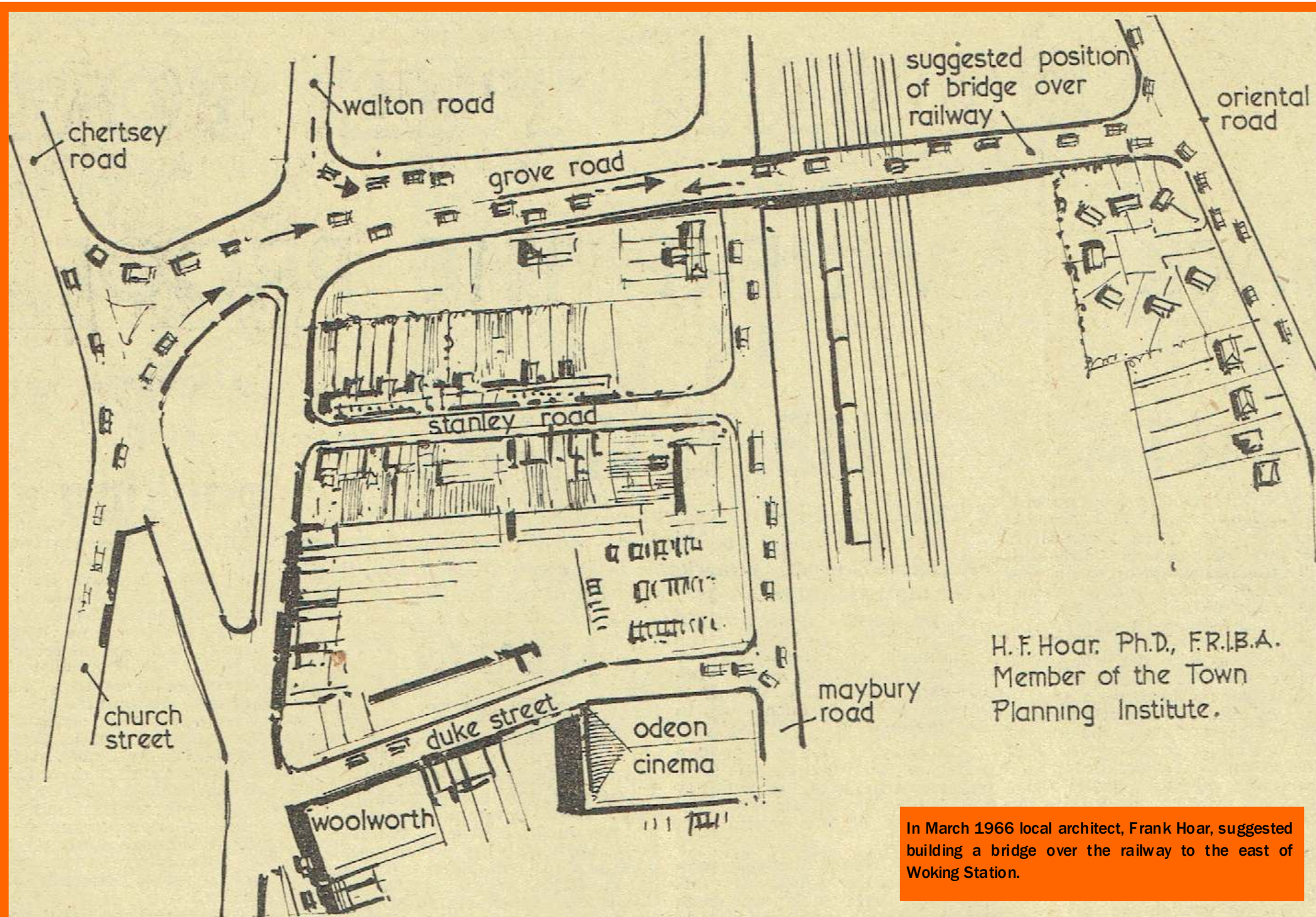


THE TRAVAILS OF TRAVEL AROUND WOKING

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In March 1966 local architect, Frank Hoar, suggested building a bridge over the railway to the east of Woking Station.

Plans announced recently to build a flyover at Woking Station, so that trains from Portsmouth to London can more easily cross the busy Southampton line, would (if it was ever built) help to solve one transport problem in the town, but a flyover of a different kind was proposed in 1966 to sort out Woking's road network, which had it been built may have effectively squared the circle of the town's broken ring-road scheme (and avoided the need

now to destroy the last vestige of any character in Guildford Road).

The idea was the brainchild of local architect, Frank Hoar, who came up with the plan to build a bridge linking Chertsey Road, via a bridge from the Grove Road area over the railway, to Oriental Road

If you stand at the entrance to the commuter car park in Oriental Road and look across the

railway to Maybury Road, it is not hard to imagine how such a scheme could have worked in the past, but modern developments now make it impossible (and vested interests at the council almost certainly did the same back in 1966).

Had it been built, access around Woking, could have been quite different, with a flyover from Oriental Road to Grove Road.

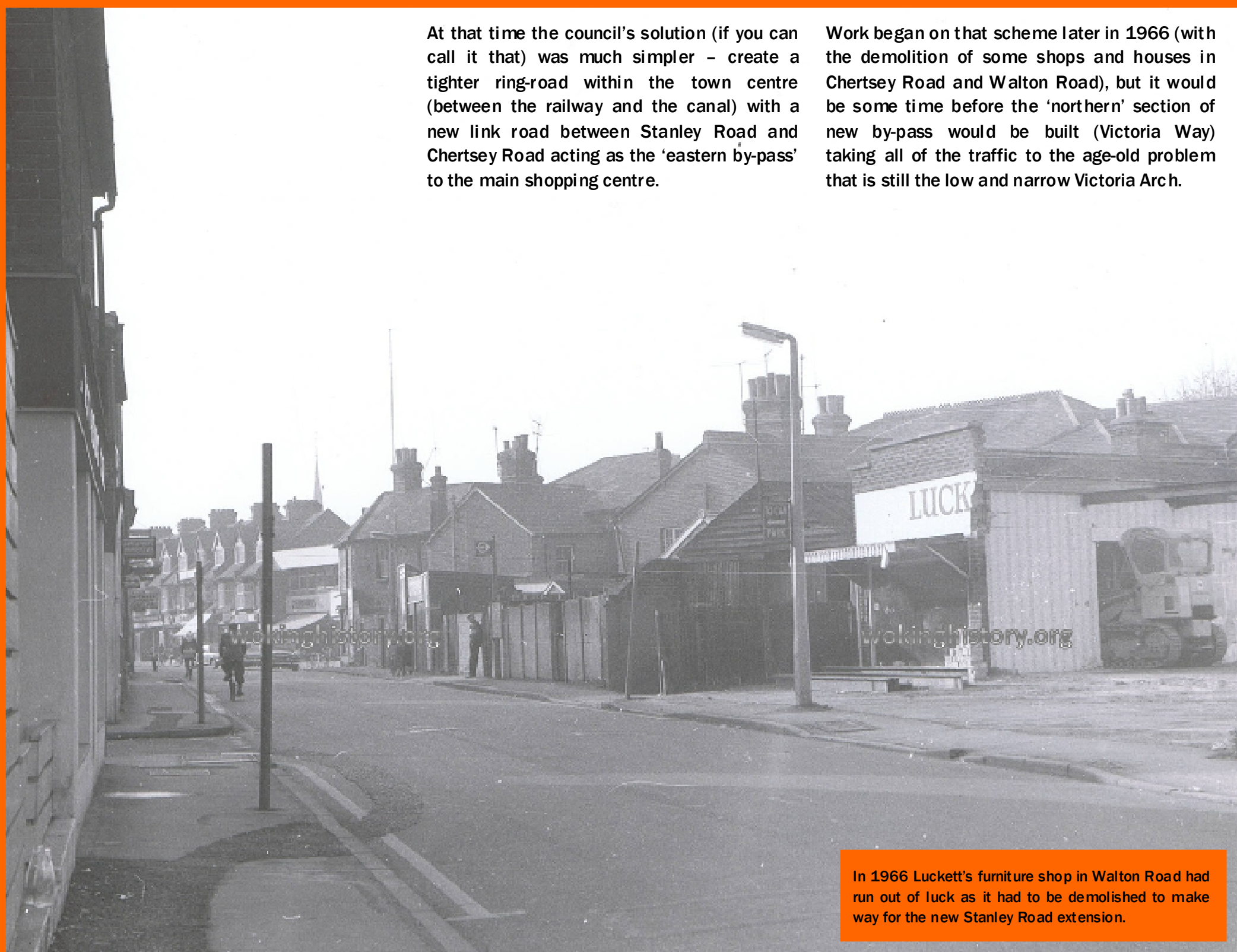


In 1966 some of the shops and houses of Chertsey Road and Walton Road were demolished so that Stanley Road could be extended to form the eastern edge of the town.



At that time the council's solution (if you can call it that) was much simpler – create a tighter ring-road within the town centre (between the railway and the canal) with a new link road between Stanley Road and Chertsey Road acting as the 'eastern by-pass' to the main shopping centre.

Work began on that scheme later in 1966 (with the demolition of some shops and houses in Chertsey Road and Walton Road), but it would be some time before the 'northern' section of new by-pass would be built (Victoria Way) taking all of the traffic to the age-old problem that is still the low and narrow Victoria Arch.



In 1966 Lockett's furniture shop in Walton Road had run out of luck as it had to be demolished to make way for the new Stanley Road extension.



The railway has always been Woking's saviour – and, from a drivers point of view, its curse. Without the quick and (relatively) easy route up to London, the town would not have grown as it has – but sandwiched between the railway and the canal the town centre has always been restricted, and whilst building extra bridges over the waterway has proved easy, finding new ways over (or under) the railway has not.

Closing the canal whilst building work takes place does not affect too many people, but imagine trying to stop the trains so you could create a new crossing – it would be impossible.

New tunnels and bridges have, of course, been built (or more accurately old one have been widened or replaced), with the resulting road closures adding to Woking's transport chaos whilst work was taking place. In December

1965 the first fourteen-ton, 59ft long concrete beams for the new Sheerwater Road Bridge was craned into place – the work on the new 74ft wide bridge taking about nine months to complete, as thirty-eight more beams would slowly be dropped into place.

At the same time British Rail were also rebuilding the railway arch over Triggs Lane, which had been proposed as part of a wider 'western by-pass' for the town, linking the A320 at the Turnoak roundabout, via Wych Hill and Triggs Lane to the A324 at The Triangle.

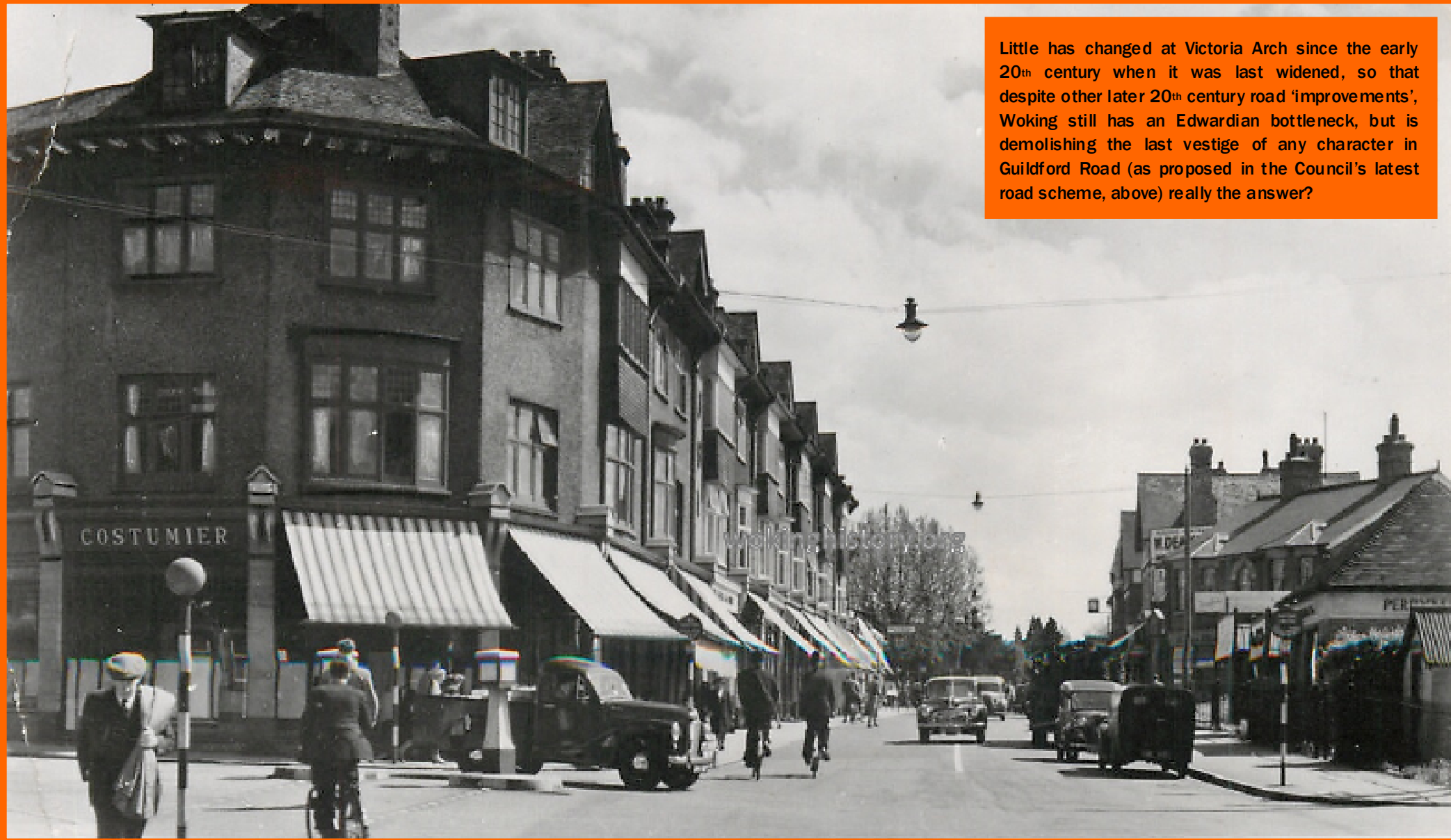
British Railways had apparently written to Woking Council as far back as 1962 advising them they needed to replace the old arch, and asking if the council wanted to help finance a wider tunnel under the railway, but the council never got back to them, with the result that



another opportunity was lost to ease the north-south divide of the town.

The old arch was replaced over two weekends in March 1966 – meaning that for six nights, Victoria Arch and Maybury Arch had to take all the towns traffic – a nightmare for the motorists of the time.

It just goes to show that when it comes to the travails of travel around Woking, nothing is new!



Little has changed at Victoria Arch since the early 20th century when it was last widened, so that despite other later 20th century road 'improvements', Woking still has an Edwardian bottleneck, but is demolishing the last vestige of any character in Guildford Road (as proposed in the Council's latest road scheme, above) really the answer?