



13 March 2024

Title	Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy – Final for Adoption
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Chris Maddocks, Strategic Transport Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	The Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the additions and updates that have been made to the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy to reflect feedback received from the public consultation.2. Approve the adoption of the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy for Reading (Appendix A).

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the additions and updates that have been made to the draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy following the public consultation, which was undertaken between 8 August and 18 September 2023, and to seek approval for the Council to adopt the final strategy.

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 2035 and for all new cars and vans to be fully zero emission at the tailpipe by the same date.
- 2.3. The transition to electric vehicles will help to achieve a range of Council strategies and objectives including those within the Climate Emergency Strategy, the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the Air Quality Action Plan. It is a key element of achieving the vision within the LTP to promote a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town with neighbourhoods that promote healthy choices and wellbeing.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The key focus of the Council's emerging Local Transport Plan (The Reading Transport Strategy 2040) 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 or equality. 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. The overarching aim of the Strategy is to accelerate the transition to Electric Vehicles for necessary travel in Reading in the context of wider Local Transport Plan aspirations to reduce the need to travel, reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality and promote sustainable and active travel.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. A public consultation on the Draft Strategy was undertaken for six weeks between 8 August and 18 September 2023. The Council received 64 responses through the consultation, including from residents and local groups such as Caversham and District Resident's Association (CADRA), alongside key industry bodies including the Energy Savings Trust (EST). Whilst this was a relatively low level of response overall, the feedback received has proved to be immensely valuable with key feedback from the consultation set out below:
 - Over 82% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the aims and objectives of the Draft Strategy.
 - 48% of respondents do not currently own an EV (electric vehicle), 31% do own an EV and 21% are actively considering purchasing an EV.
 - Of the respondents who currently own an EV, only 26% can currently charge their vehicle at home and a further 8% plan to install charging facilities at home imminently.
 - Of the respondents that do not currently own an EV, 47% said the lower costs of EVs would encourage them to purchase one, 36% said more charging points near their home was a key factor and 34% said more charge points throughout the country would encourage them to purchase an EV.
 - 71% of respondents said they would like to see more charge points installed in residential areas and local neighbourhoods, 65% in retail parks, 55% in leisure centres, and 41% would like to see more charge points installed on the major road network.
 - The most popular response for the distance charge points should be located within people's homes was within 100 meters which was selected by 36% of respondents.
- 3.5. The Draft Strategy document has subsequently been updated to reflect the main themes of feedback received through the consultation, with the key changes including:
 - Factual updates throughout the document to reflect the latest data relating to growth in EV uptake.
 - Updated to reflect the recent Government announcement that the timescales to end the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles will change to 2035 from the previous policy of 2030.

- The objectives of the strategy have been condensed and more closely aligned with the delivery plan.
 - Strengthened statements on social inclusion and the provision of fair and equitable charging rates for on-street residential charging.
 - Updates to reflect feedback on issues relating to considering conservation areas and avoiding removing trees where possible to implement on-street EV charging facilities.
 - Updated considerations for the procurement of charging infrastructure including the need to ensure future proofing, reliability and quality of service is built into any future procurements.
 - Strengthened statements on the potential for hydrogen powered vehicles, including the challenges of generating truly green hydrogen and the need for hydrogen fuel stations.
 - Updates to reflect the recent change in categorisation of EV charger by speed of charger.
 - Approximate costings for each element of the Strategy have been added to the delivery plan to give an indication of the level of investment required to deliver the strategy.
- 3.6. Development of the Strategy has involved engagement with suppliers of electric vehicle charge point infrastructure to ensure it 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.
- 3.7. 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 it 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 Park & Ride 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.
- 3.8. The Council is committed to ensuring our in-house vehicle fleet is transitioned to electric 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.
- 3.9. 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 (for instance for the procurement of more strategically located rapid charging infrastructure). 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.
- 3.10. In conclusion, the 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 Draft Strategy has been updated to reflect feedback received through the public consultation and therefore the Committee is asked to approve adoption of the final strategy.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

4.2. 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

4.3. 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.

4.4. 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.

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, a public consultation on the draft strategy was undertaken for six weeks between 8 August and 18 September 2023 and the final strategy has been updated to reflect the key themes of feedback received through the consultation.

7. Equality Implications

- 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, including revenue grant funding.

- 10.2. Delivery of the Strategy will be subject to securing funding to enable individual elements of the overall Strategy to be implemented. The Council has recently bid to Government for £866k capital grant funding to deliver residential charge points through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund, and £1.08m to deliver electric vehicle charging facilities at Reading Buses' depot through the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area fund (in addition to £3.66m for electric buses). If successful this external funding will help to deliver a significant element of the Strategy, however we will continue to seek further funding opportunities to deliver further elements of the strategy such as rapid charging facilities and charge points in Council owned car parks.

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

- A. Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy (March 2024)