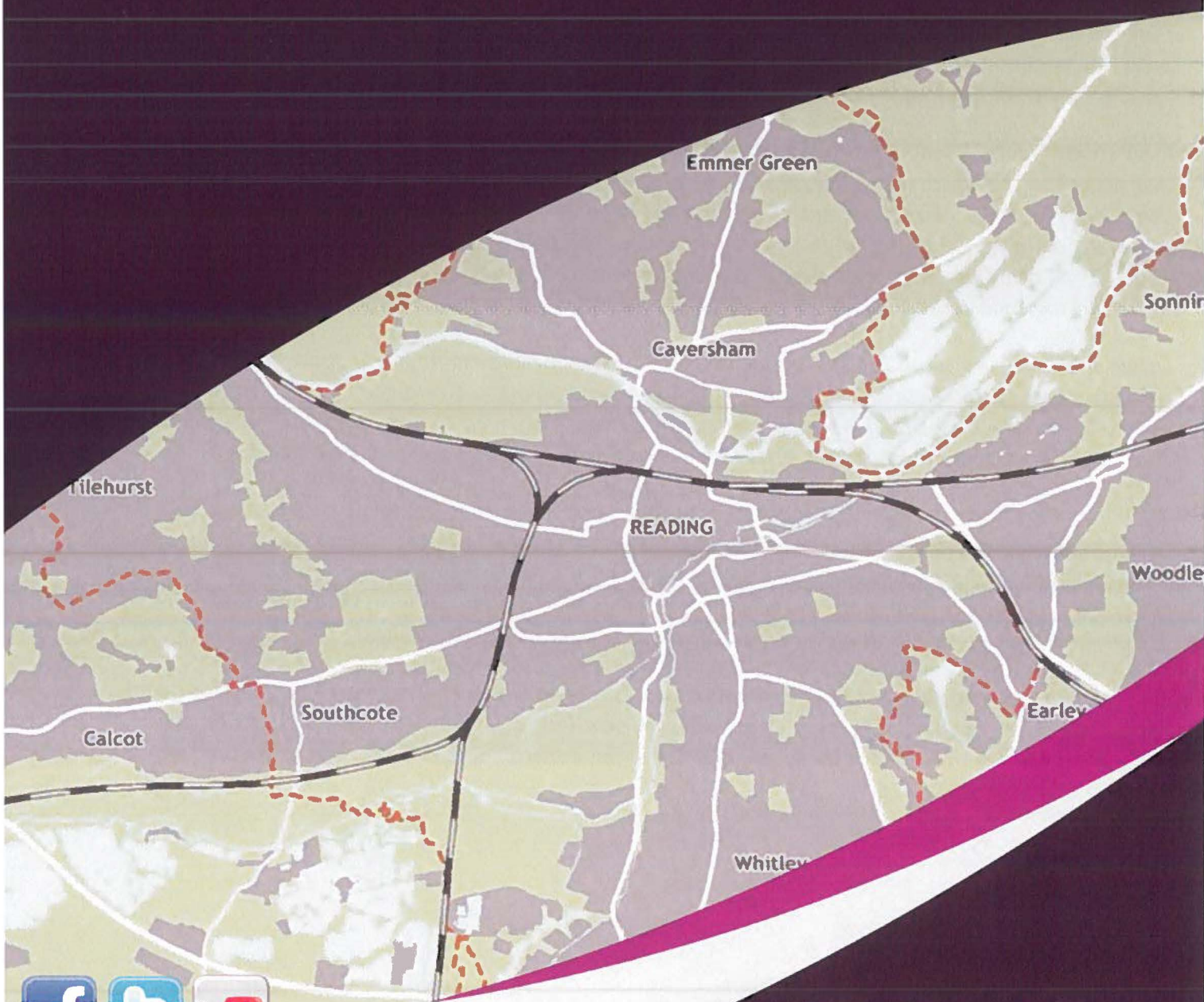


# READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

Adopted November 2019



[www.reading.gov.uk](http://www.reading.gov.uk)



**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.*



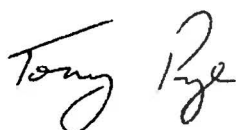
*This plan has been carefully developed to address some of the key issues facing Reading. In particular, this Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and set out its commitment to work towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. We must therefore ensure that new development only takes place 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**



that are highly tailored to one particular use, would not be able to achieve this. Using urban design principles to enhance community safety and design out crime may also be particularly important in the central area, and the Secured By Design principles will assist in this.

### **Sustainable Design and Construction**

- 5.3.9 Ensuring that the design and construction of new developments is sustainable in nature is an essential element of the strategy for Reading, and the Local Plan provides for this through Policies CC2 and H5. This policy will apply to the central area as much as any other part of the Borough. However, there are certain elements of the sustainable design agenda that are particularly relevant to the type of development typical of the centre, and to which particular attention should be paid. For instance, mixed-use developments and larger buildings tend to lend themselves to Combined Heat and Power systems, and these developments are particularly prevalent in the central area. In addition, the use of green and brown roofs or green walls will enhance the biodiversity value of developments in the centre, and other measures such as swift boxes may be appropriate to the town centre. Brown roofs in particular are of benefit to species such as black redstarts, one of the priority species in the Biodiversity Action Plan, which have been sighted in the central area.

### **Public Realm in Central Reading**

#### **CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING**

*Proposals for new development will need to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm of the central area and will be assessed against the following criteria:*

- i. All proposals on sites of more than 1 hectare within the central Reading boundary will need to provide new public open space or civic squares integrated with surrounding development. Smaller developments will contribute towards improvements to the public realm;*
- ii. Imaginative uses of open space and the public realm, which contribute to the offer of the centre, will be encouraged, and new open spaces should be of a size and shape to be flexible enough to accommodate such uses. The provision of water features, trees (including street trees) and other planting, as well as hard landscaping, to create high-quality spaces, will be expected, where appropriate;*
- iii. Development proposals adjacent to or in close proximity to a watercourse will retain and not impede existing continuous public access to and along the watercourses, and will provide legible continuous public access to and along the watercourses where this does not currently exist;*
- iv. The design of developments adjacent to a watercourse, including the refurbishment of existing buildings, will be required to enhance the appearance of the watercourses and to provide active elevations facing the watercourses. Development that turns its back on the watercourses and results in blank or mundane elevations facing the watercourses will not be permitted;*
- v. The public realm should conserve and enhance the historic environment of the centre and the significance of heritage assets therein and their setting, including through*



***layout, materials, hard and soft landscaping. There may be opportunities for areas of public realm to provide improved access to and visibility for heritage assets.***

***Pedestrianisation, traffic management and/or environmental enhancements will continue to be implemented on appropriate streets.***

- 5.3.10 Open space and well-designed areas of public realm are key contributors to the character of any area, and this applies particularly to large built-up areas such as Reading. Such areas provide opportunities for informal sports and recreation, community focal points and meeting places and space for events to take place.
- 5.3.11 Reading benefits from some substantial areas of open space close to the town centre along the Thames, and some high-quality but smaller areas such as Forbury Gardens. Increasingly, the town centre is seeing new and improved town squares and similar spaces, with the provision of squares at the north and south entrance to the new station, and recent improvements to Market Place and Town Hall Square. Additional open space or generous public realm such as town squares or wider streets that can have multiple functions would assist in creating a sense of place in the centre, and are encouraged. Indeed, these types of space are likely to present the main opportunities for additional spaces in the centre. These can act as locations for leisure activities and public gatherings and events. The provision of new public open space should be accessible and of a usable size and shape. It should be capable of use for a range of activities, across a range of age groups. Improvements to the public realm may include works such as the provision of open space, the improvement of pedestrian access to existing open space, the provision of landscaping and green infrastructure, and wider streets that act as open space.
- 5.3.12 Reading's watercourses are also major assets which need to be built into the strategy, and their distinct characters should be respected. The Kennet generally runs through more urban higher-density areas, whilst the Thames retains its sense of tranquillity. These distinct characters have informed the Local Plan. It is essential that public access along watercourses is retained and expanded in the central area. Policy EN11 deals specifically with development close to watercourses, and applies to development across Reading, including the central area. Policy EN12 relates to biodiversity and the green network, with Reading's watercourses forming significant ecological assets. These policies highlight the importance of development enhancing the watercourses as important habitats, and this applies equally in the centre.

## **Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading**

### **CR4: LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM IN CENTRAL READING**

***The Central Core will be the prime focus for major leisure, cultural and tourism development<sup>107</sup>. Leisure, cultural and tourism uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged. Innovative solutions to leisure provision will be encouraged, particularly those that make best use of available (often limited) site area.***

***The River Thames is a prime location for new or improved tourist attractions, and as such, this area is suitable for informal recreation and sporting uses and associated small-scale development, as well as improvements to management and access. Development or improvements in this area will be expected to add to or maintain the setting and character of the Thames and to conserve and enhance ecological value.***

<sup>107</sup> Leisure, cultural and tourism development are those uses within the 'main town centre uses' defined in the NPPF