

Sir

Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)

I read with interest the recently published Wokingham Borough Council LTP4. The Evidence Base for this is published alongside and quite clearly describes the Borough as currently experiencing higher car ownership, incomes and employment levels than the rest of the South East region. The data also shows that the Borough's population is growing quickly as a result of major housing and employment growth. All of this suggests that use of the car will already be much more popular than the essentially poorly developed, predominantly Reading centric and radially based bus services as a way of travelling around much of the Borough. Not unsurprisingly this is also reflected in the data supplied.

However, LTP4 is quite dismissive about the current traffic congestion experienced by Borough residents especially around the Reading fringes. Indeed, specific measures to address these are not discussed. Instead, the document contains a litany of aspirational initiatives to encourage us all to walk, cycle and get on the bus as a strategic response to keeping the Borough moving. Taken in isolation, such measures are laudable in many ways. However, in total is this really the way forward as we build more and more houses and employment opportunities which in turn tend to run counter to Borough climate change and biodiversity policies? Yet again the document is rather quiet on the degree of societal change required in our affluent local circumstances if these aspirations are to be delivered at the level necessary to tackle our existing and future traffic problems.

The Borough will install more and more charging points to help us to run our electric cars as we transition towards zero carbon. On the face of it this again seems a positive idea but in reality, doesn't it also run contrary to a strategy based on urging us to walk, cycle and get on the bus? Isn't it the case that electric and even future autonomous cars take up just as much road space as petrol models and so we shall still have unaddressed traffic congestion albeit with less pollution.

Lots of aspirational outline schemes are mentioned to encourage walk, cycle and bus modes and if these can be achieved cost effectively

without worsening present traffic problems then, most certainly, they should be welcomed. However, is this feasible given the constrained nature of much of the Borough's road network. Indeed, further concerning are the comments about redesignating road space to achieve these ends without the detail to go with the outline principle.

The timing for this document is strange given that the much delayed and all-embracing Local Plan Update (LPU) outlining future planning policy throughout the Borough is still awaited. LTP4 mentions the LPU and even alludes to a major new development area at Hall Farm on the A327 at Arborfield. However, no detail is given as to how the inevitable transport implications will be dealt with. All this could be construed as premature on an A327 corridor which is already subject to heavy traffic flows from two massive previous strategic development locations at Shinfield and Arborfield. Both developments are far from built out and so the eventual traffic implications are still awaited. Indeed, there are already moves to put even more development on this busy corridor including yet more big black sheds for the Natural History Museum and Kew Gardens as well as a rebuilt Royal Berkshire Hospital. These all within the Thames Valley Science Park which is already much bigger than originally planned. There is also even talk of the need for another highly intrusive M4 junction between Earley and Winnersh although there is no mention of any of this in LTP4.

Can LTP4 really be considered as a strategic response to the transport problems facing the Borough today and in future as Planning decisions move on so quickly? Surely as it stands the document can only be seen as naïve and unrealistic requiring our Council to reconsider. There is much more to be said about what is and (perhaps more importantly) what isn't in this document which is presently out to consultation. I recommend everyone to read it and make their feelings known to our Council.

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