

Agenda Item 59.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
182892	18/01/2019	Earley	Bulmershe and Whitegates;

Applicant	Reading Borough Council Highways and Transport Department
Site Address	Land between Thames Valley Business Park and Napier Road Reading, South of the River Thames and north of the Great Western Main Line Railway.
Proposal	Full application for the construction of a segregated fast-track public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge and viaduct, comprising concrete bridge structure supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced soil embankment, together with new footway links and existing footway alterations, junction improvements and landscaping.
Type	Full
PS Category	006
Officer	Katie Herrington
Reason for determination by committee	Major application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 12 December 2018
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

<p>SUMMARY</p> <p>This is a resubmission for the proposed erection of a new public transport link for use by buses, cyclists and pedestrians between the A3290 (Wokingham) and Napier Road (Reading) known as the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit. As a whole the proposal is a fast track/ express bus lane consisting of a bridge and viaduct, and reinforced soil embankment, junction improvements within Reading, new footpath links and landscaping. The proposal crosses between two boroughs and whilst each LPA must consider the scheme in principle as a whole, only that element falling within the relevant borough should be considered by Wokingham.</p> <p>Within Wokingham the scheme would begin at the A3290 (the Thames Valley Park and Ride Site) then becomes a viaduct that would increase in height forming a bridge across the Kennet Mouth into Reading. The road deck would consist of a bus lane and separate cycle and pedestrian lane. The width of the deck would narrow across the Kennet Mouth and again at the narrowest point of the river. Three new temporary moorings and riverside margin planting are also proposed at the narrowest point. The proposal includes street furniture and landscaping.</p> <p>The proposal forms part of a wider strategic transport infrastructure project between Wokingham and Reading Borough Councils to manage associated traffic and travel demands as a result of projected residential expansion and economic development. The site has been allocated for a high quality express bus service or mass rapid transit via policy CP10 of the Core Strategy.</p> <p>This is a resubmission of planning application 172048 which was refused by Wokingham Borough council on 30th May 2018 for the reason that:</p>

The proposed MRT link, including bridge structure, due to its height and scale and its prominent and sensitive location, particularly its proximity to the River Thames and River Kennet, would be harmful to the landscape character of the area including its riparian appearance. This would be contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy.

The scheme was; however, granted permission by Reading Borough Council.

Following this refusal of this application the submission has been revised to enhance the evidence base and amend the scheme in light of a Public Consultation exercise.

The proposal, through the erection of a fast track/ express segregated bus and cycle/path in this location consisting of a viaduct and bridge would result in an impact to the localised character of this part of the Thames Valley, and would have an impact upon landscape character of the valued landscape. However, in allocating the site for such purpose (for a high quality express bus network or mass rapid transit), given the necessary nature of such schemes, an impact upon character would have been recognised and accepted via the adoption of the Core Strategy. Such impact is to be mitigated through the design detail of the proposal.

The project has undergone extensive evaluation and review including; an economic business case, and detailed assessments looking at various options with respect to the location and type of corridor that is required and their impacts. As part of the planning application process, the proposals have also been extensively revised in order to mitigate the impacts that would result from it. This includes consideration of alternative schemes, scrutiny by a Design Review Panel, extensive revisions as a result of consultee comments, and discussion with WBC officers as part of the 2017 submission, and revisions as a result of WBC's refusal of the proposal. Whilst the proposal will still result in impacts to that part of the Riverside and to the valued landscape, the options available for this corridor are limited and the resulting proposal is considered to be the most deliverable and the one which will mitigate/ softens its impact as much as it reasonably can in order to meet the site's allocation for this purpose. The resulting changes to the proposal within Wokingham are detailed below;

- Two-column support of the viaduct has been revised to a single flared column to reduce bulk and improve visual appearance.
- Lighting columns along the viaduct replaced with low-level parapet lighting to avoid light spill.
- Deck narrowed by one metre where it is closest to the Thames Path/ River (between pier 6 and 7) so that it would have a deck width of 12.4m in total.
- It should be noted that the deck narrows where the bridge crosses the Kennet Mouth to 10.2m.
- Provision of 3 x short stay mooring platforms on the River Thames and the creation of a new margin shelf with river bank planting to provide biodiversity enhancement and to provide landscape and riverside enhancements.
- Ecological and landscape benefits through provision of wetland/marsh under viaduct
- Retention of significant and valued Willow tree to East Kennet Mouth
- Enhanced justification of the benefits, including submission of additional and updated evidence base.
- Relocation of mosaic and provision of benches and information boards

- Provision of planting (Ivy) to hang over the road deck to help soften visual impact of the structure.

This submission includes a more up to date evidence base and to provide more evidence with regard to the benefits of the proposal. This includes updated traffic data, and greater information with regards to the prospective bus routes proposed and updated journey time savings. The benefits include projected bus journey savings of 6-13 minutes in 2021, and improved access to the main line railway and associated routes (including the Elizabeth Line) and Reading Town centre and as result of modal shift will mitigate the projected increase in traffic journeys along the A4.

Whilst the proposal does not fully comply with all of the development plan policies, it is the decision maker's role to weigh the benefits of the proposal against its impacts in the planning balance in assessing whether the proposal constitutes sustainable development.

It is acknowledged that the proposal would result in environmental impacts as a result of the localised effects to the character of that part of the river and that it would have an impact upon the landscape character of that valued landscape. However, the proposal would have other environmental and significant social and economic benefits which has been demonstrated as part of the proposed submission. The site has been both allocated spatially and functionally in the Core Strategy for the provision of a high quality express bus network or mass rapid transit in order to deliver the objectives of the Local Transport network – managing the increased demand upon transport infrastructure within the borough. In terms of journey times, the submitted evidence projects that the proposal would improve bus journey reliability and result in journey savings of between 6 – 13 minutes during peak hours, and mitigate the projected increase in vehicular traffic along the A4/London Road. This would encourage travel by sustainable transport modes, not only helping to reduce congestion and improve air quality but also encourage more walking / cycling journeys to / from work which has been proven to have significant health benefits to residents. It is considered that the proposal is the only scheme which is most reasonably deliverable and has mitigated its impact upon character as far as it reasonably could. In terms of economic benefits, the proposal would assist in the economic development of both boroughs by providing more reliable mode of transport, mitigating the current constraint on congestion that is limiting economic growth in the area. This not only strengthens the existing economy but is shown to encourage economic growth in areas.

In assessing the scheme, officers consider that whilst the proposal would result in environmental impacts locally, these impacts need to be balanced against the positive aspects of the scheme. It is noted that the application site has been allocated for such purpose in the Council's adopted Core Strategy, The scheme has been shown to have other significant environmental and social and economic benefits which have been considered and are supported by the sites adoption in the Core Strategy. This includes mitigating the impact of population growth upon the wider transport network (that integral to the Core strategy) via enhancing public transport reliability and journey times for buses, and through modal shift, mitigate the projected growth of traffic movements along the A4/London Road in 2021. This includes benefits for cyclists and walkers by providing a safe, accessible, and more direct connection from the station to the business park. The proposal has been demonstrated to be the most deliverable option and the impacts have been mitigated as far as reasonably possible. The proposal would also have identified economic benefits to both Reading and the wider area through mitigating the traffic and

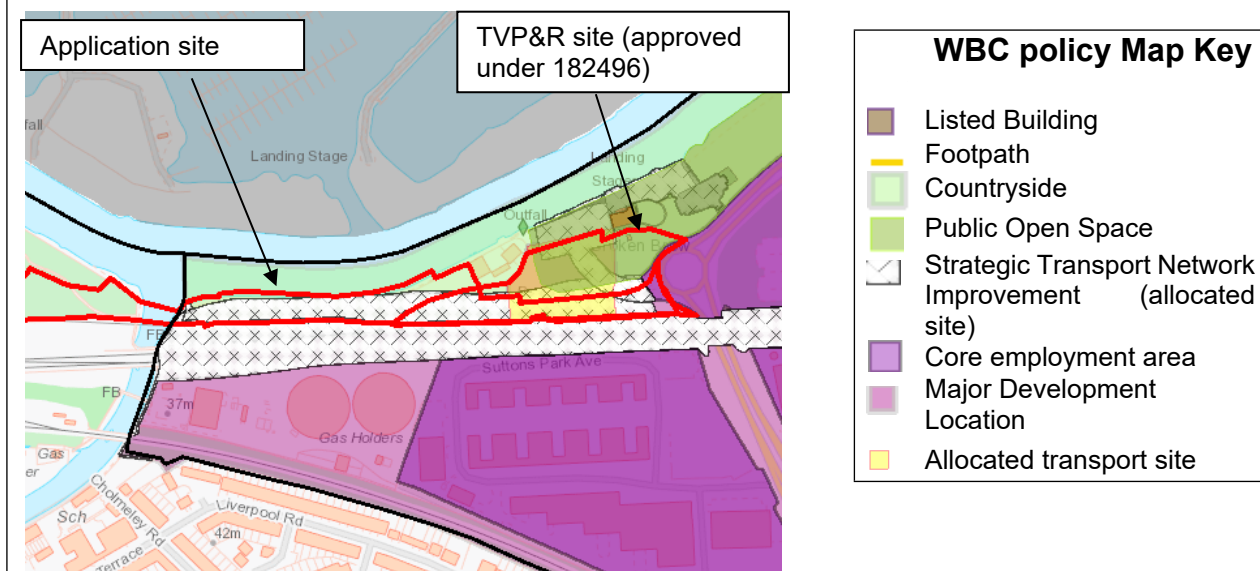
congestion that is causing delays for residents of Wokingham Borough and surrounding areas travelling into central Reading, thereby improving bus journey time. As such, on balance, whilst the proposal would result in some environmental impacts, this would be mitigated to an extent by the amended scheme and planning conditions, and the other environmental benefits, and the economic and social / health benefits of the proposal would outweigh its impact. Therefore the proposal would constitute a sustainable form of development and is recommended for approval.

PLANNING STATUS

- Strategic Transport Network Improvements – Site Allocation
- Safety Hazard Area – Major Accident Hazard Pipeline
- Safety Hazard Area – Hazardous Substance Consent
- Flood Zone 2 and 3
- Countryside
- Groundwater Consultation Zone 3
- Natural England SSSI Impact Risk Zone
- Potentially Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
- Landscape Character Assessment – Thames River Valley with Open Water
- Replacement Minerals Local Plan
- Overhead Electricity Cables
- Areas with the strongest presumption against allow sharp sand and gravel extraction

Adjacent to the site are;

- Public Open Space – Thames Valley Park
- Strategic Transport Network Improvements – Safeguarding Direction for Potential Crossrail Project Extension



RECOMMENDATION

In consideration of the Environmental Statement which has been received under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, that the committee authorise the **GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to;

1. subject to the planning obligations and planning conditions set out below and subject further to the expiry of the notification requirements pursuant to Article 15 and Schedule 3 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 on 2 January 2019 PROVIDED THAT during the notification period no material planning consideration is raised which was not considered in this report or otherwise raised in considering this report;
2. If prior to the expiry of the said notification period a material planning consideration is raised that was not in this report or raised in consideration of this report no resolution shall be made until the matter is remitted back to the next available planning committee for further consideration:

A. Prior completion of a legal agreement pursuant to s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) with the following provisional Heads of Terms:

- Use of the structure/route as a segregated Mass Rapid Transit/ fast track/ express bus link for public transport, pedestrian and cycle route only, for use only by permitted authorised vehicles (buses, minibuses, public coaches and in emergencies only emergency vehicles).
- Construction of the structure to an adoptable standard
- Agreement regarding maintenance and repair costs
- Completion of compensatory flood storage works and repair of riverbank near to the Kennet Mouth within Wokingham Borough and Reading Borough as appropriate, no later than the substantial completion of the development;
- Provision of community/art facilities (relocation of mosaic model/sculpture and provision of strategy for benches and storeyboards) prior to first use. Submission of strategy no later than commencement of development;
- Developer to undertake or otherwise fund a construction phase Employment and Skills Plan (ESP)
- Mooring controls for 3x short-stay visitor mooring platforms;
- Phasing controls: no first use of proposed route until all environmental mitigation works have been completed to the LPA's satisfaction;
- Post occupation monitoring/management requirements (Ecology management, marginal shelf, wetland, remedial work to the Thames path as a result of access to the Marginal strip as required);
- Agree a strategy for the translocation of reptiles, if required.
- The planning obligations set out above satisfy the statutory tests set out below:

- (a) necessary to make the Development acceptable in planning terms,
 - (b) directly related to the Development, and
 - (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the Development
- and are therefore capable of constituting reasons for granting planning permission in accordance with Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

B. Conditions and informatives:

1. Timescale

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Approved details

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered;

- 28791/2009/CIV/;
 - 002 rev C – site location plan
 - 003 rev D – proposed site block plan
 - 005 rev D – General arrangement plan
 - 009 rev D – Proposed utilities diversions
 - 013 – proposed cross sections
 - 017 rev C – proposed carriageway contours
 - 018 rev C – proposed surface water drainage
 - 020 rev C – proposed site context
- 28791/4001/013 rev P02 – Proposed short stay moorings and marginal planting shelf
- 28791/2003/;
 - SK321 rev P03 bridge and viaduct single column option east approach.
 - SK322 rev P02 bridge and viaduct single column option west approach
 - SK323 rev P02 Bridge and viaduct single column option east approach
 - SK310 rev P02 bridge and viaduct single column option general arrangement.
 - SK324 rev P02 bridge and viaduct single column option – cross section comparison close to riverside.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details *unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority..*

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. External materials

Before the development hereby permitted is commenced, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the viaduct/bridge shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.
Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

4. *Project Community Liaison Group*

No development shall take place until a scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which specifies the provisions and details to be made to establish a Project Community Liaison Group for the duration of the construction works. The scheme shall include details of dates of meetings and a name and telephone number for residents to contact should any issues arise during the construction period. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: In order to minimise disturbance to residents during construction works.

5. *Construction Environmental Management Plan and Method Statement*

No development shall take place until a method statement/construction environmental management plan that is in accordance with the approach outlined in the Planning/Environmental Statement, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This shall deal with the treatment of any environmentally sensitive areas, their aftercare and maintenance as well as a plan detailing the works to be carried out showing how the environment will be protected during the works. Such a scheme shall include details of and provide for the following:

1. The measures and methods to be used during the development in order to minimise environmental impact of the works (considering both potential disturbance and pollution); including measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction, wheel washing facilities, and establishment of baseline levels for noise, vibration and dust and details of any monitoring protocols that may be necessary during the works,
2. Information on the persons/bodies responsible for particular activities associated with the method statement that demonstrate they are qualified for the activity they are undertaking.
3. The ecological enhancements as mitigation for the loss of habitat resulting from the development;
4. A map or plan showing habitat areas to be specifically protected (identified in the ecological report) during the works, including an agreed buffer zone to the River Thames and River Kennet;
5. Any necessary mitigation for protected species;
6. Construction methods;
 - a. The timing of the works;
 - b. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors,
 - c. loading and unloading of plant and materials including turning areas,
 - d. details of proposed routes for heavy goods vehicles travelling to and from the site,
 - e. details of works that involve interference with the public highway (as well as public rights of way) including temporary carriageway/footpath closures, realignment and diversions,
7. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development,
8. the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate,
9. scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.

The works shall be carried out during construction and in accordance with the approved method statement and remain in place until construction ends.

Reason: To ensure the protection of wildlife and supporting habitat and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site in line with national planning policy, and in the interests of highway safety & convenience and neighbour amenities. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

6. *Highway Construction Details*

Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of roads, structures, cycle route and footways, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage, lighting and details of control measures to ensure bus only use (camera or physical barrier) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The roads and footways shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details to road base level before the development is occupied and the final wearing course will be provided within 3 months of occupation, *unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: To ensure that roads and footpaths are constructed to a standard that would be suitable for adoption as publicly maintainable highway, in the interests of providing a functional, accessible and safe development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

7. *Drainage Details*

No development shall take place until full details of the drainage system for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include:

- a. Results of intrusive ground investigation demonstrating seasonal high groundwater levels for the site and infiltration rates in accordance with BRE365.
- b. Demonstration that the base of SuDS features are at least 1m above seasonal groundwater level
- c. Full calculations demonstrating that attenuation features can cope with runoff for the 1 in 100 year flood event with a 70% allowance for climate change and runoff controlled at 5l/s in accordance with the FRA.
- d. Calculations demonstrating that there will be no flooding of pipes for events up to and including the 1 in 100 year flood event with a 70% allowance for climate change.
- e. A drainage strategy plan for the proposed development, including pipe details with invert levels as well as oil interceptor locations.
- f. A maintenance management plan for the oil interceptors and SuDS features throughout the lifetime of the development, as well as who will be responsible for the maintenance.

Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10

8. *Compensatory storage mitigation*

Prior to commencement of development, details to final alignment of the road and ground level changes for compensatory flood storage mitigation to be provided in line with the principles demonstrated in the flood risk assessment and addendum

reports. In particular, any works affecting the flood plain and flood plain storage will need to be taken into account in an appropriate assessment.

Reason: To prevent flooding elsewhere by ensuring that compensatory storage of flood water is provided in accordance with the provisions of the National Planning policy Framework (NPPF).

9. Groundwater Protection

No development approved by this planning permission shall commence until a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority.

This strategy will include the following components:

- i) A preliminary risk assessment which has identified:
 - a. all previous uses;
 - b. potential contaminants associated with those uses;
 - c. a conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptors; and
 - d. potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site.
- ii) A site investigation scheme, based on (i) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site.
- iii) The results of the site investigation and the detailed risk assessment referred to in (ii) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.
- iv) A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (iii) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

Reason: A large part of this site is underlain with Alluvium over Kempton Park Gravel Formation (both Secondary A Aquifers) over the Newhaven and Seaford Chalk Formations (Principal Aquifer - under the whole site). Groundwater from these aquifers provides base flow for the River Thames located on the boundary of the site. The EA need to protect these aquifers and the river from any contamination (which may be in the soils as a result of previously contaminative uses of the site or from pollutants within the historic landfill) and which could be disturbed and hence mobilised during construction.

10. Verification Report

Prior to any part of the permitted development being brought into use a verification report demonstrating the completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to, and approved in writing, by the local planning authority. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met.

Reason: A large part of this site is underlain with Alluvium over Kempton Park Gravel Formation (both Secondary A Aquifers) over the Newhaven and Seaford Chalk Formations (Principal Aquifer - under the whole site). Groundwater from these aquifers provides base flow for the River Thames located on the boundary of the site. The EA need to protect these aquifers and the river from any potential contamination (which may be in the soils as a result of previously contaminative

uses of the site or from pollutants within the historic landfill) and which could be disturbed and hence mobilised during construction.

11. Piling

Piling using penetrative methods shall not be carried out other than with the written consent of the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: A large part of this site is underlain with Alluvium over Kempton Park Gravel Formation (both Secondary A Aquifers) over the Newhaven and Seaford Chalk Formations (Principal Aquifer - under the whole site). The EA need to protect these aquifers from any potential contamination (which may be in the soils as a result of previously contaminative uses of the site e.g. depot/ tanks or from pollutants within the historic landfill) and which could be mobilised by the use of piling. The EA therefore need to see the results of site investigations of the identified potentially contaminative parts of this site before we can comment on any proposed foundation design.

12. Surface Water Drainage

No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground at land used for the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Scheme is permitted other than with the written consent of the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: A large part of this site is underlain with Alluvium over Kempton Park Gravel Formation (both Secondary A Aquifers) over the Newhaven and Seaford Chalk Formations (Principal Aquifer - under the whole site). The EA need to protect these aquifers from any potential contamination (which may be in the soils as a result of previously contaminative uses of the site or from pollutants within the historic landfill) and which could be mobilised by the use of soakaways. The EA need to see the results of site investigations of the identified potentially contaminative parts of this site.

13. Landscape and ecological management plan

No development shall take place until a landscape and ecological management plan, including long- term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscaped areas (except privately owned domestic gardens), shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved *unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority..* The scheme shall include the following elements:

- i) detailed designs for the proposed marginal shelf/mooring areas on the River Thames details of the extent and type of new planting (NB all planting to be locally native species of UK genetic provenance). This shall be based on the principles contained within the Landscape and Ecology Strategy Rev F (April 2018)
- ii) details of all maintenance regimes for all areas proposed to be created, enhanced and managed, both on site and in agreed off-site areas
- iii) details of any new habitat created on site
- iv) details of treatment of site boundaries and/or buffers around water bodies
- v) details of management responsibilities
- vi) details of funding to ensure on-going maintenance in perpetuity

- vii) details of habitat establishment monitoring and the means by which alternative measures will be taken to provide equivalent habitat enhancement within the borough should establishment fail.

Reason: To ensure the protection of wildlife and supporting habitat and secure opportunities for the enhancement of the nature conservation value of the site in line with national planning policy.

14. Reptile Mitigation Strategy

Prior to commencement of the development a detailed reptile mitigation strategy, to demonstrate that the favourable conservation status of species of principal importance will be maintained within Wokingham Borough, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The measures contained within the reptile mitigation strategy, including any translocation process, shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plans *unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: Details are required prior to development because insufficient detail was submitted with the application, and to secure appropriate mitigation for protected species and a strategy to maintain biodiversity, as appropriate under Core Strategy CP7.

15. External Lighting Strategy

Prior to commencement of the development details of an external lighting strategy to be used in the development hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall include the location, height, baffling to reduce light spillage, levels of illumination and a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" to include spectrum levels. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.

Reason: Details are required prior to development because insufficient detail was submitted with the application, and to secure appropriate mitigation for protected species and a strategy to maintain biodiversity, as appropriate under Core Strategy CP7.

16. Archaeology Scheme of Investigation

No development shall take place within the application area until the applicant, their agents or successors in title have secured and implemented a programme of archaeological field evaluation in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The results of the evaluation will inform the preparation of a subsequent mitigation strategy which will be submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development. The mitigation strategy will provide for:

- i) A programme of site investigation and recording, or alternative appropriate mitigation, within the area of archaeological interest. Development will not commence within the area of archaeological interest until the site investigation has been satisfactorily completed.
- ii) A programme of post investigation assessment, analysis, publication, dissemination and archiving. This part of the condition shall not be discharged until these elements of the programme have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI or unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that any archaeological remains within the site are adequately investigated and recorded or preserved in situ in the interest of protecting the archaeological heritage of the borough. Relevant Policy: MDD Policy TB25.

17. Landscaping

Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, contours, means of enclosure, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, lighting). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

18. Protection of trees

- a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until a scheme which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority (the Approved Scheme); the tree protection measures approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the Approved Scheme for the duration of the development (including, unless otherwise provided by the Approved Scheme) demolition, all site preparation work, tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery.
- b) No development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site.
- c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
- d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior

approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

19. Landscape management

Prior to the commencement of the development a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved and maintained thereafter.

Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

20. Earth mounding and contouring

Prior to the commencement of the development, details of earthworks shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include the proposed grading and mounding of land areas including the levels and contours to be formed, showing the relationship of proposed mounding to existing vegetation and surrounding landform. The Earthworks shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and permanently so-retained.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity and landscape character of the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

21. Retention of trees and shrubs

No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species *unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

22. Working hours

No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 8:00a.m. - 6:00p.m. Monday to Friday and 8:00 a.m. - 1.00p.m. Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of residents. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

Informatives

1. Southern Gas Networks advise there is a high pressure pipeline in the vicinity of the site. Any works carried out should be in consultation with SGN.
2. Network Rail advise that any works should not compromise their ability to carry out work to the railway as per their email of 1st August 2017 which will be forwarded to the applicant.
3. The Public Rights of Way Officer has advised the Public Right of Way through the site should remain open as per their letter of 29th August 2017 which will be forwarded to the applicant.
4. The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to pre-commencement conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.
5. Where this permission requires further details to be submitted for approval, the information must formally be submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.
6. This permission should be read in conjunction with the planning obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act dated [INSERT], the obligations in which relate to this development.
7. Should any bats or evidence of bats be found prior to or during the development, all works must stop immediately and an ecological consultant or the Council's ecologist contacted for further advice before works can proceed. All contractors working on site should be made aware of the advice and provided with the contact details of a relevant ecological consultant.
8. This permission does not convey or imply any approval or consent required under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for protected species. The applicant is advised to contact Natural England with regard to any protected species that may be found on the site.
9. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of a full pre-application process was undertaken by the applicant; planning issues relating to ecology, flooding, design and highways. The decision to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

PLANNING HISTORY		
No.	Proposal	Decision
Application submitted to RBC		
182892	Full application for the construction of a segregated fast-track public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge and viaduct, comprising concrete bridge structure supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced soil embankment, together with new footway links and existing footway alterations, junction improvements and landscaping	Pending
171108	Construction of a segregated fast-track public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge and viaduct, comprising a concrete bridge structure with a river span of 59.5m and a land span of 316m, supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced soil embankment, replacement supermarket car parking provisions, junction improvements and landscaping.	Committee resolved to recommended approval, subject to completion of S106.
Applications determined by Wokingham		
182448	Application for a Scoping Opinion to determine the content of an Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed development of the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Scheme	Replied. 15/10/2018
172048	Full application for proposed construction of a segregated fast-track public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge and viaduct, comprising a concrete bridge structure with a river span of 59.5m and a land span of 316m, supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced soil embankment, replacement supermarket car parking provisions, junction improvements and landscaping.	Refused. Reason: The proposed MRT link, including its bridge structure, due to its height and scale and its prominent and sensitive location, particularly its proximity to the River Thames and River Kennet, would be harmful to the landscape character of the area including its riparian appearance. This would be contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy.
162325	Scoping Opinion to determine the content of an Environmental Impact Assessment for the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Scheme	Replied 23 rd December 2016.
Park and Ride permission adjacent to site (Wokingham)		
182496	Application to vary condition 2 (Approved plans) of planning permission 161596 for the proposed development of a Park and Ride facility	Approved. 11/10/2018

	providing approximately 277 vehicular spaces, motorcycle parking and associated vehicular access and landscaping) in order to alter finished ground levels/ retaining walls, and the layout of parking spaces, bus stop and bus turning area	
161596	Full application for the proposed development of a Park and Ride facility providing approximately 277 vehicular spaces, motorcycle parking and associated vehicular access and landscaping	Approved. 10 th November 2016

SUMMARY INFORMATION	
The below relates to the part of the proposal that is located within Wokingham Borough.	
Site allocation	Allocated for Strategic Transport Network Improvements
Trees/other planting within Wokingham BC	
Number of trees/shrubs/hedge trees lost	14.
Number of trees/ shrubs/hedge trees proposed	37
Trees pruned/pollarded	4
Journey information	
Services serving Wokingham projected to utilise the proposal:	Reading Buses - New Woodley Route Winnersh Park and Ride TVP Shuttle Service X/X4 to Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell
Average projected bus journey time saving (2021)	6 – 13 minutes and enhanced reliability/time keeping

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Berkshire Archaeology	No objection subject to conditions.
Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust	Objection
Crime Prevention Design Officer	No comments received
EA	To be provided in members update,
Highways England	previous conditions advised were 8, 9, 10,
National Grid	11, 12.
National Rail	No Objection.
	No comments received.
	No comments received.
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	No comments received
Southern Gas Networks	No comments received
Office for Nuclear Regulation	No objection
Ramblers Association	No comments received
Reading Borough Council	No comments received

South East Water	No comments received
South Oxfordshire District Council	No comments received
Southern Gas Networks	No comments received
SEE Power Distribution	No comments received
Transco	No comments received
SEE Power Distribution	No comments received
Thames Water	No comments received
NHS Wokingham Clinical Commissioning Group	No comments received
WBC Biodiversity	No objection subject to condition 13, 14, 15.
WBC Economic Prosperity and Place (Community Infrastructure)	No objection.
WBC Drainage	No objection subject to condition 12.
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	No comments received
WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions 10.
WBC Highways	No objection subject to conditions 5, 6.
WBC Tree & Landscape	Objection, but suggests conditions 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,
WBC Cleaner & Greener (Waste Services)	No comments received
WBC Conservation	Objection.
WBC Property Services	No comments received
WBC Public Rights of Way	No objection subject to condition/S106
WBC Parks, Open Space & Green Issue	No comments received
WBC Sports Development	No comments received
WBC Waste Services	No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Town/Parish Council:

Early: Object:

- concerns over the environmental impact on the National Thames Path and the natural environment of the River Thames of the extra vehicles diverted to the area **See section 3 and 4.26**
- Loss of wildlife habitat **See section 11**
- Due to height, scale, prominence and its proximity to the River Thames and River Kennet, would be harmful to the landscape character of the area including its riparian appearance. Contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy **See section 3**

Early Parish Council councillor Bill Luck;

- Not a clear description of the changes **See section 1.2**
- Very similar to the refused scheme **See section 4**
- Object to proposal that would be less than 4m from the edge of the river at its closest point resulting in a prominent and overbearing alien structure in the setting of the river. **See section 4**

Local Members:

Wokingham BC members:

Cllr. Pauline Jorgensen

- The plan for a mass rapid transport system in this location would if approved, spoil the visual amenity of the Thames riverside in Earley and damage the habitat and environment with the introduction of urbanisation. **See section 4 and 11**
- The changes to the plans since last refusal to my mind have not provided a material improvement to the scheme. **See section 11**
- The use of bus transport rather than proper driverless mass transport such as the DLR will reduce the capacity of the service, increase its unreliability and potentially its operating costs. **See section 3.8 and 17**
- The system will, by encouraging people to park and ride from outside the area, increase car journeys, pollution and congestion along the A4 and the A329m though North Earley to the detriment of local residents. **See section 5.26**

BBOWT – Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife trust

- Impact on The Coal, Kennetmouth and Kings Meadow East LWS **The Coal and Kings Meadow East and much of the Kennet Mouth is located within Reading. In terms of the scheme within Reading please see section 11.**
- Biodiversity net gain concerns **See section 11**
- Loss of open space and green corridor **See section 7.**
- Inadequate information submitted to ensure protected species are protected and enhanced **See section 11**
- Consideration of the ecological impact of alternative options **See section 17.**

Wokingham Local groups:

ACER – objects to the proposal;

- Fundamentally the same as the last submission **See section 2.3**
- Changes are only cosmetic **See section 4**
- Would not address changes in terms of traffic flow in and out of east reading **See section 5**
- Purpose not adequately justified **See section 5**

Reading Local Groups:

Globe (Caversham)

- Proposal has only made minor cosmetic changes that does not address harm **See section 4**
- Insufficient replacement trees **See section 4 and 9**
- No open space land exchange **See section 7**
- Harm to character **See section 4**
- Impact on LWS, and impact upon hedges in Tesco Car park– **these is located outside of Wokingham Borough and as such is to be considered by Reading**

<p>Newtown Globe Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No material improvement since last proposal See section 2.3 and section 4 • No impact upon traffic congestion See section 5 • Alternatives not adequately considered See section 17 • Visual impact, loss of amenity, and conservation impact See section 4 and section 10. <p>Climate Change Centre Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The comments relate to the Local Plan update of Reading and as such are not relevant to this proposal within Wokingham. <p>Reading Friends of the Earth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal does not evidence improvements to air quality. See section 13. • The applicant should implement measures to reduce pollution levels everywhere to substantially below WHO guideline levels. See section 13. 	
Neighbour comments	
Letters of support: 7 (7 Reading, Wokingham 0)	
comments	Officer comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wider Reading area needs infrastructure improvements • Benefits for residents travelling to and from read by bus or cycle – avoid Cemetery Junction and other traffic hot spots • The Reading and Wokingham area has plenty of other open spaces for residents to enjoy including Kings Meadow or Dinton Pastures • Will help people get into reading for work • Taking some traffic off London Road- less pollution in Palmer Park • Road safety benefits – London Road isn't wide enough and is risky to safety • Will clear up Thames Path which is a dump • Act as catalyst for future growth • It is a 'green scheme' • Supports population mobility by providing affordable transport • Will increase transport capacity • improving links to the business parks • Push reading as a business centre • Faster and more reliable bus journey times – more frequent buses 	<p>See section 5 See section 5</p> <p>See section 7</p> <p>See section 5</p> <p>See section 13</p> <p>See section 11 and 5.</p> <p>This is more an issue of management, but see section 4.</p> <p>See section 5 See section 5 See section 5</p> <p>See section 5 See section 5</p> <p>See section 5 See section 5</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for new express bus routes from Woodley • Long term potential for upgrade to trams or similar • Smooth straight cycle way – attractive to cyclists • Link to 3rd bridge 	<p>See section 5</p> <p>See section 5 and 3.8</p> <p>See section 5</p> <p>See section 5 but note that the 3rd bridge would need assessment as a stand-alone planning application and it would not be materially affected by this proposal.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultimate aim of people using bike rather than car 	<p>See section 5</p>
Objections: 319 objections – (238 from Reading, 64 from Wokingham, and 17 others)	
Questioning benefits of scheme	
Comments	Officer response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal would have little benefit • Negligible impact upon traffic • No evidence to suggest would reduce congestion • Will create 2 bottle necks • No benefits for residents of Wokingham or Reading • A lot of the buses won't use the MRT as they serve stops on Kings Road • Nothing will make it worthwhile. 	<p>See section 5</p> <p>See section 5</p> <p>See section 5.26</p> <p>See section 5</p> <p>See section 5</p> <p>See section 5</p> <p>The considered planning balance is had in section 19</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London Road has seen reduction in traffic anyway. • Not good value for money 	<p>See section 5.26</p> <p>See section 6</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will only benefit directors of Reading Buses to get more out of town customers as it will be the only bus stop. • There is already good train links between Wokingham and Earley to Reading. • No evidence that it would improve journey times. • It will not solve the problem it is intending to solve. • Not a priority, only considered due to government funding. 	<p>The route is likely to serve a number of bus services see section 5</p> <p>The proposal would serve a range of journey types via public transport.</p> <p>see section 5</p> <p>see section 4.</p> <p>See section 4 and 6</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will only provide 68 spaces – will not notice benefit. The park and ride will be underused and not reduce traffic through cemetery junction The local community will not be able to access it. Don't need a park and ride in Reading East. It is not diverting traffic from Reading and is not substantially far out of Town. Reading Council have undertaken a number of large projects and they have been poorly executed – council have had to take remediable action/ rebuild them – IDR cuts the town in 2, CIVIC centre demolished, Dee Park housing estate was rebuilt, paying for parking on Pepper Lane. As useless as HS2 	<p>This comment appears to relate to the car parking spaces that were to be replaced at Tesco which have now been removed. However, this part of the proposal lies within Reading Borough Council and as such it is not for the Wokingham Committee to consider. See section 5</p> <p>The proposal will not restrict access for pedestrians and cycles. The Park and Ride at Thames Valley Park has permission. See section 5. See section 5.26</p> <p>Each planning application must be assessed on its own merits, and no comment can be had upon the particular circumstances of projects.</p> <p>The current proposal and HS2 are very different projects with their own particular objectives. In addition, the benefits of HS2 are yet to be assessed as it is not yet in operation. As such, the schemes are not considered to be comparable.</p>
Policy	
Comments	Officer response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not meet core policies Contrary to national and local policies Will contravene Act of Parliament 2006 	<p>This is addressed in the relevant sections of this report.</p> <p>This is addressed in the relevant sections of this report.</p> <p>It is unclear what Act of Parliament is being referred to. It is considered that the proposal would not conflict with the Acts of Parliament.</p>
Biodiversity	
Comments	Officer response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cutting down trees could harm wildlife – people keep harming wildlife. Harm to wildlife 	<p>See section 11</p> <p>See section 11</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report did not include a breeding bird survey • Did not undertake relevant biodiversity and wildlife surveys • The site forms a vital link in the 'green corridor' – development of the site at Broken Bow will indirectly affect the biodiversity at two local wildlife sites at Thames Valley Park and the Coal Kennet Mouth Kings Meadow. • No plans to relocate wildlife 	<p>See section 11</p> <p>See Section 11</p> <p>See section 11</p> <p>See section 11</p>
Trees	
Comments	Officer response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ash trees could be resistant to Ash disease – cutting it down could be detrimental. • Will result in loss of 750 / 700/ 766/800 /1000 trees • Only replaces 77 onsite • Trees make positive impact on air pollution • Will take 100s of years for trees to mature • Would result in the loss of a 100 year of tree – not protected by reading • Both willows are on Wokingham district veteran tree association list of noteworthy trees. • Large and prominent hedge in Tesco car park with hundreds of mature hedging plants, high public amenity 	<p>The trees proposed to be felled within Wokingham do not include Ash trees.</p> <p>See Section 9</p> <p>See Section 9</p> <p>See Section 9</p> <p>See Section 9</p> <p>It is understood that this relates to the proposal within Reading and as such it should not be considered as part of this application.</p> <p>Note that these willows are not themselves veteran trees.</p> <p>This is located outside of Wokingham Borough and as such would be addressed by Reading BC.</p>
Visual impact	
Comments	Officer response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm to character of the riverside which is nationally important. • Means a lot to people, seeing grey mass of concrete will not 'lift the mood' as does the trees and greenery as existing. • Harm to ambience of this part of the river • Harm due to its size and proximity to the river. 	<p>See Section 4</p> <p>See Section 4</p> <p>See Section 4</p> <p>See Section 4</p>

• Out of scale and imposing mass.	See Section 4
• Destroy a used riverside area	See Section 4
• Once gone this stretch cannot be replaced.	See Section 4
• Proposed alterations – the addition of Ivy – is meaningless	See section 4
• Riverside landscape here is very important	See Section 4
• Bridge over the Kennet would be particularly unsightly.	See Section 4
• Will turn it in a dark, shady narrow path alongside a swamp (so that homeless people will not use it).	See Section 4
• Loss of daylight and sunlight to the path	See section 4
•	
• Will add to the plethora of bridges along the river Thames	See Section 4
• Area around the Kennetmouth has distinctive natural environmental and historic structures (rail and horse shoe bridge and gas holders) that are memorable features of the greater reading area, in part due to reminder of past activities that shapes the area and its communities – it is a significance comparable to the Abbey and its quarter, and embodies the transition from town to peaceful greenwaterscapes.	See Section 4
• Cllr. Tony Page has clearly misrepresented the beautiful quality of this area stating that the scheme will deter the drugdealing, flytipping, illegal moring and other antisocial behaviour....	See Section 4
• The proposal would make the transition less pleasurable, create noise nuisance.	See section 4
• Need to understand what this concrete flyover would look like in 5 years time.	See section 4
•	
• What about lighting under the structure – otherwise it would be dark/ cast shadows along this section of path	See section 4
• Will destroy amenity of quiet and peace	See section 4

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already destroyed stretch between Tilehurst and Reading via industrial development. • Although the area had an industrial past this is beyond living memory. • The section of Thames Path affected is one of Reading's greatest assets. • Provides setting for the Thames Path trail • Railway embankment forms an important barrier between the residential and commercial development to the south and the green corridor along the Thames. 	<p>Each application must be made on its own merits.</p> <p>See section 4</p> <p>See section 4.</p> <p>See section 4.</p> <p>See section 4.</p>
Open space/ Impact upon public footpath	
Comments	Officer response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will destroy green space • Result in loss of open space in part of Reading that has insufficient open space for recreational needs of the community – many residents of west reading have no garden. • Space between railway and river is used for a wide range of recreational activities. • It is too far for people of Newtown to walk from Kennetmouth to Thames Valley Park, meaning they will have to drive to the nearest recreational area. • Will destroy the only green space some local residents have • Green space is essential for good mental health • Greenspace here is important due to its benefits for personal health, facilitating social interaction and promoting community and sense of place • Concern about closure of the path and lorry movements during construction • Will make path less attractive to use, footfall currently makes the path safe. • Impact of safety – will encourage loitering and make it noisy and smelly 	<p>See section 7</p> <p>See section 7</p> <p>See section 7</p> <p>See section 7</p> <p>See section 7</p> <p>See section 7</p> <p>See section 7</p> <p>See section 8</p> <p>See section 8</p> <p>See section 8</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No replacement provision of open space 	See section 7
Heritage	
comments	Officer comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harm to listed bridges Harm to ancient river character Will destroy an ancient place 	See section 10 See section 10 See section 10Heritage impacts
Flooding and flood risk	
comments	Officer comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed in area at risk of flooding The EA have stated that it is contrary to the Council's strategies It does not comply with the required height for the river Impact upon moisture capacity 	See section 12 See section 12 See section 12Flooding
Pollution/harm	
Comments	Officer comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal would swamp Kenavon Drive and /Newtown in exhaust fumes. Cannot raise lead levels even further by completely surrounding this area with roads full of fumes. Proposal will increase pollution via removing 700 trees. No evidence that it would reduce pollution. Impact on primary school around 350m away. Waste of money – 2 Swimming pools closed complain that people are more obese – but not surprised that money is being spent on scheme instead of people having quality of life. Increase in noise Water pollution- more than just oil is discarded – e.g. heavy metals from discarded batteries Will cause asthma and heart disease (due to loss of trees absorbing pollutants) Will result in more litter 	No buses that would operate on the proposal would be using leaded fuel. See section 9 See section 13 See section 13 See section 6 See section 13 See section 13 See section 13 See section 13
Alternative schemes	
Comments	Officer comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should have 2 bus lanes either side of cemetery junction with a larger 	See section 17

park and ride scheme with reduced fare or free.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent buses and tariff on car usage plus regular water bus, 	See section 4 and 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why can't council spend money on other traffic congestion reducing schemes. 	See section 4 and 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal would cost over 30M – could be spent elsewhere. 	See section 4 and 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternatives need to be considered. 	See section 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the 3rd lane between cemetery junction and A329m as a bus lane 	See section 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the exiting excess lane at TVBP and 329m for park and ride 	See section 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give bus priority at traffic lights 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct defects of the political economy based on the 'lie' of commuting to a job as the only way to get an income. 	This relates to a greater paradigmatic issue associated with globalisation and capitalism, and not one which can be reasonably dealt with at this local scale alone.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use money on social services 	See section 4 and section 5 funding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toll Road tunnel to protect woodland and would pay for itself – reducing congestion on A4. 	See section 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low emission zone – Friends of The Earth proposal 	See section 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferry 	See section 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen the existing dual use path and make improvements to the horseshoe bridge to make them more cycle and pedestrian friendly 	See section 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New train station at the business park 	See section 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make public transport cheaper 	Most of the bus operators are commercial operators and the fares are set commercially.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel plans, car sharing clubs, video conferencing and teleworking 	See section 5 and 17

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing safe cycle routes into reading, encouraging cycling, and low cost starter homes in Reading. • Refurbish horseshoe bridge and improve cycle path • Spend money on litter, blocked drains, homeless, unattended hedgerows, drug dealing • Put a park and ride station on junction 10 of the M4 	<p>See section 4.</p> <p>The bridge is Grade II Listed and has been adopted already.</p> <p>See section 6.</p> <p>See section 5.</p>
Highways and transport comments	
Comments	Officer comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal would increase traffic around Napier road, which may result in harm to cyclists. • Will make Vastern Road roundabout more dangerous • Will increase traffic along the A4 and A329 to the park and ride • Consultation stated that it would not decrease congestion and might increase it. • The proposal would bring many more cars too far into the outer Reading residential area before they reach the parking area any extra provision for mass vehicle parking should be further away from the town. • Traffic data is out of date • Digital signalling on railway line means that the assertion that the corridor is at capacity is untrue 	<p>For clarity, both Napier Road and Vastern Road are located within Reading Borough and not Wokingham Borough, and therefore should not be considered as part of this application (for the element within Wokingham) and instead would be assessed by Reading Borough Council.</p> <p>For clarity, both Napier Road and Vastern Road are located within Reading Borough and not Wokingham Borough, and therefore should not be considered as part of this application (for the element within Wokingham) and instead would be assessed by Reading Borough Council.</p> <p>See section 5.26</p> <p>See section 5.26</p> <p>See section 5.26</p> <p>See section 5.26</p> <p>It is understood that digital railway signalling has not yet been implemented on this part of the line and no known timescales have been provided.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will create bottleneck at start of the park and ride and end of the roundabout below reading station 	<p>See section 5.26 and that the roundabout/ junction to the park and ride has been designed to accommodate the travel movements associated with the park and ride. In terms of the roundabout below Reading station, this is located within Reading Borough and will be addressed by Reading accordingly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No consideration of traffic impact on Napier road, no segregated cycle lane/ too narrow/ safety issues at biscuit tunnel. Additional congestion on Reading Bridge roundabout. 	<p>For clarity, both Napier Road and Vastern Road are located within Reading Borough and not Wokingham Borough, and therefore should not be considered as part of this application (for the element within Wokingham) and instead would be assessed by Reading Borough Council.</p>

Other

Comment	Officer comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thanks for rejecting RBC previous application 	<p>The previous refusal is a material consideration in the assessment of this application, however members will need to take into account any new information and revisions to the scheme that is presented to them.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal includes the same objectionable features 	<p>See section 2.3</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal only adds Ivy/ changes colour of concrete 	<p>See section 2.3</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This should never go ahead/ reading council has made changes for the worse 	<p>The expression of opinions, without planning reasons, are not material to the determination of the planning application.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We already have a park and ride system which is underused. 	<p>The proposal is for a fast track/ express bus link and not a park and ride.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heard that councillor with conflict of interest stated that <i>'the river is neglected to justify this plan and that need this road to ease congestion'</i> 	<p>In the determination of such application at planning committee any members with a conflict of interest are required to declare this and refrain from the decision making process.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental costs (transporting goods, materials) during construction would be high. 	<p>This is not material to the consideration of this planning application.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No benefit to residents of Wokingham or Reading in a park and ride 	<p>Assuming that this refers to the TVP P&R, this has planning permission and should be read as a project which can connect to the fast track/ express bus link or operate as a standalone entity.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the applicant is using public money to fund the scheme via another organisation he heads Developers taking millions out of local economy by providing homes to ex-Londoners, increasing congestion, fuelling inflation and increasing climate change. Urbanisation causes climate change Nothing has changed, please reject it again Waste of time and money – at a time that our council tax has gone up 	<p>See section 6</p> <p>This is not material to the determination of this planning application.</p> <p>The proposal would encourage a model shift to public transport, and this would have the effect of reducing congestion, pollution and other polluting effects. The proposal has been altered since the last submission through the submission of additional details regarding the benefits of the proposal along with additional planting (ivy).</p> <p>See section 6, and issues regarding council tax are not material to this application.</p>

APPLICANTS POINTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scheme forms part of a wider transport strategy to manage the associated travel demands from population and economic growth for Reading and Wokingham Boroughs. The application site has been allocated for this purpose within Wokingham Core Strategy. The proposal has been extensively revised during the lifetime of the scheme in order to mitigate its impact upon character The proposal will result in faster more reliable public transport with significantly increased levels of capacity. The proposal would also provide a more efficient and lit cycle and pedestrian route.

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP2	Inclusive Communities
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP10	Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network

	CP11	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
	CP15	Employment Development
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC06	Noise
	CC08	Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB12	Employment Skills Plan
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
	TB24	Designated Heritage Assets
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide – Section 4
		DCLG – National Internal Space Standards

PLANNING ISSUES

1. Introduction

Cross Boundary proposal

1.1 The application site spans across two boroughs, Wokingham and Reading, and in line with planning legislation, an application has been made to both councils. Previously, Reading Borough Council's Planning committee considered the first application on 30th May 2018 and resolved to approve the proposal subject to conditions and the completion of a S106. After refusal by WBC in May 2018 a new application was submitted to both Councils. Reading Borough Council are yet to determine their revised application. In considering this current application for the area within Wokingham, regard must be had to the proposal as a whole – such as its strategic impact upon the wider area. However, site specific elements which are wholly within the Reading Borough area should not be considered as cannot be controlled through this planning application.

1.2 Description of Development:

1.3 This application is for a new segregated public transport link (mass rapid transit) for buses, pedestrians and cyclists. The development would comprise:

- The creation of a new segregated fast track/ express bus link with pedestrian and cycle lanes. It would extend between Napier Road, Reading and the Park and Ride site at Thames Valley Park, spanning through both WBC and RBC with a distance of around 0.9km in total, 500m of it being located within Wokingham Borough (including through the Thames Valley Park and Ride site).
- Consist of a part two way part single track bus lane with a dedicated cycle and pedestrian path.
- The erection of a new bridge over the River Kennet, spanning between WBC and Reading BC boundaries.
- Associated infrastructure and landscaping

1.4 Within Reading Borough Council's boundary the proposal would;

- Form a new T-junction with Napier Road
- Develop new and improved footpath links to Tesco and the towpath

1.5 Within Wokingham Borough Council's Boundary the proposal would;

- Connect with the approved Thames Valley Park and Ride (182482)

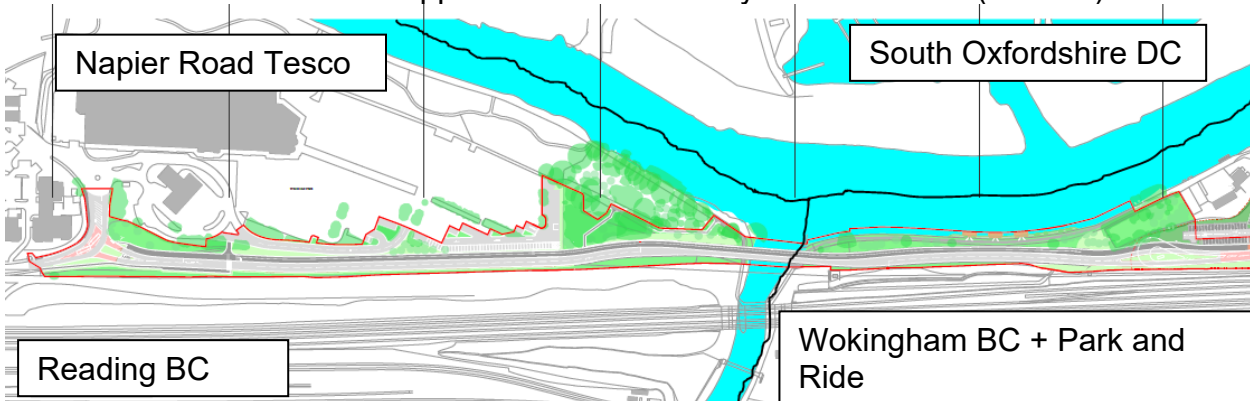


Figure 1: relationship with surrounding boroughs

The proposal within Wokingham Borough

- 1.6 The proposal site, within Wokingham Borough, starts close to the A3290 roundabout whereby the scheme here follows the same alignment to that of the approved Thames Valley Park and Ride scheme. For clarity, whilst the Thames Valley Park and Ride has approval, this proposal stretches to the roundabout to provide certainty over deliverability. The route then carries on to the west and due to the presence of an SGN gas valve to the south western edge of the TVP P&R, the scheme route divides to avoid the facility before re-joining.

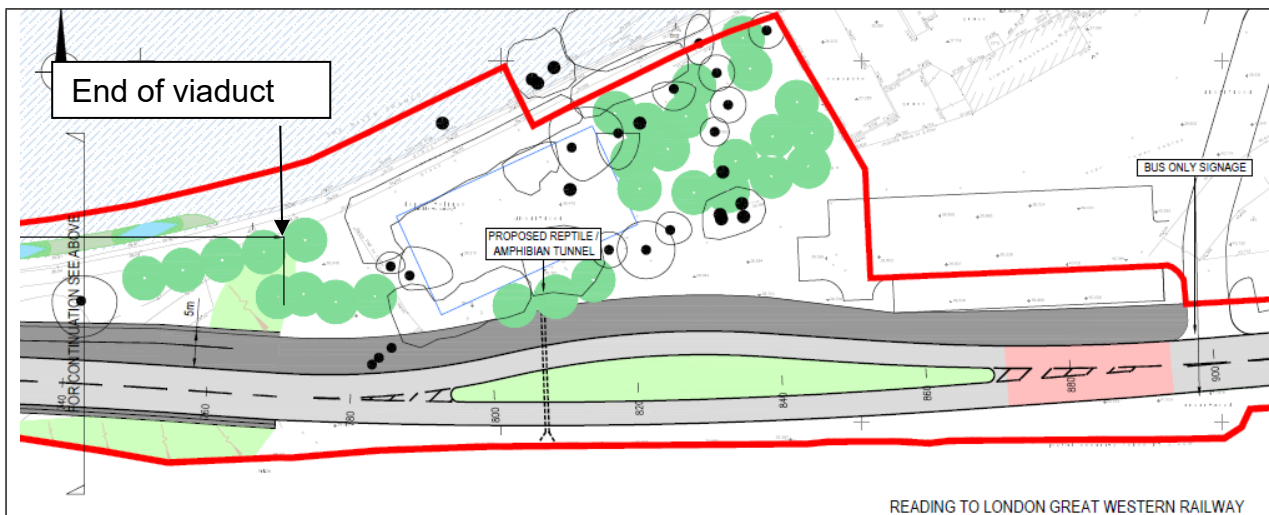


Figure 2: Scheme within Wokingham: Connection to TVP P&R

- 1.7 The proposal then becomes a 204m long viaduct consisting of a concrete deck and crossbeams (across 8 equal spans of 25.5m) supported by single concrete columns. The viaduct is required in order to accommodate flood flows beneath the structure and minimise flood impacts to the structure itself. Here the viaduct increases in height at a gradient of 1:43.

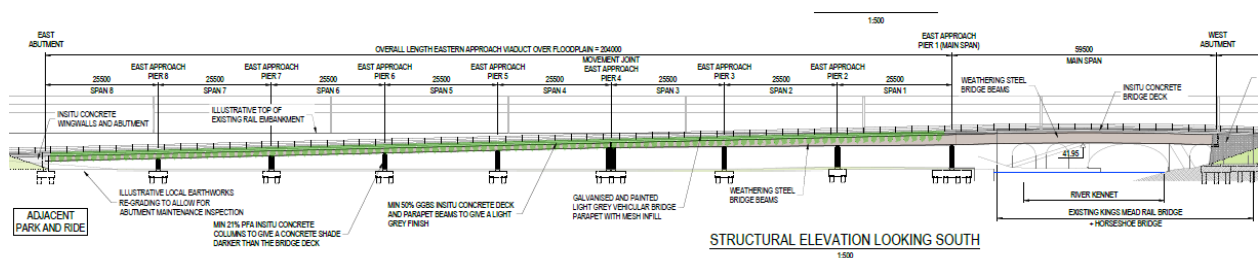


Figure 3: Scheme within Wokingham: Viaduct

- 1.8 Where the viaduct gets to the closest proximity to the Thames River the width of the deck narrows by 1m and then widens again and then towards the Kennet River Mouth narrows by 1.5m and then forms the bridge that crosses into Reading Borough.

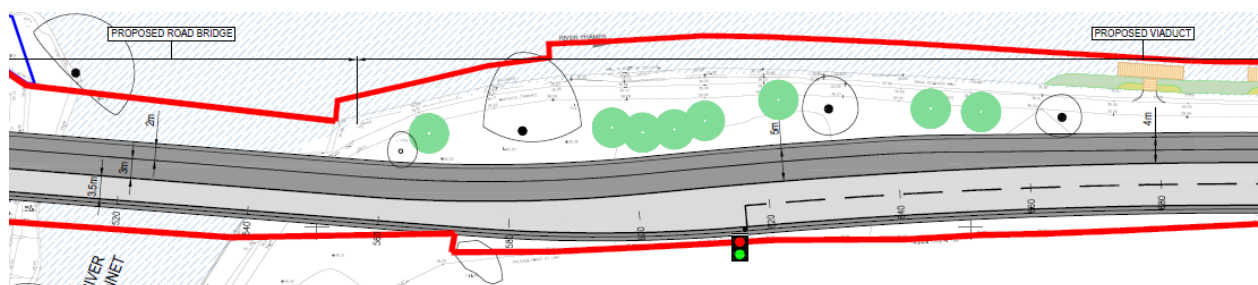


Figure 4: Scheme within Wokingham: Kennet Mouth

1.9 Revisions to the proposal

1.10 Wokingham Borough Council Planning committee considered the previous application on 30th May 2018 and resolved to refuse the proposal. The reason for refusal stated;

The proposed MRT link, including bridge structure, due to its height and scale and its prominent and sensitive location, particularly its proximity to the River Thames and River Kennet, would be harmful to the landscape character of the area including its riparian appearance. This would be contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy.

1.11 Following the refusal of this application the submission has been revised and a Public Consultation exercise conducted to seek enhancement options. This includes/involves;

- Revisions to the submitted documents and evidence base in order to better set out, explain and justify the proposal.
- An 'Enhancement option appraisal' public consultation was conducted and several enhancement options were proposed. This resulted in the selection of 'planters at high level'. This would correspond to the 'living green wall' of the TVP P&R development which was approved, subject to further details of the planting through conditions.

1.12 Environmental Impact Assessment:

1.13 Due to the size and scale of the development and its potential impact upon the local environment, an Environmental Statement (ES) has been submitted. This documents the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) of the scheme which focuses on the following issues: socio-economics; transport and access; air quality; hydrology and the water environment; ground conditions; landscape and visual including lighting; ecology; and archaeology and heritage. These topics were scoped through the submission of a scoping opinion in 2018 in conjunction with officers from Reading and Wokingham Council's. This report refers to the ES where appropriate.

2 Principle of Development:

2.1 The Core Strategy (CS) was adopted in 2010 and sets out the vision for the Borough in the current development plan period. The relevant policies are set out below;

- Policies CP1 and CP3, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development proposals are appropriate to the character of the area and represent high quality design.
- Policy CP6 promotes sustainable transport by allowing choice of different modes.
- Policy CP7 protects biodiversity interests but acknowledges the need for a proposal may outweigh the need for safeguarding nature conservation.
- Policy CP9 sets out proposals within development locations will be acceptable in principle

- Policy CP11 set outs proposal outside development locations (i.e. countryside) will only be acceptable in certain circumstances.
- Policy CP10 sets out a list of improvements to the strategic transport network. Point 10 highlights “high quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors.

2.2 The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) adds further details to the policies in the Core Strategy and was adopted in 2014. The relevant policies are set out below;

- Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise which is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- Policy CC02 confirms the development limits that were set by the Core Strategy.
- Policy CC03 protects designated green routes and the overall provision of green infrastructure.
- Policy CC06 requires proposals to address noise impacts on noise sensitive receptors.
- Policy CC08 confirms the improvements to the strategic transport network and gives further details in appendix 3 of the MDD. Appendix 3 highlights that such areas will be safeguarded as shown on the policies map and, in relation to the application, states “high quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors (CP10 (10))”.
- Policies CC09 and CC10 require proposals to have no adverse flooding or drainage impacts.
- Policy TB08 outlines open space provision for new schemes and refers to the NPPF for schemes that may result in a loss of open space.
- Policy TB12 requires proposals for major development to be accompanied by an Employment Skills Plan.
- Policy TB21 states proposal must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Landscape Character Assessment.
- Policy TB23 builds on the requirements from policy CP7 and
- policies TB24 and TB25 aim to protect heritage and archaeological aspects of the Borough

2.3 The principle for the proposed fast track/ express bus link in the proposed location has been established through Wokingham’s development plan policy. Policy CP10 of the Core Strategy sets out a list of improvements to the strategic transport network. Point 10 highlights “high quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors, and is Integral to the Core Strategy.

CP10 - Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network

Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network will be provided to ameliorate major environmental or safety problems and to support new development in partnership with other authorities. The improvements to the strategic transport network are:

Improvement to Strategic transport network	Extent Improvement is part of Core Strategy			Funding		
	Sub-Regional ⁵⁵	Integral to Core Strategy	Adjacent authority strategy	National/regional funding	Apply for through LTP	S106 and WBC funds

Figure 5: Excerpt of policy CP10

- 2.4 Policy CC08 *Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure* of the MDD states that *'Routes required for the improvement of the Strategic Transport Network and for other transport related schemes indicated on the **Policies Map or listed in the Appendix 3** of the MDD will be protected and safeguarded. Proposals for development which would compromise the implementation of these routes would not be supported'*. [bold for emphasis].
- 2.5 The policies map sets out the area allocated and therefore safeguarded for the improvement of the Strategic Transport Network. As set out in the below policy map excerpt, the allocated site area includes the area between the railway line and the Thames path and continues towards the 'Broken Bow' area. The proposal would fall within this safeguarded area 'improvements to the strategic transport network' for a 'high quality express bus service or rapid mass transit along the A4 and A329 corridor'.

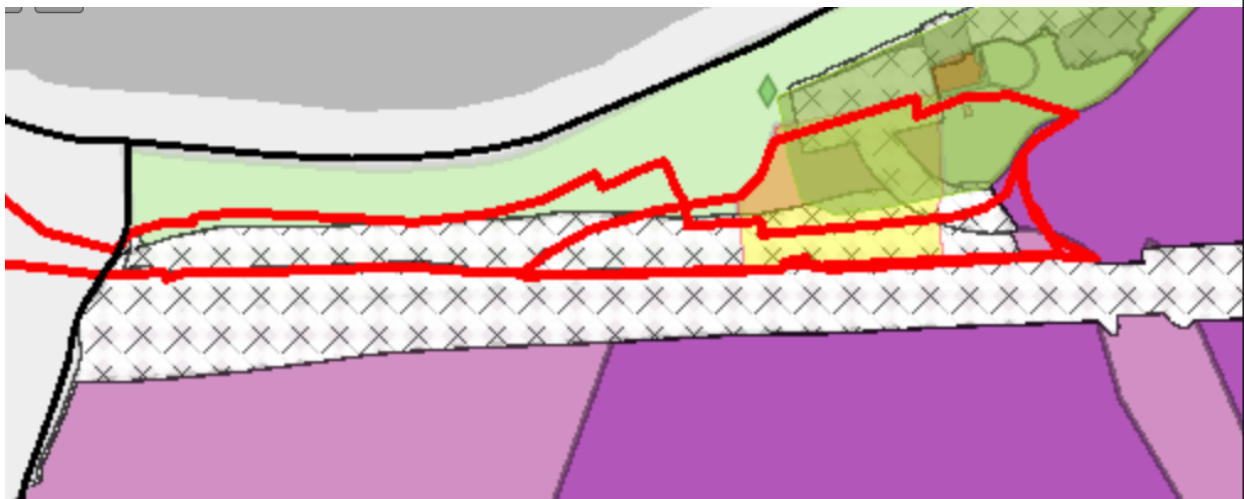


Figure 6: Excerpt of the policy map showing application site (red) and allocated site (hatched)

- 2.6 In addition, appendix 3 Strategic Transport Network and Road Infrastructure of the MDD Safeguarded Land and Protected Road/Railway Lines includes under IV 'high quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors (CP10 (10)). As such, it is well established in Wokingham's development plan policy that the proposal site falls within a site allocated for strategic transport improvements, and more specifically 'improvements to the strategic transport

network' for a 'high quality express bus service or rapid mass transit along the A4 and A329 corridor' . It is considered that the proposal would fall within the definition of such definition and as such would be acceptable in principle.

2.7 The site also falls within the countryside and therefore subject to relevant policies designed to protect the separation of settlements CP11. However, it is land that has been identified through the development plan for strategic transport network improvements under Core Strategy Policy CP10. It should be noted that the ability to improve existing transport corridors is limited and therefore alternative options needed to be considered. Following on from this, the proposal was considered to be the only realistic option for delivery of the objectives of CP10.

2.8 What falls within definition of Mass Rapid Transit

2.9 During the last application concern was raised to whether the proposal would fall within the definition of 'Mass Rapid Transit', and concern was raised that the use of bus transport other than proper driverless mass transport (such as the Docklands/driverless Light Railway) will reduce the capacity of the service, increase its unreliability and potentially its operating costs.

2.10 For clarity, Policy CP10 of the Core Strategy clearly lists a 'high quality express bus service or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors' and as such the proposal would match this aim.

2.11 Mass Rapid Transit is a generic term used to describe modern urban public transport systems and encompass a range of transport modes. Indeed, 'Mass Rapid Transit' does not specifically relate to a particular mode of transport. For instance Singapore has a MRT railway, Reading has a bus MRT (South MRT) between Mere oak Park and Ride and Reading Town Centre, there are bus Mass Rapid Transits such as that proposed by Slough (SMaRT – Slough Mass Rapid Transit via bus lanes along the A4), Rotherham's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme, South Hampshire 'Eclipse', and Kent 'Fast track'. These MRTs in place have improved the public transport service in the area and some have been a catalyst for growth. Cambridge has a similar transport system which operates bus only routes with cycle provision also running along this which has been highly successful in delivering sustainable transport network to the city and local area.

2.12 For clarity, the route could easily accommodate driverless buses/trams in the future either via charging systems at each end and the installation of any necessary wheel guidance system/ tracks.

2.13 NPPF

2.14 The NPPF sets out the Governments planning policies for England and outlines how these are expected to be applied to both plan-making and decision making. The NPPF was revised in 2018 however the policies have not significantly changed from those assessed as part of the 2017 application.

2.15 The key principle of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development which underpins the planning process. The NPPF defines sustainable

development as having three tenets: an economic role; a social role and an environmental role;

- ***an economic objective*** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- ***a social objective*** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- ***an environmental objective*** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

2.16 As such, sustainable development also includes development that plans for and supports economic delivery including the provision of necessary infrastructure; the social needs to support the delivery of additional homes, the provision of assessable services; and to protect and enhance the natural environment, including tackling climate change and minimising pollution.

2.17 Specifically relating to transport objectives, the NPPF highlights proposals should reduce greenhouse gas emissions; reduce congestion; facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport (which frequently means shifting the balance in favour of non-car modes); give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements; and, have access to high quality public transport facilities.

2.18 The NPPF is also concerned with maintaining the vitality of town centres by diversification of the retail/leisure offer but also improving ease of access to the centre.

2.19 The NPPF highlights the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity value; recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment.

2.20 In relation to historic assets the NPPF requires authorities to have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment and they should avoid or minimise conflict between a heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of a proposal.

3 Impact upon Landscape Character

- 3.1 Wokingham Marina Council Planning committee Application site Application on 30th May 2016 and resolved to refuse the proposal due to concerns it would have upon the riverside character due to its height and scale and proximity to the River Thames and River Kennet, given its prominent and sensitive location.
- 3.2 The application site within Wokingham Borough stretches between the bank to the east of the Kennet Mouth, extends to the water and follows close to the bank of the Thames Path, and extends to the railway embankment to the south, it then extends along to the park and ride, where it narrows to the A3290 roundabout.
- 3.3 To the south of the site is the railway embankment and Main Line Railway. The railway embankment, which is fenced off, is grassed and increases in height towards the railway bridge that crosses the River Kennet Mouth. This railway bridge which includes a footbridge - Horseshoe bridge – both of which are Grade II Listed. Above the railway embankment is the Great Western Main Line railway, with frequent trains passing through, overhead electrification gantries and associated railway paraphernalia such as signals. Views of the gasometers behind the railway can also be had.
- 3.4 Between the railway embankment fence and the river edge is a grassed area to the south along with a powerline and the Thames Path to the north. A number of trees are located to the south of the Thames Path in this location. The width between the railway fence and the river edge varies in its depth, opening up when turning into it from the Kennet Mouth or walking to the west from The Dreadnought. Towards the Kennet Mouth are moorings where 2/3 boats are regularly moored, and the mosaic.
- 3.5 To the east is Broken Bow which has permission for a Park and Ride Site (Thames Valley Park and Ride). Beyond here, and outside of the application site, is the Thames Valley Business Park and Thames Valley Park and the Wokingham Waterside Centre. The river here is reasonably wide and arcs allowing views along the river. Across the river are trees and a marina, and the vessels within it are visible.
- 3.6 Overall, the site has a semi-rural feel, providing a juncture between the development of Reading shown through the railway lines, electrification lines, gas storage units, and the horse shoe bridge, and the semi-rural landscape beyond characterised by the grassed, and tree lined banks, the river itself, along with the formalised footpaths, signage, and reduction in the intensity of built form.

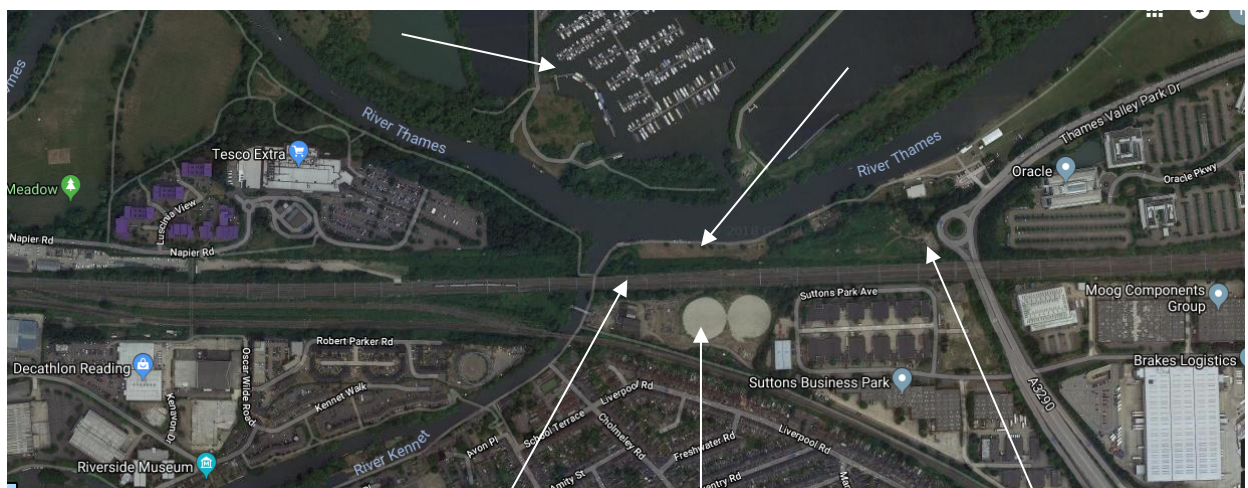


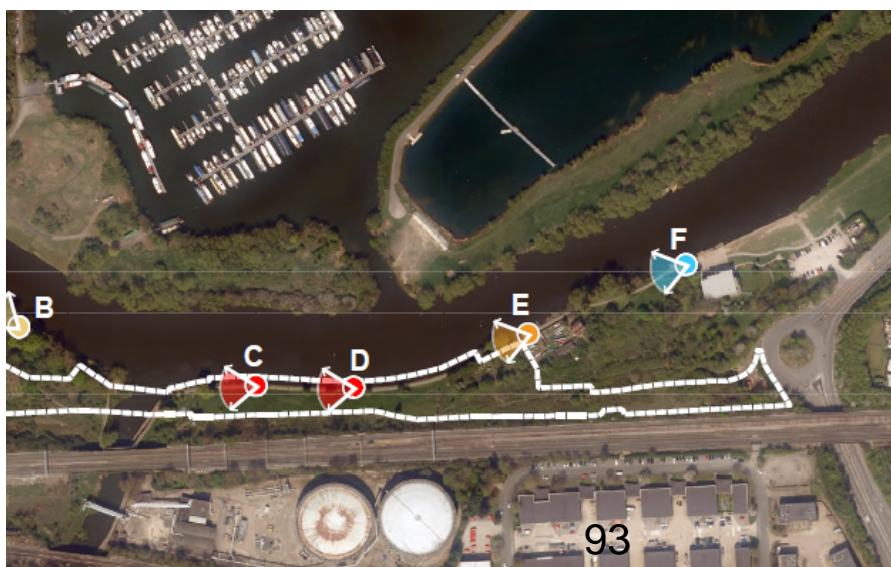
Figure 7: application site in relation to surrounding industry/urban areas

3.7 As part of the Environment Statement the submissions includes a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) that assesses the impact of the proposal upon the prevailing landscape character.

3.8 The application site within Wokingham falls within Wokingham Borough Council Landscape Character Area B2 – Thames River Valley with Open Water. This is characterised by;

- A small area of river landscape focused on the presence of the River Thames
- Broad and flat alluvial floodplain landscape with localised pockets of terrace deposits
- Transitional landscape with influence from neighbouring urban area and the presence of gas towers, roads and railway line
- Strong influence of modern and older commercial and industrial buildings
- Immediate river channel with reinforced banks... and
- Considerable evidence of recreational use including the Thames Path National Trail and water sports with associated facilities including a new watersports building.

3.9 The LVIA (Landscape Value Impact Assessment) has assessed the impact of the proposal upon landscape character. The ES recognises that, along the section of the towpath adjacent to the Viaduct, there would be significant adverse long-term visual effects. However, the LVIA also set out that views beyond this section of the Thames Path would not be impacted by the proposal. This includes views facing the east close to the Dreadnought and within Thames Valley Park itself. As such, the impact of the proposal is locally restricted. The affected landscape areas are detailed below.



Key
C and D – major to substantial effects
E – Minor effects (not significant)
F – No view

Figure 8: area within Wokingham visually affected by the proposal

3.10 The viewpoint below is close to the Kennet Mouth but facing east. Figure 9 is that presented in the LVIA, and Figure 10 shows a photomontage of the proposal in place.



Figure 9: photo of the site facing east



Figure 10: Photomontage of the proposal

3.11 The below image is a photo towards the Kennet River Mouth, and below it a photomontage of the proposal in place.



Figure 11: Photo of the site facing west towards the Kennet Mouth



Figure 12: Photomontage of the proposal facing west

3.12 It should also be noted that the assessment concludes that 15 years after planting there will be a beneficial effect on the local landscape resource due to additional planting and management to woodlands and riparian habitats. It is acknowledged that this is dependent on final landscaping details, quality of planting and maintenance to establish a high quality landscape scheme.

3.13 Concerns have been raised that the proposal would impact upon the character of the riverside. The objectors to the scheme describe the riverside here as having the effect of 'lifting their mood' having a positive ambience, being an important area as a national trail, for the history of Reading. Their concerns include that the proposal would make the area dark, narrow, unsightly, degrading the quality of the landscape with a 'mass of concrete', harming the ambience and character of this part of the river.

3.14 **Assessment**

3.15 The NPPF highlights that the planning system should contribute to and enhance national and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. At

a local level, policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy give general principles to achieve sustainable development as well as appropriate scale, design and materials to assimilate into the area. Additionally, policy CP11 defines the site as countryside where development is restricted. More specifically, policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan requires proposals to consider green infrastructure as well as protecting trees.

- 3.16 The proposal would undoubtedly alter the character of this part of the Thames Path in this location, as the proposal would involve the creation of a new structure that would be closer to the Thames River in this location. However, the proposal needs to be considered within its context. The scheme is located in an urban area and the proximity of industry and infrastructure forms part of the areas character. The scheme would be located adjacent to a railway embankment and a busy mainline railway with its regularly passing trains. The viaduct would rise to be in line with the existing railway bridge and views of the gasometers behind can be seen.
- 3.17 The realm of localised visual impact is relatively small, with views from the Thames towpath limited to when emerging beyond the Dreadnought towards the west, views from on the river and passing through that area, and when passing under the Railway and/ or over the horseshoe bridge. It is also noted that the proposal would diminish the landscape buffer in this area. This localised impact would have an impact upon the wider valued landscape officer.
- 3.18 However, it is noted that the site has been allocated for a 'high quality express bus service or mass rapid transport' system under CP10, and in doing so in principle acknowledged the impact of such necessary infrastructure required to provide such scheme. Clearly, the scale and design of the bridge is constrained by design standards and viability.
- 3.19 However, in order to minimise such impact, the proposal has undergone significant scrutiny, consideration, and revision throughout the lifetime of the proposal to reasonably minimise its height, width, massing and its proximity to the river whilst not adversely diminishing its benefits. These are explained and detailed below.
- 3.20 The width of the river edge to the fence along the railway embankment varies and this in part results in the proposal being closer to the river side in some sections than others of this part of the site. However, the height and width of the proposal has been carefully considered and extensively revised in order to both mitigate its possible impact and to ensure that the scheme is beneficial, practical, and deliverable.
- 3.21 The height of the bridge/ viaduct is a result of requirements to achieve a reasonable gradient for cycles and pedestrians (including wheelchairs), to allow persons to walk under it in appropriate locations (e.g. towards horseshoe bridge), but also to consider its relationship with and mitigate its impact upon the Grade II Listed Bridge – for instance, rising in line with it.
- 3.22 The width of the bridge is required to ensure the free flowing of buses but also to provide the required segregated pedestrian and cycle path. However, this has been reduced to mitigate its impact where possible. The width of the bridge where it is closest to the river narrows by 1m (between pier 6 and 7) and narrows by 1.5m as it crosses the River Kennet. Whilst consideration was had with regards to narrowing

the deck further, such narrowing has an impact upon the width of the bus and cycle/pedestrian lanes and further narrowing is likely to significantly impact upon the transport benefits of the proposal, including the quality of the pedestrian and cycle way and the business case for funding of the proposals.

- 3.23 The bulk and massing of the bridge has also been extensively revised to reduce its impact. The scheme has been designed and refined to reduce the bulk of the columns from a double to a single splay and the deck designed to be streamlined, creating a greater sense of space at ground level and reducing its massing. The proposed single column design also includes soft edges – curves and ellipses - providing a softer form, the flared column head and its tapering ‘foot’ shifts the bulk away from ground level creating a greater sense of space.
- 3.24 To demonstrate this, the figure below demonstrates the proposal at column 6 which is next to the narrowest part of the river. Here the narrowest point between the column and the river bank would be 8m, and the road deck would be 5.8m from the river bank. The scheme at column 6 would have a total height of around 7.2m. The first 5m would consist of the column and steel beams. The road deck itself would add an additional 0.75m, and the railings an additional 1.4m. As such, the bulk of the proposal would be further from the bank at ground level. Whilst the proposal, given its orientation, would result in shadowing of the Thames Path, such shadowing would vary throughout the year and the seasons and would not completely shadow the Thames Path.
- 3.25 In addition, to create a greater sense of space around the Thames Path in this location, the proposal includes the creation of a margin planting shelf with three mooring platforms where the proposal is closest to the towpath. They would add to the sense of openness and space and enhance the riverside location in this area.

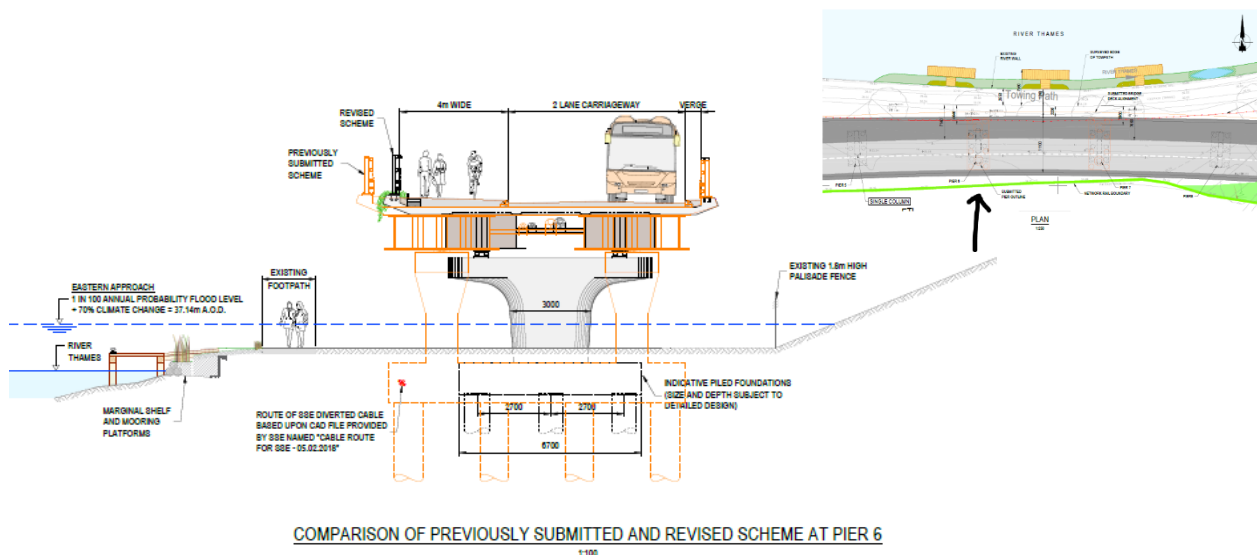


Figure 13: distance between the bank versus height of the proposal

- 3.26 For clarity, the viaduct would be 9.6m (8.4 without the railing) at its highest as it crosses the Kennet River Mouth, and to put this into context, the proposed deck would be a similar height to that of the existing rail bridge.

3.27 In terms of materials, concerns have been raised about the impact of a large concrete structure upon the character of the riverside. For clarity, use of concrete has been minimised through the use of a slender vehicle deck, steel girder (weathering to brown), and single support columns, and a high quality finish is proposed. The concrete bridge deck and parapet is designed to appear slender and thin, and constructed using a high quality concrete mix and finish to a light grey. The texture would be smooth and uniform with a formwork to leave no stains on the concrete and to achieve a sinuous appearance. In addition, ivy is proposed to hang over the road deck to help soften its appearance. The columns will be constructed using a darker grey concrete so that they appear more recessive than the brown weathered steel and concrete deck above. Anti-graffiti coating will also be applied. It should be noted that concrete is the standard material used for such projects.

3.28 Upon the deck would be a four rail steel barrier with upright posts which would be painted in light grey. A mesh screen within the envelope of the railings would be attached to deter people from climbing the railings and stop matter falling from the deck. The rails have been designed to be slender as possible to reduce its impact, the colour chosen to help it blend into the sky, along with allowing views to the riverside. From the steel barrier will be lights that would light the pedestrian and cycle way, the details of which are reserved by condition.

3.29 Landscaping is proposed to help soften the impact of the structure and the loss of 14 trees on character. The proposal would retain the large Willow Tree to the east of the Kennet Mouth (T88) and several of the Hawthorns along the river frontage (T87, T86 & T76) and it would plant an additional 37 trees within Wokingham.

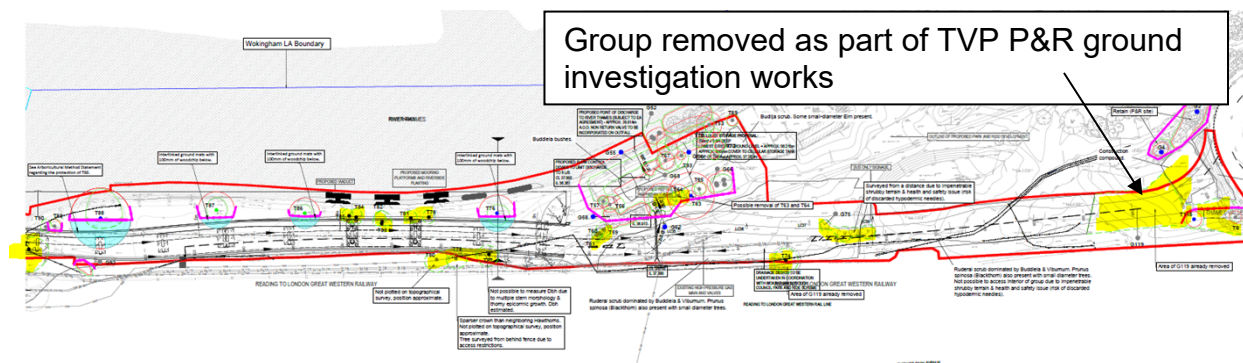


Figure 14: Tree constraints plan: the areas highlighted in yellow relate to trees or groups proposed to be removed.

3.30 To assist in softening the structure, ivy is proposed to hang from the road deck which would also tie in with the green wall of the park and ride site approved in Thames Valley Park. This would have the benefit of softening the concrete of the proposal. In addition, the treatment of the space under the viaduct has been carefully considered to form an area of marshy ground as a way of passively deterring anti-social behaviour, but also contributing to the overall landscaping scheme. Details of the landscaping scheme are reserved by condition 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.



Figure 15: proposed landscaping, public realm improvements, marginal planting and timber pontoons

- 3.31 The scheme also offers significant enhancements to the public realm and river bank of this area. The proposal would provide three temporary moorings which are sought after but not located in this area. The scheme will also repair the bank of this stretch of the river and add marginal planting as a form of enhancement. No street furniture exists in this location, and the proposal would provide seating, storyboards, and would lift, repair and relocate the mosaic within the site. Such enhancements are considered to be benefits of the scheme. These provisions are secured by way of S106.
- 3.32 The proposal would alter the character of this part of the riverside and impact upon the existing landscape. The proposed mitigations and provisions, including reduction in widths, materials, landscaping, public realm enhancements, and moorings, will go some way to soften the impact of the proposal upon the character of the riverside and provide enhancements which are considered to be a benefit.
- 3.33 In assessing the proposal upon character, it is clear that the proposal would result in some impact to both the character of that area and the wider valued landscape, which is not fully in accordance with Policy CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and CC03 of the MDD local plan. However, any such impact will need to be assessed with all other material considerations in the act of applying the planning balance.
- 3.34 This would include that the site is allocated for a high quality express bus service or mass rapid transit via CP10 and that this would have considered the necessary infrastructure this requires for such objective. In addition, the site context also needs to be considered, including semi-industrial features such as the main line railway with electrification masts with regular trains, gasometers, and the benefits of the proposal in enhancing public transport services, including the potential draw from enhanced rail services (inc. cross rail) and projected increases in travel demand.

4 The need for the proposal: Public transport benefits

- 4.1 This resubmission provides enhanced information with regard to the public transport benefits of the proposal and these are discussed in relation to the strategic context and localised benefits of the proposal.
- 4.2 However, some consideration is required to how the proposal fits into the wider context of the strategic transport infrastructure across the borough.
- 4.3 In both boroughs, significant residential expansion is forecast over the development plan period. In terms of Wokingham, the Local Transport Plan sets out mechanisms to manage such growth and associated traffic/ travel movements and in order to support new major development in the borough, a wide range of strategic transport projects would need to be progressed. Schemes like the proposed fast track/ express bus link form part of the wider strategy to manage the forecast travel demands and is set out in both boroughs transport plans.
- 4.4 Wokingham Borough Council's Local Transport Plan 2001 -2026 sets out its policy SP1: Support for Major Infrastructure that *'The Council will actively support development of suitable major transport projects that are necessary to support the future growth and success of the Borough'*. The chapter then sets out the projects detailed and supported by Planning policy, and includes under the heading of 'Major strategic Public Transport, Walking and Cycling Infrastructure' a 'High Quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors'.

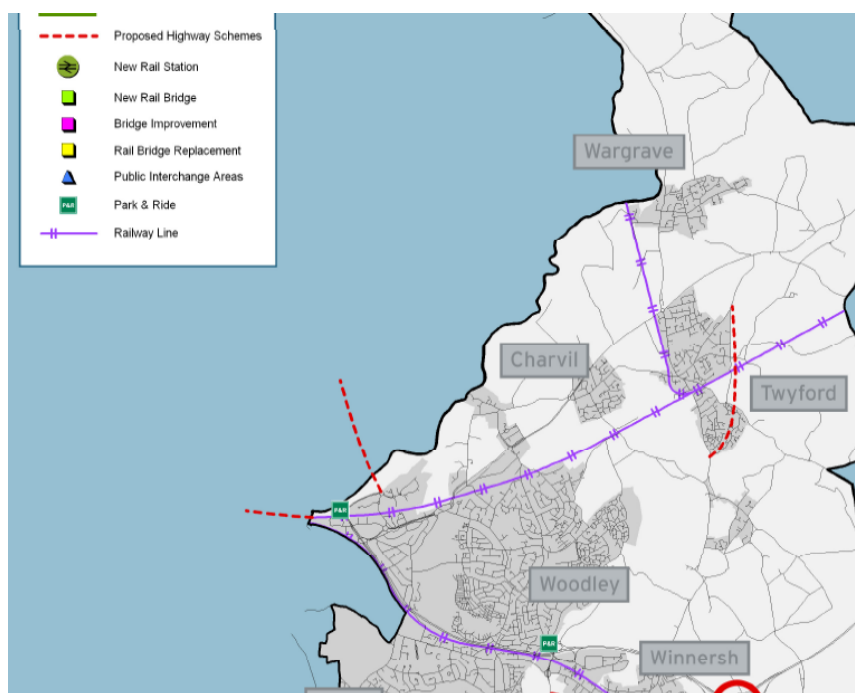


Figure 16: Excerpt from Figure 24 Indicative strategic projects-Local Transport Plan

- 4.5 It is also important to the policy context for Reading Borough Council and how this relates to Wokingham's Local Transport Plan. Reading Council's adopted Core Strategy policy CS20 sets out general principles for the implementation of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) whilst policy CS21 states that priority will be given to schemes which aim to deliver the projects in the LTP including mass rapid transit schemes. The LTP proposes a cross boundary solution to traffic congestion within the East Reading area.

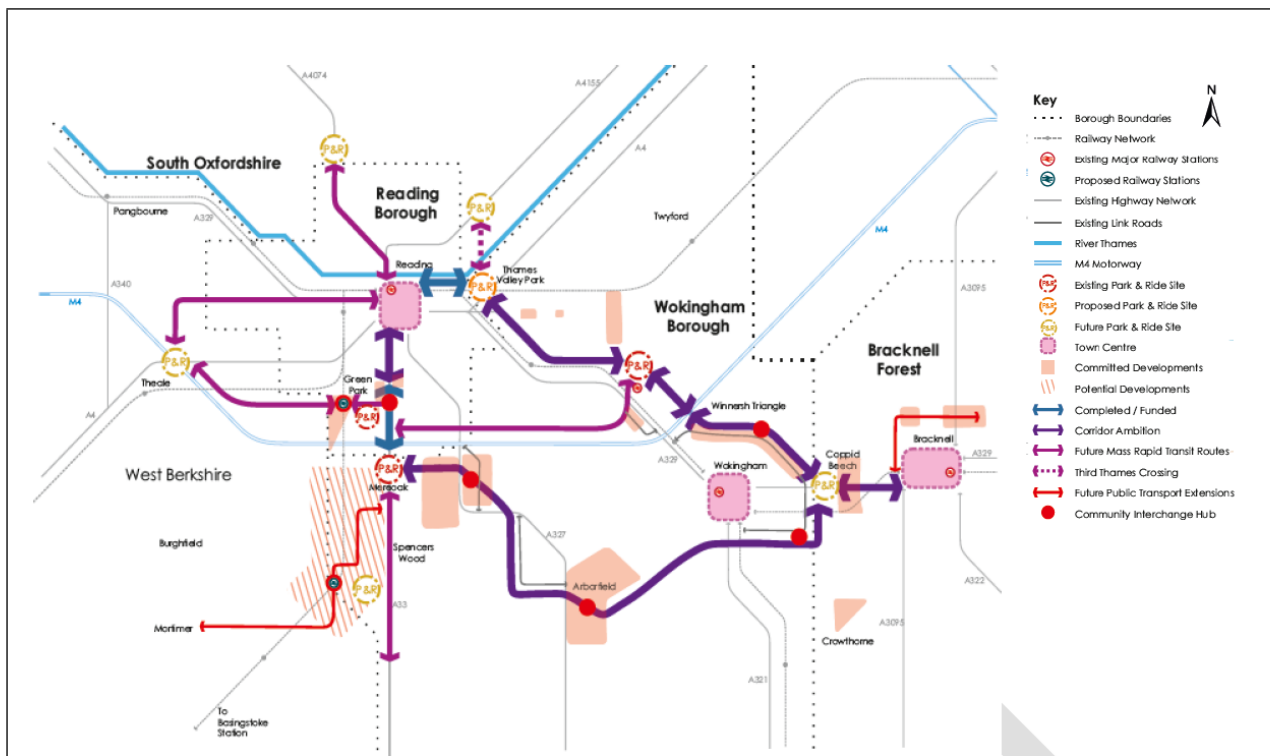


Figure 17: Wider cross boundary transport strategy

- 4.6 Indeed, the proposed fast track/ express bus link scheme is part of a wider network of fast track/ express bus link/ mass rapid transit and park and ride projects. The existing park and ride facility at Mere oak is supplemented by the South MRT route via the A33 whilst Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride takes advantage of the existing A329 route. As such, it is important to take the wider transport strategy into account when considering the scheme given that it is one element of improving the attractiveness of travelling via public transport.
- 4.7 The role of the proposal itself in this wider local transport strategy includes providing public transport improvements between Thames Valley Park and Reading, particularly providing a more efficient public transport service between TVP and Reading.
- 4.8 Congestion along the A4/London Road currently has a significant impact upon the reliability and efficiency of bus services resulting in a delay of around 12 – 24 minutes. There are bus routes that operate along London Road and generally accessibility to main line rail services at Reading Station as well as connections with other transport modes. Specifically, the Winnersh Park and Ride service, the Thames Valley Park service, the Heathrow Airport link service, local stopping routes to Woodley (12, 13, and 14), High Wycombe (850), and Wokingham (127, 128, and 129). Although there are bus lanes along Kings Road (allowing movement in and out of Reading) these stop at Cemetery Junction and buses are required to join the main traffic flow or join the counter flow bus lane along Kings Road, resulting in delays.
- 4.9 The scheme would provide significant benefits in the form of improved journey times and enhanced reliability to public transport to/from central Reading and existing residential and employment areas to the east and south-east of Reading and West

Wokingham, including Thames Valley Park (TVP), Woodley, Winnersh and Wokingham. It would provide a link to Reading station, which would provide benefit in managing the demand resulting from additional and enhanced rail services such as the Elizabeth Line (cross rail).

4.10 It does this by providing an alternative route (via the proposal) to London Road and Kings Road, where issues of congestion have been identified.

4.11 The Reading Transport SATURN Model (RTM) has been used to understand any potential journey time savings the proposed scheme may provide. Journey times from the A3290/A4 roundabout to Reading Station have been extracted from the RTM for the following route scenarios below. Such testing demonstrates that the proposed scheme would provide significant journey time savings in 2021 (projected scheme completion) of between 6 – 13 minutes for buses using the route in the peak period in comparison to the existing route along the A4 in 2021.

- Existing: London Road, Kings Road, Forbury Road, South East Station Interchange – at 2021 with TVP P&R AM and PM peak hours
- Proposed: A3290, proposed scheme, Napier Road, Northern Station Interchange, at 2021 with TVP P&R AM and PM peak hours.

Journey Time (Minutes)	Morning Peak Period		Evening Peak Period	
	Station Inbound	Station Outbound	Station Inbound	Station Outbound
Existing	12.5	17.8	15.0	16.7
Future	6.0	4.6	5.5	4.8
Journey Time Saving (between existing and future)	6.5	13.2	9.5	11.9

Figure 18: projected journey times in 2021

4.12 Improvements to services that serve Wokingham are also expected. A workshop on the 4th August 2017 was facilitated with Reading Buses to review the original assumptions regarding the bus services that may use the proposed fast track/express bus link. Rail Air and TVP have also been consulted. Wokingham would benefit from the proposal through the provision of high frequency and more reliable services. Services 14 and 15 currently route along London Road and Kings Road between Reading and Woodley. A New Woodley service could be introduced which would route via the proposed scheme whilst maintaining the current routes of the 13 and 14 serving Kings Road. This could provide a peak period frequency of 8 buses per hour between Reading and Woodley, with 4 routes via Kings Road and 4 routed via the proposed scheme.

4.13 It was also agreed that it would be reasonable to expect that the following services, including those which would serve Wokingham, would benefit from the proposal. These are also demonstrated on the map below.

- Winnersh Park and Ride
- TVP Shuttle
- RailAir (Bus to Heathrow)
- Service x/X4 to Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell

4.14 It should be noted that the proposal also offers the potential to allow other bus services to be routed via the TVP P&R to serve the stops there and/or utilise the proposal to assist in journey savings. These have been identified to be;

- TVP P&R from Winnersh Triangle (4)
- TVP commuter bus (3/4)
- Reading – Twyford – Henley – High Wycombe (850)
- Reading – Twyford – Wokingham (Nos. 127/128/129)

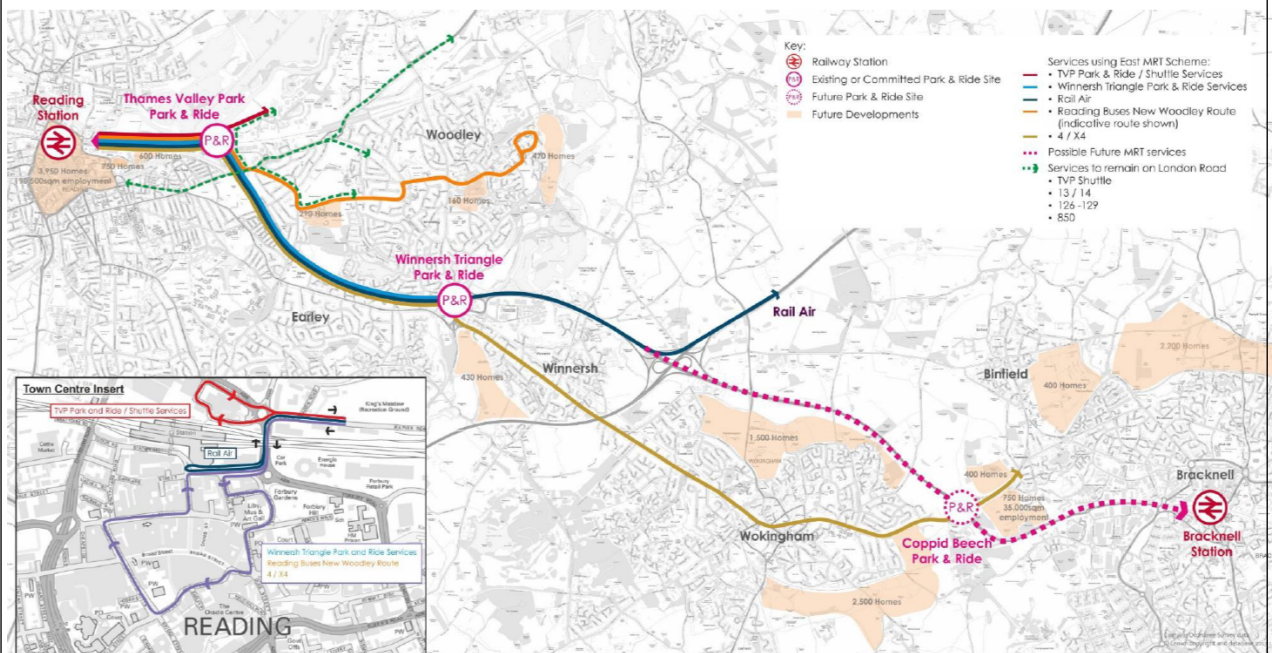


Figure 19: Map of proposed bus routes

4.15 The proposed fast track/ express bus link would provide public transport services operating along the route with a high level of reliability, and therefore a significant improvement on the current unpredictability of journey times caused by congestion on London Road.

4.16 It is also important to consider that the proposal forms part of a wider transport strategy, as set out earlier in this report, and will contribute towards further time and reliability savings through the linking up of other bus routes, high quality express bus services or mass rapid transits and park and rides, and deliver efficient services for the railway station and associated services. This would include linking to the Elizabeth Line (Cross Rail).

4.17 Concerns were raised that the proposal would end up being used for vehicles. For clarity, the proposal forms part of a wider transport strategy that is based upon enhancing public transport to encourage modal shift. In addition, securing the proposal for uses by buses etc only would be set out in a planning obligation. To ensure users of the scheme comply with this, it is proposed to install cameras to monitor the structure. If these did not deter people appropriately then it is possible that physical barriers would be required. In this event a maintenance strategy has been secured by condition (6) and as such the Highways Officer does not raise any objection.

Walking and cycling

4.18 The proposed scheme would provide an additional walking and cycling route in addition to that of the Thames Path.

4.19 As set out within the NPPF, planning decisions should enable and support healthy lifestyles, including through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. The proposal would provide a significant benefit by enhancing the quality of the pedestrian and cycle network in this location.

4.20 The proposal would provide benefits by providing a dedicated cycle route instead of the Thames Path or the A4/London Road. The Thames Path forms part of the National Cycle Network. The path is made, but it is unlit, narrow and caters for other users (walkers, runners, cycles etc) and requires cyclists to dismount to cross Horseshoe bridge and wheel or carry their bike across it, limiting speed of travel (and efficiency). The route is also subject to flooding on occasions.

4.21 The section of the A4 London Road between A3290 junction and Kings Road is a heavily trafficked route with narrow traffic lanes. Cycling along this route on the carriageway carries a high risk of collisions between vehicles and cyclists. As set out in the Environment Statement over the 5 year period (2012/3 – 2016/7) 48% of collisions (reported) on this road involved a pedestrian or a cyclist. The proposed scheme has the potential to aid in significantly reducing this identified level of conflict between motor vehicles and vulnerable users.

4.22 The proposal would provide a dedicated traffic free cycleway would be lit and not subject to issues of flooding or require them to dismount or go over the horseshoe bridge. The route would also provide a more efficient route for cyclists and avoid conflict with other users.

4.23 In terms of walking, there are a number of routes that would be made by foot between the A329m roundabout to Reading town centre and station these include;

- Via London Road and Kings Road
- Via river Kennet towpath
- Via river Thames towpath and Napier Road
- Via river Thames and Kennet Towpaths via Napier Road

4.24 London Road and Kings Road are heavily trafficked roads with signalised crossings. The footpath is unlit, narrow and currently caters for multiple users (cyclists, walkers, runners etc) resulting in higher risk of user conflicts. The proposal

would provide a dedicated path that is separate from the cycle lane and bus lanes which would be even under foot and well lit, providing a traffic free, fully constructed path for all year round use.

4.25 As such, in terms of benefits in terms of public transport, walking and cycling, the proposal would have significant benefits.

4.26 Traffic Impact benefits: Future congestion mitigation

4.27 A number of the objections to the proposal argue that the proposal would not result in a significant reduction in congestion along London Road and may even increase it.

4.28 For clarity, the proposal forms part of a wider project to manage projected traffic demands, which includes the provision of public transport improvements, as part of a wider Local Highway strategy. The proposal would help reduce the projected increase in the overall level of vehicular traffic on the A4/London Road, through the encouragement of a modal shift from vehicles to public transport.

4.29 A model has been used to understand the potential traffic impacts the proposal may have on the local highway network surrounding the site. This is based on ;

- Baseline – Existing highway network with traffic growth to 2021 and committed development plus TVP P&R
- Proposed Scheme – Existing highway network with traffic growth to 2021 and committed developments plus TVP P&R and the proposed scheme

4.30 Such data demonstrates that the traffic along the A4 corridor into and out of Reading being high throughout the day, with queues and delays building during the peak periods. This shows that two-way daily traffic flows on the A4 London Road are in the region of 35,000 vehicles. Congestion is forecast to increase as a result of committed and planned development growth within Reading and Wokingham Boroughs. For vehicles, this results in journey time delays of peak period journey times between the A2390 and Reading Station range from 7 to 24 minutes east bound and 9 to 24 minutes westbound.

4.31 Concerns were also raised that the data for traffic flows is out of date (being recorded in 2015). Paragraph 3.4.4 and Figure 3.16 of the Transport Statement sets out that RBC has installed a permanent automatic traffic counter on London Road to the west of the A4/A3290 from between 2007, with data being presented up to 2017. As such, the traffic modelling is considered to be up to date and robust.

4.32 In terms of traffic reduction, the modelling forecasts some benefits within Reading Borough. The modelling forecasts reductions in traffic movements in the residential streets in the east side of reading, such as Erleigh Road, Crescent Road and Culver Lane (along with the projected increase in traffic movements along the A4/London Road already set out above). The model expects people to switch to use the public transport into Reading via the proposed scheme as a result of increased efficiencies and reliability of public transport. Some reductions are also shown in central Reading on Forbury Road and Kings Road in the AM, as a result of people switching their mode of travel to use the bus services on the proposal. This is expected to

have the benefit of *relieving or mitigating* the forecast 2021 levels of vehicular traffic via modal shift to public transport.

- 4.33 Concerns have been raised that the scheme has not taken into account a decrease in traffic movement along the A4/London Road. The ES demonstrates that daily traffic flows on London Road (A4) have been generally consistent between 2011 and 2017, fluctuating between around 35,000 2 way daily traffic flows whereas between 2007 and the end of 2010 have shown a general downward trend. However, such trends represent a relatively fluctuation of the number of vehicles passing over a traffic counter strip. Congestion has not decreased over this time. In addition, the traffic modelling via (RTM) projects an increase of traffic demand along this A4/ London Road in 2021 as a result of projected general demand for vehicular movements (with or without the proposal).
- 4.34 Concerns have been raised that the system will, by encouraging people to park and ride from outside the area, increase car journeys, pollution and congestion along the A4 and the A329m through North Earley to the detriment of local residents.
- 4.35 The proposal forms part of a wider network of park and ride and public transport links. The proposal provides a dedicated segregated bus route from TVP P&R to Reading Town Centre (and back) and would provide a link to other modes of public transport.
- 4.36 It is considered that the proposal is unlikely to attract significant number of drivers using other routes to use the A4 or A3290/a329M to access Reading other than those who already use those routes. This is because either alternative routes, public transport and other park and rides would be closer and timelier alternatives.
- 4.37 *Economic growth:* The Transport Statement and indeed the business case state that the current constraint of congestion and inability to expand the road network further are limiting economic growth in the area. At a more local level it is noted that Thames Valley Business Park is a significant area for employment opportunities and greater access to this is of benefit to businesses. Furthermore, the accessibility of employment areas in the wider area, including Winnersh Triangle, is considered a positive impact. From a more regional level, the connectivity of employment opportunities to other areas is again beneficial and it is noted that other transport schemes like Crossrail would help with this. On the whole there is significant benefit arising from the scheme in terms of economic growth.
- 4.38 As such, it is considered that there would be significant benefits arising from the proposal in terms of enhancing more sustainable modes of transport in this location, and the wider benefits of encouraging a modal shift to mitigate projected transport demand in the area.

5 Funding:

- 5.1 Although the funding for this project is not a planning matter, it is important to understand the framework in which the need for the proposal has been developed. The applicant has secured funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership following the presentation of a business case which had to justify a transport intervention, matters for future maintenance are being discussed also.

6 Impact on Open Space

- 6.1 Some objections have been received that raise concern to the loss of open space as a result of the proposal. For clarity, the proposal site within Wokingham is not an area designed as formal *public open space* in the context of the local plan.
- 6.2 Some objections have been raised with regards to the loss of open space within the site and some references have been made to “appropriation” of open space pursuant to Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972. The appropriation procedure for open space is an executive function rather than a regulatory one. It is an entirely separate legislative stream and separate to planning considerations. It is considered the site does come under the NPPF’s definition of open space being “All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.”
- 6.3 The scheme would not lead to physical loss of open space other than the columns to the east of the Kennet mouth; however it is acknowledged that the perceived loss of open space in terms of the height and physical presence of the structure would also have an impact on visual amenity. In the planning context of open space within the NPPF the visual amenity of the site is the primary characteristic. Policy TB08 refers to the paragraph 74 of the NPPF with regards to proposals that may result in a loss of open space. This states the space should not be lost unless the land is surplus to requirements; or it would be replaced; or it would be for sports provision.
- 6.4 The development proposal has been planned for through the adopted development plan and the land has been identified for development. Open space and green infrastructure has also been planned for through the development plan and this would offset the loss of the open space attributable to this scheme. Therefore, the land can be considered surplus to requirements in the context of the borough wide provision of open space and green infrastructure and the loss of open space and green infrastructure does not weigh against the scheme significantly. In this aspect, the scheme complies with policy TB08 and the NPPF.
- 6.5 In accordance with planning guidance the site has been considered for development management purposes as open space, and to the extent that this Council holds title, it will consider any further issues that may arise in respect of appropriation separately. Nonetheless, this is a separate legal process which may be carried out by the Council’s Executive in due course. As such it is not considered to be a material to the planning considerations and would be carried out under different legislation to the Planning Acts.

7 Impact of Thames Path (national trail)

- 7.1 Concerns have been raised that the proposal would result in an impact to the setting of the Thames Path and will take it out of use during construction. The proposal would alter the character of this part of the Thames Path but it would not itself alter in the path in this location. It should also be noted that the Thames Path as a National Trail includes bridges, narrow and wider sections and as such it would not detract from the qualities of this path as a whole.

- 7.2 Condition 5 (part of the CEMP) is proposed to ensure any temporary closures of the Thames Path are kept to a minimum with a reasonable diversion put in place, to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority. In addition, a clause has been included in the proposed S106 so that any damage to the Thames Path resulting from the maintenance strip (which runs along the Thames Path) must be repaired.
- 7.3 Concerns were also raised that the proposal would impact upon the safety of that section of the Thames Path by encouraging loitering, and making it noisy and smelly. The proposal includes a marshy area under the viaduct to deter people from loitering underneath the structure. In terms of noise and smell, the route would be used by various bus service providers and not general traffic and many of the bus companies who use the service operate with low emission buses which are generally quieter also.

9. Technical tree details

- 9.1 Concerns were raised that the proposal would result in the loss of trees and that it would take 100 years for the replaced trees to regrow.
- 9.2 For clarity, note should be taken to the definitions within the submitted ES. The submitted Arboricultural impact assessment identifies all trees, tree groups, woodland, hedges and shrubs that would require removal. 'Tree/Group reference' refers to a reference number of individual plants prefixed by T (Tree), G (Group), W(Woodland), H(Hedge) or S(Shrub) to indicate the type of feature and as such involves a range of plants under the term 'tree'.
- 9.3 When taking the tree removal together (from the proposal as a whole – within Wokingham and Reading), this would consist of
- 33 individual trees
 - 19 groups containing;
 - individual species of shrub and scrub mix
 - Small trees and early mature/mature smaller woodland regeneration tree species
 - Overgrown hedgerow plants.
- 9.4 Therefore, the majority of the vegetation to be removed is a mix of lower quality scrub, hedgerow plants and small trees and many of the large mature trees growing alongside the Thames will be retained. As such, consideration is required to what planting is being referred to as being removed when considering its impact. As discussed below, the majority of the removal would take place within Reading, who have already considered the original scheme to be acceptable. For information, within Reading, the proposal would remove 20 trees and 11 groups. These groups would comprise 60 trees, and around 670 plants/shrubs/small hedge trees and 10 part tree groups consisting of around 57 trees. Most of the trees towards the river within Reading will be retained, except for T165 (Category B) T167, T184, G177 (10) (Category C).
- 9.5 The proposal would result in the loss of a limited number of trees, shrubs, and small hedges within the Borough, however, such impact is mitigated through replacement planting, which results in a net increase of trees within the Borough.

10. Heritage impacts

- 10.1 The submitted Heritage Desk Based Assessment has assessed the site in terms of the impact upon heritage assets. In respect of the proposal the heritage asset is the Grade II listed 19th century brick Railway Bridge and attached iron/timber accommodation footbridge. The assessment concludes that there would be no harmful impact to the fabric of the listed bridge given that the scheme would not physically connect to it. Furthermore, that there would be no impact to its historic value as it would still be possible to interpret the role the listed bridge played in enabling the construction and use of the Great Western Mainline.
- 10.2 It is acknowledged that the setting of the listed bridge would be altered due to the location of the bridge and viaduct. However, views from the towpath of the existing bridge are achieved when turning at the Kennet Mouth to access the horseshoe bridge, where views of the listed bridge (including the horseshoe bridge) would still be obtained.
- 10.3 Historic England do not raise any objection to the proposal. The Council's Conservation Officer has concerns; however agrees with the assessment in terms of the impact of the proposal on the listed bridge as a heritage asset and notes that the impact would not be considered 'substantial' in view of the NPPF. Nonetheless, the Conservation Officer notes that policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan requires proposals to conserve and, where possible, enhance heritage assets which the scheme would fail to achieve. As such, whilst not conflicting with the NPPF, it is acknowledged that overall there would be some impact to the setting of the heritage asset and this would conflict with local planning policy. However, this should be weighed against the wider benefits that have been identified in the planning balance.
- 10.4 A mosaic is located near the Kennet Mouth and would require removal to accommodate the scheme. Although it is a non-designated heritage asset, the mosaic is of local importance. NPPF states that a balanced judgement should be made in terms of the scale of the impact against the significance of the heritage asset. It is considered that the mosaic should be preserved and replaced in a new location following construction of the scheme and details of this would be secured through the section 106 planning obligation.

11. Ecology

- 11.1 Concerns have been raised that the proposal would result in harm and displacement of wildlife. The Council's Ecology Officer has stated that within Wokingham Borough there are no rare habitats in close proximity to the site and those that would be lost could be replaced elsewhere.
- 11.2 In relation to specific species that could be impacted the site has been surveyed for potential bat activity and for reptiles. The Ecology Officer had raised concern that potential fragmentation of the bats habitat could occur as a result of the scheme but notes the provision of bat boxes, and conditions for a lighting strategy to mitigate this. Furthermore, the change to the lighting design in terms of reduced columns is considered positive and less likely to impact on bats. The translocation of reptiles and associated mitigation has been secured by way of condition. (14).

11.3 The NPPF states that the planning process should seek to provide biodiversity benefit and it is noted that objections have been received with regards to whether the proposal would achieve a net gain. The submission includes a bio-diversity calculator which demonstrates that there would be a net gain of biodiversity. For clarity, the majority of the habitat affected by the proposal would be located outside of the borough (within Reading), and that the counterbalance habitat proposed is located roughly evenly between the boroughs, consisting of semi-improved grassland (including the margin planting and marshy planting under the viaduct). The Ecology officer raised that there is a risk that the proposal may not deliver a net gain, and to ensure this, a backup mechanism is secured by way of condition and S106 to ensure that a net gain in biodiversity is achieved. As a result, the council's ecology officer raises no objection, subject to a condition requiring a Landscape and Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) to be submitted, and as part of the S106 includes details for a backup mechanism (14).

11.4 Comments were also raised with regard to impact upon Bats. There are potential bat habitats along the site and it is noted that bats use the site as a corridor for migrating/commuting. The provision of bat boxes and the amended lighting scheme would mitigate the potential for fragmentation of the bats habitat, subject to a condition requiring a lighting strategy for light sensitive species (Condition 15).

11.5 Concerns were also raised with regard to the impact upon Breeding Birds. The council's ecologist considers that the most suitable area for breeding birds for this site (within Wokingham Borough) was the Broken Brow Thames Valley Park & Ride site. This was subject to a breeding bird survey prior to the application for the park & ride and this was included in the application bundle for transparency. The council's ecologist is satisfied that the area of the application site has had sufficient survey effort and the loss of this habitat will not adversely affect the breeding of a schedule 1 bird species, and that the loss of this habitat will not significantly alter the local population status of section 41 NERC Act listed species. As such, the proposal would be acceptable in this respect.

12. Flooding

12.1 The Environment Agency objected to the first consultation on the previous application due to concerns over flood plain storage and ecological impacts. However, after discussions and the submission of additional information the EA withdrew their objection subject to conditions (5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11).

12.2 Within the ES, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been incorporated. This states that other than the most eastern section of the site, the whole of the site is within flood zones 2 and 3b (i.e. functional floodplain). In accordance with the NPPF, the proposal has been considered against a sequential and exception test. The proposal has already been sequentially tested through the local plan process, it has been demonstrated that the development would provide wider benefits development provides wider benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk (Transport benefits); and, a site specific FRA can show the development will be safe for its lifetime and flood risk is not increased elsewhere (flood plain storage secured by S106).

12.3 In addition, the scheme includes a SUDS scheme to mitigate the impact of surface water from the structure. Concerns have been raised that the proposal would result

in issues of water quality due to 'heavy metals' and pollutants being washed into the river. The Council's Drainage Officer has assessed the application and has no objection subject to conditions. As such, the proposal would not result in an increase in pollution to this part of Wokingham/ Thames Path. The Council's Drainage Officer does not object to this subject to a condition (12).

13. Environmental Health:

13.1 *Noise and Vibration:* The Environmental Health Officer does not consider there are any receptors within Wokingham Borough that would be impacted harmfully by noise and vibration during construction or operation. This is subject to the provision of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) which can be secured through a condition (5). Whilst the provision of buses along the route may give rise to noise, it should be noted that the buses are likely to meet Euro 6 standards and as such would be relatively quieter than standard diesel buses. In addition, the area is already characterised by the noise of trains and as such the area is subject to transport related noises as existing.

13.2 *Air Quality:* Concerns have been raised that the proposal would increase pollution or would not decrease it. In addition, concerns were raised that the proposal would result in a degradation of air quality increase or pollution to this part of the Thames Path, and to the detriment of the nearby school and residents. It should be noted that such school and residents are located within Reading, and as such the impacts here including upon the AQMA is for reading to consider.

13.3 In terms of impacts within Wokingham, the report sets out that during construction the main potential effects are dust deposition and elevated particulate matter (dust) concentrations. However, these can be adequately mitigated via measures set out within the CEMP (Condition 5). The ES does not include specific monitoring for air quality changes along the Thames Path within Wokingham. However, the council's Environmental Health Officer (scientific specialist) has reviewed the ES and proposal and considers that there would be no significant impact predicted within Wokingham Borough – including the Thames Path – as a result of the proposal.

13.4 A number of the comments raise concern that the proposal would not decrease levels of pollution and that this was one of the justifications of the proposal. However, it should be noted that the effects of a modal shift in terms of pollution has not modelled. However, the proposal would through providing a more efficient alternative to the private motorcar, would encourage a modal shift away from private vehicles towards the use of the proposal, using low emission buses. The result is that the proposal is likely to help lower pollution levels along the A4.

13.5 *Ground Conditions:* The submitted surveys indicate potential contaminants from historic uses of the site. Nonetheless, the Environmental Health Officer considers the impact of the scheme to be acceptable in this respect subject to a suitably worded condition (10) to secure further ground investigation where required. As such, no objection is raised.

13.6 *Litter:* Concerns have been raised that the proposal would result in additional litter and to address this a management plan is to be agreed through S106. Litter is no more likely to occur than the existing situation and is not a matter that can be controlled through this application.

14. Residential amenity

- 14.1 There are no residential properties within the immediate vicinity of the site and as such no impact would occur residential amenity as a result of the proposal. It is acknowledged there are some leisure uses along the river bank including Wokingham Waterside Centre but these would be located a sufficient distance that no overbearing or loss of light impact would occur. As such the scheme is considered to comply with policies CP1 and CP3 in relation to this aspect.

15. Archaeology

- 15.1 The site is located in an area where there is some potential for archaeological remains and Berkshire Archaeology have recommended a condition, which is considered to be reasonable and necessary to impose (Condition 16).

16. Employment Skills Plan:

- 16.1 Policy TB12 of the MDD requires proposals within the major category for planning applications to provide an employment skills plan to encourage training and apprenticeship opportunities at the local level. It is considered this could be covered through the section 106 planning obligation.

17. *Consideration of alternatives/scheme options*

- 17.1 It should be noted that this scheme has come about after years of evaluation of different schemes. The starting point for the development of the project was to consider potential alternatives. As part of the ES and the design process as a whole the agent has considered alternative schemes and appraised these options.
- 17.2 *Tidal Flow scheme on the A4 London Road:* Such scheme is where a lane or lanes would carry traffic in one direction at one time and then switch to carrying traffic in the opposite direction at another time. Option 5 proposed a tidal flow for all vehicular traffic, and option 6 was for a bus only tidal flow schemes. However, the assessment concluded that there would be insufficient economic benefits of the proposal and that it did not bring environmental benefits (reducing carbon emissions) compared to alternatives. There were also safety and capacity issues. Tidal flow schemes, either for traffic or for buses only, would cause safety risks and additional congestion, with residents living along the northern side of the A4 have to cross 2 lanes of oncoming traffic in the PM peak hour.
- 17.3 *Tunnel under the Kennet River Mouth:* The route would pass through edge of superstore car park, then via a tunnel go under the River Kennet Mouth to the TVP P&R. However, the assessment found that there were high delivery costs when compared to the benefits, and therefore was discounted. A comment was raised that a toll road tunnel could help pay for such a proposal. However, as this implies a route for all vehicles to use, that it would not bring about the desired transport benefits (modal shift, improved public transport infrastructure) and environmental improvements (including air quality) to justify the proposal. It is also understood that the proposal would also not be economically viable, even as a toll road.

- 17.4 *Park and Ferry*: This option would involve the need for a new jetty at Christ Church Bridge, and the route would follow the Thames River between Reading station and TVP P&R. However, the option provided insufficient economic benefits and did not offer significant environmental benefits such as reducing carbon emissions compared to the other options. It is estimated that the ferry would take approximately 20 minutes in one direction and therefore would not provide a significant journey time saving to encourage a modal shift. Passengers would need to interchange between modes at Woodley, Winnersh, and Bracknell which would further discourage use.
- 17.5 *Park and Rail* This option considered a new station at TVP that would provide direct rail connection between TVP P&R and Reading Railway station. However, this option offered high delivery costs when compared to the benefits, and is not supported by Network Rail. Network Rail have confirmed that they no plans to deliver a railway station at Thames Valley Business Park. Network Rail have clarified that there is not additional capacity to accommodate a park and rail in this location. As the addition of an additional stop on a stopping service (slow train) would add additional journey time and hence take up additional capacity on the network. There would be an increase pressure on the capacity in this area due to the increased trains caused by Crossrail and the electrification project (proposing to increase long and shorter distance trains) and the addition of a station and hence stopping service would not assist in this.
- 17.6 *MRT route between Suttons Park Avenue and Alexander Turner Close, across the River Kennet and beneath the Reading to Waterloo railway line*. This option considered a routing that would be located south of the main line railway, routing along Sutton Park Avenue and Alexander Turner Close, across the River Kennet and then go beneath the Reading to Waterloo railway line. However, this option was assessed to have high delivery costs when compared with the potential benefits.
- 17.7 *A congestion charging zone in Reading*. This will need to be supported by the provision of good alternatives to driving, so that people can travel in and around the Reading Area without being charged. The proposal would support the delivery of such scheme if considered in the future.
- 17.8 *Workplace parking levy in the town centre*. This is understood to be considered by Reading Borough Council. However, this proposal would need to function alongside the proposal in order to provide the public transport links, efficiency and capacity to encourage such modal shift.
- 17.9 *Widen existing dual use path and make improvements to horseshoe bridge*. There is limited ability to enhance horseshoe bridge as it is Grade II Listed beyond the existing improvements made. In addition, this would not have the intended benefit of enhancing the efficiency and reliability of public transport.
- 17.10 *Encouraging cycling in Reading*: Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council have a number of cycle schemes which have been implemented and are being implemented, this includes the 'Ready bikes' and new route linking to Reading and Wokingham Road – (National Cycle Network) NCN route 422, and cycle lanes along the reading and Wokingham road in Wokingham.

17.11 *Light Rail*: In terms of light rail, it is understood that the funding is not available for this and it is not likely that a business case could be made at this time. However, the delivery of a segregated bus network allows ability for the route to be upgraded to light rail in the future.

18. Equalities Impact Assessment

18.1 In determining this application the committee is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, race, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief.

18.2 The proposal will be fully accessible for disabled users by providing level access and a reasonable gradient for wheelchair users, being designed to meet the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, and Department Of Transport's inclusive mobility document. The proposal will be accessible to all groups and support a modal shift to public transport. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development of those holding protected characteristics.

19. Sustainability assessment (Planning balance)

19.1 **Whilst the proposal does not comply with all of the development plan policies, as set out within the NPPF, it is the decision maker's role to weight the benefits of the proposal against its impacts in the planning balance – in assessing whether the proposal constitutes sustainable development.**

19.2 Planning application 172048 was refused by Wokingham Borough council on 30th May 2018 for the reason that;

The proposed MRT link, including bridge structure, due to its height and scale and its prominent and sensitive location, particularly its proximity to the River Thames and River Kennet, would be harmful to the landscape character of the area including its riparian appearance. This would be contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy.

19.3 Following this refusal of this application the submission has been revised to better set out the alternatives and enhance the evidence base, and a Public Consultation exercise conducted to seek enhancement options resulting in the selection of ivy to hang over the structure to assist in its softening.

19.4 The proposal, through the erection of a segregated bus and cycle/path in this location consisting of a viaduct and bridge would result in some impact to the localised character of this part of the Thames Valley, and would have an impact upon landscape character. However, it needs to be noted that the proposal would result in a major transport scheme to be located adjacent to part of the Thames River, and as with any major transport scheme – given the scale required to accommodate public transport and associated required infrastructure– will result in a change to the existing character. In allocating the site for such purpose (for a high quality express bus network or mass rapid transit) such change was recognised and accepted via the adoption of the Core Strategy. Such impact is to be mitigated through the design detail of the proposal.

19.5 The resulting proposal is the most deliverable and mitigates/ softens its impact as much as it can. The proposal, throughout its lifetime, has been extensively revised in order to mitigate the impact that would result from it. This includes prior to submission including the consideration of alternative schemes, during pre-application discussions, scrutiny by a Design Review Panel, extensive revisions as a result of consultee comments, and discussion with WBC officers as part of the 2017 submission, and revisions as a result of WBC refusal of the proposal. The resulting changes to the proposal within Wokingham are detailed below;

- Two-column support of the viaduct has been revised to a single flared column
- Lighting columns along the viaduct replaced with low-level parapet lighting
- Deck narrowed by one metre at narrowest point.
- Provision of 3 x short stay mooring platforms on the River Thames and associated riverbank planting
- Provide wetland/marsh under viaduct,
- Retention of Willow tree to East Kennet Mouth
- Enhanced justification of the benefits, including submission of additional and updated evidence base.
- Relocation of mosaic and provision of benches and information boards and signage
- Provision of planting (Ivy) to hang over the road deck.

19.6 This submission has also been revised to provide a more up to date evidence base and to provide more evidence with regard to the benefits of the proposal. This includes updated traffic data, and greater information with regards to the prospective bus routes proposed and updated journey time savings. The benefits include projected bus journey savings of 6-13 minutes in 2021 (e.g. when delivered) and as result of modal shift, will mitigate the projected increase of traffic journeys along the A4.

19.7 The proposal would result in local environmental impacts and as a result of these localised impacts to the character of that part of the river and that it would have an impact upon the landscape character of that valued landscape. This has been weighed up against the environmental benefits through the provision of a sustainable transport route and would also have significant social and economic benefits. The site has been both allocated spatially and functionally in the Core Strategy for the provision of a high quality express bus network or mass rapid transit in order to deliver the objectives of the Local Transport network – managing the increased demand upon transport infrastructure within the borough. The submitted evidence projects that the proposal would improve bus journey reliability and result in journey savings of between 6 – 13 minutes in peak hours, and mitigate the projected increase in vehicular traffic along the A4/London Road. It is also noted that the proposal is the scheme that is the most deliverable and has mitigated its impact upon character as far as it reasonably could. In terms of economic benefits, the proposal would assist in the economic development of both boroughs by providing more reliable and efficient mode of transport. Moreover the proposal is highly important to the wider transport strategy (network), mitigating the current constraint on congestion that is limiting economic growth in the area.

19.8 In taking these considerations together, whilst the proposal would result in environmental impacts locally, these impacts needed to be considered against the adopted Policy CP10 , and in doing so recognises that some impact would occur. Environmental benefit is also considered to exist through the provision of sustainable transport infrastructure. The scheme has social and economic benefits which are supported by the sites adoption in the Core Strategy. This includes mitigating the impact of population growth upon the wider transport network (that integral to the Core strategy) via enhancing public transport reliability and journey times for buses, and through modal shift, mitigate the projected growth of traffic movements along the A4/London Road in 2021 with benefits for cyclists and walkers also. The proposal has been demonstrated to be the most deliverable option and the impact has been mitigated as far as reasonably possible. The proposal would also have economic benefits through mitigating the traffic and congestion that is limiting economic growth of the area. As such, on balance, whilst the proposal would result in some local environmental impacts, it also includes some environmental benefits, in addition to significant economic and social benefits of the proposal would outweigh the impact. As such, the proposal would constitute a sustainable form of development and is recommended for approval.

CONCLUSION

This is a resubmission for the proposed for the erection of a new public transport link for use by buses, cyclists and pedestrians between the A3290 (Wokingham) and Napier Road (Reading) in accordance with Policy CP10 of the adopted Core Strategy . As a whole the proposal consists of a bridge and viaduct, and reinforced soil embankment, junction improvements, new footpath links and landscaping. The proposal crosses between two boroughs and whilst each LPA must consider the scheme in principle as a whole, only that element falling within the relevant borough should be considered by Wokingham.

Whilst the proposal would result in localised environmental and visual impacts on balance the proposal would result in wider benefits and mitigate the impact of population growth upon the wider transport network (that integral to the Core Strategy). The proposal has been shown to enhance reliability and journey times for buses, and mitigate its impact upon congestion along the A4/London Road with benefits for cyclists and walkers. The proposal has been demonstrated to be the most deliverable option and has been mitigated as far as reasonably possible. As such, on balance, it is considered the economic and social benefits of the proposal would outweigh any impact.

As such, the proposal would constitute a sustainable form of development and is recommended for approval subject to conditions and completion of a planning obligation.