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SOUTH WOKINGHAM DISTRIBUTOR ROAD: REPORT ON CONSULTATION

Wokingham Borough Council

03/10/2014

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South Wokingham Distributor Road: Report on Consultation

Wokingham Borough Council

03/10/2014

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Executive Summary

Background

Wokingham Borough Council consulted on a distributor road through the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL) to gain the public's view and to enable the scrutiny of three general alignments to provide a new road to the north, south and through the centre of the development area. The consultation period was from 23 June to 22 August 2014.

Participation in consultation

Two weekend exhibitions were held in Wokingham Market Place staffed by Council Officers during the consultation period. In addition to the public exhibitions, three static, generally unstaffed, exhibition displays were made available throughout the consultation period at the Council Offices in Wokingham; at Wokingham Library in Denmark Street; and at Wokingham Motors in Molly Millars Lane. An additional staffed session was held at the Bradbury Centre.

Questionnaires were not made available for this consultation, however a specific consultation email address was set up and consultees were invited to return their free-response comments to this address by Friday 22 August 2014. Overall, 304 letters and emails were received during the consultation period. This includes two petitions as follows:

- Starmead Drive: 16 unique signatures (Objecting to all proposals)
- Change.Org: 86 unique signatures (Support for Central +B1 and objecting to the northern alignment)

Key findings

Analysis of the comments received has shown the most favoured route alignment is the Central Route, the preference of 81% of respondents. This includes those respondents who supported the Central Route with the Option B1 alignment south of Knoll Farm. The Northern Route gained the support of 12% of respondents and the Southern Route just 6%.

The key reasons for preferring this Central Route can be summarised as follows:

- It would result in less noise and air pollution to existing residents when compared to other alignments;
- It is located the furthest from existing property and would have less impact on local character;
- New residents would buy their houses fully aware of the road and associated impacts, whereas existing residents north of the rail line bought largely because of the lack of such a road;
- A central route through the development would provide better general access to services, including buses and cycle routes;
- It provides the greatest opportunity for good and inclusive design, thereby ensuring the safe access of all road users.

The greatest number of **objections** received were in relation to the northern route alignment (77% of 144 respondents). Reasons for objection included the additional noise and air pollution that this alignment would present for local residents living north of the rail line. A full list of key objection themes is provided in Chapter 4.

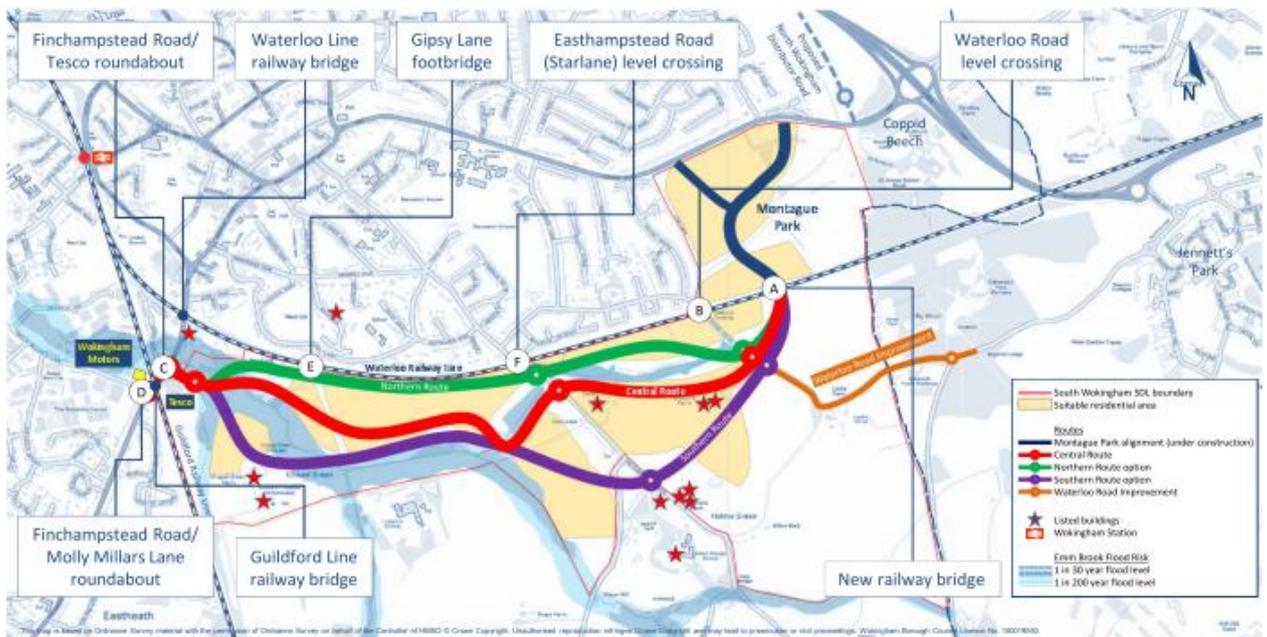
Further comments received from respondents highlighted a number of key themes, including: the need to provide adequate and safe facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists; the use of appropriate materials to minimise noise and air pollution; adequate flood abatement measures; and requests for further information, particularly surrounding the use of the traffic model.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The Council is committed to the development of 2,500 new homes in south Wokingham, in addition to 1,500 homes in north Wokingham, by 2026. The South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) will provide access to the new development and minimise its traffic impacts on residential roads in south Wokingham.
- 1.1.2 The purpose of the consultation was to invite Wokingham residents and businesses to comment on the findings of its report on the South Wokingham Distributor Road, and specifically to gain public consensus on which route should best serve new development in south Wokingham and which would also satisfy the needs of Wokingham residents. Route alignment options are shown below in Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 SWDR Route Options



- 1.1.3 The consultation provided an opportunity for residents and businesses to express its preference for a distributor road alignment and to detail other factors and information the council should take into account as part of the development highway arrangements.

1.2 Aims of Consultation

- 1.2.1 The overarching aim of the consultation was to gather feedback on the three alternatives for the proposed SWDR, and to explore concerns relating to the route alignments that would need to be addressed by the subsequent stages of work on the preferred scheme.

1.3 Structure of this Report

- 1.3.1 Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 sets out the details of the consultation approach and programme. The overall consultation findings are presented in Chapter 3, whilst the detailed findings

are presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in relation to the written responses regarding the northern, central and southern alignments respectively. Other consultation issues are dealt with in Chapter 7, and a summary of the findings is presented in Chapter 8.

2 Methodology

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 This chapter sets out the methodology employed for the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) consultation, in terms of the methods of consultation and communication employed, timescales, and process for logging comments and enquiries.

2.2 Public Consultation Approach

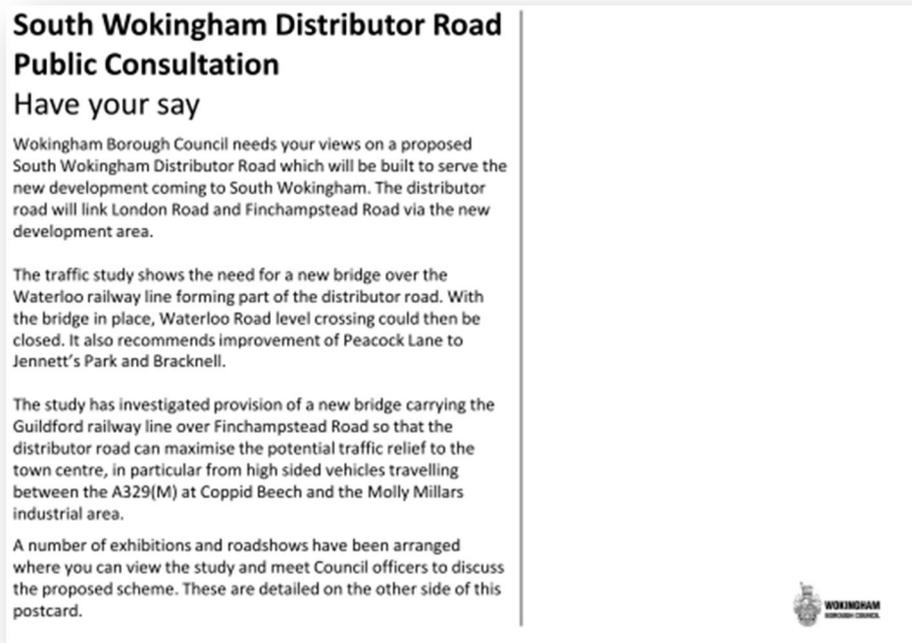
2.2.1 The Council undertook public consultation on the SWDR between Monday 23 June and Friday 22 August 2014. A variety of methods were used during the consultation, including manned and unmanned exhibitions, a website, a leaflet, and a dedicated email address in order to maximise participation from the local community. A questionnaire was not made available for this consultation. A summary of the consultation approach is provided in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 Consultation Methods

METHOD	DETAILS	AIM
South Wokingham Forum	Bradbury Centre, Rose Street, Monday 16 June	To gather feedback on the proposals prior to consulting on the proposed scheme publicly
Postcards	Approx. 13,600 sent to individual addresses (residential and business) to advise of consultation	To raise awareness of the consultation and generate interest in participating
Website	Live from 23 June 2014 to Friday 29 August 2014	To provide information about the proposed scheme
Leaflets	Approx. 1,500 taken from 2,000 made available	To provide information about the proposed scheme
Unstaffed Exhibitions	Council Offices, Shute End from 23 June to 22 August 2014 Wokingham Library, Denmark Street from 23 June to 22 August 2014 Wokingham Motors, Molly Millars Lane from 23 June to 22 August 2014	To provide information about the proposed scheme To provide access to leaflets
Staffed Exhibitions	Wokingham Market Place, Friday 27 and Saturday 28 June Wokingham Market Place, Friday 18 and Saturday 19 July Bradbury Centre, Rose Street, Monday 8 July	To provide information about the proposed scheme To provide opportunity to discuss the options and impacts with a member of the study team
Additional Meetings	Wokingham Motors, 12 June Bracknell Forest Council, 13 June Tesco, 16 June Holme Grange School, 1 July Ludgrove School, 24 July Wokingham Society, 30 July	To inform and gather specific feedback on the proposals

2.2.2 At the start of the consultation period, postcards were distributed to 13,600 residential addresses and businesses. The postcard provided background on the consultation and listed the dates and locations of the public exhibitions. The postcard is shown in Figure 2.1. Local stakeholder organisations were also informed about the consultation.

Figure 2.1 Consultation Event Post Card



2.2.3 A series of two-day weekend exhibitions were held during the consultation period in Wokingham Market Place. In addition to the public exhibitions, three static, generally unstaffed, exhibition displays were made available throughout the consultation period at the Council Offices in Wokingham; at Wokingham Library in Denmark Street; and at Wokingham Motors in Molly Millars Lane. An additional public drop-in session was also held at the Bradbury Centre. Council staff were available on request to discuss concerns and answer queries at the Council Offices throughout the consultation period. Table 2.2 below lists these events.

Table 2.2 Exhibition dates

LOCATION	TYPE	DATE
WBC Council Offices	Unstaffed	23 June to 22 August
Wokingham Library	Unstaffed	
Wokingham Motors	Unstaffed	
Wokingham Market Place	Staffed	Friday 27 to Saturday 28 September And Friday 18 to Saturday 19 July
Bradbury Centre	Staffed	Monday 8 July

2.2.4 Additional meetings were held as follows:

- Wokingham Motors, 12 June;
- Bracknell Forest Council, 13 June;
- Tesco, 16 June;
- Holme Grange School, 1 July;
- Ludgrove School, 24 July; and
- Wokingham Society, 30 July.

2.2.5 The exhibitions comprised a set of A1 display panels summarising the key issues around the scheme. Further information on the proposed options was provided on a dedicated section of WBC's website¹ and in the consultation leaflet.

2.2.6 The leaflet provided the background to the scheme, a plan showing the various alignment options and impacts of each, details of the public exhibitions, and instructions on how to respond to the consultation. A copy is included in Appendix A.

2.2.7 The leaflet was made available at every consultation event. Stocks of the leaflet were checked and replenished throughout the consultation period. In total, 2,000 copies of the leaflet were made available and 1,500 copies were taken.

2.2.8 Copies of the exhibition display boards and the full technical report were made available on the website, enabling those with an interest to examine the scheme in more detail.

¹ <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/transport/roads/southwokinghamdistributor/>

3 Consultation Findings

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 This chapter sets out the response statistics and the overall stated scheme alignment preference from the consultation event.
- 3.1.2 The following chapters in this report explore the public's views on the different alignment options for the distributor road, as well as on other issues raised by the consultation.

3.2 Overall Response

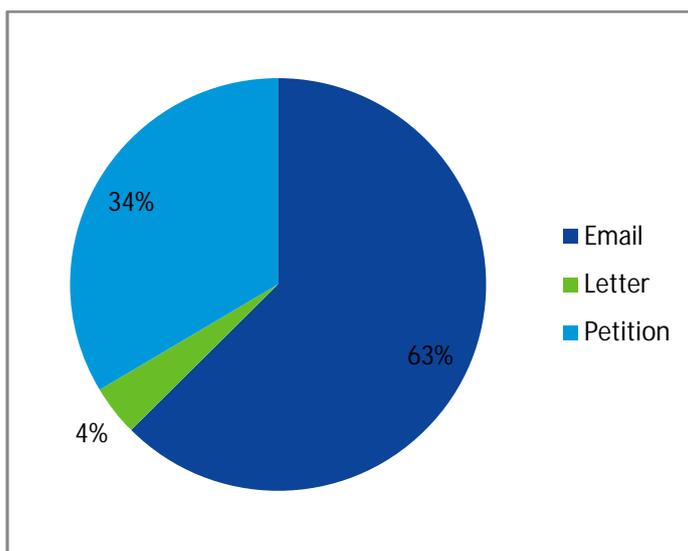
3.2.1 Overall, 304 letters and emails were received during the consultation period. This includes two petitions as follows:

- Starmead Drive: 16 unique signatures (Objecting to all proposals)
- Change.Org: 86 unique signatures (Support for Central +B1 and objecting to northern alignment)

3.2.2 A unique signature is an individual identified to have only responded to the petition and did not additionally express an opinion or comment in an email or letter. If an individual's preference for, say, Option B1 was counted as part of the Change.org petition *and* an email, this is counted only once, (to do otherwise would erroneously affect the general outcome of the consultation). However, where more than one response per household was returned, these have been counted as individual responses.

3.2.3 Comments and responses to the consultation were received by email and letter. Figure 3.1 below shows the proportion of responses received by type. The largest proportion of responses (63%) were received by email and just over a third of responses were formed by the two petitions noted above.

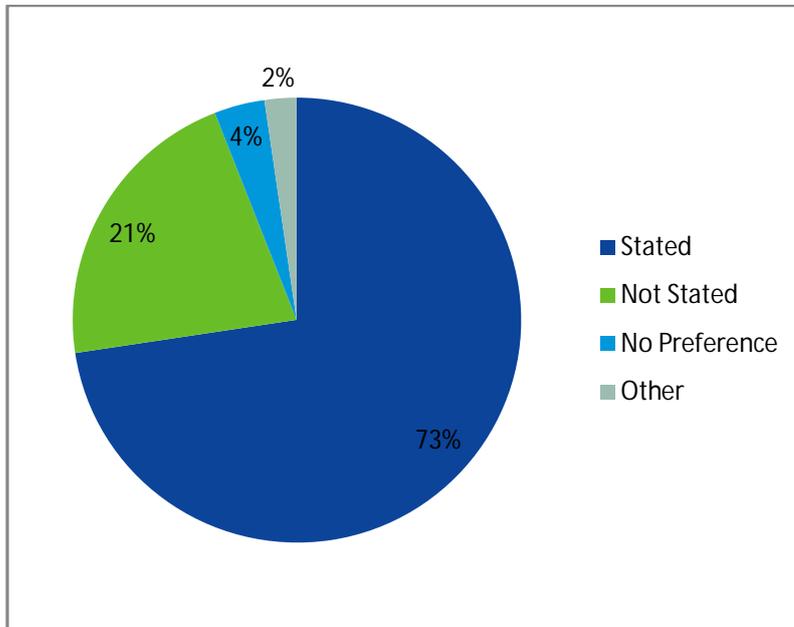
Figure 3.1 Response Type



Base: All feedback (% respondents: 304)

3.2.4 When considering the respondents' preferences for route options, 303 of the 304 responses either stated a specific route option, no preference, an alternative option (other), or did not state a preference at all. This includes the two petitions. The proportions of these responses are shown in Figure 3.2 below. Almost three-quarters of respondents stated a preference for one of the three alignments.

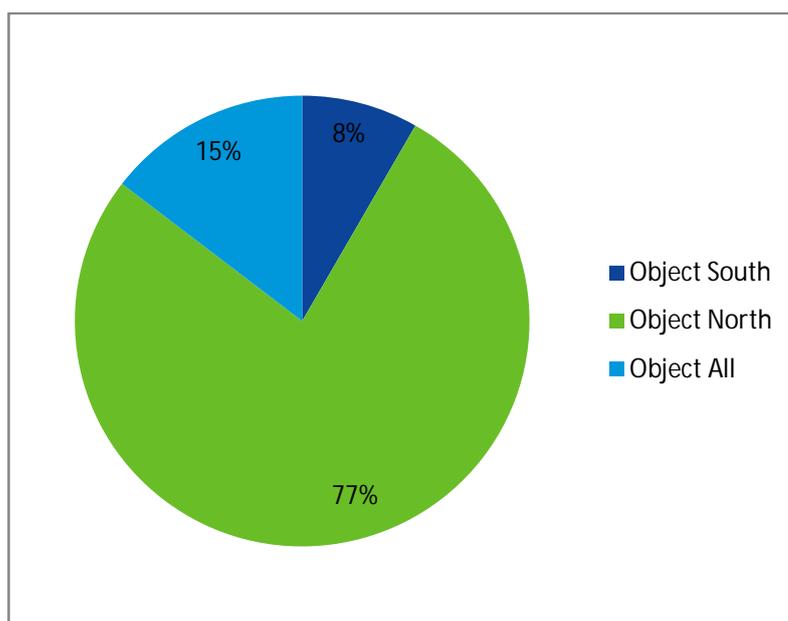
Figure 3.2 Stated Route Preferences



Base: all feedback (% respondents: 303)

3.2.5 Of the 303 respondents in Figure 3.2 above, 144 also stated an objection. The stated objections are shown in Figure 3.3 below. As can be seen, the greatest level of objections arose in relation to the northern alignment (77% of 144 respondents). No one stated any formal objection in principle to the central alignment.

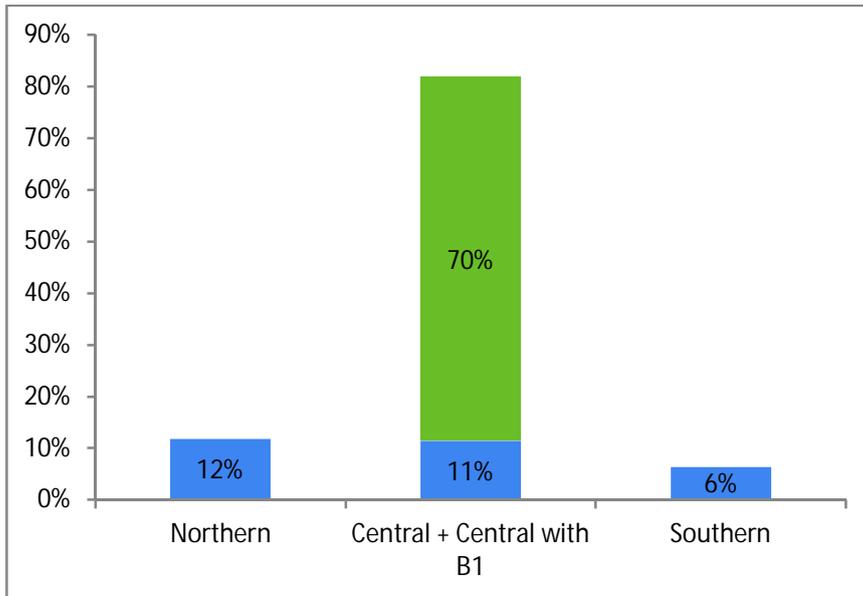
Figure 3.3 Objections



Base: 144 of 303 stated preferences (%n144)

3.2.6 Figure 3.4 below identifies the split of preferred route options between the northern, central, central with B1 and southern route alignments (220 of 303 stated preferences). This includes the Change.org petition (86 for Central + B1). Figure 3.4 shows that 81% of respondents supported the Central Route, and almost three quarters of respondents specifically stating a preference for the central alignment with the addition of B1 (shown in green).

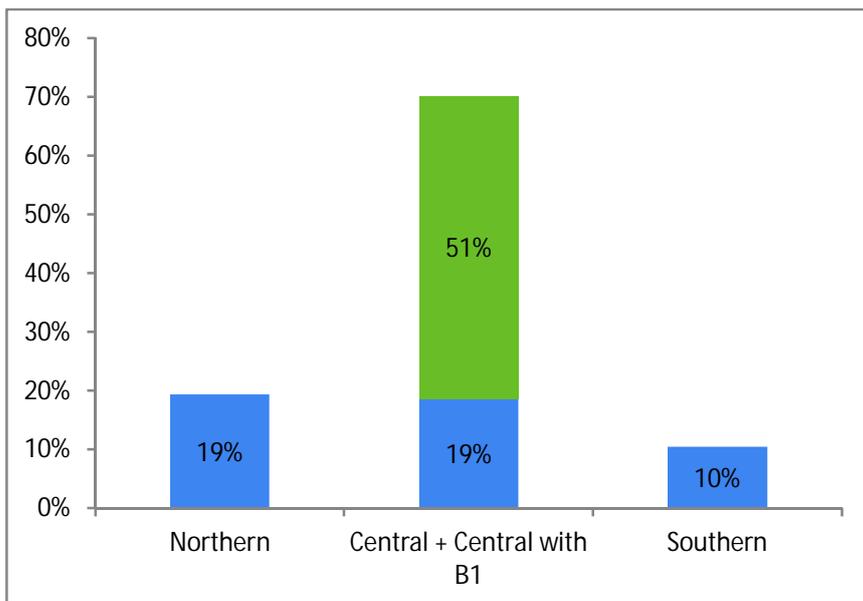
Figure 3.4 Preferred Route Alignments (including Change.org petition)



Base: 220 of 303 stated preferences (% n220)

3.2.7 Figure 3.5 below shows the effect of removing the Change.org petition from the results. The results still show a clear preference for the central route alignment (70% overall and 51% specifically stating the Central Route with Option B1).

Figure 3.5 Preferred Route Alignments (excluding Change.org petition)



Base: 134 of 303 stated preferences (%n134)

3.2.8 In relation to the general comments received by respondents, some common themes have been extracted and are summarised below:

- SWDR junction south of Starlane Level Crossing (Easthampstead Road) is too close to, and will be affected by, the operation of the level crossing and resulting queues.
- Not satisfied that closure of Waterloo Road level crossing results in a net benefit to the area.
- Not satisfied that Finchampstead Road, Molly Millars Lane and Wellington Road can cope with traffic resulting from the SWDR connection.
- Disappointment Holme Grange School was not contacted before the consultation.
- Loss of open space in south Wokingham.
- The Central Route should run across the shallow flood attenuation pond adjacent to Easthampstead Road rather than bend to avoid it.
- The Central Route should follow the line of Option B1 south of Knoll Farm to move the road further away from Gipsy Lane.

4 Consultation Findings: Northern Alignment

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 This chapter is the first of three detailing comments made on specific option alignments, starting with the Northern Route. The earlier Figure 3.4 showed that 12% of respondents who stated a preference (26 out of 220) were in favour of the northern route alignment.
- 4.1.2 Comments have been grouped and generalised so that no single comment can be attributed to an individual.

4.2 General Comments - FOR

- 4.2.1 Table 4.1 below sets out the range of comments received in support of the northern SWDR route alignment. These have been placed in order, with the most commonly stated themes at the top.

Table 4.1 Northern SWDR Route Alignment Comments - FOR

GENERAL THEME
The northern route aligns with the rail line, an existing source of noise pollution
The northern route provides the most direct route along an existing alignment and is the shortest route option
It is safer for local pedestrians and cyclists since it is bounded by the rail line which reduces the need to cross.
The alignment uses land of least value to the local surrounding community
The alignment has the least amount of environmental impact on SSSI and wildlife habitats, as well as the least amount of impact on historical buildings and private property
The alignment does not impinge on the flood plain

- 4.2.2 In some instances, whilst support is documented for the northern route, concern is also raised over the issue of the impact on queueing traffic at the Easthampstead Road rail crossing.
- 4.2.3 In addition to the comments above, one respondent was concerned for the Chapel Green area suggesting that options other than the northern route would either require compulsory purchase of property or create significant intrusion by noise and light pollution.

4.3 General Comments – AGAINST

4.3.1 Table 4.2 below sets out the range of comments stating a reason why the Northern Route is unacceptable. These are in no particular order and illustrate the diverse range of objections to the northern route alignment.

Table 4.2 Northern SWDR Route Alignment Comments - AGAINST

GENERAL THEME
The northern route alignment will provide additional noise and air pollution for local neighbours and those north of the rail line
The alignment does not protect the interests of existing residents as it is very close to existing property and will create additional noise pollution as well as loss of local identity and character
The roundabout between Easthampstead Road and the SWDR would be too close to the Starlane Crossing, resulting in safety issues for queueing traffic and localised congestion issues
This alignment will have the biggest impact on the largest number of existing residents
This alignment provides little opportunity to integrate with new development
Traffic speeds could be faster due to direct nature of the road
The alignment passes through an area that is too prone to flooding
The alignment will bring traffic pollution closer to the town centre

4.4 Other Comments

4.4.1 Supporters of the northern route also provided, in some instances, justification for not being in favour of either the southern or central route alignments. Generalised comments **against** the latter two routes are summarised below:

Southern

- Interference with listed buildings;
- Impact on surrounding countryside, including private land and SSSI woodland;
- Least direct route;
- Passes through a significant section of flood plain;
- An increase in noise and light pollution in the area surrounding the proposed route; and
- Devaluation of property.

Central

- Detrimental to rural nature of area;
- Route would dissect the development and possibly cause segregation and accessibility issues;
- Route is not direct; and
- Infringes on flood plain.

4.4.2 In addition to the comments above, a number of further comments were raised regarding other localised issues relating to a proposed SWDR. These are summarised below:

- Concerns surrounding proximity of linking in the new SWDR with Molly Millars Roundabout as there is already an existing traffic issue here;
- Signage strategy required, particularly to assist non-local traffic;
- Ensuring that safe pedestrian and cycle facilities are provided;
- Concern regarding the mitigation of flooding as well as all other environmental impacts i.e. noise and air pollution;
- Any SWDR needs to not meander through development in order to provide maximum effect on removing traffic from the town centre;
- A proper solution is required, such as a dual carriageway allowing free movement of traffic to the motorway;
- Badly determined as a distributor road – historically supported as a ‘Relief Road’;
- Plans do not provide solution for the area around Tesco, rail bridges and Wellington Road;
- SWDR speed limit should be 30mph;
- Noise abatement measures required;
- If one rail bridge is to be upgraded, then upgrade both; and
- Rail bridges should be maintained in their current form as part of Wokingham’s heritage.

5 Consultation Findings: Central Alignment (including variation)

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Overall, 82% of respondents supported the Central Route. Of these, the majority would prefer the Central Route with the Option B1 alignment south of Knoll Farm (detailed in the Technical Report). Much of this support was expressed through a change.org petition. If the change.org petition is not taken into account, 70% of respondents would still have supported the Central Route. This means that of the returned comments, the central route alignment is the most preferred option.
- 5.1.2 The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the key comments received by all respondents for and against this route and to the Highway Study as a whole.
- 5.1.3 Comments have been grouped and generalised so that no single comment can be attributed to an individual.

5.2 General Comments – FOR (excluding Option B1)

- 5.2.1 Table 5.1 below sets out the range of comments received in support of the Central Route where a preference for Option B1 was not stated. These are provided in order of most commonly stated theme.

Table 5.1 Central SWDR Route Alignment Comments - FOR

GENERAL THEME
The central alignment provides the greatest opportunity for good and inclusive design, thereby ensuring the safe access of all road users and includes minimising traffic speeds
The alignment optimises land available for housing
The proposed route through development would provide access to services, including buses and cycle routes
The alignment passes through an area less prone to flooding
Least environmental impact to surrounding area

5.3 General Comments – FOR (including Option B1)

- 5.3.1 Table 5.2 below sets out the range of comments received in support of the Central Route with Option B1. These are placed in order of most commonly stated theme.

Table 5.2 Central SWDR Route Alignment Comments - FOR

GENERAL THEME
The central alignment including B1 would act to further reduce noise and air pollution
This alignment is furthest from property and therefore has less impact on local character
New residents will buy, being fully aware of the road and associated impacts, whereas existing residents north of the rail line bought largely because of the lack of such a road
The alignment with B1 addresses the impact that the Central Route (excluding Option B1) has on Knoll Farm and Gipsy Lane
The proposed route through development would provide access to services, including buses and cycle routes
This alignment provides the greatest opportunity for good and inclusive design, thereby ensuring the safe access of all road users and includes minimising traffic speeds
This alignment is the furthest from the rail crossing at its eastern end

5.4 General Comments – AGAINST (including with B1)

5.4.1 Table 5.3 below sets out the range of comments received against any Central Route alignment. These are provided in no particular order and show the range of objections to the central route.

Table 5.3 Central SWDR Route Alignment Comments - AGAINST

GENERAL THEME
The route alignment will interfere with listed buildings
The alignment will have a detrimental impact on surrounding countryside, including private land and SSSI woodland
This option provides the least direct route
The alignment passes through a significant section of flood plain and will impact on the existing issue with flooding at Tesco Roundabout
The alignment will create an increase in noise and light pollution in the area surrounding it
The alignment could result in the devaluation of property
The alignment could encourage greater speeds
There are concerns as to whether the noise reduction associated with B1 justifies the additional cost
There is concern that the proposed route would dissect the development and possibly cause segregation and accessibility issues
The alignment requires a junction too close to the existing level crossings

5.5 Other Comments

5.5.1 Supporters of the central route also provided, in some instances, justification for not being in favour of either the northern or southern route alignments. Generalised comments **against** the latter two routes are summarised below (these have been included within the relevant chapters for the northern and southern routes, respectively):

Northern

- An increase in noise and air pollution for residents north of the rail line;
- Roundabout between Easthampstead Road and the SWDR would be too close to the Starlane Crossing resulting in safety issues for queueing traffic and localised congestion issues;
- Biggest impact on largest number of existing residents;
- Little opportunity to integrate with new development;
- Traffic speeds could be faster due to direct nature of the road;
- Proximity to existing property with associated noise pollution;
- Proximity to existing property and loss of local identity and character;
- Too prone to flooding;
- Does not protect the interests of existing residents;

Southern

- Greater environmental impact on surrounding countryside;
- May allow faster traffic speeds;
- Would encourage rat running along Gipsy Lane;
- Impact on listed properties

5.5.2 In addition to the comments above, a number of further comments were raised by those in support of the central route regarding other localised issues relating to a proposed SWDR. These are summarised below:

- Concern over Starlane Crossing and connectivity to the SWDR – raised by many of the respondents;
- SWDR, regardless of final route must consider:
 - Being built prior to house building commences to accommodate significant increase in commercial vehicles, particularly using Priest Avenue;
 - Ensuring that the Tesco roundabout be large enough to accommodate all vehicles due to use of HGVs associated with Tesco and Molly Millars / Fishponds Industrial Estates;
 - Supporting cycling, but concern that the provision must link in with the rest of the town and that better facilities for storage, for example, are provided in the town centre;
 - 30mph speed limit;
 - Provision of low noise road surface; and
 - Use of bunding or appropriate materials to mitigate noise impact.
- Effect of increased congestion on Langborough Road;
- Further information has been requested regarding the traffic impact for Heathlands Road and Easthampstead Road, as well as the Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Tree Survey;
- Lack of plans to improve / address the Easthampstead / Old Wokingham Road junction;

-
- SWDR should act as a feeder road, not a 30mph local route, otherwise it will create a knock-on effect for congestion elsewhere in the town; and
 - Interest in knowing how the existing overhead electricity pylons will be dealt with.

6 Consultation Findings: Southern Alignment

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 The Southern Route was the least supported road alignment. Only 6% of respondents who stated a preference (14 out of 220, including the Change.org petition) were in favour of the southern route alignment.
- 6.1.2 The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the key comments received by these respondents in relation to supporting this route and in relation to the Highway Study as a whole.
- 6.1.3 Comments have been grouped and generalised so that no single comment can be attributed to an individual.

6.2 General Comments - FOR

- 6.2.1 Table 6.1 below sets out the range of comments received in support of the Southern Route. These have been provided in order, with the most commonly stated theme at the top.

Table 6.1 Southern SWDR Route Alignment Comments - FOR

GENERAL THEME
This alignment avoids the issue with proximity to Easthampstead Road Starlane crossing
The proposed alignment minimises noise and air pollution to Wokingham town centre
This is the only option that passes through all of the proposed residential areas and affects least amount of existing residents
The alignment seems logical in order to provide for development further south
This alignment would be away from housing, thus providing a safer and quieter environment

6.3 General Comments – AGAINST

- 6.3.1 The Council did not consult with Holme Grange School prior to undertaking the SWDR consultation. This was unfortunate as the alignment shows the need to acquire the school's playing field. The council met with the school and apologised for this serious oversight.
- 6.3.2 Table 6.2 below sets out the range of comments received against the southern route alignment as received from all respondents. These are provided in no particular order.

Table 6.2 Southern SWDR Route Alignment Comments - AGAINST

GENERAL THEME
The alignment will create an increase in noise and air pollution for existing residents in proximity to the proposed route
The alignment will interfere with listed buildings
The proposed route will impact on surrounding countryside, including private land and SSSI woodland
This option provides the least direct route and passes through a significant section of flood plain
This alignment could result in the devaluation of property
The proposed route may allow faster traffic speeds and encourage rat running along Gipsy Lane
The alignment cuts across and requires purchase of Holme Grange School's northern playing field

6.4 Other Comments

6.4.1 Supporters of the southern route provided, in some instances, justification for not being in favour of either the northern or central route alignments. Generalised comments **against** the latter two routes are summarised below (these are also provided in the relevant chapters on the northern and central route alignments, respectively):

Northern

- Brings traffic pollution closer to the town centre;
- Increased noise and air pollution for existing housing north of the rail line;
- Proximity of proposed new roundabout on Easthampstead Road with the Starlane rail crossing; and
- Far too close to existing housing.

Central

- Requires a junction which is too close to the existing level crossings.

6.4.2 In addition to the comments above, a number of further comments were raised regarding other localised issues relating to a proposed SWDR. These are summarised below:

- In association with the SWDR, a new pedestrian crossing should be provided on Easthampstead Road near to Murdoch Road;
- Suggestion that cycle route should be removed from the SWDR and run parallel to the rail line;
- Essential that the SWDR improves pedestrian and cycle access;
- Montague Park bridge needs tree planting to minimise visual impact;
- Essential that the Molly Millars rail bridge be substantially improved to cater for the increase in HGVs;
- Suggested speed limit of 20mph;
- Suggestion that road should act as a Relief Road / Bypass to relieve pressures in the town centre;
- Concern that the proposed development and associated infrastructure will create a 'bottleneck' in the area of Tesco and Wellington Road and up in to the new Station Road; and
- Would like security that the £24.5m government road grant is not used to reduce developer S106 obligations.

7 Other Consultation Issues

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 The purpose of this chapter is to document additional comments raised by respondents to the consultation which do not refer explicitly to the individual route alignment proposals. Such comments include further proposals for the study and alternative route alignments, as well as comments relating to issues such as the Waterloo Road rail bridge and highlighting the importance of associated design and infrastructure. These comments have been grouped together to form the summary set out below.

7.2 Proposed Alternative Route Alignments

- 7.2.1 A number of respondents felt that the Highway Study has missed opportunities for the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR). These are summarised below:

■ **To alleviate pressures on the Molly Millars roundabout area:**

- a) Stop traffic coming from the Wokingham side of the railway bridge nearest Molly Millars turning right e.g. by having the SWDR join the Finchampstead Road via a new roundabout south of the Molly Millars roundabout. As a consequence of this any traffic wanting to access Molly Millars would have to head back towards Wokingham and initially give way to traffic exiting Wokingham.
- b) make traffic exiting Molly Millars only able to turn left and use the Tesco roundabout to double back down the Finchampstead Road.

This combination could reduce congestion around the Molly Millars junction and hopefully improve traffic flows.

■ **To overcome congestion issues at the Easthampstead Starlane crossing:**

- a) Provide a traffic light controlled junction between Distributor road and Easthampstead Road, with adequate queueing space so that traffic using the crossing does not unduly hinder through traffic
- b) Close the crossing, but provide a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists, crossing both the railway and the Distributor Road.

Closing the level crossing would be in line with national policy.

■ **Proposals for alterations to either end of the northern route alignment:**

- a) Montague Park end:

No benefit in having the Montague Park estate road mixed with the through traffic on the southern link. Suggest a separate road from London Road opposite the proposed North Wokingham Distributor Road as an alternative more viable option. This may mean moving the Northern distributor road slightly, but it would make sense for both North and Southern distributor/relief roads being at a common junction.

Rather than make improvements to Waterloo Road, recommendation that the proposed new roundabout south of the railway line has a direct connection to the A329 Roundabout at Jennets Park, using the ground under the current electricity pylons as a direct route.

- b) Finchampstead Road Roundabout:

Current roundabout will be unsatisfactory being too small to handle the volume of traffic at peak times already. Recommend redevelopment with fixed traffic lights.

A roundabout at the Finchamstead Road/Molly Millar Lane junction will also not work due to traffic volume. Suggest the compulsory purchase of Wokingham Motors: Enlargement of the Guildford rail bridge (more than proposed) and the creation of a traffic signalled junction with Molly Millar's Lane.

■ **To reduce volume of traffic:**

- Consider further extension of the SWDR either from the new roundabout east of Tesco, or before it to then run south through Chapel Green and Woodcra Farm to the roundabout at Think Ford. Would require either a bridge or tunnel across the Guildford line rail track – possibility of using Luckley Road Bridge.
- Route consisting of the eastern section of the southern route joining the western section of the central route would appear to be feasible and would minimise length of route in the flood prone zone.
- More simple solution – Nine Mile Road could be improved to accommodate for additional traffic, which would route along an established road, alleviate the need to modify the bridge's height restrictions on them and furthermore, cater for the planned additional housing at the former Arborfield Garrison area.
- Central route with a modified easterly section with same roundabout on Easthampstead Road as the southern route and including the modified western B1.
- Modified central route which avoids the sharp right angle bend in the present proposal, which should definitely be avoided for both safety and convenience reasons. Where it currently swings southeast, it should instead head northeast to the junction by point F and from there on the present central route.
- Inadequate to start and take the SWDR through the new Montague Park development. May be better to start a bypass at the Coppid Beech roundabout, or alternatively at the roundabout north of Jennett's Park. It could then run initially in parallel to the railway line before going over or under the Guildford rail line and join up with the Finchampstead Road near the now derelict Woodcra Manor Farm land, or at Handpost Corner.
- Real vision would connect Molly Millar industrial estate on the western side through the Old Woollahill Road and out on to the Wokingham / Reading Road in conjunction with the current proposals. This, combined with a linking Northern distributor route through to the A329(M) would be real strategic thinking.
- More strategic proposal – linking London Road with the A321 further south could improve traffic flow throughout the centre of Wokingham (on both sides of rail lines) and avoid costly engineering works and other associated costs around the A321 Finchampstead Road / Tesco / Molly Millars Area.
- Starting at Tesco roundabout – begin on Route B then up route A1 to avoid land requisition from Knoll Farm to join Route A closer to the railway lie (minimising noise and disruption to the new South Development Area) before following route A2 to re-join Route B thereby avoiding the detention pond and linking to the proposed Easthampstead Road crossing.

7.2.2 Respondents who suggested alternative route options also made a range of further comments surround the study and proposals. These are summarised below:

- The modelling is flawed, since it does not incorporate the NWDR or the Starlane crossing closure
- Concern regarding road safety impact of having both the SWDR and NWDR so close to the Coppid Beech roundabout and A329(M)
- Concern that congestion will get considerably worse at the roundabout in front of Tesco and at the Molly Millars roundabout
- No adequate reference to traffic flows on Easthampstead Road and Starlane crossing – raises question over accuracy of presented information.

7.3 Closure of Waterloo Road level crossing

7.3.1 There were mixed responses to the proposed closure of the Waterloo Road level crossing. Comments received in **objection** of the proposed closure followed the key themes set out below:

- The closure would only be of benefit to Network Rail;
- The only level crossing in Wokingham which does not cause significant delays to traffic. Will add to the congestion issues at the Easthampstead Road Starlane crossing by forcing drivers to use this route instead;
- Forcing drivers to find alternative routes will undermine the purpose of the SWDR and increase congestion and road safety issues at the Easthampstead Road / Starlane crossing; and
- SWDR is a distributor road and not a bypass – therefore it requires the maximum number of practical access points to the existing road network.

7.3.2 One respondent felt that the crossing should be closed as sufficient local access will be provided by the new SWDR.

7.3.3 Based on the responses alone, there were more reasons put forward to oppose these proposals, than to support them.

7.4 New Footbridge over Waterloo Line

7.4.1 Few comments were returned that specifically referred to the new footbridge proposals over the Waterloo line. Of those that were received, the following comments were made:

- The proposed footbridge should not be constructed since the existing concrete footbridge is adequate for those users who are capable of coping with the countryside footpath on the south side; and
- Concern from residents in immediate vicinity regarding loss of privacy and visual intrusion, as well as the added noise and disruption that would occur whilst the proposed access is being built.

7.5 General Comments received from respondents with no preference stated

7.5.1 Analysis of the responses, given in Chapter 3, shows that a quarter of the respondents to the consultation either did not state a specific route, or stated 'no preference' to the proposed route options. Some of the key concerns / comments received from these respondents (that have not previously been raised in the report) have been grouped into key themes and are set out below:

- Anything that can divert traffic away from the town centre can only benefit the long term prosperity of the town;
- SWDR and NWDR needed irrespective of completion of development;
- Suggestion of new rail station at Amen Corner to capture commuter demand from the new communities at Amen Corner, Jennett Park and Montague Park;
- Impact of residents on Rances Lane needs to be taken into consideration;
- Has consideration been given to the relationship between the A329(M) and the SWDR?
- For an effective Wokingham Bypass, the Starlane crossing will also need to be closed to address the increasing congestion issues along Easthampstead Road;

-
- Concern that existing road capacity near to Tesco and Molly Millars will not be sufficient to cope with the increased traffic demands arising from the new development and re-routing of traffic around an SWDR;
 - Existing rat running to avoid congestion issues at the Tesco / Molly Millars area requires: signage solution, including 30mph signs in both directions on Molly Millars Lane; reviewing the hatched road markings at the junction with Eastheath Avenue as it considered that this is too narrow; and ensuring that design does not impeded visibility;
 - The improvements to Coppid Beech roundabout and the London Road must be articulated;
 - Concerns about school parking and drop-off points must be covered; and
 - No mention of improved pedestrian safety along Finchampstead Road. Pedestrian and cyclist safety must be fully considered in the proposals.

7.6 Associated Infrastructure and Design

7.6.1 A number of respondents felt strongly that they needed to comment on the appropriate infrastructure and design required for the SWDR. Such comments are noted below:

- 20mph – 30mph speed limit;
- Low noise road surface;
- Use of bunding or other noise abatement measures;
- Must accommodate safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists; and
- Bridges are preferred to underpasses on the grounds of personal safety.

7.7 Summary

7.7.1 This chapter has shown that many respondents have a real interest in ensuring that the proposals create the least amount of localised impact: environmentally, socially and economically. A key concern continues to be where the SWDR will connect into the existing network and the effect that it will have on existing congestion issues, particularly in association with the Easthampstead Road and Starlane crossing.

7.7.2 Much fewer comments were received in relation to the other specific consultation issues of crossing closures and bridge proposals.

8 Summary

8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 This chapter sets out a brief summary of the consultation findings and highlights the key outstanding areas of concern.

8.2 Participation in consultation

- 8.2.1 A series of two-day weekend exhibitions were held during the consultation period in Wokingham Market Place. In addition to the public exhibitions, three static, generally unstaffed, exhibition displays were made available throughout the consultation period at the Council Offices in Wokingham; at Wokingham Library in Denmark Street; and at Wokingham Motors in Molly Millars Lane. An additional public drop-in session was also held at the Bradbury Centre.
- 8.2.2 Questionnaires were not made available for this consultation, however a specific consultation email address was set up and consultees were invited to return their comments to this address by Friday 22 August. Overall, 304 letters and emails were received during the consultation period. This includes two petitions as follows:
- Starmead Drive: 16 unique signatures (Objecting to all proposals)
 - Change.Org: 86 unique signatures (Support for Central +B1 and objecting to northern alignment)

8.3 Key findings

- 8.3.1 Analysis of the comments received has shown the most favoured route alignment is the Central Route (11% supporting the consultation alignment for the Central Route and an additional 70% favouring the Central Route with Option B1), whilst the least favoured option is the Southern Route (6%). Even without the Change.org petition supporting the Central Route with B1, 70% of respondents were in favour of the Central Route. The key reasons for preferring this route were found to be:
- Would act to further reduce noise and air pollution;
 - Furthest from property – less impact on local character;
 - New residents will buy, being fully aware of the road and associated impacts, whereas existing residents north of the rail line bought largely because of the lack of such a road;
 - Addresses impact that the Central Route (excluding Option B1) has on Knoll Farm and Gipsy Lane;
 - Route through development would provide access to services, including buses and cycle routes;
 - Provides greatest opportunity for good and inclusive design, thereby ensuring the safe access of all road users – includes minimising traffic speeds; and
 - Furthest from the rail crossing at its eastern end.

8.3.2 The greatest number of objections received were in relation to the northern route alignment (77% of 144 respondents). The key objection themes noted from the responses are set out below:

- Additional noise and air pollution for local neighbours and those north of the rail line;
- Sited too close the rail crossing – would result in congestion issues;
- Roundabout between Easthampstead Road and the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) would be too close to the Starlane Crossing resulting in safety issues for queueing traffic and localised congestion issues;
- Biggest impact on largest number of existing residents;
- Little opportunity to integrate with new development;
- Traffic speeds could be faster due to direct nature of the road;
- Proximity to existing property with associated noise pollution;
- Proximity to existing property and loss of local identity and character;
- Too prone to flooding;
- Does not protect the interests of existing residents;
- Brings traffic pollution closer to the town centre; and
- Far too close to existing housing.

8.3.3 In addition to the above, further comments received from respondents highlighted a number of key themes. These are set out below:

- Some respondents strongly felt that the SWDR should be a bypass / relief road that does not pass directly through development, but provides a free flowing solution to removing traffic from the town centre;
- Conversely, some respondents understand the need for a distributor road that caters safely for all road users;
- Respondents felt that safe pedestrian and cycle facilities and access to such facilities form an important component of the proposals, including ensuring that the provision links in with the rest of the local network and that suitable infrastructure is provided to support this in the town centre (such as cycle parking). This includes maintaining and improving access to Ludgrove and providing segregated cycle facilities;
- Design and materials need to be used to minimise noise and air pollution caused;
- Existing residents need to be listened to. New residents can make an informed choice about living next to a road;
- Northern and central alignment proposals include plans for a junction too close to the Starlane rail crossing on Easthampstead Road, with concerns over the impact that this will have on existing congestion and safety issues in this area. What is the specific design for this junction?;
- Concerns regarding the modelling as it does not incorporate the NWDR or address the Easthampstead Road / Starlane crossing congestion;
- Concern regarding the Tesco / Molly Millars area on the grounds of flooding and existing congestion. How will current capacity cope with the future demand, particularly with regards to HGVs? What mitigation measures are proposed?; and
- Preference for bridges rather than underpasses for reasons of personal security.

Appendices

Appendix A Consultation Leaflet

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