

Appendix 1 - Policy Context

ROWIP2 supports key strategies and policies. The Council has ambitious plans to increase walking and cycling in the local and wider area, therefore these links will help ensure Rights of Way are enhanced as part of the wider walking and cycling network and contributes to wider initiatives. ROWIP2 supports the national, regional, and local policies as can be seen the figure below:



Figure 4.1: ROWIP2 link to national, regional, and local strategies

National Policies

Industrial Strategy

The *Industrial Strategy White Paper* was published in November 2017 setting out the requirement for Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authorities to develop Local Industrial Strategies. The Strategy was developed around five Foundations of Productivity and four Grand Challenges as illustrated below.

Foundations of Productivity:

- Ideas: the world's most innovative economy
- People: good jobs and greater earning power for all
- Infrastructure: a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure
- Business Environment: the best place to start and grow a business
- Places: prosperous communities across the UK

Grand Challenges:

- Artificial Intelligence and data
- Ageing society
- Clean growth
- Future of mobility

Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy

The *Future of Mobility Strategy* sets out Central Government's approach to tackling mobility challenges, which was recognised as one of the four Grand Challenges and opportunities to transform the way we move through a number of underlining principles, including active travel for short urban journeys. The Future of Mobility Strategy recognises key transport challenges as:

- Safety.
- Air Pollution
- Congestion.
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Noise Pollution
- Lack of Physical Activity
- Inefficient Use of Public Space

Clean Air Strategy

The Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published England's first *Clean Air Strategy*, another Grand Challenge, in 2019 setting out how the Government will reduce emissions from transport, homes, farming and industrial sectors to improve air quality. This includes investment in active travel as detailed in the ROWIP2 Strategy.

The Road to Zero, The Clean Growth Strategy and A Green Future: A 25 Year Plan further support the ambitions of the Clean Air Strategy by setting out Government's

strategy for delivering growth whilst tackling environmental issues, including air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

The benefits of cycling and walking for local journeys are widely known. In April 2017 the Government published its first ***Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy***, setting out its ambition to make cycling and walking the natural choice for local journeys through, 'Better Safety - A safe and reliable way to travel for local journeys'.

- Better Safety - 'A safe and reliable way to travel for local journeys;
- Better Mobility - 'More people cycling and walking - easy, normal and more enjoyable'; and
- Better Streets - 'Places that have cycling and walking at their heart'

As part of this Strategy, the Government set out its intention to support Local Highway Authorities in developing ambitious, forward-looking plans (Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans) to help work towards and achieve the targets set out in the Strategy, including:

- Doubling the number of cycling stages.
- Increasing walking activity; and
- Increasing the percentage of 5 to 10 years old that usually walk to school.

Gear Change - A bold Vision for walking and cycling

The Department for Transport published in July 2020 "*Gear Change - a bold vision for cycling and walking*". This plan describes the vision to make England a great walking and cycling nation. It sets out the actions required at all levels of government to make this a reality, grouped under four themes:

- better streets for cycling and people
- cycling and walking at the heart of decision-making
- empowering and encouraging local authorities
- enabling people to cycle and protecting them when they do

Inclusive Transport Strategy

The DfT published its ***Inclusive Transport Strategy*** in 2018 to ensure that our ageing population, and the fifth of people who identify as having some sort of disability have "the same access to transport as everyone else, and that they are able to travel easily, confidently and without extra cost". The strategy sets out five key themes to delivering the strategy, including improving physical infrastructure.

As recognised in the Inclusive Transport Strategy, Local Authorities have a duty to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

Regional Policies

ROWIP2 supports the emerging regional policy led by Transport for the South-East and Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership in consultation with Local Highway Authorities.

Transport Strategy for the South East

Transport for the South East (TfSE) is an emerging Sub-national Transport Body whose primary aim is to support and grow the economy through identifying and prioritising a programme of integrated strategic transport projects across the whole southeast region. In 2018 the Council input into the development the TfSE's Economic Connectivity Review, which supported the development of the TfSE's *Transport Strategy for the Southeast* which was been published in 2020.

The Strategy vision is that by the 2050 the southeast of England will be a leading global region for net-zero carbon, sustainable economic growth where integrated transport, digital and energy networks have delivered a step change in connectivity and environmental quality. Their goals and priorities include:

Environmental priorities

- Reducing carbon emission to net zero by 2050 at the latest.
- Reducing the impact of, and the need to, travel.
- Protecting our natural, built and historic environments.
- Improving biodiversity.
- Minimising resource and energy consumption.

Social priorities

- Promoting active travel and healthier lifestyles.
- Improving air quality
- An affordable, accessible transport network that's simpler to use.
- A more integrated transport network where it is easier to plan and pay for door-to-door journeys.
- A safer transport networks.

Economic priorities

- Improving connectivity between major economic hubs, ports and airports.
- More reliable journeys.
- A more resilient network.
- Better integrated land use and transport planning.
- A digitally smart transport network.

The Council will continue to work with TfSE as it works both towards achieving statutory status and the full adoption of its Transport Strategy.

Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy

Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership is in the process of developing a ***Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS)*** as required in the Industrial Strategy White Paper published in November 2017. The emerging BLIS sets out five key priorities to achieving its vision of being ‘the best of both global and local’:

- Enhancing productivity within Berkshire’s enterprises,
- Ecosystems which are maturing and evolving and extend beyond Berkshire.
- International trade, connections, collaborations, and investment,
- Vibrant places and a supportive infrastructure,
- Making Berkshire an inclusive area where aspirations can be realised and
- Responding to climate change emergency.

The BLIS will replace the LEP’s existing Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) when it is published.

Local Policies

ROWIP2 supports the delivery of ambitious plans for economic and housing growth set out in the new Local Plan and addressing the Climate Emergency, including making Reading carbon neutral by 2030.

Reading 2050 Vision

The '**Smart and Sustainable Reading' 2050 Vision**, was developed by a partnership of local communities, businesses, education providers and public sector partners to help deliver economic growth and evolution as a smart and sustainable city to 2050 under the three themes of:

- A Green Tech City
- A City of Rivers and Parks
- A City of Culture & Diversity

It is our ambition to help fulfil this vision by delivering a step-change in high quality, high technology, and sustainable transport provision along the key growth corridors. It builds upon our current transport strategy, reflects our adopted and emerging growth strategies and connects economic corridors to address the following core needs:

- Improve accessibility, affordability and journey time/reliability of more sustainable means of travel,
- Provide public transport that is more attractive than single occupancy private car use,
- Increase in active travel,
- Enable 'non-car reliant' planned growth,
- Improve links to national transport networks and
- Improve air quality.

Enhancing and maintaining our Rights of Way network to provide access for all, creating paths that are fit for everyone and enabling and encouraging the use of the paths will help to address the core needs listed above.

Local Plan

The new **Local Plan** was approved by the Planning Inspectorate in September and adopted on 4th November 2019. The new plan sets out key development sites up to 2036 and emphasises the importance of addressing challenges, such as climate change and sustainability, in parallel to delivering ambitious plans for over 15,000 new homes and supporting employment, services and infrastructure.

The Local Plan is therefore underpinned by new carbon neutral policies and strategies recognising the Climate Change Emergency Declaration issued by the Council in February 2019 where we set an ambitious target to achieve a net carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

ROWIP2 supports the ambitious development plans set by the Local Plan by enhancing the network by encouraging walking and cycling and reducing reliance on single occupancy car journeys.

Local Plan - Neighbouring Boroughs

Plans for neighbouring boroughs, Wokingham and West Berkshire, as well as Oxfordshire and Hampshire, continue to be developed and updated. Improvements made to the network through ROWIP2 will complement these plans where Rights of Way connect neighbouring authorities.

Climate Change Strategy

A Climate Emergency was declared by the Council in February 2019 whereby we set out our approach to protecting our planet for future generations with the ambition of creating a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. This declaration is further supported by carbon neutral standards set out in the new Local Plan and new and emerging strategies for climate change and transport

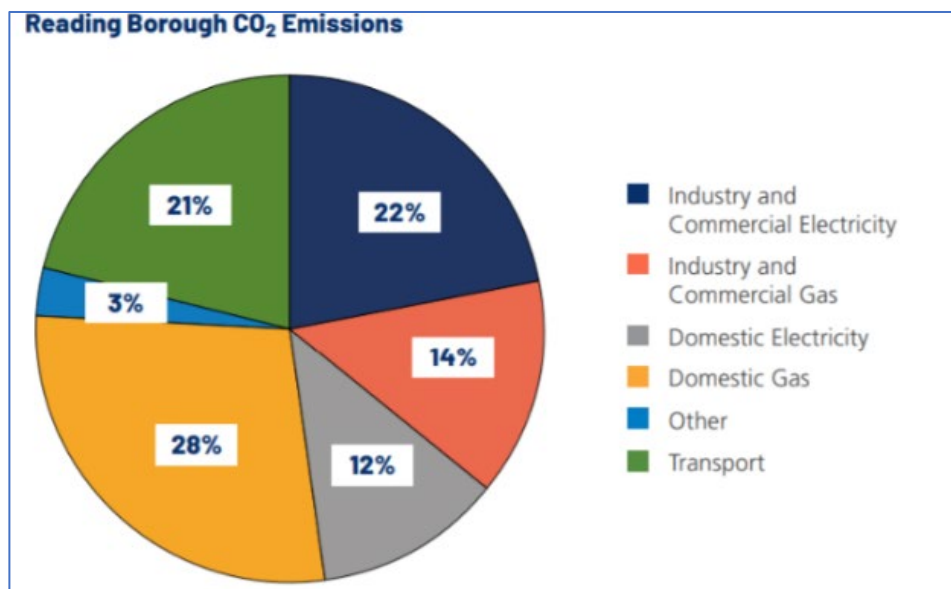


Figure 4.2: Reading Borough Council CO2 Emission

The “**Reading’s Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25**” sets out the actions required during this critical five-year period to work towards the objective of a net zero carbon Reading by 2030. It also considers how we can adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

The emerging Climate Change Strategy, which adopted in November 2020, was developed around seven themes, including ‘transport’, ‘nature’ and Health and Well being’. Officers worked alongside Reading Climate Action Network, and interested parties, to develop the themes and the emerging action plan.

Actions by ROWIP2 include the improvement of the walking and cycling routes so that they are safer and encouraging people to use the paths to walk and cycle for their local journeys instead of using the car contributes to the low carbon travel choices.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The emerging Reading Transport Strategy (RTS) 2036 themes and the supporting Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP) and ROWIP2 will all support the overall aim of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to ‘improve and protect Reading’s health and wellbeing - improving the health of the poorest, fastest’ as well as its sister documents, including the Healthy Weight Strategy.

We will work towards this vision by supporting healthy lifestyles through the improvement of Rights of Way to encourage active travel and therefore improve air quality through reduced congestion.

Our Rights of Way network provide access to the only open countryside in the Borough, and this could have a significant impact on people’s wellbeing

Corporate Plan

Our Corporate Plan sets out how we will enable Reading to realise its full potential and ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success. The plan is updated every year and outlines our strategy to deliver our vision, whilst recognising the importance of the social and environmental challenges.

Our new Plan ‘**Council Corporate Plan - 2022 to 2025- Investing in Reading’s Future**’ details the same priorities as in previous plan that Reading tackles the immediate challenges it faces in ensuring our town recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, and to continue to make progress towards the social and environmental goals from the last corporate plan.



We will achieve this through the following three themes:

1) **Health improvement** - We are working towards a clean, safe town that is easy to travel around, and where people feel the benefits of clean air and active travel like walking and cycling. Locally we are investing in walking, cycling, and public transport; tackling congestion; increasing recycling rates; and improving parks and open spaces.

2) **Thriving communities** - We will focus on the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded in our communities, ensuring young people, older people and those with long term health conditions or disabilities are supported to live their best lives. We want everyone to feel able to participate and feel they can influence decisions that affect their lives and local areas.

3) **Inclusive economy** - working towards a town where everyone can access education, skills and training and good jobs and where child poverty is eradicated. An inclusive economy enhances wellbeing and enables upward mobility, with more opportunities for more people to participate in the growth and success of the town. Our priority is to support the most vulnerable in our communities and to lay the groundwork for a strong economic recovery and that this work continues.

ROWIP2 contributes to achieve “health improvement” by encouraging active travel and improving open spaces, contributes to “Thriving communities” by considering the needs of population with mobility issues and contributes to inclusive economy by providing better links to the transport network for sustainable travel.

Smart Solutions

We want Reading to be a smart, connected town of the future. People should have the ability to make travel choices based on real time information and GPS enabled maps. The current advances and future potential of technology provide an opportunity to promote the use of our Rights of Way network and should allow us to keep up to date information of condition and use of our routes. We plan to explore how technology can help us improve the quality of service our Rights of Way and our wider walking and cycling network provide.

Association of Directors of Environment, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) Live Labs Mobilisation Plan, Thames Valley Berkshire

The Thames Valley Berkshire Live Lab project aims to harness the value of big data, Internet of Things and data science to demonstrate at scale how to make a measurable difference to the health of the region’s population and the operational efficiency of local authorities, whilst reducing CO2 emissions and improving the region’s productivity.

This project will trial technologies and working practices to tackle issues impacting on Thames Valley Berkshire productivity and populations health - congestion, air quality, road surface quality, energy consumption and carbon emissions. With a focus on outcomes that will benefit the local population, the project incorporates an innovation competition for local start-ups and SME’s who will be awarded funding to address the issues and challenges related to potholes, **local travel choices**, local

pollution and congestion. The two-year project is funded by the Department for Transport.

There is opportunity to use data from this project related to local travel choices to promote the use of our Rights of Way and the wider walking and cycling network.

Reading Transport Plan

The Reading Transport Strategy (RTS) includes five objectives that are considered as being integral to the delivery of policies and schemes that will be set out in the new transport strategy, these are:



People and
Places



Healthy Lifestyles



Clean and Green



Inclusive Growth



Smart Solutions

As with previous Local Transport Plans, the strategy will be underpinned by statutory and non-statutory sub-strategies, further detailing our approach to tackling the issues identified in the Local Transport Plan, including reduced congestion and emissions, improved air quality and health and wellbeing, whilst ensuring the economic success of the town and using smart solutions.

ROWIP2 is recognised as one of the sub-strategies to the RTS 2036, alongside other documents setting out how we will encourage more people to cycle and walk for local journeys or as part of longer multi-modal journeys.

Local Walking and Cycling Improvement Plan (LCWIP)

Our LCWIP is a sub strategy of the RTS 2036 and was developed in partnership with Wokingham and West Berkshire Councils. It sets out ambitious plans to transform our streets and encourage more people to choose cycling and walking for local journeys, or as part of longer multi-modal journeys.

LCWIP sets out a vision for walking and cycling that integrates the RTS themes:

‘To transform our cycling and walking network to be safe, clean and green and better connect people to places to support healthy lifestyle choices and inclusive growth, where everyone benefits from Reading’s success’.

The LCWIP is a joint walking and cycling strategy and implementation plan for the wider Reading area over a 10-year period and builds upon successes from the previous Cycling Strategy 2014 to 2019, Bridging Gaps and Overcoming Barriers.

Our LCWIP sets out how we will transform our existing network of branded cycle routes and our comprehensive footway network via an improved and expanded network of cycling and walking routes. These routes will better connect people to places, including strategic development sites set out in our new Local Plan, will

encourage people of all abilities to cycle and walk and will be enhanced and transformed to create a safe, clean and green transport network that supports healthy lifestyle choices.

The Rights of Way network is an integral part of our wider walking and cycling network and therefore any improvements made through ROWIP2 will directly support the aspirations and plans set out in our LCWIP2.

Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy (SMoTS)

The Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy (SMoTS) is a sub strategy of the RTS 2036 which promotes sustainable and active travel to school through various methods including School Travel Plans and various cycling and walking activities with awards for children. SMOTS objectives include encouraging schools to update travel plans use active travel, increase the number of pupils traveling sustainably to school and reducing the number of car journeys.

ROWIP2 can contribute directly to SMoTS through enhancing the Rights of Way connecting to educational institutes, making them safer, raising awareness of their existence and encouraging to use them for active travel to School.