

# Traffic Management Sub-Committee

27 November 2024



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
*Working better with you*

<b>Title</b>	Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Update Report
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	James Clements, Transport Programme Manager
<b>Lead councillor</b>	Cllr John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
<b>Ward(s)</b>	Abbey, Battle, Norcot, Southcote, Katesgrove, Redlands, Park and Whitley
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>The Sub-Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the content of this report.</li><li>2. Approve that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake statutory consultation/notification processes for items 3.6, 3.20, 3.25 and 3.35 proposed in this report, in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.</li><li>3. Authorise the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood services to make minor amendments to any of the proposals if required prior to the implementation of any of the traffic regulation orders in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub Committee.</li><li>4. Approve that subject to no objections being received the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders Procedure (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, and that no public inquiry be held into the proposal.</li><li>5. Approve that should any of the proposals receive objection(s) during the statutory consultation period, that these be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee for consideration and decision.</li><li>6. Approve, that subject to the outcome of the Southampton Street (Oracle roundabout) statutory consultation, that the sub-committee delegates to the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood services to proceed with either of the designs proposed, subject to the budget available.</li></ol>

	<p>7. Approve the minor amendments made to the advisory cycling road markings, which were necessary to safely implement the Oxford Road Bus Lane (Norcot Road) as explained in sections 3.7 to 3.14 of this report.</p> <p>8. Approve that the Bath Road bus lane be removed from the current BSIP Programme of works, and this funding be reallocated to support the delivery of the remaining programme.</p> <p>9. Approve the revocation of the Bath Road (A4) bus lane and the making of the Traffic Regulation Order associated with the revocation.</p>
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## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Sub-Committee of the progress made on the delivery of a number the BSIP schemes and to seek approval to consult on those items identified within this report.

## 2. Policy context

- 2.1. The recommendations within this report support the objectives of the Council's new Corporate Plan for the years 2022/25, and contribute towards the key themes of:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

- 2.2. 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.

- 2.3. The National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better' was published in March 2021 as part of a £3 billion 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.

- 2.4. 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.

- 2.5. The BSIP is a sub-strategy and core element of our 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.

- 2.6. The Berkshire West Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2021-2030) sets out the cross-borough priorities to deliver positive health outcomes to residents within Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire. The implementation of the schemes detailed within this report, and through promoting the use of Public Transport (as well as Active Travel initiatives) can

directly support positive outcomes, particularly for those residents and visitors living and walking alongside busy roads.

### **3. The proposal**

- 3.1. Further to the approval of this sub-committee in January 2024 to proceed with the delivery of six new bus lane schemes, a number of these schemes have now been implemented. This report sets out the progress made to date on each of these, alongside any outstanding actions required to close out each project.

#### **Oxford Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Zinzan Street & George Street**

- 3.2. The westbound bus lane on Oxford Road (between Zinzan Street and George Street) reached practical completion on 9 October 2024, from which point the new lane became operational.
- 3.3. The scheme has been well received by the bus operator and officers will continue to monitor and report to Department for Transport on the service improvements as a result of this new bus lane. The implementation of this new bus lane has not had a detrimental impact on other road users as we were able to maintain capacity.
- 3.4. The signal upgrade works between Prospect St and George St have also been completed, pending final testing and sign off from the Councils signal engineer, and officers hope the new signals will go live in the coming weeks.
- 3.5. As necessitated by the design of the new scheme, some minor amendments were made to the parking and loading bay facilities to the west of Bedford Road, between the junction and Prospect St (shown at Appendix 1). In order to formalise this new layout, officers are requesting approval to consult on the necessary changes to the existing TRO in this location. Officers confirm that the Council is not currently enforcing the restrictions in this location due to the current TRO discrepancy.
- 3.6. **[Action]** Officers are seeking approval from the sub-committee to undertake a statutory consultation to capture TRO changes in this location, which include:
- a) The relocation of the pay and display parking bays (approximately 86 meters east of their previous location)
  - b) The relocation of the loading bay (approximately 5 meters east of its previous location)
  - c) Updating the red route restrictions to reflect the changes (a&b) above
  - d) Any other updates (restricted to this location) that are identified in consultation with colleagues in Legal Services and subject to recommendation 3 of this report.

#### **Oxford Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Pangbourne Street & Norcot Road**

- 3.7. The westbound bus lane on Oxford Road (Pangbourne St and Norcot Rd) reached practical completion on 2 November 2024, from which point the new lane became operational.
- 3.8. The completion of these works was undertaken in co-ordination with colleagues from the Council's Highways Department, and included bringing forward the resurfacing programme in this area to maximise efficiency and value for money.
- 3.9. The improved crossing facilities at the junction of the retail park were completed on 12 November 2024, and is now open to the public. . Alongside this, Councillors will recall that the scheme included the relocation of the bus stop, west of Grovelands Road. This element of the project has not been implemented, and officers are monitoring the impacts of the new bus lane before implementing this relocation.

- 3.10. Initial observations of vehicle movements indicate that the scheme is performing as expected, and a further road safety audit will be undertaken in 2025. Officers will continue to monitor the performance of the road, and report to Department for Transport on the service improvements as a result of this new bus lane. The implementation of this new bus lane has not had a detrimental impact on other road users as we were able to maintain capacity.
- 3.11. Officers would like to bring to the attention of the sub-committee minor amendments that were required to be made shortly before the implementation of the scheme. These amendments were identified as part of the final review process prior to implementation and were made in consultation with the scheme designers and the independent Road Safety Auditor.
- 3.12. During the final pre-implementation review, a concern was raised regarding the general arrangement of the end of bus lane, and the movement of taxis and motorbikes merging from the bus lane into the general traffic lane. As a consequence, the project team agreed to shorten the bus lane to provide additional space for merging. Officers do not expect this to adversely affect the performance of the bus lane, but will continue to monitor this, and have identified potential solutions/mitigations that can be implemented in the future if the bus performance declines.
- 3.13. Additionally, as a consequence of the new westbound bus lane on Oxford Rd (between Grovelands Road and Norcot Road), and the reallocation of road space to facilitate this, it was not possible to retain the existing advisory cycle facilities on either side of the road, in the vicinity of the petrol station (east of Norcot Rd roundabout). Officers have ensured that all advanced stop lines have been retained, and additional cycle symbols have been implemented at appropriate locations between Norcot Road and Grovelands Road to remind motorists to be considerate to cyclists.
- 3.14. Officers confirm that the original drawings that were submitted to the sub-committee in January 2024 indicated that a small section of cycle facilities would be retained, however after further review with the scheme designer, Officers do not believe that retaining the short section offers a significant benefit to cyclists, and may increase the risk of conflict/collision. Appendix 2 provides details of the final implemented scheme as well as identifying those cycle facilities that have been removed.
- 3.15. **[Action]** Officers are seeking that the sub-committee approves the amendments made to the advisory cycling road markings, which were necessary to safely implement the Oxford Road Bus Lane (Norcot Road).

### **Bath Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Circuit Lane & Granville Road**

- 3.16. The sub-committee is asked to note that the delivery of this scheme has been delayed and it is not currently expected to be delivered as part of the current programme of BSIP works.
- 3.17. This recommendation comes as a result of increasing construction costs across the wider BSIP programme and following completion of the detailed design for this specific scheme, which has identified more significant civil engineering works will be required in order to implement the scheme. The funding originally allocated to Bath Road should be reallocated to support the delivery of the remaining capital schemes which have the approval of DfT.
- 3.18. The delivery of the Bath Road bus lane remains a key priority of our BSIP and as such was prioritised in the Council's recent BSIP 2024 update, which was approved by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 27 June 2024. Whilst no funding announcements have been made to support future BSIPs, Officers will continue to lobby DfT for funding to support these enhancements to our network of bus priority measures.

- 3.19. **[Action]:** Approve that the Bath Road bus lane be removed from the current BSIP Programme of works and that this funding be reallocated to support the delivery of the remaining programme,
- 3.20. **[Action]** Approve the revocation of the Bath Road (A4) bus lane and the making of the Traffic Regulation Order associated with the revocation.

### **Southampton Street (Oracle Roundabout)**

- 3.21. This new bus lane on the Oracle Roundabout has been put on hold pending the conclusion of the remainder of the BSIP programme, in order to establish the budget available for this scheme. Following the initial design of the scheme, officers have learnt that due to the age and condition of the traffic signals at the roundabout, it is not possible to reposition them as planned without upgrading the entire signal system. As this was not originally budgeted for, officers are not able to currently commit to the delivery of this scheme as initially set out during the statutory consultation.
- 3.22. In response to this, officers have undertaken a design review of the roundabout to identify other suitable solutions to improve bus priority. Following this, a further proposal has been included at Appendix 3 of this report. This additional proposal will see the reallocation of an existing general traffic lane to be converted into a bus lane.
- 3.23. As part of the design review, officers commissioned additional traffic modelling to understand how the junction would perform, and any impacts that would be experienced at each arm of the junction. As a result of this modelling, officers can confirm that:
- (a) Traffic modelling undertaken indicates that the main impact of the proposed scheme on congestion is the updated lane allocation for the left turn from Southampton Street onto the IDR. Traffic which is currently split across both lanes all moves into the left hand lane, which could become congested at busy periods. This may have a negative impact on buses compared to the existing situation. This risk has been mitigated by allowing buses to also use lane 2 for the ahead movement is needed to bypass traffic in lane 1.
  - (b) However, queuing for the left turn from Southampton Street to the IDR is unaffected by the number of lanes downstream on the roundabout. This may be mitigated by changing the signals timings to give more green light time to Southampton Street arm.
  - (c) Otherwise, the modelling found the changes to queue length to be insignificant compared to the widening option, as the traffic counts have found that the left-hand lane of the roundabout is seldom used by traffic currently. Therefore, converting the existing left-hand lane to a bus lane is not expected to have a significant impact on congestion or traffic flows on the roundabout itself. The outputs from the modelling are contained within Appendix A for reference.
  - (d) This layout could be delivered for a much lower cost, disruption and environmental impact of the 4-lane option and is not expected to have a material impact on traffic flows when compared to the 4-lane option.
- 3.24. Based on this modelling information, officers therefore do not believe that this alternative design proposal will have a detrimental impact on the performance of the junction, and are therefore recommending that a statutory consultation exercise be undertaken based on this new design. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, officers are seeking approval to proceed with either the original approved design, or this new value engineered design, subject to the budget remaining upon completion of the current BSIP construction activities.

- 3.25. **[Action]** Officers are seeking approval from the sub-committee to undertake a statutory consultation for the alternative design proposals for the Oracle Roundabout.
- 3.26. **[Action]** That subject to the outcome of the consultation, that the sub-committee delegates to the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood services to proceed with either of the designs proposed, subject to the budget available.

### **London Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Sidmouth Street & London Street**

- 3.27. This scheme is pending the conclusion of a formal procurement exercise, which is due to commence in the new year, subject to legal resources, with delivery of the scheme due to commence in Spring 2025. DfT have been informed of the delays to this project, and a formal extension has been agreed with them.

### **London Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction Sidmouth**

- 3.28. The westbound bus lane on London Road (Liverpool Rd to Cemetery Junction) was completed on 14 August 2024, from which point the new lane became operational.
- 3.29. Officers are continuing to monitor the impacts of the new bus lane both on Liverpool Road, but also on the surrounding roads. Traffic data is currently being collected from a number of these roads, following which officers will review and assess this data. Based on roadside observations at peak times, we note that there has been an impact at Liverpool Road, where vehicles are forced to merge into the general traffic lane. However, this has resulted in the queues predominantly being outside of the main residential areas. Moving west towards Cemetery Junction we have observed the traffic moving relatively freely and similar to those rates observed under the previous arrangement. We have also observed improvements since the re-opening of Church Road.
- 3.30. Officers are working with the bus operators to monitor the operation of the bus lane which will include bus journey time data when this is available. It should be noted that this will require a period of time to gain reliable data as all road users become accustomed to the new road layout.
- 3.31. Officers are continuing to work with colleagues at Wokingham Borough Council to investigate improvements that could be made east of Liverpool Road, both for the bus services and for general vehicle movements. Officers have put a number of options to Wokingham and are continuing to raise the importance of progressing short-term measures in their authority area which will have a beneficial impact for all road users on the corridor.

### **A33 Bus Rapid Transit (Southbound)**

- 3.32. Delivery of the scheme commenced on-site in March 2024, following a competitive procurement process to appoint a contractor to undertake the works. Construction works for this phase of the scheme are anticipated to be completed in Spring 2025.
- 3.33. The next major milestone for this project is the 'lift-in' of the new pedestrian and cycle bridge being installed to the western side of the bridge. These works are due to take place before end of November 2024.
- 3.34. Alongside the previously approved speed limit reduction on parts of the A33, this scheme also requires a new or revised traffic regulation order to cover the extension to the bus lane. Due to an oversight, approval to consult on this basis was not previously sought from the sub-committee, and so officers are requesting approval to undertake this statutory consultation.

- 3.35. **[Action]** Officers are seeking approval from the sub-committee to undertake a statutory consultation for new/amended Traffic Regulation Order for the extension to the existing bus lane facilities on the A33, as shown in Appendix 4.

## 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 The recommendations of this report link directly to the report presented to the sub-committee in January 2024 and as such the same Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) applies. The CIA undertaken identified an overall ***Medium Net 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. A 4-week informal consultation detailing the 6 bus lane schemes was run from 19<sup>th</sup> May to 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The consultation link was shared on social media and on the RBC Consultation webpage. An update on the feedback received during this consultation period was given verbally at the meeting.
- 6.2. A formal statutory consultation detailing the bus schemes ran from 9<sup>th</sup> November to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The consultation link was shared on social media, the RBC Consultation webpage and the local press. Drop in events were held for the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 consultation, and drawings of the bus lane schemes were on display with officer's present to answer questions.
- 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 Statutory Consultation provided 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, where necessary, may be undertaken once the schemes are developed in detailed design.

## **8. Other relevant considerations**

- 8.1. None

## **9. Legal implications**

- 9.1. The Council has considered all of its legal obligations when seeking to make Traffic Regulation Orders.
- 9.2. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 sets out the legal basis for making TROs. The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 provides for the statutory processes to be followed in making TROs.
- 9.3. Before making a TRO, the local authority must carry out a statutory consultation, engaging with the Chief of Police, residents, businesses, emergency services and transport operators. A notice detailing the proposed restrictions and the reasoning behind them is published in the in a local newspaper and displayed on site in the areas where the restrictions would apply. Members of the public have 21 days in which to submit objections or comments on the proposal. In order for any comments to be valid, it must be in writing, state the grounds on which it is made and sent to the address specified in the notice.
- 9.4. The local authority must consider any objections received.
- 9.5. With any traffic regulation order proposals, the Traffic Management Sub-Committee may decide whether to proceed with the TRO as published, modify it, or abandon it. If sub-committee approves the proposal, the TRO is formally made and a further notice is published giving the date when the order comes into force. The final step is to implement the restrictions by installing the necessary signage and road markings.
- 9.6. The Council has considered its Network Management Duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 and its Section 122 duty under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

### **Network Management Duty**

- 9.7. Part 2 Section 16 (1) of The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a duty on the Council as a local traffic authority to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far



as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives—

- (a) securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and
- (b) facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.

(2) The action which the authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action which they consider will contribute to securing—

- (a) the more efficient use of their road network; or
- (b) the avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority;

and may involve the exercise of any power to regulate or co-ordinate the uses made of any road (or part of a road) in the road network (whether or not the power was conferred on them in their capacity as a traffic authority). This duty places an ongoing obligation in ensuring overall traffic efficiency and network performance and not only applies to vehicles but to all pedestrians and cyclists.

### **Section 122 duty**

9.8. Further Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 places a duty on the local authority so far as practicable to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway. In carrying out this exercise the Council must have regard to the following:

- Desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises.
- The effect on the amenities of any locality effected and (without prejudice to the generality of this paragraph) the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles, so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the road(s) run.
- The strategy prepared under Section 80 of the Environment Act 1995 (the national air quality strategy).
- The importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles.
- Any other matters appearing to the local authority to be relevant.

9.9. This duty focuses on the making of individual traffic regulation decisions.

9.10. Each of these duties has been considered in detail in relation to the schemes identified in this report.

## **10. Financial implications**

10.1. Funding for the detailed designs and statutory consultation has been funded through the BSIP funding allocation.

10.2. The Council has secured £15.9m in capital funding through its BSIP, however inflationary pressures have had a significant impact on the cost of individual schemes within the overall BSIP package.

10.3. As a result of the detailed design and having prepared updated cost estimates, the total cost of the 6 bus lanes is projected to be between £4.5m and £5.1m.

- 10.4. Further to para 3.15 to 3.17, Officers are recommending that implementation of Bath Road scheme be delayed until such time as suitable additional budget is secured from Department for Transport.

## **11. Timetable for implementation**

- 11.1. The Council has been progressing the delivery of each of the schemes detailed within this report and has reported the same to Department for Transport. A summary of the delivery timeframes has been included below.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
Oxford Road (Town) Construction	Complete	October 24
London Road (Cemetery) Construction	Complete	August 24
Southampton Street Construction	Procurement	July-25
Oxford Road (Norcot) Construction	Complete	November 24
London Rd (London St) Construction	Procurement	June 25
Bath Road Construction	On-Hold	N/A

- 11.3 The above programme is subject to change and will consider local events and constraints that may result in a negative short-term impact on the highway network.

## **12. Background papers**

- 12.1. None

### **Appendices**

- 1. Appendix 1 – Oxford Road (Bedford Road) – Changes to parking restrictions**
- 2. Appendix 2 – Oxford Road (Norcot Road) – Final road layout**
- 3. Appendix 3 – Oracle Roundabout – Alternative general arrangement**
- 4. Appendix 4 – A33 bus lane general arrangement**