

# READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



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**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.*



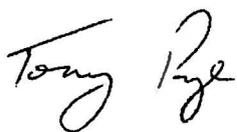
*This plan has been carefully developed to address some of the key issues facing Reading. In particular, this Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and set out its commitment to work towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. We must therefore ensure that new development only takes place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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Page".

**Tony Page**

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

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.***

- 4.6.8 The most suitable location for retail, leisure and culture development is in existing centres. These centres already have a range of facilities, and are generally accessible by a choice of means of transport. Development in these centres should maintain and enhance the centres' vitality and viability. The centre of Reading is the most accessible location in the Borough, and is among the most accessible locations in the South East, and therefore represents the best location for major development of this type.
- 4.6.9 The Council worked jointly with Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council and West Berkshire District Council to commission consultants to identify the need for additional retail and leisure development in the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area to 2036. The final Retail and Leisure Study reported in May 2017. It found a positive need for comparison goods floorspace of 54,400 sq m (net) by 2036, much of which is required in the second half of the plan period after 2026. In terms of convenience goods, an overprovision was identified of 19,500 sq m (net) by 2036. Our approach is to consider this as a whole, as no planning permission is generally required to change between convenience and comparison goods, unless it is controlled by planning condition. The Council's approach is also to treat this as very much a maximum, as there is considerable uncertainty about the retail landscape after 2026, when most of the need arises.
- 4.6.10 In terms of leisure provision, the Retail and Leisure Study also identified a need for entertainment uses including bowling and ice skating, and, potentially, additional cinema provision. The need for replacement swimming facilities in Reading is also clear.
- 4.6.11 The identified retail and leisure need is therefore directed primarily to the centre of Reading. The sites and locations that will accommodate the bulk of this need are set out in the site allocations policies, and are mainly contained within the major opportunity areas (CR11, CR12 and CR13). Sites to accommodate approximately 5,500 sq m of retail, leisure and culture floorspace in sites in or adjoining smaller centres have also been identified. The relevant policies are WR3 and ER1. The need for swimming facilities is expected to be met at Rivermead, close to the edge of the town centre (policy WR3), with additional provision at Palmer Park (ER1).
- 4.6.12 Retail, leisure and culture development outside designated centres will only be allowed in those exceptional circumstances where the provisions of national policy are met. In these cases, proposals will need to demonstrate that a sequential approach has been adopted to site selection, and that there will be no adverse impact on existing centres in Reading Borough or elsewhere.

### Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres

#### **RL3: VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF SMALLER CENTRES**

- a) ***Within the Key Frontages (identified on the Proposals Map), development involving a net loss of A1 retail or A2 financial and professional to other 'centre uses' will only be permitted where:***
- ***There would be no more than 3 consecutive units which are not in A1 or A2 retail use; and***
  - ***The proportion of the total length of the Key Frontage within the centre that is***