

READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION NOTE ON CO-OPERATION WITH OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ON PARK AND RIDE

During the hearings for the Examination into the Reading Borough Local Plan, on 2nd October 2018, the Planning Inspector requested further information on any discussions that had taken place between Reading Borough Council (RBC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) on the matter of park and ride provision on routes into Reading north of the Thames, which were identified in policy TR2 of the plan. This note provides some additional headline information on that matter.

The principle of park and ride provision on cross-boundary corridors between Reading and Oxfordshire is a longstanding ambition of RBC. Routes along the A4074 (Upper Woodcote Road) and A4155 (Henley Road) were included in the Council's Local Transport Plan 2 (finalised in 2006) and Core Strategy (adopted 2008), whilst the Council's Local Transport Plan 3 (finalised 2011) also included reference to park and ride on key routes to the north of Reading. OCC was a consultee on all of those documents, but there has not previously been contention around this issue.

RBC has also sought to ensure that planning on both sides of the boundary reflects the potential for park and ride provision. RBC responded to the consultation on Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan 4 on 28th August 2014. This response (Appendix 1 to this note) included a comment that OCC should roll forward its existing support from LTP3 for park and ride sites to the north of Reading. Unfortunately, that does not appear to have been taken on board in Oxfordshire's LTP4, even though support for park and ride to serve Oxford is strong and has been a long-standing core element of the Council's transport strategy.

More recently, RBC also responded to the consultation on South Oxfordshire's Publication Local Plan in November 2017, requesting that reference to park and ride provision on the edge of Reading be referred to as a strategic transport matter in policy TRANS1 (which already referred to improvements in the Reading area in more general terms), rather than as a general sustainable transport measure between towns and villages within South Oxfordshire.

In the past, there has been a certain amount of more detailed work already undertaken on potential park and ride routes. Feasibility work was undertaken on park and ride corridors to the north of Reading on behalf of the Cross Thames Group (of which OCC is a member) in 2007. This work is not available in the public domain at this stage, and the 11 years since the work has been undertaken may mean that its content is not necessarily up-to-date (although the high-level principles are still valid), but it does show that discussions involving OCC and other partners have been going on for some time.

With reference to the A4155 Henley Road corridor, the issue of park and ride is linked to the discussions around crossing of the Thames. The importance of park and ride accessed via a new crossing is highlighted in the New Thames Crossing Strategic Outline Business Case, prepared on behalf of the Cross-Thames Travel Group of which OCC is a member, which states the following as one of the key ways a new crossing would contribute to the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP's Strategic Economic Plan:

"The existing and developing strategic Thames Valley rail network is centred on Reading as its hub and access to this hub will be enhanced by the provision of

effective park and ride and other improved public transport access via the New Crossing.”

There have therefore been discussions between the two authorities on the subject of park and ride dating back a number of years. At this stage, such discussion has been quite high-level, as funding to develop specific proposals on identified sites have not been available. However, where sites are identified over the plan period, there will be much more detailed discussion between the relevant authorities and it will also provide a tool to require developers to assist in their delivery. It should be noted in this context that RBC has considerable experience of working jointly to achieve delivery of park and ride sites within adjoining authorities, with both the Mere oak and Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride sites within Wokingham Borough being recent examples.

APPENDIX 1: READING BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO OXFORDSHIRE LTP4

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Date: 28th August 2014

BY EMAIL

Your contact is:

Councillor Tony Page - Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Strategic Environment Planning & Transport

Dear Joy

Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 4

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to your consultation on the development of Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan 4.

There are a number of cross boundary issues of importance to both Reading and Oxfordshire which we feel should be highlighted in your emerging LTP strategy, particularly with regard to the significant demand for travel between the two authority areas which results in congestion on the limited road crossings over the River Thames, and the forecast increase in demand for rail services and interchange at Reading Station following the recent improvement works.

The demand forecasting analysis undertaken in preparation for Reading's Transport Innovation Fund bid during 2009/10 highlighted significant levels of travel between areas such as Sonning Common and other settlements in Oxfordshire to Reading for both work and leisure purposes. In addition, the high-level modelling work recently undertaken by the joint working group considering the case for a Third Thames Bridge confirmed major benefits to both Henley and South Oxfordshire from this proposed scheme. To this end we would encourage you to include support within your LTP4 for joint working to investigate the feasibility of a Third Thames Bridge in the Reading urban area.

It should also be noted that there was strong support from a packed meeting (of over 100 people) of Sonning Common Parish Council's AGM which I spoke at on 12th May 2014 for Oxfordshire and South Oxfordshire to engage with Reading and Wokingham on the case for a Third Thames Bridge.

In addition, we would advocate rolling forward support within your LTP4 for the principle of establishing park & ride facilities to the north of Reading (as included in your current LTP3), and a joined-up approach to the provision of local bus services, school transport and freight routing between the two authority areas.

We look forward to working with you on the north-south linkages highlighted above and any other emerging cross boundary issues throughout the duration of your LTP4 period.

Yours sincerely

Tony Page
Deputy Leader of the Council
Lead Member for Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport