

Agenda Item IMD29

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD: 2023/27

TITLE	Reading Transport Strategy - Wokingham Borough Council response to consultation
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways - Paul Fishwick
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	29 November 2023, 11:00 Shute End, LGF 6
WARD	(All Wards);
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framalico

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

Reading Borough Council (RBC) have recently started consultation on the draft of their new Local Transport Plan (named the Reading Transport Strategy 2040). The consultation is open until Monday 11th December 2023 and, as a neighbouring local authority, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) has been invited to comment upon the plan.

As a neighbouring authority it is important to assess how Wokingham Borough and its residents and businesses will be affected by the plan and also to ensure that the plan meets any requirements the borough may have in future.

This report sets out a recommended response to the consultation which closes on the 11 December.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Lead Member for Highways and Transport approves the proposed response as set out in Appendix 2.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report outlines the key areas of interest to Wokingham Borough in Reading Borough's Local Transport Plan (LTP).

Appendix 1 provides a summary of the issues in the consultation document which impact WBC.

Appendix 2 sets out a recommended response to the consultation which closes on 11 December 2023.

Although Wokingham Borough Council are generally supportive of the LTP and its proposed policies and schemes, this does come with some caveats and concerns.

Cross-boundary schemes are very important between RBC and WBC to facilitate connectivity between the boroughs and further afield. In order for these schemes to be successful it is essential that there is clear co-operation and co-working.

Key areas of concern include:

Congestion in Wokingham – how any of the proposal might impact on the current situation.

Demand Management – ensuring that the proposed measures are fair and do not impact on the borough negatively.

Public Transport – ensuring that routes in Wokingham are considered where changes in Reading are proposed and Wokingham’s residents do not bear the brunt of any changes. Ensuring that Reading BSIP project completed close to the borough boundary also account for potential changes that WBC might wish to make. It is also possible that if there were funds available, RBC could contribute to these from their BSIP fund.

Park and Ride – ensuring that these are viable in future and are a more attractive option including by reducing prices through sharing revenues generated in Reading Town Centre.

Schemes and their Delivery - Whilst we support many of the schemes we need to ensure that where infrastructure is installed that benefits both parties (e.g. Park and Ride sites in Wokingham) there should be a contribution to their construction as well as ongoing revenue support where appropriate.

Third Thames Crossing - Although the scheme is half in Wokingham borough and half in South Oxfordshire district, the majority of the benefits will be felt by Reading residents. WBC remains supportive, however, it is essential that a financially sustainable model for construction and ongoing maintenance be identified. It is also essential that this is designed as a sustainable route corridor and not an extension of the A3290/A329(M).

Background

Reading Borough Council have recently started [consultation](#) on the draft of their [new Local Transport Plan \(named The Reading Transport Strategy 2040\)](#). The consultation is open until Monday 11th December 2023 and, as a neighbouring Local Authority, Wokingham Borough Council has been invited to comment upon the plan.

The strategy is a statutory document that sets out Reading's plans for developing their transport network to 2040 and beyond. Although it focuses primarily on improvements within Reading Borough it also includes cross-boundary schemes which includes schemes within, or impacting upon, the Wokingham area as well as some proposals that are wholly within Wokingham Borough. As a neighbouring local authority Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a key delivery partner in the Reading Transport Strategy 2040.

Vision

The strategy is developed around the following transport vision:

“Our vision is to deliver a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town with neighbourhoods that promote healthy choices and wellbeing. Future mobility options will enable everyone in Reading to thrive, enjoy an exceptional quality of life and adapt to meet future challenges and opportunities.”

Objectives

This vision is underpinned by five objectives which are as follows:

- **Creating a Clean and Green Reading** – Provide transport options to deliver modal shift, enhance quality of life, reduce emissions and improve air quality to create a carbon neutral town.
- **Supporting Healthy Lifestyles** – Create healthy streets to encourage active travel and lifestyles, improve accessibility to key destinations and increase personal safety.
- **Enabling Sustainable and Inclusive Growth** – Enable sustainable growth and connect communities so that everyone can benefit from Reading's success.
- **Connecting People and Places** – Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport by providing attractive alternatives to the private car, helping to provide a transport network that is fast, affordable, connected and resilient.
- **Embracing Smart Solutions** – Use technology to manage the network efficiently and allow informed travel choices, whilst enabling Reading to become a smart, connected town of the future.

Business Case (including Analysis of Issues)

Challenges

The Challenges and Opportunities section identifies seven key challenges:

1. Adapting to the Future
2. Improving Air Quality
3. Reducing Congestion
4. Providing Affordable and Accessible Travel for All
5. Removing Barriers to Healthy Lifestyles

6. Achieving Good Accessibility to Local Facilities and Employment
7. Accommodating Development

Policies

Having identified these challenges, the draft plan proposes 32 policies to address them. These fall into six areas:

- **Multi-modal policies** including sustainable transport, equality and inclusivity, the environment and climate change.
- **Public transport policies** including rail, buses, taxis and private hire vehicles, waterways, mobility as a service, shared autonomous vehicles and travel information.
- **Active travel policies** including healthy streets, public space, walking and cycling, school travel, and public rights of way.
- **Network Management Policies** to manage travel demand and improve quality of life for residents.
- **Network management policies** including road safety, parking and enforcement, motorcycles, freight, smart solutions and highway asset management.
- **Communication and engagement policies** including training and education, incentivisation and public engagement.

Schemes

As part of their Transport Strategy, Reading Borough Council have included a wide range of proposed schemes and initiatives, which includes strategic cross-boundary schemes which may impact upon Wokingham Borough. These schemes have been categorised as the following typologies:

- **Multi-Modal schemes** – this category includes major transport corridors, cross-Thames travel, connecting neighbourhoods and enhancements to the Inner Distribution Road (IDR). This will also include investigating demand management schemes.
- **Public transport schemes** – this category includes upgrades and enhancements to railway stations, bus rapid transit corridors, Park and Rides, Superbus network, community transport, concessionary travel, Mobility as a Service and demand responsive transport.
- **Network management schemes** – this category includes neighbourhood and highway management, parking schemes and management, road safety schemes, intelligent transport systems, electric vehicle charging, car clubs and smart city initiatives.
- **Communication and engagement schemes** – this category includes marketing, travel information, training, school travel accreditation programme, progress reporting and public engagement.

The summary document in Appendix 1 sets out those schemes which are proposed in Reading's LTP and are likely to have the greatest impact upon Wokingham Borough.

The recommended response to the consultation in Appendix 2 sets out our response, particularly toward policies and schemes which are likely to have the greatest impact upon Wokingham Borough.

Responses from Members and Parish and Town Councils

Ward Members and our Town and Parish Councils were provided with the summary document and asked to raise any particular concerns they would like officers to consider in the response. The timescales for the consultation were quite short and some Town/Parish Councils indicated that they did not have time in their meeting cycle to be able to consider the consultation, however, a number of responses were received. A summary of these responses are included below:

Respondent	Summary of Response
Wokingham Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LTP is in line with expectations • Improvements to active travel and public transport welcome • Importance of cooperation between WBC and RBC
Charles Margetts Cllr for Finchampstead North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive of the use of Mere oak P&R • Promotion of Waterloo to Reading line should be considered and footbridge onto Earley Station Platforms. • Need for RBC and Reading Buses to financially support Winnersh Park and Ride
Woodley Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee will respond directly to the LTP Consultation
Gary Cowan Cllr for Arborfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure inclusion of Climate Emergency comments into the LTP response

Other responses were received from officers in the council including from Highways, Economic Development and the Climate Emergency Teams.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	n/a	n/a	n/a

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

This response is regarding Reading Borough Council's LTP. Where appropriate we have requested that any scheme affecting WBC should be funded by Reading BC to ensure that the benefits their residents receive are not paid for by Wokingham BC.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including property and priorities?)

The Reading LTP will potentially impact on some of Wokingham borough's roads and its road users. Our response has had input from other services in the council so that their needs can be considered, including Economic Development and the Climate Emergency Team; the objectives of Reading Borough Council broadly align with our own, our concern, as set out in the response, is that there might be unintended consequences on Wokingham from the schemes.

Public Sector Equality Duty

This is a response to a consultation, whilst our public sector equality duty has been taken into account whilst considering our response we have not produced a separate EQIA as the actions will ultimately be carried out by Reading borough Council and they would be expected to complete necessary EQIA as part of their processes as the plan develops and is delivered.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	
Monitoring Officer	
Leader of the Council	

For Highways use only	
<i>If your item is not about a highways matter you do not need to complete the Town and Parish Council information or the Local Ward Member information</i>	
Town and Parish Councils	
Local Ward Members	

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers
App 1 – Reading LTP Consultation Summary
App 2 – Consultation Response

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