

Caversham And District Residents Association

Draft Reading Transport Strategy 2040

Comments from the Caversham and District Residents Association

1. Introduction

CADRA supports the five objectives set out in para 2.10 on page 19 of the Strategy:

- Creating a clean and green Reading
- Supporting healthy lifestyles
- Enabling sustainable and inclusive growth
- Connecting people and places
- Embracing smart solutions

2. Local Issues

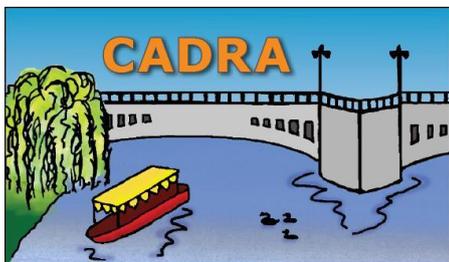
The Draft Strategy acknowledges a range of **issues particularly impacting North Reading** including:

- Congestion on three transport corridors
- Poor air quality including hot spots
- The needs of older residents, proportionately higher in North Reading (likely to increase with new retirement living developments)
- Low bus frequency (as shown in the Appendices of the Bus Service Improvement Plan)
- Susceptibility to gridlock from incidents and flooding
- Increased housing development in South Oxfordshire
- Freight traffic through residential areas and the old village centre
- Limitations on walking and cycling.

3. Major proposals

Those potentially impacting North Reading include:

- Third river crossing and associated orbital route
- New Park & Ride and Express Bus Service



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- Demand Management Measures

All three are ambitious, challenging and require support from neighbouring authorities. They may well not progress within the timescale of the strategy. There must therefore be consideration of **other measures for North Reading** to progress towards the objectives set out in page 19 of the Strategy.

In relation to the proposals for Park & Ride, we recall the presentation from Oxfordshire Transport to the Reading Transport Commission in 2008. They made clear that they supported the principle of local bus services rather than Park & Ride. We suggest that RBC should be open to that approach.

4. The Bus Service Improvement Plan

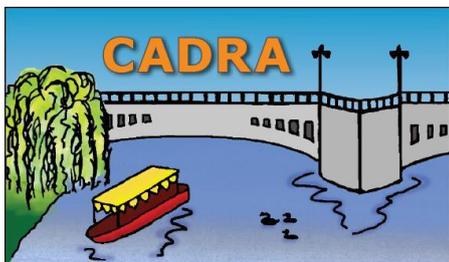
The plan contains no specific provisions for North Reading. The wider changes including improvements in bus stops, ticketing and information are welcome. But they will not change the current downward spiral of reducing bus services and increased car use. This is worsened as a high proportion on some bus routes are users with concessionary passes, which contributes to problems of financial viability. The restricted bus service is major concern for local residents and must be addressed if we are to reduce car journeys.

At the CADRA Open Meeting on 6 November, the CEO of Reading Buses set out a range of measures for “better buses by 2040.” These included improved highway efficiency and predictability for buses. In addition to measures for bus priority which will be challenging within existing road space, he sought **enhanced highway management**, particularly in the afternoon peak.

5. Neighbourhood Action Plan

As set out in para 3 above, given the uncertain progression of the major proposals and the absence of any other measures for North Reading, a Neighbourhood Action Plan is urgently needed. In line with the Neighbourhood and Highway Management summary on p134, this should focus on measures to improve:

- Highway management
- Safer routes for walking and cycling



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- Road safety measures including speed limits

The Principal List of Traffic Measures [Appendix 3 - Principal List North Reading - Nov 23.pdf \(cadra.org.uk\)](https://www.cadra.org.uk/Appendix%203%20-%20Principal%20List%20North%20Reading%20-%20Nov%2023.pdf) already includes 32 schemes for North Reading, all awaiting funding.

6. Travel to schools

This is a particular issue in North Reading. For travel across Caversham to primary schools, there should be more focus on the ease of walking and cycling, including safer crossing points. There are few options for East/West bus travel to schools.

Many secondary school pupils have a distance to travel to:

- Chiltern Edge
- Piggott School
- Henley College
- Reading Boys, Kendrick and other schools in that area

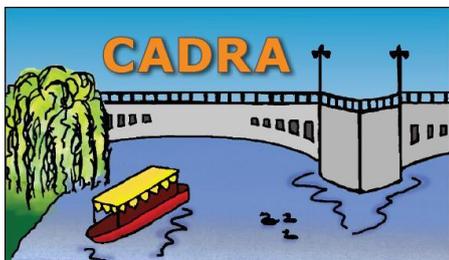
Bus travel does not meet the demand, leading to further car journeys. The new Riverside Academy will create further pressures, particularly as the initial travel plans for the school lacked ambition for sustainable modes of travel.

7. Pedestrian and Cycle Crossings and Road Safety

Walking and cycling are severely impeded where roads and junctions are difficult to cross. Examples often cited are:

- The Prospect Street/Peppard Road/Henley Road/Westfield Road junction which is on the route to many schools and where traffic moves at speed
- The Bridge Street/Church Street/Church Road junction which will be additionally impacted by journeys to the new Riverside Academy
- The Briants Avenue/Donkin Hill roundabout
- More pedestrian refuges along main and busy routes, such as Rotherfield Way and Woodcote Road near bus stops

Better conditions are needed for cycling. Where cycle lanes are not feasible, speed limits and carefully designed speed bumps would improve conditions. Improved cycle parking is needed across the retail areas.



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8. Demand Responsive Travel

Although the Readibus service is very welcome, there are many residents who do not meet its criteria but still have difficulty in accessing bus stops further away. Many of them are elderly and may not own a car. Others are parents with small children who may not have access to a car. The limitations of the bus service make it very hard for them to access their GP, the Royal Berkshire Hospital, post offices and other services. And it can easily lead to social isolation. Demand responsive travel for them is urgently needed.

9. Freight Traffic

Large vehicles along North Reading's narrow roads and junctions add to congestion and often cause damage. Caversham Road and its roundabouts are likely to be additionally impacted both by construction traffic to the three major schemes north of the station. In addition, the proposals for Oxford Road will "divert freight traffic away from Oxford Road on to Portman Road and Caversham Road."

10. Rail travel

The reduced bus service to Reading Station North makes train travel less attractive and leads to increased car and taxi journeys.

11. Conclusion

While CADRA supports the broad direction of the strategy, given the uncertainty over the major proposals, and the growing problems from congestion, it urges a package of measures for North Reading in pursuit of the agreed objectives.

November 2023