

READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



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Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

Total need for Reading Borough 2013-36	16,077 homes
<i>Minus completed 2013-2019</i>	<i>4,202 homes</i>
<i>Minus permitted or resolution to grant (>10 dwellings) at 31st March 2019⁷⁴</i>	<i>4,696 homes</i>
<i>Minus allowance for small site (<10 dwellings) windfalls at 127 per year 2019-2036</i>	<i>2,159 homes</i>
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 up⁷⁵. 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

⁷⁴ Including appropriate non-implementation rates

⁷⁵ <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 30th October 2016), there were 41 entries⁷⁶. 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

⁷⁶ 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 30th 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.