



27 June 2024

Title	Reading Transport Strategy 2040 – Final for Adoption
Purpose of the report	To make a recommendation to Council
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	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the feedback that has been received through the statutory consultation on the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, and the subsequent amendments that have been made to the Strategy as included at Appendix A. 2. To recommend to Council that the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 be adopted by Full Council as its new statutory Local Transport Plan for the period 2024-40, as included at Appendix B.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the work which has been undertaken to prepare the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, including the statutory consultation which was undertaken between 18 September and 11 December 2023, and to recommend that Full Council is asked to adopt the final Strategy as the new statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the borough.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. It is a statutory duty for all Local Transport Authorities to produce and keep under regular review an LTP under the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008. Reading’s existing LTP for the period 2011-26 was adopted by Council in March 2011. Significant progress has been made with delivery of the current LTP with the majority of schemes and initiatives within it now delivered.
- 2.2. Preparation of the new LTP, the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, commenced in 2019. This included an initial visioning consultation which was undertaken between July and September 2019, seeking views on the proposed key principles to underpin development of the Strategy. Feedback received from this consultation demonstrated strong support for the proposed vision, objectives and key themes for the Strategy, which focused on providing attractive alternatives to the private car through the provision of high-quality public transport, walking and cycling facilities.
- 2.3. Development of the Strategy continued in line with the feedback received from the visioning consultation. Despite the onset of the Covid pandemic, the decision was taken to proceed with the statutory consultation on the Strategy which was undertaken between May and August 2020.
- 2.4. This consultation provided valuable feedback on the detailed policies, schemes and initiatives included within the Draft Strategy. However, the on-going nature of the

pandemic and uncertainty regarding the implications for future travel behaviour led to the decision being taken to pause development of the Strategy at that time. This coincided with a period of significant additional requirements and associated funding opportunities emerging from Government for local authorities, principally through the 'National Bus Strategy - Bus Back Better', and 'Gear Change - A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking'.

- 2.5. Subsequently, in June last year, this Committee gave approval for a second statutory consultation to be undertaken on the Draft Strategy prior to its adoption, give the length of time that had passed since the previous consultation.
- 2.6. The Council's Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
 - Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 2.7. 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
- 2.8. 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 Reading Transport Strategy 2040 sets out an ambitious vision to create healthier, greener and more equal communities through the future provision of travel options in Reading. The Strategy is focused on promoting sustainable transport options as a realistic alternative to the private car, setting out how transport facilities and services in Reading will be developed to 2040 to help achieve our wider objectives for the town, including the Reading 2050 Vision and the objectives of the Climate Emergency Strategy.
- 3.2. It is acknowledged within the Strategy 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. Therefore, the Strategy includes the objective of a transition to electric vehicles in Reading which have a significantly reduced impact on carbon emissions compared to diesel and petrol equivalents. However, it is also recognised that this transition alone will not achieve the overall objectives of the 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.
- 3.3. A key focus of the Strategy is tackling social inequalities in Reading through the provision of affordable transport solutions to enable access to education, training, employment and leisure opportunities for everyone. Further important themes of the Strategy relate to carbon reduction and improved air quality, health and wellbeing, economic growth and making use of the latest technologies to be at the forefront of innovation.
- 3.4. A fundamental element of development of the Strategy has been engagement and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, local interest groups and residents. The overarching vision and key principles underpinning the Strategy were overwhelmingly supported in the initial consultation in 2019, including policies to guide development of the town's transport network such as re-allocating road space for the use of sustainable modes. The subsequent statutory consultation on the Draft Strategy undertaken in 2020

built upon these strong foundations, with valuable feedback and suggestions reflected in the subsequent update to the detailed proposals.

- 3.5. In June last year, this Committee gave approval for a second statutory consultation to be undertaken on the Draft Strategy prior to its adoption, given the length of time that had passed since the previous consultation.

Statutory consultation

- 3.6. The statutory consultation on the updated strategy ran from Monday 18 September 2023 until Monday 11 December 2023. This built on the previous consultation and engagement activities undertaken by providing a further opportunity for residents and all stakeholders to review the updated document and provide further feedback. Additionally, the consultation sought views on the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) which focused on the environmental, equalities and health considerations of the Strategy.

- 3.7. The consultation was launched with a press release and existing contacts, networks and statutory consultees were informed directly via email. An online survey was hosted on the Council's consultation hub and written responses were also accepted. In addition to the Strategy document itself, a summary website version of the Strategy was provided on the Council's website as an accessible and easy to read version of all of the key elements of the Strategy. Key promotional activities undertaken as part of the consultation included: a social media campaign; advertising on digital screens; public drop-in events across the borough; and engagement with key stakeholders including neighbouring authorities and local interest groups.

- 3.8. A detailed analysis of the consultation responses is provided at Appendix A. In summary, the Council received a significant amount of feedback through the consultation with 504 respondents to the online survey and 17 written responses from key stakeholders (in addition to those received as part of the 2020 consultation). The main themes of feedback included:

- Vision and objectives - 68% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the Strategy vision and objectives, 22% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the remainder (10%) either unsure or did not answer this question.
- Policies - 64% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the policies included in the Strategy, 24% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the remainder (13%) either unsure or did not answer this question.
- Schemes and initiatives - 60% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the schemes and initiatives included in the Strategy, 25% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the remainder (15%) either unsure or did not answer this question.
- Funding - the largest number of responses regarding alternative funding sources were related to sourcing funding from parking and traffic enforcement, followed by congestion charging and redistribution of Council resources and funding from external organisations.
- Monitoring progress - 51% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the targets for measuring success within the Strategy, 21% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the remainder (28%) either unsure or did not answer this question.
- Key stakeholders - we received a number of helpful responses from key stakeholders which have been used to both update the Strategy and helped to clarify delivery partner positions for individual elements of the Strategy.
- Detailed comments - we received a considerable amount of highly detailed comments, referring to specific schemes and policies which will be particularly helpful as individual elements of the Strategy are taken forward for delivery.

3.9. The Strategy has been updated following an analysis of the consultation results and the key themes of feedback. It should be noted that the core vision and underlying principles remain valid and have not been changed, as they were heavily supported through each of the three consultations. The key updates to the document following the consultation include the following:

- Factual updates - a number of factual updates have been made throughout the document to reflect changes since preparation of the previous version, for instance to reflect the latest developments in local and national policies and to reflect progress made with the delivery of schemes locally.
- Communication and engagement - updated references included within the strategy to strengthen our communication and engagement activities through the delivery of individual elements of the Strategy.
- Cross Thames Travel - the scheme text has been updated in light of multiple stakeholder comments to clearly set out relevant parties' positions and the Council's desired outcome to work with these stakeholders to resolve the issues caused by the existing limited river crossings.
- Cycling - text has been strengthened to clarify the Council's desire to deliver segregated cycle infrastructure where this is feasible and funding is available.
- Disability and accessibility – references have been strengthened throughout the document to highlight requirements regarding disability and accessibility. In addition, use of language has been altered regarding the distinction between accessibility and connectivity.
- Freight - the freight policies have been strengthened, including a policy to develop a freight strategy and work with partners to deliver improvements in freight.
- Private car - references have been strengthened throughout the document to recognise that the private car will still be an important mode of travel for many people.
- Monitoring performance - the targets within the Strategy have been reviewed and updated to reflect the latest available data, including updating the baseline data where this is available.
- Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) - The IIA has been updated to reflect the latest changes made to the document, however the overall conclusions remain unchanged.

Final Strategy

3.10. The final proposed Reading Transport Strategy 2040, as provided at Appendix B, includes the following main sections:

- Vision & Objectives – this sets out the overall vision to transform sustainable travel options in Reading through the five core themes of: creating a clean and green Reading; supporting healthy lifestyles; enabling sustainable and inclusive growth; connecting people and places; and embracing smart solutions.
- About Reading – this section provides an overview of Reading as a place, describing how the town is a major employment centre and leisure destination with excellent transport connectivity, however, also a town which suffers from significant levels of inequality.
- Challenges & Opportunities – sets out the key issues the Strategy is seeking to overcome, which include improving air quality; reducing congestion; providing affordable and accessible travel for all; removing barriers to healthy lifestyles; achieving good accessibility to local facilities and employment opportunities; accommodating sustainable development and adapting to the future.

- Our Policies – the Strategy includes a suite of policies covering a wide range of topics which add more detail to the key themes of the document. The policies set the guiding principles which should be followed to help ensure the overall vision and objectives of the Strategy are achieved.
- Our Schemes & Initiatives – the individual schemes and initiatives have been designed to work together and complement each other, with each adding value to the overall package. The Strategy includes a range of measures from localised small-scale enhancements to strategic cross-boundary schemes; with a programme focused on multi-modal, public transport, active travel and network management interventions. In addition, a comprehensive programme of communication, engagement and training initiatives are included, focused on key destinations, employment sites and schools throughout the borough.
- The schemes and initiatives contained within the Strategy have been developed to ensure they contribute towards wider Council objectives including health and wellbeing, air quality and the climate emergency. The key headline schemes include a package of public transport enhancements and priority measures (both bus and rail) on key corridors linked to mobility hubs on the edge of the urban area; developing a network of segregated cycle routes and enhanced pedestrian facilities to encourage more levels of walking and cycling; more efficient management of the highway network; improving cross river travel options to mitigate the negative impacts resulting from the limited existing river crossings; and a policy to review potential demand management measures. The combination of these interventions will all contribute towards increasing levels of sustainable travel and ultimately help to achieve our overall vision for travel in Reading.
- Funding & Implementation – this section includes a high-level delivery plan with indicative timescales for implementation of each component of the Strategy (subject to funding availability). Delivery will be split between major schemes, packages of smaller measures delivered through neighbourhood area action plans, and on-going revenue initiatives.
- Partnerships & Stakeholders – this section emphasises the importance of effective partnership working and gives a clear commitment to work with all key stakeholders to deliver the Strategy. This is vitally important to ensure each individual element is delivered, as it is the combination of initiatives which will enable the overall vision to be achieved.
- Monitoring & Review – this final section includes an ambitious set of targets to ensure progress is regularly monitored in order to remain on track towards successfully achieving the overall vision and core objectives of the Strategy.
- Appendix A: Summary of Consultation Responses – this provides a comprehensive analysis of the consultations which have been undertaken to inform the development of the Strategy.
- Appendix B: Integrated Impact Assessment - the statutory Integrated Impact Assessment report which assess the Strategy in relation to its environmental, equality and health impacts.

Conclusion

- 3.11. In conclusion, the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 addresses the key challenges and opportunities facing the borough and will put the town in the best possible position to ensure transport can play its part in achieving wider objectives relating to health and wellbeing, climate change, economic recovery and addressing inequalities. It builds on the strong foundations of high levels of public transport, walking and cycling in the borough. However, significant challenges and opportunities still need to be addressed and the Strategy includes a comprehensive programme of policies, schemes and initiatives which are aligned to the overall vision and wider objectives.

- 3.12. In addition to the Strategy itself, more detailed plans and proposals relating to individual aspects are contained within sub-strategies. These include the following previously adopted plans: the Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy. These sub-strategies have been prepared to align with and contribute towards delivery of the vision and objectives as set out in the Transport Strategy.
- 3.13. The Strategy has been developed in accordance with the current Government guidance for Local Transport Plans. The DfT has previously informed local authorities that Government was preparing new statutory LTP guidance, however this has not been forthcoming and therefore given the importance of the issues and opportunities set out within the Strategy it is recommended that the new strategy is approved in the absence of new guidance, as this will put the Council in the best possible position to respond to any funding opportunities that may arise following the upcoming General Election. The Committee is therefore asked to approve adoption of the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, as set out at Appendix B, as the new statutory Local Transport Plan for the borough, for the period 2024-40.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. The objectives, policies, schemes and initiatives contained within the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 will contribute towards the delivery of the three service priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan of Healthy Environment, Thriving Communities and Inclusive Economy, as set out in detail within this report.

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. The Reading Transport Strategy 2040, which has been developed to align with the Climate Emergency Strategy, responds to this challenge and is focused on five themes. These themes all encourage a step-change in transport infrastructure and services and a shift towards sustainable and clean modes of transport as attractive alternatives to private vehicles. The Strategy has been developed alongside the Climate Change Strategy, particularly the transport theme, to ensure consistency between the two strategies and to ensure the delivery of each strategy supports the overarching objectives of both.
- 5.3. The Climate Impact Assessment tool has been used to assess the proposal as set out within this report, resulting in an overall Net Medium Positive impact. This is due to the focus on encouraging the use of sustainable transport, walking and cycling as attractive alternatives to the private car. This includes managing congestion and therefore reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality by providing a more efficient network and suitable alternatives for vehicular traffic, which will enable existing highway capacity to be reallocated for the use of sustainable modes. The assessment also acknowledges that there will be negative impacts resulting from construction activities associated with the delivery of schemes as set out within the strategy.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. As set out within the report, a fundamental element of development of the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 has been engagement and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, local interest groups and residents. This includes the initial visioning consultation which was undertaken in 2019, and the two 12-week statutory consultations which were undertaken in 2020 and 2023.

- 6.2. Further information is contained within Appendix A 'Reading Transport Strategy 2040 - Summary of Consultation Responses'.

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. In order to comply with the Equalities Act 2010, an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), which incorporates an Equality Impact Assessment, has been undertaken as an integral part of the development of the Reading Transport Strategy 2040. In addition to equality, the IIA also considers the health and environmental implications of the proposed policies, schemes and initiatives contained within the Strategy.
- 7.3. The overall vision and key objectives of the Strategy relate directly to improving the environment, promoting healthy lifestyles and inclusivity; therefore the benefits resulting from delivery of it in these key areas are reflected in the IIA assessment. This overall focus combined with the IIA approach has ensured that these key areas are fully integrated within the strategy and the positive benefits resulting from delivery of the strategy will be maximised. In addition, the IIA considers that appropriate mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Strategy in order to minimise the impact of the proposals.
- 7.4. The final IIA report for the Strategy is available on the Council's website here at: www.reading.gov.uk/transportstrategy.

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. The Local Transport Plan is a statutory requirement as set out in the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008. The Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment, considered in the overarching Integrated Impact Assessment, is also a statutory requirement.
- 9.2. By adopting the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 as the new Local Transport Plan, which has been prepared in accordance with the current Government guidance for Local Transport Plans, the Council will have fulfilled its statutory duty to keep the transport strategy under regular review.
- 9.3. It should be noted that in the Council's Constitution the Transport Strategy is a matter reserved for Council, therefore the Strategy will need to be approved by Full Council for it to be formally adopted by the Council.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The development of the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 has been funded by existing transport budgets and a revenue grant of £178,571.43 from the DfT which has been provided specifically for the development of LTPs and associated schemes and initiatives.
- 10.2. The development and delivery of schemes as set out in the Strategy will be subject to future funding being identified and secured, such as grants issued by Central Government and private sector contributions secured through the planning process.

11. Timetable for implementation

11.1. The delivery of individual schemes included within the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 will be subject to future funding being secured. An indicative programme for delivery is included within the strategy.

12. Background papers

12.1. There are none.

Appendices

- A. Reading Transport Strategy 2040 – Summary of Consultation Responses (June 2024)**
- B. Reading Transport Strategy 2040 – Final for Adoption (June 2024)**