

Reading Cycle Campaign



Working for a cycle
friendly Reading

Reading's Draft Transport Strategy 2036

Response to Consultation

August 2020

1. Introduction

Reading Borough Council's draft Local Transport Strategy to 2036 has been reviewed by representatives of the Reading Cycle Campaign in response to the consultation on this document as well as the associated Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

We support the direction for demand management and concerted action to develop sustainable alternatives to private motor vehicles. If by 2036 we still have a transport system that is predicated on fossil fuels then we will have failed.

Reading undoubtedly needs radical intervention in our urban transport system. In the Foreword to the document Councillor Tony Page states that: "*the status quo is not an option*". We wholeheartedly agree with this statement. If we can not take these measures now, then when?

Our comments are presented hereunder for consideration by the Council.

2. Comments on Specific Policies

RTS 1 Sustainable Transport

We support the policies to provide more sustainable transport.

RTS 2 Environment and Climate Change

We support the policies to improve the natural environment and reduce carbon emissions.

RTS 4 Development Control

We support the policies to link development to sustainable transport. To reinforce this we propose that all new developments should be required to provide cycle parking with e-bike charging points.

RTS 5 Travel to School

We support policies to encourage sustainable travel to schools.

RTS 7-9 Public Transport

We have the following comments with regard to policies for public transport.

- a) We recognise the importance of public transport, but are aware that the consideration of cycling within public transport infrastructure schemes is often not given adequate consideration.
- b) A cycle audit should be included for all public transport schemes. Until Covid-19 is eradicated in the UK then public transport is unlikely to be popular.
- c) Park and ride should not be a priority as it can encourage more car use to the parking sites, and risk existing bus services by taking passengers. It may be better to support longer strategic bus routes, such as the good X38 X39 and X40 services north of the Thames, and include cycle (and car) parking at out of town villages and other suitable locations such as Woodcote and Cane End. Improved footways and cycle routes to the X-route interim stops should be encouraged. Park and ride is probably more appropriate by M4 junctions.

- d) To facilitate sustainable door to door travel buses, and particularly trains, should facilitate multi-modal journeys. To this end Reading Borough Council should work with train operators to remove barriers to taking cycles on trains.

RTS 10 Taxis and Private Hire

Whilst we generally support these policies we also request that a proportion of the fleet should be able to carry mobility chairs and cycles.

RTS 11 Waterways

We support this policy, however we also request that improved crossings of waterways for pedestrians and cyclists be provided at locks and other locations that will assist walking and cycling.

RTS 12 Connected and Autonomous vehicles

We note the policies on connected and autonomous vehicles. We request that any detrimental impact on walking and cycling is considered before such schemes are implemented. We also request that appropriate safety features (such as passing clearances for cyclists) are built into any vehicles.

RTS 13 Healthy Streets

We support the policies to provide healthy streets, including air quality and relocating motor vehicle space to cyclists and pedestrians.

However, no mention is made of creating 'mini-Hollands' where certain roads are made no-through routes to motor vehicles in order to create and encourage healthy streets and low motor-traffic neighbourhoods. We consider that this should be a specific element within 'Healthy Streets'.

Further, to create healthy neighbourhoods lower speed limits are crucial and 20mph limits should be widespread. 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.

RTS 14 Walking and Cycling

In general we support the policies to provide for increased cycling.

We believe that walking should be dealt with separately from cycling within the Transport Strategy as they are different forms of transport and have different requirements. The difference in speed between a pedestrian and a cyclist is as significant as the difference in speed between a cyclist and an urban motorist. Dealing with walking and cycling as a combined policy has in the past led to a misguided mindset that these forms of transport can be accommodated by the same infrastructure, leading to the adoption of shared use footpaths in urban areas that are not well received by cyclists or pedestrians.

Specific comments are made on the LCWIP and its Appendices in Section 5 below.

RTS 16 Rights of Way

We support policies to maintain, improve and increase rights of way. We also request that these are available for cyclists wherever possible.

RTS 18 Road Safety

We support the policies to improve road safety and request that safety studies target locations of cycling collisions.

RTS 21 Demand management

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 is likely to be acceptable as well as easy to implement.

In the longer term local and national charging schemes are likely to be easier to introduce with 'satnav' based on vehicle systems.

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.

RTS 24 Freight and Sustainable Distribution

We support the policy to support sustainable distribution, in particular the use of electric and cargo bikes.

RTS 25 Highways Maintenance

We believe the policy to maintain the road network to a good standard should have a stated hierarchy of maintenance, whereby roads which are designated or popular cycle routes should be given maintenance priority as this is critical for use by cyclists.

3. Comments on Proposed Schemes & Initiatives

Fast Track Public Transport Corridors (Section 6.11). The strategy proposes that FTPT corridors should exclude cyclists. This is only acceptable where quality cycle route alternatives to these corridors are available.

Cycle Hire Scheme (Section 6.30). To achieve the significant modal shift that is required to achieve a carbon neutral Reading we believe that a fully funded cycle hire scheme that embraces electric bikes (and possibly electric scooters) needs to be implemented. This can be funded by revenue from demand management.

4. Comments on Targets

Section 9 Monitoring & Review. The target of increasing the number of people who regularly cycle from 5.1% now to 10% in 2036 is wholly unambitious and shows a lack of belief in the impact of the policies and schemes within the Transport Strategy and the LCWIP.

5. Comments on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Section 7 Delivery

Funding is key to implementation and plans to develop infrastructure to facilitate an increase in cycling and walking must not be hostage to availability of funding. Since active travel is a key element of the Draft Local Transport Strategy it is vital that funding is in place to deliver this element. To that end, whilst central government grants will be welcome, sufficient ring fenced revenue from demand management measures must underpin delivery of the LCWIP to guard against a shortfall in other funding streams.

Crucial to delivery is getting it right. Badly designed infrastructure wastes money and alienates stakeholders. The LCWIP should include a commitment to follow the guidelines and principles of the recently published LTN 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design.

Appendix C and J

The map of proposed routes in Appendix C, and routes with proposals in Appendix J, appear to be a useful start, but there are a number of the proposals that need changing and there are gaps in the proposed infrastructure provision. Both points are partially covered in the area sections below.

Appendix G and H

Appendix G lists the proposed cycle schemes. Most of this is relatively vague and requires careful consideration on a scheme by scheme basis. Appendix H lists the Cycle Forum's requested schemes and we are pleased that at least some of these are included in the proposals.

Town Centre

1. The Town centre area is still missing key strategic through routes which the Reading Cycle Campaign request, and it is unclear what form any of the marked routes could take.
2. The orbital route via the IDR to the west is interesting or awful depending on what is proposed! We suggest that a north-south route via the Butts and West Street would be preferable, as well as a north-south route via the Market Place.
3. A route from Market Place through Abbey Gateway to Kings Road should be added, and also the existing Queens Walk to Hosier Street link.
4. The Elgar Road and Katesgrove Lane route should be a Strategic Route with a better link to Bridge Street.
5. The Great Knollys Street link to the town should be improved.

Caversham

1. The Strategic Routes should also include Henley Road to Caversham Centre. This could be via Henley Road, or via Lower Henley Road and South View Avenue linking via St John's Road and Mill Road to the Thames path.
2. The key Gosbrook Road link needs to be added as a local route from Prospect Street to Westfield Road. The alternative footpath to South Street is unsuitable, being less than 1.5m wide, and should be a pedestrians-only route.

3. The current advisory cycle route via St Peters Avenue has been deleted, we request that this be reinstated as it is quiet and has more reasonable gradients than other routes.
4. The Balmore Walk NCN route should be reclassified from local to leisure route.
5. The orbital route via Priest Hill, Kidmore Road, Oakley Road and Rotherfield Way is hilly and illogical. It should be replaced by a route via Bugs Bottom (Tredegar Road and Hunters Chase), linking Highdown School to the Heights School (a proposed local route).
6. The Briants Avenue local route may best be replaced by the quiet St John's Road.

Tilehurst and West Reading

1. Routes in West Berkshire (Theale, Calcot, Purley and Pangbourne) are included, but these seem few in number and unlikely to satisfy many cyclists.
2. Is Kentwood Road suitable as an orbital route, maybe Oak Tree Road is preferable as it is not excessively steep?
3. For the West Reading strategic routes, and in particular for Oxford Road, we propose the following measures:
 - Introduce measures to reduce through traffic on Oxford Road
 - Remove pinch points on Oxford Road
 - Reduce lane width on the Oxford Road section between town centre and Bedford Road to reduce speed
 - Apply traffic filtering on Beresford Road to stop rat running to Cow Lane / Portman Road - this will allow removal of the right turn lane, freeing up road space and reducing traffic on Oxford Road
 - Redesign of Norcot roundabout
 - Removal of mini roundabouts
 - Make strategic routes 20 mph throughout.

South Reading

1. 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?
2. Christchurch Road is well used by cyclists and should be included as a local route.

East Reading

1. For the Redlands Road strategic route we propose that a new cycle lane from north to south is facilitated by the parking areas being moved from the east side of the road to the west side.
2. In addition the road narrowing at the zebra crossing between Morgan Road and Addington Road should be removed as this is considered to be hazardous to cyclists, forcing them out towards the centre of the road. The narrowing enables the parking bays to exist close to the crossing, i.e. within the 15m zigzag lines area of the crossing.