

South Wokingham Distributor Road Public Consultation

Welcome

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.

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 flood plain.

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.

Project Summary

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.

Finchampstead Road/Tesco Roundabout

The traffic study shows a need to connect the distributor road to Finchampstead Road to:

- provide access to the new development and
- to maximise the potential for the road to provide relief to the town centre.

The absence of a connection to Finchampstead Road would result in an unacceptable increase in traffic from the SDL across the Easthampstead Road level crossing.

Finchampstead Road/Waterloo Line Railway Bridge

The Waterloo line railway bridge can accommodate all but the tallest high-sided vehicles and its improvement is desirable in the long term but not essential (see below for a comment on the Guildford line railway bridge).

Tesco Store Access

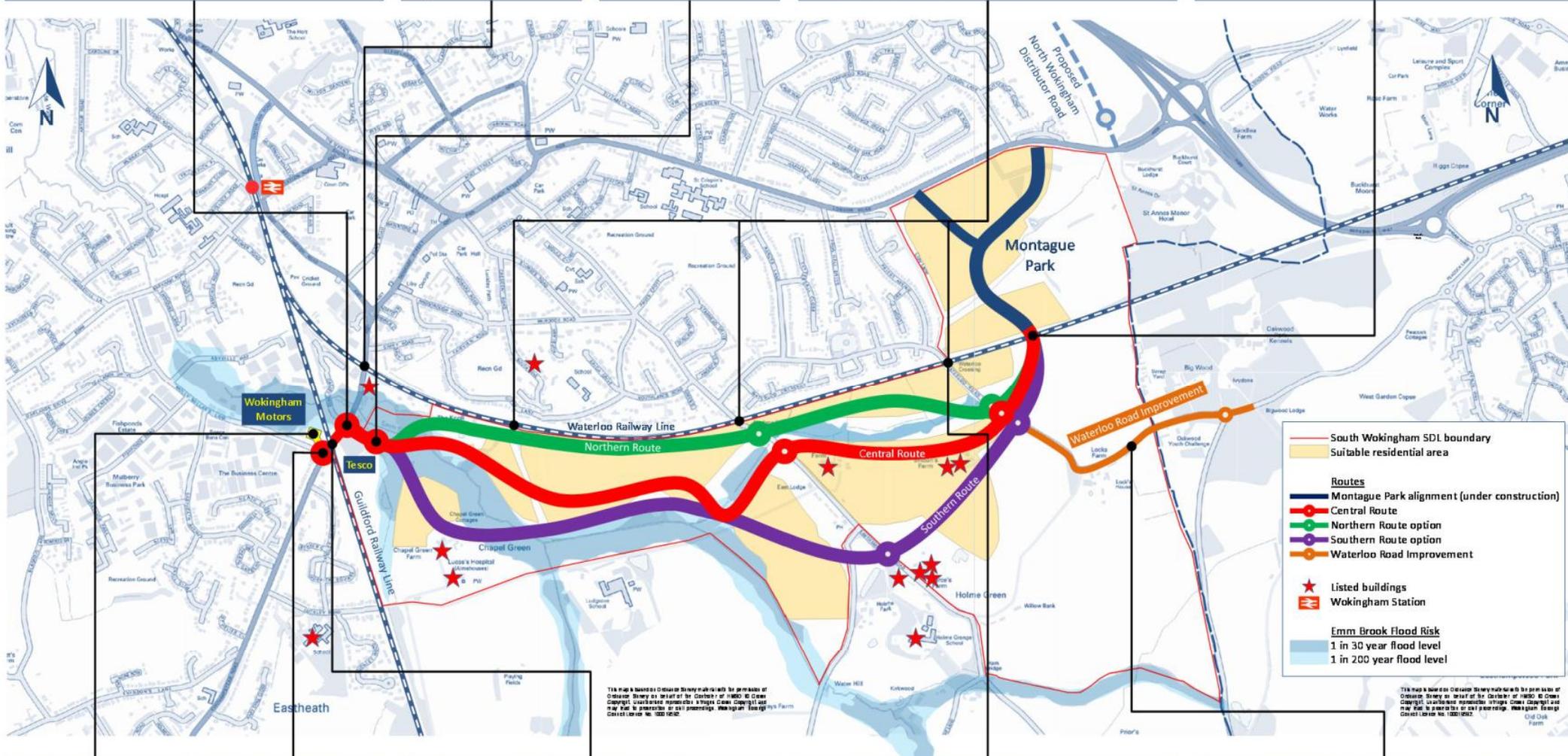
There is an impact on Tesco; a new store access could be provided with the distributor road. Discussion has commenced with the south Wokingham development consortia, Tesco and the Council to ensure that the store's access is maintained during and after construction, and where possible improved.

Pedestrian and cyclist provision across the Waterloo Railway Line

The study has investigated providing new bridges for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility impaired persons across the Waterloo railway line. These would be located at Gipsy Lane, Easthampstead Road and Waterloo Road. The Council recognises that new bridges could result in potential loss of privacy and visual intrusion for nearby residents. Consequently we will be investigating the alternative provision of underpasses, as these may be less intrusive. However they would require more extensive works, and they have their own set of delivery issues and public perceptions. These issues, and an option to make no changes to existing crossings, will be worked through in the next stage of the project before any decision is made.

New railway bridge over the Waterloo Railway Line

The study has shown that a new bridge over the Waterloo railway line is an essential requirement of the distributor road. If the bridge was not provided, SDL development traffic would use Rances Lane and Priests Avenue to get to London Road and the A329(M) resulting in an acceptably high traffic levels on these roads. More traffic would also use Peacock Lane towards Bracknell and Jennett's Park if the railway bridge was not provided.



Wokingham Motors

There are impacts on Wokingham Motors. Discussion has commenced between the south Wokingham development consortia and Wokingham Motors with regard to ensuring the continuity of its trading position in south Wokingham.

Finchampstead Road/Molly Millars Lane Roundabout

The study has concluded that an improvement to the roundabout at Molly Millars Lane would be beneficial. This will have an impact on Wokingham Motors, but residential properties in the vicinity will not be affected.

Finchampstead Road Guildford Line Railway Bridge

There is a requirement to replace the existing Guildford line railway bridge at Finchampstead Road to increase headroom and width for road traffic, and to provide greater footway width on both sides of the highway to the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists. Improved headroom would allow high-sided vehicles to use the distributor road to access the Molly Millars Lane industrial area. The Council needs to investigate further the temporary traffic implications during the bridge replacement works, and will do so in the next stage of the project. Access to the Tesco store would be maintained at all times.

Closure of Waterloo Road level crossing

Closure of Waterloo Road level crossing is beneficial in reducing the traffic increases that would otherwise occur on Rances Lane and Priests Avenue from the SDL development traffic. However closure should only be considered when the distributor road railway bridge is open. The study recognises that closure of the level crossing would cause some inconvenience to local residents in the area who may currently use this crossing, although this should be balanced against the removal of 'rat run' traffic in the environment.

Improvement to Waterloo Road and a connection to Jennett's Park

It is inevitable that some traffic from the SDL will travel via Waterloo Road and Peacock Lane to Jennett's Park, Bracknell and beyond, and the distributor road itself will create new opportunities for traffic outside the Borough to avoid London Road, Coppid Beech and the town centre. The study recommends the sensitive improvement of Waterloo Road to Peacock Lane, where possible maintaining the countryside feel of the route. Ongoing discussion with Bracknell Forest Council is taking place over this as well as the wider impact of other development in both Wokingham and Bracknell.