

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	2 JULY 2020	AGENDA ITEM:	6
TITLE:	REALLOCATION OF ROAD SPACE - READING'S ACTIVE TRAVEL PROPOSALS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND REGULATORY SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update members of the sub-committee on the Council's Active Travel programme, as approved by Policy Committee on 18th May 2020.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 - Schedule of schemes.

2 RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That members of the Sub-Committee note the report and Appendix 1.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan supports the delivery of new transport infrastructure in order to manage levels of congestion, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions, whilst accommodating the significant levels of planned economic growth. The Council's approved Capital Programme provides capital funding of over £40m for key infrastructure projects. Funding is provided from grants received from the Local Enterprise Partnership and Central Government, developer contributions, investment from Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR), and Council borrowing.
- 3.2 Consultation on Council's new Local Transport Plan (LTP) has commenced. The new strategy has been developed to help achieve wider objectives including the Reading 2050 Vision, the Climate Emergency which was declared in February 2019 and improved air quality. It is heavily focused on addressing these wider challenges through a package of solutions to both provide realistic sustainable alternatives to the private car, alongside measures to manage demand to improve air quality and congestion. The new strategy has been aligned with other Council strategies including the new Local Plan and draft Climate Emergency Strategy.
- 3.3 The Council has agreed a Strategic Framework (March 2020) which sets out the Council's key priorities including support for business and the economy. The proposals set out in

this report support accessibility for all by providing an improved travel choice to support the long term recovery of Reading.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 At the meeting of Policy Committee on 18th May 2020, members approved progression of a series of Active Travel proposals in Reading. These proposals were presented in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which, alongside the Climate Emergency, have dramatically enhanced the focus on enabling greater levels of active travel through the provision of walking and cycling facilities.

4.2 The proposals were developed with a view to short term measures that could be implemented quickly, and medium to longer term measures that, subject to the level of funding released by the Department for Transport (DfT), could be developed and implemented over the next few years.

4.3 The approved schemes are as follows:-

Short Term projects

- Gosbrook Road
- Sidmouth Street
- Reading Bridge
- Cycle lanes on Oxford Road
- Whitley Street Local Centre
- Southampton Street / Silver Street
- Redlands Road

Medium Term projects

- Blagrove Street
- Basingstoke Road
- London Road
- 20mph speed limit review

Long Term projects

- Scheme from the Centre to East Reading through a joined-up approach to the provision of sustainable transport facilities on Kings Road and London Road.
- Enhancements in West Reading including on Bath Road and further opportunities along the Oxford Road to deliver the new sections of bus lane as a part of the agreed corridor study and enhance and complement the current scheme.
- Opportunities in North Reading, including improved access to Christchurch Bridge alongside walking and cycling enhancements in Caversham local centre and on Caversham Bridge.
- Progression of measures in South Reading including on Basingstoke Road, Shinfield Road and the A33 public transport scheme.
- Enhancements to walking and cycling routes to/from and through the town centre alongside improving the quality of the urban realm.

5. CURRENT PROGRESS

5.1 In early June, the DfT formally announced the Active Travel funding programme, and confirmed the available funding (subject to application) for each authority. Reading has been allocated funding in two tranches; £295k in the first tranche and £1,179k in the second tranche. At the time of writing, the DfT have not confirmed when the first tranche funding will be released, nor have they confirmed the process for applying for the second tranche. Officers will continue to press the DfT for this information.

- 5.2 In line with the DfT funding announcement and the likely funding allocated to Reading, officers have prepared a schedule detailing the Active Travel schemes approved by Policy Committee, alongside the estimate programme and estimated costs. Members will note not all schemes can be fully funded by the DfT Active Travel funding allocation alone, and an element of “local” funding will be required - such as S106 or CIL.
- 5.3 The Council’s Network Management Team have recently introduced the first scheme in the programme - Reading Bridge advisory cycle lanes. The designs for both Sidmouth Street and Gosbrook Road/Westfield Road are at an advanced stage, and subject to securing the traffic management equipment for each scheme (barriers/bollards etc), it is hoped these schemes will be introduced in July. This is slightly later than previously planned and is mainly due to the overall response to Active Travel across the Country affecting the supply chain.
- 5.4 Due to the considerable resource required to deliver the Active Travel Programme on top of existing workloads, the remaining projects will be supported by consulting engineers who will work alongside the Council’s Network Management team to develop, design and introduce each project.
- 5.5 Officers will commence the review process of each temporary scheme early in 2021 which will be based on traffic data, user feedback, and safety records. Further updates on progress will be reported through this and other Committee’s in the coming months

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As detailed in paragraph 5.1 and 5.2 above, since the Policy Committee report in May 2020, the majority of funding for the proposals listed will now be supported by the DfT Active Travel Fund. Additional funding will be required later in the programme, and this will include Community Infrastructure Levy local funds (subject to public consultation). It is the Council’s intention to use capital funding to get the schemes quickly implemented, and then claim back the money through the Government’s Active Travel Fund. The use of consultants can also be funded by the programme.
- 6.2 Scheme funding for the projects listed in recommendation 2.1 will taken from the following lines in the Capital Programme:
- Local Traffic Management and Road Safety Schemes (£359k) - Sidmouth Street, Gosbrook Road and Reading Bridge proposals complement and support this programme (Total allocation £46k)
 - Oxford Road Corridor Works (£318k) - delivery of the on-road cycle lanes form a part of the existing capital scheme (Total allocation £12k)
 - LTP Development (£200k) - Whitley Street Local Centre, Southampton Street / Silver Street, and Redlands Road proposals support this programme (Total allocation £28k)

The use of these existing capital programme allocations, which supports ongoing road safety improvements will complement the outcomes secured arising from this budget. In some cases, projects will now be delivered earlier than previously planned within the programme such as the LTP Development projects.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 7.1 The Council has adopted a Strategic Framework (March 2020) which sets out the Council’s key priorities including:
- To keep social care services running for the children and adults who need them;

- To support vulnerable and isolated people during the crisis;
- To support business and the economy, which will secure the long term recovery of Reading.

7.2 These proposed measures will enable residents and people who work and study in Reading to more easily consider a return to work or a return to normal activities as the lockdown measures are gradually lifted. Transport is integral to the functioning of business and the economy and it is suggested that these measures to promote more walking and cycling opportunities will have a positive impact for business and the economy as well as helping people to feel safe.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

8.1 Advertising of the Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation. Notices will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and erected on lamp columns within the affected area. If this is not possible, alternative means will be proposed such as delivering the notice to each property within the affected area, and promoting the notice in the online version of local media.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149 the Council 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.

9.2 The Council has reviewed the scope of the proposals as outlined within this report and considers that the proposals have no direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics. However, the service will meet with representatives of the Access and Disability forums to determine whether they have any concerns or issues regarding the proposals.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Some interventions will not require Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Others will require TROs, of which there are different types. The main ones are:

- Permanent: this process includes prior consultation on the proposed scheme design, a 21-day notice period for statutory consultees and others who can log objections; there could be a public inquiry in some circumstances.
- Temporary: these can be in place for up to 18 months. There is a 7-day notice period prior to making the TRO and a 14-day notification requirement after it is made, plus publicity requirements. These are most suitable for putting in place temporary measures and road closures. Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will require advertisement, in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order will be made in accordance with section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended.

10.2 Necessary changes to Highway signing and lining, including temporary, will need to be implemented in accordance with the Traffic Signs, Regulations and General Directions 2016 and associated Code of Practice for temporary Highway signing.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in the draft Climate Emergency Strategy this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions, however significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.
- 11.2 Proposals set out in this paper seek to support a step-change in transport infrastructure and services and a shift towards sustainable and clean modes of transport as attractive alternatives to private vehicles. This builds on the considerable success of increasing the number of walking, cycling and public transport trips into Reading town centre to 80% as part of the delivery of previous Local Transport Plans.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Policy Committee report - 18th May 2020.