

18th November 2015

Mr. Connor Corrigan,
Delivery Manager,
Development Management,
Wokingham Borough Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham,
RG40 1WR

Dear Mr. Corrigan,

Planning Application No. 152649

Site Location: North Wokingham Strategic Development Location

Proposal: Reserved Matters for construction of the Northern Distributor Road

I am writing on behalf of the Emmbrook Residents Association in response to the above reserved matters planning application for the section of the Northern Distributor Road (NDR) within the Matthewsgreen Farm development. The application has been submitted following the Council's decisions to abandon the alignment of the western section of the NDR overwhelmingly voted for by residents in the 2013 consultation (Alternative B), which they subsequently rejected on cost grounds in 2014, as well as the alignment they then favoured as being deliverable (Alternative C). The alignment that the Council now claims to be "deliverable" is one of eight that the developers modelled in support of their outline application for the development in 2014, and is shown as Scenario C6 in Figure 6.7 "WSTM Traffic Modelling 2026 NWDR Alignment Scenarios". The current application conforms to this scenario in that it terminates the NDR from the development on Toutley Road.

As the applicant has not provided any updated traffic data in support of this application the latest data that is available to us is that supplied as part of the outline application in 2014. An extract of the output from the Wokingham Strategic Traffic Model (WSTM3) supplied at that time for Scenario C6 is shown in the table below, together with the corresponding data from the manual counts they carried out for the Toutley Road junctions. It should be noted that the future year figures given here are likely to be under estimates for the following reasons:

- (1) They do not take into account the impact the construction of 300 dwellings in the eastern section of the North Wokingham Strategic Development Location will

have on traffic flows on this section of the NDR.

(2) In June the Council’s Executive Committee endorsed the approach taken in the “Travelling to Wokingham Town Centre – Our Vision for the Future” document in managing travel to the town centre. One of the means of reducing town centre traffic include in this document was “routing through traffic on to new distributor roads north and south of the town”. The roads referred to here are the NDR and SDR despite many assurances to residents over the years from senior members of the Council that the NDR would not act as a by-pass or relief road for the town.

In view of the uncertainty that these later developments and proposals cast on the 2014 modelling for the section of the NDR in question here we submit that it is entirely appropriate that it is reassessed taking them into account before any decisions are made.

Toutley Road and Northern Distributor Road peak traffic flow data

Road	Flow Direction	AM Peak		PM Peak	
		SMA 2014	WSTM3 2026	SMA 2014	WSTM3 2026
Toutley Road north of NDR	North	17	917	68	451
Toutley Road north of NDR	South	92	545	31	769
Total	Total	109	1462	99	1220
Toutley Road south of NDR	North	46	121	56	251
Toutley Road south of NDR	South	107	326	86	251
Total	Total	153	447	142	502
Northern Distributor Road	West		533		769
Northern Distributor Road	East		700		490
Total	Total		1233		1259

Regarding the alignment of the NDR through the development the ERA has been consistent in its opposition to routing it through the most densely populated and used part of the development, thus exposing the maximum number of residents to the greatest possible level of noise and air pollution. Our case was laid out in our response to the outline application, and we feel it is worth repeating it here:

The question why is it thought such a good idea to route this amount of traffic through a residential and pedestrian area needs answering. The Design and Access Statement states in Section 6 that –

The design objective was to balance what are termed the ‘link’ and ‘place’ functions of the public highway. The link function is movement to, from and through the area. The place function is the range of other activities that the public highway accommodates in creating a vibrant, healthy and safe place to live and an active centre for the local community.

The actual answer here, of course, is that with this level of traffic there is no balance between link and place. The place function of “creating a vibrant, healthy and safe place to live and an active centre for the local community” will

be overwhelmed by the link function. The Design and Access Statement and Transport Assessment both state that the local centre would be “a shared surface area, designed to promote pedestrian movement across the NWDR and to reduce vehicle speeds adjacent to the proposed Primary School”. So it is proposed that the best way to improve pedestrian safety and “calm” the traffic is to force the pedestrians to interact with the traffic as much as possible when going about their daily business!

And what of the school? The last week in November (2014) was Road Safety Week promoted by the road safety charity Brake. Part of their safety promotion included the following:

“Brakes’s survey of 600 primary school children in the south east shows

- Three in five (60%) think roads in their community can be dangerous for walking and cycling;
- Two in five (43%) say they have been hit or nearly hit by a vehicle while on foot or bike”

Also, the Common’s Environmental Audit Committee recently concluded that new schools, care homes and hospitals should be built far away from major roads because of the dangers of air pollution, stating that “it is important to stop a new generation of children being exposed to the problem”.

Yet the school is located just about as close to the A329(M) and the NDR as it is possible to get, with its main entrance actually on the NDR. Even the school car park is situated on the other side of the school forcing the staff arriving by car to drive over the main access ways to the school in order to park.

The developer has stated that the location of the school and associated playing fields has been chosen to open out the view to the north and make the development seem less crowded. However, placing them more to the south, in the centre of the development, would have a similar visual impact and improve the health and safety aspects of the development.

From the table above it can be seen that there will be a significant increase in the traffic from present volumes on Toutley Road, with the western section that will form part of the NDR seeing an increase of over 12 times in the morning peak and over 13 times in the evening. These increases are likely to be on the low side as they do not take into account all the current factors that will impact the traffic as explained above.

The section of Old Forest Road that will form part of the NDR will see similar increases. In order to minimise the impact of this on the adjacent dwellings we look to the Council to implement the alignment of the NDR and realignment of Old Forest Road detailed in the report “North Wokingham Distributor Road” approved by the Executive Meeting on the 24th September 2015. This report outlines the plan to divert the NDR off the existing alignment of the Old Forest Road to the west immediately

after it crosses the Emmbrook, and to position its new junction with the southern section of the Old Forest Road an appropriate distance from the dwellings.

Unfortunately, although this report does acknowledge the “intensification” of traffic on Toutley Road it offers no similar scheme to mitigate its impact on the residents of this road and the cul-de-sacs off it. Under these circumstances it is essential that the Council take this issue seriously and provides the best form of mitigation possible given the constricted nature of the road. We also submit that the Planning Authority must ensure that this planning application cannot hinder or obstruct in any way any plans that the Council may have, or may formulate in the future, to achieve this mitigation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Gallagher', with a horizontal line underneath.

Paul Gallagher
Chairman
Emmbrook Residents Association