

# NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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## **COLOURFUL NEW TRAINING AID WILL GIVE HORSES AND RIDERS CONFIDENCE**

Horse riders have a chance to prepare for some eye-catching road improvements which Wokingham Borough Council is planning to carry out.

The highways authority is lining up an innovative overhaul of the California Crossroads at Finchampstead, which includes painting multi-coloured leaf designs on the tarmac around the two mini-roundabouts to make them more attractive and encourage traffic to slow down.

There will also be a new, more accessible crossing between these roundabouts with a refuge island, plus four more on the approaches on Nine Mile Ride and Finchampstead Road. These will be decorated with plain white leaves and other patterns so the area feels less centred around vehicles.

This will make the crossroads safer and easier for cyclists and pedestrians, including children walking to Nine Mile Ride Primary School and the neighbouring pre-school, in line with the council's desire to promote active and sustainable travel over car use wherever it can.

The crossing is also used by horse riders to travel between local bridleways and, when consulted, many said they would like a chance to get used to the new leaf designs in advance.

The council recognised that this was important as horses can get nervous around unfamiliar surfaces, so it worked with its highways consultant WSP and the nearby Wheatlands Farm livery yard to lay a panel of surfacing which is marked with the leaf designs.

This allows riders to carry out as much off-road training as they need before they encounter the real thing. There is no charge to use the panel but bookings must be made in advance so enough time can be allocated for every user. Anyone who is interested should email [info@wheatlandsfarm.co.uk](mailto:info@wheatlandsfarm.co.uk).

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The council has previously extended the California Way, one of its generally traffic-free “greenways” linking key destinations in the borough, to offer riders an alternative to crossing at California Crossroads.

### **Active travel for all creatures great and small**

Cllr Paul Fishwick, executive member for active travel, transport and highways, said: “We want to make our highways network safer and more friendly for all forms of alternative travel. While walking and cycling might spring first to many people’s minds, horse riding is another popular option – especially in the rural areas that make up much of our green and beautiful borough.

“We take residents’ feedback very seriously, so we were delighted to work with the local riding community to find a way of making the upcoming crossing improvements more accessible to them. This will ensure they can safely enjoy the same benefits as other people who are crossing on foot, wheelchair, bicycle, push scooter and other types of active transport.

“I’m glad to hear the panel has proven popular since we opened it in June, which should give riders plenty of time to prepare.”

Nicola Greenwood, who runs Wheatlands Farm and is also the British Horse Society’s access and bridleways officer for the area, said: “The trial panel is proving invaluable to local horse riders, allowing them to introduce their horses to the colourful design in a safe, controlled environment.

“It allows riders to take as much time as they need for their horses to become confident with the design and we’re very grateful to the council and WSP for their help in providing this training aid.”

### **Enabling plenty of alternatives to driving**

The California Crossroads scheme was proposed in recognition of the important role that this junction and its amenities play in community life and was drawn up following extensive consultation with residents. Similar layouts have proven successful elsewhere at locations including Poynton in Cheshire, Coventry city centre and Ponders End in north London.

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It includes shared access for pedestrians on the approach road to the school, part of which will be sectioned off with bollards, plus speed cushions approaching the crossroads, new seating near the shops, wider footways and "totem" signs warning drivers they are entering a busy village centre. These will be decorated with colourful art produced in partnership with the community.

The council expects to carry out the work during the 2023/24 financial year, possibly over the 2023 summer holiday though this remains subject to change at the moment. Work will be carried out as quickly as possible and with minimal disruption to residents.

The council is doing all it can to help people leave their cars at home, especially for short trips, to reduce harmful emissions, improve people's health, tackle inequality and address the climate emergency by striving to help the borough become a net-zero carbon producer by 2030.

It is about to finish consulting on its local cycling and walking infrastructure plan, which will guide improvements over the next decade or so and help secure Government funding, and continues to roll out its greenways.

It is also campaigning to support and protect bus services as operators recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and is urging operator South Western Railway to work with Network Rail and others to speed up train journeys from Wokingham borough stations, which studies say is possible.

For more information on events and initiatives that can help residents make positive changes to their lives, visit the council's My Journey Wokingham active travel page at [www.myjourneywokingham.com](http://www.myjourneywokingham.com)

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**Further information:**

1. **More from Cllr Paul Fishwick, executive member for active travel, transport and highways, at [paul.fishwick@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:paul.fishwick@wokingham.gov.uk)**