



CycleReading

WORKING FOR A CYCLE FRIENDLY READING

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

June 2020 No 147

Reading's Pop-Up Bike Schemes



**Reading Borough Council
(RBC)**

Summer Report 2020

In May, in response to the Covid-19 crisis, the Secretary of State for Transport stated that the government expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians, adding that such changes will help embed altered behaviours and demonstrate the positive effects of active travel.

Examples of the changes given by the Department of Transport included:

- 'pop up' cycle lanes
- using cones and barriers to widen footways
- reducing speed limits
- introducing pedestrian and cycle only zones for specific streets
- closing roads to through motor traffic in residential areas

These changes would be temporary (so don't need to go through full consultation), but with the advice that local authorities should seek input from stakeholders during the design phase and monitor and evaluate any temporary measures they install, with a view to making them permanent, and embedding a long-term shift to active travel.

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Campaign News

Around the country many local authorities have been implementing pop-up cycle and pedestrian schemes and RBC has drawn up a list of 7 short term projects to reallocate road space to pedestrians and cyclists. Some of these are already implemented at the time of writing.

Reallocation of road space is something we have been requesting for a long time, so these are welcome initiatives. However, with the short term rush to get the schemes implemented we were not given a chance to comment on the proposals and one scheme in particular has the potential to make things worse for cyclists.

We have outlined the 7 schemes below:

1. Gosbrook Road

A one-way system is proposed for Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road. Initially it seemed that this did not include contra-flow cycle lanes, which would have resulted in long detours on these key routes for cyclists, either putting them on the main Prospect Street, or more likely encourage footway cycling along the original routes. After RCC lobbied the Council a contra-flow cycle lane has now been confirmed on Gosbrook Road, but not on Westfield Road.

The scheme is supposedly to assist pedestrians socially distance due to



Gosbrook Road at present, a useful cycling route

the narrow footways on Gosbrook, and hopefully not an attempt to introduce a traffic gyratory scheme in Caversham. Certainly there have been assurances that this scheme is not intended to be more than a temporary Covid measure - see separate interview with Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward.

One-way traffic results in increased traffic speed, with resultant disbenefits to cyclists and pedestrians, unless very effective traffic calming and speed reducing measures are implemented. A 20mph (or less) speed limit in these roads, or all of Caversham centre, would be another better alternative.

2. Reading Bridge

The provision of cycle lanes in both directions (on carriageway) by removal of the centre southbound overtaking



Reading Bridge

lane is welcomed. RCC have been asking for this for more than a decade. The central lane over the brow of the bridge has always been a safety hazard which encouraged speeding motorists, but did nothing to improve traffic capacity at the dangerous Vastern Road roundabout.

The cycle lanes have now been marked (mid June) along George Street from Gosbrook Road to Vastern Road. This is a really good scheme despite the advisory cycle lanes being only 1.2m wide, adjacent to 3.0m vehicle lanes. Reduced speeding over the bridge should also help pedestrians and cycling conditions on the roundabout too.

3. Oxford Road

The addition of some lengths of cycle lanes are welcome, although more and better cycling improvements are needed.

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Campaign News

These measures were discussed with the campaign at the Cycle Forum 2-3 years ago.

4. Whitley Street

Conversion of the nearside southbound lane to cyclists only is welcomed but this is often blocked by double parking!

5. Southampton Street/Silver Street

The incorporation of cycle lanes (on carriageway) by removal of the hatched markings is welcome. RCC have been requesting this for at least a decade!

6. Redlands Road

A southbound (uphill) cycle lane (on carriageway) is proposed with cycle priority (Advance Stop Line?) at Christchurch Road; these are welcome.

7. Sidmouth Street

Make the road one way (northbound) for all traffic and introduce a contra-flow cycle lane in the current south-bound lane.

RBC first proposed the above at a Policy Committee meeting on 18 May. Previously we had sent a list of suggested schemes to the Council, but none of these were included. Generally we support most of the cycle lanes that are proposed as some have been on the Campaign's wish list for many years.

Town Centre

No action seems to have taken place on correcting the important cycle signing in the town centre. This would be particularly useful to new cyclists who are unclear about what routes they may use.

NCN422

The NCN422 cross-town route must be close to completion now. Time for someone to go and check all is in place, or make a list of defects and improvements requested!

John Lee

RBC Campaigner for RCC



Wokingham Borough Council (WoBC)

Summer Report 2020

Having just landed in the position of RCC representative for Wokingham Borough, I am still finding my way and hence this report will be shorter than people may have come to expect.

The main news is that Phase 4 of the National Cycle Network (NCN) 422 linking Newbury and Windsor and running through Wokingham Borough along the A329 is due to start this week. This will link the East of the town centre to the Coppid Beech roundabout at the boundary with Bracknell Forest. The cycle network will

provide a mix of on road cycle lanes and shared use off road infrastructure.

The work will be completed in eleven stages, with stage 1 starting at Rances Lane working in the direction of the Coppid Beech on 25 May. Once Rances Lane to the Coppid Beech is complete the section from Rances Lane back towards the town centre and past St Crispin's School will then be implemented, completing Wokingham Borough's section of this project.

I hope the hard work of all those involved in the aforementioned project and its completion will help nurture the incredible surge in cycling that I have been seeing across the Borough since Lockdown started at the end of March. Noticeably quieter roads (and the sunny weather!) have meant a much more pleasant cycling environment in the town and across the Borough and it is great to see so many people (especially whole families with young children) out and about on their bikes. I even took the opportunity of unusually quiet residential streets to teach my daughter to ride a bike, which was a lovely, albeit nerve wracking experience.

It's to the credit of all those involved at WoBC that the Wokingham section of NCN422 will be completed before the end of the year; however there is still a lot more that could be done in the town.

To date I have had some very positive conversations with several forward thinking Councillors who realise the economic, health and environmental benefits of encouraging active transport and I hope to have some positive updates in future newsletters.

If you hear of any road schemes or planning applications within Wokingham, do please get in touch. RCC had a positive influence on the designs of NCN422 and the North Wokingham Distributor Road and we can only have influence if we hear about new plans during the consultation stages.

Alex Cran

WoBC Campaigner for RCC

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Campaign News

The Chair and the AGM

In normal times we hold our Annual General Meeting in June and elect (or nominate) the committee for the next 12 months. Of course these are not normal times and we have therefore postponed our AGM to the autumn, when we hope that we can get together in person.

This year we will be looking for a new Chair as Adrian Lawson, our current Chair, is standing down. Adrian put himself forward for the position of Chair of the Reading Cycle Campaign back in 2008 to fill a position that was perennially vacant.

Adrian has chaired our committee meetings for 12 years and has seen the transition from these being hosted in committee members' houses to our more permanent home in RISC. Adrian discharged his chairing duties



Adrian Lawson

with a remarkable knowledge of what was going on, both in the world of cycling and also on wider environmental issues. As Chair Adrian would regularly interject numerous topical anecdotes to our meetings and then, after two hours, realise that the meeting needed to be wound up quickly so that he could get back home to attend to his dogs.

Whilst the basic role of the Chair of a voluntary organisation is simply to run the meetings, there is a more nebulous side to the position, which is to act as a figurehead for the cause. Over the years Adrian used his extensive network of contacts, his passion and his eloquence to fulfil this, albeit with perhaps a few ruffled Council feathers in his wake.

Anyone who knows Adrian - and it's remarkable just how many people do - will know that he is involved across a range of causes and activities, from volunteering for the Reading Refugee Support Centre to providing cycle awareness training for HGV drivers, to watching birds around the Kennet meadows at times when most normal people are fast asleep. But it is Adrian's ardent commitment to tackle climate change that has led him to relinquish his role on the RCC

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Jedn Cronin, Kent



Campaign News

committee, instead concentrating his energy into action to reduce biodiversity loss and greenhouse gas emissions.

The committee would like to record its thanks to Adrian for 12 years as Chair - he has been a font of ideas for promoting cycling and creating a more cycle-friendly Reading and we will miss his input.

So, we are looking for a new Chair at a time when it seems that national and local government is actually waking to the idea that cycling could help solve some of our modern day problems. If you're interested then do get in touch - bird watching is not a requirement.

Meetings in the Time of Covid-19

The RCC committee meets every other month, and like many organisations we have switched these from physical meetings to virtual meetings using Zoom whilst we are required to observe social distancing.

Our bi-monthly committee meetings alternate with Open Meetings where all members are invited, and in June we held our first Open Meeting by Zoom. If you want to be invited to any of the Zoom meetings email secretary@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk.

Make or Break for Transport in Reading

Reading Council is consulting on its Transport Strategy to 2036. That takes us six years beyond 2030, the date when Reading aims to be 'carbon neutral'.

The Transport Strategy is not just another document - it will influence how the Council treats transport in our town for the next 15 years.

In the past we have had lots of admirable words about 'sustainable transport' and 'active travel', and yet we are all painfully aware of how little has really changed since RBC formulated its first Local Transport Plan in 2001. Now it's

make or break time: the climate crisis is looming so large that even our politicians have noticed.

To be fair this draft strategy is different from its predecessors. It states that maintaining the *status quo* is not an option and mentions previously taboo subjects, such as road user charging and reallocation of road space.

Yet for sustainable transport the target is to increase the number of people regularly cycling from 5% now to just 10% in 2036. Viewing this figure it seems that the Council is expecting that all the unsustainable car journeys are going to be replaced by bus journeys.

However, in the last few weeks we have seen a huge surge in cycling in response to quiet roads and the desire for exercise and activity.

So take a look at the consultation and make your view known, it's open until 30 August. Let the Council know if you support road reallocation, give your opinions on where cycling sits in the mix.

There is a lot to digest within the draft strategy, so here are some pointers:

- Chapter 5 sets out policies. Policy RTS 14 covers cycling.
- Chapter 6 sets out schemes. Active travel is covered on Pages 123-128.
- The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) produced in 2019 forms a sub-strategy to the main document.
- LCWIP Appendices G & J outline the specific plans for improving the road network to encourage cycling.

Our thoughts on the LCWIP are outlined on page 6.

The consultation can be found on: <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/>

Keith Elliott
RCC Secretary

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The cost of the Cycling UK affiliated membership is £25 for a full year. More details from Membership Secretary on 0118 986 0230.

Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Draft Reading Transport Strategy 2036 is out for consultation, see <https://consult.reading.gov.uk>

The consultation on the Reading Transport Strategy includes the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and the details of what is proposed in terms of cycling routes are provided within the appendices. Appendix C gives an overall cycling network plan and Appendix G gives a prioritised list of measures.

The area covered includes part of West Berks and Wokingham District too. There are a number of welcome suggestions, both routes on the plans and the measures proposed. What is included and missing from these proposals is important and likely to affect funding of future cycle routes.

The following are RCC's early thoughts:

The map of proposed routes appears to be a useful start, but there are a number of areas that need revising. Also, there are gaps in the proposed infrastructure provision. Both points are partially covered below.

Town Centre

The town centre area is still missing key strategic through routes, which RCC requested, and it is unclear what form any of the marked routes could take. The orbital route via the IDR to the west is interesting or awful depending on what is proposed! I'd suggest that a north-south route via the Butts and West Street may be preferable, as well as a north-south route via the Market Place. A route from the Market Place through Abbey Gateway to Kings Road should be added, and also the existing Queen's Walk to Hosier Street link.

Caversham

Looking at the Caversham area I see the Strategic Routes as possibly acceptable, although I'd prefer to add Henley Road to Caversham Centre. If this came via Lower Henley Road and South View Avenue, it could link via St John's Road and Mill Road to the Thames path. The key Gosbrook Road link needs to be added from Prospect Street to Westfield Road. The alternative footpath to South Street is less than 1.5m wide! The current advisory cycle route via St Peter's Avenue has been deleted; we request that this be reinstated as it is quiet and has more reasonable gradients than other routes. Balmore Walk NCN route should be re-classified from local to leisure.

With all the routes they will depend on the quality of the infrastructure that is 'possible' to achieve, both physically and politically!

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Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Tilehurst and West Reading

Routes in West Berkshire (Theale, Calcot, Purley and Pangbourne) are included, but these seem few in number and unlikely to satisfy many cyclists.

Is Kentwood Road suitable as an orbital route? Maybe Oak Tree Road is preferable as it is not excessively steep.

South Reading

The Elgar Road route is only included as a local route, with the proposed strategic route being via Whitley Street. Isn't Elgar Road a preferable route to south Reading? Christchurch Road is well used by cyclists and should be included as a local route.

General Cycle Comments

Regarding the infrastructure proposed there appears to be nothing on lower speed limits, which are crucial. 20mph limits should be widespread, not just on cycle routes, but also some 10 or 15mph limit areas could be proposed near schools or shopping areas?

Nor is there anything regarding road closures (except cycling) to try to restrict through motor traffic but encourage cycling and walking.

Raised tables and reduced radii corners at side-roads should be part of the design philosophy to slow traffic at corners and to assist pedestrians to cross.

I suggest that electric bikes are included as part of the strategy, as a key way to entice drivers out of their cars and passengers from buses! Electric scooters and similar 'tech' products could also be popular forms of transport in future and the network developed to accommodate them.

Other Comments

Workplace parking charges should be considered, with charges going into cycling and walking schemes. A low charge with funding prioritised to supporting sustainable transport at the workplace.

The Third Thames bridge, if built, should have a toll to reduce/control use, and discourage non-local use by variable tolls. Toll revenue should support sustainable transport if not required for the capital cost of the bridge. Without traffic restraint, possible by tolling, the bridge would not receive approval by South Oxfordshire.

Park and ride should not be a priority as it can encourage more car use to the parking sites. Better to support longer strategic bus routes, such as the good X services, and include cycle (and car) parking at out of town villages and other suitable locations such as Woodcote and Cane End.

Your Suggestions

Please let the Campaign (as well as the Council) know your views so that we can amend our final response.

John Lee
RBC Campaigner for RCC

Why Electric Bikes Are The Answer

The way we move around in a Covid-19 world is going to change. For a time, public transport may not be as viable for large numbers of people. If this results in extra car usage we will get a lot more congestion on the roads (and pollution in the air).

I would guess that most of you reading this already know that the answer for you is cycling. Alongside all the benefits for yourself and the environment you're also doing a public service by freeing up road and bus space for others. Thank you.

I would also guess that you have family or friends who don't think cycling is for them. Reasons may vary - hills, distance, fitness, not wanting to arrive at work sweaty could all come into it. I'm here to try to help you persuade them that an electric bike could be the answer for them. I got mine last year and it's been life changing.

I am not at all a fit person. For context, I can get out of breath running alongside my toddler for more than about a minute. However, the (adjustable with four levels) assist on my bike means that even with a child or two on the back I can get up the steepest hill in Caversham with ease. When my husband borrows my (cargo) bike to do the weekly shop he just turns the assist off.

There is a myth that putting a battery on a bike is 'cheating', but I prefer to think that I'm doing far more exercise than I would be otherwise. I initially set myself a goal of trying to do the nursery pickup (Caversham to Green Park) by bike at least a couple of times a week. I loved it so much that I didn't use the bus once from when I got the bike to the point when I couldn't pedal anymore because my pregnant bump got in the way. It was quicker door to door too!

Electric bikes have a reputation for being very expensive, but that's not as true as it used to be. I know people who love the bike they have in the £500-£750 range (which is less than an annual bus fare). Electric bikes are included in the cycle to work scheme if this is something you have access to.

More than all the practical stuff, my husband has always gone on (and on, and on) about how much he enjoys being out on his bike - and suddenly I feel it too. We can enjoy rides together as a family - a real blessing during lockdown!

Goodbye waiting for buses and sitting in traffic. My electric bike can get me where I need to go, and it's fun for me and good for the environment. I truly believe this is the future of transport in cities.

Hilary Smart

Interview with Adele Barnett-Ward

We are delighted to have the opportunity to interview Cllr Adele Barnett-Ward, Caversham Ward, Lead Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities.

RCC: What are your dreams and visions for cycling in Reading?

Adele: I want cycling to be normal. I'm a member of the Labour Cycles campaign group, and our strapline is 'For the many, not the brave'. I want Reading to be a town where the sustainable transport choice is the obvious, most convenient and most enjoyable way to travel around. In many cases that will be cycling - cycling on dedicated infrastructure in busier areas and on filtered streets in residential areas - but it also means making walking safe, convenient and pleasant, and providing dedicated space for public transport to ensure reliable journey times.

RCC: What single thing would make the biggest impact to transport in Reading?

Adele: Money. We're at the point now where the political will is there. We

have a target of being carbon neutral by 2030 and we know we have to significantly reduce car use to reach that. That means increasing the use of public transport, walking and cycling, as well as encouraging smart solutions like more home-working. Our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and our new Draft Local Transport Plan, are clear statements of intent, but without serious levels of funding - either specific active travel funding (above what has recently been re-announced by the government) or the return of some form of the Local Government Grant, then we're very limited in what we can do. I talk about Waltham Forest a lot but they were given £27m to fund their changes. For perspective, that is over a hundred times more than RBC's allocation of the government's emergency active travel funding.

RCC: How do you think Reading Borough Council should harness the street knowledge the town cyclists have in plans to reallocate road space for walking and cycling?

Adele: I think the Cycle Forum session we had on the LCWIP was useful and I would like to see more of that sort of engagement. Something that I have been trying to achieve with the Cleaner Air and Safer Transport (CAST) forum is to break down the 'Them & Us' dynamic and work more openly and collaboratively. I have been to quite a few active travel events with Brian Deegan and I like his methods for grassroots engagement. Recently someone sent me the details of an online tool for crowdsourcing ideas and that looks interesting, too. There is some understandable wariness about raising people's expectations by holding too many of these exercises in advance of having funding, though. The ongoing issue of the schemes on the RCC 'town centre list' shows how if you collect up lots of great ideas and can't quickly fund them people can become frustrated.

RCC: What are your views on transport change due to the COVID-19 crisis?

Adele: This has been such a bleak time. My workload has been higher because of the pandemic, so I have not been



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Adele Barnett-Ward



Cllr Adele Barnett-Ward, Caversham Ward

one of those people who has found themselves with extra free time, but I do see other people out walking and cycling more and that is heartening. People who had told me they would never feel safe cycling in their town or city are getting on their bikes. It is vital that we build back better from this, and keeping people walking and cycling is key.

I know that there's some concern about some of Reading's proposed temporary active travel measures - I do find it ironic that I have spent two years being told RBC move too slowly on schemes and I am now seeing criticism resulting from us moving fast and announcing our intentions before we have the plans drawn up - but they are indicative of a new approach: we're going to live-test these schemes, and alter (or even remove) them if they don't work.

There's also a mix of long-term plans being accelerated - such as the cycle lanes on Reading Bridge, and reallocating the left hand lane of London Road - and temporary schemes that react to the need for social distancing and that we do not expect to retain post-Covid (like Gosbrook and Westfield Roads).

RCC: What do you hope to achieve in the Cleaner Air and Safer Transport Forum in relation to the Cycling Strategy?

Adele: The CAST forum is about building consensus across different stakeholder groups and different methods for reducing air pollution and having a town that is designed around people, not cars. I see cycling as part of that bigger picture, not an end in itself.

I started cycling (after a break of over two decades) because it was a cheap, non-polluting, convenient way to get around town, and if we're going to achieve the modal transport shift we need then we need more people like me getting on bikes: not sporty or intrepid (I describe myself as a 'sedate and risk-averse' cyclist), not cycling as an end in itself, but as the most practical and pleasant way of getting from A to B.

I want to see the RCC and other cycling groups engaging with CAST and being part of that wider discussion, not just in the cyclists-only space of the Cycle Forum.

YES, I WANT TO JOIN RCC!

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Our Mission



- To campaign for better facilities for cyclists in Reading, in particular a network of safe cycleways linking residential, industrial and commercial areas, and giving access to the town centre.
- To work with Sustrans, Cycling UK (both locally and nationally) and others interested in promoting cycling and the well-being of cyclists.
- To identify the needs of cyclists in Reading, for example the location of safe and secure parking, and to campaign for their provision.
- To work with and advise local authorities and, where necessary, criticise and highlight their shortcomings.

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7.30pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month:

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