

Caversham And District Residents Association

Local Transport Plan Reading Transport Strategy 2036, Consultation Draft March 2020

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Reading Borough Council (RBC) is updating its Transport Strategy for the period 2021 to 2036. Following the public consultation that closed on 20th September 2019 RBC has published its Local Transport Plan, Reading Transport Strategy 2036, Consultation Draft - March 2020.
- 1.2 It is intended that the consultation on the draft strategy will help shape the final strategy before it is adopted in late 2020.
- 1.3 This note contains comments and suggestions for consideration as part of CADRA's response to the consultation.

2 Vision

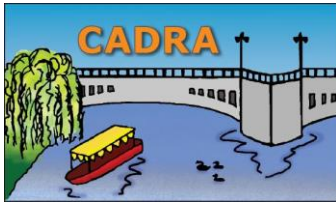
- 2.1 The Reading 2050 Vision states:

"Our vision is to deliver a sustainable transport system in Reading that creates an attractive, green and vibrant town with neighbourhoods that promote healthy choices and wellbeing. Future mobility options will enable everyone in Reading to thrive, enjoy an exceptional quality of life and adapt to meet future challenges and opportunities."

- 2.2 Five objectives underpin RBC's Vision:

- *Creating a Clean and Green Reading*
- *Supporting Healthy Lifestyles*
- *Enabling Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*
- *Connecting People and Places*
- *Embracing Smart Solutions*

CADRA fully supports both the 2050 Vision and the five underpinning objectives, as described in the draft strategy.



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3 Challenges and Opportunities

3.1 RBC has identified seven key transport challenges facing the town:

- *Adapting to the Future*
- *Improving Air Quality*
- *Reducing Congestion*
- *Providing Affordable and Accessible Travel for All*
- *Removing Barriers to Healthy Lifestyles*
- *Achieving Good Accessibility to Local Facilities and Employment*
- *Accommodating Development*

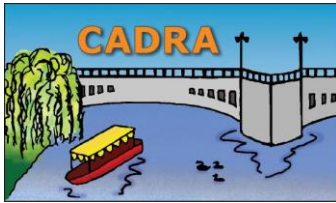
CADRA agrees with RBC's identification of the seven key transport challenges facing the town, as described in the draft strategy.

4 Reading Borough Council Policies

4.1 RBC's policies set the guiding principles for its strategy to ensure it will achieve its overall vision and objectives. These policies cover a range of topics including:

- *Multi-modal policies*
- *Public transport policies*
- *Active travel policies*
- *Demand management policies*
- *Network management policies*
- *Communication and engagement policies*

CADRA is aware of these policies and agrees that they could contribute to RBC's achievement of its overall vision and objectives.



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5 Reading Borough Council Schemes and Initiatives

5.1 RBC intends to implement its policies through the delivery of schemes and initiatives to improve transport and, in accordance with legislation, the Local Transport Plan considers the wider environment and all types of transport users. The strategy includes a range of schemes from small-scale enhancements to major cross-boundary schemes, including:

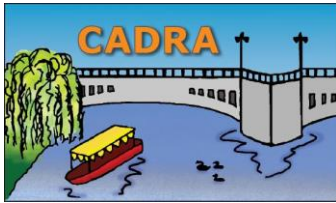
- *Demand management schemes*
- *Major multi modal schemes*
- *Public transport schemes*
- *Active travel schemes*
- *Network management schemes*
- *Communication and engagement schemes*

CADRA generally supports the initiatives but has yet to be convinced that the proposed schemes are deliverable in terms of design, funding and, most importantly, the support of neighbouring Authorities and their residents.

6 North Reading Orbital Route (Chapter 6 Page 97)

6.1 RBC proposes a North Reading Orbital Route around the northern edge of Reading linking the A4074 to the A4155. The route is linked to a proposed Third Thames Crossing east of Reading, The new route and bridge would:

- *provide an enhanced connection to the town centre and wider strategic network from the north of Reading;*
- *enable the delivery of an effective Park and Ride network in the north of Reading;*
- *include an FTPT route along its length, walking and cycling facilities and limited highway capacity for general traffic to help alleviate congestion in Caversham and over the River Thames;*
- *facilitate the reallocation of road space in Caversham and over the existing river crossings, to deliver public transport priority, walking, cycling and public space improvements; and*
- *work closely with Oxfordshire authorities to deliver the scheme, as it is reliant on land availability to the north of Reading.*



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Congestion in Caversham has long been a serious problem. It results in very poor air quality with associated health issues, an unsafe environment, an inefficient local retail centre and community severance. Caversham and Reading suffer because they are effectively the bottleneck that protects South Oxfordshire from longer distance through traffic.

The problem of roadside air quality may be solved when ban on the sale of petrol and diesel cars comes into force in 2035 or 2040. However, this will not solve the congestion, road safety and severance issues.

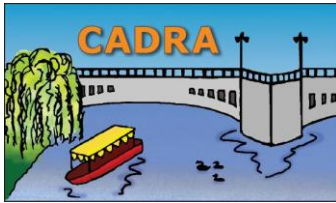
Congestion severely hampers Reading Buses ability to run reliable services north of the Thames. Because Reading Buses cannot meet its cost targets, bus services have been severely cut resulting in even greater reliance on private cars for travel into the centre of Reading.

The debate over a Third Thames Crossing and connecting roads has continued for decades. CADRA believes that the real benefit would be the removal of all South Oxfordshire, private and freight traffic, that wishes to travel to and from east and south Reading and longer distance traffic that travels through Reading and Caversham.

Park and Ride could also have a positive impact on traffic reduction in Reading and Caversham.

A Fast Track Public Transport corridor (FTPT) (Pages 107, 111), walking and cycling facilities, on an Orbital route, would be a bonus but should not be the primary focus of the scheme. The route is likely to have only a small benefit for public transport users, walkers and cyclists who would have destinations in Central Reading and Reading Station. However, an Orbital Route could allow drivers to travel around the edge of Reading to more suitable locations for P&R parking.

Neighbouring Authorities and their residents are concerned that there would be an increase in through traffic in South Oxfordshire. CADRA shares this concern and, for this reason, we believe that there should be no overall increase in the highway network capacity. CADRA believes that the reallocation of road space in Caversham and over the existing river crossings, to deliver public transport priority, walking, cycling and public space improvements, is essential to the success of the scheme. Opening of the Orbital Route and the Third Thames Crossing should only occur if there is a simultaneous reallocation of road space and capacity reduction in Reading and Caversham. Closure of Sonning Bridge to general traffic or imposition of tolls should be examined. Also, it may be necessary to consider traffic management measures in the rural villages and parts of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that are affected by longer distance through traffic. This approach would help to alleviate some of the concerns of the neighbouring Authorities and their residents.



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The Orbital Route and the Third Thames Crossing would need to be built through the edge of sensitive South Oxfordshire countryside some which is within the 'Setting' of the AONB. The problems associated with the AONB should not be taken lightly and outstanding scheme designs will be needed. It may be necessary to hide some sections of the Orbital Route in cut and cover tunnel to protect views of and within the AONB and prevent severance and damage to the countryside.

CADRA believes that full understanding of the longer distance traffic and countryside issues and design of innovative solutions will be necessary before it is possible to gain support from our South Oxfordshire neighbours and Caversham and Emmer Green residents who live on the periphery of the built up area.

7 Network Management (Page 129)

7.1 Traffic and Junction Management

7.2 RBC lists infrastructure schemes to improve network efficiency, including:

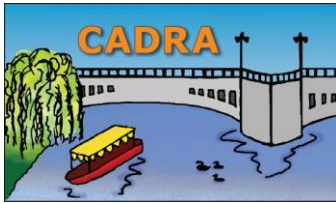
- *Junction type changes*
- *Removal of highway pinch points*
- *Traffic signal upgrades*
- *Reallocation of roadspace*
- *Lane allocation changes*
- *Changes to junction layouts*
- *Delivery of public transport priority*
- *Delivery of pedestrian and cycle priority*

Unfortunately, some junction type changes in Reading have had limited success (eg Shinfield Road and A33). Increased delays have resulted, and many drivers have diverted to alternative routes. It is hoped that the lessons learned will be applied before any similar schemes are attempted elsewhere.

Reallocation of roadspace to pedestrians and sustainable modes, such as buses and cycles, is more beneficial than increases in general traffic capacity.

Changes from traffic signals to priority control (mini-roundabouts and raised zebra or informal raised pedestrian crossings) are more appropriate in local centres such as Caversham. Some suggested changes to Caversham's local centre are described in *Sharing Our Streets, Achieving the Vision*. The purpose of these measures should be to re-balance the use of roadspace towards non-motorised users.

(https://www.cadra.org.uk/uploads/wysiwyg_editor/files/20141114-Achieving-The-Vision-REPORT.pdf).



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8 Funding and Implementation

- 8.1 RBC's implementation plan sets out an indicative delivery programme for future transport schemes and initiatives to 2036 and states that they are not fully funded. RBC has outlined various funding sources and asserts that some demand management measures will provide an additional revenue stream that could be invested in sustainable transport. The delivery of the strategy will be updated annually to provide a three-year rolling programme to allow its adaptation to changing technologies, budgets and development proposals.

CADRA believes that robust, deliverable schemes are more likely to be successful candidates for funding support.

Detailed scheme design and acceptance by residents, the travelling public and neighbouring Authorities will be needed to determine if schemes are deliverable and might qualify for funding.

9 Partnerships and Stakeholders

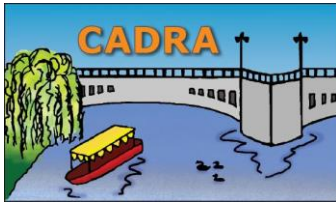
- 9.1 RBC's key delivery partners are listed under the following headings:

- *National / Regional*
- *Neighbouring Local Authorities*
- *Transport Operators*
- *Local Community*

CADRA accepts that the delivery partners list is comprehensive however there are two glaring omissions – the travelling public and road freight operators. These groups are partly covered by 'local residents' but do not include travellers and hauliers from outside of the Reading Borough boundary. Members of the public use Reading's roads in cars and on public transport to access destinations within the town or beyond and contribute towards congestion. These groups might form powerful lobbies that oppose any measure that restricts access or increases the cost of travel. Many of the roads through the town centre provide important routes to other parts of the country (eg A33, A327, A329, A3031, A4, A4074, A4155).

10 Monitoring and Review Performance

- 10.1 RBC has identified a number of key performance indicators and targets that set out its ambitions to transform travel options in Reading and enable it to measure progress in achieving its overall vision and objectives. The targets are:



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- *to significantly increase usage of sustainable transport;*
- *improve air quality;*
- *reduce carbon emissions;*
- *improve road safety; and*
- *improve public satisfaction with travel in Reading.*

10.2 The Strategy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains current and to respond to future needs and opportunities.

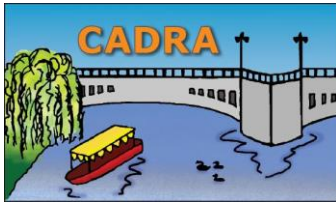
CADRA agrees with the need to monitor progress and adapt the Strategy to changes in future. However, we believe that economic, employment, retail and leisure activity should also be monitored to ensure that it is not degraded by the implementation of the Strategy. For example, large increases in private and public parking charges and congestion charging must be preceded by parallel improvements in public transport. Without this linkage the attractiveness of Reading town centre would be compromised and many employers, retailers and leisure providers might be forced to close or relocate their operations to 'out-of-town' and online sites.

11 Communication, Consultation and Engagement (Page 140)

CADRA agrees that consultation and engagement is vital for the success of the Strategy. However, RBC should be wary of assuming that a general agreement, with consultation questions, implies that respondents will agree to any measure that might achieve the objectives. For example, the summer 2019 consultation asked respondents to rank the following:

- **Reduce the number of cars on the roads**
- **Increase the number of journeys made on foot or by bike**
- **Increase the number of journeys made on public transport**
- **Tackle congestion on major roads, bridges and junctions**
- **Harness new technologies to make travelling easier**
- **Improve the poor air quality on major roads and junctions**
- **Improve road safety to reduce accidents and injuries**

It would have been astonishing if any respondent did not agree that all are desirable objectives. Positive responses do not give RBC a mandate to carry out any draconian measure that might achieve the objectives, particularly those that might affect a person's way of life. Consultation and engagement must continue, at each stage of a scheme's development, to ensure a consensus agreement before proceeding to implementation.



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11.1 RBC has committed to provide regular updates on progress in delivering the transport strategy. This will include updates to reach a wide range of the population, including people outside of the Borough through:

- *press releases,*
- *residents' newsletters*
- *social media platforms*
- *engagement with residents within and outside the Borough.*

CADRA supports this plan which must continue through each stage of its implementation and development. This will ensure consensus agreement before the Council decides on specific projects.

CADRA Committee

3 August 2020