

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 11 MARCH 2026

Present: Councillor Cross (Chair), Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Davies, Ennis, Goss, Keeping, Leng, McCann, McElroy, McGrother, Moore and Rowland.

Apologies: Councillors Ballsdon, Juthani, Lanzoni, Magon and McGoldrick.

15. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The Committee received and noted the list of delegated decisions from previous meetings.

16. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

The Minutes of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 26 November 2025 were received and noted.

18. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings of other bodies were received and noted:

- Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Local Liaison Committee on 6 November 2025;
- Cleaner Air Safer Transport Forum on 12 June 2025 and 2 December 2025;
- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board on 16 October 2025.

19. ADOPTION OF THE ELDON SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Further to Minute 12 of the meeting held on 19 November 2025, the Committee considered a report that outlined the results of the public consultation that had been held in relation to the draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal. The report recommended adopting a final version of the Appraisal, within which minor extensions to the conservation area boundary were proposed. The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment;
Appendix 2: Statement of Consultation on the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal;
Appendix 3: Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (adoption version).

The report explained that Eldon Square Conservation Area, Reading's oldest conservation area, had first been designated in 1972 and had been expanded in 1982 to include Watlington Street, Eldon Street, Victoria Street and Montague Street. The last appraisal review had taken place in 2007 and had not resulted in any further boundary changes.

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The latest review had been carried out by means of a community-led project by the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) on behalf of Reading Borough Council, supported by Council planning officers and interested community representatives. The review had utilised the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, recommended by Historic England as a methodology for assessing landscape and built environment character, but with the approach adapted by the CAAC to suit local circumstances.

The review had formed the basis of the draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal prepared by the CAAC. The draft Appraisal had been considered by the Committee at its meeting on 19 November 2025, at which approval had been granted for public consultation. In addition to comprehensively assessing the conservation area, identifying issues and vulnerabilities, and setting out an Action Plan for the area, the Appraisal also proposed minor extensions to the boundary to bring an additional five addresses into the conservation area. The existing and proposed amended boundaries were shown in Figure 1 of the report and in the proposed Appraisal at Appendix 3.

The public consultation had been conducted over an eight-week period between 25 November 2025 and 20 January 2026. A total of 14 responses had been received, which were summarised in the Statement of Consultation at Appendix 2. Points raised during the consultation included suggested wording changes, proposed amendments to maps, a query regarding the consideration of the climate emergency in relation to expanding the conservation area, and concerns about waste management, traffic management, and newly painted double yellow lines. The Statement of Consultation also set out the Council's responses to each of the comments received.

An updated version of the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal was attached to the report at Appendix 3, it incorporated detailed amendments to wording and maps, as well as other updates to ensure the document remained current. The changes made arising from the public consultation comments were highlighted in the Statement of Consultation (Appendix 2).

At the invitation of the Chair, Evelyn Williams, Chair of the Reading CAAC, gave a presentation on the work undertaken by the CAAC to develop the Eldon Square Appraisal, as well as on its future work that included the next planned appraisal of The Mount Conservation Area.

The Committee discussed the proposed updated Appraisal for Eldon Square and expressed its thanks to the CAAC for its ongoing work.

Resolved –

- (1) That the responses received during the public consultation on the draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal, as set out in Appendix 2, be noted;**
- (2) That the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal, as attached at Appendix 3, be adopted;**

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- (3) That the Eldon Square Conservation Area be extended as set out in the Appraisal (Appendix 3).**

20. CLEAN AIR LIVING MATTERS: EXPLORING READING

The Committee considered a report that updated on the Clean Air Living Matters; Exploring Reading (CALM:ER), Air Quality Awareness Programme following the completion of the project. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1: Table 1 - Summary of Key Performance Indicators for CALM;
- Appendix 2: Table 2 - Performance against KPIs.

The report explained that CALM:ER was a two-year educational project funded by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) through the Air Quality Grant Scheme 2022-2023. The purpose of the project had been to engage primary and secondary school students to increase their knowledge and awareness of air quality issues, learn about its causes, and understand impacts and find solutions through behavioural change. The programme had been delivered across schools in partnership with the Council, Stantec, the University of Reading and Design Nature between February 2023 and July 2025.

The report stated that the programme had made substantial progress across all of its key performance indicators (KPIs), had exceed many of its original targets and had left a lasting educational and environmental legacy. A main success of the programme had been to directly reach over 9,000 children, over 2,000 through practical knowledge sessions and nearly 7,000 through awareness activities.

The report highlighted significant progress in engaging the wider community and parents. Through school-gate conversations and community events, over 860 parents and carers had been directly involved, with an estimated additional 17,000 to 24,000 adults reached indirectly through CALM materials shared at home and at public events. The outreach had encouraged important discussions about air quality within households and contributed to positive behaviour changes such as reduced car idling and more frequent active travel.

Assessments of the programme showed strong learning gains had been achieved, with primary pupils improving their knowledge by 28% and secondary pupils by 9%. These results indicated that the educational materials were effective and easy to understand. Pupils were highly engaged with the presentations, videos, and hands-on monitoring activities, and were able to apply what they had learned confidently during planning and discussions. Beyond knowledge gains, the programme had succeeded in supporting behavioural change. Action planning activities had been completed in 8 primary schools and 5 secondary schools, where pupils developed and presented proposals to improve air quality in their schools and wider communities.

CALM had made a strong contribution in-terms of its curriculum integration and, although air quality was not currently a standalone topic within the national curriculum, the programme's materials had aligned well with subjects such as science, geography, mathematics, and citizenship. The development of a dedicated Key Stage 2 lesson plan, in

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collaboration with the University of Reading and a local teacher, had further embedded air quality education into mainstream learning and would remain accessible as part of the university's climate education resources. Additionally, the availability of materials on the Council's and Design Nature's websites ensured that the programme's legacy would continue beyond its official end.

The report explained the CALM:ER programme had aligned well with priorities set out in The Council Plan 2025-28, in particular the priority to deliver a sustainable and health environment and to reduce Reading's carbon footprint. The programme had also contributed directly towards the delivery of several actions outlined in the Council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) 2024-2029 which were listed in the report. The report also provided a broader overview, setting out the programme's aims and delivery methodology in detail, and included an evaluation of the project's successes, supported by a table at Appendix 2 summarising the programme's performance against its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The report concluded that the CALM:ER programme had successfully delivered a high-impact, inclusive, and sustainable environmental education programme that had engaged with over 26,000 people (or near 33,000 if two adults at home engaged with CALM materials). The programme had not only met its original objectives but had also laid the foundations for long-term engagement with air quality and climate education across schools, households and the wider Reading community.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

21. ACTIVE TRAVEL TASK AND FINISH GROUP - UPDATE REPORT

Further to Minute 14 of the meeting held on 19 November 2025, the Committee considered a report on the recommendations of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group. The report provided an officer evaluation of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations and provided an update on the delivery and outcomes of recent active travel schemes in the Borough, as well as providing detail on the Council's partnership working and setting out future plans in respect of active travel. A summary table containing an officer assessment of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and their current implementation status was attached to the report at Appendix A. A copy of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group findings and recommendations report was attached at Appendix B.

The report stated that the Council had adopted the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 (the Local Transport Plan (LTP)) in October 2024. The LTP aimed to promote healthier, greener, and more equal communities through sustainable travel and reduced reliance on private cars. Active travel was a central feature of the strategy which was supported by several sub-strategies, these included the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (PROWIP). The councillor-led, cross party, Task and Finish Group had been set up by the Committee specifically to scrutinise the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy.

The report highlighted that the Council had secured substantial external investment and had delivered an ambitious programme of active travel infrastructure improvements in

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recent years. Key achievements included pedestrianising areas around Reading Station and Station Hill, enhancing the Reading Station pedestrian subway, creating new pedestrian and cycle routes such as the Napier Road underpass and Christchurch Bridge and the delivery of east-west cycle infrastructure as part of National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 422. Additional projects included new shared use paths (such as London Road and the A33), cycle lanes on major roads (e.g. Oxford Road and Shinfield Road), enhanced pedestrian facilities throughout the town, expanded cycle parking (with cycle hubs in the town centre and at Reading Station) and the ongoing programme of road and pavement improvements across the Borough.

The Council had delivered these infrastructure improvements alongside a comprehensive programme of initiatives aimed at encouraging greater uptake of active travel. These included the introduction of various School Streets, Bikeability training in schools, Learn to Ride sessions for younger and/or less confident cyclists, road safety education in primary schools, adult cycle training, and cycle repair and maintenance events. Other examples included Walk to School Week, the Beat the Street walking and cycling challenge, a dedicated School Active Travel Officer (through Sustrans), Wellbeing Walks, the promotion of active travel schemes at various community events, and the ongoing programme of maintenance works for cycling and walking routes in the town.

The report stated that the Council had worked closely with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to deliver active travel schemes. This had included collaboration with neighbouring local authorities on cross boundary routes, with schools on initiatives such as School Streets, with Government and Active Travel England to secure grant funding and scheme approvals, and with private developers to enhance active travel infrastructure through the planning processes. The Council had also engaged extensively with local interest groups and stakeholders, including Councillor working groups for specific schemes, the Cleaner Air and Safer Transport (CAST) Forum, the Cycle Forum, the Access and Disabilities Working Group, and others to gather input during scheme development and improve future projects. These efforts, alongside the successful delivery of active travel infrastructure and the incentive initiatives set out in the report, had contributed to Reading achieving one of the highest levels of sustainable travel use in the UK outside London.

The report stated that the Task and Finish Group's recommendations, as set out in Appendix B, would help the Council to build on the considerable progress that had already been made in relation to active travel. It explained that several workstreams were underway that aligned with the Task and Finish Group's recommendations, for example the work that had been done to reprioritise the Council's Waiting Restrictions Review Programme, and the work underway in relation to the Requests for Traffic Management Measures List. Further opportunities to implement the Group's recommendations would also arise through the delivery of planned schemes, such as the design and implementation of the Bath Road/Castle Hill active travel scheme, which was being progressed with input from councillors and local stakeholder groups. Several of the Group's recommendations were also relevant and would be considered alongside input from key stakeholders as part of the planned refresh of the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LWCIP).

The report noted that the Task and Finish Group's longer-term recommendations, such as reviewing potential approaches to address pavement parking and the potential use of

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demand management measures, would require additional work to assess funding and resource implications and that any decisions made in relation to the progression of such schemes would need to follow the Council's formal decision making processes. The report also noted that the Council continued to seek to learn from examples of best practice and to improve outcomes, and noted the joint research project that had been carried out in partnership with the University of Reading and the Reading Cycle Campaign, which sought to identify the lessons learned from delivering previous active travel schemes and how they could be applied the delivery of schemes in the future.

The report set out the proposed next steps for the Council's active travel programme which it noted were included in the overall Local Transport Delivery Plan report due to be considered by the Committee later in the meeting (see Minute 22 below). It noted that the Government had announced a new approach to how funding would be allocated and that, whilst funding levels were lower than had previously been the case with the competitive allocations system, they did now offer greater long-term certainty and flexibility for planning.

The report highlighted several planned future active travel related projects that included improvements to Bath Road/Castle Hill, Sidmouth Street, and the planned partnership work with Wokingham on the Woodley-Reading active travel route. The report noted that the Council intended to continue to deliver a wide programme of initiatives, training, and incentives to increase active travel uptake. It also noted that the wider Delivery Plan set out ambitious sustainable travel enhancements for public transport which meant that careful prioritisation of financial and staff resources would be required. The report stated that the Council would continue to collaborate with partners and stakeholders to build on past successes and to ensure the effective development active travel options. The Council would also continue to learn from examples of best practice and, through sharing its own experiences, would seek to improve future schemes for residents and visitors.

Resolved – That the latest position as to the recommendations of the Active Travel Task and Finish Group as set out in the report and in Appendix A be noted.

22. LOCAL TRANSPORT DELIVERY PLAN

The Committee considered a report that set out the Department for Transport's (DfT) Local Transport Grant funding allocation for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30 and sought approval to submit the Council's initial Local Transport Delivery Plan (LTDP) to Government. The report also updated on progress and outcomes on the delivery of transport schemes and initiatives in Reading over recent years. A copy of the proposed Local Transport Delivery Plan (March 2026) was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The report set out the Government's new approach to local transport funding. The new approach replaced the previous competitive bidding model with a needs-based formula for allocating grant funding to local transport authorities. Under the new system, local authorities would be required to produce a Local Transport Delivery Plan setting out how the Integrated Transport Fund (ITF) grant would be prioritised, including details of proposed schemes, interventions, programmes and packages of expenditure. Initial versions of

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Delivery Plans were required to be submitted to the DfT by 20 March 2026, with a final version then needed by 18 September 2026.

The report also set out Reading's grant funding allocation for capital and revenue grants. The allocation covered capital funding for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30 and revenue funding for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29. Under the new funding model, grant allocations would continue to be based on different modes, such as highways maintenance, bus services and active travel, which would be consolidated into ITF grant payments. The new approach would provide local authorities with longer-term certainty and greater flexibility to decide how best to utilise the funding, with fewer grant-specific conditions than in previous years. The report also confirmed that the Council would continue to receive a separate grant for the provision of Bikeability cycle training in schools for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29.

The report noted that whilst authorities had been provided with greater flexibility, the Government had also made it clear that the grant funding needed to be used to achieve national priorities which would be set through the Local Transport Outcome Framework. This would outline measurable priority outcomes that the Government wanted local authorities to achieve and would reflect shared national and local priorities for transport which would be aligned with the upcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy.

The report stated that the Council had made considerable progress in delivering a range of local transport schemes and improvements, in part due to successfully having secured significant amounts of external grant funding through the competitive bidding process. This had allowed the Council to improve travel options for residents, with a particular focus on sustainable transport choices, and aligned with the overall vision and objectives set out in Reading's Local Transport Plan (LTP). A broad range of transport schemes and improvements had been delivered that included major upgrades to Reading's railway stations, new bus and cycling infrastructure and active travel initiatives.

The outcomes achieved from the work to promote sustainable travel had resulted in Reading achieving amongst the highest levels of sustainable travel in the country, outside of London, with a considerable shift to the use of sustainable transport modes in recent years. The report highlighted that passenger numbers had increased at all four rail stations in the Borough in 2024/25, with usage of Reading West up 43% after its redevelopment and Reading Station having gained nearly 1 million more passengers compared to the previous year to reach 14.3 million, making it one of the busiest train stations outside of London. Bus usage in 2024/25 had also continued to grow and had almost returned to pre-Covid levels with 20 million journeys made on local services, a rise from 19.5 million journeys compared to the previous year. Outside London Reading had remained the third highest area for bus use per capita, though the report acknowledged some recent declines in the numbers of fare-paying passengers during the current year. Levels of Active Travel had also increased, with approximately 55,000 walking trips and 11,000 cycling trips undertaken every day to and from the town centre. The trend for levels of cycling to and from the town centre had increased considerably, from a mode share of 2-3% between 2008-17 to a mode share of 5-6% in recent years.

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The Initial Local Transport Delivery Plan (attached at Appendix A) set out how the Council proposed to build on its past successes and how it intended to allocate the ITF grant allocation from Government for the period 2026/27-2029/30 for capital funding, and 2026/27-2028/29 for revenue funding. The Delivery Plan contained several schemes that were already underway, these included:

- the annual highways resurfacing programme;
- the introduction of new electric buses;
- the delivery of further bus priority measures;
- improved passenger facilities at the MereOak Park and Ride site;
- provision of enhanced bus services (including the Buzz 9 and 18 routes);
- delivery of the Bath Road / Castle Hill active travel scheme;
- the provision of a comprehensive programme of active travel initiatives, training and incentivisation to encourage higher levels of walking, cycling and wheeling.

The Delivery Plan also included detail on new schemes and initiatives designed to build upon the Council's recent Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Active Travel Fund (ATF) programmes. Examples of new items included the planned Local Cycling, Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) update and improvements for all users in Sidmouth Street through a redesign of the existing road layout. Funding had also been allocated to the Council's ongoing programmes and schemes relating to road safety, traffic management measures, parking and highways maintenance. The report noted that the Council was required to submit its initial Delivery Plan to the Department for Transport by 20 March 2026 and that there would be an opportunity thereafter to develop a final Delivery Plan before the final deadline on 18 September 2026.

Resolved –

- (1) That the allocation of local transport grant funding from Government for the period 2026/27-29/30 be noted;**
- (2) That submission of the Council's initial Local Transport Delivery Plan to Government, as provided at Appendix A, be approved.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.48 pm)