

# Agenda Item 76.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
203535	25/05/2021 (PPA)	Wokingham Town	Evendons; Wescott;

<b>Applicant</b>	
<b>Site Address</b>	Land at the junction of Finchampstead Road and Molly Millars Lane
<b>Proposal</b>	Full planning application for works at the junction of the A321 Finchampstead Road and Molly Millars Lane comprising replacement of the existing three-arm mini-roundabout with a larger roundabout; demolition of Nos 81 and 83/85 Finchampstead Road; and associated landscaping and changes to the pedestrian crossing environment.
<b>Type</b>	Full
<b>Officer</b>	Nick Chancellor
<b>Reason for determination by committee</b>	Applicant is Wokingham Borough Council

<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Extraordinary Planning Committee on Tuesday, 18 May 2021
<b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>	Assistant Director – Place

<b>SUMMARY</b>
<p>The application is for highway improvements to construct a larger roundabout to replace an existing mini-roundabout at the junction of Molly Millars Lane and Finchampstead Road in Wokingham. The enlarged junction would form part of the highway works associated with wider development in South Wokingham and the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR), where improvements to highway infrastructure are required by the Development Plan to ease traffic flows and improve capacity to accommodate planned growth. The development would necessitate the demolition of Nos 81 and 83/85 Finchampstead Road.</p> <p>The SWDR will be a continuous new route running through the South Wokingham SDL, connecting the A329 London Road in the north to the A321 Finchampstead Road in the south. The new road would provide access to the development and form a corridor for sustainable travel, as well as providing some traffic relief in the historic town centre of Wokingham.</p> <p>The first section of the route - from the A329 London Road to the railway line – was delivered as part of the first phase of the SDL at Montague Park (formerly Buckhurst Farm) (now known as, William Heelas Way). The second section – commonly referred to as the “Eastern Gateway” - will connect William Heelas Way to Waterloo Road via a new bridge over the Reading-Waterloo railway line. Planning permission was granted in February 2018 and works are underway. Application 192928 (reported elsewhere in this agenda) seeks consent for a third Section linking the Eastern Gateway to Finchampstead Road.</p> <p>The proposed works under this proposal have been referred to as the Western Gateway however are separate to the SWDR and relate to an improvement scheme on the existing highway. The current application is before the planning committee because the applicant is Wokingham Borough Council and is recommended for approval. In terms of</p>

its design, the proposal meets the Council's and National design standards and will not have an unacceptable impact of the amenity of neighbouring residents or on users of the highway subject to conditions. The proposal will help alleviate traffic issues locally and facilitate improved pedestrian / cycle movement at this location and is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out in this report.

## **PLANNING STATUS**

- Major Development Location
- Flood Zone 1
- Potentially Contaminated Land consultation zone
- Landfill consultation zone
- Green Route (Finchampstead Road)
- Tree Preservation Order (TPO-1362-2010 relates to five Oak trees within, or just outside the site boundary)
- Strategic Transport Network Improvements
- Overhead cables
- Bat consultation zone
- Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (straddles 5&7km zones)
- Wind turbine safeguarding zone
- Farnborough Aerodrome consultation zone
- Groundwater protection zone
- Landfill consultation zone
- Molly Millars Lane Core Employment Area

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:**

### **A. Conditions and informatives:**

#### CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three 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).

#### Approved details

2. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings received by the local planning authority on 17/12/2020. 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.

WMHP-TG-WG2-DR-HI-0161-P01 – Location Plan

WMHP-TG-WG2-DR-HI-0151-P04 – General Arrangement Plan

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. Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of roads, cycleways and footways, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage, road signage and lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details should include the following items:

- i) Revised Swept paths and carriageway adjustments
- ii) A revised plan which indicates widening of the eastern footway on Finchampstead Road in the southbound direction
- iii) Revised Plan to show details of the road markings
- iv) Details of species and height of landscaping within the visibility splays and junction intervisibility zone
- v) Details of the shared cycleway crossover on the access to Eden Motors

Works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the road hereby approved is brought into use.

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

#### Construction Environmental Management Plan

4. No development, including any works of demolition, shall take place, until a Construction Environmental Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan should include amongst other things:

- i) phasing of development;
- ii) Construction Traffic Management Plan comprising
  - a. Analysis of the volumes of construction vehicles during construction phases for both light and heavy vehicles,
  - b. Vehicle routes and notably lorry routes, with volumes of lorries,
  - c. traffic management proposals including any mitigations, hours of operation and signage;
- iii) vehicle parking for site operatives and visitors;
- iv) provision for loading, unloading and storage of plant and materials;
- v) measures to prevent queueing outside the site;
- vi) wheel washing and/or other measures to prevent deposit of mud on the highway;
- vii) measures for the control of dust and dirt during construction;
- viii) measures for the control of noise during construction in accordance;
- ix) measures to mitigate the impact on protected species and habitats during construction in accordance with the Ecological Appraisal and Bat Activity Survey Report;
- x) security hoarding including facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;
- xi) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works;
- xii) any temporary lighting; and
- xiii) procedures for liaising with the local community including a hotline number for reporting and responding to complaints.

The Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details throughout the construction period.

Reason: to safeguard the amenities of people living and working in the area, protected species and habitats and highway safety and convenience in accordance with Core Strategy CP1, CP3, CP6 & CP7 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC06 & TB23.

#### Lighting

5. Prior to commencement of the development, a Lighting Scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Scheme shall:

- i) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their resting places or along important routes used to access key area of their territory, for example for foraging; and
- ii) Specify the type of lighting to be used and how and where it will be installed in order to provide for the safe operation of the highway;
- iii) demonstrate that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

The lighting scheme shall be implemented as approved before Western Gateway comes into use and be retained and operated in accordance with the approved details thereafter.

Reason: to ensure adequate lighting is provided for highway safety and convenience whilst protecting visual amenity including setting of heritage assets and to maintain favourable conservation status of the site for protected species and species of principal importance. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP7, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies

#### Drainage

6. No construction shall take place until details of the drainage system for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LLFA. The details shall include how the site currently drains and will be drained after proposed development with consideration to SuDS. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development and shall be maintained in the approved form for as long as the development remains on the site.

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.

#### Noise

7. Details of the acoustic fencing screening to be installed along the northern façade of No. 87 Finchampstead Road and details of any other noise mitigation measures shall be submitted for written approval to the local planning authority. The approved mitigation measures shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and will be retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To protect residents of affected properties from noise. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3.

## LANDSCAPING

### Detailed landscaping scheme

8. 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, levels or contours, means of enclosure, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials. 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 (and TB06 for garden development)

### Retention of trees

9. 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 the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

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.

### Protection of trees

10.

a) No development or other operations shall take place except in complete accordance with the details within the Arboricultural Method Statement dated 16th November 2020 (WMHP-TG-WG2-RP-LS-0001 P02) and associated Tree Protection Plan (WMHP-TG-WG2-DR-LS-3004 P04) (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme).

b) No operations shall commence on site in connection with development hereby approved (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) until the tree protection works required by the Approved Scheme are in place 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 in writing 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

#### Landscape management

11. 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, other than 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.

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.

#### INFORMATIVES

1. Adequate precautions shall be taken during the construction period to prevent the deposit of mud and similar debris on adjacent highways. For further information contact the Highway Authority on tel.: 0118 9746000.

2. The Head of Highways at the Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham [0118 9746000] should be contacted for the approval of the access construction details before any work is carried out within the highway (including verges and footways). This planning permission does NOT authorise the construction of such an access or works.

3. Any works/ events carried out by or on behalf of the developer affecting either a public highway or a prospectively maintainable highway (as defined under s.87 New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA)), shall be co-ordinated and licensed as required under NRSWA and the Traffic Management Act 2004 in order to minimise disruption to both pedestrian and vehicular users of the highway.

Any such works or events, and particularly those involving the connection of any utility to the site must be co-ordinated by the developer in liaison with the Borough's Street Works team (0118 974 6302). This must take place AT LEAST three months in advance of the intended works to ensure effective co-ordination with other works so as to minimise disruption.

4. The applicant's attention is drawn to the presence of a c.2m wide service strip running adjacent to the surfaced roadway. The service strip forms part of the adopted public highway. It is an offence for any works to be undertaken within this service strip without express permission in writing from the highway authority. The Head of Technical Services at the Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham (0118 9746000) must be contacted for the approval of any such works.

5. The applicant is advised that, for the purpose of interpreting the planning conditions of this planning permission, "commencement of development" shall not be interpreted as including any activities which are strictly limited confined to site preparation / enabling work; or otherwise activity of a strictly limited nature; provided the scope of these works are first defined and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority in relation to a specific planning condition.

6. 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.

<b>RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY</b>		
<b>Application Number</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Decision</b>
192928	Land south of Wokingham, east of Finchampstead Road and west of Waterloo Road, Wokingham  Full application for the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) between Finchampstead Road and Waterloo Road, including a link to Heathlands Road, together with associated works including demolition of Nos 76A and 76B Finchampstead Road.	Live application / decision pending
192325	Land at phase 3 of the South Wokingham Strategy Development Location (SDL)  Hybrid planning application consisting of outline application with details of access for up to 190 dwellings, public open space and associated infrastructure and full application for suitable alternative natural greenspace (SANG)	Live application / decision pending
191068	Land at phase 2b of the South Wokingham Strategy Development Location (SDL)  Hybrid application: outline for up to 1,434 dwellings, a two-form entry	Live application / decision pending

	primary school, local centre, community building, public open space, play areas and associated infrastructure and landscaping, with access to be determined.; full for the proposed Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), associated landscaping and temporary car park	
190914	Land at phase 2a of the South Wokingham Strategy Development Location (SDL)  Outline application for up to 215 dwellings, public open space, play areas, associated infrastructure and landscaping, with access to be determined.	Live application / decision pending
192420	Unit 1 Molly Millars Lane, Wokingham, RG41 2QZ  Full application for the change of use to mixed use of B8, B1c and B1a. Extension of first floor. Increase in ridge height by 1.75m. Installation of 2no. silos, new external doors and solar panels.	Approved 08/12/2020
180223	89 Finchampstead Road  Householder application for the proposed erection of a two storey side and single storey side extensions to dwelling, following demolition and removal of existing extension and garage.	Approved 06/04/2018
183208	Brook House and ReadyPower House Molly Millars Lane Wokingham RG41 6LZ  Full application for the proposed change of use from existing mixed use to Sui Generis mixed use (B1c/B2/B8) to include erection of extension to Brook House, installation of solar panels and two silos, engineering excavation work, ancillary parking and demolition of existing Ready Power building.	Approved 13/09/2019
173036	Wokingham Motors, Thames House Molly Millars Lane Wokingham RG41 2QR	Approved 16/10/2017



	Full application for the erection of a single storey front extension to existing showroom	
F/2014/1760	Intersurgical Ltd Crane House Molly Millars Lane Wokingham RG412RZ  Link between Crane House and Remeha House with new front entrance, revised highway access and 15 new visitor parking spaces	Approved 05/06/2015
F/2006/7962	81 Finchampstead Road Wokingham RG412PE  Proposed single storey rear extension to dwelling to form conservatory.	Approved 01/08/2006
F/2005/6299	81 Finchampstead Road Wokingham RG412PE  Proposed change of use of land from open space to residential garden and erection of 2m high fence. Retrospective.	Approved 21/12/2005
F/2005/3889	81 Finchampstead Road Wokingham RG412PE  Proposed two storey rear and side extensions to dwelling. Erection of detached garage.	Approved 22/03/2005
F/2003/0533	Wokingham Motors Ltd Thames House Molly Millars Lane Wokingham RG412QR  Proposed erection of carpark decking for new and used car stock.	Approved 10/11/2003

<b>SUMMARY INFORMATION</b>	
<b>For Commercial</b>	
Site Area:	0.83ha
Previous land use(s) and floorspace(s)	Existing public highway (A321 Finchampstead Road and Molly Millars Lane), residential dwellings and associated curtilage (81, 83-85, 87 Finchampstead Road).
Proposed floorspace of each use	n/a
Change in floorspace (+/-)	n/a
Net loss of dwellings	-3

<b>CONSULTATION RESPONSES</b>
Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust

Berkshire Archaeology	No objection
Bracknell Forest Council	No objection
Crime Prevention Design Officer	Sought clarification / no comments offered re: crime prevention
Highways England	No objection
National Grid	
Natural England	No comments or objections
Network Rail	No objection
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	No comments received
Southern Gas Networks	No objection / advised re: location of utilities apparatus
SEE Power Distribution	No objection / advised re: location of utilities apparatus
Thames Water	
WBC Biodiversity	No comments or objections received <b>[OFFICER NOTE: recommended condition 5 seeks to control the design specification for street lighting in order to mitigate the potential for disturbance to bats]</b>
WBC Drainage	No objection subject to condition requiring details of a drainage system
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	
WBC Environmental Health	No objection. The proposal is assessed as having a negligible impact on air quality. Recommends mitigation
WBC Highways	Supports the application subject to conditions; 3, 4 and 5 refer.
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection subject to conditions to protect trees that are to be retained and details of a soft landscaping scheme to mitigate the loss of existing trees; 8-11 refer.
WBC Growth and Delivery (Planning Policy)	The application is considered to support the delivery of the South Wokingham SDL and is a transport improvement anticipated by Core Strategy CP10. The loss of three dwellings is not in conflict with Core Strategy CP3 (avoiding net loss of dwellings) sine the scheme facilitates the delivery of the wider SDL.
WBC Public Rights of Way	No objection - no impact on public rights of way.

## REPRESENTATIONS

### Wokingham Town Council:

The committee have several issues with this proposal so will have to object. These include:

Safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists with the removal of the controlled crossing. This is used frequently by young children.

The loss of Trees and houses.

The Railway bridges are pinch points and without being replaced or access widened this will be a major safety issue for pedestrians and cyclists and in particular mobility scooters, wheelchairs and buggies as the pathway will remain very narrow.

CP1 Sustainable development

- 1) quality of environment
- 10) attractive, safe, secure

CP2 Inclusive communities

- a) ageing population
- b) Children, young people and families
- c) People with special needs

CP3 General Principles for development

- b) functional, accessible, safe, secure
- c) ecological, heritage, landscape, geological
- e) full potential of site

**[OFFICER NOTE:** *The application has been subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, which includes assessing pedestrian and cycle use as well as vehicles, the conclusions of which are deemed acceptable by the LPA. Further Road Safety Audit stages will be required in conjunction with the detailed design stage for the junction. Planning conditions will ensure the loss of trees are mitigated through appropriate replacement planting. The development is an infrastructure scheme identified as being necessary within the Development Plan to support the delivery of the South Wokingham SDL and carries greater weight than the loss of three houses within the application site as it supports housing in South Wokingham. The development does not preclude future works being undertaken to widen to the railway bridge; see also Principle of Development / Finchampstead Road Bridges within the main body of this report. The development includes controlled and uncontrolled pedestrian crossings which will improve accessibility of this junction to non motorised users. Moreover it doesn't preclude a crossing being installed in the future if required. It should also be noted that the SDL development proposals are also proposing a new controlled crossing further to the south of Finchampstead Road. The development is considered to accord with policies CP1, CP2 and CP3]*

### **Finchampstead Parish Council:**

1. We are generally in favour of the application as traffic flow needs to be increased for the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) servicing the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SWSDL), however some areas may need to be reviewed.

2. The major drawback in the project is no work is projected on the railway bridge which will create a major pinch point in restricting the flow of traffic for high sided vehicles.

**[OFFICER NOTE:** *The development does not preclude future works being undertaken to widen to the railway bridge; see also Principle of Development / Finchampstead Road Bridges within the main body of this report]*

3. This also prevents the continuation of the south side shared pedestrian/cycleway coming into town. The existing path on the north side of the road under the bridge is already very busy and quite narrow. There is considerable local demand for safe walking and cycling routes into the town centre from the south. This is recognised by Finchampstead Parish Council and Wokingham Without Parish Council. Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy states that; Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) '...the development must demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car...' Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand) '...planning permission will be granted for schemes that: a) Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice; b) Improve the existing infrastructure network, including road, rail and public transport,

enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including provision for those with reduced mobility, and other users. The location is in an urban area close to the town centre and identified in the draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) as a designated walking and cycling route. This proposal fails to meet any of these policy requirements with regard to entering or leaving the roundabout from the north.

**[OFFICER NOTE: It is acknowledged that existing footway provision under the railway bridge has a sub-standard width and is limited to the eastern side of the road only. Whilst this would benefit from improvement, it falls outside the scope of the current application. The current application does not prejudice a potential future scheme to widen the bridge.]**

Even without remodelling the bridge, if the plan made clear provision for cycle and foot traffic into the town centre, even if via an adjacent alternative route, it would have some merit.

4. Whilst we support the creation of the shared pedestrian/cycleway from Finchampstead Road into the existing signalled pedestrian crossing in Molly Millar's Lane and the continuation on the north side of Molly Millar's Lane, the current design is unlikely to encourage westbound cyclists to make the effort to cross the road to join it.

**[OFFICER NOTE: The proposals provide westbound non-motorised users with the option to use shared facilities along the northern side of Molly Millars Lane. The wider SDL proposals introduce pedestrian / cycle improvements across the network which include Molly Millars Lane].**

It is also questionable as to whether this is a suitable cycling route to the station as it is not the most direct route and requires cycling along a very narrow and congested section of Barkham Rd.

5. The Design and Access statement paragraph 4.4 states that '...there is not a pedestrian / cyclist desire line to cross Finchampstead Road South of the roundabout. This is wholly inaccurate as the existing light-controlled crossing that has operated at that location for over 25 years is very-well used. We agree with the recommendations in the road safety audit stage 1, especially point H – retaining the existing signalised pedestrian crossing in Finchampstead Road, south of the junction.

**[OFFICER NOTE: Please refer to the Access & Movement / Highway Safety section in the main body of this report]**

6. There will be some loss of trees including a loss of a mature oak with a TPO and there should be specific provision to replace these.

**[OFFICER NOTE: The application is supported by a soft landscaping scheme which proposes 11 replacement trees to be planted in the immediate vicinity of the junction. Planning conditions are recommended to further refine the landscaping plan specification, including to secure the provision of larger specimens. It is therefore considered that the loss of existing trees can be adequately mitigated].**

## **Local Members:**

### **Cllr Sarah Kerr (Ewendons) – letter of objection:**

Full comments appended to this report, letter of objection summarised as follows:

- Fails to respond to air quality issues
- Fails to make adequate provision for pedestrians and cyclists / does not comply with LTN120
- Fails to encourage sustainable modes of transport
- Geometry does not allow for increased vehicle capacity at the junction

- Railway bridge remains a constraint / scheme does not address need to remove height restrictions along A321 as identified in CP21.
- Issues in Road Safety Audit have not been addressed
- Objection to removal of existing signalised crossing located to the south of the junction
- Unsafe vehicular access onto Finchampstead Road for existing residents
- Poor visibility on approach to southern arm of roundabout
- Proposed wildflower planting within verges
- Air quality report does not take account of PM2.5 – small particulates

**Cllr Maria Gee (Wescott) – letter of objection:**

Full comments appended to this report, letter of objection summarised as follows

- Fails to make adequate provision for pedestrians and cyclists / does not comply with LTN120
- Not based on sustainable design principles – will lead to increase in traffic and discourage sustainable modes of travel (pedestrians / cyclists)
- Does not meet requirements of Public Sector Equality Duty
- Objection to removal of existing signalised crossing located to the south of the junction
- Proposed crossing facilities / uncontrolled crossings potentially unsafe
- Unclear whether existing street furniture will be re-provided or relocated

**Neighbours:**

68 letters (excluding duplicates) from individuals objecting to the proposal  
1 letters from individuals in support of the proposal

Letter received from Wokingham Active Travel Community Hub  
Letter received from Great Langborough Residents Association

Individual resident and local amenity group objections to the application are summarised as follows:

- Objection to removal of existing signalised crossing located to the south of the junction / desire to maintain crossing in currently location
- Scheme makes insufficient provision for pedestrians/cyclists / does not comply with LTN 1/20
- Existing railway bridge should be widened, or included within the scope of the project
- Scheme will not improve traffic flow / short term solution
- Unsafe design / insufficient visibility at junction
- Will increase pollution
- Loss of trees not justified / insufficient proposed tree planting
- Objection to demolition of Family Centre

**[OFFICER NOTE:** *The matters raised by Clls Kerr & Gee, as well as residents and amenity groups are addressed either below directly, or else in the main body of this report (relevant section signposted below):*

- Air quality / pollution – see *Environmental Health / Air Quality*

- LTN120 / sustainable modes of travel / railway bridge constraint – see *Access & Movement / Sustainability & Accessibility*; see also, *Principle of Development / Finchampstead Road Bridges*
- Safety / design – see *Access & Movement / Highway Safety*
- Traffic – see *Access & Movement / Traffic Impact*
- Loss of trees – see *Trees & Landscape*
- Public Sector Equality Duty – An initial Equality Assessment was undertaken by the applicant and no negative impacts on protected groups were identified. The Local Planning Authority does not consider that protected groups identified by the Equality Act will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities resulting from this proposal, or that there would be any significant adverse impacts upon protected groups.
- Street furniture – Details of street furniture, including whether any is to be re-used or replacement furniture re-sited will be clarified through the detailed design process as a matter of course and subject to highway safety audit.
- Loss of Family Centre – the Centre is being relocated to a new location within the town centre; application 202270 refers.

<b>PLANNING POLICY</b>		
National Policy	<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	<b>CP1</b>	Sustainable Development
	<b>CP2</b>	Inclusive Communities
	<b>CP3</b>	General Principles for Development
	<b>CP4</b>	Infrastructure Requirements
	<b>CP6</b>	Managing Travel Demand
	<b>CP7</b>	Biodiversity
	<b>CP8</b>	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	<b>CP9</b>	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	<b>CP10</b>	Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network
	<b>CP11</b>	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
	<b>CP17</b>	Housing Delivery
	<b>CP21</b>	South Wokingham Strategic Development Location
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	<b>CC01</b>	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	<b>CC02</b>	Development Limits
	<b>CC03</b>	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	<b>CC04</b>	Sustainable Design and Construction
	<b>CC06</b>	Noise

	<b>CC08</b>	Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
	<b>CC09</b>	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	<b>CC10</b>	Sustainable Drainage
	<b>TB21</b>	Landscape Character
	<b>TB23</b>	Biodiversity and Development
	<b>TB24</b>	Designated Heritage Assets
	<b>TB25</b>	Archaeology
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	<b>BDG</b>	Borough Design Guide (2012)
		South Wokingham Strategic Development Location Supplementary Planning Document (2011)
		Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2011)
		Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (21010) & Companion Guide (2010)

## PLANNING ISSUES

### Description of Development:

1. The proposed development relates to a site comprising the junction of Finchampstead Road A321 and Molly Millars Lane, together with adjoining highway approaches and three residential properties. The junction is currently a 3-arm mini-roundabout. A footway is located along the eastern side of the junction, leading to Wokingham town centre to the north. The Finchampstead Road north arm of the roundabout passes beneath the North Downs Railway Line Bridge. The carriageway at the bridge is approximately 6.18m wide with a 1.35m wide footway on the southern side of the road.

2. The application proposes to facilitate a new, larger junction in order to ease traffic flows and improve capacity. The works require the demolition of 81 and 83/85 Finchampstead Road to accommodate a replacement three-arm standard roundabout, and creation of a new controlled crossing on the northern arm. An existing controlled crossing to the south of the junction would be removed. Uncontrolled crossing facilities at the western and southern arms, together with footway would be provided, together with an extension to the existing shared use (unsegregated) footway/cycleway along Molly Millars Lane. Reconfigured vehicular access points to existing dwellings (87 & 92 Finchampstead Road) are also specified.

### Principle of Development:

3. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) 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.

4. Wokingham Borough Core Strategy establishes the spatial vision for the Borough for the period 2006-2026, including a requirement to provide at least 13,487 new dwellings, with associated infrastructure (Core Strategy policy CP17 Housing Delivery). The majority of this new residential development is to be in four Strategic Development Locations (SDLs), of which South Wokingham is one. Core Strategy policy CP21 South Wokingham Strategic Development Location anticipates a comprehensively planned, phased urban extension of around 2,500 dwellings and associated infrastructure, including includes a new connection between Coppid Beech Roundabout and Finchampstead Road; the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR). Core Strategy policies CP10 Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network MDDL policy CC08 Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure also refer.

5. For reference the first section of the SWDR – from London Road south to the Reading-Waterloo railway line - has already been delivered as part of the first phase of the SDL, at Montague Park (formerly Buckhurst Farm) and is called William Heelas Way.

6. The second section of the road, often referred to as the “Eastern Gateway”, is under construction and will extend William Heelas Way southwards, to Waterloo Road. The works include construction of a new bridge over the railway line, a new roundabout at the junction with Waterloo Road and stopping up of Waterloo Road between the existing level crossing and the new roundabout, to facilitate closure of the level crossing by Network Rail (for safety reasons) once the alternative route via between William Heelas Way and Waterloo Road is open.

7. The “Western Gateway”, as this has been referred to when taken together with current application 192928 (for the central section of the road between the Tesco roundabout and new roundabout on Waterloo Road) is consistent with the delivery of highways improvements anticipated by Development Plan policy. Subject to detailed highways and amenity considerations, the principle of the proposed development is therefore fully established in the development plan.

#### Finchampstead Road Bridges:

8. Other works identified by Core Strategy CP10 Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network include improvements to the two railway bridges on the A321 Finchampstead Road but it has been decided subsequently that this is not feasible/will not be feasible in the foreseeable future, for the reasons explained below.

9. Detailed assessment has shown that the Finchampstead Road Bridge headroom enhancement is not essential in highway terms because alternative routes already exist and the headroom alteration is not required to derive the benefits of the southern distributor road to deliver the South Wokingham SDL.

10. The scheme design does not prejudice the bridge from being addressed at a later stage should that be considered necessary in the future. Whilst not determinative and for information, the delivery of the bridge, if progressed would result in a road closure at this location for around two years, due to its complexity and Network Rail requirements. It is however, essential that the other highway improvements (Western Gateway and South Wokingham Distributor Road) located north and south of the bridge are delivered to



provide network capacity improvements ahead of any bridge works being programmed in the future. The scheme is therefore compatible with the objectives of the strategic plan in that it facilitates the Strategic Development Location whilst accommodating new and existing traffic levels satisfactorily.

Net loss of dwellings:

11. Core Strategy policy CP3 i) General Principles for Development resists development that would lead to a net loss of dwellings. The enlargement of the existing roundabout junction would require demolition of three existing houses: 171 & 173/175 Finchampstead Road. However, the SWDR is of strategic importance, being required to support the delivery of around 2,500 new homes in the SDL as part of the planned development of the borough; material considerations that significantly outweigh the in principle objection to the loss of three dwellings.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Development:

12. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that projects should be screened if they are listed in the first column in Schedule 2 of the 2017 EIA Regulations and exceed the exclusion thresholds and criteria set out in the second column. The development is categorised as a road project under category 10b of schedule 2 and – at 0.83ha - falls below the 1ha exclusion threshold. It is not sited in a ‘sensitive area’ as defined within the regulations. As such, Environmental Impact Assessment is not required. Nevertheless, the application is accompanied by relevant supporting information that considers the environmental impact and which is referred to in later sections of this report.

Character of the Area:

13. Core Strategy policies CP1 Sustainable Development and CP3 General Principles for Development establish an overarching requirement for high quality design that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment.

14. The surrounding area is comprised of mixed-use development, including retail and commercial facilities, areas for parking, residential dwellings and an active railway line to the north-east. Two other roundabout junctions are sited further to the north along Finchampstead Road.

15. The proposed larger roundabout and road alignment changes will require the removal of three dwellings and a number of trees. Finchampstead Road is designated as Green Route so therefore these proposed changes will have an impact on the existing character of the Route in this location. There are five TPO Oak trees (1362/2010) within or just outside the red line boundary of the site. Given the mixed, urban location, the proposals for an enlarged standard roundabout are not considered to result in harm to the character of the area subject to the implementation of an appropriate landscaping scheme (see below).

Trees and Landscape:

16. Core Strategy Policies CP1, Sustainable Development and CP3, General Principles for Development require a high quality design that respects its context. This requirement is amplified by MDDL Policies CC03, Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping and TB21, Landscape Character and South Wokingham SPD which require development proposals to protect and enhance the Borough’s Green Infrastructure, retaining existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and incorporating high quality - ideally native – planting as an integral part of any scheme, within the context of the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment.

17. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment and associated Tree Impact Plan has been provided with the application. The implication of the proposed highway works on the tree resource is that 17 individual trees and one tree group will need to be removed. The majority of these have been categorised as a Category C trees (of low or average quality and value), with three trees identified as Category B trees (of a moderate quality and their loss will have an impact on visual amenity). The most significant of which is the TPO Oak growing to the front of 83 & 85 Finchampstead Road. The other TPO Oaks adjacent to the northern boundary of the site will not be affected by the proposals and can be adequately protected during the construction of the new roundabout and associated works. An Arboricultural Method Statement provides appropriate details of the tree protection during the construction period.

18. Due to the constraints of the site, the design and location of the roundabout in relation to the Category B trees there is no opportunity to amend the layout to retain these trees, including the TPO Oak. The application is supported by a soft landscaping scheme which proposed to plant 11 replacement trees in the immediate vicinity of the junction. It is considered that the landscaping scheme could be improved upon by specifying larger specimen trees and so a planning condition is recommended to refine the scheme (condition 8). Conditions are also recommended to ensure new tree planting is appropriately maintained, also that retained trees are protected through construction process (conditions 9-11). Subject to these conditions, the impact on the Green Route can be appropriately mitigated in accordance with MDD Local Plan Policy CC03

#### Access and Movement:

##### Highway Safety

19. Core Strategy Policies CP1, Sustainable Development and CP6, Managing Travel Demand seek to manage travel demand by a variety of measures. New development to be located to minimise the need to travel and where there are (or will be at the time of development) a choice of modes of transport available. It should also improve the existing infrastructure network, mitigate adverse impacts on the network, enhance road safety and avoid highway or traffic related environmental problems.

20. The application describes how the proposals have evolved over time. The geometry for the junction is considered to be in accordance with relevant guidance set out in the Manual for Streets, Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and Wokingham Borough Council's 'Living Streets'. The scheme has incorporated the recommendations of Cycle Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note 1/20 where possible.

21. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) has been carried out and is acceptable subject to further auditing. This includes consideration of pedestrian and cyclists movements. Visibility splays and swept path analysis have demonstrated that the site could be accessed safely by vehicles. The RSA agreed recommendations and amendments would be undertaken at the detailed design stage and before a stage 2 RSA. On this basis, the application has demonstrated that highway safety requirements can be met.

##### Traffic Impact

22. The Wokingham Strategic Transport Model has been used as the basis for the scheme assessment, and Transport Assessments have considered the impact of this junction in association with the wider SWDR proposals that comprise current application 192928. The modelling assessments indicate that the junctions would provide the surplus

capacity that is required to accommodate increased traffic flows resulting from the South Wokingham Distributor Road, South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL) and background traffic growth by the end of the local plan period (2026). Queuing and delay on all arms in both scenarios will be minimal during both the AM and PM peak periods. As the development would improve the functioning of the local highway network, the proposals are considered to be acceptable in terms of their impact on the highway network.

Sustainability & Accessibility:

23. WBC Core Strategy CP6 requires new development to facilitate sustainable forms of transport to allow choice and to enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including provision for those with reduced mobility. Policy CP2 also includes the requirements for meeting the needs of non-motorists users (NMUs).

24. New government guidance has been issued on provision for cycling: Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design (July 2020) emphasises the importance of cycling as means of everyday transport and establishes that cycle networks should be coherent; direct; safe; comfortable; and attractive.

25. The Council Executive has recently adopted LTN1/20 as highway guidance for developing new policy, schemes that have not been commenced and – where possible within budget constraints – to schemes already in the design process. LTN1/20 emphasises the importance of cycling as means of everyday transport and establishes that cycle networks should be coherent; direct; safe; comfortable; and attractive. The Western Gateway junction is at an advanced stage in the design process so it is necessary to consider whether the proposals are consistent with the guidance and, if not, the feasibility of revising the design. The existing site constraints and surrounding highway opportunities need also to be considered when applying LTN1/20.

26. Para 6.5.6 states that shared use facilities may be appropriate in some situations, providing they are well-designed and implemented, for example a length of shared pathway may be acceptable to achieve continuity of a cycle route. Existing facilities comprise a two-way shared use (unsegregated) off-carriageway facility for both pedestrians and cyclists along the north side of Molly Millars Lane from the west to the existing signal-controlled crossing outside Eden Motors car dealership. There is no current provision to the east of this point or to the north of the mini-roundabout on Finchampstead Road towards the railway bridge. The application proposals would extend the existing Molly Millars Lane shared use facility further eastwards to a new signal-controlled crossing close to the railway bridge on Finchampstead Road.

27. The proposals also seek to relocate the existing toucan crossing on Molly Millars Lane further to the west, though an uncontrolled crossing would be maintained at the entrance to the roundabout. The existing toucan crossing would be removed south of the roundabout along Finchampstead Road; however, an uncontrolled crossing would be provided at the entrance to the roundabout. Ward Cllrs Gee and Kerr, as well as a number of local residents have objected to the loss of the existing controlled crossing to the south of the roundabout, noting that it is well used and provides a safer alternative the proposed uncontrolled island crossing.

28. Whilst it is not considered that a crossing is required to the south of the roundabout for the purposes of the current application, this does not preclude such a facility being introduced along Finchampstead Road at a future date. It should be noted however that

a new crossing further south towards Tanglely Drive is currently being considered in association with emerging walking and cycling strategy proposals that are to be implemented as part of the broader SWSDL development.

29. A new toucan crossing would be sited at the northern arm, allowing pedestrians to safely cross to the eastern footway leading northwards under the railway bridge. Currently, this is an issue for pedestrians walking between Molly Millars and the town centre, who otherwise have to cross the road twice and with a longer route. This causes some to take a short cut walking in front of the garage and then crossing without controls near the bridge and this can be hazardous. The provision of a new northern crossing where there is a desire line therefore represents a significant improvement for users of this route.



*As existing*

*As proposed*

30. It is acknowledged that existing footway provision under the railway bridge has a sub-standard width and is limited to the eastern side of the road only. Whilst this would benefit from improvement, it falls outside the scope of the current application. The current application does not prejudice a potential future scheme to widen the bridge.

31. In conclusion, the proposals are considered to improve facilities for non-motorised users as far as is practical within the space constraints of the site. The scheme will, as a matter of course, be subject to further assessment and refinement through the detailed design and safety audit process and during operation. As such, the development is considered to provide an acceptable degree of accessibility, including for sustainable modes of travel.

#### Flooding and Drainage:

32. MDD policies CC09 and CC10 require all sources of flood risk to be taken into account. Applications are required to demonstrate that surface water arising from development will be managed in a sustainable manner. Proposals must also take account of climate change and guide development into the lowest areas of flood risk in the first instance.

33. The site falls within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at a low risk of fluvial flooding. The planning application is accompanied by a drainage strategy and plans demonstrating that the development would improve the drainage network without increasing flood risk.

A condition is recommended to require full details of the drainage system to be approved in tandem with the detailed design process for the junction; (condition 6).

Residential Amenities:

34. Core Strategy Policy CP3 requires that new development should be of a high quality of design that does not cause detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users or their quality of life. The highway works would not result in overbearing, overlooking or loss of light to any neighbouring property. The potential for noise pollution and impact of the demolition/construction works are considered within the Environmental Health section below.

Environmental Health:

Air Quality

35. Core Strategy policy CP1 Sustainable Development establishes that development should minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment.

36. The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment which considers potential changes to air quality as a result of this development. The assessment compares the 2021 baseline and future year 2036 and predicts an increase of between 0.1 – 0.2 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for Annual Mean NO<sub>2</sub> and an increase of 0.0 – 0.1 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for PM<sub>10</sub>. The Environmental Health officer considers that this is a negligible impact and has no concerns about the scheme.

Noise

37. MDDL Policy CC06 Noise requires proposals to demonstrate how noise impacts on sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) have been addressed.

No. 87 Finchampstead Road:

38. 87 Finchampstead Road immediately adjoins the application site and the roundabout carriageway would be sited within 5m of its northern elevation. The application is accompanied by a noise assessment carried out in accordance with DMRB standards and identifies the potential for road noise to adversely impact the property. Accordingly, a condition is recommended to require details of acoustic screening to be installed either within the property, or along the boundary parallel to its northern elevation. The property is owned by Wokingham Borough Council and mitigation can therefore be carried out in tandem with the wider highway improvement works.

Demolition and construction activities:

39. The development will require the demolition of three existing residential properties – 81 and 83/85 Finchampstead Road. In order to reduce the impact of demolition works on adjoining residential and commercial properties, a condition is recommended to control the method of demolition. Details will also be required to control the method of construction throughout the main works, including such elements as construction vehicle routing, traffic management, temporary lighting and measures to control dust and mud on the highway (condition 4).

Ecology:

40. Core Strategy policy CP7 and MDDL policy TB23 require appropriate protection of species and habitats of conservation value. Design Principle 1b (i-ii) is concerned with

protection of ecological habitat and biodiversity features, together with mitigation of any impacts that do arise.

41. The application is supported by ecological assessments that describe the existing baseline conditions and recommend mitigation measures, enhancements and compensation strategies. Details of proposed long term maintenance and monitoring requirements for each key species are also provided. The development is therefore considered to be capable of ensuring appropriate protection for species and habitats of conservation value and no objections have been raised.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

42. The application is a proposal for infrastructure development and therefore is not CIL liable.

Archaeology:

43. Core Strategy Policy CP3 and Submission MDD DPD Policy TB25 require the archaeological impact of development to be taken into consideration.

44. The application is supported by an archaeological assessment that satisfactorily covers the known archaeology of the site and immediate surrounds, as well as the archaeological potential of the area. As the likelihood of remains of significance surviving within the site are assessed as being low, further mitigation has not been deemed necessary.

**The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)**

*In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.*

**Conclusion**

The proposed development accords with national and local policy and forms part of an anticipated piece of sustainable transport infrastructure to meet the demands of forecast housing and employment growth. The detail of the scheme is acceptable in policy terms, subject to conditions. As such, the application is recommended for approval.