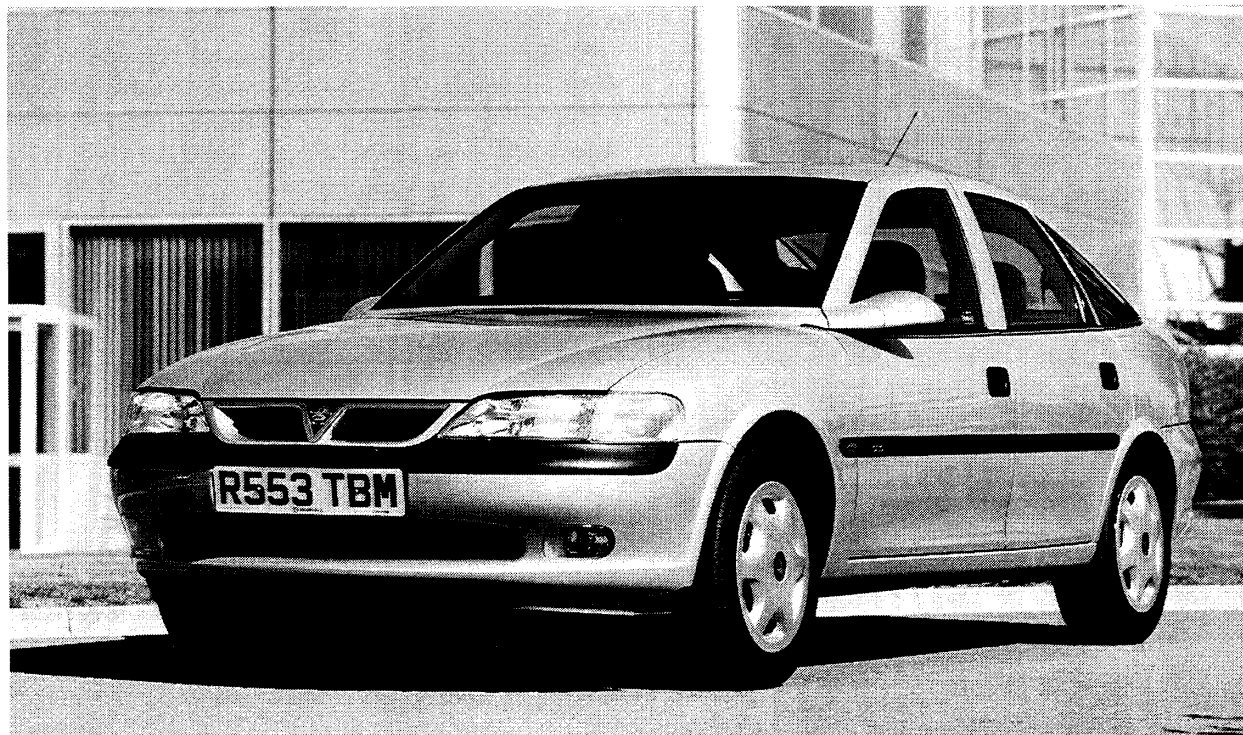




Vauxhall Vectra 2.0DTi



What's different?

High powered version of GM's latest direct-injection diesel. Second-cheapest trim level still generously equipped – why pay more?

UNTIL RECENTLY, VOLKSWAGEN-AUDI had the direct-injection diesel-car market to itself. All that's about to change – expect several new Di contenders in the next year, together with “common rail” fuel delivery, which in itself promises further fuel efficiency and lower tailpipe pollution. Meanwhile, Opel-Vauxhall has been second past the post, replacing the highly respectable Isuzu-built *indirect* injection oil-burner with its own, state-of-the-art Di diesel for both Vectra and Astra (the Japanese unit continues in 1.5-litre guise in the Corsa).

It uses a Bosch-derived higher-pressure injection pump under computer control, plus four valves per cylinder, operated by a single, chain-driven overhead camshaft. The engine is in two states of tune for the Vectra – we sampled the 82bhp version in an estate car last year (see R9664A). Now, the 100bhp version has been added, although it is its torque output that's even more auspicious, peaking at a mere 1600rpm.

So much for theory – how does it perform? In terms of accelerator response, it's neck and neck with a VW Passat TDi/110 through the gears, but proves less harsh when revved in this fashion, beyond 3000rpm. Lower-speed pulling is still mighty impressive, as well, but it can't quite match the VW for in-gear response, despite its use of lower gearing.

It feels more vibrant, as well, until beyond 1400rpm. This is a pity, because the accelerator response is there – it's just that the inevitable out-of-balance forces of this four-pot unit discourage its use. Still, anything over 30mph in fourth is smooth enough and you learn to take street corners in second.

The reward is most apparent on main roads – 50–60mph progress is both uncannily hushed and incredibly frugal. It's just a bit harsher-sounding than the lower-powered version at 70mph, but in general terms, with this DTi's extra urge and no loss of economy, it's well worth tolerating the harsher feel at both ends of the rev range.

The Vectra is at its best as a main road conveyance in other ways, too. Its ride jostles and jibs about secondary surfaces, whereas its light, precise steering feels good on smooth, open bends.

ABS is standard on all Vectras, so we consider its brake pedal effort to be a shade heavier than is strictly necessary, though stopping power and balance are

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PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		1.8	4.4	7.4	11.0
IN 5TH GEAR		7.5	13.3	18.7	24.7
IN 4TH GEAR		4.1	8.0	12.1	16.5

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	18.7/10.3		11.2/8.0		
		13.3/8.0		11.4/8.5	

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	1	3	5
		4550*		4550*	4650	24	70	124
						46	94	
								mph

*for best acceleration

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Type of use – with air conditioning off*	mpg
Urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	33½
Suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	42½
Motorway (70mph cruising)	54½
Cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	52½
Rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	61
Typical mpg overall	52½

Realistic tank range (not nominal tank capacity) 50 litres/575 miles

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2–4% in winter and 4–8% in summer

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES – LS SALOON

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience
(the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts	front ●●●●○	rear ●●●●○	Door locking	●●●●○
			central locking?	☒
Head restraints	front ●●○●○	rear ●●●○●	remote control?	☒
			auto window closure?	☒
Interior			deadlocks?	☒
safety padding	●●●○●		Luggage	
driver's airbag?	☒		secure from interior/hidden	●●●●●
other airbags?	(1) ☒		from view	●●●●●
side impact protection	●●●○●		Alarm	for LS ☐
Fuel anti-spillage	●●●○●			☒

☒ standard on test car

☐ factory fitted option

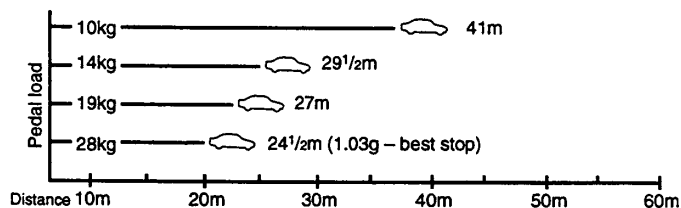
☒ not available

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●○● Behaviour in an emergency ●●●●○ Handbrake ●●○●○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)

(A good-to-average best stop with ABS is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load)



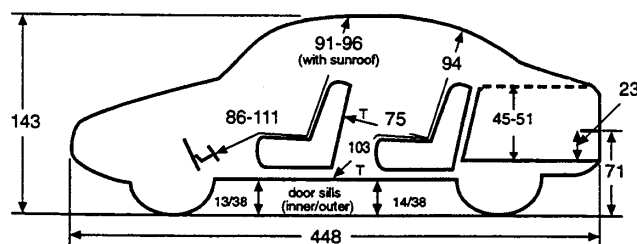
Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:

11kg at start of test, 14½kg at end of test. (Ideal brakes show no change)

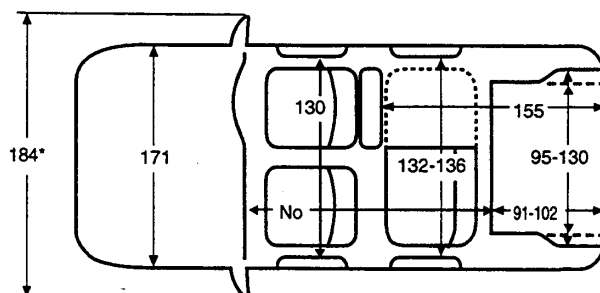
MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Four-door



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



*mirrors don't fold

reassuring. The handbrake is too unwieldy for our liking, however.

When not gearchanging, it pays to keep your left foot on the footrest provided – it's all too easy to "ride" the light clutch and cause it to slip.

Front seat support, even though there's no lumbar adjuster on Envoy or LS, is therapeutically correct and both seat and steering wheel height can be reset nowadays.

You can't help but be impressed by the generous equipment provided on the LS – the trim is hard-wearing, the features include "Trafficmaster" navigation assistance, and other aids, such as the radio cassette (with head-up display and aerial incorporated in the rear window heater elements) all work impressively.

The saloon's back seat both folds properly (just like an estate's) and can be locked to secure boot contents from the interior or from outside, independent of the central locking. The security aspect, with deadlocks and a new handset/key combined, works more conveniently than most; an alarm is extra on the LS and past experience indicates that it makes life a bit more complicated.

In living longer-term with this Vectra, we would be reassured by the reasonable parts prices and plentiful supply of dealers, but it's about time the warranty period extended beyond 12 months, and as far as DIY maintenance is concerned, forget it! The underbonnet layout is crammed in a manner that would daunt anyone without special tools and know-how.

VERDICT

This economical yet sprightly new Di diesel pitches in convincingly against VW's similar offering, and puts the other current alternatives well and truly in the shade. Even the much-respected Peugeot diesel can't measure up.

If remaining objections to low-speed harshness were tackled (perhaps by the use of balancer shafts, as used with success in the Omega version of this engine), this Vauxhall diesel would be hard to fault at present. But watch this space; new rivals are already on the horizon...

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type transverse four in line with iron block and alloy head; five main bearings

Size 84.0 x 90.0mm = 1994cc

Power 100bhp at 4300rpm

Torque 151 lb ft at 1600rpm

Valves chain-driven single overhead camshaft actuating four valves per cylinder via bridge-piece and hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition direct-injection diesel with turbocharger and intercooler. Electronically controlled mechanical injection pump with EGR and oxidising catalyser. Cableless "drive-by-wire" accelerator. Compression ignition. 60-litre tank with low-level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm 26.6 in 5th; 20.5 in 4th

See other details as shown in R9549

Likes . . . and gripes

Accurate speedo can be recalibrated in service . . . but odometer masked by column shroud

Quiet, unruffled sunroof . . . but heater warms face-level vents

Gas-struts support bonnet . . . but engine bay is crowded