

Views on road safety and capacity improvements for Wokingham Borough

The government has asked each local Highways authority to identify and improve a strategic network of main local routes. It is making money available for highways improvements to this network. Part of the rationale is to reduce use of the national strategic network for shorter trips through use of a motorway for just one or two junctions instead of using more direct local roads for these purposes.

The first task for Wokingham Borough is to define its strategic network. I have put together some draft suggestions on how Wokingham might identify its local strategic network and would be interested in your thoughts.

The nature of the Boroughs main roads

Wokingham's routes are busier east west than north south. This reflects the need of many to travel into the County centre at Reading or to go to Bracknell, to the cluster of towns west of London and to London itself in the east. East-west travellers have a choice of A329 M, A 329, and A4 as well as having the M4 to the north and the M3 to the south. North south travel is badly impeded by the east west railways lines from Paddington to Reading and Waterloo to Reading, and by the west east flowing Thames to the north of the Borough. The network has only one two way bridge over the river at Henley, where capacity is badly impeded by traffic lights at the north end of the bridge, and a one way at a time river bridge in Sonning. In Wokingham there is only one underpass bridge to the train line to Crowthorne on the A321 and that is not wide enough to take two lorries at the same time. There are 3 level crossings which cause major congestion.

The main North-south A road, the A321 should be included in the network, as it connects the Borough to Oxfordshire by the only adjacent two way river bridge starting in the Borough at Henley. It goes down to the Blackwater towns, the A 30 and by extension the M3 to the south. .

The A329 M and its extension, the A3290 should also be included. It is the heaviest used local road with two lane capacity in each direction. It runs between east and west, connecting Bracknell to east Reading. It ends at the river where Berkshire has always wanted a river crossing, but Oxfordshire has not.

The A 327 runs from Fleet in Hampshire with a western tilt to Reading going through Arborfield and Shinfield, two expanding villages. It is currently subject to by pass upgrades and will be an important route for travel into and out of Reading. It warrants inclusion.

The A329 east west road links Bracknell to Reading via Wokingham Winnersh and Earley, all busy settlements. This is also being upgraded and warrants inclusion given the usage.

The A 4 is another east-west route that used to be a trunk road. Since adoption as a local road its capacity has been cut by traffic management measures and speeds slowed. As this is not in my constituency I do not express a view on whether this should be included.

The A33 Southampton to Reading road has been detrunked and runs to the west of the Borough into Reading. It has already attracted substantial investment upgrading to its Berkshire section to dual carriageway. It should also be part of the local strategic network.