Reading Transport Strategy 2040 - Statutory Consultation

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.

Overview

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.

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 Proposed

There are 32 policies proposed by the Reading Local Transport Plan (LTP) which impact the schemes that will be progressed in Reading and will therefore potentially impact upon Wokingham. The draft plan proposes 32 policies to address their key challenges and opportunities.

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.

Schemes with direct involvement of, or impact on, Wokingham Borough

There are a number of schemes and initiatives proposed as part of the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 which will either involve Wokingham Borough Council as a "delivery partner" and be cross-boundary or have direct impact due to proximity to the borough boundary.

Multi-Modal Schemes

Transport Corridor Multi-Modal Enhancements (Page 98)

Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Multi-modal enhancements to major transport corridors, which could include:

- *Reallocation of road space to walking, cycling and public transport*
- *Improved pedestrian and cycle provision, including wider, more accessible routes and upgraded /new crossings*
- *Improved public transport provision, including bus priority infrastructure, travel information and stop facilities*
- *Increase in capacity at active travel and public transport pinch points*
- *Traffic signal upgrades*
- *Safety enhancements*
- *Removal of excessive street furniture*
- *Increased landscaping and vegetation*
- *Introduction of pedestrian and cyclist rest areas*
- *Delivery of digital roads, to enable improved management and maintenance*

The following map, Figure 1, is also included in the document. This indicates the following routes of note in Wokingham Borough:

- A33
- A327 / Shinfield Road
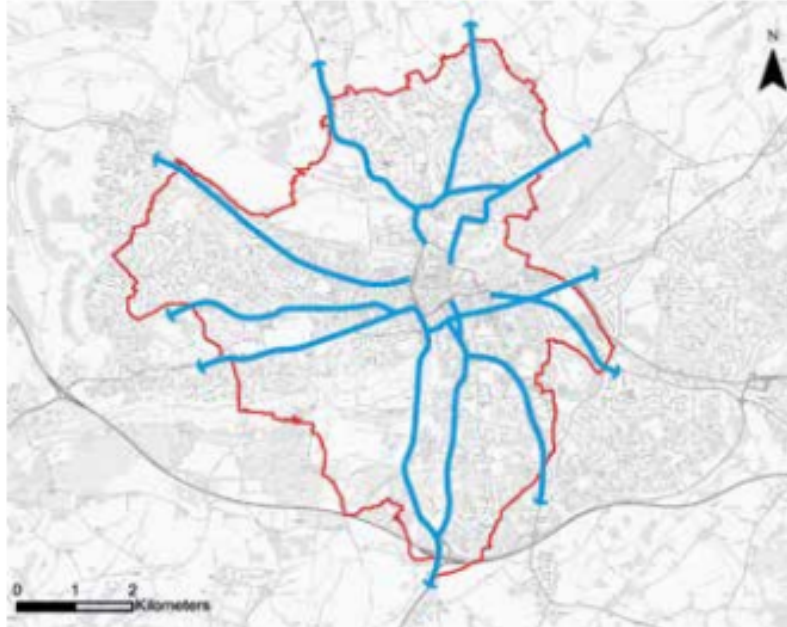- A329 / Wokingham Road
- A4 / London Road

Figure 1 – Map of Transport Corridor Multi-Modal Enhancements
Source: Reading Transport Strategy 2040, Draft for Consultation - June 2023

Cross-Thames Travel [(Page 101 / 102)](#)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

A fundamental review of travel options across the River Thames to enhance sustainable choices and help reduce the negative impacts of traffic congestion in residential areas of Reading, South Oxfordshire and Wokingham.

The focus of the scheme will be on promoting sustainable travel and addressing the issues resulting from the limited existing river crossings in Caversham, Sonning and Henley which cause significant congestion during peak times. This results in poor air quality, carbon emissions and travel delays for these local communities.

The scheme will include enhancing existing public transport, walking and cycle routes across the river, alongside fundamentally reviewing new options including the need for an additional river crossing and associated orbital route around the north of Caversham to link a new crossing with the A4074. Due to the scale of the scheme, it is likely to be delivered in phases, reflective of funding and land availability.

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Connecting Neighbourhoods [(Page 103)](#)

Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

The main objective of this scheme is to better connect neighbourhoods in the Reading urban area to enable direct trips between areas which do not need to enter central Reading.

Improvements in infrastructure and services for walking, cycling and public transport, linking key mobility hubs, residential areas and employment areas.

These improvements would reduce the need for people to travel into the town centre when they do not have an origin or destination within the centre, reducing the number of vehicles making through trips on the IDR. They will also enable around-town travel by public transport without needing to change services in the town centre.

Demand Management [(Page 104 / 105)](#)

Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Demand for travelling in low occupancy vehicles will need to be managed in order to achieve the overall vision of this strategy, alongside providing better alternatives to travel by sustainable modes.

Managing demand will contribute towards overcoming key challenges including the declared climate emergency, high levels of through-traffic, vehicle emissions causing poor air quality and the forecast levels of housing and economic development.

Continuing with a high dependency on carbon intensive transport is not a sustainable option. Therefore, alongside providing sustainable alternatives we must manage demand on the network to help to achieve the overall vision for Reading. This will involve delivering some or all of the schemes set out in this section mindful of equity.

The introduction of demand management measures will provide revenue to enable investment in sustainable transport options to provide attractive alternatives to the private car, increasing options for sustainable travel around the town.

Public Transport Schemes

Superbus Network [(Page 106)](#)

Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

A network of high-quality, high-frequency branded bus routes and infrastructure (bus shelters, real-time information, accessible buses and bus stops, Wi-Fi and USB charging on buses etc.), with reduced fares.

Bus priority (potentially involving the reallocation of road space) should be further delivered to enable the bus services to avoid the impacts of congestion.

Additionally, the expansion of the red route scheme along high frequency routes to improve traffic flow.

Cyclists, motorcyclists and taxis will generally be permitted to use bus priority infrastructure provided to support our Superbus network.

Additional scheme information is included in the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Concessionary and Discounted Travel [(Page 107)](Page 107)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

We provide statutory concessions in accordance with national legislation, which allow older and disabled people to travel on buses for free during off-peak times. Additionally, we also provide concessionary travel for disabled people and their carers during peak times, and travel at all times on dial-a-ride services for eligible pass holders.

We will investigate the potential to provide further concessions for other sustainable trips within Reading. Potential options for this could include discounted or free travel for:

- *Different population sectors (for example people aged under 18 or people living in low-income households)*
- *Different trip types (for example travel to school or trips in certain parts of Reading)*
- *Different trip times (for example off-peak travel for more users or peak travel for older people.)*

We will also work with operators to introduce a 'touch in, touch out' system with a daily capped fare, and a simpler fare structure.

South Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor [(Page 110)](Page 110)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Delivery of a BRT route along the A33, providing direct, frequent and reliable bus travel between Mereoak Park and Ride, south Reading business parks, Green Park Station, Kennet Island, Madejski Stadium and Reading town centre.

Initial phases of this scheme have been delivered as funding is secured, however there still remains significant sections along the A33, particularly northbound towards the town centre, where the BRT should be delivered to provide a continuous bus priority facility between Mereoak Park and Ride and Reading town centre.

The scheme will be developed to enable sustainable development on this key growth corridor in Reading, which includes a number of potential future development sites.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridors (Page 111)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

There are high levels of congestion during peak periods and poor air quality along key corridors in Reading, which have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of local residents. Therefore, the provision of high-quality Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors will help to address these issues by providing a realistic alternative to the private car.

The BRT network will be designed to meet a set of standards above and beyond our Superbus Network, and will be futureproofed for future public transport modes other than bus. BRT will deliver dedicated public transport lanes and routes, allowing for segregation of public transport and general traffic. Reallocation of road space for the BRT will be considered, where land is constrained, in order to achieve traffic reductions and air quality improvements.

Provision of BRT along key corridors in Reading would provide a sustainable travel option, reducing congestion and improving air quality to deliver benefits to local residents.

Mereoak Park and Ride Mobility Hub Expansion (Page 112)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Mereoak Park and Ride opened in 2015 with 570 spaces and is extensively used by people travelling from south of Reading, and the M4. It is served by Greenwave buses to Reading town centre, Madejski Stadium, Green Park and the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Mereoak is also the coach stop for Reading for National Express coach services.

There is potential for the Park and Ride to become a major transport interchange hub, encouraging further use of the Park and Ride, with the provision of additional facilities and car parking at the site.

We will deliver increased parking provision, new electric vehicle charging points, and a facilities hub (which could include toilets, a waiting room and café, for example).

This scheme would support proposed development on the A33 corridor, as well as within Reading town centre.

Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride Mobility Hub Enhancements [(Page 113)](Page 113)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride provides a key link for those travelling from the south and east of Reading. Further enhancements are proposed to increase parking capacity and improve for the Park and Ride services.

The improvements delivered will need to cater for the growth of future technologies including the provision of more electric charger points.

Wokingham Borough Council are extending parking provision by decking the car park that will allow an increase in the parking spaces. This will cater for the demand with an increase in provision of electric charging points for both cars and buses to adapt to changing technologies. Waiting facilities and associated amenities will also be upgraded to enhance user experience.

East Reading BRT would improve the journey times and reliability of the supporting bus services.

Park and Ride Mobility Hubs [(Page 114 / 115)](Page 114 / 115)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

The provision of a comprehensive Park and Ride network for Reading serving the town centre. These facilities will increase demand for public transport services, therefore enabling more viable services with greater frequency.

The provision of Park and Ride facilities alone will provide benefits. However, the benefits of this scheme will be maximised through the delivery of BRT corridors and the Superbus Network, which will introduce public transport priority and service frequency enhancements, alongside other supporting schemes.

We are committed to working with our delivery partners to deliver improved public transport services to Reading, for the benefit of their residents.

We will also work with landowners to consider the potential for utilising existing car parks to accommodate Park and Ride Mobility Hubs, where appropriate.

Mobility as a Service (MaaS) [(Pages 119 to 121)](Pages 119 to 121)

Although Wokingham Borough Council is not listed as a delivery partner for this scheme, multi-modal journeys may travel between Wokingham and Reading. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Establish a sustainable MaaS scheme allowing residents, commuters and visitors to simply plan, pay for and undertake multi-modal journeys through an easy-to-use app linked to a single payment platform. MaaS can be set up as a pay as you go or as a monthly subscription for services.

This would link various modes and operators such as bus services, rail services, cycle hire, e-scooters, taxis, car share and car hire.

Active Travel Schemes
Strategic Pedestrian Routes [(Page 123)](Page 123)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

In line with our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), we will provide improvements that follow the Healthy Streets principles. This will encourage walking and improve options for multi-modal interchange on key walking routes which connect major employment areas, transport mobility hubs, the town centre and district hubs across the Reading area. Improvements should reduce conflict with traffic and other road users and improve safety and perception of safety. Further work will be undertaken to identify strategic pedestrian routes for improvements, which could include:

- *Roadspace reallocation*
- *Enhanced public space*
- *Resurfacing*
- *Lighting and CCTV*
- *New/improved crossings*
- *Improved signage*
- *Street clutter removal and consolidation*
- *Introduction of pedestrian and cyclist rest areas*
- *Increased landscaping and vegetation*

Local Pedestrian Routes [(Page 124)](Page 124)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

In line with our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), we will create a network of local pedestrian routes that connect people to local facilities and provide feeder links to the strategic pedestrian network, as well as the wider transport network, including mobility hubs/key interchanges across the borough.

We will incorporate the Healthy Streets principles as part of these enhancements.

Strategic and Town Centre Cycle Routes [(Page 125)](Page 125)
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Given the compact nature of Reading Borough, there is significant opportunity for improvements to increase cycling levels and create a shift away from private car travel.

We will create a strategic cycle network based on the principles set out in our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Healthy Streets, connecting major destinations (including education, employment centres and transport mobility hubs) along key transport corridors and in the town centre. These routes include both radial and orbital routes as well as enhanced routes within the town centre.

Improvements will include reallocating road space, segregation from traffic for people who walk and cycle, surface improvements, crossing enhancements, parking restrictions, signage, reducing street furniture and increasing accessibility for all.

Associated public space improvements would enhance key corridors including those in deprived areas.

Shinfield Road Active Travel Improvements [(Page 126)](Page 126)
Although Wokingham Borough Council is not listed as a delivery partner for this scheme, this scheme curtails very close to the boundary between Reading and Wokingham. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

We have secured funding from the Government's Active Travel Fund to deliver significant active travel improvements on Shinfield Road between Christchurch Green and Shinfield Rise.

Improvements include:

- *Segregated cycle lanes in each direction*
- *Early release for cyclists at the three signalised junctions*
- *Improved cycle provision at all junctions*
- *Raised tables at select junctions to encourage lower vehicle speeds*
- *New and improved crossings of Shinfield Road*
- *Footway widening*
- *Introduction of double yellow lines to prevent parking obstructing active travel*
- *Bus stops marked on the carriageway*
- *A new shared space for pedestrians and cyclists near to the junction with Cedar Road/Elm Road*

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Local Cycle Routes
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

In line with our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), we will create a new or improved local cycle network along lightly trafficked routes, linking communities to local facilities such as shops, leisure facilities, healthcare and education.

Cycle facilities will include a mixture of shared or segregated foot/cycleways, on-carriageway cycle lanes, cyclist awareness signage and crossing facilities. Shared use facilities will have an interim role to play as we transition towards the provision of segregated cycle infrastructure.

Improvements to borough-wide local routes are proposed as part of the LCWIP. These routes will take into account different types of cycles for those with particular mobility needs.

We will incorporate the Healthy Streets principles as part of these enhancements.

Micro-Mobility Hire Scheme
Wokingham Borough Council is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

The provision of a new cycle hire scheme to serve Reading through new infrastructure or upgrade the existing cycle hire infrastructure.

Develop the hire fleet to include the provision of e-bikes and/or e-scooters, with the latest technology, subject to appropriate legislation being in place.

Provision of further docking stations to improve affordable access to cycling across the wider Reading urban area.

Network Management Schemes
Parking Schemes and Management
Although Wokingham Borough Council is not listed as a delivery partner for this scheme, any changes to parking management in proximity to the borough boundary may have an impact upon parking in Wokingham. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Management of parking in the Borough, in line with our Parking Strategy, includes technological advances which now enable our kerbs and parking spaces to be managed dynamically, improving efficiency of usage.

This encompasses all types of parking including, on-street, off-street car parks, Park and Ride, and resident permit parking. This could also help better manage the impacts of streetworks on parking, through incorporation of our Streetworks Permits.

Kerb-space could be booked for a variety of uses, such as general parking, disabled parking, short-stay parking, loading, servicing or as a bus stop. Usage could be managed through dynamic pricing, with higher charges applied for certain booking types at particular times of day. Improved efficiency of kerbspace will allow us to remove on-street parking that obstructs pedestrian, cycle or public transport routes.

We will also be able to manage charges for on-street and off-street parking, to discourage travel during peak periods and to encourage modal shift away from car to sustainable transport such as buses or Park and Ride.

Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) - Managing Travel on the Roads [(Page 140)](Page 140)
"Neighbouring Local Authorities" is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Smarter solutions (such as Big Data, machine learning and artificial intelligence) are transforming the way we understand how our networks are operating and our ability to predict future operation and the management decisions that can be made.

We are building a predictive system based on machine learning, which fuses a number of network datasets (for example Bluetooth journey time monitoring, Automatic Number Plate Recognition, traffic loops and bus position data). In addition, we are deploying an Internet of Things (IoT) communications platform that will help us collect real-time network condition data.

The system being built will provide network operators with enhanced information to both manage the network and provide traveller information. Further work is needed to fully integrate this system into the existing strategy management tools to fully realise its value to network management and develop a comprehensive digital roads network.

Smart City Initiatives [(Page 142 / 143)](Page 142 / 143)
Although Wokingham Borough Council is not listed as a delivery partner for this scheme, any changes to network management in Reading. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Transport impacts on a wide range of services delivered by the Council, being a driver for everything from economic growth and business rate retention to social isolation, mental and physical health and education and to, most critically, meeting our climate targets.

Transport is a derived demand, meaning it is there to get people or goods from A to B, with the need to travel being defined by the activities that the individual is undertaking or the destination of the goods. Very few trips are made purely for the journey.

With transport having such a cross authority role, there is significant potential for our transport team to work more closely across the authority to tackle the challenges around the sustainable delivery of transport. This will build on previous initiatives such as the Beat the Street programme which was jointly delivered by health and transport teams to encourage active travel.

Communication and Engagement Schemes

Travel Information and Advice (Page 145)

"Neighbouring Local Authorities" is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

Travel information enables people to make informed choices about how they travel. We will provide or facilitate high quality, real-time travel information through a number of means, which could include:

- *Mobile apps*
- *Real-time information boards*
- *Variable message signage*
- *Print (including accessible forms such as Braille and foreign language formats)*
- *Our website*
- *Personalised travel advice*
- *Information boards and signage*

We will develop a wayfinding strategy to share our information and we will open up our data for public use, allowing the private sector to develop travel information apps

We recognise the diverse needs of our residents, and we will ensure travel information and advice is provided in accessible formats.

Progress Reporting and Public Engagement (Page 148)

"Neighbouring Local Authorities" is listed as a delivery partner for this scheme. The summary in the draft for this scheme is as follows:

We will provide regular updates on progress in delivering the RTS and associated transport projects and schemes. This will include updates through a variety of measures such as press releases, residents' newsletters and via social media platforms to inclusively engage with Reading's residents, businesses and visitors.

Consultations will be undertaken to inform and engage Reading's residents on the development of schemes and initiatives, and ensure wider public support.

Engagement with residents within and outside the Borough will be undertaken to spread awareness and help achieve the goals set out in this Strategy.

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