

28th July 2025

Dear Mr Rodda,

CADRA is writing to express its concern at the recent cancellation of the boundary review for the Chilterns National Landscape and the impact that such a decision has for Reading. CADRA would ask you to consider requesting restoring the review. I understand that another Reading based group will write to you reiterating the same view.

The original reason for the boundary review was that the current boundary does not cover the entire Chilterns landscape, with some of the Chilterns distinctive natural features lying outside the current designated area. Those 'designated places' represent England's finest landscapes and very best wildlife and geological sites on land and in the sea. They provide opportunities for people to experience and enjoy some of the UK's most spectacular and beautiful land, provide people with essential services like clean water, climate regulation, beautiful places for recreation, and opportunities to learn about nature and within a wider context become a national asset.

Our concern is the possible impact that the decision to cancel the review could have on a very special landscape that CADRA thinks needs protecting. Policy ENV13 of the Reading Plan (4.2.66) tells us that;

"The Chilterns AONB runs along part of the boundary between Reading and South Oxfordshire but does not cross it. It is vital that the rural-urban fringe at this point is managed to ensure that development does not jeopardise the characteristics of the AONB."

The "Visit-Reading" website describes the area to the north of Reading as;

"the gateway to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding National Beauty'.

CADRA believes that Reading is a truly unique town because of its vibrant town centre, its proximity to local business centres, to London and to Heathrow, its rail connections, three rivers and also because of its proximity to the rolling hills of the Chilterns Natural Landscape. Here we use the term the Chilterns Natural Landscape and not the Area of Outstanding National

Beauty as we believe there are areas that lie outside of the designated area that should be included within it. CADRA notes the extensive and valuable work that has been done to date, including the work done by the Parish Councils just to the North of Reading. An extension of the designated area of the Chilterns Natural Landscape would be positive for Reading because of the public focus it would place upon The Chilterns Natural Landscape, because Reading is 'the gateway to the Chilterns'. CADRA would imagine that if such a review had brought the boundary of the AONB to completely surround North Reading that it could be hugely beneficial for Reading's tourist industry. (The areas which had been identified as potential extensions to the National Landscape have not been published, but CADRA knows that work done at the behest of the nearby Parish Councils in South Oxfordshire made a strong case that their landscape quality would merit it.)

Some observers may think that the decision to cancel the review may be seen as strengthening the hand of those currently proposing major housing developments on the boundary of Reading and South Oxfordshire. CADRA is concerned about the negative impact that any such development would have on jeopardising the characteristics of the Chilterns Natural Landscape and the pressure it would place upon the current local infrastructure such as the additional traffic and congestion that would be created for Reading. We should remind ourselves that Reading declared a climate emergency in 2019 and at that point Reading Borough Council (RBC) highlighted the negative impact of car travel (which specifically named key roads in North Reading) within its Emergency Strategy of 2020-2025.

CADRA notes the comments on MattRodda.net stating that Matt Rodda "wants to see brownfield land being used for housing, particularly as there is enough former light industrial land in Reading to build almost all the homes the town needs until 2036."

CADRA notes that RBC has submitted its 'part 1' response to the Examiner recently and within that response CADRA notes that that RBC "considers that there is no unmet housing need" and seems to argue that there is limited scope for more residential development within Reading and that responses from neighbouring authorities meant that it was "highly unlikely that a voluntary cross boundary redistribution arrangement would have been possible". That response seems to suggest that using a strategic allocation of

825 per year throughout the Plan period, the Housing Trajectory shows a shortfall of just 4 dwellings by 2040/41.

As such it would appear that there could only be benefits to Reading from the Boundary review for the Chilterns National Landscape.

CADRA understands from the published comments of Natural England and the Chilterns Conservation Board that the cancellation was driven by the need for cost savings. This seems to CADRA to be a very false economy: over two years' work has already been undertaken by consultants, by staff of the statutory bodies involved, and by the work of volunteers like our adjoining Parish Councils. It would seem likely that the cost of completing the review would be much less than the sums which have already been expended and which will presumably be wasted by this decision.

There was also significant public interest and expectation that was created by the announcement of the initial review. Alas, the announced cancellation of the review could be seen as sending a message that the Chilterns are less important than other areas, which would clearly be a negative for Reading given that it is positioning itself as the gateway.

Restoring the review, at what CADRA would imagine, would be a relatively modest cost, would be a potential positive for the government in terms of its environmental reputation and also a potential huge positive for Reading. CADRA would be very grateful if you would consider this issue and, if you share our concern, we would request that you take up the issue with the Minister, Mary Creagh MP.

Yours sincerely

Nick Haskins on behalf of CADRA

References:

[Matt Rodda Website](#)

[Reading Borough Local Plan](#)

[Visit-Reading](#)

[Reading Climate Emergency Strategy](#)

[Part 1 Response to Examiner](#)

[The Joint Parishes AONB Group Report](#)