

Traffic Management Sub-Committee

14 June 2023



Reading
Borough Council
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| Title | BSIP Bus Lanes – Statutory Consultation |
| Purpose of the report | To make a decision |
| Report status | Public report |
| Report author | Grace Atherton, BSIP Project Manager |
| Lead councillor | Cllr John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport |
| Ward(s) | Abbey, Battle, Norcot, Southcote, Katesgrove, Redlands and Park |
| Corporate priority | Healthy Environment |
| Recommendations | <p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Sub-Committee notes the content of this report.2. That permission is given by the Sub-Committee to carry out a Statutory Consultation on Traffic Regulation Orders relating to the proposed bus lanes. |

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Sub-Committee of initial feedback from the informal consultation relating to the six proposed bus lanes. Members are asked to note the proposed concept drawings for the bus lanes and to agree for officers to proceed with Statutory Consultation, subject to completion of detailed designs.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
- Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 2.2. These themes are underpinned by “Our Foundations” explaining the ways we work at the Council:
- People first
 - Digital transformation
 - Building self-reliance
 - Getting the best value
 - Collaborating with others
- 2.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan

demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

- 2.4. The National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better' was published in March 2021 as part of a £3billion funding package aimed at building back Britain's bus services. It sets out how the Government intends to deliver on its commitment to achieve ambitious and far-reaching reform of the bus services sector. As part of this funding, the Council were awarded £26m to improve the Bus Services and infrastructure, and to support growth of the public transport network.
- 2.5. The Council published its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in October 2021 and established an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with all local bus operators. The EP sets out the schemes and measures to be delivered through the BSIP funding and formed our funding bid to DfT. The content of the EP was approved by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in March 22 and November 22.
- 2.6. The BSIP is a sub-strategy and core element of our emerging Reading Transport Strategy, which sets a vision to make Reading a greener and healthier town by providing better sustainable travel choices, including buses. The transport strategy also contributes towards the vision of a net zero carbon Reading by 2023, as set out in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy.

3. The proposal

- 3.1. Concept designs have been developed for six bus lanes across the borough, and (see Appendices for drawings). have been identified as areas where bus services suffer delays as a result of traffic congestion, particularly at peak times. Therefore there is a need to introduce greater priority for buses on key routes to improve services for bus users, and to encourage modal shift due to the environmental benefits of public transport.

The proposed bus lanes are as follows:

- A329 Oxford Road – Outbound bus lane between Zinzan Street and George Street
 - A329 Oxford Road – Outbound bus lane between Pangbourne Street and Norcot Junction
 - A4 Bath Road – Outbound bus lane from Circuit Lane to Granville Road
 - A327 Southampton Street – Inbound bus lane from Pell Street to The Oracle roundabout
 - A4 London Road – Inbound bus lane between Sidmouth Street and London Street
 - A4 London Road – Inbound bus lane between Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction
- 3.2. A 4-week informal consultation seeking views on the initial bus lane scheme proposals was run from 19th May to 16th June. Plans and information were available on the RBC Consultation webpage, allowing members of the public to show their level of support and to comment on the proposed schemes. Feedback and comments will be assessed, and any amendments will be incorporated into detailed designs. It is intended that the scheme design will be prioritised based on deliverability of the scheme, with the first of these designs expected to be completed later this Summer.
 - 3.3. Due to limited road space in Reading, it is acknowledged that some of the proposals will have an impact on traffic flows and an initial analysis of the potential impact is included in the description of each scheme. All of the proposals are initial designs at this stage and if approval is given to take the schemes forward, they will be subject to detailed design work, junction modelling and road safety audits.
 - 3.4. Officers recommend that a Statutory Consultation is carried out during the summer, once detailed designs have been further developed, with the results being reported back to the Sub-Committee at a future meeting.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. The proposals as set out within this report will help to deliver the following strategic aims of the Council through the delivery of a thriving public transport network in the town:

Health Environment

- The implementation of bus lane will help alleviate delays to services along main corridors into the town centre. This can lead to a reduction in motor-vehicle journeys, which can reduce emissions and improve air quality.

Thriving Communities

- The bus lanes will improve accessibility and journey times for those using the bus, making it a more appealing option than using a private vehicle

Inclusive Economy

- The bus lane proposals will encourage bus usage and reduce congestion. They can offer equality of access to the town centre and other areas of employment.

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25, this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions. However, significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.
- 5.3. A Climate Impact Assessment has been conducted for the recommendations of this report, resulting in an overall **Net Low Positive**. It is expected that the introduction of additional bus lanes will see a shift from private vehicle usage resulting in less emissions and air pollution. There will be an improvement to air quality by providing a more efficient and attractive way to travel.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. An informal consultation detailing the 6 bus lane schemes has been in progress since 19th May 2023. The consultation link was shared on Social Media and on the RBC Consultation webpage.
- 6.2. An update on the feedback received during this consultation period will be verbally given at the meeting.
- 6.3. Traffic Management Sub-Committee is a public meeting. The agendas, reports, meeting minutes and recordings of the meetings are available to view from the Council's website.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required at this time as the proposals are not deemed to be discriminatory to persons with protected characteristics, and the proposals will help the travel needs of users. The consultation process, and subsequent Statutory Consultation will provide an opportunity for the content of objections/support/concerns to be considered prior to a decision being made on whether to implement the proposals.
- 7.3. Further EIA assessments may be undertaken once the schemes are developed in detailed design.

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. None

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 New, or changes to existing, Traffic Regulation Orders require advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The resultant Traffic Regulation Order will be sealed/revoked in accordance with the same regulations

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. Funding for the detailed designs and statutory consultation will be withdrawn from the BSIP funding allocation.
- 10.2. There are no foreseen financial risks related to the recommendations of this report.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1. Detailed design will be developed once the informal consultation has drawn to a close.
- 11.2. Statutory Consultation will begin in July 2023 with results being report to the Sub-Committee in September.

12. Background papers

- 12.1. None

Appendices

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

7. Appendix 7 – A4 London Road – Inbound bus lane between Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction