

FOREWORD BY COUNCILLOR TONY PAGE



Any town or city relies upon its centre for a wide range of purposes. Centres not only provide shops, services, leisure opportunities and places to work for local residents, but also project an image of the town or city to the rest of the country and beyond. The story of the centre of Reading in recent years has been

one of success. The opening of the Oracle centre, rejuvenation of Forbury Gardens, increasing residential population of the centre and various other changes and developments have taken the centre forward. Central Reading is now established as the thriving heart of one of the South East's leading urban areas, a nationally significant transport hub and shopping destination and a major business location. Regional policy recognises Reading as a place that will make a major contribution to the future of the South East.

Reading Borough Council is determined to build on this success through providing a centre that reflects the leading position of Reading both nationally and as capital of the Thames Valley. Work is underway to provide a considerably improved Reading Station with ambitious new developments on adjacent land. Various other sites present opportunities to provide high-quality regeneration, sustainable extensions to the centre and new places for people to live, work and visit. Such new development will deliver much of Reading's identified development needs tied in with the various major transport improvements set out in the Council's Local Transport Plan.

Such development and regeneration will provide opportunities to secure greatly enhanced links by foot and cycle to and across the centre, as well as to open spaces and the Thames.

The complexity of planning for, and development of, the centre needs comprehensive solutions. The Council began to set out such an approach in 1999 with the City 2020 Vision document, and subsequent documents have carried forward elements of that vision. However, the Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) is the comprehensive planning framework needed to achieve the significant change in the central area until 2026, without compromising those features of the centre that make it what it is. It draws up an ambitious but achievable vision for the centre, and a strategy for delivering that vision. It identifies the key sites where the vision can be achieved, examines how development can proceed and the impact on Reading's skyline, and gives the means to secure the necessary infrastructure.

The RCAAP has been through three stages of consultation, as well as a public examination, before drawing up this final version. This represents another step in the good progress the Council are making in producing the overall planning strategy for Reading. Many stakeholders have helped to shape the RCAAP, and I thank them for their contribution. With the RCAAP in place, we can continue with the task of establishing a centre of which Reading can be truly proud.

**Lead Councillor for
Planning and Transport**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** A number of new policy approaches and challenges have thrust the centre of Reading into the forefront at a national level over recent years. The drive towards revitalisation of town centres, the designation of Reading as a regional 'hub', and the focus at the local level on regeneration and major transport improvements in the centre, have meant that we are faced with a real opportunity to ensure that Reading has a centre of which it can be proud.
- 1.2** The centre can make an immense contribution to meeting the overall vision for Reading, which is set out in the Reading 2020 Vision document and the Borough's Community Strategy¹. The vision is to establish Reading as the capital of the Thames Valley and as a gateway between the UK, Europe and the world; to provide the highest quality services and facilities for all who live in, work in and visit Reading; and to maintain and improve quality of life for everyone. Significant change in the centre will be vital in taking the centre to this next level.
- 1.3** In order to grasp this opportunity, we cannot afford to allow the centre to be developed in a piecemeal way. Such levels of development require a comprehensive approach to issues such as the barriers to movement that exist in the centre, the need to plan for a compact but extended central shopping, leisure and office core, and to provide a design solution for the centre to function as a whole. A single document guiding development in the centre is needed, and the system of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) introduced in 2004² provides the appropriate vehicle. Area Action Plans (AAPs) should guide areas of significant change or conservation, for which the centre of Reading certainly qualifies. The Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) therefore forms part of the Borough's LDF, to

cover the period to 2026. The LDF replaces the Local Plan adopted in 1998.

What is an Area Action Plan?

- 1.4** An Area Action Plan is one part of the Local Development Framework for the Borough. It has the status of a Development Plan Document (DPD), alongside other DPDs such as the Core Strategy and any site allocations documents. Decisions on planning applications should be made in accordance with policies and proposals in DPD's. The Core Strategy is the most important of these documents, and all other DPD's must be in general conformity with it.
- 1.5** The role of Area Action Plans is to establish the planning framework for a specific area where significant change or conservation is needed. The plan can include a number of measures, such as general guidelines for the area or allocations of individual sites, and the plan should always consider how its proposals should be implemented.

How does the Area Action Plan relate to other plans?

- 1.6** The RCAAP forms part of Reading's Local Development Framework (LDF), along with a number of other documents. The LDF is a set of clear, concise documents supported by a strong evidence base, which together make up the planning strategy for Reading Borough.
- 1.7** In preparing the Area Action Plan, the Council must have regard to a number of documents, including national planning policy and guidance, the South East Plan, the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, and any of the Council's other Local Development Documents (LDDs). In particular, the Area Action Plan must be in general conformity with the South East Plan, proposed modifications to which have been consulted



on during 2008. The Plan is expected to be adopted at the end of 2008.

- 1.8** Other documents in the LDF with a DPD status include the Core Strategy document and Site Allocations document. The Core Strategy was subject to examination in September and October 2007. The Inspector's Report was received in December 2007, and the Strategy was found to be sound. The Core Strategy was adopted in January 2008. This sets out the overarching principles and spatial strategy for Reading, and provides the policy context for the RCAAP. The RCAAP must be in general conformity with the Core Strategy.
- 1.9** All relevant policies in the Core Strategy will apply to development in the central area. There is therefore no need for the RCAAP to repeat elements of the Core Strategy. For instance, despite the absence of a specific policy on sustainable design and construction in the RCAAP, all new development in the centre should exhibit a commitment to using energy, water, minerals, materials and all other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care, and taking account of the effects of climate change, in accordance with policy CS1 of the Core Strategy.
- 1.10** In addition, there will be a number of documents that elaborate further on policy in LDDs, known as Supplementary Planning Documents. They will include development briefs for a number of sites, including some within the central area, and policy documents on matters such as implementation of design and development policies.
- 1.11** Figure 1.1 illustrates the most important relationships that the Area Action Plan needs to have to other plans and strategies, and includes indicative dates for when these will be produced. In addition to these, other plans and strategies should be considered, including the Minerals and Waste

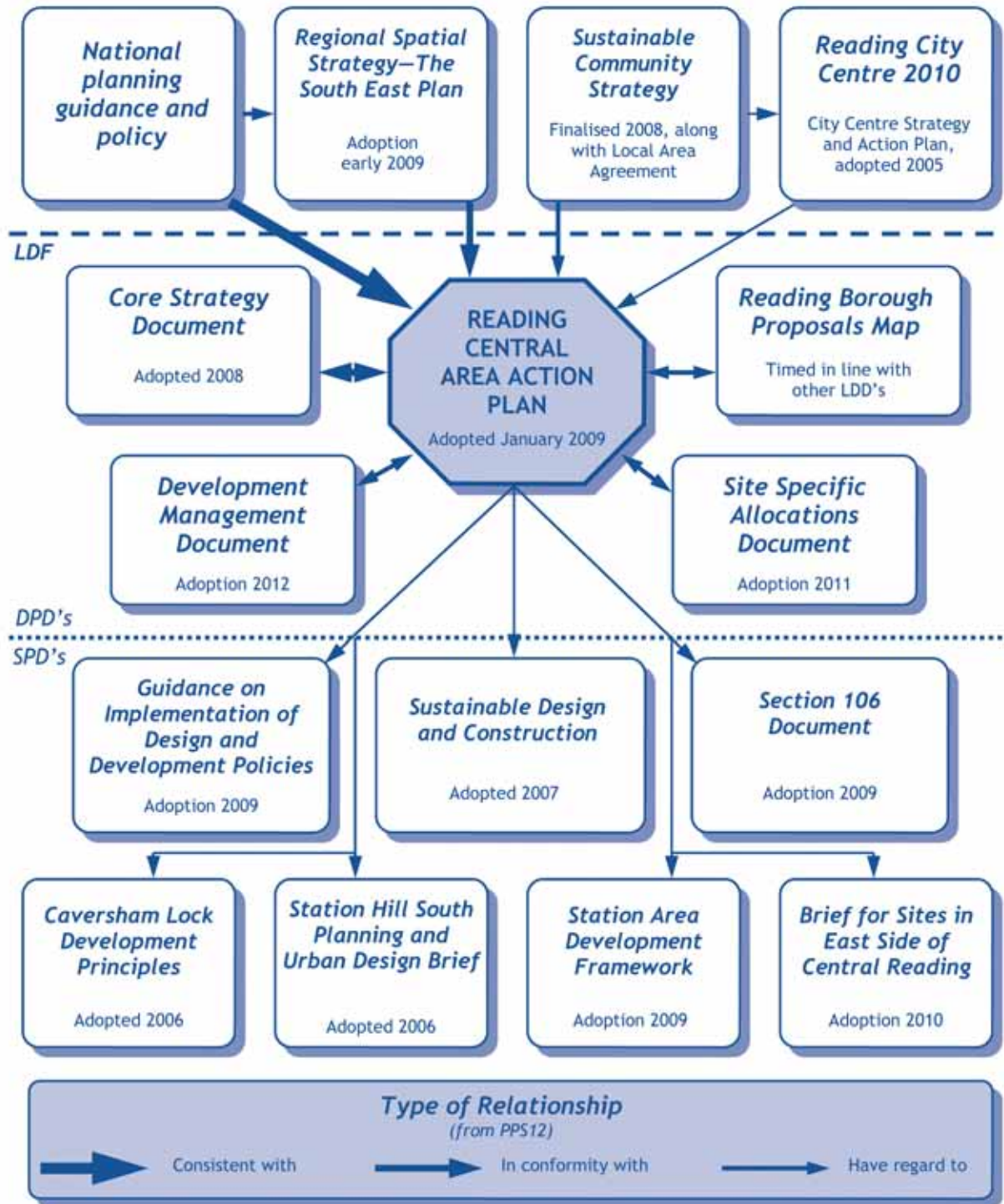
Development Framework. However, not all relationships can be shown on the diagram, particularly with other Council strategies. In particular, the Local Transport Plan 2006-2011, including an access plan for Central Reading is key, and this will be highlighted in later sections of the Plan.

- 1.12** LDF documents are available on the Council's website³, or by contacting the Council. Copies of documents have also been sent to the Borough's public libraries. Minerals and waste development framework documents are available to view on the website of the Joint Strategic Planning Unit⁴.

What have we done so far?

- 1.13** The Reading Central Area Action Plan has been through three periods of community involvement, which were carried out in line with the Council's guidelines in its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which was adopted in 2006.
- 1.14** The first stage of community involvement on the RCAAP was consultation on Issues and Options, which took place during March and April 2006. This identified key planning issues for the centre, and presented alternative spatial options for various types of development. Over 350 responses to this consultation were received.
- 1.15** The second stage was community involvement on Preferred Options for the RCAAP, between January and March 2007. This outlined the Council's preferred strategy for the central area and began to suggest policies and proposals. Fewer representations were received at this stage (over 50), but those that were received generally included a much greater level of detail.
- 1.16** Matters raised in community involvement included the likely scale of development, the provision of transport and other infrastructure, the location of main uses

Figure 1.1: The Relationship of the Reading Central Area Action Plan to other Plans and Strategies



including retail and arts and cultural provision, tall buildings and open spaces. Discussion with key partners and delivery agencies has continued since the Preferred Options consultation and has greatly informed the development of the document.

- 1.17** The development of the Submission document has therefore been informed by a great deal of community involvement and consideration of a range of factors. Responses at both previous stages have been summarised and considered, in two reports available separately⁵.
- 1.18** In addition, each stage of the RCAAP was accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal Report, which sought to identify the significant effects of the proposed and alternative options on the Council's sustainability objectives. These appraisals, as well as the appraisal of this document, have been central to the development of the Submission RCAAP. The document also took on board any developments since the publication of Preferred Options, such as the funding announcement on the Reading station project.
- 1.19** The submission of the RCAAP document to the Government marked the beginning of a final six-week period of community involvement. 36 responses were received. Responses at this stage have been summarised and responded to in a report available separately (Statement of Consultation on Community Involvement carried out during March and April 2008). An inspector appointed by the Government then held an examination into the plan to assess its soundness during 2008, before issuing binding recommendations to the Council. The RCAAP was then adopted in January 2009.
- 1.20** The examination assessed whether the RCAAP document was 'sound', meaning showing good judgement, able to be trusted

and fulfilling the expectations of the legislation. There are nine tests of soundness set out by PPS12. The tests of soundness are set out in Appendix 1.

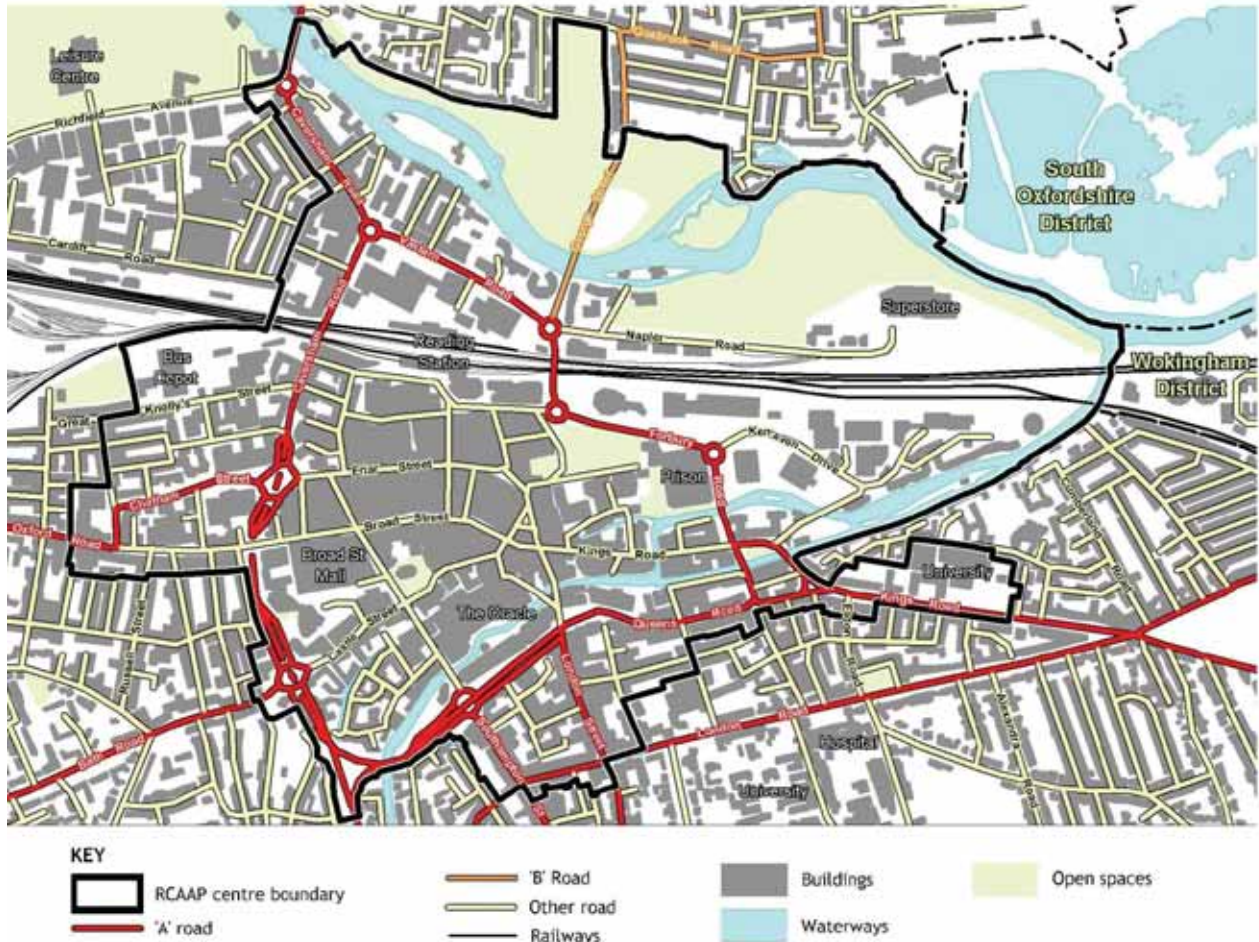
What does the RCAAP deal with?

- 1.21** The Reading Central Area Action Plan is made up of a number of different elements, which together form a comprehensive basis for managing change in the central area up to 2026. The provisions of the plan are guided firstly by a vision, and by a set of key principles which should frame development in the centre over the plan period. An overall spatial and design strategy shows the main direction and types of development and how the centre will look and function.
- 1.22** More specific proposals are included for the three key areas of opportunity in the centre: the Station/River area, the West Side and the East Side. There are also a number of more general policies which apply only within the central area, and for which the RCAAP is the most appropriate vehicle. There are also specific site allocations within the centre. These policies and allocations therefore require a proposals map, which is included at section 11 of this document.
- 1.23** One of the key differences between Area Action Plans and other DPD's is the focus on implementation. An AAP needs to demonstrate how, when, and by whom its measures will be implemented. Therefore, there is an extensive implementation section (section 9) to demonstrate how the proposals and policies will come about.

Which area does the RCAAP cover?

- 1.24** The area covered by the RCAAP is shown in Figure 1.2, and it includes those areas which will contribute most to meeting the vision for Reading and for the centre in particular, whether they be major opportunity areas, the commercial core of the centre to which

Figure 1.2: Boundary of the Reading Central Area Action Plan



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overall policies should apply, or the major areas of open space, access to and use of which the RCAAP seeks to improve. It does not, however, preclude development taking place outside the boundary.

Plan, by examining relevant plans and strategies, facts and figures and the results of past consultation exercises. It demonstrates how this background has led to the approach in this plan, and sets out the alternative approaches which have been considered and rejected. The context section of the RCAAP document is therefore very light, in order to keep the paper as concise as possible, and more extensive information is available in the background paper. Cross-references to the background evidence are included in the document where necessary.

1.25 This document also includes other central area boundaries for the application of some of the policies in the RCAAP. These boundaries are shown on the proposals map.

Background Evidence

1.26 In order to demonstrate the soundness of the Plan, the policies and proposals within the Plan need to be founded on a robust evidence base. We have therefore prepared a Background Paper to accompany this report.⁶ This sets out the context for the

1.27 This background paper has been kept up to date as the RCAAP has progressed. Many of the statistics, for example, are updated on an annual basis, and have been altered at each stage of the RCAAP. Therefore, a

⁶ Submission RCAAP Background Paper, available on Council's website



different version of the background paper was available for each public consultation stage. More specific topics are also addressed in the Background Papers to support the Core Strategy, available on the Council's website.

- 1.28** Reports have also been commissioned on a variety of issues, including tall buildings, urban design, community infrastructure, retail impact and transport. These are all available on the Council's website.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.29** Under the LDF system, every Development Plan Document that the Council produces must be accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal. A sustainability appraisal is a tool that highlights any significant environmental, social or economic effects of the plan. It assesses the plan against a number of sustainability objectives in order to identify these impacts. It incorporates the requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment, introduced through a European Directive⁷. The appraisal needs to be fully integrated into the plan process, so that it can inform and influence the plan as it goes along.
- 1.30** The Submission Draft RCAAP document was therefore accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal Report⁸, available separately. This was produced by planning officers working in conjunction with those officers producing the RCAAP, ensuring that the sustainability appraisal is a part of the production of the document itself.
- 1.31** In addition, an Appropriate Assessment is required under Article 6 of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC where plans may have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. A Screening Appropriate Assessment (available on the Council's website) found that no significant effects on these sites were likely as a result of the RCAAP.

Development of the Submission Draft

- 1.32** The Submission Draft RCAAP has been developed out of consideration of a variety of matters. These include: the Community Strategy, Core Strategy and many other strategies produced by the Council and its partners including the emerging Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Communities Plan agenda; community involvement on Issues and Options and Preferred Options; sustainability appraisal of all stages of the RCAAP; facts and figures highlighted in the background paper; research reports on various issues; and national and regional planning guidance.
- 1.33** A full discussion of these issues and how they have been considered in drawing up the Submission Draft is included within the Submission RCAAP background paper, available separately from the Council⁹.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 The Reading Central Area Action Plan has been framed within the context of national, regional, strategic and local level plans and strategies, and has been informed by evidence on the issues facing central Reading, by community involvement and by processes such as sustainability appraisal.

Policy Context

2.2 The status of Reading as the unofficial capital of the Thames Valley, one of the most economically dynamic areas of the UK, means that there is an onus at national and regional level for continued economic development to help drive the national and regional economy. As one of a number of designated regional hubs¹⁰, and part of a proposed 'diamond for investment and growth'¹¹, Reading will be a specific focus for continued economic development. Alongside this is national policy¹² which, as part of the drive towards revitalisation of our inner urban areas, generally directs those uses which attract many people, such as offices, retail, cultural and community facilities into centres, particularly primary regional centres such as Reading. This helps to enhance the vitality and viability of centres, and encourage more sustainable types of travel.

2.3 Key to all tiers of planning policy is the concept of sustainable development. One of the roles of planning is to ensure that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.

2.4 The Sustainable Community Strategy reflects these twin roles for Reading – to continue to develop the centre's national and regional significance whilst also maintaining and enhancing the quality of life within the Borough, and ensuring access to services and facilities for all. The centre of Reading is

well placed to assist in meeting the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy, and the RCAAP should provide the planning policy tool to do so.

2.5 The local planning context for the RCAAP will be set by the Council's Core Strategy document, the central component of the Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy seeks to link density of development to the level of accessibility by means other than the car. This means significant development in the centre of both housing and employment, as well as in areas such as the A33 corridor (for employment). In conformity with the Core Strategy, the RCAAP therefore clearly has a key role in delivering the spatial strategy for the Borough.

Characteristics of Central Reading

2.6 The character of the centre of Reading is strongly linked to the history of the town. There is some evidence of Roman settlement, and the name of Reading has Saxon origins. The development of Reading Abbey, founded in 1121, was a major economic stimulus for the town. The historic core of the centre dates from medieval times, around the three medieval churches of St Laurence's, St Giles' and St Mary's. Reading was mostly contained within its medieval boundaries until the end of the 18th century, when the town began to expand as a result of improved transport links (including transformation of the River Kennet into a canal, linking Reading with other areas), and industrialisation. Reading's emergence as an industrial centre is largely attributable to the arrival of the Great Western railways in the mid 19th Century.

2.7 The opening of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) in 1960 transformed the town centre, with changes to the physical appearance of Reading, including alterations to the historic street pattern, the loss of historic buildings, and dissection of the town centre. Parts of Reading's historic core were demolished



during the mid-20th Century, to make way for more modern developments. However, much of historical merit remains.

- 2.8 The profile of the centre of Reading has been markedly raised within recent years through new development, in particular the Oracle centre. Reading is within the top ten of a national ranking of UK centres¹³. However, there are emerging challenges for Reading as other nearby towns begin to regenerate their centres.
- 2.9 The centre has a wide mix of facilities. Large amounts of comparison retail are present in the centre, and there is a wide selection of leisure, cultural and entertainment facilities, as well as higher and further education facilities. The evening economy is particularly strong, and draws many visitors from outside Reading to the centre's pubs and clubs. The Council wishes to build on the leisure and cultural role of the centre with new and improved facilities. The edge of the centre holds large areas of open space, particularly on both sides of the Thames. However, there is much less open space within the core of the centre and to the south.
- 2.10 The centre is among the most important employment areas in the Borough. There is a substantial amount of office floorspace in the centre, including a number of freestanding headquarters-type buildings. However, in recent years the office market in the centre has been overtaken by the housing market, meaning that many office buildings have been converted into flats. This growing housing role in the centre has been one of the most obvious recent trends in central Reading, and population is expected to continue to expand. Residents are often young, single, childless and working in managerial and professional occupations, with a low level of car ownership.
- 2.11 There is also a substantial proportion of the built environment the character of which it is important to maintain. All or part of six conservation areas¹⁴ are within or adjacent to

the RCAAP area. These are areas of special historic or architectural interest, the character and appearance of which is worth preserving. However, there are also undesignated areas which contribute to the character of the centre and which should not be overlooked.

- 2.12 There is undoubted physical capacity within the centre to incorporate a significant level of new development, particularly when large redevelopment opportunities are taken into account. However, there are a variety of constraints on the centre. These include physical constraints such as the IDR, the rivers and the railway. In addition, much of the centre, including some of the more obvious redevelopment opportunities, are within the flood plain.

Transport Context

- 2.13 One of the most vital elements of the RCAAP is the need to draw together spatial planning and transport and ensure that development in the centre is timed to coincide with the transport improvements that are essential to its success. The context for these transport improvements is given by Reading's designation as a regional transport hub in RPG9 and the draft South East Plan.
- 2.14 Reading faces a number of transport issues. The station is the second busiest interchange outside London, confirming the importance of Reading in transport terms, but is a major bottleneck on the national rail network. Congestion on the road network is an issue, particularly in the centre. The IDR, encircling the centre, has become heavily used by through traffic, and is in need of action to relieve the pressure of growing numbers of vehicle movements. In addition, there is the issue of how transport links in with the vibrant evening economy of the centre, and ensures safety of visitors.

Figure 2.1: Transport in the Centre of Reading (source: Local Transport Plan 2006-2011)



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2.15 The Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 includes a specific Access Plan for Central Reading, illustrated in Figure 2.1. The Access Plan refers in particular to three major infrastructure projects in the centre: Reading station upgrade and interchange, mass rapid transit/park and ride, and IDR management. Indicative dates for these projects in the LTP are 2007-11, 2008-16 and 2005-11 respectively. The major schemes are outlined in greater detail in the spatial strategy in section 5. However, the LTP is about more than just major headline schemes, and includes strategies for all modes of transport, including walking and cycling.

2.16 In 2007, the Council set up a wide-ranging commission with an independent chair to examine the traffic problems of Central Reading. This examined a range of issues, including changes to the IDR, and it reported its findings in July 2008. Among its recommendations were to examine road-pricing, promote a third Thames crossing, review access from the east, discourage car access to Reading station, park and ride and to abandon the one-way IDR scheme.

2.17 Work on a parking strategy, which will include specific guidance on parking in the central area, is ongoing. This includes a review of the current Central Reading Parking Strategy, which recommends a maximum of 8,000 public car parking spaces in the centre. The location of these spaces will, however, inevitably alter with the redevelopment proposals in the centre, and this document will set out further guidance on their location.



3. VISION

3.1 The vision for the Reading Central Area Action Plan is as follows:

By 2026, central Reading will build on its status as the dynamic and creative core of the capital of the Thames Valley and an important regional hub. The centre will be promoted and maintained as a top-class location for business, retail, leisure, culture and learning. It will be the focus for continued high quality mixed use development, building on its regional status. It will be easily accessed by a choice of means of transport, and will contain a nationally significant interchange between European, UK, regional and local services, and between train and bus and other forms of transport.

The centre will provide a safe and distinctive high quality environment and commercial and community facilities accessible to all members of society, with easy access to high quality public areas, open space and water spaces. A range of living accommodation will be provided in the centre, providing a high quality of life, and supported by social infrastructure. The centre will contribute towards maintaining and improving the experience of all those who live, work, visit and study in Reading.

The historic core, special character and market town intimacy of Reading will be protected, while building on these qualities and exploiting the potential parts of the central area to accommodate modern, intensive, well designed, well connected, highly accessible urban development with first class open spaces and other public realm that will transform Reading into a modern and exciting 21st Century City.

4. KEY PRINCIPLES

4.1 The proposals and policies in the Reading Central Area Action Plan have been informed not only by the vision for the centre, but also by a set of key principles. As well as underpinning planning policy documents in the centre, these principles should also inform any development proposals in the RCAAP area. Since these principles have directly informed policies and proposals, the monitoring systems for those provisions should pick up on whether the principles are being achieved.

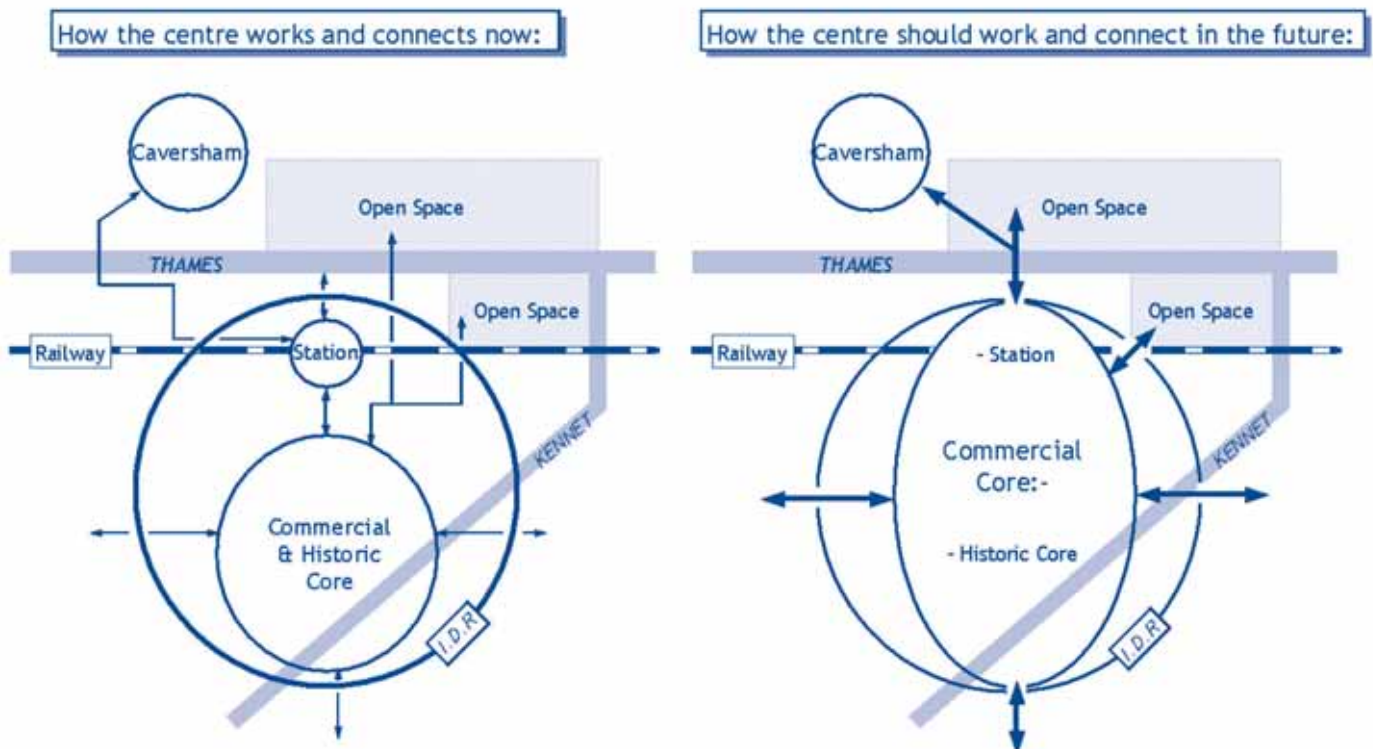
1. The centre will contain a broad range of different but complementary uses within an area easily accessed by foot.
2. The centre will appeal to all sectors of Reading's population as a place to live in, work in, study in and visit.
3. New development will exhibit an excellent, safe and sustainable quality of design that contributes to the attraction of the centre.
4. The centre will make the most of its waterside areas as a destination for leisure and recreation, and protect and enhance wildlife habitats.
5. Areas of designated open space within the centre will be protected and new opportunities will be sought.
6. Access to the centre by foot, cycle and public transport will be improved.
7. Access within the centre by foot and cycle will be improved and barriers to this improved access will be overcome, particularly in a north-south direction through the core.
8. Development in the centre will benefit from and contribute towards forthcoming major transport improvements.
9. Areas and features that positively contribute to the unique and historic character of central Reading will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced.

5. SPATIAL AND DESIGN STRATEGY

- 5.1 The strategy set out in this section shows the spatial and design philosophy, which has underpinned the policies and proposals in the Reading Central Area Action Plan, and which should inform future development in the central area. The spatial and design strategy is set out in this section, and includes all text and diagrams.
- 5.2 The spatial and design strategy has been developed with regard to a number of different influences. Community involvement on broad spatial options and the Council's preferred options, and the sustainability appraisal of those options played a key role, as well as the Council's sustainability objectives, research reports, including urban design strategies, the Local Transport Plan and the vision and key principles set out in this document. The following sections discuss how and why the strategy has been derived.

- 5.3 It is important to note that the spatial and design strategy relates to broad principles for the central area. Illustrative material in this section is intended to be indicative only. The implementation of the spatial and design strategy will be through the policies and proposals in later sections of this document, and where there are specific boundaries related to these policies, these are shown on the proposals map in section 11. It is expected that much of the development will take place in the three major opportunity areas, and the guidelines for these areas are set out in section 6 of this report.
- 5.4 The challenge will be to provide an appropriate scale and mix of uses that are viable, well connected to the core, particularly the station and the transport interchange, and that contribute to the vision of a modern 21st Century City while protecting and enhancing the historic core and other special qualities of Reading.

Figure 5.1: How the centre works and will work



How the Centre Will Work

- 5.5** The first of the two diagrams in Figure 5.1 illustrates how the centre currently functions and connects. The picture is one of fragmentation, with barriers such as the IDR, the railway and the River Thames blocking pedestrian movement in many parts. Linkages are therefore often indirect and uninviting. The station, although very close, feels disconnected from the main commercial and historic core of the centre. Connections between north and south are particularly poor at the moment.
- 5.6** The broad objective of the spatial strategy is to overcome these barriers, and to bring the station into the core of the centre. This will be achieved by expanding the commercial core of the centre northwards up to and, potentially, beyond the station, with the station becoming a destination in its own right. Improved pedestrian and cycle linkages will cross the railway, IDR and the River Thames, and will link the centre and station to the Thames and its adjacent parks, to Caversham and to the rest of Reading. It is vital to bring the Thames and its open spaces into the centre. The historic centre will be protected and continue to make up an integral part of the heart of Reading.

Main Land Uses

- 5.7** The key theme that underpins the strategy and the context in which it should be read is of a mix of uses across the central area, both vertically and horizontally, although the emphasis will differ in different areas. Where specific uses should be within certain areas (e.g. office and retail), this is provided by policy RC6. If an area is shown for certain uses on the illustrative maps, it does not mean that all areas within that definition are appropriate for redevelopment, it is merely a broad guide to distribution of uses.
- 5.8** The spatial strategy continues to promote housing development on suitable brownfield sites wherever they appear across the entire central area, as has been the case throughout recent years. No one area in the centre is seen as being inappropriate for housing development, although housing will often be part of a wider mix of uses, particularly in the commercial core. It will need to be sensitive to potential environmental problems, noise, nuisance and pollution that occur in certain parts of the centre. Getting an appropriate mix of types, sizes and tenures across the area will be of great importance, as will providing the essential uses and services to allow the centre to be seen as somewhere where people can live for the long-term. There may also be a need for alternative types of housing, such as student accommodation. This housing growth is likely to mean increasing levels of community facilities in the centre to support residential development, as well as the continued role of the centre in providing community uses to serve the whole Borough.
- 5.9** In the rare event of a conflict developing between uses, certain uses will have priority, as the centre is the only suitable location. Major retail and town centre leisure development, including evening economy uses, will take first precedence, followed by, to a more limited extent, offices. In contrast, housing uses, including supporting social and community facilities, can be located in many places across the Borough.
- 5.10** Further major commercial office development will largely be focused in an area centred on, and easily accessible from, the station. There is a need to prioritise which locations benefit from development for employment uses, and the area centred on the station offers the greatest accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling, and should therefore be the focus of development.
- 5.11** In terms of retail, Broad Street, the Oracle and the Broad Street Mall are currently the hub of retail in Reading and have by some



distance the highest levels of footfall. The existing shopping core will continue to be appropriate for retail development where this is possible, and an extension to the Oracle within the identified Primary Shopping Area (see policy RC6), or an intensification within the existing envelope of the Oracle, could help to meet some of the need for additional retail development (see policy RC4). This will assist in keeping the shopping core as compact as possible, so that it is easy to move around on foot.

5.12 However, there will not be sufficient sites within the existing shopping core to meet the entire identified need¹⁵, in line with PPS6. This will mean that the Primary Shopping Area will need to be extended, in a location that helps to retain the compact nature of the shopping core. This will need to be properly planned to mesh into the existing shopping areas rather than involve piecemeal peripheral development. It is also important that such a development complements, rather than competes with, the Oracle, and would therefore ideally be aimed towards a different market and provide a different product. A competitor to the Oracle would not benefit the centre. At best it would mean two unrelated hubs to the shopping core, with surrounding retail areas being adversely affected. At worst, one of these hubs would be more successful, and would result in an unbalanced centre.

5.13 The best location for an extension to the Primary Shopping Area is the area around the station. This has sufficient redevelopment potential to provide for this quantum of development, would assist in developing the key north-south movement corridor through the centre, and would retain the compact nature of the core. It should be of a type more suited to the core of the centre than the large-format retail warehouses currently north of the station. There may be scope around the western, eastern and southern fringes of the centre for some additional retail and leisure, but the northern area should be the main focus, and

the primary shopping area should be extended accordingly. Any extension north of the railway line should, however, be dependent on the creation of superior foot and cycle links across the railway, and this will be ensured by policy RC6.

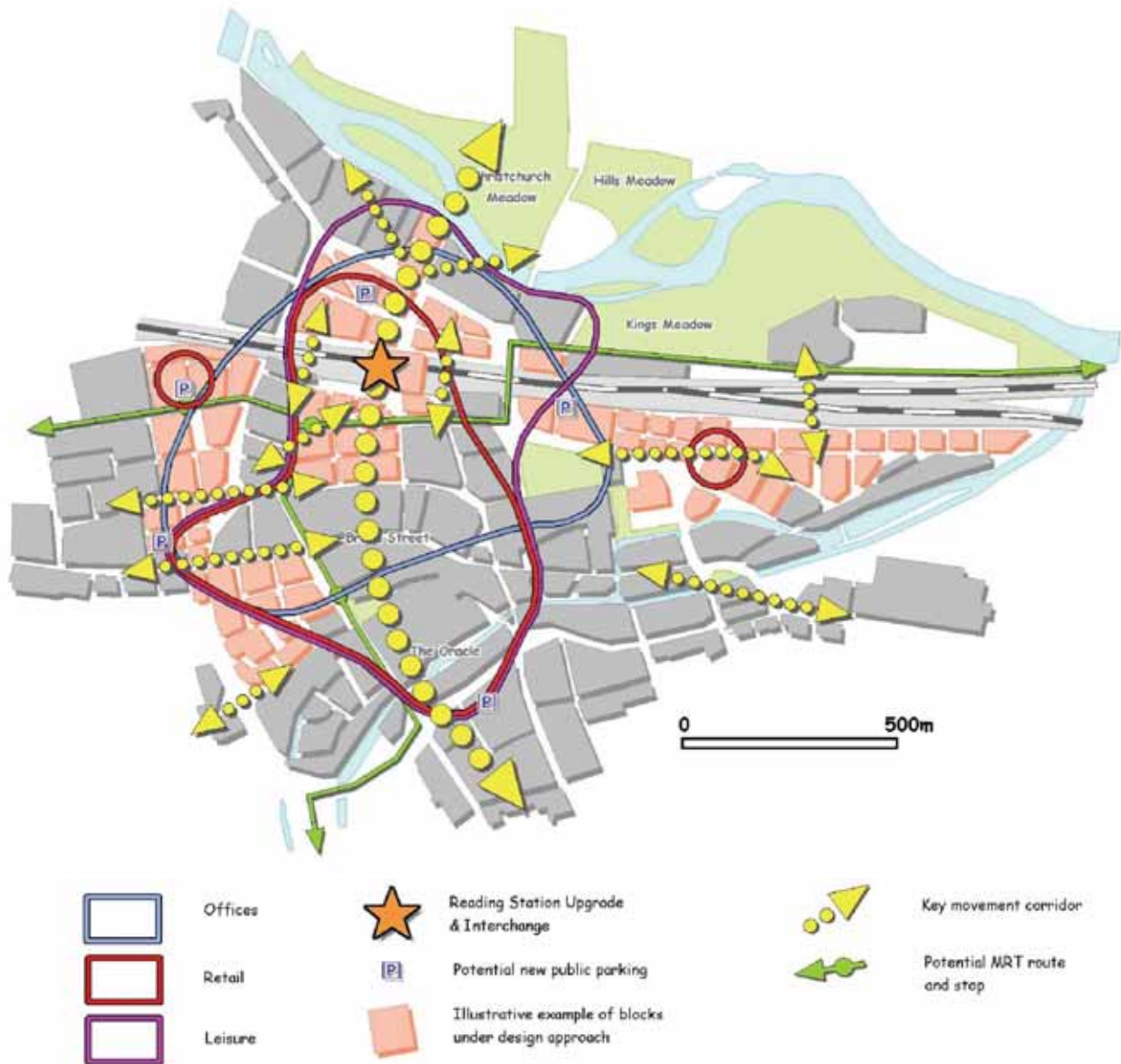
5.14 There are two other sites that could provide retail development over the period of the RCAAP. The Cattle Market site is suitable for the sale of bulky goods, but it should be ensured that this site also provides a carefully designed urban environment, rather than a low-density industrial or retail character. The existing retail around Kenavon Drive is low-density in character, and the focus here should be on higher-density mixed use, with uses including housing provided alongside the retail.

5.15 In terms of leisure, culture, recreation and tourism, there are a number of individual facilities which could be of particular benefit in widening the offer of the centre, and ensuring that it offers a range of leisure opportunities to attract people of all ages, during the evening as well as the day. These will include new arts, concert, live music and theatre provision at both large and small scales, new and improved central library provision, additional restaurants and evening uses that appeal to a wide range of users, new and improved swimming facilities, new recreational leisure facilities such as bowling and an ice rink, children's play facilities and additional hotel and conference facilities. There is potential for a multi-use leisure facility. An ice rink could potentially be an open-air or partially covered winter facility within an existing or planned area of open space. The Open Spaces Strategy seeks the provision of a skate park serving the whole Borough and forming a regional attraction on a site accessible from the station. Retail and leisure are so interlinked, that the same spatial strategy as for retail should generally apply to leisure uses.

5.16 In terms of specific leisure locations, a modern new arts venue to replace the

¹⁵ Identified in the Retail and Leisure Study 2005 (available on the Council's website)

Figure 5.2: Spatial and Design Strategy for the Centre of Reading



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Hexagon will be provided within the Hosier Street area. Some leisure development will be appropriate in the Chatham Street area, in particular swimming facilities as set out in the Chatham Street Development Brief. New development and redevelopment also provides scope for creation of new open spaces and public spaces that will provide settings for buildings and offer increased opportunities for informal recreation and leisure in the centre.

5.17 The evening economy of Reading has significantly expanded in recent years with new drinking establishments opening in the centre. Reading attracts people in the evening from across a wide area. This has been a critical element to the success of the centre of Reading, and the centre should continue to provide an 18-hour welcome to assist in delivering the vision. In order to ensure the vibrancy of the centre in the evenings and that it is not dominated by



those who only come to the centre to drink, a wide range of evening uses should be encouraged, including leisure, entertainment, arts and culture. Pubs and clubs should be kept to the commercial core of the centre rather than primarily residential areas.

- 5.18** The central area will continue to be an appropriate location for those high order community facilities that serve the whole Borough, and areas beyond the Borough boundaries. This will include higher and further education facilities, which are an important element of Reading's regional role and future status. There are also a number of existing community facilities, such as police and fire stations, which should be retained or where appropriate improved where they are still needed, or potentially relocated where there are needs that cannot be met on site. A new central library will be provided within the Hosier Street area.

Transport Improvements

- 5.19** Major improvements will take place at Reading station, as set out in the Council's Local Transport Plan. The LTP refers to three elements: the upgrade of the station, a public transport interchange, and related mixed-use development around the station. The station upgrade will include reconfigured or remodelled track, signalling, platforms and concourse extension. The interchange will incorporate facilities for disabled people, buses, coaches, taxis, cycles, kiss and ride/short-stay car parking and flexibility for a future Mass Rapid Transit system. Details on implementation are set out in section 9.
- 5.20** Preferred routes and stops for Mass Rapid Transit are shown in the LTP, although these may substantially change in line with detailed redevelopment proposals. Mass Rapid Transit would be a completely new or hybrid public transport system which would complement the existing public transport services. One of the key aims is to improve services from the station to the wider Reading urban area, and park and ride sites.

It would require dedicated space on some of the streets in the centre, including parts of the Inner Distribution Road. However, care must be taken to ensure that this system does not end up creating barriers to movement within the centre and cancelling out the benefits of breaking down barriers elsewhere. The preferred route for MRT is shown on maps and diagrams throughout this document. Details on implementation are set out in section 9.

- 5.21** In addition to the station improvements, the Council is looking at ways to better manage its existing network. This may mean changing the prioritisation of road space involving Mass Rapid Transit and Premier Bus Routes, and may also involve examining the potential for road user charging for non-residents of Reading.
- 5.22** The LTP includes an overhaul of the Inner Distribution Road that surrounds the centre, which will transform it into a series of living streets. The core project would reconfigure some junctions and convert the road to run one-way, which would better enable access to the central area. However, a wide-ranging public commission with an independent chair was set up to examine the current and future traffic problems in central Reading and any proposals for the further development of the Traffic and Access Strategy for Reading, and this reported in July 2008. More information is included at paragraph 2.16, but one recommendation was that the one-way IDR scheme be abandoned.
- 5.23** There will need to be a restructuring of car parking within the centre, particularly as some car parks form part of the potential redevelopment areas of the centre. The Central Reading Parking Strategy provides for an upper limit of 8,000 public car parking spaces in the centre and the spatial strategy map illustrates potential locations for new provision. In terms of car parking standards on individual developments, these will be set out elsewhere in the LDF. However,

innovative approaches to parking, including the formation of car clubs and shared commercial parking, are encouraged. Undercroft parking will also be appropriate in several areas, to make the best use of space.

- 5.24** To improve connections and break down major barriers, new or improved crossings for pedestrians and cyclists will be required over the IDR, the railway and the River Thames. This includes decking over the IDR at Chatham Street, and similar innovative solutions may be needed in places. This will be particularly critical in the north-south direction which is key to the overall spatial strategy. Improvements to cycling and walking will be delivered through the cycling and walking strategies, part of the Transport Strategy.

Urban Design Framework

- 5.25** The vision for the central area, in line with national, regional and local priorities, sees significant additional development in Reading in the future. This will have major impacts on the visual appearance of the town. The vision expresses the need to protect the key character elements of the central area, while modern, intensive and highly accessible development takes place in other parts. The design aspects of the spatial and design strategy build on these twin roles.
- 5.26** The existing historic core and unique character of Reading will be retained and enhanced, particularly in and adjacent to the existing central area Conservation Areas¹⁶ that cover parts of the core, such as the eastern side of the shopping area. The Castle Hill and Eldon Square Conservations Areas will also be preserved and enhanced. New development will therefore be focused away from these areas in order to preserve and enhance their character and appearance.

- 5.27** However, many parts of the central area, particularly the three identified opportunity areas, would benefit from high quality, well-designed new development. Such new development should respect and enhance the character of the central area. It should build on the existing urban grid structure of streets and places in the centre, providing high levels of access and connectivity into the centre and to the public transport interchanges. It should provide a mix of uses and, within residential developments, a mix of tenures. It should contribute to creating a high quality public realm with the provision of new open spaces and public spaces. It should provide landmarks and a sense of place, as well as high quality landscaping and public art as appropriate. It should provide continuity and enclosure with a high degree of active frontages. It should consider safety, security and crime prevention, which could include Secured By Design principles. Within the central area, intensive development of sites will be appropriate, based on building heights and low levels of car parking provision. However, new development should be of a suitable scale and mass, reflecting its location within the centre, its accessibility to public transport and the character of the surrounding area. New development should contribute to creating a high quality transport system to support movement into and around the central area.

- 5.28** Figure 5.2 shows some key elements of the design strategy, particularly main movement corridors and illustrative blocks. The blocks shown on the figure are **diagrammatic only**, in order to highlight the need for a fine urban grain and grid pattern. They should not be taken as a prescriptive guide on the structure required in individual areas.

¹⁶ Further information on Reading's conservation areas can be found on the Council's website, www.reading.gov.uk



6. MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- 6.1 Previous documents, particularly the City Centre Framework report produced by Llewelyn Davies, have noted three areas in particular with potential to provide for much of the development likely to take place in the centre. These three Major Opportunity Areas, the Station/River, West Side and East Side, are shown on Figure 6.1.
- 6.2 This section sets out broad guidelines for the areas, and includes a policy for each area. Each area is then further divided into sub-areas, where more specific policy is needed, on such issues as land use. This will provide the context for seeking regeneration on these sites and determining planning applications. In some cases, planning briefs may be needed. These will have the status of Supplementary Planning Documents, and will clarify and interpret the policy in this section.

Figure 6.1: Major Opportunity Areas



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STATION/RIVER MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA

VISION: *The station/river area will be a flagship scheme, extending the centre and providing a mixed use destination in itself and centred on a redeveloped station and new public transport interchange. It will integrate the transport links and areas northwards towards the river and into the heart of the centre.*

- 6.3 The Station/River major opportunity area is currently a mix of densities, land uses and character. Large parts of the area are currently of low density, and although many of these are in active use, they represent an inefficient use of one of the most accessible locations in the South East. In other parts of the area there is higher density development, much of which has a detrimental effect on surrounding areas, contributes towards a generally poor environmental quality and is in some cases vacant. It is difficult to move about the surrounding area on foot, particularly north of the station, and the links across the railway are uninviting and indirect. This has the effect of limiting any expansion of the centre northwards, and divides the central core from the area north of the railway.
- 6.4 The station itself is a major bottleneck on the national rail network, and it is not anticipated that, in its current state, it will be able to cope with the growth in travel on the railway and in the Reading urban area. Access to the station from areas to the north is tortuous, and the environmental quality of this side of the station is poor. Improvements to the station to rectify these issues are a necessity.
- 6.5 In order to address some of these issues, the Government approved funding for the £452 million Reading Station project in July 2007, meaning that the proposals at the heart of the Station/River area are now imminent and are likely to begin in 2008.

This in turn means that development of some of the underused and unwelcoming areas around the station is able to proceed.

- 6.6 Therefore, there exists a rare opportunity to think about the wider station area, stretching up to the River Thames in the north and the shopping core in the south, as a whole, and set down guidelines to ensure that the station is developed as an integral part of the central core of Reading. These guidelines should ensure that the area is developed in a comprehensive manner, and respects and facilitates the wider strategy for the Borough.
- 6.7 The development of the wider station area fulfils three key aims for the centre. It enables the redevelopment and improvement of Reading station, which is a national transport priority, it allows the significant improvement of north-south links through the centre, and it is the only location where major expansion of the centre can realistically take place and many of Reading's development needs can be met. For instance, the Council must allocate sufficient sites to meet the identified retail and leisure need, and the station/river area offers the best opportunity to meet this need in the form of an extension to the primary shopping area.
- 6.8 Parts of the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, particularly north of the railway line, are within both Flood Zones 2 and 3a¹⁷. However, this must be weighed against the vital role that these sites will play in regeneration in the centre. A sequential and exceptions test in line with PPS25 has been carried out in identifying these sites for development, and this is available on the Council's website as background evidence. Individual applications will need to provide their own Flood Risk Assessment. Detailed proposals on these sites will need to consider how the mix of uses is best distributed taking PPS25 advice into account.

RC1: DEVELOPMENT IN THE STATION/RIVER MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA

Development in the Station/River Major Opportunity Area will:

- i) Contribute towards providing a high-density mix of uses to create a destination in itself – the areas that also make up part of the primary shopping area and central core will have a particular emphasis on delivering much of the identified retail and leisure need;*
- ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, particularly on the key movement corridors. North-south links through the centre and across the railway line, IDR and River Thames centred on the new station are of particular importance;*
- iii) Provide developments that front onto and provide visual interest to existing and future pedestrian routes and open spaces;*
- iv) Safeguard land which is needed for:*
 - Improvements to Reading station;*
 - Reading station interchange;*
 - Mass rapid transit routes and stops;*
- v) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, including a direct green link between the station and the River Thames;*
- vi) Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and protect and, where appropriate, enhance the setting of listed buildings;*
- vii) Be laid out in a way that allows the area to come forward in parcels – for instance, single developments should not be solely inwards-facing, ignoring the links with other potential future development areas.*

¹⁷ See the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2007



Development will be in line with the following provisions for each sub-area:

RC1a, FRIAR STREET & STATION ROAD:

There will be active retail and leisure uses on the ground floor along Friar Street and Station Road, with a mix of uses on higher floors. Development should enhance linkages in a north-south direction to link to the Station Hill area. The setting of listed buildings in the area will be preserved, and opportunities to improve the environment of Merchants Place will be sought.

RC1b, FRIARS WALK & GREYFRIARS ROAD:

Development in this area will be of a mixed use with a significant leisure element. Active retail and leisure uses will be on the ground floor, particularly along Friar Street, with a mix of uses on higher floors. Development should enhance linkages in a north-south direction at a single level into the Station Hill area and through to the station. The edge of the site nearest to the areas of traditional terracing west of Greyfriars Road will require careful design treatment.

RC1c, STATION HILL:

This area will be developed for a mix of uses at a high density, including retail and leisure on the ground and lower floors and residential and offices on higher floors. There will be enhanced links through the sites, and a network of streets and spaces. Frontages on key routes through the site should have active uses. The edge of the site nearest to the areas of traditional terracing west of Greyfriars Road will require careful design treatment.

RC1d, STATION & INTERCHANGE:

The station will be improved, and an enhanced multi-modal interchange provided. New and improved links across the railway will be provided, including visual links. There may be scope for additional development for other uses within the site. The listed station building

should be retained and its setting enhanced. Areas of civic open space will be provided at the northern and southern entrances to the station.

RC1e, NORTH OF STATION:

There will be retail and leisure development on the ground floor with other uses including residential and offices on upper floors. Provision of retail development is contingent on improved links across the railway. Public car parking will be provided. An area of civic open space will be provided at the northern entrance to the station, and a green link provided to the Thames. An acceptable dry access scheme from across the site must be part of any development.

RC1g, RIVERSIDE:¹⁸

Development should maintain and enhance public access along and to the Thames, and should continue the green link from the north of the station, with potential for an area of open space at the riverside. The main use of the site should be residential, although some small-scale offices and leisure will also be appropriate.

A new or improved pedestrian and cycle crossing over the River Thames will be provided at a point between Frys Island and Reading Bridge. This may be either a new crossing or cantilevered onto the existing bridge.

RC1h, NAPIER ROAD JUNCTION:

A landmark building, containing residential and/or offices is appropriate for this site, which may contain an active commercial use on the ground floor. An acceptable dry access scheme must be part of any development on this site.

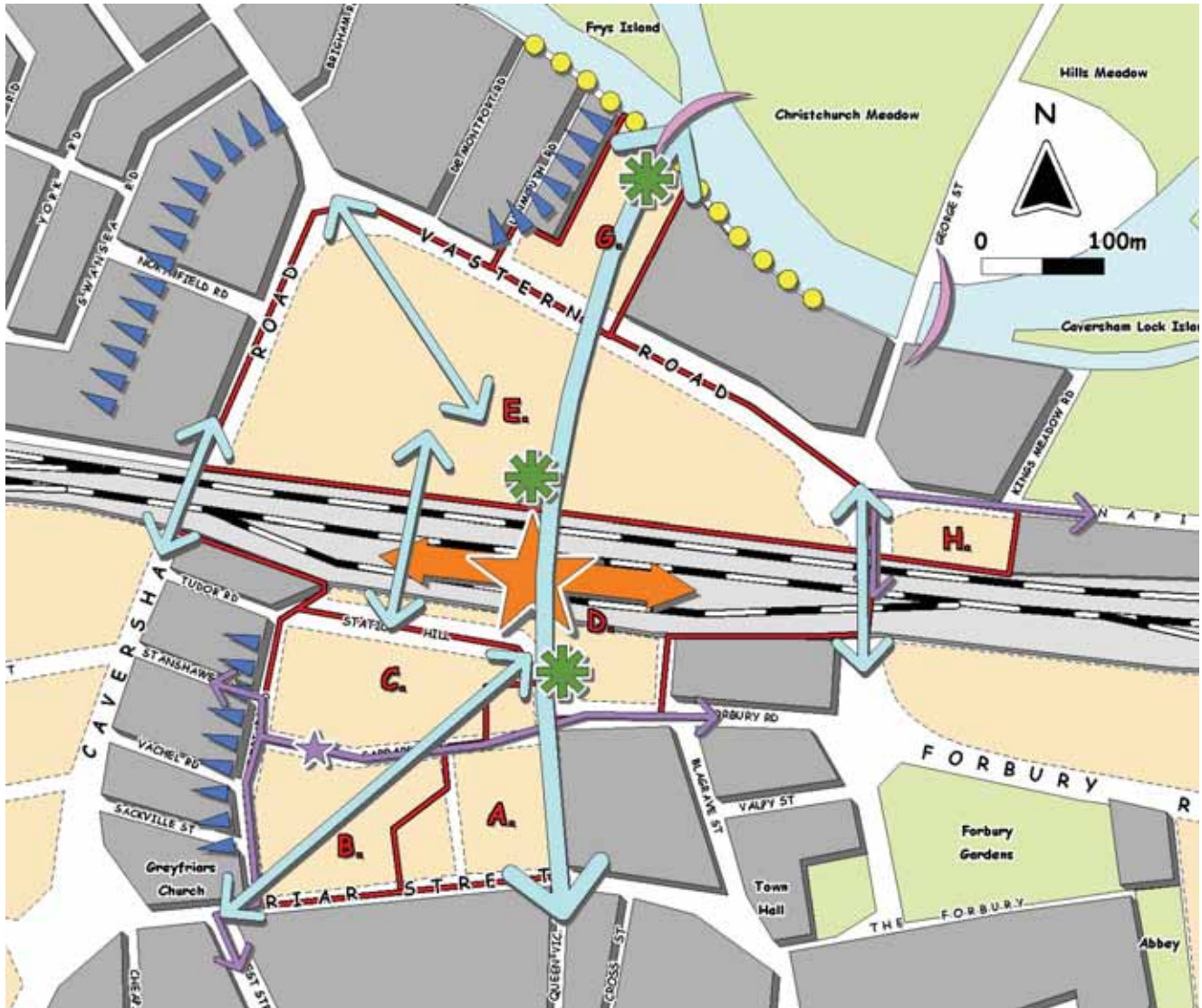
¹⁸ Sub-area RC1f was removed following the Examination

- 6.9** In order for the station area to become a destination in its own right, it should contain a wide mix of uses across the area. This wide mix of uses will ensure that the station area becomes a vibrant central quarter, active at different times of the day. This will mean retail and leisure development, to help draw the station into the core of the centre, new residential development, which will require substantial improvements to the physical environment, and offices. The station area will be the main focus for new office development in the centre, to capitalise on its high accessibility by rail and other public transport. There is also potential for future community uses within the area, including police facilities and infrastructure. A Station Area Development Framework will be prepared for this area, to enable the benefits of the station development to have a knock-on effect on surrounding areas.
- 6.10** In terms of retail and leisure development, the Station/River area will be particularly significant in delivering the needs that have been identified through background research and in this document. A need for a maximum of 100,250 sq m of additional retail floorspace has been identified to 2016¹⁹, and the leisure facilities sought are set out in paragraph 5.15. A large proportion of these uses will need to be provided in the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, both north and south of the station.
- 6.11** The successful development of this area hinges on improved accessibility by public transport, and improved permeability for pedestrians and cyclists. In terms of permeability, improving links for pedestrians and cyclists through the centre, particularly in a north-south direction, is one of the key principles for the RCAAP, along with removing barriers to access within the centre. If visual links are also provided, this will help change the perception of the area north of the station as a separate entity. The station/river area can make a particularly significant contribution to implementing
- these principles, since the most significant barriers to movement are in this area, and the opportunity to implement these should be seized. Ensuring active frontages along these routes will assist these to become attractive links, as will the provision of new areas of open space. This is particularly important on the route between the shopping core, the station and the Thames.
- 6.12** The improvements to the station and the need for a new multi-modal interchange are key elements of the Council's transport strategy and Core Strategy, as is some form of mass rapid transit linked to park and ride. These developments are likely to have requirements in terms of land, and it should be ensured that development does not prejudice those improvements which are key to the delivery of Reading's overall transport and spatial strategy, including the vision for the centre. In addition, some new public car parking is likely to be required in the area, which, due to space constraints and changes in levels, may well in some cases take the form of undercroft car parking.
- 6.13** Parts of the area around the station are appropriate for well-designed tall buildings, in line with the Tall Buildings policy (RC13), and the area will be developed at a higher density even where there are no tall buildings. However, schemes in these areas should take account of the fact that there are areas of low-rise housing fringing the area, and this should be reflected in the design of schemes, both in terms of the effect on character of the area and on the amenity of residents. In addition, there are a number of significant listed buildings in or adjoining the Major Opportunity Area, south of the railway tracks, including the historic station building, as well as a conservation area close by. Development should respect the setting of these features and will need to be carefully scaled to avoid detriment to them.

¹⁹ Reading Retail and Leisure Study 2005



Figure 6.2: Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy



- A.** Friar Street & Station Road
- B.** Friars Walk & Greyfriars Road
- C.** Station Hill
- D.** Station & Interchange
- E.** North of Station
- G.** Riverside
- H.** Napier Road Corner

KEY

- Approximate location of potential new open space
- Key corridor of movement
- Preferred Mass Rapid Transit route and stop
- Reading station upgrade
- Transition to zone of low-density residential
- Continuous public access along riverside
- Boundary of sub-area
- Area of search for pedestrian and cycle crossing of Thames

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6.14 Figure 6.2 shows the broad strategy for the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, which indicates some of the elements that need to be taken into account in developing this area. The Proposals Map (section 11) gives greater detail on some matters, such as designation of the Major Opportunity Area and Sub-Areas. The Station Area Development Framework or any Planning Briefs which are produced to cover these areas will give more detail on the principles in policy RC1, and, where appropriate, the sub-area aspects of the policy. More details on implementation of RC1 are set out in section 9.

6.15 The location of a new or improved pedestrian and cycle crossing of the Thames was the topic of much debate at Issues and Options stage, and as central a crossing as possible was generally favoured in the consultation, while respecting the character of Fry's Island. It is a key element of improving access to open spaces and north-south links through the centre. These are crucial aims for the central area, and the crossing will be achieved through section 106 agreements on developments throughout the centre where this is in line with Circular 5/05.

6.16 Areas along the western side of Caversham Road have room for improvement in terms of design and efficiency of land use. However, these are fringe areas falling largely within the floodplain, and as a result are not included within the Major Opportunity Area. Development could have a role in improving the environmental quality of the area, but only where this can satisfy the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 25 and the Core Strategy.

6.17 Parts of the area may face issues around noise and air quality that will need to be mitigated in relation to new residential development. More information on potential mitigation measures is contained in relation to policy RC9.

WEST SIDE MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA

VISION: *The west side area will be a mixed-use extension to the west of the centre containing high-quality mixed-use environments and fostering stronger east-west links into the central core.*

6.18 The West Side Major Opportunity Area is a mix of central area fringe uses along the western edge of the centre. Some of these uses are of low-density, whilst others are of poor environmental quality and are in need of improvement. One of the main features of the area is the Inner Distribution Road, which forms a major barrier to movement. Visitors arriving into the centre from the west will have to pass through these areas of low environmental quality, and this affects the perception of the centre. Regeneration of the western edge of the centre has been a long-held objective, and the development of the Chatham Street area is already underway.

6.19 Northern parts of the West Side Major Opportunity Area are within both Flood Zones 2 and 3a²⁰. However, this must be weighed against the vital role that these sites will play in regeneration in the centre. A sequential and exceptions test in line with PPS25 has been carried out in identifying these sites for development, and this is available on the Council's website as background evidence. Individual applications will need to provide their own Flood Risk Assessment. Detailed proposals on these sites will need to consider how the mix of uses is best distributed taking PPS25 advice into account.

²⁰ See the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2007



**RC2: DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST SIDE
MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA**

Development in the West Side Major Opportunity Area will:

- i) Contribute towards providing a mix of uses including residential;
- ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, in particular on key movement corridors and east-west links through the area and between development areas and the station, including improved crossings of the IDR;
- iii) Safeguard land which is needed for mass rapid transit routes and stops;
- iv) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, generally in the form of town squares;
- v) Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conservation areas and protect and, where appropriate, enhance the setting of listed buildings

Development will be in line with the following provisions for each sub-area:

RC2a, CATTLE MARKET:

This site will be developed for a mix of edge-of-centre retail uses, which may include bulky goods, and residential development, along with public car parking. The residential should be located on the parts of the site that are at lower risk from flooding. The retail must be designed to mesh into the urban fabric and a single storey retail warehouse will not be permitted.

RC2b, GREAT KNOLLYS STREET & WELDALE STREET:

This area will be developed primarily for residential, although development resulting in the loss of small business units should

seek to replace some of those units, preferably on site. Residential development should be located on the parts of the site at lower flood risk.

RC2c, CHATHAM PLACE:

A mixed-use extension to the centre will be provided, including a new residential community, commercial offices, and retail, leisure and restaurants on the ground floor, including a swimming pool. A landmark tall building will be part of the development, and the area will have a new civic open space at its heart. The development will deck over the Inner Distribution Road.

RC2d, BROAD STREET MALL:

Redevelopment will be for continued retail and leisure provision, maintaining frontages along Oxford Street and St Mary's Butts, with uses including residential and offices on upper floors.

RC2e, HOSIER STREET:

Development on this site will result in a new high-quality civic core, providing a new Civic Offices building, along with a mix of other uses including residential and supporting community uses and new open spaces. Development will also include a new arts venue to replace the Hexagon, a new central library and a replacement site for the street market.

6.20 The West Side does allow for some element of extending the central core, particularly in the Chatham Place area. However, the IDR is a significant barrier, and genuine extensions to the centre are only likely to work where a comprehensive solution to the barrier is available – for instance, the decking over of the IDR at Chatham Place as set out in the original outline permission for that site.

6.21 In general, a broad mix of uses will be sought in the West Side, given its

proximity to the central core. However, it should also be recognised that the West Side is neither as accessible nor as central to the direction of extension of the centre as the Station/River Major Opportunity Area. For this reason, the balance of uses is weighted more strongly in favour of residential than the Station/River. However, in such central fringe locations, changes in the residential and commercial markets are likely to have particular effects, so buildings should be flexible and robust to accommodate different uses.

6.22 Many of the elements that are key to successful development of the Station/River Major Opportunity Area also apply to the West Side. Improved pedestrian and cycle permeability remains vital, but the key direction through the West Side is from east to west, with the main barrier being the IDR. The presence of low-rise residential adjacent to the site also requires careful treatment, with the added issue of the Russell Street/Castle Hill and St Mary's Butts/Castle Street conservation areas adjoining the West Side. The existence of these conservation areas can be viewed as an opportunity rather than a constraint, with a chance to significantly improve parts of the area to better relate to the conservation area. Additional areas of open space will also be provided, most likely in the form of town squares. In addition, land may need to be safeguarded for major transport schemes, particularly the Mass Rapid Transit proposal.

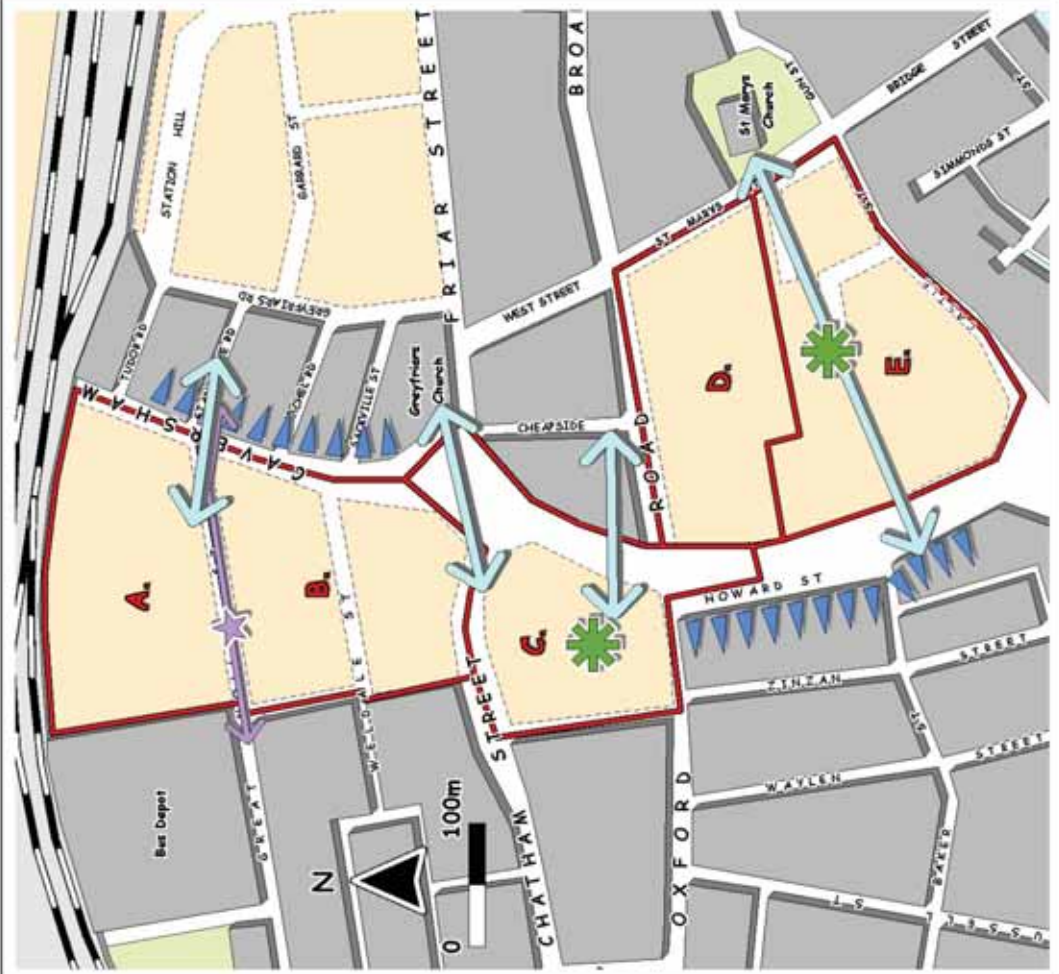
6.23 The need for replacement of the Hexagon theatre and Civic offices has been recognised for some time. The Hexagon is not suited to modern theatre requirements, while the Civic Offices offer a poor quality working environment and perform badly in terms of sustainability. This offers the opportunity for a new civic

core to be created in the area, also incorporating a new central library and site for a street market. This could include a public square which could also house temporary civic uses.

6.24 Figure 6.3 shows the broad strategy for the West Side Major Opportunity Area, which indicates some of the elements that need to be taken into account in developing this area. The Proposals Map (section 11) gives greater detail on some matters, such as designation of the Major Opportunity Area and Sub-Areas. Any Planning Briefs which are produced to cover these areas will expand on policy RC2, and, if appropriate the sub-area aspects of the policy. More details on implementation of RC2 are set out in section 9.

6.25 Parts of the area may face issues around noise and air quality that will need to be mitigated in relation to new residential development. More information on potential mitigation measures is contained in relation to policy RC9.

Figure 6.3: West Side Major Opportunity Area Strategy



- A.** Cattle Market
- B.** Great Knollys Street & Weldale Street
- C.** Chatham Street
- D.** Broad Street Mall
- E.** Hosier Street

KEY

- Approximate location of potential new open space
- Key corridor of movement
- Preferred Mass Rapid Transit route and stop
- Reading station upgrade
- Transition to zone of low-density residential
- Continuous public access along riverside
- Boundary of sub-area

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EAST SIDE MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA

VISION: The east side area will be a new community at the eastern fringes of the centre, lending a more urban character to the area, and helping to frame the historic east of the central core.

6.26 The East Side Major Opportunity Area is characterised for the most part by relatively low-density development in fairly prominent positions, including retail warehousing and business and industrial space. The area also includes some well-known local landmarks such as Queens House and Reading Prison, which may also have potential for redevelopment or reuse. The whole of this area is highly visible from the railway line, and it therefore affects the perception of Reading for people who arrive or pass through by rail. Other aspects which distinguish the East Side from the two other Major Opportunity Areas include the presence of the River Kennet, a more urbanised waterway than the Thames, along the length of the area, and a cluster of historically significant sites, including the Abbey ruins, Forbury Gardens and the Prison, at the western end of the area. Some redevelopment of former industrial and utilities sites for residential has already taken place in Kenavon Drive in recent years.

6.27 The East Side differs from the other two Major Opportunity Areas in that it is, by the standards of large sites in the centre, relatively self-contained. Whilst the West Side and Station/River are very significant in terms of important routes through the areas, there are fewer routes through the East Side, albeit that there are opportunities to create more permeability through the site for pedestrians and cyclists. Therefore, there is an opportunity to develop much of the east side as a new community making up part of the centre, but with a distinct identity.

6.28 Parts of the East Side Major Opportunity Area are within Flood Zone 2²¹. A small part is also within Flood Zone 3a. However, this must be weighed against the vital role that these sites will play in regeneration in the centre. A sequential and exceptions test in line with PPS25 has been carried out in identifying these sites for development, and this is available on the Council's website as background evidence. Individual applications will need to provide their own Flood Risk Assessment. Detailed proposals on these sites will need to consider how the mix of uses is best distributed taking PPS25 advice into account.

RC3: DEVELOPMENT IN THE EAST SIDE MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA

Development in the East Side Major Opportunity Area will:

- i) Provide a more defined urban environment than currently exists, of a medium to high density;*
- ii) In sub-areas RC3c, RC3d, RC3e and RC3f, contribute towards the provision of a new residential community at the eastern fringes of the central area;*
- iii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, in particular east-west links through the area and links between development areas and the station, including improved crossings of the IDR and railway;*
- iv) Safeguard land which is needed for mass rapid transit routes and stops;*
- v) Preserve the historic features in the area and enhance their setting where possible;*
- vi) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, particularly in the centre of the new community;*
- vii) Maintain, improve and create new access along the River Kennet.*

²¹ See the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2007

Development will be in line with the following provisions for each sub-area:

RC3a, QUEENS HOUSE:

The main use of this site will be offices, although there may be scope for some residential subject to constraints in terms of noise being overcome. Public car parking will be provided.

RC3b, READING PRISON:

The prison building itself is of historical significance and is listed, and will be retained. The building would be used for residential, commercial offices or a hotel. Development should enhance the setting of the Abbey ruins.

RC3c, FORBURY RETAIL PARK:

This site would be the focus of the new residential community, and, alongside residential, additional retail, leisure and community uses at a scale to serve the Kenavon Drive area would be appropriate. It should include a new area of open space. Implementing this policy may involve complete redevelopment or using new additional development to improve the existing urban form of the area.

RC3d, KENAVON DRIVE & FORBURY BUSINESS PARK:

This site would be largely residential in nature, although opportunities to create an area of riverside open space on or near the Kennet should be sought. Pedestrian access under the railway using an existing route will be sought. Residential development should be located on the parts of the site at lower flood risk

RC3e, 42 KENAVON DRIVE:

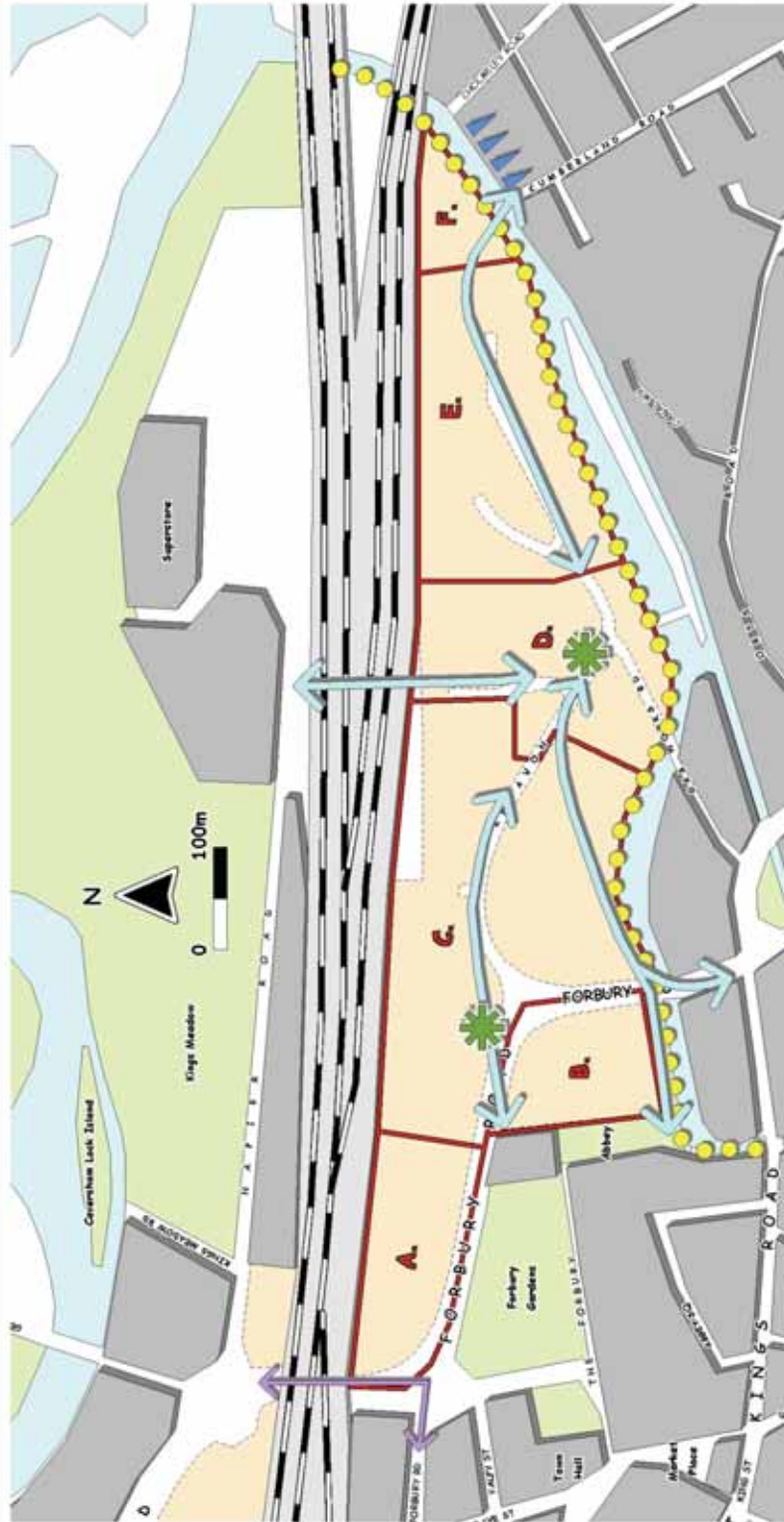
This area will be developed for medium density residential use, preserving the east-west links through the site.

RC3f, GAS HOLDER:

This area will be used for residential development. Development should enhance the character of the mouth of the Kennet and should maximise the potential of the site to be a river gateway to Reading.

- 6.29** Unlike the Station/River and West Side, the East Side feels largely separate from the commercial core of the centre. This area gives a rare opportunity for a reasonably tranquil residential community in the centre, given that much of the area is not on a vehicular through-route, and may be more attractive to families than traditional town centre housing as a result. It is important to maximise these opportunities, using design solutions such as home zones, and by providing a high quality public realm. However, there are still areas appropriate for commercial development, in the western parts of the area closest to the station.
- 6.30** One of the main purposes of the designation of this area as the East Side is the creation of a more urban feel to what is currently a low-density area of buildings which do not relate well to the streets and spaces. Therefore, development should be of a more urban form, for example perimeter blocks.
- 6.31** It has already been noted that the East Side is characterised by the presence of the River Kennet and the historically significant sites on the eastern fringes of the centre. These naturally inform the strategy and policy for the area. Some parts of the banks of the Kennet do not currently have public access, so it is important to ensure that new development seizes any opportunities to create new public routes, as well as enhance the waterside environment for ecology purposes. In addition, any development should take account of its impacts on the setting of historic sites, seeking enhancement where appropriate. The prison site offers a particular opportunity to achieve this.
- 6.32** Development in the East Side should also take account of many of the considerations applicable to the other Major Opportunity Areas, such as safeguarding land needed for major transport projects, and facilitating better pedestrian and cycle links. In this instance, east to west links across the IDR are of particular importance, although links

Figure 6.4: East Side Major Opportunity Area Strategy



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A. Queen's House		Approximate location of potential new open space		Reading station upgrade
B. Reading Prison		Key corridor of movement		Transition to zone of low-density residential
C. Forbury Retail Park		Preferred Mass Rapid Transit route and stop		Continuous public access along riverside
D. Kenavon Drive & Forbury Business Park				Boundary of sub-area
E. 42 Kenavon Drive				
F. Gas Holder				



could also be improved across the railway. New areas of open space to serve the new community will be required, as will some services and facilities.

6.33 Figure 6.4 shows the broad strategy for the East Side Major Opportunity Area, which indicates some of the elements that need to be taken into account in developing this area. The Proposals Map (section 11) gives greater detail on some matters, such as designation of the Major Opportunity Area and Sub-Areas. Any Planning Briefs which are produced to cover these areas will expand on policy RC3, and, if appropriate the sub-area aspects of the policy. The principles of the existing Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement remain relevant. In addition, permission has already been granted for some substantial elements within the area. More details on implementation of RC3 are set out in section 9.

6.34 Parts of the area may face issues around noise and air quality that will need to be mitigated in relation to new residential development. More information on potential mitigation measures is contained in relation to policy RC9.



7. OTHER OPPORTUNITY SITES

- 7.1 In addition to the Major Opportunity Areas, there are a number of smaller sites, the development of which can contribute to meeting the vision for Reading and its centre. Government guidance in PPS12 is clear that it may be appropriate for Area Action Plans to include site allocations, where it deals with an area of change, the distribution of uses and their inter-relationships. The Reading Central Area Action Plan provides the tool to identify these sites and set out guidelines for their development.
- 7.2 There are a large number of individual sites with potential for development in the central area, and it would not be realistic nor necessary to try to identify them all. The absence of an allocation in the RCAAP should not mean that a site is unsuitable for development where it accords with development plan policy, as well as national guidance. Therefore, sites were selected for inclusion in the RCAAP where they meet one of the following four criteria:
- Sites where development would contribute to significant environmental enhancement of the surrounding area;
 - Sites where development would make a significant contribution to meeting the Borough's housing need;
 - Sites where development would make a significant contribution to expanding or consolidating the range of facilities available in the centre;
 - Sites where development would make a significant contribution to achieving the Spatial Strategy of the RCAAP.

RC4: OTHER OPPORTUNITY SITES

Development which accords with the principles set out in this policy will be permitted on the following sites:

RC4a 108-116 Oxford Road, 10 Eaton Place & 115-125 Chatham Street

*Residential development with associated community uses
(100-150 dwellings)*

Development should address the following issues: relationship to adjacent listed buildings and conservation areas, potential ground contamination.

RC4b Reading Family Centre, North Street

*Residential development
(25-40 dwellings)*

RC4c 5-21 Tudor Road

*Residential development
(20 –35 dwellings)*

Development should address the following issues: flooding, relationship to areas protected under RC12, potential ground contamination, air quality.

RC4d 9-27 Greyfriars Road

*Residential and/or office development
(up to 60 dwellings)*

Development should address the following issues: relationship to areas protected under RC12.

RC4e 2-8 The Forbury & 19-22 Market Place

*Retail and related uses on ground floor with residential and/or offices on upper floors, designed to enhance contribution of site to Conservation Area. Preservation of historic building line.
(up to 20 dwellings)*

Development should address the following issues: relationship to conservation area and nearby listed buildings, noise impacts on residential use.



RC4f 3-10 Market Place, Abbey Hall & Abbey Square
Retail and related uses on ground floor with residential and/or offices on upper floors, designed to enhance contribution of site to Conservation Area. Possible pedestrian link between Market Place and Forbury Square/Abbey Square. Rear servicing and preservation of historic building line.
(up to 70 dwellings)

Development should address the following issues: relationship to conservation area and adjacent listed buildings, noise impacts on residential use.

RC4g 37-43 Market Place
Retail and related uses on ground floor with residential and/or offices on upper floors, designed to enhance contribution of site to Conservation Area. Preservation of historic building line.
(up to 15 dwellings)

Development should address the following issues: relationship to conservation area and nearby listed buildings, noise impacts on residential use.

RC4h The Anchorage, 34 Bridge Street
The site should be developed for water-compatible leisure and/or tourism uses.
Development should address the following issues: flooding.

RC4i The Oracle Extension, Bridge Street & Letcombe Street
Development of the area between the River Kennet and Mill Lane for retail, with use of site at Letcombe Street for public car park.

Development should address the following issues: flooding, relationship to conservation area.

RC4j 25-31 London Street
Residential, although flooding needs to be addressed as part of the scheme, respecting scale of adjacent listed building.
(15-30 dwellings)

Development should address the following issues: flooding, relationship to conservation area and adjacent listed building, noise impacts, air quality.

RC4k Corner of Crown Street & Southampton Street
Residential development
(10-25 dwellings)

Development should address the following issues: noise impacts, air quality.

RC4l Corner of Crown Street & Silver Street
Residential development
(50-85 dwellings)

Development should address the following issues: relationship to conservation area, noise impacts, air quality.

RC4m 181-183 Kings Road
Change of use of listed building to residential
(10-15 units)

Development should address the following issues: maintaining integrity of listed building, relationship to conservation area, noise impacts, air quality.

RC4n Thames Valley University, Kings Road
Continued development to support the role of this site in providing higher and further education and maximising its contribution to the local community.

RC4o Kings Meadow Pool, Kings Meadow Road
Use of listed building for leisure or tourism uses compatible with and ancillary to the surrounding Kings Meadow.

Development should address the following issues: maintaining integrity of listed building, flooding.

RC4p *Caversham Lock Island, Thames Side*
Development for water-compatible leisure or tourism uses, including some operational development. Potential for enhanced pedestrian access.

Development should address the following issues: flooding.

RC4q *143-145 Oxford Road*
Residential development with some retention of small-scale leisure function. (10-20 dwellings)

Development should address the following issues: relationship to conservation area, noise impacts.

RC4r *21 South Street*
Residential development of arts venue, only to take place when a replacement facility at Hosier Street is operational. (20-35 dwellings)

RC4s *Reading Central Library, Abbey Square*
Residential development with some potential for offices and other town centre uses on the ground floor, only to take place when a replacement facility is operational, potentially at Hosier Street. Enhance public access to the Holy Brook. (15-30 dwellings)

Development should address the following issues: relationship to conservation area and nearby listed buildings, the status of part of the site as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, noise impacts on residential use.

7.3 The sites listed in policy RC4 are shown on the proposals map. The development of these sites will need to be in accordance with policies in other DPD's, the South East Plan and national planning guidance. More details on the implementation of these sites are set out in section 9.

7.4 Where dwelling figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide. The number of dwellings will ultimately depend on

various factors, which need to be addressed at application stage. In line with policy within the RCAAP and Core Strategy, residential development on these allocated sites will be required to contribute to affordable housing, where they fall within the thresholds set out in CS16. The fact that a site is allocated in RC4 does not preclude the need to comply with all other policies in the LDF. There may be scope to include other ancillary uses in addition to the development specified in the allocations, which will need to be assessed against relevant policy tests.

7.5 Where there are significant issues that will need to be addressed in any planning applications on the specific sites listed above, these are highlighted in the policy. This does not remove the need to address the usual issues that should be dealt with on all sites.

7.6 In some cases, residential development is proposed in areas where noise levels may be an issue. It should be possible to mitigate this through the design of the scheme. In order for the internal noise levels to be reasonable and not adversely affect health, it would be necessary to provide a system of ventilation that entirely removes the necessity to open windows, even in very hot weather. Similarly, in terms of air quality, mitigation of impacts on residential development may be required, including means of ventilation that remove the need to open windows, and draw in the lowest levels of pollution possible, for instance from roof sources. This should be secured through the design of the proposal, and planning condition if necessary. Such systems will require additional energy use, which will need to be offset in order to comply with policy CS1 of the Core Strategy. New residential development may require the extension, or creation of new, Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). PPS 23 suggests that Section 106 agreements may



be appropriate to improve air quality or offset the subsequent environmental impact of the proposed development in the AQMAs.

- 7.7** The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 provide that all sites that are put forward as a result of community involvement should be advertised. However, no sites were put forward at earlier community involvement stages that are not included within the RCAAP.



8. GENERAL CENTRAL AREA POLICIES

- 8.1 In addition to the spatial and design strategies and proposals for major development areas, it will be necessary to include a number of policies to guide development in the centre across the board. The Reading Central Area Action Plan is the appropriate place for these policies as they give guidance which is specific to the centre, as opposed to policies in the Core Strategy and a future Development Management document.
- 8.2 These policies will be applied across the whole area of the RCAAP, unless shown otherwise on the proposals map.

Design in the Central Area

- 8.3 Part of the vision for the RCAAP is to achieve a distinctive high quality environment, by balancing protection of the historic core, special character and market town intimacy of Reading with modern, intensive, well designed, well connected, highly accessible urban development with first class open spaces and other public realm that will transform Reading into a modern and exciting 21st Century City.
- 8.4 The role of high-quality urban design in achieving the vision for the centre is therefore clear. The Core Strategy includes policies that will be applicable within the RCAAP area, including on design and the historic environment. In addition, the issue of urban design has been integrated into the whole RCAAP document, as it is not a self-contained issue. However, there is a need for a policy to highlight those elements of the design issue specific to the central area.

RC5: DESIGN IN THE CENTRE

Applications for development within the Reading central area should demonstrate the following attributes:

- a. Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;*
- b. Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality and well-maintained hard and soft landscape, public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;*
- c. The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;*
- d. Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety.*

8.5 In developing its City 2020 Vision (produced in 1999), the Council commissioned consultants Llewelyn Davies to prepare a City Centre Framework for Reading. This was published in 2002, and set out an urban design framework for the central area. In order to ensure that an up-to-date design strategy underpins the RCAAP, the Council commissioned Entec UK Ltd to update the framework and tie it in with the production of the Tall Buildings Strategy. This work, along with the wide variety of documents produced for individual areas within the centre, has provided the basis for much of the RCAAP.

8.6 Policy RC5 picks up the elements that require more specific detail than is provided in other applicable design policies. For instance, the first criterion relates to one of the key themes, 'the urban grid', that was highlighted in the City Centre Framework. The existing grid structure has the advantages of catering flexibly for movement and positive urban place-making, and new development should build on and extend this pattern. Another example would be the need for flexible and adaptable buildings, which is particularly applicable to the centre, as the changing balance between the residential and office markets is particularly pronounced here, and buildings should be able to cope with those shifts. Using design principles to enhance community safety and design out crime may also be particularly important in the central area, and the Secured By Design principles will assist in this.

Sustainable Design and Construction

8.7 Ensuring that the design and construction of new developments is sustainable in nature is an essential element of the strategy for Reading, and the Core Strategy provides for this through policy CS1. This policy will apply to the central area as much as any other part of the Borough. However, there are certain elements of the sustainable design agenda that are particularly relevant to the type of development typical of the

centre, and to which particular attention should be paid. For instance, mixed-use developments and larger buildings tend to lend themselves to Combined Heat and Power systems, and these developments are particularly prevalent in the central area. In addition, the use of green and brown roofs may enhance the biodiversity value of developments in the centre. Brown roofs in particular are of benefit to species such as black redstarts, one of the priority species in the Biodiversity Action Plan, which have been sighted in the central area.

Definition of the Centre

8.8 The Retail and Leisure Study of Reading has identified a substantial need for additional retail floorspace, and the Core Strategy states that this should primarily be directed towards the centre of Reading. The spatial strategy (section 5) and the guidelines on major opportunity areas (section 6) give guidance on the main locations for this floorspace. However, there is a need to define a Primary Shopping Area to set out the boundaries of what should be Reading's shopping core, and this will be set out on the Proposals Map.

8.9 Within this area, the general retail character should be maintained and it should be the focus for new retail investment. It will also be the first location to be examined in applying the sequential approach to identifying sites for retail proposals, in line with Planning Policy Statement 6 (2005). It will include extensions to that area in line with the overall spatial strategy for additional retail development, which sees a particular role of retail expansion to the north.

8.10 The sequential approach will also be applied to 'main town centre uses' other than retail, including leisure, cultural, visitor and arts facilities as well as offices. The general approach to these uses is set out in the Core Strategy, and involves concentration mainly on the centre. An office core and a central

²² 'Regionally significant tourism attractions' are defined by Policy TSR4 of the Draft South East Plan. This policy (along with Policy TSR3 of the Plan) relates to regionally significant tourism development, and related sports and recreation facilities. Policy RC7 therefore applies to non-regionally significant tourism attractions and corresponding development.

²³ Leisure, cultural and non-regionally significant tourism development includes the main town centre uses to which PPS6 applies, excluding retail and office uses. See paragraph 1.8 of PPS6 for further explanation.

core will need to be defined to act as the focus for these uses in the centre and in order for the sequential approach to be applied. The office core will be slightly different from the central core for reasons set out in the spatial strategy. It should be emphasised that none of these designations preclude other types of development, such as housing, occurring in these areas, as mixing uses is at the heart of the strategy.

RC6: DEFINITION OF THE CENTRE

Retail development will take place in the Primary Shopping Area, as defined on the Proposals Map. The extension to the Primary Shopping Area (RC6b) will be in place once a new pedestrian link is operational across the railway between Caversham Road and Vastern Road.

Major office development of over 1,000 sq m will take place in the Office Core, as defined on the Proposals Map.

Other main town centre uses will take place in the Central Core, as defined on the Proposals Map.

Leisure, Culture and Tourism in the Centre

8.11 Leisure and tourism in this context includes leisure, cultural, entertainment, recreation, sports and visitor facilities of the type covered by Planning Policy Statement 6, excluding drinking uses, which are covered elsewhere. These facilities will assist in widening the variety of the offer of the centre, and would, in many cases, help to attract a greater range of people into the centre. For that reason, additional uses should be encouraged and development which would result in a loss of leisure facilities should be resisted.

8.12 The following uses would be of particular benefit in widening the offer of the centre:

- New arts, concert and theatre provision at both large and small scales;
- New and improved central library provision;
- Additional restaurants, and a broader range of evening uses generally;
- New and improved swimming pool and associated facilities;
- Children's play facilities;
- New recreational leisure facilities such as an ice rink or indoor bowling facility;
- A skate park for Reading Borough, which also functions as a regional attraction;
- Additional hotel and conference facilities.

8.13 The spatial strategy in section 5 of this document, along with the guidelines for the Major Opportunity Areas in section 6, set out more precise locations for some of these uses. Proposals for these uses will be subject to the tests set out in PPS6. Policy RC7 does not apply to drinking uses.

RC7: LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM IN THE CENTRE

The Reading Central Area will be the prime focus for major leisure, cultural and non-regionally significant²² tourism development²³. These uses should be concentrated within the Central Core, as defined on the Proposals Map. Leisure, cultural and tourism uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged. Existing leisure facilities that add to the range and offer in the centre will be retained, unless it can be demonstrated that these uses can be provided for on a suitable site within the Central Core. There should be no net loss of the Centre's overall leisure provision.

Innovative solutions to leisure provision will be encouraged, particularly those that make best use of available (often limited) site area. The scale and design of the proposal must not have an adverse impact on the appearance and amenity of the surrounding development.

The River Thames is a prime location for new or improved non-regionally significant tourist

attractions, and as such, this area is likely to be suitable for informal recreation and sporting uses and associated small-scale development, as well as improvements to management and access. This development, where it is in areas at risk of flooding, should be 'water compatible' as set out in PPS25. Development or improvements in this area will be expected to add to or maintain the setting and character of the Thames.

8.14 The Retail and Leisure Study for Reading Borough (2005) concluded that most of the identified leisure need for the Borough should be accommodated within the centre of Reading, as this area contains significant existing capacity to meet identified retail and leisure needs. Whilst it is difficult to be specific and restrictive about exact sites for certain leisure and cultural facilities, the spatial strategy generally directs these uses to the Central Core, as defined on the Proposals Map. Chapter 6 provides further detail as to the location of leisure uses within Major Opportunity Area sub-areas. In many instances, the location of leisure uses will generally accord with the broad location of retail, given that the two uses are largely interlinked.

8.15 In order to diversify uses in the Town Centre and improve the Centre's leisure offer, it is important to accommodate leisure, cultural and tourism activities that appeal to a wide range of age and social groups. Dispersing these uses throughout the Centre ensures that they are widely accessible to users, and contribute to the overall vitality, vibrancy and liveability of the Centre. New development and/ or redevelopment in the Centre also provides opportunities for the creation of new spaces that may be used for formal or informal recreation and leisure.

8.16 If located within the Central Core, the Borough's range of leisure, cultural and tourism facilities should be readily accessible by a range of sustainable modes of transport. Providing a mix of leisure and entertainment facilities within this area

assists in catering for a variety of purposes within one visit to the centre, thus increasing convenience and reducing car-based trips.

8.17 Leisure and entertainment uses that would contribute to the 18 hour economy will be encouraged, and existing uses maintained. This should include a range of different, yet complementary evening and night-time economy uses to cater for all sections of Reading's community, and offer alternative activities to drinking.

8.18 Leisure, cultural and tourism development should not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents and other town centre users, or to existing town centre spaces. Proposals will therefore be expected to mitigate any potential issues of noise disturbance (particularly night-time noise), traffic-related congestion, and anti-social behaviour and crime. Such issues may be best resolved through the application of planning conditions or, where this is not possible, through planning obligations.

8.19 In some cases, it may be appropriate to incorporate leisure and cultural uses within wider developments, to create effective mixed-use schemes. Where this is the case, the Council will encourage the integration of these uses with existing developments, provided they do not give rise to adverse impacts on amenity.

8.20 Impacts on the character and function of the centre will also need to be considered, including cumulative impacts. In all cases, proposals should be based on the principles of high quality and inclusive design, to assist in making the town centre more attractive and usable for local residents, shoppers, employees and leisure visitors. Blank and/ or uninteresting façades or shed-like structures will not be permitted. The impact of proposals on existing town centre uses will also be assessed, to ensure that proposals do not detract from the vitality and viability of existing centres.

8.21 The Council will seek to negotiate contributions towards the necessary and relevant provision or improvement of leisure or recreational facilities from those development proposals that increase pressure on existing facilities, in accordance with Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy.

Drinking Establishments

8.22 Reading has become an important centre for evening drinking uses over recent years, drawing people from surrounding areas as well as from the urban area of Reading. The evening economy is a key part of the overall economy, and drinking uses have therefore been a major factor in Reading's success. It is important to keep in mind that, despite some local issues, success as a centre for evening socialising has benefited Reading, and that Reading will continue to strive to maintain an 18-hour welcome for a range of users of the centre.

8.23 There is an identified need to ensure that the offer of the evening economy is diverse, in order to widen the range of people who are attracted to the centre in the evenings. Policy RC7 on leisure uses includes many uses which will widen the evening offer, and the policy on drinking establishments should be read in conjunction with the 'Leisure, Culture and Tourism in the Centre' policy. The policy should encourage greater diversity in the offer of pubs, bars and nightclubs within the policy framework of strengthening leisure, culture and tourism in the centre.

8.24 It is important to ensure that drinking establishments are kept within the commercial core of the centre, where there will be fewer detrimental impacts on residential areas, and where those externalities that do result can be better managed and contained.

RC8: DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS

A range of complementary evening and night-time uses that appeal to all sections of Reading's society, and contribute to the 18-hour welcome, will be provided. Such uses should not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents and other town centre users. Those uses that are likely to have an adverse impact on amenity or the character and/ or function of the Central area, will not be permitted.

The location of drinking establishments (including pubs, bars and nightclubs) will be limited to Reading's Central Core.

Proposals for pubs, bars and clubs should be accessible to current and proposed night-time public transport services.

8.25 In terms of its evening economy, Reading's diversity of offer is continuing to increase. However, it is important that the Central Area remains attractive to a range of age and social groups in the evening, both in terms of leisure and entertainment activities, and drinking uses. A well-used centre makes a positive contribution to its vitality and viability, improves safety and reduces the fear of crime, and encourages a wider range of groups to visit and reside within the Central area. For this reason, it is important that Reading continues to appeal to a range of users.

8.26 It will be important to maintain drinking establishments in the centre of Reading, and as these uses are limited to the Central Core, preference will be given to their establishment within this area. Should a conflict arise between two or more uses in the Central Core, priority will be given to those uses that cannot be accommodated elsewhere, including drinking establishments. Despite their location within the boundaries of the Central Core, evening uses will still be expected to mitigate impacts on amenity, including anti-

social behaviour and crime. Many other uses are likely to positively contribute to Reading's evening economy, including leisure, cultural and entertainment uses. Whilst drinking establishments may be appropriately co-located with these facilities, they should not detract from their overall viability, or impact on their likely market (range of users).

- 8.27** Access to the Central area's evening economy uses will need to be considered in light of Reading's current and proposed night time public transport services.

Living in the Centre

- 8.28** The centre of Reading is becoming ever more important as a residential location, and this applies not only to the inner areas surrounding the core, but increasingly the commercial and shopping core itself. This is to be welcomed, as it adds vitality to the centre at all hours and ensures that there is some feeling of ownership of the streets and spaces. Housing development in the centre will continue to occur over the plan period, and this makes up a key part of the strategy for the centre. Indeed, the presence of an increasing number of residents in a centre is a good indicator of economic success. The RCAA Housing Trajectory at Appendix 2 shows the contribution that the sites identified under policies RC1 to RC4 make to meeting the Borough's housing allocation.

- 8.29** Research has shown that town and city centres, unless they are the very largest centres, are never likely to be popular with large numbers of families. However, there will be families wishing to buck the trend, and other groups who would prefer larger accommodation in the centre. The policy should therefore ensure that the range of housing in the centre is not unnecessarily limited. Whilst flats are likely to make up the vast majority of new housing development in the centre, the policy should not allow these to be dominated by one-bedroom uses, and

a minimum proportion of three or more bed-units will allow for a wider variety of people living in the centre. The Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2007) highlighted the need for a range of dwelling sizes.

- 8.30** An increasing residential population in the centre raises the issue of conflict with alternative uses, particularly in the evening. Research suggests that, far from being conflicting uses, a busy evening economy is a major attractor of potential residents, who are often young and childless. Measures to maximise the mitigation of potential noise and disturbance should be built into the design of both the potential source, and of those developments, particularly housing developments, likely to be affected. However, where the evening economy is at its strongest, the potential for noise and disturbance may be such that it cannot be mitigated through design and will make for an unacceptable living environment. In these cases, residential development adjacent to these areas should not take place, in line with the spatial strategy (paragraph 5.9).
- 8.31** In some cases, in order for the internal noise levels to be reasonable and not adversely affect health it would be necessary to provide a system of ventilation that entirely removes the necessity to open windows, even in very hot weather. Similarly, in terms of air quality, mitigation of impacts on residential development may be required, including means of ventilation that remove the need to open windows, and draw in the lowest levels of pollution possible, for instance from roof sources. This should be secured through the design of the proposal, and planning condition if necessary. Such systems will require additional energy use, which will need to be offset in order to comply with policy CS1 of the Core Strategy. New residential development may require the extension, or creation of new, Air Quality Management Areas. PPS 23 suggests that Section 106 agreements may be an

appropriate mechanism to improve air quality or offset the subsequent environmental impact of the proposed development in the AQMAs.

8.32 In terms of overall provision for affordable housing, new development in the centre will be treated no differently from any other housing development, and will follow policy set out in the Core Strategy. However, the Council currently seeks around one third of affordable housing as social rented accommodation. This type of accommodation, particularly where it is for single people, often caters for the most vulnerable in society, who may not be suited to the high-pressure living environment of the centre. While this issue will still need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, there is a need to avoid an over-concentration of one-bedroom social renting.

8.33 In order for any successful residential environment to develop, it needs to be supported by adequate community facilities, including education, health facilities, community meeting places, emergency services and community safety infrastructure. Whilst the centre of Reading currently has a wide range of high-order facilities which serve the entire Borough, it has been demonstrated that facilities geared towards a more local catchment, such as community facilities, are lacking in places. As a result, particular attention will be paid to whether additional housing development needs to contribute to the provision of new or improved community facilities. The Council will continue to work with partners to identify these needs for community facilities, and a study on the community infrastructure requirements of the RCAAP is underway²⁴. Supplementary guidance on Section 106 agreements will guide such contributions, and the SPD will set out identified needs for community infrastructure in the central area from increasing residential development.

8.34 In recent years, Reading has seen a marked increase in proposals for serviced apartments, particularly in the centre. These uses fall halfway between hotels and housing, providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living but also the amenities of a hotel. They are attractive to people who will stay in the area for weeks or months at a time. However, these uses should not be seen as a way of introducing flats by the back door and therefore avoiding the need to contribute towards the provision of affordable housing. There will need to be restrictions applied through Section 106 agreements or conditions to ensure that development does not change its character to a residential development without planning permission, and a requirement to provide regular monitoring information on length of occupancy.

RC9: LIVING IN THE CENTRE

Proposals for residential development within the central area will be assessed against the following criteria:

- i. All proposals for residential development within the central area will be required to contribute towards a mix of different sized units within the development. This will be measured by the number of bedrooms provided within individual units. Ideally, a mixture of one, two and three bedroom units should be provided. As a guide, in developments of 15 dwellings or more, a maximum of 40% of units should be 1-bed, and a minimum of 5% of units should be at least 3-bed, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable.*
- ii. Proposals for new residential development within the central area will be required to demonstrate how the issue of potential noise disturbance*

²⁴See for example the Central Area Community Infrastructure Study

from neighbouring land uses and other sources, and air quality implications of residential development, have been considered and if necessary, mitigated. New residential development should not be located next to existing town centre uses where those uses would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the new scheme, unless this can be mitigated.

- iii. Residential developments in the centre will contribute towards affordable housing in line with Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy. In the central area, an over-concentration of social renting for single persons will be avoided.*
- iv. Development in the central area that would have an adverse impact in terms of increasing the need for additional community facilities will be required to provide mitigation measures in line with the scale of the impact.*
- v. Where proposals for serviced apartments and apart-hotels fall outside the C3 use class, they will be located within the Central Core. Such proposals will not be permitted unless the duration of occupation of residents is restricted, to ensure the units are used on a short stay basis and not as residential flats, and information monitoring the implementation of this restriction is regularly supplied. Proposals within the C3 use class will be dealt with in the same way as any other residential proposal.*

Active Frontages

8.35 Active frontages at ground floor level are key in creating the impression of a healthy centre, and in ensuring that locations are places that people want to visit and spend time in. On the key streets in the centre, it is vital that new development continues to reflect this, and that it offers visual interest on the frontage even if it is not an A1 retail unit. Ground floor uses on these frontages should be uses that create interest and activity, and typically complement town centre streets. Existing and proposed active frontages are illustrated on the proposals map.

RC10: ACTIVE FRONTAGES

Uses on the ground floor along the designated active frontages (illustrated on the Proposals Map and in Figure 8.1) will be within one of the following use classes: A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1, D2 or related sui generis uses, unless it would be an entrance to upper floors. New developments (or alterations to existing uses) that front onto any of the designated active frontages will provide an active building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level, in order to contribute to the vibrancy of the Town Centre, and provide visual interest.

Frontages should be of a high visual quality. Any frontages that have the potential to hinder movement or cause unnecessary safety risk will not be permitted.

8.36 For the purposes of this policy, the designated existing and proposed active frontages are: -

Existing active frontages	Broad Street (both sides)
	Friar Street (both sides of street, between Greyfriars Road and Blagrave Street [northern side], and West Street and Market Place [southern side])
	Station Road (both sides of street, between Friar Street and Garrard Street)
	Queen Victoria Street (both sides)
	Cross Street (both sides)
	Union Street (both sides)
	West Street (both sides)
	St Mary's Butts (eastern side, between Broad Street and St Mary's Church)
	Chain Street (both sides)
	Market Place (including Buttermarket and High Street)
	Duke Street (both sides, between Kings Road and the Kennet & Avon Canal)
	King Street (both sides)
	Part of Oxford Road (northern side between West Street and Thorn Street)
	Parts of Kings Road (including King Street, land between Market Place and Abbey Square (northern side), and land between Duke Street and Highbridge Wharf (southern side))
	Gun Street (southern side, between Bridge Street and the Gun Street entrance to the Oracle)
Premises fronting the River Kennet within The Oracle Centre	
Proposed active frontages	Station Hill (southern side, opposite bus interchange)
	Station Hill (along public realm)
	Land north of Reading Station (alignment of frontage to be based on agreed development layout)
	Part of St. Mary's Butts (between Hosier Street and Oxford Road)
	Part of Oxford Road (between St. Mary's Butts and Queens Walk)

Figure 8.1: Existing and proposed active frontages in Central Reading

8.37 When located along key pedestrian routes and movement corridors, active frontages can be used to encourage street activity and increase the level of interest between various uses. This assists in defining routes, creating linkages that are lively and attractive for people to use, and increasing the vibrancy of the centre. Bringing activity onto the street is likely to promote interest and involvement, which assists in fostering a sense of place. It may also help to physically define various parts of the centre, thereby facilitating local distinctiveness and legibility. Proposals for uses that front onto pedestrian areas, routes and open space are therefore unlikely to be permitted where they fail to provide active building frontages that effectively contribute to the creation of lively street frontages.

8.38 Active frontages can be achieved through a mix of uses, which overlook and interact with the street at ground level. This includes buildings with live edges, such as shopfronts, restaurants and drinking establishments with outdoor areas, as well as building entrances directly to the street. Therefore, when planning for a mix of uses, regard must be had to factors of building orientation, the location of entrances, the difference between public fronts and private backs (of individual premises), and the definition of the public/ private interface. Active frontages will contain continuous glazed display windows. In the exceptional cases where this is not achievable, entrances and openings should be positioned at regular intervals along the ground floor, to assist in enlivening the street. Facilitating views into buildings

provides interest to passers-by, as well as making the building's function apparent.

8.39 Ensuring that uses contain frontage onto the street is essential in creating safe places and spaces, and making areas feel well-used. Developments should seek to promote casual surveillance wherever possible, to increase safety and security through 'eyes on the street'. Opportunities to enhance visual surveillance are greatly improved where frontages extend onto the street, as these areas contribute to the occurrence of activity at various times of the day (particularly when combined with a mix of other uses within nearby areas and buildings), and help to increase trade and activity at night.

8.40 Developments should seek to maintain a continuity of frontage, to improve public safety (and perceptions of safety), and to contribute towards achieving attractive building frontages that improve the appearance and character of streetscapes. New development should be designed to accord with existing building facades and lines, and avoid abnormal setbacks and gaps in the frontage. Frontages should remain uncluttered, so that they function effectively for all in society.

Small Retail Units

8.41 PPS6 identifies that planning has a key role in facilitating and promoting sustainable and inclusive patterns of development including the creation of vital and viable town centres. In promoting town centres' vitality and viability, the Government's objectives include promoting and enhancing existing centres by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services, and enhancing consumer choice, by making provision for a range of shopping. It also states that Local Planning Authorities should actively plan for growth and manage change in town centres by managing the role and function of existing centres. It is considered, in part, that this is about the provision of a

range of sizes of shops, which can cater for different and varied retail offer.

8.42 The centre of Reading is identified as a regional centre, and as such will be the focus for major retail, leisure and culture provision²⁵. Reading has been successful in recent years in becoming one of the leading retail centres in the UK. However, in a recent retail and leisure study for Reading²⁶, it was recognised that there is room for improvement in terms of diversity. It also states that there is a shortage of specialist / niche retail shops. The consultants conclude that there is a qualitative need to improve the breadth of the centre's retail offer, which would make the centre more attractive to shoppers living within its natural catchment area. Bolstering the retail offer will also be important in differentiating the centre from competing centres and newly revitalised centres. A recent study (British Council of Shopping Centres, June 2007) also highlights the importance of smaller units to accommodate independent retailers, which it states is part of creating vital and highly differentiated places.

8.43 Such findings are further supported by responses to the consultation on the Issues and Options and Preferred Options documents. A number of respondents highlighted the need for small units for retail. Although controlling the occupiers of buildings is not within the remit of planning, it can have an effect on the size of units. Part of the retail mix and character of Reading centre is the presence of a number of small shop units including within the arcades and some of the smaller side streets. In order to ensure that the vitality, diversity and retail offer of the centre of Reading is maintained and enhanced, policy RC11 seeks to retain these small retail units, and the provision of additional small units within new retail development.

RC11: SMALL SHOP UNITS

Small shop units make an important contribution to the diversity of the centre. Some areas of the centre are particularly characterised by small units, of less than 75 sq m. These include the Arcades, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Union Street, and any other areas designated in the future.

- i. Within the areas characterised by small shop units, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted.*
- ii. Major new retail development (more than 2,500 sq m) for multiple units in the Primary Shopping Area should include some provision for a range of small shop units.*

Terraced Housing in the Centre

- 8.44** One of the key principles of the RCAAP is that the future of the areas which positively contribute to the unique and historic character of central Reading will be ensured.
- 8.45** The centre of Reading contains a number of small groupings of traditional terraced housing within the Inner Distribution Road. These areas make a key contribution to the character of central Reading, and can be a pleasant surprise to first time visitors. These areas have merit in their own right: for instance, Sackville Street is a fine example of Reading patterned brickwork housing. In addition, Crane Wharf, Queen’s Cottages and Blakes Cottages are old waterside housing areas abutting the towpath and displaying a distinct character and fabric worthy of retention and enhancement. However, there are a number of areas of distinct character in Reading, and it is the juxtaposition with the high-density, often modern, context in which these areas are found that marks them out and makes them

most worthy of retention. The fact that it is the context of these areas that is the main reason for their significance makes a policy in the RCAAP a more appropriate mechanism than designation as conservation areas.

- 8.46** In addition, terraces provide opportunities for people who would not wish to live in a flat, to live in the centre. High land values mean that the development of many further houses with gardens in the core of the centre is unlikely, so these areas, where they are not already converted into flats, are important to preserve in terms of maintaining a mix and variety of housing in the centre.

RC12: TERRACED HOUSING IN THE CENTRE

The character of the following areas of traditional town centre terraced housing will be respected:

- *RC12a: Blakes Cottages*
- *RC12b: Crane Wharf*
- *RC12c: Queen’s Cottages*
- *RC12d: Sackville Street & Vachel Road*
- *RC12e: Stanshawe Road*

Development should not result in a loss, or have a detrimental effect on the character of these areas.

Tall Buildings

- 8.47** The vision for the central area seeks to build on the status of central Reading as the dynamic and creative core of the capital of the Thames Valley, and an important regional hub, in order to establish it as a top-class location for business, and the core of a modern and exciting 21st Century City. Tall buildings have an important part to play in achieving this. They have a symbolic role in marking the centre out as a regionally-significant hub of activity, and a practical role in accommodating the level of development that this status entails in a highly accessible

location. Within this context, proposals for tall buildings have markedly increased in recent years.

8.48 It is therefore essential that there is a strong and clear policy on tall buildings, based on an analysis of the effects of, and opportunities for, such buildings. The Council commissioned consultants to undertake a Tall Buildings Strategy²⁷ to inform the development of this policy. This reported in March 2008, and is available on the Council's website. Detailed justification for the policy is contained in that document.

RC13: TALL BUILDINGS

In Reading, tall buildings are defined as 10 storeys of commercial floorspace or 12 storeys of residential (equating to 36 metres tall) or above. Tall buildings will meet all the requirements below.

i) *Within Reading Borough, tall buildings will only be appropriate within the 'areas of potential for tall buildings' as defined on the Proposals Map. These areas are as follows:*

- RC13a Station Area Cluster*
- RC13b Western Grouping*
- RC13c Eastern Grouping*

Figure 8.2 gives an 'at a glance' diagrammatic indication of the principles for each area set out in the following sections.

ii) *RC13a, Station Area Cluster:*

A new cluster of tall buildings with the station at its heart will signify the status of the station area as a major mixed-use destination and the main gateway to, and most accessible part of, Reading.

Tall buildings in this area should:

- Be located at the centre of the cluster, close to the station, and step down in height from that point towards the lower buildings at the fringes;*
- Contribute to the creation of a coherent, attractive and sustainable cluster of buildings with a high quality of public realm;*
- Ensure that adequate space is provided between the buildings to avoid the creation of an overly dense townscape and to allow buildings to be viewed as individual forms;*
- Be designed to fit within a wider planning framework or master plan for the area, which allows separate parcels of land to come forward at different times in a co-ordinated manner.*

iii) *RC13b, Western Grouping:*

A small number of tall buildings would be appropriate to create a distinctive grouping, focused along the line of the IDR, to mark the area as the civic heart of Reading and a gateway to the centre.

Tall buildings in this area should:

- Be distinctive landmarks of a complementary design;*
- Be generally lower in height than the tallest buildings appropriate for the station cluster, as well as slimmer and spaced further apart;*
- Be linked to the physical regeneration of a wider area and should not be proposed in isolation;*
- Where buildings are to be integrated or front onto existing streets, include upper storeys of the taller structures that are set back from a base which is in line with the general surrounding building heights, particularly where the structure adjoins a conservation area;*

- *Not intrude on the key view between Greyfriars Church and St Giles Church, and a view from the open space in the Hosier Street development to St Mary's Church.*

iv) *RC13c, Eastern Grouping:*

One or two landmark buildings situated at street corners or other gateway sites are appropriate to mark the extent of the business area.

Tall buildings in this area should:

- *Be of a smaller scale than the tallest buildings around the station;*
- *Be slim in nature and avoid dominant massing;*
- *Avoid setting back upper storeys on Kings Road in order to align strategic views into and out of the centre;*
- *Not intrude on the view from Blakes Bridge towards Blakes Cottages.*

One tall building is already under construction, and if the permitted tall building at 120 Kings Road is constructed, there will no longer be scope for additional tall buildings in this area.

v) *In addition to the area-specific requirements, all tall building proposals should be of excellent design and architectural quality, and should:*

- *Enhance Reading's skyline, through a distinctive profile and careful design of the upper and middle sections of the building;*
- *Contribute to a human scale street environment, through paying careful attention to the lower section or base of the building, providing rich architectural detailing and reflecting their*

surroundings through the definition of any upper storey setback and reinforcing the articulation of the streetscape;

- *Contribute to high-quality views from distance, views from middle-distance and local views;*
- *Take account of the context within which they sit, including the existing urban grain, streetscape and built form and local architectural style;*
- *Avoid bulky, over-dominant massing;*
- *Preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the setting of conservation areas and listed buildings;*
- *Use high quality materials and finishes;*
- *Create safe, pleasant and attractive spaces around them, and avoid detrimental impacts on the existing public realm;*
- *Locate any car parking or vehicular servicing within or below the development;*
- *Maximise the levels of energy efficiency in order to offset the generally energy intensive nature of such buildings;*
- *Mitigate any wind speed or turbulence or overshadowing effects through design and siting;*
- *Ensure adequate levels of daylighting and sunlighting are able to reach buildings and spaces within the development;*
- *Avoid significant negative impacts on existing residential properties and the public realm in terms of outlook, privacy, daylight, sunlight, noise, light glare and night-time lighting;*

- *Provide managed public access to an upper floor observatory and to ground floors where appropriate, and ensure that arrangements for access within the building are incorporated in the design stage;*
- *Incorporate appropriate maintenance arrangements at the design stage.*

8.49 It is vital that, given their prominence, new tall buildings are of the highest architectural quality. Tall buildings of mediocre architectural quality will not be acceptable. They need to make a positive contribution to the character of the centre of Reading and to views into the centre. They will be visible from a wide area and it is therefore essential that they are of the highest design quality.

8.50 The approach of three clusters of tall buildings with differing characteristics will help to provide variety and interest in visual terms, as well as creating a distinctive character for the business core of the centre. This approach has been subject to a thorough analysis of the suitability of the areas for tall buildings in terms of a number of factors, including townscape character, historic context, local and strategic views, market demand, topography, accessibility and other issues.

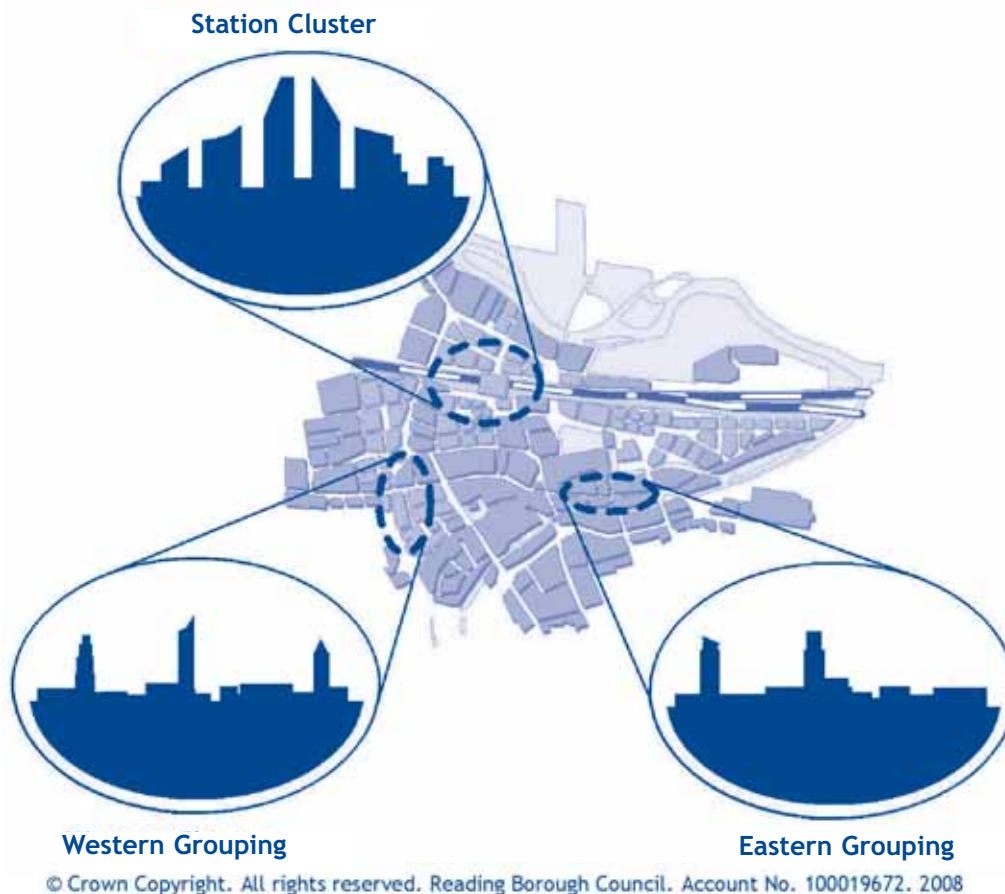
8.51 The heart of the business area, the station area, will be signified by the highest buildings and the densest cluster, due to its proximity to the station and public transport interchange. This will be the most extensive of the three clusters and will make a significant impact on the townscape around the station and on the town's skyline. It is important that a coherent, attractive and sustainable grouping of buildings is created within a high quality public realm. Tall buildings should be considered within the context of a masterplan or planning framework for the area that, within the context of this policy, will provide further

guidance on the relative heights, massing and spacing of the buildings, and the function and quality of public realm around them, along with their relationship with the major transport interchange improvements programmed or planned at Reading Station.

8.52 The western and eastern groupings are located at the extents of the business area, and each will be signified by a smaller grouping of iconic buildings, even though these may have a more residential emphasis. The western grouping could house up to three additional tall buildings, with an additional two in the eastern grouping (which is covered by existing commitments).

8.53 The area-specific guidelines set out in RC13 parts (ii), (iii) and (iv) are illustrated in Figure 8.2, which shows 'at a glance' and in diagrammatic format the differences between the areas in terms of massing, spacing between buildings and heights. It should not be taken as a prescriptive guideline for the appearance of the skyline, merely a diagrammatic representation of the policy principles.

Figure 8.2: Diagrammatic indicative representation of the differing approach to tall buildings in each area



Skyline and views

8.54 Different aspects of a tall building's design are of significance when viewed from different distances, and this will be taken into account when designing and assessing proposals under part (v) of RC13. From longer distances, the overall massing and proportion is most important, and the relationship between the silhouette and the skyline should inform the design. In the case of mid-distance views, the overall composition and detail are perceived in balance, and the hierarchy and articulation of elevations are particularly important. Finally, for local views, the interrelationship of the building's base and the immediate setting will be particularly visible, and the quality of materials and the detailing will be critical.

8.55 The contribution that tall buildings can make to views in terms of their locations should also been taken into account. Aligning tall buildings to terminate or frame views can create a strong reference point, allowing greater urban legibility.

8.56 There are some key panoramic views of the central area that tall buildings should make a positive contribution to. These include the views of the central area from Balmore Park, Caversham Park, Kings Meadow, Reading Bridge, and from Oxford Road to the west of the centre, and Wokingham Road to the east.

Street environment

8.57 Tall buildings need not prejudice the creation or retention of a human scale street

environment, provided that they are carefully located, designed with a distinct top and bottom, and have regard to the effects on the microclimate. There are a number of design solutions that can be used to assist in creating a human scale street environment:

- Stepping down a large mass to its neighbours;
- Setting back the upper floors to create the impression of a continuous streetscape;
- Ensuring that the ground level is as active and interesting as possible;
- Ensuring that the public realm is naturally surveyed;
- Providing legible and accessible entrances;
- Providing a richness to the detailing and high quality materials;
- Articulating the lower floors to reflect the character of the street;
- Mitigating against the adverse impacts a tall building can often make on the microclimate;
- Providing a continuity of frontage, street line and definition and enclosure to the public realm.

Sustainable design and construction

8.58 Tall buildings are inherently energy intensive, so there will need to be particular efforts made to ensure that tall buildings meet the requirements of Core Strategy policy CS1. Tall buildings should exploit opportunities of efficient services distribution and building energy simulation tools to reduce energy usage. Narrow span floor plates improve the availability of daylight and hence reduce dependence on artificial light. Individual control and opening of windows is challenging in taller buildings, but advances in façade technology has made this possible and allows for internal environments to be naturally ventilated at appropriate times of the year.

Climatic impact

8.59 Tall buildings can adversely affect the environmental quality of surrounding areas, particularly through the diversion of high speed winds to ground level and through overshadowing of other areas. However, good design and siting can successfully mitigate these impacts. A building, or grouping of buildings, should be modelled and simulated within its surrounding context, to examine environmental performance at an early design stage to highlight any potential issues that need to be addressed.

8.60 In terms of wind effects, the use of architectural devices such as screens, terraces and awnings as well as façade set backs can be used to minimise the effects of high wind speed at the base of a tall building.

8.61 Solar issues will influence the orientation of a building, and there are various aspects that need to be considered. These will include solar gains where passive heating is desired, shading from solar gains where they are not desired, the need to maximise daylighting, and renewable energy generation by photovoltaic cells. In terms of effects of developments, the Building Research Establishment (BRE)²⁸ has guidelines on assessing daylighting and sunlighting effects of development, which the Council will apply flexibly given the high density of the central area.

Other issues

8.62 Tall buildings that include residential will need to take account of noise and air quality issues in the same way as all additional residential development under policy RC9. All developments will need to comply with the Civil Aviation Authority's aerodrome safeguarding criteria, where buildings should be below 242 metres AOD.

8.63 Give their prominence and to signify Reading's emerging status as regional capital of the Thames Valley, it is essential that the buildings and new spaces are designed to be of the highest architectural quality. Therefore (and having taken into account CABE's and English Heritage's guidance on tall buildings) the Council considers that outline planning applications for tall buildings are appropriate only in cases where the applicant is seeking to establish the principle of (a) tall building(s) as an important element within the context of a robust and credible master plan for the area to be developed over a long period of time. In such cases principles must be established within the design and access statement accompanying the application, which demonstrate that excellent urban design and architecture will result.

Public Realm

8.64 The vision of this document sets out that all members of society will have easy access to high quality public areas, open space and water spaces. In addition, one of the key principles is to protect designated areas of open space, seek new opportunities for open space and make the most of the centre's waterside areas as a destination for leisure and recreation and a wildlife habitat. It is therefore essential that a policy to achieve these vital aims is included.

RC14: PUBLIC REALM

The following important areas of public open space will be protected from development.

- RC14a Christchurch Meadows
- RC14b Hills Meadow
- RC14c View Island
- RC14d Kings Meadow & Coal Woodland
- RC14e Forbury Gardens
- RC14f Abbey Ruins & Chestnut Walk
- RC14g King's Road Garden
- RC14h St Laurence's Churchyard
- RC14i St Mary's Churchyard
- RC14j Oracle Riverside

Proposals that would result in the loss of any of these areas of open space, or jeopardise their use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted. Proposals adjacent to these areas will ensure that access to the spaces is maintained and, where appropriate, enhanced.

Proposals for new development will need to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm of the central area and will be assessed against the following criteria:

- i. All proposals on sites of more than 1 hectare within the central area boundary will need to provide new public open space or civic squares integrated with surrounding development. Smaller developments will contribute towards improvements to the public realm;*
- ii. Imaginative uses of open space and the public realm, which contribute to the offer of the centre, will be encouraged, and new open spaces should be of a size and shape to be flexible enough to accommodate such uses. The provision of water features, trees (including street trees) and other planting, as well as hard landscaping, to create high-quality spaces, will be encouraged;*
- iii. Development proposals adjacent to or in close proximity to waterways will retain and not impede existing continuous public access to and along the waterways, and will provide legible continuous public access to and along the waterways where this does not currently exist;*
- iv. The design of developments adjacent to a waterway, including the refurbishment of existing buildings, will be required to enhance the appearance of the waterways and to provide active elevations facing the waterways. Development that turns its back on the waterways and results in blank or mundane elevations facing the waterways will not be permitted.*

Pedestrianisation, traffic management and/or environmental enhancements will continue to be implemented on appropriate streets. These will include Station Road, Station Approach, Blagrove Street, Town Hall Square, Friar Street (East), West Street, Gun Street and St Marys Butts.

8.65 Open space is a key contributor to the character of any area, and this applies particularly to large built-up areas such as Reading. Open space provides opportunities for informal sports and recreation, community focal points and meeting places and space for events to take place. As such, they are essential elements for the local community, and require protection.

8.66 Reading benefits from some substantial areas of open space, and the Council is continuing to improve the open space resource of the Borough. The Thames Parks, parts of which are within the RCAAP area, are an extensive and valuable informal area. In the core of the centre, there are some smaller and more formal areas, such as the popular Forbury Gardens, but there are few town squares or similar spaces. Additional open space such as town squares or wider streets that can function as open space would assist in creating a sense of place in the centre, and are encouraged. Indeed, these types of space are likely to present the main opportunities for additional spaces in the centre. These can act as locations for leisure activities and public gatherings and events. The provision of new public open space should be accessible and of a usable size and shape. It should be capable of use for a range of activities, across a range of age groups. Improvements to the public realm may include works such as the provision of open space, the improvement of pedestrian access to existing open space, the provision of planting, and wider streets that act as open space.

8.67 Reading's waterways are also a major asset which need to be built into the strategy, and their distinct characters should be respected. The Kennet generally runs through more urban higher-density areas, whilst the Thames retains its sense of tranquillity. These distinct characters have informed the development of the RCAAP. It is essential that public access along waterways is retained and expanded in the central area.



9. IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Planning Policy Statement 12 on Local Development Frameworks states that ‘a key feature of area action plans will be the focus on implementation’ (paragraph 2.17). Therefore, the Reading Central Area Action Plan needs to demonstrate how, when, where and by whom each provision, policy or proposal will be achieved. The following table sets out this information for each section of the document.

9.2 A variety of methods are to be used for achieving the vision of the document:

- **Development control decisions**

Decisions on applications in the centre will be made in line with the Reading Central Area Action Plan, along with other Development Plan Documents, the Regional Spatial Strategy and any saved policies. This will include the information contained on the Proposals Map. Important aspects of this implementation method include conditions, section 106 agreements, the scope of consultation on applications, and the information required to accompany applications.

- **Early and effective pre-application discussions**

Measures are in place for securing pre-application discussions. The Council have produced an initial questionnaire for those seeking pre-application advice, and encourages seeking such advice in all cases. The adopted Statement of Community Involvement strongly advises that pre-application consultation is carried out on major schemes. For instance, this would be particularly beneficial for potentially sensitive proposals, such as tall buildings.

- **Development briefs and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)**

A development brief for Chatham Street, a Design Concept Statement for Kenavon Drive and a Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief are already adopted, relating to parts of Major Opportunity Areas. Design Principles for Caversham Lock are also adopted. The Local Development Scheme also proposes a Station Area Development Framework, for adoption in 2008, and Briefs for Sites in the East Side of Central Reading, for adoption in 2010. SPD’s will continue to be a useful tool for giving specific guidelines on areas in the centre.

- **Other Council and partner strategies**

The main strategy for the Borough, developed through the Local Strategic Partnership, is the Sustainable Community Strategy and its Action Plan, the Local Area Agreement. Within this context, a number of other strategies will assist in the delivery of elements of spatial planning for the centre. These include the City Centre Strategy and Action Plan, Local Transport Plan, Cultural Strategy, Community Safety Strategy, Licensing Policy Statement, Thames Parks Plan, Waterspace Strategy, and Public Art Strategy.

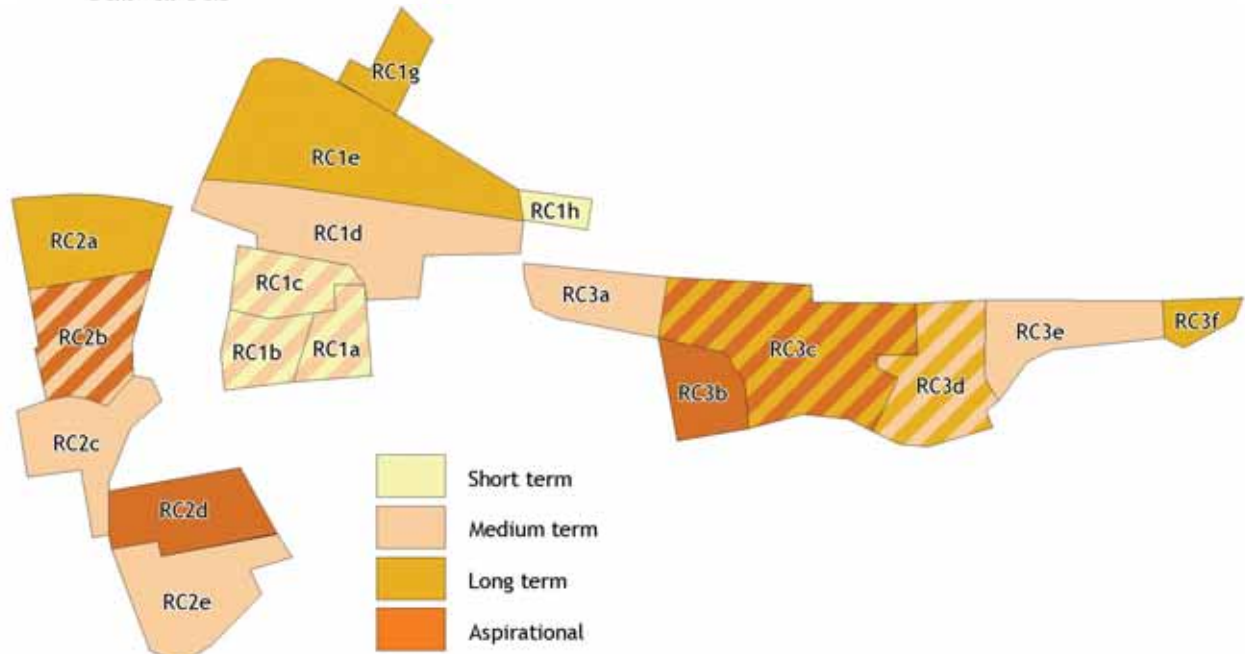
- **Continued partnership working**

Continuing close consultation with key partners will assist in delivery of the proposals in this Plan.

- **Council-owned land**

Some of the land referenced in this document is currently in Council ownership. The Council is always open to approaches from developers and adjoining land owners to explore comprehensive regeneration and development proposals which incorporates its land, and is actively bringing forward proposals for a major site in the central area.

Figure 9.1: Summary of delivery timescales for Major Opportunity Area sub-areas



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• **External funding**

There are a number of sources of external funding which are open to bids to achieve the wide-ranging vision of the RCAAP. In particular, Reading’s status as one of a number of proposed Growth Points means that the Council can bid for funding for essential infrastructure required to support the growth in housing delivery which is part of the Growth Point programme. In some cases, funding has been secured, whereas in other cases it is anticipated that further bids will be made. Much of this funding relates, and will continue to relate, to the central area, since this area is likely to see one of the largest increases in housing.

• **Liaison with utilities providers**

The amount of development proposed in the central area is likely to require upgrades in existing utilities networks, particularly in terms of electricity and water and wastewater provision, which are generally chargeable to the developer. These upgrades will be achievable, but,

depending on the scale of upgrade required, there may need to be up to three years lead-in time. Early liaison by developers with Thames Water and Scottish and Southern Energy, as well as others, is therefore essential.

9.3 Table 9.2 sets out an Implementation Framework for the RCAAP. This takes each section, policy or proposal in turn, and sets out where it will be delivered, when it will be delivered, who will deliver it and how it will be achieved. In terms of timescales, it takes broad time bands of short-term (up to 3 years from adoption – up to 2011), medium-term (3 to 8 years from adoption – 2012 to 2017) and long-term (up to the end of the plan period – 2018 to 2026). Where more detail is known on delivery dates, this is given in the schedule. In addition, the RCAAP Housing Trajectory at Appendix 2 sets out how much housing is expected to be delivered and when. Figure 9.1 gives a quick summary of the likely delivery times of each Major Opportunity Area sub-area.

9.4 There is also an ‘aspirational’ category. Whilst for the most part, the Major Opportunity Areas are capable of implementation within the plan period, there may be some areas which do not come forward, but which nevertheless need to be treated as a part of the whole, in order that any strategy is as comprehensive as possible, and in case development does come forward sooner than anticipated. However, the development of these sites are not critical to achieving the vision for the centre, and no assumptions have been made in the supporting evidence that they will be developed.

9.5 The implementation schedule does not make any mention of if, or when, the Council may seek to use its Compulsory Purchase powers. The Council will consider the use of its CPO powers to facilitate redevelopment and regeneration within the centre, where this is consistent with Council policy, irrespective of whether Council-owned land is involved. However, it is clearly preferable in most cases that landowners and developers be given the opportunity to bring forward key sites, and for this reason the use of CPOs has not been programmed. However, monitoring of key indicators through the Annual Monitoring Report will highlight where aims are not being achieved in key parts of the central area, and will indicate where there may be a need to use this measure.

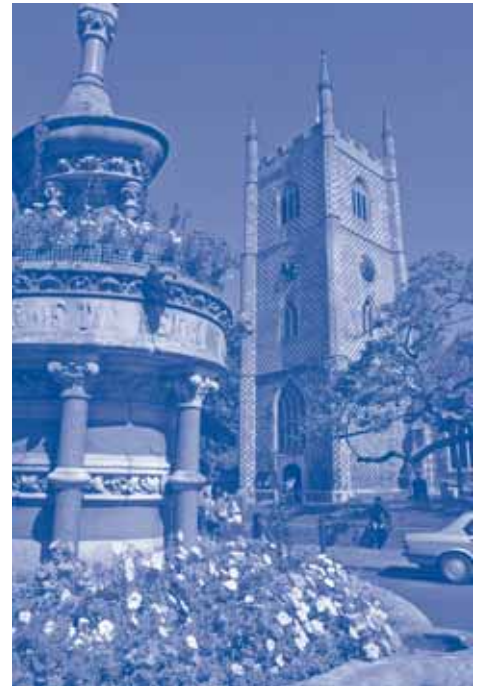


Table 9.2: Implementation Framework

		VISION & KEY PRINCIPLES			
		Whole RCAAP area			
WHERE		Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Aspirational
WHEN					
WHO & How	<p>Whole Plan Period</p> <p>Implementation of the vision will be achieved by a variety of mechanisms; through the spatial strategy and policies in the RCAAP and SPDs; the Community Strategy/Local Area Agreement, Local Transport Plans, City Centre Strategy, education strategies, housing strategies, Open Spaces Strategy. Planning application decisions will be made in line with policies in the RCAAP, by the Council or other decision-maker.</p> <p>COUNCIL:</p> <p>Other agencies that will play a role will include Network Rail, Reading Buses, Thames Valley Police, Berkshire West Primary Care Trust, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service, Reading UK CIC, the higher education sector.</p> <p>OTHER AGENCIES:</p> <p>Other agencies that will play a role will include Network Rail, Reading Buses, Thames Valley Police, Berkshire West Primary Care Trust, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service, Reading UK CIC, the higher education sector.</p> <p>DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY:</p> <p>Development schemes should be designed to help meet the vision for the centre. While policies in the RCAAP are designed to ensure that this happens in the development management process, it is more helpful if the vision is built in from the outset.</p>				

SPATIAL AND DESIGN STRATEGY					
Whole RCAAP area					
WHERE					
WHEN					
WHO & How	<p>Whole Plan Period</p> <p>COUNCIL: Spatial and Design Strategy to be implemented through development of policies and site allocations in the RCAAP in line with Spatial Strategy, and through SPDs.</p> <p>DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY: Development schemes should be designed to help meet the Spatial and Design Strategy for the centre. While policies in the RCAAP are designed to ensure that this happens in the development management process, it is more helpful if the vision is built in from the outset.</p>	<p>Short-term</p> <p>INDEPENDENT TRANSPORT COMMISSION: Make recommendations on access for central Reading.</p> <p>COUNCIL: Act on recommendations of Commission as appropriate.</p> <p>Assess the potential for reconfiguration of Council-owned community sites in central area and make proposals.</p>	<p>Medium-term</p> <p>COUNCIL & PRIVATE SECTOR: Implementation of Mass Rapid Transit proposals, funded through Transport Innovation Fund.</p> <p>NETWORK RAIL & COUNCIL: Completion of Reading Station Upgrade (see RC1d: Station & Interchange for more details)</p> <p>COUNCIL: Reconfigure Council's community sites to meet recommendations of review.</p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>Aspirational</p>
RC1: DEVELOPMENT IN THE STATION/RIVER MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA					
RC1A: FRIAR STREET AND STATION ROAD					
WHERE	Friar Street and Station Road Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map				
WHEN					
WHO & How	<p>Whole Plan Period</p> <p>COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles and Station Hill Planning and Urban Design Brief</p>	<p>Short-term</p> <p>DEVELOPER: Develop 29-35 Station Road in line with MOA/sub-area principles or completion of consented scheme.</p>	<p>Medium-term</p> <p>DEVELOPERS: Develop Thames Tower in line with RCAAP principles and Brief.</p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>Aspirational</p>
RC1B: FRIARS WALK AND GREYFRIARS ROAD					
WHERE	Friars Walk and Greyfriars Road Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map				
WHEN					
WHO & How	<p>Whole Plan Period</p> <p>COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles and Station Hill Planning and Urban Design Brief</p>	<p>Short-term</p> <p>DEVELOPERS (SACKVILLE): Develop Friars Walk in line with RCAAP principles and Brief for a mix of uses.</p>	<p>Medium-term</p> <p>DEVELOPERS: Develop site on corner of Greyfriars Road & Station Road in line with RCAAP principles and Brief for a mix of uses.</p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>Aspirational</p> <p>DEVELOPERS: Develop 20 Greyfriars Road in line with sub-area principles</p>

RC1C: STATION HILL				
Station Hill Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map				
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Short-term	Medium-term
			DEVELOPERS (SACKVILLE): Begin development of Station Hill site in line with RCAAP principles and Brief for a mix of uses.	DEVELOPERS (SACKVILLE): Continue development of Station Hill site in line with RCAAP principles and Brief for a mix of uses.
				Aspirational
RC1D: STATION AND INTERCHANGE				
Station and Interchange Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map				
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Short-term	Medium-term
			NETWORK RAIL & COUNCIL: First phase of station upgrade, including capacity improvements, begins. Funding for capacity increases secured. COUNCIL: Production of Station Area Development Framework during 2008 to cover wider station area. This will provide a vehicle for a detailed focus on implementation mechanisms on a site-specific level.	NETWORK RAIL & COUNCIL: Capacity improvements completed by 2012. Further phases of station upgrade for completion by 2015. Provision of high quality links across the railway will facilitate expansion of centre northwards. Funding for capacity increases secured.
				Aspirational
RC1E: NORTH OF STATION				
North of Station Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map				
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Short-term	Medium-term
			COUNCIL: Production of Station Area Development Framework during 2008 to cover wider station area. This will provide a vehicle for a detailed focus on implementation mechanisms on a site-specific level.	DEVELOPERS: Development of western part of the sub-area (Royal Mail and retail park) following provision of high-quality links across the railway, in line with adopted Brief, to start towards end of 'medium term'.
				DEVELOPERS: Complete development of the western part of sub-area. NETWORK RAIL/DEVELOPERS: Develop the station car park site.
				Aspirational

RC1G: RIVERSIDE						
Riverside Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map						
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Aspirational
			<p>COUNCIL: Production of Station Area Development Framework during 2008 to cover wider station area. This will provide a vehicle for a detailed focus on implementation mechanisms on a site-specific level.</p>	<p>COUNCIL: Improve foot and cycle crossings of the Thames in line with principles in RCAAP, to be funded by S106 agreements (across the central area, as increasing need for access to open space is a centre-wide matter), with some potential for other funding.</p>	<p>DEVELOPERS: Develop sub-area in line with MOA and sub-area principles, ensuring public access to River Thames</p> <p>SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN: Move sub-station to alternative site within close proximity on same electricity network.</p>	
RC1H: NAPIER ROAD JUNCTION						
Napier Road Junction Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map						
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Aspirational
			<p>DEVELOPERS: Develop site for a commercial use on the ground floor with residential and/or offices above.</p>			

RC2: DEVELOPMENT IN THE WEST SIDE MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA

RC2A: CATTLE MARKET

Cattle Market Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map

WHERE			
WHEN	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles.	Whole Plan Period COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles.	Medium-term DEVELOPERS: Development of land between Weldale Street and Chatham Street for a mix of uses after 2012.	Long-term COUNCIL AND/OR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS: Develop Council-owned site in line with MOA/Sub-area principles.
			Aspirational

RC2B: GREAT KNOLLYS STREET AND WELDALE STREET

Great Knollys Street and Weldale Street Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map

WHERE			
WHEN	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles.	Whole Plan Period COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles.	Short-term LANDOWNERS: Submission of planning application on land between Weldale Street and Chatham Street	Medium-term DEVELOPERS: Development of land between Weldale Street and Chatham Street for a mix of uses after 2012.
			Long-term DEVELOPERS: Development of land between Weldale Street and Great Knollys Street in line with MOA/sub-area principles.

RC2C: CHATHAM STREET

Chatham Street Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map

WHERE			
WHEN	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles and Chatham Street Development Brief	Whole Plan Period DEVELOPERS (AMEC): Completion of Phase 1 (with full permission, currently under construction), decking over IDR) in line with detailed planning permission and/or MOA & sub-area principles. Submission of detailed application for Phase 2 (currently with outline permission).	Short-term DEVELOPERS (AMEC): Development of Phase 2 of site (including planning permission and/or MOA & sub-area principles). Submission of planning application for final phase (landmark building zone)	Medium-term DEVELOPERS (AMEC): Development of final phase (landmark building zone)
			Long-term DEVELOPERS (AMEC): Development of final phase (landmark building zone)

RC2D: BROAD STREET MALL			
Broad Street Mall Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	Short-term	Aspirational
WHO & How	Whole Plan Period COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles.	Medium-term DEVELOPERS: Development at Yell House in line with MOA/sub-area principles.	Long-term DEVELOPERS: Redevelopment of Broad Street Mall area in line with MOA & sub-area principles.
RC2E: HOSIER STREET			
Hosier Street Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	Short-term	Aspirational
WHO & How	Whole Plan Period COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles.	Short-term COUNCIL: Development of Masterplan and submission of planning application in 2008 Development of new Civic Offices and relocation of the market.	Long-term THAMES VALLEY POLICE: Relocation of police station to alternative site, and release of site. DEVELOPERS: Development of police station site in line with MOA/sub-area principles.
RC3: DEVELOPMENT IN THE EAST SIDE MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA			
Queens House Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	Short-term	Aspirational
WHO & How	Whole Plan Period COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles.	Medium-term DEVELOPER: Submit full planning application for remainder of area covered by outline permission. Develop site in line with permission and/or MOA and sub-area principles.	Long-term DEVELOPER: Production of Brief for sites in the East Side of Central Reading during 2009/10 to cover this site and others. DEVELOPER: Develop NCP car park site in line with MOA/sub-area principles

RC3B: READING PRISON						
Reading Prison Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map						
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Whole Plan Period	Aspirational		
			Short-term COUNCIL: Production of Brief for sites in the East Side of Central Reading during 2009/10 to cover this site and others.	Medium-term	Long-term	Aspirational DEVELOPERS: Change of use and associated development of the site if and when prison no longer required.
RC3C: FORBURY RETAIL PARK						
Forbury Retail Park Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map						
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Whole Plan Period	Aspirational		
			Short-term COUNCIL: Production of Brief for sites in the East Side of Central Reading during 2009/10 to cover this site and others. COUNCIL Make environmental, public realm and pedestrian/cycle improvements to Kenavon Drive, funded through S106 and possibly growth point funding.	Medium-term DEVELOPERS: Development of Forbury Retail Park phase 2 in line with MOA & sub-area principles.	Long-term	Aspirational DEVELOPERS: Development of the Forbury Retail Park Phase 1 and Homebase/Toys R Us areas in line with sub-area principles.
RC3D: KENAVON DRIVE AND FORBURY BUSINESS PARK						
Kenavon Drive and Forbury Business Park Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map						
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Whole Plan Period	Aspirational		
			Short-term DEVELOPERS: Submission of acceptable scheme for Kodak & Ventelo site. COUNCIL: Opening up of pedestrian and cycle link under railway. Make environmental, public realm and pedestrian/cycle improvements to Kenavon Drive, funded through S106 and possibly growth point funding.	Medium-term DEVELOPERS: Development of Kodak & Ventelo in line with MOA & sub-area principles.	Long-term DEVELOPERS: Development of site to north of Kodak & Ventelo in line with MOA & sub-area principles.	Aspirational

RC3E: 42 KENAVON DRIVE						
42 Kenavon Drive Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map						
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & HOW	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Aspirational
		<p>COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles and Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement.</p>	<p>DEVELOPERS (AIG): Submission of detailed application (currently with outline permission). Begin development of site in line with planning permission and/or MOA & sub-area principles.</p>	<p>DEVELOPERS (AIG): Continue development of site in line with planning permission and/or MOA & sub-area principles.</p>		
RC3F: GAS HOLDER						
Gas Holder Sub-Area as defined on Proposals Map						
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & HOW	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Aspirational
		<p>COUNCIL: Decisions on applications to be made in line with MOA/sub-area principles and Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement.</p>			<p>LANDOWNER (SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN): Possible decommissioning of gas holder DEVELOPER: Development of site in line with MOA/sub-area principles</p>	
RC4: OTHER OPPORTUNITY SITES						
RC4A: 106-116 OXFORD ROAD, 10 EATON PLACE 7 115-125 CHATHAM STREET						
RC4A as defined on Proposals Map						
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & HOW	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Aspirational
		<p>DEVELOPERS: Land assembly required for a comprehensive scheme.</p>		<p>DEVELOPERS: Development of site in line with allocation.</p>		

RC4F: 3-10 MARKET PLACE, ABBEY HALL & ABBEY SQUARE			
RC4F as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Aspirational
WHEN		Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How		DEVELOPER: Development of site in line with allocation.	Aspirational
RC4G: 37-43 MARKET PLACE			
RC4G as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Aspirational
WHEN		Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How		DEVELOPER: Development of site in line with allocation.	Aspirational
RC4H: THE ANCHORAGE, 34 BRIDGE STREET			
RC4H as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Aspirational
WHEN		Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How		DEVELOPER: Development of site in line with allocation.	Aspirational
RC4I: THE ORACLE EXTENSION, BRIDGE STREET & LETCOMBE STREET			
RC4I as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Aspirational
WHEN		Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How	DEVELOPER (HAMMERSON): Development of site in line with allocation. Car park likely to be developed south of IDR before development north of IDR can take place.		Aspirational

RC4J: 25-31 LONDON STREET			
RC4J as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE			
WHEN	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Long-term
WHO & How		DEVELOPER: Development of site in line with allocation.	Aspirational
RC4K: CORNER OF CROWN STREET & SOUTHAMPTON STREET			
RC4K site as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE			
WHEN	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Long-term
WHO & How		DEVELOPER: Development of site in line with allocation.	Aspirational
RC4L: CORNER OF CROWN STREET & SILVER STREET			
RC4L site as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE			
WHEN	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Long-term
WHO & How		DEVELOPER: Development of site in line with allocation.	Aspirational
RC4M: 181-183 KINGS ROAD			
RC4M as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE			
WHEN	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Long-term
WHO & How		DEVELOPER: Change use of site in line with allocation.	Aspirational

RC4N: THAMES VALLEY UNIVERSITY, KINGS ROAD			
RC4N as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Aspirational
	Whole Plan Period		Long-term
	THAMES VALLEY UNIVERSITY: Ongoing development of parts of site for further and higher education use as necessary.		Aspirational
RC40: KINGS MEADOW POOL, KINGS MEADOW ROAD			
RC40 as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Aspirational
	Whole Plan Period		Long-term
	COUNCIL AND/OR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS: Change of use of site in line with allocation.		Aspirational
RC4P: CAVERSHAM LOCK ISLAND, THAMES SIDE			
RC4P as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Aspirational
	Whole Plan Period		Long-term
	ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (LANDOWNERS): Development of site in line with allocation.		Aspirational
RC4Q: 143-145 OXFORD ROAD			
RC4Q as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Aspirational
	Whole Plan Period		Long-term
	DEVELOPER: Development of site in line with allocation.		Aspirational

RC4R: 21 SOUTH STREET			
RC4R as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Aspirational
	Whole Plan Period		
	Short-term		Long-term
	Medium-term		Aspirational
			COUNCIL AND/OR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS: Development of site in line with allocation once new venue at Hosler Street is in operation.
RC4S: READING CENTRAL LIBRARY, KINGS ROAD			
RC4S as defined on Proposals Map			
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Aspirational
	Whole Plan Period		
	Short-term		Long-term
	Medium-term		Aspirational
			COUNCIL AND/OR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS: Development of site in line with allocation once new venue at Hosler Street is in operation.
RC5: DESIGN			
Whole RCAAP area			
WHERE	WHEN	WHO & How	Aspirational
	Whole Plan Period		
	Short-term		Long-term
	Medium-term		Aspirational
			COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC5. The principles of the policy will also inform development briefs and masterplans for areas within the central area.

RC6: DEFINITION OF THE CENTRE				
Primary Shopping Area, Office Core and Central Core as defined on the Proposals Map				
WHERE	Whole Plan Period		Long-term	Aspirational
WHO & How	COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC6.	Short-term	Medium-term COUNCIL: Primary Shopping Area is extended north of railway once improved links provided across tracks.	
RC7: LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM IN THE CENTRE				
Whole RCAAP area				
WHERE	Whole Plan Period		Long-term	Aspirational
WHO & How	COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC7.	Short-term COUNCIL: Further detail on identified opportunities for additional leisure development to be included within development briefs covering areas in the centre.	Medium-term	
RC8: DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS				
Whole RCAAP area, particularly area designated as the Commercial Core on Proposals Map				
WHERE	Whole Plan Period		Long-term	Aspirational
WHO & How	COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC8. Thames Valley Police and other relevant community safety partners to be consulted on all proposals for drinking establishments, and there may be a requirement for appropriate conditions and S106 agreements. The Council's Licensing Strategy also seeks a wide range of evening uses not based solely on drinking.	Short-term	Medium-term	

RC9: LIVING IN THE CENTRE			
Whole RCAAP area			
WHERE			
WHEN	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How	Whole Plan Period	Medium-term	Aspirational
	<p>COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC9. Application on Section 106 agreements and planning conditions to address the issues set out in the policy.</p>	<p>COUNCIL: Production of SPD on Section 106 agreements, which will address issues such as affordable housing, community facilities and potentially air quality and serviced apartments.</p>	
RC10: ACTIVE FRONTAGES			
Whole RCAAP area			
WHERE			
WHEN	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How	Whole Plan Period	Medium-term	Aspirational
	<p>COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC10.</p> <p>DEVELOPERS: Creation of active frontages in new developments wherever possible, but particularly on identified existing and new areas of active frontage.</p>		
RC11: SMALL RETAIL UNITS			
Whole RCAAP area			
WHERE			
WHEN	Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term
WHO & How	Whole Plan Period	Medium-term	Aspirational
	<p>COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC11.</p>	<p>DEVELOPERS: Provision of some small retail units as part of the retail development north of the station.</p>	

RC12: TERRACED HOUSING IN THE CENTRE			
WHERE	Sites listed in policy RC12 and shown on the Proposals Map, and areas in close proximity		
WHEN	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Medium-term
WHO & How	COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC12.		
			Long-term
			Aspirational
RC13: TALL BUILDINGS			
WHERE	Whole RCAAP area		
WHEN	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Medium-term
WHO & How	COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC13, informed by tall buildings strategy. DEVELOPERS: Submission of adequate information to allow assessment of proposals for tall buildings.	COUNCIL: Tall buildings strategy to be produced as SPD to give greater detail on the implementation of policy RC13. Provision of an in-house 3D digital model to assess tall buildings proposals.	
			Long-term
			Aspirational
RC14: PUBLIC REALM			
WHERE	Whole RCAAP area		
WHEN	Whole Plan Period	Short-term	Medium-term
WHO & How	COUNCIL: Development control decisions in line with policy RC14. DEVELOPERS: Provision of new areas of public realm with Major Opportunity Areas and other sites over 1 ha, as well as where other opportunities arise.	COUNCIL: Make improvements to public realm and access and provision of open space across centre, including pedestrianisation, funded through S106 and possibly growth point funding.	COUNCIL: Make improvements to public realm and access and provision of open space across centre, including pedestrianisation, funded through S106 and possibly growth point funding.
			Long-term
			Aspirational

10. MONITORING FRAMEWORK

10.1 Monitoring of policy and its results is given great weight under the Local Development Framework system. Policies should be worded such that they are capable of being monitored, to show the effects of their implementation. The Council's main monitoring tool is the Annual Monitoring Report, produced in December every year. This has two purposes. Firstly, it reviews progress in producing all local development documents against the milestones in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS), which sets out the programme for all of these documents. If documents are falling behind, it will review whether there is a need to update the LDS. Secondly, the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) monitors the effectiveness of local development documents. For example, the report will show whether the policies are impacting on development control decisions, and whether they are helping to achieve the Council's targets.

10.2 The schedule below sets out how the policies in the RCAAP will be monitored. Each policy has an indicator or a set of indicators, with a corresponding target. The schedule also sets out the source of the data, the regularity with which it will be collected and the location in which it will be presented. Generally, it will be presented in the AMR. The second schedule includes similar information for the more general contextual indicators, which show the overall character of the centre and indicate whether the vision for the centre is being met. A note of caution is required for this latter set of indicators, as they are also subject to factors outside the control of the RCAAP, such as the wider housing and commercial markets and demographic trends.

10.3 Monitoring of these indicators will reveal whether the policies and proposals in the RCAAP are being successfully implemented and whether the vision for the centre is

being achieved by the policies in the RCAAP. Therefore, the AMR will demonstrate whether, on balance, the plan needs to be reviewed. As the targets are mostly general indications of the direction the RCAAP should be taking the centre, review of the plan is likely to be needed only if there is consistent failure to meet targets by a significant margin (for instance, more than 25%), in one area or across the board. One or two small failures to meet targets are unlikely to be a reason for review, unless other information indicates that this should be the case.

Figure 10.2: Contextual Monitoring Framework

Indicator	Current Figure	Target		Data			Comments
		Target	Date	Source	Date	Where presented	
Percentage vacancy of A class units	8%	7%	Annual	Reading CIC	Annual	AMR	An indicator of the general retail health of the centre. Vacancy levels over 10% can be an indicator of a declining centre, although in larger centres the rate may be higher.
Number of inhabitants of Reading Central Area	4,000 (2001)	8,000	2011	Census	2014*	Census/ AMR	Shows that Reading is becoming a desirable place in which to live
		12,000	2021	Census	2024*		
Percentage of inhabitants of Reading Central Area who are between 20 and 44	64% (2001)	55%	2011	Census	2014*	Census/ AMR	Shows that Reading is attractive to more than just young people in which to live, and is likely to mean a more balanced community

*Or whenever Census data becomes available