

South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway

Frequently asked questions (FAQ's)

Why do we need the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR)?

We are committed to the development of 2,500 new homes in south Wokingham. The new South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR), when fully built, will link London Road and Finchampstead Road, providing access to the new development from both main roads. It will also minimise the impact of traffic from the new development on the surrounding residential roads in south Wokingham. In addition, it will provide traffic relief to the town centre, in particular from lorries travelling between Coppid Beech and the Molly Millars area.

Phase 1 of the SWDR, called William Heelas Way, was built as part of the Montague Park housing development. The Eastern Gateway is the second phase. It will provide a link between Montague Park and Waterloo Road, via a new bridge over the railway. Subsequent phases will connect Waterloo Road to Finchampstead Road.

What will the speed of the road be?

30mph

Will it be lit?

The road will be lit, as will the Waterloo Road approach to the junction with Eastern Gateway.

Why a roundabout at Waterloo Road?

We considered alternative forms of priority junctions (such as a crossroads and a T-junction) but these were not able to deal with the anticipated traffic capacity. The layout of the junction was also influenced by the need to retain a significant 'veteran' tree, and the proximity of a nearby high voltage pylon. A roundabout junction is the most effective solution to dealing with these constraints and future traffic movements.

Why close the Waterloo Road level crossing?

The Waterloo Road level crossing has been identified by Network Rail as in need of a major level crossing upgrade. There have been a number of fatalities at the crossing and there have also been a high number of incidents where vehicles and pedestrians have misused the crossing.

The Eastern Gateway will mean the level crossing can be closed because it will create a new connection between London Road (via William Heelas Way) and Waterloo Road.

What alternatives were looked at instead of closing the Waterloo Road level crossing?

A pedestrian bridge and underpass were considered near the existing level crossing. However, the feasibility assessment found that both options would have a significantly negative visual impact on nearby properties. Both options would also have needed land purchased to accommodate the structures. An alternative pedestrian and cycle route will be provided via Clay Lane and the new SWDR – Eastern Gateway, with shared surfaces adjacent to the new road.

When will the level crossing be closed?

Once the new rail bridge and the Eastern Gateway road are open.

What will the impact be on residents along Priest Ave and Rances Lane when the level crossing is closed?

We expect residents will experience a reduction in traffic volumes along these roads. However, it will create slightly longer journey times for residents from these roads who currently use the level crossing, because they will need to use the Easthampstead Road level crossing or London Road / William Heelas Way to make their journey south of the railway.

What pedestrian, cyclist and equestrians facilities are being provided as part of the scheme?

There will be a shared cycle / pedestrian way along the Eastern Gateway road linking to Montague Park, on both sides of the new road. A shared cycle / pedestrian way will also be included in the subsequent sections of the SWDR.

Will there be any increase to risk of local flooding?

The Eastern Gateway road is mainly located outside of the Environment Agency's designated flood plain. It is unlikely therefore that the risk of local flooding will increase. This is because the design incorporates flood and drainage mitigation. The road has been designed not to flood and the 1:100 flood event also includes allowances for climate change during the life of the road

Who will be informed once the planning application has been submitted and registered?

The local planning authority will have a four-week period of formal consultation. Notification letters will be sent to residents living in the vicinity of the proposed scheme giving details on how to send in comments on the application. We will also post details on how to do this on the news section of the Council website and on our social media platforms. All feedback will be passed directly to the local planning authority, which is responsible for assessing the application.

How will the SWDR assessment consider other developments in the area?

Traffic – We have a strategic transport model (WSTM3) which has been updated to take account of developments across the Borough (from our 4 Strategic Development Locations, Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration, as well as large local development sites not in the Core Strategy such as Keepatch Beech) up to 2026. In addition, developments in neighbouring local authorities (especially Bracknell, West Berkshire and Reading) as well as a general uplift in traffic flows in the region are included in the model. The potential traffic generated by all these developments, and the trips they make, is included in the assessment.

Environmental – The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 2011 require the likely significant cumulative environmental effects of a development to be considered. Accordingly, our application will consider the potential for cumulative or in-combination effects – this will be set out by topic area within the Environmental Statement.

What are we doing about mitigating the impact of any road traffic noise?

As part of the planning application, a noise (and vibration) assessment is being carried out. The assessment will determine the degree of any impacts as per national design standards, which will be mitigated as far as practicable. These will be assessed as part of the planning application process.

It is likely that a 'low-noise' road surface will be used and further mitigation provided if deemed necessary.

How will the road affect air quality?

There will be some localised impact on the site during construction, and once the road is opened. During construction, there will be some dust created by on-site activities and increases in exhaust emissions from construction traffic and machinery. The contractor will produce a Construction Environmental Management Plan which will include details of how they will manage their activities to mitigate these effects so they are negligible.

The changes in traffic patterns and the closure of the level crossing all influence the potential changes in air quality, and full details will be submitted in the air quality chapter of the Environmental Statement submitted with the planning application.

What landscape mitigation is going to be provided?

Hedgerow planting and small woodland copse planting will be provided, where appropriate. This will provide visual screening from properties and will help to integrate the proposed scheme with the character of the surrounding landscape. Hedgerows will contain native trees to mimic the nearby roads and lanes, (such as Waterloo Road and Easthampstead Road), which are a characteristic feature of the area. New hedgerow plantings and the infill of existing hedgerows will also help abate declining hedgerows in the surrounding area and promote local ecology.