

To: Councillor Cross (Chair)
Councillors Hornsby-Smith, Ballsdon, Ennis,
Griffith, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng,
Magon, McElroy, Moore, Page, R Singh and
Terry

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7 November 2023

Your contact is: **Andrew Wood - Committee Services**

**NOTICE OF MEETING - STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
COMMITTEE 15 NOVEMBER 2023**

A meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee will be held on Wednesday, 15 November 2023 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

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1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
2. MINUTES		5 - 12
To confirm the Minutes of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee held on 29 June 2023.		
3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		13 - 42
To receive the Minutes for meetings of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 14 June 2023 and 13 September 2023.		
4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES		43 - 72
To receive the Minutes for meetings of the:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Joint Waste Disposal Board on 2 March 2023 and 15 June 2023Reading Climate Change Partnership Board on 20 April 2023 and 20 July 2023		

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5. PETITIONS

Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

6. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

7. THAMES WATER SCRUTINY

**BOROUGH
WIDE**

In response to the Motion passed by Council on 27 June 2023 (Minute 18 refers) representatives from Thames Water will attend the meeting to give a presentation and answer questions from the Committee on their investment plans for Reading and on the company's work and operations within the Borough.

8. ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2022/23 ON: (I) READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY AND (II) RBC'S GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

**BOROUGH
WIDE** **73 - 118**

A report presenting the Annual Reports for 2022/23 on two key elements of Reading's response to the climate emergency:

- (I) The 2022/23 Annual Report on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25
- (II) The 2022/23 Annual Report on the Council's Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions

9. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN REVIEW

**BOROUGH
WIDE** **119 - 190**

A report seeking approval from the Committee to undertake a public consultation on the draft Reading Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028.

10. OUTCOMES OF 'THE STRATEGY ROOM' PROJECT

**BOROUGH
WIDE** **191 - 194**

A report inviting the Committee to note the outcomes of 'The Strategy Room' project to engage residents in discussions about climate change, to be summarised in a presentation at the meeting.

11.	READING CLIMATE FESTIVAL 2023 EVALUATION	BOROUGH WIDE	195 - 210
	A report evaluating the 2023 Reading Climate Festival and recognising the efforts of the partners in securing the success of the Festival.		
12.	STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE	BOROUGH WIDE	211 - 218
	A report providing the Committee with an overview on progress towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading.		
13.	LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE CONSULTATION ON SCOPE AND CONTENT	BOROUGH WIDE	219 - 374
	A report setting out the details of and seeking approval for a consultation to be undertaken on the scope and content of the Local Plan Partial Update. The report also seeks approval from the Committee to make some small amendments to the agreed Local Development Scheme (LDS).		

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STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 29 JUNE 2023

Present: Councillor Cross (Chair);

Councillors Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Ennis, Griffith, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, Magon, McElroy, Moore, Page and Terry

Apologies: Councillors R Singh

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 23 March and 24 May 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting of Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 2 March 2023 were received.

4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- Joint Waste Disposal Board – 2 March 2023
- AWE Local Liaison Committee – 25 April 2023
- Reading Climate Change Partnership - 19 January 2023

5. READING TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2040 - DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that provided the Committee with an overview of the work that had been carried out to prepare the draft Reading Transport Strategy 2040, the new Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the Borough and sought approval to carry out a twelve week statutory public consultation on the draft Strategy. A copy of the draft Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report stated that the draft Reading Transport Strategy 2040 set out an ambitious vision to create healthier, greener and more equal communities through the future provision of travel options in Reading. The Strategy was focused on promoting sustainable transport options as a realistic alternative to the private car, setting out how transport facilities and services in Reading would be developed to 2040 to help achieve the Council's wider objectives for the town, including the Reading 2050 Vision and the new zero carbon ambition by 2030. It had been acknowledged that it would not be possible for every car journey to be replaced by a more sustainable mode as people might need to drive on certain occasions, therefore the Strategy included the objective of a transition to electric

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vehicles which had a reduced impact on carbon emissions compared to diesel and petrol equivalents. However, it was clear that this transition alone would not achieve the overall objectives of the Strategy as electric vehicles still produced particulates which led to poor local air quality, did not reduce traffic congestion or encourage more active travel with the associated health and wellbeing benefits.

A key focus of the Strategy was tackling social inequalities in the Borough through the provision of affordable transport solutions to enable access to education, training, employment and leisure opportunities for everyone. Further important themes of the Strategy related to carbon reduction and improved air quality, health and wellbeing, economic growth and making use of the latest technologies to be at the forefront of innovation. The Covid pandemic had had a significant impact on travel behaviours in the Borough and the draft Strategy had been updated with a view to longer-term behavioural changes which had resulted from the pandemic. The report included the latest analysis of travel behavioural changes that had resulted from the pandemic which had been reflected in the updated draft Strategy. The report also included details of the key content of the Strategy, key updates and information on the statutory consultation.

Finally, the report explained that following the statutory consultation the feedback would be reviewed and the draft Strategy would be updated accordingly, alongside any updates required by the new LTP guidance when this was published by the Department for Transport, the updated Strategy would then be submitted to a future meeting for adoption.

Chris Maddocks, Strategic Transport Manager, informed the Committee that there had been an error in the appendix of the LTP with the London Road and Oxford Road schemes having been mixed up. The version of the SEPT Committee papers on the website contained the correct version of the appendix.

The Committee discussed the report and the draft Reading Transport Strategy 2040, asked a number of questions and raised a number of points including the following:

- The Committee thanked officers for producing a very comprehensive Strategy, the aim now was to get the people of the Borough to engage with it;
- It was acknowledged that the car provided people with a very flexible means of transport, but people needed to be asked if they really needed to make the journey in their car;
- There was a need to work with neighbouring authorities with the aim of achieving a shift in transport away from Reading;
- The Strategy provided an opportunity to accelerate the work on climate change and it was recognised that the status quo was not an option and that inter connectivity was vital;
- Post pandemic people were traveling to local destinations rather than into the town centre which meant that the way thought was given to the transport network would need to change;
- The current Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) would include evidence of bus lane use and, with regard to Demand Management, a range of options would be investigated in greater detail;

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- The aim was to provide separate paths for pedestrians and cyclists on more routes in the Borough, however there were often restrictions on space and therefore shared paths could provide an alternative as the only possible option;
- Dropping kerbs to road level and providing raised tables over side roads would be investigated as part of the scheme to help those who used wheelchairs or had mobility issues;
- Early evidence had suggested that a significant proportion of traffic passing through the town had nowhere in the Borough as its final destination and therefore levying a charge on vehicles that used the town as a short cut would be investigated.

Resolved –

- (1) That the work which had been undertaken to date to prepare the draft Reading Transport Strategy 2040 be noted;
- (2) That approval to undertake a 12-week statutory public consultation on the draft Strategy be granted.

6. ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY - DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Committee with an overview of the work that had been carried out to prepare a draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Reading and sought approval to carry out a public consultation on the draft Strategy as part of the proposed statutory consultation on the new LTP. A copy of the draft Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy would become a sub-strategy to the LTP, with the aim of accelerating the transition to electric vehicles for necessary travel in the Borough. The Strategy set out the current position of electric vehicle take-up in Reading as well as settling the future pathway to support increased uptake of electric vehicles for residents, visitors and local businesses and included reference to the charging infrastructure needs of all electric vehicles, including electric buses, car clubs, e-bikes and e-scooters. The key elements of the draft Strategy were set out in the report.

Officers had engaged with suppliers of electric vehicle charge point infrastructure to ensure the Strategy was based on the latest available information and took into account the latest projections for electric vehicle uptake and for the different types of charging infrastructure to ensure that a lack of charge points was not a barrier to the future take-up of electric vehicles. The Strategy had acknowledged the role the Council had in providing local leadership in this area and highlighted the key areas that were outside the Council's control. External funding had been secured to implement a range of charging points and it had been considered that the future provision of charge points for residents living in streets without off-street parking was a particularly important role for the Council moving forward. Therefore, further installation of charge points in streets without off-street parking had been included as key action in the Strategy.

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The report stated that the Council was committed to ensuring its in-house vehicle fleet was fully electric by 2030 and officers were working with colleagues from the other Berkshire authorities to identify how delivery of charge points could be coordinated across the county. The report also noted that whilst there was currently no statutory guidance for local authorities for the development of electric vehicle strategies it was envisaged that further direction would be included within the Department for Transport's (DfT) new guidance for local authorities on the development of LTPs. Engagement on the development of the Strategy had been carried out with the Energy Savings Trust and feedback had been incorporated in the latest version of the Strategy.

The Committee discussed the report and a number of points were raised including the following:

- The capacity of electricity suppliers both locally and nationally was an issue and they needed to be asked how they would manage the increase in demand that was, and would, result from the increased use of electric vehicles;
- The increased weight of electric vehicles would have an impact on the road infrastructure and the road infrastructure might have to change as a result;
- EV charging points needed to be spread more evenly across the Borough;
- The aim was to increase the number of on-street charging points and the challenge was to keep pace with the uptake of electric vehicles;
- A balance had to be achieved between people being able to park on street and in parking bays and providing access to charging points, however more charging points would be installed in shared parking bays;
- With regard to e-scooters the government had provided an opportunity for local authorities to take part in a trial and although Reading had not done so, Slough had, and lessons would be learned from their experience and the experience of other authorities in the trial;
- As battery life increased it was more likely that people would charge their vehicles at home;
- Rapid chargers were being provided by the private sector and work was taking place across west Berkshire to identify gaps in the provision of charging points.

Resolved -

- (1) That the work which had been undertaken to prepare the draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Reading be noted;
- (2) That approval to undertake a public consultation on the draft Strategy, alongside the proposed statutory consultation on the new Local Transport Plan be granted.

7. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing an update on the progress with delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. This included major public transport

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enhancements for both bus and rail services, active travel improvement to enable more walking and cycling and associated incentivisation and communications initiatives to encourage more healthy lifestyles. Key milestones, set out in the report, included the launch of the Reading All-Bus ticket scheme which set a daily cap for bus travel in Reading, securing an additional £1m funding from the DfT for the Bath Road active travel scheme, and the significant milestone of the opening of Reading Green Park Railway Station to the public on 27 May 2023.

The report explained that the BSIP programme had included a range of capital and revenue measures to encourage greater bus usage in Reading, with one of the key revenue initiatives being the introduction of a multi-operator fares reduction ticketing scheme. The report also explained that the current contract for the operation of the BUZZ 42 service, which ran between Kenavon Drive, the town centre and Richfield Avenue, had commenced in November 2020 and was operated by Reading Transport Limited. The initial period for the contract was due to expire on 3 November 2023, however, the contract had included the option to extend for a period of 24 months until 3 November 2025. The bus services were proving popular with usage levels increasing steadily and were fully funded by private sector section 106 contributions that had been specifically fettered for the provision of the bus service to give new residents a new sustainable travel choice. The Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection had therefore taken the decision to extend the service contract until November 2025.

An additional £1m grant funding had recently been secured from the DfT for the active travel scheme on Bath Road and the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection had agreed spend approval for this additional funding to be allocated to the scheme.

The report explained that the development and delivery of the programme of strategic transport schemes was lead and managed by officers, with external support from specialist transport planning and engineering consultants. Until August 2019 the Council had had a term contract with a single supplier for the provision of these transport consultancy services, however, since this time a number of different external procurement routes had been used to engage these services. Recent soft-market testing with a number of multi-disciplinary transport consultants had revealed interest in the establishment of a Reading focused transport consultancy framework, which would enable a more consistent approach to the delivery and development of transport schemes and associated funding proposals. The soft-market test had provided feedback on a number of different approaches which officers were reviewing to obtain best value from the market. It was likely this would involve establishing a framework with two multi-disciplinary suppliers with the ability to deliver a wide range of services, as required by the Transport and Highways teams. The scope could also be tailored to ensure that the transport related requirements of other areas of the Council could also be met. The report therefore sought approval for the progression of a procurement to establish a framework agreement for the provision of transport consultancy services and for authority to be granted to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection, in consultation with the Assistant Directors of Legal and Democratic Services and Procurement, to approve the award of the resulting contracts.

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The authorisation process in respect of Reading Green Park Station had been completed in May 2023 and the station had transferred to Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR), who owned and operated the station, respectively. An event had been held to mark the formal opening of the station with all key partners and stakeholders on 25 May 2023 and the first public services calling at the station had commenced on 27 May 2023. With regard to Reading West Station, work was being managed by GWR, who the Council were in regular dialogue with. Currently, work was being carried out to fit out the building on Oxford Road, with the sign-off process being carried out with Network Rail, and the station opening at the end of summer 2023 at the latest.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress made on the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes as outlined in the report be noted;**
- (2) That the decision of the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection to extend the BUZZ 42 bus service contract, which ran between Kenavon Drive and Richfield Avenue, until November 2025 be noted;**
- (3) That the decision of the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection to agree spend approval for the additional £1m capital grant funding which had been secured from the Department for Transport for the Bath Road active travel scheme be noted;**
- (4) That the progression of a procurement to establish a framework agreement for the provision of transport consultancy services, and the provision of delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport, and Assistant Directors of Legal & Democratic Services and Procurement, to approve the award of the resulting contracts be approved.**

8. BOROUGHWIDE SMOKE AREA CONTROL DECLARATION

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that asked the Committee to revoke all the existing Smoke Control Areas (SCA) that were currently covering a large part of the Borough, and to replace them with a new single Order declaring the whole of the Borough a smoke control area. A map of the existing areas was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that SCAs had first been introduced under the Clean Air Act 1956 to restrict coal burning following bad smog events and SCAs were still relevant today due to the rise in popularity of wood burning stoves. The current Clean Air Act 1993 had recently been updated by the Environment Act 2021 to provide a simpler regime for smoke control enforcement, allowing a possible decriminalised regime with a simplified structure for

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issuing penalty notices. There were currently 21 SCAs within the Borough that had been declared since 1959. However, these only covered around 62% of the Borough.

The report stated that the benefit of the proposal was to reduce the risk of harmful emissions of uncontrolled burning of solid fuels in open fireplaces in the 38% of Reading that was currently not covered by SCAs. The proposal would also ensure consistency and minimize confusion in relation to the controls in place for the burning of solid fuels across the Borough and to raise awareness of the health impacts of burning solid fuel on air pollution. Before the new SCA could be declared a statutory consultation process would need to be completed and a public awareness campaign would also be carried out alongside this process to ensure that residents were aware of any implications there might be on them.

Resolved -

- (1) That the existing Smoke Control Orders be revoked and replaced with a single Smoke Control Order across the whole Borough, subject to the outcome of consultations and confirmation by the Secretary of State;**
- (2) That subject to the outcome of the public consultation, the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection, in consultation with the Lead Councillor and the Assistant Director for Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to exercise the delegation confirming the order.**

9. LOW CARBON ENERGY CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE (ANNUAL REPORT)

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on the progress that had been made with the implementation of the Council's Low Carbon Energy Investment Programme.

The report explained that the 2022/23 Budget, that had been approved by Council on 28 February 2023 (Minute 35 refers) had confirmed the Council's commitment to a circa £7.1m programme of low carbon investment (energy efficiency and renewable energy installations) over the three years to 2024/25 to help achieve the corporate Carbon Plan target of an 85% reduction in the Council's carbon emissions by 2025. The 2023/24 budget had included an additional 32.2m for a new corporate solar energy programme, underlining the Council's commitment to meeting Climate Strategy and Carbon Plan commitments.

The report stated that it was important to note that there were a number of projects within the Capital Programme which contributed to the Council's climate goals, in transport, fleet, waste, housing and schools, and the low carbon investment programme was just one part of this, relating specifically to decarbonization of key corporate assets. Approval to spend against the programme had been secured at the meeting of SEPT Committee on 30 June 2021 (Minute 13 refers) and the report provided an update on the programme, reflecting changes and significant variances that had been agreed in the interim, this was set out in a

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table in the report. A similar update on the programme was submitted to the Committee annually.

Resolved - That the progress with the development and delivery of the Council's low carbon investment programme as summarised in the report, pursuant to the recommendations agreed at SEPT Committee on 30 June 2021 (Minute 13 refers) and the delegations therein be noted.

(The meeting closed at 8.10 pm)

Present: Councillor Ayub (Chair);

Councillors Lanzoni (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Ennis, Gittings, Griffith, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Keeping, Kitchingham, McCann, Moore, Page, R Singh and White

Apologies: Councillors Cross

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 2 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. PETITIONS

- (a) Petition - Request to Improve Road Safety of Hamilton Road junction with Crescent Road

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the receipt of a petition, asking the Council to improve road safety at the Hamilton Road junction with Crescent Road.

The report stated that on 2 March 2023 a petition had been submitted to the Council that had contained 23 reports of near misses/collisions and 26 comments and ideas from residents to improve safety at the crossroad. The petition read as follows:

“Because of ongoing expressions of concern, I recently asked residents of Hamilton Road to send me their examples of collisions and near-miss incidents at this crossroads, and their views on what might improve the situation. The responses are included in the attached document: Tables 1 and 2.

Near-miss incidents must be taken seriously as they are an indication of a danger that could result in death/injury/damage. Data from Crashmap.co.uk, shows only 3 incidents reported for this junction (2017 - 2020), but these data are based on reported incidents only, and exclude any unreported collisions, and the numerous, and highly significant, near-miss incidents.

The sample size of residents who responded is, not surprisingly, very small: only those on our local WhatsApp and Community email groups were consulted and this excluded the many residents not known to, or reached by, these internet-based groups. However, even this small number of residents has observed / experienced near-miss incidents on a weekly or daily basis, and some have been injured. Fortunately, so far, no one has suffered a serious or fatal injury, but we are all worried about such an occurrence, especially involving children and adults on bicycles.

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Examples of Experiences/observations include:

- *The danger to life is primarily to cyclists going north or south on Hamilton Road*
- *Near misses affecting such cyclists are a frequent occurrence, but also affect car users*
- *There have been injuries/damage from collisions*
- *Road-users (both vehicles and cyclists) are not infrequently seen ignoring the Give-Way sign on Crescent Road, crossing Hamilton without pausing. Collisions have occurred for this reason*
- *Sight-lines for road-users on both Hamilton and Crescent Roads are poor, and without stopping at the junction, and easing forward, users cannot see approaching traffic, especially cyclists.*

Examples of Ideas for improving safety at this junction include:

- *Redesign junction with bollards and staggered entry to Crescent Road users*
- *Create a mini-roundabout with raised platform, and therefore no priority to any one direction*
- *Measures to force speed-reduction especially on Crescent Road*
- *A camera to warn users of scrutiny of their driving /cycling behaviour*
- *A continuous raised hump at the junction across Crescent Road, both West and East sides.*

Whilst these changes have cost implications, the costs of injury / loss of life and their treatment by health services, and the investigation costs etc by police / Council are also considerable, let alone the long-lasting and traumatic impact of such events on the people affected.

I and others are interested in helping the Council gather more data if that would help: for instance, by gathering more reports of near-miss incidents/collisions, helping to install a camera to record activity at this junction, or helping in any way that would help the Council come to an early decision."

The report explained that the crossroad of Crescent Road and Hamilton Road was situated within a 20mph zone, which benefitted from existing vertical traffic calming measures to encourage drivers to adhere to the speed limit. The junction layout was presented with 'give way' on both approaches of Crescent Road to Hamilton Road and both Crescent Road approaches were signed and lined with the associated give way restriction in accordance with National Standards. The petition covering letter had acknowledged that casualty data that had been supplied by the police did not suggest a road safety issue at the junction, with a single 'slight' incident occurring in the latest five year period of supplied data.

The Requests for Traffic Management Measures report, that was submitted to the Sub-Committee twice annually, contained a long standing request to reduce rat-running traffic along Crescent Road and beyond. Implementation of the School Street might have

partially mitigated this issue, although it had been acknowledged that this was currently in a trial phase.

The report proposed that officers considered the contents of the petition, shared their findings with the Lead Councillor and Ward Councillors for discussion and a report on the outcome of these discussions would be submitted to a future meeting. There was currently no allocated funding for the development and delivery of physical changes to the junction, but it was recognised that there was a desire to reduce risks, where feasible.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr David Whipple, addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of the Hamilton Road Community. He also gave a presentation to illustrate the safety issues and suggestions for modifications at the junction.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That officers consider the comments and proposals contained in the petition and a report be submitted to a future meeting, following engagement with the Lead and Ward Councillors;**
- (3) That the lead petitioner be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;**
- (4) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

3. READING GREEN PARK STATION - TRO CONSULTATION RESULTS

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Sub-Committee of objections and other feedback that had been received during the statutory consultation, relating to the proposed measures at Reading Green Park Station. Feedback that had been received to the statutory consultation was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the new Reading Green Park Station and multi-modal interchange would improve significantly accessibility and connectivity to the area of south Reading which had large-scale development proposed, including the expansion of Green Park Business Park, Green Park Village residential development and the Royal Elm Park mixed use development. The station had opened on 27 May 2023 and therefore the proposed TRO measures should be implemented to ensure the safe management of traffic and parking within the wider station site. The full details of the measures were set out in the report.

A statutory consultation had been carried out and had commenced on 6 April and ended on 30 April 2023. A total of three consultation responses had been received which supported the majority of the measures that were being proposed, however, two of the

responses objected to the measures being proposed for the short stay car park, stating that the short stay limit should be increased from 20 minutes to 35 minutes and that the parking charges for the short stay car park were too high. An objection had also be registered to the proposed long stay car park and to the proposed Disabled Badge Holders at any time, maximum stay 24 hours, no return within two hours. The report proposed that the Traffic Regulation Orders be made without further amendment, noting that the proposals were consistent with the intended operation of interchange and parking facilities.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to approve the proposed traffic restrictions on Reading Green Park Station in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders Procedure)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order and no public inquiry be held into the proposal.**

4. A33 ROSE KILN LANE SPEED LIMIT - APPROVAL TO CONSULT

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that sought approval from the Sub-Committee to carry out a statutory consultation for the implementation of traffic restrictions in the form of a speed reduction between the Berkeley Avenue overbridge and 29 Rose Kiln Lane in both directions to 30mph. Proposed A33 Speed Reduction Location Drawing was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the speed limit reduction was necessary to enable the introduction of inbound and outbound bus stops, the former being in carriageway, rather than bus lane, providing much needed transport links for employees and customers to the various commercial premises in the area. In order to protect the existing capacity the lane widths would be reduced in places and so a speed limit reduction was required to maintain safe vehicle movements, including those turning left into commercial premises, which had been identified as an existing issue during the Road Safety Audit. This new section of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) supported and connected to the existing dedicated public transport priority measures on the A33 corridor, linking the town centre to Green Park, Mere oak park and ride and the longer term proposed Grazeley Garden Settlement and Four Valleys developments. The scheme was currently provided for buses but in the future could be used by guided buses, trams or driverless public transport vehicles.

This phase of the scheme was being delivered using Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding and would provide key sections of the overall scheme by joining up previous section of the BRT to provide continuous bus priority, particularly south bound, and would tackle a key pinch point of the overall scheme by constructing over the river

Kennet. These phases were therefore a vital element within the Borough as part of the overall approach and would complement further aspirations for enhancements to the BRT route within Reading and future aspirations for enhancements at the Mere oak park and ride facility. Delivering this phase of the south Reading BRT would help to deliver against the aspirations of the Borough's Local Plan and draft Local Transport Strategy as it was key to increasing the capacity of the network to deliver the journeys that would support the economy and levels of proposed growth while contributing to the wider region public transport ambitions.

A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order, reducing the speed limit, had been drafted and was due to be implemented prior to commencement of construction in Autumn 2023.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and it was suggested that the 30mph restriction be extended to the wider area.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Statutory Consultation be approved to take place;**
- (2) That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order(s);**
- (3) That any objection(s) received following the statutory advertisement be submitted to a future meeting.**

5. CRESCENT ROAD SCHOOL STREET SCHEME

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that sought approval to make the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for the implementation of the Crescent Road School Street Scheme permanent. The full results of the Crescent Road Statutory Consultation were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that the Crescent Road School Street Scheme had initially been due to launch in November 2021, however, it had been delayed in order to recruit more marshal volunteers. The scheme was subsequently launched in February 2022 operating in the mornings only. The afternoon school street closure had then been introduced in November 2022 following the recruitment of marshal volunteers. A Road Safety Audit (RSA) Stage 3 had been carried out in May 2022 and only two problems had been noted, both in relation to the junction of Bulmershe Road/Crescent Road. Recommendations were made to cut back vegetation and to remove traffic cones that had been placed there to prevent parking/drop-off on the double yellow lines. These were partly accepted by the Council. The RSA 3 had also made an observation regarding the crossing point on the Wokingham Road next to the bus stop which the Council would look to address as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan measures.

Transport Officers had made a number of site visits to review the operation of the School Street scheme, including on the surrounding roads outside of the closure. Following

initial congestion on the implementation of both the morning and afternoon closures the scheme had operated well once parent and carers had become used to the arrangements and had changed travel habits accordingly. Traffic surveys, including automated traffic counters, had been carried out before and after the implementation of the scheme. This had highlighted that there were some displacement of traffic movements to Bulmershe Road and the surrounding network, including Eastern Avenue, Hamilton Road and Culver Lane, but these were minor and were considered to be manageable within the existing network. Officers would continue to monitor traffic levels in the surrounding area. Throughout the School Street scheme officers had requested visits by parking enforcement officers and Thames Valley Police officers to monitor vehicles and encourage safe and legal practice and this had proved to be effective.

The results of the statutory consultation were detailed in the report and there had been 66.7% support for making the scheme permanent.

Resolved -

- (1) That the progress of the School Street scheme for Crescent Road, as outlined in the report, be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to make the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order permanent for Crescent Road subject to agreement from the schools to continue co-ordinating the marshals;**
- (3) That the observation from the RSA 3 regarding the crossing point from the bus stop on the Wokingham Road be noted and officers investigate possible solutions as part of BSIP measures.**

6. BSIP BUS LANES - STATUTORY CONSULTATION

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Sub-Committee of initial feedback from the informal consultation relating to the six proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) bus lanes. The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1	Bus Lane Consultation Narrative;
Appendix 2	A329 Oxford Road – Outbound bus lane between Zinzan Street and George Street;
Appendix 3	A329 Oxford Road – Outbound bus lane between Pangbourne Street and Norcot Junction;
Appendix 4	A4 Bath Road – Outbound bus lane from Circuit Lane to Granville Road;
Appendix 5	A327 Southampton Street – Inbound bus lane on Southampton Street from Pell Street to the Oracle roundabout;
Appendix 6	A4 London Road – Inbound bus lane between Sidmouth Street and London Street;
Appendix 7	A4 London Road – Inbound bus lane between Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction.

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The report explained that concept designs had been developed for six bus lanes across the Borough and had been identified as areas where bus services suffered delays as a result of traffic congestion, particularly at peak times. Therefore, there was a need to introduce greater priority for buses on key routes to improve services for bus users and to encourage modal shift due to the environmental benefits of public transport. The proposed bus lanes were as follows:

- A329 Oxford Road - Outbound bus lane between Zinzan Street and George Street;
- A329 Oxford Road - Outbound bus lane between Pangbourne Street and Norcot Junction;
- A4 Bath Road - Outbound bus lane from Circuit Lane to Granville Road;
- A327 Southampton Street - Inbound bus lane from Pell Street to The Oracle roundabout;
- A4 London Road - Inbound bus lane between Sidmouth Street and London Street;
- A4 London Road - Inbound bus lane between Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction.

A four week informal consultation that had sought views on the initial bus lane scheme proposals had run from 19 May to 16 June 2023. Plans and information had been available on the Council's website for members of the public to provide their feedback and the results would be assessed and any amendments would be incorporated into detailed designs. It was intended that the scheme design would be prioritised based on deliverability of the scheme, with the first of these designs expected to be completed later in summer 2023. Due to limited road space in the Borough, it had been acknowledged that some of the proposals would have an impact on traffic flows and an initial analysis of the potential impact had been included in the description of each scheme. All the proposals were initial designs and if approval was given to take the schemes forward they would be subject to detailed design work, junction modelling and road safety audits.

At the invitation of the Chair, Asif Rasheed, Chair of the Reading Taxi Association, addressed the Sub-Committee specifically on the wording used on signage.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and asked for the results of the informal consultation to be sent to them.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That a Statutory Consultation on Traffic Regulation Orders relating to the proposed bus lanes be carried out.

7. PARKING RESTRICTIONS AT NEW VEHICULAR ACCESS FOR READING LINK RETAIL PARK

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The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on traffic management measures associated with the development at Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane, and sought approval to carry out a statutory consultation on the introduction of waiting restrictions within the new vehicular access into the retail park situated on Rose Kiln Lane. An illustration of the proposal was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that planning permission had been granted in July 2021 for a new drive-thru coffee shop and vehicular access onto Rose Kiln Lane and that it had been constructed, but it had been acknowledged that the waiting restrictions within the access had not been provided as had been secured through the Highways Agreement. The report proposed providing a double yellow line waiting restrictions on both sides of the road to the new retail park access for a setback distance of circa 6.33m. The inclusion of the waiting restrictions had been deemed necessary to ensure that indiscriminate parking did not occur within the new access resulting in queues back onto Rose Kiln Lane. The new access would only provide access to and not egress from the retail park, given constraints and as such had been designed narrower than a standard access width. Any vehicle that had parked within the access would therefore leave insufficient room for an additional vehicle to pass. The waiting restrictions were therefore essential to dissuade drivers from parking vehicles on or close to the new access road to the retail park. The funding that had been provided by the developer only related to works associated with the development and therefore only dealt with the new access and not any restrictions on the surrounding Highway Network.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to undertake a statutory consultation in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, for the proposals contained set out in Appendix 1, attached to the report;**
- (3) That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to make the Traffic Regulation Order for the proposed scheme;**
- (4) That any objection(s) received following the statutory advertisement be submitted to a future meeting;**
- (5) That the Head of Transport (or appropriate Officer) in consultation with the appropriate Lead Councillor, be granted authority to make minor changes to the proposals;**
- (6) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

8. PARKING RESTRICTIONS AT ALTERED VEHICULAR ACCESS FOR FORMER READING COLD STORE, DEACON WAY

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on traffic management measures associated with the development at Reading Cold Store, Deacon Way, and sought approval to carry out a statutory consultation on the alteration or waiting restrictions within the new vehicular access into the proposed industrial units situated on Deacon Way. An illustration of the proposal was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and a drawing of the existing waiting restriction layout was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report explained that planning permission had been granted on 6 April 2023 for a front and side extension on the ground and first floor of the building on Deacon Way, following the partial demolition of the building, the replacement of external materials, reconfiguration of internal layouts and relocation of vehicular access. Commencement of the development was subject to the positive outcome of the statutory consultation as the changes were fundamentally to the proposed access arrangement as without them access would not be possible for larger delivery vehicles because of the current on street parking arrangement. The proposal consisted of redistributing the existing single and double yellow line waiting restrictions on both sides of Deacon Way in the vicinity of the site; the current restrictions were detailed in the report and were set out in Appendix 2. The current restrictions allowed for up to nine cars to park on carriageway with these spaces provided directly opposite one another along Deacon Way therefore reducing the carriageway to single line traffic.

The new access would be located central to the site as well as the current areas of parking along Deacon Way therefore necessitating the required changes. This was detailed in the report and set out in the drawing attached at Appendix 2. The proposed alterations did result in a reduction of three on street parking spaces, however, this was mitigated by the provision of seven on-site parking bays whereby the former Reading Cold Store site had provided none. Overall, the scheme would present a benefit to the wider area by reducing the demand for on street parking and as such created an additional space on street. In addition, the staggered arrangement of the proposed parking areas provided for a better flow of vehicles along Deacon Way by ensuring greater length of carriageway that could allow for two vehicles to pass one another.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to undertake a statutory consultation in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, for the proposals contained within in Appendix 1, attached to the report;**
- (3) That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to make the Traffic Regulation Order for the proposed scheme;**

- (4) That any objection(s) received following the statutory advertisement be submitted to a future meeting;**
- (5) That the Head of Transport (or appropriate Officer) in consultation with the appropriate Lead Councillor, be granted authority to make minor changes to the proposals;**
- (6) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

9. JACKSONS CORNER - PROPOSALS FOR STATUTORY CONSULTATION

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that sought agreement for officers to carry out statutory consultation on proposed alterations to the highway layout at Jacksons Corner to the north-east of the junction with King's Road and High Street. An illustrative plan to show the alterations proposed within the funding agreement was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and an Equality Impact Assessment was attached at Appendix 2.

The report explained that as part of the agreed planning permission at Jacksons Corner, situated to the north-east of the junction with King's Road and High Street, proposed alterations to the highway layout had been agreed. The alterations included widening of the narrow footway width on the northern side of King's Road, reversal of the one-way traffic direction along Abbey Square, increased provision and relocation of bus stops and provision of on-street loading bays. These changes would necessitate alterations to existing waiting restrictions. The developer had provided the Council with funding to deliver these alterations, which it was required to carry out by 31 March 2024. The alterations required statutory consultation and the report sought agreement for officers to carry out these processes and submit feedback to a future meeting to inform the implementation, or otherwise, decision.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to undertake a statutory consultation for the proposed alterations in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996;**
- (3) That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to make the Traffic Regulation Order(s);**
- (4) That any objection(s) received during the statutory advertisement be submitted to a future meeting;**

- (5) That the Highways & Traffic Services Manager, in agreement with the Lead Councillor and Ward Councillors, be allowed to make minor alterations to the proposals as may be necessary;
- (6) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.

10. CIL LOCALLY FUNDED SCHEMES - RESULTS OF STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

Further to minute 53 of the previous meeting, the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing the Sub-Committee with details of the objections that had resulted from the statutory consultations for the agreed proposals of zebra crossings on Imperial Way and Whitley Wood Lane and for traffic calming measures on Shaw Road and Boston Avenue. Feedback that had been received to the consultations and the advertised scheme drawings was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that statutory consultations had been carried out between 11 May and 1 June 2023 and that the proposed location for the zebra crossing had taken into account the restrictions associated with funding and feasibility.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That having considered the objections, set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report, the proposals be implemented;
- (3) That respondents to the statutory consultation be informed of the decision of the Sub-Committee accordingly, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;
- (4) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.

11. EVALUATION OF LOCAL 15% CIL SCHEME UPDATE - REDLANDS TRAFFIC CALMING

Further to Minute 30 of the meeting on 10 November 2022, the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report that summarised the outcome of a meeting with Ward Councillors and Reading Cycle Campaign that had discussed areas of concern that had been raised about the officer recommendation to alter a priority flow measure on Redlands Road. The report also summarised some desirable changes and some officer comments. The original scheme drawings, that had been advertised during the statutory consultation, were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

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The report explained that at the meeting on 10 November 2022 the Sub-Committee had agreed to alter a priority-flow measure on Redlands Road. This alteration was still subject to funding and would require statutory consultation. There had been an additional action added, that officers met with Ward Councillors and Reading Cycle Campaign to discuss other areas of concern that had been raised and to submit agreed proposals to a future meeting so that a single statutory consultation could be carried out. The meeting took place on 27 March 2023 and additionally included attendance by the then Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, Councillor Page, and a number of local residents. The report included a summary of the elements that had been raised during the joint site visit; desirable changes and some officer comments. Funding had not yet been identified for these changes and the majority of the requested alterations would be subject to detailed investigation, design, road safety audit and statutory consultation before they could potentially be agreed, or otherwise, for implementation.

The report proposed that a high-level summary of the requested changes should be added to the regularly reported Requests for Traffic Management Measures so that they were formally captured. It also proposed the removal of the priority flow feature on Redlands Road was given priority for any identified funding and for resourcing, as it had been this element that had been identified in the road safety audit and appeared to be causing the greatest local concern. Agreement for a suitable replacement to this speed calming feature would need to form part of this work and further discussions would need to take place in order to reach an agreement in principle about the type of feature that should be investigated.

Resolved -

- (1) That a high-level summary of the requested changes be added to the regularly reported 'Requests for Traffic Management Measures' so that they are formally captured, as set out in paragraph 3.6 of the report;**
- (2) That once resources permit, detailed investigations be conducted for the requested changes, enabling further stakeholder discussion and refinement toward an agreed scheme of alterations;**
- (3) That the removal of the priority flow feature on Redlands Road, as set out in paragraph 3.5.1 of the report, be given priority for any identified funding, as detailed in paragraph 3.7 of the report;**
- (4) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

12. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of item 16 below, as it was likely that there would be disclosure of exempt

information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

13. WAITING RESTRICTION REVIEW PROGRAMME

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report informing the Sub-Committee of objections (including petitions) that had resulted from the statutory consultation for the agreed proposals that had formed the 2022B programme. The report also sought approval for officers to carry out statutory consultation for recommended new/alterations to waiting restrictions as part of the 2023A programme. These proposals aimed to address the issues that had been raised in the initial list of requests which had been submitted to the previous meeting and agreed for investigation.

The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 - Feedback that had been received to the consultation for the 2023B programme, along with the advertised drawings for the proposals.

Appendix 2 - A summary of the petitions that had been received against the consulted 2022B programme proposals for Charndon Close, Lyndhurst Road and Barry Place.

Appendix 3 - The officer recommendations from the 2023A programme, along with the drawings for the proposals.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the following proposals made under the waiting restriction review 2022B programme, as set out in Appendices 1, and petitions in Appendix 2, attached to the report, be implemented, amended or removed from the programme as follows:**
 - **Friar Street - Implement as advertised;**
 - **Elm Park - Implement as advertised;**
 - **Loverock Road - Implement as advertised;**
 - **Donkin Hill, Anglefield Road - Implement as advertised;**
 - **Hemdean Road - Implement as advertised;**
 - **Donkin Hill and Lower Henley Road - Remove from the programme;**
 - **Priest Hill - Remove from the programme;**
 - **Gurney Close - Implement as advertised;**
 - **Christchurch Road - Implement as advertised;**
 - **Brownlow Road - Remove from the programme;**
 - **Lesford Road/Heron Way - Implement as advertised;**
 - **Maitland Road - Implement as advertised;**

- Kendal Avenue - Implement as advertised;
 - Charndon Close - Remove from the programme;
 - Armour Hill - Implement as advertised;
 - Lyndhurst Road - Remove from programme;
 - Norcot Road - Remove from the programme;
 - Crescent Road and Hamilton Road - Implement as advertised;
 - Palmer Park - Implement as advertised;
 - Eldon Terrace - Remove from the programme;
 - Kennetside - Remove from the programme;
 - Barry Place - Remove from the programme;
 - Blandford Road - Implement as advertised;
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to seal the resultant Traffic Regulation Order and no public inquiry be held into the proposals;
- (4) That the respondents to the statutory consultation, and lead petitioners, be informed of the decision of the Sub-Committee accordingly, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;
- (5) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake a statutory consultation for the 2023A programme in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, for the proposals contained within in Appendix 3, subject to:
- (i) Church and Katesgrove Wards, Northumberland Avenue - Defer to the next programme;
 - (ii) Katesgrove Ward, Newark Street - Officer recommendations be agreed, namely remove from the programme;
 - (iii) Katesgrove Ward, Whitely Street - Officer recommendations be agreed, namely remove from the programme;
 - (iv) Kentwood Ward, Armour Hill - Officer recommendations be agreed, namely remove from the programme;
 - (v) Norcot and Southcote Wards, Honey End Lane - Officer recommendations be agreed, namely remove from the programme;
 - (vi) Redlands Ward, Newcastle Road - Officer recommendations be agreed, namely remove from the programme;
 - (vii) Tilehurst Ward, Beverley Road - Officer recommendations be agreed, namely remove from the programme;

- (6) That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order for the 2023A programme;
- (7) That any objection(s) received during the statutory advertisement be submitted to a future meeting;
- (8) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.

14. APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY PARKING PERMITS

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report giving details of the background to the decisions to refuse applications for Discretionary Parking Permits from 24 applicants, who had subsequently appealed against these decisions.

Resolved -

- (1) That, with regard to applications 8 and 12, a first discretionary permit be issued, personal to the applicants;
- (2) That, with regard to application 13, a first discretionary permit be issued, personal to the applicant, subject to the applicant providing the appropriate proofs and documentation;
- (3) That, with regard to application 4, a third discretionary permit be issued, personal to the applicant charged at the third permit fee;
- (4) That, with regard to application 10, a second discretionary permit be issued, personal to the applicant;
- (5) That, with regard to application 14, discretionary visitor permit books be issued, personal to the applicant, subject to the standard scheme limits for the number of books that could be issued each year and charged at the standard rate;
- (6) That, with regard to application 15, a first discretionary permit be issued, personal to the applicant, for Zone 14R and additionally, that discretionary visitor permit books be issued, personal to the applicant, also for Zone 14R, subject to the standard scheme limits for the number of books that could be issued each year and charged at the standard rate;
- (7) That, in line with the Council's environmental and climate change commitments and with a view to encouraging car sharing arrangements, for officers explore ways to accommodate the issuing of permits to residents who lived at separate addresses but who shared the use of a

single vehicle to enable the shared vehicle to be parked in different permit zones within Borough;

- (8) That, with regard to application 16, a temporary permit be issued, personal to the applicant, whilst the above matter, as outlined in (7) above, was being investigated;
- (9) That, with regard to application 18, a first discretionary permit be issued, personal to the applicant, subject to the applicant providing appropriate proof of medical need, with a temporary permit to be issued in the meantime, officers check whether the correct reason for the refusal of the original permit application had been communicated back to the applicant and for the applicant to be advised of the correct reason if not;
- (10) That, with regard to application 19, officers be instructed to check whether the applicant had previously been granted a permit for Zone 01R and subject to the applicant previously having been granted a Zone 01R permit, a first discretionary permit, personal to the applicant, for Zone 01R, be issued; if the applicant had not previously been granted a Zone 01R permit the application be refused and officers provide the applicant with an explanation as to the reason;
- (11) That, with regard to application 24, a temporary one year permit be issued, personal to the applicant, subject to the applicant providing the appropriate proofs and documentation;
- (12) That a decision in respect of application 9 be deferred to the next meeting to allow officers to provide further information as to whether the applicant was applying for the first discretionary permit for the flat or for the first discretionary permit for the building as a whole, and for officers to also provide details as to whether the planning informative applied to the specific flat or to the building as a whole;
- (14) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services' decision to refuse application 1 be upheld, but that officers contact the applicant to discuss whether they might be eligible for business permits;
- (15) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services' decision to refuse application 7 be upheld but that officers liaise with colleagues in social services teams to consider ways to accommodate requests from officers who had legitimate reasons for needing the use of a Healthcare Professional Permit in order to allow them to carry out their official duties;
- (16) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services' decision to refuse applications 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 17, 20, 21, 22 and 23 be upheld.

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(Exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2).

(The meeting closed at 9.15 pm)

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TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

Present: Councillor Ayub (Chair);

Councillors Lanzoni (Vice-Chair), Barnett-Ward, Cross, Ennis, Gittings, Griffith, Goss, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Keeping, McCann, Moore, Page, R Singh and White

Apologies: Councillor Kitchingham

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ayub declared an interest in item 19 on the grounds that he owned a hackney carriage.

16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of 14 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

A question on the following matter was submitted, and answered by the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport on behalf of the Chair:

Questioner	Subject
Councillor White	Improving Road Safety Around Schools

(The full text of the question and reply was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

18. PETITIONS

(a) Petition - Speeding on Francis Street

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the receipt of a petition, requesting the Council to address alleged speeding and traffic volumes along Francis Street. A map showing Francis Street was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report stated that on 8 August 2023 a petition had been submitted to the Council that had contained 32 signatures. The petition read as follows:

“Reading Council, non resident car owner, delivery vans, and bin vans often drive too fast on Francis Street. Residents’ cars are parked on both sides of the street. With an increase of “through” traffic and the number of wide vans, residents’ cars are regularly scratched, dented and damaged often with no recourse or named parties given for insurance claims.

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We would like to park our cars without worrying that they will be damaged and want to avoid a pedestrian or cyclist being hurt. Reading Council; the residents agree that we need to tackle speeding on Francis Street with anti-speeding measures and investigate other ways to cut the volume of traffic on the street."

The report explained that Francis Street was a one-way street that ran west to east between Elgar Road and Sherman Road and that within the previous five years of Police supplied casualty data up to 1 April 2023 there had been no recorded incidents on the Street.

The Requests for Traffic Management Measures report that was submitted to the Sub-Committee twice annually contained an entry for requested traffic calmed 20mph restrictions on Alpine Street, Francis Street and Edgehill Road specifically. The list had been submitted to the Sub-Committee meeting on 2 March 2023, Minute 54 refers, and it was intended to submit an update to the next meeting on 13 November 2023.

The report stated that there was currently no allocated funding for the development and delivery of a 20mph zone on Francis Street and officers were aware of the desire for similar treatment in the surrounding area. Officers acknowledged the concerns that had been raised by residents both in the petition and with prior direct contact and 20mph appeared to be appropriate for the nature of the street. Therefore, the report proposed that the entry in the Requests for Traffic Management Measures Report should be updated to reflect the receipt of the petition, with an expectation that scheme development would commence once funding had been identified. The application of traffic calming features, such as speed humps, required statutory consultation and could be locally controversial, but would likely also deter motorists from using these streets as short-cuts, and would additionally address the concerns that had been raised in relation to current traffic volumes.

At the invitation of the Chair Ian Fullbrook, addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of the petitioners.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the existing entry on the 'Requests for Traffic Management Measures' report be updated to reflect the receipt of the petition be agreed;**
- (3) That the lead petitioner be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;**
- (4) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

(b) Petition - Improving Safety at Kenilworth Avenue and Monks Way Entrances

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the receipt of a petition, requesting the Council to improve the safety of the entrance of Kenilworth Avenue and Monks Way, with requests for raised pedestrian crossings and waiting restrictions. A copy of the petition was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that on 22 August 2023 a petition had been submitted to the Council from the Southcote Park Estate Committee that requested three changes:

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

- The implementation of double-yellow lines around the eastern corner of Kenilworth Avenue, continuing eastbound along Southcote Lane. This was being requested to improve visibility for motorists exiting Kenilworth Avenue onto Southcote Lane, which was currently being compromised by on-street parking;
- Raised table/bump across Kenilworth Avenue at its junction with Southcote Lane. This was being requested to align with other junctions along Southcote Lane that had had this treatment. It was anticipated to help reinforce pedestrian priorities at the junction which the recent Highway Code changes had introduced;
- Raised table/bump across Monks Way, at its junction with Southcote Lane.

The report stated that beyond the junctions with Southcote Lane these sections of Kenilworth Avenue and Monks Way were not adopted Highway. However, the Highway adoption of Southcote Lane extended into the junctions, so any feature/design would need to be feasible within that adopted section. Tables of this nature should be set back from the junction give-way lines to reduce the risk of vehicle destabilisation when turning and to ensure that the give-way markings were prominent. The table would have entry/exit ramps of a prescribed gradient and a minimum table width of 1.5m should be provided for pedestrians. It was expected that the current extent of adopted land would not fully accommodate this, so development of the scheme would likely require further land adoption, albeit to a relatively small extent to make the scheme feasible. This would allow necessary realignment of the approaching footways and an offset of the table from the junction. Other raised tables along Southcote Lane were set back from the junction and occupied approximately five to five and a half metres between the junction and the end of the furthest ramp. These were relatively wide tables which could be reduced for application at Kenilworth Avenue and Monks Way, but not to the three metres adopted length that had been suggested within the petition.

Surface water drainage would be a consideration of the design and if additional gullies were required this might also necessitate additional potential adoption of land to enable feasibility of the installation.

The report stated that within the previous five year period of Police supplied casualty data up to 1 April 2023, there had been no recorded incidents either at the junction of Kenilworth Avenue or Monks Way.

The report explained that the request for double-yellow lines had already been captured on the list of new requests proposed for the 2023B Waiting Restriction Review Programme, see Minute 21 below, and would be developed as part of the programme. There was currently no allocated funding for the development and delivery of the two requested raised crossings, but officers acknowledged the concerns that had been raised in the petition. The report proposed that the requests should be added to the Requests for Traffic Management Measures Report and once funding had been allocated, scheme development could be programmed and resourced. These development processes would include the requirement for statutory public consultation, so it needed to be noted that they would not be guaranteed for delivery, even when funding became available.

At the invitation of the Chair Soren Sturup-Toft, Trustee member of the Southcote Park Estate Committee, addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of the petitioners.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the request for waiting restrictions has been captured in the 2023B Waiting Restriction Review programme be acknowledged and that it is developed through this programme agreed;**
- (3) That the requests for raised tables at the entrances to Kenilworth Avenue and Monks Way be added to the next 'Requests for Traffic Management Measures' report update be agreed;**
- (4) That the lead petitioner be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;**
- (5) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

19. PETITION UPDATE - PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE USE OF KINGS ROAD BUS LANE

Further to Minute 16(a) of the meeting held on 14 September 2022 and Minute 28 of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 the Sub-Committee considered a report that set out the officer recommendations that related to the refined request to enable Council licenced private hire vehicles to use the Kings Road, outbound, bus lane.

The report explained that since the report that had been submitted to the November 2022 meeting of the Sub-Committee the strategy work had regrettably yet to be resourced and the petitioning private hire association had refined their request to apply only to the Kings Road (outbound) bus lane.

The report stated that the Kings Road was experiencing a relatively high number of incidents involving casualties. The majority of these incidents either involved pedestrians crossing the road or vehicles turning across other vehicles within the bus lanes. Officers were concerned that an increase in the volume of traffic in the bus lanes, particularly as this traffic would be a similar profile of vehicles to those within the general traffic lanes, would risk increasing the number of casualties. Although it was important to note that officers were not alleging that it would necessarily be as a result of any inappropriate or unsafe driving that was anticipated by the Council's licenced private hire drivers, but as a consequence of increased volumes of traffic that would be travelling at higher speeds in comparison with the general traffic lanes.

The Red Route parking restrictions that spanned from east to west Reading, including Kings Road, had primarily been implemented to improve the reliability of bus services along this corridor, particularly the Number 17 route. The alterations to the Kings Road bus lane had also been introduced with this objective, reducing the previous restriction from all private hire vehicles, alongside other permitted vehicle types, to just Reading Borough Council licenced private hire vehicles. With enforcement based on the vehicle type, and not whether the vehicle was occupied with a fare, alongside the apparent lack

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

of a cap on either the number of licenced private hire vehicles or on the access restriction itself, opening the bus lanes to private hire vehicles could have a marked difference on traffic volumes using the lanes throughout the day.

The report explained that to pursue the requested alteration of access along the Kings Road outbound bus lane would require the following:

- Identification of funding;
- Statutory Consultation – Creation and advertising of the proposed new Traffic Regulation Order (TRO);
- Implementation of the Decision – Consideration of the consultation feedback;
- Signing Review – Review and creation of signing specifications for the required changes along the route;
- Making the Order – Seal and advertise the made TRO;
- Implementation of the Scheme – Change the signing on street and updating exemptions on the enforcement camera software.

The report stated that, as agreed at the November 2022 meeting, it remained the intention of officers to carry out a strategic review of bus lane access across the Borough and the recommendation that the requested alteration to access along Kings Road outbound bus lane was not agreed.

At the invitation of the Chair Kamran Saddiq, Chairman of the Reading Private Hire Association, addressed the Sub-Committee in favour of private hire vehicle use of the Kings Road outbound bus lane. At the invitation of the Chair Ashif Rasheed, Chair of the Reading Taxi Association, also addressed the Sub-Committee, he spoke against private hire vehicles using the bus lane.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and Councillor Ennis proposed, seconded by Councillor Barnett-Ward, that an informal consultation be carried out on the requested change to enable Reading Borough Council licenced private hire vehicles to use the Kings Road, outbound, bus lane. He stated that the consultation should include a number of stakeholders such as bus companies, taxi associations, cycle groups, disability access groups and the general public and a report setting out the results be submitted to the January 2024 meeting.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That an informal consultation be carried out on the requested change to enable Reading Borough Council licenced private hire vehicles to use the Kings Road (outbound) bus lane;**
- (3) That a number of stakeholders be included in the informal consultation, such as, bus companies, taxi associations, cycle groups, disability access groups and the general public;**

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- (4) That a report setting out the results of the informal consultation be submitted to the meeting in January 2024.**

(Councillor Ayub declared an interest in the above item on the grounds that he owned a hackney carriage. He left the room and took no part in the discussion or decision making.)

20. PROPOSALS FOR A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING - UPPER REDLANDS ROAD

The Sub-Committee considered a report that sought approval to carry out statutory consultation/notice processes necessary to progress the scheme for a pedestrian crossing on Upper Redlands Road. A scheme design of the Upper Redlands Road Pedestrian Crossing was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that having reviewed and assessed bids from local authorities, Active Travel England had responded to authorities with an award and Reading had been awarded funding for the delivery of the pedestrian crossing on Upper Redlands Road to the value of £75,000.

The scheme was jointly promoted by the Council, St Joseph's College and the University of Reading as there was no safe place for children, university students or local residents to cross Upper Redlands Road. This scheme would provide safer routes for children to walk to school as well as linking to the university via Elmhurst Road to the Active Travel scheme on Shinfield Road as well as the Active Travel scheme at Christchurch Green. Following discussion with Ward Councillors, officers had commissioned an independent Road Safety Audit for the scheme and, subject to the findings and necessary adjustments, which were not expected, the report proposed that officers carried out the required statutory consultation for the scheme. Any objections would be submitted to a future meeting and if there were no objections the report proposed that the scheme should be considered as approved for delivery.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake statutory consultation/notification processes for the proposed zebra crossing designs on Upper Redlands Road, in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996;**
- (3) That the Highways and Traffic Services Manager, in agreement with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, be authorised to make minor alterations to the agreed proposals;**
- (4) That subject to no objections being received the scheme be considered as agreed for implementation enabling delivery planning to commence;**

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2023**

- (5) That should a scheme receive objection(s) during the statutory consultation period, that these be submitted to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for consideration and decision regarding scheme implementation.

21. WAITING RESTRICTION REVIEW PROGRAMME

The Sub-Committee considered a report informing the Sub-Committee of objections, including petitions, that had resulted from the statutory consultation for the agreed proposals that formed the 2023A Waiting Restriction Review programme and provided the Sub-Committee with the list of new requests for potential inclusion in the 2022B programme. The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 - Feedback that had been received to the statutory consultation for the 2023A programme, and the advertised drawings for those proposals;

Appendix 2 - Summary of the petition that had been received against the consulted 2023A programme for Ashby Court;

Appendix 3 - Summary of new requests for potential inclusion in the 2023B programme.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That the following proposals made under the waiting restriction review 2023A, as set out in Appendix 1, be implemented, amended or removed from the programme as follows and the petition in Appendix 2 noted:
- Northumberland Avenue - Implement as advertised;
 - Carsdale Close - Remove from the programme;
 - Coley Avenue - Implement as advertised;
 - Almond Drive - Implement as advertised;
 - Odiham Avenue - Implement as advertised;
 - Henley Road - Implement as advertised;
 - Essex Street - Implement as advertised;
 - Pottery Road - Implement as advertised;
 - Helmsdale Close - Implement as advertised;
 - Shilling Close - Implement as advertised;
 - Ashby Court - Implement as advertised;
 - Foxhays Road - Implement as advertised;
 - St Agnes Way - Implement as advertised;
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to seal the resultant Traffic Regulation Order;

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- (4) That respondents to the statutory consultation, and the lead petitioner, be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee accordingly, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;
- (5) That having considered the requests made for waiting restriction changes, set out in Appendix 3 attached to the report, the requests be investigated by officers as part of the 2023B review programme, subject to the following amendments to the programme:
 - (i) Hemdean Road - Remove from the programme;
 - (ii) Pottery Road - Remove from the programme;
- (6) That that the officer recommendations, following investigation of the new requests, be shared with Ward Councillors, providing opportunity for local consultation (informal) and for their comments to be included in the next report submitted to the Sub-Committee;
- (7) That, should funding permit, a further report be submitted to the Sub-Committee seeking agreement to conduct the Statutory Consultation on the recommended schemes for the 2023B programme;
- (8) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.

22. JACKSONS CORNER - RESULTS OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION

Further to Minute 10 of the previous meeting, the Sub-Committee considered a report informing them of objections that had resulted from the statutory consultation for the proposals that had been agreed at the June 2023 meeting in respect of Jacksons Corner. The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 - Plan to show the alterations proposed in the advertised Traffic Regulation Order;

Appendix 2 - Feedback that had been received during the statutory consultation;

Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment.

The report explained that as part of the agreed planning permissions at Jacksons Corner, situated to the north-east of the junction with Kings Road and High Street, proposed alterations to the highway layout had been agreed. The alterations included widening of the narrow footway width on the northern side of Kings Road, reversal of the one-way traffic direction along Abbey Square, increased provision and relocation of bus stops and provision of on-street loading bays. The changes would necessitate alterations to existing waiting restrictions. The developer had provided the Council with funding to deliver these alterations, which it was required to complete by 31 March 2024. The delivery deadline was one of the conditions and the funding was ringfenced for delivering the

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

scheme and, aside from potential feasibility issues in this constricted area, proposed alterations to the scheme might breach the funding conditions.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That having considered the objections set out in Appendix 2, the proposals, as set out in the report, be implemented;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to seal the resultant Traffic Regulation Order,**
- (4) That the respondents to the statutory consultation be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee accordingly, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;**
- (5) That the Highways & Traffic Services Manager, in agreement with the Lead Councillor and Ward Councillors, be authorised to make minor alterations to the proposals as may be necessary;**
- (6) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

23. DIGITAL PARKING PERMITS

Further to Minute 17 of the meeting held on 14 September 2022, the Sub-Committee considered a report informing the Sub-Committee of the findings of the Digital Parking Permits Project that had been carried out between 31 October 2022 and 30 April 2023. Feedback that had been received to the statutory consultation was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report summarised the proposed changes that would mean permits would not be printed and posted, the scheme would no longer require a permit to be displayed in the vehicle and residents would not be asked to allow up to 14 days for these permits to be issued.

The report explained that procurement of a new Parking Services contract had led to a change in supplier, the new service would start on 1 November 2023 with Unity 5 providing back office Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) and Permit software system. This had provided for improvements to be made, which allowed for some of the issues that had been identified at pilot stage to be resolved.

All permits would need to be migrated to the new system regardless of whether they were digital or not and it should be noted that even if the permits were still printed, they would still be linked to the Civil Enforcement Officers handheld computer terminal, except visitor permit scratch cards. Visitor permits would not be linked to the handheld terminal and if there were any errors with the completion of the permit the visitor would

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

be liable to receive a PCN, as they did currently. They would also receive a PCN if the permit was obscured/fell down. The Council was unlikely to cancel PCNs that had been incorrectly completed or not displayed correctly. A digital visitor permit scheme would remove the likelihood of a PCN being issued because the vehicle and dates were completed online and there was no issue with the permits falling down.

The report included a table that showed the permits that had been issued between 31 October 2022 and 30 April 2023 and the total on issue as of 5 July 2023. The report also included an analysis of the consultation feedback and a summary of the benefits of the new scheme.

Finally, the report proposed that digital permits should be rolled out for all permit types, except for visitor permits, to continue to have offline (physical) permits for residents who still needed this requirement (specifically for Resident, Carers and Visitor Permits), to continue the trial in Permit Zone 02R for digital permits and to update the permit scheme rules and definitions with these changes.

Resolved -

- (1) That the proposal that Digital Permits were introduced Boroughwide for all permits except Visitor Permits, which would remain as physical permits, be agreed;**
- (2) That offline (physical) permits be retained for vulnerable residents (residents & carer permits);**
- (3) That residents in the permit zone 02R which was part of the original trial continue to trial digital visitor permits under the new permit software;**
- (4) That a statutory consultation for the implementation of a full rollout of digital permits Boroughwide to include all permit types be carried out in November 2023 and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to make the Traffic Regulation Order;**
- (5) That the Traffic Regulation Order be made permanent;**
- (6) That respondents to the statutory consultation be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee accordingly following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;**
- (7) That no public inquiry be held into the proposal.**

24. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

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That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of item 25 below, as it was likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

25. APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY PARKING PERMITS

The Sub-Committee considered a report giving details of the background to the decisions to refuse applications for Discretionary Parking Permits from 19 applicants, who had subsequently appealed against these decisions.

Resolved -

- (1) That, with regard to applications 1 and 11, a first discretionary permit be issued, personal to the applicants;**
- (2) That, with regard to applications 15, 16 and 19, a first discretionary permit be issued, personal to the applicant, subject to the applicant providing the required proofs and documentation;**
- (3) That, with regard to application 17, a first discretionary permit be issued for one year, personal to the applicant, subject to the applicant providing the appropriate proofs and documentation;**
- (4) That, with regard to applications 3 and 13, discretionary visitor permit books be issued, personal to the applicants, subject to the standard scheme limits for the number of books that could be issued each year and charged at the standard rate;**
- (5) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services' decision to refuse applications 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14 and 18 be upheld.**

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2).

(The meeting closed at 8.33 pm)

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**JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
2 MARCH 2023
(9.30 - 11.05 am)**

Present: Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Councillor Mrs Dorothy Hayes MBE

Reading Borough Council
Councillor Tony Page
Councillor Karen Rowland

Wokingham District Council
Councillor Clive Jones
Councillor Ian Shenton

Officers Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager
Jayne Rowley, re3 Principal Finance Officer
Sarah Innes, re3 Performance Officer
Monika Bulmer, re3 Communication Officer
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council
Claire Pike, Bracknell Forest Council
Andrew Edwards, Reading Borough Council

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor John Harrison, Bracknell Forest Council

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

21. Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board

The spelling of Francesca Hobson would be amended within the minutes.

RESOLVED that subject to the amendments, the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board held on the 9 January 2023, be approved as a correct record.

22. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

23. Progress Report

The Board received a report briefing them on progress in the delivery of the re3 Joint Waste PFI Contract.

The report covered:

- re3 and Council Performance Statistics
- Waste Tracking
- WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Banks
- Recycling of Flexible Plastic Packaging
- Booking System Translations

- Links Between Booking Systems and Fly-tipping
- HWRC (Household Waste Recycling Centre) Reuse Options
- Review of HWRC Charges
- Actions from the HWRC User Satisfaction Survey
- Community Compost Scheme
- Agenda Setting

Sarah Innes reported the provisional recycling rates for April 2022 – January 2023 were detailed within the report alongside a comparison of the full year of 2021/22. Graphs setting out the quarterly performance had also been included which showed that the recycling rates for all three Councils were slightly below the figures for last year. A full year of data would be available at the next meeting in June, Sarah would provide a full breakdown of the data at this meeting however it was already clear that the compostable tonnage, food waste and garden waste, was already below previous year's figures. It was suggested that the cost of living could have had an impact on the amount of food waste collected as people were not wasting as much food.

Since 2004, Local Authorities had to report their waste data to Government via the Waste Data Flow System. This included the tonnages of waste collected and details of how and where each tonne is treated. Later in 2023, or in 2024, these systems were due to be replaced by a digital waste tracking service. Defra was building the system up gradually and it is understood that they would work on plans for local authority usage and provision of data in the first half of 2023. It was currently unclear what the implications of this were. Officers would seek to be part of the discussions so that the implications for data entry and monitoring could better be understood.

At the January meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, Members had instructed Officers to investigate the idea of using a network of recycling banks to collect small electrical appliances. Officers had spoken to three local authorities who currently use banks to collect these items and investigated how re3 could provide a similar service. As a result, an expression of interest in relation to the Material Focus WEEE fund had been submitted, which had been successful to get to the next stage of funding. Sarah asked for feedback from Members in regard to where the banks should be situated. If the bid was approved there would be 30 banks, 10 banks per authority which would allow each Council to look at a cross section of sites borough wide.

At the January Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, Members asked Officers to investigate options for recycling flexible plastic packaging and as a result Sarah had been talking to the Flexible Plastic Fund 'FlexCollect' Project which a small number of Councils were currently trialling. The FlexCollect team were currently looking for more Councils to take part in the trial and Officers have expressed an interest on behalf of the re3 Partnership. A meeting has taken place so that the Delivery Manager for the project could visit the MRF (Material Recycling Facility) and a discussion could take place about the practicalities of sorting, storing and reprocessing the waste. These tests would be undertaken in the coming weeks and subject to the outcomes of testing in the MRF further discussions would take place with the waste collection teams to identify a potential trial location. If the trial were to proceed, then the packaging would be collected in the Councils current kerbside recycling provision.

At the January 2023 meeting, Members agreed to retain the booking system at the Recycling Centres. A variety of ways to supplement the booking system were discussed at this time such as translation. As a result, translation went live in February 2023. An example of this was provided to the board. Concerns were raised

that google translated wasn't always accurate however the benefit was that many languages could be provided, and if internal Council translation facilities had been used, then there was only a total of 6 languages that would have been provided. An FAQ had been provided on the re3 website stating that there may be some errors. Contributors would look at some of the translations of key languages within the Borough.

In 2022, DEFRA funded a project to examine whether there was a link between a national increase in fly-tipping and the use of booking systems at recycling centres, which was also something that had been discussed by re3. An external company conducted surveys and interviews with local authorities and re3 Officers contributed information about the experience of the partnership through these routes. Fly-tipping statistics were also examined in detail for six local authority areas. A report was published in January 2023 setting out the findings and conclusions from the project. The report noted that no academic literature was found which provided evidence of a link between fly-tipping and booking systems. The report would be circulated to the Board.

Following on from the presentation from the re3 Contractor and discussions at the January Board meeting about the current reuse activities undertaken at the re3 facilities and the potential for future expansion to divert items from the waste stream. Members were presented with a list of options to be explored further:

- Repair workshops
- Upcycling
- 'Libraries' (Through which a range of items could be borrowed).
- Permanent reuse shops (for instance at an offsite location)
- Online reuse shops

Currently all Councils had a repair café which was a good position to be in. Monika Bulmer was keen for there to be a repair strategy and work collaboratively and promote the repair cafés.

As a result of increased costs, Officers had reviewed the prices being charged for disposal of non-household waste at the re3 recycling centres. Current prices were designed to recover the cost of handling and disposing of nonhousehold waste and were non-profit making. A table with the proposed price increases was included within the report which included an increase of soil and rubble to £3 per 35L bag for all users. Any agreed changes to the charges would be implemented from 1 April 2023. Changes to the prices would be updated on the re3 website, site signage and the booking webform.

Toilets and sinks would fall under the charge for rubble, Officers were unsure on the collection of these and would look into these.

Councillor Jones stated that he didn't want to increase the cost of soil and rubble for residents and wished to remove it all together in time. However, there were concerns that the cost would then be picked up by others. It was suggested that a report be brought back to the Board regarding the implications of the charges and what the impact of the removal of the charges would be. It was agreed by the Board that Soil and Rubble would not increase to £3 for residents, and a report would be brought back to the board.

The statistical results of the Annual HWRC User Satisfaction Survey had been presented to the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board in January 2023. Since

then, the comments had been analysed. A summary of these were included in the annex to the report. Alongside the comments a list of actions had been compiled, a number of which has already been completed or underway.

Members had previously agreed to relaunch the community compost scheme with the bags of re3Grow left over from the 2022 project in Spring 2023. It was proposed that the bags this year be allocated on a first come first basis relaunches, Officers recommend that this year the compost be allocated on a first come-first serve basis, subject to the applicants meeting the advertised criteria.

Members and Officers discussed the agenda setting requirement that had been proposed as part of the Audit completed in 2022. It was proposed that one member from each Local Authority be nominated to attend the agenda setting meeting and for this to be an online meeting. It was suggested that this be held closer to the meeting date to ensure that everything was dealt with at a meeting closer to the next board meeting.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members indicated how they would like Officers to proceed in relation to the potential introduction of banks for the collection of small electrical appliances, as described at 5.15.
- ii. Members indicated which of the reuse options, listed at 5.33, they would like Officers to explore further, with the intention of returning to a subsequent re3 Board meeting with proposals.
- iii. Members reviewed the proposed revisions to charges for non-household waste, shown at 5.37, and confirm that these should be implemented to deliver full cost recovery apart from the increase to residents for soil and rubble, where a report would be brought back to the board.
- iv. Members instructed Officers to allocate compost under the relaunched community scheme, on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to appropriate allocation between the councils and the fulfilment of the agreed criteria.
- v. Members agreed a date for a first agenda setting meeting as described at 5.50 to be set before the next meeting.

24. Communications Report

The Board received a report briefing them on the Partnership's communications activities.

The report covered:

- re3Grow Community Compost scheme
- Contamination awareness
- Vapes recycling
- Recycling Centres inclusion campaign
- Safety at HWRCs campaign
- Anti-litter campaign

Monika Bulmer, e3 Communications and Marketing Officer, detailed the re3grow community compost scheme which was directed at local organisations and

schools. The scheme would be promoted to the public via local news outlets, social media, newsletters, and directly to potential beneficiaries. The press release and social media assets were currently being prepared and would be available to use by the councils' communications officers. There had been 69 beneficiaries last year, with over 160 bags distributed.

Re3Grow compost had commenced at the end of February, which was now in its fifth year. A new poster, promoting its features had been produced and would be displayed at both sites. It was reported that bags had already been sold.

A set of infographics, presenting the current contamination level in each Councils' recycling bins had been produced. It included environmental impacts and costs, and the infographic for each council. These were included in appendix 1 of the report. Across re3, £487k could have been saved last year, if all items were sorted correctly and it was important to talk about this with residents. Officers would be receiving regular infographics.

Vape recycling had been discussed at the previous meeting and was proving to be a difficult challenge. It has been established that the majority of local vape retailers have not set up the take back schemes. Trading Standards believe this is due to lack of information in relation to their legal obligations. Suggested guidance to residents was to recycle vape pens at the Recycling Centres and not placed in rubbish bins. Monika had spoken to OPSS to seek further guidance and Trading Standards had advised it might be helpful for re3 to support retailers by contacting them and providing guidance on how to set up the take back scheme.

The online booking system webform had be enhanced by integrating translation services for over 100 languages. This new feature would aim at improving accessibility and clarity for residents whose first language is not English. The new feature would be advertised using social media advertising, aiming at multicultural audiences living locally. Further research and analysis would be done to map areas of low usage and to advertise the service in those areas. Target groups who were under consideration were residents who:

- had recently moved to the area.
- lived in rented and shared accommodation.
- had low literacy levels.
- had low technical skills.
- had a disability or impairment.
- lived in a deprived area.

re3 was taking part in the trial safety campaign launched by the FCC Environment across their four contracts. The campaign aims at reducing the number of accidents on site.

The re3 Marketing and Communications Officer presented details of an anti-litter campaign that utilised an existing national app called LitterLotto. These incentivise residents to pick up and dispose of litter correctly. The full scope of the campaign had not gained approval from all partnering councils, however re3 would support any council keen to trial the tool.

RESOLVED that Members note the contents of this report.

25. **Legislation Report**

The Board received a report briefing Members in relation to the emerging detail from the Environment Act 2021, as it related to waste management.

There had been two rounds of public consultations (2020 and 2021), in which Government sought input on how the three main limbs of the strategy (Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). The consultation documents had been released on these two areas, but the documents on Waste Collection Consistency were still awaiting release.

Extended Producer Responsibility – The Government wishes producers of packaging to pay the full net cost of collection and treatment associated with the packaging placed into circulation. This is to encourage better overall design of packaging. Under EPR, producers will pay modulated fees, set according to the assessed environmental impact and/or treatment cost of the packaging they put into circulation. Councils would be assessed according to the relative 'Efficiency' and 'Effectiveness' of their service. Councils would be placed within a performance cohort, wherein their costs and their performance will be benchmarked against a 'best in class' council. Cohorts would be drawn from councils that shared some similarities.

Individual councils deemed to be sub-optimally 'efficient' and/or 'effective' may be presented with an Improvement Notice. When an Improvement Notice is issued, it would also identify future year funding reductions.

Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) - A deposit, an additional sum on top of the normal sale price, would be added to in-scope packaging, at the point of sale. It was noted that these were drink containers, bottles and cans specifically, but not all bottles and cans! The deposit would most likely be a sum such as 20p per item which was a sum that had been widely referred-to throughout the consultations. This would apply to both single and multi-pack items.

Waste Collection Consistency – Even though the report was yet to be published, it was already known that Councils would be mandated to collect newspapers and magazines, cardboard, glass bottles, plastic bottles, plastic pots/tubs/trays and steel and aluminium cans or tins. Plastic film, aerosols, cartons and foil would be added to the list of mandated materials, most likely in 2027.

Glass collection and plastic film collection and processing would need to be added to re3's current services to achieve compliance.

It was important to note some of the potential outputs and issues that could arise. It was likely that there could be a financial squeeze from producers. The elderly and disabled hadn't been factored into DEFRA's impact assessment, which was still an issue. The cost of living was a big factor, for example the three SNP candidates had recently stated that they would pause their DRS, which was ahead of the one in England, due to the cost issues involved. There were repercussive contract costs as there were certain things within the contract that may need to be changed due to the change in legislation. There was also the issue of possible changes in packaging changes and packaging being phased out which could affect what was contracted to be collected which may complicate things.

Arising from the Members comments and questions, the following points were made:

- Detailed clarity was still being awaited for glass collection. It was unsure when this would be announced, or what the precise requirements would be.
- There would be some support financially provided by the Government, this would be based again on cohorts and a formula.

- Re3 Councils could be based in different cohorts.
- The formula would be based on conditions that took into account demographics.
- The effective and efficiency calculation would drive down costs.
- It was felt best in class could be cause negativity and was a negative approach. It was suggested that a letter be drafted to DEFRA from the Board in regards to this.

RESOLVED that Members note the contents of the report.

26. Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED that pursuant to Regulation 21 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of items 9 & 10 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

27. Financial Management Report

The Board received the Finance Report which briefed the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board on the Partnership's current financial position.

RESOLVED that Members note the Partnership's financial position for the current year.

28. Contract Transition Report

The Board received a report briefing Members on steps that would be required as the three Councils considered, planned and then delivered the transition of the contract.

RESOLVED that

- Members note the contents of the report.
- Members endorse the contents of the draft Transition Plan and the proposal for indicative costs and timelines to be presented to the re3 Board (as at paragraphs 5.21 to 5.23).
- Members incorporate future reports on Transition, in its agenda for future meetings of the re3 Board.

29. Date of the Next Board Meeting

Thursday 15 June 2023 at Reading Borough Council.

CHAIRMAN

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JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
15 JUNE 2023
(9.38 - 11.53 am)

- Present: Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Mary Temperton
Councillor Helen Purnell
- Reading Borough Council
Councillor Karen Rowland
- Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Sarah Kerr
Councillor Ian Shenton
- Officers Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager
Monika Bulmer, re3 Marketing & Communications Officer
Sarah Innes, re3 Performance Officer
Jayne Rowley, re3 Finance Officer
Kevin Gibbs, Bracknell Forest Council
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council
Andy Edwards, Reading Borough Council
Richard Bissit, Wokingham Borough Council

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillor Liz Terry, Reading Borough Council

30. Election of Chair

RESOLVED that Councillor Rowland be elected Chair for the meeting, and Councillor Shenton be appointed Vice-Chair for the meeting.

It was discussed and agreed that in future years, it made best sense that the Annual General Meeting be held at the Summer meeting to align with any elections or portfolio changes.

Councillor Rowland welcomed new members to the Board and thanked Councillor Hayes for her passionate and admirable service as Chair of the Board since 2010, in taking on the task around the climate emergency. The Board also thanked Councillor Page for his service as Vice-Chair of the Board.

31. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2023 were approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment of *Wokingham District Council* to *Wokingham Borough Council* in the attendance record.

33. Urgent Items of Business

There were no Urgent Items of Business.

34. **Progress Report**

Sarah Innes, re3 presented the Progress report with performance statistics.

Members' attention was drawn to the recycling rates which had declined across all three Councils. There had been a reduction in recycling tonnes, kerbside collection and bring backs. There had also been a reduction in garden waste tonnes which could be attributed to the recent warm weather. Food waste collection had also declined, and it was speculated that this could be attributed to the rising cost of living. Glass tonnage recycling had also reduced; however it was noted that there had been an increase in glass recycling during COVID and this was now returning to normal levels.

There had been an increased in contamination in mixed dry recycling, which was important to address. Members queried the arrangements for contaminations, and it was clarified that legislation dictated the classification of contaminate particulates which would include things such as loose shredded paper. It was noted that shredded paper should be contained, for example in an envelope, when recycled, and members asked for this to be better communicated to the public as it was expected that the public were not aware.

At a previous meeting, members had asked for further information on the implications of raising the cost per 25 litre unit for soil and rubble disposal from £2.50 to £3. Sarah explained that the income from soil and rubble disposal was around £90,000 which was neutral with the cost of disposal for these materials however the increase to £3 per unit would account for inflation on the contract. The current charging arrangement for re3 was not dissimilar to that of neighbouring Councils. Having discussed the matter, Members agreed with the increase to £3 per unit.

Sarah presented an update on the proposed WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) banks. Officers had used information from a local provider to submit a successful funding application to the Material Focus WEEE fund and were subsequently seeking further quotes from reprocessors to secure the funding. It was noted that there would be no income stream for the reprocessing of electrical items, and the costs had been calculated to carry the project to the end of the PFI contract. Members supported the roll out of banks in principle, subject to ongoing procurement and funding discussions, and noted that the 30 banks would be equally split across the three boroughs.

Sarah presented an update on the Podback scheme following previous discussions at the Board. Re3 had been invited to participate in coffee pod recycling at the Household Waste Recycling Centres, to accept aluminium and plastic coffee pods. While the scheme targeted 80% of coffee pod brands, any pods could be recycled using the scheme. The scheme was being implemented with clear signage and website updates, and it was hoped that the process would go live in July 2023. Although the scheme was classified as a trial, it was hoped that it would become permanent. Members queried how and where the pods would be recycled, and it was clarified that an audit report was in process to cover full details, but all plastics would be recycled within the UK, and the coffee contents of the pods would be processed at an anaerobic digestion facility in the UK. Members were happy to proceed with the scheme, with a review in 6 months' time.

Members received details on the call for evidence for the Near Elimination of biodegradable waste disposal in landfill by 2028. Officers commented on the potential for some practical incoherencies, and the potential cost for compliance. Officers would seek members' contribution to the call for evidence submission by 7 July 2023.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of this report
- ii. Members review the proposed revisions to charges for non-household waste, described at 5.15, and confirm that these should be implemented to deliver full cost recovery
- iii. Members instruct Officers to proceed with the 'WEEE bank' project, as described from 5.21; to roll out a network of collection points for small electrical appliances
- iv. Members agree to receive a report on the implications of the coffee pod recycling service, 6 months after its launch at the Recycling Centres.

35. Communications Report

Members received the Communications report. Monika Bulmer, Marketing and Communications Officer at re3 presented key points arising from the report.

The Household Waste Recycling Centre online booking system had been improved to include translation services, and had subsequently been promoted through press releases, a social media campaign to target multi-cultural audiences, adverts in residential magazines and recycling leaflets available in Arabic, Polish and Urdu. Monika had been invited to meet with some community groups to explain the system, which had received positive responses. Members requested that promotion of the translation system be broadened to Bracknell and Wokingham as well as with Reading community groups. Members noted that the system was currently being translated into Chinese, and promotion with local Chinese community groups would take place once this work was complete.

The Recyclopedia app had been in place since 2018 for residents to look up items for recycling, point residents to relevant websites and to re3 services. Officers had reviewed the current app and proposed a move to a new platform called Scrapp which offered better functionality, including barcode scanning, automated bin day reminders and integrated maps for bottle banks. A dashboard view could provide insight into the searches residents were making. Monika resolved to discuss translation services with Scrapp, to ensure that more languages were available to residents. Members welcomed the transfer to the new system and commented that it may help with previously discussed contamination issues but urged caution in not overcomplicating the app to ensure it remained usable for all residents. Monika agreed to arrange a demonstration of the new app to Members which Cllr Rowland requested before a "go live" of the new site.

Regrow community compost had been delivered to local organisations and schools as part of a successful community scheme. 75% of the total community allowance had been allocated, and members were encouraged to continue promotion of the scheme for the remaining bags of compost to be used.

Virtual tours of the recycling facility were being developed for the re3 website, and it was hoped that these could be used with new, younger audiences who were not able to visit the site. The tours would be finalised at the end of July 2023, and the facility would be closed for a short time to allow for photos to be taken. Members were also invited to come for a tour of the recycling facility in person.

Monika gave a summary of Communications activities since the last meeting, which had included seasonal recycling advice over Easter and the Coronation, and

communications around plastic and glass contamination. The Repair cafes in each borough had also been promoted.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of this report.
- ii. Members approve the recommendation, as described at point. 5.19, to commission and adopt Scrapp as the partnership App.

36. Trial Collection of Flexible Plastic Packaging

Sarah Innes presented a report on the FlexCollect scheme, for which Re3 been selected as a trial area.

Subject to member approval, the two-year scheme would roll out to 5,000 properties in Reading, then to a total of 20,000 properties across the re3 area, in the second year. It was hoped that funding could be secured to continue the project after its completion. Officers were preparing for implementation, and there remained some legal queries to be explored.

Monika Bulmer commented that WRAP had been responsible for the communications material for the FlexCollect project, and that these materials were being localised. FlexCollect bags and a leaflet would be delivered by Royal Mail to all eligible households. Residents had been supportive of the idea, and officers would continue to promote the scheme through neighbourhood apps and Facebook groups.

Members welcomed the idea in principle, however there were concerns around the use of single-use plastic bags for collection, particularly as some Councils had run recent communications about removing single-use plastics from the recycling and food waste process. It was noted that the FlexCollect bags would be recycled along with their contents, but officers recognised the concern and suggested a meeting with FlexCollect to discuss alternatives.

RESOLVED that:

- i. Members note the contents of this report
- ii. Members approve the participation of the re3 Councils in the FlexCollect Project, as described from 5.5
- iii. Members instruct the re3 Project Director to sign the FlexCollect contract as described at 5.21.

37. Re3 deposit return scheme correspondence report

Officers provided an update on the correspondence with Minister Pow on the deposit return scheme, which Board members had discussed at a previous meeting.

It was recognised that a deposit return scheme would have significant implications on local collections and residents' way of life, particularly in light of cost of living. Officers had queried the apparent lack of an Equality Impact Assessment, significant additional costs associated with the scheme, fair funding arrangements for Councils and the added complexity for residents.

Board members noted the response from Minister Pow however it was commented that the response did not satisfactorily address the issues raised. Members asked if there was any further lobbying that re3 could do, and Oliver Burt agreed to contact

the Local Government Association to find out whether any other organisations shared the concerns of this Board.

38. Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED that pursuant to Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2012 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of items 11 to 14 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

- (3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

39. CIPFA Reviews Report

Members received a report on the CIPFA Reviews undertaken for Wokingham Borough Council by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) on the arrangements of the re3 partnership and the shared waste management contract.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of this report.
- ii. Members seek the development of a specification for a shared review of the financial arrangements (as described at 5.26 to 5.30) including future reporting to the re3 Board.

40. Re3 Partnership Background and Transition Report

Board members received a report on the background to the re3 Board and the shared arrangements, and the plans for transition of this contract.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the contents of this report.
- ii. Members endorse the broad strategic principles listed at 5.33 for use by the re3 Project Team, and the councils, in preparations for contract transition
- iii. Members approve the allocation of 5.48

41. Financial Report

Board members received the Financial Report for 2022/23 and the outlook for 2023/24. Cllr Rowland encouraged that an additional meeting for members that wished to have a further introduction or refresher as to the financial report's structure and to clarify any questions surrounding its method of presentation take place preferably prior to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that

- i. Members note the Partnership's financial position as at the end of 2022/2023 and the financial outlook for 2023/2024.

42. Date of the Next Board Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 21 September 2023, to be held at Bracknell Forest Council.

CHAIRMAN

Reading Climate Change Partnership

Board Meeting Minutes, 20th April 2023

MS TEAMS meeting online and recorded, 10 AM-12 PM

<u>Attendees</u> Tracey Rawling-Church (co-Chair and chaired meeting) Tim Dixon (co-Chair) Peter Moore	Chris Maddocks Brian Puszkar Nick West-Oram Alison Foster Ben Burfoot	Scott Witchalls Tony Page Paul Ducker Dylan Parkes Heather Marshall	Rachel Hazell Brian Grady Tricia Marcouse
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Item	Action- Who?
<p>1. Welcome and introductions</p> <p>Welcome to Brian Puszkar (BP) Customer Relationship Manager for SSEN. BP will represent DNO / electricity perspective on the board.</p> <p>Apologies: Grace Andrews, Rachel Spencer, Shreeya Paudal, Mike Waddelove</p>	
<p>2. Minutes of last meeting – approval</p> <p>Minutes were approved by the board.</p>	
<p>3. Leavers: Tim Dixon and Tony Page</p> <p>TD's final board meeting representing University of Reading and as co-Chair of RCCP. Dylan Parkes will now represent the UoR.</p> <p>TD encouraged members to contact him (TD) if he can assist after his departure.</p> <p>Councillor TP announced that after five decades on the Council he is standing down as Deputy Leader of the Council, as Lead Member for Climate Strategy and Transport and as the Council's representative on the RCCP board. He continues to be a councillor until May 2024 and hopes to confirm soon that in this final year with the Council he will be standing for election as Mayor of Reading.</p> <p>TRC: Succession plan needed to fill this gap on the RCCP board.</p> <p>TP thanked TD and UoR on behalf of Reading Borough Council (RBC) and offered to host an in-person farewell event in the Mayor's parlour at the Civic Offices, date TBC.</p> <p>Board members voted to hold some board meetings in person going forward and TP said RBC is willing to host meetings onsite or facilitate meeting rooms offsite.</p>	<p>PM: Succession plan for TP</p> <p>TP: Farewell celebration for TP and TD</p> <p>TRC/BB: Arrange future In-person (hybrid) board meetings</p>
<p>4. Recruitment/election of Co-chair</p> <p>PM formally opened nominations for role of co-chair and encouraged board members to put themselves forward or nominate others outside the board (with the nominee's approval). If there is more than one candidate elections will be held at next board meeting. PM will send a follow-up email about the nominations process. TRC is in post as co-chair for another year.</p>	<p>PM: Send nominations email</p>

<p>5. Appointment of RCCP Co-ordinator Sarah Parker left role of RCCP Coordinator in February. Her replacement Gudrun Freese is due to start in May. (Update: GF started on 3 May 2023.)</p>	
<p>6. Reading Climate Festival 2023 - TRC Eventbrite link for festival events is continually updated: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/reading-climate-festival-31664834047</p> <p>This year's festival is part of larger initiative between RBC, UoR and REDA to bring <i>Gaia</i> installation to Reading Town Hall: https://whatsonreading.com/gaia</p> <p>The festival will be extended to 21st June to include UoR's Show your Stripes Day: https://www.internationaldays.co/event/show-your-stripes-day/r/recAKuGPDA84qPKNu</p> <p>What's On Reading listing has given the festival a higher profile this year: https://whatsonreading.com/venues/reading-climate-action-network/whats-on/reading-climate-festival-2023</p> <p>Theme leads are encouraged to curate talks / events / content related to their themes. Contact Tracey with suggestions and questions. Request to all board members to follow Reading CAN social media accounts and boost with your own accounts. Hannah Laidley from RBC Arts and Culture team is supporting with festival content for young people.</p> <p>DP spoke about an emerging UoR partnership with Reading Football Club and schools – a physical enactment of the climate stripes on Show Your Stripes Day (kids in appropriately coloured clothes lining up), which may also be covered live by a national broadcaster. It is also possible that a Youth Climate Summit will be held at the same venue.</p> <p>DP sees this as an opportunity for UoR and schools to inspire and mobilise schools across the country and internationally to replicate these activities, using the stripes as a visual meme. Note: DP will alert team when public announcements about these events can be made.</p> <p>BG: Request to be CC'd in school events to ensure attendance and engagement is maximised amongst the 60 schools he represents.</p> <p>DP: Some key UoR events are not yet listed on the Eventbrite page, include: an event on what the average person / family can do, fronted by a high-profile person; and an event on policy and progress at national level, with high-profile front-person. UoR not ready to announce these yet.</p>	<p>All: Submit theme-related content for festival to TRC</p> <p>All: Amplify festival social media (Insta; Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) via your own accounts</p> <p>TRC: Ask HL to keep BG in loop for schools events</p> <p>DP: Update group on UoR events once confirmed</p>
<p>7. Updates from Theme Leads (verbal)</p> <p>ENERGY (BB): Retrofit is a big challenge for the borough. The Council has completed over 100 Reading retrofits in the last year, tapping into government schemes and grants. Progress is too slow but Reading has delivered more retrofit than our national funding allocation. Further grant funding will follow but are not well suited to Reading.</p>	<p>BB: Meet with BP on: network capacity; smart tech; peak smoothing</p> <p>BB: Set up subgroup on</p>

<p>Plans for district energy for Reading town centre are progressing, with grant support from the government's Heat Network Delivery Unit. The university is also progressing with next phase of its own district energy scheme. The Council is looking into including specifications on district energy for bidders as part of the new development around the theatre and Minster Quarter.</p> <p>The Council has put large scale heat pumps into leisure centres and will also install them into the Civic and Hexagon as part of a successful Levelling Up Fund bid. There have been network capacity challenges with installing heat pumps in Reading and this is a growing area for concern.</p> <p>Large scale electric vehicles: half of the Council's fleet of bin lorries are now electric and this has been evident to residents and has received some press coverage. This is part of the zero-carbon depot project which is progressing.</p> <p>Challenges in terms of network capacity: BB keen to engage with BP on key challenges for Reading. Developers are currently not able to install heat pumps at scale in line with planning policy because of network capacity issues and this poses threat to delivery of climate change strategy.</p> <p>Challenges in terms of national policy which prevent delivery at scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Still waiting to find out what happens with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) which will bring forward new EPC levels for buildings - The national programme on retrofit falls well short of the recommendations of the UK Committee on Climate Change – funding and grant programmes for retrofit come out in small batches for relatively small amounts, which puts pressure on supply chains - Smart energy: We are doing small projects using Internet of Things. BB wants to touch base with BP on smart tech challenges and peak smoothing challenges which need to be overcome to deliver energy objectives for the climate change strategy. 	<p>local area energy planning and report back at next board meeting. Invite South East Net Zero Energy Hub to present their work.</p>
TRANSPORT (CM):	
<p>Buses: Funding received from government for our Bus Service Improvement Plan. As part of this a ticket discount scheme was launched in partnership with operators a few weeks ago – £3.50 for an all-day bus ticket on any of the three main operators. The national scheme for a £2.00 single ticket continues.</p> <p>Active travel: Some government funding secured:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shinfield Road cycle scheme in construction phase, currently building the route from the university up to the borough boundary / The Maidens. See recent press release. - Bath Road scheme in design phase, construction will start this summer. - Schools: Crescent Road scheme has introduced afternoon sessions thanks to additional volunteer marshals. <p>Rail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading West station: New station building on the Oxford Road will open Summer 2023. - Green Park station due to open soon, date TBC shortly. 	

EV charging: Some government funding was received recently (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure – LEVI funding) with an opportunity to bid for future money to put in some charging infrastructure. RBC will be consulting on EV charging strategy in summer / autumn.

Transport plan: RBC are preparing a new Local Transport Plan, which is the town's statutory transport document, and will consult on that in the autumn. Both will feed into the update of the climate change strategy.

RESOURCES AND CONSUMPTION (PD):

PD: Theme on 'amber' status for delivery. Reading **recycling rate** remains above 50%; RBC and RE3 are continuing to innovate with new services and messaging. Lots of groups committing to climate action but the challenge is making connections and **aligning efforts** and finding investment to address gaps and unlock innovation.

Strong support on social media for **Food Waste Action Week** in March and some of this was a direct result of the Reading Museum's presentation at the last RCCP meeting. Would be great to have some offline activities next year. ReadingCAN events team and RE3 have identified some funding for **recycling pilot** at their own events this year with the idea of developing a package that could be rolled out more widely. They will launch a working group of local festival organisers.

New connections are emerging, e.g. Reading **Public Health** team member whose focus is on food poverty and healthy eating is keen to broaden focus to sustainable food systems more generally.

New Directions College is partnering with John Lewis to offer a series of **sustainable fashion workshops** culminating in an exhibition during Climate Festival, working with schools. Additional notes are attached with email.

WATER (HM):

Water is also on an 'amber' when taking a more **local Reading-specific action on water**, vs entire Thames Valley (which Thames Water cover). PM and HM continuing to progress investigation of **biodiversity** enhancement opportunities at Kennet Meadows and HM has meetings in diary with colleagues at Thames Water.

HM is discussing **flood mitigation** opportunities at Stone Street with Sam Shean (RBC) and considering customer-side and resident initiatives that might help to alleviate flooding and deliver additional benefit in drought conditions e.g possible water butt campaign, with Reading as a test-and-learn opportunity.

HM proposed setting up sessions to facilitate joined-up action across themes. HM has been talking to Johnson Matthey about **biogas and synthetic gas** opportunities and thinks a subcommittee of theme leads would yield additional fruitful overlaps.

HM: Share links to new water campaign videos

Education and raising public awareness: Thames Water has new videos (HM will share link) and are using YouTube more effectively. Deploying more targeted brand and marketing campaign around sewer misuse, leakage and how to use water more wisely.

Deadline: Developing next 5-year Thames Water **business plan** which must be submitted to regulator (Ofwat) by 2 October 2023. It includes **roll-out of smart-metres** with target of 74% by 2030 which will encourage more effective use of water in the home.

NATURE AND GREEN SPACES: TM

TM to PD: Sue Ryder and motor neurone disease group run second hand clothes events. Could John Lewis help to promote?

TM: Draughtbusters will apply for funding this week to support **DIY draught proofing**, including a 'how-to' video. Can Draughtbusters promote their campaigns on the RCAN website and via the weekly Council newsletter? Councillor TP confirmed that this is possible, and inputs should be submitted via Peter.

Nature and Green spaces: Our £10,000 **lottery fund** will be spent by end of May 2023.

Planting activity completed with over 250 kids in Victoria Park off Great Knolly St and at Shinfield Rd rec ground. The Council has put in standard trees there as well. Final event 7th May with lottery fund money on Coronation weekend.

Completed **butterfly monitoring** package with Ridgeway Primary School and will do another with Civitas. Nature Design delivering project on **how trees and nature can provide shade in the future**. Will share Erica's poster on this via email.

Continuing to trial different **management options for RBC land** – looking at four different plots each year. The Council are doing a lot of work at South Whitley Park and for 2023; looking at Prospect Park, Kings Meadow, Emmer Green playing field and Emmer Green Pond. Planted more hedging at Emmer Green shops. Keep Emmer Green have planted shrub borders.

Slow progress in these areas – support needed from team:

Work on looking for biodiversity offsets is not progressing. The Council should be leading on this.

Work with the business sector to improve the local area around buildings is not progressing – so would be grateful for help creating opportunities here. TRC offered to introduce TM to the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce sustainability meetings.

HEALTH (AF):

All: Feed biodiversity offset options to TM

TRC: Introduce TM to Chamber of Commerce re managing land around offices and buildings

Climate impact of the Royal Berkshire Hospital: Currently assessing whether our projects over the last year achieved carbon reduction targets and reviewing Green Plan. Results will be shared at next board meeting.

New hospital: Announcement delayed but due by end May. New hospital is scheduled for delivery using 'Hospital 2.0' standards and design. Funding was secured for whole new hospital – not for refurbishing or repurposing. It must be fit for purpose for next 50 – 60 years. This will impact the options for achieving the target to be net zero by 2030.

It's unlikely Hospital 2.0 can be delivered on the current site because: 2.0 is fully single rooms, not wards therefore the same number of beds requires considerably more space. It must be fully digitally enabled. There are problems with sinkholes on the current site, including below the Grade II listed building. There is a practical issue of moving people out while demolishing and re-building. Challenges if RBH move to new site: carbon footprint; how to decontaminate and demolish current site.

RCCP partnership has been helpful and instrumental in facing challenges: School of the Built Environment at the UoR did a site visit this week and will report back on how they might be able to help and support; student offered to do dissertation on how we might achieve net zero by 2030; RBH is participating in research on heat resilience and other areas that will grow and develop.

BB and AF have discussed district heat pumps for new hospital. The University and the Council are both investing in them. Sinkholes are likely to mean a new hospital will be needed sooner rather than later so further conversation around district heat pumps is timely.

COMMUNICATIONS: (RH)

Meetings will resume next week. What realistically can comms and engagement achieve with limited support? Need to focus on areas that can make the most difference.

Discussion related to Themes:

PM: Local area energy planning is an important gap to fill in next strategy; proposed session at future board meeting on big strategic questions that will affect whole group. SW endorsed this; availability of electricity influences what can be achieved – if we need to reset, the whole group must understand practical constraints.

BB will organise energy subgroup to report back to board. Will invite [Greater South East Net Zero Energy Hub](#) to present work on cohesive local area energy planning at regional level, to help Reading plan and progress in tandem with neighbouring authorities.

BP: New price control from 1 April 2023 includes £1 billion investment earmarked for transition to net zero. From SSEN perspective local area energy plans useful for guiding this spend – e.g. putting in bigger cables where it meets needs. Hopes to open doors where group is experiencing network constraints.

<p>8. The Strategy Room National Pilot Project (PM)</p> <p>Project developed by NESTA, UCL, Innovation Agency and a local agency who invited us to participate. Perfect fit with the engagement we need to do for next strategy review. RBC set up 6 workshops in Reading over a week (3 for residents; one for elected members; one for RCCP; one set up by UoR) to talk to people about potential climate policy options for the future. Reading had the highest participation rates in the country. Pilot project team (external) will present results to decision makers on the Council and possibly also to RCCP board. Likely to inform local policy going forward.</p>	<p>PM: Set up presentation to the RCCP board</p>
<p>9. Finance Report (BB)</p> <p>Deferred, report to be circulated by email.</p>	<p>BB: Circulate Finance Report</p>
<p>10. Communications and Engagement Plan for Strategy Review (PM)</p> <p>RBC/RCCP will use the Climate Festival as starting point for engagement / start climate conversations. Working group proposed: Peter, Gudrun, Rachel, Shreeya, comms leads across Council and Dylan. This group will develop a plan for this work and present it at next board meeting.</p>	<p>PM: Convene working group and report back at next board meeting</p>
<p>11. AOB</p> <p><u>REDA Green Skills Report</u> SW: REDA launched their Green Skills Report, commissioned from Shared Intelligence (full title: <i>Towards a green jobs and skills roadmap for Reading: https://www.visit-reading.com/business/news/2023/3/29/20-000-potential-new-green-jobs-for-reading-by-2050</i>). It sets out interventions in the local economy that could generate up to 20,000 green jobs in Reading by 2050 (or up to 50,000 by some metrics). Next steps (1) develop action plan with Activate Learning and others to embed skills (2) engagement plan to get green skills high up business agenda. It will be presented to REDA board next week with an ask to invest in core green skills needed to deliver net zero targets.</p> <p><u>Interfaith Groups – connections needed</u> TD: Interfaith groups are a gap in RCAN partnership outreach and also opportunity to reach diverse ethnic groups. Churches are keen to bring climate change message to congregations. RCAN already connected with Reading Green Christians. Any engagement leads for other / interfaith groups? Could DP connect us into groups at UoR? TRC will ask Connect Reading.</p> <p><u>Sport England Funding</u> NWO: Sport and physical activity world is getting more direction at national level, vs local groups left to decide for themselves whether to have governance on sustainability. Sport England funding will now come with requirement to offer sustainability policies, which will force whole sector to consider</p>	<p>All: Share your connections with interfaith group leaders with Gudrun and Tracey</p>

<p>sustainability more formally. Get Berkshire Active will look into developing terms of reference around sustainability policies and will work with RCCP to shape opportunities and action in the sector.</p> <p><u>Reading Football Club</u> TRC: Reading Football Club will have a climate change theme at match on 29 April and has asked if we want a stand at the stadium. DP: Invitation is the result of the club's partnership with UoR (including climate stripes on uniform). Plan was for bigger climate event but has been scaled back. DP will be there with a banner and flyers – plus climate stripes bus. AF will also support. TRC will connect them with Zsuzsi Lindsay.</p> <p><u>Theme synergies</u> Theme leads endorsed idea of subgroup to explore cross-cutting issues. TRC to offer meeting options.</p> <p><u>Raising awareness of successes</u> HM: Notes the inspiration value of the group's activities for the wider community – even small-scale improvements like planting new hedges. Nudge to members to share their activities more widely and to do more collective comms too.</p> <p><u>RCAN Marquee for voluntary groups at Waterfest</u> TM: RCCP has limited display material. Could theme leads provide additional materials e.g. posters or info sheets etc?</p> <p><u>MJ Awards Shortlist</u> PM: RBC has been nominated and shortlisted for Municipal Journal Awards 2023 for leadership in responding to climate emergency. Interview on 4th May 2023 will decide winner. PM to set up pre-meeting for TRC, TP and PM. There is a shortlist badge we can use in comms.</p>	<p>TRC: Connect DP and AF with ZL re football stand</p> <p>TRC: Circulate meeting options for cross-theme meetings</p> <p>PM: to set up pre-meeting for TRC, TP and PM.</p>
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Reading Climate Change Partnership
Board Meeting Minutes, 20th July 2023
MS TEAMS meeting online, 10 AM - 12 PM

<u>Attendees</u> Tracey Rawling-Church (Co-chair and chaired meeting) Peter Moore	Chris Maddocks Nick West-Oram Alison Foster Ben Burfoot	Scott Witchalls Cllr John Ennis Dylan Parkes Heather Marshall	Brian Grady Tricia Marcouse Gudrun Freese (Minutes)
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Item	Actions
<p>1. Welcome, introductions and staff changes</p> <p>Welcome to Councillor John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport at Reading Borough Council.</p> <p>Heather Marshall has changed organisations from Thames Water to Mott Macdonald (where she will continue to do some work on behalf of Thames Water in a client capacity). The board were supportive of Heather continuing to hold the water theme lead seat.</p> <p>Apologies: Brian Puszkas, Rachel Hazell, Scott Witchalls, Paul Ducker</p>	
<p>2. Staff changes</p> <p>Two new volunteers were onboarded in July to support with newsletter subscriber growth and social media.</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of last meeting – approval</p> <p>Minutes were approved by the board.</p>	
<p>4. Election of co-chair</p> <p>Dylan Parkes was voted in (unanimously) as co-chair of RCCP.</p>	
<p>5. Reading Borough Emissions Data (BB)</p> <p>Ben presented GHG emissions data for the whole of Reading Borough, for the calendar year 2021, sourced from UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics, 2005 to 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) There is an 18-month lag on this data so it only appeared in June 2023.</p> <p>This measures scope 1 and 2 emissions using data from energy meters (electricity and gas), a combination of vehicle emissions and fuel sales, land use, methane and a number of other sources.</p> <p>Emissions in 2021 went up compared with 2020 but were similar to 2019. This was expected as 2020 emissions were lower due to the pandemic.</p> <p>In 2020 Reading was 4th best for local authority area emissions reductions since the baseline year in the UK. In 2021 Reading was 8th best, out of 374.</p>	<p>PM/BB: Publish synopsis of data with context.</p> <p>GF: Share Heather's idea with cycling group.</p>

Biggest emissions reductions achieved in commercial electricity, due in part to decarbonisation of national grid + efficiency of appliances and LED lighting. As a result, vehicle emissions and domestic gas now represent a much larger percentage of emissions in the borough.

The biggest opportunities for reduction are wherever fossil fuels are used, including vehicles and gas boilers.

2021 was slightly colder than 2020, which accounts for some of the increase.

Decreases in commercial electricity emissions in 2020 is probably partially related to an increase in home working.

Data shows that retrofit should be a key focus on the Council and the wider borough's approach to emissions reduction.

Peter added: Reading has much lower per capita emissions than other Berkshire authorities which reflects its dense urban nature and also its relative deprivation in comparison with relatively wealthy neighbouring boroughs. Ben pointed out whilst this is generally true there are also significant issues for the rural fuel poor in neighbouring boroughs who may rely on car travel and who may have difficult 'eat, heat or travel' choices to make.

General discussion:

Emissions data includes transport into Reading for work, but only the part of the journey in the Borough. These car journeys often start in neighbouring boroughs where public transport is not as good as Reading and those boroughs will count the majority of those journeys in their emissions data.

Transition to EV is key to emissions reduction in Reading, but converting more car journeys to walking and cycling and public transport is even more important.

Heather: TfL has updated their journey planning website to show walk and cycle times before car, train and bus options. Would be great to identify the best walking and cycling routes in our area that are alternatives to car journeys and publicise these locally.

Overall Reading is a successful economy, but some are getting left behind. Reading is doing better in relative terms vs absolute emissions reduction.

Schools: Opening of a new secondary school in September 2024 will impact transport emissions. How can we embed new approaches to school travel right from the beginning?

Going forward how can we prioritise retrofitting approaches for older schools as well as high standards in new school building provision?

A synopsis of the data with added context published with these minutes.

<p>6. Reading Climate Festival 2023 (TRC)</p> <p>TRC shared a synopsis of 2023 Reading Climate Festival statistics (see attachment), for a subset of festival events (i.e. not including Gaia and Gaia satellite events and not including University of Reading events).</p> <p>TRC was thanked for originating the festival and for her countless volunteer hours towards it again this year and she in turn thanked Hannah Laidley and Gudrun Freese for their contributions to the Festival.</p> <p>The figures for 2023 show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fewer events attracted a larger overall audience compared with last year - <i>What's On Reading</i> was RCAN's key referring website - there is work to do to improve the diversity of the ReadingCAN community <p>Planning has started for next year's festival and the intent is to join up all festival event hosts (Council, RCCP, Univ of Reading and others) and user journeys under one umbrella.</p> <p>Dylan P reported that the UoR's tweet showing the climate stripes projected onto the Cliffs of Dover has had 1.2 million views. Gaia had 12,000 ticketed visitors.</p> <p>Request to all: Please submit ideas for a centrepiece for 2024 (to replace Gaia). Please send ideas to Gudrun.</p> <p><i>Consideration for 2024:</i> Should we still hook our festival dates to Green Great Britain Week in June? There was no benefit this year in terms of funding and we may need to consider possibility of future heatwaves during this period. Increasing uncertainty about impact of weather on outdoor events suggests we should maintain a good balance of online and in-person events.</p> <p>Idea to incorporate other events throughout the year under the festival / RCAN / climate pledge brand – e.g. Ramadan is often linked to climate and stewardship of nature and a partnership will help us diversify our climate community.</p>	<p>ALL: Submit ideas for centrepiece for 2024 Reading Festival to GF</p>
<p>7. Stakeholder Engagement for Climate Strategy (PM & GF)</p> <p>Peter M presented a detailed timeline for the Stakeholder Engagement process leading up to the publication of a revised Climate Strategy for Reading for the period 2025 – 2030.</p> <p>Milestones in the timeline include the 3rd, 4th and 5th Annual Reports for RCCP; the next two climate festivals, and the net zero scenario tool pilot.</p> <p>PM also reported back on The Strategy Room Project. Reading's 6 events had the highest participation of any LA area in the country. Note – incentives were offered. This is a tool we can roll out during the SE process and Peter has an Expression of Interest form.</p> <p>PM will circulate Reading data from the project before the next board meeting.</p>	<p>ALL: Share link to newsletter as widely as possible to encourage new sign-ups.</p> <p>ALL: Add comments to Miro Board "What do we want to achieve with stakeholder engagement events?"</p>

<p>GF presented a progress update showing Phase 1 stakeholder engagement to date + new community-building initiatives designed to grow our reach in advance of launching stakeholder engagement events later this year and throughout next year.</p> <p>New initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Superstructure to align all RCAN comms channels with the Stakeholder Engagement Process (see Stakeholder Engagement Slides) • RCAN Newsletter (ReadingCAN Updates) – launched late July. See first edition – and sign up to future editions – here: https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=e39502fb149639fdb4c865ed5&id=f2451ad6ac • New RCAN blog series (to be included in each newsletter): “Who’s doing what about climate & biodiversity in Reading” – please send Gudrun any concrete / newsworthy examples to include in the blog. This blog’s aim is to help the Reading climate community ‘see itself’ as one collective, supporting the mission in different ways (businesses, the Council, University, schools, students, neighbourhood initiatives, green groups, local eco-heroes, sector organisations, individual actions, etc) • Social Media – Another new volunteer has been onboarded and will start creating content for RCAN Instagram in late July 2023 • New webinar series: How to Engage Citizens in Climate Change Strategy – RCAN will host guests to showcase inspiring examples of citizen engagement. This can run throughout the 18-month consultation period and beyond. • Creatives for Climate – RCAN will initiate a new Reading chapter of this international movement to help mobilise our local creative community around local climate action, and bring them into the stakeholder engagement and delivery process for the new strategy • New Pledge Campaign – Zsuzsi Lindsay, Readings, Cultural Development Officer has offered to work on a campaign to increase RCAN’s climate action pledges. She has been briefed and is preparing a proposal. • Stakeholder Engagement Working Group – Kick-off meeting was held 13 July 2023. We agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The next strategy should aim at transformative and exponential effects, and include a strong but not exclusive focus on what’s achievable by 2030 ○ We need an education component in the SE process so that those consulted can understand the diverse challenges and opportunities related to mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity in Reading ○ At least some of the events could be innovation challenges that deliver new solutions for Reading and more ‘agency’ ○ To do some audience analysis so we can target audiences with the biggest impact potential with the right events 	<p>PM: Circulate Reading data from The Strategy Room Project</p> <p>ALL: Send examples of newsworthy climate initiatives from your sector or org to GF, for new blog series</p> <p>ALL: Add ideas to Stakeholder Engagement Miro Board or email to GF.</p> <p>ALL: Let GF know if you would like to be included in funding sub-group.</p> <p>GF: Include funding brainstorm event in SE process.</p> <p>DP: Enquire about UoR support for research on (1) Reading target audiences for climate action (2) dashboard and metrics for local area emissions (3) examples of hyperlocal adaptation challenges and climate effects</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To identify and initiate research projects with UoR to support the strategy process and delivery against net zero (e.g. audience analysis, dashboard, climate literacy baselines, other) ○ RCAN should be the face of the stakeholder engagement process rather than the Council, and we should consider updates to the RCAN brand ○ Budget is available from the Council for the stakeholder engagement process ○ Given the urgency, our stakeholder engagement process should also – in addition to listening – aim to facilitate the emergence of new projects and campaigns, widespread climate literacy and ownership of the component challenges of net zero. ○ Are there some campaigns we could identify, where Reading residents make specific asks of national government? Please send ideas to Gudrun. <p><u>Inputs:</u> “What do we want to achieve with stakeholder engagement events / what are they for?” Please add your thoughts to the Stakeholder Engagement Events Miro Board or send ideas to Gudrun via email. To comment on this Miro Board you will be prompted to set up a free account.</p>	
<h2>8. Updates from Theme Leads (verbal)</h2> <p>ENERGY (BB):</p> <p><i>Key takeaways:</i> Decarbonising heat is a key challenge in Reading. We need to replace fossil fuels used in boilers with electrically powered heat pumps.</p> <p>Local area energy planning: Engagement between the Council and SSEN is improving. However, on grid capacity issues, SSEN’s planned upgrades up to 2028 will not be sufficient to support the quantity of EV and heat pumps needed to meet decarbonisation targets in Reading.</p> <p>Solar: The Council-endorsed Solar Together project has launched. Good sign-ups achieved for first participation deadline.</p> <p>Retrofit: The Sustainable Warmth Grant scheme has now finished. The Home Upgrade Scheme continues in its place but this is more difficult for residents to access. Reading had a pipeline of over 100 homes that were eligible for the old scheme but which may not be eligible for the new scheme. The new money (allocation) for retrofit in Reading from government is well below what is needed to meet demand and very far from what is needed to meet the 2030 target.</p> <p>Heat networks: Feasibility study is complete. North of the station is viable. Ben is trying to get a Minster Quarter Heat Network integrated into the redevelopment plans and secure grant funding to help develop this.</p> <p>Council Levelling Up Fund successes: Money has been awarded for:</p>	

- Bringing the Central Library into the Civic Offices and installing heat pumps in place of the existing boilers and chillers. This will complete the decarbonisation of the Civic and Library buildings.
- The Hexagon Theatre project to add a new community and live music space to the existing theatre, to be built to net-zero standard. The project will supply heat to the old and new parts using ground source heat pumps, as well as a number of retrofit and renewable energy measures to the existing building.

TRANSPORT (CM):

Apologies sent

RESOURCES AND CONSUMPTION (PD):

Update emailed by Paul Ducker:

Not a lot of changes to report since the last update (in April), but enough to inspire a gentle feeling of optimism.

Developments from the last quarter to highlight:

- New Directions College students' Upcycled Fashion designs exhibited during Reading Climate Festival. There were some stunning creations showing great skill and creativity. Although it is something that developed completely independently of the RCCP/RCAN plan, it is exciting to see this sort of initiative happening. How can we encourage and support other similar initiatives?
- Incredible Edible Reading growing conversations. IER is currently developing a vision to connect initiatives around food growing, food poverty, healthy eating and sustainability, inspired by other towns and boroughs that have developed sustainable food strategies. How can we best support approaches that cut across themes?
- Reading Festival keen to do more on sustainability. I have been so impressed by the enthusiasm that Reading's local festival organisers have brought to the challenge of reducing their event's negative impacts. Particular mention must go to the Readipop team the East Reading Festival committee. But almost as impressive as the efforts of organisers are the barriers they experience to doing things differently. It shouldn't be this hard! What can we do to help 'de-risk' innovation as well as ensure that the infrastructure in public spaces used for events is supportive of sustainability?
- Tapping into networks that facilitate reuse. The call out from Rivermead Leisure Centre, via Peter Moore, to find a new home for 300 chairs and the response from Connect Reading was a reminder of the active networks we have in Reading. As with previous updates, the further we get away from the original action plan the more the highlighted actions are not those envisaged at the time the plan was written. This is to be expected. But can also be seen as an indication of the momentum of the strategy and its success in connecting aligned activities.

Getting serious about funding: Paul is thinking about -funding. 2030 is approaching fast. Relying on voluntary effort alone is not going to be enough. How can we unlock

different types of funding to ensure delivery capacity matches ambition? Also, there is a question about people who work in purpose driven organisations that want to do good but also make a living. As indicated above, one of the areas that is exercising me is how best to support organisations, like festivals, that want to do something different (like use reusable bar cups) but who cannot afford to take the risk of trying something that could cost more than the 'business as usual' model of single use, disposable cups. Do we need a funding sub-group?

WATER (HM):

Heather Marshall has moved to Mott MacDonald from Thames Water but is still working with Thames a few days a week, on secondment.

Thames Water has now published their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan, covering key challenges and how they propose to tackle them. Heather will share consumption data for Reading compared with other Boroughs.

Developer incentives, which guide developers on how to be more water friendly, offer up to 2k per property. Thames Water is looking at how businesses could be given same incentives for efficiencies.

Reading should incorporate **biodiversity net gain** into climate strategy – e.g. sustainable drainage through urban greening not only slows down water build-up but also offers positive health benefits.

Could Reading aim to be on the Top 10 Urban Green Spaces list? Board members would have to pool objectives and work together.

NATURE AND GREEN SPACES: TM

Apologies sent

HEALTH (AF):

AF: The Trust is finalising their Carbon Reduction Report for 2022/2023. It shows a 27% reduction in carbon compared with 2021/2022 for the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust. This rate of reduction is not expected to continue, as it represents the 'low-hanging fruit' of the impact of the implementation of our de-steaming across the main site as being the main reason.

Areas to improve include further improvements in our energy use such as reducing our heating and lighting use, particularly out of main hours.

COMMUNICATIONS: (RH)

Apologies sent

GENERAL DISCUSSION FOLLOWING THEME UPDATES

<p><i>Funding:</i> TRC asked members for an expression of interest in a funding sub-group. Please contact Gudrun if you would like to join.</p> <p>PM: We can't rely on volunteers for core functions or for fundraising. Ideally we need to embed resources and funding into organisations.</p> <p>GF: Suggested a funding discussion as one of our stakeholder engagement events.</p>	
<p>9. Climate Strategy Annual Report 2022/2023 PM will be in touch shortly to ask for inputs. The Report will be published in November. These inputs will also be very useful for the education component of the Stakeholder Engagement process.</p>	<p>PM: Send brief for inputs.</p>
<p>10. Finance Report (BB) Annual budget (income from solar generation) is £26,400 which covers salary of part-time coordinator plus all operating costs, e.g. monthly fees for website, email distribution, Zoom, etc.; branding assets such as banners or leaflets; furniture hire; freelance support, etc.</p> <p>£4,700 spent so far this year (first quarter).</p> <p>We have ringfenced £35,000 unspent budget from previous years.</p>	<p>BB: Circulate Finance Report</p>
<p>11. AOB</p> <p>JE: A consultation is planned on local transport in the Borough and this should help reduce emissions. A second strategy consultation will cover EV.</p> <p>Request for RCAN to promote these.</p> <p>PM: Carbon Literacy training will become a more fundamental part of New Directions. PM delivered a course to first group of Council managers.</p> <p>Urged members to check our Carbon Literacy Project (CLP) and see if you can adopt it in your organisation.</p> <p>NWO: Offering Systems Thinking courses to teams.</p> <p>HM: Do guides exist for car owners, gardeners, etc. that set out the opportunities for efficiency, regeneration etc, i.e. best opportunities?</p>	<p>JE: Send details to Gudrun so we can promote.</p> <p>ALL: Have a look at CLP and see if you can adopt in your organisations.</p>

Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

15 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Annual Reports for 2022/23 on (i) the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and (ii) the Council's corporate greenhouse gas emissions
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Peter Moore, Head of Climate Strategy
Lead Councillor	Cllr Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the progress in reducing Reading Borough's carbon emissions, which have fallen by 51% since 2005. 2. Note the progress in reducing Reading Borough Council's corporate emissions, which have fallen by 74% since 2008/09. 3. Note that while progress is being made, the Council and other partners will need to increase the pace of emissions reduction to meet the targets for a net zero Reading, and a net zero Council, by 2030.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. This report presents Annual Reports for 2022/23 for two key elements of Reading's response to the climate emergency:

- The 2022/23 Annual Report on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (Appendix 1): this report has been prepared by the Reading Climate Change Partnership and reflects activity by a range of partners across Reading, not just the Council. The headline messages from the report are that, in common with the rest of the UK, emissions for 2021 (the latest year for which data is available) rose compared to 2020, as emissions re-bounded following the lifting of pandemic restrictions. The long-term trend remains positive, however, with Borough emissions falling 51% since 2005. This is down from the 55% reduction reported in 2020, but Reading has still seen the 8th largest reduction in emissions out of 374 UK local authority areas. Reading's per capita emissions also remain the lowest in Berkshire. The pace of emissions reduction will, however, need to increase significantly to get back on track to achieve the Strategy target of 'net zero by 2030'.
- The 2022/23 Annual Report on the Council's corporate greenhouse gas emissions (Appendix 2): this report is produced annually by the Council and tracks progress with implementation of the Council's Carbon Plan and the targets within it. The headline message from the report is that the Council's carbon footprint has been cut by 73.9% since 2008/09, a further reduction from the 71.3% figure reported in 2021/22. This means the Council remains broadly on track to meet its interim target of an 85% cut in emissions by 2025, but further action and investment will be needed to achieve this target, and to make progress towards the ultimate target of becoming a net zero organisation by 2030.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. In 2019 the UK government committed to a national statutory target of 'net zero carbon' by 2050, having updated the Climate Change Act to aim for a 100% reduction in emissions compared to the 1990 baseline. The UK's 'carbon budget' is designed to achieve a 68% reduction in UK emissions by 2030 and 78% by 2035. The Committee on Climate Change, the government's statutory adviser on climate change, has, however, warned in its latest (2023) report to Parliament that insufficient urgency is being attached to delivering these targets and the necessary enabling measures. The Committee has also warned that proposals to defer key climate policies such as the ban on the sale of new petrol/diesel cars announced in September 2023, will put the achievement of these targets at even greater risk.
- 2.2. Prior to the adoption of the national 'net zero by 2050' target, Reading Borough Council had declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019, committing to the more ambitious aim of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. In November 2020, the Council subsequently endorsed the new Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (prepared by the Reading Climate Change Partnership, of which the Council is a founding member) based on the 'net zero by 2030' ambition. At the same time the Council adopted a new corporate Carbon Plan for the period 2020-25, including an interim target to reduce the Council's own emissions by 85% by 2025 *en route* to net zero by 2030.
- 2.3. This report now presents Annual Reports on both the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and the Council's own greenhouse gas emissions, covering the financial year (2022/23).

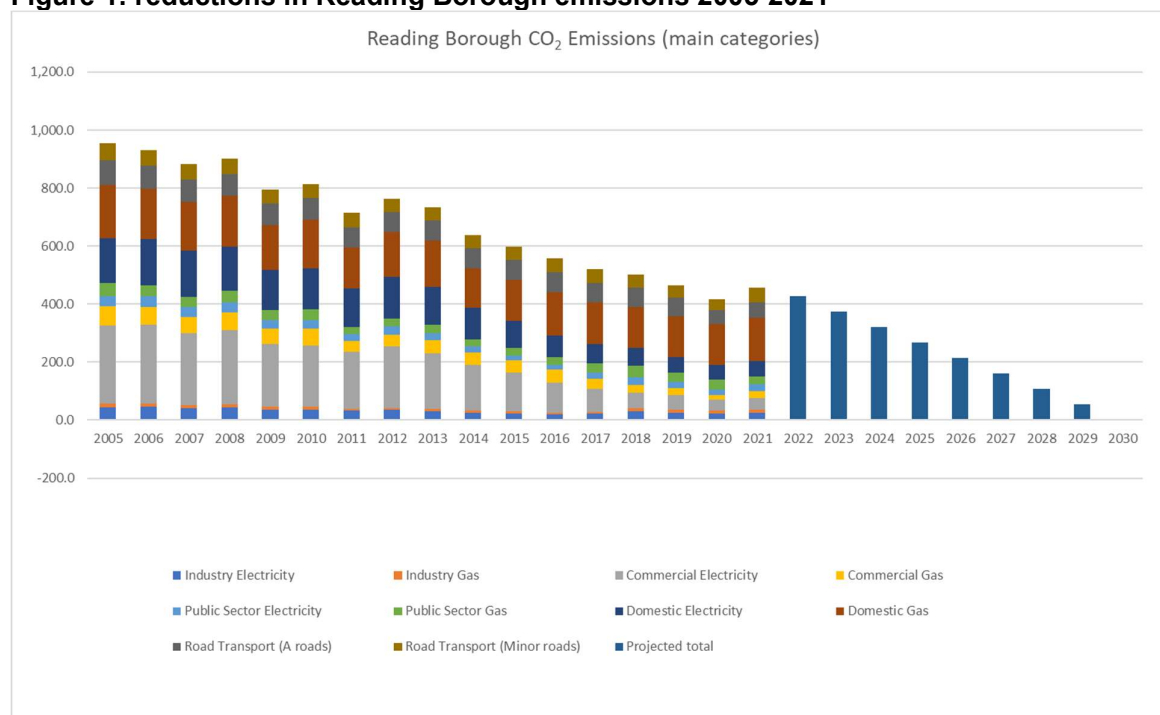
3. Key conclusions from the Annual Report 2022/23 on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy (see Appendix 1)

- 3.1 The Annual Report has been prepared by the Reading Climate Change Partnership, and is presented to SEPT Committee to meet the Partnership's commitment to transparent reporting on progress with strategy implementation, and to ensure that it is widely available to the public. As such, the report describes activity by a range of partners who have committed to action within the strategy, of which the Council is just one.
- 3.2 The measure used to track progress towards the target of 'a net zero Reading by 2030' is a national (DESNZ) dataset for 'emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities', published annually. There is a lag in the national data collection exercise so the latest data, published in June 2023, relate to the calendar year 2021, the first year after the main 2020 lockdown restrictions, including travel restrictions, were eased.
- 3.3 While the 2020 data showed a sharp drop in Reading's emissions compared to 2019, reflecting the impact of pandemic restrictions, the 2021 data show a clear 'bounce-back' in emissions, a pattern reflected locally, nationally and internationally. Key points are:
 - Reading Borough's emissions increased by 9.7% between 2020 and 2021 - although this is slightly above the national average increase of 8.1%, Reading's reduction between 2019 and 2020 was also larger than most - so our emissions fell faster in response to pandemic restrictions but bounced back harder once they eased.
 - The pandemic 'bounce-back' phenomenon was exacerbated nationally and locally by colder weather in 2021 compared to 2020, which led to more demand for heating.
 - Care should be taken, however, with these year-on-year comparisons, particularly those years affected by the pandemic, and long-term trends are more instructive: in this regard, the long-term trend remains downwards and Reading's emissions have fallen by 51.3% since 2005 – the 8th largest reduction out of 374 UK local authority areas.

- Reading's per capita emissions remain the lowest in Berkshire and are also lower than the SE and UK average.

3.4 Reading's performance relative to other areas is therefore strong by this measure. Nonetheless, 2021 was the first year for over a decade that emissions rose nationally and locally: to achieve net zero by 2030 we now need to see significant reductions every year to 2030 as shown in figure 1. Nationally and locally emissions in 2021 were only slightly lower than the pre-pandemic year of 2019. We will, however, need the 2022 data (due for publication in June 2024) to understand whether the long-term downward trend shown in figure 1 resumes.

Figure 1: reductions in Reading Borough emissions 2005-2021



3.5 The Annual Report also highlights case studies and celebrates achievements which have been taken forward by partners in Reading during the course of the last year. These include several initiatives led by the Council:

- **Low carbon leisure centres:** new leisure facilities opened at Palmer Park and Rivermead for which, in 2022, the Council provided an additional £976,248 to install air source heat pumps and additional solar capacity, reducing emissions from the facilities by 57% and 80% respectively compared to the original design. This formed part of an energy and carbon saving package of measures worth over £2.5 million as part of the £40 million investment in new leisure facilities delivered with our partners Greenwich Leisure Ltd (GLL).
- **Reduced waste emissions:** research conducted earlier this year by re3, the waste partnership between Reading, Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Councils, quantified the reductions in emissions arising from adoption of more sustainable waste management practices. This shows that emissions from Reading's municipal waste were cut by 66.8% between 2015/16 and 2022/23, largely as a result of achieving significant reductions in waste going to landfill, with reductions in waste volumes overall also being a significant factor.
- **Public participation:** in April 2022 Reading submitted a successful bid to be part of the Local Climate Engagement Project, a prestigious initiative offering training and

peer learning, developed and delivered by UK100 and a consortium of NGOs specialising in public participation, to better equip staff and volunteers with the skills needed to engage the public in decisions about climate change. Training took place in 2022 and the learning is now being applied to our communications and engagement work.

- **Citizen engagement:** the Council was also invited to take part in a national pilot programme, *The Strategy Room*, which uses an innovative scenario-based format to engage citizens in discussions about climate change to inform local policy-making. Six workshops were held in Reading in March 2023 as part of the project, achieving the highest participation rates of all the pilot areas. A separate report on the outcomes of the project is being presented to SEPT Committee at the November 2023 meeting.
- **Transparency and accountability:** in July 2022 the Council submitted its annual return to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) whose international reporting platform is regarded as the 'gold standard' in climate reporting for local authorities. In November 2022 CDP confirmed that Reading had retained its place on their 'A' list of cities taking bold climate action, an accolade reserved for just 19 UK local authority areas and 122 worldwide out of over 1,000 who disclose via CDP.

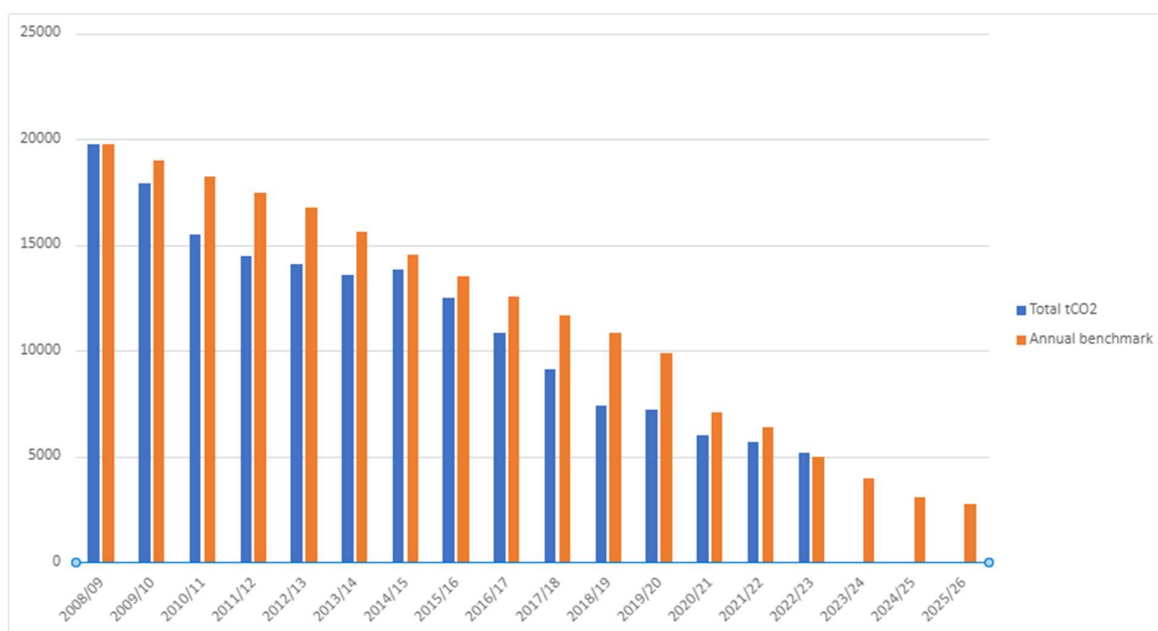
4. Key conclusions from the Council's annual greenhouse gas emissions report (see Appendix 2)

- 4.1 This report has been produced annually by the Council since 2008/09 to track progress with implementation of the Council's Carbon Plan and its publication meets our obligations to report transparently on corporate emissions in line with the relevant emissions reporting protocols. Although the Council's emissions represent less than 1.3% of the total for the Borough, they assume greater significance due to the need for the Council to lead by example in setting and delivering ambitious carbon reduction targets.
- 4.2 The headline conclusion of the report is that the Council's carbon footprint has been cut by 73.9% since 2008-09, a further reduction from 71.3% reported in 2021/22. This means that the Council's emissions fell by 9% between 2021/22 and 2022/23. As with Borough carbon emissions, however, care should be taken with year-on-year comparisons and the long-term trend is more instructive. Whilst this keeps the Council broadly on track to meet its target of an 85% cut in corporate emissions by 2025, figure 2 shows that the gap between 'planned' and 'actual' reductions has closed.
- 4.3 On of the factors in the reduction in emissions recorded in 2022/23 is the continued decarbonisation of grid energy as more renewable energy (such as offshore wind and solar) comes on stream – this reduces the carbon content of the electricity used by the Council, hence our strategy of electrifying heating and transport to take advantage of this lower carbon energy. Put another way, for every heat pump or EV we invest in, we see an additional 'free' reduction in our emissions every year beyond the initial year of installation/ purchase as long as grid decarbonisation continues.
- 4.4 Major projects in the pipeline which will deliver significant additional cuts in emissions over the next few years include:
 - Full electrification of the Refuse Collection Vehicle (RCV) fleet: 6 electric RCVs are now operational and the remaining 7 are on order, for delivery later this financial year. Together these will reduce fleet emissions by c15%;
 - Decarbonisation of the Civic Offices: the Council is replacing gas heating with air source heat pumps as part of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) project to integrate the Central Library into the Civic Offices, with heat pumps due for installation in 2024.
 - Decarbonisation of the Hexagon campus, with a combination of air source and ground source heat pumps replacing gas heating as part of the LUF project to add a

new performance space to the existing Hexagon, along with lighting and insulation improvements, due for completion in 2025.

- Disposal of Central Library as part of the LUF programme, expected in 2025.
- 4.5 These projects will make a significant contribution towards our targets but further projects and further investment will still be needed. Work is underway to identify these investment needs and will be taken forward through the normal budget setting processes of the Council.
- 4.6 Working in the opposite direction to these initiatives, a recent inventory of streetlighting assets identified a number of assets (traffic lights etc) which had not previously been accounted for in the emissions reporting. Streetlighting remains a significant energy user and source of emissions, despite the Council successfully completing the LED switchover project, so this will result in an increase emissions from this source in 2023/24, unless other mitigations can be found to compensate within the streetlighting portfolio. Work is therefore underway to mitigate this potential impact.
- 4.7 The overall trajectory of Council emissions since 2008/09 is shown in figure 2, along with notional annual benchmarks aligning to the interim target of an 85% cut by 2025. These benchmarks were based on assumptions made in 2020, at the start of the current Carbon Plan period, on when the impact of different interventions might be seen. Figure 2 shows that the gap between actual reductions and these notional benchmarks has closed, reflecting the fact that the Council has set very ambitious targets, and that, with many of the 'easy' and low cost carbon reduction measures having already been taken, each remaining percentage point of emissions reduction is inevitably more challenging.

Figure 2: reductions in RBC corporate emissions 2008/09 to 2022/23



- 4.8 Significantly, the Carbon Plan includes a secondary target to reduce the Council's fossil fuel use to 50% of its 2008/09 level by 2025 through removal of fossil fuel heating and electrification of vehicles. The council used 433,214 litres of fuel/oil, and 10,325 MWh of natural gas in 2022/23. This means that this target has now been achieved two years early – the Council's gas use is currently 61% lower than 2008/09 and oil/fuel is 55% lower than 2008/09, which represents a significant achievement.

5. Contribution to strategic aims

- 5.1 The Council's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as summarised in this report support the following Corporate Plan priorities:

- **Healthy environment:** the Annual Reports record progress on tackling climate change and working towards our goal of a net zero carbon town and Council by 2030.
- **Thriving communities:** various actions in the Climate Strategy and Carbon Plan are designed to help reduce energy use and thus reduce the exposure of households and businesses to high energy bills, which have been a major source of concern as energy prices have escalated.
- **Inclusive economy:** the Council's Carbon Plan includes investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy which stimulates the low carbon economy and provides employment in this sector.

- 5.2 The corporate Carbon Plan also contributes to TEAM Reading values, particularly on Efficiency – by minimising the risks and costs associated with energy use and by improving the energy and carbon efficiency of Council operations.

6. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 6.1. The Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019 (minute 48 refers). This commits to the ambitious goal of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 and the Council's Carbon Plan for 2020-25 align with this goal, setting more ambitious targets for reducing emissions compared to the Council's previous plans. The Annual Reports which are the subject of this report are an important mechanism for tracking progress towards these targets but do not have any material environmental or climate implications in and of themselves.

7. Community Engagement

- 7.1. Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way". While there is no requirement to consult on the Annual Reports which are the subject of this report, they will be made public via the Reading Climate Action Network website and the Council's website. In addition, the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy was the subject of extensive public consultation and engagement prior to publication in November 2020.

8. Equality Implications

- 8.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for this report.

9. Other Relevant Considerations

- 9.1. Consideration has been given to other issues of relevance to this report, the key one being risk management implications. 'Failure to meet net zero carbon commitments', in relation to both Borough emissions and the Council's own operations, is included as a high level risk in the Council's Strategic Risk Register, and the likelihood and impact of this risk is assessed on an ongoing basis. The increase in Borough emissions between 2020 and 2021 inevitably increases the risk associated with achievement of the targets.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Completion of the Annual Reports included in this report is not mandatory but is important for transparency in demonstrating progress towards key policy objectives.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although Appendix 2 quantifies the cumulative and annual costs avoided as a result of efforts to reduce energy use and thus carbon emissions within the Council's estate and operations, under the auspices of the corporate Carbon Plan. This suggests that the cumulative costs

avoided by the Council from reduced energy consumption since 2008/09 are c£22.2 million (excluding standing charges and other contract charges) compared to if no action had been taken. In 2022/23 alone these avoided costs were estimated at c£4.7 million. With energy prices still at a high level, the value at stake from reducing our energy consumption in line with Carbon Plan aspirations is likely to increase in future years. The report also highlights the need for the Council to make further investment to achieve its interim target of an 85% cut in corporate emissions by 2025 and ultimate target of net zero by 2030. Work is underway to quantify these investment needs and will be taken forward through the normal budget setting process.

12. Timetable for Implementation

- 12.1. Not applicable. The next Annual Reports on the Climate Strategy and Carbon Plan will be presented to SEPT Committee in November 2024.

13. Background Papers

- 13.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. Annual Report 2022/23 on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25
2. Annual Report 2022/23 on Reading Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions

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The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 Annual Report 2022/23

November 2023



Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25

3rd Annual Progress Report (2022/23)

Produced by Reading Climate Change Partnership/Reading Climate Action Network (November 2023)

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FOREWORD

The World has changed a great deal since Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy was published in 2020.

While we have emerged from the grip of the coronavirus pandemic, we have seen many lasting changes to the way we live, work and connect. We have seen an energy price crisis followed by a cost-of-living crisis, dragging more people into fuel poverty and underlining the importance of energy security. Conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have further highlighted how tragedy and instability reverberate around the world.

The headlines have often been dominated by extreme weather events across the globe, with record breaking temperatures, forest fires, droughts and floods causing untold misery and destruction, and taking countless lives. As climate scientists have highlighted for decades, climate change will increase the frequency and severity of such events.

Against this backdrop, scientific consensus has concluded that the Paris Agreement target of keeping the global average temperature increase below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels is increasingly unlikely to be achieved, with the IPCC's 6th synthesis report concluding that we are probably on a pathway to 2.8°C of warming by 2100 and the 1.5 °C limit will likely be exceeded this decade.

As we report on progress against our 2020-25 Climate Emergency Strategy, the Reading Climate Change Partnership is already beginning work on developing our 2025-30 plan, which will take us up to our target date of 2030 for a net zero and climate resilient town. The process will include an extensive community engagement programme to ensure that every individual and organisation in Reading has the opportunity to contribute, and we would urge you to participate if you can.

While the global outlook may not be entirely positive, we have seen some progress locally. Reading's emissions have reduced by 51% since 2005, the 8th largest reduction out of 374 UK local authority areas, and we have retained our coveted place on the CDP's global 'A' list. We have strengthened our board to include more of the town's anchor institutions and continued to foster collaborations towards developing systematic solutions to climate-related problems. You will find a number of case studies in this report that showcase some of these.

A highlight in 2023 was a greatly expanded Reading Climate Festival which, with the support of Reading Borough Council's Culture Service, REDA and the University of Reading brought the iconic artwork "Gaia" to the town as a centrepiece for 12 days of events, performances and talks. Whether providing actionable information on best practice to cut carbon or inspiring a deeper appreciation of the fragility of the planet that sustains us, community engagement is a key component in encouraging everybody to play their part in reducing carbon emissions and helping to protect biodiversity.

We are extremely grateful to the colleagues, partners, organisations and individuals across Reading who have worked together collectively and individually to take action on climate. We have been unable to capture every action taken in this report but felt it important to record our thanks as every action taken, no matter how small, can make a difference. In particular we would like to thank Professor Tim Dixon, our former co-chair, whose leadership we greatly appreciated and who stepped down having retired this year from his position at the University of Reading.

We don't underestimate the scale of the challenge but we remain committed to our mission of bringing together everybody who lives, works or studies in Reading to combat climate change and help ensure a more sustainable future for us all.

Dylan Parkes and Tracey Rawling-Church

Co-Chairs, Reading Climate Change Partnership



Reading

1. INTRODUCTION

The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 was published in November 2020 and included a commitment to review progress annually. This report represents the third annual report on the Strategy covering the year 2022/23. The report combines:

- An assessment of progress against the headline targets in the strategy (section 2)
- Case studies illustrating and celebrating progress (section 3)
- A summary of key developments and achievements since our last Annual Report (section 4)

Annex 1 to this report - a detailed account of progress with the seven action plans on which the strategy is based - will be published on the Reading Climate Action Network website at [Annual Report – Reading Climate Action Network \(RCAN\) \(readingcan.org.uk\)](https://readingcan.org.uk/Annual-Report-Reading-Climate-Action-Network-RCAN/) simultaneously to this report being published in November 2023.

While the report has been produced by the Reading Climate Change Partnership and reflects progress with action to which a wide range of partner organisations have contributed, in the interests of transparency, and to put the report on the public record, a copy has been submitted to the 15th November 2023 meeting of Reading Borough Council's Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee, and it has also been published on the RCAN website via the link above.

2. PROGRESS REPORT ON READING BOROUGH EMISSIONS

2.1 Measuring Reading's emissions

The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy reinforced the goal of a 'net zero Reading by 2030' which was first set out in the Climate Emergency Declaration passed by the Council in February 2019 on behalf of the wider community.

Carbon dioxide emissions statistics for UK local authority areas are compiled by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and published annually as 'The UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics'¹. This dataset represents the most reliable and consistent breakdown of CO₂ emissions across the country, using nationally available data sets going back to 2005.

The DESNZ statistics include a data subset for 'Carbon dioxide emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities'. This excludes sources of emissions which cannot realistically be influenced by local action such as those arising from motorway traffic, large industrial installations (excluding power stations) within the EU Emissions Trading System, diesel railways and land use change. We use this dataset to track progress towards the net zero by 2030 target for Reading as, while it does not substantially change the headline figure for emissions reduction in the area compared to the main DESNZ dataset, it does reflect the sources of emissions from Reading over which local partner organisations and residents have most control and influence.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2021>

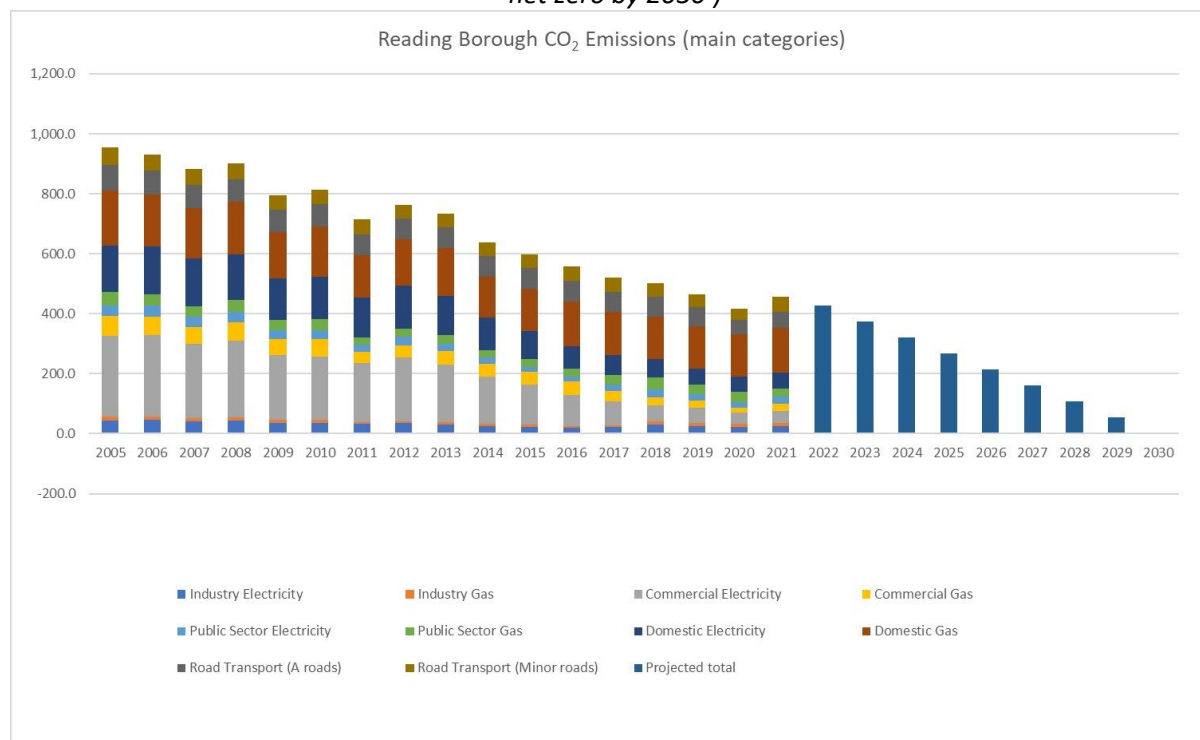
While these statistics represent the most comprehensive and robust assessment of emissions by local authority area and are used by many other local authority areas to measure their progress toward net zero, it is important to recognise their limitations. Chief among these is the fact that they measure ‘territorial’ or ‘production’ emissions (goods, products and services made or provided in Reading), but do not take account of emissions arising from consumption (things used or eaten in Reading but produced outside Reading’s boundaries). This latter calculation would add a significant proportion to Reading’s ‘real-world’ carbon footprint due to our reliance on imported food and other products. This is not to say that our Strategy ignores the issue of emissions arising from consumption – on the contrary, measures to tackle such emissions feature prominently in the Action Plans on which the Strategy is based – but it does mean that the impact of these actions will not necessarily be reflected in the headline measure of the Borough’s carbon footprint used to measure progress towards net zero.

2.2 Progress towards net zero by 2030

As described above, the headline measure of Reading’s progress towards net zero is the reduction in emissions since 2005 based on the national data for ‘emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities’. The 2021 statistics (the latest year for which data is available) were published in June 2023 and show that CO₂ emissions fell from 985.8kt in 2005 to 480.1kt in 2021 - a reduction of 51.3% which compares favourably to the UK average of 39.3% and the South East regional average of 38.9%. The reduction in Reading Borough emissions is also the 8th highest reduction out of 374 UK local authority areas, suggesting that Reading is leading the way in national efforts to reduce emissions by this measure. Figure 1 summarises the reduction in Reading Borough’s emissions over that period by sector.

51.3% cut in Reading’s area emissions since 2005

Figure 1: reduction in carbon dioxide emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities from Reading Borough 2005-21 by sector (with projected reductions needed to reach ‘net zero by 2030’)



It is important to note that there is a significant time lag in this dataset so the data reported in June 2023 in fact relates to the calendar year 2021. As figure 1 shows, Reading's emissions actually rose between 2020 and 2021, a pattern which is replicated internationally and nationally: 96% of UK local authority areas saw an increase in emissions over the same period. While colder weather increasing heating demand was a factor, the increase is largely explained by the fact that while emissions fell sharply between 2019 and 2020, mainly as a result of pandemic restrictions coming into effect, they then 're-bounded' in 2021 when those same restrictions were lifted. Caution should therefore be taken with year-on-year comparisons, especially those affected by the pandemic, and the long-term trend is more instructive.

While not all of the 51.3% reduction in Reading's emissions since 2005 is attributable to local action – a significant portion of it arises from national policies to decarbonise the energy going into the national grid – the way in which Reading's economy has developed, with a focus on high-tech sectors with relatively greater reliance on electricity, and relatively less reliance on gas and other fossil fuels, has enabled the Borough to benefit from the lower carbon energy now coming through the grid. The benefits of lower-carbon grid energy were of course experienced by every local authority area, so the fact that Reading has seen the 8th largest reduction out of all UK local authority areas still provides meaningful evidence that Reading is heading in the right direction, and doing so faster than most.

Reading has seen the 8th largest reduction in emissions out of 374 UK local authority areas since 2005

It remains equally clear, however, that there is much more to do. Whilst we saw a year-on-year reduction in emissions of 11% between 2019 and 2020, we then saw a 9.7% increase in emissions between 2020 and 2021 which makes the challenge of reaching net zero by 2030 even harder. Even smoothing for pandemic effects, the data suggest that emissions fell by only 2% between 2019, the pre-pandemic year, and 2021, the post-pandemic year, whereas we need to see annual reductions of 5-10% every year between now and 2030 to bring net zero within reach. As Reading's Climate Emergency Declaration made clear, net zero by 2030 cannot be delivered by local action alone and requires changes in central government policy and resources which, thus far, have not been forthcoming at the scale and pace required.

The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy document made clear that progress towards the aspiration of a 'net zero Reading by 2030' was unlikely to take the form of a straight-line reduction in emissions, and it was always likely that the pace of emissions reduction would need to accelerate as the decade progressed. The data appears to confirm that the challenge will indeed increase as the decade advances – but it also shows that we are making progress which should build confidence in our ability to tackle the huge challenge which the achievement of 'net zero' represents.

2.3 Emissions reduction in Reading compared to other Berkshire local authority areas

Comparison with neighbouring local authority areas provides another way of looking at emissions reduction in Reading. Table 1 shows the reduction in emissions in each Berkshire local authority area between 2005 and 2021, based on the national dataset for 'emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities', as well as figures for the South East and UK as a whole. Table 1 also shows the figures for per capita emissions for these jurisdictions.

Reading has the highest long-term rate of emissions reduction and lowest per capita emissions out of the 6 Berkshire local authority areas

The data for the Reading local authority area is positive by both measures. Reading is the only local authority area in Berkshire

to have seen a 50%+ reduction in emissions between 2005 and 2021, and is also the only local authority area in Berkshire with per capita emissions of below 3 tonnes CO₂ per annum. Reading also compares favourably with South East and UK averages – a 51.3% cut in emissions since 2005 compared to 38.9% for the South East and 39.3% for the UK; and per capita emissions of 2.8 tonnes p.a. compared to 3.7 tonnes p.a. for the South East and 4.1 tonnes p.a. for the UK.

Table 1: Emissions reduction in Berkshire local authority areas (with South East and UK averages)

Area	% reduction 2005-21	Per capita emissions (tonnes pa)
Reading	51.3%	2.8
Bracknell Forest	44.3%	3.3
Slough	14.1%	3.8
West Berkshire	38.6%	4.9
Windsor & Maidenhead	41.8%	3.9
Wokingham	38.7%	3.1
SE average	38.9%	3.7
UK average	39.3%	4.1

2.4 Progress on improving resilience to climate impacts

The vision for the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy has two key elements – first, reducing emissions to net zero by 2030, and second, making Reading more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate. Whilst we have metrics for the former as summarised above, there is no simple means of measuring the latter. However, the Action Plans within the Strategy include several actions designed to adapt to climate impacts.

Overall, while there are well-established mechanisms for adaptation planning in some areas like flood risk management and heatwave planning, adaptation planning in Reading (like many other areas) remains at a developmental stage. Furthermore, while we have a good understanding of the potential impacts, further work is needed to raise awareness of these and the steps which public services, businesses, organisations and individuals need to take to improve their resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

The heatwave of summer 2022, which saw UK and Reading temperature records broken, provided an important test of preparedness for the sort of extreme conditions we can expect more of in future. Communications on staying safe in the heat were stepped up and, many organisations made temporary changes to working practises from which we can learn to help us adapt in future.

Nonetheless, it is estimated that there were 3,271 excess deaths in the UK (6.2% above the five-year average) during the five ‘heat periods’ between June and August 2022 (defined as days when the average temperature is above 20°C in central England). 2,803 of these were among the over-65s, illustrating how extreme weather events tend to impact the most vulnerable.

During 2021-22, Reading Borough Council worked with the University of Reading and the Met Office to produce a ‘City Pack’ for Reading outlining key climate impacts we can expect. This was published

in August 2022 and Reading is one of only 20 cities for whom the Met Office have conducted this work, providing a valuable resource to inform adaptation planning going forward. The City Pack sets out the factors affecting Reading's weather and climate, summarises observed changes and impacts, explains the projections used to forecast future changes based on different emissions scenarios and sets out the basis of good climate risk management. The City pack provides organisations in Reading with a valuable resource to inform their efforts in planning to adapt to future climate change.

2.5 Future risks and challenges

Since our last annual report, which documented the rapid escalation in energy prices, fossil fuel prices have remained high and volatile. Global pressures make it unlikely that this volatility will cease.

With wider cost-of-living pressures and high levels of inflation, many more households have been pushed into fuel poverty. Many of the policy solutions being considered as a response to rising energy bills fail to address both the magnitude of the increase in prices, and one of the underlying causes of the crisis: dependence on fossil fuels. At the same time the policies which offer some of the quickest and cheapest solutions – encouraging people out of their cars, promoting active travel, insulating homes – are not being promoted or invested in as heavily as they might.

In addition, a backlash in some quarters against 'net zero' threatens to undermine the consensus on the need for action. The evidence suggests that neither fracking nor the opening up of new oil and gas fields in domestic waters will do anything to lower prices in the short or medium term and, even if they did, they would undermine our net zero aspirations.

Recent government announcements have suggested even further dilution of key policies designed to meet net zero. This puts the onus on Reading and like-minded cities to work even harder to keep net zero at the top of the agenda, and to deliver their own local commitments.

3. CASE STUDIES FROM 2022/23

It is important to celebrate progress on the journey to net zero and there have been some significant developments and achievements over the last year of which Reading can be proud. The case studies below demonstrate progress by a range of partners within the scope of the Strategy:

CASE STUDY 1: ENERGY & LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT

Low-carbon leisure facilities for Reading

The climate crisis is also a public health crisis, making it essential that investment in the latter also addresses the former. Reading has invested in modern, regionally-significant leisure facilities to improve health and wellbeing whilst ensuring alignment with its ambitious climate commitments.

Having secured planning permission to construct two new leisure facilities at Palmer Park and Rivermead to exacting BREEAM 'Excellent' standards, the Council and its leisure partner, Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), went the extra mile by designing additional heat pumps and solar systems to reduce emissions from the two flagship leisure facilities through a low carbon energy package worth over £2.5 million.

The heat pumps being installed at Rivermead will reduce the use of gas by c.1,400,000 kWh/year, an 80% reduction in the carbon emission rate of the new centre compared to the original design, with much of the additional electrical load offset by new solar panels. The additional heat pump at Palmer Park will reduce the new centre's use of gas by c.400,000kWh/year, a 57% reduction in the carbon emission rate compared to the original design. Solar panels were already being installed at Palmer Park and will, again, help offset the additional electrical load generated by the heat pump. The new Palmer Park facility opened in December 2022, followed by Rivermead in July 2023. These buildings now host two of the largest heat pump projects in Reading.

New air-source heat pump at Rivermead Leisure Centre



CASE STUDY 2: ENERGY & LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT

University of Reading Water Source Heat Pump

A £2.2 million grant from the Government's Green Heat Network Fund is helping the University of Reading reduce the carbon footprint of its entire built estate by 10%.

The grant, which is being match funded by the University, is being used to fund the installation of a large water-source heat pump in the University's Energy Centre. The Energy Centre provides heating and hot water to 17 buildings on the Whiteknights campus through an underground district heating network (DHN), currently powered by a combination of a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) engine and gas boilers.

The Green Heat Network Fund, funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), provides capital funding towards the cost of decarbonising heat networks, through a competitive process open to private and public sector heat networks.

The new water-source heat pump will provide around 50% of the current heating supply to the district heating network. As well as providing heating, the project will see the creation of a small district cooling network to some of the science facilities nearby, with cooling being a free by-product of the heat pump.

Work began in October 2023 to drill the boreholes required for the scheme to extract water from the below-ground aquifer. Once fully operational, the water-source heat pump will reduce the University's emissions by 1,500 tonnes of carbon per year. This is equivalent to a 10% reduction in emissions from buildings across the entire University estate.

Dan Fernbank, Energy & Sustainability Director at the University of Reading, said: 'This project will have significant impact for the University and for the local area. The reduction in nitrous oxide emissions will be the equivalent to those of around 394 diesel cars per year, so this is good news from a local air quality perspective'.

Borehole drilling for the new water-source heat pump system at Whiteknights Campus



CASE STUDY 3: TRANSPORT

Opening of Green Park station

Reading Green Park Station opened for public use in May 2023. The first new railway station to open in Reading since Reading West in July 1906, this major facility provides improved sustainable travel options for local residents and businesses in the Green Park area, as well as fans attending events at the Select Car Leasing Stadium, home of Reading Football Club.

The station, built by Reading Borough Council, Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR), features:

- Two 150m platforms
- A new fully accessible station building
- A fully accessible overbridge, providing access to both platforms, via stairs and lifts
- A bus interchange, taxi rank and cycle parking facilities

The station sits on the Reading to Basingstoke line, with half-hourly services running north to Reading and south to Basingstoke through the day. It significantly improves accessibility to the south Reading area where large-scale development is taking place, including the expansion of Green Park Business Park and Green Park Village.

Reading's public transport offer continues to go from strength to strength, with the transformation of Reading West Station and the Elizabeth Line now offering travellers to and from Reading a seamless transition into central or east London without having to change to the tube at Paddington.

The new Green Park station opened in May 2023



CASE STUDY 4: NET ZERO RESEARCH

University of Reading secures funding to help shift when UK uses energy

In July 2023 the University of Reading confirmed that it will be leading a key theme in a new research hub, aiming to change the way the UK uses energy. Professor Jacopo Torriti, from the University's School of Built Environment, will lead the Flexibility Theme of the new £15 million Energy Demand Centre, as part of a £53 million investment in six research hubs and centres aiming to help the UK meet its net zero targets. The Flexibility Theme will explore the capacity to shift energy consumption at different times of the day or the year to make the most of renewables.

Professor Torriti said: 'Flexibility of electricity demand is one of the most critical challenges of a net zero society. This is because being able to move energy demand loads would enable suppliers to make better use of variable renewable energy, would make the most of smart systems and battery storage, and would minimise the investment needed in energy infrastructure to meet peak energy demand. These changes would make the task of reaching net zero more straightforward and more affordable'.

The work could help curb energy bills by encouraging use of energy away from the peak times, such as early evenings. The research is part of a series of new UK energy research centres and hubs, aimed at boosting knowledge, creating innovative green technologies and reducing demand for energy to achieve greener, cleaner domestic, industrial and transport energy systems.

A new national Energy Demand Research Centre will build an evidence base for understanding consumer behaviour, assessing the impact of socio-technical energy demand reduction measures, and research mechanisms to improve energy efficiency. The centre, led by the universities of Sussex and Newcastle, will investigate how domestic, industrial and transport energy demand reduction can be delivered on a local and national level across the UK. The centre has been awarded £15 million from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

The University of Reading: a world-leading centre for climate research



CASE STUDY 5: TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Reading again recognised for global leadership on climate change

In November 2021, Reading Borough Council received notification that Reading had been added to the 'A' list of cities taking 'bold climate action' by the international NGO, the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). The Council re-submitted Reading's data to the CDP platform again last year, and was pleased to receive confirmation in November 2022 that Reading had retained its place on the CDP 'A' list. The annual assessment, designed to encourage cities to ramp up climate action, is conducted by the CDP which holds the world's richest and most comprehensive dataset on how companies, cities, states and regions measure and address their environmental impacts. It is widely recognised as the 'gold standard' of environmental reporting.

Reading was one of only 19 UK local authority areas, and one of just 122 globally, to be admitted to the CDP 'A' list in 2022, out of over 1,000 cities who submit their data to the platform. Reading and the other towns and cities on the 'A' List are celebrated for showing that urgent and impactful climate action - from ambitious emissions reduction targets, to building resilience against climate change - is achievable at a local level despite the pressures of a challenging global economic situation.

According to CDP, 'A' list cities demonstrate their climate leadership through concerted and effective action; are taking twice as many mitigation and adaptation measures as non-'A' List cities; and identify more than twice as many opportunities, such as the development of sustainable transport sectors and clean technology businesses.



CASE STUDY 6: COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

Reading Climate Festival 2023

The 2023 Reading Climate Festival took place from 10th-21st June with the stated aim of ‘inspiring and encouraging positive action on climate change’. The first Reading Climate Festival, curated by Reading Climate Action Network (ReadingCAN) with support from a range of partners, was held in November 2020. This inaugural Festival took the form of a series of on-line events necessitated by the pandemic restrictions in place at the time, with the centrepiece being the launch of the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25. The festival has been held annually since 2020, achieving good levels of participation (c.1,000 registrations for events in 2022).

The Festival continues to be run and curated by ReadingCAN, the public-facing brand of the Reading Climate Change Partnership. In 2023 the partners – led by ReadingCAN, Reading Borough Council, the University of Reading and the Reading Economic & Destination Agency (REDA) - developed plans for the most ambitious festival to date. The centrepiece of this vision was the exhibition of a major international artwork, Luke Jerram’s ‘Gaia’, at Reading Town Hall.

As a result, the 2023 Festival engaged 13,000 people in 20 events held across Reading, with ‘Gaia’ attracting c12,000 of these and drawing in people from all parts of Reading and the UK. As well as engaging a wide range of people in conversations about climate change the Climate Festival therefore represented a significant cultural, educational and economic event for Reading as a whole.

‘Gaia’ was hosted at the Reading Concert Hall from the 10th-18th of June 2023. The partnership collaborated to deliver 57 ticketed sessions, including ‘Twilight’ events (for late night sessions) and ‘Relaxed’ events (aimed at neurodivergent audiences). Sessions were £2 per ticket for over 16s, under 16s were free. There were also 10 curated events and 10 school sessions to engage students.

The ‘Gaia’ exhibition at Reading Town Hall



CASE STUDY 7: COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

'Show Your Stripes Day' 21st June 2023

As the culmination of the Reading Climate Festival 2023, the University of Reading spearheaded international 'Show Your Stripes Day' on 21st June.

The 'climate stripes' infographic was created in 2018 by Professor Ed Hawkins, climate scientist at the University of Reading and National Centre for Atmospheric Science. These vertical, coloured bars have no words and no numbers but show the progressive heating of our planet in a single, striking image. The blue and red stripes show clearly and vividly how global average temperatures have risen over nearly two centuries.

The White Cliffs of Dover were illuminated blue and red to highlight a stark climate change message. The Tate Modern chimney and landmarks in Reading, the USA and Canada also displayed the climate stripes. People all over the world were encouraged to download and share the graphics and start conversations about the impact of climate change where they live.

Professor Hawkins said: 'In 2022 millions of people saw the stripes at Reading Festival, London Fashion Week and on football kits and started conversations about climate change. Displaying the stripes on the White Cliffs of Dover and other landmarks will hopefully lead to more conversations about our warming world and inspire people to work together to tackle climate change. We are seeing a rapid rise in temperature, mainly due to burning fossil fuels, and this already means we are experiencing more intense extreme weather with severe consequences for all of us. Every bit of future warming will make those consequences worse'.

Schoolchildren in Reading and Wokingham came together to think about climate actions they would like to see in their schools at a Youth Climate Summit on 21st June, gathering at the Select Car Leasing Stadium, home of Reading FC, to display the climate stripes. A number of Reading landmarks were also illuminated in blue and red to showcase the stripes.

The White Cliffs of Dover illuminated by the 'Climate Stripes' in June 2023



CASE STUDY 8: NATURE & GREEN SPACE

Tree-mendous designs for urban shade

During lockdown, Sara Kopp of Sara's Gardens visited the majority of Reading Borough Council's public land holdings to identify existing features supporting biodiversity and carbon storage and to suggest potential changes to increase provision.

This complex matrix was given to Reading Borough Council alongside detailed suggestions and drawings for five central urban areas. These were discussed with the Council and agreed changes compiled, including new tree planting for additional shade in future during hotter summers.

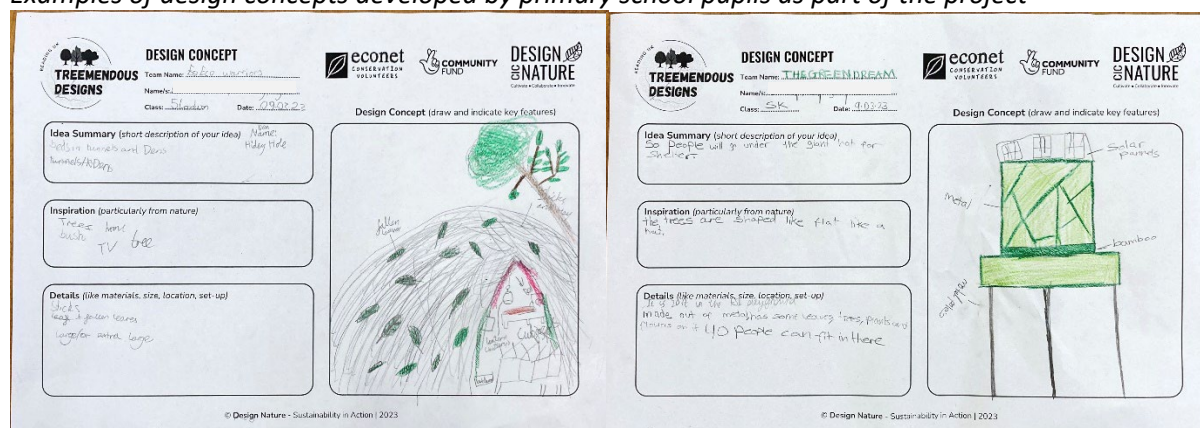
Two of these sites, Victoria Park on Great Knollys Street and Shinfield Road Recreation Ground, formed the core of a lottery application by Econet to fund the changes and to introduce climate change mitigation ideas in the local community.

Econet worked with two local primary schools, Ridgeway School in Whitley and Civitas Academy on Great Knollys Street, and planted bulbs in the two parks with every class. Design Nature provided a workshop at each school looking at the requirement for future shade and getting the children to design solutions for use in the park, the school or at home.

Reading and District Natural History Society delivered training on the life cycle of butterflies and how to identify the species likely to be seen in the school grounds and local park, with a monitoring activity pack for the summer term.

The Council and Ethical Reading's Trees for Reading fund planted standards in the winter of 2021/22 and Reading Tree Wardens added more in Great Knollys Street in 2022/23. Finally, the fund paid for new benches in Whitley parks.

Examples of design concepts developed by primary school pupils as part of the project



CASE STUDY 9: RESOURCES & WASTE**Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust IT Amnesty**

This year RBH developed a programme to reuse and repurpose old IT equipment. Working with Sunscreen IT and Centerprise, the Trust's IT department and Royal Berks Charity developed a process to recycle old IT hardware - reducing landfill, saving CO₂ and providing a charity donation back to the Trust.

A simple concept, the project has produced many benefits. Previously unused IT hardware would be stored and then destroyed but now the Trust is able to avoid carbon, save water, help children around the world with the recycled equipment and raise money for the charity. The waste costs have been removed and the Trust is sharing the project with other NHS Trusts.

Since the launch the Trust has been able to facilitate 6 collections; 379 items have been collected and recycled; 128 tonnes of carbon has been avoided; and 57.05 million litres of water has been saved. The intention is that the initiative will continue and be expanded for 2023/24 with a view to accepting personal IT hardware from staff.



CASE STUDY 10: HEALTH & WELLBEING

Oasis Health and Wellbeing Garden at Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading

It's been 18 months since Food4families (F4F)/Mulberry Tree Landscapes first teamed up with the Royal Berks Charity to design and develop a garden to complement the new Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust staff wellbeing centre at 17 Craven Road, Reading.

Significant progress has been made and a beautiful garden has been developed which not only enhances the wellbeing of staff but also supports the Trust to achieve other goals: a net zero carbon strategy, community engagement, staff recruitment and retention, improved health outcomes for the wider community and new partnerships with the town. Although wellbeing gardens are being developed in many hospital trusts, the practice of wellbeing gardening to support staff is still new.

The value for the Trust of the partnership with F4F is that as well as garden design skills, they bring many years' experience of community engagement and a wide network of community groups who are involved in promoting green wellbeing as a means to foster social cohesion and community resilience.

The primary purpose of the centre and garden is to create a safe haven for highly stressed hospital staff, creating a nurturing, multi-purpose green space not only for staff but also providing opportunities to enhance health and wellbeing in the wider community. With careful scheduling of community activities, the Trust ensures ongoing maintenance of the site but also supports the provision of green social prescribing that Primary Care Trusts across Reading are promoting through Reading Voluntary Action and GP practices.

The Royal Berkshire Hospital's Wellbeing Garden



CASE STUDY 11: NATURE & GREEN SPACE

Clayfield Copse Security Bund

The fencing alongside the car park for Clayfield Copse in Caversham was falling apart and no longer providing a secure barrier. Econet worked with Reading Borough Council to provide an economic solution that improves biodiversity.

The Council arranged for construction and maintenance wastes to be deposited along the land boundary. Econet volunteers, including Friends of Clayfield Copse and Conserve Reading on Wednesdays, worked to create a sensible profile and produce an acceptable tilth for sowing. Reading Borough Council planted a row of English oak standards along the external bund boundary.

Volunteers, including children from Caversham Park Primary School, scattered wildflower seed over the bank, raked it in, and installed a string matrix across the area to reduce the amount eaten by birds. Despite a drought period after sowing, cornfield annuals appeared and flowered the first summer and attracted pollinators. A wider variety of annuals, biennials and perennials came up in the second summer with a greater number and variety of insects and at least one bumblebee nest. The bund is managed by Friends of Clayfield Copse, a part of Econet.

Wildflowers at Clayfield Copse



CASE STUDY 12: BUSINESS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Reading Climate Fayre, 22nd November 2022 and Reading Climate Festival, 16th June 2023

NatWest, in collaboration with Ethical Reading, Crowe Accountants and REDA as the organising committee, welcomed 150 business owners and employees from across the Thames Valley to Green Park in November 2022 for the first Reading Climate Fayre, aimed primarily at the business community. Guests heard from a mix of public and private organisations on the challenges and opportunities associated with climate change and how to start a journey to net zero as an organisation. Speakers included:

- Professor Richard Allan, Professor in Climate Science, Reading University
- Dr Maria Carvalho, Head of Climate Economics & Data, NatWest
- Akhil Handa, Founder & CEO, Earth51
- Peter Moore, Head of Climate Strategy, Reading Borough Council
- Tracey Rawling-Church, Co-Chair, Reading Climate Action Network
- Stuart Clark, Head of Climate Transition, Lombard
- Mairead Taylor, Director Green & Sustainable Finance, NatWest
- Mirry Christie, Director, Matrix

The day also enabled local businesses who support other businesses and households with their climate journeys to display their services and products in a trade show format.

NatWest, in collaboration with Ethical Reading and Crowe Accountants, subsequently held a breakfast session as part of Reading Climate Festival 2023 looking at the topics Sustainability Financial Reporting, Greenwashing and ISO14001. Speakers included Alex Hindson, Head of Sustainability at Crowe, and Danny Owen of NatWest Mentor.

Reading Climate Fayre November 2022



CASE STUDY 13: ENERGY & LOW CARBON DEVELOPMENT

DraughtBusters Reading

DraughtBusters is a voluntary group that started to install draughtproofing measures into the homes of people living in fuel poverty over a decade ago, facilitated by an initial grant from Reading Borough Council. Clients are now referred to DraughtBusters by the Council's WinterWatch service, Citizens' Advice Reading and the NHS, who direct people to the free service. The programme went into 'whisper' mode during the pandemic, although the DraughtBusters website (www.readinguk.org/DraughtBusters) remained as a source of technical know-how for DIY enthusiasts and others seeking help.



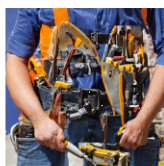
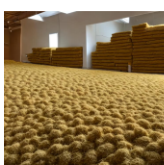

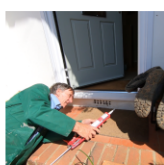
In 2022, DraughtBusters received a £10,000 grant from the government's Shared Prosperity Fund via Reading Borough Council to be paid over three years to increase awareness of the help available, recruit more volunteers and start additional hubs in the Reading area. Demand for services increased over the following winter, driven by the energy price hike, and the payback period for introducing draughtproofing measures into a home reduced to just a couple of months.


DraughtBusters have successfully trained new volunteers over the last 18 months, improved their website, developed 'how-to' videos on their YouTube channel, and become active on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which was suggested by two teams of students from the University who helped out with the project. DraughtBusters regularly attend community events with information stalls and provide advice to community groups. The team has also begun talking with housing associations and the charitable housing sector to provide their employees and tenants with draughtproofing training.

Another 10 DraughtBusters groups have started in the towns surrounding Reading with help from DraughtBusters Reading. The team were also involved in the production of the first technical guide on draughtproofing houses which was published in September 2023.

DraughtBusters

Popular Misconceptions

 <p>Not DraughtBusters is not superman, we can't help if your house is falling apart.</p>	 <p>Not DraughtBusters is not against ventilation, but ventilate only where and when it is needed.</p>	 <p>Not DraughtBusters does not require a lot of tools, it is the right ones that are needed.</p>
 <p>Not DraughtBusters doesn't do insulation, but we advise homeowners how to do it.</p>	 <p>Not DraughtBusters does not need a lot of money, material cost of a typical house is only in the range of £25</p>	 <p>FACT: we are on our knees often to reach the crassest draughty corners</p>



4. KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE OUR LAST ANNUAL REPORT



5. PROGRESS WITH ACTION PLAN DELIVERY

5.1 Overview

Annex 1 to this report - a detailed account of progress with the seven action plans on which the strategy is based - will be published on the Reading Climate Action Network website at [Annual Report – Reading Climate Action Network \(RCAN\) \(readingcan.org.uk\)](https://readingcan.org.uk) simultaneously to this report being published in November 2023. We have reviewed each Action Plan in preparation for this Annual Report and ‘RAG’-rated the status of each action based on the following definitions:

- RED – not yet started
- AMBER – started but not in line with target dates/outcomes
- GREEN – complete/underway and on target
- BLUE – action no longer relevant/overtaken by events/information not available

The majority of actions remain ‘green’ or ‘amber’, but a significant number have not been progressed due largely to constraints on the Partnership’s resources, and a number have been ranked ‘blue’ where the action envisaged is no longer relevant or has been over-taken by events.

6. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from this Annual Report that much has been achieved – the reduction in Reading’s emissions between 2005 and 2021 (the latest year for which data is available) of 51.3% is the 8th highest reduction of 374 local authority areas according to the UK Government dataset which records ‘carbon dioxide emissions within the scope of influence of the local authority’.

However, it remains equally clear that there is much more to do – the ‘re-bounce’ in national and local emissions seen after pandemic restrictions lifted makes the achievement of net zero by 2030 even more challenging.

As we said in the Strategy document, we did not envisage progress towards the aspiration of a ‘net zero Reading by 2030’ would take the form of a straight-line reduction in emissions, and it was always likely that the pace of emissions reduction would need to accelerate as the decade progressed. The data appears to confirm that the challenge will increase as the decade advances – but also shows that we are making progress which should build confidence in our ability to tackle the huge challenge which the achievement of ‘net zero’ represents. We will, however, need more support from central government to make net zero by 2030 possible as this cannot be achieved by local action alone.

Climate-related weather events around the globe and at home illustrate the equally pressing need to adapt to future climate impacts. It therefore remains incumbent on all partners to develop their adaptation strategies alongside plans to reduce their emissions in the coming months and years. As part of the developed world the UK has more resources to adapt than many, but also bears more than its share of responsibility for historic emissions – further underlining the importance and urgency of the need for us to take action in this vital area.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL: GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) REPORT 2022 - 23

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reading Borough Council (RBC) is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) across its estate and operations. The means to do so are set out in the Council's corporate Carbon Plan.

The Council's 'Carbon Plan 2020-2025' was approved by Policy Committee in November 2020, and sets out actions to meet an ambitious carbon emissions reduction target of 85% by 2025, *en route* to becoming a 'net zero' organisation by 2030.

This year (2022/23) the Council's carbon footprint (gross corporate emissions) reduced by a further 2.6%, with a total reduction of 73.9% against the 2008/09 baseline. This equates to a year-on-year decrease of 9.3% in absolute gross corporate emissions compared to 2021/22 levels. In order to achieve the 2025 target set in the Carbon Plan, a further 11.1% reduction in the carbon footprint is therefore required.

In addition to measuring our corporate GHG emissions as summarised in the figures above, we also measure and report on the gross emissions of the Council's 'wider influence', taking account of other factors outside our direct control but within the scope of our influence. This is explained further in section 2.6.

In the Annual GHG report for 2020/21, it was noted that a significant impact had been felt from the Covid-19 pandemic, with the start of the first UK lockdown coinciding with the start of the 2020/21 reporting year. The year saw the closure of offices, public-facing buildings and other non-essential facilities during the pandemic, all of which were a significant factor in the emissions reductions witnessed in 2020/21. It was noted in the 2021/22 report that there was an emissions 'bounce-back' effect, as many facilities re-opened and energy use returned to levels reflective of longer operational hours. Whilst the corporate emissions have shown a continued reduction of a further 2.6% against the 2008/09 baseline, this 'bounce-back' effect has continued to some extent within 2022/23, with a slight increase in electricity use across a number of facilities due to a higher intensity of use.

The financial cost of energy provides a further incentive to reduce its use, particularly in the light of the current high prices and the volatility of wholesale markets. In this regard, it is estimated that the cumulative costs avoided by the Council from reduced energy consumption since 2008/09 are c.£22.2m (excluding standing charges and other contract charges) compared to if no action had been taken. In 2022/23 alone these avoided costs were estimated at £4.7m.

1. Introduction

1.1 Policy context

Prior to the Government's adoption of the national 'net zero by 2050' carbon reduction target, Reading Borough Council had declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019, committing to the more ambitious aim of a 'net zero carbon Reading by 2030'. In November 2020, the Council subsequently endorsed the new Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (prepared by the Reading Climate Change Partnership) based on the 'net zero by 2030' ambition, and adopted a new corporate Carbon Plan for the period 2020-25, including a more ambitious target to reduce the Council's own emissions by 85% by 2025 *en route* to net zero by 2030.

The vision for the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy is *'for a Reading which is working rapidly towards (i) Net zero carbon dioxide emissions in the Reading area by 2030 (ii) Being better prepared to deal with the impacts of a changing climate.'*

This sets the context for Reading Borough Council's efforts to reduce its own corporate emissions.

1.2 Leading by Example

While the Council's emissions represent only a small proportion of the total emissions for the Borough (less than 1.3%), the Council recognises the importance of demonstrating leadership by example in terms of delivering deep and meaningful reductions in its own emissions.

The Council has a long history of carbon reduction initiatives adopted since it signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in March 2006. In 2007 RBC worked with the Carbon Trust to produce Reading's first Local Authority Carbon Management Plan (LACM). Since 2008 the authority has managed a rolling investment programme in energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies to achieve carbon reduction. The 2015-20 Carbon Plan set a target of achieving a 50% reduction in corporate emissions by 2020, a target which was achieved three years early. The 2020-25 Carbon Plan therefore represents just the latest in a series of actions to reduce corporate emissions.

1.3 The Carbon Plan 2020-25

Reading Borough Council's 'Carbon Plan 2020-25', was approved in November 2020, confirming the organisation's target to reduce carbon emissions by 85% against the 2008/9 baseline. In addition the following targets were also included: 1) a renewable energy target to generate 50% of total energy consumed from renewable sources by 2025. 2) A fossil fuel target to reduce fossil fuel consumption by 50% by 2025. Progress against these targets is reported in section 2.8.

2. Reading Borough Council Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions

2.1 The Organisation

Reading Borough Council is a unitary local authority. RBC is now comprised of three directorates; Directorate of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services (DEGNS); Directorate of Resources (DoR); and Directorate for Adult Social Care & Health (DASCH). Brighter Futures for Children, which is a not-for-profit company, manages the services which look after the children of Reading, and is responsible for its own carbon emissions reporting. Carbon management for the Council is managed in the Sustainability Team which sits within DEGNS.

2.2 How we measure the Council's emissions: scope

The headline measure against which progress towards our Carbon Plan targets is measured is the Council's corporate GHG emissions, or 'corporate carbon footprint', comprising activities

under its direct operational control (see section 2.5). We also measure and report on the Council's 'wider influence' GHG emissions which includes activities outside of its direct control but within its 'wider influence' (see section 2.6).

As of the 2021/22 reporting year, all schools (including community, voluntary aided, diocese, Academy and Free Schools) and managed services (including GLL managed leisure centres, Reading Transport and Smallmead Materials Recycling Facility (MRF)) are included within our 'wider influence' measure, where RBC can influence, rather than control, the operations.

The Council measures its GHG emissions in line with accepted protocols for doing so and a list of activities which are used to calculate the Council's carbon footprint is as follows. A detailed breakdown of the activities that are reported, and within which scope, can be found in Annex 1.

Scope 1 (Direct emissions)

- Fossil fuels – natural gas and burning oil consumption
- Transport fleet
- Fugitive emissions from air conditioning units only (excluding emissions from domestic fridges and freezers)
- Self-supplied renewably generated electricity or heat

Scope 2 (Indirect Emissions)

- Purchased electricity

Scope 3 RBC Corporate (Other Indirect Emissions) –

- Electricity losses from transmission and distribution
- Managed assets - business travel

Scope 3 Non-Corporate (Other Indirect Emissions)

- Schools (Community, Voluntary Aided, Diocese, Academy and Free Schools)
- Outsourced services (4 leisure centres, 1 bus company, 1 waste MRF)

Outside Scopes

- None this year

Renewable electricity

- Renewably generated electricity from systems owned by RBC, but supplying electricity to other parties

The Council's headline corporate carbon footprint measure is calculated by adding Scope 1 and 2 plus an element of Scope 3 which is considered 'corporate'. This is the measure on which the Carbon Plan target of an 85% reduction by 2025 is based. By contrast, we calculate the 'wider influence' emissions by adding together everything in Scopes 1, 2 and 3.

We also calculate net emissions for both measures taking into account renewable energy generation exported to the grid or sold to others, although the reporting protocols recommend reporting based on gross emissions. As such, net figures are included for illustrative purposes only, and do not affect the headline measures of our 'corporate carbon footprint' or 'wider influence' footprint which are based on gross figures.

2.3 Baseline Year and reporting

The Council has been reporting its carbon footprint since 2005/06. Since this time, the reporting systems have changed several times and data collection has improved. The Council's baseline year for the purposes of the current Carbon Plan is 2008/09.

Since 2013/14, the Council is no longer required to annually report carbon emissions for the Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme. However, we continue to report on emissions annually in the interests of transparency and public accountability.

The emissions factors used for calculation of the GHG footprint for 2022/23 (1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023) are those published by DEFRA, based on a 1-year average factor for each year.

2.4 Weather Correction

A considerable contribution to the GHG emissions of the Council is from space heating. With changing heat demand depending on the weather of each year there can be increased or decreased fuel demand, which has an impact on the emissions. Weather correction calculations can be undertaken to adjust for this bias. Weather corrected figures can be found in Annex 2. The official annual reported emissions are uncorrected.

2.5 Reading Borough Council Greenhouse Gas emissions 2022/23

Reading Borough Council's absolute (gross) corporate GHG emissions for 2022/23 were 5,149 tCO₂, a reduction of 73.94% compared to the 2008/09 baseline. This represented a year-on-year reduction of 9% against 2021/22 (5,675 tCO₂) emissions.

When renewably generated electricity, exported to the grid, or sold to third parties is netted off against this gross figure, to the sum of 289 tCO₂, this gives a net corporate carbon emissions figure of 4,859 tCO₂, 9.6% below 2021/22 emissions. This is the first time that our net corporate GHG emissions have fallen below 5,000 tonnes and represents a significant milestone.

In emissions reporting, 'intensity measurement' calculates an organisation's GHG emissions against a specific relevant activity. There are a number of factors that determine and influence the level of GHG emissions of an organisation, such as size of buildings, number of employees (activity ratios), financial turnover of the business (financial ratio) etc.

For Reading Borough Council, the intensity ratio is measured by number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff working for the Council. The recommended methodology by the Defra/DESNZ guide is to measure this using direct emissions (Scope 1 and 2) only which occur as a direct result of staff activities.

The employee intensity ratio for Reading Borough Council, for the latest reporting year 2022/23 was:

$$\text{tCO}_2\text{e per FTE} = \frac{4,864}{1,555.63} = 3.13 \text{ tCO}_2\text{e/FTE}$$

This compares to the employee intensity ratio for Reading Borough Council as a whole for the previous reporting year 2021/22 which was:

$$\text{tCO}_2\text{e per FTE} = \frac{5,681.7}{1,530.4} = 3.71 \text{ tCO}_2\text{e/FTE}$$

This shows that the intensity measurement for RBC (emissions per employee) reduced by 15.6% in 2022/23, a further sign of increased efficiency in carbon terms.

2.6 Reading Borough Council 'wider influence' emissions 2022/23

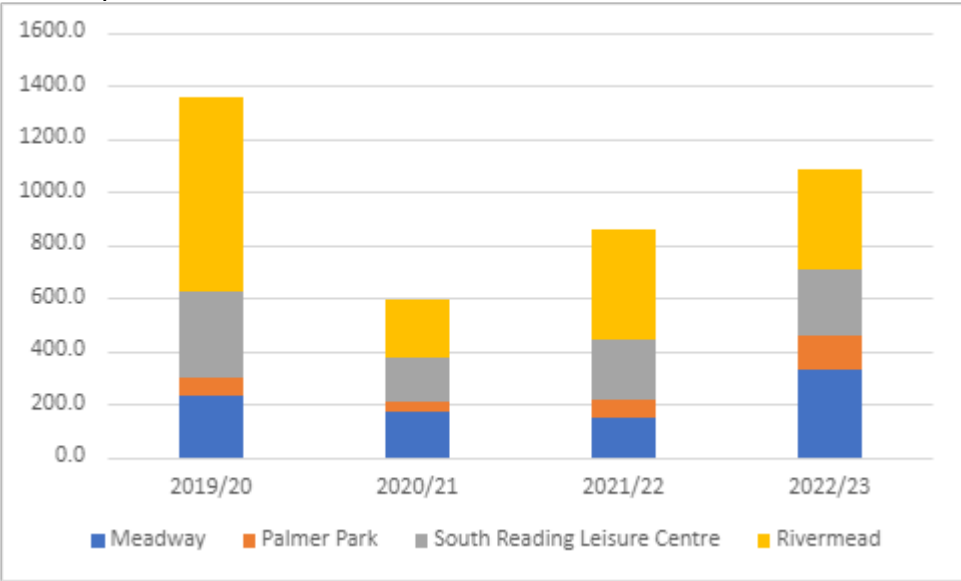
Work is underway to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the Council's full 'Scope 3' emissions and we envisage including a more robust measure of these in their entirety in the next iteration of our Carbon Plan for the period 2025-30. In the interim, in addition to measuring our corporate GHG emissions as summarised above in 2.5, we also measure and report on the gross emissions from some significant elements of our Scope 3 emissions. We refer to these emissions as the Council's 'wider influence' emissions, taking account of sources of emissions which are outside our direct control but within the scope of our influence.

By this measure, the ‘wider influence’ GHG emissions of the organisation, including schools and managed services, were 36,992.9 tCO₂ for 2022/23, down 5.9% against the 2008/09 baseline. Although this figure represented a year-on-year increase of 63% against equivalent figure for 2021/22 emissions, it should be treated with caution as it is heavily influenced by pandemic effects, as explained below. It is important to note, however, that the success of Reading Buses and its growth over time have a significant influence on the ‘wider emissions’ emissions measure as a whole, to the extent that, if emissions from Reading Transport’s fuel use are removed from the equation, emissions by this measure decreased by 1% compared to the previous year, and by 58.9% against the 2008/09 baseline.

The assets in the ‘wider influence’ category include leisure centres, Reading Transport, schools and the Smallmead Materials Recycling Facility. Recent trends in consumption show a clear impact from Covid-19 measures and care must therefore be taken with recent year-on-year comparisons. Notably leisure centres significantly reduced consumption of both electricity and gas during restricted operations and lockdowns, and Reading Buses operated a reduced service resulting in significantly less fuel and mileage. These trends have very clearly reversed in 2022/23, with a return to more typical service delivery, and therefore increases in emissions overall, but with significant evidence of more carbon efficient operations at the same time, as summarised below.

- Leisure sites:** Greenwich Leisure Ltd has now managed the four leisure centres in Reading since July 2021, with the newly extended Palmer Park facility opening in December 2022. The emissions from these leisure facilities are reported in the Council’s ‘wider influence’ emissions dataset, and represent a significant source of emissions within Reading. As such, to ensure continued improvements within its scope of influence, RBC has invested heavily in energy efficiency, decarbonisation and renewable energy generation within the leisure facilities, all of which will support the reduction of the carbon emissions from the operations. A further opening up and increased use of the leisure facilities post-Covid, combined with the opening of the larger and greatly improved facilities at Palmer Park Sports Stadium, can be seen in 2022/23, with a 26% year-on-year increase on carbon emissions compared to 2021/22. However, when comparing against the last pre-Covid year, 2019/20, which is a more meaningful comparison, the carbon emissions from the leisure facilities as a whole are now 20% lower (see figure 1). In other words, we have greatly enhanced and expanded the leisure centre offer in Reading but reduced emissions from it at the same time.

Figure 1: Comparison of Leisure Centre emissions 2019/20 to 2022/23



- Reading Transport Ltd:** Reading Transport carbon emissions have significantly increased in 2022/23 (by 130%) compared to 2021/22. The emissions from operations within the company’s buildings decreased by 6% over the same period, but fuel use for the fleet increased by 137% as services continued to recover after the record lows arising from pandemic restrictions and reductions in demand. However, whilst the consumption of fuel

inevitably went up as a result of this recovery, the mileage of the fleet also increased but by a greater extent, so the carbon efficiency of the fleet improved by 2.3%. In fact, the carbon emissions per km in 2022/23 is the most efficient since this measure was first calculated in 2016/17, and for the first time was under 1kg CO₂e per km. So, whilst the overall emissions reported for Reading Transport have increased, the public transport services it provides have both expanded and become more carbon more efficient, as well as offering wider social and environmental benefits, not least the emissions avoided from passengers who might otherwise use private transport.

- **Schools:** gathering accurate data for emissions from schools remains a challenge, particularly for Academy schools, so confidence in the following data is lower than for other categories. Based on best available data, however, carbon emissions from schools were 4,997.8 tCO₂ (gross) for 2022/23, up 1.5% compared to 2021/22 emissions. Gas use has increased in schools over this period, possibly because many schools have continued to ventilate buildings more than before the pandemic for health reasons. By contrast, electricity consumption has reduced over the same period, reflecting lighting upgrades, more efficient equipment, and the recent major programme of solar PV installations and energy efficiency improvements delivered with help from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS).
- **Smallmead Materials Recycling Facility:** the data shows a 40% reduction in emissions from Smallmead compared to the baseline year, which in this case is 2010/11 due to the unreliability of data prior to this year. In a separate exercise outside the scope of this report, research conducted earlier this year by re3, the waste partnership between Reading, Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Councils, sought to quantify the reductions in emissions arising from adoption of more sustainable waste management practices. This data shows that emissions from Reading's municipal waste were cut by 66.8% between 2015/16 and 2022/23, largely as a result of achieving significant reductions in waste going to landfill, with reductions in waste volumes overall also being a significant factor.

2.7 Statistical summary of RBC GHG emissions

The figures for 2022/23 are illustrated in Table 1 below, compared against 2008/09 baseline data. A full breakdown of the data can be found in Annex 3.

Table 1: Reading Borough Council GHG Emissions 2022/23, compared to 2008/09 (with the headline measure of corporate GHG emissions highlighted)

YEAR	Baseline 2008/09	2022/23	% change
	tCO ₂	tCO ₂	
SCOPE 1 – Corporate			
	6,594	3,029	-54%
SCOPE 2 - Corporate			
	11,850	1,834	-84.5%
SCOPE 3 (part thereof)			
CORPORATE	1,318	284	-78%
SCHOOLS	7,203*	4,997	-30.6%
LEISURE CENTRES	1,209	1,087	-10%
BUS SERVICES	10,538	25,402	141%
WASTE MRF	598*	357	-40%
GROSS 'CORPORATE' EMISSIONS (Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 'CORPORATE')	19,761	5,149	-73.9%
GROSS 'WIDER FOOTPRINT' EMISSIONS – Scope 1, Scope 2 and all of Scope 3	39,310	36,992	-5.9%

ELECTRICITY EXPORTED/SOLD TO GRID/OTHERS	0	289	n/a
NET EMISSIONS - Scope 1, 2, 3 - CORPORATE	19,761	4,859	-75.4%
NET EMISSIONS - ALL	39,310	36,704	-6.6%

*Baseline data for schools and waste MRF have been set at 2009/10 and 2010/11 respectively, due to unreliable data in prior years.

2.8 Progress against Carbon Plan targets

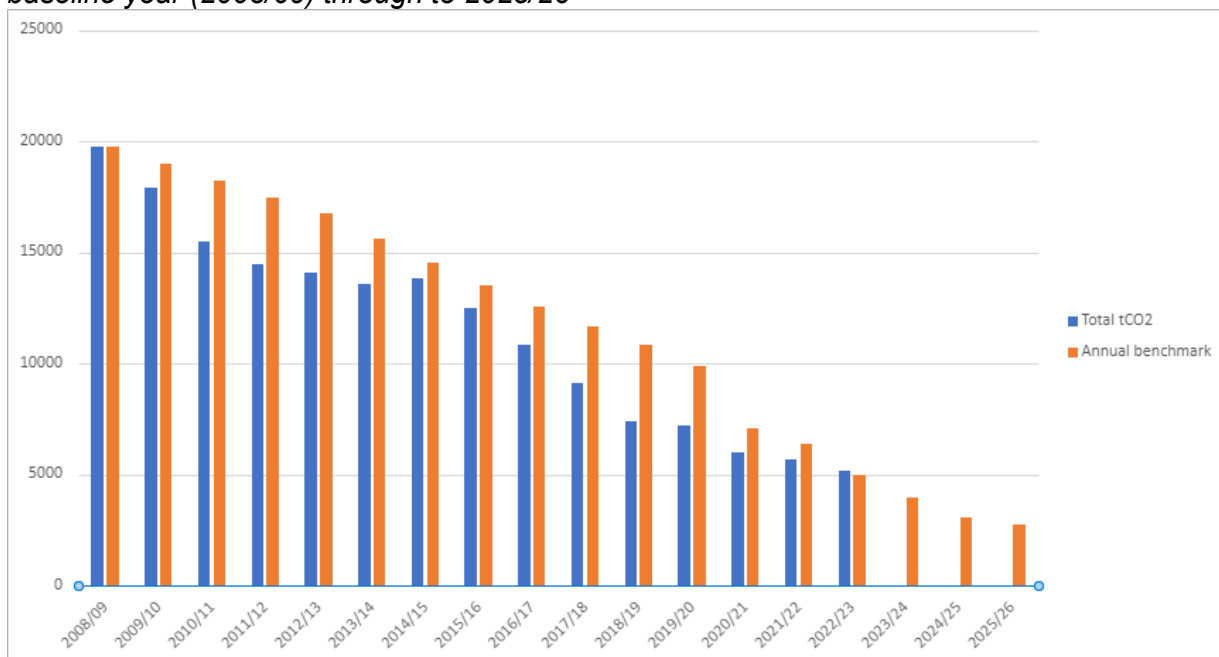
Reading Borough Council's Carbon Plan 2020-2025 sets out actions and projects which have been translated into a notional set of annual emissions reductions for each year of the 5-year plan (see table 2). These provide benchmarks for measuring progress towards the interim target of an 85% reduction in corporate emissions by 2025, *en route* to the ultimate target of net zero by 2030.

The gross annual CO₂ emissions from RBC's operations in 2022/23 was 5,149 tonnes, 9% lower than the previous year, although slightly above the 2022/23 benchmark of 4,957 tonnes. This continued reduction in emissions illustrates the organisations continued, positive progress towards the 85% reduction target, though the slackening of the rate of reduction demonstrates the growing challenge to meet these ambitious targets. It is therefore of vital importance that action on emissions be continued, as there is no room for complacency.

Table 2: projected annual benchmarks to achieve 85% reduction in RBC corporate carbon footprint by 2025

Business year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
RBC Net corporate CO ₂ emissions tonnes eq. /p.a.	7,107	6,394	4,957	3,977	3,105	2,787

Figure 2: RBC corporate GHG emissions performance against annual benchmarks from the baseline year (2008/09) through to 2025/26



The Council produced the equivalent of 8.9% of its total energy consumed in buildings from renewable sources in 2022/23. This represents 14.5% of its electricity consumption. While this is some way short of the ambitious Carbon Plan target of 50% of our energy needs to be met from renewables by 2025, as energy and fossil fuel use continues to come down, and as further capital investment in renewables comes on stream, the gap should begin to close.

The council used 433,214 litres of fuel/oil, and 10,325 MWh of natural gas in 2022/23. The Carbon Plan includes a target to reduce this to half of this level by 2025 through removal of fossil fuel heating and electrification of vehicles. This target has now been achieved two years early – the Council’s gas use is currently 61% lower than 2008/09 and oil/fuel is 55% lower than 2008/09.

2.9 Renewable/low carbon energy

Reading Borough Council owns over 500 solar PV arrays, and has shareholdings in a community renewable energy generation scheme in the borough operated by Reading Community Energy Society. In total these generated 1,501,468 kWh of electricity in 2022/23, of which over 487,000 kWh was deemed to have been exported to the National Grid. Twenty-three systems generated and self-supplied 130,973 kWh to RBC sites, whilst the remaining arrays generated and supplied 846,309 kWh to schools, housing tenants and other parties in 2022/23. The renewably generated electricity leads to 300 tCO₂ carbon emissions savings, which can be ‘netted off’ against the RBC gross emissions (excluding those ‘self-supplied’).

3. Risks and Opportunities

Future climate change presents a number of significant risks for Reading. These risks present themselves in terms of a number of key societal and natural impacts caused by, for example, urban heat island effects and surface water flooding. These risks underline the need for the Council to continue to give a high priority to climate action, not least as there could be significant cost and service pressures arising directly or indirectly from climate impacts.

In addition to this, and as the policy landscape develops, there are significant additional risks to inaction relating to the volatility and costs associated with fossil fuel use and extraction. The Council, whilst an early adopter of net zero carbon commitments, is now in the majority among councils across the UK that have embarked on highly ambitious decarbonisation plans. Failure to do so would expose the borough to high risks associated with fossil fuel dependency.

Set against this wider risk are the opportunities associated with decarbonisation. The financial and reputational benefits of reducing the costs and risk associated with inaction now far outweigh the costs of action. The development of a low carbon skill base also represents an economic opportunity.

The financial cost of energy provides a further incentive to reduce its use, particularly in the light of the current high prices and the volatility of wholesale markets. In this regard, it is estimated that the cumulative costs avoided by the Council from Carbon Plan implementation and reduced energy consumption since 2008/09 are c.£22.2m (excluding standing charges and other contract charges) compared to if no action had been taken. In 2022/23 alone these avoided costs were estimated at £4.7m.

References

Environmental Reporting Guidelines: Including mandatory greenhouse gas emissions reporting, June 2013

The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25

The Carbon Plan 2020-2025: Reading Borough Council – our pathway to net zero Carbon

ANNEXES

Annex 1: GHG Protocol scope and treatments of renewables

Reporting of GHG emissions for RBC, divided into 3 scopes	
Scope 1 (Direct emissions): Emissions from activities owned or controlled by your organisation that release emissions into the atmosphere. They are direct emissions.	
Fossil fuels – Natural Gas and burning oil consumption	Direct emissions from combustion of natural gas and oil
Transport Fleet	Direct emissions from combustion of diesel and petrol
Fugitive emissions from air conditioning units only (excluding emissions from domestic fridges and freezers)	Emissions released from equipment leaks
Self-supplied renewably generated electricity or heat	Direct emissions at site (zero emissions). See Figure A1 below for further detail on treatment of renewables.
Scope 2 (Energy indirect): Emissions released into the atmosphere associated with your consumption of purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling. These are indirect emissions that are a consequence of your organisation's activities but which occur at sources you do not own.	
Purchased electricity	Electricity purchased from supplier. Emissions at source, outside RBC control.
Scope 3 (Other indirect): Emissions that are a consequence of your actions, which occur at sources which you do not own or control and which are not classed as scope 2 emissions.	
Electricity losses from transmission and distribution	Emissions as a result of losses from transmission and distribution of electricity on the national grid
Managed Assets – Business travel	Emissions as a result of travel by means not owned or controlled by RBC
Schools (Community, Voluntary Aided, Diocese, Academy and Free Schools)	Emissions from activities within schools, which are not controlled by RBC
Outsourced services (5 car parks, 2 leisure centres and bus company office)	Emissions from activities within managed services, which are not controlled by RBC
Outside Scopes:	
CO ₂ equivalent emissions from biofuels	Other GHG emissions from combustion of biofuels. Awaiting emissions factors
Renewable electricity:	
Renewably generated electricity from systems owned by RBC, but supplying electricity to other parties	Emissions avoided by generating electricity renewably at site. See Figure A1 below for further detail on treatment of renewables.

Exclusions:

Water supplied & sewerage: to date the data available for reporting emissions from water use is not sufficiently robust. Work is being undertaken to enable this for future years.

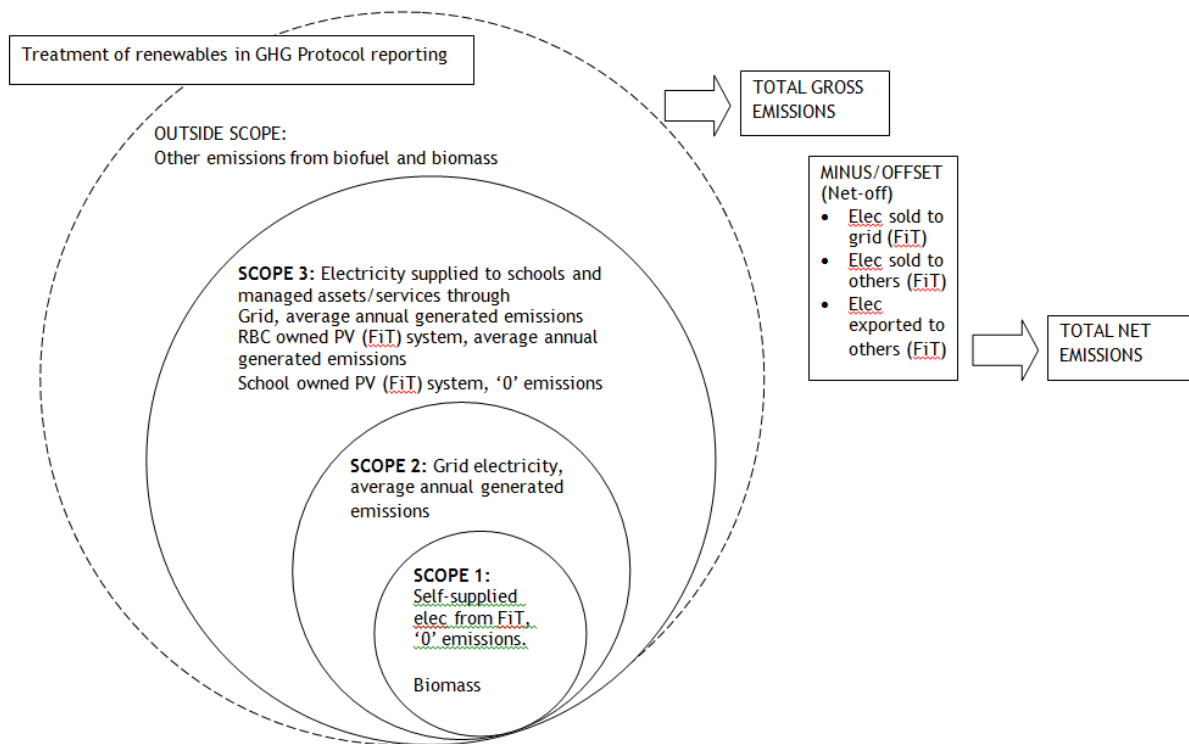


Figure A1: Treatment of renewables in GHG Protocol reporting, depending on system ownership and reporting scope

Annex 2: Full breakdown 2022/23 GHG data vs baseline

GHG PROTOCOL REPORTING

YEAR	REPORTING UNITS	BASELINE: 2008/09			2022/23		
		kWh/litres/km/ m3/kg	conversion factor	tCO2	kWh/litres/km/m3/kg	conversion factor	tCO2
FLEET - PETROL	litres	16,717	2.2450	38	10,915.32	2.2	23.6
FLEET - GAS OIL	litres				1,325	2.8	3.7
FUGITIVE - R12	kg			-			-
FUGITIVE - R22	kg			-			-
FUGITIVE - R407C	kg					1,774.0	-
FUGITIVE - R134A	kg						-
FUGITIVE - R410A	kg				19.5	2,088.0	40.7
FUGITIVE - R49a	kg						-
FUGITIVE - R404a	kg					3,922.0	-
CHP - GAS	kWh			-			-
CHP - ELECTRICITY	kWh			-			-
BIOMASS	kg			-			-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh		-	-	71,632	-	-
TOTAL				6,594			3,030
SCOPE 2							
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	24,416,596	0.4853	11,850	9,486,441	0.19338	1,834
CAR CLUB - SMALL	km	-	-	-			0.00
CAR CLUB - MEDIUM	km	-	-	-			0.000
TOTAL				11,850			1,834
SCOPE 3							
CORPORATE							
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	24,416,596	0.0391	954	9,486,441.0	0.02	167.8
BUSINESS MILEAGE - average fuel unknown	km	1,742,835	0.2086	364	1,598.0	0.17	0.3
BUSINESS MILEAGE - average petrol	km				230,217.0	0.17	39.2
BUSINESS MILEAGE - supermini petrol	km					0.15	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - dual purpose 4 x 4	km						-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - MPV petrol	km					0.19	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - luxury	km						-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - MPV diesel	km					0.18	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - executive petrol	km					0.22	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - executive diesel	km					0.17	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - lower medium petrol	km					0.17	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - small petrol	km				191,735.6	0.15	28.1
BUSINESS MILEAGE - med petrol	km				126,187.1	0.18	23.3
BUSINESS MILEAGE - large petrol	km				4,744.4	0.28	1.3
BUSINESS MILEAGE - small diesel	km				104,441.6	0.14	14.6
BUSINESS MILEAGE - med diesel	km				31,726.6	0.17	5.3
BUSINESS MILEAGE - large diesel	km				23,237.3	0.21	4.9
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Small electric	km				16,547.3	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Medium Electric	km				1,984.3	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Large Electric	km				537.5	-	-
BUSINESS CYCLE	km						-
BUSINESS MOTORCYCLE	km						-
WATER SUPPLIED	m3			-	397125		-
WATER SEWERAGE	m3			-			-
TOTAL				1,318			284.9
SCHOOLS*							
GAS	kWh	18,387,800	0.1836	3,376	18,614,656.00	0.18	3,397.92
OIL	litres	3,130,463	0.2468	773	29,757.00	2.54	75.59
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	6,224,888	0.4521	2,814	7,174,470.00	0.19	1,387.40
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	6,224,888	0.0386	240	7,174,470.00	0.02	126.92
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh		0.4521	-		0.19	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh		-	-		-	-
WATER SUPPLIED	m3			-			-
WATER SEWERAGE	m3			-			-
FUGITIVE - R410A	kg				4.80	2,088.00	10.02
FUGITIVE - R32	kg					1,774.00	-
FUGITIVE - R407C	kg			-			-
TOTAL				7,203			4,998
LEISURE CENTRES							
GAS	kWh	2,722,149	0.1836	500	4,120,491	0.18	752
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	1,353,406	0.4853	657	1,586,958	0.19	307
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	1,353,406	0.0391	53	1,586,958	0.02	28
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh		0.0391	-		0.19	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh		0.4853	-			-
TOTAL	kWh			1,209			1,087
READING BUSES							
GAS	kWh	914,874	0.1836	168	1,055,505	0.18	193
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	1,049,393	0.4853	509	1,523,630	0.19	295
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	1,049,393	0.0391	41	1,523,630	0.02	27
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh		0.0391	-		0.19	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh		0.4853	-			-
FLEET - DIESEL	litres	3,817,389	2.6	9,820	6,662,388	2.56	17,041
FLEET - CNG	litres				3,090	2,539.25	7,846
TOTAL				10,538			25,402
WASTE MRF SMALL MEAD*							
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	1,140,310	0.4853	553	1,691,865	0.19338	327
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	1,140,310	0.0391	45	1,691,865	0.01769	30
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh			-		0	0
TOTAL				598			357
OUTSIDE SCOPE							
FLEET - DIESEL - BIOFUEL MIX	litres						
FLEET - PETROL - BIOFUEL MIX	litres						
CNG	litres						
BIOMASS							
TOTAL							
GROSS EMISSIONS - CORPORATE	Tonnes			19,761			5,149
GROSS EMISSIONS - ALL	Tonnes			39,310			36,993
GROSS EMISSIONS - CORPORATE - weather corrected	Tonnes			19,606			5,062
GROSS EMISSIONS - ALL - weather corrected	Tonnes			39,030			36,704
ELECTRICITY EXPORTED/SOLD TO GRID/OTHERS	kWh				1,298,673	0.23112	300
NET EMISSIONS - CORPORATE	Tonnes			19,761			4,860
NET EMISSIONS - ALL	Tonnes			39,310			36,704
NET EMISSIONS - CORPORATE - weather corrected	Tonnes			19,606			4,762
NET EMISSIONS - ALL - weather corrected	Tonnes			39,030			36,403

Annex 3: Historic data

GHG PROTOCOL REPORTING													
YEAR		2019/20			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
	REPORTING UNITS	kWh/litres/km/m3/kg	conversion factor	tCO2	kWh/litres/km/m3/kg	conversion factor	tCO2	kWh/litres/km/m3/kg	conversion factor	tCO2	kWh/litres/km/m3/kg	conversion factor	tCO2
SCOPE 1													
GAS	kWh	13,617,789.00	0.18385	2,504	12,054,110.0	0.18387	2,216	11,617,587.0	0.18316	2,128	10,325,887.0	0.18254	1,885
OIL	litres	22,500	2.54042	57	18,561	2.54039	47	4,800	2.54014	12		2.54013	-
FLEET - DIESEL	litres	436,640.44	2.59411	1,133	435,665.29	2.54603	1,109	449,841.73	2.51233	1,130	420,973.70	2.55784	1,077
FLEET - PETROL	litres	13,310.32	2.20904	29	10,353.00	2.16802	22	10,617.80	2.19352	23	10,915.32	2.16185	24
FLEET - GAS OIL	litres	21,229	2.75821	59	21,049	2.75776	58	18,492	2.75857	51	1,325	2.75857	4
FUGITIVE - R12	kg												
FUGITIVE - R22	kg												
FUGITIVE - R407C	kg	11.325	1774	20.1	9.26	1774	16.4		1774	0.0		1774	0.0
FUGITIVE - R134A	kg		0	0.0		1430	0.0			0.0			0.0
FUGITIVE - R410A	kg	47.13	2088	98.4	2.8	2088	5.8	17.9	2088	37.4	19.5	2088	40.7
FUGITIVE - R49a	kg												
FUGITIVE - R404a	kg	28.01	3922	109.9		3922	0.0		3922	0.0		3922	0.0
CHP - GAS	kWh												
CHP - ELECTRICITY	kWh												
BIOMASS			0	0		0	0			0			0
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh	174,847	0	0	154,417	0	0		0	0	22,575	0	0
TOTAL				4,009.8			3,475.5			3,381.9			3,029.6
SCOPE 2													
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	10,957,750	0.25560	2,801	9,463,044	0.23314	2,206	9,416,978	0.21233	2,000	9,486,441	0.19338	1,834
CAR CLUB - SMALL	km	554	0.15371	0.09		0.14652	0.00			0.00			0.00
CAR CLUB - MEDIUM	km	99	0.19228	0.019		0.1847	0.000			0.000			0.000
TOTAL				2,801			2,206			2,000			1,834
SCOPE 3													
CORPORATE													
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	10,957,750	0.0217	238	9,463,044	0.02005	190	9,416,978	0.01879	177	9,486,441	0.01769	168
BUSINESS MILEAGE	km	4,450	0.1771	1	395	0.1714	0.1		0.17148	0.0	1,598	0.17067	0.3
BUSINESS MILEAGE - average petrol	km	538,089	0.18084	97.3	250,086	0.1743	43.6	267,135	0.17431	46.6	230,217	0.17048	39.2
BUSINESS MILEAGE - supermini petrol			0.15538	0.0		0.15017	0.0		0.1513	0.0		0.14802	0.0
BUSINESS MILEAGE - dual purpose 4 x 4	km												
BUSINESS MILEAGE - MPV petrol			0.1994	0.0		0.19351	0.0		0.19479	0.0		0.19118	0.0
BUSINESS MILEAGE - luxury	km												
BUSINESS MILEAGE - MPV diesel			0.18101	0.0		0.17627	0.0		0.17503	0.0		0.177844	0.0
BUSINESS MILEAGE - executive petrol			0.23659	0.0		0.22699	0.0		0.22342	0.0		0.21999	0.0
BUSINESS MILEAGE - executive diesel			0.17525	0.0		0.16735	0.0		0.17399	0.0		0.174684	0.0
BUSINESS MILEAGE - lower medium petrol			0.18008	0.0		0.17343	0.0		0.17497	0.0		0.17162	0.0
BUSINESS MILEAGE - small petrol	km	174,419	0.15371	26.8	108,531	0.14836	16.1	156,256	0.14946	23.4	191,736	0.14652	28.1
BUSINESS MILEAGE - med petrol	km	125,469	0.19228	24.1	103,634	0.18659	19.3	128,899	0.18785	24.2	126,187	0.1847	23.3
BUSINESS MILEAGE - large petrol	km	17,400	0.28295	4.9	3,129	0.27807	0.9	4,208	0.27909	1.2	4,744	0.27639	1.3
BUSINESS MILEAGE - small diesel	km	43,816	0.14208	6.2	19,988	0.13721	2.7	78,451	0.13758	10.8	104,442	0.13989	14.6
BUSINESS MILEAGE - med diesel	km	36,627	0.17061	6.2	86,098	0.16637	14.3	37,400	0.16496	6.2	31,727	0.168	5.3
BUSINESS MILEAGE - large diesel	km	21,015	0.20947	4.4	17,606	0.20419	3.6	22,792	0.20721	4.7	23,237	0.20953	4.9
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Small electric	km					0	0.0	801	0	0.0	16,547	0	0.0
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Medium Electric	km				161	0	0.0	1,669	0	0.0	1,984	0	0.0
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Large Electric	km					0	0.0	4,971	0	0.0	538	0	0.0
WATER SUPPLIED	m3										397125		
WATER SEWERAGE	m3												
TOTAL				408.6			290.4			293.9			284.9

SCHOOLS													
GAS	kwh	17,139,950	0.18385	3,151	17,331,695	0.18387	3,187	16,866,611	0.18316	3,089	18,614,656	0.18254	3,398
OIL	litres	64,810	2.54042	165	88,192	2.54039	224	35,465	2.54014	90	29,757	2.54013	76
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kwh	7,566,730	0.2556	1,934	7,273,687	0.23314	1,696	7,503,748	0.21233	1,593	7,174,470	0.19338	1,387
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kwh	7,566,730	0.0217	164	7,273,687	0.02005	146	7,503,748	0.01879	141	7,174,470	0.01769	127
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kwh	91,973	0.2556	24	98,858	0.23314	23		0.21233	0		0.19338	0
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kwh	53,398	0	0	53,398	0	0		0	0		0	0
WATER SUPPLIED	m3												
WATER SEWERAGE	m3												
FUGITIVE - R410A	kg	6.445	2088	13.5	10.61	2088	22.2	4.8	2088	10.0	4.8	2088	10.0
FUGITIVE - R32					3.2								
FUGITIVE - R407C			1774	0.0		1774	0.0		1774	0.0		1774	0.0
TOTAL				5,427.5			5,274.6			4,923.7			4,997.8
LEISURE CENTRES													
GAS	kwh	2,287,929	0.18385	421	680,752	0.18387	125	2,401,196	0.18316	440	4,120,491	0.18254	752
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kwh	1,128,315	0.2556	288	381,917	0.23314	89	1,241,494	0.21233	264	1,586,958	0.19338	307
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kwh	1,128,315	0.0217	24	381,917	0.02005	8	1,241,494	0.01879	23	1,586,958	0.01769	28
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kwh	18,986	0.2556	5	20,162	0.23314	5	37,703	0.21233	8		0.19338	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kwh												
TOTAL				734			222			727			1,087
READING BUSES													
GAS	kwh	1,067,396	0.1771	189	1,334,455	0.18387	245	1,129,870	0.18316	207	1,055,505	0.18254	193
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kwh	1,623,623	0.17061	277	1,307,373	0.23314	305	1,464,363	0.21233	311	1,523,630	0.19338	295
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kwh	1,623,623	0.20947	340	1,307,373	0.02005	26	1,464,363	0.01879	28	1,523,630	0.01769	27
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kwh	18,740	0.17061	3	16,668	0.23314	4	10,291	0.21233	2		0.19338	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kwh												
FLEET - DIESEL	litres	2,935,195	2.6	7,614	1,335,486	2.5	3,400	2,686,750	2.5	6,750	6,662,388	2.6	17,041
FLEET - CNG	litres	1,758	2542.0	4,469	813	2533.0	2,061	1,470	2538.5	3,730	3,090	2539.3	7,846
TOTAL				12,889			6,037			11,026			25,402
SMALL MEAD													
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kwh	2,526,953	0.2556	646	1,633,650	0.23314	381	1,760,270	0.21233	374	1,691,865	0.19338	327
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kwh	2,526,953	0.0217	55	1,633,650	0.02005	33	1,760,270	0.01879	33	1,691,865	0.01769	30
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kwh		0	0		0	0		0	0		0	0
TOTAL				700.7			413.6			406.8			357.1
GROSS EMISSIONS - CORPORATE				7,219.3			5,972.1			5,675.3			5,149.0
GROSS EMISSIONS - ALL				26,970			17,919.3			22,758.4			36,992.9
ELECTRICITY EXPORTED/SOLD TO GRID/OTHERS	kwh	1,338,901	0.2773	371	1,375,999	0.25319	348	1,298,673	0.23112	300	1,370,495	0.21107	289
NET EMISSIONS - CORPORATE				6,848			5,624			5,375.2			4,859.7
NET EMISSIONS - ALL				26,599			17,571			22,458			36,704

Note: Fleet fuel data in 'Managed Services' Scope 3 are not included in total emissions figures in pre-2020/21 historical data

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Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

15 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Air Quality Action Plan Review
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Ross Jarvis, Principal Air Quality Project Officer
Lead councillor	Councillor John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Change and Strategy
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the draft Air Quality Action Plan to be taken forward for consultation. 2. To note that a further report will be brought to the March 2024 Committee following the consultation to adopt the final Air Quality Action Plan

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Reading's air quality (Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)) is improving; however, we still have some locations which are above the UK and World Health Organization (WHO) air quality limits. The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) will target these locations but not just for compliance with UK or WHO standards, but to push further to improve air quality across the whole of Reading.
- 1.2. This Action Plan identifies the areas where we need to work together to improve air quality. The actions identified are those that officers plan to work towards implementing over the next five years to benefit people's quality of life, the environment and improve the community we live in by having cleaner air.
- 1.3. The purpose of this report is to present the draft AQAP to the Committee to be approved for consultation, as well as outlining the next steps for its adoption by the Council.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
 - Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 2.2. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

- 2.3. The Environment Act 1995 requires Local Authorities to review and assess local air quality and to take action to improve air quality where exceedances of objective levels are identified. To this end Reading have declared an Air Quality Management Area and put in place an AQAP. Guidance recommends updating AQAPs every five years. The current action plan was adopted in 2016. Reading Borough Council is now fulfilling its statutory duty by updating its AQAP. These actions are linked to wider objectives including health and wellbeing, the climate emergency and social inequalities.

3. The Proposal

Current Position

- 3.1. The previous AQAP focused on actions to reduce Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) to achieve compliance with national objectives. Examples of some of the recent successful initiatives that have helped to improve air quality over this period include:
- Construction of Green Park Station, which formally opened in May 2023. The new railway station offers a sustainable travel alternative to private vehicle use, connecting the Green Park business area, Select Car Leasing (Madejski) Stadium and the Green Park Village residential area to the Great Western Railway line.
 - Commencement of the Southern Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor, offering a sustainable travel option connecting the south of Reading to central Reading which will be largely unaffected by local road congestion.
 - Introduction of Park & Ride schemes at Thames Valley Park, Winnersh Triangle and Mere oak, to reduce the number of car trips to central Reading, thereby reducing congestion and emissions.
 - Provision of the National Cycle Network 422, offering a safer east-west cross-town route, to encourage and prioritise active travel.
 - Reading's bus fleet has received substantial investment in recent years, enabling the retrofitting of buses with newer, cleaner exhaust engines. 100% of Reading's bus fleet now comprises hybrid, natural gas or Euro 6 diesel engines, making the fleet one of the cleanest in the UK.
 - In 2020, Reading Borough Council introduced a taxi emissions policy and reduced taxi licensing fees for ultra-low emission and electric vehicle drivers, by 25% and 50%, respectively. This will encourage the uptake of low- or -zero- emission taxis, reducing the air quality impacts these have on the local road network.
- 3.2. As a result of these and other initiatives our monitoring network shows there have been considerable improvements in NO₂ levels, as shown in the below table.

Table 1: Number of NO₂ Objective Exceedances and Borderline Exceedances

Year	Number of Exceedances of NO ₂ objective (annual average)	Number within 10% of Exceedance
2018	15	15
2019	5	8
2022	1	3

N.B: Monitoring in 2020 and 2021 was impacted by the lockdowns introduced over Covid-19 so does not represent normal conditions and as a result has not been included.

- 3.3. The new AQAP combines actions to continue to reduce NO₂ to achieve compliance with actions targeting PM_{2.5}. This is to align with the increasing evidence around Particulate

Matter, PM_{2.5} being the most harmful to health and the policy changes that have followed. The Environment Act 2021 has made it a requirement for new binding PM_{2.5} targets to be brought in. These were brought into force in the Air Quality Strategy 2023.

Table 2: Annual Average PM_{2.5} at Cemetery Junction Urban Background Site

Year	PM _{2.5} Level (annual average micrograms per metre cubed (µg/m ³) at Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN) background monitoring station (WHO target < 5 µg/m ³)
2018	7
2019	8
2020	8
2021	8
2022	8

- 3.4. Although the responsibility for achieving the targets is with the Secretary of State, the Government's Air Quality Strategy stipulates that all local authorities must take sufficient action to reduce PM_{2.5} emissions from sources within their control. In circumstances where the extent of measures from local authorities are deemed insufficient, the Government will consider implementing statutory duties on local authorities. PM_{2.5} has been given considerable weight throughout this AQAP. In February 2020 officers from Environmental Protection, with support from environmental consultants Phlorum, started work on updating the AQAP.
- 3.5. A steering group with officer representation from Strategic Transport, Planning, Public Health and Sustainability was set up to ensure the plan aligned with other linked policy areas such as: the Transport Strategy, Climate Change and Climate Emergency Strategy's, the Local Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.6. Work on the Air Quality Action Plan took place alongside the development of the Transport Strategy. Due to the impact of the pandemic on transport it was necessary to pause work on the Transport Strategy to establish new baseline information in 2022/23. Due to the close links between air quality and traffic emissions it was also considered necessary to also pause the completion of the Air Quality Action Plan until new baseline information was available to ensure the plans alignment and to maximise the opportunities to tackle one of the largest contributors of poor air quality.
- 3.7. As we have moved on from the most serious impact of the pandemic with a relative return to normal, Transport Officers have resumed work on the Reading Transport Strategy. The draft strategy was approved for consultation over the summer at the Council's Strategic Environment Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee in June 2023.

Options Proposed

- 3.8. A draft AQAP has been produced for implementation (Appendix 1). Working with the support of consultants Phlorum, the plan:
 - Updates baseline data figures and trajectories.

- Updates to align with any changes to local and national policies that have been introduced in the last two years.
 - Updates the list of actions to align with the RTP and current thinking/ AQ practice.
 - Consulted members of the steering group for comment.
- 3.9. AQAP policy options will include direct policy interventions, infrastructure schemes, education or enabling options, to support Reading's ambitious plans and UK strategies going forward. As such, policy options will include strategies to encourage or accelerate the uptake of low to zero emission vehicles, non-diesel vehicles, increase modal shift and discourage vehicle usage in certain areas where people live or go to school. Active travel and health options are also prioritised in the AQAP, alongside measures to reduce particulate matter concentrations. As based on the conclusions of the above, the areas prioritised for action include:
- Priority 1 – reduce road NO_x & PM emissions throughout Reading, with emphasis placed on reducing emissions on Reading's Inner Distribution Road (IDR);
 - Priority 2 – reduce exposures of individuals and locations where vulnerable people (children, elderly and those with cardiovascular disease) live, work or visit;
 - Priority 3 – encourage, enable and support people and businesses to shift from high polluting to zero emission transport or energy options;
 - Priority 4 – inform and educate people on the financial, environmental and health benefits of active travel, modal shift and reducing emissions through our daily lives;
 - Priority 5 – inform, educate and enforce compliance (where necessary) on domestic wood burning regulations, to reduce local PM_{2.5} emissions; and
 - Priority 6 – improve our monitoring network and planning requirements to support other projects and ensure new developments align with the aims of this AQAP.
- 3.10. These priorities will be achieved via the actions listed in table 5.1-5.3 of the action plan including:
- Air quality planning guidance for construction sites and operational developments
 - Implementation of the EV Infrastructure Strategy
 - Smoke Control Area awareness campaign
 - School air quality awareness programme
- 3.11. Some refinement may still be required to the AQAP on receipt of further input from steering group members.
- 3.12. It is proposed that comments from the consultation will be reviewed and a final plan taken to March 2024 committee for adoption.

Alternative Option

- 3.13. AQAPs are a statutory requirement when an AQMA is in place and the review of our AQAP is already overdue.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. The development and delivery of the AQAP will help to deliver the following service priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan:

- **Healthy Environment** - Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease, lung conditions and cancer. The actions taken under the proposal would help to improve air quality which would directly contributing to the service priority from the Council's Corporate Plan
- **Thriving Communities** – Poor air quality disproportionately affects the most vulnerable adults and children. Those living in more deprived areas also tend to be exposed to higher levels of air pollution, therefore by improving air quality the proposal will help to tackle these inequalities in our society.

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1. All the actions within the AQAP aim to improve local air quality. The main pollutants of concern for local air quality are Nitrogen Dioxide and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), from sources of combustion. Measures to lower these pollutants, such as those encouraging active travel, or less/better burning of solid fuels simultaneously also lower Carbon emissions. In so doing these projects help the Council work towards the target of being zero carbon by 2030.
- 5.2. A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed in respect of this report. It suggests a 'net medium positive' impact arising from the adoption of the AQAP.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. The consultation process as laid out in the Local Air Quality Management guidance will be followed to ensure that all stakeholders are able to comment on the proposed plan prior to adoption. This will include steering group members, statutory consultees and the public.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The strategy has been developed in line with these requirements and the delivery of individual elements of the strategy may be subject to further Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) as they are developed.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. The Environment Act 1995 requires Local Authorities to review and assess local air quality and to take action to improve air quality where exceedances of objective levels are identified. Reading Borough Council is fulfilling its statutory duty by updating its AQAP.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. The development of the draft AQAP used consultancy management support (Phlorum) paid for through grant funding. The redrafting work cost £5000, which is being covered by a combination of remaining grant funding and existing budget.

- 9.2. Some projects, such as those requiring policy, or enforcement will be progressed through officer time alone. Others will require external funding.
- 9.3. The schools air quality awareness programme was awarded funding (£327,000) by a Defra Air Quality Grant 2022/23. We will look to fund other projects through applying to this annually.
- 9.4. We are currently applying to the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) scheme for funding to help implement the EV Infrastructure Strategy
- 9.5. Officers will look out for other funding opportunities.

10. Timetable for implementation

- 10.1. The redrafting of the action plan took place over the summer. It is now being circulated internally to the steering group.
- 10.2. The steering group consists of representatives from Environmental Protection, Transport, Public Health, Planning and Sustainability.
- 10.3. When approved the draft AQAP will undergo a statutory and public consultation process.
- 10.4. Comments received during consultation will be considered before the final version is taken to SEPT Committee in March 2024 for approval.
- 10.5. The approved AQAP will then be sent to Defra for approval before final adoption.

11. Background papers

- 11.1. There are none.

Appendices

- 1. Draft Reading Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2028

Reading Borough Council

Air Quality Action Plan

In fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995

Local Air Quality Management

2024 - 2028



Reading Borough Council

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Report Reference Number	Draft Air Quality Action Plan (2024-2028) – <i>Consultation Document</i>
Date	18 th September 2023

Forward

Forward from Lead or portfolio holder....

We are very pleased to present the updated Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Reading that sets out our vision for delivering air quality improvements across our borough over the next 5 years.

During the challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic we had periods in the lockdowns where we experienced a slowdown in traffic numbers that resulted in noticeable environmental improvements. We saw temporary improvements in air quality across Reading during this period, and this coincidentally showed us the level of actions needed to reduce pollution.

The Reading AQAP was initially drafted during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021) and has since been reviewed and updated. During this period, we have reviewed the current situation with regard to air quality, evaluated options to improve air quality and have looked at future opportunities for improving local air quality for our residents, visitors, businesses and the environment.

Improving air quality goes hand in hand with our major policy areas that we as a Council are driving forward on, including: Health and Social inequality, the Climate Emergency Strategy, the Transport Plan for Reading and Reading's 2050 Vision. We will drive the change in partnership with all communities across Reading by focussing on three themes:

- Healthy environment
- Thriving communities
- Inclusive economy

Reading's air quality is improving; however, we still have some locations which are above the UK and World Health Organization (WHO) air quality limits. The Action Plan for improving air quality will target these locations but not just for compliance with UK or WHO standards, but to push further to improve air quality for the sake of the residents health across the whole of Reading.

This Action Plan identifies the areas where we need to work together on, to improve air quality. With your support, actions taken forward will help to benefit people's quality of life, the environment and improve the communities we all live in by having cleaner air.

Executive Summary

This Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) has been produced as part of our statutory duties required by the Local Air Quality Management framework. It outlines the action we will take to improve air quality in Reading between 2024 and 2028.

This action plan replaces the previous action plan which ran from 2016 to 2020.

Since 2016, we have made substantial progress in our attempts to enable improvements in air quality. Projects delivered through the past action plan include:

- Construction of Green Park Station, which formally opened in May 2023. The new railway station offers a sustainable travel alternative to private vehicle use, connecting the Green Park business area, Select Car Leasing (Madejski) Stadium and the Green Park Village residential area to the Great Western Railway line.
- Commencement of the Southern Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor, offering a sustainable travel option connecting the south of Reading to central Reading which will be largely unaffected by local road congestion.
- Introduction of Park & Ride schemes at Thames Valley Park, Winnersh Triangle and Mere Oak, to reduce the number of car trips to central Reading, thereby reducing congestion and emissions.
- Provision of the National Cycle Network 422, offering a safer east-west cross-town route, to encourage and prioritise active travel.
- Construction of Christchurch Bridge in September 2015, which offers a link to pedestrians and cyclists exclusively, connecting central Reading to Caversham's riverside areas, to further encourage and prioritise active travel.
- Reading's bus fleet has received substantial investment in recent years, enabling the retrofitting of buses with newer, cleaner exhaust engines. 100% of Reading's bus fleet now comprises hybrid, natural gas or Euro 6 diesel engines, making the fleet one of the cleanest in the UK.
- In 2020, Reading Borough Council introduced a taxi emissions policy and reduced taxi licensing fees for ultra-low emission and electric vehicle drivers, by 25% and 50%, respectively. This will encourage the uptake of low- or -zero-

emission taxis, reducing the air quality impacts these have on the local road network.

The above list of projects is not inclusive of all the successful measures undertaken by Reading Borough Council in recent years, but the list serves to highlight some of the key achievements made to improving air quality across Reading.

The previous AQAP focussed on actions to reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions, with the intention of achieving compliance with national objectives. This new AQAP continues these ambitions, but also places considerable emphasis on targeting PM_{2.5} emission reductions. This is to align with the increasing evidence around PM_{2.5} being extremely harmful to health, and the changes to national policy that have followed as a result.

Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas^{1,2}.

The annual health cost to society of the impacts of particulate matter alone in the UK is estimated to be around £16 billion³. Reading Borough Council is committed to reducing the exposure of people in Reading to poor air quality in order to improve health.

We have developed actions that can be considered under six broad topics:

- Policy guidance and development control
- Promoting low emission plant

¹ Environmental equity, air quality, socioeconomic status and respiratory health, 2010

² Air quality and social deprivation in the UK: an environmental inequalities analysis, 2006

³ Defra. Abatement cost guidance for valuing changes in air quality, May 2013

- Promoting low emission transport
- Public information
- Transport planning and infrastructure
- Traffic management

Our priorities are to tackle emissions from local transport sources that impact on key locations and communities by developing policies and infrastructure plans to enable the prioritisation of sustainable and active travel modes.

Policy is to be developed to tackle domestic wood burning in Reading along with local planning guidance to better manage and control development emissions. Other initiatives include setting up a service for alerting and protecting vulnerable individuals during air pollution episodes and developing and implementing an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy.

In this AQAP we outline how we plan to effectively tackle air quality issues within our control. However, we recognise that there are a large number of air quality policy areas that are outside of our influence (such as vehicle emissions standards), but for which we may have useful evidence, and so we will continue to work with regional and central government on policies and issues beyond Reading's direct influence.

Responsibilities and Commitment

This AQAP was prepared by the Phlorum Limited and the Principal Air Quality Project Officer of Reading Borough Council with the support and agreement of the following officers and departments:

- Assistant Director, Planning, Transport & Public Protection: James Crosbie.
- Regulatory Services – Public Protection Manager: Matt Golledge.
- Regulatory Services - Community Protection Manager: Catherine Lewis.
- Public Health and Wellbeing Team - Public Health Consultant: Martin White.
- Transport - Transport Programme Manager: Chris Maddocks.
- Transport - Project Manager: James Clements.
- Transport – Senior Transport Planner: James Turner.

- Head of Climate Strategy: Peter Moore.
- Sustainability Manager: Ben Burfoot.
- Public Health: David Munday.
- Planning – Planning Policy Manager: Mark Worringham.

This AQAP has been approved by:

<insert details of high level Council members who have approved the AQAP (This could also include support from County Councils or from National Highways where appropriate) e.g. Head of Transport Planning, Head of Public Health, with e-signature>.

Keith Townsend – Executive Director for Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services

Ruth McEwan – Lead Councillor Education and Public Health

This AQAP has been signed off by a Director of Public Health.

This AQAP will be subject to an annual review, appraisal of progress and reporting to the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee. Progress each year will be reported in the Annual Status Reports (ASRs) produced by Reading Borough Council, as part of our statutory Local Air Quality Management duties.

If you have any comments on this AQAP please send them to Ross Jarvis at:

Address: Reading Borough Council, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU

Telephone: 0118 937 2314

Email: Ross.Jarvis@reading.gov.uk

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1 Introduction

This report outlines the actions that Reading Borough Council will deliver between 2024-2028 in order to reduce concentrations of air pollutants and exposure to air pollution; thereby positively impacting on the health and quality of life of residents and visitors to the borough of Reading.

It has been developed in recognition of the legal requirement on the local authority to work towards Air Quality Strategy (AQS) objectives under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 and relevant regulations made under that part and to meet the requirements of the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) statutory process.

This Plan will be reviewed every five years at the latest and progress on measures set out within this Plan will be reported on annually within Reading Borough Council's air quality ASR (Annual Status Report).

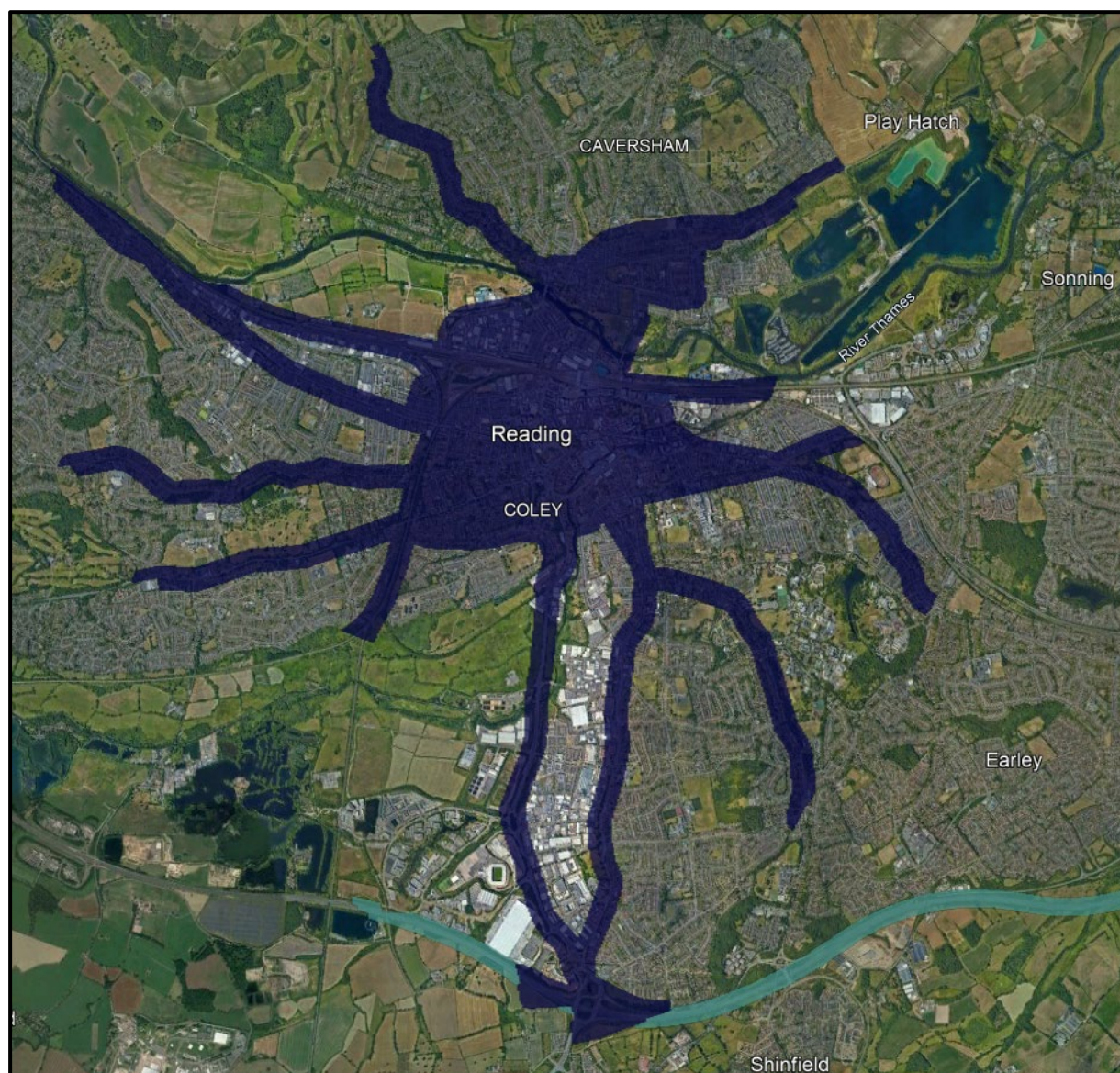
2 Summary of Current Air Quality in Reading

Please refer to the latest ASR from Reading Borough Council for full details of air quality monitoring and information.

2.1 Reading Air Quality Management Area

The current Reading Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), shown in Figure 1, extends out from the central Inner Distribution Road (IDR) zone along the main arterial roads and along some rail routes passing through Reading. The AQMA was declared due to exceedances of the annual mean UK Air Quality Strategy (AQS) Objective for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in 2009. Full details of the UK's air quality standards and objectives are provided in Appendix C, for reference.

Figure 1 – Reading Air Quality Management Area



© Google Earth imagery.

2.2 Air Quality Monitoring

Reading Borough Council monitors for NO₂, particulates with diameters of 10 microns or less (PM₁₀), particulates with diameters of 2.5 microns or less (PM_{2.5}) and ozone (O₃) at a number of locations across the borough.

There are four automatic air quality monitoring stations (AQMS) in Reading [monitoring pollutants]:

- Reading AURN⁴ Urban Background AQMS [NO₂; PM₁₀; PM_{2.5}; O₃]
- RD1 Roadside AQMS [NO₂; PM₁₀]
- RD3 Roadside AQMS [NO₂; PM₁₀]
- RD4 Roadside AQMS [NO₂; PM₁₀]

Reading also has a network of non-automatic NO₂ diffusion tubes monitoring concentrations at 56 locations. The majority of monitoring locations in Reading are at the roadside, with only 1 site at an urban background location (the Reading AURN AQMS).

2.2.1 2019 and 2022 Monitoring Results

Due to the influence of the Covid-19 lockdowns during 2020/21, baseline air quality information presented in this AQAP is based on pre-Covid-19 data from 2019, and post-Covid-19 data from 2022.

Monitoring results from the 2020 ASR for NO₂, covering the 2019 data period, saw the number of non-compliant locations reduce to 5 from 15 locations (in 2018), with regard to the annual mean air quality objective (AQO). The data also identified a further 8 sites that were within 10% of the AQO risk threshold.

The key locations of non-compliance/ elevated concentrations in 2019 were:

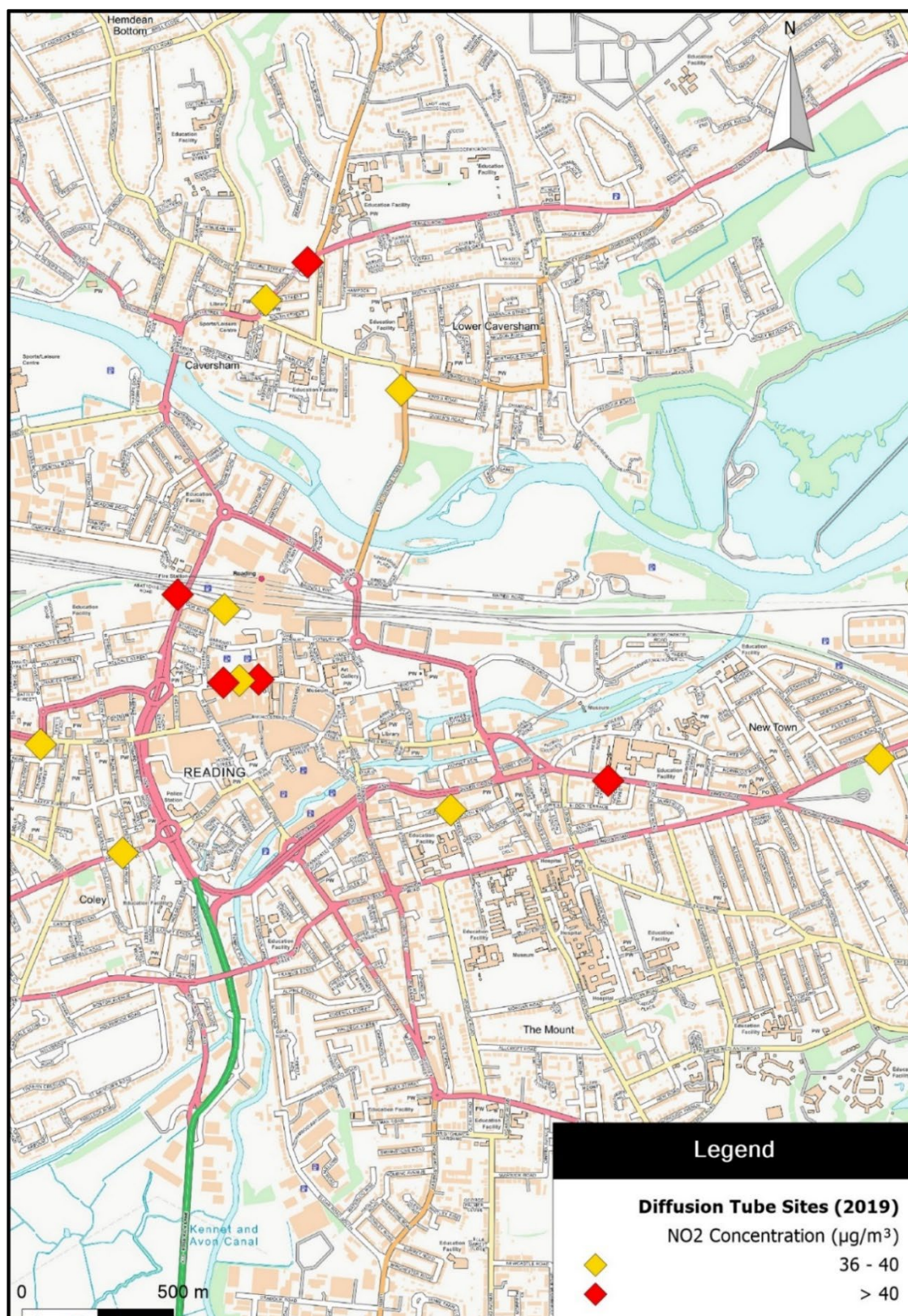
- London Road
- Kings Road
- Castle Hill
- Prospect Street
- Caversham Road/ A329
- George Street
- Caversham Road (A4155)
- Oxford Road
- Station Hill and Friar Street

⁴ AURN – Automatic Urban and Rural Network AQMS operated by Defra.

No locations were in exceedance of the NO₂ 1-hour mean AQO and there were no exceedances of any AQOs for PM₁₀. There was no exceedance of the 20 µg/m³ PM_{2.5} annual mean concentration target limit either.

Figure 2, below, displays the locations of diffusion tubes which were at least within 10% of the annual mean AQO for NO₂ in 2019.

Figure 2 – Locations where NO₂ concentrations were above 36 µg/m³ in 2019.



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database 2021.

Note: An additional site, DT 24 on Oxford Road to the west, was also within 10% of the AQO.

Monitoring results from the 2023 ASR for NO₂, covering the 2022 data period, saw the number of non-compliant locations reduce to just 1 from the 5 locations in 2019, with regard to the annual mean air quality objective (AQO). The data also identified a further 3 diffusion tube sites that were within 10% of the AQO risk threshold.

The key locations of non-compliance/ elevated concentrations in 2022 were:

- Caversham Road/ A329
- Friar Street

No locations were in exceedance of the NO₂ 1-hour mean AQO and there were no exceedances of any AQOs for PM₁₀. There was no exceedance of the 20 µg/m³ PM_{2.5} annual mean concentration target limit either.

Figure 3, below, displays the locations of diffusion tubes which were at least within 10% of the annual mean AQO for NO₂ in 2022.

Figure 3 – Locations where NO₂ concentrations were above 36 µg/m³ in 2022.



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database 2021.

2.2.2 Long term air quality trends in Reading

The Influence of Covid-19

The reduction in annual mean NO₂ exceedance areas between 2019 and 2022, as displayed in Figure 2 and Figure 3, suggests that air quality in Reading has improved over time.

It is acknowledged that the Covid-19 lockdowns and tiered restrictions impacted on our way of life and day to day activities, including; how and where we travelled, business operations, leisure activities and reduced use of public transport systems.

The associated lockdown periods showed how traffic influenced local pollution levels and signalled the level of reductions that could drive toward improved air quality. During the Covid-19 lockdown, levels of NO₂ dropped by between 20-30% across the country⁵ – primarily from a significant reduction in private vehicle use.

It is difficult to anticipate what the future impact on local and national pollutant emissions are likely to be in the wake of the pandemic. However, it is quite probable that 2022 represents the first year of a post pandemic era – a “new normal”. This AQAP shall be continually reviewed and will be updated, if necessary, as more post-pandemic data is gathered in the future.

Figure 4, below, shows monthly mean NO₂ concentrations at Reading’s AURN urban background monitoring site, between 2017 and 2022. The data have been de-seasonalised and de-weathered using software packages available in *R* (v 4.3.1)⁶ and *Openair*⁷, to reduce the influence of seasonal variability and meteorology on the

⁵ The Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG) issued a rapid review in June 2020 on the estimation of changes in air pollution emissions, concentrations, and exposure during the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK. The document acknowledges that there is some evidence to suggest that nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter (PM) and ozone (O₃) may increase susceptibility to respiratory infections or worsen disease prognosis, although it recognises that there are still insufficient studies or mixed evidence for specific combinations of endpoints, infection types, age groups or pollutants.

⁶ R Core Team (2023). *_R_: A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing_*. R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. <<https://www.R-project.org/>>.

⁷ Carslaw, DC. and Ropkins, K. (2012). *Openair* – an R package for air quality data analysis.

time series data. The subsequent trends seen in the data, after normalisation, better correlate with how air quality has actually changed over time.

Figure 4 – De-seasonalised monthly mean NO₂ concentrations at Reading's AURN monitoring site.

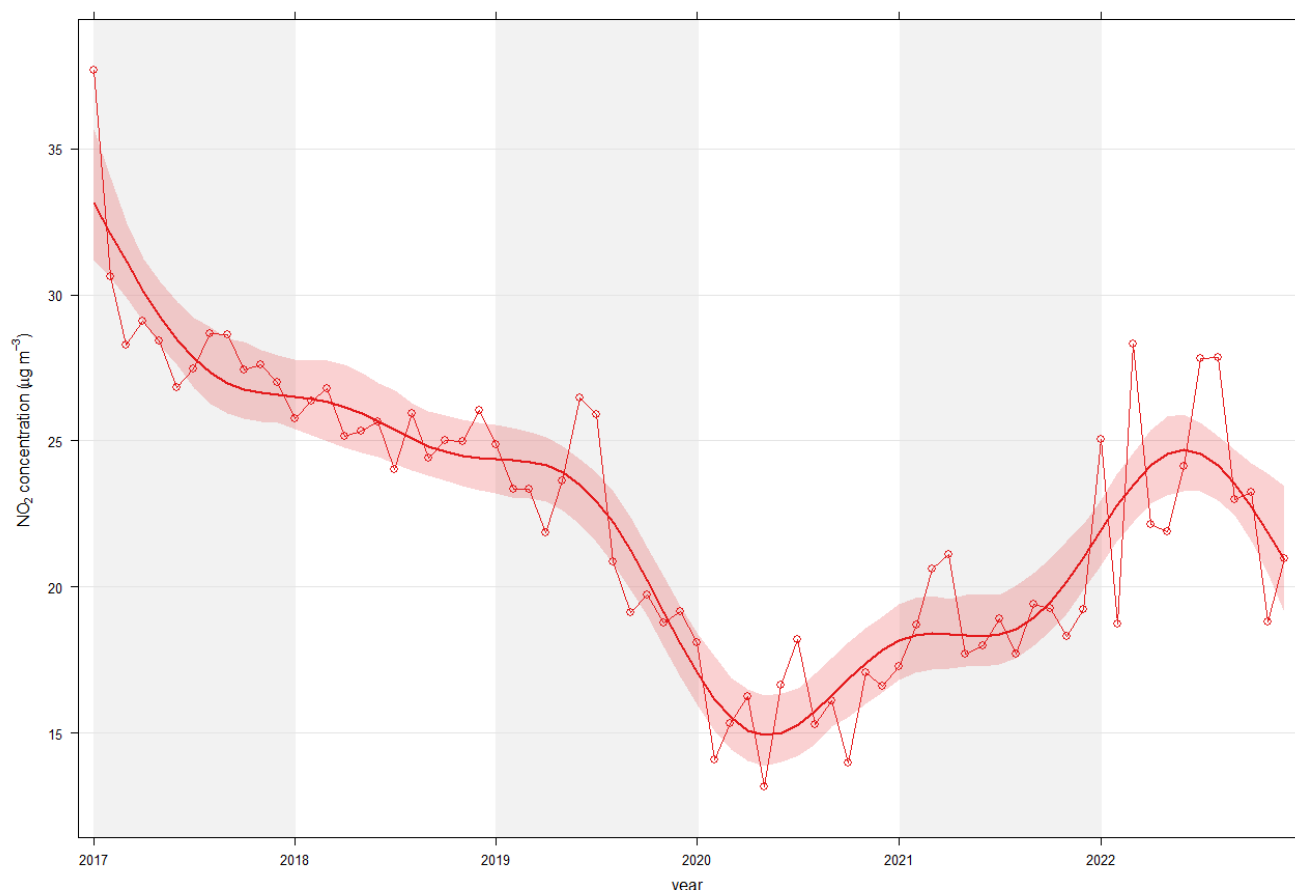


Figure 4 very clearly shows the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on local air quality. The main local source of pollution within Reading is road transport emissions, and a Covid-19 study⁸ undertaken on behalf of the Council strongly suggested that the key cause of this air quality improvement was the reduction in vehicle trips on the local road network.

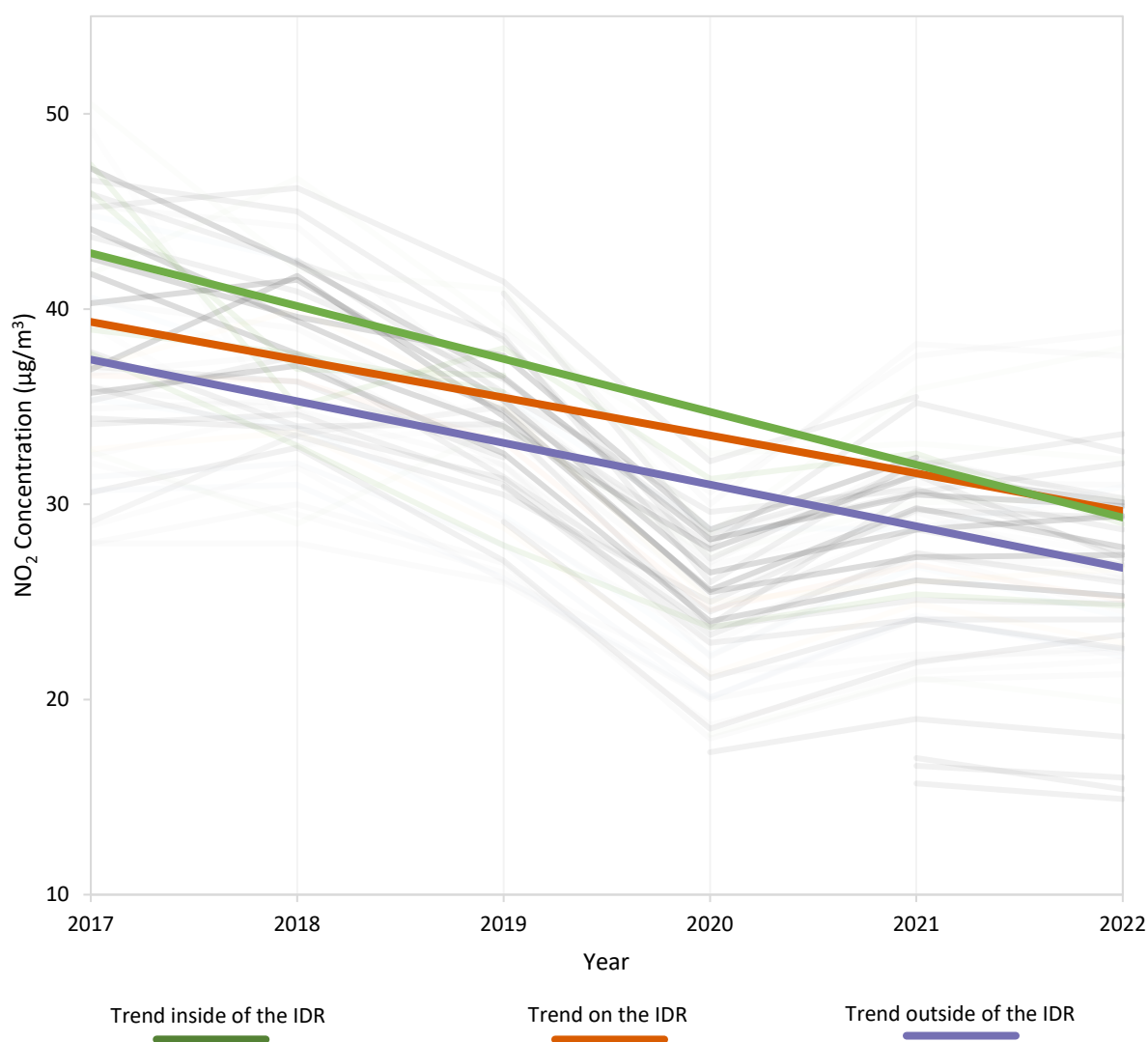
⁸ Reading Borough Council and Phlorum Limited. (2020). Reading AQAP-Covid Data Review

Barring the brief plateau in NO₂ concentrations at the time of the 2021 winter lockdown, concentrations have since increased to near pre-pandemic levels, likely due to the return of vehicles on the local road network.

NO₂ trends within and outside of Reading's IDR

Figure 5, below, displays trends in NO₂ concentrations at all of Reading's roadside monitoring sites (both AQMSs and diffusion tubes) between 2017 and 2022. Three coloured trendlines are also presented, representing the average (mean) trends for the monitoring sites in, on and outside of the IDR – these trendlines exclude monitoring data from 2020 and 2021, to limit the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on the observed trends.

Figure 5 – Trends in NO₂ concentrations at Reading's monitoring sites.



Evidently, air quality has improved significantly since 2017 with regards to NO₂, even after discounting the influence of the pandemic on air quality trends.

The greatest rate of improvement has occurred at monitoring sites within the IDR, in Reading's Town Centre. In 2017, the highest NO₂ concentrations were identified in central Reading, but since then, concentrations have reduced at an average (mean) rate of 2.7 µg/m³ per year.

Concentrations outside of the IDR have consistently remained below those identified in central Reading, improving at an average rate of 2.1 µg/m³ per year.

At the few monitoring sites located directly on the IDR, NO₂ concentrations have been improving since 2017, but at a slower rate of approximately 1.9 µg/m³ per year. Because of this, in 2022, annual mean roadside concentrations appear to be worse on the IDR than elsewhere in Reading, on average.

Long-term trends in Particulate Matter concentrations

The above data solely discusses trends with regards to NO₂, the pollutant for which Reading's AQMA was declared. However, increasing pressure is being placed on local authorities to consider how to manage particulate emissions within their boroughs.

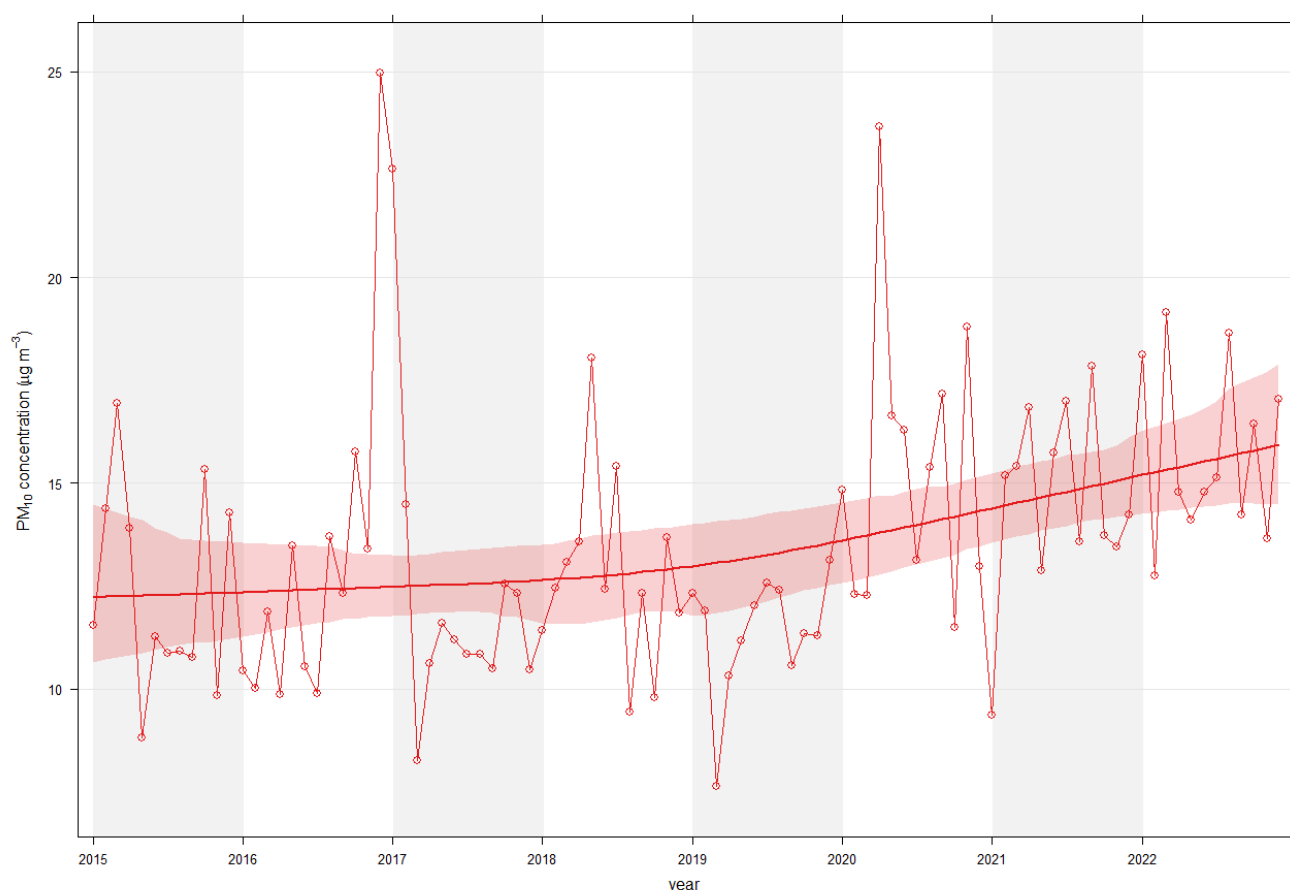
As previously mentioned, concentrations of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} have consistently remained well below the UK's AQOs at all monitoring sites. Historically, PM₁₀ concentrations have declined gradually over time. However, the rate of improvement has decreased since 2016, to such an extent that concentrations at Reading's urban background AQMS have actually been on the rise in recent years.

This is demonstrated in Figure 6, below, which displays monthly mean de-seasonalised PM₁₀ concentrations at the urban background AQMS. Although the rate of increase is very gradual, and concentrations remain well below AQOs, Reading Borough Council acknowledges the need to address the apparent worsening within its AQAP measures.

Regarding PM_{2.5}, there is no clearly discernible trend in either direction, but it is apparent that PM_{2.5} concentrations are not improving. Again, although the rate of increase is very gradual, and concentrations remain well below AQOs, Reading Borough Council acknowledges the need to address the apparent worsening within its AQAP measures. For this reason, alongside increasing pressures from the

Government for Local Authorities to reduce PM_{2.5} emissions across their boroughs, this AQAP places considerable weight to the consideration of measures to improve local PM concentrations. Measures to address PM₁₀ should inherently address PM_{2.5} also, as the two are inextricably linked.

Figure 6 - De-seasonalised monthly mean PM₁₀ concentrations at Reading's AURN monitoring site.



2.2.3 AQMA Retention

The Reading AQMA is to be retained in its current form. The reasons for this are two-fold:

- Exceedances of the annual mean AQO for NO₂ are still present within the existing AQMA boundaries; and
- Reading Borough Council are intent on producing an AQAP which targets air quality improvements across the entire borough, not just exceedance areas.

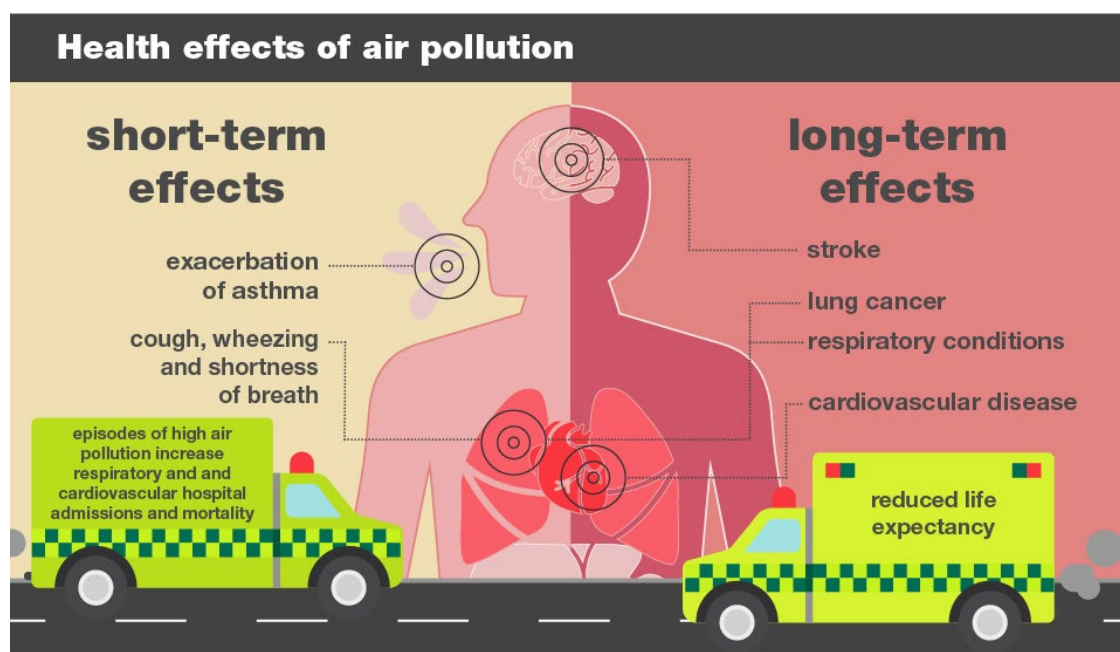
3 Reading Borough Council's Air Quality Priorities

3.1 Public Health Context

Poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. Air pollution can cause, complicate, or exacerbate many adverse health conditions. It usually manifests in respiratory or cardiac symptoms and can lead to chronic health issues. Recent studies show that poor air quality can affect every organ in the body and even cause damage to cognitive performance. Exposure to poor air quality is directly related to diseases such as cancer, asthma, strokes, heart disease, diabetes, obesity and dementia.

Health effects of pollutants can impact on people's health in the short-term or long term, as shown in Figure 7⁹.

Figure 7 - Health effects of air pollution (Public Health England).



⁹ This figure forms part of the Guidance "Health Matters: air pollution", which was published by Public England on their website on 14th November 2018.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), air pollution is associated with 7 million premature deaths worldwide every year, of which 4.2 million are attributed to exposure to outdoor air pollution. The WHO estimate that 99% of people in the world breathe air containing health impacting levels of air pollutants¹⁰.

With this in mind, and despite some emphasis being placed on reducing emissions on Reading's IDR (where air quality is poorest), several actions listed within this AQAP to improve air quality have been designed to improve on the current situation across the whole of the borough.

3.1.1 Health Inequalities

Air pollution can affect people from different ethnicities, ages, and social groups. It is likely to have greater impacts on those who experience high amounts of exposure and those who have greater susceptibility. The most vulnerable are those with pre-existing health conditions, children, or the elderly.

Several studies are also showing a strong correlation between poor air quality and inequality issues. A 2019¹¹ research study, led by academics at the Air Quality Management Resource Centre at the University of the West of England, Bristol, found that social inequalities in traffic-related pollution exposure are 'clearer and stronger' than ever before. The study found that while young children, young adults, and households in poverty have the highest levels of exposure to air pollution, it is the richer households who are more responsible for it.

In December 2020, Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah became the first person to officially have air pollution listed as a cause of death on her death certificate. Ella lived near a major circular road in southeast London and died in 2013 when she was 9 years old. At the inquiry into Ella's death, the coroner Philip Barlow cited that;

¹⁰ WHO (2023). Air Quality and Health. <https://www.who.int/teams/environment-climate-change-and-health/air-quality-and-health/health-impacts/exposure-air-pollution>

¹¹ Barnes et al (2019) Emissions vs exposure: Increasing injustice from road traffic-related air pollution in the United Kingdom.

"Air pollution was a significant contributory factor to both the induction and exacerbation of her asthma" and "that the cumulative effect of continuously breathing in toxic air caused her fatal asthma attack".

A recent study from the Office for National Statistics¹² also shows a strong positive correlation between the proportion of population in the UK that falls into the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity (BAME) category and the exposure of NO₂ measured over a period of 10 years across several areas in England.

Reading's Public Health department not only aims to improve health, but also reduce health inequalities by using an evidence-based approach to make recommendations on the delivery of health and wellbeing services. As such, this Action Plan will support work underway within the public health arena.

3.2 Planning and Policy Context

3.2.1 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹³, which was revised in July 2021, sets out the Government's planning policy for England. At its heart is an intention to promote more sustainable development. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions and air quality is a material planning consideration.

A core principle in the NPPF that relates to air quality effects from development is that planning should "contribute to conserve and enhance the natural and local environment". In achieving this, it states in paragraph 174 that:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: [...]"

¹² The ONS acknowledges air pollution is one of many factors that may be driving disproportionate outcomes for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people – Ethnicity is strongly correlated with pollution exposure in England, with ethnic minorities more likely to live in polluted areas.

¹³ Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), (2021), National Planning Policy Framework.

preventing new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality [...].”

Regarding compliance with relevant limit values and national objectives for pollutants the NPPF, paragraph 186 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement. So far as possible these opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage, to ensure a strategic approach and limit the need for issues to be reconsidered when determining individual applications. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones is consistent with the local air quality action plan.”

Climate Change and Decarbonisation

The UK Government has committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68 percent by 2030 and is to end support for the fossil fuel sector overseas.

Commitments to cutting greenhouse gas emissions will also benefit local air quality by bringing forward plans for decarbonising various sectors including transport, as well as industry, energy and domestic sources of emissions.

The Climate Change Act 2008 sets up a framework for the UK to achieve its long-term goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and to ensure steps are taken towards adapting to the impact of climate change. The Act saw the UK tasked with reducing emissions by at least 80% by 2050.

The government set out its “Road to Zero” Strategy¹⁴ for cleaning up road transport emission and published the Transport Decarbonisation Plan (TDP) *Decarbonising transport: a better, greener Britain*¹⁵ in July 2021. The TDP outlines the Government’s current position on transport emissions, including highlighting current policies and strategies in place to decarbonise the transport sector. The TDP sets out to ban the sale of diesel and petrol cars and light goods vehicles from 2030, followed by the requirement for all new cars and vans to be fully zero emission at the tailpipe by 2035. Additionally, the Government have published a consultation on ending the sale of all non-zero emission Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) from 2040, with lighter HGVs from 2035¹⁶.

Statutory Obligations to Reduce PM_{2.5}

PM_{2.5} is becoming more focal to the UK’s air quality ambitions. In 2019, the UK’s Clean Air Strategy¹⁷ proposed the introduction of new, ambitious, long-term air quality targets for PM_{2.5}. In 2021, the Environment Bill¹⁸ committed the Secretary of State to setting new Air Quality Objectives for PM_{2.5}.

Subsequently, the 2023 Air Quality Strategy¹⁹ stipulates two new legally-binding long-term targets to reduce concentrations of fine particulate matter, PM_{2.5}. The two new targets are an annual mean concentration of 10 µg/m³ or below and a reduction in average population exposure by 35% by 2040, compared to a 2018 baseline. These targets will help drive reductions in the worst PM_{2.5} hotspots across the country, whilst ensuring nationwide action to improve air quality for everyone.

¹⁴UK Govt Department for Transport (2018)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/739460/road-to-zero.pdf

¹⁵ DfT (2021), Decarbonising transport: a better, greener Britain. Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002285/decarbonising-transport-a-better-greener-britain.pdf

¹⁶ DfT (2021) Heavy goods vehicles: ending the sale of new non-zero emission models. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/heavy-goods-vehicles-ending-the-sale-of-new-non-zero-emission-models>

¹⁷ Defra (2019). Clean Air Strategy 2019. Accessible at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/770715/clean-air-strategy-2019.pdf

¹⁸ UK Govt (2021). Environment Act 2021

¹⁹ Defra (2023). Air Quality Strategy – Framework for Local Authority Delivery. Accessible at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1180706/Air_Quality_Strategy_Web.pdf

The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023²⁰, which supplements the Air Quality Strategy, sets out the delivery plan to achieve the targeted pollutant reductions, which has been reviewed accordingly during the production of this AQAP. The Improvement Plan also sets an additional interim long-term target for PM_{2.5}, of 12 µg/m³, to be achieved by January 2028.

The Government's Air Quality Strategy stipulates that all local authorities must take sufficient action to reduce PM_{2.5} emissions from sources within their control. In circumstances where the extent of measures from local authorities are deemed insufficient, the Government will consider implementing statutory duties on local authorities. Reading can confirm that PM_{2.5} has been given considerable weight throughout this AQAP.

Reading acknowledges that the Environment Bill, Air Quality Strategy and Environmental Improvement Plan target reductions in all pollutants, not solely PM_{2.5}. The measures set out within this Action Plan are designed to reduce emissions of several key pollutants, across all sectors within the control of the Council.

Along with the commitment to set targets on air quality for the UK, the new Bill also promises the creation of a new independent Office for Environmental Protection to scrutinise environmental policy and law, investigate complaints, and take enforcement action against public authorities, if necessary, to uphold current and future environmental standards.

3.2.2 Local Policy

Reading has key plans, strategies, and policies that the AQAP will compliment and support.

Reading Local Plan

²⁰ Govt (2023). Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. Accessible at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168372/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf

The Reading Local Plan²¹ guides development in Reading up to 2036 and will therefore play a key role in how the town evolves, with core objectives for sustainable growth. The Local Plan seeks to deliver new homes and employment space in Reading, alongside critical infrastructure to accommodate forecast housing demands and job creation, and to ensure the town remains an attractive place to work, live and study.

Local Plan Policy EN15: Air Quality is of direct relevance to air pollution in the planning context:

“Development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.

- i. Development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be mitigated. The following criteria should be taken into account:*
 - Whether the proposal, including when combined with the cumulative effect of other developments already permitted, would worsen air quality;*
 - Whether the development is within, or accessed via, an Air Quality Management Area; and*
 - Whether it can be demonstrated that a local worsening in air quality that would not detrimentally affect human health or the environment would be offset by an overall improvement in air quality, for instance through reduction in the need to travel.*
- ii. Where a development would introduce sensitive uses (such as residential, schools and nurseries, hospitals, care facilities) into, or intensify such uses within, an Air Quality Management Area, detrimental effects on that use will be mitigated. Mitigation measures should be detailed in any planning application. If there*

²¹ Reading Borough Council (2019). Reading Borough Local Plan – Adopted November 2019.

are significant detrimental effects that cannot be mitigated, the application should be refused.

- iii. *Where required, planning obligations will be used to secure contributions to measures to tackle poor air quality or for air quality monitoring.”*

This policy aims to ensure that increased development within Reading does not lead to a net increase in emissions as well as ensuring any increased exposure within the poorest areas of air quality is accompanied by appropriate mitigation.

In addition to this are several policies of indirect relevance to air quality, including:

- CC3: Adaption to Climate Change
- TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
- TR2: Major Transport Projects
- TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities; and
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging.

Reading 2050 Vision

The Reading 2050 Vision is an ambitious description of what Reading can be, with three themes central to Reading’s long-term success as a smart and sustainable city. These three themes are:

- A green tech city
- A city of culture and diversity
- A city of rivers and parks

The report envisages a place where low carbon living will be the norm, and where the built environment, technology and innovation have combined to create a smart, dynamic and sustainable city, with a high quality of life and equal opportunity for all.

Climate Emergency Declaration and Strategy 2020-2025

Reading Borough Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019 which highlighted its commitment to playing a full role and leading by example in achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 sets out the actions required during the five-year period to work towards the

objective of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030, the target adopted in the climate emergency declaration. There are several actions within the strategy that will help drive down local emissions:

- T13: Develop a zero-emission vehicle strategy for the Borough
- T14: Decarbonise the Council Vehicle Fleet
- T15: Increase Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points
- T16: Increase Zero Emission Vehicles Uptake
- T18: Planning Policy for EV Charging in new properties
- T19: Reduce emissions from the Taxi Fleet; and
- T20: Improve Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

Reading Transport Strategy 2040 (Local Transport Plan)

As demonstrated in Chapter 2 of this AQAP, nitrogen dioxide concentrations have generally improved across Reading in recent years. Nonetheless, some areas of Central Reading are still in, or close to, exceedance of legal objectives, specifically at locations close to busy and congested roads. Many of Reading Borough Council's actions therefore revolve around improvements to Reading's local transport network.

The Reading Transport Strategy will help to deliver both the Reading 2050 and Reading Local Plan visions, through an ambitious programme of measures to enable and encourage sustainable travel choices in the town by 2040, with the intent that future transport strategies will continue to support the Reading 2050 vision in the longer term.

Strategic objectives have been developed (see Figure 8, below) as the guiding principles running through this strategy to ensure and set out how Reading will measure success in delivering the vision for transport in Reading.

Figure 8 – Reading Transport Strategy Objectives

The Local Transport Strategy sets out 32 strategic policies and proposes over 40 schemes and initiatives to achieve the above objectives. Most of these prospective schemes and initiatives will offer benefits to local air quality, at least indirectly. Some of these initiatives are discussed in further detail within Section 5 of this AQAP.

Carbon Plan 2020-25

The Carbon Plan sets out policy and targets on corporate energy and water management and identifies actions to achieve these within the time period 2020-2025. The plan includes actions which relate to reducing and decarbonising Reading's own buildings and services, including transport which accounts for 15% of CO₂ emissions (2018/19) for the authority.

Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030

Reading's Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out the areas the Council will focus on to improve and protect the health and wellbeing of people who live in Reading and those who visit. The strategy and associated action plan cover a wide range of topics, including a vision that all residents will benefit from a healthy environment, a

[‘Health in All Policies’](#) approach to reduce health inequalities, the benefit to mental and physical health of increased physical activity levels through active travel and a recognition of the benefits of greater social connectedness through improved access to transport.

Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan sets out how the Council will enable Reading to realise its full potential and ensure that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share the benefits of its success.

The Council has listened to what residents, businesses and partners have said about their experience of Reading, and their hopes and aspirations for the town. In this year’s residents survey, the Council heard that residents are satisfied with how it runs services in Reading but would like to see more action taken on affordable housing, levels of crime, road conditions, congestion and climate change. Through public consultation on major change initiatives – such as the new Local Transport Plan and the Climate Emergency Strategy – the Council knows it has the support of residents and partners to make the required changes. The Council will drive the necessary change in Reading by focussing on the following three themes:

- Healthy environment
- Thriving communities
- Inclusive economy

3.3 Source Apportionment

The AQAP measures presented in this report are intended to be targeted towards the predominant sources of emissions within Reading Borough Council’s administrative area.

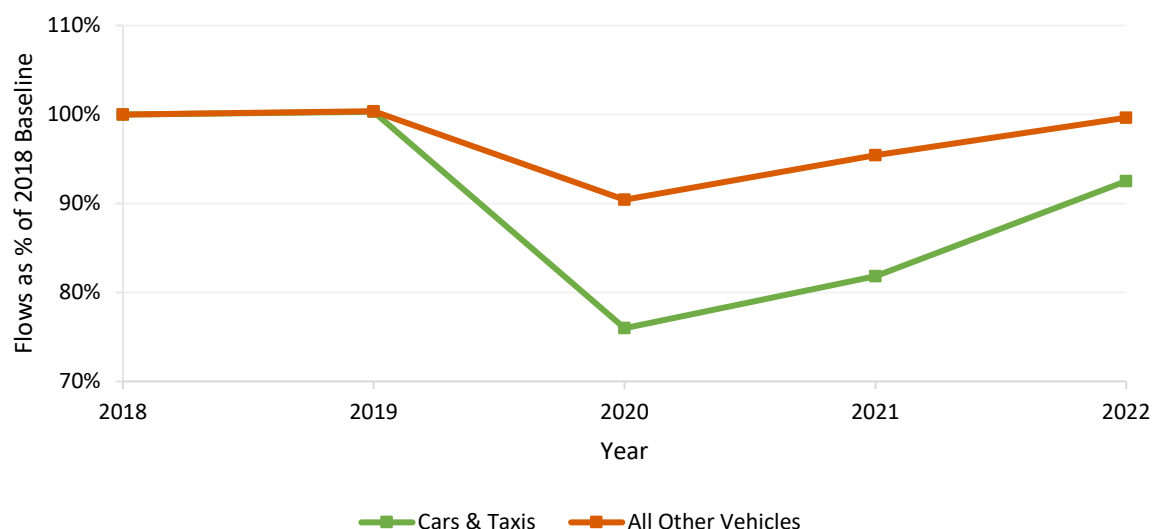
A source apportionment exercise was carried out by Reading Borough Council in 2023, using data from 2022/ 2023 (post-Covid), where possible.

The Influence of Covid-19 on Air Quality

We appreciate that Covid-19 has had a substantial influence on air quality across the UK (see Figure 4) and there is still uncertainty regarding how long-lasting some of its effects could be. It is widely accepted that one of the key influences for the improved

air quality conditions observed during the pandemic was a reduction in vehicle flows. The Department for Transport (DfT) has provided regional traffic statistics for the borough of Reading²², which have been used to demonstrate how the number of vehicle trips has changed during and since the pandemic, as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9 – Annual average vehicle flows in Reading as a proportion of the 2018 baseline



The data clearly demonstrates that the pandemic had a disproportionately greater effect on car trips than on trips made by other vehicles (light goods vehicles, heavy goods vehicles and buses). In 2022, trips by other vehicles returned to pre-Covid levels. Car and taxi trips have increased but remain considerably below pre-Covid levels, which could explain why air quality was considerably better in 2022, than 2019. Whether car trip volumes will continue to increase, or whether the pandemic will have long-lasting effects on travel behaviours (e.g. a permanence to 'working from home' trends), will become apparent in future years.

In the unlikely event that air quality worsens in subsequent years, this source apportionment exercise should be reviewed to determine whether any associated conclusions remain relevant.

²² DfT (2023). Road Traffic Statistics. Accessible at <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/#/6/55.250/-1.000/basemap-regions-countpoints>

Sources of Pollution

Pollutants can arise from an amalgamation of local sources, as well as sources imported from other regions, cities (e.g. London) and land masses (e.g. Europe). Vehicle emissions will arise from the combustion of fossil fuels in vehicle engines and their subsequent release to atmosphere via tailpipe exhausts. The most significant pollutants released by cars and other vehicles are oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}).

Other (background) sources might include emissions from commercial operations, domestic heating, industry, energy production, airports and railways, or even from secondary chemical reactions in the atmosphere.

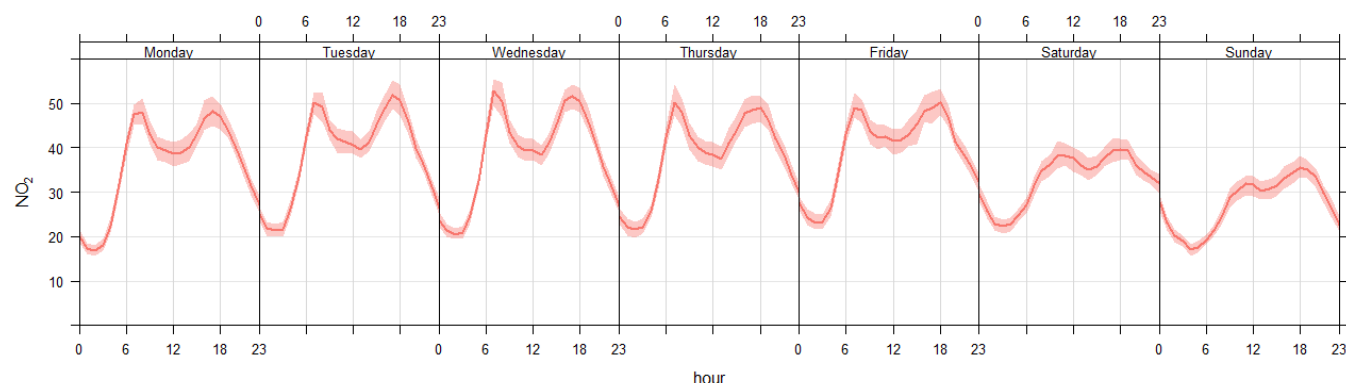
3.3.1 Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x)

A source apportionment study provides information on the sources of pollutants, to assist in identifying which sectors should be targeted to deliver the most effective emissions reduction strategy to deliver compliance with Air Quality Objectives. As discussed in Section 2.2.1, most of Reading is currently compliant with all Air Quality Objectives, but there remain some areas where NO₂ concentrations are unacceptably high.

Transport is responsible for more than two thirds of all NO_x emissions and accounts for a significant proportion (around 10% or more) of the total emissions of other pollutants. Road transport, in particular, continues to account for a significant proportion of emissions of all the main air pollutants.

Figure 10, below, displays the average weekly temporal variability in NO₂ concentrations at Reading's RD1 Automatic Monitor, located adjacent to the A329 Caversham Road, throughout 2022. The data highlights significant NO₂ peaks specifically during the morning and evening 'rush-hour' periods from Monday to Friday. This corroborates our understanding that road transport emissions are a substantial source of NO_x pollution near Reading's arterial road network.

Concentrations reduce at the weekends, likely due to an overall reduction in vehicle movements. This is a trend that was comparably identifiable before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 10 – Weekly variability in NO₂ concentrations at RD1 in 2022.

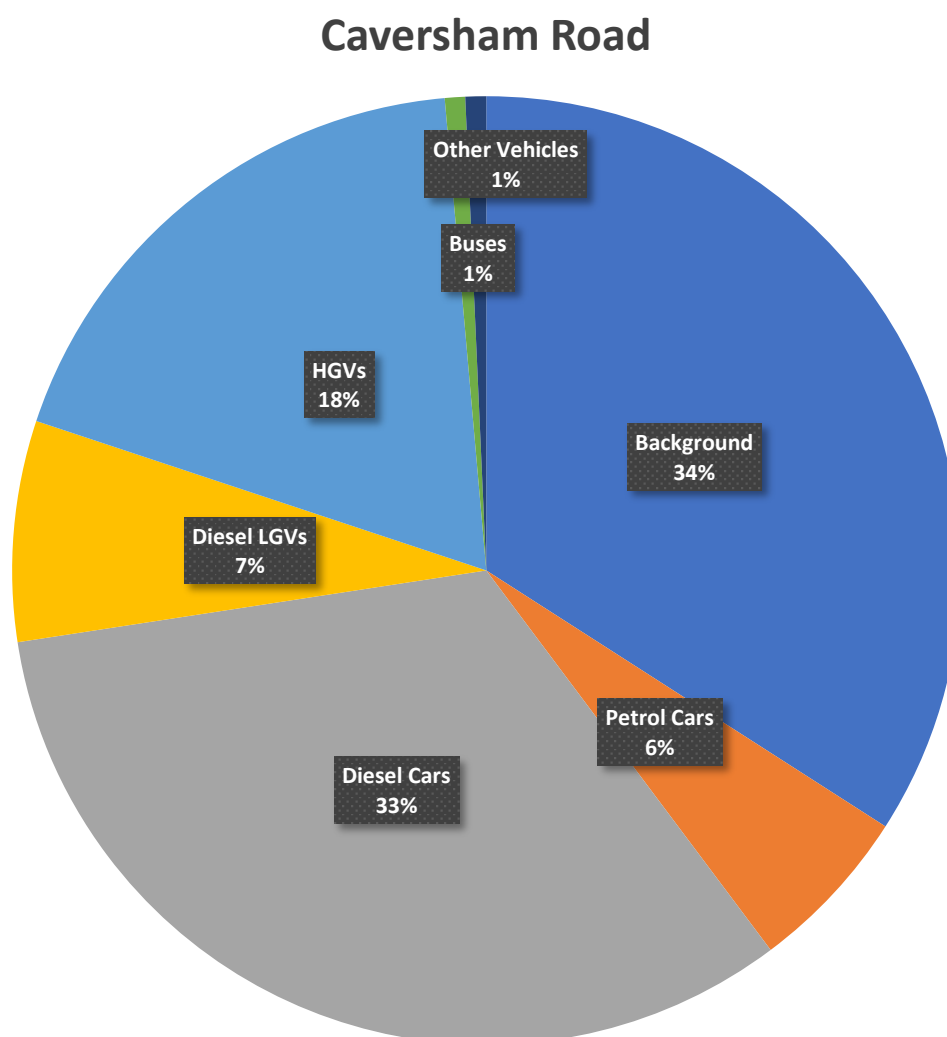
NO_x Source Apportionment

Acknowledging the above evidence, the NO_x source apportionment focuses on the local vehicle fleet. Traffic data were obtained from the DfT and Reading Borough Council's own traffic count data, and fleet emissions data were obtained from Defra's latest Emissions Factor Toolkit (EFT v11.0) and Reading's own bus fleet data. Locations with both suitable traffic data and monitoring data were used for analysis.

According to manually counted traffic data, cars, taxis and light good vehicles (LGVs) comprise over 90% of all vehicle trips on almost all of Reading's road network.

As such, it is no surprise that the bulk of traffic emissions at roadside locations are from cars, taxis and LGVs. Figure 11 shows that of the 66% of NO_x concentration attributable to vehicle traffic, 39% is attributable to cars (primarily diesel cars), 7% to diesel LGVs, 18% to HGVs and 1% to buses.

Figure 11 – NOX Concentration Source Apportionment for the Caversham Road exceedance location (#DT43)



For context, at the Caversham Road diffusion tube (the only AQO exceedance location in 2022), where an NO₂ concentration of 43.3 µg/m³ was recorded, almost 17 µg/m³ of the annual mean concentration arises from car traffic, approximately 3 µg/m³ from diesel LGVs, 8 µg/m³ from HGVs and approximately 0.3 µg/m³ from buses.

According to the above data, the key issue from an air quality perspective is associated with the volume of diesel cars on the road network. Therefore, any measures to reduce the number of diesel car trips and associated congestion issues are likely to enable air quality improvements and encourage Reading towards being fully compliant with all Air Quality Objectives.

HGV emissions are also a considerable contributor to local air pollution at this location. Reading's Transport Strategy acknowledges that a uniquely large proportion of vehicle trips along Reading's IDR are HGVs, likely due to the convenience of this road network for cross-Thames travel. At other locations across Reading, such as B3345 George Street and A4155 Castle Hill, the contribution of HGVs to local NO_x concentrations is over 10% less than the contribution of HGVs on the IDR.

It is worth acknowledging that approximately a third of NO_x concentrations are generated from non-vehicular sources. Defra provides estimated background concentrations of the UKAQS pollutants at the UK Air Information Resource (UK-AIR) website²³. These estimates are produced using detailed modelling tools and are presented as concentrations at central 1km² National Grid square locations across the UK. UK-AIR estimates that approximately 6% of NO_x is generated from domestic, institutional or commercial combustion heating, with a similar proportion generated from railway freight movements. The majority of background emissions are from regional rural sources.

It is acknowledged that Defra's UK-AIR background data is collected for 1km² grid squares, so is not necessarily site specific. In the case of the Caversham Road diffusion tube, the estimate background concentration is likely to be close to this value, but the tube's proximity to the railway means the proportion of railway freight emissions could be slightly higher than the estimated value. Reading Borough Council are intent on investigating the air quality impacts of Reading's railways further in the coming years.

3.3.2 Particulate Matter

Exhaust emissions and brake and tyre wear are likely to constitute a notable proportion of PM emissions (potentially up to 20%) close to Reading's arterial road

²³ Defra: UK-AIR. www.uk-air.defra.gov.uk

network, so measures to reduce vehicular NO_x emissions should inherently help enable PM reductions also.

However, unlike NO_x, a considerable proportion of PM is produced from non-vehicular sources. Defra's UK-AIR estimates that approximately 20% of Reading's PM_{2.5} concentrations are from naturally occurring sources (e.g. sea spray and pollen), almost 20% is from domestic, institutional or commercial combustion heating, and the vast majority is from transboundary sources (i.e. Europe) or formed through secondary reactions in the atmosphere.

The notion that the primary sources of PM differ to those of NO_x is corroborated by comparing Figure 4 to Figure 6, where long term trends in NO₂ concentrations differ to that of PM.

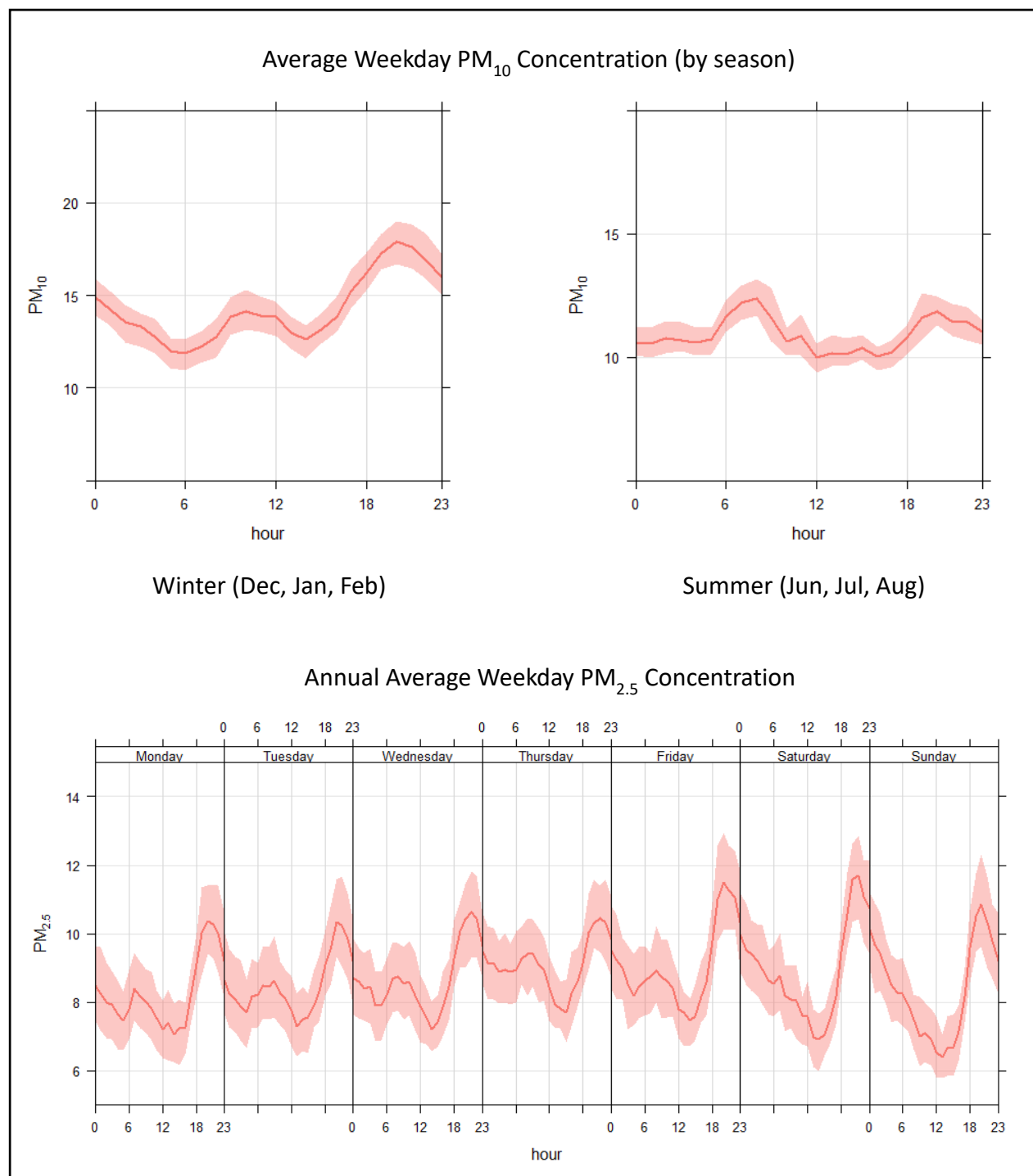
One possible cause of the recent plateauing of PM concentrations (increases, in some cases) is from recent increases in domestic solid fuel burning. Since 2011, Defra estimates that PM_{2.5} emissions from domestic wood burning have increased by over 124%, with a recent UK-wide survey identifying that 1 in 13 homes burned wood²⁴. Public Health England approximate that solid fuel burning could now account for over 30% of local PM emissions²⁵.

Temporal variability in PM concentrations at Reading's urban background automatic monitor show regular peaks in the evenings, which are exacerbated in winter and at weekends (see Figure 12, below). Given the 'sharpness' of this peak, its prominence compared to the same peak in summer months, and the fact that the peak continues well beyond the weekday afternoon traffic 'rush-hour', the source of the peak is likely to be arising at least partly from localised domestic and commercial solid fuel combustion sources.

²⁴ Defra (2023). National Statistics: Emissions of air pollutants in the UK – Particulate Matter (PM10 and PM2.5).

²⁵ PHE (2019). Review of Intervention to Improve Outdoor Air Quality and Public Health.

Figure 12 – Weekday variability in PM concentrations at Reading AURN in 2022.



As such, Reading Borough Council intend to place considerable weight to reducing this emission source.

3.4 Required Reduction in Emissions

Within Reading, there is currently one location identified as being in exceedance of any of the legal UK Air Quality Objectives. This is at Diffusion Tube #43, on

Caversham Road, where a 2022 annual mean NO₂ concentration of 43.3 µg/m³ was recorded, 8.25% above the annual mean AQS.

Following the calculation processes prescribed in LAQM.TG(22)²⁶, a road NO_x concentration reduction of over 7.61 µg/m³ would be required to achieve compliance at this location, which represents a 15% reduction in road NO_x emissions.

3.5 Key Priorities

AQAP policy options will include direct policy interventions, infrastructure schemes, education or enabling options, to support Reading's ambitious plans and UK strategies going forward. As such, policy options will include strategies to encourage or accelerate the uptake of low to zero emission vehicles, non-diesel vehicles, increase modal shift and discourage vehicle usage in certain areas where people live or go to school. Active travel and health options are also prioritised in the AQAP, alongside measures to reduce particulate matter concentrations.

As based on the conclusions of the above, the areas prioritised for action include:

- Priority 1 – reduce road NO_x & PM emissions throughout Reading, with emphasis placed on reducing emissions on Reading's Inner Distribution Road (IDR);
- Priority 2 – reduce exposures of individuals and locations where vulnerable people (children, elderly and those with cardiovascular disease) live, work or visit;
- Priority 3 – encourage, enable and support people and businesses to shift from high polluting to zero emission transport or energy options;
- Priority 4 – inform and educate people on the financial, environmental and health benefits of active travel, modal shift and reducing emissions through our daily lives;

²⁶ Defra. (2022). Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 Part III, Local Air Quality Management, Technical Guidance LAQM. TG(22). London: Defra.

- Priority 5 – inform, educate and enforce compliance (where necessary) on domestic wood burning regulations, to reduce local PM2.5 emissions; and
- Priority 6 – improve our monitoring network and planning requirements to support other projects and ensure new developments align with the aims of this AQAP.

4 Development and Implementation of Reading Borough Council's AQAP

4.1 Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

In developing/updating this AQAP, we have worked with other local authorities, agencies, businesses and the local community to improve local air quality. Schedule 11 of the Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities to consult the bodies listed in Table 4.1. **In addition, we have undertaken the following stakeholder engagement:**

- Public Consultation
- Website
- Social Media
- Etc.>

The response to our consultation stakeholder engagement is given in Appendix A: Response to Consultation.

Table 4.1 – Consultation Undertaken

Consultee	Consultation Undertaken
The Secretary of State	<Yes/No>
The Environment Agency	<Yes/No>
The highways authority	<Yes/No>
All neighbouring local authorities	<Yes/No>
Other public authorities as appropriate, such as Public Health officials	<Yes/No>
Bodies representing local business interests and other organisations as appropriate	<Yes/No>

4.2 Steering Group

Reading Council established an internal Air Quality Steering Group (AQSG) in 2020 to develop and evaluate the draft AQAP measures. When the work was recommenced on the AQAP in 2023 some of the officers had changed, this is signified by the year in brackets after each name in the below list.

The AQSG was composed of Reading Council members and officers:

- Former Deputy Leader of the Council: Cllr Tony Page (2020).
- Former Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee: Cllr Paul Gittings (2020).
- Former Deputy Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services: Giorgio Framallicco (2020).
- Regulatory Services – Principal Air Quality Project Officer: Ross Jarvis (2020, 2023).
- Assistant Director, Planning, Transport & Public Protection: James Crosbie (2023).
- Regulatory Services – Public Protection Manager: Matt Golledge (2023).
- Regulatory Services - Community Protection Manager: Catherine Lewis (2020, 2023).
- Public Health and Wellbeing Team - Public Health Consultant Martin White (2023).
- Transport - Transport Programme Manager: Chris Maddocks (2020, 2023).
- Transport - Project Manager: James Clements (2020, 2023).
- Transport – Senior Transport Planner: James Turner (2020, 2023).
- Head of Climate Strategy: Peter Moore (2020, 2023).
- Sustainability Manager: Ben Burfoot (2020, 2023).
- Public Health: David Munday (2020).
- Planning – Planning Policy Manager: Mark Worringham (2023).

- Planning – Senior Planning Policy Officer: Sarah Burr (2023).

5 AQAP Measures

Table 5.1, Table 5.2 and Table 5.3 shows the Reading Borough Council AQAP measures. It contains:

- a list of the actions that form part of the plan
- the responsible individual and departments/organisations who will deliver this action
- estimated cost of implementing each action (overall cost and cost to the local authority)
- expected benefit in terms of pollutant emission and/or concentration reduction
- the timescale for implementation
- how progress will be monitored

NB: Please see future ASRs for regular annual updates on implementation of these measures.

5.1 Travel Measures

Reading Borough Council are committed to implementing as many measures as possible to encourage and facilitate a shift from private petrol/ diesel vehicle use to more active and sustainable travel modes.

Reading's Transport Strategy 2040 discusses an abundance of ambitious schemes and initiatives to achieve this goal, which will inherently allow for significant improvements in air quality across the borough.

A few examples of proposed measures are listed below:

- Cross-Thames Travel: there is potential for a new road crossing over the Thames, to support in the alleviation of congestion on the IDR. Reduced congestion on the IDR will better enable multi-modal enhancements on the IDR, which will aim to support active travel and prioritise bus transportation.
- Reading's bus fleet is one of the cleanest emitters in the country, with approximately 100% of the fleet comprising hybrid, gas or Euro 6 diesel vehicles. With this in mind, Reading Borough Council are placing heavy

emphasis on improving the attractiveness and accessibility of bus travel across Reading. To this end, they are proposing the following measures:

- Enable more direct routes between neighbourhoods with poor bus use statistics, key mobility hubs and employment areas;
 - Introduction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) facilities across four key routes and expansion of Park and Ride sites, connecting the outskirts of the borough to Central Reading via highly efficient transport modes.
 - Introduce a Mobility as a Service (MaaS) scheme, which would enable travellers to reach destinations confidently and conveniently, without the need for private vehicles, utilising a user-friendly transport services mobile app; and
 - Offer discounted fares for young people to discourage private vehicle school trips, which account for approximately 25% of 'rush-hour' car trips.
- In 2020, taxi licensing fees were reduced by 25% for drivers of ultra-low emission vehicles, and 50% for drivers of electric vehicles. By 2028, Reading is targeting for all taxis to be electric or ultra-low emission vehicles.
 - Cycle infrastructure improvements are being delivered through Active Travel Schemes on the Shinfield Road and on the Bath Road/Castle Hill. Further schemes are planned for future Active Travel Funding rounds.

5.2 Other measures

It cannot be argued that targeting measures to improve the transport sector's environmental impacts, such as those listed above, will have the most significant contributions to local air quality improvements, especially with regards to NO₂. However, there are a considerable number of alternative measures which can also allow for such benefits, especially with regards to reducing other pollutants, such as PM_{2.5}.

A few examples of proposed measures are listed below:

- In the coming years, Reading proposes to introduce planning guidance for new developments, supporting developers to minimise the air quality impacts of developments through strategic emissions mitigation plans.
- Reading Borough Council have recently consulted on the prospect of expanding Reading's existing Smoke Control Area (04/09/2023 – 16/10/2023) to encompass the entire borough. Properties and business within Smoke Control Areas are encouraged to avoid the burning of solid fuels (i.e. wood and coal) through chimneys. Legal prohibitions are based on specific fuel types associated with significant smoke generation, limiting fuel sales and purchases to 'Ready to Burn' / 'Smokeless' fuels, unless alternatives are burned within Defra exempt appliances. Reading Borough Council are also obtaining funding to enable the introduction of better enforcement measures to ensure better compliance with fuel burning regulations.
- There is also significant value in providing the public with sufficient information to enable them to make informed decisions on matters of health and air quality. To this end, Reading Borough Council are committed to providing several air quality resources to the public, such as:
 - AirAlert – air quality alerts are delivered to the public via text or email on days where pollution levels are recorded as being particularly high and potentially harmful to health;
 - The council will work with GPs and Health Practitioners to better educate health patients on the risks of air quality, especially where the patient is identified as having, or being at risk of having, respiratory or cardiovascular illnesses;
 - Air quality awareness campaigns will continue to be rolled out into schools, to encourage an interest and understanding of the potential issues and solutions from an early age; and
 - Resources will be made available to Reading's residents, enabling them to better understand the potential air quality impacts of wood burning/ bonfires/ indoor air quality.

Table 5.1 – Air Quality Action Plan Measures: Cleaner Transport

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
RDAQ1_ Transport	Vehicle access/ speed management (road/ bridge access)	Traffic management	Reduction of speed limits, 20mph zones	2023	TBC	RBC	RBC/DFT	No	Funded/partially funded/ not funded	<£1m	Implementation /Planning	Minor Localised benefits to PM; Smoother driving leading to a reduction of PM from tyre and brake wear	No. of roads made 20mph		
RDAQ2_ Transport	Parking standards – diesel/ EV differential parking rates	Traffic Management	Emission based parking or permit charges	2024	2024	RBC	RBC	No	Not funded	< £10k	Planning	Minor Regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM; encourages uptake of cleaner vehicles			
RDAQ3_ Transport	Reading Buses investment programme and support	Vehicle Fleet Efficiency	Public Transport Improvement	2023	2027	RBC/Reading Buses	Defra/ JAQU/DFT	Yes		1m-10m	Planning	Moderate Regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM; reduces bus emissions	Buses decarbonised	ZEBRA funding bid being prepared	
RDAQ4_ Transport	Neighbourhood and Highway Management	Traffic Management	UTC, Congestion management, traffic reduction	2024	2028	RBC	RBC/DFT	No	Not funded	< £10k	Planning	Minor Localised benefits to NO ₂ and PM			
RDAQ5_ Transport	Implementation of EV Infrastructure Strategy	Promoting Low Emission Transport	Procuring alternative Refuelling infrastructure to promote Low Emission	2024	2025	RBC		No	Not funded	£10k - £50k	Implementation	Moderate Regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM; facilitating and encouraging	Policy adoption		

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
			Vehicles, EV recharging, Gas fuel recharging									EV vehicle uptake rates			
RDAQ6_ Transport	Improve taxi fleet emissions	Promoting low emission transport	Taxi licensing conditions	2024	2028	RBC	RBC	No	Not funded	£10k - £20k	Planning	Minor Regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM; reduces taxi emissions		Emissions policy in place for hackney fleet	
RDAQ7_ Transport	School Streets	Promoting Travel Alternatives	Other	2023	2027	RBC/Schools	RBC/DFT/Schools	No	Part funded	< £10k	Implementation	Minor Regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM; encouraging travel alternatives	New schemes investigated	4 schools streets implemented covering 7 schools.	
RDAQ8_ Transport	Continue to promote active and low emission travel options	Promoting Travel Alternatives	All	2023	2028	RBC	RBC/DFT	No	Part funded	£50-£100k per annum	Implementation	Minor Regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM; encouraging travel alternatives		Numbers of people walking and cycling	
RDAQ9_ Transport	Multi-modal enhancements (Traffic corridor, IDR, Oxford Rd)	Traffic Management	Strategic highway improvements, Re-prioritising road space away from cars, inc Access management, Selective vehicle priority, bus priority, high vehicle	2024	2028	RBC	RBC/DFT	No	Part funded	£10-£15m (BSIP)	Implementation	Major Regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM			To improve wider connectivity with the outskirts of Reading, while reducing traffic congestion.

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
			occupancy lane												
RDAQ10_Transport	Cross-Thames Travel Scheme	Traffic Management	Strategic highway improvements, Re-prioritising road space away from cars, inc Access management, Selective vehicle priority, bus priority, high vehicle occupancy lane									Major benefits to NO ₂ and PM on the IDR and existing bridges			Potential for new Thames crossing to the east of Reading, to alleviate congestion on the IDR and enable RDAQ17.
RDAQ11_Transport	Connecting Neighbourhoods	Traffic Management	Strategic highway improvements, Re-prioritising road space away from cars, inc Access management, Selective vehicle priority, bus priority, high vehicle occupancy lane									Moderate regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM			Plan is to enable more direct routes between neighbourhoods, key mobility hubs and employment areas, hopefully via sustainable transport improvements, to reduce through travel on the IDR.
RDAQ12_Transport	Concessionary and Discounted	Promoting Low	School Travel Plans	2023	2025	RBC/DFT	DFT	No	Funded		Implementation	Minor regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM			Discounted bus fares for young people, to discourage parents

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
	Travel for Students	Emission Transport													driving kids to schools
RDAQ13 _Transport	Travel demand management charges	Traffic Management	Other									Minor regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM			Vehicles travelling <u>through</u> Reading ('rat-runs') without the need to be <u>in</u> Reading to be charged.
RDAQ14 _Transport	Bus Rapid Transit Schemes	Traffic Management	Strategic highway improvements, Re-prioritising road space away from cars, inc Access management, Selective vehicle priority, bus priority, high vehicle occupancy lane									Major regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM			Bus Rapid Transit Schemes from the South, Southeast, Southwest, East and West, to connect Central Reading to the wider town.
RDAQ15 _Transport	Park and Ride Expansions	Alternatives to Private Vehicle Use	Bus based Park & Ride									Moderate regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM			
RDAQ16 _Transport	New pedestrian and cycling routes	Transport planning and Infrastructure	Cycle network/ Other									Minor regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM; better enabling alternatives to private vehicle use			In line with Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
RDAQ17_Transport	Freight and Delivery Management Schemes	Freight and Delivery Management	Delivery and Service Plans									Minor regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM			Such as encouraging 'last-mile' deliveries to be made by zero-emission vehicles

Table 5.2 – Air Quality Action Plan Measures: Policy and Guidance Development

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
RDAQ20_Policy	Air quality planning guidance for construction sites and operational developments	Policy Guidance and Development Control	Air Quality Planning and Policy Guidance	2024	2025	RBC	RBC	No	Not funded	< £10k	Planning	Moderate Regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM; limits air quality impacts of new developments	Implementation of policy		
RDAQ21_Policy	Wood burning policy and expansion of Smoke Control Area	Policy Guidance and Development Control	Other	2023	2024	RBC	RBC	No	Not funded	< £10k	Implementation	Moderate Regional benefits to PM; reducing domestic combustion pollutant contributions	Expansion of SCA, Implementation of policy	Public consultation process undertaken	
RDAQ22_Policy	Use of Wood Burning Enforcement Powers	Policy Guidance and Development Control	Other	2024	ongoing	RBC	RBC	No	Not funded	<10k	Planning	Minor regional benefits to PM	Number of enforcement actions taken		

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
RDAQ23_Policy	Retrofitting Buildings to support Net Zero Ambitions	Policy Guidance and Development Control	Other	2023	ongoing	RBC		No				Minor regional benefits to NO ₂	Number of buildings retrofitted		In line with ambitions of Reading Climate Action Network. This should reduce the need to rely on gas boilers and solid fuel burning
RDAQ24_Policy	Encourage commercial cooking establishments to incorporate fine particulate filtration systems in their vents	Policy Guidance and Development Control	Other	2025	ongoing	RBC	RBC	No	Not funded	<10k	Planning	Minor regional benefits to PM	Number of businesses reached, percentage of businesses with filtrations systems		
RDAQ25_Policy	Develop a Non-Road Mobile Machinery Emissions Policy	Policy Guidance and Development Control	Air Quality Planning and Policy Guidance	2025	2026	RBC	RBC	No	Not funded	<10k	Planning	Minor regional benefits to PM	Implementation of policy		London have stringent NRMM policies in place to ensure heavy construction vehicles use as low-emission technologies as practically possible, which could be replicated in Reading

Table 5.3 – Air Quality Action Plan Measures: Public Health and Awareness

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
RDAQ26_Public	airAlert service (pollution warning service)	Public information	Via other mechanisms	2024	2024	RBC	RBC/Defra	no	Not funded	£5k CAPEX, £5k OPEX	Planning	No direct influence on pollutant concentrations, but provides the public with the opportunity to better protect themselves from pollution spikes	Implementation, number of subscriptions.	Part of AQ grant bid	Ongoing cost of running service
RDAQ27_Public	School awareness events	Promoting Travel Alternatives	Other	2023	2027	RBC/Design Nature/University of Reading/Stantec	AQ Grant	yes	Funded	£100k-£300k	Planning	No direct influence on pollutant concentrations, but increases awareness	Number of school/pupils reached	AQ grant secured. Programme in development.	
RDAQ28_Public	Health promotion work with NHS	Public information	Other	2023	2027	RBC/NHS/PHE		no	Not funded	£100k-£200k	Planning	No direct influence on pollutant concentrations, but increases awareness			
RDAQ29_Public	Mobility as a Service (MaaS) scheme	Public Information	Via other mechanisms	2023	2027	RBC		no	Not funded		Planning	Minor regional benefits to NO ₂ and PM			Enable travellers to reach destinations confidently and conveniently, without the need for private vehicles, utilising a user-friendly transport

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
															services mobile app
RDAQ30_Public	Increase PM _{2.5} Monitoring to help understanding of levels and sources in Reading	Public Information	Other	2024	2028	RBC/Defra/EA	RBC/EA	no	Not funded	100k-500k	Planning	No direct influence on pollutant concentrations, but enables greater understanding to better target measures in the future	Number of monitoring locations	AQ grant application submitted, EA planning to install monitoring station	Carry out monitoring of PM _{2.5} at more locations in Reading, to better understand current situation and trends.
RDAQ31_Public	Smoke Control Area Awareness Campaign	Public Information	Other	2023	2025	RBC/Defra	RBC	no	Not funded	<10K	Planning	No direct influence on pollutant concentrations, but improves awareness	Publicity measures taken, surveys.	Information on RBC website	Develop and deliver awareness campaign to educate residents of the adverse air quality impacts of solid fuel burning. Materials re-published every winter for maximum impact.
RDAQ32_Public	Bonfire/ garden waste fire awareness campaign	Public Information	Other	2024	2026	RBC	RBC	no	Not funded	<10K	Planning	No direct influence on pollutant concentrations, but improves awareness	Publicity measures taken, letters sent.		Develop and deliver awareness campaign to educate residents of the adverse air quality impacts of burning garden waste/ bonfires. Materials re-published every autumn for maximum impact.

Measure No.	Measure	Category	Classification	Estimated Year Measure to be Introduced	Estimated / Actual Completion Year	Organisations Involved	Funding Source	Defra AQ Grant Funding	Funding Status	Estimated Cost of Measure	Measure Status	Target Reduction in Pollutant / Emission from Measure	Key Performance Indicator	Progress to Date	Comments / Potential Barriers to Implementation
RDAQ33_Public	Engagement in National Clean Air Day	Public information	Other	2024	ongoing	RBC	RBC	no	Not funded	<10k	Planning	No direct influence on pollutant concentrations, but improves awareness	Events held locally, Publicity of campaign.		Encourage schools to be engaged in the topic of air quality. Awareness raising for residents.
RDAQ34_Public	Indoor Air Quality Awareness Campaign	Public Information	Other	2025	ongoing	RBC	RBC	no	Not funded	<10k	Planning	No direct influence on pollutant concentrations, but improves awareness	Publicity measures taken, surveys.		Knowledge of the importance of indoor air quality is starting to pick up traction, but public awareness remains limited. No targets or legislation in place.

Appendix A: Response to Consultation

Table A.1 – Summary of Responses to Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement on the AQAP

Consultee	Category	Response
<Insert consultee e.g. Chamber of Commerce>	<Insert category e.g. Business>	<Insert text e.g. Disagree with plan to remove parking on High Street in favour of buses and cycles; consider it will harm business of members>

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Appendix B: Reasons for Not Pursuing Action Plan Measures

Table B.1 – Action Plan Measures Not Pursued and the Reasons for that Decision

Action category	Action description	Reason action is not being pursued (including Stakeholder views)
<Select from the categories in the blue instruction box above>	<Insert description of measure>	<Insert text here>

Appendix C: Current UK Air Quality Standards and Objectives

Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 requires the Secretary of State to publish a national Air Quality Strategy and gave Local Authorities statutory duties to implement the system of LAQM.

The 2008 Ambient Air Quality Directive (ED/2008/50/EC) sets legally binding limits for concentrations in outdoor air for major air pollutants that impact public health such as particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), to be met before 2010. These directive air quality limits were transposed into UK law and are set out in the Air Quality Strategy as provided in Table C.

Table C: UK Air Quality Standards and Objectives

Pollutant	Averaging Period	Air Quality Standard (AQS) (µg/m ³)	Air Quality Objective (AQO)
Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	1 hour	200	200 µg/m ³ not to be exceeded more than 18 times a year
	Annual	40	40 µg/m ³
Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀)	24 hour	50	50 µg/m ³ not to be exceeded more than 35 times a year
	Annual	40	40 µg/m ³

Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5})	Annual	20	20 µg/m ³
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The objectives adopted in the UK are based on the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000, as amended, for the purpose of Local Air Quality Management. These Air Quality Regulations have been adopted into UK law from the limit values required by European Union Daughter Directives on air quality.

The UKAQS for PM_{2.5} was amended as part of The Environment (Miscellaneous Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

The LAQM process requires all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where an exceedance is considered likely the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives.

Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Description
AQAP	Air Quality Action Plan - A detailed description of measures, outcomes, achievement dates and implementation methods, showing how the local authority intends to achieve air quality limit values'
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area – An area where air pollutant concentrations exceed / are likely to exceed the relevant air quality objectives. AQMAs are declared for specific pollutants and objectives
AQS	Air Quality Strategy
AQO	Air Quality Objective
ASR	Air Quality Annual Status Report
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EU	European Union
WHO	World Health Organisation
LAQM	Local Air Quality Management
NO ₂	Nitrogen Dioxide
NO _x	Nitrogen Oxides
PM ₁₀	Airborne particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10µm (micrometres or microns) or less
PM _{2.5}	Airborne particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 2.5µm or less

O ₃	Ozone
BRT Corridor	Bus Rapid Transit Corridor
IDR	Reading's Inner Distribution Road which surrounds central Reading
AURN	Defra's Automatic Urban and Rural Network of monitoring stations
AQMS	Air Quality Monitoring Station
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
TDP	Reading's Transport Decarbonisation Plan
DfT	Department for Transport
LGV	Light Goods Vehicle – goods vehicles weighing less than 3.5 tonnes.
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle – goods vehicles weighing greater than 3.5 tonnes.
UK-AIR	Defra's UK Air Information Resource
AQSG	Reading's Air Quality Steering Group
EV	Electric Vehicle

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Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

15 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Outcomes of 'The Strategy Room' project
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Peter Moore, Head of Climate Strategy
Lead Councillor	Cllr Ennis, Lead Member for Climate Strategy and Transport
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	1. That the Committee note the outcomes of 'The Strategy Room' project to engage residents in discussions about climate change (to be summarised in a presentation at the Committee meeting).

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 'The Strategy Room' is a project designed to engage people in discussion about climate change led by Nesta, the innovation agency, University College London's Climate Action Unit and Fast Familiar, a Reading-based digital agency. It is described as 'an immersive experience which uses facilitated deliberation, interactive polling and collective intelligence to identify the climate change policies that will best help a local area to reach net zero emissions'; and as 'a way for people to walk in off the street, and within 90 minutes imagine together the benefits of a Net Zero future, and help create a strategy for their local area on how to get there'.
- 1.2 In late 2022 Reading Borough Council was invited to be one of 12 local authorities to take part in the pilot phase of the project. The Council welcomed the opportunity to participate and worked with partners to organise 5 workshops in March 2023 under the project – 3 for residents, 1 for RCCP Board members and 1 for RBC elected members. The project team also worked with the University of Reading who hosted a session so 6 workshops were held in total in Reading with 67 people taking part, over 10% of the total participating in the pilot. Reading also achieved the highest participation rates of any of the 12 pilot areas with a good turnout at all of the workshops.
- 1.3 Following workshops held around the country in spring 2023, the data gathered was analysed and published at a launch event on 12th July 2023. The results can be interrogated via a new website created for the project at strategyroom.uk. The website gives further details of the scenarios and policy prescriptions discussed at the workshops, and enables results from Reading to be compared with the national results.
- 1.4 RBC councillors who participated in the workshop in March 2023 expressed an interest in receiving a presentation on the findings of the project – a presentation from the project team has therefore been arranged for the SEPT Committee meeting on 15th November 2023.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Council declared a climate emergency in February 2019 and worked with partners via the Reading Climate Change Partnership to produce the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25. This was endorsed by the Policy Committee in November 2019. The Strategy emphasises the importance of good communications and public engagement to the delivery of climate action and the invitation to participate in the pilot phase of 'The Strategy Room' project was accepted by the Council in this context.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The outcomes of the pilot phase of the project will be summarised in a presentation to SEPT Committee meeting on 15th November.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The 'Strategy Room' project relates to Corporate Plan themes as follows:
- Healthy Environment: the actions discussed within scope of the project have the potential to contribute to a healthier environment via reducing emissions and the co-benefits arising
 - Thriving Communities: the actions discussed within scope of the project have the potential to contribute to thriving communities by helping them understand climate change and what they can do to respond to the issues it raises.
 - Inclusive Economy: the actions within the scope of the project have the potential to contribute to an inclusive economy as they emphasise the economic benefits and opportunities of taking action on climate change.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Whilst there are no direct climate impacts arising from this report a Climate Impact Assessment has been completed suggesting a low positive impact arising from the project (low because of the limited scale to date).

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The 'Strategy Room' project is a pilot project designed to improve community engagement in decision-making about climate change. Lessons learnt from the pilot phase will be applied to any wider roll-out of the project.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. The project was led by external partners rather than the Council though efforts were made by the project team to encourage participation from a wide cross-section of the population, for example, by offering a voucher of nominal value to encourage participation and holding sessions at different times of day.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. There are none.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. There are none.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background Papers

12.1. There are none.

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Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

15 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Reading Climate Festival 2023 Evaluation
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Donna Pentelow, Assistant Director of Culture and Peter Moore, Head of Climate Strategy
Lead Councillor	Councillor Barnett-Ward, Lead Councillor for Leisure & Culture and Councillor Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the committee note the evaluation of the 2023 Reading Climate Festival as outlined in Appendix 1 and recognise the efforts of the partners 2. That the committee note the impact of Luke Jerram's Gaia on participation and engagement in Reading Climate Festival 2023. 3. That the Committee note the value of arts, culture and creativity in engaging people in wider social issues (in this case, climate change)

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The 2023 Reading Climate Festival took place from 10-21 June with the stated aim of 'inspiring and encouraging positive action on climate change'. The first Reading Climate Festival, curated by the Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN) with support from a range of partners, including the Council, was held in November 2020. This inaugural Festival took the form of a series of on-line events necessitated by the pandemic restrictions in place at the time, with the centrepiece being the launch of the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25. The festival has been held annually since 2020, building a reputation and achieving good levels of participation of around 1000 participants a year. This is a good level of participation particularly in the context of the very limited resources available for its delivery.
- 1.2 The festival is run and curated by the Reading Climate Action Network (RCAN), the public-facing brand of the Reading Climate Change Partnership, a multi-agency partnership for which the Council acts as 'host' and accountable body.
- 1.3 In 2023 RCAN, the Council, the University of Reading and the Reading Economic & Development Agency (REDA) recognised the potential of a partnership approach to deliver against a number of shared objectives:
 - to showcase the important role Reading has played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change;
 - to inform and engage the community about the work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net-zero, climate resilient town by 2030;
 - to inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of our community's effort to address climate change.
- 1.4 The centrepiece of this vision was the exhibition of a major international artwork, Luke Jerram's Gaia, at Reading Town Hall engaging over 13,000 people over 20 events held

across Reading, attracting people from all parts of Reading and the UK. As well as engaging a wide range of people in conversations about climate change, the festival represented a significant cultural, educational and economic event for Reading as a whole. The costs of bringing Gaia to Reading were recovered through income, delivering high value at little or no cost to the public purse.

2 Policy Context

- 2.1 Prior to the adoption of the national 'net zero by 2050' target, Reading Borough Council had declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019, committing to the more ambitious aim of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. In November 2020, the Council subsequently endorsed the new Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (prepared by the Reading Climate Change Partnership) based on the 'net zero by 2030' ambition. The Climate Emergency Strategy recognises the importance of communicating and engaging with the residents and businesses of Reading to deliver this ambition. The Reading Climate Festival was developed as a vehicle to achieve this engagement.
- 2.2 This report covers the evaluation of the Reading Climate Festival 2023, its successes in continuing and growing the climate conversation, engaging new people in that conversation, nurturing strong sector wide partnerships and legacy.

3 Reading Climate Festival Evaluation Findings

Context of the Reading Climate Festival

- 3.1 The Reading Climate Festival was founded in 2020 by Reading Climate Action Network (Reading CAN), the public-facing 'brand' of the Reading Climate Change Partnership, a non-executive, multi-agency body for which the Council serves as 'host' and accountable body. The festival is aimed at helping individuals, communities and organisations understand how they can support Reading's commitment to being a net-zero, climate-resilient town by 2030 (as per the vision set out in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy).
- 3.2 Since 2021 the festival has been held in association with the UK's Great Big Green Week, as aligning with this enabled external funding to be secured. It offers a series of free in-person and online events co-created with the community to inspire and encourage positive action on climate change.
- 3.3 The festival's strategic priorities are: to showcase the important role Reading has played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change; to inform and engage the community about the work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net-zero, climate resilient town by 2030; to inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of our community's effort to address climate change.
- 3.4 To help realise these ambitions and given the ability of arts and culture to reach new audiences and be a vehicle to have wide ranging conversations, Luke Jerram's iconic artwork Gaia was brought to Reading Town Hall as a key focal point for the festival. To manage this event and the wider festival, we built on an existing strong working relationships established during the Year of Culture 2016 and subsequently built on between the University of Reading, REDA, the Reading BIDs, Reading Borough Council and RCAN. This partnership allowed us to share and increase resources to have a greater impact and reach.
- 3.5 Gaia was chosen as a unifying piece of artwork that met all partners' strategic priorities. It was a piece that spanned all our audiences, and which could very easily be linked to the climate narrative in a positive and informative way. It is also internationally known and drew people from other parts of the country.
- 3.6 Gaia was hosted at the Reading Concert Hall from the 10th to the 18th of June 2023. The partnership collaborated to deliver 57 public ticketed sessions, including 'Twilight'

(for evening sessions) and 'Relaxed' (aimed at neurodivergent audiences) events. Sessions were £2 per ticket for over 16s, under 16s were free. There were 10 curated events and 10 school sessions that sat alongside Gaia. An additional 19 events took place as part of the Reading Climate Festival programme.

Key Outcomes from the 2023 Reading Climate Festival

- 3.7 Gaia as part of the Reading Climate Festival, helped engage new people in the climate conversation growing the audience by approximately 1,200% in one year. The combined cooperation and use of each partner's online resources meant that reaching a wider audience was possible. This event put Reading on the map and engaged Reading residents that may not have previously engaged in the festival.
- 12,000 people attended Gaia at the Reading Climate Festival, of which approximately 24% were from outside of the town. A further 1,300 attended other events at the festival.
 - Together the partnership's social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) impressions were 283,772. The Council's reach was 82,893. 100,000 people were reached via newsletters.
 - Via the What'sOnReading.com website the Gaia webpage had 23,615 unique page views (16,649 Unique Users) from the 23rd of March to the 21st of June. This is an impressive number when compared to a Reading favourite, the annual Panto which had 52,049 unique page views (37,844 unique users) for the calendar year of 2022. In three months, Gaia received approximately 45% of the number that the panto got in the whole of 2022.
 - The Committees from both Reading Central and Abbey Quarter Business Improvement Districts (BID), representing over 700 local businesses, voted unanimously to support the installation of Gaia.
 - During the Gaia exhibition, the BID sponsored three separate events developed to engage the local businesses and their workforce: including a talk by bushcraft and survival expert, Ray Mears. This engaged with nearly 300 people from 100 local businesses.
 - The festival enhanced Reading's sense of place and reinforced its identity as a place which is engaged with the climate change issue. In a post-event survey 90% of respondents who were from Reading said Gaia and the ancillary programme made them feel proud of the town.
 - Climate anxiety is a growing concern in the UK, with 80% of those surveyed by Statista¹ having some concern about climate change. Many people report feeling daunted by the enormity of the problem, and by incorporating the RCAN Small Pledge initiative into the booking process we hoped to alleviate this sense of helplessness and give participants a sense of agency.
 - 503 people responded to a post event survey, 25% of respondents were moved to join the climate action conversation as a result of seeing Gaia.
 - The festival engaged young people: The Reading Museum Education Team and University of Reading managed the schools' outreach programme for Gaia engaging with 18 primary schools and 6 secondary schools. We first offered the opportunity to schools in the areas serving those in the most economically deprived areas of Reading. Of those that were invited 11 accepted. Together they reached over 600 school pupils and created online resources that will exist beyond the project.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/426733/united-kingdom-uk-concern-about-climate-change/>

3.8 Conclusions

- 3.9 Using Gaia as the centrepiece of the 2023 Festival increased its reach to c13,000 people compared to previous festival audiences of c1,000, clearly demonstrating the potential of cultural events and the arts to attract new and different people to the climate change discussion.
- 3.10 The inclusion of Gaia in the festival also brought wider benefits to Reading in terms of pride in place, sense of place, partnership working, wider reputation and economic activity, although these have been more challenging to quantify.
- 3.11 Whilst the specific pledges made by participants may be relatively modest in number, the impact of a few can already be seen. For example, 83 households pledged to turn their heating down by 1 degree, this small change represents an approximate saving over 6.3 tons of CO2 emissions a year (full details can be found in the table in appendix one) which is roughly equivalent to the amount of carbon that 289 trees could absorb in a year. Moreover this is not the only measure of the success of the project: the ability to start climate conversations and get people thinking about, talking about and acting on climate change – which are inherently more difficult to measure - was where the real benefits lay.
- 3.12 Plans for the 2024 Reading Climate Festival, centred around Show Your Stripes Day on 21 June, are already in development with the same partners. The partnership is keen to build on the success of the 2023 festival and arts and culture will continue to feature strongly. Full legacy plan can be found in Appendix 1.

4 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 Involvement in the Reading Climate Festival supports the following RBC Corporate Plan strategic priorities:
- **Healthy Environment:** The Reading Climate Festival helps inform our community of the work that is happening locally to tackle climate change and how they can get involved with helping Reading reach a net zero carbon town by 2030.
 - **Thriving Communities:** Many of the events help inform residents of how to reduce their carbon footprint but also their household bills in the process.
 - **Inclusive Economy:** The festival brought people in from outside of Reading, enhancing our tourism offering. Engaged young people in the conversation and addressed climate anxiety.

5 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Although there are no direct climate implications arising from the recommendations in this report, a Climate Impact Assessment has been completed which suggests that the Festival as a whole is likely to have delivered a 'medium positive' impact, based on the significantly increased levels of engagement achieved compared to previous climate festivals.

6 Community Engagement

- 6.1 The evaluation of this project was carried out by Reading Museum volunteers and a post event survey sent out by the Reading Arts and RCAN Team. The responses from audience members and participants formed the basis of this evaluation.
- 6.2 Reading's Youth Council rep for Climate Change was part of the festival's steering group, helping shape the programme and offered feedback on youth engagement.
- 6.3 Work was undertaken with schools from across Reading to engage them in a school's climate summit on Show your Stripes Day.

7 Equality Implications

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report. Efforts were made, however, in the planning and delivery of the Festival to ensure that it was accessible to all and as inclusive as possible by making almost all events free, offering a balance of online and 'in person' events, promoting events via a diverse range of channels, and keeping ticket prices for Gaia at the minimum level required to cover costs.

8 Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1 None to report.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 None to report.

10 Financial Implications

- 10.1 The costs of bringing Gaia to Reading were recovered through ticket income and joint investment from the partners therefore delivering high value at no cost to the public purse. The total cost of the bringing Gaia to Reading was £47,270, all of which was covered through sponsorship from partner organisations (£20,657), UK Shared Prosperity Funding (£10,969) and ticket income (£15,642).

11 Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1 N/A

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. Gaia Evaluation Report

Appendix 1 – Gaia Final Report

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Introduction

In 2023 The Reading Climate Festival was in its fourth year. Over the previous three years it had enjoyed a good level of support from community as well as business organisations. This year there was an opportunity to further grow the festival and extend its reach and therefore impact, by bringing Luke Jerram's Gaia to the Town Hall. It was for this purpose that Reading Borough Council, University of Reading, the Reading BIDs and the Reading Climate Action Network (ReadingCAN) Reading Climate Festival came together.

Through this collaboration, there was the opportunity to work together to programme activity around Gaia in the town hall, jointly raise funding, work through each other's communications networks, share resources and amplify messaging.

Aim of the Reading Climate Festival

Luke Jerram's Gaia was held as part of the Reading Climate Festival. The Festival is held in association with the UK's Great Big Green Week and with the support of Reading's Economic and Destination Agency. Reading Climate Festival offers a series of free in-person and online events to inspire and encourage positive action on climate change.

Founded and curated by [Reading Climate Action Network](#) (ReadingCAN), the festival is aimed at helping individuals, communities and organisations understand how they can support Reading's commitment to being a net-zero, climate-resilient town by 2030.

Gaia

Gaia was hosted at the Reading Town Hall, in the Concert Hall from the 10th to the 18th of June 2023. The partnership collaborated to deliver 57 public tickets sessions, including Twilight (for late night sessions) and Relaxed (aimed at neurodivergent audiences) events, these sessions were £2 per ticket for over 16s, under 16s were free. There were 10 curated events and 10 school sessions that sat alongside Gaia. An additional 19 events took place as part of the Reading Climate Festival programme.

The Purpose

The purpose of the Gaia Exhibition was to deliver against jointly agreed strategic priorities. These included:

1. To showcase the important role Reading has played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change.
2. To inform and engage the community about work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net zero, climate resilient town by 2030.
3. To inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of our community's effort to address climate change.

Evaluation of the event was carried out to understand whether this event met these targets. The results of the evaluation are discussed below.

Why Culture and Creativity as a vehicle?

'A key challenge is that climate change is an unprecedented 'collective action problem that requires agreement, collaboration and shared action among people and organisations that may not normally collaborate...decisions on climate action taken by organisations, communities and individuals will often depend not only on a factual understanding of climate change but the underlying personal values, social and cultural norms, and ability to adapt.'

For this reason there is a growing recognition that climate change constitutes not only an environmental and scientific challenge but a cultural challenge, and that there is a need to make climate change and climate action more meaningful and personally relevant...'²

Because Climate Action and engagement in the Climate Conversation is such a personal journey we need to consider *'other methods of engagement beyond the presentation of scientific facts.'*³

Culture is a powerful *'conduit for public engagement'* and the artists and practitioners are *'agents of change'*⁴ helping us envision a climate resilient future, galvanising people towards shared goals of planetary balance. Over the years, culture and these agents of change have played a key role in catalysing social and political change.

Culture, Art, and Creativity is a proven way to support people's understanding of the natural world, making complicated and sometimes anxiety inducing topics accessible, driving understanding and starting important conversations. It can also support change in behaviours and help people make changes in their lives that will help benefit the bigger picture.

We understand that big changes are needed to truly tackle this challenge that we are all now facing, however, every journey starts with a first step, and that first step cannot be a leap, it needs to feel achievable, manageable and have a measurable change. The aim is to engage those who have traditionally disengaged, give confidence to those who are inactive but want to engage and further

² [12. engaging-the-public-on-climate-change.pdf | Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(unesco.org\)](#)

³ [12. engaging-the-public-on-climate-change.pdf | Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(unesco.org\)](#)

⁴ [What does climate action look like for the Culture and Creative Sector Industries? - Climate-KIC](#)

direct those who are already comfortable with the climate change topic. Culture and creativity can help bridge the gap between all three of these audiences.

Why Gaia?

'Fascinating view of earth. It (Gaia) made me think about how beautiful the earth is and why we should protect it.' Gaia Attendee

Gaia was chosen as a unifying piece of artwork that met all partners' strategic priorities. It was a piece that spanned all our audiences, and its main purpose was not a climate story but one that could very easily be linked to that narrative in a positive and informative way. It is also a piece that is internationally known and will draw people from other parts of the country.

For many people, taking action against climate change feels like an almost unbearable task, facing them too late and with too few options of attack.⁵

At a time when many people are experiencing stress as a result of our 'anxiety-provoking culture'⁶, and two thirds of Britons are experiencing eco anxiety, this is a more gentle 'nudge theory' approach to the Climate Crisis that evokes the Overview Effect⁷.

'I thought the exhibit was quite profound, making me feel in awe of the world and also protective towards the planet. Both good things.' Gaia Attendee

The piece was installed and supported with a view to engaging new people in the conversation and offering possibilities to a situation that can feel quite hopeless.

Putting Reading on the Map

Showcasing the important role Reading has played on the world stage in understanding and addressing climate change.

Gaia helped further highlight Reading as a place that leads on sustainable best practice and spread the word about the ongoing good work that partners are doing to help combat climate change.

The University of Reading collaborated with partners to create a complimentary exhibition, celebrating the work that the partners are doing on a local, national and international stage to combat climate change, but also to promote ways in which people can get involved with climate action.

Reach of the event

12,000 people viewed this exhibition and Gaia, of which approximately 24% were from outside of the town.

'Inspiring and amazing to have this iconic piece of art in Reading.' Gaia Attendee

The collaboration helped extend the reach beyond the realms of each individual organisation, further helping to amplify key climate messaging. Together our social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) impressions were 283,772 and our reach was 82,893.

We communicated directly through newsletters with over 100,000 people from our local community of students, businesses and residents.

Via the What's On website the Gaia webpage had 23,615 unique page views (16,649 Unique Users) from the 23 March to the 21st of June, this is an impressive number when compared to a Reading

⁵ [Why It's Hard to Stay Motivated in the Fight Against Climate Change \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/why-it-s-hard-to-stay-motivated-in-the-fight-against-climate-change-2796187)

⁶ [NOTES ON A NERVOUS PLANET | Kirkus Reviews](#)

⁷ [Overview effect - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overview_effect)

favourite, the Panto which got 52,049 unique page views (37,844 unique users) for the calendar year of 2022.

In three months, Gaia got approximately 45% of the number that the panto got in the whole of 2022.

Local and regional media outlets supported the event, a selection of links to the news articles can be found below:

- <https://rdg.today/gaia-unveiled-in-reading-as-the-climate-festival-gets-underway> and news features can be found below.
- <https://planetradio.co.uk/greatest-hits/berkshire-north-hampshire/news/gaia-art-work-reading/>

It was also covered by ITV Meridian and local radio stations, including BBC Radio Berkshire and Planet Radio.

Gaia was also advertised through the Great West Way and via the GWR networks.

Enhancing Reading's Sense of Place

Pride in place is 'the emotional bond between people and place.'⁸ A sense of place is important for a town, it develops a sense of community and belonging. On the surface this would seem like an arbitrary need, especially in the context of Climate Change.

However, research into developing a locality's sense of place can '*Influence our well-being, how we describe and interact with a place, what we value in a place, our respect for ecosystems and other species, how we perceive the affordances of a place, our desire to build more sustainable and just urban communities, and how we choose to improve cities.*'⁹

*Sense of place plays a key role in predicting and promoting public support for conservation in diverse socioecological contexts.*¹⁰

Although our evaluation was not in-depth enough to explore some of the above outcomes in more detail, we were able to do some high-level research in Pride of Place, which is the emotional connection one feels towards the town they live in. We recognise that more research would need to be done to irrefutably demonstrate the connection between the two concepts. That being said, 90% of those who were from Reading said Gaia and the ancillary programme made them feel proud of the town.

From a partnership point of view, the nature of this event attracted high-profile names in support of the programme. This confidence led to MP Alok Sharma, President of COP26 climate talks, TV weather presenter Laura Tobin, broadcaster Ray Mears and others speaking as part of the programme of events.

Feedback from the project team was that Gaia brought a sense of occasion, similar to the one that is brought about by large festivals. That sense of occasion afforded all partners the confidence to work together to amplify joint messaging and leverage in contacts that may not normally have engaged with this work.

Engaging people in the conversation

To inform and engage the community about work of RCAN/partner organisations in working towards a net zero, climate resilient town by 2030.

In Reading, 'Action on Climate Change' was given the second highest level of dissatisfaction and the second lowest level of satisfaction from people who responded to the Residents' Survey.¹¹

⁸ [Townscapes: Pride in Place | Resources | High Street Task Force \(highstreettaskforce.org.uk\)](#)

⁹ [Sense of Place – The Nature of Cities](#)

¹⁰ [The ecosystem service of sense of place: benefits for human well-being and biodiversity conservation | Environmental Conservation | Cambridge Core](#)

¹¹ [Appendix 12 - Summary of the Results of the Residents Survey 2022.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)

Nationally,

- 70% of British people want politicians to take urgent action to tackle climate change ¹²
- UK wide, two thirds of people are experiencing eco-anxiety and 80% of those surveyed by Statista had some concern about climate change¹³.
- 80% of those surveyed across 17 developed economies said they were willing to make a change to help combat climate change. ¹⁴
- 73% said they were willing to take personal action to help protect our planet

Engaging our communities in the climate conversation, supporting their climate action journey and promoting the work that the partners are doing to combat climate change will help alleviate some of the concerns felt by local residents thereby supporting people's mental wellbeing and sense of agency.

Engaging people in the conversation:

- 12,000 people attended Gaia and the ancillary events curated by the partners, which compares to c.1000 at previous Reading Climate Festivals
- 503 people responded to a post event survey, of those who responded 82% gave the event a 4 star or more
- 25% of respondents were moved to join the climate action conversation as a result of seeing Gaia
- The Committees from both Reading Central and Abbey Quarter Business Improvement Districts (BID), representing over 700 local businesses, voted unanimously to support the installation of Gaia.
- During the installation the BID sponsored three separate events developed to engage the local businesses and workforce. This engaged with nearly 300 people from 100 local businesses.

Engaging new people in the conversation:

A link to where bookers were from in Reading can be found [here](#). This spread of bookers' locations will serve as a benchmark for future events. As can be seen from the map the majority of bookers were from Reading, with the furthest booking being from Australia. Although our aim is to ensure that the climate conversation reaches as many people as possible we do understand that with the cost-of-living crisis and the pressures that people are facing in some of our most economically deprived areas of Reading, that climate action may not be the top of their priorities.

When engaging people in the climate conversation, the primary aim of doing this is ensuring that the conversation is relevant and applicable to their circumstances, and it is possible for them to take part in the conversation without bias or barriers.

In order to do this we employed key principles for the event:

- Making it accessible
 - Low cost or free
 - Accessible events for neurodivergent people
 - Additional support for blind and hard of hearing people
- Not only about the science
 - The event could be engaged with both from a scientific and a pure enjoyment perspective
- Family friendly

¹² <https://www.euronews.com/green/2023/01/18/two-thirds-of-brits-are-struggling-with-climate-anxiety-heres-what-you-can-do-about-it>

¹³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/426733/united-kingdom-uk-concern-about-climate-change/>

¹⁴ [Climate Change Concerns Make Many Around the World Willing to Alter How They Live and Work | Pew Research Center](#)

- This event was about bringing all generations together to experience as individuals or together
- Manageable changes
 - Small pledges

Engaging Young People

‘The climate crisis is taking a growing toll on the mental health of children and young people...eco-anxiety “risks exacerbating health and social inequalities between those more or less vulnerable to these psychological impacts”... Although not yet considered a diagnosable condition, recognition of eco-anxiety and its complex psychological effects was increasing, they said, as was its “disproportionate” impact on children and young people.

...a 2020 survey of child psychiatrists in England showing that more than half (57%) are seeing children and young people distressed about the climate crisis and the state of the environment.’¹⁵

At a local level, No5 Young People’s Counselling found that eco anxiety was the second biggest concern that young people are facing, but that concern is not being expressed in counselling sessions. There are a number of hypotheses as to why this might be the case, one of the beliefs is that this may be around the lack of language to express this concern, work is ongoing to address this.

Through this project the aim was to demonstrate the power of creativity and culture in the context of the school curriculum to support education, engagement and agency around climate action and change.

The Museum Education Team and University managed the schools’ outreach programme for Gaia. Through this programme they engaged with 18 primary schools and 6 secondary schools. First offering the opportunity to schools in the areas serving those in the most economically deprived of Reading.

Together they reach over 600 school pupils and created online resources that will exist beyond the project.

They gave young people the agency to discuss climate action and climate change in a safe environment.

Primary school students were asked two questions after the Gaia viewing:

Question 1: why is Nature important and why should we protect it?

Question 2: What can I do to protect the environment?

They wrote their answers to the first question on flower-shaped post-its which were pinned at the base of a tree to create a visual natural environment for it.

Then they wrote their answers to the second question on leaf-shaped post-its which were pinned to the branches of the trees to show how their efforts and pledges can bring the tree back to life.

¹⁵ [‘Eco-anxiety’: fear of environmental doom weighs on young people | Anxiety | The Guardian](#)



This feedback will be used to inform future work at the Museum and also help create further resources.

Feedback from the schools:

English Martyrs:

"(the session leader) was wonderful- meeting us outside and helping to get us organised. She gave us a lot of information and answered the children's questions with enthusiasm. Our Eco-team at school loved this experience. Having written activities was also great to help children stay focused on "doing"."

Caversham Primary:

"The exhibition was amazing and the session questions had obviously been well thought out and considered. Having three groups in the room at the same time didn't work very well though - we had the quietest guide and we couldn't hear her but could hear the other two guides very loudly. Also, it all seemed a bit rushed - the children didn't have time to just look at the globe and I think there was a wasted opportunity not to go up to the second storey of the hall to look at the amazing exhibit from a different point of view."

Hemdean House:

"This was a unique opportunity for the children and they all found it fascinating. Could have been a little longer."

New Christ Church Primary:

"My class had a brilliant time, the teacher was fantastic and responded so well to the class".

Feeling empowered and Taking Action

Inspire and facilitate individuals/families to make clear pledges to adopt greener behaviours in support of our communities' efforts to address climate change.

*"Fear of the unknown and fear of not having control may contribute to people who feel stuck," says Gulotta. "Taking small steps in a way that makes them feel they are in control of their own actions may make them feel less stressed and less fearful."*¹⁶

Through this programme over 100 people signed up to the RCAN Climate Pledge. Although a small proportion of those who visited, it is a good start. As a partnership we will be aiming to develop this scheme and support people to continue their climate journey.

¹⁶ [Why It's Hard to Stay Motivated in the Fight Against Climate Change \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/why-it-s-hard-to-stay-motivated-in-the-fight-against-climate-change-278616)

The 15 options that are offered to those signing up are mostly measurable. The impact from these small changes is listed below and will be shared with the developing community that RCAN is creating – through their mailing list growth campaign among other things – to help spur people on and build confidence around engaging in climate action.

Pledge	Number Assumptions: Each person is responsible for a household	Possible Impact**
Turn heating down by 1c	83	Approximate saving of 1530kw a year per household and 10-13% on their bills. Total: 1530kw x 83 households = 126,990 kw Approximate Carbon Saving of 126,990 kw x 50g Co2 ¹⁷ emissions per kwh = 6,349,500g Co2 emissions
Switching appliances off at the wall	70	¹⁸ Average saving per household of £60/45kgCO2e p.a. by switching off at the wall. This would equate to: 45kg x 70 households = 3150Co2 Kg savings a year
Take a shower instead of a bath	79	Taking a shower every day instead of a bath every day, saves a person 3650 gallons a year. 3650gallons x 79 = 288,350 gallons a year saving ¹⁹
Wash clothes at 30c and only a full load	75	Approximately £13 saving a year per household
Tap water only and use reusable bottle	84	Carbon footprint of making a plastic bottle of water approx. 82.9g of Co2 ²⁰ and 5.3litres of water ²¹ Assumption that people may buy 3 bottles of water a month. (3*12)*84= 3024 bottles of water saved 3024 * 82.9g Co2 =251,000 3024*5.3litres = 16000 litres
Eat local and mainly vegetable based diet	71	1 vegetarian day per week (52 days a year) can save nearly 100kgs of CO2 per year.

¹⁷ [Carbon Dioxide Emissions From Electricity - World Nuclear Association \(world-nuclear.org\)](https://world-nuclear.org)

¹⁸ [Guide to choosing home appliances - Energy Saving Trust](#)

¹⁹ [How Much Money Can You Save a Year by Taking a Shower Instead of a Bath? | Budgeting Money - The Nest](#)

²⁰ [What Is the Carbon Footprint of a Plastic Bottle? | Sciencing](#)

²¹ [The Water Footprint of Your Plastic Bottle - FoodPrint](#)

		1 vegetarian week per month (12 weeks a year) can save nearly 153kgs of CO2 per year. 1 vegan day per week (52 days a year) can save nearly 143kgs of CO2 per year. 1 vegan week per month (12 weeks a year) can save nearly 231kgs of CO2 per year. ²²
Change supplier to a sustainable energy supplier	80	Each household could save approximately 1 tonne of CO2 per year by switching ²³
Recycle	84	You could save approximately 61kg a month of CO2 ²⁴
Walk, cycle or scoot to the shops and short journeys	70	Those who switch just one trip per day from car driving to cycling reduce their carbon footprint by about 0.5 tonnes over a year, representing a substantial share of average per capita ²⁵ CO2 emissions Introducing our new carbon calculator (stepcount.org.uk)
Avoid fast fashion	80	Recycling Carbon Footprint Savings Calculator [2023] (recyclewits.com)
Buy products without plastic	82	On average people produce 68 pounds of plastic waste per year. For every 1lb of plastic waste it creates 3lbs of Co2 during the manufacturing process. Therefore 68lbs x 3= 204lbs of Co2 per person 204lbsx82= 16,728 ²⁶²⁷
Write to MP about Climate Change	48	Why it's worth contacting your MP about the environment – even if they don't seem to care Greenpeace UK
Use Ecosia	47	Reading specific link for Reading Residents to use - https://ecosia.co/readingplantstreets
Find out more about RCAN and local work	68	

²² [How much carbon could you save by going veggie or vegan every so often? - Exeter City Council News](#)

²³

[Everything You Need To Know About Switching To A Sustainable Energy Supplier | HuffPost UK Tech \(huffingtonpost.co.uk\)](https://www.huffpost.co.uk/tech/everything-you-need-to-know-about-switching-to-a-sustainable-energy-supplier/)

²⁴ [Recycling Carbon Footprint Savings Calculator \[2023\] \(recyclewits.com\)](https://recyclewits.com/)

²⁵ [Ditching the car for walking or biking just one day a week cuts carbon footprint | Imperial News | Imperial College London](#)

²⁶ [Food Packaging Waste Statistics: Understanding the Rise of Food Packaging Waste - Environment Co](#)

²⁷ [How Much Plastic Does One Person Use in a Day? - Naturaler](#)

** We understand that exact calculations can be very difficult to ascertain, however, every effort has been made to use reputable sources to come to an informed possible impact of the pledges.

Conclusions

- By increasing the reach of the Festival to c13,000 people compared to previous Festival audiences of c1,000, using Gaia as the centrepiece of the 2023 Festival clearly demonstrated the potential of cultural events and the arts to attract new and different people to the climate change discussion
- The inclusion of Gaia in the Festival also brought wider benefits to the town in terms of pride in place, partnership working, wider reputation and economic activity
- Whilst the specific pledges made by participants may be relatively modest in number, the impact of a few can already be seen, moreover this is not the only measure of the success of the project: the ability to start climate conversations and get people thinking about, talking about and acting on climate change – which are inherently more difficult to measure - was where the real benefits lay

Legacy from the project

-see the benefits of engaging in art to start and continue important conversations

- engaging new audiences

Target	How	Lead(s)
Continue to build and develop the partnership created through Reading Climate Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the steering group on a quarterly basis for the Climate Festival and collaborate on future Climate Festival projects • Rotate Chairs to ensure that each organisation has equal engagement in the project • Develop a Terms of Reference for the Steering Group • Agree a JD for Chair and Co-Chair 	RBC, UoR, BID, RCAN, Reading Youth Council
Jointly curate a headline programme of creative/cultural-events or a creative/cultural event for future Reading Climate Festivals, as well as a programme of action-oriented hybrid events focused on supporting the objectives of Reading's climate strategy	Agree a timeline for sign off	
Evaluation of each programme to ensure that it fits with the strategic priorities of each of the partners	A jointly penned and agreed informal partnership understanding	

Continue to support the development of the pledges initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly work to encourage pledging sign- up • Continually develop the initiative to ensure that it meets with the strategic priorities of Reading 	
Continue to advocate for young people's mental wellbeing in the context of eco-anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allyship training • Eco-anxiety training • Engage young people in the climate festival 	

Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

15 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Strategic Transport Schemes Update
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Chris Maddocks, Strategic Transport Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	The Committee is asked to: 1. Note the progress made on delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes as summarised in this report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the latest progress with the delivery of the programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. This programme includes major enhancements to public transport and active travel facilities, aimed at encouraging more healthy lifestyles and helping to address the Climate Emergency.
- 1.2. The current programme includes the following schemes and initiatives:
 - Bus Service Improvement Plan Programme
 - South Reading Bus Rapid Transit
 - Reading West Station Upgrade
 - Tilehurst Station Upgrade
 - Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme
 - Bath Road Active Travel Scheme
 - Active Travel Behavioural Change Programme
 - School Streets Programme

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Council's current Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets the transport strategy for Reading up to 2026. Development of a new LTP, the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, has progressed with the core principles of the strategy linked to wider objectives including health and wellbeing, economic growth and social inequalities, improved air quality and the Climate Emergency. The strategic transport schemes included within this report are fully aligned with both the existing and new LTP, with the delivery of each individual scheme a key component of achieving the overall vision and objectives of the strategy.
- 2.2. The LTP sets the context and overarching vision for future transport provision in Reading, with sub-strategies providing more detailed implementation plans for specific topics. These form the basis for preparing funding proposals to deliver key elements of each sub-strategy, including the Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan and the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

3. The Proposal

Bus Service Improvement Plan Programme

- 3.1. The Council adopted its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in October 2021, setting out plans to enhance services and encourage more people to travel by bus in Reading. The BSIP was fully aligned with the objectives of the National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better'. Following a thorough review and detailed discussions with officials from the Department for Transport (DfT), the Council was awarded £26.263m grant funding in January 2023, which was the third highest funding award (per head of population) in the country.
- 3.2. As required by Government, the Council subsequently developed an Enhanced Partnership (EP) agreement with all local bus operators; and convened an EP Board with the major operators to oversee the development and delivery of the BSIP programme. Essentially the EP agreement sets out our commitment to deliver, in partnership with the operators, the schemes that the Council has been awarded grant funding for from Government.
- 3.3. The BSIP programme includes a range of both capital and revenue measures, with the funding award consisting of £15.939m capital and £10.324m revenue grant funding. The key elements of the programme are set out below:

Capital schemes:

- Phase 5 of the South Reading BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) scheme.
- Programme of new bus lanes on key routes in the Borough.
- Improvements to passenger facilities at MereOak Park & Ride site.
- Package of town centre public transport enhancements, bus signal priority measures and improvements for passengers at bus stops.

Revenue initiatives:

- Introduction of a multi-operator fares discount scheme.
 - Programme of bus service enhancements including for Route 9, Buzz 42 and park & ride services.
 - Comms and engagement programme to publicise the enhancements delivered through the BSIP programme.
 - Development of initial proposals for future bus priority measures in the borough.
 - Management of the EP arrangements and programme delivery support.
- 3.4. Delivery of the BSIP programme commenced with the launch of the Reading All-Bus ticket discount scheme in March 2023. This sets a daily cap for travel within Reading to ensure no one pays more than a set fare for unlimited travel undertaken in a day. The offer includes travel on services operated by Reading Buses, Thames Travel, Arriva and Thames Valley Buses. In addition, tap-on tap-off contactless payment on all the main operators has been introduced from 1 November 2023, with an introductory offer of £3 for all-day travel until 31 December 2023 which is funded by the BSIP grant. The All-Bus ticket scheme has proved extremely popular to date, with over 730k tickets sold in the first 6 months of operation, saving residents in Reading over £500k in fares as a result. The all-day discount scheme also complements the Government's national £2 single fare scheme.
 - 3.5. Enhancements to bus services have been progressed, with the operation of Route 9 services awarded to Reading Buses in September 2023 following a competitive procurement process. This contract includes the provision of services between Whitley and Green Park Station to ensure local residents can fully benefit from the new station facility which was delivered by the Council and opened in May 2023. A procurement

process is currently underway for the provision of enhanced BUZZ 42 services that are currently fully funded by special ringfenced private sector contributions secured through the planning process. The BSIP funded enhancements will provide an improved service connecting the significant residential developments at Kenavon Drive, the town centre, new Rivermead leisure centre and the forthcoming secondary school on Richfield Avenue.

- 3.6. Development of the programme of capital schemes is being progressed, with detailed design completed and a competitive procurement process undertaken to appoint a contractor to deliver the next phase of works for the South Reading BRT scheme. An initial public consultation has been undertaken on the concept designs for the proposed programme of bus lanes for the Oxford Road (x2), Bath Road, Southampton Street and London Road (x2). Feedback from this consultation is being incorporated into the detailed designs prior to a statutory consultation being undertaken, which will ultimately inform the decision on whether to proceed with each scheme. In addition, design work for the passenger enhancements at MereOak Park & Ride site is being undertaken and delivery of the programme of bus stop passenger enhancements is on-going.

South Reading Bus Rapid Transit

- 3.7. The South Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme is a series of bus priority measures on the A33 growth corridor, with the overall vision of creating a dedicated fast-track public transport priority route between MereOak Park & Ride and Reading town centre. The current scheme which is being delivered in phases as external funding is secured, which in future has the potential to become a guided-bus, tram or autonomous shared vehicle system.
- 3.8. The first four phases of the scheme have been delivered with over £15m external funding secured from the Local Growth Fund and fettered developer contributions secured through the planning process. Phase 4 was constructed last year, which includes an outbound bus lane between Rose Kiln Lane and Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island), and the upgrade of the traffic signals to an intelligent Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuation (MOVA) method of control at the Bennet Road gyratory to improve traffic flows on this key corridor.
- 3.9. Funding for phase 5 of the scheme has been secured as part of the overall BSIP grant as set out above. This phase will link up existing outbound bus lanes delivered through previous phases through the construction of an additional lane over the River Kennet, between the junctions with Rose Kiln Lane (South) and Kennet Island. This will complete the outbound section of the scheme, which would enable future funding bids to focus on delivery of the remaining inbound sections, which could logically be split into four distinct phases depending on the level of funding available through individual funding opportunities. The future potential adaption of the scheme into a guided bus or tram system would require further investment in the necessary infrastructure and vehicles at that time.

Reading West Station Upgrade

- 3.10. A Masterplan setting out a vision for significant enhancements to Reading West Station and the wider interchange has been prepared by the Council, in partnership with GWR and Network Rail. This includes enhanced passenger facilities, security improvements and enhancements to both the Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road station entrances.
- 3.11. External funding of over £4.5m has been secured to deliver the first phase of the Masterplan works, which includes grant funding from the Local Growth Fund, developer contributions secured through the planning process and funding directly from Great Western Railway (GWR). The current phase of works includes provision of a new station building on the Oxford Road with associated interchange works, increased cycle parking and a new ticket barrier at the Tilehurst Road station entrance. The scheme will provide safety and security improvements at both entrances through enhanced CCTV coverage and lighting, which have been designed with input from the British Transport Police.

- 3.12. Construction of the highway alterations and interchange improvements on the Oxford Road to accommodate the new station building are complete and subsequently GWR's contractors took possession of the southern footway for construction of the new passenger building. Works for the new building are substantially complete by GWR and it is anticipated that the footway will be reopened and traffic management measures removed imminently, with the new station building opening once the railway industry sign-off process have been completed by GWR and Network Rail. The new entrance and gateline at the Tilehurst Road entrance has been completed and opened by GWR.
- 3.13. The current scheme includes passive provision for accessibility enhancements within the new station building, however Network Rail's position is that lifts cannot be delivered at the station until a full platform rebuild is undertaken to deliver the necessary minimum platform widths to meet accessibility requirements. Therefore, the Council will continue to work with railway partners including Network Rail to seek opportunities to secure funding for these key elements of the overall Masterplan for the station.

Tilehurst Station Upgrade

- 3.14. The Council is working with Network Rail and GWR to develop a series of proposals to upgrade passenger facilities at Tilehurst Station, and funding is being sought to develop an agreed Masterplan. This would include enhancements within the station and for the wider interchange, including improved access arrangements to/from the station.
- 3.15. Network Rail has secured £4m funding from Government for the first phase of works to deliver accessibility improvements through the installation of lifts at the station. They will be installed within the existing station footbridge which had been designed with passive provision for lifts. When complete, these works will provide step free access to all platforms at the station.
- 3.16. A prior notification application was submitted to the Council by Network Rail in May 2023 and subject to securing the necessary consents, it is anticipated that construction works will commence on-site by Network Rail's contractor in the new year.

Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme

- 3.17. Delivery of the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is being undertaken in phases as external funding is secured. The Shinfield Road active travel scheme is a key element of this plan; which will provide segregated cycle facilities and pedestrian improvements on a key route between residential areas in south Reading, the University of Reading, Royal Berkshire Hospital and the town centre.
- 3.18. External funding of £1.4m has been secured to deliver the scheme, including grant funding from Active Travel England. An initial consultation on the concept designs for the scheme was undertaken in autumn 2021, which included a public drop-in event held at the University of Reading. Feedback from this consultation was incorporated into the final detailed designs and the statutory consultation on the required Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to implement double yellow line parking restrictions along the route was approved by the Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee in March 2022.
- 3.19. Construction of the scheme is being undertaken by the Council's in-house Highways team, with a degree of sub-contracting which is being managed by the Highways department. Construction works commenced at the University / Christchurch Green end of the route and works are due to be completed in the new year.

Bath Road Active Travel Scheme

- 3.20. The active travel scheme on Bath Road is another key element of the Council's LCWIP, which will provide a segregated cycle route and pedestrian improvements on this key route between residential areas in west Reading and the town centre.
- 3.21. External funding of £2.5m has been secured to deliver the scheme, including grant funding from Active Travel England. An initial consultation on the concept designs for the scheme was undertaken in summer 2022, which included a public drop-in event held at the Reading Association for the Blind on Carey Street. The detailed scheme designs have

been prepared to incorporate feedback received through this consultation, including elements of the scheme that require a TRO statutory consultation which was approved by the Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee in March 2023.

- 3.22. A competitive procurement process is currently being undertaken to appoint a contractor to deliver the scheme, with construction works due to commence on-site early in the new year.

Active Travel Behavioural Change Programme

- 3.23. The Council has secured over £370k revenue grant funding from Government to deliver an active travel behavioural change programme, aimed at supporting a shift in travel behaviour to walking, cycling and scooting. This programme complements the segregated cycle routes and enhanced pedestrian facilities being delivered through the active travel capital schemes on Shinfield Road and Bath Road.
- 3.24. Delivery of this programme of initiatives is on-going, including the provision of adult cycle training and cycle maintenance courses in addition to the training being provided to children in schools through the Bikeability programme. The Council is working in partnership with Sustrans to deliver behavioural change initiatives through a dedicated officer as a joint Sustrans resource in partnership with Bracknell Forest Council. Activities undertaken to date include provision of led rides and walks, supporting schools with the delivery of Modeshift STARS travel planning activities, and working with partners to support events including Reading Cycle Festival and the Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel.
- 3.25. This programme of initiatives includes support for the delivery of secure cycle parking facilities in the town centre, following representations to the Council from local groups with a strong desire to be involved in the delivery and on-going management of such a facility. Despite good progress being made and arrangements agreed with Primark for a secure cycle parking hub to be located in their premises at West Street, Primark subsequently pulled out of the agreement and therefore the Council is currently seeking a new partner and premises for this facility.

School Streets Programme

- 3.26. The Council launched a School Street application process and guidance in spring 2020, after securing £175k revenue grant funding from Government. To date, School Street schemes have been implemented at Park Lane Primary Junior School (Downing Road and Lambourne Close), Wilson Primary School (Wilson Road), Thameside Primary School (Harley Road) and most recently on Crescent Road in east Reading. The scheme on Crescent Road is a joint scheme for Maiden Erleigh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School.
- 3.27. The School Street schemes have been initially established as trials under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), which includes a 6-month statutory consultation period to provide the opportunity for comments and objections to the scheme to be submitted to the Council. The Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee provided approval for the schemes at Park Lane Junior, Wilson and Thameside Primary schools to be made permanent in June 2022, and the Crescent Road scheme in June 2023.
- 3.28. Applications to establish new School Street schemes are being encouraged and a public drop-in event for a potential scheme for Civitas Academy (Great Knollys Street) took place in September 2023 as part of a wider consultation with parents and local residents. In addition, monitoring of the existing schemes to identify any improvements which can be made to help encourage walking and cycling for children, parents and carers is being undertaken.
- 3.29. In conclusion, this report provides the Committee with an overview of the latest position with the delivery of individual schemes and initiatives which make up the programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. The Committee will be kept informed of the latest developments through regular progress reports to future meetings.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
- Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 4.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
- People first
 - Digital transformation
 - Building self-reliance
 - Getting the best value
 - Collaborating with others
- 4.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.
- 4.4. The delivery of the programme of strategic transport schemes will help to deliver the three service priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan of Healthy Environment, Thriving Communities and Inclusive Economy by providing high-quality, affordable transport options which will help to reduce congestion, improve air quality and help to encourage more healthy lifestyles.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in our Climate Emergency Strategy this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions, however significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.
- 5.2. The Climate Impact Assessment tool has been used to assess the full programme of works as set out within this report, resulting in an overall Net Medium Positive impact. This is due to the programme being focused on encouraging the use of sustainable transport, walking and cycling as attractive alternatives to the private car. The programme will enhance facilities to encourage more use of sustainable transport and active travel options, and therefore reduce the use of the private car and resulting congestion, carbon emissions and other air quality issues. There are inevitably emissions associated with the construction of these major schemes, however we are working to reduce these short-term impacts in order to achieve the longer-term modal switch benefits.
- 5.3. In addition, the delivery of the major transport schemes as set out within this report form a vital part of our overall transport and climate emergency strategies, which has achieved considerable success in recent years including bus usage in Reading being the second highest in the country outside of London, having increased by 23% since 2010, and around 35% of trips into Reading town centre being made by pedestrians and cyclists.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The schemes included within the current major transport scheme programme have and will be communicated to the local community through public exhibitions, consultations and Council meetings.

- 6.2. Statutory consultation will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation, including Traffic Regulation Orders as appropriate. Notices will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and will be erected on lamp columns within the affected area.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The Council, and where appropriate partner delivery organisations, have carried out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise on all of the projects included within the current major transport scheme programme.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. The creation of and changes to existing Traffic Regulation Orders will require Cemex advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. These procedures have been and will continue to be completed at the relevant time.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The capital schemes included within the strategic transport schemes programme are included in the Council's Capital Programme which includes the funding profile for each scheme. This programme of works is funded by external grants and funding contributions which have been secured from various external sources as set out within the report. Both the capital and revenue schemes and initiatives within this programme are monitored regularly as part of the Council's internal budget monitoring processes.
- 10.2. Specific grant conditions are attached to the individual external grants which have been secured to fund the delivery of the programme of schemes and initiatives as set out within this report. These conditions relate to both the type of works that the grants can be used to fund and the timescales within which the funding needs to be spent. Failure to meet these conditions may result in the Council being required to repay the grant funding, either in part or in full.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. The latest timetables for implementation of the individual schemes and initiatives which make up the full programme are set out within the report.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

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Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

15 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Local Plan Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Mark Worringham, Planning Policy Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Local Plan Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content (Appendix 1) be approved for consultation. 2. That the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Local Plan Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning, prior to consultation. 3. That the amended Local Development Scheme (Appendix 2) be agreed.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted in 2019. There is a statutory requirement to undertake a review of a local plan within five years of adoption. A Local Plan Review to comply with this requirement identified that there was a need to undertake a Partial Update of the Local Plan, and this was agreed by this committee on 23rd March (Minute 36 refers). This committee also agreed a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which set out the timetable for undertaking the Partial Update. This included a 'regulation 18' consultation around the content of the update beginning in November or December 2023.
- 1.2. This report therefore recommends undertaking consultation on the scope and content of the Local Plan Partial Update. A proposed consultation document is set out at Appendix 1. This consults on the proposed approach to those policies that form part of the Partial Update, including matters such as the overall provision of housing as well as consulting on sites that have been put forward for consideration for development.
- 1.3. This report also recommends some small amendments to the agreed LDS. These updates mainly affect the timetable for production of supplementary planning documents (SPDs), and do not amend the timetable for undertaking the Partial Update. These are set out in Appendix 2.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted by Council on 4th November 2019 (Minute 28 refers). Since that point, the Local Plan has been the main consideration in determining planning applications within Reading.
- 2.2. There is a statutory duty for local planning authorities to review their local plans within five years of the adoption date. Such a review should determine whether there is a need to update the Local Plan in full or in part. A review of the Reading Borough Local Plan was

therefore required to be undertaken by 4th November 2024. This review was reported to this Committee on 23rd March 2023 (Minute 36 refers) and identified a need to carry out a Partial Update of the Local Plan.

- 2.3. Changes to national policy and guidance, in particular in relation to the level of housing need for the authority, represent particular reasons why plans or individual policies may require updating. There have been a variety of changes to national policy, including a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021 and an updated version of the standard methodology for assessing housing need which places particular emphasis on the largest urban areas (including Reading) for delivering housing. This was the main reason that a need to update the Local Plan was identified, but there are a number of individual reasons for the particular policies.
- 2.4. This Committee on 23rd March 2023 also agreed a Local Development Scheme (LDS) (Minute 36 refers), which sets out a timetable for carrying out the Local Plan Partial Update. It also expects publication of a number of supplementary planning documents (SPDs).

3. The Proposal

Current position

- 3.1 The LDS approved in March 2023 sets out the timetable for the Local Plan Partial Update. It identifies that a 'Regulation 18' consultation would take place between November/December 2023 and January 2024. Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires that local planning authorities consult on the subject of a local plan that the local planning authority proposes to prepare, but it does not require that this be a full draft. The LDS anticipates that this will be the first of two consultation stages on the Partial Update.
- 3.2 The LDS also expects publication of a Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD in June 2023, a Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD in November 2023 and a Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD in November 2023.
- 3.3 In terms of the Partial Update, the Council undertook a call for sites to be nominated for development or other designations which took place between April and June 2023. This resulted in 17 additional sites being nominated for development within Reading Borough, as well as a number of changes to existing allocated sites. The additional sites nominated were as follows:

Site	Ward	Area (ha)	Proposed use
Aquis House, 49-51 Forbury Road and 33 Blagrove Street	Abbey	0.42	Offices & residential
Sapphire Plaza, Watlington Street and Royal Court, Kings Road	Abbey	0.40	Residential & commercial
Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane	Coley	2.03	Residential & retail
72 Berkeley Avenue	Coley	0.33	Residential
John Lewis Depot, Mill Lane	Katesgrove	0.37	Residential
Land at 9 Upper Crown Street	Katesgrove	0.35	Residential
Tunbridge Jones, Cradock Road	Katesgrove	0.69	Residential
Land at 132-134 Bath Road	Southcote	0.51	Residential or mixed residential & commercial
Land west of Milford Road	Thames	0.86	Residential
Crowne Plaza Reading, Caversham Bridge	Thames	1.29	Hotel with residential and/or residential care and/or filling station/EV charging
2 Norman Place	Thames	0.55	Residential

Reading Bridge House, George Street	Thames	0.40	Residential
Tesco Extra, Napier Road (part of car park)	Thames	0.88	Residential
Kennet Place, Kings Road	Thames	0.29	Residential conversion
Part of Reading College, Kings Road	Thames	0.51	Residential
Land at Green Park Village, Flagstaff Road	Whitley	0.24	Residential
Former Sales and Marketing Suite, Drake Way	Whitley	0.25	Residential

Local Plan Partial Update

- 3.4 The proposal is to undertake a consultation on scope and content for the Local Plan Partial Update, in line with the timetable set out in the LDS. This consultation will be undertaken under Regulation 18 of the Regulations. The proposed consultation document is set out at Appendix 1.
- 3.5 The consultation document does not include draft policies at this stage, rather it outlines the proposed approach for updating each of the policies that form part of the Partial Update and asks targeted questions to garner stakeholders' views on the proposed direction of travel. Draft policies will be contained in the Pre-Submission Draft stage, planned for August 2024.
- 3.6 The key question for the consultation is around housing provision. The consultation document therefore asks questions about the number of homes that the relevant updated policy (H1) should plan for. H1 currently provides for 689 homes per year. However, the new standard methodology referred to in paragraph 2.3 would result in a much increased figure of 877 homes per year. The Council has also commissioned evidence of local need which has resulted in an alternative figure of around 735 homes per year, whilst the estimated capacity is around 800 homes per year. The proposed approach is that housing provision should be based around the capacity figure of 800 per year.
- 3.7 The proposed consultation document includes proposals for additional sites for development or other uses. It asks for views on the potential inclusion of all additional sites that have been nominated through the call for sites, whilst being clear that the Council has not made a decision on whether or not the site should be included. This is the only opportunity to consult on these sites prior to producing a full draft document. Many of these sites may not be considered suitable for inclusion when a full draft is produced, and the consultation document includes substantial caveats, but it is vital that they are subject to community involvement to ensure that any decision on inclusion or exclusion is as robust as possible.
- 3.8 The recommended action is to agree the Draft Consultation on Scope and Content for consultation. Consultation would be undertaken between November 2023 and January 2024, and the results of consultation will inform the next stage of the plan, a Pre-Submission Draft.

Local Development Scheme

- 3.9 Some changes are required to the timescales set out in the LDS, in particular in relation to the SPDs. The Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD is particularly related to the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain as part of the Environment Act 2021, but not all of the guidance and regulations are yet in place to allow this document to be drafted in full. Progress on the other two SPDs has slowed in order to prioritise the Local Plan process. It is proposed that the timescales of all three documents be amended to ensure that a draft come to the March meeting of this committee.
- 3.10 No changes are proposed to the Local Plan Partial Update timetable.
- 3.11 A tracked changes version of the LDS is set out in Appendix 2. The proposal is to approve this as the latest version.

Other options considered

- 3.12 The production of the Local Plan in line with the timetable identified in the LDS has already been agreed. Therefore, the alternative options are mainly around the format and content of the document.
- 3.13 In a general sense, an alternative option to the format of the consultation document would have been to have included full draft policies at this stage. However, this was not considered appropriate because it could have involved considerable work on policy drafting that may have been abortive if the overall policy direction was not considered appropriate once it had been subject to consultation. There will still be an opportunity for consultation on the draft policy wording when the Pre-Submission Draft is subject to consultation in August 2024.
- 3.14 In terms of the more specific content, there are a number of alternative options for each of the policy approaches within the document. Where these alternative options are reasonable and potentially achievable, they are described within the document itself, together with a summary of any implications of those options.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Local Plan Partial Update, through setting out the way Reading will develop to 2036, will contribute to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2022/25:
- Healthy environment: through ensuring that policies are up to date to achieve the highest environmental standards in development, respond to the Environment Act and incorporate the approach of the Local Transport Plan;
 - Thriving communities: through ensuring that housing needs are met insofar as possible, including affordable housing of the right tenure to meet Reading's needs; and
 - Inclusive economy: through updating policies to meet development needs for economic development uses.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. There is a requirement to undertake a sustainability appraisal of each stage of a Local Plan document. A sustainability appraisal assesses the impact of each policy, proposal and alternative option against a range of sustainability objectives covering environmental, economic and social matters. A Sustainability Appraisal of the Consultation on Scope and Content has been prepared and will be published alongside the consultation as a background document. The environmental and climate implications of each policy and option are considered as part of that document.
- 5.2. In general terms, the most significant climate implications are that proposed approach would see more ambitious proposals for the energy efficiency of developments. The proposed updates to policies CC2 and H5 seek to further improve the performance of non-residential and residential developments respectively to continue to ensure that Reading's policies are of a level of ambition necessary to address the Climate Emergency. In addition, updates are proposed to policies CC3 and CC4 to strengthen requirements around climate change adaptation and the provision of decentralised energy respectively.
- 5.3. In terms of the level of development proposed, the sustainability appraisal highlights that new development will have environmental and climate implications in terms of matters such as emissions, resource use and waste generation, and highlights the need for these to be mitigated as part of the planning application process, in part through the application of updated development management policies as outlined above.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. It is vital that the widest community engagement on the Partial Update takes place at the very earliest stage, as this is an opportunity for the public and other consultees to have most influence on how the plan develops and what areas it deals with. It is proposed that this begins towards the end of November 2023, in line with the LDS. As this would involve consulting over the Christmas and New Year period, it is proposed that the statutory six-week period be increased to eight weeks. This would mean concluding the consultation in late January.
- 6.2. Consultation will take place in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, which was adopted in March 2014. This lists the following measures as being potentially appropriate for this stage of plan preparation.
- Interactive workshops;
 - Questionnaires;
 - Leaflet drops across a defined area;
 - Exhibitions, particularly in locations and at times which would maximise the number of people not previously involved in planning matters attending, e.g. shopping centres;
 - Online resources, including interactive webpages or questionnaires;
 - Forum discussions, which could include specific groups such as developer/landowner forums.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. As set out in relation to section 5, a Sustainability Appraisal of the Consultation on Scope and Content has been prepared and will be published alongside the consultation. One of the sustainability objectives that to "Avoid significant negative effects on groups or individuals with regard to race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation", and it therefore addresses the equality implications of the policies.
- 7.2. In broad terms, the following implications have been identified:
- Policy H2, Density and mix: the effects would be positive in terms of age due to increasing provision of family housing;
 - Policy H5, Housing standards: the effects would be positive due to updates to reflect the need for wheelchair accessible homes;
 - Policy H7, Accommodation for vulnerable people: the effect would be significantly positive due to any update to account for needs for people requiring care or other forms of specific accommodation;
 - Policy H8, Residential conversions: there would be both positive and negative effects in terms of age, as the retention of family housing benefitting children could come at the expense of HMOs which often house young adults;
 - Site Cen8, Crowne Plaza: effects on age would be positive of any of the options that include residential care.
 - Site Sou1, Reading Link Retail Park: effects on age would be positive if there is a focus on family housing.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1 There are none

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Local Plan documents, including updates, are produced under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The process for producing local plans is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Regulation 18 states that a local planning authority should consult on what a local plan should contain. This Local Plan Partial Update Proposed Approach has been produced within this Regulation 18 requirement.

9.2. Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) states that local planning authorities must prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme. The LDS should specify:

- The local development documents that will be development plan documents;
- The subject matter and geographical area of the documents;
- Which documents are to be prepared jointly;
- Any matter or area for which the authority have agreed a joint committee;
- The timetable for the preparation of Local Development Documents; and
- Any other prescribed matters.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 The Local Plan Partial Update will be funded from existing budgets. The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:-

1. Revenue Implications

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Employee costs (see note1)	80	18	-22
Other running costs	100	10	-43
Capital financings costs	0	0	0
Expenditure	180	28	-65
Income from:			
Fees and charges (see note2)	0	0	0
Grant funding	0	0	0
(specify)			
Other income	0	0	0
Total Income	0	0	0
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)	180	28	-65

10.2 The net cost of the Local Plan is reflected in existing budgets.

2. Capital Implications

10.3 There are no capital implications.

3. Value for Money (VFM)

10.4 As part of the budget setting process, the business case included alternate options which could deliver different outcomes including not to undertake an update and to undertake an update with lower revenue implications. Value for money was tested and the revenue budget requirement to deliver the review was considered to be proportionate to the benefit it will deliver.

4. Risk Assessment

10.5 There are no risks as a result of the proposals in this report.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1. The timetable for carrying out the Local Plan Partial Update is set out in the Local Development Scheme, as agreed by this Committee on 23rd March 2023 (Minute 36 refers).

12. Background Papers

12.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. Local Plan Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content
2. Local Development Scheme tracked changes version

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LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE

**Consultation on Scope and Content (under
Regulation 18), November 2023**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted on 4th November 2019. It sets out the planning policies and proposals for Reading up to 2036 and is the main consideration when deciding planning applications. This document is the first stage of consultation upon a Partial Update of the plan to cover a selected group of policies. It asks for your views on how this Partial Update should be carried out to inform drafting of updated policies.

Background

- 1.2 Local planning authorities are required by law to undertake a review of their local plans within five years of adoption, as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The purpose of the review is to examine whether or not policies are up-to-date and whether there is therefore a need to update them. Reading's local plan review was required to be undertaken by 4th November 2024.
- 1.3 A Local Plan Review has been carried out and was published in March 2023¹. This identified a need to update 45 of the 90 policies in the plan². It was therefore decided to progress a Partial Update of the Local Plan, covering those identified policies only together with associated parts of the plan such as the spatial strategy and infrastructure delivery plan, rather than a full update of the entire plan.
- 1.4 On 27th April 2023, the Council also publicised a 'Call for Sites', which is an invitation for sites to be nominated for inclusion in the Local Plan, generally for development but also potentially for other designations. This resulted in 17 sites in Reading in addition to those already identified being nominated for inclusion, and these are presented for consultation in the relevant section of this document.

Understanding this consultation

- 1.5 This consultation document consults on proposed changes to each policy and part of the plan that is within the scope of the update. These are set out in order of the existing Local Plan. The document describes the approach that will be taken to updating each policy, but does not contain a draft update. Full draft policies will be a matter for the next consultation. The document also briefly describes any potential alternative approaches that have been identified, for an understanding of the options available.
- 1.6 As the focus of the consultation is on how the adopted plan should be updated, it needs to be read in conjunction with the policies in that document³.
- 1.7 In the 'Area-specific policies and site allocations' section of this document (section 12) we also ask for your views on the new sites nominated for inclusion as a result of the 'Call for Sites' exercise, or on any significant proposed changes to existing sites. Please note that inclusion within this document does not mean that the site will be included in the final plan, but it is important that a consultation is undertaken to inform

¹ [Local Plan Review March 2023 \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://www.reading.gov.uk/Local-Plan-Review-March-2023)

² As work has progressed on the Partial Update, a need to update a further two policies has arisen – H14: Suburban renewal and regeneration and RL4: Betting shops and payday loan companies

³ [Local Plan Adopted November 2019.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://www.reading.gov.uk/Local-Plan-Adopted-November-2019.pdf)

any decision to include or exclude a site. An initial description of issues and constraints is included with each site, but often further evidence will be necessary before there can be a final conclusion.

- 1.8 Specific questions are asked for each matter. You can answer whichever questions you want, and do not need to answer all questions in the document.

Responding to the consultation

- 1.9 The contents of this document are open for consultation, and we welcome your views.
- 1.10 Comments should be made in writing by 5 pm on 19th January 2024. Written comments should be submitted by e-mail or by post.
- 1.11 E-mailed comments should be sent to planningpolicy@reading.gov.uk
- 1.12 Comments sent by post should be addressed to:

Planning Policy Team
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Reading
RG1 2LU

Next steps

- 1.13 Once this consultation is complete, the Council will consider the comments received. A draft of the Partial Update will then be prepared, taking account of those comments. This draft will be under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, which means that it will be the Council's final draft before submitting the Partial Update to the Secretary of State. Submission marks the beginning of a process of public examination undertaken by an independent inspector, who will determine whether the plan is sound, legally compliant and fulfils the duty to co-operate. Depending on the outcome of this process, the Partial Update can be adopted. An updated version of the Local Plan incorporating the Partial Update will then be produced, and this will form part of the development plan, which is the first consideration in deciding planning applications.
- 1.14 The timetable for progressing this Partial Update is set out in detail in the most recent Local Development Scheme (LDS) from November 2023, available on the Council's website⁴.
- 1.15 The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act received royal assent in October 2023. This makes significant changes to the system of local plan production. However, there are proposed transitional arrangements that are expected to mean that this Partial Update can continue to be produced under the old system.

⁴ [Planning policy - Reading Borough Council](#)

2. Important policy background and evidence

- 2.1 The existing Local Plan is underpinned by a considerable evidence base, and the Partial Update will also require support by further or updated pieces of evidence. This will be assembled alongside the plan and needs to be available at the latest when the plan is submitted. The plan also needs to sit alongside a whole range of other plans, strategies and policies. A summary of some of the most important areas of evidence is set out below.

National policy

- 2.2 National planning policy is mainly set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the most recent update to which was published in September 2023. The NPPF is expected to evolve further as the Partial Update is produced. However, national planning policy can also come from other sources, including written ministerial statements and freestanding policy documents. Local planning policy is expected to be in general conformity with national policy.

Local policy

- 2.3 There are a range of other documents produced to cover Reading, or a grouping of wider authorities, that are of relevance to the Partial Update. These include the Council's Corporate Plan, the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, Transport Strategy and Housing Strategy among others. There is also an adopted Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan that covers Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead and has development plan status alongside the Local Plan. The Minerals and Waste Plan does not fall within the scope of this update. In addition, the local plans of areas adjoining Reading are of importance. These plans and strategies are referenced in the individual policy update sections where they are of relevance.

Census 2021

- 2.4 Some of the results from the 2021 Census have recently been published, covering a number of key matters. Of perhaps the greatest significance, in particular because it is strongly related to housing need, is the change in population and number of households.
- 2.5 There has been an increase in population of Reading Borough from 155,698 to 174,224 between 2011 and 2021, an approximately 12% population increase. There has also been an increase in households over the same period, rising from 62,869 to 67,683, an approximate 8% increase. Of particular relevance is that the 4,814 increase in the number of households over that ten-year period is lower by around 1,000 to 1,200 than what was anticipated by both the 2014-based household projections (used as the basis for the national standard methodology for calculating housing need) and the household forecasts developed as the demographic basis for calculating housing need in the existing Local Plan⁵. It is also lower by around 1,000 than actual housing delivery over that period, which totalled a net gain of 5,792. This matter is discussed later in this document in relation to policy H1.

⁵ From the Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment

2.6 Some of the other key headlines from the Census are as follows:

- An increase in household size;
- A shift from owner occupation towards private renting;
- An overall ageing population with a higher proportion of those over 65 and a lower proportion of those under 18;
- Declining economic activity rates; and
- A very significant increases in homeworking among Reading residents, unsurprisingly given the timing of the Census during the pandemic;

Housing needs

2.7 National policy is that housing need should usually be calculated based on a national standard methodology that is outlined in Planning Practice Guidance. This methodology takes into account projections of household numbers and local housing affordability, whilst also applying a 35% uplift to the local authorities that cover the core of the 20 largest urban areas in England, of which Reading is one. This means that, based on most recent figures, there is a need for 877 homes per year in Reading up to 2041, a substantial increase from the existing plan figure of 689 per year.

2.8 The Council has commissioned work on housing needs to give a counterpoint to this standard methodology figure that is rooted in local need. A Housing Needs Assessment, being undertaken by Opinion Research Services Ltd, is underway. In addition to overall levels of need, this looks more specifically at the different types of housing needed including affordable and family-sized housing, and the different groups requiring housing. The Assessment has not yet fully reported, and will be published in due course, but initial conclusions are that local need is likely to be considerably lower than the figure produced by the standard methodology.

2.9 Section 8 of this plan looks at this matter in more detail.

Call for sites

2.10 The Council carried out a ‘call for sites’ exercise between April and June 2023 to seek to identify any additional sites for development or for other designations. This resulted in 15 additional sites within Reading being nominated for development, primarily for residential use. In addition to this, three strategic locations outside Reading were put forward. Finally, there were six suggestions for changes to existing allocations.

2.11 All of the proposed additional sites are summarised under the policy to which they would be added if suitable – e.g., for those in South Reading, this would be SR4 (Other Sites for Development in South Reading). The full detail of each proposed additional site, including a location plan, is in Appendix 2.

Sustainability appraisal

2.12 It is a requirement of producing a local plan that it be accompanied by a sustainability appraisal. A sustainability appraisal examines the effects of plans and policies against a number of environmental, social and economic objectives. A Sustainability Appraisal of the Partial Update Consultation on Scope and Content is available on

the Council's website⁶. This process incorporates the scoping stage of Equality Impact Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment.

2.13 The most recent Sustainability Appraisal Framework was produced in 2014. This remains a reasonable basis for undertaking sustainability appraisal, but some of the objectives require updating to ensure that they are in line with priorities in 2023. It is proposed that the sustainability objectives are updated as follows (shown in tracked changes format):

- Objective 1: To ~~limit the impact of climate change~~ address the climate emergency through minimising CO2 emissions and other greenhouse gases.
- Objective 2: Adapt to inevitable climate change in terms of preparedness for extreme weather events, including avoiding and managing the risk of flooding, heat wave, drought and storm damage.
- Objective 3: Ensure appropriate, efficient, reliable and careful use and supply of energy, water, minerals, food and other natural resources.
- Objective 4: Minimise the consumption of, and reduce damage to, undeveloped land.
- Objective 5: Minimise the generation of waste and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management.
- Objective 6: Minimise air, water, soil/ ground and noise pollution, and improve existing areas of contaminated land and poor air and water quality.
- Objective 7: Value, protect and enhance the amount and diversity of wildlife, habitat and geology, and other contributors to natural diversity, including establishing/enhancing ecological networks, including watercourses and surrounding corridors.
- Objective 8: Avoid contributing towards a likely significant effect, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, that could lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of internationally-designated wildlife sites.
- Objective 9: Create, enhance and maintain attractive and clean environments including protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing landscape and townscape character.
- Objective 10: Value, protect and, where possible, enhance the historic environment and the heritage assets therein and the contribution that they make to society and the environment.
- Objective 11: Protect, promote and improve human health, safety and well-being including through healthy lifestyles.
- Objective 12: Promote strong and vibrant communities through reduction in crime, and the fear of crime and enhanced community cohesion.
- Objective 13: Ensure high quality housing of a type and cost appropriate to the needs of the area.
- Objective 14: Reduce the need for travel and transport particularly by car or lorry, ~~and~~ facilitate and encourage sustainable and active travel choices.
- Objective 15: Ensure good physical access for all to essential services and facilities, including healthcare.

⁶ [Weblink to be added]

- **Objective 16:** Avoid significant negative effects on groups or individuals with regard to race, age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.
- **Objective 17:** Value, protect and enhance opportunities for all to engage in culture, leisure, and physical and recreational activity, particularly in areas of open space and waterspace.
- **Objective 18:** Facilitate sustainable economic growth and regeneration that provides employment opportunities for all and supports a successful, competitive, inclusive and balanced local economy that meets the needs of the area.
- **Objective 19:** Reduce deprivation and inequality within and between communities.
- **Objective 20:** Maximise access for all to the necessary education, skills and knowledge to play a full role in society and support the sustainable growth of the local economy.

Q1: Do you agree with the changes to the sustainability objectives to be used in carrying out sustainability appraisal?

Other evidence

- 2.13 There will be further updated evidence that needs to be assembled, in particular for matters such as needs for employment and other commercial floorspace, flood risk, transport impacts and whole plan viability, as well as a full refresh of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). This will inform the full draft of the Partial Update and will be published as it is finalised. Evidence may indicate that the direction of the individual policy updates need to change from what is described in this document.

3. Vision, objectives and spatial strategy

- 3.1 As it is not proposed to undertake a comprehensive overhaul of the Local Plan, it is also not intended to completely revise the vision, objectives and spatial strategy of the plan. However, there are nevertheless some important updates and changes that are required.

Climate emergency

- 3.2 The impacts of climate change are already being felt across the globe, and will only become more obvious over the lifetime of the plan. Everyone will be impacted, but the indications are that those who are already most vulnerable will be disproportionately affected. Reading Borough Council takes this extremely seriously, and declared a Climate Emergency in February 2019, together with setting a target of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. Although the need to tackle climate change was fundamental to the existing plan, the declaration of a Climate Emergency and accompanying 2030 target were too late for inclusion. The target will not be met without all relevant plans and strategies striving to achieve it. There is therefore a clear need for an update to ensure that the Climate Emergency is central to both the vision and objectives of the Local Plan.

Q2: How should the Climate Emergency be reflected in the vision and objectives?

- 3.3 Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 was published in 2020. This includes a large number of actions, many of which are relevant to the Local Plan. These are discussed in relation to individual policy updates where relevant.

Level of development in Reading

- 3.4 The level of need for different types of development in Reading will need to be reassessed. This work is already underway for housing, and will also need to be undertaken for other forms of development. For the most part this is discussed in relation to individual policies, e.g. H1. The general expectation is that figures for housing provision are likely to increase, whilst needs for commercial forms of development are not expected to significantly increase. Overall levels of development will be continue to be set out in the spatial strategy.

Spatial approach to development in Reading

- 3.5 The fact that Reading is a geographically small, urban authority means that development relies almost wholly on previously-developed land, and the spatial strategy is to a large extent dictated by where sites are available. The existing spatial strategy has a focus on Central Reading and, to a lesser extent, South Reading because this is where the sites with the greatest potential are. It was expected that, over the existing plan period from 2013 to 2036, around 50% of the housing to be provided would be in Central Reading and around 24% would be in South Reading. In terms of commercial uses, almost all of the retail and leisure uses and the majority of office uses are expected to be in Central Reading, whilst virtually all of the industrial and warehouse uses will be in South Reading.

- 3.6 Looking forward to 2041, there will have to be an even stronger focus on Central Reading if we are to deliver housing to meet needs. The new sites that have been put forward and are set out in Appendix 2 are dominated by town centre sites. It is estimated that the proportion of new homes that are delivered in the town centre is likely to increase from around 50% to 60% as a result of the update and the roll forward of the plan period.
- 3.7 Whilst delivering homes at high density in the town centre is the only way that Reading can get close to meeting needs within its boundaries, this causes other issues. In particular it is very difficult to secure family-sized homes of three or more bedrooms in the town centre. Over the period of the existing plan, housing delivery has been dominated by one and two-bedroom homes. This places greater importance on delivery of family-sized dwellings wherever they can be achieved, but particularly outside the town centre.

Beyond Reading's boundaries

- 3.8 The Local Plan Partial Update can only directly influence development within Reading's boundaries. The urban area centred on Reading extends into neighbouring authorities West Berkshire and Wokingham, whilst settlements in those authorities as well as South Oxfordshire look to Reading for many services and facilities. Each of those authorities has its own local plan process where the role of development close to Reading's boundaries is considered.
- 3.9 Previous evidence suggested that the West of Berkshire area (covering the authorities of West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest) had a strong functional relationship in terms of the housing market. This remains the case. The existing Local Plan identifies a small shortfall in meeting Reading's housing needs within the authority's boundaries of 230 dwellings, and there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that agrees that the shortfall will be met within the area covered by those four authorities. However, that MoU relates only to the level of need identified in the adopted plan, i.e. 699 homes per year. There is no agreement to deliver Reading's unmet needs over and above that figure.
- 3.10 Figure 3.1 of the existing Local Plan is a contextual map from the 2016 West of Berkshire Spatial Planning Framework showing opportunities and constraints in the wider area around Reading. In particular it shows areas of search for major development including the Grazeley area and around the M4 south of the Kennet Meadows, neither of which form part of the latest Local Plan strategies for Wokingham or West Berkshire. This diagram is therefore considerably out of date and needs to be either removed or replaced with a new version showing the constraints and major developments from the most recent Local Plans. The accompanying text also needs to be significantly revised. Other diagrams showing the Grazeley development, such as in the South Reading section, also need to be revised.
- 3.11 During the Call for Sites exercise, a number of locations outside (or almost entirely outside) Reading were put forward for strategic scale development, including parts of all three of Reading's neighbouring authorities. It is not the role of Reading's Local Plan to consult on these potential development opportunities. However, the Council does recognise the strong interrelationships with those areas immediately outside our

boundaries, and we note that development on one side of the boundary is potentially capable of meeting needs arising on the other.

- 3.12 It is also worth being aware that Reading's housing needs under the national standard methodology (see section 8) are significantly increased by an urban uplift that is applied to the 20 largest urban areas in England. Reading only appears on this list of 20 because the defined urban area includes significant areas within other authorities, which raises the question of how that fact is best reflected in where development takes place.

Summary of proposed changes

- 3.13 The following changes are proposed:
- To amend the vision and objectives to reflect the Climate Emergency and the move to a net zero carbon Reading by 2030;
 - To amend the spatial strategy to reflect changes to overall levels of development and to subtly change the emphases on different areas of Reading to reflect available capacity; and
 - To remove out of date information on the context in neighbouring authorities including replacement of Figure 3.1 with an updated map showing constraints and major development areas.

Q3: Do you have any comments on the suggested changes to the vision, objectives and spatial strategy?

4. Plan period and strategic policies

Plan period

- 4.1 For plans that include housing, the expectation is that the plan period covers at least 15 years from adoption. It is proposed that the base date of the plan change from 2013 to 2023 and the end date be pushed forward from 2036 to 2041 to ensure that there are 15 years plus a one-year buffer from the expected adoption date in 2025.

Q4: Do you agree with the proposed plan period of 2023 to 2041?

Identification of strategic policies

- 4.2 Since the Local Plan was drafted, a requirement has been introduced in the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, and further articulated in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), for plans to explicitly identify which policies are strategic in nature. Strategic policies are those that “*set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places*” according to paragraph 20 of the NPPF and should be limited to those that address strategic priorities and relevant cross-boundary issues. Such policies should look ahead for at least 15 years, and should make sufficient provision for development, infrastructure, community facilities and conservation and enhancement of the built, natural and historic environment.
- 4.3 The existing Local Plan does not explicitly label policies as being strategic or not, so this will need to be rectified in the update. It is proposed that the relevant policies will be labelled as a ‘strategic policy’ and that an appendix will be added listing the strategic policies,
- 4.4 Table 4.1 lists the policies that we have identified as being strategic in nature, together with the reasons they are considered to be strategic according to the NPPF. The content of these policies is only proposed to be updated where identified in this document.

Table 4.1: Identified strategic policies

Policy	Reason for identification (with NPPF reference)
CC2: Sustainable design and construction	Includes measures to address climate change mitigation (para 20(d))
CC3: Adaptation to climate change	Includes measures to address climate change adaptation (para 20(d))
CC4: Decentralised energy	Includes measures to address climate change mitigation (para 20(d)) and provide energy infrastructure (para 20(b))
CC6: Accessibility and the intensity of development	Addresses the pattern and scale of development (para 20)
CC7: Design and the public realm	Addresses the design quality of Reading (para 20)
CC9: Securing infrastructure	Makes provision for infrastructure (para 20(b))
EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment	Provides for conservation of the historic environment (para 20(d))

EN7: Local green space and public open space	Provides for the conservation of the natural environment including green infrastructure (para 20(d))
EN8: Undesignated open space	Provides for the conservation of the natural environment including green infrastructure (para 20(d))
EN12: Biodiversity and the green network	Provides for the conservation of the natural environment including green infrastructure (para 20(d))
EN13: Major landscape features and areas of outstanding natural beauty	Provides for the conservation of the natural environment including landscapes (para 20(d)) and deals with features that span boundaries (para 21)
EN14: Trees, hedges and woodlands	Provides for the conservation of the natural environment including green infrastructure (para 20(d))
EM1: Provision of employment development	Identifies the level of employment to be provided across Reading (para 20(a))
EM2: Location of employment development	Addresses the pattern of development (para 20)
EM3: Loss of employment land	Addresses the pattern of development (para 20)
H1: Housing provision	Identifies the level of housing to be provided across Reading (para 20(a)).
H2: Density and mix	Addresses the pattern of development (para 20) and provides for the right housing to meet needs (para 20(a))
H3: Affordable housing	Makes provision for affordable housing to meet needs (para 20(a))
H5: Standards for new housing	Includes measures to address climate change adaptation (para 20(d))
H6: Accommodation for vulnerable people	Identifies the level of residential care to be provided across Reading (para 20(a)).
H12: Student accommodation	Addresses the pattern of development (para 20)
TR1: Achieving the transport strategy	Makes provision for sufficient transport infrastructure (para 20(b))
TR2: Major transport projects	Makes provision for sufficient transport infrastructure (para 20(b)) and includes projects with cross-boundary implications (para 21)
TR4: Cycle routes and facilities	Makes provision for sufficient transport infrastructure (para 20(b)) and includes routes that cross boundaries (para 21)
RL1: Network and hierarchy of centres	Addresses the pattern of development (para 20)
RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development	Identifies the level of retail and culture development to be provided across Reading (para 20(a)) and addresses the pattern of development (para 20)
OU1: New and existing community facilities	Makes provision for community facilities (para 20(c))
OU2: Hazardous installations	Relates in part to the emergency planning zone of a facility in an adjoining authority with cross-boundary implications (para 21)
CR10: Tall buildings	Addresses the pattern and scale of development (para 20)

CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area	Strategic-scale development that makes significant contribution to providing for development needs (para 20(a)) and the pattern and scale of development (para 20)
CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area	Strategic-scale development that makes significant contribution to providing for development needs (para 20(a)) and the pattern and scale of development (para 20)
CR13: East Side Major Opportunity Area	Strategic-scale development that makes significant contribution to providing for development needs (para 20(a)) and the pattern and scale of development (para 20)
SR1: Island Road Major Opportunity Area	Strategic-scale development that makes significant contribution to providing for development needs (para 20(a)) and the pattern and scale of development (para 20)
SR2: Land North of Manor Farm Road Major Opportunity Area	Strategic-scale development that makes significant contribution to providing for development needs (para 20(a)) and the pattern and scale of development (para 20)
SR3: South of Elgar Road Major Opportunity Area	Strategic-scale development that makes significant contribution to providing for development needs (para 20(a)) and the pattern and scale of development (para 20)
ER2: Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading	Campus spans the boundary with Wokingham Borough and therefore has cross-boundary implications (para 21)
ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital	Hospital serves communities in adjoining authorities and therefore has cross-boundary implications (para 21)

- 4.5 We welcome any comments on whether the correct policies have been identified as strategic.

Q5: Do you agree with the list of strategic policies?

5. Cross-cutting policies

- 5.1 The following policies are proposed to be updated:
- CC2: Sustainable design and construction;
 - CC3: Adaptation to climate change;
 - CC4: Decentralised energy;
 - CC7: Design and the public realm; and
 - CC9: Securing infrastructure.
- 5.2 The following policies are considered to be up-to-date and are not proposed to be updated:
- CC1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
 - CC5: Waste minimisation;
 - CC6: Accessibility and the intensity of development; and
 - CC8: Safeguarding amenity.

Q6: Do you agree that we should update the cross-cutting policies listed?

CC2: Sustainable design and construction

- 5.3 This policy deals with sustainable design and construction requirements for the construction of new non-residential buildings and redevelopment and refurbishment of existing buildings to non-residential use. In light of RBC's aims to be a net-zero Borough by 2030 as well as recent and forthcoming changes to national policy through the Building Regulations, changes are required to ensure the highest level of sustainability possible. Other changes are needed to clarify elements of the policy that have arisen in appeal decisions, ensure water neutrality and deter unnecessary demolition.
- 5.4 The Government has recently adopted an interim update to Part L of the Building Regulations (June 2022) to require improved energy performance with regard to building fabric performance including limiting values for insulation and air tightness, as well as emissions rates for new buildings. This update is referred to as the interim Future Buildings Standard with respect to non-residential development. At the time of writing, the full standards (with more stringent requirements for building performance and limits on operational emissions from development) are expected to be adopted by 2025 in alignment with the UK target of achieving net zero by 2050.
- 5.5 Although updates to Part L are a welcome improvement, all development built to Part L standards will contribute to Reading's carbon emissions, albeit at a lower level than previously. Local Planning Authorities are permitted to implement standards improving on the limits set in the Building Regulations in order to drive proportionate local response to local and national climate action targets. Given that Reading will see a high level of growth in the coming years, failure to require high sustainable design and construction standards would result in the need for costly retrofit in the future and risk the Borough missing its target for net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

- 5.6 The existing policy approach requires BREEAM⁷ “very good” as a minimum, with a requirement for all major non-residential developments to achieve BREEAM “excellent.” There have not been particular difficulties in achieving these standards for most forms of building, although some applicants have reported difficulty in securing an assessor. Developments in Reading tend to already achieve high BREEAM scores as they are usually located in sites that are well-served by non-car transport modes. However, experience suggests that some forms of development have greater difficulty meeting standards, such as warehouse and schools. The policy should be amended to clarify that where requirements cannot be met, the highest possible standard must be achieved. It is no longer appropriate to require minor developments to meet BREEAM “Very Good” as a minimum, as this is now superseded by the interim requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations. Due to the difficulty in securing BREEAM assessors, a new policy approach could define its own limits for space heating demand and total energy demand, with an emphasis on fabric performance. BREEAM, or equivalent assessment methods, could remain an option for applicants.
- 5.7 Our current local plan approach does not address embodied carbon. Analysing embodied carbon gives a more accurate estimate of the emissions released during different stages of development including raw material extraction, transportation, manufacturing and construction. These emissions account for a significant portion of total emissions. As required by other local planning authorities, including the London Plan, sustainability statements should include details of how embodied carbon is considered and reduced throughout the design process through a Whole Carbon Life Assessment. Additionally, as demolition is often a significant source of carbon emissions, a local approach should take a presumption against demolition. This is consistent with the presumption in favour of sustainable development within the NPPF. Where major demolition is required, applicants should be required to divert 95% of construction waste away from landfill, as recommended in the London Plan 2021.
- 5.8 An existing Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is in place and the general principles, where in compliance with the proposed policy will continue to apply. The Government has announced its intention to eliminate the use of topic-based SPDs in the coming years. Therefore, an update to CC2 should include as much detail as possible to strengthen and future-proof the policy such that it could be applied sufficiently in the absence of a supporting SPD.
- 5.9 The following changes are proposed:
- In the final paragraph of the policy, the text should be changed to clarify that all development must achieve water neutrality, in which all major new developments would employ or contribute to water saving measures equivalent to the development’s water consumption. Applicants will also be required to adopt the ‘fittings approach’ as outlined within the Building Regulations, rather than a per capita consumption approach.
 - The first bullet point within the policy should be amended to state that applicants should achieve net-zero development defined as ‘a scenario in which the quantity

⁷ BREEAM stands for Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method, an accrediting body providing voluntary certification frameworks for assessing the sustainability of development.

of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions arising from the development's operational energy use on an annual basis is zero or negative, and where whole-life emissions are reduced through sustainable design measures. Net zero building status must be achieved through the application of the following energy hierarchy:

- Minimise and manage operational energy demand through building design, fabric performance and servicing measures.
- Use local energy resources (such as secondary heat) wherever possible to meet residual demands.
- Meet remaining residual energy demands by producing, storing and using renewable energy on-site.
- Monitor and report on energy performance.⁸
- The second bullet point should be amended to state that all non-residential development proposals must include an energy statement which confirms that proposals:
 - Can generate at least the same amount of renewable electricity on-site (and preferably on-plot) as they demand over the course of the year (regulated and unregulated) using a methodology proven to accurately predict post-occupancy performance; and
 - Achieve a site average space heating demand of 15-20kWh/m²/yr and a site average total energy demand of 70kWh/m²/yr. No unit shall exceed total energy demand of 90kWh/m²/yr, irrespective of the amount of on-site renewable production. (Total energy demand means the amount of energy used as measured by the metering of the building with no deduction for renewable energy generated on site).
- An additional paragraph should be added to define the requirements of the Energy Statement, including pre-built performance estimates and as-built calculations prior to occupation. Weight will be given to proposals which demonstrate a commitment to on-going monitoring post-occupation which can be clearly communicated to the occupier.
- An additional paragraph should be added to outline an “exceptional basis clause” which requires the highest possible standards in cases where the above points cannot be met for technical, viability or other policy reasons, such as heritage. In these cases, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the requirements can be met. For major developments of 1000 sqm or more, applicants must also either
 - Enter into a legal agreement to provide renewable energy infrastructure off-site equivalent to at least offsetting the additional energy requirements not achieved on site; or
 - Provide a financial contribution to the LPA of a value sufficient enough to offset the remaining performance not achieved on site; or
 - Demonstrate that the buildings will be connected to a decentralised energy network; or

⁸ This net-zero definition and mitigation hierarchy represents industry best-practice as defined by the UK Green Building Council.

- Demonstrate that the proposal is compliant with BREEAM Outstanding or Excellent (or equivalent certification method).
- An additional paragraph should be added to state that demolition of an existing building should be accompanied by a full justification for the demolition and demonstrate how 95% of all construction waste will be diverted away from landfill.
- An additional paragraph should be added to require an embodied carbon assessment for all applications for new-build commercial floorspace of 5000m² or more. This assessment must demonstrate a score of less than 800kg/sqm of carbon can be achieved within the development for the substructure, superstructure and finishes.
- The supporting text should be amended to:
 - Refer to the Council's most recent Climate Emergency Strategy and Carbon Plan and to refer to the existing 2019 Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.
 - Amend the final sentence of paragraph 4.1.3 to refer to new metrics within the policy that stand alone from BREEAM for on-site renewables, space heating demand and total energy demand.
 - Omit paragraph 4.1.4.

5.10 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** Although this approach would require improvements past the stated target emissions rate in the Building Regulations, it would rely on BREEAM standards when more ambitious standards could be achieved. Additionally, BREEAM "Very Good" is no longer appropriate, as it has been superseded by the updates to Part L and some applicants have expressed difficulty in securing a BREEAM assessment.
- **Omit the policy and rely on updates to Part L of the Building Regulations:** This would result some reductions in carbon emissions. The Building Regulations are the legally allowable poorest values and do not represent best practice. There is also often an energy performance gap whereby developers aiming for these targets fall short of meeting them post-occupancy. Additionally, there is uncertainty surrounding timescales for forthcoming updates to the Building Regulations. Should local policy fail to prescribe its own sustainability standards in line with local targets, progress toward net-zero would be delayed. Moreover, the exact definition of net-zero within the Future Buildings Standard remains to be defined through ongoing Government consultation. It is likely that "net-zero ready" as defined by the Future Buildings Standard will require approximately 75% emissions reduction relative to 2021 standards rather than 100% as it relies on full decarbonisation of the electricity grid.
- **Update the policy to require BREEAM "Excellent" of both major and minor non-residential development:** Although this approach would require improvements past the stated target emissions rate in the Building Regulations, it would rely on BREEAM standards when more ambitious standards could be achieved. This approach does not provide flexibility for applicants who wish to use certification schemes other than BREEAM.
- **Update the policy, but with less ambitious requirements for target emissions rate reduction:** The London Plan, for instance, requires a minimum

improvement past the stated carbon emission rate standards, usually expressed as a 35% improvement of the target emissions rate. This would result in an improvement, but not go as far towards achieving net-zero aims as the preferred approach.

Q7: Do you agree that we should update policy CC2 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

CC3: Adaptation to climate change

- 5.11 This policy aims to ensure that new developments adapt to the effects of climate change, for instance through orientation, shading, ventilation, planting and drainage.
- 5.12 The presumption in favour of sustainable development within the NPPF now includes greater emphasis on measures to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects. This means that adapting to climate change is accorded greater significance.
- 5.13 In addition to greater emphasis within national planning policy, Reading Borough Council has published further local guidance that affords greater weight to climate change adaptation. These are summarised as follows:
- The Reading Climate Change Emergency Strategy (2020) identifies a number of actions with relevance to policy CC3, including an action to use green infrastructure including green walls, green roofs and planting to reduce carbon emissions and promote urban cooling (N20). The existing policy approach is very much in line with this action, but more detail will be provided in the forthcoming Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD.
 - A Sustainable Design and Construction SPD was adopted in December 2019 and follow on from the policy approach in CC3. This does not require an update to CC3, but the policy should refer to this document.
 - The Reading Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2019) sets out key risks and opportunities for adaptation in Reading. It identifies higher risk areas within the Borough. This does not require an update to CC3, but the policy should refer to this document.
- 5.14 The following changes are proposed:
- Addition of reference to the Reading Climate Change Emergency Strategy (2020).
 - Addition of reference to the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019).
 - Addition of reference to the Reading Climate Change Adaptation Plan (2019) and identification of higher risk areas within the Borough.
 - Additional language to acknowledge that strategies will continue to evolve during the Local Plan process.
 - Additional language to give greater weight to climate change mitigation.
- 5.15 ***Alternative options:*** The only other option identified is to not update the policy. This would result in a policy that does not refer to the most up-to-date strategies in place and does not afford appropriate weight to climate change mitigation measures, given the urgency of the climate emergency.

Q8: Do you agree that we should update policy CC3 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

CC4: Decentralised energy

- 5.16 This policy aims to ensure that opportunities for decentralised energy within major developments are identified and incorporated where possible, either through new provision or allowance for connection to an existing or future energy network.
- 5.17 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy (2020) includes an action (E11) to work with developers to maximise district energy solutions in line with the Local Plan policies on decentralised energy, including establishing district heat, investigating the potential of rivers ground and aquifers in Reading for renewable heat and implementing heat pump schemes.
- 5.18 Additionally, new legislation will establish Heat Network Zoning. This will formally designate areas within the Borough for new heat networks and allow the local authority to enforce requirements within them. Further guidance is expected toward the end of this year.
- 5.19 The following changes are proposed:
- Incorporate references to the Climate Emergency Strategy and actions within;
 - Add language to strengthen the requirements (i.e. “must connect to a decentralised energy source unless this is not suitable, feasible or viable.”);
 - Incorporate further progress on establishing district heat networks; and
 - Refer to Heat Network Zoning.
- 5.20 **Alternative options:** The only other option identified is to not update the policy. Although this would continue to contribute to decentralised energy provision within the Borough, it does not refer to the most up-to-date government guidance or facilitate the establishment of Heat Network Zones in the coming years.

Q9: Do you agree that we should update policy CC4 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

CC7: Design and the public realm

- 5.21 This policy promotes high quality design outcomes through development management that maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. Changes to this policy are considered to be necessary in light of the recent publication of the National Model Design Code and the forthcoming requirement for all local planning authorities to develop their own local design codes. Small changes are also needed to account for the NPPF’s increased emphasis on “beauty” and to ensure greater emphasis on green infrastructure and biodiversity due to the declaration of a climate emergency.
- 5.22 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act requires local planning authorities to adopt local design codes. Until recently, design codes have usually been associated with specific sites. An authority-wide design code must be consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide⁹ and National Model Design Code¹⁰ and seek to reflect local character and the design preferences of local residents. RBC will seek to publish a local design code in the coming years and as such, Policy CC7 needs to be

⁹ National design guide - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁰ National Model Design Code - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

amended to provide the basis for the forthcoming code and to align our design objectives with those stated in the National Model Design Code.

5.23 The following changes are proposed:

- Change the text of the policy to reflect the three overarching aims and ten characteristics outlined in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code as follows:
 - All development must be of high-quality design, employing characteristics to create, maintain and enhance physical character, nurture and sustain a sense of community and positively address environmental issues affecting the climate. Proposals will be assessed to ensure that the development makes a positive contribution within the following characteristics:
 - Context – enhances the surroundings based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and its surroundings and is responsive to local history, culture and heritage.
 - Identity – is attractive and distinctive, with a positive and coherent identity that suits the context, its history, how we live today and how we are likely to live in the future. Proposals should be visually attractive to occupants and other users with a strong focus on beauty as a result of high-quality architecture.
 - Built form – exhibits a coherent pattern of development that is compact and walkable, accessible to public transport, services and facilities with recognisable streets and other spaces that are easy to navigate, safe and accessible. Development should employ appropriate scale, architectural detail and materials.
 - Movement – is accessible and easy to move around for all, taking account of the diverse needs of its users and providing a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes. Development should promote activity and social interaction.
 - Nature – enhances and optimises nature by integrating existing and new natural features into a multifunctional network to support quality of place, biodiversity, water management and climate change mitigation.
 - Public spaces – creates safe, social and inclusive public spaces.
 - Uses – ensures uses are mixed and integrated, including a range of local services and facilities to support daily life and a mix of housing tenures and types.
 - Homes and buildings – creates homes and buildings which are functional, healthy and sustainable with good quality internal and external environments to promote health and well-being.
 - Resources – reflects efficient use of resources and resilience for the future by reducing resource requirement for land, energy and water and being adaptable overtime by reducing the need for redevelopment.
 - Lifespan – ensures development is made to last, robust and easy to use and look after, adapting to users' changing needs and evolving technologies.

Applications for major developments should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all matters listed above.

- The supporting text should be amended to:
 - Refer to the changes in the NPPF with regard to design and summarise Section 12: Achieving well-designed places.
 - Refer to and explain changes to legislation that will require the publication of local design codes.

5.24 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** The only other option identified is to not update the policy. Although this would continue to contribute to positive design within the Borough, it does not refer to the most up-to-date government guidance or facilitate the adoption of a local design code in the coming years.

Q10: Do you agree that we should update policy CC7 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

CC9: Securing infrastructure

- 5.25 This policy ensures that development in Reading is accompanied by appropriate provision of infrastructure, services and facilities. It lists the range of infrastructure priorities in order of importance.
- 5.26 In Spring 2023, Government consulted on proposals for a new Infrastructure Levy which aims to reform the existing system of developer contributions (Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy). A further consultation on the drafting of those regulations is expected in due course. Changes are proposed to CC9 to future-proof the policy for any forthcoming legislation, to refer to the end of pooling restrictions for the spend of monies collected through Section 106 agreements and to emphasise the increasing importance of digital infrastructure. Finally, as the Government has announced its intention to phase out topic-based Supplementary Planning Documents and remove their status and weight in decision-making, changes should be made to incorporate any important existing elements of the Employment, Skills and Training SPD.
- 5.27 The following changes are proposed:
- In the fourth bullet point regarding economic development infrastructure, add language to refer to digital connectivity.
 - At the end of the policy, a paragraph should be added to future-proof the policy for the forthcoming Infrastructure Levy. Depending on the progress of relevant regulations and guidance, the policy may need to be amended to allow for the Levy to be implemented. In particular, there may be a need to establish different routeways in terms of financial contributions from different sizes of development. However, these changes cannot be outlined until more information is known.
 - The supporting text should be amended to:
 - Remove reference to the CIL regulations which places limits upon pooling Section 106 payments (paragraph 4.1.48);
 - Describe the new role of Infrastructure Funding Statements in setting spend priorities;

- Describe the forthcoming Infrastructure Levy and clarify that for the foreseeable future, infrastructure will continue to be funded through the current system;
- State that certain applicants must develop a site-specific Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) as stated in the existing Employment, Skills and Training SPD. Funding to deliver the ESP outcomes will be the responsibility of the developer working in consultation with the Council, its ESP delivery partner and relevant skills and employment delivery partners. This will be based on meeting a specified number of training, apprentice and up-skilling outcomes in both the construction phase and end-user phase. Supporting text may also include tables from the SPD that demonstrate how contributions will be calculated and which developments will pay, as well as tables in the SPD appendix specifying required benchmarks, outputs and employment density guidance.

5.28 **Alternative options** The only alternative identified is to not update the policy. Although spending priorities remain unchanged, this would result in a policy that is out-of-date as it fails to refer to the removal of Section 106 pooling restrictions, the new role of infrastructure funding statements, the forthcoming Infrastructure Levy and the growing importance of digital infrastructure.

Q11: Do you agree that we should update policy CC9 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

6. Built and natural environment

- 6.1 The following policies are proposed to be updated:
- EN4: Locally important heritage assets;
 - EN7: Local green space and public open space;
 - EN12: Biodiversity and the green network;
 - EN13: Major landscape features and areas of outstanding natural beauty; and
 - EN14: Trees, hedges and woodlands.
- 6.2 The following policies are considered to be up-to-date and are not proposed to be updated:
- EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment;
 - EN2: Areas of archaeological significance;
 - EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas;
 - EN5: Protection of significant views with heritage interest;
 - EN6: New development in a historic context;
 - EN8: Undesignated open space;
 - EN9: Provision of open space;
 - EN10: Access to open space;
 - EN11: Waterspaces;
 - EN15: Air quality;
 - EN16: Pollution and water resources;
 - EN17: Noise generating equipment; and
 - EN18: Flooding and sustainable drainage systems.

Q12: Do you agree that we should update the built and natural environment policies listed?

EN4: Locally important heritage assets

- 6.3 This policy deals with buildings and structures that have significance as part of the built environment but which are not of such significance that they qualify for national protection as, for instance, listed buildings. Only small changes are considered to be needed to policy EN4, to ensure that it is as robust as possible, and to address uncertainties and issues that have arisen during appeal decisions.
- 6.4 The following changes are proposed:
- In the second paragraph of the policy, the wording should be brought into line with paragraph 201 of the NPPF, as it could currently be argued that the wording in EN4 that benefits should “significantly outweigh” harm or loss goes further even than the approach to designated assets. This wording would be based on this paragraph of the NPPF;

- The policy text should be changed to refer to “*the decision-maker*” rather than “*the Council*” because the Council will not always be the decision-maker, for instance in the event of an appeal; and
- The supporting text should clarify that the policy is not intended to be applied to heritage assets with a national designation, such as listed buildings or buildings of townscape merit in a conservation area.

Q13: Do you agree that we should update policy EN4 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

- 6.5 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to not update the policy, which would likely lead to continued uncertainty about how to apply the policy in the context of national policy.

EN7: Local green space and public open space

- 6.6 This policy protects defined areas as either Local Green Space or Public Open Space, which will be protected from development.

Changes to existing spaces

- 6.7 There have been changes on the ground that have affected defined areas of Local green space and public open space, in particular through development. These mean that in practice it is considered necessary to revise the boundary of the defined areas to reflect the reality on the ground. These are summarised below, and in each case a map showing the proposed boundary change is in Appendix 1.
- A new primary school has been constructed on part of Mapledurham Playing Fields (EN7Nn). The proposal is therefore to remove this from the designated Local Green Space, which would reduce the total area from 10.86 ha to 10.35 ha.
 - A new pool and leisure facilities have been constructed at Palmer Park, and part of the car parking provision is on land within the designated Local Green Space. At the same time, land previously part of the car park now forms a public space in front of the new entrance. The proposal is therefore to remove the area now within the car park from the Local Green Space and add the new public space, which would reduce the total area very slightly from 16.07 ha to 16.06 ha.
 - Two developments are underway that affect Rivermead and Thameside Promenade (EN7Wp), identified as Local Green Space. A new leisure centre including a swimming pool is under construction at Rivermead, mainly on what was previously car park but including an element of the identified LGS, but some of the existing buildings will be demolished and this will result in the provision of additional public space. Meanwhile, a new secondary school at the former golf driving range is also under construction and this will result in the loss of some of the existing LGS, although much of the driving range site will change from the range to school playing fields. The proposal is to change the boundaries which will reduce the total area from 16.83 ha to 16.08 ha.
- 6.8 The other location where development has taken place within an identified area of open space under this policy is Kensington Park (EN7Wi), where a scout hut has been developed within the corner of the park. However, the new building is small and

is a replacement for an existing scout hut within the park that is part of the designation, so it is not considered that this necessitates any changes to the boundary.

- 6.9 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to not update the policy to take changes on the ground into account, but this would mean that the boundaries are out of date.

Q14: Do you agree with the proposed amendments to the boundaries of the existing Local Green Spaces and Public Open Spaces?

Possible additional spaces

- 6.10 The Call for Sites exercise resulted in a proposal to add two existing development allocations (WR3s: Land at Kentwood Hill and WR3t: Land at Armour Hill) to the adjoining identified Victoria Recreation Ground and Kentwood Hill Allotments area of Local Green Space (EN7Wu). This would require the removal of the development allocations, and this is discussed further in section 12. A map of the existing allocations is below.

Figure 6.1: Map of existing allocations at Kentwood Hill and Armour Hill



- 6.11 However, even if the sites were no longer identified for development, designation as Local Green Space would also require justification in terms of the criteria for Local Green Space in the NPPF, namely that the space is:
- a. in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - b. demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
 - c. local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- 6.12 **Alternative options:** As well as the main options of leaving the designation as it is, or identifying the entirety of the two allocated sites as Local Green Space, an alternative option could be to identify everything apart from the built elements (essentially the builders merchants) as Local Green Space. However, essentially this

approach was in a submission version of a previous development plan, and the Inspector deleted it as it would not represent a comprehensive solution to the wider area.

Q15: Do you consider that Land at Kentwood Hill (WR3s) and Land at Armour Hill (WR3t) would qualify as Local Green Space?

- 6.13 A Playing Pitches Strategy was adopted in November 2021. Among its recommendations were a number of site-specific recommendations to protect certain pitches for playing field use in the Local Plan. Whilst some of these pitches fall within areas protected under EN7, there are 14 pitches which do not. These are as follows:
- Ibis Club;
 - Madejski Stadium;
 - John Madejski Academy;
 - University of Reading Sports Park;
 - Caversham Park;
 - Prospect School;
 - Reading School;
 - Reading Girls School;
 - Leighton Park School;
 - Ranikhet Primary School;
 - The Abbey School
 - Scours Lane;
 - Downing Road Playing Fields; and
 - The Wren School
- 6.14 However, many of these are school sites, and existing policy OU1 of the Local Plan already contains provisions around protection of school playing fields. As such it is not considered that specific protection is needed. Caversham Park, Downing Road and the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus (which includes Sports Park) are covered by existing policies in the Local Plan that deal with any loss of existing open space. Madejski Stadium is a built leisure facility which would be covered by policy RL6.
- 6.15 This would leave the neighbouring sites of Scours Lane and Ibis Club, which provide an important recreational and leisure space and are not specifically covered by other policies. In our view, this would meet the criteria for Local Green Space designation as set out in NPPF paragraph 102 in terms of it being “(b) *demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife*” (emphasis added). It is therefore proposed that this be designated as a Local Green Space. A map is included within Appendix 1 (figure A1.4).
- 6.16 **Alternative options:** Other options include:
- **Do not update the policy to add the Ibis Club and Scours Lane site:** This approach could result in an important playing pitch that is highlighted in the

Playing Pitches Strategy not being specifically protected, albeit that it would still have general protection under policy EN8.

- **Identify all additional sports pitches within the Playing Pitches Strategy as Local Green Space:** This would result in a duplication of policy, and, in some cases, subtle differences in emphases of policies covering the same site, which would not provide certainty and clarity.

Q16: Do you agree that Ibis Club and Scours Lane be designated as Local Green Space?

Summary

6.17 The following changes are proposed:

- That policy EN7 and the proposals map be changed to incorporate amendments to existing spaces and a new space at Ibis Club and Scours Lane.

6.18 **Alternative options:** See previous paragraphs.

EN12: Biodiversity and the green network

6.19 This policy aims to ensure that biodiversity in Reading is protected and enhanced wherever possible. This includes the protection of sites of identified importance, as well as the establishment of a green network across the town, as well as preventing the net loss of biodiversity on site and achieving a net gain wherever possible.

6.20 Biodiversity is one of the areas where the context has changed most significantly since the Local Plan was adopted. The Environment Act 2021 introduces new requirements and responsibilities regarding biodiversity, in particular a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) on development sites that comes into force for all but small sites in January 2024 and for small sites in April 2024. Alongside this are other measures, such as the production of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the introduction of conservation covenants as a way of securing improvements.

6.21 In addition, a Reading Climate Emergency Strategy was published in 2020, followed by Biodiversity Action Plan in 2021, both of which contained relevant actions that should be considered within the update to the policy.

Biodiversity Net Gain

6.22 There is a need for EN12 to set out a strategy for how the new provisions of the Environment Act will be approached, in terms of extent of BNG and location and priorities for provision.

6.23 Some authorities are seeking to use planning policies to require BNG at higher levels than the mandatory 10% levels, for instance 20%. The Council's initial intention is that, in this case where there is no experience of applying this new requirement, it is preferable to initially stick to the mandatory level, but would like your views on whether there is scope for this to be increased, albeit that doing so would require viability testing alongside other policy requirements of the plan.

Q17: Do you agree with the proposed level of biodiversity net gain to be sought?

- 6.24 The general expectation will be that BNG is delivered on-site if possible, but in cases where there needs to be off-site delivery, the nature of Reading Borough may cause some issues. There are no established schemes to provide BNG credits within Reading, and, although these may emerge over time, the urban nature of the Borough is likely to limit the potential credits available. This means that, particularly in the early stages, some off-site provision may need to be delivered outside Reading. Although the metric already favours off-site provision closer to the development location, the Council's intention is that only provision within or in close proximity to Reading is likely to be acceptable. At this stage, a 10 km buffer is suggested.
- 6.25 In addition, there is likely to be a need to provide guidance on the types of location where off-site provision will be preferred. In the long term, the production of Local Nature Recovery Strategies will help to guide towards the best strategic opportunities for biodiversity improvements. However, these are still in production for the relevant areas (including Berkshire) and, as a short-term measure before the LNRS is prepared, it is suggested that Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) are a reasonable substitute. There are two BOAs that extend into Reading, namely Kennet Valley East and West Reading Woodlands, and their extent is shown on Figure 4.4 of the existing Local Plan.
- 6.26 Finally, there are other elements in how statutory BNG is to be applied that need to be covered by policy. The metric excludes 'irreplaceable habitat' because its loss should not be justified, but it does mean that the policy needs to ensure that this is protected in its own right. Also, there will be some crossover with our existing policy that seeks BNG wherever possible, and this includes some sites which have a zero existing value under the metric, in particular some brownfield sites. It needs to be clarified that we are seeking BNG on all sites (above a 'de minimis' level that excludes householders and sites of less than 25 sq m) irrespective of whether the site can deliver 10% improvement under the Act.

Q18: Do you agree with the proposed approach to off-site Biodiversity Net Gain provision?

Q19: Do you have any other comments on how Biodiversity Net Gain is to be addressed?

Incorporating actions from other strategies

- 6.27 The Climate Emergency Strategy identifies a number of actions relating to wildlife corridors, as follows:
- Identifying wildlife corridors (N11) (including identifying primary and secondary routes);
 - Assessing the quality of wildlife corridors (N12);
 - Managing the impact of development areas on wildlife corridors (N13).
- 6.28 The Local Development Scheme identifies that a Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD is due to be produced, and this is likely to be the best vehicle to consider this level of detail, as the high-level policy already covers the key areas. Work on the SPD is continuing alongside the update, and, if a need for an amendment emerges from that work, it can be incorporated in the draft.

- 6.29 The Biodiversity Action Plan identifies another set of actions relevant to this update but that not already addressed, as follows:
- Assess planning applications in terms of their impact on soils;
 - Ensure that, as a minimum, new development does not increase light spillage over rivers;
 - To ensure that any new landscaping adjacent to watercourses is predominantly native and wildlife friendly; and
 - To require the re-naturalisation of the river bank when new development is adjacent to it.
- 6.30 These elements can all be included within an updated policy.

Q20: Do you agree with the proposed additions to policy EN12 as a result of the Biodiversity Action Plan?

Summary

- 6.31 The following changes are proposed:
- That the policy make clear that ‘irreplaceable habitat’, which is not covered by the BNG metric, will be protected alongside formal designations;
 - That the policy refer to the mandatory requirement and reference how this will relate to all sites including those which have a zero value under the metric;
 - That the de minimis requirements below which existing BNG requirements be brought into line with statutory BNG, i.e. to exclude developments on land below 25 sq m and householder applications;
 - That an indication of requirements in terms of off-site compensation, e.g. a minimum 10 km distance from the Borough, be added, as well as directing off-site provision towards areas identified in Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) where possible, and towards Biodiversity Opportunity Areas until such time as a LNRS is in place;
 - That reference be added to protecting important soils;
 - That reference be added to avoiding light spillage over rivers;
 - That new landscaping next to rivers should be native and wildlife friendly; and
 - That renaturalisation of the riverbanks should be required for relevant applications.
- 6.32 ***Alternative options:*** Other options include:
- ***Not to update the policy:*** This option is not appropriate as it would not take account of the new 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, and would lead to confusion and uncertainty about how these requirements are to be applied and how they would relate to the existing EN12 provisions.
 - ***Increase the on-site Biodiversity Net Gain requirement to 20%:*** This approach could be considered if it could be accommodated within the viability of the whole plan, but at this stage it is considered to be preferable to implement the policy at the statutory level until there is more experience of operating it.

- **Not include any spatial requirements for off-site BNG:** This approach would allow developers to provide off-site BNG anywhere where credits can be secured. This would mean that there is no guarantee that enhancements are anywhere within the local area (albeit the metric does penalise this to an extent).

EN13: Major landscape features and areas of outstanding natural beauty

- 6.33 This policy deals primarily with five major landscape features that span significant areas of Reading (the Thames Valley, the Kennet and Holy Brook Meadows, the West Reading Wooded Ridgeline, the East Reading Wooded Ridgeline and the North Reading Dry Valleys and Chilterns Escarpment). No changes are proposed to the extent of these areas or how the policy works for these features.
- 6.34 However, there is a process underway led by Natural England to review the boundary of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which currently abuts the Reading Borough boundary adjacent to Caversham Heights but does not include any land within Reading. The Council is involved in this review, and it is expected to report in 2024. If the AONB boundary is amended to include any land within Reading, the policy will need to be expanded to deal with any proposals that fall within the AONB, taking account of both national policy and policy of adjoining authorities within the Chilterns AONB, in particular South Oxfordshire.
- 6.35 The following change is proposed:
- Should any land within Reading be identified as part of the Chilterns AONB as a result of the ongoing review, the policy should be expanded to ensure that any development within the AONB conserves and where possible enhances its character and natural beauty.
- 6.36 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to not update the policy, which will fail to take account of the latest position.

Q21: Do you agree that, in the event of land in Reading being identified for inclusion within the Chilterns AONB, we should update policy EN13 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

EN14: Trees, hedges and woodlands

- 6.37 This policy aims to protect existing trees, hedges and woodlands where they are of importance and ensure that new tree planting takes place within development sites.
- 6.38 Since the Local Plan was adopted, policy and legislation around trees, hedges and woodlands has continued to evolve. At a national level, the Environment Bill has introduced a number of new requirements including 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, whilst the NPPF has been strengthened with regards trees. At a local level, the Council's new Tree Strategy was adopted in 2021 that included ambitious proposals for tree cover as well as more detail on the planting necessary and a spatial identification of the areas most in need of additional planting. The Tree Strategy is not a local development document, and therefore reflection of its provisions in an updated policy EN14 will give greater weight to ensuring they are reflected in developments.
- 6.39 The following changes are proposed:

- The first paragraph should be expanded to refer to the headline ambitions of the Tree Strategy, in particular that canopy cover be increased to 25% by 2030 and that no ward should have a canopy cover below 12%.
- The policy should give more spatial direction, in line with the Tree Strategy, by placing particular emphasis for tree planting on the treed corridors (including the main roads, railways, rivers and Green Links), low canopy cover wards, Air Quality Management Area and areas of high treescape value such as wooded major landscape features and conservation areas¹¹;
- The content of the NPPF, in particular referring to creation of tree-lined streets, should be reflected in EN14;
- Some of the more detailed elements of the Tree Strategy, in particular prioritising large canopy species wherever possible to maximise the canopy cover benefits and contributing to overall diversity of the tree stock, should be referred to in the policy;
- The policy should give further emphasis to protecting and securing the long-term future of vitally-important ancient and veteran trees;
- There should be cross references introduced to the importance of aligning planting with other priorities such as biodiversity net gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

6.40 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** This option would leave the policy as it is. It would fail to incorporate important elements of the Tree Strategy and would fail to maximise its potential to address the Climate Emergency.
- **Require a minimum canopy cover level:** Some plans require a minimum tree cover on development sites, for instance 20% or 30%. This is not considered appropriate in Reading because the sites are extremely varied in their potential for planting, with many town centre sites being developed at a high plot coverage leaving less room for planting.

Q22: Do you agree that we should update policy EN14 as described to take account of the Tree Strategy and other matters?

¹¹ See the Tree Strategy ([Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy, March 2021](#)), in particular Appendices 2 and 3.

7. Employment

- 7.1 The following policies are proposed to be updated:
- EM1: Provision of employment development; and
 - EM2: Location of new employment development.
- 7.2 The following policies are considered to be up-to-date and are not proposed to be updated:
- EM3: Loss of employment land; and
 - EM4: Maintaining a variety of premises.

Q23: Do you agree that we should update the employment policies listed?

EM1: Provision of employment development

- 7.3 This policy aims to identify the level of employment development required and deal with the impacts that a higher level of employment than planned for could have on the demand for housing.
- 7.4 In terms of offices, EM1 identified a need for a net gain of between 53,000 and 112,000 sq m. What has actually happened since the policy was adopted is that office space has reduced by around 74,000 sq m. Whilst the amount of space with planning permission remains high, some of this will only be delivered in the long term or may not be delivered at all.
- 7.5 For industrial and warehouse space, EM1 identified a need for an additional 148,000 sq m. There has been an increase in space of around 20,000 sq m since the plan was adopted, but this leaves a substantial amount still to be delivered.
- 7.6 The evidence on which these levels of need were based is now more than five years old. In addition, it predated Covid, which is likely to have significantly affected working patterns and the need for additional space. For this reason, office need at least is unlikely to have increased. However, national policy clearly expects the need for economic development uses to be assessed. As yet this evidence has not been produced. When it is, the proposal is to update policy EM1 to provide for any revisions to the assessed level of need insofar as is possible. It will also need to consider whether there is scope to accommodate unmet need from elsewhere where appropriate.
- 7.7 The following changes are proposed:
- That the policy be updated to refer to updated needs for office and industrial and warehouse uses, taking account of the most up-to-date information; and
 - That consideration be given to any opportunity to meet unmet need for employment uses from other authorities.
- 7.8 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to **not update the policy**, which would not address development needs as required by national policy.

Q24: Are you aware of anything else that should be factored into an update to policy EM1?

EM2: Location of new employment development

- 7.9 This policy identifies the main locations for major office and industrial or warehouse development. In doing so, it identifies a number of Core Employment Areas.
- 7.10 Work on identifying the level of need for employment floorspace, as outlined in relation to policy EM1, will also have implications for policy EM2. The extent of the Core Employment Areas identified will be those necessary to ensure that the floorspace needing to be retained is not lost to other uses, thus undermining economic growth. As such, there may be boundary changes proposed to those areas. At this stage, it is not possible to outline what those changes would be. However, other than the definition of individual areas, the wording of the policy is not proposed to change significantly.
- 7.11 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to **not update the policy**, which would potentially result in a mismatch of supply and demand and could either result in employment needs being met, or could protect space that is not required to meet future needs.
- 7.12 Options around individual sites within Core Employment Areas that have been put forward for development are set out for the individual sites in Appendix 2.

Q25: Do you have any comments on how policy EM2 should be updated?

8. Housing

8.1 The following policies are proposed to be updated:

- H1: Housing provision;
- H2: Density and mix;
- H3: Affordable housing;
- H4: Build to rent schemes;
- H5: Standards for new housing;
- H6: Accommodation for vulnerable people;
- H7: Protecting the existing housing stock;
- H8: Residential conversions; and
- H14: Suburban renewal and regeneration.

8.2 The following policies are considered to be up-to-date and are not proposed to be updated:

- H9: House extensions and ancillary accommodation;
- H10: Private and communal outdoor space;
- H11: Development of private residential gardens;
- H12: Student accommodation; and
- H13: Provision for gypsies and travellers..

Q26: Do you agree that we should update the housing policies listed?

H1: Housing provision

8.3 This policy sets out the amount of housing to be provided in Reading over the plan period and identifies the scale of the shortfall and how it is to be addressed. The existing provision figure is 689 per year up to 2036. This is based on an identified need for 699 year including a shortfall of 10 dwellings per year to be met outside Reading's boundaries. More than half of the identified need was for affordable housing.

8.4 The number of homes to be provided is the most significant question that the Partial Update must address, and the main reason that an update is required. The approach to calculating housing need has changed significantly since the Local Plan was submitted, and reliance on existing calculations of need is not an option. There is now a national standard methodology for calculating housing need which is set out in Planning Practice Guidance¹². Use of this methodology, on the basis of the most recent information in 2023¹³, results in a need in Reading for **877 homes per year** up to 2041.

8.5 It is important to note that this standard methodology includes a 35% uplift for the authorities that cover the main parts of the 20 largest urban areas in England. Reading is one of those urban areas, which means that the housing need is

¹² [Housing and economic needs assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-and-economic-needs-assessment)

¹³ Based on household growth of 5,067 between 2023 and 2033 and median workplace-based affordability ratio of 8.52

increased by 35%. The Council's view is that this divorces the standard methodology from a basis in local need, and the Council has therefore commissioned its own evidence to understand what the need for homes would be using an alternative methodology, rooted in local need. The work is underway and will be published in due course, but initial results from this work identifies this locally-based need figure as being around **735 homes per year** up to 2041, with a significant proportion of this remaining affordable housing.

8.6 At the same time, the Council has been updating its assessment of the capacity of sites within the Borough to accommodate development needs, including for housing. The existing Local Plan was supported by a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, and it is this work that is being updated to support the Partial Update. The assessment has not been finalised and published, but initial results suggest that there may be capacity in Reading to accommodate **approximately 800 homes per year** up to 2041.

8.7 ***The key figures to be aware of in setting a housing provision target to 2041 are therefore as follows:***

- ***Standard methodology figure (as at 2023) – 877 homes per year;***
- ***Local assessment of housing need using an alternative methodology – around 735 homes per year;***
- ***Initial estimates of maximum capacity within Reading – around 800 homes per year.***

8.8 A shortfall in Reading meeting its own needs therefore only arises if the standard methodology is used. According to initial estimates, the locally-based level of need of 735 homes per year can be accommodated within Reading's boundaries. However, under the standard methodology figures, a shortfall of around 1,000 to 1,400 homes that cannot be delivered in Reading would arise. The agreement with other authorities in the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area (Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham) that Reading's unmet needs be accommodated within the area relates only for the need as set out in the existing policy and does not apply to unmet needs against the standard methodology. Unmet needs would need to be considered afresh.

8.9 The proposed approach is that the H1 housing provision figure should reflect the capacity likely to be available, i.e. approximately 800 homes per year (subject to a more detailed assessment of capacity in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) for a total of 14,400 to 14,850. The proposed position is therefore that the housing provision planned for is 9-12% higher than genuine local needs, and this therefore does not give rise to any unmet need that is required to be accommodated within other authorities.

8.10 Existing capacity on sites with planning permission or existing allocations is around 11,200 homes, including an allowance for small site windfalls of less than 10 dwellings. Meeting an annual provision figure of 800 dwellings per year would mean identifying sites for an additional approximately 1,700 dwellings, either on new sites or by changes to capacity of existing identified sites.

8.11 The following changes are proposed:

- That the housing provision figure in H1 be amended to reflect available capacity to 2041, expected to be in the region of 800 homes per year for a total of around 14,400 homes, but to be refined through more detailed capacity work;
- That reference to a shortfall being accommodated within neighbouring authorities be removed from the policy and supporting text; and
- That information on housing supply in the supporting text be updated with the most recent position.

8.12 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** National policy is clear that changes to the way that housing need is calculated will be a reason to update the policy, and this approach would not therefore be compliant with national policy.
- **Housing provision of 699 per year:** This option would provide for the full level of need as assessed for the existing local plan, including eliminating any unmet needs. However, as above, this approach would not comply with national policy.
- **Housing provision of 877 per year:** This option would provide for the full level of need under the standard methodology. However, work on capacity within Reading indicates that it would not be possible to accommodate this in full, which would mean a reliance on exporting unmet need elsewhere. In addition, it would fail to take account of the exceptional circumstances of Reading's local need being demonstrably lower than the figure generated by the standard methodology.
- **Housing provision of 735 per year:** This option would provide for the locally-assessed level of housing need. However, capacity work has indicated that there is an opportunity to provide above this level, meaning that this option would not help to substantially boost housing delivery.

Q27: Do you have any comments on the amount of housing that Reading should be planning for?

Q28: Do you have any comments on how the issue of a shortfall in identified needs is proposed to be addressed?

H2: Density and mix

- 8.13 This policy sets out guidance for the most appropriate residential density in different areas and on different sites. It also requires larger developments outside centres to deliver family housing to help meet the significant need. Furthermore, it requires consideration of the potential for delivering self-build homes. These elements need consideration separately.

Density

- 8.14 In terms of density, existing policy H2 bases this on a number of criteria, informed by indicative density ranges for different types of area (town centre, urban and suburban). These density ranges were originally derived from now replaced national policy.

- 8.15 The NPPF (paragraph 125) now states that there should be minimum density standards for city and town centres and other areas well served by public transport, and that these should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential areas, unless there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate. Minimum density standards should also be considered for other areas.
- 8.16 The difficulty in putting such approaches into practice is that the appropriate density can vary quite widely from location to location. This is particularly the case in town centres which also tend to be the main locations for existing heritage assets, as well as there being other constraints. This means that minimum densities either need to be set at a relatively low level, or they need to be significantly caveated where there are particular sensitivities, such as heritage assets.
- 8.17 The existing indicative densities from the policy are set out in Table 8.1 along with the existing average densities in different types of area, as well as the average density that has been achieved in new build residential development over the last ten years. This shows that, in new developments, town centre densities have very substantially exceeded the policy minimum in recent years, urban densities have been very much at the top of the policy range, whilst suburban densities have been exactly at the mid-point of the range.

Table 8.1: Residential density in policy and as achieved (dwellings per hectare)

Area type	Existing average density	Indicative density range from policy H2	Average density achieved 2013-2023
Town centre ¹⁴	199 dph	Above 100 dph	334 dph
Urban ¹⁵	77 dph	60-120 dph	116 dph
Suburban ¹⁶	32 dph	30-60 dph	45 dph

- 8.18 The following changes are proposed:
- That, to reflect national policy, the emphasis of the policy be changed to specify usual minimum densities for different types of area subject to potential exceptions;
 - That the following usual minimum densities be used:
 - Town centre – 200 dwellings per hectare;
 - Highly accessible urban sites (district and local centres and sites close to a high frequency public transport stop) – 100 dwellings per hectare;
 - Other urban sites – 70 dwellings per hectare
 - Suburban sites – 40 dwellings per hectare.
 - That a set of criteria for considering exceptions be included, to include matters such as the presence of heritage assets or sensitive landscapes or

¹⁴ Town centre areas tend to be high density and mixed use (often mixed vertically) with a significant amount of commercial floorspace

¹⁵ Urban areas are medium to high density, and are characterised by a variety of types of development, including: residential areas featuring significant amounts of flats and terraced housing, usually without dedicated private outdoor space or with small gardens; dedicated employment or retail park areas; and mixed areas along key routes or in district centres

¹⁶ Suburban areas are generally residential in character, are composed of detached or semi-detached homes, or some larger terraced homes, with gardens, as well as larger areas of public open space

townscapes, unacceptable impacts on residential amenity and any impacts on delivering the necessary mix of sizes of dwelling.

8.19 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Do not update this part of the policy:** This approach would fail to accord with national policy, particularly in the centre of Reading.
- **Set higher minimum densities in line with average achieved densities:** As shown in table 8.1, the average achieved densities over the last ten years are higher than the proposed policy minima. However, setting a minimum at this average level would fail to take account of the different circumstances from site to site and would risk having a considerable negative effect on local character.

Q29: Do you agree with the proposed update to policy H2 to incorporate minimum densities?

Size and type

- 8.20 The policy places an emphasis on delivering family housing of three or more bedrooms, which had been identified as representing about half of the total housing need in Reading. Delivering family housing in Reading is difficult due to the emphasis on high density town centre sites, and there is no doubt that the policy as it stands is not delivering the size of accommodation needed. Based on the needs identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Reading needed 3,558 new homes of three or more bedrooms between 2013 and 2023, but actually delivered 1,125, only around a third of the need, despite overall housing delivery broadly in line with identified needs. Whilst it was never expected that existing policy H2 could meet all family housing needs alone, clearly more needs to be done.
- 8.21 Work is underway on updating the needs for family homes as part of the wider housing needs, but this is not expected to show a significantly different picture in that the family housing needs are not being met.
- 8.22 There is therefore a need to increase the proportion of family housing sought across the board, ensuring that sites in all locations make a contribution, but that those outside centres, where the scope to provide family accommodation is greatest, are genuinely family housing-led.
- 8.23 There is clearly a potential conflict with policies that apply a minimum residential density in that it is easier to meet such policies by delivering smaller homes. There is a need for such conflicts to be resolved in favour of the provision of family housing.
- 8.24 The following changes are proposed:
- That the minimum proportion of 3- or more bed homes required on sites of ten or more dwellings outside centres be increased from 50% to 67% (one third) unless this is not achievable;
 - That, notwithstanding the minimum proportion, the number of 3- or more bed homes on sites of all sizes should be maximised;
 - That a minimum percentage of three-bed dwellings within district and local centres of 20% be applied;
 - That there also be increases in family housing provision in Central Reading (see discussion on policy CR6); and

- That the policy explicitly state that, in the event of conflict between meeting minimum densities and delivery of family housing, family housing will take priority.

8.25 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Do not update this part of the policy:** This approach would continue the existing position, which is that family homes of three bedrooms or more are delivered at a rate significantly below what is required, thus failing to address needs in full.
- **Seek higher provision of family accommodation on relevant sites outside centres (up to 100%):** This approach might deliver some additional family housing, although it might be restricted by the limited number of such sites that occur outside centres. However, this approach would be less flexible and risks failing to deliver mixed and balanced communities.

Q30: Do you agree with the proposed increased focus on family housing in policy H2?

Self-build

8.26 The Council has a statutory duty to grant enough permissions for self- and custom-build homes to meet the level of need identified on the statutory Self Build Register. Securing new self-build homes from private developments in Reading can be very difficult, in particular because so much of the development that takes place is flatted, where self-build is not practicable. The Council's priority for its own housing land will remain the delivery of much needed affordable housing as opposed to self-build.

8.27 At the end of the most recent 'base period'¹⁷, there were 51 entries on Part 1 of the Register. Part 1 comprises those that have passed a local connection test, and the statutory duty to grant permissions applies to Part 1 only. Typically the Council only permits around 5-6 self-build dwellings each year, but there are around 10-11 additions to the Register annually. The policy is not therefore currently meeting the statutory duty.

8.28 The following change is proposed:

- That the wording regarding self-build be amended to state that developments of ten or more houses 'should' make provision for self-build wherever viable and achievable, as opposed to 'will consider' making provision.

8.29 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Do not update this part of the policy:** This approach would not assist in meeting the statutory duty to grant sufficient permissions.
- **Specify a minimum proportion of self-build, for instance 10%:** This approach is likely to lead to an overprovision of homes against the needs on the register, which stands at 51, and is likely to be more difficult to achieve on some of the smaller developments where it might only involve one or two plots.

Q31 Do you agree with the proposed update to policy H2 to strengthen the wording on self-build?

¹⁷ Base periods are a way of monitoring demand on the Self Build Register, and run from 31st October in one year to 30th October the following year. The most recent base period was 31st October 2022 to 30th October 2023.

H3: Affordable housing

- 8.30 This policy aims to ensure that housing development makes an appropriate contribution to the delivery of affordable housing, either through delivery on site for larger developments, or through a financial contribution for smaller developments. It requires the following contributions:
- Developments of 10 or more dwellings – 30%
 - Developments of 5-9 dwellings – financial contribution equating to 20%
 - Developments of 1-4 dwellings – financial contribution equating to 10%
- 8.31 The need at the time of the existing Local Plan was assessed as 406 affordable dwellings per year up to 2036, forming the majority of the overall housing need. Work is underway on assessing the up-to-date level of need, but the need is likely to remain substantial, and it remains clear that securing additional affordable housing is essential.
- 8.32 Whilst viability assessment of the policy requirements of the whole plan will need to be undertaken, there is not otherwise any intention to reduce the amount of affordable housing sought or the threshold above which a contribution is expected. However, there are a number of more detailed matters that need to be considered.

Tenure

- 8.33 The existing policy delegates the specific tenures of affordable housing sought to the Affordable Housing SPD. An Affordable Housing SPD was adopted in March 2021, which set tenure expectations as follows:
- Affordable rented accommodation at 'Reading affordable rent' levels – at least 62% of the affordable housing to be provided; and
 - Affordable home ownership (shared ownership or another product) – maximum 38%.
- 8.34 Reading affordable rent means rental levels capped at 70% of market rates and is intended to be affordable to those in housing need in Reading.
- 8.35 It is proposed that the updated policy H3 incorporate the expected affordable housing tenures. This would give full policy weight to the expectations, and would maximise clarity for applicants about what will be sought. This will be particularly important with the deletion of SPDs in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.
- 8.36 The Council's starting point will be to continue to seek at least 62% of provision at Reading affordable rent levels, because this tenure best meets our priority needs. This will be subject to choices about how the new First Homes tenure is incorporated (see following section). However, we are mindful of the need for an updated viability assessment of the whole plan's requirements, which will need to be refreshed before the Partial Update is finalised.

First Homes

- 8.37 A Written Ministerial Statement of 24th May 2021 introduced First Homes as a new affordable housing product. First Homes are discounted homes for sale to first time buyers. The minimum discount to qualify as a First Home is 30%. The WMS stated that a minimum of 25% of on-site affordable units secured by Section 106 should be

for First Homes. It also stated that a minimum of 25% of off-site financial contributions secured should be used for the provision of First Homes.

- 8.38 The existing Local Plan policy H3 pre-dates First Homes and therefore does not require First Homes as part of the affordable housing contribution. In order to comply with national policy, the update to H3 will need to include at least 25% First Homes as part of the tenure split of the required on-site affordable housing.
- 8.39 The Council's strong view is that the inclusion of First Homes should not result in any reduction in the delivery of homes at 'Reading affordable rent' levels, because that is the product that most clearly addresses the extensive affordable housing need in the Borough. This would mean that the 25% First Homes would be delivered as part of the existing 38% for affordable home ownership, which would generally mean replacing some of the shared ownership.
- 8.40 National policy allows local planning authorities to apply a greater discount than 30% for First Homes, up to 40 or 50% based on local evidence. The Council does not intend to increase the level of discount, because doing so will affect the viability of the development in a way that would either reduce the overall number of affordable homes or would reduce the number at Reading affordable rent, neither of which would do enough to deliver the genuinely affordable homes needed.
- 8.41 There are other eligibility criteria that national policy allows local planning authorities to apply for accessing First Homes, as follows:
- Lower income cap;
 - Prioritisation of key workers;
 - Local connection test;
 - Other criteria such as employment status.
- 8.42 Regarding the income cap, the baseline eligibility requirement is that those eligible for First Homes should have a combined household income below £80,000. However, local authorities are able to set a lower income cap if it can be justified on the basis of lower local first-time buyer incomes. It is not considered likely that Reading's first time buyer incomes will be lower than the national average, and it is not therefore currently proposed to set a lower income cap.
- 8.43 National guidance encourages local planning authorities to prioritise key workers (defined locally based on the most pressing needs of the local area). This is considered to be helpful in ensuring that First Homes genuinely meet some of the most pressing local needs, albeit it will add complexity to relevant Section 106 agreements.
- 8.44 Guidance allows a local connection test to be set. The Council intends to apply a local connection test, because this will ensure that it is local affordable housing need that is being addressed. There is already a local connection test that is applied for considering additions to the Self Build Register, and this forms a potential model.
- 8.45 National guidance allows local authorities to set other criteria, and one suggested is around employment status. At this point, the Council does not propose to apply additional eligibility criteria over and above those previously discussed.

Q32: Do you agree with the proposals for incorporating First Homes into policy H3 as described?

Deferred contributions

- 8.46 In a case where a developer has demonstrated that it is not viable to provide policy-compliant levels of affordable housing at the time that permission is granted, it is nevertheless possible that market conditions will change by the time that the development is completed. For this reason, as set out in the adopted Affordable Housing SPD¹⁸, it is current practice for a deferred contributions mechanism to be included in a Section 106 agreement that ensures that, in the event of a change in market conditions that makes a greater contribution viable, a proportion of increased profits are secured for affordable housing. However, this current practice is not reflected in the wording of policy H3, which has led to issues at appeal, and it is therefore proposed that the update includes reference to a deferred contribution. The detail of how this is secured would continue to be outlined in the SPD.

Q33: Do you agree with the inclusion of a requirement for a deferred contribution in policy H3?

Where on-site provision cannot be made

- 8.47 There have been recent instances where it has been difficult for developers to identify a Registered Provider to take on on-site affordable housing units, particularly where the number of units is small. The usual approach in Section 106 agreements is that, in the event that a Registered Provider cannot be found, the units should be offered to the Council in the first instance, with a financial contribution payable as a last resort. However, this is not currently referred to in policy H3, and it is proposed that the H3 update incorporate this provision.

Q34: Do you agree with the inclusion of the proposed approach to instances where a Registered Provider cannot be found to take on affordable housing units?

Summary

- 8.48 The following changes are proposed:
- The required tenure split should be set out in the policy as defined in the Affordable Housing SPD;
 - That a requirement for 25% First Homes should be included within the required tenure, as part of the 38% affordable sale requirement, at the 30% discount specified in national policy, unless doing so reduces the overall level of affordable housing that could be achieved, in which case First Homes may be replaced by another affordable home ownership product such as shared ownership;
 - That a local connection test for access to First Homes be applied and that key workers be prioritised;
 - That the policy be amended to specify that a deferred contribution will be required where the affordable housing contribution falls short of policy requirements; and
 - That the policy be amended to require that a cascade mechanism be used where a Registered Provider cannot be found to take on agreed on-site

¹⁸ [Affordable Housing SPD, adopted March 2021 \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://reading.gov.uk/affordable-housing-spd)

affordable housing, with homes being offered to the Council in the first instance and finally a financial contribution sought.

8.49 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Do not update the policy:** This would mean that the policy continues to rely on certain matters such as tenure and deferred contributions being delegated to the Affordable Housing SPD, and will mean that there is a risk of lesser weight being applied to these elements as a result. It would also, through the lack of inclusion of First Homes, fail to comply with national policy.
- **Incorporate First Homes into the tenure required following the approach suggested in national guidance:** This approach prioritises the 25% First Homes and then would split the remainder according to the existing 62/38 tenure split, which would mean 25% First Homes, 47% Reading affordable rent and 28% other affordable home ownership including shared ownership. This is not considered acceptable as it would result in less than half of affordable housing addressing Reading's most pressing needs, for rented accommodation.
- **Not to include First Homes within the specified tenure:** This approach would continue to apply the existing required tenure from the SPD and would not include First Homes. However, this would not comply with national policy, and would require evidence that Reading is an exceptional case in terms of greater need for other affordable home ownership products than First Homes.
- **To include First Homes at a greater discount of 40 or 50%:** National guidance specifies that it is possible to apply a greater discount than the minimum 30% to First Homes. However, doing so is likely to significantly alter the viability of affordable housing provision and ultimately is likely to lead to lower on-site delivery overall.

H4: Build to rent schemes

- 8.50 This policy sets out criteria for consideration of proposals for build to rent housing, which are purpose-built private rented developments held in a single ownership. Build to rent has become an increasingly important source of housing in Reading, with many of the larger developments recently completed or under construction in Central Reading being build to rent.
- 8.51 Build to rent will continue to have a role to play in housing development in Reading, and it will be important to retain a criteria-based policy largely along the lines of the existing policy. The identified need for an update relates simply to lessons learned from greater experience in dealing with such proposals in Reading since the policy was drafted.
- 8.52 One of the main benefits of build to rent is in security of tenure. The policy as it stands requires minimum three-year tenancies with a six-month break clause in the tenant's favour. These are expectations that do not apply to other forms of residential, and are generally in line with policy expectations in other areas. However, with build to rent expected to be such an important sector, and buying a home being out of reach for so many, it is important to make sure that the security of tenure is maximised insofar as is possible. Therefore the Council would like to explore the potential to ensure that these tenancies are able to be rolled forward for a further tenancy period wherever possible, and an update to the policy could cover this. This is something that would need to be secured within the Section 106 agreement.

- 8.53 The following change is proposed:
- That point 2 of the policy be amended to state that a further three-year tenancy period should generally be offered at the end of the tenancy.
- 8.54 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to **not update the policy**, which, whilst it has been operating reasonably well in recent years, would miss the opportunity to maximise the security of tenure.

Q35: Do you agree with the proposed update to policy H4 around rolling tenancies forward?

H5: Standards for new housing

- 8.55 This policy ensures that new build housing within Reading meet minimum standards pertaining to internal space, water efficiency, carbon emissions and accessibility and adaptability.
- 8.56 The Government has sought to consolidate the wide range of standards required for new housing by encouraging reliance on minimum requirements within the Building Regulations for most matters with a small number of optional standards above Building Regulations minima. Optional standards include internal space, water efficiency and accessibility and only apply where included in the Local Plan.
- 8.57 Additionally, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), accompanying Ministerial Statement published in July 2018 and Government response to the revised NPPF consultation states that local authorities are not restricted in their ability to require energy efficiency standards above the Building Regulations. It also reiterated that the Government remains committed to delivering a Future Homes Standard through the building regulations which will deliver highly energy-efficient, zero carbon homes in the coming years.
- 8.58 The Government has announced its aim for the Building Regulations to require all new build homes to be highly energy-efficient and zero carbon ready by 2025. An interim standard was adopted in 2022. However, the detailed consultation for further improvements has been delayed. Moreover, the existing interim standards fail to meet industry best practice for building performance and do not address the energy performance gap (whereby as-built units do not meet efficiency and emissions standards stated during application stage). Therefore, it is considered appropriate that the Council continue to require energy efficiency standards through its Local Plan in order to reach the target of a net-zero Borough by 2030. The policy should be future-proofed to avoid any conflict with the forthcoming Future Homes Standard.
- 8.59 In order to avoid reliance on the changing standards in the Building Regulations, it is considered that the Local Plan should assess space heating demand, total energy use and use of on-site renewables, rather than an emission rate benchmarked from Part L of the Building Regulations. Officers have also highlighted that relying on the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) within the Building Regulations significantly underestimates actual space heating demand and can allow applicants to build to lower energy-efficiency standards. Energy metrics are seen to be more technically robust and designed to lead to better building outcomes with a focus on fabric efficiency in the first instance.

- 8.60 It should also be noted that the Future Homes Standards will require that all new-build homes be “zero-carbon ready” meaning they can perform as operationally zero carbon without the need for retrofit once the electricity grid has been fully decarbonised. Full decarbonisation is estimated by National Grid to be achievable by 2035, but only with significant and urgent energy reform by Government. Therefore, reliance on the forthcoming Future Homes Standard may fail to deliver zero carbon homes within the Borough and would certainly fall short of meeting our aims for zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- 8.61 Stringent requirements for space heating demand, total energy use and use of on-site renewables should reduce the need for financial contributions to account for residual emissions. In cases where requirements cannot be achieved on-site, off-site provision, connection to a decentralised energy network or a financial contribution may be required. The method for calculating this contribution should be reviewed in light of inflation, the decreasing carbon intensity of the grid and the relationship between the contribution and the cost of the actual projects needed to offset such emissions. Further work will be commissioned as the Local Plan review progresses.
- 8.62 It should be noted that the emissions rate and fabric energy efficiency standards prescribed within the Building Regulations are the legally allowable poorest values. They do not represent best practice and many as-built developments do not perform to the standards approved at application stage. As such, post-occupancy evaluation of major schemes is particularly important. Failure to perform post-occupancy evaluation or to meet intended thermal performance, air tightness and energy use may result in enforcement action.
- 8.63 In terms of water efficiency, there remains clear evidence from the Environment Agency that the Thames River Basin is a water-stressed area. Given this, the highest possible standards should continue to be applied through H5 in order to meet demand management aims. It is considered that this is best achieved through a fittings approach (as described in CC2 above and as outlined in the Building Regulations) and through requiring developers to seek water neutrality, if possible.
- 8.64 The existing policy does not account for embodied carbon or the environmental impacts of demolition and replacement.
- 8.65 In terms of accessibility and adaptability, the main thrust of the policy should still apply but may be amended to account for any additional needs that arise as a result of the Housing Needs Assessment.
- 8.66 In terms of the nationally-described space standard, this should continue to be applied to all new-build housing outside the Central Area. Sufficient internal space is essential to the quality of life for residents. In the centre of the town, this may not always be possible and could limit development, but the national standard provides a useful point of reference for applicants.
- 8.67 The following changes are proposed:
- Paragraph b should be amended to require all new-build housing be designed to achieve water neutrality, if possible. As a minimum, all new-building housing must

be built to the higher water efficiency standard under the Building Regulations, using a fittings approach¹⁹.

- Paragraphs c and d should be amended to require all new-build housing to be net zero carbon and also designed to achieve the following (calculated using a methodology proven to accurately predict a building's actual energy performance):
 - Site average space heating demand of 15-20kWh/m²/annum;
 - Site average of total energy demand less than 35kWh/m²/annum;
 - No single dwelling unit to have a total energy demand in excess of 60kWh/m²/annum, irrespective of amount on on-site renewable energy production; and
 - On-site renewable energy generation to match total energy use over the course of a year, with a preference for roof-mounted solar PV.
- New paragraph to state that achievement of the targets is to be achieved through adherence to the following energy hierarchy:
 - Minimise and manage operation energy demand through building design, fabric performance and servicing measures.
 - Use local energy resources (such as secondary heat) wherever possible to meet residual demands.
 - Meet remaining residual energy demands by producing, storing and using renewable energy on-site.
 - Monitor and report on energy performance.²⁰
- An additional paragraph should be added to define the requirements of the Energy Statement, including pre-built performance estimates and as-built calculations prior to occupation. Weight will be given to proposals which demonstrate a commitment to on-going monitoring post-occupation which can be clearly communicated to the occupier.
- An additional paragraph should be added to outline an “exceptional basis clause” for major development of 10 dwellings or more which requires the highest possible standards in cases where the above points cannot be met for technical or other policy reasons, such as heritage. In these cases, an applicant must either:
 - Enter into a legal agreement to provide renewable energy infrastructure off-site equivalent to at least offsetting the additional energy requirements not achieved on site; or
 - Provide a financial contribution to the LPA of a value sufficient enough to offset the remaining performance not achieved on site (a minimum contribution of £5K and a maximum contribution of £15K per dwelling unit will be required); or

¹⁹ Maximum fittings consumption under the optional requirement level is outlined in Table 2.2 in [Document G of the Building Regulations](#)

²⁰ This definition represents industry best-practice as defined by the UK Green Building Council.

- Demonstrate that the residential units will be connected to a decentralised energy network; or
- Demonstrate that the proposal is compliant with Passivhaus Plus or Premium or Passivhaus Classic supplemented with evidence meeting on-site renewable generation requirements (or equivalent accreditation scheme that is demonstrated to be consistent with the requirements of the policy).

In cases where the points cannot be met for reasons of viability, an Energy Statement must set out in full the degree to which the requirements can be met in order to enable the development to become viable.

- A new paragraph should be included to require applications of 50 or more dwellings to submit an Embodied Carbon Assessment that demonstrates a score of less than 750-800kg/sqm of carbon can be achieved within the development for the substructure, superstructure and finishes.
- Paragraph f should be amended to account for any increase in the need for wheelchair using dwellings that arise as a result of the Housing Needs Assessment.
- The supporting text should be amended to:
 - Amend paragraph 4.4.37 to the Ministerial Statement published in July 2018 and Government response to the revised NPPF consultation that state that local authorities are not restricted in their ability to require energy efficiency standards above the Building Regulations.
 - Amend paragraph 4.4.44 to describe importance of and requirements for water neutrality, as well as the fittings approach.
 - Amend paragraph 4.4.45 to refer to RBC's Carbon Strategy and Climate Change Emergency.
 - Amend paragraph 4.4.46 to remove reference to previous carbon requirements benchmarked from the Building Regulations and include reference to an updated calculation for determining contributions for offset of residual emissions.
 - Add paragraph to provide further detail with regard to embodied carbon assessments.
 - Add paragraph to provide further detail with regard to demolition justification.

8.68 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** Although the existing policy approach specifies zero carbon homes, it does not outline more robust standards with regard to total energy use and space heating demand. It also fails to require on-site renewables to match total energy use. In practice, major developments generally comply with the policy, but many applicants achieve a 35% improvement on-site plus a contribution to account for remaining emissions.
- **Omit the policy and rely on updates to Part L of the Building Regulations:** This would result some reductions in carbon emissions. The Building Regulations are

the legally allowable poorest values and do not represent best practice. There is also often an energy performance gap whereby developers aiming for these targets fall short of meeting them post-occupancy. Additionally, there is uncertainty surrounding timescales for forthcoming updates to the Building Regulations. Should local policy fail to prescribe its own sustainability standards in line with local targets, progress toward net-zero would be delayed. Moreover, the exact definition of net-zero within the Future Homes Standard remains to be defined through forthcoming Government consultation.

- **Update the policy, but with less ambitious requirements for target emissions rate reduction:** The London Plan, for instance, requires a minimum improvement past the Building Regulations, usually expressed as a 50% improvement of the target emissions rate. This is accompanied by requirements for applicants to report energy use intensity and space heating demand in order to address an as-built performance gap. This would result in an improvement, but not go as far towards achieving net-zero aims as the preferred approach.

Q36: Do you agree that we should update policy H5 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

H6: Accommodation for vulnerable people

- 8.69 This policy deals with proposals for specialist residential accommodation for vulnerable people, including older people and people with disabilities. It identifies the amount of residential care accommodation required over the plan period.
- 8.70 National policy has recently strengthened to emphasise the importance of providing accommodation for older people. The 2021 Census demonstrates that Reading, in common with many other areas, has an ageing population. Work is underway on assessing the needs for housing across Reading, and this includes the needs of particular groups requiring housing, including elderly people and those in need of care. This will generate a need figure for residential care that will replace the existing figure of 253 bedspaces.
- 8.71 There has been substantial provision of extra care housing in recent years in Reading, to the extent that there is considered to be an over-supply, and as such there is no identified need for further extra care. The policy should be amended to make this clear.
- 8.72 In addition to any additional need, there is also the issue of a great deal of existing provision being within older buildings that do not always meet modern standards, and there will therefore be a need to replace some of this over the plan period.
- 8.73 A recent issue that has arisen with specialist housing for older people is that the age threshold for eligibility is relatively low, often 55. There are clearly instances where people of that age are in need of specialist accommodation, and it is appropriate that those needs are met. At the same time, there are concerns that this may result in general residential developments that simply act to exclude younger people and therefore do not provide mixed and balanced communities. It is proposed to amend the policy to state that ages of eligibility below 65 will need to be robustly justified.
- 8.74 The following changes are proposed:

- That the level of need for residential care identified in ongoing housing needs work be included to replace the existing identified need;
- That it be emphasised that there is not considered to be any further needs for extra care;
- That the need to replace some existing provision with more modern accommodation be noted; and
- To state that ages of eligibility for what would otherwise be standard C3 dwellinghouses will need to be robustly justified.

8.75 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** This would fail to take account of the latest information on needs for residential care bedspaces.
- **To move to a criteria-based policy only without specific needs identified:** This would fail to plan appropriately for the needs for housing for vulnerable people, including the older people that are specifically identified in national policy.

Q37: Do you agree that we should update policy H6 as described?

H7: Protecting the existing housing stock

8.76 This policy ensures that the existing housing stock within Reading is not reduced as a result of development that would result in a net loss of homes. This remains an important principle given the extent of housing need in Reading, because the cumulative effect of individual proposals that result in a net loss of housing makes it more difficult to meet these needs.

8.77 However, there are some circumstances where this policy is proving to be insufficiently flexible and is preventing other objectives being achieved. For instance, there have been proposals to convert two existing smaller flats into one larger house, which would have the benefit of increasing family housing supply, which, as seen in relation to policy H3 is a considerable challenge in Reading. As it stands, this would in principle be in conflict with policy H7.

8.78 The following changes are proposed:

- That the policy be reworded so that the ability to apply exceptional circumstances apply to the whole of the policy, not just the first sentence; and
- That additional exceptional circumstances be added to paragraph 4.4.56 to include creating new family accommodation of three or more bedrooms and improving accommodation that does not meet expected standards due to, for instance, inadequate internal space.

8.79 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to **not update the policy**, which would make it more difficult to provide additional family housing than the proposed policy approach.

Q38: Do you agree that we should update policy H7 as described to allow for increases in family housing?

H8: Residential conversions

- 8.80 This policy sets out the criteria for considering conversions from houses to flats or to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). There are a number of factors to take into account, but one of the main elements is a threshold approach to proposals for HMOs within an area in which the Council has put Article 4 directions in place that mean that small HMOs (between three and six unrelated occupants) need planning permission.
- 8.81 The reasons why this policy was considered to be in need of update related to issues that have arisen during its implementation. There was confusion about how the threshold approach should be applied, in terms of whether the total number of residential properties referred to residential buildings or individual dwellings. There was also a lack of clarity about how the policy requirement that a proposal *“would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing”* would be judged outside the Article 4 direction area, where the policy threshold did not apply. There were also issues that arose during appeals that needed to be addressed, in particular whether it is acceptable for bathrooms to be located at upper floors above habitable rooms and whether a conversion to HMO represented a loss of family accommodation, which can be addressed through revisions to the policy.
- 8.82 Some of the above issues were partly addressed by the adoption of a new Residential Conversions SPD in March 2023. This set out a new approach to HMO proposals outside the Article 4 area, including a new threshold approach. It also made a number of important clarifications and updates. Having recently consulted on and produced that SPD, it makes sense to bring the main policy points into the policy itself.
- 8.83 The following changes are proposed:
- That the policy be reworked to include the approach outlined in the Residential Conversions SPD for proposals for HMOs or flat conversions outside the Article 4 area. This approach consists of:
 - A threshold approach whereby the proportion of houses within a 50m radius of the application site that are in use as HMOs or which have been converted to flats would exceed 50%²¹;
 - A presumption against the granting of permission for an HMO where the area falls within the 30% most deprived areas in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation; and
 - Consideration of any other evidence of dilution or harm of a mixed and sustainable community.
 - That the policy be clarified to ensure that the number of residential properties from which the total proportion is calculated when the threshold approaches are applied relates to residential buildings as opposed to residential dwellings;

²¹ For full details of how this approach works in practice, please see the Residential Conversions SPD - [Residential Conversions SPD Adopted March 2023 \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://reading.gov.uk/residential-conversions-spd-adopted-march-2023)

- That a situation where a residential dwelling is sandwiched between two HMOs be avoided, and resolving existing situations of this type should be given weight in planning decisions;
- That the clause around inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units be strengthened to ensure that the location of bathrooms above habitable rooms be avoided wherever possible; and
- That the supporting text make clear that a loss of family accommodation cannot be mitigated through the provision of a dwelling as part of the development unless that dwelling has three bedrooms or as many bedrooms as the dwelling to be converted, whichever is lesser.

8.84 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** Not to update the policy would be fairly similar to the proposed approach, as the changes proposed are generally already dealt with in the Residential Conversions SPD. However, it would miss an opportunity to bring the documents into line, and may mean more difficulties in implementation if the updates do not have full development plan policy weight.
- **To apply the same threshold approach outside the Article 4 direction area:** This option would mean taking the same approach, i.e. a threshold of 25% HMOs, outside the Article 4 area as well as inside. Whilst having the advantage of consistency, this would not address the main issue outside the Article 4 area which is that there tend to be many more conversions to flats than to HMOs.
- **To apply a lower threshold outside the Article 4 direction area:** Lower thresholds, due to the fact that they also take flat conversions into account, risk resulting in the situation of policy being more restrictive towards HMOs outside the Article 4 area (the area of greatest concern) than within it.
- **To use a criteria-based approach outside the Article 4 direction area:** This approach would fail to provide sufficient certainty as to whether a proposal for conversion is likely to be acceptable.

Q39: Do you agree that we should update policy H8 as described to address issues with implementation of the policy?

H14: Suburban renewal and regeneration

- 8.85 This policy sets out the approach to proposals for renewal and regeneration of Reading's suburban residential areas to improve the environment and housing stock and deliver more homes. The policy is currently relatively general and does not identify specific locations.
- 8.86 Following on from successful regeneration of Dee Park, work is ongoing on whether there are any significant opportunities to undertake further estate regeneration within Reading's areas of local authority housing that will deliver a net increase in dwellings, in particular for affordable housing. At this stage, it is not possible to be more specific, but the intention is that an updated policy in a draft Partial Update in 2024 may be able to identify clearer opportunities for such regeneration.
- 8.87 The following change is proposed:

- That specific opportunities for suburban renewal and regeneration be identified within the policy when the work to identify those opportunities has been undertaken.

8.88 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** Although this business as usual approach would not be detrimental, it would miss an opportunity to provide enhanced support to appropriate specific proposals for suburban renewal and regeneration as they emerge.
- **To identify detailed proposals for areas including housing provision figures:** Whilst this approach would give the greatest certainty, the proposals are unlikely to be at the stage where high levels of detail can be given by the time the plan is submitted. As such, this approach would be unhelpful.

Q40: Do you agree that we should update policy H14 as described to identify specific opportunities for suburban renewal and regeneration?

New policy: Co-living

- 8.89 Co-living is a form of communal residential accommodation which falls within a single management regime and which offers more communal facilities and amenities than a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), and is generally on a relatively large scale (often considered to be 50 bedrooms). On-site facilities can differ from scheme to scheme, but may include working spaces, cinema and gym as well as an on-site events programme. Most of the published information sees co-living as being primarily geared towards younger people used to living communally after studying. We have not yet dealt with any applications for co-living in Reading, but it is becoming more common in some of the UK's largest towns and cities and we expect to see proposals in Reading within the plan period.
- 8.90 In planning terms, co-living is a sui generis use, i.e. not falling within a specific use class, which means that it will always require planning permission. There is no policy specifically on co-living in the Local Plan, and this will make it more difficult to determine proposals when they are submitted.
- 8.91 There are a number of issues that require consideration in developing a new policy:
- There needs to be a way of distinguishing co-living from other proposals that might be similar in some ways such as HMOs, student accommodation and apart-hotels, and the key elements are likely to be the extent of the communal space and facilities provided, the length of the tenancies and the degree of single management;
 - The likelihood is that co-living will compete with general housing provision for a limited number of sites, in particular in the town centre. This will make it more difficult to meet our housing needs, in particular for on-site affordable housing;
 - Other authorities covering larger cities have generally set a minimum size of 50 bedrooms to qualify as co-living. However, Reading is a smaller market and it is likely that proposals here may well also be generally smaller. A lower threshold is expected to be appropriate.

- Reading's adopted Affordable Housing SPD specifies that co-living will be expected to provide a financial contribution to affordable housing. This approach is consistent with other authorities' approaches and should be continued.

8.92 It is proposed that a new policy on co-living be included:

- That sets a minimum of 20 bedrooms to qualify as co-living;
- That restricts proposals for co-living to sites that are not already identified for general residential, as allocations or permissions, unless the co-living element would be in addition to the anticipated residential;
- That otherwise generally directs co-living to town centre or edge-of-centre sites where parking is not required;
- That sets out standards with which co-living proposals are expected to comply, including a minimum amount of communal space (suggested 5 sq m per resident), minimum room sizes (suggested 20 sq m), a minimum tenancy period (suggested 3 months) and a management plan, with the latter two secured by Section 106 agreement;
- That requires a financial contribution towards affordable housing, the basis for which is as already set out in the Affordable Housing SPD²².

8.93 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **No policy:** This would mean that there would be no policy basis upon which to determine anticipated proposals for co-living, which leads to uncertainty and potential lack of consistency.
- **Criteria-based policy:** This approach would omit any preference in terms of location and be based around criteria such as internal size standards and affordable housing. However, it is likely to lead to situations where co-living competes with much-needed general housing for scarce sites, and makes it more difficult to meet Reading's housing needs.
- **Negative approach to co-living:** This approach could seek to discourage co-living overall on the basis that it is not a form of accommodation for which a particular need has been identified. A policy could, for instance, require an applicant to identify a need. This approach is considered to be unnecessarily restrictive of an approach which could have some benefits in providing opportunities for housing for younger people in particular;
- **Positive approach to co-living:** This approach could seek to encourage co-living proposals within Reading on the basis that it is a more innovative approach to meeting needs. However, co-living is an untested product in Reading, and it is therefore considered that, before the implications are known in full, such an approach would not be appropriate.

Q41: Do you agree that a new policy on co-living should be included?

Q42: Do you agree with the proposed policy direction on co-living?

²² This is calculated on the basis that four bedspaces equates to one dwelling, so for instance a co-living proposal of 80 bedspaces would need to make a financial contribution equivalent to a 20 dwelling proposal.

9. Transport

- 9.1 The following policies are proposed to be updated:
- TR1: Achieving the transport strategy;
 - TR2: Major transport projects;
 - TR4: Cycle routes and facilities; and
 - TR5: Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging.
- 9.2 The following policy is considered to be up-to-date and is not proposed to be updated:
- TR3: Access, traffic and highway-related matters.

Q43: Do you agree that we should update the transport policies listed?

TR1: Achieving the transport strategy

- 9.3 This policy aims to ensure that developments contribute to meeting the objectives of the transport strategy and contribute towards sustainable transport measures. It is therefore intrinsically linked to the latest Transport Strategy. A Draft Transport Strategy 2040 has been subject to consultation during 2023.
- 9.4 Much of the broad strategic direction of the Transport Strategy, in terms of prioritising public transport, walking and cycling, remains within the latest version. However, the objectives, listed in the supporting text to the policy, have changed, and that part of the supporting text needs to be revised to reflect the latest objectives. The objectives in the Draft Transport Strategy are as follows:
- Creating a clean and green Reading: Provide transport options to 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; and
 - 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.
- 9.5 Therefore, whilst there is some continuity from previous strategies, there are also some important new or enhanced elements, such as reference to healthy streets and smart solutions, as well as cross-referring to the Climate Emergency. TR1 is intended to be future-proof in the sense that the wording of the policy should not need to be updated whenever a new Transport Strategy is adopted. However, the latest version of the Transport Strategy is intended to be a long-term strategy running to 2040, close to the 2041 end date of the Partial Update, and it is therefore considered worth

incorporating these objectives into the policy so that they have significant policy weight.

9.6 The following changes are proposed:

- That the new objectives from the latest Transport Strategy be incorporated into the policy; and
- That cross-references to the Transport Strategy in the supporting text, in particular paragraph 4.5.1, be updated.

9.7 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to **not update the policy**, which would mean that the Local Plan and Transport Strategy are not as integrated as they could be.

Q44: Do you agree with the proposed updates to policy TR1 to reflect the Transport Strategy 2040?

TR2: Major transport projects

9.8 This policy identifies the major transport projects from the Local Transport Plan and prioritises their implementation. Some of these projects have been completed. In addition, a Draft Transport Strategy 2040 containing new projects has been subject to consultation during 2023, and there is therefore considerable need to update this policy.

9.9 The following projects listed in the policy have been completed and should be removed from the policy and proposals map:

- Cow Lane Bridges were completed in April 2019;
- Green Park Station and Interchange opened in 2023; and
- The elements of the National Cycle Network Route 422 were completed in 2020.

9.10 The M4 Smart Motorway project referred to in the supporting text and shown on the proposals map has also been completed insofar as land is required in Reading.

9.11 Crossrail, also referred to in the supporting text, has also been completed, and Elizabeth Line services are now running to Reading. The safeguarding direction which effects a considerable amount of land close to the railway line does not appear to have been formally revoked, but in practice there is not considered to be a need to continue to show this land on the proposals map and refer to it in the text.

9.12 Some of the existing projects listed in TR2 require updated references. For instance, what was formerly referred to as Mass Rapid Transit is now Bus Rapid Transit, whilst the Draft Transport Strategy refers to Cross Thames Travel rather than Crossing of the River Thames.

9.13 There are also a number of new projects within the Draft Transport Strategy that would potentially affect the use of land and therefore need to be outlined in TR2. These include:

- Transport corridor multi-modal enhancements;
- Inner Distribution Road multi-modal enhancements;

- Oxford Road multi-modal enhancements;
- Reading station interchange enhancements;
- Tilehurst station upgrade;
- Town and local centre public space enhancements;
- Strategic pedestrian routes;
- Local pedestrian routes;
- Strategic and town centre cycle routes;
- Shinfield Road active travel improvements;
- Bath Road/Castle Hill active travel improvements;
- London Road active travel improvements;
- Local cycle routes;
- Cycle parking mobility hubs and facilities; and
- Smart city initiatives.

9.14 For the most part, these projects will be shown on a new overall map to replace figure 4.8 of the existing plan. However, in some cases, such as Reading Station interchange enhancements and Tilehurst station upgrade, there may be a need for a more specific boundary to be shown on the proposals map.

9.15 The following changes are proposed:

- That Cow Lane Bridges, Green Park Station and Interchange and NCN 422 be removed from the policy and proposals map;
- That reference to M4 Smart Motorway and Crossrail be removed from the supporting text and the proposals map; and
- That the projects listed in paragraph 9.13 be added to the policy and shown on an updated overall Major Transport Schemes map, and the extent of safeguarded land shown on the proposals map where necessary.

9.16 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to **not update the policy**, which would mean that the policy is significantly out of date, and would make it more difficult to achieve some of the transport projects within the Transport Strategy.

Q45: Do you agree with the proposed updates to policy TR2 to show an updated list of major transport projects?

TR4: Cycle routes and facilities

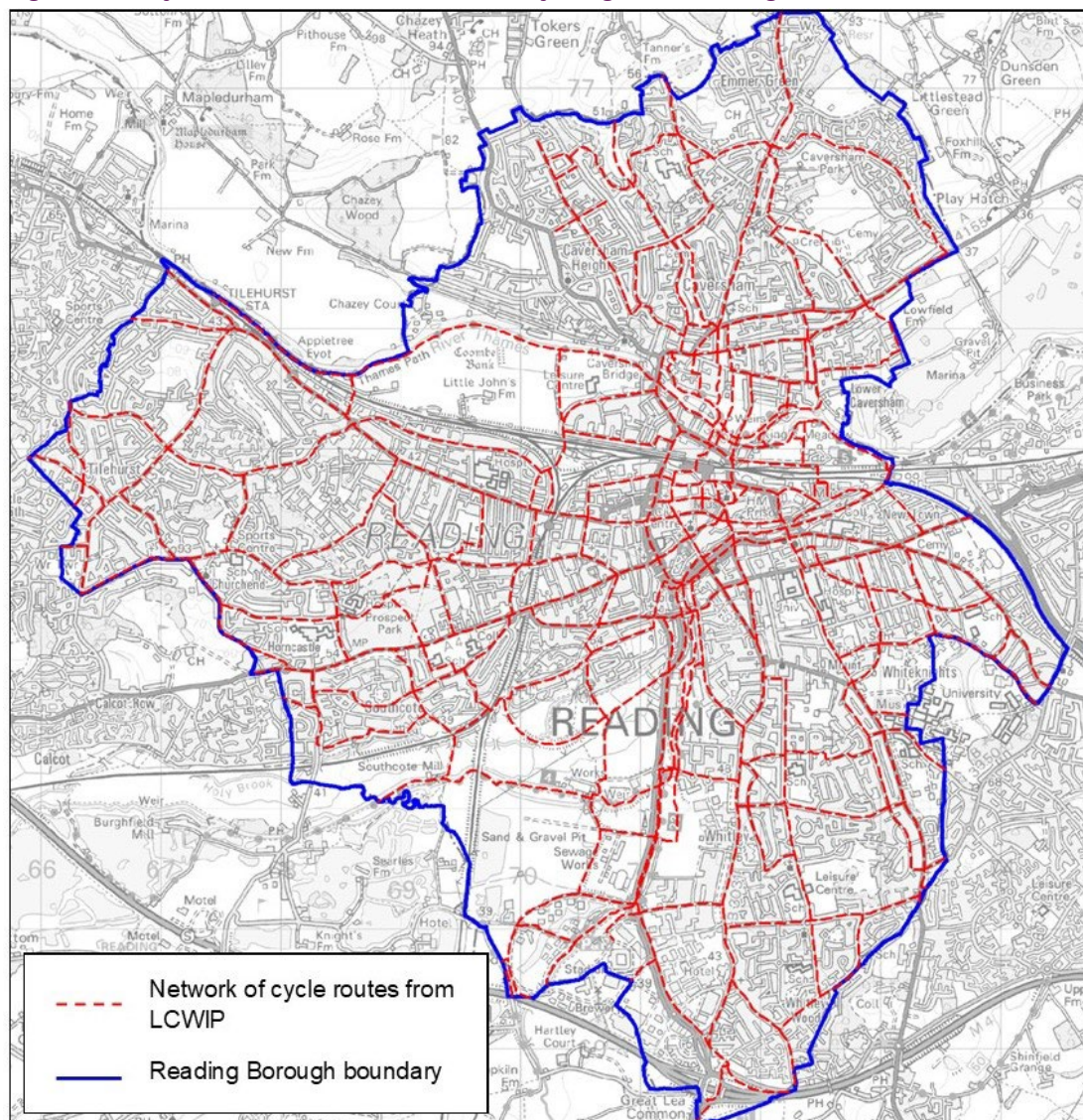
9.17 This policy ensures that opportunities are taken to improve cycling access, and identifies cycle routes that should be maintained, enhanced or extended. The routes are shown on the proposals map and are based on the 2014 Cycling Strategy.

9.18 A Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)²³ was published in March 2020 and was developed in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council and West Berkshire District Council. The LCWIP forms a sub-strategy to the transport strategy aiming to help deliver plans to increase walking and cycling usage. The LCWIP

²³ [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://reading.gov.uk/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan)

identifies a network of cycle routes, with five particular categories: town centre routes, strategic routes, orbital routes, local routes and leisure routes. Each of these categories has different measures associated with it and is geared towards different levels of cyclists. This network extends across the whole Reading urban area including areas outside Reading Borough. Figure 9.1 shows the network of routes within Reading Borough. The policy and accompanying proposals map will be updated to include these routes.

Figure 9.1: Cycle network from the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan



9.19 The LCWIP also distinguishes between five different types of route, as follows:

- Town centre routes: High quality, safe, designed for high volumes of cyclists, connecting to strategic and orbital routes, and integrated with public transport on low traffic volume/20mph routes;
- Strategic routes: Direct, safe, quickest, high quality, designed for high volumes of cyclists, segregated from traffic and pedestrians (where possible);
- Orbital routes: Provide access between strategic corridors, high quality routes, segregation (desirable);

- Local routes: Quieter roads, pleasant to cycle along, low traffic volumes and speeds;
- Leisure routes: Quieter roads, pleasant to cycle along, low traffic volumes and speeds.

9.20 The following changes are proposed:

- That the proposals map be updated to show the cycle network from the LCWP; and
- That the policy outline the different requirements for the five types of cycle route (cross-referring to the LCWIP for more detail).

9.21 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to **not update the policy**, which would mean that the policy is significantly out of date, and would mean that opportunities to enhance the more up-to-date cycling network could be missed.

Q46: Do you agree with the proposed updates to policy TR4 to reflect the LCWIP?

TR5: Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging

9.22 This policy ensures that car and cycle parking appropriate to the level of accessibility of the site is provided as part of new developments and that electric vehicle (EV) charging is provided for specified developments.

9.23 The identified need for an update to this policy is on electric vehicle charging. Unsurprisingly, this is an area that is changing rapidly. Although recent announcements have pushed back the date of a ban on sale of new petrol or diesel vehicles to 2035, this still falls well within the period of the updated plan. The Council has recently consulted on its Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2023²⁴. This notes the importance of securing charge points in new development, but also identified the following needs for infrastructure provision:

- Residents of Reading – Slow to Fast charging on-street for those who cannot install home chargers.
- Commuters and visitors to Reading – Rapid and ultra rapid charging at charging stations and slow to rapid charging at public and private car parks, workplaces, retail, entertainment venues etc reflecting typical duration of stay.
- Businesses providing local services, e.g. taxi services and delivery services

9.24 In terms of specific requirements for new development, Approved Document S took effect on 15th June 2022, meaning that provision of EV charging is generally covered by the Building Regulations. The Approved Document contains higher standards than existing policy TR5, in particular for new residential developments with communal parking, where a charging point per dwelling is generally expected rather than the 10% specified in TR5. On the face of it, therefore, there is no need for the policy to make provision for EV charging for residential development, even though the NPPF (paragraph 107) states that planning policies should take the need to ensure an

²⁴ [appendix-a---reading-evci-strategy---june-2023.pdf](#)

adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles into account.

- 9.25 However, there are some exclusions in the Approved Document regarding residential. In general these relate to where there is a cost over £3,600 per charge point for connection, or whether there is capacity within the existing electric connection, depending on whether or not the building is new build or a change of use.
- 9.26 The main area where there is scope to set standards over and above the Approved Document is in terms of non-residential development. For new non-residential developments, the Approved Document broadly matches the existing TR5 requirements, i.e. one charging point per ten spaces. However, given the increasing need to ensure infrastructure is available to support the move to electric vehicles, in particular the need for rapid and ultra rapid charging at workplaces and other commercial venues identified in the draft EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy, this provides an area where there is scope for improvement. It is therefore proposed to increase the provision for non-residential developments from 10% to 20% of spaces within dedicated car parks of 10 spaces or more.
- 9.27 There is also a need to support the roll-out of appropriately located EV charging infrastructure outside development sites, on which the policy is currently silent. In particular there will need to be increased provision on the public highway, within car parks and in other locations such as filling stations. This provision will not always be covered by permitted development rights, particularly since they only apply in off street parking locations. There will also be a potential need to support the provision of renewable energy that powers charge points. There will be important caveats around keeping the footway clear, minimising clutter and the particular sensitivities of trees and the historic environment, but, if sufficient infrastructure is to be provided to enable a shift to EVs, the presumption in the policy should generally be in favour.
- 9.28 The following changes are proposed:
- That the specific residential EV charging requirements are removed as they are superseded by Building Regulations;
 - That the requirement for non-residential developments be increased from 10% to 20% of off-road spaces where there are at least 10 spaces; and
 - That a presumption in favour of charging infrastructure, subject to caveats around areas such as accessibility, amenity, trees and heritage, be introduced.
- 9.29 **Alternative options:** Other options, which are around non-residential parking, include:
- **Not to update the policy:** This approach would not make any additional contribution to addressing the Climate Emergency through additional EV charging provision.
 - **To seek a higher proportion of non-residential parking to include charge points:** The difficulty with this option is deliverability in terms of whether it can be supported by available electricity supply (already known to be a constraint) as well as viability.

Q47: Do you agree with the proposed updates to policy TR5 regarding electric vehicle charging?

10. Retail, leisure and culture

- 10.1 The following policies are proposed to be updated:
- RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development;
 - RL3: Vitality and viability of smaller centres; and
 - RL4: Betting shops and payday loan companies.
- 10.2 The following policies are considered to be up-to-date and are not proposed to be updated:
- RL1: Network and hierarchy of centres;
 - RL5: Impact of main town centre uses; and
 - RL6: Protection of leisure facilities and public houses.

Q48: Do you agree that we should update the retail, leisure and culture policies listed?

RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development

- 10.3 This policy identifies the amount of retail, leisure and culture development that will be planned for and sets out the approach to where this development should be located.
- 10.4 The policy currently identifies a need for up to 34,900 sq m of retail and related facilities up to 2036. However, what has actually happened on the ground is that there has been a net loss of retail, leisure and culture floorspace of around 38,000 sq m over the plan period so far (2013 to 2023). There does remain a significant amount of floorspace with planning permission, but in general the trend is that there be a loss of retail floorspace in particular rather than a gain.
- 10.5 The evidence on which these levels of need were based is now more than five years old. In addition, it predated Covid, which is likely to have significantly affected shopping and leisure patterns. For this reason, retail need at least is unlikely to have increased. However, national policy clearly expects the need for economic development uses to be assessed. This evidence remains to be produced. When it is, the proposal is to update policy RL2 to provide for any revisions to the assessed level of need insofar as is possible.
- 10.6 The following change is proposed:
- That the policy be updated to refer to updated needs for retail, leisure and culture uses, taking account of the most up-to-date information.
- 10.7 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to **not update the policy**, which would not address development needs as required by national policy.

Q49: Are you aware of anything else that should be factored into an update to policy RL2?

RL3: Vitality and viability of smaller centres

- 10.8 This policy aims to manage the uses within the identified district and local centres, in particular ensuring that retail and financial and professional uses do not fall below a certain level, that takeaways are not permitted to over-concentrate, that there would

be no ground floor loss of town centre uses and that additional town centre uses are provided where possible.

- 10.9 The main reason that an update is needed to this policy is that it requires that a minimum proportion of the key frontage in each centre is in A1 (retail) or A2 (financial and professional) use. However, changes to the use classes order in 2020 have removed these use classes and placed these uses within a wider E class that also includes offices, light industrial, restaurants and cafes and medical centres among other uses. This means that this part of the policy can no longer be applied as drafted.
- 10.10 The proposal is simply to remove part (a) of this policy. There is little point in seeking to replace it with a policy that retains an equivalent level of E class uses, because this is such a wide-ranging use class that very little within these frontages falls outside it. Of those remaining uses that are present within frontages, there are already other controls in the plan on changes to takeaways and non-centre uses (part (b) of this policy) and betting shops and payday lenders (policy RL4). Those uses which fall outside both class E and which are not already controlled by other policies (principally pubs, beauty/nail/tanning salons, tattooists, launderettes, hotels and community uses such as churches) generally contribute to the diversity of a centre and form such a minor element (7% of the total identified key frontages) that there is little to be gained by specifically controlling them.
- 10.11 There will need to be associated changes to part (d) of the policy to refer to class E rather than A1 and A2, and also to the list of centre uses and non-centre uses in paragraph 4.6.16.
- 10.12 In terms of other changes, permitted development rights came into force in 2021 that would result in E class uses being potentially subject to conversion to residential without requiring planning permission. However, the Council made a legal direction (known as an Article 4 direction) that came into force in November 2022 to remove these permitted development rights in the most important parts of the district and local centres. This direction was modified by the Secretary of State on 10th October 2023. The supporting text should be amended to reference the direction.
- 10.13 The following changes are proposed:
- That criterion a) which seeks to retain a certain proportion of A1 and A2 uses within each centre be removed from the policy;
 - That the policy and supporting text wording be revised to reflect new use classes; and
 - That reference be made to the Article 4 direction that controls changes to residential within parts of the centres.
- 10.14 **Alternative options:** Other options include:
- **Not to update the policy:** This approach would mean that the policy remains out of date, and that parts of it are no longer realistically capable of implementation.
 - **To seek to retain a minimum proportion of use class E:** The difficulty with this approach is that class E is now so wide-ranging as to render the policy almost pointless, in that there is very little within the broad category of town centre uses that does not fall within that use class.

Q50: Do you agree that we should update policy RL3 as described to reflect permitted development rights?

RL4: Betting shops and payday loan companies

- 10.15 This policy prevents clustering of betting shops and payday loan shops, so that an application for such a use should not result in three or more premises within 150 m of the application property. The issue is that clustering of such premises can exacerbate existing economic problems in local areas, as well as having a detrimental effect on the appearance and character of the area, particularly where the shopfronts are obscured.
- 10.16 This policy was not identified as being in need of update within the Local Plan Review, but there has recently been an increase in proposed adult gaming centres, in particular in the Friar Street area where there a number of betting shops are already present. These gaming centres have much the same effect as betting shops and payday lenders in terms of economic issues and character and appearance. It is therefore proposed that policy RL4 should be extended to cover these premises.
- 10.17 There is also a risk that the existing policy wording could be interpreted as meaning that the policy will only apply where an application takes the cluster over the threshold of three and that once this is already exceeded there are no further restrictions. This is not the policy intent, and this should therefore be clarified.
- 10.18 The following changes are proposed:
- That the policy be extended to cover all gambling establishments; and
 - That it be clarified that, where there are already three establishments within 150 sq m, no further increase will be permitted.
- 10.19 **Alternative options:** Other options include:
- **Not to update the policy:** This approach would allow adult gaming centres and other gambling establishments to continue to cluster, leaving to effects on local economic conditions and character of the local area.
 - **To set an alternative threshold for adult gaming centres:** This approach would mean applying a different threshold for adult gaming centres than for betting shops and payday lenders. However, this would not address a situation where it is the combination of one of each of the uses outlined in the policy that is causing the issues.

Q51: Do you agree that we should update policy RL4 as proposed to address other gambling establishments?

11. Other uses

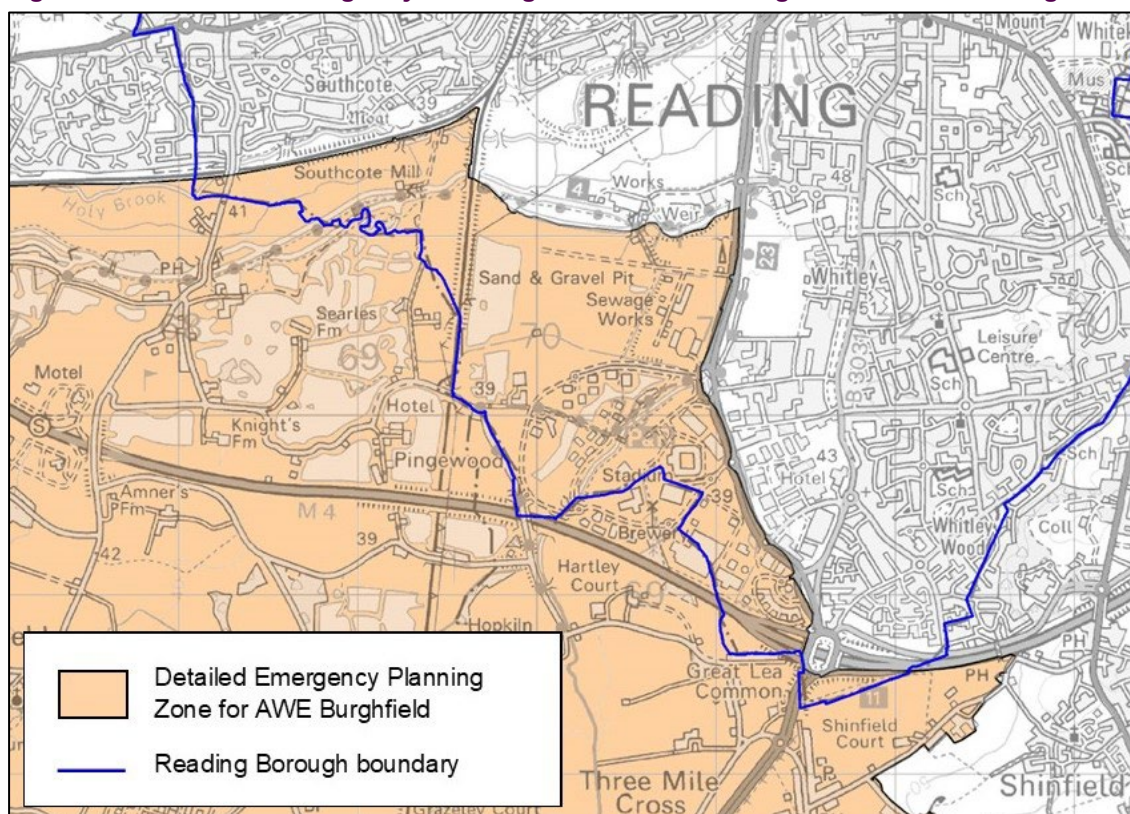
- 11.1 The following policies are proposed to be updated:
- OU2: Hazardous installations; and
 - OU3: Telecommunications development.
- 11.2 The following policies are considered to be up-to-date and are not proposed to be updated:
- OU1: New and existing community facilities;
 - OU4: Advertisements; and
 - OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines.

Q52: Do you agree that we should update the policies for other uses listed?

OU2: Hazardous installations

- 11.3 This policy ensures that proposals that would involve hazardous substances, or development in the vicinity of hazardous sites, would not pose adverse health and safety risks.
- 11.4 Most aspects of the policy, including its general principles, remain up-to-date and are not proposed to be changed. However, there has been a significant change the area around the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield that needs to be reflected. In 2020, the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) around AWE Burghfield was significantly extended and, for the first time, now includes extensive parts of Reading. This was not as a result of any change in activities on the site but resulted from changes in the relevant legislation. The area affected is generally to the west of the A33 and south of the Kennet & Avon Canal. This represents a significantly greater constraint on development in this area than existed at the time that OU2 was drafted. A map of the DEPZ as it applies to Reading is in Figure 11.1.
- 11.5 The following changes are proposed:
- There should be an additional clause to the policy which deals specifically with development in the DEPZ for AWE Burghfield, which makes it clear that proposals will be judged in terms of their impact on the AWE Burghfield Off-Site Emergency Plan and that increases in population within the DEPZ will not be acceptable unless they can be accommodated within that Plan;
 - The DEPZ boundary should be added to the Proposals Map; and
 - The supporting text on AWE Burghfield (currently paragraphs 4.7.15 and 4.7.16) needs to be rewritten to include the updated position and a map similar to Figure 11.1.

Figure 11.1: Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for AWE Burghfield within Reading



- 11.6 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to not update the policy, but this will fail to reflect changes that are already in effect and fail to provide a clear local policy basis for judging proposals in the DEPZ.

Q53: Do you agree with the changes proposed to reflect the extension of the DEPZ for AWE Burghfield? Are there other changes that are required?

- 11.7 The degree to which the DEPZ prevents development from taking place within its boundaries is a matter which will need to be considered when considering relevant allocations. Existing allocation SR1 is within the DEPZ for example, as is the suggested site Sou4 at Flagstaff Road. Recent inconsistent appeal decisions have not been helpful in clarifying this matter. It is also worth noting that much of the DEPZ within Reading falls outside the 3 km buffer of AWE Burghfield which was the starting point for defining the zone and was only included when this was mapped to features on the ground to avoid splitting communities. It will therefore need to be weighed against other factors.

OU3: Telecommunications development

- 11.8 This policy aims to deliver telecommunications infrastructure and increase digital connectivity throughout the Borough while mitigating the negative effects of installations on amenity.
- 11.9 The existing policy approach is robust and has been tested at appeal on several occasions. Appeal decisions since the adoption of the plan have reinforced the need for adequate assessment of alternative sites.

- 11.10 Although the existing policy is generally effective, it would benefit from removal of reference to outdated technology. Additionally, the policy should be strengthened to express the Council's requirement for careful siting and design of installations to ensure there are no adverse impacts on visual amenity, heritage, trees and highway safety.
- 11.11 Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019, there have been a number of changes to permitted development rights with regard to telecommunications infrastructure. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) Order 2022 came into force on 4th April 2022. As such, many applications for telecommunications development now fall under the prior approval process.
- 11.12 In addition, the NPPF now states that, when considering the need to keep masts to a minimum, this should take into account "*providing reasonable capacity for future expansion*". It makes specific reference to 5G technology as well as technology needed to enable smart cities.
- 11.13 The existing policy and supporting text refers to lamp column 'swap outs'. This is no longer considered relevant or desirable as the size of installations has increased substantially. Instead of pursuing opportunities for lamp column 'swap outs', large installations should be designed in such a way to avoid adverse impacts through careful siting, preferably avoiding pavements or alongside streets, where possible.
- 11.14 The following changes are proposed:
- Amend the first bullet point of the policy to state that development should be carefully sited and designed as to avoid adverse impacts to trees and highway safety, in addition to heritage assets and neighbouring amenity. Applications that result in a negative impact due to the cumulative effect of multiple installations within a single location will not be permitted.
 - Amend the second bullet point to omit reference to lamp column 'swap-outs.'
 - Amend the third bullet point to ensure that alternative sites 'especially those that avoid use of pavements or sites alongside streets' have been fully investigated.
 - The supporting text should be amended to:
 - Explain that given the increasing size of installations, streetside siting is increasingly problematic.
 - Explain new permitted development rights for telecommunications which came into force on 4th April 2022. These:
 - Enable more significant provision of radio housing;
 - Allow for the widening and increasing the height of existing ground-based masts;
 - Allow additional height for building-based masts;
 - Increase the height limit for new ground-based masts; and

- Strengthen the conditions on the siting and visual impacts of development.
 - Remove reference to third- and fourth-generation technology in paragraph 4.7.18.
 - Remove paragraphs 4.7.20, 4.7.21 and 4.7.23.
 - Remove reference to EU Council's recommendation for ICNIRP certificates and simply refer to the certificate itself.
- 11.15 **Alternative options:** The only alternative identified is to **not update the policy**. Although the criteria for assessing proposals largely remains the same, this would result in a policy that is out-of-date as it fails to refer to the changing technology, the new role of permitted development rights and the increasing importance of ensuring that alternative sites have been fully investigated, as reinforced by recent appeal decisions.

Q54: Do you agree with the changes proposed to policy OU3?

12. Area-specific policies and site allocations

12.1 The following policies are proposed to be updated:

- CR2: Design in Central Reading;
- CR5: Drinking establishments in Central Reading;
- CR6: Living in Central Reading;
- CR7: Primary frontages in Central Reading;
- CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area;
- CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area;
- CR13: East Side Major Opportunity Area;
- CR14: Other sites for development in Central Reading;
- CR15: The Reading Abbey Quarter;
- SR1: Island Road Major Opportunity Area;
- SR4: Other sites for development in South Reading;
- SR5: Leisure and recreation use of the Kennetside areas;
- WR3: Other sites for development in West Reading and Tilehurst;
- CA1: Sites for development and change of use in Caversham and Emmer Green;
- ER1: Sites for development in East Reading;
- ER2: Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading; and
- ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital.

12.2 The following policies are considered to be up-to-date and are not proposed to be updated:

- CR1: Definition of Central Reading;
- CR3: Public realm in Central Reading;
- CR4: Leisure, culture and tourism in Central Reading;
- CR8: Small shop units in Central Reading;
- CR9: Terraced housing in Central Reading;
- CR10: Tall buildings;
- CR16: Areas to the north of Friar Street and east of Station Road;
- SR2: Land north of Manor Farm Road Major Opportunity Area;
- SR3: South of Elgar Road Major Opportunity Area;
- WR1: Dee Park;
- WR2: Park Lane Primary School, The Laurels and Downing Road; and
- CA2: Caversham Park.

Q55: Do you agree that we should update the area-specific and site allocation policies listed?

CR2: Design in Central Reading

- 12.3 This policy aims to ensure that development within Central Reading is designed in such a way that it contributes to and respects the particular character of the central area, such as its historic character, fine-grained grid structure, elements of high-quality townscape, waterspaces, open spaces and public realm. Policy CR2 aims to pick up on elements that require more specific detail than is provided in CC7 and other design policies.
- 12.4 The following changes are proposed:
- Remove the reference in paragraph a to the ‘existing grid’ as this may have become fragmented and instead refer to aims to re-establish an ‘original grid.’
 - In paragraph c, add reference to designing for biodiversity net gain.
 - A paragraph should be added to clarify how instances of conflict between priorities should be dealt with.
 - The supporting text should be amended to:
 - Refer to the principles of the National Model Design Code and a forthcoming Design Code for Reading as stated above with regard to CC7.
 - Give an example of how instances of conflict between priorities should be dealt with. For instance, in the case of a proposed direct north-south link from the station preventing the provision of active frontages, the route should be prioritised and active frontages provided where possible, as the transport link is considered of higher priority than the possible positive effects of an active frontage.
- 12.5 **Alternative options:** The only alternative identified is to **not update the policy**. Although this would continue to contribute to positive design within the town centre, it does not refer to the most up-to-date government guidance or facilitate the adoption of a local design code in the coming years. Retention of language referring to “the existing grid” may result in applications for development which are fragmented. The existing policy approach also fails to specify how conflicts between priorities should be addressed.

Q56: Do you agree that we should update policy CR2 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

CR5: Drinking establishments in Central Reading

- 12.6 This policy sets out the approach to proposals involving pubs, bars and clubs in Central Reading.
- 12.7 The reason that this policy has been identified as within scope of the update is that the Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) is overdue for review. The CIA is part of the Licensing Policy and deals with the sale of alcohol within the Town Centre Cumulative Impact Area (covering most of the commercial core of the centre). The existing CIA currently covers the period from October 2018 to October 2021. A Draft CIA was published for consultation, which ended on 12th September 2023.

- 12.8 The intention is that policy CR5 should be aligned with any applicable CIA for the town centre, albeit taking the different roles of licensing and planning powers into account. As such, updates to this policy will await further detail on the status of the CIA.
- 12.9 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to not update the policy, but this will potentially lead to a situation where planning policy and licensing policy are not aligned and would lead to confusion.

Q57: Do you have any comments on whether and how policy CR5 should be updated?

CR6: Living in Central Reading

- 12.10 This policy deals with specific matters that affect residential proposals in the centre of Reading, including the mix of unit sizes, noise and air quality issues, specific requirements for affordable housing tenure and the issue of serviced apartments.
- 12.11 The NPPF (paragraph 125) states that there should be minimum density standards for city and town centres, and that these should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential areas, unless there are strong reasons why this would be inappropriate. This was the particular reason that this policy was identified for an update. However, the issue of minimum densities is now considered in relation to policy H2 and does not need to be restated here.
- 12.12 The issue where an update is most likely to be necessary is the mix of housing. As previously stated for policy H2, securing family housing of three or more bedrooms is extremely challenging. The expectation in CR6 is that developments of 15 or more dwellings will include at least 5% of dwellings at three or more bedrooms. This reflects the challenges of delivering family housing on high-density town centre sites. However, with the town centre likely to make up the majority of housing delivery over the plan period, there is a strong case to be made for expecting a greater mix on town centre sites.
- 12.13 The following change is proposed:
- To increase the minimum proportion of family homes of three or more bedrooms expected on town centre sites from 5% to 10 or 15%.
- 12.14 **Alternative options:** Other options include:
- **Not to update the policy:** This would make no contribution towards improving the mix of housing delivered to secure more family homes.
 - **To increase the minimum proportion of three-bedroom homes further to 20%:** There are likely to be much more significant issues in delivering this in practice, in that it is much less likely than the proposed approach to be in line with demand, as well as making it more difficult to achieve the required number of dwellings on town centre sites.

Q58: Do you agree that we should update policy CR6 to seek a greater contribution towards family housing?

CR7: Primary frontages in Central Reading

- 12.15 This policy aims to ensure that the main shopping frontages across Central Reading provide active uses with a shopfront, and that a proportion of retail or financial and professional use is retained within each frontage.
- 12.16 The main reason that an update is needed to this policy, as for policy RL3, is that it requires that a minimum proportion of the key frontage in each centre is in A1 (retail) or A2 (financial and professional) use, but changes to the use classes order in 2020 have removed these use classes and placed these uses within a wider E class. This means that this aspect of the policy can no longer be applied as drafted.
- 12.17 The proposal is to remove the final paragraph of the policy, which refers to a minimum proportion of any specific use. This is because use class E, within which changes cannot be controlled, covers such a wide range of uses that a minimum proportion would be ineffective. Other parts of this policy already prevent a loss to the types of uses that do not activate the primary frontage, such as residential.
- 12.18 The first paragraph of the policy will also need to be amended where it refers to specific use classes that will be appropriate on the primary frontages. The updated policy should refer to C1, E, F1, F2 or related sui generis uses,
- 12.19 Where primary frontages are shown on the Proposals Map they are either existing frontages or proposed frontages. Existing frontages are mapped onto existing buildings and proposed frontages show a broad direction of the frontage within a proposed development site, The Station Hill development is under construction, with some parts already occupied, and there is therefore a need to change the frontage that extends through the site to meet Friar Street from a proposed to an existing primary frontage. Figure 12.1 shows the proposed extent of the frontage.

Figure 12.1: Proposed extent of primary frontage in Station Hill



12.20 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** This approach would mean that the policy remains out of date, and that parts of it are no longer realistically capable of implementation.
- **To seek to retain a minimum proportion of use class E:** The difficulty with this approach is that class E is now so wide-ranging as to render the policy almost pointless, in that there is very little within the broad category of town centre uses that does not fall within that use class.

Q59: Do you agree that we should update policy CR7 as described to reflect changes in use classes?

CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area

12.21 This policy identifies the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, a large area of redevelopment potential centred around Reading Station, and extending to the River Thames in the north and Friar Street in the south, for redevelopment and change for a mix of uses including 2,245-3,415 dwellings and 136,000-190,000 sq m of commercial floorspace.

12.22 There has been progress on many of the key sites within the Station/River Major Opportunity Area. The general update on each of the sub-areas is as follows:

- CR11a: Friar Street and Station Road: This sub-area covers a large number of relatively small sites. Some development had already been completed by adoption of the Local Plan, but more recent progress includes:
 - 1 Station Road: Completion of conversion and extension for 14 dwellings.
 - Applications have been submitted for redevelopment of 35-39 Friar Street and change of use of 13-15 Station Road that would deliver new dwellings, but not yet determined.
- CR11b: Greyfriars Road corner: This site is divided into two parts:
 - 20 Greyfriars Road: Prior approval is in place for change of use of offices to 43 dwellings. Development has not yet started.
 - 52-55 Friar Street: No application or development progress other than an expired permission for redevelopment.
- CR11c: Station Hill: The whole of the site now has planning permission for a very significant mixed use redevelopment. This consists of the following elements:
 - Phase 1: Development for 599 dwellings and ground floor commercial uses in the area south of Garrard Street is under construction, and the first dwellings have recently been completed.
 - Phase 2: Development for 36,000 sq m of offices is under construction.
 - Phase 3: Outline permission is in place for mixed use development with offices, commercial, up to 750 dwellings and other uses, with no application yet for reserved matters.
- CR11d: Brunel Arcade and Apex Plaza: No application or development progress.
- CR11e: North of the Station: This site is divided into three parts:
 - 80 Caversham Road: Planning permission has been granted for a mixed use development for 620 dwellings, offices, retail, community uses and health centre;
 - Station Retail Park: An application for a significant mixed use redevelopment was received and an appeal against non-determination is ongoing at the time of writing.
 - Network Rail Car Park: No application or development progress.
- CR11f: West of Caversham Road: The site is divided into two parts:
 - 97a-117 Caversham Road: Planning permission has been granted for redevelopment for 60 dwellings. Development has not yet started.
 - 75-77 Caversham Road: No application or development progress.
- CR11g: Riverside: The site is divided into two parts:

- 55 Vastern Road: Planning permission has been granted for 209 dwellings, a café and a north-south link through the site. Development has not yet started.
- SSE site: No application or development progress.
- CR11h: Napier Road Junction: This site has now been fully developed for 315 dwellings, known as Thames Quarter. No further development is anticipated.
- CR11i: Napier Court: No application or development progress.

12.23 For this, and for the other town centre major opportunity areas, it is not proposed to exclude sites where they are completed or are under construction because the purpose of the designation is to ensure that the area is developed as comprehensively as possible, but the diagrams (in this case Figure 5.3) will be amended to show the status of any buildings that have been completed or are under construction, and specific sub-area guidance for sites that have been wholly completed will be removed.

12.24 In addition, updated work on the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) may identify some changes to the capacity levels for further development set out in the policy, in order to help us meet development needs.

Q60: Do you have any comments on the proposed amendments to reflect progress on sites within the Station/River Major Opportunity Area?

12.25 The Call for Sites exercise resulted in a proposal from the owner of Apex (formerly Apex Plaza) that the capacity of the site, already identified as part of CR11d for “250-380 dwellings, 3,000-5,000 sq m net gain of offices, 1,000-2,000 sq m net gain of retail and leisure”, be increased to reflect its location directly adjacent to the station and within a designated tall buildings cluster. We would like to hear any views on this before it is considered further.

12.26 In addition, there was a proposal that the site be separated out from the Brunel Arcade site in the allocation to allow it to come forward independently. In our view, this is not necessary, as sites within the same sub-areas have already come forward independently (for instance those within the North of the Station sub-area), but this could potentially be made more explicit within policy CR11 and other equivalent policies.

Q61: Do you have any views on the amendments to CR11d that have been suggested to us?

CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area

12.27 This policy identifies the West Side Opportunity Area, a large area of redevelopment potential around the western parts of the centre, extending to the railway line in the north and Castle Street in the south, which provides 1,570-2,430 dwellings and 14,000-21,000 sq m of commercial floorspace.

12.28 There has been progress on many key sites within the West Side Major Opportunity Area. The general update on each of the sub-areas is as follows:

- CR12a: Cattle Market: No application or development progress.

- CR12b: Great Knollys Street and Weldale Street: This sub-area covers a number of different sites, on which there has been some progress as follows:
 - Land at Weldale Street and Chatham Street: Development for 418 dwellings under construction, with 253 dwellings already completed.
 - 45 Caversham Road: Development of 40 dwellings under construction.
 - Unit 16 North Street: Planning permission for redevelopment for 10 dwellings and office space. Development has not yet started.
- CR12c: Chatham Street, Eaton Place and Oxford Road: This sub-area covers a number of different sites, on which there has been some progress as follows:
 - 114 Oxford Road: Development for 16 dwellings has been completed.
 - 115 Chatham Street: Planning permission has been granted for redevelopment for 54 dwellings. The existing buildings have been demolished.
 - Applications have been submitted for redevelopment of Eaton Court, 106-112 Oxford Road and 10 Eaton Place that would deliver new dwellings, but are not yet determined.
- CR12d: Broad Street Mall: Planning permission has been granted for development on the Broad Street Mall that would deliver 422 dwellings. Development has not yet started.
- CR12e: Hosier Street: No application or development progress.

12.29 For this, and for the other town centre major opportunity areas, it is not proposed to exclude sites where they are completed or are under construction because the purpose of the designation is to ensure that the area is developed as comprehensively as possible, but the diagrams (in this case Figure 5.4) will be amended to show the status of any buildings that have been completed or are under construction, and specific sub-area guidance for sites that have been wholly completed will be removed. In addition, there is a need for a revision to site CR12e (Hosier Street) to refer to the latest proposals, through money from the Levelling-Up Fund, for improvements to the Hexagon Theatre.

12.30 In addition, updated work on the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) may identify some changes to the capacity levels for further development set out in the policy, in order to help us meet development needs.

Q62: Do you have any comments on the proposed amendments to reflect progress on sites within the West Side Major Opportunity Area?

12.31 The Call for Sites exercise resulted in a proposal that the allocation of the Cattle Market site (CR12a) be amended to reduce the amount of retail on site and increase the number of homes. It was suggested that the site could accommodate 800 to 1,200 dwellings compared to 330 to 490 in the existing allocation. The Council will carry out its own assessment of the possible capacity, but we would like to hear any views on this before it is considered further.

Q63: Do you have any views on the amendment to CR12a at the Cattle Market that has been suggested to us?

CR13: East Side Major Opportunity Area

- 12.32 This policy identifies the East Side Opportunity Area, a large area of redevelopment potential around the eastern parts of the centre, extending from close to Reading Station in the west to the mouth of the River Kennet in the east, which would provide 1,531-2,285 dwellings.
- 12.33 There has been progress on many key sites within the East Side Major Opportunity Area. The general update on each of the sub-areas is as follows:
- CR13a: Reading Prison: No application or development progress.
 - CR13b: Forbury Retail Park: This sub-area covers three different sites, on which there has been some progress as follows:
 - Former Homebase and Toys R Us: Development for 765 dwellings was granted planning permission and is under construction, with 292 dwellings already completed.
 - Forbury Retail Park Phase 1: An application has been submitted for redevelopment that would deliver new dwellings, but is not yet determined.
 - Forbury Retail Park Phase 2: No application or development progress.
 - CR13c: Forbury Business Park and Kenavon Drive: No application or development progress.
 - CR13d: Gas Holder: Planning permission has been granted for development that would deliver 130 dwellings. Development has not yet started,
- 12.34 For this, and for the other town centre major opportunity areas, it is not proposed to exclude sites where they are completed or are under construction because the purpose of the designation is to ensure that the area is developed as comprehensively as possible, but the diagrams (in this case Figure 5.5) will be amended to show the status of any buildings that have been completed or are under construction, and specific sub-area guidance for sites that have been wholly completed will be removed.
- 12.35 In addition, updated work on the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) may identify some changes to the capacity levels for further development set out in the policy, in order to help us meet development needs.

Q64: Do you have any comments on the proposed amendments to reflect progress on sites within the East Side Major Opportunity Area?

- 12.36 Reading Prison (CR13a) is currently identified for a wide range of possible uses in the existing plan. The site, until recently owned by the Ministry of Justice, was on the market for some time, and a sale is understood to be in progress. According to the policy, the use of the site should include some cultural or heritage element or related retail and leisure that draws on its significance. However, this emphasis can be further strengthened by making clear that a cultural, heritage or leisure use that provides wider benefits to Reading and to the Abbey Quarter is absolutely essential.

Q65: Do you agree with the proposed changes to CR13a to increase the emphasis on culture and heritage?

- 12.37 The Call for Sites exercise resulted in a proposal that the allocation of the Kenavon Drive and Forbury Business Park site (CR13c) be amended to increase the number of homes on site. It was suggested that the site could accommodate 430 to 450 build to rent dwellings compared to 190 to 285 dwellings in the existing allocation. The Council will carry out its own assessment of the possible capacity, but we would like to hear any views on this before it is considered further.

Q66: Do you have any views on the amendment to CR13c on Kenavon Drive and Forbury Business Park that has been suggested to us?

CR14: Other sites for development in Central Reading

- 12.38 This policy identifies a number of sites for development in Central Reading outside the three major opportunity areas.
- 12.39 There have been changes on a number of the sites listed in policy CR14 that need to be reflected. It is proposed to remove the following sites from the policy:
- CR14b: Former Reading Family Centre, North Street, which is under construction and is nearing completion;
 - CR14c: 17-23 Queen Victoria Street, where a change of use for serviced apartments has been undertaken and where the residential allocation has therefore been superseded;
 - CR14f: 1-5 King Street, where a change of use to offices has been completed and where the residential allocation has therefore been superseded; and
 - CR14k: Corner of Crown Street and Silver Street, where residential development has been completed.
- 12.40 In addition, updated work on the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) may identify some changes to the capacity levels for further development set out in the policy, in order to help us meet development needs.

Q67: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in Central Reading? Do you want to see any other changes?

- 12.41 The following sites in Central Reading have been identified as possible additions to the policy through the call for sites or other sources. More detail on each site is included in Appendix 2, and we would like to hear your views on whether they should be identified before we come to a conclusion on their suitability. Please note that the suggested uses and any indication of scale of development are what has been suggested to us at this point, and do not necessarily represent our view on the most suitable form of development, if any:
- Aquis House, 49-51 Forbury Road and 33 Blagrove Street (Cen1): potential redevelopment of offices for mixed residential and office development of 10-15 storeys;
 - Reading Central Library, Kings Road (Cen 2): primarily residential development as a result of the proposed library move to Bridge Street;

- John Lewis depot, Mill Lane (Cen3): potential redevelopment of warehouse (which forms part of the existing CR14g allocation) for around 200 build-to-rent dwellings;
- Crowne Plaza Reading, Richfield Avenue (Cen4): potential full or partial redevelopment of hotel site for hotel with ancillary food and drink, residential use, residential care and/or filling and EV charging station;
- 2 Norman Place (Cen5): potential redevelopment of office for a residential development of around 240 dwellings;
- Reading Bridge House, George Street (Cen6): potential redevelopment of office building for 300 to 400 dwellings;
- Tesco Extra, Napier Road (Cen7): potential development of part of the existing car park for 150-200 dwellings;
- Kennet Place, Kings Road (Cen8): conversion to approximately 70 apartments.
- Sapphire Plaza, Watlington Street and Royal Court, Kings Road (Cen9): potential redevelopment of office and residential block for a residential development of 250 to 400 dwellings and around 3,000 sq m of commercial space;
- Part of Reading College site, Kings Road (Cen10): potential redevelopment of south eastern corner of site for mixed use or residential development of around 45 dwellings.

12.42 **Alternative options:** Potential alternative options for each individual additional site are set out in Appendix 2.

Q68: Do you have any comments on any of the potential additional allocations to policy CR14?

CR15: The Reading Abbey Quarter

12.43 This policy sets guidance for development within or in the vicinity of the Reading Abbey Quarter, which will be a major area for heritage and cultural life within the Borough, offering educational, economic and open space opportunities.

12.44 The main identified need for update to this policy is around its relationship to the adjoining Reading Prison (site CR13a). As highlighted in relation to CR13, the site is in the process of being sold, and it will be vital that it includes some cultural, heritage or leisure use that provides wider benefits to Reading. Policy CR15 already states that the Abbey Quarter should be considered in the context of the Reading Prison site, but this should be further emphasised by stating that the Reading Prison site should be considered part of the Abbey Quarter for these purposes and that the areas should link into and complement one another.

12.45 The following change is proposed:

- To state that the Reading Prison site should be considered part of the Abbey Quarter for the purposes of CR15 and that the areas should link into and complement one another.

- 12.46 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to not update the policy, and, whilst there are still hooks in the policy around the relationship to the prison, it may miss an opportunity to further emphasise that it should be considered alongside the Abbey Quarter.

Q69: Do you have any comments on the proposed changes to policy CR15 regarding the Abbey Quarter?

SR1: Island Road Major Opportunity Area

- 12.47 This policy identifies the Island Road Opportunity Area, a large area of development potential around Island Road and to the west of the A33, to provide 129,800-157,000 sq m of employment floorspace.

- 12.48 The general update on each of the sub-areas is as follows:

- SR1a: Former Landfill, Island Road: No application or development progress.
- SR1b: North of Island Road: Development for new industrial and warehouse floorspace has been completed covering the whole site.
- SR1c: Island Road A33 Frontage: No application, other than an old extant office permission that is not expected to be implemented, or development progress.

- 12.49 For this, and for the other town centre major opportunity areas, it is not proposed to exclude sites where they are completed or are under construction because the purpose of the designation is to ensure that the area is developed as comprehensively as possible, but the diagrams (in this case Figure 6.2) will be amended to show the status of any buildings that have been completed or are under construction, and specific sub-area guidance for sites that have been wholly completed will be removed.

- 12.50 With work to identify the level of employment need due to be undertaken, this may have implications for policy SR1, which represents by far the biggest allocation of employment development in the plan. The policy may therefore need to be updated to take this into account.

- 12.51 The Local Plan Review identified the main potential reason for update as being the extension to the DEPZ around AWE Burghfield (see section 11), which covers the site. However, this is not a new allocation, rather it is a continuation of an existing allocation adopted in 2019 that predates the 2020 changes to the DEPZ and should have therefore been taken into account when the extension was made. However, this is relevant only as long as the allocation remains a continuation of the existing. Any proposal to increase the geographical extent or amount of floorspace on site will need to be considered in the context of the extended DEPZ and the impacts on the Off-Site Emergency Plan.

- 12.52 The following changes are proposed:

- That the diagram and text be updated to show where parts of the allocation have been completed; and
- That the implications of a new assessment of employment need be considered.

Q70: Do you have any comments on the proposed changes to policy SR1 regarding the Island Road area?

SR4: Other sites for development in South Reading

- 12.53 This policy identifies a number of sites for development in South Reading outside the three major opportunity areas.
- 12.54 There have been changes affecting one of the sites listed in policy SR4 that need to be reflected. It is proposed to remove the following site from the policy:
- SR4f: Land South West of Junction 11 of the M4, which was identified for development associated with the wider Grazeley garden settlement proposal within Wokingham and West Berkshire's area, but, as described in section 3, this is proposal is not being taken forward, and the SR4f allocation is no longer therefore appropriate or deliverable.
- 12.55 In addition, updated work on the HELAA may identify some changes to the capacity levels for further development set out in the policy, in order to help us meet development needs.

Q71: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in South Reading? Do you want to see any other changes?

- 12.56 The following sites in South Reading have been identified as possible additions to the policy through the call for sites or other sources. More detail on each site is included in Appendix 2, and we would like to hear your views on whether they should be identified before we come to a conclusion on their suitability. Please note that the suggested uses and scale of development are what has been suggested to us at this point, and do not necessarily represent our view on the most suitable form of development, if any:
- Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane (Sou1): potential redevelopment of retail park for mixed residential for around 200 dwellings and retail use of around 2,300 sq m;
 - Tunbridge Jones, Cradock Road (Sou2): potential redevelopment of employment site for 72 to 96 dwellings;
 - Former Sales and Marketing Suite, Drake Way (Sou3): potential redevelopment of marketing building for 23 dwellings;
 - Land at Green Park Village, Flagstaff Road (Sou4): residential development for 50 dwellings including affordable housing; and
 - 2 Hexham Road (Sou5): residential development.
- 12.57 ***Alternative options:*** Potential alternative options for each individual additional site are set out in Appendix 2.

Q72: Do you have any comments on the potential additional allocations to policy SR4?

SR5: Leisure and recreation use of the Kennetside areas

- 12.58 This policy supports use of the areas around the River Kennet for low-intensity leisure and recreation, and identifies two areas that offer particular opportunities to achieve this aim.

12.59 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy includes an action (W14) to improve the resilience of the Kennet Meadows through creating a resilient wetland. This is further supported in the Biodiversity Action Plan, which aims to maximise the wildlife value of the Kennet Valley East including by raising water levels in Fobney Meadow. Although the specifics of this proposal are yet to be established, policy SR5 has an opportunity to support these proposals where any planning permission for engineering works would be required.

12.60 The following change is proposed:

- To state that works to create a resilient wetland in the Kennet Meadows will be supported, subject to ensuring that there are no adverse impacts on flood risk and biodiversity.

12.61 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to not update the policy, but this risks not taking account of a major opportunity for improvements to biodiversity and flood risk, which will help adaptation to the Climate Emergency.

Q73: Do you agree with the proposed update to policy SR5 to reflect potential proposals at Kennet Meadows?

WR3: Other sites for development in West Reading and Tilehurst

12.62 This policy identifies a number of sites in West Reading and Tilehurst for development and change. There have been changes on the sites listed in policy WR3 that need to be reflected. As a result, it is proposed to remove the following sites from the policy:

- WR3a: Former Cox & Wyman site, Cardiff Road, where residential development is completed;
- WR3c: 28-30 Richfield Avenue, which has been refurbished and extended for the existing dealership use and where the residential allocation is no longer expected to be deliverable;
- WR3d: Rivermead Leisure Centre, Richfield Avenue, where new leisure development has been completed;
- WR3q: Norcot Community Centre, Lyndhurst Road, where development in line with the policy is completed.

12.63 It is also proposed to make amendments to existing allocations to reflect changes that have taken place, as follows:

- WR3e: Yeomanry House, Castle Hill, where permission has been granted for nursery use, as yet unimplemented. With changes to the use classes order, it is considered that a wider commercial use of the building that can encompass the permitted nursery use, the restaurant use already noted in the policy as well as other uses, should be incorporated, as an alternative to possible residential use;
- WR3g: 211-221 Oxford Road, 10 and rear of 8 Prospect Street, where residential development at 8 and 10 Prospect Street has been completed, resulting in a reduced area of 0.16 ha;

- WR3i: Part of former Battle Hospital, Portman Road, where the development is mostly completed except for a small part of the site. It is proposed that this small part of the site of 0.21 ha should continue to be allocated for residential use, likely to be in the region of 15-20 homes;
- WR3j: Land at Moultsford Mews, where the upper end of the dwelling range is currently 16 dwellings but a planning permission for this site (reference 201391) has demonstrated that 26 dwellings can be accommodated, and this should therefore be the upper end of the range;
- WR3m: 103 Dee Road, where the upper end of the dwelling range is currently 50 dwellings but a planning permission for the site (reference 221130) has demonstrated that 54 dwellings can be accommodated, and this should therefore be the upper end of the range;
- WR3o: The Meadway Centre, Honey End Lane, where there has been a resolution to grant planning permission for a development of new commercial uses and 258 dwellings, which shows that there is significant potential for residential development that should be accommodated within the updated policy.

12.64 In addition, updated work on the HELAA may identify some changes to the capacity levels for further development set out in the policy, in order to help us meet development needs.

Q74: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in West Reading and Tilehurst? Do you want to see any other changes?

12.65 During the Call for Sites exercise carried out in 2023, one response suggested that changes were required to sites WR3s (Land at Kentwood Hill) and WR3t (Land at Armour Hill). These changes would entail either changes to WR3t to remove the car park and access track from the allocation, or the wholesale removal of both sites from the plan. Removal of the car park from WR3s would reduce the size of the site by a very small amount, around 0.01 ha, whilst the access track is mostly outside the allocation site anyway. However, it would cause issues in terms of deliverability of the allocation as a whole if the existing vehicular access was not part of the site. Figure 6.1 in section 6 shows the extent of the existing allocations.

12.66 The existing allocation would provide much needed housing, including likely family housing, to help to meet Reading's needs. As discussed in section 8, the Local Plan is not in a position where it can generally afford to lose existing allocated housing sites, particularly in relation to the standard methodology. However, we would like to hear your views before a final decision is reached on whether or not there should be any changes to policy WR3s and WR3t.

Q75: What is your view on the suggested changes to sites WR3s and WR3t?

12.67 The following sites in West Reading and Tilehurst have been identified as possible additions to the policy through the call for sites or other sources. More detail on each site is included in Appendix 2, and we would like to hear your views on whether they should be identified before we come to a conclusion on their suitability. Please note that the suggested uses and scale of development are what has been suggested to us at this point, and do not necessarily represent our view on the most suitable form of development, if any:

- Land west of Millford Road (Wes1): potential redevelopment of employment uses for a residential development of around 70 dwellings;
- 72 Berkeley Avenue (Wes2): residential use;
- Land at 132-134 Bath Road (Wes3): potential redevelopment of employment uses for a residential development or mixed use commercial and residential development;
- Southcote Library, 234 Southcote Lane (Wes4): residential development.

12.68 **Alternative options:** Potential alternative options for each individual additional site are set out in Appendix 2.

Q76: Do you have any comments on the potential additional allocations to policy WR3?

CA1: Sites for development and change of use in Caversham and Emmer Green

12.69 This policy identifies a number of sites in Caversham and Emmer Green for development and change. There have been changes on the sites listed in policy CA1 that need to be reflected. It is proposed to remove the following site from the policy:

- CA1b: Part of Reading Golf Course, Kidmore End Road, where a planning permission (reference 211843) has been granted on a much more extensive site than the existing allocation, covering the whole of the Golf Club site that is within Reading's boundaries, and not including the health use or the retention of the golf use on the remaining land. Construction has now commenced, meaning that the allocation can be removed.
- CA1g: Land West of Henley Road Cemetery, which has now become part of the cemetery.

12.70 It is also proposed to make amendments to existing allocations to reflect changes that have taken place, as follows:

- CA1d: Rear of 200-214 Henley Road, 12-24 All Hallows Road & 4, 7 & 8 Copse Avenue, where the development of two new homes at 4 Copse Avenue has taken place, which means that the allocation reduces from 0.87 to 0.82 ha and the amount of proposed new dwellings should reduce by around two.
- CA1e: Rear of 13-14a Hawthorne Road and 282-292 Henley Road, where the development of four new homes has taken place, which means that the allocation reduces from 0.37 to 0.31 ha and the amount of proposed new dwellings should reduce by around four.

12.71 In addition, updated work on the HELAA may identify some changes to the capacity levels for further development set out in the policy, in order to help us meet development needs.

Q77: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in Caversham and Emmer Green?

ER1: Other sites for development in East Reading

12.72 This policy identifies a number of sites in East Reading for development and change. There have been changes on a number of the sites listed in policy ER1 that need to be reflected. As a result, it is proposed to remove the following sites from the policy:

- ER1a: Woodley Arms, Waldeck Street, where student accommodation is under construction;
- ER1f: Hamilton Centre, Bulmershe Road, which has been developed for an education use and where the residential allocation has therefore been superseded;
- ER1h: Arthur Hill Swimming Pool, 221-225 Kings Road, where residential development is under construction; and
- ER1j: Palmer Park Stadium Area, where additional leisure development is completed.

12.73 In addition, updated work on the HELAA may identify some changes to the capacity levels for further development set out in the policy in order to help us meet development needs.

Q78: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in East Reading? Do you want to see any other changes?

12.74 The following site in East Reading has been identified as a possible addition to the policy through the call for sites or other sources. More detail on the site is included in Appendix 2, and we would like to hear your views on whether it should be identified before we come to a conclusion on its suitability. Please note that the suggested uses and scale of development are what has been suggested to us at this point, and do not necessarily represent our view on the most suitable form of development, if any:

- Land at 9 Upper Crown Street (Eas1): potential redevelopment of car park for residential development of 46 dwellings.

12.75 **Alternative options:** Potential alternative options for the individual additional site are set out in Appendix 2.

Q79: Do you have any comments on the potential additional allocation to policy ER1?

ER2: Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading

12.76 This policy guides development at the University of Reading's Whiteknights Campus, to take account of the particular constraints of the area including its open space value and biodiversity significance, and to enable the university to continue to develop to fulfil its important role in the town.

12.77 The policy was identified for possible update mainly due to changes to permitted development rights that increase the ability for a university to expand within its own site. There is potentially significant scope to make use of those rights at the Whiteknights Campus. However, on reflection, there is not considered to be a need for a significant update to the policy other than a reference to those rights, because,

whilst for some developments it may no longer be applicable, there will still be significant instances where a planning application will be required and the policy can be applied.

- 12.78 The other reason identified for possible update was the change to the wording of the NPPF (paragraph 96) that requires local authorities to plan proactively and positively for required public service infrastructure facilities before applications are submitted. In this context, awareness of the University's own plans and strategies is important. An up-to-date estates strategy has not been published, but there is a Strategic Plan 2020-2026 that identifies four key principles: community, excellence, sustainability and engaged university.
- 12.79 Of the principles, sustainability may have particular implications for the policy, with the University having set a target of reducing its carbon emissions to net zero by 2030, which fits well with the overall aims for Reading as a whole. It has a Net Zero Carbon Plan 2021-2030 which outlines how this is to be achieved. Whilst there are no specific measures that need to be reflected in any update to policy ER2, it is likely that there will be some measures that will need to go through the planning application process, and this can usefully be referenced within the policy alongside the other forms of development that may be required.
- 12.80 Further information regarding the University's plans may emerge during the production of the Partial Update, and we will seek to take account of these in any further updates.
- 12.81 The following changes are proposed:
- That development for the purposes of meeting sustainability goals be specifically referenced in the policy; and
 - That anything else emerging from the University's plans be taken into account in an update.
- 12.82 **Alternative options:** The only alternative option identified is to not update the policy, but this would fail to keep the policy up-to-date to proactively plan for the development required in line with the NPPF.

Q80: Do you agree that we should update policy ER2 regarding Whiteknights Campus as described?

ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital

- 12.83 This policy guides development at the Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH) site on London Road, to take account of the particular constraints of the area including its heritage value, and to enable the hospital to continue to develop to fulfil its important role in the town.
- 12.84 The future of the RBH is under active consideration. In December 2020, a Strategic Outline Business Case was produced for consideration by the NHS, which set out three options:
- Development of emergency care block, elective centre for planned hospital care, new women's and children's facility and potential local Medical School;

- Building of a substantially new hospital on the present site of the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading; and
 - Full relocation and rebuilding of a new hospital.
- 12.85 A consultation was undertaken by the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust between January and March 2023 on the future of the hospital. This consultation included whether or not the existing hospital should be changed, whether a new hospital should be built on the site or whether a new hospital should be developed elsewhere in Berkshire. A decision is not expected to be made until some point during 2024 at the earliest. This decision will clearly have significant implications for the policy.
- 12.86 This Council has made its position clear, in that it strongly believes that the hospital should remain within Reading, where it is most accessible to its catchment, including by public transport, walking and cycling. However, it may not be the Council that will ultimately make the decision on whether development should take place on a new site, in particular if any new site is outside the Borough. Therefore, whilst the updated policy is expected to continue to express the Council's belief that the RBH should remain in Reading, it must nonetheless deal with a scenario in which the site is vacated.
- 12.87 If the RBH is to remain on site, there is a need for it to be substantially remodelled and/or redeveloped. Much of the existing space is cramped, poorly laid out and does not meet modern healthcare needs. There would need to be an increase in floorspace, potentially up to around 30%. It is recognised that this could be difficult to achieve on what is already a densely developed site.
- 12.88 In the scenario of RBH relocating, the Council's strong position is that the site at London Road should continue to meet local healthcare needs. There is an identified need to move towards new models of healthcare provision that incorporate both primary care and other elements such as diagnostics and outpatient care. This necessitates fewer premises, but they need to be larger and more flexible. If the RBH site were to move elsewhere, the site would present a clear opportunity for such provision for East Reading and would offer the continuation of a health use. This could also incorporate other community uses within the site to take advantage of co-location benefits. However, it would not be likely to require the use of the entire site and would also be unlikely to incorporate the listed block at the northern end of the site. There would therefore be expected to be a significant residential component.
- 12.89 The following changes are proposed:
- That the strong preference for the hospital to remain in Reading is clear;
 - To enable expansion on site in a way that does not cause negative impacts to the local area, most notably in terms of transport, heritage and surrounding residential amenity; and
 - That the policy include provisions for the use of the site in the event that the hospital moves elsewhere, including a significant continued health and community role as well as residential use.
- 12.90 **Alternative options:** Other options include:

- **Not to update the policy:** This approach would potentially leave a significant policy gap if the decision was made to move the hospital.
- **To identify the site as a formal development allocation:** It is not possible to meaningfully allocate the site at this point before a decision is made on whether the hospital is to remain or move, because there could be no certainty about delivery.

Q81: Do you agree that we should update policy ER3 regarding Royal Berkshire Hospital as described?

13. Infrastructure delivery

- 13.1 Infrastructure is required to support new development within the Borough through the Plan period to ensure that communities are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. The requirement for local authorities to assess quality and capacity of infrastructure, as part of the Local Plan process, is identified in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 13.2 In preparing the Partial Update of the Reading Local Plan, the Council is liaising with a wide range of infrastructure providers to determine long-term strategic infrastructure needs that would result from the level and distribution of planned growth within the Borough. This will result in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), a separate document to accompany the Local Plan which sets out in full how infrastructure to support the levels of development set out in this plan will be provided. The existing IDP for the Local Plan is available on the Council's website²⁵. Officers are currently drafting an IDP to accompany the Partial Update.
- 13.3 An Infrastructure Delivery Schedule derived from the emerging Partial Update IDP is included here and summarises the key infrastructure projects which will be required to support the level of proposed growth. These have been identified through a process of consultation with internal departments and external providers. It should be noted that discussions with providers are ongoing and more detail will emerge as the Partial Update process continues. Discussions aim to identify the strategy, existing provision and capacity issues, impact of future growth and priorities for meeting need for the following categories:
- Physical:
 - Transport
 - Water Supply
 - Wastewater
 - Electricity
 - Gas
 - Waste
 - Renewable Energy
 - Digital
 - Air Quality
 - Green:
 - Open Space
 - Biodiversity
 - Social and Community:
 - Education – Primary and Secondary
 - Education – Post 16 Further Education
 - Early Years – Children's Centres and Nurseries
 - Community Centres

²⁵ The existing IDP to accompany the 2019 Local Plan is available here: [EV007 Full Infrastructure Delivery Plan March 2018.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://reading.gov.uk/reading-borough-local-plan/infrastructure-delivery-plan/infrastructure-delivery-plan-march-2018.pdf)

- Health – Primary Care and Hospital Provision
- Police
- Fire and Rescue
- Housing – Adult Social Care Accommodation
- Economic Development
- Leisure – Sports
- Culture and Tourism
- Community Safety

The Schedule identifies key infrastructure requirements that are known at this time. It aims to set out the project, the need for it, requirements, costs, funding, timescales and who is responsible for delivery.

- 13.4 The majority of housing development will occur on brownfield sites and represent 100 dwellings or less. Therefore, in most cases there will not be the requirement for significant infrastructure on a site-by-site basis. The infrastructure schemes will be strategic in nature, serving the impacts of growth from groupings of sites. Where there is need for site-specific infrastructure, this will be addressed and negotiated at the detailed planning stage.
- 13.5 A range of different infrastructure requirements are being reviewed for the Partial Update IDP, but only infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth has been identified within the following schedule. These include core transport projects, health provision and additional police infrastructure. The IDP will be a 'living' document and represents a snapshot in time based on the best information available at the time. It will be updated as and when further information becomes available.

Q82: Have all the relevant areas of infrastructure been correctly identified?

Q83: Do you have any comments on the draft IDP schedule?

Table 13.1: Draft Infrastructure Delivery Schedule

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Cycle and e-Scooter Hire	Encouraging active travel and promoting an alternative to car use	Operation and maintenance of publicly available bike and/or e-scooter hire scheme	Cost unknown – LTP block grant, S106, CIL	Ongoing	Reading Borough Council (RBC)
Borough-wide	Physical	Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)	Encouraging active travel and promoting an alternative to car use	Local measures to encourage cycling and walking routes, including segregated facilities, lighting, cycle parking, etc.; new areas of development to be connected to existing network	Cost unknown – LTP block grant, Active Travel grant, S106, CIL	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Physical	Major Repair and Improvement Projects	Improving and maintaining existing infrastructure	Continuous maintenance and improvement of existing facilities and infrastructure including retaining walls, culverts, subways, footbridges and flood defence schemes	Cost unknown – LTP block grant	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Schemes	Providing alternatives to car use and encourage sustainable transport use; reduce congestion; improve accessibility and air quality	Dedicated express, limited stop bus-based rapid transit connected to Park and Ride locations; focused in key areas of growth and key routes in urban areas	Approx. £100,000,000 – LTP block grant, CIL	2024-2040	RBC
Borough-wide	Physical	Network Management, Junction improvements and Road Safety	Increase attractiveness of public transport, reduce congestion, promote sustainable travel and improve road safety	Improvements to existing infrastructure and enhanced provision	Cost unknown– LTP block grant, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Physical	Park & Ride Sites (Mobility Hubs)	Reduce the mode share of trips by car to central Reading, thereby reducing congestion and improving accessibility and air quality	A series of new Park and Ride sites and local transport interchanges will be provided on key routes to Reading	Approx. £30,000,000 – S106, LTP, CIL	2024-2040	RBC, adjoining authorities
Borough-wide	Physical	Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)	Increase attractiveness of public transport, reduce congestion, promote sustainable travel, improve accessibility and air quality	Improvements to existing public transport infrastructure and provision enhancement including bus stops, bus lanes and bus priority at junctions	Costs unknown – LTP block grant, BSIP grant, S106, CIL	Ongoing	RBC, adjoining authorities

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Third Thames Crossing	Reduce congestion	Provide alternative north-south route across the River Thames via a new road public transport and active travel bridge, and associated mitigation measures on the road network	Approx. £165,000,000 depending on the option – CIL (this figure depends on the nature of any mitigation measures on the road network)	Third Thames Crossing	Wokingham Borough Council, RBC, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council
Borough-wide	Physical	Decentralised energy and renewables	To reduce the carbon footprint of the Borough and reduce and stabilise energy costs, through the development of low carbon, localised energy infrastructure, to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and assist in meeting national and local targets for net-zero carbon	Details are not known at this time, but district energy networks will likely be focussed in the town centre	Costs unknown - CIL, Section 106	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Water and wastewater infrastructure	To ensure sufficient capacity to accommodate future growth	There are a number of areas within the Borough including some parts of west and south Reading where Thames Water has identified potential capacity issues with water and wastewater, in particular with the overall scale of development in the catchment draining to Blakes Lock SPS. For these areas, detailed investigations and modelling will be required to determine if local infrastructure upgrade is required.	Costs to be determined by Thames Water with developers	As and when a development comes forward and where issues have been highlighted by Thames Water. Thames Water has indicated that upgrades to assets can take up to three years in lead time.	Thames Water and the relevant developer

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Electricity	To ensure sufficient capacity to accommodate future growth	In order to accommodate development as proposed throughout the Borough and to account for increased electricity demand as a result of net zero requirements, major reinforcement works to the infrastructure would need to be carried out. Additionally, cables and plant equipment may require diverting and relocating as a result of development designs and layouts. Discussions with SSEN are ongoing in order to ensure that grid constraints do not negatively impact growth and do not result in connection delays.	Costs to be determined by SSEN chargeable to developments on an appointment basis.	Ongoing	SSEN

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Digital connectivity	Increasing Berkshire's full fibre coverage to 85% by 2025, eliminating connectivity 'not spots' within the Borough, optimising use of wireless and small cell technologies	In order to expand advanced, high-quality and reliable electronic communications networks to support sustainable economic growth	Costs to be determined by providers	Ongoing	RBC and private sector providers
Borough-wide	Physical	Air Quality Monitoring	To assess the levels of pollutants at strategic locations where further development is likely to worsen air quality	NOx and PMx analysers, enclosures and associated infrastructure	Section 106, CIL, DEFRA Air Quality Grant	Ongoing	RBC
South	Physical	South Reading BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) and other BRT schemes	Providing alternative modes to car use and encourage sustainable transport use; reduce congestion; improve accessibility and air quality	Dedicated express, limited stop bus-based rapid transit connected to MereOak Park and Ride, areas of growth and key routes in the urban area	Approx. £55,000,000 (for South Reading BRT, other scheme costs unknown at this time) – LFG, S106, CIL	2024-2040	RBC
Central/East	Physical	Demand management scheme	Improve air quality and/or decrease congestion	Unknown	Costs unknown – LTP block grant, S106, CIL	Unknown	RBC
Central/East	Physical	Town Centre access and public realm enhancements	Reducing the impact of congestion; delivering a higher quality public realm; encouraging healthier lifestyles; improving access to central Reading	Junction improvements; accident remediation scheme; secure cycle parking hub, improved way finding	Costs unknown – LTP block grant, S106, BID	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Green	Open Spaces Strategy	Improve the quality of existing open space and facilities, particularly in larger parks to benefit the wider population	Improvements to strategically important open spaces	Costs unknown - S106, CIL, grant funding	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Green	Play Requirements	Some of the current stock of play equipment is more than a decade old. At current levels of use, the quality is declining; an increasing population accelerates the rate of decline such that equipment needs to be continually refreshed.	Continuous investment is needed simply to sustain existing provision and to ensure that it is safe. Because many of the Council's 55 play areas are used to capacity, increases in the local population will require additional equipment. Equipment may need to be updated to meet the needs of children with special needs and children of a variety of ages.	Costs unknown - S106, CIL, grant funding	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Green	Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies	To protect, enhance and increase biodiversity in parks, open spaces, allotments, cemeteries, woodland, watercourses, riparian corridors and wetland areas.	Reading's Biodiversity Action Plan identifies a number of actions including: enhancing and increasing habitats for plants and wildlife; creating links between existing habitats; increasing plant diversity across grassland open spaces; improving existing and planting additional hedgerows; improving diversity of tree species in woodlands; improving and enhancing the Borough's watercourses and riparian corridors.	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	EA, RBC
Borough-wide	Green	Allotment Creation & Enhancement	Ongoing development pressure on existing private allotments. Very long waiting lists for allotments which will be exacerbated by population growth	To improve allotment provision within the Borough, especially in the North and West	Dependent on funds becoming available or a development opportunity making land available	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Updating and improving Reading's indoor sports provision	Further details to be identified.				
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Police Facilities	To make communities safe, increase public confidence, reduce costs by improving efficiency, improve service delivery and improve outcomes for victims of crime, as well as to aid in the prevention and investigation of crime with ANPR cameras	Premises – new police station in South Reading, touchdown space in central Reading and other areas.	Costs TBD	Ongoing	Thames Valley Police (TVP)
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Digital policing equipment	To make communities safe, increase public confidence, reduce costs by improving efficiency, improve service delivery and improve outcomes for victims of crime, as well as to aid in the prevention and investigation of crime with ANPR cameras	Digital policing equipment including smartphones, tablets, body-worn video cameras, vehicle Wi-Fi and other capabilities, including enhanced and new ANPR cameras at strategic locations within the Borough	Each ANPR camera costs approximately £11,000. Digital policing kit costs approx. £6250 per officer.	Ongoing	TVP

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Townsafes and Emergency Planning Radio Scheme	To provide a safe and non-threatening environment for people who live, work or visit Reading	Signal boosters to address the negative impacts of tall buildings on the network, new equipment and software to provide a modern and secure system	CIL	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Social and Community	CCTV system	To provide a safe and non-threatening environment for people who live, work or visit Reading	Up-to-date CCTV software with high encryption, replacement of existing BT fibre system, new cameras, rollout of wireless CCTV technology	CIL	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Primary and Secondary Education	Unlikely to be a significant need for additional primary and secondary places. However an increase in specialist provision is likely to be required, as well as a reconfiguration of SEND places and facilities.				

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Primary Care	Additional capacity at existing surgeries associated with development and reconfiguration or relocation of any existing sites that are not fit-for-purpose, restructuring of surgeries into fewer, larger more fit-for-purpose facilities that provide a wider range of co-located services	Larger, fully-fitted facilities provided by the developer on the ground floor(s) of new build flatted developments in the centre; larger hubs located throughout the Borough	Costs unknown – CIL, S106 The Integrated Care Board considers the following costs per sqm to be appropriate (as at Oct 2023 and to include VAT and professional fees) as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New build and extensions (involving land purchase) - £6,310 psm • Extensions (no land purchase) - £5,692 psm • Internal refurbishments/reconfigurations - £3,750 psm 	Ongoing	RBC, BOB ICB
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Specialist and Hospital Care	Additional floorspace to provide a modern service, relocation of some hospital services (such as diagnostics and some outpatient care) to hubs distributed throughout the Borough, any infrastructure needed to enable the relocation of the RBH (if relocation is needed)	An increase in floorspace will be required on-site if the RBH remains in its current location in order to provide a modern service. This will also require increased digital 'smart hospital' technology and infrastructure associated with net-zero carbon operations	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC, BOB ICB, RBH

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Adult Social Care Accommodation	Some existing sites are aging and in need of repair; significant rise in the number of older residents projected throughout the Borough	New, purpose built facilities to relocate existing residential care that is not fit-for-purpose	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Culture and Tourism	Relocation of the Central library and improvements to the Hexagon, ongoing enhancement of the Abbey Quarter, investment in registered parks and gardens, and public realm improvements to wayfinding, interpretation, key monuments, statues and memorials within the town centre.			Levelling-Up Funding regarding library and Hexagon		

14. Glossary

Active travel – A means of travel that involves physical activity, such as walking or cycling.

Adoption – The point at which a planning document becomes official policy through a formal decision by the Council.

Adult gaming centres – A form of gaming establishment requiring a license gaming machines general operating licence from the Gambling Commission and a premises licence from the Licensing Authority, where Category B, C and D machines can be made available.

Affordable housing – Housing provided at below market price to meet the identified needs of an area. A fuller definition is included within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Ancient tree – a tree of great age in relation to others of the same species.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – A landscape protected at national level due to its character and natural beauty.

Article 4 direction – A legal direction which can be made by the Council to remove normal permitted development rights.

Biodiversity – The diversity of plant and animal species.

Biodiversity Opportunity Area – Identified areas where there are substantial opportunities to make positive changes for biodiversity at a strategic scale.

BREEAM – A widely used means of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of buildings. BREEAM assessment methods generally apply to commercial developments (industrial, retail etc).

Build to rent – Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. It can form part of a wider multi-tenure development comprising either flats or houses, but should be on the same site and/or contiguous with the main development. Schemes will usually offer longer tenancy agreements of three years or more, and will typically be professionally managed stock in single ownership and management control. (definition from NPPF)

Call for sites – an exercise whereby the Council asks for sites to be nominated as potential allocations in the Local Plan.

Co-living – A form of communal residential accommodation in which individuals live under a single management regime and which offers more communal facilities and amenities and is usually on a larger scale than a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – A charge that local authorities can place on most types of new development in their area, to be spent on infrastructure to support the development of the area. CIL was introduced in Reading in April 2015.

Crossrail – A transport project to provide east-west rail links across London, which terminated at Reading station. Services are now running as the Elizabeth Line.

Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) – An area around a specific facility for which particular emergency planning arrangements are in place. In Reading's case, the DEPZ relates to the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield.

Development briefs – Documents setting out planning principles for a specific site. Also known as planning briefs.

Development plan – a plan setting proposals for development that has followed the defined processes and is the main consideration in deciding planning applications (alongside national development management policies when they are introduced).

Dwelling – A single housing unit – a house, flat, maisonette etc.

Embodied carbon – in the context of this plan, the amount of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gas emissions associated with construction of a building or development.

Equality Impact Assessment – An assessment of the impacts of a decision or policy on those with protected characteristics under the Public Sector Equality Duty,

Examination – Local plans are considered at an examination, during which the Planning Inspector assesses the soundness and legal compliance of the document.

Extra care – housing designated for occupation mainly by over-55s but with higher level support and care to help residents live independently (source of definition: gov.uk)

First Homes – An affordable housing product constituting homes for sale to first-time buyers at a minimum 70% discount. A more detailed definition is within Planning Practice Guidance.

Habitat Regulations Assessment – An assessment to test if a plan or project proposal could significantly harm the designated features of a European site, protected under the Habitat Regulations.

House in multiple occupation (HMO) – A house occupied by unrelated individuals. Please note that the specific definition of an HMO changes depending on the legislation covering a specific area, e.g. planning or licensing. In Planning, there are two types of HMO – a small HMO under use class C4 of three to six unrelated individuals and a large HMO defined as a sui generis use of seven or more unrelated individuals.

Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) – An assessment that examines the capacity of an area for housing and economic development uses. National Planning Practice Guidance provides more information on such assessments.

Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) – A document that relevant local authorities have to publish annually to report on collection of, spend of and future priorities for developer contributions.

Infrastructure Levy – a levy on development to fund provision of infrastructure, introduced by the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act.

Inner Distribution Road (IDR) – the inner ring road circling Reading's core, made up of Queens Road, part of Caversham Road, Vastern Road, Forbury Road and part of Watlington Street.

Irreplaceable habitat – Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen (source of definition: NPPF).

Key worker – A worker who provides an essential service to the community. The specific definition can depend on the context.

Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act – An act of parliament, receiving Royal Assent in October 2023, which includes a range of proposals relating to planning and local government.

Local Development Scheme (LDS) – The published programme for producing planning documents.

Locally listed building – Identified locally-significant buildings, which do not benefit from the same statutory protection as buildings on the national list.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) – A signed document between parties that sets out an agreed position.

Mobility hubs – an element of the Draft Transport Strategy where people can transfer between modes and access a range of other facilities.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – A document setting out the main national planning policy for England. The most recent version was published in 2021.

Net zero carbon – achieving a balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it (source of definition: Energy Saving Trust).

Passivhaus – a standard for houses that are very environmentally friendly because they can be kept at a comfortable temperature using no or almost no energy, or a house that meets this standard (source of definition: Cambridge Dictionary).

Permitted development rights – Legal rights that exclude a specific type of development from the need to apply for planning permission.

Planning appeal – There is a right for applicants to appeal against a decision on a planning application.

Planning briefs – Documents setting out planning principles for a specific site. Also known as development briefs.

Planning Practice Guidance – national guidance on planning practice that can be found at [Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-practice-guidance)

Purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) – Living accommodation provided specifically for those in education.

Reading Affordable Rent – A locally-set level of affordable rent which is designed to be affordable to those needing affordable housing in Reading, and which is calculated in accordance with paragraphs 4.5 to 4.10 of the Affordable Housing SPD²⁶.

Registered provider – Landlords of affordable housing, including local housing authorities and housing associations, which are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing.

Retrofit – In the context of this plan, to alter a building that has already been built to improve its environmental performance.

Section 106 agreement – A legally binding agreement or obligation entered into by the local authority and a land developer over an issue related to a planning application, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

²⁶ [Affordable Housing SPD, adopted March 2021 \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://www.reading.gov.uk/affordable-housing-spd)

Serviced apartments – A use falling between hotels and housing, providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living but also the amenities of a hotel, and let on short-term tenancies, often less than three months. Generally classed as C1 hotels for planning purposes.

Shared ownership – An affordable housing product where a proportion of the property is purchased and the remainder rented from the Registered Provider.

Small cell technologies – A type of wireless communication infrastructure that is designed to enhance network capacity and coverage in areas with high user density or limited space (source of definition: Mpirical)

Soundness – When holding an examination into planning documents, the role of the Inspector is to decide whether the documents are ‘sound’. Under paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) plans are sound if they are positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) – The methodology used by the Government to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings.

Standard methodology – The methodology for assessing housing needs set out in Planning Practice Guidance.

Strategic policies – Policies and site allocations which address strategic priorities in line with the requirements of section 19(1B-E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Submission – The stage at which a draft Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

Sui generis – A use not specifically defined in the most recent use classes order and which has its own category.

Supplementary Plan – A new form of planning document introduced in 2023 to replace Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that provides further detail to supplement a Local Plan and which has the same weight.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – A planning document that provides more detailed policy guidance than development plans, but does not have the same weight.

Sustainability Appraisal – A sustainability appraisal should be completed for all local development documents at all stages. It highlights the main environmental, economic and social effects of the document.

Sustainability Appraisal Framework – A document setting the basis for carrying out the sustainability appraisal, including setting the objectives and establishing baseline information.

Tall building – For the purposes of Reading’s planning policy, a building of 10 commercial storeys or 12 residential storeys or greater.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) – An order made by a local planning authority in respect of trees and woodlands. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of trees without the LPA’s consent.

Use Classes Order – A piece of legislation, most recently in 2020, which divides uses into separate use classes, where planning permission is required to change between use classes unless permitted development rights exist.

Veteran tree – a tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition (source of definition: Natural England).

West of Berkshire Spatial Planning Framework – A non-statutory document published in December 2016 looking at opportunities for growth in the West of Berkshire, along with the cross-boundary implications and the essential infrastructure needed.

Appendix 1: Proposed changes to EN7 boundaries

Figure A1.1: Proposed change to Mapledurham Playing Fields

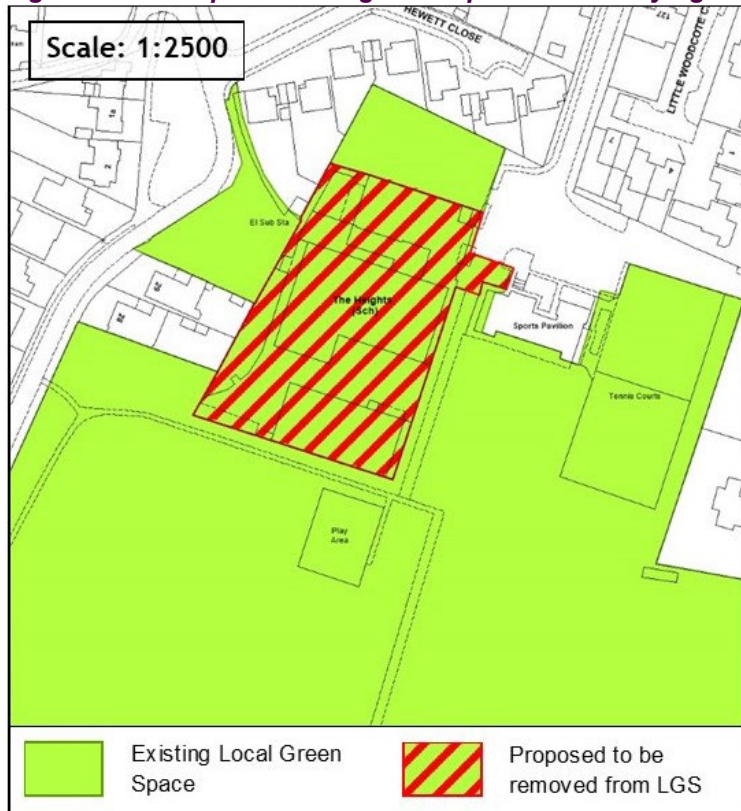


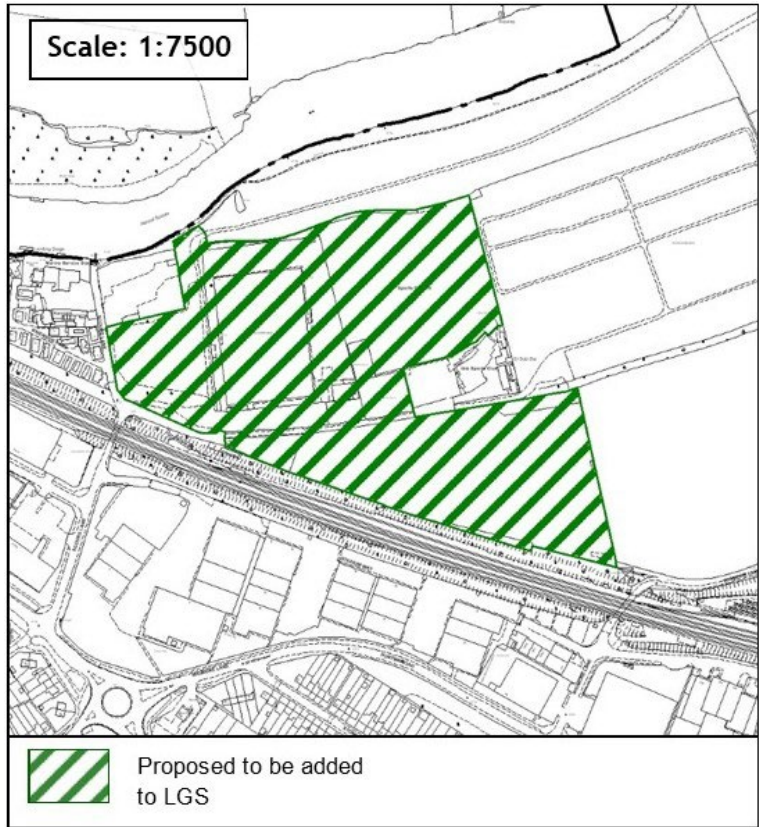
Figure A1.2: Proposed change to Palmer Park



Figure A1.3: Proposed change to Rivermead



Figure A1.4: Proposed change to add Scours Lane and Ibis Sports Ground

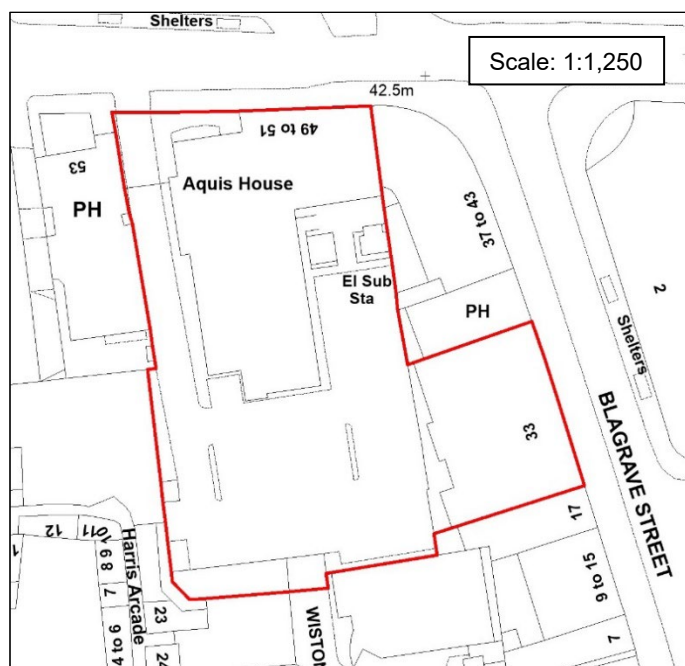


Appendix 2: Additional sites nominated for development

- A2.1 This appendix includes full details of the sites put forward for consideration as a development allocation. Please note that we are consulting on all sites put forward to ensure that a decision on inclusion or exclusion takes account of your views, and that inclusion in this appendix does not mean that a site will necessarily be allocated.
- A2.2 For each site, a range of alternatives have been identified. These are for the purposes of consultation and sustainability appraisal. Unless otherwise stated, they have not been suggested by the developer or landowner, and this means that in some cases the deliverability or viability of the option may make it difficult to pursue that option.

Site Cen1: Aquis House, 49-51 Forbury Road and 33 Blagrove Street

Figure A2.1: Aquis House, 49-51 Forbury Road and 33 Blagrove Street



Size (hectares): 0.42

Ward: Abbey

Easting: 471580. **Northing:** 173670

Current use: Offices and car parking

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Redevelopment of offices for mixed residential and office development of 10-15 storeys

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Potential alternative option 2: Redevelopment for mixed use residential and office at below tall building threshold level (12 storeys)

Potential alternative option 3: Redevelopment or change of use of 33 Blagrove Street only

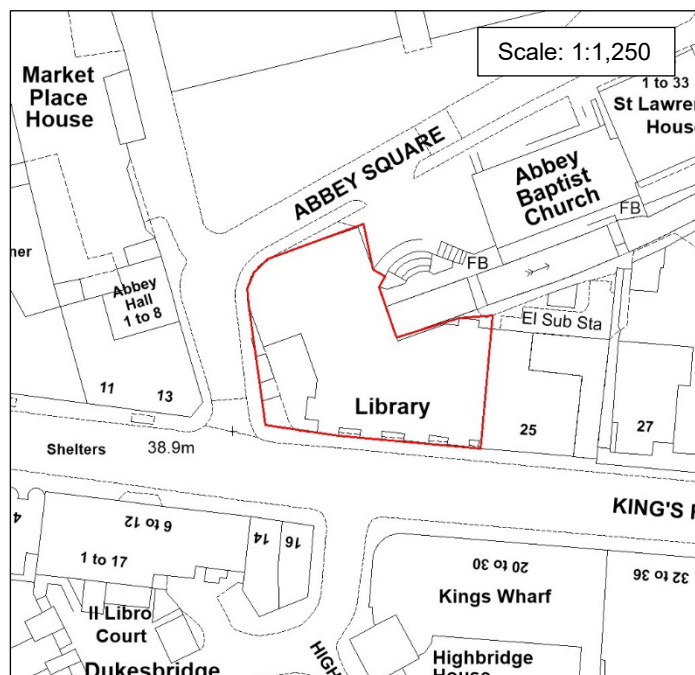
Potential alternative option 4: Redevelopment or change of use of Aquis House only

Issues and constraints: Adjacent to listed buildings and partly within a conservation area. 33 Blagrove St is diagonally opposite the Grade II* listed Town Hall. Within area of archaeological potential. Potential noise issues from adjacent drinking establishments. Noise and air quality issues relating to presence of bus stops and coach station opposite. Surrounding character is of similar height and massing to the existing building (4-6 storeys). Electricity substation located onsite in the carpark behind Aquis House.

Other information: Within the town centre.

Site Cen2: Reading Central Library, Abbey Square

Figure A2.2: Reading Central Library, Abbey Square



Size (hectares): 0.1

Ward: Abbey

Easting: 471810. **Northing:** 173400

Current use: Library

Source of nominated site: Council-owned site

Development suggested by nominator: Proposal to move the Central Library to Bridge Street, which frees up the library site. Proposal would be for a residential-led development.

Alternative option 1: Do not allocate.

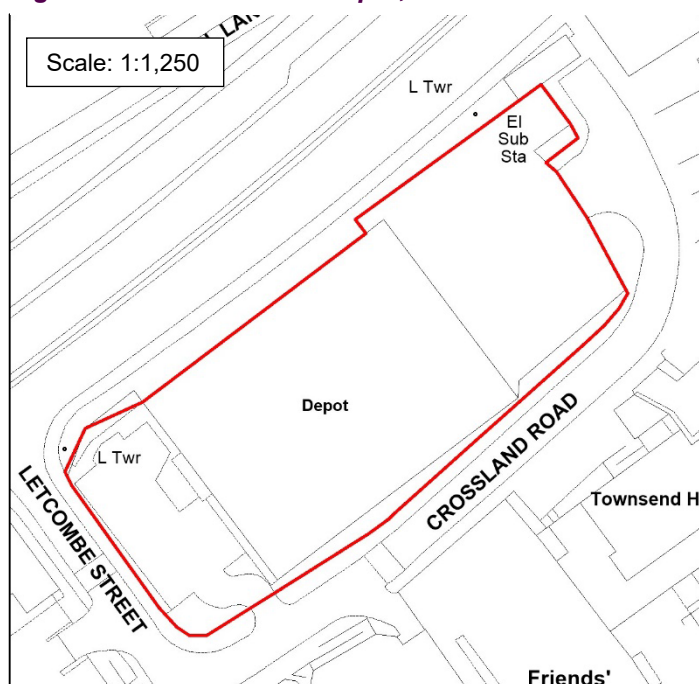
Alternative option 2: Commercial development including office and ground floor retail and related uses.

Issues and constraints: Northern part of site is part of the Reading Abbey scheduled ancient monument. Whole site is within area of archaeological potential. Adjacent to Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The Holy Brook runs beneath the site and Flood Zone 3 affects the part of the site that straddles the brook. Defined Green Link along Holy Brook to the east. Within Air Quality Management Area. Northern part of site subject to potential contamination as a former warehouse site. Potential noise issues from busy Kings Road, including nearby bus stops. Kings Road is a defined cycle route.

Other information: Within the town centre. Within Reading Abbey Quarter policy boundary (CR15)

Site Cen3: John Lewis Depot, Mill Lane

Figure A2.3: John Lewis Depot, Mill Lane



Size (hectares): 0.37

Ward: Katesgrove

Easting: 471690. **Northing:** 171080

Current use: Warehouse

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Redevelopment of warehouse for around 200 build to rent dwellings.

Alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Alternative option 2: Retain as part of existing allocation CR14g (see below),

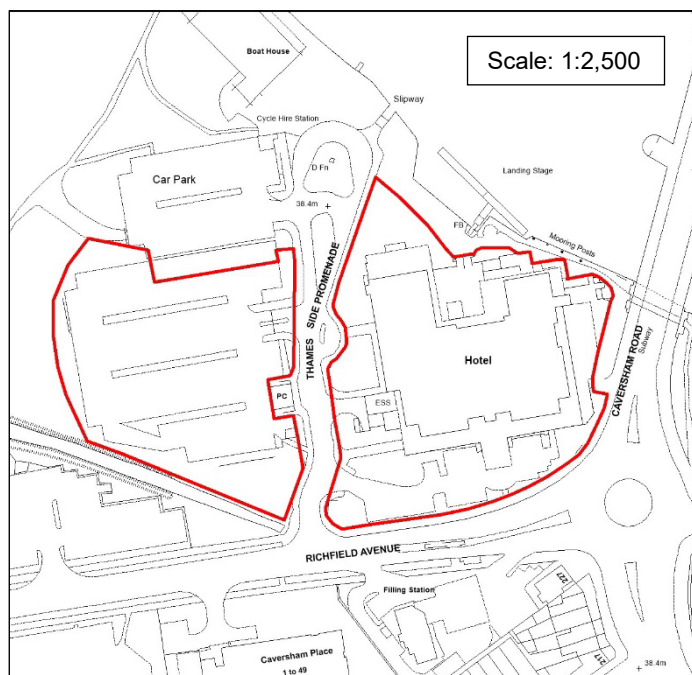
Alternative option 3: Residential development at more general town centre or edge of centre densities (75-125 dwellings)

Issues and constraints: Adjacent to conservation area, as well as listed buildings on London Street. Within area of archaeological potential. Presence of the Inner Distribution Road flyover and associated noise and air quality issues. Existing trees and hedgerows, particularly along Mill Lane. Any development at height is likely to result in overlooking of the cemetery/garden at the Reading Friend's Meeting House and possibly the shared garden at Townsend House. Electricity substation is located on-site.

Other information: Within the town centre. This site is part of the existing allocation CR14g, for an extension to the Oracle involving retail floorspace to the north of this site and relocation of the car park onto this site. This was a longstanding allocation that predated the 2019 Local Plan, but there are no indications that it will be implemented, and the context for new retail has changed substantially in recent years.

Site Cen4: Crowne Plaza Reading, Richfield Avenue

Figure A2.4: Crowne Plaza, Richfield Avenue



Size (hectares): 1.29

Ward: Thames

Easting: 471050. **Northing:** 174540

Current use: Hotel and car park

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Mix of uses through the full or partial redevelopment for hotel (Class C1) with ancillary food and beverage offering (Class E), major residential (Class C3), care home (Class C2) and/or electric vehicle charging station/garage (Sui Generis).

Alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Alternative option 2: Hotel redevelopment only (whole site)

Alternative option 3: Hotel redevelopment only (car park)

Alternative option 4: Residential development and/or residential care only (whole site, estimated at 90-140 dwellings)

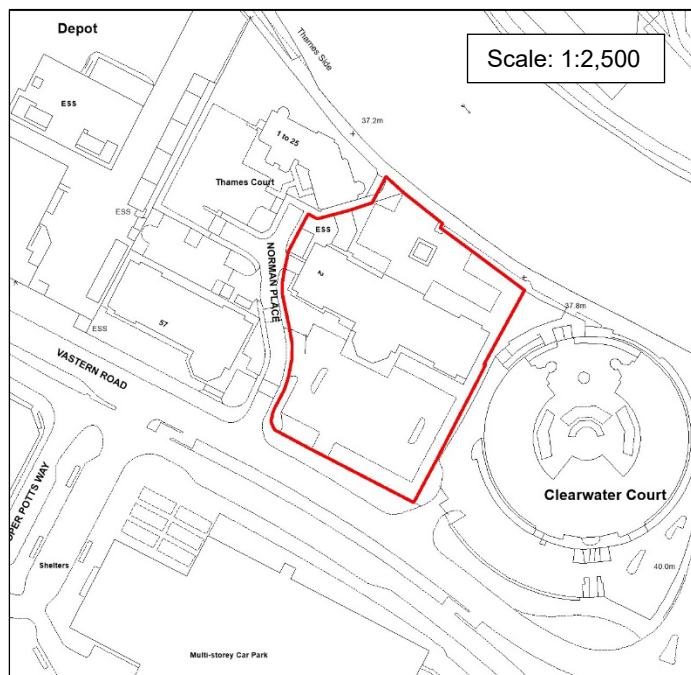
Alternative option 5: Residential development and/or residential care only (car park, estimated at 40-60 dwellings)

Issues and constraints: The part of site west of Thameside Promenade is within Flood Zone 3, with the remainder within Flood Zone 2, requiring compliance with the sequential test and potentially exception test. Site is adjacent to Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature. Close to existing employment areas south of Richfield Avenue. There are a number of Tree Preservation Orders on site including within the car park. Within Air Quality Management Area.

Other information: Within the town centre.

Site Cen5: 2 Norman Place

Figure A2.5: 2 Norman Place



Size (hectares): 0.55

Ward: Thames

Easting: 471660. **Northing:** 174050

Current use: Offices

Source of nominated site: Developer submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of up to 240 homes.

Alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Alternative option 2: Residential development at more general town centre or edge of centre densities (110-185 dwellings)

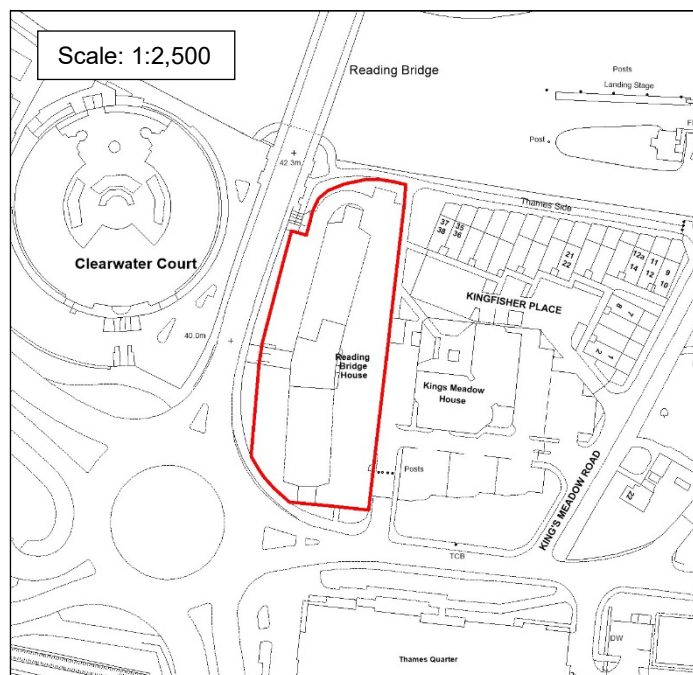
Alternative option 3: Conversion to residential, estimated 70-80 dwellings

Issues and constraints: Fringes of site are within Flood Zone 2 and partly Flood Zone 3. Identified potential for contamination across whole site. Noise impacts from IDR. Need to consider implications on Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature. Within Air Quality Management Area. There is an existing pedestrian link through Norman Place between Vastern Road and the River Thames. Loss of existing employment space would require justification. Close to existing residential block at Thames Court.

Other information: Within the town centre. Adjacent to existing allocation of the Station/River Major Opportunity Area (CR12).

Site Cen6: Reading Bridge House, George Street

Figure A2.6: Reading Bridge House, George Street



Size (hectares): 0.4

Ward: Thames

Easting: 471800. **Northing:** 173970

Current use: Offices

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of 300-400 dwellings

Alternative option 1: Do not allocate, expected continuation in office use

Alternative option 2: Conversion of existing building to residential, estimated at around 200 dwellings

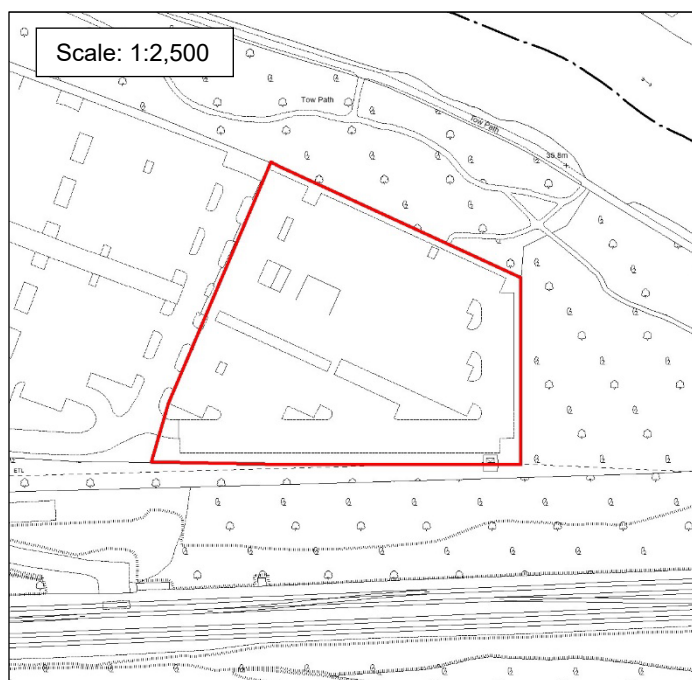
Alternative option 3: Residential development at general town centre densities, estimated at around 80-135 dwellings

Issues and constraints: Within Flood Zone 2. Trees subject to Tree Preservation Order surrounding the site. Identified potential for contamination across whole site. Potential noise impacts from IDR. Need to consider implications on Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature. Within Air Quality Management Area. Loss of existing employment space would require justification. Narrow site and existing building, and the rise of Reading Bridge creates changes in levels. Within area of archaeological potential. The adjacent Reading Bridge is locally listed.

Other information: Within the town centre. Adjacent to existing allocation of the Station/River Major Opportunity Area (CR12).

Site Cen7: Tesco Extra, Napier Road

Figure A2.7: Tesco Extra, Napier Road



Size (hectares): 0.88

Ward: Thames

Easting: 472660. **Northing:** 173920

Current use: Part of superstore car park

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of 150-200 dwellings.

Alternative option 1: Do not allocate.

Alternative option 2: Additional retail development.

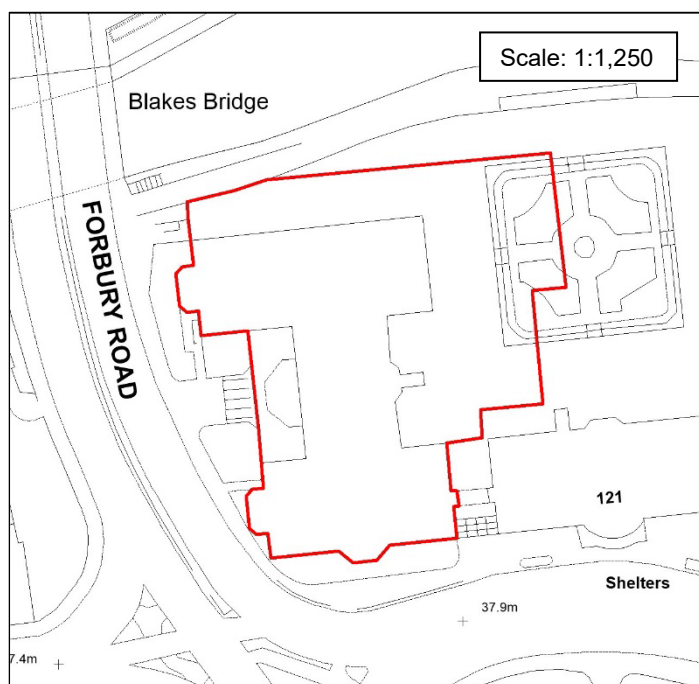
Alternative option 3: Residential development at more typical urban densities, approximately 100 dwellings.

Issues and constraints: Whole of site is within Flood Zone 2. All trees within car park subject to Tree Preservation Order. Potential impacts on Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature and adjoining areas of biodiversity importance. Part of site within Air Quality Management Area. An existing Crossrail Safeguarding Direction covers the site, and this appears to still be in effect even though Crossrail works in the area are complete and the land is not required.

Other information: Within the defined town centre.

Site Cen8: Kennet Place, Kings Road

Figure A2.8: Kennet Place, Kings Road



Size (hectares): 0.29

Ward: Thames

Easting: 472200. **Northing:** 173440

Current use: Offices.

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Conversion to approximately 70 apartments.

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

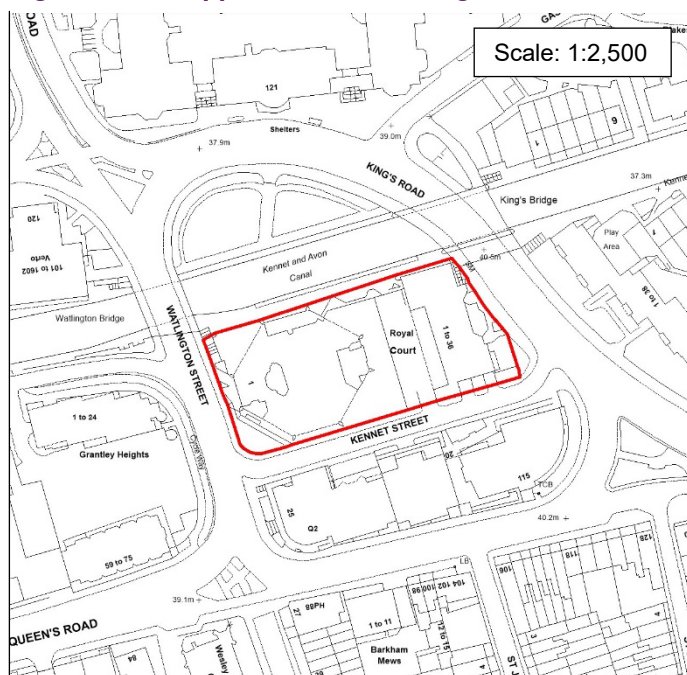
Potential alternative option 2: Redevelopment for residential at typical town centre densities, approximately 60-100 dwellings.

Issues and constraints: Site subject to potential contamination. Noise from IDR. Within Air Quality Management Area. Loss of employment space would require justification. Existing trees and hedges in the courtyard to the rear of the building. Nearby Grade II listed Prison and locally listed Huntley and Palmers Building and Kings Road Garden. Within area of archaeological potential.

Other information: Within the town centre.

Site Cen9: Sapphire Plaza, Watlington Street and Royal Court, Kings Road

Figure A2.9: Sapphire Plaza, Watlington Street and Royal Court, Kings Road



Size (hectares): 0.4

Ward: Abbey

Easting: 472260. **Northing:** 173330

Current use: Office, residential

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of 250-400 dwellings (215-365 net gain) and around 3,000 sq m of commercial space.

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate.

Potential alternative option 2: Residential development at general town centre densities of 80-135 dwellings (45-100 net gain).

Potential alternative option 3: Redevelopment of Sapphire Plaza for residential (approximately 50-85 dwellings) together with refurbishment of Royal Court.

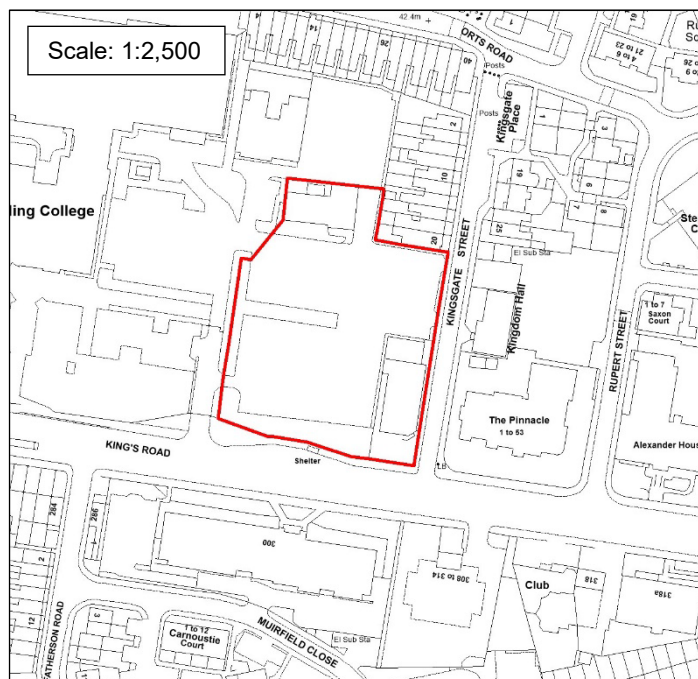
Potential alternative option 4: Conversion of Sapphire Plaza to residential (approximately 70 dwellings) together with refurbishment of Royal Court.

Issues and constraints: Northern edge of the site is within Flood Zone 2. Adjacent to the Inner Distribution Road, with potential impacts in terms of road noise. Also within an Air Quality Management Area. There are potential contamination issues across the site. The suggested development would result in the loss of existing residential in Royal Court, amounting to 36 dwellings. There would also be a loss of employment floorspace at Sapphire Plaza, which would require justification.

Other information: Sapphire Plaza had received prior approval for a conversion to 85 dwellings, but this has now expired. Within the town centre.

Site Cen10: Part of Reading College, Kings Road

Figure A2.10: Part of Reading College, Kings Road



Size (hectares): 0.51

Ward: Thames

Easting: 472820. **Northing:** 173280

Current use: Part of college, theatre, car park

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Mixed use or residential development with around 45 dwellings.

Alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Alternative option 2: Residential development of site excluding the part occupied by the theatre to ensure that this important use is not lost. This would result in a small reduction of the site to 0.44 ha.

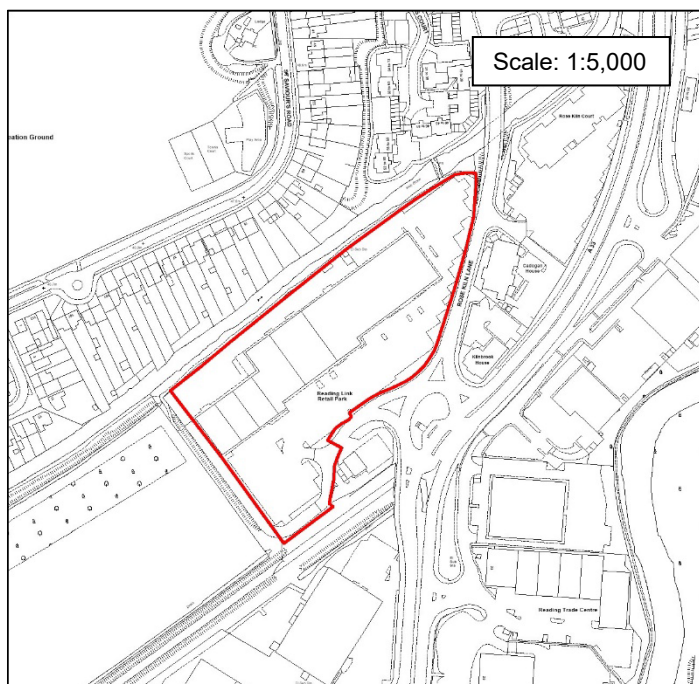
Alternative option 3: Development for continued education use.

Issues and constraints: Trees within site are subject to Tree Preservation Order. Loss of community and cultural use, with the Reading Rep Theatre in particular having recently opened. Within Air Quality Management Area. Impacts on existing car parking for the college, and potential access issues onto Kings Road.

Other information: Within the town centre.

Site Sou1: Reading Link Retail Park

Figure A2.11: Reading Link Retail Park



Size (hectares): 2.03

Ward: Coley

Easting: 471160. **Northing:** 172180

Current use: Retail park

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential and retail development for 200 homes and 2,300 sq m of retail use.

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Potential alternative option 2: Residential development only (estimated similar number of dwellings)

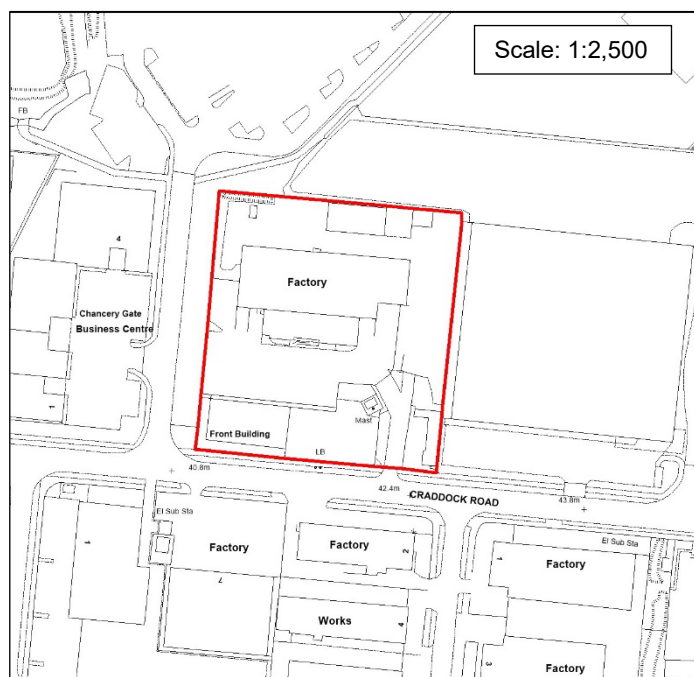
Potential alternative option 3: Residential development only with particular focus on family housing (estimated 100 to 150 dwellings)

Issues and constraints: The very fringe of the site is within Flood Zone 2. Site affected by Tree Preservation Orders, including a large number at the edge of the site. Part of site subject to potential contamination. Noise from the adjacent A33. Within Air Quality Management Area. Partly within area of archaeological potential.

Other information: A drive-through coffee shop has very recently been built on the site.

Site Sou2: Tunbridge Jones, Cradock Road

Figure A2.12: Tunbridge Jones, Cradock Road



Size (hectares): 0.69

Ward: Katesgrove

Easting: 471620. **Northing:** 171570

Current use: Industrial

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of 72-96 dwellings

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

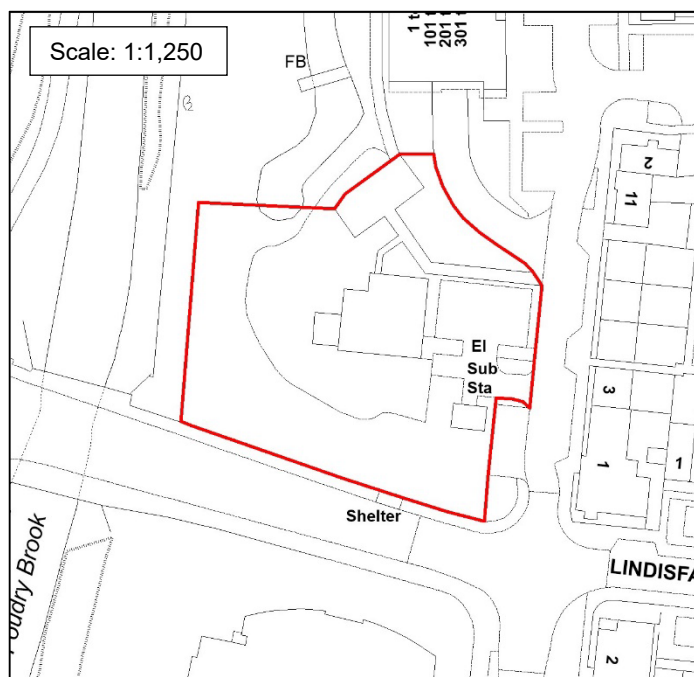
Potential alternative option 2: Development for employment uses.

Issues and constraints: Site is currently protected as part of a Core Employment Area, and is currently surrounded on all sides by commercial and industrial uses which would have significant amenity implications for any residents. Potential contamination across much of the site.

Other information: Adjacent to South of Island Road Major Opportunity Area (SR3).

Site Sou3: Former Sales and Marketing Suite, Drake Way

Figure A2.13: Former Sales and Marketing Suite, Drake Way



Size (hectares): 0.25

Ward: Whitley

Easting: 471190. **Northing:** 170770

Current use: Vacant former marketing building

Source of nominated site: Developer submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of 23 dwellings.

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

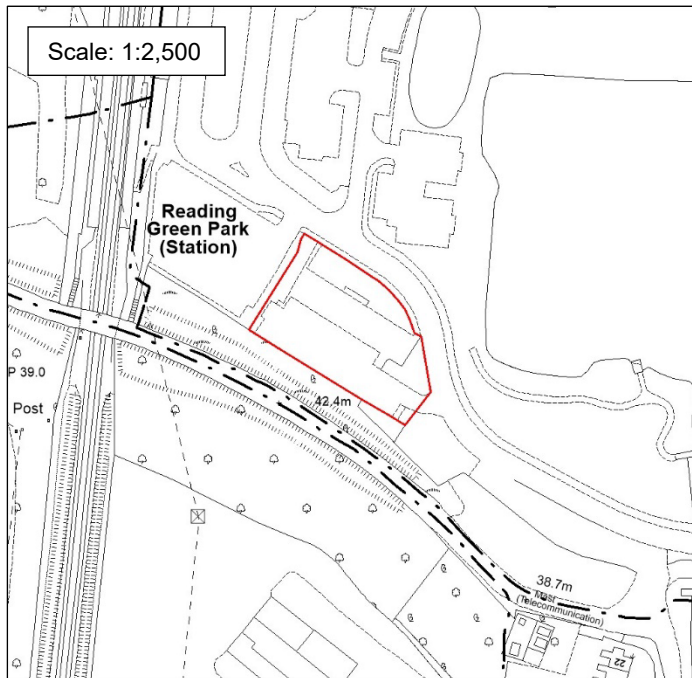
Potential alternative option 2: Residential development of 14 dwellings in line with expired permission.

Issues and constraints: Site subject to potential contamination associated with former sewage works use. Importance of retaining landscaped entrance to Kennet Island.

Other information: Planning permission was granted for 14 dwellings was granted but has since expired.

Site Sou4: Site at Green Park Village, Flagstaff Road

Figure A2.14: Site at Green Park Village, Flagstaff Road



Size (hectares): 0.24

Ward: Whitley

Easting: 469600. **Northing:** 170100

Current use: Temporary construction compound

Source of nominated site: Developer submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of 50 dwellings including affordable housing

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate.

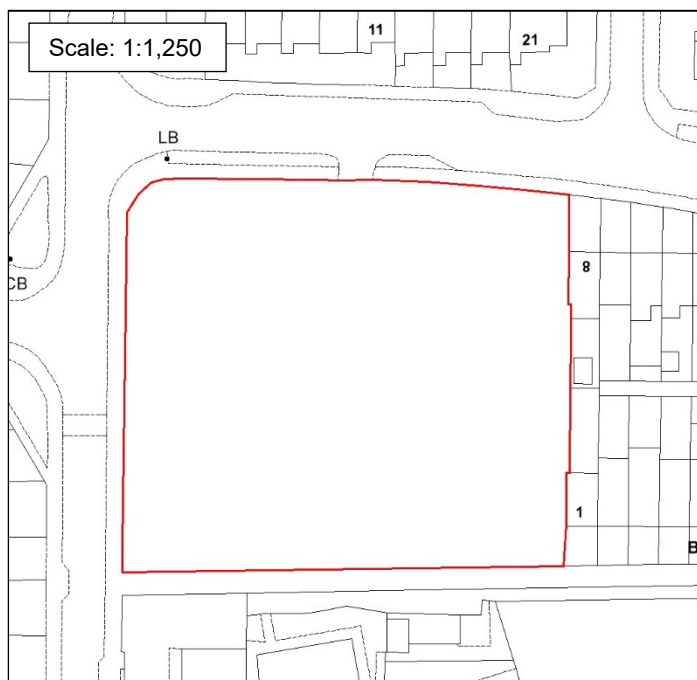
Potential alternative option 2: Development for office and commercial uses

Issues and constraints: Site is within Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for AWE Burghfield. Within Flood Zone 2, albeit that development for multi-storey car park has already been permitted.

Other information: Site was originally permitted for a multi-storey car park associated with the Green Park Station and interchange, but this is no longer required. Adjoins boundary with West Berkshire District Council.

Site Sou5: 2 Hexham Road

Figure A2.15: 2 Hexham Road



Size (hectares): 0.46

Ward: Redlands

Easting: 472240. **Northing:** 171430

Current use: Cleared site

Source of nominated site: Council-owned site

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate.

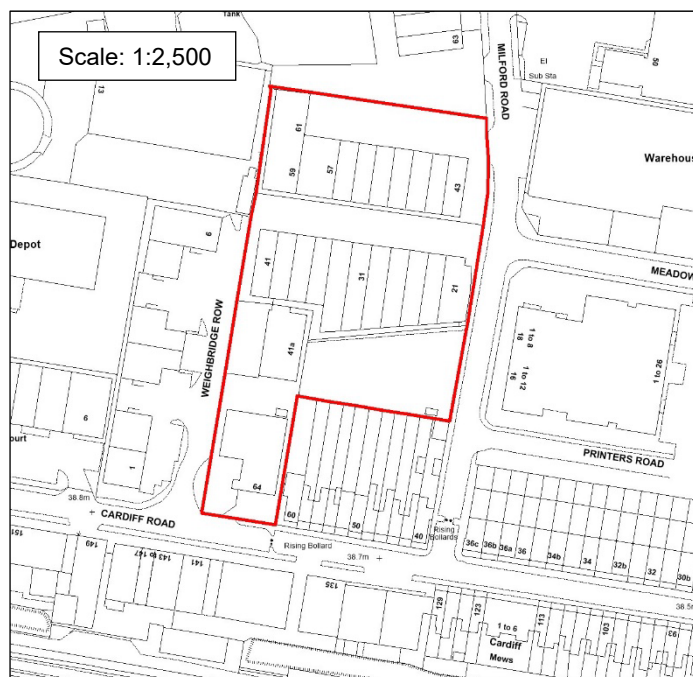
Potential alternative option 2: Development for community uses.

Issues and constraints: A number of significant trees on site. Public footpath along southern boundary of the site. Adjoins residential to the east.

Other information: Site of former care premises, now cleared.

Site Wes1: Land west of Milford Road

Figure A2.16: Land west of Milford Road



Size (hectares): 0.86

Ward: Thames

Easting: 470830. **Northing:** 174160

Current use: Industrial uses, former car park.

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of around 70 dwellings

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Potential alternative option 2: Residential development of only vacant land, approximately 10-15 dwellings.

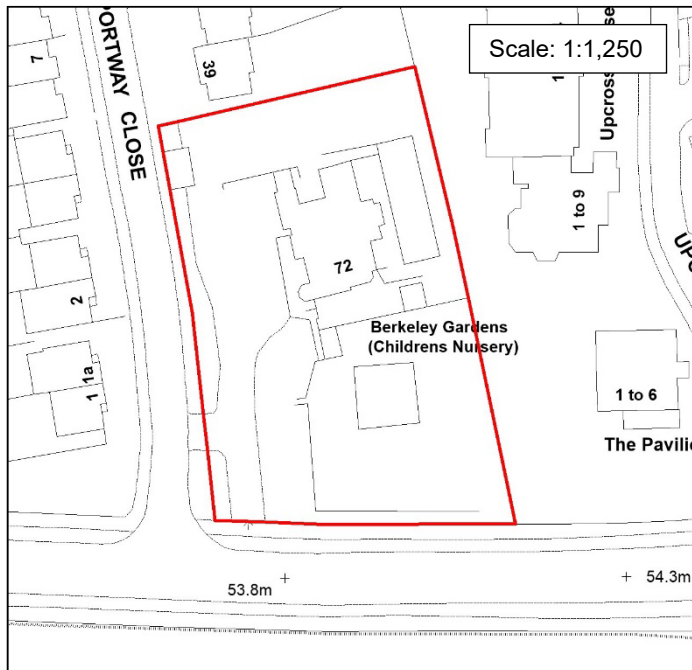
Potential alternative option 3: Redevelopment for employment uses

Issues and constraints: Site is currently protected as part of a Core Employment Area (other than unused former Cox & Wyman car park), and adjoins industrial uses which would have significant amenity implications for any residents. Units are suitable for small businesses. Within Flood Zone 2. Potential contamination across much of the site. Within Air Quality Management Area. Also adjoins residential uses to the south.

Other information: None

Site Wes2: 72 Berkeley Avenue

Figure A2.17: 72 Berkeley Avenue



Size (hectares): 0.33

Ward: Coley

Easting: 470500. **Northing:** 172560

Current use: Nursery

Source of nominated site: Agent submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential use

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Potential alternative option 2: Residential conversion only (estimated at 10-12 dwellings)

Potential alternative option 3: Residential redevelopment (estimated at 25-35 dwellings)

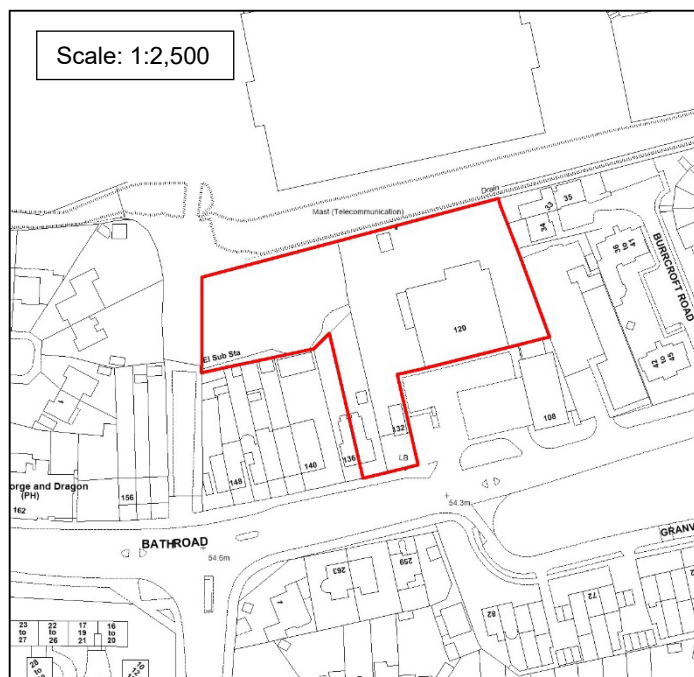
Potential alternative option 4: Conversion plus additional development (estimated at 20-30 dwellings)

Issues and constraints: A number of trees subject to Tree Preservation Order are on site. The building is in an existing community use and the loss of this use would therefore need to be justified. The existing building is likely to be considered a non-designated heritage asset.

Other information: The suggestion is that this site would become available once a nursery has opened at Yeomanry House (which is allocated in the existing Local Plan as WR3e), but this has not yet taken place.

Site Wes3: Land at 132-134 Bath Road

Figure A2.18: Land at 132-134 Bath Road



Size (hectares): 0.51

Ward: Southcote

Easting: 468320. Northing: 172220

Current use: Industrial, car dealership and workshops

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator (1): Residential development only (estimated 44 dwellings)

Development suggested by nominator (2): Mixed use commercial and residential

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Potential alternative option 2: Residential development at typical suburban densities (approximately 20-25 dwellings)

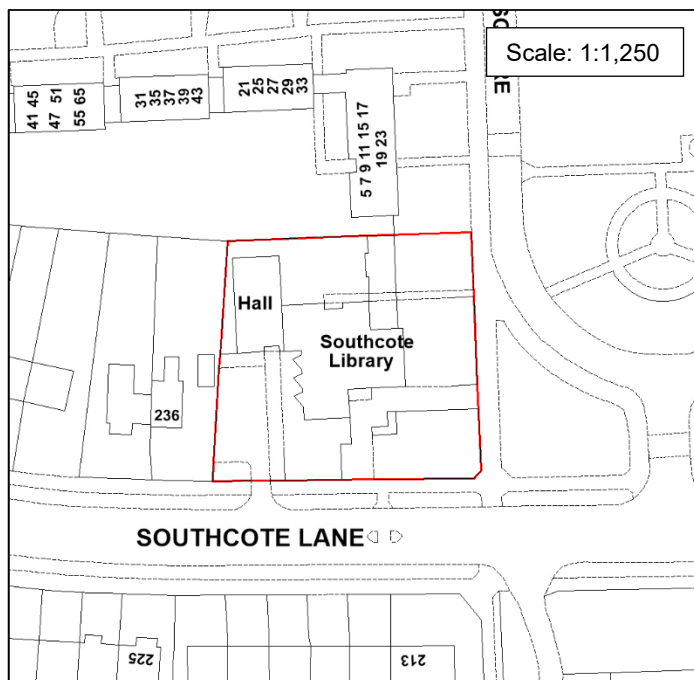
Potential alternative option 3: Redevelopment for employment uses.

Issues and constraints: Much of site subject to potential contamination. Within Air Quality Management Area. Loss of employment space would require justification. There is some vacant land within the site, but the existing narrow access would restrict its potential, so a more comprehensive development of the whole site may be necessary. Significant tree cover along the boundary, in particular the northern boundary. Telegraph pole and post box in front of the point where access would be required.

Other information: None

Site Wes4: Southcote Library, 234 Southcote Lane

Figure A2.19: Southcote Library, Southcote Lane



Size (hectares): 0.17

Ward: Southcote

Easting: 468770. **Northing:** 171880.

Current use: Former library and community hall

Source of nominated site: Council-owned site.

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate.

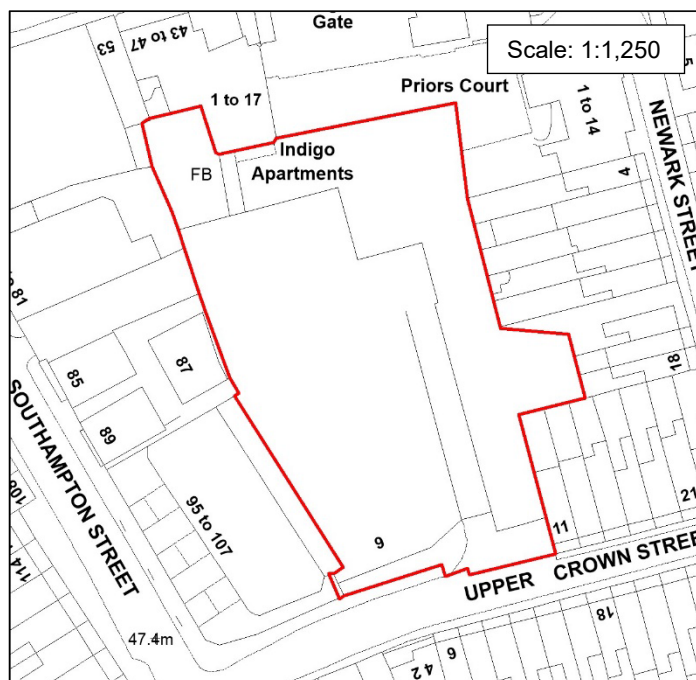
Potential alternative option 2: Development for community uses

Issues and constraints: Some trees and bushes on site. Loss of community use would require justification. Adjoins residential properties to west and north.

Other information: None.

Site Eas1: Land at 9 Upper Crown Street

Figure A2.20: Land at 9 Upper Crown Street



Size (hectares): 0.35

Ward: Katesgrove

Easting: 471770. **Northing:** 172780

Current use: Car park

Source of nominated site: Landowner submission to call for sites

Development suggested by nominator: Residential development of around 46 dwellings.

Potential alternative option 1: Do not allocate

Potential alternative option 2: Residential development at typical urban densities of approximately 25-40 dwellings.

Issues and constraints: To the rear of a significant amount of existing residential. Potential contamination across much of site. Within Air Quality Management Area. Would likely result in significant overlooking of nearby residential gardens.

Other information: Planning application (211614) for development for 46 dwellings was refused and dismissed at appeal.

Appendix 3: Schedule of consultation questions

Please note that it is not expected that respondents will answer every question. Please answer only those questions that you wish to respond to.

Q1: Do you agree with the changes to the sustainability objectives to be used in carrying out sustainability appraisal?

Q2: How should the Climate Emergency be reflected in the vision and objectives?

Q3: Do you have any comments on the suggested changes to the vision, objectives and spatial strategy?

Q4: Do you agree with the proposed plan period of 2023 to 2041?

Q5: Do you agree with the list of strategic policies?

Q6: Do you agree that we should update the cross-cutting policies listed?

Q7: Do you agree that we should update policy CC2 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

Q8: Do you agree that we should update policy CC3 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

Q9: Do you agree that we should update policy CC4 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

Q10: Do you agree that we should update policy CC7 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

Q11: Do you agree that we should update policy CC9 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

Q12: Do you agree that we should update the built and natural environment policies listed?

Q13: Do you agree that we should update policy EN4 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

Q14: Do you agree with the proposed amendments to the boundaries of the existing Local Green Spaces and Public Open Spaces?

Q15: Do you consider that Land at Kentwood Hill (WR3s) and Land at Armour Hill (WR3t) would qualify as Local Green Space?

Q16: Do you agree that Ibis Club and Scours Lane be designated as Local Green Space?

Q17: Do you agree with the proposed level of biodiversity net gain to be sought?

Q18: Do you agree with the proposed approach to off-site Biodiversity Net Gain provision?

Q19: Do you have any other comments on how Biodiversity Net Gain is to be addressed?

Q20: Do you agree with the proposed additions to policy EN12 as a result of the Biodiversity Action Plan?

Q21: Do you agree that, in the event of land in Reading being identified for inclusion within the Chilterns AONB, we should update policy EN13 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

Q22: Do you agree that we should update policy EN14 as described to take account of the Tree Strategy and other matters?

Q23: Do you agree that we should update the employment policies listed?

Q24: Are you aware of anything else that should be factored into an update to policy EM1?

Q25: Do you have any comments on how policy EM2 should be updated?

Q26: Do you agree that we should update the housing policies listed?

Q27: Do you have any comments on the amount of housing that Reading should be planning for?

Q28: Do you have any comments on how the issue of a shortfall in identified needs is proposed to be addressed?

Q29: Do you agree with the proposed update to policy H2 to incorporate minimum densities?

Q30: Do you agree with the proposed increased focus on family housing in policy H2?

Q31: Do you agree with the proposed update to policy H2 to strengthen the wording on self-build?

Q32: Do you agree with the proposals for incorporating First Homes into policy H3 as described?

Q33: Do you agree with the inclusion of a requirement for a deferred contribution in policy H3?

Q34: Do you agree with the inclusion of the proposed approach to instances where a Registered Provider cannot be found to take on affordable housing units?

Q35: Do you agree with the proposed update to policy H4 around rolling tenancies forward?

Q36: Do you agree that we should update policy H5 as described? Are there other changes that are required?

Q37: Do you agree that we should update policy H6 as described?

Q38: Do you agree that we should update policy H7 as described to allow for increases in family housing?

Q39: Do you agree that we should update policy H8 as described to address issues with implementation of the policy?

Q40: Do you agree that we should update policy H14 as described to identify specific opportunities for suburban renewal and regeneration?

Q41: Do you agree that a new policy on co-living should be included?

Q42: Do you agree with the proposed policy direction on co-living?

Q43: Do you agree that we should update the transport policies listed?

Q44: Do you agree with the proposed updates to policy TR1 to reflect the Transport Strategy 2040?

Q45: Do you agree with the proposed updates to policy TR2 to show an updated list of major transport projects?

- Q46: Do you agree with the proposed updates to policy TR4 to reflect the LCWIP?
- Q47: Do you agree with the proposed updates to policy TR5 regarding electric vehicle charging?
- Q48: Do you agree that we should update the retail, leisure and culture policies listed?
- Q49: Are you aware of anything else that should be factored into an update to policy RL2?
- Q50: Do you agree that we should update policy RL3 as described to reflect permitted development rights?
- Q51: Do you agree that we should update policy RL4 as proposed to address other gambling establishments?
- Q52: Do you agree that we should update the policies for other uses listed?
- Q53: Do you agree with the changes proposed to reflect the extension of the DEPZ for AWE Burghfield? Are there other changes that are required?
- Q54: Do you agree with the changes proposed to policy OU3?
- Q55: Do you agree that we should update the area-specific and site allocation policies listed?
- Q56: Do you agree that we should update policy CR2 as described? Are there other changes that are required?
- Q57: Do you have any comments on whether and how policy CR5 should be updated?
- Q58: Do you agree that we should update policy CR6 to seek a greater contribution towards family housing?
- Q59: Do you agree that we should update policy CR7 as described to reflect changes in use classes?
- Q60: Do you have any comments on the proposed amendments to reflect progress on sites within the Station/River Major Opportunity Area?
- Q61: Do you have any views on the amendments to CR11d that have been suggested to us?
- Q62: Do you have any comments on the proposed amendments to reflect progress on sites within the West Side Major Opportunity Area?
- Q63: Do you have any views on the amendment to CR12a at the Cattle Market that has been suggested to us?
- Q64: Do you have any comments on the proposed amendments to reflect progress on sites within the East Side Major Opportunity Area?
- Q65: Do you agree with the proposed changes to CR13a to increase the emphasis on culture and heritage?
- Q66: Do you have any views on the amendment to CR13c on Kenavon Drive and Forbury Business Park that has been suggested to us?
- Q67: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in Central Reading? Do you want to see any other changes?

Q68: Do you have any comments on any of the potential additional allocations to policy CR14?

Q69: Do you have any comments on the proposed changes to policy CR14 regarding the Abbey Quarter?

Q70: Do you have any comments on the proposed changes to policy SR1 regarding the Island Road area?

Q71: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in South Reading? Do you want to see any other changes?

Q72: Do you have any comments on the potential additional allocations to policy SR4?

Q73: Do you agree with the proposed update to policy SR5 to reflect potential proposals at Kennet Meadows?

Q74: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in West Reading and Tilehurst? Do you want to see any other changes?

Q75: What is your view on the suggested changes to sites WR3s and WR3t?

Q76: Do you have any comments on the potential additional allocations to policy WR3?

Q77: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in Caversham and Emmer Green?

Q78: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the existing allocated sites in East Reading? Do you want to see any other changes?

Q79: Do you have any comments on the potential additional allocation to policy ER1?

Q80: Do you agree that we should update policy ER2 regarding Whiteknights Campus as described?

Q81: Do you agree that we should update policy ER3 regarding Royal Berkshire Hospital as described?

Q82: Have all the relevant areas of infrastructure been correctly identified?

Q83: Do you have any comments on the draft IDP schedule?

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APPENDIX 2

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

~~March~~ November 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a document that sets out a local planning authority's programme for producing planning policy documents. Local planning authorities are required to produce a LDS under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by part 111 of the Localism Act 2011. The LDS should set out which planning policy documents the authority will be producing and when. The LDS should state:
- (a) the local development documents that will be produced;
 - (b) the subject matter and geographical area to which each document is to relate;
 - (c) which documents are to have 'Development Plan' status;
 - (d) which documents (if any) are to be prepared jointly with one or more other local planning authorities;
 - (e) any matter or area where there is, or is likely to be, a joint committee;
 - (f) the timetable for the preparation and revision of the documents
- 1.2 This LDS therefore sets out the planning policy documents that Reading Borough Council intends to produce over the coming years, what and where they will cover and when they will be produced. The types of document include two types in particular:
- **Local Plan:** a document that has been subject to independent testing and has development plan status in the determination of planning applications; and
 - **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):** a document which provides more detail to the Local Plan but which is not subject to independent testing, does not have development plan status and cannot make policy in itself.
- 1.3 ~~The~~ Prior to the March 2023 version, the Council's previous LDS was produced in November 2016 and, in particular, set out the timetable for production of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The Local Plan was adopted in November 2019, and the previous LDS is therefore out of date. ~~This~~ The 2023 version ~~replaces-replaced~~ all previous versions of the LDS. ~~This version contains minor changes to the March 2023 version to update timescales.~~
- 1.4 Section 2 summarises the documents that have been adopted and which contain the current planning policy framework for Reading. This includes documents that cover a wider area than just Reading Borough.
- 1.5 Section 3 summarises the programme for production of new planning policy documents, including the Local Plan policies update and continued production of SPDs. More detail on these documents is included in Appendix 1 (for the Local Plan policies update) and Appendix 2 (for other documents).

2. Existing planning policy documents

- 2.1 The full list of documents that are already adopted and in place is set out in Table 1. In summary, the Local Plan was adopted on 4th November 2019 and the Minerals and Waste Plan on 31st January 2023. There is a significant number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that have been adopted, many of which date from before the Local Plan but which nonetheless continue to have effect after

Table 1: Existing adopted planning policy documents at 31st March 2023

Document title	Status	Adoption date	End date	Policy lineage
Reading Borough Local Plan	Development Plan	November 2019	2036	National policy
Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan	Development Plan	January 2023	2036	National policy
Affordable Housing	SPD	March 2021	Not specified	Local Plan (H3, H4)
Battle Hospital Planning Brief	SPD	April 2005	Not specified	Local Plan (WR3)
Caversham Lock Area Development Principles	SPD	March 2006	Not specified	Local Plan (CR14)
Dee Park Planning Brief	SPD	December 2008	Not specified	Local Plan (WR1)
Design Guide to House Extensions	SPD	March 2021	Not specified	Local Plan (H9)
Design Guide to Shopfronts	SPD	January 2022	Not specified	Local Plan (OU5)
Employment, Skills and Training	SPD	April 2013	Not specified	Local Plan (CC9)
Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement	SPD	July 2004	Not specified	Local Plan (CR13)
Meadway Centre Planning Brief	SPD	November 2013	Not specified	Local Plan (WR3)
Minster Quarter Area Development Framework	SPD	December 2018	Not specified	Local Plan (CR12)
Palmer Park Development Framework	SPD	April 2020	Not specified	Local Plan (ER1)
Parking Standards and Design	SPD	October 2011	Not specified	Local Plan (TR5)

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<u>Reading Prison Framework</u>	SPD	March 2015	Not specified	Local Plan (CR13)
<u>Reading Station Area Framework</u>	SPD	December 2010	Not specified	Local Plan (CR11)
<u>Residential Conversions</u>	SPD	March 2023	Not specified	Local Plan (H8)
<u>Revised Planning Obligations under Section 106</u>	SPD	November 2013	Not specified	Local Plan (H3, CC9)
<u>South West Reading Planning Brief</u>	SPD	April 2000	Not specified	None
<u>Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief</u>	SPD	March 2007	Not specified	Local Plan (CR11)
<u>Sustainable Design and Construction</u>	SPD	December 2019	Not specified	Local Plan (CC2, CC3, H5)
<u>Statement of Community Involvement</u>	Statement of Community Involvement	March 2014	Not specified	None
<u>Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report</u>	Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report	September 2014	Not specified	None
<u>Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule</u>	CIL Charging Schedule	January 2015	Not specified	None

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3. Programme for planning policy documents

- 3.1 This section sets out the programme for the planning policy documents that the Council expects to produce, and the timescales and processes for production. Table 2 below summarises the documents to be produced and when they are anticipated to be finalised. More details on each document, including those aspects specified in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) are set out in Appendices 1 (for the Local Plan) and 2 (for other documents).

Table 2: Summary programme for producing planning policy documents

Document title	Planned consultations	Expected adoption date	Policy lineage
Reading Borough Local Plan Policies Update	November 2023- January 2024 August-September 2024	Summer 2025	National policy
Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan Review	Not known	Not known – review by January 2028 to determine whether update needed.	National policy
Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD	July-September 2023 March - May 2024	November 2023 July 2024	Local Plan (EN12, EN14)
Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD	July-September 2023 March - May 2024	November 2023 July 2024	Local Plan (TR1-TR5)
Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD	September-October 2023 July - August 2024	March 2024 November 2024	Local Plan (CR3, CR4)
Other SPDs as required	TBC	TBC	Local Plan

- 3.2 The key document within the programme is the policies update for the Local Plan. Under Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) there is a requirement to carry out a review of a Local Plan within five years of adoption. A review of the Local Plan was undertaken and reported in March 2023¹, and this determined that an update of certain policies was required, for a variety of reasons including new national policy and legislation, changes in circumstances and monitoring of the effectiveness of policies. A full update of the whole Plan was not required. In total, 45 policies were identified as requiring update, set out in Table 3:

¹

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s26812/12%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20SEPT%20Report%20March%202023.pdf>

Table 3: Local Plan policies requiring update

Policy	Policy	Policy
<u>CC2: Sustainable design and construction</u>	H4: Build-to-rent schemes	CR6: Living in Central Reading
<u>CC3: Adaptation to climate change</u>	H5: Housing standards	CR7: Primary frontages in Central Reading
<u>CC4: Decentralised energy</u>	H6: Accommodation for vulnerable people	CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area
<u>CC7: Design and the public realm</u>	H7: Protecting the existing housing stock	CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area
<u>CC9: Securing infrastructure</u>	H8: Residential conversions	CR13: East Side Major Opportunity Area
<u>EN4: Locally important heritage assets</u>	TR1: Achieving the transport strategy	CR14: Other sites for development in Central Reading
<u>EN7: Local green space and public open space</u>	TR2: Major transport projects	CR15: The Reading Abbey Quarter
<u>EN12: Biodiversity and the green network</u>	TR4: Cycle routes and facilities	SR1: Island Road Major Opportunity Area
<u>EN13: Major landscape features and areas of outstanding natural beauty</u>	TR5: Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging	SR4: Other sites for development in South Reading
<u>EN14: Trees, hedges and woodlands</u>	RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development	SR5: Leisure and recreation use of the Kennetside areas
<u>EM1: Provision of employment development</u>	RL3: Vitality and viability of smaller centres	WR3: Other sites for development in West Reading and Tilehurst
<u>EM2: Location of employment development</u>	OU2: Hazardous installations	CA1: Other sites for development in Caversham and Emmer Green
<u>H1: Housing provision</u>	OU3: Telecommunications development	ER1: Other sites for development in East Reading
<u>H2: Density and mix</u>	CR2: Design in Central Reading	ER2: Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading
<u>H3: Affordable housing</u>	CR5: Drinking establishments in Central Reading	ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital

3.3 Work on the Partial Update since the Review was carried out has further identified the need for an update to policy H14: Suburban renewal and regeneration and RL4: Betting shops and payday loan companies.

3.4 Appendix 1 contains more information on the policies update and a more detailed timetable.

- 3.45 The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan was adopted very recently, in January 2023. The five-yearly review period will apply to this document as well, but at this stage, with the document very recently put in place there is no indication of whether any update will in due course; be necessary.
- 3.56 Alongside the above documents with 'Development Plan' status in determining planning applications, there is an intention to continue to produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide additional levels of detail to supplement development plan policy. A Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD ~~has already reached draft stage, and~~ a Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD and a Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD have ~~also~~ been recognised as important priorities. There is a challenge in that these SPDs will be linked to existing policies rather than updated policies, but work on the SPDs will feed into the Local Plan policies update process where necessary to ensure that there is the necessary level of alignment.
- 3.67 It should also be noted that the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill ~~proposes~~ makes changes to the planning system, including the replacement of SPDs with 'supplementary plans' with an enhanced status and a requirement for public examination. The timescales in this document assume production of both the Partial Update and SPDs under the current process as the timetable will result in submission of the Partial Update before the trigger date for moving to a new system. Depending on whether and when these changes are made there may be a need for changes to the production timetable to reflect new requirements, and, once the update of the Local Plan is complete, to undertake a process of replacing existing SPDs with supplementary plans.
- 3.78 Progress on production of planning policy documents is monitored in the Annual Monitoring Report, generally produced in December each year. These can be found on the Council's website².

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² www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy

Appendix 1: Local Plan policies update

A1.1 Table A1.1 shows the detailed information required for the Local Plan policies update.

Table A1.1: Summary of important information relating to the Local Plan policies update

Title	Reading Borough Local Plan Policies Update	
Role and subject	<p>Update of selected policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) based on the outcome of the review of the Local Plan, to ensure that policies are up-to-date.</p> <p>Local Plan review identified that The following policies <u>are identified</u> as being in need of an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cutting policies – CC2, CC3, CC4, CC7, CC9 • Environment policies – EN4, EN7, EN12, EN13, EN14 • Employment policies – EM1, EM2 • Housing policies – H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, <u>H14</u>, • Transport policies – TR1, TR2, TR4, TR5 • Retail and leisure policies – RL2, RL3, <u>RL4</u>, • Other use policies – OU2, OU3 • Site allocation and area-specific policies – CR2, CR5, CR6, CR7, CR11, CR12, CR13, CR14, CR15, SR1, SR4, SR5, WR3, CA1, ER1, ER2, ER3 <p>The update will also include the overall Spatial Strategy and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Other policies not mentioned above will not be part of the scope of the policies update unless it is determined at a later date that this is necessary.</p>	<p>Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial</p> <p>Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial</p> <p>Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial</p>
Geographic coverage	Whole of Reading Borough	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Status	Development Plan	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Policy lineage	National policy	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Documents that would be replaced	Selected policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Call for site nominations	May April 2023	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Regulation 18 consultation	November/December 2023 – January 2024	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Regulation 19 consultation	August/September 2024	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Submission	November 2024	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Examination	February/March 2025	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Adoption	June/July 2025	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial

A1.2 The programme does not allow for adoption of updated policies before the expiry of the five-year statutory review period, as this would be unrealistic. However, it does aim for submission of the policies update by that point so that there are emerging updated policies that can be given some weight in development management decisions, to avoid a policy vacuum where key policies would otherwise be out-of-date.

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Resources

A1.3 The most significant draws on resources through the preparation of a policies update will be staffing, evidence preparation and examination costs. A budget that provides sufficient resources to undertake the Local Plan production for a two year period between 2023 and 2025 was agreed at Council in March 2023. This should provide sufficient flexibility to undertake the update, including staffing resources. Should this not be the case, however, it may be necessary to undertake certain pieces of evidence work in-house or to look for more creative approaches such as joint commissioning.

Risks

A1.4 There are a number of potential risks in updating policies in the Local Plan. These are considered below.

A1.5 **Delays in production:** There are a significant number of possible reasons why plan production can be delayed, some of which are linked to the other risks below, and not all of which are within the control of the Council. The specific risk here is that the five-year period after which certain policies may be considered out-of-date is set in stone, and a delay in updating those policies would result in an absence of policy on some key matters, not least housing provision. The best way to mitigate this risk is an early assessment of housing and other key development needs and expected levels of provision to feed into the plan review. Delays will need to be reflected in a new version of the LDS (or Local Plan Timetable if the changes in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill are in effect).

A1.6 **Changes to national planning system:** Significant changes to the national planning system have been proposed and consulted upon in recent years, starting with the Planning White Paper in August 2020. More recently, the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill ~~has been laid before~~ is working through parliament. In terms of Local Plans, the Bill reaffirms the commitment to a plan-led system, but there are important changes that refer to local plan timetables. The current programme, involving submission in November 2024, will mean that the Partial Update is prepared under the existing plan-making system rather than the new system in the Bill, but the Update must nevertheless be mindful of how changes such as the introduction of could have major implications for the policies update, not least the proposal for national development management policies with which there is a statutory requirement for Local Plans to comply will affect the policies. In addition, the requirement for a LDS would be replaced by a need for a Local Plan

Timetable. ~~According to the consultation launched in December 2022, the Levelling-Up Bill provisions are expected to be in force from November 2024, and plans submitted before 30th June 2025 will not be required to be prepared on the basis of the new system, so this may not affect Reading's update.~~

- A1.7 **Changes to national planning policy:** National policy is generally set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), but it can be subject to changes either through amendments to the NPPF itself or through other means such as written ministerial statements. Changes to the NPPF will undoubtedly be required as and when changes to the planning system are made, in particular in relation to national development management policies. Changes are also possible to the methodology for calculating housing need, and this could have wide-ranging implications for the policy update. A consultation on proposed changes began in December 2022, and ~~some of those changes relating to wind power have already been made to the NPPF, whilst others are outstanding~~the changes to the NPPF identified can be factored into the updates. The only way to mitigate this risk is for the Council to monitor consultations or statements from central government to have an early indication of the direction of travel.
- A1.8 **Further resource constraints:** Budgets for 2023-2024 are set, but further resource constraints could impact on the Council's ability to progress the update in 2024-2025 and beyond. However, the majority of the spend is likely to be in 2023-2024 in commissioning the main pieces of evidence, so it is more likely that resource restrictions in future years would lead to slight delays in the timetable rather than major changes. It may mean a need to update the LDS (or Local Plan timetable).
- A1.9 **Impact of neighbouring authorities' plans:** Given the geography of Reading and the close relationship with neighbouring authorities, decisions made in one authorities plans may have significant implications for its neighbours. As it stands, there remains a duty to co-operate under the Localism Act 2011 that is an essential element of plan-making, and should mean that the strategic implications of plans will be discussed throughout the process, which mitigates this risk to some extent. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill proposes removal of the duty to co-operate and its replacement with an as-yet unspecified test of alignment, ~~but this is not expected to be relevant to the Partial Update.~~ In practical terms, whatever legal test is in place, close working with neighbours will be necessary to prevent unforeseen issues from arising.
- A1.10 **Changing local circumstances:** It is not considered likely that there will be substantial changes to local planning circumstances (e.g. demography, development pressures, economic changes) that would cause a major issue for the programme outlined in this LDS. Planning policies should be drafted with enough flexibility to cope with changes in circumstances, and the flexibility of the policies will be one of the tests when the document is examined.

Appendix 2: Other documents

A2.1 In addition to the Local Plan, work is expected to progress on a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide more detailed guidance on existing Local Plan policies. These will need to be future-proofed so that they can also operate with updated policies.

A2.2 A need for a Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD has been identified, to set out how the new system of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, in force from November 2023, will operate, as well as picking up on a number of actions from other documents including the Climate Emergency Strategy.

Table A2.1: Summary of important information relating to the Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD

Title	Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD	
Role and subject	Detailed policy and guidance on biodiversity and the natural environment, including approach to matters in the Environment Act 2021 including statutory Biodiversity Net Gain. Also picking up on actions in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, Tree Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan.	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Geographic coverage	Whole of Reading Borough	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Status	Supplementary Planning Document	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Policy lineage	Reading Borough Local Plan (policies EN12, EN14)	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Documents that would be replaced	None	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Draft SPD consultation	July-September 2023 March-May 2024	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Adoption	November 2023 July 2024	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial

A2.3 A need has also been identified for a Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD, to update the parking standards from the existing SPD that is now some years old, but also to take account of the new Local Transport Plan and any opportunities for meeting the aims of that plan within development proposals.

Table A2.2: Summary of important information relating to the Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD

Title	Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD	
Role and subject	Detailed policy and guidance regarding revised standards for car and cycle parking as part of development schemes and the promotion of sustainable transport measures including implementation of measures set out in Local Transport Plan.	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Geographic coverage	Whole of Reading Borough	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Status	Supplementary Planning Document	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial
Policy lineage	Reading Borough Local Plan (policies TR1, TR2, TR3, TR4, TR5)	Formatted: Font: (Default) Arial

Documents that would be replaced	Parking Standards and Design SPD (October 2011)
Draft SPD consultation	November 2023 – January 2024 March-May 2024
Adoption	March 2024 July 2024

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- A2.4 A need for a Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD has been identified, to ensure that the substantial amount of development to be undertaken in Central Reading contributes to a much-enhanced public realm which contributes positively and consistently to the overall character of the centre.

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Table A2.3: Summary of important information relating to the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD

Title	Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD
Role and subject	Detailed policy and guidance to improve the quality of the public realm throughout central Reading.
Geographic coverage	Central Reading
Status	Supplementary Planning Document
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected
Policy lineage	Reading Borough Local Plan (policies CR2, CR3)
Documents that would be replaced	None
Draft SPD consultation	November 2023 – January 2024 July-August 2024
Adoption	March 2024 November 2024

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