

# 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.*



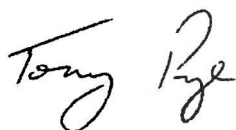
*This plan has been carefully developed to address some of the key issues facing Reading. In particular, this Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and set out its commitment to work towards achieving a carbon neutral Reading by 2030. We must therefore ensure that new development only takes place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



## 5.4 Central Reading Site-Specific Policies

### Station/River Major Opportunity Area

**VISION:** *The station/river area will be a flagship scheme, extending the centre and providing a mixed use destination in itself and centred on the new station and public transport interchange. It will integrate the transport links and areas northwards towards the River Thames and into the heart of the centre.*

#### **CR11: STATION/RIVER MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA**

**Development in the Station/River Major Opportunity Area will:**

- i) Contribute towards providing a high-density mix of uses to create a destination in itself and capitalise on its role as one of the most accessible locations in the south east. Development for education will be an acceptable part of the mix;**
- ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, particularly on the key movement corridors. North-south links through the area centred on the new station, including across the IDR, are of particular importance;**
- iii) Provide developments that front onto and provide visual interest to existing and future pedestrian routes and open spaces;**
- iv) Safeguard land which is needed for mass rapid transit routes and stops;**
- v) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, with green infrastructure, including a direct landscaped link between the station and the River Thames;**
- vi) Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conserve and, where possible, enhance listed buildings, conservation areas and historic gardens and their settings;**
- vii) Give careful consideration to the archaeological potential of the area and be supported by appropriate archaeological assessment which should inform the development;**
- viii) Demonstrate that it is part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of this policy, and which contributes towards the provision of policy requirements that benefit the whole area, such as open space; and**
- ix) Give early consideration to the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.**

**Development of the station and interchange was completed in 2015. Development in surrounding areas will be in line with the following provisions for each sub-area:**



**CR11a, FRIAR STREET & STATION ROAD:**

*There will be active retail and leisure uses on the ground floor along Friar Street and Station Road, with a mix of uses on higher floors. Development should enhance linkages in a north-south direction to link to the Station Hill area. Listed buildings and their settings in the area will be conserved, and opportunities to improve the environment of Merchants Place will be sought.*

Site size: 1.36 ha      Indicative potential: 150-270 dwellings, offices, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed)

**CR11b, GREYFRIARS ROAD CORNER:**

*There will be active retail and leisure uses on the ground floor along Friar Street, with a mix of uses on higher floors and in the rest of the area. The edge of the site nearest to the areas of traditional terracing west of Greyfriars Road will require careful design treatment.*

Site size: 0.37 ha      Indicative potential: 90-140 dwellings, offices, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed)

**CR11c, STATION HILL & FRIARS WALK:**

*This area will be developed for a mix of uses at a high density, including retail and leisure on the ground and lower floors and residential and offices on higher floors. There will be enhanced links through the site, including in a north-south direction into the Station Hill area and through to the station, and a network of streets and spaces. Frontages on key routes through the site should have active uses. The edge of the site nearest to the areas of traditional terracing west of Greyfriars Road will require careful design treatment.*

Site size: 2.87 ha      Indicative potential: 380-570 dwellings, 80,000-100,000 sq m of offices, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed)

**CR11d, BRUNEL ARCADE AND APEX PLAZA**

*This area will be developed for a mix of uses at high density, including residential and/or offices. Retail and/or leisure uses will activate the ground floor facing the southern station square. Development should seek to enhance the setting of nearby heritage assets, and views from within the conservation area and Forbury Gardens should be carefully considered.*

Site size: 1.51 ha      Indicative potential: 250-380 dwellings, 3,000-5,000 sq m net gain of offices, 1,000-2,000 sq m net gain of retail and leisure

**CR11e, NORTH OF STATION:**

*There will be retail and leisure development on the ground floor activating the streets and spaces including the new northern station square, with other uses including residential and offices on upper floors. Retail will have good pedestrian links to, and will not have a detrimental impact on, the rest of the retail core of the centre. Public car parking will be provided. A high quality route incorporating a green link should be provided through to the Thames. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment, and should consider opportunities to open up the culverted Vastern Ditch and enhance it as an ecological feature.*

Site size: 6.71 ha      Indicative potential: 640-960 dwellings, 50,000-80,000 sq m net gain of offices, 3,000-6,000 sq m net gain of retail and leisure, hotel.



**CR11f: WEST OF CAVERSHAM ROAD:**

*This area will be developed for residential with on-site open space. Densities will be lower than elsewhere in the Station/River area to reflect the proximity to low-rise residential areas, and the edge of the site nearest to the areas of terracing will require careful design treatment and respect the historic context of areas to the west. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

Site size: 0.92 ha      Indicative potential: 75-115 dwellings.

**CR11g, RIVERSIDE:**

*Development should maintain and enhance public access along and to the Thames, and should be set back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river. Development should continue the high quality route including a green link from the north of the station to the Christchurch Bridge, with potential for an area of open space at the riverside. The main use of the site should be residential, although some small-scale leisure and complementary offices will also be acceptable. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

Site size: 1.24 ha      Indicative potential: 250-370 dwellings, 1,000-2,000 sq m of leisure, no significant net gain in offices.

**CR11h, NAPIER ROAD JUNCTION:**

*A landmark building, containing residential and/or offices is appropriate for this site, which may contain an active commercial use on the ground floor. Land on the Napier Road frontage will be safeguarded for Mass Rapid Transit. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

Site size: 0.49 ha      Indicative potential: 200-300 dwellings, 2,000-3,000 sq m of retail or commercial.

**CR11i, NAPIER COURT:**

*This area will be developed for residential. The design must avoid detrimental effects on the adjacent Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature, and building heights should reduce from west to east across the site. Land on the Napier Road frontage will be safeguarded for Mass Rapid Transit. Development of the Network Rail depot will be dependent on an alternative location at the railway triangle to the west of the centre becoming available. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.*

Site size: 1.62 ha      Indicative potential: 210-310 dwellings.

- 5.4.1 The Station/River major opportunity area is currently a mix of densities, land uses and character. Large parts of the area are currently of low density, and although many of these are in active use, they represent an inefficient use of one of the most accessible locations in the South East. In other parts of the area there is higher density development, much of which has a detrimental effect on surrounding areas, contributes towards a generally poor environmental quality and is in some cases vacant. It is difficult to move about parts of the surrounding area on foot, particularly north of the station.
- 5.4.2 The area has recently been transformed with the completion of the Reading Station project in 2015, including the opening of the new station in 2014. As well as removing a bottleneck on the

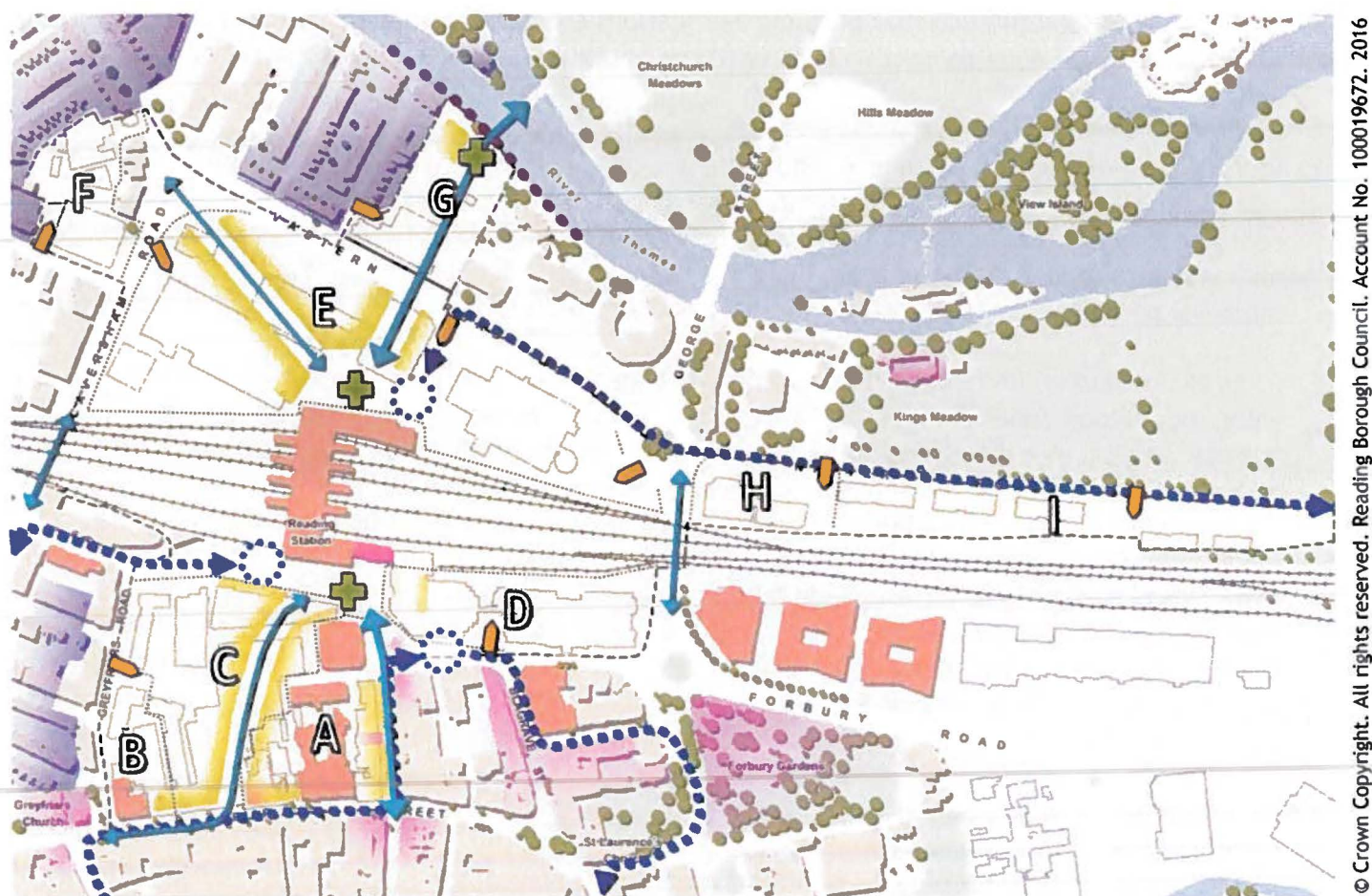


national rail network, it has significantly improved passenger capacity, vastly improved the local environment around the station and improved north-south linkages through opening of the underpass. The arrival of the Elizabeth Line at Reading, timetabled for 2019, will further enhance the accessibility of the area. This provides a strong impetus for development of the surrounding sites, and gives an opportunity to think about the wider station area, stretching up to the River Thames in the north and the shopping core in the south, as a whole. These guidelines should ensure that the area continues to develop in a comprehensive manner, and is brought into the core of the centre.

- 5.4.3** *The development of the wider station area allows the significant improvement of north-south links through the centre, and offers the opportunity to expand the core of the centre northwards to help meet development needs.*
- 5.4.4** In order for the station area to become a destination in its own right, it should contain a wide mix of uses across the area. This wide mix of uses will ensure that the station area becomes a vibrant central quarter, active at different times of the day. This will mean retail and leisure development, to help draw the station into the core of the centre and activate streets and spaces, new residential development, which will require substantial improvements to the physical environment, and offices. The station area will be the main focus for new office development in the centre, to capitalise on its high accessibility by rail and other public transport. There is also potential for future community uses within the area, including police facilities and health infrastructure.
- 5.4.5** Policy CR11 includes some figures for indicative development capacity. It should be noted that, to an even greater extent than other areas, development capacity can vary significantly on high density town centre sites, and these figures are therefore an indication only. Of greatest importance will be the creation of a high-quality, well-designed mixed use destination, and there is potential for development figures to vary in order to achieve this aim.
- 5.4.6** The successful development of this area hinges on improved accessibility by public transport, and improved permeability for pedestrians and cyclists. In terms of permeability, improving links for pedestrians and cyclists through the centre, particularly in a north-south direction, is one of the key principles for the spatial strategy of the centre, along with removing barriers to access within the centre. If visual links are also provided, this will help change the perception of the area north of the station as a separate entity. The opening of the underpass under the station and the provision of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the Thames have recently helped to achieve this vision, but further improvements can still be made. Ensuring active frontages along these routes will assist these to become attractive links, as will the provision of new areas of open space. This is particularly important on the route between the shopping core, the station and the Thames. In particular, on the Riverside site (CR11g), achieving this north-south link is the main priority for the site, and this should be given substantial weight in development management.
- 5.4.7** Improving public transport access to the centre, particularly the station and public transport interchange, is vital, and the provision of a mass rapid transit system linking the centre and station to park and ride sites is a key aspect of Reading's transport strategy. In this area this will mainly be on existing streets, but in some cases there may be requirements in terms of land, and it should be ensured that development does not prejudice the delivery of MRT or other major transport schemes. In addition, some new public car parking is likely to be required in the area, which, due to space constraints and changes in levels, may well in some cases take the form of undercroft car parking.



5.4.8 Parts of the area around the station are appropriate for well-designed tall buildings, in line with the policy on tall buildings (CR10), and the area will be developed at a higher density even where there are no tall buildings. However, schemes in these areas should take account of the fact that there are areas of low-rise housing fringing the area, and this should be reflected in the design of schemes, both in terms of the effect on character of the area and on the amenity of residents. In addition, there are a number of significant listed buildings in or adjoining the Major Opportunity Area, south of the railway tracks, including the historic station building (now the Three Guineas), as well as a conservation area and historic park close by. Development should respect the setting of these features and will need to be carefully designed to avoid detriment to them.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Reading Borough Council. Account No. 100019672. 2016



Figure 5.3: Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy



- 5.4.9 Figure 5.3 shows the broad strategy for the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, which indicates some of the elements that need to be taken into account in developing this area. The Proposals Map gives greater detail on some matters, such as boundaries of the Major Opportunity Area and Sub-Areas. A Station Area Development Framework was prepared for most of this area in 2010 to provide more detailed guidance, and a Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief covering sites CR11a, b and c dates from 2007. These documents continue to apply, alongside any future Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 5.4.10 Ideally, development of sub-areas should be undertaken in as comprehensive a manner as possible. Some of the sub-areas are within different ownerships, and it is recognised that parts may be developed with different timescales. However, it is vital that there is clear regard for the rest of the sub-area and that planning applications are accompanied by information that addresses how the development will relate to the potential or planned development of neighbouring sites.
- 5.4.11 Parts of the area may face issues around noise and air quality that will need to be mitigated in relation to new residential development. More information on potential mitigation measures is contained in relation to policy CR6. There is also considered to be a high potential for archaeological finds within the area, including from prehistoric, Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods. Early consultation on these matters will be required.
- 5.4.12 Parts of the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, particularly north of the railway line, are within both Flood Zones 2 and 3a as shown in the SFRA<sup>111</sup>. However, this must be weighed against the vital role that these sites will play in regeneration in the centre. A sequential and exceptions test in line with the NPPF has been carried out in identifying these sites for development, and this is available on the Council's website as background evidence. Where a more detailed assessment at planning applications stage finds that the site falls partly in Flood Zone 3 (e.g. for CR11g or CR11i), flood mitigation measures should be designed to the 1 in 100 year level plus a 35% allowance for climate change, and residual risk should be assessed against the 70% allowance (with both extents shown in the 2017 SFRA). Individual applications will need to provide their own Flood Risk Assessment. Detailed proposals on these sites will need to consider how the mix of uses is best distributed taking flooding guidance into account.
- 5.4.13 Sites within this area potentially contain public sewers. If building over or close to a public sewer is agreed to by Thames Water it will need to be regulated by a 'Build over or near to' Agreement in order to protect the public sewer and/or apparatus in question. It may be possible for public sewers to be moved at a developer's request so as to accommodate development in accordance with Section 185 of the Water Act 1989.

---

<sup>111</sup> See the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2017



## West Side Major Opportunity Area

**VISION:** *The west side area will be a mixed-use extension to the west of the centre containing high-quality mixed-use environments and fostering stronger east-west links into the central core.*

### CR12: WEST SIDE MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA

**Development in the West Side Major Opportunity Area will:**

- i) **Contribute towards providing a mix of uses including residential. Development for education will be an acceptable part of the mix;**
- ii) **Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, in particular on key movement corridors and east-west links through the area and between development areas and the station, including improved crossings of the IDR where achievable;**
- iii) **Safeguard land which is needed for mass rapid transit routes and stops;**
- iv) **Provide additional or improved areas of open space where possible, generally in the form of town squares, and provide additional green infrastructure where possible;**
- v) **Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conservation areas and conserve and, where possible, enhance listed buildings and conservation areas and their settings;**
- vi) **Give careful consideration to the archaeological potential of the area and be supported by appropriate archaeological assessment which should inform the development;**
- vii) **Demonstrate that it is part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of this policy, and which contributes towards the provision of policy requirements that benefit the whole area, such as open space; and**
- vii) **Give early consideration to the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.**

**Development at Chatham Place is now complete. Development will be in line with the following provisions for each of the remaining sub-areas:**

#### **CR12a, CATTLE MARKET:**

**This site will be developed for a mix of edge-of-centre retail uses, and residential development, along with public car parking. The retail may include bulky goods, but should not include a significant element of non-bulky comparison goods retail. It must be designed to reflect the urban grid layout and built form of the centre and a single storey retail warehouse will not be permitted. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.**

**Site size: 2.46 ha**

**Indicative potential: 330-490 dwellings, 10,000-15,000 sq m net gain of retail.**



**CR12b, GREAT KNOLLYS STREET & WELDALE STREET:**

*This area will be developed primarily for residential. Any development which would result in the loss of small business units should seek to replace as many of those units as possible, preferably on site. There should be a careful transition to the lower density residential areas to the west. Listed buildings and their settings in the area will be conserved and where possible enhanced.*

Site size: 3.02 ha      Indicative potential: 280-510 dwellings, no significant net gain of other uses.

**CR12c, CHATHAM STREET, EATON PLACE AND OXFORD ROAD:**

*Development of this area will be primarily for residential, with potential for community uses. There may also be some small scale retail and leisure uses on the Oxford Road frontage. This area is surrounded by heritage assets or low-rise residential, and inappropriate building scale at the fringes of the site will not be permitted. There is an opportunity to enhance the Oxford Road frontage, including with tree planting.*

Site size: 1.15 ha      Indicative potential: 180-260 dwellings.

**CR12d, BROAD STREET MALL:**

*The site will be used for continued retail and leisure provision, maintaining frontages along Oxford Street and St Mary's Butts, and improving frontages to Hosier Street and Queens Walk, with uses including residential, with some potential for offices, on upper floors. This may be achieved by comprehensive redevelopment. Alternatively, a development which retains the existing mall with additional development above may be appropriate where it improves the quality of the existing mall frontages.*

Site size: 2.75 ha      Indicative potential: 280-420 dwellings, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed).

**CR12e, HOSIER STREET:**

*Development on this site will result in a new residential community centred around an improved area of public open space and a high quality environment, with an improved entrance to the site from St Mary's Butts. The edges of the open space will be activated with retail, leisure and/or other main town centre uses such as hotel use, and development may also include some limited offices uses. The Hexagon theatre will only be developed if a replacement facility for Reading, expected to be in the same area, is provided, and approaches to the theatre will be improved. Development will also include a replacement site for the street market. The car parking below ground level will be retained and incorporated into the development.*

Site size: 3.41 ha      Indicative potential: 500-750 dwellings, 4,000-6,000 sq m of retail and leisure.

- 5.4.14 The West Side Major Opportunity Area is a mix of central area fringe uses along the western edge of the centre. Some of these uses are of low-density, whilst others are of poor environmental quality and are in need of improvement. One of the main features of the area is the Inner Distribution Road, which forms a major barrier to movement. Visitors arriving into the centre from the west will have to pass through these areas of low environmental quality, and this affects the perception of the centre. Regeneration of the western edge of the centre has been a long-held objective, and the development of the Chatham Street area is now complete.
- 5.4.15 In general, a broad mix of uses will be sought in the West Side, given its proximity to the central core, and there is provision for some additional retail or leisure, particularly around Hosier Street. However, it should also be recognised that the West Side is neither as accessible nor as central to the direction of extension of the centre as the Station/River Major Opportunity Area. For this reason, the balance of uses is weighted more strongly in favour of residential than the