

TITLE	South Wokingham Distributor Road
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 27 November 2014
WARD	Wokingham Without
DIRECTOR	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment
LEAD MEMBER	John Kaiser, Executive Member for Planning and Highways

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Provides a spine road to access the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location

Ensures appropriate mitigation of traffic impacts from the development of South Wokingham Strategic Development Location

Allows the Strategic Development Location to be developed as envisaged by the Core Strategy

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive approves the allocation of funds to progress with the Central Route and associated works for the South Wokingham Distributor Road including investigation of two minor route deviations: (a) south of Knoll Farm; and (b) west of Easthampstead Road.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

WBC has completed public consultation for a South Wokingham Distributor Road. The public preference is for the Central Route, supported by 81% of consultation responses.

The total scheme package is as follows:

- A spine road through the centre of the SDL. The route connects to the Montague Park section of the road immediately north of the Waterloo railway line. A new bridge would then carry the road over the railway to a new junction with Waterloo Road. The distributor road would continue to a new junction at Easthampstead Road and on to Finchampstead Road, connecting at the existing Tesco roundabout.
- The route refinement will consider a diversion of the consultation route south of Knoll Farm (Option B1) and to route across the existing flood attenuation pond west of Easthampstead Road (see Figure 1);
- A new railway bridge over the Waterloo Line (mentioned above);
- Closure of Waterloo Road level crossing;
- An improvement to Peacock Lane towards Jennetts Park and Bracknell;
- Replacement and widening of the Guildford Line railway bridge at Finchampstead Road;
- Realignment of Finchampstead Road between Molly Millars Lane and the Tesco roundabouts;

- An enlarged roundabout at Molly Millars Lane; and
- Investigation of pedestrian and cyclist crossings of the Waterloo Line to connect the SDL and Wokingham town centre.

The project would require the relocation of Wokingham Motors as its current site is required for the new junction of Molly Millars Lane and Finchampstead Road, and to provide a temporary works compound for the bridge works.

Background

Policy CP21 of the Council's Core Strategy identified a requirement to improve transport capacity along the A321 and A329 including the provision of road between Coppid Beech roundabout and Finchampstead Road to appropriately mitigate and enable the development of the South Wokingham SDL, as envisaged by the Core Strategy.

The Council indicated that a distributor road would provide the most effective scheme to provide access to the SDL and to mitigate the traffic impacts arising from the development.

In 2013 WSP was appointed by the Council to undertake a study to identify the most appropriate mitigation scheme. The study investigated 16 route alignments:

- A route to the north, close to the Waterloo railway line;
- A route to the south passing close to Holme Grange School and Ludgrove School; and
- A central alignment, generally approximating to the route indicated in the South Wokingham Supplementary Planning Document.

The Technical Study reported in March 2014, indicating the traffic impacts, environment and property impacts, land requirements, engineering design and deliverability for each of the northern, central and southern alignments. In total, 16 option tests were undertaken to determine traffic effects of the general alignments and those of associated works to complement the distributor road scheme.

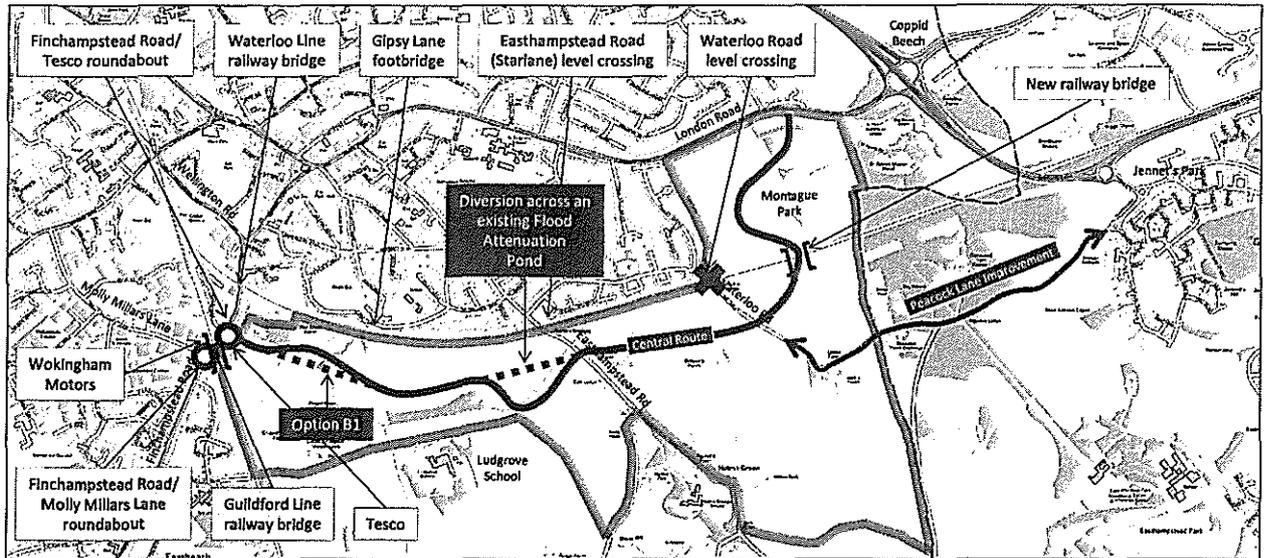
Public Consultation

Public consultation was completed between 23 June and 22 August 2014. Around 300 responses were submitted to the Council. A report of consultation responses is available to the Executive for the purposes of this meeting. The report will be placed in the public domain in December 2014.

Central Route

In total, 81% of respondents supported the **Central Route** (see Figure 1). Of these, 86% specifically called for the alignment detailed in the Technical Report as Option B1, a minor diversion of the consultation route south of Knoll Farm. Some respondents also queried the need for the road to avoid a flood attenuation pond, east of Easthampstead Road, shown as a significant 'kink' on the consultation drawings. These are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Central Route (the consultation alignment and suggested diversions)



The main factors mentioned by respondents in support of the Central Route are:

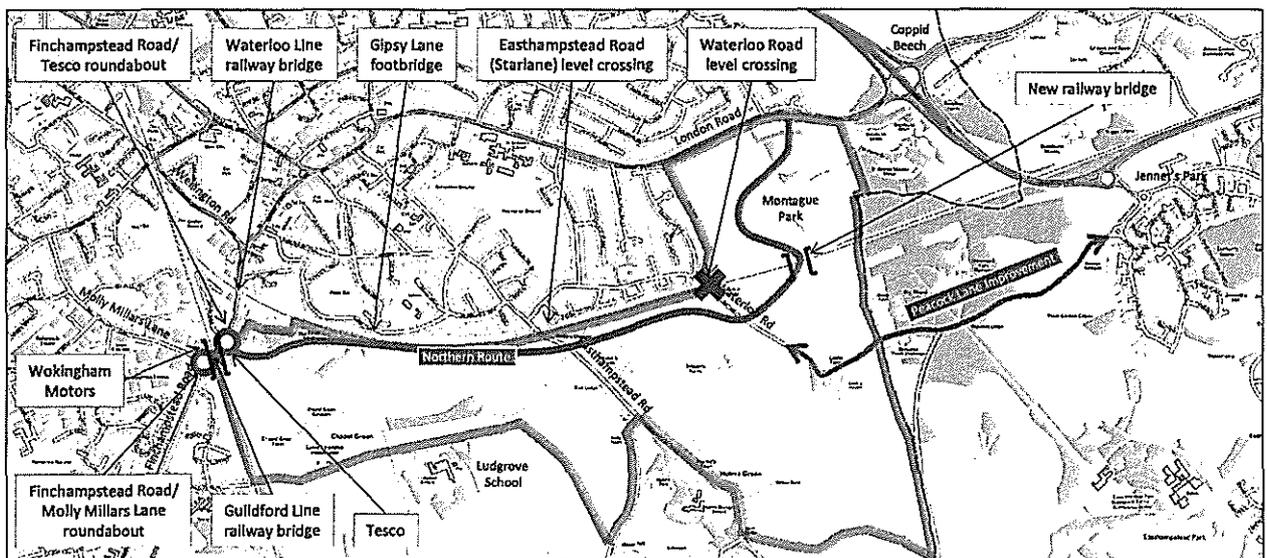
- Provides the greatest opportunity for good and inclusive design;
- Provides convenient access to services, including buses and cycle routes;
- Optimises land available for housing;
- Passes through the land area least prone to flooding;
- Has the least environmental impact.

The main reason stated to support the preference for Option B1 is that it would further reduce noise and air pollution on existing properties, and have less impact on character;

Northern Route

The **Northern Route**, shown in Figure 2, gained the support of 12% of respondents.

Figure 2 Northern Route



Reasons stated by respondents in support of the Northern Route included:

- It is close to the railway line which itself is an existing source of noise pollution;
- Because the railway line is the only thing located north of the road, it reduces the need for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the road hence making it the safest option;
- It uses land of least value to the surrounding community;
- It has the least impact on historic buildings and property.

Those against this option stated:

- It would cause noise and air pollution for those living to the north of the railway line, having the greatest impact on existing residents;
- It is too close to existing residents;
- There is little opportunity to link the road to the development.

There are also highway and traffic design issues at the junction of the proposed road and Easthampstead Road given its close proximity to the level crossing.

Southern Route

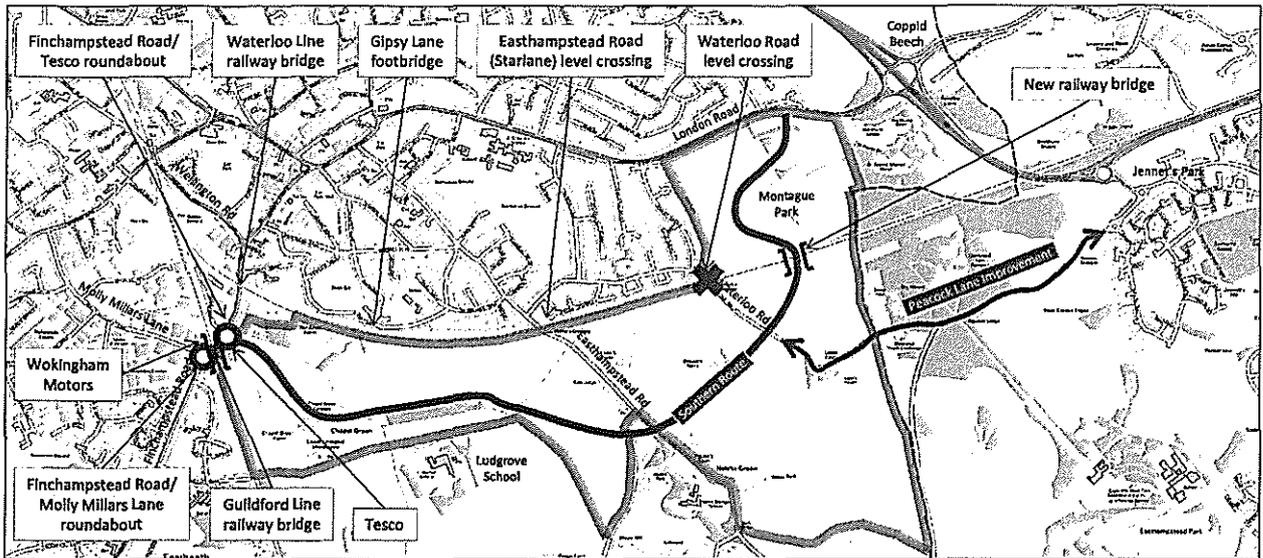
The **Southern Route** was the preference of 6% of respondents and is shown in Figure 3. Stated supporting reasons in favour of the Southern Route are as follows:

- It avoids issues arising at Easthampstead Road from proximity to the Starlane level crossing;
- It minimises noise and air pollution to existing residents of Wokingham;
- It would be away from the housing areas, thus providing a safer and quieter environment.

Reasons for opposing the Southern Route are:

- It would directly affect the Holme Grange School, requiring the loss of its northern playing field;
- It would indirectly affect other listed buildings;
- It would cause the loss of value of existing property;
- It passes through a significant section of flood plain;

Figure 3 Southern Route



Current Works in Progress

Following the consultation, the council has instructed WSP to:

- To undertake further investigations related Finchampstead Road works at the Guildford Line railway bridge to maximise the headroom clearance between the road surface and the reconstructed railway bridge;
- To review and update flood plain and river modelling of the Emmbrook to establish the potential changes in hydrology due to the removal of major culverts and reinstatement of the river as part of the CF Taylor (Cala Homes) development;
- To investigate the feasibility for pedestrian and cycle underpasses beneath the Waterloo Line having previously examined and noted the adverse impacts on adjacent properties from improved footbridges over the railway; and
- Indicate the traffic impacts from the temporary closure of Finchampstead Road between Molly Millars Lane and the Tesco roundabout to enable bridge and road works

This work is due to report later in the year.

SWDR Central Route Scheme Refinement

Stage 1B is an interim stage to refine the Central Route to include and confirm the viability of minor diversions for Option B1 and at the flood attenuation pond. Stage 1B can be summarised as:

- **Environment:**
 - Scoping for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA);
 - Detailed Phase 1 habitat ecology work
 - An outline Flood Risk Assessment;
 - Agriculture and soil assessment;
 - Landscape and visual impact assessment with outline mitigation measures for these items;
- **Engineering:**
 - Investigation of alignment refinements in line with consultation responses;
 - Further engineering and earthworks design of the Central Route including

- Option B1 and at the existing flood attenuation pond;
 - Preliminary junction arrangements, especially south of the Easthampstead Road (Starlane) level crossing, the Finchampstead Road improvement and Tesco access road;
 - Refinement of railway bridge works at Finchampstead Road and over the Waterloo Line including liaison with Network Rail;
 - Flood mitigation investigation;
 - Topographical survey;
 - Earthworks design clarification and refinement;
 - Drainage strategy;
 - Identification of utilities and diversions;
 - Risk workshop;
 - Geotechnical survey; and
 - Update scheme construction cost estimate;
- **Traffic modelling** to refine junction layouts, and to indicate the traffic impacts arising from the temporary closure of Finchampstead Road to enable bridge replacement works;
 - **Meetings** with developers and landowners;
 - Project management, meetings and consultation with members and officers, and overall reporting.

The Council will return to Executive to gain their approval for the refined scheme.

Stage 2 will take the project to a level of detail to support a planning application. It is provisionally estimated that Stage 2 will take ten to twelve months to complete, subject to extent and duration of ecology surveys

Stage 3 involves the preparation of Detailed Design drawings and tender documents for construction. This would take around 18 months to complete.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

Funding for Stage 2 has already been allocated. Stage 1B would require additional funding detailed as follows:

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£150,000	£150,000	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	tbc	tbc	tbc
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	tbc	tbc	tbc

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Funding for this project will be provided from a grant secured from the Housing and Communities agency.

Cross-Council Implications

The Council's intention is that the scheme will be partially developer-funded, and will depend on the Council obtaining the full build cost of the scheme through relevant S106 agreements and (once operational) CIL and that enough developments come forward (or come forward early enough) to fund the scheme. There is therefore the risk that the Council will be required to fund (or forward fund) a proportion of the scheme. There will also be financial and timescale implications for the Council should a CPO inquiry be ordered by the Secretary of State during Stage 2. Accordingly, unless the Council is able to acquire funding through some alternative streams, there is a possibility that the Council will need to redirect funding for other infrastructure into this scheme, should the need arise.

List of Background Papers

South Wokingham Distributor Road Consultation Report (Draft)

Contact Matt Davey	Service Highways and Transport
Telephone No 0118 908 8304	Email matt.davey@wokingham.gov.uk
Date 18 November 2014	Version No. 03