# READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

## Adopted November 2019

Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

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[22]. 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**
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> *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.*
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> *Employment development should provide mitigation measures in line with its impacts on labour and skills and on the transport network.*

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[22] 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:*
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> - *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.*
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> *Where relevant a high priority will also be given to the appropriate provision of the following:*
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> - *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:*
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> - *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[23]. This indicates that in some instances, it may be possible to

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[23] 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[24], as well as a CIL charging schedule[25], 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[26] 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)[27].

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

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

[26] The Infrastructure Delivery Plan can be found in Section 10

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

## 4.2 Built and Natural Environment

### Heritage

4.2.1 Reading's unique heritage will be at the heart of the town's identity and will be highly visible, valued and accessible by those who live in, work in or visit the town. It will enrich Reading's communities and enable them to interact with, and celebrate, the town's history and historic assets.

4.2.2 The role of the Local Plan is to proactively conserve and enhance the historic environment and promote its enjoyment. This entails recognition of the value of historic features that are desirable for retention, ensuring that the most valued townscapes and landscapes (e.g. those with national and international designations) are given the highest level of protection and other locally valued assets are recognised, retained and enhanced wherever possible. Protecting Reading's heritage assets contributes to a sense of place, and doing so can contribute to other important planning goals. Investment in heritage and culture, in turn, generates more spending in the local economy. For example, previous investment in publicly owned heritage assets within the Abbey Quarter, like the Forbury Gardens and Simeon Monument, has created an attractive environment for high-quality commercial investment including Forbury Square and Forbury Hotel[28]. A vibrant historic environment also contributes to town centre vitality, sustainable transport, residential development, good design and the natural environment. Heritage assets can be a positive force for regeneration. New development can be beneficial to heritage assets through providing or encouraging new uses or better revealing their significance.

4.2.3 If we are to properly value our substantial heritage assets, it is important to understand their significance, and this means appreciating how they relate to the history of the town. The following sections therefore summarise the main aspects of Reading's history insofar as they relate to the current built environment.

4.2.4 There is evidence of prehistoric and Roman settlement in Reading, particularly around the river valleys. There have been a variety of locations where such evidence has been found, and there is potential for archaeological finds across the Borough.

4.2.5 Despite this evidence for earlier settlement, Reading is a Saxon place-name from early Saxon settlers who settled the land near the meeting point of the Thames and Kennet in the 6th century. The historic core retains reminders of its Saxon and medieval origins through its early street pattern and ancient parish churches. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Reading belonged to the king and included a small borough and two manors. In 1121, King Henry I founded Reading Abbey. The Abbey dominated the town and became one of the richest religious houses in England, making Reading a wealthy place, and a centre of religion and pilgrimage. The Dissolution of the Monasteries by King Henry VIII in 1538 signalled the beginning of the Abbey's decline.

4.2.6 In the centuries following the closing of the Abbey, Reading secured its role as a thriving market town making good use of its road and river links. It played an important role in the English Civil War, as a Royalist garrison in the town was besieged during 1643. In the 18th century, new industries developed, notably brewing, iron-founding and brick and tile making. Early 19th century maps show the town had hardly extended beyond its medieval core, but expansion was stimulated by the development of new transport links. The Kennet & Avon Canal was opened in 1810 bringing London and Bristol into direct communication by water. The town also became an important stop for coaches on the Bath Road, and numerous fashionable houses mainly fronted

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[28] Reading Borough Council, *Draft Heritage Statement*, 2014 http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1193/Draft-Heritage-Statement/pdf/Draft-Heritage-Statement.pdf purposes.

in stone or render were built on roads east and west of the centre. The coming of the Great Western Railway in 1840 resulted in a rapid growth of major industries, notably Huntley and Palmers biscuit makers and Suttons Seeds, which provided employment for a growing population. The Victorian and Edwardian expansion and prosperity of the town is demonstrated by Reading's distinctive use of locally made coloured brick, terracotta and tile.

4.2.7  Beyond the town centre, former rural parishes like Caversham and Tilehurst joined the Borough in 1911. For example, St Peter's Conservation Area is the old village centre of Caversham around the medieval parish church and the restored Thames-side Caversham Court Gardens. The parks and gardens of the many country houses that once surrounded Reading also survive within the modern urban townscape, including Caversham Park, Prospect Park and Whiteknights.

4.2.8  Figure 4.1 summarises the main elements of the history of Reading described above in terms of how it impacts on the built environment that is present today, starting with the town's Saxon beginnings. It is intended to help the understanding of the significance of our heritage assets, which is of use both in adequately protecting those assets and in better revealing them through new development.

4.2.9  Nearly all of Reading's heritage assets are owned by private organisations and individuals. The conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is the responsibility of everyone in the community. The Council owns relatively few historic assets, although some of the assets it does own are very prominent, such as the Abbey Gate and Ruins and Town Hall. The conservation and enhancement of Reading's historic assets must be based in innovative and creative approaches involving high levels of partnership. Many local organisations are already working to enhance the view that Reading is a heritage destination. These policies attempt to address that Reading has not always made the most of its significant heritage.

4.2.10 Heritage assets are defined in the NPPF as a "building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest."[29] Heritage assets may be formally designated as being of national importance or of local importance and may include listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments, registered parks and gardens, industrial heritage sites, sites of archaeological interest and historic landscapes. The fact that an asset is not identified on a list does not mean it is not of historical significance.

4.2.11 Reading Borough contains a diverse range of heritage assets:
- 800 nationally Listed Buildings (including 30 Grade I and Grade II*);
- 15 Conservation Areas, including Buildings of Townscape Merit identified in each of the Conservation Area appraisals;
- Two Scheduled Ancient Monuments (Reading Abbey, including the Civil War earthworks and Reading Gaol, and High Bridge);
- Five Historic Parks and Gardens;
- Locally listed buildings and structures, one of which (3 Craven Road) is protected by an Article 4 Direction;
- 15 Article 4 Directions protecting locally distinctive buildings by removing permitted development rights;
- Various sites of industrial heritage;
- The Berkshire Historic Environment Record[30] contains comprehensive records of over 1200 archaeological sites and finds in Reading.

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[29] NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

[30] Historic England's Heritage Gateway can be accessed online at http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/