

## **BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB)**

**REPORT TO:** BLTB

**DATE:** 12 March 2020

**CONTACT OFFICER:**

Josie Wragg, Chief Executive, Slough  
Borough Council, lead officer to BLTB

### **PART I**

#### **Item 7: 2.02 Bracknell: Warfield Link Road – One Year Evaluation Report**

##### ***Purpose of Report***

1. At your meeting in March 2017, you approved guidance for the preparation of one- and five-year-on impact reports for BLTB funded local transport schemes.
2. This report introduces the impact report for scheme 2.02 Bracknell: Warfield Link Road.

##### ***Recommendation***

3. You are recommended to note the reports from the scheme promoter and the independent assessor.

##### ***Other Implications***

##### ***Financial***

4. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

##### ***Risk Management***

5. The government requires all LEPs to have Assurance Frameworks which set out governance arrangements and financial procedures. One of the specific requirements for transport schemes is to require scheme promoters to submit impact reports one- and five-years post implementation.

##### ***Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications***

6. Slough Borough Council will provide legal support for the BLTB should any questions arise on the application of the Assurance Framework.

##### ***Supporting Information***

7. Bracknell Forest Council received £3.5m towards the £5.2m cost of this scheme.
8. The one-year on impact report is attached at Appendix 1; and the independent assessor's report is attached at Appendix 2.

## **Conclusion**

9. The Independent Assessor believes that the WLR one-year impact report represents a well-constructed and balanced document, making good use of the available evidence. It is considered to meet many of requirements for a one-year impact report, although would, ideally, have provided more specific evidence of the impacts of the WLR scheme.
10. The report provides a good overview of the scheme delivered and the positive impacts that have occurred in terms of increased highway and walking and cycling provision. The scheme has clearly facilitated access to enable housing development across the Warfield area. Housing development has come forward, albeit not at the rate that had originally been forecast.
11. At this stage, it is not clear if the road is carrying the volumes of traffic anticipated; however, since this will be directly linked to the associated levels of development (and housing occupation), it is recognised that this will be behind planned levels.
12. There is evidence to demonstrate that the scheme has successfully redistributed trips away from congested parts of the local highway network, specifically Newton Green.
13. There is no further action required

## **Background Papers**

None.

# Warfield Link Road

## 12 Month Evaluation Report



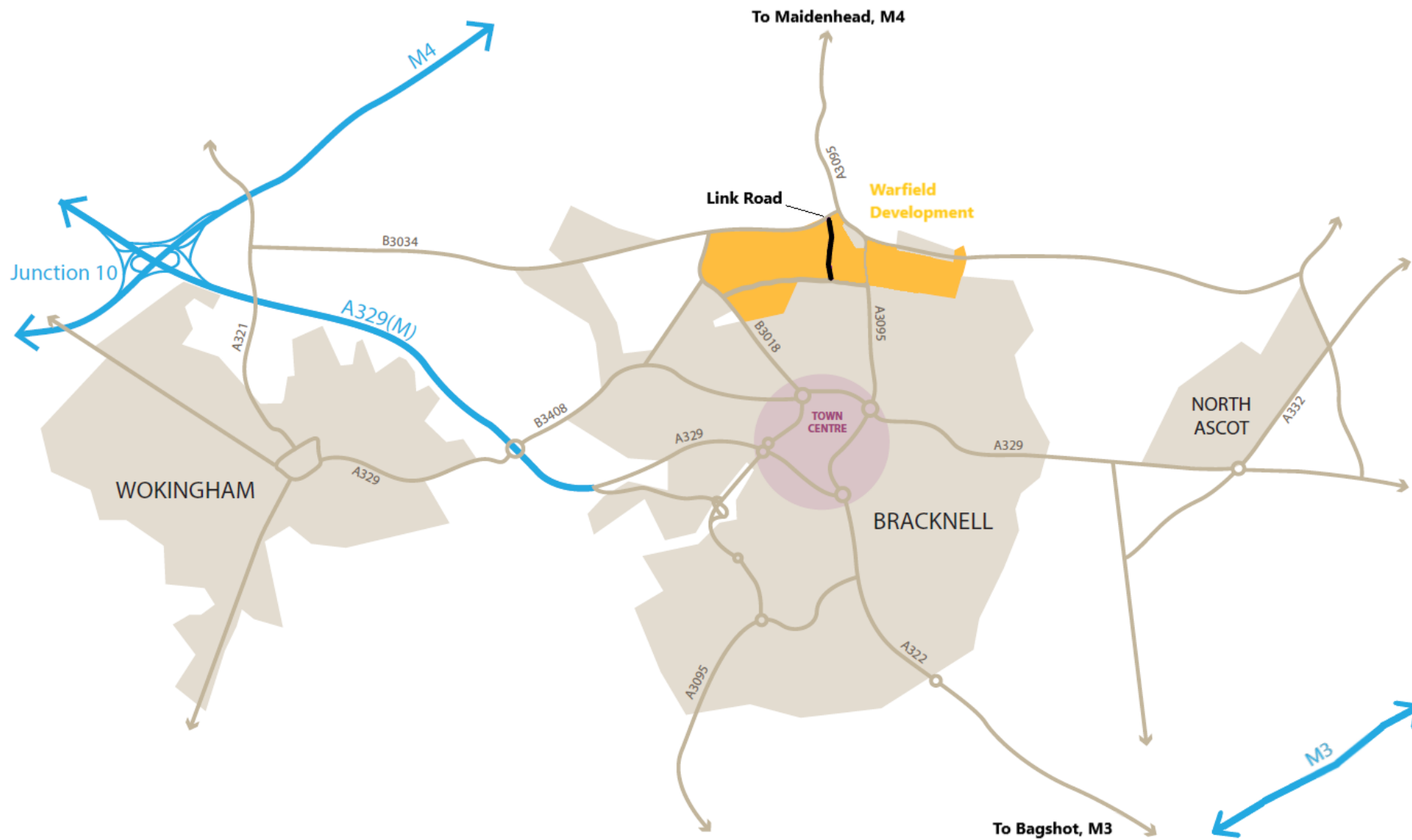
# 1. Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 The Warfield Link Road is a half-mile length of strategically important new road, constructed between 2016-2018 to facilitate a significant new housing development and relieve pressures on existing routes in the Bracknell Forest Parish of Warfield.
- 1.2 Bracknell Forest has recently seen a period of high growth with significant release of land around the area to facilitate much-needed housing. However, there have been previous years (e.g. 2006) with lower delivery rates due to delays partly attributable to infrastructure needs. The Warfield development and its link road will significantly boost housing supply.
- 1.3 The A3095 road carries significant volumes of traffic during peak hours and faces constraints at two signal-controlled junctions within the village of Newell Green. The basic intentions of the new link road were to facilitate significant new development, whilst also relieving some traffic pressure from the A3095 by encouraging it to take an alternative route.



Figure 1: Location of link road shown in black, within the wider proposed Warfield Development area (yellow)

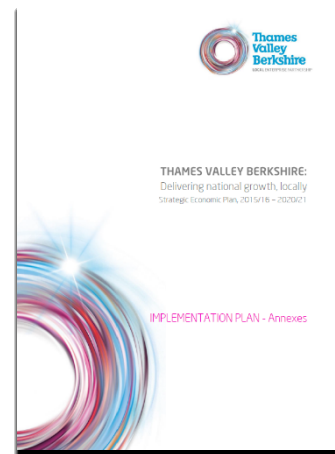


## Justification for the scheme

- 1.4 The Warfield housing development was identified by the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as a significant location for growth and the link road as a regional transport priority within its [Strategic Economic Plan](#), with Bracknell Forest having the second biggest planned housing provision between 2006 – 2026. This plan outlines the case for necessary investment to infrastructure, enterprise and employment that is required for the Thames Valley region's economic growth.
- 1.5 The building of the link road unlocked a strategic development location for 2,200 new dwellings, a school, neighbourhood centre, open space, SANG and other infrastructure and facilities. The link road crosses the middle of the site and serves as access for many of the development parcels.
- 1.6 Bracknell Forest Council put together a successful financial [Business Case](#) for the scheme, and submitted it to the LEP for funding through the Local Growth Fund. The scheme was successful and as a result, the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) provided some of the funding towards the Warfield Link Road.

- 1.7 **The Thames Valley LEP Strategic Economic Plan** has six key strategic priorities which it requires any infrastructure packages to achieve. These are:

- Unlocking housing development;
- Enhancing urban connectivity;
- Encouraging vibrant town centres;
- Positioning Thames Valley Businesses for a digital future;
- Foundations for future growth – housing transport and utilities; and
- Enhancing the strategic transport network.



- 1.8 The Warfield site delivers on all of these priorities, which will be covered in more detail in the following chapters. In addition, **the Bracknell Forest Council Local Transport Plan Core Strategy and Implementation Plan (2011 – 2026)** defines the following objectives which were considered in the planning process for the Warfield Link Road:

- Reduce delays associated with traffic congestion and improve reliability of journey times;
- Maintain and improve, where feasible, the local transport network;
- Secure necessary transport infrastructure and services to support sustainable development;
- Encourage and promote accessibility by sustainable modes of transport;
- Protect and enhance the quantity and quality of natural resources including water, air quality and the natural environment;



- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport

### **Specific Scheme Objectives**

1.9 The proposed Warfield Link Road Scheme key objectives were (and, given that construction on the site is ongoing, remain):

- Providing access to 2200 new dwellings;
- Providing access to local employment and supporting the building of the new homes;
- Assisting in tackling local congestion issues for historic and proposed development by providing an improved link road and thus relieving other alternative routes that are rural in nature and not suitable for increased traffic loads;
- Improving journey times between the edges of Bracknell and the Town Centre and key employment areas in the town;
- Improving the environment for non-motorised users on existing routes and also providing the right level of infrastructure for new residents on the development areas served by the new link.

### **Measures of Success**

1.10 The Link Road Business Case stated that the Council would be measuring the following items to see if the scheme has been successful:

- Reduced traffic on existing roads around the area of the new development;
- A potential increase in the number of walking and cycle trips from existing areas;
- Improvements in journey times into the town centre from the edges of the urban area;
- The comprehensive development of the area is brought forward quickly, including the provision of affordable housing and the new school;

We will consider how successful the scheme has been in delivering on the objectives in the following chapters.

## 2. Scheme Build

2.1 The key delivery stages for the project were outlined in the project programme that was submitted with the Business Case presented to the LEP in 2014. The phases of construction were as follows;

- Stage 1 – Quelm Park Roundabout to Watersplash Lane
- Stage 2 – Watersplash Lane to Senior Living Roundabout
- Stage 3 – Senior Living Roundabout to Forest Road
- Stage 4 – Forest Road Roundabout to Three Legged Cross

2.2 The planning framework for comprehensive mixed-use development including 2,200 dwellings at Warfield was developed as follows:

- Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008) Policy CS5 identified the site.
- Site Allocation Local Plan Policy SA9 allocated the site for housing, other uses and the provision of a link-road.
- The Warfield Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2012) provided more detailed guidance on how the site should be developed.

2.3 However, the site comprised multiple ownerships which meant comprehensive development as a single site through one planning application could not be achieved. Therefore, to kick- start a large part of the site (known as area 2), the Council entered into negotiations with Berkeley Homes during 2013/14 to deliver 750 dwellings, significant open space provision, a new primary school and the construction of the link road. The constructed link road has already allowed the development of a further land parcel to the East of the road, hence why Berkeley's offered to construct the whole road if financial support could be obtained.

2.4 Without financial support there would have been a significant delay to housing delivery in the allocation because of the fragmented ownership of the Warfield site, emerging s106 pooling restrictions and that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was not yet in place.

2.5 As a result, outline planning permission for the Berkeley's development including the link road, the school and other elements was granted in October 2014. The link road was secured with other infrastructure items in an accompanying s106 Agreement. This significantly reduced the delivery risk for this project.

2.6 In advance of construction works which were expected to start in January 2015, Section 278 and Section 38 agreements for the link road were required between Berkeley Homes (the developer) and the authority. In order to mitigate delay in construction, the authority agreed a staged approach to Section 278 approvals. This allowed the first and second stage engineering plans to be delivered whilst discussions with the Environment Agency and the authority on the third and fourth stages (Forest Road roundabout to Three Legged Cross) continued, as the link road had to cross the River Cut.

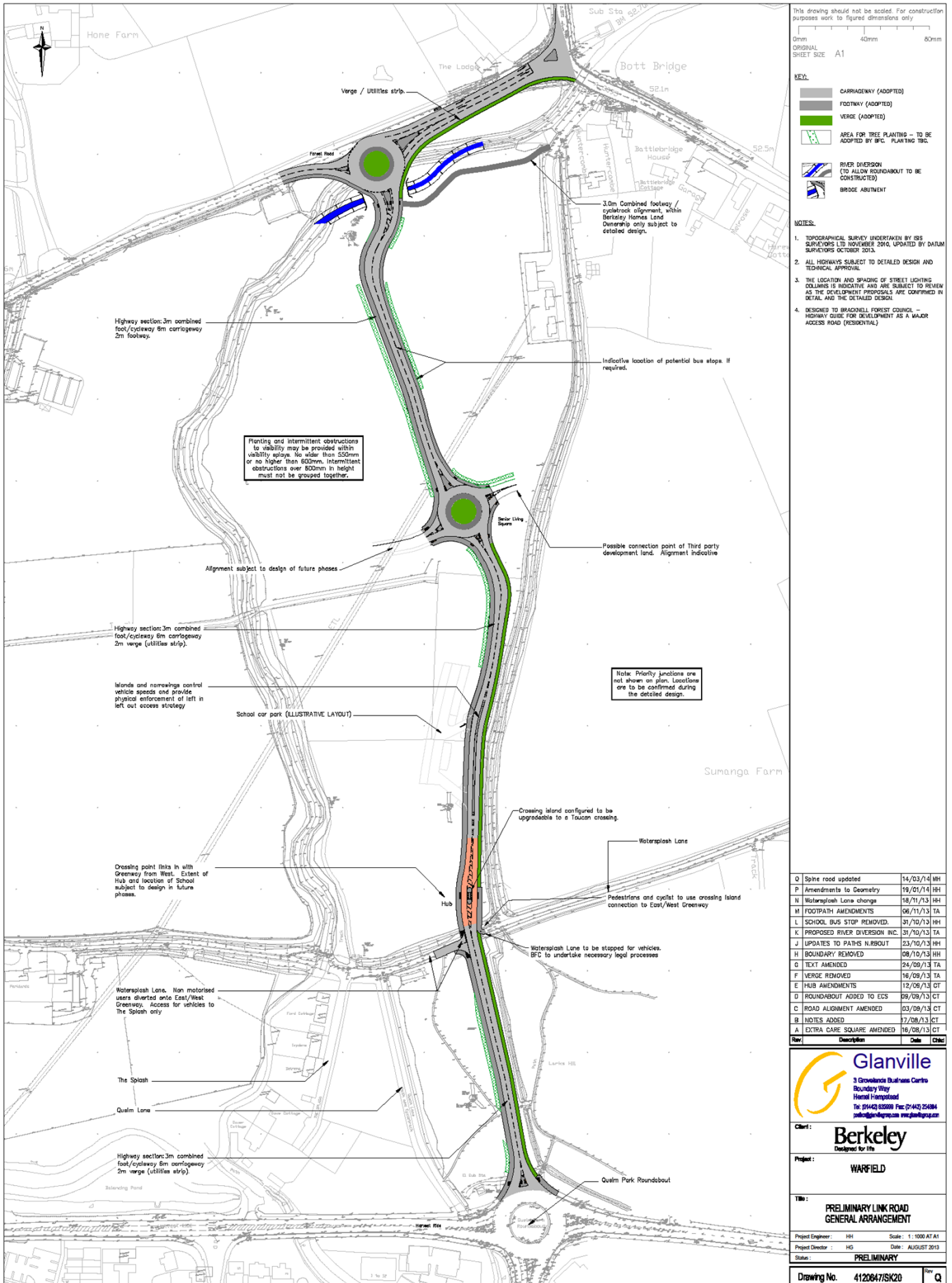
2.7 Further benefits of ensuring that funding for the link road was secured early were assistance in relieving traffic congestion on adjacent routes, improved journey times to the town centre and major employment areas. It also resulted in key deliverables, such as the school and some affordable housing coming forward early in the development because this provision is accessed directly from the new road, thus supporting the local economy.



- 2.8 Each of the stages of construction were completed on time and in line with the project programme. Sopwith Road was substantially completed in late 2016 and received its provisional completion certificates in Spring 2017 and it was adopted in Spring 2018.
- 2.9 Works along Forest Road as part of the northern section of the link road were substantially complete and given a provisional completion certificate in late 2018 and it was adopted in Summer 2019.
- 2.10 Ellison Road, which links Sopwith Road and Forest Road was substantially complete and received a provisional completion certificate at the same time as the Forest Road (Late 2018) but as construction activity continues on site it has yet to be finally adopted. Final adoption is anticipated to occur in Summer 2020.



**Figure 2: Warfield Link Road Scheme Design**



### **3. Scheme Budget and costs**

- 3.1 The project commenced in 2014 with an estimated construction cost of £5.2m, with detailed design, site investigations and preparatory work undertaken by Berkeley Homes.
- 3.2 In 2015, Bracknell Forest Council received £3.5m from the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership to significantly help fund the construction of the Link Road. The funding was split equally over the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years.
- 3.3 The remainder of the construction cost (£1.7m) was provided by Berkeley's, with an agreement to provide any costs over and above the allocated budget. Upon completion, the total cost of the project was £5,282,845.

| Preparation Cost   | Budget Cost          | Application 1 - Feb '16 | Cost to complete     |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Bridge 1 Architectural Working Drawings                    | 3450                 | 3450                    | 0                    |
| Structures Design for Bridge                               | 22000                | 22000                   | 0                    |
| Bridge 1 Piling Design                                     | 10200                | 10200                   | 0                    |
| Civils Design - Link Road                                  | 77000                | 77000                   | 0                    |
| Additional meetings and amendments to Link Road            | 17438                | 17438                   | 0                    |
| Scan Survey of Link Road                                   | 4750                 | 4750                    | 0                    |
| TRO Link Road  | 4000                 | 4000                    | 0                    |
| Siemens/MMA - Link and 3 Legged Cross                      | 1476.25              | 1476.25                 | 0                    |
| Conditional Survey to Forest Road and 3 Legged Cross       | 1921.9               | 1921.9                  | 0                    |
| Forest Road Core/Trenching                                 | 4503.7               | 4503.7                  | 0                    |
| Legal Costs for Link Road Stage 1 South                    | 2000                 | 2000                    | 0                    |
| Sewer Agreements   | 7854.26              | 7854.26                 | 0                    |
| Archaeology  | 12516                | 12516                   | 0                    |
| AIP Bridge   | 11837.5              | 11837.5                 | 0                    |
| CDM Services   | 4295                 | 4295                    | 0                    |
| <b>Construction Cost</b>                                   |                      |                         |                      |
| North South Link Road                                      | 2,923,516.23         | 1370116.03              | 1553400.2            |
| Additional Muck Away- Senior Living Roadabout on Link Road | 46,545.41            | 0                       | 46545.41             |
| Signalised Three Legged Cross Junction                     | See above.           | -                       | -                    |
| North of River Cut Tree Clearance                          | 20,100.00            | 0                       | 20100                |
| River Cut Diversion  | 51,500.00            | 0                       | 51500                |
| On site diversion of 33kV power line                       | 565,027.87           | 565027.87               | 0                    |
| On site diversion of 11kV power line                       | 167,905.70           | 167905.7                | 0                    |
| Link Road CBR's  | 2,424.00             | 2424                    | 0                    |
| Foul Drainage Diversion                                    | 15000                | 0                       | 15000                |
| Road Safety Audit  | 2200                 | 2200                    | 0                    |
| River Cut Earthworks Testing                               | 1522                 | 1522                    | 0                    |
| Senior Living Roundabout Foul Connection Groundworks Co    | 42000                | 0                       | 42000                |
| Forest Road Closure and Traffic Management                 | 10000                | 0                       | 10000                |
| Bridge Testing   | 14208                | 0                       | 14208                |
| Bridge Piling Matt Test                                    | 1102.4               | 0                       | 1102.4               |
| Crossing over The Cut (Bridge 1)                           | 517,760.31           | 0                       | 517760.31            |
| Off Site Sewer Diversion                                   | 34,642.64            | 0                       | 34642.64             |
| Basin A  | 84,935.00            | 0                       | 84935                |
| Basin E1   | 52,000.00            | 0                       | 52000                |
| <b>Statutory Undertakers Diversions</b>                    |                      |                         |                      |
| HV Service Diversion - Trench Vertical                     | 750.00               | 750                     | 0                    |
| 11kV Diversions - Link Road Diversion                      | 125,099.27           | 125099.27               | 0                    |
| Electrical Diversions - Three Legged Cross                 | 50,000.00            | 0                       | 50000                |
| Gas Diversions - Three Legged Cross                        | 100,000.00           | 0                       | 100000               |
| Electrical Diversion - Forest Road                         | 180,000.00           | 0                       | 180000               |
| BT Diversion Forest Road                                   | 47,773.50            | 0                       | 47773.5              |
| Diversion for surface water drain for North Link Road      | 12,000.00            | 12000                   | 0                    |
| Street Light Connection South Link Road                    | 12,510.37            | 12510.37                | 0                    |
| Forest Road Water Diversion                                | 17,000.00            | 0                       | 17000                |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>£5,282,765.31</b> | <b>£2,444,797.85</b>    | <b>£2,837,967.46</b> |

## Cost Breakdown

## 4. Delivered Scheme

4.1 As proposed, the finished link road provides a key piece of infrastructure to both facilitate and mitigate the impact of new housing developments around Warfield and northern Bracknell. The road forms part of a significantly improved network in the area, relieving congestion pressure from the existing route through Three Legged Cross junction, the Plough and Harrow junction and Newell Green.

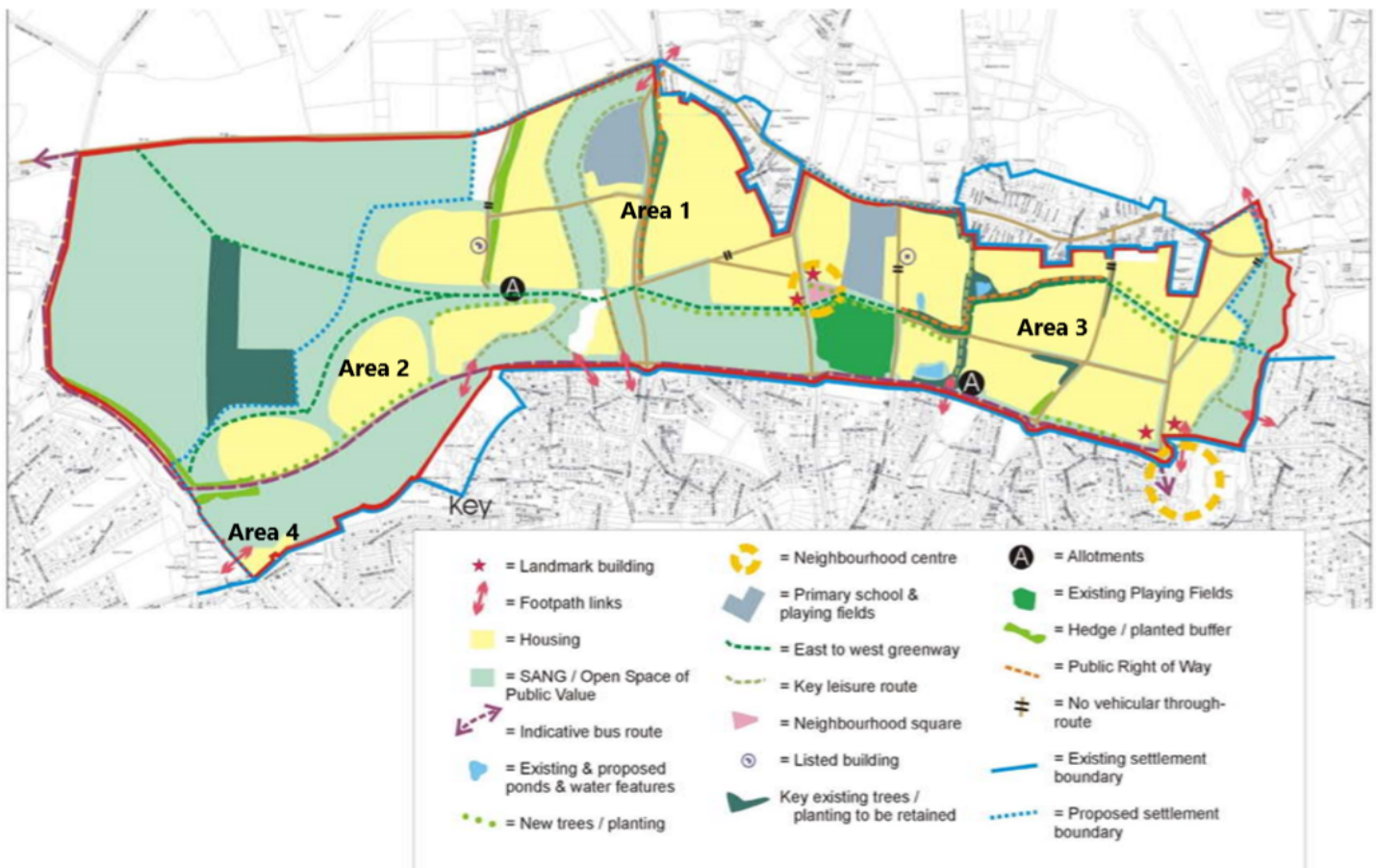
### How has the scheme delivered the SEP strategic priorities?

#### Unlocking housing development

4.2 The link road in itself unlocks housing development by providing a means of access to new housing sites. However, under the initial plans (without LEP funding), the wider site relied on Berkeley Homes to deliver the road under their own timescales. A major parcel to the east could only be delivered with new access directly from the link road. Without an accelerated delivery programme this parcel would have remained land locked and held to ransom by Berkeley's where the site could not commence until Berkeley's construct the link road under a much longer build programme. This would have significantly affected the viability of the other housing sites with those developers putting their schemes on hold.

4.3 As covered in section 2, the securing of LEP funding allowed the road to be constructed much more quickly, thus unlocking much-needed housing development sites to the east and west of it. The road has directly facilitated access for construction of half of the total homes on the Warfield site, whilst indirectly benefitting the remainder by means of improved access and connectivity, with wider enhancements to the strategic transport network of Bracknell as a whole.

**Figure 3: Map of site showing locations of development parcels relative to the link road**



- 4.4 As of September 2019, permission for over 987 dwellings (of a total of 2,200) has been granted, along with a two-form entry primary school which can accommodate 420 pupils (which opened in September 2016), and a residential care home of 65 units.
- 4.5 The housing development 'parcels' are the responsibility of a number of different developers and fall within the four areas shown in Figure 3. These dwellings have been, or will be constructed by:

**Area 1:**

Redrow Homes – Orchids Place development to the east of the link road, 3 completions and 27 dwellings under construction. Total site 116 dwellings.

Linden Homes – Archfields development at Newell Green, 15 under construction. Total site 52 dwellings.

Millgate Homes – Larks Hill Place at Watersplash Lane, 5 completions and 14 under construction. Total site 42 dwellings.

604 dwellings expected after 2026.

**Area 2:**

Berkeley Homes - Woodhurst Park development to the far Western extents of the site, total site 685 dwellings. As at Sept 2019, 334 dwellings have been completed and further 123 under construction.

Berkeley Homes – Lawrence Court is a 65 bed senior living/extra care/sheltered accommodation, completed in 2016.

100 dwellings expected after 2026.

**Area 3:**

454 dwellings expected after 2026.

**Area 4:**

Millgate Homes – Meadows Reach at Binfield Road, completion of 27 dwellings in 2016.

**Completions to date**

- 4.6 Housing starts on site were in-line with the Warfield SPD trajectory, and 2014/15 saw the first dwelling completions to the expected timescales. However, the period 2015-2019 has not seen the numbers delivered. As at March 2019, the SPD had predicted 800 units, however in reality 371 units were delivered. The current Housing Trajectory over the next five years suggests 588 units, however the 2012 SPD suggested 1000 units. Delivery of Areas 1-3 is expected to exceed the 2026 plan period.
- 4.7 This has been attributed to a number of factors including complex land ownership to the East of the masterplan development and a general slowdown in the market due to external factors such as the EU Referendum and three general elections.

## The Redrow Homes Orchids Place Development, under construction December 2019



### Enhancing urban connectivity

- 4.8 Aside from unlocking important housing growth, the Link Road improves urban connectivity for Warfield, its surrounding parishes, and also the wider Bracknell area. That connectivity can be considered across all transport modes;
- 4.9 For motor traffic, facilitating easier, more efficient transit between Bracknell Town Centre; the Warfield Development site; surrounding towns such as Wokingham, Windsor, Maidenhead and Ascot; and the wider region. The opening of the link road provides more reliable journey times, and less congestion, as motorists do not have to deal with signalised junctions within Newell Green.
- 4.10 For pedestrians, cyclists and bus users, the road provides a well-lit 3m wide footway / cycleway along its length which is connected to the East-West Greenway, the comprehensive Bracknell cycle network and Harvest Ride where bus stops are located. The design of the road is open and straight, aligned toward the town centre with attractive natural views either side to make the walking and cycling experience as easy, safe and efficient as possible, and a new crossing was installed on Harvest Ride to further improve onward town centre connectivity in 2017.
- 4.11 The Greenway, which has been provided as part of the Warfield development is a 1.5km stretch of tarmac and aggregate-surfaced foot and cycle path, which is bordered by plants, grassy open spaces, public art installations, water features and play areas. It provides a pleasant, traffic free urban connection, but also provides a place to relax, exercise and socialise for residents and visitors to the area. The Greenway and its connected paths can also be used by Equestrians. This was opened ahead of schedule, and feedback from the local community group suggests that it is popular with both local residents and those who travel in from the wider community and park in the new Cabbage Hill car park, to the North of the development site.
- 4.12 Walking and Cycling surveys undertaken in 2019 suggest increases in pedestrians of 13% and cyclists of 3% on routes to and around the Northern Parishes on the previous year. Cycling levels across the wider Borough have increased by 13.7% from 2018 to 2019. This is the highest level in 7 years, following a period of fluctuation. The council continues to promote cycling and sustainable modes, and is committed to improving cycling provision across Bracknell Forest.



**Cyclists on the East-West Greenway, which intersects the Link Road, with housing construction seen in the background**



Encouraging vibrant town centres

- 4.13 Bracknell Town Centre underwent a huge regeneration programme from 2014 to 2017, which saw its dilapidated 1960s town centre demolished and a brand new town centre put in its place. This has transformed the town, and its status as a place to live, work, and shop, and is bucking national trends with new stores continuing to open.
- 4.14 Within the first year of opening, the Lexicon reported 16 million visitors (surpassing expectations by 1 million), and an increase of 49% in the number of residents choosing it as their destination of choice. Bracknell Town Centre is now also drawing visitors from surrounding towns such as Wokingham, Reading and Maidenhead due to easy and convenient access and its mix of shops, restaurants and leisure opportunities.
- 4.15 The new link road provides a key part of that access, with a more direct and reliable means of getting to the town centre from the North of the Borough. The onward distance from the end of the road is around 1.2km to the new 1200-space Avenue multi-storey car park. This distance can also be walked in around 30 minutes, or cycled in 10 minutes over a relatively flat and easy route. The development that the link road facilitates will mean more people living in close proximity of the town centre, further supporting its development and sustainability. A second major phase of the town centre redevelopment called 'The Deck' is due to open in 2022 which will provide further retail, restaurants and entertainment, along with an improved connection to Princess Square, an existing indoor shopping arcade.



#### Positioning TVB for a digital future

- 4.16 All 2,200 dwellings facilitated by the link road will be connected to the latest superfast fibre-optic broadband. The road provides a digital communications spine and its construction from scratch allowed easy access and installation for the main service providers.

#### Foundations for future growth – housing, transport and utilities

- 4.17 Demand for housing will remain strong in Bracknell Forest and across Berkshire for the foreseeable future, and the Council will be under pressure to meet its housing targets through brownfield, and inevitably further greenfield sites in the North of the Borough.
- 4.18 The link road frees up capacity in an area of the local transport network that was otherwise becoming congested, with unreliable journey times. It will help to facilitate further housing growth, providing an effective north-south link which is fit for purpose whilst not being to the detriment of nearby residents.
- 4.19 A new 4,000 home site around the existing Syngenta premises in Jealotts Hill, proposed for construction in the next 10 years, would not be viable without the link road, and any associated improvements to the highway network will complement it further.

#### Enhancing the strategic transport network

- 4.20 The main benefit of the new link road on the strategic transport network is the diversion for through traffic away from Newell Green, particularly the north-south A3095, which is a strategically important link between Bracknell, Maidenhead and the M4 / A404 / M40, carrying around 12,000 vehicles per day. The link road provides a more appropriate route for through-traffic, both travelling North to South and East to West, and is suitable for all vehicle classifications.
- 4.21 For traffic heading North / South, there are few alternatives to the A3095, and the turning count survey results in Appendix 1 show that traffic movements from both directions have split with some movements choosing the new link road. It is likely that this trend will increase as the road becomes better established.



## 5. Travel Demand

- 5.1 Traffic turning count surveys carried out at five junctions in November 2019 have been compared to surveys carried out at the same junctions in June 2013 as part of the planning application for the Warfield development. It should be noted from the outset that at this early stage in the development, it is too early to analyse the full impact of the link road, especially given that only 20% of dwellings have been completed. However, this analysis provides an early, indicative view of how it is working.
- 5.2 Broadly, traffic flows across Bracknell Forest have increased between 2013 and 2019 by around 6%. This is closely reflected in the overall inbound and outbound flow figures seen in Appendix 1 when distributed across the network, including the impact of additional housing and a new primary school and nursery off Sopwith Road.
- 5.3 The 2026 strategic transport model builds on this effect by demonstrating all impacts over a wider area associated with the adopted Local Plan being fully built out. As stated in section 4.6, housing starts are not in line with the Warfield SPD trajectory or the rest of the Local Plan so it is hard to assess whether the growth recorded is in line with our projections. The model utilises spare capacity across the network, meaning that some alternative routes may become more desirable if this additional local demand creates pressure at key locations. Therefore, the figures shown in Appendix 1 are very much in line with our expectations for network management through the ongoing programme of strategic corridor improvements.
- 5.4 Looking in more detail at the junctions, the results broadly show that the link road is working in routing traffic away from Newell Green, with an average 35% reduction in flows through the Plough and Harrow junction. It is expected that this trend will continue to increase as the road is further established and construction vehicles and traffic management associated with the development (which can potentially slow and deter motorists) is removed.
- 5.5 For the purposes of consistency, and using data at the busiest times of day, peak hour flows have been compared and the figures and movements are shown in Appendix 1 in detail. In summary, the results show that:

### **AM Peak**

#### Three Legged Cross Junction

- 5.6 Flows from the North (A3095 towards Bracknell) have increased by 6%, but traffic turning East towards Newell Green has decreased by 32%, whilst traffic turning West towards the new link road has increased by 108%.

#### Plough & Harrow Junction

- 5.7 Flows through the village and into this constrained signalised junction have decreased by 33% as a whole.

#### Warfield Roundabout

- 5.8 Overall flows into the roundabout from all approaches have decreased. However, movements heading west towards the new spine road have increased by 60%. It is likely that the new school is partly responsible for this increase.

### **PM Peak**

#### Three Legged Cross Junction

- 5.9 Flows from the North (A3095 towards Bracknell) have increased by 9%, but traffic turning East towards Newell Green has decreased by 24%, whilst traffic turning West towards the new link road has increased by 92%.
- 5.10 Perhaps more noticeably, traffic heading away from Bracknell turning onto the A3095 has increased from the direction of the new link road by 64%, whilst flows have decreased from Newell Green by 43%. These are significant changes which show that traffic heading out of the Borough in the evening is using the link road and avoiding Newell Green.

#### Plough & Harrow Junction

- 5.11 Flows through the village and into this signalised junction have decreased by 38% as a whole.

#### Warfield Roundabout

- 5.12 Overall flows into the roundabout from all approaches have decreased. However, movements from the west away from the new spine road have increased by 15%.

### **Journey Times**

- 5.13 One further key objective of the road was to improve journey times into the town centre. However, due to traffic management on Warfield Road associated with various utilities throughout most of 2019, we were unable to carry out reliable journey time surveys. In addition to this, the link road and Newell Green are still subject to the ongoing impacts of construction vehicles and sporadic traffic management associated with the various development sites. It was concluded that this would affect our efforts to carry out reliable journey time surveys which were intended to give a realistic reflection of how the new road is impacting on traffic movements. It is assumed that journey times will have improved across the whole local network as traffic is routed towards the new capacity, although in particular on the North / South A3095 route.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The construction of the link road was a policy and necessary transport solution to support the whole allocated site (2,200 dwellings). The project has resulted in successful partnership working between the developers, BFC, the LEP and other agencies, and was built on time and on budget, to a high standard, allowing important associated construction to progress.
- 6.2 At this early stage in the development it is too early to analyse the full impact of the link road, especially given that only 20% of dwellings have been completed. However the initial findings suggest that it is having a positive overall effect and is progressing towards delivering on its objective. The most notable benefit shown by the surveys carried out is the diversion of through-traffic away from the village of Newell Green and the Plough & Harrow junction.
- 6.3 During further stages of development, the road will become better established to local residents and regular users, and will also be taking the bulk of traffic from the new properties and their residents.



# Independent Assessment Summary Report: Warfield Link Road One Year Impact Report

February 2020

[www.hatchregeneris.co.uk](http://www.hatchregeneris.co.uk)

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# Independent Assessment

This technical note provides an independent assessment of the One-year Impact Report submitted by Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) in relation to Warfield Link Road (WLR).

The WLR scheme received £3.5 million funding through the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP) Local Growth Fund deal. As part of the on-going assurance process, TVB LEP requires all funded schemes to produce one-year and five-year post-implementation impact reports to demonstrate how each scheme has performed against expectations.

## Process

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The one and five-year impact reports are expected to assess the following elements of the scheme:

- a. did it get built?
- b. was it to plan?
- c. was it on time?
- d. was it to budget?
- e. is it working ok?
- f. what impact has it had?
- g. any learning points?

Hatch Regeneris have applied these criteria, but also sought to use the process as positive influence to identify specific ways in which project scheme design or delivery could be enhanced to enhance future value of this scheme or other future LEP funded schemes.

## Scheme Summary

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The Council received £3,500,000 (66%) from the TVB LEP Local Growth Fund as part of an overall estimated scheme cost of £5,282,845.

The WLR is a half-mile length of strategically important new road, constructed between 2016-2018 to facilitate a significant new housing development and relieve pressures on existing routes in the Bracknell Forest Parish of Warfield.

The planned work consisted of:

**Warfield Link Road:** A new road linking Quelms Park Roundabout by Harvest Ride and Forest Road (B3034). It also connects to new development sites via a roundabout by Forest Road and a further roundabout along the new link road. In addition, the scheme incorporates improvements to junctions between Forest Road (B3034) and Warfield Street (A3095) – referred to as ‘Three Legged Cross’.

**Greenway:** 3m shared use path and a pedestrian island along the link road from Quelms Park Roundabout to Forest Road.

The scheme was designed to directly 'unlock' 750 homes located to the west of the Warfield Link Road and Warfield Street and to the east of Binfield Road (B3018), as well as facilitate the wider development of 2,200 homes across the whole Warfield area.

The scheme was also designed to relieve traffic pressure from the A3095, particularly from the two signal-controlled junctions within the village of Newell Green, by encouraging traffic to take an alternative route via the new WLR.

A summary of the primary objectives of the scheme were to: provide access to 2,200 new dwellings; provide access to local employment; assist in tackling local congestion issues; improve journey times into Bracknell Town Centre and key employment areas in the town; and improve the environment for non-motorised users.

The Full Business Case Outline Monitoring and Evaluation Plan included reference to post-scheme opening traffic surveys on the WLR and surrounding roads to establish whether the change in traffic movement patterns and improvements to journey times have occurred, as anticipated within the traffic modelling. In addition, wider transport surveys of walking and cycling were planned on existing roads to identify if the anticipated improvement in physical activity, journey quality and reduction in severance have led to an increase in non-motorised uses.

## Review Findings

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### General Observations

Each of the scheme elements are reported to have been constructed on time and in line with the project programme.

The scheme was delivered for a final cost of £ 5,282,845, representing a relatively modest cost overrun of £82,945 (1.5%), which was covered by the developer. Information is not currently available to understand where these additional cost overruns occurred. The risk register included with the FBC indicated that post-mitigation mean risk, along with the cost of mitigation, was estimated at £121,196. It is not explicitly clear if this was included within the final scheme costs. It is also unclear what level of contingency may have been included within the original construction cost estimates. As such, it cannot be concluded how accurate the original baseline assessment of scheme costs were, prior to any contingency being added.

At present it is understood that only 20% of the of dwellings around the Warfield area, that that the WLR scheme was designed to support, have been completed. This rate of delivery is slower than anticipated within the SPD. At March 2019, 371 out of 800 planned units were completed, whilst the current Housing Trajectory for the next five years indicates 588 planned completions in comparison to the SPD forecast of 1,000 units. BFC has attributed the slower rate of completions to a number of factors, including complex land ownership to the east of the masterplan development, and a general slowdown in the market due to external factors, such as the EU Referendum and three general elections.

Comparative traffic turning count surveys were carried out in November 2019 by BFC at five junctions. These have been compared to surveys carried out at the same junctions in June 2013. BFC highlight two points to take into consideration when assessing the count data: i) underlying growth in traffic levels across Bracknell of 6%;

and ii) the fact that build-out rates across the Warfield area have been slower than anticipated.

Flows on the link road itself are recoded as 349 northbound and 232 southbound at the southern end during the AM peak, with 230 northbound and 116 southbound at the northern end. The equivalent flows in the PM peak are 201 northbound and 266 southbound at the southern end, and 148 northbound and 245 southbound at the northern end. It is not clear how these compares to forecast usage of the link road. The proportion of through traffic (strategic movements) and local access traffic is also unknown at this stage.

The count data indicates a 35% reduction in traffic through Newell Green indicating the WLR has been successful in diverting traffic away from this area.

Due to traffic management on Warfield Road associated with various utilities throughout most of 2019, BFC have been unable to carry out reliable journey time surveys around the impact area of the WLR scheme. In addition, the WLR and Newell Green are still subject to the ongoing impacts of construction vehicles and sporadic traffic management associated with the various development sites. BFC concluded that this would affect the ability to obtain reliable journey time surveys with which to assess the impact of the WLR on journey times. As such, it is not feasible to verify the impact of the WLR scheme in this respect, at present.

Whilst specific cycle counts for the Greenway are not available, walking and cycling surveys undertaken by BFC in 2019 suggest increases in pedestrians of 13% and cyclists of 3% on routes to and around the Northern Parishes on the previous year. Cycling levels across the wider Borough are reported by BFC to have increased by 13.7% from 2018 to 2019. Whilst this does not provide a direct assessment of the success of the Greenway to-date, it infers that walking and cycling levels are increasing and that there will be positive use of the infrastructure.

It is reported, in general terms, how the scheme is supporting Bracknell town centre vibrancy, positioning TVB for a digital future, providing the foundations for growth (housing, transport, utilities), and enhancing the strategic transport network. Whilst not evidenced in detail, there is a broadly supporting narrative demonstrating these positive outcomes from the WLR scheme.

## **Conclusions**

The WLR one-year impact report represents a well-constructed and balanced document, making good use of the available evidence. It is considered to meet many of requirements for a one-year impact report, although would, ideally, have provided more specific evidence of the impacts of the WLR scheme.

The report provides a good overview of the scheme delivered and the positive impacts that have occurred in terms of increased highway and walking and cycling provision. The scheme has clearly facilitated access to enable housing development across the Warfield area. Housing development has come forward, albeit not at the rate that had originally been forecast.

At this stage, it is not clear if the road is carrying the volumes of traffic anticipated; however, since this will be directly linked to the associated levels of development (and housing occupation), it is recognised that this will be behind planned levels.

There is evidence to demonstrate that the scheme has successfully redistributed trips away from congested parts of the local highway network, specifically Newton Green.

The absence of journey time data means it is currently not feasible to assess the success of the scheme in terms of improved access into, and out from, Bracknell town centre. These surveys should be completed as soon as it is reasonable to do so.

Specific walking & cycling counts for the Greenway have not been undertaken; however, evidence is provided to support the case that walking and cycling levels are increasing within the general area. It is recommended, that local surveys are completed once the build out of the Warfield area developments are more substantially complete.

The scheme was delivered on time and close to budget (+1.5%), and at no extra cost to the public sector. There is a limitation in the available data to understand how outturn costs evolved in relation to forecast costs. Overall, however, the budgeting process appears reasonably robust, and the delivery of the project was well-managed. Subject to further considerations of traffic flows and journey time impacts, the scheme is considered to be working well and has delivered the broad outcomes required.

Key points for consideration to enhance the future outcomes of the project include:

The requirement for journey time surveys, as soon as network conditions are considered permissible, to enable an understanding of the impact of the scheme upon enhancing access into, and out from, Bracknell town centre; and

The requirement for a walking & cycling survey of the Greenway, once the sufficient local housing development has been completed, to enable an assessment of the take-up of the infrastructure provision and to understand if further measures are required to encourage greater usage.

Additional points to facilitate wider learning across future projects include:

The need to consider sensitivity tests to reflect varying build-out rates for residential development. It is acknowledged that SPD projections represent planned public sector targets, but that external factors will always affect the private sectors ability to deliver against those projections. The implications for delays to development should be incorporated within infrastructure investment decisions; and

The importance of tracking outturn costs against projections produced at the FBC stage. This will provide understanding of how costs elements vary and whether appropriate levels of contingency and risk have been included.

