

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES - 23 JUNE 2026**

Present: Councillors Cross (Chair), Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Dominguez, Ennis, Gurung, Keeping, Leng, McElroy, McGoldrick, McGrother, Moore, Nikulina, Saadat and DP Singh.

Also in attendance via Microsoft Teams: Councillor McCann.

Apologies: Councillors Goss and Stevens.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 11 March 2026 and 27 May 2026 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 5 March 2026 were received and noted.

4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

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

- Cleaner Air Safer Transport (CAST) Forum on 31 March 2026;
- Joint Waste Disposal Board on 5 February 2026 and 23 April 2026; and
- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board (RCCP) on 15 January 2026 and 16 April 2026.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

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

Questioner	Subject
Councillor Moore	Discharges into Foudry Brook from the Reading Sewage Treatment Works

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

6. THE MOUNT DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The Committee considered a report that sought approval to conduct a public consultation on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal for The Mount Conservation Area commencing in July 2026. The following documents were appended to the report:

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- Appendix 1 - The Mount Conservation Area Appraisal - Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 - The Mount Conservation Area Appraisal Draft June 2026

The report stated that, following discussions regarding the Council's approach to managing and protecting the historic environment, the Council had supported the establishment of the Reading Conservation Areas Advisory Committee (CAAC). A key concern identified by the CAAC had been that many of Reading's conservation area appraisals had not been reviewed for a considerable period, despite best-practice guidance recommending updates every five to ten years. It had therefore been agreed that the CAAC would lead a programme of appraisal reviews, working in consultation with local communities. In line with this programme of conservation area reviews, the Mount Conservation Area Appraisal was the fifth appraisal to be undertaken by the CAAC, following the completed reviews of the St Peters', Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road, Christchurch and Eldon Square conservation areas.

The report explained that local planning authorities had a statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework to review existing conservation areas and designate areas of special architectural or historic interest where appropriate. Whilst not a legal requirement, Historic England recommended that Conservation Area Appraisals were reviewed and updated every five to ten years. It was noted that such appraisals were material considerations in the determination of planning applications and formed an important evidence base for planning policy.

The report stated that The Mount Conservation Area had first been designated in 1987 and was most recently appraised in 2009, when no changes to the conservation area boundary had been recommended. The Committee was informed that the current review and updated appraisal had been prepared as part of a community-led project undertaken by the CAAC, with support from Council planning officers and interested local community representatives. It was noted that the review had utilised an adapted version of the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, that had been recommended by Historic England, to assess the character of the area's landscape and built environment.

The report further stated that no changes to the conservation area boundary were proposed. The updated appraisal identified a number of issues and vulnerabilities, including walls and railings that were overgrown or in need of repair, a lack of traditional street furniture and lighting, poor street and pavement surfaces with limited use of traditional materials, and inconsistent/mixed conservation area signage. Recommended measures set out in the Action Plan included achieving greater consistency in street signage, providing information to householders on the maintenance of walls and railings and to provide a street care information document on the importance of materials.

The report stated that, subject to approval, consultation on the draft appraisal document would commence in July 2026, with responses informing revisions to the document. The revised appraisal would then be presented to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration and adoption.

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At the invitation of the Chair, Evelyn Williams and Claire Truman of Reading CAAC delivered a presentation outlining the work that had been undertaken by the CAAC to carry out the appraisal of The Mount Conservation Area and to prepare the draft appraisal document.

Resolved –

- (1) That The Mount Draft Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 2) be approved for consultation;**
- (2) That the Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to The Mount Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, prior to the start of consultation on the draft document.**

7. LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE MAIN MODIFICATIONS

The Committee considered a report seeking approval to undertake public consultation on the Main Modifications and Proposals Map Modifications to the Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU). The report set out the background to the Partial Update, the examination process, and the Main Modifications that had been identified by the Planning Inspector as being necessary to ensure that the LPPU was sound and legally compliant. The following documents were appended to the report:

- Appendix 1 – Schedule of Main Modifications
- Appendix 2 – Proposals Map Modifications

The report stated that the Reading Borough Local Plan had been adopted in 2019 and that there was a statutory requirement to review the Plan within five years of its adoption. A review had identified the need for a Partial Update of the Local Plan, which the Committee had agreed to proceed with on 23 March 2023 (Minute 36 refers). Consultation on the scope and content of the Partial Update had been undertaken between November 2023 and January 2024, followed by consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) in November and December 2024. The resulting LPPU was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9 May 2025 and subsequently underwent a public examination led by an independent Planning Inspector, including hearings held in November 2025 (Stage 1) and February 2026 (Stage 2).

The Planning Inspector had identified several Main Modifications that were required to ensure the Local Plan Partial Update was sound and legally compliant. Given their significance, the proposed modifications would be subject to public consultation and sustainability appraisal. The Inspector had worked with the Council and, where appropriate, other examination participants to develop the proposed wording of the changes which were set out in Appendix 1. The Main Modifications set out in Appendix 1 ranged from minor drafting amendments to more substantial changes to the LPPU. The most significant modifications were summarised in the report. It also noted that the Main Modifications would result in consequential amendments to the Proposals Map, which were detailed separately in Appendix 2.

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The report further explained that, although the formal letter confirming the Main Modifications had not yet been received from the Planning Inspectorate, the Inspector had communicated the required modifications to the Council as part of the examination process. Officers did not anticipate that the formal letter would result in any changes to the modifications set out in Appendices 1 and 2 but delegated authority was being sought to enable any minor amendments arising from the final letter to be made before the consultation commenced.

The report explained that the Main Modifications would need to be subject to public consultation before they could be incorporated into the LPPU. It was therefore proposed that consultation be undertaken on the Main Modifications set out in Appendix 1 and the associated Proposals Map amendments set out in Appendix 2. The consultation was expected to take place between 26 June and 7 August 2026. Any representations received during the consultation period would be submitted directly to the Planning Inspector for consideration in preparing their final report. The Council would only be able to adopt the LPPU once it had received the Inspector's final report confirming that the Plan was sound, legally compliant and satisfied the duty to co-operate.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Local Plan Partial Update Main Modifications (Appendix 1) and Proposals Map Modifications (Appendix 2) be approved for consultation;**
- (2) That the Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the Main Modifications and Proposals Map Modifications that did not alter the policy direction as identified in any letter from the Planning Inspector, prior to consultation.**

8. ADOPTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report that sought the adoption of the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (TCPRS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and approval of the Council's responses to the comments received during the public consultation on the draft Strategy SPD.

The report stated that the intended purpose of the Strategy SPD document was to provide detailed policy and guidance to improve the quality of the public realm throughout central Reading and would be used to supplement the Local Plan when making decisions on planning applications in the town centre. In addition, it would also inform works that affected the town centre public realm outside the development process, including the Council's own works. A copy of the proposed Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD was attached to the report at Appendix 3. A consultation on a proposed draft version of the Strategy SPD had been undertaken in January and February 2025, and a summary of the comments that had been received in response to the consultation and the Council's responses to those comments was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

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The report explained that, other than the high-level Local Plan policy, there was no single document to guide the quality of public realm elements in the town centre and that, as many of the key development sites that would deliver growth in the town centre were currently already at the planning application or pre-application stage, or were expected to be soon, there was considered to be a lack of specific guidance on how to ensure that all improvements to the public realm were working to an agreed framework. This included the Council's own interventions in the public realm outside the development process. The report noted that, without a detailed strategy, there was a likelihood that decisions that affected the public realm would be made on an ad-hoc basis, thereby undermining the character and cohesiveness of central Reading. The Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD had been developed to address this concern and to provide an overarching framework and guide for all future public realm improvements in the town centre.

The report summarised the content of the proposed Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD which included an appraisal of existing town centre streets and spaces, a movement framework for pedestrians and cyclists, a design manual covering key public realm elements, detailed proposals for five priority locations in the town centre, broader guidance for other example areas, and an action plan to support both short and long-term implementation.

The consultation on the draft Strategy SPD had taken place between 15 January and 26 February 2025 and had attracted 41 responses. Key themes included concerns about maintaining accessible bus services, improving paving quality and maintenance, reducing the prevalence of obstructive trade waste bins, providing safer cycling infrastructure, enhancing accessibility for all users, and strengthening the town centre's historic character and sense of place. Respondents also highlighted the importance of trees, biodiversity and riverside improvements, raised concerns about funding and deliverability, called for better management of crime, litter and antisocial behaviour, and emphasised the need to support independent retailers. The report explained that the Strategy SPD had been revised in response to consultation feedback. It summarised the amendments that had been made following the consultation and set out the changes reflected in the proposed version of the document as attached at Appendix 3.

The report noted that, under transitional arrangements that had been introduced by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Council had until 30 June 2026 to adopt the Strategy SPD. This was because SPDs were being replaced by supplementary plans which were more limited in scope and had different preparation requirements. There was therefore no opportunity to pursue a substantially revised version of the SPD that would require further consultation, as it could not be adopted within the permitted timeframe.

An update was provided at the meeting that a response submitted by Councillor Hornsby-Smith in his personal capacity regarding cycling in Broad Street had been inadvertently omitted from the consultation results set out in Appendix 2.

Resolved –

- (1) That the responses to representations on the Draft Town Centre Public Realm Strategy within the Statement of Consultation, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved;**

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- (2) That the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD, as attached at Appendix 3, be adopted.**

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.24 pm)