

Overview

Bus Service Improvement Plan – Bus Lane Initial Consultation

Reading Borough Council has been awarded over £26m funding from Central Government to improve bus services in the borough, which is the third highest funding award (per head of population) in the country. This funding is a result of the ambitious plans set out within our [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\)](#), which includes a range of initiatives including cheaper and simpler fares, enhanced services and new infrastructure to prioritise buses on key routes.

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 2030, as set out in the [Reading Climate Emergency Strategy](#).

Reading already has an extensive bus network which is well used by residents and visitors. However, bus services do suffer from 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 local residents.

The proposed bus lanes included within this package are:

- 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

The main benefits we are seeking to achieve from these proposals are to make travelling by bus in Reading easier, cheaper, quicker and more reliable. If more people choose to travel by bus this will result in reduced carbon emissions, better air quality, and improved health and wellbeing. Bus services, including community transport and school services, provide vital access to opportunities such as education, training, employment, essential services including healthcare and social events.

We are now seeking your views on the initial bus lane scheme proposals before decisions are taken on whether to proceed and more detail plans are produced. 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 the scheme is taken forward will be subject to more detailed design work and road safety audits which may necessitate further design changes.

In addition, part of the funding received from Government is for the development of future bus lane proposals, therefore we are also seeking your suggestions for new schemes as part of this consultation.

Proposed Bus Lane 1 - A329 Oxford Road - Outbound bus lane between Zinzan Street and George Street (*Concept scheme designs can be found below*)

The proposal is for an outbound bus, taxi and cycle lane using space from existing hatching, some limited kerb realignment and limited lane alterations. This will enable buses on routes 15/15a, 16,17,143 to Dee Park, Calcot, Tilehurst, Purley and Pangbourne to avoid being delayed by queueing traffic before and after the Bedford Road traffic lights. This new lane will be used by up to about 15 buses an hour and will also provide a useable cycle space out of the general traffic.

One consideration as part of this scheme is the proposed removal of the ability to turn right out of Eaton Place to Oxford Road, to avoid the trend for rat-running of traffic avoiding the queue on Chatham Street. Some changes to existing on street parking or loading arrangements are planned with the bus lane finishing after George Street. The on-street parking outside 197-199 Oxford Road will be relocated approximately 60m east of its current location.

This scheme is also being developed to ensure consistency with the public realm improvements being proposed as part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone initiative.

The proposed bus lane would increase benefits to buses and cycles. With revised entry and exit arrangements to Waylen Street and Zinzan Street additional parking spaces on these roads could be created and access for pedestrians across these roads made much easier. Cyclists using Oxford Road would be encouraged to cycle in the new bus/taxi/cycle lane rather than use the congested pavements as many currently do.

Potential traffic impact of scheme proposal

It is anticipated that some traffic which currently uses Eaton Place to access Oxford Road to avoid the Chatham Street traffic queue would be displaced back onto Chatham Street, rather than adding to vehicle movements in this very busy part of Oxford Road. It is not envisaged that any further traffic displacement would result from this scheme proposal.

Proposed Bus Lane 2 - A329 Oxford Road - Outbound bus lane between Pangbourne Street and Norcot Junction (*Concept scheme designs can be found below*)

There is currently an inbound bus lane from the edge of Winslet Place to Tidmarsh Street, however the majority of traffic queueing in this area is outbound towards Norcot roundabout. Therefore, the proposal is for a new outbound bus lane which would replace the existing inbound one to remove buses, taxis and cycles from this westbound traffic congestion.

The new bus lane would be used by routes 16,17,143 to Purley, Pangbourne and Tilehurst with up to 10 buses an hour currently. All current traffic movements would continue to be

available and relocation of the existing bus stop immediately west of Grovelands Road to a new location slightly further west into the new bus lane will make traffic flow after the traffic lights easier. Traffic islands and signals would be remodelled to continue to offer all current pedestrian crossing access.

Potential traffic impact of scheme proposal

By replacing an existing bus lane with a longer one in the opposite direction there is no expectation that significant traffic displacement would result from this scheme proposal.

Proposed Bus Lane 3 - A4 Bath Road - Outbound bus lane from Circuit Lane to Granville Road (*Concept scheme designs can be found below*)

The proposal is for an outbound bus, taxi and cycle lane using space from existing hatching and some kerb realignment on the south side of Bath Road. It is proposed to extend the new bus lane past Honey End Lane junction to end at Granville Road giving westbound buses relief from traffic queueing for Honey End Lane and Burghfield Road. This will benefit 4 existing buses an hour on routes 1,2/2a to Calcot, Theale, Burghfield, Mortimer and Newbury and provide a basis for future bus developments to west Reading.

Existing crossing points for pedestrian access to Prospect Park will be retained and the new bus lane will provide cyclists with an option for westbound journeys rather than crossing to the north side existing shared use pedestrian and cycle path.

Potential traffic impact of scheme proposal

There is no reallocation of existing traffic lanes or amendments to junction layouts proposed as part of this scheme, therefore it is not expected that any significant traffic displacement would result from this proposal.

Proposed Bus Lane 4 - A327 Southampton Street - Inbound bus lane on Southampton Street from Pell Street to The Oracle roundabout (*Concept scheme designs can be found below*)

The proposal is for the reallocation of one traffic lane from north of Pell Street to just before the Oracle roundabout to provide a dedicated inbound bus/taxi/cycle lane, linking to the existing bus lanes on Southampton Street and Bridge Street. Provision of this bus lane would enable people travelling to the town centre by bus/taxi to avoid the congestion generated by cars travelling to town centre car parks. This is particularly the case with busy shopping days such as Saturdays and school holidays/Christmas, which currently results in delayed buses and lost or cancelled journeys.

The current layout on Southampton Street enables conflicting movements to take place and provides no safe route for cyclists other than the shared use pavement on the east side. Confident cyclists will be able to use the bus and cycle lane which will provide a shared safe space before the traffic light pinch point at the roundabout approach which will be widened slightly within the constrained highway boundary.

It is proposed that the bus lane would be located in the current left hand lane, whilst allowing traffic for the IDR west to join this lane to turn left. Traffic for the IDR east and the Oracle car parks will use the middle and right hand lanes, thus avoiding conflicts of movement. Up to around 15 buses an hour from South Reading and Coley Park will benefit from this bus lane on routes 5,6/6a and 11.

An additional element of the proposal is for a new bus/cycle lane in the current outside lane on the Oracle roundabout, leading directly to the Bridge Street bus/cycle lane. Lanes on the roundabout would be modified to accommodate the additional bus/cycle lane by taking a small amount off the central island and reducing lane widths slightly. Westbound lanes from The Oracle car park would be reduced from three to two allowing some greening of the south edge of the roundabout.

Potential traffic impact of scheme proposal

It is envisaged that the removal of one lane for general traffic on the approach to The Oracle roundabout would result in, at certain times, increased traffic congestion, particularly for traffic queuing to access town centre car parks, although better lane segregation may mitigate this. More detailed modelling of the traffic impacts of the proposal would be undertaken if this scheme is progressed to identify any mitigation measures that could be introduced as part of the scheme.

Proposed Bus Lane 5 - A4 London Road - Inbound bus lane between Sidmouth Street and London Street (*Concept scheme drawings can be found below*)

The proposal is for a new inbound bus/taxi/cycle lane by re-using existing hatched areas of highway and reallocating much of the existing left turn lanes between Sidmouth Street and Kendrick Road and between Kendrick Road and London Street. This will enable buses 3/9/19's from the RBH and 21/21a from the University to make easier moves along London Road and into the existing London Street bus lane. The number of buses using the lane will be about 14 per hour and will also be useable by cyclists, taxis and emergency vehicles.

The existing eastbound bus lane from London Street to Kendrick Road would remain in place.

A new combined 'inbound' bus stop could be provided in the new westbound bus lane replacing the existing bus stop at the foot of Kendrick Road and the existing bus stop on London Road providing passengers with a much greater service from the combined bus stop.

Vehicles will continue to be able to turn into or out of Kendrick Road and Crown Place, to turn into East Street and to turn south onto Silver Street. The turn from London Road to Sidmouth Street will be unaffected. Detailed revisions to the junction at Kendrick Road will provide a safe crossing of both in and out flows at Kendrick Road instead of only one safe crossing at present.

Potential traffic impact of scheme proposal

It is envisaged that there will be some displacement of vehicles turning left to Kendrick Road and Silver Street, which would remain in the main carriageway for longer and therefore create additional traffic flows in this section of London Road.

Proposed Bus Lane 6 - A4 London Road - Inbound bus lane between Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction (*Concept scheme designs can be found below*)

The proposal is for one of the two existing inbound traffic lanes to be replaced with one inbound bus/taxi/cycle lane and one inbound general traffic lane. This will help speed up bus services 13/14 from Woodley, 127-9 and 850 from Twyford, Thames Valley Park shuttle buses, Rail-Air coaches from Heathrow, park and ride buses from Winnersh Triangle, and the new Hospital Park and Ride service from Thames Valley Park P&R to the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

At least 18 eighteen buses an hour are likely to use this facility which will also be available for use by cyclists, taxis and by emergency vehicles travelling to the hospital. It is intended that the existing bus stops on London Road would continue to be served and the existing pedestrian crossings would be retained.

A key consideration for the design of this scheme will be the potential traffic congestion and road safety implications resulting from traffic waiting to turn right from London Road into the residential area of New Town, particularly traffic turning into the side roads at Liverpool Road and Cholmeley Road. The scheme proposes a continuous bus lane for the length of London Road from the Liverpool Road to a point opposite Amity Road. It should be noted that the bus lane will need to end prior to each junction to allow traffic to merge safely before and after the junctions.

It should be noted that we are seeking feedback at an early stage of the scheme development process and further design work and road safety audits would need to be undertaken to develop the initial design if this scheme is taken forward, therefore the initial concept designs are subject to change.

Wokingham Borough Council also has longer-term plans to introduce bus priority measures on this corridor, and it is an aspiration in their revised BSIP. Wokingham Borough Council are actively seeking funding to support these shared aspirations.

Potential traffic impact of scheme proposal

At certain peak periods, this proposal is likely to result in a degree of traffic displacement due to the reduction of capacity for inbound traffic into Reading from the existing two lanes down to one. Therefore, more detailed modelling will need to be undertaken if this scheme is progressed to further assess the feasibility of the scheme and to identify any mitigation measures that could be introduced as part of the scheme.

We are now seeking your views on the initial bus lane scheme proposals

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 the scheme is taken forward will be subject to more detailed design work and road safety audits which may necessitate further design changes.

In addition, part of the funding received from Government is for the development of future bus lane proposals, therefore we are also seeking your suggestions for new schemes as part of this consultation.

Objections or comments should be sent in by:

- Filling out the online survey below
- Emailing
- Or in writing to M Graham, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Reading Borough Council, Civic Offices, Reading, RG1 2LU

by no later than 16th June 2023. Please quote ref: Bus Service Improvement Plan if you are responding by email or post.