

To: Councillor Cross (Chair)  
Councillors Hornsby-Smith, Ballsdon,  
Davies, Ennis, Goss, Juthani, Keeping,  
Lanzoni, Leng, Magon, McCann, McElroy,  
McGoldrick, McGrother, Moore and  
Rowland

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11 November 2025

Your contact is: Andrew Wood - Committee Services

**NOTICE OF MEETING - STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT  
COMMITTEE 19 NOVEMBER 2025**

A meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee will be held on Wednesday, 19 November 2025 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>Page No</u>
<b>1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>		
<b>2. MINUTES</b>		<b>5 - 8</b>
To confirm the Minutes of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee held on 26 June 2025.		
<b>3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE</b>		<b>9 - 30</b>
To receive the Minutes for meetings of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 11 June and 11 September 2025.		
<b>4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES</b>		<b>31 - 46</b>
To receive the Minutes for meetings of the:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Joint Waste Disposal Board on 24 June and 18 September 2025; and</li><li>Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) Board on 24 April and 17 July 2025.</li></ul>		

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**5. DELEGATED DECISIONS****47 - 48**

To review the list of decisions delegated to officers by the Committee.

**6. PUBLIC PETITIONS & QUESTIONS**

To receive any petitions and questions from the public.

**7. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

To receive any question from Councillors.

**8. ELDON SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL****REDLANDS; 49 - 184  
THAMES**

A report seeking Committee approval to conduct a public consultation on the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal. A short presentation will also be given by representatives from the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC).

**9. READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2025-30  
AND ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2024/25 ON (I) THE  
READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2020-25  
AND (II) CORPORATE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS.****BOROUGH 185 - 394  
WIDE**

A report seeking Committee approval to adopt the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-30 and presenting the:

- i. Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 Annual Report for 2024/25; and
- ii. Reading Borough Council's Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Annual Report for 2024/25.

**10. REPORT OF THE ACTIVE TRAVEL TASK & FINISH  
GROUP - FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS****BOROUGH 395 - 416  
WIDE**

A report presenting the findings and recommendations of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group.

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# Agenda Item 2

## STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

### MEETING MINUTES - 26 JUNE 2025

**Present:** Councillors Cross (Chair), Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Davies, Ennis, Goss, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, Leng, McCann, McElroy, McGoldrick, McGrother and Rowland.

**Also in attendance via Microsoft Teams:** Councillor Magon.

**Apologies:** Councillors Ballsdon and Moore.

## **2. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 12 March 2025 and 21 May 2025 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

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

The Minutes of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 6 March 2025 were received and noted.

## **4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES**

The Minutes of the following meetings were received and noted:

- Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Local Liaison Committee on 24 April 2025.
- Cleaner Air and Safer Transport (CAST) Forum on 1 April 2025.
- Joint Waste Disposal Board on 27 February 2025 and 24 April 2025.
- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board on 16 January 2025.

## **5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

A question on the following matter was asked in accordance with Standing Order 36.

Questioner	Subject
Councillor McElroy	Hospital Bus Stop in Town Centre

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

## **6. ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) CHARGING IN READING TENDER AWARD**

The Committee considered a report on progress relating to the tender to find a suitably qualified and experienced partner to roll out an on-street Electric Vehicle (EV) charging programme within Reading. The report also sought delegated authority from the Committee

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to authorise the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Director of Finance, to enter into a 15-year contract with the successful bidder (with a possible one-year extension) to deliver EV charging in the borough.

The subject of the tender was the provision of a network of EV charging infrastructure across the borough that would support the delivery of the Council's EV Charging Strategy (a key aspect of the Council's Local Transport Plan). The key objectives of the EV Charging Strategy included increasing public EV charging provision to ensure the uptake of EV technology was not constrained by a lack of infrastructure and to ensure that that same infrastructure was appropriately distributed to ensure equitable access across the town.

The report summarised the procurement process and explained that the Council had completed stage one of a two stage open procurement process and had shortlisted five experienced contractors to return tenders. The successful tenderer would be required to enter into a contract with the Council to install, operate, and maintain at least 1,500 standard-speed on-street EV chargers, across the town, primarily utilising the existing lamp column power network. In locations where the lamp column power network could not be used, the contractor would be required to install alternative power and charging apparatus.

The report stated that a long-term contract of up to 15 years, with the option of a one-year extension, would be entered into to ensure financial security for both the Council and the successful bidder. The contract would include protections for the Council should the contractor go out of business, that would allow the Council to take over the assets and seek to award a contract to an alternative provider. At the end of the contract the Council would be in a position to either have the units removed by the contractor or seek another suitable contractor via an open procurement process to take over the running and maintenance of the assets.

The successful bidder would be required to secure suitable funding themselves either privately or through the Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund (CIIF), to deliver the installation programme over a two-year period. The project would not require capital funding from the Council but would utilise £766k of the £866k of LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) Grant funding that the Council had already secured from Government. The remaining £100k from the secured LEVI grant fund would be retained to support resident applications for cross-pavement EV charging solutions.

The successful bidder would be expected to cover the risks associated with the delivery of the scheme, including bearing the costs of any on-street charging units that did not achieve the expected usage. Tenderers would be also required to demonstrate social value and a strong commitment to carbon reduction principles within their submissions. The Council would agree the successful tenderer's delivery programme to ensure that the Council's priorities were met, including enhancing opportunities in socially deprived areas of the town and achieving the best possible price per kilowatt hour for residents who would use the charging points.

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The report stated that, whilst the estimated income over the lifetime of the contract fell below that where Committee approval would normally be required, delegated authority to authorise officers to enter into a contract with the successful bidder was being sought from the Committee as the potential total value of the concessionary contract with the provider could theoretically reach over £190m over the 15-year lifetime of the contract. The report explained that an annual rebate of £65K (increasing annually in line with RPI) had been mandated to cover the cost of a contract manager. The rebate would commence in April 2027 after LEVI capability funding for the LEVI project lead had elapsed. The Council had set a gross margin share (revenue minus cost of energy) rebate rate of 3% that it would receive if or when income met or exceeded the £65K (plus RPI) mandatory annual rebate payment figure. Therefore, the Council's direct revenue costs would be completely covered.

Tenderers would be required to detail their approach to tariff pricing within their respective bids, including setting an appropriate tariff ceiling (the current prices for Electric Vehicle charging within the tender returns ranged between 39p/kWh and 85p/kWh). Tenderers would also be required to submit a transparent cost model detailing how their tariff figures were calculated. The successful tenderer would be permitted to request an increase to the tariff ceiling twice a year under the change mechanism in the contract. Any tariff increase would need to be supported by an up-to-date cost model and provide appropriate benchmarking figures to evidence why a price increase was required. It was anticipated that the successful tenderer would need to carefully consider any increases to its tariffs in order to remain competitive with other providers.

The report explained that at years 5, 8, 10, and 12 of the contract the Council could opt to review the gross margin share rate. This gave the Council leeway to make adjustments if necessary. Additionally, if annual income surpassed the £65K mandatory rebate figure the Council could choose to decline to accept the extra revenue and instead channel those funds towards community benefit (eg lower tariffs or expanded infrastructure). The checkpoints were therefore not just financial but offered strategic moments for the Council to evaluate the contract's overall effectiveness, including value for money for residents.

### **Resolved –**

- (1) That the progress made towards the tender to find a suitably qualified and experienced partner to roll out an on-street Electric Vehicle (EV) charging programme within Reading be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Director of Finance, be authorised to enter into a 15-year contract with the successful bidder (with a possible 1-year extension) to deliver EV charging in Reading.**

### **7. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report on the progress made towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. The programme included several major enhancements to public transport and active travel schemes and initiatives

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that were aimed at encouraging more healthy lifestyles, reducing pollution and carbon emissions, and supporting sustainable economic growth in the Borough.

Each of the strategic transport schemes outlined in the report were fully aligned with the Council's new Local Transport Plan (the Reading Transport Strategy 2040) and its sub-strategies, with the delivery of each individual scheme contributing towards achieving the Strategy's overall vision.

The report contained progress updates on the following individual schemes and initiatives:

- Public Transport Programme – Electric Buses.
- Public Transport Programme – Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
- Public Transport Programme – Tilehurst Station Accessibility Enhancements.
- The Active Travel Programme.

The report also sought spend and scheme approval as the Council had recently secured a further £1.3 million of grant funding from the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Zero Emissions Bus Region Area (ZEBRA) fund. This was in addition to the £4.7m the Council had already secured from the fund and would be used to expand the electric bus fleet by a further eight vehicles and to provide those additional vehicles with the necessary charging infrastructure. The report stated that Reading Buses planned to deploy the additional eight electric buses on the Yellow 26 route that served the town centre, Southcote, Ford's Farm and Calcot.

**Resolved –**

- (1) **That the progress made towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes, as summarised in the report, be noted.**
- (2) **That spend and scheme approval for the additional £1.3m of grant funding that the Council had secured from Government to increase the roll-out of electric buses in Reading by a further 8 electric buses, including the associated changing infrastructure, be granted.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.37 pm)

**Present:** Councillors Lanzoni (Chair), Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Cross, Eden, Ennis, Gittings, Griffith, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Keeping, McGrother, Nikulina, O'Connell, R Singh and White.

## 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Ayub and Barnett-Ward declared interests in item 6(a), on the grounds that they had signed the petition requesting that a pedestrian crossing be installed on Wokingham Road.

## 2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 6 March 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 3. PREVIOUS DELEGATED DECISIONS

The Sub-Committee received the list of delegated decisions from previous meetings.

## 4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were received:

- Reading Cycle Forum – 12 February 2025.

## 5. QUESTIONS

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 Nikulina	Tackling Whitley Street Cycle Lane Problems

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

## 6. PETITIONS

### (a) Petition – Wokingham Road Crossing

The Sub-Committee received a report on the receipt of a petition that had been received requesting that a pedestrian crossing be installed on Wokingham Road, near to the junction with Hamilton Road.

The report stated that on 18 May 2025 a petition had been submitted to the Council that had counted indications of support from 180 individuals. The full petition read as follows:

*"We the undersigned request that a safe crossing be installed on Wokingham Rd close to the Hamilton Road bus stop (by the cemetery wall).*

*Many residents have expressed their concerns about the dangers of crossing there. In particular elderly, disabled people and those with young children find it challenging to cross the road when high volumes of cars travel at speed. A safe crossing would be a clear signal to drivers that pedestrians are trying to cross the road. We urge you to implement this important measure for the benefit of the people of Park Ward.”*

The report explained that at the desired location, Wokingham Road, was a 30mph street, with two westbound traffic lanes (a bus lane and a general traffic lane) and an eastbound general traffic lane with an advisory cycle lane alongside. Both sides of the road had Red Route ‘no stopping at any time’ restrictions in place, with the cemetery on the northern side and residential properties, some of which had off-street parking access, on the southern side.

The report recommended that officers considered the requested change and undertook a high level desktop study in order to make recommendations to a future meeting. It was likely that such a requested change would need to be considered for entry on the Council’s regularly reported ‘Requests for Traffic Management Measures’ as there was currently no identified funding or staffing resource to commence development of a scheme at the current time.

At the invitation of the Chair the petition organiser, Electra Colios, addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of the petitioners.

At the invitation of the Chair Brian Oatway also addressed the Sub-Committee in support of the petition.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That officers consider the contents of the petition and make their recommendations in a petition response report to be submitted to a future meeting;**
- (3) That no public enquiry be held into the proposals.**

(Councillors Ayub and Barnett-Ward declared an interest in the above item on the grounds that they had signed the petition. They took no part in the discussion or decision making.)

**(b) Petition – Southcote School Street**

Further to Minute 35 of the previous meeting, the Sub-Committee received a report on the receipt of a petition that had been received requesting the establishment of a School Street for Southcote Primary School.

The report explained that a petition response report that had been submitted to the previous meeting, had explained the potential benefits of a School Street at this location and officers had carried out the additional recommended action of writing to the Head Teacher to inform them of the receipt of that petition and to encourage engagement with the Council in developing a School Street project.

The report stated that on 28 May 2025 a petition had been formally submitted to the Council containing indications of support from 104 individuals. The petition had been hosted online and had been created on 7 September 2024. The full petition read as follows:

*“I’m a resident of Southcote, Reading, UK, and I feel it’s high time we addressed a growing concern in our community—the traffic situation near Southcote Primary School, particularly during drop-off and pick-up times. We find it nearly impossible to get in and out of our driveways on Silchester Road and Shepley Drive and it’s become a daily struggle. Numerous near misses have been recorded, an alarming sign of the dangers that exist.*

*Sadly, the challenge has been amplified by the lack of support from the school. The ample car park that was originally built to be a drop-off point for parents remains off-limits. Instead, parents are forced to drop off children along the one-way road, causing a logjam that takes up to 15 minutes to clear.*

*School Streets, implemented successfully in other parts of the UK, have been shown to significantly reduce traffic congestion around schools and create a safer environment for all. They prioritise walking and cycling during school start and end times, making drop off and pick up less dangerous and congested.*

*We believe a School Street for Southcote Primary School would alleviate this ongoing issue, freeing our driveways and reducing near misses significantly, making the area safer for both residents and pupils. We ask the local council and school management to take into consideration our concerns and create a safer, smoother traffic system for the benefit of all.*

*We appeal to you, our fellow residents, parents and local community members to support this petition. Let’s collectively ask for the establishment of a School Street for Southcote Primary School, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and our community. Please sign this petition and help us make our voices heard.”*

The report explained that officers were aware of some of the difficulties that some parents were causing for local residents at school drop-off and pick-up times and the report that had been submitted to the previous meeting had summarised some of the measures that had been introduced, or had been proposed, to try and mitigate these issues.

The School Street initiative currently required schools to engage with and apply to implement a scheme. There was a level of officer support that could be provided in the development of a scheme but, currently the implementation and operation required volunteers from the school and local community to marshal the closure and facilitate legitimate access/egress. It was appreciated that finding and retaining volunteer marshals could be challenging and the Council remained appreciative of those who were currently supporting schemes. Officers were reviewing potential options that could support such initiatives but, these would need to be considered in due course. Currently, the Council was reliant on the school and community to apply and support a scheme and was not in a position to instruct or impose a scheme on a school. It was not a restriction that was currently considered feasible for imposing on a school and the surrounding streets, therefore, officers did not consider that there were currently any further actions that they could take to address the request set out in the petition.

At the invitation of the Chair the petition organiser, Abba Lucas, addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of the petitioners.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and Councillor Ennis proposed that recommendation (2) be changed so that he, Ward Councillors and officers were charged with continuing the dialogue with the school and local residents with the aim of finding a safe solution to the traffic situation near Southcote Primary School.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That Councillor Ennis, Ward Councillors and officers be charged with continuing the engagement with the school, to invite a School Street application, remain available to advise on that application with the aim of finding a safe solution to the traffic situation near Southcote Primary School;**
- (3) That no public enquiry be held into the proposals.**

(c) Petition – Changes to Road-side Parking, Wokingham Road

The Sub-Committee considered a petition that had been received requesting changes to road-side parking on Wokingham Road.

The petition had counted indications of support from 75 individuals. The full petition read as follows:

*“I am writing on behalf of the congregation of Earley Christian Fellowship (ECF), 153 Wokingham Road, Earley to express our dismay at the recent changes to the road-side parking on Wokingham Road. ECF has been based at 153 for over 40 years. For all this time, the church has relied on, and been able to park freely on Wokingham Road, albeit in the last 5 years subject to a 2 hour un-charged time limit and small charge thereafter.*

*The charging structure for Wokingham Road was carefully considered by the TMSC in 2019/20, in direct response to representations received (including from ECF) about the proposed metering. Issues considered by Committee at that time included the 'Pay to Pray' debate; the Council's requirement to comply with the Equality Act 2010 (and hence any proposal not being discriminatory to persons of protected characteristics (eg by way of religion, age (young or old), disability or pregnancy)) and the inherent importance to ECF of an adequate free parking period on Wokingham Road. The tariff arrived at at that time was a 2 hour un-charged period, followed by 50p per hour thereafter. For most week-day activities at ECF, the 2 hour free period was sufficient for parking. On a Sunday morning however, when people are typically at ECF for longer, 3 hours used to cost 50p. This has now risen to £2.70 (including 20p RingGo admin charge) - a whopping 440% increase! The removal of the 2 hour free period and extortionate hike in price is completely contrary to the careful consideration by this Committee in 2019/20 of the effect of the tariff on ECF. Many of the ECF congregation do walk, cycle or use the bus to come to services and events, but those who are older, have young families or travel from further afield rely on there being easily accessible parking nearby without*

*prohibitive cost. Removal of the 2 hour free period and huge increase in price could therefore be considered indirect discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 (indirect discrimination can occur when there is a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages a person with a particular protected characteristic).*

*Furthermore, the disabling of the meters and the consequent requirement to use an app to park really is discriminatory against those without smartphones, those who aren't tech savvy (such as the elderly), or those who aren't local (eg if we have a funeral or wedding).*

*We would be grateful therefore if the meters on Wokingham Road could be returned to use and the previous tariff reinstated."*

At the invitation of the Chair the petition organiser, Bernadette Cowling, addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of the petitioners.

Councillor Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, gave the following response to the petition:

*"The petition from the Earley Christian Fellowship (ECF) cites a previous decision by the Transport Management Sub Committee (TMSC) in 2019/20 and the Equalities Act 2010.*

*The decision by the committee not to introduce charges at that time was in line with many other areas where there was limited free parking. The changes in the tariff structure in January 2024 removed the majority of these free periods. The change now brings the area into line with the rest of the borough. As background the free period in both Dunstall Place and Recreation Road was removed as part of the annual review of fees and charges. A petition from residents and businesses in the area around the car parks, protesting the removal of the free period was submitted to TMSC. Both petitions were rejected*

*The parking charge is now consistent across the borough treating all people and all religious groups in the same way. It would be difficult to provide a different approach at Wokingham road to support the ECF as this could be viewed as favouring one religious group over another.*

*As part of a review of the number and location of pay and display machines, it has been decided to install a card only pay and display machine close to the ECF. This will negate the need to use the Ring Go service, thereby avoiding the 20p convenience charge.*

*The Council's overall move towards creating a net zero borough is not supported by free parking, even for a limited period. Pay and display charges are an effective and proven tool in encouraging behaviour change and by maintaining a free parking period, travellers would be encouraged to continue to use their vehicles, which is not something the Council wishes to encourage."*

The Sub-Committee discussed the petition and it was agreed that further investigation was needed particularly in relation to free parking and unification of parking in the area.

**Resolved – That the petition be noted.**

**7. WOODLEY ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEME: PALMER PARK AVENUE PARALLEL CROSSING - CONSULTATION RESULTS**

Further to Minute 24 of the meeting held on 27 November 2024, the Sub-Committee considered a report that informed them of the results of the statutory consultation process for the proposed changes on Palmer Park Avenue and Wykeham Road junction as part of the scheme by Wokingham Borough Council. A plan of the Palmer Park Avenue and Wykeham Road crossing facilities was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and the consultation results were attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report explained that the entire scheme consisted of the provision of a new cycle route connecting Woodly Town Centre and Palmer Park, including an upgrade to the existing shared footway/cycleway sections, junction upgrades and priority crossing points. Part of Woodlands Avenue was to be reduced to 20mph, with Palmerston Road and Culver Lane proposed to form part of a wider 20mph zone which was being delivered as a separate scheme. Church Road was to remain at 30pmh. The section of the scheme with Reading Borough consisted of the provision of a new parallel crossing over Palmer Park Avenue at the entrance to Palmer Park and improved crossing facilities, including a raised table and crossing at the Wykeham Road junction with Palmer Park Avenue. The pavement on the south side of Culver Lane, between its junction with Wykeham Road and the Borough boundary was also to be converted to shared space for pedestrians and cycles. The section of the scheme within the Borough had been developed with the engagement and feedback from Transport Officers and a statutory consultation had been carried out between 30 January and 28 February 2025. A total of 27 public responses had been received to the consultation, with 23 supportive of the scheme and four unsupportive. There had been no objections to the scheme from Thames Valley Police.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the report and the results of the consultation be noted;**
- (2) That the implementation of the proposed measures be approved;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to make the Traffic Regulation Order;**
- (4) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

**8. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER RECTIFICATION – UPDATE**

Further to Minute 37 of the previous meeting, the Sub-Committee received a report that informed them of progress and decision making in respect of the TRO rectification process. The following Appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 Drawings pack to highlight the locations and restrictions affected, accompanying the table in Section 3.6, as reported to Council in October 2024;

Appendix 2 Consultation feedback received for TRO 7 (London Road);

Appendix 3	Consultation feedback received for TRO 8 (Hosier Street & St Marys Butts);
Appendix 4	Consultation feedback received for TRO 9 (A33 Bus Lanes);
Appendix 5	Consultation feedback received for TRO 10 (Redlands Road);
Appendix 6	Drawings pack to highlight the locations affected by the new items referred in Section 3.11 of the report.

The report highlighted a further three TRO issues that had since been discovered, for which officers were seeking agreement to carry out the statutory consultation processes on two of them so that the TROs might be brought back into compliance and enforcement recommenced with the restrictions presented on street. These issues affected the southbound bus lane on London Street, split bays within the town centre and a limited waiting bay on Armour Road.

With regard to the Digital TRO Project the report explained that officers were awaiting the outcome of a recent Government consultation regarding the potential implementation of their new regulations and it was anticipated that this would not happen until October 2025 at the earliest. This incoming legislation continued to inform the delivery order/priority of the overall project. The software supplier providing the TRO management suite had been appointed and officers were in the early stages of onboarding, process and delivery mapping.

## **Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to undertake statutory consultations to address the Traffic Regulation Order issues identified and recommendations proposed in item 3.11 of the report, in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Environment and Commercial Services be granted authority to make minor amendments to any proposals to be consulted, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee;**
- (4) That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to make the Traffic Regulation Orders;**
- (5) That any objection(s) received during the statutory advertisement be submitted to a future meeting;**
- (6) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

## **9. WAITING RESTRICTION REVIEW - 2024A RESULTS OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

The Sub-Committee received a report informing them of objections that had resulted from the statutory consultation for the agreed proposals that had formed the 2024A Waiting Restriction Review Programme. Objections and other feedback that had been received to the statutory

consultation for the 2024A programme and the advertised drawings relating to those proposals were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that at the meeting on 11 September 2024 (Minute 17 refers) a list of requests for potential inclusion into the 2024B Programme had been submitted and the Sub-Committee had agreed the locations that should be investigated for potential treatment. The officer resource for carrying out this work had been occupied with other high priority work, particularly the TRO Rectification Project, see Minute 7 above. While some work had commenced, it was not sufficiently advanced for submitting to this meeting and it was expected that scheme recommendations would be submitted to the September 2025 meeting. Initial recommendations would be shared with Ward Councillors for comment ahead of that meeting as usual.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the following proposals made under the waiting restriction review 2024A programme, as set out in Appendices 1, attached to the report, be implemented, amended or removed from the programme, subject to any valid and substantive objections being received, as follows:**
  - Bembridge Place – Implement as advertised;
  - Northcourt Avenue – Remove from the programme;
  - Oak Tree Road – Implement as advertised;
  - Armour Road – Officer comments noted;
  - Newcastle Road – Implement as advertised;
  - Addison Road – Remove from the programme;
  - Westwood Road – Implement as advertised;
  - Childrey Way – Remove from the programme;
- (3) That should any further valid written/postal objections be received after this meeting, provided they were sent within the statutory consultation period, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee consider these and make a decision regarding the implementation, or otherwise, of the scheme;**
- (4) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make and seal the resultant Traffic Regulation Order;**
- (5) 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;**
- (6) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

**10. NORTHCOURT AVENUE CIL – RESULTS OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

Further to Minute 18 of the meeting held on 11 September 2024, the Sub-Committee received a report that provided the Sub-Committee with the results of the Statutory Consultation for traffic calming and speed reduction proposals on Northcourt Avenue and Wellington Avenue. The following Appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Objections and other feedback that had been received to the statutory consultation – combining feedback to the 20mph and speed hump consultations;
- Appendix 2 Drawings for the proposed scheme.

The report explained that due to the different legal processes required to consult on speed limit changes and on the installation of speed humps/tables, there had been two separate consultations that had been carried out concurrently on the scheme between 15 May and 6 June 2025.

## **Resolved –**

- (1) **That the report be noted;**
- (2) **That having considered the feedback, set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report, the Northcourt Avenue Traffic Calming scheme be implemented, subject to resolution (3) below and to any valid and substantive objections being received;**
- (3) **That should any further written/postal objections be received after this meeting, provided they were sent within the statutory consultation period, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee consider these and make a decision regarding the implementation, or otherwise, of the scheme;**
- (4) **That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to seal the resultant Traffic Regulation Order (Speed Limit Order);**
- (5) **That respondents to the statutory consultations be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee accordingly, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting;**
- (6) **That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.**

## **11. RESIDENTS PARKING SCHEME REVIEW INCLUDING DIGITAL VISITOR PERMITS**

The Sub-Committee considered a report that sought to amend the Permit Management Rules to create a standardised approach to simplify the number of permits, and following the results of the digital parking permit trial, to recommend the adoption of digital permits and visitor permits Boroughwide from October 2025. The following Appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Feedback from Residents
- Appendix 2 Breakdown of Visitor permit sessions used per month

- Appendix 3 List of Healthcare Professions
- Appendix 4 Table 2 - Digital Visitor Permit Packs and Physical Books issued in 2024/2025
- Appendix 5 Table 3 - Number of Sessions booked, including session duration

The report explained that there were 19 Resident Parking Zones across the Borough which provided spaces on-street for households to find parking near their homes and the report included a table that set out the permits that had been issued in 2024/2025. At the meeting on 13 September 2023 (Minute 23 refers) the start of a trial of digital permits had been agreed with the exception of Visitor Permits in zone 02R and a trial of digital visitor permits had been on going in permit zone 02R since 13 March 2024.

The residents in 02R, as part of the trial, were entitled to two free packs and up to five charged packs of visitor permits per year, each pack contained 120 sessions and each session was for one hour. In summary, residents were provided with 240 free hours of parking for visitors and the ability to buy up to 600 additional hours of visitor time. A resident could book a session from their pack, with the minimum being one session/hour. Once a session had been booked, the session(s) were deducted from their pack. This was all managed from their online account.

Residents had been notified of the digital trial, including the visitor pack trial, and a feedback form had been provided. To date 12 responses had been received from residents under the trial that had been held over the previous 12 months. There were 665 permits in zone 02R.

The report stated that the digital scheme was working well, with generally positive feedback. It had allowed for more efficient working practices that supported stronger compliance, and the visitor permit scheme was proving to be more suited to customer needs, with shorter stays possible, as well as being easier to access. Therefore, the recommendation was to roll out the Digital Visitor Permit packs to the other permit zones along with visitor permits for Business, Charity and other discretionary visitor permit types. The inclusion of these permits in the digital rollout would simplify the process for obtaining visitor permits and would not restrict the applicant to times when the Council offices were open, thereby providing greater flexibility for customers.

The option to have physical visitor permits would be retained for those residents who were unable to utilise the digital version. However, these books of visitor permits would not be available to purchase online through the portal, and requests would need to be made by post or email.

The report explained that it was recommended to roll out digital visitor permits Boroughwide in October 2025 to allow officers time to communicate and amend back-office systems and, as with the trial of Digital Visitor Permits in 02R, a communication and roll-out plan would be drawn up.

The report detailed other proposed changes to the following sections of Permit Scheme:

- Motorcycle Parking;
- Council Pool Vehicles;
- Nanny, Houseboat and Foreign Vehicle Permits
- Teachers Permits;
- Healthcare Professional Permits;

- Update of the Permit Scheme Rules and Definitions.

**Resolved –**

- (1) **That the following the trial of Digital Permits and Visitor Permits in Zone 02R, their rolling out Boroughwide and the rolling out Boroughwide of digital Business, Charity and Discretionary permits, be agreed;**
- (2) **That the following amendments be made to the permit scheme:**
  - (a) **Motorcycles are included in the permit scheme but are charged for at the first permit rate regardless of other vehicles owned;**
  - (b) **Reading Borough Council pool vehicles are included in the scheme;**
  - (c) **Houseboats, Nanny and Foreign Registered vehicle permits are removed from the permit scheme due to low take up and the creation of a new General Discretionary permit;**
  - (d) **Healthcare Professional Permits are updated to remove the list of professions and that permits are issued on the basis they visit patients in their homes;**
  - (e) **Teachers permits be renamed educational establishment permits and be limited to the current demand as set out in Table 4 at paragraph 3.29 allowing the schools to determine the recipients of those permits charged at resident rates;**
  - (f) **Schools applying for permits must have a current School Travel plan;**
  - (g) **The Director of Finance be authorised to determine the charges for permits relating to Reading Borough Council vehicles or staff;**
- (3) **That the permit scheme rules and definitions be updated as per the above agreed amendments.**

## **12. EMISSIONS BASED CHARGING**

The Sub-Committee considered a report that sought to modernise pay and display parking and introduce emissions-based charging for parking and residents permits across the Borough in support of wider policy objectives around air quality, health and climate. The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1	Tariff structure including emissions charges
Appendix 2	On street permits charging structure
Appendix 3	Climate Impact Assessment
Appendix 4	Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 5	Green House Gas Emissions by Sector (UK 2021)
Appendix 6	Responses to Emissions-Based Charging consultation
Appendix 7	Direct emails to Parking Manager

The report explained that a report on changes to Parking Services had been submitted to Policy Committee on 20 January 2025 (Minute 52 refers) that set out proposals to introduce emissions-based charging for on and off-street parking, resident and all other parking permits across the Borough. The proposal to introduce Emissions-Based Charging (EBC) was expected to elicit strong opinions and, to gauge support, an informal consultation has been conducted in March 2025. Nearly 10,000 residential properties, as well as businesses and other permit holders affected had had the opportunity to respond of which 275 had done so. 64% of respondents had strongly agreed or agreed that they were concerned about the effects of air quality on the health of their children or family and a similar number (61.8%) had been concerned about the impact on their own health. In summary, a ratio of almost 2 to 1 had expressed concern about the impact of air quality on not only their health but, also on the health of their family. There had been strong opposition to linking EBC to permits, with 70% disagreeing and strongly disagreeing when asked if permit parking charges should be linked to CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> emission levels of the vehicle. There were also a high number of responses that suggested the proposals would impact negatively on lower income households. Positively, while 73% had said the proposals were unlikely to change their travel behaviour, a significant proportion (20%) had said it would, meaning that potentially this approach could result in a significant shift in modal choice and result in positive air quality impacts.

The report stated that with regard to Pay and Display Tariffs, the planned introduction of new machines that would record Vehicle Registration Mark (VRM), meant there was an opportunity to link to Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) data on tail pipe emissions. Data on vehicle type was already collected through the RingGo pay by phone system and the data enabled the Service to identify a vehicle fuel type. This information could be used to model a charging regime targeted at the most polluting vehicles with the primary objective being to encourage those with the most polluting vehicles to choose other modes of transport. RingGo data for Reading had shown that 88% of all vehicles using the parking app were either petrol or diesel and only a small percentage (6%) were Ultra Low Emission Vehicles. The proposal was that a percentage charge was added to on-street parking tariffs for the most polluting vehicles, based on the addition of 20% for petrol and 25% for diesel on a sliding scale of charging based on carbon dioxide emissions. Westminster and Lambeth Councils had both recently introduced emissions-based charging schemes; Westminster had levied 67% on diesels and a range of 15% to 100% on non-diesels. Lambeth had levied a 75% charge on diesel vehicles. The Council had started at a lower percentage uplift but, this would be subject to future review to continue encouraging and incentivising less polluting vehicles.

Recognising the tail pipe emission benefits of Electric Vehicles meant that they would not pay any additional tariff to encourage take up and reflect the delivery programme of the Council's EV Strategy, which would further support sustainable growth. As more data was gathered about the types of vehicles using the parking service, a review of tariffs would be carried out two years after the scheme had been introduced to address any imbalances within the system.

The report stated that it was proposed to introduce emissions-based charging in October 2025, following roll out of the new machines and completion of the necessary legal processes.

Finally, with regard to permits, the report stated that in 2024/25 the Council had issued 30,648 permits of all types. Post Covid, there had been a positive shift in the reduction of second vehicle permits issued to residents however, analysis of vehicle emissions had indicated a slow transition to lower emissions vehicles. Whilst affordability and availability were a clear factor in residents' choice to transition to ultra-low emissions vehicles, the impact on air quality,

particularly in densely packed town centre locations, was significant. It was therefore proposed to introduce an Emission Based Charging regime as set out in Appendix 2 attached to the report.

**Resolved –**

- (1) **That subject to statutory consultation, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services, be granted authority to introduce emissions-based charging for:**
  - (a) **On street pay and display;**
  - (b) **Resident parking permits and all other parking permits;**
- (2) **That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to make:**
  - (a) **The Traffic Regulation Order for the introduction of emissions-based charging for on street pay and display;**
  - (b) **The Traffic Regulation Order for the introduction of emissions-based charging for Resident parking permits and all other parking permits;**
- (3) **That should formal objections be received officers submit a report to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for consideration.**

#### **13. 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 the item 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.**

#### **14. APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY PARKING PERMITS**

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

**Resolved –**

- (1) **That, with regard to application 2, a temporary, 12-month, second discretionary resident permit be issued for permit zone 01R, personal to the applicant;**
- (2) **That, with regard to application 4, a first discretionary resident permit be issued, personal to the applicant and charged at the standard rate;**

**(3) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services' decision to refuse applications 1 and 3 be upheld.**

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

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and finished at 9.09 pm).

**Present:** Councillors Lanzoni (Chair), Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Cross, Eden, Ennis, Gittings, Griffith, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Keeping, McGrother, Nikulina, O'Connell, R Singh and White.

## 15. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 16. PREVIOUS DELEGATED DECISIONS

The Sub-Committee received the list of delegated decisions from previous meetings.

## 17. QUESTIONS

Questions on the following matters were submitted, and answered by the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport on behalf of the Chair:

Questioner	Subject
Richard Wong	Pavement Parking at the junction of Basingstoke Road and Surrey Road
Councillor White	Improving Road Safety in Reading

(The full text of the questions and replies were made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

## 6. PETITIONS

### (a) Petition Receipt and Response – Last Crumb Junction

The Sub-Committee received a report on the receipt of a petition that had been received requesting the installation of controlled pedestrian crossing facilities at the junction of Westfield Road, Peppard Road, Prospect Street and Henley Road, known locally as the "Last Crumb" Junction. The report also provided the officer response to the petition namely, that the existing entry on the regularly reported Requests for Traffic Management Measures would be updated to reflect receipt of the petition and to note that officers were seeking funding opportunities for increasing delivery opportunities for these requested schemes.

The report stated that on 2 September 2025 a petition had been submitted to the Council that had contained indications of support from 1855 individuals. The petition had been hosted online and had been created on 3 July 2025 and read as follows:

*"There is a total lack of facilities for Caversham pedestrians crossing from Westfield Road to walk up Peppard Road and visa versa. It is not hyperbolic to describe crossing here as utterly terrifying. The simple installation of a puffin crossing at this location would have limited impact upon traffic and yet improve pedestrian safety exponentially. It is not a case of, if an accident will happen here, but more, a case of when.*

*It should be noted that crossing here by pedestrians is a very frequent occurrence. Furthermore, many of these pedestrians are children. You have children going to and from: The Hill primary school, St Anne's RC primary school, Chiltern nursery, Caversham Preparatory school, Queen Anne's school and Highdown school. All these children are regularly forced to take their lives in their hands. Not only are school children forced to cross without adequate provision, parents who live on Peppard road who wish to take their children to the closest play area (Westfield road park), are also forced to gamble with their children's safety. It is ridiculous the council has spent money on refurbishing this play area only for the journey there to be so dangerous!*

*Furthermore, if you wish to visit Balmore Park from Westfield Road, again, those wishing to access green spaces are having to play Russian roulette with their safety.*

*As any parent I want to promote a healthy lifestyle to my child by walking to school - a wish that is aligned with the government's promotion of healthy living; and yet, I am faced with the irony of having to cross a dangerous junction in order to promote a healthy lifestyle! This is of course the same danger facing anyone who wishes to walk into Reading town centre from Peppard road (and use the specially designed pedestrian bridge over the river!).*

*It is of course also important to remember that this danger to pedestrians does not only have an impact upon individuals - it has an impact upon society as a whole. If we are to reduce obesity and the associated costs to the NHS, we need to embed a culture of walking from childhood - how can this be achieved by asking children to face unnecessary dangers on a daily basis? In addition, we all need to be taking steps towards living in a carbon neutral way - how can these steps be achieved if they are literally causing our children to step onto a dangerous road?*

*Furthermore, as any parent, I want to be teaching my child the importance of road safety and the green cross code. This is impossible to do at this junction; and thus, must be having a huge impact upon the understanding of road safety for a multitude of other children, young people and adults in the area. It is also worth noting that for drivers it can hardly be a pleasant experience having to dodge pedestrians on their car journeys.*

*There are of course the normal excuses like 'it would cost too much', but are we really saying life is not valuable enough? Or, of course, the old trope, that it would cause delays. To this I ask, what is really more important? Asking a driver to add, less than, two minutes to their journey or saving a child's life as they walk to school? Or the ludicrous line that drivers would be confused by the change! This would easily be addressed with signage to indicate a change. It really boils down to, are we going to address this matter now, before a death, or find the line "lessons need to be learnt" is being said when it is all too late!.*

*Finally, it should be noted the dangers faced by all pedestrians crossing junction are not only even greater for our children, but also for our elderly and disabled too. The most vulnerable are being put in the most danger! This is abhorrent!"*

The report explained that at the location all approaching roads had a 30mph restriction on them and were single lane approaches and exits, with the exception of Henley Road, which had an additional right-turn filter lane. The junction was the meeting point of two nationally classified 'A' roads, so experienced relatively high volumes of local and commuter traffic by a

number of transport modes. The junction also served a catchment for a variety of local journeys, including access to schools, shops, bus stops and businesses.

While the junction had traffic signal control, these did not operate a controlled pedestrian crossing phase and the equipment, while operational, was one of the Council's older installations. The nearest controlled crossing was a zebra crossing on Prospect Street, approximately 175m to the south west. In addition, the Peppard Road and Prospect Street approaches had relatively narrow footways that were additionally constrained behind and the eastern footway on Peppard Road started to raise significantly from the relative carriageway level.

The report stated that when a petition had been received to improve pedestrian crossing facilities at the Last Crumb Junction in November 2017 the Sub-Committee had agreed to add the changes to the Requests for Traffic Management Measures for consideration at its meeting on 11 January 2018 (Minutes 42(b) and 58 refer). A guide cost of over circa £500k has been estimated for the changes however, there were a great number of variables that could mean the cost would be much higher. The List also contained over 130 other entries for which there was local demand but, no identified funding. There were no set criteria which Councillors were required to apply when allocating funds but, typically a range of factors were considered such as the benefits of change, risks, displacement, costs and available resources.

The report explained that the Council was currently working on the budget setting process for 2026/27 and as part of the process was considering if more funding for these schemes could be provided outside of developer funding. At this stage confirmation as to whether or not this would result in a funding stream could not be given as there were many competing priorities and until such time as funding had been secured for the project no detailed investigation could start. The existing entry for this change would be updated to reflect the receipt of the petition.

At the invitation of the Chair the petition organiser, Heidi North, addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of the petitioners by giving a presentation.

At the invitation of the Chair Andrew Towse, Deputy Head Pastoral and DSL, Queen Anne's School, also addressed the Sub-Committee in support of the petition.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and the presentations and it was acknowledged that this was a dangerous junction for pedestrians which needed to be addressed. The Chair and Councillor Ennis both explained that a lot of work had taken place to try resolve the issue and that the safety of pedestrians was paramount. It was a complex crossing and time would need to be taken to get the solution right, with local residents and Ward Councillors involved in the process.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the officer response in sections 3.3 to 3.5 of the report be agreed;**
- (3) That no public enquiry be held into the proposals.**

**7. WOKINGHAM ROAD PEDESTRIAN CROSSING – PETITION RESPONSE**

Further to Minute 6(A) of the previous meeting, the Sub-Committee considered a report that provided officer recommendations in response to the petition that requested the Council to introduce a pedestrian crossing on Wokingham Road, near to the Hamilton Road bus stop.

The report explained that currently there was no allocated funding for the development and delivery of the pedestrian crossing. Officers acknowledged the concerns that had been raised and the requested changes appeared appropriate for the location, based on the high level review that had been carried out to date. The report therefore proposed that a new entry be made on the next update of the Requests for Traffic Management Measures report which was expected to be submitted to the next meeting on 26 November 2025. It was also suggested that the entry was for a proposed pedestrian crossing facility on Wokingham Road near the Hamilton Road bus stop, which would be investigated and consulted on when funding was allocated. Scheme development would only commence once funding had been identified, when it would be programmed around other scheme development priorities.

## **Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That a new entry onto the ‘Requests for Traffic Management Measures’ report to reflect the receipt of this petition and the requested measures 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.**

## **9. WAITING RESTRICTION REVIEW - 2024A RESULTS OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION**

The Sub-Committee received a report that sought approval for officers to carry out statutory consultation for recommended/alterations to waiting restrictions as part of the 2024B programme. These proposals aimed to address the issues that had been raised in the initial list of requests that had been submitted to the meeting on 11 September 2024 (Minute 17 refers) and agreed for investigation. The recommendations had been shared with Ward Councillors and an opportunity had been provided for their comment.

The report explained that officers also sought agreement to remove the fixed five minute observation periods that were currently being practiced for single yellow and double-yellow line enforcement. This was not a statutory requirement and it was expected that a consistent, discretionary approach would assist enforcement officers in appropriately addressing parking issues being experienced across the Borough.

The Recommendations for consultation (2024B Programme) were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The report also proposed the removal of fixed observation periods for single yellow and double yellow line restrictions. Removal of fixed observation periods and the creation of guidance for Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) to ensure consistently applied discretion would enable CEOs to minimise the abuse of single yellow line restrictions across the Borough. The change

could be brought in almost immediately, without the need for statutory consultation notifications. It would not be officers' intention to 'catch out' motorists who might have become accustomed to this observation period, so it was proposed that a two week period of warning notices would be issued from the implantation of the change, prior to penalty charge notices being applied. All other observation periods would remain the same.

With regard to the removal of fixed observation periods and the application of "consistently applied discretion" by CEOs, officers explained that the discretionary element was about being reasonable and the CEOs asking if a vehicle should be in that place at that time and whether an action was happening such as loading and unloading. This would be another means of tackling disruption and might be something that could stop more restrictions having to be put in place.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That no public inquiry be held into the proposals;**
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake a statutory consultation for the 2024B programme in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, for the proposals contained in Appendix 1, attached to the report, subject to the following amendments to the programme:**
  - Grove Road – Remove from the programme;**
  - Broomfield Road – Remove from the programme;**
  - Park Lane (between City Road and the Water Tower – Remove from the programme;**
  - Whitley Wood Lane – Remove from the programme;**
- (4) 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 2024B programme;**
- (5) That any objection(s) received during the statutory advertisement be submitted to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for an outcome decision;**
- (6) That the recommended changes to enforcement observation periods, as set out in Section 3.5 of the report be agreed.**

**8. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER RECTIFICATION – UPDATE**

Further to Minute 8 of the previous meeting, the Sub-Committee received a report that informed them that the statutory consultation that had been agreed at the previous meeting for rectifying TRO issues that had been discovered in the Town Centre Red Route order had been carried out. No objections had been received and therefore the TRO would be made. The report also highlighted an issue that had been discovered, and since rectified, with non-

compliant yellow line restrictions on Durham Close. The following appendices were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 Drawing to highlight the location of the London Street bus lane, referred to in Section 3.11 of the report;

Appendix 2 Drawing to highlight the locations of the town centre red route parking bays, referred to in Section 3.11 of the report.

The report explained that as part of the rectification scheme, officers had also been identifying areas where signing and lining relating to restrictions required improvement and had been actioning any required changes. In addition, part of the Action Plan that had been agreed by Council in October 2024, and monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee, had included a commitment to establish a process for raising and addressing any further issues that might be discovered with other TROs. While the Digital TRO Project was expected to mitigate the risks of TRO issues, there would be instances where issues were found with existing orders and that there should be a more ‘business as usual’ process for addressing these as they arose. Officers had discovered further issues for which enforcement had ceased as follows:

- London Street southbound bus lane (reported to the June 2025 meeting);
- Town Centre Red Route – Various ‘split-use’ bays;
- Durham Close – Double-yellow lines.

With regard to Durham Close, a section had been found to have double-yellow-lines in place that were not covered by a TRO. It was suspected that these long-standing markings were in place in an advisory capacity before the section of road had been adopted as Highway, but had remained in place. Enforcement had been ceased immediately and the lines had been removed, following discussion with Ward Councillors regarding their necessity.

The report stated that in respect of the Digital TRO Project, officers were awaiting the outcome of a recent Government consultation regarding the potential implementation of their new regulations. It was anticipated that this would be in early 2026. The incoming legislation continued to inform the delivery order/priority of the overall project. The software supplier who was providing the TRO management suite had been appointed and officers were now in the early stages of onboarding, process and delivery mapping. Development of the project was being monitored via the Council’s Customer Experience Board, with additional reporting to the Transformation and Efficiency Board, and progress was being reported to the Audit and Governance Committee as part of the wider Action Plan remit of that Committee. Further updates would be submitted to the meeting once dates of key initial project milestones had been agreed with the supplier.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That no public enquiry be held into the proposals.**

**13. 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 the item 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.**

**14. APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY PARKING PERMITS**

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

**Resolved –**

- (1) That, with regard to application 1, a first discretionary resident permit be issued, personal to the applicant and charged at the standard rate;**
- (2) That, with regard to application 2, a temporary, 12-month, first discretionary resident permit be issued, personal to the applicant and charged at the standard rate;**
- (3) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services' decision to refuse applications 3 and 4 be upheld.**

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

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and finished at 7.48 pm).

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# Agenda Item 4

## JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD 24 JUNE 2025 (10.00 - 11.55 am)

Present: Bracknell Forest Council  
Councillor Helen Purnell (Vice Chair)

Reading Borough Council  
Councillor Karen Rowland (Chair)  
Councillor Liz Terry

Wokingham Borough Council  
Councillor Martin Alder  
Councillor Katrin Harding

Apologies Councillor Mary Temperton

Officers Oliver Burt, re3 Project Director  
Monika Bulmer, re3 Marketing & Communications Officer  
Sarah Innes, re3 Performance Officer  
Steve McDonald, re3 Financial Officer  
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council  
Claire Pike, Bracknell Forest Council  
Pam Rowe-Jones, Wokingham Borough Council  
Richard Bisset, Wokingham Borough Council  
Chris Wheeler, Reading Borough Council

### 1. **Election of Chair**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Karen Rowland be elected Chair of the Board for the municipal year 2025/26.

### 2. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Helen Purnell be appointed Vice-Chair of the Board for the municipal year 2025/26.

### 3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. **Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 5. **Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

### 6. **Progress report**

Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer presented the Progress report and drew members' attention to the following key areas.

The implementation of the Controlled Waste Regulations had resulted in a free allowance for disposal of DIY waste per household. At the request of members, officers had looked into expanding the range of items which could be recycled at the sites for items which were not classified as DIY waste. Officers had investigated the charging structures across other authorities and proposed a single price point approach to ensure clarity for the public and staff at the sites. If agreed, the pricing structure for non-DIY waste would be implemented from the end of September 2026. It was clarified that the free allowance per household for DIY waste would still apply.

The Flex Collect trial and funding was due to finish in March 2026. Officers offered to present a report to the next Board meeting to set out the learning from the trial and preparations for any similar future service. Members were reminded that they would also be required to make a decision on the service provided to the existing cohort of households on the trial.

The wording on third party services was now on the re3 website, and the three councils may wish to add something similar to their own websites.

The WRAP trial was awaiting a final contract sign off and this would be shared with Assistant Directors of each Council for approval.

Monika Bulmer, re3 Marketing and Communications officer presented the communications elements of the progress report and drew members' attention to the following areas.

The National Civic Amenity Conference was due to be held in Reading on 10 July 2025, organised by a national organisation to focus on best practice in the sector. Re3 would act as the event's cohost, and would be providing site visits before and after the event. The Chair of the Joint Waste Disposal Board would be invited to give a welcome speech, and re3 had been offered a speaking slot to showcase the current reuse activity.

A bid for funding for a behavioural change communication campaign had been successful and would be used to target food waste communications in the autumn. Communication activities were being finalised, and all materials from the programme would be available to all partners to use.

The pop up shop on 15 June had been the most successful event so far with 360 items sold, and 2.2 tonnes worth of items diverted from waste. Another event was hoped to be organised in September in Wokingham, if the right location could be found for the off-site event.

In response to questions on all elements of the report, the following points were noted:

- Residents would be informed of the non-DIY waste charges by social media campaigns, signage on site, and messages through the booking system.
- Members noted that the non-DIY waste charges likely remained cheaper for residents than booking a skip.
- It was suggested that small items such as toilet seats and single towel rails should be specified in the charging schedule.
- It was noted that the DIY waste items could not be reused. The charges would only apply to construction and demolition waste, and not to freestanding items such as bookcases.

- The intention behind a single price point was to keep the approach simple for residents and staff, and all efforts would be taken to minimise impact on staff at the sites.

Having discussed the matter it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 Members note the contents of this report.
- 2 Members approve the expansion of the Recycling Centre 'DIY' charges, as described at 6.16, and instruct Officers to refine the proposed charging structure and implement this from September 2025.
- 3 Members request a final report on the FlexCollect trial be brought to the Joint Waste Disposal Board meeting in September, as described at 6.19.

## 7. **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 9, 10 and 11 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

## 8. **Strategy Report and Draft Waste Management Strategy**

Sarah Innes and Monika Bulmer presented the initial thoughts for the Waste Strategy and members discussed the proposals.

Having discussed the matter, it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 the contents of this report be noted
- 2 officers from each council be requested to work together to submit a final draft of the re3 Strategy to Members at the September Joint Waste Disposal Board meeting, as described at paragraphs 6.9 and 6.10
- 3 appropriate officers from each council be requested to outline and describe the process for public consultation of the re3 Strategy, as described at paragraph 6.11 (noting the potential requirement to extend the deadline for adoption)
- 4 Members agree to monitor the delivery of the adopted re3 Strategy at this Board and at the appropriate forum within each council, as described at 6.12

## 9. **re3 Contract Transition report**

Oliver Burt, re3 Project Director presented the re3 contract transition report.

Having discussed the matter, it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 the contents of this report be noted

- 2 a subsequent update report be submitted to the September 2025 meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board.

#### **10. Financial monitoring report**

Steve McDonald, re3 financial officer presented the financial monitoring report.

Having discussed the matter, it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 the Forecast financial position for the re3 partnership be noted as detailed at 6.1 to 5.10 of this report
- 2 the Passthrough Cost Reconciliation for FY24/25 be noted as detailed at 6.11

#### **11. Date of the Next Board Meeting**

18 September 2025, 10am (Reading Borough Council)

**CHAIRMAN**

**JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD**  
**18 SEPTEMBER 2025**  
**(10.00 - 11.56 am)**

Present: Councillor Karen Rowland, Reading Borough Council (Chair)  
Councillor Helen Purnell, Bracknell Forest Council (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Mary Temperton, Bracknell Forest Council  
Councillor Liz Terry (Reading Borough Council)  
Councillor Katrin Harding (Wokingham Borough Council)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Alder

In attendance: Oliver Burt, re3 Strategic Waste Manager and Project Director  
Monika Bulmer, re3 Marketing and Communications Officer  
Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer  
Steve McDonald, re3 Financial Officer  
Damian James, Bracknell Forest Council  
Claire Pike, Bracknell Forest Council  
Richard Bisset, Wokingham Borough Council  
Pam Rowe-Jones, Wokingham Borough Council  
Chris Wheeler, Reading Borough Council

**12. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**13. Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board**

The minutes of the Joint Waste Disposal Board held on 24 June 2025 were approved as a correct record.

**14. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

**15. re3 Progress Report**

Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer presented the re3 Progress report.

Members' attention was drawn to the proposals on DIY charging, to refine the structure of the scheme with the contractor. The proposal was to implement the new charging structure from 1 December 2025, and the government mandated free allowance would remain in effect. The scheme aimed to direct cost for large disposal of DIY waste to the household rather than council tax payers in general.

Members also noted the proposal to ban certain individuals who had behaved inappropriately at recycling centres from the centres in future. This followed two incidents, one of physical abuse, at one of the sites. Legal advice had been sought from Reading Borough Council's Legal team, and guidance on how to ban an individual from sites was awaited. Officers planned to bring a future report to the next meeting on other incidents where a ban might be considered.

In response to members' questions, the following points were noted:

- Members were keen to publicise the fact that DIY charging was on a cost recovery basis.
- Members welcomed the suggestion that households could deposit their four-weekly allowance of DIY waste in one go but recognised that work would be needed to enable this through the system.
- Members requested publicity to include meaningful and practical reference to volume, rather than referring to waste in litres. It was noted that this was in place on the website but could be further publicised.
- The list of chargeable DIY waste would be kept under review, but carpet and rugs were not included in other Council's chargeable DIY waste lists. re3 could seek its own legal advice on this and consider the matter further.
- The contractor was looking to add audio to the CCTV system in place, and the data protection implications of this were being explored.
- Members queried how residents who behaved violently at recycling sites could be banned from the sites, and it was understood that bans were implemented infrequently at Councils with this policy in place. Legal advice would be sought in the instance that a resident did not comply with a ban.

Having discussed the matter, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The contents of this report be noted
- 2 Officers be instructed to implement the proposed charging structure, as described at 6.10, from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025.
- 3 Officers be instructed to bring a report to the next meeting on options to ban users from the Recycling Centres in justifiable circumstances.
- 4 Temporary bans be agreed to be issued, upon receipt of legal advice, in cases of physical abuse, as described at 6.22.

## 16. **re3 Communications Report**

Monika Bulmer, re3 Communications and Marketing Officer presented the re3 Communications report.

The 're3wear' campaign had launched for the reuse of school uniforms in partnership with First Days charity and had been well received on social media. The campaign would run year-round.

The behavioural change communication campaign was on track to launch in Autumn 2025 with the aim to increase food waste recycling. Suppliers had been secured, and officers were looking to target all households in Reading and some targeted areas of Wokingham.

The new chatbot widget on the website was working well, and 7,700 chats had been opened since the launch in July 2025.

Officers were working to collate feedback on the DIY charges and provide clear information and guidance to residents using existing communication channels.

The National Civic Amenity Site conference had been held in Reading in July and had been a success. Re3 had co-hosted the event and conducted two tours of the recycling site at Smallmead.

The annual environment report had included a strong result in customer satisfaction and had focussed on the range of reuse schemes available to residents.

Monika also updated on plans for communication work during Recycling Week, following the WRAP campaign. Public tours of the MERF were scheduled and were fully booked. An online tour was planned to further engage with residents and all members were invited to attend online.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The chatbot was not intended to necessarily reduce customer contact to the re3 office, but to direct residents to the answers to their queries on the website where possible.
- Members commented that any communications work needed to be sensitive to the different approaches taken across three Councils.
- It was discussed that the communications assets, from the campaign, would be shared with Bracknell Forest (who decided against joining this specific campaign).
- Communications around glass kerbside recycling would take priority in Bracknell Forest over food waste recycling.
- Residents were not able to browse the recycled school uniforms at the recycling sites, and any donations would be sent to First Days for quality control.
- Bracknell Town Council had made contact following a successful Summer of Fun event at which Reread books had been given out to children, to arrange an ongoing collection point at their office.
- Officers planned to look into the analytics behind the chat bot once it had been operating for a number of months, to get further detail on the enquiries residents had.

Members noted the report.

## 17. **re3 Flexible Plastics Report**

Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer presented the re3 Flexible Plastics report.

The FlexCollect project had been seeking to understand the outcome of the trial, and the consortium's final report had been published with positive conclusions drawn. Members were reminded that funding for the FlexCollect trial across re3 council areas would conclude in March 2026, and officers proposed that flexible plastics in the areas covered by the trial be funded for a further year.

Officers also proposed to commission technical drawings of the MRF and changes required in order to expand the flexible plastics collection to a greater area.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The MRF was set up for the level of current engagement in flexible plastic collection trial and residents could not opt-in to the scheme at this time.
- FCC anticipated that a technical report on the necessary changes to expand the flexible plastics scheme would be available by the end of the year and would be shared with Board members as soon as possible.
- Members recognised the challenges and risks associated with the emissions trading scheme, with lots of uncertainties at the moment.
- It was noted that Wokingham residents were not part of the flexible plastics collection trial.

- Members reiterated the importance of a responsible waste stream for recyclables.
- Members requested further details around a contract to secure recycling capacity to maximise on the expertise gained through the trial.
- It was commented that the budget setting process across the three councils may not allow for the capital approval process ahead of the 1 April 2027 when the legislation was due to begin.

Having discussed the matter, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The contents of the report be noted
- 2 The continuation of the flexible plastic service to the trial area in 2026/27 as described at 6.20 be approved
- 3 The indicative costs associated with continued use of bags and comingled collection during a full roll-out from 2027/28 be noted, and the Contractor's costs of £21k for technical drawings of the MRF be approved so the table of costs can be finalised with capital costs, as described at 6.29.

**18. Joint Waste Disposal Board Reports, Information and Internal Governance Report**

Oliver Burt, re3 Project Director presented the report on Information and Internal Governance.

re3 officers were proposing to publish some public data sets including bottle bank maps, booking information and details on recycling contamination.

Oliver also explained the need for collaboration around report writing prior to being presented at the Board, to ensure that the three Councils could each fulfil their governance requirements whilst preventing delayed information reaching the Board meetings.

Members were also asked whether or not the agenda setting meetings could be held at the end of each Board meeting.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Members welcomed an open and transparent approach to data publication, with the caveat that data needed to be explained to be impactful and fully understood by residents.
- Members were mindful that not all Board reports would be as significant as others, and it was not anticipated that all Board reports would need to be taken through all internal committees before being presented at the Board.
- It was suggested that the minutes of Board meetings could go back to a relevant Committee in each Council to provide a feedback loop.
- Members were keen to keep the separate agenda setting meetings to allow for reflection following Board meetings.

Having discussed the matter it was **RESOLVED** that

- 1 The contents of this report be noted

- 2 The plan to publish key sources of information as described at 6.5 and 6.7 (and as illustrated at Appendix 1) be approved
- 3 The Assistant Directors at the respective councils be requested to liaise over a schedule for earlier reporting, seeking to establish mutually suitable conditions, for reporting and scrutiny across the partnership, as proposed at 6.15.

19. **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 10, 11 and 12 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.

20. **re3 Financial Management Report**

Steve McDonald, re3 Finance Officer presented the financial management report.

Having discussed the report, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The Forecast financial position for the re3 partnership be noted as detailed at 5.1 to 5.8 of this report
- 2 The proposed re3 FY26/27 Budget at 5.9 to 5.21 be noted

21. **re3 Strategy and Consultation Report**

Monika Bulmer, re3 communications and marketing officer presented the re3 strategy report.

Having discussed the report, it was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The contents of this report be noted
- 2 A final draft of the re3 strategy be endorsed, as described at 6.3 and 6.4.
- 3 The suggested consultation questions and consultation programme, as described at 6.12 to 6.16 have been reviewed and that members establish a Task and Finish Group comprising Members and relevant Officers to address and resolve any outstanding issues, including feedback proposed during the meeting.

22. **re3 Contract Transition Report**

Oliver Burt presented the re3 Contract Transition report.

Having discussed the matter, members **RESOLVED** that:

- 1 The contents of this report be noted.

- 2 The arrangements for allocating internal resources and the commissioning of Local Partnerships to support the partnership in planning and the preparation of business cases be approved.
- 3 The proposal for an agreed and coherent project vision to be developed, as described at 6.21 to 6.25, be approved.

**23. Date of the Next Board Meeting**

Board members agreed the following dates for meetings in 2026/27, at locations to be confirmed:

5 February 2026, 10am  
2 April 2026, 10am  
11 June 2026, 10am  
17 September 2026, 10am  
28 January 2027, 10am

**CHAIRMAN**

# MINUTES: RCCP Board Meeting

24 April 2025

**Attendees:** Ben Burfoot, Heather Marshall (Chair), Gudrun Freese, Rachel Spencer, Tracey Rawling Church, Dylan Parkes, Tricia Marcouse, Nick West-Oram, John Ennis, Chris Maddocks

**Apologies:** Paul Ducker; Mike Wadelove

## 1. Council Structure & Staffing update

- Ben Burfoot shared that Emma Gee has been confirmed as Executive Director. Ben now reports to Sam Rackham (interim assistant director).
- Council restructuring may affect the climate team's influence.
- Heather requested a Council structure overview for the next meeting. **Action:** Ben to prepare and share an organisational chart of the Council relevant to RCCP for next board meeting
- GF is starting a freelance project in June so will remain working only 1.5 days a week for RCCP. GF will claim some overtime for extra days worked around the Festival and stakeholder engagement.
- Nick West-Oram announced he is leaving his role at GBA and moving to Surrey FA.

**Action:** NWO/GBA to nominate a replacement RCCP representative before next Board Meeting.

## 2. Climate Action Fund (CAF) Lottery Bid

### Overview:

- Gudrun presented an outline bid focused on building RCCP into a staffed, central resource that convenes and supports delivery partnerships and campaigns for the new Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 – 2030 + delivers several ongoing projects too, including Reading Climate Festival, the ReadingCAN website, newsletter and socials and Climate Innovation Challenge competitions.
- Heather presented a separate outline bid for a local grassroots sports-focused bid.

### Outcomes:

- Two separate bids will proceed; if possible the sum requested by both bids together will not exceed 1.5M.
- Rachel reminded that the bids must clearly connect to community action.

**Actions:**

- Heather Marshall to discuss next steps with RBC / Ben Burfoot for the sports bid, wrt bid submission
- Heather Marshall and Nick West-Oram (or his successor) to discuss grassroots football delivery concept.
- Gudrun Freese to pick up RCCP bid development again after Reading Climate Festival, and touch base with Lisa Hill (West Berkshire bid)
- Gudrun Freese to liaise with relevant University of Reading staff to agree their role in the bid
- Gudrun Freese to contact bid beneficiaries and manage their participation
- Gudrun Freese to circulate a second draft of the bid, aiming for submission in September (dependent on Uni of R availability)

### **3. Climate Emergency Strategy Update**

- Tracey Rawling Church provided an update on the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

**Key Dates:**

- Second draft deadline: 9 May
- Board feedback due: 2 May
- Launch of draft version: 7 June (to coincide with Reading Climate Festival)

**Actions:**

- All theme leads to:
  - Review and submit feedback on strategy and action plan by 2 May
  - Ensure delivery actions have identified partners
  - Attend and present at the 10 June strategy launch event
- Tracey to collate feedback and finalise second draft – Due: 9 May
- Ben Burfoot to provide updated net-zero pathway graphics and narrative for the strategy – Due: 9 May

### **5. Climate Festival (7–21 June)**

**Core Events:**

- Strategy Launch (10 June)
- SME event (17 June) – led by Tracey
- Climate actions for local residents – led by Gudrun, with co-operation from Uni of Reading
- School engagement and Climate Ambassadors – led by Dylan
- Nature events – coordinated by Tricia
- Public lecture (11 June) – organised by Dylan

**Actions:**

- All organisers to finalise event details and share for listing by mid-May
- Tracy to confirm theme lead speakers for 10 June launch event
- Dylan to confirm school programme and support for ambassador engagement

## 6. RCCP Governance & Structure

- Governance review ongoing; outcome of Lottery bid will influence future structure and roles.

## 7. AOB

- Discussed subtle shift in net-zero target narrative from 2030 to 2040, based on CCC's 7th carbon budget.
- Agreed that public messaging must manage expectations and highlight continued ambition and co-benefits of local action.

## Summary of Key Actions

Action	Responsible	Due Date
Share Council structure diagram	Ben Burfoot	Next meeting
Nominate new GBA rep	GBA (via Nick)	Before next meeting
Develop and submit sports-focused Lottery bid	Heather Marshall	ASAP
Develop and submit RCCP Lottery bid	Gudrun	ASAP
Submit second draft of strategy	Tracey Rawling Church	9 May
Provide net-zero pathway graphics	Ben Burfoot	9 May
Finalise Festival events	All organisers	Mid-May
Confirm school events	Dylan Parkes	Mid-May

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# READING CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIP

## Board Meeting MINUTES

Thursday 17 July 2025

MS TEAMS Meeting, 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

Chair: Dylan Parkes

*Apologies:* Tracey Rawling Church; John Ennis; Ryan Gordon (replacing Nick West Oram for Get Berkshire Active)

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### 1. Welcome and apologies

- Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies

### 2. Minutes of previous meeting / Actions review

- Previous minutes approved
- Outstanding actions reviewed

### 3. People changes

- Council update: new Assistant Director structure is under review; climate remit may shift but will remain high profile
- Paul stepping down as Resource Team Lead
- Trish confirmed she will step down after the current strategy is complete
- **Action: GF to propose changes to theme lead role and responsibilities to support recruitment of new nature, resources and food roles**
- Paul Ducker proposed as potential ongoing Board member due to his current role in education/skills
- **Action: Dylan to discuss with Paul.**
- Board thanks Paul Ducker for his impactful, enthusiastic and caring contribution.

### 4. Climate Action Fund Lottery Bid(s)

#### 4.1 Place-based grassroots sports bid (Heather Marshall)

- Scope broadened from football to grassroots sports
- Bid (£700k/5 years) includes part-time roles, delivery of carbon literacy training and small-scale infrastructure investments
- Get Berkshire Active has been invited to submit the bid and host the roles; RBC and others also have proposed roles in the bid
- Bid is near final draft; it will be recirculated once roles are confirmed with partner
- **Action: Heather to share draft with Dylan and Board members when bid partners have signed off**

#### 4.2 RCCP bid (Gudrun Freese)

- Parallel bid progressing, linked to enabling delivery of the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 – 2030, combining some enabling / backbone support for climate action in Reading and some direct delivery, e.g. RCCP-led campaigns, Reading Climate Festival, updates to action plans, etc.
- Likely to be close to £1.5M limit
- Several different local groups are working on a “Net Zero Transition Hub” concept; bid would seek to merge these and raise funds for this, with support from Uni of Reading
- University of Reading is interested in exploring possibility of submitting the bid and/or hosting or co-hosting relevant roles
- Proposed funded roles: Comms & Engagement Lead, Innovation & Facilitation Lead, Head of Climate Strategy & Impact; Reading Climate Pledge for Organisations Lead

- There would also be more support for Theme Leads and volunteers, a budget for digital marketing to improve reach; budget to cover costs associated with Reading Climate Festival, targeted campaigns, innovation challenges; other
- Delivery partners named in the new climate emergency strategy would also receive financial support and central comms, engagement, facilitation and impact assessment support through this bid
- Bid deadline officially Dec 2025, aim to submit in Oct
- Debate over whether roles should be hosted by Council or University. Consensus: explore mixed model.
- **Action: Gudrun to continue designing and drafting the bid proposal and get input from Uni of Reading and others**
- **Action: Dylan to explore addition of academic Board member**

## 5. Climate Strategy Update

- Draft 3 of strategy circulated; stakeholder consultation open until 21 July (likely extended to 27 July)
- 27 responses to date; some negative feedback linked to wider Council consultations (e.g. parking permits)
- Key feedback themes: language on “behaviour change,” integration with heritage buildings, general support for water, waste, nature themes
- Easy-read, public-facing version of strategy to follow final draft, incorporating Reading Climate Pledge for Individuals / Organisations

**Actions:**

- Tracy to incorporate consultation feedback and prepare final draft by late August
- Ben/Gudrun to provide Board with materials for promoting consultation across networks
- Board members to complete and share consultation survey where possible

## 6. Reading Climate Festival 2025 & 2026 Planning

- 2025 Festival delivered successfully despite low resource (~1,000 attendees, 400+ new mailing list signups)
- Thanks recorded to Tracey and Gudrun for leading delivery
- Issues with “What’s On Reading” listings; need early engagement for 2026
- Arts & Culture team expected to re-join Steering Group for 2026

**Actions:**

- Dylan/Gudrun to reconvene expanded Steering Group early autumn
- Tracy/Gudrun to liaise with Council Culture Team re 2026 planning and What’s On Reading integration

## 7. Theme Updates

- **Water (Heather Marshall):** Strong partnership session with RBC & Thames Water; agreed actions include CPD training, smarter business audits, pre-planning alignment, joint approaches on SUDs
  - **Action: Heather to coordinate Thames Water CPD/training session with RBC**
  - **Action: Heather to liaise with RBC Properties (via Ben) and Connect Reading on smarter business audits**
- **Energy (Ben Burfoot):** Heat network project progressing with RBH involvement; NESO planning engagement underway

Committee	Directorate	Date of meeting	Minute number	Item title	Decision	Officer delegated to	Lead Councillor portfolio	Expected timescale for decision
SEPT Committee	DEGNS	26/06/25	6 (2)	Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging in Reading Tender Award	That the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Director of Finance, be authorised to enter into a 15-year contract with the successful bidder (with a possible 1-year extension) to deliver EV charging in Reading.	AD of Environmental & Commercial Services	Climate Strategy and Transport	An evaluation has been completed and a preferred bidder identified. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded by the end of 2025 with delivery of the scheme expected to commence in April 2026.

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## Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

Working better with you

19 November 2025

<b>Title</b>	Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Emma Gee, Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
<b>Report author</b>	Mark Worringham, Planning Policy Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
<b>Council priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 2) be approved for consultation.</li> <li>That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, prior to the start of consultation on the draft document.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Eldon Square Conservation Area was designated in 1972 under the Town & Country Planning Act 1971 (as amended), the first conservation area in Reading, and the most recent full conservation area appraisal was produced in 2007. Following discussions over the Council's approach to the historic environment, the Council agreed to support the setting up of a Reading Conservation Areas Advisory Committee (CAAC). One of the primary concerns of the CAAC was the length of time since many conservation area appraisals had been prepared and adopted. According to best practice appraisals should be updated every 5-10 years and many of these appraisals are now in need of review. It was subsequently agreed that the CAAC would lead on reviews of conservation area appraisals in consultation with local communities.
- 1.2 The Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal is the fourth review to be completed, following St Peters in 2018, Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road in 2020 and Christchurch in 2024. This report seeks approval of the draft review of the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal. Committee is asked to approve the draft appraisal for consultation commencing in November/December 2025.
- 1.3 Appendix 2 contains a copy of the draft appraisal and associated documents including maps showing the proposed boundary extensions. The results of the consultation will feed into a revised appraisal to be adopted in 2026.

### 2. Policy Context

- 2.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework impose a duty on local planning authorities to review

their existing conservation areas and designate as conservation areas any 'special areas of architectural or historic interest'.

2.2 Although not required by law, Historic England recommends that Conservation Area Appraisals are reviewed and updated regularly, every five to ten years. Conservation Area Appraisals are material considerations in the determination of relevant planning applications and are specifically referred to as a consideration in policy EN3 of the Local Plan. They can also form a key piece of evidence for the preparation of planning policy.

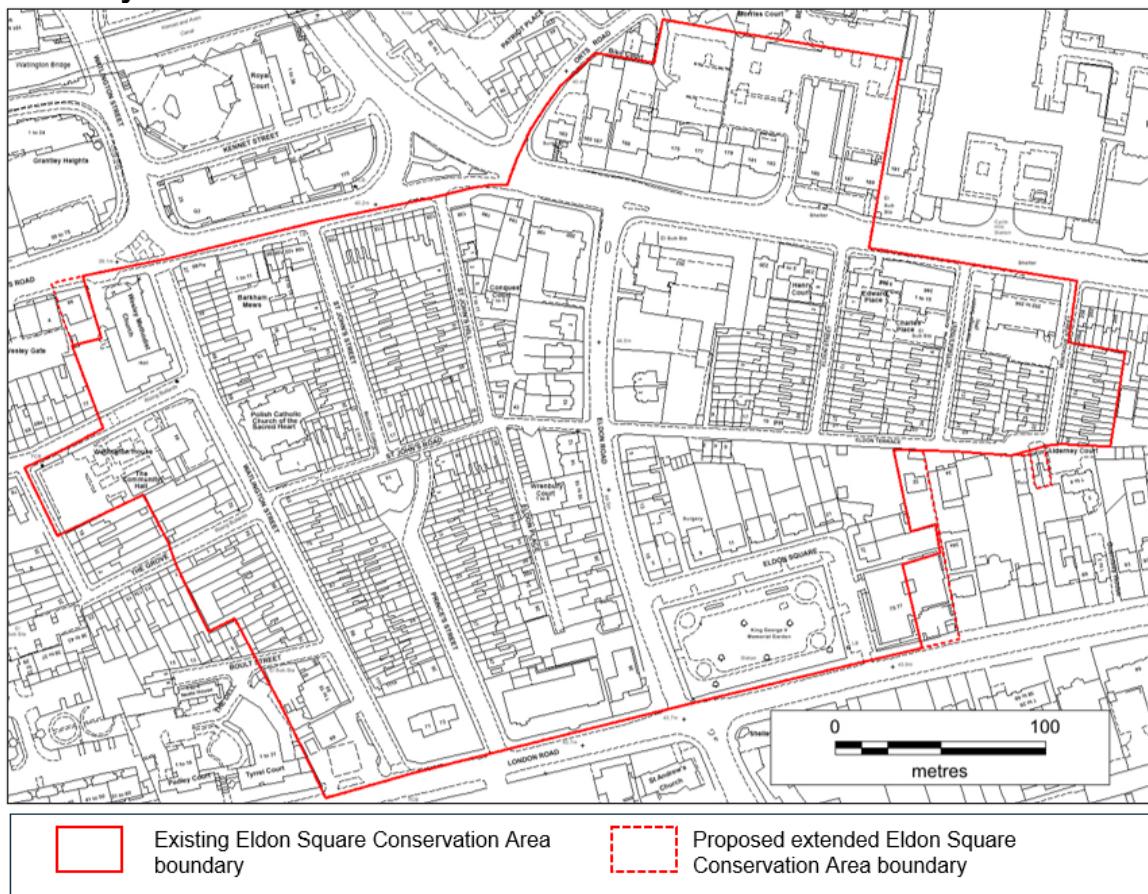
### 3. The Proposal

#### *Current position*

3.1 The Eldon Square Conservation Area was originally designated in 1972 and was Reading's first designated Conservation Area. The area was extended to include Watlington Street, Eldon Street, Victoria Street and Montague Street in 1982. The most recent appraisal was prepared in 2007. That appraisal recommended that 84 Queens Road be considered for inclusion in the Conservation Area, but no extension resulted from the appraisal.

3.2 The existing boundaries of the conservation area (along with the now proposed boundary extensions) are provided in the plan below.

**Figure 1: Existing and proposed extended Eldon Square Conservation Area boundary**



3.3 The review and the updated appraisal is the result of a community-led project carried out by the CAAC, with assistance from RBC planning officers and interested local community representatives. The review made use of an adaptation of the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, which was recommended by officers of Historic England. This provided a methodology for preparing assessments of the character of the landscape and built environment of the area, but the methodology has been adapted to local circumstances by the CAAC. The appraisal has been updated partly as a result of that assessment.

3.4 The review has resulted in various recommendations for boundary extensions, namely:

- The addition of 84 Queens Road, consisting of the vicarage for the Wesley Methodist Church, which is already in the Conservation Area. It forms part of the same site as the church and helps to mark the transition between the historic church and modern development further west along Queens Road.;
- The addition of 77 London Road as this comprises half of an office building with 75 London Road which is already in the Conservation Area;
- The addition of 32 Eldon Terrace to rationalise an eastern boundary with 75-77 London Road and the rear of 27 Eldon Square;
- The addition of 46 and 48 Eldon Terrace as this is a pair of attractive Victorian houses, once a terrace of three.

3.5 The updated appraisal identifies issues and vulnerabilities (page 11), including:

- Historic streetscape and local distinctiveness are under threat from the requirements of traffic management and public amenities;
- Loss of original architectural details;
- Poor appearance of George V Memorial Gardens.
- Ongoing decline in local amenities such as public houses;
- Street clutter;
- Traffic noise and pollution detract from the character and environmental quality of the main streets;
- Kings Road only has two crossing points and presents a barrier to and a negative environment for pedestrians to experience the oldest and grandest character area of the CA.

3.6 Recommended measures (within the Action Plan, section 8) include:

- Implement the boundary extension (as shown in Figure 1);
- Reduce number of buildings of townscape merit;
- An Article 4 direction to prevent loss of original features;
- Address issue of domestic bins in front gardens and obtrusive pipework on the front of buildings;
- Improve the blight caused by main roads and residential car parks;
- Address poor maintenance of George V Memorial Gardens; and
- Address signage, street clutter, and materials.

3.7 CAAC will manage the action plan but responsibility for some of these actions can only rest with RBC. Other actions can be undertaken by local volunteer organisations and community groups (e.g. CAAC) with limited support from council officers.

3.8 A consultation exercise on the review of the Conservation Area, carried out by the CAAC in March 2025, attracted 13 responses.

3.9 Committee is recommended to approve the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 2) for further consultation.

***Other options considered***

3.10 The two alternative options considered are;

- Not to progress the draft conservation area appraisal; and
- To undertake a lighter-touch review of the appraisal that does not result in an extension.

3.11 To not progress the appraisal at this stage would fail to capitalise on the good work done by volunteers of the CAAC, and would mean that the appraisal for the conservation area is somewhat out of date and is of less use for decision making on planning applications, as well as failing to take the opportunity to protect the character and interest of a wider area not currently falling within the conservation area.

3.12 The lighter touch review could pick up on some of the recent changes in the area but would not be able to include any substantive changes to the boundary, meaning that the significant heritage interest outside the conservation area boundary would have no recognition in planning documents, or statutory protection.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

4.1 The Eldon Square CAA, through identifying areas of particular heritage importance and their significance, will contribute to the following priority in the Council Plan 2025-2028:

- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint: The CAA will contribute to the objective to 'Further improve the physical environment of Reading by improving air quality, access to green space, and the quality of public spaces' by offering enhanced protections and identifying improvements to one of Reading's most historic and characterful areas.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1 There are a variety of ways in which the appraisal could have environmental and climate implications.

5.2 Bringing more buildings within the conservation area exercises greater control over demolition, which in turn makes it more likely that buildings will be reused rather than demolished and redeveloped, albeit that this will be a matter to consider site by site through the planning application process.

5.3 Extending the conservation area, and providing an updated appraisal, will give further protection to the trees within the area, which play an important role in terms of air quality and adapting to climate change.

5.4 The inclusion of new areas within the extended conservation area could have implications in terms of the ability of those premises to make physical alterations to improve their environmental performance without needing planning permission. In particular, there are greater restrictions on solar panels and equipment, wind turbines, air source heat pumps and flues associated with biomass heating or combined heat and power where they would face the highway or be closer to the highway than the existing building. This would need to be addressed on a site by site basis through the planning application process, taking account of policies in the Local Plan.

#### **6. Community Engagement**

6.1 The Council's consultation process for planning policy, as set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, adopted June 2025), is that the widest and most intensive community involvement should take place at the earliest possible stage, to allow the community a genuine chance to influence the document. Although the SCI deals mainly with development plan documents, the general principles are useful for documents such as a Conservation Area Appraisal. Community involvement exercises have been undertaken by the Conservation Area Advisory Committee as part of undertaking the review. Details of community involvement on the initial stages are set out in Appendix 1 of the appraisal document. These included a public consultation event on 24 March 2025, community walks, and an online questionnaire also available in hard copy at Central Library.

6.2 A formal consultation led by the Council will be undertaken on the Draft Conservation Area Appraisal. Responses received will be considered in preparing a final draft appraisal for adoption. The draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal consultation will be based around making the document available for comment.

## **7. Equality Implications**

7.1 It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief. An equality scoping assessment is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

8.1 There are none.

## **9. Legal Implications**

9.1 Areas within the Conservation Area, including the proposed extensions if agreed, will benefit from the controls set out within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The legislation would control the demolition of buildings as well as ensure a closer control over new development in the area.

9.2 The following would apply:

- a. In the exercise of planning powers the Secretary of State and planning authorities are under a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of the area;
- b. the demolition of buildings within the conservation area requires planning permission;
- c. "Permitted Development" rights are more restricted in Conservation Areas, and Article 4 Directions restricting "permitted development" rights in Conservation Areas do not (as is the case elsewhere) have to be referred to the Secretary of State for consent;
- d. more controls exist in relation to works to any trees, not necessarily just TPO trees;
- e. more exacting standards of advertisement control should be applied to advertisements in the Conservation Area, so long as the authorities are sensitive to the needs of businesses within the Conservation Area;
- f. development proposals within conservation areas should either make a positive contribution to the preservation of the character or appearance of the area, or leave the character or appearance unharmed.

9.3 Dave Anthony, Solicitor, has cleared these Legal Implications.

## **10. Financial Implications**

10.1 Existing budgets are sufficient for the publication of the final documents and to notify occupiers affected. The bulk of the work on the draft has been undertaken by CAAC members on a voluntary basis.

10.2 Consultation exercises can be resource intensive. However, the Council's consultation process is based mainly on electronic communication, which helps to minimise resource costs, and costs of the consultation exercise for the Conservation Area Appraisal will be minimal and met from existing budgets.

10.3 Some of the actions within the Action Plan fall to the Council to undertake. Some would be accommodated within existing budgets, albeit would be reliant on officer time, such as progressing an Article 4 direction. Where additional resources may be required, e.g. on maintenance of the gardens, the action plan identifies alternatives including support of voluntary groups.

10.4 Stuart Donnelly, Financial Planning & Strategy Manager, has cleared these Financial Implications.

## **10 Timetable for Implementation**

11.1 The expectation is that, subject to the results of consultation on the draft, a report will be submitted to a future meeting and a final version of the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal will be adopted in March 2026.

## **11 Background Papers**

12.1 There are none.

## **Appendices**

1. Equality Impact Assessment
2. Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal

## Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

### Provide basic details

**Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:**

Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal

**Directorate:** DEGNS – Directorate of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

**Service:** Planning, Transport and Public Protection

**Name:** Mark Worringham

**Job Title:** Planning Policy Manager

**Date of assessment:** 28/08/2025

### Scope your proposal

**What is the aim of your policy or new service?**

To update the existing Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal

**Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

The Council will benefit from having an up to date appraisal for use as a material consideration in planning decisions. Stakeholders, including members of the public and the development industry, will benefit from more certainty.

**What outcomes will the change achieve and for whom?**

Adoption of an updated appraisal and boundary extension will contribute to the protection and management of heritage assets.

**Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

Developers/landowners, the public and community groups. All parties want an updated appraisal so as to best protect and enhance the historic environment in the area.

### Assess whether an EIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; promoting equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? (Think about your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc)

Yes  No

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Think about your complaints, consultation, feedback.

Yes  No

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required because the limited boundary extensions and proposed actions set out in the Appraisal would not be likely to have differential effects on racial groups, gender/transgender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief.

Signed (completing officer)	Mark Worringham	Date: 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2025
Signed (Lead Officer)	Mark Worringham	Date: 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2025

# Eldon Square Conservation Area

## Draft Conservation Area Appraisal

*A community-led Conservation Area Appraisal*

*Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee on behalf of Reading Borough Council*



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# Eldon Square Conservation Area

## Draft Conservation Area Appraisal

*A community-led Conservation Area Appraisal*

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee  
on behalf of Reading Borough Council

*Note: This version was drafted before the former Eldon Arms re-opened as the Sip n' Spin  
Cafe & Bar.*

## Foreword by Councillor Micky Leng

[To be added]

Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets



## Initial Statement

Reading has fifteen Conservation Areas. Each Conservation Area (CA) has an individual Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA).

Historic England (HE) recommends that appraisals should be undertaken for each Conservation Area and that these should be reviewed every five years to ensure that they reflect the up-to-date situation and are continuing to do the job they are designed for – to protect ‘the character or appearance of an area which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) is an independent community led body set up in 2016 to advise Reading Borough Council when reviewing Conservation Area Appraisals or policies for the preservation and enhancement of CAs, heritage sites or other features of historic importance.

The Eldon Square Conservation Area was formally designated in 1972, following a period of public consultation. In 1982 it was extended to include Watlington Street to the west and Eldon Street, Victoria Street and Montague Street to the east. It was last appraised by the Council’s external consultants, The Conservation Studio of Cirencester, in 2007. Their report was formally adopted by the Council at that time and, where the report’s findings and recommendations have been found to remain relevant today they have been carried forward in this Appraisal.

This community led Conservation Appraisal has been prepared by Reading CAAC, using an adaptation of the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, an approach to carrying out appraisals recommended by HE.

The Appraisal is preceded by a one page summary of the CA. The first part of the appraisal comprises a Statement of Special Interest, which summarises the key qualities and features which give the area its character and which justify the special protection afforded by a conservation area. This is followed by a more detailed analysis of each of the key elements and areas.

A number of changes have been made to the appraisal and the format of the document since the 2007 review:

- The content of the document is in line with current HE guidance;
- We have placed an increased emphasis on trees and green space in this appraisal because of our heightened awareness of their importance in an urban area such as the Eldon Square CA;
- We have placed more emphasis on documenting historic shopfronts as their importance to the streetscape is increasingly valued in the town;
- An action plan has been included to set out recommendations for the future management of the area to maintain its special character;
- National and local planning legislation, frameworks and policies have not been listed in detail but are summarised in para 1.1;
- Photographic appendices have been included listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit, views, trees and green spaces and shopfronts;

- Details of the consultation process are included in Appendix 1;
- A full description of the archaeology and history of development of the area is included in Appendix 2 with a summary in para 3.

Within the body of the document, where there have been significant changes for better or worse to the area since the last review e.g. property renovation or neglect, these have been mentioned.

The approach to Buildings of Townscape Merit (BTM) in the CA has been reviewed and brought into line with that in other CAs. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of BTMs and the reasoning is set out in full in para 5.3.2.

The existing boundaries of the CA have been reviewed and all of the areas currently included merit retention. Kings Road, the core of the original 1972 conservation area designation, is challenged by the A329 and some of the more recent developments on the south side but it is important to remember that the 1830 road layout that enabled development in the area is a key part of the special and defining character of the CA.

An extension is proposed to include:

- The vicarage at 84 Queens Road which was recommended for consideration at the 2007 review. The building dates from c1900 and was built as The Manse to the Wesley Methodist Church and is part of the same site. The architects were Morris and Son. It is a two storey brick building with bands of contrasting white brick, Welsh slate roof, brick stacks with clay pots. The east door (facing the Wesley Methodist Church) is recessed within a porch with a pointed arch and a faintly ecclesiastical appearance. It helps to mark the transition between the historic church and modern development further west along Queens Road.
- 77 London Road, which together with 75 London Road, already in the CA, now forms one office building and a boundary line should not be drawn through the middle.
- 32 Eldon Terrace should be included to rationalise an eastern boundary with 75-77 London Road and the rear of 27 Eldon Square.
- 46 & 48 Eldon Terrace, a pair of attractive Victorian houses, once a terrace of three.

The inclusion of all properties along the south side of Eldon Terrace was considered. With the exception of nos 32, 46 & 48 this was rejected for two reasons. First, London Road east of Eldon Square has many fine, dramatic examples of Victorian architecture which as with the houses of Eldon Square have past or present access to Eldon Terrace. Although it might be advantageous to include the south side of Eldon Terrace for completeness, including the property on London Road would require a new character area. Second, other properties on the north side of London Road plots, 34 Eldon Terrace and Alderney Court, are modern and in themselves are not worthy of inclusion. 79 London Road which has a boundary with No 34 is protected by being listed. The permeability of the London Road and also Eldon Square to Eldon Terrace boundary is an ongoing development issue.

The inclusion of Reading College was considered but again it could not be justified without undermining the integrity of the CA. Views out of the CA to the college are important.

Along Kings Road to Fatherson Road there is a terrace of properties the final three of which, Victoria Place, are particularly fine examples of Victorian gothic. There is another similar property on Fatherson Road. We recommend that consideration is given as to how best to protect the heritage of the area between the CA and Fatherson Road including London Road properties, only three of which are listed, 79 and 95 & 97. This is outside the scope of this appraisal review.

The Grove and Boult Street were considered for inclusion and have many merits but could not be justified at this time without a full consideration of the potential of further extension to South Street.

We are grateful to Berkshire Archaeology, Reading Borough Libraries, Reading Museum and Royal Berkshire Archives for their assistance with producing this revised appraisal and permission to reproduce images and maps as noted in the text.

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## Statement of Special Interest

### SS1 Introduction and Summary

This section summarises those elements which create the area's character and justify its designation as a Conservation Area (CA) to assist key decisions on its development and enhancement. Later sections of this appraisal provide fuller details. The key characteristics are:

- Eldon Square, a mid-nineteenth century planned formal town square comprising an enclosed garden surrounded on three sides by Bath stone detached and semi-detached buildings;
- Eldon Road, at its southern end part of the formal arrangement of Eldon Square, notable for a row of mid-nineteenth century dwellings on its west side;
- The former residents' garden at Eldon Square, now known as King George V Memorial Gardens, enclosed by grade II listed railings and containing mature trees and other greenery and a large statue of the first Marquess of Reading;
- Nos 163 to 189 (odd) Kings Road, a long row of prestigious Bath stone former early-nineteenth century residences with good quality Classical and Italianate detailing;
- A cohesive development of mid-nineteenth century mainly terraced houses occupied by artisans, local tradesmen and especially later in the century, workers at the nearby Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory, the largest employer in nineteenth century Reading;
- The prevalent use of Bath stone and local brick;
- The architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, include two grade II\* listed buildings or groups of buildings (Watlington House and 173-183 (odd) Kings Road);
- Two listed churches in unusually close proximity (Wesley Methodist Church and the Sacred Heart Church (built as the Church of St John the Evangelist)) the spires of which are a local landmark;
- Re-use of former light industrial and commercial enterprises adds depth to the understanding of the historic development of the area;
- Distinctive local details such as cast iron street name signs, ghost signs and old lamp posts;
- Lengths of historic stone kerbs and gulleys and remnants of old railings;
- Protected trees and groups of trees and public and private green space;
- There are 30 listed buildings or groups of buildings in the CA and 26 buildings or groups of buildings of townscape merit;
- The CA has three character areas distinguished by age, architectural style and building materials:
- Character area 1 is the central area of 1830s onwards development including Eldon Square, Eldon Road and Kings Road;

- Character area 2 includes terraced streets west of Eldon Road i.e. Watlington Street, St Johns Street, St Johns Road, St Johns Hill, Princes Street, Eldon Place and Queens Road (south);
- Character area 3 includes later nineteenth century terraces to the west of Eldon Road i.e. Eldon Terrace, Eldon Street, Victoria Street, Montague Street, Town Place.

## SS2 Significance and Key Positive Features

Historically, the conservation area was developed as a residential area with small scale industrial activity and workshops. Facilities to serve the community included churches and a Sunday school, public houses, shops and bakeries.

Today, the area is still predominantly residential but some of the larger houses are now in multiple occupation or flats or converted into doctors surgeries (e.g. no. 9 Eldon Square) or offices (e.g. nos 173-183 Kings Road). A few shops remain, notably three convenience stores and an upholstery workshop. There is a modern petrol station with small supermarket at the south west corner of Watlington Street which was built on the site of a former stonemason's yard.

Within the conservation area there are two active places of worship (Wesley Methodist Church and the Polish Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart) and two public houses (The Lyndhurst and The Retreat). Purpose-built late twentieth century office blocks, Hanover and Berkshire House, in Kings Road have now been converted to residential.

The terraced streets of the CA are enclosed and protected from noise and disturbance by traffic. Vehicular access beyond the main roads are discouraged by means of artificially created cul-de-sacs and blockages that prevent 'rat-runs'.

Focal corner locations occupied or previously occupied by shops, public houses, bakeries or light industrial uses are identifiable within the area e.g. St Johns Street which had a public house at the north east corner (now a convenience store), a bakery at the north west corner with a (vacant) retail unit and ghost sign, a public house at the south west corner and a beerhouse/grocers at the south east corner.

The area is typified in the title of F C Padley's 1973 history of the area 'A Village in the Town, Reading's first conservation area'. The special character of the CA includes the social and community life of 'The Village'.



*Figure 1: The Kennet Morris performing in St Johns Street in front of The Retreat public house in summer 2023 (image Evelyn Williams)*

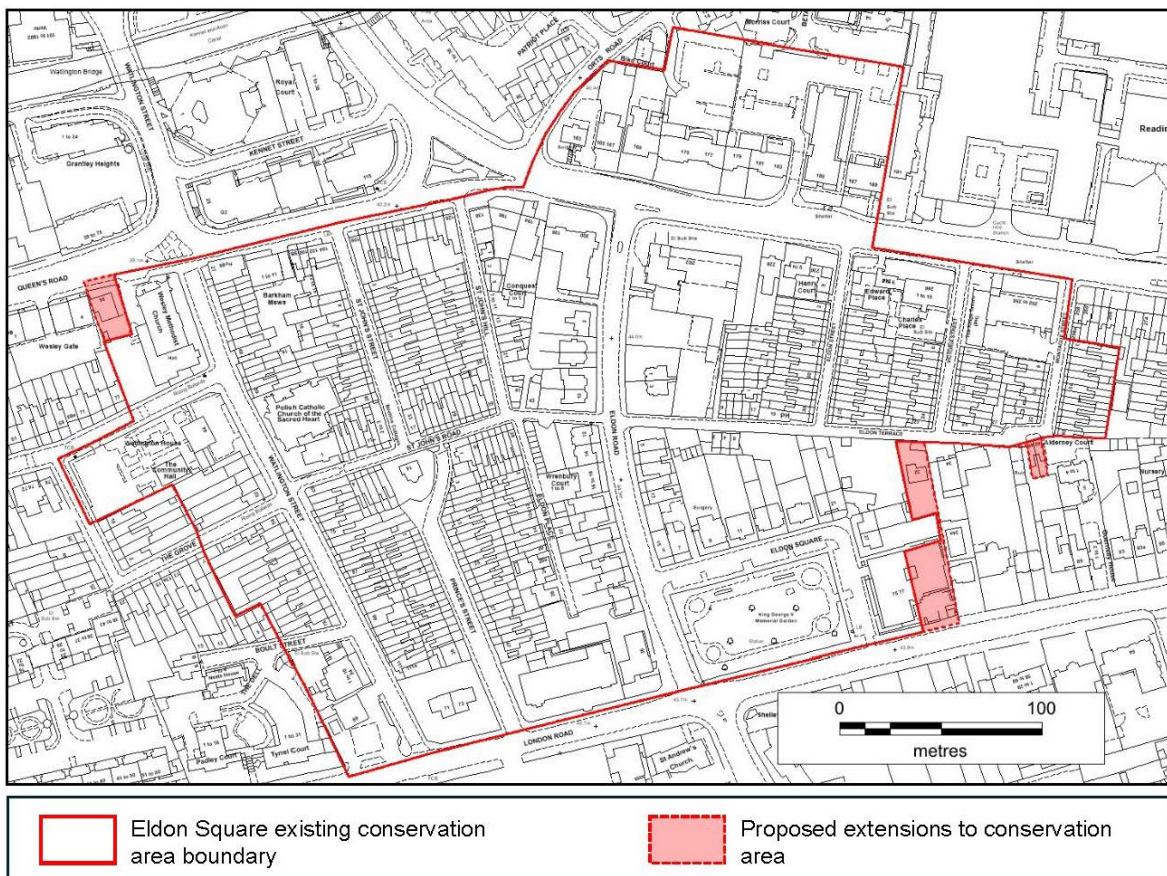
### **SS3 Issues and vulnerabilities**

- Historic streetscape and local distinctiveness are under threat from the requirements of traffic management and public amenities;
- Loss of original architectural details;
- Poor appearance of George V Memorial Gardens.
- Ongoing decline in local amenities such as public houses;
- Street clutter;
- Traffic noise and pollution detract from the character and environmental quality of the main streets;
- Kings Road only has two crossing points and presents a barrier to and a negative environment for pedestrians to experience the oldest and grandest character area of the CA.

### **SS4 Recommended measures**

In order to address the issues and vulnerabilities set out above, Section 8, The Conservation Area Action Plan, sets out in tabular form a series of measures with timescales which should be undertaken to ameliorate these issues.

## SS5 The 2024 Boundary and Character Area Adjustments



**Figure 2: Proposed Conservation Area Boundary (inclusive of proposed area extensions)**

The boundary extensions proposed are minimal and rectify anomalies in the 1982 boundary. Over and above the incorporation of additional properties, no adjustment to character areas are required.

### Character area 1

- The inclusion of 77 London Road is required to include the whole premises of 75-77 London Road as a boundary through the middle of a building is not practical.



*Figure 3: 75-77 London Road (image Evelyn Williams)*

### **Character area 2**

- The vicarage attached to the Wesley Church was recommended for inclusion in 2007 but this was not followed through. The property dates from c1900 and was built as The Manse to the Wesley Methodist Church and is part of the same site. The architects were Morris and Son. It is a two storey brick building with bands of contrasting white brick, Welsh slate roof, brick stacks with clay pots. The east door (facing the Wesley Methodist Church) is recessed within a porch with a pointed arch and a faintly ecclesiastical appearance. It helps to mark the transition between the historic church and modern development further west along Queen's Road, beyond the CA before reaching Grade II listed Queens Crescent.



*Figure 4: Vicarage of the Wesley Church (image Zoë Andrews)*

### **Character area 3**

- 32 Eldon Terrace is included to match the inclusion of 77 London Road which sit north and south respectively of the garden of 27 Eldon Square. The entrance from Eldon

Terrace is a distinctive historic feature of the street, abutting the flint and brick wall which extends west from here to the junction of Eldon Terrace and Victoria Street.



*Figure 5: 32 Eldon Terrace (image Evelyn Williams)*

- 46 and 48 Eldon Terrace, are two remaining properties of a terrace of three similar to those in the immediate area and are worthy of protection within the CA. They close the view south along Montague Street.



*Figure 6: Left 46 & 48 Eldon Terrace from Montague Street (image Zoë Andrews) right 46 & 48 Eldon Terrace (image Evelyn Williams)*

# Conservation Area Appraisal

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Policy context

The purpose of an Appraisal document is to ensure that the special interest justifying designation of the Conservation Area (CA) is clearly defined and analysed in a written statement of its character and appearance. This provides a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for development plan policies and development control decisions, and also forms the basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals.

This Appraisal (CAA) describes and defines the particular historical and architectural character and interest of the Eldon Square CA, highlighting those features of its character and appearance that should be preserved or enhanced and identifying negative features that detract from the area's character and appearance, and issues that may affect it in future.

The CAA has been produced within current national and local planning policy guidelines. The National Planning Policy Framework states that '*When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.*'

### Sustainable development

The government has outlined a presumption in favour of sustainable development with economic, social and environmental objectives. In relation to the environmental objective the NPPF states:

*'...to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'*

### New development in conservation areas

In relation to new development in conservation areas the NPPF states:

*'Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably'.*

In order to accurately make these judgements clear, evidence must be laid out detailing the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area.

### Local Plan

Reading adopted a new Local Plan in November 2019 which set out policies for the protection of Reading's historic environment including designated heritage assets such as conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets. A partial update to the plan commenced in 2023.

This Appraisal cannot hope to mention every building or feature within the CA that might be of value. Any omission should not be taken to imply that it is not of any interest or value to the character of the area.

## **1.2 Public consultation**

This appraisal is in a format recommended by Historic England. It has been prepared by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee. In this CA, there are many local residents to consult with and also local businesses. Consultation has been aimed at engaging with residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the area to help define what continues to be of special significance and worthy of protection and/or enhancement.

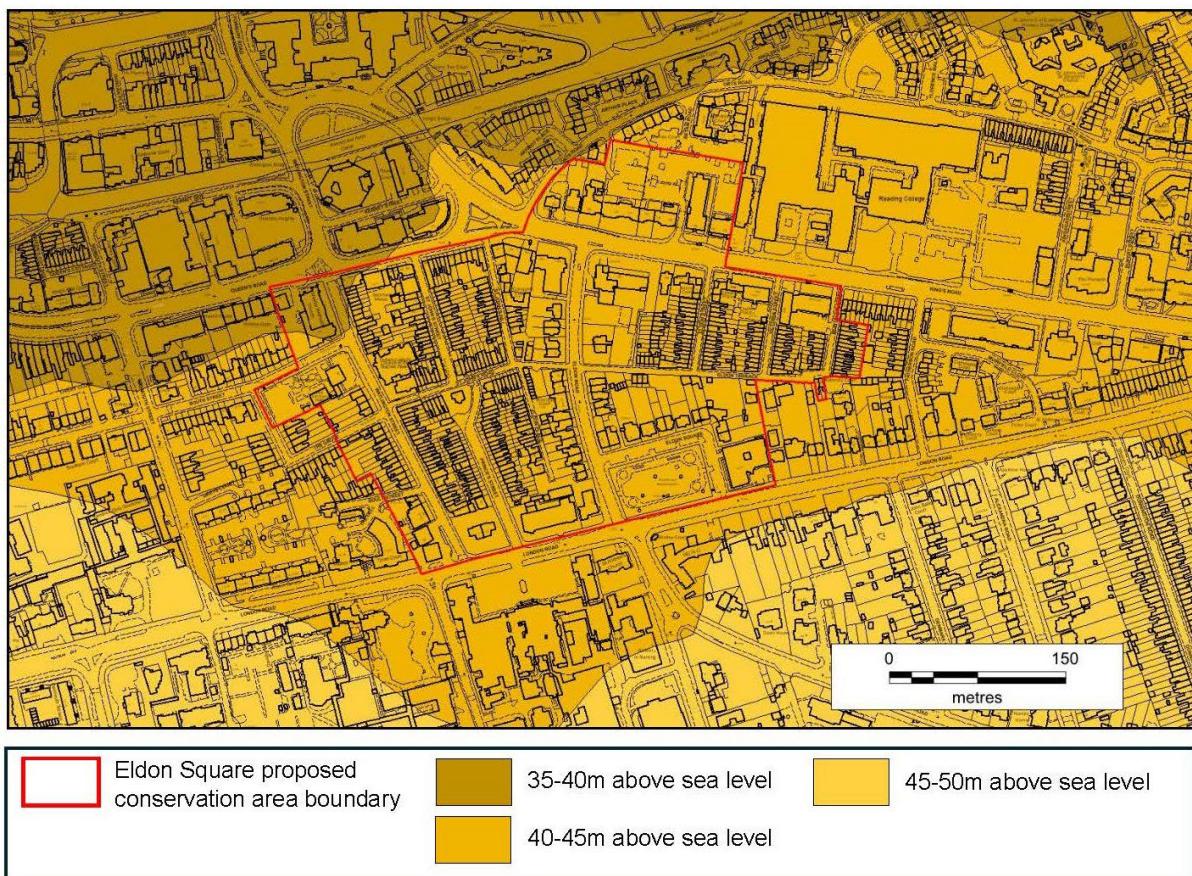
## **2. Landscape setting**

Eldon Square Conservation Area lies well within the east side of urban Reading just beyond the Inner Distribution Road (IDR). It is 1km from Reading's Saxon centre at the St Mary's Butts/ Gun Street crossroads, 0.8km from Reading's Medieval Market Place at the gates of Reading Abbey, under 1km from The Oracle in the town centre and 1km from Reading Station.

The CA includes parts of the north and south side of Kings Road but otherwise lies between London Road and Queens Road. These are three wide heavily trafficked east-west routes through Reading. Eldon Road, the north-south 'spine' of the conservation area is a major route linking Kings Road and London Road. Watlington Street was also once a thoroughfare between Kings Road and London Road but is now closed to traffic at its northern end. St Johns Street, where there is no parking, and Eldon Terrace form an east-west route from Watlington Street to Montague Street which is only available to pedestrians and cyclists in its entirety.

The row of grand early nineteenth century dwellings on the north side of Kings Road (nos 163 to 189 Kings Road) face south as do most of the properties on Eldon Square showing off the honey glow of Bath stone on a sunny day.

From Eldon Road there is a slight fall in the land westwards to Watlington Street. Throughout the area there is a general fall northwards to the River Kennet, hence the side-street named St Johns Hill.



*Figure 7: Landscape map of the conservation area.*

### 3. Brief History of the Area

The land sales by Reading Corporation and the Crown and the building of two new roads across the land in 1834, Kings Road (named after King William IV) and Queens Road (after Queen Adelaide) were the catalysts for the development of the Eldon Square district on what had previously been mainly agricultural land.

High class houses were built in Eldon Square and in Kings Road, out of Bath stone brought to Reading by the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Oval was at the centre of a planned development which was not completed, being overtaken by the need for smaller terraced houses.

Early occupants of the Bath stone houses were mainly of independent means and the residents of the terraced houses were tradesmen, artisans and labourers who worked either on their own account or were employed in Reading's development boom and local industries.

On the south side of London Road opposite the CA is the Royal Berkshire Hospital which opened in 1839, sited on land donated by Lord Sidmouth.

The church of St John the Evangelist on Watlington Street was built in 1872 and replaced the original 1837 church on the same site which could not accommodate the growing number of worshippers in the area. The foundation stone for the Wesley church on Queens Road was laid 1872 and the vicarage was built c1900.

The area changed in the second half of the twentieth century as Reading changed when Brewing (H & G Simonds/Courage), Biscuits (Huntley & Palmers) and Bulbs (Suttons Seeds), the industries of Reading's 3Bs moved out of the town centre.

Today the area has lost almost all the local businesses, public houses and shops and is mainly residential. However, former retail premises, public houses and light industrial properties are identifiable and are often situated at street corners. It has a strong community spirit and residents are proud of living there. Most properties are well maintained and some, but not all, have been improved with the re-instatement of previously lost heritage features.

A more detailed history can be found in Appendix 2.

## 4. Spatial Analysis

### 4.1 Key characteristics and plan form

The conservation area is in a wholly urban location and comprises a dense network of streets of detached and semi-detached buildings running north/south or east/west. It comprises all or parts of 14 streets, roads, places and terraces which range from pedestrian only pathways to major A roads.

The most distinctive element of the street pattern is Eldon Square where development commenced in 1834. The development of prestigious Bath stone houses surrounds three sides of a small rectangular, and now public, park enclosed by railings containing a lawn, trees and shrubs and a statue of Rufus Isaacs, first Marquess of Reading (1860-1935). Building height is mainly two or, less commonly, three-storey. Modern, late twentieth century office and residential blocks rise to as many as 5 storeys.

South facing nos 163 to 189 Kings Road are set well back from the road. These large Bath stone houses, elevated above semi-basements are, because of a slight bend in the road and its width, prominent in views along Queens Road and Kings Road. Nos 173-183 form a terrace of three pairs of similar properties linked at ground floor level. Northward views along Eldon Road and Eldon Street are enhanced by a glimpse of the stone facades of no. 169 and no. 187/189 respectively.

The most prominent landmarks in the conservation area and surrounding locality are the spires of the Wesley Methodist Church and the Church of St John the Evangelist, now the Polish Church of the Sacred Heart. The churches have a presence in Watlington Street and the two spires, only a few hundred metres apart, are a positive feature of the conservation area and further afield.

The Oval, no. 14 St Johns Road, is a detached mid-nineteenth century brick building. An 1834 map indicates that it was to be the focal point of a planned cruciform layout of streets which never came to pass. The Oval looks directly down St Johns Street to the point where Queens Road and Kings Road merge. Similarly, to the south, it is directly aligned with Princes Street and there is a fine, but off-centre, view of the façade of the Royal Berkshire Hospital, built in 1839 and Grade II\* listed (1156091). The central portion shares an architect, Henry Briant, and building material, Bath stone, with many of the grander residential properties of Kings Road, Eldon Road and Eldon Square. Trees in The Oval's rear garden soften the urban street scene in the view north along Princes Street.

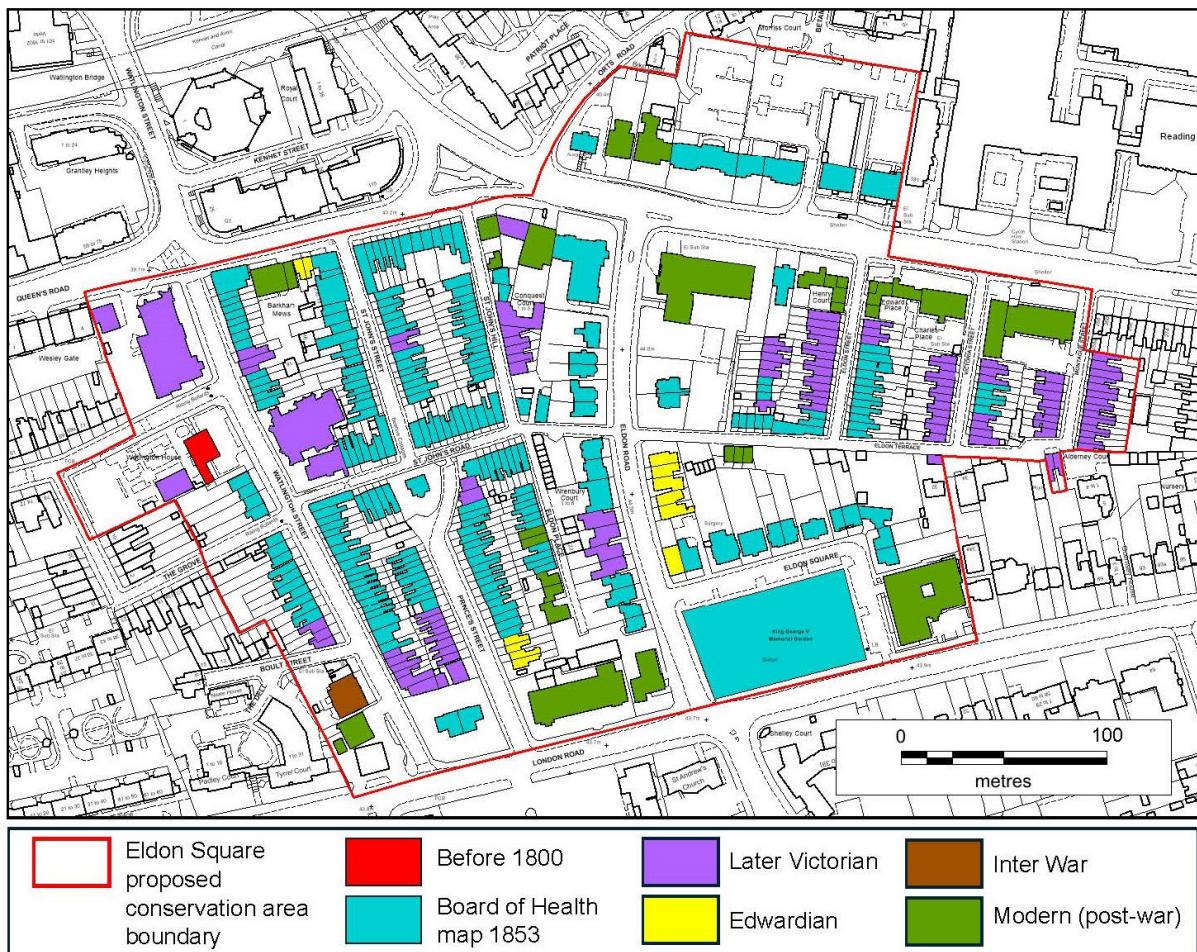
Corner sites along St Johns Road, Eldon Terrace, Queens Road, Kings Road and London Road were generally and sometimes still are, occupied by public houses, retail or industrial buildings. St Johns Street for example had at one time, the Beehive public house on the south-western corner, a beerhouse/ bakery and grocers shop on the south-eastern corner a bakery on the north-western corner and the Military Arms public house, now a convenience store, on the north-eastern corner.

Nearly all of the conservation area's terraced houses have a small front garden between the building line and pavement. The main exceptions are nos 16-30 (even) and nos 13-21 (odd) St Johns Hill which are built directly up to back-of-pavement line. More prestigious detached and semi-detached properties in Kings Road, Eldon Road and Eldon Square were built with large rear gardens but increasingly these are being lost to car parking.

The pattern of 'streets', 'roads', 'hill', 'terrace' and 'places' was clearly established by 1853 when the Board of Health maps were produced. With the exception of today's Watlington Street and London Road this had taken place within a 20 year period since the 1830s. Eldon Road is the widest road entirely within the CA and Princes Street is wider than its terraced counterparts.

At least 50% of today's residential properties are shown on the 1853 Board of Health map (coloured in turquoise on the map below) and most of the rest (coloured purple on the map below) from the later Victorian era. There are a few infill properties from Edwardian times (coloured yellow on the map below), for example 11-13 Eldon Road which has a '1902' date stone. The only inter-war property is the County Arms public house which was built on the site of an existing pub of that name. Modern properties especially along Queens Road, largely date from the 1970s or later and replace older properties but there are one or two infill properties and garden or former industrial yard developments such as 26 Eldon Place.

The gardens of Eldon Square have changed in layout but the site and railings remain as when first laid out for the use of residents in the 1830s.



**Figure 8: Buildings by age**

**Notes on the map of buildings by age:**

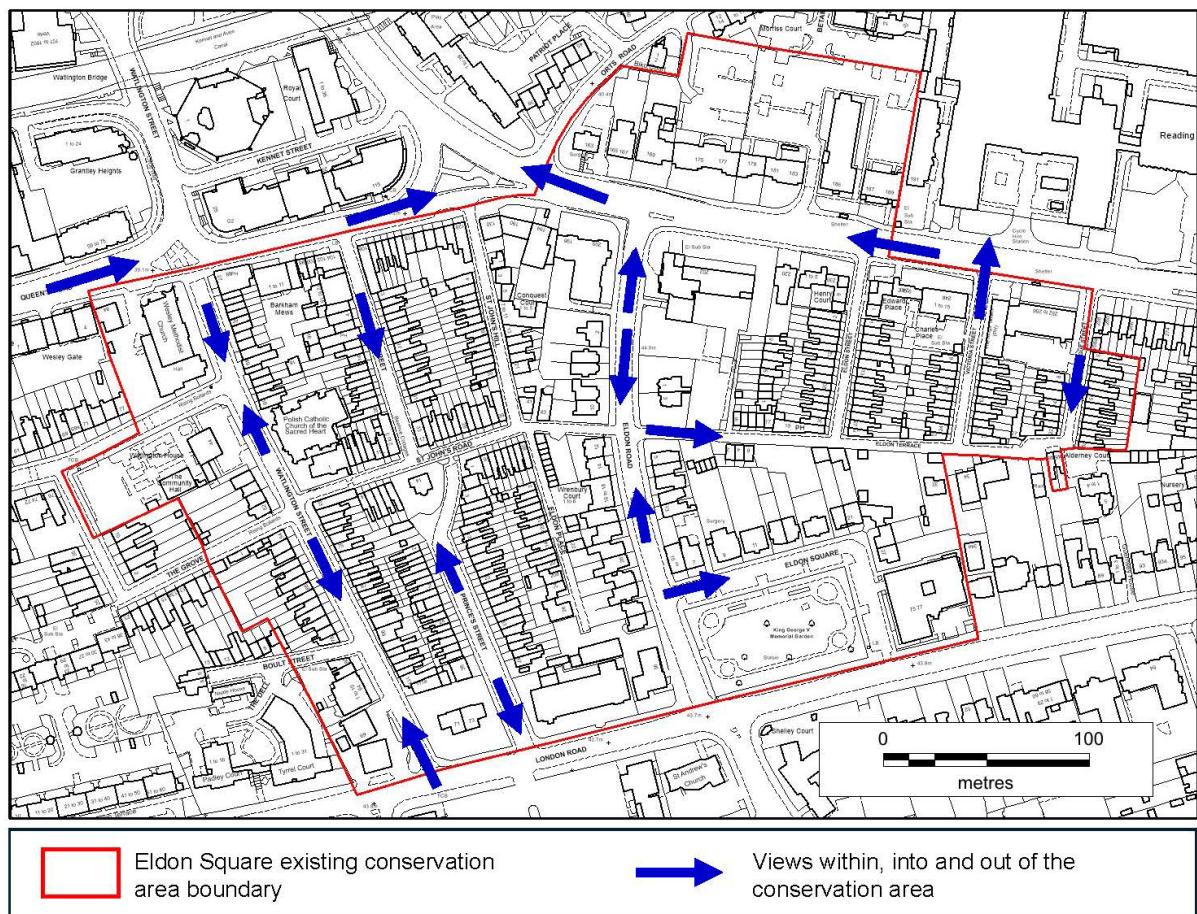
The dating of properties has followed the date of first appearance on a map and sometimes this can be confirmed or refined by other evidence such as visual inspection, newspapers, directories, censuses or Historic England listing descriptions. In general, although properties may have been extended and in some cases considerably, the date is the date of first appearance of a property on the site. This is fairly straightforward for most terraced residential properties but the precise dating of some properties has proved problematic:

- 5 Eldon Square/ 15 Eldon Road is listed Grade II. The Board of Health map (1853) shows a single property on the plot which is now occupied by 5 Eldon Square/15 Eldon Road and 7 Eldon Square. Evidence from maps, directories, photographs and external physical inspection indicate that 5 Eldon Square/ 15 Eldon Road dates from the beginning of the twentieth century on the site formerly occupied by the western section of 7 Eldon Square. 5-13 Eldon Road were also built around this time.
- 190 Kings Road is a modern makeover, with at least one additional storey, of a Victorian building.

**4.2 Views into, within and out of area**

(see Appendix 5 for images)

The map below shows the direction of views into, within and out of the CA with blue arrows.



*Figure 9: Views into, within and out of the area*

#### 4.2.1 Views into the area



*Figure 10: Views into the CA - east along Queens Road (image Evelyn Williams)*

Views into the area tend to be marred by roads and traffic on major thoroughfares which are a distraction to the viewer. Modern developments and car parks are concentrated at key junctions on the main roads. There are three historic views of note:

- Looking east along Queens Road to the junction with Kings Road and beyond. From the west end of Queens Road, adjacent to Queens Crescent, which is listed and of a similar era, the listed buildings on the north side of Kings Road come in to view as does the spire of the Wesley church. As the viewer approaches and the road curves more properties are visible.
- Looking north down Watlington Street from in front of the Royal Berkshire Hospital on London Road. In this view the curve and incline of Watlington Street, and the two church spires are visible. The view continues down towards the river, the Verto building and Watlington Bridge.
- Looking west from Reading College (Activate Learning) has a view, albeit currently marred by traffic, of listed properties to the north and more modern developments within the CA to the south

#### **4.2.2 Views within the area**

There are a limited number of views within the area because of the short horizon resulting from the street plan. The following are important views:

- Looking north towards The Oval (rear) from Princes Street. This view shows the Oval as it was meant to be seen, as a focal point, when approaching down Princes Street.
- Looking south towards The Oval (front) from St Johns Street. This view of the front of The Oval was not planned, unlike the view from Princes Street. However, it attracts the eye into the CA and also towards The Retreat public house.
- Looking east along Eldon Terrace from Eldon Road. This is an intriguing view down a side street.
- Looking south along Montague Street towards Eldon Terrace. This view shows the variety of terraced housing on Montague Street. The view is closed by 46 and 48 Eldon Terrace in the middle distance and behind that, the rear of one of the taller London Road properties.
- Looking east from Eldon Road into Eldon Square. From this spot you can see the houses of Eldon Square and also the comparative quietness compared with Eldon Road.
- Looking north down Eldon Road towards Kings Road;
- Looking south up Eldon Road towards Eldon Square. This view could show off the properties on the west side of Eldon Road. It is marred not as much by the block of Hanover House but all paraphernalia of traffic management including the yellow box markings at the junction;
- Looking south from the foot of Watlington Street.

#### 4.2.3 Views out of the area



*Figure 11: View out of CA towards the Queens Road and Kings Road junction (image Evelyn Williams)*

Beyond the CA there are very few idyllic views but nevertheless there are some which are important in understanding the growth and development of the area.

- View west towards the traffic gyratory, more or less at the historic junction of Queens Road and Kings Road, the area to the north, on the right, is out of the CA;
- From Princes Street south to the Royal Berkshire Hospital. There are no views from the CA that align precisely with the portico of the hospital, this is the closest;
- From Watlington Street there is a view towards Reading Gaol and depending on any development that takes place on this site it may improve. The removal of the modern block close to the boundary wall would increase the visibility of the prison building;
- North from Victoria Street to Reading College (Activate Learning).

#### 4.5 Trees and green spaces

(see Appendix 6 for images)

The most significant green space in the area and the only public garden is the King George V Memorial Garden. Once the private garden for Eldon Square residents, the council took ownership in 1944<sup>1</sup> planning to use the King George V memorial fund to convert it to a Garden of Ease which opened in 1951<sup>2</sup>. The gardens are poorly maintained, visibly neglected and the listed railings are in need of repainting. Within the gardens is a statue of Rufus Isaacs, Lord Reading, by Charles Sergeant Jagger (1885-1934) was cleaned early in 2025 after a long period of neglect. The gardens are enclosed by railings and the name plate on the gates 'P. B. & E. Reading' indicates that they were made by Perry, Barrett and Exall,

<sup>1</sup> Reading Standard 6 October 1944 p5

<sup>2</sup> Reading Standard 18 May 1951 p3

a successor of Perry and Barrett<sup>3</sup> and one of the precursors of the Reading Ironworks Company Ltd.



**Figure 12: Aerial view of Watlington House rear garden. The garden has been laid out in the style of an apothecary's garden based on a plan from the first half of the eighteenth century (image Richard Bennett)**

Another significant green space is the rear garden of Watlington House which has been restored (2012-2014) since the last appraisal review. It is laid out according to a mid-eighteenth century plan with planting typical of an apothecary's garden as Samuel Watlington's uncle was an apothecary<sup>4</sup>. It is sometimes open to the public. The front garden and parking was remodelled in 2021 with a new wall and railings and has been planted with trees, shrubs and flowers.

Most residential properties have a front garden and many are very well maintained with shrubs and flowers although others have been paved.

The grounds of Hanover House have been well landscaped with mature silver birches and other trees, protected by a TPO, which are visible from Kings and Eldon Roads.

A number of other trees are protected including an ancient black mulberry at 1a Eldon Road (now a vacant building plot).

Properties on St Johns Road and Eldon Square have an exuberant display of wisteria when in flower.

There are two sets of planters preventing access to Watlington Street from South Street and Queens Road. These are not sufficiently well maintained to add more than a token touch of green to the streetscape.

The island at the junction of Queens and Kings Roads, just outside the CA is a welcome contrast to the surrounding tarmac and traffic but should be better maintained.

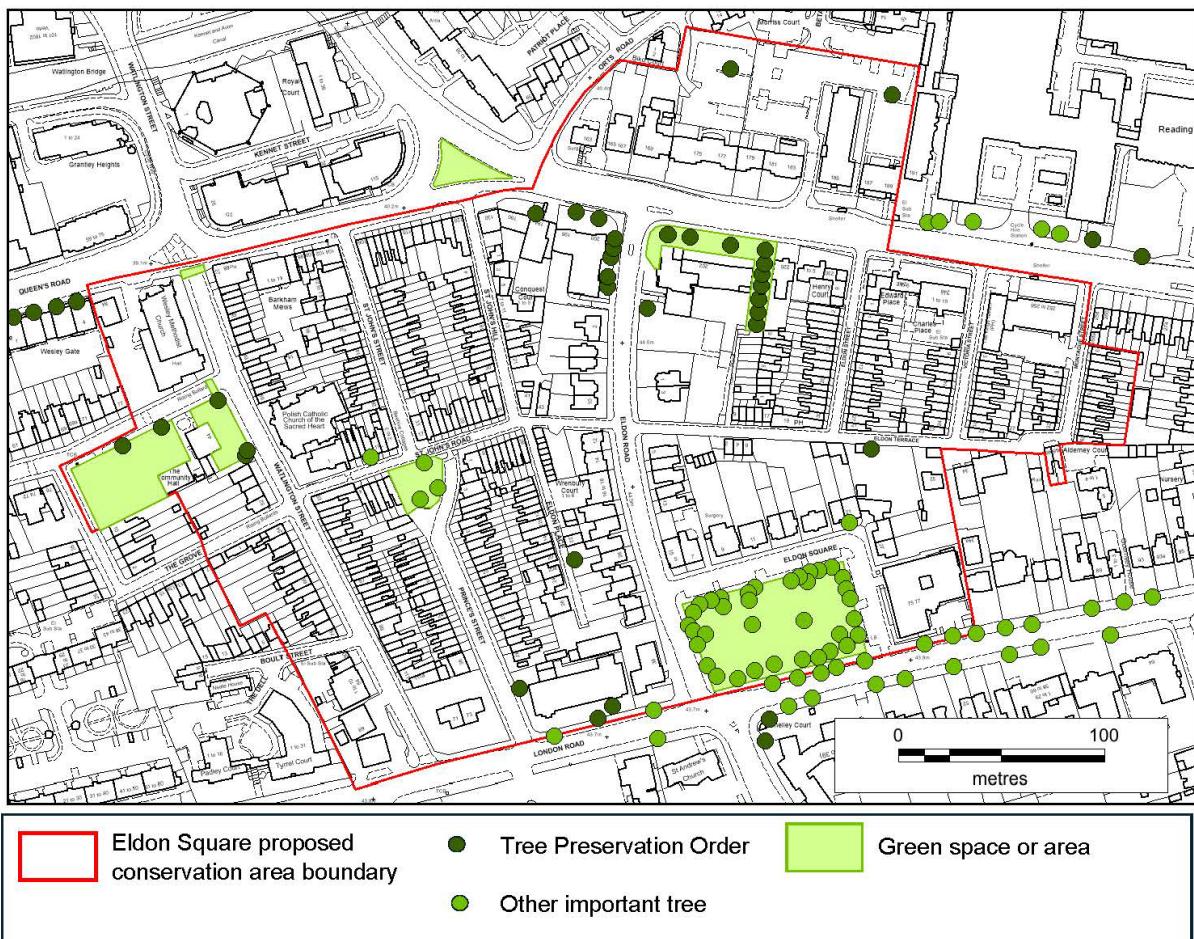
<sup>3</sup> Reading Mercury 27 April 1835 p1

<sup>4</sup> Watlington House website [the garden restoration](#) accessed 23 May 2025



**Figure 13: Traffic island at the junction of Queens Road and Kings Road**

Protected trees, other significant trees and green spaces are marked on the map below. It has not been possible to identify every notable tree and lack of a specific reference does not imply that it is not of value.



**Figure 14: Trees and green spaces within the conservation area**

## 5. Buildings and Public Realm

### 5.1 Key positive characteristics

With the exception of Watlington House and now long lost farm buildings, the area was a greenfield site of agricultural land when in the 1830s Queens Road and Kings Road were laid out and the land sold on lease by the Crown and Reading Corporation. Development progressed rapidly from then onwards especially to the east of Watlington Street.

The result of this development boom is a time capsule of grand villas and squares overtaken by demand for terraced housing for trades people, artisans and factory employees on the east side of Reading and the facilities and amenities required.

It is possible to read this progression today in the layout of the streets and range of building styles. The area was never entirely residential with a range of small industrial enterprises, retail premises, public houses and a large brewery. Many of these were still in existence into the second half of the twentieth century and apart from a few survivals have now been converted to housing. These have been noted below within the relevant character areas.

### 5.2 Materials, styles and features

The Eldon Square Conservation Area contains, for the most part, nineteenth century housing built during a 40 year period between c1835-1875. Apart from landmark buildings such as the two churches, Watlington House, The Oval, the St John's Road Mission Hall and Reading Room and the inter-war County Arms, there are three distinctively different predominant architectural styles within the conservation area: large detached and semi-detached Bath stone houses, narrow-frontage brick terraced houses of two or three storeys and 1970s and later office and residential development mainly along the south side of Kings Road.

The large houses on the north side of Kings Road, Eldon Road and Eldon Square mostly date from the 1830s and 1840s and are built from Bath Stone in the Classical style favoured in the first half of the nineteenth century. The exception is the semi-detached pair of 1 & 3 Eldon Road which are yellow stock brick at the front and red brick at the rear.

Watlington Street is part north/south route between the road to Shinfield on the ridge to the south of Reading and the town centre that existed before Queens Road and Kings Road were laid out. It forms the boundary between Corporation and Crown lands and apart from seventeenth century Watlington House, developed slowly from the 1830s onwards with a more eclectic mix of building materials and design than other streets in the CA. 99 Watlington Street is particularly worthy of mention.

Two storey red brick terraces predominate in the narrower streets between London Road and Kings Road. These residential properties are characterised by a narrow frontage with, at ground floor, a front door with a single window beside and above is a single matching window. A brick dentilled eaves course is common. Brick chimney stacks protrude through the slate roof well below the ridge with the effect that the lively roofscape created by a row of chimney stacks and red clay pots is highly visible from the street. The street frontages, though terraced, are not uniform and do not always follow a regular building line but are made up from short rows of differing design reflecting the piecemeal development of the area.

Terraced housing typologies fall into 7 groups according to number of storeys, colour and pattern of brickwork, style and material of door surrounds and window lintels. The brick bond is mainly Flemish and the roof materials of slate.

- i) Two storey, round arched brick door surround, one downstairs and one upstairs window with a chequerboard brick pattern.
- ii) Two storey, round arched brick door surrounds, one downstairs and one upstairs window, red brick.



*Figure 15: Left Watlington Street foot (i) and right St Johns Street (ii) (images Zoë Andrews)*

- iii) Two storey red brick, plain brick or stone door surrounds and window lintels, one downstairs and one upstairs window. Variations include stone string courses.



*Figure 16: Eldon Street (iii) (image Zoë Andrews)*

- iv) Taller three storey properties occur singly or in groups on some streets with single or double sets of upper floor windows with cills supported by corbels. Grander examples of this typology such as 17 St Johns Street have grey brick with red brick door and

window surrounds and string courses and 73 Watlington Street has full height windows on the second floor.



**Figure 17: Left four three storey houses on St Johns Road and right a three storey house on St Johns Street (iv) (images Evelyn Williams)**

- v) The west side of Watlington Street is predominantly comprised of short runs of three storey brick terraces of slightly varying design but most have two windows on the first and second floor and a front door and window on the ground floor which is not aligned with those above. Some front doors have recessed entrances behind a rounded arch. The detailing around the windows varies with 74-78 Watlington Street being the most ornate.



**Figure 18: 78 and part of 76 Watlington Street (v) (image Zoe Andrews)**

More rarely:

vi) Two storey, arched doorway, downstairs bay, one central window above, grey and red brick with cream brick window surrounds e.g 8-12 Montague Street.



*Figure 19: Bay windowed houses on Montague Street (image Zoë Andrews)*

vii) St Johns Hill has a unique terrace of five houses of grey brick with red brick door and window surrounds



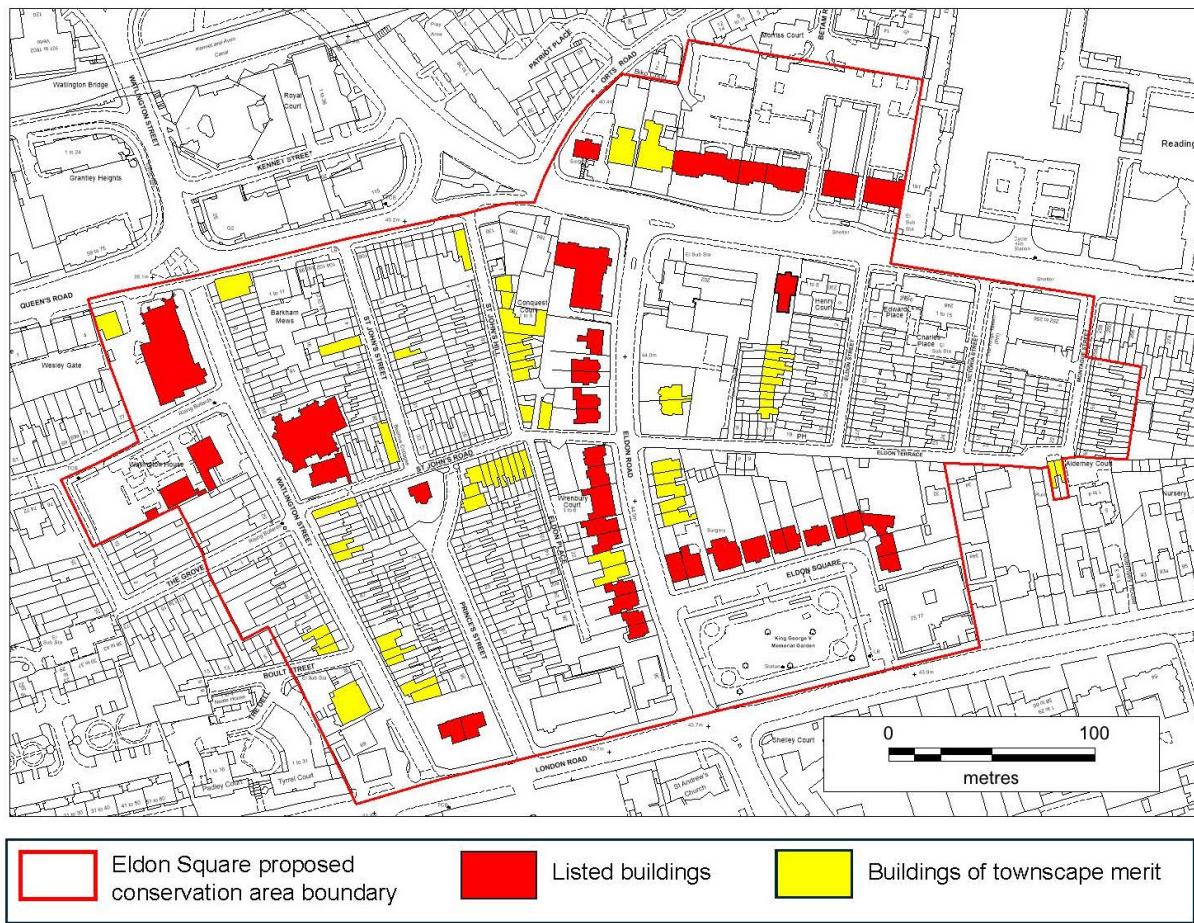
*Figure 20: Houses on the east side of St Johns Hill (vii) (images 1 & 2 Zoë Andrews, image 3 Evelyn Williams)*

The south side of Kings Road is not as homogenous which reflects the more complex twentieth century development on this side of the road. Office blocks built in the 1970s have now been converted and/or remodelled for residential use. At the corner of Eldon Road and Kings Road the site of Hanover House was once a large villa, Swiss Villa, and a short terrace of housing. Travelling east from 220 Kings Road there is a long stretch of 1990s residential development set back from the road behind a hedge which terminates at the corner of Victoria Street. The block between Victoria Street and Montague Street and the CA boundary, now Cityblock student accommodation, was occupied by the Berkshire Brewery, established in 1865 which later became a Salmons tea warehouse. The car parks at the rear

of Hanover House and Cityblock could be improved as they are a very visible distraction on the narrow terraced streets to the south.

Historically, slate was the prevalent roofing material, brought to the town first by canal but later by the railway. Nowadays, many slate roofs have been re-roofed with concrete tiles or artificial slate. The County Arms (dated 1936) has an original clay tile roof but this is unusual. No. 27 Princes Street has a slate roof with a 'fishscale' effect created by alternate use of straight and rounded slates and the ground floor bays of 41-47 Princes Street also have a fishscale roof.

### 5.3 Buildings of local historic interest and positive buildings



**Figure 21: Listed Buildings and Buildings of Townscape Merit**

#### 5.3.1 Listed buildings

There are 30 listed buildings and structures or groups of buildings and structures in the CA and most are within character area 1.

The buildings and structures are all identified on Map 8 and are also listed in Appendix 3 where images are provided along with a short summary and link to the Historic England listing entry.

Character Area 1

- 163 Kings Road

- 173-183 Kings Road
- 185 Kings Road
- 187-189 Kings Road
- 196-200 Kings Road
- 220-222 Kings Road
- 2 Eldon Road
- 4 & 6 Eldon Road
- 8 & 10 Eldon Road
- 12 & 14 Eldon Road
- 16 & 18 Eldon Road
- 20 & 22 Eldon Road
- 28 & 30 Eldon Road
- 32 & 34 Eldon Road
- 5 Eldon Square (and 15 Eldon Road adjoining)
- 7 Eldon Square
- 9 Eldon Square
- 11 Eldon Square
- 13 & 15 Eldon Square
- 17 Eldon Square
- 19 & 21 Eldon Square
- 23 Eldon Square
- 25 & 27 Eldon Square
- Railings to George V Memorial Gardens

#### Character Area 2

- Watlington House including the Garden Hall, Watlington Street
- Walls enclosing west wall of Watlington House
- Wesley Methodist Church, Watlington Street
- Polish Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart including the school room, Watlington Street
- 71 & 73 London Road
- The Oval

#### Character Area 3

There are no listed buildings in Character Area 3

### 5.3.2 Buildings of Townscape Merit

There are 26 buildings or groups of buildings of townscape merit and most are within character area 2.

These are identified on Map 8 below and with a photograph and short description in Appendix 4.

At the last appraisal review almost every building in the CA was recognised as a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM) because of the special contribution that they make to the street scene. This differs from the approach in other Reading CAs. Historic England guidance is that locally important buildings, should meet specific criteria to demonstrate that they contribute positively to the area. The criteria in summary relate to the importance to the context of a listed heritage asset, landmark quality, significance of design or architect, historic associations with local people or past events, reflect former uses of the area or contribute to the character and appearance of the area. The criteria are similar to those to be used for locally listed buildings (LLB) and as Reading does not designate LLB in its conservation areas it is understood that BTM should be the equivalent within a CA.

We consider that many of the properties designated as BTMs do not meet the criteria and that there is sufficient recognition of their contribution to the villagescape as a whole and as part of the special character of the area, by their inclusion within the CA.

Many properties, although in most cases well maintained have had windows replaced, brickwork painted over or other modifications made over time which have had a negative impact on the character and appearance of the area e.g. the east side of Victoria Street.



*Figure 22: Victoria Street looking north in the direction of Reading College (image Zoë Andrews)*

The Garden Room at Watlington House and the schoolroom at the Polish Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart were included as BTMs on the 2007 appraisal but it is considered that they are listed as they lie within the curtilage of the related listed building and are now shown as such.

#### Character Area 1

- 165-169 Kings Road
- 1&3 Eldon Road

- 5-13 Eldon Road
- 26-28 Eldon Road

#### Character Area 2

- 84 Queens Road
- 88 Queens Road
- 104 Queens Road
- 63 Watlington Street (Swift Upholstery)
- 73-79 Watlington Street
- 74-78 Watlington Street
- 86 Watlington Street (former County Arms public house)
- 99 Watlington Street
- 111 & 111a Watlington Street
- 3 St Johns Hill
- 5 St Johns Hill
- 7-11 St Johns Hill
- 13-21 St Johns Hill
- 39 St Johns Road (former Lifeboat public house)
- 41 & 43 St Johns Road
- 16-28 St Johns Road
- 15 St Johns Road and Beehive Cottages
- 8 St Johns Street (Retreat Public House)
- 17 St Johns Street
- 1 & 3 Princes Street

#### Character Area 3

- 1-9 Town Place
- 46 & 48 Eldon Terrace

#### ***Recommended for removal from the list of BTMs***

#### Character Area 1

No BTM properties were removed, most properties in this character area are nationally listed.

#### Character Area 2

- 65-71 Watlington Street

- 77-97 Watlington Street
- 101-109 Watlington Street
- 46-72 Watlington Street
- 80 & 82 Watlington Street
- 2-36 Princes Street
- 5-47 Princes Street
- 1-39 St Johns Road
- 4-14 St Johns Road
- 2-12 Eldon Place
- 14-20 Eldon Place

### Character Area 3

- 6-24 Victoria Street
- 3-21 Victoria Street
- 8-22 Montague Street
- 3-28 Montague Street
- 2-30 Eldon Street
- 1-27 Eldon Street
- 9-25 Eldon Terrace

### **5.4 Historic shopfronts**

There are four examples of historic shopfronts or shopfronts with heritage features in the CA. Images are included in Appendix 7.

- corner site of 63 Watlington Street, Swift Upholstery, has a traditional shopfront with awning;
- no 111, boarded up and To Let as of February 2025, is traditional in style with a recessed entrance.
- 104 Queens Road has a modernised but traditional style shopfront and the fascia board is topped by decorative ironwork (in need of repair).
- 23 Victoria Street has a historic shopfront dating probably from the 1960s/70s.

Of the many public houses in the area, only The Retreat and The Lyndhurst are still in business. Former public houses where evidence of this use remains include:

- County Arms on Watlington Street, converted to flats;
- The Beehive on St Johns Road;
- Golden Lion beerhouse at 54 Watlington Street has a painted over Simonds logo on the front elevation;

- The Weather Station on Eldon Terrace is undergoing residential conversion;
- The Lifeboat has a ghost 'Ind Coope Burton Ales & Stouts' sign on the St Johns Hill elevation.



*Figure 23: L - former Beehive public house, St Johns Road and R former Golden Lion with Simonds sign painted over, fascia board and shop window bricked in (images Zöe Andrews)*



*Figure 24: Ghost sign on the former Lifeboat public house, St Johns Road/St Johns Hill corner (image Evelyn Williams)*

## 5.5 Public Realm

### 5.5.1 Floorscape, street lighting, street furniture and local detail

Although carriageway and pavements are paved in modern tarmac or concrete slabs, there are many examples of natural stone roadside kerbs and gutters which, like the brick chimney stacks and clay pots of the roofscape, add to the conservation area's special character and appearance. Watlington Street has long thin kerbstones with two or three lines of granite setts forming the gutter. In Eldon Place the kerb and gutter is formed by long wide granite stones. Paving and kerbstones in Eldon Square are concrete, to the detriment of the character of the area, but the gutter is formed by lengths of stone grooved with a wide

channel to contain the flow of water. Eldon Place retains two areas of stone setts in the carriageway and there are further paved areas of setts outside The Retreat and a former workshop in St Johns Street.

Street lighting in the area is almost exclusively modern. Two cast iron lamp posts on Princes Street were removed in the 2010s as part of the introduction of LED lighting. There are, however, a small number of historic fluted iron lamp posts in the conservation area; at no. 9 Town Place (not in working order), and three (some re-used) in Eldon Square. On Eldon Road replica heritage lamp posts line both sides of the street.

The rear of Kings Road, offices and residential blocks, are almost always given over to car parks which do not present an interesting or pleasing face to the street, for example the rear of Hanover House on Eldon Terrace and the rear of City Block from Victoria Street. Similarly the car park to the rear of Melrose House at the entrance to Watlington House has a negative impact on the setting of the Grade II listed house and the entrance to or exit from the street.

Road re-surfacing in the last few years has enabled the introduction of narrow double yellow lines, albeit with some initial issues, which are more suitable for a CA. Some of the pavement surfaces are poor and uneven with a noticeable camber making them uncomfortable for pedestrians e.g. Watlington Street.

Blocked drain covers and poor drainage results in flooding at times of heavy rainfall particularly on Princes Street.

### **5.5.2 Local details and features**

Eldon Square Conservation Area's local identity is enhanced by a number of small details and features that cumulatively help to give the conservation area a sense of place. The following are some of the small but not insignificant elements that contribute to the conservation area's special interest and are worthy of protection: cast-iron street name signs (e.g. Eldon Terrace, St Johns Road, South Street), stone channels to help the run-off of rainwater (e.g. The Grove), remnants of historic railings (e.g. nos 48, 50 & 52 Watlington Street), coal hole cover at no 64 Watlington Street hand painted Eldon Road sign on no. 30 Eldon Road, Rosetta House on Eldon Square, Venetian Cottages faintly visible on 32 & 34 Eldon Road and ghost signs.

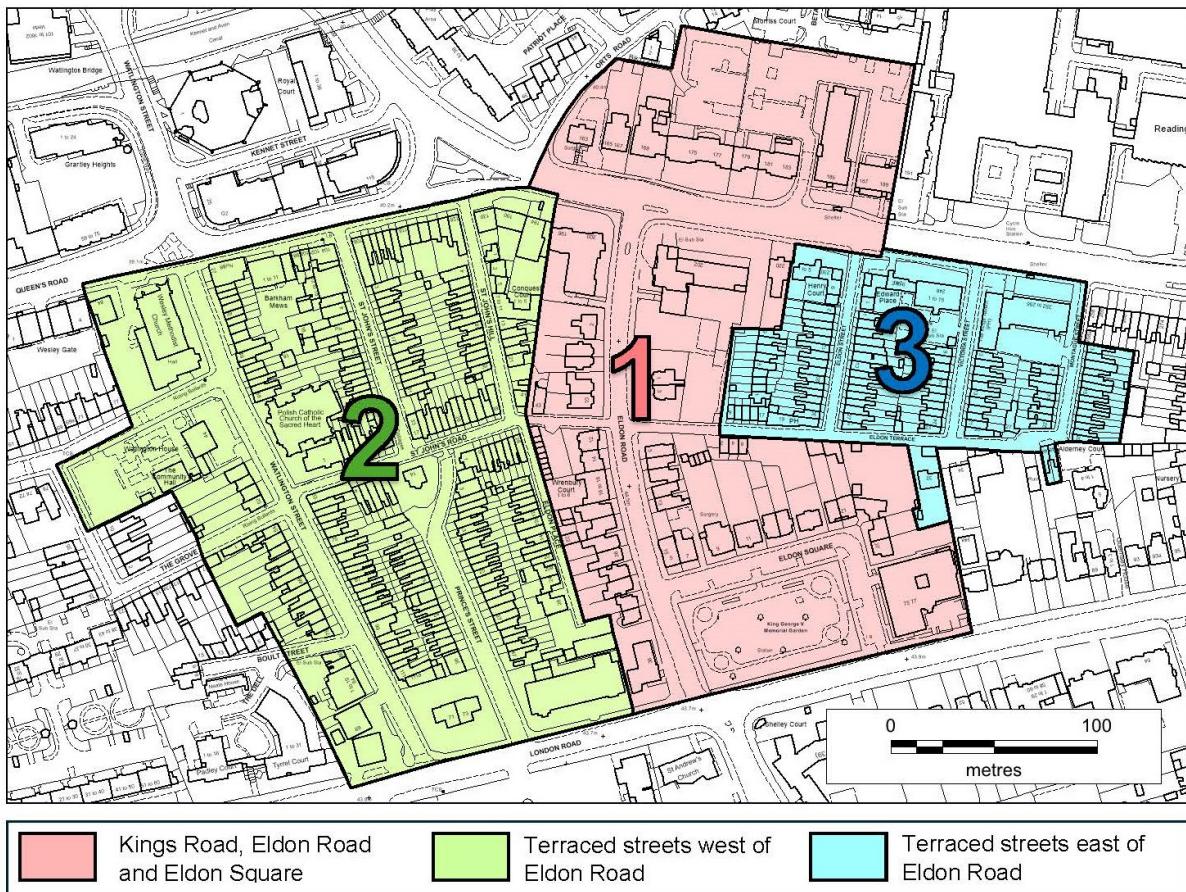
## **6. Character Areas**

The conservation area can be divided into 3 character areas according to building type and period. Area 1 contains large prestigious predominantly Bath stone residences including Eldon Square whilst Areas 2 and 3 contain predominantly brick terraces. Areas 2 and 3 have many similarities but the terraces east of Eldon Road are more uniform, smaller in scale and of a slightly later date than the terraced development west of Eldon Road.

The three character areas are as follows:

- Area 1: Kings Road, Eldon Road and Eldon Square;
- Area 2: Terraced streets west of Eldon Road i.e. Watlington Street, St Johns Street, St Johns Road, St Johns Hill, Princes Street, Eldon Place, Queens Road (south);

- Area 3: Terraced streets east of Eldon Road i.e. Eldon Terrace, Eldon Street, Victoria Street, Montague Street, Town Place.



*Figure 25: Character Areas (inclusive of proposed area extensions)*

## 6.1 Character Area 1 - Kings Road, Eldon Road and Eldon Square



*Figure 26: 175-179 Kings Road (Evelyn Williams)*

This area contains the majority of the conservation area's listed buildings and is characterised by tall detached or semi-detached residences in Italianate style faced with Bath stone. They are set back from the highway and have long rear gardens in some cases now given over to car parks.

Nos. 163 to 189 on the north side Kings Road form an almost continuous row of buildings of architectural interest enriched by large stone porticos, rusticated ground floors and pairs of full height bows. They rise to three storeys with basement and are approached up a flight of stone steps. No 163, Encombe House is the oldest property and continuing the 'Eldon' theme was probably named after the seat of the Earls of Eldon. Nos 165 & 167 were gutted and rebuilt in the 1990s. Despite this, 165 is possibly the most famous in the row as the address where, in 1874 the French poet Arthur Rimbaud advertised that he gave French lessons. The rebuilding is recorded in the opening shots of the film *Robinson in Space*, Patrick Keillor (1997).

Eldon Square is a formally planned composition (c1830) of houses around three sides of a residents' garden with contemporary railings, unique in Reading. To the north of Eldon Square is a service road, Eldon Terrace. Eldon Square properties appear in several early photographs from William Henry Fox Talbot's *Reading Establishment*. The garden now known as the George V Memorial Gardens is a public park with a lawn, flower beds and trees.



**Figure 27: The view north down Eldon road with Eldon House (left) and Eldon Square (right). c1860.**  
**Eldon Square a print by J Macaulay courtesy of Reading Library local studies collection**

Eldon Road connects the major thoroughfares of London Road and Kings Road. Nineteenth century buildings on the west side are nearly all listed and dating from the same period as Eldon Square, but nos 20/22 and 24/26 do not appear on a map of 1879.

The east side of Eldon Road is less intensively developed and contains a large brick pair (nos 1/3) and a large stucco pair of 1902 (nos 11/13) on either side of a c1900 row of three terraced houses built in Bath stone.

Many of these former houses have been converted to flats, offices or professional uses.

The frontage of the buildings comprise open lawn and flower beds with low boundary roadside walls of mixed construction: stone blocks, brick, poured concrete, or rendered concrete blocks. The front pedestrian accesses are mainly gated with a variety of wrought iron and forged steel options, and flagged concrete paths leading to steps up to raised ground floor entrances above accessible semi basements.

Part of the garden frontage to 163 has been converted to hard standing for car parking but vehicle access is mainly via the rear of the properties.

There are some modern developments in this area which appear out of keeping with the prevailing first half of the eighteenth century character:

- On the south side of Kings Road the appearance is less uniform and a modern block (Hanover House) on the corner of Kings Road and Eldon Road, once offices, now apartments is out of keeping with the prevailing character. The block occupies the site of Swiss Villa, York Villas and York Place.
- A B Walker, funeral director, premises at 36 Eldon Road and Princes House 73a London Road was the site of Eldon House which occupied the whole block west to Princes Street.
- Eldon Court, 75-77 London Road replaced an earlier house, known as Rose Cottage in 1842, also with a London Road address.



**Figure 28: Eldon House, now the site of A B Walker, funeral directors, and Princes Lodge, from the 1860 auction catalogue courtesy of Reading Borough Libraries local studies collection**

*Character Area 1: Features that make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:*

- The high concentration of listed buildings including Grade II\*;
- The architectural cohesion of prestigious mid nineteenth century residential development;
- Grandeur of nos 163 -189 Kings Road;
- The formal planning of Eldon Square;
- King George V Memorial Gardens and railings in Eldon Square, a green space with mature trees;
- Good quality townscape;
- Prevalent use of Bath stone;
- Many examples of historic railings and good boundary treatments, including restoration on some properties;
- Three cast iron lampposts in Eldon Square.

*Character Area 1: Features that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:*

- Loss of original front boundary walls and railings;
- Inensitive alterations to listed buildings e.g. garage door in basement of no. 2 Eldon Road;
- Poor quality and poor condition of paving around Eldon Square;
- Poor state of maintenance of George V Memorial Gardens;
- No. 36 Eldon Road (A B Walker funeral directors), in a prominent corner location, is out of character with the prevalent architectural cohesion of Eldon Road and Eldon Square;
- Car parks at the rear of Hanover House and 10 Eldon Road;
- Modern developments on south side of Kings Road;
- Loss of rear gardens to parking and garages;
- The gated demolition site on Eldon Terrace at the rear of Eldon Square;
- Building plot at 1a Eldon Road surrounded by HAZ fencing;
- Continual disturbance, noise and pollution of traffic on main roads.

## **6.2 Character Area 2 - Terraced streets west of Eldon Road**

This character area is predominantly residential with some houses in multiple occupation. There are three shops (one currently empty), an upholsterers, two places of worship and two public houses. Watlington House, a seventeenth century clothier's mansion and garden, managed by the Watlington House Trust providing office space for rent mainly to charities and the garden hall can be hired for events. A modern petrol station and shop serves London Road at the south end of Watlington Street. Melrose House west and east, 71/73 London Road, houses Royal Berkshire Hospital medical facilities and a GP practice.

Watlington Street is the oldest and primary street within this character area with an eclectic mix of historic properties of different scales, architectural styles and construction materials. It is a major pedestrian thoroughfare to and from the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the town centre. Traffic control measures, bollards and planters, only allow access from London Road.



*Figure 29: The rear of The Oval facing Princes Street (image image Zoë Andrews)*

The other side-streets in this area are narrower and have a more intimate feel than Watlington Street and two storeys is the norm. St Johns Street, St Johns Road, St Johns Hill, Princes Street and Eldon Place are characterized by short rows of modest two-storey terraced housing built to accommodate Reading's expansion in the mid/late nineteenth century.

The Oval, 14 St Johns Road, a detached building located in the centre of the linear street pattern, is the focal point of St Johns Street and closes the view down Princes Street from London Road. Although it now stands alone in its brick grandeur it was part of planned development which did not come to fruition. There is a pleasing coherence to the brickwork patterns on the south side of St Johns Road (nos 16-28) with the brickwork of 1 Princes Street and the Oval which may have taken cues from the brickwork of Watlington House.



**Figure 30: Coherent brick patterns 16-28 St Johns Road, 1 Princes Street and The Oval (images Zoë Andrews)**

St Johns Street and St Johns Hill lead north and slightly downhill towards Queens Road. With the exception of two three-storey properties, one of which forms The Retreat public house, St Johns Street is comprised of similar but not identical two-storey, red brick, terraced properties. Most of the houses on St Johns Hill, nos 16-30 and 13-21, do not have a front garden and open onto the street. 3 and 5 St Johns Hill and the former mineral water works at nos 7-11 are completely different in character.

Eldon Place is accessible from St Johns Road and is a service road for Eldon Road properties. There are five modern infill properties, three built on the rear gardens of Princes Street and two in the middle where there was a large property which was last used as warehouse but had had previous light industrial uses.

Princes Street was planned as a wide street leading to planned development around the Oval. It only has vehicle access from London Road and at the southern end comprises two-storey, red bricked properties which are fairly uniform in style but not identical. Nos 19 and 41-47 have ground floor bay windows and 31 and 33 have a fish scale slate roof and cream brick string course, door and window surrounds. The ground floor bay windows of 41-47 Princes Street also have fish scale roofs. At the northern end is the former St John's Road Mission and Reading Room. The camber of the roadway and shallow kerbs has caused issues with flooding in the very wet weather which is becoming increasingly common.

Queens Road is a busy one-way thoroughfare that flows in an east-west direction through the northern edge of the CA. 118-128 are a terrace of six substantial but poorly maintained three-storey and basement residential properties originally part of Grenville Terrace.

Of the three character areas with this CA, it is this area where current residential uses have most replaced a once thriving small industrial, artisan and commercial community. Swift Upholstery on Watlington Street is the only workshop remaining on the street in 2025. The corner premises had been a butchers shop.

The former Somerville & Andrews glass merchants premises at 111a Watlington Street has been vacant for some years.

Some previous industrial and commercial properties are listed below:

- Two properties on Eldon Place replace the former 1970s Bradley and Bliss Ltd warehouse. Former uses of the site include a builders, a mineral water company and an engineering shop;



*Figure 31: (Left) workshop on Eldon Place c1972 courtesy Reading Libraries Local Studies and (right) 12 and 12a Eldon Place in the same space March 2025 (image Evelyn Williams)*

- 43 St Johns Road was the former warehouse of 1970s C and W Andrews, glass merchants who also occupied no 41 as offices;
- 7-11 St Johns Hill is a conversion and development incorporating the former 1970s Conquest Works, previously Humphries & Holt Mineral Water Works, earlier W E Line & Co (from c.1892, telephone no 45);
- Former undertakers at 1a and 1b Princes Street.
- At the rear of 36 Princes Street, backing on to 111a Watlington Street there is a former tailors' workshop;
- 16 St Johns Street had been a pork butchers shop with a small slaughter house in the garden.
- Meaby & Co had a large bakery enterprise for Triticumina biscuits on Queen's Road. The business was linked to Meaby's bakery at the foot of St Johns Street but it did not prosper. The building was used for producing rennet in the UK by Danish Company Christopher Hansen from 1916 and from the 1960s as a wallpaper store. There was a fire in 1968 and the site which now also links through to Watlington Street was sold and redeveloped as Barkham and Watlington Mews.



**Figure 32: Conquest Court, a residential conversion of a former light industrial premises (image Evelyn Williams)**

*Character Area 2: Features that make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:*

- Two grade II listed churches with landmark spires;
- Trees and gardens in front of Grade II\* Watlington House soften the urban landscape;
- Formal garden to rear of Watlington House is a valuable 'breathing space' within the town;
- Old brick and flint boundary wall (grade II) to curtilage of Watlington House (grade II\*);
- Variety of terraced houses with high quality brickwork, generally well maintained and in some cases original features restored by owners/occupiers;
- A sprinkling of ghost signs, unique properties, public houses and small scale industrial conversions add depth to the fabric of the villagescape;
- Vestiges of early-nineteenth century planned formal layout around The Oval (grade II) and Princes Street;
- Coherence of brickwork patterns on the south side of St Johns Road with the brickwork of 1 Princes Street and the Oval;
- Historic stone kerbs and gulleys;
- Areas of historic setts in Eldon Place and St Johns Street;

- Lively roofscape of brick chimneys and clay pots.

*Character Area 2: Features that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:*

- Loss of original slate roofs and other architectural features such as gates, railings and boundary walls;
- Loss of original windows and front doors to modern replacements;
- Loss of front gardens for car parking e.g. no 80 Watlington Street;
- Painting over the brick on some properties;
- The addition of porches e.g. no. 19 St Johns Road;
- Water outflow pipes on the front of buildings converted to HMO/flats on Watlington Street;
- Poor condition of older properties on Queens Road;
- Stalled renovation at 34-36 Princes Street;
- Works to the roof and removal of chimneys at 41 St Johns Road;
- Modern petrol station is completely out of character with the historic street, however it should be noted that it replaces a garage and other former commercial uses including a stone masons yard;
- Car park of Melrose House;
- Litter and rubbish on the street is unsightly;
- Wheelie bins on pavement or crowding into small front gardens;
- Intrusive traffic noise from London Road and Queens Road.

### **6.3 Character Area 3 - Terraced streets east of Eldon Road**

This character area is primarily residential but also contains a shop on Kings Road and the former 'Out to Lunch' sandwich shop on Victoria Street which retains its shopfront.

Eldon Terrace was built as a narrow service road to the rear of properties in Eldon Square and provides access to four streets that run northwards onto Kings Road as well as rear access to some of the large properties on London Road. A modern terrace of 'mews' style properties at 2-6 Eldon Terrace was built c2010 replacing garages and workshops.



*Figure 33: Modern housing on Eldon Terrace (image Zoë Andrews)*

Town Place is the oldest in origin and unique in the CA as a row of 9 houses with long front gardens that can only be reached by a footpath. The later nineteenth century houses at the north end of the place were a redevelopment of part of the area occupied by Keeps Buildings which had access from Queens Road.

Eldon Street, Victoria Street and Montague Street are three short streets laid out in the 1860s/70s and adopted by the borough council in 1874. They have terraced houses on either side with small gardens to the front and larger gardens to the rear.



*Figure 34: Victoria Street (image Zoë Andrews)*

Victoria Street was the first to be laid out and is the most uniform in appearance being mainly simple red brick properties of uniform design. Victoria Square, a development similar in style to Eldon Square, was opposite the end of the street on the north side of Kings Road. It was demolished in the 1950s to build Reading College (now Activate Learning).

Montague Street terminates the view east down Eldon Terrace and has some individual variation in the groups of buildings. Nos 8-12 have ground floor bay windows, are built from grey brick with cream brick window surrounds and red detailing at first floor level.

Eldon Street has the most individual variation in the brickwork design of groups of properties.



*Figure 35: (Left) former Berkshire Brewery while in use as a Salmons tea warehouse c1905 (R W Ford's album 'The Borough of Reading as it Was') and right 1933 the new Salmons tea building on the same site. Images courtesy Reading Borough Libraries Local Studies*

Approaching from Kings Road the terraced housing starts at the boundary of now demolished nineteenth century industrial or residential properties which have now been replaced by modern housing or offices converted to residential.

- Between Victoria and Montague Street, Cityblock student accommodation occupies the site of the former Berkshire Brewery (1865), later Salmons Tea Warehouse (1884) and first rebuilt c1933.
- Charles Place (246 Kings Road), Edward Place (240 Kings Road) and Henry Court (230 Kings Road) is a two to four storey development of flats flanking Eldon Street, dating from the mid 1990s. This is a mature and thoughtful low rise yellow and red brick and stucco development behind a low wall, railings and hedge. It replaces Riplingham and Laurel Place.



*Figure 36: Charles Place, Edward Place and Henry Court (images Evelyn Williams)*

*Character Area 3: Features that make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:*

- Rectilinear grid pattern of streets;
- Nineteenth century brick terraced houses typical of Reading;
- Good quality brickwork;
- Flint wall on south side of Eldon Terrace;
- Historic stone kerbs;
- Some attractive well maintained gardens;
- Cast iron lamp post (not working) on Town Place;
- Cobden Terrace ghost sign at corner of Victoria Street and Eldon Terrace.

*Character Area 3: Features that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:*

- Loss of original windows and front doors to modern replacements;
- Loss of original slate roofs and other architectural features such as iron gates and railings;
- Painting over original brickwork;
- Addition of porches;
- Loss of front gardens;
- Unsightly concrete boundary walls;
- Conversion of the Weather Station public house (formerly the Eldon Arms) to residential has stalled since 2023;
- Vacant and boarded up building sites at 12 Eldon Terrace, and 14 Eldon Terrace/rear of 17 Eldon Square where approved works have not yet begun following demolition of existing garages etc;
- Dominant appearance of modern development along Kings Road with car parks to the rear;
- Forecourt of the shop at 252 Kings Road (ground floor of City Block);
- Car park behind Cityblock;
- Impact of the appearance of the car park at the rear of, Grade II listed, 81 London Road which has an exit onto Eldon Terrace.

Much improved since the last appraisal review is 23 Eldon Terrace at the junction of Eldon Terrace and Victoria Street.

## **7. Negative features, issues and opportunities for enhancement**

### **7.1 Loss of original architectural features and detail**

Many of the unlisted, and some of the listed, buildings in the conservation have been adversely affected by the use of inappropriate modern materials or details. Common faults include:

- the replacement of original timber sash windows with uPVC or aluminium is common;
- the loss of original panelled front doors and their replacement with stained hardwood, uPVC or aluminium doors is common;
- addition of a porch which obscures the original front entrance;
- loss of chimney stacks and clay pots;
- the replacement of stone slate or Welsh slate roofs with concrete tiles;
- overpainting of brickwork;
- loss of original front boundary walls.

## 7.2 Neglect and opportunities for enhancement

The general condition of properties in the conservation area is good. Empty properties may fall into disrepair unless a new and viable use is found. The Oval was long in need of refurbishment and maintenance which took place in 2023.



*Figure 37: Front of The Oval from St Johns Road (image Evelyn Williams)*

In addition to the problems of traffic and the loss of architectural detail noted above, street parking is an issue in the area and may lead to an increase in pressure for off-street parking, particularly in Watlington Street.

There is potential to improve the look of car parks at the rear of buildings which impact the character and appearance of the area. They are often at odds with the landscaping or garden at the front of the property:

- rear of Hanover House;
- rear of Melrose House;
- rear of 10 Eldon Road;

- rear of Cityblock;
- rear of 81 London Road (not in the CA).

The conservation area contains a number of streets paved with stone setts or flags, which must be protected. This appraisal has identified the most important examples of these surfaces and they should be protected and repaired as necessary, using traditional techniques and materials.

### **7.3 Advertising and shop signage**

65 Watlington Street (currently Twins News and Mart) has an unsympathetic fascia board, vinyls, fly posting and is plagued with graffiti.

The garage and shop on the corner of London Road and Watlington Street although improved since the last appraisal, could be further improved by the removal of the advertising on the Watlington Street side.

The forecourt of the retail unit of the ground floor Cityblock, 106 Queens Road and 65 Watlington Street could be more sympathetic to their surroundings, particularly so in the case of the latter two which have a more immediate heritage context.

### **7.4 Tree loss**

A large sycamore tree was removed from the garden of Watlington House in 2025 due to the damage that it was causing the wall with 10 The Grove. Other Watlington House trees were removed during the garden restoration completed in 2015, when they were replaced with plants and shrubs more appropriate to the age of the building.

There has in general been an increase in trees cover in the area due to council tree planting although the locations along South Street is questionable due to the potential impact on the wall of Watlington House.

### **7.5 Street furniture and surfacing**

Historic streetscape and local distinctiveness is under threat from the needs of traffic management and public amenity bodies.

Throughout the area there are bollards restricting access and one way signage on the road surface and on street signs. This is a distraction from the character of the area but is very much appreciated by local residents who would otherwise find themselves living within a maze of rat runs between Queen and Kings Roads and London Road.

Along Queens Road and Kings Road the importance of the road as a major route has required large direction signs.

The concrete paving slabs in Eldon Square are not appropriate to the high quality environment of the historic buildings and formal square. Repaving with natural stone would be a definite enhancement.

Street furniture and streetworks should take account of the designation of the area as a CA when maintenance is carried out.

## 7.6 Rubbish and bins

Trade bins placed in front of the few retail premises in the CA are unsightly but until a better solution is found, inevitable. Similarly domestic wheelie bins stored in front gardens and multiple bins required for HMOs are inevitable.

## 7.7 Development pressure and changing skyline

The site of the former Mulberry House Dental Surgery at 1a Eldon Road remains undeveloped with the site and the mulberry tree protected by HAZ fencing. The current appearance of the site is poor, detracts from the appearance of the area as a whole and there are no extant planning permissions for development of the site. The protected mulberry appears to be thriving.

High rise developments on the north side of Queens Road and in the town centre are visible from the CA. The quality of design and materials of any future developments should be appropriate to the proximity to the CA.

The future of the site of Reading Gaol is currently uncertain but there is the potential for the view from Watlington Street to improve.

## 7.8 Traffic noise and pollution

The core streets of the conservation area (Queens Road, Kings Road, Eldon Road, London Road) are part of the principal traffic circulatory routes through Reading. The route finally decided on for the eastern section of Reading's IDR in the 1980s used existing roads but widening and new bridges were required. The result is a very busy gyratory passing the former site of Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory with a complex traffic system. The character and environmental quality of these streets are spoiled by noise and pollution which is not pedestrian or resident friendly.

A red route was introduced along Kings Road in 2018 in addition to outbound and inbound bus lanes. Despite these measures, traffic congestion is a constant feature. London Road is the main vehicle inbound route into Reading and is similarly congested.

It is beyond the scope of this appraisal to do more than recommend that every opportunity to improve this situation would have heritage as well as lifestyle and health benefits to local residents and pedestrian users of the roads.

## 8. Action Plan

### Table 1 – All Conservation Areas

Policies, attitudes and actions which need to be applied to all of Reading's Conservation Areas if the town's remaining historic character is to be protected and enhanced as it should be. These apply to the Eldon Square Conservation Area as fully as they do to all, particularly with regard to the careful protection of architectural detail in any building alterations. It is acknowledged that these proposals have resource implications, especially for Reading Borough Council, at a time when resources are stretched and limited.

*Table 1: Actions for all conservation areas*

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO
Loss of original architectural features and details (see 7.1). Inensitive change and development not requiring planning permission, permitted development	<p><b>Guidance:</b> Provide guidance document on 'approved' methods for common small scale alterations</p> <p><b>Awareness:</b> Provide householder information on the added value of 'period detail' and detail on economic alternatives for energy efficiency savings</p> <p>Material prepared by other planning authorities could be used as a model for preparing written guidance</p>	<p>RBC and CAAC</p> <p>Update as at July 2025. A <a href="#">Design Guide to House Extensions</a> Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was published in March 2021. This has general guidance on and examples of roof dormers, roof lights and extensions which would be acceptable or unacceptable in conservation areas.</p> <p>Update as at July 2025. A <a href="#">Design Guide for Shopfronts</a> SPD was published in January 2022. A new or replacement shopfront will always require planning permission. The guidance includes the specific sensitivities in relation to shopfronts, fascia boards, lighting etc in conservation areas and on heritage buildings.</p>

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO
		Update as at July 2025. A guidance leaflet for householders has been drafted by RBC, reviewed by CAAC.
Loss or change to original boundary features.	<b>Awareness:</b> Provide householder information document on the added value and visual importance of boundary walls and railings  <b>Policy:</b> Article 4 directions could be implemented as resources allow (see Table 2 for further recommendations on what this should cover in this CA)	RBC and CAAC
Insensitive development undertaken without permission	<b>Guidance:</b> Provision of property owner guidance on legal requirements for alterations/development/tree works in conservation areas.  <b>Enforcement:</b> Legal enforcement by RBC to secure reversal of changes	RBC and CAAC  Update as at May 2025. This is partially covered in the guidance leaflet for householders has been drafted by RBC, reviewed by CAAC.  Enforcement - RBC
Redevelopment within or adjoining the Conservation Area should respect the general height, massing and alignment of existing buildings and use a palette of materials which reflect its existing character.	<b>Guidance, Policy:</b> Supplementary Design guidance planning document for development in historic areas.  <b>Support:</b> Use CAAC to gain informed comment on planning applications affecting Conservation Areas	RBC and CAAC

## Table 2 – Eldon Square Conservation Area

Policies and actions which are specific to this Conservation Area, to retain and enhance its important contribution to the life of Reading as a whole. They may require some limited revenue resources, which it is recommended should be given high priority, but little or no public capital expenditure.

*Table 2: Actions for Christchurch Conservation Area*

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO
Boundary extensions should be implemented as proposed in this revised appraisal.	<b>Policy:</b> Boundary extension to be implemented.	RBC
Reduction on number of Buildings of Townscape Merit should be implemented as proposed in this revised appraisal	<b>Policy:</b> Recommendations to be implemented.	RBC
Loss of original features of properties including boundary walls and railings.	<p><b>Policy:</b> An Article 4 direction should be considered to remove permitted development rights (PDR) to protect these features. This would require planning permission to be obtained for these works to be undertaken in the future. Although some works in CAs are not covered by PDR more clarity is required.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Draft wording of suitable Article 4 for agreement with RBC.</p> <p>Enforcement action taken against unauthorised works which do not comply with PDR restrictions in a CA or without planning permission required by an Article 4 should be consistent.</p>	CAAC/RBC Additional clarity on what is not covered by PDR in a CA is provided in the forthcoming guidance leaflet for householders that has been drafted by RBC, reviewed by CAAC.

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO
The conversion of some larger properties to HMOs and flats has exacerbated the issues with bins and rubbish in front gardens and on pavements	<b>Action:</b> Enforcement by RBC streetscene of numbers of bins at each property and the inspiration for some innovative solutions.	RBC with assistance of CAAC and local councillors
The conversion of some larger properties to HMOs and flats has caused obtrusive pipework on the front of properties and utilitarian railing which detract from the historic fabric.	<b>Action:</b> Opportunities should be taken to improve the public face of these properties.	CAAC/RBC when next a planning application is submitted to make changes to the property.
Busy main road along Kings Road, Queens Road, London Road	<b>Action:</b> Future transport strategies should aim to improve the blight caused by the main roads	RBC CAAC to comment in transport strategies
Poor maintenance of George V Memorial Gardens	<b>Action:</b> If RBC is not able to maintain the flower beds and volunteer groups are not able to continue, a lower maintenance planting plan should be initiated.  The statue of Lord Reading needs regular cleaning.	RBC
Car parks in large residential blocks are detrimental to the character and appearance of the area and are very visible to pedestrians in the area	<b>Action:</b> Owners should be encouraged to landscape at the rear as well as the Kings Road front of sites.	RBC and CAAC
Street clutter, materials and traffic signage that impacts conservation area character area and views	<b>Action:</b> Guide to be produced to assist RBC streetscene staff.	RBC and CAAC

## Appendix 1 Public Consultations

This appraisal has been in progress for some years and was relaunched on 16 June 2022 with a community event at The Retreat public house. This was attended by a number of residents, councillors and Reading CAAC members.

On Saturday 3 December 2022 a boundary walk took place which was attended by local residents, councillors and Reading CAAC members.

2023 kicked off with a small community event on 3 January again at The Retreat.

While the initial events were mainly aimed at engaging with local residents Reading CAAC took part in the inaugural Reading Walks Festival and led a walk around the CA on Sunday 14 May 2023 which was open to the general public.

2024 was a quiet year for progress but a set of photographs was taken for inclusion in the appraisal.

In January and February 2025 a draft appraisal was produced in the course of which a walkabout for Reading CAAC members with a local resident was organised on 14 February.

Following Reading CAAC approval on 3 March 2025 of the draft for publication a community meeting was held on 24 March 2025 at The Retreat. An informal public consultation ran from then until the 6 May 2025. There were 13 responses, 12 from the online questionnaire and a single response to the hard copy questionnaire placed in the Central Library which was substantially similar to the online questionnaire. The survey included space for additional comments or by writing directly to [chair.readingcaac@gmail.com](mailto:chair.readingcaac@gmail.com) which was taken up by some respondents. 10 of the 13 respondents lived or owned property in the CA.



The Eldon Square Conservation Area was first designated in 1972 and was last reviewed in 2007. The conservation area appraisal describes and defines the special historical and architectural character and interest of the Eldon Square CA. It highlights those features of its character and appearance that should be preserved or enhanced. It also identifies negative features that detract from the area's character and appearance, and issues that may affect it in future.

In this review Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee ([readingcaac.org](http://readingcaac.org)) are recommending an extension of the boundary to include five additional properties.

<p>1. Do you agree that the designation of conservation areas is important to protecting the special character of Reading?</p> <p>Please tick the box that applies.</p>	<p>Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Neither agree nor disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>2. Do you agree with the proposed boundary extension to include five additional properties?</p> <p>Please tick the box that applies. If other please comment in the box below.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Other <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Space for comments on Question 2

3. Do you agree that current appearance of some of the properties is the biggest challenge to the character and appearance of the conservation area?

Please tick the box that applies.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree  
nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly  
disagree

4. Do you agree with our recommendation that an Article 4 designation is required to protect original exterior features on properties in the Eldon Square Conservation Area?

Please tick the box that applies. If other please comment in the box below.

Yes

No

Other

Space for comments on Question 4

5. Are you satisfied with the appearance and cleanliness of the streets and public realm in the conservation area?

Please tick the box that applies.

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

6. Do you live in or own property in the conservation area?

Please tick the box that applies.

Yes

No

7. Do you work in the conservation area?

Please tick the box that applies.

Yes

No

8. If have any further comments please use the space below or email chair.readingcaac@gmail.com.

9. How interested are you in the work of Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee?

Please tick the box that applies.

Very

Slightly

Not at all

Thank you for responding to this questionnaire.

[www.readingcaac.org](http://www.readingcaac.org)

@CaacReading

The results of the consultation indicated general support for the protection offered by conservation area designation to the special character of Reading, the draft revised appraisal and boundary revision. Only one respondent disagreed with the boundary extension.

The potential for introducing an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for certain alterations to properties and the implications of that were questioned. A better explanation of what this would mean and clarification that it would only apply to future alterations has been included in the management plan. Nevertheless in the current climate emergency and prevailing economic situation anything that appears to prevent climate adaptation and be expensive to residents is subject to challenge. In terms of explanation and understanding of what it means to own a property or live in a property in a conservation area we await the forthcoming 'Guidance and Advice for Householders' to be published by RBC.

The question which had the broadest range of responses was in relation to the appearance and cleanliness of public areas. There were no 'very satisfied' responses, 2 'satisfied', 2 neither 'satisfied nor dissatisfied', 8 'dissatisfied' and 1 'very dissatisfied'.

We are grateful to those respondents who took the time to make suggestions on improving the document and pointed out errors. The Initial Statement has been expanded to give more information on changes, not just the boundary changes, made in this Appraisal compared with the 2007 version and corrections to the text have been made where necessary.

## Appendix 2 Archaeology and Historical Development of the Area

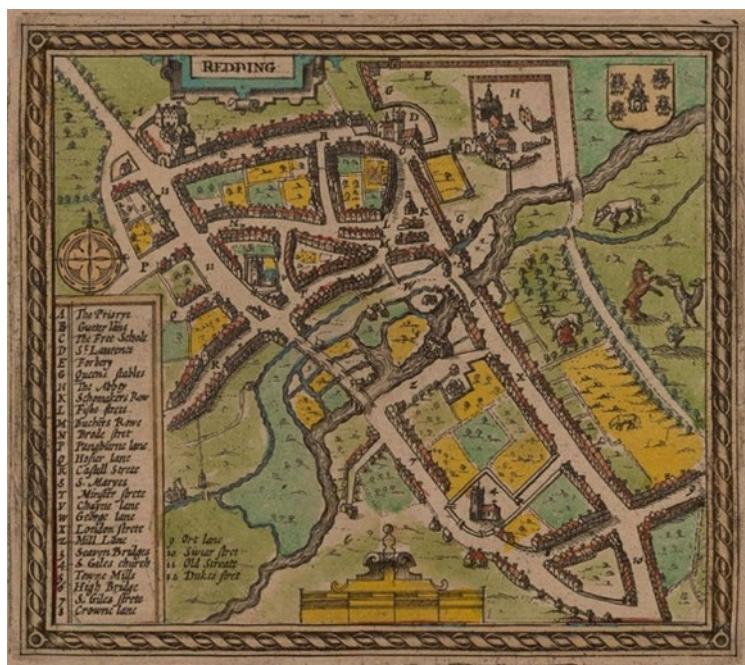
### 1. Archaeology

Excavations have uncovered pre-historic, Roman, Saxon and later medieval finds in the wider area particularly north of Queens Road and Kings Road towards the town centre and River Kennet.

Closer to the CA but outside the boundary there were the following finds: a lower-paleolithic (500,000 BCE to 150,001 BCE) hand axe at 52 London Road in 1945; a neolithic (4,000 BCE to 2,351 BCE) ground axe at 58 London Road in c1947 and in London Road, precise location unknown a partial skeleton was found from the late Roman to early Saxon period. There have been excavations in conjunction with modern developments such as the extension to Clarendon House, Queens Road in 2019 which uncovered finds from earlier developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

The HER does not record any finds arising within the CA from the construction of modern developments along the south side of Kings Road. These late twentieth century office and residential properties replaced mid nineteenth century buildings which had been built on a greenfield site. Other parts of the CA have remained largely undisturbed since that time and it is an area of archaeological potential.

### 2. Historical Development



*Figure 38: Speed's plan of Reading 1611 – The Eldon Square CA is on the extreme right. There are horses on Crown Lands to the north and south of the stream (now Gunter's Brook and Kennet & Avon canal)*

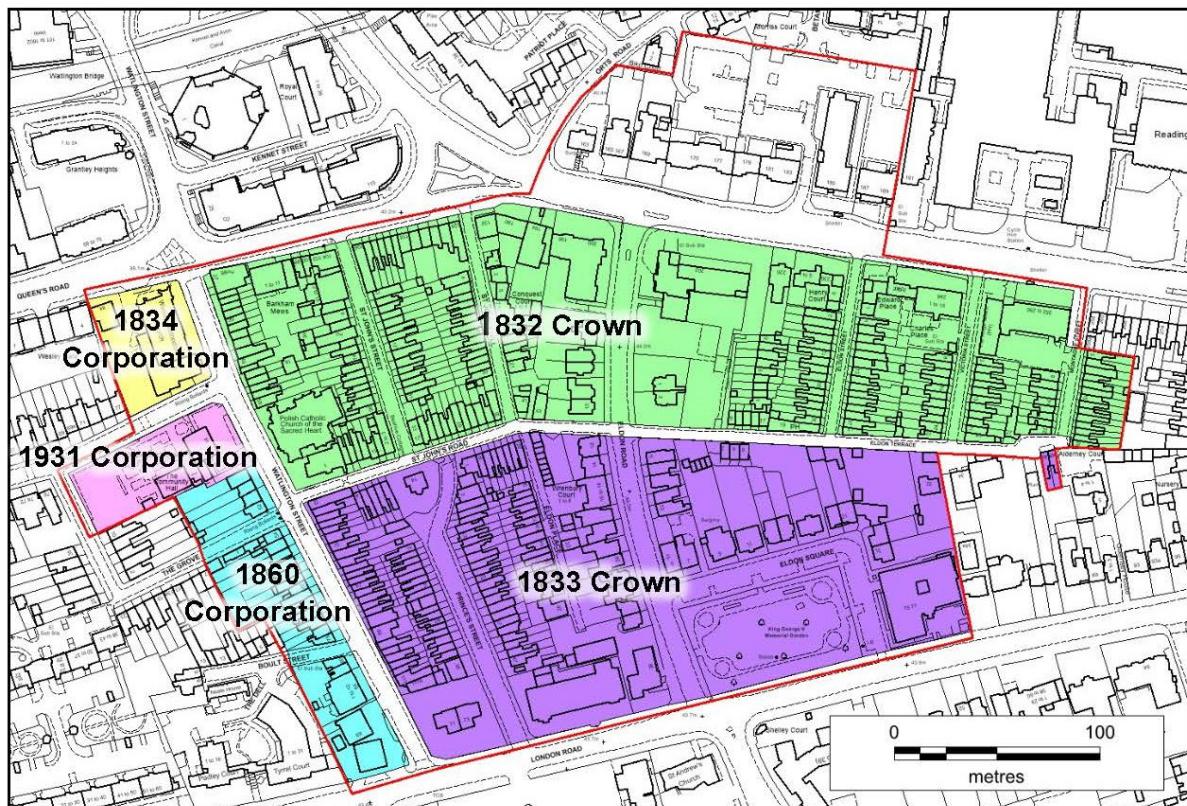
At the dissolution of Reading Abbey, land which had belonged to the abbey was taken over by the Kings (Crown) Estate. Queen Elizabeth I in 1560 leased part of the Abbey lands to Reading Corporation.

Watlington Street, named after Robert Watlington, a seventeenth century clothier, roughly follows the course of what was formerly known as Ort Lane or Abbey Lane, part of a historic north-south trackway (including today's Redlands Road) leading over the Kennet to the Abbey. Watlington House is a grade II\* listed building dating from 1688 with the eastern part

fronting Watlington Street added in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is the only building still standing from the time before the sale of Crown and Corporation Estates which began in the 1830s.

### Sale of Crown and Corporation Estates

The land sales by Reading Corporation and the Crown and the building of two new roads across the land in 1834, Kings Road (named after King William IV) and Queens Road (after Queen Adelaide) were the catalysts for the development of the Eldon Square district on what had previously been mainly agricultural land.



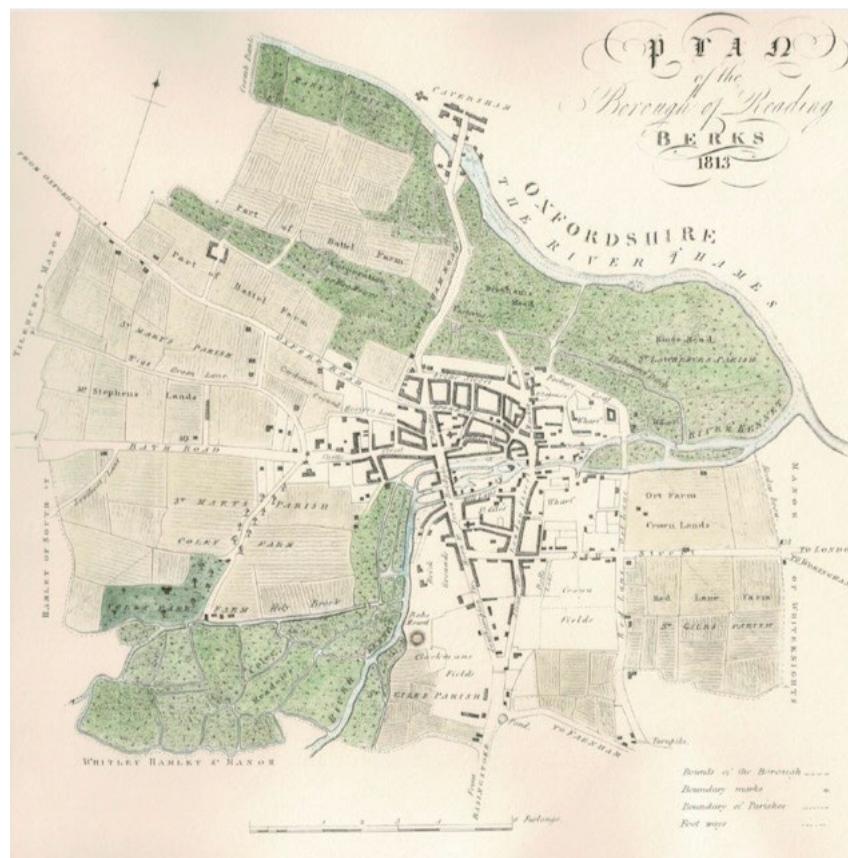
*Figure 39: Dates of land sales within the 2025 CA boundary*

Eldon Square was named after Lord Eldon (1751-1838) who started life as John Scott of Newcastle, entered Parliament in 1783, was created Lord Eldon in 1799 and became Lord Chancellor in Addington's Government in 1801. After the loss of his wife in 1831, he is said to have spent much time at Erleigh Court in Sonning in Berkshire with his brother, Lord Stowell. He was a great patron of Reading's Royal Berkshire Hospital which opened in 1839. Newcastle, his birthplace, also has a town square in his name.

High class houses were built in Eldon Square and in Kings Road, out of Bath stone brought to Reading by the Kennet and Avon Canal. A press report stated that masons also came from Bath to work on the properties<sup>5</sup>. The first houses to be built on Eldon Square were Rosetta Villa and nos 19 and 21. The first stone was laid on Monday 16 June 1834 by Mrs Hodges, wife of Edward Hodges described in the press report as 'purveyor to the forces' who had purchased some of the land. Mr Hodges suggested that the development should be named after Lord Eldon and the Mayor, Thomas Lawrence, who was involved in developing

<sup>5</sup> Reading Mercury 1 April 1833

the area, agreed<sup>6</sup>. There is evidence that it was not completed until 1837 by which time Mr Hodges was living there<sup>7</sup>. On Kings Road, Encombe House, sometimes Villa, is marked on the 1834 Commissioner's map but may not have been habitable at that time.



**Figure 40: Plan of the Borough of Reading 1813 when most of the area was farmland. Courtesy Richard Bennett.**

<sup>6</sup> Berkshire Chronicle 21 June 1834 p2

<sup>7</sup> Mercury 17 March 1838 p2. Hodges vote was contested in an election.



*Figure 41: Commissioner's plan of the Borough of Reading 1834. Kings Road and Queens Road have been laid out as has Eldon Square 'Not completed' and The Oval and its mirror image to the north marked out.*

A further boost to the development of Reading was the construction of the Great Western Railway which reached the town in 1840.

The coming of the railway resulted in a rapid growth of major industries, notably Huntley & Palmers, biscuit makers, and Suttons Seeds, which provided work for a rapidly increasing population. The terraced streets in the conservation area east and west of Eldon Road were among the many terraces built during Reading's rapid expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century.

By 1842 building on the north and south side of Kings Road and Eldon Square was almost complete and some development of the west side of Eldon Road had taken place.

The first St John the Evangelists' Church was built on the site of Collins Farm at the corner of Watlington Street and St Johns Street in 1837. The church was rebuilt in 1872 as it had been outgrown by the congregation and is the building we have today, now the Polish Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart. The parish covered most of Newtown and was very involved with the temperance movement.

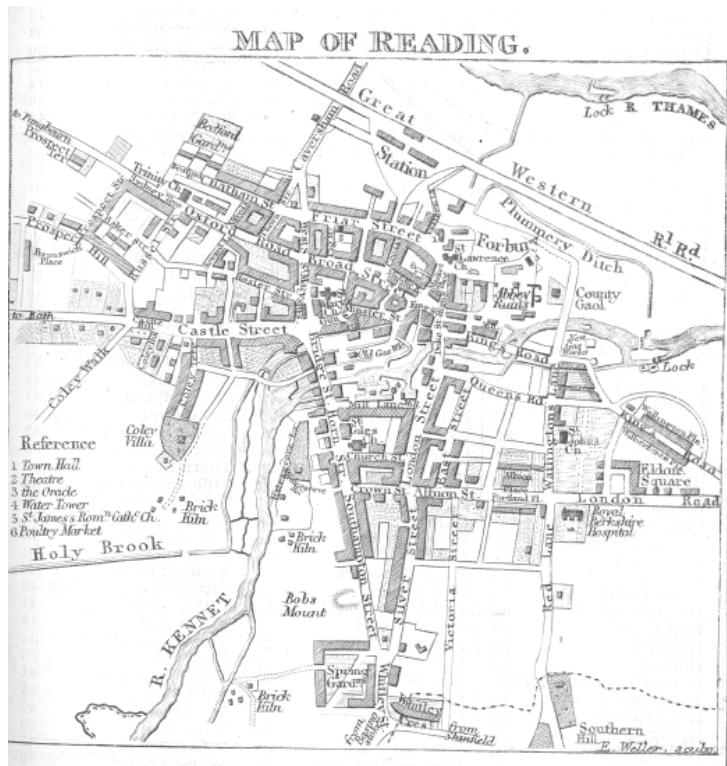


Figure 42: Map of Reading in 1842 from the Post Office Street Directory

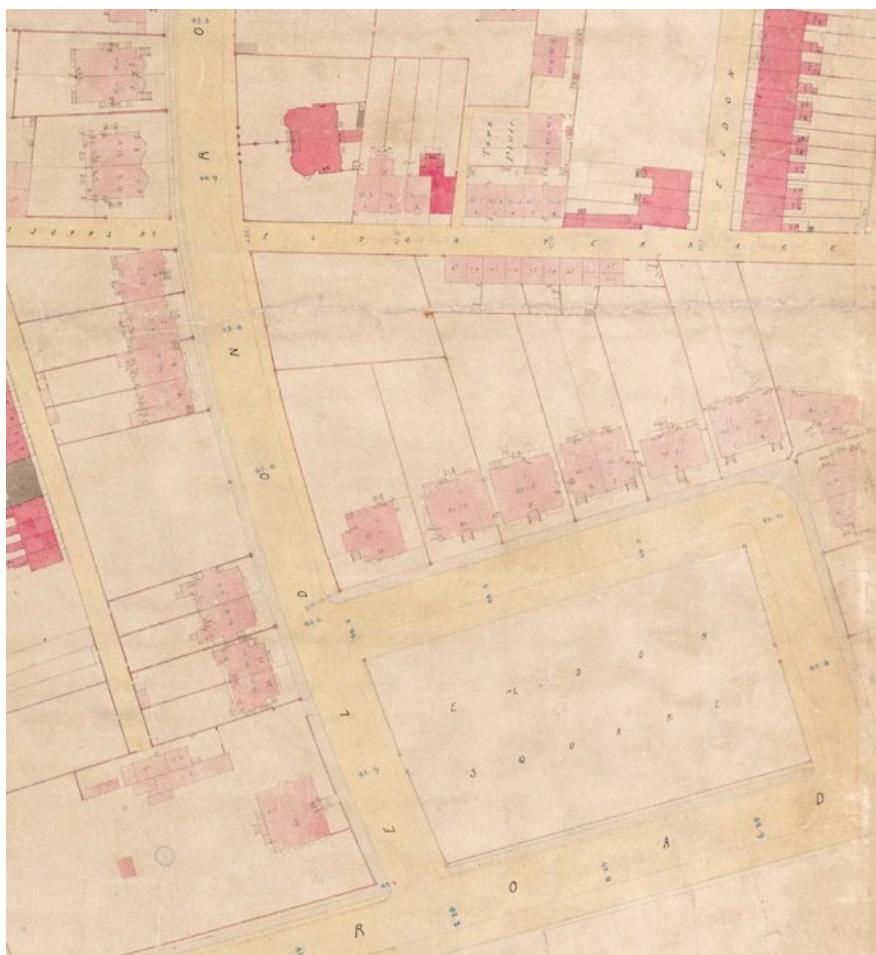


Figure 43: Extract from Board of Health map 1853 Eldon Square and part of Eldon Road, R/AS/2/4/12  
courtesy Royal Berkshire Archives

By the end of the 1870s when detailed Ordnance Survey maps are available there are still undeveloped plots in the CA on Watlington Street, Eldon Road, St Johns Hill, Town Place, Eldon Street, Victoria Street and Montague Street but the street pattern is clear. By c1900 the area is almost fully developed.

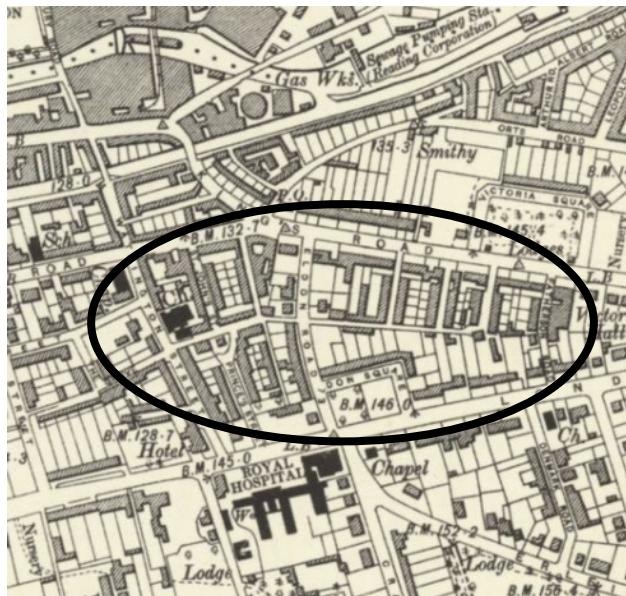


Figure 44: Eldon Square area 1900 OS map surveyed 1898

There has been a limited amount of rebuilding in the late twentieth century, particularly along London Road and the south side of Kings Road but the street pattern has not been altered, except for works to prevent vehicular access to certain side-streets.

To the north beyond the CA, along the northern section of Watlington Street and Orts Road, redevelopment in the 1970s and 1980s including the completion of the IDR circuit changed the face of the area. Industrial premises and public houses as well as older residential properties of Newtown to the north of the CA were demolished.

### The first residents of the Eldon Square Conservation Area – terraced streets

Reading's population grew rapidly throughout the nineteenth century. In the first national census, in 1801, the population of Reading was about 9,400. By 1851 the population had more than doubled, to 21,500, and at the end of the century, it stood at around 59,000.

Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory grew steadily following the opening of the Kings Road premises in the late 1840s and by the end of the nineteenth century 5,000 employees worked there. Many of those who worked there lived in the CA and the impact can be seen in censuses from later in the nineteenth century.

From reviewing a sample of census records in 1851 very few people in the area work for Huntley & Palmers. Male residents of St Johns Street worked in a variety of trades and other jobs, there were millwrights, carpenters, stonemasons, painters and glaziers, tailors, bakers and gardeners. Some of these trades would have been involved in the building and development boom in Reading and supplying services to the growing population around them. Many women in the area, either living on their own or the wives and daughters of a male head of household worked as dressmakers, upholsterers or needlewomen. The same pattern is repeated in other streets.

People moved to Reading to take up the opportunities offered. It was suggested in the press that stonemasons from Bath came to work on Bath stone buildings<sup>8</sup>. Two stonemasons moved from Wiltshire and their families were living next door to one another in St Johns Hill in 1851; John Gibbs and Susannah Aust, wife of John Aust. Mrs Aust lived to be almost 100 years old and in 1911 featured in the Reading Standard as 'One of the oldest, if not the oldest old-age pensioner in Reading...'. Her husband had come to Reading to work as a stonemason on the building of the Royal Berkshire Hospital. She had worked as a dressmaker and a nurse. When her husband retired they were able to live in the almshouses on Castle Street but when he died she had to move out and lived at Finch Court. She died in 1913 at the Workhouse Infirmary after having broken her leg<sup>9</sup>.

By 1881 there were many more occupants working at the biscuit factory, or with family members at the factory or who had lodgers working at the factory. In the eastern part of the CA e.g. Eldon Street almost all the heads of households were working in the biscuit factory (we assume Huntley & Palmers) and sometimes children too.

### **The first residents of Eldon Square Conservation Area – Eldon Square, Kings Road and Eldon Road**

In the 1841 and 1851 censuses the occupants of Kings Road and Eldon Square properties were mainly people of independent means, fundholders and property owners. There were also members of the armed forces, an architect, clergymen, and there were a number of schools.

Francis Trench who as curate of St Giles built the first St Johns Church in 1837 lived at 7 Eldon Square in 1841 and No 11 in 1851.

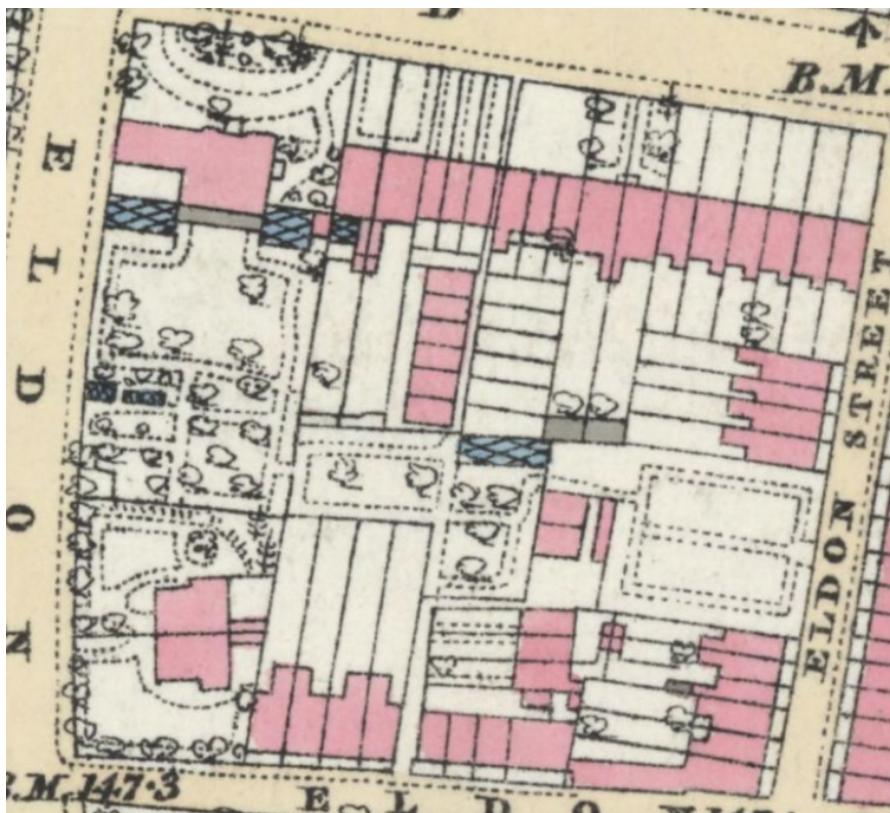
By 1881/1891 more residents are professionals such as the Reading's first full time salaried, Town Clerk, Henry Day (18 Eldon Road) and Edward Margrett, artesian well boring hydraulic engineer (9 Eldon Square) or business owners such as iron founder T C Williams (169 Kings Road).

One of the largest properties, now demolished, was Swiss Villa on the corner of Kings Road and Eldon Road. It was built for William Silver Darter but he never seems to have lived there. From 1838-1863 it was occupied by brewer Harry Sowdon. The 1879 map below shows the extensive gardens and glass houses that attached to the property and the mulberry tree growing at 1a Eldon Road probably came from this garden.

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<sup>8</sup> See 2.3.3 above

<sup>9</sup> Reading Standard 21 January 1911 p8 and Reading Observer 21 June 1913 p6.



*Figure 45: Swiss Villa and the area between Eldon Road and Eldon Street. OS map 1875-1877 published 1879, courtesy National Library of Scotland.*

### **The community as described in the 1903 Licensed Premises survey**

A snapshot of the population is found in the description, using the direct vocabulary of the time for licensing purposes, of the area and clientele of licensed premises (beerhouses and alehouses) in the CA in the 1903 licensing survey.

- Watlington Street was a 'Street and neighbourhood composed of dwelling houses chiefly occupied by the better class of artizans who are employed at the biscuit factory';
- Eldon Terrace 'Street comprised of private houses occupied by artizans and the working class';
- St Johns Road and St Johns Street 'Street composed of cottages, and occupied by artizans, labourers &c';
- Kings Road 'West end of street is devoted to trade purposes, Eastern end residential houses, tradesmen, professional men and artizans residing therein';
- Queens Road 'Street chiefly residential, the better working classes being in residence in the vicinity of the house [The Lyndhurst]'.

There were 12 licensed premises:

- Victoria 15 & 17 Eldon Terrace
- Eldon Arms, Eldon Terrace (later The Weather Station)
- Berkshire, 252 Kings Road

- Military Arms, 106 King's Road (now a convenience store)
- Beehive, St Johns Road
- Lifeboat, St Johns Road
- 17 St Johns Road (later Deane's)
- Retreat, St Johns Street
- Lyndhurst Arms, 19 Watlington Street
- Boatbuilders' Arms 2 & 4 Watlington Street
- County Brewery Tap, 88 Watlington Street
- Golden Lion, 54 Watlington Street

Not all the licensed premises would be recognised as public houses today for example 17 St Johns Road had a 6 day licence and was also a baker and grocer and Golden Lion on Watlington Street was also a grocer's shop.

### **Reading's first conservation area**

Eldon Square was Reading's first conservation area designated in 1972. It was closely followed by St Marys Butts/Castle Street and Russell Street/Castle Hill (now Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road).

The principle of creation of conservation areas to protect the important heritage of areas and neighbourhoods rather than solely individual buildings was established under Civic Amenities Act of 1967. Reading Civic Society had been founded a few years before and was in the forefront of the campaign for conservation areas in Reading.

Reading events that gave impetus to the initiative were the redevelopment of parts of the town centre and the future route of Reading's Inner Distribution Road. Also in the 1970s the 3Bs, Biscuits (Huntley & Palmers), Beer (H & G Simonds) and Bulbs (Suttons Seeds), all left Reading town centre and permanently changed its appearance and function.

Just north of the CA, redevelopment of the Orts Road area with modern residential properties was being planned and the council compulsorily purchased pre-Victorian properties in preparation for that<sup>10</sup>.

In 1973 Frederick Padley wrote 'A Village in the Town, Reading's first conservation area'<sup>11</sup> which was followed by an update 10 years later. Mr Padley had lived in the area all his life and as well as telling its history and that of the people who lived there, he documented businesses and organisations. The booklet is an invaluable shortcut to understanding the streets west of Eldon Road and an updated edition would be welcomed.

In the late 1970s there was a major local heritage conservation victory when St John the Evangelist Church was saved from demolition. The church was listed Grade II by Historic England (Then DoE) in 1974.

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<sup>10</sup> Reading Museum 'Revealing Reading's Hidden History, Orts Road & Newtown'. Happy Museum Project. 2013. Copy available in Reading Central Library.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Charles Padley, 'A Village in the Town, Reading's first conservation area' (1973), Reading Branch Workers Educational Association

In 1973, a history of the church and its activities in the area 'Happy are They, The History of the Parish of St John the Evangelist and St Stephen, Reading' by John McKechnie<sup>12</sup> had been published looking forward to changes in the parish.

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) undertook a 1970 Campaign to review the needs of the parish and its buildings. It decided that St John's School no longer represented suitable premises and that both its churches (including St Stephens, Orts Road, a fine William White building, demolished in 1976) should be replaced<sup>13</sup>. It decided to build a new school combined with a Parish Centre and dispose of the redundant sites and buildings. At the time demolition could be approved even when a viable alternative use was available.

Once the Parish Centre was built, the parish church would be declared redundant (on 15 August 1978) and vested in the Church Commissioners who would demolish the building and sell the site. A Pastoral Scheme approved by the Diocese and the Queen, was drawn up to enable this. However things did not go according to this plan.

The Save St John's Association and Reading Civic Society led a campaign of protests against the proposed demolition. The determination to demolish the church persisted 'for pastoral reasons' although it would have adversely affected the half of the parish in the conservation area. This resulted in a conflict over several years including the intervention of Marcus Binney's 'Save Britain's Heritage' group (founded in 1975). The church is mentioned in 'Change & Decay' by Marcus Binney and Peter Burman as an example of a former church that made a major contribution to the townscape<sup>14</sup>.

In February 1981 the previous Pastoral Scheme was revoked and a revised scheme allowing for alternative use resulted in a 999 year lease of the church to Reading's Polish community<sup>15</sup>.

Reading Borough Council also played its part in the drama. Although Ecclesiastical Exemption allowed decisions to be made by the church while it was still in use, this did not apply to the walls around the church. These could not be demolished because they were within a conservation area and at 5 feet tall exceeded the height at which conservation area consent was required for demolition. This consent was not given which prevented demolition vehicles entering the site. Safety was also an important consideration as the spire is 150 feet (45m) high, on a very confined site. This together made demolition prohibitive.

The legislation relating to Ecclesiastical Exemption has now changed in favour of re-use, with all major denominations covered.

The two histories of the area and the creation of a conservation area within a few years of one another are indicative of the level of change that was happening in the built and community environment.

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<sup>12</sup> John McKechnie, 'Happy are They, The History of the Parish of St John the Evangelist and St Stephen, Reading'

<sup>13</sup> John McKechnie, 'Happy are They, The History of the Parish of St John the Evangelist and St Stephen, Reading'

<sup>14</sup> Marcus Binney and Peter Burman (1975), 'Change & Decay. The Future of Our Churches' p30, image p33. The book accompanied an exhibition at the V & A in 1977 in which the Church of St John the Evangelist was featured.

<sup>15</sup> Reading Evening Post 3 March 1981, p9 and Public Notice p10

## Historic Associations

Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), the French Decadent poet, lived as a French tutor at 165 Kings Road, from August to December 1874. While there he wrote most of 'Illuminations' generally considered his greatest work. The rebuilding of the property features in the opening sequence of Patrick Keillor's 'Robinson in Space'. Ironically this has therefore become the most famous of all the grand Kings Road houses.

Henry Briant (1813-1884) and his brother Nathaniel Briant (1813-39) were local architects. Henry Briant was responsible for the Royal Berkshire Hospital, houses in Eldon Square (reputedly with his brother) and the ornate Italian Palazzo style town-centre bank in King Street. Nathaniel Briant (1813-39) was probably responsible for the layout of Reading Cemetery.

William Henry Fox Talbot/ Nicolaas Henneman photographed houses on Eldon Square in the 1840s.

Rufus Isaacs, Lord Reading (1860-1935) and MP for Reading 1904-1913, whose statue is within the George V Memorial Gardens was Viceroy of India 1921-26. The statue was one of two of past viceroys, the other was Lord Harding, that were commissioned from the sculptor Charles Sergeant Jagger (1885-1934) by Sir Edward Lutyens for the Indian capital of New Delhi. Following Indian Independence in 1947 Lord Isaacs widow was concerned for its fate and sought its return to Reading and paid for it to be shipped<sup>16</sup>, arriving in 1969. In 1971 it was decided, after some debate, to place the statue in the gardens<sup>17</sup>. There was a suggestion from councillors that this decision should be reviewed and consideration given to relocating it when the new law courts had been constructed<sup>18</sup>. The site in the gardens was approved of by Stella Isaacs, the Dowager Marchioness and she was expected to unveil it but died on 22 May 1971. The unveiling by the third Marquess of Reading took place on 8 July 1971.

## The Three Bs

- As described above, due to the proximity of the area to Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory many employees lived in this area. George Palmer is recorded as living at Wilberforce Place in the 1851 census and was described as a biscuit baker employing about 130 hands. William Isaac Palmer was responsible for the Lodge Temperance Hotel on Queens Road<sup>19</sup>. It replaced a public house on the same site in the 1870s.

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<sup>16</sup> Reading Civic Society newsletter [Spring 2024](#), David Stevens 'Lord Reading's Statue'

<sup>17</sup> Reading Evening Post 4 March 1971

<sup>18</sup> Presumably the law courts referred to were the new Magistrates Courts on Castle Street. Minutes of the Town Planning and Buildings Committee 5 March 1971, endorsing the decision of the Public Entertainment and Parks Committee 23 February 1971

<sup>19</sup> Berkshire Chronicle 28 January 1916 p6 Death of Mr J Humphries of The Lodge Hotel



*Figure 46: Kings Road, Reading c1905. The Lodge Hotel is on the right. Courtesy of Reading Libraries Local Studies Collection*

- Alfred Sutton (1818-97), brother of Martin Hope Sutton and third son of the founder of Sutton Seeds, John Sutton funded the St John's Road Mission and Reading Room on Princes Street<sup>20</sup>.
- Brewer Harry Sowdon lived for some time at Swiss Villa, now part of the site of Hanover House. Sowdon's brewery on Bridge Street was acquired by H & G Simonds in 1851.
- Another brewer, Samuel Henry Gutteridge Higgs of the Lion Brewery on Castle Street lived and was landlord of the Berkshire Inn on Kings Road in the early twentieth century.

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Census information via [findmypast](#)

British Newspaper Archive via [findmypast](#)

<sup>20</sup> Berkshire Chronicle 13 June 1868 p5

## Appendix 3 Listed buildings

Table 3: Listed buildings in Character Area 1

Address of building	HE listing number	Image 1	Image 2	Brief description mainly derived from listing entry
163 Kings Road (N) (formerly Encombe Lodge)	1303084 <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1303084?section=official-list-entry">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1303084?section=official-list-entry</a>		None	<p>Grade II</p> <p>Probably the oldest property of the properties on the north of Kings Road, the most westerly of an array of similar prestige buildings formerly known as Wellington Place. It is c.1840 and attributed to Henry and Nathaniel Briant</p> <p>two storeys, attic &amp; basement</p> <p>faced with Bath stone</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>
173-183 Kings Road (N) (Wilton House, Malvern House, Oakley House)	1155954 <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1155954">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1155954</a>	 		<p>Grade II*</p> <p>Built after 1832 as part of Wellington Place</p> <p>attributed to Henry and Nathaniel Briant</p> <p>three groups of semi-detached properties with single storey links.</p> <p>Three storeys with a basement.</p> <p>French casements with balconies and cast iron railings.</p> <p>The buildings are almost but not completely identical in particular the capitals of the pilasters on the central pair are different from those of the outer pairs.</p> <p>(images 173-175, 175-177 and 179-181 Evelyn Williams)</p>

Address of building	HE listing number	Image 1	Image 2	Brief description mainly derived from listing entry
185 Kings Road (N) Kings Court (Waterloo Lodge)	1113499 <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113499">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113499</a>		None	Grade II Built after 1832 as Waterloo Lodge and part of Wellington Place attributed to Henry and Nathaniel Briant comprises three floors with a basement and modern attic level. Faced with Bath stone (image Evelyn Williams)
187-189 Kings Road (N) (Waterloo Place)	1321921 <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321921">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321921</a>		None	Grade II Built before 1840 and part of Waterloo Place attributed to Henry and Nathaniel Briant symmetrical pair of houses with glazing bar sash windows. Comprises three floors with a basement and a later addition of an attic. Faced with Bath stone (image Evelyn Williams)

196-200 Kings Road (S) Eldon Lodge (Wilberforce Place)	1321922 <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321922">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321922</a>		None	<p>Grade II</p> <p>Constructed in the early 1840's and formerly known as Wilberforce Place</p> <p>attributed to Henry and Nathaniel Briant</p> <p>Less grand than 163-189 on the north side of the road.</p> <p>A block of three houses faced with Bath stone.</p> <p>Modern extensions onto Eldon Road.</p> <p>One window on each building floor with cast iron railings at ground floor.</p> <p>(Evelyn Williams)</p>
220-222 Kings Road (S) (Nelson Place)	1113502 <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113502">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113502</a>		None	<p>Grade II</p> <p>Previously known as Nelson Place, they were faced with Bath stone but are now rendered.</p> <p>Double gabled 3 storey and basement front. Wide eaves to slate roof.</p> <p>Each house has one arched window on the ground floor, and common stairwell landing also with an arched window. The upper windows are glazing bar sashes. A modern semi-replica entrance door. French casements to basement.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>

2 Eldon Road	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1248744">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1248744</a>		None	Grade II  Before 1840. Known to be by Nathaniel Briant. Altered. 2 storeys and basement. Stucco, ground floor channelled. Central pedimented doorcase with modern applied pilasters (originally a window). Steps to door. Garage doors inserted to left hand basement. Hipped slate roof with flat eaves.  (image Evelyn Williams)
4 & 6 Eldon Road	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113462">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113462</a>		None	Grade II  Before 1840. Probably by Henry or Nathaniel Briant. 2 storeys and basement. Bath ashlar. Hipped slate roof with central chimneys. Deep bracketed eaves. On 1st floor outer small round-headed windows, inner French casements with flanking wall thickenings. On ground floor: tripartite glazing bar sashes in bows with vermiculated dividing quoin strip. Vermiculated voussoirs to outer round-headed doorways. Flanking extensions. Projecting front garden walls terminate in the Eldon Square type of polygonal pier with crested capping.  (image Zoë Andrews)

8 & 10 Eldon Road	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321940">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321940</a>		None	Grade II  Circa 1840. Probably by Henry or Nathaniel Briant. Bath ashlar pair. Rusticated ground floor and quoins. 3 storeys and basement, 1st and 2nd floors have 2 windows each, glazing bar sashes, round-headed on 2nd floor, bracketed pediments on 1st floor. Each has a wide 3 light bay with casement windows. Entered from side in porches with Doric piers, cornice and blocking course. (image Zoë Andrews)
12 & 14 Eldon Road	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113463">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113463</a>		None	Grade II  Circa 1840. Probably by Henry or Nathaniel Briant. Bath stone pair. 2 storeys and basement with 3 storey end pavilions. Slate roof with projecting eaves. Outer doors, No 12 in angle, porch with stilted segmental arch. 1 bay end pavilions with shaped surrounds to 1st and 2nd floor windows; round-headed on ground floor with panels below and impost and label moulds; ground floor channelled. Bath stone garden walls to front with pierced roundels and moulded coping. (image Evelyn Williams)
16 & 18 Eldon Road	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113464">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113464</a>		None	Grade II  Circa 1840s. Probably by Henry or Nathaniel Briant. Bath stone ashlar pair. Hipped slate roof with stone eaves brackets. Ornamental frieze (simplified guilloche). Glazing bar sash windows in 4 ranges, bracketed pediments to ground floor windows and bracketed balconies. Set back side bays for entrance, No 16 has pilasters, balustrade over, in projecting porch. No 18 has 2 storey porch with round-headed doorway. (image Zoë Andrews)

20 & 22 Eldon Road	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321941">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321941</a>		None	Grade II  Bath stone ashlar with rusticated quoins, cornice over ground floor and brackets to eaves. Slate roof with crested ridge. Paired central round-headed arches to entrances. Front garden wall has flanking Eldon Square-type piers (polygonal with crested capping).  Although listing entry says 1840-58 and nearer to later date, Henry or Nathaniel Briant, Sidney Gold suggests earlier and likely to be Nathaniel Briant as 20 Eldon Road named Tressilian, the name later given to his son.  (image Evelyn Williams)
28 & 30 Eldon Road	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113465">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113465</a>		None	Grade II  Before 1840. Probably Henry or Nathaniel Briant. Bath stone ashlar pair with hipped slate roofs and 2 central chimneys. Flat eaves, obscured in front by wide break with coved cornice in which are 2 small attic windows with marginal glazing; guilloche panels below. Recessed round-headed porches on either side. Front garden walls project and have Eldon Square-type piers: polygonal with crested capping.  (image Zoë Andrews)
32 & 34 Eldon Road	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321942">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321942</a>		None	Grade II  Venetian Cottages is faintly visible on the central pillar.  Circa 1840. Probably by Henry or Nathaniel Briant. 3 storeys and basement pair. Bath stone ashlar with hipped slate roof. Marginal glazing on ground floor with overall segmental pediments and corbelled balconies with delicate wrought-iron patterns. Recessed flanking 2 storey porches with round-headed doorways and round-headed side lights. Plain gable roofed wings set back on each side behind porch extensions.

				(image Zoë Andrews)
5 Eldon Square and 15 Eldon Road (adjoining)	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113467">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113467</a>		None	<p>Grade II</p> <p>Listing description dates this property to c.1840. Attributed to the Briants. The evidence suggests that this is an early twentieth century building arising from the subdivision of the plot on which 7 Eldon Square stood and demolition of the western bay of No 7. (Listing correction has been requested).</p> <p>Bath stone. Slate roof with large 2 light dormer with marginal glazing. End chimneys. 2 windows on 1st floor with stop-beaded surrounds, large tripartite window on ground floor with segmental head, all sashes with marginal glazing. Ground floor window has moulded architrave and panelling in tympanum. Recessed doorway to right with architrave surround. Bath stone corner pier to south-west of garden with chamfered sides.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>
7 Eldon Square	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321943">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321943</a>		None	<p>Grade II</p> <p>Circa 1840. 2 and 3 storey Bath ashlar 'pair' to No 5 (qv). Italianate style. Raised surround on 1st floor, bracketed segmental pediment on ground floor with corbelled balcony. One window to left over recessed modern door in plain doorway. Slate roofs with projecting eaves.</p> <p>Considerably modified at the turn of the twentieth century when the plot on which it stands was partitioned, the western bay demolished, a new front entrance created where there was once a window.</p> <p>(Listing correction has been requested)</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>

9 Eldon Square	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113468">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113468</a>		None	Grade II  Circa 1840 detached. Italianate. 2 storey wings flanking 3 storey centre. Basement. Bath stone ashlar, ground floor channelled. 1st floor sill string to wings and modillion cornice with blocking course; centre plain cornice with high parapet. Central doorway flanked by pilasters and projecting gabled porch with arched entrance. End piers to front garden, similar to others in the area. Hidden slate roof with ashlar chimneys, (moulded capping).  ((image Zoë Andrews))
11 Eldon Square	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321944">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321944</a>		None	Grade II  Circa 1840s. Italianate. The largest house on the north side of the layout. 3 storeys. Bath stone ashlar on plinth. Gabled side bays. 2nd floor outer windows modified Venetian with corbelled stone balconies. Outer 1st floor windows have bracketed cornices, centre has trellis verandah balcony over porch. Central panelled double door with rectangular overlight and projecting porch on square piers, modillion cornice and pierced parapet, arched windows to sides. Slate roof with projecting eaves. Garden wall pier (of Eldon Square pattern) to right.  ((image Zoë Andrews))

13 & 15 Eldon Square	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1155144">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1155144</a>		None	Grade II  Circa 1840. Italianate pair. Bath stone ashlar. Central arched panel with window in attic, flanking round headed windows with corbelled cills. Glazing bar sash windows with marginal glazing. Inner ground floor windows French casements to wide balconies with arched railings supported on short Doric-type column from basement area retaining walls. Outer 2½ glazed doors with steps, No 13 with projecting stone porch having shouldered lintel. Central panel pier on 1st floor with urn capping.  (image Evelyn Williams)
17 Eldon Square	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113469">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113469</a>		None	Grade II  Circa 1840. Asymmetrical Italianate. 2 ½ storeys and basement. Bath stone ashlar on plinth. Band over ground floor. Central 2 panelled door with arched fanlight. Steps to projecting gabled porch with corner piers and arched opening. Flanking corner garden piers (of the Eldon Square-type).  (image Evelyn Williams)
19 & 21 Eldon Square	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113470">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113470</a>		None	Grade II  Two of the first houses to be built on Eldon Square.  Circa 1840s pair. Bath stone ashlar with band over ground floor. 2 storeys. Outer gabled breaks, 4 bays in all, with paired windows (C19 sashes) arched on 1st floor. The ground floor windows are tall casements, the inner 2 with verandah linking outer breaks, cast iron guard rails and stone brackets and supports from area wall. Central arched groove to 1st floor. Wall thickened and channelled for arched doorways. Slate roof.  (image Zoë Andrews)

23 Eldon Square Rosetta Villa	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1155151">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1155151</a>		None	Grade II  One of the first houses to be built on Eldon Square. Rosetta Villa has been carved above the front door.  Set back house in angle of square. Circa 1840s. Dressed Bath stone, centre ashlar with channelled ground floor. Gabled bay to left, central angled entrance bay with shaped panel over cornice; lower bay to right. Plate glass sash windows. Re-entrant curved walls to front garden gate which has the crenellation-capped piers of Eldon Square type.  (image Evelyn Williams)
25 & 27 Eldon Square	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321945">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321945</a>		None	Grade II  Circa 1840s. Pair. 2 storeys, attic and basement. Bath stone ashlar, ground floor channelled with band over. Flat eaves with plain brackets. Hipped slate roof with central ashlar chimney. On the ground floor: tall French casements with 2 tented verandah balconies with pierced stone parapets on stone brackets. Flanking set-back doorways which have shaped low relief pediments, No 25 as a glazed door and a 2 storey 2 window extension.  (image Zoë Andrews)

Railings to King George V Memorial Gardens	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113466">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113466</a>					<p>Grade II (images Zoë Andrews (pillars &amp; gate) &amp; Evelyn Williams (pedestrian gate no longer in use))</p> <p>Mushroom topped railings (1830s) thought to have been manufactured by Perry, Barrett and Exall of Reading. Lock plate on two of the three gates is marked P.B. &amp; E. Reading.</p> <p>The railings are models for other railings in the area whether original (The Oval) or reproduction (Watlington House).</p> <p>The eastern gate does not have mushroom tops and may not be of the same era.</p> <p>(images Evelyn Williams)</p>
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**Table 4: Listed buildings in Character Area 2**

Address of building	HE listing number	Image 1	Image 2	Brief description mainly derived from listing entry
Watlington House	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321898">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321898</a>	 		<p>Grade II*</p> <p>The western part built 1688 for Samuel and Anne Watlington, see rainwaterheads: 1688 W S A. Eastern part said to have been added 1763 (probably earlier).</p> <p>Red and silver grey brick with a raised brick string at 1st floor level. Moulded and bracketed wood eaves cornice. Hipped old tile roof, brick end chimneys, dormered to west; valley roof with dormers facing valley. Garden door with moulded architrave surround in trellis porch and central half-landing stair window above it under a moulded brick pediment. A single storey 'booth' wing to the south. Interior: panelled hall with 2 arch screen on fluted piers. Turned balusters to stairs (straight string), double ramped mahogany dado rail and baluster rail, panelled. dado (circa 1740 probably). Samuel Watlington was Mayor of Reading in 1695 and in 1711.</p> <p>The listing includes the late nineteenth century garden hall as it is within the curtilage of the house.</p> <p>This tin building was brought to the garden of Watlington House in the late nineteenth century when the house was being used by Kendrick School. It is now used for meetings and functions.</p> <p>(images Evelyn Williams)</p>

Address of building	HE listing number	Image 1	Image 2	Brief description mainly derived from listing entry
Walls enclosing west end of Watlington House	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113607">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113607</a>		None	<p>Grade II</p> <p>Late C17 or early C18. Massive brick and flint walls of varying heights. North and south walls about 80-90 yards long. West wall about 30 yards long.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams (Jan 2025))</p>
Polish Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113606">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113606</a>			<p>Grade II</p> <p>Church of England. 1872-73 by W.A. Dixon. Large Early English style rock faced Kentish Ragstone church with red Mansfield stone and Bath stone dressings.</p> <p>Replaced a smaller church of the same name on this site from the first half of the eighteenth century.</p> <p>The church was on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register and extensive restoration works were undertaken in the 2010s. Unfortunately this resulted in the removal of original railings and replacement with modern ones. The schoolroom on the southern side of the church appears not to be included in the listing entry.</p> <p>(images Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	HE listing number	Image 1	Image 2	Brief description mainly derived from listing entry
Wesley Methodist Church	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321916">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1321916</a>			<p>Grade II</p> <p>QUEEN'S ROAD 1. 5128 Wesley Chapel SU 7273 7/557 II 2. Dated 1872. Red brick with stone and white brick dressings - steeple principally white brick. Tiled roofs. Gothic plan and elevation. 4 bay aisled nave with flush transept and 1 bay chancel. 3 sided gallery interior. Main porch to north-east with 3 stage tower and steeple. Lancet windows. Decorated tracery in large north window. The 2 spires of St John's and Wesley Chapel are close together and important landmarks for Reading. 1872 foundation stone on Watlington Street elevation)</p> <p>(images Evelyn Williams)</p>

Address of building	HE listing number	Image 1	Image 2	Brief description mainly derived from listing entry
The Oval	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1156910">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1156910</a>	 		<p>Grade II</p> <p>Early nineteenth century, 2 storey detached villa. Red brick with silver grey brick headers. Toothing brick cornice. Wide eaves to low pitched slate roof. A symmetrical 'T'-plan design carefully aligned so that the south end closes the vista along Princes Street from the Reading Hospital with a full height bow (1 window, French casement on ground floor). North front faces down St John's street; 3 bays, glazing bar sash windows and central 6 panel door in recessed arch with fanlight. Garden to south surrounded by cast iron mushroom capped rails (see George V Memorial Gardens, Eldon Square) on stone plinths.</p> <p>Railings at the rear of The Oval are the same style as those of the Eldon Square gardens</p> <p>(image left top Evelyn Williams, right and left bottom Zoë Andrews)</p>
71 & 73 London Road (Melrose House)	<a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113507">https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1113507</a>			<p>Grade II</p> <p>Now one house, early nineteenth century, 3 storeys and basement. Stucco with rusticated ground floor and quoins. Moulded cornice at 1st floor level. 4 Roman Ionic pilasters embracing 2 upper floors with plain frieze and moulded and bracketed cornice breaking forward over pilasters. Large central stuccoed chimney stack.</p> <p>There are two entrances one from each side that appear to have been added in 1990 (see image of portico).</p> <p>(images Evelyn Williams)</p>

There are no listed buildings in Character Area 3.

## Appendix 4 Buildings of townscape merit

*Table 5: Buildings of townscape merit within Character Area 1*

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
165 & 167 Kings Road		None	<p>Both properties were entirely rebuilt in the 1990s in a style to match the surrounding buildings. The rear of 167 has a very large modern extension.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>
1 & 3 Eldon Road			<p>1 &amp; 3 Eldon Road, Beaufort and Ditton Lodge are a semi-detached houses built of yellow stock brick with patterned brick on the chimney stack. The rear of property which can be seen from Eldon Terrace is red brick. Many original exterior features remain.</p> <p>(images Evelyn Williams)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
5-7 Eldon Road		None	(image Zoë Andrews)
11 & 13 Eldon Road		None	Semi-detached pair of Edwardian houses. Egyptian style pylon doorways. 1902 date stone at first floor level. (image Evelyn Williams)
24 & 26 Eldon Road		None	Semi-detached stone fronted pair of late Victorian houses. Features include tall ground floor windows and small front dormers. (image Evelyn Williams)

**Table 6: Buildings of townscape merit within Character Area 2**

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
84 Queens Road			<p>The late Victorian vicarage (manse) attached to the Wesleyan church. Important because of its link with the church and sharing the same site. (images Zoë Andrews)</p>
102-104 Queens Road			<p>Former Meaby's Bakery, later A Lee Bakery. (image Evelyn Williams) Cast iron decoration on Queens Road shop window (image Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
1 Princes Street		None	<p>The Lodge at the corner of Princes Street and St Johns Street. Red and grey brick chequerboard pattern with a grey brick string course. The double front houses faces the side of The Oval and was probably part of the original plan for the area. From 1870 the home of undertaker H North with premises next door now 3a &amp; 3b Princes Street (see below). The family business was taken over by William Bourton who moved from 111 and 111a Watlington Street.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>
3a and 3b Princes Street		None	<p>Originally the premises of H North undertaker – see 1 Princes Street above. Now converted to two residential units.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
3 Princes Street		None	<p>Formerly St John's Mission and Reading Room, 1868. Built at the expense of Mr Alfred Sutton.          (image Evelyn Williams)</p>
16-28 St Johns Road		None	<p>Chequerboard red and grey brick terrace running from Eldon Place to 1 Princes Street.          Group value with The Oval (Grade II listed) and 1 Princes Street.          (image Evelyn Williams)</p>
The schoolroom at the Polish Catholic Church, Watlington Street		None	<p>The schoolroom is not mentioned in the listing entry for the church itself although the style is similar and it is on the same site. It was included as a building of townscape merit in the 2007 appraisal and so has (for now) been included here.          (image Evelyn Williams)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
63 Watlington Street		None	<p>Swift Upholstery has a corner position and the junction of Watlington Street and St Johns Road. The traditional shop front has an awning. The last workshop of its kind now in the CA.</p> <p>In 1972 the premises were occupied by a butcher.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>
73-79 Watlington Street			<p>73 Watlington Street is unique in the CA in having full height windows on the third floor. The next door properties at 75 is more typical of this typology within the CA. The properties have retained or restored original features, railings, windows, window corbels, blind boxes etc and are well maintained. Unfortunately the brickwork of No75 has been painted over.</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
99 Watlington Street		None	<p>This is an attractive double fronted property, with slightly asymmetrical first floor windows with a porch and other heritage features. Landmark building on the east side of Watlington Street.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>
111 Watlington Street		None	<p>The shop was at the time of the last appraisal occupied by Somerfield Glass who also operated from the workshop at 111a. Both properties seem to have been linked from the time of the first occupiers Boughton builders (see below). There is an indecipherable ghost sign on the gable.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
111a Watlington Street		None	<p>Former W Boughton, Andrews glass merchants and Somerville glass merchants. Historically linked with 111 above and a vestige of the light industrial and commercial past of the area.          (image Evelyn Williams)</p>
74-78 Watlington Street		None	<p>This row of three are distinctive and retain or have restored many original features.          (image Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
84 Watlington Street (County Arms)		None	<p>County Arms 1936 replaced an earlier public house of the same name. Converted and extended to provide flats in the 2010s.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>
13-21 St Johns Hill			<p>13-21 St Johns Hill date from c1900 much later than properties on the opposite side of the hill. The grey brick with red window and door surrounds are distinctive. The properties have very tall chimneys that have been retained.</p> <p>(left image Zoë Andrews)</p> <p>(right image Evelyn Williams)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
7-11 St Johns Hill (Conquest Court)		None	<p>Built as a mineral water factory for Humphries and Holt, taken over by Tunbridge, Jones &amp; Co of Castle Street in 1932. In the later twentieth century it was occupied by Conquest Products Ltd a small leatherwork factory, hence the current name.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>
5 St Johns Hill		None	<p>Double fronted red brick.</p> <p>With No 7 St Johns Hill appears on the Board of Health Maps 1853. Set back from St Johns Hill.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
3 St Johns Hill		None	<p>With No 7 St Johns Hill appears on the Board of Health Maps 1853. Set back at an angle from St Johns Hill.</p> <p>Two storeys and basement, stucco.</p> <p>Magnificent display of climbing roses when in flower.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>
39 St Johns Road			<p>Former Lifeboat public house with ghost sign revealed.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
41 St Johns Road		None	<p>Former Eldon Cottage which had an extensive garden to the rear on which 11-13 St Johns Hill were constructed. Later occupied as offices of C and W Andrews glass merchants.</p> <p>Unfortunately the chimney stack was removed when the property was reroofed in 2023.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>
43 St Johns Road		None	<p>Formerly warehouse of C and W Andrews Glass Merchants.</p> <p>Converted to residential.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
15 St Johns Road and Beehive Cottages		None	-
8 St Johns Street		None	<p>The Retreat public house. The property was licensed in the second half of the nineteenth century when the property was occupied by Thomas Law pork butcher and beer retailer. In 1903 it was a beerhouse tied to Higgs brewery.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
17 St Johns Street		None	<p>Recently refurbished three storey grey brick with red brick window and door surrounds. (image Evelyn Williams)</p>
88 Queens Road		None	<p>The Lyndhurst public house. At the foot of Watlington Street (once Lyndhurst Street) and named after the first Lord Lyndhurst who succeeded Lord Eldon as Lord Chancellor. (image Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
118-128 Queens Road		None	<p>Although not particularly well maintained these properties represent the taller red bricked terraces built along Queens Road from c1850. There are six in this terrace. The eastern three have lost their chimney pots but the western three have retained them.</p> <p>(image Richard Bennett)</p>

**Table 7: Buildings of townscape merit within Character Area 3**

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
1-9 Town Place		None	<p>Some of the older cottages on Town Place. A unique terrace in the CA with no vehicular access.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>

Address of building	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
46 & 48 Eldon Terrace		None	Landmark buildings on the corner of Eldon Terrace where it meets Montague Street. (image Evelyn Williams)

## Appendix 5 Conservation Area Views

See the text of the appraisal for the significance of these views

*Table 8: Views into the Conservation Area*

Location of view	Image
East along Queens Road to the junction with Kings Road and beyond.  (image Evelyn Williams)	
Further east along Queens Road closer to the CA.  (image Evelyn Williams)	
North down Watlington Street from in front of the Royal Berkshire Hospital on London Road.  (image Evelyn Williams)	

Location of view	Image
West from Reading College (Activate Learning) (image Evelyn Williams)	

**Table 9: Views within the Conservation Area**

Location of view	Image
North towards The Oval (rear) from Princes Street (image Evelyn Williams)	
South towards The Oval (front) from St Johns Street (image Evelyn Williams)	

Location of view	Image
East along Eldon Terrace from Eldon Road (image Evelyn Williams)	
South along Montague Street towards Eldon Terrace (image Zoë Andrews)	
East from Eldon Road into Eldon Square (image Evelyn Williams)	

Location of view	Image
North down Eldon Road towards Kings Road (images Jennifer Berdoltt)	
South from Kings Road up Eldon Road towards Eldon Square (image Evelyn Williams)	
South from the foot of Watlington Street (image Jennifer Berdoltt)	

**Table 10: Views out of the Conservation Area**

Location of view	Image
<p>View west towards the traffic gyratory, more or less at the historic junction of Queens Road and Kings Road, the area to the north, on the right, is out of the CA.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>	
<p>From Princes Street south to the Royal Berkshire Hospital.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>	
<p>From Watlington Street there is a view towards Reading Gaol.</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>	

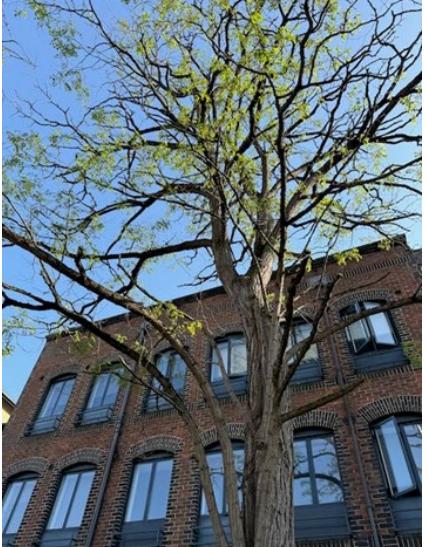
Location of view	Image
<p>2016 view from almost the same spot before the Verto building was constructed but after the demolition of Kings Point. (image Evelyn Williams)</p>	
<p>North from Victoria Street to Reading College (Activate Learning) (image Evelyn Williams)</p>	

## Appendix 6 Conservation Area Trees

*Table 11: Trees with a Tree Preservation Order*

Location of tree	Image 1	Image 2	TPO details and number if applicable
1a Eldon Road		None	1 tree, 58/05  Black mulberry tree in leaf June 2021 while works were going on at Hanover House to remove dangerous cladding and replace with new.  It is highly likely that the mulberry was within the garden of Swiss Villa which is known to have had a mulberry tree.  (image Evelyn Williams)
24 Eldon Road		None	1 tree, 4/22  Monterey Cypress at the rear  (image Evelyn Williams)

Location of tree	Image 1	Image 2	TPO details and number if applicable
23 Eldon Square		None	<p>1 tree, 150/05</p> <p>Plane tree in rear garden overhanging Eldon Terrace</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>
175 & 177 Kings Road (land to rear)		None	<p>1 tree, 95/06</p> <p>Plane tree at rear.</p> <p>There are also other trees screening the boundary of the site</p> <p>(image Evelyn Williams)</p>

Location of tree	Image 1	Image 2	TPO details and number if applicable
185-189 Kings Road			<p>1 tree, 44/13 Plane tree in car park at rear. (images RBC)</p>
194 Kings Road (Kings Lodge)		None	<p>1 tree, 145/05 False acacia in front garden/parking area (image Evelyn Williams)</p>

Location of tree	Image 1	Image 2	TPO details and number if applicable
196-200 Kings Road (Wilberforce Place)		None	7 trees, 61/13 7 ornamental pears (image Evelyn Williams)
202 Kings Road			7 trees, 1 group, 60/13 6 silver birch on east boundary, Maple, Whitebeam, Beech and silver birch on Kings Road frontage (images Evelyn Williams)

Location of tree	Image 1	Image 2	TPO details and number if applicable
73a London Road, Princes Court		None	3 trees 149/05 Walnut (image Evelyn Williams)
73a London Road, Princes Court		None	Horse Chestnut (image Evelyn Williams)

Location of tree	Image 1	Image 2	TPO details and number if applicable
73a London Road, Princes Court		None	Horse Chestnut (image Evelyn Williams)
Watlington Street, Watlington House & Hall		None	13 trees, 77/002 Following the rear garden improvement in 2012-2014 and a sycamore felled early in 2025 there are now 5 TPO trees at Watlington House. 2 sycamores at the front, a Hornbeam that replaced a diseased sycamore at the front and a Magnolia and Persian Ironwood at the rear. (image Evelyn Williams)

Location of tree	Image 1	Image 2	TPO details and number if applicable
Watlington Street, Watlington House & Hall		None	Replacement hornbeam at rear of flower bed (image Evelyn Williams)
Watlington Street, Watlington House & Hall		None	Rear garden in March 2025 showing the Persian Ironwood (left) and Magnolia (right) TPO tallest trees close to the wall. (image Richard Bennett)

**Table 12: Other significant trees and green spaces**

Location of tree	Image
Eldon Square Wisteria (image Zoë Andrews)	
St Johns Road Wisteria (image Zoë Andrews)	
George V Memorial Gardens mulberry planted by Reading CAAC in memory of member Roger Williams, with larger tree behind (image Evelyn Williams)	

Location of tree	Image
George V Memorial Gardens Trees on north side (images Evelyn Williams)	
George V Memorial Gardens trees (images Evelyn Williams)	
Trees at the front and rear of The Oval (images Evelyn Williams)	

Location of tree	Image
London Road plane trees along southern border of CA  (image Evelyn Williams)	
Trees along southern boundary of Reading College  (image Evelyn Williams)	

**Table 13: Green spaces (please note there are some overlaps with TPO and significant trees listed above)**

Location of space	Image
George V Memorial Gardens on Eldon Square  (image Evelyn Williams)	

Location of space	Image
Watlington House garden (rear) (image Richard Bennett)	
Watlington House car park and garden (front) (images Evelyn Williams)	
Watlington House path from front door looking east	

Location of space	Image
Watlington House north-east corner of front garden (panoramic)	 A panoramic photograph showing the north-east corner of Watlington House's front garden. The garden is landscaped with a circular arrangement of shrubs and trees. In the background, a red brick church with a tall spire is visible, along with several modern apartment buildings and a street with parked cars under a blue sky with white clouds.
Watlington House south-east corner of front garden (pano)	 A panoramic photograph of the south-east corner of Watlington House's front garden. The garden features a large, ornate Gothic-style church with a tall spire in the background. In the foreground, there are trees and a brick wall. The sky is blue with some clouds.
Planters on South Street (image Zoë Andrews)	 A photograph of a street scene on South Street. Two large wooden planters filled with greenery are placed on the sidewalk. The street is lined with red brick houses. A few cars are parked along the side of the road. The sky is overcast.
Planters on Watlington Street (image Zoë Andrews)	 A photograph of a street scene on Watlington Street. Two large red brick planters filled with greenery are placed on the sidewalk. The street is lined with modern apartment buildings. A traffic light is visible in the foreground, showing a red signal. The sky is clear and blue.

Location of space	Image
<p>Traffic island on Queens Road and Kings Road junction (adjacent to CA) (image Evelyn Williams)</p>	

## Appendix 7 Original or substantially original heritage shopfronts

*Table 11: Trees with a Tree Preservation Order*

Location	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
63 Watlington Street		None	Swift Upholstery, awning in place. (image Zoë Andrews)
111 Watlington Street		None	Now unoccupied. Recessed doorway. Features in the Shopfronts Design Guide SPD (image Evelyn Williams)

Location	Image 1	Image 2	Comment
104 Queens Road			<p>Corner shop doorway, A Lee Bakery sign. Most recently it was Ewemove estate agency.</p> <p>Right: Decorative ironwork in need of repair above fascia board.</p> <p>(images Zoë Andrews)</p>
23 Victoria Street		<p>None</p>	<p>Out to Lunch Catering Co</p> <p>Long closed but fondly remembered as a delicatessen/sandwich shop. In 1972 it was a grocers run by Mrs M Day.</p> <p>(image Zoë Andrews)</p>

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## Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

Working better with you

19 November 2025

<b>Title</b>	i) Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030 ii) Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 Annual Report iii) The Council's corporate greenhouse gas emissions report
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a key decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Ben Burfoot, Sustainability Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>That the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Adopt the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 to 2030 on behalf of the Council.</li> </ul> <p>Note;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) the publication of the annual performance report for the current Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 to 2025 which shows progress in reducing Reading Borough's carbon emissions, which have fallen by 57% since 2005.</li> <li>c) the publication of the Annual Green House Gas Report for the Council (2024/25) which reports progress in reducing Reading Borough Council's corporate emissions, which have fallen by 73.4% since 2008/09.</li> <li>d) that while progress is being made, the Council and other partners will need to redouble efforts to reduce fossil fuel consumption and switch to electrically powered heat and transport to achieve net zero.</li> <li>e) that 2024/5 was the eighth wettest winter on record and the summer of 2025 was the warmest on record in the UK. The increased risks that climate change poses for both the Council and residents requires the implementation of adaptation strategies.</li> </ul>

## 1. Executive Summary

This report presents:

### 1.1. The new 2025-2030 Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan for adoption (Appendix 1&2)

- 1.1.1. The new Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030 is presented to the Committee for adoption by the Council. It sits alongside an action plan which is designed to accelerate progress towards 'a net zero town that is resilient to the impacts of climate change'.
- 1.1.2. The Strategy draws on the collective action of organisations but does not seek to replicate strategies which are held by those organisations and which are already helping to deliver these objectives. The Strategy acknowledges that work to achieve net zero will continue beyond 2030, albeit good progress has been made to date.

### 1.2. The 2024/25 Annual Report on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 (Appendix 3)

- 1.2.1. 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. Examples of projects delivered during the period of the Strategy are detailed in the Appendix.
- 1.2.2. Emissions for 2023, the latest year for which data is available, fell once again compared to 2022. This shows a continuation of the year on year reductions which have now fallen to 57% below the 2005 baseline. This is the lowest that emissions have been in Reading to date. This represents the 12<sup>th</sup> largest reduction in emissions out of 374 UK local authority areas.
- 1.2.3. Modelling of Reading was carried out using of the latest report from the national committee on climate change (7<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget report). This indicated that a 75% reduction towards 'net zero' could be possible by 2030 from our 2005 baseline if policy delivery keeps track with the recommendations in that report. The national target for 2030 is for a 68% reduction since 1990.

### 1.3. The 2024/25 Annual Report on the Council's corporate greenhouse gas emissions (Appendix 4)

- 1.3.1. 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 73.4% since 2008/09 (75% if all the renewable energy generated by our assets is considered). This remains ahead of the borough reductions showing that the Council is 'Leading by Example' and represents a small improvement on the previous year, albeit RBC emissions have plateaued over the last three reported years.
- 1.3.2. Assuming some emission reductions are achieved in the 25/26 year, the Council will likely achieve a 75-80% reduction in its carbon footprint against the current carbon plan target of 85% by the end of 2025/6.
- 1.3.3. A greater amount of investment in decarbonisation in the 2025 to 2030 period will be required if the Council's target of net zero by 2030 is to be realised.
- 1.3.4. The most effective way to reduce carbon emissions is to reduce energy consumption. The Council has been reducing its consumption and consequent emissions consistently since its baseline year. The cumulative avoided costs associated with this, set against the cost if no action had been taken, was estimated as £34.9m to date with the figure for 2024/5 alone at £6.4m.

## **2. Policy Context**

### **National Context**

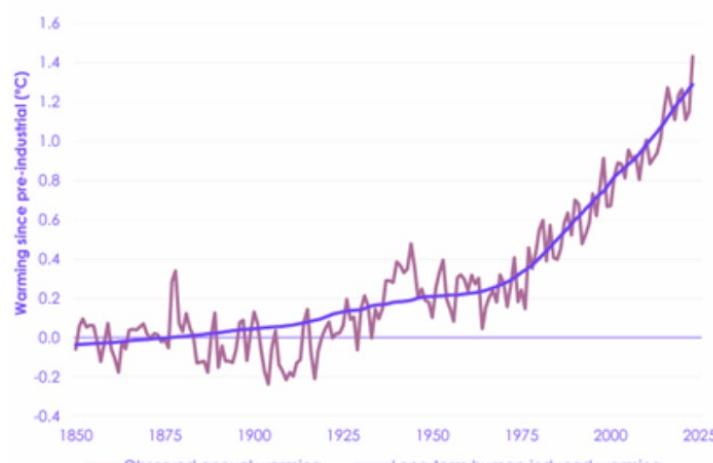
- 2.1. In 2019 the UK government committed to a national statutory target of 'net zero carbon' by 2050, having updated the Climate Change Act to aim for a 100% reduction in emissions compared to the 1990 baseline. The UK's 6<sup>th</sup> 'carbon budget' is designed to achieve a 68% reduction in UK emissions by 2030 and 78% by 2035.
- 2.2. The Climate Change Committee (CCC), the government's independent adviser on climate change, has, in its latest (2025) report to Parliament stated that they now have improved confidence that the UK is on track to meet its 2030 target of 68%. Approximately half of the policies are deemed to be credible, where this was previously around one third.
- 2.3. The Government is currently considering the 7<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget with the Climate Change Committee having published its report setting out recommendations as to how a balanced pathway can be progressed to achieve net zero for the UK by 2050, with 87% reductions being achieved by 2040. A new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) was submitted to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) in January 2025 committing the UK to an 81% reduction by 2035.
- 2.4. The Committee has given the government credit for their clean power plan, but its key message is that there is a need to reduce the price of electricity to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles and heat pumps in particular. The government is taking a multifaceted approach to this as electricity prices remain linked to gas. Market reform is planned to lower electricity costs by linking prices to cheaper renewable energy, which is less than half the cost.
- 2.5. This ratcheting up of the UK targets and increase in credible policies will help to close the gap on future targets and leads directly to local opportunities for Councils to accelerate the transition in their areas.
- 2.6. **Local Policy Context**
- 2.7. 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 carbon neutral borough by 2030 subject to national policies. 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.
- 2.8. At the same time the Council adopted its own corporate Carbon Plan for the period 2020-25, including an interim target to reduce the Council's own emissions by 85% by 2025 on route to net zero by 2030.
- 2.9. The Council continues to lead by example, reducing emissions more rapidly than the borough as a whole. By working with partners across the public and private sector and building access to support and communication with the public the Council will continue to play a leadership role.
- 2.10. It is clear, that the transition will take some time to achieve and we need to look to 2030 as a policy milestone to a renewed and extended policy trajectory to achieve this ambitious goal for the borough. Our model focusses on 2040 with the ambition to achieve close to 90% reduction against the 2005 baseline, provided national policies enable this.
- 2.11. The new Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030, remains a five-year plan, but focusses on laying the foundations for a faster transition and strengthening partnerships, helping member organisations contribute effectively and implement their own strategies.
- 2.12. The new strategy was developed by the Reading Climate Change Partnership in association with 'Dialogue Matters', who won a stakeholder CIWM award for

stakeholder engagement for their work in Reading. The process consisted of a series of workshops, questionnaires and stages of consultation. The final version of the Strategy is presented in Appendix 1 alongside the Action Plan and is recommended for adoption by the Council.

## 2.13. The impacts of Climate Change on the Borough

- 2.14. The last 10 years have been the warmest globally since records began. Global average surface temperature in 2024 was recorded between 1.51-1.57°C above the pre-industrial average – the low end of this range being above the 1.5°C threshold to which the Paris Agreement seeks to limit the rise in global average temperature. At the time of writing, 2025 was considered likely to become one of the three warmest years on record globally.
- 2.15. 2025 was officially the warmest summer on record for the UK with a mean temperature of 16.1°C. July was warmer than normal and June was the warmest ever recorded in England, according to the Met Office.
- 2.16. A tool for local impacts produced by the BBC and Met office shows that in Reading the maximum temperature between 1991 and 2019 was 35.7°C and by 2100 this could rise to 42.5°C if the world experiences 4°C of warming. (note this temperature record fell in 2022 when temperatures hit 36.4°C)
- 2.17. Warmer wetter winters are characteristic of the climatic changes we can expect in the UK. 2024/25 was the eighth wettest winter on record in the UK with eight of the ten warmest and wettest winters having occurred since the turn of the century.
- 2.18. These statistics are among many which illustrate the reality of global warming which is driving an increasing range of impacts, risks and costs at home and abroad including floods, heatwaves, storms and wildfires. The key risks facing the UK arise from warmer, wetter winters; hotter drier summers; and more extreme weather events. The warming trend will continue until 'net zero emissions' is reached and probably for some time beyond this due to the fact that some greenhouse gases remain in the atmosphere for decades. A 2021 study by UCL suggested that, by 2100, global GDP could be 37% lower when taking the effects of climate change on economic growth into account. It is well established that climate will have the greatest impacts on the most vulnerable in society as they are most exposed to these risks and have the least resources to adapt.
- 2.19. As a result there is a growing need for the Council, communities and partners to adapt to climate impacts. A Climate Change Adaptation Framework has been developed by the Council to integrate the increased risks from the changing climate into service planning.

Figure 1 - Global Average Temperature



Description: Since 1850, global average temperatures have been increasing, with a particular acceleration beginning around 1970.

Observed annual temperatures fluctuate around long-term human-induced warming.

Source: Smith, C. et al (2024) Climate indicator data: indicators of global climate change 2023 revision.

Notes: [1] Observed annual warming shown reflects an average across several datasets. [2] Long-term human-induced uses the 'anthropogenic p50' metric from Smith, C. et al (2024).

### 3. Key Conclusions from the Annual Report 2024/25 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.

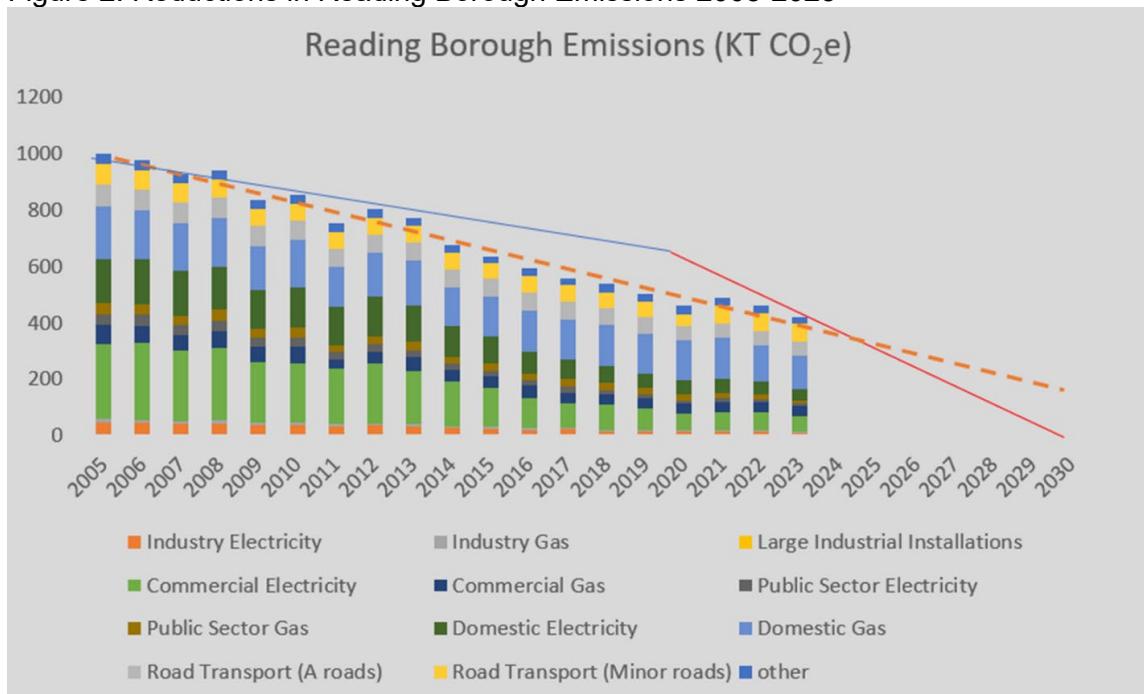
3.2 The measure used to track progress towards the target of 'a net zero Reading by 2030' is a national (DESNZ) dataset for 'emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities', published annually. There is a lag in the national data collection exercise so the latest data, published in June 2025, relate to the calendar year 2023.

3.3 The 2023 data show a continued downward trajectory in emissions, building on the reductions made in 2022 which in turn had reverted to a downward trend after the pandemic in 2021:

- Reading Borough's emissions of 427.3 kilo-tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>(e) reduced by a further 4% against the 2005 baseline year between 2022 and 2023.
- The emission trajectory for Reading has been generally downwards. This reflects the general pattern for the UK, largely attributable to the decarbonisation of the electricity grid over the 2005 to 2023 period. Reading's emissions have fallen by 57.3% since 2005, 10.1% more than the UK average for the same data and, once again the 12<sup>th</sup> largest reduction out of 379 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. Nationally and locally, emissions in 2023 were lower than the pandemic year of 2020, which until that point was the lowest that it had been in Reading. The 2023 data (published in June 2025) showed that since the year after the pandemic the long-term downward trend in emissions has resumed. (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Reductions in Reading Borough Emissions 2005-2023



3.5 The final performance report of the Climate Emergency Strategy celebrates the achievements which have been taken forward by partners in Reading over the Strategy period. These include several initiatives led by the Council:

3.6 **Zero Carbon Bus Travel:** Reading's award winning bus company is owned by the Council and delivers high quality bus services for its local and regional residents. In 2024 there was an increase of bus passengers to 19.5m which was an increase of 11% over the previous year. The bus depot has also undergone a major transformation with a fleet of 32 new electric buses due to begin service in autumn 2025. Plans are progressing for a major new solar array on the roof of the depot to accompany the array on the office roof. This is being delivered by Reading Community Energy Society and Reading Borough Council.

3.7 **Zero Carbon Depot:** In 2024, the Council completed the acquisition of its 13<sup>th</sup> and last electric waste vehicle in March 2024, effectively decarbonising 25% of its diesel emissions at a stroke. Expansion of solar through the installation of solar canopies at the depot site alongside heat pumps for the buildings and the electrification of the remainder of the vehicle fleets would see the depot come very close to net zero in its operations.

3.8 **Levelling Up – Decarbonising the Library, Civic Offices and Theatre:** Over the past year, projects have advanced on these three buildings. The Civic Offices had new heat pumps installed and these are now operational, completely removing all gas supplies. . Boreholes are now drilled at the Hexagon Theatre and ready to connect to new ground source heat pumps which will extract heat from the aquifer to heat the theatre. This will enable gas to be removed from this building also.

3.9 **A Green Events Code of Practice for Reading Festival and Reading Climate Festival:** Reading Festival took part in phase 2 of the GECoP pilot in 2025. The principles are *1. Act urgently on the climate crisis in line with scientific evidence and best practice. 2. Commit to knowledge sharing within the industry; we are in this together. 3. Transparent measurement and reporting of impacts annually. 4. Ambitious commitment to improve year-on-year, with a commitment to innovation, accepting that not all climate-positive decisions will provide cost-benefits in the short term. 5. Communicate actively for positive change, acknowledging our events have a unique power to amplify solutions-based messaging around the climate crisis.* Readings Climate Festival was successfully run once more in 2025 with over 1000 participants taking part in online and in person events across the town over the two week period.

3.10 **12 Years of Model Climate Conferences:** The children of Reading schools have participated in Reading's annual model international climate conference since 2013. The Conference Of the Parties allows the delegates of each team (country) to negotiate their targets and participate in the real issues of the day that are being experienced in the global conference taking place at the same time, this year in Brazil.

3.11 **Rewilding and Nature:** Reading has changed the way it manages the mowing regimes for roundabouts, verges and areas within public parks to improve biodiversity and extend corridors through the town. Additional areas of public space have been surveyed for extending carbon storage and biodiversity, and changes to management proposed. In addition, volunteers have planted new mini community orchards in Caversham, central Reading, and the restoration of the old orchard at Prospect Park. Another scheme that has been successful has been the introduction of sedum roofs to bus stops around Reading.

3.12 **'A' Rated for Climate:** in September 2025 the Council submitted its fourth annual return to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) whose international reporting platform is

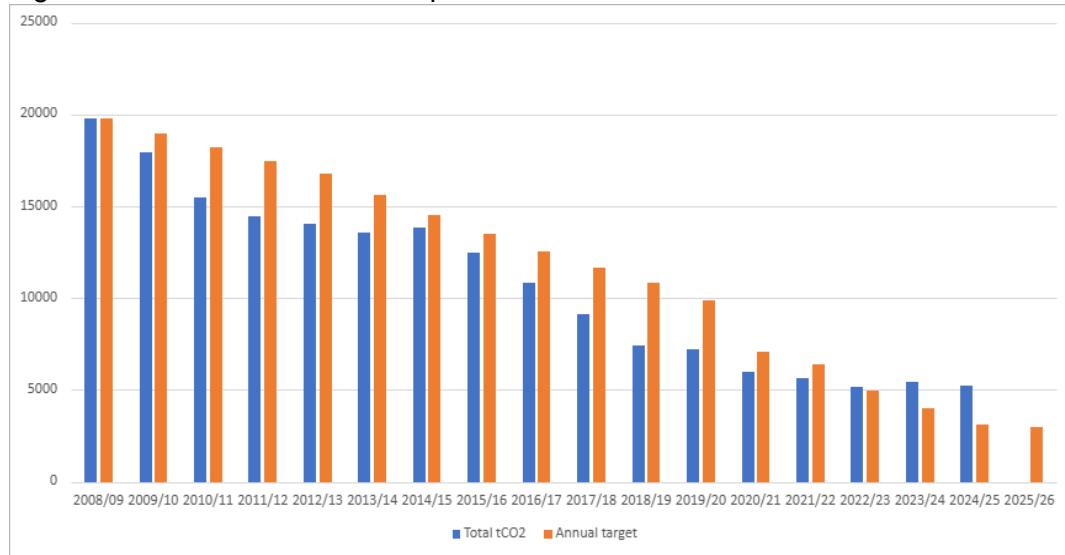
regarded as the 'gold standard' in climate reporting for local authorities. In 2025 CDP confirmed that Reading had retained its place on their 'A' list of cities taking bold climate action, one of only 122 cities across the world and 20 in the UK to achieve this level.

#### **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 only 1.2% 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 for the 2024/25 business year has been cut by 73.4% since 2008-09, a decrease of 0.7% in emissions from 2023/24. This plateauing of emissions puts the Council significantly above its annual target level for meeting an 85% cut in corporate emissions by 2025/6. (See Figure 3.)
- 4.3 The Council, at the time of this report only has one year remaining (the current financial year) in which to achieve this target, meaning a reduction of 11.6% would be required. We would expect to see some improvement based on projects and our understanding of grid carbon projections but this would not be likely to achieve the target levels. It therefore looks more likely that a reduction of 75-80% would be achieved.
- 4.4 Despite a plateauing of emissions in recent years, there are a number of projects currently being delivered as detailed above which, going forward, have the potential to deliver additional cuts in emissions although they are not all scheduled to be complete until close to the end of, or beyond the Strategy period. Some projects which will be completed after the end of the strategy period are:
- 4.5 **Completion of the decarbonisation of the Hexagon campus:** Using ground source heat pumps to utilise water extracted from Reading's aquifer, to replace gas heating. This project will form part of the LUF project which will add a new performance space to the existing Hexagon. Expected in 2026/7
- 4.6 **Disposal of Central Library:** As part of the LUF programme, expected in 2026/7.
- 4.7 **Further investment in solar panel installations:** At the Council's depot, car parks and other sites.
- 4.8 These projects will make a significant contribution towards our targets, but further projects and investment will still be needed in order to meet net zero. Work is underway to identify these investment needs. A new carbon plan will come forward in 2025/6 which will include details of the pathway to net zero for Council emissions for the years 2025 to 2030.
- 4.9 The overall trajectory of Council emissions since 2008/09 is shown in figure 3, 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. The impact of different interventions can be seen in this document. Figure 3 shows that the recent reductions have fallen short of the trajectory set out. This reflects the fact that the Council has set very ambitious targets, and that, with many of the easier and lower cost carbon reduction measures having already been

taken, each remaining percentage point of emissions reduction is inevitably more challenging and emissions reductions are dependent on many factors, many of which are outside the Council's control.

Figure 3: Reductions in RBC corporate emissions 2008/09 to 2024/25



- 4.9 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 Appendix 3.
- 4.10 The UK electricity carbon emissions intensity factor is prone to fluctuate from year to year as the generation of renewable energy, fuel mix consumed in UK power stations (and auto-generators) and the proportion of net imported electricity changes. The increase in emissions in RBC in 2023 was largely attributable to this factor increasing. In 2024 the carbon emissions intensity factor remained broadly similar to that of 2023.
- 4.11 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.£34.9m (excluding standing charges and other contract charges) compared to if no action had been taken. In 2024/25 alone these avoided costs were estimated at £6.4m.
- 4.12 Reading Borough Council's absolute (gross) corporate GHG emissions for 2024/25 were 5,260.1 tCO<sub>2</sub>, a reduction of 73.4% compared to the 2008/09 baseline. This represented a year-on-year decrease of 2.7% against 2023/24 (5,403.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, or 143 tCO<sub>2</sub>.
- 4.13 When renewably generated electricity, exported to the grid, or sold to third parties is netted off against this gross figure, to the sum of 325 tCO<sub>2</sub>, this gives a net corporate carbon emissions figure of 4,935.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>, 2.4% lower than 2023/24 emissions.
- 4.14 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 1,636,118 kWh of electricity in 2024/25, of which over 414,737 kWh was deemed to have been exported to the National Grid. Twenty-three systems generated and self-supplied 194,474 kWh to RBC sites, whilst the remaining arrays generated and supplied 986,810 kWh to schools, housing

tenants and other parties in 2023/24. The renewably generated electricity leads to 325 tCO<sub>2</sub> carbon emissions savings, which can be 'netted off' against the RBC gross emissions (excluding those 'self-supplied').

- 4.15 The Council produced the equivalent of 8.25% of its total energy consumed in buildings from renewable sources in 2024/25. This represents 16.1% 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.
- 4.16 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 345,459 litres of fuel/oil, and 10,464 MWh of natural gas in 2024/25. 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 60.7% lower than 2008/09 and oil/fuel is 64.1% lower than 2008/09.

## 5. Contribution to strategic aims

- 5.1 The Council's efforts to respond to climate strategies and reduce greenhouse gas emissions both for its own operations and for the wider borough are summarised in this report and support the following Corporate Plan priorities:

***The strategy's vision is for a "happier, healthier, climate friendly and climate resilient town' that has chosen to respond to climate change by creating a stronger, more connected community and better quality of life for all."***

### 5.2 The Strategy meets the Council Plan Objectives as follows:

#### **Promote more equal communities in Reading**

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.

#### **Secure Reading's economic and cultural success**

Policies within the strategy seek to protect businesses and householders from suffering financial loss and towards building on the economic benefits of a sustainable and climate resilient economy of the future.

**Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint.** The Policy has a strong focus on the health and environmental benefits of climate action and has strong ambitious targets for reducing our carbon footprint at its heart.

#### **Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children.**

The policy seeks to help to protect Readings adults and children from the impacts of climate change as well as creating opportunities for engagement, new skills and a sustainable future for everyone.

**Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future.** A secure and sustainable future for the borough depends significantly on how well the town adapts to the impacts, challenges and opportunities of climate change. This includes how well it protects its natural capital; how sustainable its organisations and population are; and how they take

advantage of the low carbon economy. The policy introduces many projects and programmes which will aim to build a stronger more resilient future for Reading.

5.3 **TEAM Reading:** The corporate Carbon Plan and Climate Emergency Strategy also contribute to all of the TEAM Reading values, including working **Together** across departments and with partners, working **Efficiently** in our use of natural resources, being **Ambitious** in our climate action and **Making a difference** to our community.

## **6. Environmental and Climate Implications**

6.1 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25, the new Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030 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 programmes for improvement to nature and wider environmental impact will be positively impacted by this policy. The changes within these policies seek to improve all the climate implications categories set out in the Climate Implications Assessment meaning that the proposal will have a net Positive impact.

## **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".

7.2 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 to 2030 was developed through an extensive programme of community engagement. Winning an award for its work on Climate Engagement, its facilitator 'Dialogue Matters' guided the process, including 3 inclusive engagement workshops and a stakeholder review process. This led to publication of an initial draft of the strategy for a period of six weeks for public consultation on the Councils 'Go Vocal' platform before a final draft version was posted for a seven week period of consultation on the same platform. The final version is submitted for adoption to this committee.

7.3 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.

7.4 This document will undergo further graphics and design including more accessible and shortened versions.

## **8. Equality Implications**

8.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for this report, although individual projects and programmes referred to within the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy may require this in due course.

## **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' and 'Failure to adapt to the risks of climate change' in relation to both Borough emissions and the Council's own operations, are included as high

level risks in the Council's Strategic Risk Register, and the likelihood and impact of this risk is assessed on an ongoing basis.

## **10. Legal Implications**

- 10.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Local Authorities do not have a statutory duty to take general action on climate change or net zero, albeit specific programmes within the strategy may relate to a series of more specific powers and statute, with some examples below.
- 10.2. Modifications to policies, procedures and processes may be made under the General Power of Competence set out in the Localism Act 2011 and/or other statutory powers as detailed below. It is anticipated that a range of actions could also be delivered under a number of other statutory powers such as those which fall under the Climate Change Act, the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards Regulations, the Energy Performance in Buildings Regulations, the Heat Network Regulations, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Act and other local authority powers. It is also anticipated that projects and programmes will be required to comply with the Council's Standing Orders including the Contract Procedure Rules as set out under in the Council's constitution.

## **11. Financial Implications**

- 11.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although Appendix 3 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£34.9 million (excluding standing charges and other contract charges) compared to if no action had been taken. In 2024/25 alone these avoided costs were estimated at c£6.4m 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 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. 19th November – Adoption of Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030 by the Council.
- 12.2. Years 2025 to 2030 inclusive. Implementation of policy.

## **13. Background Papers**

- 13.1. [Climate change - Reading Borough Council \(declaration and other information\)](#)

13.2 [The Seventh Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee](#)

**14. Appendices**

- Appendix 1. Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030
- Appendix 2. Reading Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030
- Appendix 3. RCCP Annual Report 2025
- Appendix 4. RBC GHG Report 2024/5 (Reading Borough Council Greenhouse Gas Emissions)

# Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030

Reading Climate Change Partnership

20<sup>th</sup> October 2025

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# Introducing the strategy

This document sets out what Reading plans to do by 2030 to work towards the objective of a net zero carbon Reading. It also considers how we can adapt to become more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate such as flooding and heatwaves. It is the fourth in a series of strategies that have been developed by the Reading Climate Change Partnership, a community partnership established in 2009 to lead the response to climate change in the Reading area. Its Board includes representation from the community and voluntary sector, the statutory sector, the private sector, the health sector and academia. You can read about the make-up of the Reading Climate Change Partnership [here](#).

When Reading Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 it recognised the Reading Climate Change Partnership as the organisation responsible for steering Reading's response to the climate emergency on behalf of the wider community. While the Council sits on the board, the Partnership is an independent entity and its activities go beyond the Council's policies and strategies; however it cooperates closely with the Council to ensure a joined-up approach to reducing carbon emissions regardless of whether they fall within the Council's domain or the wider community. We will be requesting that the Council 'adopt' this strategy at the Council's Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in November 2025. This will mean that the Strategy will form a policy of the Council, albeit the Council only has certain obligations within it as the partnership collectively own the strategy.

If the strategy is to succeed it needs to be 'owned' by every organisation, business and resident across Reading. We all have a part to play in helping to reduce carbon emissions and ensure that

everybody can thrive in a changing climate. We recognise that some are better equipped to act than others, and that people with limited resources, health challenges, or social disadvantages are likely to be the most adversely affected by climate change. We are also aware that many people and communities are not currently included in the conversations and activities around climate action, and we commit to working to expand the inclusivity of this strategy and its associated action plan as well as ensuring that nobody is left behind in the transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient town. We also recognise that climate change presents opportunities as well as risks, which can help bring about social and economic benefits through creating a thriving, low-carbon economy with green jobs.

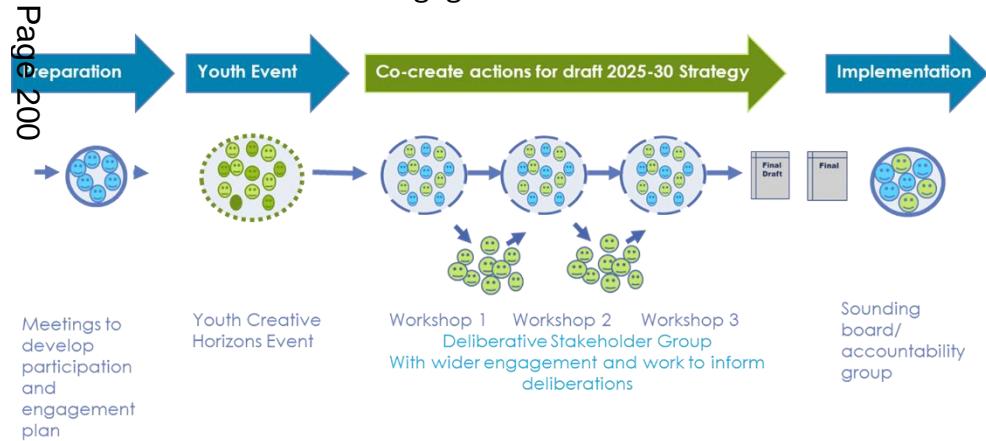
Carbon emissions have no borders and the strategy recognises the necessity to work beyond the statutory boundaries of Reading in collaboration with like-minded people, places and organisations. Whether you live, work or study in Reading – even as infrequent visitor – we encourage you to get involved. We have established Reading Climate Action Network to enable individuals, organisations and schools to become part of climate action in and around Reading, and you can find out more [here](#).



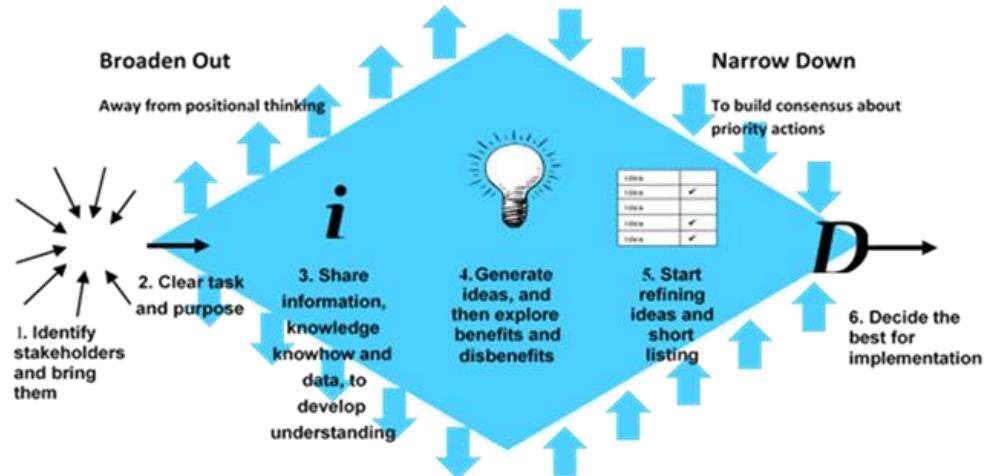
# How the strategy and action plan were developed

With financial support granted from Reading Borough Council, Dialogue Matters were appointed to oversee the process of involving the people and organisations of Reading in developing this Climate Emergency Strategy.

Dialogue Matters is a UK-based company that specialises in designing and facilitating stakeholder dialogue processes. They created and delivered a process called the 'Year of Climate Engagement' that enabled participants to share understanding and knowledge, generate ideas and solutions, prioritise and plan action, and identify resources and enablers for change. The process, which won a CIEEM award for 'Best Practice Stakeholder Engagement' is illustrated below:



The participants were invited based on various criteria, some having relevant expertise or influence and others representing communities of interest, ensuring that the views of Reading's diverse population were represented, especially those from marginalised and under-served groups. This approach allowed a broad range of views and ideas to be considered before refining and prioritising them to inform the Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-30, as illustrated opposite:



Narrowing down the priority actions required the Partnership to consider their potential contribution to either carbon emissions or adaptation, the degree of influence the Partnership holds and who else might need to be involved to get things done. We also considered blockers and enablers including local and central government policy.

The result is this strategy document, which is intended to stand for the full five-year period, and a companion Action Plan which will be subject to annual reviews and progress reports. Prior to final publication, this draft was offered up for final stakeholder review open to all who wished to participate; all feedback received was reviewed and considered for inclusion. Anonymised feedback will be made available once the final consultation has been completed.

In the interests of transparency the end point report containing all the outputs from the deliberative process has been published in its entirety and can be found [here](#).

# Foreword on behalf of Reading Climate Change Partnership

*Early in 2025, the world's major climate science organisations announced that 2024 had been the warmest year on record, and that for the first time the global average temperature had reached 1.5 degrees warmer than pre-industrial levels for the entire year.*

*The Paris climate treaty, agreed in 2015, set out that we should aim to keep global temperature increases below the 1.5 degree threshold or risk severe climate change impacts, including more frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves and rainfall. Though we would need to see this increase in temperature being reached consistently over several years to conclude we have fully exceeded the 1.5 degree threshold, reaching this level for the first time was a sobering indicator that we are still on a trajectory towards further climate disaster.*

*News headlines in 2024/25 frequently highlighted events such as Wildfires, floods and extremes of temperature with tragic consequences for lives and livelihoods. The World Meteorological Organisation's report on 2024 listed 151 unprecedented extreme weather events around the world, meaning that they were worse than any ever recorded in the region.*

*Never has there been more reason for concern about the changing climate and for greater resolve and commitment for action to address it. Yet this year we have already seen dramatic changes and significant volatility on the world stage, with some parts of the world retreating from their vital climate commitments.*

*It could be a moment to despair but instead, it should be a reminder that we all need to act to secure the future we want to see. And much of that work will need to be delivered at a local level, with people*

*working together towards building low carbon and climate resilient communities.*

*Delivering Reading's ambition to be a net-zero, climate-resilient town continues to be a monumental task. One that can only be delivered through partnership. Thankfully, the Reading Climate Change Partnership has the support of a wide and growing network of local people and organisations who bring with them expertise from a wide range of sectors and backgrounds.*

*There is no single organisation in Reading that can do this alone. Partnership is the key to reducing emissions, building resilience, improving people's health, engaging stakeholders, reducing fuel and food poverty, protecting our rivers and growing and restoring our green spaces.*

*As you read through our shared Climate Emergency Strategy, we hope you will feel inspired by the ideas generated through our community engagement and empowered to become part of the delivery team for Reading's net zero ambition, as a project partner, funder of RCCP's work, convener, volunteer or innovator.*

*We sincerely hope you'll join us in this important and rewarding endeavour!*

**Dylan Parkes**, Head of Strategic Engagement (Climate and Environmental Sustainability) at the University of Reading

**Heather Marshall**, Technical Director - Water and Infrastructure Systems at Mott Macdonald

**Co-chairs of the Reading Climate Change Partnership**

# Forewords on behalf of Reading Borough Council

*As we approach 2030, a renewed focus is required. There is little doubt our target is an ambitious one in the context of the challenges faced. We make no apologies for that.*

*Reading's early commitment to tackle the climate emergency, through our declaration and indeed through previous strategies, is clear. And while the figures show we have made significant strides locally, we know the hardest yards are yet to come.*

*This latest Climate Emergency Strategy is the culmination of over a year of engagement. I would like to thank all of you who have taken the time to contributed to it and, furthermore, your commitment to helping to deliver it.*

*The Council is of course a key player, but as we have always emphasised, the response to this most urgent of priorities needs to be a collective endeavour. We are fortunate in Reading to be home to so many individuals, organisations and partners who acknowledge it is our response today which will determine the environment we leave for future generations.*

**Leader of the Council – Councillor Liz Terry**



*Addressing Global Climate Change is the defining challenge of our generation. The impacts are very real and they are already being felt locally. The people of Reading are exposed to ever more extreme patterns of weather driven by the changing climate.*

*The impact is felt most keenly by those who have contributed the least to the problem and those least able to protect themselves. In other parts of the world, whole communities are being swept away by floods, crops are failing, and ecological destruction is undermining the capacity of nature to correct the problem.*

*The burning of fossil fuels is the root cause of the changing climate. Reading has been reducing its emissions steadily as a borough and here in the Council we are proud of our record. Our waste is collected using electric vehicles, our buildings are being decarbonised and we have installed thousands of solar panels.*

*We will continue to lead by example and work with partners to help our communities to respond in their own way and feel part of this movement. In this way we hope that together we can put Reading at the forefront of the UK's global leadership in tackling climate change.*

*I would like to thank our partners, networks and countless volunteers without whom this strategy would not have been possible. I look forward to working together to deliver this next crucial stage in Reading's journey.*

**Lead Councillor for Climate and Transport – Councillor John Ennis**



# Understanding the challenge: National and global

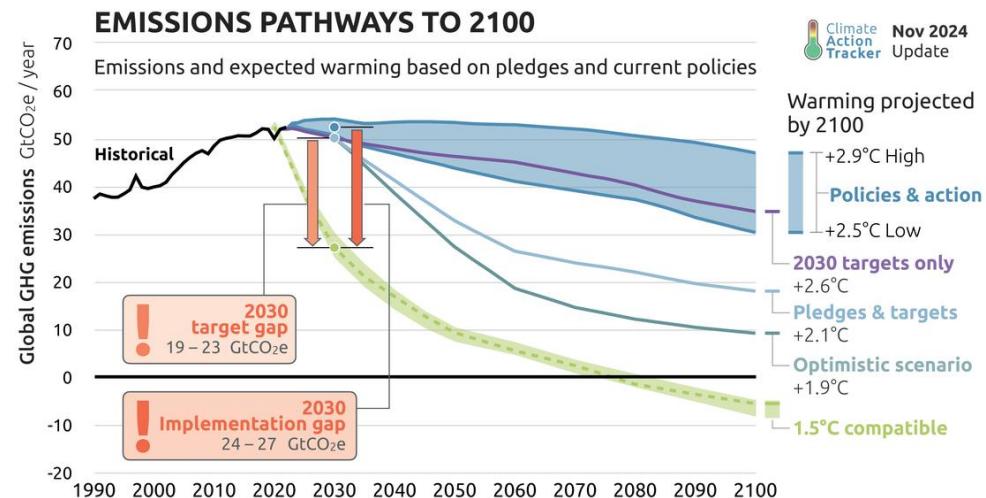
Climate change is accelerating. Rising temperatures, extreme weather and environmental changes are already affecting people's lives—disrupting food supplies, damaging infrastructure, and increasing pressure on water and energy resources.

The UK is not immune. Our country is warming at a rate similar to the global average, and recent years have brought record-breaking heatwaves, more intense storms, and worsening flood risks. In 2022, the UK recorded temperatures over **40°C for the first time**, and heavy rainfall has caused repeated flooding in many communities. These events are no longer rare—they are becoming the new normal.

At the same time, the UK has made important progress in cutting carbon emissions. Coal use has plummeted, renewable energy is now a major part of our electricity supply, and many businesses and households are making changes. But we are **not moving fast enough**. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) warns that without stronger policies and action, we will fall short of our climate targets and remain unprepared for the impacts already on the way.

The CCC has concluded that although the rate of emissions increase has slowed over the past decade warming will inevitably continue and global temperatures will continue to rise until the level of greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere begin to fall. Therefore, even if we take urgent action to reduce our carbon emissions, we must also prepare for increased impacts of climate change.

Recent political developments may have led to action on climate change being de-prioritised in some parts of the world, but scientists agree that curbing climate change is an existential imperative. While it is increasingly unlikely that the global temperature increase can be kept within the 1.5°C target set in the Paris Agreement, and the UN now considers whether if current targets are met we would be on track for a ~3°C global temperature rise, every tonne of carbon emissions avoided contributes to limiting global warming, helping to ensure that our planet – and our town – remain a comfortable place to live for generations to come.



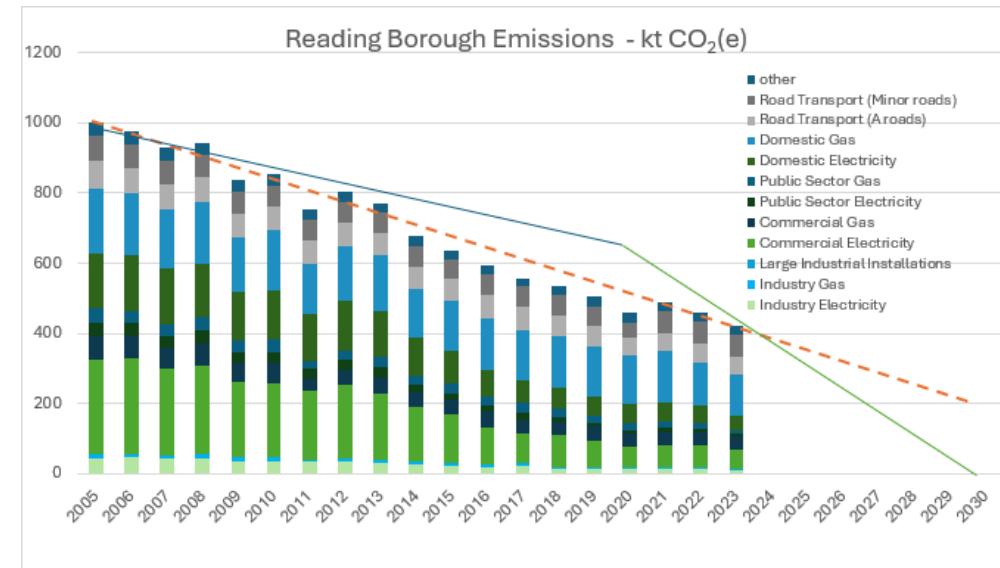
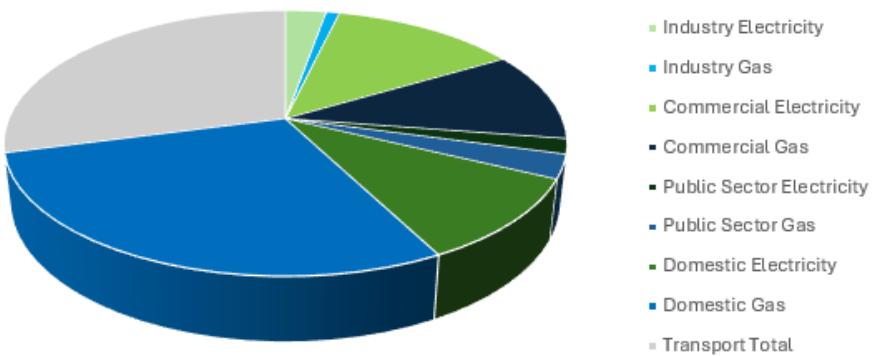
## The local context: Reading's climate change challenge

The previous Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan was launched in 2020 during the UK's pandemic lockdown. Other significant events since then include the formal separation of the UK from the EU, the energy price crisis and a change of government. The climate emergency declaration explicitly recognised that the ambitious target of net zero by 2030 'can only be achieved with substantial policy changes from national government'. Reading Borough Council is committed to this target, however it can only take policy as far as national government allows.

The following graph illustrates Reading's direct emissions – (categorised as Scopes 1 and 2 under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol), broken down by sector.

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Breakdown of 2023 Reading Borough CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 427kt(e)



Blue line = target to 2020. Green line = Climate Emergency Objective. Dashed line = Trajectory

The above graph illustrates how Reading's emissions have reduced since 2005, based on the latest data available at publication. While many residents and organisations are attempting to reduce their own emissions, they can only do so if low carbon alternatives are affordable and easily accessible and to achieve net zero will require deeper and much more rapid decarbonisation than has so far been possible. Emissions reduction at pace and scale remains a systemic challenge that requires a large number of actors working collaboratively to deliver, including both technology and operational change. This new strategy recognises that the work of making Reading a net zero, climate resilient town won't be finished by 2030, while simultaneously striving to deliver the largest possible emissions reduction in line with the UK government's commitment to net zero by 2050 at the latest.

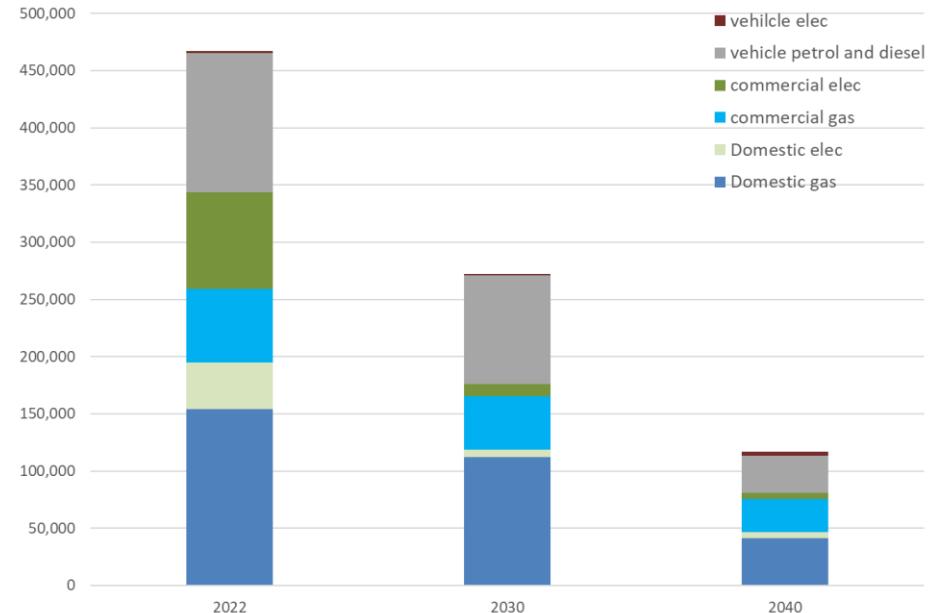
This will be easier for some categories of emissions than others, especially since the official data does not account for the emissions caused elsewhere by manufacturing the goods we buy and the food we consume (categorised as Scope 3 by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol). Developing a methodology for measuring, and a programme for reducing, these indirect emissions will be essential.

Emissions in the borough of Reading have continued to fall almost every year since the government data set was produced. The main reductions can be attributed to the decarbonisation of grid electricity although we cannot necessarily assume that this will continue under future governments. Due to decarbonisation of the grid, domestic gas has become a larger proportion of emissions and decarbonisation of heat will need to be prioritised in order to meet the 7<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget.

The Carbon Budget, produced by the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC), sets the emissions reductions that will be necessary in order to achieve the UK government's targets. The [7<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget](#) was published in February 2025 and considers the period 2038-2042, based on an emissions reduction pathway from 2025 to Net Zero by 2050. It sets out a vision which includes the clean power plan, aiming to achieve a 95% decarbonisation of national grid electricity by 2030 and net zero by 2035 for grid electricity by 2035.

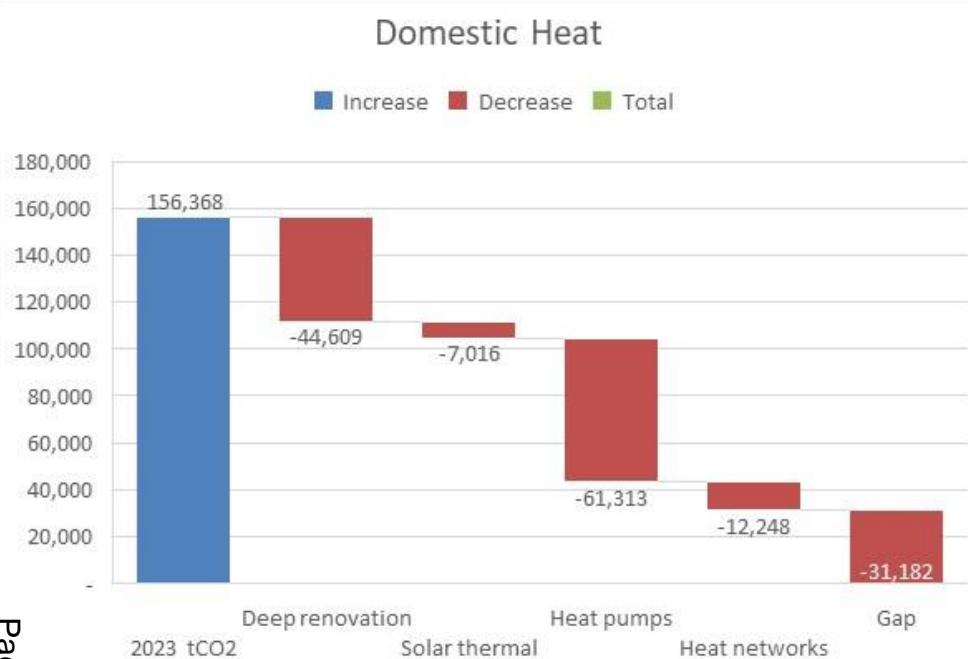
The zero carbon pathway for Reading has been aligned with the 7<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget recommendations. On this foundation, Reading will then need to achieve targets set out in the pathway to 2040 to have half of the buildings in the Borough heated using heat pumps or other non-fossil fuel based systems and for the majority (75%) of cars to be electric.

CCC targets applied to Reading Zero Carbon Pathway



By utilising renewable energy on the roofs of our buildings and harnessing heat from our aquifers and rivers we can decarbonise Reading and publish an estimate of what our maximised renewable deployment, coupled with above CCC recommendations, will deliver.

It's worth noting that while local renewable energy generation is relatively insignificant compared to the scale of UK grid decarbonisation, creating additional renewal capacity will benefit the local communities and economy. While grid decarbonisation and the Council's own abatement activities will deliver a proportion of the emissions reduction needed, everybody in Reading has a part to play in minimising their own carbon emissions and progress in other sectors is likely to be slower leaving a gap that will need to be filled.



Work with community energy leads shows that decarbonising domestic heat will be one of the most significant challenges, with anticipated technology solutions only able to contribute some of the required reduction in demand for gas, leaving a gap of just over 31 tCO<sub>2</sub>.

## Adaptation

Since 2020 we have begun to feel the impacts of climate change at a local level, particularly in extremes of heat and rainfall, making adaptation a more urgent requirement. The 18 months to March 2024 was the wettest 18-month period on record with rail services disrupted and multiple flood warnings raised for the Thames and Kennet. 2022 included the hottest day on record leading to power cuts caused by energy infrastructure overheating and an increase in heat related deaths. The 2020-25 strategy was accompanied by Reading's first Climate Change Adaptation Plan and this strategy includes adaptation as a core component.

While we continue to work towards reducing carbon emissions, we will also need to prepare ourselves for the changes to the climate and weather that are anticipated. We are already experiencing hotter, drier summers and milder, wetter winters and can expect to experience flooding from the Thames and Kennet, flash flooding from intense rainfall, heat stress and damage to infrastructure. This will require adaptation of the built environment and green spaces, both to reduce the impact of extreme weather and enable people to live comfortably.



Adjacent image of The Oracle, taken while the River Kennet was in flood, illustrates how it was designed to accommodate the impacts of flooding while maintaining the ability to operate.

## Risks and Opportunities – to be illustrated

If we do nothing, we'll experience:

**Regular flooding from our rivers** – with resulting costs and disruption to our homes and businesses

**Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather**, including heatwaves and cold snaps, placing increased pressure on our health and social care services

**Higher food costs and less choice**, as changing weather patterns and extreme weather reduces crop yields

**Damage to road and rail infrastructure** caused by extreme weather, particularly intense rainfall, disrupting our journeys and causing expensive repairs

**Worse health and higher mortality** due to increases in heat and pollution related diseases

**Energy cost increases** due to unmanaged consumption, poor insulation and energy insecurity

**Water insecurity** caused by droughts,

If we act together, we'll experience:

**A thriving, low-carbon economy** with new, green jobs and a highly skilled workforce attracting good salaries

**Clean, renewable, local energy** that benefits the community

**Improved air quality**, leading to a reduction in respiratory diseases

**More opportunities to enjoy green and open spaces**, improving resilience to heatwaves and providing a connection to nature that is proven to boost mental wellbeing and reduce stress

**A healthier, happier and more cohesive community** with fewer people suffering poor health, food insecurity and fuel poverty

**Lower living costs** due to more stable food supply and more energy efficient homes

**More active lifestyles and better diets**, leading to improved health outcomes

**Protection from flooding** and uninterrupted services

# Our Vision

**This section is aspirational – it describes the Reading of the future, painting a picture of the place we aim to become through the activities and initiatives outlined in this Strategy.**

Our vision is of a healthier, happier, climate-friendly and climate-resilient Reading, a town that has chosen to respond to climate change by creating a stronger, more connected community and better quality of life for all. This comes from our inclusive approach to achieving deep cuts in emissions and planning ahead for the effects of climate change.

The impact of our climate action goes beyond our town's footprint, positively affecting neighbouring areas through the skills and technologies we play our part in developing

Reading is a beacon for other towns and cities, developing and sharing knowledge, creating cooperative partnerships and collaborations with other places, and learning from them. Climate innovation, community action and social entrepreneurship are nurtured in a town that is diverse, dynamic, exciting and people-centric. Change is socially just and inclusive, ensuring affordable energy, accessible transport and safe green spaces for current and future generations.

## Shared endeavour and ethos

This is a shared endeavour working with, but going far beyond, council activities. Communities, organisations, third sector businesses and people of all ages are involved and share resources to reach the goals. There are staff and resources in RCCP to lead and mobilise this shared endeavour.

Young people around the town continue to contribute their views and are actively part of creating a better environment.



## Expanding the Vision by Theme

Climate is part of formal and informal education throughout Reading, leveraging national, regional and sectoral initiatives to create widespread understanding and support for ongoing climate work. Reading is a climate literate town; events and success stories inspire citizens in all communities. Reading's schools, colleges and the University deliver skills training and support lifelong learning. A forum for business and organisations inspires and encourages accountability.



Changes improve life for all residents in ways that include, and are sensitive to, different peoples and communities. This especially applies to children and more vulnerable people.

Cleaner air and more green shared spaces have a positive impact on people's health and well-being. Reading's waterways and public spaces are cleaner, and people make more use of them for leisure.

Renewable and community energy make a significant contribution to Reading's energy supply, with more of the benefits shared locally. The majority of buildings harness their own renewable energy using heat pumps and solar. Energy infrastructure is decarbonising rapidly and reliance on fossil fuels is much reduced.



We live in homes and work in buildings that use less energy. Through leveraging public and private finance, building retrofit has increased markedly. New housing development is very low carbon and future proofed for net zero with contributions being made to retrofit programmes. Buildings are increasingly well insulated, including sympathetic retrofit of Reading's heritage buildings. Local residents understand the role that energy consumption plays in the town's climate change challenge and have access to evidence-based advice and practical support.

Safe and accessible walking and cycling routes create opportunities for healthy, low-carbon leisure and travel. Walking, cycling, electric bus and rail routes, in Reading



beyond, are interconnected and easier to use, enabling people to replace some car journeys to popular destinations with active travel or low-carbon public transport. Cars and delivery vehicles are cleaner and quieter and there are fewer vehicles on the roads. EV infrastructure has been rolled out across Reading including for those without driveways.



Water consumption and associated power demand is reduced through meters, reduced leakage and water conservation measures. Flooding is well controlled through nature based urban drainage solutions, but flood and drought mitigation measures are also in place for added security. Our water is safe and clean, supporting biodiversity, carbon capture and health.



People and organisations are mindful about what they buy and consume, through awareness of its impact. They are careful in how they use and dispose of the things they buy, avoiding over-consumption and waste. Green tech and circular economy ideas are championed and adopted, creating economic opportunities for start-ups and community businesses that reduce emissions by minimising resource demand and wastage.



Green spaces are numerous and available to all. They are diverse in life and nature, locking up carbon and benefitting both wildlife and people. Shady spots provide cool refuges for people and wildlife in heatwaves. Street trees and green walls help cool the town. In appropriate locations, wilder management reduces energy and costs, and provides natural food and breeding sites for wildlife.



People enjoy a healthy, low-carbon, plant-rich diet based on affordable, local, seasonal and home-grown products. Food waste is minimised and surplus is shared. More affordable growing space is available for local food growing in well managed allotments and community gardens to support a healthy local food system and their produce can be found in cafés and restaurants around the town.



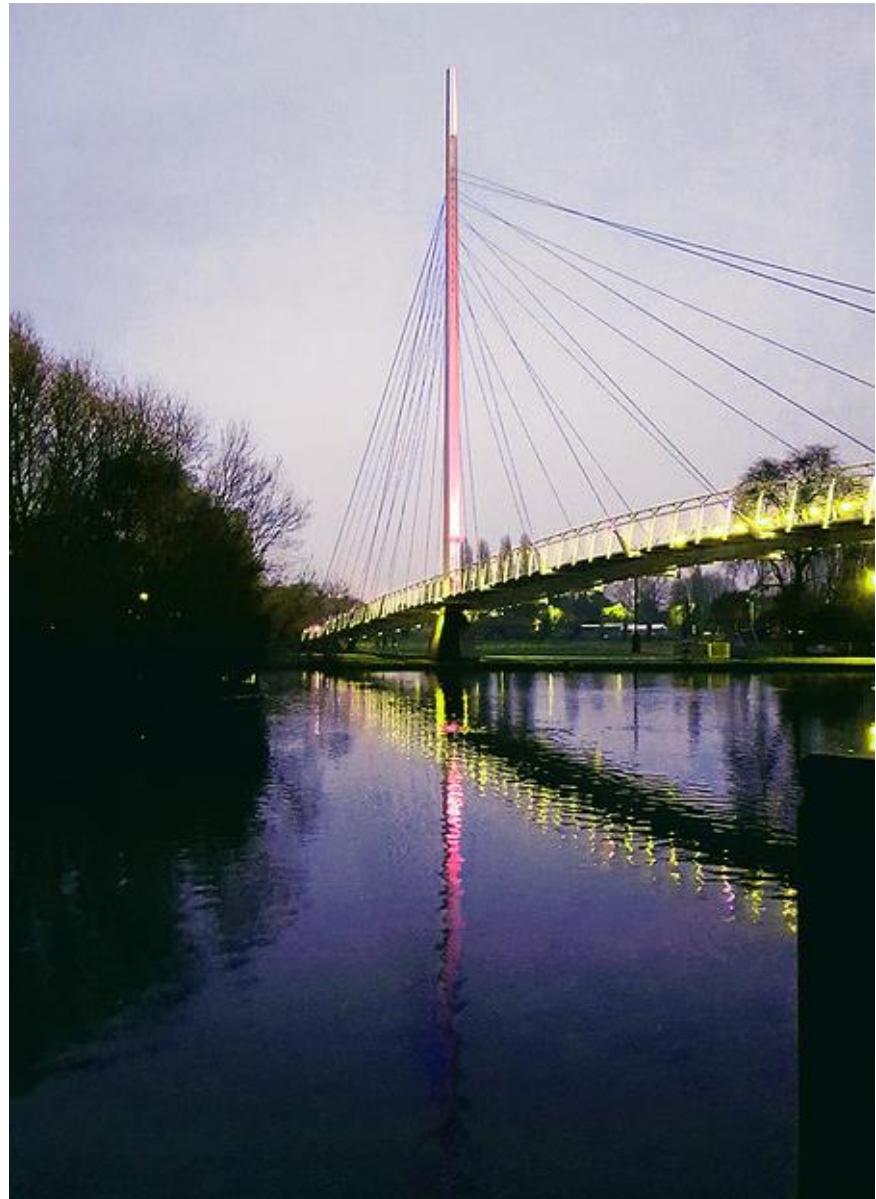
## Cross-cutting topics

During the deliberative process, participants identified 7 cross-cutting topics which apply to all the action plan themes. To these we have added Planning and Development, which was originally proposed as one of the Action Themes but which cannot be effectively influenced by Reading Climate Change Partnership because it lies fully within the control of Reading Borough Council. Health and Personal Resilience was an Action Theme in the 2020-25 Strategy but further work is needed with health authorities to develop this work area so it has been moved to this section.

These eight cross-cutting topics have informed the development of the Action Plan as well as prompting the identification of a number of enabling conditions that will provide the context for future development of the Action Plan in subsequent years.

They are:

- Planning and development
- Training and capacity building
- Health and personal resilience
- Adaptation
- Community engagement
- Campaigns and communication
- Innovation
- Funding and resourcing



## Planning and development

Local planning can enable change in all areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation to be more holistic, targeted and effective. It can ensure that climate priorities are taken into account when planning for other factors not directly relevant to net zero and climate adaptation (for example: noise and air quality, crime hotspots, youth support, needs of low-income households). Reading was one of the first councils to adopt zero carbon for new developments, and can build on this to support low-carbon development.

The strategic priorities for planning and development identified by stakeholders were:

- Ensure that all new developments in Reading meet rigorous energy, heat, and environmental standards – reinforcing climate and nature objectives
- Align planning policies with climate mitigation, adaptation, and environmental priorities to support integrated and long-term sustainability across Reading's built environment
- Acknowledge the importance of carbon capture in soil and planting, and maintaining biodiversity on new and existing sites.
- Facilitate a dedicated forum bringing together stakeholders who are seeking to find solutions to meeting net zero and adaptation targets required by planning
- Local Planning Authority to periodically review, identify and address enablers and blockers impacting the successful delivery of the 2025-30 Climate Emergency Strategy
- Work with other Councils to lobby for changes to national planning policy to allow greater ambition in local planning

## • Training and capacity building

Decarbonising infrastructure needs education and training to foster a skilled workforce. The service sector increasingly includes detailed consideration of climate impacts and shifting asset values. Everyone needs to understand how they can contribute to decarbonisation of their workplace. In this respect, every job is a climate job.

Excellent existing initiatives include the University of Reading's Climate Ambassador Programme for schools, HE and FE offers from the University of Estate Management and New Directions College, and Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce's work to develop Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). While most formal training on decarbonisation is focused on school leavers, more needs to be done to focus on upskilling the existing workforce. REDA's Green Skills research report provides a framework and priorities for green workforce skills as part of the Reading Economic Development Framework. Activate Learning and REDA have launched a programme of Sustainability Leaders and Managers courses for Reading businesses. Priorities identified are:

- Co-ordinate green skills activity targeted at business with REDA and the Reading Economic Development Framework
- Establish a cross-sectoral task force to align training initiatives in Reading, including REDA and the LSIPs
- Develop industry-based sustainability competency frameworks
- Strengthen partnerships between HE and FE, businesses, and public bodies to embed sustainability into professional training
- Create learning resources to bridge skill gaps in existing and emerging green industries
- Make Carbon Literacy training available to the general public and provide high quality guidance on how to decarbonise homes and lifestyles

## Health and personal resilience

Health inequalities already exist in Reading and these are likely to be exacerbated by climate change with the very old, the very young, those with disabilities and those suffering hardship likely to be disproportionately affected by its impacts. According to the World Health Organisation's analysis of the health impacts of climate change there are three main categories of risk that are expected to significantly impact Reading – increased heat waves and related air quality issues, increased rainfall and associated flooding, and changing transmission patterns for infectious diseases. All of these have the potential to negatively affect the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Reading's residents. Alongside these are the underlying health issues associated with fuel poverty and poor diet, and the potential for mental health challenges associated with anxiety and stress caused by climate change and its impacts.

The good news is that many of the actions we need to take to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change also have the potential to improve our community's health and wellbeing. Most of the themes in the Climate Change Action Plan include several actions that will make a direct or indirect contribution to health and wellbeing.

Additional priorities are:

- Appropriate communication on the potential health risks associated with climate change and how to minimise them
- Consideration of relevant health and wellbeing impacts when developing interventions for other climate change challenges
- Emphasis on the health and wellbeing co-benefits that can be delivered through action on climate change, to help increase engagement and participation

## Adaptation

With the impacts of climate change already being experienced in the form of extreme weather, we need to ensure communities and infrastructure are resilient to both acute climate risks such as heatwaves and flooding and chronic risks such as drought. This can be done through sustainable urban planning and building design, green infrastructure, and nature-based solutions, all of which are covered in relevant sections of the Action Plan, but we also need to be ready to respond quickly in case of floods and heatwaves to ensure that people know how to keep themselves safe.

The University of Reading is undertaking research around improving the reliability of forecasting to help prepare for extreme weather events. Following the recent heatwaves, organisations and businesses have also started to plan for acute climate risks; this is evident in the new 'warm rooms' and 'cold rooms' at various community centres as well as passive climate control in newer office buildings, and SUDs schemes in business parks, housing developments and educational establishments.

Strategic priorities for adaptation are:

- Integrate climate risk assessments into urban planning and policy decisions
- Implement small-scale, community driven climate resilience projects alongside large-scale infrastructure adaptation
- Use technology including simulations and GIS mapping to enhance real-time decision making on climate risks
- Support decentralised surface water management and biodiversity to enhance community and ecosystem resilience
- Convene local utilities and other relevant bodies to ensure statutory adaptations plans are joined up and comprehensive

## Community engagement

Climate change presents a threat that requires action on numerous fronts, at international, national, local and personal level. While efforts are necessary to decarbonise products, systems and infrastructure, we also need to create societal shifts towards sustainable lifestyles, to reduce consumption and ensure net-zero behaviours are embedded across all sectors.

Encouraging lifestyle change is not a simple task. People have to juggle a number of different priorities and people don't respond well to being told how to behave. While there is no shortage of information, people may not have the time or money to take the advised actions or there may be other barriers. Ability to take action is sometimes limited by external factors, for example people in poorly insulated rented homes suffering fuel poverty but prevented from improving insulation to reduce their fuel bills. Sometimes targets and incentive are perverse; for example Reading has had some success with increasing recycling rates but this doesn't help to reduce the production of waste. Strategic priorities on lifestyle change are:

- Use behavioural science to design interventions that enable and encourage sustainable choices
- Integrate learning on climate change into school curricula beyond traditional subjects
- Use incentives and other economic models to drive sustainable behaviours such as circular economy principles
- Align public health and sustainability efforts to promote wellbeing and environmental responsibility
- Develop a Community Engagement and Participation Theme and associated Action Plan and communications programme.

## Campaigns and communication

Inspiring and encouraging people to act requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder communication strategy that ensures inclusive climate messaging and delivers widespread engagement.

Creative and innovative ways to raise awareness are being championed by a number of organisations Jelly Reading Arts Collective, the BBC Creative Lives Project, Local Artists Awareness Creation, Reading Climate Festival, Nature Nurture and Commando Jugendstil; the Gaia Installation brought in a wide audience but these activities don't always translate into conversion to action. There are many communities in Reading that are not engaged in the climate conversation and we need more storytellers and messaging that resonates with more people, including in languages other than English; however budget does not currently exist for paid communications media.

Reading Borough Council and the University of Reading are essential partners in amplifying messages to reach a wider audience, and networking organisations like Ethical Reading, Connect Reading and business groups can inform organisations of all types and sizes.

Strategic priorities for communication are:

- Develop a climate communications alliance to streamline messaging across institutions
- Use digital platforms, apps, gamification, community outreach, and storytelling to make sustainability relatable
- Align climate communications with public health, economic, and social justice narratives
- Foster collaboration between businesses, local government, and civil society to amplify impact
- Develop a dashboard to illustrate progress

## Innovation

Reading is a technology hub with a world-leading University and a high density of companies working in the information technology and communications space. It has already undertaken some innovative technology led projects, for example the Smart City Fund programme involving Reading Borough Council and Stantec. It has the opportunity to leverage data-driven technologies and artificial intelligence to enhance urban sustainability, resilience, and efficiency.

Technology can be used to promote and reward lifestyle change, enable smarter choices and give early warning of acute climate risks; numerous examples exist of innovative systems from other places that could potentially be adapted for use in Reading. We already use technology to manage buildings dynamically in response to not just temperature and light levels but also occupancy and air quality. There may be additional opportunities for machine learning or the internet of things to help energy management or build virtual batteries for energy storage. Technology also allows green infrastructure and water flows to be mapped, and can support resource exchanges to contribute to a circular economy. Proposed priorities are:

- Develop an integrated smart city framework that aligns digital innovation with sustainability goals
- Use AI and big data to optimise energy use, mobility, and climate forecasting
- Ensure ethical considerations, digital inclusion and data privacy safeguards in technologies, especially for AI
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing between places, businesses, industries, local policymakers, and research institutions
- Learn what prevents successful local projects from scaling
- Alignment of sustainable energy solutions with data centres

## Funding and resourcing

Systemic change requires investment and unlocking funding is a fundamental challenge for delivery of Reading's net zero goals. Innovative investment vehicles will be needed to augment the funding provided by central government in the form of grants and loans. Currently, there is insufficient understanding of what the total cost would be of decarbonising the town and who will fund each element.

Reading Community Energy Society and Reading Hydro have already proven the value of community energy schemes and this concept could be extended to other types of intervention allowing local people to fund projects in return for a share of financial returns. Other interventions, such as solar PV and potentially EV charging points for households can be delivered more cost-effectively using group buying schemes.

Specific challenges to be overcome include the retrofit of rented and leased home and offices where the landlord would bear the cost of energy efficiency interventions but the tenant would reap the reward of lower energy bills. Strategic priorities for funding are:

- Prioritise the identification of additional funding streams, especially with regard to communications resourcing
- Calculate the cost of the various actions required to make Reading net zero and identify funding options for each element
- Gain a full picture of all potential funding sources, including those detailed during the deliberative process, and identify how each might be applied to unlock actions in the Action Plan
- Establish a funding innovation work group to manage the process of identifying new funding opportunities and how they might be applied in Reading

# Policy and Regulatory Drivers

The UK's regulatory framework for achieving Net Zero by 2050 is undergoing significant transformation in 2025, aligning policy with the urgency of climate action. The cornerstone legislation is the **Climate Change Act 2008**, which mandates legally binding carbon budgets and a Net Zero target. Supporting this, the **Net Zero Strategy** outlines sector-specific pathways, while the **UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS)** incentivises emissions reductions across heavy industries. A key provision of this act is the function of the **Committee on Climate Change** and the setting of 5 yearly carbon budgets. In February 2025 the CCC submitted its **7<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget** report detailing a balanced pathway to 2050 with bold objectives for 2038-2042.

A key plank of the government's approach to achieving net zero is through the introduction of the Clean Power Plan which will ensure that the electricity network all but eliminates fossil fuel combustion and/or captures emissions. This will enable the decarbonisation of heating, transport and industrial processes. The clean power plan will be delivered through **Electricity Market Reform**, major investments in renewable energy delivered through the market (including community energy), and obligations placed on the energy network and system operators.

There are updates to the building control regulations with the upcoming **Future Homes Standard** which will initially require an estimated 75% reduction in emissions from new buildings. Alongside this EPC ratings will be updated and landlords will be required to meet EPC C rating to be able to let their properties after 2030. Various incentives and grants are available to assist in these regulatory challenges set out in the government's **Warm Homes Plan**, which aims to improve energy

efficiency, reduce heating costs, and support the transition to cleaner energy in homes—particularly for low-income households and renters.

In 2025, a number of new regulations are reshaping the landscape. The **Procurement Act 2023**, effective from February 2025, embeds sustainability into public procurement, requiring environmental and social value to be considered in contract awards. Meanwhile, the **Public Procurement Notice (PPN) 06/21** enforces the need for carbon reduction plans for suppliers to public sector.

The **UK Sustainability Reporting Standards (UK SRS)** will standardise ESG disclosures, enhancing corporate transparency. Additionally, **Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR)** continues to mandate large businesses to report energy use and emissions. These regulations will drive more organisations to manage and report on their carbon emissions, having an effect right along supply chains.

Climate-related financial disclosures are transitioning from the TCFD framework to the **IFRS Sustainability Standards**, ensuring continuity in climate risk reporting. Together, these evolving regulations signal a shift toward integrated, accountable, and enforceable climate governance—placing Net Zero at the heart of UK economic and environmental policy.

It should be acknowledged that UK decarbonisation faces rising opposition from some political parties and that it is possible that during the life of this Strategy document some of these regulations may be rolled back. Friends of the Earth is one organisation campaigning for bold and ambitious climate policy, as outlined in this report: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/fairness-test-mandate-bold-climate-policy>

# Reading Borough Council policy and strategies

## Local Policy

Reading Borough is a Unitary Authority. This means the Council has responsibility for all local government functions in its area including transport, housing, planning, adult social care, education and public health although its decisions can be overturned by central government.

As such, the Council has a number of key policies which have the potential to significantly influence our response to the climate emergency. The Council Plan is the overriding strategy setting out the priorities. The Local Transport Plan is one such key policy, which sets out how the local highways network will be run together with a suite of sub-strategies which sit under this including electric vehicles, cycling and walking infrastructure and public transport strategies to name a few.

The Local Plan sets out local planning policies in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, within imposed limits that may hamper ambition. Other relevant policies are; The economic development strategy, the Health and Wellbeing strategy, the Tree Strategy, the Tackling Inequality Strategy and Open Spaces Strategy.

Additionally, the Council's actions to reduce its own carbon emissions are set out in its Carbon Plan. This is not an exhaustive list.

You can find the strategies and policies of the Council here: [Strategies and plans - Reading Borough Council](#).

While Reading Borough Council is committed to decarbonising the town, this also depends on system change in both policy and practice at national level; therefore we intend to work alongside other places to demand changes in national policy to support decarbonisation.

## National policy asks

### Ensure consistency

Climate change should not be a political issue, with different political parties holding widely differing views and policies, leading to regulations being overturned when the governing party changes.

We need certainty that long-term climate policy and targets will be maintained regardless of which party is in power, to provide confidence for investors and homeowners.

### Deliver in Partnership

Swift, effective climate action requires partnership at every level of every sector. Reading's partnership has built a wide network of volunteers and brings together many key organisations to tackle the climate crisis. The partnership is almost entirely reliant on volunteer effort however and we call on Government to commit to direct resources to our Partnership and to work with equivalent Partnerships in other UK cities and regions, to deliver net zero resilient, healthy and just places where everyone benefits.

To ensure that local government reorganisation and devolution enables stronger regional partnership approaches to tackling the climate crisis.

### Deliver a Fair and Just Transition

To deliver an environmentally sustainable economy through policies which protect the most vulnerable, create good jobs and deliver accessible, affordable public services, providing targeted support and funding to make sure that no one is left behind.

## **Deliver Sustainable Buildings**

Commit to an urgent infrastructure investment programme backed up by the relevant mandated standards to improve the efficiency of all buildings to reduce emissions, make homes warmer and cheaper to run, make businesses more resilient, increase investment and create thousands of new jobs for local people. Ensure that:

- councils are empowered to set ambitious net zero targets for local development
- funding is made available for public and private housing and businesses alike to retrofit buildings.
- the gap between gas and electricity prices is quickly narrowed to support electrified low carbon heating solutions.
- skills are built in the sector with appropriate standards to help the market drive uptake.
- EPCs favour the lowest carbon option.

## **Deliver Clean Energy**

Commit to finishing the task of decarbonising the national electricity networks by generating all our energy from renewable and sustainable sources, supporting smart grid solutions for households, removing barriers and creating investment frameworks that support community and local renewable energy initiatives alongside national renewable infrastructure. In addition Local Authorities should be given powers to direct and steer energy infrastructure investment.

## **Deliver Clean, Affordable Transport**

Commit to comprehensively reshape personal and public transport, enabling people to make active travel the first-choice for short journeys by supporting local authorities and operators to develop local transport

networks to support active travel, decarbonise public transport, and drive forward the national transition to electric vehicles.

## **Enable Sustainable Choices**

Commit to measures which promote conscious consumer choices, enabling people to buy sustainably, repurpose, recycle more and throw away less through supporting Councils to provide local waste collection and management processes that materials to be recovered.

Support local businesses and in adopting circular economy approaches and supplying sustainable products to local markets as well as encouraging individuals to make climate conscious choices through national behaviour change programmes.

Ensure that national data monitoring standards are adopted for supply chain emissions.

Ensure high standards for food quality that include the climate impacts relating to their place or origin, import and processing.

Introduce labelling systems to inform the public of these impacts.

## **Help Us to Adapt**

Commit to comprehensive support to reduce risk and build resilience against the present, unavoidable and intensifying impacts of climate change, including flooding, extreme temperature, intensifying storms and pressure on the supply of food, water and other vital resources.

Ensure key organisations are obligated to report and manage their climate based risks, costing these into long term investment decisions. Provide nationally funded programmes that address key climate risks including mechanisms to support ecological services investment alongside infrastructure planning.

## Action Themes

During the deliberative process, the contributions of the participants were grouped into action themes, each of which would have its own section of the Action Plan. The specific actions identified are outlined in the action plan, which will be updated annually to reflect what has already been achieved and allow new actions to be added in response to emerging needs and changing circumstances.

The six themes that emerged from the public workshops were:

- Energy and heat
- Travel and transport
- Water
- Beyond waste
- Nature and open spaces
- Food

Five of these themes are carried over from the 2020-25 Strategy and Action Plan, however food has been separated out from Beyond waste into a category of its own because it represents such a significant portion of carbon emissions and health and wellbeing, which was previously a theme, has been redefined as a strategic priority (see page 13).

The following sections provide additional context for the Action plan, outlining what has been achieved up to this point, defining the current nature of the challenge and any anticipated trends or policy changes that will influence outcomes, and detailing which organisations are already active in the area and what they are working on.



## Energy and heat

Carbon emissions from the gas and electricity used to power our buildings represent 72% of Reading's carbon emissions. The balance is primarily from transport emissions. While grid decarbonisation will make a substantial contribution to the reduction of emissions from electricity, gas emissions can only be reduced by switching to electricity for heating and cooking; however there are limits on the amount of electricity that the local grid can provide and this will need to be addressed by energy companies. At the same time, it is estimated that around 30% of energy purchased by households for heating is wasted due to poor insulation, therefore improving energy efficiency will help to reduce the load on the energy grid as well as cutting bills. This affords the opportunity for more community energy schemes and the development of local heat and energy networks. This is an area where Reading has already made good progress with two community energy companies established in the town including a hydro-electric scheme on the Thames at Caversham. Development of community energy will continue through this strategy period, including rolling out domestic and commercial community solar schemes.

Our action plan also aims to address important social issues relating to energy and heat, such as fuel poverty and health risks. The energy price crisis highlighted the importance of reducing our reliance on volatile energy systems based on importing fossil fuels. It also put financial pressure on thousands of households in Reading, worsening fuel poverty and strengthening the argument for retrofitting homes and creating more renewable electricity capacity. While some funding has been provided by central government to incentivise the retrofit of low-carbon heating technologies and energy efficiency measures, there have been concerns about the suitability of some of the available

interventions and the complexity of application processes. Helping people to make the right choices involves ensuring that the right information and consumer protections are in place and there are easily accessible options for all from the fuel poor to the able to pay.

Additionally, if we are to use electricity to decarbonise, how much we pay for it, relative to gas is crucial. Minimising the load on the national grid at peak times will allow us to meet the extra demand for electricity to supply the heat and transport which are so pivotal to decarbonisation. Energy storage will play a role in levelling out demand, and ground source heat – potentially taking advantage of nearby aquifers - could provide an alternative source of renewable energy in addition to solar and hydro. Embracing 'smart energy' technologies will allow us to choose the lowest carbon, cheapest times to draw power from the grid, further reducing both costs and carbon.

Reading was one of the first towns in the UK to adopt zero carbon for new developments. The proposed Future Homes and Building Standard would ensure that new homes built from 2025 produce 75-80% less carbon emissions than under previous regulations. Meanwhile, the Council takes all steps permitted under current planning regulations to minimise the emissions of new developments, which fall short through its net zero carbon homes policy. There are additional challenges relating to both commercial and domestic tenanted buildings, where the responsible party for energy efficiency measures is not usually the bill payer. The MEES regulations enforcing improved EPC ratings for leased properties will also ratchet up during the life of this strategy.

## Travel and transport

Travel and transport is responsible for 26% of Reading's carbon emissions. The key objectives identified by stakeholders involved in the deliberative process were:

- Reduce reliance on private cars by enhancing accessibility, safety, and convenience of alternative travel modes – including walking, cycling, and public transport
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive EV charging network to support the transition to electric vehicles and low-emission transport options across Reading
- Drive a marked shift away from 'business as usual' by embedding sustainable policies, procurement, and operational changes on travel and transport across businesses and organisations.

Regarding terms of the transport infrastructure for Reading, this is covered by Reading's Local Transport Plan which has already been the subject of extensive public consultation and will inform Reading Borough Council's strategy regarding provision for vehicles in the town. This Strategy and Action Plan therefore focuses on what can be done by individuals and organisations, and how the Local Transport Plan can be supported and augmented by additional interventions

Emissions from vehicles contribute both to global warming and to local air pollution, therefore there are public health considerations regarding both the need to minimise pollution from vehicles and to protect those choosing active travel options from its harmful effects. Reducing congestion can make a significant contribution to air quality as well as emissions reduction, as can the adoption of EVs in preference to petrol and diesel vehicles. However, not everybody can afford an EV – especially since road tax advantages have been withdrawn – and there

are challenges in providing charging points for motorists without off-street parking. Here companies can contribute to EV adoption through their fleet procurement policies and by taking advantage of programmes such as salary sacrifice which enables tax-efficient purchase of EVs and installing charging points in workplaces, for which funding is available from central government. Within the centre of Reading there is the opportunity for cargo bikes and last-mile pooled transport solutions.

Companies can also support active travel, through the provision of Cycle to Work schemes which provides tax incentives and interest-free credit for the purchase of bikes, including ebikes. Additionally, having a Low-carbon Travel Plan can help staff make better choices for business travel, support car sharing, incentive the use of public transport and encourage the use of remote meeting technology in place of some face to face meetings.

Active travel can have health benefits in terms of increasing activity levels and this can be an incentive for some people. Some of the things that discourage cycling are safety concerns and lack of secure bicycle storage and these are issues that can be addressed through the Action Plan, alongside initiatives promoted by the Council.

Reading already has an award-winning bus company that has pioneered the use of alternative fuels to reduce carbon emissions, and 19.5 million bus journeys were made in the borough during 2023/4 – and 11.4% rise and 54% above the national average. This amounts to 109.4 bus journeys per head of population a 9.8% increase on the previous year and 74% above the England average. During the life of this Strategy Reading Buses will begin electrification of its fleet, supported by community energy generation alongside other funding.

## Water

The connection between water and carbon emissions might not be immediately obvious, but purifying and distributing water and treating sewage requires the use of equipment that consumes energy, and therefore minimising water consumption and reducing waste helps to cut emissions. From an adaptation point of view the connection is more obvious; we are all aware of the changing weather patterns caused by global warming and some of us will have been directly affected by the flooding experienced from the Thames, Kennet and Loddon rivers in recent years. This is projected to get worse as global average temperatures increase and therefore it's important to be prepared for these impacts, both in terms of the built environment and infrastructure being adapted to cope better with deluges and also for households and businesses to be prepared for flooding that might occur. We also need to consider the health impacts associated with flooding, both in terms of the stress of having to deal with the aftermath but also the potential for disease due to sewers discharging into watercourses during heavy rainfall.

While flooding is becoming a more frequent occurrence, Reading is also in the most water-stressed part of the UK and, while winters are likely to become wetter due to climate change, summers are predicted to become drier which will increase the potential for extended periods of drought. Conserving water and protecting our green and open spaces from the effects of drought is therefore an additional priority, which also involves ensuring that what rainfall we do receive can be harvested and stored to support demand in times of shortage. Green and open spaces can also play a part in reducing the impact of flooding and helping to conserve water so there is a strong relationship between these two themes of the Strategy and Action Plan.

## Beyond waste

This section of the Action Plan has been renamed, from Resources and Consumption to Beyond Waste to reflect the importance of not just finding end of life solutions for waste but also consuming more thoughtfully and designing products and services that use fewer resources. This approach, often referred to as the Circular Economy, aims to meet society's needs with the least possible amount of resources and then ensure that those resources are returned to the economy at the highest possible value and can play a significant role in meeting emissions reduction targets (see [report](#)).

The goods we buy and use in our homes, communities and organisations require raw materials to be mined or harvested, transported to a factory to be manufactured and then distributed to their point of sale. Each of these processes causes carbon emissions – especially when the raw materials or finished goods are transported from one continent to another. Then when we are finished with the item, further emissions are caused by recycling or disposing of it. Many of those impacts are experienced by those in the global south, who are already experiencing the greatest effects of climate change.

The emissions data published for Reading by central government agencies doesn't take into account its consumption of goods and services but to achieve net zero will require all emissions sources to be minimised, not just those from energy directly consumed in the town.

Planned changes to recycling regulations in 2027 will require further improvements to Reading's recycling facilities, but alongside increasing the percentage of waste that is recycled, our Action Plan also seeks to reduce the amount of waste that is produced. We are fortunate that there are already great repair and share initiatives to build on.

## Nature and open spaces

Reading is a largely urban environment, but still contains substantial areas of nature and open spaces including public parks, woodland, water meadows and private gardens. While nature deserves preservation in its own right, our Action Plan focuses on aspects that contribute directly to the reduction of carbon emissions and adaptation to climate change. This includes ensuring that people feel connected to nature and understand their place in the ecosystem, so that the effects of climate change are more readily understood.

In this context, the three key objectives identified by stakeholders were:

- Ensure well-managed and accessible green and open spaces across Reading to enhance environmental and social wellbeing and encourage active lifestyles
- Implement robust conservation and management strategies to increase biodiversity, support habitats, and improve ecosystem resilience in Reading
- Enhance the role of nature and open spaces in the long term capture and storage of carbon through rewilding, street tree planting, restoring water meadows and wetland, and applying sustainable land management practices.

Reading Borough Council's management of public spaces is determined by its own Tree Strategy, Biodiversity Action Plan and the new Nature Recovery Strategy for Berkshire, so the Action Plan avoids duplicating this work, instead focusing on what people and organisations might do for themselves, building partnerships that can enhance the council's own activities and ensuring a joined up approach that creates synergies between the council's activities and those undertaken by other organisations.

## Food

Globally, food is one of the three greatest contributors to carbon emissions, hence its introduction as a separate theme in the Action Plan. What we eat, where it is produced, how much it is processed and how much of it we waste all have significant impacts on climate change, both through the fuel consumed, the land used and the emissions caused by decomposition of food waste. At the same time, a proportion of households in Reading are experiencing food poverty, many people have unhealthy diets and we have already seen how extreme weather can affect food security and increase food prices.

Reading has already implemented kerb-side food waste recycling, which helps to reduce the emissions from food waste by turning it into fertiliser and energy, and is increasing the reach of food waste collections in line with "Simpler Recycling" policy from central government. It also has a number of charities and community projects ensuring that surplus food is distributed to those in hardship and the establishment of Reading Food Partnership provides a great opportunity. While food waste forms part of the Action Plan, it is primarily focused on four key objectives:

- Significantly expanding local food production and consumption, embedding it as a core part of Reading's culture and lifestyle
- Increasing universal access to affordable, nutritious food and supporting healthier, more sustainable diets
- Implementing circular food systems that prevent waste at every stage – production, distribution, and consumption – while maximising food recovery and redistribution.
- Leveraging community food initiatives to foster stronger social connections and resilience to climate change.

# Governance, Funding and Resourcing

## Current Status

The Reading Climate Change Partnership is an unincorporated, non-executive partnership. Each of its board members volunteers their time, either independently or as part of a related salaried role in the organisation they represent. The Partnership is independent in terms of decision-making but is not a separate legal entity and is hosted by Reading Borough Council which serves as 'accountable body' for the Partnership. We have only one paid member of staff, a part-time coordinator, hosted by Reading Borough Council but working exclusively for the partnership. This new 5-year plan brings with it an opportunity to review RCCP's governance structure and purpose, and related roles. In reality, we have evolved beyond the remit on which we were founded, having developed several assets that are primed for growth, including an annual Reading Climate Festival, a website, newsletter and social media channels, and a de facto role as an orchestrator and convener of new delivery vehicles for our latest Climate Emergency Strategy.

As part of our process to finalise this strategy, we will also be reviewing and updating our governance and purpose so that we can support the delivery of this plan over the next five years. Our board members represent different sectors of Reading's community, including Reading Borough Council, The University of Reading and Royal Berkshire NHS Trust who between them account for around one-fifth of the town's carbon emissions. Others represent groups of organisation or specific interest areas, some also serve as Theme Leads holding a section of our Action Plan. You can see our board members [here](#).

The partnership's sole source of funding to date is modest feed-in tariff payments from solar panels purchased with a grant. This is sufficient to fund our co-ordinator, host our website and contribute towards Reading Climate Festival and an annual Model COP event for local schoolchildren, however securing additional funding is critical if we are to achieve the delivery of our Strategic Priorities and Action.

## Recommendations

The author was asked to consider how the effectiveness of the partnership could be enhanced in terms of its ability to deliver its Action Plan. These fall into two key areas:

### Funding enhancement

The current level of funding is not sufficient to invest in the scale of activities required in order to deliver all the necessary actions to achieve the partnership's goals. Securing additional funding could be transformational for the partnership, as evidenced by similar organisations in other places (eg Bristol, Manchester and Oxford).

With all board members acting in a voluntary capacity, time commitment can be inconsistent and activities are always at risk from other priorities, making it difficult to maintain momentum. While the breadth of expertise and representation offered by the board is excellent, nobody has personal responsibility for executing the Action Plan. Securing the funding to appoint a full-time project manager to oversee delivery of the Action Plan could be transformational.

In addition, communications and engagement is a critical component of the Action Plan, to ensure that good information is provided to diverse audiences in a timely fashion. A full-time communications

professional to oversee the communication and engagement elements of the action plan – ideally supported by a communications budget for paid-for media would extend the content and reach, ensuring that messages cut through and are well received.

There are a number of different funding avenues that the partnership could explore to support these two roles:

- The National Lottery Fund regularly offers grants for community action on climate, often of significant value up to 7 figures.
- Other trusts and foundations invite applications for climate-related community action which might be suitable for funding individual projects or programmes.
- Large corporations based in and around Reading could be invited to commit some of their CSR/ESG budget to either sponsoring a role in the partnership or a specific project or theme area.

Alternative ways of generating revenue might be considered on a more transactional basis. Some examples are offered below but these should not be considered exhaustive:

- Restaurants might offer diners the opportunity to round-up the cost of plant-based meals with the balance being used to fund related activities in the Action Plan
- Companies requiring to include a Social Value element in a bid might be encouraged to collaborate on delivery of relevant actions from the Action Plan
- Climate Bonds could be offered to local residents as occurred in [West Berkshire](#)

It should be noted that some funding options are only available to certain types of organisation, and the partnership's unincorporated

status could prove a barrier. Establishing a charitable company, a CIC or a CIO might expand the range of funding opportunities available, although this would also increase the governance overhead.

### **Operational enhancement**

It is sometimes difficult to achieve secure linkage between activities being led by external organisations or groups. It has also been difficult to retain theme leads, due to the significant workload associated with a volunteer overseeing delivery of a programme of actions alongside other commitments.

For this reason it is recommended that the partnership consider having co-leads for all themes in the Action Plan, pairing a relevant council representative with a counterpart from civil society as has been done with the new Food theme. This would help to coordinate actions as well as reducing individual workload.

In addition, the model followed in the Nature and Open Spaces theme which includes a working group to support the theme lead(s) brings both additional expertise and added resource. Ideally this should be comprised of both independent subject-matter experts and representatives of delivery partners.

Finally, applying for grants is a specialised activity requiring excellent bid-writing skills as well as extensive knowledge of what funding opportunities exist and how to qualify for them; many of the larger funds have extensive application processes which are both time consuming and deadline-bound. It may be worth the partnership considering whether this skill should be outsourced on a commercial basis. Alternatively a dedicated bid-writer as a volunteer on the board or a sub-group of board members could be established with responsibility for funding applications.

# Measuring and Reporting Progress

To ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in delivering Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan, we will adopt a robust framework for measuring and reporting progress. Reporting will be overseen by the Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP), which will coordinate with key stakeholders across sectors to:

- Establish a baseline and methodology for measuring Scope 3 emissions
- Agree and update annual targets and milestones, aligned with Reading's net zero targets.
- Coordinate data collection and analysis across sectors and partner organisations.
- Publish regular progress reports and case studies.

As part of our drive for continuous improvement, we will place greater emphasis on establishing clear objectives and KPIs to track our progress in delivering the Climate Emergency Strategy. These may include, for example:

**Carbon emissions:** Annual Reading CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, sector-specific emissions (e.g., transport, buildings, waste).

**Energy:** Renewable energy generation and consumption, energy efficiency improvements.

**Transport:** Modal shift statistics, EV uptake, public transport usage.

**Green infrastructure:** Tree canopy coverage, biodiversity indicators, proportion of green space, increase in SuDS.

**Community engagement:** Number of organisations and residents engaged, climate literacy metrics.

Progress will be reported through:

**Annual Reports:** Detailing progress on delivering Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy and progress against carbon budgets.

**Case studies:** Highlighting achievements, challenges and community initiatives from across Reading.

**Updated Action Plan:** The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually, indicating progress against previous actions and ensuring that actions remain relevant in light of changes to national and local policy and other external factors.

All reports will be made publicly available via the Reading Borough Council and ReadingCAN websites, ensuring transparency and encouraging civic engagement. While we will be able to report what has been done, it is also important that we are able to measure the impact of those actions in terms of emissions reduction and progress towards our net zero target.

Measuring emissions across an entire town is challenging – although data is readily available regarding Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, Scope 3 data is much harder to obtain and the reporting methodology is less well established. We are fortunate to have the support of the University of Reading in the development of our reporting framework and will continue to work towards improving the quality of data across all emissions sources throughout the life of this Strategy and Action Plan. Through the Council we will also continue to work with CDP, which promotes transparency on climate reporting and has rated Reading A for the past four years.

# Partnerships and Collaborations

Our vision is of a healthier, happier, climate-friendly and climate-resilient Reading — with walkable neighbourhoods, clean air, thriving local businesses offering good jobs, warm and energy-efficient homes, affordable energy, safe cycling routes and a public transport system that works for everyone.

The Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) sets the city's climate vision and targets, working collaboratively to drive forward Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy.

Alongside our partnership, we are committed to embedding climate action into local policy and decision-making, promoting the need for urgent and equitable action at pace and scale, while highlighting the many co-benefits for health, wellbeing and the local economy.

We actively seek funding to support climate initiatives in Reading and bring together local expertise to co-design practical, community-led solutions to the climate crisis.

We champion best practice across our partners and lead campaigns to inspire and empower residents, businesses and organisations to take meaningful action.

We position Reading as a climate-conscious town, engaging with regional and national networks to accelerate change and share our learning.

Together, our work helps shape an inclusive, positive vision for a zero carbon, climate-resilient Reading — and brings together the people, knowledge and resources needed to achieve it.

Our board members represent a wide range of businesses, organisations and institutions- you can find out who they are [here](#) - but that is only a fraction of Reading's community and our stakeholders include everybody who lives, works, studies or spends leisure time in Reading. To implement system change across an entire town requires collaboration on a massive scale and our Action Plan includes a number of actions that are aimed at convening organisations to address some of the challenges that are not within our current sphere of influence.

We are grateful for the support of Delivery Partners who have agreed to work with us on shaping and delivering programmes and projects; you can find them mentioned against individual actions in our Action Plan. But success also depends on organisations of all sizes committing to reducing their own emissions and supporting our communications and engagement activities to help inspire lifestyle change in the wider community.

At a local level, Reading Borough Council is collaborating with adjoining local authorities both individually and through membership of The Sustainable Prosperity Board. Regionally, Reading is a member of the Greater South East Net Zero Hub, the Covenant of Mayors, Race to Zero (a global campaign to rally businesses, cities, regions and investors) and UK100, the cross-party network for climate leaders in local government.

By working with other places and national organisations, we aim to share knowledge and expertise and also to work together to influence national policy change to remove obstacles we have in common.

# Getting Involved

## Individuals

Climate change is an issue that effects everybody, but we understand that it may not be everybody's top priority. Health, money, work and other topics can feel much more critical in many households, yet many of the individual actions that can reduce carbon emissions can also have benefits in other areas of life. Our vision is a healthier, happier, town that offers a stronger, more connected community and better quality of life for all.

You can often save money, improve your health or sometimes both by changing the way you heat and insulate your home, the way you travel, what you eat and what you buy. Our aim is to provide the information to help you to make better choices, and also to work with local businesses to make the climate-friendly options easier and cheaper to buy. Once you've decided to take action, we want to make sure you have good quality information on what to do and where to get help – whether that's how to decarbonise your heating or where to get your water bottle refilled. That's why the first question on the ReadingCAN website is "What can I do?".

We've created a Climate Pledge for individuals who want to adopt a more climate-friendly lifestyle, providing handy prompts for some of the actions that can have a large impact on emissions. Signing up means you've made a commitment to do what you can towards our shared vision for Reading and allows us to keep in touch to update you on new services and resources that might be of interest. You can find out more about it [here](#).

## Organisations

Whatever size your organisation, you probably already feel some pressure from customers to take action on climate change. Many large businesses already fall in scope for legislation that makes emissions reporting mandatory, including both carbon emissions and climate risk reporting, and smaller businesses are finding that this cascades down to them as suppliers. Carbon Reduction Plans are now compulsory for many public sector contracts. This makes emissions a strategic issue, and one that more organisations will have to get to grips with as time goes by.

Navigating the regulations and standards can be a challenge, especially for SMEs and micro businesses who are less likely to have the time and expertise – yet these organisations are responsible for more than half of the town's carbon emissions. Your efforts are certainly important when it comes to achieving our target of a net zero, climate resilient town, both in terms of your own actions and the influence you have over your stakeholders, including suppliers and staff.

The ReadingCAN Business Pledge sets out some simple commitments that organisations of all sizes can make that will contribute to reducing carbon emissions in a way consistent with common reporting standards. You can find it [here](#). We have also established [Reading Business CAN](#), a growing network of businesses and other organisations on LinkedIn, with the aim of sharing expertise and best practice, and a dedicated schools area on the ReadingCAN website to help with climate curriculum [here](#).

## Acknowledgements and Thanks

The development of the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan would not have happened without the support of a large number of individuals who, independently or on behalf of their organisation, took part in our deliberative process by attending one or more of our workshops. We are also indebted to Dialogue Matters who guided the process and documented the insights and ideas that contributed to this final Strategy and the Action Plan that accompanies it. We would like to thank you all for your contribution.

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A special thank you to Professor Ed Hawkins, University of Reading for his permission to use his climate stripes imagery for our branding. The progression from blue (cooler) to red (warmer) stripes portrays the long-term increase in average global temperature for Berkshire from 1850 (left side of graphic) to the present day.  
#showyourstripes

# Glossary of Terms

Adaptation	Climate change adaptation is the process of adjusting to current or expected effects of climate change.
Biodiversity	The variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable and which is under threat from the effects of climate change.
Carbon	Commonly used as shorthand for carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ).
Carbon baseline	The year against which target decreases in emissions are measured.
Climate Change	A pattern of change affecting global or regional climate, for example average temperature and rainfall, or an alteration in frequency of extreme weather conditions. This variation may be caused by both natural processes and human activity, including emissions of greenhouse gases.
Carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> )	Carbon dioxide is a gas that occurs naturally in the Earth's atmosphere and is also a by-product of human activities such as burning fossil fuels. It is the principal greenhouse gas produced by human activity.
Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO <sub>2</sub> e)	Seven greenhouse gases have been associated with climate change are subject to emission limits under the Kyoto Protocol; each has a different global warming potential. The overall warming effect of this cocktail of gases is often expressed in terms of carbon dioxide equivalent, i.e. the amount of CO <sub>2</sub> that would cause the same amount of warming.
Carbon footprint	The amount of carbon emissions caused by an individual, organisation or geographic area or during the manufacture of a product in a given period of time.
Carbon neutral	Carbon neutrality is a state of net-zero carbon dioxide emissions. This can be achieved by balancing emissions of carbon dioxide with its removal (including through carbon offsetting).
Carbon offsetting	A way of compensating for emissions of CO <sub>2</sub> by participating in, or funding, efforts to take CO <sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere. Offsetting often involves paying another party to save or remove emissions equivalent to those produced by your activity.
Carbon sequestration	The process of storing carbon dioxide. This can happen naturally, as growing trees and plants turn CO <sub>2</sub> into biomass (wood, leaves, and so on). It can also refer to the capture and storage of CO <sub>2</sub> produced by industry.
Circular Economy	In a traditional linear economy, the process goes 'make, use, dispose of.' In a circular economy, we try to retain resources in the economy at their highest possibly value, designing out waste from processes and business models and prioritising re-use of whole products, components and materials. Typically, this prioritises the use of renewable energy and natural resources, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals (which impair reuse).
Climate Emergency	A situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.
Decarbonise	To reduce the amount of CO <sub>2</sub> released into the atmosphere.
Fossil fuels	Natural resources, such as coal, oil and natural gas, containing hydrocarbons. These fuels are formed in the Earth over millions of years and produce carbon dioxide when burnt (often in power stations to generate electricity).

Greenhouse gases (GHGs)	A greenhouse gas (GHG) is a gas that absorbs and emits radiant energy within the atmosphere, causing the greenhouse effect and leading to climate change.
Just transition	A 'just transition' means moving to a carbon-neutral society that's fair to everyone, leaving no one behind by developing an environmentally sustainable economy that supports good quality jobs and decent livelihoods.
Net zero	The term net zero means achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it. Unlike carbon neutrality, this cannot be achieved using offsetting.
Per-capita emissions	The total amount of greenhouse gas emitted by a country or region per unit of population.
Science-based targets	Science-Based Targets refer to emission reduction goals that align with the necessary level of decarbonisation to keep the global temperature increase below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, as outlined in the Paris Agreement.
Scope 1, 2 & 3 emissions	From the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, which is the world's most widely-used greenhouse gas accounting standard. Scopes 1 & 2 refer to the emissions that are owned or controlled by an organisation, typically from their use of fuel. Scope 3 emissions are caused by the activities of the company but occur from sources not owned or controlled by the organisation. One organisations' Scope 3 emissions will be another's Scopes 1&2.
SME (Small to medium enterprise)	An organisation with fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of less than €50 million or a balance sheet total less than €43 million. In 2022 there were more than 5.7 million SMEs in the UK.
Stakeholder	Any person or group who is affected by, or can influence, the activities of another group. For a company, this typically extends to employees, customers, suppliers, communities, governments and NGOs, but could also include 'hidden' stakeholders such as poor or marginalised groups, or the environment.
Stakeholder engagement	A process of consultation and discussion with stakeholders to understand their views and to ensure that their needs and concerns are properly considered in policy and action.
Supply chain	A network of facilities and distribution options that perform the functions of procurement of materials, transformation of these materials into intermediate and finished products, and the distribution of these finished products to customers, ie the chain of suppliers inputting to a final product.
Sustainable development	The most frequently quoted definition of sustainable development is from the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 'Our Common Future', 1987 (also known as The Brundtland Report): 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.
Systems thinking	An approach to problem solving, by viewing 'problems' as parts of an overall system, rather than reacting to specific part, outcomes or events and potentially contributing to further development of unintended consequences.
Waste hierarchy	The relative benefit of different ways of dealing with waste, based on its environmental impact. Typically defined as a pyramid with the best processes at the top and worst at the bottom, ranging from waste avoidance all the way down to landfill.
Water stress	Occurs when the demand for water in an area significantly outstrips that which is available.

## Acronyms

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
ESG	Environmental Social and Governance
FE/HE	Further Education/Higher Education
GBA	Get Berkshire Active
GECOP/GECoP2	Green Events Code of Practice
GIS	Geographic Information System
GRFGN	Greater Reading Food Growing Network
GSENZH	Greater South East Net Zero Hub
GTG	Green Theme Group
LGA	Local Government Association
LSIPs	Local Skills Improvement Plans
TVLEP	Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership
NEU	National Education Union
PPA	Power Purchase Agreement
RBC	Reading Borough Council
RCAN/ReadingCAN	Reading Climate Action Network
RCCP	Reading Climate Change Partnership
RCES	Reading Community Energy Society
REDA	Reading Economic Development Agency
RISC	Reading International Support Centre
RVA	Reading Voluntary Agency
SSEN	Scottish and Southern Energy Networks
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
TTR	Transition Town Reading
TVLRF	Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum
UoR	University of Reading
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector

# Index of International and National Policy instruments

[The Paris Agreement 2015](#) - A legally binding international treaty on climate change adopted by 195 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015 which entered into force on 4 November 2016. Its goal is to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.”

[The Climate Change Act 2008 \(as amended\)](#) - Cornerstone legislation setting legally binding carbon budgets for the UK to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Establishes the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) to advise and monitor progress. [Seventh Carbon Budget](#) is the latest carbon budget set by the CCC and contains ambitious targets for 2038-2042.

[Net Zero Strategy \(2021, updated 2025\)](#) - Outlines how the UK will meet its net zero target. Focuses on clean energy, transport decarbonisation, green finance, and innovation. Updated in 2025 to align with the global goal of tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030

[Third National Adaptation Programme \(NAP3\)](#) - Covers 2023–2028 and outlines how the UK will adapt to climate risks. This was criticised in the 2025 CCC progress report for being piecemeal and lacking effective delivery

[Environment Act 2021](#) - Provides a legal framework for environmental governance post-Brexit. Introduces long-term targets for air quality, water, biodiversity, and waste. Establishes the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP).

[Planning and Infrastructure Bill \(2025\)](#) - Aims to accelerate green infrastructure and housing development. Supports the UK's ambition to become a “clean energy superpower”

[Energy Security Strategy \(2022, with 2025 updates\)](#) - Focuses on reducing reliance on fossil fuels and boosting domestic energy production. Includes investment in offshore wind, nuclear, and hydrogen.

[UK Emissions Trading Scheme \(UK ETS\)](#) - Replaced the EU ETS post-Brexit. Cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions with tightening caps over time.

[Green Finance Strategy](#) - Encourages private investment in sustainable projects. Includes mandatory climate-related disclosures for large companies.

[Road to Zero Strategy \(2018\)](#) - Long-term policy framework to reduce emissions from road transport and transitioning to zero-emission vehicles.

[Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations \(MEES\) 2015](#) - Regulations introducing measures to improve the energy efficiency of certain private rented property in England and Wales.

[The Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations 2012](#) - A set of regulations that aim to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. The regulations require Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) to be produced when a domestic or non-domestic building is constructed, sold or let.

[The Building Regulations](#) approved documents – A set of documents that provide guidance on ways to meet the building regulations.

[The Future Homes Standard](#) – due to be implemented in Autumn 2025 and fully enforced by 2028, this will ensure that new homes will produce 75-80% less carbon emissions.

[The Warm Homes Strategy](#) – Provides funding for local authorities to deliver energy performance and low carbon heating upgrades to low-income homes in England

[The Home Energy Conservation Act](#) - Require local authorities to submit reports every two years on the energy conservation measures they have taken to improve the energy performance of residential buildings

[The Energy Act 2023](#) - a wide-ranging piece of UK legislation designed to reform the energy market to ensure greater security, affordability, and independence. It primarily focuses on enabling the transition to a net-zero energy system by providing regulatory frameworks and funding mechanisms for new, clean energy technologies.

[Heat Network Zoning Regulations](#) - Identifying and designating zones where heat networks provide the lowest-cost, low carbon heating option.

*Back page – graphics to be developed*

# Reading Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030

Reading Climate Change Partnership

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0<sup>th</sup> October 2025

## Introduction

This action plan accompanies the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-30 and sets out local climate action priorities across six action areas: energy and heat, travel and transport, water, waste, nature and open spaces, and food. Unlike the strategy, which will remain fixed for the period it covers, the action plan is intended to be a dynamic document. This will enable it to adapt to changing circumstances such as new central government policy, emerging science or technology innovations and changing local priorities, as well as allowing new actions to be added as opportunities emerge. Progress against the plan will be reported annually.

These actions will be shaped into delivery projects by various groups and organisations over the next five years to help (1) reduce our town's emissions and (2) to strengthen our town's resilience to the negative effects of climate change, such as heat waves, flooding, damage to resources and infrastructure, supply chain disruption and water shortages, among other things.

The actions were crowd-sourced and co-created by local experts, community representatives and +200 residents during Reading's Year of Climate Engagement 2024, with the support of expert facilitators. They represent current local thinking about barriers that need to be shifted to unlock net zero for Reading and opportunities for significant collective climate impacts. It should be emphasised that this is a plan for Reading and its scope is limited to what can be done by individuals and organisations in the town to reduce our carbon emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change. Before including them in the Action Plan, ideas contributed during the deliberative process were assessed to determine whether they were relevant to our scope and mission and whether Reading Climate Change Partnership could either take action or influence others in the town to act.

Reading Borough Council has introduced numerous actions to mitigate climate emissions in its strategies and plans over the last decade and national government has introduced initiatives too; our action plan is designed to be complementary to these. In some cases the actions aim to enhance or influence a policy or project that is already 'owned' by our local Council or national government. In others the action is additional – e.g. an action that must be taken voluntarily by citizens, householders or businesses, or an action that aims to fill an information gap or mobilise local responses. We can seek to influence the council's policies and strategies, but ultimately these are outside our control.

There is no single delivery body in Reading whose role it is to understand and set out our town's specific pathways to net zero, or to guide and mobilise people around climate action priorities – although the LGA is consulting to petition national government to empower local authorities to do this. That is why RCCP was formed in 2008 as a volunteer-led partnership, aiming to fill at least some of this gap. RCCP is not staffed however, apart from a part-time co-ordinator, and it was not set up to be a delivery body. These action plans can be seen as opportunities for climate action that require local organisations to come together to form delivery vehicles.

You will see that some of the actions have delivery partners attached to them; i.e. people or organisations who have stepped up to adopt an action into their own organisation or oversee delivery of it. Other actions do not yet have delivery partners, but they have nevertheless been identified as

important levers for achieving net zero. In these cases RCCP volunteers will attempt to mobilise relevant delivery partners, or they may dedicate volunteer time towards bringing these opportunities to life. Please get in touch on [\(email address here\)](#) if you are able to adopt or oversee any of these actions or support existing delivery partners. We see this as the beginning of a delivery plan – a framework for collective climate action that local people and organisations can rally around.

Each of the 6 themes has its own vision, an outline of the challenge and a summary of key barriers and enablers; these have been kept deliberately brief for readability. You can find further information in the strategy document on what has already been achieved for each of the themes and what activities are already occurring or planned. The strategy document also contains details of the cross-cutting strategic issues which have informed the action plan. Each of the themes will be led by two co-leads, one drawn from the staff of Reading Borough Council or other official body within the partnership, and the other from the private, community or voluntary sector, each with relevant experience and expertise. They will be supported by a working group composed of those with relevant influence, knowledge or experience.

We have categorised each of the actions: Delivering, Convening, Communicating or Influencing. Where actions are dependent on additional funding being secured or other barriers for which we haven't yet identified a solution we have noted this in the final column.

# Energy and Heat

## Vision



*Renewable and community energy make a significant contribution to Reading's energy supply, with more of the benefits shared locally. The majority of buildings harness their own renewable energy using heat pumps and solar. Energy infrastructure is decarbonising rapidly and reliance on fossil fuels is much reduced.*

We live in homes and work in buildings that use less energy. Through leveraging public and private finance, building retrofit has increased markedly. New housing development is very low carbon and future proofed for net zero with contributions being made to retrofit programmes. Buildings are increasingly well insulated, including sympathetic retrofit of Reading's heritage buildings. Local residents understand the role that energy consumption plays in the town's climate change challenge and have access to evidence-based advice and practical support.

## The Challenge

We rely on energy, primarily in the form of gas and electricity, to heat and light our homes and businesses and power our technology. Grid electricity is decarbonising, which will support emissions reduction targets, but our homes and businesses were designed with heating systems that rely on fossil fuels. In order to move away from these energy sources we need to both reduce our energy consumption and switch to lower carbon technologies. This needs to happen on an unprecedented scale, but switching can be unaffordable and many people don't feel confident about technology choices. Inconsistent government policy, complicated incentive schemes and rogue operators all contribute to uncertainty about what measures to adopt and who to trust to provide them. Even new homes and commercial buildings aren't equipped with renewable heating and cooling because central government policy prevents local authorities from insisting on highest environmental standards as a condition of planning permission.

Basic energy efficiency measures such as draught proofing and loft insulation can be adopted by most people at low upfront cost. In these cases an engaging, targeted communications and lifestyle change campaign emphasising the financial benefits could achieve good results. Other changes, like wall insulation or replacing heating systems with low carbon heat pumps, would require people to make substantial investment, potentially at the expense of other priorities such as a holiday or new car. For many this level of climate action may be totally financially out of reach and out of mind in which case, the most fruitful climate actions may involve removing barriers to action through grant support for example.

Funding is particularly important where household choices are restricted due to poverty and where the choice to 'heat or eat' for example may be very real. The refurbishment through retrofitting of existing homes seeks to address the multitude of social and health issues associated with underheated homes whilst also future proofing homes to use less energy and to decarbonise them.

## Enablers and Barriers

Through public workshops we identified a number of barriers to decarbonising energy and heat in Reading, and some corresponding enablers.

### Barriers

Renewables:

- Lack of government incentives and financing options for renewables
- Red tape makes local energy networks difficult
- Conflict between PV panels and trees, especially with TPOs
- Landlord/leaseholder arrangements.

Decarbonising energy, heat and transport:

- Grid capacity limitations cannot support increased electricity demand to displace other fuel sources
- Lack of government/tax incentives for decarbonising of heat
- Relative expense of electricity compared to gas for heating
- Immature EV charging infrastructure and high vehicle costs
- Lack of skilled installers and maintenance personnel
- Lack of incentive/penalties for private or commercial landlords to improve insulation or decarbonise property
- Government support for energy price crisis rewards energy suppliers rather than funding energy efficiency measures
- Inconsistent government policy regarding phasing out of high carbon technology, e.g. gas boilers
- High cost of adaptation of the energy infrastructure and built environment

### Enablers

Renewables:

- Reading has two well-established community energy companies that could help deliver solutions (although these rely on volunteer hours)
- Street-scale programmes can help make solar PV systems affordable and easier to access
- Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) could help provide finance for creating new renewables capacity

Decarbonising energy, heat and transport:

- Aquifers provide opportunities for ground source heat at scale
- Reading has access to a highly skilled workforce, particularly in technology, and good educational institutions
- Green leases could help accelerate decarbonisation of commercial buildings
- Government schemes are available for decarbonising the homes of those on lower incomes with healthcare needs
- Novel finance schemes from other places could be emulated (for example Future Leap in Bristol)
- Reducing household poverty/providing grants for change

## Barriers

### Lifestyle Change:

- Lack of confidence in technology
- Uncertainty around choice of technology and reputation of installers
- Low take-up of over-complicated government schemes interpreted as lack of interest, leading to fewer incentives being offered
- Concerns over insulation scams (e.g. examples of issues with solid wall insulation causing damp issues)
- People tend not to value free advice as much as paid-for (even though there is increasingly helpful information and data available for free)
- Lack of resources to run behaviour change campaigns
- Lack of consistent oversight and maintenance of relevant data and information to enable targeted behaviour change campaigns.
- Information alone is usually not sufficient for collective behaviour change, live examples and targeted campaigns are more effective

## Enablers

### Lifestyle Change:

- Various communications platforms and channels exist in Reading that could host, maintain and disseminate up-to-date information about what local residents, schools and businesses can do to reduce demand and decarbonise
- Targeted campaigns like the University of Reading's Climate Ambassadors for Schools Scheme have been established
- Open houses and champions schemes can help inspire and build confidence
- Reducing household poverty can be a powerful incentive for interventions that reduce energy bills, especially when this involves providing grants for change

#	Action name	Category	Description	Targets & milestones	Led by	Involving	Limiting factors
<b>Renewables</b>							
E1.1	Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)	Convening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Further projects delivered using 'private wire' where there is an on-site demand that can be met.</li> <li>2) Work with electricity networks and other third parties to develop 'sleeving approaches' that enable Reading's community energy societies to develop solutions for PPAs using large scale commercial roofs</li> </ul>	Bring forward 5MWP of solar installed capacity over strategy period	RBC	Reading Hydro, RCES, commercial rooftop owners, REDA, SSEN	
E1.2	Supporting skills development	Convening	Work with local HE and FE providers to Integrate climate sustainability into local education and workforce development, including those already in employment, fostering a skilled local workforce for renewables, retrofit and climate adaptation. Utilise resources from the Regional Skills Pilot for the Southeast.	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	REDA	HE and FE providers, trade associations, local contractors, Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH)	
E1.3	Solar Panels	Delivering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Make reverse auction available to householders to allow low priced solar installations and batteries.</li> <li>2) Investigate reverse auction approaches for heat pumps</li> </ul>	Bring forward >50 installations per annum	IChoosr (RBC)		

E1.4	Solar farms	Convening	Seek partners to explore feasibility for a solar farm and/or large scale roof arrays on land west of the current RE3 Island Road site	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RBC	Funding partners	
E1.5	Energy internet	Convening	Bring together relevant stakeholders to explore innovative ways to store energy and share surplus capacity coupling with opportunities such as data centres.	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Energy)	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	

#### Decarbonising energy, heat and transport

Page 22	E2.1	Green leases	Convening	Bring together relevant stakeholders to establish a set of criteria for green leases in Reading to unlock energy efficiency measures for commercial tenants		Reading Borough Council	REDA, LEP, large commercial landlords	
	E2.2	Retrofit funded programmes	Delivering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Progress funded Retrofit programmes for the fuel poor and those eligible for grant funding.</li> <li>2) Establish an Insetting scheme to enable retrofitting using Zero Carbon Homes funding.</li> <li>3) Develop tools and information to guide the 'able to pay market'.</li> <li>4) Review and bid for relevant central government funding schemes to decarbonise heat and improve energy efficiency, balancing fitness</li> </ol>	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RBC (	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	

			for purpose with wide access and prompt roll-out				
E2.3	Retrofit grant funding programmes	Influencing	<p>Gain commitment from RBC to work in partnership with community groups to set up a private homeowners retrofit service e.g. 'Superhomes' via NEF or similar</p> <p>Work in Partnership to bid for funds to provide services for free to those in hardship but not eligible for government grants</p>	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Energy)	RBC, Reading Hydro, Go Renewables, local contractors	
E2.4	Retrofit offer	Delivering	Develop and market an offer to provide accessible, expert advice on the most appropriate measures for individual homes and small businesses.	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Reading Hydro	RBC, RCCP (Energy), Draughtbusters, other subject matter experts, local contractors	
E2.5	Fuel poverty	Communicating	<p>1) Clear signposting of free services such as the Warmer Homes Service, Draughtbusters, alongside online information services to help gain information and funding options to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy costs, via the ReadingCAN and RBC websites</p> <p>2) Deliver Warm Homes funding through Portsmouth Consortium in the borough, Supplement the programme</p>	<p>Published by end of 2025 and updated at least annually</p> <p>Retrofit homes – targets to be confirmed</p>	RBC	RCCP (Comms), CAB	

			with other funding such as Zero Carbon Homes.				
E2.6	Landlord Retrofit- public sector	Delivering	Seek funding for and deliver Low Carbon Housing Strategy for RBC Housing	Maximise EPC C and above based on Warm Homes Funding. Net Zero Housing plan to be developed by end 2026.	RBC	Landlords	Availability of funding
E2.7	Landlord Retrofit – private sector	Influencing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Support Private Landlords in seeking grants and carrying out works on their properties to improve the EPC levels before 2030.</li> <li>2) Enforce EPC levels required by UK law by 2030</li> </ol>	EPC C rating by 2030 (government proposal)	RBC	Landlords	
E2.8	Adaptation	Influencing	Feed into the Supplementary Planning Document in the New Local Plan to ensure that the Adaptation Framework is fit for purpose	2026	RBC		
E2.9	Funding decarbonisation	Convening	Establish a working group to investigate novel ways of funding decarbonisation and energy efficiency that have been successful in other places and develop suitable solutions for Reading	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Energy)	RBC, University of Reading (School of the Built Environment), Reading Hydro, RCES	
E2.10	Designing equitable	Planning	Bring together energy professionals, policy makers and local community groups to	To be defined at the first	Just-Systems (UKRI funded	RBC, University of Reading (Just	

	approaches to decarbonisation		develop an ambitious, equitable, inclusive proposal for decarbonisation, with an initial focus on heat networks.	meeting of the working group	research project)	Systems project), Royal Berkshire Hospital, Maid Energy, RCCP	
E2.11	Heat networks	Delivering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Complete the Detailed Project Development stage for Reading Heat Network.</li> <li>2) Apply for Green Heat Network Fund for Reading</li> <li>3) Procure an Energy Service Company to build and operate Reading's heat network.</li> <li>4) Establish a Zone Coordinator for Reading</li> <li>5) Construction of heat network clusters</li> <li>6) Consider options to link Royal Berkshire Hospital to University of Reading Networks/town network.</li> </ol>	Dec 2025      Mar 2026      2026 - 2027      2026/7      2027 – 2030	RBC		
E2.12	Develop Local Area Energy planning tools for Reading	Influencing	RBC and community energy groups to use the LENZA and Pathways tools to plan local projects and inform network decisions	Access to LENZA by the end of 2025. Access to 'Pathways' to be maintained continuously when funding ceases in April 2025	RBC	Reading Hydro, RCES	Availability of funding to renew the CoreLogic Pathways tool when GSENZ funding ceases. Agreement by RBC for community

							energy groups to access the tools
<b>Lifestyle change</b>							
E3.1  Page 246	Community Energy Hub	Communicating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a single source of reliable consumer advice on renewables and retrofit decarbonisation measures, including signposting to funding options and reputable suppliers using a suitable accreditation.</li> <li>Reading Net Zero Transition Hub to target segmented audiences through a range of suitable media, enabling actions, community engagement and lifestyle change campaigns</li> <li>Explore the potential for a physical hub.</li> </ol>	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RBC  RBC, UoR,  Reading Hydro	RCCP (Energy), RCCP (Comms), Reading Hydro, Trading Standards, accreditation providers  RCCP (Comms)	Promotion of the online hub through paid-for media and creation of the physical hub both subject to availability of funding to deliver. Expertise and resource to design and deliver appropriate campaigns that enable action
E3.2	Energy Champions	Communicating	Compile a list of businesses and homes prepared to host “open house” sessions to demonstrate solutions and promote via the ReadingCAN website and RBC comms e.g. ‘A House Like Mine’ - exemplars of retrofit for common housing archetypes.	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Energy)	RCCP (Comms), RBC	
E3.3	Cooling	Communicating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with relevant experts to develop and share information on how to keep</li> </ol>	To be defined at the first	RCCP (Comms)	RBC, subject matter experts	

			<p>homes and workplaces cool during heatwaves.</p> <p>2) Establish and share details of public cool spaces that can be accessed during heatwaves (and similar for warm spaces for extreme cold)</p>	meeting of the working group			
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# Travel and Transport

## Vision



*Safe and accessible walking and cycling routes create opportunities for healthy, low-carbon leisure and travel. Walking, cycling, electric bus and rail routes, in Reading and beyond, are interconnected and easier to use, enabling people to replace some car journeys to popular destinations with active travel or low-carbon public transport. Cars and delivery vehicles are cleaner and quieter and there are fewer vehicles on the roads. EV infrastructure has been rolled out across Reading including for those without driveways.*

## The Challenge

Like most urban places, Reading has a well-developed transport infrastructure yet still suffers from traffic congestion and air quality issues. Reading Borough Council has a number of relevant strategies and policies which outline its priorities regarding transport infrastructure, in particular its Local Transport Plan; these were developed with public consultation and with consideration of the ambition for a net zero, climate adapted town by 2030. The role of this action plan is not to duplicate or rehash those strategies but to outline how Reading Climate Change Partnership can support and enhance the Council's activities, and also encourage the lifestyle change that will be needed from both individuals and organisations to help reduce carbon emissions from the transport of both people and goods in the town.

There are three main ways that emissions from travel and transport can be reduced at a town level:

- Reducing the number of journeys that need to be made by vehicles
- Switching to less polluting vehicles, in particular public transport and electric vehicles (EVs)
- Encouraging active modes of travel such as walking and cycling

We are building on strong foundations as Reading has an excellent bus fleet and extensive rail connections, although there are affordability and access issues for many people. Affordability is also a factor for adoption of EVs, as is access to charging points for those without off-street parking. Infrastructure changes need to take these challenges into account while also encouraging those who can adapt their travel habits to do so.

Organisations also have a part to play in developing their own plans to minimise the need for travel by their staff and customers, managing logistics more efficiently and finding ways to decarbonise their own fleet and business travel.

As we make these changes, we need to prepare for increased disruption to transport systems arising from climate impacts and ensure that people can still travel safely and comfortably in a changing climate. Air quality issues will be exacerbated by higher temperatures and therefore reducing pollution from vehicles will be an important benefit, as will the health and fitness improvements that come from active travel.

## Enablers and Barriers

Through public workshops we identified a number of barriers to supporting nature and biodiversity to help reduce emissions and improve adaptation to climate change in Reading, and some corresponding enablers.

### Barriers

#### Encouraging Active Travel

- Lack of secure cycling storage
- Lack of funding for cycling provision
- Few bike repair stores
- Narrow Victorian streets
- Concerns over the safety of cycling, wheeling and walking
- Upfront cost of bikes, ebikes and essential accessories
- People and organisations are not always aware what facilities are available to them
- People and organisations aren't always aware of how much their travel choices contribute to carbon emissions

#### Reducing vehicle emissions

- Cost of providing EV charging facilities – both public and private
- Difficulty of providing EV charging for those without driveways
- High cost of EVs in comparison to ICE vehicles
- Grid restrictions on supplying electricity for EV charging
- Need to protect provision for those with impaired mobility

#### Low carbon transport infrastructure

- The risk /of damage and injury to cyclists caused by poorly maintained surfaces
- Increased rainfall and higher temperatures due to climate change are likely to be a disincentive to active travel

### Enablers

#### Encouraging Active Travel

- Safe walking and cycling routes
- Low traffic neighbourhoods and 20mph zones
- Secure bike storage, including for e-bikes
- Cycle to work schemes
- Potential for using technology to support and incentivise active/low-carbon travel
- Health benefits of active travel are a motivator
- Established local groups already providing effective support
- Promotion of RBC funded schemes such as Reading Bike Kitchen to provide affordable bike repairs and parts

#### Reducing vehicle emissions

- The opportunity to expand car clubs
- Potential for last mile delivery centres and low-carbon town centre delivery vehicles
- Funding received for electrifying Reading's buses
- Grants available for in-home and office charging points
- Health benefits of cleaner air
- Potential for b-directional EV charging for local energy storage

#### Low carbon transport infrastructure

- Reading's award-winning bus service
- Reading's Tree Strategy aims to green cycle routes

#	Action name	Category	Description	Targets & milestones	Led by	Involving	Limiting factors
<b>Encouraging active travel</b>							
T1.1	Travel plans for schools, organisations and business parks	Communicating	Develop and share resources to support organisations, particularly schools, SMEs and charities, to develop low carbon travel plans, including guidance on best practice and a template for creating travel plans	Resources published to ReadingCAN website by 2027	RCCP (Business)	REDA, RCCP (Comms)	Requires investment in resource to deliver
T1.2	Cycle to work schemes	Communicating	Develop explainer for businesses and signpost Cycle to Work schemes to increase take-up.	Published to ReadingCAN website by March 2027	RCCP (Travel)	RCCP (Comms)	
T1.3	Integrated ticketing	Communicating	Work with Reading Borough Council to promote integrated ticketing as a means of making public transport cheaper and easier to use	Ongoing as part of ReadingCAN comms programme	RCCP (Comms)	RBC	
T1.4	Responding to national government policy	Convening	Work with Reading Borough Council to support policy development in response to future changes to government policy to encourage active travel – for example with relation to e-scooters	As and when required	RCCP (transport)	RBC	
T1.5	Smart City Pilots	Convening	Set up a working group to leverage the relevant Smart City pilots being delivered by Stantec around making public transport more accessible for the elderly, and encouraging sustainable travel to schools, with a view to broadening the reach of the programmes	Working group set up by March 2027	RCCP (transport)	Stantec, RBC	Requires investment in resource to deliver

T1.6	Active Travel information hub	Communicating	Work with relevant providers to develop a comprehensive information source on all the organisations and services in Reading to promote and support active travel, including empowering organisers to enter their own information into the ReadingCAN events calendar and including existing guided walk leaflets	Information hub launched by 2027	RCCP (Comms)	Transition Town Reading, Reading Bike Kitchen, Reading Cycle Campaign, others	
T1.7	Active Travel for health	Influencing	Support active travel actions by advocating for these to be included in Physical Activity alliance and healthy weight system planning with RBC Public health	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Get Berkshire Active	RBC (public health and wellbeing)	
P age 251	Promoting low-carbon travel	Communicating	Work with Reading Buses to develop a comms strategy that promotes the benefits of fleet electrification to passenger	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Transport)	Reading Buses	
T1.9	Active travel to school	Convening	Work with Reading's schools to encourage more solutions to promote active travel to school, including new school streets, walking and bike buses and additional bicycle parking	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Brighter Futures for Children	RCCP (Transport)	
<b>Reducing vehicle emissions</b>							
T2.1	Last mile delivery	Convening	Convene a dedicated group on last mile delivery to explore the opportunities for establishing last mile delivery centres in Reading to reduce the number of commercial vehicles and, where	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Transport)	REDA, Pedal and Post, other suitable providers	Requires investment in resource to deliver

			possible, switch to low carbon alternatives				
T2.2	Car clubs	Convening	Bring together relevant interested parties to unlock the use of private spaces as sites for car club providers and develop a suitable offer for Reading	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Transport)	Landlords/property managers, car club operators, RBC	Requires investment in resource to deliver
T2.3	Car sharing and community transport	Communicating	Check what car sharing services and community transport services are active in Reading and ensure they are included on the ReadingCAN website	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Comms)	RBC, RVA	
T2.4	e-Bikes and e-Cargo bikes	Convening	Bring together relevant interested parties to explore the potential for setting up schemes to encourage the use of e-bikes and e-cargo bikes, including e-bike libraries and e-cargo bike clubs	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Transport)	RBC, other stakeholders to be identified	
T2.5	Low-carbon public fleets	Influencing	Work with Reading Borough Council and other partners to encourage decarbonisation of public fleets such as buses, taxis, school transport and accessible transport services	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Transport)	RBC, other stakeholders to be identified	

#### Low carbon transport infrastructure

T3.1	Adaptation measures	Convening	Convene group for knowledge sharing on adaptation e.g. permeability of road surfaces, shading for walking and cycling	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Transport)	University of Reading, RBC	Requires investment in resource to deliver
T3.2	New infrastructure	Influencing	Work with Reading Borough Council to prompt consideration of how existing infrastructure can be adapted to ensure maximum environmental benefit when new	As and when required	RCCP (Transport)	RBC	

			infrastructure is adopted, for example with respect to possible new Thames road bridge				
T3.3	Road repairs	Convening	Convene the relevant stakeholders to explore more sustainable ways of maintaining roads and determining priorities for repairs based on use by cyclists and other wheelers	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Transport)	RBC, Road Innovation Group (Sam Shean), Tarmac	Requires investment in resource to deliver

# Water

## Vision



*Water consumption and associated power demand is reduced through meters, reduced leakage and water conservation measures. Flooding is well controlled through nature based urban drainage solutions, but flood and drought mitigation measures are also in place for added security. Our water is safe and clean, supporting biodiversity, carbon capture and health*

## The Challenge

The River Thames, which winds through Reading, is more than just a waterway; it's a source of pride, a place of recreation and a vital natural resource. Like the Thames, the River Kennet is a valuable wildlife habitat, and its flood plain helps protect Reading from flooding. As our climate evolves, we have a unique opportunity to adapt and thrive by embracing smarter, more sustainable ways of managing water. While we can expect more varied weather—wetter winters, drier summers, and extremes like floods or droughts—these changes also present a chance to build a more resilient and water-wise Reading community. Reading is located in one of the more water-stressed regions of the UK, with water availability per person comparable to some of the driest places in the world. Yet, we are fortunate to have strong foundations locally: the River Kennet and the chalk aquifer beneath the ~~Berkshire Downs~~ are theoretically able to provide a reliable water supply. By using this resource wisely through improved water efficiency, rainwater harvesting, and leak prevention, we can ensure it continues to support our growing town, even during dry spells.

As rainfall becomes more intense and unpredictable, we have the chance to enhance our flood resilience by protecting and managing our green space, including flood plains, carefully and safeguarding them from development. To stay ahead of the curve, we can invest in smarter, greener solutions—like sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), green infrastructure, and permeable surfaces—that help water soak into the ground naturally and reduce pressure on our drains. These improvements not only reduce flood risk but also bring added benefits like greener streets, cooler urban spaces and more vibrant habitats for wildlife.

We've already seen how surface water can affect our homes and streets, and now is the time to empower every household and business with the knowledge and tools to prepare. Simple actions—like checking flood risk, creating a flood plan, or using drains responsibly—can make a big difference. While national action is needed to fully address issues like sewage overflows, we can all play a part by keeping our sewers clear and supporting local water initiatives. Together, we can build a community that's ready for whatever the weather brings—stronger, safer, and more connected through our shared commitment to water.

## Enablers and Barriers

During public workshops, we identified several challenges that make it harder to improve flood resilience, conserve water, and reduce the impact of sewage in Reading. We also explored practical solutions that could help overcome these barriers and support efforts to cut emissions and adapt to climate change.

### Barriers

#### Flood resilience and mitigation

- Climate change is already causing more extreme rainfall events
- Reading is based at the confluence of several rivers, all with the potential to flood during heavy rainstorms
- Impermeable surfaces are the default in hard landscaping
- Encroachment of development into flood plains and water meadows
- Cost of maintaining surface water drainage systems
- Lack of flood risk awareness and what to do in case of flooding
- Lack of investment by the EA in river system management

#### Water conservation

- Lack of priority given by water companies to fixing leaks – also reduces personal motivation to conserve water
- Water efficiency is not seen as a priority for many people and organisations
- More local food production could increase demand for water

#### Water quality

- Release of sewage into waterways remains an issue with insufficient penalties imposed by central government
- People don't always know what they can and cannot dispose of into domestic sewers

### Enablers

#### Flood resilience and mitigation

- Sustainable Urban Draining Schemes (SuDS)
- Flood alerts available from the Environment Agency
- The ability of green infrastructure to mitigate flood risk
- Expertise available from the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum and the University of Reading
- Opportunity to learn from other places with well-developed flood prevention programmes
- Flood mitigation programmes could be developed as “carbon insetting” opportunities

#### Water conservation

- Existing guidance available on how to use water efficiently can be amplified
- Rainwater harvesting and greywater collection technologies can help reduce demand
- Water meters can help promote efficient water use
- Making “water neutrality” a planning requirement
- Low-cost water saving solutions, e.g. water butts

#### Water quality

- Existing information on how to avoid sewer abuse can be amplified

#	Action name	Category	Description	Targets & milestones	Led by	Involving	Limiting factors
<b>Flood resilience and mitigation</b>							
W1.1	Flood risk awareness	Communicating	Increase awareness of the flood risk for Reading and how to access flood alerts and warnings by sharing the online tool available via Defra: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/where-do-you-want-to-check-check-your-long-term-flood-risk">Where do you want to check? - Check your long term flood risk - GOV.UK</a>	Published on ReadingCAN by 2025.	RCCP (Comms)	RCCP (Water), Defra, Environment Agency	Online tool requiring access to a computer and the internet.
W1.2	Flood preparedness	Communicating	Raise awareness of flood risk by engaging with the community. This includes sharing information with individuals and organisations on what to do in case of flooding, based on publicly available information.	Published on ReadingCAN by 2025. Support TVLRF with local engagement from 2025 to 2027.	RCCP (Comms)	RBC. Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF)	Requires volunteers to support delivery of engagement activities.
W1.3	Guidance for schools and community groups on flooding	Communicating	Develop guidance based on best practice from other places and share locally.	Develop and share guidance by 2027.	RISC	Other councils	
W1.4	Guidance for developers on SuDS	Communicating	Develop guidance based on best practice from other places, including SuDS marketplace in London, and share locally	Develop and share locally relevant guidance for developers by 2027.	Green Task Group	Local landscape architects, engineering firms	Need to ensure alignment with existing SuDS guidance documents.
W1.5	Natural Flood Management	Influencing	Investigate the use of green infrastructure to reduce flooding and develop recommendations for	By 2030	RCCP (Water)	GTG, Thames Water, RBC, local catchment	Requires investment in resource to deliver

			Reading; focusing on opportunities for Natural Flood Management.			partnerships, and the Environment Agency.	
W1.6	Rainwater harvesting and reuse in gardens and allotments	Influencing	<p>1) Facilitate a knowledge sharing session with Waltham Forest Council on the risks and rewards from rainwater harvesting (e.g. water butts).</p> <p>2) Explore alternative ways to conserve water in growing spaces and share learnings</p>	By 2025	RCCP (Water)	Elizabeth Rapoport, Flood Ready London Partnership Waltham Forest Council	
W1.7	Kennet Meadows	Influencing	<p>Ensuring that Kennet Meadows, as Reading's primary natural flood defence, is defended from development</p> <p>Develop a scheme to retain water in certain areas on the meadow.</p>	Ongoing	RBC	GTC	
W1.8	Protecting Reading's network of green spaces	Delivering	Maintain and enhance green spaces and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) to support river health and biodiversity.	Increase area of green coverage from 17% baseline	RCCP (Nature)	RBC	Requires investment in resource to deliver
W1.9	Enhance sports pitch resilience	Convening	<p>1) Partner with local grassroots sports organisations to improve water stewardship and protect pitches from flooding and drought and unlock new opportunities for NbS and SuDS at sports grounds.</p> <p>2) Develop recommendations for ensuring that new artificial pitches have SUDS or diversion to existing ditch lines and</p>	<p>Sports projects delivered collaboratively through a place-based approach.</p> <p>Target 2028 for pilot project.</p>	RCCP (Water)	Football Association (FA), Get Berkshire Active, RBC	Requires investment in resource to deliver

			additional controls for biodiversity loss				
W1.10	Enhancing local flood plains	Delivering	River and flood plain initiatives to slow and store water and support river health by reducing runoff and improving local biodiversity through community involvement. See 1.7 above Kennet Meadow.	Deliver one community flood plain initiative by 2030.	RCCP (Water)	RCCP (Nature) and local community groups	
W1.11	Education on flood resilience	Delivering	Engage with schools and further education about water actions and flood resilience; arrange walks and programmes around existing and planned areas	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Water)	BfFC	Requires funding to deliver
<b>Water conservation</b>							
W2.1 Page 258	Advice for gardeners	Communicating	Design and deliver a local campaign to enable more water-efficient gardening, using up-to-date info on water butts, green shed roofs, watering strategies etc.	Published by 2026. Workshops and knowledge sharing sessions to be delivered.	RCCP (Nature)	GRFGN, Allotment groups/IER Partner with Our Rainwater.	Requires resources for workshop delivery
W2.2	Water conservation in development	Convening and Influencing	Work with planning team to encourage water conservation measures (including greywater/rainwater harvesting) and/or water neutrality to be made mandatory in all new planning applications. Socialise and encourage uptake of Thames Water incentives for water neutral developments.	Guidance prepared by Thames Water.	RCCP (Water)	Our Rainwater, local plumbers and trades people, developers, Thames Water, and RCCP (Nature).	

W2.3	Greywater collection	Delivering	1) Pilot greywater collection solutions in Reading, e.g. local depots and offices. 2) Publish guidance for households on retro-fitting greywater capture solutions	By 2030	RCCP (Water)	Thames Water, Mott Macdonald, Our Rainwater, RBC	
W2.4	Water information hub	Communicating	Create/signpost information on water efficiency for individuals and organisations, including the carbon emissions associated with water use/treatment and heating water for cooking/washing etc.	Published by 2027	RCCP (Water)	Rivers Trust, Thames Water, local catchment partnerships	
W2.5 Page 259	Educate the public about Reading's water situation	Communicating	Share and explain water efficiency and per capita consumption targets (set by government) and how this compares to current consumption. Develop Comms Strategy for engaging public, including schools.	Available material published on RCAN website by 2025. New material prepared and published. Published by 2026.	RCCP (Water)	Thames Water, Environment Agency	
W2.6	Educate businesses about water use, efficiency benefits, and dry weather preparedness /response	Communicating	Share the Thames Water Drought Plan. Signpost relevant information and case studies from reputable sources. Create industry-specific advice and case studies. Run a drought exercise with Local Resilience Forum (LRF), partners and businesses. Communicate the Environment Agency 'incident management' approach to drought.	Information resource compiled and published. Industry-specific guidance available. Drought exercise and incident management response.	RCCP (Water)	Thames Water, Environment Agency, Thames Valley Resilience Forum	

W2.7	Leadership and Influence	Influencing	Lobby MPs and Defra to strengthen building regulations and planning process, to drive water efficiency within all new developments and procurement schemes.	Update to building regs and planning. Implementation of Schedule 3.	RCCP (Water)	Thames Water, Environment Agency, Local ENGOs, Rivers Trust	
W2.8	Promote drought-tolerant landscaping	Convening	Engage with local businesses, community groups and landscape architects to educate and promote drought-tolerant landscaping	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Water)	Local community groups, and RCCP (Nature)	
W2.9	Pilot time-of-use pricing models for water services	Delivering	Work with Thames Water to deliver tariff trials for time of use pricing to shift demand away from peak periods	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Water)	Thames Water, RBC	
W2.10	Offer free or subsidised plumbing checks	Delivering	Work in partnership with energy and heating initiatives to support vulnerable customers to address leaks in their home, to reduce customer side leaks and plumbing losses	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Water)	Local plumbers and trades people, RBC, a funding delivery partner such as HACT	

#### Water quality (including Sewage and pollution)

W3.1	Reducing herbicide use	Influencing	Identify alternatives to damaging herbicides and disseminate advice to relevant stakeholders to protect water quality by minimising chemical runoff into rivers and streams. Work with local businesses, community groups, and landscape architects..	Establish baseline for number of uses or sites where herbicide is used and reduce herbicide use by 50% by 2030	RCCP (Water)	GRFGN, Allotment groups/IER	
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W3.2	Improving run-off from roads	Influencing	Identifying new opportunities to improve green infrastructure on roads and pavements. Support implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and new planting areas to manage flood risks and enhance natural filtration.	Current infrastructure projects. Integrate green and blue infrastructure in 50% of new transport projects by 2030	RCCP (Water)	In partnership with RCCP (Transport)	
W3.3	Educate the public about sewer abuse	Communicating	Publish sewer abuse and the impact on water quality, messages and content to RCAN website. Education and awareness campaign delivered with local partners including drainage companies.	Content published. Local partnerships with drainage companies established	RCCP (Water)	Thames Water, Environment Agency	
W3.4	Educate and regulate chemicals that enter the river - pets	Communicating	Educate the public and increase awareness of the impact of different chemicals (used in everyday life) on river health. Work with local veterinarian clinics to support education for dog owners on the impact of flea treatments.	In partnership with local businesses and veterinarian clinics, engage with 10% of dog owners in Reading	RCCP (Water)	Local community groups, veterinarian clinics, and pet owners.	

# Beyond Waste

## Vision



*People and organisations are mindful about what they buy and consume, through awareness of its impact. They are careful in how they use and dispose of the things they buy, avoiding over-consumption and waste. Green tech and circular economy ideas are championed and adopted, creating economic opportunities for start-ups and community businesses that reduce emissions by minimising resource demand and wastage.*

## The Challenge

Our modern economy is built on consumerism and easy access - if we have enough money we can easily buy whatever we want, whenever we want it. This generates a great deal of waste, which causes carbon emissions not only when it is processed but also through the raw materials, manufacturing processes and transport of the goods. Even services and virtualised products, such as streaming music and entertainment, emit carbon through data storage and transmission, as well as the manufacturing, transport and disposal of the devices used to enjoy them. Live entertainment is just as impactful, causing significant emissions from the infrastructure needed to put on an event or festival and the food and drink prepared and consumed on site. We need to reduce emissions but we also want to preserve our ability to have fun.

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BEST USE

Refuse/Rethink/Redesign

Reduce and reuse

Preparation for reuse

Recycling/composting/anaerobic digestion

Material and chemical recovery

Residuals management

Unacceptable



One way to frame this challenge is through an approach called the circular economy. To provide the goods we need we take materials from the Earth, make products from them, use them and eventually throw them away as waste – the process is linear. To try and reduce the impact of waste we adopt end of life solutions like recycling, but the amount of materials we consume doesn't really change. A circular economy is a system where materials never become waste and are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture and composting, and recycling. The circular economy can help reduce carbon emissions and also address other global challenges, like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by breaking the link between the provision of goods and services and the consumption of finite resources. By designing better products and services, and re-imagining business models to rely less on ownership of physical products, we aim to stop waste being produced in the first place. This is illustrated by the new hierarchy of waste developed by [Zero Waste Europe](#); you can read more about the Circular Economy and find useful resources at the [Dame Ellen Macarthur Foundation](#).

Like many of the changes needed to reduce carbon emissions, the Circular Economy is a system intervention requiring organisations and policymakers to work together to develop better systems and processes that enable consumers to make low-carbon choices.

## Enablers and Barriers

Through public workshops we identified a number of barriers to creating a more circular economy in Reading, and some corresponding enablers.

### Barriers

#### Waste prevention and management:

- Recycling provision is different at home, work and school, causing confusion and leading to contamination of waste streams (including kerbside bins) that prevent recycling
- Fines for incorrect treatment of waste are not high enough to work as a deterrent
- Market demand for recycled materials is variable and prices not always attractive
- Facilities for waste and recycling processing aren't sufficient
- Public investment in waste and recycling is limited
- No kerbside collection of glass in Reading
- The habit of throwing away items instead of repair/recycling

#### Innovation:

- Funding for innovation is difficult to access
- Difficulty in demonstrating the value of innovation to funders

#### Lifestyle change:

- Lack of understanding of the link between resources, waste and carbon emissions
- A busy curriculum in schools leaves little time for messaging
- Lack of resources – people, time and money
- Lack of consistency in communication of what good looks like
- Limited/hard to access information about what's available
- Language barrier in some communities

### Enablers

#### Waste prevention and management:

- Planned changes in waste legislation will help improve systems
- Various media exist that can communicate better information about recycling facilities, including future changes e.g. The ReadingCAN website, Reading Borough Council publications
- Better recycling provision for people who can't drive to facilities
- More instore recycling of WEEE, batteries and other waste
- Repair cafes, tool libraries and sharing economy solutions

#### Innovation:

- Funding might be available from government, innovation funds or private funders to develop circular economy solutions
- Reading has access to a highly skilled workforce, particularly in technology, and plenty of innovative, agile organisations
- Circular design guidelines and principles already exist
- The relevance of circular economy across themes

#### Lifestyle Change:

- Various media exist that can communicate better information about recycling facilities, e.g. The ReadingCAN website, Reading Borough Council publications
- The Climate Ambassadors programme for schools
- Some resource exchanges already exist in the area, plus charities etc – improved comms and funding needed
- Guidance published in various languages

#	Action name	Category	Description	Targets & milestones	Led by	Involving	Limiting factors
<b>Waste prevention and management</b>							
W1.1	Improving waste data	Influencing	Lobby for a local waste dashboard for both domestic and commercial waste with the correct metrics to promote improved performance	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Waste)	RE3	
W1.2	Working group on problematic waste streams	Convening	<p>1) Assemble a working group to agree and implement policies to reduce waste /improve recycling rates for specific waste streams, including (but not limited to) demolition waste, clothing, glass, soft plastics, WEEE, PV panels, EV batteries (kerbside &amp; centralised)</p> <p>2) Consider a study at Reading Material Recovery Facility to identify items that are commonly discarded before end of life and define interventions to help keep them in circulation</p>	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RBC (Waste Services)	RE3, RCCP (Waste), REDA	
W1.3	Bokashi for Business	Delivering	Develop an offer to help small organisations including schools and 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector in scope of new food waste regulations to comply cost-effectively through the use of Bokashi bins to store waste. Deliver pilot and roll out.	Develop offer by mid 2026; pilot 2027-8	G TG	RBC, Waste Contractors	Requires minor funding for resource to deliver
<b>Innovation</b>							
W2.1	Design Guidelines	Communicating	Create a set of design guidelines covering all the Climate	To be defined at the first	Design Matters,	New Directions	

			Emergency Strategy themes to support alignment with circular economy principles	meeting of the working group	Studio Technical Nature (Erica Purvis)	College (Paul Ducker)	
W2.2	Food waste innovation	Convening	Convene the RE3 councils and seek agreement to developing a data-backed programme of actions to optimise management of food waste based on climate impact, considering home-based methods as well as door to door collection and out of area processing.	Convene discussions with RE3 councils by end of 2026 and identify data needs.	GTG	RBC, RE3, University of Reading	Funding required for research elements
W2.3	Recycling hubs	Convening	Bring together RBC and Re3 to explore ways of making recycling easier for people without cars	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Waste)	RBC, Re3	
<b>lifestyle change</b>							
W3.1	Circular Economy information hub	Communicating	Create a definitive information source on Circular Economy, waste hierarchies and a directory of recycling, re-use, repair and sharing facilities available in the Reading area and promote widely via social media	Published on the ReadingCAN website by 2026, updated annually	RCCP (TRC)	Studio Technical Nature, RCCP (Waste), Connect Reading, RISC (Kirsty Dabbs), REDA, RBC TTR (transition town reading): bicycle kitchen, library of	

						things, repair cafes)	
W3.2	Schools	Convening	Develop a network of green reps to support schools to improve resource efficiency, where possible aligning with the Green Ambassadors programme and Let's Go Zero	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	NEU/Schools Joint Forum	Design Nature - Links to Let's Go Zero, University of Reading – Links to Climate Ambassadors	
W3.3	Businesses	Convening	Develop an offer for businesses to promote Circular Economy principles and support the development of innovative business practice, with the aim of encouraging them to eventually develop, publish and promote their own circular economy action plan.	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Business)	REDA, Studio Technical Nature	
W3.4	Festivals and Events	Convening	Build on the national Green Events Code of Practice (in which Reading is a participant) to maximise the benefits of participating in the Phase 2 pilot	Phase 2 runs until Autumn 2026	Reading GECoP team	Reading Borough Council, University of Reading, Vision for Sustainable Events, Reading Independent Festivals Forum, Andrew Lansley, Julie's Bicycle	

W3.5	Success stories	Communicating	Collect and write up success stories about circular solutions and promote widely on ReadingCAN website and in social media as well as sharing with other media outlets	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Comms)		
W3.6	Advertising	Influencing	Work with RBC to determine the potential for a moratorium on advertising high-polluting activities on billboards and bus stops around the town	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Waste)	RBC	

## Nature and Open Spaces

### Vision



*Green spaces are numerous and available to all. They are diverse in life and nature, locking up carbon and benefitting both wildlife and people. Shady spots provide cool refuges for people and wildlife in heatwaves. Street trees and green walls help cool the town. In appropriate locations, wilder management reduces energy and costs, and provides natural food and breeding sites for wildlife.*

### The Challenge

Although Reading is a largely urban environment, it has numerous public parks and open spaces and opportunities for greening the built environment, as well as private gardens, school playing fields and water meadows. Nature has a role to play in both emissions reduction and adaptation; soil, trees and other plants store carbon dioxide that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere and all green plants photosynthesize, taking in carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. Conversely, rotting vegetation releases carbon dioxide as well as methane which is a potent global warming gas so it's important to avoid land which is prone to flooding from drying out. From an adaptation point of view green spaces help water to drain more quickly, helping to reduce flooding from heavy rainfall, and trees provide welcome shade, making active travel more comfortable in heatwaves as well as helping to keep the air cooler for everybody. While protecting biodiversity is important in its own right, this action plan prioritises actions that contribute to either emissions reduction or avoidance or adaptation to climate change.

Most people are aware of the benefits of nature for health and wellbeing, and are generally supportive of activities that create pleasant open spaces for recreation and improve walking and cycling routes. However, many are unaware of the contribution they can make through their own actions, particularly with regard to the way they manage their own gardens.

Some activities that are in scope of this theme are covered already by Reading Borough Council strategies and policies and these are not individually duplicated here. However, this plan does include actions which can support, leverage or inform the Council's activities.

## Enablers and Barriers

Through public workshops we identified a number of barriers to supporting nature and biodiversity to help reduce emissions and improve adaptation to climate change in Reading, and some corresponding enablers.

### Barriers

#### Managing green spaces:

- Reading Borough Council has limited funds and people
- Best practice expertise is not always available in house
- Land management is not always joined up which can lead to conflicting activities
- Hard to influence management of privately owned open spaces
- Competition for space, eg paving gardens for parking

#### Carbon storage:

- Complexity of gaining consensus from numerous stakeholders for measures to prevent water meadows drying out in summer
- Completing research, running pilots and developing recommendations is time-consuming and costly
- Lack of funding for expertise and pilot projects
- RBC cannot enforce planting on private land to assist in reaching canopy cover targets of the Tree Strategy

#### Biodiversity:

- People don't always know the best way to promote biodiversity in their own green spaces and gardens
- There is no list of suitable projects available for developers to meet their Biodiversity Net Gain obligations
- Insufficient resources for the council to develop and manage sites to sell biodiversity units to developers

### Enablers

#### Managing green spaces:

- Specialist expertise is available from outside the council
- Volunteers support management of council green spaces. and assist in review of management strategies
- The existing community groups in Reading, such as Econet, Reading Tree Wardens, Friends of Fobney Marsh, GRFGN

#### Carbon storage:

- The University of Reading is already undertaking research on carbon capture in soil
- Biochar has been well researched and a pilot scheme can be discussed with Council and volunteers
- Factsheets developed to encourage householders to process waste food/green wastes at home and store in their own garden
- Tree and hedge planting and natural regeneration of woodland all adds to carbon storage although available space is limited

#### Biodiversity:

- The Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy provides a framework for improving biodiversity
- Biodiversity Net Gain provides a mechanism to increase biodiversity as a requirement for developments
- Good information exists regarding best practice on biodiversity within Reading CAN, that can be amplified

#	Action name	Category	Description	Targets & milestones	Led by	Involving	Limiting factors
<b>Managing green spaces</b>							
N1.1	Encouraging tree planting in gardens	Communicating	Refresh tree planting information sheet for small gardens and ensure it's widely available to residents	End of autumn 2026	GTG	RCCP Comms	Funds needed for printed leaflets and posters
N1.2	Help identify sites for RBC tree planting	Delivering	Work with Reading Borough Council to improve the facilities for people to identify potential sites for tree planting via the council website	Change RBC website end 2026	RBC	RCCP (Nature)	
N1.3	Mini-forests	Delivering	Identify potential sites for mini-forests and work with Reading Borough Council to identify suitability and work with volunteers, sponsors and charities to get them planted	Continuous throughout plan period	GTG	Reading Tree Wardens, Reading Borough Council (StreetScene), local businesses,	
N1.4	Tree mapping	Influencing	Continue work to ensure that trees planted by volunteers are added to tree maps and then made available to the public	End 2026 for public access, continue adding through plan period	RBC (GIS and Planning)	RCCP (nature) Reading Tree Wardens, Econet	
N1.5	Reporting issues	Communicating	Help increase awareness of the RBC app for reporting issues in public spaces through RCCP comms channels.	Continuous	RCCP (Comms)	RBC (Comms)	
N1.6	Adaptation	Convening	Convene a relevant group to identify what interventions might be needed help nature thrive and how they could be delivered, eg	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Nature)	Other stakeholder to be identified	

			street tree watering during droughts			by the working group	
N1.7	Keeping green spaces clean	Delivering	Work with Connect Reading to determine the potential for expanding the RESCUE project to encourage more communities involved in litter picking	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Nature)	Connect Reading	Requires funding to deliver
<b>Carbon storage in nature</b>							
N2.1	Research value of carbon capture in nature	Delivering	Establish a research project to calculate how much carbon is captured in different habitats in Reading and how much it can contribute to Net Zero target	By mid 2027	University of Reading	University of Reading (PhD students)	Requires funding for resource to deliver
N2.2	Best practice management of private sports fields	Communicating	Develop and share recommendations on best practice for managing sports fields for carbon storage and biodiversity	End 2027	Keep Berkshire Active (Nick West-Oram)	RBC (Active Reading), ECONET, Tree Wardens	
N2.3	Retaining water on Kennet Meadows during dry months	Convening	Bring together Reading Borough Council, the Environment Agency, Thames Water and relevant landowners/tenant farmers to explore measures that would retain water on the parts of Kennet Meadows during dry months to avoid releasing methane.	End 2028	RCCP (Nature)	RBC (Property), Environment Agency, Thames Water, Friends of Fobney Meadows	
N2.4	Biochar	Delivering	Secure an MSC to write up work already done on biochar for carbon storage and explore opportunities with Reading Borough Council for a biochar pilot	End 2027	GTG, University of Reading (Agriculture)	RBC (Street scene), Local tree surgeons	
N2.5	Hedgerows	Communicating	Update and share advice for landowners, including schools	End of 2026	GTG	RCCP (Comms),	

			and residents, on the importance of hedgerows and hedgerow trees and how to plant and maintain them; offer advice on access to stock and practical help with planting			ECONET, Reading Tree Wardens, Tree Council	
N2.6	Support Council with expertise on carbon storage in nature	Delivering	Provide expertise to advise the Council on best options for managing land to store more carbon	Briefing paper end 2026 and ongoing	GTG	Reading University	
N2.7	Reviewing the Council's management of public open spaces	Delivering	Providing expertise from conservation bodies and others in the Nature working group to work with the Council to review or develop the management plans for public open spaces and suggest options for improvement to increase carbon storage and biodiversity. Potential changes to be discussed with other major user bodies to optimise management plans	Minimum four areas a year	RBC (Street Scene)	Econet GTG. Reading University	
N2.8	Biodiversity around playing surfaces	Influencing	Where artificial playing surfaces are introduced on RBC land, identify and implement an equivalent area for increasing biodiversity and carbon storage to overcome loss	From 2026	RBC (Street Scene)	GTG	
N2.9	Ranking options for change in management of open	Delivering	Rank options for changes in management and assess impact on climate emissions/ adaptation requirements. Develop outline revenue and capital costs for	Minimum 4 sites a year	Reading Borough Council (Street Scene)	ECONET, Green Theme Group, Reading University	

	spaces and identifying budgetary implications		implementing management changes. Implement changes possible within current budget Rank other options for change and feedback into lists for planning offsets and BNG options				
N2.10	Management of highway edges (mainly roadside verges and roundabouts) and park surrounds	Delivering	<p>1) Continue and improve current “rewilding” programme to allow carbon storage and species diversity to increase biodiversity corridors through the town</p> <p>2) Review existing moving patters and species development with potential to change regime</p> <p>3) Consider additional planting of wildflowers and identify plots for rotovation and sowing of annual seed mix for additional colour and food for pollinators</p>	Ongoing	Reading Borough Council (Street Scene and Highways)	Green Theme Group	
N2.11	Enable suggestions from the public for new or improved rewilding areas	Delivering	Provide suggestion link for new sites and sign up for growing/planting wildflower plugs on RBC website “rewilding” page	Mid 2026	RBC (Street Scene)		
<b>Supporting biodiversity</b>							
N3.1	Offsets for urban development	Influencing	Work with Council to identify the potential for BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) and establish local projects using wildlife habitat	Ongoing	RBC (Planning) to maintain the list	Contributions from RBC (Planning, Parks, Street	

			creation/nature recovery as offsets for urban development., and calculate the cost of change, link with management change on public and/or private land. Consideration should be given to the <a href="#">Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Berkshire</a> and to increasing carbon storage and resilience to climate change.			Scene, and Highways), Ethical Reading, ECONET, other wildlife groups (Tree Wardens, RISC, Tree Council)	
N3.2	Wildlife corridors	Influencing	Work with the Council and utilities companies to expand tree and vegetation buffers around critical infrastructure, considering noise and light pollution for maintaining wildlife corridors	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Green Theme Group	RBC, utilities companies	
N3.3	Greener gardens	Communicating	Expand and share existing guidance on wildlife/climate adapted gardens and garden buildings to store carbon, assist with urban drainage and resilience and support biodiversity.	2 new factsheets a year on RCAN website, with wider publicity	GTG and RBC (Planning) for content, RCCP (Comms) for dissemination	RISC, Food 4 Families, IER, Reading Food Growing Network	May require funding for printed leaflets/posters if required
N3.4	Advice service for adaptation	Delivering	Provide tailored free advice to schools/ community groups/SMEs for wildlife friendly gardening/ water efficient gardening/recycling in the garden	Up to 8 organisations advised per year from 2026	ECONET		Funds may be required for implementation

## Food

### Vision



People enjoy a healthy, low-carbon, plant-rich diet based on affordable, local, seasonal and home-grown products. Food waste is minimised and surplus is shared. More affordable growing space is available for local food growing in well managed allotments and community gardens to support a healthy local food system and their produce can be found in cafés and restaurants around the town

### The Challenge

The combined emissions from food production, processing, distribution, cooking and waste account for between a quarter and one-third of all the World's carbon emissions, second only to energy generation. What we eat is therefore an important component of any Net Zero plan. Food is also the fuel that sustains life, and therefore both a hugely emotive subject and inextricably linked with health and wellbeing. In fact, our modern diet doesn't seem to be particularly good for us; in March 2025 a study by [The Lancet](#) predicted that by 2050 half of the World's population over 25 will be living with obesity, which in turn brings risks of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and reduced life expectancy. Many convenience foods are ultra processed which is both carbon intensive and can also result in reduced nutritional value combined with high flavour appeal, leading to overeating. However, these foods are typically inexpensive and require little time to prepare, so many busy people rely on them to feed their family economically.

Many people are now aware that meat, especially beef, has [high environmental impact](#). This is primarily because it's much less efficient calorifically to feed plants to an animal to grow meat than it is for humans to directly consume the plants. Industrial scale farming for meat and dairy are particularly damaging for the environment, particularly through deforestation which removes a valuable carbon store. According to the [World Health Organisation](#), consuming red and processed meats is also linked to various health risks, including increased likelihood of cancer, heart disease and other chronic conditions. That doesn't mean that all plant-based food is good because we also need to take into account the emissions caused by growing out of season, preparing, packaging and shipping food and the associated use of other resources such as water. As a general rule, a low carbon diet could be described as plant-rich, minimally processed, local and seasonal. Even in our urban environment there are opportunities for growing food locally, often as a communal activity that can contribute to mental wellbeing and reduce isolation. While it is not the aim of this strategy to police anybody's diet, it's important to improve understanding of the environmental impacts of producing different foods in order to make an informed choice that can both reduce environmental impact and benefit health and could also save money. You can find out about the relative impacts of different dietary choices, and calculate our own dietary carbon footprint, [here](#).

And then there's food waste. It's estimated that up to two thirds of food produced in the world is wasted – half of that before it reaches market through poor growing conditions, lack of people to harvest it, rejection of "ugly" produce and poor handling, and the other half after we have bought it. The production losses drive up prices and food waste at home represents a direct cost to our households. Food waste, beef and dairy farming, are a major

sources of methane which is one of the most potent global warming gases, so the challenge is not just reducing food waste but also improving how it is dealt with.

## Enablers and Barriers

Through public workshops we identified a number of barriers to supporting a low carbon diet and reducing food waste:

### Barriers

What we eat:

- The influence of advertising for unhealthy/high carbon food
- Lack of understanding of the relative health and environmental impacts of different food choices
- Time and financial pressures
- Restricted or no access to a kitchen, poor cooking conditions
- Cultural norms and habits
- Marginalisation of plant-based options on menus
- Lack of knowledge of how to prepare food from scratch
- Low cost of mass produced food

### Enablers

What we eat:

- Existing community kitchens and food co-ops
- Shared kitchens made available at low or no cost
- Existing learning resources that could be amplified
- Carbon labelling on menus e.g. Wahaca, Clever Cuisine at UoR
- Integrating sustainable food into the education curriculum
- Use of social media to share quick and easy recipes
- Reducing poverty can be a co-benefit
- Improving access to food outlets in under-served areas
- Encouraging food outlets to offer healthy options

Local food production:

- Long waiting list for allotments
- Perception that local food and farmers markets are expensive
- Lack of “real food” outlets showcasing local produce
- Insufficient funding for local food growing groups

Food waste reduction:

- Food waste recycling targets don’t encourage food waste reduction
- Kerbside food waste collection can reduce motivation to minimise waste or use leftovers
- Offers such as economy packs and buy one get one free
- Managing food waste is expensive for small organisations
- No food waste collection in some types of home

Local food production:

- Potential to establish community gardens on derelict land
- Establishing community gardens as part of new developments
- Celebrating in-season and local produce
- Seed exchanges and support for grow your own
- Helping people grow their own food in their gardens
- Adequate long-term funding for community food growing

Food waste reduction:

- Community fridges and food redistribution networks
- Expansion of food waste collection to flats by 2026
- Training around meal planning and how to use up leftovers
- Potential for bokashi-based solution for small organisations

#	Action name	Category	Description	Targets & milestones	Led by	Involving	Limiting factors
<b>What we eat</b>							
F1.1	Community Kitchens	Delivering	Work with existing community kitchens in the town to determine what works for creating hubs to explore diet, meal planning and food preparation in community settings. Prioritise free or low-cost, beginner-friendly cooking classes focusing on healthy, appetising, affordable, low-carbon meals including for different ethnic groups and under-served communities including refugees. (Drawing on examples from Brighton and Hove, St Lukes and Nourish in London)	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Reading Food Partnership	Community kitchens, RISC/Food4Families, Reading Community Learning Centre, New Directions College, RBC (Social Inclusion and VCS Partnerships), RBC (Community Partnerships Services)	Requires funding for resource to deliver
Page 278							
F1.2	Making menus inclusive	Convening	Work with restaurants in the town to integrate plant-based choices into all menus, so that all dietary choices are available to everyone	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Food)	REDA, restauranteurs	
F1.3	Sustainable menus for organisations	Convening	Host an event/series of events showcasing best practice in creating healthy, affordable, low-carbon menus and procuring sustainable produce. Work with existing and new partnerships to develop guidance for venues and festivals	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	REDA	University of Reading	Requires funding for resource to deliver
F1.4	Food carbon pilot	Delivering	Explore ways of introducing carbon labelling on menus (similar to Wahaca), making it	To be defined at the first	RCCP (Food)	To be defined at the first	Requires funding for

			easier for people to make low carbon choices	meeting of the working group		meeting of the working group	resource to deliver
F1.5	Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)	Delivering	Develop a content offer for Reading's HAF provision that focuses on nutrition, food growing and cookery to help develop practical skills for healthy eating	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Reading Food Partnership with RISC	Brighter Futures/RBC, schools	Requires funding for resource to deliver
F1.6	Advertising moratorium	Influencing	Work with RBC to influence policy to minimise fast food advertising in the town, including on buses	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Food)	RBC	
F1.7	Plant-Based Treaty	Influencing	Explore the potential for RBC, and possibly other relevant organisations, to endorse the Plant-Based Treaty, and consider how its tools and resources might support RCCP's Food theme	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Food)		
F1.8	Links with obesity	Influencing	Work with relevant agencies to identify the synergies between low carbon diets and other dietary programmes, including but not limited to the NHS Obesity Challenge, maximise cross-signposting and leverage associated funding opportunities	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Food)	RBC, NHS	
F1.9	Meal box solutions	Convening	Work with local food retailers to explore the potential for creating a meal box offer (similar to Gousto) offering low-cost, low-carbon, healthy meals for local people	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Food)	Local food retailers	
F1.10	School meals	Convening	Work with schools and school meal providers to improve health and carbon impacts of school	To be defined at the first	RCCP (Food)	Schools, school meals providers,	

			meals, drawing on existing national guidance and other sources of best practice	meeting of the working group		Brighter Future for Children	
<b>Local food production</b>							
Page 280	F2.1	Community Gardens	Delivering	Establish shared gardens in vacant plots, schools, community centres to create opportunities for local food and herb growing and help teach regenerative growing skills.	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Reading Food Growing Network	Incredible Edible Reading, RISC/Food4Families, RBC (Social Inclusion and VCS Partnerships), RBC (Community Partnerships Services) (also for community centres)
	F2.2	Improving access to allotments	Convening	Establish a group to explore ways to improve the use of allotments in Reading. Include ways to reduce allotment waiting times (e.g. Brighton model offering smaller plots for new growers), growing skills for allotment holders (how to best utilise space, reduce pesticide use, regenerative growing)	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Reading Food Partnership	RBC (Allotment Officer)
	F2.3	Reading Town Meal	Convening	Bring together the former organisers of Reading Town Meal to try to re-establish this as an annual event	Spring 2026	RCCP (Food)	RISC, Food4Families (who else?)
	F2.4	Funding for food projects	Convening	Bring together a relevant team to explore the potential for using the	To be defined at the first	RCCP (Food)	RBC

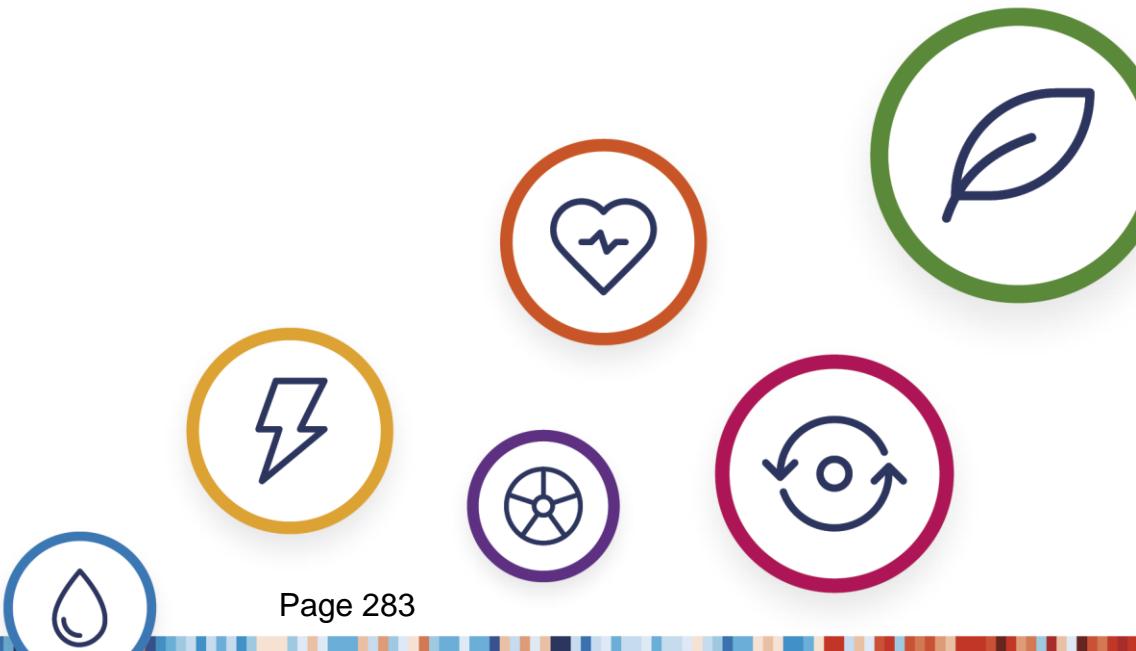
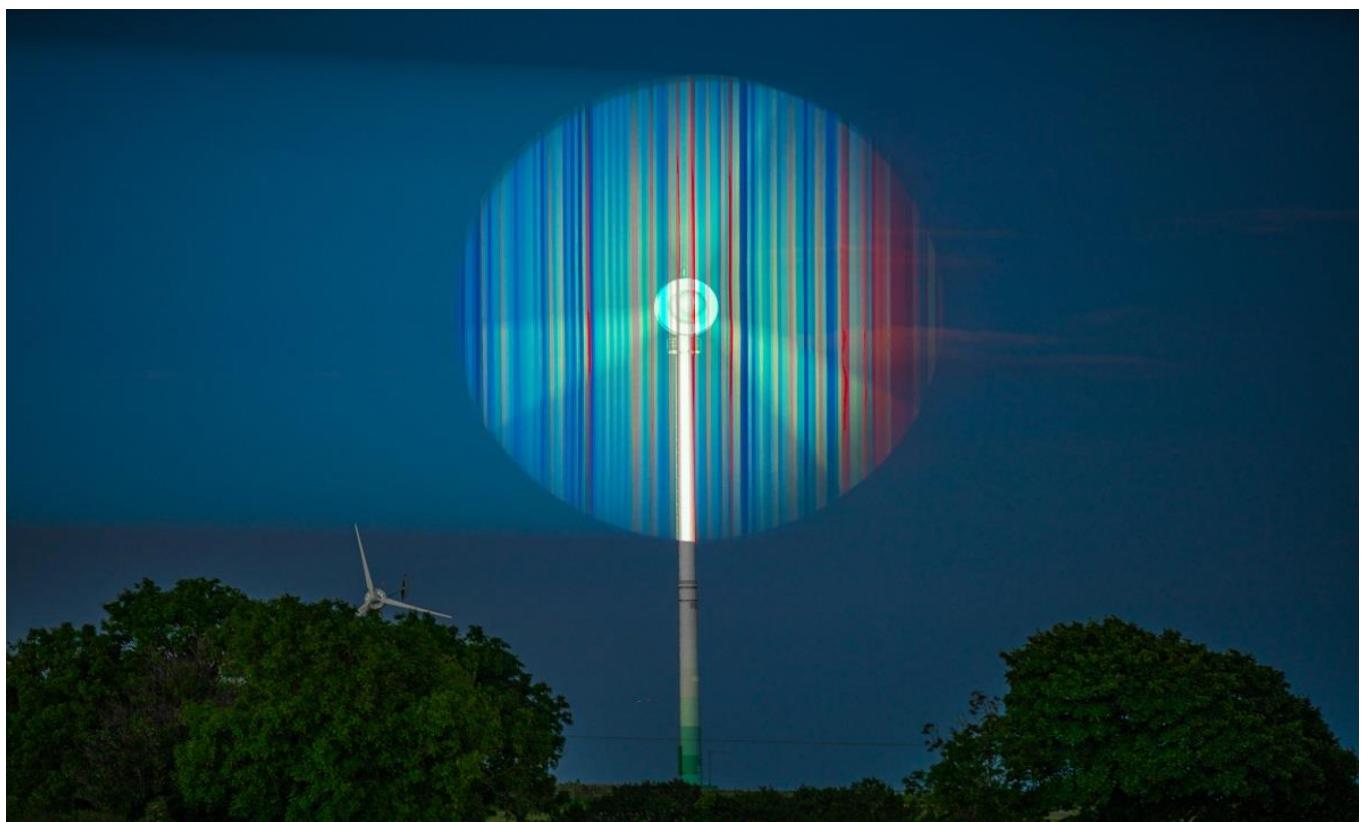
			HACT Social Value methodology to generate carbon credits from local food growing projects than can be reinvested in other programmes	meeting of the working group			
<b>Food waste reduction</b>							
F3.1	Circular Economy for Food	Delivering	Run a hackathon applying circular economy principles to design out food waste at point of sale by improving the systems for redistribution via food banks, community fridges and pantries and charities.	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	RCCP (Food)	Technical Nature, charities, supermarkets, restaurants.	Requires funding for resource to deliver
F3.2	Schools Food Waste Challenge	Delivering	Create resources to run a food waste challenge for schools linked with Food Waste Action Week	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	Technical Nature		Requires funding for resource to deliver
F3.3	Food Waste Research	Delivering	Analysis of GHG produced by food waste in Reading, including both domestic settings and catering and hospitality	To be defined at the first meeting of the working group	University of Reading (Eugene Mohareb)	University of Reading (Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Sciences)	
F3.4	Food Sharing Resources	Communicating	Produce a comprehensive guide to food sharing resources in Reading, e.g. Olio/Too Good to Go, refill cafes, community fridges and food banks etc., on Reading Services Guide	Publish by Spring 2026 and update at least annually	Reading Food Partnership	RCCP (Comms)	

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# The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25

## Annual Report 2024/25

November 2025



# Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Progress Report (2024/25)

Produced by Reading Climate Change Partnership (November 2025)

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# FOREWORD

As we reflect on another year of climate action in Reading, it is impossible to ignore the shifting sands of national and global climate ambition. Political ambition is wavering, and families are facing real pressures – from rising living costs to housing and healthcare challenges. In this context, climate change can feel like just one more issue competing for attention. But the truth is, local climate initiatives can help solve these challenges too – by lowering energy bills, improving air quality, creating green jobs, and building healthier, more connected communities. *Local* action helps bring the benefits of climate action to *local* people.

Reading continues to demonstrate that bold, community-driven climate action is not only possible – it is essential. Our town’s commitment to becoming net-zero and climate-resilient by 2030 is more than a target; it is a shared vision that unites residents, businesses and institutions. In the last reporting period of 2023/24, we saw tangible progress:

- Reading Borough Council has [reduced its own emissions](#) by 71% since 2008, and [across the borough](#) emissions fell by 57% between 2005 and 2023
- Heat Network feasibility studies and low-carbon economy initiatives are laying the groundwork for [long-term transformation](#)
- During 2004, over 400 residents and businesses engaged in helping to shape the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plans for the crucial years of 2025 - 2030; RCCP and Dialogue Matters won a CIEEM Best Practice Award for the stakeholder engagement work that shaped this strategy.
- Big companies with a presence in Reading, are proving that climate action isn’t just good for the planet, it’s good for business: PepsiCo is investing in renewable energy with 89% of electricity used in company-owned operations powered by renewables in 2024<sup>[1]</sup>; Oracle’s UK data centres, including those in Reading, already run on 100% renewable energy, and its new Industry Lab in the town is helping test green technologies across sectors; Microsoft is contracting over 34 GW of renewable energy globally and using AI to help reduce emissions and water use.

Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) is helping to create a framework for collective climate action, bringing together diverse actors – from local government and academia to grassroots organisations and businesses. Together, we are delivering projects that reduce emissions, restore nature and improve lives. But we must go further. The next phase of our strategy (2025–2030) will require even greater collaboration. Whether you are a policymaker, funder, parent, student, community leader, ‘creative’ or CEO, your role in this transition matters. We invite you to find your place in Reading’s Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plans for 2025 – 2030. Help us evolve it over the next five years and become an active part of the local team that is working in myriad ways to deliver a climate-resilient, net-zero Reading.

Reading is proving that local action matters. Let’s continue to lead and inspire action, together.

**Heather Marshall and Dylan Parkes**, Co-chairs, Reading Climate Change Partnership

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<sup>[1]</sup><sup>[1]</sup> [PepsiCo Reports 2024 Progress Against PepsiCo Positive \(pep+\) Sustainability and Nutrition Goals](#)

# 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 fifth annual report on the Strategy covering the year 2024/25. 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 detailed account of progress with the action plans on which the strategy is based (Annex 1)

The report is the final performance report for the Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 to 2025 although it should be noted that emissions data remains outstanding for two years 2024 and 2025 as there is a reporting lag in the government data and therefore the data for a 2024 will not be available until the summer of 2026 and will form part of the first report of the progress against the 2025 to 2030 strategy.

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 will be submitted to the November 2025 meeting of Reading Borough Council's Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee.

## 1. 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'<sup>1</sup>. This dataset represents the most reliable and consistent breakdown of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions across the country, using nationally available data sets going back to 2005, the baseline.

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 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.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1086967/uk-local-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2005-2020-release.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1086967/uk-local-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2005-2020-release.pdf) <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

### HEADLINE NUMBERS:

- **There has been a 57.3% cut in Reading's area emissions since 2005.**
- **Reading has seen the 12<sup>th</sup> largest reduction in emissions in 2023 out of 374 UK local authority areas since 2005.**

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 2023 statistics (the latest year for which data is available) were published in June 2024 and show that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions fell from 1009.9kt in 2005 to 427kt in 2023 - a reduction of 57% which compares favourably to the UK average of 43%, the South East regional average of 43% and the five other local authorities in Berkshire which range from 14% to 46%.

The reduction in Reading Borough emissions is also the **12<sup>th</sup> highest reduction out of 374 UK local authority areas**, suggesting that Reading is leading the way nationally in efforts to reduce emissions by this measure.

Figure 1 on the next page summarises the reduction in Reading Borough's emissions over that period by sector.

It is important to note that there is a significant time lag in this dataset so the data reported in June 2025 in fact relates to the calendar year 2023. As figure 1 shows, Reading's emissions reduced again in 2023 bringing them in line with the levels experienced during the pandemic. Overall, the downward trajectory of emissions has slowed. Caution should be taken with year-on-year comparisons, especially those affected by the pandemic, and the long-term trend is more instructive. The emissions post pandemic returned to a level very close to pre pandemic and have fallen for two years since, returning to trend set prior to the pandemic.

Not all of Reading's CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions achieved by 2023 are attributable to local action. A significant portion arises from national policies to decarbonise the electricity network. The way in which Reading's economy has developed, with a focus on high-tech sectors with relatively greater reliance on electricity, coupled with its small geographical size, means that it is relatively less reliant on gas and other fossil fuels. The benefits of lower carbon grid electricity were of course experienced by every local authority area, to a greater or lesser degree, so the fact that Reading has seen the 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

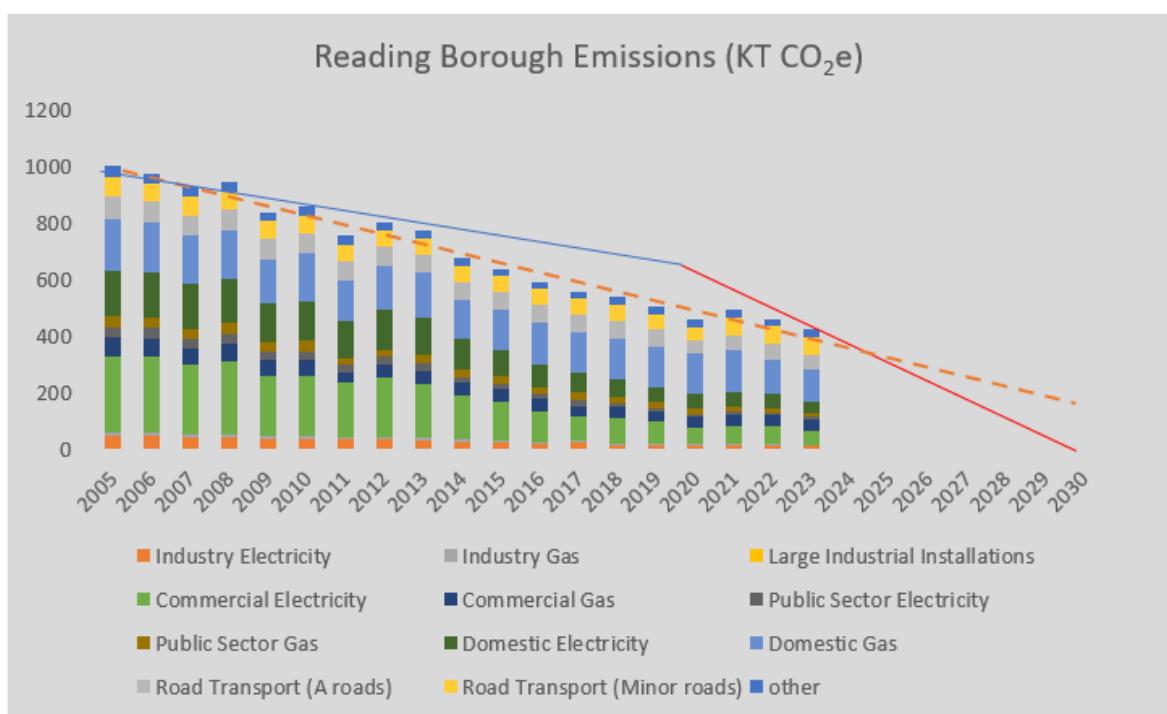
It remains equally clear, however, that there is much more to do. We saw a year-on-year reduction in emissions of 9% between 2022 and 2023 which typical of the annual reductions seen the last twenty years. It is clear that the pandemic year was not a typical year and this 'blip' was not sustained but in fact emissions but 'bounced back' to pre-pandemic levels showing no meaningful reduction between 2019 and 2021. Whilst the downward trend appears to have now returned the trajectory is not on course to meet a net zero position by 2030.

The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy makes clear that progress towards the aspiration of a 'net zero Reading by 2030' required significant national policy intervention, and it was always likely that the pace of emissions reduction would need to accelerate as the decade progressed. Major transformational changes such as the widespread electrification of heat and transport take time to embed and will not be likely to follow a linear trajectory.

The data continues to show that the challenge will indeed increase as the decade advances, but it also shows that we are making relatively good progress which gives us some encouragement that we are moving towards the pursuit of 'net zero'.

As we conclude the 2020 to 2025 strategy and move into the 2025 to 2030 period, a transition away from fossil fuels alongside a rapid decarbonisation of the UK national electricity grid will be needed to be able to shift this trajectory downwards for Reading. The key message of the Committee on Climate Change is that transport and heat needed to be rapidly electrified to enable this to occur.

*Figure 1: reduction in carbon dioxide emissions within the scope of influence of local authorities from Reading Borough 2005-22 by sector (with projected reductions needed to reach 'net zero by 2030')*



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

### HEADLINE COMPARISONS:

- **Reading has the highest long-term rate of emissions reduction out of the six Berkshire local authority areas.**
- **Reading has the lowest per capita emissions out of the six 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 2023, 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.

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 >57% reduction in emissions between 2005 and 2023 and is also the only local authority area in Berkshire with per capita emissions of below 2.5 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> per annum. Reading also compares favourably with the South East and UK averages – a 57.3% cut in emissions since 2005 compared to 47% for the south east and the UK; and per capita emissions of 2.4 tonnes p.a. compared to 3.2 tonnes p.a. for the South East and 3.5 tonnes p.a. for the UK.

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

Area	% reduction 2005-23	Per capita emissions 2023 (tonnes pa)
Reading	57%	2.4
Wokingham	47%	2.6
Windsor & Maidenhead	50%	2.7
Bracknell Forest	53%	2.8
Slough	16%	3.5
West Berkshire	45%	4.3
SE average	47%	3.2
UK average	47%	3.5

## 2.4 Progress on improving resilience to climate impacts

### HEADLINES:

- **A ‘City Pack’ for Reading was published in August 2022 to support adaptation planning – a collaboration between the Met Office, University of Reading and Reading Borough Council.**
- **In November 2024 Reading Borough Council published a Framework for Adaptation for its services.**

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 relatively early stage. Furthermore, while we have an understanding of the potential impacts, more 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 for Reading area as three consecutive days when maximum temperatures reach 28 °C). 2,803 of these were among the over-65s, illustrating how extreme weather events tend to impact the most vulnerable.

Flooding continues to impact Reading significantly with the winter of 2023/2024 leading to dramatic floodwaters and significant impact to properties and transport links.

In August 2022 the University of Reading and the Met Office published a 'City Pack' for Reading outlining key climate impacts we can expect. 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.

In November 2024 Reading Borough Council published a Framework for Adaptation for its services.

## **2.5 Future challenges and opportunities**

Energy prices peaked towards the end of 2022 and subsequently dropped but remain relatively high compared to 2021. Global pressures make it unlikely that this volatility will cease.

Cost of living pressures continue. Whilst inflation has now reduced to pre-pandemic levels, the substantial increased energy costs have pushed more households into fuel poverty. According to the latest fuel poverty statistics (2023) fuel poverty in Reading increased by 0.4% to 10.9% since the previous year. Analysis of the 88 LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) in Reading shows a range from 4-27%. This is the highest of the six unitary Local Authority area in Berkshire and whilst it is lower than the average UK rate of 11.4%, it is much closer to it than the previous year (10.5 and 13.4% respectively).

Fuel poverty is where households are at high risk of not being able to afford their energy bills. This occurs where incomes are low, energy prices are high and homes are poorly insulated. Government support for retrofit programmes, whilst rightly targeted on low-income households with poor Energy Performance Certificates has not benefited a significant number of homes in Reading due to funding caps and onerous eligibility criteria. Low carbon electrical heating technologies, such as heat pumps, whilst significantly more efficient do not significantly impact on fuel poverty as they use electricity which remains expensive in comparison to gas. This is due to energy pricing policies and continued reliance on fossil fuels.

The Government has pledged to increased grant funding for retrofit and details of this programme are expected in the Autumn Statement which is when it is understood that the government plan to publish their Warm Homes Plan. Reading Borough Council is part of the Portsmouth consortium for delivery of this scheme and has also claimed some funds under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

Manifesto commitments and recent announcements will involve re-instating legislation to bring all private and social landlord properties to an EPC C level by 2030, giving much needed clarity in this area albeit not applying to the owner-occupied sector which remains the majority of housing in Reading.

The government's reinstatement of the 2030 date for ending new petrol and diesel vehicle sales is set to exclude hybrid vehicles until 2035. Local Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure funding has been provided to install EV chargers to Reading streets and car parks.

High profile policies on lifting of on shore wind turbine bans and support for large solar projects offer some degree of support for renewable energy and it is understood that a pipeline of projects will gain support from the Government's Clean Power 2030 plan which contains a target for the UK to secure a further 8GWp of community solar capacity (around 16 million panels).

## 2. CASE STUDIES

### Stories from Reading's journey to net zero

The following photographs illustrate the stories you will read in this section. Thank you to everyone who submitted case studies this year – both RCCP partners and other groups taking climate action locally. We hope these stories will inspire you and create a few creative collisions too.

*One of Reading's most popular annual events, WaterFest 2025:*



*Examples of solar-powered irrigation systems:*



*Planting community orchards at Emmer Green Playing Fields and Bugs Bottom*



*Local schools participated in a mock UN Conference of the Parties (COP)*



Clean Air Living Matters: Exploring Reading (CALM:ER)



# SOLAR-POWERED WATER IRRIGATION IN READING

**We're all part of the solution when it comes to becoming a more climate-resilient town.**

## The challenge

Summer 2025 was one of the driest on record in the UK, with rainfall across England at just 62% of the seasonal average and some areas experiencing the driest March to July period since 1921. In Reading, groundwater levels dropped significantly, and water resources were under pressure, prompting temporary use bans and drought alerts from Thames Water. With gardens suffering and mains water restricted, residents were encouraged to find alternative ways to conserve and reuse water.

## The response

Naomi, a Reading resident and keen gardener, installed a solar-powered irrigation system connected to a 200-litre water butt that collected rainwater from her roof. The system used a small solar panel to power a pump that distributed water through a drip irrigation network across her raised beds. This set-up allowed her to maintain her vegetable garden – tomatoes, courgettes, and herbs - without relying on mains water during the drought.

## Impact

- Naomi saved over 200 litres of mains water over the summer, equivalent to two bathtubs.
- Her garden remained productive despite the dry conditions.
- The system operated entirely off-grid, using renewable energy and free rainwater.
- She inspired two neighbours to install similar systems.

## Why it matters

With Reading facing increasing water stress and climate extremes, small-scale solutions like Naomi's offer practical, low-cost ways to slow and store water locally. They reduce pressure on public supplies, support biodiversity, and build resilience in urban gardens.

## CALL TO ACTION

Think about how you can slow and store water where you live. Whether it's installing a water butt, using mulch to retain soil moisture, or setting up a solar-powered irrigation system, every drop counts. Let's make our gardens part of the solution, from mains to rains.

*Submitted by RCCP Theme Lead (Water)*

# READING LEADS THE WAY IN WATER-EFFICIENT PLANNING

**Reading has been celebrated as a best practice example!**

## The challenge

Reading is one of the most water-stressed areas in the UK. One consequence of this is the need to reduce water consumption even while developing new housing.

## The response

RBC and Thames Water are working collaboratively to align local planning policies with national water efficiency goals, including:

- Incorporating water efficiency standards into the Local Plan update, encouraging developers to exceed minimum regulatory requirements
- Supporting the Thames Water Developer Incentive Scheme, which offers financial discounts to developers who commit to water neutrality – using low-flow fixtures, rainwater harvesting, and greywater recycling
- Promoting SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) and water reuse technologies in new developments, to manage surface water and reduce pressure on the sewer network.

The Future Homes Hub’s “Water Ready” report (April 2024) celebrated RBC as a **best practice example** of a proactive approach to water efficiency in planning, noting RBC’s leadership in encouraging developer uptake of water-saving technologies, using local policy to drive innovation and exceed national targets, and creating a replicable model for other LAs.

## Outcomes

- Increased developer engagement with water efficiency standards
- Uptake of Thames Water’s incentive scheme, with developers saving up to £1,800 per property by achieving water neutrality
- Enhanced resilience of new homes to drought and water scarcity
- Positive environmental impact through reduced abstraction and improved river health.

## CALL TO ACTION

Local authorities and developers can follow Reading’s lead. Explore the Future Homes Hub’s roadmap ([Future Homes Hub Delivery Plan and Roadmap](#)) and Thames Water’s incentive scheme ([Charging arrangements for new connection services 2025/26](#)) to start your journey toward water-smart development.

*Submitted by: RCCP Theme Lead (Water)*

# GREEN EVENTS CODE OF PRACTICE

**Six Reading events will participate in the next phase of GECoP, which will be rolled out to 30 additional local authorities.**

## The challenge

Until recently, UK-based event organisers lacked consistent nationwide guidance on how to understand, assess, improve and validate the sustainability impacts of their events.

## The response

Reading was one of 10 local authorities to take part in a landmark **national pilot project** to find ways of making events and festivals more sustainable, which came to an end earlier this year. The year-long **Green Events Code of Practice (GECoP)** pilot has helped shape national guidance on sustainability for event organisers across the country. In Reading, East Reading Festival, Reading Festival, Readipop Festival, Reading Water Fest, Reading Pride, and Reading's Economic and Destination Agency (REDA) took part in the pilot.

RBC is now taking part in **phase two** of the programme which will see GECoP rolled out to 30 additional local authorities. The initiative ties in with the Council's ambition (as a member of RCCP) for Reading to be a net-zero-carbon borough.

The GECOP pilot focused on seven key areas where positive environmental change could be achieved at events: governance, energy, travel and transport, food and drink, waste, water and influence.

Event organisers were asked to trial the Donut Advisory Tool for Events which offered a quick and effective way to assess an event's sustainability practices against the GECoP. It creates an event score and highlights good practice and potential improvement areas.

## Early results

At the Council's biggest annual event, Water Fest, bins were provided for mixed recyclables and food waste, diesel generators were replaced by giant battery power, drinking water filling stations were offered and local suppliers were used where possible.

## CALL TO ACTION

Local event organisers can also benefit from the GECoP. Find out more and download the Green Events Code at: <https://visionsustainableevents.org/green-events-code/>.

*Submitted by: RBC Comms Lead (Climate)*

# LOCAL CLIMATE ACTION CAMPAIGN

**Reading Borough Council partnered with the Met Office to run the Local Climate Action campaign throughout November 2024.**

## The challenge

Many Reading residents are not aware of everyday actions they could take to help reduce their own impact on the environment or to prepare for the effects of climate change. Many are also unaware of climate actions being taken by Reading Borough Council (RBC) and other local businesses and groups to reduce carbon emissions. RBC aimed to raise awareness, inform local residents and inspire additional climate action.

## The response

The RBC communications team worked with the Met Office on a month-long social media campaign to highlight ways residents and businesses can prepare for flooding and other extreme weather conditions, which are occurring more regularly because of climate change. The Met Office also shared RBC's posts across its social media platforms, linking this to their own work and services, websites, newsletters, blogs etc.

The campaign also highlighted local groups and projects that are contributing to a healthier environment, including videos on the bike bus scheme at The Heights Primary School, Reading Library of Things, Reading Buses and the climate credentials of the University of Reading. A video on the benefits of buying second-hand featured designer Wayne Hemmingway.

The campaign drew on data and examples from the RBC's carbon emissions annual report and RCCP's Climate Emergency Strategy annual report. Examples included the decarbonisation of Council buildings including the Civic Centre and Hexagon theatre, the national Green Events Code of Practice pilot and Clean Air Living Matters air quality schools education programme.

## Results

The campaign was one of the Council's best performing and was considerably boosted by the support of the Met Office, helping it to reach audiences beyond Reading.

## CALL TO ACTION

For ideas on climate actions individuals and organisations can take, visit:

<https://readingcan.org.uk/#> For advice on how to be ready for the weather, visit:

<https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/warnings-and-advice/weatherready>. Schools can contact the University of Reading's Climate Ambassadors: <https://climateambassadors.org.uk/>

*Submitted by: RBC Comms Lead (Climate)*

# TWO NEW COMMUNITY ORCHARDS & AN AVENUE OF FLOWERING CHERRIES

**Volunteers are helping to conserve Reading's natural environment and improve Reading's public open spaces**

## The challenge

Reading's open spaces have multiple uses for recreation, organised sports and relaxation as well as for carbon storage and biodiversity. Volunteers and the Council work together to increase carbon storage and make corridors for biodiversity, whilst providing access for the other needs. Tree planting is one such action.

## The response

Reading Tree Wardens and Econet identified public areas in Caversham for planting new community orchards that would count towards the Reading Borough Council (RBC) tree planting numbers as well as providing a harvest for people and wildlife. The trees will provide fruit from August to October for residents and wildlife.

Council officers checked the sites for potential problems with service lines and then gave permission.

Freely Fruity, a charity that provides and plants fruit trees for community plantings, sourced the saplings and tree supports, and led the planting in February 2025, alongside the wardens and Econet volunteers.

Despite the hot weather and drought, volunteers kept the trees watered and all have survived the summer months.

The two sites are at Emmer Green Playing Fields and Bugs Bottom. The team replaced dead fruit trees at Mapledurham Playing Fields community orchard on the same day.

In a separate initiative, Reading Borough Council has planted an avenue of 18 white flowering cherry trees either side of the diagonal path across Westfield Park. This avenue is part of the 650 standards and saplings planted across Reading in the winter of 2024/5 by RBC, Ethical Reading, the Tree Wardens and Econet.

## CALL TO ACTION

If you would like to volunteer with the Tree Wardens to plant trees and/or water newly planted trees contact [rtwn2011@gmail.com](mailto:rtwn2011@gmail.com), or volunteer with Econet and help protect and improve your local environment then visit [www.econetreading.org.uk](http://www.econetreading.org.uk) to see upcoming tasks and events.

*Submitted by: RCCP Theme Lead (Nature and Open Spaces)*

# MODEL CLIMATE CONFERENCE 2024

## Local schools participated in a mock UN Conference of the Parties (COP)

### The challenge

Climate change is already here, but future generations will bear the brunt of it. Young people deserve opportunities to develop the skills and understanding needed to participate in different forms of climate action, including climate change negotiations at local and global levels.

### The response

Local social consultancies [Just Ideas](#) and [InterClimate Network](#) have developed a youth climate conference format, which they also deliver, modelled on the annual COP, the 'Conference of the Parties' who signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The format includes an accessible briefing on each country's position on a selection of issues, and clear guidance for additional research.

Coinciding with COP29 in Azerbaijan, the **11th annual Reading Model Climate Conference** brought together 64 students from eight local secondary schools.

In the opening address the Mayor of Reading called climate change the defining issue of our time and welcomed attendees to the Council Chamber, a hub for local decision-making.

Students then participated in a global debate, representing countries from Indonesia to Uganda, presenting well-researched national perspectives on climate challenges and solutions. Each school also showcased its own climate initiatives and engaged in discussions on maximising local impact. Finally, local decision-makers and business leaders fielded questions from students, strengthening the link between youth voices and community leadership.

### Feedback and results

The [2024 InterClimate Network Impact Report](#) captures feedback from all students and teachers who participated in these events in 2024:

- **90%** left with a better understanding of how they can take climate action
- **95%** deepened their understanding of global climate negotiations
- **94%** now feel more confident to share their concerns and ideas about climate change
- **100%** of teachers would recommend the conference.

### CALL TO ACTION

If your school or local authority would like to host a **Model Climate Conference**, [contact Just Ideas](#) to bring this powerful educational experience to life.

*Submitted by: Just Ideas and InterClimate Network*

# CONNECT READING RESOURCE XCHANGE PROGRAMME

## 100 surplus iPads redistributed to local schools and charities

### The challenge

Businesses dispose of hundreds of thousands of tonnes of usable equipment each year – from office furniture to IT devices. Only 22% of the 62 million tonnes of annual global e-waste is properly recycled. Charities, schools and community organisations could put these unwanted corporate resources to good use, while preserving their hard-working budgets for other things.

### The response

Connect Reading's Resource Xchange programme is well established locally, with over £2.2m of surplus resources redistributed since 2019. In 2024, PepsiCo was planning to recycle 100 surplus iPads. Connect Reading ran a mini bid process to redistribute these to 19 local charities and schools where they would be most needed by service users. This demonstrates how Connect Reading delivers practical climate action while supporting digital inclusion.

Rather than being sent to landfill, the devices were repurposed, enabling access to education for young people, improved access to online services for digitally excluded residents, and improved fundraising processes for local charities. Each reused iPad avoided approximately 8 kg of e-waste and saved an estimated 160 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, based on lifecycle data.

This project reflects some of Connect Reading's core strengths:

- Operational efficiency: Items were matched and delivered within two weeks of donation
- Cross-sector collaboration: PepsiCo's ESG goals aligned with local need, facilitated by Connect Reading's brokerage
- Social value: Beneficiaries included charities supporting young people, refugee families, children with SEND, and disadvantaged adults

The programme offers a scalable model for circular-economy delivery, with clear environmental metrics and grassroots community impact. It also supports Reading Borough Council's climate and inclusion strategies by reducing waste and improving access to technology. Connect Reading is well-positioned to expand this work through existing infrastructure, strong local networks, and proven delivery.

### CALL TO ACTION

To help Connect Reading extend the Resource Xchange to more local charities please donate here: <https://connectreading.org.uk/contact/>

*Submitted by: Connect Reading*

# RCCP'S CLIMATE ACTION FUND BID

## The climate crisis is maturing, and so are we!

Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) was set up as 12-member group in 2009, primarily to **inform, convene** and **produce** five-year climate change strategies and action plans. The plans provide a **framework for collective climate action**, with each action delivered by an RCCP partner (e.g. University of Reading, the Council, GREN, etc.) or another local organisation that has identified a climate action priority, shaped a relevant action with others and nominated itself to help deliver it. RCCP's 'Year of Climate Engagement 2024' (the participation process that informed the *Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2025 – 2030*) won a CIEEM Best Practice Award for Stakeholder Engagement. This is the fourth strategy RCCP has developed since 2007.

## The challenge

The challenge we want to address with our National Lottery bid concerns 'who delivers what' during the 5-year period between strategies. RCCP is a partnership, which means there is no 'central resource' or delivery capacity beyond that of a paid part-time co-ordinator. Actions are delivered by partner organisations, not by RCCP itself. Additional 'central' work is achieved through volunteer hours, for example volunteer hours have: produced a Reading Climate Pledge for Individuals and one for SMEs and charities; founded and delivered an annual Reading Climate Festival; created the ReadingCAN website; and written funding bids.

A clear need is emerging for a **central resource** to build on the assets described above and to:

- inspire and enable action through design and delivery of multi-partner campaigns
- support and convene the strategy's existing delivery partners
- evolve the action plans and bring new delivery partners into the framework
- communicate effectively with stakeholders, including the 'general public'
- provide an evidence base for campaigns, e.g. by developing local pathways to net zero

## The response

We want to transition RCCP into a resourced organisation with roles, responsibilities and flagship projects related to the *Reading Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plans 2025 – 2030*. To enable this, we are working on a £1.5M bid to the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund, which will be submitted by mid December 2025.

## CALL TO ACTION

If you can help us refine the bid or access other sources of funding, or if you would like to be written into the bid as a delivery partner, please get in touch:[gudrun.freese@readingcan.org.uk](mailto:gudrun.freese@readingcan.org.uk)

*Submitted by: RCCP Board*

# GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY LEADERS' SCHOLARSHIP

**More than 200 students welcomed by University of Reading into programme that seeks to transform knowledge into action**

## The challenge

The University of Reading saw a need to provide more support and opportunities for high-achieving students who wish to develop into the sustainability leaders of the future.

## The response

The Global Sustainability Leaders Scholarship enrolled its first 230 scholars in September 2025. As one of the UK's largest-ever sustainability-focused undergraduate scholarship programmes, the scheme will create a community of future global sustainability leaders.

Up to 400 scholarships will be awarded each year across all subject areas, each lasting a maximum of four years. Each successful student will receive £6,000 a year to cover living costs, benefit from cross-disciplinary learning experiences alongside their core studies, and access sustainability leadership development opportunities.

The scholarships will be available to students who achieve AAA at A-level (or equivalent), with adjusted criteria for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and for students who demonstrate a passion and commitment to addressing climate and environmental challenges.

Students who are not recipients of the scholarship can receive free climate and sustainability education through a new online course launched by the University, 'Advocating for a Better Planet', launched in October 2025. The course is designed to help students explore issues they care about and identify one step they can take to make a difference. Students will research and plan an action to address and advocate for a sustainable or climate-based challenge.

## Why it matters

Vice-Chancellor Professor Robert Van de Noort said: "We must bring together knowledge, experience and understanding from across our broad range of disciplines. We need historians who understand how societies have adapted to change. Artists who can inspire others to see the world differently. Economists and social scientists who can develop workable policies that help communities to adapt. Psychologists who can help us understand and influence how people may adopt more sustainable behaviours. Computer scientists who can harness new technologies for good. And so much more besides. The scholarship you've earned is just the beginning. Over the coming years, you'll develop competencies through a series of experiences designed to transform knowledge into action."

## CALL TO ACTION

Find out more at : [Global Sustainability Leaders Scholarship - University of Reading](https://www.reading.ac.uk/study/scholarships/global-sustainability-leaders-scholarship-university-of-reading)

*Submitted by: University of Reading*

# AIR QUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME REACHES 9,000 SCHOOL PUPILS

**Two-year project reached pupils from 28 different schools across Reading**

## The challenge

Air pollution – indoor and outdoor – has a negative effect on health and well-being. Increasing awareness of its causes and impacts can help to reduce air pollution or avoid exposure to it.

## The response

The **Clean Air Living Matters: Exploring Reading (CALM:ER)** programme set out to increase knowledge and awareness of the causes of poor air quality and explore solutions. Engagement activities targeted primary and secondary school pupils, teachers and parents.

Between January 2024 and July 2025, the CALM:ER team delivered: workshops and assemblies in 20 primary and eight secondary schools; all-day sessions at the University of Reading; 50 parent engagement sessions at school gates; and community events around the borough. In total, it is estimated that between 26,000 to 33,000 people engaged in the CALM programme.

Reading Council led the government-funded programme with support from the University of Reading, engineering consultants Stantec and social enterprise Design Nature.

Assemblies included discussions about sources of air pollution, such as transport and wood burning, its impact on health and ways of reducing it and avoiding exposure to it.

Air quality monitors were provided to participating schools and pupils were able to carry out indoor and outdoor air quality measurements over a period of time. The results were analysed and discussed during workshop sessions. Pupils were also able to take real-time measurements and look at the pollutants detected, their levels and potential sources.

## Why it matters

Cllr John Ennis, Reading's Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, said: "Improving air quality in Reading is a high priority for the Council and the CALM programme has been a brilliant way of engaging young people, their families and the wider community on this important subject. Although air quality is improving in Reading, pollution still poses a health risk, particularly for children, the elderly and people with lung and heart conditions, which is why this Council continues to invest heavily in public transport, whether that is buses and bus lanes, rail travel or improved pedestrian and cycle facilities. The CALM project has delivered fun and engaging sessions to more than 9,000 Reading children who now have much more knowledge and awareness of air quality, the common causes of air pollution and ways of reducing it."

## CALL TO ACTION

Find out more at: [Clean Air Living Matters](#)

*Submitted by: University of Reading*

# UNIVERSITY OF READING'S AMBITIOUS NET ZERO PLAN

## The challenge

The University of Reading (UoR) has already reduced carbon emissions from its buildings by 64% since 2009 while saving £57.9 million on energy bills. UoR's carbon reductions so far are equivalent to taking all cars off Reading's roads for over a year. UoR's energy efficiency initiatives include switching from gas heating to electric systems and installing solar panels that now provide 5% of electricity needs. Business travel emissions dropped 50% after UoR set an overall cap on travel emissions, including banning flights within the UK and to destinations reachable by train within eight hours from London. UoR has now set itself the challenge of **being even more ambitious in their reduction plans and targets across a broader scope of emissions**, keeping in line with the latest best practice.

## The response

A bold new **Net Zero Carbon Plan** that covers everything from student travel to food purchases will now help UoR cut the emissions of its supply chain by 70% by 2040. The new targets extend beyond campus buildings to include emissions from student halls run by private companies, goods bought by the University, and even student travel home at the end of term. These broader emissions are targeted to fall 40% by 2035 and 70% by 2040. The updated plan is one of the most ambitious and comprehensive plans in the higher education sector, reflecting that the University is a leader in sustainability among higher education institutions. In 2021 UoR set out a pathway for achieving carbon neutrality on campus by 2030, and they are on track to achieve this. Additional actions are planned to achieve the emissions cuts required by 2040:

- Student halls operated by private company UPP must achieve zero carbon emissions by 2040. UoR will work with suppliers to cut emissions from goods and services by 80% within 16 years.
- Staff and student commuting emissions must drop by 50% by 2035.
- UoR remains committed to sourcing 100% of its electricity through certified renewable energy sources, and plans to significantly expand its renewable energy and battery storage capability to generate much more of its own electricity.
- Heating systems across the estate will switch from gas to electric heat pumps by 2030.

Dan Fernbank, Energy and Sustainability Director at the University of Reading, said: "We've already proven that ambitious climate action delivers real results - cutting emissions by 64% since 2009, while saving millions of pounds. We are expanding our carbon targets because we have a responsibility to demonstrate that comprehensive climate action is both possible and beneficial. Our ambitious climate goals will be the benchmark for other institutions to follow. By tackling emissions across our operations, we are addressing the entire environmental impact of the University of Reading - not just the easy areas. As we celebrate our centenary in 2026, we are shaping a better world for the next hundred years and beyond."

## CALL TO ACTION

Read more here: [University of Reading Net Zero Carbon Plan 2025-2040](https://www.reading.ac.uk/about-us/centenary/centenary-plan/our-plan/our-plan-net-zero-carbon-plan-2025-2040/)

*Submitted by: University of Reading*

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM READING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CARBON REDUCTION PLAN

**Zero Carbon Bus Travel:** Reading's award-winning bus company is owned by the Council. In 2024 the number of bus passengers was 19.5m, an increase of 11% over the previous year. The bus depot has also undergone a major transformation with a fleet of 32 new electric buses due to begin service in autumn 2025. Plans are progressing for a major new solar array on the roof of the depot to accompany the array on the office roof. This is being delivered by Reading Community Energy Society and Reading Borough Council.

**Zero Carbon Depot:** The Council completed the acquisition of its 13<sup>th</sup> and last electric waste vehicle in March 2024, effectively decarbonising 25% of its diesel emissions. Expansion of solar through the installation of solar canopies at the depot site alongside heat pumps for the buildings and the electrification of the remainder of the vehicle fleets would see the depot come very close to net zero in its operations.

**Levelling Up – Decarbonising the Library, Civic Offices and Theatre:** Over the past year, the Civic Offices had new heat pumps installed and these are now operational, completely removing all gas supplies. As the new Library is brought into the offices, the old Library will be sold for housing offering further reductions. Boreholes are now drilled at the Hexagon Theatre and works are underway to build an extension to the theatre. This work will include new ground source heat pumps which will extract heat from the aquifer. This will enable gas to be removed from this building also. Once these two new extended buildings have had all fossil fuels removed, carbon emissions will be reduced significantly and the emissions should continue to reduce year on year as the UK Clean Power Plan decarbonises the national electricity network.

**'A' Rated for Climate:** In September 2025 the Council submitted its fourth 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 2025 CDP confirmed that Reading had retained its place on their 'A' list of cities taking bold climate action, one of only 122 cities across the world and 20 in the UK to achieve this level.

*Submitted by: Reading Borough Council*

## 4. PROGRESS WITH ACTION PLAN DELIVERY

### 4.1 Overview

In terms of the action plans around which the Strategy is based, 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

Annex 1 contains a detailed description of progress with the action plans on which the strategy is based. The majority of actions remain ‘green’ or ‘amber’ (89%), but a significant number have not been progressed due largely to constraints on the Partnership’s resources.

## 5. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from this Annual Report that much has been achieved over the past year and through the five years of this strategy. The reduction in Reading’s emissions between 2005 and 2023 (the latest year for which data is available) of 57% is, once again, the 12<sup>th</sup> highest of 374 local authority. The data is from the UK Government dataset which records ‘carbon dioxide emissions within the scope of influence of the local authority’.

Whilst this represents relatively good progress, it remains clear that there is much more to do – emissions reductions appear to be back to their pre-pandemic trend of steadily reducing in the borough but not on a trajectory to meet net zero by 2030. Especially as we are 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of the way to 2030.

The past year has seen the new UK Clean Power Plan launched which aims to bring reduce the carbon intensity of UK electricity by achieving a 95% clean energy mix by 2030. This will also ensure that emissions are less than one quarter of their current level. We must now shift our heat and transport to electrified sources to benefit from this transition. Electric Heat pumps and vehicles are approximately three times as efficient as their fossil powered counterparts and meaning that combined the strategy would result in almost complete decarbonisation. As boilers and cars have similar life expectancy a redoubled effort to replace with old fossil powered units with new electrically powered technologies at their natural end of life point would ensure that within 15 years a significant decarbonisation can occur.

At a local level the Council and University have been installing heat pumps and increasing the numbers of electric vehicles in their fleets, steadily reducing their fossil fuels. The public sector emissions in the 2023 year reduced by a considerable 24% on the year before and overall have reduced by 75% since the baseline year.

Our bus company is reporting record ridership, the third highest in the UK outside London. A new Local Transport Plan has been aligned with the climate challenge and sets in train a number of key projects

designed to help residents to travel actively. A new train station was opened in Reading at Green Park and a funding was secured to purchase 32 electric buses in Reading.

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.

Our natural environment offers a precious reprieve for humans and wildlife in the heat of the summer and can help to protect us from flooding in the winter. Our biodiversity is at risk from the changing climate and we must help sustain it.

Reading's thriving army of volunteers participated in a plethora of events to preserve and enhance our nature with two new orchards being planted last year and many other events. The University is developing the old walled garden as an educational resource, forest gardens are being planned and planted, a sensory and teaching area for students to name but a few.

Work took place to raise water awareness including community walks and tours and celebration of our wetlands, online events at the climate festival and consultation leading to a new flood resilience plan in 2025.

Over the past year and throughout the life of this strategy Reading Climate Change Partnership and its partners have worked on countless projects and programmes. Members of the public have worked with paid employees in the public, voluntary sector and private sectors to deliver and mobilised a great number of initiatives which show the highly active engagement of our local community in acting on climate in Reading.



# **ENERGY ACTION PLAN**

## **2020 - 2025**

Our aim (in 2020) is that by 2025 Reading is taking urgent action to decarbonise its energy networks, increase energy efficiency and create renewable energy capacity. It has concrete plans to achieve sufficient demand reduction to enable its annual energy needs to be 100% covered by its renewable generation, taking account of the increased load from transport and heat becoming electrically powered.

# Energy & Low Carbon Development Theme Action Plan – RAG rating for 2024/2025

*Please note:* Some of the actions included in the action plans below, and the scale and pace at which they can be progressed, will be subject to the prevailing national policy context and/or the provision of additional powers and resources by central government, as made clear in Reading's climate emergency declaration.

## Sub category: Low Carbon Development

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	RAG Status	Commentary (100 word max)
E1: an Energy Master Plan for Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an Energy Master Plan for Reading</li> </ul>	i) Develop stakeholder group ii) Establish evidence base and technology pathway iii) Develop cross sector implementation plan	i) Q4 2020 ii) Q2 2021 iii) Q2 2021	Scottish and Southern Energy (District Network Operator) SGN (Southern Gas Networks) Ovo Energy Octopus Energy Local renewable energy suppliers. Spirit Solar Reading Energy Strategy forum	AMBER	An evidence base has been developed (statistical returns provided to DNO and NESO) and use of LENZA tool. Collaboration with UoR on approaches to dashboard and a transition hub working with UoR and community (cross sector)
E2: Energy Efficiency in New development	Introduce high standards of energy efficiency for new development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large commercial to BREEAM 'excellent' standard</li> </ul>	iv) % achieving standard v) Schemes supported though offset	Ongoing Choose an item.	Reading BC	GREEN	Zero Carbon and BREEAM standards are being applied but as the former are applied at the end of development process few have been realised at current time. LA housing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>with best methods employed</li> <li>• Larger housing developments built to zero carbon standards</li> <li>• Ensure standards post construction with best methods employed</li> <li>• Build new council housing to the highest standards Net zero carbon and exceeding 50% reduction on building regulations</li> <li>• Consider the embodied energy in building materials in publicly commissioned projects</li> </ul>					being built to high (close to carbon neutral standard) Embodied energy being include in LA Plan review.
E3: Energy Reduction through Retrofit Programme	<p>Establish a housing retrofit programme in Reading which is compelling for property owners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for funding</li> <li>• Compile high quality information on stock and energy efficiency levels of local housing</li> <li>• Identify partners</li> <li>• Zero carbon offset</li> <li>• Investigate green/community bonds and other finance innovation</li> <li>• Commercial retrofit scheme</li> </ul>	<p>Apply MHCLG Local Authority Delivery funding Sept to Dec 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stock condition survey Oct 20</li> <li>• Supply chain development work TBC</li> <li>• Collect Section 106</li> <li>• funds for zero carbon development</li> <li>• Work with LEP and Reading UK to establish</li> </ul>	2020/21	Reading BC and developers and/or retrofit companies	AMBER	Most of the actions met within the strategy period. Grant schemes have been implemented in Reading and Zero Carbon Offset but a bonds scheme and commercial retrofit scheme not delivered.

		companies to pilot – scheme TBC				
E4: Retrofit Design	<p>Establish standards for climate-conscious retrofit (not exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop standards for different property types <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Heritage sympathetic schemes</li> <li>- Consider damp and ventilation.</li> <li>- Design for climate risks</li> <li>- Heat recovery ventilation</li> <li>- Underfloor heating</li> <li>- Consider embodied energy in construction</li> <li>- Introduce water saving especially hot water.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop public communication and resources for retrofit.</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Water, Business</p>	Identify pilot projects which target specific solutions for different building types locally..	2020 to 2022	Reading BC, English Heritage SECBE, University of Reading	AMBER	This action has not progressed for heritage buildings although the PAS 2030 standards do in theory meet many of these requirements. This is the standard for grant funded retrofit work.
E5: Behaviours that save energy in homes and businesses and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop approaches to reduce energy consumption in homes, businesses and schools</li> </ul>	<p>Publish resources</p> <p>Targeted campaign</p>	<p>2020/21</p> <p>2021/2022</p>	<p>National/local agencies and organisations</p> <p>materials and resources</p>	AMBER	Some schemes were investigated including eco refurb which is being implemented. Offers local tools. A business decarb scheme delivered using EU funding. Climate festival and pledge

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create information resources</li> <li>• Develop targeted behaviour-change campaign</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Community, Business, schools</p>			Reading BC, RCCP Brighter Futures	AMBER	
E6: Best in class buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop high standard projects in different sectors, to reduce emissions</li> </ul> <p><u>Link:</u> Business</p>	Publish reports on buildings	Q2 2021	Housing providers	AMBER	The Councils LA new build properties can be shown to be Passivhaus principles.
E7: Reducing fuel poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide Winter Watch service</li> <li>• Support new schemes targeting retrofitting for those most in need</li> <li>• Build referral mechanisms for those suffering from poor health and/or fuel poverty.</li> <li>• <u>Links:</u> Community, Health</li> </ul>	Reading Housing Strategy  Design new approaches  Establish cross-referral programme	2020/21  2020/22  Ongoing	Reading BC, other agencies (Health Citizen advice etc)	GREEN	Reading Warm Homes team expanded. Retrofit grants made available within eligibility criteria.
E8: Leadership and Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider legal options for establishing standards that go higher than regulations</li> <li>• Buy sustainable LCGES (Low Carbon Goods and Environmental Services) from local suppliers to build supply chains where rules allow. Use social value KPIs</li> <li>• Develop in-house skills for retrofit of Council housing</li> </ul>	Consider trials nationally  Project to work with public and private sector to build local supply chain	Q3 2020  2021 – 2023	Reading BC Reading UK TVB – (Berkshire) LEP	RED	Implementation of sustainable procurement in key organisations has continued to develop but no specific resources to support work with supply chains. In house skills within council for retrofit established.
E9: Reading Borough Council	Reading Borough Council to set out plan to achieve emissions	Published plan to 2025 and meet its milestones	Q4 2020	Reading BC	AMBER	Plan published and all major assets decarbonised except the Town Hall

Carbon Plan 2020 to 2025	reductions and renewable energy generation targets.					which is being designed. Decarbonisation of Civic Offices, Hexagon Theatre and Bennet Road depot in progress. Some projects not delivered and 85% target unlikely to be met by 2025 (one more reporting year 25/26).
E10: Publish new housing strategy to incorporate energy retrofit	New strategy to include C-rating and where possible B rating for all Council and rental accommodation in borough by 2030 <a href="#">Link: Business</a>	i) New housing strategy ii) Implementation	2020/21 2021 onwards	Reading BC	AMBER	Some work has taken place to improve Council houses . EPC ratings increased to 52% of Reading dwellings in 2024 compared to 48% in 2023. Social housing was 69% above EPC C in 2024 (up 3% from 2023) compared to 39% in owner occupied and 46% in Private rented.

### Sub category: Renewable Energy – Heat

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
E11: Renewable Heat – Ground Source	Work with developers to maximise district energy solutions in line with Local Plan policies on decentralised energy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish District Heating</li><li>Investigate the potential of rivers, ground and aquifers in Reading for renewable heat</li><li>Implement heat pump schemes</li><li>Develop skills of local installers</li></ul> <a href="#">Link: Business</a>	Complete studies  Implement scheme	Q2 2020  Q2 2022 (dependant on developers)	Reading BC /BEIS University	AMBER	Good progress but behind original timelines as projects not yet complete. Feasibility phase complete and now working through Detailed Project Design phase. Boreholes drilled at Hexagon Theatre showing adequate flow in aquifer. Heat pump schemes in development.

E12: Renewable Heat Air Source	Consider different types of heat pumps and develop skills of local installers <u>Link:</u> Business	Report on Air Source Heat Pumps Identify installers Conduct trials	Q3 2020 Q3 2020 Q2 2021	Reading BC	AMBER	Various local installs (338 housing plus 3 large RBC buildings) but no trials were conducted. Resource not available for skills development. Net Zero Hub funding went to other areas of SE for skills.
E13: Renewable Heat Anaerobic Digestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anaerobic digestion for food waste streams</li> <li>Consider biogas generation for buses and inject to grid</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Resources, Transport	Report informing waste strategy	Q2 2021	University of Reading	GREEN	Municipal food waste collection implemented. AD used to supply grid and gas powered buses linked.
E14: Hydrogen	Investigate renewably sourced hydrogen fuel cell technology in particular for use in Heavy Commercial Vehicles (HCVs) <u>Links:</u> Business, Transport Investigate hydrogen injection to gas network	Identify schemes/trials  Discussions with SGN	DATE TBC	Reading BC Reading UK Reading Transport SGN	Not continued	Hydrogen network not scheduled to reach Reading until 2040s. Focus in Reading is on electrified transport system.

### Sub category: Renewable Energy – Electricity

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
E15: Solar PV (commercial)	Establish large commercial roof-based schemes that service base loads in large commercial buildings <u>Link:</u> Business	Establish scheme  Achieve high proportion of suitable roofs	2020/22  2025	UoR, Reading UK & Reading BC, TVBLEP/Reading UK, SE Energy hub	AMBER	Scheme not progressed although larger arrays being developed by RBC, Reading Transport Ltd and University of Reading
E16: Solar PV (domestic)	Establish phase 1 of domestic scheme using bulk purchase to reduce price	Develop scheme Scheme up and running	2020  2022	RCCP, Tenants groups, local companies	GREEN	Scheme implemented – solar together. 249 installs in phase 1 and 652 registered interest in phase 2 with 150 having paid.
E17: Solar PV (Public buildings including schools)	Install solar panels onto public buildings including housing, community buildings, schools, schools	Council target 50% of electricity from	2025	RBC NHS Police Fire authorities	GREEN	Solar installed on 30 schools. Second phase in 2023 included 14 schools funded through PSDS.

	hospitals, leisure centres, police and fire authorities	renewables (mainly solar)				
E18: Renewable Energy – hydro	To bring forward Hydro-electric power schemes powered by Reading's rivers To publicise sustainable energy through educational programme. <u>Link: Water</u>	Planning approval secured already, investment and commence scheme Launch educational programme, tours etc	2020/21  2022	Reading Hydro	GREEN	Installed and tours do operate – consideration of a 'Sustainability Centre'
E19: Investment in Renewable Energy at Regional level	Consider investment in land and sites in and outside of Reading that have potential to supply renewable electricity to Reading Investigate suitable land with (potential) planning and connections for renewable energy generation	Initial report by	Q2 2021	Reading BC	RED	Not progressed. Wokingham solar farm is potential for PPA for Reading based organisations

#### Sub category: Electric Powered Transport - see also Transport Theme Action Plan

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
E20: Energy strategy for Bus Depot and surrounding area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish potential for solar – depot, car park canopies, Civitas School</li> <li>Investigate <a href="#">Riding Sunbeams</a> option for direct connection to railway network</li> </ul>	Report	2020/21	RBC, Reading Community Energy Society	AMBER	Schemes are being developed for Reading car parks but these have been delayed due to pandemic impacts and review of assets. Riding sunbeams not viable for Reading.

## Sub category: Electricity Storage, Management and Metering – Smart Cities Solutions

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
E21: Battery Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grid side battery storage by Local Energy company (District Network Operator)</li> <li>Behind meter storage on domestic and commercial sites</li> <li>Specialist large scale storage facilities third party</li> </ul>	Establish energy strategy group Develop energy strategy draft	2020  Q2 2021	SSE Public Sector Private sector	RED	Not aware of any schemes
E22: Smart Meters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roll out of smart meters in households</li> <li>Identify 'Internet of Things' solutions linked to smart meters</li> <li>Explore linkages to 'time of use' tariffs (different rates for different times of day) linked to IoT devices and 'vehicle to grid' (vehicles powering buildings).</li> <li>Establish trials with vehicles/buildings and local network</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Business, Transport</p>	Energy company schedules/targets	2020 to 2024	Energy Companies  RCCP University of Reading	AMBER	Reportedly 54% of SSEN meters are smart across their networks.
E23: Internet of Things projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction of in-building solutions for projects that use the cloud and smart response approaches</li> </ul>	Smart Cities projects	2020 to 2022	Reading BC, University of Reading	Choose an item.	Update needed from UoR

	including machine learning to optimise energy flows					
E24: Heat storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the potential of natural and engineering based heat storage systems in urban context for stabilising heat supply and balancing summer storage and winter loads</li> </ul>	Set up Energy Working group	TBC	TBC	GREEN	University of Reading and RBC have installed open loop ground source heat pump boreholes. A total of 6 have been installed.
E25: Carbon intensity research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with University and or third parties to develop accurate real time assessment of carbon intensity of electricity and optimise energy flows to minimise carbon emissions</li> </ul>	Set up Energy Working Group	2022	Reading BC, University of Reading	GREEN	Some work carried out by UoR based on RBC site.



# **NATURE ACTION PLAN**

## **2020 - 2025**

Our aim is that by 2025 the people of Reading will live in a greener town with changes to the management of open spaces and the green links between them that store more carbon as well as giving shade for hot summers, corridors for wildlife and some flood control. New developments will include biodiversity net gain and water management, and there will be exemplar sites showing how to change planting and soil management around buildings to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

# Nature Theme Action Plan – RAG rating for 2024/2025

*Please note:* Some of the actions included in the action plans below, and the scale and pace at which they can be progressed, will be subject to the prevailing national policy context and/or the provision of additional powers and resources by central government, as made clear in Reading's climate emergency declaration. They are also dependent upon recruiting enough volunteers to the Nature task Force to supplement the existing nature theme group.

## Sub-category: Carbon Sequestration

Action name	Description	Target & measure/milestone	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
N1: Increasing tree cover across the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plant more street trees</li> <li>Test new planting options in town centre and on the road network</li> <li>Promote trees in private gardens/ business/ schools</li> <li>Encourage tree and hedge planting in air pollution hotspots esp. schools</li> <li>Enable more street tree planters</li> <li>Promote use of degradable tree planting maps and tubes</li> </ul> <u>Link:</u> Education, Transport	Targets per updated Biodiversity Action Plan & RBC Tree Strategy (NB resources for and timing of implementation may be influenced by England Tree Strategy, publication of which is awaited)  Publish guidance on RCAN website 2 school hedges/year Review policies for traffic restrictions  Policy for council planting; publish guidance for householders;	RBC to adopt Tree Strategy 2020 Planting programme to 2025  2020 2021 2021	Reading BC, Ethical Reading; Tree Wardens (RTWN); Nature Task Force (NTF) Econet Food4Families Thames Water	AMBER	Trees/saplings planted winter 2024/5 were 407 standards and 255 saplings by RBC Streetscene . Tree wardens Econet and Freely Fruity. 135 Saplings were replacements. Only one school hedge, two new community land hedges and thickening of large hedgerow done during plan period. No other requests from schools
N2: Managing land to store more carbon and increase biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review methods to protect existing stored carbon and relative benefits of different land uses</li> </ul>	Conduct literature review	2021  2021	Reading BC University NTF BBOWT	AMBER	Commenced work

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify optimum practical and effective management systems for retaining carbon in Reading</li> <li>Feedback into review of management of Council land</li> </ul>	Feedback into review of Council land management and planting programme				
N3 explore use of biochar and charcoal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research on cost benefit of charcoal and biochar</li> <li>Expect results to show that expensive to purchase but beneficial for tree growth and resilience to climate change and should be part of planting plans</li> <li>Seek opportunities to make charcoal from local forestry waste to sell locally and reduce imports and to dig into the soils to sequester carbon</li> </ul>	Research undertaken RBC ground maintenance policies and planting policies revised accordingly Advice leaflets for householders on RCAN website	2023	UoR RBC Local charcoal makers BBOWT Coppice Federation	AMBER	Commenced discussions
N4: Review Council parks and woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey land, including allotments, and make recommendations that increase carbon storage, flood control, and Biological Action Plan delivery, compatible with increased public use for health</li> </ul> <p><u>Link:</u> Water, Health</p>	<p>Survey minimum 4 sites per year</p> <p>Recommend management changes</p>	From 2020	Reading BC NTF Econet, Reading and District Natural History Society (RDNHS), RTWN	AMBER	All sites given initial survey. Detailed surveys and recommendations for management changes completed for 9 sites, 3 more by end of 2025.
N5: Test different management of parks, verges and roundabouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review mowing regimes in parks</li> <li>Consider measures like extending tree cover, scrub regeneration and conservation grassland</li> <li>Consider options for managing roadside verges/roundabouts</li> <li>Test, review and implement preferred options</li> <li>Accompany changes with public education campaign</li> </ul>	<p>Annual meeting to review options for evidence-based changes</p> <p>Consider options for changing mowing/planting on 6 area/yr of verge/roundabouts and 2 areas in parks</p> <p>Review impact and extend across town</p>	<p>From 2021</p> <p>From 2021</p> <p>From 2020</p>	Reading BC NTF Community groups	GREEN	Continuation of different mowing regimes across the town and extension of areas

N6: Planning for replacement for ash dieback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide which areas to be left for regeneration with resistant ash</li> <li>Decide on replacement species on Council land where necessary</li> <li>Grow on local material to plant out (potential schools project)</li> </ul> <u>Link:</u> Education	Review Council woodlands and revise management plans  2 year collection of seeds with schools	2022  2 per year	Reading BC Parks; "friends of" groups; NTF, Community groups	AMBER	New tree officers employed and dangerous ash under a removal plan. No specific plan for replacements species
N7: Kennet Meadows	Review options to increase carbon storage and biodiversity through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining water levels through the year</li> <li>increasing granularity of livestock management to form a mosaic of swards</li> <li>Before and after surveys required for carbon capture and biodiversity</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Water	Discussions underway Completion targets and dates to be agreed	TBA	Land Owners EA, Reading BC NTF Thames Water	RED	No agreements between landowners/tenants to change management although attempted
N8: Increase hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey existing hedgerows and suggest new hedgelines/infill</li> <li>Schools encouraged to have hedge boundaries to mitigate air pollution</li> <li>Hedgerows promoted along cycle routes/ walking routes for air pollution mitigation and shade</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Health	Review hedgerows as part of wildlife corridor survey at 10km/year  Target schools and park boundaries for priority planting	Annual report  2 per year from 2021	NTF to survey  Landowners to plant and maintain	AMBER	Some surveying achieved, not achieving targets
N9: Food waste/green waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support no dig cultivation, home composting/ worm bins</li> <li>Disseminate information on food fermentation and support larger scale waste trials</li> <li>Seek University research to quantify effects</li> </ul>	Information on RCAN website and links to other sources  Support 2 trials: data required before end of RE3 contract	2020  2024	NTF Food4Families Community groups UoR MERL	GREEN	PhD at UoR being written up. provedf fermentation delivers better food for soil microorganisms and reduces carbon emissions cf composting

## Sub-category: Supporting wildlife habitats and biodiversity

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
N10: Compensatory habitat restoration/offsets for urban development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline review of the likely requirements for habitat compensation and biodiversity net gain due to development of sites in the Local Plan</li> <li>Financial mechanism developed</li> </ul>	System to be set up  Implementation	2020  continuous	Reading BC planning	RED	Legislation delayed in implementation, and now potentially under review again. taken forward into next plan
N11: Identifying wildlife corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working from the green links shown in the Local Plan, and revision of the Biodiversity Action Plan, identify primary and secondary routes</li> <li>Agree any changes/additions changes with RBC planning department and Council</li> </ul>	Identify routes and mark on plan for transfer to RBC Geographical Information System	2020	Reading BC planning BAP review/NTF  Reading BC parks and Highways	GREEN	On GIS. Active Leisure and Transport group in RBC working to increase use of walking routes
N12: Assessing the quality of wildlife corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review existing data</li> <li>Walk through and rapid assessment of accessible land</li> <li>List priorities for enhancement on public land and community land</li> </ul> <u>Link:</u> Community, Health	Start within year 1, 10km a year reports on the corridor survey	Annual from 2020-2025	NTF/Reading BC community groups  Network rail  BBOWT	AMBER	Not achieved 10 km/year
N13: Managing the impact of development areas on wildlife corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure design and planting on development sites contributes to wildlife corridors</li> <li>Ensure connectivity through developments with appropriate supplemental planning guidance</li> <li>Align with objectives of revised Biodiversity Action Plan and/or</li> </ul>	Supplementary Planning Document published	2021  Implementation ongoing	Reading BC  Berkshire Local Nature Partnership  BBOWT	AMBER	Worked with Berkshire Nature Recovery Strategy to deliver new goals. Delay in delivery of the plan

	green infrastructure strategy/plan					
N14: Species protection/recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodiversity Action Plan develops objectives for increasing/recovery of identified key species</li> <li>Ensure these are fed into management methods and changes in wildlife corridors</li> </ul>	<p>Develop land management objectives</p> <p>Implement from:</p>	2020  2021	Reading BC/NTF  University of Reading	AMBER	Worked with Berkshire Nature Recovery Strategy to deliver new goals. Delay in delivery of the plan
N15: Biodiversity enhancement pilots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet/work with residents associations/ community groups</li> <li>Offer regular workshops/newsletter input/other methods to support changes in these areas</li> </ul> <p><u>Link:</u> Community</p>	<p>Identify 2 areas to participate including an area of deprivation</p> <p>Review impact relative to other areas</p>	2020 2023	NTF Adopt-a street Community groups	GREEN	Two sites developed with lottery funding during action plan period, plus community orchards in south reading and caversham
N16: Data recording/monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request that all new data go onto TVERC, irecord or data systems that link with TVERC (Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre)</li> <li>Recruit volunteers for recording</li> <li>Encourage householders to take part in garden surveys/ TV projects</li> </ul> <p><u>Link:</u> Community</p>	<p>Contact all local groups</p> <p>Recruit volunteers</p> <p>Publicise surveys undertaken by others</p>	2021  2020  Each year	NTF Community groups UoR	GREEN	

#### Sub category: Planting for biodiversity and resilience

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)

N17: Provide Information on adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information on climate resilience and wildlife friendly gardening</li> <li>Improving soil structure and promote water reuse</li> <li>Promote exemplar sites – eg council, church, school</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Water, Health, Education	Information published on RCAN website  2 exemplar projects by:	Q4 2020  2025	NTF  RISC community groups, Reading BC	AMBER	Factsheets produced on RCAN website  Changes to council sites and school sites. Limited promotion
N18: Greening front gardens and reducing hardstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information and links to potential designs for increasing green cover and reducing hardstanding</li> <li>Hold seminar for developers</li> <li>Seek TV support for project, eg Gardener's World</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Water, Energy and LCD	Information by end 2021  Seminar  Contact TV options	2021  2022  2023	RCAN/ NTF/RHS	AMBER	Regular information provided at Beanoole Day each year. No seminar for developers. Gardeners world approached and Gardeners Question time. GQT show held in Reading during plan period
N19: Interaction with garden centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage garden centres to introduce a wildlife friendly and climate change adaptation section</li> <li>Peat-free labelling of composts</li> </ul> <u>Link:</u> Business	Programme introduced	2020	NTF BBOWT	AMBER	Garden entres around Reading (none in Reading area) approached, but no success in creating links. Peat free compost for garden use is now required by Law.

#### Sub category: Green Spaces for Cooling/well-being

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
N20: Green Infrastructure	Using green infrastructure to reduce carbon emissions from	In local plan. May need Supplementary planning document	SPD 2022	Reading BC	AMBER	Very limited changes. Bus shelters introduced with green roofs, and proof that

	<p>buildings and promote urban cooling, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Green walls and roofs on new build</li> <li>• Promote green roofs on existing single storey structures</li> <li>• Plant for shading of cycle/pedestrian routes</li> <li>• Research on impacts of green infrastructure required</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Energy &amp; LCD, Water, Transport, Health</p>	<p>Advice published on RCAN website Research projects to evaluate effects</p>	<p>2022 2021</p>	<p>NTF NTF/UoR</p>		<p>survived this years' drought. Planting for additional shade in parks and roadsides undertaken</p>
N21 Develop green space to enable increased health benefits	<p>Tree/hedge planting to provide shade, reduce particulate pollution and oxides of nitrogen</p> <p><u>Links:</u> Health</p>	Part of reviews referred to in N4 above	Ongoing from 2020	Landowners	AMBER	Done as part of reviewing management plans, mainly increased tree cover

### Sub category: Communication and Engagement

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
N22: Raising awareness in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify two areas in the town, including an area of deprivation, to concentrate existing resources to test ideas and communication methods for dissemination</li> <li>• Extend proven ideas to other areas</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> All themes, Business, Community</p>	2 target areas identified and developed	Identify test areas by 2021; Extend to four areas by 2025	Nature Task Force	AMBER	Effective communication in Caversham area and new small sites developed. Substantial inputs from RBC, Econet, Nature nurture and others in South Whitley area to increase involvement in open spaces
N23: Advice service for adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advice to schools/ community groups/ for wildlife friendly gardening/ water</li> </ul>	Offer half day advice service to up to 20	Advice service from 2021	NTF BBOWT	GREEN	Advice give to various groups, but have not had 20

	efficient gardening/recycling in the garden <u>Links:</u> Water, Education, Community, Adaptation	organisations a year, plus online leaflets				requests per year. Online leaflets provided
N24: Support schools in their climate change initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide list of support actions available through ReadingCAN or external sources to enhance existing systems (e.g. ecoschools), and distribute</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Education, Communication and Engagement	Create option list for schools Offer 8 support activities a year	2020  From 2021	RCAN  Nature Task Force	AMBER	Offered service through brighter future but limited take up. Worked with 3 schools during plan period.
N25: Supporting Businesses and NGOs in their climate change initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make opportunities for groups to do practical work via Team Challenge</li> </ul> <u>Link:</u> Business, Communication and Engagement	6 actions a year	Set up by 2021	Reading BC/NTF Econet/TCV	AMBER	Available, but no real success.
N26 Identify opportunities for green prescribing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce a list of groups willing to provide options for social prescribing and make available to local GPs</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Health	List available to RBC Public Health	2021	NTF	RED	Taken out of this plan as being done through RVA



# **RESOURCES ACTION PLAN**

## **2020 - 2025**

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Our aim for 2025 is that Reading is on track to become a zero-waste town by 2030, is actively innovating to find new ways of using resources more efficiently and thereby minimising our contribution to climate change. To facilitate this transition, by 2025 it is easy for everybody to access information and services to help them find ways to reduce waste and repurpose things they no longer need.

# Resources Theme Action Plan

NB Some of the actions included in the action plans below, and the scale and pace at which they can be progressed, will be subject to the prevailing national policy context and/or the provision of additional powers and resources by central government, as made clear in Reading's climate emergency declaration.

This RAG rating was completed in 2024. We are currently recruiting for a new Resources Theme Lead to take the 2025 – 2030 action plan forward.

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)
<b>R1: Food: Reducing domestic food waste</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish baseline and set meaningful targets for reducing domestic food waste</li> <li>Adopt the Love Food, Hate Waste toolkit from WRAP and drive behaviour change through communications</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Business	Baseline research completed by March 2021  Communications programme in place, targets set and tracked annually from July 2021	Q1 2021  Q3 2021 onwards	Reading BC (lead); University of Reading (research)	AMBER	No baseline collection phase. Some progress made through promotion of WRAP Food Waste Action Week and linking up with the emerging Reading Food Partnership. Re3 also promoting food waste reduction (and recycling) through their socials.
<b>R2: Food: Reducing commercial food waste</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish baseline and set meaningful targets for reducing commercial food waste</li> <li>Create a programme combining reduction measures, well-managed charity donations and best outcome waste processing</li> <li>Collaborative programme by and for business</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Community, Business, Education	Baseline research completed by September 2021;  Communications programme in place, targets set and tracked annually from January 2022  Commercial food waste collection from TBC	Q3 2021  Q1 2022  TBC	RCAN (lead); Reading UK CIC; University of Reading (research); Connect Reading; Waste/recycling contractors Reading BC/commercial parties	AMBER	As R1. Perhaps scope to get local businesses to go public about their commitments and progress. (Some may choose to do so by aligning with WRAP's 'Guardians of Grub' programme.)

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)
R3: Food: Reducing food waste in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish baseline and set meaningful targets for reducing food waste in schools</li> <li>Create a programme combining reduction measures, well-managed charity donations and best outcome waste processing</li> <li>Commercial food waste collection to be introduced by Reading BC for schools</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Community, Business, Education	Baseline research completed by September 2021; Communications programme in place, targets set and tracked annually from January 2022 Commercial food waste collection for schools from TBC	Q3 2021 Q1 2022 TBC	RCAN (lead); University of Reading (research); Reading BC/commercial waste partners	AMBER	As R1. Perhaps scope to get local schools & their catering partners to go public about their commitments and progress. (Some may choose to do so by aligning with WRAP's 'Guardians of Grub' programme.)
R4: Other: Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish baseline and set meaningful targets for reducing the amount of clothing wasted</li> <li>Introduce programmes to divert unwanted clothing from general waste through various means including donation, swapping, sharing, leasing/rental, etc.</li> <li>Investigate the potential for emulating the WearNext project pioneered in New York</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Business, Community	Establish baseline and identify areas for improvement Publish programme of targeted interventions	Q1 2021 Q4 2021	Reading Circular Economy Club (lead); Reading UK CIC; Connect Reading; Re3 (baseline data)	AMBER	No baseline collection phase. Have been, or are, various initiatives focused on reducing textile waste including New Directions College's 'Upcycled Fashion' projects and retailers introducing return and repair services. But lack of capacity limits scope to make connections.

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)
<b>R5: Other: Resource efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish easy to access and understand best practice guidance covering all common household purchases (in and out of home)</li> <li>• Focus on extended life, zero waste, energy efficiency</li> <li>• Signpost established labels and standards, advisory bodies, etc.</li> <li>• Establish communications programme to reinforce behaviour change</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Communications and Engagement</p>	Guidance published and communications programme launched	Q2 2021	ReadingCAN (lead); Re3; Reading UK CIC	AMBER	A number of initiatives exist or have emerged (including the information and support provided through the network of local Repair Cafés) that promote knowledge and skills to support resource efficiency . A number of retailers have also introduced repair services. But not joined up enough or delivering fast enough change. There is an opportunity to connect and promote what exists. Also for anchor institutions to lead by example.

## 2: Reuse – keeping products in use for longer; delaying the point at which they need to be recycled

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)	Carry forward to 2025-30?
R6: Re-use and repair: Establish a definitive information source on re-use and repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compile and maintain a comprehensive directory of re-use and repair resources in Reading, and encourage new ones, especially through social enterprise</li> <li>Include information resources like ifixit and services like <i>Reading Repair Café</i> and <i>Reading Bicycle Kitchen</i></li> <li>Establish communications programme to reinforce behaviour change</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Community</p>	Directory published, update process and communications programme in place by April 2021	Q2 2021	ReadingCAN (lead); Organisations offering re-use and repair services; Reading UK CIC; Transition Towns; Re3	AMBER	Although progress not made on developing a directory of reuse and repair resources, a number of initiatives exist or have emerged that promote supporting knowledge and skills. Some retailers have introduced repair services. Opportunity to promote what exists as well as identify gaps. Anchor institutions can lead by example.	Amend – As R4
R7: Sharing, renting and swapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compile and maintain a comprehensive directory of sharing, renting and swapping resources, and encourage new ones</li> <li>Include peer to peer systems like <i>Freegle</i>, rental and “as a service” systems, charity outlets and platform services like <i>Too Good to Go</i></li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Community</p>	Directory published, update process and communications programme in place by:	Q2 2021	ReadingCAN (lead); Organisations offering sharing, rental and swapping services; Transition Towns	AMBER	Although progress not made on developing a directory of sharing, renting & swapping resources, a number of initiatives exist or have emerged that promote supporting knowledge and skills (including Reading Library of Things). There is an opportunity to connect and promote what exists as well as identify gaps. Also for anchor institutions to lead by example.	Amend – As R4

### 3: Recycle – seeing what we end up throwing away as still having value, and doing our best to retain and recover that value at its highest level

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)	Carry forward to 2025-30?
R8: Food: Kerbside food waste recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise take-up of kerbside food waste recycling when introduced</li> <li>Appropriate annual targets to be set in conjunction with Reading BC/Re3</li> <li>Communications programme required to drive behaviour change</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Community, Education	Increase Reading's recycling rate by 7% through food waste collection	Q4 2021	Reading BC/Re3	GREEN	Achieved early by re3 and performance maintained.	Amend – As R1
R9: Other: Glass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a baseline and set meaningful targets for increasing glass collection</li> <li>Improve access to glass recycling facilities for residents</li> <li>Focus on areas with high density housing/low car ownership</li> <li>Work with hospitality industry to introduce colour segregated glass collection</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Community, Business	Establish baseline and identify areas for improvement  Publish plan to introduce improved provision for residents and businesses, including targets for collection by September 2021	Q1 2021  Q3 2021	Reading BC (domestic lead); Reading UK CIC (business lead); University of Reading (research); Waste/recycling contractors	AMBER	No baseline collection stage. But aware that re3 and Reading BIDS are addressing glass recycling infrastructure	Amend – As R1, may make sense to group some actions together. Also worth noting that the engagement of some partners is very much tied to their contractual requirements and associated KPIs.

### 3: Recycle – seeing what we end up throwing away as still having value, and doing our best to retain and recover that value at its highest level

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)	Carry forward to 2025-30?
R10: Other: Kerbside recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximise kerbside collection and minimise contamination</li> <li>Increase awareness of what can do in kerbside recycling</li> <li>Implement communications programme to encourage and improve confidence in recycling</li> <li>Set annual targets to improve collection/contamination rates</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Community</p>	Increase in Reading's overall recycling rate by 4% by October 2021 arising from efforts to reduce contamination	Q4 2021	Reading BC/Re3	GREEN	RBC/re3 are continuing to experiment with ways to increase recycling rates and reduce contamination.	Amend – As R9

## 4: Reimagine and redesign – rethinking products and systems to avoid waste altogether; making Reading an engine of the circular economy

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)	Carry forward to 2025-30?
R11: Plastics: Plastic-Free Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued implementation of single-use plastic-free pledge by RBC and sharing the learning</li> <li>Encouraging adoption of the Surfers Against Sewage Plastic-Free Community methodology and tools by communities, businesses and schools</li> <li>Replicate Plastic Free Caversham concept to achieve the critical mass of groups, schools and businesses required to secure Plastic Free accreditation for Reading</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Business, Community, Education</p>	<p>Reading BC to share own lessons in becoming plastic free</p> <p>Caversham to secure accreditation as a Plastic Free Community, with first schools and businesses accredited</p> <p>Plastic-Free Community accreditation gained by at least one other Reading community</p> <p>Set annual targets for the number/percentage of schools and businesses to be Plastic Free</p>	<p>Q3 2021</p> <p>Q3 2021</p> <p>Q4 2021</p> <p>Q3 2022</p>	<p>Reading BC (Council and schools lead); Reading UK CIC (business lead); Reading Business CAN</p>	AMBER	<p>Amber, but edging towards green. Plastic Free Caversham achieved SAS accreditation. But the steering group disbanded soon afterwards. Installation of public drinking fountain has been delayed but Thames Water is still committed to funding. Unfortunately no other neighbourhood has expressed interest in following PFC's lead.</p>	<p>Amend – Rethink the means of achieving the goal of Reading becoming a plastic free town. Engagement with national initiatives (Plastic Free Communities, Refill, etc.), local commitments (RBC's plastic free resolution) and active support for plastic free initiatives.</p>

#### 4: Reimagine and redesign – rethinking products and systems to avoid waste altogether; making Reading an engine of the circular economy

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)	Carry forward to 2025-30?
<b>R12: Food: Climate-friendly diet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish reliable and authoritative information on how to eat more sustainably</li> <li>• Focus on dietary choices, sustainable sourcing, child nutrition</li> <li>• Guidance for caterers as well as individuals</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Community, Business, Health, Nature, Education	Best practice identified and guidance prepared by:  Communications programme developed and campaign launched by:	Q1 2021  Q3 2021	University of Reading; Subject-matter specialists (e.g. breastfeeding, food growing networks)	AMBER	Amber, but edging towards green. Emergence of Reading Food Partnership with the vision of 'affordable, healthy and sustainable food for all' in Reading offers an exciting opportunity. Reading Food Partnership is one of a network of such partnerships around the country which provides scope to learn from others aswell.	Amend – Reading Food Partnership could be invited to take on the role of lead body for successor action. Alternatively could work with Reading Food Partnership to identify elements of their strategy that align with the RCCP Strategy and how they could mutually support one another

## 4: Reimagine and redesign – rethinking products and systems to avoid waste altogether; making Reading an engine of the circular economy

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)	Carry forward to 2025-30?
R13: Other: Zero waste and circular festivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Reading's festival organisers to develop resource-stewardship systems to reduce waste at festival venues (and campsites, where appropriate)</li> <li>Explore different approaches to engage and encourage organisers, vendors and festival goers in addressing waste</li> <li>Establish baseline and set meaningful targets for reducing waste and maximising recovery of resources</li> <li>Engage with Reading Festival to understand the challenge of campsite waste and explore opportunities to reduce unrecyclable tent waste</li> <li>Connect with and draw on the experiences of Green Deal Circular Festivals and other sustainable events bodies (A Greener Festival, Julie's Bicycle, Vision 2025)</li> </ul>	<p>Work with ReadingUK CIC local festival organisers group to understand the challenges and share best practice by:</p> <p>Collect baseline data by:</p> <p>Co-produce programme of knowledge sharing and local collaboration by:</p> <p>All of Reading's festivals to have a statement or page describing their approach to sustainability on their web site by:</p> <p>Zero tents to be left behind on site at Reading Festival by:</p>	<p>Q3 2020</p> <p>Q1 2021</p> <p>Q2 2021</p> <p>Q3 2021</p> <p>Q3 2025</p>	<p>Reading Circular Economy Club (lead); Reading UK CIC; University of Reading (research); Waste/recycling contractors; Festival organisers</p>	GREEN	<p>Momentum in Reading's festival sector has continued to build over the last year. A major boost this year was the invitation for Reading Borough Council to work with Vision 2025, Julie's Bicycle and a group of other local authorities around the country to pilot the Green Events Code of Practice, GECoP. This has given Reading and its festival access to tools and expertise. Reading Festival is participating in the GECoP pilot. But tents remain a challenge.</p>	<p>Amend - Could invite Reading Independent Festival Forum, RIFF, to take on the role of lead body for the successor action. Alternatively could work with RIFF to identify elements of their strategy that align with the RCCP Strategy and how they could mutually support one another.</p>

#### 4: Reimagine and redesign – rethinking products and systems to avoid waste altogether; making Reading an engine of the circular economy

Action (Written in 2020)	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target completion date	Delivery partners	RAG 2024	Commentary (100 word)	Carry forward to 2025-30?
R14: Circular economy: Establish Reading Circular Economy Club to grow the Circular Economy in Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Reading Circular Economy Club – part of international network of Circular Economy Clubs</li> <li>Peer to peer information exchange and networking for businesses/organisations</li> <li>Develop resource exchange to create closed resource loops, reducing use of virgin resources and finding new uses for waste products</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Business</p>	<p>Reading Circular Economy Club set up – DONE</p> <p>Regular scheduled meetings and events established and publicised</p> <p>Resources exchange set up and operational</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Q4 2020</p> <p>Q2 2021</p>	<p>Reading Circular Economy Club (lead); Reading CAN/Reading Business CAN; Re3</p>	AMBER	<p>Amber, but edging towards green. Circular Economy Club was established and was active (online) throughout the pandemic but has since gone dormant. That said, there is circular activity in the town. The challenge is, perhaps, to develop a narrative that helps make it visible. A number of local projects are working on a shared narrative that might form a basis for collaboration.</p>	<p>Amend – May be better to identify desired outcomes. Could then identify some actions to generate momentum as well as invite others to align their own efforts and strategies (whether or not named in the action plan). Opportunity to work with/support the emerging networks of local projects. Say something encouraging about circularity in construction?</p>



# TRANSPORT ACTION PLAN

**2020 - 2025**

Our aim is for a low carbon future for transport in which emissions are cut by reducing the need to travel by more polluting modes of transport, shifting more journeys to sustainable modes of transport and supporting the transition from petrol/diesel to electric vehicles. In the process, we will improve health and wellbeing, while making transport infrastructure more resilient to climate impacts.

# THEME OVERVIEW: Transport

Theme Lead: Chris Maddocks

## 1. PROGRESS WITH ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

*Please enter here a brief overview of progress with delivery of the action plan, highlighting in particular (i) any significant examples of success and (ii) any key challenges to implementation which have been encountered.*

Significant progress has been achieved with delivery of the Transport Theme over the past few years, including the Council adopting its new Local Transport Plan, the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, in October 2024. The vision of this Strategy is fully aligned with the Climate Emergency Strategy; with the policies, schemes and initiatives for travel heavily focused on promoting sustainable, active and public transport over the next 15+ years.

Reading has the third highest number of bus passenger journeys per head of population in England (outside of London) and achieved an 11% increase in bus passenger journeys to 19.5m from 22/23 to 23/24 (the latest period for which data is available). The Council has secured external grant funding of over £30m over the past few years to invest in improving bus services, which has enabled the Reading All-Bus ticket discount scheme which saved passengers more than £5million in fares, and helped to fund 32 new electric buses which Reading Buses have recently purchased, with the first buses due to be launched later this year.

Substantial progress has been made to improve travel options for other sustainable modes, including the opening of Reading Green Park Station, the upgrade of Reading West Station and the delivery of the active travel scheme, including segregated cycle facilities, on Shinfield Road leading to the University campus.

In addition, the Council has adopted its new Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy and has secured external grant funding for the rollout of around 1,500 electric vehicle charging points across the borough, predominately in residential streets that do not have off-street parking to help with the uptake of electric vehicles for residents.

## 2. EXTERNAL POLICY CHANGES RELEVANT TO THE THEME

*Please enter here a brief overview of any changes in the external environment which are relevant to the Action Plan which have come about since the Action Plan was written – e.g. changes in national or local policy, new legislation or funding streams – and explain how they may impact on implementation of the Action Plan, or require new action to be initiated.*

Grant funding from Central Government for sustainable transport improvements is anticipated to continue, however this is likely to be at a lower level for Reading in future years as Government moves away from competitive bidding processes to allocating funding on a formulaic basis.

## 2. OTHER EXTERNAL CHANGES RELEVANT TO THE THEME

The high levels of inflation experienced in recent years has impacted on the delivery of a number of transport schemes; and has resulted in increased costs for local bus companies leading to the need to increase fares and in some cases reduce service levels.

### **3. KEY ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN RUN-UP TO REVIEW OF 2025 -2030 STRATEGY**

Policy changes from Central Government regarding Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation are likely impact delivery partners for the Transport Theme (and others) in the medium term.

# Transport Theme Action Plan – RAG rating 2024/2025

NB Some of the actions included in the action plans below, and the scale and pace at which they can be progressed, will be subject to the prevailing national policy context and/or the provision of additional powers and resources by central government, as made clear in Reading's climate emergency declaration.

## Sub-category: Reducing need and demand for travel, promoting walking and cycling

Action name	Description	Target & measure/ milestone (NB numerical targets subject to confirmation in final Local Transport Plan still in development at time of publication)	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
T1: Reduce the need to travel through well planned development	Ensure that services, leisure facilities and employment opportunities are located close to where people live and/or in locations easy to access by sustainable transport services via planning policy and decisions <u>Links:</u> Business, Community, Health, Energy and LCD	Reduction in transport-related emissions across Reading Implementation of Reading Local Plan policies	2025 (this is an on-going action)	Reading BC Developers	AMBER	Proposals are contained in the Council's new Local Plan Update.
T2: Develop demand management measures to reduce traffic and encourage shift from high carbon transport	Consider introduction of individual or combined policies via the forthcoming Local Transport Plan such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workplace Parking Levy</li><li>• Clean Air Zone</li><li>• Alternative demand management measures</li></ul>	Initiate consultation Develop business case for preferred option(s) Implement preferred measure(s)	TBC	Reading BC Local Businesses Neighbouring Authorities Department for Transport Reading BID	AMBER	Demand management measures are contained in the Council's new Transport Strategy.  Consultation taking place on Emission Based Charging.

	<u>Links:</u> Business, Community, Health					
T3: Enhance provision for Pedestrians & cyclists to encourage low carbon travel choices	Provide space for walking and cycling improvements, including segregation and road reallocation (where feasible), surface improvements, crossing priority, safety improvements and increased cycle parking hubs/facilities as set out in Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan  <u>Links:</u> Health	Increase proportion of adults who walk at least 3 times per week from 30.8% (2019) to 40% by 2025 (en route to a 60% target by 2036)  Increase proportion of adults who cycle at least 3 times per week from 5.1% (2019) to 9% by 2025 (en route to a 15% target by 2036)	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan targets through to 2040	Reading BC Local User Groups Thames Valley Police	GREEN	A range of pedestrian and cycle enhancements have been implemented including new crossing facilities, secure cycle parking and segregated cycle lanes on Shinfield Road.
T4: Enhance Town Centre and Local Centre Public Space to improve air quality and reduce carbon use	Improve the pedestrian experience in Central Reading and local centres by providing better access to key destinations for walking, cycling and bus passengers  Green up the local environment to encourage use and enjoyment of local facilities  <u>Links:</u> Business, Community, Health	Increase active travel mode share of trips to/from Reading town centre from 32% (2017-2019 avg) to 34% by 2025 (en route to a 38% target by 2036)  Increase public transport trips to/from Reading town centre from 44.5% mode share (2017-2019 avg) to 45.5% mode share per day by 2025 (en route to a 48% target by 2036)  Decrease car trips mode share to/from Reading town centre from 23.5% (2017-2019 avg) to 20.3% mode share by 2025 per day (en route to a 14% target by 2036)	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan targets through to 2040	Reading BC Transport Operators Reading BID Local User Groups Developers Businesses Residents	AMBER	The Council has recently consulted on a Reading Town Centre Urban Relam Strategy
T5: Promote Sustainable Travel to School	Establish dedicated and safe walking and cycling routes for each school. Reduce the	Increased shift from private car use to active travel	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan	Reading BC School Communities	AMBER	New School Street schemes have been established in Reading.

and other education sites to encourage low carbon travel choices	danger and pollution from 'the school run' Roll-out Play Streets/School Streets programme - supporting local communities and schools who want to organise street closures	Improved health and fitness of schoolchildren Improved air quality Trial school street closures at selected schools before a wider roll-out across the borough	targets through to 2040	Bikeability Provider TV Police Local User Groups Residents Uni of Reading	AMBER	
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#### Sub-category: Encouraging a switch to public transport

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones (NB numerical targets subject to confirmation in final Local Transport Plan still in development at time of publication)	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)
T6: Improve major and radial routes to promote switch to sustainable modes of travel	Improve the transport options on main corridors and radial routes including A4, A33, A327, A329, A4074, A4155 and the Inner Distribution Road. Make space to encourage changes in travel choice to low/zero carbon modes. <u>Links:</u> Business, Community, Education	As per T3 and T4	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan targets through to 2040	Reading BC Neighbouring LAs TVB LEP Transport Operators Local User Groups Residents Businesses	AMBER	Proposals are contained in the Council's new Transport Strategy
T7: Improve Quality Bus Corridors	Improve branded local routes with faster, more reliable and more frequent services, changing people's travel habits away from dependency on cars	Increase bus journeys per year by 9% from 22.5M (2019) to 24.6M (en route to a target increase of 25% by 2036)	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan targets through to 2040	Reading BC Transport Operators Businesses Residents Schools	GREEN	Significant investment in enhanced bus services, ticket discounts and bus priority measures through the Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) programme.

	especially for commuter and school journeys <u>Links:</u> Business, Community, Education			Health Services Department for Transport/UK Gov	GREEN	
T8: Establish Fast-Track Public Transport Corridors	Improve speed and reliability of key public transport routes through establishment of key Fast-Track Public Transport (FTPT) corridors on strategic routes (including south, west, east and north).	As per T7	2025	Reading BC Wokingham BC West Berkshire BC Oxfordshire CC Transport Operators	AMBER	Proposals are contained in the Council's new Transport Strategy
T9: Extend Park and Ride provision to encourage car users to change onto low carbon alternatives to access Reading	Provision of new and expanded Park & Rides to intercept traffic on main corridors into Reading. <u>Links:</u> Business	Increased use of P&R trips to/from Reading by 25% compared to 2019 levels  New P&R at Thames Valley Park opened  Winnersh Triangle P&R expanded  New P&R sites identified	2025  2020  2021  2025	Reading BC Transport Operators Royal Berks Hospital Businesses Wokingham BC Thames Valley Park W Berks BC Oxfordshire CC TVB LEP Businesses	AMBER	Proposals are contained in the Council's new Transport Strategy.  Enhanced park & ride services recently reinstated from Winnersh Triangle.
T10: Deliver Railway Station upgrades to encourage car users to use low carbon alternatives to and from Reading	Improved access to railway stations at Reading, Reading West and Tilehurst by walking, cycling and public transport. Improved customer experience	Increase public transport trips to/from Reading town centre from 44.5% mode share (2017-2019 avg) to 45.5% mode share per day	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan targets through to 2040	Reading BC Network Rail Great Western Railway TVB LEP	GREEN	Significant enhancements including Green Park Station, Reading West Station Upgrade and accessibility enhancements at Tilehurst Station.

	(including fully accessible platforms), interchange and public space enhancements, including new and improved cycle parking hubs and facilities	by 2025 (en route to a 48% target by 2036)				
T11: Open Reading Green Park Railway Station	Provide new station for access to Green Park and South Reading and interchange with integrated bus services <u>Links:</u> Business	New station completed and served by GWR services. Interchange open with provision of integrated bus services.	2021	Reading BC Network Rail Great Western Railway Transport Operators TVB LEP DfT Businesses	GREEN	Complete
T12: Implement traffic management schemes to support low carbon travel choices	Provide effective management of the existing network to meet changing mobility demands of Reading  Provide safe roads and pavements including crossings and reduce crossing conflicts and interruptions to the flow of walking and cycling	As per T4	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan targets through to 2036	Reading BC Transport Operators Emergency Services	AMBER	On-going delivery of the Council's waiting review programme

#### Sub-category: Reducing emissions from the vehicle fleet and using new technology

Action name	Description	Target & measure/ milestone (NB numerical targets subject to confirmation in final Local Transport Plan still in	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)

		development at time of publication)				
T13: Develop a zero emission vehicle strategy for the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study suitable locations</li> <li>• Identify potential network constraints</li> <li>• Assess potential demand</li> </ul>	Strategy development to follow Local Transport Plan	2020/21	Reading BC	GREEN	Complete
T14: Decarbonise the Council Vehicle Fleet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase electric charging points at Council buildings</li> <li>• Consider phased replacement of Council vehicles with electric powered units wherever possible</li> <li>• Charging points to be installed at depot that can allow vehicles to power buildings</li> <li>• Carbon Plan will set targets for reduction in diesel/petrol</li> </ul>	RBC Carbon Plan  Feasibility report,  Business case,  Budget approval * (subject to above)	Q4 2020  2022-2024	Reading BC	AMBER	Delivery on-going.
T15: Increase Public Electric Vehicle Charging Points	Install electric charging points in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council car parks</li> <li>• Leisure centres</li> <li>• Lamp columns (trials)</li> <li>• Business premises</li> <li>• Taxi ranks</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Business, Transport	First car park project  All suitable car parks  First leisure centre  All leisure centres	2020/21  2023  2020/21  2022	Reading BC,  Reading UK,  Taxi Assoc,  Leisure provider	GREEN	Funding secured for new chargepoints and procurement for a supplier underway.
T16: Increase zero emissions vehicles uptake	Work with vehicle sales outlets in Reading to increase zero emission vehicle uptake <u>Links:</u> Business	Zero emission vehicle uptake compared to national benchmarks	Ongoing	Reading UK RCAN	AMBER	On-going
T17: Establish and promote eBikes	Identify charging locations for electrically assisted pedal cycles and investigate	Develop strategy for location	TBC	Reading BC Site owners	AMBER	Opportunities are being explored

	potential for e-bike hire scheme.					
T18: Planning policy for EV charging in new properties <u>Links:</u> Business	Monitor number of additional charging units installed in new properties	Monitor additional units in line with planning policy	Ongoing	Reading BC Developers	GREEN	Including in new Local Plan
T19: Reduce emissions from the Taxi Fleet	Require all taxis and private hire vehicles to be electric or hybrid by 2030	Improved Air quality, reduced carbon emissions	Beyond 2025	Reading BC Taxi and Private Hire Associations	AMBER	On-going Council emission policies
T19A Reduce emissions and improve efficiency of freight movements	Work with the freight operators and businesses to encourage use of cleaner vehicle technology, consolidate deliveries, encourage 'out of hours' deliveries during quieter times and trial e-cargo bikes and freight consolidation parks where feasible.	Improved Air quality, reduced carbon emissions and reduced congestion	Beyond 2025	Reading BC Road Haulage Association Logistics UK Freight operators and local businesses	AMBER	On-going Council network management policies
T20: Improve Electric Vehicle Charging infrastructure	Develop and implement policy for appropriate provision of electric vehicle charging points across the borough	Provision of EV charging installed as per the policy to accommodate anticipated increases in demand	2022	Reading BC Transport Operators Third Party Landowners	GREEN	See similar item above
T21: Deploy Intelligent Transport Systems to encourage change to low carbon transport	Use technology and real-time data to improve safety, efficiency environmental performance and journey experience of users of the transport system, particularly at signal-controlled junctions	As per T4	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan targets through to 2036	Reading BC Transport Operators	AMBER	On-going
T22: Embrace Smart Solutions to reduce use of carbon in transport	Smarter Working – maximise benefits of flexible working patterns including working from home (to cut transport	Decrease car trips mode share to/from Reading town centre from 23.5% (2017-2019 avg) to 20.3%	2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan	Reading BC Employers Transport Operators	AMBER	On-going

	<p>demand) and more flexible working hours to encourage commuter travel outside of the peak periods.</p> <p>Smart City Initiatives - Use different types of electronic Internet of Things (IoT) sensors to collect data and then use insights gained to manage assets, resources and services efficiently.</p> <p>Implement Micromobility and Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) schemes as they evolve to facilitate shift from personally-owned modes of transportation towards mobility provided as a service, combining <u>public</u> and <u>private transportation</u> services through a unified gateway that manages the trip, which users can pay for with a single account</p> <p><u>Links:</u> Business</p>	<p>mode share by 2025 per day (en route to a 14% target by 2036</p> <p>Reduced need for car ownership across the borough</p>	<p>targets through to 2036</p>	<p>Emergency Services Highways England Motoring Organisations</p> <p>Reading BC DfT Car Clubs</p>		
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#### Sub-category: Adaptation, Communication & Engagement

Action name	Description	Targets & measures/ milestones (NB numerical targets subject to confirmation in final Local Transport Plan still in development at time of publication)	Target completion date	Delivery partners	Status	Commentary (100 word max)

<p>T23a (General): Develop education, initiatives, promotion and advice to encourage low carbon travel choices</p>	<p>Undertake marketing activities promoting sustainable transport, including national events such as Bike Week, Clean Air Day, In Town Without My Car Day, and organising local events and activities</p> <p>Enable access to any adults who want to undertake Bikeability training.</p> <p>Provide courses through schools as well as to individuals and to groups.</p> <p>Provide up-to-date travel information to enable people to make informed travel choices including open data apps, real time passenger information and roadside Messaging Signs</p> <p>Develop programme of training, education and initiatives to promote sustainable transport usage</p> <p><u>Links:</u> Education, Health</p>	<p>As per T4</p>	<p>2025 as part of the Local Transport Plan targets through to 2036</p>	<p>Reading BC Stakeholders</p> <p>Reading BC School Communities Bikeability Provider Thames Valley Police Local User Groups Residents</p>	<p>GREEN</p>	<p>Annual programme of initiatives promoting the use of sustainable transport</p>
<p>T23b (Schools): Develop education, initiatives, promotion and advice to</p>	<p>Roll-out Mode-shift STARS accreditation scheme to all schools in Reading to recognise efforts encouraging sustainable travel</p>	<p>Achieve 50% of all schools accredited to at least Bronze by 2025.</p> <p>Improvements to air quality and road safety as well as</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>Reading BC</p>	<p>AMBER</p>	<p>Modeshift STARS materials available for all schools in Reading to use.</p>

encourage low carbon travel choices in school	<p>Implement School Streets, working with the schools to provide temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times resulting in a safer, healthier and a more pleasant environment.</p> <p>Enable access to anybody who want to undertake Bikeability training. Provide courses through schools as well as to individuals and to groups.</p> <p><u>Links:</u> Education, Health</p>	encouraging healthier lifestyles.		School Communities	AMBER	
T24: Research and plan for Carbon Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation	<p>Participate in research programmes investigating the carbon footprint related to transport and the air quality impact of transport</p> <p>Design climate adaptation into the planning and operation of transport network to improve resilience to climate change impacts</p> <p><u>Links:</u> Adaptation</p>	<p>Research completed and recommendations made</p> <p>Climate Change Adaptation key consideration in planning of all schemes</p>	<p>2022</p> <p>2025 and beyond</p>	<p>Reading BC Transport operators University of Reading DfT Other Stakeholders</p>	AMBER	On-going



# **WATER ACTION PLAN**

## **2020 - 2025**

Our aim for 2025 is that Reading will be the most 'water-aware' and 'water-efficient' town in the UK, going beyond national targets. We will achieve this by developing and implementing a dedicated communications and education strategy and delivering a range of water saving improvements in Reading's homes and businesses. Climate change will also increase the risk of flooding: significantly from the River Thames and from urban storm water. We will help residents and businesses understand these risks and get ready for them.

# THEME OVERVIEW: Water

Theme Lead: Heather Marshall

## 1. PROGRESS WITH ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Our aim remains to make Reading the most water-aware and water-efficient town in the UK. In 2024–2025, we made strong progress through local engagement, infrastructure improvements, and policy advocacy. Communication and education remain central, alongside collaboration with the Environment Agency, Thames Water, and local communities to deliver water-saving solutions for homes and businesses.

Climate change impacts were again felt locally. In January 2025, heavy rainfall and storm events, including the tail end of Storm Éowyn, caused disruption. While the River Thames didn't reach 2024's record levels, surface water flooding and high groundwater led to localised impacts in low-lying areas.

In response, Reading Borough Council, supported by Stantec, advanced its flood resilience work through the Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), published in May 2025. This identified priority sites and recommended bunds, ditch clearance, and infrastructure upgrades.

To raise water awareness, we delivered several initiatives:

- Events at Reading Climate Festival 2025, including a community walk, Reading Hydro tour, flood resilience consultation, and wetland nature walks.
- Online workshops and webinars on water-saving and flood preparedness.
- Collaboration with Thames Water and RBC on pilot schemes and retrofit opportunities.
- Signposting resources to help households and businesses improve water efficiency and resilience.

We continue to advocate for green infrastructure to manage surface water. Engagement with key partners has progressed around the future implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act, expected to mandate SuDS in new developments. The Flooding Review also highlighted the need to keep watercourses clear, with the Climate Change Partnership supporting community engagement and messaging around sewer misuse and litter.

Kennet Meadows remains a priority for biodiversity and flood protection. Although progress has been slowed by land ownership and technical studies, proposals such as rewetting and nature-based solutions like beaver reintroduction are being explored to improve habitat and water flow.

Reading continues to lead on green roof adoption, holding 7th place in the UK Green Roof League Table (excluding Greater London). Retrofitting of bio-solar and low-maintenance systems has expanded, and interest in biodiverse green roofs is growing. A standout initiative includes green living roofs on 15 bus shelters, using sedum plants to absorb pollution, capture rainfall, and support pollinators.

## 2. EXTERNAL POLICY CHANGES RELEVANT TO THE THEME

National and local policy changes are positively influencing our water stewardship efforts:

- National targets aim for a 20% reduction in household water use and 9% in non-household use by 2037–38.
- Ofwat's £100M Water Efficiency Fund supports behaviour change and innovation in water-saving technologies.
- Storm overflow regulations have tightened, with Thames Water required to reduce average spills and meet stricter nutrient reduction targets to protect river ecosystems.

### **3. OTHER EXTERNAL CHANGES RELEVANT TO THE THEME**

*Horizon scanning for key issues we need to think about as we plan the next strategy, omissions which will need to be addressed, or significant new actions which may be required.*

As we plan the next strategy, we must address emerging challenges and gaps in water and flood management. Key issues include:

1. Flood Risk and Climate Resilience  
More frequent flooding from rivers and surface water demands stronger planning, guided by updated flood risk assessments and mapping tools.
2. Water Resource Pressure  
Reading faces high water stress, with growing demand and climate impacts requiring action on leakage, recycling, and efficiency.
3. Green Infrastructure Solutions  
Nature-based approaches like SuDS, green roofs, and wetlands are vital to manage stormwater and support biodiversity alongside engineered defences.
4. Community Engagement  
Effective water efficiency relies on inclusive education, retrofit support, and culturally sensitive messaging to reach all communities.

# Water Theme Action Plan

**NB:** Some of the actions included in the action plans below, and the scale and pace at which they can be progressed, will be subject to the prevailing national policy context and/or the provision of additional powers and resources by central government, as made clear in Reading's climate emergency declaration.

This theme's RAG rating was last updated in 2024.

Action name Written in 2020	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
W1: Educate the public about Reading's water situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share and explain our 2050 target and how this compares to current consumption, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic water consumption by activity</li> <li>Info on non-domestic water consumption</li> <li>Where our water comes from</li> </ul> </li> <li>Develop Comms Strategy for engaging public, including schools</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Education, Community, Business, Communication and Engagement.</p>	<p>Available material published on RCAN website</p> <p>New material prepared and published</p>	<p>2020</p> <p>2021</p>	Thames Water	GREEN	<p>Local authority communications to Reading residents in relation to floods in early 2024 were timely and informative.</p> <p>Further discussions were held and a flood response investigation undertaken to identify any gaps and opportunities for improvement. This flood review led to recommendations which can be seen in Section 5 of the Stantec Flood Report: <a href="#">Appendix 2 - Reading flood investigation Jan 2024 flood event.pdf</a></p>
W2: Educate households about their water consumption and the need to save water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share information on the risks of drought and importance of water conservation.</li> <li>Provide tips and information on how to save water in the home and garden</li> <li>Develop and implement Comms Strategy for engaging households</li> </ul>	<p>Information resource compiled and published</p> <p>Comms programme underway</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>2025</p>	Thames Water	GREEN	<p>Educational materials shared and helpful tools available to the public including: <a href="#">Water saving calculator</a>   <a href="#">Water saving</a>   <a href="#">Help</a>   <a href="#">Thames Water</a></p>

Action name Written in 2020	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
	<u>Links:</u> Energy & LCD, Nature, Communication and Engagement					
W3: Educate businesses about water use, efficiency benefits, and dry weather preparedness / response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share the Thames Water Drought Plan</li> <li>Signpost relevant information and case studies from reputable sources</li> <li>Create industry-specific advice and case studies</li> <li>Run a drought exercise with Local Resilience Forum (LRF), partners and businesses</li> <li>Communicate the Environment Agency 'incident management' approach to drought</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Business, Energy and LCD, Communication and Engagement	Information resource compiled and published  Industry-specific guidance available  Drought exercise and incident management response	2020  2021  2022	Thames Water (lead) Environment Agency RCAN/RBCAN	GREEN	<a href="#">Water efficiency for businesses   Wholesale   Thames Water</a> New targets for business water efficiency set by Defra will require greater effort on behalf of the commercial sector to reduce their water usage and improve their efficiency. MOSL (the market operator) have published helpful guidance ( <a href="#">Microsoft Word - RWG WE Road map revision - Nov 2023 - FINAL formatted (mosl.co.uk)</a> ) which includes the action to increase awareness of the water scarcity issue and of Defra's target for demand reduction in the business sector
W4: Educate the public about water quality and sewer abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish sewer abuse and water quality stats, messages and content to RCAN website</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Business, Community, Communication and Engagement	Content published	2021	Thames Water	GREEN	While awareness campaigns continue to be rolled out, sewer misuse remains a concern for the local authority and water company. Households and businesses continue to put things down the drain that lead to blockages and pollutions such as wet wipes and fats. Additionally, with the number of household improvement works, misconnection can occur and result in either surface water being discharged into the foul network and taking up critical capacity or foul water being connected to a surface water only network and being discharged without treatment directly to our local watercourses.

Action name Written in 2020	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
W5: Water efficiency measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote installation of water saving and efficiency devices during refurbishment</li> <li>Promote Thames Water's 'Smarter Business Visit' scheme to all schools in Reading</li> <li>Increase awareness of leaky loos and benefits of fixing plumbing losses</li> <li>Engage with building management companies to promote retrofitting/leak fix</li> <li>Expand the provision of water info packs from new homes to all households</li> <li>Promote Thames Water's 'Smarter Home' visit scheme to homes with smart meters</li> <li>Support the roll-out of smart meters</li> <li>Conduct periodic research on understanding and engagement with water saving.</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Community, Business, Communication and Engagement</p>	Refurbishment programme  Schools visits, building management company engagement and leaky loos programme  Water info packs, smart meters and research project	2020  2021  2025	RCAN Reading Borough Council Thames Water University of Reading (research)	GREEN	This remains on-track, supported by local planning policy.
W6: "Water Neutrality" as a planning requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate whether the RBC Sustainable Planning Document can be modified to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the requirement for all new major</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Share the contents of the Sustainable Planning Document on RCAN website	2020  2022	Reading BC Thames Water	GREEN	Work continues to progress on enabling water neutrality, with RBC taking the lead through the planning function and sustainability policies included in the local plan.

Action name Written in 2020	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
	<p>developments to contribute to funding water saving measures equivalent to the development's water consumption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopting the 'fittings approach' within Building Regulations rather than a pcc calculation approach</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Energy and LCD</p>	<p>Feedback on required amendments</p> <p>Amendments implemented</p>	2025			
W7: Leadership and Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lobby MPs and Defra to introduce a mandatory water label to help consumers make water-efficient choices</li> <li>Lobby MPs and Defra to strengthen building regulations and planning process, to drive water efficiency within all new developments and procurement schemes.</li> </ul>	<p>Water labelling</p> <p>Building regs and planning</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>2025</p>	<p>RCAN</p>	GREEN	Working in partnership with Thames Water, MOSL (the market operator) and other stakeholders to support policy and regulation that promote water efficiency and water security.
W8: Research to drive future improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research the costs, benefits and suitability, of rainfall harvesting and grey water recycling schemes.</li> <li>Use UKCP18 climate modelling and local river flow models, to develop projections for future drought / water resource availability.</li> </ul>	Develop research proposals	2020-25	<p>RCAN</p> <p>University of Reading (research)</p>	AMBER	Limited modelling or future scenarios undertaken locally, however extensive information available more widely, including work commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) which can be used to inform and improve the situation in Reading.

Action name Written in 2020	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With RBC and LEP update our estimates of Reading population growth to 2050</li> <li>Develop a new evidence-based 2050 water target</li> <li>Review the first Adaptation Plan and identify and deliver initial win-win opportunities</li> <li>Identify thresholds, risks, solutions and case studies for the second Adaptation Plan</li> <li>Work with Thames Water to understand the changes to household and business water use due to COVID-19 impacts</li> </ul> <p><u><a href="#">Links: Adaptation</a></u></p>					

Action name <b>Written in 2020</b>	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
W9: Raise awareness of fluvial (river) flood risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness of flood risk from the River Thames and the proposed Reading and Caversham Scheme by carrying out various engagement activities</li> <li>Update the flood maps on the Gov.UK website to show the areas at risk of flooding based on the latest flood modelling</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> <a href="#">Education</a>, <a href="#">Business</a>, <a href="#">Transport</a>, <a href="#">Community</a>, <a href="#">Adaptation</a></p>	Engagement activities  Flood maps updated	Q2-3 2020  2022	Environment Agency  Partners: Reading BC, local councillors, local businesses and community groups	GREEN	<p>Reading experienced significant flooding in early 2024. A report was commissioned, detailing the actions taken by the Council and other responsible bodies during flooding in Reading January 2024, and recommended actions to tackle future flood threats (<a href="#">Section19-Flood-Report-RBC-final.pdf</a> (<a href="#">reading.gov.uk</a>) and <a href="#">Appendix 2 - Reading flood investigation Jan 2024 flood event.pdf</a>).</p>

<p>W10: Raise awareness of the Flood Warning and flood alert service</p> <p><u><a href="#">Links:</a></u> Education, Business, Community, Adaptation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of at-risk homes and businesses signed-up to receive Flood Alerts</li> <li>• Signpost advice on the Flood Warning Service and what to do before, during and after a flood</li> <li>• Develop “what if” scenarios to help people and businesses understand the importance of self-preparation, and education about flood risk</li> </ul>	<p>90% sign-up to FW service</p> <p>100% sign-up to FW service</p> <p>“What if” scenarios developed and posted on ReadingCAN</p>	<p>Q4 2021</p> <p>Q4 2025</p> <p>Q4 2025</p>	<p>Environment Agency</p> <p>Partners: Reading BC and community groups</p>	<p><b>AMBER</b></p>	<p>Flood alert service operational. Residents in areas of risk receiving alerts and access to information available.</p> <p>Additional actions recommended to address risk of flooding including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The open section of Christchurch Ditch between George Street and the public footpath adjacent to residential properties at Heron Island was cleared of accumulated debris within the channel and on the RBC-owned bank. A tree creating a partial blockage in the channel was also removed.</li> <li>- A further tree has been felled which was growing adjacent to and through the wingwall of the culvert located at the eastern end of Hills Meadow.</li> <li>- The local surface water drainage network in Queens Road has been checked and cleared by RBC Highways Team.</li> <li>- A preliminary meeting was held with the Heron Island Residents Association (HIRA) to discuss potential culvert clearance works.</li> <li>- The ditch immediately south of Circuit Lane has been cleared of debris</li> <li>- Bank and footpath repairs have been undertaken to the Holy Brook to the east of Briscoe's Bridge</li> <li>- Installation of a trash screen to the culvert at the eastern end of Hills Meadow, to capture debris before it enters the closed section of the culvert and improve the ease of future clearance work</li> <li>- Establishment of a checking/maintenance schedule for the ditch and trash screen</li> <li>- Installation of a level gauge board at the eastern end of Christchurch Ditch to provide a</li> </ul>
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Action name Written in 2020	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
W11: Reducing fluvial flood risk from River Thames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work in partnership with Risk Management Authorities and local stakeholders to identify ways to reduce fluvial flood risk</li> <li>Gain support from all Reading communities on action to reduce flood risk from the River Thames</li> <li>Seek funding through partnership funding and local grants.</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Education, Business, Community, Adaptation</p>	<p>Reading community makes decision about favoured River Thames flood reduction option</p> <p>Funds raised to deliver favoured option</p>	<p>Q2-3 2021</p> <p>2025</p>	<p>Environment Agency</p> <p>Partners: Reading BC, local councillors, Thames Water, Local Resilience Forum, community groups and local businesses</p>	RED	<p>visual indicator of water levels and potential flood risk to residents</p> <p>Work required to meet the 100% target for those registered for the flood warning service.</p> <p>'What if' scenarios not yet published on RCAN website, however excellent flood preparation and response resources available on Reading Council website, updated 16 July 2024.</p> <p>Flood related community engagement and action plans with investment not yet delivered. Opportunity to establish a flood resilience bond or community investment plan potentially, to support keeping the gutters clear, green space available, and providing flood awareness and education.</p>
W12: Implement sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the importance of SuDS and their practical application</li> <li>Find out what post scheme monitoring is happening and recommend how this can be improved</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Nature, Adaptation, Transport</p>	<p>Share planning information</p> <p>Monitoring, reporting and research</p>	<p>2020</p> <p>2025</p>	Reading BC	AMBER	<p>We remain committed to prioritising sustainable urban drainage initiatives. Taking inspiration from London neighbours (<a href="#">Plans unveiled for UK's largest sustainable urban drainage network (susdrain.org)</a>) we will continue to work with the Local Council and Thames Water to identify and realise opportunities for sustainable drainage. This will also be reflected in the updated local Plan.</p>

Action name Written in 2020	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
W13: Investigate the use of green infrastructure to reduce slow down storm water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate measures to slow the flow of storm water, eg by planting and creating scrapes and swales.</li> <li>Follow up on research by Reading University and the Landwise project</li> <li>Transfer learning to RBC Sustainable Design and Construction (supplementary planning document).</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Nature, Transport, Adaptation, Business	Scope project brief and costs Deliver results	2020 2023	Water theme group  Partners: Environment Agency and University of Reading	RED	Additional work required to understand opportunities for green infrastructure to support stormwater management in Reading.
W14: Improve the resilience of the Kennet Meadows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a plan for the Kennet Meadows to make it a resilient wetland</li> <li>Make sure the plans preserve the need for the meadows to act as flood plain</li> <li>Consider the drought risk and make sure the needs of the meadows are considered in EA / TW drought plans. There will be a limit to their protection...is it possible to develop a recovery plan early to try and mitigate?</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Nature, Adaptation, Energy	Workshop to bring partners together and agree scope  Develop and share plan	2021 2023	EA  Partners: CEH (Wallingford), UoR Water theme group member	AMBER	Initial conversations have not resulted in action. Need to reassess opportunity and reengage relevant stakeholders.
W15: Improve our flood risk adaptation plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve our understanding of climate change adaptation thresholds</li> </ul>	Post information on revised future flood modelling, as it is released	Ongoing	Partners: EA, Reading BC and local	AMBER	Work progressing on improving and updating flood risk guidance and adaptation planning.

Action name Written in 2020	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
W16: Investigate opportunities for Green roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the latest UK climate projections to find out what extreme rainfall events we need to prepare for.</li> <li>Check the developing EA guidance for fluvial flooding and develop our own understanding of the changing flood risk for the River Thames and River Kennet.</li> <li>Develop our flood adaptation plans through to 2050 and beyond</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Education, Adaptation	<p>Deliver report on change in storm rainfall, and Thames + Kennet flood peaks</p>	Q4 2024	interest groups	AMBER	Report commissioned by RBC following January 2024 flooding will support continued progress against this action.
W17: Develop links to the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop recommendations for green roofs, green walls and landscaping for new build</li> <li>Explore opportunities for retrofitting homes and offices</li> <li>Develop advice for home owners on the benefits of breaking up hard surfaces in driveways and gardens</li> </ul> <u>Links:</u> Transport, Nature, Community, Business	<p>Create research proposals</p> <p>Deliver results</p>	2021 2025	UoR  Partners: Reading BC and EA	AMBER	<p>Green roofs on new builds and as part of a retrofit programme have the potential to delivery more benefit for local residents through enhanced biodiversity and slowing and storing water. There are also health and well being benefits associated with green infrastructure.</p> <p>Work in flight to work with partnership organisations to share guidance and best practice via the RCAN website.</p> <p>Information to help establish a level of ambition and overcome barriers included here: <a href="https://cdn.net/london-living-roofs-walls-report-2019.pdf">LONDON-LIVING-ROOFS-WALLS-REPORT-2019.pdf (cdn.net)</a></p>

Action name	Description	Targets, measures, milestones	Target complete date	Delivery partners	Status in 2024	Commentary (100 word max)
Written in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share the developing adaptation planning and vision for Reading with the LRF to inform long term strategic decisions.</li> <li>Share advice on being prepared for an incident including "Thames Valley: Are you ready?" booklet and advice from the Environment Agency</li> <li>Use resources from Business in the Community Business Resilience Group to help businesses improve resilience</li> </ul> <p><u>Links:</u> Community, Business, Adaptation</p>					<p>There is a need to strengthen the link between RCAN and the TV LRF, which provides helpful tools and guides to support communities, individuals, and businesses prepare for an event.</p> <p>2025 will focus on sharing the work the TV LRF deliver and including a link to their resources. This may be most relevant for communities at risk of flooding.</p>

# COMMUNICATIONS

*Cross-cutting service*

# OVERVIEW: Communications

## PROGRESS WITH ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The RCCP Communications Theme has not had a dedicated volunteer Theme Lead since 2022. Prior to this, communications actions were delivered by two very active volunteer Comms Theme Leads with support from a part-time RCCP co-ordinator.

### During this period, successes included:

- creation of a public-facing brand, ReadingCAN
- creation of a comprehensive ReadingCAN website with an info hub that services organisations (including businesses and schools) and individuals who want to reduce their carbon footprint
- a Reading Climate Pledge for individuals
- a Reading Climate Pledge for organisations
- annual Reading Climate Festivals
- communications infrastructure including: Zoom; Eventbrite; Facebook; X; Instagram; website hosting; a blog; a LinkedIn group for local businesses
- school visits, talks and stands at community events
- promotion of community organisations and initiatives focused on climate and nature
- other.

This comms infrastructure provided a strong foundation for RCAN's communications work, however the pace was not sustainable without similarly dedicated volunteers. We have not been successful (yet) in fundraising for a paid comms and engagement role.

### 2024/2025

In the absence of volunteer comms leads, the part-time RCCP Co-ordinator (working 1.5 days a week in 2024/2025) took on a selection of Comms & Engagement responsibilities during 2024/25 on top of co-ordination responsibilities, specifically:

1. Curation of the **Reading Climate Festival 2025** programme; promotion of the Festival through RCAN channels; plus design and delivery of a selection of Festival events
2. Targeted comms and engagement related to **RCCP's Year of Climate Engagement**, the process that informed the Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plans for 2025-2030

Successes in this reporting period included:

- **Reading Climate Festival 2025:** 30 online and in-person events provided opportunities for local climate and nature groups and individuals to showcase their campaigns, services, successes and key messages; the Festival also provided a key 'moment' to engage the Reading public in co-creating the new climate strategy.
- **Year of Climate Engagement 2024/25**

- Creation and convening of a 'core deliberative group' which met during three day-long workshops in 2024/25 to shape successive drafts of the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy & Action Plans 2025 - 2030
- Three public surveys, which responded to and shaped the above process
- Convening of a Youth Engagement Day
- Convening a Reading Climate Leaders' Summit
- Communications toolkits to enable local organisations to promote the above opportunities

RCCP and Dialogue Matters (our partner for the three core deliberative group workshops), won a **CIEEM Best Practice Award for Stakeholder Engagement**, for our Year of Climate Engagement activities.

#### CHALLENGES:

- Lack of resource was a key challenge during this time. The more targeted comms and engagement work in 2024/25 came at the expense of **basic services** that were envisioned for the comms role: e.g. gathering news from partners, telling inspiring stories and promoting events; raising awareness of the 2020-2025 Climate Emergency Action Plans; and management of day-to-day queries.
- It was also challenging to manage expectations from the public. Setting up a public-facing brand in 2021/2022 (ReadingCAN) has led people to assume that ReadingCAN/RCCP is a delivery body with central resource (staff and funds) to shape and deliver comms campaigns, rather than a partnership where actions are proposed and delivered through member organisations, e.g. University of Reading; Reading Borough Council; GREN, etc.

A paid, full-time Comms and Engagement Lead could add a lot of value to RCCP's work in Reading, working closely with both volunteers and with comms leads at anchor institutions, ideally within a 'Reading Climate Communications Alliance'. It's not likely that this strategic need and orchestrator role could be serviced by volunteers who come and go.

#### 2. EXTERNAL TRENDS & INSIGHTS RELEVANT TO THE THEME

- There is a major backlash globally and locally against greenwashing (whether intentional or because of lack of data and insights), and a number of creative agencies are collaborating to introduce a new role and new standards for creative work – e.g. Futerra, Climate Outreach and Creatives for Climate.
- There is also a backlash against overly simplified or non-targeted appeals to 'individual action' without the added context of the relative impacts of, for example corporate behaviour and responsibilities, local and national government behaviour, systemic barriers, relative incomes and top-of-mind concerns. Climate campaigns require thoughtful, targeted and accurate messaging that does not place unrealistic burden on individuals. Communications campaigns that promote solar PV, heat pumps, meat-free diets, insulation, EV, grow-your-own, 'sharing, repairing and re-use',

and various behaviour and mindset changes are not context-free and should therefore also aim to (1) enable or inspire these changes locally, including through partnerships with local businesses and the Council, (2) inspire change through storytelling and case studies using trusted spokespeople from target communities (3) provide accurate and up-to-date information, and trusted endorsements where possible. These campaigns require time and thought to develop, and a large outreach partnership to achieve impact.

- RCAN comms tends to reach a set of 'usual suspects'. We are struggling to build our reach without additional comms resource to develop targeted outreach and engagement campaigns or an editorial programme, e.g. to inspire others through sharing stories about local climate action.
- Even as sustainability rises to the top of more people's list of concerns, the cost of living can sometime frustrate efforts to grow, for example uptake of solar, EV, heat pumps and insulation, even if savings can be demonstrated over the long term. Many household climate actions do offer savings even in the short-term, e.g. various circular economy actions related to repair, sharing platforms, 2<sup>nd</sup> hand, recycling, etc., as well as reducing meat in diets. The cost-of-living crisis actually builds the case for these sorts of 'cost-saving' climate actions, so a little bit of additional comms resource could help to harvest this low-hanging fruit.

#### ***4. KEY ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY FOR 2025-30***

All of the current themes included in the current climate action plans are calling for additional comms and engagement resource.

Comms and engagement resource is needed to develop a coherent comms and engagement strategy to service Reading's 2025 – 2030 climate action priorities, and to raise awareness of the strategy and engage people in it.

A funding bid has been submitted to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund.

No changes have been made to this RAG rating since the last annual report in 2024.

## CROSS-CUTTING THEME: Communications & Engagement

Action name*	Description (written in 2020)	Target, measure, milestone	Target complete date	Delivery	Status	Commentary (100 words), and resource challenges (100 words)	Carry forward to 2025-30?
<b>General</b>							
Information hub	<p>Establish &amp; maintain one-stop hub on website where all themes are supported with relevant, practical info for all stakeholders.</p> <p>Mixture of bespoke content (Reading-centric) and signposts to reliable sources of info e.g. WRAP, Wildlife Trust, Energy Saving Trust, Carbon Trust etc.</p> <p>Supported by comms programme (conventional and social) to drive traffic. Include info on progress: achievements, measurement etc.</p>	Content published on website	Set up by Nov 2020, continuously update thereafter.	Comms and Engagement Volunteer + Theme leads	GREEN	<p>An online info hub was created in 2022 by volunteers. It shows evidence-based individual and organisational climate action options related to diets, travel, energy use, nature, waste and recycling. Given resource constraints, traffic to this hub has been indirect, e.g. visitors who arrive via Reading Climate Festival or Year of Climate Engagement outreach, which were RCCP's key outreach projects for 2024.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> RCCP has not had a comms volunteer or staff resource to prioritise updates to the info hub, or to design and deliver targeted outreach campaigns related to the hub. Currently revisiting whether this should be a priority of RCCP and if so how to resource it and how to position RCCP – e.g. would RCCP manage a group of volunteers? Convene comms innovation challenges linked to the strategy? Simply promote the strategy itself and encourage organisations to design relevant campaigns in response to it? Raise funds for a full-time comms lead? Invest resource in growing our own comms channels?</p>	Amend – (1) update content and (2) align outreach campaigns with climate action priorities for 2025-2030
Dashboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a dashboard with KPIs that track progress against the targets in the strategy.</li> <li>Publish on the RCAN website but also</li> </ul>	Dashboard designed and created	Set up by Dec 2020 and continuously updated thereafter	RCCP Co-ordinator + Energy Theme Lead + UoR	AMBER	RCCP created a dashboard brief and convened a scoping meeting with RBC and UoR. All agreed on the desirability of this dashboard. Wokingham Council is also keen to partner. RCCP proposed a dashboard-focused Masters project to UoR. The aim of the dashboard is to help different audience	Yes

	strategic media around the town, eg large digital sign at the station, buses, The Oracle, Reading Borough Council venues.				Yellow	<p>segments understand the potential avoided emissions under their collective influence (agency), e.g. householders, businesses, schools, consumers, commuters, public authorities, etc. and measure changes and progress by various segmentations.</p> <p>This would support and guide a storytelling and campaign strategy, rather than replace it, and form an evidence base for the town's journey to net zero.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> Currently no-one 'owns' this project as an organisational deliverable. The project requires expert oversight, especially as we want to integrate Scope 3 emissions into the dashboard and develop messages around Scope 3 emissions for Reading's net zero challenge.</p>	
Brand Book and Stakeholder Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop brand guidelines, style guide and messaging matrix</li> <li>Confirm role of RCCP versus RCAN and relationship with other organisations within Reading</li> </ul>	Brand Book and stakeholder map created	By end Sept	Comms and Engagement Volunteer / RCCP Co-ordinator	GREEN	<p>We have a de facto brand (see social media outreach; Reading Climate Festival 2024 comms; and website look, feel and copy).</p> <p>Going forward we will need to update messaging re the role and responsibilities of RCCP &amp; RCAN (especially with regard to comms &amp; engagement), to manage expectations and also to encourage and direct offers of support.</p> <p>A strong stakeholder list emerged via our research for Reading Climate Leaders' Summit and Designing a Net Zero Reading Deliberative Group participants and comms targets – we know have a list of 300+ named contacts.</p>	Yes – update for 2025 - 2030
Campaign Calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and publish a calendar of campaigns to encourage action on different issues, eg Beat</li> </ul>	Quarterly Rolling Comms Plan devised and published	By Nov 2020	Comms and Engagement Volunteer / RCCP Co-ordinator	GREEN	RCCP campaigns for 2021 – 2024 have been delivered. 2024 outreach focused primarily on Reading Climate Festival (and component partner events) and the Year of Climate Engagement (and component activities). RCCP also partnered with	Amend

Page 373	<p>the Street, Fair Trade Fortnight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align with RBC campaigns and initiatives led by other organisations in the town, as well as national “days” eg Earth Day</li> <li>• Support with social media and conventional media such as bus advertising, outdoor, The Oracle, council magazine</li> </ul>				<p>RBC on a Month of Climate Awareness in 2023 and 2024. A new campaign calendar is needed for 2025, and this should derive from comms priorities for this period. Given existing resource this likely to have a similar scope.</p> <p>Theme leads are currently identifying comms &amp; engagement campaign needs within their theme areas for the 2025 – 2030 Climate Emergency Strategy – e.g. around energy use and retrofit; water use; food waste; habitat protection; climate literacy; etc. Local organisations across Reading will take ownership of these campaigns by adding their names as delivery partners / partnerships against these comms actions in the Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025 - 2030. RCCP can inform people of these campaigns, but it does not have the resource to design and deliver them.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> Additional resource would allow RCCP to mobilise and support targeted campaigns linked to the new climate strategy, and offer guidance around greenwashing, best practice, behaviour change, etc. They could also offer ‘innovation services’, e.g. by hosting ‘communications innovation challenges’ to mobilise responses to particular comms and engagement needs related to the strategy.</p>	
Climate Literacy Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer carbon and climate training, tailored to support the RCAN Action Plan, to all who live, work or study in Reading</li> <li>• Begin by training all RBC staff</li> <li>• Potential to build on the University's <a href="#">MOOC</a></li> </ul>	<p>Development of training</p> <p>Targets for delivery</p>	<p>December 2021</p> <p>?</p>	<p>GREEN</p>	<p>RBC budget has covered a first wave of Climate Literacy Training for RBC staff. This is ongoing and each participant designs a climate action to take into their work KPIs.</p> <p>Could it become one of the (resourced) climate action priorities for the new strategy, for Reading to become a climate-literate town? (Does a net-zero Reading require a climate-literate Reading?)</p>	<p>Amend – not a comms action</p>

	<p>and/or Climate Reality training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation available from the UNEP endorsed <a href="#">Carbon Literacy Project</a></li> </ul>					<p><b>Resource:</b> Budget for this would need to come from RBC and other stakeholders, e.g. UoR, corporates, or from fundraising.</p>	
Third party events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take part in/support local public events eg Town Meal, Beanpole, day, Waterfest, Meadows Day, school fetes etc.</li> </ul>	Events calendar published and theme support agreed.	10 events per year	RCAN admin	AMBER	<p>RCAN hosted and sponsored Big Lunch and supported 30 other events during Reading Climate Festival. RCCP board members (volunteers) spoke at several third-party events, including CADRA.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> Requires portable display materials as well as volunteer help + key messaging and calls to action.</p>	Amend
Funding hub  <b>Page 374</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and maintain a list of sources of outside funding that can be drawn on to support RCAN initiatives.</li> <li>• Offer grants to support small local initiatives that align with RCAN goals</li> </ul>	List published	Set up by end of 2020, continuously updated thereafter.	RCAN admin	AMBER	<p>RCCP has won funding from GWR and Tomato Energy in the past two years and is also a recipient of funding from RBC, which was ringfenced for a review and update of RCCP's Climate Emergency Strategy. RCCP is looking into National Lottery Community Fund, Co-op Community Fund and RBC's Social Value Fund. RCCP channeled some of these funds into 'mock UN' schools events and many additional events via Reading Climate Festival.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> We intend to shape a volunteer role around fundraising.</p>	Amend – not a comms action
Volunteer Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Reading Voluntary Action to establish process to recruit volunteers to support delivery of RCAN activities</li> </ul>	Relationship built and process established	December 2020	RCAN, RVA	AMBER	<p>This will likely be a priority moving forward. We have posted a few volunteer roles on RVA, and have had some approaches via the website, but have not found suitable candidates – i.e. relevant comms skills and ability to work independently.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> The RCCP Co-ordinator role would need to be expanded to make time for recruitment and management.</p>	Amend – not a comms actions
Research Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a research programme to support the actions in the strategy</li> </ul>	Programme developed and approach defined	April 2021	RCAN, University of Reading	AMBER	<p>It will likely emerge as a climate action priority for the new strategy to align UoR research with the town's climate action priorities. We will need a</p>	No - not an RCCP comms action

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the University of Reading to develop a structured approach to matching research needs with students seeking research projects.</li> </ul>					champion at the UoR to oversee this. UoR is currently leading on this.	
Climate Action Pledge for Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a pledge that residents can sign to commit to taking action on climate change across a relevant range of impacts</li> <li>Possible “eco-journey” starting with simple things and becoming more advanced</li> </ul>	Pledge defined and published	November 2020	RCAN	GREEN	<p>Pledge was created for individuals in 2022 and published on RCAN homepage. It is a feature of most RCCP outreach campaigns.</p> <p>A dedicated pledge outreach campaign is now needed.</p> <p>We may need to update the pledge to align with the 2025 – 2030 strategy.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> To optimise reach, the pledge campaign would need the buy-in and participation (and possibly joint branding) of a comms alliance (i.e. comms leads at all delivery partner organisations). The campaign would need orchestration.</p>	Amend as ongoing campaign
Business focus							
Reading Climate Pledge for Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define a set of commitments for organisations to sign up to in order to gain “Climate Friendly” status</li> </ul>	Pledge defined and published	November 2020	RCAN lead	AMBER	<p>This pledge was developed and published on the RCAN website in 2023. Stage 2 was kicked off in 2024, when RCCP launched a pledge campaign concept during Reading Climate Festival 2024, in partnership with Connect Reading, REDA and Ethical Reading. This will be developed further during late 2024 and 2025. Local organisations will be invited to sign up to the pledge to support Reading’s journey to net zero and they will receive guidance and practical support to work towards making their own organisations net zero. Our goal is to create a visual dashboard showing a growing number of local businesses committed to supporting Reading’s journey to net zero.</p>	Yes

						<b>Resource:</b> RCCP orchestration + co-ordination with Connect Reading, REDA and Ethical Reading.	
Climate-Aware Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed climate change into the workstreams of the LEP, IOD, Chamber of Commerce and other local business networks</li> <li>Work with leaders of those organisations to convince them of the strategic importance of climate change for their own organisations and their membership</li> </ul>	All nominated organisations have climate change as part of their mission	Summer 2021	RBC lead	GREEN	<p>During 2024 a targeted list of 90 senior local leaders across all major sectors has been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>invited to the Reading Climate Leaders' Summit hosted by RCCP, to invite them into the ambition to become a net zero town by 2030</li> <li>invited to participate in the core deliberative group 'Designing a net Zero Reading' - the stakeholder participation process for co-creating Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025 – 2030</li> <li>invited to comment on emergent climate action priorities via two surveys</li> <li>invited to become delivery partners for specific climate action priorities in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025 - 2030</li> </ul>	Yes
Lobbying for better business practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify barriers preventing use of sanctions to address "carbon crimes", eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaving lights on all night in office buildings</li> <li>Having doors of restaurants/retail units open</li> <li>Incorporate the GHG Protocol (Scope 1, 2 &amp; 3) ?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Lobby central government for the policy changes</li> </ul>	Issues identified and lobbying programme launched	Spring 2021	RCAN lead	RED	<p>Integrate into current strategy review and identify suitable delivery partner.</p> <p>Resource needed</p>	Yes – but not a comms priority
Reading Business Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish business network for sharing of expertise and</li> </ul>	Network already launched.	November 2020	RCAN lead Ethical Reading Sustainability Champions	AMBER	Established but lacks momentum. This will be linked to the revived Pledge campaigns for organisations (see above).	Yes – merge with similar goals

Action Network	<p>knowledge on sustainable business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold regular events</li> <li>• Publish business-centric advice and guidance and signpost tools and models from reputable sources on the RCAN website</li> <li>• Encourage all Reading Businesses to nominate an employee who is their representative and can help to engage the company</li> </ul>	<p>Events programme published</p> <p>Information hub launched</p>	November 2020		RED		
Pledge Sustainable Business Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the suitability of BCorp and BITC frameworks and other accreditations</li> <li>• Ideally have a free-to-use dashboard system</li> <li>• Introduce an accreditation scheme for businesses that recognises achievement at different levels, eg bronze, silver, gold, to create a race to the top</li> </ul>	<p>Research completed and proposal published</p>	Summer 2021	RCAN lead	RED	<p>No progress – this could be integrated into the Pledge Campaign for Organisations.</p> <p>May require funding</p>	Amend – not a comms priority
Divestment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divestment from fossil fuels is an important signal of intent as well as a way to divert capital investment from carbon-based to cleantech/Greentech innovation.</li> </ul>	<p>Campaign launched</p>	November 2021	RCAN lead	RED	<p>No progress – this can be merged into pledge campaign targeting local organisations</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run a campaign encouraging all institutional investors in Reading to divest</li> </ul>						
Business volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create opportunities for staff to support delivery of actions from the strategy via Team Challenge</li> </ul>	6 business actions a year	First actions Q1 2021	RCAN lead Connect Reading/RBC /NTF/Econet/TCV,	RED	No progress – this can be merged into the pledge campaign got organisations (see above)	
Community focus							
Working with other organisations  Page 378	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish links with other groups working on the sustainability agenda across Reading and showcase their work through the RCAN website</li> <li>Enable sharing of events, expertise, knowledge and resources by other groups</li> </ul>	Partner hub set up with ability for representatives to contribute content	Partner hub set up by end 2020	Comms and Engagement team	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCAN hosted and sponsored a 'by invitation only' 'Shaping a Future for Community Energy in Reading' event during Reading Climate Festival 2024. As a result the group proposed to set up a local energy transition hub and a number of workstreams have been set up.</li> <li>Circular economy initiatives have been promoted on the RCAN website and socials.</li> <li>A newsletter has been set up and local groups have been invited to submit their news and events.</li> </ul> <p>Comms resource is needed to liaise with local groups so that we can promote their news.</p>	Amend
Community focused work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify 2 geographical areas in Reading (up to 10 streets) – and support the residents in these streets to lead more climate-friendly lives. Develop competition (eg 'green streets initiative')</li> </ul>	2 areas per year  6 groups per year	First area identified by Q2 2021  First group identified by Q1 2021	RCAN admin	RED	<p>No progress. This could be submitted as a proposed climate action priority for the new strategy and delivery partners identified via that process.</p> <p>There is no resource for this at RCCP</p>	Amend

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and work with community groups (i.e. religious, ethnic, age related) – and support the members to lead more Climate friendly lives, through community talks and projects</li> </ul>						
<b>Education focus</b>							
Schools-based interventions  Page 379	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the Education team and Better Futures for Children, to establish a programme of climate change interventions for schools.</li> <li>To cover physical changes (i.e install solar panels, heat pumps etc) and support with lessons/curriculum / local community engagement (use Eco Schools framework?)</li> <li>Draw on established tools and programmes where possible</li> </ul>	Programme launched	September 2021	RCAN admin  Brighter Futures for Children, RBC Sustainability team, Helen Roberts team	GREEN	<p>Schools section on website has been set up. The UoR launched their Climate Ambassadors for Schools scheme during Reading Climate Festival. A proposed energy transition hub (see above) will support schools to reduce emissions via solar, heat pumps and energy efficiency.</p> <p><a href="https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/">https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/</a>  <a href="https://www.greenschoolsproject.org.uk/">https://www.greenschoolsproject.org.uk/</a>  <a href="https://www.wwf.org.uk/get-involved/schools/green-ambassadors">https://www.wwf.org.uk/get-involved/schools/green-ambassadors</a>  <a href="https://www.youngclimatewarriors.org/">https://www.youngclimatewarriors.org/</a></p>	Amend
Reading Schools Climate Action Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish teacher network for sharing of expertise and knowledge on sustainable schools (for primary and secondary)</li> <li>Hold regular events</li> </ul>	Network launched.  Events programme published	September 2021	Brighter Futures for Children  RCAN, Alfred Sutton primary?	RED	Discontinued due to lack of resources	Amend – this is a BFfC action

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish school-centric advice and guidance and signpost tools and models from reputable sources</li> <li>• Link to home schooling networks</li> </ul>	Information hub launched					
Model Climate Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the model climate conference to include all schools in Reading</li> <li>• Bring the outputs back to the RCAN website</li> <li>• Legacy - Supporting the schools to make the changes they committed to on the day, through the RSCAN</li> </ul>	50% increase in schools participating in the Model Climate Conference	November 2021	Just ideas	GREEN	<p>RCCP supported Reading Schools Climate Conferences in 2022 and 2023 and will support one in 2024. We made personal contact with non-participating schools to encourage attendance. We also supported a Youth Mobilisation Day during Reading Climate Festival as part of the wider climate strategy review, to elicit youth visions of a net zero Reading, and promoted a Big Letter to schools.</p> <p>Subject to funding – we have received a donation from GWR and have applied to Tomato Energy</p>	Yes
Young Persons Climate Assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the potential to set up a Young Persons activist Network – for young people to meet up with like-minded individuals to develop ideas and support regular meetings, Instagram account?</li> <li>• Are there any programmes that we could already fit in with? Eg: Youth Council, schools strikes for climate, <a href="https://www.foeeurope.org/yfoee">https://www.foeeurope.org/yfoee</a></li> </ul>	Research appetite and develop proposal if appropriate	June 2021	RCAN admin	GREEN	<p>A UoR student and Reading Youth Council were invited to host and design a Youth Mobilisation Day during Reading Climate Festival, which received financial and other support from RCCP and RBC. Both were also invited into the core deliberative group for Designing a Net Zero Reading.</p> <p>Must be youth led and with proper safeguarding</p>	

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL: GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) REPORT 2024 - 25

### 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 (2024/25) the Council's carbon footprint (gross corporate emissions) has decreased by 2.7% compared to the previous year, or by 143 tCO<sub>2</sub>. This equates to a decrease of 73.4% in absolute gross corporate emissions compared to the 2008/9 baseline. In order to achieve the 2025 target set in the Carbon Plan, a further 11.6% 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.

The UK electricity carbon emissions intensity factor is prone to fluctuate from year to year as the fuel mix consumed in UK power stations (and auto-generators) and the proportion of net imported electricity changes. In the 2023 UK government update, the UK Electricity CO<sub>2</sub>e factor has increased by 7% (compared to the 2022 update) due to an increase in natural gas use in electricity generation and a decrease in renewable generation. The 2024 carbon emissions intensity factor has remained broadly similar to that of 2023.

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.£34.9m (excluding standing charges and other contract charges) compared to if no action had been taken. In 2024/25 alone these avoided costs were estimated at £6.4m.

## 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).(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 and heat pumps only (excluding emissions from domestic fridges and freezers)

#### **Scope 2 (Indirect Emissions)**

- Purchased electricity
  - Less self-supplied renewably generated 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 2024/25 (1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025) are those published by DEFRA, based on a 1-year average factor for the calendar year 2024.

## 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 2024/25

Reading Borough Council's absolute (gross) corporate GHG emissions for 2024/25 were 5,260.1 tCO<sub>2</sub>, a reduction of 73.4% compared to the 2008/09 baseline. This represented a year-on-year decrease of 2.7% against 2023/24 (5,403.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, or 143 tCO<sub>2</sub>.

When renewably generated electricity, exported to the grid, or sold to third parties is netted off against this gross figure, to the sum of 325 tCO<sub>2</sub>, this gives a net corporate carbon emissions figure of 4,935.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>, 2.4% lower than 2023/24 emissions.

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 2024/25 was:

$$\text{tCO}_2\text{e per FTE} = \frac{4,952.1}{1,695.35} = 2.92 \text{ CO}_2\text{e/FTE}$$

This compares to the employee intensity ratio for Reading Borough Council as a whole for the previous reporting year 2023/24 which was:

$$\text{tCO}_2\text{e per FTE} = \frac{5,158}{1,612.56} = 3.19 \text{ CO}_2\text{e/FTE}$$

This shows that the intensity measurement for RBC (emissions per employee) decreased by 8.4% in 2024/25.

## 2.6 Reading Borough Council 'wider influence' emissions 2024/25

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 23,373.5 tCO<sub>2</sub> for 2024/25, down 40.5% against the 2008/09 baseline. However, this figure represented a year-on-year increase of 5.9% against equivalent figure for 2023/24 emissions. Although it should be noted that data accuracy is not as sound across the wider influence emissions.

The assets in the 'wider influence' category include leisure centres, Reading Transport, schools and the Smallmead Materials Recycling Facility.

- **Leisure sites:** Greenwich Leisure Ltd has now managed the four leisure centres in Reading since July 2021, with the new Rivermead leisure centre building (dry-side) opening in 2023, and the pools opening in summer 2024. 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. The year 2023/24 was the first full year of operation of the larger and greatly improved facilities at Palmer Park Sports Stadium. This facility predictably had a parallel increase in energy use in 2023/24, but has subsequently stabilised in 2024/25. The new Rivermead facility had a staged opening, with the dry side opening in 2023, and the pools opening in summer 2024, with the facilities having an equivalent increase in energy use across these years. Whilst energy use has increased in total across all leisure facilities, the total carbon emissions are still 31% lower when compared to the last pre-Covid year, in 2019/20. Furthermore, the carbon intensity of across participants has also improved by 12% across the facilities, with participant numbers increasing by c.54% in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24. With the investment in energy efficient, low carbon and renewable technologies, it is anticipated that the new facilities will be much more energy efficient than the pre-covid service.

*Figure 1: Comparison of Leisure Centre emissions 2019/20 to 2024/25*



- **Reading Transport Ltd:** Following an audit of data and data systems, historic data for 2022/23 and 2023/24 reported data for Reading Transport has been amended. Carbon emissions have increased in 2024/25 (by 8%) compared to 2023/24.
- **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

4,700.9 tCO<sub>2</sub> (gross) for 2024/25, up 6% compared to 2023/24 emissions. Whilst carbon emissions across the schools estate has only decreased by 13% over the last 5 years, pupil numbers have increased by 8% during that period.

- **Smallmead Materials Recycling Facility:** the data shows a 2% reduction in emissions from Smallmead operations compared to 2023/24.

## 2.7 Statistical summary of RBC GHG emissions

The figures for 2024/25 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 2024/25, compared to 2008/09 (with the headline measure of corporate GHG emissions highlighted)*

YEAR	Baseline 2008/09	2024/25	% change
	tCO <sub>2</sub>	tCO <sub>2</sub>	
<b>SCOPE 1 – Corporate</b>			
	<b>6,594</b>	<b>2,846</b>	<b>-56.8 %</b>
<b>SCOPE 2 - Corporate</b>			
	<b>11,850</b>	<b>2,105</b>	<b>-82.2 %</b>
<b>SCOPE 3 (part thereof)</b>			
<b>CORPORATE</b>	<b>1,318</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>-76.4 %</b>
<b>SCHOOLS</b>	<b>7,203*</b>	<b>4,700</b>	<b>-34.7 %</b>
<b>LEISURE CENTRES</b>	<b>1,209</b>	<b>1,128</b>	<b>-6 %</b>
<b>BUS SERVICES</b>	<b>10,538</b>	<b>11,968</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>WASTE MRF</b>	<b>598*</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>-47 %</b>
<b>GROSS 'CORPORATE' EMISSIONS (Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3 'CORPORATE')</b>	<b>19,761</b>	<b>5,260</b>	<b>-73.3 %</b>
<b>GROSS 'WIDER FOOTPRINT' EMISSIONS – Scope 1, Scope 2 and all of Scope 3</b>	<b>39,310</b>	<b>23,373</b>	<b>-40.5 %</b>
<b>ELECTRICITY EXPORTED/SOLD TO GRID/OTHERS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>NET EMISSIONS - Scope 1, 2, 3 - CORPORATE</b>	<b>19,761</b>	<b>4,935</b>	<b>-75 %</b>
<b>NET EMISSIONS - ALL</b>	<b>39,310</b>	<b>23,049</b>	<b>-41.3 %</b>

\*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

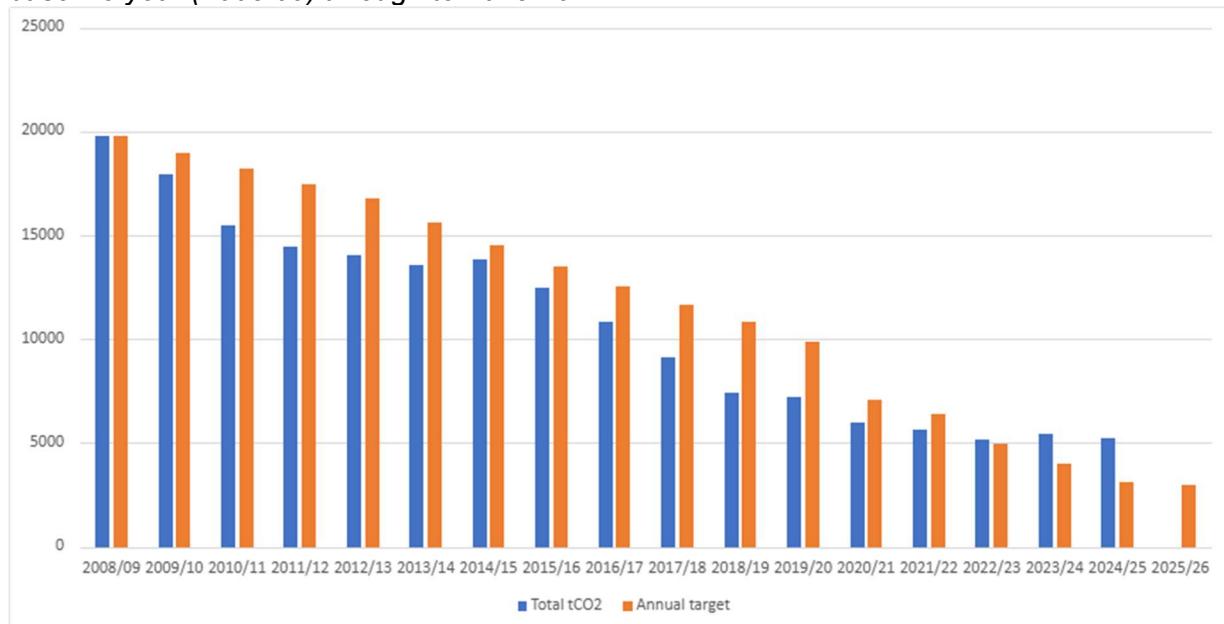
Reading Borough Council's Carbon Plan 2020-2025 sets out actions and projects which have been translated into a notional set of annual emissions reductions for each year of the 5-year plan (see table 2). These provide benchmarks for measuring progress towards the interim target of an 85% reduction in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

The gross annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from RBC's operations in 2024/25 was 5,260 tonnes, 2,155 tonnes above the 2024/25 target benchmark of 3,105 tonnes. To meet the 2025/26 target, an annual reduction of 2,296 tCO<sub>2</sub> will be required in the final year of the Carbon Plan. This is a challenging target, and 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 <sub>2</sub> 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 8.25% of its total energy consumed in buildings from renewable sources in 2024/25. This represents 16.1% 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 345,459 litres of fuel/oil, and 10,464 MWh of natural gas in 2024/25. 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 60.7% lower than 2008/09 and oil/fuel is 64.1% 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 1,636,118 kWh of electricity in 2024/25, of which over 414,737 kWh was deemed to have been exported to the National Grid. Twenty-three systems generated and self-supplied 194,474 kWh to RBC sites, whilst the remaining arrays generated and supplied 919,608 kWh to schools, housing tenants and other parties in 2024/25. The renewably generated electricity leads to 325 tCO<sub>2</sub> 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.£34.9m (excluding standing charges and other contract charges) compared to if no action had been taken. In 2024/25 alone these avoided costs were estimated at £6.4m.

## **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	
<b>Scope 1</b> (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.
<b>Scope 2</b> (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.
<b>Scope 3</b> (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
<b>Outside Scopes:</b>	
CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions from biofuels	Other GHG emissions from combustion of biofuels. Awaiting emissions factors
<b>Renewable electricity:</b>	
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.

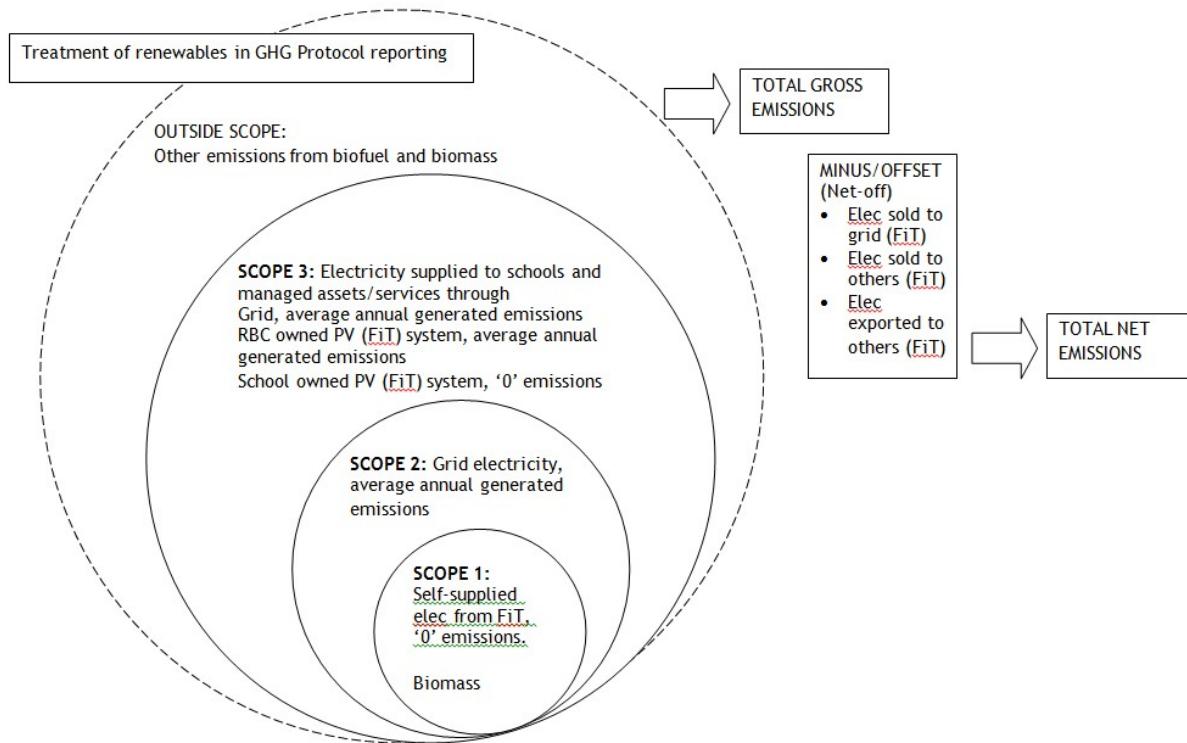


Figure A1: Treatment of renewables in GHG Protocol reporting, depending on system ownership and reporting scope

## Annex 2: Full breakdown 2024/25 GHG data vs baseline

YEAR	REPORTING UNITS	BASELINE: 2008/09			2024/25		
		kWh/litres/km <sup>1</sup>	conversion factor	tCO2	kWh/litres/km <sup>1</sup>	conversion factor	tCO2
<b>SCOPE 1</b>							
GAS	kWh	26,624,860	0.1836	4,888	10,464,651	0.18	1,914.0
OIL	litres	329,462	0.2468	81	-	-	-
FLEET - DIESEL	litres	616,794	2.5725	1,587	338,852	2.66	901.9
FLEET - PETROL	litres	16,717	2.2450	38	6,607	2.08	13.8
FLEET - GAS OIL	litres	-	-	-	-	-	-
FUGITIVE - R12	kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
FUGITIVE - R22	kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
FUGITIVE - R32	kg	-	-	-	2	675	1.2
FUGITIVE - R407C	kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
FUGITIVE - R134A	kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
FUGITIVE - R410A	kg	-	-	-	8	1,924	15.6
FUGITIVE - R49a	kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
FUGITIVE - R404a	kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
CHP - GAS	kWh	-	-	-	-	-	-
CHP - ELECTRICITY	kWh	-	-	-	-	-	-
BIOMASS	kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh	-	-	-	194,474	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>				6,594	-	-	2,846.5
<b>SCOPE 2</b>							
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	24,416,596	0.4853	11,850	10,169,642	0.21	2,105.6
CAR CLUB - SMALL	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
CAR CLUB - MEDIUM	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>				11,850			2,105.6
<b>SCOPE 3</b>							
<b>CORPORATE</b>							
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	24,416,596	0.0391	954	10,169,642	0.02	186.1
BUSINESS MILEAGE - average fuel unknown	km	1,742,835	0.2086	364	3,121	0.17	0.5
BUSINESS MILEAGE - average petrol	km	-	-	-	159,306	0.16	26.2
BUSINESS MILEAGE - supermini petrol	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - dual purpose 4 x 4	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - MPV petrol	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - luxury	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - MPV diesel	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - executive petrol	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - executive diesel	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - lower medium petrol	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - small petrol	km	-	-	-	209,313	0.14	30.1
BUSINESS MILEAGE - med petrol	km	-	-	-	168,794	0.18	29.9
BUSINESS MILEAGE - large petrol	km	-	-	-	12,088	0.27	3.2
BUSINESS MILEAGE - small diesel	km	-	-	-	113,549	0.14	15.9
BUSINESS MILEAGE - med diesel	km	-	-	-	49,906	0.17	8.4
BUSINESS MILEAGE - large diesel	km	-	-	-	37,100	0.21	7.7
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Small electric	km	-	-	-	19,296	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Medium Electric	km	-	-	-	19,750	-	-
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Large Electric	km	-	-	-	913	-	-
BUSINESS CYCLE	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
BUSINESS MOTORCYCLE	km	-	-	-	-	-	-
WATER SUPPLIED	m <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	101,434	-	-
WATER SEWERAGE	m <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	96,362	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>				1,318			308.1
<b>SCHOOLS*</b>							
GAS	kWh	18,387,800	0.1836	3,376	15,977,120	0.18	2,922.2
OIL	litres	3,130,463	0.2468	773	43,606	2.54	110.8
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	6,224,888	0.4521	2,814	6,990,128	0.21	1,447.3
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	6,224,888	0.0386	240	6,990,128	0.02	127.9
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh	-	0.4521	-	67,202	0.21	13.9
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh	-	-	-	360,626	0.21	74.7
WATER SUPPLIED	m <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-
WATER SEWERAGE	m <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-
FUGITIVE - R410A	kg	-	-	-	2	1,924	3.3
FUGITIVE - R32	kg	-	-	-	1	675	0.8
FUGITIVE - R407C	kg	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>				7,203			4,700.9
<b>LEISURE CENTRES</b>							
GAS	kWh	2,722,149	0.1836	500	3,580,813	0.18	654.9
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	1,353,406	0.4853	657	1,899,197	0.21	393.2
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	1,353,406	0.0391	53	1,899,197	0.02	34.8
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh	-	0.0391	-	-	-	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh	-	0.4853	-	220,122	0.21	45.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	kWh	-	-	1,209			1,128.5

<b>READING BUSES</b>	<b>litres</b>						
GAS	kWh	914,874	0.1836	168	1,244,620	0.18	227.6
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	1,049,393	0.4853	509	1,623,937	0.21	336.2
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	1,049,393	0.0391	41	1,623,937	0.02	29.7
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh		0.0391	-	-	-	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh		0.4853	-	-	-	-
FLEET - DIESEL	litres	3,817,389	2.6	9,820	2,506,758	2.66	6,671.9
FLEET - CNG	litres				1,831	2,568	4,702.3
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>10,538</b>			<b>11,967.8</b>
<b>WASTE MRF SMALL MEAD*</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>						
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	1,140,310	0.4853	553	1,403,233	0.21	290.5
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	1,140,310	0.0391	45	1,403,233	0.02	25.7
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh						
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>598</b>			<b>316.2</b>
<b>OUTSIDE SCOPE</b>							
FLEET - DIESEL - BIOFUEL MIX	litres						
FLEET - PETROL - BIOFUEL MIX	litres						
CNG	litres						
BIO MASS							
<b>TOTAL</b>							
<b>GROSS EMISSIONS - CORPORATE</b>	<b>Tonnes</b>			<b>19,761</b>			<b>5,260.1</b>
<b>GROSS EMISSIONS - ALL</b>	<b>Tonnes</b>			<b>39,310</b>			<b>23,373.5</b>
<b>GROSS EMISSIONS - CORPORATE - weather corrected</b>	<b>Tonnes</b>			<b>19,606</b>			<b>5,132.1</b>
<b>GROSS EMISSIONS - ALL - weather corrected</b>	<b>Tonnes</b>			<b>39,030</b>			<b>22,984.5</b>
<b>ELECTRICITY EXPORTED/SOLD TO GRID/OTHERS</b>	kWh				<b>1,441,644</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>324.9</b>
<b>NET EMISSIONS - CORPORATE</b>	<b>Tonnes</b>			<b>19,761</b>			<b>4,935.3</b>
<b>NET EMISSIONS - ALL</b>	<b>Tonnes</b>			<b>39,310</b>			<b>23,048.6</b>
<b>NET EMISSIONS - CORPORATE - weather corrected</b>	<b>Tonnes</b>			<b>19,606</b>			<b>4,807.3</b>
<b>NET EMISSIONS - ALL - weather corrected</b>	<b>Tonnes</b>			<b>39,030</b>			<b>22,659.6</b>

### Annex 3: Historic data

YEAR	2020/21				2021/22				2022/23				2023/24				2024/25			
	REPORTING UNITS	kWh/litres/km/m3/kg	conversion factor	tCO2	kWh/litres/km/m3/kg	conversion factor	tCO2													
<b>SCOPE 1</b>																				
GAS	kWh	12,054,110.0	0.18387	2,216	11,617,587.0	0.18316	2,128	10,325,887.0	0.18254	1,885	11,029,898	0.18256	2,014	10,464,651	0.18290	1,914				
OIL	litres	18,561	2.54039	47	4,800	2.54014	12	2,54013	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
FLEET - DIESEL	litres	435,665.29	2.54603	1,109	449,841.73	2.51233	1,130	420,973.70	2.55784	1,077	379,004	2.51000	951	338,852	2.66155	902				
FLEET - PETROL	litres	10,353.00	2.16802	22	10,617.80	2.19352	23	10,915.32	2.16185	24	8,509	2.10000	18	6,607	2.08440	14				
<b>FLEET - GAS OIL</b>	litres	21,049	2.75776	58	18,492	2.75857	51	1,325	2.75857	4	1,097	2.76000	3	-	-	-	-	-		
FUGITIVE - R12	kg																			
FUGITIVE - R22	kg																			
FUGITIVE - R32	kg										0		0	1.8	675	1,215				
FUGITIVE - R407C	kg	9.26	1774	16.4		1774	0.0		1774	0.0										
FUGITIVE - R134A	kg		1430	0.0			0.0			0.0										
FUGITIVE - R410A	kg	2.8	2088	5.8	17.9	2088	37.4	19.5	2088	40.7	18.9	1924.0	36.4	8.1	1924.0	15.6				
<b>FUGITIVE - R49a</b>	kg																			
FUGITIVE - R404a	kg		3922	0.0		3922	0.0		3922	0.0										
CHP - GAS	kWh																			
CHP - ELECTRICITY	kWh																			
BIO MASS			0	0			0			0										
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh	154,417	0	0	0		0	0	22,575	0	0	0	236,770	0	0	194,474	0	0		
<b>TOTAL</b>				3,475.5			3,381.9			3,029.6				3,022.2			2,846.5			
<b>SCOPE 2</b>																				
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	9,463,044	0.23314	2,206	9,416,978	0.21233	2,000	9,486,441	0.19338	1,834	10,048,637	0.20707	2,081	10,169,642	0.20705	2,106				
CAR CLUB - SMALL	km	0.14652	0.00				0.00			0.00										
CAR CLUB - MEDIUM	km	0.1847	0.000				0.000			0.000										
<b>TOTAL</b>			2,206				2,000			1,834				2,081			2,105.6			
<b>SCOPE 2</b>																				
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	9,463,044	0.23314	2,206	9,416,978	0.21233	2,000	9,486,441	0.19338	1,834	10,048,637	0.20707	2,081	10,169,642	0.20705	2,106				
CAR CLUB - SMALL	km	0.14652	0.00				0.00			0.00										
CAR CLUB - MEDIUM	km	0.1847	0.000				0.000			0.000										
<b>TOTAL</b>			2,206				2,000			1,834				2,081			2,105.6			
<b>SCOPE 3</b>																				
<b>CORPORATE</b>																				
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	9,463,044	0.02005	190	9,416,978	0.01879	177	9,486,441	0.01769	168	10,048,637	0.02	180	10,169,642	0.02	186				
BUSINESS MILEAGE	km	395	0.1714	0.1		0.17148	0.0	1,598	0.17067	0.3	617	0.17	0.1	3,121	0.17	0.5				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - average petrol	km	250,086	0.1743	43.6	267,135	0.17431	46.6	230,217	0.17048	39.2	177,890	0.16	29	159,306	0.16	26				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - supermini petrol			0.15017	0.0		0.1513	0.0		0.14802	0.0			0			0		0		
BUSINESS MILEAGE - dual purpose 4 x 4	km																			
BUSINESS MILEAGE - MPV petrol			0.19351	0.0		0.19479	0.0		0.19118	0.0			0			0		0		
BUSINESS MILEAGE - luxury	km																			
BUSINESS MILEAGE - MPV diesel			0.17627	0.0		0.17503	0.0		0.177844	0.0			0			0		0		
BUSINESS MILEAGE - executive petrol			0.22699	0.0		0.22342	0.0		0.21999	0.0			0			0		0		
BUSINESS MILEAGE - executive diesel			0.16735	0.0		0.17399	0.0		0.174684	0.0			0			0		0		
BUSINESS MILEAGE - lower medium petrol			0.17343	0.0		0.17497	0.0		0.17162	0.0			0			0		0		
BUSINESS MILEAGE - small petrol	km	108,531	0.14836	16.1	156,256	0.14946	23.4	191,736	0.14652	28.1	186,333	0.14	26	209,313	0.14	30				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - med petrol	km	103,634	0.18659	19.3	128,899	0.18785	24.2	126,187	0.1847	23.3	200,871	0.18	36	168,794	0.18	30				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - large petrol	km	3,129	0.27807	0.9	4,208	0.27909	1.2	4,744	0.27639	1.3	6,936	0.27	2	12,088	0.27	3				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - small diesel	km	19,988	0.13721	2.7	78,451	0.13758	10.8	104,442	0.13989	14.6	87,757	0.1	12	113,549	0.1	16				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - med diesel	km	86,098	0.16637	14.3	37,400	0.16496	6.2	31,727	0.1618	5.3	47,889	0.2	8	49,906	0.2	8				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - large diesel	km	17,606	0.20419	3.6	22,792	0.20721	4.7	23,237	0.20953	4.9	32,851	0.2	7	37,100	0.2	8				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Small electric	km		0	0.0	801	0	0.0	16,547	0	0.0	33,178		0	19,296		0				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Medium Electric	km	161	0	0.0	1,669	0	0.0	1,984	0	0.0	11,413		0	19,750		0				
BUSINESS MILEAGE - Large Electric	km		0	0.0	4,971	0	0.0	538	0	0.0	510		0	913		0				
WATER SUPPLIED	m3							397125			137490			101434						
WATER SEWERAGE	m3										130616			96362						
<b>TOTAL</b>				290.4			293.9			284.9			300.3			308.1				

<b>SCHOOLS</b>																
GAS	kWh	17,331,695	0.18387	3,187	16,866,611	0.18316	3,089	18,614,656	0.18254	3398	15,031,404	0.1826	2,744	15,977,120	0.1829	2,922
OIL	litres	88,192	2,54039	224	35,465	2,54014	90	29,757	2,54013	76	2,5400	-	43606	2,5402	111	
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	7,273,687	0.23314	1,696	7,503,748	0.21233	1,593	7,174,470	0.19338	1,387	6,800,962	0.2071	1,408	6,990,128	0.2071	1,447
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	7,273,687	0.02005	146	7,503,748	0.01879	141	7,174,470	0.01769	127	6,800,962	0.0179	122	6,990,128	0.0183	128
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh	98,858	0.23314	23		0.21233	0		0.19338	0	75,952	0.2071	16	67,202	0.2071	14
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh	53,398	0	0		0	0		0	0	535,770	0.2071	111	360626	0.2071	75
WATER SUPPLIED	m3															
WATER SEWERAGE	m3															
FUGITIVE - R410A	kg	10.61	2088	22.2	4.8	2088	10.0	4.8	2088	10.0	0.0			1.7	1924.0	3.3
FUGITIVE - R32		3.2												1.3	675.0	0.8
FUGITIVE - R407C			1774	0.0		1774	0.0		1774	0.0	0.0			0.0		
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>5,274.6</b>			<b>4,923.7</b>			<b>4,997.8</b>			<b>4,401.0</b>			<b>4,700.9</b>
<b>LEISURE CENTRES</b>																
GAS	kWh	680,752	0.18387	125	2,401,196	0.18316	440	3,268,124	0.18254	597	2,427,223	0.1826	443	3,580,813	0.1829	655
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	381,917	0.23314	89	1,241,494	0.21233	264	1,586,958	0.19338	307	1,602,400	0.2071	332	1,899,197	0.2071	393
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	381,917	0.02005	8	1,241,494	0.01879	23	1,586,958	0.01769	28	1,602,400	0.0179	29	1,899,197	0.0183	35
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh	20,162	0.23314	5	37,703	0.21233	8		0.19338	-	8,349	0.2071	2	-	-	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh										30,865	0.2071	6	220,122	0.2071	46
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>222</b>			<b>727</b>			<b>932</b>			<b>812</b>			<b>1,128</b>
<b>READING BUSES</b>																
GAS	kWh	1,334,455	0.18387	245	1,129,870	0.18316	207	1,055,505	0.18254	193	1,232,538	0.183	225	1,244,620	0.183	228
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	1,307,373	0.23314	305	1,464,363	0.21233	311	1,523,630	0.19338	295	1,482,286	0.207	307	1,623,937	0.207	336
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	1,307,373	0.02005	26	1,464,363	0.01879	28	1,523,630	0.01769	27	1,482,286	0.018	27	1,623,937	0.018	30
ELECTRICITY FROM RBC FIT	kWh	16,668	0.23314	4	10,291	0.21233	2		0.19338	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh															
FLEET - DIESEL	litres	1,335,486	2.5	3,400	2,686,750	2.5	6,750	2,477,169	2.6	6,336	2,277,304	2.51	5,716	2,506,758	2.66	6,672
FLEET - CNG	litres	813	2533.0	2,061	1,470	2538.5	3,730	1,569	2539.3	3,984	1,859	2,563	4,763	1,831	2,568	4,702
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>6,037</b>			<b>11,026</b>			<b>10,835</b>			<b>11,037</b>			<b>11,968</b>
<b>SMALL MEAD</b>																
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID	kWh	1,633,650	0.23314	381	1,760,270	0.21233	374	1,691,865	0.19338	327	1,443,390	0.2071	299	1,403,233	0.2071	291
ELECTRICITY FROM GRID T&D	kWh	1,633,650	0.02005	33	1,760,270	0.01879	33	1,691,865	0.01769	30	1,443,390	0.0179	26	1,403,233	0.0183	26
ELECTRICITY FROM RENEWABLES	kWh			0	0		0	0	0	0						
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>413.6</b>			<b>406.8</b>			<b>357.1</b>			<b>324.8</b>			<b>316.2</b>
<b>OUTSIDE SCOPE</b>																
FLEET - DIESEL - BIOFUEL MIX	litres															
FLEET - PETROL - BIOFUEL MIX	litres															
CNG	litres															
BIOMASS	tonnes															
<b>TOTAL</b>																
<b>GROSS EMISSIONS - CORPORATE</b>				<b>5,972.1</b>			<b>5,675.3</b>			<b>5,149.0</b>			<b>5,403.3</b>			<b>5,260.1</b>
<b>GROSS EMISSIONS - ALL</b>				<b>17,919.3</b>			<b>22,758.4</b>			<b>22,270.0</b>			<b>21,978.0</b>			<b>23,373.5</b>
ELECTRICITY EXPORTED/SOLD TO GRID/OTHERS	kWh	1,375,999	0.25319	348	1,298,673	0.23112	300	1,370,495	0.21107	289	1,524,448	0.22499	343	1,441,644	0.22535	325
NET EMISSIONS - CORPORATE				<b>5,624</b>			<b>5,375.2</b>			<b>4,859.7</b>			<b>5,060.4</b>			<b>4,935.3</b>
NET EMISSIONS - ALL				<b>17,571</b>			<b>22,458</b>			<b>21,981</b>			<b>21,635</b>			<b>23,049</b>

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

## Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

Working better with you

19 November 2025

<b>Title</b>	Report of the Active Travel Task & Finish Group - Findings and Recommendations
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To present the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	N/A
<b>Report author</b>	Andrew Wood, Principal Committee Administrator
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
<b>Council priority</b>	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the findings and recommendations of the Active Travel Task and Finish Scrutiny Group Report, as set out in Appendix 2, be noted;</li> <li>That officers review the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and provide an evaluation report to a future meeting of this Committee.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group, established by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee on 12 March 2025 ([Minute 26](#) 2024-25 refers). The Group's scrutiny exercise has concluded and its report is provided at Appendix 2.
- It is recommended that relevant officers review the report's findings and present an evaluation of the Scrutiny Group's recommendations to the SEPT Committee meeting on 11 March 2026.

### 2. Policy Context

- Active Travel refers to modes of travel that involve a level of physical activity, such as walking, wheeling (e.g. using wheelchairs, mobility scooters) and cycling, as alternatives to motorised vehicles.
- On 15 October 2024, the Council adopted the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 as the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the Borough ([Minute 21](#) 2024-25 refers). The LTP encompasses the Council's Active Travel strategy and its associated sub-strategies, including the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
- In line with the Council's overview and scrutiny procedure rules, the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee established a Councillor-led Task and Finish Group on 12 March 2025 to scrutinise and review the implementation of Reading's Active Travel strategy. The Committee also approved the Group's Terms of Reference, its cross-party membership and Chair (Councillor Cross).

2.4. The Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group, as agreed by the SEPT Committee are listed below and can be viewed in full at Appendix 1:

**Terms of Reference:**

- 1) To undertake member-led scrutiny of the design, funding and delivery of the Council's cycling and walking network schemes.
- 2) To enable increased member understanding of the Council's approach to active travel schemes.
- 3) To take evidence from internal and external stakeholders.
- 4) To identify areas of best practice and areas for improvement.
- 5) To assess how the implementation of active travel schemes is meeting the Council's Local Transport Plan objectives especially inclusion and equality of access.
- 6) To make recommendations to be considered by a subsequent meeting of the SEPT Committee.

**Policy and Financial Considerations:**

- 7) To note the existing process for the allocation of CIL monies to fund active travel schemes.
- 8) To note the need to balance the Council's limited resources for Strategic Transport, including active travel, in terms of both funding and staff, alongside the other schemes and initiatives required to deliver the LTP objectives.
- 9) That acceptance and/or priority given to recommendations will be taken following consultation with the Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services and in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport.
- 10) To make recommendations that feed into the LCWIP update alongside other consultation input from stakeholders and the Lead Councillor.
- 11) To note that any recommendations with financial implications would need to be reviewed by the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services and S151 officer.
- 12) To note that resourcing of the overview and scrutiny exercise will be managed from within existing budgets.

**3. Summary of Scrutiny Activity**

3.1. The Active Travel Task and Finish Group undertook its scrutiny review through a series of meetings and evidence-gathering activities. The Group's activity is summarised in the table below:

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Activity:</b>
<b>12 March 2025</b>	Active Travel Task and Finish Group established by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee.
<b>3 April 2025</b>	Initial meeting of the Task and Finish Group. Agreement to submit written questions to RBC officers and to distribute a stakeholder questionnaire.
<b>12 April 2025</b>	Written questions submitted to RBC officers.
<b>25 April 2025</b>	Stakeholder questionnaire issued by Committee Services.

<b>29 May 2025</b>	Task and Finish Group met to review RBC officer and stakeholder written responses. Agreement to hold evidence-gathering sessions with RBC officers and Reading Cycle Campaign and to contact other Local Authorities with strong records of delivering successful Active Travel schemes.
<b>30 June 2025</b>	Meeting to refine follow-up questions to ask RBC officers at in-person evidence gathering session.
<b>3 July 2025</b>	In-person evidence gathering session held with RBC officers at Civic Offices.
<b>Post 3 July 2025</b>	Additional written questions submitted by the Chair to RBC officers. Responses collected and circulated by Committee Services.
<b>7 August 2025</b>	Online evidence-gathering session held with Reading Cycle Campaign.
<b>29 August 2025</b>	Questionnaire sent to selected Local Authorities. Responses collated by Committee Services and shared with Group members.
<b>19 September 2025</b>	Final meeting to discuss findings and agree recommendations. Chair tasked with drafting the final report.

#### **4. Findings and Recommendations**

- 4.1. The Active Travel Task and Finish Group's findings and recommendations report can be found attached at Appendix 2.
- 4.2. Officers have provided a significant amount of information to the Task and Finish Group throughout this process, covering a wide range of areas including Central Government guidance and funding, the Council's statutory duties, roles and capacity of teams within the Council, previous decisions taken by Members at Committees, and detailed information regarding specific designs of active travel schemes. There is an opportunity to implement recommendations from the Group through a refresh of the Council's adopted Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan (LCWIP), which will be reviewed in the context of the challenging financial circumstances facing the Council and the need to prioritise available resources (both financial and staffing) in the most effective way to meet our overall objectives as set out in the Reading Transport Strategy 2040.

#### **5. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 5.1. Scrutiny of the Council's Active Travel strategy contributes towards achieving the Council's wider Strategic Aims by supporting healthier lifestyles, reducing environmental impact, and promoting inclusive access to transport.
- 5.2. Through evidence-led review and stakeholder engagement, the Group's work will help ensure that the Council's Active Travel strategy is aligned with the Council's commitments to public health, climate action, economic growth, and social equity.
- 5.3. The scrutiny process also strengthens governance by promoting transparency and cross-party collaboration, while helping to shape infrastructure that is accessible, sustainable, and responsive to community needs. This work supports the delivery of the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 and reinforces the Council's vision for a thriving, connected, and resilient Borough.

#### **6. Environmental and Climate Implications**

- 6.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers)

- 6.2. Active Travel contributes directly to the Council's environmental and climate goals by encouraging walking, wheeling, and cycling as alternatives to private car use.
- 6.3. Active Travel schemes help to reduce emissions, alleviate traffic congestion, and improve air quality. By scrutinising the implementation of the Council's Active Travel strategy, the work of the Task and Finish Group will help to ensure that these important goals are achieved.

## **7. Community Engagement**

- 7.1. As part of its scrutiny exercise, the Task and Finish Group engaged with a range of stakeholder organisations with an interest in Active Travel. This included regular participants of the Cycle Forum and attendees of the Cleaner Air Safer Transport (CAST) Forum, ensuring that a broad spectrum of community perspectives were considered.
- 7.2. To explore examples of best practice, the Group also surveyed a number of Local Authorities, among them several London boroughs and selected county and city councils known for their successful delivery of Active Travel schemes. These insights helped inform the Group's understanding of effective approaches and potential opportunities for improvement within Reading.

## **8. Equality Implications**

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. At its meeting on 12 March 2025, SEPT Committee agreed to amend the Task and Finish Group's Terms of Reference to include "inclusion and equality of access" as a key consideration within the scrutiny exercise.
- 8.3. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not considered applicable to the recommendations contained within this report.

## **9. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 9.1. There are none.

## **10. Legal Implications**

- 10.1. Reading Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the [Constitution](#), pages 125–127) set out how the Council's scrutiny functions operate.
- 10.2. This review has been carried out in line with Scrutiny Procedure Rules for setting up and appointing task and finish groups to undertake overview and scrutiny exercises and report back to the appointing Committee.

## **11. Financial Implications**

- 11.1. Continued support for the Task and Finish Group will require officer time to facilitate the scrutiny process and to prepare the report reviewing and responding to the Group's findings and recommendations. These resource requirements will continue to be managed from within existing budgets.
- 11.2. In accordance with the Group's Terms of Reference, any recommendations with financial implications are required to be reviewed by the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services and the Section 151 Officer. These financial

considerations will be addressed in the officer report recommended for submission to the SEPT Committee in March 2026.

## **12. Timetable for Implementation**

- 12.1. It is proposed that a report be prepared by officers reviewing the Task and Finish Group's findings and recommendations to be submitted to the next meeting of SEPT Committee on 11 March 2026.
- 12.2. Subject to the decision(s) made by SEPT Committee on 11 March 2026, an action tracker could be developed to monitor the implementation of the Group's recommendations. Alternatively, a report could be submitted to a future meeting of SEPT Committee updating on progress made towards the implementing of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations.

## **13. Background Papers**

- 13.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference and Membership of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group (as agreed by SEPT Committee on 12 March 2025).

Appendix 2: Active Travel Task and Finish Scrutiny Group Report.

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# Appendix 1

## Active Travel Task-&Finish Group - Terms of Reference and Membership

(as agreed by SEPT Committee on 12 March 2025)

### Policy Context:

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (pages 133-135 of the Constitution) allow Committees to set up and appoint task-orientated, time-limited task-and-finish groups to undertake an overview and scrutiny exercise and report back to the appointing Committee.

RBC: Local Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Local Transport Plan (LTP).

National context: Active Travel Fund (ATF) funding, recent national changes, Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 guidance.

### Action:

A Member Task and Finish cross party working group will be set up to provide overview and scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy.

The group will be supported by Committee Services; it will meet on a regular basis and report back to a future meeting of SEPT Committee.

### Terms of Reference:

1. To undertake member-led scrutiny of the design, funding and delivery of the Council's cycling and walking network schemes.
2. To enable increased member understanding of the Council's approach to active travel schemes.
3. To take evidence from internal and external stakeholders.
4. To identify areas of best practice and areas for improvement.
5. To assess how the implementation of active travel schemes is meeting the Council's Local Transport Plan objectives especially inclusion and equality of access.
6. To make recommendations to be considered by a subsequent meeting of the SEPT Committee.

### Policy and Financial Considerations:

7. To note the existing process for the allocation of CIL moneys to fund active travel schemes.
8. To note the need to balance the Council's limited resources for Strategic Transport, including active travel, in terms of both funding and staff, alongside the other schemes and initiatives required to deliver the LTP objectives.
9. That acceptance and/or priority given to recommendations will be taken following consultation with the Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services and in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport.
10. To make recommendations that feed into the LCWIP update alongside other consultation input from stakeholders and the Lead Councillor.
11. To note that any recommendations with financial implications would need be reviewed by the Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services and S151 officer.
12. To note that resourcing of the overview and scrutiny exercise will be managed from within existing budgets.

## **Active Travel Task-&Finish Group - Terms of Reference and Membership**

(as agreed by SEPT Committee on 12 March 2025)

### **Membership (7):**

Membership of the Task and Finish Group will be on the basis of 4:1:1:1 (Labour: Green: Conservative: Liberal Democrat). Appointments to the Task and Finish Group will be made as follows:

Labour	4	Cllr Will Cross (Chair) Cllr Andrew Hornsby-Smith Cllr Jacopo Lanzoni Cllr Jenny McGrother
Green	1	Cllr Josh Williams
Conservative	1	Cllr Stephen Goss
Liberal Democrat	1	Cllr James Moore

### Active Travel Task and Finish Scrutiny Group Report

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The cross-party task and finish group was established by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) committee in March 2025, with a remit to scrutinise the implementation of the council's cycling and walking strategy, and to make recommendations.
- 1.2 The group took written evidence from Reading Borough Council officers, local community groups, and high-performing local authorities for active travel. Further oral evidence was taken via a meeting with representatives of the Reading Cycle Campaign, and a meeting with Transport officers.
- 1.3 In line with the terms of reference, the task and finish group has not proposed any changes to the council's recently-agreed Local Transport Strategy, but has instead concentrated on identifying ways to improve the implementation of the existing strategy. The group has sought to reach unanimity, and its recommendations have been agreed 'nem con' unless otherwise specified.
- 1.4 Reading's Local Transport Strategy has been independently assessed, in a recent Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) report, as setting ambitious goals for modal shift to active and public transport. The report, considered by Audit and Governance Committee on 9 April 2025 [[viewable here](#)], noted that staffing constraints mean that it will only be possible to achieve these targets if all resources are prioritised in a way that aligns with the council's strategic objectives. Members recognised that these constraints are a national issue affecting all councils, it is noted that current Transport for the South East (TFSE) studies and consultations [[viewable here](#)] have verified that active travel in Reading is further ahead in their journeys towards modal shift than other councils in the South East and elsewhere and that there is opportunity for local improvement to better meet our strategic goals.
- 1.5 The group was mindful of the financial position that the council faces, and therefore has not made any recommendations for unfunded additional expenditure. The focus has instead been on looking at how processes can be improved, and how existing funding sources could best be used and prioritised, as several areas of concern were identified in this area.
- 1.6 Members found that while a strong strategic commitment to active travel exists, its effective implementation is currently facing operational challenges. This report sets out 12 recommendations across three themes, focusing on rebalancing scheme design priorities, best utilising available funding, and aligning internal processes to accelerate the delivery of a cohesive and safe active travel network, in order to meet the council's existing targets for modal shift:

#### Recommendations

- 1: Avoidance of 'missing links'
- 2: Increased use of 'wands' for a better value-vs-effort ratio

- 3: Considered use of shared spaces where appropriate
- 4: Continuous footways and ‘informal’ side-road zebra crossings
- 5: Cyclist-level traffic lights
- 6: Pavement parking and accessibility for disabled pedestrians
- 7: Making best use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) contributions
- 8: Consideration of other sources of income, including demand management measures
- 9: Reprioritisation of Waiting Restrictions Review Programme (WRRP)
- 10: A clear pathway from scheme request to implementation
- 11: Embedding active travel across the council
- 12: Senior leadership oversight and project management to ensure delivery at pace

1.7 The task and finish group members would like to extend our thanks to the local community groups, Reading Borough Council officers, and officers from other authorities who provided evidence to this scrutiny process; and to Andrew Wood and Committee Services officers for providing valuable administrative support to assist members in carrying out this review.

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## Recommendations

### 2. Scheme Design and Prioritisation

2.1 The group assessed whether the council is striking the right balance in its approach to scheme design and prioritisation, taking evidence from other councils and carefully considering feedback and suggestions from local stakeholders. Members were particularly mindful of evidence from leading local authorities, which showed that the areas which have seen the greatest level of modal shift to active travel are those which have implemented extensive, segregated and connected cycle networks, enabling people to feel safe when using active travel.

2.2 Members found a range of examples of best practice from other local authorities. Glasgow City Council has seen significant modal shift due to its segregated network; Greater Manchester councils have worked with the mayoral authority to deliver an integrated network across local authority areas; Edinburgh has developed new Street Design Guidance to incorporate dropped kerbs, tighter junction radii and pavement widening during infrastructure renewal schemes; Nottingham has introduced a Workplace Parking Levy to fund sustainable transport infrastructure; Lambeth has developed a kerbside use strategy to reallocate space from cars to pedestrians, cyclists and sustainable urban drainage; and Southwark’s Streets for People scheme is moving away from favouring cars in order to free up space for cycling and walking.

#### **Recommendation 1: Avoidance of ‘missing links’**

2.3 Members of the group acknowledged that there was a strong perception from public stakeholders that Reading’s cycling network contained numerous ‘missing links’, which hindered uptake among potential cyclists. The group noted that even short gaps in

connectivity can have the effect of forcing cyclists onto busy main roads where they feel less confident, which precludes people from using the bicycle for the entire journey. As mentioned above, it was noted that the local authorities which had seen the greatest increase in cycle usage were those who had successfully delivered a connected and segregated network via a ‘cycle superhighway’ approach.

2.4 Members considered three case studies of Active Travel Fund (ATF) funded schemes to try and ascertain why missing links could arise:

#### **Shinfield Road**

The Shinfield Road cycle scheme has delivered a long length of stepped track, but active travel upgrades to the Christchurch Green junction are intended to take place in a subsequent phase, thereby resulting in a missing link between the new Shinfield Road scheme and Redlands Road. Members noted that previous ATF bidding requirements had limited the types of schemes that the council could put forward in specific funding rounds but noted that the funding allocation mechanism had recently been made more flexible, providing an opportunity for a reconsideration of the approach taken in putting schemes forward.

Members found that the prioritisation matrix for previous ATF-funded strategic cycle schemes had led to missing links, by preferring schemes which had the highest net level of support in the public consultation, rather than preferring schemes which would most help to deliver a connected cycle network.

#### **Castle Hill**

The group welcomed the approach taken with the proposed Castle Hill scheme, whereby the initial phase of delivery will concentrate on the more dangerous Inner Distribution Road (IDR) roundabout end (which connects with existing cycle routes in the town centre) as opposed to delivering a long length of cycle track along the Bath Road which would end with a missing link when cyclists arrived at the IDR roundabout.

#### **Southampton Street**

Members noted that a lengthy mandatory cycle lane (between the Hindu Temple and the former Red Cow pub, via an existing bus lane) had been introduced quickly and effectively as part of Covid-era ATF measures, but that there is then a gap in the form of a busy road between the Red Cow junction and the bus lane at the Oracle roundabout. No subsequent progress had been made with connecting these two schemes, due to officer concerns about the potential impact on car traffic at the roundabout, thereby resulting in a missing link.

The group felt that elected members had given a clear ‘steer’ on increased pedestrian and cyclist priority as part of the Local Transport Strategy, and that the council should ensure that any consideration of statutory duties to facilitate the expeditious movement of traffic on the road network gives sufficient weight to the movement of cyclists and pedestrian traffic, to promote modal shift.

Members of the task and finish group further recommend that a primary criterion for all future strategic scheme selection should be the prioritisation of linking up

existing infrastructure to form a contiguous cycle superhighway network. This might often involve starting in the town centre and building outwards, but specific cases would need to be considered in more detail as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) update.

**Recommendation 2: Increased use of ‘wands’ for a better value-vs-effort ratio**

- 2.5 It was recognised that a variety of Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) compliant methods of cycle lane segregation exist, including stepped tracks and bollards/wands. The group noted that existing strategic schemes in Reading had largely used stepped tracks, which are high quality and good practice, but are significantly more costly, and do not allow as long a length of cycle track to be implemented for the same amount of money as methods such as wands.
- 2.6 From officer evidence, it was noted that the primary reason for not using wands in schemes was a concern that it would be harder to clear leaves from these routes, however, members noted from the evidence of leading local authorities that this had seemingly not proved to be an impediment to wand-based schemes elsewhere, and felt that the gutter issue was a factor to be weighed up against other priorities, rather than a reason to rule out wands altogether. It was also noted that wands can be used to deliver large lengths of segregation quickly, with the potential to upgrade the schemes at a later stage if warranted.
- 2.7 The group recommends that the council should reconsider its approach to segregation, explicitly taking into account the use of lower-cost options (such as bollard/wand protection) where they can deliver a lengthier, more integrated cycle network more quickly, sharing experiences with other local authorities when it may be beneficial.
- 2.8 A further recommendation is to review the town’s existing painted cycle lanes as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) update, with a view to identifying locations for wands to be installed to improve segregation, as a ‘quick win’.



Figure 1: a stepped cycle track (DfT - Department for Transport)



Figure 2: a cycle lane with wand segregation (TfL - Transport for London)

### **Recommendation 3: Considered use of shared spaces where appropriate**

2.9 The group noted that shared spaces are not preferred by Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) guidance, and therefore any schemes involving these would be unlikely to qualify for Active Travel Fund (ATF) funding. However, it was also recognised that, while there are some issues with pedestrian and cyclist interface on shared paths, they can also feel safer to novice cyclists (including women and children), and therefore may be beneficial in encouraging modal shift, especially in areas with existing wide paths and low footfall.

2.10 Members noted that there are numerous 'gaps' in the town's existing shared space network, as well as some missing pavement markers, missing tactile paving, instances of signage on the pavement surface not being reflected on the cycle network map, and instances of routes indicated on the map not having the appropriate indication on the pavement surface.

2.11 Noting that these 'gaps' may be fairly quick and cost-effective to deal with, the group recommends that appropriate consideration be given to extensions to shared space routes as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) review, as locally-funded small schemes, to complement the emerging segregated cycle network.



*Figure 3: a shared-use path for cyclists and pedestrians (DfT)*

### **Recommendation 4: Continuous footways and 'informal' side-road zebra crossings**

2.12 Members noted that recent changes to the Highway Code had given increased priority to pedestrians and cyclists and side road junctions, and noted that a growing number of local authorities have been redesigning such junctions to increase the physical sense of priority, such as continuous footways/Copenhagen crossings. These entry treatments physically maintain the pavement level and surface material, indicating to drivers that they are crossing a continuous pedestrian route, rather than the other way around. This design enhances accessibility for disabled users and pushchairs by eliminating the need to navigate kerbs, making the walking route more direct and uninterrupted. A further, and more cost-effective measure, can be found in pilots of 'informal' side road zebra crossings, in Westminster and other local authorities.

2.13 The group found that there had been some examples of good practice with continuous footways in Reading, but this was not consistent and did not form part of a larger commitment to such entry treatments.

2.14 It was also noted that some London authorities had implemented continuous paths for cyclists and pedestrians where segregated cycles tracks had been installed. Members noted that there would be cost considerations to such an approach, but that this type of infrastructure may avoid some of the issues with sharp kerbs that have affected the Shinfield Road scheme where the raised path ends and restarts at each side road, as well as improving the sense of priority.

2.15 While the group noted that continuous footways would not be suitable for every junction, it was felt that such options were generally being ruled out on the grounds of inconvenience to motorists, or cost, and felt that they were not currently being sufficiently prioritised in the 'toolbox' of measures available to the council. The group therefore recommends that the council consider examples of best practice in other local authorities and take into account how such crossings can promote modal shift in future major and minor schemes.



Figure 4: Shinfield Road stepped cycle track with white painted entry treatment (Google Maps)



Figure 5: a stepped cycle track with 'flush kerb' entry treatment (Google Maps)



Figure 6: an entry treatment of both a stepped cycle track and continuous footway (Google Maps)



Figure 7: a continuous footway for pedestrians (Google Maps)



Figure 8: an informal side-road zebra crossing (Google Maps)

#### **Recommendation 5: Cyclist-level traffic lights**

- 2.16 Cyclist-level traffic lights can be installed alongside normal traffic lights at advance stop lines, or as part of segregated infrastructure. These can sometimes be phased differently to allow early release, they improve visibility and safety, and more generally provide a visual reminder to all road users that cyclists are using the junctions.
- 2.17 The group found that there were very few such traffic lights in Reading, and although the Council had supported their use in principle, there had been no progress towards installing any, due to cost considerations. Members recognised that cost would generally prohibit the retrofitting of cyclist-level lights on existing infrastructure due to its fragility, as this would require a full replacement of the existing traffic lights, but noted that many other local authorities have similar issues with ageing infrastructure yet had introduced a significant number of cyclist-level lights. It was further noted that no cyclist-level signals had been installed as part of the Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant funded programme on cost grounds; members did not feel that this reflected the correct balance of strategic priorities.
- 2.18 The group recommends that the installation of cyclist-level traffic lights should be adopted as the default where new traffic light infrastructure is installed (e.g. on new housing estates), and in junctions undergoing a complete replacement (e.g. via the

Traffic Signal Obsolescence Grant or as part of those Active Travel Fund (ATF) works which require a full signal replacement).



Figure 9: cycle traffic lights at eye level (DfT)

#### **Recommendation 6: Pavement parking and accessibility for disabled pedestrians**

- 2.19 A recurring theme in the evidence from stakeholders was that pavements are routinely obstructed by parked cars, which causes a significant impediment for pedestrians and disabled people. It was noted that there are some streets where pavement parking restrictions would result in a reduction in car parking capacity, due to the roads in question being too narrow for cars to park on both sides unless using the pavement. Members felt that that a loss of parking capacity was not, in itself, a good reason to rule out pavement parking restrictions, as the Local Transport Strategy specifically commits to the reallocation of space from cars to pedestrians, whose needs are not currently being adequately prioritised.
- 2.20 In 2014, the council implemented a pavement and verge parking ban via Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), in Tilehurst and Southcote. Members recognised that for administrative reasons it would not be feasible to implement a boroughwide ban via this method, and that the council is waiting for the government to make an announcement on changes to national legislation. In the meantime, individual problem streets could be considered for parking restrictions via the existing waiting restrictions review programme, noting the significant capacity constraints.
- 2.21 It is therefore recommended that the council should await forthcoming government updates on a national pavement parking ban, and consider becoming an early adopter or pilot local authority for any opportunities that arise to address pavement obstructions.
- 2.22 A further recommendation, specifically concerning the needs of disabled pedestrians, is that the council give due consideration to benches/perching places as part of proposals to improve the town's public realm, recognising that pregnant women, disabled and elderly people, those living with chronic pain, and carers with small children etc struggle to access amenities without adequate places to rest.

### 3. Funding

- 3.1 The group considered whether the council is making the best use of all current and potential funding sources to finance active travel schemes.
- 3.2 Members noted that constraints on local authority finances mean that active travel schemes must generally be funded from income sources outside of the council's general revenue streams. In Reading, strategic active travel schemes have largely been funded via the government's Active Travel Fund (ATF), as well as some use of Section 106 monies. A key theme noted in the response from Reading Cycle Campaign was the slow progress with the backlog of 'small scheme' implementation, due to a lack of funding, and the task and finish group has focused on making recommendations to improve the CIL process in order to address this.
- 3.3 Members recognised that transport schemes are only one of several 'themes' for Community Infrastructure Level (CIL) expenditure, with others including parks, public realm improvements and community facilities. It was recognised that transport expenditure should be balanced with these other areas of spending, but members felt that the right balance was not currently being struck, particularly when it came to 80% CIL, where the lack of any funding for cycling infrastructure was not felt to reflect the council's strategic priorities.

#### **Recommendation 7: Making best use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) contributions**

- 3.4 The group took evidence on the current use of developer contributions (such as CIL and S106 funds) for major and minor active travel schemes.
- 3.5 Members expressed significant concern that the 15% CIL process did not appear to be operating effectively in this area. The current situation is that minor active travel measures (such as improved cycling facilities, pedestrian refuges, speed calming features, modal filters etc) are agreed by committee, subject to funding, with the main source of potential funding being 15% CIL. The CIL terms of reference allow either councillors or officers to submit funding bids, to be agreed by the Policy Committee; however, officer feedback indicated that officers had not submitted any CIL funding requests for these schemes, meaning that a backlog of agreed schemes has built up. Members noted that, in practice, 15% CIL bids only originate from ward councillors – this leads to a failure point in the process, as an active travel network will have gaps if ward members in different areas have different priorities. It was also noted that, where members have put forward new cycling and walking measures for CIL funding, these are often schemes that do not feature in the existing list of agreed schemes.
- 3.6 Members noted that £500,000 of 80% CIL funding had been used (by Network Management) to successfully and quickly deliver a programme of dropped kerbs and grab rails to benefit pedestrians. However, this was a new programme that did not originate from the agreed list of schemes, which are still forming a backlog. Evidence from Finance officers was that no bids had been received from the Strategic Transport team for 80% CIL funding, which members considered to be a missed opportunity. It was noted that there had been significant use of 80% CIL funding for road resurfacing,

which will provide some benefit to cyclists and pedestrians, but members did not consider that this balance of funding adequately reflected the changing priorities of the council for active travel.

- 3.7 The group also noted that there had been use of S106 contributions in funding schemes by both Network Management and Strategic Transport, however, it was observed that a significant number of pending schemes in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and other request lists are located in the town centre, and that progress has not been made with these despite significant housing development in this area, and associated developer contributions.
- 3.8 Members noted that a source of frustration from cycling groups was the lengthy list of small measures in the town centre area, which had been outstanding for many years, predominantly signage and wayfinding measures, without an identified funding source.
- 3.9 The task and finish group recommends that the council should review processes around how S106 and CIL funds are managed and allocated for active travel, and to ensure that officers are proactively putting forward schemes for funding.

**Recommendation 8: Consideration of other sources of income, including demand management measures**

- 3.10 As mentioned above, a significant constraint on active travel scheme delivery is the limited available funding. Members noted that in the medium term a metro-mayoral authority will be introduced; this is a potential source of additional funding, and many of the councils with the highest active travel capability rating are part of combined authorities. A risk is that Reading Borough Council will not be able to fully benefit from this funding due to capacity issues, and members therefore request that officers plan ahead for any opportunities that are likely to arise from devolution.
- 3.11 Members also recognised that the several leading authorities have introduced schemes such as the Workplace Parking Levy, Clean Air Zone or Congestion Charge. These are demand management measures, the primary function of which is to change travel behaviours, but which have the second order effect of raising income which is ringfenced to transport expenditure, including active travel. The task and finish group noted that a Workplace Parking Levy (WPPL) had previously been considered by Reading Borough Council, which had the potential to raise a significant amount of income depending on the area covered, but this had not been progressed due to uncertainty about post-Covid travel behaviours.
- 3.12 The group recognised that any such scheme would be a significant undertaking, and felt that the current priority should be to ensure that all existing funding sources are being fully utilised, and that processes are working properly. However, it is recommended that the council should formally monitor and evaluate examples of income generation from demand management measures implemented in other local authorities, and consider further exploring the potential for a WPPL in Reading when the time is right.

## 4. Implementation

4.1 The group considered whether officer time, processes, and high-level vision are adequately aligned with strategic active travel aims.

### **Recommendation 9: Reprioritisation of Waiting Restrictions Review Programme (WRRP)**

4.2 It was recognised in the recent Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) review that Reading Borough Council has an ambitious target for active travel, and that a key risk is lack of officer capacity in delivering the necessary programme of work. The evidence which the task and finish group took from officers highlighted the fact that a significant proportion of officer time is currently taken up by the Waiting Restrictions Review Programme (involving changes to double yellow lines, parking bays etc), and associated Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) administration, investigation and consultation work. This has limited the amount of time available for active travel measures, and resulted in a backlog. While noting that double yellow lines can be popular with residents, they are not a strategic priority in the Local Transport Strategy, unlike active travel, and members did not feel that the council is currently getting the balance right.

4.3 The majority of the task and finish group members agreed to recommend that Reading Borough Council should limit the size of the Waiting Restrictions Review Programme (WRRP) to allow for greater officer time to be allocated to active travel work. Furthermore, the council should introduce a transparent scoring matrix for the WRRP submissions, which weights requests according to the council's various priorities (including active travel), and aligns with the LCWIP.

### **Recommendation 10: Clear pathway from scheme request to implementation**

4.4 Members of the group found that the current progress route for scheme requests lacks clarity and consistency, and that there are too many 'request lists', leading to mismanaged expectations and frustrations from members of the public.

4.5 In their written evidence, officers set out the route that schemes should take through the council's processes:

- Inclusion/alignment with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
- Optioneering
- Concept design
- Funding secured
- Scheme and spend approval (Policy/Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (SEPT))
- Initial public consultation (including engagement with local interest groups)
- Review feedback and amend plans as appropriate
- Detailed design
- Approval to undertake statutory consultation (Traffic Management Sub-Committee (TMSC))
- Statutory consultation
- Review feedback and amend plans as appropriate
- Report objections / scheme amendments (TMSC)
- Procurement of a contractor

- Construction
- Scheme opening
- Scheme monitoring

4.6 Members felt that in practice, requests were not consistently following this pathway, with too many ‘on ramps’ and ‘off ramps’ throughout. For example, some completely new schemes were being put forward for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding by councillors which did not form part of the agreed LCWIP, schemes that had been approved by committee or are in the existing LCWIP had not been progressed for funding, and there were too many ‘request lists’ with no clear pathway for progression. Currently, the various request lists include the Requests for Traffic Management Measures, the Cycle Forum request list and the CIL request list, as well as the LCWIP. In some locations, multiple conflicting schemes have been developed, and it is not always clear which proposals have been superseded, so this will need to be considered as part of the LCWIP review to ensure clarity and effective prioritisation.

4.7 The task and finish group recommends that the existing ‘request lists’ be combined into one, with clear criteria for progression from idea, to approval, to implementation.

4.8 Officers are also requested to ensure that engagement with key stakeholders, including the Reading Cycle Campaign, takes place at the earliest formative stages of scheme development.

**Recommendation 11: Embedding active travel across the council**

4.9 Members noted that the council has undergone a significant change in strategic priorities around active travel in recent years, and recognised the strong commitment to cycling and walking from key officers, but noted that in order for the ambitious modal shift targets to be achieved, it will be necessary to ensure that these new priorities are fully embedded across a range of departments, including Network Management, Anti Social-Behaviour (ASB) and Public Realm, Planning etc.

4.10 The task and finish group recommends that the council should formally reiterate its commitment to active travel, and that the council should take steps to ensure that the active travel strategic vision is consistently embedded across all relevant council departments, thereby ensuring that day-to-day operational decisions consistently support the growth of safe and cohesive cycling and walking infrastructure.

**Recommendation 12: Senior leadership oversight and project management to ensure delivery at pace**

4.11 Members of the task and finish group noted that perceptions of the progress to-date on active travel differed between officers and public stakeholders. The group felt that there needs to be more clarity around the effective project management of major schemes, with concern about the number of strategic Active Travel Fund (ATF) schemes that have yet to be completed.

4.12 The recommendation is that the council should review mechanisms for senior leadership oversight, and ways to ensure that the strategic vision for active travel is

being consistently implemented and that delivery is proceeding at pace, with clear reporting lines from the Chief Executive to the Executive Director.

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## **5. Next steps**

### **Progress tracker**

- 5.1 Officers are requested to provide a report to the next meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport (SEPT) Committee, agreeing or rejecting each recommendation; and to update councillors by way of a light-touch progress tracker to every second meeting of SEPT Committee, until all accepted recommendations are completed.

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