

Appendix D.1: Transport Statement

East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Scheme

Transport Statement

On behalf of **Reading Borough Council, Highways and Transport Department**



Project Ref: 28791/5543 | Rev: 0 | Date: October 2018



Document Control Sheet

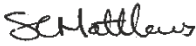
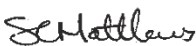
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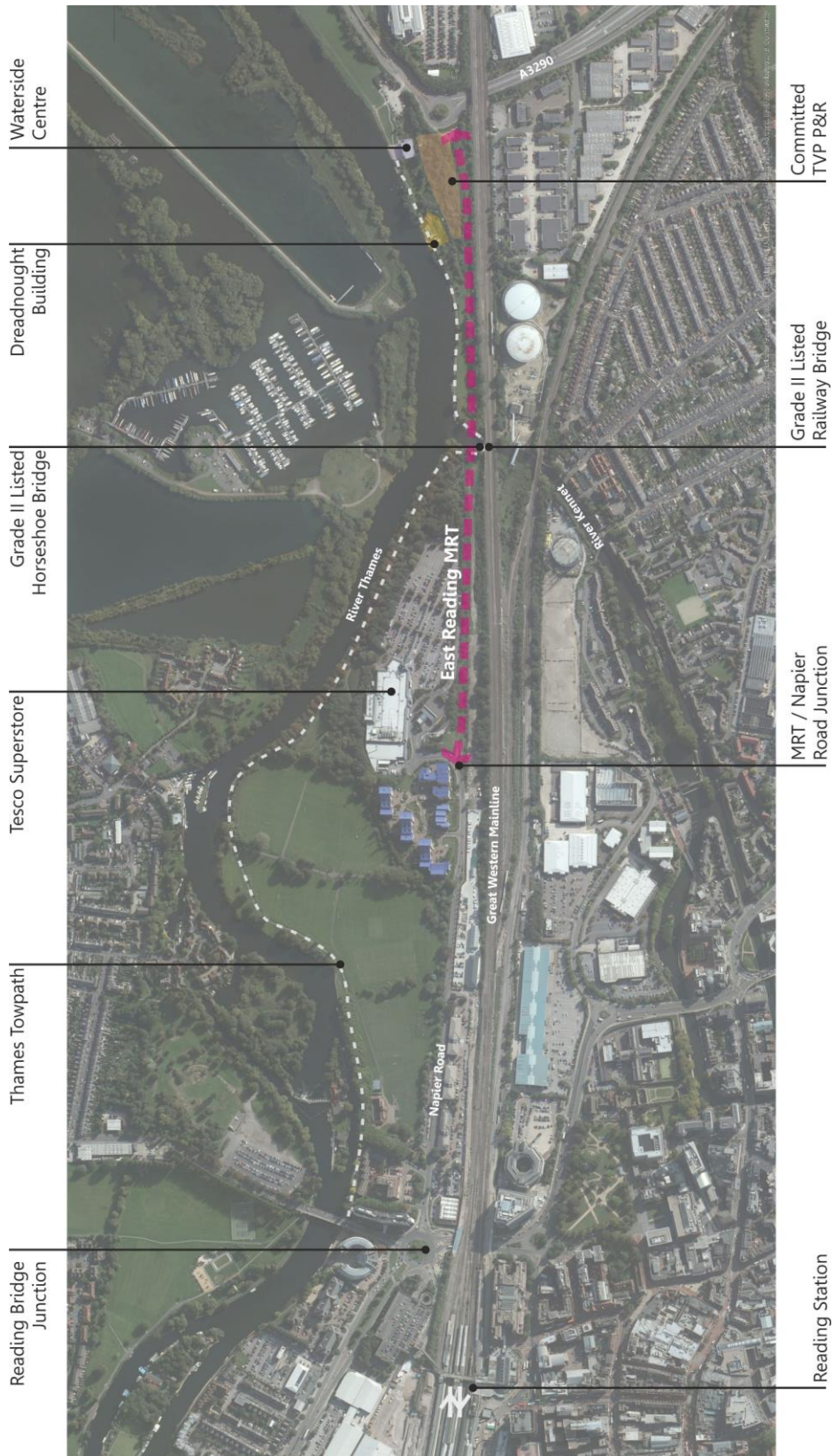
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Transport Statement (TS) has been prepared to support a full planning application for the East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (East MRT) scheme. The proposed scheme straddles the two Local Planning Authority areas of Reading Borough Council (RBC) and Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).
- 1.1.2 The East MRT scheme is a segregated fast track public transport, pedestrian and cycle route that will support enhanced accessibility and continued sustainable growth in Reading, Wokingham Borough and the wider area. It would provide a new dedicated public transport link from central Reading to existing residential and employment areas to the east and south-east of Reading, including Thames Valley Park (TVP), Woodley, Earley, Winnersh and Wokingham.
- 1.1.3 The purpose of the scheme is to improve access to and from Reading eastwards for buses, pedestrians and cyclists. This will help accommodate forecast increase in travel demand along the heavily congested A4 corridor, which provides access to existing residential employment and educational sites, as well as Reading town centre, Reading railway station and substantial planned development in Wokingham Borough and Reading town centre.
- 1.1.4 The East MRT Scheme is proposed to link into the A3290 at Thames Valley Park (TVP), adjacent to the proposed new Park and Ride facility (TVP P&R), to Napier Road, Reading town centre and the railway station, see **Figure 1.1**.
- 1.1.5 The TVP P&R development was granted full planning permission (application ref: 161596) by WBC in November 2016 for:
- “Development of a Park & Ride facility providing approximately 277 vehicular spaces, motorcycle parking and associated vehicular access and landscaping.”*
- 1.1.6 A Section 73 Application (application ref: 182496) has since been submitted for the TVP P&R on the 7th September 2018 to vary aspects of the planning permission.

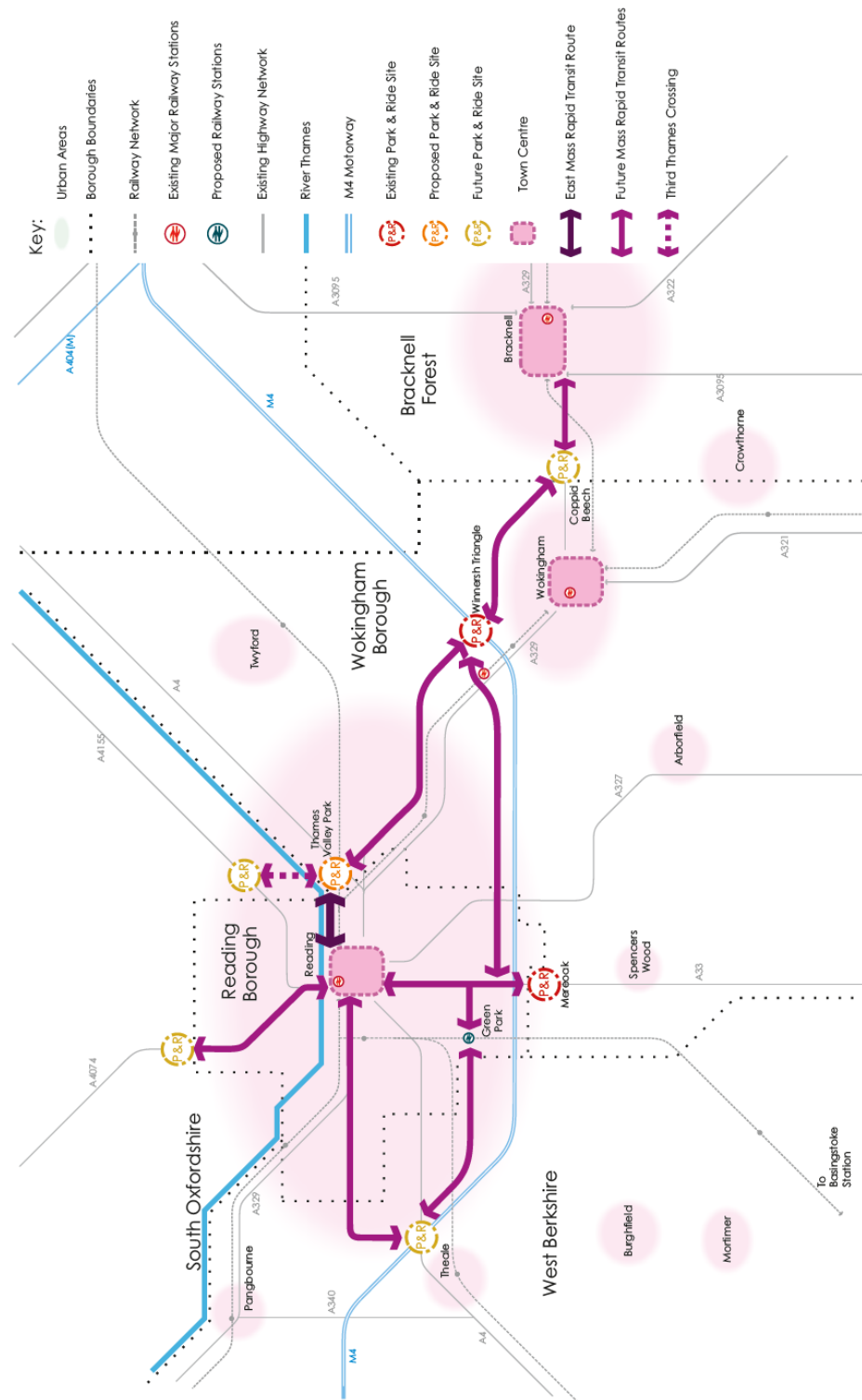
Figure 1.1: Site Location



1.2 Wider Transport Strategy

1.2.1 **Figure 1.2** shows Reading's public transport strategy to provide significantly improved radial and orbital MRT routes.

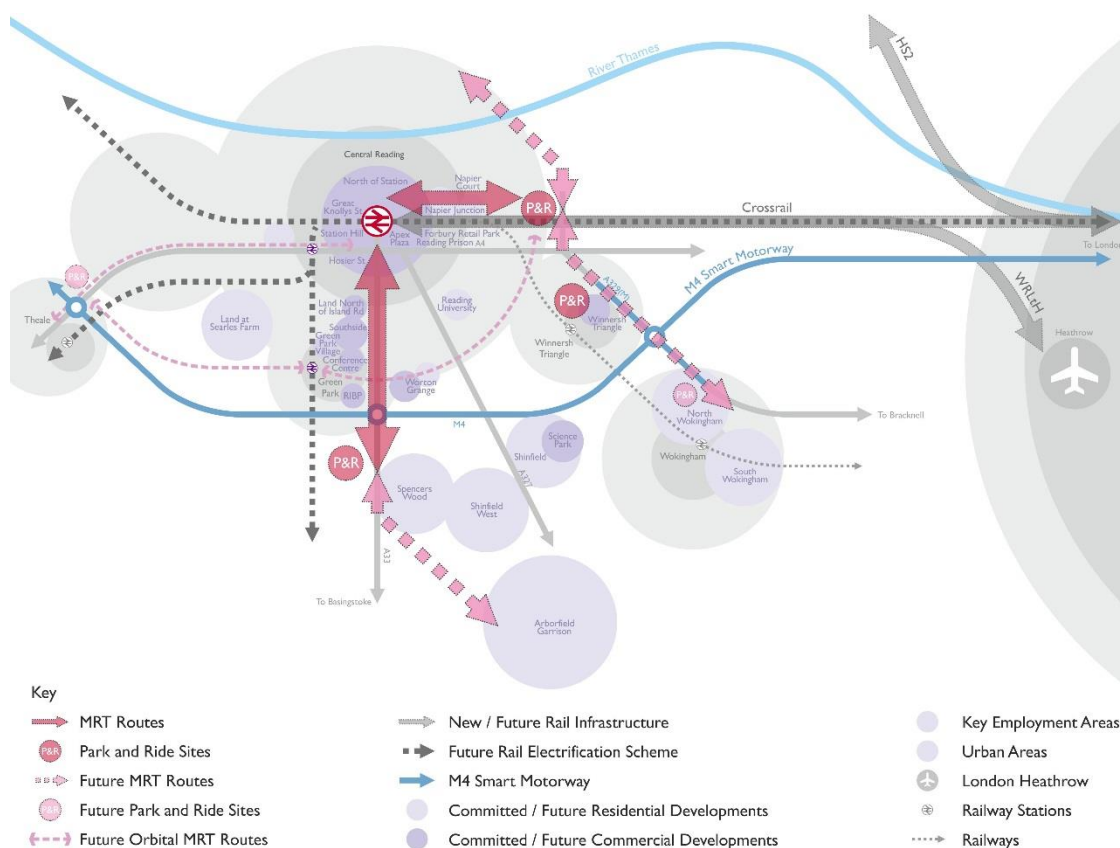
Figure 1.2: Reading Borough Council Public Transport Strategy



1.3 Future Connections to Strategic Transport Networks

- 1.3.1 This eastern section will form part of a longer term MRT network for the Thames Valley or operate as a standalone MRT route. The link also provides future opportunity to link to a Third Thames Crossing to provide MRT to a P&R north of the River Thames.
- 1.3.2 Reading is planned to benefit from significant investment in the following strategic networks (see **Figure 1.3**):
- Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) services are planned to operate from Reading Station in 2019 providing direct services into central London. This line is reported to be generating the most homes of all the new rail lines;
 - The Western Rail Link to Heathrow (WRLtH) will provide direct access to Heathrow Airport from Reading and is planned to be completed in 2021;
 - HS2, which should be completed in the next decade, will reduce journey times from London to Birmingham to 49 minutes, making it easier to commute from Britain's second city to the capital. London's rail commuter network will then encompass Brighton, in the south, Southend, in the east, Reading, in the west, and Birmingham, to the north; and
 - M4 Junctions 3-12: Smart Motorway scheme is currently under construction and due to be fully operational by 2022.
- 1.3.3 The East MRT scheme will improve accessibility to these strategic transport networks, allowing residents from existing and planned development living to the east of Reading to reach the rail services and Reading town centre, or visitors arriving from the motorway to use the P&R at TVP or Winnersh into Reading town centre.

Figure 1.3: Strategic Transport Networks and Connections



1.4 Economic Growth in Reading and the Wider Area

- 1.4.1 Growth in Reading and the wider area is planned to continue over the coming years, with more housing and investment in employment opportunities.
- 1.4.2 A growing town must be supported by good transport links, to provide urban connectivity and access to wider strategic networks. Reading's transport links are suffering from the highest levels of delays in any Local Authority outside London (source: Department for Transport Statistics, Road Congestion Statistics Table CGN0502B, February 2018) with limited public transport alternative that avoids congestion. RBC has made significant headway in delivering its transport strategy (set out in the last three Local Transport Plans), which has been identified to support planned growth, but significant work is still needed. Junction 11 on the M4 has benefitted from capacity increases and bus priority. Reading Station has been improved to remove the rail bottleneck and facilities upgraded to support the capacity increases. Park and Ride sites have been delivered at Mere oak and Winnersh, with another planned at Thames Valley Park. Cycle routes have been delivered along London Road, Wokingham Road, A33, and across the River Thames via a new foot/cycle bridge. Pinch point schemes have relieved bottlenecks. Cross boundary working with neighbouring authorities has been involved in delivering some schemes.
- 1.4.3 Ernst and Young compiled a report which suggested that economic growth in Reading was predicted to be higher than anywhere else in the UK. However the average commuter in Reading spends 26 hours a year in congestion during peak hours, with a total estimated cost of £75 million (Source: Inrix 2017 Traffic Scorecard). A step-change is needed to provide connectivity, capacity upgrades and encourage sustainable travel to allow this potential economic growth to be achieved.

1.5 Business Case

- 1.5.1 A Business Case for the East MRT Scheme was prepared that considered five different cases, Strategic, Economic, Financial, Commercial and Management.
- 1.5.2 The methodology has been agreed with the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (TVBLEP) independent auditor. The Business Case does not consider the future potential of the route, in terms of:
- Further services using the route (beyond those assumed, as set out later in this report in section 5.2);
 - The ability to connect into a future MRT network and associated increase in demand;
 - Any increase in demand to access Crossrail services; and
 - Development sites being identified in the emerging Local Plans in RBC, WBC and South Oxfordshire District County (SODC).
- 1.5.3 Potential increases in cycle use and bus patronage due to the East MRT Scheme have been estimated to inform the Business Case. This work has shown that the East MRT could increase levels in cycling by 114 new trips per day based on timesaving and improved cycling facilities utilising DfT TAG UNIT A5.1. The demand modelling undertaken to inform the business case shows that the East MRT Scheme will lead to an increase in public transport patronage by up to 15%.
- 1.5.4 Even with the limitations bullet pointed above, the Business Case demonstrates a high value for money. The Business Case shows that the East MRT Scheme is supported by a robust case for change that fits with wider public policy objectives (strategic case), demonstrates value for money (economic case), is commercially viable (commercial case), is financially affordable (financial case) and is achievable (management case).

2 Policy Context

2.1 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that: “planning policies should:

- a. support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities;*
- b. be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned;*
- c. identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development;*
- d. provide for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking (drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans);*
- e. provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy. In doing so they should take into account whether such development is likely to be a nationally significant infrastructure project and any relevant national policy statements; and*
- f. recognise the importance of maintaining a national network of general aviation airfields, and their need to adapt and change over time – taking into account their economic value in serving business, leisure, training and emergency service needs, and the Government’s General Aviation Strategy”*

2.1.2 The East MRT scheme has been identified by both RBC and WBC highway authorities, alongside transport operators such as: Reading Buses, Stewarts Travel and Rail Air to support the delivery of sustainable economic growth and housing for both boroughs and beyond in Bracknell Forest.

2.1.3 Land has been safeguarded in both boroughs for the scheme to be delivered, and included specifically within WBC’s Proposals Map and referenced in their Managing Development Delivery.

2.1.4 The scheme delivers significant upgrades to the walking and cycling networks between Reading and Wokingham boroughs.

2.1.5 The scheme is a fundamental element of the wider sustainable transport strategy for Reading and the Thames Valley, enabling the future provision of a dedicated public transport corridor between Reading – Wokingham – Bracknell and in north Reading linked to the proposed Third Thames crossing.

2.1.6 The East MRT scheme will improve accessibility to the strategic rail and highway networks, allowing residents from existing and planned development living to the east of Reading to reach the rail services and Reading town centre, or visitors arriving from the motorway to use the P&R at TVP or Winnersh into Reading town centre.

2.1.7 The scheme therefore strongly accords with the NPPF.

2.2 Regional Policy

Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Strategic Priorities

2.2.1 The LEP seek to “ensure we have transport infrastructure for the 21st century”

2.2.2 One of LEP’s objectives is “to secure investment for Thames Valley Berkshire Strategic infrastructure from public or private sources that will cause barriers to growth in the four areas”:

- Housing and Regeneration
- Transport
- Telecommunications
- Utilities

2.2.3 The delivery of the East MRT Scheme will help to achieve these aspirations and objectives.

Thames Valley Berkshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan and Implementation Plan

2.2.4 The East Reading Mass Rapid Transit has been identified for support from LGF from 2016/17 onwards. The scheme has been identified to respond to business concerns with regard to accessibility and journey time and reliability. It will improve access to Reading town centre and major employment sites, from the east and complement the Park and Ride facilities at Winnersh Triangle and Thames Valley Park. It will enable the delivery of south eastern section between Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell.

2.3 Local Policy

Reading Borough Council Core Strategy

2.3.1 The adopted Reading Borough Council (RBC) Core Strategy identifies four distinct, but well-connected areas that present themselves as sustainable locations for future development. Quality bus corridors / Mass Rapid Transit is identified as one of the eight core infrastructure projects.

2.3.2 Policy CS21 ‘Major Transport Projects’ states:

“As a regional transport hub, priority will be given to the implementation of the priority transport projects identified in the Local Transport Plan, particularly the upgrading of Reading Station Interchange, Park and Ride Sites, Mass Rapid Transit, road improvements, Quality Bus Routes and associated transport improvements. Land needed for the implementation of priority transport projects will be safeguarded from development, to enable their future provision.”

Figure 2.1: RBC Local Development Framework, Core Strategy (Page 64)

**Figure 7.1:
Transport
Connections
and Strategy**
(Source: Local
Transport Plan)

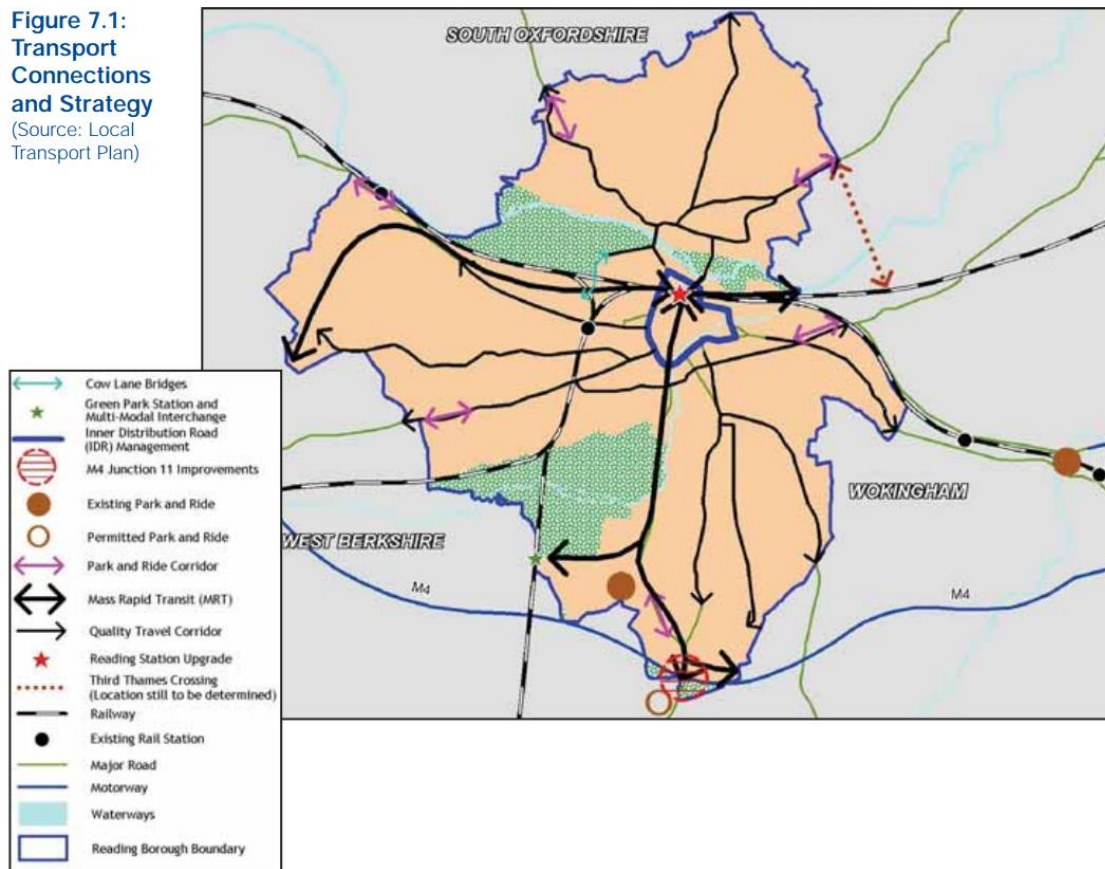


Figure 2.2: RBC Local Development Framework, Central Area Action Plan (Page 18)



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Reading Borough Council Local Transport Plan

- 2.3.3 Reading Borough Council's Local Transport Plan (2011 – 2026) provides the following detail with regards to their Transport Vision for Connecting Reading:

"Transport in Reading will better connect people to the places that they want to go: easily, swiftly, safely, sustainably and in comfort. We will meet the challenges of a dynamic, low-carbon future to promote prosperity for Reading. Whichever way you choose to travel, by foot or bicycle, motorcycle, bus, rail, car or boat whether to work or education, to leisure or the services you need, our transport system will help you get there."

- 2.3.4 The LTP provides a number of Area Action Plans (AAP's) for the different areas across the borough, with each of these supporting the implementation of MRT through 'Opportunities for Addressing Challenges'.

Eastern AAP includes:

- “To continue to work with Wokingham Borough Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Bracknell Forest District Council to find cross-boundary solutions to transport challenges.
- To work with Wokingham Borough Council to progress the implementation of a long term Park and Ride strategy, considering alternative sites to Loddon Bridge, including the possible use of Broken Brow at the northern end of the A3290.
- To carry out targeted neighbourhood or area studies, working with Wokingham Borough Council to build on previous work to deliver multi-targeted benefits, including the improvement of public transport journey times and reliability and the management of development pressures. One focus would be on strategic radial routes into Reading and the potential provision of a mass rapid transit supporting a park and ride strategy.
- To work with the private sector and Wokingham Borough Council to innovate and secure delivery of integrated transport choices associated with new development proposed within Wokingham Borough.
- To work with Wokingham Borough Council to deliver an East Reading Transport Link and associated Park & Ride facilities”

2.3.5 The LTP notes that: “An MRT system must be designed to meet a set of standards above and beyond a quality local bus. The long-term vision incorporates a network that expands the public transport offer rather than replacing existing networks, and it will be branded as such. The MRT network extends beyond Reading to offer public transport and interchange options to the wider travel to work area. The Park and Ride objectives and policies support the MRT and interchange options, aiming to reduce private transport mileage and improve journey times and air quality on some of Reading’s busiest roads.”

Figure 2.3: RBC Local Transport Plan (2006 - 2011) (Page 8) and RBC Local Transport Plan (2011 to 2026) Public Transport Strategy (Page 54)

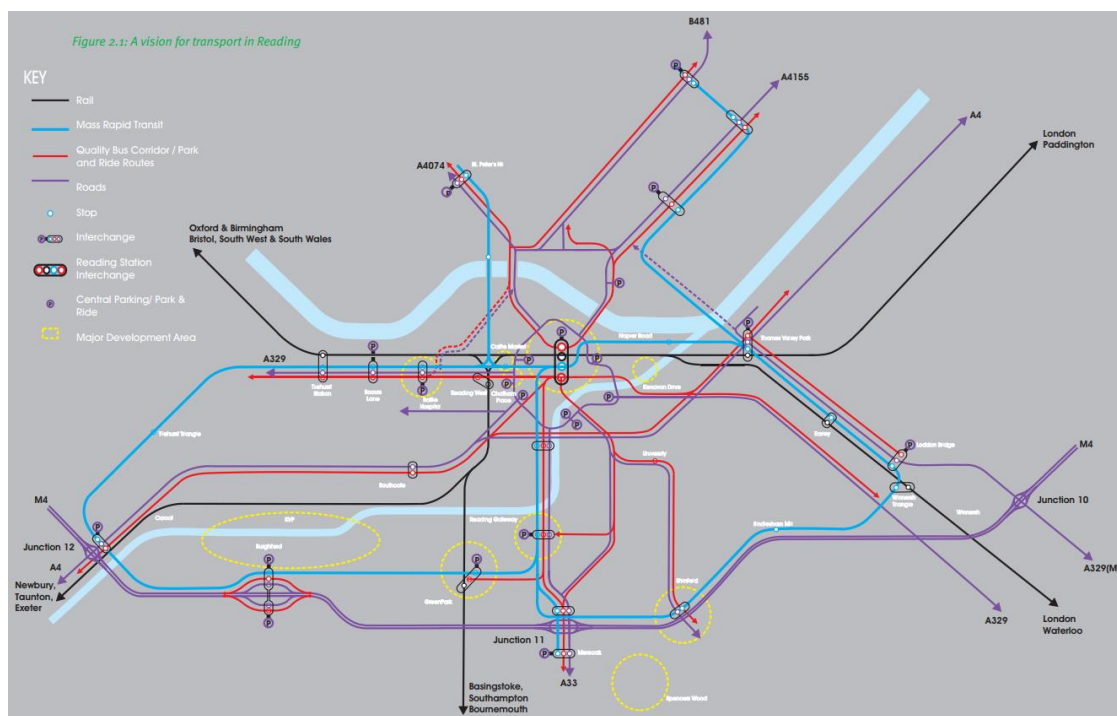


Figure 2.4: RBC Local Transport Plan (2006 - 2011) (Page 71)

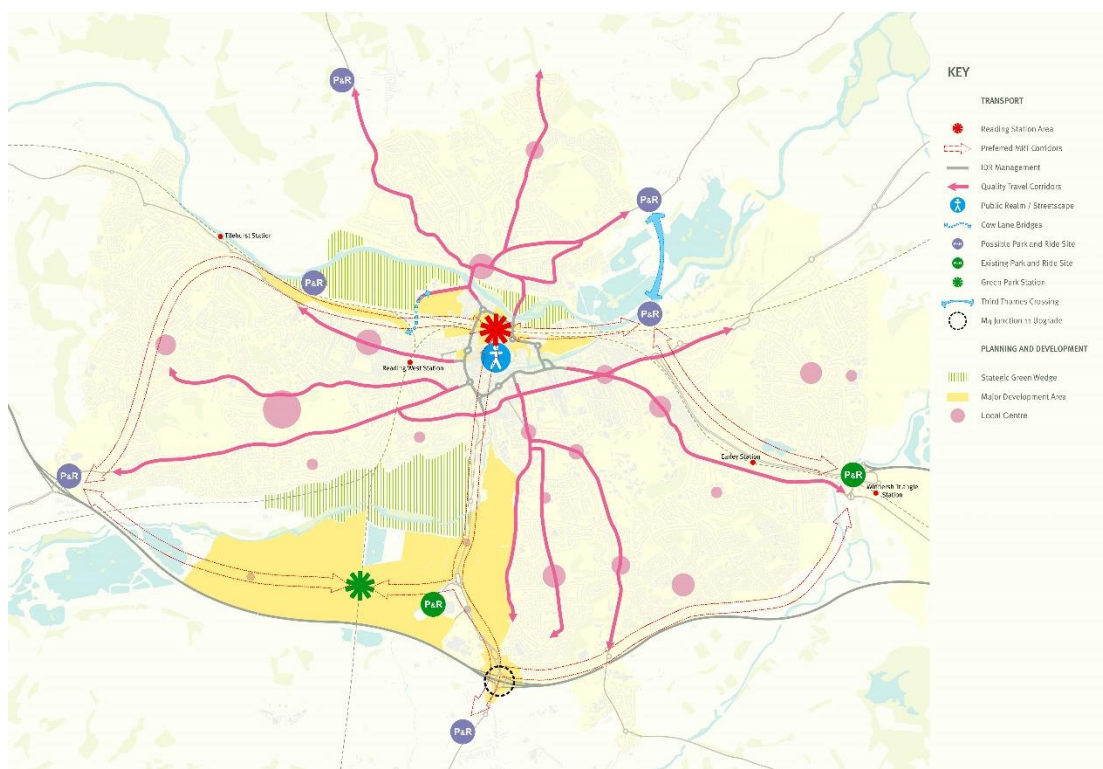


Figure 2.5: RBC Local Transport Plan (2006- 2011) (Page 79) and RBC Local Development Framework, Central Area Action Plan (Page 12)



Wokingham Borough Core Strategy

- 2.3.6 High Quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors are identified as an integral part of Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy. Policy CP10 of the Core Strategy, together with Policy CC08 and Appendix 3 of the MDD Local Plan, safeguard areas identified for improvements to the strategic transport network including mass rapid transit along the A4/A329 corridors, improvements to public transport services and improvements to footpath and cycle networks.
- 2.3.7 The East MRT scheme will help assist the planning obligations related to South Wokingham (2500 homes) and North Wokingham (1500 homes):
- *"Improvements to the quality and frequency of public transport services along any part of the network" ...*
 - *"High quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along A329 corridor"*

Wokingham Local Transport Plan

- 2.3.8 Policy PT8 Park & Ride: *“The council will promote the use of Park & Ride services and will support the future introduction of new sites in the borough where feasible.*

Over the life of this plan and the development of the adopted core strategy we will work with Reading Borough council and Bracknell Forest Councils to deliver and retain Park & Ride at the following locations:

- *Near to Coppid Beech roundabout on the A329 in Wokingham*
- *Park and Ride in the vicinity of the M4 junction 11 (MereOak)*
- *Relocation or retention of the Park & Ride at Winnersh*
- *Park & Ride located in Thames Valley Park to complement the high quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 or A329 corridors into central Reading.”*

- 2.3.9 This confirms their aspirations to connect to a mass rapid transit system along the A4 or A329.

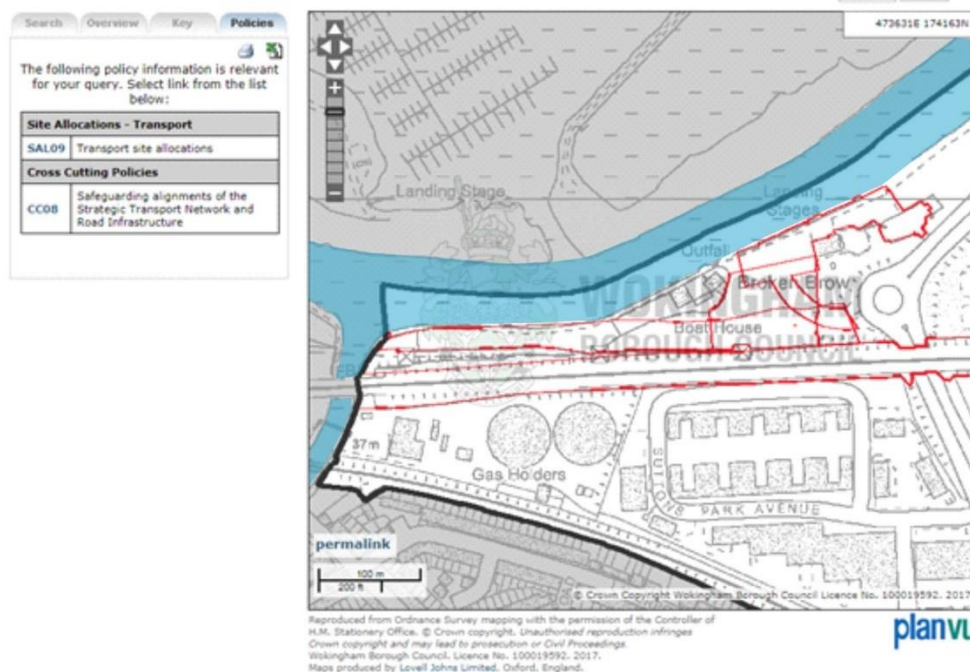
- 2.3.10 Policy SP1: Support for Major Infrastructure sets out that *“the Council will actively support development of suitable major transport projects that are necessary to support the future growth and success of the Borough. Major Strategic Public Transport, Walking and Cycling Infrastructure includes:*

- *“High quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors*
- *High quality express bus services or mass rapid transit between Reading and Woodley town centres*
- *High quality express bus services between Green Park and Twyford stations via the Park & Rides in the vicinity of M4, J11 and Loddon Bridge and Winnersh Triangle Railway Station*
- *Measures to improve accessibility by non-car transport modes along routes to the stations at Green Park and Winnersh Triangle”*

Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted February 2014).

- 2.3.11 Appendix 3 of the MDD Local Plan refers to strategic transport projects indicated on Figure 24 of the Local Transport Plan, which includes a proposed highway scheme connecting west into Reading Borough from Thames Valley Park and the proposed TVP P&R facility. Supporting text to Policy SAL09 of the MDD Local Plan (Paragraphs 4.68-4.69) requires development proposals to have regard to the ‘Cross Town Link’ proposals from Thames Valley Park being pursued by RBC.

Figure 2.6: Extract from WBC Online Proposals Map – Safeguarded Land



Source: <http://www.planvu.co.uk/wbc>

2.3.12 The policy relating to the East MRT Scheme in **Figure 1.8** is:

- Policy CC08: Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure.
 - Routes required for the improvement of the Strategic Transport Network and for other transport related schemes indicated on the Policies Map or listed in Appendix 3 of the MDD will be protected and safeguarded. Proposals for development which would compromise the implementation of these routes would not be supported.
- MDD Appendix 3: Strategic Transport Network and Road Infrastructure - Safeguarded Land and Protected Road/Railway Lines
 - i. Measures to improve cross Thames travel (policy CP10 (1))
 - iv. High quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors (CP10(10)). This project is dependent on Reading Borough Council's 'Cross-town Link6'.
 - v. Crossrail (CP10(16)).
 - c) Provide a Park & Ride near the Coppid Beech roundabout on the A329 in Wokingham (CP10(5))
 - j) Improvements to the quality and frequency of public transport services along any part of the network (CP10(19))
 - k) Improvements to increase the use of bicycles, including cycle paths (CP10(20))
 - l) Enhancements to footpath and cycle networks to improve access to services and facilities (CP10(21))