
Great Langborough Residents' Association

Representing the interests of residents in south central Wokingham

5 September 2012

Keith Baker, Executive Member for Highways & Planning, Wokingham BC

Dear Councillor Baker

We urge you to conduct a thorough and public review of the proposed route, estimated capacity, safety and environmental impact of the Southern Distributor Road.

The Southern Distributor Road's purpose in the adopted South Wokingham SDL Supplementary Planning Document is defined as: *To carry all vehicles travelling through South Wokingham, to connect neighbourhoods and to give access and exposure to the centres.* The SPD further states that: *The detailed design of streets should conform to the principles set out in the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets.* The DoT Manual guides as follows: **2.2 Streets and roads:** *2.2.1 A clear distinction can be drawn between streets and roads. Roads are essentially highways whose main function is accommodating the movement of motor traffic. Streets are typically lined with buildings and public spaces, and while movement is still a key function, there are several others, of which the place function is the most important.*

This distinction is not at all clear in the route diagrams or text in the SPD. The SDR is thus in danger of failing both as a Street and as a Road.

We have followed closely the often heated correspondence on this subject. We have little interest in who did what in the past.

However, you do have a duty to share with the community what decisions and recommendations have been made to date and the basis for them.

The proposed road must meet its basic criteria for success. They are as follows, in no particular order of priority: -

- The capacity of the road must be sufficient to accommodate both through and locally generated traffic of all expected types.
- The road should ease the traffic pressure on the town centre and not attract additional vehicles.
- The road design and the route through the housing development should be safe for all road users and for users of intersecting rights of way.
- The potential environmental impact on existing and new residents should be understood and minimised.
- The visual impact of the road should not destroy a highly valued rural aspect and detract from the effectiveness of allocated SANGS.
- The cost of the road should be such that it can be adequately funded by developer contributions and, if available, local and national government sources.

The Southern SDR is one of several key local issues where trust is in danger of breaking down between Wokingham Borough Council and concerned residents. This is an opportunity for you to reverse this by sharing relevant existing and future information with us in an open fashion.

Wokingham residents have a genuine interest in the future of our town. They will understand that major infrastructure decisions are always complex. Some of the factors will exert a pull in opposite directions. Acceptable compromises will have to be struck. If we understand the issues that the decision makers are facing, there is a better chance of community support.

One of the ways in which a dialogue could be started and developed is in the Southern SDL Forum. David Nash, our representative, attended the inaugural meeting on July 16th chaired by Cllr. Rob Stanton. The attendees agreed that a prime candidate for the next meeting should be the proposed Southern Distributor Road.

We await the announcement of the date for the next meeting. Hopefully, the forum will become a genuine consultation vehicle.

Yours sincerely

Pat Smith, Chairman, Great Langborough RA, 58 Sturges Road, RG40 2HE

Cc: Rob Stanton, Deputy Leader, Wokingham BC