

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

November 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a document that sets out a local planning authority's programme for producing planning policy documents. Local planning authorities are required to produce a LDS under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by part 111 of the Localism Act 2011. The LDS should set out which planning policy documents the authority will be producing and when. The LDS should state:
- (a) the local development documents that will be produced;
 - (b) the subject matter and geographical area to which each document is to relate;
 - (c) which documents are to have 'Development Plan' status;
 - (d) which documents (if any) are to be prepared jointly with one or more other local planning authorities;
 - (e) any matter or area where there is, or is likely to be, a joint committee;
 - (f) the timetable for the preparation and revision of the documents
- 1.2 This LDS therefore sets out the planning policy documents that Reading Borough Council intends to produce over the coming years, what and where they will cover and when they will be produced. The types of document include two types in particular:
- **Local Plan:** a document that has been subject to independent testing and has development plan status in the determination of planning applications; and
 - **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):** a document which provides more detail to the Local Plan but which is not subject to independent testing, does not have development plan status and cannot make policy in itself.
- 1.3 Prior to the March 2023 version, the Council's previous LDS was produced in November 2016 and, in particular, set out the timetable for production of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The Local Plan was adopted in November 2019, and the previous LDS is therefore out of date. The 2023 version replaced all previous versions of the LDS. This version contains minor changes to the March 2023 version to update timescales.
- 1.4 Section 2 summarises the documents that have been adopted and which contain the current planning policy framework for Reading. This includes documents that cover a wider area than just Reading Borough.
- 1.5 Section 3 summarises the programme for production of new planning policy documents, including the Local Plan policies update and continued production of SPDs. More detail on these documents is included in Appendix 1 (for the Local Plan policies update) and Appendix 2 (for other documents).

2. Existing planning policy documents

- 2.1 The full list of documents that are already adopted and in place is set out in Table 1. In summary, the Local Plan was adopted on 4th November 2019 and the Minerals and Waste Plan on 31st January 2023. There is a significant number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that have been adopted, many of which date from before the Local Plan but which nonetheless continue to have effect after

Table 1: Existing adopted planning policy documents at 31st March 2023

Document title	Status	Adoption date	End date	Policy lineage
Reading Borough Local Plan	Development Plan	November 2019	2036	National policy
Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan	Development Plan	January 2023	2036	National policy
Affordable Housing	SPD	March 2021	Not specified	Local Plan (H3, H4)
Battle Hospital Planning Brief	SPD	April 2005	Not specified	Local Plan (WR3)
Caversham Lock Area Development Principles	SPD	March 2006	Not specified	Local Plan (CR14)
Dee Park Planning Brief	SPD	December 2008	Not specified	Local Plan (WR1)
Design Guide to House Extensions	SPD	March 2021	Not specified	Local Plan (H9)
Design Guide to Shopfronts	SPD	January 2022	Not specified	Local Plan (OU5)
Employment, Skills and Training	SPD	April 2013	Not specified	Local Plan (CC9)
Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement	SPD	July 2004	Not specified	Local Plan (CR13)
Meadway Centre Planning Brief	SPD	November 2013	Not specified	Local Plan (WR3)
Minster Quarter Area Development Framework	SPD	December 2018	Not specified	Local Plan (CR12)
Palmer Park Development Framework	SPD	April 2020	Not specified	Local Plan (ER1)
Parking Standards and Design	SPD	October 2011	Not specified	Local Plan (TR5)

Reading Prison Framework	SPD	March 2015	Not specified	Local Plan (CR13)
Reading Station Area Framework	SPD	December 2010	Not specified	Local Plan (CR11)
Residential Conversions	SPD	March 2023	Not specified	Local Plan (H8)
Revised Planning Obligations under Section 106	SPD	November 2013	Not specified	Local Plan (H3, CC9)
South West Reading Planning Brief	SPD	April 2000	Not specified	None
Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief	SPD	March 2007	Not specified	Local Plan (CR11)
Sustainable Design and Construction	SPD	December 2019	Not specified	Local Plan (CC2, CC3, H5)
Statement of Community Involvement	Statement of Community Involvement	March 2014	Not specified	None
Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report	Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report	September 2014	Not specified	None
Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule	CIL Charging Schedule	January 2015	Not specified	None

3. Programme for planning policy documents

- 3.1 This section sets out the programme for the planning policy documents that the Council expects to produce, and the timescales and processes for production. Table 2 below summarises the documents to be produced and when they are anticipated to be finalised. More details on each document, including those aspects specified in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) are set out in Appendices 1 (for the Local Plan) and 2 (for other documents).

Table 2: Summary programme for producing planning policy documents

Document title	Planned consultations	Expected adoption date	Policy lineage
Reading Borough Local Plan Policies Update	November 2023- January 2024 August-September 2024	Summer 2025	National policy
Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan Review	Not known	Not known – review by January 2028 to determine whether update needed.	National policy
Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD	March - May 2024	July 2024	Local Plan (EN12, EN14)
Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD	March – May 2024	July 2024	Local Plan (TR1-TR5)
Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD	July - August 2024	November 2024	Local Plan (CR3, CR4)
Other SPDs as required	TBC	TBC	Local Plan

- 3.2 The key document within the programme is the policies update for the Local Plan. Under Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) there is a requirement to carry out a review of a Local Plan within five years of adoption. A review of the Local Plan was undertaken and reported in March 2023¹, and this determined that an update of certain policies was required, for a variety of reasons including new national policy and legislation, changes in circumstances and monitoring of the effectiveness of policies. A full update of the whole Plan was not required. In total, 45 policies were identified as requiring update, set out in Table 3:

¹

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s26812/12%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20SEPT%20Report%20March%202023.pdf>

Table 3: Local Plan policies requiring update

Policy	Policy	Policy
CC2: Sustainable design and construction	H4: Build-to-rent schemes	CR6: Living in Central Reading
CC3: Adaptation to climate change	H5: Housing standards	CR7: Primary frontages in Central Reading
CC4: Decentralised energy	H6: Accommodation for vulnerable people	CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area
CC7: Design and the public realm	H7: Protecting the existing housing stock	CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area
CC9: Securing infrastructure	H8: Residential conversions	CR13: East Side Major Opportunity Area
EN4: Locally important heritage assets	TR1: Achieving the transport strategy	CR14: Other sites for development in Central Reading
EN7: Local green space and public open space	TR2: Major transport projects	CR15: The Reading Abbey Quarter
EN12: Biodiversity and the green network	TR4: Cycle routes and facilities	SR1: Island Road Major Opportunity Area
EN13: Major landscape features and areas of outstanding natural beauty	TR5: Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging	SR4: Other sites for development in South Reading
EN14: Trees, hedges and woodlands	RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development	SR5: Leisure and recreation use of the Kennetside areas
EM1: Provision of employment development	RL3: Vitality and viability of smaller centres	WR3: Other sites for development in West Reading and Tilehurst
EM2: Location of employment development	OU2: Hazardous installations	CA1: Other sites for development in Caversham and Emmer Green
H1: Housing provision	OU3: Telecommunications development	ER1: Other sites for development in East Reading
H2: Density and mix	CR2: Design in Central Reading	ER2: Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading
H3: Affordable housing	CR5: Drinking establishments in Central Reading	ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital

3.3 Work on the Partial Update since the Review was carried out has further identified the need for an update to policy H14: Suburban renewal and regeneration and RL4: Betting shops and payday loan companies.

3.4 Appendix 1 contains more information on the policies update and a more detailed timetable.

- 3.5 The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan was adopted very recently, in January 2023. The five-yearly review period will apply to this document as well, but at this stage, with the document very recently put in place there is no indication of whether any update will in due course; be necessary.
- 3.6 Alongside the above documents with 'Development Plan' status in determining planning applications, there is an intention to continue to produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide additional levels of detail to supplement development plan policy. A Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD, a Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD and a Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD have been recognised as important priorities. There is a challenge in that these SPDs will be linked to existing policies rather than updated policies, but work on the SPDs will feed into the Local Plan policies update process where necessary to ensure that there is the necessary level of alignment.
- 3.7 It should also be noted that the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill makes changes to the planning system, including the replacement of SPDs with 'supplementary plans' with an enhanced status and a requirement for public examination. The timescales in this document assume production of both the Partial Update and SPDs under the current process as the timetable will result in submission of the Partial Update before the trigger date for moving to a new system. Depending on whether and when these changes are made there may be a need for changes to the production timetable to reflect new requirements, and, once the update of the Local Plan is complete, to undertake a process of replacing existing SPDs with supplementary plans.
- 3.8 Progress on production of planning policy documents is monitored in the Annual Monitoring Report, generally produced in December each year. These can be found on the Council's website².

² www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy

Appendix 1: Local Plan policies update

A1.1 Table A1.1 shows the detailed information required for the Local Plan policies update.

Table A1.1: Summary of important information relating to the Local Plan policies update

Title	Reading Borough Local Plan Policies Update
Role and subject	<p>Update of selected policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) based on the outcome of the review of the Local Plan, to ensure that policies are up-to-date.</p> <p>The following policies are identified as being in need of an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cutting policies – CC2, CC3, CC4, CC7, CC9 • Environment policies – EN4, EN7, EN12, EN13, EN14 • Employment policies – EM1, EM2 • Housing policies – H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, H14 • Transport policies – TR1, TR2, TR4, TR5 • Retail and leisure policies – RL2, RL3, RL4 • Other use policies – OU2, OU3 • Site allocation and area-specific policies – CR2, CR5, CR6, CR7, CR11, CR12, CR13, CR14, CR15, SR1, SR4, SR5, WR3, CA1, ER1, ER2, ER3 <p>The update will also include the overall Spatial Strategy and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Other policies not mentioned above will not be part of the scope of the policies update unless it is determined at a later date that this is necessary.</p>
Geographic coverage	Whole of Reading Borough
Status	Development Plan
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected
Policy lineage	National policy
Documents that would be replaced	Selected policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan
Call for site nominations	April 2023
Regulation 18 consultation	November/December 2023 – January 2024
Regulation 19 consultation	August/September 2024
Submission	November 2024
Examination	February/March 2025
Adoption	June/July 2025

- A1.2 The programme does not allow for adoption of updated policies before the expiry of the five-year statutory review period, as this would be unrealistic. However, it does aim for submission of the policies update by that point so that there are emerging updated policies that can be given some weight in development management decisions, to avoid a policy vacuum where key policies would otherwise be out-of-date.

Resources

- A1.3 The most significant draws on resources through the preparation of a policies update will be staffing, evidence preparation and examination costs. A budget that provides sufficient resources to undertake the Local Plan production for a two year period between 2023 and 2025 was agreed at Council in March 2023. This should provide sufficient flexibility to undertake the update, including staffing resources. Should this not be the case, however, it may be necessary to undertake certain pieces of evidence work in-house or to look for more creative approaches such as joint commissioning.

Risks

- A1.4 There are a number of potential risks in updating policies in the Local Plan. These are considered below.
- A1.5 **Delays in production:** There are a significant number of possible reasons why plan production can be delayed, some of which are linked to the other risks below, and not all of which are within the control of the Council. The specific risk here is that the five-year period after which certain policies may be considered out-of-date is set in stone, and a delay in updating those policies would result in an absence of policy on some key matters, not least housing provision. The best way to mitigate this risk is an early assessment of housing and other key development needs and expected levels of provision to feed into the plan review. Delays will need to be reflected in a new version of the LDS (or Local Plan Timetable if the changes in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill are in effect).
- A1.6 **Changes to national planning system:** Significant changes to the national planning system have been proposed and consulted upon in recent years, starting with the Planning White Paper in August 2020. More recently, the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill is working through parliament. In terms of Local Plans, the Bill reaffirms the commitment to a plan-led system, but there are important changes that refer to local plan timetables. The current programme, involving submission in November 2024, will mean that the Partial Update is prepared under the existing plan-making system rather than the new system in the Bill, but the Update must nevertheless be mindful of how changes such as the introduction of national development management policies with which there is a statutory requirement for Local Plans to comply will affect the policies. In addition, the requirement for a LDS would be replaced by a need for a Local Plan Timetable.

- A1.7 Changes to national planning policy:** National policy is generally set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), but it can be subject to changes either through amendments to the NPPF itself or through other means such as written ministerial statements. Changes to the NPPF will undoubtedly be required as and when changes to the planning system are made, in particular in relation to national development management policies. Changes are also possible to the methodology for calculating housing need, and this could have wide-ranging implications for the policy update. A consultation on proposed changes began in December 2022, and some of those changes relating to wind power have already been made to the NPPF, whilst others are outstanding. The only way to mitigate this risk is for the Council to monitor consultations or statements from central government to have an early indication of the direction of travel.
- A1.8 Further resource constraints:** Budgets for 2023-2024 are set, but further resource constraints could impact on the Council's ability to progress the update in 2024-2025 and beyond. However, the majority of the spend is likely to be in 2023-2024 in commissioning the main pieces of evidence, so it is more likely that resource restrictions in future years would lead to slight delays in the timetable rather than major changes. It may mean a need to update the LDS (or Local Plan timetable).
- A1.9 Impact of neighbouring authorities' plans:** Given the geography of Reading and the close relationship with neighbouring authorities, decisions made in one authorities plans may have significant implications for its neighbours. As it stands, there remains a duty to co-operate under the Localism Act 2011 that is an essential element of plan-making, and should mean that the strategic implications of plans will be discussed throughout the process, which mitigates this risk to some extent. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill proposes removal of the duty to co-operate and its replacement with an as-yet unspecified test of alignment, but this is not expected to be relevant to the Partial Update. In practical terms, whatever legal test is in place, close working with neighbours will be necessary to prevent unforeseen issues from arising.
- A1.10 Changing local circumstances:** It is not considered likely that there will be substantial changes to local planning circumstances (e.g. demography, development pressures, economic changes) that would cause a major issue for the programme outlined in this LDS. Planning policies should be drafted with enough flexibility to cope with changes in circumstances, and the flexibility of the policies will be one of the tests when the document is examined.

Appendix 2: Other documents

- A2.1 In addition to the Local Plan, work is expected to progress on a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to provide more detailed guidance on existing Local Plan policies. These will need to be future-proofed so that they can also operate with updated policies.
- A2.2 A need for a Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD has been identified, to set out how the new system of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, in force from November 2023, will operate, as well as picking up on a number of actions from other documents including the Climate Emergency Strategy.

Table A2.1: Summary of important information relating to the Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD

Title	Biodiversity and Natural Environment SPD
Role and subject	Detailed policy and guidance on biodiversity and the natural environment, including approach to matters in the Environment Act 2021 including statutory Biodiversity Net Gain. Also picking up on actions in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, Tree Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan.
Geographic coverage	Whole of Reading Borough
Status	Supplementary Planning Document
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected
Policy lineage	Reading Borough Local Plan (policies EN12, EN14)
Documents that would be replaced	None
Draft SPD consultation	March-May 2024
Adoption	July 2024

- A2.3 A need has also been identified for a Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD, to update the parking standards from the existing SPD that is now some years old, but also to take account of the new Local Transport Plan and any opportunities for meeting the aims of that plan within development proposals.

Table A2.2: Summary of important information relating to the Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD

Title	Sustainable Transport and Parking SPD
Role and subject	Detailed policy and guidance regarding revised standards for car and cycle parking as part of development schemes and the promotion of sustainable transport measures including implementation of measures set out in Local Transport Plan.
Geographic coverage	Whole of Reading Borough
Status	Supplementary Planning Document
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected
Policy lineage	Reading Borough Local Plan (policies TR1, TR2, TR3, TR4, TR5)

Documents that would be replaced	Parking Standards and Design SPD (October 2011)
Draft SPD consultation	March-May 2024
Adoption	July 2024

- A2.4 A need for a Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD has been identified, to ensure that the substantial amount of development to be undertaken in Central Reading contributes to a much-enhanced public realm which contributes positively and consistently to the overall character of the centre.

Table A2.3: Summary of important information relating to the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD

Title	Town Centre Public Realm Strategy SPD
Role and subject	Detailed policy and guidance to improve the quality of the public realm throughout central Reading.
Geographic coverage	Central Reading
Status	Supplementary Planning Document
Joint preparation	No joint preparation expected
Policy lineage	Reading Borough Local Plan (policies CR2, CR3)
Documents that would be replaced	None
Draft SPD consultation	July-August 2024
Adoption	November 2024