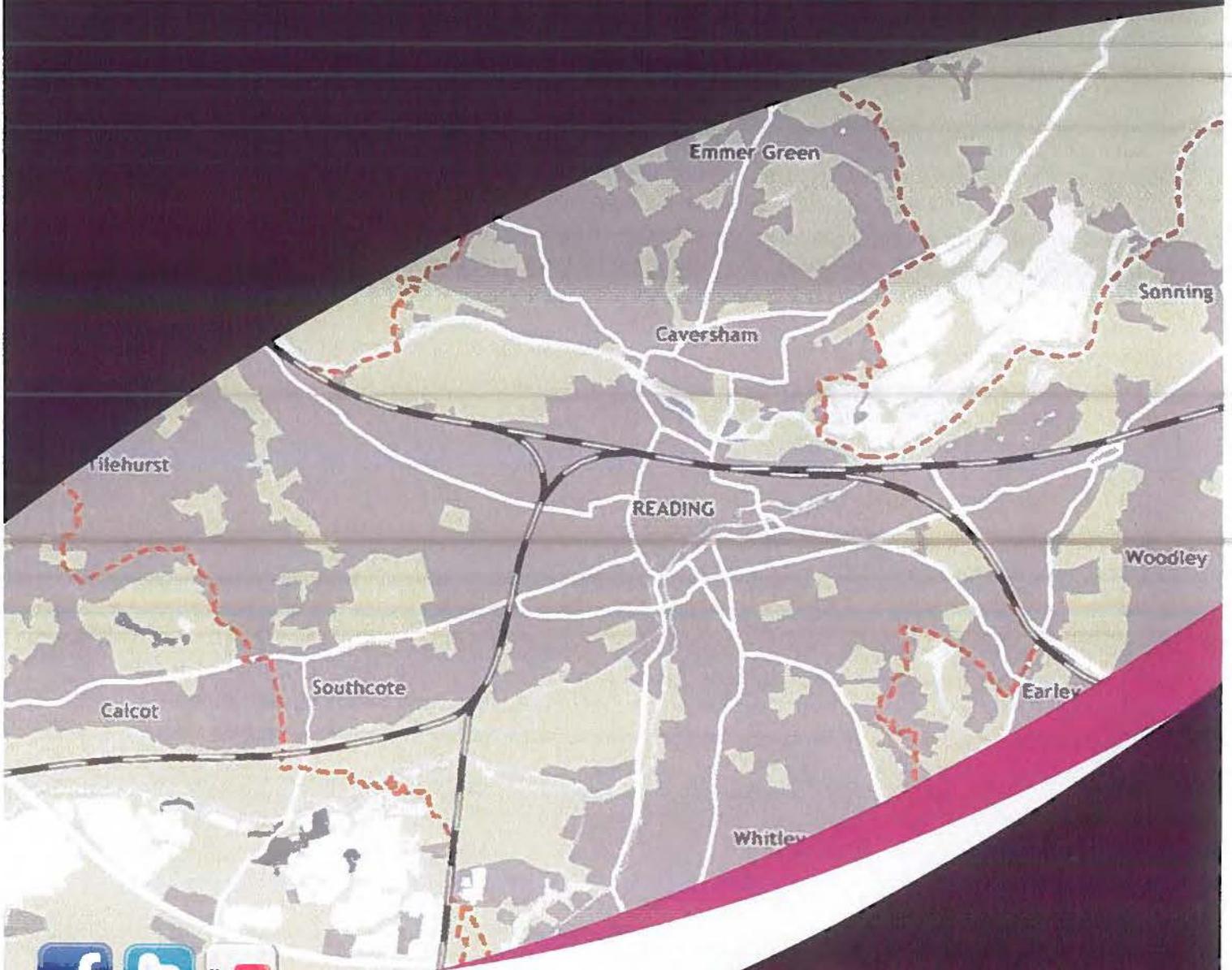


READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



www.reading.gov.uk



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

FOREWORD

By Councillor Tony Page

The Local Plan is the document that guides development in Reading up to 2036, and it will therefore play a decisive role in how our town evolves over the next two decades. It will be the main point of reference for anyone wishing to undertake new buildings, changes or developments within Reading over that period.



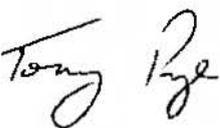
This plan has been carefully developed to address some of the key issues facing Reading. In particular, this Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and set out its commitment to work towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. We must therefore ensure that new development only takes place where it can help us in achieving that aim. The Local Plan contains sustainability policies that put it at the cutting edge of authorities across the country. We are proud in Reading to be in the top 5% of local authorities in Britain for cutting carbon emissions and the Local Plan will play a major part in building upon that success.

Over recent years, Reading has had great economic success, and this has resulted in considerable investment in the town. However, this success brings its own issues. In particular, Reading faces an acute housing crisis. There are not enough homes in general, and there is a particular need for genuinely affordable housing which represents more than half of our overall assessed housing need. The Local Plan is a major part of our response to this issue, and we continue to work with neighbouring councils to look at the needs of the Reading area as a whole.

Other critical issues to be considered include how to provide the employment space and supporting infrastructure to make sure that Reading continues to be an attractive place in which to work, to live and to study. The benefits of Reading's economic success also need to be shared out more equally with those communities in Reading that suffer high levels of deprivation and social exclusion.

The Plan also takes a positive approach to conserving and enhancing Reading's considerable but, in the past, often overlooked historic legacy. Reading has some truly significant historic sites, some of which are identified for future use and enhancement as part of this Plan. Improving Reading's environment is a major part of the Plan, both in terms of revitalising tired and run-down sites and areas, and in preserving those elements that are essential to our residents' quality of life.

This Plan will ensure that our town remains a great place in which to live, work and play for people living here now - and in the future. It provides an excellent basis for delivering on our Climate Emergency Declaration earlier this year, and achieving a sustainable and prosperous future for Reading.



Tony Page

Deputy Leader, Reading Borough Council and
Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport

Waterspaces

EN11: WATERSPACES

Reading's waterspaces will be protected and enhanced, so that they can continue to contribute to local and regional biodiversity and ecology, flood mitigation, local character, heritage and visual amenity, the provision of accessible leisure and recreational opportunities and, where appropriate, navigation. There will be no adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor.

Where development in the vicinity of watercourses is acceptable, it will:-

- *Provide appropriate, attractive uses and buildings that enhance the relationship of buildings, spaces and routes to the watercourse, including through creating or enhancing views of the watercourse, and create a high quality public realm;*
- *Make positive contributions to the distinct character, appearance, historic significance, landscape and amenity of the watercourses;*
- *Provide a strengthened role for watercourses as important landscape features, wildlife corridors, historic features and recreation opportunities;*
- *Wherever practical and consistent with its biodiversity role, provide good, level access to and along the waterside for all those who want to use it;*
- *Be set at least ten metres back from the watercourse wherever practicable and appropriate to protect its biodiversity significance;*
- *Improve the quality of watercourse environment through protecting and enhancing habitats and ensuring that habitat creation is balanced with access and urban uses; and*
- *Pursue opportunities for deculverting of watercourses.*

4.2.46 Reading is built on two main rivers that contribute to the distinct character of the Borough. Each provides a very different character and role. The Thames remains largely natural in character, bounded by parks, green spaces and fields for most of its stretch through Reading, although it meets the edge of the town centre on the south bank between Caversham and Reading Bridges. The Kennet is similarly rural in the south west of the Borough, but has a stronger integration into the fabric of the town centre than the Thames. It is important that development recognises and builds on these distinct characters.

4.2.47 Land uses adjoining the watercourses will contribute to the creation of attractive and highly accessible waterside environments, within which people can feel safe and comfortable. Buildings should face onto the water and present active frontages along the Kennet, with ground floor uses designed to enhance activity and life along this corridor. Uses and facilities along the Thames will be diversified, seeking to provide a greater variety of leisure activities and facilitating public use and recreation.

4.2.48 In addition to the two main rivers, the Holy Brook contains a unique character and links to the town's ancient history. Development should seek to increase the prominence of the Holy Brook, and open up the brook for public access, as well as consider any opportunities for deculverting it, which will provide ecological and potentially flood risk benefits. There are also a number of other small tributaries within Reading Borough, with their own character, and there may again be opportunities to enhance these as well as investigate deculverting.

4.2.49 The role of watercourses in attracting and catering for visitors and local people of all ages and backgrounds must be recognised. Development adjoining the watercourses should therefore

provide public access to, or contribute towards improving the pedestrian facilities to, along or across the watercourses. Whilst there may be cases where this is not possible due to particular site-specific constraints, these will be exceptional circumstances only. The Council will seek to promote schemes that facilitate linkages between the Thames, and the town and the Kennet, which will be facilitated through the spatial strategy for central Reading.

- 4.2.50 The wildlife function of the watercourses is also vital. There is also a clear relationship between this policy and EN12 on Biodiversity and the Green Network, as the main watercourses are identified as green links within that policy, vital for wildlife movement. In order to enhance this biodiversity role, development should be set at least ten metres back from the bank where possible and appropriate. In this case, development refers to buildings, fences and walls as well as laying of non-permeable surfaces. Ideally, unless direct access to or along the waterside is of particular significance on a site, a buffer should be maintained as a natural or semi-natural habitat free from built development, parking areas, private gardens and formal landscaping. Additionally, where a watercourse runs through a proposed development, a buffer shall be provided on both banks. There should be a long term landscape and ecological management plan for this buffer.
- 4.2.51 Where barriers to fish are present in a watercourse adjacent to development proposals, the design should include measures to allow for the natural movement of fish within the watercourse.
- 4.2.52 The Council has also produced a Thames Parks Plan, which seeks to physically link the significant areas of public park along the Thames in Reading, and increase the number and range of people using the parks. It takes each of the eight parks in turn and makes recommendations, as well as suggesting measures to deal with cross-cutting issues such as access. There are particular opportunities for enhancing watercourses adjacent to parks for wildlife and people.
- 4.2.53 There are also a number of other plans and strategies that relate to the watercourses and land around them. The Thames Valley National Landscape Character Area profile (Natural England)⁴⁴ identifies priorities for enhancement of the landscape. The Thames River Basin Management Plan (Environment Agency)⁴⁵ seeks to achieve the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment in the Thames basin, and includes a number of objectives. Meanwhile, the Thames Waterway Plan (River Thames Alliance)⁴⁶ deals with the use of the river and seeks to achieve a healthy growth in its use for communities, wildlife, leisure and business. This document is in the process of being reviewed. In addition, the Environment Agency must be consulted for any proposals affecting watercourses under separate legislation. Development within 8 metres of the top of a riverbank will require the prior consent of the Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/3865943?category=587130>

⁴⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289937/geth0910bswa-e-e.pdf

⁴⁶ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289784/geth1205bjyc-e-e.pdf

⁴⁷ www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/environmental-permits