

**TEST
EXTRA**

Vauxhall Vectra Estate

Featuring 2.0Di diesel



What's different?

Vectra now available as an estate car, with minor seating revisions for 1997; steering rake now adjustable, too.

THE LAUNCH OF THE VECTRA ESTATE car neatly coincides with the introduction of Vauxhall's exciting new direct-injection diesel engine. Like fish and chips, they're made for each other; what better than a torquey and frugal diesel under the bonnet of an elegant yet capacious maid of all work like this estate?

We say "exciting" not because this two-litre diesel is particularly powerful (its 82bhp peak is the same as its Isuzu, Japanese-sourced predecessor's that had only a 1.7-litre capacity), but because this European design moves the technology on from VW's impressive 1.9 and 2.5TDi. It uses direct injection, as well, but features a new Bosch-derived higher-pressure injection pump under computer control, plus four valves per cylinder, operated by a single, chain-driven overhead camshaft. All these technical features are there primarily to achieve two vital objectives: low pollution and low noise and vibration levels.

The emission tests confirm this power unit is 20 per cent cleaner than the current rules require, but it's the

general smoothness and hush, once it's under way, that makes the most favourable impression. Only a brief vibration period around 1500rpm mars what is otherwise a direct-injection unit that matches or improves on the less efficient Peugeot/Citroën four-cylinder, indirect-injection engine's refinement.

This 1500rpm vibrancy is a pity, because it also spoils the unit's gutsy response that surfaces at even lower revs; it's an important part of the power unit's remarkable fuel economy, as well. Low revs and long legs make for an impressive 52 $\frac{1}{2}$ mpg at the legal limit – with a tank range to match.

The inevitable under-bonnet hammering from a cold start is the diesel's only real give-away, but this quickly subsides and a delightful clutch and precise gearchange make the car very easy-going in traffic; all that lovely low-speed torque produces effortless acceleration in third and fourth, which confers a liveliness of response in normal give-and-take driving that feels much more sprightly than our 15sec 30–70mph time would suggest. The engine will run to 5000rpm, but change 500rpm earlier for the best times.

Nevertheless, the latest VW/Audi 110bhp counterpart runs this Opel/Vauxhall power plant very close in terms of smoothness and decibels, with superior acceleration and even a slight edge in mpg

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PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.4	5.7	9.8	15.1
IN 5TH GEAR		7.9	13.9	20.2	26.9
IN 4TH GEAR		4.4	8.6	13.2	18.6

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	17.4/10.2		12.3/8.8		
		13.9/8.6		13.0/10.0	

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	
		4450*		4450*	4050	
						mph

*for best acceleration

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: diesel

Normal range (no air conditioning)	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	40½
Short journeys in the suburbs	44
Motorway – 70mph cruising	52½
Brisk driving, mixed roads	52
Gentle driving, rural roads	61
Typical mpg overall	52
Realistic tank range*	51 litres/585 miles
*based on fuel gauge, warning lamp and filling station experience	

MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

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

FACTS AND FIGURES

ENGINE Type

transverse four cylinders with iron block and alloy head (and sump). Five main bearings

Size

1994cc

Power

82bhp at 4300rpm

Torque

136 lb ft at 1800rpm

Valves

chain-driven single overhead camshaft actuating four valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

Fuel/ignition

direct-injection diesel with low-pressure turbocharger – no intercooler. Electronically controlled rotary injection pump with exhaust gas recirculation and two-way exhaust catalyser. "Drive-by-wire" cableless accelerator. Compression ignition but with electric preheating for cold starts

TRANSMISSION

Type

five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm

26.6 in 5th; 20.5 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph

2630 in top gear

All other details similar to those given in R9549

HOW THE VECTRA 2.0Di COMPARES

	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom – front (cm)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (cm)	Steering† turns/ circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
VAUXHALL VECTRA 2.0Di (Estate)	1994/82	2630	15.1	26.9/18.6	52	24/28*	111	101/75	3.0/10.9	449
VW Passat 1.9TDi/110 (Saloon)	1781/110	2450	11.1	21.4/15.9	53½	24½/18*	110	102/74	2.8/10.9	468
Ford Mondeo 1.8TD (Hatch)	1753/87	2820	14.6	25.5/17.5	45	24/22*	110	102/76	3.0/10.4	456
Citroën Xantia 1.9TD (Hatch)	1905/92	2750	13.5	29.0/18.7	43	27/11	107	103/74	3.2/10.6	444
Rover 620SDi (Saloon)	1994/105	2700	11.1	22.9/14.6	45	27/11*	113	97/71	3.1/11.7	465
Peugeot 406 1.9 (Saloon)	1905/90	2850	13.7	28.2/18.4	42	29/14	111	99/75	3.2/11.0	456

* with ABS

† all power-assisted

returns. We look forward to sampling GM's 100bhp version; due out soon – will it remain such a smoothie?

Of course, there are other interesting petrol engines in the Vectra line-up, most notable of which is the 2.5 V6 (see R9643A). The 1.8- and two-litre fours are economical, too, by comparison with rivals, but neither is especially smooth running, nor particularly responsive at lower revs.

So much for motive power. What about the new estate car layout? It isn't designed to sacrifice style to function, yet our dimensions table confirms that it usefully enhances load space compared with the hatchback, in a body that stands just 1.4cm longer at the kerb. Just as important, there is (unlike the Astra Estate) absolutely no compromise to back seat space or comfort in this conversion; in fact, headroom is better. There are no rattles or body-induced drumming – indeed, when you're facing forward, you would be hard pressed to remember that it's the estate car you're driving. However, the realisation recurs every time you need to reverse for, as with most modern cars, it's easier to "place" the rear end of this estate version, because of better rear quarter vision and the fact that the inside is almost as far away as the outside

extremities. Under the rear load deck, there are some handy shallow stowage trays, as well as a full-sized spare wheel and tools. And, of course, there's no load sill; it's a pity the rear bumper ledge is painted and unprotected, though.

Coming back to the Vectra for a second, longer look at the GLS, we discovered several features that were better for knowing; there were other details that irritated, however – we list them in our "Likes and gripes" panel. Warmed air from the ventilator, after a hot start, is caused by the unfortunate positioning of the turbocharger under the bonnet, too close for comfort to the air intake. It should work to advantage in winter, of course, but we wonder what it does for the air-conditioner?

VERDICT

Overall, we emerged very impressed by this estate car conversion – it's so well done that we're left wondering why people with practical needs ever bother with a saloon. It strikes a price balance between style and practicality and is the ideal concomitant for this sophisticated new diesel engine. Both do an excellent job to make the Vectra diesel estate car most desirable transport.

Likes ... and gripes

Unruffled, buffet-free sunroof ...	but facia vents blast hot air for five minutes, after parking briefly
Short, crisp brake pedal response of ideal weight ...	but some squeal and handbrake creak on our car
Twin lumbar adjusters for front seats orthopaedically zealous ...	but more soft overlay would be nice
	... you can't lock (by key or handset) without arming the alarm
	... ignition keyhole won't accept key readily

