

READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



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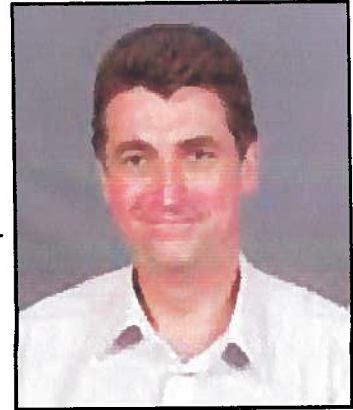


Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

FOREWORD

By Councillor Tony Page

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



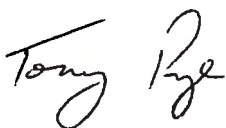
This plan has been carefully developed to address some of the key issues facing Reading. In particular, this Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and set out its commitment to work towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. We must therefore ensure that new development only takes place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

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

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

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

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



Tony Page

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

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 guidance⁴⁹, and more specific local metrics may be produced during the plan period.

- 4.2.64 For some types of development⁵⁰, 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.

⁴⁹ See for example https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69531/pb13745-bio-technical-paper.pdf

⁵⁰ 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 Map⁵¹, 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

⁵¹ Clayfield Copse and the western part of McIlroy Park