

Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update

Mobility hubs in Reading – update on engagement

Purpose

This note has been prepared to provide an update on engagement since the December 2024 Statement of Common Ground (SOCG, [examination library reference DUC07](#)) between Reading Borough Council (RBC), South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWHDC).

This note has been prepared to address an action, which was raised during the Stage 2 Joint Local Plan hearings: Councils to provide details of engagement with Reading Borough Council in relation to Reading's mobility hubs. It also provides an update on the progression of mobility hub proposals through the Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU) examination and the Reading Transport Strategy 2040.

This note has been discussed and shared with Reading Borough Council and Oxfordshire County Council in July 2026.

1. Background: December 2024 Statement of Common Ground

The December 2024 SoCG ([examination library reference DUC07](#)) confirmed that the authorities had engaged constructively on a range of cross-boundary planning matters, including transport and infrastructure issues associated with the functional relationship between Reading and adjoining areas. The SoCG recorded that engagement had taken place throughout preparation of the Joint Local Plan and Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update and that cooperation would continue as both plans progressed through examination.

The SODC and VoWH Duty to Cooperate Statement ([examination library reference CSD09.1](#)) and the SOCG (DUC07) identify strategic transport infrastructure and sustainable transport connections as matters with potential cross-boundary significance, and record ongoing engagement with neighbouring authorities where transport impacts extend beyond administrative boundaries.

2. Background: Reading Regulation 19 Representation on the Joint Local Plan

Reading Borough Council submitted a representation to the JLP Regulation 19 consultation ([Reading Borough Council Regulation 19 representation](#)) in November 2024 which raised mobility hubs as a matter of particular relevance to Reading's strategic transport objectives:

Reading commented on Policy IN3 – Transport infrastructure and safeguarding, and the Joint Local Plan's transport infrastructure provisions.

Reading's representation highlighted that its Transport Strategy 2040 promotes a network of park and ride and mobility hubs, and that these will require land to be identified outside of Reading in most cases. Reading stated that several of the corridors identified by its Transport Strategy 2040 cross the Reading-South Oxfordshire boundary and stated there are no sites to provide these within Reading.

Reading supported the identification of mobility hubs within Policy IN3 but requested clarification that these would include park and ride mobility hubs located on routes serving Reading.

3. Update on engagement regarding mobility hubs

Reading adopted the [Local Transport Plan 4 - Reading Transport Strategy](#) at Full Council on 15 October 2024. Reading undertook considerable work to address issues raised by [South Oxfordshire](#) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) on the draft Reading Local Transport Plan.

Reading Transport Strategy now includes details which South Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire County Council consider to be genuinely multi-modal for the proposed Park and Ride Mobility Hubs, with reference to local and strategic pedestrian connectivity, cycle routes, micro-mobility hire and car clubs linked to mobility hubs. It also states that Reading is seeking to work with South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire to address north and west car travel demands via Park and Ride Mobility Hubs. Oxfordshire County Council would want any proposals to be developed in line with Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan policies, including the Oxfordshire mobility hub strategy and developing area-based Movement and Place Plans ([Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#)). These will be ongoing discussions.

4. Background: SoDC and VoWH Regulation 19 representation on the Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update

In the Regulation 19 representation on the RBC Local Plan Partial Update, SODC and VoWH noted that the Plan identifies a series of Park and Ride Mobility Hubs, and corridors where these hubs would be proposed – including three routes crossing the boundary with South Oxfordshire, although no sites are identified. SODC and VoWH stated that further work is needed to understand how these hubs could reduce car dependency and effective use of land.

SODC and VoWH also noted that Figure 8.1 of the Plan shows route arrows and park and ride symbols inside South Oxfordshire, stating that this is not appropriate given South Oxfordshire is not covered in the scope of RBC's Local Plan, and asked that the diagram be amended.

5. Background: Mobility Hubs in the RBC Local Plan Partial Update

The Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update Submission Draft (May 2025) includes Policy TR2: Major Transport Projects, which identifies Park and Ride

Mobility Hubs as one of Reading's major transport projects and states that priority will be given to implementation of the major transport projects identified in the adopted Reading Transport Strategy, with land safeguarded where necessary.

Whilst Reading BCs Policy TR2 supports delivery of Park and Ride Mobility Hubs, the Plan does not itself identify specific mobility hub locations within South Oxfordshire, allocate land within South Oxfordshire, or specify any requirement for South Oxfordshire District Council to safeguard particular sites.

6. Position as of July 2026: RBC

Reading Borough Council maintain the position as set out in the RBC Local Plan Partial Update [Matter 1 hearing statement](#), paragraph 1.2.6 that *“In terms of park and ride mobility hubs, there are three existing park and ride facilities within Wokingham Borough, but the identified corridors would almost certainly require sites in West Berkshire and South Oxfordshire. However, specific sites have not yet been identified. Once sites are identified, the Council would work with the relevant adjoining authority to progress their delivery. In the meantime, the Council continues to seek recognition of the need to make park and ride provision in adjoining Local Plans”*

The Reading Local Plan [Inspector's Post Stage 2 Letter](#) of March 2026 which reports on transport matters contains nothing specific about Mobility Hubs. Main modifications agreed with the Inspector were approved for consultation by Reading's Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee, and these contained no significant changes affecting the proposed mobility hubs. The Inspector's final report is pending.

7. Position as of July 2026: South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse

To date, neither the Reading examination outcomes, nor any associated Statement of Common Ground has an outcome of allocating specific land for Reading mobility hubs.

The position therefore remains one of continued cooperation and recognition of Reading's longer term transport aspirations rather than a requirement for specific allocations or safeguards within the Joint Local Plan.

8. Conclusion

The Reading Transport Strategy reflected positive outcomes in terms of genuine multi-modal proposals following engagement between Reading, South Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire County Council. Any future proposals should take into account policy in Oxfordshire, including those plans and strategies developed under the Oxfordshire LTCP.

Since the December 2024 Statement of Common Ground (DUC07), cooperation between Reading Borough Council and South Oxfordshire/Vale of White Horse on transport matters is ongoing.

At the present time, the evidence supports the conclusion that the strategic need for mobility hubs has been raised as part of cross-boundary engagement, and that cooperation remains ongoing, however no specific mobility hub sites have been identified or proposed by RBC. On that basis, there are no specific sites to form the basis of allocation or safeguarding of land for Mobility Hubs in the JLP to meet Reading Borough Council's immediate transport aspirations. Should specific proposals emerge, these would need to be supported by evidence and considered through ongoing cooperation between all stakeholder authorities.

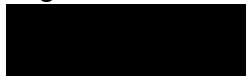
Signed



Mark Worringham, Planning Policy Manager, Reading Borough Council

Date 29 July 2026

Signed



Lucy Murfett, Policy Manager, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

Date: 28 July 2026

Appendices

Appendix A: Oxfordshire County Council Response to Reading Borough Council Local Transport Plan 4 statutory consultation, December 2023.

Appendix B: South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse response to Reading Borough Council Local Plan Review Regulation 19 consultation, December 2024.

Appendix C: Reading Borough Council response to South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation, November 2024.

Reference: Reading Transport Strategy
2040 - Statutory Consultation

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20th December 2023

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Dear Transport Planning Team,

Response to Reading Borough Council Local Transport Plan 4 statutory consultation.

Please find below Oxfordshire County Council's response to your Reading Transport Strategy 2040 (RTS 2040) statutory consultation.

Oxfordshire County Council ask that we continue to be engaged with on the transport strategy and look forward to continuing to work jointly on relevant transport projects.

Yours sincerely,



Director of Transport and Infrastructure

Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is pleased to submit a consultation response to the Reading Local Transport Plan 4 – 'Reading Transport Strategy 2040 (RTS 2040)'. Overall, we are supportive of the vision, objectives and policy approach set out in RTS 2040.

We are particularly supportive of those policies around supporting walking, cycling and public transport improvements which align with our Local Transport Plan, called the [Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#) (LTCP) which was adopted in July 2022. These policies provide a good basis for continued partnership working on planning for cross-boundary travel between Reading and Oxfordshire.

In our response to the consultation conducted in September 2020, we opposed the plan as we did not agree with the proposed schemes and measures included for cross boundary travel between Reading and Oxfordshire. Whilst some progress has been made, we still have significant concerns about the schemes included and therefore we continue to oppose the plan on these grounds.

The remainder of our response provides more detailed comments about our key areas of interest and then detailed comments. We recognise that the RTS 2040 is the policy document and further work will be conducted to develop specific schemes and shortlist options. Our comments reflect this and are generally focused on the high level policies or influencing the next stage of work.

- **Whilst generally, we are supportive of the vision, objectives and policy approach set out in RTS 2040, we have significant concerns about the schemes included in the strategy and therefore we continue to oppose the plan on these grounds.**

Oxfordshire to Reading connectivity

A critical area of interest for OCC is the connectivity needs between Oxfordshire and Reading, including the future of the A4074 corridor and improving walking, cycling and public transport connectivity.

We recognise that there is demand for cross boundary travel between Oxfordshire and Reading (in both directions) and that this needs to be managed appropriately. We consider that transport measures developed should focus on walking, cycling, public and shared transport to facilitate this travel, as set out in our LTCP. We are pleased that the schemes and initiatives identified in RTS 2040 generally reflect this and welcome further discussions to help support sustainable cross-boundary travel.

However, we are concerned that there is a considerable focus on large scale physical infrastructure schemes in the plan. We question the deliverability of such schemes and suggest further consideration of demand management. Demand management schemes will likely have more significant impacts on travel behaviour and will be required to deliver net-zero targets.

We also think that there are smaller packages of sustainable transport interventions that should be considered. We propose that in relation to cross boundary travel the following interventions should be considered:

- Opportunities to build on NCN route 5.

- Development of walking and cycling routes towards Henley, Sonning Common and Wallingford.
- Opportunities to improve Public Rights of Way, including along the Thames Path.
- Development of Strategic Active Travel Routes and Greenways, as identified in our LTCP.
- Opportunity to increase frequency of bus services between Oxfordshire and Reading.
- Development of mobility hubs to improve transport connectivity by all modes.
- Improvements to access to train services, including better transport interchange at stations with connections to Reading such as improved cycle parking.

We welcome explicit reference to Oxfordshire County Council's position regarding any new crossings of the River Thames. We would like to reiterate that the motion approved by Oxfordshire County Council on 10th September 2019 remains our position on a third Thames crossing:

- Should a new bridge be built it should be restricted to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.
- The bridge and necessary mitigation measures must not be considered as two separate projects, but as one project.

We would also like to highlight that OCC do not have any funding for a third Thames crossing and the majority of any river crossing would be within Oxfordshire's (and South Oxfordshire District Council's) boundary. Likewise, planning consent for any bridge would be entirely out of RBC's control and would require planning applications to OCC and/or South Oxfordshire District Council and Wokingham Borough Council.

We support the inclusion of a more holistic approach to cross-Thames travel and fundamental review of options to enhance sustainable travel choices as outlined in the scheme summary on p101. We ask that OCC continue to be engaged with on any future work. We also welcome removal of the North Reading Orbital Route as a standalone initiative.

However, we are concerned that the Cross-Thames Travel scheme still largely focuses on delivery of an additional bridge for private car traffic and orbital route. This is in contrast to the scheme summary.

We do not consider that there is justification for development and delivery of an additional bridge for car traffic and orbital route which would improve through traffic capabilities of the local road network in Reading and South Oxfordshire. The delivery of such as scheme does not align with delivery of the objectives and policies set out in RTS 2040 or the vision, objectives and targets in our adopted LTCP.

There are established links between road building and 'induced demand' which are in contrast to net-zero aspirations and our LTCP targets to reduce private car trips. Furthermore, the high cost for delivery of the scheme, means that the economic viability for delivery is highly uncertain.

We support the evolution of the park and ride concept to encompass mobility hubs, which aligns with our LTCP and supporting [Mobility Hub Strategy](#). We are currently working to identify potential locations for mobility hubs, which includes consideration of the A4074

corridor. Therefore, we believe there are potential opportunities for mobility hubs that support cross-boundary movement and welcome further engagement on this.

However, we are concerned that 'strategic park and ride sites' are still referred to on p77. Similarly, we are concerned that whilst the term 'mobility hub' has been added, there is no policy to support the concept or explanation of what is meant by it. We do not believe that 'park and ride mobility hub' scheme descriptions truly reflect the mobility hub concept and remain largely focused on car parking.

We are opposed to any strategic park and ride site in South Oxfordshire that is focused on car parking but welcome opportunities to explore mobility hubs that are similar to the Oxfordshire concept, and which also support existing/new public transport and active travel routes.

We are therefore opposed to the RTS 2040 in its current form, as we do not agree with the proposed schemes and measures it includes for cross boundary travel between Reading and Oxfordshire. We are particularly concerned about the continued inclusion of an additional bridge for private car traffic, orbital route and strategic northern park and ride site. We ask that RBC reconsiders its approach to cross-boundary travel and would welcome the opportunity to work together where needed to help develop this revised approach.

- **Generally supportive of the focus on walking, cycling, public and shared transport schemes in RTS 2040.**
- **Concerned that there is a focus on large scale infrastructure schemes and propose that smaller packages of interventions should be considered.**
- **Support the inclusion of a more holistic approach to cross-Thames travel and welcome explicit reference to OCC's position.**
- **Reiterate our position regarding cross-Thames travel remains the same and any new Thames bridge should be for public transport and active travel only.**
- **Welcome removal of the North Reading Orbital Route as a standalone initiative but have significant concerns that Cross-Thames travel still focuses on a new bridge for private car traffic and associated orbital route.**
- **Do not consider that there is justification for development and delivery of a new bridge for private car traffic and associated orbital route.**
- **Support inclusion of mobility hubs, but we are concerned that there is no policy support and scheme descriptions do not truly reflect the mobility hub concept.**
- **Opposed to the RTS 2040 in its current form as we do not agree with the proposed schemes and measures for cross boundary travel.**

Climate emergency

A priority for OCC is tackling the climate emergency through rapid decarbonisation. This priority underpins our LTCP. The LTCP includes a commitment to delivering a net-zero Oxfordshire transport network by prioritising walking, cycling, public and shared transport.

We welcome that the need to reduce carbon emissions is also included in the RTS 2040 vision and objectives. However, there is opportunity to strengthen the ambition in this area and work towards delivery of a net-zero transport system rather than carbon neutrality.

We also consider that the road transport carbon emission reduction target is not ambitious enough. The target is less than a 50% reduction and would require a considerable amount of reduction after 2040 to meet the 2050 UK net-zero target.

It is suggested this would also better align with emerging LTP and quantifiable carbon reduction guidance from the Department for Transport which will require LTPs to “establish how a carbon reduction in line with carbon budgets and Net Zero will be achieved.”

- **Welcome that the need to reduce carbon emissions is reflected in the RTS 2040 and generally supportive of the policies identified to achieve this.**
- **Suggest the ambition should be strengthened to work towards delivery of a net-zero transport system and include more ambitious targets.**

Walking and cycling

Encouraging increased levels of walking and cycling is central to our LTCP, as noted previously. We believe a new approach that prioritises these modes will be critical to delivery of future transport plans.

We welcome that this approach is recognised in the RTS 2040 and there is policy commitment to reallocating road space to sustainable modes, developing the walking and cycling networks and developing demand management measures.

We also support the consideration of longer distance cycle trips and cross-boundary connectivity, although this could be better reflected in policy. The proposals to develop strategic cycle routes could help to facilitate cross boundary movements and the increasing uptake of e-bikes will further help to facilitate this increase. Following adoption of the LTCP, we have been working to develop our strategic active travel network and welcome any opportunities for engagement and collaboration on this moving forward.

- **Support the focus on promoting walking and cycling in the RTS 2040 and welcome opportunities for engagement and collaboration moving forward.**

Freight

Freight is a key issue in Oxfordshire, particularly issues related to inappropriate HGV movements. We published a [Freight and Logistics Strategy](#) alongside our LTCP to provide more detail about how we will work to address freight challenges.

Partnership working is one of the key principles in our freight strategy due to the complexity of the freight system. Much of the freight system is beyond the control of individual local authorities and so it is essential to cultivate good working relationships with neighbouring local authorities, freight operators and sub-national transport bodies.

We are therefore concerned that the freight and sustainable distribution policies only consider movement within Reading and do not consider wider impacts on neighbouring local authorities. We would encourage recognition of the need for partnership working with a range of stakeholders on any freight schemes moving forward.

- **Encourage recognition of the need for partnership working with a range of stakeholders on any freight schemes moving forward.**

Spatial and transport planning

We welcome the policies included on development control and commitment to work with developers to design development that supports delivery of the Reading Transport Strategy. However, in order to deliver the aspirations of transport plans such as the RTS 2040 we believe that a more comprehensive rethink of spatial and transport planning is required. This rethink needs to begin at the strategic level and continue through all stages of planning.

As part of our LTCP we adopted a policy requiring transport assessments accompanying planning applications for new development to follow the County Council's [‘Implementing ‘Decide & Provide’: Requirements for Transport Assessments’](#) document. The document was adopted by our cabinet in September 2022.

We believe that in order to realise the aims of LTPs we need to make the shift from ‘predict and provide’ transport planning to ‘decide and provide’ at a more detailed level. We encourage consideration of a similar approach as part of the RTS 2040.

Similarly, it is important that this approach is reflected in the Local Plan update, so that development is allocated in locations where the need to travel is reduced and where opportunities can be realised for providing high-quality sustainable transport options.

- **Welcome policies included on development control but suggest a more comprehensive move towards ‘decide and provide’ transport planning.**

Detailed comments

Further detailed comments on RTS 2040 are set out in the table below.

RTS 2040 Page number/Section	Comment
General	Whilst there is an overview of challenges and opportunities the narrative for why the chosen approach is required and the benefits it will deliver for residents could be clearer and stronger. There is a particular lack of explanation for how particular policies will help and tangible benefits residents everyday lives. We suggest enhancing this narrative and explanation to help bring residents along with change.
General	Suggest considering the language used. Terms such as ‘pedestrians’, ‘cyclists’ and ‘car drivers’ are not always helpful as they define people by transport mode and can reinforce perceived divisions.
Objectives (p19)	Suggest amending the “connecting people and places” objective wording. The current wording could be made stronger and better align with policy 1.1 by amending “Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport” to “Prioritise the use of sustainable modes of transport”. This would provide more clarity and a clear sense of direction.
National policy and guidance (p20)	The national policy and guidance does not reference the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, Gear Change or National Bus Strategy which are important context.
Policy RTS 1.3 (p73)	Question whether specifying reasons for car journeys is helpful. In our experience, attempting to define what is/isn’t an essential journey can lead to division and debate.
Policy RTS 1.3 (p73)	We are concerned that the policy opens the door to traffic capacity schemes which does not align the general policy direction and other policies around prioritising sustainable transport. In order to deliver the goals of the RTS a strong approach to sustainable transport prioritisation is required. We suggest

	that the policy wording should be amended to make clear that general traffic capacity increases will only be considered as a final option / after all other options have been explored.
The environment and climate change policies (p73)	Welcome the inclusion of the policies and considerations about embodied carbon however the policies are vague and embodied carbon policies are weaker than other policies through the inclusion of wording such as “embed consideration”, “seek to reduce” and “where feasible”. The policies could be made stronger and a clear commitment to reduce embodied carbon.
Policy RTS 2.5 (p73)	The policy is missing a word following “we”.
Policy RTS 2.6 (p73)	It would be beneficial to consider and include how embodied carbon reduction will be delivered and quantified such as through use of PAS 2080. The figure number has also not been included within the policy.
Policy RTS4 (p75)	Suggest a more comprehensive rethink of how spatial and transport planning interact in Reading. Whilst we welcome the policies, particularly references to healthy streets, they do not substantially change the current ‘predict and provide’ approach to transport planning. We suggest further consideration of how the move from ‘predict and provide’ transport planning to ‘decide and provide’ planning could be made through the RTS 2040.
Para 5.24 (p77)	Concerned that ‘strategic park and ride sites’ are referred to. We are opposed to any strategic park and ride site in South Oxfordshire and suggest there are opportunities to develop mobility hubs to support existing public transport routes before progressing with development of large scale park and ride sites. We also question the deliverability of ‘strategic’ park and ride sites.
Policy RTS 8.2 (p78)	Policies regarding the reallocation of road space are not worded consistently. Policies RTS 1.2, 12.2 and 13.2 state that road space will be reallocated but policy 8.2 includes “where feasible”. We suggest removing this from policy 8.2 and having consistently strong policies regarding the reallocation of road space.
Active travel policies (p81)	We generally support the policies and welcome inclusion of place shaping and public realm policies which are important to consider alongside the delivery of infrastructure. We also suggest considering coproduction/codesign of active travel schemes and ‘community activation’ measures to support physical infrastructure.
Active travel policies (p81)	We suggest utilising the terminology “walking, wheeling, cycling and riding” or explaining that these are the modes covered by active travel to be inclusive of all residents and active travel modes.
Policy RTS13 (p82)	Support inclusion of place shaping and the healthy streets approach. We suggest it would also be helpful to consider 15-minute city / 20-minute neighbourhood concepts to support the creation of walkable neighbourhoods.
Policy RTS 14.3 (p82)	Walking and cycling networks should be designed to be inclusive and attractive to people of all preferences and abilities. This should not be subject to feasibility and so “where feasible” should be removed from the policy.
Policy RTS 17.2 (p84)	We support the proposal to publish traffic reduction targets which aligns with the inclusion of car trip reduction targets in our LTCP. Such targets would be beneficial to include in the RTS 2040. It seems like a missed opportunity that such important targets have not been included in the RTS 2040.
Road safety policies (p85)	Suggest considering adoption of the vision zero and safe systems approach. The approach recognises that no traffic deaths are acceptable and provides a recognised and coordinated approach to proactively improve road safety.
Parking policies (p86)	The parking policies should also consider parking for motorcycles, bicycles, and other forms of micromobility. Parking is a key factor affecting the attractiveness of cycling.
Freight policies (p88)	The policies do not recognise the complexity of the freight network. The policies only consider freight movement within Reading and do not consider

	wider impacts on neighbouring local authorities. We would encourage recognition of the need for partnership working with a range of stakeholders such as neighbouring local authorities and sub-national transport bodies, as well as freight operators.
Freight policies (p88)	The policies make no reference to rail freight and the significant opportunities it offers to reduce the volume of road based freight.
Our schemes and initiatives (p96-148)	Oxfordshire County Council are listed as a 'delivery partner' on a number of schemes and initiatives. It is unclear what is meant by this and we would wish to know more detail about the benefits, impacts and viability before considering becoming 'delivery partners' for any schemes that have cross-boundary implications.
Public Transport Schemes (p97)	Mobility hub schemes are included in section 6 but the concept is not introduced previously in the RTS 2040 or covered by policy. We suggest it would be helpful to include a policy to support the concept and explain to residents and other stakeholders what is meant by it.
Transport corridor multi-modal enhancements (p98)	Supportive of the principle but would wish to know more before becoming a 'delivery partner'. Ask that OCC continue to be engaged with on any future work.
Cross-Thames Travel (p101)	Welcome a more holistic approach to cross-Thames travel and explicit reference to Oxfordshire County Council's position regarding any new crossings of the River Thames. We would like to reiterate that our position remains the same and ask that OCC continue to be engaged with on any future work. We would not consider ourselves a 'delivery partner' for the scheme at this time.
Cross-Thames Travel (p101)	Reiterate and support comments made by South Oxfordshire District Council regarding paragraph 2. The paragraph references the conclusions made by the Cross Thames Travel Group and suggests that all parties are in agreement that the project, as described, has merit for progression toward delivery. This is not the case and as such we recommend that the explanation be revised to reflect this.
Cross-Thames Travel (p101)	Concerned that a bridge for private car traffic and the North Reading Orbital route are still primarily discussed as part of the Cross-Thames Travel scheme. We do not consider that there is justification for development and delivery of the scheme. The scheme does not align with delivery of the objectives and policies set out in RTS 2040 or our LTCP and the economic viability for delivery is highly uncertain.
Connecting neighbourhoods (p103)	Supportive of the principle but would wish to know more before becoming a 'delivery partner'. Ask that OCC continue to be engaged with on any future work. We are particularly interested in opportunities to deliver enhanced cross boundary walking, cycling or public transport connectivity.
Demand management (p104)	Supportive of the principle and would be happy to share experiences of developing demand management measures in Oxford. We would wish to know more before becoming a 'delivery partner' and are keen to understand the impacts of any scheme on Oxfordshire. Ask that OCC continue to be engaged with on any future work.
Superbus network (p106)	Supportive of the principle and welcome opportunities to enhance cross boundary bus connectivity. Oxfordshire County Council may be a delivery partner as the highway authority in Oxfordshire.
Park and ride mobility hubs (p114)	Supportive of the principle but would wish to know more before becoming a 'delivery partner'. Ask that OCC continue to be engaged with on any future work. We believe there are potential opportunities for mobility hubs that support cross-boundary movement and welcome further engagement on this.

Park and ride mobility hubs (p114)	Whilst the term 'mobility hub' has been added, there is no policy to support the concept or explanation of what is meant by it. We do not believe that the scheme description truly reflects the mobility hub concept and it remains largely focused on car parking.
Park and ride mobility hubs (p114)	As highlighted previously, we are opposed to any strategic park and ride site in South Oxfordshire that is focused on car parking but welcome opportunities to explore mobility hubs that are similar to the Oxfordshire concept, and which also support existing/new public transport and active travel routes.
Strategic and town centre cycle routes (p125)	Supportive of the principle but would wish to know more before becoming a 'delivery partner'. Ask that OCC continue to be engaged with on any future work. We have been working to develop proposals for a strategic active travel network following adoption of the LTCP and suggest reviewing this for any opportunities for collaboration moving forward.
Strategic and town centre cycle routes (p125)	The potential for strategic active travel could be better reflected in the active travel policies on p81.
Micro-mobility hire scheme (p133)	We are unsure what potential there is for cross boundary micro-mobility hire scheme but are generally supportive of the principle. We would wish to know more before becoming a 'delivery partner'. Ask that OCC continue to be engaged with on any future work.
Funding and implementation (p161)	We have reservations that the level of large transport infrastructure schemes such as the multi-modal corridors, cross-Thames travel and park and ride mobility hubs can be funded and delivered in the timescales outlined, particularly given the significant detailed work that is needed to progress these schemes.
Multi-modal indicators (p171)	The car trip performance indicator only considers the town centre which is a small proportion of the borough. It is recognised this is where the existing cordon is located but question whether this provides an accurate overall picture of car use in the borough to assess performance and inform future decision making.
Multi-modal indicators (p171)	The road transport carbon emission reduction target is not ambitious enough. The target is less than a 50% reduction and would require a considerable amount of reduction after 2040 to meet the 2050 UK net-zero target.
Public transport indicators (p171)	The park and ride and rail usage 2040 targets do not specify the time period over which the targets relate to i.e. per year

Policy and Programmes

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17 December 2024

Dear Planning Policy Team

We're grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Regulation 19 Consultation for the [Reading Local Plan partial update](#).

We note that you are partially updating the December 2019 Reading Local Plan, which will soon be over five years old. The plan's end date will be extended from 2036 to 2041. We see the partial update affects approximately half of the policies within the 2019 Local Plan, and that other policies are to be carried forward.

Vision and Strategic Objectives

We generally believe the proposed themes and the Reading Local Plan vision are sound. The updated policies' ambitious climate and environmental vision, aiming for net-zero carbon emissions in Reading by 2030 to combat the climate emergency, has our support.

Spatial Strategy

We support the proposed spatial strategy updates, which remain focused on Central Reading and remain an appropriate sound strategy for Reading. Likewise, the South and Vale spatial strategy in our emerging Local Plan does not focus development near Reading.

Climate Change

A new objective targeting climate change issues has been added to the local plan's partial update: *'Respond to the climate emergency by contributing to achieving a net zero carbon Reading by 2030'*.

Policies in the Plan are then enhanced to help achieve this objective.

We support the focus in the cross cutting policies on seeking to achieve the net zero carbon Reading by 2030 objective.

However, policies CC2 and H5 require all new build housing to be built to the optional water efficiency standard (under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations) to achieve water neutrality 'where possible'. We think you would be justified in going further and making your policies more effective, given the area is under serious water stress as per the [Environment Agency classification](#), and the general population growth that remains higher than the national average. By way of example, in our Joint Local Plan which we recently submitted for examination, we have proposed a higher water efficiency standard in JLP Policy CE7 of water use not exceeding 100 litres per person per day, or any future tighter standard that may replace this. We have also produced a Water Efficiency Topic Paper, available [here](#).

Housing Need and Requirements

The Government sets out in the NPPF/PPG that it expects all authorities to follow the standard method to determine the number of homes needed, unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach, which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals (December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 61).

We support Reading's proposed housing requirement and believe it to be sound. Reading Borough Council has a revised Housing Needs Assessment (July 2024) which has identified a local housing need of 735 homes per year to 2041, which is lower than the standard method. We support the exceptional circumstances that justify the alternative approach to the standard method proposed by the Council in the Housing Provision Background Paper (November 2024).

Reading has a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment confirming the ability to meet needs in full to 2041, delivering 825 homes per year. This means that there is no expectation of unmet housing need needing to be planned for by neighbouring local authorities.

Employment Need and Supply

Reading Borough Council identifies the need for additional office and industrial floorspace. Existing allocations and as yet un-implemented permissions, plus windfall employment sites will contribute towards meeting this employment need. We believe the employment strategy to be sound.

Infrastructure

The strategy outlined in the Plan for the provision of strategic infrastructure to facilitate the proposed development is detailed in section 10.3 of the Plan, along with the corresponding Table 10.2. This table summarises the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the necessary components to support anticipated growth.

Table 10.2 identifies the Third Thames Crossing as a north-south route across the River Thames via a new road, public transport and active travel bridge and associated mitigation measures on the road network. You will be aware that there has not been enough work undertaken on the impact that this new road bridge would have on the Oxfordshire road network or the necessary mitigation measures needed. It is also not clear how the bridge and suitable road connections would be funded.

Table 10.2 also identifies a series of Park and Ride Mobility Hubs, and corridors where these hubs would be proposed - including three routes crossing the boundary with South Oxfordshire, although no sites are identified. Further work is needed to understand how these hubs could reduce car dependency and effective use of land.

Figure 8.1 in the Plan contains an Emmer Green area strategy, showing route arrows and park and ride symbols inside South Oxfordshire. This is not appropriate, given our adjoining district is not covered in the scope of Reading's Local Plan, and we ask that you amend the diagram. There is no evidence of the financial viability of these proposals and further work would be needed on the impacts on surrounding areas.

For these reasons we believe Section 10 currently to be unsound because it is not justified, not consistent with national policy, nor is it effective.

Duty to Co-operate

On 23 August 2024 Reading Borough Council communicated with local planning authorities within a 10km radius regarding housing need. The purpose of this communication was not to announce an unmet housing need, but rather to explore the potential for accommodating any unmet need should the Partial Update be informed by an alternative (the standard method). This unmet need was projected to total 954 homes to 2041.

Out of the nine authorities contacted, eight provided responses, with most indicating an inability to meet the identified need. Furthermore, the majority expressed that addressing this need at this stage was premature, as the standard method does not reflect the evidenced housing demand.

South and Vale consider that:

- The policies on housing need and employment need in the Reading Local Plan update have met the Duty to Cooperate legal test;
- Reading has collaborated closely throughout the process with South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse on potential strategic planning matters during the preparation of the Local Plan partial update and the Joint Local Plan for South and Vale;
- There are cross-boundary matters and 'live' issues that require continuous engagement with Reading Borough Council.

Yours sincerely



Planning Policy Team leader



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BY EMAIL

0118 937 3337

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Date: 12 November 2024

Your contact is: [REDACTED] Planning Policy

Dear Sir/Madam,

Reading Borough Council (RBC) is grateful for the opportunity to make representations on the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Plan. RBC works closely with South Oxfordshire District Council in particular on a range of strategic planning matters and looks forward to continuing this process throughout the Local Plan process. We welcome the progress that has been made on the Local Plan to date.

RBC has some comments on the following matters in the Local Plan:

- Duty to co-operate;
- Housing need;
- Affordable housing;
- Gypsy and traveller provision;
- Cross-Thames travel;
- Park and ride mobility hubs; and
- Gypsy and traveller provision.

1. Duty to co-operate

RBC has worked closely with SODC and VOWHDC on strategic planning matters in the preparation of this Local Plan. We can therefore confirm that we consider that the duty to co-operate has been complied with throughout this plan-making process.

2. Housing needs

STRAT2 is replaced by HOU1 and JT1. Policy HOU1 plans to deliver 16,530 new homes to 2041 in South Oxfordshire, meeting all of South Oxfordshire's identified need as well as an allowance for meeting a portion of Oxford City's unmet need. Reading Borough Council welcomes the commitment to meeting the needs arising within the District in full. We are not in a position to comment on whether the level of Oxford's unmet need to be provided is appropriate, although it is vital that the local plans for Oxfordshire in combination meet those needs to avoid placing pressure on other areas, such as Reading.

Reading Borough Council is currently consulting on its Local Plan Partial Update Pre-Submission Draft (Reg 19). Exceptional circumstances have been identified for basing the plan on an alternative approach to the standard method, and a Housing Needs Assessment has identified a local housing need of 735 homes per year. The Council has recently completed its Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) which found that Reading will be able to meet those needs in full to 2041 and will deliver 825 homes per year over that period. On that basis, there are not expected to be any unmet needs from Reading arising over the plan period, although you will be aware that in August 2024 the Council wrote to nearby authorities including SODC to understand the position in relation to unmet needs should the standard method be used as the basis. Your response to this letter is noted.

It is recognised that the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Local Plan does not propose significant housing growth on the boundaries of Reading. Reading Borough Council agrees with this position based on current information. Partly this is due to the rural nature of the areas close to this part of the boundary along with the close proximity of the Chilterns National Landscape, and the extent of the River Thames flood zones. However, the transport and other infrastructure constraints in the northern part of the Borough have long been seen as a significant constraint to significant new development north of the River Thames.

3. Affordable housing

Policy H9 on affordable housing is being replaced with Policy HOU3, which seeks contributions of 40% on sites with a net gain of 10 or more homes. RBC welcomes the commitment to secure a high level of affordable housing in new developments, as meeting those needs will prevent further pressure being placed on neighbouring areas such as Reading.

4. Gypsies and travellers

Policy HOU10 plans to meet the identified needs from the area for sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople. Reading has an unmet need for permanent sites for gypsies and travellers of 10-17 pitches, and no sites on which this need could realistically be met due to the constrained urban nature of the Borough. Requests to nearby authorities under the duty to co-operate have not resulted in these unmet needs being accommodated by any other authority, and this unmet need therefore remains outstanding, and it is likely that Reading will continue to have unmet needs for some time. Any consideration of needs within the plan area should therefore take account of whether there is any scope to accommodate any of Reading's unmet needs. RBC would be pleased to discuss this matter further with the authorities as the plan progresses, including any discussion of how provision can be resourced.

5. Cross Thames Travel

TRANS1b is being replaced with Policy IN3. RBC's recently adopted Transport Strategy 2040 identifies that due to Reading's location and a lack of alternative strategic north-south road connections in the surrounding area, there are high levels of through-traffic. This adds to the high levels of congestion in the town centre, on the bridges over the River Thames and along key corridors. The Cross-Thames Travel Group has been formed to develop options to improve travel across the River Thames, including reviewing opportunities to improve existing routes and to review the need for a new river crossing to the east of Reading and associated mitigation measures. It is disappointing that this work has not been included nor mentioned within this policy or any land safeguarded for a potential crossing.

6. Park and ride mobility hubs

Policy IN3 identifies transport priorities including the delivery of mobility hubs to support transport interchanges (d). Reading's Transport Strategy 2040 includes a network of park and ride mobility hubs, with a recognition that this will in most cases require land to be identified outside Reading. Three of the routes on which park and ride mobility hubs are corridors which cross the Reading–South Oxfordshire boundary and where realistically there are no sites to provide these within Reading (A4074, B481 and A4155). We support the identification of mobility hubs within policy IN3 but consider that, in order for it to be effective, the policy or supporting text should clarify that these will include park and ride mobility hubs on routes into Reading.

Regards,



Planning Policy Team Leader