

Frequently Asked Questions 27/11/13
A4 Calcot Widening, Langley Hill to Royal Avenue.

Q1) Why is this scheme needed?

A1) Widening the A4 between Langley Hill and Royal Avenue has long been an aspiration of West Berkshire Council. A number of studies, most recently the North/South Kennet Study, identified this option as the most cost effective solution to improving traffic flow between the West Reading/Tilehurst area and M4 junction 12.

A bid was submitted to central government for funding as part of the Department for Transport's (DfT) Local Pinch point programme and funding was awarded in front of many other bids nationwide, because of the excellent value for money this scheme provides.

Q2) How much is the scheme costing? Where is this money coming from? Is IKEA contributing?

A2) The total scheme cost is approximately £2.9m. The majority of the funding (£2m) will come from the DfT as part of their Local Pinch point Fund programme: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/series/local-pinch-point-fund>

This is a pot of money aimed at removing pinch points and improving traffic flow in areas that have seen significant development.

The remainder of the funding is from S106 developer's contributions (including IKEA) and from the Council's Local Transport Plan grant.

Why this can't be used for other areas?

Q3) Why is the design not two lanes in both direction?

A3) There is not enough available highway land for two lanes without removing the right turn lane. This could be done, but would mean a ban on all right turns along this stretch of road. We could remove the right turn lane/hatching in future if eastbound congestion gets worse, but the lane improvements at either end will yield a good short term benefit.

Q4) How will the Council discourage motorists from rat-running along Charrington Road and Royal Avenue during construction?

A4) Two lanes of traffic will remain open on the A4 throughout the construction period which should keep traffic flowing and reduce the amount of rat running.

A number of suggestions were also received from the drop-in consultation session including physical restrictions and HGV bans on Charrington Rd and Royal Avenue during the construction. These will be investigated further and reported back through the Local Ward Members and the Parish Councils.

Q5) What improvements are being made for cyclists?

A5) The main focus of the funding is aimed at easing traffic congestion. An off carriageway foot/cycle path already exists on the north side of the A4 and on carriageway cycle lanes exist on Charrington Road that extends parallel to the A4. There is not enough available land to provide on carriageway cycle lanes on the A4; however consideration will be given to improving cycle priority along the existing route.

Q6) What will happen to the trees and bushes where the road is being widened?

A6) Unfortunately a number of mature oaks and adjacent undergrowth would have to be removed to make way for the road widening. Replacement planting will take place along the A4 where possible. A landscaping scheme will be developed and discussed with adjacent residents. Close board (acoustic) fencing has also been incorporated within the length of the scheme to provide screening.

Q7) What noise mitigation will be provided for residents whose properties will now be closer to the road?

A7) Acoustic experts have been employed by the Council to advise on the best form of noise mitigation for adjacent properties. This could take the form of a noise barrier or secondary glazing for affected properties. Once the acoustic report is complete it will be made public and discussed with adjacent residents.

Q8) What is the Council going to do about privacy for properties where the trees have been removed.

A8) At locations where the trees have been removed either replacement planting will be provided if there is enough space, alternatively fencing will be erected to provide a barrier.

Q9) How will motorists turn right from the side accesses?

A9) The right turn lanes will be retained. It may be harder to turn right but visibility is good. Keep clear markings will be used as appropriate to stop traffic queuing at the pedestrian crossing blocking Cranbourne Ave. If drivers aren't comfortable with turning right across two lanes of oncoming traffic it is only a short detour to go round the roundabout at Royal Ave, and then turn left.

Q10) Why did you choose to only widen the westbound lane?

A10) The morning peak westbound congestion tends to be worse and less predictable than the afternoon peak eastbound congestion. The eastbound lane improvements should make a positive difference as we are extending the Langley Hill left turn lane and significantly extending the merge lane from Royal Avenue.

Q11) When will the construction start and how long will it take?

A11) If approved to proceed it is intended to commence work on site by July 2014 for approximately 9 months.

Q12) The main problem in the morning is the pedestrian crossing. What about a bridge?

A12) Any bridge would require extensive ramps on the approach and room does not exist within the Highway to accommodate this.

The crossing will be widened so more people can cross at a time. This will enable us to optimise the frequency with which the crossing will stop traffic. The two lane westbound approach to the crossing will significantly improve capacity in the morning peak when the crossing causes most delays.

An underpass will encounter similar problems to the provision of a bridge. Land would not be available to achieve the required levels and the construction costs would be significant. Underpasses can also prove unpopular due to anti-social behaviour.

Q13) Some problems were created when Langley hill was converted to a signalised junction can we change it back to a roundabout?

A13) No. Traffic levels have grown a lot since it was a roundabout. Traffic signals will be "fair" to all approaches. The roundabout was notorious at the time for accidents due to motorists taking risks to enter the roundabout. Returning the junction to a roundabout would also remove the pedestrian crossings at this junction which would further compromise safety at this busy junction.

Q14) What measures will be taken to protect wildlife where the road is being widened?

A14) Ecological consultants have been employed to ensure any wildlife adjacent to the A4 is preserved.

Q15) Can you provide a bus stop outside the Calcot Priory?

A15) This will be looked at and incorporated into the design if a safe location for a bus stop can be located.

Q16) During the construction will parents be able to continue to park in the lay-by on the A4 when taking children to school.

A16) Unfortunately the lay-by will be out of commission for much of the construction and cannot be used. West Berkshire Council will discuss alternative locations for park and walk with the School for the duration of the works.

The lay-by will be retained for use after construction is complete.

Q17) What happens next?

A17) The results of this consultation will be reported to the Council's Executive Member for Highways at the end of November, who will determine whether the scheme will continue to detailed design.

Q18) What will the fence and retaining wall look like?

A18) The detailed design of the fencing and retaining wall will be discussed with individual property owners as part of the detailed design process. A further consultation exercise will be carried out to review these details.

Q19) I am concerned about speeding when the road is completed. Will a speed camera be installed?

A19) Speed cameras are installed in locations where road safety records are particularly poor. This scheme will be designed to the latest design standards and subject to an independent road safety audit.

Q20) Will a crash barrier be installed to protect properties?

A20) The scheme will be designed in accordance with the latest national design standards. Crash barriers will be installed in locations where these standards dictate it is appropriate.

Q21) Concerned about loss of value to property?

A21) If residents are concerned about their property value they will be able to submit a claim for compensation under the land compensation act. The Council will contact those properties which the District Valuer deems to be affected and advise them of their rights.

Q22) What will be done to prevent Flooding?

A22) The drainage system on the A4 will be upgraded to accommodate the additional surface area created by widening the road.