Agenda Item 54.

TITLE	North Wokingham Distributor Road
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 24 September 2015
WARD	Emmbrook, Evendons, Norreys and Wescott
DIRECTOR	Heather Thwaites, Director of Environment
LEAD MEMBER	John Kaiser, Executive Member for Planning and Highways

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Enables development in the North Wokingham Strategic Development Location.

Ensures appropriate mitigation of traffic impacts from the development of North Wokingham Strategic Development Location on existing residential areas.

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

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) agrees to the deliverable route option to provide the alignment for the North Wokingham Distributor Road and to progress it through detailed design to a full planning application and the funding necessary for this.
- 2) agrees that officers will continue the process of securing land required to deliver the deliverable route option.
- 3) agrees the expenditure of £1.25m with a profile of £250,000 in year 1 and £500,000 in both years 2 and 3.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

WBC has completed the refinement of North Wokingham Distributor Road following a public consultation in 2013.

Affected land owners have expressed a willingness to engage in negotiations relating to acquisition of their land for building the road.

The total scheme package is as follows:

- A generally 30mph, 6.1m wide single carriageway road with a provision for pedestrians and cyclists separated from the road by a tree-lined verge. The road would run through the North Wokingham SDL as a through-route linking all new development areas and connecting to the A329 at new junctions with Reading Road and London Road.
- A new junction would be formed with Old Forest Road south of the Emm Brook.
- The route will incorporate a existing sections of Old Forest Road, Toutley Road, and

Bell Foundry Lane.

- The road will be provided in partnership with SDL developers.
- The council recognises the potential for noise and visual impacts to residents living on and close to Old Forest Road, Toutley Road and Bell Foundry Lane.

The next stage of the project would be to prepare a planning application and would take approximately 12 months.

Background

Policy CP20 of the Council's Core Strategy identifies a requirement to improve transport capacity along the A321 and A329 to appropriately mitigate and enable the development of the North Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL), as envisaged by the Core Strategy

The Council indicated that a distributor road would provide the most effective form of mitigation against the impacts arising from the development of the SDL.

In 2013 WSP was appointed to undertake a study to identify the most appropriate highway scheme. The study identified three alternative alignments for a North Wokingham Distributor Road in the vicinity of Old Forest Road and Toutley Road, and a single alignment east of Twyford Road based on traffic impacts, environment and property impacts, land requirements, engineering design and deliverability. The routes are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Public Consultation Alignments

Public consultation was completed during September and October 2013. Around 1,450 questionnaires were returned to the Council with approximately 80 additional emails, letters and other correspondence. Of those that responded, 78% of the stated public preference was for Alternative B. The second public preference was for Alternative A that retained use of Old Forest Road and which was supported by 14% of respondents. Alternative C was the preference of 7% of respondents. A report of consultation responses was issued in spring 2014.

The consultation resulted in a number of route variations that required further more detailed investigation before the identification of a deliverable route alignment. In addition, the council was already aware that providing Alternative B would affect the operation of Toutley Industrial Estate and have a significant environmental impact on the Emm Brook flood plain close to M4 J10 which is also allocated as SANG to mitigate development at the Matthewsgreen site.

In March 2014 Executive approved additional funding to progress with the refinement of the distributor road options to gain greater confidence in scheme delivery. This report

summarises the findings of that refinement process.

The scheme is contained in the 10 year capital vision of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/2016 at an estimated £19.25m for construction. Costings will be refined as the design progresses. Responsibility for delivering some sections of the distributor road lies with the respective developers. These developers would still make a financial contribution to those sections of the distributor road outside of their development parcels.

Liaison since March 2014

The Council has undertaken a number of liaison meetings with local councillors and with landowners whose land is required for the road.

Deliverable Route Option

Following investigation of a number of route options, the refinement study recommends a single route for the distributor road termed the Deliverable Route Option. The route is a combination of Alternatives A and C, optimised to minimise land requirements, environmental and ecological impacts, and impacts to businesses and residents. The council recognises that there will be noise and visual impacts to some properties close to the suggested road alignment.

Excepting the need to mitigate noise and visual impacts on residential properties, there are few specific physical constraints along the route alignment.

The proposed route is shown schematically in Figure 2. The full technical appraisal of the route is available on request.

The proposed cross section for the distributor road is shown in Figure 3. The road carriageway would be 6.1m wide east of Old Forest Road with a 30mph speed limit. The speed limit would be increased to 40mph between Old Forest Road and Reading Road and the road width increased to 7.3m. The distributor road will be generally tree lined to provide a landscaped verge between road traffic and pedestrian and cyclist paths provided on both sides of the carriageway. Cyclist priority will be provided at minor junctions.



Figure 3 Proposed Cross-Section of the Distributor Road



Figure 2 Deliverable Route Option

The distributor road will have street lighting and illuminated signs and bollards as appropriate. Road markings will have high reflectivity and high quality road studs.

The road has been designed using the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) that provides standards, advice notes and other documents relating to the design, assessment and operation of roads in the UK. The road engineering has also taken account of current Environment Agency standards for a road close to water and crossing flood plains. Loss of flood water storage on the flood plain arising from a new road may need to be compensated in the vicinity of the road scheme requiring additional land purchase.

Reading Road to Old Forest Road

From west to east, the distributor road would form a new roundabout with A329 Reading Road. The roundabout would be constructed off-line to Reading Road with the remnant section of highway in front of the houses retained for resident's access and servicing. The junction has been sized and located to minimise the impact to existing residents of who will live opposite the new junction. Through traffic on Reading Road would use the new roundabout.

The approach lanes and the size of the roundabout have been designed to accommodate forecast traffic flows in 2026. This includes consideration for and traffic arising from full SDL development and a connection to the proposed Winnersh Relief Road that would join Reading Road to the west of the M4 motorway overbridge.

Land to provide the junction would be taken from the Winnersh Parish Council allotments and an existing parking area for the Bulldog Service Station. Both land parcels are in the ownership of Wokingham Borough Council and leased to the respective parties. The allotments would be reprovided elsewhere in the locality, although a new location has not yet been agreed. The council will establish a working group to progress with the identification and specification of a new site.

The junction would have an impact on the existing car wash facility at the Bulldog Service Station such that the car wash might need to be relocated. The council will discuss detailed options with the service station owner in the next stage of the project.

The distributor road would continue north across the existing Winnersh allotments and over the Reading-Wokingham railway line on a new road-over-rail bridge. It then continues across agricultural land to join Old Forest Road at a new junction north of Ashton Road and immediately south of the Emm Brook.

This route would affect the Millennium Arboretum. It is proposed that the amenity will be reprovided as an enhanced landscaping strip between the distributor road and M4 motorway. There is also an opportunity to reprovide the allotment in the same area, but this would be subject to further consultation with the parish council and existing allotment holders.

Affected land owners have been consulted and in principle have agreed to negotiate with the council for the acquisition of their land.

A new junction with Old Forest Road would positively direct through traffic to use the new section of highway. Old Forest Road to the south would form the minor arm and

northbound traffic from Old Forest Road would give way to through traffic.

The Emm Brook bridge on Old Forest Road would be replaced with a wider structure to accommodate the highway and improved pedestrian and cyclist provision.

The distributor road would then join Toutley Road at a realigned junction with Old Forest Road. Traffic to and from Monkey Mates, the scrap yard and council maintenance depot would give way. A new junction would also be formed with the Metro Centre.

Toutley Road

Toutley Road would form the route between Old Forest Road and the Matthewsgreen development. This would result in an intensification of traffic on Toutley Road. The existing bridge over the Ashridge Stream would be improved, as would pedestrian and cyclist provision in the locality.

The developer would provide the route section between Toutley Road and Twyford Road as it provides the main road through the Matthewsgreen development.

The council will work with the developer and local residents to provide the best possible solution for the stretch of the road east of Toutley Cottages.

Bell Foundry Lane

The junction of Twyford Road and Bell Foundry Lane would be improved to form a roundabout that also provides access to the Matthewsgreen development. Bell Foundry Lane itself would be widened to the north and within highway land to provide a minimum 6.1m carriageway. The 90° bend would be replaced with one of larger radius; this would impact Cantley Recreation Ground, requiring the corner of an existing playing field.

A new roundabout would be formed on Bell Foundry Lane immediately south of the existing sewage works access road. The distributor road would continue east on a new alignment between the sewage works and Ashridge Farm and connect to the Kentwood Farm West development. The existing access road to the sewage works would be stopped up and a new access provided from the new section of distributor road.

East of Warren House Road

The road continues as the development spine road through the Kentwood Farm West and East development sites and Keephatch Beech. New roundabout junctions would be provided at Warren House Road and Binfield Road.

The A329 London Road junction would be provided as traffic signals. It has been sized and tested to work with the improved Coppid Beech Roundabout and Montague Park traffic signal controlled junctions.

Visual Impact and Noise Mitigation to affected Residents

The environmental report to the refinement study is available on request.

The visual impacts of the relief road will be reduced in part by the road alignment itself. This would include constructing the road level as close to and below the existing ground level where this is achievable. Elsewhere extensive tree and shrub planting will be provided, and, at the more sensitive noise and visual receptors, landscaped earth bunds will be provided. The landscape design and land requirements to achieve this will be detailed for the planning application.

Air Quality

Air quality in the study area is mainly influenced by operational emissions from road transport using the M4, A329(M), A329 Reading Road, Twyford Road and a number of local residential roads. The council has declared the area around M4 J10 (the junction with the A329(M)) as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The results of air quality modelling undertaken by the council indicates that the Air Quality Strategy AQS objectives for nitrogen dioxide and particulates are being met within the general vicinity of the monitoring sites and it is considered unlikely that the distributor road will result in any exceedances of the AQS objectives.

Detailed investigations for impacts on buildings are required for the construction phase and will be reported in the planning application. Before undertaking this work, it is difficult to comment stage on dust and particulate deposition to nearby properties. However, in accordance with the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) Guidance on the Assessment of Construction Phase Effects, with appropriate mitigation measures in place, the effect of dust and particulate emissions arising from the distributor road is anticipated to be negligible.

Noise

The overall impact of noise on existing residents will be considered in detail as part of the planning application. Where existing roads are used to form the distributor road, operational background noise level changes are anticipated, especially on Toutley Road. The use of bunds, noise barriers and surfacing that produces less noise will all be considered as part of the design.

More detailed studies will ultimately be required to determine the significance of noise and vibration effects, and also any regulatory duty to discharge the obligations under the Noise Insulation Regulations (NIR) 1975, as amended.

Water Quality

Sections of the distributor road will run on or close to areas designated as Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3, and the scheme would affect a number of culverts and drainage ditches. The Environment Agency has general policy regarding culverts and states that no watercourse should be culverted unless there is an overriding need to do so. The alteration of drainage patterns and the creation of extensive areas of impermeable surface through new areas of hard standing also has the potential to alter the level and rate of surface water run-off. Bridges will be provided over water courses at Old Forest Road, Toutley Road and the new highway section connecting to Kentwood Farm West. A need to culvert an existing drainage ditch has been identified on Bell Foundry Lane to keep the improvement scheme within the existing highway corridor. However culverting can change and reduce the ecological status of water bodies as well as increasing the risk of blockage.

Further engineering design will be undertaken in consultation with the Environment

Agency during preparation of the planning application.

Traffic Effects

Traffic modelling indicates that the distributor road will enable new development in the North Wokingham SDL and mitigate its traffic impacts on existing residential areas to the south. In this respect the Deliverable Route Option fully mitigates the impacts of development. Traffic flows for the Forecast Year 2026 are summarised in Figure 3.

The council's WSTM3 (Wokingham Strategic Transport Model, version 3) has been used to model the traffic effects of the distributor road. It models traffic volumes and behaviour using pcus, or passenger car units. These units are frequently used in traffic assessment work and are based on the principle of translating all vehicles into one common traffic 'currency'. This is achieved by apportioning different pcu values to different types of traffic. A car is equivalent to one pcu. An articulated lorry is 2.9 pcus and a bus 2.5 pcus.

WSTM3 models traffic conditions in 2010 and for a Forecast Year 2026. The 2026 model assumes completion and occupation of all 1,800 new homes located in the North Wokingham SDL, and provision of the full distributor road connecting to A329 Reading Road and London Road and linking all the new development areas.

The traffic model reports traffic flows for the weekday AM and PM peak hours. The morning or AM peak hour represents the time period 0800-0900hrs and the evening or PM peak hour 1700-1800hrs.

In the 2026 AM peak hour the new section of distributor road west of Old Forest Road would be used by a two-way flow of around 1,125 pcus/hr. The flow on Toutley Road is forecast to be 1,400 pcus/hr. Through the Matthewsgreen development the two-way flow is shown as 1,275 pcus/hr and 1,325 pcus/hr on Bell Foundry Lane.

The new section of highway between the sewage works and Ashridge Farm and leading into Kentwood Farm West has an AM 2026 peak hour flow of 1,050 pcus/hr. Through Kentwood Farm East and into Keephatch Beech the distributor road would carry 1,025 pcus/hr, and on the approaches to and from A329 London Road the two-way flow is shown is 1,125 pcus/hr.

In the 2026 PM peak hour the distributor road's two-way flow north of A329 London Road and south of Binfield Road is forecast to be 825 pcus/hr. On the section north through Keephatch Beech and into Kentwood Farm East the indicated flow is 975 pcus/hr, and a flow of 875 pcus/hr is shown on the new section north of Ashridge Farm.

Bell Foundry Lane is shown with a forecast two-way flow of 1,225 pcus/hr and 1,300 pcus/hr through the Matthewsgreen development. The flow on Toutley Road is shown as 1,150 pcus/hr and on the new road section west of Old Forest Road the forecast flow is 970 pcus/hr.

Derived from TA 79/99 Table 2, the design capacity of a 6.1m wide of this type road is 1,500 vehs/hr two-way total. On this basis the distributor road sections operate at between 68% and 93% of design capacity in the 2026 AM peak hour (from 1,025 pcus/hr to 1,400 pcus/hr), and between 55% and 87% of design capacity in the 2026



Figure 3 Traffic Flow Summary

All alternatives to using Toutley Road could only be provided at significant cost and would provide no additional traffic benefit. Options would have required the acquisition PM peak hour (from 825 pcus/hr and 1,300 pcus/hr). On all sections, the forecast flow is within the design capacity of a road of this type and indicates a good to satisfactory level of service during peak periods. Traffic flows during the inter-peak, evening periods (after 1900hrs) and at weekends will be significantly lower than those forecast for the weekday peak hours.

Other Options Considered

A number of alternative alignments for the distributor road were considered and these are detailed in the Refinement Report, available on request. The options included: retaining use of Old Forest Road (Alternative A); four alternatives to using Toutley Road to form the distributor road; and two alternative routes to the new section proposed between Bell Foundry Lane and the Kentwood Farm West development.

Delivery Implications

<u>Environmental Impacts and Compensation</u>: At this stage of the project, findings presented in the Environmental Appraisal Report must be considered both generic and preliminary and will require updating when a single route for the distributor road is agreed by Executive. This will be reported in the planning application.

<u>Flood Risk</u>: Proposed new sections of highway at the junction of Old Forest Road and Toutley Road, and the crossing on the stream between Bell Foundry Land and Kentwood Farm West are both located in flood risk zones. The Toutley Road scheme is located in a Flood Risk 3 zone. Consultation and agreement on any mitigation will be required with the Environment Agency.

<u>Reading-Wokingham Line Railway Bridge</u>: Discussions with Network Rail to enable the road-over-rail bridge crossing of the Reading-Wokingham railway line are at an early stage.

Landowner Meetings: Although meetings have been held with most affected land owners, the council only has in principle agreement to negotiate the acquisition of land to enable the highway. When planning permission is secured the council will then engage in detailed land acquisition talks. It has not been possible to identify the land owner for land at the junction of Old Forest Road and Toutley Road. It appears that the registered land owner is no longer in business and correspondence to date has been returned undelivered. The council is continuing to pursue options to identify the land owner, initially under section 16 of the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976.

<u>Allotments</u>: In-principle agreement has been secured form Winnersh Parish Council to reprovide the allotments at least to an equivalent area/number of pitches to the existing site. The requirements for and facilities at a new site are understood, however a location has not been agreed or secured. Discussions will continue and a site identified ahead of submission of a planning application for the distributor road.

<u>Developer-Provided Sections of Distributor Road</u>: The council is working with developers to secure the earliest delivery of the distributor road in its entirety. Discussions with developers have gained in principle support for this delivery approach.

<u>Transport Business Case</u>: To secure government funding for all or part of a road scheme, a road project must demonstrate value-for-money. This is presented in a Transport Business Case (TBC). The TBC has at its centre a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and is the method of choice for establishing both value-for-money and priorities at all levels of planning. It will be very difficult to make a business case for any option other than the Deliverable Route Option, with the exception of Alternative A. If any other option in the Toutley area is included in the TBC it may undermine the business case for the whole distributor road. Any failure to secure government funding for the road would at best delay the timing of its full completion.

Road sections east of Toutley Road and within development boundaries would be delivered in line with development phasing, but the improvement of Bell Foundry Lane and especially the new section west of Old Forest Road could not be provided until developer contributions received by the council or CIL funds were sufficient to allow construction to start. Any delay to the distributor road being provided in full would not delay housing deliveries and would result in additional traffic loadings on residential roads towards Reading Road junctions at Old Forest Road, Emmbrook Road and Holt Lane. Government funding secured on a successful TBC would ensure the early delivery of the route in full.

Next Steps

If the route is approved then the next key milestone is to develop a planning application and seek approval for this. The planning application will require detailed design and a full environmental impact assessment. In parallel, work will be done on the business case that is required to secure the funding that has been identified by the Department for Transport for the scheme. The earliest an application could be brought to planning committee would be summer 2016. Procurement would follow approval and construction could possibly start in 2018/2019.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

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

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£250,000	Yes	Capital
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£500,000	Yes	Capital
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£500,000	Yes	Capital

Funding has already been allocated through the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/2016 to progress the scheme.

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

See Cross-Council Implications below.

The figures shown above are taken from the Council's capital vision from the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Cross-Council Implications

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

List of Background Papers

North Wokingham Distributor Road: Refinement Report

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