Towards a

A Smart & Sustainable Reading

UK 2050: Full Report
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READING IS ON THE MOVE

Not since the end of the 19th century has there been a time when Reading’s prospects have looked so good. Building on many of our natural advantages of location and environment, the arrival of major new businesses, a greatly improved transport infrastructure and - crucially - a new sense of hope and confidence all point to a positive future. As a result, Reading could become one of the great towns of the world.

But change brings new challenges and that is why the Reading 2050 Vision work is so important. It has brought together a wide range of interested parties to think carefully about how best to secure a smart and sustainable future for Reading, identifying both opportunities and risks.

The University of Reading is proud to play its part in this project. We are a national and international university but one that is firmly grounded in our locality. ‘Town and Gown’ are inextricably linked and we rely on each other to succeed.

Sustainable thinking underpins all that we do at the University. That is seen from the range of our research interests, through the way we seek to transfer knowledge, to a commitment to sustainable practices on our campuses. At the same time, developments such as our forthcoming 42 acre Science and Innovation Park demonstrate our long term commitment to the town.

The Reading 2050 Vision is work in progress. I hope that you will join us in bringing it to fruition.

Sir David Bell KCB, Vice-Chancellor, University of Reading
Based in Reading or its surrounds for over 75 years, we are a business that is passionate about the Town’s success. Moving to The Blade in June 2014 brought us back into the heart of the town and the heart of its thriving business community. But with that has come an awareness of Reading’s existing strengths: challenges and great potential, both in the short and long term.

We work as Planners and Designers in towns and cities across the UK and internationally, reviewing urban landscapes and identifying opportunities for improvement of the built form, infrastructure, public realm and ultimately sense of place. Within Reading we wanted to harness the knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment apparent in the town’s business community, to identify the opportunities they saw and would importantly support/invest in. The process of delivering a vision for a town, never mind an aspiring city such as Reading, is a challenging one, but as our process has expanded to the wider community we have been heartened by the willingness to engage and contribute, and the desire for Reading to continue to succeed.

We are delighted to be involved in this process and are looking forward to working closely with all Partners and participants to ensure it meets expectations and provides a robust yet ambitious framework for growth across the town, over the next 35 years.

Kim Cohen & John Haxworth

Reading UK CIC

‘Reading is a town with a rich history, which has thrived throughout the early twenty-first century and has the potential to deliver so much more for its residents, businesses and visitors. The founding partners of Reading UK 2050, Reading UK CIC, Barton Willmore and the University of Reading, share a passion for Reading and we believe that by working with Reading’s many stakeholders to create a shared vision, Reading will be better equipped to become a smarter and more sustainable place in which to work, live and play.

In 2015, Reading can rightly claim to be one of the UK and Europe’s leading economies. Having weathered the recession well, Reading is currently enjoying an almost unprecedented wave of investment. However, the world changes rapidly and success cannot be taken for granted. Even as we publish this document there are sections of Reading’s population who are still not benefitting from this economic vibrancy.

We believe that the time is right to refresh and reframe the debate about Reading’s future development, to reassess where we are going and ensure that we create a vision and plan for Reading which presents realistic, exciting, smart and sustainable solutions. We don’t know what the world will be like in 35 years’ time but we do know that to ensure growth and prosperity for everyone in Reading, we need to think strategically and plan, long-term.

This report is the culmination of a project which began in June 2013 with a meeting of Reading’s young property professionals to discuss Reading’s potential from a private sector perspective. Along the way, we have garnered support and engaged stakeholders from across the private, charity and public sector. In one sense, this report is just the beginning. Having done the initial feasibility work for a Vision, we are now actively seeking input to develop the framework into something that will help us build on Reading’s strengths, grow the economy, share the benefits and deliver a legacy of a truly smart and sustainable city in 2050’.

Nigel Horton-Baker
What is a city vision?

Cities can be vibrant hubs of enterprise and innovation, bringing together business, education and administration to generate economic growth and culture. The concentration of people in cities has huge implications for the world in terms of environmental impact, resource depletion, deteriorating ecosystems and climate change, all of which present major challenges and opportunities in meeting the goal of sustainable development.

Many cities have struggled to cope with the disconnection that exists between long term environmental change and shorter term planning horizons, and this has often meant that cities have taken a relatively short term view of the future, for example, because of political resistance or fragmented decision-making.

But things are changing. Many cities in the UK and internationally are building visions of how they see their future to 2020, 2050 and beyond. Part of the drive for this comes from the increasing devolution of powers from central government to cities, but also from a real desire for cities to think ahead and develop strategies which will help them transition to a more sustainable future. These visions (or shared expectations about a plausible and desirable future) differ in their shape and form, but they are a powerful way of promoting discussion and debate, providing a sense of purpose and mobilising resources so that a city can plan for and move to a sustainable future.

In the UK, for example, Bristol’s 2020 vision, and its smart city vision, is based on ‘people, place and prosperity’, a desire to be a ‘Global Green Capital’, and an aspiration to be a centre for smart city thinking. In Canada, Vancouver aims to be the world’s greenest city by 2020 with tough targets set for greenhouse gas emissions and a desire to create a city which is resilient to climate change. In Denmark Copenhagen’s vision is based on a target to be carbon neutral by 2025, underpinned by a highly successful walking/cycling policy agenda and a strong focus on renewables.

Looking further ahead into the future, Glasgow has developed a vision for 2061, which is now also underpinned by its aspiration to be a leading ‘future city’ with smart technology at its core. Smaller urban areas have also developed visions. In the UK, for example, Milton Keynes is working with business and other stakeholders to develop a Smart 2020 Vision with a strong focus on electric vehicles and smart technologies.

The best city visions are something more than simply a branding or re-branding exercise. Although a successful city vision only becomes a success when the vision is realised, best practice visions not only clearly link together strategies, plans and actions, but also integrate the vision clearly with climate change, energy, infrastructure, economy and people. Moreover, successful visions need to be politically viable, analytically sound, and participatory so that key stakeholders form part of the process of formulating the vision.

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1. For example, cities are already responsible for some 75% of global energy consumption and 80% of greenhouse gas emissions.

2. Both the Technology Strategy Board (TSB) and the UK government’s Business Innovation and Science (BIS) Department have also placed a strong emphasis on ‘future cities’ through the InnovateUK Catapult and Foresight Programme respectively.
50% of the world’s population (3.6b) lives in cities

2050 this is set to grow by 84% to some 6.3bn (70%)
A major urban area such as Reading faces key challenges in its future. Although it is not yet officially a ‘city’, Reading, as part of a wider Reading/Wokingham urban area, has a current population of 318,000 (2011), and this is set to grow to 362,400 by 2037. The Reading of today is also very different from the Reading of 40 years ago. The ‘beer, biscuits and bulbs’ (and ‘bricks’) for which Reading was rightly famous have long since gone, and today, Reading’s economy, which is highly connected nationally and internationally and is one of the strongest in the UK, is based on high tech industry, innovation and inward investment.

However, vibrant economic activity and a growing population come at a price, and that price is reflected not only in greenhouse gas emissions, but also in outdated and congested infrastructure, pockets of deprivation, and a sense that Reading could, and should, be a more liveable place.

For example, Reading’s success as a busy commercial centre is reflected in the fact that nearly half of its carbon footprint comes from its commercial activities, but Reading also has a large number of older pre-1919 terraced houses, which are often poorly insulated and inefficient in energy terms, and many of which will still be standing in 2050. Reading’s new City Deal also makes it clear how important it is to tackle the issues of deprivation and joblessness, especially amongst young people.

It is this historic legacy and infrastructure lock-in that often makes it difficult to re-engineer or retrofit an urban area like Reading in order to adapt and mitigate for the effects of climate change. Indeed the recent floods in Reading, arising from its location straddling the Thames, brought the issue of flood prevention and adaptation into sharp focus in the town.

Changing business and peoples’ behaviour in order to tackle these issues is a complex task, and will require strategic thinking, new partnerships and even new forms of governance and institutional structures in order for us to succeed. This has been recognised in some of the reports which have focused on futures thinking in Reading over the last 10 years. In 1998, Reading Borough Council published its Reading City 2020 which saw Reading as a ‘continental-type city with squares and plazas and open spaces’. Reading Local Strategic Partnership’s Reading City 2030 (2011) also attempted to scope out the sort of place Reading should be in the future. More recently, in 2013, Reading Climate Change Partnership published Reading Means Business on Climate Change, a climate change strategy for 2013-2020, that aims to reduce the carbon footprint of the borough in 2020 by 34%, compared to 2005 levels (see Appendix 1), and also suggests that ‘low carbon living will be the norm in 2050’. Finally, in 2013, Barton Willmore produced a report following its young property professionals workshop series, entitled Reading 2050, which set out some of the key development and growth areas that Reading might exploit through to 2050.

Despite this, we do not yet have a clear sense of how Reading should evolve through to 2050, either to fulfil a shared aspiration, or to paint a picture of the sort of place Reading could and should be. Developing a Reading UK 2050 vision today is therefore very important because:

- We need a better understanding of what a low carbon future would look like for Reading.
- Creating a clear vision would help attract further inward investment and would help Reading retain and enhance its competitive edge.
- There is a real opportunity to harness Reading’s economic growth potential in alliance with a focus on sustainable and low carbon living.
- Reading could act as an exemplar for ‘future city’ thinking in the wider Thames Valley Berkshire Local Economic Partnership.
- There is an increasing number of partnership funding opportunities at city level in the UK and internationally around a ‘future cities’ agenda.
1 Celebrates its heritage and location
2 Has a real sense of place and identity
3 Offers a strong economic alternative to London
4 Supports and celebrates its diversity and cultural mix
5 Becomes a place to move and stay/mature
6 WE CAN ALL BE PROUD OF
Understanding Reading: History & Growth

Reading’s geographic location at the confluence of the Thames and Kennet rivers and its location 40 miles west of London explain the ancient origins of its success as a trading centre and centre of commerce and manufacturing. Founded as a Saxon town in the late 5th or 6th century, Reading is likely to have taken its name from the ‘Readingas’, a local Anglo-Saxon tribe. Its continued growth and strategic importance over the next 400-500 years saw the founding of a major Abbey in 1161 by Henry I, who is buried in the Abbey Grounds.

Reading’s subsequent success was so rapid that by 1525 it was the largest town in Berkshire, and tax returns show that Reading was the 10th largest town in England when measured by taxable wealth. By 1611, it had a population of over 5000 and had grown rich on its trade in cloth and silk weaving. Old maps of the town depict a compact town still very much constrained on its south side, and roughly triangular in shape.

However, the modern wealth and prosperity of Reading was really founded in the 18th century when improved road and river transport saw major iron works and brewing emerge in the town. As canal and road and rail transport improved further, Reading also developed during the 19th and 20th centuries as a major centre for the ‘Three Bs’ of beer (1785–1980, Simonds Brewery), bulbs (1837–1974, Suttons Seeds), and biscuits (1822–1976, Huntley and Palmers). Brickmaking (a fourth ‘B’) was also very important and is reflected in the use of local bricks in many of Reading’s buildings.
After the Second World War and particularly over the last 50 years, Reading has expanded and changed rapidly. During this time Reading’s three B’s, as manufacturing trades, fell away and instead the town worked hard to attract some of the new industries for which it is now famous: electrical components, data processing, software, surgical/healthcare products and professional services. Reading’s place in popular culture was also enshrined in the first Reading Festival of 1971.

Today, with a population of 155,700 (or 318,000 if we are looking at the Reading/Wokingham Urban Area), Reading is a major commercial and retail centre, and home to many leading multinational high tech companies such as Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco and Ericsson, and more recently Huawei and Quintiles, alongside other companies from the insurance and investment sectors. Although not yet officially a ‘city’, recent research has positioned Reading as being one of the top five ‘city’ economies in the UK with many other measures pointing to a strong track record in inward investment and economic growth.

Despite these positives Reading also has a number of issues relating to social inclusion. As in other cities there are areas of deprivation. According to Reading Borough Council’s Sustainable Economic Development Strategy, Reading Borough contains some of the most deprived areas of the South East, including super output areas (SOAs) in the 20% most deprived in England for the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Future proposals must tackle these challenges as well as build on our history and enhance our successes to date.
The starting point for our work was not to develop a masterplan for Reading, but rather a vision.

A vision is a shared expectation about a plausible and desirable future. As a result the journey so far has been and will continue to remain a very consultative one. This route map shows our journey so far...

‘Reading is already an attractive international town. I’d like it to be a successful city by 2050, with all the trappings of housing, arts, culture, quality of life and identity. We need to offer young entrepreneurs improvement and opportunity. There’s been so much enthusiasm in the room today, and where there’s a will there’s a way!’

Nigel Horton-Baker, Reading UK CIC @ The Reading UK 2050 Workshop, May 2014
THE READING UK 2050 WORKSHOP

- Attended by local businesses, community representatives, investors and property specialists
- Reviewed challenges and opportunities, spatial mapping and the route to realising Reading UK 2050.

THAMES VALLEY PROPERTY FORUM

- Occupiers, investors & property specialists
- Partners of Reading UK 2050 presented ‘The Vision so far’ and requested further input to the challenges and opportunities for Reading

WHERE’S READING HEADING?

- Part of the national Happy Museum Program
- Series of Community Workshops/Interviews/undertaken to develop a film and resultant exhibition

WE INVITE YOU TO REVIEW OUR PROGRESS SO FAR AND JOIN US AS THE VISION CONTINUES TO EvOLVE...

‘Reading is under-bounded - its administrative boundary doesn’t match its wider urban footprint. It’s also part of a wider network of cities and has a global significance. In an era of increased devolution of powers to cities, this means we need to work together across scales and boundaries to create an environment for smart and sustainable living to flourish in Reading to 2050’.

Prof. Tim Dixon, University of Reading
@ The Reading UK 2050 Workshop, May 2014
A smart and sustainable city

In futures thinking ‘backcasting’ is often used to generate a desirable future, and then look backwards from that future to the present in order to strategise and to plan how it could be achieved. In other words, a vision, or visions, of a desirable future are first defined and then pathways (or roadmaps) to that future are developed.

An example of this approach is the EPSRC Retrofit 2050 programme, in which the University of Reading was a key player. This research scoped out three generic visions

- **Vision 1: A Smart-Networked City**: The city as a hub within a highly mobile and competitive globally networked society. Pervasive, information-rich virtual environments integrate seamlessly with the physical world. ICTs provide real-time information to drive efficiencies through automation and intelligent control, and advanced market-oriented solutions allow for the internalisation of environmental costs. This is an open, outward-looking society in which the mobility of people, goods and services remains high.

- **Vision 2: Compact City**: The city as a site of intensive and efficient urban living. Urban land-use, buildings, services and infrastructure provision are optimised in order to create dense urban settlement forms that encourage reduced demand and more efficient use of energy and resources. Concentration in urban centres reduces pressures on the periphery. Significant efficiencies are obtained through systems integration and re-design.

- **Vision 3: Self Reliant-Green City**: The city as a self-reliant bioregion, living in harmony with nature. A self-replenishing, largely self-reliant system of circular metabolism, where resources are local, demand is constrained and the inputs and outputs of the city are connected (cradle to cradle). In many ways this is an inward-facing society, but one conscious of its global responsibility to ‘live within its limits’.

Of course these are not mutually exclusive visions and are also designed to provide ‘jumping off’ points for developing futures-based thinking. To develop the Reading UK 2050 vision we combined elements of a smart city (Vision 1) with those of a sustainable city (Visions 2 and 3). This was because Reading already has a long-term aspiration to be ‘low carbon’ by 2050, but also has a strong technology and green technology focus in its existing economy. Moreover, a 2050 time horizon provides space to think beyond today’s immediate problems, and enables a greater sense of strategic thinking by identifying desirable as well as undesirable outcomes.

A ‘smart and sustainable’ city can be defined as:

“A city that leverages ICT infrastructure to:

- Improve the quality of life of its citizens.
- Ensure tangible economic growth for its citizens.
- Improve the well-being of its citizens.
- Establish an environmentally responsible and sustainable approach to development.
- Streamline and improve physical infrastructure.
- Reinforce resilience to natural and man-made disasters.
- Underpin effective and well-balanced regulatory, compliance and governance mechanisms” (Source: International Telecommunications Union (2014) Smart Sustainable Cities: An analysis of definitions)
The Reading UK 2050 Workshop - May 2014

In May 2014 we ran a full day workshop, attended by over 50 invited delegates from Reading and its wider area, including major employers, academics, investors, entrepreneurs, planning experts and a wide range of Reading stakeholders.

The aim of the workshop was to take the first steps towards developing a Smart and Sustainable vision for Reading UK 2050.

Working in groups we ran three main sessions during the workshop. In the first two sessions each group was asked to focus the context of their response to the question asked, around one of three key elements - reflecting the 3 pillars of development (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place &amp; environment</th>
<th>• Built environment</th>
<th>• Transport/Mobility</th>
<th>• Land Use</th>
<th>• Physical environment</th>
<th>• Climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People &amp; Lifestyle</td>
<td>• Values/behaviour</td>
<td>• Social equity and inclusion</td>
<td>• Health and wellbeing</td>
<td>• Social capital</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy &amp; Employment</td>
<td>• GDP/growth</td>
<td>• Jobs</td>
<td>• Population</td>
<td>• Trade and exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three sessions comprised:

**SESSION 1 -**

What should a Smart and Sustainable Reading look like in 2050? (Developing the vision)

What should Reading look like in 2050? How will it feel and what will it be like living there? How do we join smart technologies with sustainable thinking in Reading to set it apart, building on the strengths Reading already has?

**SESSION 2 -**

How do we achieve a smart and sustainable Reading by 2050? (Developing the roadmaps)

What do we need to do, and by when, to achieve the Smart and Sustainable vision for Reading? This included the following key elements in the ‘roadmaps’ that were produced:

- Governance structures - what needs to be in place, and by when, for the 2050 vision to happen?
- Behavioural changes - what behavioural changes need to happen by whom and how can this be driven?
- Key technologies - what are going to be the key energy, water and waste technologies which will underpin this transition and how best can they be deployed?
- Other factors - what other factors need to be considered perhaps around resilience or other aspects of transition which we need to consider?

**SESSION 3 -**

Spatial Mapping

This session focuses upon integrating the thinking from the earlier sessions into the fabric of Reading. This focused on scoping out the physical changes which could support the smart and sustainable vision, both in the short, medium and long term. Group work examined, through base maps at large and smaller scales, how specific key developments might emerge and what infrastructure changes were needed.

We used ‘postcards from the future’ to summarise the thinking of groups in sessions 1 and 2, and these were at the heart of developing the urban design scenarios for session 3.
The Outputs
Session 1 - What should a Smart and Sustainable Reading look like?

Focusing the context of their response on the area they had been given i.e. place & environment, people & lifestyle, etc, the groups were encouraged to consider what a ‘Smart & Sustainable’ Reading could look like. We encouraged attendees to be ambitious and focus on what their ideal location might provide, while tying this in to the strengths and weaknesses they were already aware of within Reading.

The starting point for discussion was that there is a real danger that Reading is a polarised city—almost a ‘tale of two cities’ with (i) an affluent and skilled professional labour force and (ii) an unskilled, or semi-skilled labour force with housing access issues. Within a smart and sustainable vision for Reading by 2050 there should be a strong focus on promoting and achieving equality of opportunity across Reading.

The groups both agreed that a smart and sustainable Reading will therefore tackle this inequality through improved housing provision. Community cohesion must be promoted through better support networks, better childcare near the home and the workplace. There should be a strong focus on food production with a fourfold increase in community farms and allotments.

A smart and sustainable Reading will have high quality cycle routes and lanes and this will be linked with a drive to promote health and well-being and a key aspiration should be to increase sustainable mobility across the city. Public transport improvements will be important and Reading will have an inexpensive light rail system, free buses and more park and rides.

Innovative designs will make much better use of the river frontage with floating houses and houseboats. Brownfield land development will be maximised, and Reading’s compact nature will be a key part of the future vision.

All solid walls in Reading’s ageing housing stock will be insulated by 2050 and Reading will be a leading exemplar of low energy living. There will be a strong focus on sharing business space and there will be a long ‘green wall’ or ‘green curtain’ for the IDR.

Energy use and water use would be reduced, and waste recycling increased by rolling out smart technologies and driving behaviour changes across the city. Digital technologies will help shape work-life balance and provide for increased homeworking so that commuting is reduced.

There will be more mixed use parks mixing business with leisure, meeting space and recreation and there will be opportunities to develop this space along the river and elsewhere in the city.

There will be a Reading Centre for Sustainable Living established which will highlight sustainable living and link with the University of Reading’s strong focus on sustainability research, education and knowledge transfer around low carbon innovation and enterprise. Reading will be an exemplar of low carbon living within the wider Thames Valley, building on its high tech industry and environmental technology expertise.
Dear Mum,

Wish you were here...

100% of our children receive good/outstanding education.

75% of our population have responded to a survey and said they feel part of a safe, supportive and happy community.

Most of the buildings have had a face lift, have been retrofitted and we don't have heating bills anymore...The buildings look great too.

We have free buses paid for by the congestion charge and local taxes - no more traffic jams.

All of the deprived wards are now prosperous and everyone has equal opportunities.

We have got here by our local authority and their partners making bold decisions and good investment decisions.

People & Lifestyle
In terms of creating a smart and sustainable Reading, the groups felt it was important to think about the historic legacy of a place and how its location can be underpin its future development. Overcoming the constraints imposed by boundaries in the four local authorities which overlay Reading is an important starting point as its local geography. Currently Reading lacks ‘personality’ and needs another dimension to re-invigorate and re-energise its place in the wider south east region, and globally.

Reading needs to be understood as a place which has a ‘transient’ nature—there are people who move to Reading for work and then leave as they become more affluent and there are other groups who have lived in Reading for more than two generations. Currently Reading does not have the same quality of cultural facilities as Basingstoke, for example, but has a better retail offer. Reading needs to improve both its ‘stickability’ and ‘liveability’.

Reading has avoided embracing its river frontages. With smart and sustainable design solutions Reading could make better use of retail/leisure and allied uses (including green infrastructure) in the riverside areas, and should build on its strong historic heritage to develop a more people-focused personality. This also entails considering the diverse mix of cultures and communities within Reading. For example, in 2010, it was reported that Reading has 150 different spoken languages within its population. Huawei’s recent location of its UK headquarters at Reading Green Park was based partly on the high degree of integration of Chinese speakers in Reading’s population.

Both groups also felt that transport is also a major issue in Reading, with much of the transport system focused directly on the centre. Because of the large number of commuters coming into Reading, many of the carbon emissions from transport have been ‘offshored’ but this should not prevent a radical re-think of Reading’s transport infrastructure. Transport will need to be more distributed by 2050 and cycle routes needs further encouragement with additional mass transit corridors linking transport hubs, town centre and green spaces to reduce car usage and focus on more sustainable forms of transport. We also need to think carefully about the mix of land uses that are needed. For example, do we need more traditional office space buildings when the current trend is towards SME-friendly coffee-shop style collaborative workspaces?

More efficient public transport must be part of a wider move towards a low carbon future (which should be a ‘given’) by 2050, with a strong emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the city. This would also mean that Reading would become more attractive to inward investment (perhaps playing out to a broader appeal as a fair-trade, ethical city, but educating people and reminding people how their positive actions are part of a low carbon Reading would be vital to achieve.

There also needs to be a strong focus on the ability of Reading to generate its own power supply through distributed renewable networks. This requires buy in from a range of key stakeholders as well as innovative financing techniques.

Balancing employment opportunities, and building on the role of the University of Reading and its focus on the knowledge economy, will be vital to underpinning a successful transition to a smart and sustainable Reading by 2050.
A Postcard from the future in the context of People & Lifestyle

Dear Leader of Reading Borough Council,

Reading on Thames (Kennet) European City of Culture

Reading has rediscovered its rivers and canals which have become green, vibrant and loved public spaces.

It’s so easy to move around and you don’t have to use a car.

Many of those ugly old office buildings have been reinvented as creative work spaces other beyond reuse have been blown up.

The new city spaces bustle with life, a festival city with a real sense of soul.

New homes allow families to grow up and stay in the city. This is a really cool place to live.

The RBC is a vibrant and focused organisation leading cultural and physical regeneration of the city.

PLACE & ENVIRONMENT
The groups both felt that Reading’s ‘USP’ is based around its waterways location and its national/ international connectivity. When thinking about Reading’s future, the development of a better and more sustainable transport system, providing better affordable housing, and building on Reading’s reputation as a centre for IT innovation and enterprise, alongside its strengths in insurance and professional services is important. This means developing an entrepreneurship ‘pull’ for Reading as an alternative to London.

A smart and sustainable Reading will need to have an integrated masterplan for the city, and decision-making will need to cross Local Authority boundaries. This means that Reading needs to have city status and that should be focused on ‘Greater Reading’.

Both groups agreed that attracting younger people to live and stay in Reading must be a key focus and developing the right mix of housing across the city will be important to prevent transience. To retain its competitive edge Reading will also need to attract low carbon and green technology companies to locate there. Brownfield land will present development opportunities and opportunities for densification to maintain Reading’ compact form, but also looking to how greenfield land can benefit Reading in becoming a more liveable city.

In many ways business parks have become disconnected from the city, and improved transport needs to reconnect these areas. There needs to be a much better network of buses and perhaps a new underground or tram system. Reading should seriously consider a third bridge crossing, but reduce its car dependence. Much more needs to be done to connect the new railway station with the rest of the town centre. By 2050 there will be a new business and mixed use hub with buzz, linking the station to the rejuvenated central area.

The future vision for Reading (which will include a masterplan) needs to encompass Greater Reading and needs to develop a sense that Reading can be beautiful, connected ad green. It should link its high tech character with a low carbon future and should be a resilient city that can adapt to climate change.

Reading’s lack of character and lack of ‘soul’ is a real issue. A smart and sustainable Reading needs to be a place with a clear identity and character: open for business with a ‘can-do’ attitude; be able to attract investment; be a great location and build on its transport links; create a diverse economy; and be dynamic and future proof.
Dear Boss,

This is such a cool city at 1 million people, well connected to London and Heathrow and the rest of the UK.

You might have heard of Reading Valley as this hi-tech capital where they have all the festivals... but there is so much more.

The Mayor has created an open-for-business culture, the transport system is amazing - you can travel out from the station by metro bus or even bubble car.

This links all the industrial and residential areas in a sustainable way. There is a wide range of housing and opportunities and due to the planning there are a lot of affordable locations for our employees.

When you walk out of Reading Station you are struck by the beauty of Reading. We should base our HQ here!

ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT
Session 2 - How do we achieve a smart and sustainable Reading by 2050?

Reviewing the core suggestions made in Session 1 we then encouraged participants to consider a timeline for their delivery, what should take priority and what particular type of change would it require e.g. governance, behaviour or technology.

When seeking to understand the process of realising many of the ambitions highlighted in Session 1, it was clear that there were not only Governance implications but also behavioural and technology advancements that must be made throughout the timeframe to 2050, to enable us to reach the end goals identified.

Here we have collated the outputs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How will we get there?</th>
<th>2014-2020</th>
<th>2020-2050</th>
<th>2050</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Develop vision/brand</td>
<td>Elected mayor</td>
<td>City region with international status</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City status achieved</td>
<td>Third bridge crossing</td>
<td>Flexible masterplan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Greater Reading Assembly (GRA)</td>
<td>Flexible masterplan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Flexible masterplan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Climate risk assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Crossrail links completed</td>
<td>Use road pricing to subsidise public transport &amp; cycling free public transport</td>
<td>Fully sustainable thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walking/cycling promoted and developed</td>
<td>New financing models (eg TIF, carbon bonds, local investment funds)</td>
<td>Flexible working patterns for all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resilient city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies (energy, water and waste)</td>
<td>Big data</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency in energy production</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency in energy production</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broadband</td>
<td>Sustainable, low carbon housing is the norm</td>
<td>Mass rapid transit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rapid transit</td>
<td>Retrofitting at scale</td>
<td>Smart technologies and adaptive technologies are mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable mobility</td>
<td></td>
<td>Retrofit targets achieved</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-sufficiency in energy production</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Water and waste recycling technologies rolled out</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Electric vehicles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retrofitting at scale</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Session 3 - Spatial Mapping

In this session the group were asked to consider their ideas spatially. What kind of development does Reading need and where can it go within the town? The accompanying lists and images outline some of the key elements proposed.

Group 1
MACRO
- Solar powered vehicle charging south of M4 or at Junction 11.
- Business incubation space in UoR Science Park
- Sustainable energy or an Anaerobic Digestion Plant at Green Park
- Marina or nature reserve on flood plains to west of A33.
- High level sustainable pedestrian and cycle route into Reading
- Support to development of independent retailers on Oxford Road
- Improved transport links along the Oxford Road
- Build to Rent development close to Prospect Park
- Flood/nature reserve/marina close to Festival site
- Compact housing and employment uses across central Reading
- Re-establishment of hidden rivers through Reading’s town centre
- Another road bridge across the River Thames
- Delivery of shared ownership housing in Caversham
- Development of ‘Winnersh Village’ given transportation links

MICRO
- Create a ‘tourist trap’ around the historical elements of Reading centre
- Deliver fun activities by the river in the parks
- A district energy network alongside the River Thames
- Independent market hall or Hub for start-ups with encouraging rents
- Entertainment quarter on civic centre/broad st mall/hexagon site with skate park, cafes and open space.
- Open air swimming pool powered by renewable energy close to the River Thames
- Improved pedestrian link to river and parks under railway.
Group 2

**MACRO**
- Rapid transit linking the north and south
- Rebalancing of north and south of town in terms of built environment
- Open town to the River Thames
- Build over the railway line in order to better link the north and south and connect to the river.
- High quality floating residential with green roofs alongside the river.

**MICRO**
- A Cathedral of people/Theatre of dreams building - The Reading Barbican
- Provide accommodation for the festival within the centre of town.
- Extend the commercial hub north of the station and to the River Thames
- Develop a leisure facility in walking distance of town centre/close to marina as a leisure hub
- Reduce the status of the IDR, especially where the commercial area crosses it
- Use IDR for Mass rapid transport.
- Overbridge the IDR to the west where possible
- Entrepreneurs could populate the west auction house site - studios and workshops, residential above.
- Green roofs on town centre development continue the wildlife corridors

Group 3

**MACRO**
- The second Oracle at Shinfield
- Build around Green Park to deliver a South Garden City
- Green Park Hub
- Mass rapid transit linking north to south and east to west
- Family homes delivered on the current Cattle Market site
- A year round Festival Park
- High rise, high density in centre
- Tech city west focus area
- Earley Hub
- Winnersh Hub

**MICRO**
- A Sky train
- Cathedral Quarter at Reading Minster
- Arena and public open space on the Civic Centre/Hexagon/St Mary’s Butts site
- Arts and cultural centre in same location
- New urban village by the water - Festival site
- Aqua zone by marina
- Play zone by river and parks
- Tech cells campus
- Interface with river and development in opportunity area to east of town centre
- Another floating village here too?
Economy & Employment

• Employment led regeneration
• Entrepreneurial Pull
• Diversity of employment
• Diverse range of business accommodation
• Celebration of technology
• Provide a hub for activity and networking
• International connection and trade
• Super connected digital economy, 4G mobile everywhere
• Integrated test bed for University within the city, facilitating technology and research
• Strong focus on Low carbon and green technologies
• Enhanced transport infrastructure – green and sustainable
• Densification of current compact form

Place & Environment

• Compact development
• Energy, water, waste and food production
• Affordable housing
• Sustainable improved connectivity and transport links
• Make more of the rivers and landscape
• Make more of our heritage
• Enhance existing buildings
• Develop iconic architecture utilising green technologies
• Local Power generation is explored, facilitated and celebrated
• A new leisure quarter around the river
• A cultural hub and home for the festival in the city

People & Lifestyle

• Nurture an active and sociable environment
• Diverse range of residential accommodation throughout the town centre and beyond.
• Cultural diversity supported and celebrated throughout the town
• Skilled diverse workforce encouraged and supported
• Education and development of young people is facilitated
• Strong connectivity and transport network to join and integrates neighbourhoods
• Civic space
• Subsidised public transport
• Retrofitting of all homes.
• Greater café culture
• Promote shares in local employment investment projects
The Vision so Far...
Synthesizing all of the content and ideas generated to date we have been able to propose some headline aspirations for the Reading UK 2050 vision...

**THE VISION SO FAR...**

**An internationally recognised city region, with an established lifestyle and knowledge based economy.**

**A cosmopolitan city celebrating and supporting its cultural diversity.**

**Retrofitted and developed to create a smart, sustainable, high quality built environment.**

**A leading destination offering a vibrant city of arts, culture, architecture and public realm.**

**Supported by a comprehensive sustainable transport system that accommodates walking and cycling, as well as rapid transport and zero emission vehicles.**
A city of equal opportunities for all and reducing poverty and deprivation.

A dynamic, resilient and confident city attracting new businesses and entrepreneurs operating sector wide.

A leader in smart and green technology and sustainable living solutions.

A city which has rediscovered and embraced its heritage and landscape.

Generating a large proportion of its own energy from renewables.
A Vision for Reading UK 2050

This exciting visual seeks to depict some of the ideas emerging from our work to date. Within this we have identified three common themes which can be drawn together into scenarios. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive but they frame some of the key ideas presented through the process so far, specifically drawing upon the strengths and opportunities unique to Reading. These are shown overleaf...
A City of Rivers & Parks...

...recognises how water has shaped much of Reading. Not just the River Thames, but the River Kennet, the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Holy Brook all weave their way through and under much of our city, defining and offering opportunity via their river banks and crossings. The city would celebrate Reading’s waterways, opening them up to offer recreational spaces such as animated parks, a Lido, food production opportunities and city centre riverside living. Greening the IDR, through a modal shift in transportation, will create an enhancing green ring around the city, as opposed to the current constricting concrete one, while regular open space and green roofs provide lungs for the city as we seek to increase density and improve sustainability.

‘The Thames and Kennet and the open space alongside these are vastly underused or celebrated. Although I am regularly here, this kind of sense of place and community is what’s needed to make me and no doubt others stay.’
Nicky Hodgson, Festival Republic
@ The Reading UK 2050 Workshop, May 2014

A City of Festivals & Culture...

...would build on the success of the iconic Reading Festival to deliver arts and culture to people of all ages and ethnicities. We would look to facilitate community interaction and opportunity within Reading, weaving the music festival back into the city, offering vibrant public gathering spaces and integrating and celebrating our city’s heritage. Comedy, independent retailers and pop up shops, street cafes and markets, art exhibitions, sporting events, religious and international festivals, could all be celebrated and woven throughout the urban fabric to bring our city to life.

‘Reading needs to come out of London’s shadow and deliver an identity of it’s own. It’s got some strong differentiators that strong leadership might help to enhance while also delivering real structural change. Then Reading can compete.’
Matthew Battle, UK Property Forum
@ The Reading UK 2050 Workshop, May 2014
A Green Tech City...

...builds upon the established technology focus of our city. It celebrates and encourages diversity through business incubation units, ‘Ideas Factories’ and a city centre University campus through which to exhibit and test cutting edge ideas and approaches, no matter what faculty they are emerging from. Retrofitting existing buildings and the development of new iconic architecture will provide some of the greenest accommodation possible for incoming businesses, while a Reading ‘Oyster’ card, a comprehensive cycle network and Urban Gondolas or a Rapid Transit System connect the city from east to west, and north to south, relieving the town centre of congestion.

‘Reading in 2050 could have people using electric cars and other means of sustainable transport, living in houses without heating systems, using less water and energy and richer, happier and more active as a result. This is already all possible, I do it already - so we can easily begin implementing many of these things now and phasing attitude and behavioural change over the coming years. But to do this we need a vision.

Anthony Cowling, Greater Reading Environmental Network
@ The Reading UK 2050 Workshop, May 2014
A number of short, medium and long term objectives were identified through the workshops:

- Develop the Vision and brand
- Review how leadership can respond to the challenges
- Undertake social, economic and environmental assessments
- Develop a flexible futures framework for short, medium and long term development
- Complete crossrail, and consider opportunities for rapid transit, a third river crossing and further improvements to the walking and cycling network
- Establish and drive a programme for big data broadband delivery
- Review self-sufficiency in energy production options and establish key waste and water enhancements required
- Begin retrofitting programme and consider means to drive for high quality, sustainable architecture.
- Achieve city status
- Assess cultural opportunities, potential for growth and requirements to support this.
- Explore financing opportunities at Government, LEP and Local Authority levels

2014-2020

- Support the ongoing Vision evolution and promotion of Reading City
- Strong collaborative leadership is in place and facilitating joined up thinking across Greater Reading
- Consider flexible futures framework successes and continue to evolve
- Deliver sustainable low carbon building as the norm
- Explore and utilise financing opportunities such as TIFs, Carbon Bonds, Crowd Funding and Local Investment Funds.
- Progress plans for rapid transit and deliver a third river crossing and free public transport
- Enhanced cycleways and footpaths and road pricing is driving changes in behaviour
- Establish a thriving cultural calendar with enhanced facilities and promotion
- Deliver a business hub and flexible commercial space opportunities
By 2050 Reading is a smart & sustainable community, which, through strong leadership and growing confidence, is looking to how it now makes the most of it’s infrastructure and dynamism to continue to grow and diversify and remain a leading, visionary city.
It has become a city with:

- City region and international status
- A strong and resilient economy
- A growing programme of community and cultural events
- An integrated, efficient and sustainable transport network
- A highly efficient, sustainable building stock
- A strong identity and confidence in it’s status as a destination
- A continually evolving future framework
- Smart and green technologies throughout
- Flexible working environments and a diverse sector presence
What now?
What Now?

The Reading 2050 project is very much at the start of its journey and further dialogue and consultation with key stakeholders is planned. This is not a masterplan, but rather the start of a process which we hope will to continue to evolve. We will be focusing our efforts on communicating and working with business, the local authorities, the local enterprise partnership (LEP) and other stakeholders to develop the vision.

In the short term we feel it is important to:

- establish a clear vision and identity - the process we have started is the beginning of that journey.
- create a Reading Futures 2050 Group - to help drive a new Reading 2050 vision.
- join up thinking around ‘Greater Reading’.
- improve transport and infrastructure.
- create innovative partnership and joint funding models.

The work we are doing for Reading 2050 is an example of a co-created project, and other cities throughout the UK are working with a range of partners to develop visions, as part of the UK Government Foresight Future of Cities programme.

As the vision for Reading evolves we will be developing other activities, not only based around workshops and urban design activities and events, but also connecting through to other projects including Reading Museum’s Happy Museum project and The Abbey Quarter Project in Reading, which will also explore the past, present and future of Reading.
We are therefore continuing to seek thought and opinion via:

**TELL US YOUR THOUGHTS:**

- Tweet your thoughts #reading2050
- Join and post your comments on our Reading 2050 LinkedIn group
- Register your interest in joining future Reading UK 2050 events
  info@bartonwillmore.co.uk

**OR VISIT US AT WWW.READING2050.CO.UK:**
Appendices
## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Key targets from Reading Climate Change Partnership’s Reading Means Business on Climate Change¹⁰

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Energy supply 2020</strong></td>
<td>Renewables will be 8%; smart grids, heat supply networks and decentralised energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low carbon development 2020</strong></td>
<td>High standards of energy efficiency with on-site renewables; retrofit measures across Reading; low embodied carbon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural environment 2020</strong></td>
<td>Thriving and interconnected natural environment; local business involvement; community involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water supply and flooding 2020</strong></td>
<td>Manage demand and supply of water to reduce water shortages; reduce carbon footprint of water supply and water heating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transport 2020</strong></td>
<td>Transport policy which supports low carbon travel options and encourages non car travel. Air pollution from vehicles to be reduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purchasing, supply and consumption 2020</strong></td>
<td>New business models based on circular economy; reduce waste and increase recycling; sustainable behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education, Communication and Behaviour 2020</strong></td>
<td>People of all ages will be equipped with knowledge and skills that will increase access to employment within a local green economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community 2020</strong></td>
<td>Build community activity relating to sustainable communities and reduce consumption through a sharing economy.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reading: Understanding the Present and the Past to Inform the Future

If we are to understand how Reading might evolve in the next 50 years it is important to understand the reasons for Reading’s success and also the things that have not worked as well for Reading during its previous history. Indeed this is a key recommendation of Sir Terry Farrell’s UK Government-commissioned review of Architecture and the Built Environment: that cities should have ‘urban rooms’ which paint a timeline of understanding the evolution of a place from its past through to the present, and into the future. This short section of the report uses graphics, images and text to paint a short history of Reading as context for understanding how it might evolve over the next 50 years.

The Present

Today, with a population of 155,700 (or 318,000 if we are looking at the Reading/Wokingham Urban Area), Reading is a major commercial and retail centre, and home to many leading multinational high tech companies such as Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco and Ericsson, and more recently Huawei and Quintiles, alongside other companies from the insurance and investment sectors. Although not yet officially a ‘city’, recent research has positioned Reading as being one of the top five ‘city’ economies in the UK with many other measures pointing to a strong track record in inward investment and economic growth (Box1).

10 See also Happy Museum Project: http://www.happymuseumproject.org/
Reading’s success is based on its physical and virtual connectivity networks in an increasingly globalised world. Research in 2010 (The Reading Diamond Report) showed that the location of multinational companies in Reading and the wider Thames Valley Region promoted effective flows of specialised knowledge, finance and talented labour which provide additional attraction for further inward investment. Reading’s first-class rail links (strengthened by the major new railway redevelopment at Reading station), proximity to London and Heathrow also provide a powerful magnet for jobs and economic growth. Indeed, Reading’s strategic importance is also recognised by the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP) which sees Reading as a key hub in a wider polycentric network of towns in the Thames Valley. Finally, Reading’s retail importance is highlighted by the fact it is in the top 25 retail destinations in the UK, founded on the continued strength of the Oracle Centre’s performance.

Much of Reading’s strength is built on its ability to attract inward investment and a diversity of employees, and Reading’s cultural and ethnic diversity (its schoolchildren speak 150 languages) is often seen as a strength. Writing in the Daily Telegraph in 2010 (Reading: a Babel of Dialects) Elizabeth Grice suggested:

‘In the chaotic, multi-cultural melting pot that is the Oxford Road, you are as likely to hear Panjabi, Yoruba, Guarani, Temne or Uzbek as you are the native tones perpetuated by David Brent in The Office. You can read the Dziennik Polski, drink in a Polish pub, work out in a Hungarian-run gym, have African hair extensions, shop in a Portugese deli, buy Halal meat’.

Reading: a success story

- Ranked Number 1 European city for foreign direct investment (FDI European Cities and Regions of the Future 2014/15 (Financial Times)).
- Ranked Number 1 in the UK for the percentage of people in the labour market in employment (Centre for Cities, 2014).
- Ranked 5th for best qualified labour force (42.6% of population NVQ4 or above) and for share of UK graduates (28% of population are graduates) (Centre for Cities, 2014).
- Reading has the 5th highest startup rate in the UK, and is in the top 10 for patents granted (Centre for Cities, 2014)
- Reading is ranked 8th best European micro city for quality of life, based on health, labour force and income according to the FDI European Cities and Regions of the Future (Financial Times, 2012/13)
- Reading is the most culturally diverse place in the world per head of population (there are more than 150 languages spoken) (Daily Telegraph, 2010)
- University of Reading is ranked as one of the top 1% global universities (Times Higher)
- Ranked within top 25 UK retail destinations (CACI)
- Most populous town in the UK not to have city status (Barton Willmore Reading 2050 Report)
- Reading is ranked No. 1 for productivity in the Centre for Cities’ City Monitor 2015.
- 5th best qualified workforce should also be the 2015 report
- Reading tops the table as the UK’s number one tech centre according to KPMG’s Tech Monitor Report 2014 with 1 in 5 companies classified as tech companies
- Reading was named the UK’s most successful economic city in the Good Growth for Cities 2014 report (PwC / Demos) of the 36 largest economic areas in the UK
- Reading is second only to London for the concentration of SMEs, with 364.6% per 10,000 population in 2013 (Centre for Cities Small Business Monitor 2014)
The Blade from Reading Abbey

Despite these positives Reading also has a number of issues relating to social inclusion. In Reading, as in other cities there are areas of deprivation. According to Reading Borough Council’s Sustainable Economic Development Strategy, Reading Borough contains some of the most deprived areas of the South East, including super output areas (SOAs) in the 20% most deprived in England for the Index of Multiple Deprivation (located in South Reading, Coley, Coronation Square area and Dee Park. In terms of education, skills and training, Reading contains 3 SOAs that are within the 5% most deprived in England (located in South Reading) and an additional 11 SOAs that are within the 10% most deprived. The new Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal aims to address some of these issues, particularly the skills gaps, unemployment and underemployment of 16-24 year olds.

The Past

Reading’s geographic location at the confluence of the Thames and Kennet rivers and its location 40 miles west of London explain the ancient origins of its success as a trading centre and centre of commerce and manufacturing. Reading was founded as a Saxon town in the late 5th or 6th century, probably taking its name from the ‘Readingas’, a local Anglo-Saxon tribe. Its continued growth and strategic importance over the next 400-500 years saw the founding of a major Abbey in 1161 by Henry I, who is buried in the Abbey Grounds. Although there are today limited remains of the Abbey, street names such as Holy Brook and Minster Street point to the strong historic legacy of the Abbey and its importance as a major European centre of pilgrimage.

Reading’s subsequent success was so rapid that by 1525 it was the largest town in Berkshire, and tax returns show that Reading was the 10th largest town in England when measured by taxable wealth. By 1611, it had a population of over 5000 and had grown rich on its trade in cloth and silk weaving. In fact it was during this time that a local clothier John Kendrick (after whom Kendrick School is named) bequeathed a large sum of money for setting up a workhouse for poor people, which was called the ‘Oracle’ (because it is suggested John Kendrick was a ‘man of vision’), and which the Oracle Shopping Centre (creating 4000 jobs) was subsequently named after. John Speed’s map of Reading from this time shows a small and compact town still very much constrained on its south side, and roughly triangular in shape.
However, the modern wealth and prosperity of Reading was really founded in the 18th century when improved road and river transport saw major iron works and brewing emerge in the town. As canal and road and rail transport improved further, Reading also developed during the 19th and 20th centuries as a major centre for the ‘Three Bs’ of beer (1785–1980, Simonds Brewery), bulbs (1837–1974, Suttons Seeds), and biscuits (1822–1976, Huntley and Palmers). Brickmaking (a fourth ‘B’) was also very important and is reflected in the use of local bricks in many of Reading’s buildings.

After the Second World War and particularly over the last 50 years, Reading has expanded and changed rapidly. The Lower Earley development, completed in 1977, for example, was one of Europe’s largest residential housing developments, housing 20,000 people in 9000 homes, and by this time the M4 motorway had further improved Reading’s connectivity, although Reading’s three B’s had left the town by the late 1970s/early 1980s (Box 2).

During this time Reading began to attract some of the new industries for which it is now famous, including electrical components, data processing, software, surgical/healthcare products and professional services. Reading’s place in popular culture was also enshrined in the first Reading Festival of 1971.

Some key developments in Reading over the last 50 years

- 1968 Last trolley bus runs in Reading
- 1969 Inner Distribution Road construction started (completed in 1985)
- 1970 Broad Street partly pedestrianized (and fully pedestrianized in 1995).
- 1971 M4 opened and first Reading Festival launched
- 1972 Butts Centre development.
- 1976 First high speed 125 trains run through Reading.
- 1976 New Civic Offices open
- 1977 Hexagon opens
- 1989 Apex Plaza opens
- 1998 Madjeski Stadium built
- 1999 A33 Relief Road and Oracle Shopping Centre
- 2012 University of Reading opens London Road campus for Institute of Education - £21 million
- 2013 Reading Station Redevelopment
- 2014 HM The Queen opens £900 million redeveloped Reading Station
Views on Reading: ‘A Much Maligned Town’?

Despite Reading’s recent success as a commercial centre there has often been a critical literary tradition which has surrounded the town. Not exclusively so, but enough to suggest that Reading could be a much better place to live if something could be done about its appearance and its ‘soul’.

Adam Sowan’s book, ‘A Much Maligned Town’ captures the essence of this writing and emphasises the point that during the mid-1960s, as Reading’s reputation declined, much of the more vitriolic writing in the press and literature pointed to its ‘dullness’. In fact on 15 March 1968, the Reading Chronicle ran a headline, ‘Reading is Dragsville’. This was echoed in the Village Voice, a Caversham Park Village magazine, which suggested:

‘Reading must be the deadliest, dullest most boring dragsville with the powers and dignity of a County Borough and seat of a University anywhere south of Reykjavik’.

In a rather different vein, Miles Jebb, writing in 1988 (‘A Guide to the Thames Towpath’), said:

‘The old centre of Reading is separated from the Thames by the main railway line, and the Intercity trains rushing through the station somehow symbolise the story of the town. For Reading has always been a place of transit and transiency, a halting-place on the mainline of history, often appearing in terms of a return ticket’.

Writing some 15 years later Martin Andrew (Reading: A Pocket Album, 2003) suggested:

‘Mention the town of Reading to many people and they think of Oscar Wilde’s Ballad of Reading Gaol, or tell you that the town is impossible to get into by car, or that the middle has gone and it is just a doughnut with a road and vast suburbs.’

Perhaps Reading’s lack of foresight was at the root of many of its problems. Writing with some impatience in 1862, John Okey Taylor, mayor elect, wrote:

‘It takes three centuries to carry out anything in Reading: one to think about it, one to talk about it and another to carry it out’.

This is ironic, given the literal meaning of the ‘Oracle’ Shopping Centre, and also given Reading’s strong historic and cultural legacy, which is also built on entrepreneurial endeavour.

So now more than ever we need a strong vision for Reading that looks at the kind of place it should be by 2050, building on the past and understanding the present, to transform its future.
Appendix 3 - Contributors so far...

PropertySphere (Young Property Professionals Network) - June 2013

Caroline Crutcher
Chloe Jordan
Chris Blencowe
Chris Collings
Dan Bradbury
Danielle Parker
Darrel Ward
Edmund Smith
Eleanor Burton
Eleanor Thomson
Heather Williams
Jannicke Brar
Julian Spence
Kate Parry-Jones
Laura Wainwright
Mr Adam Gibbs
Mr Adam Lloyd
Mr Andrew Hawkins
Mr Andy Wells
Mr Ben Greatbatch
Mr Ben Kite
Mr Ben Muirhead
Mr Brian Condon
Mr Chris Newman
Mr Christopher Grahame

Olswang Solicitors
Beard Oxford
Hilson Moran Partnership
Barclays Bank Plc
Bellway Homes (Thames Gateway)
Peter Brett Associates LLP
Clancy Consulting Ltd
University of Reading
SEGRO
Barclays Bank Plc
University of Reading
Blandy & Blandy
Blandy & Blandy
Olswang Solicitors
Boyce Turner
SEGRO
Barclays Bank Plc
i-Transport LLP
Ridge & Partners
EPR
Odyssey Markides
FMW Consultancy Ltd
Haslams
Peter Brett Associates LLP

Mr David Mather
Mr Duncan Findlay
Mr Edward Wheeler
Mr Jamie Redman
Mr Nathan Stevenson
Mr Nick Chancellor
Mr Nicklas Holm
Mr Patrick Smith
Mr Paul Roseff
Mr Robert Jones
Mr Robert Pearson
Mr Stephen Vigar
Mr Tom Fletcher
Ms Helen Burrell
Ms Susan Haslam
Oliver Goodyear
Philip Hunter
Rob Harris
Rowan Turrall
Sam Leckenby
Simon Lickley
Steve Jones
Thomas Fitzpatrick
Vicky Charlieson
Will Morris

JDP
i-Transport LLP
Peter Brett Associates LLP
Michael Aubrey Partnership
Bellway Homes (Thames Gateway)
Meeting Place Communications
Dawns Construction Ltd
Dawns Construction Ltd
Peter Brett Associates LLP
Michael Aubrey Partnership
Hicks Baker
Reading Borough Council
Lambert Smith Hampton
Boyce Turner
FMW Consultancy Ltd
Michael Aubrey Partnership
Lambert Smith Hampton
Elementa Consulting Ltd
Boyce Turner
Barclays Bank Plc
Blandy & Blandy
Kinnars UK Ltd
Upton McGougan Plc
Blandy & Blandy
Haslams
The Reading UK 2050 Workshop - May 2014

A panel of Reading UK 2050 Partners presented the vision so far at this conference and challenged the audience to give their views on the best and least favorite aspects of Reading. Contributions made by over 70 attendees were collated and fed into the resultant vision presented here, as many mirrored those already flagged at previous events.

Attendees: All delegates of the conference including

- Property developers
- Investors
- Occupants
- Industry Professionals
- Academia

http://www.ukpropertyforums.com/tvpf-14

Thames Valley Property Conference - September 2014

A group of Reading UK 2050 Partners presented the vision so far at this conference and challenged the audience to give their views on the best and least favorite aspects of Reading. Contributions made by over 70 attendees were collated and fed into the resultant vision presented here, as many mirrored those already flagged at previous events.

Attendees: All delegates of the conference including

- Property developers
- Investors
- Occupants
- Industry Professionals
- Academia

http://www.ukpropertyforums.com/tvpf-14

Estates Gazette Thames Valley Roundtable - August 2014

A group of property industry professionals who operate within or have interests within Reading were invited to join an industry roundtable focused upon delivering ‘Tech’ sector focused growth across Reading and the implications this has on the property market and product on offer.

Attendees:

- Kim Cohen, Barton Willmore
- Nigel Horten-Baker, Reading UK CIC
- Alison Bell, Reading Borough Council
- Juliette Morgan, Tech City
- Stacey Meadwell Estates Gazette
- Rory Carson, Oxford Properties
- Tao Tao, Sunfor Lighting
- Steve Capel-Davies, PBA
- Andrew Willcock, Savills
- Joel Hawkins, Bell Hammer

http://www.ukpropertyforums.com/tvpf-14
When Green met Grey - October 2014

The final event of Thames Valley Tech Week at GROW saw students from across Reading join ConnectTVT for a competition-style problem solving workshop, looking at Reading 2050, and asked students to look at greener ways to improve Reading’s infrastructure and transport issues. REading UK 2050 collaboratively presented the process and issues uncovered to date to the assembled students before they were divided up into teams and each team assigned a mentor, or ‘grey’ as we like to call them, to give them some guidance about the task set for them.

Each team was given a brief, outlining what aspect the Reading UK 2050 initiative they would be focusing on. The briefs ranged from ‘What would an integrated transport system look like and how would you use it?’ to ‘With technology enabled communities and a vibrant urban ecosystem, what enablers will further enhance our society?’. The students then had to present their ideas and the presentation with the most votes would win.

The students threw themselves into the task and offered some real fresh thinking to the issues whilst under the guidance of their ‘grey’ mentors. Some of the mentors commented on how quickly the students really got stuck in to the task at hand. Their innovative thinking and enthusiasm was infectious and they were a credit to their respective colleges.

The workshop was punctuated by talks and activities from various speakers including Professor Tim Dixon who is a Professor of Sustainable Futures in the Built Environment at Reading University, Simon Beasley from Reading Council, and Georg Ell who is the Country Director for UK & Ireland at Tesla Motors. The students also took part in a ‘cool wall’ activity run by Jenni Montgomery from Barton Willmore.

The day was a lot of fun, seeing two generations working in tandem. The mentors had a lot to offer in terms of experience and the students returned the favour with their fresh perspective and energy.

Attendees:
• Pupils from Reading’s University Technical College (UTC)
• Pupils from Reading College
• Jacqueline Lane & Tim Morgan - Nvidia
• Neil Bellamy & David Askew - Natwest
• John Donnelly - Microsoft
• Chanika Farmer & Peter Roseff - Peter Brett Associates
• Les Hines - RPMGI
• Mark Neild - Agileering
• John Morton - Computers, Processes and Management (CPM)

Where’s Reading Heading? - January - March 2015

‘Where’s Reading Heading?’ is an exhibition concept devised by Brendan Carr of the Museum of Reading, in response to The Happy Museum Project and funding received in late 2014.

The Museum of Reading have undertaken to curate a short documentary film which reflects the themes and issues raised by the REading UK 2050 initiative. Contributions from attendees to several workshops and interviews have been gathered into the short documentary film produced by Ginger & Pickles Ltd, while artist Jon Lockhart is currently working on a contemporary art installation called ‘Convergence’ which also reflects the themes and thoughts. Both products of the project will be complete by the end of April 2015, at which point they can be utilised within further programmes of public engagement alongside the REading UK 2050 team.

Attendees:
• Representatives from Oxford Road, Dee Road and Newtown communities
• Students from Reading’s University Technical College
• Reading International Solidarity Centre
• IMUSE
• Berkshire Local Nature Partnership
• Nature Nurture
• Reading Sustainability Centre
