

READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



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Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

FOREWORD

By Councillor Tony Page

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Location of Employment Development

EM2: LOCATION OF NEW EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT

Major office development will take place in the centre of Reading and along the A33 corridor. Office development will also take place in the other centres in the network set out in Policy RL1, but should be of an appropriate scale to those centres.

Other major employment uses, including industrial and storage and distribution will be located in the A33 corridor or in the Core Employment Areas. Non-employment uses that would support the area's economic function may be located in the Core Employment Areas where they do not result in a loss of employment land.

The Core Employment Areas are shown on the Proposals Map and set out below:

- *EM2a: Green Park*
- *EM2b: North of the M4*
- *EM2c: South of Basingstoke Road*
- *EM2d: Bennet Road*
- *EM2e: North of Basingstoke Road*
- *EM2f: Elgar Road*
- *EM2g: Richfield Avenue*
- *EM2h: Portman Road*
- *EM2i: Wigmore Lane*
- *EM2j: Bridgewater Close*
- *EM2k: Sterling Way*
- *EM2l: Marcus Close*
- *EM2m: Paddock Road*

4.3.9 Employment development which attracts significant numbers of trips should be in highly accessible locations which are or will be well served by a choice of means of transport. Major office development (over 2,500 sq m) will therefore be directed to the centre of Reading and along a high-accessibility corridor focused on the A33, a new station at Green Park and forthcoming mass rapid transit links to the south. This A33 corridor is shown on the map for South Reading, figure 6.1 in Section 6, and this includes a number of Core Employment Areas. Some more limited office development will also be appropriate in district and local centres, in line with the levels of scale for retail and leisure development set out in the policy on the hierarchy of centres (RL2). These locations will be the first locations to consider for the respective scale of development when operating the sequential test under paragraph 86 of the NPPF.

4.3.10 Major employment development for industrial, storage and distribution or similar uses (over 2,500 sq m) will be directed primarily to the Core Employment Areas, or to areas along the high-accessibility A33 corridor to the south. These areas are currently relatively successful industrial and warehousing areas which are likely to continue to be needed in employment use. There is some scope for intensification of employment sites within Core Employment Areas, such as development on surplus parking or servicing space, which will be acceptable subject to other material considerations. Smaller-scale industrial and warehouse uses may be appropriate in other areas, but this will be dependent on other considerations such as amenity of residents and the suitability of transport connections, and in practice will not therefore usually be acceptable in residential areas.

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.