

## **Statement of Common Ground**

### **Appendix D**

Extracts of relevant Local Plan policies

# READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



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**Reading**  
Borough Council

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## 4. GENERAL POLICIES

### 4.1 Cross-Cutting Policies

4.0.1 The policies in this section are general policies applicable to the whole of Reading, although some may also refer in part to specific areas.

#### Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

##### **CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.*

*Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan (including, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Proposed development that conflicts with the development plan will be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.*

*Where there are no policies relevant to the application or the policies which are most important to determining the application are out of date at the time of making the decision then permission will be granted unless material considerations indicate otherwise - taking into account whether:*

- The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.*

4.1.1 The Government has placed the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of its approach to planning, and this is articulated in the National Planning Policy Framework, published in February 2019. This policy aims to ensure that decisions are taken in line with that presumption. In doing so, it helps to achieve all of the core objectives.

#### Sustainable Design and Construction

##### **CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION**

*Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.*

**To meet these requirements:**

- **All major non-residential developments or conversions to residential are required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM ‘Excellent’ standards, where possible;**
- **All minor non-residential developments or conversions to residential are required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM ‘Very Good’ standard as a minimum;**
- **All non-residential development or conversions to residential should incorporate water conservation measures so that predicted per capita consumption does not exceed the appropriate levels set out in the applicable BREEAM standard. Both residential and non-residential development should include recycling greywater and rainwater harvesting where systems are energy and cost effective.**

- 4.1.2** The future growth of Reading in terms of the amount of new development taking place has the potential to impose a large environmental footprint in terms of consumption of resources and materials, the use of energy and the associated emission of greenhouse gases that contribute towards climate change. As such, the incorporation of sustainable design and construction techniques are essential in order to minimise this impact in the context of Reading. Reading’s Climate Change Strategy<sup>16</sup> (Reading Means Business on Climate Change 2013-2020) seeks to tackle the Borough’s contribution to climate change by reducing Reading’s carbon footprint by 34% by 2020 in comparison to 2005 levels. New development has a role to play in achieving these aims.
- 4.1.3** The general principle of this policy in terms of new development applies to both residential and non-residential uses. For non-residential uses (including non-C3 forms of accommodation) and for conversions to residential, this policy incorporates the use of BREEAM standards. These standards cover a wide range of matters including building fabrics and materials, energy and water use, amenity areas and ecology, waste recycling, the location and accessibility of developments, daylighting, sound insulation etc. However, the current standards give high scores in urban areas to using previously developed land that is close to services, amenities and public transport routes. Developments in Reading will therefore naturally score relatively highly before any consideration of the impact of development itself. Reading Borough Council believes that development should mitigate effects further by reducing greenhouse gas and other polluting emissions and providing higher energy conservation, hence the requirement for BREEAM ‘Excellent’ ratings.
- 4.1.4** For a number of uses, including offices, the requirement to achieve ‘Excellent’ ratings is unlikely to significantly affect viability. However, some types of development, such as industrial uses, warehouses and schools might find it more difficult to meet these standards. In these cases, developments must demonstrate that the standard to be achieved is the highest possible for the development, and at a minimum meets the BREEAM ‘Very Good’ standard.
- 4.1.5** Expectations for performance of new-build homes in terms of emissions are set out in policy H5 on housing standards. An existing Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document is in place and, and the general principles, where in compliance with the overall policy, will continue to apply. An updated version of the SPD will be published in 2019 to

<sup>16</sup> Reading’s Climate Change Strategy can be accessed on the Council’s website at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1232/Climate-Change-Strategy/pdf/Climate-Change-Strategy.pdf>

supplement this policy and will provide further detail on how developments will be expected to achieve the BREEAM ratings required by policy CC2.

### Adaptation to Climate Change

#### CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

*All developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. The following measures shall be incorporated into development:*

- *Wherever possible, new buildings shall be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements;*
- *Proposals involving both new and existing buildings shall demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, green walls, etc;*
- *Use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as part of a landscape scheme, to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets and to help to connect habitat, designed with native plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions; and*
- *All development shall minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system, and where possible incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in river flooding levels as a result of climate change*

- 4.1.6 Adaptation is about making sure future communities can live, work, rest and play in a comfortable and secure environment in the face of inevitable climate change. Taking action now to help successfully achieve adaptation measures would help to reduce vulnerability for people, businesses, services and infrastructure to climate change. Adaptation measures need to be built into all new developments to ensure the sustainable development of housing, businesses and the economy of Reading. Applicants should refer to the forthcoming Sustainable Design and Construction SPD for further guidance.
- 4.1.7 The impacts of climate change are predicted to increase over time, with winters getting warmer and wetter, while summers become hotter and drier. It is expected that there will be more extreme weather leading to impacts including intense rainfall and floods, heatwaves, droughts and increased risk of subsidence. These impacts will affect people's lives, homes and businesses as well as essential services and supplies such as transport, hospitals, water supply and energy. There will also be significant impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment.
- 4.1.8 Given the anticipated level of growth of the Borough over the coming years, it is imperative that this growth takes place in a sustainable manner incorporating climate change adaptation technologies. Buildings, services and infrastructure need to be able to easily cope with the impacts of climate change. Part of this ability to cope relates to ensuring that new development is designed to adapt to more intense rainfall, the possibility of flooding, plus heat waves and droughts. The design of developments therefore needs to more carefully consider matters such as shading, insulation and ventilation, surface water runoff and storage and the use of appropriate tree and other planting.

- 4.1.9 Reading is an urbanised Borough with a high proportion of hardstanding/ built form, and is built on two main rivers - the Thames and the Kennet. Other watercourses in the Borough include Foudry Brook and its tributaries, the Berry Brook, Vastern Ditch, Christchurch Ditch, the creek along the base of the Warren escarpment and various ditches on the Kennet floodplain upstream of the A33. In addition the Holy Brook, a smaller watercourse, runs through the town centre. As such the Borough is vulnerable to flooding from surface water run-off and directly from watercourses. While Reading itself was not significantly affected by the floods of 2007 and 2008, around two-thirds of the flooding during the 2007 floods was caused by surface water<sup>17</sup>.
- 4.1.10 There is a need to look at the whole community and consider how developments could be affected by rainfall and the different flood pathways. Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA), and the Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) should be used to help with this, as well as guidance on how buildings can be made more resistant and resilient to climate change by including features such as green roofs for sustainable drainage or raised floor levels for flood-proofing.
- 4.1.11 Applications for change of use of existing buildings should also incorporate measures to adapt to climate change through for example, being flood repairable, i.e. when refurbishing a building, constructing internal parts in such a way that although flood water enters a building, elements that are damaged by flood water are capable of being easily repaired or replaced; raising the level of sockets above expected flood levels; inclusion of pump and sump systems below floorboards to remove water faster than it can enter the house from below ground level<sup>18</sup>. Ultimately, raising the height of flooring above predicted flood levels is a better alternative. All types of flooding (fluvial, surface water and groundwater) must be considered.

## Decentralised Energy

### CC4: DECENTRALISED ENERGY

*In meeting the sustainability requirements of this plan, developments of the sizes set out below shall demonstrate how consideration has been given to securing energy for the development from a decentralised energy source.*

*Any development of more than 20 dwellings and/ or non-residential development of over 1,000 sq m shall consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision, within the site, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision.*

*Where there is existing decentralised energy provision present within the vicinity of an application site, further developments of 10 dwellings or more or non-residential development of 1,000 sq m or more will be expected to link into the existing decentralised energy network or demonstrate why this is not feasible.*

- 4.1.12 Decentralised energy is a term that covers a variety of technologies, including various renewable technologies, and more efficient energy generation such as Combined Heat and Power (CHP), which provides heating and electricity at the same time. This policy promotes the

<sup>17</sup> The Pitt Review: Interim Report, November 2008

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.nhbcfoundation.org>

use of decentralised energy including CHP and district heating, which has particular applications to a dense urban area such as Reading. It provides an explanation of when CHP or district heating should be considered as an energy efficient design measure to achieve the most up to date requirements for residential development and BREEAM requirements for other types of development. More information on decentralised energy will be published in the forthcoming Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

- 4.1.13** Electricity production is currently dominated by a centralised electricity generating system. Centralised electricity generating stations waste around two thirds of the energy in the fuels they use through the production of waste heat in generation then in electricity transmission and distribution to end users. On average around 65% of the energy is lost before it even reaches consumers. If better use could be made of this waste heat, and transmission distances could be reduced, there would be major benefits in tackling climate change and improving security of supply. A decentralised energy system (which might include CHP) can help address these issues.
- 4.1.14** In addition the opportunity to reduce carbon emissions associated with heating requirements can be realised through the use of low carbon fuels such as biomass in the form of woodchip or wood pellets. The use of these fuels is often impractical and uneconomic on an individual dwelling basis but can be feasible when a higher heat load can be supplied from a central heat source with heat distributed to individual users via a pipe network, often termed district or community heating.
- 4.1.15** CHP plants, although often fuelled by fossil fuels, are much more efficient than large centralised power stations, because the heat is used either as process heat in industry or distributed around buildings via a district heating system. The availability of a local district energy network connected to the decentralised energy generation plant means the CHP plant can be integrated with other fuels/technologies such as biomass, geothermal energy, or solar collectors. Much lower levels of energy are lost in transmission compared to centralised generation because distances from the point of generation to the point of use are relatively very short. Given that CHP involves the simultaneous generation of usable heat and power (usually electricity) in a single process, the amount of heat that is wasted is reduced and the heat that would normally be wasted to the atmosphere, rivers or seas can be put to use. Air-source or ground-source heat pumps should be considered in the first instance, as these methods are less carbon intensive than CHP.
- 4.1.16** By seeing the energy system as a whole and locating energy production close to where it is used, it is possible to use both the heat and electricity generated and provide a doubling in the efficiency of current electricity generation and use as delivered by the mix of centralised power stations.
- 4.1.17** The NPPF actively promotes bringing forward decentralised energy, with an expectation that new development will comply with adopted Local Plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy. The NPPF also refers to identifying opportunities for energy supply for development to be drawn from a decentralised, renewable or low carbon supply system and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.
- 4.1.18** Following the production of heat spot maps, a feasibility study of the Borough, carried out by Thames Valley Energy (TVE), has identified potential opportunities for decentralised energy provision including district heat energy provision and CHP plant, which consider both existing and likely new development in the Borough as currently allocated. Potential for district heat

and energy provision is being explored in areas of the town centre but represents just one of many possible ways of fulfilling the requirements of policy CC4.

- 4.1.19 The policy is likely to mainly apply to major developments in Central Reading, given the mixed nature and size of schemes being proposed in these locations, with some potential in South Reading in addition. However, it is possible that appropriate sites could come forward in other parts of the Borough.
- 4.1.20 The success of such a scheme, both in terms of, for example, establishing the CHP plant (as part of a decentralised energy network) and future connections to the plant of both existing buildings and new buildings, will be dependent on the creation of strong partnerships between Reading Borough Council where relevant, the developer or representative of existing businesses and an Energy Service Company (ESCO). The involvement of an ESCO will allow multiple users to access the energy from the scheme and set out the contracts for doing so.

### Waste Minimisation and Storage

#### **CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE**

*Development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of buildings and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including the reuse and recycling of construction waste and the promotion of layouts and designs that provide adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.*

- 4.1.21 European policy and legislation (e.g. Landfill Directive), along with national policy, seeks to achieve a more sustainable approach to methods of waste management and specifically place waste minimisation at source at the top of what is referred to as the waste hierarchy.
- 4.1.22 Continuing with past patterns of waste management is recognised as being clearly unsustainable and the main thrust of policy is to increase the value recovered and decrease the amount of waste sent to landfill. In light of this and the fact that development and re-development are significant contributors to waste production, policies need to translate this into specific policies regarding waste minimisation in development design, construction and demolition.
- 4.1.23 Building materials and other non-renewable resources are being taken up at a rapid rate and increased re-use and recycling is essential in order to reduce waste and to manage future extraction and its impact on the environment. In light of this, and the need to reduce the amount of waste generated and to increase the proportion of waste that is reused or recycled through better waste management, it is considered necessary that a policy is in place that will achieve these aims. The beneficial restoration and reuse of buildings should generally be considered before demolition and redevelopment.
- 4.1.24 The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, adopted in 2011, contains more detail on waste minimisation measures, and this document continues to be relevant. A Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan for Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is in preparation, and will cover the waste planning needs of the area.

## Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

### CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

*The scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations. Unless it can be demonstrated that the accessibility of a site is to be significantly upgraded, for example, by providing high quality pedestrian routes or providing access to good public transport services, any new development must be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to that level of accessibility.*

- 4.1.25 It is important that development is accessible by a choice of modes of transport. This means that the primary locations for new development will be those accessible by walking and cycling to a wide range of employment, services and facilities, leisure, education and health facilities, or which are accessible by walking to routes/stops of frequent public transport services that provide easy access to the aforementioned uses. Locating development in areas accessible by walking and cycling can serve important public health goals, including:
- increased physical activity;
  - decreased incidences of cardiovascular disease and obesity;
  - reduced levels of stress caused by traffic noise and congestion;
  - fewer cases of lung or heart disease associated with poor air quality;
  - proximity to healthcare services;
  - access to open space for recreation<sup>19</sup>.
- 4.1.26 The highest levels of accessibility in Reading are to be found in the town centre, which is also one of the most accessible locations in the South East. However, good levels of accessibility are also to be found within district and local centres and along well-served public transport corridors. For example, in the south of Reading, the delivery of a mass rapid transit (MRT) route will enable development that is at a higher density than in many other out of centre areas, in particular where there are transport interchanges.
- 4.1.27 As a rule of thumb, a good level of accessibility is considered to be that within 400m of a defined centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and within 400m by pedestrian routes of a bus stop served by a service with a frequency of better than one bus every 20 minutes in each direction within daytime hours (7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.). In many parts of Reading, it will be important to ensure that access to a range of facilities is encouraged, and not affected by existing barriers, such as major roads, rivers and railways.
- 4.1.28 The Spatial Strategy, in figure 3.2, includes an indicative illustration of how the intensity of development relates to the level of accessibility. However, it is important to note that it is indicative only, and that changes to, or more detailed assessment of, accessibility levels over the plan period may enable a different approach to development density in some areas.

<sup>19</sup> NHS Healthy Urban Development Checklist <http://www.healthyrbandevelopment.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Healthy-Urban-Planning-Checklist-March-2014.pdf>

## Design and the Public Realm

### CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

*All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -*

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials*

*will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -*

- *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability - capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity - meets a wide range of needs.*

*Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -*

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.*

*Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matters.*

**4.1.29** Reading is an historic town with at least 1,100 years of history. It is a town that has evolved over time. It contains many historic areas and a diversity of areas of different ages often with their own distinctive character. This local plan promotes development within the Borough but requires that development should positively contribute to making the Borough a better place. It needs to involve the highest quality design that is sensitive to, and contributes to enhancing, the character of the area in which it is located.

- 4.1.30** The NPPF recognises that good design “is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people” (paragraph 56). It goes on to state that planning should ensure that developments:
- “will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
  - establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
  - optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;
  - respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
  - create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
  - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.” (paragraph 58)
- 4.1.31** The NPPF importantly further places the onus on development to actively improve the area wherever possible. It states that “Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions” (paragraph 64).
- 4.1.32** An attractive built environment has been shown to encourage walking, cycling and other healthy behaviours<sup>20</sup>. A high-quality public realm and a sense of place can incentivise active travel and create a sense of community cohesion by reducing social isolation, fear of crime and incidences of chronic disease. Suitable access allows everyone to participate equally and improves overall health and wellbeing. Sport England have produced a list of ten ‘active design’ principles, which provide a basis for considering how design can contribute to overall activity and health<sup>21</sup>.
- 4.1.33** The Borough contains many established, attractive areas which are highly valued by residents and which are worthy of protection from damaging and insensitive new development. While there may be capacity to accommodate new development in many parts of the Borough, it should only occur where proposals are of a scale, density and design that would not cause damage to the qualities, character and amenity of the areas in which they are situated. Such development should also provide attractive high quality buildings and public realm that positively contributes to the area in which it is located, in accordance with good urban design principles.
- 4.1.34** There will be a strong expectation that design issues will be dealt with at pre-application stage. Some major proposals will be referred to the Design Review Panel where there are significant design implications. Supplementary Planning Documents may be prepared for elements of design where necessary.
- 4.1.35** Where some elements are crucial to good design, but there is a risk that they may be lost or eroded in the future through works not requiring planning permission, planning conditions may be used to secure those elements. Planning conditions will also be used to secure appropriate materials and other details.

<sup>20</sup> RTPi Promoting Healthy Cities [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1119674/rtpi\\_promoting\\_healthy\\_cities.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1119674/rtpi_promoting_healthy_cities.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/planning-for-sport/planning-tools-and-guidance/active-design/>

## Safeguarding Amenity

### CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

*Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:*

- *Privacy and overlooking;*
- *Access to sunlight and daylight;*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;*
- *Harm to outlook;*
- *Noise and disturbance;*
- *Artificial lighting;*
- *Vibration;*
- *Dust and fumes;*
- *Smell;*
- *Crime and safety; or*
- *Wind, where the proposals involve new development of more than 8 storeys.*

*The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy.*

*As well as immediate impacts, other aspects to which this policy applies will include matters such as hours of operation of businesses, and effects of traffic movements, particularly of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). Proposals which would generate regular movements of HGVs on residential roads will not be acceptable.*

*Where an otherwise acceptable development could change its character to a use that would have a greater impact on amenity without needing planning permission, conditions will be applied to restrict such changes.*

- 4.1.36** One of the key concerns of planning is to ensure that new development does not reduce the quality of the environment for others, particularly where it would affect residential properties. At the same time, ensuring that new development creates a quality living environment for future residents is also critical. The policy aims to ensure that existing and additional residential properties provide an acceptable living environment, which is a key element of a high quality of life. It is applicable to any type of development.
- 4.1.37** Substantial levels of development are planned for Reading in coming years, and the vast majority of it will take place in the existing urban area of Reading. Although the mix of uses sought will be generally beneficial to Reading, this increasing concentration of different types of development may give rise to some tensions between uses.
- 4.1.38** Most tensions can be avoided by careful design, siting and orientation of buildings and spaces, paying particular attention to those aspects which are most likely to cause issues (e.g. car parks, bin stores and noisy equipment), and which are most sensitive to effects (e.g. children's play areas, outdoor spaces or habitable rooms). Planning conditions can also be used to deal

with matters such as the installation of extraction systems, hours of operation, or preventing a development from changing its character.

- 4.1.39 There is not any current policy prescribing the location of employment uses below 2,500 sq m. Such a policy is not required, as long as impacts on residential amenity are carefully controlled. This policy will therefore be regularly applied to new or expanding employment uses. Where HGV movements (vehicles having a gross laden weight greater than 7.5 tonnes) are to be generated, apart from during construction, it is not appropriate that residential roads are used. This policy also seeks to ensure that new development for uses such as residential in close proximity to commercial use is not located or designed in a way that leads to future tensions that would constrain the operation of existing businesses.
- 4.1.40 Amenity levels for new residential development may also be considered. For instance, layouts should avoid locating living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens next to, above, or below proposed and neighbouring bedrooms unless effects can be adequately mitigated through design. Another example is that ‘dual aspect’ units will help to increase access to light.
- 4.1.41 Other policies in this document deal specifically with uses which often have particular amenity impacts, for instance residential conversions (H8) and house extensions (H9). Policy CC8 must be read in conjunction with these policies where they apply.
- 4.1.42 There is good practice guidance available on some of these issues<sup>22</sup>. The Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance on House Extensions provides some useful guidance on how extensions can be designed to accord with the principles of this policy, and that SPG continues to be current. For instance, the SPG sets out a basic way to protect light to main rooms in adjoining dwellings, through avoiding extensions that would infringe on an area measured at an angle of 45° from the midpoint of the closest window to a habitable room in a neighbouring property.
- 4.1.43 This policy mainly deals with the end result of developments, but in the meantime, conditions may be applied to regulate the amenity effects of construction.

## Securing Infrastructure

### **CC9: SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE**

***Proposals for development will not be permitted unless infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets lost or impacted upon as a result of the development or made necessary by the development will be provided through direct provision or financial contributions at the appropriate time.***

***Employment development should provide mitigation measures in line with its impacts on labour and skills and on the transport network.***

<sup>22</sup> For instance, reference to the ‘BRE Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice’ document may be of use in ensuring that new development adjacent to residential properties is not of adverse bulk and does not block out sunlight and daylight to habitable rooms and outdoor living spaces.

*In determining appropriate provision or contribution, the highest priority will be given to the following:*

- *Transport infrastructure, including major cross boundary or sub-regional infrastructure projects;*
- *Open space, green infrastructure and other measures to improve or enhance biodiversity;*
- *Education, including cross-boundary facilities;*
- *Economic development services and infrastructure, including employment, skills and training development initiatives and childcare provision.*

*Where relevant a high priority will also be given to the appropriate provision of the following:*

- *Energy infrastructure, including decentralised energy projects;*
- *Health provision; and*
- *Police Service infrastructure.*

*Other measures, as follows, should also be considered where a specific need is identified and justified:*

- *Community facilities;*
- *Leisure and cultural infrastructure;*
- *Reading Central Area infrastructure and amenities, including public realm and street care enhancements;*
- *Environmental improvements outside the Central Area, such as within local centres, including off-site street tree and other tree planting;*
- *Measures to tackle poor air quality or for on-going air quality monitoring; and*
- *Flood mitigation and prevention measures.*

**4.1.44** Development is required to play a role in delivering sustainable development. Development should minimise damage, loss and impact upon existing infrastructure and environmental assets. Should loss or damage occur, developers should compensate for or mitigate any impact caused by a development. Development proposals will be expected to mitigate all relevant impacts in accordance with the criteria and rate of contribution and/or levy as set out in relevant documentation, taking account of levels of development that have already been accepted, and mitigation measures that have already been agreed or implemented. However, where it will not be possible to mitigate all relevant impacts or needs, for example for reasons of viability, the Council will take into account priorities, as set out in the policy, when seeking to agree an appropriate range of measures.

**4.1.45** Provision will be secured through planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy as relevant. Such contributions may be pooled, in order to allow necessary infrastructure to be secured in a fair and equitable way insofar as is compliant with relevant legislation.

**4.1.46** Government policy on planning obligations is contained in The Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 as amended<sup>23</sup>. This indicates that in some instances, it may be possible to

<sup>23</sup> The Community Infrastructure Regulations (2010) can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/9780111492390/contents>

make acceptable development proposals that might otherwise be unacceptable, through the use of planning conditions, or, where this is not possible, through planning obligations. The regulations set out principles and policy tests under which planning obligations may be sought.

- 4.1.47** Supplementary Planning Guidance on Section 106 agreements<sup>24</sup>, as well as a CIL charging schedule<sup>25</sup>, have been adopted and continue to have effect in relation to this policy. These provide more information on what will be required with detail regarding:
- The scale and form of obligation;
  - The financial contribution sought;
  - The role of pooled payments;
  - Maintenance payments; and
  - Charges for preparing agreements.
- 4.1.48** Where the combined impact of a number of developments creates the need for infrastructure, it may be reasonable for the associated developers' contributions to be pooled, in order to allow the infrastructure to be secured in a fair and equitable way. Pooling can take place both between developments and between local authorities where there is a cross-authority impact. The CIL Regulations place limits upon pooling Section 106 payments, but there is still potential to pool contributions where there is a clear group of related developments.
- 4.1.49** This policy will need to be read in conjunction with the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan<sup>26</sup> and relevant strategies, plans and best practice should be taken into account. In accordance with national policy as set out in the NPPF, requirements must consider their effects on the viability of development. In particular, in considering planning obligations, the relevant tests will need to be applied as set out in Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended)<sup>27</sup>.
- 4.1.50** The tight labour market of Reading and the wider Thames Valley area means that additional employment development could result in still greater pressures on housing in the Borough, more congestion and longer commuting distances. Pressure on housing can particularly affect those who cannot afford open market housing. One possible way to mitigate these impacts is through maximising the potential of the existing population to fill jobs, through improving skills, changing working practices or providing childcare facilities. Therefore, such development should include mitigation commensurate with its impact on the demand for labour and skills.

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<sup>24</sup> Supplementary Planning Guidance on Section 106 and Planning Obligations can be found on the council's website at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/readingldf>

<sup>25</sup> The CIL Charging Schedule can be accessed on the council's website at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/planningadvice>

<sup>26</sup> The Infrastructure Delivery Plan can be found in Section 10

<sup>27</sup> Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/9780111492390/regulation/122>

**EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

*Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:*

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *Scheduled Monuments;*
- *Historic parks and gardens; and*
- *Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.*

*All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.*

*Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.*

*Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.*

*Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.*

*The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.*

*Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.*

**4.2.12** Planning is an important instrument for maintaining and enhancing the environment, and preserving built and natural heritage. Planning policy must therefore reconcile the need for development with the need to protect the natural and historic environment. Planning policy should also seek opportunities for development to secure the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, to better reveal its significance and to increase access to and enjoyment of that environment.

**4.2.13** Heritage Statements will be expected to:

- i) describe the significance of the asset and its setting, using appropriate expertise; at a level of detail proportionate to its significance and sufficient to understand the potential

- impact of the proposal; using appropriate references such as the Historic Environment Record and, if necessary, original survey (including, for assets or archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation); and
- ii) set out the impact of the development on the heritage assets and a suggested mitigation that is proportionate to the impact and the significance of the heritage asset, including where possible positive opportunities to conserve and enjoy heritage assets as well as recording loss and advancing knowledge.

**4.2.14** In areas where there is a need to protect character, local authorities have the power to make an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights and require planning applications<sup>31</sup>. There are 15 Article 4 directions currently in place that relate to patterned brickwork and one relating to a locally listed building (plus two which restrict conversions from a house to an HMO) and the Council will continue to consider the implementation of Article 4 directions, particularly in areas where special historic character is threatened<sup>32</sup>. There is potential to use Local Development Orders (LDOs) in combination with Article 4 Directions in order to allow owners to reinstate features that reflect historic character without having to submit a planning application.

**4.2.15** Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Unlike buildings listed by Historic England, they are designated at the local level by the local authority. These areas are designated because they have a particularly distinctive character and usually provide a strong link to the history of the area and are considered to be heritage assets for the purposes of applying this policy. The specific heritage interests of Reading's Conservation Areas are set out in Conservation Area Appraisals. These documents serve as a guide for managing development in these areas.

**4.2.16** Heritage Assets at Risk are identified by Historic England as “vulnerable to neglect, decay or other threats”.<sup>33</sup> Heritage Assets at Risk deserve priority attention. As of October 2017, four assets in Reading have been identified by Historic England as ‘at risk’. These are:

- Sacred Heart, St John's Road
- Chazey Farm Barn, The Warren
- St David's Hall, Portland Place, 24-30 London Road
- Remains of Reading Abbey

At the time of writing, three of the four sites identified as ‘at risk’ are either undergoing improvement or have secured funding for improvement (Sacred Heart, St David's Hall and the Remains of Reading Abbey). The Council is working closely with the owners of the Chazey Farm Barn to develop a plan for its restoration. Should other assets become identified as ‘at-risk’ throughout the plan period, the Council will actively work toward their protection. The most up-to-date list can be viewed on the Historic England website<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> NPPF

<sup>32</sup> A map of areas in Reading under Article 4 Direction can be found at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/planningadvice>

<sup>33</sup> PPG, 12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/12-conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment/>

<sup>34</sup> The Heritage-at-risk register can be accessed on Historic England's website at <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk>

**EN2: AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Applicants should identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance by consulting the Historic Environment Record. This will require an assessment of the archaeological impacts of development proposals to be submitted before the planning application is determined. Planning permission will not be granted in cases where the assessment of the archaeological impacts is inadequate.*

*Where remains cannot be preserved ‘in situ,’ remains should be properly excavated, investigated and recorded. This will require adequate provision for the identification, investigation, recording and publication of the archaeological resource. Where appropriate, Section 106 agreements will be negotiated to protect, enhance and interpret archaeological remains.*

*Development proposals which will have an adverse effect on scheduled monuments and other nationally important archaeological remains and their settings will not be allowed unless there is clear and convincing justification in the form of overriding public benefits.*

- 4.2.17** Archaeological excavation is, by its nature, a generally destructive process, so the archive is the unique record of this investigation and needs to be preserved and accessible in perpetuity. Archives from within Reading Borough are usually added to Reading Museum’s collection. The Proposals Map shows ‘Areas of Archaeological Potential’, where there is recognised archaeological potential, although it is also important to recognise that there is a potential for archaeological finds almost anywhere in the Borough. All reports submitted to support the application will be written by a qualified heritage professional and should assess impacts and effects to an appropriate level of detail.

**EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS**

*The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:*

- *Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;*
- *Restoring original building features;*
- *Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;*
- *Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;*
- *Improving signage and street furniture;*
- *Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;*
- *Sympathetic landscaping and planting;*
- *Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;*
- *Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;*
- *Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area’s historical significance.*

***Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.***

- 4.2.18** Appraisals were undertaken for all Reading’s conservation areas between 2005 and 2010. These identify the special interest of each area and provide a valuable tool for considering development in these areas. The Conservation Area appraisals can be found on the Council’s website<sup>35</sup>. Information for property owners, estate agents and the public is also available online<sup>36</sup>.
- 4.2.19** The Council supports community-led efforts to assess and update Conservation Area appraisals and management plans with limited technical support from officers and will work closely with groups with the aim of adopting updated appraisals and management plans. The Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee is a community-led group separate from the Council and comprised of people with an interest in the built environment and its heritage<sup>37</sup>. Membership will be drawn from local amenity societies, residents’ associations, independent historical, architectural and planning experts, and local residents and businesses.

#### **EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS**

***Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.***

***Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset’s significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.***

- 4.2.20** The Council has established and maintains a List of Locally Important Buildings. The local significance of assets may become known at any time throughout the duration of this plan and the list will be revised dependent on any new information. Criteria for inclusion of locally listed assets can be found in Appendix 2. Local heritage assets do not qualify for statutory listing and are not protected from loss in the same way as listed assets<sup>38</sup>. It should be recognised that seeking the reuse of historic buildings and, where appropriate, their modification to reduce carbon emissions and secure sustainable development, without harming the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, helps to mitigate the effects of climate change. Therefore, buildings on the Local List should be re-used, where possible.

<sup>35</sup> The most up-to-date Conservation Area appraisals can be accessed on the Council’s website at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/conservationareas>

<sup>36</sup> More information on Conservation Areas can be found on the Council’s website at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/conservationareas>

<sup>37</sup> More information about the Conservation Area Advisory Committee can be found on the Reading Civic Society’s website at [http://www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk/wordpress/?page\\_id=186](http://www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk/wordpress/?page_id=186)

<sup>38</sup> More information on locally listed heritage assets can be found on Historic England’s website at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/locallylistedhas/>

Area. There are a number of other views in the Borough that are important for other reasons, and these are covered by other designations and documents. Policy EN13 deals with major landscape features, of and within which there are many views of importance. There are also a number of views of central Reading, in particular including the station area. The Reading Station Area Framework (chapter 7) identifies both longer and shorter distance views that are of importance<sup>39</sup>.

#### **EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT**

*In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:*

- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);*
- b. Sensitivity to historic context;*
- c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);*
- d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.*

**4.2.23** The Council is committed to protecting and where appropriate, enhancing, Reading's historic environment. This includes ensuring that buildings and features of local architectural and historic interest are taken fully into account and safeguarded, as appropriate. New development in the vicinity of historic assets or at the edges of conservation areas should be sympathetic. It should reflect elements of the local historic environment in the form of the new development. This could include a wide range of matters such as footprint sizes, setbacks from the road frontage, landscaping, window placement and size, prevailing building height or architectural features. The aim is not to copy existing heritage, but to use new development to underline key consistent elements of the local historic environment. Good, modern design that is complimentary to the historic environment will be acceptable and preferable to 'pastiche.'

**4.2.24** The Council's positive approach to promoting Reading's unique historic character relies on early discussions with stakeholders at the pre-application stage, so that applicants are fully informed of the issues they are required to address.

### **Local Green Space and Public Open Space**

#### **EN7: LOCAL GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE**

*The following Local Green Spaces (LGS) and Public Open Space (POS), as shown on the Proposals Map, will be protected from development. Proposals that would result in the loss of any of these areas of open space, erode their quality through insensitive adjacent*

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1674/Reading-Station-Area-Framework/pdf/Reading-Station-Area-Framework.pdf>

*development or jeopardise their use or enjoyment by the public, will not be permitted.*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
EN7Ca	Christchurch Meadows	LGS	11.06
EN7Cb	Forbury Gardens	LGS	1.8
EN7Cc	Hills Meadow	LGS	4.26
EN7Cd	Kings Meadow and the Coal Woodland	LGS	16.17
EN7Ce	Kings Road Gardens	POS	0.16
EN7Cf	St Laurence's Churchyard	POS	0.39
EN7Cg	St Mary's Churchyard	POS	0.59
EN7Ch	View Island	LGS	1.62
EN7Sa	Cintra Park	LGS	6.87
EN7Sb	Fobney Island Nature Reserve	POS	6.18
EN7Sc	Greenham Avenue, Kennet Island	LGS	0.47
EN7Sd	John Rabson Recreation Ground and The Cowsey	LGS	26.91
EN7Se	Kennet Island Nature Reserve	POS	1.62
EN7Sf	Long Barn Lane Recreation Ground	LGS	3.29
EN7Sg	Shinfield Road Recreation Ground	LGS	1.15
EN7Sh	South Whitley Park	LGS	5.31
EN7Si	Waterloo Meadows	LGS	10.32
EN7Sj	Whitley Wood Recreation Ground	LGS	4.15
EN7Wa	Arthur Newbery Park	LGS	13.02
EN7Wb	Battle Square	LGS	0.54
EN7Wc	Beresford Road Playground	POS	0.54
EN7Wd	Blagrove Recreation Ground	POS	0.87
EN7We	Blundells Copse and Meadway Sports Ground	LGS	9.48
EN7Wf	Coley Recreation Ground	LGS	5.62
EN7Wg	Courage Park	POS	1.74
EN7Wh	Great Knollys Street Recreation Ground	POS	1.49
EN7Wi	Kensington Park	LGS	4.23
EN7Wj	Lousehill Copse	LGS	12.67
EN7Wk	Mcllroy Park and Round Copse	LGS	15.02
EN7Wl	Meadway Woodland	POS	2.6
EN7Wm	Oxford Road Recreation Ground	LGS	0.69
EN7Wn	Portman Road Playground	POS	2.32
EN7Wo	Prospect Park	LGS	46.52
EN7Wp	Rivermead and Thameside Promenade	LGS	16.83
EN7Wq	Robert Hewett Recreation Ground	LGS	0.34
EN7Wr	Southcote Linear Park	LGS	3.47
EN7Ws	Taff Way Woodland	POS	2.74
EN7Wt	Tofrek Terrace	POS	2.1
EN7Wu	Victoria Recreation Ground and Kentwood Hill Allotments	LGS	4.64
EN7Wv	Oxford Road Community Garden	POS	0.12
EN7Na	Albert Road Recreation Ground	LGS	1.53
EN7Nb	Amersham Road Recreation Ground	LGS	2.31
EN7Nc	Balmore Walk	LGS	7.06
EN7Nd	Beechwood	LGS	3.65
EN7Ne	Bug's Bottom (Hemdean Bottom)	LGS	14.23
EN7Nf	Caleta Close Play Area	POS	0.46
EN7Ng	Caversham Court Gardens and Allotments	LGS	1.4
EN7Nh	Caversham Pond	POS	0.73
EN7Ni	Clayfield Copse and Blackhouse Woods	LGS	26.31
EN7Nj	Emmer Green Pond	POS	1.09
EN7Nk	Emmer Green Recreation Ground and Allotments	LGS	2.27
EN7Nl	Land at Deans Farm	POS	2.29
EN7Nm	Land at Stuart Close	POS	0.73
EN7Nn	Mapledurham Playing Fields	LGS	10.86
EN7No	Milestone Wood and Milestone Way	LGS	8.29
EN7Np	Rotherfield Way Copse	LGS	1.97

EN7Nq	<i>The Warren Woodland West</i>	LGS	0.99
EN7Nr	<i>Westfield Road Recreation Ground</i>	LGS	1.45
EN7Ea	<i>Alfred Sutton Playing Field</i>	LGS	4.9
EN7Eb	<i>Eldon Square</i>	POS	0.35
EN7Ec	<i>Lorenzo Quelch Park</i>	POS	0.12
EN7Ed	<i>Palmer Park</i>	LGS	16.07

**4.2.25** The National Planning Policy Framework states that local communities, through local plans, are able to identify Local Green Space for specific protection which is of particular importance to them. The aim of this policy is therefore to define the boundaries of Local Green Space, based on the criteria in the NPPF. Local Green Spaces can only be designated during local plan preparation or review and must be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. The policy also defines Public Open Space, where the local policy position is the same, but which do not benefit from the additional protection afforded by the Local Green Space designation as they do not fulfil the relevant criteria.

**4.2.26** As outlined in the NPPF, Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife; and
- Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land<sup>40</sup>.

**4.2.27** Individual assessments which test each Local Green Space against the criteria outlined in the NPPF can be found in the relevant background information<sup>41</sup>.

**4.2.28** Access to high quality open spaces, sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities<sup>42</sup>. Open space policies contribute towards many of the goals of the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2017-2020) by supporting residents to make healthy lifestyle choices and reducing social isolation through public open space. Additionally, these policies contribute to the delivery of many other Council objectives in terms of supporting an urban renaissance, defining the character of a town and place, promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well-being, climate change adaptation, and the promotion of sustainable development.

**4.2.29** This policy has been informed by the Council's Open Spaces Strategy<sup>43</sup> where the protection of publicly accessible recreational open space was considered to be of great importance. This is useable space which provides a resource for sport, leisure and informal recreation. This policy therefore deals mainly with those areas which can be accessed by the public, although it includes some exceptional allotment sites where they qualify as Local Green Space in terms of the criteria above. Areas with restricted access, such as school playing fields, are not included, although it is important to note that other policies in the Local Plan, as well as national policy, cover such areas.

<sup>40</sup> Sections 76-77 of the NPPF available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>41</sup> On the Council's website at [www.reading.gov.uk/readingldf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/readingldf)

<sup>42</sup> NPPF

<sup>43</sup> The Council's most up-to-date Open Spaces Strategy can be found at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/7108/What-is-the-Reading-Open-Spaces-Strategy>

## Undesignated Open Space

### **EN8: UNDESIGNATED OPEN SPACE**

*There will be a presumption in favour of retention of undesignated open space, which will include allotments. Development should not result in the loss of or jeopardise use and enjoyment of undesignated open space. Development may be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that replacement open space, of a similar standard and function, can be provided at an accessible location close by, or that improvements to recreational facilities on remaining open space can be provided to a level sufficient to outweigh the loss of the open space. The quality of existing open space should not be eroded by insensitive development on adjoining land.*

- 4.2.30 Reading has many areas of open space not identified in Policy EN7 (Local Green Space and Public Open Space) in both public and private ownership, which nevertheless provide important recreational and amenity resources. It is important that these areas are retained where possible.
- 4.2.31 This policy relates to all open space in the Borough; publicly or privately owned, apart from the Local Green Spaces and Public Open Spaces identified in Policy EN7. It applies not just to the loss of the space, but to a situation where development prevents the use of open space in close proximity through such effects as preventing public access or leading to unacceptable levels of overshadowing. Where a development proposal involves losing open space that is not specifically designated, appropriate replacement space should be provided where it is easily accessible to the people most affected. Alternatively, compensating improvements could be made to existing open space in the area. Undesignated open spaces within or adjacent to Conservation Areas or the setting of heritage assets are particularly valuable.
- 4.2.32 This policy also covers Reading's various allotment sites (apart from those identified as Local Green Space), with a presumption in favour of their retention. Compensatory provision for the loss of any allotments in line with the policy will need to consider whether it adequately replaces the role of the allotments that would be lost.

## Provision of Open Space

### **EN9: PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE**

*All new development should make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development. This can be achieved through on or off-site provision, contributions toward provision or improvement of existing leisure or recreational facilities.*

*On sites of 50 dwellings or more, or for developments where the availability and quality of existing open space has been identified as deficient, new provision will be sought. Development must ensure satisfactory provision of children's play areas and neighbourhood parks.*

*A secure maintenance arrangement shall be demonstrated to ensure that any open space is properly maintained throughout the life of the development. In exceptional circumstances*

*where the Council agrees to the adoption of the open space, a commuted sum for future maintenance will be required as part of any legal agreement.*

*On sites of less than 50 dwellings, or in areas not identified as deficient in the provision of open space, new open space provision, improvements or enhancements will be sought, including through appropriate contributions.*

*The provision of open space for all developments shall satisfy the most urgent need subject to considerations of particular deficiencies. The most up-to-date Open Spaces Strategy should guide provision type and size. New open space should:*

- *Be in useable parcels of land and not be fragmented;*
- *Be safely and easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier, including a road;*
- *Be accessible to the general public and be designed so as to feel that it is part of the public and not private realm;*
- *Create a safe environment, appropriately considering lighting and layout to reduce the fear of crime;*
- *Provide some informal landscaping for aesthetic, wildlife and recreational purposes; and*
- *Link into the Green Network where possible.*

**4.2.33** It is essential that new developments make provision for open space to meet the needs of the residents/occupiers of the development. With a growing population resulting from new development, it follows that the amount and/or quality of open space in the Borough should increase over the plan period. Qualitative improvements might include the provision of supporting amenities e.g. benches, refreshment facilities, green infrastructure, etc.

**4.2.34** The Open Space Audit carried out as part of the preparation of the Open Space Strategy also found significant deficiency in the provision of play areas and safe access to play areas in several parts of Borough, although some of these deficiencies have been addressed since publication of the Strategy. Special consideration needs to be given to ensuring adequate provision of play space as part of all development proposals.

**4.2.35** Open space is unevenly distributed across the Borough. People in and around the town centre are still further away from public open space than guidelines recommend and parts of North Reading are very deficient in play areas. In many cases historical development patterns make it difficult to introduce new areas of public open space without large-scale redevelopment.

**4.2.36** The Open Spaces Strategy identifies the following main issues:

- Access: the distribution of public open space leaves some areas underprovided:
  - In Central Reading, public open space is, by and large, where residents are not;
  - In North Reading, large areas are lacking children’s play facilities;
  - Areas immediately to the West, North West, South and East of the town centre are amongst the most poorly supplied in the Borough; the problem is exacerbated by very dense housing; and
  - Severance lines, such as busy roads or railways, further restrict residents’ access to open space.

- Quality: some of the existing parks and open spaces are of poor quality and lack facilities.
- Links to public open space: these are fragmented, so that some public open space is not linked by pedestrian infrastructure to homes, and wildlife corridors are incomplete.
- Wildlife: many links between habitats are incomplete and could be improved by wildlife corridors.

**4.2.37** The space hierarchy in Figure 4.3 should be used as a benchmark for considering open space provision in the Borough, in terms of both quality and quantity, and should be considered in the context of up-to-date local assessments in line with the NPPF. Its objective is to assist in promoting some consistency in provision across the town, as well as helping to identify where households have limited access to public open space and where the quality of provision is inadequate.

**4.2.38** Large, higher-tier parks are not substitutes for a good distribution of local parks. Clearly, an open space labelled ‘district park’ is also a neighbourhood park for households within a reasonable catchment. For residents living further away from a district park, access to local parks and other small recreational open spaces nearby must also be available.

**4.2.39** The Open Spaces Strategy states that, ‘All guidelines recommend that at least some open space for children to play, *whether publicly or privately owned*, be available within 100-200m of every home. This will primarily affect very high-density developments, like flats, as almost all other houses have some form of garden’.

**4.2.40** Policy H10 seeks to secure private and communal outdoor amenity areas on all residential developments, the extent of which will be guided by the site’s proximity to quality public open space. Conversely, this policy looks to secure public open space. In determining the appropriate form, location and extent of public open space for new development, consideration will be given to the extent of deprivation of private or communal garden areas within the proposed scheme.

**Figure 4.3: Hierarchy and typology of open spaces of recreational value, and provision standards for Reading**

	Description	Size	Transport mode	Radial catchment
Borough Park	Varied character and facilities; open parkland, natural, formal, sport, play and relaxation; catering	60 ha	Car; public transport; cycle	
District parks	Varied character and facilities (but fewer than above); natural, formal, sport, play and recreation	20 ha	Car; bus; cycle; foot	1.2 km
Local parks	Relaxation, play and ball games	2 ha or 1-2 ha equipped	Cycle; foot; wheelchair	0.8 km
Neighbourhood park	LEAP + informal space	0.1-0.2 ha equipped	Foot; wheelchair	0.4-0.8 km
Small recreational open spaces	‘low-grade’ recreation	0.1-0.2 ha	Foot; wheelchair	0.4-0.8 km
Linear open spaces	Relaxation; green link		Foot; cycle	
Semi-natural sites	Comparatively undisturbed sites, managed for wild flora and fauna		Cycle; foot; wheelchair	1.5-2.0 km

- 4.2.41** Improvements to the quality and facilities of existing open space and/or the provision of new open spaces should be secured through financial contributions as part of smaller developments, either through CIL or Section 106 agreements. As a minimum, the provision of safe access for new households to new or existing enhanced public open space should be a requirement. In larger scale commercial/retail developments, the integration of additional public spaces (such as civic squares) should be required.
- 4.2.42** Regeneration initiatives and housing redevelopments sometimes create opportunities to provide new open space or reorganise space through land swaps. Feasibility of this alternative should be considered in areas deficient in public open space.
- 4.2.43** There will be a presumption that the Council will not adopt additional areas of public open space except in exceptional circumstances. Developers will therefore need to make provision for the continuing future maintenance of these open spaces.

#### ***Provision of green space with development - overview of requirements***

*Policy EN9 provides for public open space in residential developments of over 50 dwellings. However, there are a variety of policies that ensure that all new residential development within the Borough makes some form of contribution to green infrastructure, through:*

- *Private and communal green space in accordance with Policy H10*
- *Landscaping, in accordance with Policy CC7, and linked into a wider Green Network wherever possible in accordance with Policy EN12;*
- *Innovative solutions in the high density town centre such as green roofs, green walls and roof gardens in accordance with policies CR2 and CR10;*
- *Tree planting in accordance with policies CC3 and EN14*

### **Access to Open Space**

#### **EN10: ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE**

***In areas with relatively poor access to open space facilities (including as a result of severance lines), new development should make provision for, or contribute to, improvements to road and other crossings to improve access to green space and/or facilitate the creation or linking of safe off-road routes to parks.***

- 4.2.44** There are a number of severance lines that act as barriers to access to open space, some of which were identified in the 2007 Open Spaces Strategy. New development proposals should be assessed in terms of accessibility to open space (as well as other services and facilities). Opportunities should be identified for development to improve or contribute to the improvement of access to open spaces, such as through providing or funding the provision of improvements to crossings, green routes, towpaths or pedestrianisation of streets.
- 4.2.45** The creation of a network of safe links for pedestrians and cyclists, that improves access to a choice of open spaces, is a key objective and an integral part of the Open Spaces Strategy. Not only will these routes increase open space usage and reduce trips by cars, they should be considered an intrinsic component of the overall open space structure and experience that Reading offers. Paths alongside the Kennet and Thames in particular, provide a unique opportunity to enhance the network of green links and corridors across the Borough.

## 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)<sup>44</sup> identifies priorities for enhancement of the landscape. The Thames River Basin Management Plan (Environment Agency)<sup>45</sup> 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)<sup>46</sup> 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 2016<sup>47</sup>.

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

<sup>45</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/289937/geth0910bswa-e-e.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289937/geth0910bswa-e-e.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/289784/geth1205bjyc-e-e.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289784/geth1205bjyc-e-e.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> [www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/environmental-permits](http://www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/environmental-permits)

## Biodiversity and the Green Network

### EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

- a) *The identified Green Network, the key elements of which are shown on the Proposals Map, shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. Permission will not be granted for development that negatively affects the sites with identified interest or fragments the overall network. The Green Network comprises:*
- *Sites with identified biodiversity interest - Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, protected and priority species and their habitats, Priority and Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, and the River Thames and all its tributaries (including the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal); and*
  - *Areas with potential for biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together - designated Local Green Space and open green spaces, and existing and potential Green Links.*

*New development shall demonstrate how the location and type of green space, landscaping and water features provided within a scheme have been arranged such that they maintain or link into the existing Green Network and contribute to its consolidation. Such features should be designed to maximise the opportunities for enhancing this network. All new development should maximise opportunities to create new assets and links into areas where opportunities are as yet unidentified on the Proposals Map.*

- b) *On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should:*
- *Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and*
  - *Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.*

*In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is “no net loss” of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development.*

4.2.54 Despite its primarily urban nature, Reading has a number of important wildlife habitats including woodlands, grasslands and wetlands. These are the remnants of a once much wider and more connected series of habitats that supported a greater diversity of species. As well as larger habitats, individual features of biodiversity interest can be present at a small scale within a variety of types of site. As set out elsewhere in this plan, there are significant needs for new development within Reading, but there is also a need to attain a balance between accommodating development activity, and preserving important biodiversity and geodiversity.

4.2.55 There are two main elements to this policy:

- Identifying the key areas of biodiversity importance and drawing them together into an interconnected ‘Green Network’ across Reading; and
- General development management guidance for all sites on biodiversity and geodiversity.

### Existing features

4.2.56 Whilst there are no nationally or internationally designated habitats in Reading, the Borough contains many sites that are important to the local and strategic context, and therefore need to be protected. These include:

- Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites: these are designated by the local authority, in the latter case in conjunction with Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre;
- protected and priority species and their habitats and habitats identified as being important within Reading’s Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP);
- Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: these are those focus areas identified by the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum and agreed by the South East England Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF), where biodiversity improvements are likely to have the most beneficial results at a strategic scale. Two BOAs cross into Reading Borough - the West Reading Woodlands and LNRs, and the Kennet Valley East (see Figure 4.4). The BOA designation identifies priorities for enhancement. The priorities for the areas in Reading are available to view on the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership website<sup>48</sup>, and, for these areas and for adjacent development, biodiversity enhancements under this policy should reflect those priorities.

4.2.57 The Council will manage LNRs and LWSs, to ensure that they remain protected against the adverse effects of development or related activity. It should be noted that the above designations are defined outside the Local Plan process, which means that they are potentially subject to change within the plan period, and the adopted Proposals Map may not show the latest boundaries. The Council, together with Natural England, the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum

(BNCF) and Thames Valley Environment Records Centre (TVERC), will continue to keep LWSs and LNPs under review. BNCF will also keep the priorities for Biodiversity Opportunity Areas under review.

4.2.58 As well as the need to protect existing biodiversity value, this policy hinges on the concept of a ‘Green Network’. This stitches together the known areas of biodiversity importance with areas where there is potential for increased

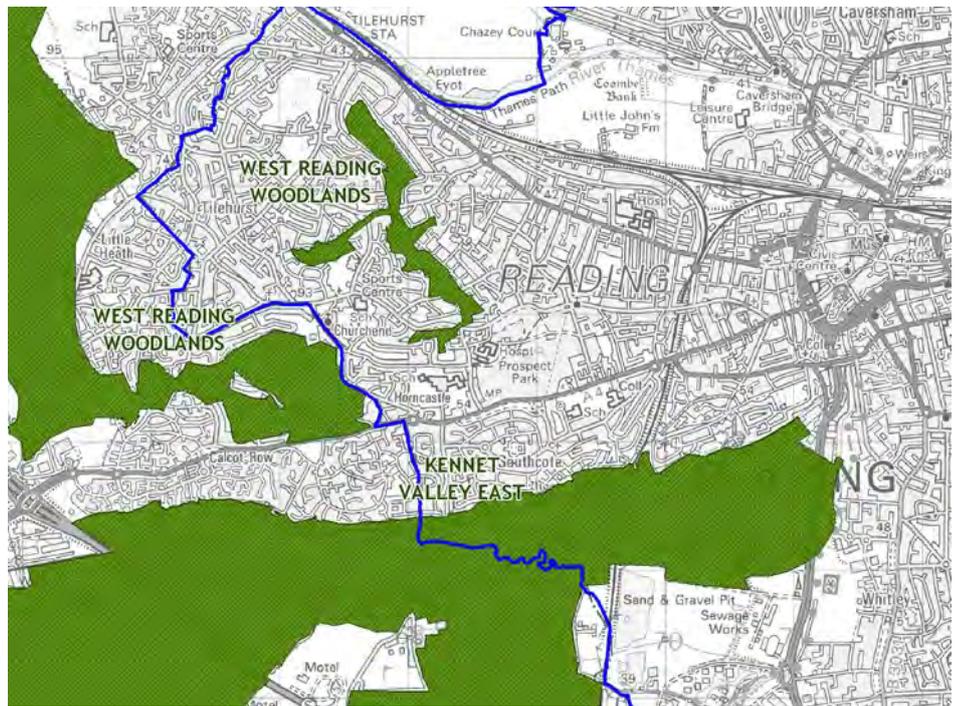


Figure 4.4: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Reading

<sup>48</sup> <http://berkshirelnp.org/index.php/what-we-do/strategy/biodiversity-opportunity-areas>

biodiversity significance into a network that allows wildlife to move between sites. This seeks to overcome the issue that sites of wildlife importance have become fragmented into a number of small, unconnected sites with isolated wildlife populations. Climate change is likely to increase the need for linkages, as species will increasingly need to move across the landscape to stay within their climatic range. The Green Network also fulfils other purposes such as storm water control and air pollution amelioration.

- 4.2.59** The Green Network incorporates both the existing designated areas already set out, but also areas with potential for biodiversity value and movement. It has been identified through a desk based study using GIS data held by TVERC and Reading Borough Council. The study was carried out by TVERC. This Green Network policy goes beyond site specific considerations and is aimed towards the broader context acknowledging that for these areas to achieve their true value and potential they need to work as part of a network with one area being successfully linked to another area, rather than remaining as isolated fragments. Therefore, its interconnectedness is critical.
- 4.2.60** Given the importance of the interconnectedness of the Network, new and potential ‘green links’ are crucial. These lie between assets both within and outside the Borough and either link these areas or have the potential to do so (e.g. through re-development or management). They include both public and private land, and may include lines of trees, riverbanks, road and railway verges, a series of well vegetated gardens, stepping stones of small patches of habitat, green roofs or watercourses and ponds, or other similar features.
- 4.2.61** The routes identified as Green Links on the Proposals Map either denote an existing link or illustrate an indicative location for where potential Green Links could be located to provide desired connectivity for wildlife between ecologically important areas. It should not necessarily be interpreted as a precise line, rather it may indicate an indicative potential connection between areas. In practice, most Green Links shown on the map are a mixture of existing and potential links, i.e. whilst there are existing aspects that contribute to the Network there is also significant potential for development to make a further contribution to improve the Network. There is therefore little difference in how existing and potential links should be treated in terms of the policy. Green Links do not mean or imply public access.
- 4.2.62** Opportunities will be sought in conjunction with development proposals, to enhance the quality and integrity of the Green Network. Proposals should seek ways to enhance and restore biodiversity and geology, and enhance the quality and integrity of sites (where appropriate), by maximising the inclusion of biodiversity and nature conservation features, as part of good design, and by locating those features carefully to best contribute towards the interconnectedness of the Network. In addition, it must be clearly demonstrated that such measures will be effectively managed and maintained, to a high standard, over the lifetime of the development, through the mechanism of landscape and ecological management plans agreed in writing by the Council.

#### *General Considerations*

- 4.2.63** As well as those habitats already defined, there are many undesignated sites where there may be important biodiversity interest. The overall principle here is that there should be no net loss of biodiversity, and a net gain, as supported by the NPPF, wherever it can be achieved. Ecological information supplied should be in accordance with the British standard for biodiversity management, BS42020. A mitigation hierarchy approach, as set out in paragraph 118 of the NPPF, will be used to consider the loss of on-site biodiversity. In exceptional

circumstances where the benefits of development outweigh the loss, and where the mitigation hierarchy has been followed, off-site compensation may be acceptable. There are established metrics for considering off-site mitigation at a national level, including those described in DEFRA's biodiversity offsetting guidance<sup>49</sup>, and more specific local metrics may be produced during the plan period.

- 4.2.64 For some types of development<sup>50</sup>, including all major schemes, an ecological survey report and/or bat survey will be required.

### Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

#### **EN13: MAJOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY**

***Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature. The following areas, as shown on the Proposals Map, are defined as Major Landscape Features:***

- *The Thames Valley;*
- *The Kennet and Holy Brook Meadows;*
- *The West Reading wooded ridgeline;*
- *The East Reading wooded ridgeline; and*
- *The North Reading dry valleys and Chilterns Escarpment.*

***Development which affects the setting of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that demonstrates that there is no detrimental impact on the North Wessex Downs or Chilterns AONBs in terms of scale, design, layout or location. None of Reading Borough falls within an AONB, but where the urban area meets the Chilterns AONB is shown on the Proposals Map.***

- 4.2.65 Reading is primarily an urban area, but it benefits from a number of natural features that have remained largely undeveloped. The urban context means that the preservation of these features as a backdrop is of particular importance. New development should seek to maintain and enhance the natural beauty and visual amenity of the identified major landscape features. The extent to which new development prevents or minimises the visual impact on major landscape features and other landscape values is largely dependent on the location, design and scale of proposals. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) can provide a useful methodology for assessing landscape impact where the setting of an AONB would be affected. It should be noted that this policy does not rule out development in or close to these areas, but seeks to ensure that development only takes place where it can preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the feature.
- 4.2.66 Whilst no part of Reading Borough falls within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), there are two AONBs in close proximity. The Chilterns AONB runs along part of the boundary between Reading and South Oxfordshire, but does not cross it. It is vital that the rural-urban fringe at this point is managed to ensure that development does not jeopardise the characteristics of the AONB. The North Wessex Downs AONB is, at its closest point, 200m west of the Borough boundary at Tilehurst. Therefore there are fewer visual linkages, but development in this area must nevertheless take into account any impact on this AONB.

<sup>49</sup> See for example [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/69531/pb13745-bio-technical-paper.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69531/pb13745-bio-technical-paper.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Please see the Council's Validation Checklist for when an Ecological Survey Report and/or Bat Survey will be required.

## Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

### EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLANDS

*Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced.*

*New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change. Measures must be in place to ensure that these trees are adequately maintained.*

- 4.2.67 Trees, hedges and woodlands help define the landscape and character of the Borough and provide multiple benefits to the urban environment including maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, absorbing carbon and helping to adapt to climate change. Reading's woodlands are a highly visible feature of the ridgelines and a strong feature in the landscape of the river valleys that shape the urban area. Trees are also an important component of the character of many parts of the Borough particularly its older developed areas and suburbs and especially in Conservation Areas. Many streets within Reading, including primary routes into town, are characterised by their tree-lined nature, which should be protected and enhanced. Whilst Reading has some important woodlands and areas with substantial numbers of trees, including two areas of Ancient Woodland, shown on the Proposals Map<sup>51</sup>, other areas lack tree cover. It is therefore vital to ensure that important trees and woodlands are protected and canopy cover extended in areas lacking cover, including in conjunction with new development. This will particularly be the case for irreplaceable Ancient Woodland and veteran trees.
- 4.2.68 Trees can make a positive contribution towards reducing the effects of future climate change by dissipating the impact of heavy rainfall, reducing urban temperatures and providing shade and protection against the detrimental effects of sunlight. New development should seek to incorporate strategically sited trees that will provide shade and cooling to developments, particularly to street frontages, large hard landscaped areas and other areas of public realm. Off-site tree provision will be appropriate in some cases where it has been demonstrated that acceptable development cannot provide an appropriate level of mitigation planting (where trees are to be removed) and/or new planting within the site. This will be of particular importance where such sites are within or on priority tree planting areas/routes, as defined in the Tree Strategy. There will be a need to use appropriate large canopy species that are adaptable to future predicted climatic conditions (native species if possible and where appropriate in order to deliver biodiversity benefits), particularly the higher temperatures and potential drought conditions predicted in summer. Tree stock should either be UK grown or sourced from a domestic nursery that retains its trees for a minimum of one year (a full growing season) within the UK before sale to ensure plant health and non-infection by foreign pests or disease.
- 4.3.69 Trees, hedges and woodlands have multiple wildlife benefits in providing habitat, habitat links and foraging areas for numerous flora and fauna. The protection of these both in the public and private realm, within development proposals, will be sought in order to meet the Council's duties to biodiversity. New development should seek to ensure that new landscaping is

<sup>51</sup> Clayfield Copse and the western part of McIlroy Park

primarily of wildlife friendly species and adds to the linking of green areas across the Borough.

- 4.2.70** Due to the value placed on trees in Reading, the Council produced a Tree Strategy in 2010<sup>52</sup>, which seeks to significantly increase the amount of tree coverage by protecting trees from development pressure and through planting both on its own land and through development related landscape schemes. In addition, the Council has produced a Tree Strategy Planting Plan, identifying priorities for new planting in the Borough and highlighting the need for succession planting, which will be updated when required. The Council may make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect single trees or groups of trees, which prevent lopping, topping or felling without the Council's consent. Details on which trees are specifically protected can be found on the Council's website.
- 4.2.71** The Council will seek to ensure that appropriate measures are secured for the successful protection of trees, in line with good practice, where retained as part of development proposals. Developers will be expected to implement agreed measures in accordance with details approved through the planning process.
- 4.2.72** Retention, enhancement and extension of woodlands will be achieved in conjunction with relevant development proposals, and may include measures such as new planting and management plans. The effective management of new woodland areas will be promoted, recognising the economic, environmental and social benefits that woodland management and tree planting can provide.
- 4.2.73** The Council, in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and friends groups, has produced management plans for over 90 ha of its woodlands<sup>53</sup>. These are available on the Council's website. Implementation of these plans will be part funded by the Forestry Commission.

## Air Quality

### **EN15: AIR QUALITY**

***Development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.***

- i. Development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be mitigated. The following criteria should be taken into account:***
  - Whether the proposal, including when combined with the cumulative effect of other developments already permitted, would worsen air quality;***
  - Whether the development is within, or accessed via, an Air Quality Management Area; and***
  - Whether it can be demonstrated that a local worsening in air quality that would not detrimentally affect human health or the environment would be offset by an overall improvement in air quality, for instance through reduction in the need to travel.***
- ii. Where a development would introduce sensitive uses (such as residential, schools and nurseries, hospitals, care facilities) into, or intensify such uses within, an Air Quality Management Area, detrimental effects on that use will be mitigated. Mitigation***

<sup>52</sup> The Tree Strategy can be accessed on the Council's website at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/trees>

<sup>53</sup> Arthur Newbery and McIlroys Park; Beech Wood, Rotherfield Way Copse and Balmore Walk; Blundell Copse; Bugs Bottom and Furzeplat; Clayfield Copse; Lousehill Copse; Prospect Park and Devils Dip; Southcote Linear Park; Thames Woodlands; The Cowsey; and Warren Woodland Escarpment.

*measures should be detailed in any planning application. If there are significant detrimental effects that cannot be mitigated, the application should be refused.*

*iii. Where required, planning obligations will be used to secure contributions to measures to tackle poor air quality or for air quality monitoring.*

- 4.2.74 Air pollution can have a serious effect on human health and the environment; and as such it is essential that any new development within Reading avoids creating unacceptably poor levels of air quality both inside and outside the Borough boundaries. Air pollution is not only harmful to human health but may also have harmful effects on plants and animals as well as corroding materials and buildings. Whilst there are legal limits, there are no ‘safe’ levels of air pollutants. It is estimated that air pollution reduces the life expectancy of every person in the UK by an average of 7-8 months<sup>54</sup>.
- 4.2.75 The National Planning Policy Framework requires local policies to sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values or national objectives, taking into account the existence of Air Quality Management Areas and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas (paragraph 124).
- 4.2.76 Although concentrations of PM<sub>10</sub> in Reading are below Air Quality Objective levels, there remain concerns about nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels. Road traffic has been shown to be the predominant source of pollution. DEFRA and the DfT produced a UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations in July 2017, and this was accompanied by information on local authorities with roads shown by national modelling to have NO<sub>2</sub> levels above legal limits, and when those roads would be projected to fall within legal limits. Reading was identified as having roadside concentrations exceeding legal limits in 2017-20, but dropping below legal limits from 2021. As such Reading was considered to marginally meet the target and was not one of the authorities considered to have the greatest issue with projected exceedences beyond 3-4 years that would require development of a local action plan. However, local monitoring (not used in the DEFRA model) indicates more areas of exceedance than modelled by DEFRA. The rate of development in the Reading area was also something not taken into account in the DEFRA model. Therefore the concern is that harmful levels of air pollution will persist in Reading for much longer than shown in the DEFRA model unless action is taken. There clearly remain significant concerns about air quality in Reading, and the Council has made clear that it is serious about addressing these issues.
- 4.2.77 Other particles include PM<sub>2.5</sub>, and, again there is no ‘safe’ levels of these particles, although there are World Health Organisation guideline levels. There is a requirement for the UK to attain a national exposure target for PM<sub>2.5</sub> of 15% reduction between 2010 and 2020. The Council is monitoring these levels,
- 4.2.78 In order to tackle the air quality issue, the Council declared a single Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) across a large area of Reading, and implemented an associated Air Quality Action Plan. The AQMA includes much of the central area and main radial transport corridors. This coincides with many of the areas where the largest amount of development is expected to take place, and a robust policy is therefore required to accompany it.
- 4.2.79 The AQMA, shown on the Proposals Map highlights the main area of concern, and focus for this policy, however ensuring high levels of air quality is important for the whole of Reading, and air

<sup>54</sup> The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, volume 1, 2007

quality may be a consideration outside the AQMA. Some schemes may potentially significantly impact air quality outside of the AQMA, or may have effects on the AQMA, for example through large-scale traffic generation.

- 4.2.80** This policy aims to ensure that increased development within Reading does not lead to a net increase in emissions as well as ensuring any increased exposure within the poorest areas of air quality is accompanied by appropriate mitigation. Mitigation measures vary for each case, but can include simple measures designed into the scheme from the outset. The most likely mitigation through design involves setting residential units further back from busy roads, however, in some circumstances this could also include siting habitable rooms away from the façade fronting the pollution source, or, in the case of mixed use development, limiting the residential accommodation to higher floors. Other mitigation measures may also include travel plans, restrictions in car access or parking, planting, green walls or certain types of paving that absorb NO<sub>2</sub>. It does not mean that the development of sensitive uses where they would be exposed to poor air quality will necessarily be inappropriate.
- 4.2.81** In some cases, an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) will be required with a planning application. The requirement for an assessment will depend entirely on the exact nature and location of the application. However, broadly speaking, developments will be likely to require an AQA if they are major developments (10 dwellings or 1,000 sq m of floorspace or more) located within or accessed from the AQMA and:
- Would lead to a material increase in congestion or HGVs;
  - Would include significant amounts of car parking, for example 100 spaces, or would significantly increase current provision, for example by 25%;
  - Would emit air pollutants that would affect sensitive receptors, including areas of biodiversity importance such as priority habitats; or
- An AQA will also be likely to be required if a development of any scale would locate new sensitive receptors, such as residential, in areas of particularly poor air quality, such as on the façade of a very busy road.
- 4.2.82** The above criteria are meant as a guide only, and in reality there may be schemes which may meet one or more of the above but may not require an AQA. Conversely there may be schemes which do not meet the above but may require an assessment. More detailed guidance about how to judge which developments might lead to a material increase in congestion or HGVs is included within Planning for Air Quality (EPUK and IAQM, 2017)<sup>55</sup>, although this may be subject to update within the plan period, which means that including that detail within the Local Plan is not appropriate. It is strongly recommended that the Council’s Environmental Protection Team is contacted if it is believed an assessment may be required, as they will be able to provide guidance as well as advice on the level of detail required within the assessment and providing monitoring data.
- 4.2.83** Where it is identified that a scheme will increase emissions within the AQMA, the developer will be expected to identify measures to mitigate the increase in emissions. In some cases this could be achieved through scheme design or through the introduction of a low emissions strategy, comprising a package of measures to reduce transport related emissions. A low emissions strategy will be specific to individual developments and dependent upon the exact nature and location.

<sup>55</sup> Land-Use Planning & Development Control: Planning For Air Quality (Environmental Protection UK, Institute of Air Quality Management, 2017) <http://www.iaqm.co.uk/text/guidance/air-quality-planning-guidance.pdf>

- 4.2.84 It may be appropriate in some circumstances for the developer to fund mitigating measures elsewhere, to offset any increase in local pollutant emissions as a consequence of the proposed development. In general, air quality monitoring will be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy, but where there is a specific issue, this may be achieved through the use of a Section 106 agreement for a specific scheme or measure. On particularly significant schemes, low emissions strategies may be required, which comprise a package of measures to reduce the transport impacts<sup>56</sup>.
- 4.2.85 This policy is part of a wide package of measures to tackle air quality in Reading, including policies within the transport section of this plan on promotion of sustainable travel. The Air Quality Action Plan 2015<sup>57</sup> includes transport, planning and other measures to both tackle existing sources, and to promote behavioural change to reduce air pollution. As the Council reviews its approach to air quality, it may be necessary to produce a Supplementary Planning Document that provides more detail on how the policy will be achieved, particularly in the construction phase.

### Pollution and Water Resources

#### **EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES**

*Development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution; where it would result in no deterioration in, or ideally enhance, ground and surface water quality; and where adequate water resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure will be in place to support the proposed development prior to occupation.*

*Proposals for development that are sensitive to the effects of noise or light pollution will only be permitted in areas where they will not be subject to high levels of such pollution, unless adequate mitigation measures are provided to minimise the impact of such pollution.*

*Development will only be permitted on land affected by contamination where it is demonstrated that the contamination and land gas can be satisfactorily managed or remediated so that it is suitable for the proposed end use and will not impact on the groundwater environment, human health, buildings and the wider environment, during demolition and construction phases as well as during the future use of the site.*

- 4.2.86 The effective protection of the environment is a key aspect of sustainable development, and reducing pollution is one of the core planning principles in the NPPF. This policy prevents harmful development, mitigates the impact of potentially polluting developments and ensures that developments and receptors that are sensitive to pollution are separated from sources of such pollution. Sensitive receptors can include particularly sensitive uses, as well as sensitive features such as source protection zones or groundwater aquifers.
- 4.2.87 Air quality is dealt with in Policy EN15, but there are other pollution issues in Reading, such as the fact that some ground and surface waters are experiencing a degree of pollution. It is therefore important to ensure that future development does not result in any further deterioration of water quality and, where possible, results in an improvement in overall quality

<sup>56</sup> Low Emissions Strategies (Beacons Low Emission Strategies Group, 2008) <http://www.lowemissionstrategies.org/>

<sup>57</sup> On the Council's website: [http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6389/Air-Quality-Action-Plan/pdf/AQAP\\_Update\\_2016.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6389/Air-Quality-Action-Plan/pdf/AQAP_Update_2016.pdf)

to help to achieve ‘good’ status in line with the Water Framework Directive. In line with the predicted level of new development within Reading, it will be important to ensure that this does not place an undue burden on existing water resources or result in a deterioration in potential yield of surface and ground water resources. In order to improve the quality of life of those living and working within Reading, it is important to avoid any detrimental impact from development in the form of noise and light pollution.

- 4.2.88** There are a number of sites affected by contamination within the Borough as a result of previous land uses. In order to make the most effective use of previously developed land within Reading, it will be important to ensure that, where possible, such land is remediated through the development process so that it is suitable for redevelopment. Where a development is known to be on historic contaminated land or contamination could be an issue, the application will not be approved unless it is supported by proportionate but sufficient site investigation information in a risk assessment. This will need to determine the existence or otherwise of contamination, its nature and extent, the risks it may pose and to whom/what (the ‘receptors’) so that these risks can be assessed and satisfactorily reduced to an acceptable level<sup>58</sup>. The risk assessment should also identify the potential sources, pathways and receptors (‘pollutant linkages’) and evaluate the risks. This information will enable the local planning authority to determine whether further more detailed investigation is required, or whether any proposed remediation is satisfactory, requiring a remediation plan and verification report. A risk assessment of land affected by contamination should inform an Environmental Impact Assessment if one is required. Some buildings, particularly tall buildings, may require piling. In some instances, due to contamination, piling may not be suitable unless remediation is carried out to a suitable standard to protect the Principal Aquifer. Early pre-application engagement with the Council and Environment Agency is strongly advised.
- 4.2.89** The Council has a Contaminated Land Strategy (2011)<sup>59</sup> in place which sets out how it intends to identify contaminated land across the Borough and remove the potential for significant harm. Addressing contamination on proposed development sites is therefore only part of a wider approach to the issue.
- 4.2.90** Exposure to high levels of noise can have a significant effect on human health. This policy deals with noise issues in general, whilst policy EN17 deals particularly with noise-generating equipment. It is worth noting that there is a Professional Practice Guide on Planning and Noise available<sup>60</sup> which provides guidance on design of residential developments to take account of noise, and taking account of this from the early design stage will help to reduce noise effects on future residents.
- 4.2.91** The provision of adequate water, wastewater and sewerage infrastructure is critical, and needs to be in place prior to occupation. A Utilities Statement is required for all major development at application stage, and this will need to include the outcome of consultation with the sewerage undertaker. Where there is a capacity constraint and improvements in off-site infrastructure are not programmed, the developer should set out how the infrastructure improvements will be completed prior to occupation of the development. The use of private

<sup>58</sup> See DEFRA policy companion document considering the use of ‘Category 4 Screening Levels’ in providing a simple test for deciding when land is suitable for use and definitely not contaminated (<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=18341>)

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1233/Contaminated-Land-Strategy/pdf/Contaminated-Land-Strategy.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> IOA, ANC & CIEH (2017) <http://ioa.org.uk/sites/default/files/14720%20ProPG%20Main%20Document.pdf>

sewage disposal facilities within publicly sewered areas will only be acceptable if the applicant can demonstrate that the additional cost of connecting to the sewer would be unreasonable, connection is not practically feasible or the proposed private sewerage system would provide additional environmental benefits that would outweigh the potential environmental risks.

### Noise Generating Equipment

#### **EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT**

*Where noise generating equipment is proposed, the noise source specific<sup>61</sup> level (plant noise level) should be at least 10dBA below the existing background level as measured at the nearest noise sensitive receptor.*

- 4.2.92 The Local Plan proposals will see a high level of development within Reading. Reading is a densely populated town with many new planning developments taking place. Residents live in close proximity to commercial activities, therefore it is important to minimise background creep in order to protect the noise environment and maintain quality of life for people living and working in the town. The negative impact of environmental noise on health is becoming better understood (for example WHO 1999, 2009 and 2011<sup>62</sup>).
- 4.2.93 Planning Practice Guidance on noise states that no specific measures are required to manage the acoustic environment in situations where noise can be heard as a result of a development and there is a slight effect on the acoustic character of the area but there is no effect on the behaviour and attitude of people exposed to the noise. However, the guidance also states that:
- The cumulative impacts of more than one source of noise should be considered; and
  - In cases where existing noise sensitive locations already experience high noise levels, a development that is expected to cause even a small increase in the overall noise level may result in a significant adverse effect occurring.
- 4.2.94 The Council considers that the above two factors apply due to the town being densely populated and there being a high likelihood of subsequent noise generating plant being installed in a particular location. It is therefore necessary for each planning application for noisy plant to protect the acoustic environment and as far as possible prevent the increase in background noise levels because the cumulative impact of installation of noisy plant which causes an increase in background noise level is likely to lead to an adverse effect.
- 4.2.95 The Planning Practice Guidance on noise also states that local planning authorities may decide to develop specific standards to apply to various forms of proposed development in their area. It cautions against the implementation of fixed thresholds because specific circumstances may justify some variation being allowed. Because this policy sets a noise target in relation to the background noise level, this allows variation of the threshold with the local circumstances because it does not set an absolute noise level that the plant must achieve, it relates it to the local noise level.

<sup>61</sup> The noise source specific level is the measured noise level, as opposed to the rating level, which is the specific level with correction factors included.

<sup>62</sup> World Health Organisation (WHO) (1999), Guidelines for Community Noise; WHO (2009), Night Noise Guidelines for Europe; WHO (2011), Burden of Disease from Environmental Noise: Quantification of healthy life years lost in Europe

4.2.96 Where the plant noise rating level does not meet this standard, the background noise will increase. When subsequent new plant is added it will be assessed against this higher background level which results in an increasing benchmark against which subsequent new plant is introduced. This leads to an incremental increase in the noise in an area each time new plant is introduced ('background creep'). This policy standard has been applied by Reading Borough Council for a number of years and experience has demonstrated it to be achievable in most cases. In addition, noise control technology is improving, therefore further increasing the achievability of this standard.

### Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems

#### **EN18: FLOODING AND SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS**

*Development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance, following the Sequential and Exceptions Test set out in the NPPF, and taking into account the effects of climate change. It will consider flooding from all sources, including fluvial, surface water, groundwater and sewer flooding. Where development in areas at risk of flooding is necessary, it will not reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding. Wherever possible, development should be designed to reduce flood risk, both on- and off-site.*

*All major developments<sup>63</sup> must incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as appropriate and in line with the Government's Technical Standards<sup>64</sup>. Smaller schemes are encouraged to incorporate SuDS, where possible. Runoff rates should aim to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site. Schemes should ensure that the movement of water through vertical infiltration as well as horizontal run-off does not worsen contamination effects. Wherever possible, SuDS provision should maximise ecological benefits, link into the existing Green Network, incorporate tree planting and landscaping and avoid damage to existing significant trees, including through changes to the site hydrology. All new developments in areas of flood risk should give priority to SuDS.*

4.2.97 A significant area of land within Reading is at risk of flooding, and this is expected to worsen with the effects of climate change. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken for the Borough<sup>65</sup>. This describes and analyses how the Borough is affected by flood risk and the nature of that risk. The flood plain plays an important role in protecting the built up area of Reading as it accommodates floodwater and reduces the risks of water levels rising and affecting properties in a wider area. This capacity shall not be reduced by development or the raising of land levels. The movement of water across the flood plain is also important, and obstructions to this will place a greater burden on other parts of the flood plain. Even away from the flood plain, inappropriate drainage schemes can exacerbate local flooding problems and increase the amount of water entering watercourses. This results in litter and contamination.

<sup>63</sup> 10 or more dwellings or equivalent non-residential or mixed developments

<sup>64</sup> Sustainable drainage systems non-statutory technical standards <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-drainage-systems-non-statutory-technical-standards>

<sup>65</sup> See [www.reading.gov.uk/readingldf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/readingldf)

**4.2.98** The National Planning Policy Framework directs development away from areas that are liable to flood, and states that proposals for development in areas of a medium and high risk of flooding need to be assessed against a sequential test and, if appropriate, an exceptions test. This has already been carried out for those sites allocated within this plan<sup>66</sup>, and there is no need for this to be repeated unless the proposed use and/or flood risk vulnerability classification would differ from the allocation. Development should therefore comply with the requirements of the NPPF alongside this policy. Development proposals on sites greater than 1 hectare or that are in Flood Risk Zones 2 or 3 will need to be supported by the following, and, in doing so, will need to take account of the latest guidance on allowances for climate change (see below):

- a) A flood risk assessment which demonstrates that the most appropriate layout of development on site in terms of flood risk has been applied;
- b) Demonstration that a sequential approach has been taken within the site, directing the most vulnerable uses to the areas of lowest flood risk;
- c) Demonstration that resilient and resistant construction methods for managing residual risk and delivering an overall reduction in flood risk have been assessed;
- d) The provision of space for flood water storage through the use of open space or areas above ground (where appropriate);
- e) The raising of floor levels above flood levels, taking account of all forms of flooding (where appropriate);
- f) Demonstration that flood risk is not increased elsewhere and where possible reduced;
- g) Demonstration of safe access and egress to the development; and
- h) Demonstration that all forms of flooding are taken into account including groundwater and surface water flooding.

**4.2.99** The effects of flooding are expected to worsen with climate change, and this needs to be taken into account when considering development. The Environment Agency has produced guidance on the allowances for climate change to be taken into account for each river basin district. Reading falls within the Thames basin district<sup>67</sup>. Depending on the vulnerability of development proposed, and the flood risk classification, different allowances should be taken into account. The SFRA models and maps allowances of 25%, 35% and 70%, which correspond to the upper end allowances for the Thames basin.

**4.2.100** The SFRA also defines the extent of the functional floodplain within Reading. The 2017 SFRA, in describing how this has been approached, distinguishes between Flood Zone 3b 'Functional Floodplain' and Flood Zone 3b 'Developed'. For clarity, the final definition on the flood zone maps F4 in the SFRA incorporates both of these categories, and it is this combined area which should be considered as Flood Zone 3b for the purposes of applying policy.

**4.2.101** The nature of Reading means that there are a significant number of sites in need of regeneration, generally containing vacant, derelict, low density or poor quality buildings, within areas of medium or high flood risk. Where the redevelopment of previously developed land at risk of flooding provides significant regeneration benefits, this will need to be considered in the context of the sequential and, if applicable, exceptions test.

**4.2.102** Due to recent changes to the planning system, Reading Borough Council serves as a Lead Local Flood Authority and is responsible for approving SuDS schemes for new development. SuDS may

<sup>66</sup> Available on the Council's website

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change-allowances>

be eligible for adoption by the Council, provided they are within public open space or serve more than one property and have been designed in accordance with the CIRIA SuDS manual<sup>68</sup>.

**4.2.103** Flood risk and other environmental damage can be mitigated by minimising changes in the volume and rate of surface runoff. Sustainable drainage systems can often be achieved at little to no additional cost and may actually decrease landscape maintenance expenses throughout the lifetime of a development. Virtually any new development should be able to deliver SuDS due to the wide variety of techniques available. SuDS can be very effective on brownfield sites, but care must be taken to reduce environmental damage from contaminated land. It is also possible to ‘retrofit’ SuDS for existing developments. SuDS provide opportunities to:

- Reduce the causes and impacts of flooding;
- Guard against the effects of climate change;
- Enhance biodiversity;
- Improve water quality by removing pollutants from runoff; and
- Achieve green space, amenity, recreation and wildlife benefits through water management.

**4.2.104** Sustainable drainage systems aim to replicate natural drainage as closely as possible and minimise the impacts of development. In the first instance, schemes should consider the provision of SuDS through landscaping, with reference to Part D of the CIRIA SuDS manual, and in any case should consider the following:

- Integration with existing landscape;
- Tree planting provision fed by groundwater runoff that functions effectively in place of attenuation tanks;
- Additional capacity to cater for future development; and
- Techniques including, but not limited to, permeable pavements, swales, basins, rain gardens, green roofs, rainwater re-use, infiltration trenches, ponds and wetlands.

**4.2.105** Schemes for SuDS need to be careful to avoid resulting in contamination of watercourses and groundwater. Soakaways in contaminated land will not be appropriate. Infiltration SuDS techniques should only dispose of clean roof water into clean, uncontaminated ground, should not be used for foul discharges or trade effluent, and may not be suitable within Source Protection Zone 1.

**4.3.106** The SuDS elements of the policy apply to major development. Small-scale developments will be encouraged to adopt elements of SuDS wherever practicable, including the provision of permeable surfaces within the site, e.g. on front gardens or car parking areas.

<sup>68</sup> Construction Industry Research and Information Association, SuDS Manual [http://www.ciria.org/Resources/Free\\_publications/SuDS\\_manual\\_C753.aspx](http://www.ciria.org/Resources/Free_publications/SuDS_manual_C753.aspx)

**4.3.11** The Core Employment Areas are the main areas of employment uses (excluding the town centre) within Reading. They are shown on the Proposals Map, and have been defined through an examination of the contribution that they make to the employment role of Reading. In order for these areas to maximise their contribution to the economy, there may be scope for inclusion of uses that are not strictly within an ‘employment’ classification as set out in 4.3.14 in order to support the economic role of the area, for instance through provision of services and facilities for workers and customers. Where this does not result in a loss of employment land, it will be acceptable subject to other policy considerations, such as the retail and leisure sequential approach. If a loss of employment land is proposed, it will need to be judged against policy EM3.

### Loss of Employment Land

#### **EM3: LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND**

*Within the Core Employment Areas, the overall level of employment land should be maintained. Proposals that would result in a loss of such land will not be permitted other than in the exceptional circumstances described below.*

*Where, in exceptional circumstances, it can be demonstrated that a site in a Core Employment Area has no long-term prospect of employment use, a related alternative commercial use or a use which complements the employment use of the area may be considered that would not result in a significant reduction in jobs.*

*In other areas, the following matters will be considered when assessing proposals which would result in a loss of employment land: -*

- (i) Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor?*
- (ii) Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable?*
- (iii) Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading?*
- (iv) Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area?*
- (v) Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land?*
- (vi) Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme?*

**4.3.12** There is a need for a certain degree of flexibility with existing employment land to allow an appropriate balance of uses to develop in the right locations. For this reason, it is not appropriate to simply apply a blanket protection to all existing employment areas. However, the Core Employment Areas have been identified as those areas of greatest economic significance, providing space that is required to ensure that the Reading economy is balanced and that those activities which support higher value businesses are in close proximity. As a result, an overall loss of employment land in these core areas would risk undermining the local economy, and should not be permitted. It is worth emphasising that this policy does not primarily aim to protect a specific number of jobs (which could be replaced in a non-employment use), but is rather about balance of the economy.

- 4.3.13** The policy recognises that on some exceptional sites within the CEA, there may not be any long-term prospect of re-use or redevelopment for employment, and in these cases it is preferable for a site to be used for an alternative commercial use that complements the area than for it to be vacant in the long-term. Long term vacancy in this case can be taken to mean five years or more, as shorter time periods might be the result of short-term economic conditions. For example, some of the older industrial areas contain large sites that were tailored to the needs of a specific type of operation that no longer exists or operates in the same way, making it unviable to re-let, either in its existing form or sub-divided, in the long-term. If there is also no long-term prospect of redevelopment of these sites for employment, alternative commercial uses under this policy may be considered.
- 4.3.14** Elsewhere, a loss of employment land for other uses may be acceptable, depending on whether the land is still needed for employment purposes. Each application will need to be assessed on its merits, and the matters to be considered are set out in (i) to (vi) which should inform a balanced decision, not be used as a checklist where every item is fulfilled. Proposals should demonstrate how these factors justify the release of employment land.
- 4.3.15** Factors which may be taken into account in assessing these matters include:
- (i): proximity to the strategic road network, particularly for storage and distribution, access by public transport, foot and cycle, future transport infrastructure provision;
  - (ii): ownership constraints, prevailing market conditions including vacancy levels, response to marketing of site for employment use, physical constraints of site such as topography, other constraints such as utilities provision;
  - (iii): balancing supply and long-term demand, allowing for a degree of vacancy necessary in a healthy market;
  - (iv): effects on neighbouring uses of noise, pollution and air quality, intensity of activity;
  - (v): need for additional housing, community facilities and other uses; and
  - (vi): likelihood of development resulting in ‘islands’ of other uses in employment areas, whether a better environment would be created through a more comprehensive development.
- 4.3.16** ‘Employment land’ in the context of this policy is land which is primarily in B1, B2 or B8 use, or is a use not in the above use classes for which an employment area is the only realistic location. This is a judgement that will need to be made on a case-by-case basis, but relevant considerations will include the effects of noise and disturbance, odours etc, HGV movements and whether the use requires a building that would detract from the character of other areas, e.g. with high, blank frontages and very large building footprints.

### Maintaining a Variety of Premises

#### **EM4: MAINTAINING A VARIETY OF PREMISES**

***A range of types and sizes of units should be present in the Borough, and proposals should maintain or enhance this range. In particular, the overall level of start-up and grow-on space should be maintained and, where possible, increased, and any loss of small units should be offset by new provision. Proposals should maintain the overall level of storage and distribution uses in the South of Basingstoke Road (EM2c).***

***Subject to these considerations, proposals for redevelopment of older industrial units for more flexible employment premises will be acceptable.***

## 4.4 Housing

### Provision of Housing

#### **H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING**

*Provision will be made for at least an additional 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036.*

*The Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area to ensure that the shortfall of 230 dwellings that cannot be provided within Reading will be met over the plan period.*

- 4.4.1 There is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area. The six Berkshire authorities (Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham Borough Council) together with the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership co-operated on the production of a Berkshire (with South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which reported in February 2016<sup>72</sup>. This study identified the Housing Market Areas within which the Berkshire authorities should work, and set out levels of housing need between 2013 and 2036.
- 4.4.2 The SHMA identifies Reading as being part of a Western Berkshire Housing Market Area, together with West Berkshire, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest. Within this area, an ‘objectively assessed need’ is identified for a total of 2,855 new homes every year up to 2036. Reading’s share of this need is 699 homes per year, or a total of 16,077 between 2013 and 2036. The expectation in the NPPF is that local planning authorities should meet their need unless they can demonstrate that doing so is not possible.
- 4.4.3 However, Reading is a very tightly defined urban area, and sites for new development are limited. The undeveloped land that does exist is mainly either in the functional floodplain or is important public open space. Provision of new housing therefore involves a heavy reliance on previously developed land, and the supply of such sites constrains the amount of housing that can be delivered in the Borough. The Council therefore needs to set targets for housing provision that are capable of being met.
- 4.4.4 It is considered that of the 16,077 homes needed, 15,847 can be delivered in Reading Borough, which equates to 689 dwellings per annum. A Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment<sup>73</sup> (HELAA) has demonstrated that this is the level of housing development that Reading can realistically accommodate in the plan period. This uses a methodology that has been jointly agreed with four other Berkshire authorities, and examines each site with potential for ten dwellings or more, in terms of its development capacity, suitability, availability and achievability, as well as making an allowance for windfall development on sites of less than ten dwellings. The HELAA was carried out in November 2017, but the information on housing supply has been updated to 31st March 2019. The expected provision breaks down as follows:

<sup>72</sup>[http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/2959/Housing-Market-Assessment/pdf/Berkshire\\_Strategic\\_Housing\\_Market\\_Assessment\\_Feb\\_2016.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/2959/Housing-Market-Assessment/pdf/Berkshire_Strategic_Housing_Market_Assessment_Feb_2016.pdf)

<sup>73</sup> Available at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/readingldf>

Total need for Reading Borough 2013-36	16,077 homes
Minus completed 2013-2019	4,202 homes
Minus permitted or resolution to grant (>10 dwellings) at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019 <sup>74</sup>	4,696 homes
Minus allowance for small site (<10 dwellings) windfalls at 127 per year 2019-2036	2,159 homes
Remainder not already identified	5,020 homes
Identified in Local Plan	4,790 homes
Shortfall to be accommodated elsewhere in HMA	230 homes

4.4.5 The Local Plan includes a Housing Trajectory at Appendix 1, which sets out how the housing requirement in policy H1 is expected to be met over the plan period, including forecast completions for each year. The Housing Trajectory will be kept up to date and a revised version published each December in the Council’s Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR will also include an up-to-date assessment of the five-year housing land supply, a requirement of national policy. This will highlight any issues with the delivery of new homes, and whether there is any need to address issues through measures such as a plan review or through discussions with other authorities under the duty to co-operate.

4.4.6 Delivering the level of housing set out in policy H1 will mean that there is a shortfall of 230 dwellings when considered against Reading’s need. This will need to be accommodated elsewhere within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area. The other three authorities within the HMA recognise that there will be issues with Reading’s ability to accommodate its need within its own boundaries, and this issue is set out within the West of Berkshire Spatial Planning Framework to which the four authorities have signed up<sup>75</sup>. There will be continuing dialogue on this matter between the affected authorities which will inform local plans. Where agreement is reached, it will be for individual authorities’ Local Plans to specify where development will be located.

## Density and Mix

### H2: DENSITY AND MIX

*The appropriate density of residential development will be informed by:*

- *the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located, including the housing mix, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscape or townscape areas;*
- *its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;*
- *the need to achieve high quality design;*
- *the need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and*
- *the need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.*

*Indicative densities for different types of area are set out in figure 4.5, but the criteria above may indicate that a different density is appropriate. Residential development capacity figures within the site allocation policies are often based on these densities, but*

<sup>74</sup> Including appropriate non-implementation rates

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/west-of-berkshire-spatial-planning-framework-final.pdf>

*the capacity of each site will likewise depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout, and may differ from the range set out in the allocation. Net densities of below 30 dwellings per hectare will not be acceptable.*

*Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6, in particular for family homes of three or more bedrooms. As a minimum, on new developments for 10 or more dwellings outside the central area and defined district and local centres, planning decisions will ensure that over 50% of dwellings will be of 3 bedrooms or more, having regard to all other material considerations.*

*Residential proposals for ten houses or more (excluding houses that are to be provided as affordable homes) will consider making appropriate provision for plots as self- or custom-build wherever viable and achievable, based on the number of entries on the self-build register. The provision of self-build plots will be secured through legal agreement. Any plots that have not been sold after 12 months of appropriate marketing will revert to the developer to build.*

- 4.4.7 With the significant need for housing in Reading and surrounding areas, it is important that efficient use is made of the land that is available to boost the delivery of new homes. However, there are other considerations that need to be weighed against this, in particular the character of the surrounding areas and any other particular sensitivities. Each site has its own particular characteristics, and it is not appropriate to set down exact densities in this policy. Likewise, dwelling figures and bed spaces in site allocations policies CR11-14, SR2-4, WR1-3, CA1-2 and ER1 should be treated as indicative, as the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout. This may mean that dwelling and bed space totals for an allocated site fall outside the indicative range specified in the respective policy.
- 4.4.8 Nevertheless, some guidance on appropriate densities in different areas can be helpful as an indication, and figure 4.5 therefore sets out some ranges within suburban, urban and town centre sites. For town centres, 100 dwellings per hectare is used as an indication, but, depending on the site, the appropriate density may be significantly greater than this, in view of the need to make best use of accessible sites set out in policy CC6. It is important to note that these will not be applied as hard-and-fast rules, and the particular characteristics of a site when judged against the criteria in the policy may well mean that a density outside these ranges is appropriate. This will particularly be the case where existing buildings are to be converted.

**Figure 4.5: Indicative density ranges (dwellings per hectare)**

Town Centre	Urban	Suburban
Above 100	60-120	30-60

- 4.4.9 In terms of the appropriate mix, the Berkshire SHMA considered this issue when assessing the level of housing need. The overall percentages needed are set out in figure 4.6. For market housing, it identified a particular need within both Reading and the Western Berkshire HMA for family housing of three bedrooms or more. For affordable housing, the focus of need was on one and two-bedroom accommodation. When taken as a whole however, homes with two or more bedrooms, capable of accommodating families, represent the majority of the need, and

this Plan identifies this provision as a priority (see policy H3). One-bedroom accommodation tends to have a higher turnover, meaning that more existing accommodation is likely to become available. In addition, there should clearly be an emphasis on providing homes for families in need. In overall terms, there is clearly a need for over half of new dwellings to be of three or more bedrooms.

**Figure 4.6: Estimated size of accommodation type required in Reading (Source: SHMA 2016)**

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom
Market	10.3%	29.6%	41.5%	18.5%
Affordable	43.4%	32.9%	21.6%	2.1%
Overall	18.6%	30.5%	36.5%	14.4%

- 4.4.10** In terms of a policy requirement, it is not possible to introduce a blanket requirement across the whole Borough. A very substantial amount of Reading’s housing need will need to be met in the town centre due to the availability of sites, and delivery of a substantial amount of family housing on these sites will not be achievable. This places a particular onus on those sites outside centres to help to meet the needs for family homes. As such, a minimum requirement for family homes should be applied to major schemes as a baseline, but, on sites where a greater contribution is possible, the presumption will be that the percentage of family homes should increase, unless other material considerations, such as viability, indicate otherwise.
- 4.4.11** Within the centre of Reading, the considerations will be somewhat different, and Policy CR6 in the Central Reading section sets out specific requirements. Within smaller centres, it is desirable to provide housing above shops for a variety of reasons, and this aim would be difficult to fulfil with a blanket mix requirement.
- 4.4.12** In applying this policy, any room designated as a bedroom should comply with the criteria from the national space standards, set out in the supporting text to policy H5.
- 4.4.13** Inevitably, even with this policy requirement in place, Reading is likely to provide a significantly greater proportion of smaller dwellings than its neighbours in the Western Berkshire HMA. This may mean that some rebalancing across the HMA is appropriate, with other authorities potentially providing a greater proportion of larger family accommodation.
- 4.4.14** National policy in the NPPF places a strong emphasis on supporting self-build housing through planning. In line with statutory requirements, the Council has a register of those wishing to build their own homes, and in the first ‘base period’ (i.e. up to 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016), there were 41 entries<sup>76</sup>. It is likely that there will be further entries in the future as the existence of the register becomes more well-known. The Council has a statutory duty to grant suitable development permission in respect of enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the authority’s area arising in each base period.
- 4.4.15** It is highly unlikely that the statutory duty to grant enough permissions will be met without some form of policy intervention. For this reason, it is considered appropriate that larger schemes of houses (not including flats and maisonettes or non-C3 forms of housing such as student accommodation) should consider making a contribution to meeting this need. The level

<sup>76</sup> The base periods are defined in the Housing and Planning Act 2016. The first base period is the time between establishment of the self-build register and 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016 (the day before the commencement of the statutory duty to grant suitable permissions), and the subsequent 12 months is the next base period.

of contribution would depend on the scale of the self-build need at the time. The following formula gives an indication of the appropriate level of provision, and is based on an estimate of the expected number of overall houses on sites to which the policy would apply. This is subject to a cap, so that no development would be expected to deliver more than 20% of houses as self-build.

$$N = \frac{(R - P)}{750} \times H$$

Where *N* is the indicative number of self-build plots that is appropriate on a given site  
*R* is the number of entries on the self-build register for the most recent base period  
*P* is the number of self-build plots permitted since the end of the most recent base period  
*H* is the number of market houses (not including flats and maisonettes) proposed on a given site

**4.4.16** However, it is possible that the entries on the register will not always translate to firm demand on the ground. Households may not be in a position to make an offer on a plot, their circumstances may have changed, or their needs may be met in another authority. The provision of self-build cannot therefore be allowed to unacceptably delay the delivery of new homes. Therefore, if after 12 months of appropriate marketing, a plot has not sold, it will revert to the developer to build.

### Affordable Housing

#### **H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

***Residential development will make appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading***

- ***on sites of 10 or more dwellings, 30% of the total dwellings will be in the form of affordable housing;***
- ***on sites of 5 - 9 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough; and***
- ***on sites of 1 - 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.***

***For sites of 10 or more dwellings, provision should be made on site in the first instance with a financial contribution being negotiated to make up the full requirement as appropriate.***

***In all cases where proposals fall short of the policy target as a result of viability considerations, an open-book approach will be taken and the onus will be on the developer/landowner to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.***

***In determining residential applications the Council will assess the site size, suitability and type of units to be delivered in relation to the current evidence of identified needs. The Council will seek an appropriate tenure mix of affordable housing to include social rented, affordable rent, intermediate rent and shared ownership affordable units. The affordable units provided should be integrated into the development.***

***Priority needs are currently for housing with two or more bedrooms that can house families. The Council will regularly monitor and review the need for, and delivery of, affordable housing.***

***The following types of residential development will be exempt from the requirement to provide affordable housing:***

- ***Replacement of a single dwelling with another single dwelling; and***
- ***Conversion of a dwelling to self-contained flats where there is no new floorspace.***

- 4.4.17** Affordable housing is subsidised housing that enables the asking price or rent to be substantially lower than the prevailing market prices or rents in the locality, and is subject to mechanisms that will ensure that the housing remains affordable for those who cannot afford market housing. It is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as, “housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).” The Government has classified some new tenures as affordable, including starter homes.
- 4.4.18** The NPPF indicates that in order to boost significantly the supply of housing, local authorities should ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area. It goes on to indicate that local planning authorities need to plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community in order to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.
- 4.4.19** The Berkshire (with South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA, 2016) has once again emphasised the critical need for affordable housing within Reading as well as the remainder of Berkshire. The SHMA identified a need for 406 new affordable homes per year in Reading, which represents the majority of the overall housing required. The consequences of not providing much-needed affordable homes would be severe, and would include homelessness, households in temporary or unsuitable accommodation, overcrowding and younger people having to remain living with parents for increasing periods. Insufficient affordable housing will also act as an impediment to economic growth, as firms will face increasing problems with accommodation for their workforce. Meeting even a substantial proportion of the identified housing need presents significant challenges, and it is therefore critical that new residential development of all sizes makes whatever contribution it can.
- 4.4.20** A Ministerial Statement in November 2014 sought to remove sites of ten or less dwellings from the need to provide affordable housing. Although subsequent challenges in the courts<sup>77</sup> have upheld this statement, they have also clarified that the statement does not have the effect of overriding local policies where there is evidence of exceptional need for affordable housing. Such a need clearly exists in Reading, and it is therefore appropriate that sites of ten or less dwellings contribute to meeting this need. However, on a practical level, it is more difficult to make such provision from residential conversions and from one-for-one replacement, which means that such developments will be exempted from the provisions of policy H3.
- 4.4.21** Affordable housing contributions will be sought from residential-only developments and mixed-use developments. On-site provision (serviced land or completed units) of affordable housing

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2016/441.html>

will always be sought in the first instance on sites of 10 dwellings or more. Where there are exceptional reasons, the provision of surrogate sites (serviced land or completed units) or commuted sums that will enable the provision of a commensurate number and mix of affordable units, will be considered. Examples of exceptional circumstances may include sites where there are existing concentrations of particular types of affordable housing, where there are demonstrable benefits to be gained by providing the new units elsewhere (e.g. to create more socially-balanced communities), or where there is an opportunity to provide a particular type of much needed housing elsewhere (e.g. family housing). In the case of commuted sums, the Council will choose the registered provider to which to direct the funding or may use the contribution for Local Authority New Build. Under this policy it is accepted that affordable housing provision can take place off site or through contributions in the case of sites of less than 10 dwellings.

- 4.4.22** Affordable housing contributions must be secured in perpetuity and thus be available to successive generations of households in recognised housing need. The most effective way of doing this is through the involvement of a registered provider (RP).
- 4.4.23** The target set in the policy has been determined as the result of an assessment of the viability of development of sites of various sizes in the Borough in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. This will be the expected level of affordable housing provision.
- 4.4.24** However, the Council will be sensitive to exceptional costs of bringing a site to market such as for reasons of expensive reclamation, or infrastructure costs, or high existing use values. Where applicants can demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Council, exceptional difficulties in bringing a site to market, the Council will be prepared to consider detailed information on the viability of a particular scheme and, where justified through an open book approach, to reduce the affordable housing requirement. The information required will be proportionate to the scale of development, and, where a proposal is for less than 10 dwellings, will be more limited in scope and length. For sites of less than 10 dwellings, a brief schedule of the main elements of the viability calculations, supported by estate agent valuations, will generally suffice. The Affordable Housing SPD, to be revised later in 2019, will contain more detail on information to be submitted. As development costs are usually reflected in the residual land value, the purchase price of a particular site will not, on its own, be a reason for reducing the affordable housing requirement. The Council will generally secure provision of affordable housing through a Section 106 agreement.
- 4.4.25** The tenure, size and type of affordable housing provided as part of any scheme should respond to the identified need for affordable housing taking account of the most up-to-date information, including information in an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document or other Supplementary Planning Document<sup>78</sup>. The SPD may need to be updated to take account of any changes to the affordable housing definition, as well as other matters. Taking account of the 2016 SHMA, housing with two or more bedrooms that can house families is a priority. Paragraph 4.4.9 considers this in more depth. New development should therefore include a range and mix of tenures, sizes and types (e.g. house types, flats) of affordable housing (as appropriate depending on site size) to reflect local needs and to reflect the range and mix of house types in the scheme as a whole (i.e. the mix of dwelling sizes in the provision of affordable housing should reflect the mix proposed for the private housing).

<sup>78</sup> The most up-to-date Affordable Housing SPD at the time of publication is that adopted in July 2013: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1063/Affordable-Housing-Supplementary-Planning-Document-Adopted-July-2013/pdf/Affordable-Housing-Supplementary-Planning-DocumentJul13.pdf>

**4.4.26** At the time of producing the Local Plan, the tenure split below reflects the most up to date position on needs within Reading. However, a revised Affordable Housing SPD, to be produced during 2019, will look at this issue in detail. The needs below are therefore subject to change within the SPD.

- Social rented or affordable rent housing of no more than target rent - 70% of affordable housing units; and
- Intermediate and/or shared ownership housing - 30%.

### Build to Rent Schemes

#### **H4: BUILD TO RENT SCHEMES**

*Planning permission will be granted for developments of self-contained, private rented homes which:*

- 1. Are secured in single ownership providing solely for the rental market for a minimum 20 year term with provision for clawback of affordable housing contributions should the covenant not be met; and*
- 2. Provide tenancies for private renters for a minimum of three years with a six month break clause in the tenant's favour and structured and limited in-tenancy rent increases agreed in advance; and*
- 3. Provide a high standard of professional on-site management and control of the accommodation; and*
- 4. Provide a commitment to high-quality rental arrangements, through meeting Reading Borough Council's voluntary Rent with Confidence Standards or equivalent measures; and*
- 5. Provide for a mix of unit sizes in accordance with Policy H2 or CR6; and*
- 6. Meet the standards of design set out in Policy H5; and*
- 7. Provide 30% on-site affordable housing, either in accordance with Policy H3 and any relevant Supplementary Planning Document; or in the form of Affordable Private Rent Housing as defined and set out in a relevant Supplementary Planning Document.*

**4.4.27** Planning Practice Guidance, under the heading 'The private rented sector', indicates that:

“some privately rented homes can come from purpose built schemes held in single ownership which are intended for long term rental. The economics of such schemes differ from build for sale and should be determined on a case by case basis. To help ensure these schemes remain viable while improving the diversity of housing to meet local needs, local planning authorities should consider the appropriate level of planning obligations, including for affordable housing, and when these payments are required. So these homes remain available to rent only, local planning authorities may choose to explore using planning obligations to secure these schemes for a minimum period of time. Local planning authorities should enforce these planning obligations in the usual way.” (reference 10-018-20150326)

**4.4.28** A large part of the housing stock in Reading is privately rented although mostly through

the development to providing solely private rented accommodation for a minimum period of 20 years. Where viability testing demonstrates that affordable housing contributions are unviable, clawback mechanisms will be included as part of the planning permission to recoup the loss of affordable housing if any residential units are sold out of single ownership within the covenant period. Comments on assessing viability within policy H3 and its supporting text also apply to schemes under H4. A charge towards the provision of additional affordable housing will be triggered where any private rented homes are sold within the development within 20 years of occupation of the completed development.

- 4.4.35** Affordable housing will be allocated to eligible households on Reading’s housing waiting list. Affordable Private Rent Housing must be allocated in the first instance to eligible households on Reading’s housing waiting list.
- 4.4.36** Any on-site affordable housing (or exceptionally where such housing is provided off-site) will be provided in perpetuity. Affordable Private Rent Housing must be provided in perpetuity.

### Standards for New Housing

#### **H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING**

*New build housing should be built to the following standards, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable:*

- a. All new build housing outside the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map will comply with the nationally-described space standard.*
- b. All new build housing will be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations<sup>79</sup>.*
- c. All major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes.*
- d. All other new build housing will achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.*
- e. All new build housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless it is built in line with M4(3) (see below).*
- f. On developments of 20 or more new build dwellings, at least 5% of dwellings will be wheelchair user dwellings in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations. Any market homes provided to meet this requirement will be ‘wheelchair adaptable’ as defined in part M, whilst homes where the Council is responsible for allocating or nominating an individual may be ‘wheelchair accessible’.*

- 4.4.37** The Government has sought to consolidate the wide range of standards required for new housing across the country. The approach has been to rely on minimum requirements in the Building Regulations for most matters, but to set a small number of ‘optional’ national standards over and above the Building Regulations minima, which local planning authorities can choose to apply

<sup>79</sup> References are to the 2015 Building Regulations

in their areas. These ‘optional’ standards cover internal space, water efficiency and accessibility. Local planning authorities cannot seek any additional, or higher, standards for new housing.

- 4.4.38** These ‘optional’ standards can only apply where a policy is included in a Local Plan. This policy therefore applies those standards in Reading Borough. It should be noted that the standards are only ‘optional’ for the local planning authority to apply in their areas, but that once applied, compliance in line with the policy is compulsory. Conditions will be applied to relevant planning permissions to ensure compliance with the policy. For water efficiency and accessibility, the standards will be applied through the Building Regulations. Planning conditions may be required to secure compliance. Where references to the Building Regulations in the policy change, the requirement shall be taken to refer to the most up-to-date standard. Housing in the centre will also need to consider the requirements of policy CR6. These standards apply to residential uses in the C3 use class only.
- 4.4.39** As recommended in Planning Practice Guidance, it is appropriate to avoid immediate application of new standards to allow time for any associated costs to be factored into developments, including land deals, as they emerge. It is considered that the date of adoption of the plan is appropriate, as the draft policy has been public since April 2017.
- 4.4.40** Housing standards serve an important role in ensuring resident health and well-being. Providing the appropriate types of housing at affordable levels can reduce overcrowding, unhealthy living conditions, injuries in the home and social isolation<sup>80</sup>. Deprived residents are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a result of substandard housing<sup>81</sup>.

#### *Internal space*

- 4.4.41** Ensuring sufficient levels of internal space is essential to the quality of life of residents of the Borough, which is a key element of the vision for the Borough. The Council is concerned that a great deal of development has now taken place under permitted development rights that provides inadequate internal space. This cannot be controlled, but, where it is possible to do so, it is important to ensure that there is as much housing with adequate internal space as possible. However, it is considered that there is a distinction between what counts as adequate internal space within the centre of Reading and elsewhere. The expectations of those choosing to live in the centre of Reading, in terms of both internal and external space, as well as issues such as noise, tend to be different to those in other parts of the Borough. In addition, in central Reading, applying the space standard could have the effect of reducing the ability of the area to make its expected portion of the housing need, as many existing developments, including some that are well-regarded, would not have gone ahead in their current form were the space standard in force.
- 4.4.42** However, even where it does not apply, the nationally prescribed space standard offers a useful point of reference and a good basis for design of new developments. The standard as at March 2015 is set out below, and requires that:
- a. the dwelling provides at least the gross internal floor area and built-in storage area set out

<sup>80</sup> NHS Healthy Urban Development Checklist <http://www.healthyurbandevelopment.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Healthy-Urban-Planning-Checklist-March-2014.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> Shelter, The Impact of Bad Housing on Physical Health [http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why\\_we\\_campaign/housing\\_facts\\_and\\_figures/subsection?section=the\\_impact\\_of\\_bad\\_housing](http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why_we_campaign/housing_facts_and_figures/subsection?section=the_impact_of_bad_housing)

- in Figure 4.7 below;
- b. a dwelling with two or more bedspaces has at least one double (or twin) bedroom;
  - c. in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5 sq m and is at least 2.15m wide;
  - d. in order to provide two bedspaces, a double (or twin bedroom) has a floor area of at least 11.5 sq m;
  - e. one double (or twin bedroom) is at least 2.75m wide and every other double (or twin) bedroom is at least 2.55m wide;
  - f. any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage (if the area under the stairs is to be used for storage, assume a general floor area of 1 sq m within the Gross Internal Area);
  - g. any other area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900-1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all;
  - h. a built-in wardrobe counts towards the Gross Internal Area and bedroom floor area requirements, but should not reduce the effective width of the room below the minimum widths set out above. The built-in area in excess of 0.72 sq m in a double bedroom and 0.36 sq m in a single bedroom counts towards the built-in storage requirement;
  - i. the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area.

**Figure 4.7: Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (sq m)**

Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37)*			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

4.4.43 The full standard can be viewed on the gov.uk website<sup>82</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/524531/160519\\_Nationally\\_Described\\_Space\\_Standard\\_Final\\_Web\\_version.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524531/160519_Nationally_Described_Space_Standard_Final_Web_version.pdf)

### *Water efficiency*

**4.4.44** In terms of water efficiency, there is a clear need to ensure that the highest possible standards are in place, particularly given the likely effects of climate change. The Thames Water area is classed as a ‘water-stressed area’ by the Environment Agency, and the Thames River Basin Management Plan stresses the importance of demand management in the area. For clarity, the tighter water efficiency standard referred to here and set out in the Building Regulations is 110 litres per person per day.

### *Emissions*

**4.4.45** Reading’s Climate Change Strategy (Reading Means Business on Climate Change 2013-2020) sets challenging targets for tackling the Borough’s contribution to climate change, and aims to reduce Reading’s carbon footprint by 34% by 2020 in comparison to 2005 levels. One of the Strategy’s strategic principles is that buildings in Reading should be built to high standards of energy efficiency incorporating on-site renewable energy where possible. Given the scale of residential development in Reading up to 2036, achieving the aims of the Climate Change Strategy will not be possible without that development having a minimal impact on carbon emissions.

**4.4.46** Therefore, the requirement will be that major new housing is built to zero carbon homes standard. A revised Sustainable Design and Construction SPD to be produced in 2019 will contain more detail on achieving this requirement, but in general, where homes are not designed to be carbon neutral, this will mean as a minimum a 35% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the 2013 Building Regulations<sup>83</sup> plus a contribution of £1,800 per tonne towards carbon offsetting within Reading (calculated as £60 per tonne over a 30 year period). Where it is proposed to meet the zero carbon homes requirement in another way, clear evidence should be provided to demonstrate how it will be achieved at planning application stage. Zero carbon homes is an achievable standard that, until recently, was intended to be a national requirement in the Building Regulations. All other housing should be built to a level equivalent to the emissions requirement of former Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, which is a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations. Where the 19% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions cannot be achieved on site, an offset may be possible through planning contributions. Further guidance on such an off-set will follow the Local Plan.

### *Accessibility*

**4.4.47** There are two levels of ‘optional’ standards for accessibility. M4(2) of the Building Regulations is for accessible and adaptable dwellings, and relates to relatively straightforward design measures that can allow homes to be adaptable as the needs of the occupier change. In that sense, it is broadly in the same vein as Lifetime Homes, although not identical. M4(3) relates more specifically to wheelchair user housing. The specific requirements can be seen in the Part M approved document<sup>84</sup>. In terms of part M4(3), Part M distinguishes between ‘wheelchair accessible’ dwellings (which apply only where the Council is responsible for allocating or nominating an individual) and ‘wheelchair adaptable’ dwellings (which can apply to any homes), and the policy therefore reflects this distinction.

<sup>83</sup> The Building Regulations for England Approved Document L1A: Conservation of Fuel and Power in New Dwellings (2013 edition)

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m>

- 4.4.48** The requirements for wheelchair housing have been set at a level that would allow Reading to meet its expected requirement. The need for wheelchair user housing is expected to grow with an ageing population, and this has been factored into the requirements. In terms of accessible and adaptable homes, it is more difficult to identify a specific requirement. This standard is about more than addressing specific needs, rather it is a changing approach, which enables those who may not have specific needs now to remain in their homes as their circumstances change. Since it involves relatively simple design features, it is considered that 100% of new dwellings can be built to this standard without it being an overly onerous requirement.
- 4.4.49** In terms of applying the 5% requirement, where it would result in a fraction of a wheelchair user dwelling, provision should be to the nearest whole dwelling. For instance, 5% of a development of 35 homes would be 1.75, which should result in provision of two homes.

### Accommodation for Vulnerable People

#### **H6: ACCOMMODATION FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

- i) Provision will be made for at least an additional 253 residential care bedspaces for elderly people between 2013 and 2036, in addition to the overall housing need. Other specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will address the identified needs, which are primarily for accommodation that enables occupants to live as independently as possible, particularly for older people and people with physical disabilities.**
- ii) Development for specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will fulfil the following criteria:**
- **Developments will, where possible, locate accommodation close to, or incorporate, relevant community facilities, such as healthcare services, or day care for elderly people;**
  - **Where development would result in a loss of general housing, it must meet identified needs in the most up-to-date Housing Strategy and be able to accommodate at least an equivalent number of people;**
  - **Larger developments will include adequate provision for ambulance access;**
  - **Development will incorporate areas of green space, which are particularly important for many groups of vulnerable people;**
  - **Developments within residential areas will be designed to respect the residential character of their surroundings; and**
  - **Where a development requires a new physical link between buildings and where the gaps between buildings form part of the character of a street, the need for a linkage must be clearly demonstrated, and must avoid negative impacts on the character of the street.**
- iii) Development catering for people with limited mobility will fulfil the following criteria:**
- **Developments should be located within 400 metres of an identified district or local centre and a bus stop on a strategic bus route; and**
  - **Development should include secure storage for mobility scooters.**
- iv) Affordable specialist housing for vulnerable people that meets the needs of the most up to date Housing Strategy may count towards affordable housing provision in line with policy H3.**

such as granny annexes, can be one housing solution to some of these trends. However, this ancillary accommodation should not be a way of introducing new dwellings by stealth. Therefore, planning conditions and, where necessary, obligations will ensure that extra accommodation remains ancillary to the main dwelling. Ancillary accommodation could be considered a separate dwelling where it:

- Is self-sufficient in terms of facilities e.g. kitchens and bathrooms;
- Has its own front door without internal links to the main house; and/or
- Has its own external facilities, e.g. access, drive, garden; or has scope for these external facilities to be easily created.

- 4.4.77 There is a substantial amount of changes that a householder can now make to their property without needing planning permission. Whilst this policy cannot be applied to developments that do not need permission, it nevertheless serves as a useful guide on how to minimise effects of the development.
- 4.4.78 Some rear extensions, within certain size parameters, do not require planning permission, but rather need to apply for prior approval. If an adjoining neighbour objects to the application, the Council may determine the application on amenity grounds only. In these cases, the principal policy that will be used is CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity).
- 4.4.79 Where a house extension is proposed that would affect a listed or locally-listed building or its setting, the application should be determined in line with relevant policies for heritage (EN1, EN4 and EN6).

### Private and Communal Outdoor Space

#### **H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE**

*Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.*

*The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.*

- 4.4.80 Access to private or communal outdoor space can make a vital contribution to a high quality of life. In addition to providing opportunities for outdoor living and enjoyment, amenity space serves functional requirements, such as refuse storage and clothes drying. Outdoor amenity space includes private spaces such as gardens or courtyards (front, back and side), shared communal spaces, balconies and roof gardens.

- 4.4.81** Reading is a comparatively dense urban area, and recent high-density developments have accentuated this pattern. Against this background, the need to ensure that dwellings have sufficient private or communal outdoor space becomes vital to ensure that a high quality of life can be achieved. The need to require provision of private outdoor space was identified by a study of residential developments in Reading<sup>87</sup> as a key aspect of design quality, as has the need to make sure that it is clear which areas are private, which are communal, and which are public.
- 4.4.82** This policy also fits with other areas of the strategy. For instance, there is an identified requirement for housing which will be suitable for families, and good levels of outdoor space are a necessary element of such housing. In complying with policies on design, developments will have to respect spacing and openness where this forms part of the character of an area. Inevitably that may well dictate requirements for private and communal space. In addition, requirements for privacy, and other amenity considerations may dictate distances between properties that will result in spaces to provide for private and communal space.
- 4.4.83** Flats in central Reading will not require the same amount of outdoor space as houses in other parts of Reading, and the sites are usually more constrained in any case. This is because often the needs of residents within central Reading can be different to those of the rest of the Borough. Flats in central Reading<sup>88</sup> are less likely to attract families, and the ability to walk to public open space nearby reduces the need for private open space.
- 4.4.84** The policy does not just relate to development of new dwellings. Other types of development, such as the conversion of a house into flats, and house extensions that would result in a loss of outdoor space, will also be judged against the policy. Whilst conversions usually only have an existing level of space to work with, they will not be acceptable where they cannot comply with the policy.
- 4.4.85** It is important to read this policy in conjunction with Policy CC8 on safeguarding amenity and Policy H8 on residential conversions, as many of the planning issues associated with the provision of private or communal garden areas have implications in terms of potential impacts on neighbours and in respect of dwelling conversions. It should be noted that requirements in this policy are in addition to requirements for public open space under policy EN9.
- 4.4.86** In determining the appropriate level of private and communal open space for the new development, the constraints of the site and the extent of deprivation of public open space within the proposed scheme will be taken into consideration. Where communal open space provision may not be considered a necessary requirement for flats within Central Reading, suitable balconies and roof gardens should be provided.
- 4.4.87** In the past, the Council has sought the following minimum provisions for private or communal outdoor space for each type of accommodation, and they provide a useful guide for proposals:
- (a) Houses: Useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates (measured externally and including garage space).
  - (b) Flats outside central Reading:

<sup>87</sup> Residential Design and Quality of Life in Reading, Roger Evans Associates and the Survey Shop, 2007

<sup>88</sup> Central Reading refers to the area shown on the Proposals Map

- 1 and 2-bedroom: 25 sq m per flat
- 3 or more bedrooms: 40 sq m per flat
- Sheltered units: 20 sq m per unit

(c) Development in central Reading will not always be expected to comply with the standards set above. Open space is nonetheless required, unless exceptional circumstances prevail, to accommodate modest sitting out areas and clothes drying facilities.

### Development of Private Residential Gardens

#### **H11: DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL GARDENS**

*Proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:*

- 1) *The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:*
  - *The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;*
  - *A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage;*
  - *Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc;*
  - *Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area;*
  - *The materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary;*
  - *The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.*
- 2) *The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking;*
- 3) *The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;*
- 4) *The proposal does not lead to tandem development<sup>89</sup>;*
- 5) *The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;*
- 6) *The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;*
- 7) *The emphasis is on the provision of family-sized housing;*

<sup>89</sup> 'Tandem development' is used to describe a dwelling built behind another, the rear building having no frontage and being accessed by a private roadway or track alongside the front building.

## 4.5 Transport

### Achieving the Transport Strategy

#### TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

*Proposed development should contribute appropriately to meeting the objectives of the most up-to-date Local Transport Plan or any successor document, including sub-strategies, specific projects identified and the local action plans.*

*Planning permission will not be granted for major development proposals unless there is a commitment to implement measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, such as through provision to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport; and through agreed travel plans, safe routes to local facilities and services, including schools and parks, and similar measures.*

*All development proposals should make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with any agreed transport assessment submitted as part of the application.*

- 4.5.1 The Council's objectives for transport set out in the Local Transport Plan (2011-2026)<sup>92</sup> are: -
- To facilitate more physically active travel for journeys in a healthy environment;
  - To improve personal safety on the transport network;
  - To provide affordable, accessible and inclusive travel options for everyone;
  - To ensure that the transport network operates safely and efficiently to meet the needs of all users;
  - To align transport and land use planning to enable sustainable travel choices, improve mobility, reduce the need to travel and preserve the natural environment;
  - To deliver balanced packages of value for money transport solutions and make best use of existing transport investment;
  - To offer sustainable transport choices for the Travel to Work Area and beyond, integrating within and between different types of transport;
  - To improve journey times, journey time reliability and the availability of information; and
  - To reduce carbon emissions from transport, improve air quality and create a transport network which supports a mobile, affordable low-carbon future.
- 4.5.2 New development has a vital role to play in helping to achieve those objectives. The scale of development envisaged in Reading up to 2036 would have significant impacts on the transport system, in addition to the general forecast growth in trips arising from the existing population. The predicted growth in trips can only be accommodated through major investment in transport, particularly sustainable modes. New development should make appropriate provision for works that contribute to the programmes developed as part of the strategy, either directly or through making appropriate contributions.
- 4.5.3 Major developments (10 dwellings or 1,000 sq m of non-residential floorspace or more) can make a particular contribution to achieving the strategy. In these cases, it is important that users of, and visitors to the development can make sustainable travel choices using non-car

<sup>92</sup> [http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/2421/Local-Transport-Plan-2011-26/pdf/Local\\_Transport\\_Plan\\_2011-26.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/2421/Local-Transport-Plan-2011-26/pdf/Local_Transport_Plan_2011-26.pdf)

modes of transport. This should include provision that enables and supports walking, cycling and the use of public transport including from the development. For developments that are likely to have significant transport implications, Travel Plans will be sought. These will involve undertakings from developers and occupiers to implement measures for promoting and supporting the use of sustainable transport, in accordance with best practice. Measures will vary from scheme to scheme, and innovative solutions will be encouraged. Travel Plans should include robust measures to ensure that the proposals in them are implemented, monitored and reviewed as necessary. Major residential proposals should also examine and include proposals to enable the promotion and support of safe routes to schools, as well as sustainable travel to local services and facilities, including access to and provision of public transport.

- 4.5.4 All developments will be assessed for their impact upon the transport network, including the local and trunk road and motorway networks and, where relevant, the rail network. Development should provide mitigation measures in line with their impacts on these networks, taking account of levels of development that have already been accepted, and mitigation measures that have already been agreed or implemented. It will be a condition of planning permission that appropriate measures are in place to secure any remedial transport measures required. Where necessary, a transport assessment of the scheme will be required. This will measure the impacts both of the development proposal and of any remedial measures proposed by the developer to address those impacts. Once a satisfactory package of remedial measures has been negotiated, contributions may be sought from developers to secure their delivery.
- 4.5.5 Contributions to a general package of transport improvements in Reading will continue to be made through the Community Infrastructure Levy, but contributions in Section 106 agreements will also have a role to play where there are site-specific issues that need to be addressed, e.g. junction improvements, new pedestrian crossings, additional cycle facilities, new public transport infrastructure, or inclusion of land for a transport scheme.
- 4.5.6 The current Local Transport Plan covers the period 2011-2026, but this policy applies to any subsequent plans that may be published. A new version of the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) is in production in 2019, and this will need to consider both additional capacity and demand management measures.

### Major Transport Projects

#### **TR2: MAJOR TRANSPORT PROJECTS**

*Priority will be given to the implementation of the major transport projects identified in the Local Transport Plan (or any successor document) and other identified major transport projects. Land required for these projects will be safeguarded where necessary. These will include:*

- *Mass Rapid Transit*
- *Park and Ride sites*
- *Green Park station and interchange*
- *Reading West station upgrade*
- *Cow Lane bridges*
- *Crossing of the River Thames*
- *National Cycle Network Route 422*
- *Development of high-quality bus services*

### M4 Smart Motorway

4.5.12 Development consent was granted by the Secretary of State in September 2016 for the M4 Smart Motorway project between junctions 3 and 12 of the M4. The scheme uses technology to manage traffic flow, providing better information to drivers and converting the hard shoulder to a traffic lane. Works are expected to take place between 2017 and 2022<sup>94</sup>. Within Reading Borough, works are expected to largely be within the envelope of the existing motorway and junction, as shown on the Proposals Map.

### Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

#### **TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS**

*In determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment.*

*Development will only be permitted where:-*

- i) Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;*
- ii) The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;*
- iii) The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;*
- iv) The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and*
- v) For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.*

*Proposals involving either the construction of a new site access, or a material increase in the use of an existing site access, directly onto the Classified Highway Network will not be acceptable if they would be likely to result in the encouragement of the use of the network for short local trips or compromise the safe movement and free flow of traffic on the network or the safe use of the road.*

4.5.13 Reading is a dense urban Borough, containing a broad variety of uses. It has a thriving economy and is a net importer of labour. These factors mean that Reading's transport network is often under significant pressure, and the impacts of new developments therefore require careful management, particularly in terms of new accesses and the effects of additional traffic generation.

<sup>94</sup> For more information, see <http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/m4-junctions-3-12-smart-motorway/#project>

- 4.5.14 It is important to ensure that proposals will not interfere with the free flow of traffic on the highway and that there would be no risk to the safety of people using that road including vulnerable groups such as pedestrians (including mobility-impaired users), cyclists and motorcyclists. The proximity of other accesses is also significant. In particular, creating new access points onto the Classified Highway Network, or changing the nature of an existing access or the type of traffic using the access, is likely to bring about risks to the safety of road users and increase traffic volumes. Where an existing area of the network already exceeds its operational capacity, proposals involving a new site access and/or additional trips likely to worsen the existing situation will not normally be permitted, unless the proposals provide improvements to the transport infrastructure which significantly reduce the effects of potential private car borne trips on the network.
- 4.5.15 The Council has produced a policy on accesses, which deals particularly with residential accesses onto classified roads, and commercial accesses onto all adopted roads<sup>95</sup>. The policy, adopted in 2011, endorses the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets (for lightly trafficked roads within urban areas) and the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (for access and junction improvements to classified roads from residential developments and to the entire road network for commercial developments). It is too detailed to reproduce here, but compliance with it, or any replacement, is essential. It follows national guidance that avoids access onto main roads wherever possible.
- 4.5.16 The Classified Highway Network is defined by the highways authority, and includes a number of main roads not classified as A or B roads. The Network at the time of this plan is shown on the Proposals Map, but it may change within the plan period, so the Council's website should be checked for the latest position.

### Cycle Routes and Facilities

#### **TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES**

*Developments will be expected to make full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development and to integrate cycling through the provision of new facilities. Development of new facilities for cycling, such as cycle hire points and cycle parking, will be acceptable.*

*The cycle routes identified in the most up-to-date Cycling Strategy will be maintained, enhanced and added to or extended. Development will not detrimentally affect an identified cycle route. Where opportunities exist, improvements to that route, including the provision of connecting routes, and/or cycling facilities will be sought within developments or through planning contributions.*

- 4.5.17 Cycling is one of the most sustainable forms of transport, and forms an important part of Reading's transport strategy. Opportunities to continue to promote cycling, and enhance important routes, should be seized.

<sup>95</sup> Geometric Design Guidance for Residential Accesses onto Classified Roads and Commercial Accesses onto Adopted Roads (Version 2), approved July 2011.

- 4.5.18** The Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 is supported by a full Cycling Strategy, published in 2014. This seeks to enhance cycling in Reading through:
- “new and improved cycle infrastructure that will aim to bridge gaps between existing barriers, including the railway and River Thames
  - cycle hire will give people that do not currently have access to a bicycle the opportunity to cycle to key destinations
  - increased cycle parking facilities to enable people to park closer to more key destinations
  - positively promoting the benefits of cycling in a compact urban area such as Reading.”<sup>96</sup>
- 4.5.19** The Cycling Strategy 2014 continues and builds upon the cycle routes developed as part of the 2008 strategy by identifying detailed policies for delivering infrastructure and route improvements for cyclists on the public highway to enhance the routes. The relevant routes are shown on the Proposals Map, and the Policy therefore applies to these routes. If an updated Cycling Strategy or supporting cycle map shows a different network of cycle routes, these will become the routes to which this policy applies.
- 4.5.20** The measures which the strategy identifies in different areas include minor improvements, new links, maintenance, branding and signing. The Cycling Strategy and the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will be useful to help identify which improvements are required.
- 4.5.21** In addition, a cycle hire scheme was initially introduced in central, north, south and east Reading in 2014. There is the potential for this scheme to be expanded to key destinations in west Reading during the plan period, and this should be supported, subject to compliance with other policies in this Plan.
- 4.5.22** Reading is working with the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and neighbouring authorities to provide additional strategic cycle routes as part of the NCN (National Cycle Network) and to provide enhanced linkages between the NCN and local cycle routes within the Borough.

### Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

#### **TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING**

***Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.***

***Development should make the following provision for electric vehicle charging points:***

- ***All new houses with dedicated off-street parking should provide charging points;***
- ***Within communal car parks for residential or non-residential developments of at least 10 spaces, 10% of spaces should provide an active charging point.***

- 4.5.23** Ensuring the appropriate level of car parking in new developments involves striking a careful balance. On the one hand, it is important that enough parking is provided so that there is not a

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1065/Revised-Parking-Standards-and-Design-Supplementary-Planning-Document-Adopted-October-2011/pdf/Revised-Parking-Standards-And-Design-Supplementary-Planning-DocumentOct11.pdf>

knock-on effect on the safety and function of the highway and public transport network through on-street parking. On the other hand, an over-provision of car parking, particularly at places of work, can lead to less sustainable travel choices.

- 4.5.24 The Council has produced a Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)<sup>97</sup>, which includes different standards in four different zones according to the accessibility of those zones. The SPD also sets out requirements for cycle parking. The document is available on the Council's website. It will continue to apply, until such time as it is superseded by any more up-to-date version.
- 4.5.25 Reading has local air quality issues linked to traffic and congestion, which are highlighted in reference to policy EN15 on air quality. Increased use of low-emissions vehicles would make a major contribution to tackling this issue, as well as helping to tackle carbon emissions. However, one of the main barriers to increased use of low-emissions vehicles is the lack of supporting infrastructure. Therefore, new development should make adequate provision for electric vehicle charging points. Where a house has its own off-street parking, this can be a relatively simple design measure factored into the construction, and should generally be achievable in all cases. Elsewhere, where at least 10 spaces are provided, 10% of spaces should contain active charging points.

## Walking

- 4.5.26 The Council is committed to encouraging sustainable travel choices and to improving the accessibility and quality of sustainable travel infrastructure. Walking is essential for achieving door-to-door journeys and is the dominant mode for movements into and out of central Reading. Outside the central area, walking is one of the main means of travelling to local destinations and forms a key element of wider local journeys made by public transport. Challenges including the provision of local facilities and services, such as shops, schools and healthcare, personal security, attractiveness of public realm as well as footway parking are to be overcome in order to encourage more people to consider walking for local journeys. There is not therefore a specific policy on walking, but consideration of walking has informed many elements of the whole plan. The Council will continue to improve and expand the existing walking infrastructure and provide quality links in order to cater for future demand.

<sup>97</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1065/Revised-Parking-Standards-and-Design-Supplementary-Planning-Documents-Adopted-October-2011/pdf/Revised-Parking-Standards-And-Design-Supplementary-Planning-DocumentsOct11.pdf>

## 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.***

- 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*

a case-by-case basis to protect visual amenity. The most recent report (2015) sets the following levels (applicable to measurements at night):

Illuminate Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Zone E1 (candelas/m <sup>2</sup> )	Zone E2 (candelas/m <sup>2</sup> )	Zone E3 (candelas/m <sup>2</sup> )	Zone E4 (candelas/m <sup>2</sup> )
Up to 10.00	100	400	600	600
Over 10.00	N/A	200	300	300

(Source: Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements, Institute of Lighting Professionals, 2015).

4.7.30 The zones are described as:

- Zone E1: Intrinsically dark areas.
- Zone E2: Low district brightness areas (e.g. rural-urban fringe).
- Zone E3: Medium district brightness areas (e.g. district and local centres and urban areas).
- Zone E4: High district brightness areas (e.g. the core of the centre).

In some circumstances, particularly where listed buildings and conservation areas are concerned, illumination levels may need to be reduced, although this will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Please see the comments in paragraph 4.7.26 about illumination.

4.7.31 There is an overlap between this policy and OU5 on shopfronts, and, in some cases, both policies will apply.

### Shopfronts and Cash Machines

#### **OU5: SHOPFRONTS AND CASH MACHINES**

*Shopfronts, individual features of shopfronts and cash machines will respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street, in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and street will be retained and, where possible, restored. Safety and security will be maintained and enhanced.*

*For shopfronts, the following criteria will be fulfilled:*

- a) New shopfronts on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;*
- b) Where a shop occupies multiple units, shopfronts will not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost;*
- c) Fascia boards should be lower than any first floor windows, and reflect the predominant height of historic fascia boards on surrounding buildings;*
- d) Canopies and blinds over windows and entrances should be for the shading of the shop and should be retractable; and*
- e) Shopfronts should present an active frontage to the street at all times. Where security is essential, security features will be internal, such as internal open mesh grilles. Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint and films, will be minimised and will not obscure the window.*

4.7.32 Reading has many good examples of shopfronts, both traditional and modern. To ensure that the heritage character and amenity of the Borough is maintained, the design of shopfronts is

vital. The character of a shopping street is often defined by its shopfronts. Given the success of Reading as a shopping destination, many visitors experience Reading mainly as shoppers, and it is therefore important that shopfronts do not detract from this experience.

- 4.7.33** The overall composition of multiple shopfronts is often of greatest importance, and features such as stallrisers, pilasters and fascia boards can contribute to the character of the building as well as to the streetscape, and should be retained where they already exist. Such features should be included in new shopfronts where they are part of the character of the street. Fixed canopies can obscure such features and are usually inappropriate. Merging of shopfronts can negatively affect the pattern of the street, and, where shop units are combined, the pattern can be maintained by having a gap in the fascia boards and a strong separation between the exterior of the two units by a pilaster or a column.
- 4.7.34** Security is an important consideration and the Council does not seek to hinder the ability of businesses to protect their property. However, in recent years, many shopfronts have been secured by external, solid roller doors. These are often a cheap and easy solution for security, but have detrimental effects on the shopfront and streetscape, presenting a blank wall to pedestrians and reducing natural surveillance. Other methods of security, such as lattice grilles and internal shutters are more appropriate as they still provide the necessary security but also create a more open frontage and allow light spillage after dark. In recent years, there have also been a number of cases where shop windows have been obscured by opaque material, which can have a negative effect on the vitality of the whole street and is not appropriate. Shopfronts should remain active during both the day and night.
- 4.7.35** Safety and security will be a prime consideration in the location of cash machines, which should be located in well-lit, busy areas, away from dark corners or recesses.

## 5.3 General Policies for Central Reading

### Definition of Central Reading

#### **CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING**

*The Central Area boundary as shown on the Proposals Map will mark the edge of the town centre other than where specified. However, for the purposes of application of the sequential test for main town centre uses, the following definitions as defined on the Proposals Map are used:*

- *Retail development will take place in the Primary Shopping Area;*
- *Major office development of over 1,000 sq m will take place in the Office Core; and*
- *Other main town centre uses will take place in the Central Core.*

- 5.3.1 The policy identifies the boundaries of the town centre for the purposes of applying the sequential test, as set out in paragraph 86 of the NPPF. These boundaries are distinct from the boundary of ‘Central Reading’ as the area covered by section 5. Need has been identified for additional main town centre uses (see section 4.6) and the overall strategy is that the centre of Reading should be the main location for such main town centre uses. The spatial strategy for Central Reading (section 5.2) and the guidelines on Major Opportunity Areas (policies CR11-13) 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.
- 5.3.2 The primary shopping area should be the focus for new retail investment. It will be the first location to be examined in applying the sequential approach to identifying sites for retail proposals, in line with the NPPF.
- 5.3.3 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 RL2, and involves concentration mainly on the centre. An office core and a central 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.
- 5.3.4 It should be emphasised that the designation of, for example, a primary shopping area, does not mean that other types of development will not also be acceptable within this area. Mixing uses within the centre is at the heart of the strategy. The policy is purely in place to allow the application of the sequential test.

### Design in Central Reading

#### **CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING**

*Applications for development within Central Reading 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 landscaped areas, and public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;***
- c. Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;***
- d. 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;***
- e. 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; and***
- f. Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.***

- 5.3.5** Part of the strategy for Central Reading is to achieve a distinctive high quality environment, by integrating 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 help to cement its role as a modern and exciting 21<sup>st</sup> Century centre.
- 5.3.6** The role of high-quality urban design in achieving the vision for the centre is therefore clear. This Local Plan includes general policies that will be applicable everywhere, including Central Reading, including on matters such as design and the historic environment. As the largest concentration of heritage assets in the Borough, policies on heritage will in particular be highly relevant in the centre. In addition, the issue of urban design has been integrated into the whole Central Reading section, as it is not an entirely area-specific issue. However, there is a need for a policy to highlight those elements of the design issue specific to Central Reading.
- 5.3.7** A City Centre Framework was published in 2002 which set out an urban design framework for the central area. This was updated in 2008<sup>106</sup>, and this work, along with the wide variety of documents produced for individual areas within the centre, has provided the basis for much of the Central Reading section of the Local Plan.
- 5.3.8** Policy CR2 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’, which 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 through changes of use. Buildings

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/2857/City-Centre-Framework-2008/pdf/City-Centre-Framework-2008.pdf>

that are highly tailored to one particular use, would not be able to achieve this. Using urban 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

- 5.3.9 Ensuring that the design and construction of new developments is sustainable in nature is an essential element of the strategy for Reading, and the Local Plan provides for this through Policies CC2 and H5. 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 or green walls will enhance the biodiversity value of developments in the centre, and other measures such as swift boxes may be appropriate to the town 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.

### Public Realm in Central Reading

#### **CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING**

*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 Reading 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 expected, where appropriate;*
- iii. Development proposals adjacent to or in close proximity to a watercourse will retain and not impede existing continuous public access to and along the watercourses, and will provide legible continuous public access to and along the watercourses where this does not currently exist;*
- iv. The design of developments adjacent to a watercourse, including the refurbishment of existing buildings, will be required to enhance the appearance of the watercourses and to provide active elevations facing the watercourses. Development that turns its back on the watercourses and results in blank or mundane elevations facing the watercourses will not be permitted;*
- v. The public realm should conserve and enhance the historic environment of the centre and the significance of heritage assets therein and their setting, including through*

*layout, materials, hard and soft landscaping. There may be opportunities for areas of public realm to provide improved access to and visibility for heritage assets.*

*Pedestrianisation, traffic management and/or environmental enhancements will continue to be implemented on appropriate streets.*

- 5.3.10 Open space and well-designed areas of public realm are key contributors to the character of any area, and this applies particularly to large built-up areas such as Reading. Such areas provide opportunities for informal sports and recreation, community focal points and meeting places and space for events to take place.
- 5.3.11 Reading benefits from some substantial areas of open space close to the town centre along the Thames, and some high-quality but smaller areas such as Forbury Gardens. Increasingly, the town centre is seeing new and improved town squares and similar spaces, with the provision of squares at the north and south entrance to the new station, and recent improvements to Market Place and Town Hall Square. Additional open space or generous public realm such as town squares or wider streets that can have multiple functions 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 landscaping and green infrastructure, and wider streets that act as open space.
- 5.3.12 Reading's watercourses are also major assets 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 Local Plan. It is essential that public access along watercourses is retained and expanded in the central area. Policy EN11 deals specifically with development close to watercourses, and applies to development across Reading, including the central area. Policy EN12 relates to biodiversity and the green network, with Reading's watercourses forming significant ecological assets. These policies highlight the importance of development enhancing the watercourses as important habitats, and this applies equally in the centre.

### **Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading**

#### **CR4: LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM IN CENTRAL READING**

*The Central Core will be the prime focus for major leisure, cultural and tourism development<sup>107</sup>. Leisure, cultural and tourism uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged. Innovative solutions to leisure provision will be encouraged, particularly those that make best use of available (often limited) site area.*

*The River Thames is a prime location for new or improved tourist attractions, and as such, this area is suitable for informal recreation and sporting uses and associated small-scale development, as well as improvements to management and access. Development or improvements in this area will be expected to add to or maintain the setting and character of the Thames and to conserve and enhance ecological value.*

<sup>107</sup> Leisure, cultural and tourism development are those uses within the 'main town centre uses' defined in the NPPF

- 5.3.13** This policy refers to those leisure, culture and tourism uses that are defined as ‘main town centre uses’ in the NPPF, 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 there are substantial opportunities within Central Reading to accommodate leisure and cultural uses, as well as new visitor accommodation. Policy RL2 directs major leisure, culture and tourism uses to Central Reading, and CR1 defines the Central Core as the most suitable part of the centre.
- 5.3.14** 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. 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.
- 5.3.15** In all cases, new leisure development 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. 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.
- 5.3.16** 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 integration of these uses with existing developments will be encouraged, provided they do not give rise to adverse impacts on amenity.
- 5.3.17** 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.

### Drinking Establishments in Central Reading

#### **CR5: DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS IN CENTRAL READING**

*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.*

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

- 5.3.18** 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.

- 5.3.19 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 CR4 on leisure uses includes many uses which will widen the evening offer, and the policy on drinking establishments should be read in conjunction with that 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.
- 5.3.20 Drinking establishments are included within ‘main town centre uses’, and therefore proposals for new facilities will need to follow a sequential approach in line with the NPPF and policy CR1. The preference in this approach is for a location within the Central Core where there will be fewer detrimental impacts on residential areas, and where those externalities that do result can be better managed and contained.
- 5.3.21 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. Evening uses will still be expected to mitigate impacts on amenity, including anti-social behaviour and crime.

### Living in Central Reading

#### **CR6: LIVING IN CENTRAL READING**

*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/studios, 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 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) In meeting the requirement to provide affordable housing, in the central area an over-concentration of social renting for single persons will be avoided.*
- iv) 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.*

- 5.3.22** 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, with 7,600 new homes expected to 2036.
- 5.3.23** 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 therefore ensures 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, developments should not be dominated by one-bedroom units, 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 (2016) highlighted the need for a range of dwelling sizes.
- 5.3.24** 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.
- 5.3.25** 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 CC2 or H5. 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, where it is in compliance with the CIL Regulations.
- 5.3.26** 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 H3 on affordable housing. However, the policy seeks a proportion 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.
- 5.3.27** 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.

### Primary Frontages in Central Reading

#### **CR7: PRIMARY FRONTAGES IN CENTRAL READING**

*Uses on the ground floor along the designated primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map 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 primary 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.*

*Proposals that would result in the loss of A1 or A2 use such that the proportion of the length of frontage within the street in A1 or A2 use falls below 50% will not be permitted, unless the proposal introduces a use that makes a positive contribution to the overall diversity of the centre. 50% of new primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map should be in A1/A2 use.*

- 5.3.28** 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. Ensuring that uses contain frontage onto the street is essential in creating safe places and spaces, and making areas feel well-used.
- 5.3.29** Primary frontages (most of which are existing, but some will be created through new development) are illustrated on the Proposals Map. Whilst a wide range of uses, such as housing, are generally appropriate in the centre, the primary frontage should be occupied by those uses that make the greatest contribution to the vibrancy of the centre. These 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. 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.

## Terraced Housing in Central Reading

### **CR9: TERRACED HOUSING IN CENTRAL READING**

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

- **CR9a: Blakes Cottages**
- **CR9b: Crane Wharf**
- **CR9c: Queen's Cottages**
- **CR9d: Sackville Street & Vachel Road**
- **CR9e: Stanshawe Road**

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

- 5.3.33** The centre of Reading contains a number of small groupings of traditional terraced housing within the Inner Distribution Road. These areas make a unique 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 Local Plan a more appropriate mechanism than designation as conservation areas.
- 5.3.34** 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.

## Tall Buildings

### **CR10: 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:**

- CR10a: Station Area Cluster**
- CR10b: Western Grouping**
- CR10c: Eastern Grouping**

*Figure 5.2 gives an ‘at a glance’ diagrammatic indication of the principles for each area set out in the following sections.*

**ii) CR10a, 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:*

- *Follow a pattern of the tallest buildings 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) CR10b, Western Grouping:**

*A secondary cluster of tall buildings would be appropriate to create a distinctive grouping, to mark the area as the civic heart of Reading and a gateway to the centre.*

*Tall buildings in this area should:*

- *Contribute to the development of a cluster of tall buildings that is clearly subservient to the Station Area Cluster;*
- *Be generally lower in height than the tallest buildings planned for the Station Area Cluster;*
- *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) CR10c, 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 has recently been developed (The Blade), 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;*
  - *Conserve and, where possible, 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;*
  - *Consider innovative ways of providing green infrastructure, such as green walls, green roofs and roof gardens;*
  - *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 daylight and sunlight 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.*

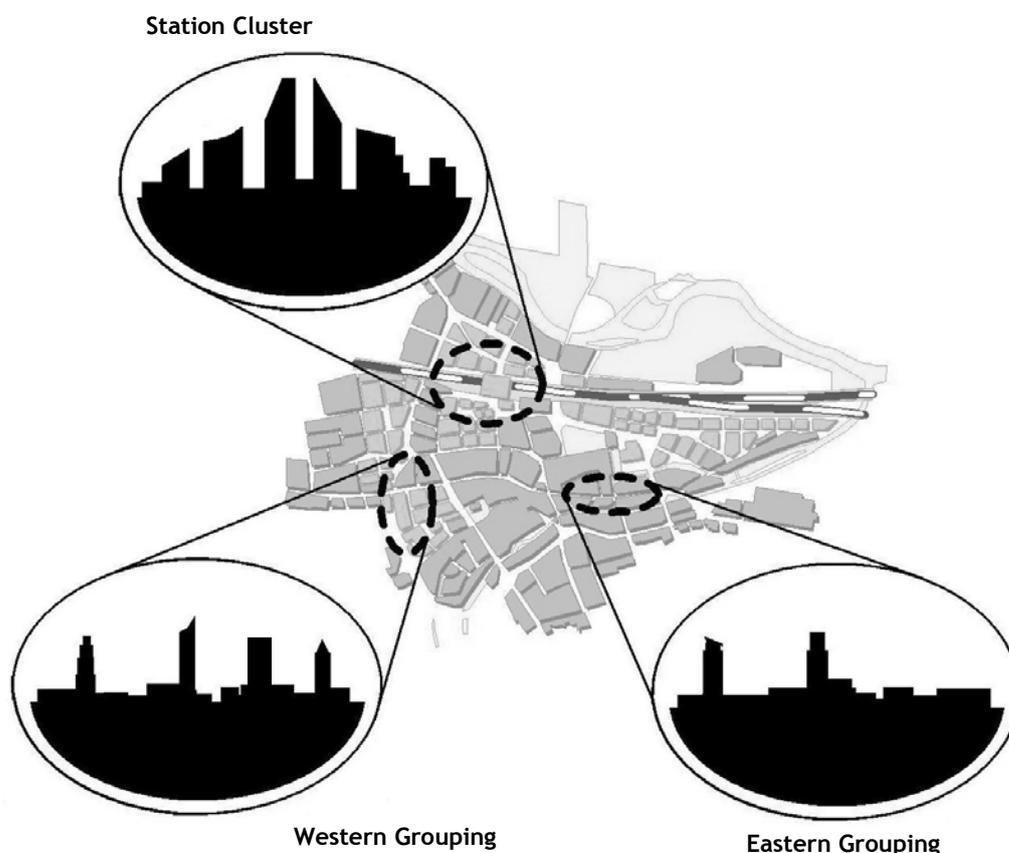
**5.3.35** The vision for Reading seeks to build on the status of central Reading as the dynamic and creative core of the capital of the Thames Valley. Tall buildings have an important part to play in achieving this. They have a symbolic role in marking the centre out as a regionally-significant hub 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.

**5.3.36** 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. A Tall Buildings Strategy was

produced in March 2008, and is available on the Council's website<sup>109</sup>.

- 5.3.37** 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.
- 5.3.38** 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.
- 5.3.39** 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.

**Figure 5.2:** Diagrammatic indicative representation of the differing approach to tall buildings in each area



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<sup>109</sup> [www.reading.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.reading.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

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 delivered at Reading Station.

- 5.3.40 The western and eastern groupings are located at the extents of the business area, and each will be signified by a smaller grouping of tall buildings, with a more residential emphasis.
- 5.3.41 The area-specific guidelines set out in CR10 parts (ii), (iii) and (iv) are illustrated in Figure 5.2, 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.

### *Skyline and views*

- 5.3.42 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 CR10. 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.
- 5.3.43 The contribution that tall buildings can make to views in terms of their locations should also be taken into account. Aligning tall buildings to terminate or frame views can create a strong reference point, allowing greater urban legibility.
- 5.3.44 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, the Whitley Street area to the south and Wokingham Road to the east.

### *Street environment*

- 5.3.45 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; and
  - Providing green infrastructure for a comfortable microclimate, cleaner air and visual interest.

### *Sustainable design and construction*

**5.3.46** 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 CC2 or H5. 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.

### *Wind and solar effects of tall buildings*

**5.3.47** 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. Wind should be assessed against the Lawson Criteria. Sunlight and daylight should meet the criteria outlined in the ‘Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a guide to good practice’, published by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and the British Standard Code of Practice for Daylighting (BS8206-2).

**5.3.48** 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.

**5.3.49** 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)<sup>110</sup> has guidelines on assessing daylight and sunlight effects of development, which the Council will apply flexibly given the high density of the central area.

### *Other issues*

**5.3.50** 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. All developments will need to comply with the Civil Aviation Authority’s aerodrome safeguarding criteria, where buildings should be below 242 metres AOD.

**5.3.51** Given 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 Historic England’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.

<sup>110</sup> [www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk)

## 5.4 Central Reading Site-Specific Policies

### 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 the new station and public transport interchange. It will integrate the transport links and areas northwards towards the River Thames and into the heart of the centre.*

#### **CR11: 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 and capitalise on its role as one of the most accessible locations in the south east. Development for education will be an acceptable part of the mix;**
- ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, particularly on the key movement corridors. North-south links through the area centred on the new station, including across the IDR, 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 mass rapid transit routes and stops;**
- v) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, with green infrastructure, including a direct landscaped link between the station and the River Thames;**
- vi) Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conserve and, where possible, enhance listed buildings, conservation areas and historic gardens and their settings;**
- vii) Give careful consideration to the archaeological potential of the area and be supported by appropriate archaeological assessment which should inform the development;**
- viii) Demonstrate that it is part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of this policy, and which contributes towards the provision of policy requirements that benefit the whole area, such as open space; and**
- ix) Give early consideration to the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.**

**Development of the station and interchange was completed in 2015. Development in surrounding areas will be in line with the following provisions for each sub-area:**

**CR11a, 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. Listed buildings and their settings in the area will be conserved, and opportunities to improve the environment of Merchants Place will be sought.*

*Site size: 1.36 ha      Indicative potential: 150-270 dwellings, offices, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed)*

**CR11b, GREYFRIARS ROAD CORNER:**

*There will be active retail and leisure uses on the ground floor along Friar Street, with a mix of uses on higher floors and in the rest of the area. The edge of the site nearest to the areas of traditional terracing west of Greyfriars Road will require careful design treatment.*

*Site size: 0.37 ha      Indicative potential: 90-140 dwellings, offices, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed)*

**CR11c, STATION HILL & FRIARS WALK:**

*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 site, including in a north-south direction into the Station Hill area and through to the station, 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.*

*Site size: 2.87 ha      Indicative potential: 380-570 dwellings, 80,000-100,000 sq m of offices, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed)*

**CR11d, BRUNEL ARCADE AND APEX PLAZA**

*This area will be developed for a mix of uses at high density, including residential and/or offices. Retail and/or leisure uses will activate the ground floor facing the southern station square. Development should seek to enhance the setting of nearby heritage assets, and views from within the conservation area and Forbury Gardens should be carefully considered.*

*Site size: 1.51 ha      Indicative potential: 250-380 dwellings, 3,000-5,000 sq m net gain of offices, 1,000-2,000 sq m net gain of retail and leisure*

**CR11e, NORTH OF STATION:**

*There will be retail and leisure development on the ground floor activating the streets and spaces including the new northern station square, with other uses including residential and offices on upper floors. Retail will have good pedestrian links to, and will not have a detrimental impact on, the rest of the retail core of the centre. Public car parking will be provided. A high quality route incorporating a green link should be provided through to the Thames. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment, and should consider opportunities to open up the culverted Vastern Ditch and enhance it as an ecological feature.*

*Site size: 6.71 ha      Indicative potential: 640-960 dwellings, 50,000-80,000 sq m net gain of offices, 3,000-6,000 sq m net gain of retail and leisure, hotel.*

**CR11f: WEST OF CAVERSHAM ROAD:**

*This area will be developed for residential with on-site open space. Densities will be lower than elsewhere in the Station/River area to reflect the proximity to low-rise residential areas, and the edge of the site nearest to the areas of terracing will require careful design treatment and respect the historic context of areas to the west. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

Site size: 0.92 ha      Indicative potential: 75-115 dwellings.

**CR11g, RIVERSIDE:**

*Development should maintain and enhance public access along and to the Thames, and should be set back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river. Development should continue the high quality route including a green link from the north of the station to the Christchurch Bridge, with potential for an area of open space at the riverside. The main use of the site should be residential, although some small-scale leisure and complementary offices will also be acceptable. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

Site size: 1.24 ha      Indicative potential: 250-370 dwellings, 1,000-2,000 sq m of leisure, no significant net gain in offices.

**CR11h, 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. Land on the Napier Road frontage will be safeguarded for Mass Rapid Transit. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

Site size: 0.49 ha      Indicative potential: 200-300 dwellings, 2,000-3,000 sq m of retail or commercial.

**CR11i, NAPIER COURT:**

*This area will be developed for residential. The design must avoid detrimental effects on the adjacent Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature, and building heights should reduce from west to east across the site. Land on the Napier Road frontage will be safeguarded for Mass Rapid Transit. Development of the Network Rail depot will be dependent on an alternative location at the railway triangle to the west of the centre becoming available. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

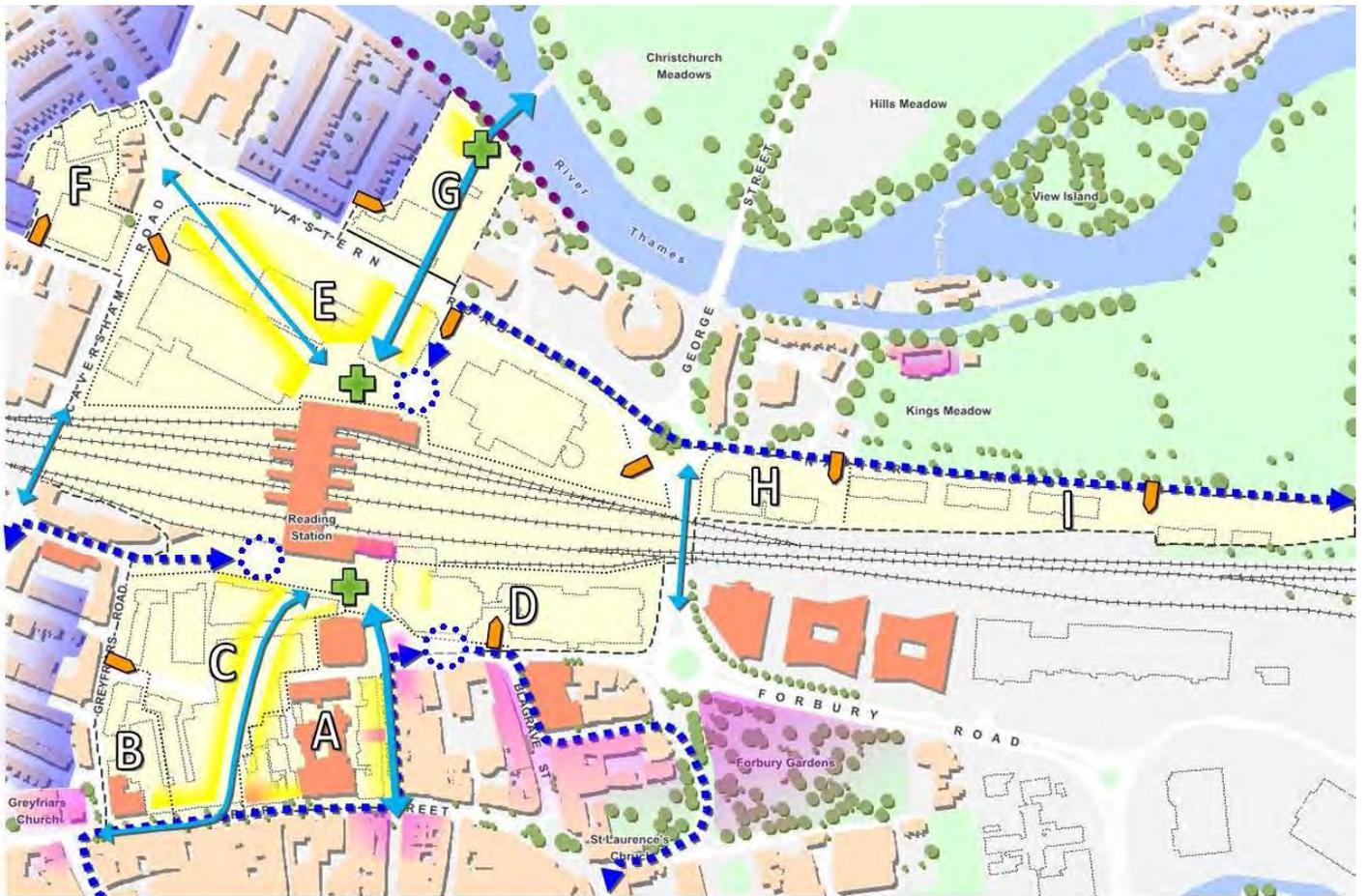
Site size: 1.62 ha      Indicative potential: 210-310 dwellings.

- 5.4.1 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 parts of the surrounding area on foot, particularly north of the station.
- 5.4.2 The area has recently been transformed with the completion of the Reading Station project in 2015, including the opening of the new station in 2014. As well as removing a bottleneck on the

national rail network, it has significantly improved passenger capacity, vastly improved the local environment around the station and improved north-south linkages through opening of the underpass. The arrival of the Elizabeth Line at Reading, timetabled for 2019, will further enhance the accessibility of the area. This provides a strong impetus for development of the surrounding sites, and gives an 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. These guidelines should ensure that the area continues to develop in a comprehensive manner, and is brought into the core of the centre.

- 5.4.3 The development of the wider station area allows the significant improvement of north-south links through the centre, and offers the opportunity to expand the core of the centre northwards to help meet development needs.
- 5.4.4 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 and activate streets and spaces, 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 health infrastructure.
- 5.4.5 Policy CR11 includes some figures for indicative development capacity. It should be noted that, to an even greater extent than other areas, development capacity can vary significantly on high density town centre sites, and these figures are therefore an indication only. Of greatest importance will be the creation of a high-quality, well-designed mixed use destination, and there is potential for development figures to vary in order to achieve this aim.
- 5.4.6 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 spatial strategy of the centre, 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 opening of the underpass under the station and the provision of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the Thames have recently helped to achieve this vision, but further improvements can still be made. 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. In particular, on the Riverside site (CR11g), achieving this north-south link is the main priority for the site, and this should be given substantial weight in development management.
- 5.4.7 Improving public transport access to the centre, particularly the station and public transport interchange, is vital, and the provision of a mass rapid transit system linking the centre and station to park and ride sites is a key aspect of Reading's transport strategy. In this area this will mainly be on existing streets, but in some cases there may be requirements in terms of land, and it should be ensured that development does not prejudice the delivery of MRT or other major transport schemes. 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.

5.4.8 Parts of the area around the station are appropriate for well-designed tall buildings, in line with the policy on tall buildings (CR10), 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 (now the Three Guineas), as well as a conservation area and historic park close by. Development should respect the setting of these features and will need to be carefully designed to avoid detriment to them.



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**Figure 5.3: Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy**

- 5.4.9** Figure 5.3 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 gives greater detail on some matters, such as boundaries of the Major Opportunity Area and Sub-Areas. A Station Area Development Framework was prepared for most of this area in 2010 to provide more detailed guidance, and a Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief covering sites CR11a, b and c dates from 2007. These documents continue to apply, alongside any future Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 5.4.10** Ideally, development of sub-areas should be undertaken in as comprehensive a manner as possible. Some of the sub-areas are within different ownerships, and it is recognised that parts may be developed with different timescales. However, it is vital that there is clear regard for the rest of the sub-area and that planning applications are accompanied by information that addresses how the development will relate to the potential or planned development of neighbouring sites.
- 5.4.11** 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 CR6. There is also considered to be a high potential for archaeological finds within the area, including from prehistoric, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods. Early consultation on these matters will be required.
- 5.4.12** Parts of the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, particularly north of the railway line, are within both Flood Zones 2 and 3a as shown in the SFRA<sup>111</sup>. 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 the NPPF has been carried out in identifying these sites for development, and this is available on the Council's website as background evidence. Where a more detailed assessment at planning applications stage finds that the site falls partly in Flood Zone 3 (e.g. for CR11g or CR11i), flood mitigation measures should be designed to the 1 in 100 year level plus a 35% allowance for climate change, and residual risk should be assessed against the 70% allowance (with both extents shown in the 2017 SFRA). 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 flooding guidance into account.
- 5.4.13** Sites within this area potentially contain public sewers. If building over or close to a public sewer is agreed to by Thames Water it will need to be regulated by a 'Build over or near to' Agreement in order to protect the public sewer and/or apparatus in question. It may be possible for public sewers to be moved at a developer's request so as to accommodate development in accordance with Section 185 of the Water Act 1989.

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<sup>111</sup> See the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2017