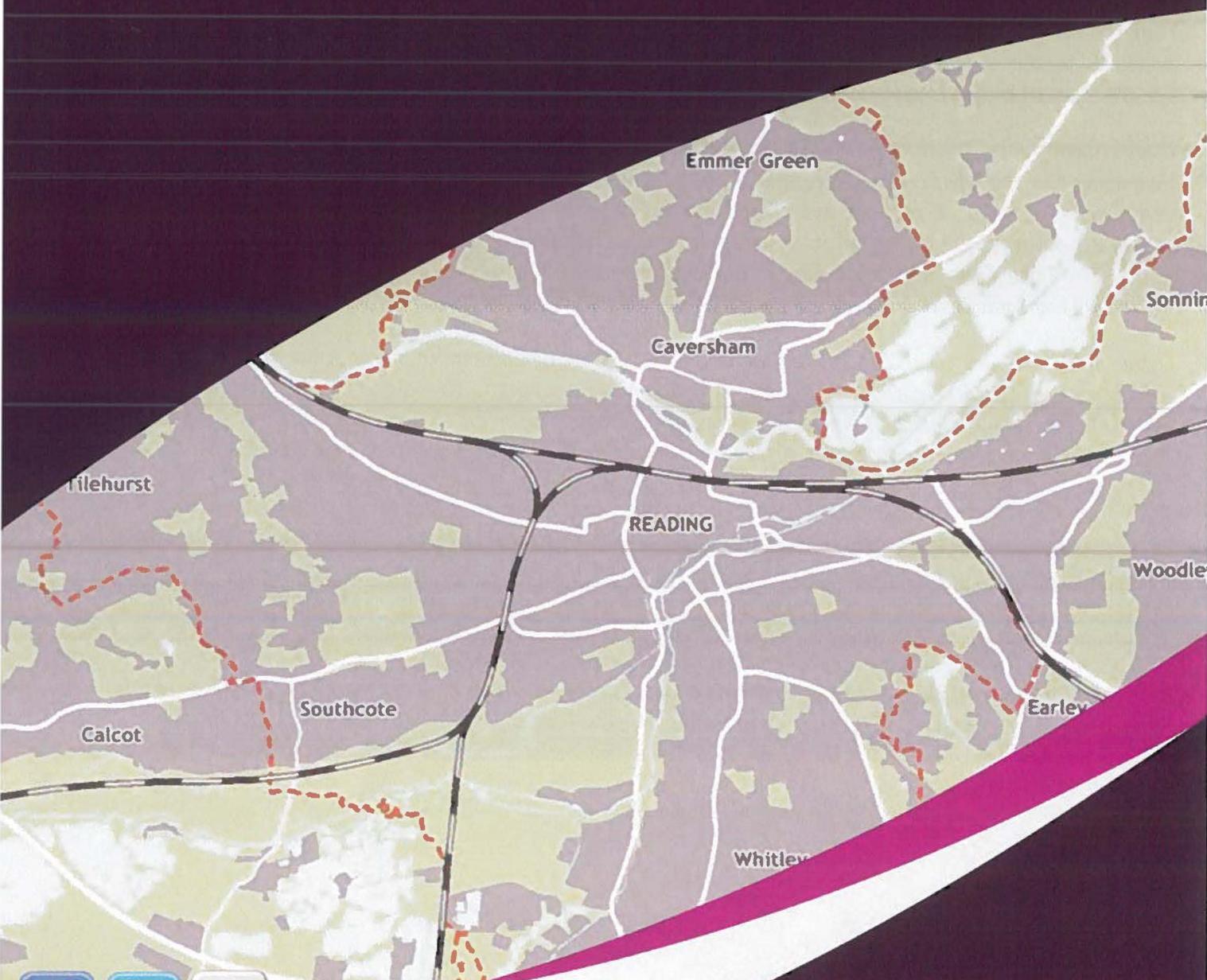


# READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



[www.reading.gov.uk](http://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.*



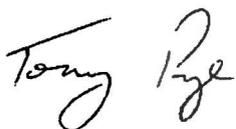
*This plan has been carefully developed to address some of the key issues facing Reading. In particular, this Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and set out its commitment to work towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. We must therefore ensure that new development only takes place 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

## 4.6 Retail, Leisure and Culture

### Network and Hierarchy of Centres

#### RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES

*The following network of centres are identified and defined on the Proposals Map:*

<b>Regional Centre:</b>	<b>Reading</b>
<b>District Centres:</b>	<b>Caversham, Cemetery Junction, Emmer Green, Meadway, Oxford Road West, Shinfield Road, Tilehurst Triangle, Whitley</b>
<b>Major Local Centres:</b>	<b>Whitley Street, Wokingham Road</b>
<b>Local Centres:</b>	<b>Basingstoke Road North, Christchurch Road, Coronation Square, Erleigh Road, Dee Park, Northumberland Avenue North, Wensley Road, Whitley Wood</b>

*The vitality and viability of these centres should be maintained and enhanced. Some centres are based around a small area of green, and where this is an important part of the layout and function of the centre, it will be retained and where possible enhanced. The following improvements will be acceptable in all centres:*

- *Accessibility and transport improvements;*
- *Broadening range of facilities;*
- *Residential use of upper floors; and*
- *Environmental enhancements.*

*Central Reading will see the greatest levels of development and change. Development and change, including intensification of town centre uses, will also take place within smaller centres in line with the role of the centre in the network. The smaller centres which are expected to be the main focus for intensification, change and additional community facilities will be The Meadway and Whitley District Centres.*

- 4.6.1 Reading has a very strong town centre, along with a network of much smaller but important centres which, although overshadowed by the strength of central Reading, have a vital role in providing easy access to shops, services and facilities, particularly in areas of deprivation. It is important that this network and hierarchy of centres is identified in the plan to ensure that shops and services are as accessible as possible.
- 4.6.2 Reading is clearly by far the dominant centre within the Borough and for much of the surrounding area. It is a centre of regional significance, and was identified by Experian in 2017 as being the centre with the 8th strongest market potential in the country<sup>98</sup>. However, as competing centres continue to enhance their offer, it will continue to be necessary to develop and adapt to maintain its position. The town centre is where the vast majority of town centre development will occur. The Central Reading section of this Plan provides further information.
- 4.6.3 The next level in the hierarchy present in Reading is district centres. It is considered that, whilst only three or four centres may currently qualify as district centres according to the NPPF

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.experian.co.uk/marketing-services/news-retailscape-uk-retail-centres-best-placed-to-thrive.html>

definition, it is appropriate to designate more district centres in order to encourage an increase in the range of facilities. This will mean that centres capable of acting as alternatives to the centre of Reading for some uses will be accessible to a greater number of people. This approach in the existing plan has seen a recent expansion of facilities in Whitley, for example.

- 4.6.4 There are a number of smaller concentrations of shops and services across Reading. These are designated as local centres, which fulfil the next tier in the hierarchy from district centres. Whitley Street and Wokingham Road are larger centres than other centres in this list, and they are therefore designated as major local centres, where a greater scale of development will be appropriate.
- 4.6.5 Of the centres other than Central Reading, those which have the greatest physical capacity for development are The Meadway and Whitley. Whitley centre is located within one of the concentrations of greatest deprivation in Reading, and within which substantial development will take place over the plan period. There has been recent development of new town centre uses within this centre, and there is scope for additional development, which is dealt with within the South Reading chapter. The Meadway is an ageing shopping precinct which would benefit from substantial physical improvement (or, potentially, complete redevelopment) to allow it to continue its district centre role. This site is covered by an allocation in policy WR3, and by a Planning Brief. However, this does not mean there will not be significant investment in other centres, and there is an existing planning permission for development in Caversham centre for example.
- 4.6.6 The boundaries of all centres on the Proposals Map have been deliberately drawn to include a wider area than simply the shopping parades, incorporating facilities such as schools and community centres where possible. Such an approach emphasises the importance of a diverse range of facilities. The boundaries also incorporate known development opportunities where they exist. This will ensure that, where the sequential approach is being applied, smaller centres include sites which could actually be developed.
- 4.6.7 When applying the sequential approach as set out in the NPPF, the town centre boundaries are the centre boundaries set out on the Proposals Map, with the exception of Central Reading, where the boundary will depend on the uses proposed (see Policy CR1).

## Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development

### ***RL2: SCALE AND LOCATION OF RETAIL, LEISURE AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT***

***Provision will be made for up to 34,900 sq m of retail and related facilities in Reading to 2036, together with new leisure facilities.***

***Retail and main town centre leisure and culture development, where it would mean a net gain of over 2,500 sq m, will take place in, or as an extension to, the centre of Reading, unless it is on a site allocated for such development. Where a need for additional development has been identified, and no sites are available in or adjoining the centre of Reading, or other defined centres, a sequential approach should be adopted to identifying alternative sites.***

***All development will comply with the relevant tests for retail, leisure and culture development set out in national policy.***