

Appendix 2: Statement of Consultation on Draft Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD

STATEMENT OF CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

June 2026

1. Summary of Consultation Measures

- 1.1 Consultation took place from 15th January to 26th February 2025. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) supplements policies in the Local Plan, and at the time the outcome of the Local Plan Examination was not known. However, it was considered to be essential to undertake the consultation on the assumption that the Local Plan would be found sound, to enable adoption of the SPD as soon as possible after Local Plan adoption.
- 1.2 Consultation involved contacting all those on the Council's planning policy consultation list, which includes a mix of statutory consultees, businesses, voluntary and community organisations and interested individuals. The document was also published on the Council's website and was available to view in Reading Borough Council libraries and in the Civic Offices.

2. Summary of Responses

- 2.1 A total of 41 responses were received.
- 2.2 The following issues were raised by respondents (from most frequently cited to least frequently cited):
- Public transport – This was the most frequently cited issue within the proposed Strategy. Respondents had concerns about the impacts of the proposed public realm designs on the operation of bus services and stated the importance of ensuring buses remain highly accessible within the town centre, particularly for vulnerable users and older residents.
 - Aesthetics of the public realm – Representations cited the poor quality of existing paving throughout the town centre, the blight of trade waste bins and the lack of effective maintenance.
 - Cycling infrastructure – Respondents emphasised the need for safe continuous cycle routes, segregation from pedestrians, and secure bike parking.

- Pedestrian access and accessibility – Many comments highlighted areas of the town centre that are unpleasant to walk in and present particular challenges for older residents, children, those with visual impairments and wheelchair users.
- Heritage and culture – Comments received emphasised the importance of valuing Reading’s historic assets, improving the quality of public art and creating a sense of place around shared cultural identity.
- Green Spaces – Respondents noted the importance of trees, planting, biodiversity, and riverside enhancements in improving quality of life within the town.
- Strategy implementation – Many groups and individuals expressed concern about funding and deliverability and raised the need for a clear action plan.
- Public safety – Representations cited crime and antisocial behaviour as a significant problem within the town centre.
- Maintenance – Comments called for long-term upkeep of schemes, significant improvements to litter control and the use of more durable materials.
- Retail and Business – Some respondents called for the Strategy to create an environment that better supports independent shops and creates a true mix of retailers.

2.3 Detailed summaries of each individual representation, as well as a response from the Council are included below:

| Name | Summary of Representation | Council Response |
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| Alli, Paul | <p>This draft offers a valuable framework for enhancing Reading’s public spaces. However, to truly revitalise the town centre, the following key considerations should be prioritised:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversify the retail landscape by promoting independent businesses. Actively encourage and support local, independent businesses that foster a unique and vibrant retail scene like Filter House Coffee and discourage an over-concentration of phone repair shops, nail salons, vape shops and chain stores. Curate a retail mix to achieve a balance of types such as boutiques, specialist shops and high-quality eateries. | <p>Noted.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Although the strategy and the Local Plan aim to achieve a diverse retail landscape, this is largely out of the scope of planning, as planning is simply concerned with the types of uses in units (i.e. “retail” or “café”) and is unable to dictate specific uses within these larger categories. |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Address anti-social behaviour and improve public safety by implementing strategies for drug and alcohol-related problems, homelessness and public harassment. This may involve increased police presence and support for vulnerable individuals. Anti-social behaviour results in litter and discourages tourism. Note the preponderance of prostitutes near the Oxford Road. Enhance lighting, increase the visibility of CCTV and create more welcoming and secure public spaces, particularly for vulnerable groups. 3. Enhance Reading's cultural identity through embracing its heritage, developing cultural destinations and supporting local arts. Explore opportunities for placemaking through public art installations, historical walking tours and cultural events. Develop destinations, such as Reading Gaol as an arts centre or museum. Encourage street art in appropriate locations and ensure it enhances the public realm. This could involve improving the visual appeal of the IDR with murals. The existing arcades are tacky and the theatre only shows pantomimes. The "Reading" Christmas sign above the Boots on Broad Street is beyond tacky. 4. Improve public realm aesthetics by promoting visual appeal, greenery and cleanliness. Address visual blight by improving the appearance of buildings, removing scaffolding (for example near St Lawrence's Church) and implement creating solutions (vegetation, painting, artwork) for drab surfaces, such as the walls of the IDR. Increase greenery throughout the town. Implement robust litter | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Creating more welcoming and secure public spaces is one of the main aims of the Strategy. Enhancing public lighting is a guiding principle within the document. CCTV is also referenced within the design manual. Public safety strategies or increased police presence is not within the scope of the SPD. 3. The Strategy aims to improve the visual appeal of the town through public art (Section 5.13). The Arcades themselves are not considered part of the public realm, but opportunities for improvement to interiors are considered at such time applications come forward. It is not within the scope of the SPD to specify what is shown at the Theatre, change temporary Christmas decorations, create a programme of walking tours or events. 4. It is not within the scope of the SPD to require removal of scaffolding, although the detrimental effects of long-term scaffolding are noted within the document. The strategy aims to increase vegetation and public art throughout the town centre. Section 5.9 emphasises the importance of providing litter bins in |
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| | <p>control measures, more bins, regular street cleaning and public awareness campaigns. Oxford Road is particularly blighted by rotting food and litter.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Create a network of safe and well-maintained cycle and pedestrian routes throughout the town. Cyclists should be able to access the whole town safely without using busy roads. Create pedestrian-friendly zones with reduced traffic, better crossings and dedicated pedestrian spaces. 6. Implement an effective action plan by including SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) objectives. Allocate adequate resources and staffing. Regularly monitor progress, evaluate and make necessary adjustments. The Council should employ individuals to act immediately rather than simply producing plans. 7. Community Engagement – ensure ongoing engagement with residents, businesses & community groups. Actively solicit and consider feedback on the strategy. <p>By focusing on these areas and working closely with the community, Reading can create a vibrant and attractive town centre that is a source of pride for residents and a magnet for visitors.</p> | <p>areas of high demand and near seating areas. The SPD cannot implement litter control measures, street cleaning or awareness campaigns, as these are not within the remit of planning.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The Strategy aims to create a network of safe cycle routes throughout the town, better crossings and dedicated pedestrian spaces. These should be read alongside the 2040 Local Transport Plan. 6. The Strategy intends to provide indicative examples of how the public realm will be improved at such time developments come forward. More detail is described on page 12. The Action Plan is detailed in Section 8.1. This Strategy once adopted will be a material consideration in the consideration of planning applications and Planning Officers will use the SPD to require public realm improvements of developers. 7. Noted. This consultation has actively solicited the feedback of residents, local business & community grounds. |
| <p>Bryant, Helen (RBC Access Officer)</p> | <p>Camber is an important factor for pavements and roads, especially for wheelchair users.</p> <p>Page 10. – Disabled parking needs to be taken into consideration in St Mary’s Butts.</p> <p>Page 10 – Cyclists and pedestrians really do not mix – especially pedestrians who are older, have walking</p> | <p>Change proposed to add reference to the needs of wheelchair users, those with visual or cognitive impairments and other additional needs.</p> <p>Page 10 -- Change proposed to clarify that consideration of “universal access” may include</p> |

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| | <p>difficulties or visual impairments or some cognitive conditions.</p> <p>Page 34 – The bricks look lovely but they become dislodged very easily as the streets are not level. There will be need for levelling works to make sure that these dips and bumps are smoothed out.</p> <p>Page 49 – Leaves can also cause slip/trip hazards, esp. when wet. They can also hide dropped kerbs and tactile paving.</p> <p>Page 51 – Grass isn't easy for wheelchair users to move on, especially if it is wet.</p> <p>Page 58 – Tree pits must be designed so that they do not become a trip hazard or a nuisance to wheelchair users, parents with buggies, etc.</p> <p>Page 62 – The edges of rain gardens must not present a trip hazard to blind or visually impaired people.</p> <p>Page 66 – More seating is definitely needed – some disabled people find the large expanse of paving very daunting and need places to rest</p> <p>Page 67 – Colour contrast is very important with any street furniture and the paving surrounding it</p> <p>Page 68 – The DDA no longer exists. It is now the Equality Act.</p> | <p>disabled parking. If parking is removed, disabled parking should be retained, if possible.</p> <p>Page 10 -- Noted. Section 4.4 clarifies that a major objective of the strategy seeks to “resolve public transport conflicts by putting pedestrians first and all other road users as ‘guests’ in the town centre.”</p> <p>Page 34 – Noted but this is not considered necessary to cite detailed requirements of building works within the strategy.</p> <p>Page 49 -- Change proposed to add language on page 49 to ensure that tree planting considers where falling leaves may obstruct paths for those with additional needs.</p> <p>Page 51 -- Noted, but it is not considered necessary to cite this within the Strategy.</p> <p>Page 58 -- Change proposed to add language to state that tree pits must be designed with pedestrians and wheelchair users in mind.</p> <p>Page 62 -- Change proposed to state that the edges of rain gardens should be legible by blind or visually impaired people.</p> <p>Page 66 – Noted.</p> |
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| | <p>Page 70 – Lightning columns must not be so visible as to cause a hazard to visually impaired people.</p> <p>Page 74 – Colour contrast is also very important on signage – the writing must contrast with the background</p> <p>Page 75 – Signs must be carefully placed. Sign type 4 might be a hazard to blind and visually impaired people.</p> <p>Page 76 – Lighting levels need to be adequate for people who are visually impaired to see sufficiently, and shouldn't change colour values of surroundings</p> <p>Page 77 – Restaurants and cafes, etc should not spread out over time and reduce access for wheelchair users, blind people, parents with prams and others</p> <p>Page 78 – Any raised stages should be or should be capable of being made accessible to wheelchair users. Any floor markings should not cause visual confusion for people who are blind or those with cognitive impairments</p> <p>Page 80 – Outdoor dining spaces must not spill out too far and cause obstructions for people using wheelchairs, scooter and walking aids and those who are visually impaired</p> <p>Page 89 – Blue badge parking also needs to be considered here</p> | <p>Page 67 – Change proposed to add language to ensure that street furniture is visible (or legible to those with visual impairments).</p> <p>Page 68 – Change proposed to replace DDA with the Equality Act.</p> <p>Page 70 – Noted, but it is not necessary to cite this here as this applies to all street furniture.</p> <p>Page 74 – Noted but it is not considered necessary to cite this here.</p> <p>Page 75 – Change proposed to ensure that special care is taken to ensure all signage does not create a hazard.</p> <p>Page 76 – Noted, but it is not necessary to re-state this within this section.</p> <p>Page 77 – Change proposed to reiterate that street activation should not result in additional barriers.</p> <p>Page 78 – Change proposed to cite this.</p> <p>Page 80 – It is not considered necessary to re-state this here.</p> <p>Page 89 – Change proposed.</p> |
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| Butcher, Heather | It is good to invest in our public services as well as the natural habitats of green space and social housing. The NHS and education are the main key players in the growth of the community. We can be the best town, we need that city status now, we deserve it, a fast-growing town. With also much diversity in people and culture, we have lots to celebrate in the success and vibrancy of learning together - The city of Berkshire, Reading. | Noted. |
| Conservation Area Advisory Committee | <p>1. SUMMARY</p> <p>1.1 Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee is pleased to comment on the Draft Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy but we would have welcomed an opportunity to comment in advance of this consultation.</p> <p>1.2 We support the introduction of the Strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the town centre and the improvements that it could bring to the public realm.</p> <p>1.3 Our comments below, both positive and negative, and areas where we feel that the strategy has missed opportunities in the public realm, are in the main specific to our interests in Reading's heritage.</p> <p>1.4 In addition to the Strategy we have also read the officer's report that was submitted to Policy Committee on 18 December and listened to councillors' discussion at that meeting.</p> | <p>1.1 Noted, but it is not considered necessary to engage community groups on specific SPD's before the consultation stage, particularly as this is not a heritage-specific strategy.</p> <p>1.2– 1.4 Noted.</p> |

2. SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

2.1 The officer's report states (our bold): *Para 1.1 The document would provide detailed policy and guidance to improve the quality of the public realm throughout central Reading and will be used to supplement the Local Plan in making decisions on planning applications in the town centre. **In addition, it will also inform works that affect the town centre public realm outside the development process, including the Council's own works.***

Comment: Currently the design guide includes proposals which will cause harm to Reading town centre's heritage, culture and sense of place if implemented without the need for planning permission. We have listed our concerns below in paragraph 4.

2.2 We are aware that this Strategy is only part of the vision for the town centre, the officer's report states: *Para 2.5 An emerging Town Centre Strategy (2024-2050) will be a comprehensive vision for transforming Reading's town centre into a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable hub that addresses the rapid population growth forecast for the central area up to 2050.*

Comment: We will welcome the opportunity to review the Town Centre Strategy at the earliest opportunity.

2.3 Section 3.3 of the Strategy is a street audit overview and refers to Reading Town Centre Street Audit as a complementary document.

2.1 Please see comments in reply to paragraph 4.

2.2 Noted. The Town Centre Strategy will undergo a period of public consultation when complete.

2.3 This document was used internally, but has not been published.

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| | <p>Comment: How can a copy of this document be obtained or when will it be published?</p> <p>3. OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY</p> <p>3.1 Of the ten objectives, the three below have the most impact on our area of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing green and blue infrastructure • Highlighting Reading’s Heritage • Decluttering the Streets <p>3.2 Of the ten guiding principles, the three below have the most impact on our area of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Sustainable movement • 4 Ensure consistency in design (paving and street furniture) • 6 Ensure consistency in design (restoration ... and celebration...) <p>3.3 We are aware of current principles of best practice in public realm design and management and how they have been implemented in Reading and elsewhere in the UK and Europe.</p> <p>3.4 We participated in Reading High Street Heritage Action Zone surveys undertaken by Feria Urbanism.</p> <p>4. DETAILED COMMENTS</p> <p>Our comments below cover the sections of the design manual that most impact Reading’s heritage.</p> <p>4.1 Paving materials</p> | <p>3.1 – 3.4 Noted</p> |
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| | <p>4.1.1 There are some streets and alleyways in the town centre that have historic paving and these should be protected, for example but not limited to: Market Place/London Street Conservation Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setts/cobbles in Thorn Street• Stone paving on the alleyway to 112 London Street• Stone paving of Sims Court <p>4.1.2 In some parts of the town centre projects have been undertaken to improve paving and enhance the space. Replacing them for consistency with the rest of the town centre requires strong justification which may not happen if planning permission is not required, for example but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• York stone paving in Market Place• The slate that commemorates the completion of the pedestrianisation of Broad Street on 17 May 1994 <p>4.1.3 Most of the town centre public realm has a <i>background and structure</i> of red brick block paving in herringbone and block patterns but this is not without its own contribution to a thoughtful urban realm for example but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grey stone roundels at major pedestrian junctions on Broad Street such as Queen Victoria Street and Cross Street• Differentiation between the paving on wider Queen Victoria Street with bands of grey paving, from that on Cross Street• The paving on the Oracle Riverside which commemorates its previous use through patterns and inset slabs | <p>4.1.1 No change needed. Protection of existing heritage paving is clearly stated in the last paragraph of page 44.</p> <p>4.1.2 If planning permission is not required, this is difficult to enforce. However, the general principles stated for paving state that the visual appearance of proposed paving will be considered and that paving should serve to enhance areas with existing heritage assets, such as Market Place. Therefore, it is not considered necessary or effective to cite these specific features within the document.</p> <p>4.1.3 Please see response above.</p> |
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| | <p>4.1.4 Most of the buildings in the town centre are not red brick, for example but not limited to the following listed buildings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queen Victoria Street (yellow brick with terracotta) • Reading Town Hall (substantially constructed of grey brick with terracotta) • St Lawrence’s Church, St Mary’s Minster, St Mary’s Castle Street and Greyfriars comprise flint and stone • The Horn public house and 35-37 St Mary’s Butts (timber framed) <p>Comment Therefore, there is a risk that heritage paving will be harmed and the proposed paving palette would not necessarily highlight the importance of these buildings any better than the existing paving at much greater capital cost and loss of embedded carbon.</p> <p>4.2 Street furniture</p> <p>4.2.1 Benches</p> <p>The variety and location of street benches is often intentional, thoughtful and important to Reading residents, for example but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bench to Barbara Morley in Town Hall Square • The bench donated by the National Council of Women in Town Hall Square • The seating area on Broad Street (where Paddington currently sits eating a marmalade sandwich) is a work of art commissioned by Reading Borough Council in 1997 from Matthew Fadden | <p>4.1.4 Noted, but it is not considered that it is necessary to state these here.</p> <p>The strategy does not intend to replace heritage paving with a proposed paving palette, rather it states that surrounding heritage assets and visual appearance will inform new paving decisions.</p> <p>4.2.1 Noted.</p> |
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- The seating along Chestnut Walk which was commissioned as part of the Oscar Wilde Walk project
- The seating in Forbury Gardens is painted crimson and bears Reading's hexagon logo
- The seat on Broad Street that was installed as part of the Abbey Quarter project

4.2.2 Lampposts

The variety of lampposts is sometimes intentional and an important part of Reading's heritage. When the majority of Reading's lampposts were converted to LED in 2018/19 the budget and condition of the lamp posts only allowed the conversion of a small number of cast iron lamp posts.

- Within the town centre there are three on Chestnut Walk; two next to the river and one just beyond the Oscar Wilde gates

Comment Therefore, there is a risk that heritage street furniture important to the town will be harmed by this strategy.

4.2.3 Bollards

There are good reasons why town centre bollards e.g. in Market Place, unsightly as they may be, should not and cannot be removed which we are sure others are better placed to comment on.

4.2.4 Buses

Buses are part of the solution to a sustainable net zero Reading but throughout this document they are treated as part of the public realm problem situation rather than being in need of a public realm solution for the benefit of all including buses.

4.2.2 Page 66 states that existing heritage street furniture should be retained, as appropriate. In some cases, the existing condition of heritage street furniture may not allow for repair.

4.2.3 The Strategy does not intend to remove bollards where they are necessary but rather to reduce visual clutter where some elements of street furniture are redundant.

4.2.4 The Strategy aims to recognise the important role of buses in sustainable travel while attempting to reduce the negative impacts of buses on the public realm. A high level of bus

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| | <p>There is an opportunity in this strategy to design a solution that enables more bus travel by making connections between routes and navigation between bus stops easier. This might be solely through improved wayfinding or more sophisticated solutions may be possible.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our buses are a different colour for different routes and not unlike the underground it should be possible to have indicators and announcements that show that you can 'change here for 5,6, and 6a Emerald' if alighting from a '4 or 4a Lion' as on the tube map and tube announcements. • From each town centre bus stop it should be possible to see where you can get your next connection. • When arriving at the station bus connections should be clearly signposted and visible within the station and all exits. <p>4.2.5 Wayfinding</p> <p>We agree that the wayfinding signage and information boards put in place as part of the Abbey Quarter project is a success. It is clear that it forms a coherent group from the Station through to the Abbey Quarter and along Market Place and Broad Street.</p> <p>Other signage is not as coherent and varies from location to location e.g. The Oracle, Station Hill development and the Station Area having their own designs that are different from standard town centre direction signs.</p> <p>Wayfinding can be direct (e.g. signposts) or indirect and subliminal (e.g. bunting, lighting, public art trails). One</p> | <p>accessibility must be maintained while improving use by other users (pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists).</p> <p>Indicators and announcements are not within the scope of the Public Realm Strategy, but a change is proposed to state on page 32 that improvements may include signage with regard to buses.</p> <p>4.2.5 Noted.</p> <p>The strategy states on page 75 states that signage should be coordinated wherever possible.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| | <p>solution will not meet all Reading's signage needs, for example, scallop shell signage in streets marking the route to the Abbey for walkers on St James' Way will be instantly recognisable to walkers.</p> <p>Comment Signage should be noticeable, clear, good quality and durable and does not need to be uniform for all routes.</p> <p>5. WHAT IS NOT COVERED</p> <p>5.1 The town centre currently suffers from trade and domestic refuse bins and bags on pavements, overflowing litter bins and fly tipping. Increased residential density in the centre will exacerbate waste issues. The Strategy does have any solutions to address this fundamental problem.</p> <p>5.2 Street name signs are not mentioned. Heritage signs should be left in place and there is a convention that street name signs should be green in conservation areas.</p> <p>5.3 Advertising screens on Broad Street and Station Hill are part of the current urban realm but a future strategy is not mentioned in the document. A 2024 proposal for a new sign in Broad Street was refused following widespread condemnation.</p> <p>5.4 Urilifts in Town Hall Square and St Marys Butts are not mentioned in the document. The provision of suitable public conveniences as part of making the town centre an attractive destination should be part of the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy.</p> | <p>Noted. This is well-covered on page 75.</p> <p>5.1 The Local Plan emphasises the importance of providing dedicated areas for trade and domestic refuse as applications come forward. Page 66 highlights the importance of new litter bins in areas of high demand. Flytipping and frequency of waste collection is not within the scope of the strategy. That being said, the Strategy aims to minimise street clutter and this can include bins and refuse bags.</p> <p>5.2 Change proposed on page 75 to note that historic signs should be retained where possible and street name signs within Conservation Areas should be green instead of black.</p> <p>5.3 Advertising screens will be considered against the general criteria for street furniture outlined in Section 5.9 which aims to ensure that new street furniture is positioned appropriately and is not excessive.</p> |
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| | <p>5.5 Provision for dog walkers and dog poo bins is not mentioned.</p> <p>5.6 Motorcycle parking is incorrectly mentioned on St Marys Butts as ‘informal parking’ rather than a designated motor cycle parking place.</p> <p>5.7 Cycle delivery drivers (electric bike or otherwise) are a feature of modern life especially for town centre residents and as an additional customer base for Reading restaurants. Provision is required for parking and resting between pick-ups. As a category of people working in the town centre their needs should be considered.</p> <p>5.8 Birds, ducks and small animals may be covered under the general heading of biodiversity but are not given sufficient prominence. For example, the Kennet by Queens Road car park (specific project example 6.6.) is well used by waterfowl and that is why it looks muddy as it does now. The ducks are part of Reading town centre’s biodiversity and the area would be best left as it is.</p> <p>6. MAINTENANCE</p> <p>6.1 Reading CAAC is very concerned about the long term appearance of the town centre public realm. Maintenance costs must be considered or our beautiful new public realm with soon become degraded and look dirty and dismal.</p> <p>Section 5.17 Maintenance Good Practice sets out the requirements and we do not believe that this is realistically achievable. For example but not limited to:</p> | <p>5.4 It is not considered necessary to highlight the existing urilifts within the Town Centre. Due to funding constraints, the Council is unable at this time to create new public toilets.</p> <p>5.5 Change proposed to include this on page 66.</p> <p>5.6 Change proposed.</p> <p>5.7 Because delivery cyclists do not cluster in one area for pick-ups, it would not be effective to provide a few larger parking areas within the town centre. A dedicated delivery cyclist area is very difficult to enforce. The strategy seeks to accommodate these users within wider cycle parking considerations instead. This is stated on page 67.</p> <p>5.8 Noted, but it is considered that the indicative examples on page 103 would not harm these animals or prevent their access.</p> <p>6.1 Noted.</p> <p>It is not considered appropriate to avoid new planting simply because it may harbour litter. The many benefits of green infrastructure outweigh this risk and each area will be required to accord with a maintenance plan are outlined in 5.17. The Strategy also accounts for the effects of increasingly extreme weather and</p> |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centre pavement surfaces are not just used by pedestrians. There is a certain amount of vehicle traffic for deliveries, maintenance vehicles and, on Broad Street, Readibus. Reading's larger paving slabs whether basic concrete or stone do not cope as well with this as brick paving. The proposed stone paving should be able to cope with the load. • Food markets, other events traffic and general wear and tear can cause damage to pavement surfaces. Brick paving usually copes well and is lower maintenance than say the York Stone on Market Place. • Green planting on road and pavement verges or planters often becomes a permanent home for stray litter which is discarded or blown by the wind into available spaces. Litter picking from new planting is unlikely to be affordable with current budget constraints. • Green planting will only look good if its maintained and watered. In the current economic situation and with very wet and very dry seasons becoming more common neither are a given. We are not convinced that, apart from trees, the planting solutions proposed along roadways or even in public squares are capable of being economically maintained. • Planters, hanging baskets and floral displays should not even be considered unless as with those supported by Reading BIDs they are funded for maintenance. <p>7. CO-ORDINATION OF THE STRATEGY The strategy is an SPD. How will RBC ensure that the agreed strategy is implemented or enabled across RBC departments including those responsible for Climate Change, Culture and</p> | <p>recommends specific species and regular watering regimes. Planters, hanging baskets and floral displays will also be subject to maintenance plans.</p> <p>Do not agree that the indicative paving materials proposed would be less durable than brick or require lower maintenance. In any case, these are merely examples and the Strategy clearly cites that material durability and maintenance will be considered at such time schemes come forward.</p> <p>7. Colleagues across the Council has been consulted extensively during the formulation of the Strategy. At such times schemes come</p> |
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| | <p>Leisure, Streetscene and Traffic?</p> <p>8. LANGUAGE AND TONE</p> <p>There are words and phrases used in this SPD that we would prefer to see substituted by more suitable language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive summary para 2 ‘preserving its historical and cultural identity’. If nothing else please change ‘preserving’ to ‘conserving and enhancing’. We contend that Reading’s identity continues to change and develop and that is really what this strategy should be part of. • The document is not consistent in relation to the terms used for people and organisations in the town centre. Is it ‘residents and visitors’, is it ‘families and other user groups’ or is it ‘businesses and visitors’. The phrase ‘people who live, work and visit’ has been used in other scenarios and is better. • It should recognise ‘Kennet Side’ as Chestnut Walk. • It is not helpful that principles 4 and 6 are both titled ‘Ensure consistency in design’ • The strategy reads as if it could have been written for any town, anywhere. Whilst the principles of best practice are universal that should not mean that every town looks the same with the same paving, same seating and playful places. | <p>forward, various RBC departments will be consulted again.</p> <p>8. Change proposed to state “conserving and enhancing.”</p> <p>Change proposed to state “people who live, work and visit.”</p> <p>Change proposed to replace “Kennet Side” with “Chestnut Walk.”</p> <p>Change proposed to re-title principle 6.</p> <p>The schemes in the Strategy are indicative and Section 3.6 aims to identify character areas that should provide a locally-informed starting point for proposals. At such time proposals come forward, schemes which reflect the unique elements of Reading would be viewed favourably.</p> |
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| Carr, Tony | <p>I would strongly support the strategy as an overall plan to make Reading town centre more pleasant, accessible and sustainable.</p> <p>In particular, I am supportive of the measures to upgrade facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and that these users should have a higher priority over private motor vehicles in the town centre. Also, I would agree that these facilities need to be linked and upgraded to form continuous, coherent and attractive routes in order to be effective.</p> <p>There are some details of cycle routes that need to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide a walking/cycling route through the Vastern Court development site to form a convenient and safe route to the town centre and station from the residential area to the west of Caversham Road - allowing northbound cyclists on the western side of Market Place as well as allowing two-way cycling on the eastern end of Friar Street to provide a north-south route from the south to the town centre and station - improving paths along the Thames and Kennet as well as links to these routes. | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The Vastern Court site does include walking and cycling routes. The roundabout at Vastern Court is also identified within the Strategy for improvement of cyclists and pedestrians.</p> <p>Allowing changes directional travel for cyclists on existing routes is not within the scope of the Strategy. This is best addressed by transport planning, although these areas (market Place and Friar Street) are both highlighted as areas that would benefit from improvements to cycling infrastructure.</p> <p>Noted – this is detailed on page 25.</p> |

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| Collinge, Matthew | <p>Fundamentally believe this will be a great boost to the town, specifically the part about refreshing paving etc. Aesthetics go a huge way to making the town a more pleasant place to be. Improving the aesthetics is a (relatively speaking) cheap thing to do, so it's a quick win.</p> <p>Whilst I want bus travel to be as pleasant as possible, I still believe having a lay-by for a bus stop rather than stopping in the road will be more sensible. This will reduce car congestion and therefore emissions/idling, but also incidents of impatience.</p> <p>I know that strictly this isn't covered in the strategy, but I think the one thing Reading desperately needs is a modern bus station. Possibly where the old part of the train station is/where the railair coach stops. I think the benefits to multi-modal transport would be huge. Also a dry/warm place to wait is so much more appealing and makes changing to public transport so much more appealing. Thanks.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Do not agree. The Strategy aims to reduce congestion by encouraging transport by other modes. Lay-bys for buses (as detailed on page 33) create narrow footways and harm pedestrian circulation.</p> <p>It is considered that there is not sufficient space within the surroundings of the train station site to accommodate a new bus station. Public transport is still clustered within the area and interchanges are easily achieved.</p> |
| Crabolu, Gloria | <p>It looks good but I advise to consider two missing items: it's very important to consider the types of businesses around the town centre. Businesses should be aligned to the common vision for Reading. Reduction or removal of phone repair shops whose ethics and legality is quite questionable. Same things for all fast foods around city centre. It's full of them, and it only contributes to an unhealthy and 'cheap' feel. I wish I could go more often in town, but there is nothing that attracts me to go there, very few healthy options.</p> | <p>Although the strategy and the Local Plan aim to achieve a diverse retail landscape, this is largely out of the scope of planning, as planning is simply concerned with the types of uses in units (i.e. "retail" or "café") and is unable to dictate specific uses within these larger categories.</p> |
| Cross, Will | <p>I am supportive of the draft strategy, with the following comments:</p> | |

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| | <p>- In addition to considering changes to Broad Street to allow cycling along the full length, consideration should also be given to allowing a contra-flow cycling facility on Minster Street / Gun Street between John Lewis and Prezzo; and a contra-flow cycling facility eastbound on the eastern end of Friar Street, between the Harris Arcade and O'Neill's. These are not currently on the consultation's map of preferred cycle movements, however they are both on the Reading Cycle Campaign request list, and would involve less conflict between cyclists and pedestrians compared to Broad Street.</p> <p>- Castle Street should be included in the scope of this plan as it is a key route in the town centre and links into the St Mary's Butts area, where significant changes are proposed to road layout etc. Castle Street is also subject to significant upcoming redevelopment as part of the old Civic/police station site.</p> <p>The pavements along the Castle Street conservation area are concrete slabs which are subject to significant damage, replacement with squares of tarmac, and large and unsightly utility trenches reinstated with tarmac rather than slabs. These slabs are in a worse condition than the red bricks that are proposed to be upgraded elsewhere, the area should be included in the public realm strategy to ensure that when the development happens, the pavements are dealt with sympathetically.</p> <p>- Lots of consideration has been given to desired traffic and pedestrian/cycle movements, however Castle Street should also be included. Significant new cycle tracks are being introduced from Castle Hill across the IDR roundabout, but</p> | <p>Allowing changes directional travel for cyclists on existing routes is not within the scope of the Strategy. This is best addressed by transport planning, although these areas both highlighted as areas that would benefit from improvements to cycling infrastructure.</p> <p>Castle Street was not selected as one of the specific areas to be featured in the indicative examples, but the Strategy simply uses these areas to illustrate examples of best-practice public realm interventions that can be applied to different types of environments throughout the town centre, including at Castle Street.</p> <p>Noted. The proposed guidance on paving in the Strategy seeks to improve these conditions.</p> <p>Please see answer regarding Castle Street above.</p> |
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| | <p>then people will arrive on Castle Street, which is not as safe due to traffic. It should be made safer by reducing the number of parking bays, giving more space for walking and cycling, and limiting through-traffic.</p> <p>My suggestion is that Castle Street be made access only, with a bus gate at the Brew Dog end (St Mary's Butts junction). If people want to access the Oracle car park they should be using the A329.</p> | <p>This is not within the scope of the Public Realm Strategy.</p> |
| <p>Drukker, Mark</p> | <p>My comments are divided into the sections.</p> <p>2.3 Bus and bus stop dominance - they should remain dominant. There is no mention of the lack of public toilets.</p> <p>3.1 Wide variety of street furniture, because the post-box and bus shelter are important.</p> <p>4.2 Cyclist passage through the pedestrianised zone is not safe.</p> <p>4.3 It would be wrong to reduce the impacts of buses on the town centre.</p> <p>4.4. It would be wrong to reduce the impacts of buses on the town centre. They are too important to be 'guests' in the town centre.</p> <p>4.5 Build-outs for bus shelters are not suitable in Reading, with the 3 or 4 buses arriving at the same time, or buses terminating.</p> | <p>2.3 The strategy does not seek to affect the operation of buses within the town, but rather to address any negative impacts of buses and balance bus transport with the needs of other users. Due to significant budget constraints, the Council cannot maintain additional public toilets within the town centre.</p> <p>3.1 The Strategy seeks to retain a wide variety of appropriate street furniture.</p> <p>4.2 It is not considered appropriate or effective to completely ban cyclists from the pedestrianised zone, as this provides an important no-traffic route for cyclists. The Strategy acknowledges that this will create some conflict and safety concerns with pedestrians and aims to manage cycling. More detail is provided on pages 34-37. Diagram 3 (recommended) would provide a shoulder on each side of Broad Street for pedestrians and</p> |

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| | <p>4.6 Pedestrians and "wheelers" (wheelchairs? pushchairs? trolleys?) should have priority over cyclists. Buses should have priority over cyclists. Disabled motorists should have priority over other drivers. Bans on e-bikes, electric bikes and e-scooters should be enforced</p> <p>Pedestrians often prefer to walk in the middle of Broad Street, not by the shop frontages. I walk as far away from smokers, vapers and dogs as possible</p> <p>There should be a complete ban on hate rallies, magicians and people promoting religious, political, commercial and charity interests. Cycling should be banned in Broad Street - cyclists should dismount.</p> <p>4.7 Cycling should be banned in Broad Street, which is often packed with pedestrians - cyclists should dismount. The brick roadway should be completely replaced by more durable material. The bricks are uneven, likely to cause falls, and there are big puddles whenever it rains.</p> <p>5.3 Granite is better than bricks. All pedestrian roads and paths are likely to be used by emergency, council, maintenance and unloading vehicles, so the surface must take them and drain well.</p> <p>5.5. Trees should not be planted close to buildings, and trees should be monitored so that buildings and paths should not be damaged by the roots. Benches should not be placed under trees, because of problems with bird droppings.</p> <p>5.9 litter bins should be large enough for litter. The tops of bins should be open, so that people do not leave cigarette</p> | <p>cyclists could use the central lane. This seeks to strike a balance between the needs of cyclists and pedestrians.</p> <p>4.3 "Reducing the impacts" of buses refers to negative effects of buses such as noise and pollution, not reducing services themselves. Buses remain a key part of Reading's transport strategy.</p> <p>4.5 It is not considered that build-outs will not be suitable in some areas of the Borough. The Council intends to work closely to Reading Buses to ensure build-outs are located in appropriate locations.</p> <p>4.6 The Highway Code requires that pedestrians (including wheelchair and pushchair users) have priority over cyclists, but enforcement is not within the scope of the Public Realm Strategy. The Strategy can only illustrate possible designs that may positively influence behaviour. It is also not within the scope to give disabled motorists priority over other drivers, although the Strategy does make reference to the importance of disabled parking. Encouraging cyclists to travel alongside the frontages would increase conflict with pedestrians going in and out of shops. It is considered that temporary or spontaneous activities such as those listed can help to activate the street. (Anyone promoting religious</p> |
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| | <p>ends on the top. Bollards are important to stop pavement parking, and to protect against terrorism, burglaries and thefts. Finger masts should be fixed to avoid the frequent habit of people turning them round. They should be supplemented by fixed boards with arrows. There should be signs pointing to public toilets.</p> <p>5.10 There is no over-lighting, but lots of under-lighting in Reading. Broad Street is now the only street in Reading that is well-lit, with strong lights, close together. Personal safety should trump light pollution. Light pollution can be reduced by lowering the heights of the lamps. LED lights in Reading are very poor - the streets are too dark to walk safely, and they cause pedestrians and drivers to be dazzled by the glare from headlights. LED lights must be stronger and closer together - the distance between LED lights should be half that between sodium lights. Pavements must be lit.</p> <p>5.11 Play provision should be fenced off to stop dogs entering the area.</p> <p>5.12 Finger masts should be fixed to square poles to avoid the frequent habit of people turning them round to point in the wrong direction. Road signs should not be ambiguous - one in Market Place about access is not clear when it is allowed, and when it is not allowed.</p> <p>5.13 Graffiti should be removed, and tags identified and the perpetrators prosecuted.</p> | <p>or political speech is allowed to do so under UK law in most cases).</p> <p>4.7 Considerate cyclists will dismount or use other routes if Broad Street is too crowded. Again, it is not considered appropriate to ban cyclists from this area as it provides a safe, traffic-free route within the town. Bricks are considered one of the best and most durable materials, but do require maintenance.</p> <p>5.3 Noted. This is stated on page 43.</p> <p>5.5 Do not agree. Trees can provide important shading for nearby buildings or seating. Nonetheless, tree placement will be carefully considered as described on page 49.</p> <p>5.9 It is considered that bins with very large openings allow for flytipping of household rubbish or cardboard, rather than litter as intended. The Strategy does not aim to remove bollards unless they are considered redundant. It is considered too prescriptive to specify that directional fingerposts be fixed. This is best covered by the first paragraph in 5.12 which states signs should be durable. As there are very few public toilets within Reading that are owned by the Council, visitors rely on facilities that are usually within privately-owned shopping centres and it would not be considered appropriate for the Council to provide directions.</p> |
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| | <p>6.2 Narrowing the road in St Mary's Butts will cause more bus congestion. Buses often arrive in bunches. There must be room for buses to overtake each other, including those changing drivers or terminating. There should also be provision for the disabled in cars. Public toilets should be reintroduced in St Mary's Butts.</p> <p>6.3 Narrowing the road in Market Place will cause more bus congestion. Buses often arrive in bunches. There must be room for buses to overtake each other. Public toilets should be reintroduced in Market Place. Town Hall Square and Butter Market must be capable of being used by buses when The Forbury or Market Place are closed by roadworks.</p> <p>6.4 Removing the left hand turns, and the bus gate, at the London Street / Queens Road junction will delay buses because of the poor traffic light phasing. Reducing the lanes in Queens Road will cause tailbacks. The bottom of London Street should be widened to allow the bus lane to start at the junction, because buses often cannot reach the bus lane.</p> <p>6.5 Narrowing the road in Station Road will cause more bus congestion, particularly when lorries are unloading. Buses often arrive in bunches. There must be room for buses to overtake each other, including those changing drivers or terminating.</p> <p>6.2 to 6.5 Buses terminate, change drivers and drivers take relief breaks in these streets because the two bus stations next to the railway station have been replaced by buildings.</p> | <p>5.10 The levels of lighting seek to strike a balance between ensuring public safety and avoiding light pollution. In any case, the Strategy states that areas should be assessed under current British Standards. As schemes come forward, this will be considered in detail.</p> <p>5.11 Fencing all play provision prevents smaller elements from integrating with the surrounding area. It may be appropriate to fence in formal play areas, but not always pocket play spaces or playful elements. This will be considered on a case by case basis.</p> <p>5.12 Road signage is not within the scope of the Strategy. Please see comment above with regard to fingerposts.</p> <p>5.13 Removal of graffiti is required by section 5.17. Prosecution is a police matter and is not within the scope of the Strategy.</p> <p>6.2 The schemes in the Strategy are intended to be indicative. The Council acknowledges that there is often a conflict between the ability of bus companies to operate and other public realm considerations, such as concerns over bus dominance. The Strategy seeks to strike a balance and at such time specific works are pursued, the Council will engage very closely with bus operators to ensure operability.</p> |
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| | <p>The only way to reduce this is to demolish the bottom floors of buildings opposite the railway station and replace them by a large bus station.</p> <p>6.6 For personal safety, particularly for older people, handrails must be provided next to the river and canal, and also next to busy roads.</p> <p>7.2 Narrowing the road in Oxford Road will cause more bus congestion. Buses often arrive in bunches. There must be room for buses to overtake each other. Much of the parking in Oxford Road is taken by out-of-town taxis and private hire cars between jobs, and for drivers to attend local places of worship.</p> <p>8. There must be well-signposted public toilets and washing facilities, with proper security. There should be good access for the disabled.</p> | <p>Change proposed to refer to the need to protect disabled parking if existing parking spaces are reduced or removed. It is not possible for public toilets to be reintroduced in St Mary's Butts due to funding constraints.</p> <p>6.3 Please see comments with regard to 6.2 above. It is not possible for public toilets to be reintroduced in Market Place due to funding constraints. It is not appropriate to allow buses traffic through Town Hall Square or Butter Market as these are safe, traffic-free zones for pedestrians.</p> <p>6.4 Addressing tailbacks or attempting to affect traffic flows is not within the scope of the Strategy.</p> <p>6.5 Please see comments with regard to Section 6.2 above. The Council is working closely with bus operators to ensure a balance is struck between the ability of buses to operate and concerns over the impacts of buses for other uses, particularly pedestrians.</p> <p>6.2 – 6.5 The decision to remove the town centre bus station was taken nearly 20 years ago and since then, the bus company has been able to manage effectively within the town centre. At this point, there is no land available to reinstate a bus station and it is not considered necessary.</p> |
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| | | <p>6.6 Handrails are provided in areas where the pavement is particularly narrow or it is necessary to prevent pedestrian movements across the street in certain locations. It is not practical or necessary to have handrails throughout the town centre or alongside the river or canal, although many parts of the waterside do have handrails.</p> <p>7.2 Increasing the road space on the Oxford Road would create a more hostile environment for pedestrians. It is not possible to dictate who uses the parking spaces on the Oxford Road.</p> <p>8. As stated above, due to budget constraints and the availability of toilets at larger shopping centres in the town, it is not possible to reinstate public toilets.</p> |
| El-Eter, Tarek | I think this draft is amazing and should be started immediately. | Noted. |
| Elliot, Keith | <p>Very strongly support this strategy and hope that it will influence the development of the town centre in my lifetime.</p> <p>Minor comments on details:</p> <p>1. Cycle parking is identified as street clutter, but don't 'throw out the baby with the bath water'. Cycle parking needs to be highly visible to deter cycle theft.</p> <p>2. Section 4.6: the east end of Friar St is one way which prevents a direct west to east route for cyclists. A contra-</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>1. Change proposed to state that cycle parking should be highly visible in order to deter cycle theft.</p> <p>2. Allowing changes directional travel for cyclists on existing routes is not within the scope of the</p> |

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| | <p>flow cycle lane would help here. Similarly a south to north route contra-flow on Market Place. The key to the figure does not specifically mention contra-flow but just 'strengthened for cycling'. I would like the one-way issue that restricts cycle routes to at least be recognised.</p> | <p>Strategy. This is best addressed by transport planning, although these areas (Market Place and Friar Street) are both highlighted as areas that would benefit from improvements to cycling infrastructure. Change proposed to acknowledge that one-way cycle routes within the town centre negatively impacts the connectivity of the cycle network.</p> |
| <p>Essery, Tracey</p> | <p>It's good to see sustainable development centred in the strategy. However, the executive summary mentions Reading's ambition to be a carbon-neutral town by 2030. This is not correct. The ambition is Net Zero by 2030 - the terms are not interchangeable and mean quite different things.</p> | <p>Change proposed.</p> |
| <p>Fenemore, David</p> | <p>I would have liked to have seen the frame of reference the designers were given.</p> <p>I think it includes - do not question why a road is pedestrianized/not, do not question why a road is one way or not, do not question if a road is one way why its that way not the other.</p> <p>Have all the regulations and recommendations been taken on board from government departments, charities (wheelchair users, sight loss, guide dog etc) police and anti crime organisations (no shadowy places s for people to hide by low planting on walk routes etc), separation of cycles and pedestrians and motor vehicles. This seems broadly just to replicate the past mistakes on a grander scale.</p> | <p>A detailed discussion of the elements to be covered by the Public Realm Strategy is within Item 7 of the Policy Committee Report 18 Dec 2024 ((Public Pack)Agenda Document for Policy Committee, 18/12/2024 18:30).</p> <p>Although the Strategy contains some limited discussion of which roads within the town centre are pedestrianised or one-way, management of highways is not within the scope of this project. The Reading Transport Strategy 2040 may be of interest: Reading Transport Strategy 2040 - Reading Borough Council</p> <p>Yes, these groups have been consulted and recommendations taken into account. It is not considered possible to completely segregated</p> |

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| | <p>Is there a short pedestrian route from the railway station to the hospital, with minimal pollution and road crossings, same for cyclists. can i safely walk/cycle from the railway station to the hexagon/civic centre/town hall/ palmer park sports hall without undue diversion, with few road crossings and low pollution</p> | <p>cyclists and pedestrians within the town centre, as many pedestrianised areas provide important traffic-free routes for cyclists. Rather, the strategy aims to manage conflicts between these users.</p> <p>The analysis of areas and intersections on page 35 highlights these issues and illustrates which areas are most in need of interventions. Ensuring that pedestrians and cyclists can reach key locations from transport hubs with safe crossing and reduced pollution is a key aim of the Strategy.</p> |
| <p>Gardiner, John</p> | <p>I wanted to raise a point in response to the above:</p> <p>At the back of Reading Central Library is a light post that hasn't been functioning for several months. The lack of lighting makes the area dark and unsafe, particularly when the walkway from the library is icy. Staff in the building have been raising the issue for months without resolution.</p> <p>Given this, I note with disappointment that section 5.10 of the draft strategy, which concerns lighting strategy, makes no mention of consideration being given to the maintenance of the lighting to be used.</p> <p>Please could you ensure future plans take into consideration that it already takes RBC several months to fix broken light bulbs. Perhaps the most effective way to achieve the desired lighting effects would be to spend less on glossy reports and more on basic maintenance.</p> | <p>Noted. This has been passed to the relevant team within the Council.</p> <p>Page 81 details specific considerations for maintenance going forward, including lighting. This could include an asset register to ensure that public realm elements within the town centre are accounted for and that their management and repair is allocated to a specific body. This will help to ensure that no asset is overlooking despite the Council's significant funding constraints.</p> |
| <p>Germer, Ian</p> | <p>The content of the document is impressive - well done. However, there are some significant omissions.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <p>Bicycles - no provision for SECURE bike parking.</p> <p>Oxford Road - some mention but no solution to the blight of bins, until this is solved no amount of planting and remodelling will raise the aspirations and feel of this cultural melting pot.</p> <p>Traffic - none of the traffic plans have real credibility whilst there is no comprehensive traffic journey monitoring, mapping and control. No new bus routes etc, should be allowed until the traffic light system across the town is upgraded to included route tracking and dynamic flow control. Once journeys have been mapped (end-to-end) then roads and routes and be properly redesigned based on knowledge not dogma.</p> <p>Architecture - architecture looms over all public spaces yet there is little said about this and little involvement of residents in choosing the style being built or refurbished. Station hill at ground level is lovely but the buildings are square and inhuman. Limit all new buildings to 10 stories, double the levies on developers for every floor above the fifth.</p> <p>Signing - what is the first thing you see when exiting Reading station? Not a welcome to the culture, environment, events and facilities but an enormous ugly electronic advertising hoarding promoting anything but Reading!</p> | <p>Although specific sites are not identified, the need for secure cycle parking is stated on pages 31 and 32 and sites will be identified when opportunities arise.</p> <p>Proliferation of bins and the lack of appropriate bin storage will be considered under guidance to address clutter. The Local Plan also requires consideration of proper bin storage when applications for development come forward. The traffic light system is not within the scope of the Public Realm Strategy. The Local Transport Strategy 2040 and the Local Plan have been informed by thorough transport modelling. These strategies aim to reduce congestion by encouraging more sustainable journeys rather than increasing the number of car journeys within the town centre.</p> <p>The design on buildings within the town is not within the scope of the Strategy, but proposed updates to the Local Plan aim to improve the aesthetic quality of new and refurbished buildings in the town. It is not possible under national planning guidance to increase levies based on floors over five storeys. Moreover, tall buildings are an effective way of delivering the appropriate amount of residential units and commercial floorspace to meet Reading's economic needs.</p> |
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| | <p>Rivers and Canals - so important and great to be mentioned but more should be done - will Holy Brook be uncovered? Introduce water-buses.</p> <p>Outdoor dining - yes! but more cover is needed using a combination of tree and canopies.</p> <p>Trees, shrubs, planting - excellent focus, please don't let this be watered down :-)</p> | <p>Applications for new illumination advertising screens will be considered individually according to the criteria for street furniture generally, which on page 66 states that it should be "positioned in a rational way to ensure pedestrian movements, create uncluttered spaces and respond to the function of the space."</p> <p>Noted. The Local Plan states that "development should seek to increase the prominence of the Holy Brook, and open up the brook for public access, as well as consider any opportunities for deculverting it, which will provide ecological and potentially flood risk benefits." "Hidden rivers" are also cited on page 18 of the strategy as a current issue to be addressed. It is not within the scope of the Strategy to create water buses.</p> <p>Noted. These aims are also bolstered by new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.</p> |
| Godfrey, Lin | <p>If all plans go ahead there'll be even more clutter & no room for pedestrians. Pedestrians & cyclists together fill me with horror. They don't mix especially in a small area such as Broad St. in fact whole strategy seems geared to cyclists, pedestrians are 2nd class citizens. The town centre to me is Market Place, Broad St & Queen Victoria St. Friar St, Station Rd & St. Mary's Butts are where you catch the bus. OK so you're trying to change that. Good luck</p> | <p>Reducing conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians is emphasised within the Transport Plan and the Public Realm Strategy. All opportunities to resolve these conflicts will be considered. Within the Town Centre itself, it is very difficult to provide a segregated cycle path and it is not considered appropriate to ban cycling from Broad Street as this provides a safe, no-traffic route for cyclists. Diagram 3 on page 37, for instance, aims to create a central</p> |

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| | | corridor for cyclists to deter cycling in pedestrianised areas on either side. |
| Guide Dogs Charity | <p>The charity Guide Dogs provides mobility services to increase or maintain the independence of people with sight loss across the UK. Alongside our mobility services we campaign nationally to break down physical and legal barriers to enable people with sight loss to live their lives on their own terms. In Reading there are an estimated 4,000 people living with sight loss. Due to a variety of reasons, including an ageing population, the number of people with sight loss is predicted to increase to 4,700 in Reading by 2032. This number excludes the thousands of vision impaired residents of neighboring local authority areas who visit Reading for retail, recreation, health and employment reasons.</p> <p>Guide Dogs expert local teams work from our centre in Burghfield Common and supports clients across Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey from this location. Although universally recognised for our iconic guide dogs, we also provide adult vision rehabilitation and children and young people habilitation and family support services which empower individuals of all ages with a vision impairment to get out and about in their local community.</p> <p>The RNIB estimates that only one in four people of working age who are registered as blind or partially sighted are employed and that blind and partially sighted people are twice as likely to be inactive than people without sight loss.</p> <p>Guide Dogs welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Draft Reading Town Centre Public</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <p>Realm Strategy. We commend the council's commitment to making Reading a more accessible and inclusive environment for all users. However, we wish to highlight specific concerns and recommendations to ensure that the strategy fully accommodates the needs of blind and partially sighted individuals.</p> <p>Key Issues and Recommendations</p> <p>1. Tactile Paving and Wayfinding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy acknowledges the importance of appropriate tactile paving in aiding visually impaired users, but it is critical that tactile surfaces comply with Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines. • There must be consistency in tactile paving across the town centre to avoid confusion for blind and partially sighted pedestrians. • Audio and tactile wayfinding elements should be integrated into the town's signage strategy to improve independent navigation. <p>2. Pedestrianised Zones and Shared Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We welcome the emphasis on reclaiming road space for pedestrians but strongly advocate against the implementation of shared space schemes without clear demarcation between pedestrian and vehicular areas. • Kerbs and delineated pedestrian pavements are essential to ensure safety and confidence for blind and partially sighted individuals. • Seating, cycle stands, and other street furniture must be positioned to avoid creating obstacles within pedestrian pathways. | <p>Change proposed to cite Department for Transport guidance with regard to tactile surfaces.</p> <p>Change proposed to ensure consistent use of tactile paving.</p> <p>Change proposed to ensure audio and tactile wayfinding elements are considered.</p> <p>Change proposed to highlight the importance of clear demarcation between pedestrian and vehicular areas for the visually impaired, including kerbs and delineated pedestrian pavements.</p> <p>Change proposed to ensure all street furniture is positioned in a way that avoids creating obstacles for the visually impaired.</p> |
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| | <p>3. Lighting and Visibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced and consistent lighting is necessary to assist those with partial sight in navigating the town centre safely, particularly along pedestrian routes, crossings, and bus stops. • Glare from inappropriate lighting or reflective surfaces should be minimized to avoid causing discomfort or additional difficulties for those with visual impairments. <p>4. Public Transport Accessibility</p> <p>While the strategy recognises the importance of bus accessibility, bus stop placement and design must consider the needs of visually impaired users. No one should feel unsafe when they walk or use public transport in the streets and spaces where they live or work. Yet we increasingly hear that street designs are creating barriers for disabled people. That is why Guide Dogs commissioned University College London (UCL) to explore the impact of four different types of design on disabled people, including blind people and people with a vision impairment. The research focused on Floating Island Bus Stops, Shared Bus Stop Boarders, Segregated Cycle-footways and Continuous Footways. These designs all incorporate cycle paths into their design.</p> <p>The research recently published included a literature review, focus groups with disabled people, workshops with professionals, site visits and controlled experiments at UCL's Person-Environment-Activity Research Laboratory (PEARL), identified significant problems with these designs and identified 15 recommendations for improvements. Key recommendations include:</p> | <p>Change proposed to ensure that the needs of partially sighted users are considered with regard to lighting, including reducing glare.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local communities (including disabled people) and professional specialists must be involved in the co-cultivation of pedestrian infrastructure to ensure that inclusion and accessibility are embedded into the planning and design process.• Investigate different ways of enabling cycle lanes and bus stops to interact which do not raise safety concerns amongst passengers and pedestrians using the stop. This investigation should include consideration of alternative positions, alignments and routes for the cycle lane to ensure that both cyclists and pedestrians are safe around bus stops. Until findings from this research are available, stop the further installation of Floating Island Bus Stops and Shared Bus Stop Boarders.• For Segregated Cycle-footways, a tactile paving delineator should be used at all times rather than a painted white line. Such routes should only be considered if the recommended space can accommodate the requirements for both users. Tactile paving should be installed at the beginning and end of each section, as well as at regular intervals within the Segregated Cycle-footway, in line with the guidance.• Local authorities should install tactile paving and other signalling at all continuous pavement crossings so that there is a consistency of approach. <p>Notably... “research found that Shared Bus Stop Boarders pose a greater threat to disabled people and are considered less safe than Floating Island Bus Stops. Participants in our research were universally opposed to the use of Shared Bus Stop Boarders, and the experts consulted were equally sceptical of their safety. These problems are inherent in the</p> | <p>The Strategy does not propose the use of Floating Island Bus Stops or Shared Bus Stop Boarders.</p> <p>Change proposed to ensure tactile paving is used consistently, with particular attention paid to segregated cycle-footways.</p> |
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| | <p>design of Shared Bus Stop Boarders, and we do not think they should be used in their current form. Some of the main risks of this design include the higher travelling speeds of cyclists and risks boarding and leaving buses directly onto a cycle path. More research is needed to understand if these designs can be made to be safe and accessible, but until this is complete, the design should not be further implemented.”</p> <p>Guide Dogs would urge decision makers involved with street design, and transport planning to engage with this significant new research and seriously consider the recommendations contained within it in relation to current and future regeneration and infrastructure schemes across Camden.</p> <p>5. Street Clutter and Obstructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We support the council’s initiative to declutter the streetscape; however, enforcement is necessary to prevent businesses from placing A-boards or outdoor seating in pedestrian walkways. • Temporary obstructions, such as construction hoardings, should include clear tactile warnings to alert blind and partially sighted individuals. <p>6. Inclusive Play and Public Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any play spaces or interactive public realm features should be designed with sensory elements that cater to visually impaired individuals. • Seating and resting areas should be clearly identifiable, free from trip hazards, and positioned thoughtfully along pedestrian routes. | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The importance of enforcement is noted on page 81.</p> <p>Change proposed to require tactile warnings for construction hoardings on page 80.</p> <p>Noted. Page 72 states that play spaces should include consideration of visually impaired users.</p> |
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| | <p>Conclusion Guide Dogs supports the overarching vision of the Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy but urges the council to ensure that accessibility measures to ensure the town centre is truly inclusive for disabled people including blind and partially sighted people.</p> <p>We share Reading Council’s ultimate goal of “setting out a clear, consistent and usable set of principles, to allow high quality and appropriate development of the public realm in Reading, with the aim of achieving an attractive, memorable and vibrant town centre.” To help in achieving this goal, Guide Dogs has published comprehensive guidance to assist designers, architects, and local authorities in creating places that are both inclusive for people with sight loss, and ready to address the challenges towns and cities face in the future.</p> <p>The “Making the built environment inclusive” guidance can be viewed and downloaded by clicking on the following link: www.guidedogs.org.uk/inclusive-regeneration/ I would be grateful if you could share the link to this guidance document with your colleagues and partner organisations.</p> | <p>Change proposed to ensure seating placement considers visually impaired users on page 66.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
| Hammerson PLC | <p>We write upon behalf of our client Hammerson PLC, being the owners of The Oracle in Reading Town Centre in response to the ongoing consultation on the draft Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD.</p> <p>We note that the SPD is intended to supplement and expand upon higher level planning policies, and in this case</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <p>the SPD supplements Policy CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading) contained within the Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted on 4th November 2019. Policy CR3 requires (inter alia) that proposals for new development make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm of the central area.</p> <p>Hammerson recognise many of the issues raised within the draft SPD concerning the existing poor state of the public realm in Reading Town Centre, including street and highway clutter, mismatching and poor-quality materials, litter, lack of green space, and difficulty wayfinding.</p> <p>In general terms, Hammerson PLC therefore support the Council's objective of preparing a comprehensive vision aimed at transforming the town's public spaces into pleasant, accessible, and sustainable environments that can support the town's growing population and economic development, with a view to developing a cohesive network of routes and public spaces over time.</p> <p>Hammerson PLC therefore support in-principle the 10 key objectives and guiding principles of the draft strategy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unifying the Public Realm Design •Improving Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure •Enhancing Green and Blue Infrastructure •Promoting a Sustainable and Inclusive Town Centre •Addressing Vehicular Dominance •Highlighting Reading's Heritage •Activating Public Spaces •Decluttering the Streets | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Integrating High-Quality Materials •Encouraging Temporary and Flexible Uses <p>Hammerson PLC agree that the quality of the public realm plays a vital role in the creation of a place with an enhanced sense of identity, where people will choose to spend their time. It gives great scope for, community-based activities, temporary interventions / events, ‘greening’ the town with landscaping and the inclusion of creative lighting schemes.</p> <p>The work to set out a typology of streets within the town centre is also supported along with the analysis and audit of such.</p> <p>The identification of key development sites within the town centre is also considered a positive step. Within the Oracle Estate, we note that the ‘Vue’ (or Yield Hall Place 2) site is identified as a development site on the Heritage and Conservation Plan on Page 22, but that the ‘Debenhams’ (or Yield Hall Place 1) site to the north is not. We suggest that the plan on Page 22 is updated to reflect both sites being identified as per Page 23.</p> <p>Hammerson also note and support the identification of The Oracle Estate as a particular ‘character area’ within the town centre, reflecting its different character and much larger scale to its surrounds.</p> <p>Hammerson note that Section 3.7 ‘Aspirational Town Centre Structure’ identifies existing mall routes through The Oracle as primary routes which should be preserved, enhanced and extended. The new pedestrian route and mall entrance</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Change proposed.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Change proposed.</p> |
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| | <p>onto the Riverside by the retained retail floorspace as part of the Yield Hall Place 1 planning application is a good example of the Council's ambition already being realised. We suggest this new route is added onto the plan in Section 3.7.</p> <p>The Pedestrian, Wheelers & Cycle Framework, confirms that Reading town centre has a comprehensive current movement and transport hierarchy and that the bus and road networks, whilst highly successful assets, create both challenges and opportunities for the future growth and development of the town. In particular, the Inner Distribution Route (IDR) is an important strategic movement corridor that helps to keep traffic out of the town centre core. However, due to its nature it severs access from surrounding neighbourhoods and creates a barrier or collar to walking, wheeling and cycling. Hammerson PLC support the overall recommendations for improvement listed on page 32, including to IDR permeability: "Improve permeability of pedestrians and cyclists from the surrounding neighbourhoods across the IDR to the town centre including improved junctions and crossings".</p> <p>The inclusion of a 'Design Manual' which describes all of the components which contribute to the overall public realm forms a significant part of the draft SPD and is also welcome. It is intended to be a guide which helps steer in making design, material and style decisions for future projects and enhancement works. Hammerson PLC consider this essential to both achieving the Council's ambitions and addressing future maintenance issues.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| | <p>Chapter 6 then goes on to identify a number of areas that best demonstrate how the public realm can be enhanced following the guidelines set out in the draft strategy and goes on to state that these areas should be viewed as examples of what can be achieved and the principles set out should also be applied to other corresponding and similar streets and spaces. These are known as the ‘Major Public Realm Enhancement Schemes’.</p> <p>The draft SPD goes on to confirm that: The specific projects are also considered key areas where change will bring the best impact and value for Reading Town Centre. The diagrams, plans and sketches should be considered as guidance and subject to a full design led process where surveys, studies, assessments, engagement and design development look to resolve the existing issues and aim to achieve the desired vision. They are provided to help illustrate the aspirations of the public realm strategy. It is very important to note that, at this stage, the schemes presented are no more than illustrations or a series of ‘diagrams, plans and sketches’ (as confirmed above) and that no technical assessment has been undertaken to underpin the feasibility of such at all.</p> <p>The Queens Road & London Street Junction of the IDR to the south of The Oracle Estate is identified as one of the 6 Major Public Realm Enhancement Schemes. It is without doubt the most complex and likely the most expensive of the 6 Major Public Realm Enhancement Schemes listed within the draft SPD. Indeed, based upon the sketches, it is the only planned significant change to the IDR other than</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted, although it is important to remember that “These areas should be viewed as <i>examples of what can be achieved</i> and the principles set out should also be applied to other corresponding and similar streets and spaces” (page 86).</p> |
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| | <p>Trooper's Potts / IDR Junction, which is very limited in ambition by comparison.</p> <p>On the scheme for the Queens Road & London Street Junction: Works at this junction of the type and scale shown on the sketches are likely to have a very significant knock-on impact on the wider road network, buried services and river channels. They cannot be considered or planned in isolation to the wider road network and without the required technical input, including highway modelling and surveys, can only be considered an 'aspiration' at this stage.</p> <p>Moreover, all the planned public realm improvements, taken together, will benefit the town centre as a whole and will act as a catalyst for further inward investment and regeneration. Hammerson PLC note with concern that at Page 12 the draft SPD suggests: "Major developments will be expected to contribute towards the enhancement of the surrounding public realm, including undertaking or funding works outside their own site boundary wherever there are opportunities to do so. In some cases, financial contributions will also be pooled towards wider town centre public realm improvements, but this will not be in place of essential improvements to the areas surrounding development sites".</p> <p>This cannot mean that works (or entire schemes) should be required to be undertaken by developers without limitation. Indeed, the draft SPD does not discuss or quantify the cost of any of the works identified, or indeed the town centre wide ambition for public realm improvements as a whole,</p> | <p>Noted. See above.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>It is important to remember than the examples provided are indicative and simply illustrate the types of schemes that could be achieved. Improvements to the public realm are still</p> |
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| | <p>and merely notes that funding requirements are unknown (Page 116).</p> <p>Public Realm works beyond application site boundaries can be delivered by a 'Grampian' style condition imposed upon a planning permission for a development. This is usually where the scope and scale of the works is known. Otherwise, it is usual to secure such works by way of a Planning Obligation.</p> <p>The NPPF (December 2024) discusses the use of conditions and planning obligations. In relation to planning conditions, NPPF Paragraph 56 tells us that: "Local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition."</p> <p>NPPF Paragraph 57 goes on to tell us that: "Planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects."</p> <p>Importantly, in relation to planning obligations, NPPF Paragraph 58 tells us that: "Planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following tests: a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; b) directly related to the development; and</p> | <p>subject to the policies of the Local Plan which consider impacts on viability.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| | <p>c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.”</p> <p>On the basis that the 6 Major Public Realm Enhancement Schemes in particular will undoubtedly benefit the Town Centre as a whole, Hammerson PLC are concerned that the draft SPD contains no mechanism or attempt to apportion the benefit of such improvement works to existing and proposed development across the town centre as a whole and, hence, then fairly apportion the cost of such works to different landowners and development schemes.</p> <p>Indeed, Section 8.1 ‘Emerging Action Plan’ (see below) identifies the first stage in implementation is to understand what steps are needed for each major scheme to proceed to a project – surveys, understanding of funding requirements etc. This suggests that the Council must take the lead and progress next steps in undertaking the preparatory work for each scheme and checking they are deliverable.</p> <p>This must be given further detailed consideration and the NPPF tests set out in Paragraph 57 must be met in all cases.</p> <p>In summary, whilst Hammerson PLC support the principle of a strategy to improve public realm in Reading town centre, they consider that much more work needs to be done in relation to how the public realm improvements will be fairly funded and delivered, in order to prevent ad hoc and disproportionate requests being made of particular developers or development schemes, which can have a very significant impact on development viability.</p> | <p>This will be considered at planning application stage in line with the policies of the Local Plan. The Strategy does not suggest that the whole of these specific, indicative proposals will be required of Hammerson PLC.</p> <p>Change proposed to emphasise that these steps are to be undertaken jointly between the Council and developers.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The Council would not impose requirements which would deliver development unviable according to the policies within the Local Plan.</p> |
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| | <p>The document is considered to be generally lacking any clarity on deliverability or identification of responsibility within the Council for bringing forward the changes proposed. No timescales are put alongside any of the actions, and 'delivery' is limited to 2 pages in a 117 page document.</p> | <p>The Strategy is not intended to provide detailed timescales, but instead identifies possible next steps for the Council and provides a useful guide for planning officers when determining applications as schemes come forward.</p> |
| <p>Hennell, Jane of The Canal & River Trust</p> | <p>The Canal & River Trust act as Navigation Authority for the area covered by this strategy. However the strategy is comprehensive and we support its introduction. The Trust is currently preparing a 'Design Coding for Waterways' guidance document which will be sent to the Borough council in due course.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |
| <p>Historic England</p> | <p>Thank you for consulting Historic England on the Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy. We welcome preparation of this Strategy and broadly support most of its contents, especially the sustained focus on better appreciation of the historic environment.</p> <p>In this cover letter, we highlight one part of the town centre that we believe is currently insufficiently recognised in the Strategy, namely Abbey Square. We encourage greater consideration of this, as an integral part of the Abbey Quarter, both in terms of its significance (e.g. on page 22) and the potential for public realm improvements.</p> <p>Also, we highlight the potential for implementation of the Strategy to deliver an integrated approach to the management of the historic and natural environment, thereby delivering added value.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Change proposed on page 5 to clearly communicate that the areas of the town centre identified within the Strategy are merely examples. These examples are intended to illustrate how public realm improvements should be applied to different types of environments within the town centre, not to prioritise areas for interventions. Therefore, it is not considered necessary to include Abbey Square, as the Strategy does not preclude the area from being a focus for improvements.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <p>The Council may wish to draw from Historic England’s ‘Streets for All’ documents, which contain a wealth of information on streetscape improvements and set out means to improve public spaces without harming their valued character, including recommendations for works to surfaces, street furniture, new equipment, traffic management infrastructure and environmental improvements.</p> <p>As a final point, liaison with the Council’s conservation team and archaeological advisers is recommended throughout work on the Strategy. They are best placed to advise on local heritage issues and priorities, including access to data held in the Historic Environment Record; how the Strategy can be tailored to avoid or minimise potential adverse impacts on the historic environment and to maximise opportunities for securing wider benefits for conservation and management of heritage assets.</p> <p>Page 5—Objectives It’s good to see highlighting Reading’s heritage is one of the objectives.</p> <p>Page 13—Vision While we realise it is not the Council’s intention for “build upon the heritage” in a literal sense, we query if this could be phrased to avoid that resonance. “This vision looks to both build upon <u>conserve and better appreciate</u> the heritage and look towards the future growth of the town, encouraging people to explore, businesses to flourish and creating a safe, inclusive and vibrant street scene.”</p> | <p>No change proposed. This is best addressed by policies within the Local Plan which require close working with these groups as proposals come forward.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Change proposed.</p> |
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| | <p>Page 14—Guiding Principles Principle 4 is the same as principle 6. We query if principle 6 should be renamed and suggest wording for consideration. “06 Ensure consistency in design <u>Celebrate Reading’s heritage</u>”</p> <p>Page 18—Photograph bottom right Reading Town Hall is listed Grade II* rather than Grade II</p> <p>Page 22—Section 3.4: Heritage and Conservation The text omits reference to Grade II* buildings. Perhaps simpler to refer listed buildings? Also, it risks inaccurately conveying the multiple sites associated with Reading Abbey that are Scheduled. We suggest rewording. This risk is increased by the map, which does not include all the Scheduled sites within the study area. This needs to be rectified.</p> <p>“Reading town centre counts three Conservation Areas, many Grade I and II listed buildings, a <u>R</u>egistered park with Forbury Gardens and <u>multiple S</u>cheduled <u>M</u>onuments <u>associated with Reading Abbey area at the Abbey, Prison site and High Bridge on Duke St. is also Scheduled.</u> For more information, refer to Reading’s Historic Area Assessment ***include weblink***”</p> <p>Page 23—Section 3.5 Development sites Refer to which local plan, not simply “Sites identified for development or change in Local Plan”</p> <p>Page 30—Section 4.3</p> | <p>Change proposed.</p> <p>Change proposed.</p> <p>Change proposed to include reference in text to Grade II* listed buildings. It is not considered necessary to amend the map as it is intended to provide an overview, not a high level of detail.</p> <p>It is not considered necessary to state which Local Plan as it can be assumed that the relevant Local Plan is the version most recently adopted by the Council.</p> <p>Change proposed to reformat bullets.</p> |
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| | <p>Bullets 1 and 8 in the middle column need to be formatted differently to help the reader.</p> <p>Page 31—Key to the wheel Surely the key to the wheel should be shown <u>without</u> colours? The colours in the larger wheel make it harder to interpret the map & smaller wheels.</p> <p>Page 50—Principles for vegetation We recommend adding a point that connects with the historic environment. •<u>“Connection with heritage – Consider the historic context of the location; how this might be used to greatest advantage in an integrated approach”</u></p> <p>Page 58—Tree planting We recommend adding a point that connects with the historic environment. “There are a number of factors to consider, which include; competition for space beneath the streets with utilities, the proposed usage and character of the public realm, suitability for an urban environment, <u>impacts on and connection with heritage assets above and below ground</u>, visual characteristics, resilience and adaptability to climate change. Retention of existing trees, especially mature trees also needs to be carefully considered and conditions of trees continued to be monitored by RBC.”</p> <p>Page 89—Vision & Schematic Proposal for St. Mary’s Butts We welcome plans to enhance the local environment and enable the better appreciation of heritage assets in this location.</p> | <p>It is considered that the colours in the wheel help to visually delineate between each section. These colours also align with the TfL Healthy Streets Strategy.</p> <p>It is unclear why reference to the historic environment is relevant in considerations for vegetation.</p> <p>Change proposed.</p> <p>Noted. Change proposed to correct typo.</p> |
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| | <p>Note typo. “Enhanced setting of Grade I listed Reading Minster”</p> <p>Page 98—Vision & Schematic Proposal for Market Place & Town Hall Square We welcome plans to enhance the local environment and enable the better appreciation of heritage assets in this location. Note typo. “Celebrate heritage monuments and listed buildings, creating focal points and removing clutter.”</p> <p>Page 107—Other Area Guidelines Abbey Square has the potential to better integrated within the Abbey Quarter and appreciated as an integral part of that Quarter. Note this includes sites of the Scheduled Abbey, which are currently invisible. There is the potential to enhance the appreciation of these assets, potentially including Holy Brook too (informed by a careful approach to the redevelopment of central library), as well as the Grade I Abbey Gate. We suggest Abbey Square is considered further in the Public Realm Strategy.</p> <p>Page 111—The Forbury We welcome plans to enhance the flow and appreciation of heritage in this location.</p> | <p>Noted. Change proposed to correct typo.</p> <p>Please see response above with regard to Abbey Quarter.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
| <p>Hunter, Nick</p> | <p>Thanks for sending round the plans you have for the town centre. In general I feel that the sentiment and ideas are good. I just have a few specific comments:</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I very much agree with the analysis of "before". Essentially the town centre is really pretty scummy, mainly due to the open space feeling claustrophobic, inconsistent and cheap. 2. I think in your "after" pictures there is still too much clutter. Less is more. Spend a bit more on quality and consistent paving instead. 3. A problem in Reading is there is no single large public square. I think you should remove the cemetery south of Reading Minster and incorporate that into an enlarged public space (again, with less clutter than your illustrations foresee). 4. Don't overdo it on the vegetation. It would be nice, but you would never be able to maintain it I suspect and soon it would look bad with litter permeating it. 5. Have a look at Newbury. I know it was easier for them as it is smaller but I don't think they have done a bad job in the Market Place and Northbrook Street. Somehow the atmosphere is much better now. 6. I have sympathy on the bikes and scooters. Whatever you enact, I am sure that they will still carry on charging through, maiming people. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted. 2. It is important to remember that the schemes are indicative and simply provide examples of what could be achieved. 3. It is not considered feasible to remove a cemetery. Broad Street provides an extensive pedestrianised area within the town centre. 4. Vegetation provides important ecological benefits, can help to cool the urban area and can reduce surface water flooding during storm events. Clear maintenance plans will be required as detailed in Section 5.17. 5. Noted. 6. The Strategy aims to establish design elements that will deter irresponsible cycling and scooting, but it is not considered appropriate to ban cycling and scooters within the town as many pedestrianised areas provide important no-traffic routes. |
| Jacobs, Adam | <p>General wider comment</p> <p>- in our view, this work is #1 importance to town centre: it affects public perception and confidence to shop in RG1. If delivered will potentially reduce security issues and add to economic growth by attracting business and spend local - understand the point of having a policy in place, but the key</p> | <p>Noted. The Strategy is not intended to be funded solely by the Council, but rather provides indicative examples of how developer contributions can be spent improving the public realm in the coming years.</p> |

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| | <p>driver should be proactively looking to fund it. If funding isn't found, and work not started, then the report would be out of date.</p> <p>Specific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When designing any public realm physical furniture (lamps, signs, benches etc), can they have some wit/ verve/ personality reflecting Reading - the private sector manage to incorporate imaginative nods to Reading in design. Appreciate the 'neutrality' of tone to assist with looking at buildings, but we have an opportunity to think outside the box and inject something personal and engaging. - How does it aligns/ syncs with Caversham, Tilehurst and other small conurbations in satellite to Reading - design with them in mind for rolling out wider. - Security - with a lot of public realm I see, bollards/ furniture are in place to stop terrorist incidents w/ cars or lorries. Or indeed a vehicle out of control to protect pedestrians. I saw no indication of these in any drawings. Purposely omitted? Legal obligation? | <p>It is considered that neutral street furniture contributes to a cohesive and consistent look and feel within the town centre. Should applications come forward that exhibit particular creativity or reflect local character, these will be considered individually.</p> <p>This strategy focuses solely on the town centre itself.</p> <p>It is not the intention of the Strategy to preclude the use of bollards. As applications come forward, the need for bollards will be assessed alongside other considerations for safety and crime prevention. It is not considered necessary to include these within the drawings.</p> |
| John Lewis Partnership | <p>JLP are the owners of land at Mill Lane and therefore have a significant interest in the Public Realm Strategy (PRS).</p> <p>The site currently accommodates a vacant warehouse building formerly used as customer collections facilities, ancillary car park and servicing area. This use is no longer needed. The site is now identified as a draft allocation for residential development (CR14r) in the Reg 19 Local Plan Partial Update (November 2024) and is subject to a live planning application (ref. PL/24/1155) submitted August</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <p>2024 for: <i>Demolition of the existing building and redevelopment of the site comprising erection of a new building for up to 215 build to rent residential dwellings (Use Class C3) together with flexible commercial/community space (Use Class E/F1/F2), residents' facilities, landscaping, public realm, amenity space, cycle parking and disabled car parking.</i></p> <p>The draft PRS identifies a number of proposed public realm improvements around the Site.</p> <p>Purpose of the Strategy (Chp 2) The draft Public Realm Strategy explains that its purpose is to "...achieve the ultimate goal of setting out a clear, consistent and usable set of principles, to allow high quality and appropriate development of the public realm in Reading, with the aim of achieving an attractive, memorable and vibrant town centre" (section 2.1).</p> <p>Section 2.1 adds that the draft Public Realm Strategy is intended to comprise a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), linked to Policy CR3 (Public Realm in Central Reading) of the Local Plan (2019), which will inform decisions on planning applications. The latest Local Development Scheme (LDS) targets adoption of the Public Realm Strategy in March 2025.</p> <p>Notably the Council is currently progressing a draft LPPU in order to address various changes since the adoption of the Local Plan (2019) including new legislation, increasing housing requirements and changes in local circumstances. The emerging LPPU is intended to be submitted later in</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| | <p>February 2025, with adoption scheduled for September/October 2025. Whilst the recent Regulation 19 LPPU (November 2024) does not propose updates to Policy CR3, a number of changes are proposed to other adopted Local Plan policies relevant to development in Central Reading, including Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm), H1 (Housing Provision), H2 (Density and Mix) and CR14 (Other sites for development in Central Reading). The Regulation 19 LPPU (November 2024) also proposes to accommodate an even greater proportion of development (59%) in Central Reading.</p> <p>Given the amount of new development proposed in the town centre, the overall aim of the draft Public Realm Strategy – to set out principles to support the achievement of an ‘attractive, memorable and vibrant town centre’ – is supported. In particular JLP support the ambition to improve the public realm in order to enhance the experience, safety and environmental credentials for the long-term benefit of the town centre and local people. The submitted development proposals at the Site (ref. PL/24/1155) seek to follow this approach and incorporate high quality design principles to support the aims and vision of the draft Public Realm Strategy. It is however important to ensure that the Public Realm Strategy is aligned with and supplements the emerging LPPU to provide appropriate up-to-date guidance.</p> <p>Town Centre Appraisal (Chp 3) The ‘fast-paced transformation’ of the town centre and the need to thereby preserve and enhance the public realm to ‘help deliver Reading’s full potential’ (section 5) is acknowledged and supported. The ‘Development Sites’</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>It is not considered necessary to include reference to specific planning applications.</p> |
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| | <p>shown at section 3.5 should be updated however to acknowledge that an application has been submitted at the Site which is relevant to the public realm strategy. Notably the submitted development proposals (ref. PL/24/1155) seek to address several of the identified ‘current issues and concerns’ (including ‘lack of street activation’ and ‘lack of green’) (section 3.1), through the provision of increased active frontages along Mill Lane and delivery of new public landscaped spaces and significant Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>The aims for a ‘transformed IDR’ with enhanced links to ‘overcome the severance generated by the IDR’, as identified in the ‘Aspirational Town Centre Structure’ (section 3.7), are particularly supported. In this regard, it is important that development proposals within individual Character Areas are not considered in isolation, but also recognise the opportunities to deliver ‘attractive urban spaces’ linked across Character Areas (e.g. between London Street Area and The Oracle).</p> <p>Pedestrian, Wheelers & Cycle Framework (Chp 4) Building on the challenges identified in the Town Centre Appraisal (chapter 3), the need to overcome the ‘barriers’ caused by the IDR is further highlighted at section 4.1. The identified opportunity in this regard to enhance the junction of the IDR / London Street for walking and cycling (section 4.2) will help address these challenges and support links across the IDR, and is therefore also supported.</p> <p>Design Manual (Chp 5) The design manual provides recommendations for a number of design components relevant to the overall public realm.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Change proposed to make clear that schemes within the document are indicative and aim to</p> |
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| | <p>The details and recommendations set out are intended as a 'guide' rather than being overly prescriptive, which is an approach that is supported. The design manual should be clear however to allow for alternative high quality design solutions to come forward at the detailed design stage. It is essential therefore that text to this effect is added to the SPD before it is adopted.</p> <p>The recommendation for lighting columns to be 'simple' and be of 'minimal design' is supported and will help to facilitate increased high quality development within the town centre.</p> <p>Specific Projects (Chp 6) One of the specific projects identified includes the 'Queens Road & London Street Junction' (section 6.4) which is located approximately 50m to the east of the Site. The proposals include realignment of the pedestrian crossing, increased footpath widths and increased greening and landscaping. The stated objective is to 'strengthen the North-South link for walking and cycling to support sustainable and active travel from the south to the town centre and reduce the significant severance caused by the IDR to communities in this area.'</p> <p>The proposed public realm improvements at the Queens Road & London Street Junction will provide improved legibility and connections across the IDR between London Street / Mill Lane and The Oracle, as well as helping to reduce noise and pollution impacts. The proposals will therefore be positive for future residents of the proposed development at the Site and are therefore fully supported.</p> | <p>provide examples of what could be delivered. Alternative high-quality design proposals will be considered.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| | <p>Emerging Action Plan (Chp 8) The Emerging Action Plan sets out proposed next steps towards achieving specific projects, including the 'Queens Road & London Street Junction'. The Action Plan explains that this would include undertaking surveys, understanding funding requirements and other considerations. These next steps are acknowledged and supported. It will be important that any planning obligations sought to support the funding of these projects are necessary, directly related and reasonably related in scale to development, in line with the provisions of paragraph 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024).</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |
| <p>Jones, Peter</p> | <p>Please find my wishes to improve your excellent planning scheme. I think your ideas to make the IDR easier for residents to cross to and from the centre of town are commendable.</p> <p>I have marked up your illustrations with my comments. See attached:</p> <p>Principally, I would make Broad St shopping zone a gated cycle free zone with only VIP disabled vehicle access allowed (including Union Street, Chain Street, Queen Victoria St and Cross St)</p> <p>Redevelop the roundabouts at Forbury Rd/Vastern Rd and Queens Rd/London St.</p> <p>Redevelop area around junction at A329 and A33.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Broad St provides an important traffic-free route for cyclists. Banning cyclists from the area would force them onto busier routes and may deter many from cycling. The Strategy recognises the conflict between pedestrians and cyclists and recommends various designs that could help reduce incidences of conflict, for instance, by creating a central lane for cyclists.</p> <p>These roundabouts are identified on page 29 at junctions identified for enhancement.</p> |

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| | <p>Create footpaths to cross the IDR to link the inner town with residential areas, particularly from Kenavon Dr to Forbury Gardens.</p> <p>Friar St to The Forbury must be a 2 way cycle route. 2 way cycle routes should be established throughout the town centre.</p> <p>IDR and all roads within IDR boundary should be 20mph speed restricted.</p> <p>The northeastern arc of the IDR should be reduced to 2 lanes. Queens Rd to Kings should be 2-way to stop vehicles queueing on the Watlington St gyratory.</p> <p>The southwest IDR A33 junction is a brutal mess... in wet weather I just pray I am in the 'correct' lane to get through safely.</p> <p>Generally, Reading is an interesting town to walk around, but all the walking routes seem to end abruptly. The pedestrian is either confronted with heavy traffic, a long wait to cross many wide lanes of traffic, or the path just ends in a broken-down part of town. Visitors leave with a bad impression.</p> <p>Your scheme will make a big impact... please persevere and make it happen.</p> | <p>It is considered that the junction at A329 and A33 already benefits from good pedestrian and cycling infrastructure as it is completely separate from vehicle movements.</p> <p>Noted. These junctions are identified as areas for enhanced walking, wheeling and cycling on page 29.</p> <p>It is not within the scope of the Strategy to specify directional cycle routes on particular streets, but a change is proposed as stated above to state that one way cycle routes within the town centre may limit the connectivity of the network.</p> <p>It is not within the scope of the Strategy to restrict vehicle speeds along the IDR or reduce the number of lanes along the IDR.</p> <p>Traffic flows at this intersection (A33 Junction) are not within the scope of the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy.</p> <p>Noted. The Strategy notes these negative elements within the existing conditions assessment and seeks to better connect walking routes, reduce town centre traffic, shorten crossings and improve visual amenity.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| <p>Kennet & Avon Canal</p> | <p>The consultation document makes extensive reference to pedestrian and vehicle movement but appears to overlook river traffic. The River Kennet is a prominent feature of Reading Town Centre. Active boats can enhance the visual effect of the areas adjacent to the Kennet and can emphasise the recreational opportunities of the river whilst bringing the commercial benefits of holiday boating traffic to town centre businesses.</p> <p>Proposals in Para 6.6 describe the area adjacent to Queens Road Car Park as “offering very little opportunity to dwell”. The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust welcomes the proposed improvement of this area but also believes this could be enhanced by promoting short term mooring facilities by holiday boats to bring additional colour and animation to this area.</p> <p>Charged mooring is currently permitted in this area but Reading is the only place on the whole of the Kennet and Avon Canal where the local authority applies mooring charges. Notices about payment emphasise penalties for non-payment and are unwelcoming. The local holiday hire base advises hirers not to stop in Reading as the Council conditions are so tight as to put hirers (and the boat-yard as boat owners) at risk of prosecution. The Trust would be very pleased to work with Council officers to develop a system where short term mooring for holiday boats adds to Reading’s urban landscape. Mooring space at County Lock is required for boats operating or waiting to operate the lock but the adjacent open area has potential for improvement as an attractive waterside space.</p> | <p>River traffic is not within the scope of the Strategy, but page 8 states “establishing principles to enhance access and amenity values of riverways” as an aim of the Strategy.</p> <p>Change proposed to include consideration of new mooring facilities.</p> <p>Removing mooring charges or considering existing mooring space is not within the scope of the Strategy.</p> |
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| | <p>Proposals in Para 5.12 for improved directional and interpretative signage are welcomed. The town centre waterways offer opportunities for several circular walks of varying lengths. The Trust would be pleased to work with RBC to develop and promote these walks and may be able to use our archives to assist input to interpretative displays.</p> <p>Add reference to five local leisure marinas (Burghfield Island, Frouds Bridge, Greenham, Newbury Boat Co. and Newbury) and advise boaters not to stop in Reading, but rather travel to Henley, Marlow, Pangbourne, Abingdon, Wallingford, etc where they are more friendly towards holiday/leisure boaters.</p> | <p>Change proposed to Section 5.12 to highlight the need for wayfinding to feature waterway walking routes.</p> <p>Direction leisure boaters to marinas outside the Borough is not within the scope of the Strategy.</p> |
| Lalley, Christine | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The 10 Guiding Principles are all extremely sound and worthy but many are dependent on funding which is lacking. The most important principle is the last one – maintenance, which is equally underfunded. Initial surfaces, finishes of schemes are usually good but then they are dug up by utilities and the subsequent reinstatement is non-existent/poor/wrong materials etc. Graffiti, litter, flytipping, weeds in gutters all degrade the public realm and are not attended to as they should be. 2. Green roofs on bus shelters or PV on the roofs of bus shelters – use every surface positively. Glass gets dirty and is never cleaned. See those at the back of Primark. 3. The strategy certainly identifies the many problems in the public realm very well – muddled, visual clutter of street furniture – signs, bins of different ages, manufacturers, design, materials, etc but is thin on the solutions. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted. The Strategy aims to emphasise the importance of maintenance going forward. 2. Change proposed to ensure PV and/or green roofs are considered for bus shelters. With regard to cleaning and maintenance, please see response above. 3. The Strategy seeks to provide many descriptions and illustrations of examples of how these problems can be resolved. |

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| | <p>4. The Emerging Action Plan has many potential studies but where is the funding and skilled officers to carry them out? Good luck.</p> | <p>4. Due to significant funding constraints at the Council, the Strategy seeks to provide an outline of how developer contributions may be spent as schemes come forward.</p> |
| <p>Leonidas, Gerry</p> | <p>Having read and participated in previous related projects, this is impressive in its scope. There is a genuine holistic approach, and finally – a recognition that the town centre has incredible potential if it is enabled to become more than a forced trip to reach shops and little else.</p> <p>The foregrounding of walking/cycling is long overdue, and at the very least of the level required by forward-looking, sustainable plans. Streetcraft interventions are both realistic and enabling.</p> <p>One area that is missing and marks out the plan as lacking in relation to approaches in continental towns, is the active consideration of the journeys walkers/cyclists/wheelers take up to the boundaries of the town centre. No plan for the centre will embed new behaviours unless people can get there safely from nodes like the RBH, UoR, and residential neighbourhoods. Safe routes need to extend in an uninterrupted manner to the periphery of the town, from north Caversham to Lower Earley, Whitley, Tilehurst, etc. This is a standard consideration on the continent, as well and the few towns in the UK that have got this right, and should be included in the plan as an enabling measure.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The geographic scope of this Strategy is limited to the Town Centre itself, although many of the intersections at the edge of the centre are identified as areas for improvement. The Local Transport Strategy and the policies of the Local Plan identify priorities for enabling active travel throughout the Borough. The Local Transport Strategy in particular emphasises the importance of safe routes throughout Reading's suburbs and surrounding communities.</p> |
| <p>Murphy, Jason</p> | <p>The draft plan sets out a strong vision. However, it is lacking in reference to how the changes can design out crime, with the unintentional consequences of some schemes being that crime may be more likely. Location and impact of CCTV and its merits is a critical issue, as well as</p> | <p>Change proposed to include reference to the Reading Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy.</p> |

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| | <p>understanding existing crime hotspots and the enablers for this. Crime, such as aggressive begging takes place in the public realm and the solution to resolve this is to remove one of three things - the victim (making a place less likely to lead to harm); the offender (making a space less encouraging of crime) or changing the environment so that opportunities for crime are reduced. There is no reference in the document to the Reading Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy and no mention of recent community safety survey findings which highlight the impact of crime is having on public perceptions of safety; in particular from aggressive begging, and consumption of alcohol and drugs.</p> <p>There is also no reference to children and children's insight to how to design and utilise a space. A child friendly designed urban space is well known to be a more enticing, safe and attractive space and therefore the plan is lacking insight from children's point of view; a space presumably they are more likely to use in the future than adults commenting on it. What work has there been to hear from children and young people, and not just those from well healed backgrounds?</p> <p>It is a surprise that among the guiding principles there is no reference to safety, or a safer public realm. The document also implies that CCTV is contributing to the clutter in the urban space which overlooks the functionality of CCTV and the optimum deployment to ensure its utility in preventing and detecting crime.</p> | <p>Change proposed to refer to the importance of considering the impacts of design on aggressive begging, crime, perceptions of safety and the consumption of alcohol and drugs. Each scheme will also seek comments from Thames Valley Police as proposals come forward.</p> <p>It is considered that the extensive section on play elements and language addressing the needs of different users such as prams and "wheelers" will help to create an environment that meets the needs of children and young people. Although the Consultation did not host any events specific to children, it was widely advertised.</p> <p>Change proposed to clarify the important role of CCTV and to ensure that CCTV will not be removed unless it is redundant.</p> |
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| National Highways | We are concerned with proposals that have the potential to impact the safe and efficient operation of the SRN, in this case the M4 motorway. We therefore have no comments. | Noted. |
| Natural England | <p>Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.</p> <p>We support the principle of meaningful and early engagement of the general community, community organisations and statutory bodies in local planning matters, both in terms of shaping policy and participating in the process of determining planning applications.</p> <p>Whilst we welcome this opportunity to give our views, the topic of the Supplementary Planning Document does not relate to our remit to any significant extent. We do not therefore wish to comment, except to support the approach to integrate nature rich green infrastructure, urban greening and nature-based solutions into the streetscape as widely as possible.</p> <p>Strategic Environmental Assessment/Habitats Regulations Assessment -- In principle SPDs should not be subject to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive or the Habitats Directive because they do not normally introduce new policies or proposals or modify planning documents which have already been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal or Habitats Regulations Assessment. However a SPD may occasionally be found likely to give rise to significant effects which have not been formally assessed in</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. This is not the case.</p> |

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| | <p>the context of a higher level planning document. This may happen, for example, where the relevant high level planning document contains saved policies within a saved local plan which predates the need to carry out a SA or HRA and therefore no higher tier assessment has taken place. If there is any doubt on the need to carry out a SA or HRA a screening assessment should be carried out.</p> | |
| Norman, Peter | <p>The strategy document puts forward a vision of a much improved public realm for Reading. Improvements to pedestrian and cyclist connectivity would be huge improvements particularly addressing how the IDR severs the town centre from the outer areas.</p> | Noted. |
| Oatway, Brian | <p>The plan appears to prioritise the convenience of younger and so generally more physically able residents above that of the safety of older and so generally less physically and mentally able residents. For example, potentially moving bus stops further from town centre shops but at the same time potentially allowing cyclists to cycle straight through the town centre and perhaps even allowing cyclists to use contraflow along one way traffic roads endangers older pedestrians especially those with sight, hearing and motion difficulties.</p> <p>Elderly residents already have to walk further to get into the town centre when arriving by buses 17, 4 and 4a than before the bus stop was moved to opposite Jackson Corner and then also have to squeeze through the narrow gap between the cycle stands and shops to get onto Broad Street. These cycle stands are a real pain in the neck to less able pedestrians trying to get onto Broad Street after already navigating on- pavement cyclists between the bus stop and Broad Street.</p> | <p>The Strategy does not intend to move bus stops further from town centre shops, but rather to enable further analysis of kerbside usage to ensure ease of pedestrian circulation. It is not considered feasible to remove cyclists from the town centre or eliminate existing cycle routes as these provide important low- and no-traffic routes for cyclists. The Strategy aims to improve the design of shared spaces to reduce conflict.</p> <p>Cycle parking helps to encourage more sustainable journeys within the town. The Strategy seeks to strike a balance between the needs of different users. This includes further analysis of kerbside usage to ensure that pavements are wide enough for foot traffic in busy areas.</p> |

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| | <p>Given the forecast increase in the number of older residents and decrease in the number of younger residents over coming years surely the needs of older hence less physically and mentally able residents should be given priority over the convenience of younger hence generally more physically able cyclists? Please let us enjoy the town centre please rather than being stressed out by being forced to share the centre with far too many cyclists who, I think it is fair to say, act on far too occasions as if pedestrians should jump out of their way. Please.</p> <p>Can I suggest that planners visit Bracknell town centre where there is a ban on cycling through the town centre, a ban which is enforced with the result that shoppers can meander at will between shops with far, far, far less stress that Reading town centre].</p> | <p>The Strategy does not wish to privilege cyclists over older residents and indeed, many older residents are cyclists themselves. The Strategy seeks to strike a balance as explained above.</p> <p>A complete ban on cycling would be very difficult to enforce and therefore, the Strategy aims to reduce conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians rather than ban cyclists entirely.</p> |
| Reading Buses | <p>I write to set out our views on the proposed strategy and vision for the town centre. We fully agree with the need to support the town's growing population and economic development, and to set out common design guidelines for developers to consider, but think more detailed thought is needed on how bus services should be accommodated. We are one of eight remaining Council owned bus companies in the UK, with a remit to provide the best possible bus service to the residents of Reading and the travel to work area. We operate a network of demand-led services that support the Council's aims to minimise the use of private vehicles, improve air quality, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce congestion. Reading has the third highest level of bus usage per head of population outside London with 19.5 million passenger journeys starting within</p> | Noted. |

to Borough per annum, and is seeking to grow that figure further.

Annual surveys undertaken by the Council have shown that 27.3% of people travel to the town centre by bus, second only to 28.3% who walk, 16.9% who travel by car, 14.6% by train, 7.2% by taxi and 5.3% by bicycle. Furthermore, the expansion of the town's population has been facilitated almost entirely by growing bus usage over the last 20 years as the only practical way to make better use of space and for journeys from increasingly distant suburbs. It is therefore vital for the town's success to aspire to provide excellent facilities for bus users.

Reading Station is the ninth busiest rail station outside of London, with 13.5 million entries and exits a year. Sales of the integrated rail-bus ticket Plus Bus are the third highest in the UK, highlighting the significant level of integration and interchange that takes place between the bus and rail networks, in addition to destinations in the town centre. It is therefore vital for the town's success to aspire to provide excellent interchange facilities between bus and rail services.

The bus network has adapted to many changes over the years to help improve the public realm in the town centre, which is an equally vital part of the town's success. Our traditional hub in Broad Street was pedestrianised in the 1990s, which required buses to be diverted onto narrower service roads around the town centre in a one-way loop, which coupled with increasing traffic congestion made cross-town services less efficient to provide. Then Station

Hill was pedestrianised in 2011, making interchange more difficult. Significant effort went into establishing the current arrangements to try to ensure that what remains works as effectively as possible within a much more constrained environment.

It is no surprise or coincidence that some of the busiest areas in the town centre are the locations where bus stops are located. The strategy itself identifies these as “primary and strategic roads”, and the meaning of these needs to be considered more closely. Reducing space for buses in these locations will only serve to concentrate more buses into a smaller space. The pedestrian flow is determined by the location of the transport links, and in their absence, footfall is likely to shift, affecting the viability of the retail and entertainment units nearby, and the definition of those roads as primary or strategic.

Bus services are not just an investment in transport, but in the town centre. They are important to urban areas for several reasons:

- Bus use enables more people to be moved along a corridor of limited vehicle capacity;
- Buses enable people who either do not have a car or who do not wish to use one to travel farther than they can walk, with benefits to social equality;
- Bus services from peripheral developments can reduce car use from those developments and the resulting congestion on main radial roads;

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus users contribute substantially to retail activity in town centres; • Towns and cities in which access to the centre is largely by bus can achieve a better city centre environment through more pedestrian space and better air quality; • Buses contribute to active travel and healthier lifestyles because of walking (or cycling) to and from bus stops. <p>It can therefore be said that buses sustain town centres, strengthen communities and protect the environment. Please see “Buses in Urban Developments, CIHT, January 2018” and “Bus Back Better, National Bus Strategy, 2021” for more detail.</p> <p>Larger tram-like shelters are needed at all stops on Friar Street, Station Road, Blagrove Street, Market Place, Jackson’s Corner and St Mary’s Butts.</p> <p>We have some specific points regarding various sections of the draft strategy as follows:</p> <p>Section 2.6 principle 03 for sustainable movement prioritises making Reading a pleasantly walkable and cyclable town. However, this isn’t practical for those travelling longer distances, or those with mobility problems, for whom buses are the only real environmentally sustainable alternative. Moving bus services further away from the destinations people wish to reach makes the bus less attractive, encouraging greater private car use, and lower overall visitor levels. The strategy should be that buses become accepted with a sort of preferential access to</p> | <p>Noted. The principles and schemes within the Strategy are intended to be indicative, rather than provide detailed proposals for plans. At such time plans for larger shelters come forward, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Noted. The Council acknowledges that buses serve an important function for town centre users, particularly those with mobility issues. The schemes in the Strategy are intended to be indicative and illustrate larger principles for a high-quality public realm. It does not intend to move services further away from destinations. It acknowledges that buses are an important element, but it would not be appropriate to grant</p> |
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| | <p>a pedestrian focused town centre in the areas that are not fully pedestrianised.</p> <p>The guiding principles for the design of streets for buses include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bus stops sited to directly serve passenger objectives;• Buses protected from delays due to other traffic;• Bus stops equipped for passenger comfort and convenience, including seating, shelters and information for passengers;• Bus stop infrastructure designed for minimum 'dwell time';• Bus infrastructure capable of handling the type and frequency of services being provided;• Compatibility with other 'movement and place' functions expected of the street in question. <p>Section 4.1 we are concerned by the view that bus movements negatively affect the public realm in some locations and make it difficult to navigate for other user groups such as pedestrians, wheelers and cyclists. One could say the same thing about street markets, buskers or special events, but they are an equal necessity of a vibrant town centre. We do however think that there are some interventions that could be made to improve facilities for everybody by more closely studying how each part of the town centre is being used, and obtaining a more detailed understanding of the measures that will actually help buses service the area efficiently. We would be happy to work with you on this.</p> | <p>preferential access to pedestrian area without careful consideration on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>We agree with the principles stated but do not feel that amendments providing this level of detail regarding street design for buses is necessary within the Strategy. There is also an onus on bus operators to ensure that schedules are efficiently minimising dwell time and carefully considering the types and frequency of services to reduce negative impacts on the public realm.</p> <p>A change is proposed to pp. 28 to highlight the important positive contribution that buses make to Reading's town centre. It is not necessarily the presence of buses that negatively impacts the public realm, but rather a combination of existing design factor and demands from different users. Further detailed work is required to understand how these various demands can be balance to accomplish wider aims, but this is not within the scope of the Strategy.</p> |
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Section 4.2 highlights Station Road, Market Place and St Mary's Butts as locations where the balance between movement and placemaking is skewed. However, this is the result of a strategic decision made to prioritise other parts of the town centre, including many of those outlined in section 4.3 as healthy streets. We do not agree that the footways on Station Road are narrow, that buses are part of the issue in Market Place, or that Bridge Street is an area where there is significant demand for enjoyment, and we have seen no evidence of the alleged road safety issues linked to buses in Duke Street.

Section 4.3 and 4.4 we do not agree that reducing carriageway widths would help to reduce the impact of buses on the town centre – concentrating more vehicles into a narrower space could increase the impact, and will make it even more difficult for buses to navigate these areas. More space needs to be provided for buses to help relieve the congested parts of the town centre, and accommodate the council's projected growth in population and public transport usage.

Section 4.5 the proposed bus stop improvements appear to be very generic solutions that work well on normal urban roads with standard traffic and standard bus stops, but don't reflect any of the roads in Reading town centre. It states, "where services are frequent this can lead to buses being stacked and unable to pass one another, which increases their impact on the public realm and can negatively affect the perception of buses". In reality, all of the bus stops in the town centre are used on a frequent basis, and having buses obstructing the highway wouldn't just affect perception of

This section simply seeks to identify pressures in particular areas that may need improvement as opportunities arise. Station Road's footpaths are some of the busiest in Reading. Previous strategies have increased demand for bus movements on Station Road as the station interchange is a key destination. Improvements to the public realm are needed, but this would not necessarily need to be at the expense of public transport. This is also the case at Market St, Bridge St and Duke St.

The Strategy states that carriageway widths will be reviewed to identify where these can be reduced. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Restricting the highway could also negatively impact cycle movements and this would be considered as well in order to seek a balance. We agree that reducing carriageway widths may in some cases have negative consequences.

We acknowledge that there remain issues with bus stacking throughout the town, either due to the volume of services (which is positive for users) or where timetables conflict, drivers change or rest. Many of these issues could be resolved which would go a long way to improving perception and access at many stops.

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| | <p>buses, it would make the area more dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. Reducing the amount of space for buses would increase the number of occasions buses are unable to pass each other, and cyclists the buses.</p> <p>Section 4.7 we would note that the current use of Broad Street is intended to provide a variety of uses for pedestrians in addition to being a thoroughfare, and that the gateways to the town centre could be considered to be where the existing pedestrianised areas start and finish, and the areas beyond considered supporting parts of the wider town centre. The railway station and bus network should be considered supporting parts of the town centre.</p> <p>Section 5.2 outlines the purpose of reclaiming road space to redress the balance between vehicles and pedestrians. As per section 4.5, this is a good generic approach for normal urban roads, but doesn't reflect any of the roads in Reading town centre. Whilst reduced width crossing points help pedestrians cross more quickly/easily, it is not necessarily safer in an environment with already very low vehicle speeds, if the result is pedestrians and vehicles in much closer proximity to each other.</p> <p>Section 5.12 public transport information should be included within the wayfinding displays.</p> <p>Section 6.2 describes some proposals for St Mary's Butts that make very little practical sense, and offers the complete opposite to the stated aims of the strategy by misunderstanding the area. There are some historical</p> | <p>The examples provided are indicative of options that would be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>The reallocation of road space will be considered on a case-by-case basis, carefully considering impacts on different types of vehicles and the wider transport and economic objectives of the Council. The diagram aims to illustrate best-practice for consideration in schemes and is not intended to be prescriptive. A balance must be struck in order to ensure safety for pedestrians and cyclists while ensure public transport users can access key destinations.</p> <p>Section 5.12 does not aim to provide detail as to what information should be included, although the Council would support this.</p> |
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| | <p>features in this area that could be made more accessible without impacting bus passengers.</p> <p>The area marked 10 is primarily used by bus passengers waiting for services to the west of Reading, with 11-15 buses an hour departing from the two stops. Whilst not a terminal point, large numbers of customers board in this location, meaning that the proposed single stop would not be adequate for either the number of vehicles or people boarding at peak times. The churchyard wall is used extensively by people waiting for buses, in addition to the two current shelters, adding to the character of the area. Moving those people to a narrow roadside with no seating would significantly worsen the waiting experience. Ideally the two would be combined somehow, so that the bus waiting area remains an integrated part of the design. Kerbs and a segregated carriageway must however be retained to maintain accessibility for wheelchair users onto the buses.</p> <p>The key challenge in the area is enabling easy passage for pedestrians through the queue of people waiting for buses, so we understand why a realignment has been proposed, albeit with inadequate provision for the queue. We are also not convinced that the proposed garden by the church wall would improve the quality of the area - there is very little leisure use of the existing churchyard because it is a graveyard, the nearest retail units would be on the other side of a narrower and more intensively used road, and it would be disconnected from the additional garden in Hosier Street. The direct path from Bridge Street to West Street is why pedestrians use this area in the first place, instead of walking through the churchyard, and the walkway through</p> | <p>Do not agree. The proposals are intended to be indicative of best practice, not prescriptive. Any proposed changes to the public realm would be assessed in order to determine possible impacts on buses.</p> <p>A change is proposed to include both bus stops on southbound route alongside the graveyard. We agree that two stops are necessary here due to high volume.</p> <p>Again, the maps provided are indicative. It includes a garden space alongside Hosier Street, as well. This will significantly increase the quality of the area. We do not agree that a garden alongside the graveyard would not be well-used of result in an indirect path to West Street.</p> |
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the garden would no longer be direct. Hosier Street would be a more logical location for a garden to create a use for the area that was previously occupied by additional market stalls – the remaining stalls only use St Mary’s Butts because of higher footfall.

Removing the “wall of cars” that is present on both sides of the monument island should be a priority, and we would suggest limiting this whole area to buses and loading only. It would be preferable to retain traffic lanes on both sides of the island rather than trying to segregate bus users from the town centre to reflect the desire lines of pedestrians. Removing the parking would create significant scope to enhance the pavements and central island, and create a much more open feeling when buses aren’t present loading. Having two stops means that there are currently times when no buses are present, moving to one stop would mean buses are more likely to be constantly present.

A secondary challenge is posed by the lack of capacity for buses arriving on the other side of St Mary’s Butts, at point 03 outside the Broad Street Mall. There is a much larger flow of buses from South to North due to the one-way system for most buses around the town centre. The lack of space here can often lead to queues of buses waiting to get through, making the road difficult to cross, and the “gateway” point an uninviting pinchpoint. Ideally this would be removed, the carriageway redesigned, and the gateway relocated to point 06 with the junction of Bridge Street as part of a redesigned central island.

Agree that removing wall of cars on each side is a priority. Do not agree that retention of traffic lanes on both sides of the island is absolutely necessary, but this is something that should be considered in detail.

The Council acknowledges issues with queues of buses at this location and this should be looked at in more detail. The proposals on pp. 89 are indicative, not prescriptive and the Strategy would not preclude reconfiguration of bus stops if a detailed analysis provided evidence for this.

We are not convinced that the proposed delivery bays on footpath pads are a good idea, the one in Station Road does not work in a satisfactory manner due to the bins and debris that are always present alongside, despite it being a prime part of the town centre that this strategy is specifically seeking to improve, and because vehicles can rarely park neatly on it.



Section 6.3 contains proposals for Market Place, which again don't make much practical sense. Page 93 point 08 proposes to "reduce the carriageway width to the minimum possible, for buses to safely move through the area at a slow pace." in a very busy

Agree – change proposed to remove delivery bays on footpaths.

Agree that a proposal for a layby may be impractical here as this may lead to buses queuing to access the layby and increase the perception of bus dominance in this area..

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| | <p>boarding point for buses to the South. Buses in this area already travel at a very slow speeds due to the confined nature of the road.</p> <p>Point 09 proposes a raised pedestrian crossing in a location that not on a desire line. We do not think that a raised crossing is necessary or desirable given the low volume and very low speed of traffic in this area, and the negative impact raised tables have on bus passenger comfort. It would be most sensibly located at the junction at road level. Previous work has shown that it is not necessary to have a signalised crossing due to the relatively low volume of traffic, and our drivers are trained to give way to pedestrians here.</p> <p>Point 03 proposes a wide comfortable footpath, which we believe is already in place, apart from the loading bays that are generally used for estate agent cars. Removing this parking would create a wide path that neatly flows into the pedestrianised area.</p> <p>At Point 04, we would propose that the spikey chain fence around the market place is removed to allow free access to pedestrians from any point, with updated paving to match the rest of the town centre, and so that the pedestrianised area doesn't feel like a road. Delineation from that area to the vehicle movement area should still be obvious.</p> | <p>Change proposed to remove reference to layby. "Reducing the carriageway to the minimum possible" remains an aspiration. This would be assessed in detail.</p> <p>A case for a crossing and whether or not it would need to be raised would be considered in detail at a later stage, but a change is proposed to remove reference to "raised tables" due to the impact on buses and associated maintenance of the raised crossing due to high volume of buses.</p> <p>The footpath here is not currently wide but would be if the loading bays were removed as indicated in the diagram.</p> <p>This is proposed under point 5 on pp 93.</p> |
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Wall of cars in Market Place



Uninviting entrance pad and chain fence around Market Place

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| | <p>Section 6.4 proposes the removal of all the slip roads to/from the IDR, which is not advisable. The slip road from Duke Street onto Queens Road is essential to maintain the bus priority measures that are provided for buses leaving the town centre, as it is the only permissible route for vehicles that aren't buses to use. There is no pedestrian demand for this movement due to the proximity of the riverside path and Star Lane which provides access to the same locations.</p> <p>This also proposes narrowing the slip road from Mill Lane into London Street, which is present to help manage the significant demand for traffic movements. This could cause traffic tailbacks to the Oracle Roundabout, which would not be desirable.</p> <p>This also proposes the removal of the slip road from Queens Road onto London Street, which is not desirable because it is the only alternative route following the introduction of a one way system along Sidmouth Street to create an active travel route. Whilst not heavily used movement, it would need to be reconsidered for residents of South Street.</p> <p>The proposed narrowing of Duke Street High Bridge (shown as London Street in the strategy document) would not be practical for the volume of bus movements in the area. Buses need to be able to pass each other in this location due to the limited time available for buses with phasing of the traffic lights across the IDR. Otherwise, additional "bus walls" of queueing buses would be created. The bus priority link across the IDR is important for the efficient provision of</p> | <p>The Strategy does not proposed to remove all o the slip roads to/from the IDR. Given the low number of routes using the slip road from Duke Street onto Queens Road, we anticipate the impact on buses to be minimal.</p> <p>The slip road from Mill Lane into London Street already narrows at the end to a single lane. It is unclear how this would create more significant tailbacks.</p> <p>Change proposed to ensure removal of this slip road retains vehicle movements from Queens Road onto London Street through the intersection itself.</p> <p>Do not agree. There is a high volume of pedestrians in this area and the additional weight of electric buses may result in changes to weight restrictions. This will be looked at in further detail.</p> |
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services to the South of the town, Hospital and University, and the Council is legally committed to retain all existing bus priority measures as part of the statutory Bus Enhanced Partnership.

There is a lot less traffic running east to west along Queens Road due to the rest of the one-way system, so it would appear that the IDR could be reduced to one lane in this direction without affecting traffic throughput too greatly, helping to reduce the dominance that motor traffic has in this area.

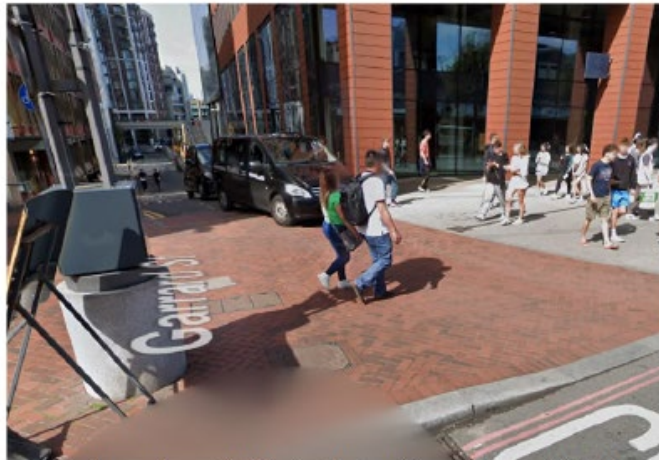
Section 6.5 suggests that Station Road is “currently cluttered, congested and dominated by buses”. It is strategically important for this area to be the focus of the bus network, providing an interchange with both the town centre and railway in the absence of any other option. The area is only busy because it is the only location that can efficiently be served by buses for both the town centre and station. Reducing the number of stops would intensify the usage of the remaining stops, and make the so called “bus walls” longer and more congested. There is a significant lack of space and facilities for buses in this area, with a lot of services already relegated to surrounding roads. It is also not fair to say that the road is dominated by buses – there is a wide footpath that has been shown to be the maximum possible width following trials undertaken with ourselves and the Council ahead of the current layout being adopted in 2011. Furthermore, the reopened Friars Walk should help separate pedestrian flows, and provide a fully pedestrianised experience.

Noted. Detailed consideration of spare network capacity is not within the scope of the Strategy but rather the Strategy seeks to provide examples of how best practice principles could be applied in areas of the town.

It is considered that the existing issues identified are accurate but the Strategy does not intend to remove buses from this important focus of the network. The proposals for a new junction, 4 m wide one way lane, enhanced pedestrian crossings, street trees and pockets spaces will not disrupt the operation of buses in the area. The proposals do not seek to widen the footpath, but rather to declutter it.

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| | <p>The waiting area for bus passengers generally works well, with space for pedestrians to pass waiting passengers, and only really suffers because of the begging by individuals who target the area because of the number of people passing through. It is nonsense to suggest that “bus walls create an intimidating place for people”. However, the road could be more pleasantly designed in an integrated way with the rest of the surroundings, perhaps with a continuous shelter covering the whole area for pedestrians and bus passengers alike. The east pavement is more lightly used, so there may be scope to narrow it slightly to create more space on the more popular west side.</p> <p>The report does not make any mention of the significant problem that has been caused by the relaxed approach that has been taken to providing space for taxi ranks, especially compared to the original vision for Station Road which was to provide a traffic-free walkway from the Station to Friar Street, and is why so many bus services now have to depart from Station Road and the surrounding area. The horse-shoe taxi rank was developed as a temporary measure during the remodelling of the Southern Interchange, but was subsequently retained due to pressure from taxi operators having gained extra business. This needs to be removed to allow the top of Garrard Street to be closed to allow the bus stands to be more spaced out, and to provide a clear pedestrian walkway. The horse-shoe taxi rank also undermines the bus service, especially with people unfamiliar with the area, and encourages un-necessary vehicle mileage within the town centre. The taxi operators state that there is a significant loss of trade during times when the rank has been closed, confirming that the rank is</p> | <p>Begging and rough sleeping is not within the scope of the Strategy. The Council acknowledges that bins associated with a nearby pub and fast food contribute to clutter, as well as the introduction of the loading bay at Sainsbury’s. A safe crossing outside the Malmaison may result in more pedestrians using the east side footpath, but it would likely not be appropriate to narrow the east side footpath as it is not very wide as is.</p> <p>Detailed consideration of taxi ranks and movements is not within the scope of the Strategy, but the Strategy seeks to reduce conflicts between vehicles and other users (pedestrians, cyclists) generally. This will be considered in detail at such time schemes come forward.</p> |
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not necessary, and that they are taking trade from more sustainable and economic modes. The taxi rank at the Southern Interchange should be sufficient to cover all needs of the entire town centre, and particularly Station Hill and Friar Street. We therefore also recommend the removal of the taxi rank on Friar Street East, by point 02, which creates an unpleasant “wall of taxis” for pedestrians to get past.



Taxis crossing pedestrianised area at top of Garrard Street



Friar Street taxi rank - regular over-ranking, and the one bus carries more people than all the taxis combined

7.1 Trooper Potts Way

The strategy doesn't make any specific comments about the Station North bus interchange, but this would benefit from radical simplification and the addition of more greenery to link in with the proposals for the IDR junction, given the relatively low level of usage.

7.2 Oxford Road

This is an extremely busy area that is difficult to get right because it is a key corridor to the west, carriageway space is very limited, and often heavily dominated by on-street parking. Parking needs to be minimised, and any spare highway space used to allow bus services to flow more freely.

Parking on the bridge over the IDR should be removed because there are no houses or shop fronts, and the remaining carriageway is not wide enough for buses to

Noted. The Strategy emphasises the importance of establishing wide green verges and medians. Any simplification would need to continue to provide facility for rail replacement and special events, such as Reading Festival.

Noted. The Strategy seeks to rationalise on-street parking.

Change proposed to allow for consideration of removal of one side of on-street pay and display parking on the Oxford Road just over the IDR.

safely pass, even when cyclists are present. The car parking re-enforces the impact of the IDR on the town centre, but some greenery could be added to significantly improve this.

Not mentioned - Station Square

We would also like to add that the station forecourt area is underutilised and currently consists of various rows of bollards and other street clutter, rather than anything that makes the area desirable. It is a very large area that currently feels like a chore to walk through due to being open, windswept and devoid of any character. The paving doesn't align with the rest of the town centre, or the vision to add greenery. A radical but potentially attractive solution would be to relocate the statue of King Edward VII that is currently isolated within the roundabout onto the square. Relocating the roundabout slightly could allow the bus shelters to be moved out, therefore creating a clearer line of sight from the station exit to Broad Street. Ideally the Station building and John Lewis building would be visible from the other.

The inclusion of new street trading pitches has resulted in better utilisation of this area. It is not considered that this recently re-developed area represents an area of the town centre most in need of improvement.



Street clutter and bland paving at Station Square

One final suggestion for this area would be to ensure that provision is made for a full bus interchange as part of any redevelopment of the Brunel Arcade, and in the meantime to take ownership of the RailAir layby to allow better use of the space for bus services to free up space elsewhere.

Not mentioned - Friar Street West

The strategy doesn't contain any specific points about Friar Street, but with the emergence of the Station Hill development and reopening on Friars Walk, greater attention should be given to this area. The road surface is extremely poor, which is a point that I have already expressed serious safety concerns to officers about because it affects pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users as well as bus passengers and bus operators. This needs urgent attention, and repairing in a way that helps create multiple links across to Broad Street, West Street and the rest of the town centre. Proper ongoing maintenance would

It is not considered likely that a bus station on this site would be deliverable without significantly affecting viability. Moreover, this is not within the scope of the Strategy. Any redevelopment of the site would be assessed in detail to ensure support for the high volume of buses in this area and its importance as an interchange.

The Council agrees that resurfacing is needed at Friar Street, but this is not within the scope of the Strategy.

significantly improve the appearance and perception of Friar Street.



Crossing outside Friars Walk unsuitable for wheelchairs due to road surface defects that have been present for an extended period of time.

The creation of a loading bay in the westbound bus lane along Friar Street a few years ago means that buses are frequently required to wait for an opportunity to get past the vehicles. This causes queues of vehicles that didn't exist before the loading bay was added. The loading bay is often only occupied purely by delivery bikes that could be accommodated elsewhere. Removing obstructions would help to smooth the bus flow, and reduce the occurrence of "bus walls".

Noted, but this level of detail and this area at Friar Street is not within the scope of the Strategy.



Loading bay in bus lane

Conclusion

We are struggling to see a significant opportunity to reduce the impact of buses on the town centre by reducing carriageway widths – in most cases this would have the opposite effect. The challenge can only be solved by providing more pavement space for buses, allowing their impact to be more spread out, removing all remaining on-street parking, and reviewing taxi and loading provision with the aim of removing any duplicated provision.

A change is proposed to ensure that the Strategy clearly acknowledges the important contribution that buses make to the town and that the impact on buses will be considered when specific proposals come forward. Nonetheless, reducing carriageway width is an important tool in improving the public realm and remains an aim of the Strategy. Detailed review of infrastructure for buses, street-parking and taxi is not within the scope of the Strategy.

REDA

REDA welcomes the Reading BC Town Centre Public Realm Strategy, believing it to be a positive and useful tool to be used in the future regeneration of the town centre bringing together all who live work, do business and redevelop our sites and building in a common design guide approach which we believe is pivotal to securing future public and private sector funds to implement it. This was the overall conclusion of a webinar that REDA hosted on Friday

Noted.

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| | <p>28th February comprising over 30 representatives of business and interested parties. The audience was provided with a presentation summarising the Strategy, by the consultants who had written it; notably Mehron Kirk and Marine Goudoffre of Studio DWG, our thanks to them for this. Below are the main points raised by the audience about the draft strategy for consideration before the strategy is adopted by the Council.</p> <p>Overall Response REDA welcomed the opportunity for our Town Centre BID team to be involved in the development for this strategy at the early stage and throughout its development and we hope to continue this partnership working with you as we move forward to identify funding streams, design specific solutions and implement them and improve reading Town Centre.</p> <p>The need to move quickly into implementation, as the town centre is long overdue a comprehensive make over and beyond welcome, but a piece meal and ad-hoc approach so far has been taken. We need to move swiftly so that we don't miss opportunities in the here and now of securing S106 money for the strategy on sites coming forward for example, this year.</p> <p>On February 28th REDA hosted a webinar to get some final responses to the draft strategy. The main points raised at our webinar and endorsed by REDA, for your consideration in the final document and or for use in the implementation of the Strategy are as follows:</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> |
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| | <p>1. Importance Of The Strategy: REDA operates the Business Improvement District on behalf of more than 650 businesses in the town centre. There is evidence that the state of the public realm directly affects the perception and behaviour of visitors, employees, businesses and residents in their use of the town centre. Having a poor public realm means people are less likely to want to visit, work, relocate businesses to, or invest in the town centre. The Police having undertaken research in Reading also point to the fact that a poor public realm perpetuates begging, rough sleeping, vandalism and crime as people that do not feel out of place. A design guide type tool of this nature is therefore vitally important in reducing crime and stimulating economic growth.</p> <p>2. Delivering The Strategy: The audience was understanding of the message given by the consultants in the presentation that this was not a fully planned and funded strategy, rather a toolkit to be used in all negotiations and proposals that would be undertaken in the town centre. But S106 was mentioned numerous times as the solution to funding the strategy. The audience therefore expressed the wish that RBC should embrace this fact and in the absence of the necessary public funds currently, RBC should prioritise proposals in the public realm strategy, in any future planning application discussions with a view to extracting as much financial contribution to the enhancement and upgrade of the public realm as possible. We agreed with the consultants that further reference to good practice and expertise in Northern Europe should go hand in hand with more detailed plans in Reading as they are seen to be bolder and more impactful especially in tackling the climate</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The Strategy is intended to be used as a tool to enable S106 receipts and prioritise public realm improvements.</p> |
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| | <p>emergency and reducing the carbon emissions effect of vehicles.</p> <p>3. Reading Climate Mitigation And Net Zero Targets: REDA welcomes more planting outlined in the strategy, shady tree-lined walks will be essential in maintaining cool spaces for people during heatwaves, especially if we want to discourage them to use air-conditioned cars. Where possible, semi-permeable surfaces should be used in place of impermeable ones to assist with drainage in the event of heavy rainstorms, which are already becoming more frequent due to climate change. The Strategy should cross reference advice in the 2025 Climate Emergency Strategy on this matter.</p> <p>4. Reading A Living Place: We welcome this as an underlying philosophy however there are issues that we don't feel have been sufficiently addressed in the Strategy. Firstly, child friendly recreation areas. There are examples where signs prohibit ball games and skating and little or no areas for play activity. With more and more families living in the town centre the strategy should outline how our urban area can be designed in a way to make such areas available and safe. Secondly our audience felt that despite design measures to mitigate the impact of cars and large vehicles the balance would still be in favour of them and not people. A balance that must be reversed if Reading is to be a 'living place'. REDA has seen a detailed response from Reading Buses and supports the case for public transport and reducing cars in the town centre. However landscaping measures are not enough, there are still some bold decisions that need to be taken alongside this Strategy to</p> | <p>Noted. These aims are also supported by policies within the Local Plan.</p> <p>Change proposed to refer to the Climate Change Emergency Strategy.</p> <p>It is considered that the strategy makes extensive reference to play spaces and playful elements within public spaces.</p> <p>Noted. The Strategy aims to improve the public realm within the town centre to encourage cycling, walking and public transport use. It is unclear what specific and further changes to the language in the Strategy would effectively reduce the number of cars or delivery lorries within the town centre. Reducing journeys by private car is an overarching aim within the town, reiterated by the Local Transport Strategy</p> |
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| | <p>reduce the visual impact, threat to safety and personal experience people have of a large number of cars, delivery lorries, waste collection lorries and buses in the town centre. Not forgetting that cycling as a sustainable and healthy form of transport is very welcome if the right segregation and signposting is put in place. Again, Northern Europe may have the answer.</p> <p>5. Wayfinding: We welcome the reference to wayfinding in the Strategy and need for consistency. This needs a masterplan approach across the whole town centre and should not be addressed by incremental signage schemes as at present. In particular we would like to see emphasis in the strategy of signage to our visitor destination points – cultural, heritage, arts and entertainment venues as well as hotels. Perhaps colour coding areas / quarters of the town centres could be included in the strategy. in a similar way to the successful colour coding of our Reading Buses.</p> <p>Reading borough Council recently adopted the Reading place brand and we would like to see this referenced in the design guide for use on any wayfinding, street art, entry signs street furniture etc. It is not just a logo and very adaptable with a full range of colours and adaptations to many situations as outlined in the detailed place brand toolkit. https://www.visit-reading.com/readingbrand The brand is more than just a logo and we would ask that the Public Real Strategy specifically recommends that any physical structures (lamps, signs, benches etc), are designed in a way that is authentically Reading with personality that reflects the town. (Station Hill Development and its public</p> | <p>and the Local Plan. The Strategy also includes extensive discussion of the importance of safe cycle routes, wayfinding and cycle parking throughout the town centre.</p> <p>Because the implementation of the Strategy relies on developer contributions, it is not possible to impose a specific design for signage. It is considered more effective to outline design guidance and evaluate each scheme on its own merits as it comes forward.</p> <p>Please see above – likewise, it is not possible to require use of the Reading place brand across the town centre.</p> |
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| | <p>realm have really raised the bar and set a new benchmark in this respect.</p> <p>6. Public Art: Reading has adopted a very comprehensive public art strategy, most recently delivered excellently in the Station Hill development. We would like to see more detailed guidance on this in the strategy so it can benefit from developer funding as well.</p> <p>7. Our Riverside Public Realm: Reading has three waterways. We would like to see more guidance on our rivers and canal side walkways and moorings as an integral and often overlooked part of the town centre, in which people arrive at and depart from, or at least try to as the moorings are limited and not always well maintained. They are a great part of our heritage and hold great potential for more sustainable water ways to travel along the Thames, through the Oracle and down to south Reading with some investment and public realm design guidance.</p> <p>8. Digital Screens: We would like to see guidance on the use of digital screens for advertising in the street scape. There was no support for digital screens and in fact REDA spearheaded a major campaign against the proposal for such a large screen in Broad Street which was finally rejected. However, guidance on where screens are out of character in the public realm may have prevented such an application being made in the first place.</p> <p>9. Counter Productive Influences: A number of negative influences on the public realm were highlighted by our audience, notable unsightly rows of bins (especially on</p> | <p>Section 5:13 provides guidance on public art. Although it is not within the scope of the Strategy, it identifies the need for further work to provide detailed public art guidance.</p> <p>Mooring is not considered to be within the scope of the Strategy, but the Strategy makes frequent reference to the importance of improving and connecting waterside areas, as well as create new access to waterside areas that are not accessible.</p> <p>8. It is not considered necessary to provide specific guidance on digital screens for advertising as these proposals will be considered under general considerations for street furniture within the Strategy and the advertisement policies of the Local Plan which include visual impact and illumination guidance.</p> <p>9. These elements are identified as issues within Section 3.1. It is very difficult for the Strategy to enforce proper bin storage, but bins will be assessed as proposals come forward</p> |
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| | <p>Station Road and Oxford Road), the poor reinstatement of works on utilities infrastructure, cycle safety and infrastructure. (eg confusing signs on Broad Street and ugly new black bicycle racks on Broad Street). While bin collection is the subject of legislation their storage on the pedestrian areas and pathways is unsightly. Perhaps the guidance could advocate underground storage options. Could cycle racks and parking areas be given consistent design guidance in the strategy. It is also important that public realm design of landscaping and signage is included to ensure greater safety for pedestrians and families with children from cyclists.</p> <p>10. Influences Outside The Remit Of The Strategy: We congratulate the consultants in referencing a wide range of other strategies that seek to shape the town centre including REDA's own BID Plans (2024-29) and Reading 2050 City Vision. It is important that the Strategy explicitly references the need for those using it to refer to these wider plans as they can sometimes hold the key to both solving some of the solutions that can enhance the public realm and tackling issues that can be counter productive.</p> <p>The reason for not doing a detailed guide for Union Street (Smelly Alley) as was provided for Chain Street was given that a master plan approach was needed outside the remit of the public realm strategy. This was because there were so many issues in Smelly Alley that a simple make over was not the long-term solution. REDA fully supports the audience response that RBC should urgently bring forward the master plan for Smelly Alley.</p> | <p>when looking at street clutter. The Local Plan also requires consideration of proper bin storage when individual planning applications come forward. It is not considered feasible to require underground bin storage. The Strategy includes specific guidance for cycle racks, but parking requirements are outlined in a separate Supplementary Planning Document. The document includes design strategies to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>10. Change proposed to refer to the BID Plans and Reading 2050 Vision.</p> <p>The area examples provided in the document are intended to be indicative, illustrating the possible public realm interventions that could be employed in different types of environments within the town centre. Therefore, it does not preclude improvements to Union Street (Smelly Alley) and in fact, many of the principles applied to the Chain Street example could be applied to Union Street. Significant improvements to Union Street remain a priority for the Council.</p> |
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| | <p>Going Forward The Audience having accepted the strategy did not have detailed costed and funded actions plans currently but did emphasise the need for the Council to priorities Section 106 funding towards an implementation plan as soon as possible. This means engaging developers immediately.</p> <p>However, one final point that was well made was that a complimentary approach could be one of mitigation, to avoid the need to keep on searching for funding. The idea that we should seek to engage all residents, landlords, businesses owners and their employees in taking pride in their public realm was well made and we would recommend it to the Council. This especially means public realm directly surrounding the properties of those living or using the town centre for business, but also being involved in collective activities such as tree planting and litter picking etc. REDA would be willing to work with the Council to further develop this idea with a pilot project. REDA would also like to be involved in shaping further detailed plans and celebrating success. To these ends we would be willing to convene similar focus group meeting to help shape and prioritise detailed proposals and also feedback regularly on progress made in implementing the strategy to businesses and interested parties.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted and welcomed, although this is outside of the scope of the Strategy itself.</p> |
| Rey, Thomas | <p>This is an amazing initiative and needs to be adopted ASAP. My only concern is how bus lanes could be impacted by some of the proposals on Oxford Road, where a reduction in road space would seemingly remove the newly created bus lane. Public transport infrastructure needs to be expanded alongside this type of scheme.</p> | <p>Change proposed to amend the drawings to clarify that there is no intention to remove the new bus lane between Zinzan St and Prospect Street. At the time of the initial audit to inform the Strategy, the bus lane was not in place and so it was unintentionally omitted from the illustrations.</p> |

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| <p>Robinson, Peter</p> | <p>Promising strategy. I hope many of these proposals can come to life.</p> <p>I oppose the proposed cycle lane down the middle of Broad Street.</p> <p>We should deck over the IDR.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>The Strategy does not endorse this option, but simply provides a recommended example that could help to protect and separate pedestrians and cyclists. A detailed proposal will be considered in detail at such time it comes forward.</p> <p>Noted. The cost of decking over the IDR is likely prohibitive, but any proposals would be considered at such time they come forward.</p> |
| <p>Silva, Jade</p> | <p>This looks great! Very good design and the pages are well constructed. But we do need another bridge to redirect traffic that doesn't need to be in Reading.</p> | <p>Noted. This is not within the scope of the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy, but remains an aim of the Local Plan and the Local Transport Strategy.</p> |
| <p>Smith, Colin</p> | <p>I wholeheartedly support your plans to encourage cycling, especially as the bus service to Caversham ends at 7.30pm</p> <p>There is a key issue that needs addressing - bike theft. I know many people who are put off cycling in the strong belief that their bike will be stolen in town. Similarly, I know others who did cycle but soon stopped when their bike WAS stolen.</p> <p>It is a real obstacle to this objective.</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. This is chiefly a police matter, but the Strategy includes elements of design that will help to discourage bike theft, such as a preference for secure cycle parking in the town centre, cycle parking that is highly visible and design guidance for Sheffield stands.</p> |
| <p>Sport England</p> | <p>Although, this draft document does not relate specifically to the provision of any sport related spaces, Sport England does wish to see places to be designed so that they encourage people to be more active. Sport England's Active Design (May 2023) [https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-</p> | <p>Noted.</p> |

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| | <p>and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design] document sets out how places can enable this. The draft strategy's aspirations for the town centre appear to align closely to this Active Design document and Sport England supports the broad principles that the strategy is trying to achieve.</p> | |
| Stevens, Cllr David | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A good document and very welcome. 2. I think that we should make clear that the document is 'aspirational.'" On page 8, the second paragraph states 'the recommendations within this document are to be implemented through both public and private development projects.' That gives the strong impression that there is no flexibility once the strategy is adopted. Funds and planning of schemes has not been finalised. When each scheme comes forward we will be keen to inspect and comment and consider the context. 3. I think we need to be very careful about increasing town centre cycling. Slow moving pedal powered bikes are one thing. We are now seeing increasingly powerful e-bikes – essentially powerful motorbikes often ridden by delivery riders who have little respect for one way streets pavements and unwary pedestrians. I do not want to encourage their use in the pedestrianised areas of the town. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noted. 2. Change proposed to include this language on page 8. 3. Noted. We recognise the issues caused by increasingly powerful e-bikes, many of which are not legal. This is largely a police matter, but the Strategy aims to design public spaces in order to reduce conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Allowing cycling in pedestrianised areas of the town provides important traffic-free routes and can encourage sustainable journeys, but unfortunately interventions in the built environment are unable to differentiate slow moving cyclists and speeding and often illegal e-bikes. |
| Webb, Richard | <p>Excellent to be seeing this report and some great work and guidance.</p> <p>Just one comment. The red brick paving is very much part of Reading's streetscape and seems to have been dropped</p> | <p>Noted.</p> <p>It is considered that because many of the heritage buildings in Reading are red brick, a</p> |

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| | <p>in preference to other materials. Just look at Reading from google earth (page 4 in report) and you can see the warm red everywhere.</p> <p>Reasons for brick:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brick is very relevant to Reading as a material, it could be considered the fourth b - beer biscuits bulbs and bricks! 2. It is typically more sustainable than concrete or granite + can be permeable. 3. Used appropriately it is very attractive. <p>Also, there's a lot of it already on the ground so to replace it would be unsustainable and costly and could make Reading public realm even more patchy. Perhaps worth reconsidering and working with it.</p> | <p>neutral paving palette could serve to accentuate the historic environment within the town centre. This is explained in detail in Section 5.3. That being said, each proposal will be considered individually and the paving guidance specifically cites that paving should be appropriate to the heritage of the area and durable. It also states that concrete slabs should be avoided.</p> |
| Wilkins, John | <p>Very interesting, lots of nice ideas but has major weaknesses such as no consideration of costs of implementation and ongoing maintenance.</p> <p>Want to keep cars out of centre of Reading, concerns about number of buses in some roads but no clear solution. (What about a bus station?)</p> <p>It would be good to have uniform pavement materials but in many parts of Reading as safe undamaged surface of any colour would be an improvement.</p> <p>Lots of emphasis on cycling but many no attempt on how to deal with over enthusiastic cyclists who plague parts of Reading.</p> | <p>Noted. The Strategy states that projects will be implemented at such time Council funding or developer contributions become available. This will include maintenance arrangements as detailed in 5.17.</p> <p>The decision to remove the town centre bus station was taken nearly 20 years ago and since then, the bus company has been able to manage effectively within the town centre. At this point, there is no land available to reinstate a bus station and it is not considered necessary.</p> <p>Noted. The Strategy cites the existing poor condition of paving throughout the town centre</p> |

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| | <p>I like trees and other green planting but to be successful MUST be properly maintained. This has not always been the case in the past.</p> <p>Are trees in planters really a practical proposition, a dead tree is far worse than no tree.</p> <p>The IDR is seen as a problem but the report lacks a substantive solution.</p> <p>Lots of consultant jargon. In places plain English would have helped.</p> | <p>and identifies this as a major focus for improvements.</p> <p>It is not possible for built environment interventions to address dangerous cycling, which is largely a police matter. Rather, the Strategy aims to implement design measures that will reduce speeds and lessen opportunities for conflict with pedestrians.</p> <p>Noted. Detailed maintenance plans are a key focus of the Strategy, particularly for green infrastructure.</p> <p>Because the decking of the IDR or the elimination of the IDR is not considered to be feasible, the Strategy focuses improvements on major intersections along the IDR to reduce negative effects (such as noise and pollution) and to improve the experience of users not travelling by car (walking, cycling and wheeling).</p> <p>Noted, but it is difficult to propose changes here as it is unclear which specific areas are considered by the representor to be “jargon.”</p> |
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