Non-Technical Summary

The South Wokingham Distributor Road Study has considered the best way of accessing new development, balancing traffic relief and environmental impacts.

It concludes that a central route is the most appropriate alignment, running through the centre of the development area as:

- It is the most efficient use of land and way to serve the development area by road and bus;
- It minimises the walking distance to the main road through the development;
- It has the least environmental impact to existing residents; and
- Appropriate flood mitigation works can be provided to the Emm Brook floodplain.

A new road scheme will always have an environmental impact, but the study has concluded that most environmental impacts identified can be mitigated.

The traffic study shows the clear requirement for a new bridge forming part of the distributor road and connecting Montague Park with new development south of the Waterloo railway line. Waterloo Road level crossing could be closed but only if the distributor road railway bridge is provided.

The report also recommends improvement of Peacock Lane to Jennett’s Park and Bracknell.

The study recommends replacement of the low headroom railway bridge carrying the Guildford railway line over Finchampstead Road so that the distributor road can maximise the potential for traffic relief to the town centre, in particular from high sided vehicles travelling between Molly Millars industrial area, London Road and the A329(M) at Coppid Beech.

Next Steps

The study is ongoing. It is important that the Council keeps you informed of development, proposals and construction activities in the South Wokingham SDL.

The next steps for the South Wokingham Distributor Road project include:

- A detailed investigation of the impacts arising from Finchampstead Road railway bridge reconstruction works;
- Detail the improvements to Peacock Lane;
- Continue work and discussions with the SDL developers, Tesco, Wokingham Motors, Network Rail and other stakeholders to refine the South Wokingham Distributor Road scheme and delivery opportunities; and
- An investigation of the alternative provision of underpasses beneath the Waterloo railway line instead of bridges over the railway for pedestrians, cyclists and the mobility impaired;
- Ensure that you, residents’ groups, local councillors, parish and town councils and others are kept informed.

Background

The purpose of this exhibition is to provide you with information on the route that we consider could best serve new development in south Wokingham. Your views are important and you can be sure that your opinions will be seriously considered.

The Council is committed to the development of 2,500 new homes in south Wokingham in addition to 1,500 in north Wokingham by 2026. The South Wokingham Distributor Road is designed to provide access to the new development and to minimise its traffic impacts on residential roads in south Wokingham.

The Borough Council is consulting with you on the findings of its report on the South Wokingham Distributor Road. It has concluded that a route through the centre of the development is the most appropriate alignment following an investigation of a number of alternatives.

Have your say

We need your views on our study to make sure we are taking all relevant information into account going forward with our commitment to deliver the development.

This is an unmanned exhibition. However we are also holding a number of exhibitions in the Market Place, Wokingham, attended by officers where you can discuss the scheme and gain further information on the alternative routes. The dates and times for these exhibitions are as follows:

Friday 27 June from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm
Saturday 28 June from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm
Friday 18 July from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm
Saturday 19 July from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm

There is a dedicated email address for the South Wokingham Distributor Road and a website where you will find the full highway study reports. These are shown at the base of the boards.

The consultation will close on Friday 22 August 2014 and you should send any comments to us by Friday 29 August 2014.

Please do not hesitate to contact the team if you have any questions.

The Council will use your comments to refine the preferred scheme for South Wokingham. We will publish a report on the comments received later this year and will present them at a future South Wokingham Forum.
The Study

In looking at how best to secure relief for the town, access new development and protect the environment, the study considered three possible routes for the South Wokingham Distributor Road between Finchampstead Road and the Waterloo railway line:

- **A central route** as detailed in the adopted South Wokingham SDL Supplementary Planning Document (October 2011);
- **A northern route** parallel and close to the Waterloo railway line; and
- **A southern route** along the SDL boundary.

A section of the distributor road is already under construction, connecting the SDL development area at Montague Park to London Road.

These routes are shown on the display boards to the right.

Highway Design

The proposed design and feel of the road is similar to that of the North Wokingham Distributor Road. It comprises a single carriageway road bounded by a verge strip containing trees, and a pedestrian and cyclist path on both sides of the carriageway. The design speed and speed limit is 30mph throughout.

Option Appraisal

In general terms, there is little difference between the traffic effects of a central, northern or southern route. All provide some relief to Wokingham town centre, a result of the diversion of traffic between Finchampstead Road and Coppid Beech Roundabout.

The central route provides both the distributor road function and provides access to the new housing areas. It is also the most efficient way to operate a bus service and minimises the average walking distance for all new residents to bus stops. Both the northern and southern routes would still need roads to be built through and across the SDL to provide access to the new homes. This would lead to a confusing design and duplication of road infrastructure and hard surfacing.

In traffic and engineering terms, the central route is considered to be the most appropriate option.

Environmental Issues

There are no significant environmental concerns in the SDL area and the study has highlighted where there may be specific impacts for each of the route alternatives, most of which could be mitigated by the new housing around the road alignments.

All route options are influenced by local ecology, existing and proposed housing areas and especially the Emm Brook and its associated flood plain. Indeed, the Emm Brook represents a significant constraint in the SDL, especially towards the west of the development area close to Finchampstead Road.

The southern route has the greatest environmental impact and consequently would be the most challenging to provide. It would remove sections of existing trees and hedges along the Emm Brook, an area that could be used for recreational routes in the SDL, and would result in the loss of a portion of woodland near Ludgrove School. Substantial measures would be required to mitigate the effect upon retained habitats and to compensate for habitat loss.

Each of the routes pass through the Emm Brook’s floodplain, but a southern route would have approximately one-third of its total length in the flood plain, whereas the central and northern routes would enter the flood risk areas for a short distance, mainly in the western area of the SDL. Consequently flood alleviation, compensation and mitigation measures would be significant for the southern route and hence incur greater overall construction challenges.

The northern route has the greatest impact on air quality, noise and vibration to existing residents north of the Waterloo railway line (those along Gipsy Lane and roads off Waterloo Road), as it would route closest to existing properties. The southern route would bring the road close to Ludgrove School and residents around Holme Green. Generally the central route would have the least impacts on existing areas.

All three routes pass close to or within the setting of ten listed buildings. A northern or southern route could, however, have some serious potential impacts to individual buildings which would be difficult to manage, especially noise and vibration impacts. The central route has a lesser impact and in the longer term any impacts on heritage assets is likely to be mitigated in large part by the new housing developments within the SDL. The next stage of the project will consider these impacts on sensitive locations.

In all other respects, there are no significant or long term effects on habitats, landscapes or visual constraints from any route.

Overall, an alignment based around the central route has the least environmental impact on existing residents.
South Wokingham Distributor Road Public Consultation

Finchampstead Road/Tesco Roundabout
The study has concluded that no improvements are needed to the roundabout at this location.

New railway bridge over the Waterloo Railway Line
The study has concluded that no improvements are needed to the bridge at this location.

Closure of Waterloo Road level crossing
Closure of Waterloo Road level crossing is beneficial in reducing the traffic in areas that would otherwise occur on Waterloo Road. People would use the distributor road instead. The closure will be monitored and reviewed as necessary.

Improvement to Waterloo Road and a connection to Jennett's Park
It is suggested that some homes be relocated to create a new road and a connection to Jennett's Park. The new road will be constructed on the land between Waterloo Road and the existing roundabout.

Wokingham Motors
There are impacts on Wokingham Motors. Discussions have been held with the developer to ensure the continuity of its trading position in Wokingham.

Pedestrian and cyclist provision across the Waterloo Railway Line
There is a need for improved cycle facilities at this location. The study has concluded that no improvements are needed to the facilities at this location.

Financial Package
The study has concluded that no improvements are needed to the financial package at this location.

Finchampstead Road/ Waterlow Line Railway Bridge
There is no requirement to replace the existing signal box due to improvements to the existing signal box. No improvements are necessary to the signal box.

Central Road
There are impacts on Central Road at this location. Discussions have been held with the developer to ensure the continuity of its trading position in Wokingham.