



**29 June 2023**

<b>Title</b>	Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy – Draft for Consultation
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
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<b>Lead councillor</b>	Cllr John Ennis
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Recommendations</b>	The Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the work which has been undertaken to prepare the draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Reading.</li><li>2. Provide approval to undertake a public consultation on the draft strategy, alongside the proposed statutory consultation on the new Local Transport Plan.</li></ol>

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the work undertaken to prepare a draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Reading, and to seek approval to undertake a public consultation on the draft strategy as part of the proposed statutory consultation on the new Local Transport Plan (for which approval is being sought under a separate Committee item).

## **2. Policy context**

- 2.1. The Department for Transport (DfT) published the Transport Decarbonisation Plan 'Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain' in July 2021 to set the pathway and key principles underpinning the approach to delivering net zero transport in the UK by 2050.
- 2.2. This was followed by the publication of 'Taking Charge: The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy' in March 2022. The strategy sets out Government's vision and action plan for the rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the UK, ahead of the dates to end the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 and for all new cars and vans to be fully zero emission at the tailpipe by 2035.
- 2.3. The transition to electric vehicles will help to achieve a number of Council strategies and objectives including those within the Corporate Plan, the Climate Emergency Strategy with its core objective of Reading becoming a net zero carbon town by 2030, the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the Air Quality Action Plan. It is a core element of the LTP vision to promote a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town with neighbourhoods that promote healthy choices and wellbeing.
- 2.4. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
- Healthy Environment
  - Thriving Communities

- Inclusive Economy
- 2.5. 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
- 2.6. 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.

### **3. The proposal**

- 3.1. The main focus of the Council’s Transport Strategy is to promote sustainable alternatives to the private car, such as public transport, walking and cycling; as this will be fundamental to achieving our overall vision and wider objectives relating to health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and sustainable economic growth. However, the transition to electric vehicles will also play an important role in achieving the carbon and air quality elements of the strategy and it is acknowledged that it is not possible for every car journey to be replaced by a more sustainable mode, for instance people may need to drive on occasions due to reasons relating to work, family, safety, gender differences or equality issues. It should be noted that this transition alone will not achieve the overall objectives of the wider transport strategy as electric vehicles still produce particulates which lead to poor local air quality, do not reduce traffic congestion nor encourage more active travel with the associated health and wellbeing benefits.
- 3.2. The Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy will become a sub-strategy to the Local Transport Plan, with the aim of accelerating the transition to electric vehicles for necessary travel in Reading. The strategy sets out the current position of electric vehicle take-up in Reading as well as setting the future pathway to support increased uptake of electric vehicles for residents, visitors and local businesses. The strategy includes reference to the charging infrastructure needs of all electric vehicles, including electric buses, car clubs, e-bikes and e-scooters.
- 3.3. The key elements of the draft strategy document are set out below:
- Introduction – this sets out the context and rationale for developing an electric vehicle strategy for Reading, including the leadership role for the Council in this area.
  - Policy Context – this section provides a summary of the national, regional and local policy context for the strategy, including how it will contribute towards the Council’s objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan, Climate Emergency Strategy and Local Transport Plan.
  - EV Charging Infrastructure in Reading – this sets out the range of current electric vehicle infrastructure in the borough which is available to the public, an overview of the different types of charging infrastructure currently on the market alongside the relevant standards and regulations, and our aspirations for charging infrastructure for all modes including buses, car clubs, e-bikes and e-scooters.
  - Charging Infrastructure Options Appraisal – this section explores the different options that are available to increase the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the borough, including an appraisal of the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches and a quantification of the level of infrastructure that is likely to be required in the future.

- Funding Options & Opportunities – this provides a summary of the different funding options and opportunities that are available to increase the take-up of electric vehicles, including the need to coordinate provision in the borough with the plans of neighbouring local authorities and the private sector. The section will also explore opportunities for joined up working with other authorities.
  - Charging Infrastructure Delivery Plan – this section sets a delivery plan for increasing the provision of electric vehicles in Reading in the short, medium and long-term, including the role of the Council and key partners from both the public and private sectors. This includes working with owners/ operators of existing combustion engine infrastructure, such as petrol stations and car parks, regarding the potential to convert this existing usage into charging for electric vehicles.
- 3.4. Engagement with suppliers of electric vehicle charge point infrastructure has been undertaken to ensure the strategy is based on the latest available information in this rapidly evolving market. The strategy takes into account the latest projections for electric vehicle uptake and therefore the requirements for different types of charging infrastructure to ensure that a lack of charge points is not a barrier to the future take-up of electric vehicles.
- 3.5. The strategy acknowledges the role the Council has in providing local leadership in this area to set an example for residents and local businesses to follow, however also highlights the key areas which are outside of the control of the Council. External funding has previously been secured to implement a range of charge points in the town, including rapid charge points at Mere oak and Winnersh P&R sites, fast charge points in some Council owned car parks and slow charge points in a number of residential streets throughout the borough. It is considered that the further provision of charge points for residents living in streets without off-street parking is a particularly important role for the Council moving forward. Therefore, further installations of charge points in streets without off-street parking is included as a key action within the strategy.
- 3.6. The Council is committed to ensuring our in-house vehicle fleet is fully electric by 2030 and good progress is being made in this area, with our current fleet including 7 electric small vans, 6 electric refuse collection vehicles, 2 electric pool cars and an electric litter collection vehicle. In addition, work is currently being progressed to upgrade the power supply into the depot at Bennet Road to ensure further charging infrastructure can be provided to cater for future electric vehicles in the fleet.
- 3.7. In addition to the strategy for the borough, officers are working with colleagues from the other Berkshire authorities to identify how delivery of charge points can be coordinated across the county. Options being considered to ensure charging infrastructure is delivered in the most joined-up and cost-effective way include the possibility of joint bidding opportunities, sharing resources where appropriate and exploring the potential advantages of pursuing a pan-Berkshire supplier arrangement. This could be achieved through a 'concession framework' to procure an operator(s) to provide charging facilities on appropriate highway land across the county, with associated revenue income.
- 3.8. It should be noted that whilst there is currently no statutory guidance for local authorities for the development of electric vehicle strategies, it is envisaged that further direction will be included within the Department for Transport's new guidance for local authorities on the development of Local Transport Plans. However, engagement on development of the strategy has been undertaken with the Energy Savings Trust and feedback has been incorporated within the latest version of the document.
- 3.9. In conclusion, the draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy sets out the context and Council's ambitions to provide the infrastructure required to enable a rapid transition to electric vehicles in Reading, in line with our wider climate and transport ambitions. The Committee is therefore asked to provide approval for a public consultation to be undertaken on the draft strategy, after which feedback will be incorporated into an updated strategy which will be brought back to the Committee to seek adoption by the Council.

#### **4. Contribution to strategic aims**

- 4.1. The delivery of the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy will help to deliver the three service priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan, particularly the creation of a healthy environment. This will be achieved by increasing usage of electric vehicles which have a significantly reduced impact on carbon emissions than diesel and petrol equivalents.

#### **5. Environmental and climate implications**

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in our 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.
- 5.2. A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed which suggests a 'net medium positive' impact arising from adoption of the strategy. In order to achieve the Council's sustainable transport vision and meet our climate change goals, we will need to reduce car use both within and through the borough by providing attractive and viable alternatives through prioritising and promoting public transport and active travel schemes. However, our Transport Strategy recognises that private vehicle use, car and van trips, will remain for many the most appropriate mode of transport. Therefore, by encouraging the adoption of electric vehicles for the trips that still need to be made they can be made to be more sustainable with a lower impact on the environment and climate change as well as reducing the impact of poor air quality in Reading.
- 5.3. A key driver to the successful adoption of electric vehicles is the ability to adequately charge vehicles. For some the natural choice will be through home charging in an off-street setting, but this will not be available for many, and Reading has a particularly high proportion of homes that do not have off-street parking. Our Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy will provide a framework for a network of charging points across the borough and to remove barriers to EV ownership and help achieve our targets from our Climate emergency Strategy of increasing uptake of zero emission vehicles.

#### **6. Community engagement**

- 6.1. As set out within the report, it is proposed that a public consultation is undertaken to seek feedback on the draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy as part of the proposed statutory consultation to be undertaken on the Council's new Local Transport Plan, the Reading Transport Strategy 2040.

#### **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. The strategy has been developed in line with these requirements and the delivery of individual elements of the strategy be subject to further Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) as they are developed.

#### **8. Other relevant considerations**

- 8.1. There are none.

## **9. Legal implications**

- 9.1. There is no current statutory requirement for the Council to produce an Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy, however it is anticipated that the new Local Transport Plan guidance being prepared by the Department for Transport may place this duty on Local Transport Authorities.

## **10. Financial implications**

- 10.1. Development of the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy has been funded by existing transport budgets to date.

## **11. Timetable for implementation**

- 11.1. The delivery of individual schemes included within the strategy will be subject to future funding being secured.

## **12. Background papers**

- 12.1. There are none.

## **Appendices**

1. **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy – Draft for Consultation (June 2023)**