

READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



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Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

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 2010⁵², 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 woodlands⁵³. 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***

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

⁵³ 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 months⁵⁴.
- 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 PM₁₀ in Reading are below Air Quality Objective levels, there remain concerns about nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) 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 NO₂ 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_{2.5}, 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_{2.5} 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

⁵⁴ 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 NO₂. 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)⁵⁵, 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.

⁵⁵ 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 impacts⁵⁶.
- 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 2015⁵⁷ 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

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

⁵⁷ On the Council's website: http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/6389/Air-Quality-Action-Plan/pdf/AQAP_Update_2016.pdf