

READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



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Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

the development to providing solely private rented accommodation for a minimum period of 20 years. Where viability testing demonstrates that affordable housing contributions are unviable, clawback mechanisms will be included as part of the planning permission to recoup the loss of affordable housing if any residential units are sold out of single ownership within the covenant period. Comments on assessing viability within policy H3 and its supporting text also apply to schemes under H4. A charge towards the provision of additional affordable housing will be triggered where any private rented homes are sold within the development within 20 years of occupation of the completed development.

- 4.4.35 Affordable housing will be allocated to eligible households on Reading's housing waiting list. Affordable Private Rent Housing must be allocated in the first instance to eligible households on Reading's housing waiting list.
- 4.4.36 Any on-site affordable housing (or exceptionally where such housing is provided off-site) will be provided in perpetuity. Affordable Private Rent Housing must be provided in perpetuity.

Standards for New Housing

H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING

New build housing should be built to the following standards, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable:

- a. All new build housing outside the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map will comply with the nationally-described space standard.***
- b. All new build housing will be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations⁷⁹.***
- c. All major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes.***
- d. All other new build housing will achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.***
- e. All new build housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless it is built in line with M4(3) (see below).***
- f. On developments of 20 or more new build dwellings, at least 5% of dwellings will be wheelchair user dwellings in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations. Any market homes provided to meet this requirement will be 'wheelchair adaptable' as defined in part M, whilst homes where the Council is responsible for allocating or nominating an individual may be 'wheelchair accessible'.***

- 4.4.37 The Government has sought to consolidate the wide range of standards required for new housing across the country. The approach has been to rely on minimum requirements in the Building Regulations for most matters, but to set a small number of 'optional' national standards over and above the Building Regulations minima, which local planning authorities can choose to apply

⁷⁹ References are to the 2015 Building Regulations

in their areas. These 'optional' standards cover internal space, water efficiency and accessibility. Local planning authorities cannot seek any additional, or higher, standards for new housing.

- 4.4.38 These 'optional' standards can only apply where a policy is included in a Local Plan. This policy therefore applies those standards in Reading Borough. It should be noted that the standards are only 'optional' for the local planning authority to apply in their areas, but that once applied, compliance in line with the policy is compulsory. Conditions will be applied to relevant planning permissions to ensure compliance with the policy. For water efficiency and accessibility, the standards will be applied through the Building Regulations. Planning conditions may be required to secure compliance. Where references to the Building Regulations in the policy change, the requirement shall be taken to refer to the most up-to-date standard. Housing in the centre will also need to consider the requirements of policy CR6. These standards apply to residential uses in the C3 use class only.
- 4.4.39 As recommended in Planning Practice Guidance, it is appropriate to avoid immediate application of new standards to allow time for any associated costs to be factored into developments, including land deals, as they emerge. It is considered that the date of adoption of the plan is appropriate, as the draft policy has been public since April 2017.
- 4.4.40 Housing standards serve an important role in ensuring resident health and well-being. Providing the appropriate types of housing at affordable levels can reduce overcrowding, unhealthy living conditions, injuries in the home and social isolation⁸⁰. Deprived residents are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a result of substandard housing⁸¹.

Internal space

- 4.4.41 Ensuring sufficient levels of internal space is essential to the quality of life of residents of the Borough, which is a key element of the vision for the Borough. The Council is concerned that a great deal of development has now taken place under permitted development rights that provides inadequate internal space. This cannot be controlled, but, where it is possible to do so, it is important to ensure that there is as much housing with adequate internal space as possible. However, it is considered that there is a distinction between what counts as adequate internal space within the centre of Reading and elsewhere. The expectations of those choosing to live in the centre of Reading, in terms of both internal and external space, as well as issues such as noise, tend to be different to those in other parts of the Borough. In addition, in central Reading, applying the space standard could have the effect of reducing the ability of the area to make its expected portion of the housing need, as many existing developments, including some that are well-regarded, would not have gone ahead in their current form were the space standard in force.
- 4.4.42 However, even where it does not apply, the nationally prescribed space standard offers a useful point of reference and a good basis for design of new developments. The standard as at March 2015 is set out below, and requires that:
- a. the dwelling provides at least the gross internal floor area and built-in storage area set out

⁸⁰ NHS Healthy Urban Development Checklist <http://www.healthyrbandevelopment.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Healthy-Urban-Planning-Checklist-March-2014.pdf>

⁸¹ Shelter, The Impact of Bad Housing on Physical Health http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why_we_campaign/housing_facts_and_figures/subsection?section=the_impact_of_bad_housing

- in Figure 4.7 below;
- b. a dwelling with two or more bedspaces has at least one double (or twin) bedroom;
 - c. in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5 sq m and is at least 2.15m wide;
 - d. in order to provide two bedspaces, a double (or twin bedroom) has a floor area of at least 11.5 sq m;
 - e. one double (or twin bedroom) is at least 2.75m wide and every other double (or twin) bedroom is at least 2.55m wide;
 - f. any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage (if the area under the stairs is to be used for storage, assume a general floor area of 1 sq m within the Gross Internal Area);
 - g. any other area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900-1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all;
 - h. a built-in wardrobe counts towards the Gross Internal Area and bedroom floor area requirements, but should not reduce the effective width of the room below the minimum widths set out above. The built-in area in excess of 0.72 sq m in a double bedroom and 0.36 sq m in a single bedroom counts towards the built-in storage requirement;
 - i. the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area.

Figure 4.7: Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (sq m)

Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37)*			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

4.4.43 The full standard can be viewed on the gov.uk website⁸².

⁸² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524531/160519_Nationally_Described_Space_Standard_Final_Web_version.pdf

Water efficiency

4.4.44 In terms of water efficiency, there is a clear need to ensure that the highest possible standards are in place, particularly given the likely effects of climate change. The Thames Water area is classed as a 'water-stressed area' by the Environment Agency, and the Thames River Basin Management Plan stresses the importance of demand management in the area. For clarity, the tighter water efficiency standard referred to here and set out in the Building Regulations is 110 litres per person per day.

Emissions

- 4.4.45 Reading's Climate Change Strategy (Reading Means Business on Climate Change 2013-2020) sets challenging targets for tackling the Borough's contribution to climate change, and aims to reduce Reading's carbon footprint by 34% by 2020 in comparison to 2005 levels. One of the Strategy's strategic principles is that buildings in Reading should be built to high standards of energy efficiency incorporating on-site renewable energy where possible. Given the scale of residential development in Reading up to 2036, achieving the aims of the Climate Change Strategy will not be possible without that development having a minimal impact on carbon emissions.
- 4.4.46 Therefore, the requirement will be that major new housing is built to zero carbon homes standard. A revised Sustainable Design and Construction SPD to be produced in 2019 will contain more detail on achieving this requirement, but in general, where homes are not designed to be carbon neutral, this will mean as a minimum a 35% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the 2013 Building Regulations⁸³ plus a contribution of £1,800 per tonne towards carbon offsetting within Reading (calculated as £60 per tonne over a 30 year period). Where it is proposed to meet the zero carbon homes requirement in another way, clear evidence should be provided to demonstrate how it will be achieved at planning application stage. Zero carbon homes is an achievable standard that, until recently, was intended to be a national requirement in the Building Regulations. All other housing should be built to a level equivalent to the emissions requirement of former Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4, which is a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations. Where the 19% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions cannot be achieved on site, an offset may be possible through planning contributions. Further guidance on such an off-set will follow the Local Plan.

Accessibility

4.4.47 There are two levels of 'optional' standards for accessibility. M4(2) of the Building Regulations is for accessible and adaptable dwellings, and relates to relatively straightforward design measures that can allow homes to be adaptable as the needs of the occupier change. In that sense, it is broadly in the same vein as Lifetime Homes, although not identical. M4(3) relates more specifically to wheelchair user housing. The specific requirements can be seen in the Part M approved document⁸⁴. In terms of part M4(3), Part M distinguishes between 'wheelchair accessible' dwellings (which apply only where the Council is responsible for allocating or nominating an individual) and 'wheelchair adaptable' dwellings (which can apply to any homes), and the policy therefore reflects this distinction.

⁸³ The Building Regulations for England Approved Document L1A: Conservation of Fuel and Power in New Dwellings (2013 edition)

⁸⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m>

4.4.48 The requirements for wheelchair housing have been set at a level that would allow Reading to meet its expected requirement. The need for wheelchair user housing is expected to grow with an ageing population, and this has been factored into the requirements. In terms of accessible and adaptable homes, it is more difficult to identify a specific requirement. This standard is about more than addressing specific needs, rather it is a changing approach, which enables those who may not have specific needs now to remain in their homes as their circumstances change. Since it involves relatively simple design features, it is considered that 100% of new dwellings can be built to this standard without it being an overly onerous requirement.

4.4.49 In terms of applying the 5% requirement, where it would result in a fraction of a wheelchair user dwelling, provision should be to the nearest whole dwelling. For instance, 5% of a development of 35 homes would be 1.75, which should result in provision of two homes.

Accommodation for Vulnerable People

H6: ACCOMMODATION FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

- i) Provision will be made for at least an additional 253 residential care bedspaces for elderly people between 2013 and 2036, in addition to the overall housing need. Other specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will address the identified needs, which are primarily for accommodation that enables occupants to live as independently as possible, particularly for older people and people with physical disabilities.*
- ii) Development for specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will fulfil the following criteria:*
 - Developments will, where possible, locate accommodation close to, or incorporate, relevant community facilities, such as healthcare services, or day care for elderly people;*
 - Where development would result in a loss of general housing, it must meet identified needs in the most up-to-date Housing Strategy and be able to accommodate at least an equivalent number of people;*
 - Larger developments will include adequate provision for ambulance access;*
 - Development will incorporate areas of green space, which are particularly important for many groups of vulnerable people;*
 - Developments within residential areas will be designed to respect the residential character of their surroundings; and*
 - Where a development requires a new physical link between buildings and where the gaps between buildings form part of the character of a street, the need for a linkage must be clearly demonstrated, and must avoid negative impacts on the character of the street.*
- iii) Development catering for people with limited mobility will fulfil the following criteria:*
 - Developments should be located within 400 metres of an identified district or local centre and a bus stop on a strategic bus route; and*
 - Development should include secure storage for mobility scooters.*
- iv) Affordable specialist housing for vulnerable people that meets the needs of the most up to date Housing Strategy may count towards affordable housing provision in line with policy H3.*