

# **READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN**

**Adopted November 2019**

**Submission Draft Partial Update May 2025**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Role and Status of the Document

- 1.1.1 The Local Plan for Reading is the document that contains the policies for how Reading will develop up to 2041, which is the end date of the plan. It identifies the amount of development that will take place, the areas and sites where development is expected to be accommodated, and where it will be restricted, and sets out policies for how planning applications will be decided.
- 1.1.2 The plan has ‘development plan’ status. This means that, legally, it is the main consideration in deciding planning applications in Reading. Decisions should be in line with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise<sup>1</sup>. There are changes to this legal basis to further emphasise the role of the development plan, as well as include national development management policies, but the commencement of these changes is still awaited.
- 1.1.3 The local plan is an updated version of the Local Plan adopted in November 2019. With the exception of minerals and waste planning, which was undertaken jointly with neighbouring authorities, all local planning policies are contained within a single document.
- 1.1.4 It is important that this document is read as a whole. Whilst there might, for instance, be a policy dealing with a specific type of development (for example, development for schools) or site, other policies in the plan may also be relevant, for instance around amenity or design.

## 1.2 Context for Reading

- 1.2.1 Reading Borough cannot be viewed in isolation from its wider context. The Borough itself forms the core, but not the whole, of the urban area that is generally considered to constitute Reading. Figure 1.1 shows how the urban area centred on Reading extends beyond the Borough boundaries, particularly into Calcot, Purley-on-Thames and parts of Tilehurst in West Berkshire, and Woodley and Earley in Wokingham. These areas largely function as suburbs of Reading. In a wider sense, the Reading urban area in many ways functions as a single ‘city region’ with the nearby towns of Wokingham and Bracknell. The relationship to South Oxfordshire is different, in that the Borough boundary forms the edge of the urban area, and partly the beginning of the Chilterns National Landscape.
- 1.2.2 There has been an increase in the population of Reading Borough from 155,698 to 174,224 between 2011 and 2021, an increase of approximately 12%. There has also been an increase in the amount of households over the same period, rising from 62,869 to 67,683, an approximate 8% increase<sup>2</sup>. Whilst, in common with most areas, there is an ageing population, Reading nonetheless has a younger population profile than many of its neighbours. The proportion of older people aged 65 or older has increased by 17.2% between 2011 and 2021. Given the urban nature of Reading, it is unsurprising that it ranked fourth in the South East for population density at the time 2021 census, with 4,312.6 residents per sq. km<sup>3</sup>. Affordability of housing is an increasingly critical issue, with rising house prices and rents putting housing beyond

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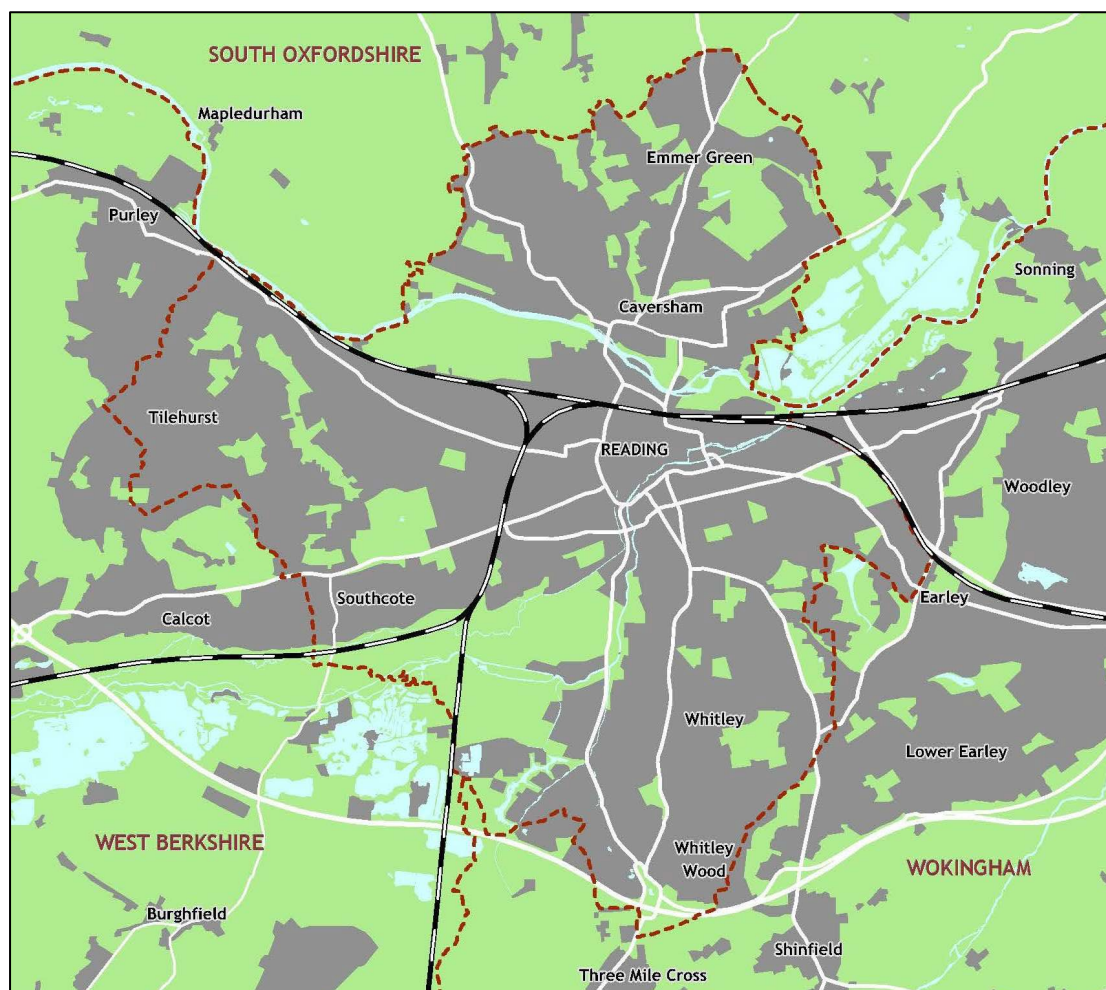
<sup>1</sup> Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

<sup>2</sup> ONS [Estimates of the population for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/populationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/estimatesofthepopulationfortheukenglandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland)

<sup>3</sup> ONS [Population density - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationanddemography/articles/populationdensity)

the reach of many of our residents. This also forms a barrier to economic growth, with access to housing making recruitment difficult in many sectors.

**Figure 1.1: Context of Reading Borough**



- 1.2.3 Reading is a major centre of employment, with 117,000 employee jobs available as of 2022<sup>4</sup>. There are more jobs in Reading than workers (e.g. there were 91,400 economically active persons within the borough in 2022)<sup>5</sup>, which means that Reading typically imports workers from other local authority areas, placing strain on the transport network and on the housing market. This reflects the economic success of the town, which functions as the centre of the Thames Valley, one of the most economically dynamic regions in the country. Reading is a hub for a variety of businesses, including ICT, professional services and science-based businesses<sup>6</sup>, and at the same time it still hosts a number of industrial activities, and has an increasing role in logistics. Many of these businesses rely on the high level of skills in the area, and there are also strong relationships with the University of Reading. However, despite the overall economic buoyancy, there are pockets of deprivation within the urban area where there are unemployment issues and concentrations of low skills.

<sup>4</sup> [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)

<sup>5</sup> [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)

<sup>6</sup> [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)

- 1.2.4 Reading town centre is also one of the UK's most important centres. Its importance for retail, boosted by the opening of the Oracle in 1999, is long established, but it is also significant for leisure and culture, and, increasingly, as somewhere to live.
- 1.2.5 Reading is an ancient town with over 1,000 years of history, and contains a wealth of archaeology and historic buildings. The historic environment has been, and is, important in forming the identity of the town and its people. The historic environment – all the archaeology, buildings and landscapes that surround us – contributes to the underlying framework that creates a sense of place for Reading. However, there is a clear need for Reading to make more of those important historic assets.
- 1.2.6 Reading's location on the Great Western main rail line and the M4 motorway makes it a major hub for transport movement. Reading station is one of the busiest stations outside London, and also marks the western extent of the Elizabeth Line (formerly known as Crossrail), with services to Reading having commenced in 2022. In addition, Reading's location on the Kennet & Avon canal and River Thames and at the meeting point of several national cycle routes gives it significance for a variety of other modes of travel.

### **1.3 Relationship with other plans and strategies**

- 1.3.1 The Local Plan is the main planning document for Reading. It replaced the three previous development plan documents – the Core Strategy (adopted 2008, amended 2015), Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted 2009) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012, amended 2015). The Local Plan was originally adopted on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019.
- 1.3.2 The only topics that the Local Plan does not cover are minerals and waste planning. These are the subject of a separate Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which has been prepared jointly with Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. More information on the Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which was adopted in January 2023, can be found on the website<sup>7</sup>.
- 1.3.3 There will be specific sites or topics that require more detailed consideration, and this will mean the production of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). These may include planning briefs for specific sites, or topic based SPDs on matters such as sustainable design. These cannot make policy on their own, and can only provide more detail on a policy in a Local Plan. Some existing SPDs will continue to apply under the proposed new policies, and the relevant section of the plan states where this is the case. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 replaces SPDs with Supplementary Plans, but the transitional arrangements mean that SPDs will continue to apply alongside this version of the Local Plan.
- 1.3.4 This plan has been prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the overall national approach to planning. Local plans should be consistent with the principles and policies in the NPPF, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 1.3.5 The NPPF states that plans should make clear which policies are 'strategic policies'. Strategic policies are those that "set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places" according to paragraph 20 of the NPPF and should be limited to those that address strategic priorities and relevant cross-boundary issues.

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<sup>7</sup> [The Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan - Reading Borough Council](#)

Such policies should look ahead for at least 15 years, and should make sufficient provision for development, infrastructure, community facilities and conservation and enhancement of the built, natural and historic environment. One of the purposes of strategic policies is to provide a clear starting point for non-strategic policies. Non-strategic policies may be within the Local Plan, or could also be in neighbourhood plans, albeit there are not currently any neighbourhood plans in Reading. Where a policy is a strategic policy, this is noted in the policy title.

## **1.4 Process of production**

- 1.4.1 The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted as the Council's official policy on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019.
- 1.4.2 There is a statutory duty to review a local plan within five years of adoption, which in this case means 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024. A review was carried out in March 2023, and this concluded that there was a need to undertake a Partial Update of the Local Plan. The need for the Partial Update arises for a number of reasons including new legislation, changing national and local policy, the results of monitoring existing policies and changes in circumstances on the ground.
- 1.4.3 The Partial Update encompasses approximately half of the policies in the Plan. Other policies are to be carried forward as already adopted. This tracked changes consultation version of the Plan includes all policies, whether or not they are to be updated, for completeness and so that the full context of the updated policies can be seen.
- 1.4.4 This version of the Partial Update is the Submission version, which is the version that the Council has submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 1.4.5 Submission of the document marks the beginning of a public examination by an independent Inspector, which is likely to include a series of public hearings. The Inspector will decide whether the document is sound, legally compliant and complies with the duty to co-operate. If it is, it can be adopted as the Council's official policy. It is currently expected that this will happen during 2026.

## **1.5 Evidence and technical reports**

- 1.5.1 There are a significant number of background papers and pieces of research that have informed this Local Plan and provide the justification for the policies. The full justification for each policy or proposal is not included in the plan in order to keep the document as brief as possible, although some key elements may be referenced where relevant. The documents making up the full evidence base are available on the Council's website.
- 1.5.2 Perhaps the most significant documents are those which identify the development needs. In the case of housing, this is the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA, published 2024)<sup>8</sup>, which identifies the local housing need for Reading up to 2041. A need of 735 new dwellings each year is identified. The HNA also looks at the need for affordable housing, different dwelling sizes and some specific types of housing such as residential care. There is also a document that assesses the need for new economic development and retail and leisure uses (Commercial Development Needs Assessment, published 2024). This informs the overall strategy and is referred to where relevant. It is important to note that economic development and housing are

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<sup>8</sup> <https://images.reading.gov.uk/2024/10/Reading-Housing-Needs-Assessment-July-2024.pdf>

intrinsically linked, and the need for new homes in the area is partly related to the area's role as a key driver of the national economy. Therefore the evidence seeks to work from the same basis wherever possible.

- 1.5.3 In addition to the development needs assessments, there is a variety of other background information on various aspects of planning in Reading. These include technical reports on matters such as flood risk and transport, as well as general background papers that describe the evolution of policy in the plan. Evidence to support the Local Plan is set out on the Council's website<sup>9</sup>.
- 1.5.4 This Local Plan is also supported by a Sustainability Appraisal. This assesses the environmental, social and economic effects of the policies and proposals in the plan, and is a legal requirement. The Sustainability Appraisal was open to consultation at the same time as the plan, and can be viewed on the Council website<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>



## 2. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

### 2.1 Vision

- 2.1.1 The vision is the starting point for the Local Plan, in that it sets out how we see Reading in 2041, at the end of the plan period. There have been a number of previous visions, notably that from the 2008 Core Strategy, which informed previous development plan documents. It is considered that this vision is still largely relevant.
- 2.1.2 However, in parallel to the drafting of the adopted Local Plan (2019), Reading UK, the economic development and marketing company for Reading, launched a 2050 vision for the town as a smart and sustainable city by 2050. Reading UK have worked closely with two Board member partners, Barton Willmore and the University of Reading, and consulted widely with business as well as citizens and visitors to the town. It has also been considered and supported by the Council. It is not a statutory document but provides a vision for all in the town to participate in and a context for the Local Plan and its policies. It will be the basis for influencing Government, stakeholders, investors and funders to support the Vision.
- 2.1.3 The Reading 2050 Vision will help in establishing Reading as an internationally recognised and economically successful city region. It envisages a place where low carbon living will be the norm, and the built environment, technology and innovation have combined to create a smart, dynamic and sustainable city, with a high quality of life and equal opportunity for all.
- 2.1.4 By 2050 it envisages that Reading will be a smart and sustainable city that
1. Shares success to support and enable thriving communities;
  2. Delivers a real sense of place and identity;
  3. Thrives on cultural and cross-generational diversity;
  4. Is recognised for its heritage and natural assets;
  5. Embeds technology to deliver innovation and low carbon living for all; and
  6. Welcomes ethical and sustainable businesses who support Reading.
- 2.1.5 The project has looked in detail at how this vision may look in parts of the town as an example of how Reading could develop. In particular it has focused on:
1. Reading as a Green Tech City using the area around the Station forecourt
  2. Reading as a City of Culture and Diversity along the Oxford Road as it crosses the IDR
  3. Reading as a City of Rivers and Parks with the example of the Thames between the Caversham and Reading Bridges.
- 2.1.6 This Local Plan looks to 2041, but, where a longer term direction of travel is emerging, it is important to consider the overall vision in that context. Therefore, the headlines emerging above inform the Local Plan vision.
- 2.1.7 In addition, the Council has a Council Plan 2025 - 2028. This clearly covers a much shorter time period than both the Local Plan and the Reading 2050 project, but it is nevertheless important to understand current wider priorities. The five key themes are as follows:



- Promote more equal communities in Reading;
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success;
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint;
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children; and
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future.

2.1.8 The vision draws on a range of work locally in deciding on the direction Reading is going in, and as such continues the overall approach of previous visions for the Borough, notably in the 2008 Core Strategy.

*Reading will be a dynamic, inclusive, net zero carbon community of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It will be a clean, green, healthy, safe and desirable place in which to live, work, study and visit. Its economic strength will be harnessed to meet the needs of all in the community. Everyone will have the opportunity to benefit from all that Reading can offer. Everyone has a part to play in shaping its future.*

*Reading will continue to thrive as an internationally recognised economic centre, and the core of a wider, vibrant urban area and surrounding hinterland within other authorities, that makes a vital contribution to the UK economy. It will be an environment where new business can start up and flourish. It will continue to adapt to ensure its success continues with economic changes and new working practices. The right infrastructure to enable Reading to continue to fulfil this role will be in place, and people will be able to easily move around the town with a comprehensive network of public transport, walking and cycling. The centre will continue as a regionally important shopping and business location, but its role will be widened as a place for culture, leisure and entertainment, as well as a place to live.*

*Reading's residents, particularly those most in need, will have access to high quality housing that meets their requirements and safeguards their quality of life. All residents will have access to adequate services and facilities, particularly through strong district and local centres, and to open green space. Children and young people will be supported through education and other assistance, whilst people of all ages will have the opportunity to improve their skills to make a contribution to the community. Residents will have all that they need to be able to live a full and active life.*

*Reading's role as a centre for the arts and culture will expand, drawing on its dynamism and diversity. Reading's extensive heritage importance will be conserved and enhanced and better revealed and integrated into the identity of the town. Green areas throughout the town, including its watercourses, woodlands and open green space, will be protected, enhanced and linked together as a recreational and ecological resource. Reading's environment will be clean and healthy, and this will be balanced against economic and housing growth through a strongly sustainable approach to development including innovative approaches to energy provision.*

## 2.2 Objectives

2.2.1 The vision can be condensed into a more specific series of Local Plan objectives, which contain more of a planning emphasis, and which inform the policies that are

included and what they should say. Again, these objectives are relatively consistent with the objectives that have previously been in place, notably in the Core Strategy, and give continuity with past and existing strategies.

#### 2.2.2 The objectives for the Local Plan are as follows:

1. *Respond to the climate emergency by contributing to achieving a net zero carbon Reading by 2030;*
2. *Strengthen the role of Reading, including central Reading, as the hub for the Thames Valley, providing an accessible focus for the development of employment, housing, services and facilities, meeting the needs of residents, workers, visitors, those who study in Reading Borough, and the wider area;*
3. *Make the most efficient use of Reading's limited land, particularly previously developed land, to ensure that as many new homes as possible are delivered to meet identified needs, particularly needs for affordable housing;*
4. *Improve the quality of life for those living, working, studying in and visiting the Borough, creating inclusive, sustainable communities with good access to employment, open space and waterspace, transport, education, services and facilities (such as sustainable water supplies and wastewater treatment, healthcare services, social and community facilities, sport and recreation, etc.) to meet identified needs;*
5. *Form the basis for co-operation with neighbouring authorities to consider the wider West of Berkshire area as a whole;*
6. *Ensure new development and existing areas are accessible and sustainable, in accordance with the sustainability appraisal objectives, including adapting to the effects of climate change;*
7. *Maintain and enhance the historic, built and natural environment of the Borough through investment and high quality design, and capitalise on these assets to contribute to quality of life and economic success;*
8. *Improve and develop excellent transport systems to improve accessibility within Reading and for the wider area by sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling;*
9. *Offer outstanding cultural opportunities, which are based on multiculturalism, local heritage and high quality, modern arts, leisure and visitor facilities;*
10. *Ensure that Reading is a healthy, clean, safe and socially-inclusive community where the needs of all its citizens are met by high quality, cost effective services and outstanding levels of community involvement.*

#### 2.2.3 The sustainability objectives mentioned in objective 3 are a separate but related set of environmental, social and economic objectives that have been identified for the purpose of undertaking sustainability appraisal. They are set out in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (2014). There is also an important relationship with the objectives of other plans and strategies covering Reading, such as the Climate Change Strategy 2013-2020 (Reading Means Business on Climate Change), which have informed these objectives.

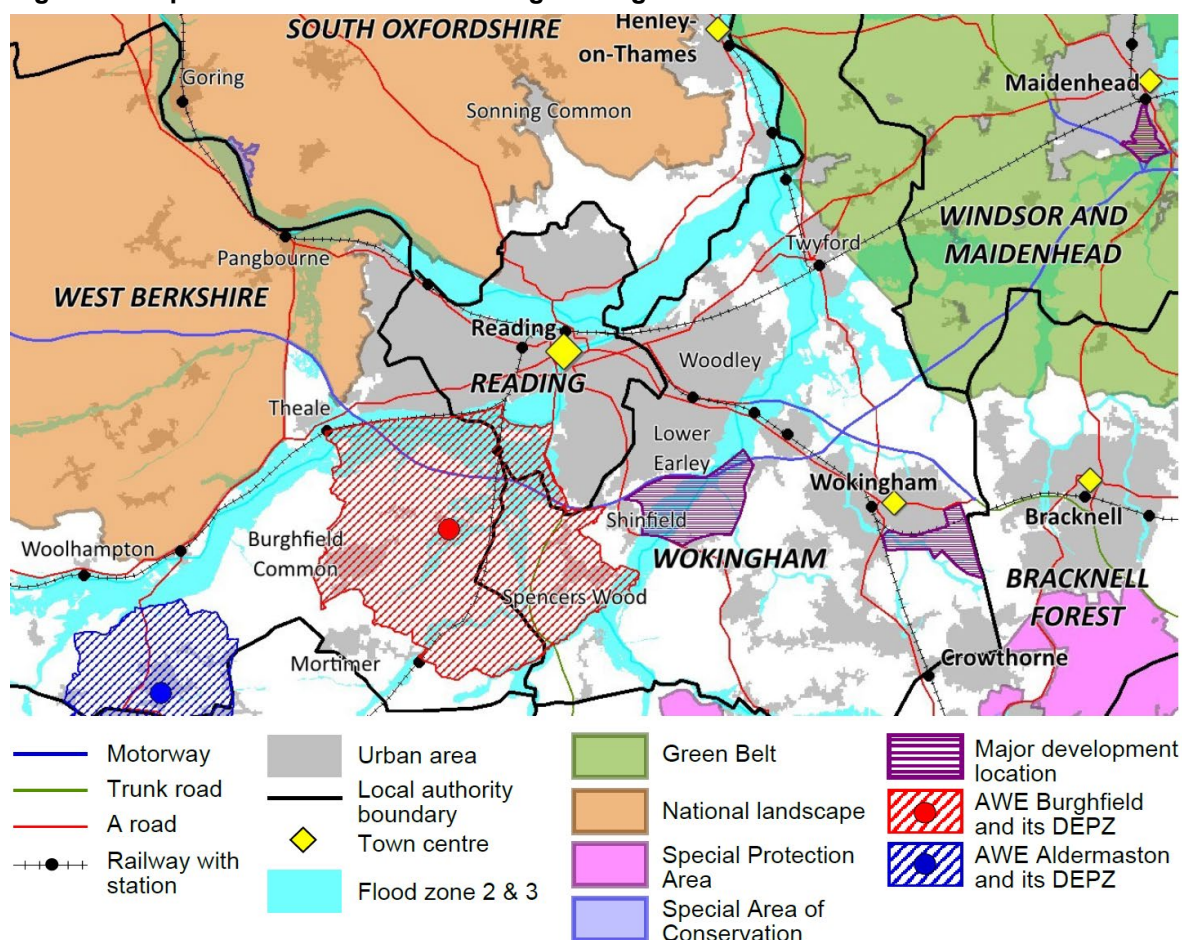
### 3. SPATIAL STRATEGY

- 3.0.1 This section sets out the overall spatial strategy for the Borough which has guided the formulation of policies in the plan. The strategy itself does not form part of the policy as such, but shows what the policies in the plan are trying to achieve and how it sits within a wider spatial approach.

#### 3.1 Wider Spatial Context

- 3.1.1 Reading cannot be viewed in isolation from its wider spatial context. Reading Borough forms the core of a larger urban area that extends into neighbouring authorities West Berkshire and Wokingham, and it sits at the centre of a functional area that also includes surrounding settlements. Previous evidence has strongly pointed to a strong functional relationship across an area comprising West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell Forest, broadly known as the West of Berkshire area. The relationships are particularly strong in terms of the housing market, but are also relevant for commercial markets. This has meant that a significant amount of joint working has been undertaken in the past around the West of Berkshire area. A number of settlements in the southern part of South Oxfordshire also look towards Reading, albeit that the local authority as a whole tends to have more of a relationship with other Oxfordshire authorities.
- 3.1.2 Reading also has a role as the centre of the Thames Valley, which is a significant economic driver for the region and the UK as a whole. It is home to a number of important economic sectors including information and communications technology (ICT), business services and pharmaceuticals, as well as a manufacturing and logistics role. Its centre remains a major regional destination for shopping and leisure activities.
- 3.1.3 There is no agreed overarching spatial strategy that applies to the local area, but there is a need for development plans in the area to complement one another. This is particularly the case across the main functional area, the West of Berkshire area. Within this area, each authority has an adopted or emerging local plan that is at an advanced stage. Figure 3.1 sets out the overall spatial context for the area, including major areas of development outside Reading's boundaries. Strategic development locations (SDLs) in Wokingham will affect Reading due to their proximity to our boundary, including the South of the M4 SDL (only approximately 360 dwellings in the submitted plan and is not therefore shown), and the proposed Loddon Valley Garden Village SDL comprising phased delivery of 3,930 homes that forms part of Wokingham's Proposed Submission Local Plan Update. Developments on this scale will be expected to deliver a significant improvement in infrastructure, and transport links into Reading in particular by public transport will be of vital importance.
- 3.1.4 Figure 3.1 also illustrates constraints such as the extent of the AWE Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ). Information on the DEPZ and its implications for development within the Borough are detailed within Policy OU2: Hazardous Installations.

**Figure 3.1: Spatial context for the Reading Borough Local Plan**



## 3.2 Spatial Strategy for Reading

3.2.1 The constrained nature of Reading Borough dictates the spatial strategy to some extent. Significant development can only occur where sites are available, which inevitably means a considerable focus on the centre and south of Reading. Opportunities for large-scale expansion of the town onto greenfield sites within the Borough are virtually non-existent, with the small rural areas within the boundaries subject to significant flood risk. This means a need to look within the existing urban area for opportunities, and to ensure efficient use of land. The spatial strategy for Reading consists of the following elements:

- Central Reading as the focus for meeting much of the identified development needs at a medium and high density;
- South Reading as a location for meeting much of the remainder of the development needs, and the enhancement of links from the centre to South Reading and to major development locations beyond;
- Some new development within identified district and local centres, including more diversity of services and facilities and some increase in densities;
- Limited reallocation of some areas of employment to housing and supporting uses;

- Increasing densities where appropriate in other areas with high levels of accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling;
- Ensuring that urban extensions or garden villages close to the Reading urban area are provided with adequate facilities including infrastructure links into Reading.

3.2.2 Figure 3.2 summarises the spatial strategy.

3.2.3 **Central Reading:** The centre of Reading is the main hub of retail and employment for the Borough and for much of the surrounding area. It is one of the most accessible locations in the South East, boosted by recent major investment in an upgraded station, new transport interchanges and by the forthcoming arrival of the Elizabeth Line. At the same time, there are considerable areas of underused land around the edge of the centre which offer an opportunity to accommodate a considerable amount of development at a high density, which will include some opportunities for new tall buildings in appropriate locations.

3.2.4 Therefore, a significant proportion of the development to be provided in Reading within the plan period will be within the central area. This will include around 8,700 homes (around 59% of the total planned for) and 46,000 sq m of offices (the full total planned for).

3.2.5 There are a number of constraints that are particularly applicable in the central area. The town centre represents the greatest concentration of heritage interest in Reading, and the density and design of development will need to reflect this. Considerable areas of the town centre are also potentially at risk of flooding. There are also physical barriers to movement in and around the centre, such as the rivers, railway and Inner Distribution Road. The section on Central Reading (section 5) deals with how these issues will be addressed. In addition, a reliance on Central Reading to deliver housing will inevitably mean that many of the dwellings delivered will be small with little private outdoor space. This means that development that takes place in other areas must give a greater focus on the provision of much-needed family housing.

3.2.6 **South Reading:** The south of Reading is the other main part of the Borough where there are significant sites potentially available for development, particularly in the area close to the A33. The accessibility of this area is expected to increase substantially with the Bus Rapid Transit scheme linking the town centre with the recently-opened Mere oak park and ride. Many of the sites that could be developed are vacant or underused and of poor visual quality, and offer an opportunity to create a high-quality gateway into Reading.

3.2.7 Around 2,700 homes can be provided in South Reading over the plan period, some 18% of the total planned for. However, due to constraints such as contamination, flood risk and noise and disturbance, many of the sites will not be appropriate for residential development. South Reading will also therefore be the location to meet much of Reading's need for new employment floorspace, with a strong focus on industry and warehousing, accommodating virtually all of the new industrial and warehouse space planned for. There is a particular opportunity on land around Island Road.

3.2.8 **Other areas of Reading:** Development opportunities within the West, North and East of Reading are more limited, with these areas largely consisting of existing residential areas. As primarily residential areas, any development will be generally residential in nature, with some development for community uses. Around 1,900

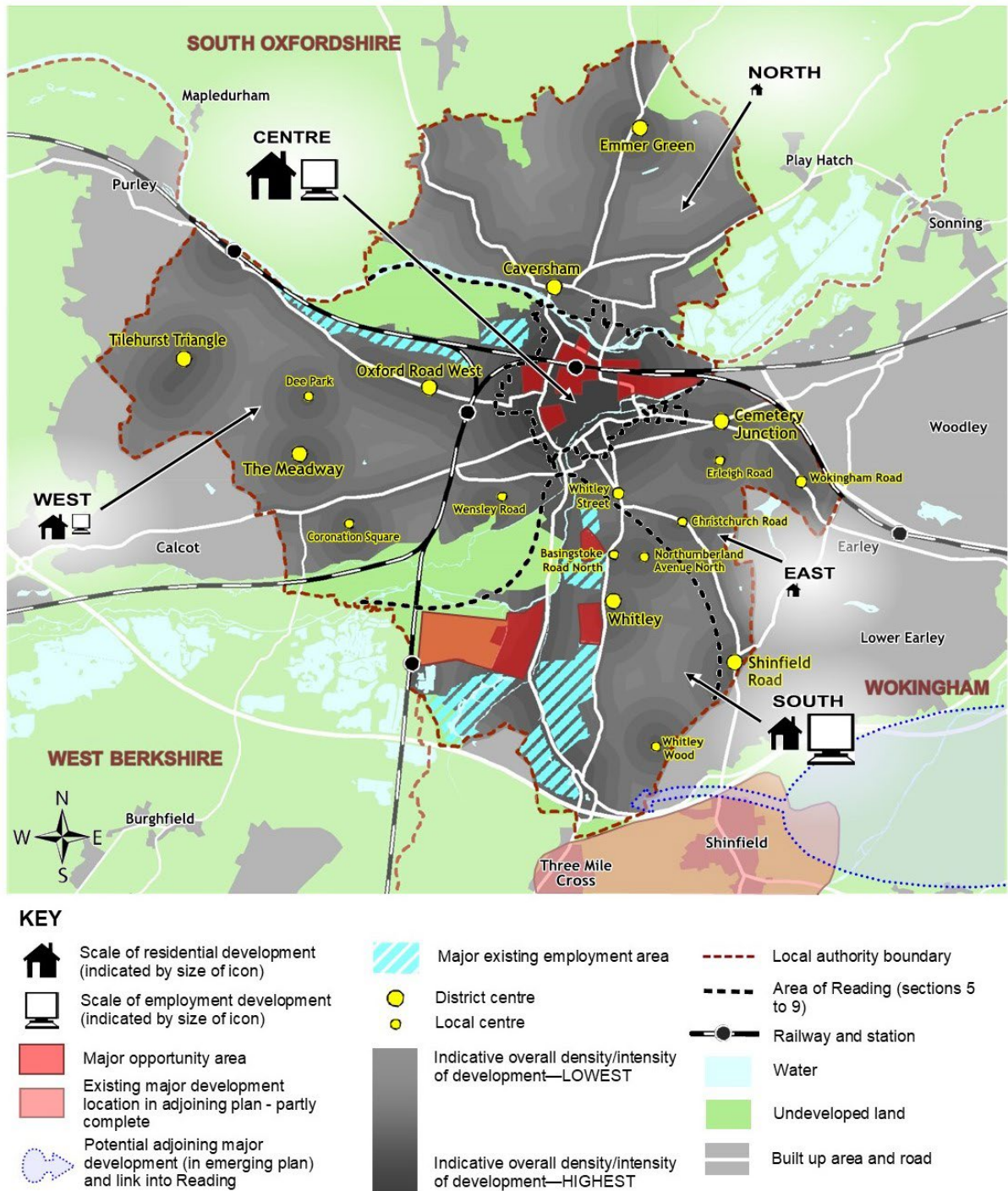
homes (13% of the total to be provided in the plan period) can be provided in West Reading, with around 700 (5%) in North Reading and 800 (6%) in East Reading. The amount of residential in West Reading is substantially higher than the others simply because this is the largest and most populous of the areas, and is where the majority of small housing sites have historically tended to come forward.

- 3.2.9 **District and local centres:** The network of smaller identified centres is essential in ensuring good access for the local community to shops and services, particularly for those who do not have access to a car. This network will be maintained and strengthened, and the diversity of the centres will be broadened. The centres also tend to have relatively high levels of accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling, and as such are appropriate locations for new residential and employment development which may often be at a higher density than surrounding residential areas. Higher density residential accommodation in these more sustainable locations would also help address local housing need by widening the choice of housing in what are often predominantly lower density suburban areas. New development will also give an opportunity for environmental enhancements and new facilities within these centres.
- 3.2.10 **Existing employment areas:** A high level of need has been identified for new floorspace for employment development, to help ensure the future prosperity of Reading. This means that the majority of our employment areas need to be retained and, where possible, intensified, to continue to provide this role. As such, there is not scope for wholesale redevelopment of employment land to help meet housing needs. However, as an exception, there are some specific areas where there is some potential for residential use, in particular where the current uses are not 'pure' employment uses, where there is a difficult relationship with residential land that could be better addressed through development, or where there is little prospect of employment use in the long term. Areas around Manor Farm Road, south of Elgar Road and at the eastern edge of the Richfield Avenue area are the main opportunities.
- 3.2.11 **Increasing densities:** In locations which are highly accessible by public transport, as well as walking and cycling, there are opportunities to seek to increase density of development to help to meet needs. However, careful attention should be paid to the existing character of a local area and issues such as heritage. One clear opportunity to increase densities is along the A33 corridor in South Reading, where the BRT scheme will improve public transport accessibility, and where higher density development can frame a high quality entrance to Reading.
- 3.2.12 **Major developments outside Reading:** It is likely that there will be significant development of new homes, together with supporting facilities, on the edge of the Reading urban area. A Strategic Development Location around Shinfield and Spencers Wood has been identified for some time in Wokingham's development plan, and much of it is already complete. As set out in paragraph 3.1.3, the Proposed Submission Wokingham Local Plan also identifies major development at Loddon Valley Garden Village. Whilst some local services and facilities are to be provided within large developments, Reading will inevitably be the main town that these developments rely upon for higher order infrastructure. Consideration of transport links from these areas into Reading should therefore make up a major part of the spatial strategy.
- 3.2.13 Sections 5 to 9 of this plan contain specific policies for, and allocations within, various areas of Reading: Central Reading, South Reading, East Reading, Caversham and Emmer Green and West Reading and Tilehurst. Figure 3.2 shows the location of



those areas. More detailed spatial strategies for those areas, where necessary, are included within the relevant chapter.

**Figure 3.2: Spatial Strategy for Reading**



## 4. GENERAL POLICIES

- 4.0.1 The policies in this section are general policies applicable to the whole of Reading, although some may also refer in part to specific areas.

### 4.1 Cross-Cutting Policies

#### **Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**

##### **CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.*

*Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan (including, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Proposed development that conflicts with the Development Plan will be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.*

*Where there are no policies relevant to the application or the policies which are most important to determining the application are out of date at the time of making the decision then permission will be granted unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:*

- The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.*

- 4.1.1 The Government has placed the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of its approach to planning, and this is articulated in the National Planning Policy Framework, published in December 2023. This policy aims to ensure that decisions are taken in line with that presumption. In doing so, it helps to achieve all of the core objectives.

#### **Sustainable Design and Construction**

##### **CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION (Strategic policy)**

*Proposals for new development, including the construction of new building(s) and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of building(s) and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.*

*All non-residential developments or conversions to residential are required to achieve net-zero development defined as “a scenario in which the quantity of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions arising from the development’s*



**operational energy use on an annual basis is zero or negative, and where whole-life emissions are reduced through sustainable design measures.” Net zero building status must be achieved through the application of the following energy hierarchy:**

- **Minimise and manage operational energy demand through building design, fabric performance and servicing measures;**
- **Use local low carbon energy resources (such as secondary heat) wherever possible to meet residual demands;**
- **Meet remaining residual energy demands by producing, storing and using renewable energy on-site; and**
- **Monitor and report on energy performance<sup>11</sup>.**

**All non-residential development proposals must include an energy statement which confirms that proposals:**

- **Can generate at least the same amount of renewable electricity on-site (and preferably on-plot) as they demand over the course of the year (reasonable estimates of regulated and unregulated use) using a methodology proven to accurately predict post-occupancy performance; and**
- **Achieve a site average space heating demand of 15-20kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr and a site average total energy demand of 70kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr. No unit shall exceed total energy demand of 90kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/yr, irrespective of the amount of on-site renewable production. ('Total energy demand' means the amount of energy used as measured by the metering of the building with no deduction for renewable energy generated on site).<sup>12</sup>**

**An energy statement should include pre-built estimates and as-built calculations prior to occupation<sup>13</sup>. Weight will be given to proposals which demonstrate a commitment to on-going monitoring post-occupation which can be clearly communicated to the occupier.**

**All non-residential development or conversions to residential must be designed to be water efficient and reduce water consumption in accordance with the 'fittings approach' detailed within the Building Regulations<sup>14</sup>. Proposals that achieve water neutrality<sup>15</sup> will be particularly supported. Both residential and non-residential development should include recycling greywater and rainwater harvesting where systems are energy- and cost-effective.**

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<sup>11</sup> This net-zero definition and mitigation hierarchy represents industry best-practice as defined by the UK Green Building Council.

<sup>12</sup> Applicants should refer to the LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide for specific guidance with regard to different types of non-residential buildings, such as schools or commercial offices:  
[https://www.leti.uk/\\_files/ugd/252d09\\_3b0f2acf2bb24c019f5ed9173fc5d9f4.pdf](https://www.leti.uk/_files/ugd/252d09_3b0f2acf2bb24c019f5ed9173fc5d9f4.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Applicants should refer to CIBSE TM54: Evaluating Operational Energy Use at Design Stage.

<sup>14</sup> All water fittings and appliances installed must be compliant with Table 2.2 'fittings approach' as outlined within Part G of the Building Regulations.

<sup>15</sup> Water neutral development is development which does not increase the rate of water abstraction for drinking water supplies above existing levels. For every new development, water demand should first be minimised and then any remaining water demand offset, so that the total demand on the public water supply is the same after development as it was before.

***The demolition of an existing building should be accompanied by a full justification for demolition<sup>16</sup> and demonstrate how 95% of all construction waste will be diverted away from landfill<sup>17</sup>. For non-listed buildings, demolition will only be acceptable where:***

- The building is in such a poor state that it is not practical or viable to refurbish or re-use;***
- Such refurbishment or re-use would result in a similar amount or a greater amount of embodied carbon generation; or***
- Such refurbishment or re-use would result in a building with poor thermal efficiency resulting in a greater lifetime carbon emissions than would arise from a re-build.***

***All applications for new-build commercial floorspace of 5000m<sup>2</sup> or more must include an embodied carbon assessment. This assessment must demonstrate that a score of less than 800kg/m<sup>2</sup> of carbon can be achieved within the development for the substructure, superstructure and finishes.***

***Exceptional basis clause: In cases where the above points cannot be met for technical, viability or other policy reasons (such as heritage), the highest possible standards are required. In these cases, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the requirements can be met. For major developments of 1000 sqm or more, applicants must also either:***

- Enter into a legal agreement to provide renewable energy infrastructure off-site that is equivalent to at least offsetting the additional energy requirements not achieved on site; or***
- Provide a financial contribution to the LPA of a value sufficient enough to offset the remaining performance not achieved on site<sup>18</sup> (with this being a minimum contribution of £5k and a maximum of £100k per 1,000 sq m)<sup>19</sup>; or***
- Demonstrate the buildings will be connected to a heat network; or***
- Demonstrate that the proposal is compliant with BREEAM Outstanding or Excellent (or equivalent certification method).***

- 4.1.2 The amount of new development taking place within Reading has the potential to impose a large environmental footprint in terms of consumption of resources and materials, the use of energy and the associated emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. As such, the incorporation of sustainable design and construction techniques are essential in order to minimise this impact. The Reading Climate Emergency strategy (2020-25)<sup>20</sup> seeks to achieve a net zero carbon Reading

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<sup>16</sup> Sites allocated within the Local Plan are not subject to the requirement for full justification for demolition.

<sup>17</sup> Applicants should refer to the [RICS Professional Standard Whole Life Cycle Assessment](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/circular_economy_statements_lpg_0.pdf) as a preferred methodology. Additional guidance can also be found at [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/circular\\_economy\\_statements\\_lpg\\_0.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/circular_economy_statements_lpg_0.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> As the grid is decarbonised, financial contributions will be linked to residual carbon emissions rather than energy demand.

<sup>19</sup> Index linked, with the prices in the policy being 2024 prices

<sup>20</sup> Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy can be accessed on the Council's website at [updated Appendix 1 READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2020-25-Final.pdf](#)

by 2030. New development has a significant role to play in achieving these aims and will ensure buildings are fit to exist without replacement for many years.

- 4.1.3 The general principle of this policy in terms of new development applies to both residential and non-residential uses. For non-residential uses (including non-C3 forms of accommodation) and for conversions to residential, this policy incorporates new metrics which stand alone from BREEAM for on-site renewables, space heating demand and total energy demand. The BREEAM standards remain a useful guide and cover a wide range of matters including building fabrics and materials, energy and water use, amenity areas and ecology, waste recycling, the location and accessibility of developments, daylighting, sound insulation etc. However, the current standards give high scores to development in urban areas to which use previously developed land that is close to services, amenities and public transport routes. Developments in Reading will therefore naturally score relatively highly before any consideration of the impact of development itself. As such, Reading Borough Council requires that development must mitigate effects further by reducing greenhouse gas and other polluting emissions and reducing energy demand.
- 4.1.4 Additional expectations for performance of new-build homes in terms of emissions are set out in policy H5 on housing standards. An existing Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document<sup>21</sup> is in place and, and the general principles, where in compliance with the overall policy, will continue to apply.
- 4.1.5 Particular attention should be paid to historic buildings. As historic buildings continue to change, they must contribute to a net zero future and be fit for future users. Through sensitive adaptation and keeping buildings in use, historic buildings can make an important contribution to reducing carbon emissions and energy costs. Applicants should refer to advice from Historic England on adapting historic buildings for energy and carbon efficiency<sup>22</sup>. The LETI Climate Emergency Retrofit Guide<sup>23</sup> is also a useful resource for applicants.

## **Adaptation to Climate Change**

### **CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE (Strategic Policy)**

***All developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to adapt to climate change and to mitigate the risks of overheating, flooding and extreme storms. The following measures shall be incorporated into development unless it can be demonstrated that requirements are not suitable, feasible or viable:***

- ***New buildings shall be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements. Proposals involving both new and existing buildings must be designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change by including the following measures:***
  - ***Solar shading,***
  - ***Thermal mass,***

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<sup>21</sup> The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD can be viewed on the Council's website at [Sustainable-Design-and-Construction-SPD-Adopted-December-19.pdf \(reading.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Historic England Advice Note 18](#)

<sup>23</sup> [LETI Climate Emergency Retrofit Guide](#)

- ***Appropriate heating and ventilation of the building,***
  - ***Appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight,***
  - ***Green and brown roofs, and***
  - ***Green walls.***
  - ***Use of trees and other planting to cool the urban environment through shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets and to help to connect habitat, integrated soft surfaces designed with native plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changing climatic conditions;***
  - ***All development must address the risks of overheating through passive cooling and energy efficiency measures in the first instance<sup>24</sup>;***
  - ***All development must minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system and incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in river flooding levels as a result of climate change.***
- 4.1.6 Adaptation is about making sure future communities can live, work, rest and play in a comfortable and secure environment in the face of climate change. Taking action now to help successfully achieve adaptation measures would help to reduce vulnerability for people, businesses, services and infrastructure to climate change. Adaptation measures need to be built into all new developments to ensure the sustainable development of housing, businesses and the economy of Reading. Applicants must consider the adaptive capacity of buildings from the earliest stages of design. Applicants should refer to the Reading Climate Change Emergency Strategy<sup>25</sup> and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD<sup>26</sup>.
- 4.1.7 The impacts of climate change are predicted to increase over time, with winters getting warmer and wetter, while summers become hotter and drier<sup>27</sup>. It is expected that there will be more extreme weather leading to impacts including intense rainfall and floods, heatwaves, droughts and increased risk of subsidence. This will affect people's lives, homes and businesses as well as essential services and supplies such as transport, hospitals, water supply and energy. There will also be significant impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment. Applicants must seek a good understanding of future climate risk and incorporate these risks into designs from the outset.
- 4.1.8 Given the anticipated level of growth of the Borough over the coming years, it is imperative that this growth takes place in a sustainable manner incorporating climate change adaptation technologies. New development must be designed to adapt to more intense rainfall, possible flooding, heat waves and droughts. All development in Reading must be built with future climate in mind in order to avoid maladaptation,

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<sup>24</sup> Applicants should refer to the Good Homes Alliance Early Stage Overheating Risk Tool Checklist: <https://goodhomes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GHA-Overheating-in-New-Homes-Tool-and-Guidance-Tool-only.pdf>

<sup>25</sup>

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s14713/updated%20Appendix%201%20READING%20CLIMATE%20EMERGENCY%20STRATEGY%202020-25-Final.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Sustainable-Design-and-Construction-SPD-Adopted-December-19.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained?s=09>

whereby poor design will result in increased risks for future occupants. Careful consideration of adaptive capacity will help to avoid the need for costly retrofit in the coming years.

- 4.1.9 The Design and Access Statement must clearly set out how the requirements of the policy have been addressed or identify where these requirements are not relevant. Where a Design and Access Statement is not required, applicants should clearly state how requirements have been met within another part of the application, such as a planning statement. Considerations in this policy are also addressed by the Building Regulations, particularly Part O on overheating<sup>28</sup>. Therefore, addressing these issues at design stage could ensure compliance with Building Control.
- 4.1.10 Reading is an urbanised Borough with a high proportion of hardstanding/ built form, and is built on two main rivers – the Thames and the Kennet. In addition the Holy Brook, a smaller watercourse, runs through the town centre. Other watercourses in the Borough include Foudry Brook and its tributaries, the Berry Brook, Vastern Ditch, Christchurch Ditch, the creek along the base of the Warren escarpment and various ditches on the Kennet floodplain upstream of the A33. As such the Borough is vulnerable to flooding from surface water run-off and directly from watercourses. While Reading itself was not significantly affected by the floods of 2007 and 2008, around two-thirds of the flooding during the 2007 floods was caused by surface water<sup>29</sup>. Further incidents occurred in 2013 and 2014, as well as in January 2024<sup>30</sup>.
- 4.1.11 There is a need to look at the whole community and consider how developments could be affected by rainfall and the different flood pathways. Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) and the Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) consider how developments could be affected by rainfall and flood pathways. An integrated network of soft surfaces filled with plants that are resistant to heat and have low water needs will reduce surface water run-off and provide significant cooling of the urban environment.
- 4.1.12 Applications for change of use of existing buildings should also incorporate measures to adapt to climate change through for example, being flood repairable, i.e. when refurbishing a building, constructing internal parts in such a way that although flood water enters a building, elements that are damaged by flood water are capable of being easily repaired or replaced; raising the level of sockets above expected flood levels; inclusion of pump and sump systems below floorboards to remove water faster than it can enter the house from below ground level<sup>31</sup>. Ultimately, raising the height of flooring above design flood level is a better alternative. All types of flooding (fluvial, surface water and groundwater) must be considered.

## Heat Networks

### **CC4: HEAT NETWORKS (Strategic policy)**

***Developments must demonstrate how consideration has been given to securing energy for the development from a heat network or, where this is not possible, a non-fossil fuel source.***

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<sup>28</sup> The [Good Homes Alliance Early Stage Overheating Risk Tool](#) may provide a useful starting point.

<sup>29</sup> The Pitt Review: Interim Report, November 2008

<sup>30</sup> The January 2024 Reading Flood Investigation Report can be found here:  
<https://images.reading.gov.uk/2024/04/Section19-Flood-Report-RBC-final.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.nhbcfoundation.org>

***Any development of more than 20 dwellings and/ or non-residential development of over 1,000 sq m must demonstrate how a connection will be made to a suitable low carbon heat network where available in the vicinity, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable. Where no such network is available, heat and/or cooling must be supplied from low carbon sources<sup>32</sup> and be connectable to future heat network***

***Where there is an existing low carbon heat network present within the vicinity of an application site, further developments of 10 dwellings or more or non-residential development of 1,000 sq m or more will be expected to link into the existing low carbon heat network or demonstrate why this is not feasible.***

***Any proposal for new or extended decentralised energy schemes will only be supported if the scheme is renewable-based.***

- 4.1.13 Heat networks distribute heat or cooling from a central source or sources and deliver it to a variety of different customers such as public buildings, shops, offices, hospitals, universities and homes. By supplying multiple buildings, they avoid the need for individual boilers or electric heaters in every building. Heat networks are also uniquely able to use local sources of low carbon heat which would otherwise go to waste. This could be from factories, the ground or even from rivers. Environmental heat or waste can be captured and 'stepped' up using heat pumps to supply heating and/or cooling for buildings. These sources can include air, water sources such as rivers and aquifers and/or the ground. Air source heat pumps can either be communal within a development or provided individually in dwellings/premises. The former would typically be considered to be connectable to a heat network, provided a suitable design is used whereas the latter would not.
- 4.1.14 Electricity production in the UK comes from a range of sources and is delivered via the national electricity network. Electricity generating stations that use fossil fuels waste around two thirds of the energy in the fuels they use through the production of waste heat in generation then in electricity transmission and distribution to end users. On average around 30% of the energy is lost before it reaches consumers. Renewable energy generation which is fed into the National Grid (transmission network) is a much more efficient and clean energy source and is typically combined with other renewable and non-renewable sources at differing proportions according to weather conditions and demands. This means that the carbon intensity of grid electricity varies over time.
- 4.1.15 By seeing the energy system as a whole and locating energy production close to where it is used, it is possible to use both the heat and electricity generated and provide a doubling in the efficiency of current electricity generation and use as delivered by the mix of centralised power stations.
- 4.1.16 The NPPF actively promotes bringing forward decentralised energy, with an expectation that new development will comply with adopted Local Plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy. The NPPF also refers to identifying opportunities for energy supply for development to be drawn from a decentralised, renewable or low carbon supply system and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers. New Government requirements for heat network zoning are forthcoming. These will require that all buildings within specific heat network zones are required to connect to a heat network within a prescribed timeframe.

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<sup>32</sup> Defined as meeting the Government standard of 100g/CO<sub>2</sub>/kwh for heat networks. For centralised or site-based schemes, defined as in SCOP 2.8 of the UN Net Zero Building Standard.



- 4.1.17 Following the work by the Council working with the Heat Network Delivery Unit in the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, a heat-mapping and masterplanning study was produced by Element Energy. Subsequently, two feasibility studies for the North of the Station and Minster Quarter areas were produced. These areas represent the main opportunity areas within the Town Centre and schemes within these areas are considered to be strategically significant and will enable the viability of heat networks. Potential for heat networks continues to be explored across the town centre much of which is expected to fall within the Heat Network Zone in forthcoming regulations.
- 4.1.18 The policy is likely to mainly apply to major developments in Central Reading, given the mixed nature and size of schemes being proposed in these locations, with some potential in South Reading in addition. However, it is possible that appropriate sites could come forward in other parts of the Borough.
- 4.1.19 The success of such a scheme relies on establishing the heat sources and energy centres, but also needs to consider pipework, thermal storage and future connections. It must also consider the internal design of buildings which need to accommodate wet distribution systems, preferably with underfloor heating, laterals, risers and space for plant. The implementation of the scheme will be dependent on the creation of strong partnerships between Reading Borough Council where relevant, the developer or representative of existing businesses and an Energy Service Company (ESCO). The involvement of an ESCO will allow multiple users to access the energy from the scheme and set out the contracts for doing so.
- 4.1.20 Due to the underground nature of heat networks, particular attention should be paid to any possible archaeological impacts as detailed in Policy EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance.

## **Waste Minimisation and Storage**

### **CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE**

***Development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of buildings and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including the reuse and recycling of construction waste and the promotion of layouts and designs that provide adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.***

- 4.1.21 European policy and legislation (e.g. Landfill Directive), along with national policy, seeks to achieve a more sustainable approach to methods of waste management and specifically place waste minimisation at source at the top of what is referred to as the waste hierarchy.
- 4.1.22 Continuing with past patterns of waste management is recognised as being clearly unsustainable and the main thrust of policy is to increase the value recovered and decrease the amount of waste sent to landfill. In light of this and the fact that development and re-development are significant contributors to waste production, policies need to translate this into specific policies regarding waste minimisation in development design, construction and demolition.
- 4.1.23 Building materials and other non-renewable resources are being taken up at a rapid rate and increased re-use and recycling is essential in order to reduce waste and to manage future extraction and its impact on the environment. In light of this, and the need to reduce the amount of waste generated and to increase the proportion of waste that is reused or recycled through better waste management, it is considered

necessary that a policy is in place that will achieve these aims. The beneficial restoration and reuse of buildings should generally be considered before demolition and redevelopment.

- 4.1.24 The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, adopted in 2019, contains more detail on waste minimisation measures, and this document continues to be relevant. A Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan for Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead was adopted in January 2024, and covers the waste planning needs of the area.

### **Accessibility and the Intensity of Development**

#### **CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT (Strategic policy)**

***The scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations. Unless it can be demonstrated that the accessibility of a site is to be significantly upgraded, for example, by providing high quality pedestrian routes or providing access to good public transport services, any new development must be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to that level of accessibility.***

- 4.1.25 It is important that development is accessible by a choice of modes of transport. This means that the primary locations for new development will be those accessible by walking and cycling to a wide range of employment, services and facilities, leisure, education and health facilities, or which are accessible by walking to routes/stops of frequent public transport services that provide easy access to the aforementioned uses. Locating development in areas accessible by walking and cycling can serve important public health goals, including:
- increased physical activity;
  - decreased incidences of cardiovascular disease and obesity;
  - reduced levels of stress caused by traffic noise and congestion;
  - fewer cases of lung or heart disease associated with poor air quality;
  - proximity to healthcare services;
  - access to open space for recreation<sup>33</sup>.
- 4.1.26 The highest levels of accessibility in Reading are to be found in the town centre, which is also one of the most accessible locations in the South East. However, good levels of accessibility are also to be found within district and local centres and along well-served public transport corridors. For example, in the south of Reading, the delivery of a bus rapid transit (BRT) route will enable development that is at a higher density than in many other out of centre areas, in particular where there are transport interchanges.
- 4.1.27 As a rule of thumb, a good level of accessibility is considered to be that within 400m of a defined centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and within 400m by pedestrian routes of a bus stop served by a service with a frequency of better than one bus every 20 minutes in each direction within daytime hours (7.00

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<sup>33</sup> NHS Healthy Urban Development Checklist <http://www.healthyurbandevelopment.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Healthy-Urban-Planning-Checklist-March-2014.pdf>



a.m. to 7.00 p.m.). In many parts of Reading, it will be important to ensure that access to a range of facilities is encouraged, and not affected by existing barriers, such as major roads, rivers and railways.

- 4.1.28 The Spatial Strategy, in figure 3.2, includes an indicative illustration of how the intensity of development relates to the level of accessibility. However, it is important to note that it is indicative only, and that changes to, or more detailed assessment of, accessibility levels over the plan period may enable a different approach to development density in some areas.

## **Design and the Public Realm**

### **CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM (Strategic policy)**

***All development must be of high-quality design, employing characteristics to create, maintain and enhance physical character, nurture and sustain a sense of safety and community and positively address environmental issues affecting the climate. Proposals will be assessed to ensure that the development makes a positive contribution within the following characteristics:***

- ***Context – enhances the surroundings based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and its surroundings and is responsive to local history, culture and heritage.***
- ***Identity – is attractive and distinctive, with a positive and coherent identity that suits the context, its history, how we live today and how we are likely to live in the future. Proposals should be visually attractive to occupants and other users with a strong focus on high-quality architecture.***
- ***Built Form – exhibits a coherent pattern of development that is compact and walkable, accessible by public transport, services and facilities with distinctive and legible streets and other spaces that are easy to navigate, safe and accessible. Development should employ appropriate scale, architectural detail and materials. Streets should be tree-lined and provide high-quality public realm.***
- ***Movement – is accessible and easy to move around for all and especially vulnerable users, taking account of the diverse needs of its users and providing a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes. Development should promote activity and social interaction.***
- ***Nature – enhances and optimises nature by integrating existing and new natural features into a multifunctional network to support quality of place, biodiversity, water management and climate change mitigation. Schemes should retain existing trees and aim to establish new trees.***
- ***Public spaces – creates safe, secure, social and inclusive public spaces and streets.***
- ***Uses – ensures uses are mixed and integrated, including a range of local services and facilities to support daily life and a mix of housing and tenure types.***
- ***Homes and buildings – creates homes and buildings which function well and are visually attractive, healthy, safe and sustainable with good quality internal and external environments to promote health and well-being.***

- ***Resources – reflects efficient use of resources and resilience for the future by reducing resource requirements for land, energy and water and being adaptable over time by reducing the need for development.***
- ***Lifespan – ensures development is made to last, robust and easy to use and look after, adapting to users’ changing needs and evolving technologies.***

***Applications for major developments should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all matters listed above and may be expected to improve and maintain the public realm of the surrounding area. For minor applications, the issues above should be addressed within a planning statement.***

***In instances where on-site provision is not sought, applicants may be required to make financial contributions towards public realm improvements.***

- 4.1.29 Reading is an historic town with at least 1,100 years of history. It is a town that has evolved over time. It contains many historic areas and a diversity of areas of different ages often with their own distinctive character. This local plan promotes development within the Borough but requires that development should positively contribute to making the Borough a better place. It needs to involve the highest quality design that is sensitive to, and contributes to enhancing, the character of the area in which it is located.
- 4.1.30 The NPPF recognises that good design “is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.” (paragraph 131). It goes on to state that planning should ensure that developments:
- (a) “will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
  - (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
  - (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
  - (d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangements of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
  - (e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks;
  - (f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience. (paragraph 135)

More information on the role of design and placemaking in new homes and communities is available through Homes England<sup>34</sup>.

- 4.1.31 The NPPF importantly further places the onus on development to actively improve the area wherever possible. It states that “Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design” (paragraph 139).
- 4.1.32 An attractive built environment has been shown to encourage walking, cycling and other healthy behaviours<sup>35</sup>. A high-quality public realm and a sense of place can incentivise active travel and create a sense of community cohesion by reducing social isolation, fear of crime and incidences of chronic disease. Suitable access allows everyone to participate equally and improves overall health and wellbeing.
- 4.1.33 The Borough contains many established, attractive areas which are highly valued by residents and which are worthy of protection from damaging and insensitive new development. While there may be capacity to accommodate new development in many parts of the Borough, it should only occur where proposals are of a scale, density and design that would not cause damage to the qualities, character and amenity of the areas in which they are situated. Such development should also provide attractive high-quality buildings and public realm that positively contributes to the area in which it is located, in accordance with good urban design principles. Development must take the opportunity to create new high-quality character areas when existing character is lacking. Applications within the town centre should refer to the Town Centre Public Realm Strategy which reviews the existing public realm and outlines general public realm guidance, as well as a comprehensive town centre public realm strategy<sup>36</sup>.
- 4.1.34 Proposals should prioritise the retention of existing natural features and the creation of new natural features to create a multifunctional green network. Streets should be tree-lined and all applicants should refer to the Council’s Tree Strategy<sup>37</sup>.
- 4.1.35 There will be a strong expectation that design issues will be dealt with at pre-application stage. For major proposals where there are significant design implications, planning officers will engage with design review bodies as part of the decision-making process. The approach to design should not be a “tick-box” exercise, but rather should employ an overarching aesthetic approach where all elements listed in the policy combine to create an attractive and well-functioning place. Supplementary Planning Documents may be prepared for elements of design where necessary.
- 4.1.36 Where some elements are crucial to good design, but there is a risk that they may be lost or eroded in the future through works not requiring planning permission, planning conditions may be used to secure those elements. Planning conditions will also be used to secure appropriate materials and other details.

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<sup>34</sup> [Homes England Fact Sheet 6: The role of design and placemaking in new homes and communities.](#)

<sup>35</sup> RTPI Promoting Healthy Cities [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1119674/rtpi\\_promoting\\_healthy\\_cities.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1119674/rtpi_promoting_healthy_cities.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> The Town Centre Public Realm Strategy is forthcoming.

<sup>37</sup> The Councils Tree strategy can be accessed here: <https://images.reading.gov.uk/2021/03/Tree-Strategy-March-2021.pdf>

## **Safeguarding Amenity**

### **CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY**

***Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:***

- ***Privacy and overlooking;***
- ***Access to sunlight and daylight;***
- ***Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;***
- ***Harm to outlook;***
- ***Noise and disturbance;***
- ***Artificial lighting;***
- ***Vibration;***
- ***Dust and fumes;***
- ***Smell;***
- ***Crime and safety; or***
- ***Wind, where the proposals involve new development of more than 8 storeys.***

***The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy.***

***As well as immediate impacts, other aspects to which this policy applies will include matters such as hours of operation of businesses, and effects of traffic movements, particularly of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). Proposals which would generate regular movements of HGVs on residential roads will not be acceptable.***

***Where an otherwise acceptable development could change its character to a use that would have a greater impact on amenity without needing planning permission, conditions will be applied to restrict such changes.***

- 4.1.37 One of the key concerns of planning is to ensure that new development does not reduce the quality of the environment for others, particularly where it would affect residential properties. At the same time, ensuring that new development creates a quality living environment for future residents is also critical. The policy aims to ensure that existing and additional residential properties provide an acceptable living environment, which is a key element of a high quality of life. It is applicable to any type of development.
- 4.1.38 Substantial levels of development are planned for Reading in coming years, and the vast majority of it will take place in the existing urban area of Reading. Although the mix of uses sought will be generally beneficial to Reading, this increasing concentration of different types of development may give rise to some tensions between uses.

- 4.1.39 Most tensions can be avoided by careful design, siting and orientation of buildings and spaces, paying particular attention to those aspects which are most likely to cause issues (e.g. car parks, bin stores and noisy equipment), and which are most sensitive to effects (e.g. children's play areas, outdoor spaces or habitable rooms). Planning conditions can also be used to deal with matters such as the installation of extraction systems, hours of operation, or preventing a development from changing its character.
- 4.1.40 There is not any current policy prescribing the location of employment uses below 2,500 sq m. Such a policy is not required, as long as impacts on residential amenity are carefully controlled. This policy will therefore be regularly applied to new or expanding employment uses. Where HGV movements (vehicles having a gross laden weight greater than 7.5 tonnes) are to be generated, apart from during construction, it is not appropriate that residential roads are used. This policy also seeks to ensure that new development for uses such as residential in close proximity to commercial use is not located or designed in a way that leads to future tensions that would constrain the operation of existing businesses.
- 4.1.41 Amenity levels for new residential development may also be considered. For instance, layouts should avoid locating living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens next to, above, or below proposed and neighbouring bedrooms unless effects can be adequately mitigated through design. Another example is that 'dual aspect' units will help to increase access to light.
- 4.1.42 Other policies in this document deal specifically with uses which often have particular amenity impacts, for instance residential conversions (H8) and house extensions (H9). Policy CC8 must be read in conjunction with these policies where they apply.
- 4.1.43 There is good practice guidance available on some of these issues<sup>38</sup>. The Council's Design Guide to House Extensions SPD provides some useful guidance on how extensions can be designed to accord with the principles of this policy, and that SPD continues to be current. For instance, the SPD sets out a basic way to protect light to main rooms in adjoining dwellings, through avoiding extensions that would infringe on an area measured at an angle of 45° from the midpoint of the closest window to a habitable room in a neighbouring property.
- 4.1.44 This policy mainly deals with the end result of developments, but in the meantime, conditions may be applied to regulate the amenity effects of construction.

## **Securing Infrastructure**

### **CC9: SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE (Strategic policy)**

***Proposals for development will not be permitted unless infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets lost or impacted upon as a result of the development or made necessary by the development will be provided through direct provision or financial contributions at the appropriate time.***

***Employment development should provide mitigation measures in line with its impacts on labour and skills and on the transport network.***

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<sup>38</sup> For instance, reference to the 'BRE Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice' document may be of use in ensuring that new development adjacent to residential properties is not of adverse bulk and does not block out sunlight and daylight to habitable rooms and outdoor living spaces.

***In determining appropriate provision or contribution, the highest priority will be given to the following:***

- ***Transport infrastructure, including major cross boundary or sub-regional infrastructure projects;***
- ***Healthcare provision;***
- ***Open space, green infrastructure and other measures to improve or enhance biodiversity;***
- ***Education, including cross-boundary facilities;***
- ***Economic development services and infrastructure, including employment, skills and training development initiatives and childcare provision.***

***Where relevant a high priority will also be given to the appropriate provision of the following:***

- ***Energy infrastructure, including decentralised energy projects; and***
- ***Police Service infrastructure.***

***Other measures, as follows, should also be considered where a specific need is identified and justified:***

- ***Community facilities;***
- ***Leisure facilities;***
- ***Cultural infrastructure (such as theatres, museums, libraries, archives and heritage sites);***
- ***Reading Central Area infrastructure and amenities, including public realm and street care enhancements;***
- ***Environmental improvements outside the Central Area, such as within local centres, including off-site street tree and other tree planting;***
- ***Measures to tackle poor air quality or for on-going air quality monitoring; and***
- ***Flood mitigation and prevention measures.***

4.1.45 Development is required to play a role in delivering sustainable development. Development should minimise damage, loss and impact upon existing infrastructure and environmental assets. Should loss or damage occur, developers should compensate for or mitigate any impact caused by a development. Development proposals will be expected to mitigate all relevant impacts in accordance with the criteria and rate of contribution and/or levy as set out in relevant documentation, taking account of levels of development that have already been accepted, and mitigation measures that have already been agreed or implemented. However, where it will not be possible to mitigate all relevant impacts or needs, for example for reasons of viability, the Council will take into account priorities, as set out in the policy, when seeking to agree an appropriate range of measures.

4.1.46 Provision will be secured through planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy as relevant. Such contributions may be pooled, in order to allow

necessary infrastructure to be secured in a fair and equitable way insofar as is compliant with relevant legislation.

- 4.1.47 Government policy on planning obligations is contained in The Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 as amended<sup>39</sup>. This indicates that in some instances, it may be possible to make acceptable development proposals that might otherwise be unacceptable, through the use of planning conditions, or, where this is not possible, through planning obligations. The regulations set out principles and policy tests under which planning obligations may be sought.
- 4.1.48 As a contribution receiving authority, Reading Borough Council is required to publish an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS)<sup>40</sup> which reports on contributions toward infrastructure between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> March. It covers both CIL and S106 contributions and states future priorities for spending.
- 4.1.49 Supplementary Planning Guidance on Section 106 agreements<sup>41</sup>, as well as a CIL charging schedule<sup>42</sup>, have been adopted and continue to have effect in relation to this policy. These provide more information on what will be required with detail regarding:
- The scale and form of obligation;
  - The financial contribution sought;
  - The role of pooled payments;
  - Maintenance payments; and
  - Charges for preparing agreements.
- 4.1.48 According to the requirements of the SPD, some applicants must develop a site-specific Employment and Skills Plan (ESP). Funding to deliver the ESP outcomes will be the responsibility of the developer working in consultation with the Council and any ESP delivery partner(s). This will be based on meeting a specified number of training, apprentice and up-skilling outcomes in both the construction phase and end-user phase. Applicants should refer to the tables within the SPD that demonstrate how contributions will be calculated and which developments will pay, as well as tables within the SPD's appendix specifying required benchmarks, outputs and employment density guidance.
- 4.1.49 Where the combined impact of a number of developments creates the need for infrastructure, it may be reasonable for the associated developers' contributions to be pooled, in order to allow the infrastructure to be secured in a fair and equitable way. Pooling can take place both between developments and between local authorities where there is a cross-authority impact.
- 4.1.50 This policy will need to be read in conjunction with the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan<sup>43</sup> and relevant strategies, plans and best practice should be taken into account. In accordance with national policy as set out in the NPPF, requirements

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<sup>39</sup> The Community Infrastructure Regulations (2010) can be found at

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/9780111492390/contents>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>

<sup>41</sup> Supplementary Planning Guidance on Section 106 and Planning Obligations can be found on the council's website at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>

<sup>42</sup> The CIL Charging Schedule can be accessed on the council's website at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/planningadvice>

<sup>43</sup> The Infrastructure Delivery Plan can be found in Section 10



must consider their effects on the viability of development. In particular, in considering planning obligations, the relevant tests will need to be applied as set out in Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended)<sup>44</sup>.

- 4.1.51 The tight labour market of Reading and the wider Thames Valley area means that additional employment development could result in still greater pressures on housing in the Borough, more congestion and longer commuting distances. Pressure on housing can particularly affect those who cannot afford open market housing. One possible way to mitigate these impacts is through maximising the potential of the existing population to fill jobs, through improving skills, changing working practices or providing childcare facilities. Therefore, such development should include mitigation commensurate with its impact on the demand for labour and skills.

## **Health Impact Assessment**

### **CC10 – HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT (Strategic Policy)**

***Development that would detrimentally affect health will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that negative effects are mitigated. Proposals for major development or for proposals for accommodation for vulnerable people must be accompanied by an HIA which includes (but is not limited to):***

- a) A description of the baseline conditions of the site, the surrounding areas and its current use;***
- b) The identification of any population groups that could be affected by the development and associated health issues, inequalities and priorities in the area, supported by appropriate evidence/data;***
- c) An assessment of the impacts of the proposal on the identified population groups and local health issues, inequalities and priorities, including any potential positive and negative impacts, along with any mitigation measures incorporated into the design to reduce identified negative outcomes; and***
- d) Details of monitoring proposed mitigation measures throughout the lifetime of the development.***

***The level of detail should be proportionate to the development. Applicants should refer to the additional information and guidance contained in the Public Health England's Guide related to Health Impact Assessment in Spatial Planning<sup>45</sup>.***

- 4.1.52 A social objective to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities is one of the three overarching objectives of the planning system identified in the NPPF to achieve sustainable development. Creating an inclusive, healthy, and safe place to live is also part of the vision as set out in this Local Plan. Therefore, it is vital to plan for and design a healthier built environment. To ensure development in Reading promotes and contributes to this, development proposals should consider health outcomes from the outset.

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<sup>44</sup> Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2010/9780111492390/regulation/122>

<sup>45</sup> [Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368212/Health_Impact_Assessment_in_spatial_planning_-_GOV.UK.pdf)



- 4.1.53 The HIA should include relevant contextual analysis to help inform an assessment of impacts on the health environment. This will include a description of the physical characteristics of the development site and its surrounding area. The assessment should also identify the population group and the area that will be affected by the development. Applicants should refer to the latest Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy<sup>46</sup> to consider the local context in terms of health and demographics, as well as the various challenges and visions for the area.
- 4.1.54 The HIA should also include an assessment identifying how the proposed development will impact upon the identified population groups and the key health issues in the local area. The assessment should clearly set out how the development proposals address each issues. If negative or neutral impacts on health are identified, developers should seek to change to the design to avoid or reduce these impacts. Where mitigations are proposed, it is important that relevant consultees are informed at an early stage to ensure the effectiveness of those mitigations and determine how these will be monitored going forward.
- 4.1.55 Developers will be expected to be responsible for the undertaking of the HIA. Any necessary mitigations identified in the assessment will be secured through planning conditions or Section 106 planning obligations.
- 4.1.56 Developers are encouraged to engage with the Council on HIA requirements at an early stage, ideally during pre-application discussions.

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<sup>46</sup> [Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy \(HWBS\) 2021 – 2030 - Reading Borough Council](#)

## 4.2 Built and Natural Environment

### Heritage

- 4.2.1 Reading's unique heritage will be at the heart of the town's identity and will be highly visible, valued and accessible by those who live in, work in or visit the town. It will enrich Reading's communities and enable them to interact with, and celebrate, the town's history and historic assets.
- 4.2.2 The role of the Local Plan is to proactively conserve and enhance the historic environment and promote its enjoyment. This entails recognition of the value of historic features that are desirable for retention, ensuring that the most valued townscapes and landscapes (e.g. those with national and international designations) are given the highest level of protection and other locally valued assets are recognised, retained and enhanced wherever possible. Protecting Reading's heritage assets contributes to a sense of place, and doing so can contribute to other important planning goals. Investment in heritage and culture, in turn, generates more spending in the local economy. For example, previous investment in publicly owned heritage assets within the Abbey Quarter, like the Forbury Gardens and Simeon Monument, has created an attractive environment for high-quality commercial investment including Forbury Square and Forbury Hotel<sup>47</sup>. A vibrant historic environment also contributes to town centre vitality, sustainable transport, residential development, good design and the natural environment. Heritage assets can be a positive force for regeneration. New development can be beneficial to heritage assets through providing or encouraging new uses or better revealing their significance.
- 4.2.3 If we are to properly value our substantial heritage assets, it is important to understand their significance, and this means appreciating how they relate to the history of the town. The following sections therefore summarise the main aspects of Reading's history insofar as they relate to the current built environment.
- 4.2.4 There is evidence of prehistoric and Roman settlement in Reading, particularly around the river valleys. There have been a variety of locations where such evidence has been found, and there is potential for archaeological finds across the Borough.
- 4.2.5 Despite this evidence for earlier settlement, Reading is a Saxon place-name from early Saxon settlers who settled the land near the meeting point of the Thames and Kennet in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The historic core retains reminders of its Saxon and medieval origins through its early street pattern and ancient parish churches. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Reading belonged to the king and included a small borough and two manors. In 1121, King Henry I founded Reading Abbey. The Abbey dominated the town and became one of the richest religious houses in England, making Reading a wealthy place, and a centre of religion and pilgrimage. The Dissolution of the Monasteries by King Henry VIII in 1538 signalled the beginning of the Abbey's decline.
- 4.2.6 In the centuries following the closing of the Abbey, Reading secured its role as a thriving market town making good use of its road and river links. It played an important role in the English Civil War, as a Royalist garrison in the town was besieged during 1643. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, new industries developed, notably brewing, iron-founding and brick and tile making. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century maps show the

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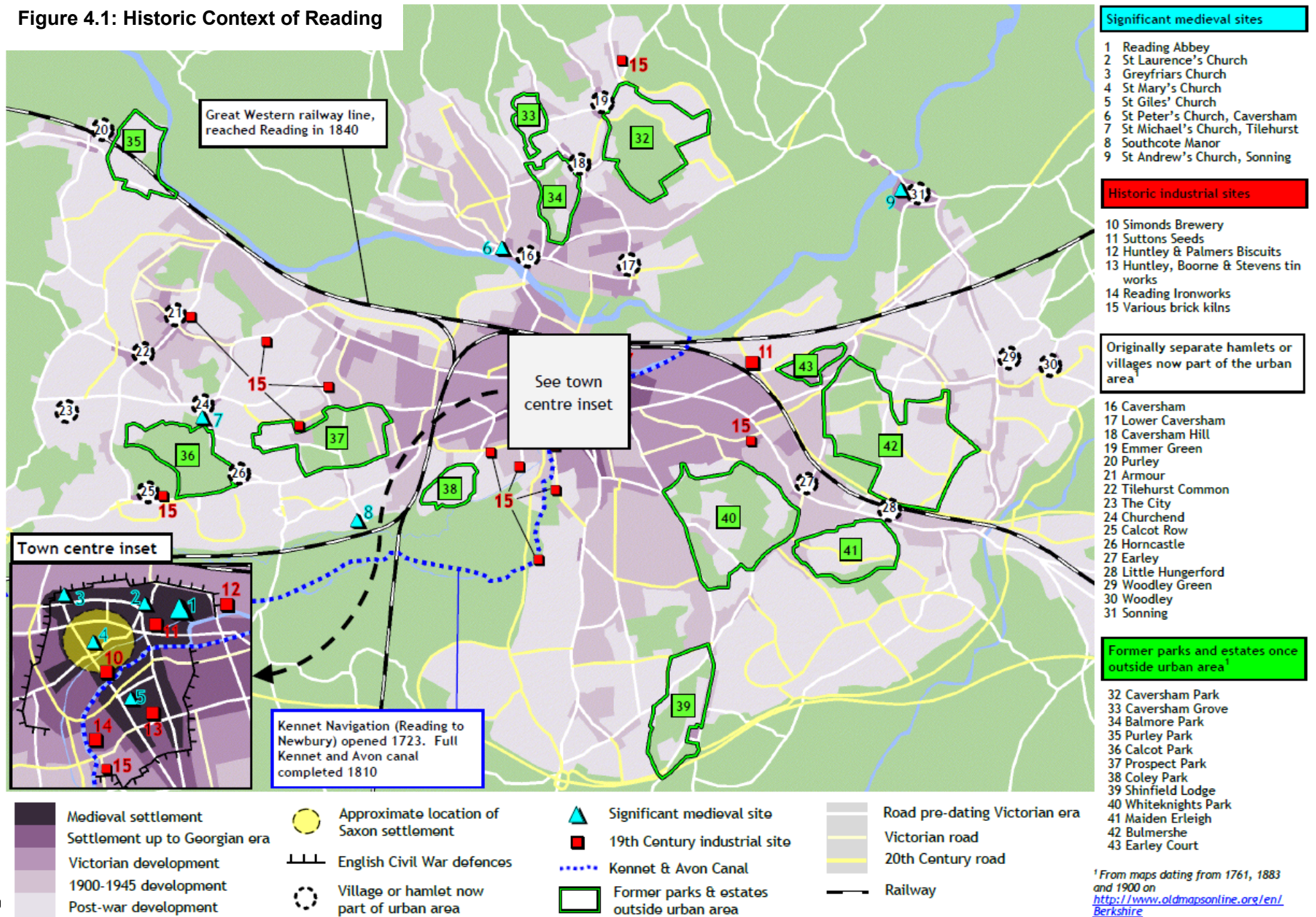
<sup>47</sup> Reading Borough Council, *Draft Heritage Statement*, 2014 <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1193/Draft-Heritage-Statement/pdf/Draft-Heritage-Statement.pdf>

town had hardly extended beyond its medieval core, but expansion was stimulated by the development of new transport links. The Kennet & Avon Canal was opened in 1810 bringing London and Bristol into direct communication by water. The town also became an important stop for coaches on the Bath Road, and numerous fashionable houses mainly fronted in stone or render were built on roads east and west of the centre. The coming of the Great Western Railway in 1840 resulted in a rapid growth of major industries, notably Huntley and Palmers biscuit makers and Suttons Seeds, which provided employment for a growing population. The Victorian and Edwardian expansion and prosperity of the town is demonstrated by Reading's distinctive use of locally made coloured brick, terracotta and tile.

- 4.2.7 Beyond the town centre, former rural parishes like Caversham and Tilehurst joined the Borough in 1911. For example, St Peter's Conservation Area is the old village centre of Caversham around the medieval parish church and the restored Thames-side Caversham Court Gardens. The parks and gardens of the many country houses that once surrounded Reading also survive within the modern urban townscape, including Caversham Park, Prospect Park and Whiteknights.
- 4.2.8 Figure 4.1 summarises the main elements of the history of Reading described above in terms of how it impacts on the built environment that is present today, starting with the town's Saxon beginnings. It is intended to help the understanding of the significance of our heritage assets, which is of use both in adequately protecting those assets and in better revealing them through new development.
- 4.2.9 Nearly all of Reading's heritage assets are owned by private organisations and individuals. The conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is the responsibility of everyone in the community. The Council owns relatively few historic assets, although some of the assets it does own are very prominent, such as the Abbey Gate and Ruins and Town Hall. The conservation and enhancement of Reading's historic assets must be based in innovative and creative approaches involving high levels of partnership. Many local organisations are already working to enhance the view that Reading is a heritage destination. These policies attempt to address that Reading has not always made the most of its significant heritage.



Figure 4.1: Historic Context of Reading



4.2.10 Heritage assets are defined in the NPPF as a “building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest<sup>48</sup>.”

Heritage assets may be formally designated as being of national importance or of local importance and may include listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, industrial heritage sites, sites of archaeological interest and historic landscapes. The fact that an asset is not identified on a list does not mean it is not of historical significance.

4.2.11 Reading Borough contains a diverse range of heritage assets:

- 800 nationally Listed Buildings (including 30 Grade I and Grade II\*);
- 15 Conservation Areas, including Buildings of Townscape Merit identified in each of the Conservation Area appraisals;
- Two Scheduled Ancient Monuments (Reading Abbey, including the Civil War earthworks and Reading Gaol, and High Bridge);
- Five Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Locally listed buildings and structures, one of which (3 Craven Road) is protected by an Article 4 Direction;
- 15 Article 4 Directions protecting locally distinctive buildings by removing permitted development rights;
- Various sites of industrial heritage;
- The Berkshire Historic Environment Record<sup>49</sup> contains comprehensive records of over 1200 archaeological sites and finds in Reading.

**EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT (Strategic policy)**

***Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:***

- ***Listed Buildings;***
- ***Conservation Areas;***
- ***Scheduled Monuments;***
- ***Historic parks and gardens; and***
- ***Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.***

***All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic***

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<sup>48</sup> NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary [National Planning Policy Framework - Annex 2: Glossary - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/617353/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_-_Annex_2_-_Glossary_-_Guidance_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Historic England's Heritage Gateway can be accessed online at <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>



***character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.***

***Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.***

***Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.***

***Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.***

***The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.***

***Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.***

4.2.12 Planning is an important instrument for maintaining and enhancing the environment, and preserving built and natural heritage. Planning policy must therefore reconcile the need for development with the need to protect the natural and historic environment. Planning policy should also seek opportunities for development to secure the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, to better reveal its significance and to increase access to and enjoyment of that environment.

4.2.13 Heritage Statements will be expected to:

- i) describe the significance of the asset and its setting, using appropriate expertise; at a level of detail proportionate to its significance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal; using appropriate references such as the Historic Environment Record and, if necessary, original survey (including, for assets or archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation); and
- ii) set out the impact of the development on the heritage assets and a suggested mitigation that is proportionate to the impact and the significance of the heritage asset, including where possible positive opportunities to conserve and enjoy heritage assets as well as recording loss and advancing knowledge.

4.2.14 In areas where there is a need to protect character, local authorities have the power to make an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights

and require planning applications<sup>50</sup>. There are 14 Article 4 directions currently in place that relate to preserving patterned brickwork (some of these include additional areas of protection such as architectural features, terracotta details and railings/gates) with one more relating solely to architectural features, and a further one relating to the demolition of a locally listed building. Article 4 directions are also in place for reasons unrelated to heritage (such as conversions from a house to an HMO and introduction of new residential). The Council will continue to consider the implementation of Article 4 directions, particularly in areas where special historic character is threatened<sup>51</sup>. There is potential to use Local Development Orders (LDOs) in combination with Article 4 Directions in order to allow owners to reinstate features that reflect historic character without having to submit a planning application.

4.2.15 Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Unlike buildings listed by Historic England, they are designated at the local level by the local authority. These areas are designated because they have a particularly distinctive character and usually provide a strong link to the history of the area and are considered to be heritage assets for the purposes of applying this policy. The specific heritage interests of Reading's Conservation Areas are set out in Conservation Area Appraisals. These documents serve as a guide for managing development in these areas.

4.2.16 Heritage Assets at Risk are identified by Historic England as "vulnerable to neglect, decay or other threats"<sup>52</sup>. Heritage Assets at Risk deserve priority attention. As of November 2022, three assets in Reading have been identified by Historic England as 'at risk'. These are:

- Chazey Farm Barn, The Warren
- Remains of Reading Abbey
- Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area

The Council is working to secure the future of these assets. Should other assets become identified as 'at-risk' throughout the plan period, the Council will actively work toward their protection. The most up-to-date list and information on their status can be viewed on the Historic England website<sup>53</sup>.

## **EN2: AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

***Applicants should identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance by consulting the Historic Environment Record. This will require an assessment of the archaeological impacts of development proposals to be submitted before the planning application is determined. Planning permission will not be granted in cases where the assessment of the archaeological impacts is inadequate.***

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<sup>50</sup> NPPF

<sup>51</sup> A map of areas in Reading under Article 4 Direction can be found at [Article 4 directions in Reading](#)

<sup>52</sup> NPPG, 12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/achieving-sustainable-development/delivering-sustainable-development/12-conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment/>

<sup>53</sup> The Heritage-at-risk register can be accessed on Historic England's website at <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk>



***Where remains cannot be preserved ‘in situ,’ remains should be properly excavated, investigated and recorded. This will require adequate provision for the identification, investigation, recording and publication of the archaeological resource. Where appropriate, Section 106 agreements will be negotiated to protect, enhance and interpret archaeological remains.***

***Development proposals which will have an adverse effect on scheduled monuments and other nationally important archaeological remains and their settings will not be allowed unless there is clear and convincing justification in the form of overriding public benefits.***

- 4.2.17 Archaeological excavation is, by its nature, a generally destructive process, so the archive is the unique record of this investigation and needs to be preserved and accessible in perpetuity. Archives from within Reading Borough are usually added to Reading Museum’s collection. The Proposals Map shows ‘Areas of Archaeological Potential’, where there is recognised archaeological potential, although it is also important to recognise that there is a potential for archaeological finds almost anywhere in the Borough. All reports submitted to support the application will be written by a qualified heritage professional and should assess impacts and effects to an appropriate level of detail.

### **EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS**

***The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:***

- ***Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;***
- ***Restoring original building features;***
- ***Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;***
- ***Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;***
- ***Improving signage and street furniture;***
- ***Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;***
- ***Sympathetic landscaping and planting;***
- ***Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;***
- ***Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;***
- ***Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area’s historical significance.***

***Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.***

- 4.2.18 Appraisals were undertaken for all Reading's conservation areas between 2005 and 2010, and revised versions of three of these appraisals have been adopted between 2019 and 2024. These identify the special interest of each area and provide a valuable tool for considering development in these areas. The Conservation Area appraisals can be found on the Council's website<sup>54</sup>. Information for property owners, estate agents and the public is also available online<sup>55</sup>.
- 4.2.19 The Council supports community-led efforts to assess and update Conservation Area appraisals and management plans with limited technical support from officers and will work closely with groups with the aim of adopting updated appraisals and management plans. The Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee is a community-led group separate from the Council and comprised of people with an interest in the built environment and its heritage<sup>56</sup>. Membership is drawn from local amenity societies, residents' associations, independent historical, architectural and planning experts, and local residents and businesses.

#### **EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS**

***Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.***

***Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in substantial harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. Where it is accepted by the decision-maker that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.***

- 4.2.20 Local heritage plays an essential role in building and reinforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment,<sup>57</sup> and the Council has established and maintains a List of Locally Important Buildings.

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<sup>54</sup> The most up-to-date Conservation Area appraisals can be accessed on the Council's website at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage-and-conservation/conservation-areas-listed-buildings/>

<sup>55</sup> More information on Conservation Areas can be found on the Council's website at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage-and-conservation/conservation-areas-listed-buildings/>

<sup>56</sup> More information about the Conservation Area Advisory Committee can be found at <https://readingcaac.org/>. For information on the Reading Civic Society, visit <https://www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk/>

<sup>57</sup> Historic England's guidance on Local Heritage listing can be found here: [Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage \(historicengland.org.uk\)](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/local-heritage/listing/)

The local significance of assets may become known at any time throughout the duration of this plan and the list will be revised dependent on any new information. Criteria for inclusion of locally listed assets can be found in Appendix 2. Local heritage assets do not qualify for statutory listing and are not protected from loss in the same way as listed assets or Conservation Area designations<sup>58</sup>. It should be recognised that seeking the reuse of historic buildings and, where appropriate, their modification to reduce carbon emissions and secure sustainable development, without harming the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, helps to mitigate the effects of climate change. Therefore, buildings on the Local List should be re-used, where possible.

- 4.2.21 For clarification purposes, this policy is not intended to be applied to heritage assets with national designation, such as listed buildings, nor other types of non-designated heritage assets, e.g. identified buildings of townscape merit in conservation areas.

#### ***EN5: PROTECTION OF SIGNIFICANT VIEWS WITH HERITAGE INTEREST***

***New development should not harm and where possible should make a positive contribution to views of acknowledged historical significance.***

***The following views merit special protection:***

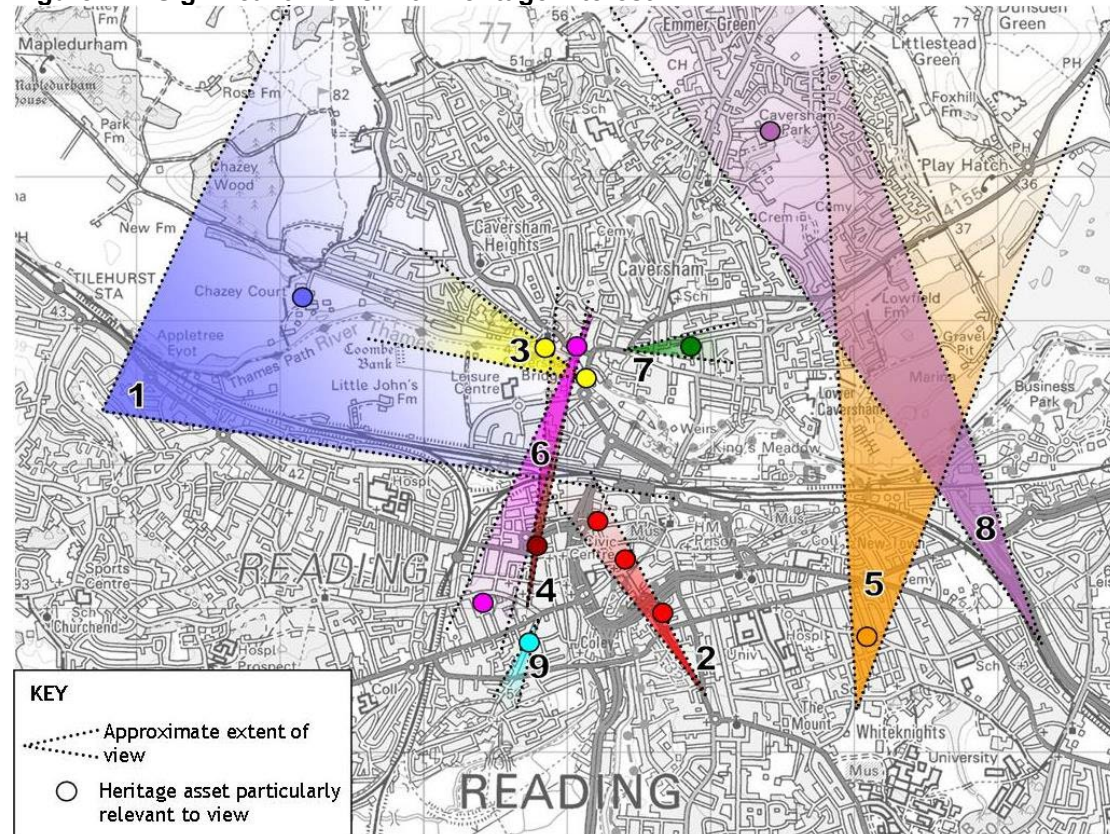
- 1. View from Mcllroy Park towards Chazey Farm Barn, the Thames Meadow and the Chilterns escarpment***
  - 2. View northwards down Southampton St from Whitley St towards St Giles Church, St Mary's Church and Greyfriars Church***
  - 3. View upstream from Caversham Bridge***
  - 4. View northwards down Russell St towards the Church of the Holy Trinity***
  - 5. View over Alexandra Road Conservation Area toward the Chilterns escarpment***
  - 6. View southwards down St Annes Rd towards Downshire Square***
  - 7. View of St Annes Church Tower from the west***
  - 8. View towards Caversham Park House from the A329(M), railway and surrounding streets***
  - 9. View southwards along tree-lined Coley Avenue.***
- 4.2.22 Development proposals should consider opportunities for view enhancement. Improvements to significant views that take a pro-active role in repairing past damaging conditions or seek to establish and manage accessible viewing places will be encouraged.
- 4.2.23 The views identified in this policy (shown in Figure 4.2) were selected for their historic significance and describe either a view of a heritage asset itself or a

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<sup>58</sup> More information on locally listed heritage assets can be found on Historic England's website at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/locallylistedhas/>

view from a historic viewing place.<sup>59</sup> This list is not comprehensive, but aims to include the most significant heritage views in the Borough that are not protected by other policies, for instance within a Conservation Area. There are a number of other views in the Borough that are important for other reasons, and these are covered by other designations and documents. Policy EN13 deals with major landscape features, of and within which there are many views of importance. There are also a number of views of central Reading, in particular including the station area. The Reading Station Area Framework (chapter 7) identifies both longer and shorter distance views that are of importance<sup>60</sup>.

**Figure 4.2: Significant Views with Heritage Interest**



#### **EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT**

***In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:***

<sup>59</sup> An assessment prepared by the Reading CAAC identifying and assessing significant views with a heritage interest as identified in the Local Plan can be found here: <https://images.reading.gov.uk/2021/11/Assessment-of-Significant-Views-with-Heritage-Interest-January-2018.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> [images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Reading-Station-Area-Framework.pdf](https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Reading-Station-Area-Framework.pdf)



- a. ***The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);***
  - b. ***Sensitivity to historic context;***
  - c. ***Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);***
  - d. ***Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.***
- 4.2.24 The Council is committed to protecting and where appropriate, enhancing, Reading's historic environment. This includes ensuring that buildings and features of local architectural and historic interest are taken fully into account and safeguarded, as appropriate. New development in the vicinity of historic assets or at the edges of conservation areas should be sympathetic. It should reflect elements of the local historic environment in the form of the new development. This could include a wide range of matters such as footprint sizes, setbacks from the road frontage, landscaping, window placement and size, prevailing building height or architectural features. The aim is not to copy existing heritage, but to use new development to underline key consistent elements of the local historic environment. Good, modern design that is complimentary to the historic environment will be acceptable and preferable to 'pastiche.'
- 4.2.25 The Council's positive approach to promoting Reading's unique historic character relies on early discussions with stakeholders at the pre-application stage, so that applicants are fully informed of the issues they are required to address.

## **Local Green Space and Public Open Space**

### ***EN7: LOCAL GREEN SPACE AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE (Strategic policy)***

***The following Local Green Spaces (LGS) and Public Open Space (POS), as shown on the Proposals Map, will be protected from development. Proposals that would result in the loss of any of these areas of open space, erode their quality through insensitive adjacent development or jeopardise their use or enjoyment by the public, will not be permitted.***

<b>Code</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
<b>EN7Ca</b>	<b>Christchurch Meadows</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>11.06</b>
<b>EN7Cb</b>	<b>Forbury Gardens</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>EN7Cc</b>	<b>Hills Meadow</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>4.26</b>
<b>EN7Cd</b>	<b>Kings Meadow and the Coal Woodland</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>16.17</b>
<b>EN7Ce</b>	<b>Kings Road Gardens</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.16</b>
<b>EN7Cf</b>	<b>St Laurence's Churchyard</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.39</b>
<b>EN7Cg</b>	<b>St Mary's Churchyard</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.59</b>

<b>Code</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
<b>EN7Ch</b>	<b>View Island</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>1.62</b>
<b>EN7Sa</b>	<b>Cintra Park</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>6.87</b>
<b>EN7Sb</b>	<b>Fobney Island Nature Reserve</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>6.18</b>
<b>EN7Sc</b>	<b>Greenham Avenue, Kennet Island</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>0.47</b>
<b>EN7Sd</b>	<b>John Rabson Recreation Ground and The Cowsey</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>26.91</b>
<b>EN7Se</b>	<b>Kennet Island Nature Reserve</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>1.62</b>
<b>EN7Sf</b>	<b>Long Barn Lane Recreation Ground</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>3.29</b>
<b>EN7Sg</b>	<b>Shinfield Road Recreation Ground</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>1.15</b>
<b>EN7Sh</b>	<b>South Whitley Park</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>5.31</b>
<b>EN7Si</b>	<b>Waterloo Meadows</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>10.32</b>
<b>EN7Sj</b>	<b>Whitley Wood Recreation Ground</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>4.15</b>
<b>EN7Wa</b>	<b>Arthur Newbery Park</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>13.02</b>
<b>EN7Wb</b>	<b>Battle Square</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>0.54</b>
<b>EN7Wc</b>	<b>Beresford Road Playground</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.54</b>
<b>EN7Wd</b>	<b>Blagrove Recreation Ground</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.87</b>
<b>EN7We</b>	<b>Blundells Copse and Meadway Sports Ground</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>9.48</b>
<b>EN7Wf</b>	<b>Coley Recreation Ground</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>5.62</b>
<b>EN7Wg</b>	<b>Courage Park</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>1.74</b>
<b>EN7Wh</b>	<b>Great Knollys Street Recreation Ground</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>1.49</b>
<b>EN7Wi</b>	<b>Kensington Park</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>4.23</b>
<b>EN7Wj</b>	<b>Lousehill Copse</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>12.67</b>
<b>EN7Wk</b>	<b>Mclloy Park and Round Copse</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>15.02</b>
<b>EN7Wl</b>	<b>Meadway Woodland</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>EN7Wm</b>	<b>Oxford Road Recreation Ground</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>0.69</b>
<b>EN7Wn</b>	<b>Portman Road Playground</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>2.32</b>
<b>EN7Wo</b>	<b>Prospect Park</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>46.52</b>
<b>EN7Wp</b>	<b>Rivermead and Thameside Promenade</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>16.08</b>
<b>EN7Wq</b>	<b>Robert Hewett Recreation Ground</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>0.34</b>
<b>EN7Wr</b>	<b>Southcote Linear Park</b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>3.47</b>
<b>EN7Ws</b>	<b>Taff Way Woodland</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>2.74</b>
<b>EN7Wt</b>	<b>Tofrek Terrace</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>2.1</b>

<b>Code</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
<b>EN7Wu</b>	<b><i>Victoria Recreation Ground and Kentwood Hill Allotments</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>5.2</b>
<b>EN7Wv</b>	<b><i>Oxford Road Community Garden</i></b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.12</b>
<b>EN7Ww</b>	<b><i>Ibis Club and Scours Lane</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>8.26</b>
<b>EN7Na</b>	<b><i>Albert Road Recreation Ground</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>1.53</b>
<b>EN7Nb</b>	<b><i>Amersham Road Recreation Ground</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>2.31</b>
<b>EN7Nc</b>	<b><i>Baltimore Walk</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>7.06</b>
<b>EN7Nd</b>	<b><i>Beechwood</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>3.65</b>
<b>EN7Ne</b>	<b><i>Bug's Bottom (Hemdean Bottom)</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>14.23</b>
<b>EN7Nf</b>	<b><i>Caleta Close Play Area</i></b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.46</b>
<b>EN7Ng</b>	<b><i>Caversham Court Gardens and Allotments</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>EN7Nh</b>	<b><i>Caversham Pond</i></b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.73</b>
<b>EN7Ni</b>	<b><i>Clayfield Copse and Blackhouse Woods</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>26.31</b>
<b>EN7Nj</b>	<b><i>Emmer Green Pond</i></b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>1.09</b>
<b>EN7Nk</b>	<b><i>Emmer Green Recreation Ground and Allotments</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>2.27</b>
<b>EN7Nl</b>	<b><i>Land at Deans Farm</i></b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>2.29</b>
<b>EN7Nm</b>	<b><i>Land at Stuart Close</i></b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.73</b>
<b>EN7Nn</b>	<b><i>Mapledurham Playing Fields</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>10.35</b>
<b>EN7No</b>	<b><i>Milestone Wood and Milestone Way</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>8.29</b>
<b>EN7Np</b>	<b><i>Rotherfield Way Copse</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>1.97</b>
<b>EN7Nq</b>	<b><i>The Warren Woodland West</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>0.99</b>
<b>EN7Nr</b>	<b><i>Westfield Road Recreation Ground</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>1.45</b>
<b>EN7Ea</b>	<b><i>Alfred Sutton Playing Field</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>4.9</b>
<b>EN7Eb</b>	<b><i>Eldon Square</i></b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.35</b>
<b>EN7Ec</b>	<b><i>Lorenzo Quelch Park</i></b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>0.12</b>
<b>EN7Ed</b>	<b><i>Palmer Park</i></b>	<b>LGS</b>	<b>16.06</b>

4.2.26 The National Planning Policy Framework states that local communities, through local plans, are able to identify Local Green Space for specific protection which is of particular importance to them. The aim of this policy is therefore to define the boundaries of Local Green Space, based on the criteria in the NPPF. Local Green Spaces can only be designated during local plan preparation or review and must be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. The policy also defines Public Open Space, where the local policy position is the same, but which do not benefit from the additional



protection afforded by the Local Green Space designation as they do not fulfil the relevant criteria.

4.2.27 As outlined in the NPPF, Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife; and
- Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land<sup>61</sup>.

4.2.28 Individual assessments which test each Local Green Space against the criteria outlined in the NPPF can be found in the relevant background information<sup>62</sup>.

4.2.29 Access to high quality open spaces, sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities<sup>63</sup>. Open space policies contribute towards many of the goals of the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2021-2030) by supporting residents to live healthy lives and reducing social isolation through public open space. Additionally, these policies contribute to the delivery of many other Council objectives in terms of achieving a healthy environment, including supporting Reading's zero carbon ambitions, adapting to climate change and enabling the recovery of biodiversity, enhancing the character of the town, promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion and the promotion of sustainable development.

4.2.30 This policy has been informed by the Council's Open Spaces Strategy<sup>64</sup> where the protection of publicly accessible recreational open space was considered to be of great importance. This is useable space which provides a resource for sport, leisure and informal recreation. This policy therefore deals mainly with those areas which can be accessed by the public, although it includes some exceptional allotment sites where they qualify as Local Green Space in terms of the criteria above. Areas with restricted access, such as school playing fields, are not included, although it is important to note that other policies in the Local Plan, as well as national policy, cover such areas.

## Undesignated Open Space

### ***EN8: UNDESIGNATED OPEN SPACE (Strategic policy)***

***There will be a presumption in favour of retention of undesignated open space, which will include allotments. Development should not result in the loss of or jeopardise use and enjoyment of undesignated open space. Development may be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that replacement open space, of a similar standard and function, can be provided at an accessible location close by, or that improvements to***

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<sup>61</sup> Sections 76-77 of the NPPF available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>62</sup> On the Council's website at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>

<sup>63</sup> NPPF

<sup>64</sup> The Council's most up-to-date Open Spaces Strategy can be found at [https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Reading\\_Open\\_Spaces\\_Strategy.pdf](https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Reading_Open_Spaces_Strategy.pdf)

***recreational facilities on remaining open space can be provided to a level sufficient to outweigh the loss of the open space. The quality of existing open space should not be eroded by insensitive development on adjoining land.***

- 4.2.31 Reading has many areas of open space not identified in Policy EN7 (Local Green Space and Public Open Space) in both public and private ownership, which nevertheless provide important recreational and amenity resources. It is important that these areas are retained where possible.
- 4.2.32 This policy relates to all open space in the Borough; publicly or privately owned, apart from the Local Green Spaces and Public Open Spaces identified in Policy EN7. It applies not just to the loss of the space, but to a situation where development prevents the use of open space in close proximity through such effects as preventing public access or leading to unacceptable levels of overshadowing. Where a development proposal involves losing open space that is not specifically designated, appropriate replacement space should be provided where it is easily accessible to the people most affected. Alternatively, compensating improvements could be made to existing open space in the area. Undesignated open spaces within or adjacent to Conservation Areas or the setting of heritage assets are particularly valuable.
- 4.2.33 This policy also covers Reading's various allotment sites (apart from those identified as Local Green Space), with a presumption in favour of their retention. Compensatory provision for the loss of any allotments in line with the policy will need to consider whether it adequately replaces the role of the allotments that would be lost.

### **Provision of Open Space**

#### **EN9: PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE**

***All new development should make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development. This can be achieved through on or off-site provision, contributions toward provision or improvement of existing leisure or recreational facilities.***

***On sites of 50 dwellings or more, or for developments where the availability and quality of existing open space has been identified as deficient, new provision will be sought. Development must ensure satisfactory provision of children's play areas and neighbourhood parks.***

***A secure maintenance arrangement shall be demonstrated to ensure that any open space is properly maintained throughout the life of the development. In exceptional circumstances where the Council agrees to the adoption of the open space, a commuted sum for future maintenance will be required as part of any legal agreement.***

***On sites of less than 50 dwellings, or in areas not identified as deficient in the provision of open space, new open space provision, improvements or enhancements will be sought, including through appropriate contributions.***

***The provision of open space for all developments shall satisfy the most***

**urgent need subject to considerations of particular deficiencies. The most up-to-date Open Spaces Strategy should guide provision type and size. New open space should:**

- ***Be in useable parcels of land and not be fragmented;***
- ***Be safely and easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier, including a road;***
- ***Be accessible to the general public and be designed so as to feel that it is part of the public and not private realm;***
- ***Create a safe environment, appropriately considering lighting and layout to reduce the fear of crime;***
- ***Provide some informal landscaping for aesthetic, wildlife and recreational purposes; and***
- ***Link into the Green Network where possible.***

4.2.34 It is essential that new developments make provision for open space to meet the needs of the residents/occupiers of the development. With a growing population resulting from new development, it follows that the amount and/or quality of open space in the Borough should increase over the plan period. Qualitative improvements might include the provision of supporting amenities e.g. benches, refreshment facilities, green infrastructure, etc.

4.2.35 The Open Space Audit carried out as part of the preparation of the Open Space Strategy also found significant deficiency in the provision of play areas and safe access to play areas in several parts of Borough, although some of these deficiencies have been addressed since publication of the Strategy. Special consideration needs to be given to ensuring adequate provision of play space as part of all development proposals.

4.2.36 Open space is unevenly distributed across the Borough. People in and around the town centre are still further away from public open space than guidelines recommend and parts of North Reading are very deficient in play areas. In many cases historical development patterns make it difficult to introduce new areas of public open space without large-scale redevelopment.

4.2.37 The Open Spaces Strategy identifies the following main issues:

- Access: the distribution of public open space leaves some areas underprovided:
  - In Central Reading, public open space is, by and large, where residents are not;
  - In North Reading, large areas are lacking children's play facilities;
  - Areas immediately to the West, North West, South and East of the town centre are amongst the most poorly supplied in the Borough; the problem is exacerbated by very dense housing; and
  - Severance lines, such as busy roads or railways, further restrict residents' access to open space.

- Quality: some of the existing parks and open spaces are of poor quality and lack facilities.
- Links to public open space: these are fragmented, so that some public open space is not linked by pedestrian infrastructure to homes.
- Wildlife: many links between habitats are incomplete and could be improved by wildlife corridors.

4.2.38 The space hierarchy in Figure 4.3 should be used as a benchmark for considering open space provision in the Borough, in terms of both quality and quantity, and should be considered in the context of up-to-date local assessments in line with the NPPF. Its objective is to assist in promoting some consistency in provision across the town, as well as helping to identify where households have limited access to public open space and where the quality of provision is inadequate.

4.2.39 Large, higher-tier parks are not substitutes for a good distribution of local parks. Clearly, an open space labelled 'district park' is also a neighbourhood park for households within a reasonable catchment. For residents living further away from a district park, access to local parks and other small recreational open spaces nearby must also be available.

4.2.40 The Open Spaces Strategy states that, 'All guidelines recommend that at least some open space for children to play, *whether publicly or privately owned*, be available within 100-200m of every home. This will primarily affect very high-density developments, like flats, as almost all other houses have some form of garden'.

**Figure 4.3: Hierarchy and typology of open spaces of recreational value, and provision standards for Reading**

	Description	Size	Transport mode	Radial catchment
Borough Park	Varied character and facilities; open parkland, natural, formal, sport, play and relaxation; catering	60 ha	Car; public transport; cycle	
District parks	Varied character and facilities (but fewer than above); natural, formal, sport, play and recreation	20 ha	Car; bus; cycle; foot	1.2 km
Local parks	Relaxation, play and ball games	2 ha or 1-2 ha equipped	Cycle; foot; wheelchair	0.8 km
Neighbourhood park	LEAP + informal space	0.1-0.2 ha equipped	Foot; wheelchair	0.4-0.8 km
Small recreational open spaces	'low-grade' recreation	0.1-0.2 ha	Foot; wheelchair	0.4-0.8 km
Linear open spaces	Relaxation; green link		Foot; cycle	
Semi-natural sites	Comparatively undisturbed sites, managed for wild flora and fauna		Cycle; foot; wheelchair	1.5-2.0 km

4.2.41 Policy H10 seeks to secure private and communal outdoor amenity areas on

all residential developments, the extent of which will be guided by the site's proximity to quality public open space. Conversely, this policy looks to secure public open space. In determining the appropriate form, location and extent of public open space for new development, consideration will be given to the extent of deprivation of private or communal garden areas within the proposed scheme.

- 4.2.42 Improvements to the quality and facilities of existing open space and/or the provision of new open spaces should be secured through financial contributions as part of smaller developments, either through CIL or Section 106 agreements. As a minimum, the provision of safe access for new households to new or existing enhanced public open space should be a requirement. In larger scale commercial/retail developments, the integration of additional public spaces (such as civic squares) should be required.
- 4.2.43 Regeneration initiatives and housing redevelopments sometimes create opportunities to provide new open space or reorganise space through land swaps. Feasibility of this alternative should be considered in areas deficient in public open space.
- 4.2.44 There will be a presumption that the Council will not adopt additional areas of public open space except in exceptional circumstances. Developers will therefore need to make provision for the continuing future maintenance of these open spaces.

#### **Provision of green space with development – overview of requirements**

Policy EN9 provides for public open space in residential developments of over 50 dwellings. However, there are a variety of policies that ensure that all new residential development within the Borough makes some form of contribution to green infrastructure, through:

- Private and communal green space in accordance with Policy H10
- Landscaping, in accordance with Policy CC7, and linked into a wider Green Network wherever possible in accordance with Policy EN12;
- Innovative solutions in the high density town centre such as green roofs, green walls and roof gardens in accordance with policies CR2 and CR10;
- Tree planting in accordance with policies CC3 and EN14;
- Application of the urban greening factor in accordance with policy EN19.

### **Access to Open Space**

#### **EN10: ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE**

***In areas with relatively poor access to open space facilities (including as a result of severance lines), new development should make provision for, or contribute to, improvements to road and other crossings to improve access to green space and/or facilitate the creation or linking of safe off-road routes to parks.***

- 4.2.45 There are a number of severance lines that act as barriers to access to open space, some of which were identified in the 2007 Open Spaces Strategy. New development proposals should be assessed in terms of accessibility to

open space (as well as other services and facilities). Opportunities should be identified for development to improve or contribute to the improvement of access to open spaces, such as through providing or funding the provision of improvements to crossings, green routes, towpaths or pedestrianisation of streets.

- 4.2.46 The creation of a network of safe links for pedestrians and cyclists, that improves access to a choice of open spaces, is a key objective and an integral part of the Open Spaces Strategy. Not only will these routes increase open space usage and reduce trips by cars, they should be considered an intrinsic component of the overall open space structure and experience that Reading offers. Paths alongside the Kennet and Thames in particular, provide a unique opportunity to enhance the network of green links and corridors across the Borough.

## **Waterspaces**

### **EN11: WATERSPACES**

***Reading's waterspaces will be protected and enhanced, so that they can continue to contribute to local and regional biodiversity and ecology, flood mitigation, local character, heritage and visual amenity, the provision of accessible leisure and recreational opportunities and, where appropriate, navigation. There will be no adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor***

***Where development in the vicinity of watercourses is acceptable, it will:-***

- ***Provide appropriate, attractive uses and buildings that enhance the relationship of buildings, spaces and routes to the watercourse, including through creating or enhancing views of the watercourse, and create a high quality public realm;***
- ***Make positive contributions to the distinct character, appearance, historic significance, landscape and amenity of the watercourses;***
- ***Provide a strengthened role for watercourses as important landscape features, wildlife corridors, historic features and recreation opportunities;***
- ***Wherever practicable and consistent with its biodiversity role, provide good, level access to and along the waterside for all those who want to use it;***
- ***Be set at least ten metres back from the watercourse wherever practicable and appropriate to protect its biodiversity significance;***
- ***Improve the quality of watercourse environment through protecting and enhancing habitats and ensuring that habitat creation is balanced with access and urban uses; and***
- ***Pursue opportunities for deculverting of watercourses.***

- 4.2.47 Reading is built on two main rivers that contribute to the distinct character of the Borough. Each provides a very different character and role. The Thames remains largely natural in character, bounded by parks, green spaces and fields for most of its stretch through Reading, although it meets the edge of

the town centre on the south bank between Caversham and Reading Bridges. The Kennet is similarly rural in the south west of the Borough, but has a stronger integration into the fabric of the town centre than the Thames. It is important that development recognises and builds on these distinct characters.

- 4.2.48 Land uses adjoining the watercourses will contribute to the creation of attractive and highly accessible waterside environments, within which people can feel safe and comfortable. Buildings should face onto the water and present active frontages along the Kennet, with ground floor uses designed to enhance activity and life along this corridor. Uses and facilities along the Thames will be diversified, seeking to provide a greater variety of leisure activities and facilitating public use and recreation.
- 4.2.49 In addition to the two main rivers, the Holy Brook contains a unique character and links to the town's ancient history. Development should seek to increase the prominence of the Holy Brook, and open up the brook for public access, as well as consider any opportunities for deculverting it, which will provide ecological and potentially flood risk benefits. There are also a number of other small tributaries within Reading Borough, with their own character, and there may again be opportunities to enhance these as well as investigate deculverting.
- 4.2.50 The role of watercourses in attracting and catering for visitors and local people of all ages and backgrounds must be recognised. Development adjoining the watercourses should therefore provide public access to, or contribute towards improving the pedestrian facilities to, along or across the watercourses. Whilst there may be cases where this is not possible due to particular site-specific constraints, these will be exceptional circumstances only. The Council will seek to promote schemes that facilitate linkages between the Thames, and the town and the Kennet, which will be facilitated through the spatial strategy for central Reading.
- 4.2.51 The wildlife function of the watercourses is also vital. There is also a clear relationship between this policy and EN12 on Biodiversity and the Green Network, as the main watercourses are identified as green links within that policy, vital for wildlife movement. In order to enhance this biodiversity role, development should be set at least ten metres back from the bank where possible and appropriate. In this case, development refers to buildings, fences and walls as well as laying of non-permeable surfaces. Ideally, unless direct access to or along the waterside is of particular significance on a site, a buffer should be maintained as a natural or semi-natural habitat free from built development, parking areas, private gardens and formal landscaping. Additionally, where a watercourse runs through a proposed development, a buffer shall be provided on both banks. There should be a long term landscape and ecological management plan for this buffer.
- 4.2.52 Where barriers to fish are present in a watercourse adjacent to development proposals, the design should include measures to allow for the natural movement of fish within the watercourse.
- 4.2.53 The Council has also produced a Thames Parks Plan, which seeks to physically link the significant areas of public park along the Thames in Reading, and increase the number and range of people using the parks. It takes each of the eight parks in turn and makes recommendations, as well as



suggesting measures to deal with cross-cutting issues such as access. There are particular opportunities for enhancing watercourses adjacent to parks for wildlife and people.

- 4.2.54 There are also a number of other plans and strategies that relate to the watercourses and land around them. The Thames Valley National Landscape Character Area profile (Natural England)<sup>65</sup> identifies priorities for enhancement of the landscape. The Thames River Basin Management Plan (Environment Agency)<sup>66</sup> seeks to achieve the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment in the Thames basin, and includes a number of objectives. Meanwhile, the Thames Waterway Plan (River Thames Alliance)<sup>67</sup> deals with the use of the river and seeks to achieve a healthy growth in its use for communities, wildlife, leisure and business. This document is in the process of being reviewed. In addition, the Environment Agency must be consulted for any proposals affecting watercourses under separate legislation. Development within 8 metres of the top of a riverbank will require the prior consent of the Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016<sup>68</sup>.

## Biodiversity

### EN12: BIODIVERSITY (Strategic policy)

#### a) Reading' Green Network

***Reading's Green Network, the key components of which are shown on the Proposals Map, shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. Permission will not be granted for development that negatively affects components of the Green Network. The Green Network comprises:***

- ***Local Wildlife Sites;***
- ***Local Nature Reserves;***
- ***Priority habitats;***
- ***Protected and priority species and their habitats;;***
- ***Important trees, hedgerows and woodlands;***
- ***Waterbodies including the River Thames and all its tributaries (including the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal);***
- ***Green Links (as shown on the Proposals Map); and***
- ***Areas with potential for biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together such as Local Green Space.***

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<sup>65</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/3865943?category=587130>

<sup>66</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/289937/geth0910bswa-e-e.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289937/geth0910bswa-e-e.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/289784/geth1205bjyc-e-e.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289784/geth1205bjyc-e-e.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> [www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/environmental-permits](http://www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/environmental-permits)

***New development shall demonstrate how the location and type of green space, landscaping and water features provided within a scheme have been arranged so that they enhance Reading's Green Network. Developments should be designed to maximise the opportunities for enhancing the network having regard to the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (BLNRS) as appropriate.***

***b) Biodiversity Net Gain***

***On all development sites, a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) must be achieved, except that which is exempt as set out within The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024. The 10% BNG should be delivered on-site wherever possible. However, if on-site provision is not achievable, or Readings Green Network can be more coherently enhanced through off site provision, off-site gain can be pursued, in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy. Where practicable off-site provision should be directed towards areas within the borough and identified in the Council's Natural Environment SPD, BLNRS (or Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) until such a time as the BLNRS and the SPD is in place).***

***Notwithstanding the above development that results in the loss or deterioration of 'irreplaceable habitats' will not be permitted.***

***c) Wildlife friendly design***

***Unless there are clearly justifiable reasons for not doing so, development must:***

- Protect and enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site***
- Provide new tree planting;***
- Provide wildlife friendly landscaping using wildlife-friendly species (preferably native) as appropriate;***
- Provide permanent bird and bat boxes wherever practicable.***
- Provide wildlife friendly landscaping using wildlife-friendly species (preferably native) as appropriate; and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds and bird nesting and bat roosting opportunities integral within new buildings (such as universal swift bricks and bat bricks or tiles)); and***
- Avoid increasing, and wherever possible reduce, artificial light at night in particular over trees, hedgerows and waterbodies.***

***d) Waterbodies***

***Unless there are clearly justifiable reasons for not doing so, development must:***

- Not increase artificial light at night over waterbodies, and reduce it wherever practicable***
- Provide native and wildlife friendly landscaping adjacent to waterbodies.***

- ***Re-naturalise the banks of waterbodies when new development is adjacent to it wherever possible.***
- ***Not cover over watercourses***

**e) Soils**

***Applications for new development on or adjacent to the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land will demonstrate that the quality of soils on that land will not be reduced.***

4.2.55 Despite its primarily urban nature, Reading has a number of important wildlife habitats including woodlands, grasslands and wetlands. These are the remnants of a once much wider and more connected series of habitats that supported a greater diversity of species. As well as larger habitats, individual features of biodiversity interest can be present at a small scale within a variety of types of site. As set out elsewhere in this plan, there are significant needs for new development within Reading, but there is also a need to attain a balance between accommodating development activity, and preserving important biodiversity and geodiversity,

4.2.56 There are two main elements to this policy:

- Identifying the key areas of biodiversity importance and drawing them together into an interconnected 'Green Network' across Reading; and
- Preserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity on all sites.

***Existing features***

4.2.57 Whilst there are no nationally or internationally designated habitats in Reading, the Borough contains many sites that are important to the local and strategic context, and therefore need to be protected. These include:

1. Local Wildlife Sites – These are designated by the Berkshire Local Wildlife Selection Panel
2. Local Nature Reserves – a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal local authorities.
3. Priority Habitats – Habitats included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
4. Protected and Priority Species and their habitats,
5. Trees, hedgerows and woodland,
6. Waterbodies including the River Thames and all its tributaries (including the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal),
7. Green Links (as shown on the proposals map)
8. Areas with the potential to enhance biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together such as local green spaces

- 4.2.58 The Council will manage all of Reading's LNRs and most of its LWSs. This policy will ensure that they remain protected against the adverse effects of development or related activity. It should be noted that the above designations are defined outside the Local Plan process, which means that they are potentially subject to change within the plan period, and the adopted Proposals Map may not show the latest boundaries. The Council, together with the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership (BLNP) and Thames Valley Environment Records Centre (TVERC), will continue to keep LWSs under review.
- 4.2.59 As well as the need to protect existing biodiversity value, this policy hinges on the concept of a 'Green Network'. This stitches together the known areas of biodiversity importance with areas where there is potential for increased biodiversity significance into a network that allows wildlife to move between sites. This seeks to overcome the issue that sites of wildlife importance have become fragmented into a number of small, unconnected sites with isolated wildlife populations. Climate change is likely to increase the need for linkages, as species will increasingly need to move across the landscape to stay within their climatic range. The Green Network also fulfils other purposes such as storm water control and air pollution amelioration.
- 4.2.60 The Green Network incorporates both the existing designated areas already set out, but also areas with potential for biodiversity value and movement. It has been identified through a desk based study using GIS data. This Green Network policy goes beyond site specific considerations and is aimed towards the broader context acknowledging that for these areas to achieve their true value and potential they need to work as part of a network with one area being successfully linked to another area, rather than remaining as isolated fragments. Therefore, its interconnectedness is critical.
- 4.2.61 Given the importance of the interconnectedness of the Network, new and potential 'green links' are crucial. These lie between assets both within and outside the Borough and either link these areas or have the potential to do so (e.g. through re-development or management). They include both public and private land, and may include lines of trees, riverbanks, road and railway verges, a series of well vegetated gardens, stepping stones of small patches of habitat, green roofs or watercourses and ponds, or other similar features.
- 4.2.62 The routes identified as Green Links on the Proposals Map either denote an existing link or illustrate an indicative location for where potential Green Links could be located to provide desired connectivity for wildlife between ecologically important areas. It should not necessarily be interpreted as a precise line, rather it may indicate an indicative potential connection between areas. In practice, most Green Links shown on the map are a mixture of existing and potential links, i.e. whilst there are existing aspects that contribute to the Network there is also significant potential for development to make a further contribution to improve the Network. There is therefore little difference in how existing and potential links should be treated in terms of the policy. Green Links do not mean or imply public access.
- 4.2.63 Opportunities will be sought in conjunction with development proposals, to enhance the quality and integrity of the Green Network. Proposals should seek ways to enhance and restore biodiversity, and enhance the quality and integrity of sites (where appropriate), by maximising the inclusion of biodiversity and nature conservation features, as part of good design, and by

locating those features carefully to best contribute towards the interconnectedness of the Network. In addition, it must be clearly demonstrated that such measures will be effectively managed and maintained, to a high standard, over the lifetime of the development, through the mechanism of landscape and ecological management plans agreed in writing by the Council.

### ***Biodiversity Net Gain***

- 4.2.64 The Environment Act 2021 became law on 9 November 2021. It requires (through amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) all planning permissions in England, with some exemptions (including self-build developments, development below the de-minimis threshold and householder applications), to be granted subject to a new general pre-commencement condition that requires approval of a biodiversity gain plan.
- 4.2.65 This system is commonly referred to as Biodiversity Net Gain and became mandatory on 12 February 2024 for major applications and 2 April 2024 for minor applications.
- 4.2.66 The Statutory Metric is a spreadsheet tool for calculating habitat losses or gains from a project using habitats, measured using Habitat, Hedgerow and Watercourse Units as a proxy measure for biodiversity. It is accompanied by an excel spreadsheet calculator that assigns values to habitats before a change and assumed habitat values after the change. Development needs to result in a net gain in Habitat Units as measured with the Statutory Metric.
- 4.2.67 Before issuing planning permission the council must be satisfied that, if granted, the biodiversity gain plan condition could be met and to do this they need to be satisfied that the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy has been followed. If it has not been demonstrated that the hierarchy has been followed then the application may be refused. The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy and its effect for the purpose of the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain is set out in Articles 37A and 37D of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. This hierarchy (which does not apply to irreplaceable habitats) sets out a list of priority actions:
- first, in relation to onsite habitats which have a medium, high and very high distinctiveness (a score of four or more according to the statutory biodiversity metric), the avoidance of adverse effects from the development and, if they cannot be avoided, the mitigation of those effects; and
  - then, in relation to all onsite habitats which are adversely affected by the development, the adverse effect should be compensated by prioritising in order, where possible, the enhancement of existing onsite habitats, creation of new onsite habitats, allocation of registered offsite gains and finally the purchase of biodiversity credits.
- 4.2.68 With this in mind, applicants will be expected to demonstrate how the hierarchy has been followed and may wish to provide a draft Biodiversity Gain Plan with their submission.
- 4.2.69 It should be noted that The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy is distinct from the Mitigation Hierarchy which states that a planning application should be refused if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from the development

cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for.

- 4.2.70 Not all development that complies with The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy will comply with the Mitigation Hierarchy (for example where a development would result in the loss of an expanse of ecologically rich garden which in itself is not a medium, high and very high distinctiveness habitat – the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy might be met but the Mitigation Hierarchy would not).
- 4.2.71 The BLNRS's will help guide offsite (and in some cases on site) biodiversity improvements.
- 4.2.72 At present, there are no established schemes to provide off-site BNG within the Borough of Reading. Details of The Council's approach to off-site habitat delivery will be provided within the Natural Environment SPD. Although these may emerge over time, it is acknowledged that given the urban nature of the borough, the availability of off-site gains within the borough boundary may at least in the first instance be limited. Therefore, off-site provision may need to be delivered outside of Reading Borough. Applicants are however advised that the provision of offsite habitat units close to the application site and within the borough may help demonstrate compliance with the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy and the Mitigation Hierarchy referred to above.

#### **Other Considerations**

- 4.2.73 Actions from the Biodiversity Action Plan (2021) have been included within the policy update, including the impacts of artificial light at night, a developments' impact on soils, the provision of ecological enhancements integral to new buildings, and the conservation and enhancement of waterbodies.

### **Major Landscape Features and National Landscapes**

#### **EN13: MAJOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND NATIONAL LANDSCAPES (Strategic policy)**

***Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature. The following areas, as shown on the Proposals Map, are defined as Major Landscape Features:***

- ***The Thames Valley;***
- ***The Kennet and Holy Brook Meadows;***
- ***The West Reading wooded ridgeline;***
- ***The East Reading wooded ridgeline; and***
- ***The North Reading dry valleys and Chilterns escarpment.***

***Development which affects the setting of a National Landscape will be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that demonstrates that there is no detrimental impact on the North Wessex Downs or Chilterns National Landscapes in terms of scale, design, layout or location. None of Reading Borough falls within a National Landscape, but where the urban area meets the Chilterns National Landscape is shown on the Proposals Map.***

- 4.2.74 On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) situated within England and Wales were renamed National Landscapes. As such, the Local Plan Partial Update refers to The Chilterns National Landscape (formerly the Chilterns AONB) and North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly North Wessex Downs AONB).
- 4.2.75 Reading is primarily an urban area, but it benefits from a number of natural features that have remained largely undeveloped. The urban context means that the preservation of these features as a backdrop is of particular importance. New development should seek to maintain and enhance the natural beauty and visual amenity of the identified major landscape features. The extent to which new development prevents or minimises the visual impact on major landscape features and other landscape values is largely dependent on the location, design and scale of proposals. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) can provide a useful methodology for assessing landscape impact where the setting of a National Landscape would be affected. It should be noted that this policy does not rule out development in or close to these areas, but seeks to ensure that development only takes place where it can preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the feature.
- 4.2.76 Whilst no part of Reading Borough falls within a National Landscape, there are two National Landscapes in close proximity. The Chilterns National Landscape runs along part of the boundary between Reading and South Oxfordshire, but does not cross it. It is vital that the rural-urban fringe at this point is managed to ensure that development does not jeopardise the characteristics of the National Landscape. A review by Natural England of the Chilterns National Landscape boundary is underway, and this may change the degree to which the boundary interacts with Reading's boundary, but at the time of preparing this plan no amended boundary is available. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape is, at its closest point, 200m west of the Borough boundary at Tilehurst. Therefore there are fewer visual linkages, but development in this area must nevertheless take into account any impact on this National Landscape.

## **Trees, Hedges and Woodlands**

### ***EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLANDS (Strategic policy)***

- 1. Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance. In particular, ancient woodland and veteran trees must be protected, and their long-term future secured. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced.***
- 2. Reading's vegetation cover will be extended with an aim of increasing canopy cover of Reading to 25% and ensuring that all wards have a minimum of 12% canopy cover by 2030.***
- 3. New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity, to improve air***



***quality and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change. Measures must be in place to ensure that these trees are adequately maintained.***

- 4. Areas where there is a particular requirement for additional tree planting including within new development include:***
  - a. Treed corridors (as shown in the Tree Strategy, including the main roads, where planting on frontages to create tree-lined streets should be incorporated, railways, rivers and green links);***
  - b. Low canopy cover wards (12% canopy cover or below);***
  - c. Air Quality Management Areas; and***
  - d. Areas of high treescape value such as wooded major landscape features and conservation areas.***
- 5. The following matters should be taken into account in fulfilling the requirements of this policy:***
  - a. Where possible, planting should align with other priorities such as Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies;***
  - b. Planting should consider the historic environment as appropriate and avoid potential future harm to designated heritage assets;***
  - c. Planting should contribute to a diversity of tree stock in Reading by ensuring proposed tree provision is diverse in its proportion of individual from and one Family, Genus and Species, and take biosecurity into account;***
  - d. Planting should prioritise inclusion of large canopy species wherever space allows, taking account of the size of the canopy at maturity, to ensure that canopy cover is maximised; and***
  - e. Planting space should allow provision of sufficient soil volume for the future requirements of trees at maturity***

4.2.77 Trees, hedges and woodlands help define the landscape and character of the Borough and provide multiple social, economic and environmental benefits to the urban environment including softening the built environment, increasing property values, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, absorbing carbon and helping to adapt to climate change. Reading's woodlands are a highly visible feature of the ridgelines and a strong feature in the landscape of the river valleys that shape the urban area. Trees are also an important component of the character of many parts of the Borough particularly its older developed areas and suburbs and especially in Conservation Areas. Many streets within Reading, including primary routes into town, are characterised by their tree-lined nature, which should be protected and enhanced. Whilst Reading has some important woodlands and areas with substantial numbers of trees, including two areas of Ancient Woodland, shown on the Proposals Map<sup>69</sup>, other areas lack tree cover. It is therefore vital to ensure that important trees and woodlands are protected and canopy cover extended in areas lacking cover, including in conjunction with new development. This will

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<sup>69</sup> Clayfield Copse and the western part of McIlroy Park

particularly be the case for irreplaceable Ancient Woodland and veteran trees.

- 4.2.78 Trees can make a positive contribution towards reducing the effects of future climate change by dissipating the impact of heavy rainfall, reducing urban temperatures and providing shade and protection against the detrimental effects of sunlight. As part of the response to the Climate Emergency, a new Tree Strategy<sup>70</sup> was produced in 2021 that contains ambitious plans to achieve 25% coverage of the Borough by tree canopy by 2030, which would represent a significant increase over the canopy cover in 2022 of 17.7%. The Strategy also plans that all wards will have at least 12% canopy cover, a level which two wards (Abbey and Battle) currently fall well below. Achieving this level of increase in canopy will require significant increases in planting from all sources, including the Council's own planting, but the ambitions cannot be achieved without new development playing its part.
- 4.2.79 New development should therefore seek to incorporate strategically sited trees that will provide shade and cooling to developments, particularly to street frontages, large hard landscaped areas and other areas of public realm. This will be of particular importance where such sites are within those areas prioritised in the Tree Strategy. This includes those wards with low existing canopy cover, which in 2022 included Abbey (5.5%) and Battle (7.4%), and to a lesser extent Whitley (12.0%), Katesgrove (13.1%), Thames (13.8%) and Park (14.8%). It also includes the identified treed corridors, formed of the main transport and waterway corridors plus identified green links, as well as Air Quality Management Areas and areas of high treescape value. The Tree Strategy contains a map showing these areas, but it is not reproduced here as the Strategy may be amended during the lifetime of this plan.
- 4.2.80 Off-site tree provision will be appropriate in some cases where it has been demonstrated that acceptable development cannot provide an appropriate level of mitigation planting (where trees are to be removed) and/or new planting within the site.
- 4.2.81 The Tree Strategy contains detailed guidance on new planting. It recognises the particular importance of climate adaptation, diversity and biosecurity. Species that are both resilient to the effects of climate change and wildlife-friendly will be key, but diversity is also vital to reduce vulnerability to pests and disease. There will be a need to use appropriate large canopy species that are adaptable to future predicted climatic conditions (native species if possible and where appropriate in order to deliver biodiversity benefits), particularly the higher temperatures and potential drought conditions predicted in summer. When including large canopy species, care must be taken to ensure sufficient canopy space and soil volume is available for the tree when it reaches maturity. Tree stock should either be UK grown or sourced from a domestic nursery that retains its trees for a minimum of one year (a full growing season) within the UK before sale to ensure plant health and non-infection by foreign pests or disease.
- 4.3.82 Trees, hedges and woodlands have multiple wildlife benefits in providing habitat, habitat links and foraging areas for numerous flora and fauna. The protection of these both in the public and private realm, within development proposals, will be sought in order to meet the Council's duties to conserve

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<sup>70</sup> [Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy, March 2021](#)

and enhance biodiversity. New development should ensure that new landscaping is primarily of wildlife friendly species and adds to the linking of green areas across the Borough.

- 4.2.83 The Council may make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect single trees or groups of trees, which prevent lopping, topping or felling without the Council's consent. Details on which trees are specifically protected can be found on the Council's website.
- 4.2.84 The policy makes clear reference to the need to appropriately consider the impact that any new planting might have on the historic environment. For example, if it is situated within an area of archaeological potential, care will be needed to understand the potential for harm to archaeological remains and avoid or minimise such harm.
- 4.2.85 The Council will seek to ensure that appropriate measures are secured for the successful protection of trees, in line with good practice, where retained as part of development proposals. Developers will be expected to implement agreed measures in accordance with details approved through the planning process.
- 4.2.86 Retention, enhancement and extension of woodlands will be achieved in conjunction with relevant development proposals, and may include measures such as new planting and management plans. The effective management of new woodland areas will be promoted, recognising the economic, environmental and social benefits that woodland management and tree planting can provide.
- 4.2.87 The Council, in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and friends groups, has produced management plans for over 90 ha of its woodlands<sup>71</sup>. These are available on the Council's website. Implementation of these plans will be part funded by the Forestry Commission.

## **Air Quality**

### **EN15: AIR QUALITY**

***Development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.***

- i. Development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be mitigated. The following criteria should be taken into account:***
- Whether the proposal, including when combined with the cumulative effect of other developments already permitted, would worsen air quality;***
  - Whether the development is within, or accessed via, an Air Quality Management Area; and***

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<sup>71</sup> Arthur Newbery and McIlroys Park; Beech Wood, Rotherfield Way Copse and Balmore Walk; Blundell Copse; Bugs Bottom and Furzeplat; Clayfield Copse; Lousehill Copse; Prospect Park and Devils Dip; Southcote Linear Park; Thames Woodlands; The Cowsey; and Warren Woodland Escarpment.

- ***Whether it can be demonstrated that a local worsening in air quality that would not detrimentally affect human health or the environment would be offset by an overall improvement in air quality, for instance through reduction in the need to travel.***
- ii. ***Where a development would introduce sensitive uses (such as residential, schools and nurseries, hospitals, care facilities) into, or intensify such uses within, an Air Quality Management Area, detrimental effects on that use will be mitigated. Mitigation measures should be detailed in any planning application. If there are significant detrimental effects that cannot be mitigated, the application should be refused.***
- iii. ***Where required, planning obligations will be used to secure contributions to measures to tackle poor air quality or for air quality monitoring.***

4.2.88 Air pollution can have a serious effect on human health and the environment; and as such it is essential that any new development within Reading avoids creating unacceptably poor levels of air quality both inside and outside the Borough boundaries. Air pollution is not only harmful to human health but may also have harmful effects on plants and animals as well as corroding materials and buildings. Whilst there are legal limits, there are no 'safe' levels of air pollutants. It is estimated that air pollution reduces the life expectancy of every person in the UK by an average of 7-8 months<sup>72</sup>.

4.2.89 The National Planning Policy Framework requires local policies to sustain compliance with and contribute towards relevant limit values or national objectives, taking into account the existence of Air Quality Management Areas and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas (paragraph 192).

4.2.90 Although concentrations of PM<sub>10</sub> in Reading are below Air Quality Objective levels, there remain concerns about nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels. Road traffic has been shown to be the predominant source of pollution. DEFRA and the DfT produced a UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations in July 2017, and this was accompanied by information on local authorities with roads shown by national modelling to have NO<sub>2</sub> levels above legal limits, and when those roads would be projected to fall within legal limits. Reading was identified as having roadside concentrations exceeding legal limits in 2017-20, but dropping below legal limits from 2021. As such Reading was considered to marginally meet the target and was not one of the authorities considered to have the greatest issue with projected exceedences beyond 3-4 years that would require development of a local action plan. However, local monitoring (not used in the DEFRA model) indicates more areas of exceedance than modelled by DEFRA. The rate of development in the Reading area was also something not taken into account in the DEFRA model. Therefore the concern is that harmful levels of air pollution will persist in Reading for much longer than shown in the DEFRA model unless action is taken. There clearly remain significant concerns about air quality in Reading, and the Council has made clear that it is serious about addressing these issues.

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<sup>72</sup> The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, volume 1, 2007

- 4.2.91 Other particles include PM<sub>2.5</sub>, and, again there is no 'safe' levels of these particles, although there are World Health Organisation guideline levels. There is a requirement for the UK to attain a national exposure target for PM<sub>2.5</sub> of 15% reduction between 2010 and 2020. The Council is monitoring these levels,
- 4.2.92 In order to tackle the air quality issue, the Council declared a single Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) across a large area of Reading, and implemented an associated Air Quality Action Plan. The AQMA includes much of the central area and main radial transport corridors. This coincides with many of the areas where the largest amount of development is expected to take place, and a robust policy is therefore required to accompany it.
- 4.2.93 The AQMA, shown on the Proposals Map highlights the main area of concern, and focus for this policy, however ensuring high levels of air quality is important for the whole of Reading, and air quality may be a consideration outside the AQMA. Some schemes may potentially significantly impact air quality outside of the AQMA, or may have effects on the AQMA, for example through large-scale traffic generation.
- 4.2.94 This policy aims to ensure that increased development within Reading does not lead to a net increase in emissions as well as ensuring any increased exposure within the poorest areas of air quality is accompanied by appropriate mitigation. Mitigation measures vary for each case, but can include simple measures designed into the scheme from the outset. The most likely mitigation through design involves setting residential units further back from busy roads, however, in some circumstances this could also include siting habitable rooms away from the façade fronting the pollution source, or, in the case of mixed use development, limiting the residential accommodation to higher floors. Other mitigation measures may also include travel plans, restrictions in car access or parking, planting, green walls or certain types of paving that absorb NO<sub>2</sub>. It does not mean that the development of sensitive uses where they would be exposed to poor air quality will necessarily be inappropriate.
- 4.2.95 In some cases, an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) will be required with a planning application. The requirement for an assessment will depend entirely on the exact nature and location of the application. However, broadly speaking, developments will be likely to require an AQA if they are major developments (10 dwellings or 1,000 sq m of floorspace or more) located within or accessed from the AQMA and:

- Would lead to a material increase in congestion or HGVs;
- Would include significant amounts of car parking, for example 100 spaces, or would significantly increase current provision, for example by 25%;
- Would emit air pollutants that would affect sensitive receptors, including areas of biodiversity importance such as priority habitats; or

An AQA will also be likely to be required if a development of any scale would locate new sensitive receptors, such as residential, in areas of particularly poor air quality, such as on the façade of a very busy road.

- 4.2.96 The above criteria are meant as a guide only, and in reality there may be schemes which may meet one or more of the above but may not require an AQA. Conversely there may be schemes which do not meet the above but may require an assessment. More detailed guidance about how to judge which developments might lead to a material increase in congestion or HGVs is included within Planning for Air Quality (EPUK and IAQM, 2017)<sup>73</sup>, although this may be subject to update within the plan period, which means that including that detail within the Local Plan is not appropriate. It is strongly recommended that the Council's Environmental Protection Team is contacted if it is believed an assessment may be required, as they will be able to provide guidance as well as advice on the level of detail required within the assessment and providing monitoring data.
- 4.2.97 Where it is identified that a scheme will increase emissions within the AQMA, the developer will be expected to identify measures to mitigate the increase in emissions. In some cases this could be achieved through scheme design or through the introduction of a low emissions strategy, comprising a package of measures to reduce transport related emissions. A low emissions strategy will be specific to individual developments and dependent upon the exact nature and location.
- 4.2.98 It may be appropriate in some circumstances for the developer to fund mitigating measures elsewhere, to offset any increase in local pollutant emissions as a consequence of the proposed development. In general, air quality monitoring will be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy, but where there is a specific issue, this may be achieved through the use of a Section 106 agreement for a specific scheme or measure. On particularly significant schemes, low emissions strategies may be required, which comprise a package of measures to reduce the transport impacts<sup>74</sup>.
- 4.2.99 This policy is part of a wide package of measures to tackle air quality in Reading, including policies within the transport section of this plan on promotion of sustainable travel. The Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029<sup>75</sup> includes transport, planning and other measures to both tackle existing sources, and to promote behavioural change to reduce air pollution. As the Council reviews its approach to air quality, it may be necessary to produce a Supplementary Planning Document that provides more detail on how the policy will be achieved, particularly in the construction phase.

## **Pollution and Water Resources**

### **EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES**

***Development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution; where it would result in no deterioration in, or ideally enhance, ground and surface water quality; and where adequate water***

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<sup>73</sup> Land-Use Planning & Development Control: Planning For Air Quality (Environmental Protection UK, Institute of Air Quality Management, 2017) <http://www.iaqm.co.uk/text/guidance/air-quality-planning-guidance.pdf>

<sup>74</sup> Low Emissions Strategies (Beacons Low Emission Strategies Group, 2008) <http://www.lowemissionstrategies.org/>

<sup>75</sup> On the Council's website: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/climate-and-pollution/air-quality-action-plan/>



**resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure will be in place to support the proposed development prior to occupation.**

**Proposals for development that are sensitive to the effects of noise or light pollution will only be permitted in areas where they will not be subject to high levels of such pollution, unless adequate mitigation measures are provided to minimise the impact of such pollution.**

**Development will only be permitted on land affected by contamination where it is demonstrated that the contamination and land gas can be satisfactorily managed or remediated so that it is suitable for the proposed end use and will not impact on the groundwater environment, human health, buildings and the wider environment, during demolition and construction phases as well as during the future use of the site.**

- 4.2.100 The effective protection of the environment is a key aspect of sustainable development, and reducing pollution is one of the core planning principles in the NPPF. This policy prevents harmful development, mitigates the impact of potentially polluting developments and ensures that developments and receptors that are sensitive to pollution are separated from sources of such pollution. Sensitive receptors can include particularly sensitive uses, as well as sensitive features such as source protection zones or groundwater aquifers.
- 4.2.101 Air quality is dealt with in Policy EN15, but there are other pollution issues in Reading, such as the fact that some ground and surface waters are experiencing a degree of pollution. It is therefore important to ensure that future development does not result in any further deterioration of water quality and, where possible, results in an improvement in overall quality to help to achieve 'good' status in line with the Water Framework Directive. In line with the predicted level of new development within Reading, it will be important to ensure that this does not place an undue burden on existing water resources or result in a deterioration in potential yield of surface and ground water resources. In order to improve the quality of life of those living and working within Reading, it is important to avoid any detrimental impact from development in the form of noise and light pollution.
- 4.2.102 There are a number of sites affected by contamination within the Borough as a result of previous land uses. In order to make the most effective use of previously developed land within Reading, it will be important to ensure that, where possible, such land is remediated through the development process so that it is suitable for redevelopment. Where a development is known to be on historic contaminated land or contamination could be an issue, the application will not be approved unless it is supported by proportionate but sufficient site investigation information in a risk assessment. This will need to determine the existence or otherwise of contamination, its nature and extent, the risks it may pose and to whom/what (the 'receptors') so that these risks can be assessed and satisfactorily reduced to an acceptable level<sup>76</sup>. The risk assessment should also identify the potential sources, pathways and receptors ('pollutant linkages') and

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<sup>76</sup> See DEFRA policy companion document considering the use of 'Category 4 Screening Levels' in providing a simple test for deciding when land is suitable for use and definitely not contaminated (<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=18341>)

evaluate the risks. This information will enable the local planning authority to determine whether further more detailed investigation is required, or whether any proposed remediation is satisfactory, requiring a remediation plan and verification report. A risk assessment of land affected by contamination should inform an Environmental Impact Assessment if one is required. Some buildings, particularly tall buildings, may require piling. In some instances, due to contamination, piling may not be suitable unless remediation is carried out to a suitable standard to protect the Principal Aquifer. Early pre-application engagement with the Council and Environment Agency is strongly advised.

- 4.2.103 The Council has a Contaminated Land Strategy (2011)<sup>77</sup> in place which sets out how it intends to identify contaminated land across the Borough and remove the potential for significant harm. Addressing contamination on proposed development sites is therefore only part of a wider approach to the issue.
- 4.2.104 Exposure to high levels of noise can have a significant effect on human health. This policy deals with noise issues in general, whilst policy EN17 deals particularly with noise-generating equipment. It is worth noting that there is a Professional Practice Guide on Planning and Noise available<sup>78</sup> which provides guidance on design of residential developments to take account of noise, and taking account of this from the early design stage will help to reduce noise effects on future residents.
- 4.2.105 The provision of adequate water, wastewater and sewerage infrastructure is critical, and needs to be in place prior to occupation. A Utilities Statement is required for all major development at application stage, and this will need to include the outcome of consultation with the sewerage undertaker. Where there is a capacity constraint and improvements in off-site infrastructure are not programmed, the developer should set out how the infrastructure improvements will be completed prior to occupation of the development. The use of private sewage disposal facilities within publicly sewered areas will only be acceptable if the applicant can demonstrate that the additional cost of connecting to the sewer would be unreasonable, connection is not practically feasible or the proposed private sewerage system would provide additional environmental benefits that would outweigh the potential environmental risks.

## Noise Generating Equipment

### **EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT**

***Where noise generating equipment is proposed, the noise source specific<sup>79</sup> level (plant noise level) should be at least 10dBA below the existing background level as measured at the nearest noise sensitive receptor.***

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<sup>77</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1233/Contaminated-Land-Strategy/pdf/Contaminated-Land-Strategy.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> IOA, ANC & CIEH (2017)

<http://ioa.org.uk/sites/default/files/14720%20ProPG%20Main%20Document.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> The noise source specific level is the measured noise level, as opposed to the rating level, which is the specific level with correction factors included.

- 4.2.106 The Local Plan proposals will see a high level of development within Reading. Reading is a densely populated town with many new planning developments taking place. Residents live in close proximity to commercial activities, therefore it is important to minimise background creep in order to protect the noise environment and maintain quality of life for people living and working in the town. The negative impact of environmental noise on health is becoming better understood (for example WHO 1999, 2009 and 2011<sup>80</sup>).
- 4.2.107 Planning Practice Guidance on noise states that no specific measures are required to manage the acoustic environment in situations where noise can be heard as a result of a development and there is a slight effect on the acoustic character of the area but there is no effect on the behaviour and attitude of people exposed to the noise. However, the guidance also states that:
- The cumulative impacts of more than one source of noise should be considered; and
  - In cases where existing noise sensitive locations already experience high noise levels, a development that is expected to cause even a small increase in the overall noise level may result in a significant adverse effect occurring.
- 4.2.108 The Council considers that the above two factors apply due to the town being densely populated and there being a high likelihood of subsequent noise generating plant being installed in a particular location. It is therefore necessary for each planning application for noisy plant to protect the acoustic environment and as far as possible prevent the increase in background noise levels because the cumulative impact of installation of noisy plant which causes an increase in background noise level is likely to lead to an adverse effect.
- 4.2.109 The Planning Practice Guidance on noise also states that local planning authorities may decide to develop specific standards to apply to various forms of proposed development in their area. It cautions against the implementation of fixed thresholds because specific circumstances may justify some variation being allowed. Because this policy sets a noise target in relation to the background noise level, this allows variation of the threshold with the local circumstances because it does not set an absolute noise level that the plant must achieve, it relates it to the local noise level.
- 4.2.110 Where the plant noise rating level does not meet this standard, the background noise will increase. When subsequent new plant is added it will be assessed against this higher background level which results in an increasing benchmark against which subsequent new plant is introduced. This leads to an incremental increase in the noise in an area each time new plant is introduced ('background creep'). This policy standard has been applied by Reading Borough Council for a number of years and experience has demonstrated it to be achievable in most cases. In addition, noise control

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<sup>80</sup> World Health Organisation (WHO) (1999), Guidelines for Community Noise; WHO (2009), Night Noise Guidelines for Europe; WHO (2011), Burden of Disease from Environmental Noise: Quantification of healthy life years lost in Europe

technology is improving, therefore further increasing the achievability of this standard.

## **Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems**

### **EN18: FLOODING AND SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS**

***Planning permission will only be granted where proposals have fully considered the effects of flooding from all sources (fluvial, surface water, reservoir, groundwater, and sewer flooding) over the lifetime of the development and accounting for climate change.***

***Development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance, following the Sequential and Exceptions Test set out in the NPPF.***

***Where development in areas at risk of flooding is necessary, it will not be permitted unless a strategic or site-specific Flood Risk Assessment in line with the Government's technical standards<sup>81</sup> demonstrates that for the lifetime of the development:***

- a) It will not increase flood risk;***
- b) Provide safety for future occupants in times of flooding;***
- c) Provide safe access and egress in the event of a flood; and***
- d) Clearly illustrate that all necessary mitigation measures have been implemented.***

***All development must incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) in line with the Government's Technical Standards<sup>82</sup> unless this is not viable or feasible. Runoff rates should aim to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site. Schemes should ensure that the movement of water through vertical infiltration as well as horizontal run-off does not worsen contamination effects. SuDS provision should maximise ecological benefits, link into the existing Green Network, incorporate tree planting and landscaping and avoid damage to existing significant trees, including through changes to the site hydrology. Surface water must not drain to the foul sewer, as this is a major cause of sewer flooding.***

***A SuDS maintenance plan must be submitted alongside planning applications to demonstrate how schemes will be managed and remain effective over the lifetime of the development. The implementation of the SuDS maintenance plan may be secured by planning condition.***

- 4.2.111 A significant area of land within Reading is at risk of flooding, and this is expected to worsen with the effects of climate change. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been undertaken for the Borough<sup>83</sup>. This

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<sup>81</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessment-for-planning-applications>

<sup>82</sup> Sustainable drainage systems non-statutory technical standards  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-drainage-systems-non-statutory-technical-standards>

<sup>83</sup> In draft form, when finalised to be published at <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>

describes and analyses how the Borough is affected by flood risk and the nature of that risk. The flood plain plays an important role in protecting the built up area of Reading as it accommodates floodwater and reduces the risks of water levels rising and affecting properties in a wider area. Flood plain storage capacity shall not be reduced by development or the raising of land levels. The movement of water across the flood plain is also important, and obstructions to this will place a greater burden on other parts of the flood plain. Therefore, development should not obstruct flood flow routes. Even away from the flood plain, inappropriate drainage schemes can exacerbate local flooding problems and increase the amount of water entering watercourses. This results in litter and contamination.

4.2.112 The National Planning Policy Framework directs development away from areas that are liable to flood, and states that proposals for development in areas of a medium and high risk of flooding need to be assessed against a sequential test and, if appropriate, an exceptions test. This has already been carried out for those sites allocated within this plan, and there is no need for this to be repeated unless the proposed use and/or flood risk vulnerability classification would differ from the allocation. Development should therefore comply with the requirements of the NPPF alongside this policy. Development proposals on sites in Flood Risk Zones 2, 3 or 3b will need to be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment. Sites in Flood Zone 1 will also require a Flood Risk assessment if:

- a) The site is 1 hectare or greater
- b) The site contains land identified by the Environment Agency as having critical drainage problems
- c) The land has been assessed in the SFRA as having increased flood risk in the future
- d) The vulnerability classification is increasing and may be subject to sources of flooding other than rivers or the sea.

The site-specific Flood Risk Assessment should also demonstrate that:

- e) A sequential approach has been taken within the site, directing the most vulnerable uses to the areas of lowest flood risk;
- f) Resilient and resistant construction methods for managing residual risk and delivering an overall reduction in flood risk have been assessed;
- g) There is provision of sufficient space for flood water storage through the use of open space or areas above ground (where appropriate);
- h) There will be no loss in flood plain storage, and where possible it should be increased
- i) Floor levels are raised above flood levels, taking account of all forms of flooding (where appropriate);
- j) Flood risk is not increased elsewhere and where possible reduced
- k) There is safe access and egress to the development
- l) All forms of flooding are taken into account, including groundwater, surface water, sewer and reservoir flooding, and;

m) The impacts of climate change on future flood risk have been considered in line with the latest guidance.

4.2.113 The effects of flooding are expected to worsen with climate change, and this needs to be taken into account when considering development. The Environment Agency has produced guidance on the allowances for climate change to be taken into account for each river basin district<sup>84</sup>. Reading falls within the Thames basin district. Depending on the vulnerability of development proposed, and the flood risk classification, the appropriate allowance must be taken into account within the Flood Risk Assessment.

4.2.114 The SFRA also defines the extent of the functional floodplain within Reading. The 2024 SFRA, in describing how this has been approached, distinguishes between Flood Zone 3b 'Functional Floodplain' and Flood Zone 3b 'Developed'. For clarity, the final definition on the flood zone maps in the SFRA incorporates both of these categories, and it is this combined area which should be considered as Flood Zone 3b for the purposes of applying policy. Depending on the vulnerability status of development, certain types of development are inappropriate in areas at risk of flooding. Unless development is classed as water compatible, or essential infrastructure that has met the exception test, new development will be considered as incompatible with the functional floodplain and will not be permitted. Redevelopment in the functional floodplain will only be considered appropriate if:

- a) there is no intensification or increase in vulnerability
- b) there is no increase in built footprint or impedance of flood flows
- c) it can be demonstrated that people and property would be safe for the lifetime of the development
- d) fluvial risk is reduced overall and floodplain storage is increased wherever possible.

4.2.115 The nature of Reading means that there are a significant number of sites in need of regeneration, generally containing vacant, derelict, low density or poor quality buildings, within areas of medium or high flood risk. Where the redevelopment of previously developed land at risk of flooding provides significant regeneration benefits, this will need to be considered in the context of the sequential and, if applicable, exceptions test.

4.2.116 Due to recent changes to the planning system, Reading Borough Council serves as a Lead Local Flood Authority and is responsible for approving SuDS schemes for new development. SuDS may be eligible for adoption by the Council, provided they are within public open space or serve more than one property and have been designed in accordance with the CIRIA SuDS manual<sup>85</sup>.

4.2.117 Flood risk and other environmental damage can be mitigated by minimising changes in the volume and rate of surface runoff. Sustainable drainage systems can often be achieved at little to no additional cost and may

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<sup>84</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change-allowances>

<sup>85</sup> Construction Industry Research and Information Association, SuDS Manual  
[http://www.ciria.org/Resources/Free\\_publications/SuDS\\_manual\\_C753.aspx](http://www.ciria.org/Resources/Free_publications/SuDS_manual_C753.aspx)



actually decrease landscape maintenance expenses throughout the lifetime of a development. Virtually any new development should be able to deliver SuDS due to the wide variety of techniques available. SuDS can be very effective on brownfield sites, but care must be taken to reduce environmental damage from contaminated land. It is also possible to 'retrofit' SuDS for existing developments. SuDS provide opportunities to:

- Reduce the causes and impacts of flooding;
- Guard against the effects of climate change;
- Enhance biodiversity;
- Improve water quality by removing pollutants from runoff; and
- Achieve green space, amenity, recreation and wildlife benefits through water management.

4.2.118 Sustainable drainage systems aim to replicate natural drainage as closely as possible and minimise the impacts of development. In the first instance, schemes should consider the provision of SuDS through landscaping, with reference to Part D of the CIRIA SuDS manual, and in any case should consider the following:

- Integration with existing landscape;
- Tree planting provision fed by groundwater runoff that functions effectively in place of attenuation tanks;
- Additional capacity to cater for future development; and
- Techniques including, but not limited to, permeable pavements, swales, basins, rain gardens, green roofs, rainwater re-use, infiltration trenches, ponds and wetlands.

4.2.119 Schemes for SuDS need to be careful to avoid resulting in contamination of watercourses and groundwater. Soakaways in contaminated land will not be appropriate. Infiltration SuDS techniques should only dispose of clean roof water into clean, uncontaminated ground, should not be used for foul discharges or trade effluent, and may not be suitable within Source Protection Zone 1.

4.2.120 The SuDS elements of the policy apply to major development. Small-scale developments will be encouraged to adopt elements of SuDS wherever practicable, including the provision of permeable surfaces within the site, e.g. on front gardens or car parking areas.

### **Urban Greening Factor**

#### **EN19: URBAN GREENING FACTOR**

***Proposals must demonstrate how an appropriate proportion of green cover will be delivered on site through an Urban Greening Factor (UGF) assessment. This may include both existing and newly established landscaping.***

***The following criteria must be met (assessed as-built):***

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>SCORE REQUIRED</b>
<b><i>Major developments that are predominately residential (more than 50% as-built internal floor area)</i></b>	<b>25%</b>
<b><i>Major developments that are predominately commercial (more than 50% as-built internal floor area)</i></b>	<b>25%</b>
<b><i>Non-householder applications that are Biodiversity Net-Gain (BNG) exempt (as they are below the de-minimis threshold)</i></b>	<b>50%</b>
<b><i>Development where more than 60% of land within the existing site boundary is hard surfacing</i></b>	<b>25%</b>
<b><i>Development that results in a net loss of biodiversity using BNG</i></b>	<b>25%</b>
<b><i>Self-build and custom-build housing</i></b>	<b>50%</b>
<b><i>Householder applications where the proposals will result in more than 30% of the site as building(s) or hard-surfacing</i></b>	<b>60%</b>
<b><i>All other applications where the proposals will result in more than 30% of the site as building(s) or hard-surfacing</i></b>	<b>25%</b>

***All application types listed in the table must be accompanied by a completed UGF assessment and site plans clearly illustrating different UGF surface cover types, tree planting and other features (cross-referenced to landscaping and BNG plans). Where detailed landscaping plans have not been provided at application stage, the Council may impose a condition for plans to be submitted at a later stage that are in accordance with the UGF assessment and site plans.***

- 4.2.121 An UGF calculation tool is available in Appendix 3 and on the Council's website<sup>86</sup>. There are two main components of the UGF: 1) a target factor that sets a minimum proportion/percentage of greening for a particular site and 2) a schedule of Surface Cover Types and associated factor weightings that are used to calculate the score. The UGF metric is based on a calculator published by Natural England<sup>87</sup>, however, it has been amended to

<sup>86</sup> Will be added when plan is adopted

<sup>87</sup> [Urban Greening Factor for England – Development and Technical Analysis - NERR132 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk)

suit the local context of Reading. The weighted scores assigned to different surface cover types are based on the environmental benefits provided to the site and its occupants. The score is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Sum of each Surface Cover Type (m}^2\text{) i.e. (Surface Cover A x Factor A) + (Surface Cover B x Factor B) + Surface Cover C x Factor C) etc.}}{\text{Total Site Area (m}^2\text{)}}$$

*Total Site Area (m<sup>2</sup>)*

The resulting score is then compared with the target UGF score for the development type as set out within the policy.

- 4.2.122 The Borough is predominately urban in nature and therefore, many potential development sites have no existing green space or vegetation. As such, where there is a mandatory requirement for a 10% increase in biodiversity and little to no vegetation exists, BNG requirements fail to deliver benefits.
- 4.2.123 In addition, the overuse of artificial or impermeable surfaces can result in negative impacts on the physical environment. On the other hand, natural green coverage can result in numerous positive impacts on amenity, health and well-being, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Soft surfaces effectively slow and store rainwater during periods of intense rainfall and promote cooling during extreme heat events.
- 4.2.124 This policy does not intend to place significant additional burdens on development, but seeks to employ a simple method for the Council to assess greening factor and covers a wide range of green infrastructure, including (but not limited to) green roofs, trees, modified grassland, semi-natural vegetation (e.g. woodland) and garden planting.
- 4.2.125 The requirements of UGF are not to be used in place of other policy requirements, such as the requirements for mandatory BNG or any requirements through Policy EN12.

## 4.3 Employment

- 4.3.1 Reading is the largest population and employment centre in Berkshire, which is one of the economic powerhouses of the UK. The economic output of Berkshire as a whole, in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA) equates to around £30bn<sup>88</sup>. The components of continued strong economic growth, such as access to Heathrow airport, strong transport links to London and the west, a highly skilled workforce and a high standard of living, are likely to continue to be in place across the plan period. Continued economic buoyancy is therefore likely, but this will also mean addressing the challenges that limit growth, such as lack of affordable housing, a stretched transport infrastructure and the need for suitable business space.
- 4.3.2 Reading is the main office market in Berkshire, albeit that the Reading office market is also seen as including business parks such as Thames Valley Park, Green Park, Winnersh Triangle and Arlington Business Park, which fall wholly or partly within adjoining areas. As well as the business parks, there is a good stock of modern town centre floorspace, with more developments with planning permission. Reading's offices are home to a strong representation of knowledge-based and ICT businesses, business services and pharmaceuticals, with a range of other multinationals present. Alongside these offices, there is also a substantial amount of industrial and warehouse space. In contrast to offices, this space is primarily within the Borough boundary. There are large older industrial areas around the south and west of the Borough, containing a range of space, much of which is at cheaper rents. Increasingly, there is also a good offer of modern, large distribution space in the south of Reading, and Reading is increasingly being seen as a good location for logistics operators.
- 4.3.3 Within Berkshire, evidence<sup>89</sup> has pointed to strong relationships with the neighbouring authorities of Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, West Berkshire. This is therefore the main grouping of authorities that Reading must co-operate with in considering employment needs.

### Provision of Employment

#### **EM1: PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT (Strategic policy)**

***Provision will be made for a net increase of 30,000-86,000 sq m of office floorspace and 167,000 sq m of industrial, warehouse and/or research and development space in Reading Borough for the period 2023 to 2041.***

***Development that would exceed the levels of employment development set out in this policy, after existing permissions and allocations are accounted for, will need to either: (a) demonstrate that it will not result in additional need for local housing; or (b) mitigate its impacts on the need for local housing, which may be through the provision of additional residential development.***

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<sup>88</sup> Thames Valley Berkshire LEP: Strategic Economic Plan:

<http://thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/Portals/0/FileStore/StrategicEconomicPlan/TVB%20SEP%20-%20Strategy.pdf>

<sup>89</sup> <http://thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/Portals/0/FileStore/StrategicInfrastructure/StrategicInfrastructure/14793%20Berkshire%20FEMA%20Final%20Report%2029.02.16.PDF>

***Proposals to provide a freight consolidation centre in a location with good access to the strategic highway network will be supported, subject to other policies in this plan.***

4.3.4 An Commercial Development Needs Assessment (CDNA) for Reading<sup>90</sup> was carried out in 2024, which identified the level of need for additional office, industrial, warehouse or research and development space between 2023 and 2041. The results of the CDNA are that the figures that Reading needs to plan for between 2023 and 2041 are:

- 85,803 of office floorspace; and
- 167,113 sq m of industrial, warehouse and research and development floorspace<sup>91</sup>.

Figures are rounded in Policy EM1, as such an assessment can never be entirely precise. The levels of need identified above are before application of a safety margin and an allowance for future losses. In terms of the allowance for future losses, it is not appropriate to incorporate this within the policy for two reasons. Firstly, as for housing, the Local Plan requirement should be based on net change. Many of the allocations in this plan will result in either a loss or gain of employment floorspace, and should be considered in net terms. Secondly, it is within the power of the LPA to prevent much (although not all) of this floorspace loss if it is appropriate to do so. In terms of the safety margin (which is applied to industrial, warehouse and research and development only), which equates to two years' supply, the limited nature of available sites and the high levels of need for other uses, including housing, means that there is not scope to provide this additional allowance in Reading over the plan period.

4.3.5 There is scope to accommodate the full level of need within Reading Borough. This conclusion has been reached primarily by the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) process, supplemented by other evidence where necessary.

4.3.6 There is currently a reasonable balance between the levels of employment planned for in Policy EM1 and the levels of housing set out in H1, as the relationship between employment and housing levels formed part of the evidence that supports these policies. That means that planning for levels of employment development over and above the upper amounts set out in this policy (when considered across the wider area) is likely to lead to an imbalance, and a greater need for housing within the area, as well as increasing the need to travel as workers commute from further afield.

4.3.7 Therefore, where a development is proposed that would increase the level of employment development over the upper levels currently planned for, taking account of developments with planning permission and with outstanding allocations in this plan for employment use, the concerns about impacts on local housing need to be allayed. This will need to be achieved either by convincing justification as to why there will be no effects, or by adequately mitigating any effects, for instance through additional residential development.

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<sup>90</sup><https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>

<sup>91</sup> This is the need from the 'blended scenario' minus the safety margin,

The Annual Monitoring Report will inform whether these thresholds have been reached.

- 4.3.8 Freight consolidation centres are locations which serve as a single point for deliveries to a specific area, which are then distributed within the area by fewer vehicles, potentially low-emission vehicles, thus reducing congestion and helping to improve air quality. Schemes currently operate in London and Bristol and Bath. The Plan should support any such proposals in Reading, and they will be appropriate uses within Core Employment Areas, although specific locations will need to be considered against other policies.

### **Location of Employment Development**

#### ***EM2: LOCATION OF NEW EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT (Strategic policy)***

***Major office development will take place in the centre of Reading and along the A33 corridor. Office development will also take place in the other centres in the network set out in Policy RL1, but should be of an appropriate scale to those centres.***

***Other major employment uses, including industrial and storage and distribution will be located in the A33 corridor or in the Core Employment Areas. Non-employment uses that would support the area's economic function may be located in the Core Employment Areas where they do not result in a loss of employment land.***

***The Core Employment Areas are shown on the Proposals Map and set out below:***

- ***EM2a: Green Park***
- ***EM2b: North of the M4***
- ***EM2c: South of Basingstoke Road***
- ***EM2d: Bennet Road***
- ***EM2e: North of Basingstoke Road***
- ***EM2f: Elgar Road***
- ***EM2g: Richfield Avenue***
- ***EM2h: Portman Road***
- ***EM2i: Wigmore Lane***
- ***EM2j: Bridgewater Close***
- ***EM2k: Sterling Way***
- ***EM2l: Marcus Close***
- ***EM2m: Paddock Road***

- 4.3.9 Employment development which attracts significant numbers of trips should be in highly accessible locations which are or will be well served by a choice of means of transport. Major office development (over 2,500 sq m) will therefore be directed to the centre of Reading and along a high-accessibility corridor focused on the A33, a new station at Green Park and forthcoming bus rapid transit links to the south. This A33 corridor is shown on the map for South Reading, figure 6.1 in Section 6, and this includes a number of Core Employment Areas. Some more limited office development will also be appropriate in district and local centres, in line with the levels of scale for retail and leisure development set out in the policy on the hierarchy of centres (RL2). These locations will be the first locations to consider for the respective



scale of development when operating the sequential test under paragraph 91 of the NPPF.

- 4.3.10 Major employment development for industrial, storage and distribution or similar uses (over 2,500 sq m) will be directed primarily to the Core Employment Areas, or to areas along the high-accessibility A33 corridor to the south. These areas are currently relatively successful industrial and warehousing areas which are likely to continue to be needed in employment use. There is some scope for intensification of employment sites within Core Employment Areas, such as development on surplus parking or servicing space, which will be acceptable subject to other material considerations. Smaller-scale industrial and warehouse uses may be appropriate in other areas, but this will be dependent on other considerations such as amenity of residents and the suitability of transport connections, and in practice will not therefore usually be acceptable in residential areas.
- 4.3.11 The Core Employment Areas are the main areas of employment uses (excluding the town centre) within Reading. They are shown on the Proposals Map, and have been defined through an examination of the contribution that they make to the employment role of Reading. In order for these areas to maximise their contribution to the economy, there may be scope for inclusion of uses that are not strictly within an 'employment' classification as set out in 4.3.14 in order to support the economic role of the area, for instance through provision of services and facilities for workers and customers. Where this does not result in a loss of employment land, it will be acceptable subject to other policy considerations, such as the retail and leisure sequential approach. If a loss of employment land is proposed, it will need to be judged against policy EM3.

### **Loss of Employment Land**

#### ***EM3: LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND (Strategic policy)***

***Within the Core Employment Areas, the overall level of employment land should be maintained. Proposals that would result in a loss of such land will not be permitted other than in the exceptional circumstances described below.***

***Where, in exceptional circumstances, it can be demonstrated that a site in a Core Employment Area has no long-term prospect of employment use, a related alternative commercial use or a use which complements the employment use of the area may be considered that would not result in a significant reduction in jobs.***

***In other areas, the following matters will be considered when assessing proposals which would result in a loss of employment land: -***

- (i) Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor?***
- (ii) Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable?***
- (iii) Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading?***

- (iv) *Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area?***
- (v) *Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land?***
- (vi) *Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme?***

4.3.12 There is a need for a certain degree of flexibility with existing employment land to allow an appropriate balance of uses to develop in the right locations. For this reason, it is not appropriate to simply apply a blanket protection to all existing employment areas. However, the Core Employment Areas have been identified as those areas of greatest economic significance, providing space that is required to ensure that the Reading economy is balanced and that those activities which support higher value businesses are in close proximity. As a result, an overall loss of employment land in these core areas would risk undermining the local economy, and should not be permitted. It is worth emphasising that this policy does not primarily aim to protect a specific number of jobs (which could be replaced in a non-employment use), but is rather about balance of the economy.

4.3.13 The policy recognises that on some exceptional sites within the CEA, there may not be any long-term prospect of re-use or redevelopment for employment, and in these cases it is preferable for a site to be used for an alternative commercial use that complements the area than for it to be vacant in the long-term. Long term vacancy in this case can be taken to mean five years or more, as shorter time periods might be the result of short-term economic conditions. For example, some of the older industrial areas contain large sites that were tailored to the needs of a specific type of operation that no longer exists or operates in the same way, making it unviable to re-let, either in its existing form or sub-divided, in the long-term. If there is also no long-term prospect of redevelopment of these sites for employment, alternative commercial uses under this policy may be considered.

4.3.14 Elsewhere, a loss of employment land for other uses may be acceptable, depending on whether the land is still needed for employment purposes. Each application will need to be assessed on its merits, and the matters to be considered are set out in (i) to (vi) which should inform a balanced decision, not be used as a checklist where every item is fulfilled. Proposals should demonstrate how these factors justify the release of employment land.

4.3.15 Factors which may be taken into account in assessing these matters include:

- (i): proximity to the strategic road network, particularly for storage and distribution, access by public transport, foot and cycle, future transport infrastructure provision;
- (ii): ownership constraints, prevailing market conditions including vacancy levels, response to marketing of site for employment use, physical constraints of site such as topography, other constraints such as utilities provision;
- (iii): balancing supply and long-term demand, allowing for a degree of vacancy necessary in a healthy market;

- (iv): effects on neighbouring uses of noise, pollution and air quality, intensity of activity;
- (v): need for additional housing, community facilities and other uses; and
- (vi): likelihood of development resulting in 'islands' of other uses in employment areas, whether a better environment would be created through a more comprehensive development.

4.3.16 'Employment land' in the context of this policy is land which is primarily in B1, B2 or B8 use, or is a use not in the above use classes for which an employment area is the only realistic location. This is a judgement that will need to be made on a case-by-case basis, but relevant considerations will include the effects of noise and disturbance, odours etc, HGV movements and whether the use requires a building that would detract from the character of other areas, e.g. with high, blank frontages and very large building footprints.

## **Maintaining a Variety of Premises**

### **EM4: MAINTAINING A VARIETY OF PREMISES**

***A range of types and sizes of units should be present in the Borough, and proposals should maintain or enhance this range. In particular, the overall level of start-up and grow-on space should be maintained and, where possible, increased, and any loss of small units should be offset by new provision. Proposals should maintain the overall level of storage and distribution uses in the South of Basingstoke Road (EM2c).***

***Subject to these considerations, proposals for redevelopment of older industrial units for more flexible employment premises will be acceptable.***

- 4.3.17 In order to ensure a healthy and balanced local economy, we need to make sure that a variety of sizes and types of employment premises are available. This variety of premises should be widened, including seeking more modern and flexible employment space in the designated industrial areas, as well as flexible office buildings in the centre and elsewhere that can easily be subdivided to provide spaces for small and growing businesses. Development should not therefore reduce the range of sites and space available, and this applies in all locations, not merely the Core Employment Areas. In particular, the South of Basingstoke Road, as defined in policy EM2, is an important location for storage and distribution uses, with good access to the major road network, and is a major contributor to the local economy. There should not be a net loss of B8 use in this location.
- 4.3.18 Adequate space for small-and medium-sized enterprises should be maintained, in order to ensure the future prosperity of Reading's economy. There is a need for the continued development of start-up/ incubator and grow-on space in the Borough, and opportunities to provide this will be sought. Whether units are suitable for start-up businesses will depend partly on management arrangements and lease terms. However, planning can ensure that enough small units are available to be capable of acting as start-up space. In terms of implementation of this policy, small units are industrial or warehousing units of up to 150 sq m (gross external area). Where proposals anywhere in the Borough would lead to a reduction in this type of

space, this will need to be offset by new premises elsewhere. Move-on accommodation is more difficult to define, particularly in terms of space, but a reduction in the range of units of 150 – 500 sq m (g.e.a.) should only occur where it is demonstrated that there is a surplus of such space.

## 4.4 Housing

### Provision of Housing

#### ***H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING (Strategic policy)***

***Provision will be made for at least an additional 14,850 homes (averaging 825 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2023 to 2041.***

- 4.4.1 There is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area. Whatever the approach to identifying a specific level of housing need and provision, it is clear that strong delivery of new housing is required across the whole plan period.
- 4.4.2 The NPPF expects local plans to assess housing needs by using a standard methodology, detailed in Planning Practice Guidance. Using the figures for 2025, the standard methodology would result in a need for 822 new homes in Reading per year. It is important to note that, because Reading is one of the 20 largest urban areas in England, the methodology includes a 35% uplift which makes a significant difference to the level of homes proposed, but which is not based on actual levels of local need.
- 4.4.3 To determine the actual level of local housing need in Reading, a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) was undertaken, which was finalised in 2024. This identified Reading's housing need to 2041 as being 735 homes per year, or a total of 13,230 between 2023 and 2041. It is considered that there are exceptional circumstances in Reading that justify using this local assessment of need rather than the standard methodology. In particular, Reading is in the unusual situation that the standard methodology (if the urban uplift is excluded) would result in a housing need that is too low, whilst the inclusion of the urban uplift results in a housing need that is too high. In addition, Reading is in a unique position of being by some distance the smallest of the authorities affected by the urban uplift (outside London) in terms of both spatial area and existing population, which makes the application of an arbitrary urban uplift that applies only to the biggest cities inappropriate here.
- 4.4.4 However, national policy is clear that local plans should aim to significantly boost housing delivery wherever they can. A Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment<sup>92</sup> (HELAA) published in 2024 has demonstrated that Reading would be able to accommodate a higher level of housing delivery than the identified local housing need, of 825 homes per year. This uses a methodology that has been jointly agreed with four other Berkshire authorities, and examines each site with potential for ten dwellings or more, in terms of its development capacity, suitability, availability and achievability, as well as making an allowance for windfall development on sites of less than ten dwellings. It is therefore considered that, in order to continue to address the housing crisis and to reflect national policy, the Local Plan should plan for the assessed capacity of 825 homes per year rather than the lower need figure.
- 4.4.5 The expected provision breaks down as follows:

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<sup>92</sup> Available at [Planning policy - Reading Borough Council](#)

<b>Total provision for Reading Borough 2023-41</b>	<b>14,850 homes</b>
Minus completed 2023-2024	1,028 homes
Minus permitted or resolution to grant (>10 dwellings) at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024 <sup>93</sup>	5,860 homes
Minus allowance for small site (<10 dwellings) windfalls at 96 per year 2024-2029, 91 per year 2029-2034, 87 per year 2034-2039 and 82 per year 2039-2041	1,534 homes
<b>Remainder not already identified</b>	<b>6,428 homes</b>
<b>Identified in Local Plan</b>	<b>5,110-7,470 homes</b>

- 4.4.6 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. 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.

## **Density and Mix**

### ***H2: DENSITY AND MIX (Strategic policy)***

#### ***1. Density***

***Residential development will be expected to achieve at least the following minimum densities:***

- ***Town centre sites: 260 dwellings per hectare***
- ***Urban sites: 100 dwellings per hectare***
- ***Suburban sites: 42 dwellings per hectare.***

***Exceptions to the minimum densities will apply where achieving that density would:***

- ***Cause unacceptable harm to a designated heritage asset or its setting;***
- ***Cause a detrimental effect on important landscapes;***
- ***Create unacceptable impacts on amenity of existing or new residents;***

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<sup>93</sup> Including appropriate non-implementation rates



- ***Prevent an appropriate conversion of an existing building or buildings;***
- ***Prevent policy requirements on the minimum proportion of family homes of three or more bedrooms from being achieved; or***
- ***Prevent policy requirements on the provision of open space or other necessary on-site facilities from being achieved.***

***Subject to the above, 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.***

## ***2. Mix of sizes***

***Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.5, and in particular should maximise the provision of family homes of three or more bedrooms. As a minimum, new development for 10 or more dwellings outside the central area will comply with the following, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable:***

- ***In district and local centres, at least 20% of dwellings will be of three bedrooms or more;***
- ***In other locations, at least 67% of dwellings will be of three bedrooms or more.***

## ***3. Self- and custom-build***

***Residential proposals for ten houses or more (excluding houses that are to be provided as affordable homes) should make 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. It is particularly important that urban areas that are highly accessible by a choice of means of travel make good use of suitable sites. However, there are other considerations that need to be weighed

against this, including any important landscapes or heritage assets, the character of the surrounding areas and residential amenity, alongside any other particular sensitivities.

- 4.4.8 National policy is clear that in town centres and locations well served by public transport, local plans should set minimum densities for residential development. Almost all of Reading is relatively well-served by public transport, and it is therefore appropriate to set minimum densities across all parts of the Borough. In order to achieve an increase in density to make the most of Reading's accessibility, these minimum densities have been set at a 30% increase over existing average densities.
- 4.4.9 However, there will be instances where complying with minimum densities is not appropriate, and the policy therefore anticipates the circumstances where it may be appropriate for development to be at a density below these minima. Of particular note is the need to ensure that there is no internal conflict within the policy with the expectations around family housing, so the policy makes clear that, should a situation arise where it is not possible to deliver sufficient family homes without falling below the relevant minimum density, this will be resolved in favour of delivering family housing.
- 4.4.10 Even above the minimum density, there is still significant scope for a range of densities. In the town centre in particular, the circumstances of the site may allow for a density that significantly exceeds the minimum specified. The criteria in the policy will help to inform the appropriate density on each site. It should be noted that, 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.
- 4.4.11 In terms of the appropriate mix, the Reading Housing Needs Assessment considered this issue when assessing the level of housing need. The overall percentages needed are set out in figure 4.4. For market housing, it identified a particular need for family housing of three bedrooms or more, representing more than 80% of the need. For affordable housing, the need was more balanced. When taken as a whole however, affordable 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 a majority of new dwellings to be of three or more bedrooms.

**Figure 4.4: Estimated size of accommodation type required in Reading**  
(Source: HNA, 2024)

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom
Market	0.5%	15.4%	65.6%	16.1%
Affordable	31.7%	24.9%	28.7%	14.7%
Overall	18.0%	20.7%	44.9%	15.3%

- 4.4.12 In terms of a policy requirement, it is not possible to introduce a blanket requirement across the whole Borough due to the different characteristics of residential developments. 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 high proportion of family housing on these sites will not be achievable. This places a particular onus on those sites outside the town centre 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.
- 4.4.13 Within the centre of Reading, the considerations will be somewhat different, and Policy CR6 in the Central Reading section sets out specific requirements.
- 4.4.14 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.
- 4.4.15 Inevitably, even with this policy requirement in place, Reading is likely to provide a significantly greater proportion of smaller dwellings than neighbouring authorities. This may mean that some rebalancing across the wider area is appropriate, with other authorities potentially providing a greater proportion of larger family accommodation.
- 4.4.16 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 most recent 'base period'<sup>94</sup> (i.e. up to 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023), there were 51 entries on part 1 of the register<sup>95</sup>. 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.
- 4.4.17 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 make a contribution to meeting any identified need. The level 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. For clarity, it relates to houses only, not flats or maisonettes. This is subject to a cap, so that no development would be expected to deliver more than 20% of houses as self-build.

$$N = ((R - P) / 750) \times H$$

*Where N is the indicative number of self-build plots that is appropriate on a given site*

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<sup>94</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>95</sup> Part 1 contains those who have passed a local connection test

*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*

- 4.4.18 However, it is likely 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 (Strategic policy)**

- 1. 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, with provision made on site in the first instance with a financial contribution being negotiated to make up the full requirement as appropriate;**
  - 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.**
- 2. 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 applicant to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.**
- 3. In the event that a policy-compliant affordable housing contribution cannot be secured at application stage, a deferred contribution mechanism will be included in a Section 106 agreement that, based on the conclusion of a later viability review, secures an appropriate proportion of any increased profits over and above those identified at application stage as a financial contribution towards affordable housing.**
- 4. In determining residential applications the site size, suitability and type of units to be delivered in relation to the current evidence of identified needs will be assessed. The following tenure mix will be sought:**
  - At least 62% of the affordable housing to be provided as Reading Affordable Rent;**
  - A maximum of 38% of the affordable housing to be provided as affordable home ownership products, which may include First Homes and shared ownership.**

5. ***Any on-site affordable units provided should be integrated into the development.***
6. ***Where on-site affordable housing units are agreed, a cascade mechanism will be secured in a Section 106 agreement in the event that a Registered Provider cannot be found to take on the units. This cascade mechanism will ensure that units are offered to the Council in the first instance, and, should the Council not take on the units, an equivalent financial contribution provided.***
7. ***Priority needs are currently for housing with two or more bedrooms that can house families. The Council will regularly monitor and review the need for, and delivery of, affordable housing.***
8. ***The following types of residential development will be exempt from the requirement to provide affordable housing:***
  - ***Replacement of a single dwelling with another single dwelling; and***
  - ***Conversion of a dwelling to self-contained flats where there is no new floorspace.***

4.4.19 Affordable housing is subsidised housing that enables the asking price or rent to be substantially lower than the prevailing market prices or rents in the locality, and is subject to mechanisms that will ensure that the housing remains affordable for those who cannot afford market housing. It is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as, “housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions”, with the listed definitions covering affordable housing for rent, starter homes, discounted market sales housing and other affordable routes to home ownership.

4.4.20 The NPPF indicates that in order to boost significantly the supply of housing, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, and that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. It goes on to state that as much of an area’s need should be met as possible, which includes an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community. Strategic policies are expected to make sufficient provision for housing, including affordable housing.

4.4.21 The Reading Housing Needs Assessment (HNA, 2024) has once again emphasised the critical need for affordable housing within Reading as well as the remainder of Berkshire. The HNA identified a need for 406 additional affordable homes per year in Reading, which represents the majority of the overall housing required. The consequences of not providing much-needed affordable homes would be severe, and would include homelessness, households in temporary or unsuitable accommodation, overcrowding and younger people having to remain living with parents for increasing periods. Insufficient affordable housing will also act as an impediment to economic growth, as firms will face increasing problems with accommodation for their workforce. Meeting even a substantial proportion of the identified housing need presents significant challenges, and it is therefore critical that new residential development of all sizes makes whatever contribution it can.

- 4.4.22 The NPPF states that affordable housing should not be sought from developments that are not major. However, national policy does not have the effect of overriding local policies where there is evidence of exceptional need for affordable housing. Such a need clearly exists in Reading, and it is therefore appropriate that sites of ten or less dwellings contribute to meeting this need. However, on a practical level, it is more difficult to make such provision from residential conversions and from one-for-one replacement, which means that such developments will be exempted from the provisions of policy H3.
- 4.4.23 Affordable housing contributions will be sought from residential-only developments and mixed-use developments. On-site provision (serviced land or completed units) of affordable housing will always be sought in the first instance on sites of 10 dwellings or more. Where there are exceptional reasons, the provision of surrogate sites (serviced land or completed units) or commuted sums that will enable the provision of a commensurate number and mix of affordable units, will be considered. Examples of exceptional circumstances may include sites where there are existing concentrations of particular types of affordable housing, where there are demonstrable benefits to be gained by providing the new units elsewhere (e.g. to create more socially-balanced communities), or where there is an opportunity to provide a particular type of much needed housing elsewhere (e.g. family housing). In the case of commuted sums, the Council will choose the registered provider to which to direct the funding or may use the contribution for Local Authority New Build. Under this policy it is accepted that affordable housing provision can take place off site or through contributions in the case of sites of less than 10 dwellings.
- 4.4.24 Affordable housing contributions must be secured in perpetuity and thus be available to successive generations of households in recognised housing need. The most effective way of doing this is through the involvement of a registered provider (RP). However, it is recognised that in some instances, in particular where the number of on-site affordable dwellings would be very small, it can be difficult to find an RP willing to take on the dwellings, and this eventuality should be anticipated in Section 106 agreements and a cascade mechanism introduced which involves dwellings being offered to the Council in the first instance if another RP cannot be found, with an equivalent financial contribution provided should the Council not take on the dwellings.
- 4.4.25 The target set in the policy has been determined as the result of an assessment of the viability of development of sites of various sizes in the Borough in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. This will be the expected level of affordable housing provision.
- 4.4.26 However, the Council will be sensitive to exceptional costs of bringing a site to market such as for reasons of expensive reclamation, or infrastructure costs, or high existing use values. Where applicants can demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Council, exceptional difficulties in bringing a site to market, the Council will be prepared to consider detailed information on the viability of a particular scheme and, where justified through an open book approach, to reduce the affordable housing requirement. The information required will be proportionate to the scale of development, and, where a proposal is for less than 10 dwellings, will be more limited in scope and length. For sites of less than 10 dwellings, a brief schedule of the main elements of the viability

calculations, supported by estate agent valuations, will generally suffice. The Affordable Housing SPD, adopted in 2021, contains more detail on information to be submitted. As development costs are usually reflected in the residual land value, the purchase price of a particular site will not, on its own, be a reason for reducing the affordable housing requirement. The Council will generally secure provision of affordable housing through a Section 106 agreement.

- 4.4.27 However, viability assessments are a snapshot in time. Although a viability assessment at application stage may have justified a reduced affordable housing contribution, circumstances may have improved by the time that development takes place, such that an improved affordable housing contribution would be viable. A deferred contribution mechanism will therefore be included within Section 106 agreements for developments where viability has justified a reduced affordable housing contribution to secure some of the uplifted profit towards affordable housing. The Affordable Housing SPD provides more detail on how this will work in practice.
- 4.4.28 The tenure, size and type of affordable housing provided as part of any scheme should respond to the identified need for affordable housing taking account of the most up-to-date information, including information in the Affordable Housing SPD<sup>96</sup>. The SPD may need to be updated to take account of any changes to the affordable housing definition, as well as other matters. Taking account of the HNA, housing with two or more bedrooms that can house families is a priority. Paragraph 4.4.9 considers this in more depth. New development should therefore include a range and mix of sizes and types (e.g. house types, flats) of affordable housing (as appropriate depending on site size) to reflect local needs and to reflect the range and mix of house types in the scheme as a whole (i.e. the mix of dwelling sizes in the provision of affordable housing should reflect the mix proposed for the private housing).
- 4.4.29 In terms of tenure, the priority is rented accommodation at a rental level that is affordable to those in Reading who are in need. Reading Affordable Rent is a tenure level introduced in the 2021 Affordable Housing SPD capped at 70% of market rents, which is considered to meet this requirement. The majority of on-site affordable housing, at least 62%, should be at this tenure, unless a specific need has been identified for key workers that will not be met elsewhere, in which case key worker accommodation can be provided. The remainder can be an affordable home ownership product, which will fulfil the NPPF requirement that a minimum of 10% of all homes in major developments should be for affordable home ownership. In the past, this has generally been in the form of shared ownership, but a Written Ministerial Statement on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 requires 25% of on-site affordable housing to be in the form of First Homes, and First Homes delivered to fulfil this requirement will come from this affordable home ownership portion. More information on tenure is within the Affordable Housing SPD.

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<sup>96</sup> [Affordable Housing SPD, adopted March 2021 \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://reading.gov.uk/affordable-housing-spds)



## **Build to Rent Schemes**

### **H4: BUILD TO RENT SCHEMES**

***Planning permission will be granted for developments of self-contained, private rented homes which:***

- 1 Are secured in single ownership providing solely for the rental market for a minimum 20 year term with provision for clawback of affordable housing contributions should the covenant not be met; and***
- 2 Provide tenancies for private renters for a minimum of three years with a six month break clause in the tenant's favour, with a further three-year tenancy period offered at the end of the tenancy, and structured and limited in-tenancy rent increases agreed in advance; and***
- 3 Provide a high standard of professional on-site management and control of the accommodation; and***
- 4 Provide a commitment to high-quality rental arrangements, through meeting Reading Borough Council's voluntary Rent with Confidence Standards or equivalent measures; and***
- 5 Provide for a mix of unit sizes in accordance with Policy H2 or CR6; and***
- 6 Meet the standards of design set out in Policy H5; and***
- 7 Provide 30% on-site affordable housing, either in accordance with Policy H3 and any relevant Supplementary Planning Document; or in the form of Affordable Private Rent Housing as defined and set out in a relevant Supplementary Planning Document.***

4.4.30 A large part of the housing stock in Reading is privately rented although mostly through landlords who own a limited number of separate properties. Development interest in large, institutionally owned, private rented schemes (known as build to rent) has increased in Reading recently. Thames Quarter, a development of 315 residential units on the corner of Vastern Road and Napier Road, was the first such development to be built in Reading. In line with government policy, including the NPPF, it is considered that the local plan for Reading needs to contain a policy covering this form of development.

4.4.31 Build to Rent developments are long term investment vehicles that it is hoped will be attractive to financial institutions. Financial institutions will be looking for large-scale, professionally managed developments. Such developments will bring new providers into the UK housing market (financial institutions play major roles on housing provision in much of Europe and North America), thus increasing competition. They will bring higher quality and better managed accommodation and associated services to the private rental market. They will operate with longer tenancies as the model seeks to retain occupants for as long as possible.

4.4.32 Private rented sector (PRS) housing meets the housing needs of residents who cannot afford to buy or do not want to buy private homes or who cannot get access to social housing or subsidised housing in Reading. It can benefit

the local and regional economy as it enables greater household mobility. However, there are many issues associated with private renting in the Borough revolving around poor quality and poorly managed accommodation with limited security of tenure and unjustified rent increases.

- 4.4.33 The Council wishes to encourage a private rented sector which provides high quality, professionally managed accommodation and a greater level of security for tenants than that which is offered by much of the current PRS market. We will support institutional investment in the sector where benefits are secured for residents and the economy of the Borough and where this produces high quality development with positive benefits for the Borough. Such schemes will normally be larger scale developments of more than 50 units to achieve the level of quality and facilities and to efficiently provide the high quality of management that is needed to support such accommodation.
- 4.4.34 It is accepted that as Build to Rent developments are dependent on long term rental income rather than early sales, their funding is inevitably long term, and operates to different viability models compared to for sale schemes. Government policy therefore sees a need for some flexibility, particularly in relation to affordable housing provision. Nevertheless, where such justification is being made, the Council will expect the viability appraisal to also provide information on the viability of the development as a for sale scheme.
- 4.4.35 The Council will expect rental levels for the affordable housing or Affordable Private Rent housing to be related to Local Housing Allowance rate levels (including service charges) and be affordable for those identified as in need of affordable housing in the Borough. An Affordable Housing SPD, adopted in 2021, sets out further detail on all aspects of build to rent. The Council will expect such housing to remain affordable in perpetuity.
- 4.4.36 That policy acknowledges the need to tie such schemes to providing rental accommodation for a minimum period of time, particularly where the planning authority has been flexible over affordable housing provision or in the use of the Affordable Private Rent housing. Therefore, where viability assessments show that the full target affordable housing cannot be provided or where the provider proposes the provision of Affordable Private Rent Housing, managed by the owner of the development, the Council will expect the application to agree to a covenant tying 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.
- 4.4.37 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.

- 4.4.38 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 (Strategic policy)***

***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 achieve water neutrality, where possible. As a minimum, all water fittings and appliances within new-build housing should be compliant with the 'optional' standard outlined in Table 2.2 Part G of the Building Regulations which requires a fittings approach<sup>97</sup>***
- c. All new-build housing will be required to achieve net-zero development as defined in Policy CC2 and to achieve the following (calculated using a methodology proven to accurately predict a building's actual energy performance:***
  - Site average space heating demand of 15-20kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum;***
  - Site average of total energy demand less than 35kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum;***
  - No single dwelling unit to have a total energy demand in excess of 60kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum, irrespective of the amount of on-site renewable energy production; and***
  - On-site renewable energy generation to match total energy use over the course of the year, with a preference for roof-mounted solar PV.***

***Exceptional basis clause: In cases where the above points cannot be met for technical, viability or other policy reasons (such as heritage), the highest possible standards are required. In these cases, an applicant must demonstrate the extent to which the requirements can be met. For major developments of 10 dwellings or more, applicants must also either:***

- Enter into a legal agreement to provide renewable energy infrastructure off-site equivalent to at least offsetting the additional energy requirements not achieved on site; or***

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<sup>97</sup> Table 2.2 is available here and should be employed to guarantee that all fittings and appliances have appropriate water efficiency flow rates and/or volumes:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80092540f0b623026911f3/BR\\_PDF\\_AD\\_G\\_2015\\_with\\_2016\\_amendments.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80092540f0b623026911f3/BR_PDF_AD_G_2015_with_2016_amendments.pdf)

- ***Provide a financial contribution to the LPA of a value sufficient enough to offset the remaining performance not achieved on site (a minimum contribution of £5K and a maximum contribution of £15K per dwelling unit will be required); or***
- ***Demonstrate the buildings will be connected to a heat network; or***
- ***Demonstrate that the proposal is compliant with Passivhaus Plus or Premium or Passivhaus Classic supplemented with evidence of meeting on-site renewable generation requirements (or equivalent accreditation scheme that is demonstrated to be consistent with the requirements of the policy).***

***In cases where the points cannot be met for reasons of viability, an Energy Statement must set out in full the degree to which the requirements can be met in order to enable the development to become viable.***

- d. An Energy Statement should include pre-built estimates and as-built calculations prior to occupation. Weight will be given to proposals which demonstrate a commitment to on-going monitoring post-occupation which can be clearly communicated to the occupier.***
- 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 10% 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'.***

4.4.39 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 in their areas. These 'optional' standards cover internal space, water efficiency and accessibility.

4.4.40 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.

- 4.4.41 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 2024.
- 4.4.42 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 isolation<sup>98</sup>. Deprived residents are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a result of substandard housing.

### ***Internal space***

- 4.4.43 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.
- 4.4.44 However, even where it does not apply, the nationally described space standard offers a useful point of reference and a good basis for design of new developments. The standard as of 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 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

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<sup>98</sup> NHS Healthy Urban Development Checklist <http://www.healthyurbandevelopment.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Healthy-Urban-Planning-Checklist-March-2014.pdf>

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 4.5: 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	

4.4.45 The full standard can be viewed on the gov.uk website<sup>99</sup>.

<sup>99</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/524531/160519\\_Nationally\\_Described\\_Space\\_Standard\\_Final\\_Web\\_version.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524531/160519_Nationally_Described_Space_Standard_Final_Web_version.pdf)

### ***Water efficiency***

- 4.4.46 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 in the policy is set out in the 'Optional' standard within Part G of the Building Regulations and should be achieved through a fittings approach.
- 4.4.46 Reading Council encourages all new housing development to utilise Thames Water's 'environmental incentive'<sup>100</sup> which offers financial assistance to achieve high performance levels for water fittings and appliances, the inclusion of water reuse technologies (rainwater and/or greywater recycling), and water neutrality.

### ***Emissions***

- 4.4.47 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-2025 sets challenging targets for tackling the Borough's contribution to climate change, and aims to achieve a net-zero carbon Reading by 2030. 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 2041, achieving the aims of the Climate Change Strategy will not be possible without that development having a minimal impact on carbon emissions.

### ***Accessibility***

- 4.4.48 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 document.<sup>101</sup> 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.
- 4.4.49 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

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<sup>100</sup> Details of the incentives scheme can be found at <http://www.thameswater.co.uk/developers/charges>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m>



design features, it is considered that 100% of new dwellings can be built to this standard without it being an overly onerous requirement.

- 4.4.50 In terms of applying the 10% requirement, where it would result in a fraction of a wheelchair user dwelling, provision should be to the nearest whole dwelling. For instance, 10% of a development of 35 homes would be 3.5, which should result in provision of four homes.

## **Accommodation for Vulnerable People**

### **H6: ACCOMMODATION FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE (Strategic policy)**

- (i) Provision will be made for at least an additional 915 specialist older person housing units between 2023 and 2041, comprising 188 units of housing with care, 477 units of housing with support and up to 250 residential care bedspaces. This forms part of the overall need identified in policy H1. 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, accommodation for people of all ages with complex needs, or for accommodation that replaces existing aging properties.**
- (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;**
  - **Development for specialist accommodation for older people will not be subject to lower age restrictions below 65 unless those age restrictions can be robustly justified by addressing an identified need;**
  - **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) 71% of the need for specialist older person housing units (other than residential care) is for affordable units. Affordable specialist housing for vulnerable people that meets these needs, or another need identified in the most up to date Housing Strategy, will count towards affordable housing provision in line with policy H3.**

4.4.51 Reading is facing a range of housing needs over the coming years, and it is vital to recognise some of the more complex needs that should be taken account of specifically in future provision. Whilst some of these derive from an ageing population (for instance, the amount of people in Reading aged over 75 is expected to increase by around 52% from 2023 to 2041<sup>102</sup>), they also emerge from the fact that many people with existing needs are in poor, ageing or unsuitable accommodation. Groups covered by this section include elderly people, people with learning or physical disabilities, people with mental health problems, young people at risk, children, people with a drug or alcohol problem, ex-offenders, homeless people, asylum seekers and people fleeing domestic violence.

4.4.52 The Reading Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) assessed the likely level of need for various forms of specialist accommodation for older people. The HNA identified a need for 915 additional specialist older person housing units in Reading to 2041.

4.4.53 For many groups, accommodation that supports more independent living is required, rather than large new residential care facilities. This includes 477 units of housing with support (including retirement living and sheltered housing) and 188 units of housing with care (including extra care and extra sheltered housing), which are likely to usually fall within the C3 use class, albeit this will depend on the specific level of care proposed. It also includes up to 250 bedspaces of residential care, generally falling within the C2 use class. For clarity, this need is included within the overall housing need referred to in policy H1.

4.4.54 Certain types of development will have specific requirements in terms of determining planning applications, which are set out in (iii) above. However, it is also important to state that these are essentially residential facilities, appropriate for residential areas, to which policies on matters such as residential amenity, outdoor space, flooding and pollution also apply.

4.4.55 Some recent proposals for specialist accommodation for older people have proposed lower age restrictions as low as 55. Whilst it is recognised that there will continue to be some people of this age who are in need of specialist accommodation, it is important to ensure that this is not used as a route to

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<sup>102</sup> Reading Housing Needs Assessment, 2024

create developments that inappropriately exclude younger people or families with children. Therefore, age restrictions below 65 will need to be clearly justified in terms of the need that it is intending to fulfil.

- 4.4.56 Some types of facilities, including extra care, will require on-site facilities such as a restaurant, laundry, and staff offices. Where the use of these facilities is dedicated to residents and staff, they are ancillary to the existing use and do not need to fulfil the location tests in national planning policy and elsewhere.
- 4.4.57 In terms of the application of the criterion regarding physical links, possible techniques for avoiding impacts include setting back from the building line, reducing height and using appropriate materials.

## **Protecting the Existing Housing Stock**

### **H7: PROTECTING THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK**

***Planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land, nor will it be granted for a net loss in the number of residential units or gross floor area, unless there are exceptional circumstances that apply.***

- 4.4.58 As demonstrated in this plan, there are substantial needs for additional housing in Reading, and every effort should be made to meet those needs in line with the NPPF. Therefore, net loss of existing housing would only serve to exacerbate this problem. There may be exceptional circumstances where a loss of a limited amount of general residential would help to meet other key identified needs, for instance for a specific identified need for accommodation for vulnerable groups (see policy H5) or to reinstate a use more appropriate to the significance of a heritage asset. Exceptional circumstances may also apply in relation to a loss of residential units or gross floor area, where, for example, it includes the creation of new family accommodation of three or more bedrooms (see policy H3) or improves accommodation that does not meet expected standards due to, for instance, inadequate internal space. Such exceptional circumstances should be clearly demonstrated as part of any planning application.

## **Residential Conversions**

### **H8: RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS**

1. ***Proposals to convert buildings into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking and the treatment of bin storage areas and other related servicing.***
2. ***Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) will only be acceptable where:***
  - a. ***The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;***

- b. The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*
  - c. There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
  - d. There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units, and in particular the location of bathrooms above habitable rooms should be avoided;*
  - e. Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access;*
  - f. The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom<sup>86</sup> for residents;*
  - g. In the case of conversions to self-contained flats or sui generis HMOs, the property to be converted measures more than 120 square metres gross;*
  - h. In the case of conversions to self-contained flats, at least 25% of the units formed and, where there are 4 or fewer units at least one unit of accommodation, should be suitable for family occupation with a minimum of two bedrooms.*
  - i. In the case of sui generis HMOs, there is sufficient communal space<sup>103</sup>;*
  - j. In the case of all HMOs, the proposal should not result in a residential dwelling being ‘sandwiched’ between two HMOs.*
- 3. In areas covered by an Article 4 direction that restricts changes of use from Class C3 dwellings to Class C4 small HMOs, planning permission will not normally be granted where the proportion of HMOs (either C4 or sui generis) will result in HMOs representing 25% or more of the residential properties within a circle of 50m radius measured from the application site.**
- 4. In areas not covered by an Article 4 direction that restricts changes of use from Class C3 dwellings to Class C4 small HMOs, proposals for HMOs or flat conversions will not normally be granted where any of the following apply:**
- a. The proportion of residential properties within a 50m radius of the application site that are in use as HMOs or which have been converted to flats would exceed 50%;*

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<sup>103</sup> This is defined in the Council's Residential Conversions SPD – see <https://images.reading.gov.uk/2023/03/Residential-Conversions-SPD-Adopted-March-2023.pdf>

***b. The application site is for an HMO and the area falls within the 30% most deprived areas in England according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation; or***

***c. There is other clear evidence of dilution or harm of a mixed community.***

4.4.59 Residential conversions have an important role to play in housing land supply in Reading. The subdivision of large houses has often enabled renovation and affordable maintenance of properties. Conversion to flats has also added a valuable supply of reasonably low cost private rented accommodation, meeting a need in the market. Generally, conversions provide for a market need for small, flexibly let accommodation reflecting household formation trends in the population and the more transient nature of parts of the labour market.

4.4.60 Council Tax data indicates that 27.4% of the dwellings in Reading are currently rented privately, compared to a national rate of only 11.9%. Work on the private rented sector by the Council in developing its Housing Strategy, using data such as Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, shows significant problems and issues associated with private rented sector property in Reading. Whilst the strategy wishes to continue to develop a healthy private rented sector, this must be undertaken in a manner that minimises the potential adverse impacts that high concentrations of conversions and intensification of use can bring to areas of the Borough.

4.4.61 There are potential adverse effects from such conversions, particularly where there are concentrations. The significant loss of family housing can erode the character of an area through insensitive individual conversions and the cumulative impacts of physical changes to properties as a result of such use. Such streets are suffering from impacts such as significant car parking problems; clutter and untidiness; unsightly accumulation of satellite dishes; poor building maintenance; increased activity, noise and nuisance, etc. The quality of conversions, particularly where unregulated, can also be poor, with poor standards of accommodation and health and safety concerns.

4.4.62 Conversions, either individually or cumulatively, can also have a harmful impact on the character of the area through unduly diluting mixed and sustainable communities. In certain parts of the Borough, there are high concentrations of flat conversions and houses in multiple occupation, in part reflecting the very high student population which is especially prevalent around the University. Given that students are predominantly present during term time only, it can leave some roads and areas feeling quite dormant at other times, failing to achieve a mixed and sustainable community. In locations with already high numbers of flats or houses in multiple occupation, conversions to single family housing could help create a more mixed and sustainable community. For this reason, the policy seeks to control the concentration of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and flat conversions by applying a limit to the amount of HMOs and/or flat conversions within close proximity of an application property.

4.4.63 This policy relates to both small and large HMOs in addition to conversions to flats. A small HMO (those occupied by 3-6 unrelated individuals sharing one or more basic amenity/ies) falling within a C4 use class has permitted development rights to change between the C4 and C3 (general residential)

use classes without the need for a planning application, unless it is subject to an Article 4 direction (see below).

- 4.4.64 If there are more than six unrelated occupants sharing one or more basic amenities, the property is likely to be classed as a 'large HMO' (sui generis) which will be outside use class C4. Planning permission will always be required for a change to a large HMO.
- 4.4.65 In areas where there is considered to be a need to control the spread of HMOs, the Council can introduce an 'Article 4 direction', which removes the automatic right to convert a dwellinghouse to a small HMO, and means that planning permission is required. Two such directions have so far been introduced – in a large area covering much of Katesgrove, Park and Redlands wards close to the University, and in a smaller area covering Jesse Terrace in west Reading. Details of these areas can be found on the Council's website<sup>104</sup>. If any new directions are introduced after publication of this Plan, those details will also be on the website.
- 4.4.66 In ensuring that any change of use to a HMO within the area covered by the Article 4 Direction, either individually or cumulatively, does not unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing in line with the policy, the following guidance will be used to determine a planning application for change of use from C3 (dwellinghouse) to a HMO.
- 4.4.67 Planning permission will not normally be granted where the proportion of HMOs (either C4 or sui generis) will result in HMOs representing 25% or more of the residential properties within a circle of 50m radius measured from the application site. For the avoidance of doubt, residential properties in this case means residential buildings rather than residential dwellings (i.e. a dwelling that has been converted to two flats is one property for these purposes).
- 4.4.68 The centre of the radius will be the front door of the property. A 50m radius will be drawn from this point and any properties or any part of a building falling within the radius will be taken into account in the assessment. If a part of a building falls within the circle and partly without, then the property will form a part of the assessment.
- 4.4.69 Where the radius includes properties that lie outside Reading Borough's administrative boundaries (for example they fall within Wokingham Borough boundary), they will not be taken into account in the assessment and only those properties in Reading Borough will contribute to the assessment.
- 4.4.70 Where the radius includes entire buildings falling within an A, B, C1 or C2, D or sui generis use class (apart from a sui generis HMO) they will be discounted from the total number of buildings in the radius. Similarly, purpose-built flats will be discounted from the total number of buildings in the radius. Any existing flat conversions will be included in the number of C3 dwellings and will not be included in the number of HMOs for the purposes of the threshold calculation.
- 4.4.71 The Council will use information available to it to identify which properties are within an HMO use (either C4 or sui generis). It is anticipated that the

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<sup>104</sup> [Article 4 Directions - Reading Borough Council](#)

information to calculate the percentage will initially be based primarily on Environmental Health and Council Tax information, given data protection and other regulations preventing the use of certain information. Where there is significant doubt as to whether a property is an HMO, it will not be counted towards the threshold. For the avoidance of doubt, the application property will be taken into account in calculating this percentage of properties.

- 4.4.72 The applicant should also undertake their own estimate of the number of HMOs to accompany the planning application and provide all of their supporting data. It is advised that pre-application advice is sought prior to submitting any planning application.
- 4.4.73 Planning permission will be required to change the use of a small HMO to a large HMO, or to intensify the use of a lawful large HMO (without any physical extension or external alteration to the property) by increasing the number of occupiers. In this instance the threshold limit will not be triggered as the HMO has already been established in the street and, therefore, have no further effect on the concentration of HMOs and balance and mix of households in the local community.
- 4.4.74 The same technical approach as set out above should be used when calculating the 50% threshold for proposals for HMOs or flat conversions in all areas not covered by the Article 4 direction area.
- 4.4.75 In part 2.h of the policy, there is a requirement for 25% of flats resulting from a flat conversion to be two-bedroom or more. The purpose of this is to retain some larger accommodation. For clarity, the retention of a two-bedroom flat does not fully mitigate the impact of the loss of a three-bedroom dwelling or larger and does not therefore mean that other parts of the policy around a mixed and balanced community and the threshold approach have been complied with.
- 4.4.76 'Sandwiching', as referred to in criterion 2.j, where a proposal for a conversion would result in a dwellinghouse being located directly between two HMOs should be avoided, due to the noise and disturbance issues that can arise, particularly in locations where there are thin party walls without sound insulation. Avoiding 'sandwiching' of HMOs also contributes towards maintaining a mixed and balanced community. For the avoidance of doubt, 'sandwiching' only applies where a property would directly adjoin an HMO on either side with a party wall. It would not apply where, on one side, a dwellinghouse is separated from the HMO property by a gap such as a road, pathway or side garden.
- 4.4.77 Proposals which resolve a situation where a dwellinghouse is sandwiched between two HMOs will be given weight in planning decisions.
- 4.4.78 It is important to read this policy in conjunction with Policy CC8 on safeguarding amenity, as many of the planning issues associated with house conversions relate to impacts on neighbours. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Residential Conversions provides further guidance on these points.



## House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation

### **H9: HOUSE EXTENSIONS AND ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION**

***An extension to a house or other householder development will be acceptable where it:***

- ***Respects the character and appearance of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design;***
- ***Respects the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and appearance of the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and any important existing building line;***
- ***Does not present an overbearing impact on neighbours or a large blank façade to public areas; and***
- ***Does not result in a loss of biodiversity within gardens.***

***In addition to the above, ancillary accommodation, such as granny annexes, will be acceptable where it would not be capable of operating as a separate dwelling which could be let or sold separately.***

- 4.4.79 It is important to read this policy in conjunction with Policy CC8 on safeguarding amenity, as most of the planning issues associated with house extensions relate to impacts on neighbours. Policies on private outdoor space (H10), loss of trees (EN14) and the Council's Design Guide to House Extensions SPD are also relevant. The policy relates to all types of extension and ancillary accommodation, such as porches, dormer windows and ancillary buildings (e.g. garages and sheds).
- 4.4.80 Reading is a dense urban area, and there is limited land for new housing development. When household needs change, particularly through growing families, the ability to extend a house can give an alternative to moving to a larger property, often in a less accessible location, or out of the Borough. Such a movement of families can act against creating mixed communities. Therefore, it is important to ensure that, where a household wishes to stay in an existing house, there is as much flexibility as possible to do so. However, extensions can cause undesirable planning issues, and these must be addressed in policy.
- 4.4.81 Extensions to the side and front of houses are particularly visible, although rear extensions may also be visible from streets, public spaces and footpaths. In these cases, it is important to reflect the character of the street and ensure that an extension is not visually dominant in a way that detracts from its surroundings. Extensions should reflect the building line, or, preferably, be set back from the building line. They should also ensure that, where gaps between dwellings are a key part of the character of the street, they are retained. Some types of additions, for example box-shaped dormer windows facing the highway, are unlikely to be acceptable under the terms of this policy.
- 4.4.82 A number of demographic trends are also at work in Reading, including an ageing population, as well as less traditional household arrangements. The provision of ancillary accommodation, such as granny annexes, can be one

housing solution to some of these trends. However, this ancillary accommodation should not be a way of introducing new dwellings by stealth. Therefore, planning conditions and, where necessary, obligations will ensure that extra accommodation remains ancillary to the main dwelling. Ancillary accommodation could be considered a separate dwelling where it:

- Is self-sufficient in terms of facilities e.g. kitchens and bathrooms;
- Has its own front door without internal links to the main house; and/or
- Has its own external facilities, e.g. access, drive, garden; or has scope for these external facilities to be easily created.

4.4.83 There is a substantial amount of changes that a householder can now make to their property without needing planning permission. Whilst this policy cannot be applied to developments that do not need permission, it nevertheless serves as a useful guide on how to minimise effects of the development.

4.4.84 Some rear extensions, within certain size parameters, do not require planning permission, but rather need to apply for prior approval. If an adjoining neighbour objects to the application, the Council may determine the application on amenity grounds only. In these cases, the principal policy that will be used is CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity).

4.4.85 Where a house extension is proposed that would affect a listed or locally-listed building or its setting, the application should be determined in line with relevant policies for heritage (EN1, EN4 and EN6).

## **Private and Communal Outdoor Space**

### **H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE**

***Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.***

***The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.***

4.4.86 Access to private or communal outdoor space can make a vital contribution to a high quality of life. In addition to providing opportunities for outdoor living and enjoyment, amenity space serves functional requirements, such as refuse storage and clothes drying. Outdoor amenity space includes private spaces such as gardens or courtyards (front, back and side), shared communal spaces, balconies and roof gardens.

- 4.4.87 Reading is a comparatively dense urban area, and recent high-density developments have accentuated this pattern. Against this background, the need to ensure that dwellings have sufficient private or communal outdoor space becomes vital to ensure that a high quality of life can be achieved. The need to require provision of private outdoor space was identified by a study of residential developments in Reading<sup>105</sup> as a key aspect of design quality, as has the need to make sure that it is clear which areas are private, which are communal, and which are public.
- 4.4.88 This policy also fits with other areas of the strategy. For instance, there is an identified requirement for housing which will be suitable for families, and good levels of outdoor space are a necessary element of such housing. In complying with policies on design, developments will have to respect spacing and openness where this forms part of the character of an area. Inevitably that may well dictate requirements for private and communal space. In addition, requirements for privacy, and other amenity considerations may dictate distances between properties that will result in spaces to provide for private and communal space.
- 4.4.89 Flats in central Reading will not require the same amount of outdoor space as houses in other parts of Reading, and the sites are usually more constrained in any case. This is because often the needs of residents within central Reading can be different to those of the rest of the Borough. Flats in central Reading<sup>106</sup> are less likely to attract families, and the ability to walk to public open space nearby reduces the need for private open space.
- 4.4.90 The policy does not just relate to development of new dwellings. Other types of development, such as the conversion of a house into flats, and house extensions that would result in a loss of outdoor space, will also be judged against the policy. Whilst conversions usually only have an existing level of space to work with, they will not be acceptable where they cannot comply with the policy.
- 4.4.91 It is important to read this policy in conjunction with Policy CC8 on safeguarding amenity and Policy H8 on residential conversions, as many of the planning issues associated with the provision of private or communal garden areas have implications in terms of potential impacts on neighbours and in respect of dwelling conversions. It should be noted that requirements in this policy are in addition to requirements for public open space under policy EN9.
- 4.4.92 In determining the appropriate level of private and communal open space for the new development, the constraints of the site and the extent of deprivation of public open space within the proposed scheme will be taken into consideration. Where communal open space provision may not be considered a necessary requirement for flats within Central Reading, suitable balconies and roof gardens should be provided.

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<sup>105</sup> Residential Design and Quality of Life in Reading, Roger Evans Associates and the Survey Shop, 2007

<sup>106</sup> Central Reading refers to the area shown on the Proposals Map

4.4.93 In the past, the Council has sought the following minimum provisions for private or communal outdoor space for each type of accommodation, and they provide a useful guide for proposals:

- (a) Houses: Useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates (measured externally and including garage space).
- (b) Flats outside central Reading:
  - 1 and 2-bedroom: 25 sq m per flat
  - 3 or more bedrooms: 40 sq m per flat
  - Sheltered units: 20 sq m per unit
- (c) Development in central Reading will not always be expected to comply with the standards set above. Open space is nonetheless required, unless exceptional circumstances prevail, to accommodate modest sitting out areas and clothes drying facilities.

### **Development of Private Residential Gardens**

#### ***H11: DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL GARDENS***

***Proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:***

- 1) The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:***
  - ***The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;***
  - ***A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage;***
  - ***Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc;***
  - ***Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area;***
  - ***The materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary;***
  - ***The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.***
- 2) The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking;***

- 3) ***The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;***
- 4) ***The proposal does not lead to tandem<sup>107</sup> development;***
- 5) ***The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;***
- 6) ***The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;***
- 7) ***The emphasis is on the provision of family-sized housing;***
- 8) ***The development provides biodiversity net gain wherever possible, and would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit or in association with adjacent green space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribute to the green network; and***
- 9) ***The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area.***

4.4.94 This policy deals with new residential development on garden land. Residential development in this policy is defined as excluding 1) house extensions and outbuildings; 2) subdivision of original dwelling with additional units on the same or similar footprint; 3) redevelopment of flats for higher intensity development or conversion of a house/s for flats where the original private residential garden land is retained for private communal garden use; 4) development of garage sites adjacent and/or to the rear of existing private residential gardens.

4.4.95 Residential development of garden land is a component of the overall housing land supply in the Borough, and this will continue to be the case through the plan period. However, such developments can give rise to particular tensions, and, if not designed sensitively, can fundamentally change the character of a local area and worsen the quality of life of local residents. It is therefore important to have a policy to ensure that developments can make a positive contribution to the character of an area. This accords with the NPPF, which states that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, and that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

4.4.96 Private<sup>108</sup> residential garden land is defined as:

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<sup>107</sup> Tandem development' is used to describe a dwelling built behind another, the rear building having no frontage and being accessed by a private roadway or track alongside the front building.

<sup>108</sup> This includes communal gardens for flats for example, where the use of the garden is for residents only as opposed to general public use.

- Land within the curtilage<sup>109</sup> of a residential building(s); and/or
  - Land where the previous lawful use was for private residential garden.
- 4.4.97 The NPPF identifies that design policies should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Policy H11 includes a number of criteria which provide further detail regarding the matters which will be considered when assessing whether a proposal for residential development in garden land makes a positive contribution to the character of an area. These criteria include that a proposal should have a layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot. This particular aspect could include the consideration of the plot widths and lengths of existing properties.
- 4.4.98 Policy H11 includes reference to high quality materials and elevational details, which where appropriate should be distinctive and/or complementary; there may be instances where the existing prevailing vernacular is poor and a contrasting contemporary style would be an improvement. There will be instances, therefore, where a modern innovative design that complements the surrounding area will be acceptable.
- 4.4.99 Reference within the policy to principal architectural features includes chimneys, bays etc. All external hard surface areas should be of permeable materials.
- 4.4.100 With regard to physical security measures, this refers to items such as gates, cameras, security railings etc. In particular, gated communities will not be acceptable, because of the impact they have on increasing the fear of crime and reducing community cohesion.
- 4.4.101 There is recognition that private residential gardens can be of significant biodiversity value. When considered in isolation, a single garden may be assessed as being of limited wildlife value, and would not necessarily warrant protection. However groups of gardens often contain a mosaic of habitats supporting a diversity of species and often provide important links or stepping stones for species moving through an urban area, which can contribute to the Green Network. It is accepted that not all gardens are of importance for wildlife, particularly where there is uniformity of habitats, such as driveways or manicured lawn, or where the garden does not form part of a larger block. It is the fragmentation of blocks of gardens which can have an adverse impact on wildlife.
- 4.4.102 Where a Design and Access Statement is required (i.e. for developments of ten or more dwellings, or less than ten in a conservation area), each proposal should include relevant detail within the Statement which addresses the matters included within this policy. It is advisable for applicants to seek pre-application advice in all cases because of the often sensitive nature of garden land developments.

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<sup>109</sup> Domestic curtilage is generally understood as usually a garden, but can include parking areas, access roads, vegetable plots, children's play equipment, and stables (where the horses are kept for pleasure rather than agricultural use). The domestic curtilage is not necessarily marked off or enclosed, but it should be clearly attached to the house or serve the house in some useful and intimate way.

## Student Accommodation

### ***H12: STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (Strategic policy)***

***New student accommodation will be provided on or adjacent to existing further or higher education campuses, or as an extension or reconfiguration of existing student accommodation.***

***There will be a presumption against proposals for new student accommodation on other sites unless it can be clearly demonstrated how the proposal meets a need that cannot be met on the above sites.***

- 4.4.103 Reading has a strong student population, drawn by the University of Reading and also by Reading College. This population brings many benefits to the area, in terms of supporting services and facilities, and means a strong supply of well-qualified people, many of whom remain in the Borough after graduation and make a major contribution to its economic success. It is important that sufficient accommodation is provided to enable students to live close to where they study. The Council particularly recognises the benefits of purpose-built student accommodation where there is a partnership arrangement with a further or higher education institution and where it offers accommodation that meets the needs of students in terms of facilities, convenience to places of study and in terms of the cost of accommodation.
- 4.4.104 The HNA (2024) looked at the issue of need for additional student housing. It notes, based on information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) that full-time student numbers have remained relatively unchanged at the University of Reading between 2017 and 2022. It did not identify a specific need for additional purpose built student accommodation, although it did note that the impacts of the Covid pandemic will have impacted figures over this period. Ultimately, the need for accommodation is very dependent on any growth plans at the University, and, although there are no current firm plans for expansion, this is subject to change. It is agreed that there is a current shortfall in University accommodation of around 1,000 bed spaces for first year students. Across all years of study, for 2021/22, 3,400 students were housed in rented accommodation other than university or private halls.
- 4.4.105 It is considered that this existing need should mainly be met on campus or through reconfiguration and redevelopment of existing halls of residence, subject to considerations of amenity and character. The St Patrick's Hall site has been identified in policy ER1e as such a proposed site. Its delivery will help to address the student guarantee (where first year students who have the University as their first choice are guaranteed accommodation).
- 4.4.106 However, the need for student accommodation is highly dependent on any expansion of the University. Where such an expansion requires planning permission, it will need to be tested against policies OU1 and, depending on location, ER2, to ensure it can be supported by appropriate student accommodation. The need for future expansion of accommodation will therefore need to be kept under review.
- 4.4.107 The provision of new student accommodation needs to be balanced against other types of housing. It is likely that purpose built student housing, where it is affordable to those students currently in HMOs, can free up some



existing homes to meet more general needs, and there is evidence that in those recent years where numbers of students in HMOs have dropped, this has coincided with the opening of large new on-campus student accommodation blocks. However, the Council considers that there are many sites where development for students prevents a potential housing site being used to help to meet the more pressing needs for general housing, including affordable housing. Development for students should therefore be prioritised towards established student locations, unless a specific need for a development in a certain location can be clearly demonstrated.

## **Provision for Gypsies and Travellers**

### **H13: PROVISION FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS**

***Proposals for new sites or extensions to existing sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople will be judged against the following criteria:***

***Proposals should***

- i. Have safe and convenient access onto the highway network;***
- ii. Have good access to a range of facilities including education and healthcare by a choice of means of travel, including walking;***
- iii. Not have an unacceptable impact on the physical and visual character and quality of the area;***
- iv. Not result in an adverse impact on the significance of a heritage asset;***
- v. Be located in line with national and local policy on flood risk, and not involve location of caravans in Flood Zone 3;***
- vi. Not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of existing residents in surrounding areas, or on future residents of the proposal; and***
- vii. Not result in the loss of biodiversity or important trees, and provide a net biodiversity gain where possible.***

4.4.108 National planning policy requires that the local authority assess the need for accommodation for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople in its area. As it stands, the only existing site is a site for travelling showpeople at Scours Lane. The Council has undertaken a Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showpeople and Houseboat Dweller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) that assessed the need for accommodation for these groups, which reported in September 2017. It found a need for:

- 10-17 permanent pitches for gypsies and travellers;
- A transit site consisting of 5 pitches;
- Two additional plots for travelling showpeople; and
- No need for additional residential moorings for houseboats.

4.4.109 The expectation in national policy is that, where a need is identified, a local authority should plan to meet that need unless there are exceptional

reasons why it should not. In terms of permanent and transit accommodation for gypsies and travellers, the Council has gone through a thorough site assessment process, which culminated in a consultation on gypsy and traveller provision during September and October 2017. The conclusion was that there were no sites that could meet the permanent or transit accommodation needs. The Council is exploring with its neighbours whether there are options for meeting the permanent need outside the Borough, and continues to look for opportunities to make transit provision within Reading. In terms of travelling showpeople, the small need identified is unlikely to be able to support a new site on its own, and therefore any proposal for expansion of the existing site will need to be considered on its merits.

- 4.4.110 In addition to an identified site, there is also a need to include a general policy to judge any applications for sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople. The requirements do not differ markedly from the requirements for housing for any other groups, but the need to have good access by foot to education and healthcare (ideally within 400m, but 800m at the furthest) is particularly vital, as is the need for good access to the highway network.

## **Renewal and Regeneration of Residential Areas**

### ***H14: RENEWAL AND REGENERATION OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS***

***There is scope for some of Reading's residential areas to undergo renewal and regeneration that would achieve the following aims:***

- ***Improve the local built environment;***
- ***Improve, replace and modernise the housing stock; and***
- ***Deliver additional homes.***

***Where development would fulfil the above aims, it would generally be supported, subject to other policies in this plan and provided that:***

- ***Any loss of undeveloped land would be outweighed by a qualitative improvement in open and green space and by the benefits of development to the community as a whole;***
- ***Buildings and features that make a positive contribution to the area's character are retained;***
- ***There would be adequate community facilities to serve the resulting community; and***
- ***There would not be an unacceptable impact on the highway network as a result of loss of parking areas or garages.***

***It is anticipated that renewal and regeneration of residential areas will deliver a net gain of around 400 homes over the plan period.***

- 4.4.111 Reading has a number of older housing estates, many of which are still primarily in Council ownership. With such a substantial need for new homes in Reading, it is logical to look to existing areas to see whether there is scope for these areas to accommodate new housing.

4.4.112 The regeneration of Dee Park (see policy WR1) provides an example of a significant area regeneration that can address existing problems within an area at the same time as delivering new homes. The full development when complete will result in a net gain of almost 350 homes through demolition of ageing housing and a more efficient layout including development on underused areas.

4.4.113 Dee Park was a particularly extensive regeneration project, but there may still be opportunities for regeneration, renewal and reconfiguration of some of Reading's residential areas at a range of scales. This will replace existing homes, some of which are nearing the end of their lifetimes, as well as delivering an increase in homes. The principle of this is generally to be welcomed, and the policy aims to provide support to such proposals where they do not result in unacceptable impacts on the existing area. It is estimated that regeneration led by the Council will be able to deliver approximately 400 homes by 2041, but will continue to deliver housing beyond the end of the plan period.

### **Purpose-Built Shared Living Accommodation**

#### **H15: PURPOSE-BUILT SHARED LIVING ACCOMMODATION**

***Development for purpose-built shared living accommodation will meet all of the following criteria:***

- 1. It is located on a site that has not been identified for general residential (as plan allocations or extant permissions), unless the purpose-built shared living accommodation element would be in addition to the planned residential;***
- 2. It is located within the town centre or a 15-minute walk of the town centre, unless a clear justification for an alternative location is provided;***
- 3. It provides units for rent with minimum tenancy lengths of no less than three months;***
- 4. High quality, and well-placed on-site communal facilities and services are provided that are sufficient to meet the requirements of, and available to and easily accessible by, all residents of the proposal. At least 4 sq m of internal communal space will be provided per resident, decreasing to 3 sq m per resident where there would be more than 100 residents, which includes common work areas but excludes circulation space such as corridors and stairways. On-site communal facilities will offer at least:***
  - Communal kitchen and dining facilities***
  - Laundry and drying facilities***
  - A concierge***
  - Cleaning, maintenance and security services***
- 5. The private units have an internal size of at least 18sqm, include a bathroom with shower, and are not capable of being used as self-contained dwellings;***

6. ***It is under a single management regime;***
7. ***The proposal is accompanied by a management plan, secured by Section 106 agreement, which demonstrates how the development, including the communal facilities, will be managed and maintained over its lifetime;***
8. ***The proposal is accompanied by a security strategy, provided at planning application stage and secured by condition or Section 106 agreement, setting out how crime and anti-social behaviour will be mitigated through design and management measures; and***
9. ***A contribution is made to provision of affordable housing at an equivalent level to policy H3. This will form an off-site financial contribution, unless on-site self-contained affordable dwellings can be provided that do not rely on, and operate independently from, the internal communal facilities.***

4.4.114 Purpose-built shared living developments (also known as ‘co-living’) is a form of communal residential accommodation which falls within a single management regime and which offers more communal facilities and amenities than a HMO, and is generally on a relatively large scale. Units within such developments are not self-contained dwellings, which is what distinguishes such developments from build-to-rent accommodation, and makes the on-site communal facilities particularly important. On-site facilities can differ from scheme to scheme, but may include working spaces, a cinema or gym as well as an on-site events programme. Co-living is not restricted to particular groups by age, but is often marketed towards younger people used to living in a community after studying.

4.4.115 Shared living developments are a ‘sui generis’ use, i.e., not falling within a specific use class, which means that it will always require planning permission. Reading is beginning to see proposals for co-living, and this policy is therefore necessary to ensure that new purpose built, shared living developments can be adequately assessed.

4.4.116 In Reading, this form of accommodation is seen as diversifying the accommodation offer, rather than replacing the many traditional dwellings that are required. To that end, as for student accommodation, the policy prioritises housing to meet general needs (including affordable housing) on those sites which are required to meet our housing targets, including allocated housing sites and extant planning permissions, unless this accommodation is additional. To qualify as purpose-built shared living accommodation, the proposed development must comprise a minimum of 20 bedrooms. This is to ensure that such development is clearly distinguished from an HMO, and to help foster a successful communal environment. High-quality communal accommodation is the only reason why smaller private living spaces are acceptable, and it is therefore critical to the appropriateness of a co-living proposal. In practice, co-living proposals will usually be significantly larger than 20 bedrooms to make such communal facilities viable.

4.4.117 A minimum tenancy period of three months allows for more flexibility for tenants compared to other forms of conventional housing accommodation, whilst ensuring there is some degree of continuity and in turn avoiding rapid

turnover and also avoiding the accommodation operating as essentially serviced lets. This will be secured through a Section 106 agreement.

4.4.118 A management plan must be produced which demonstrates how the proposed development will be managed, maintained, and integrated into the surrounding community. The management plan will be secured via a Section 106 agreement. Matters that will be covered by the management plan will include:

- The number of residents;
- Management and maintenance of communal spaces;
- Tenancy matters, including length of tenancies and arrangements for moving in and out;
- Events management;
- Staffing arrangements and provision of the concierge service;
- Cleaning and linen changing of both private and communal areas;
- Delivery arrangements for both servicing of the development as a whole and for individual residents; and
- Safety procedures, including fire safety; and
- Monitoring and review of the management plan.

4.4.119 This form of community living carries risks in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour, from residents and their guests as well as from others who may try to gain access, and the consequences of these issues may be particularly significant if it deters residents from using communal spaces, as they will not have private spaces of sufficient size to be completely self-contained. As such, a security strategy is particularly significant and needs to be factored into the design of the development. Such a strategy is a requirement at planning application stage, and it may well result in measures that need to be factored into the management plan.

4.4.120 Large-scale shared accommodation is not considered to be suitable as affordable housing. This is because this form of accommodation with high reliance on communal accommodation and often more temporary in nature is not suitable for most households in need of stable, long-term affordable accommodation, and should be a lifestyle that is chosen rather than enforced by circumstances. On this basis, an off-site financial contribution towards affordable housing is generally required, unless a development can accommodate on-site self-contained affordable dwellings that operate independently. The appropriate level of affordable housing is at an equivalent level to Policy H3, and the level should be calculated by assuming that one dwelling equates to four units of accommodation. For instance, a development of 80 co-living units would equate to 20 dwellings, and would enable the equivalent of 30% affordable housing to be provided, whilst a development of 32 co-living units would equate to 8 dwellings and would provide 20%. Financial contributions are calculated on the basis of Gross Development Value (GDV), and the Affordable Housing SPD provides further details on the calculation.

## 4.5 Transport

### Achieving the Transport Strategy

#### **TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY (Strategic policy)**

***Proposed development should contribute appropriately to meeting the objectives of the most up-to-date Reading Transport Strategy or any successor document, including sub-strategies, specific projects identified and the local action plans.***

***Planning permission will not be granted for major development proposals unless there is a commitment to implement measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, such as through provision to encourage active travel and the use of public transport; and through agreed travel plans, safe routes to local facilities and services, including schools and parks, and similar measures.***

***All development proposals should make appropriate provision for works and contributions to create healthy streets and ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with any agreed transport assessment submitted as part of the application. This should include making appropriate financial contributions towards active travel, public transport of local highway works to address any impacts.***

***Development sites should contribute to upgrades to bus stops in line with the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Reading Transport Strategy, including real time passenger information, where relevant stops do not already meet the required standards.***

#### 4.5.1 The Council's objectives for transport set out in the adopted Local Transport Plan (2024-2040)<sup>110</sup>, which are: -

- Creating a clean and green Reading: Provide transport options to enhance quality of life, reduce emissions and improve air quality to create a carbon neutral town;
- Supporting healthy lifestyles: Create healthy streets to encourage active travel and lifestyles, improve accessibility to key destinations and increase personal safety;
- Enabling sustainable and inclusive growth: Enable sustainable growth and connect communities so that everyone can benefit from Reading's success;
- Connecting people and places: Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport by providing attractive alternatives to the private car, helping to provide a transport network that is fast, affordable, connected and resilient; and

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<sup>110</sup> <https://www.reading.gov.uk/vehicles-roads-and-transport/transport-strategy/reading-transport-strategy-2040/>

- Embracing smart solutions: Use technology to manage the network efficiently and allow informed travel choices, whilst enabling Reading to become a smart, connected town of the future
- 4.5.2 New development has a vital role to play in helping to achieve those objectives and the delivery of the Reading Transport Strategy. The scale of development envisaged in Reading up to 2041 would have significant impacts on the transport system, in addition to the general forecast growth in trips arising from the existing population. The predicted growth in trips can only be accommodated through major investment in transport, particularly sustainable modes. New development should make appropriate provision for works that contribute to the programmes developed as part of the strategy, either directly or through making appropriate contributions.
- 4.5.3 Major developments (10 dwellings or 1,000 sq m of non-residential floorspace or more) can make a particular contribution to achieving the strategy. In these cases, it is important that users of, and visitors to the development can make sustainable travel choices using non-car modes of transport. This should include provision that enables and supports active travel including walking and cycling and the use of public transport including from the development, supporting low-carbon travel and creating healthy streets. For developments that are likely to have significant transport implications, Travel Plans will be sought which align with the visions and objectives of the adopted transport strategy, including climate, equalities and health and wellbeing priorities. Developments must carry out and submit evidence of travel plan monitoring and will require remedial actions to be taken as appropriate, in line with relevant planning consents. Major residential proposals should also examine and include proposals to enable the promotion and support of safe routes to schools, as well as sustainable travel to local services and facilities, including access to and provision of public transport.
- 4.5.4 All developments will be assessed for their impact upon the transport network, including the local and trunk road and motorway networks and, where relevant, the rail network. Development should provide mitigation measures in line with their impacts on these networks, taking account of levels of development that have already been accepted, and mitigation measures that have already been agreed or implemented. It will be a condition of planning permission that appropriate measures are in place to secure any remedial transport measures required. Where necessary, a transport assessment of the scheme will be required. This will measure the impacts both of the development proposal and of any remedial measures proposed by the developer to address those impacts. Developers should work with the Council to maintain access during construction works for sustainable transport modes as far as possible. Once a satisfactory package of remedial measures has been negotiated, contributions may be sought from developers to secure their delivery.
- 4.5.5 Contributions to a general package of transport improvements in Reading will continue to be made through the Community Infrastructure Levy to improve the transport network and mitigate the impact of development including for example through enhancement of walking, cycling and public transport facilities. Contributions in Section 106 agreements will also have a role to play where there are site-specific issues that need to be addressed, e.g. junction



improvements, new pedestrian crossings, additional cycle facilities, new public transport infrastructure, or inclusion of land for a transport scheme.

- 4.5.6 The adopted Reading Transport Strategy covers the period 2024-2040, but this policy applies to any subsequent plans that may be published.

### **Major Transport Projects**

#### ***TR2: MAJOR TRANSPORT PROJECTS (Strategic policy)***

***Priority will be given to the implementation of the major transport projects identified in the adopted Reading Transport Strategy (or any successor document) and other identified major transport projects. Land required for these projects will be safeguarded where necessary. These will include:***

- ***Bus Rapid Transit;***
- ***Park and Ride Mobility Hubs;***
- ***Reading West station upgrade;***
- ***Tilehurst station upgrade;***
- ***Reading station interchange enhancements;***
- ***Cross-Thames Travel;***
- ***Superbus network;***
- ***Transport corridor multi-modal enhancements;***
- ***Inner Distribution Road multi-modal enhancements;***
- ***Oxford Road multi-modal enhancements;***
- ***Town and local centre public space enhancements;***
- ***Strategic pedestrian routes;***
- ***Local pedestrian routes;***
- ***Strategic and town centre cycle routes;***
- ***Shinfield Road active travel improvements;***
- ***Bath Road/Castle Hill active travel improvements;***
- ***London Road active travel improvements;***
- ***Local cycle routes;***
- ***Cycle parking mobility hubs and facilities; and***
- ***Smart city initiatives.***

***Land to be safeguarded for the following projects is shown on the Proposals Map: southern and eastern Bus Rapid Transit route (TR2a)<sup>111</sup>, Tilehurst Station upgrade (TR2b) and Reading West Station (TR2c), .***

- 4.5.7 There has been considerable success in delivering major transport improvements for Reading in recent years, including the new Green Park station and interchange which opened in 2023, and the completion of the Cow Lane bridges in April 2019. However, with the continued growth of the Borough, more investment is needed to ensure that transport infrastructure needs are met.
- 4.5.8 Those transport projects that are highlighted in the adopted Reading Transport Strategy 2024-2041 that are likely to have the most significant needs in terms of land use are Bus Rapid Transit and Park and Ride Mobility Hubs.<sup>112</sup> Figure 4.6 shows selected major transport projects, whilst the future public transport network is shown in Figure 4.7.
- **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) (Formerly Mass Rapid Transit):** This is a scheme to provide high quality public transport connections between park and ride sites mobility hubs and major travel generators. Wherever possible, this is likely to involve a dedicated route, although it may also use some existing road space in places. The project involves a number of corridors across the Borough (see figure 4.9). Initial phases of the South BRT Transport Corridor have been delivered, however, there still remain significant sections along the A33 where the BRT is to be delivered. Much of the land on the route to the South has been secured by Section 106 agreement on major development schemes, and this will continue to be sought on key sites where they come forward. In addition to South Reading BRT, BRT will be provided along the West Reading, South West Reading, East Reading and South East Reading corridors.
  - **Park and Ride Mobility Hubs:** Despite recent new park and ride provision at MereOak, Winnersh, and Thames Valley Park (all located in Wokingham Borough), there is a continued need for new provision. Opportunities for new sites will therefore be sought, particularly on the corridors identified on figure 4.6. Given the constraints of the Borough, the Council continues to explore opportunities for new park and ride mobility hub sites within neighbouring authorities, and subject to a suitable site and/or development coming forward, will review and present a detailed proposal and business case, setting out the benefits of the scheme. Park and ride can complement existing bus services, including inter-urban buses, by supporting their use.
  - **Reading West Station Upgrade:** Major upgrades to Reading West Station were completed in Spring 2023. However, opportunities to fund the remaining elements of the scheme, including lifts to ensure full accessibility at the station, are yet to be delivered and opportunities to fund this continues to be sought.

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<sup>111</sup> Not shown on the Proposals Map

<sup>112</sup> For cycling projects and improvements as listed in policy TR2, further detail can be found within the supporting text under policy TR4 (Cycle routes and facilities).

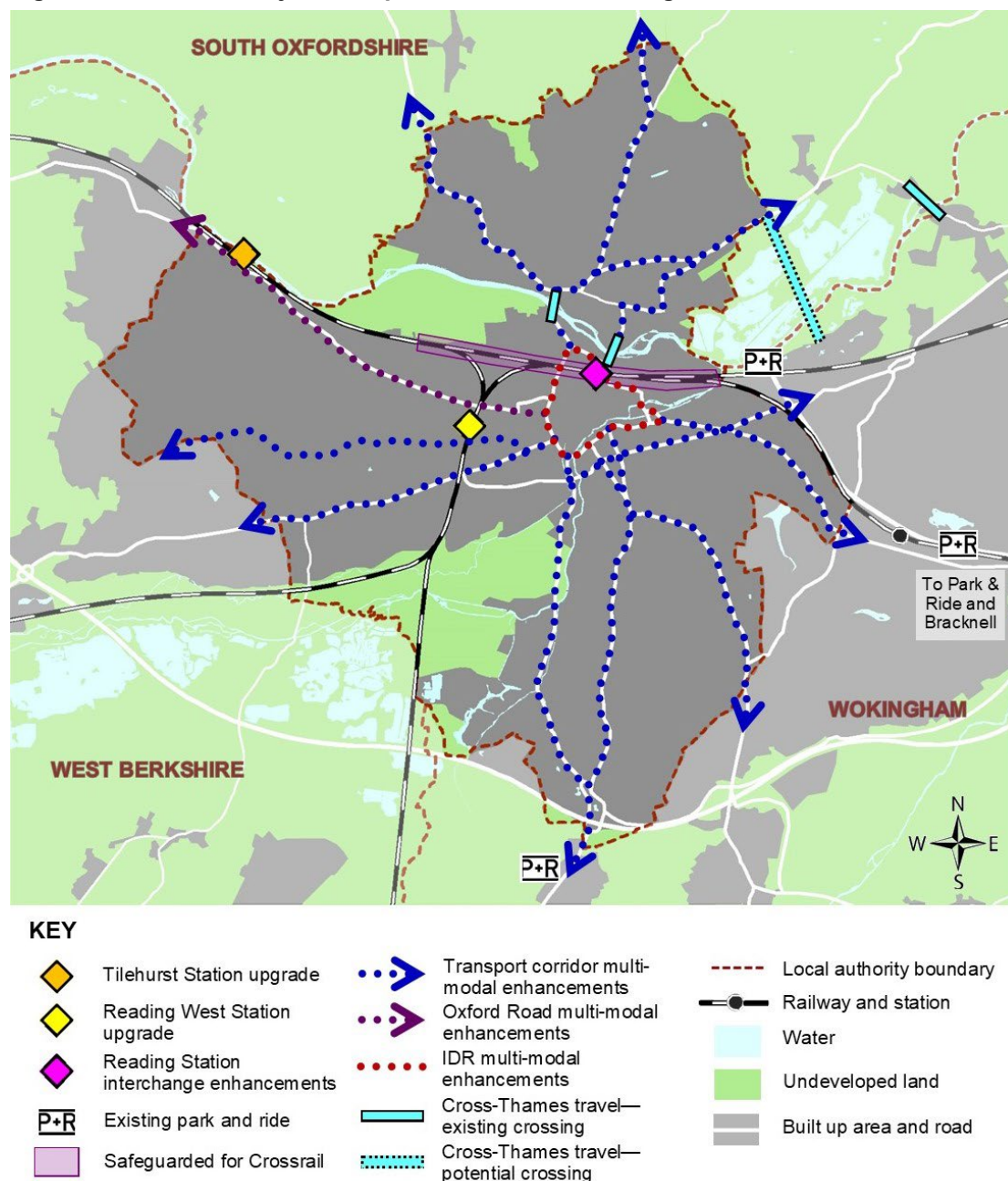
- **Tilehurst station upgrade:** Access to Tilehurst Station is currently poor, making the station inaccessible for some users. Plans to improve visitor experience to the station and make it fully accessible by providing lifts are planned, as well as improved footways, crossings, drop-off/pick-up points and additional cycle and car parking.
- **Reading station interchange enhancements:** Further enhancements are planned to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, and deliver public realm benefits to enhance the area as a key welcome point and gateway to Reading, including (but not limited to): improved bus-rail integration, improved north/south active travel spine, improved access to the station for cyclists, improvements in cycle parking, signage and digital wayfinding.
- **Cross-Thames Travel:** The River Thames is a major barrier to movement, meaning that the existing bridges in the immediate Reading area (Reading, Caversham and Sonning Bridges) are under pressure at peak times. Reading is currently working with Wokingham Borough Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, National Highways, the Department for Transport, Transport for the South East, and Local Parish and Town Councils to identify measures to improve the situation. This may involve an additional crossing. The most likely route for such a crossing would be within Wokingham and South Oxfordshire, but if the work identifies a need for use of land within Reading, this should be taken into account. Mitigation on the road network on either side of a bridge may be required.
- **Superbus network:** Reading has developed a comprehensive high quality bus network to enable effective public transport services to operate, resulting in one of the highest uses of buses in the country. The scale of developments forecast will require that this network is expanded and developed, and a network of high-quality, high-frequency branded bus routes and infrastructure is sought. There are also important inter-urban bus services linking Reading with other towns and cities. The Council will seek support for enhanced bus facilities such as bus shelters, bus shelters, real-time information and accessible bus stops to both safeguard the existing network from the effects of developments and to enhance the services offered to serve new developments.
- **Transport corridor multi-modal enhancements:** Multi-modal enhancements to major transport corridors are planned to address traffic volumes and congestion across Reading. Enhancements could include (but are not limited to) reallocation of road space to walking, cycling and public transport, bus priority infrastructure, traffic signal upgrades, safety enhancements and increased pedestrian and cycle provision. Such upgrades would result in reduced congestion, improved air quality and increased walking, cycling and public transport levels.
- **Inner Distribution Road (IDR) multi-modal enhancements:** The IDR forms a key part of the highway network. As such, congestion and air pollution are major issues. Improvements to reduce severance and reconnect communities include (but are not limited to) reallocation of road space to walking, cycling and public transport, improved pedestrian and cycle provision, improved public transport provision such as bus priority

infrastructure, traffic signal upgrades, safety enhancements and removal of excessive street furniture. Improvements would help to encourage more sustainable travel and improved traffic flow, air quality, and reduced carbon, as well as an increased uptake of public transport.

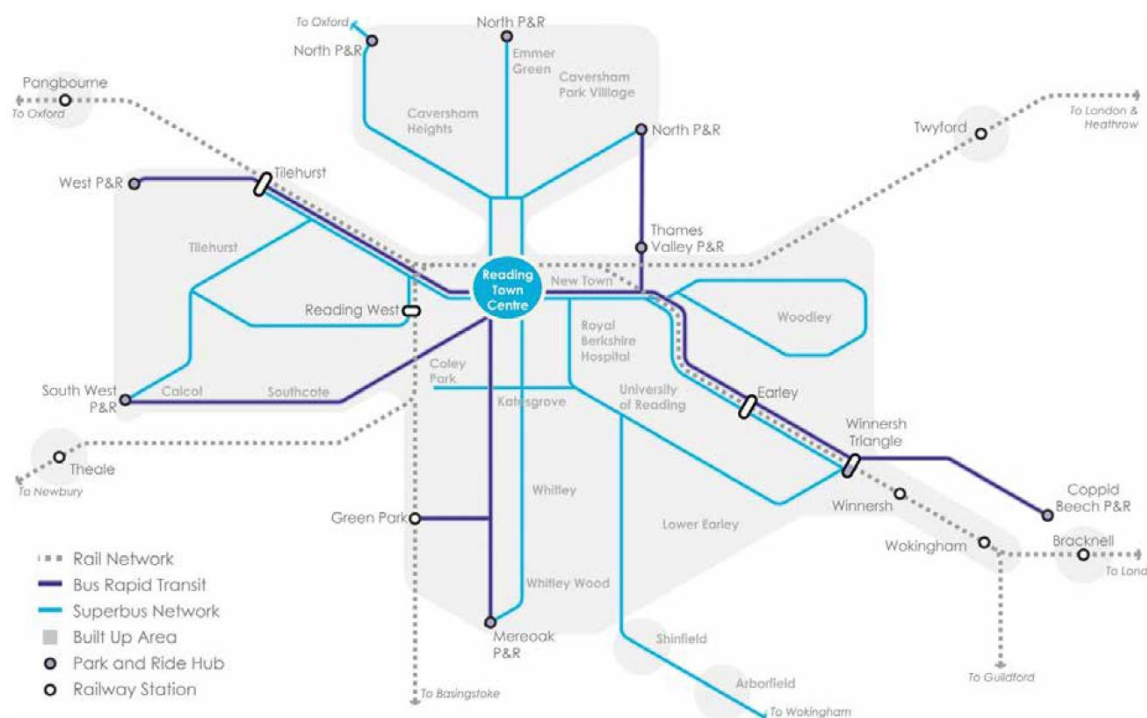
- **Oxford Road multi-modal enhancements:** The Oxford Road, Portman Road, and Cow Lane corridor is a key arterial route that suffers from congestion and air pollution issues. Multi-modal improvements are planned to create a safer and less traffic dominated environment which includes (but is not limited to) reallocation of road space for, and improved provision of walking, cycling and public transport movement (e.g. seating, accessible routes), enhancement to the local centre and interchange facilities at Reading West Station, potential re-routing of freight traffic, traffic signal upgrades and safety enhancements.
- **Town and local centre public space enhancements:** Enhancements will be made within central Reading and local centres through focusing on sustainable travel modes and removing or reducing conflicts between motorised transport and walking/cycling. Health Streets Principles will also be incorporated. Improvements could include (but is not limited to) improved access for walking and cycling in and around the town centre, creation of car free spaces, providing rest and amenity areas, providing adequate facilities for deliveries and enhanced public realm e.g. through the use of high quality materials.
- **Strategic and local pedestrian routes:** As per the LCWIP, improvements to strategic and local pedestrian routes will take place that follow the Healthy Streets principles.
- **Shinfield Road active travel improvements:** There is currently a lack of segregated cycling provision and the overall route quality of Shinfield Road is not conducive to walking and cycling. Funding has been secured for active travel improvements here, including segregated cycle lanes, raised tables at select junctions, new and improved crossings of Shinfield Road, footway widening, and the introduction of double yellow lines, amongst other improvements.
- **Bath Road/Castle Hill active travel improvements:** Funding has been secured to deliver active travel improvements, including segregated cycle lanes and provision at all junctions, relocated bus stops, new and improved pedestrian crossings, improved carriageway markings and introduction of double yellow lines.
- **London Road active travel improvements:** This project aims to deliver a series of active travel improvements along the London Road corridor. Improvements could include (but is not limited to) enhanced cycle lanes and improved provision at all junctions, new and improved pedestrian crossings, enhancements at bus stops, improved carriageway markings and links to the wider cycle network.
- **Smart City initiatives:** The Smart City approach uses data to understand the transport network as well as people's travel needs. It is a cross-sector, cross-authority scheme to address transport challenges, using technology to address these needs where they provide an optimum solution, for example, utilising smart city initiatives to optimise sustainable

transport opportunities and reduce congestion, creating a more effective transport network that improves safety, increases productivity and improves mobility. 4.5.9 The constrained geography of the Borough means that major transport investment virtually always requires significant cross-boundary working. The Council will continue to work with its partners, including neighbouring authorities and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, to ensure that these vital schemes are delivered. More detail on the delivery of these schemes, where it is known, is set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which is in chapter 10 of this plan.

**Figure 4.6: Selected Major Transport Schemes in Reading**



**Figure 4.7: Future Public Transport Network in Reading from Transport Strategy**



## Crossrail

- 4.5.10 The Secretary of State for Transport issued a Safeguarding Direction on 29 April 2009, identifying land which should be safeguarded for an extension of the Crossrail scheme from Maidenhead to Reading, the services on which are known as the Elizabeth Line. The Elizabeth Line services to Reading commenced in May 2022, with all services fully operational. The safeguarding authority is now Transport for London (TfL), and as the safeguarding direction has not been revoked, it will remain in the Local Plan until formal changes are made to the safeguarding direction. This land is identified on the Proposals Map, although there is no need to repeat this safeguarding through policy in this document. The Council will now consult with Transport for London for planning applications that fall within the identified land.
- 4.5.11 The Council supports the proposed East-West Rail Link between Oxford, Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Norwich which would provide greater connectivity to these destinations for rail services from Reading. It is not currently expected that this will require additional land in Reading.

## Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

### **TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS**

***In determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment.***

***Development will only be permitted where:-***

- i) ***Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;***
- ii) ***The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;***
- iii) ***The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;***
- iv) ***The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and***
- v) ***For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.***

***Proposals involving either the construction of a new site access, or a material increase in the use of an existing site access, directly onto the Classified Highway Network will not be acceptable if they would be likely to result in the encouragement of the use of the network for short local trips or compromise the safe movement and free flow of traffic on the network or the safe use of the road.***

4.5.12 Reading is a dense urban Borough, containing a broad variety of uses. It has a thriving economy and is a net importer of labour. These factors mean that Reading's transport network is often under significant pressure, and the impacts of new developments therefore require careful management, particularly in terms of new accesses and the effects of additional traffic generation.

4.5.13 It is important to ensure that proposals will not interfere with the free flow of traffic on the highway and that there would be no risk to the safety of people using that road including vulnerable groups such as pedestrians (including mobility-impaired users), cyclists and motorcyclists. The proximity of other accesses is also significant. In particular, creating new access points onto the Classified Highway Network, or changing the nature of an existing access or the type of traffic using the access, is likely to bring about risks to the safety of road users and increase traffic volumes. Where an existing area of the network already exceeds its operational capacity, proposals involving a new site access and/or additional trips likely to worsen the existing situation will not normally be permitted, unless the proposals provide improvements to the transport infrastructure which significantly reduce the effects of potential private car borne trips on the network.

4.5.14 The Council has produced a policy on accesses, which deals particularly with residential accesses onto classified roads, and commercial accesses onto all adopted roads<sup>113</sup>. The policy, adopted in 2011, endorses the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets (for lightly trafficked roads within urban areas) and the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (for access and junction improvements to classified roads from residential developments and to the entire road network for commercial developments). It is too detailed to

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<sup>113</sup> Geometric Design Guidance for Residential Accesses onto Classified Roads and Commercial Accesses onto Adopted Roads (Version 2), approved July 2011.



reproduce here, but compliance with it, or any replacement, is essential. It follows national guidance that avoids access onto main roads wherever possible.

- 4.5.15 The Classified Highway Network is defined by the highways authority, and includes a number of main roads not classified as A or B roads. The Network at the time of this plan is shown on the Proposals Map, but it may change within the plan period, so the Council's website should be checked for the latest position.

## **Cycle Routes and Facilities**

### **TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES (Strategic policy)**

***Developments will be expected to make full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development and to integrate cycling through the provision of new facilities. Development of new facilities for cycling, such as new cycle routes, cycle hire points and cycle parking, will be acceptable.***

***The cycle routes identified in the most up-to-date Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) will be maintained, enhanced and added to or extended. Development will not detrimentally affect an identified cycle route. Where opportunities exist, improvements to any relevant route, including the provision of connecting routes, and/or cycling facilities will be sought within developments or through planning contributions. In particular, improvements to existing cycle connections should be undertaken in accordance with the Cycle Route Design Principles as set out within the LCWIP for the five types of cycle route (Town centre routes, Strategic routes, Orbital routes, Local routes, and Leisure routes).***

- 4.5.16 Cycling is one of the most sustainable forms of transport, and forms an important part of Reading's transport strategy. Opportunities to continue to promote cycling, and enhance important routes, should be seized.
- 4.5.17 The adopted Local Transport Plan 2040 is supported by the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), published in 2020. This seeks to transform our streets and encourage more people to choose cycling in Reading through the following:
- Enhancing cycling and walking networks, so they are clean and green and people feel safe and happy to cycle and walk for local journeys or as part of longer multi-modal journeys.
  - Encouraging people of all ages and abilities to make healthy lifestyle choices by making cycling and walking the natural choice and offering support through the delivery of initiatives and campaigns promoting the benefits of active travel and the transition to cycling and walking.
  - Providing well connected cycling and walking routes linking to key destinations, such as employment centres, local centres, schools and health services to support inclusive growth and reduce congestion.
  - Providing safe, attractive and well connected cycling and walking routes linking residential areas, employment sites and transport interchanges, so people can travel to the places they need to get to more easily.

- Integrating smart solutions into cycling and walking facilities to help us travel faster, cleaner and safer.
- 4.5.18 The LCWIP 2020 continues and builds upon the Cycling Strategy 2014 by evolving the existing branded cycle network to include strategic cycle routes connected by a series of orbital, local and leisure routes that support people in travelling to the places they need to go via safe, clean and green transport infrastructure based on the principles of best practice examples. If an updated LCWIP or supporting cycle map shows a different network of cycle routes, these will become the routes to which this policy applies.
- 4.5.19 The measures which the strategy identifies in different areas include minor improvements, enhanced connectivity, maintenance, greening and signing.
- 4.5.20 The adopted Reading Transport Strategy 2040 includes a number of new projects (see also policy TR2) relating to cycling and which potentially affect the use of land, set out below:
- **Strategic and town centre cycle routes:** Given the compact nature of Reading Borough, there is significant opportunity for improvements to increase cycling levels, including the creation of a strategic cycle network based on the principles set out in the LCWIP and Healthy Streets, connecting major destinations along key transport corridors and in the town centre. Improvements include reallocation of road space, segregation between traffic and those who walk and cycle, parking restrictions, increasing accessibility for all, amongst other proposed improvements.
  - **Local cycle routes:** The local cycle network is sometimes disjointed, following less direct and quieter routes, with missing connections. In line with the LCWIP, a new or improved local cycle network will be created along lightly trafficked routes, linking communities to local facilities. This will include (but is not limited to) a mixture of shared or segregated foot/cycleways, cyclist awareness signage and crossing facilities.
  - **Cycle parking mobility hubs and facilities:** Provision of secure, covered cycle hubs at transport interchanges are proposed, with the potential for manned security. Hubs can provide a large number of secure spaces with double height racks and include facilities such as CCTV, lighting, electric charging points, bicycle repair stands and pumps. This project also involves the establishment of residential cycle parking facilities, particularly in areas of terraced housing.

## **Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging**

### **TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING**

***Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.***

***Within communal car parks for non-residential developments of at least 10 off-road parking spaces, 20% of spaces should provide an active electric vehicle charging point.***

***There will be a presumption in favour of electric vehicle charging infrastructure within Reading unless there are clear detrimental impacts***

***on: accessibility by foot and cycle or by those with limited mobility; highway safety; residential amenity; important trees; or the significance of a heritage asset or its setting.***

- 4.5.21 Ensuring the appropriate level of car parking in new developments involves striking a careful balance. On the one hand, it is important that enough parking is provided so that there is not a knock-on effect on the safety and function of the highway and public transport network through on-street parking. On the other hand, an over-provision of car parking, particularly at places of work, can lead to less sustainable travel choices.
- 4.5.22 The Council has produced a Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)<sup>114</sup>, which includes different standards in four different zones according to the accessibility of those zones. The SPD also sets out requirements for cycle parking. The document is available on the Council's website. It will continue to apply, until such time as it is superseded by any more up-to-date version.
- 4.5.23 Reading has local air quality issues linked to traffic and congestion, which are highlighted in reference to policy EN15 on air quality. Increased use of low-emissions vehicles would make a major contribution to tackling this issue, as well as helping to tackle carbon emissions. However, one of the main barriers to increased use of low-emissions vehicles is the lack of supporting infrastructure. Therefore, for non-residential car parks with at least 10 spaces, at least 20% of spaces should provide an active charging point. New residential development must adhere to the Building Regulations Approved Document S, which sets out specific requirements for such development, for example, the provision of a charging point per dwelling or per parking space.

## **Walking**

- 4.5.24 The Council is committed to encouraging sustainable travel choices and to improving the accessibility and quality of active travel infrastructure. Walking is essential for achieving door-to-door journeys and is the dominant mode for movements into and out of central Reading. Outside the central area, walking is one of the main means of travelling to local destinations and forms a key element of wider local journeys made by public transport. Challenges including the provision of local facilities and services, such as shops, schools and healthcare, personal security, attractiveness of public realm as well as footway parking are to be overcome in order to encourage more people to consider walking for local journeys. There is not therefore a specific policy on walking, but consideration of walking has informed many elements of the whole plan. As for cycling, the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) will guide how walking infrastructure is provided, and this includes a network map showing prestige, primary, secondary, link footway, local access footway and rights of way routes. The Council will continue to improve and expand the existing walking infrastructure and provide quality links in order to cater for future demand.

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<sup>114</sup> [Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://www.reading.gov.uk/revised-parking-standards-and-design-supplementary-planning-document)

## 4.6 Retail, Leisure and Culture

### Network and Hierarchy of Centres

#### ***RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES (Strategic policy)***

***The following network of centres are identified and defined on the Proposals Map:***

<b><i>Regional Centre:</i></b>	<b><i>Reading</i></b>
<b><i>District Centres:</i></b>	<b><i>Caversham, Cemetery Junction, Emmer Green, Meadway, Oxford Road West, Shinfield Road, Tilehurst Triangle, Whitley</i></b>
<b><i>Major Local Centres:</i></b>	<b><i>Whitley Street, Wokingham Road</i></b>
<b><i>Local Centres:</i></b>	<b><i>Basingstoke Road North, Christchurch Road, Coronation Square, Erleigh Road, Dee Park, Northumberland Avenue North, Wensley Road, Whitley Wood</i></b>

***The vitality and viability of these centres should be maintained and enhanced. Some centres are based around a small area of green, and where this is an important part of the layout and function of the centre, it will be retained and where possible enhanced. The following improvements will be acceptable in all centres:***

- ***Accessibility and transport improvements;***
- ***Broadening range of facilities;***
- ***Residential use of upper floors; and***
- ***Environmental enhancements.***

***Central Reading will see the greatest levels of development and change. Development and change, including intensification of town centre uses, will also take place within smaller centres in line with the role of the centre in the network. The smaller centres which are expected to be the main focus for intensification, change and additional community facilities will be The Meadway and Whitley District Centres.***

- 4.6.1 Reading has a very strong town centre, along with a network of much smaller but important centres which, although overshadowed by the strength of central Reading, have a vital role in providing easy access to shops, services and facilities, particularly in areas of deprivation. It is important that this network and hierarchy of centres is identified in the plan to ensure that shops and services are as accessible as possible.
- 4.6.2 Reading is clearly by far the dominant centre within the Borough and for much of the surrounding area. It is a centre of regional significance, and was identified by Experian in 2017 as being the centre with the 8<sup>th</sup> strongest market potential in the country<sup>115</sup>. However, as competing centres continue to

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<sup>115</sup> <http://www.experian.co.uk/marketing-services/news-retailscape-uk-retail-centres-best-placed-to-thrive.html>

enhance their offer, it will continue to be necessary to develop and adapt to maintain its position. The town centre is where the vast majority of town centre development will occur. The Central Reading section of this Plan provides further information.

- 4.6.3 The next level in the hierarchy present in Reading is district centres. It is considered that, whilst only three or four centres may currently qualify as district centres according to the NPPF definition, it is appropriate to designate more district centres in order to encourage an increase in the range of facilities. This will mean that centres capable of acting as alternatives to the centre of Reading for some uses will be accessible to a greater number of people. This approach in the existing plan has seen a recent expansion of facilities in Whitley, for example.
- 4.6.4 There are a number of smaller concentrations of shops and services across Reading. These are designated as local centres, which fulfil the next tier in the hierarchy from district centres. Whitley Street and Wokingham Road are larger centres than other centres in this list, and they are therefore designated as major local centres, where a greater scale of development will be appropriate.
- 4.6.5 Of the centres other than Central Reading, those which have the greatest physical capacity for development are The Meadway and Whitley. Whitley centre is located within one of the concentrations of greatest deprivation in Reading, and within which substantial development will take place over the plan period. There has been recent development of new town centre uses within this centre, and there is scope for additional development, which is dealt with within the South Reading chapter. The Meadway is an ageing shopping precinct which would benefit from substantial physical improvement (or, potentially, complete redevelopment) to allow it to continue its district centre role. This site is covered by an allocation in policy WR3, and by a Planning Brief. However, this does not mean there will not be significant investment in other centres, and there is an existing planning permission for development in Caversham centre for example.
- 4.6.6 The boundaries of all centres on the Proposals Map have been deliberately drawn to include a wider area than simply the shopping parades, incorporating facilities such as schools and community centres where possible. Such an approach emphasises the importance of a diverse range of facilities. The boundaries also incorporate known development opportunities where they exist. This will ensure that, where the sequential approach is being applied, smaller centres include sites which could actually be developed.
- 4.6.7 When applying the sequential approach as set out in the NPPF, the town centre boundaries are the centre boundaries set out on the Proposals Map, with the exception of Central Reading, where the boundary will depend on the uses proposed (see Policy CR1).

## **Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development**

### **RL2: SCALE AND LOCATION OF RETAIL, LEISURE AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT (Strategic policy)**

***Provision will be made retail, leisure and related facilities in Reading sufficient to maintain the vitality and viability of the network and hierarchy of centres.***

***Retail and main town centre leisure and culture development, where it would mean a net gain of over 2,500 sq m, will take place in, or as an extension to, the centre of Reading, unless it is on a site allocated for such development. Where a need for additional development has been identified, and no sites are available in or adjoining the centre of Reading, or other defined centres, a sequential approach should be adopted to identifying alternative sites.***

***All development will comply with the relevant tests for retail, leisure and culture development set out in national policy.***

- 4.6.8 The most suitable location for retail, leisure and culture development is in existing centres. These centres already have a range of facilities, and are generally accessible by a choice of means of transport. Development in these centres should maintain and enhance the centres' vitality and viability. The centre of Reading is the most accessible location in the Borough, and is among the most accessible locations in the South East, and therefore represents the best location for major development of this type.
- 4.6.9 The Council commissioned consultants to identify the need for additional retail and leisure development in Reading to 2041. The final Commercial Development Needs Assessment reported in November 2024. It found an overprovision of 5,467 sq m of comparison goods floorspace up to 2041. In terms of convenience goods, a very small positive need of 428 sq m was identified by 2041. Our approach is to consider this as a whole, as no planning permission is generally required to change between convenience and comparison goods, unless it is controlled by planning condition. As a result, no positive overall need for retail floorspace has been identified.
- 4.6.10 In terms of leisure provision, the Commercial Development Needs Assessment does not identify needs for any specific facilities, but bowling and ice skating remain gaps in Reading's offer.
- 4.6.11 Without a need for significant additional provision, the focus will be on development that reinforces the vitality and viability of existing centres. This may mean additional floorspace in some cases, particularly where it diversifies the offer of individual centres or provides for the regeneration of those centres.
- 4.6.12 Retail, leisure and culture development outside designated centres will only be allowed in those exceptional circumstances where the provisions of national policy are met. In these cases, proposals will need to demonstrate that a sequential approach has been adopted to site selection, and that there will be no adverse impact on existing centres in Reading Borough or elsewhere.



## Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres

- a) ***RL3: VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF SMALLER CENTRES*** Within district, major local and local centres, development will be permitted provided that:
- *There would be no more than 2 consecutive sui generis takeaways, and no more than 30% of the length of the Key Frontage would be in takeaway use; and*
  - *There would be no net loss of 'centre uses' for 'non-centre uses' at the ground floor (apart from entrances to upper floors), particularly in the Key Frontages, except in exceptional circumstances. On upper floors, other uses including residential ('living over the shops') will be acceptable.*
- b) *Within and adjacent to district, major local and local centres, all new development should provide some 'centre uses' at the ground floor, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would not be possible or appropriate.*
- c) *Where the Key Frontages within a centre as identified on the Proposals Map are proposed to significantly change, or have already significantly changed, as a result of redevelopment, meaning that criterion a) cannot be applied, proposals should ensure that ground floor concentrations of sui generis takeaways are avoided.*

4.6.13 One of the key elements of the spatial strategy for Reading is the protection and enhancement of the identified network of district and local centres in the Borough. These ensure that services are provided close to people's homes and provide a heart to Reading's various communities. It also reduces the need to travel to the centre of Reading or elsewhere, particularly in areas of deprivation where levels of car ownership are low. It is vital to ensure that a diverse range of services are available within each centre.

4.6.14 There is limited control that the Council can exercise over the uses that are within ground floor shop units, in particular since revisions to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) in 2020 consolidated a number of existing classes into one single use class E. The key priority will be to ensure that these premises remain in an active commercial use that contributes to the vitality and viability of the centre, other than for takeaways (see below).

4.6.15 There are now a wide range of changes of use that can take place under permitted development rights<sup>116</sup>, without needing planning permission. This includes changes from some sui generis uses to use class E. It also includes changes from use class E and a number of sui generis uses to residential, subject to prior approval being needed to determine whether the Council's approval will be required. However, in the case of these residential permitted development rights, an Article 4 direction is in place covering the main parts of all the district, major local and local centres (including the Key

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<sup>116</sup> [Article 4 Directions - Reading Borough Council](#)



Frontages) that removes these permitted development rights and means that planning permission will be required for such changes<sup>117</sup>.

4.6.16 The policy makes reference to the distinction between ‘centre uses’ and ‘non-centre uses’, although it should be noted that it does not relate to upper floors, where a wide mix of uses will be appropriate. These are defined as follows:

**‘Centre uses’**

- Shops, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes, assembly and leisure (such as gyms or indoor sports and recreation), nurseries and healthcare institutions (E uses)
- Hotels (C1 uses)
- Non-residential institutions such as schools and places of worship (F1 uses)
- Halls or meeting places, swimming pools, outdoor sports and recreation (F2 uses)
- Other uses falling within the ‘sui generis’ category typically found in centres, including drinking establishments, takeaways, launderettes, cinemas, theatres, music and concert halls, bingo halls, dance halls, tattooists, beauty parlours, amusement arcades, betting shops and pay day loan shops<sup>118</sup>

**‘Non-centre uses’**

- General business uses (E use)
- Industry and storage and distribution (B2 and B8)
- Residential institutions (C2)
- Residential (C3)
- Other uses falling within the ‘sui generis’ category

4.6.17 Criterion (a) has two purposes. Firstly, concentrations of takeaways can have a negative effect on the amenity of residents, and can also change the character of the street. Its other purpose is to prevent inappropriate uses, particularly housing, from encroaching on centres at the ground floor and permanently removing shop units or other facilities. Elsewhere in the country, whole centres have been lost in this way. However, it is important that uses such as housing and offices are integrated into centres at upper floors to ensure diversity and good access to jobs and housing. Exceptional circumstances are those where it can be clearly demonstrated that the only alternative to loss of the unit to any ‘centre use’ is long-term vacancy (e.g. that it could be expected to be vacant for longer than 5 years).

4.6.18 Criterion (b) recognises the fact that opportunities for expansion of these centres are relatively rare, and therefore, where they do occur, they should be

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<sup>117</sup> [Article 4 Directions - Reading Borough Council](#)

<sup>118</sup> Policy for betting shops and pay day loan shops is set out in RL4

seized, in order to enhance the role of centres in serving their local communities.

- 4.6.19 Where the policy includes the term 'consecutive' under (a, this includes where units are separated by the entrance to a side-street or footpath, or any other small gap between buildings.
- 4.6.20 References to 'key frontage' in this policy, e.g. for the proportion of sui generis takeaways will not be capable of being applied where there is a comprehensive development of a centre, or a part of a centre, that significantly alters the frontages. In such a case, developments need to be judged against criterion c) of the policy.
- 4.6.21 This policy does not apply to the town centre of Reading. A different approach is required there, which is dealt with in Policy CR7.

### **Betting Shops and Payday Loan Companies**

#### **RL4: BETTING SHOPS AND PAYDAY LOAN COMPANIES**

***Proposals for new betting shops, payday loan shops or gambling establishments will not be permitted where it would result in three or more betting shops, payday loan shops and/or gambling establishments within a 150 metre radius of the application property. Where there are already three such establishments within 150 sq m, no further increase in such uses will be permitted.***

- 4.6.22 Betting shops, payday loan shops and gambling establishments such as casinos and adult gaming centres are classified as Sui Generis uses. This means that planning permission is required for a new betting shop, payday loan shop or gambling establishment.
- 4.6.23 An individual operation does not necessarily cause issues on its own, and can make a valuable contribution to the range of facilities in a centre, particularly a smaller centre. However, where the uses start to cluster together, the presence of these premises can exacerbate existing economic problems in local areas, as well as having a detrimental effect on the appearance and character of the area, particularly where the shopfronts are obscured.
- 4.6.24 The policy therefore seeks to prevent the clustering of betting, payday loan shops or gambling establishments in order to prevent the adverse effects above. The radius should be measured from the closest part of a shopfront, i.e. where the closest part of two or more existing shopfronts are within a 150m radius of the shopfront of the application premises, permission would generally be refused.
- 4.6.25 The application of this policy also applies where there are already three such establishments within 150 sq m. Once this threshold has been exceeded, no further increase will be permitted.

### **Impact of Main Town Centre Uses**

#### **RL5: IMPACT OF MAIN TOWN CENTRE USES**

***Proposals that include more than 1,000 sq m (gross) of new or additional floorspace for main town centre uses in an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location should demonstrate that there will be no***

***significant adverse impact on existing centres. Ensuring that centres within areas of deprivation are not adversely affected is of particular local importance.***

- 4.6.26 'Main town centre uses', including retail, leisure and offices, should generally be located in centres in the first instance. However, where development does take place elsewhere, it is important that it does not undermine the identified network of centres.
- 4.6.27 The National Planning Policy Framework sets a threshold of 2,500 sq m, above which all proposals for main town centre uses should be accompanied by an assessment of impact on existing centres. However, the NPPF gives local planning authorities the scope to set their own local thresholds if necessary. In Reading, 1,000 sq m (gross) is considered to be the appropriate threshold, as this is the level above which a significant adverse impact on the smallest centres is a strong possibility. The retail floorspace in many of Reading's local centres is below 1,000 sq m, so a larger development could well cause adverse effects.
- 4.6.28 An impact assessment will be included with every relevant application above this threshold. Matters to be considered in an assessment are set out in national guidance, but the following impacts are particularly significant for Reading:
- Impacts on trade levels;
  - Impacts on the prospect of investment in existing centres;
  - Impacts on centres in areas of deprivation<sup>119</sup>; and
  - Cumulative impacts with other developments and proposals within the preceding five years.

## **Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses**

### ***RL6: PROTECTION OF LEISURE FACILITIES AND PUBLIC HOUSES***

***Existing leisure facilities or public houses will generally be retained, and there is a strong presumption in favour of retaining leisure facilities or public houses where they are the only facility of their type in a district, major local or local centre. Developments that would result in the loss of a leisure facility or a public house will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that:***

- a. There is no need for this type of facility in this area; or***
- b. The function of the facility can be adequately fulfilled by an existing facility, or a facility proposed as part of the development, where that facility would be at least as accessible to the same catchment; or***
- c. Unless the site is a sports or recreation facility, the impacts on amenity of residents or on crime and security of retaining the facility could not be dealt with through other measures, and would be so***

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<sup>119</sup> Centres where there are recognised deprivation issues are Coronation Square, Dee Park, Whitley and Whitley Wood.

***severe as to outweigh the benefits to the wider community of retaining the facility.***

- 4.6.29 Facilities that provide opportunities for leisure, recreation, sport and tourism are vital to our physical and mental health, and are a key element of overall quality of life, as well as contributing to the Borough's economic success. Whilst Reading contains a range of facilities, there are areas in which there is substantial room for improvement. Such facilities need to be close to where people live, to reduce the need to travel and, often, to serve a role at the heart of the community (a role often filled by uses such as pubs).
- 4.6.30 Therefore a policy is required that resists the loss of such facilities. This is of particular importance in centres, where a leisure facility or pub can be an important anchor use. Therefore, within centres, it generally resists loss of a facility where it is a use unique within the centre, even if it would be replaced by a different 'leisure' use. A number of such facilities are listed as 'assets of community value', which are of significance to the local community and therefore fulfil an important role, and if a facility is listed as such an asset, this may form a consideration in determining an application. The current list of assets of community value can be viewed on the Council's website<sup>120</sup>.
- 4.6.31 This policy deals with built leisure facilities. This includes cinemas; theatres and concert halls; bowling alleys; galleries and museums; bingo halls; snooker and pool halls; pubs, bars and nightclubs; leisure centres, sports facilities and gyms; stadia; tourist attractions; and ice rinks. It does not include open space, playing fields and more informal recreational facilities, which are covered by separate policies, or visitor accommodation, as this does not generally serve a local community need. Loss of community facilities is dealt with in Policy OU1.
- 4.6.32 Evidence to show that there is no need for the facility (a) will need to be based on clear, long-term issues and trends rather than short-term economic circumstances or lack of viability due to poor management. Retention of a facility where there is no need for it can result in long-term vacancy detracting from the centre's vitality and viability or the quality of the local area. Any alternative facilities identified to comply with (b) must fulfil a similar role, have sufficient capacity to adequately serve the existing catchment, and must be at least as accessible by public transport, foot and cycle to the majority of the catchment as the facility to be lost. The purpose of (c) is to ensure that facilities are not lost where there are alternative measures under powers such as licensing and environmental health that could resolve amenity issues whilst retaining the use, and that amenity impacts are intrinsic to the use rather than how the use has been managed – this is particularly relevant to public houses. In applying (c) within Central Reading, the need for the area to fulfil a variety of important roles that may generate some noise and activity later in the evening should be borne in mind, in line with the comments in paragraph 5.3.21.
- 4.6.33 The policy will involve some consideration of how planning overlaps with other Council powers, such as licensing and environmental health to ensure that the loss of a facility is a last resort.

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<sup>120</sup> [List of nominated assets of community value - Reading Borough Council](#)

## 4.7 Other Uses

### New and Existing Community Facilities

#### ***OU1: NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES (Strategic policy)***

***Proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities, such as schools and healthcare uses, will be supported, subject to other policies in the plan. Proposals for additional development for further and higher education will only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that it would not lead to a material increase in the need for student accommodation, or that it will be supported by an appropriate increase in existing or planned student accommodation.***

***On-site intensification of some facilities, particularly schools, may result in some loss of open areas. This may be acceptable where the impact on open areas is minimised, and the area has no specific use, or where that use can satisfactorily be accommodated elsewhere on the site, subject to other policies in the plan. The above does not include loss of sports pitches and playing fields, which should only be developed where:***

- a) an assessment clearly shows the area to be surplus to requirements; or***
- b) the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or***
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.***

***New community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel (including walking and cycling), and in existing centres where possible.***

***Where a proposal for a new school meets a clear need, and it would otherwise accord with national and local policy, it will be acceptable on sites identified for residential or other development.***

***Proposals involving the redevelopment of existing community facilities for non-community uses will not be permitted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no longer a need to retain that facility.***

- 4.7.1 Quality of life for the residents of Reading is one of the key elements of the vision for the Borough. A good quality of life is not only desirable in itself, but also ensures that Reading remains attractive to investment. The provision of sufficient good quality community facilities is crucial to ensuring that Reading is a place in which people want to live and continue living.
- 4.7.2 Community facilities mean different things to different people. The term could encompass health facilities, education and training facilities (at all levels), youth and community centres and meeting places, libraries, places of worship, civic and administrative facilities and recycling facilities and civic amenity sites. Other uses such as open spaces, sport and recreational

facilities, leisure facilities or pubs are often centrepieces of a community, although these are dealt with in other sections of the Local Plan.

- 4.7.3 The range and quality of facilities serving Reading's communities should be improved. Retaining important facilities will be essential. Some community facilities appear on a list of assets of community value (under the Localism Act 2011), available on the Council's website<sup>121</sup>, and this may indicate the importance of a facility. The provision of a mix of compatible community services on a single site will also be encouraged.
- 4.7.4 Given the dense, built up nature of Reading and the lack of appropriate new sites, it is inevitable that some of the Borough's community facility needs will have to be met through intensification of the use of existing sites. This has particularly been the case on school sites in recent years, and this is likely to continue to be an important aspect of new provision. In some cases, this may mean some development on open areas within the site. This can be acceptable in some cases, but needs to be balanced against the provision of adequate sports and play space, bearing in mind the national policy presumption against loss of playing fields in the NPPF, and other issues such as impact on biodiversity. The Reading Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy (Nov 2021) provides an assessment of existing provision and projects future demand<sup>122</sup>.
- 4.7.5 These facilities should be located in areas that are well serviced by a choice of means of transport, including public transport, walking and cycling. In the case of healthcare facilities, this should include the car. The most appropriate location for community facilities will be in or on the edge of existing centres identified in the network in policy RL1, which will maximise access for the greatest number of people. This will be particularly important for developments that seek to provide a range of different community uses. However, there may be circumstances in which an existing centre is not the most appropriate location, such as where there is a need to provide for an area that does not contain a defined centre. In these cases, community facilities should be located in areas of high accessibility, such as public transport corridors or within close proximity of public transport nodes.
- 4.7.6 A need has been identified for new education provision over the plan period, in particular a new 6 form entry secondary school ideally located close to the town centre (see the Infrastructure Delivery Plan for more information). Work is underway on identifying potential locations. Due to the scarcity of development sites in Reading, a site that would otherwise be appropriate may already be identified for development, particularly for residential. In these cases, development for a school should be supported due to the importance of meeting this need.
- 4.7.7 There are some types of community facilities that are essentially residential in character, such as nursing homes. These are dealt with in policy H5.
- 4.7.8 There are some significant sites in Reading where continued development to help fulfil the site's role in providing for the community is likely to be needed,

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<sup>121</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/6211/List-of-Assets-of-Community-Value>

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.reading.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/council-strategies-plans-and-policies/playing-pitch-strategy/>



for instance Reading College. This will be acceptable, subject to other policies in the plan. Development at the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus is dealt with in policy ER2 and at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in policy ER3.

- 4.7.9 However, it must be recognised that further and higher education expansion can put pressure on the housing market. Given the scale of the need for new homes in Reading, this must be carefully managed. Therefore, applications for academic development that lead to a material increase in additional students needing student accommodation should be supported by an appropriate increase in existing or planned student accommodation. This should be considered in line with policy H12.

### **Hazardous Installations**

#### **OU2: HAZARDOUS INSTALLATIONS (Strategic policy)**

***Proposals for hazardous substances consent, or development in the vicinity of hazardous sites or pipelines, will not be permitted unless it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the amount, type and location of hazardous substances would not pose adverse health and safety risks to the surrounding population and environment; and that any necessary special precautions to limit other potential societal risks to acceptable degrees would be put in place prior to the development commencing.***

***Any proposal for development within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) of AWE Burghfield (AWE B), shown on the Proposals Map or as subsequently amended, that would increase the residential or non-residential population and level of activity will not be acceptable unless:***

- ***it does not prejudice the security and current and future operations and defence capabilities of AWE B; and***
  - ***any increase in population within the DEPZ can be accommodated in the context of the AWE B Off-Site Emergency Plan at the time of the planning application (or any successor under an alternative name).***
- 4.7.10 Substantial levels of development will take place in Reading up to 2041, and the urban nature of the Borough means that developments have the potential to come into conflict with one another. This is especially the case where proposals for housing and hazardous sites, or pipelines, would be in close proximity.
- 4.7.11 The following Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) sites were located within Reading at the time of publication (2024):
- Gillette UK Ltd. factory – 452 Basingstoke Road
  - Oxxem – 117 Loverock Road
- 4.7.12 Whilst all of these types of sites are often subject to stringent controls under other existing Health and Safety legislation, it is necessary to control proposals for hazardous substances consent and the kinds of development permitted in the vicinity of existing hazardous sites installations through the planning process.



- 4.7.13 In addition, Reading's population has a relatively high multi-ethnicity that would result in additional communication requirements when considering a potential emergency evacuation situation. The 2021 Census (ref TS012) established that 32.7% of Reading's population was born outside of the UK/Ireland, compared to 15.2% for the South East as a whole. For this reason, there is an added onus on prevention of such situations.
- 4.7.14 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and, for nuclear licensed sites, the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), acting jointly with the Environment Agency (EA), form the statutory body of the COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards) Competent Authority and provide specialist advice to the Borough on matters relating to hazardous sites. Therefore, both planning applications for development within specified distances of non-nuclear licensed hazardous sites, or pipelines, and/or proposals for new hazardous installations will be referred to the HSE and/or EA. The principal aim of the COMAH Competent Authority is to reduce the risks of potential major accidents that are associated with the handling of hazardous substances.

#### ***Atomic Weapons Establishment, Burghfield***

- 4.7.15 The Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield (AWE B) is located in West Berkshire District, just over 1.5 km from the Reading Borough boundary. The activities within the site include final assembly, maintenance and decommissioning of warheads, and it is critical to sustaining the UK government's nuclear deterrent and supporting national defence and security. Under the requirements of the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPiR), there is a Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) that surrounds the site, and currently extends to a significant extent into Reading Borough. The boundary of the DEPZ is defined by West Berkshire District Council (WBDC) and is subject to regular review. The most up-to-date boundary can be seen on WBDC's website<sup>123</sup> and may not be the same as that shown on the Proposals Map at the time of adoption.
- 4.7.16 Emergency Planning at RBC will be best placed, in consultation with WBDC, which maintains the Off-Site Emergency Plan (OSEP) for AWE Burghfield, and the AWE Off-Site Emergency Planning Group, to judge how a proposal will impact the OSEP. Proposals for any increase in population or activity within the DEPZ (including working or visiting population) should be subject to consultation with ONR, AWE and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) as well as Emergency Planning services in both West Berkshire and Reading. ONR should also be consulted on planning applications of certain types within the Outer Consultation Zone (a 5 km radius) of AWE Burghfield and the 12 km zone of both AWE Burghfield and AWE Aldermaston. Details of these types of application can be found on the ONR website<sup>124</sup>.
- 4.7.17 The Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, West Berkshire District Council, Wokingham Borough Council) as well as other bodies to monitor development proposals and activity, to understand the impact on the OSEP and the operation of AWE.

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<sup>123</sup> Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) - West Berkshire Council

<sup>124</sup> [Land use planning | Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

## Telecommunications Development

### OU3: TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT

***Proposals for telecommunications development will be permitted provided that:***

- ***They do not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the surrounding area, the significance of a heritage asset, trees or highway safety;***
- ***The apparatus will be sited and designed so as to minimise its visual impact by the use of innovative design solutions such as concealment/camouflage options; and***
- ***Alternative sites and site-sharing options, especially those that avoid the use of pavements or sites alongside streets, have been fully investigated and it has been demonstrated that no preferable alternative sites are potentially available which would result in a development that would be less visually intrusive.***

***Applications which result in a negative impact due to the cumulative effect of multiple installations within a single location will not be permitted.***

- 4.7.18 Reading is currently relatively well provided for in respect of mobile phone coverage. However, the anticipated continued expansion of the telecommunications network is likely to require additional 'infill' coverage, much of which is likely to be within established residential areas.
- 4.7.19 Given continuing advances in mobile phone technology and increasing trends to send larger amounts of information via mobile phones, additional telecommunication infrastructure will be required to facilitate this demand. This will most notably be in the form of new telecommunications 'base stations' or antennae. Installations are likely to increase in size and therefore, streetside siting is increasingly problematic.
- 4.7.20 Applicants will also need to ensure that proposals are supported by an acceptable ICNIRP (International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection) declaration which demonstrates that the apparatus would meet the recommendation on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0Hz to 300GHz). Where relevant, ICNIRP declarations should be based on the cumulative effects of electromagnetic fields emitted by other nearby base stations and antennae as well as the proposed development.
- 4.7.21 In April 2022, new permitted development rights for telecommunications<sup>125</sup> came into force. These regulations:
- Enable more significant provision of radio housing;
  - Allow for the widening and increasing the height of existing ground-based masts;

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<sup>125</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/278/made/data.pdf>

- Allow additional height for building-based masts;
- Increase the height limit for new ground-based masts; and
- Strengthen the conditions on the siting and visual impacts of development.

## Advertisements

### OU4: ADVERTISEMENTS

***Advertisements will respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance, and will not have a detrimental effect on public safety. The cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account, and a proliferation of advertisements that detrimentally affects visual or aural amenity or public safety will not be acceptable. All adverts shall comply with the following criteria:***

- Advertisements will not obstruct windows, any other sign already located on the building, or cut across significant architectural features such as historic fascias, windows, pilasters, cornices or scrolls;***
- Where a shop or business occupies more than one adjacent unit, the advertisement will not run between the shopfronts;***
- Advertisements on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;***
- Advertisements will not reduce visibility for users of the highway or accesses onto the highway;***
- Illumination should not detract from the amenity of the area or pose a safety hazard to users of the highway; and***
- Advertisements should not obscure the sight lines of cameras installed for public safety.***

4.7.22 National planning policy requires amenity and public safety to be considered for all applications for advertisement consent, but there is scope for authorities to highlight important amenity and safety considerations at the local level.

4.7.23 Reading is characterised by a busy centre, smaller district and local centres, and dense areas of industrial and warehouse development and community uses. These different activities require advertisements and signs to convey their purpose to visitors and passers by, but, given the density of the Borough, this gives rise to potential tensions. It is important that an advertisement policy takes the needs of advertisers into consideration while also protecting visual and aural amenity and ensuring safety to pedestrians and motorists.

4.7.24 Despite the fact that the policy does not deal specifically with types of advertisements, some types are unlikely to be considered appropriate in terms of how visual amenity and safety is defined in the policy. Freestanding

advert panels in urban streets, for instance, can have a significant detrimental effect on views of the streetscene. Bulky box fascia and projecting signs, often crudely attached onto existing fascias, create a poor visual impression and will not generally be acceptable. Whole fascia internal illumination should be avoided. Care should be taken to ensure that illumination is in keeping with the character of the area, particularly where it would affect heritage assets, for instance face or halo illumination of individual letters may be appropriate and discreet slim-line LED downlighters may be acceptable. Advertisements above ground floor level are particularly prominent, and care should be taken to avoid detrimental effects on visual amenity.

4.7.25 In areas such as the town centre where there are many advertisements side by side, it is important that the advertisements do not create visual clutter, which can be particularly relevant to projecting signs. It is also important to maintain the pattern of the street. Therefore, if a shop or business occupies more than one shop front, the fascia and advertisements must not extend unbroken across the multiple shop fronts. In all cases, the cumulative effect of advertisements must be considered, particularly in areas of dense commercial activity.

4.7.26 This policy will be applied in conjunction with national guidance, e.g. in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance. Conditions relating to matters such as hours of illumination or length of display will be applied where necessary. When an advertisement can be seen from the Strategic Road Network, the Council may be required to consult with Highways England, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007.

4.7.27 In considering illumination levels, the levels of illumination set out by the Institute of Lighting Professionals will be applied as maxima for public safety reasons. Lower levels may be sought on a case-by-case basis to protect visual amenity. The most recent report (2015) sets the following levels (applicable to measurements at night):

<b>Illuminated Area (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Zone E1 (candelas/m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Zone E2 (candelas/m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Zone E3 (candelas/m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Zone E4 (candelas/m<sup>2</sup>)</b>
Up to 10.00	100	400	600	600
Over 10.00	N/A	200	300	300

(Source: Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements, Institute of Lighting Professionals, 2015).

4.7.28 The zones are described as:

- Zone E1: Intrinsically dark areas.
- Zone E2: Low district brightness areas (e.g. rural-urban fringe).
- Zone E3: Medium district brightness areas (e.g. district and local centres and urban areas).
- Zone E4: High district brightness areas (e.g. the core of the centre).

In some circumstances, particularly where listed buildings and conservation areas are concerned, illumination levels may need to be reduced, although

this will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Please see the comments in paragraph 4.7.26 about illumination.

- 4.7.29 There is an overlap between this policy and OU5 on shopfronts, and, in some cases, both policies will apply.

### **Shopfronts and Cash Machines**

#### **OU5: SHOPFRONTS AND CASH MACHINES**

***Shopfronts, individual features of shopfronts and cash machines will respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street, in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and street will be retained and, where possible, restored. Safety and security will be maintained and enhanced.***

***For shopfronts, the following criteria will be fulfilled:***

- a) New shopfronts on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;***
- b) Where a shop occupies multiple units, shopfronts will not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost;***
- c) Fascia boards should be lower than any first floor windows, and reflect the predominant height of historic fascia boards on surrounding buildings;***
- d) Canopies and blinds over windows and entrances should be for the shading of the shop and should be retractable; and***
- e) Shopfronts should present an active frontage to the street at all times. Where security is essential, security features will be internal, such as internal open mesh grilles. Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint and films, will be minimised and will not obscure the window.***

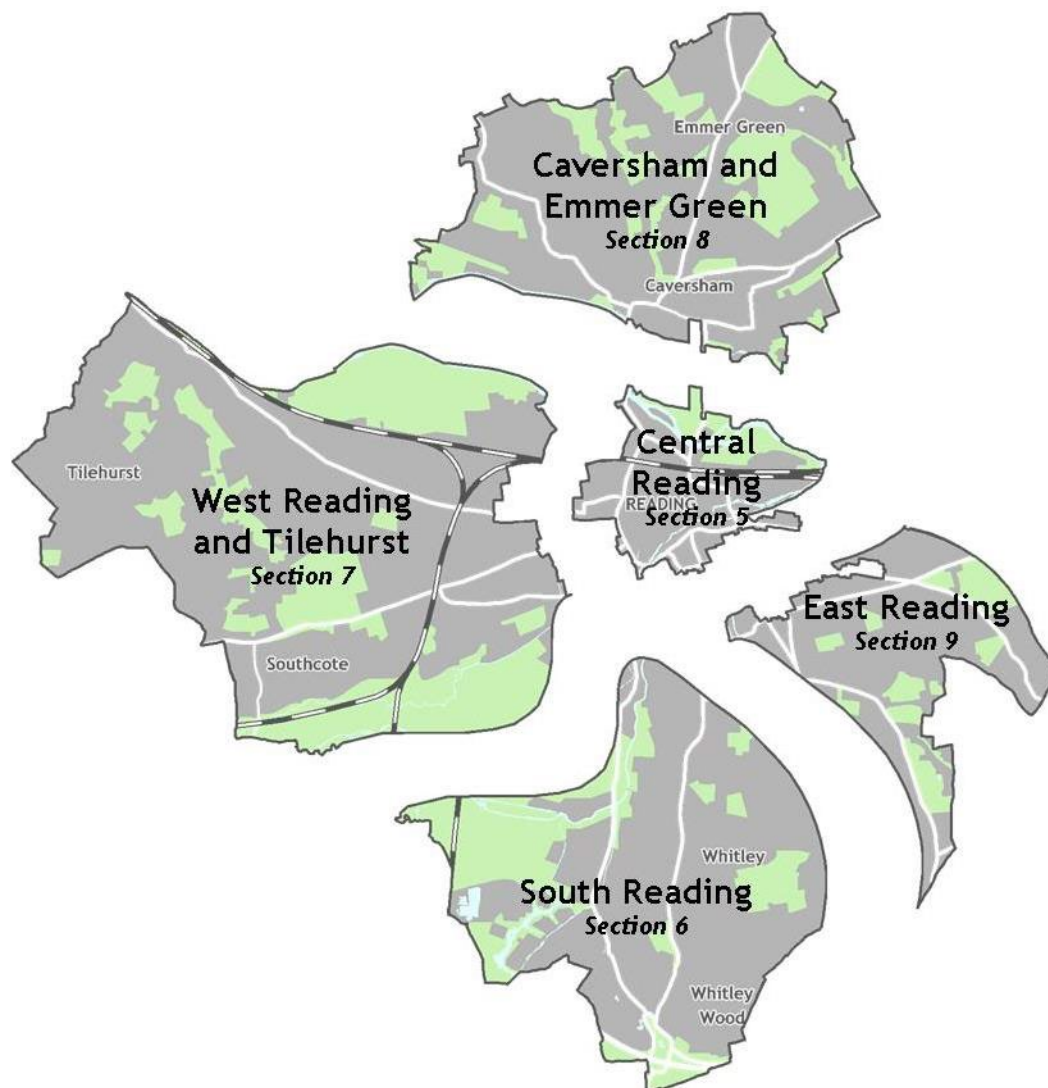
- 4.7.30 Reading has many good examples of shopfronts, both traditional and modern. To ensure that the heritage character and amenity of the Borough is maintained, the design of shopfronts is vital. The character of a shopping street is often defined by its shopfronts. Given the success of Reading as a shopping destination, many visitors experience Reading mainly as shoppers, and it is therefore important that shopfronts do not detract from this experience.

- 4.7.31 The overall composition of multiple shopfronts is often of greatest importance, and features such as stallrisers, pilasters and fascia boards can contribute to the character of the building as well as to the streetscape, and should be retained where they already exist. Such features should be included in new shopfronts where they are part of the character of the street. Fixed canopies can obscure such features and are usually inappropriate. Merging of shopfronts can negatively affect the pattern of the street, and, where shop

units are combined, the pattern can be maintained by having a gap in the fascia boards and a strong separation between the exterior of the two units by a pilaster or a column.

- 4.7.32 Security is an important consideration and the Council does not seek to hinder the ability of businesses to protect their property. However, in recent years, many shopfronts have been secured by external, solid roller doors. These are often a cheap and easy solution for security, but have detrimental effects on the shopfront and streetscape, presenting a blank wall to pedestrians and reducing natural surveillance. Other methods of security, such as lattice grilles and internal shutters are more appropriate as they still provide the necessary security but also create a more open frontage and allow light spillage after dark. In recent years, there have also been a number of cases where shop windows have been obscured by opaque material, which can have a negative effect on the vitality of the whole street and is not appropriate. Shopfronts should remain active during both the day and night.
- 4.7.33 Safety and security will be a prime consideration in the location of cash machines, which should be located in well-lit, busy areas, away from dark corners or recesses.
- 4.7.34 A Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD was adopted in 2022 and provides more detail.

## AREA-SPECIFIC SECTIONS





## 5. CENTRAL READING

### 5.1 Area Context

- 5.1.1 The centre of Reading is one of the most accessible locations in the South East, and contains one of the most successful shopping centres in the UK. It is a location for a number of businesses of national and international importance, and is home to a growing residential community. It has a significant concentration of important heritage assets, some of which are increasingly being better revealed through new investment.
- 5.1.2 The character of the town centre is strongly linked to the history of the town. There is some evidence of Roman settlement, and the name of Reading has Saxon origins, with the original Saxon settlement in the vicinity of St Mary's church. The development of Reading Abbey, founded in 1121, was a major economic stimulus for the town. The historic core of the centre dates from medieval times, around the three medieval churches of St Laurence's, St Giles' and St Mary's. Reading was mostly contained within its medieval boundaries until the end of the 18th century, when the town began to expand as a result of improved transport links (including transformation of the River Kennet into a canal, linking Reading with other areas), and industrialisation. Reading's emergence as an industrial centre is largely attributable to the arrival of the Great Western railway in the mid 19th Century.
- 5.1.3 The opening of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) in 1969 transformed the town centre, with changes to the physical appearance of Reading, including alterations to the historic street pattern, the loss of historic buildings, and dissection of the town centre. Parts of Reading's historic core were demolished during the mid-20th Century, to make way for more modern developments. However, much of historical merit remains.
- 5.1.4 More recently, there has been substantial new development within the centre. The opening of the Oracle centre in 1999 helped to establish Reading as one of the leading shopping locations in the UK. More recently, Reading station has been transformed, increasing passenger capacity and removing a significant bottleneck on the rail network. New public spaces north and south of the station provide a focus for new development. New tall buildings have been developed in the centre, and, with further tall buildings already permitted, the skyline of Central Reading is set to transform.
- 5.1.5 The centre has a wide mix of facilities. Large amounts of comparison retail are present in the centre, and there is a wide selection of leisure, cultural and entertainment facilities. The evening economy is particularly strong, and draws many visitors from outside Reading to the centre's pubs and clubs. The edge of the centre holds large areas of open space, particularly on both sides of the Thames. However, there is much less open space within the core of the centre and to the south.
- 5.1.6 The centre is among the most important employment areas in the Borough. There is a substantial amount of office floorspace in the centre, including a number of freestanding headquarters-type buildings. However, over the last two decades, there has been a trend for older office buildings to be converted into flats, which has accelerated since 2013 due to new permitted development rights, albeit that an Article 4 direction is now in place to control

this in key locations. This growing housing role in the centre has been one of the most obvious recent trends in central Reading, and Central Reading as defined here (which is largely the commercial core) had a population of 12,000 at the 2021 Census, but will have expanded even since that date, and will continue to do so in future. Residents are often young, single, childless and working in managerial and professional occupations, with a low level of car ownership, reflecting the fact that the vast majority of homes in the area are flats.

- 5.1.7 Given the history of the centre, it is unsurprising to find that the most significant cluster of heritage assets are in the area. Around 40% of Reading's listed buildings are in the centre (and many of the remainder are on its fringes), including five of Reading's six Grade I listed buildings, and more than half of the Grade II\* listed buildings. Four conservation areas are within or partially within the centre, as are both of Reading's scheduled ancient monuments.

## **5.2 Strategy for Central Reading**

- 5.2.1 The following represent some key principles for the area:

- a. The centre will contain a broad range of different but complementary uses within an area easily accessed by foot.
- b. The centre will appeal to all sectors of Reading's population as a place to live in, work in, study in and visit.
- c. New development will exhibit an excellent, safe and sustainable quality of design that contributes to the attraction of the centre.
- d. The centre will make the most of its waterside areas as a destination for leisure and recreation, and protect and enhance wildlife habitats.
- e. Areas of designated open space within the centre will be protected and new opportunities will be sought.
- f. Access to the centre by foot, cycle and public transport will be improved.
- g. Access within the centre by foot and cycle will be improved and barriers to this improved access will be overcome, particularly in a north-south direction through the core.
- h. Development in the centre will benefit from and contribute towards forthcoming major transport improvements.
- i. Areas and features that positively contribute to the unique and historic character of central Reading will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced.

- 5.2.2 The challenge will be to provide an appropriate scale and mix of uses that make a major contribution to meeting Reading's needs, are viable, well connected to the core, particularly the station and the transport interchange, and that help to achieve a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century town centre while protecting and enhancing the historic interest and other special qualities of Reading.

## ***Movement and transport***

- 5.2.3 Ten years ago, the picture of the centre was one of fragmentation, with barriers such as the IDR, the railway and the River Thames blocking pedestrian movement in many parts, together with uninviting linkages between other parts of the centre. These issues have begun to be addressed in recent years, with a new underpass under the station, a new pedestrian and cycle crossing of the Thames and improvements to the public realm along streets such as Station Road. However, barriers such as the IDR still exist, and the spatial strategy will continue to seek to overcome these barriers, particularly through expansion of the centre northwards beyond the railway. Emphasising a north-south link through the centre will help to link the centre to the Thames and its adjacent parks, to Caversham and to the rest of Reading.
- 5.2.4 Significant transport investment has taken place in Central Reading in recent years, with the major improvements to Reading station together with new public transport interchanges and resulting changes to routes and services. Improvements are expected to continue with the delivery of a Bus Rapid Transit system, linking Central Reading to the wider Reading urban area and park and ride mobility hub sites. It may require dedicated space on some of the streets in the centre. However, care must be taken to ensure that this system does not end up creating barriers to movement within the centre and cancelling out the benefits of breaking down barriers elsewhere. The preferred route for BRT in Central Reading is shown on Figure 5.1. Details on implementation are set out in section 10.

## ***Land uses***

- 5.2.5 A key theme that underpins the strategy and the context in which it should be read is of a mix of uses across the central area, both vertically and horizontally, although the emphasis will differ in different areas. Where specific uses should be within certain areas (e.g. office and retail), this is provided by policy CR1. If an area is shown for certain uses on the illustrative maps, it does not mean that all areas within that definition are appropriate for redevelopment, it is merely a broad guide to distribution of uses.
- 5.2.6 Housing development on suitable sites will continue to be promoted across the centre, although it will often be part of a wider mix of uses, particularly in the commercial core. It will need to be sensitive to potential environmental problems, noise, nuisance and pollution that occur in certain parts of the centre. Getting an appropriate mix of types, sizes and tenures across the area will be of great importance, as will providing the essential uses and services to allow the centre to be seen as somewhere where people can live for the long-term. This housing growth is likely to mean increasing levels of community facilities in the centre to support residential development, as well as the continued role of the centre in providing community uses to serve the whole Borough.
- 5.2.7 In the rare event of a conflict developing between uses, certain uses will have priority, as the centre is the only suitable location. Major retail and town centre leisure development, including evening economy uses, will take first precedence, followed by, to a more limited extent, offices. In contrast, housing uses, including supporting social and community facilities, can be located in many places across the Borough.

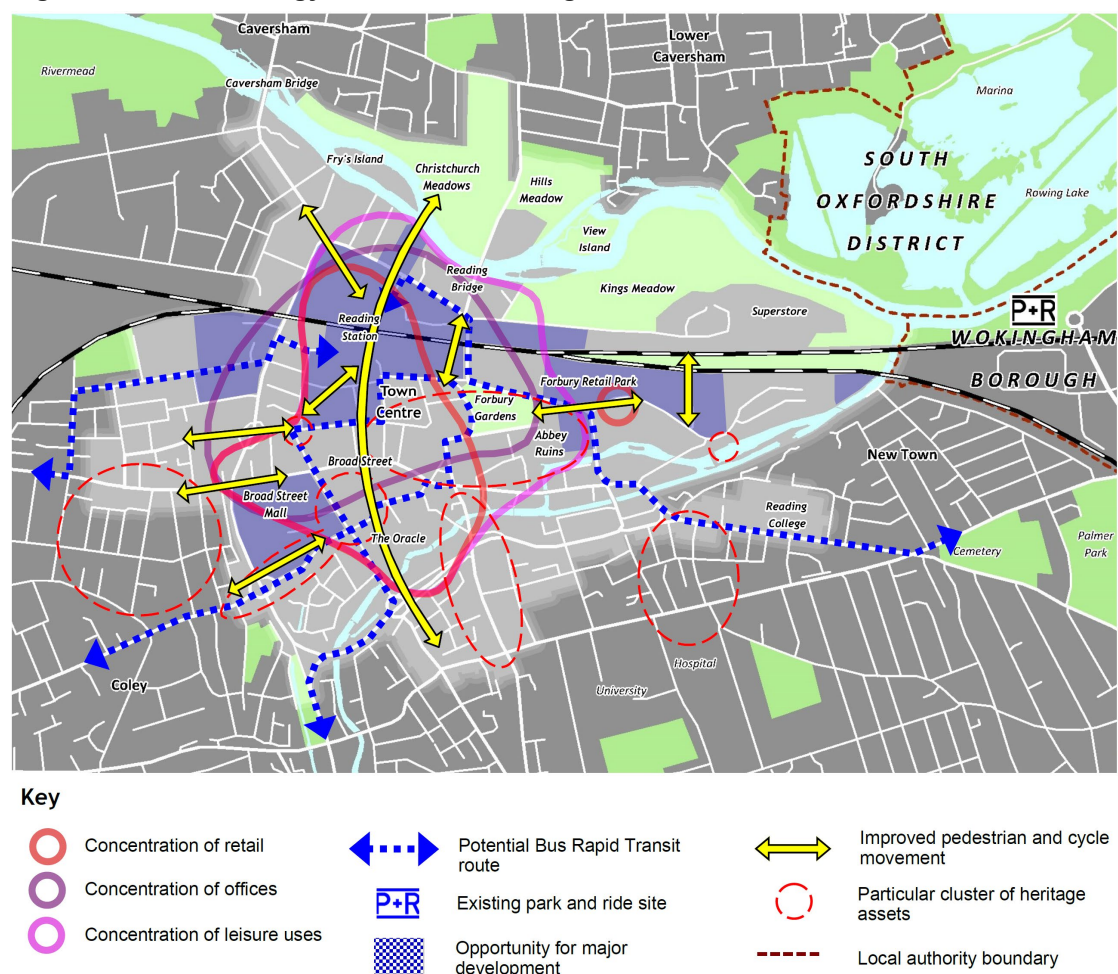
- 5.2.8 Further major commercial office development will largely be focused in an area centred on, and easily accessible from, the station, to ensure the greatest level of accessibility by means of travel other than the car.
- 5.2.9 In terms of retail, Broad Street, the Oracle and the Broad Street Mall are currently the hub of retail in Reading and have by some distance the highest levels of footfall. It is not expected that this will change significantly, as a retail hub needs to be as compact as possible to ensure that it is viable, although there is scope for this area to be expanded in places to help to activate key streets and spaces in new development areas, particularly to the north of the current shopping core around the station.
- 5.2.10 In the context of changes to retailing, in particular online shopping, the focus of town centres across the country is increasingly on leisure provision, and Reading town centre's leisure offer will need to expand to ensure that the centre can meet this changing role. This will include arts and cultural provision, sport and recreation facilities and additional restaurants and evening uses that appeal to a wide range of users and continue to provide an 18-hour welcome. The centre will continue to provide community facilities to serve the Borough as well as the centre's growing residential population. New development and redevelopment also provides scope for creation of new open spaces and public spaces that will provide settings for buildings and offer increased opportunities for informal recreation and leisure and community events in the centre.

### *Urban design*

- 5.2.11 The key to the design approach in the centre is achieving a high quality built environment and public realm. In some areas, for instance much of the existing historic core, this is already present, and in these cases this will be retained and enhanced, particularly in and adjacent to the existing central area conservation areas that cover parts of the centre. The Reading Abbey Quarter project will promote the former precinct of Reading Abbey and its surrounds, a significantly wider area than merely the remaining ruins, as a high quality visitor destination, well-linked into the rest of the centre.
- 5.2.12 However, in many parts of the central area, particularly the three identified major opportunity areas, there are low-quality and underused areas that would benefit from high quality, well-designed new development. Such new development should respect and enhance the character of the central area. It should build on and reestablish the urban grid structure of streets and places in the centre, providing high levels of access and connectivity into the centre and to the public transport interchanges. It should contribute to creating a high quality public realm with the provision of new open and public spaces, high quality landscaping and public art as appropriate. It should provide continuity and enclosure with a high degree of active frontages.
- 5.2.13 Much of the development that takes place in the centre will be high density, to help meet the needs for new development as well as to provide a high-quality area that capitalises on its excellent accessibility by public transport. Accordingly, there will be scope for additional tall buildings in specific parts of the centre, in line with the tall buildings policy CR10, but it is important to bear in mind that achieving high densities does not necessitate tall buildings where they are not appropriate. In general, the tallest buildings will be in the most accessible location, around the station.

5.2.14 These principles are illustrated on Figure 5.1.

**Figure 5.1: Area strategy for Central Reading**



## Summary

5.2.15 There is undoubted physical capacity within the centre to incorporate a significant level of new development, by efficient use of underused land through carefully developing at higher densities. This represents the most significant opportunity to accommodate new development within Reading. However, there are a variety of constraints in the centre. As well as the centre's significant heritage, and the importance of protecting the centre's limited open space, these include physical constraints to movement such as the IDR, the rivers and the railway. In addition, much of the centre, including some of the more obvious redevelopment opportunities, lies within the flood plain.

5.2.16 It is expected that between 2023 and 2041 Central Reading will accommodate approximately:

- 8,700 homes to 2041 (around 59% of the total planned for – this includes 749 homes already completed during 2023-24);
- 46,000 sq m of office floorspace (virtually all of the total planned for); and



- Retail and leisure floorspace, unlikely to result in a net gain across the plan period.

## 5.3 General Policies for Central Reading

### Definition of Central Reading

#### **CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING**

***The Central Area boundary as shown on the Proposals Map will mark the edge of the town centre other than where specified. However, for the purposes of application of the sequential test for main town centre uses, the following definitions as defined on the Proposals Map are used:***

- ***Retail development will take place in the Primary Shopping Area;***
- ***Major office development of over 1,000 sq m will take place in the Office Core; and***
- ***Other main town centre uses will take place in the Central Core.***

- 5.3.1 The policy identifies the boundaries of the town centre for the purposes of applying the sequential test, as set out in paragraph 91 of the NPPF. These boundaries are distinct from the boundary of 'Central Reading' as the area covered by section 5. Need has been identified for additional main town centre uses (see section 4.6) and the overall strategy is that the centre of Reading should be the main location for such main town centre uses. The spatial strategy for Central Reading (section 5.2) and the guidelines on Major Opportunity Areas (policies CR11-13) give guidance on the main locations for this floorspace. However, there is a need to define a Primary Shopping Area to set out the boundaries of what should be Reading's shopping core, and this will be set out on the Proposals Map.
- 5.3.2 The primary shopping area should be the focus for new retail investment. It will be the first location to be examined in applying the sequential approach to identifying sites for retail proposals, in line with the NPPF.
- 5.3.3 The sequential approach will also be applied to 'main town centre uses' other than retail, including leisure, cultural, visitor and arts facilities as well as offices. The general approach to these uses is set out in RL2, and involves concentration mainly on the centre. An office core and a central core will need to be defined to act as the focus for these uses in the centre and in order for the sequential approach to be applied. The office core will be slightly different from the central core for reasons set out in the spatial strategy.
- 5.3.4 It should be emphasised that the designation of, for example, a primary shopping area, does not mean that other types of development will not also be acceptable within this area. Mixing uses within the centre is at the heart of the strategy. The policy is purely in place to allow the application of the sequential test.

## **Design in Central Reading**

### **CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING**

***Applications for development within Central Reading should demonstrate the following attributes:***

- a. Development will build on and attempt to re-establish a grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;***
- b. Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality and well-maintained hard and soft landscaped areas, and public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;***
- c. Development should provide green infrastructure and design for biodiversity net gain, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;***
- d. The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;***
- e. Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety; and***
- f. Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.***

***In cases where conflicts arise between the elements listed above, measures which bring the greatest public benefit will be prioritised.***

- 5.3.5 Part of the strategy for Central Reading is to achieve a distinctive high-quality environment, by integrating protection of the historic core, special character and market town intimacy of Reading with modern, intensive, well designed, well connected, highly accessible urban development with first class open spaces and other public realm that will help to cement its role as a modern and exciting 21<sup>st</sup> Century centre.
- 5.3.6 The role of high-quality urban design in achieving the vision for the centre is therefore clear. This Local Plan includes general policies that will be applicable everywhere, including Central Reading, including on matters such as design and the historic environment. As the largest concentration of heritage assets in the Borough, policies on heritage will in particular be highly relevant in the centre. In addition, the issue of urban design has been integrated into the whole Central Reading section, as it is not an entirely area-specific issue. However, there is a need for a policy to highlight those elements of the design issue specific to Central Reading.



- 5.3.7 A City Centre Framework was published in 2002 which set out an urban design framework for the central area. This was updated in 2008<sup>126</sup>, and this work, along with the wide variety of documents produced for individual areas within the centre, has provided the basis for much of the Central Reading section of the Local Plan.
- 5.3.8 Supplementary Planning Documents may be prepared for elements of design where necessary. These may include Design Codes that reflect local character and local design preferences which can provide a framework for high-quality place-making.
- 5.3.9 Policy CR2 picks up the elements that require more specific detail than is provided in other applicable design policies. For instance, the first criterion relates to one of the key themes, 'the urban grid', which was highlighted in the City Centre Framework. The grid structure has the advantages of catering flexibly for movement and positive urban place-making, and new development should build on and extend this pattern. Another example would be the need for flexible and adaptable buildings, which is particularly applicable to the centre, as the changing balance between the residential and office markets is particularly pronounced here, and buildings should be able to cope with those shifts through changes of use. Buildings 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**

- 5.3.10 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 bricks 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.

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<sup>126</sup> <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/2857/City-Centre-Framework-2008/pdf/City-Centre-Framework-2008.pdf>

## **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 watercourses 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.***

- 5.3.11 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.
- 5.3.12 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.

- 5.3.13 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>127</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.***

- 5.3.14 This policy refers to those leisure, culture and tourism uses that are defined as 'main town centre uses' in the NPPF, excluding drinking uses, which are covered elsewhere. These facilities will assist in widening the variety of the offer of the centre, and would, in many cases, help to attract a greater range of people into the centre. For that reason, additional uses should be encouraged, and there are substantial opportunities within Central Reading to accommodate leisure and cultural uses, as well as new visitor accommodation. Policy RL2 directs major leisure, culture and tourism uses to Central Reading, and CR1 defines the Central Core as the most suitable part

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<sup>127</sup> Leisure, cultural and tourism development are those uses within the 'main town centre uses' defined in the NPPF

of the centre.

- 5.3.15 In order to diversify uses in the town centre and improve the Centre's leisure offer, it is important to accommodate leisure, cultural and tourism activities that appeal to a wide range of age and social groups. Leisure and entertainment uses that would contribute to the 18-hour economy will be encouraged, and existing uses maintained. This should include a range of different, yet complementary evening and night-time economy uses to cater for all sections of Reading's community, and offer alternative activities to drinking.
- 5.3.16 In all cases, new leisure development should be based on the principles of high quality and inclusive design, to assist in making the town centre more attractive and usable for local residents, shoppers, employees and leisure visitors. Blank and/ or uninteresting façades or shed-like structures will not be permitted. New development and/ or redevelopment in the Centre also provides opportunities for the creation of new spaces that may be used for formal or informal recreation and leisure.
- 5.3.17 In some cases, it may be appropriate to incorporate leisure and cultural uses within wider developments, to create effective mixed-use schemes. Where this is the case, the integration of these uses with existing developments will be encouraged, provided they do not give rise to adverse impacts on amenity.
- 5.3.18 Leisure, cultural and tourism development should not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents and other town centre users, or to existing town centre spaces. Proposals will therefore be expected to mitigate any potential issues of noise disturbance (particularly night-time noise), traffic-related congestion, and anti-social behaviour and crime.

### **Drinking Establishments in Central Reading**

#### **CR5: DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS IN CENTRAL READING**

***A range of complementary evening and night-time uses that appeal to all sections of Reading's society, and contribute to the 18-hour welcome, will be provided. Such uses should not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents and other town centre users. Those uses that are likely to have an adverse impact on amenity or the character and/ or function of the Central area, will not be permitted.***

***Proposals for pubs, bars and clubs should be accessible to current and proposed night-time public transport services.***

- 5.3.19 Reading has become an important centre for evening drinking uses over recent years, drawing people from surrounding areas as well as from the urban area of Reading. The evening economy is a key part of the overall economy, and drinking uses have therefore been a major factor in Reading's success. It is important to keep in mind that, despite some local issues, success as a centre for evening socialising has benefited Reading, and that Reading will continue to strive to maintain an 18-hour welcome for a range of users of the centre.
- 5.3.20 There is an identified need to ensure that the offer of the evening economy is diverse, in order to widen the range of people who are attracted to the centre

in the evenings. Policy CR4 on leisure uses includes many uses which will widen the evening offer, and the policy on drinking establishments should be read in conjunction with that policy. The policy should encourage greater diversity in the offer of pubs, bars and nightclubs within the policy framework of strengthening leisure, culture and tourism in the centre.

- 5.3.21 Drinking establishments are included within 'main town centre uses', and therefore proposals for new facilities will need to follow a sequential approach in line with the NPPF and policy CR1. The preference in this approach is for a location within the Central Core where there will be fewer detrimental impacts on residential areas, and where those externalities that do result can be better managed and contained.
- 5.3.22 Should a conflict arise between two or more uses in the Central Core, priority will be given to those uses that cannot be accommodated elsewhere, including drinking establishments. Evening uses will still be expected to mitigate impacts on amenity, including anti-social behaviour and crime.

### **Living in Central Reading**

#### **CR6: LIVING IN CENTRAL READING**

***Proposals for residential development within the central area will be assessed against the following criteria:***

- i. All proposals for residential development within the central area will be required to contribute towards a mix of different sized units within the development. This will be measured by the number of bedrooms provided within individual units. Ideally, a mixture of one, two and three bedroom units should be provided. As a guide, in developments of 15 dwellings or more, a maximum of 40% of units should be 1-bed/studios, and a minimum of 15% of units should be at least 3-bed, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable.***
- ii. Proposals for new residential development within the central area will be required to demonstrate how the issue of potential noise disturbance from neighbouring land uses and other sources, and air quality implications of residential development, have been considered and if necessary, mitigated. New residential development should not be located next to existing town centre uses where those uses would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the new scheme, unless this can be mitigated.***
- iii. In meeting the requirement to provide affordable housing, in the central area an over-concentration of social renting for single persons will be avoided.***
- iv. Where proposals for serviced apartments and apart-hotels fall outside the C3 use class, they will be located within the Central Core. Such proposals will not be permitted unless the duration of occupation of residents is restricted, to ensure the units are used on a short stay basis and not as residential flats, and information monitoring the implementation of this restriction is regularly supplied.***

- 5.3.23 The centre of Reading is becoming ever more important as a residential location, and this applies not only to the inner areas surrounding the core, but increasingly the commercial and shopping core itself. This is to be welcomed, as it adds vitality to the centre at all hours and ensures that there is some feeling of ownership of the streets and spaces. Housing development in the centre will continue to occur over the plan period, with 8,700 new homes expected to 2041.
- 5.3.24 Town and city centres, unless they are the very largest centres, are never likely to be popular with large numbers of families. However, there will be families wishing to buck the trend, and other groups who would prefer larger accommodation in the centre. The policy therefore ensures that the range of housing in the centre is not unnecessarily limited. Whilst flats are likely to make up the vast majority of new housing development in the centre, developments should not be dominated by one-bedroom units, and a minimum proportion of three or more bed-units will allow for a wider variety of people living in the centre. Reading Housing Needs Assessment highlighted the need for a range of dwelling sizes across the Borough.
- 5.3.25 An increasing residential population in the centre raises the issue of conflict with alternative uses, particularly in the evening. Research suggests that, far from being conflicting uses, a busy evening economy is a major attractor of potential residents, who are often young and childless. Measures to maximise the mitigation of potential noise and disturbance should be built into the design of both the potential source, and of those developments, particularly housing developments, likely to be affected. However, where the evening economy is at its strongest, the potential for noise and disturbance may be such that it cannot be mitigated through design and will make for an unacceptable living environment. In these cases, residential development adjacent to these areas should not take place.
- 5.3.26 In some cases, in order for the internal noise levels to be reasonable and not adversely affect health it would be necessary to provide a system of ventilation that entirely removes the necessity to open windows, even in very hot weather. Similarly, in terms of air quality, mitigation of impacts on residential development may be required, including means of ventilation that remove the need to open windows, and draw in the lowest levels of pollution possible, for instance from roof sources. This should be secured through the design of the proposal, and planning condition if necessary. Such systems will require additional energy use, which will need to be offset in order to comply with policy CC2 or H5. Section 106 agreements may be an appropriate mechanism to improve air quality or offset the subsequent environmental impact of the proposed development in the AQMAs, where it is in compliance with the CIL Regulations.
- 5.3.27 In terms of overall provision for affordable housing, new development in the centre will be treated no differently from any other housing development, and will follow Policy H3 on affordable housing. However, the policy seeks a proportion of affordable housing as social rented accommodation. This type of accommodation, particularly where it is for single people, often caters for the most vulnerable in society, who may not be suited to the high-pressure living environment of the centre. While this issue will still need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, there is a need to avoid an over-concentration of one-bedroom social renting.



- 5.3.28 In recent years, Reading has seen a marked increase in proposals for serviced apartments, particularly in the centre. These uses fall halfway between hotels and housing, providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living but also the amenities of a hotel. They are attractive to people who will stay in the area for weeks or months at a time. However, these uses should not be seen as a way of introducing flats by the back door and therefore avoiding the need to contribute towards the provision of affordable housing. There will need to be restrictions applied through Section 106 agreements or conditions to ensure that development does not change its character to a residential development without planning permission, and a requirement to provide regular monitoring information on length of occupancy.

### **Primary Frontages in Central Reading**

#### **CR7: PRIMARY FRONTAGES IN CENTRAL READING**

***Uses on the ground floor along the designated primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map will be within one of the following use classes: C1, E, F1, F2 or related sui generis uses, unless it would be an entrance to upper floors. New developments (or alterations to existing uses) that front onto any of the designated primary frontages will provide an active building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level, in order to contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre, and provide visual interest.***

***Frontages should be of a high visual quality. Any frontages that have the potential to hinder movement or cause unnecessary safety risk will not be permitted.***

- 5.3.29 Active frontages at ground floor level are key in creating the impression of a healthy centre, and in ensuring that locations are places that people want to visit and spend time in. On the key streets in the centre, it is vital that new development continues to reflect this, and that it offers visual interest on the frontage. Ground floor uses on these frontages should be uses that create interest and activity, and typically complement town centre streets. Ensuring that uses contain frontage onto the street is essential in creating safe places and spaces, and making areas feel well-used.
- 5.3.30 Primary frontages (most of which are existing, but some will be created through new development) are illustrated on the Proposals Map. Whilst a wide range of uses, such as housing, are generally appropriate in the centre, the primary frontage should be occupied by those uses that make the greatest contribution to the vibrancy of the centre. These frontages will contain continuous glazed display windows. In the exceptional cases where this is not achievable, entrances and openings should be positioned at regular intervals along the ground floor, to assist in enlivening the street. New development should be designed to accord with existing building facades and lines, and avoid abnormal setbacks and gaps in the frontage. Frontages should remain uncluttered, so that they function effectively for all in society.

### **Small Retail Units in Central Reading**

#### **CR8: SMALL SHOP UNITS IN CENTRAL READING**

***Small shop units make an important contribution to the diversity of the centre. Some areas of the centre are particularly characterised by small***



***units, of less than 75 sq m. These include the arcades, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Union Street, and any other areas designated in the future.***

***Within the areas characterised by small shop units, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted.***

***Major new retail development (more than 2,500 sq m) for multiple units in the Primary Shopping Area should include some provision for a range of small shop units.***

- 5.3.31 In promoting town centres' vitality and viability, national policy in the NPPF focuses development in town centres and states that policies will allow centres to "grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters" (paragraph 85). It also states that local planning authorities should actively plan for growth and manage the role and function of existing centres. This includes the range of sizes of shops, which can cater for different and varied retail offers.
- 5.3.32 Reading is known as being a major shopping destination with a wide offer of national multiple retailers. However, there is also an existing grouping of smaller retailers which adds diversity to the range of the centre, and planning can help to maintain this sector and allow it to grow. Although controlling the occupiers of buildings is not within the remit of planning, it can have an effect on the size of units. Part of the retail mix and character of Reading centre is the presence of a number of small shop units including within the arcades and some of the smaller side streets. In order to ensure that the vitality, diversity and retail offer of the centre of Reading is maintained and enhanced, this policy seeks to retain these small retail units, and the provision of additional small units within new retail development.

### **Terraced Housing in Central Reading**

#### **CR9: TERRACED HOUSING IN CENTRAL READING**

***The character of the following areas of traditional town centre terraced housing will be respected:***

- ***CR9a: Blakes Cottages***
- ***CR9b: Crane Wharf***
- ***CR9c: Queen's Cottages***
- ***CR9d: Sackville Street & Vachel Road***
- ***CR9e: Stanshawe Road***

***Development should not result in a loss, or have a detrimental effect on the character of, these areas.***

- 5.3.33 The centre of Reading contains a number of small groupings of traditional terraced housing within the Inner Distribution Road. These areas make a unique contribution to the character of central Reading, and can be a pleasant surprise to first time visitors. These areas have merit in their own right: for instance, Sackville Street is a fine example of Reading patterned brickwork housing. In addition, Crane Wharf, Queen's Cottages and Blakes Cottages

are old waterside housing areas abutting the towpath and displaying a distinct character and fabric worthy of retention and enhancement. However, there are a number of areas of distinct character in Reading, and it is the juxtaposition with the high-density, often modern, context in which these areas are found that marks them out and makes them most worthy of retention. The fact that it is the context of these areas that is the main reason for their significance makes a policy in the Local Plan a more appropriate mechanism than designation as conservation areas.

- 5.3.34 In addition, terraces provide opportunities for people who would not wish to live in a flat, to live in the centre. High land values mean that the development of many further houses with gardens in the core of the centre is unlikely, so these areas, where they are not already converted into flats, are important to preserve in terms of maintaining a mix and variety of housing in the centre.

## **Tall Buildings**

### **CR10: TALL BUILDINGS (Strategic policy)**

***In Reading, tall buildings are defined as 10 storeys of commercial floorspace or 12 storeys of residential (equating to 36 metres tall) or above. Tall buildings will meet all the requirements below.***

- i) ***Within Reading Borough, tall buildings will only be appropriate within the 'areas of potential for tall buildings' as defined on the Proposals Map, other than as set out in criterion v). These areas are as follows:***

***CR10a: Station Area Cluster***

***CR10b: Western Grouping***

***CR10c: Eastern Grouping***

***Figure 5.2 gives an 'at a glance' diagrammatic indication of the principles for each area set out in the following sections.***

- ii) ***CR10a, Station Area Cluster:***

***A new cluster of tall buildings with the station at its heart will signify the status of the station area as a major mixed-use destination and the main gateway to and most accessible part of Reading.***

***Tall buildings in this area should:***

- ***Follow a pattern of the tallest buildings at the centre of the cluster, close to the station, and step down in height from that point towards the lower buildings at the fringes;***
- ***Contribute to the creation of a coherent, attractive and sustainable cluster of buildings with a high quality of public realm;***
- ***Ensure that adequate space is provided between the buildings to avoid the creation of an overly dense townscape and to allow buildings to be viewed as individual forms;***
- ***Be designed to fit within a wider planning framework or master***

*plan for the area, which allows separate parcels of land to come forward at different times in a co-ordinated manner.*

**iii) CR10b, Western Grouping:**

*A secondary cluster of tall buildings would be appropriate to create a distinctive grouping, to mark the area as the civic heart of Reading and a gateway to the centre.*

*Tall buildings in this area should:*

- Contribute to the development of a cluster of tall buildings that is clearly subservient to the Station Area Cluster;*
- Be generally lower in height than the tallest buildings planned for the Station Area Cluster;*
- Be linked to the physical regeneration of a wider area and should not be proposed in isolation;*
- Where buildings are to be integrated or front onto existing streets, include upper storeys of the taller structures that are set back from a base which is in line with the general surrounding building heights, particularly where the structure adjoins a conservation area;*
- Not intrude on the key view between Greyfriars Church and St Giles Church, and a view from the open space in the Hosier Street development to St Mary's Church.*

**iv) CR10c, Eastern Grouping:**

*One or two landmark buildings situated at street corners or other gateway sites are appropriate to mark the extent of the business area.*

*Tall buildings in this area should:*

- Be of a smaller scale than the tallest buildings around the station;*
- Be slim in nature and avoid dominant massing;*
- Avoid setting back upper storeys on Kings Road in order to align strategic views into and out of the centre;*
- Not intrude on the view from Blakes Bridge towards Blakes Cottages.*

**v) *In addition to the three clusters, 'areas of less suitability for tall buildings' are shown on the Proposals Map, within which tall buildings will not be suitable unless a clear case can be made that the cluster approach would not be undermined when all significant views are taken into account and that all of the other aspects of this policy are complied with.***

**vi) *Outside the three clusters and the 'areas of less suitability for tall buildings', tall buildings will not be permitted.***

**vii) In addition to the area-specific requirements, all tall building proposals should be of excellent design and architectural quality, and should:**

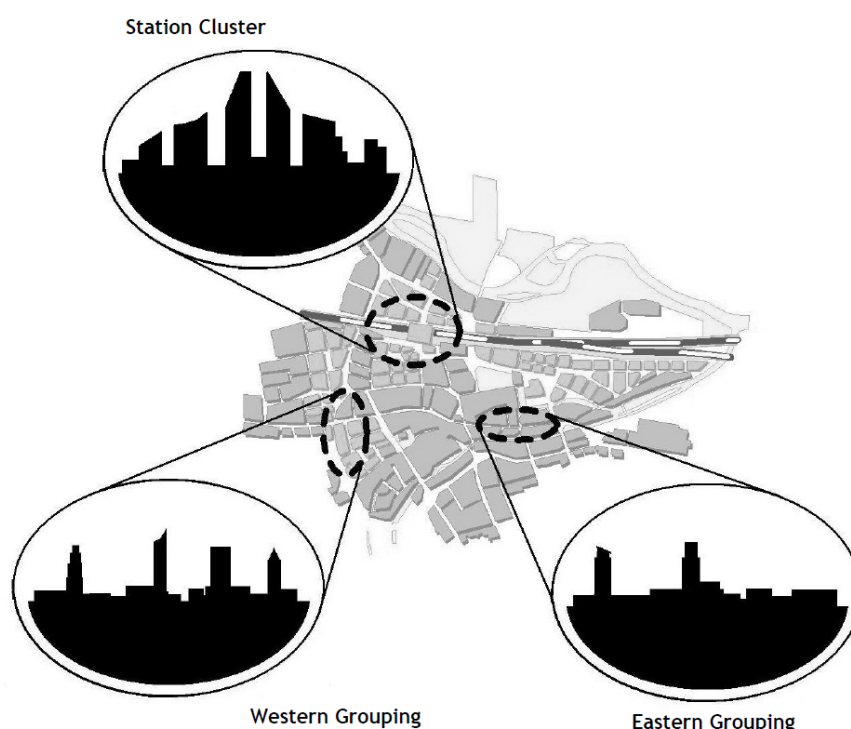
- Enhance Reading's skyline, through a distinctive profile and careful design of the upper and middle sections of the building;**
- Contribute to a human scale street environment, through paying careful attention to the lower section or base of the building, providing rich architectural detailing and reflecting their surroundings through the definition of any upper storey setback and reinforcing the articulation of the streetscape;**
- Contribute to high-quality views from distance, views from middle-distance and local views;**
- Take account of the context within which they sit, including the existing urban grain, streetscape and built form and local architectural style;**
- Avoid bulky, over-dominant massing;**
- Conserve and, where possible, enhance the setting of conservation areas and listed buildings;**
- Use high quality materials and finishes;**
- Create safe, pleasant and attractive spaces around them, and avoid detrimental impacts on the existing public realm;**
- Consider innovative ways of providing green infrastructure, such as green walls, green roofs and roof gardens;**
- Locate any car parking or vehicular servicing within or below the development;**
- Maximise the levels of energy efficiency in order to offset the generally energy intensive nature of such buildings;**
- Mitigate any wind speed or turbulence or overshadowing effects through design and siting;**
- Ensure adequate levels of daylight and sunlight are able to reach buildings and spaces within the development;**
- Avoid significant negative impacts on existing residential properties and the public realm in terms of outlook, privacy, daylight, sunlight, noise, light glare and night-time lighting;**
- Provide managed public access to an upper floor observatory and to ground floors where appropriate, and ensure that arrangements for access within the building are incorporated in the design stage;**
- Incorporate appropriate maintenance arrangements at the design stage.**

- 5.3.35 The vision for Reading seeks to build on the status of central Reading as the dynamic and creative core of the capital of the Thames Valley. Tall buildings have an important part to play in achieving this. They have a symbolic role in marking the centre out as a regionally-significant hub of activity, and a practical role in accommodating the level of development that this status entails in a highly accessible location. Within this context, proposals for tall buildings have markedly increased in recent years.
- 5.3.36 It is therefore essential that there is a strong and clear policy on tall buildings, based on an analysis of the effects of, and opportunities for, such buildings. A Tall Buildings Strategy was produced in March 2008, and is available on the Council's website<sup>128</sup>.
- 5.3.37 It is vital that, given their prominence, new tall buildings are of the highest architectural quality. Tall buildings of mediocre architectural quality will not be acceptable. They need to make a positive contribution to the character of the centre of Reading and to views into the centre. They will be visible from a wide area and it is therefore essential that they are of the highest design quality.
- 5.3.38 The approach of three clusters of tall buildings with differing characteristics will help to provide variety and interest in visual terms, as well as creating a distinctive character for the business core of the centre. This approach has been subject to a thorough analysis of the suitability of the areas for tall buildings in terms of a number of factors, including townscape character, historic context, local and strategic views, market demand, topography, accessibility and other issues.
- 5.3.39 The heart of the business area, the station area, will be signified by the highest buildings and the densest cluster, due to its proximity to the station and public transport interchange. This will be the most extensive of the three clusters and will make a significant impact on the townscape around the station and on the town's skyline. It is important that a coherent, attractive and sustainable grouping of buildings is created within a high quality public realm. Tall buildings should be considered within the context of a masterplan or planning framework for the area that, within the context of this policy, will provide further guidance on the relative heights, massing and spacing of the buildings, and the function and quality of public realm around them, along with their relationship with the major transport interchange improvements delivered at Reading Station.
- 5.3.40 The western and eastern groupings are located at the extents of the business area, and each will be signified by a smaller grouping of tall buildings, with a more residential emphasis.
- 5.3.41 The area-specific guidelines set out in CR10 parts (ii), (iii) and (iv) are illustrated in Figure 5.2, which shows 'at a glance' and in diagrammatic format the differences between the areas in terms of massing, spacing between buildings and heights. It should not be taken as a prescriptive guideline for the appearance of the skyline, merely a diagrammatic representation of the policy principles.

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<sup>128</sup> <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/>

**Figure 5.2: Diagrammatic indicative representation of the differing approach to tall buildings in each area**



### ***Skyline and views***

- 5.3.42 Different aspects of a tall building's design are of significance when viewed from different distances, and this will be taken into account when designing and assessing proposals under part (v) of CR10. From longer distances, the overall massing and proportion is most important, and the relationship between the silhouette and the skyline should inform the design. In the case of mid-distance views, the overall composition and detail are perceived in balance, and the hierarchy and articulation of elevations are particularly important. Finally, for local views, the interrelationship of the building's base and the immediate setting will be particularly visible, and the quality of materials and the detailing will be critical.
- 5.3.43 The contribution that tall buildings can make to views in terms of their locations should also be taken into account. Aligning tall buildings to terminate or frame views can create a strong reference point, allowing greater urban legibility.
- 5.3.44 There are some key panoramic views of the central area that tall buildings should make a positive contribution to. These include the views of the central area from Balmore Park, Caversham Park, Kings Meadow, Reading Bridge, and from Oxford Road to the west of the centre, the Whitley Street area to the south and Wokingham Road to the east.

### ***Street environment***

- 5.3.45 Tall buildings need not prejudice the creation or retention of a human scale street environment, provided that they are carefully located, designed with a distinct top and bottom, and have regard to the effects on the microclimate.

There are a number of design solutions that can be used to assist in creating a human scale street environment:

- Stepping down a large mass to its neighbours;
- Setting back the upper floors to create the impression of a continuous streetscape;
- Ensuring that the ground level is as active and interesting as possible;
- Ensuring that the public realm is naturally surveyed;
- Providing legible and accessible entrances;
- Providing a richness to the detailing and high quality materials;
- Articulating the lower floors to reflect the character of the street;
- Mitigating against the adverse impacts a tall building can often make on the microclimate;
- Providing a continuity of frontage, street line and definition and enclosure to the public realm; and
- Providing green infrastructure for a comfortable microclimate, cleaner air and visual interest.

### ***Sustainable design and construction***

- 5.3.46 Tall buildings are inherently energy intensive, so there will need to be particular efforts made to ensure that tall buildings meet the requirements of Core Strategy policy CC2 or H5. Tall buildings should exploit opportunities of efficient services distribution and building energy simulation tools to reduce energy usage. Narrow span floor plates improve the availability of daylight and hence reduce dependence on artificial light. Individual control and opening of windows is challenging in taller buildings, but advances in façade technology has made this possible and allows for internal environments to be naturally ventilated at appropriate times of the year.

### ***Wind and solar effects of tall buildings***

- 5.3.47 Tall buildings can adversely affect the environmental quality of surrounding areas, particularly through the diversion of high speed winds to ground level and through overshadowing of other areas. However, good design and siting can successfully mitigate these impacts. A building, or grouping of buildings, should be modelled and simulated within its surrounding context, to examine environmental performance at an early design stage to highlight any potential issues that need to be addressed. Wind should be assessed against the Lawson Criteria. Sunlight and daylight should meet the criteria outlined in the 'Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight: a guide to good practice', published by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and the British Standard Code of Practice for Daylighting (BS8206-2).
- 5.3.48 In terms of wind effects, the use of architectural devices such as screens, terraces and awnings as well as façade set-backs can be used to minimise the effects of high wind speed at the base of a tall building.
- 5.3.49 Solar issues will influence the orientation of a building, and there are various



aspects that need to be considered. These will include solar gains where passive heating is desired, shading from solar gains where they are not desired, the need to maximise daylighting, and renewable energy generation by photovoltaic cells. In terms of effects of developments, the Building Research Establishment (BRE)<sup>129</sup> has guidelines on assessing daylight and sunlight effects of development, which the Council will apply flexibly given the high density of the central area.

### **Other issues**

- 5.3.50 Tall buildings that include residential will need to take account of noise and air quality issues in the same way as all additional residential development. All developments will need to comply with the Civil Aviation Authority's aerodrome safeguarding criteria, where buildings should be below 242 metres AOD, and Heathrow Airport is a consultee for any buildings above 150m within Central Reading.
- 5.3.51 Given their prominence and to signify Reading's emerging status as regional capital of the Thames Valley, it is essential that the buildings and new spaces are designed to be of the highest architectural quality. Therefore (and having taken into account CABI's and Historic England's guidance on tall buildings) the Council considers that outline planning applications for tall buildings are appropriate only in cases where the applicant is seeking to establish the principle of (a) tall building(s) as an important element within the context of a robust and credible master plan for the area to be developed over a long period of time. In such cases principles must be established within the design and access statement accompanying the application, which demonstrate that excellent urban design and architecture will result.

## **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 (Strategic policy)**

##### ***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 and healthcare will be an acceptable part of the mix;***
- ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, particularly on the key movement corridors. Direct 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***

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<sup>129</sup> [www.bre.co.uk](http://www.bre.co.uk)

*existing and future pedestrian routes and open spaces;*

- iv) Safeguard land which is needed for bus rapid transit routes and stops, and, where relevant, contribute to enhanced bus priority on Vastern Road exiting the northern station interchange;*
- v) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, with green infrastructure, including a direct landscaped link between the station and the River Thames that provides visual links for as much of the route as possible;*
- 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 and electricity infrastructure in conjunction with relevant infrastructure providers, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

*Development of a number of parts of the area have already been completed or are underway. Development in remaining 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: 120-190 dwellings, up to 5,000-7,000 sq m hotel, 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. Listed buildings and their settings in the area will be conserved.*

*Site size: 0.37 ha*

*Indicative potential: 160-230 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: 2.17 ha*

*Indicative potential: 490-934 dwellings, 64,000-95,000 sq m of offices, 3,900-5,900 sq m retail and leisure*

#### **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. Development should deliver a fitted-out primary healthcare facility where this is viable and where there is a realistic prospect that an occupier to operate the facility can be found.*

*Site size: 1.51 ha*

*Indicative potential: 280-420 dwellings, offices (no significant net gain assumed), 1,000-2,000 sq m net gain of retail and leisure and/or primary healthcare*

#### **CR11e, NORTH OF STATION:**

*There will be a mix of commercial, retail, community 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 and on ground floors away from the key frontages. Retail will have good pedestrian links to, and will not have a detrimental impact on, the rest of the retail core of the centre. A high quality direct 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: 1,190-1,790 dwellings, 50,000-80,000 sq m net gain of offices, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed), 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: 94-140 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 direct route including a green link from the north of the station to the Christchurch Bridge, with 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: 250-380 dwellings, leisure (no significant net gain assumed), no significant net gain in offices.*

**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 potential Bus Rapid Transit and new or reinstated bus stops on Napier Road provided. 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: 1.84 ha*

*Indicative potential: 250-370 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 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. New open spaces have been provided north and south of the station entrances. The arrival of the Elizabeth Line at Reading has further enhanced 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. Figures expressed in the policy include the development potential from April 2024, including any permissions within the site that are underway or outstanding.
- 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. The provision of visual links 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 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 direct 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 bus rapid transit system linking the centre and station to park and ride mobility hub 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 BRT or other major transport schemes.
- 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.
- 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 come forward at different times and be developed with different timescales and under different planning permissions. 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 Flood Zone 2, with some very small parts in Flood Zone 3a, as shown in the SFRA<sup>130</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

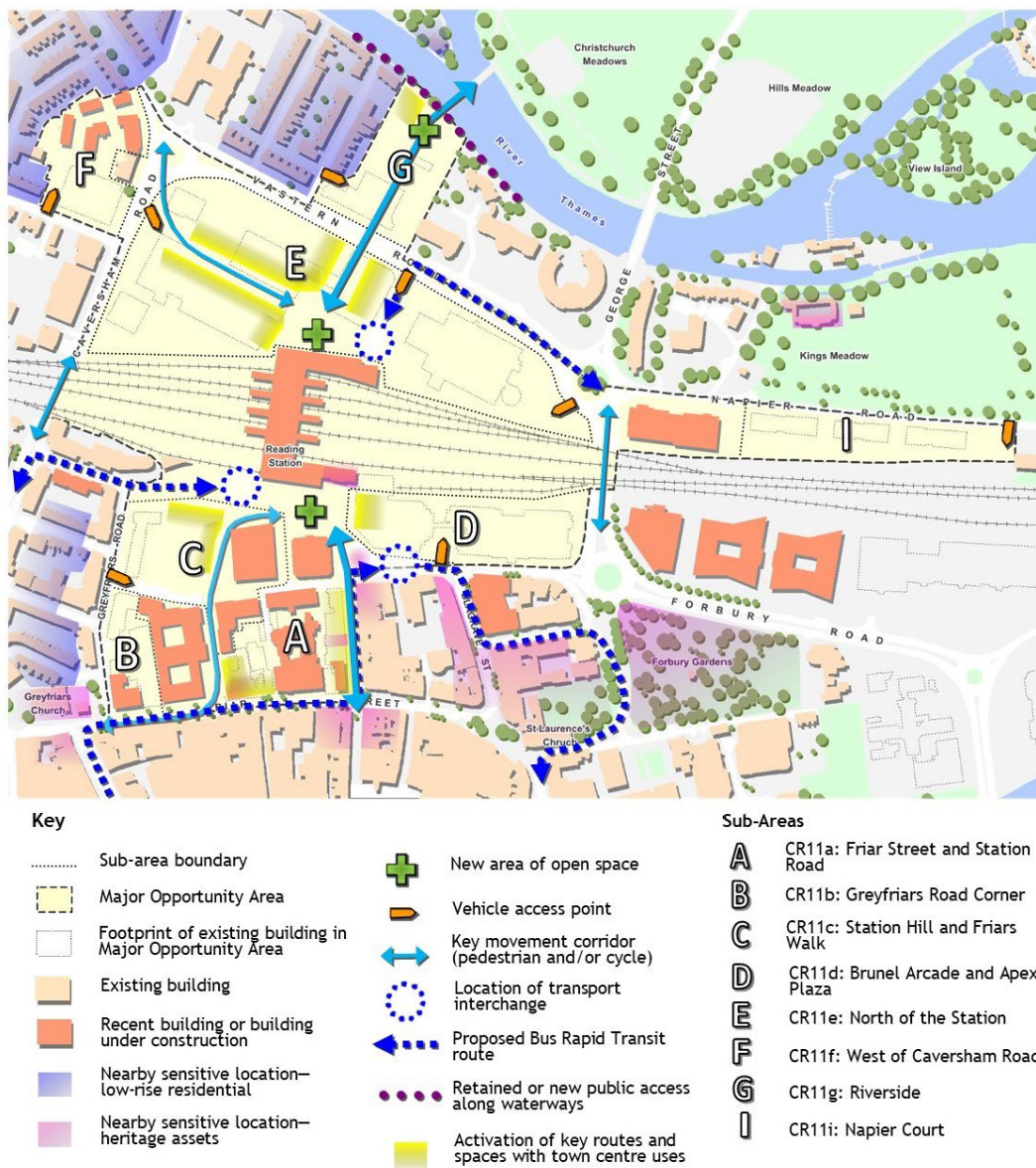
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<sup>130</sup> See the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2024

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.

**Figure 5.3: Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy**





## **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 (Strategic policy)**

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

- i) Contribute towards providing a mix of uses including residential. Development for education and healthcare 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 bus 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***
- viii) Give early consideration to the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure and electricity infrastructure in conjunction with relevant infrastructure providers and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Development of a number of parts of the area have already been completed or are underway. Development on remaining areas will be in line with the following provisions for each of the remaining sub-areas:***

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

***This site will be developed for primarily residential development. It must be designed to reflect the urban grid layout and built form of the centre. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment. Development should deliver a fitted-out primary healthcare facility where this is viable and where there is a realistic prospect that an occupier to operate the facility can be found.***

Site size: 2.46 ha

Indicative potential: 560-840 dwellings, primary healthcare.

**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: 260-380 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. The Oxford Road frontage is a treed corridor and should be enhanced with tree planting.*

Site size: 1.01 ha

Indicative potential: 190-280 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: 420-600 dwellings, retail and leisure (no significant net gain assumed), potential for hotel.

**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 is to be extended to provide an enhanced theatre facility, 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**

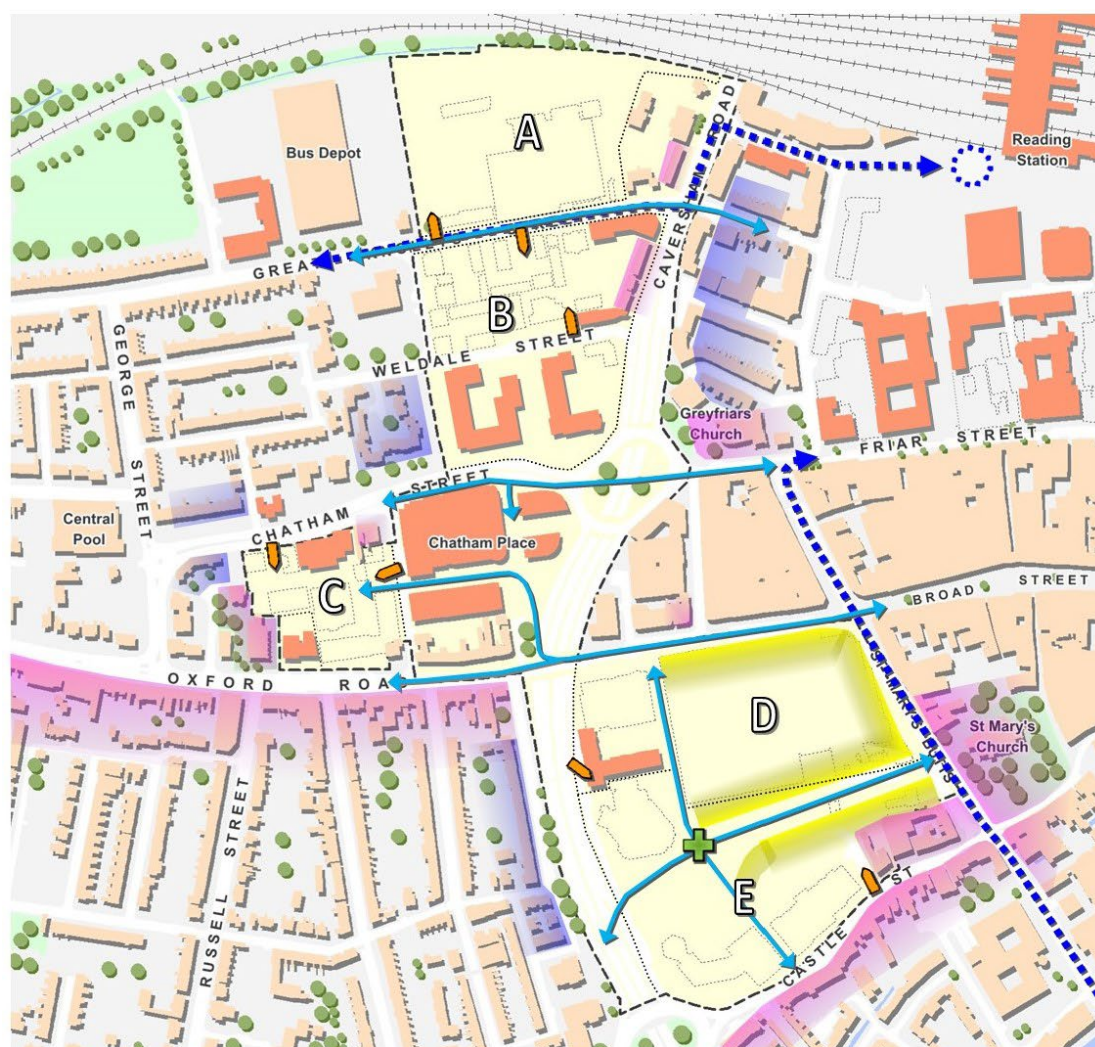
**Indicative potential: 650-970 dwellings, 2,900-4,400 sq m of retail and leisure.**

- 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 some of this regeneration is now complete or is underway.
- 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 Station/River. However, in such central fringe locations, changes in the residential and commercial markets are likely to have particular effects, so buildings should be flexible and robust to accommodate different uses. Policy CR12 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. Figures expressed in the policy include the development potential from April 2024, including any permissions within the site that are underway or outstanding.
- 5.4.16 Many of the elements that are key to successful development of the Station/River Major Opportunity Area also apply to the West Side. Improved pedestrian and cycle permeability remains vital, but the key direction through the West Side is from east to west, with the main barrier being the IDR. The presence of low-rise residential adjacent to the site also requires careful treatment, with the added issue of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road and St Mary's Butts/Castle Street conservation areas and numerous listed buildings adjoining the West Side. The existence of these historic assets can be viewed as an opportunity rather than a constraint, with a chance to significantly improve parts of the area to better relate to the conservation area. Additional areas of open space will also be provided, most likely in the form of town squares. In addition, land may need to be safeguarded for major transport schemes, particularly the Bus Rapid Transit proposal.
- 5.4.17 In the Hosier Street area, the old civic offices have been demolished. There are also plans in place to revitalise and extend the Hexagon theatre with a new 300-capacity auditorium to include performance and rehearsal space and entrance improvements, which gives an opportunity to further improve the environment around the theatre. Hosier Street represents a significant opportunity for a major residential led-regeneration that will improve public realm across the area.
- 5.4.18 Figure 5.4 shows the broad strategy for the West Side 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. Any Planning Briefs which are produced to cover these areas will expand on policy CR12, and, if appropriate the sub-area aspects of the policy.

- 5.4.19 There is potential for tall buildings on those parts of the area that fall within the Western Grouping as defined on the Proposals Map. Further detail on this is set out in policy CR10. 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. Early consultation on these matters will be required.
- 5.4.20 Northern parts of the West Side Major Opportunity Area are within Flood Zone 2. However, this must be weighed against the vital role that these sites will play in regeneration in the centre. A sequential test in line with the NPPF has been carried out in identifying these sites for development, and this will be available on the Council's website as background evidence. 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 flood risk into account.
- 5.4.21 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.

**Figure 5.4: West Side Major Opportunity Area Strategy**



**Key**

.....	Sub-area boundary	■	Nearby sensitive location—heritage assets	■	Activation of key routes and spaces with town centre uses
■	Major Opportunity Area	+	New area of open space	<b>Sub-Areas</b>	
■	Footprint of existing building in Major Opportunity Area	→	Vehicle access point	<b>A</b>	CR12a: Cattle Market
■	Existing building	↔	Key movement corridor (pedestrian and/or cycle)	<b>B</b>	CR12b: Great Knollys Street & Weldale Street
■	Recent building or building under construction	⊙	Location of transport interchange	<b>C</b>	CR12c: Chatham Street, Eaton Place & Oxford Road
■	Nearby sensitive location—low-rise residential	→	Proposed Bus Rapid Transit route	<b>D</b>	CR12d: Broad Street Mall
				<b>E</b>	CR12e: Hosier Street

## East Side Major Opportunity Area

**VISION:** The east side area will be a new community at the eastern fringes of the centre, lending a more urban character to the area, and helping to frame the historic east of the central core

**CR13: EAST SIDE MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA (Strategic policy)**

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

- i) Provide a more defined urban environment than currently exists, of a high density;*
- ii) Contribute towards the provision of a new residential community at the eastern fringes of the central area. Development for education and healthcare will be acceptable within the site;*
- iii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, in particular east-west links through the area and links between development areas and the station, including improved crossings of the IDR and railway;*
- iv) Safeguard land which is needed for Bus Rapid Transit routes and stops;*
- v) Conserve and enhance the listed buildings, scheduled monument and historic garden in the area and their setting where possible;*
- 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;*
- viii) Provide additional areas of open space where possible, particularly in the centre of the new community;*
- ix) Maintain, improve and create new access along the north side of the River Kennet to the Kennet Mouth; and*
- x) Give early consideration to the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure and electricity infrastructure in conjunction with relevant infrastructure providers, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

***Development at Forbury Place and 42 Kenavon Drive is now complete and is nearing completion at Huntley Wharf. Development will be in line with the following provisions for each of the remaining sub-areas:***

***CR13a, READING PRISON:***

***The prison building itself is of historical significance and is listed, and its historic significance will be conserved and where possible enhanced. The building would be used for a use compatible with its heritage, which should include a cultural, leisure or heritage use that draws on its significance and provides wider benefits to the town centre. The site is part of a scheduled monument, and therefore any additional development will be dependent on a thorough demonstration that it would not have detrimental impacts on the significant archaeological interest. The prison is a vital site for the Abbey Quarter, and any development or change of use should complement and strongly link into the Abbey Quarter. The area adjacent to the Kennet & Avon Canal***



***should be enhanced as an open space and leisure destination, including potential for improved moorings.***

***Site size: 1.44 ha***

***Indicative potential: approximately 10,000 sq m of mixed uses including cultural, leisure or heritage uses.***

**CR13b, FORBURY RETAIL PARK:**

***This site would be the focus of the new residential community, and, alongside residential, additional retail, leisure and community uses at a scale to serve the Kenavon Drive area would be appropriate. It should include a new area of open space. Implementing this policy may involve complete redevelopment or using new additional development to improve the existing urban form of the area. Some parts of the site are likely to be implemented in the long term.***

***Site size: 3.98 ha***

***Indicative potential: 870-1,300 dwellings, no net gain of retail.***

**CR13c, KENAVON DRIVE & FORBURY BUSINESS PARK:**

***This site would be largely residential in nature, although opportunities to create an area of open space close to the Kennet should be sought. Development will link into the existing pedestrian link under the railway to Napier Road. Development should deliver a fitted-out primary healthcare facility where this is viable and where there is a realistic prospect that an occupier to operate the facility can be found.***

***Site size: 2.07 ha***

***Indicative potential: 320-490 dwellings, primary healthcare.***

**CR13d, GAS HOLDER:**

***This area will be used for residential development. Development should enhance the character of the Kennet and should maximise the potential of the site to be a river gateway to Reading. Public access along the river will be sought. Development should be set back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river to reflect its wildlife significance. Development should take account of potential contamination on the site.***

***Site size: 0.71 ha***

***Indicative potential: 46-130 dwellings.***

- 5.4.22 The East Side Major Opportunity Area was formerly characterised for the most part by relatively low-density development in fairly prominent positions, including retail warehousing and business and industrial space, as well as the historic local landmark of Reading Prison. The whole of this area is highly visible from the railway line, and it therefore affects the perception of Reading for people who arrive or pass through by rail. Other aspects which distinguish the East Side from the two other Major Opportunity Areas include the presence of the River Kennet, a more urbanised watercourse than the Thames, along the length of the area, and a cluster of historically significant

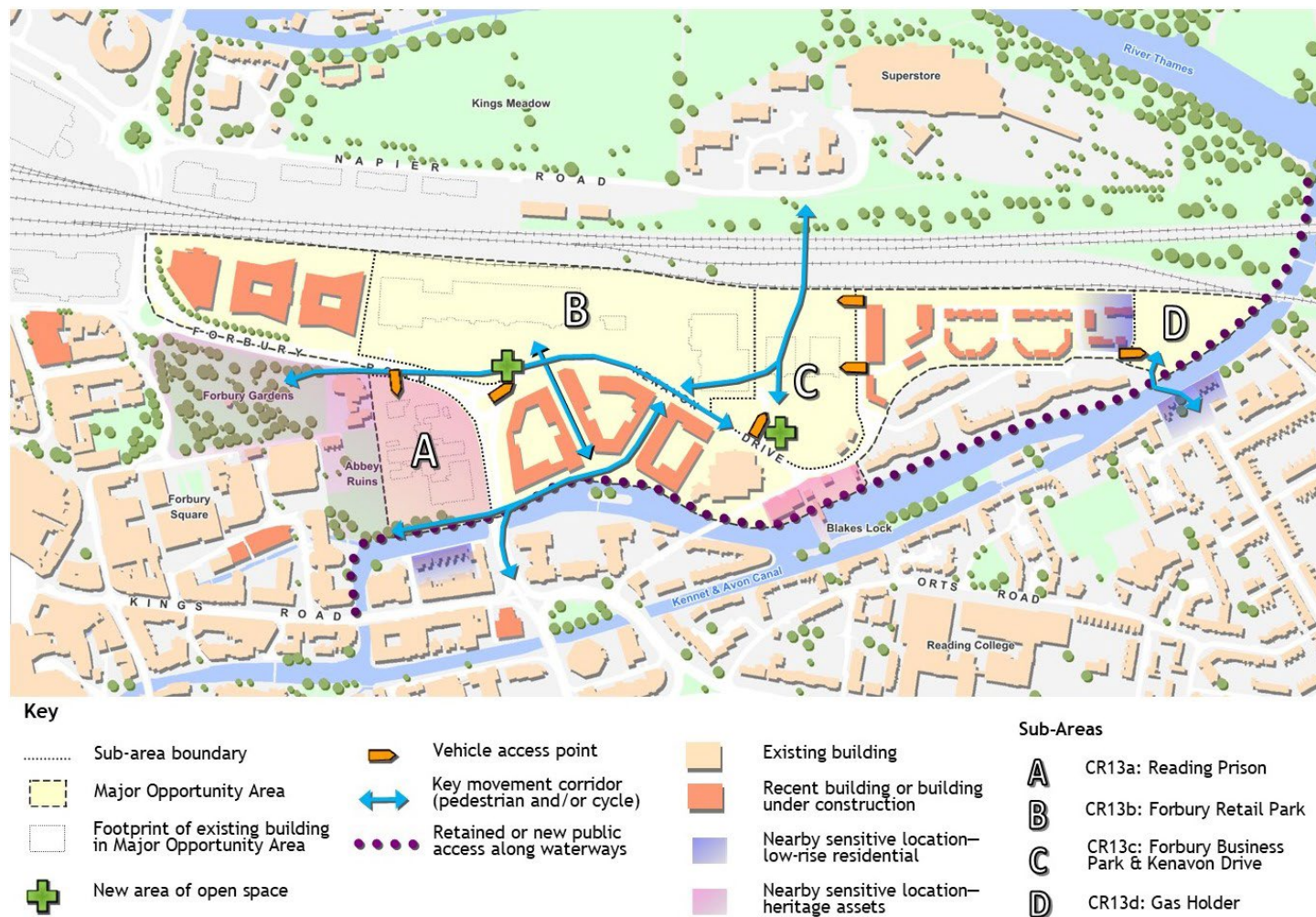


sites, including the Abbey ruins, Forbury Gardens and the Prison, at the western end of the area. Some redevelopment of former industrial, office and utilities sites for residential has already taken place in Kenavon Drive in recent years. Development of 42 Kenavon Drive and Forbury Place has been completed and development at Huntley Wharf is nearing completion.

- 5.4.23 Policy CR13 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. Figures expressed in the policy include the development potential from April 2024, including any permissions within the site that are underway or outstanding.
- 5.4.24 The East Side differs from the other two Major Opportunity Areas in that it is, by the standards of large sites in the centre, relatively self-contained and separate from the commercial core. Whilst the West Side and Station/River are very significant in terms of important routes through the areas, there are fewer routes through the East Side, albeit that there are opportunities to create more permeability through the site for pedestrians and cyclists. Therefore, there is an opportunity to continue to develop much of the east side as a new, reasonable tranquil residential community making up part of the centre, but with a distinct identity. It is important to maximise these opportunities, using design solutions such as home zones, and by providing a high quality public realm.
- 5.4.25 One of the main purposes of the designation of this area as the East Side is the creation of a more urban feel to what is currently a low-density area of buildings which do not relate well to the streets and spaces. Therefore, development should be of a more urban form, for example perimeter blocks.
- 5.4.26 It has already been noted that the East Side is characterised by the presence of the River Kennet and the historically significant sites on the eastern fringes of the centre. These naturally inform the strategy and policy for the area. Some parts of the banks of the Kennet do not currently have public access, so it is important to ensure that new development seizes any opportunities to create new public routes, as well as enhance the waterside environment for ecology purposes. Policy EN11 provides more information. In addition, any development should take account of its impacts on the setting of historic sites, seeking enhancement where appropriate. The prison site offers a particular opportunity to achieve this, and its strong integration within the wider Abbey Quarter project offers an opportunity to further enhance this emerging heritage destination.
- 5.4.27 Development in the East Side should also take account of many of the considerations applicable to the other Major Opportunity Areas, such as safeguarding land needed for major transport projects, and facilitating better pedestrian and cycle links. In this instance, east to west links across the IDR are of particular importance. Links across the railway have been improved with the opening of the underpass to Napier Road, but can be further enhanced by providing a high quality approach to this underpass, as well as by public access under the railway at the eastern end of the site. New areas of open space to serve the new community will be required, as will some services and facilities.

- 5.4.28 Figure 5.5 shows the broad strategy for the East Side 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 designation of the Major Opportunity Area and Sub-Areas. There are existing Supplementary Planning Documents covering parts of the site. The Reading Prison Framework was adopted in 2015, and continues to be relevant. Reading Prison is a highly constrained site, and the Framework contains much more detailed information on these issues and how they should be addressed. It is important that options for uses that may secure the future of the listed prison building are kept open at this stage but a cultural, heritage or leisure use that is in accordance with the historic importance of this building should be the focus. The Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement also provides useful guidance, but it predates the Local Plan by some years, so where there is any conflict with policy CR13, the Plan policy takes precedence.
- 5.4.29 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. Early consultation on these matters will be required. In particular, the location of Reading Prison as part of a scheduled ancient monument means that the substantial archaeological potential is one of the factors to be considered at the very outset of the scheme, and the Reading Prison Framework discusses this in more detail.
- 5.4.30 Parts of the East Side Major Opportunity Area are within Flood Zone 2. A small part is also within Flood Zone 3a. 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. 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 flood risk into account.
- 5.4.31 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. Sites CR13a, CR13b and CR13c are also close to a pumping station, and effects on proposed residential properties as a result of odour, noise and vibration will need to be considered.

**Figure 5.5: East Side Major Opportunity Area Strategy**



## **Other Sites for Development in Central Reading**

### **CR14: OTHER SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL READING**

*The following sites will be developed according with the principles set out in this policy:*

#### **CR14a CENTRAL SWIMMING POOL, BATTLE STREET**

*Development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Conserve and where possible enhance the setting of the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings;*
- *Include tree planting on the Oxford Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;*
- *Take account of nearby scale of development, including higher density development to the east;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Avoid overlooking of the rear of existing residential properties; and*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required*

*Site size: 0.55 ha*

*56-120 dwellings*

#### **CR14d 173-175 FRIAR STREET AND 27-32 MARKET PLACE**

*Change of use of listed buildings and development of remainder for residential and/or offices with retail and related uses on the ground floor, retaining the arcade form.*

*Development should:*

- *Avoid detrimental effects on the significance of the listed building and the Conservation Area and their settings;*
- *Take account of potential archaeological significance;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use.*

*Site size: 0.18 ha*

*34-54 dwellings plus ground floor town centre uses*

#### **CR14g THE ORACLE RIVERSIDE EAST**

*Development of the eastern end of the Oracle Riverside for residential development with commercial development including retail and/or leisure at the ground floor.*

***Development should:***

- ***Retain and increase tree planting along the Kennet and Avon Canal to enhance the treed corridor;***
- ***Address flood risk issues, including avoiding development in the part of the site within Flood Zone 3;***
- ***Avoid harm to the significance of listed buildings and the Conservation Area and their settings;;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance; and***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address any contamination on site.***

***Site size: 1.26 ha***

***250-370 dwellings, retention of retail and/or leisure on key frontages on ground floor***

***CR14h CENTRAL CLUB, LONDON STREET***

***Development for residential with potential for ground floor community provision.***

***Development should:***

- ***Make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings;***
- ***Retain the iconic mural on the northern frontage;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.05 ha***

***14-20 dwellings with community use provision***

***CR14i ENTERPRISE HOUSE, 89-97 LONDON STREET***

***Change of use of listed building from offices to residential***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid harm to the significance of the listed building and the Conservation Area;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.15 ha***

***9-13 dwellings***

**CR14j CORNER OF CROWN STREET AND SOUTHAMPTON STREET**

***Development for residential***

***Development should:***

- ***Enhance the setting of nearby listed buildings;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Include tree planting on the Southampton Street frontage to enhance the treed corridor;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.08 ha***

***13-19 dwellings***

**CR14l 187-189 KINGS ROAD**

***Change of use of listed buildings from offices to residential or student accommodation***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid harm to the significance of the listed buildings and the Conservation Area;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.1 ha***

***11-17 dwellings or equivalent level of student accommodation***

**CR14m CAVERSHAM LOCK ISLAND AND CAVERSHAM WEIR, THAMES SIDE**

***Development for water-compatible leisure or tourism uses, including some operational development. Proposals including enhanced pedestrian access and/or use of weir for generation of hydropower will be acceptable.***

***Development should:***

- ***Address flood risk issues;***
- ***Retain important trees on site;***
- ***Avoid harm to the setting of the listed Kings Meadow pool;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Avoid a detrimental impact on the biodiversity value of the River Thames, and set buildings back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river;***
- ***Retain public access across the site; and***

- ***Not impact on the operation of the lock and weir.*** Site size: 0.1 ha

Site size: 0.5 ha

900-1,100 sq m of leisure use

#### **CR14n READING CENTRAL LIBRARY, ABBEY SQUARE**

***Development for residential, subject to provision of a new central library at the Civic Offices.***

***Development should:***

- ***Take measures to prevent any detrimental impact on the scheduled monument;***
- ***Avoid harm to the setting of the Conservation Area;***
- ***Avoid development in Flood Zone 3 and consider opportunities to enhance the biodiversity potential of the Holy Brook including through deculverting;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address any contamination on site.***

Site size: 0.1 ha

22-32 dwellings

#### **CR14o 100 KINGS ROAD**

***Change of use from serviced apartments to residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

Site size: 0.19 ha

40-60 dwellings

#### **CR14p QUEENS WHARF, QUEENS ROAD**

***Change of use of ground floor office floorspace to residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

Site size: 0.08 ha

9-13 dwellings



**CR14q HAVELL HOUSE, 62-66 QUEENS ROAD**

***Change of use of offices to residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.06 ha***

***14-20 dwellings***

**CR14r JOHN LEWIS DEPOT, MILL LANE**

***Development for residential***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid detrimental effects on the setting of listed buildings and the Conservation Area;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address any contamination on site.***

***Site size: 0.37 ha***

***76-110 dwellings***

**CR14s 20-22 DUKE STREET**

***Change of use and potential extension for residential***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO and increase tree planting along the Kennet & Avon Canal where possible;***
- ***Take measures to prevent any impact on the scheduled monument;***
- ***Avoid harm to the setting of listed buildings and the Conservation Area;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address flood risk issues;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.08 ha***

***12-18 dwellings***

**CR14t AQUIS HOUSE, 41-59 FORBURY ROAD**

***Development and/or change of use for residential and offices***

***Development should:***

- ***Locate residential development in the parts of the site where they are not subject to an unacceptable level of noise from adjoining late-night venues;***
- ***Avoid harm to the setting of listed buildings and the Conservation Area;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address any contamination on site.***

***Site size: 0.35 ha***

***39-59 dwellings and potential net gain of offices***

**CR14u 33 BLAGRAVE STREET**

***Development or change of use for residential***

***Development should:***

- ***Enhance the Conservation Area where possible;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.07 ha***

***20-30 dwellings***

**CR14v 2 NORMAN PLACE**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Contribute to enhanced bus priority on Vastern Road exiting the northern station interchange;***
- ***Contribute towards an extension and bifurcation of the BUZZ18 bus route, with an increase in daytime, evening and weekend frequency;***
- ***Include tree planting on the Vastern Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;***
- ***Avoid a detrimental impact on, and where possible enhance, the biodiversity value of the River Thames, and set buildings back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river;***

- ***Address flood risk issues, including avoiding development in the part of the site within Flood Zone 3 insofar as is possible;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address any contamination on site; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 0.55 ha***

***130-190 dwellings***

#### ***CR14w READING BRIDGE HOUSE, GEORGE STREET***

***Development or change of use for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Contribute to enhanced bus priority on Vastern Road exiting the northern station interchange;***
- ***Contribute towards an extension and bifurcation of the BUZZ18 bus route, with an increase in daytime, evening and weekend frequency;***
- ***Provide new or reinstated bus stops on Napier Road;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO, and enhance the treed corridor and footway along the River Thames where possible;***
- ***Avoid a detrimental impact on, and where possible enhance, the biodiversity value of the River Thames, and set buildings back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address flood risk issues;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address any contamination on site; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 0.4 ha***

***150-230 dwellings***

#### ***CR14x PART OF TESCO CAR PARK, NAPIER ROAD***

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Contribute towards an extension and bifurcation of the BUZZ18 bus route, with an increase in daytime, evening and weekend frequency;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO, and incorporate existing trees into the development where possible;***
- ***Avoid any loss of or detrimental impact on priority habitats and the adjacent local wildlife site;***
- ***Address flood risk issues;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address noise and light impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address any contamination on site; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 0.88 ha***

***57-85 dwellings***

#### **CR14y KENNET PLACE, KINGS ROAD**

***Change of use to residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Include tree planting and other landscaping where possible on the Kennet & Avon Canal to enhance the treed corridor;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address any contamination on site; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 0.29 ha***

***84-126 dwellings***

#### **CR14z SAPPHIRE PLAZA, WATLINGTON STREET**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Include tree planting and other landscaping where possible on the Kennet & Avon Canal to enhance the treed corridor;***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential;***

- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use;*
- *Address any contamination on site; and*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

*Site size: 0.25 ha*

*50-74 dwellings*

#### **CR14aa PART OF READING COLLEGE, KINGS ROAD**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- *Ensure that adequate parking and servicing access for the Reading Rep Theatre is retained;*
- *Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO, and incorporate existing trees into the development where possible;*
- *Retain and where possible increase tree planting on the Kings Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;*
- *Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential;*
- *Investigate impacts on the Superficial Secondary A aquifer and Bedrock Principal aquifer through a desk-based study at a minimum;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use.*

*Site size: 0.44 ha*

*31-47 dwellings*

#### **CR14ab 160-163 FRIAR STREET**

***Change of use of upper floors to residential.***

***Development should:***

- *Address air quality impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use.*

*Site size: 0.1 ha*

*28-42 dwellings, retention of ground floor retail uses*

5.4.32 This policy identifies those sites within Central Reading in addition to the Major Opportunity Areas in policies CR11-13 where development will be

appropriate. As well as contributing to meeting the identified needs of the Borough, allocation can help provide physical regeneration of sites which are in some cases vacant or underused. In addition, it allows the Council to highlight the issues which need to be addressed in developing sites, set out site-specific requirements and, if necessary, plan for the provision of infrastructure.

- 5.4.33 Where dwelling or floorspace figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide, and usually reflect an indicative maximum capacity. They are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. However, the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout. The fact that a site is allocated in CR14 does not preclude the need to comply with all other policies in the local plan, including, for residential developments, the need to provide affordable housing.
- 5.4.34 Where there are significant issues that will need to be addressed in any planning applications on the specific sites listed above, these are usually highlighted in the policy, and usually correspond to other policies in the Local Plan, such as EN1, EN2, or EN11-18, where more detail is set out. However, it is not a guarantee that there are no other potential issues, and it does not remove the need to address the usual matters that should be dealt with on all sites. Site CR14m is covered by a Caversham Lock Development Principles Supplementary Planning Document, which continues to be relevant.
- 5.4.35 In some cases, residential development is proposed in areas where noise levels may be an issue. It should be possible to mitigate this through the design of the scheme. In order for the internal noise levels to be reasonable and not adversely affect health, it would be necessary to provide a system of ventilation that entirely removes the necessity to open windows, even in very hot weather. Similarly, in terms of air quality, mitigation of impacts on residential development may be required, including means of ventilation that remove the need to open windows, and draw in the lowest levels of pollution possible, for instance from roof sources. This should be secured through the design of the proposal, and planning condition if necessary. Such systems will require additional energy use, which will need to be offset in order to comply with policy CC2 or H5.
- 5.4.36 On some sites identified for housing, there may be potential for community uses, such as meeting spaces, healthcare or education to be provided which have not been anticipated by this plan. There may also be potential for specialist housing provision for other groups, outside the C3 dwellinghouse use class. This could potentially reduce the amount of housing which could be provided on specific sites. Depending on other policies in the plan, this can be appropriate, provided that it does not harm the chances of delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy – this decision will be informed by the most up-to-date housing trajectory.
- 5.4.37 Some sites 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.

### Sites with existing planning permission

5.4.38 At the time of publication of the Local Plan, a number of sites in Central Reading in addition to the allocated sites had planning permission for ten or more dwellings or more than 1,000 sq m of non-residential development. There is not considered to be a need to identify most of these sites within a policy, as the permission establishes the principle of the development. Any future applications on these sites will be acceptable where they are substantially the same as the existing permission, subject to the policies in this Local Plan. Applications for developments will need to be considered against policies in the plan, in particular whether it would adversely impact the likelihood of meeting Reading's identified development needs.

Site	App ref	Summary of development
Clarendon House, 59-75 Queens Road	180909	Extensions and additional development for 43 dwellings (4 dwellings completed, remainder not started)
34-38 Southampton Street	181117	Demolish pub and one dwelling to provide 11 dwellings (under construction)
43 London Street	191043	Redevelopment and change of use for 21 dwellings (under construction)
54 Queens Road	191660, 201749	Change of use of offices to 20 dwellings and extension for 9 additional dwellings
12-18 Crown Street	201138	Change of use from serviced apartments to 44 dwellings
The Faculty, 23-27 London Road	201221	Change of use from serviced apartments to 15 dwellings
115 Chatham Street	210349	Development of 54 dwellings (under construction)
Great Brigham's Mead, Vastern Road	210587	Change of use of offices to 110 dwellings (under construction)
75-77 London Street	220244	Redevelopment and conversion for 15 dwellings
71-73 Caversham Road	220922	Partial redevelopment and change of use for 29 dwellings and retail use
1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 145-148 Friar Street	221232	Part demolition and change of use for serviced apartments and ground floor commercial (under construction)
138-144 Friar Street	221235	Part redevelopment for hotel
20-30 Kings Road	231190	Change of use to law courts
Civic Offices, Bridge Street	231495	Extension and part change of use for new library



Site	App ref	Summary of development
The Hexagon, Queens Walk	240063	Extension for theatre use

*Development progress is correct to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024*

## **The Reading Abbey Quarter**

### **CR15: THE READING ABBEY QUARTER**

***The Abbey Quarter will be a major area for heritage and cultural life within the Borough, offering educational, economic and open space opportunities. The Council will pursue any opportunities to reinstate features of architectural or historic significance and remove features that harm the asset and its setting.***

***Development in the vicinity should promote the architectural, archaeological or historic interest of the Abbey and its setting. The Abbey Quarter will:***

- a. protect and enhance the historic setting and frame the Abbey as Reading's most significant heritage asset;***
- b. manage and maintain its heritage assets within a coordinated approach;***
- c. further reveal significance for public enjoyment through enhanced access, interpretation, archaeological investigations or repair of neglected elements;***
- d. mitigate impacts on transportation networks by strengthening pedestrian, cycling and public transport linkages for increased tourism; and***
- e. represent a cohesive heritage destination for tourism and investment.***

***The Abbey Quarter should be considered in the context of the adjacent historic Reading Prison site identified in policy CR13, which represents an opportunity to further consolidate the cluster of heritage interest and cultural setting of The Abbey Quarter. The areas should link into and complement one another, providing public access via the linkages where possible.***

- 5.4.39 The Abbey is Reading's most significant heritage asset. This historic site is particularly evocative with layers of history including the burial place of King Henry I, the civil war defences of Forbury Hill, the Abbey Gate where Jane Austen attended school, the Victorian Maiwand Lion and Reading Gaol where Oscar Wilde was imprisoned<sup>131</sup>. The Abbey Ruins and Forbury Gardens area provides a significant opportunity to create a new heritage and leisure quarter including Reading Museum at the Town Hall. In 2018, the Abbey ruins fully re-opened to the public following repairs. More information on the project, including an overall map of the area, is available at [www.readingabbeyquarter.org.uk](http://www.readingabbeyquarter.org.uk).

<sup>131</sup> Reading Borough Council, *Draft Heritage Statement*, 2014

## **Area to the North of Friar Street and East of Station Road**

### **CR16: AREA TO THE NORTH OF FRIAR STREET AND EAST OF STATION ROAD**

***The area east of Station Road and north of Friar Street, as shown on the Proposals Map, makes a positive contribution to the character of the town centre. The character of the retail units in the Harris Arcade and the overall Station Road and Friar Street frontages will be maintained and, where possible, enhanced. There is potential for some conversion of buildings and some development within the site that does not detrimentally affect its overall character. However, proposals for wholesale redevelopment that would detrimentally affect the overall character will not be supported.***

- 5.5.40 The area to the north east of the Station Road and Friar Street junction is unusual, in that it makes a significant positive contribution to the townscape of central Reading, but most of the area does not have sufficient historic significance to justify a heritage designation, with the exception of six listed buildings (Great Western House, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 Friar Street). Many of the buildings are more modern than they appear, but nevertheless present high quality frontages to the street. The Harris Arcade is a vital part of the diversity of the shopping offer, and contains many small independent shops (see also policy CR8). Aside from its own merits, the area is of wider significance because it joins the Station/River Major Opportunity Area, where there will be large-scale redevelopment and regeneration featuring tall buildings, to the London Street/Market Place conservation area, including the Grade I listed St Laurence's Church and Grade II\* listed Town Hall. It is also the area through which visitors will pass to get from the station to the heritage destination of the Abbey Quarter area.
- 5.3.41 Key principle (i) for Central Reading is that "Areas and features that positively contribute to the unique and historic character of central Reading will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced". Conservation of the character of this area therefore fits in with the overall strategy. This policy is not intended to prevent any development taking place, and there may be opportunities within parts of the site, particularly away from the main frontages, as well as opportunities for changes of use. However, it does seek to ensure that any such development takes place within the context of the character of the area and conserves those elements that make the greatest contribution.

## 6. SOUTH READING

### 6.1 Area Context

- 6.1.1 South Reading is the area of the Borough between the town centre and Junction 11 of the M4 motorway, bounded by the A327 to the east and with the Kennet meadows to the west. It had a population of 29,200 at the 2021 Census, but is expanding with major residential developments underway.
- 6.1.2 The existing South Reading area includes two distinct elements, separated by the Basingstoke Road. To the east of the Basingstoke Road are the residential areas, including the areas of Whitley and Whitley Wood. With the exception of some Victorian houses at the northern end of the area, most of this area was developed between in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, much of it as postwar local authority housing.
- 6.1.3 To the west of Basingstoke Road lie Reading's most extensive industrial and commercial areas, clustered either side of the A33 relief road dual carriageway, opened in 1999. East of the relief road are older areas of mixed industrial, warehouse and office space, whilst to the west are more modern business areas including Green Park and Reading International Business Park, as well as the new Tesco distribution warehouse. Various retail parks adjoin the A33, whilst the Select Car Leasing Stadium, home of Reading Football Club, is one of the major landmarks. These developments sit in and around areas formerly used for minerals extraction and waste management uses.
- 6.1.4 This area has seen significant amounts of development in recent years. The football stadium, Green Park business park and the relief road all date from around 2000. More recently, new developments have included a new water treatment works and a household waste recycling centre. New communities have broken the traditional divide between residential and employment along Basingstoke Road, with the new community of Kennet Island on the former sewage treatment works completed, and development of the new residential community at Green Park underway since 2016 and nearing completion. Plans to develop more than 600 dwellings, along with a convention centre, ice rink and hotel, adjacent to the Madejski Stadium have also been approved.
- 6.1.5 South Reading represents the largest concentration of deprivation in the Borough, with many neighbourhoods within the 20% most deprived areas in England<sup>132</sup>. There are particular issues with regard to skills and qualifications.
- 6.1.6 South of the M4 motorway are the villages of Three Mile Cross, Spencers Wood and Shinfield, all within Wokingham Borough, and this area is identified within Wokingham's Core Strategy as a Strategic Development Location for around 2,500 homes together with supporting facilities, much of which is now complete. The University of Reading science park has been developed, with Shinfield Film Studios also now open, and these offer potential to generate growth in the technology and creative sectors in the area. There are proposals within Wokingham's Local Plan for an additional Strategic Development Location at Loddon Valley Garden Village, to the south east of

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<sup>132</sup> Six lower super output areas within the 20% most deprived according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation January 2019 from the ONS.

Reading, with a phased delivery of around 3,930 dwellings, which will require very significant investment in supporting infrastructure.

## **6.2 Strategy for South Reading**

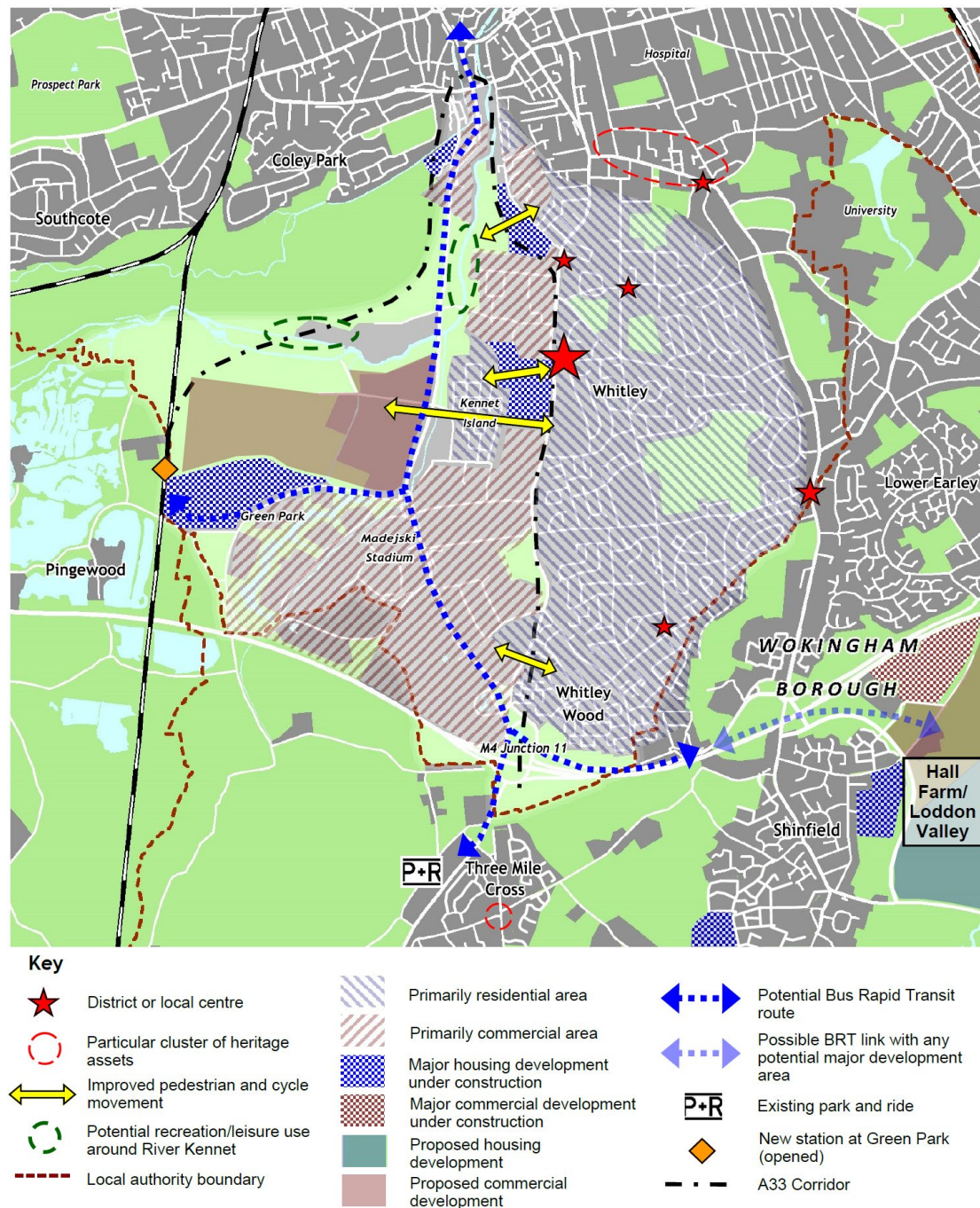
6.2.1 The following represent some key principles for the area:

- a. South Reading will be the location for a significant amount of new residential and employment development over the plan period. It will continue to be the main location for new industrial, warehouse and research and development uses, and some older industrial areas will be reallocated for residential in a carefully planned manner which addresses tensions between residential and employment;
- b. Development will contribute to revitalising and regenerating the wider South Reading area, by integrating, in a physical sense and in terms of community infrastructure provision, with established residential areas, and by providing new employment opportunities to meet the needs of the local population;
- c. The accessibility of South Reading will be enhanced by provision of Bus Rapid Transit linking central Reading with MereOak Park and Ride and Green Park station;
- d. Transport connections out of Reading Borough to the south and south east will be enhanced to connect any large-scale development proposed in adjacent authorities to central Reading and to Green Park station;
- e. The environs of the A33 and the Basingstoke Road will be enhanced to provide an attractive entrance into Reading, with densities along the A33 corridor increased to make good use of increased accessibility;
- f. The isolation of some existing and new housing areas in South Reading will be reduced, thereby enhancing it as an attractive and pleasant place to live;
- g. Whitley district centre will be enhanced to serve as the main district centre for South Reading;
- h. Opportunities to undertake renewal and regeneration of some of South Reading's suburban areas will be investigated;
- i. The watercourses and water bodies in the area, including the River Kennet and its tributaries, will be protected and enhanced as a multi-functional resource for ecology, landscape and recreation.

6.2.2 The overall strategy is illustrated on Figure 6.1.



**Figure 6.1: Area strategy for South Reading**



6.2.3 There is scope for significant additional development in South Reading, both in terms of residential development on older commercial uses, and new modern employment space, around the A33 corridor. Opportunities for new development within the existing residential areas are more limited, but some potential for renewal of some of the housing areas may exist.

6.2.4 It is considered that South Reading can accommodate around 2,700 homes between 2023 and 2041, around 18% of the total planned for (this includes 185 homes completed during 2023-24). It can also accommodate around 135,000 sq m of employment floorspace, a large majority of the total planned

for, although almost all of this will be for industrial and warehousing rather than offices.

- 6.2.5 In terms of a wider spatial strategy, the area is divided into four broad zones.
- 6.2.6 East of the B3031 Basingstoke Road are the established residential communities of South Reading, including Whitley and Whitley Wood. As previously referred to, these include Reading's largest concentration of deprivation. Within this area, there will be continued infill residential development, and there may also be opportunities to renew and regenerate some established residential areas, although this will require further detailed investigation.
- 6.2.7 Between the Basingstoke Road and the A33 is the largest area of employment land within the Borough. Much of this provides a vital resource for small and growing businesses needing cheaper accommodation, and for other uses that support Reading's economy including storage and distribution. However, there are some opportunities, where there are existing high levels of vacancy and where uses make less of a contribution to the economy of Reading, to reallocate some uses for carefully planned housing.
- 6.2.8 West of the A33 and north of the Kennet & Avon canal lie the Kennet Meadows, which are vital for wildlife, landscape and recreation. These contain a network of watercourses, including the River Kennet, Kennet & Avon Canal, Foudry Brook and Holy Brook and their tributaries. These will be preserved, although uses that enhance access and support their recreation function may be appropriate.
- 6.2.9 West of the A33 and south of the Kennet & Avon canal is the area which will see the greatest amount of development over the plan period, particularly for employment uses. Green Park will continue to operate as a premier business location, together with the new residential community, in a high quality setting and supported by a new station. The areas around Island Road to the north offer potential to meet the vast majority of Reading's need for new industrial and warehouse floorspace.
- 6.2.10 Critical to the strategy will be movement between the various parts of South Reading. The north to south links between the south of Reading and the town centre are already strong, but will be further enhanced through bus rapid transit and, potentially, any further transport infrastructure to support any significant development beyond Reading's boundaries. East to west links are much weaker, however, and require enhancement. In particular, those links should allow pedestrians and cyclists from existing south Reading communities to better access jobs within new development further west.
- 6.2.11 Local facilities to support the new development proposed will generally be focused on existing designated centres. In particular, the Whitley district centre has expanded to meet south Reading's needs, and there is scope for enhancement of this centre to continue. Efforts should be made to ensure that any new community provision provides for needs of both existing and new communities wherever possible.
- 6.2.12 There are continued proposals for additional development outside Reading's boundaries, in particular to the south east. It will be for the local plans for relevant areas to determine whether such development is appropriate, and, if so, what the parameters should be. However, whilst such developments

would include services and facilities, it would clearly still rely on higher-order services within Reading to meet some of its needs. Links into Reading by all modes of transport will therefore be crucial, and should be supported by the Local Plan.

## **6.3 South Reading Site-Specific Policies**

### **Island Road Major Opportunity Area**

***VISION: The Island Road area will be a major new location for industrial and warehouse development, providing jobs in one of the areas of greatest need.***

#### **SR1: ISLAND ROAD MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA (Strategic policy)**

***Development in the Island Road Major Opportunity Area will provide new business space comprising mainly industrial, warehouse and research and development uses, with some supporting office uses.***

***Development will:***

- i. Locate the noisiest elements of the development away from any existing or planned residential, and include an adequate landscaped buffer to residential to ensure that there are no significant adverse effects through noise and disturbance;***
- ii. Through sensitive design, layout and landscaping, ensure that development does not detract from the character and appearance of the Kennet Meadows major landscape feature;***
- iii. Avoid negative impacts on drainage, water quality and flood risk on or off the site, including in relation to the river intake and groundwater protection zone of the nearby Fobney Water Treatment Works;***
- iv. Take account of potentially contaminated land and potential odour issues arising from the sewage treatment works;***
- v. Protect and where possible enhance biodiversity, particularly related to any development in close proximity to the watercourses and any priority habitats, taking the findings of an ecological assessment into account;***
- vi. Protect existing public rights of way and enhance links to the east, across the A33;***
- vii. Safeguard land which is needed for proposed bus rapid transit routes and stops;***
- viii. Take steps to mitigate any significant adverse impacts on the transport network;***
- ix. Be capable of being accommodated within the Off-Site Emergency Plan for AWE Burghfield;***
- x. Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure and electricity infrastructure in conjunction with relevant infrastructure providers, and make provision for upgrades where required; and***



- xi. Provide measures to ensure that the increase in new employment opportunities offers benefits to the local workforce, including through employment, skills and training measures.**

**Development in surrounding areas will be in line with the following provisions for each sub-area:**

**SR1a, FORMER LANDFILL, ISLAND ROAD:**

**The former landfill site will be developed for warehouse uses with some potential for industrial and research and development uses where it would not cause detrimental impacts to existing or planned residential. Development on past landfilled areas will need to demonstrate that it will not cause any negative effects on human health or on the wider environment. The noisiest elements of the development should be located away from any existing or planned residential, in particular residential at Green Park to the south, and development should include an adequate landscaped buffer to residential to ensure that there are no significant adverse effects through noise and disturbance, and a 10m undeveloped buffer to the top of the bank of the watercourse to the east. Development should have regard to the development of the whole site and access should be considered as a comprehensive whole.**

**Site size: 32.13 ha**

**Indicative potential: 90,000-133,000 sq m of industrial/warehouse/R&D use**

**SR1c, ISLAND ROAD A33 FRONTAGE:**

**This site will be developed for commercial use. Proposals for industrial, warehouse or research and development use will therefore be appropriate, as will offices in line with the existing permission. Related commercial uses as part of the mix may also be appropriate, although proposals that would involve main town centre uses (excluding offices) will only be appropriate where there is no significant adverse impact on existing centres. The frontage to the A33 will be of high visual quality and incorporate tree planting to enhance the A33 as a treed corridor, and an alignment for a bus rapid transit route through the site in a north-south direction will be a requirement.**

**Site size: 9.7 ha**

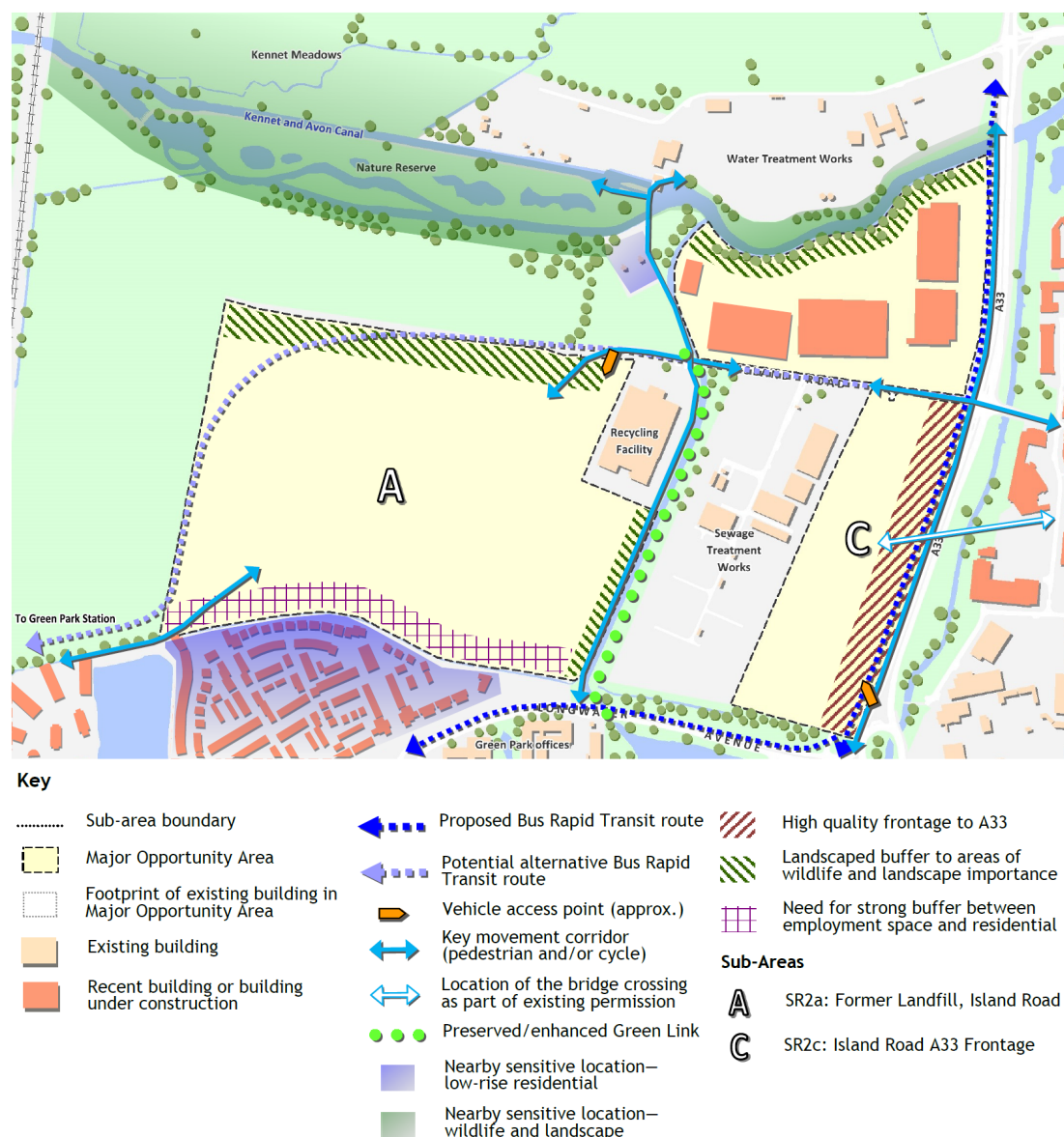
**Indicative potential: 25,000-38,000 sq m of industrial/warehouse/R&D uses, or alternative commercial uses.**

- 6.3.1 The land around Island Road provides the main opportunity to meet the identified needs for industrial and warehouse land in Reading. It is located in close proximity to some of the areas of greatest concentration of unemployment and low skills, and could therefore potentially provide substantial economic benefits to the town. The adopted Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan identifies this area as potentially suitable for small scale waste activities requiring enclosed industrial premises, which can be included within development of the site.
- 6.3.2 However, the particular circumstances of much of the land mean that development will need to be sensitively designed and constructed. To the south of the area, over 1,000 new homes have been or are being constructed

at Green Park, and development risks creating tensions between these two uses. The areas to the north are identified as a major landscape feature, and development would potentially be visible from this feature, particularly where land is raised. Much of the site was previously used as sludge beds before becoming landfill, some of which was filled fairly recently, whilst other areas are within Flood Zone 2. For this reason, development will be dependent on adequately overcoming these constraints.

- 6.3.3 In terms of transport, the provision of new bus rapid transit, for which planning has reached an advanced stage in South Reading, provides part of a solution to transport issues in the area, and land close to the A33 and within SR1c will be required to deliver this measure. The BRT routes will be required to the south to MereOak park and ride, and to the south west towards Green Park station and interchange. One possible route towards Green Park station, as an alternative to Longwater Avenue, would be through site SR1a, and the potential for this route to be provided will need to be considered.
- 6.3.4 Planning permission already exists for over 70,000 sq m of offices on site SR1c as part of the Kennet Island planning permission. Whilst implementation of this scheme remains possible, this is not expected. The site is therefore also identified for alternative commercial uses, in particular industry and warehousing, albeit that other uses such as car showrooms or trade counter uses, along with offices in line with existing permissions, will potentially be appropriate. The existing office permission was considered appropriate in terms of transport impacts, and this will be taken into account in assessing schemes. The works to the Island Road and A33 junction were undertaken as part of the infrastructure works associated with this permission. Prior to development taking place, there may be some use of the site for temporary uses, where it would not affect the long term development potential of the site.
- 6.3.5 The location of the site close to the sewage treatment works means that early liaison with Thames Water is likely to be required. 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.
- 6.3.6 Figure 6.2 illustrates some of the key principles from the policy.

**Figure 6.2: Island Road Major Opportunity Area Strategy**



## Land North of Manor Farm Road Major Opportunity Area

**VISION:** Land north of Manor Farm Road will be a new residential community linking to Kennet Island and centred on a strengthened Whitley district centre.

### SR2: LAND NORTH OF MANOR FARM ROAD MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA (Strategic policy)

**Redevelopment of the Manor Farm Road site will primarily be for housing, enhancement and potential extension to the Whitley District Centre, open space and public realm improvements. Education and healthcare provision as well as other community uses will also be appropriate uses within a wider development.**

**Development will:**

- i. ***Not be piecemeal in nature but will only be in appropriately sized/arranged sites that will promote the integration of Kennet Island with the established areas of Whitley to the east<sup>133</sup>. Proposals should be designed in the context of a wider development of the area;***
- ii. ***Incorporate measures to facilitate improved pedestrian and cycle permeability, in particular east/west links across Basingstoke Road and through to Kennet Island;***
- iii. ***Enhance the Basingstoke Road frontage to reflect the scale and character of existing residential development to the east;***
- iv. ***In meeting the Council's sustainability requirements, secure energy from a decentralised energy source;***
- v. ***Provide an appropriate buffer along the frontage of Manor Farm Road to reflect the commercial nature of land to the south and to avoid introducing new homes into an area where existing commercial activities could detract from the amenities of future residential occupants;***
- vi. ***Maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Whitley District Centre where possible through the provision of additional complementary community facilities and smaller retail units, but not retail warehousing, to serve the local community;***
- vii. ***Make relevant and necessary contributions to enhance and improve the existing community facilities in the wider Whitley area;***
- viii. ***Take account of potential surface water flooding, and potentially contaminated land, and ensure that there is no adverse effect on water quality;***
- ix. ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure and electricity infrastructure in conjunction with relevant infrastructure providers, and make provision for upgrades where required; and***
- x. ***Take account of potential archaeological significance.***

***Site size: 12.06 ha***

***Indicative potential: 1,000-1,490 dwellings, potential net gain in retail and leisure.***

6.3.7 The land north of Manor Farm Road comprises a large grouping of employment premises, a number of which are vacant. An opportunity has been identified for redevelopment to provide an area of new housing to connect the Kennet Island residential area, construction of which is coming towards an end, and the older established residential areas to the east.

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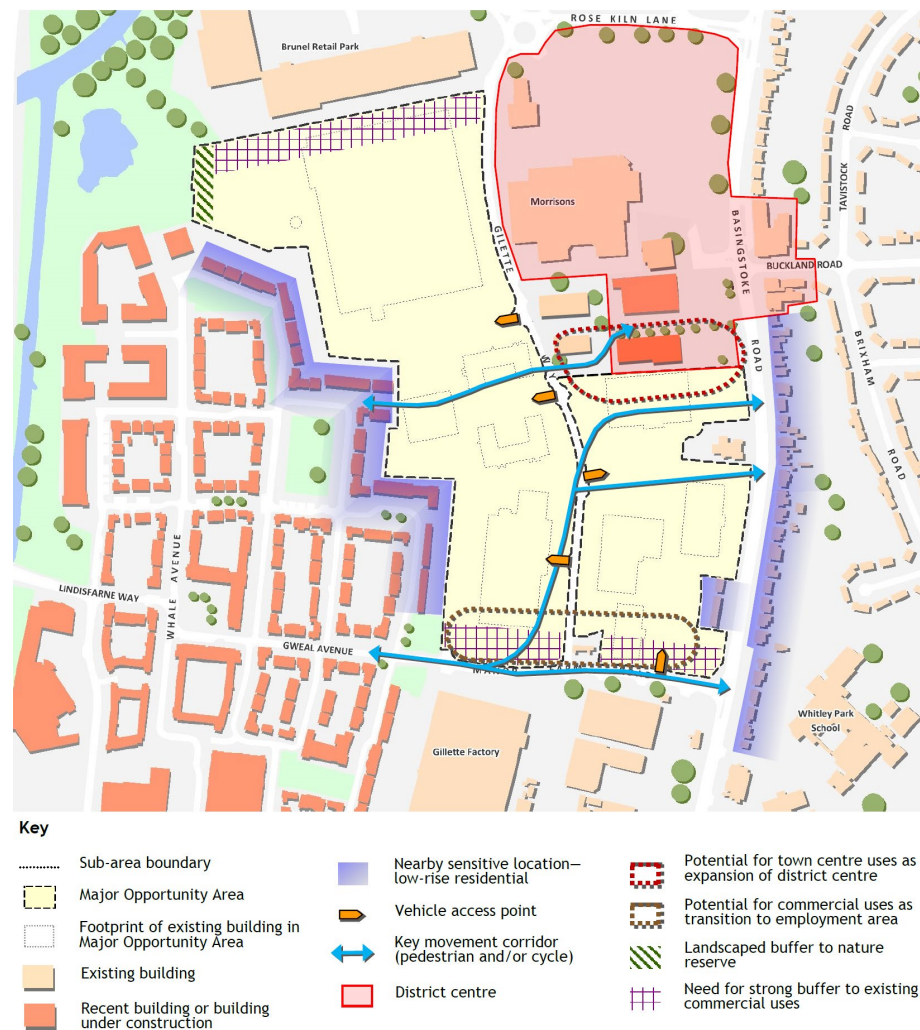
<sup>133</sup> This will ultimately be a judgement to make at planning application stage. It is not expected that all sites within SR2 will come forward at once, but the decision on whether particular schemes are acceptable will be based on whether a site can be developed without significantly compromising the living environment of residents of the site, and without resulting in an inward-looking scheme that prevents the development from relating well to future development of adjoining sites. This will need to take into account matters such as the size of the site, the relationship with and use of adjoining sites and whether an appropriate buffer exists or can be created.

6.3.8 An opportunity to extend the Whitley district centre was also identified when the site was originally designated, and this has led to the development of former offices for a new foodstore, gym and public house. There may be opportunities to enhance, consolidate, and potential provide further facilities to extend, the centre.

6.3.9 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.

6.3.10 Figure 6.3 illustrates some of the key principles from the policy.

**Figure 6.3: Land North of Manor Farm Road Major Opportunity Area Strategy**



## South of Elgar Road Major Opportunity Area

***VISION: The area will be redeveloped to form a new residential community which improves the relationship with the adjoining meadows.***

***SR3: SOUTH OF ELGAR ROAD MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA (Strategic policy)***

***Development of the South of Elgar Road site will be for residential, with potential for supporting community uses. The potential for commercial uses to be part of any future mixed-use development hinges on whether a layout can be created that allows the relationship between residential and commercial to be effectively managed.***

***Development will:***

- i. Ensure that there are measures in place, such as an appropriate buffer between new residential development and any adjacent industrial and warehouse uses, to ensure that there are no adverse effects on residents as a result of noise and disturbance and the visual impact of business uses;***
- ii. Provide a high quality landscaped ecological boundary to Waterloo Meadows, and a landscaped green link to connect Waterloo Meadows to the vegetated area to the northeast of Elgar Road;***
- iii. Enhance pedestrian access between Elgar Road and Waterloo Meadows;***
- iv. Retain significant trees on the site wherever possible;***
- v. Give careful consideration to the archaeological potential of the area and be supported by appropriate archaeological assessment which should inform the development;***
- vi. Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure and electricity infrastructure in conjunction with relevant infrastructure providers, and make provision for upgrades where required;***
- vii. Where possible, use existing accesses; and***
- viii. Take account of potential surface water flooding, and potentially contaminated land.***

***Site size: 5.38 ha***

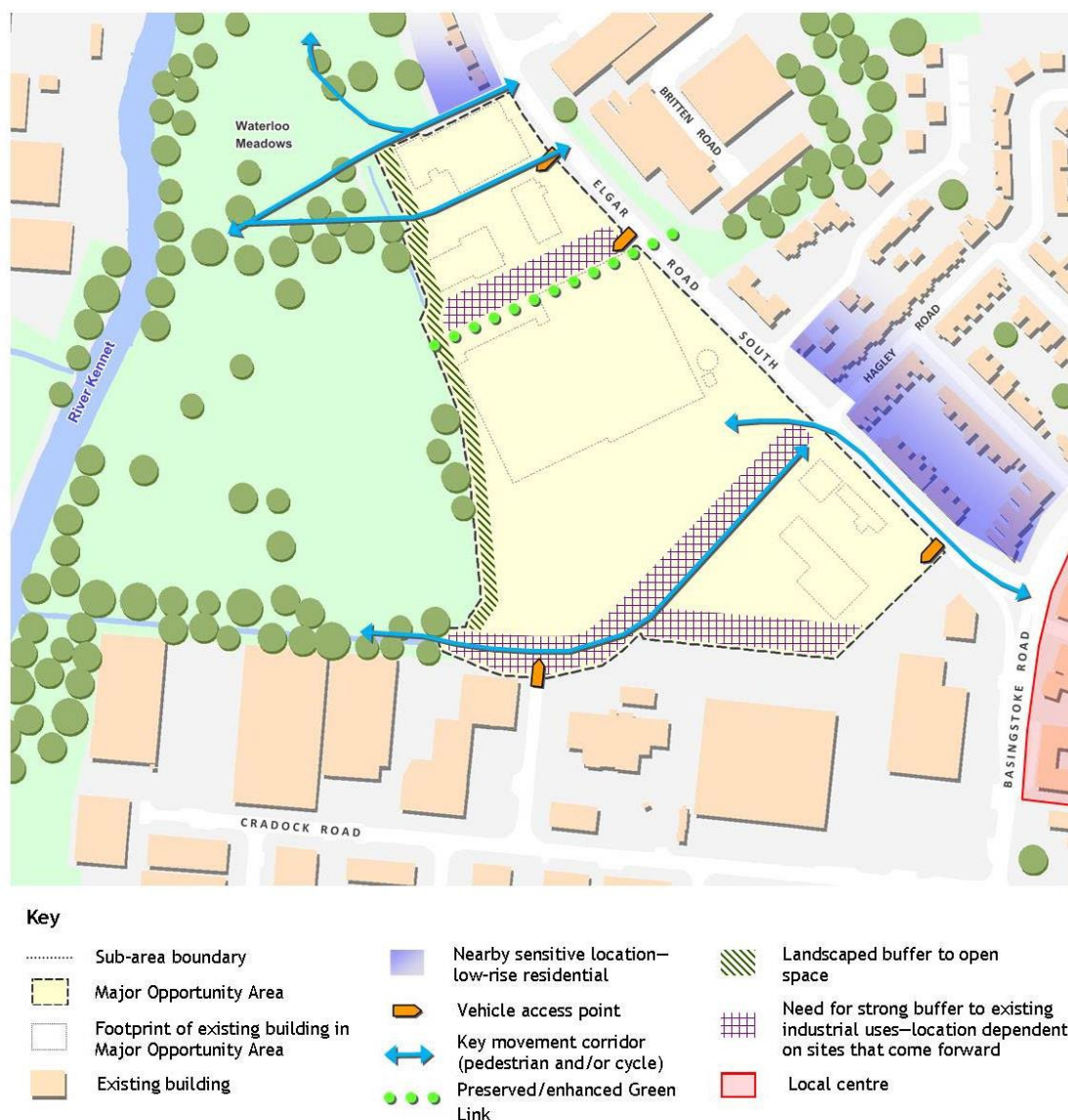
***Indicative potential: 360-540 dwellings.***

6.3.11 There is an opportunity to redevelop some sites along the southern side of Elgar Road South for residential. This area has historically been part of Reading's employment offer, but in recent years there have been other uses such as retail, and some vacancy. The largest opportunity is the Makro site, which covers most of the major opportunity area, but there are possibilities of extending any development west and east to allow it to better relate to established residential areas. This is likely to represent a longer-term opportunity, arising later in the plan period.

6.3.12 Figure 6.4 illustrates some of the key principles from the policy.



**Figure 6.4: South of Elgar Road Major Opportunity Area Strategy**



## Other Sites for Development in South Reading

### SR4: OTHER SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH READING

*The following sites will be developed according with the principles set out in this policy:*

#### SR4a PULLEYN PARK, ROSE KILN LANE

*Redevelopment of builders merchant and car dealerships for residential, with potential for on-site retail facilities to serve the site.*

**Development should:**

- ***Include a landscaped buffer to the River Kennet to ensure no detrimental impacts on the Local Wildlife Site, with development set back at least 10m from the river, retaining and planting trees along the river frontage wherever possible;***



- ***Enhance the green link through the site following the stream that links the Holy Brook and River Kennet, including ecological enhancements;***
- ***Include tree planting on the A33 frontage to enhance the treed corridor;***
- ***Include a buffer to the commercial uses to the south to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on amenity of residents;***
- ***Be designed to avoid overlooking of rear gardens and residential properties to the east of the river on Elgar Road;***
- ***Address flood risk issues and not be located in the area of the site at highest risk of flooding (Flood Zone 3);***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address noise and light impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address any contamination on site; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 1.29 ha***

***80-120 dwellings***

#### ***SR4b REAR OF 3-29 NEWCASTLE ROAD***

***Development for residential***

***Development should:***

- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential; and***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance.***

***Site size: 0.47 ha***

***14-22 dwellings***

#### ***SR4c 169-173 BASINGSTOKE ROAD***

***Redevelopment of industrial and warehousing for residential***

***Development should:***

- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address any contamination on site;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance; and***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing***

*residential; and*

- *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

*Site size: 0.8 ha*

*72-110 dwellings*

#### **SR4d 16-18 BENNET ROAD**

*Development for employment uses, preferably for industrial, warehouse and/or research and development use.*

*Development should:*

- *Take account of potential archaeological significance;*
- *Address any contamination on site;*
- *Address flood risk issues; and*
- *Take account of the location of a pumping station in close proximity, which will require liaison with Thames Water.*

*Site size: 0.74 ha*

*2,000-3,100 sq m of industrial/warehouse/R&D*

#### **SR4e PART OF FORMER BERKSHIRE BREWERY SITE**

*Development for employment uses. The site has an existing permission for 33,910 sq m of offices, but would also be suitable for industrial, warehouse and/or research and development use. Related commercial uses as part of the mix may also be appropriate, although proposals that would involve main town centre uses (excluding offices) will only be appropriate where there is no significant adverse impact on existing centres.*

*Development should:*

- *Enhance the setting of the listed Little Lea Farmhouse;*
- *Provide for a green link and planting as part of a treed corridor along the A33 frontage;*
- *Include a landscaped buffer to the watercourses around the site, with development set back at least 10m from the top of the bank of the river wherever possible;*
- *Address any contamination on site;*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required;*
- *Safeguard land which is required for Bus Rapid Transit routes and stops; and*
- *Provide measures to mitigate any impact on the Off-Site Emergency*

***Plan for AWE Burghfield.***

*Site size: 3.7 ha*

*12,000-18,000 sq m of industrial/warehouse/R&D*

***SR4g READING LINK RETAIL PARK, ROSE KILN LANE***

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Contribute towards an improved Sunday bus service to and from the town centre;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on the Major Landscape Feature by ensuring that development does not present a hard urban edge to the Kennet Meadows;***
- ***Ensure that development is set back at least 10m from the top of the bank of the adjacent watercourse to provide a buffer for biodiversity;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address any contamination on site;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address noise and light impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

*Site size: 2.12 ha*

*150-220 dwellings*

***SR4h 11 BASINGSTOKE ROAD***

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Be accessed primarily from Christchurch Gardens;***
- ***Ensure provision of a green link through the site as shown on the Proposals Map;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO and including the trees on the frontage to Basingstoke Road;***
- ***Enhance the setting of the Christ Church conservation area;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***

- *Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential; and*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

*Site size: 1.91 ha*

*130-200 dwellings*

#### **SR4i 85-87 BASINGSTOKE ROAD**

*Change of use or development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Address any contamination on site;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use.*

*Site size: 0.06 ha*

*12-15 dwellings*

#### **SR4j LAND AT WARWICK HOUSE, WARWICK ROAD**

*Development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential*

*Site size: 0.05 ha*

*10 dwellings*

#### **SR4k FORMER SALES AND MARKETING SUITE, DRAKE WAY**

*Development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Retain and enhance the landscaped frontage to Foudry Brook and the A33;*
- *Address any contamination on site;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use.*

*Site size: 0.18 ha*

*15-23 dwellings*

## **SR4/ LAND AT DRAKE WAY**

### ***Development for residential.***

#### ***Development should:***

- ***Address any contamination on site;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use, including from the adjacent vehicle dealership use.***

***Site size: 0.22 ha***

***20-30 dwellings***

- 6.3.13 This policy identifies those sites within South Reading where development will be appropriate. As well as contributing to meeting the identified needs of the Borough, allocation can help provide physical regeneration of sites which are in some cases vacant or underused. In addition, it allows the Council to highlight the issues which need to be addressed in developing sites, set out site-specific requirements and, if necessary, plan for the provision of infrastructure.
- 6.3.14 Where dwelling or floorspace figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide, and usually reflect an indicative maximum capacity. They are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. However, the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout. The fact that a site is allocated in SR1 does not preclude the need to comply with all other policies in the local plan, including, for residential developments, the need to provide affordable housing.
- 6.3.15 Where there are significant issues that will need to be addressed in any planning applications on the specific sites listed above, these are usually highlighted in the policy, and usually correspond to other policies in the Local Plan, such as EN1, EN2, or EN11-18, where more detail is set out. However, it is not a guarantee that there are no other potential issues, and it does not remove the need to address the usual matters that should be dealt with on all sites.
- 6.3.16 On some sites identified for housing, there may be potential for community uses, such as meeting spaces, healthcare or education to be provided which have not been anticipated by this plan. There may also be potential for specialist housing provision for specific groups outside the C3 dwellinghouse use class. This could potentially reduce the amount of housing which could be provided on specific sites. Depending on other policies in the plan, this can be appropriate, provided that it does not harm the chances of delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy – this decision will be informed by the most up-to-date housing trajectory.

### **Sites with existing planning permission**

- 6.3.17 At the time of publication of the Local Plan, a number of sites in South Reading in addition to the allocated sites had planning permission for 10 or more dwellings or more than 1,000 sq m of non-residential development. There is not considered to be a need to identify these sites within a policy, as the permission establishes the principle of the development. Any future

applications on these sites will be acceptable where they are substantially the same as the existing permission, subject to the policies in this Local Plan. Applications for developments will need to be considered against policies in the plan, in particular whether it would adversely impact the likelihood of meeting Reading's identified development needs.

Site	App ref	Summary of development
Plot 8, 600 South Oak Way	070488	Development for offices (20,430 sq m)
Madejski Stadium, Royal Way	101623	Expansion of football stadium (28,442 sq m net gain)
Green Park Village, Longwater Avenue	102172, 180691	Development for 836 dwellings including extra care housing, offices (16,000 sq m), primary school, community use (381 sq m), retail and related facilities (684 sq m) (under construction)
177 Basingstoke Road	150715	Development of student accommodation for 34 bedspaces (under construction)
Land at the Madejski Stadium	160199	Development for up to 618 dwellings, convention centre and ice rink, 246 bedroom hotel, up to 102 serviced apartments, decked car parking, ancillary retail, open space, transport interchange
Green Park Village Phase 6A	171019	Development for 339 dwellings and retail space) in place of office element of Green Park Village (see 102172 above)
Unit 1, Acre Road	181059	Change of use to flexible B2/B8 use (6,183 sq m)
Atlantic House, Imperial Way	190856	Change of use of office to police HQ (4,707 sq m) (under construction)
Brunel Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane	201853, 230953	Alternative permissions for storage and distribution and/or industrial use of all or part of retail park
220 Elgar Road South	220258	Development for 16 dwellings
Bennet Court, Bennet Road	221936	Development for industrial or storage and distribution uses (4,108 sq m)

Site	App ref	Summary of development
2 Hexham Road <sup>134</sup>	230279	Development for 42 dwellings and social care services
Thales, Worton Grange <sup>135</sup>	231254	Redevelopment for new industrial or storage building
40 Bennet Road	231607	Change of use from B2 industrial to vehicle servicing and/or B2 including extensions (1,588 sq m)

*Development progress is correct to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024*

## **Kennet Meadows**

### **SR5: KENNET MEADOWS**

***The Kennet Meadows will continue to play a vital role for biodiversity, landscape, leisure and recreation to serve the whole Borough.***

***Works, including engineering works, necessary to enhance the biodiversity function of the area will be supported.***

***Use of the areas around the River Kennet for low-intensity leisure and recreation will be supported. The following sites in particular offer opportunities to enhance recreation and leisure provision:***

- ***Former laboratory and fish farm, Fobney Mead;***
- ***Land north and east of Rose Kiln Lane.***

***These sites are located wholly or partly in the functional floodplain, and parts of the site and surrounding areas have strong significance for biodiversity. As such, the uses supported by this policy would be low-intensity in nature, with any built development of limited scale, and, within the functional floodplain, water-compatible.***

***Any proposals will need to demonstrate that there will be no adverse impacts on biodiversity, flood risk, landscape, public foot and cycle access along the river, the operation and condition of the river and the operation of the adjacent Water Treatment Works. If a proposal results in additional use of the Kennet by boats, it should not have an adverse effect on the River Kennet Site of Special Scientific Interest further upstream.***

6.3.18 The Kennet Meadows represent the largest concentration of areas of biodiversity significance in Reading, and one of its most significant landscapes. It also represents an area of importance for informal leisure and recreation within easy reach of Central Reading. There is potential for enhancement of all of these roles, including provision of biodiversity net gain, which may require engineering works to control water levels.

6.3.19 With an increasing residential population in South Reading, as well as in other parts of the Borough, there is an opportunity to use the considerable asset of

<sup>134</sup> Resolved to grant permission subject to signing of Section 106 agreement

<sup>135</sup> Resolved to grant permission subject to signing of Section 106 agreement



the River Kennet as a recreational resource to which these new residents have good access. However, these areas are heavily constrained by flood risk, biodiversity and landscape considerations, which means that an allocation for significant built leisure development cannot be made.

- 6.3.20 This allocation is therefore limited to low-intensity uses, where built development is limited. A marina is a potential use, and the area north and east of Rose Kiln Lane was in the past identified for such a use. Other possible uses include visitor facilities (where appropriate to the flood risk designation) and accessible open spaces. The policy does not identify the sites for more intensive built leisure uses. Such uses would not be in line with national policy were they to be located within the functional floodplain, and additionally would need to pass other policy tests such as the sequential test for main town centre uses. Thames Water should be contacted at the earliest opportunity to discuss any potential proposal that would affect the Water Treatment Works.

## **7. WEST READING AND TILEHURST**

### **7.1 Area Context**

- 7.1.1 The area covered by this section is the west of Reading Borough, including part of the former parish of Tilehurst. This area is bounded by the River Thames to the north and the Kennet Meadows to the south. The east of the area abuts the town centre around the Inner Distribution Road, whilst the west of the area is the boundary with West Berkshire District.
- 7.1.2 The Reading urban area extends well beyond the Borough boundaries into West Berkshire in the areas of Purley-on-Thames, the parish of Tilehurst, and Calcot, and there is no clear distinction between these areas on the ground. These areas form part of what West Berkshire's submitted Local Plan calls the Eastern Area.
- 7.1.3 According to the 2021 Census, around 68,100 people live within the West Reading and Tilehurst area, whilst a further 26,400 people reside in the immediate adjoining urban areas within West Berkshire. Housing in the area includes a wide range of types, with older terraces around Oxford Road, and Victorian villas around the eastern part of the Bath Road area, moving into more modern suburban areas and a number of local authority housing estates further west. There are two conservation areas close to the town centre, Downshire Square and Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road, whilst the Horncastle and Routh Lane conservation areas, remnants of former hamlets separated from Reading, are adjacent to the Borough boundary.
- 7.1.4 The area includes two large industrial areas around Portman Road and Richfield Avenue. In terms of transport, the A329 Oxford Road and A4 Bath Road corridors are the main road routes, whilst the main Great Western line towards the West and Wales passes through the area, as well as the lines towards Newbury and Basingstoke. Reading West and Tilehurst stations are both within the area. As well as the very significant flood meadows around the Thames and Kennet, the area also includes one of Reading's main historic parks, Prospect Park, as well as a network of parks and woodlands with wildlife significance threaded through Tilehurst.
- 7.1.5 Outside Reading's boundaries, there is a concentration of retail development at Junction 12 of the M4, as well as one of the Reading urban area's main business parks at Theale. Education facilities in West Berkshire, particularly the secondary schools, draw pupils from within Reading. Beyond the urban area is the eastern edge of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

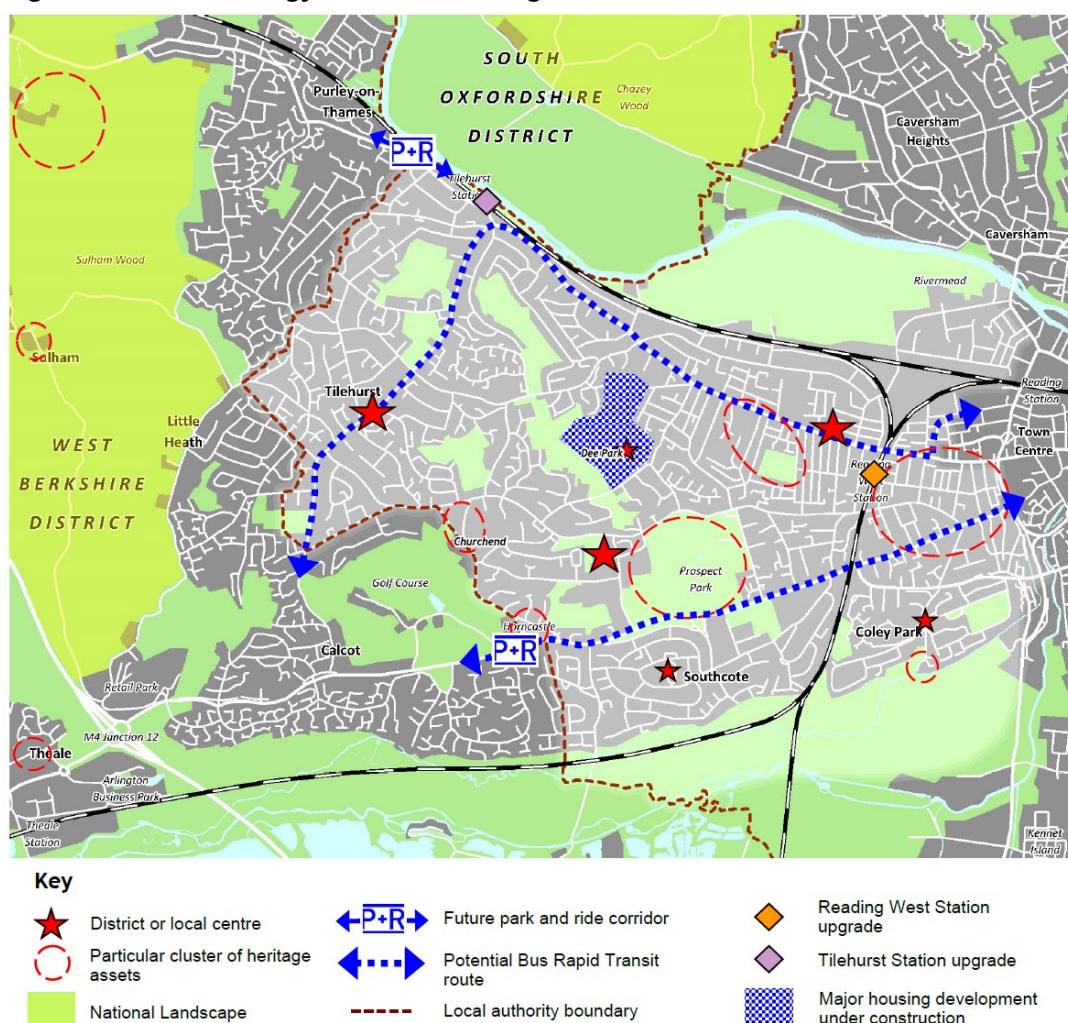
### **7.2 Strategy for West Reading and Tilehurst**

- 7.2.1 The following represent some key principles for the area:
  - a. Important employment areas will be retained for the most part, although some loss of identified fringe locations will help to manage the tension between employment and residential areas;
  - b. District and local centres will continue to thrive, and the Meadway district centre will see development to ensure that it is better able to serve the local community;

- c. Opportunities to undertake renewal and regeneration of some of West Reading's suburban areas will be investigated;
- d. New development will provide or contribute to infrastructure to adequately support the development;
- e. New park and ride mobility hub capacity will be sought on the A4 and A329 corridors;
- f. Development will enable and support key transport improvements, such as bus rapid transit, and the upgrade of Tilehurst and Reading West stations;
- g. Areas of landscape and heritage importance will be conserved, including the edge of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes;
- h. Recreation use of the Rivers Thames and Kennet and their surrounds will be promoted.
- i. Should any future major development take place beyond Reading's boundaries to the west or south west, infrastructure links into Reading should be enhanced.

7.2.2 The strategy for the area is illustrated on Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1: Area strategy for West Reading and Tilehurst**



- 7.2.3 West Reading and Tilehurst has some potential for additional development, although not on the scale of Central and South Reading, as it is largely taken up with existing residential areas, industrial areas that need to be retained, and important areas of recreational open green space or flood meadows.
- 7.2.4 It is considered that West Reading and Tilehurst can accommodate around 1,900 homes between 2023 and 2041, around 13% of the total planned for (this includes 45 dwellings that were completed between 2023 and 2041). Enhancement of the Meadway centre, along with other developments, may deliver some commercial development to secure the future of the district centre. It is important to note that this is an indication of potential capacity, not a policy target.
- 7.2.5 Opportunities for new development are largely spread out over the whole area, as there are not the same opportunities for large new development sites that exist in South Reading. Much of the development is expected to be in the form of small sites, as has historically been the case. There are potential opportunities for some of the older residential areas to see some regeneration and renewal, although opportunities are not expected to be on the scale of the ongoing development at Dee Park.
- 7.2.6 Provision of local services and facilities will be focused on existing centres, and, of the three district centres in the area, it is the Meadway centre where it is anticipated that there will be the greatest provision of new facilities. The older industrial areas, particularly those around Portman Road and Richfield Avenue, will be retained and protected.
- 7.7.7 There are a number of important heritage assets, including four conservation areas and a historic park, which will be conserved. West Reading also has substantial biodiversity interest, with a network of woodlands threaded through the urban area, which would benefit from being better linked together, as well as the biodiversity importance of the Thames, Kennet, Holy Brook and their surrounds including the Kennet Meadows. Most of the same areas also have considerable landscape significance, due to the topography of the area. In a wider sense, the North Wessex Downs National Landscape is close to the Borough boundary to the west, whilst the Chilterns National Landscape is on the other side of the Thames, and West Reading has a number of locations with clear views into and from the Chilterns National Landscape in particular. Development should preserve these features, and where appropriate and possible, enhance them.
- 7.2.8 It is important to recognise the location of a substantial part of the urban area outside the Borough boundaries. The boundary in this location bears little relationship to the function of the area as a whole, and new development in West Berkshire will use facilities in Reading, and vice versa. There is therefore a need for policy on the areas to be aligned, and to ensure that provision of infrastructure on both sides of the boundary is viewed in the context of the area as a whole.
- 7.2.9 The issue of the Borough boundary is illustrated in terms of bus rapid transit and park and ride. Both the A4 (Bath Road) and A329 (Oxford Road) corridors are major entrances to Reading where park and ride provision will be sought, but that will necessitate sites being provided within West Berkshire, linked into Reading by bus rapid transit, which may in some cases require a dedicated route. Reading will continue to work with West Berkshire to address these, and other, important cross boundary transport issues.

- 7.2.10 It must also be recognised that there is a possibility that, in the long-term, significant development may take place on the edge of the urban area outside the Borough boundaries. Neither Reading Borough nor West Berkshire District Councils currently propose such development but if a large scale development were to occur within the lifetime of the plan, it would be vital to recognise its likely reliance on Reading for high-order services and facilities, and ensure that there is adequate infrastructure provision, including linking into Reading's public transport network.

## 7.3 West Reading and Tilehurst Site-Specific Policies

### Dee Park

#### **WR1: DEE PARK**

***The Dee Park area, as identified on the Proposals Map, will continue to be regenerated to provide a sustainable community including the following:***

- ***New and improved housing, which increases the overall density of the site, and provides a greater mix of size, type and tenure, including a higher proportion of family housing than at the outset of regeneration;***
- ***A new Local Centre including a range of facilities, integrated with housing development;***
- ***Improved community facilities, which would be multi-functional and serve a range of groups, and may include sports facilities; and***
- ***Improved quality of open space provision, including greater usability of recreational space, and an area of public realm in the centre.***

***Development will be integrated with surrounding areas, provide a safe and secure environment, and enhance transport links to and from the estate. Development will take account of potential surface water flooding.***

***Development will maintain and enhance the role of Ranikhet Primary School in serving the local and wider community.***

- 7.3.1 Dee Park is a mainly 1960s housing estate in West Reading, primarily within Norcot ward. The following physical issues have been identified with the estate:

- A poor quality physical environment that contributes to issues of crime and anti-social behaviour and a lack of integration with its surroundings;
- Poor quality, energy efficiency and condition of some of the buildings and parts of the public realm;
- Lack of facilities, and low levels of use of existing facilities, which results in vacancy and lack of viability of the local centre;
- Lack of a mix of housing, with a high proportion of small units, and a transient population.

- 7.3.2 Regeneration of the area is therefore essential, and a key objective for the Council. This regeneration is well underway, and at the time of this plan, phases 1, 2a and 2b had delivered 515 new homes (a net gain of around 301) along with new retail facilities. The remainder of the scheme as currently permitted would deliver 190 more homes (a net gain of 108), and this has not commenced.
- 7.3.3 This policy is therefore required to support ongoing regeneration plans for Dee Park. This policy does not refer to a comprehensive redevelopment of the entire area, as there are existing buildings and areas which will be incorporated into any scheme. This policy also does not include a target for how many additional dwellings will result from the development, although the current permission is for a total net gain of 342 dwellings (including those already built). This reflects the fact that the key issue is achieving physical regeneration, and it is not therefore appropriate to be prescriptive in terms of how many dwellings will result.
- 7.3.4 The Dee Park Planning Brief, adopted as an SPD in 2008, highlights the issues and proposed solutions in much greater depth. This document continues to be relevant for any planning decisions.

### **Park Lane Primary School, The Laurels and Downing Road**

#### **WR2: PARK LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL, THE LAURELS AND DOWNING ROAD**

***The existing Park Lane Primary School and associated playing fields, hard play areas, car parking and associated facilities will be reprovided on a single extended site at The Laurels, School Road, Tilehurst, which will include replacement early years provision, library and health clinic.***

***If required to support the scheme, subject to it being demonstrated that the loss of the open space is justified under relevant national and local policy, the Downing Road Playing Fields will be developed for residential (45-55 dwellings) together with appropriate public open space, including a play area, and provide an appropriate setting for the existing public footpath that forms the western boundary of the site. Resolution of highway and access issues on Downing Road will be required. Hedgerows and trees should be retained. Improvements to pitches elsewhere will be necessary to help to offset the loss of playing fields.***

***The main Park Lane School Site will be redeveloped for residential purposes (15-20 dwellings) with access off Downing Road and Chapel Hill. Development should address the practicality of retaining elements of the existing building within any new scheme.***

***The Park Lane School Annex will be reused/redeveloped for community or residential purposes, subject to safeguarding the amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties.***

***Development should take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

- 7.3.5 Park Lane Primary School is a 2 Form Entry (2FE) Primary School. The school currently operates from a split campus across four separate sites.



This arrangement provides an unsatisfactory primary education environment. In addition, the suitability and condition of its buildings and outdoor play areas is far from ideal in relation to modern education practice. The total site area of the 4 parcels of land that comprise the existing school extends to 2.67ha.

- 7.3.6 As part of a major rationalisation project, it is proposed to build a replacement 2FE primary school on the site of The Laurels incorporating the existing Blagrove Nursery, Tilehurst Library and Tilehurst Health Clinic and utilising, and reconfiguring, part of the existing recreation ground for school playing fields and outdoor play. The existing Blagrove Nursery school site would be returned to public open space and incorporated into Blagrove Recreation Ground. The scheme will provide new, bespoke designed school buildings, in conjunction with the required external playing field areas sufficient to meet the minimum requirements for a school of this size along with a new 2-court MUGA hard court provision.
- 7.3.7 The current Junior part of the school comprises two built sites along with a playing field located at the end of Downing Road. The main school site which fronts onto Park Lane, with entrances from Chapel Hill and Downing Road, contains an extended Victorian brick building with a grassed frontage to Park Lane and hard play areas to the rear. The site contains a number of trees. National policy gives further weight to the conservation of local heritage assets even where they are undesignated, and requires that applications affecting heritage assets, including local heritage assets such as Park Lane School, should be accompanied by information on the significance of the asset using appropriate expertise, and that there is a presumption in favour of conservation of the asset. Any development of the site should address the practicality of retaining and converting parts of the existing school building. The site is proposed for residential development although the provision of specialist accommodation, e.g. care home, elderly units, etc., would be appropriate in this very accessible location.
- 7.3.8 The Annex site contains a single storey prefabricated building with frontage to the eastern side of Downing Road. The depth of the site is only 13 metres which is very shallow and it backs on to houses and gardens that front Park Lane/ School Road. The site and existing building is provisionally reserved for a police office and a facility for the Tilehurst Horticultural Association. Residential would be an appropriate alternative use of the land, subject to regard being paid to the amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties.
- 7.3.9 The Downing Road Playing Field is a fenced area of private, recreational space. Loss of open space is generally resisted by policy in this Local Plan, which is why specific work has been undertaken on this piece of land. The disposal of the Downing Road Playing Field has been approved by the Secretary of State for Education (under Section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998).
- 7.3.10 The proposal at Downing Road is for residential development, although the provision of specialist accommodation, e.g. care home, elderly units, would be appropriate in this very accessible location. Some public open space provision, including a play area, should be provided as part of any development and provide an appropriate setting for the public footpath adjoining the western boundary of the site. Developers should examine the possibility of serving some of the development via a separate access from Beverley Road.



- 7.3.11 This site potentially contains 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.

### **Other Sites for Development in West Reading and Tilehurst**

#### **WR3: OTHER SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN WEST READING AND TILEHURST**

*The following sites will be developed according with the principles set out in this policy:*

##### **WR3b 2 ROSS ROAD & PART OF MEADOW ROAD**

*Development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Take account of access restrictions on surrounding streets and ensure that residential access is generally separated from accesses to commercial areas;*
- *Include all parking requirements within the site to avoid exacerbating parking issues on existing streets;*
- *Ensure appropriate separation or buffers between residential and industrial areas, to improve the relationship between the two uses in the local area;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use;*
- *Address any contamination on site;*
- *Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential;*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required; and*
- *Address flood risk issues arising from a Flood Risk Assessment.*

*Site size: 0.6 ha*

*41-61 dwellings*

##### **WR3f 4 BERKELEY AVENUE**

*Development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use; and*

- ***Address any contamination on site.***

***Site size: 0.06 ha***

***11-17 dwellings***

### ***WR3g 211-221 OXFORD ROAD***

***Development for residential with district centre uses on ground floor Oxford Road frontage, continuing the existing Oxford Road building line.***

***Development should:***

- ***Enhance the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings;***
- ***Include tree planting on the Oxford Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address any contamination on site.***

***Site size: 0.16 ha***

***9-13 dwellings and ground floor district centre uses (no significant net gain)***

### ***WR3h REAR OF 303-315 OXFORD ROAD***

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Retain rear access for properties on Oxford Road;***
- ***Only take place as a comprehensive development rather than parts of the site;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on trees protected by TPO;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential.***

***Site size: 0.22 ha***

***10-16 dwellings***

### ***WR3i LAND AT PORTMAN WAY***

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- *Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;*
- *Address flood risk issues arising from a Flood Risk Assessment, including from surface water;*
- *Take account of potential archaeological significance; and*
- *Address any contamination on site.*

*Site size: 0.21 ha*

*18-26 dwellings*

#### **WR3j LAND AT MOULSFORD MEWS**

*Development for residential with potential for ground floor commercial use.*

*Development should:*

- *Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address any contamination on site.*

*Site size: 0.16 ha*

*21-31 dwellings and 100-200 sq m of ground floor commercial*

#### **WR3k 784-794 OXFORD ROAD**

*Development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Only take place as a comprehensive development rather than parts of the site;*
- *Include tree planting on the Oxford Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;*
- *Address flood risk issues arising from a Flood Risk Assessment, including from surface water;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address any contamination on site.*

*Site size: 0.22 ha*

*18-26 dwellings*

#### **WR3l 816 OXFORD ROAD**

*Development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Include tree planting on the Oxford Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use;*
- *Address any contamination on site; and*
- *Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential.*

*Site size: 0.23 ha*

*20-30 dwellings*

### **WR3n AMETHYST LANE**

*Development for residential and respite care use.*

*Development should:*

- *Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential; and*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

*Site size: 0.57 ha*

*16-24 dwellings, no significant net gain of community use*

### **WR3o THE MEADWAY CENTRE, HONEY END LANE**

*Development of existing shopping centre to provide a new district centre including retail and leisure uses and additional residential. Development should be as comprehensive as possible.*

*Development should:*

- *Enhance the diversity of types and sizes of uses within the district centre;*
- *Ensure that district centre uses including a strong retail component is provided on ground floors;*
- *Improve links within the centre and to adjoining areas, and be designed to draw people into the centre;*
- *Not take the form of additional development that does not seek to address the centre's existing design issues;*
- *Be arranged around a quality public space which can serve as a focus for the community;*
- *Include new tree planting and retain existing important trees where possible;*
- *Avoid detrimental effects on the biodiversity and landscape significance of the woodland to the north and west of the site;*

- *Provide for an enhanced green link at the south and west of the site between Prospect Park and the Meadway Woodland;*
- *Reduce height towards the rear of residential properties on Cockney Hill;*
- *Be designed to reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour;*
- *Be accessed from existing accesses;*
- *Enhance cycle access to the site;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address any contamination on site.*

*Site size: 2.99 ha*

*A net gain of up to 231 dwelling and 2,000 sq m of retail and leisure*

### **WR3p FORMER ALICE BURROWS HOME, DWYER ROAD**

*Development for residential and/or residential care.*

*Development should:*

- *Be accessed from Appleford Road only;*
- *Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;*
- *Take account of the potential impact on wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required; and*
- *Take account of potential archaeological significance.*

*Site size: 0.48 ha*

*24-36 dwellings or an equivalent number of residential care bedspaces*

### **WR3r FORMER CHARTERS CAR SALES, OXFORD ROAD**

*Development for residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Provide access to the site from Lippincote Court;*
- *Avoid adverse visual impacts on views from the north side of the Thames and on the Thames Valley major landscape feature;*
- *Avoid detrimental impacts on the wildlife value of existing wooded areas and on significant trees including those protected by TPO;*
- *Include tree planting on the Oxford Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use;*

- ***Address any contamination on site; and***
- ***Take account of the two-storey character of houses south of Oxford Road.***

***Site size: 0.33 ha***

***8-12 dwellings***

#### **WR3s LAND AT KENTWOOD HILL**

***Development for residential, subject to the site not being identified as a Local Wildlife Site.***

***Development should:***

- ***Be supported by information showing how development fits within a comprehensive approach to the whole area (including WR3t and the protection of the neighbouring allotments and recreation ground);***
- ***Assess and mitigate any impacts on the Kentwood Hill/Norcot Road/School Road junction;***
- ***Provide adequate footway/cycleway provision to link into existing routes;***
- ***Include a landscaped border to Kentwood Hill;***
- ***Provide for well-vegetated green links between the copse and the Victoria Recreation Ground, and between the copse and Kentwood Hill;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees, including those protected by TPO, and on the stream in the copse;***
- ***Retain and avoid detrimental impacts on important areas of biodiversity;***
- ***Avoid adverse visual impacts on the West Reading Wooded Ridgeline major landscape feature, and ensure that views can be gained through the site from the recreation ground and neighbouring streets towards the Chiltern escarpment;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Ensure that development will not have a detrimental effect on land stability on the site and nearby; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 0.97 ha***

***32-48 dwellings***

#### **WR3t LAND AT ARMOUR HILL**

***Development for residential, subject to the site not being identified as a Local Wildlife Site.***

**Development should:**

- *Be supported by information showing how development fits within a comprehensive approach to the whole area (including WR3s and the protection of the neighbouring allotments and recreation ground);*
- *Ensure that there is no reduction in vehicle access to, parking for and security of the allotments or reduction of the allotments themselves as a result of the development;*
- *Assess and mitigate any impacts on the Armour Hill/Kentwood Hill junction;*
- *Include a landscaped border to Armour Hill;*
- *Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;*
- *Retain and avoid detrimental impacts on important areas of biodiversity;*
- *Avoid adverse visual impacts on the West Reading Wooded Ridgeline major landscape feature;*
- *Take account of potential archaeological significance;*
- *Ensure that development will not have a detrimental effect on land stability on the site and nearby; and*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

*Site size: 0.45 ha*

*10-14 dwellings*

**WR3u 132-134 BATH ROAD**

**Development for residential.**

**Development should:**

- *Create an enhanced access onto Bath Road without a detrimental impact on highway safety;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use;*
- *Address any contamination on site; and*
- *Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential; and*
- *Avoid discharging surface water flows into the public sewer.*

*Site size: 0.51 ha*

*17-25 dwellings*



**WR3v FORMER SOUTHCOTE LIBRARY, CORONATION SQUARE**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Aim to avoid adverse impacts on important trees on site; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 0.17 ha***

***15-23 dwellings***

**WR3w PART OF TESCO CAR PARK, PORTMAN ROAD**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Contribute towards an extension and bifurcation of the BUZZ18 bus route, with an increase in daytime, evening and weekend frequency;***
- ***Be accessed from the existing car park access;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;***
- ***Address flood risk issues arising from a Flood Risk Assessment, including from surface water;***
- ***Address noise and light impacts on residential use, particularly from the adjacent filling station and service access to the superstore;***
- ***Address any contamination on site; and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 0.59 ha***

***46-68 dwellings***

**WR3x 1-15 ST GEORGES ROAD**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Address any contamination on site;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use;***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential; and***

- ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

*Site size: 0.15 ha*

*11-17 dwellings*

**WR3y 72 BERKELEY AVENUE**

***Change of use to residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

*Site size: 0.33 ha*

*9-13 dwellings*

- 7.3.12 This policy identifies those sites within West Reading and Tilehurst where development will be appropriate. As well as contributing to meeting the identified needs of the Borough, allocation can help provide physical regeneration of sites which are in some cases vacant or underused. In addition, it allows the Council to highlight the issues which need to be addressed in developing sites, set out site-specific requirements and, if necessary, plan for the provision of infrastructure.
- 7.3.13 Where dwelling or floorspace figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide, and usually reflect an indicative maximum capacity. They are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. However, the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout. The fact that a site is allocated in WR3 does not preclude the need to comply with all other policies in the local plan, including, for residential developments, the need to provide affordable housing.
- 7.3.14 Where there are significant issues that will need to be addressed in any planning applications on the specific sites listed above, these are usually highlighted in the policy, and usually correspond to other policies in the Local Plan, such as EN1, EN2, or EN11-18, where more detail is set out. However, it is not a guarantee that there are no other potential issues, and it does not remove the need to address the usual matters that should be dealt with on all sites.
- 7.3.15 On some sites identified for housing, there may be potential for community uses, such as meeting spaces, healthcare or education to be provided which have not been anticipated by this plan. There may also be potential for specialist housing provision for specific groups, outside the C3 dwellinghouse use class. This could potentially reduce the amount of housing which could be provided on specific sites. Depending on other policies in the plan, this can be appropriate, provided that it does not harm the chances of delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy – this decision will be informed by the most up-to-date housing trajectory.

- 7.3.16 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief (adopted 2013) provides more guidance on the development of site WR3o, and this continues to be relevant. Sites WR3i, WR3j and WR3w also fall within the area covered by the Battle Hospital Planning Brief (adopted 2005). This document continues to be relevant, but it predates the Local Plan by some years, so where there is any conflict with policy WR3, the Plan policy takes precedence.
- 7.3.17 Sites WR3i, WR3p, WR3s and WR3t 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.

### Sites with existing planning permission

- 7.3.18 At the time of publication of the Local Plan, a number of sites in West Reading in addition to the allocated sites had planning permission for 10 or more dwellings or more than 1,000 sq m of non-residential development. There is not considered to be a need to identify these sites within a policy, as the permission establishes the principle of the development. Any future applications on these sites will be acceptable where they are substantially the same as the existing permission, subject to the policies in this Local Plan. Applications for developments will need to be considered against policies in the plan, in particular whether it would adversely impact the likelihood of meeting Reading's identified development needs.

Site	App ref	Summary of development
1025-1027 Oxford Road	070937	Development of 12 dwellings
2-6 Water Road and 158 Dee Road	161507	Redevelopment of 4 dwellings for 11 dwellings
53-55 Argyle Street	170134	Change of use of clinic to 10 dwellings (under construction)
127a Loverock Road	190591	Development for employment uses (1,667 sq m)
Wensley Road	200122	Development of 46 dwellings (under construction)
42 Portman Road	200693	Change of use of office to 14 dwellings (under construction)
18 Parkside Road	210582	Development of 10 dwellings (under construction)
Dellwood Community Hospital, Liebenrood Road	211728	Partial demolition, change of use and extension to form care home
Richfield Driving Range, Richfield Avenue	212061	Development of secondary school of 11,333 sq m (under construction)
103 Dee Road	221130	Development of 54 dwellings (under construction)

Site	App ref	Summary of development
Curzon Club, 362 Oxford Road <sup>136</sup>	221345	Redevelopment of club for 30 dwellings
63-86 Rowe Court	221693	Development of 54 dwellings (under construction)

*Development progress is correct to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024*

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<sup>136</sup> Resolved to grant permission subject to signing of Section 106 agreement

## 8. CAVERSHAM AND EMMER GREEN

### 8.1 Area Context

- 8.1.1 The area covered by this section is the area of Reading Borough north of the River Thames, comprising the wards of Caversham, Caversham Heights, Emmer Green and part of Thames.
- 8.1.2 Caversham grew up as a separate settlement on the north banks of the Thames within Oxfordshire, only becoming part of the borough of Reading in 1911. For this reason, it has a distinct identity, and this history can also be seen in the presence of many road names that are also used in Reading (such as Prospect Street, South Street and Queen's Road). Emmer Green was a smaller settlement in a location at the edge of the Chiltern Hills, featuring a number of chalk mines, before becoming subsumed within the wider urban area.
- 8.1.3 Unlike other suburban parts of Reading, the urban area does not extend beyond the Borough boundaries into South Oxfordshire district, and these areas directly abut the Oxfordshire countryside. For most of its length, the northern part of the Reading Borough boundary follows the exact urban edge. To the west of Caversham, the Chilterns National Landscape adjoins the Borough boundary.
- 8.1.4 According to the 2021 Census, around 33,000 people live within this area. The area is generally the most affluent part of Reading, although there are some small focuses of deprivation, notably around Amersham Road. The lower part of Caversham is characterised by Victorian terraced housing with some new additions. To the northwest, Caversham Heights contains large homes within sizeable plots, many of which were developed between 1900 and 1930. Later 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development is concentrated around upper parts of Caversham, Emmer Green and the Caversham Park area.
- 8.1.5 There are two conservation areas. St Peter's is centred on St Peter's Church and the historic garden of Caversham Court, on the banks of the Thames, and close to the heart of the old settlement of Caversham. Surley Row is further north, and is set out along the route from Emmer Green to the old parish church of Caversham. One of Caversham's most distinctive features is the listed manor house and 38 ha historic park at Caversham Park.
- 8.1.6 The area is defined by its topography. The low lying areas close to the Thames are prone to flooding, and flood risk continues to provide a constraint to future development. However, the ground quickly rises to the north and northwest, as the remainder of the area undulates as it meets the fringes of the Chiltern hills. The 'dry valleys' typically found in the Chilterns also extend into Caversham, and there are a number of wooded and undeveloped areas that help to link the area into the wider Chilterns landscape beyond.
- 8.1.7 The area is largely residential in nature, although there is one small industrial area at Paddock Road as well as the retail and related uses in Caversham centre, as well as a smaller grouping at Emmer Green. There are only two road crossings of the River Thames within the urban area of Reading, and this can lead to congestion within the centre of Caversham. However, the Christchurch pedestrian and cycle bridge has helped to further link the areas together. The main roads leading out of the Borough are the A4155 to

Henley-on-Thames, A4074 towards Wallingford and the B481 to the nearby village of Sonning Common and towards Watlington. Sonning Common also has a secondary school, Chiltern Edge, which is attended by some Reading residents.

## **8.2 Strategy for Caversham and Emmer Green**

8.2.1 The following represent some key principles for the area:

- a. There will be enhanced pedestrian and cycle links between central Caversham and Reading town centre;
- b. New development will provide or contribute to infrastructure to adequately support the development;
- c. New mobility hub capacity will be sought on the A4155, A4074 and B481 corridors;
- d. The Council will continue to work with its neighbouring authorities towards provision of a crossing of the Thames east of Reading;
- e. Areas of landscape and heritage importance will be preserved, including the edge of the Chilterns National Landscape;
- f. The watercourses in the area, including the River Thames and its tributaries, will be protected and enhanced as a multi-functional resource for leisure, recreation, ecology and landscape.

8.2.2 Caversham and Emmer Green have relatively little scope for additional development compared to some other areas of Reading, as virtually the whole area is covered by residential areas with some public open space. Much of Lower Caversham is subject to flood risk constraints. There remains potential for infill development and development involving residential gardens, and there is an ongoing development at the former Reading Golf Club, but this area is not likely to be able to accommodate a significant proportion of Reading's identified need.

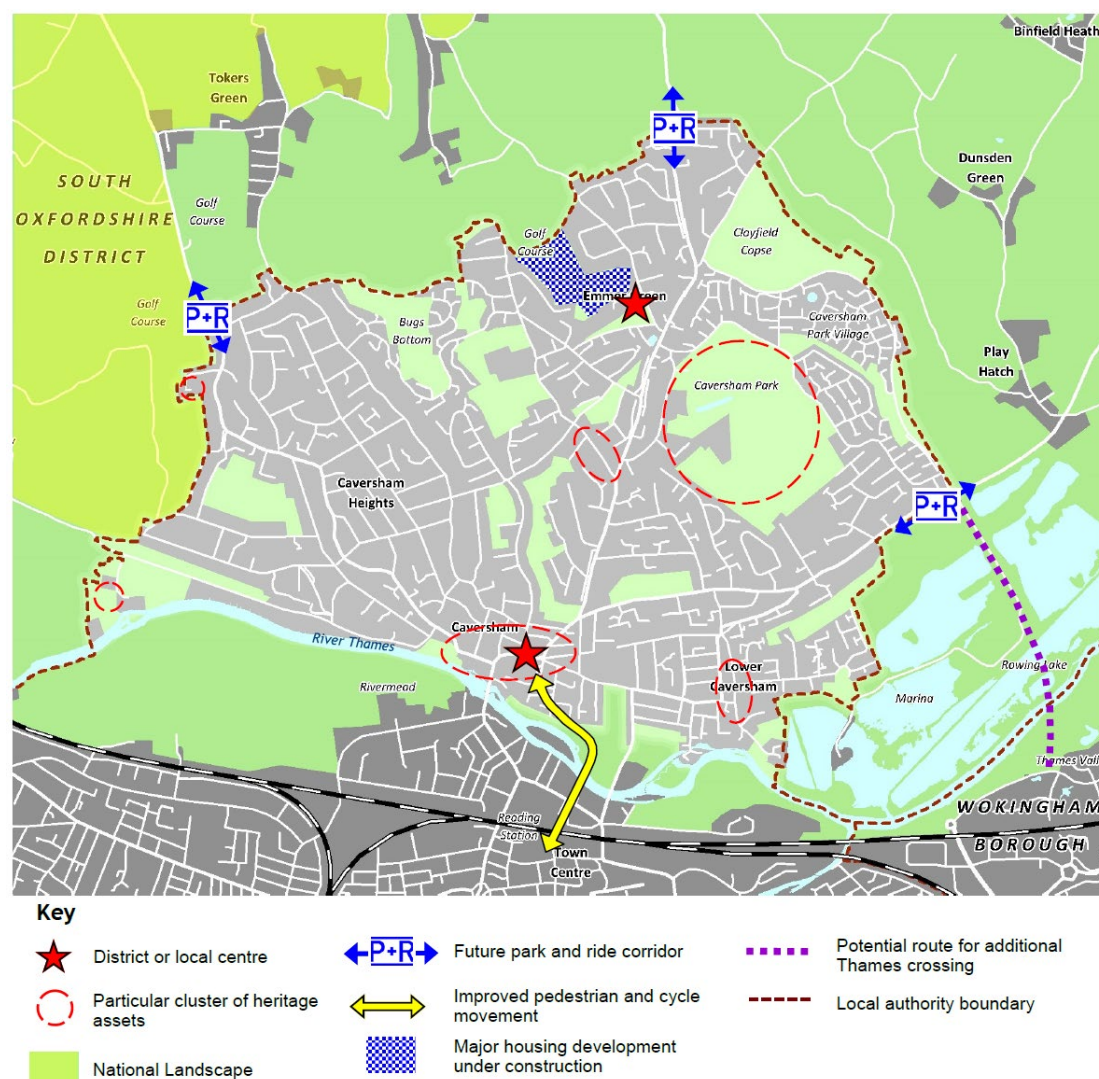
8.2.3 It is considered that Caversham and Emmer Green can accommodate around 700 homes between 2023 and 2041, around 5% of the total planned for (this includes 27 homes completed during 2023-24). There is not scope to accommodate any substantial proportion of the non-residential development needs, although development in and around central Caversham may result in additional town centre uses. It is important to note that this is an indication of potential capacity, not a policy target.

8.2.4 As a result of the limited development capacity, the overall strategy in this area is largely based around ensuring that, where development is to be accommodated, it is done in a way that prevents adverse effects on the existing areas. Of particular importance in Caversham and Emmer Green are potential effects on landscape, heritage and infrastructure. The relationship of the landscape with the Chiltern Hills and River Thames, described in paragraph 8.1.6, and of the townscape with the former separate settlements of Caversham and surrounding hamlets, will be preserved.

8.2.5 The adequacy of infrastructure to support additional development remains one of the most significant concerns in the area. In particular, transport, education and healthcare are issues that would need to be addressed in any

development. The Council is working constructively with Wokingham Borough Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, local parish and town councils, Transport for the South East, National Highways and the Department for Transport to work up proposals for cross-Thames travel, although any additional crossing capacity would be likely to be largely within neighbouring authorities. An additional crossing could result in measures to increase public transport capacity on existing crossings, which would improve traffic issues. The Council continues to explore opportunities for new park and ride mobility hub sites within neighbouring authorities to help alleviate some of the issues identified.

**Figure 8.1: Area strategy for Caversham and Emmer Green**



## 8.3 Caversham and Emmer Green Site-Specific Policies

### Sites for Development and Change of Use in Caversham and Emmer Green

#### CA1: SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN CAVERSHAM AND EMMER GREEN

*The following sites will be developed according with the principles set out in this policy:*



#### **CA1a READING UNIVERSITY BOAT CLUB, THAMES PROMENADE**

***Development for residential. Where retention of the existing boathouse is not proposed, development will only be permitted subject to its relocation or clear demonstration that its loss is justified in line with policy RL6 or national policy.***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid detrimental visual effects on the Thames Valley major landscape feature;***
- ***Take account of the risk of flooding, and locate development only in the portion of the site in Flood Zone 2, closest to Abbotsmead Road;***
- ***Provide for a green link across the site from Christchurch Meadows to Abbotsmead Road;***
- ***Conserve the setting of the listed war memorial;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance, and be supported by a desk-based archaeological assessment which should inform the development.***

***Site size: 0.56 ha***

***18-28 dwellings***

#### **CA1c LAND AT LOWFIELD ROAD**

***Development for residential<sup>137</sup>.***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;***
- ***Retain areas of woodland making up priority habitat, take account of the potential for wider biodiversity interest and allow for a green link across the Lowfield Road frontage of the site;***
- ***Address any contamination on site;***
- ***Avoid detrimental visual effects on the North Reading Dry Valleys and Chilterns Escarpment major landscape feature and on Caversham Park; and***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance.***

***Site size: 0.93 ha***

***21-31 dwellings***

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<sup>137</sup> There is a temporary permission for 28 temporary homes for homeless households, reference 160762, with subsequent amendments. This allocation is for the longer-term future of the site.

**CA1d REAR OF 200-214 HENLEY ROAD, 12-24 ALL HALLOWS ROAD & 7 & 8 COPSE AVENUE**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Be accessed from Overton Drive;***
- ***Be designed to retain important trees and groups of trees, and avoid adverse effects on important trees including that protected by TPO;***
- ***Avoid adverse impacts on adjoining priority habitat;***
- ***Provide for a green link across the site from the copse to the north of the site southwards;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use relating to the southern portion of the site;***
- ***Address any contamination on site; and***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential.***

***Site size: 0.84 ha***

***17-25 dwellings***

**CA1e REAR OF 13-14A HAWTHORNE ROAD & 284-292 HENLEY ROAD**

***Development for residential***

***Development should:***

- ***Be accessed from Maytree Walk;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.31 ha***

***8-12 dwellings***

**CA1f REAR OF 1 & 3 WOODCOTE ROAD AND 21 ST PETER'S HILL**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Be accessed from Symeon Place;***
- ***Retain established trees and vegetation around the edge of the site, in particular those protected by TPO;***
- ***Take account of the high potential archaeological significance and***

***be supported by assessment work which should inform the development;***

- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential.***

***Site size: 0.33 ha***

***11-17 dwellings***

#### **CA1h HEMDEAN HOUSE SCHOOL, HEMDEAN ROAD**

***Continued education and community use of the site, or, if no longer required for education, change of use and development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Contribute to providing enhanced bus priority on Vastern Road exiting the northern station interchange;***
- ***Retain those buildings that make the most significant contribution of the character of the surrounding area;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO; and***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential.***

***Site size: 0.93 ha***

***Continued education and/or community use, or 22-34 dwellings***

- 8.3.1 This policy identifies those sites within Caversham and Emmer Green where development and change will be appropriate. As well as contributing to meeting the identified needs of the Borough, allocation can help provide physical regeneration of sites which are in some cases vacant or underused. In addition, it allows the Council to highlight the issues which need to be addressed in developing sites, set out site-specific requirements and, if necessary, plan for the provision of infrastructure.
- 8.3.2 Where dwelling or floorspace figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide, and usually reflect an indicative maximum capacity. They are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. However, the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout. The fact that a site is allocated in CA1 does not preclude the need to comply with all other policies in the local plan, including, for residential developments, the need to provide affordable housing.
- 8.3.3 Where there are significant issues that will need to be addressed in any planning applications on the specific sites listed above, these are usually highlighted in the policy, and usually correspond to other policies in the Local Plan, such as EN1, EN2, or EN11-18, where more detail is set out. However, it is not a guarantee that there are no other potential issues, and it does not

remove the need to address the usual matters that should be dealt with on all sites.

- 8.3.4 On some sites identified for housing, there may be potential for community uses, such as meeting spaces, healthcare or education to be provided which have not been anticipated by this plan. There may also be potential for specialist housing provision for specific groups, outside the C3 dwellinghouse use class. This could potentially reduce the amount of housing which could be provided on specific sites. Depending on other policies in the plan, this can be appropriate, provided that it does not harm the chances of delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy – this decision will be informed by the most up-to-date housing trajectory.

### **Sites with existing planning permission**

- 8.3.5 At the time of publication of the Local Plan, a number of sites in Caversham and Emmer Green in addition to the allocated sites had planning permission for ten or more dwellings or more than 1,000 sq m of non-residential development. There is not considered to be a need to identify most of these sites within a policy, as the permission establishes the principle of the development. Any future applications on these sites will be acceptable where they are substantially the same as the existing permission, subject to the policies in this Local Plan. Applications for developments will need to be considered against policies in the plan, in particular whether it would adversely impact the likelihood of meeting Reading's identified development needs.

Site	App ref	Summary of development
Chazey Farm, The Warren	030275	Development of 78-bed nursing home
Unit 1, Paddock Road Industrial Estate	100384	Development for industrial/warehouse units totalling 1,577 sq m
St Martin's Precinct, Church Street	140997	Redevelopment for retail (501 sq m net gain), restaurant (524 sq m net gain), leisure (652 sq m net gain), residential (40 dwellings) plus additional works
Reading Golf Club, Kidmore End Road	211843	Development for 223 dwellings (under construction)
205-213 Henley Road <sup>138</sup>	220189	Development for 50 retirement living dwellings

*Development progress is correct to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024*

## **Caversham Park**

### **CA2: CAVERSHAM PARK**

***Caversham Park and Caversham Park House are key features of the heritage and landscape of Reading. Caversham Park is a Registered***

<sup>138</sup> Resolved to grant permission subject to signing of Section 106 agreement

***Historic Park and Garden, and the site contains a number of listed features. These assets will be conserved.***

***Conversion of the house from offices to residential and/or a cultural, community or heritage use, or other suitable use compatible with its heritage, will be acceptable if it sustains the significance of the listed building. It is currently estimated that up to 40-45 dwellings could be accommodated, but the figure will be dependent on more detailed historic assessment of the building and the precise mix of uses.***

***Any development or conversion proposals should open as much of the park as possible up to public access, including reinstatement of any historic public footpaths where possible and appropriate.***

***This policy does not allocate the site for additional development over and above conversion of the house. There may be scope for some limited development on previously developed land within the site, which will need to be justified at application stage. Such development must comply with the criteria below:***

- ***No development will negatively affect the significance of the heritage assets and their setting;***
- ***Development will not detract from the character or appearance of the important landscape value; and***
- ***Development will not negatively affect significant trees or areas of biodiversity importance.***

8.3.6 Caversham Park is a historic estate in Caversham totalling 38 ha, the origins of which date back to at least Norman times, with the estate featuring in the Domesday Book. It was formerly the home of the Earl of Pembroke and later the Earls of Warwick<sup>139</sup>. The site is a registered historic park. A succession of manor houses have stood within the site, but the current listed Caversham Park House dates from the Victorian era. The house and its grounds have been used by the BBC as its Monitoring Station, together with the base for BBC Radio Berkshire. Given its location at the top of a hill, it is highly prominent from a number of locations in Reading, in particular the entrance along the A329(M).

8.3.7 In July 2016, the BBC announced its decision to vacate the site<sup>140</sup>. This leaves a very large area comprised mainly of open green space, to which there has been no public access up to now. There is clearly an opportunity to secure a beneficial use of an important listed building, and also to secure access to a large area of much needed open space of significant historic interest for the local population.

8.3.8 Caversham Park is a Registered Historic Park and Garden<sup>141</sup>. The Historic England website<sup>142</sup> states that:

“The main purpose of this Register is to celebrate designed landscapes of note, and encourage appropriate protection. ... The National Planning

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<sup>139</sup> [http://www.berkshirehistory.com/castles/caversham\\_park.html](http://www.berkshirehistory.com/castles/caversham_park.html)

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-36712152>

<sup>141</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000524>

<sup>142</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/registered-parks-and-gardens/>

Policy Framework defines registered parks and gardens as designated heritage assets meaning that substantial harm to, or total loss of, a registered park or garden should be 'exceptional' or 'wholly exceptional', depending on the site's grade."

- 8.3.9 A variety of uses of the existing building may be acceptable, although the extent of internal works to the listed building will have a strong influence over the form of the conversion. These possibilities include conversion to residential, a cultural or heritage use that capitalises on the heritage of the park, such as a visitor centre, or a community use that could include education. It may be possible to achieve a mix of uses within the building.
- 8.3.10 For clarity, this allocation is not for additional development. At this stage, it has not been demonstrated that significant additional development within the area will not harm the historical significance of the site or is otherwise appropriate. Any proposal that includes additional development would need to be accompanied by compelling evidence that such development will not have a detrimental impact on the many features of importance within the site, including areas of important habitat, significant trees, the House and other listed structures, views in and out of the site, and the overall significance of the park itself, as well as on considerations such as access.

## 9. EAST READING

### 9.1 Area Context

- 9.1.1 This section covers the areas of Reading Borough east and south east of the centre, up to the Wokingham Borough boundary. It is a relatively small geographical area, but contains some 31,800 residents according to the 2021 Census, making it the highest residential density in the Borough outside the town centre.
- 9.1.2 The area within Reading Borough forms only a small part of the east of the urban area, as beyond the Borough in Wokingham Borough lie the areas of Woodley, Earley, Lower Earley and Winnersh, all of which function as part of the immediate Reading urban area and which account for a further 76,000 residents, as well as major business parks such as Thames Valley Park, Suttons Business Park and Winnersh Triangle.
- 9.1.3 East Reading within the Borough boundary is dominated by Victorian housing. The area grew up with the industrial expansion of the town in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the housing supported the key industries such as Huntley and Palmers biscuits and Suttons Seeds. This heritage is evident in the names around the area, including Palmer Park and Alfred Sutton primary school. Much of the area is formed of terraced housing to house the workers, but there are also larger homes, many of which were intended for managers at the new industries.
- 9.1.4 This heritage means there is a significant concentration of important heritage features in the area. Six conservation areas (Alexandra Road, Christchurch Road, Kendrick Road, Redlands, South Park and The Mount) take in some of the best preserved of these Victorian areas, whilst a seventh, Eldon Square, picks out some of the town's Georgian heritage at the fringe of the town centre. However, these are merely the best examples, whilst much of the surroundings of these conservation areas continues the Victorian theme. Reading cemetery is a registered historic garden, and Palmer Park is one of the town's main green spaces.
- 9.1.5 This part of town is known for two key institutions: the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the University of Reading. The University of Reading is a major focus of higher education with an international reputation, and its main Whiteknights Campus spans the boundary of Reading and Wokingham Boroughs, with another campus on London Road. This means that East Reading's population is boosted by thousands of students, some living in purpose-built halls, but others in private rented accommodation in the areas around the campus. This boosts the vibrancy of the area, but can also lead to tensions with permanent residents. The Royal Berkshire Hospital on London Road is the main hospital for residents of west and central Berkshire, and was established in 1839. It now employs more than 4,000 staff. Both the university and the hospital occupy some of the surrounding Victorian buildings for additional functions.



## 9.2 Strategy for East Reading

9.2.1 The following represent some key principles for the area:

- a. The University of Reading's Whiteknights Campus will continue to develop to support the economy and function of the town, subject to the constraints of the site;
- b. The areas of tension between the University and surrounding areas will be carefully managed, and purpose-built student accommodation on established university sites will be supported;
- c. The Royal Berkshire Hospital site, whether or not the Hospital remains in situ, will continue to have an important healthcare function, and as long as the Hospital remains continue to be a very significant facility for the wider sub-region, although development on site will avoid adverse effects on the surrounding residential areas;
- d. Areas of heritage and landscape importance will be conserved and enhanced;
- e. New development will provide or contribute to infrastructure to adequately support the development;
- f. The provision of transport improvements including Bus Rapid Transit to link into park and ride at Thames Valley Park will be supported.

9.2.2 The strategy for the area is illustrated on Figure 9.1.

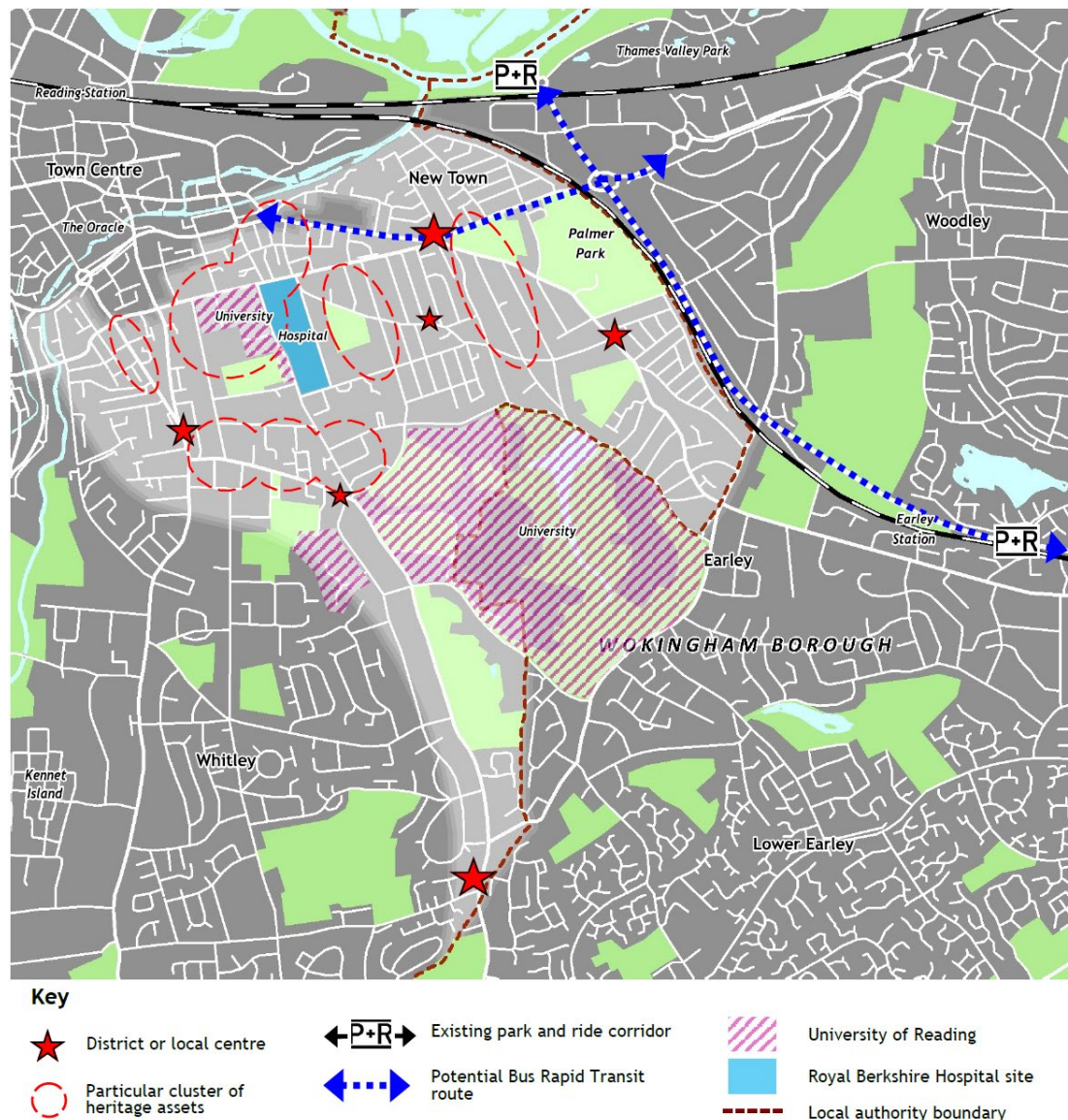
9.2.3 The substantial historic significance of much of East Reading, together with the existing residential density, means that there is little scope for additional major development. Much of the recent development has been associated with the University, and that is likely to continue to be the case in the plan period.

9.2.4 It is considered that East Reading can accommodate around 800 homes between 2023 and 2041, around 6% of the total planned for (this includes 22 homes already completed during 2023-24). The area is unlikely to be able to make any significant contribution to meeting development needs for employment or retail uses. It is important to note that this is an indication of potential capacity, not a policy target.

9.2.5 Given the limited amount of development expected, no overall strategy for development distribution is necessary. However, there are two major themes that need to be highlighted in the area strategy, namely heritage and the need to manage the relationship between the residential areas and the two major institutions, the university and hospital.

9.2.6 The concentration of heritage assets in East Reading is very significant, with 17% of the area falling within a conservation area or historic park. These assets should of course be conserved. However, given the distribution of conservation areas in particular, there may be opportunities for development on sites in between areas to better link those areas together with high quality design.

**Figure 9.1: Area strategy for East Reading**



9.2.7 The University of Reading is a vital part of Reading's economy and life, and there will continue to be a need for development to support that role at its main Whiteknights campus, as well as its secondary campus at London Road. This development will be supported, where it does not result in significant adverse effects. However, there is clearly an issue around accommodating students in the area, with many existing homes in the area now occupied by students, and therefore concerns about various possible effects such as noise, parking and the sustainability of local services with less accommodation available for families. For this reason, an increase of purpose-built student accommodation is needed, but the Council considers that first priority should be on the existing university sites, both to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, and so that key sites elsewhere deliver much-needed general housing rather than student accommodation. The Whiteknights campus crosses the boundary with Wokingham, and it is important that policy across the site is consistent.

- 9.2.8 The hospital is clearly a vital facility for the town and surrounding area, but its future location remains uncertain with alternative sites being considered as part of the New Hospital Programme. The Council wishes to see the hospital remain in Reading Borough, but should a decision be made to relocate, continued use of part of the existing site for healthcare will be essential. In terms of the existing hospital, there is a serious local issue with car parking, at least in part due to parking related to the hospital spilling into surrounding streets. New development at the hospital will therefore need to show what measures will be taken to prevent further worsening of this issue.

## **9.3 East Reading Site-Specific Policies**

### **Sites for Development in East Reading**

#### ***ER1: SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN EAST READING***

***The following sites will be developed according with the principles set out in this policy:***

##### ***ER1b DINGLEY HOUSE, 3-5 CRAVEN ROAD***

***Retention and change of use of locally listed building for residential with complementary additional development.***

***Development should:***

- ***Retain the locally-listed building, which is subject to an Article 4 direction, and any additional development should enhance its setting;***
- ***Reflect the setback of buildings from the road in the immediate local area***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including that protected by TPO.***

***Site size: 0.33 ha***

***30-46 dwellings***

##### ***ER1c LAND REAR OF 8-26 REDLANDS ROAD***

***Development for residential, with potential for student accommodation or university uses reflecting the existing student accommodation use on the northern part of the site.***

***Development should:***

- ***Make a positive contribution to the conservation area and to the setting of adjacent listed buildings;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Retain the wall fronting Morgan Road; and***
- ***Retain mature trees on the site and provide for a north-south green link, which will reduce the amount of the site that can be developed and will particularly limit development behind 14-24 Redlands Road.***

***Site size: 0.74 ha***

***14-20 dwellings***

**ER1d LAND ADJACENT TO 40 REDLANDS ROAD**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including that protected by TPO;***
- ***Make a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential; and***
- ***Take account of the potential for biodiversity interest, including bats.***

***Site size: 0.43 ha***

***25-37 dwellings***

**ER1e ST PATRICK'S HALL, NORTHCOURT AVENUE**

***Development to intensify the provision of student accommodation on site, with retention of locally-listed Pearson's Court.***

***Development should:***

- ***Retain the locally-listed building and additional development should enhance its setting;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;***
- ***Take account of the potential for biodiversity interest, including bats;***
- ***Enhance the green link across the northern boundary of the site and***
- ***Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.***

***Site size: 3.39 ha***

***Net gain of approximately 450-500 bedspaces***

**ER1i 261-275 LONDON ROAD**

***Development for residential with district centre uses on the ground floor.***

***Development should:***

- ***Be accessed from Cholmeley Road;***
- ***Assess and mitigate any impact on the Cholmeley Road/London Road junction;***

- *Make a positive contribution to the setting of the Registered Park and Garden at Reading Cemetery;*
- *Take account of potential archaeological significance;*
- *Include tree planting on the London Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;*
- *Take account of the potential for contamination;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use; and*
- *Ensure appropriate back to back separation from existing residential.*

*Site size: 0.16 ha*

*10-14 dwellings and 250-380 sq m of town centre uses*

#### **ER1k 131 WOKINGHAM ROAD**

*Development for residential with ground floor local centre uses.*

*Development should:*

- *Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;*
- *Include tree planting on the Wokingham Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;*
- *Address any contamination on site;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use.*

*Site size: 0.15 ha*

*10-14 dwellings and 240-350 sq m of retail or related use.*

#### **ER1I PRINCES HOUSE, 73A LONDON ROAD**

*Change of use to residential.*

*Development should:*

- *Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;*
- *Include tree planting on the London Road frontage to enhance the treed corridor;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use.*

*Site size: 0.16 ha*

*21-31 dwellings*

### **ER1m LAND ADJACENT TO 17 CRAVEN ROAD**

***Development for residential, subject to no longer being required for health-related uses.***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO;***
- ***Enhance the setting of nearby listed buildings;***
- ***Reflect the prevailing heights on the eastern side of Craven Road; and***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use.***

***Site size: 0.27 ha***

***22-34 dwellings***

### **ER1n 51 CHURCH ROAD, EARLEY**

***Development for residential.***

***Development should:***

- ***Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO; and***
- ***Enhance the setting of the nearby listed church.***

***Site size: 0.23 ha***

***13-19 dwellings***

- 9.3.1 This policy identifies those sites within East Reading where development will be appropriate. As well as contributing to meeting the identified needs of the Borough, allocation can help provide physical regeneration of sites which are in some cases vacant or underused. In addition, it allows the Council to highlight the issues which need to be addressed in developing sites, set out site-specific requirements and, if necessary, plan for the provision of infrastructure.
- 9.3.2 Where dwelling or floorspace figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide, and usually reflect an indicative maximum capacity. They are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. However, the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout. The fact that a site is allocated in ER1 does not preclude the need to comply with all other policies in the local plan, including, for residential developments, the need to provide affordable housing.
- 9.3.3 Where there are significant issues that will need to be addressed in any planning applications on the specific sites listed above, these are usually highlighted in the policy, and usually correspond to other policies in the Local Plan, such as EN1, EN2, or EN11-18, where more detail is set out. However, it is not a guarantee that there are no other potential issues, and it does not



remove the need to address the usual matters that should be dealt with on all sites.

- 9.3.4 On some sites identified for housing, there may be potential for community uses, such as meeting spaces, healthcare or education to be provided which have not been anticipated by this plan. There may also be potential for specialist housing provision for specific groups, outside the C3 dwellinghouse use class. This could potentially reduce the amount of housing which could be provided on specific sites. Depending on other policies in the plan, this can be appropriate, provided that it does not harm the chances of delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy – this decision will be informed by the most up-to-date housing trajectory.
- 9.3.5 Sites ER1b potentially contains 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.

### **Sites with existing planning permission**

- 9.3.6 At the time of publication of the Local Plan, a number of sites in East Reading in addition to the allocated sites had planning permission for ten or more dwellings or more than 1,000 sq m of non-residential development. There is not considered to be a need to identify most of these sites within a policy, as the permission establishes the principle of the development. Any future applications on these sites will be acceptable where they are substantially the same as the existing permission, subject to the policies in this Local Plan. Applications for developments will need to be considered against policies in the plan, in particular whether it would adversely impact the likelihood of meeting Reading's identified development needs.

<b>Site</b>	<b>App ref</b>	<b>Summary of development</b>
University of Reading, The Chancellors Way & Shinfield Road	100726	Development of 151-bed hotel and conference centre
The Woodley Arms, Waldeck Street	171893	Development of student accommodation for 38 rooms (under construction)
Alexander House, 205-207 Kings Road	210902, 210906, 230400	Change of use and extension for a total of 43 dwellings (under construction)
75-81 Southampton Street	211636	Development of 19 dwellings
Land adjacent to 300 Kings Road	221162	Development of 14 dwellings
Royal Berkshire Hospital, London Road	230321	Development of new urology block



9 Upper Crown Street <sup>143</sup>	230814	Development of 46 dwellings
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*Development progress is correct to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024*

## **Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading**

### **ER2: WHITEKNIGHTS CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF READING (Strategic policy)**

***The University of Reading is a national and international educational establishment of strategic importance which will continue to adapt and expand over the plan period. The Whiteknights Campus as shown on the Proposals Map will continue to be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading. Such development may include additional or replacement staff, teaching, research and enterprise accommodation, infrastructure and services, sports and leisure facilities and development to reduce the University's carbon emissions among other uses. Access to and within the site will be improved where necessary.***

***Where development would result in a material need for additional students to be housed, it should be supported by an appropriate increase in existing or planned student accommodation. Provision of new student accommodation on the Whiteknights Campus, or as a reconfiguration or extension of nearby dedicated accommodation, will therefore be acceptable subject to other policies in the Plan.***

***Development will accord with the following criteria:***

- ***Areas of wildlife significance and current or potential green links will be retained or enhanced, and not detrimentally affected by development, including through light effects;***
- ***The safety of those using the campus will be maintained or enhanced;***
- ***There will be no significant detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties; and***
- ***The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.***

9.3.7 Reading is home to the University of Reading. This occupies a number of sites within and around the Reading urban area, many of which are outside the Borough boundaries, but its main location is the Whiteknights campus, shown on the Proposals Map, split between Reading and Wokingham Boroughs. This campus will be the main focus of future development associated with the University of Reading, although there will continue to be development activity at the University's secondary, but original, campus on London Road.

9.3.8 The Whiteknights Campus has a number of issues which distinguish it from other parts of the Borough, and therefore necessitate a distinct approach. The University currently has around 23,000 students<sup>144</sup> from over 160

<sup>143</sup> Resolved to grant permission subject to signing of Section 106 agreement

<sup>144</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk](http://www.reading.ac.uk)

countries plus over 4,000 staff, and Whiteknights is the hub of university activity. Students, staff and visitors need to be supported by services, facilities and infrastructure. This policy is therefore required for the part of the Whiteknights campus that lies within the Borough.

- 9.3.9 The site is on the site of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Whiteknights Park, and includes a significant amount of parkland, woodland and lakes. Its attractive surroundings are part of the pull of the university, but also offer a number of constraints to development. Parts of the site have significant wildlife importance, and the area is a prominent part of the local landscape, adjoining part of the East Reading wooded ridgeline Major Landscape Feature, with large tracts of open green space. A number of listed buildings are on site, and the campus is surrounded by residential areas. In addition, approximately two thirds of the Campus is within Wokingham Borough, meaning that a consistent approach is required.
- 9.3.10 An Estates Strategy for the University is in preparation to cover the period to 2032, which will outline the role that the estate, including the Whiteknights Campus, will help to deliver the four University strategic principles set out in the Strategic Plan of community, excellence, sustainability and engaged university. It is already clear that the University's Net Zero Carbon Plan 2021-2030 entails development within the campus to achieve decarbonisation. In addition, the main focus of the Estates Strategy is expected to be the concept of the 'University within a park', and that there will be a significant emphasis on repurposing and refurbishing existing buildings, as well as creating a campus heat and improving accessibility across the campus. At this stage, there is no indication that the strategy will involve a significant increase in the amount of floorspace on the campus.
- 9.3.11 Many of the main planning issues on the site are dealt with elsewhere within the local plan. Although it is not appropriate to repeat policy here, developments will need to consider matters such as parking (TR5 and Parking and Design Standards SPD), biodiversity (EN12), the historic environment (EN1-EN6), residential amenity (CC8) and landscape (EN13).

## **Royal Berkshire Hospital**

### **ER3: ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL (Strategic policy)**

***The Royal Berkshire Hospital is a highly significant facility which serves the needs of Reading as well as much of its hinterland. The strong preference is for the Hospital to remain on its current London Road site, unless a move to another site would enhance its accessibility to residents of Reading and the rest of its catchment, would not lead to a reduction in standards of care, and would comply with other policies in the Plan.***

***1. If the Hospital remains on its London Road site, the site will need to be a focus for significant additional and replacement healthcare development to meet modern requirements, and to be flexible to adapt to changing technologies or modes of service delivery. Such development will be supported where it complies with the following criteria:***

- a. Where development would result in an increase in staff or visitors, it should be accompanied by measures which ensure that***

**development does not have an adverse effect on the functioning of the highway, either as a result of increased use or by resulting in additional on-street parking in surrounding streets;**

**b. Development will conserve the listed main block on London Road and 17 Craven Road, ensuring that their use is consistent with its conservation;**

**c. Development would not result in adverse effects on the setting of listed buildings and conservation areas; and**

**d. There will be no significant detrimental impact on neighbouring residential properties.**

**2. If the Hospital moves to a new site outside the Borough, any development must include a retained healthcare use on the site that ensures that appropriate clinical facilities are available in an accessible location for the local population. Alongside this retained healthcare use, residential development (which may include residential care, student accommodation or other forms of residential) will be appropriate, and there will also be potential other uses such as education, community uses and small-scale commercial facilities to be included. On-site public open space will be provided.**

**Conservation of the listed North Block and enhancement of its setting will be of critical importance to any development, and the building will be used for a use compatible with its significance. The setting of the building on London Road requires particular enhancement to include landscaping.**

9.3.12 The Royal Berkshire Hospital, located between London Road, Craven Road, Redlands Road and Addington Road, is the main hospital facility for the Royal Berkshire NHS Trust, which provides hospital services to west and central Berkshire. As such, it is a vital facility not only for Reading, but for a much wider surrounding area. The hospital employs more than 4,000 staff, making it a key part of the Reading economy.

9.3.13 The Trust is part of the New Hospital Programme which aims to deliver 40 new hospitals across the country by 2030, and is currently within Cohort 4, due to deliver in 2025-2030. Work has been undertaken on developing a business case for a new hospital, and this has involved several consultations on the future of the RBH. Whilst this has involved consideration of how a new hospital may be accommodated on the current site, it has also involved consideration of whether the hospital should move to a new site, with the main sites that have been subject to consultation located outside the Borough boundaries.

9.3.14 Should a new hospital be developed on the existing site, it is clear that this will involve very significant levels of development, and a substantial increase in floorspace of around 30% on what is already a constrained site. This is required mainly to provide a hospital that meets modern standards, rather than being necessitated by population growth. The Council supports this option as a site close to the town centre enables as many of Reading's residents to access healthcare as possible. However, it is recognised that this presents significant challenges in terms of cost, disruption and the

constraints of the site, and the decision on whether the hospital remains on site will not be for the Council to make.

- 9.3.15 If the decision is made to move to a new site, this will leave a significant site of 7.75 ha available for other uses. Of greatest importance is that some form of health provision remains available on site to ensure that services remain as accessible as possible to the local population. This could include primary healthcare and also some local provision of services that are currently provided at the hospital, such as outpatient care. It would also provide an opportunity to co-locate some other community facilities, which could include social care for example. The primary use of the majority of the land is likely to be residential, which could include a range of different types of accommodation.
- 9.3.16 The site has particular heritage significance. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century North Block fronting London Road is listed. The priority is that North Block will need to be occupied by a use that is consistent with its significance, and the policy does not therefore seek to be prescriptive about its future use. Its setting should be enhanced, particularly the frontage to London Road. 17 Craven Road is also listed. There are also two conservation areas (Kendrick and Eldon Square) adjoining the hospital, as well as several other listed buildings, and the setting of these assets particularly affect the Redlands Road and London Road frontages.
- 9.3.17 One of the main issues affecting the site is transport, and, in particular, parking. London Road is subject to particular congestion issues at peak times. On-site car parking is a limited resource at the current hospital, and this has resulted in a significant issue of on-street car parking in surrounding residential streets, although this is also related to the nearby University and the occupation of many houses in the area by students. A Residents' Parking Scheme has been introduced in many of these nearby streets, which will further emphasise the need for development at the hospital, where it results in additional visitors, to introduce measures that manage travel issues. This could involve use of park and ride, public transport, or may involve on-site car parking where it could be managed to avoid additional strain on roads.
- 9.3.18 The policy needs to be read in conjunction with other policies in the plan, for example on residential amenity (CC8), protection and enhancement of the historic environment (EN1-6) and on traffic and highway issues (TR3).

## 10. IMPLEMENTATION

### 10.1 Implementation Measures

- 10.1.1 Some information on specific measures for implementing policies is set out in the supporting text for the relevant policy, but this section provides a useful summary on some of the key methods:
- 10.1.2 **Development management decisions:** The key delivery method for all policies in the Local Plan is through the development management process. Decisions on applications will be made in line with the Local Plan once adopted, alongside other material considerations including national policy. This will include the information contained on the Proposals Map. Conditions and section 106 agreements will be used where relevant, and certain information will be required to accompany applications. The Council produces a Validation Checklist, updated periodically, which summarises the information that should be submitted alongside different types of application.
- 10.1.3 **Early and effective pre-application discussions:** Since the development management process is intended to be a proactive approach to managing the whole development process, there is an emphasis on pre-application discussions. The Council already has measures in place for securing pre-application discussions, including a form for those seeking pre-application advice, and a charging regime. The adopted Statement of Community Involvement strongly advises that pre-application consultation is carried out on major schemes.
- 10.1.4 **Topic-related Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) or Supplementary Plans:** Some of the policy topics in the Local Plan will need to be covered by Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). For instance, an Affordable Housing SPD provides more guidance on how affordable housing will be secured through development, and a Parking Standards and Design SPD sets out detailed expectations for parking provision with development. The Local Plan generally states where an SPD will be produced, or where an existing SPD will continue to be applied. SPDs are to be replaced by Supplementary Plans, but the transitional arrangements mean that SPDs will remain valid until the five year review period of this update finishes, likely in 2030.
- 10.1.5 **Site-related Supplementary Planning Documents or Supplementary Plans:** The Council will continue to produce planning briefs for key sites. In addition, many of the existing planning briefs that relate to development allocations in this document will remain in place, for instance the Station Area Framework and Battle Hospital and Meadway Centre planning briefs.
- 10.1.6 **Local Development Orders (LDO):** A Local Development Order (LDO) is an order made by a local planning authority which has the effect of granting permission on a site for a certain development. It removes the need for a developer to apply for planning permission, and therefore streamlines the planning process. LDOs have not been used in Reading in recent years, but there is a Government proposal that local planning authorities should make extensive use of LDOs for suitable housing sites. The use of LDOs for some allocated sites therefore remains a possibility. Another new Government requirement is a 'brownfield register', which keeps a public record of suitable previously-developed land for housing to encourage its development. Land

on Part 2 of the Register will be subject to LDOs. LDOs have not yet been used in Reading, but could potentially have a role in implementation of the plan.

**10.1.7 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** In terms of securing many of the infrastructure needs identified in this plan, one of the main tools that the Council has is the Community Infrastructure Levy. This is a levy on development taking place in the Borough to contribute towards infrastructure. A CIL Charging Schedule sets out the range of charges, and an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement details the schemes which CIL will contribute towards. The current Charging Schedule was adopted in January 2015, and CIL was introduced in Reading in April 2015.

**10.1.8 Section 106 agreements:** Prior to the introduction of CIL, Section 106 agreements were the main mechanisms for securing contributions towards infrastructure provision. Their use is now much more limited, but they will continue to be used to ensure that affordable housing is provided in line with the policies in this plan, as well as to secure employment, skills and training measures, and for certain site-specific infrastructure alongside CIL where necessary.

**10.1.9 Other Council and partner strategies:** The Local Plan will need to be implemented alongside a number of other plans and strategies, produced by both the Council and its partners. Some of the policies in the Local Plan need to be applied in conjunction with other strategies, for instance:

- Adopted Local Transport Plan 2040 (TR2: Major Transport Projects);
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (TR4: Cycle Routes);
- Air Quality Action Plan (EN15: Air Quality);
- Open Spaces Strategy (EN9: Provision of Open Space);
- Tree Strategy (EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands);
- Accommodation with Care Commissioning Strategy (H5: Accommodation for Vulnerable People)
- Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy (various policies relating to matters such as open space and walking and cycling).

**10.1.10 Council-owned land:** Some of the land referenced in this document is currently in Council ownership. The Council is always open to approaches from developers and adjoining land owners to explore comprehensive regeneration and development proposals which incorporates its land, and is actively bringing forward proposals for a major site in central Reading. The Council will also continue to bring forward its own development proposals, for instance for new affordable or extra-care housing or for education, where there is the opportunity and funding to do so.

**10.1.11 Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO):** The Council will consider the use of its CPO powers to facilitate redevelopment and regeneration within the Borough, where this is consistent with Council policy, irrespective of whether Council-owned land is involved. However, it is clearly preferable in most cases that landowners and developers be given the opportunity to bring forward key sites, and for this reason the use of CPOs has not been

programmed.

- 10.1.12 **Duty to Co-operate:** Much of this local plan has sought to place Reading Borough within its wider context, in particular in reference to the immediate surrounding area. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council has a duty to co-operate with a range of partner organisations, including nearby planning authorities, government bodies and infrastructure providers. The Council has produced a Duty to Co-operate Scoping Statement, setting out the partners and topics which will be subject to the duty, and this is available on the Council's website<sup>145</sup>. There is a signed Statement of Common Ground covering the West of Berkshire area, and joint work across this and other boundaries will continue. The duty to co-operate is replaced in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act, but will still apply to this plan as it was submitted before the relevant cut-off date.

## 10.2 Delivery Timescales

- 10.2.1 Figure 10.1 sets out indicative timescales for the developments and site proposals that are anticipated to be delivered. These represent our best estimate at the time, and the delivery timescale of individual sites are liable to change over the plan period. It is not considered that any deliberate phasing of development proposals is required, although, on some sites, developments will need to be coordinated to create a comprehensive development. The table is split into five-year periods, with short-term meaning within five years (2023-2028), medium-term five to ten years (2028-2033) and long-term is after ten years (2033-2041). A category for unknown or longer-term is also included, which includes sites where there is less confidence of delivery over the plan period, but which are nevertheless considered to be worth allocating.
- 10.2.2 For housing sites, it is a requirement of a Local Plan that covers housing to include a Housing Trajectory, setting out how the provision of housing across the plan period will meet the targets in the plan. A Housing Trajectory, which builds on the timescales in figure 10.1 and shows how the level of housing planned for will be achieved, is included in Appendix 1.

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<sup>145</sup> [https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/RBC\\_Duty\\_to\\_Cooperate\\_Scoping\\_Strategy\\_1215.pdf](https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/RBC_Duty_to_Cooperate_Scoping_Strategy_1215.pdf)



**Figure 10.1: Overall timescales for site proposals**

<b>Policy Ref</b>	<b>Site/Proposal</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Short (2023-28)</b>	<b>Medium (2028-33)</b>	<b>Long (2033-41)</b>		<b>Longer term/unknown</b>
CR11a	Friar Street and Station Road		X	X	X		
CR11b	Greyfriars Road Corner			X			X
CR11c	Station Hill and Friars Walk	X	X	X			
CR11d	Brunel Arcade and Apex Plaza				X		
CR11e	North of Station			X	X		X
CR11f	West of Caversham Road	X			X		
CR11g	Riverside		X				X
CR11i	Napier Court			X			X
CR12a	Cattle Market				X		
CR12b	Great Knollys Street and Weldale Street	X			X		X
CR12c	Chatham Street, Eaton Place and Oxford Road	X	X	X	X		
CR12d	Broad Street Mall			X			
CR12e	Hosier Street			X	X		
CR13a	Reading Prison		X				
CR13b	Forbury Retail Park	X		X			X

<b>Policy Ref</b>	<b>Site/Proposal</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Short (2023-28)</b>	<b>Medium (2028-33)</b>	<b>Long (2033-41)</b>		<b>Longer term/unknown</b>
CR13c	Forbury Business Park and Kenavon Drive			X			
CR13d	Gas Holder		X				
CR14a	Central Swimming Pool, Battle Street		X				
CR14d	173-175 Friar Street and 27-32 Market Place		X				
CR14g	The Oracle Riverside East			X			
CR14h	Central Club, London Street		X				
CR14i	Enterprise House, 89-97 London Street			X			
CR14j	Corner of Crown Street and Southampton Street			X			
CR14l	187-189 Kings Road			X			
CR14m	Caversham Lock Island, Thames Side				X		
CR14n	Reading Central Library, Abbey Square			X			
CR14o	100 Kings Road			X			
CR14p	Queens Wharf, Queens Road			X			
CR14q	Havell House, 62-66 Queens Road			X			
CR14r	John Lewis Depot, Mill Lane			X			
CR14s	20-22 Duke Street			X			

<b>Policy Ref</b>	<b>Site/Proposal</b>	<b>In progress</b>	<b>Short (2023-28)</b>	<b>Medium (2028-33)</b>	<b>Long (2033-41)</b>		<b>Longer term/ unknown</b>
CR14t	Aquis House, 49-51 Forbury Road				X		
CR14u	33 Blagrove Street				X		
CR14v	2 Norman Place			X			
CR14w	Reading Bridge House, George Street				X		
CR14x	Part of Tesco Car Park, Napier Road				X		
CR14y	Kennet Place, Kings Road			X			
CR14z	Sapphire Plaza, Watlington Street			X			
CR14a a	Part of Reading College, Kings Road				X		
CR14a b	160-163 Friar Street			X			
SR1a	Former Landfill, Island Road			X	X		
SR1c	Island Road A33 Frontage			X	X		
SR2	Land North of Manor Farm Road				X		
SR3	South of Elgar Road				X		X
SR4a	Pulleyn Park, Rose Kiln Lane				X		
SR4b	Rear of 3-29 Newcastle Road		X	X			

Policy Ref	Site/Proposal	In progress	Short (2023-28)	Medium (2028-33)	Long (2033-41)		Longer term/unknown
SR4c	169-173 Basingstoke Road						X
SR4d	16-18 Bennet Road		X				
SR4e	Park of Former Berkshire Brewery Site		X	X			
SR4g	Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane			X			
SR4h	11 Basingstoke Road				X		
SR4i	85-87 Basingstoke Road			X			
SR4j	Land at Warwick House, Warwick Road			X			
SR4k	Former Sales and Marketing Suite, Drake Way			X			
SR4l	Land at Drake Way			X			
WR1	Dee Park		X	X			
WR2	Park Lane Primary School, The Laurels and Downing Road						X
WR3b	2 Ross Road and Part of Meadow Road				X		
WR3f	4 Berkeley Avenue			X			
WR3g	211-221 Oxford Road						X
WR3h	Rear of 303-315 Oxford Road		X				
WR3i	Land at Portman Way			X			

Policy Ref	Site/Proposal	In progress	Short (2023-28)	Medium (2028-33)	Long (2033-41)		Longer term/unknown
WR3j	Land at Moultsford Mews		X				
WR3k	784-794 Oxford Road						X
WR3l	816 Oxford Road			X			
WR3n	Amethyst Lane		X				
WR3o	The Meadway Centre, Honey End Lane		X	X			
WR3p	Alice Burrows Home, Dwyer Road		X				
WR3r	Former Charters Car Sales, Oxford Road			X			
WR3s	Land at Kentwood Hill			X			
WR3t	Land at Armour Hill			X			
WR3u	132-134 Bath Road			X			
WR3v	Former Southcote Library, Coronation Square		X				
WR3w	Part of Tesco Car Park, Portman Road			X			
WR3x	1-15 St Georges Road				X		
WR3y	72 Berkeley Avenue			X			
CA1a	Reading University Boat Club, Thames Promenade			X			
CA1c	Land at Lowfield Road				X		

Policy Ref	Site/Proposal	In progress	Short (2023-28)	Medium (2028-33)	Long (2033-41)		Longer term/unknown
CA1d	Rear of 200-214 Henley Rd, 12-24 All Hallows Rd & 7 & 8 Copse Ave			X			
CA1e	Rear of 13-14a Hawthorne Rd & 284-292 Henley Rd			X			
CA1f	Rear of 1-3 Woodcote Road and 21 St Peter's Hill			X			
CA1h	Hemdean House School, Hemdean Road			X			
CA2	Caversham Park		X	X			
ER1b	Dingley House, 3-5 Craven Road			X			
ER1c	Land Rear of 8-26 Redlands Road			X			
ER1d	Land Adjacent to 40 Redlands Road			X			
ER1e	St Patrick's Hall, Northcourt Avenue				X		
ER1i	261-275 London Road				X		
ER1k	131 Wokingham Road				X		
ER1l	Princes House, 73A London Road			X			
ER1m	Land adjacent to 17 Craven Road			X			
ER1n	51 Church Road, Earley				X		

## 10.3 Infrastructure Delivery Plan

- 10.3.1 Infrastructure is required to support new development within the Borough through the Plan period to ensure that communities are sustainable. The requirement for local authorities to assess quality and capacity of infrastructure, as part of the Local Plan process, is identified in the National Planning Policy Framework. The suggested broad categories are physical, green and social infrastructure.
- 10.3.2 In preparing this Local Plan, the Council has been in liaison with a range of infrastructure providers to determine long term strategic infrastructure needs which would result from the level and distribution of planned growth within the Borough. This has resulted in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which sets out in full how infrastructure to support the levels of development set out in this plan will be provided, and the IDP is on the Council's website. An Infrastructure Delivery Schedule (Figure 10.2) derived from the IDP is included here, and summarises the key infrastructure projects which will be required to support the level of proposed growth. These have been identified through this process of consultation and liaison with internal departments and external organisations. This schedule sets out the project, the need for it, requirements, costs, funding, timescales and who has responsibility for delivery.
- 10.3.3 The majority of housing development will occur on brownfield sites and represent 100 dwellings or less. Therefore, in most cases there will not be the requirement for significant infrastructure on a site by site basis. The infrastructure schemes will be strategic in nature, serving the impacts of growth from groupings of sites. Where there is need for site specific infrastructure, this will be addressed and negotiated at the detailed planning stage. The Infrastructure Delivery Schedule identifies key infrastructure requirements for major sites that are known at this time.
- 10.3.4 A range of different infrastructure requirements have been reviewed in the IDP report, but only infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth has been identified within the delivery schedule in Figure 10.2. These include core transport projects, health provision, additional capacity for primary and secondary education places, community and youth provision and additional neighbourhood police infrastructure. The IDP will be a 'living' document; a snapshot in time, based on the best available information at this time. This will need to be updated as and when further information becomes available.



**Table 10.2: Summary Infrastructure Delivery Schedule**

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Cycle and e-Scooter Hire	Encouraging active travel and promoting an alternative to car use	Operation and maintenance of publicly available bike and/or e-scooter hire scheme	Cost unknown – LTP block grant, S106, CIL	Ongoing	Reading Borough Council (RBC)
Borough-wide	Physical	Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)	Encouraging active travel and promoting an alternative to car use	Local measures to encourage cycling and walking routes, including segregated facilities, lighting, cycle parking, etc.; new areas of development to be connected to existing network	Cost unknown – LTP block grant, Active Travel grant, S106, CIL	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Physical	Major Repair and Improvement Projects	Improving and maintaining existing infrastructure	Continuous maintenance and improvement of existing facilities and infrastructure including retaining walls, culverts, subways, footbridges and flood defence schemes	Cost unknown – LTP block grant	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Schemes	Providing alternatives to car use and encourage sustainable transport use; reduce congestion; improve accessibility and air quality	Dedicated express, limited stop bus-based rapid transit connected to Park and Ride Mobility Hub locations; focused in key areas of growth and key routes in urban areas	Approx. £100,000,000 – LTP block grant, CIL	2024-2040	RBC
Borough-wide	Physical	Network Management, Junction improvements and Road Safety	Increase attractiveness of public transport, reduce congestion, promote sustainable travel and improve road safety	Improvements to existing infrastructure and enhanced provision	Cost unknown– LTP block grant, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Physical	Park & Ride Sites (Mobility Hubs)	Reduce the mode share of trips by car to central Reading, thereby reducing congestion and improving accessibility and air quality	A series of new Park and Ride Mobility Hub sites and local transport interchanges will be provided on key routes to Reading	Approx. £30,000,000 – S106, LTP, CIL	2024-2040	RBC, adjoining authorities

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)	Increase attractiveness of public transport, reduce congestion, promote sustainable travel, improve accessibility and air quality	Improvements to existing public transport infrastructure and provision enhancement including bus stops, bus lanes and bus priority at junctions	Costs unknown – LTP block grant, BSIP grant, S106, CIL	Ongoing	RBC, adjoining authorities
Borough-wide	Physical	Third Thames Crossing	Reduce congestion	Provide alternative north-south route across the River Thames via a new road, public transport and active travel bridge and associated mitigation measures on the road network.	Approx. £165,000,000 depending on the option – CIL (this figure also depends on nature of mitigation measures on the road network)	Third Thames Crossing	Wokingham Borough Council, RBC, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Decentralised energy and renewables	To reduce the carbon footprint of the Borough and reduce and stabilise energy costs, through the development of low carbon, localised energy infrastructure, to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and assist in meeting national and local targets for net-zero carbon	Details are not known at this time, but district energy networks will likely be focussed in the town centre	Costs unknown - CIL, Section 106	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Water and wastewater infrastructure	To ensure sufficient capacity to accommodate future growth	There are a number of areas within the Borough including some parts of west and south Reading where Thames Water has identified potential capacity issues with water and wastewater, in particular with the overall scale of development in the catchment draining to Blakes Lock SPS. For these areas, detailed investigations and modelling will be required to determine if local infrastructure upgrade is required.	Costs to be determined by Thames Water with developers	As and when a development comes forward and where issues have been highlighted by Thames Water. Thames Water has indicated that upgrades to assets can take up to three years in lead time.	Thames Water and the relevant developer

Borough-wide	Physical	Electricity	To ensure sufficient capacity to accommodate future growth	In order to accommodate development as proposed throughout the Borough and to account for increased electricity demand as a result of net zero requirements, major reinforcement works to the infrastructure would be to be carried out. Additionally, cables and plant equipment may require diverting and relocating as a result of development designs and layouts. Discussions with SSEN are ongoing in order to ensure that grid constraints do not negatively impact growth and do not result in connection delays.	Costs to be determined by SSEN chargeable to developments on an appointment basis.	Ongoing	SSEN
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Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Physical	Digital connectivity	Increasing Berkshire's full fibre coverage to 85% by 2025, eliminating connectivity 'not spots' within the Borough, optimising use of wireless and small cell technologies	In order to expand advanced, high-quality and reliable electronic communications networks to support sustainable economic growth	Costs to be determined by providers	Ongoing	RBC and private sector providers
Borough-wide	Physical	Air Quality Monitoring	To assess the levels of pollutants at strategic locations where further development is likely to worsen air quality	NOx and PMx analysers, enclosures and associated infrastructure	Section 106, CIL, DEFRA Air Quality Grant	Ongoing	RBC
South	Physical	South Reading BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) and other BRT schemes	Providing alternative modes to car use and encourage sustainable transport use; reduce congestion; improve accessibility and air quality	Dedicated express, limited stop bus-based rapid transit connected to MereOak Park and Ride, areas of growth and key routes in the urban area	Approx. £55,000,000 (for South Reading BRT, other scheme costs unknown at this time) – LGF, S106, CIL	2024-2040	RBC
Central/East	Physical	Demand management scheme	Improve air quality and/or decrease congestion	Unknown	Costs unknown – LTP block grant, S106, CIL	Unknown	RBC



Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Central/East	Physical	Town Centre access and public realm enhancements	Reducing the impact of congestion; delivering a higher quality public realm; encouraging healthier lifestyles; improving access to central Reading	Junction improvements; accident remediation scheme; secure cycle parking hub; improved way finding	Costs unknown – LTP block grant, S106, BID	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Green	Open Spaces Strategy	Improve the quality of existing open space and facilities, particularly in larger parks to benefit the wider population	Improvements to strategically important open spaces, masterplan for Christchurch Meadow to develop the area as a high-quality destination park	Costs unknown - S106, CIL, grant funding	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Green	Play Requirements	Some of the current stock of play equipment is more than a decade old. At current levels of use, the quality is declining; an increasing population accelerates the rate of decline such that equipment needs to be continually refreshed.	Continuous investment is needed simply to sustain existing provision and to ensure that it is safe. Because many of the Council's 55 play areas are used to capacity, increases in the local population will require additional equipment. Equipment may need to be updated to meet the needs of children with special needs and children of a variety of ages.	Costs unknown - S106, CIL, grant funding	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Green	Biodiversity Action Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies	To protect, enhance and increase biodiversity in parks, open spaces, allotments, cemeteries, woodland, watercourses, riparian corridors and wetland areas.	Reading's Biodiversity Action Plan identifies a number of actions including: enhancing and increasing habitats for plants and wildlife; creating links between existing habitats; increasing plan diversity across grassland open spaces; improving existing and planting additional hedgerows; improving diversity of tree species in woodlands; improving and enhancing the Borough's watercourses and riparian corridors.	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	EA, RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Green	Allotment Creation & Enhancement	Ongoing development pressure on existing private allotments. Very long waiting lists for allotments which will be exacerbated by population growth	To improve allotment provision within the Borough, especially in the North and West	Dependent on funds becoming available or a development opportunity making land available	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Updating and improving Reading's indoor and outdoor sports provision	Increase capacity to account for increase in residents and projected increase in demand, lack of provision of artificial turf pitches	Increased capacity at existing indoor facilities, more artificial turf pitch capacity, improvements to grass pitches and pavilions	Costs unknown	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Police Facilities	To make communities safe, increase public confidence, reduce costs by improving efficiency, improve service delivery and improve outcomes for victims of crime, as well as to aid in the prevention and investigation of crime with ANPR cameras	Premises – new police station in South Reading, touchdown space in central Reading and other areas.	Costs TBD	Ongoing	Thames Valley Police (TVP)

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Digital policing equipment	To make communities safe, increase public confidence, reduce costs by improving efficiency, improve service delivery and improve outcomes for victims of crime, as well as to aid in the prevention and investigation of crime with ANPR cameras	Digital policing equipment including smartphones, tablets, body-worn video cameras, vehicle Wi-Fi and other capabilities, including enhanced and new ANPR cameras at strategic locations within the Borough	Each ANPR camera costs approximately £11,000. Digital policing kit costs approx.. £6250 per officer.	Ongoing	TVP
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Townsafe and Emergency Planning Radio Scheme	To provide a safe and non-threatening environment for people who live, work or visit Reading	Signal boosters to address the negative impacts of tall buildings on the network, new equipment and software to provide a modern and secure system	CIL	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Social and Community	CCTV system	To provide a safe and non-threatening environment for people who live, work or visit Reading	Up-to-date CCTV software with high encryption, replacement of existing BT fibre system, new cameras, rollout of wireless CCTV technology	CIL	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Primary and Secondary Education	Further detail is forthcoming, but early discussions have indicated that there is unlikely to be a need for new school places generally, although an increase in specialist provision may be required, as well as a reconfiguration of SEND places and facilities.				
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Primary Care	Additional capacity at existing surgeries associated with development and reconfiguration or relocation of any existing sites that are not fit-for-purpose, restructuring of surgeries into fewer, larger more fit-for-purpose facilities that provide a wider range of co-located services	Larger, fully-fitted facilities provided by the developer on the ground floor(s) of new build flatted developments in the centre; larger hubs located throughout the Borough	Costs unknown – CIL, S106  The Integrated Care Board considers the following costs per sqm to be appropriate (as at Oct 2023 and to include VAT and professional fees) as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New build and extensions (involving land purchase) - £6,310 psm</li> <li>• Extensions (no land purchase) - £5,692 psm</li> <li>• Internal refurbishments/reconfigurations - £3,750 psm</li> </ul>	Ongoing	RBC, BOB ICB

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Specialist and Hospital Care	Additional floorspace to provide a modern service, relocation of some hospital services (such as diagnostics and some outpatient care) to hubs distributed throughout the Borough, any infrastructure needed to enable the relocation of the RBH (if relocation is needed)	An increase in floorspace will be required on-site if the RBH remains in its current location in order to provide a modern service. This will also require increased digital 'smart hospital' technology and infrastructure associated with net-zero carbon operations	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC, BOB ICB, RBH
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Adult Social Care Accommodation	Some existing sites are aging and in need of repair; significant rise in the number of older residents projected throughout the Borough	New, purpose-built facilities to relocate existing residential care that is not fit-for-purpose	Costs unknown – CIL, S106. More specific commissioned needs expected to emerge in early 2024.	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism -- Historic sites and parks and gardens	Need to ensure further accessibility and a wider range of high-quality opportunities for visitors	Schemes needed at Forbury Gardens, Caversham Court Gardens and Prospect Park	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC



Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism -- Public realm improvements through conservation of key monuments, statues and memorials	Restoration needed to improve monuments, statues and memorials and their settings	Specific schemes to be determined	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism – preservation of historical collections	To ensure ongoing safe storage and public access to archive collections from across Berkshire	Specific schemes to be determined	Costs unknown but to be agreed with the other five Berkshire councils through the Archives Board	Ongoing	RBC
Borough-wide	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism - Improvements to existing and establishment of new public art	To create an interesting and high-quality public realm for residents and visitors	Specific schemes to be determined	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Central/East	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism -- Improvements to interpretation and wayfinding strategy	To contribute to clear network of key attractions and venues	Specific schemes to be determined	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC

Location	Type	Scheme	Need for Scheme	Scheme Requirements	Capital Cost and Funding	Timescales (where known)	Lead Delivery Agency
Central/East	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism -- Continued enhancement and Improvement of the Abbey Quarter	Need to ensure setting of the Abbey Quarter site is of high-quality	Restoration of listed tombs and key monuments within St Laurence's Churchyard, other schemes to be determined	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Central/East	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism -- Town Hall and Museum	Need to intensify use and ensure financial sustainability through redevelopment	Significant investment in and remodelling of the museum's galleries	£500,000 – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Central/East	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism Relocation of Central Library to Civic Offices in Bridge St	To create additional capacity and provide a more flexible space with increased digital and learning resources	New central library delivered within an extended Civic Offices	£8.6 million secured as of Nov 2023, further funding needed – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Central/East	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism – Ongoing improvements to library network buildings	To improve the space in libraries, prioritising the branch library network	Building and internal improvements. 3 of 7 libraries do not have public toilets, for example	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC
Central/East	Social and Community	Culture and Tourism -- Refurbishment and expansion of the Hexagon Theatre	1970's-built Hexagon Theatre is limited due to its age and design	To revitalise the existing theatre and to create a new, flexible space for performances and community use	£13.7 million secured for extension as of Nov 2023, further funding of approximately £4 million needed to revitalise original theatre – CIL, S016	Ongoing	RBC

North	Social and Community	Leisure -- Masterplan for Christchurch Meadows	To realise its potential as a destination park	Masterplan and implementation	Costs unknown – CIL, S106	Ongoing	RBC
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## 11. MONITORING

- 11.1.1 The Council's main monitoring tool is the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), produced in December every year. This has two purposes. Firstly, it reviews progress in producing all local development documents against the milestones in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS), which sets out the programme for all of these documents. If documents are falling behind, it will review whether there is a need to update the LDS. Secondly, the AMR monitors the effectiveness of local development documents. For example, the report will show whether the policies are impacting on development management decisions, and whether they are helping to achieve the Council's targets.
- 11.1.2 The schedule in Figure 11.1 sets out how the policies in the Local Plan will be monitored. There are a significant number of policies in the plan, and the resources are unlikely to be available to monitor each individually, so policies are grouped into their overall sections, with indicators for each section. The schedule sets out the source of the data that will be collected to monitor the plan, the regularity with which it will be collected and the location in which it will be presented. Generally, data will be presented in the AMR.
- 11.1.3 Monitoring of these indicators will reveal whether the policies and proposals in the Local Plan are being successfully implemented and therefore whether the overall strategy is being achieved. The AMR will therefore demonstrate whether, on balance, the Local Plan needs to be reviewed. In the event that one or two targets are being marginally missed is unlikely to form a reason to review the plan. A review is more likely to be needed if there is consistent failure to meet targets by a significant margin, in one area or across the board. It should be noted that some development targets, particularly those for the individual areas of Reading, are approximate, and, as set out in the individual area sections, do not represent a policy target. The ultimate distribution of development across the Borough may vary to a degree.
- 11.1.4 Where monitoring, particularly the updated housing trajectory that will be published in the Annual Monitoring Report, demonstrates that there will not be sufficient progress on meeting this shortfall, the Council will consider the reasons for this, and will consider whether the extent of the lack of progress is sufficient to trigger a full or partial review of the Local Plan.

**Figure 11.1: Monitoring Framework**

Indicator	Relevant policies	Target		Data		
		Target	Target Date	Source	Date	Where presented
Cross-Cutting Policies						
Carbon footprint of Reading Borough	General, CC2	Annual reduction	Annual	Reading Climate Change Partnership	Annual	RCCP website <sup>146</sup>
Sustainability requirements attached to major planning applications approved	CC2, H5	Requirements for all majors	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Contributions towards infrastructure secured through Section 106 agreements	CC9	No specific target - maximise contribution		RBC	Annual	AMR
Community Infrastructure Levy receipts and expenditure	CC9	No specific target - maximise contribution		RBC	Annual	AMR
Built and Natural Environment						
Amount of public recreational open space	EN7 - EN9	No net loss	By 2041	RBC	Biannual	AMR
Loss of open space to development	EN7, EN8	None	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
New public open space brought into use through development	EN9	Net gain	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR

<sup>146</sup> <http://www.readingclimateaction.org.uk/>

Indicator	Relevant policies	Target		Data		
		Target	Target Date	Source	Date	Where presented
Number of Local Wildlife Sites in positive conservation management	EN12	80%	Annual	TVERC	Annual	AMR
Area of Biodiversity Action Plan habitat	EN12	No net loss	Annual	TVERC	Annual	AMR
Development in Major Landscape Features	EN13	None	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Air quality targets in the UK Air Quality Strategy	EN15	Various	Various	RBC	Various	RBC website
Development on sites wholly or partly in Flood Zones 2 and 3	EN18	Net change of maximum 4,000 dwellings and 150,000 sq m non-residential <sup>147</sup>	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR
<b>Economic Development</b>						
Office floorspace completed (net change)	EM1	30,000 – 86,000 sq m	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR
Industrial, warehouse and research and development floorspace completed (net change)	EM1	167,000 sq m	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR

<sup>147</sup> This relates to the amount of development permitted or allocated on sites wholly or partly in Flood Zones 2/3 in this Local Plan

Indicator	Relevant policies	Target		Data		
		Target	Target Date	Source	Date	Where presented
Proportion of office floorspace completed which is in the centre or A33 corridor	EM2	90%	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Proportion of industrial/warehouse/R&D floorspace completed which is in the A33 corridor or Core Employment Areas	EM2	80%	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Net change of employment land within Core Employment Areas	EM3	No net loss	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Net change in small business units (less than 150 sq m)	EM4	No net loss	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Net change in storage & distribution floorspace in south of Basingstoke Road	EM4	No net loss	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
<b>Housing</b>						
Five year housing land supply measured against targets in H1	H1	More than 5 year supply plus buffer <sup>148</sup>	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Amount of new housing delivered (net change)	H1	825	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR

<sup>148</sup> The buffer is generally 5%, unless over the plan period a track record of under-delivery is established, in which case the buffer rises to 20%



Indicator	Relevant policies	Target		Data		
		Target	Target Date	Source	Date	Where presented
Amount of new affordable housing delivered on new development sites.	H3	30% on sites of 10+ dwellings	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
		20% contribution on sites of 5-9 dwellings				
		10% contribution on sites of 1-4 dwellings				
New-build dwellings delivered by size and type	H2	At least 67% 3-bed or more outside centre	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Percentage of new dwellings on previously-developed land	General	90%	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Proportion of student accommodation delivered on non-FHE sites	H12	None	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Net additional gypsy and traveller pitches	H13	10-17 permanent pitches	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR

Indicator	Relevant policies	Target		Data		
		Target	Target Date	Source	Date	Where presented
		Transit site for 5 pitches  2 plots for travelling showpeople				
Dwellings delivered and offices lost through office to residential prior approvals	General	No target <sup>149</sup>		RBC	Annual	AMR
Transport						
Delivery of identified transport projects in policy TR2	TR2	Various – see Transport Strategy		RBC	Annual	Reports to SEPT Committee
Retail, Leisure and Culture						
Retail, leisure and culture floorspace delivered	RL2	No target		RBC	Annual	AMR
Proportion of retail, leisure and culture floorspace delivered that is in a designated centre	RL1	80%	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Retail vacancy within designated centres	RL1	Less than 10%	Biannual	RBC	Biannual	AMR

<sup>149</sup> Council has little control over this matter

Indicator	Relevant policies	Target		Data		
		Target	Target Date	Source	Date	Where presented
Other Uses						
Floorspace for community facilities (use class D1) delivered	OU1	Net increase	Annual	RBC	Annual	AMR
Development for residential and non-residential uses within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for AWE Burghfield	OU2	No target		RBC	Annual	AMR
Central Reading						
Dwellings completed in Central Reading (net change)	CR11, CR12, CR13, CR14	8,700 (approx.)	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR
Office floorspace completed in Central Reading (net change)	CR11, CR12, CR13, CR14	46,000 sq m (approx.)	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR
Retail and leisure floorspace completed in Central Reading (net change)	CR11, CR12, CR13, CR14	No target	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR
South Reading						
Dwellings completed in South Reading (net change)	SR2, SR3, SR4	2,700 (approx.)	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR
Industrial/warehouse/R&D floorspace completed in South Reading (net change)	SR1, SR4	135,000 sq m (approx.)	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR

Indicator	Relevant policies	Target		Data		
		Target	Target Date	Source	Date	Where presented
West Reading and Tilehurst						
Dwellings completed in West Reading and Tilehurst (net change)	WR1, WR2, WR3	1,900 (approx.)	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR
Caversham and Emmer Green						
Dwellings completed in Caversham and Emmer Green (net change)	CA1, CA2	700 (approx.)	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR
East Reading						
Dwellings completed in East Reading (net change)	ER1	800 (approx.)	By 2041	RBC	Annual	AMR

## 12. GLOSSARY

**Accessibility:** The ability to access places and services, to be able to get about or get to specific facilities.

**Active frontage:** A front of a building which provides activity to the street or space onto which it faces. Please note that this also has a specific policy definition – see policy CR7.

**Active travel:** A means of travel that involves physical activity, such as walking or cycling.

**Adoption:** The point at which a planning document becomes official policy through a formal decision by the Council.

**Adult gaming centres:** A form of gaming establishment requiring a license gaming machines general operating licence from the Gambling Commission and a premises licence from the Licensing Authority, where Category B, C and D machines can be made available.

**Affordable housing:** Housing provided at below market price to meet the identified needs of an area. A fuller definition is included within the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Air Quality Action Plan:** An action plan for addressing air quality issues in an Air Quality Management Area.

**Air Quality Management Area (AQMA):** An area where air quality objectives are not likely to be met. There is a requirement to draw up an action plan for each AQMA.

**Air Quality Objective Levels:** Local authorities are required under the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess air quality against a series of Air Quality Objectives set at national level.

**Ancient tree:** A tree of great age in relation to others of the same species.

**Annual Monitoring Report (AMR):** A yearly report showing how the Council are keeping to their timetable and what the effects of their plans are.

**Apart-hotel:** A use falling between hotels and housing, providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living but also the amenities of a hotel. Generally classed as C1 hotels for planning purposes.

**Article 4 Direction:** A direction which can be made by the Council to remove normal permitted development rights.

**Base station:** A base station is a macrocell, microcell or picocell site and consists of radio transmitters and receivers in a cabin or cabinet connected to antennae by feeder cable.

**Biodiversity:** The diversity of plant and animal species

**Biodiversity Opportunity Area:** Identified areas where there are substantial opportunities to make positive changes for biodiversity at a strategic scale.

**BREEAM:** A widely used means of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of buildings. BREEAM assessment methods generally apply to commercial developments (industrial, retail etc).

**Brownfield:** Land which has been previously developed.

**Brown roof:** A roof surfaced with a broken substrate, e.g. broken bricks.

**Building line:** The general line of buildings along a street, beyond which few or no buildings project.

**Building of townscape merit:** A building identified in a Conservation Area Appraisal identified as making a particular contribution to the character of the conservation area, usually not covered by a formal heritage designation.

**Build to rent:** Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. It can form part of a wider multi-tenure development comprising either flats or houses, but should be on the same site and/or contiguous with the main development. Schemes will usually offer longer tenancy agreements of three years or more, and will typically be professionally managed stock in single ownership and management control (definition from NPPF)

**Bulky goods:** Goods which are large and often require shopping trips to be made by car: e.g. furniture, DIY products etc.

**Call for sites:** An exercise whereby the Council asks for sites to be nominated as potential allocations in the Local Plan.

**Classified Highway Network:** The network of identified main roads, consisting of A, B and C roads.

**Co-living:** A form of communal residential accommodation in which individuals live under a single management regime and which offers more communal facilities and amenities and is usually on a larger scale than a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

**Combined Heat and Power:** Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units generate electricity through an engine and capture the by-product, combustion heat, for use in heating and hot water systems.

**Community facilities:** Facilities and services which are of benefit to the wider community. See policy OU1 for a definition of community facilities as it applies to the Local Plan.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** A charge which local authorities can charge on most types of new development in their area, to be spent on infrastructure to support the development of the area. CIL was introduced in Reading in April 2015.

**Community involvement:** Involvement of various individuals, groups and organisations and the general public in preparing planning documents.

**Comparison retail:** Retail of goods, such as clothes, records, books which are often purchased after a comparison of prices and available alternatives.

**Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO):** This is a means for local authorities to acquire land needed to help deliver economic and social change, under the Acquisition of Land Act 1981.

**Conservation area:** Defined areas of special architectural or historic interest which are worth preserving.

**Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH):** The **Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999** (COMAH) and their amendments 2005, are the enforcing regulations within the United Kingdom of the [Seveso II Directive](#) devised in [Brussels](#) following the [Seveso disaster](#). They are applicable to any establishment storing or otherwise handling large quantities of industrial chemicals of a hazardous nature. Types of establishments include chemical warehousing, chemical production facilities and some distributors.

**Crossrail:** A transport project to provide east-west rail links across London, which will terminate at Reading station. Services are now running as the Elizabeth Line.

**Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ):** An area around a specific facility for which particular emergency planning arrangements are in place. In Reading's case, the DEPZ relates to the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield.

**Design and Access Statement:** These accompany a major planning application, or a minor planning application in a designated area, to explain the design of the proposal.

**Development briefs:** Documents setting out planning principles for a specific site. Also known as planning briefs.

**Development plan:** A plan setting proposals for development that has followed the defined processes and is the main consideration in deciding planning applications (alongside national development management policies when they are introduced).

**Dormer window:** Located in the roof of a building, it projects or extends out through the roof, often providing space internally.

**Downlighters:** A type of lighting where the light is projected downwards – in the case of advertisements often illuminating a sign below.

**Dwelling:** A single housing unit – a house, flat, maisonette etc.

**Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA):** An assessment to calculate the needs for economic development uses, which mainly constitute offices, industry and warehouses. The Central Berkshire EDNA was produced in 2016.

**Elizabeth Line:** Rail services connecting Reading with London arising as part of the Crossrail scheme.

**Embodied carbon:** In the context of this plan, the amount of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gas emissions associated with construction of a building or development.

**Energy Service Company (ESCO):** Companies concerned with maximising efficient and cost-effective supply and end-use of energy for their customers. This can encompass a mixture of the following as appropriate; competitive purchasing of various fuels; CHP; end-use efficiency measures; consumption monitoring and management and others. Found on [http://www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Energy%20services%20company%20\(ESCO\)](http://www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Energy%20services%20company%20(ESCO))

**Equality Impact Assessment:** An assessment of the impacts of a decision or policy on those with protected characteristics under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

**Evening Economy:** A term for the business activities, particularly those used by the public, which take place in the evening. This includes pubs, clubs, restaurants and some arts/cultural uses.

**Examination:** Local plans are considered at an examination, during which the Planning Inspector assesses the soundness and legal compliance of the document.

**Extra care:** Housing designated for occupation mainly by over-55s but with higher level support and care to help residents live independently (source of definition: gov.uk)

**First Homes:** An affordable housing product constituting homes for sale to first-time buyers at a minimum 70% discount. A more detailed definition is within Planning Practice Guidance.

**Flood Risk Assessment (FRA):** A requirement at planning application stage to demonstrate how flood risk will be managed.

**Flood Zones:** The Environment Agency designate flood zones to reflect the differing risks of flooding. Flood Zone 1 is low probability, Flood Zone 2 is medium probability, Flood Zone 3a is high probability and Flood Zone 3b is functional floodplain. See the NPPF.

**Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA):** An area in which there are particular economic interrelationships, and which therefore functions as an economic whole, regardless of authority boundaries.

**Geodiversity:** The diversity of the geology in a location.

**Granny annexe:** A self-contained area within a dwelling house/ the curtilage of a dwelling house, that does not have all the facilities to be a self-contained unit of accommodation and is therefore dependent on the main house for some functions. It will usually be occupied by a relative.

**Green infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities (*Source of definition: Natural England*)

**Green roof:** A roof with vegetation on top of an impermeable membrane.

**Habitats Regulations Assessment:** An assessment to test if a plan or project proposal could significantly harm the designated features of a European site, protected under the Habitat Regulations.

**Hazardous Substances Consent:** Consent required for the presence on, over, or under land of any hazardous substance in excess of controlled quantity. Determining body is the Local Planning Authority.

**Health Impact Assessment (HIA):** A tool used to identify the health impacts of a plan or project and develop recommendations to maximise the positive impacts and minimise negative impacts, while maintaining a focus on addressing health inequalities.

**Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs):** A truck or lorry, defined by the EU as being over 3,500 kg.

**Historic Environment Record:** A source of information on all aspects of the historic environment in a given area.

**Historic Parks and Gardens:** Parks and gardens of special historic interest, designated by Historic England.

**House in Multiple Occupation (HMO):** A house occupied by unrelated individuals. Please note that the specific definition of an HMO changes depending on the legislation covering a specific area, e.g. planning or licensing. In Planning, there are two types of HMO – a small HMO under use class C4 of three to six unrelated individuals and a large HMO defined as a sui generis use of seven or more unrelated individuals.

**Housing Association:** An independent not-for-profit body that provides low-cost 'affordable housing' to meet specific housing needs.

**Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA):** An assessment that examines the capacity of an area for housing and economic development uses. National Planning Practice Guidance provides more information on such assessments.

**Housing Market Area (HMA):** 'A geographical area defined by household demand and preferences for all types of housing, reflecting the key functional linkages between places where people live and work' (*source of definition: Planning Practice Guidance*).

**Housing Needs Assessment (HNA):** An assessment that looks to understand and investigate the nature and make-up of current and future housing needs across the area.



**Housing trajectory:** A tool to compare how much housing the authority will provide against its requirement, and manage the supply.

**ICNIRP declaration:** A declaration from telecommunications code systems operators which confirms that any specific telecommunications proposal will adhere to ICNIRP guidelines on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields.

**Illumination:** The act of lighting something – in the case of this document, usually an advertisement or sign.

**Information and Communications Technology (ICT):** Equipment, applications and services that involve communication.

**Infrastructure:** The basic services and facilities needed for the smooth running of a community.

**Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP):** A plan for providing the infrastructure necessary to support growth.

**Implementation:** The means by which aims and strategies are carried out.

**Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS):** A document that relevant local authorities have to publish annually to report on collection of, spend of and future priorities for developer contributions.

**Inner Distribution Road (IDR):** Inner Distribution Road – the road circling Reading's core, made up of Queens Road, part of Caversham Road, Vastern Road, Forbury Road and part of Watlington Street.

**International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) Electromagnetic Field:** International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) Electromagnetic Field: The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection is a body of independent scientific experts consisting of a main Commission of 14 members, 4 Scientific Standing Committees covering Epidemiology, Biology, Dosimetry and Optical Radiation and a number of consulting experts. This expertise is brought to bear on addressing the important issues of possible adverse effects on human health of exposure to non-ionising radiation.

**Irreplaceable Habitat:** Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen (source of definition: NPPF).

**Issues and Options:** The first consultation stage in producing the local plan.

**Key Worker:** A worker who provides an essential service to the community. The specific definition can depend on the context.

**Lattice grilles:** A type of protection for shopfronts and windows that is in a lattice-pattern and allows views through the window.

**Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA):** An authority responsible for strategies for managing flood risk in their areas. These are usually county or unitary authorities.

**Legibility:** 'The degree to which a place can be easily understood and traversed' (*source of definition: By Design, 2000*).

**Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act:** An act of parliament, receiving Royal Assent in October 2023, which includes a range of proposals relating to planning and local government.

**Listed building:** Buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Permission is required before works that might affect their character or appearance can be undertaken. They are divided into Grades I, II and II\*, with I being of exceptional interest.

**Local Development Order (LDO):** A Local Development Order is a tool that a local authority can use to grant permission for certain types of development within a specified area, and can therefore be used to simplify the planning process.

**Local Development Scheme (LDS):** The programme for producing planning documents.

**Local Green Space:** A type of green space protected for its particular local significance according to criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework.

**Local Plan:** The main document setting out planning policies for a District or Borough.

**Local Transport Plan (LTP):** A plan setting out the strategy and priority for transport.

**Locally listed building:** Identified locally-significant buildings, which do not benefit from the same statutory protection as buildings on the national list.

**Macrocell:** A macrocell provides the largest area of coverage within a mobile network. The antennae for macrocells can be mounted on ground-based masts, rooftops or other existing structures. They must be positioned at a height that is not obstructed by terrain or buildings. Macrocells provide radio coverage over varying distances depending on the frequency used, the number of calls made and the physical terrain. Macrocell base stations have a typical power output in tens of watts.

**Main town centre uses:** Uses defined in the NPPF – retail; leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation; offices; and arts, culture and tourism.

**Bus Rapid Transit (BRT):** A proposal in Reading for a completely new or hybrid public transport system to complement the existing provision.

**Massing:** ‘The combined effect of the height, bulk and silhouette of a building or group of buildings’ (*source of definition: By Design, 2000*).

**Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** A signed document between parties that sets out an agreed position.

**Microcell:** Microcells provide additional coverage and capacity where there are high numbers of users within urban and suburban macrocells. The antennae for microcells are mounted at street level, typically on the external walls of existing structures, lamp-posts and other street furniture. Microcell antennas are usually smaller than macrocell antennas and when mounted on existing structures can often be blended into building features. Microcells provide radio coverage over distances, typically between 100m and 1000m and operate at power levels substantially below those of macrocells.

**Microclimate:** The climate of a small area.

**Mixed-use:** Where a site contains more than one use.

**Mobility hubs:** Sites which bring together shared transport with public transport and active travel in well-designed public spaces. They can be large, such as around a railway station, or smaller, embedded in communities, providing sustainable alternatives to private car ownership for travel.

**Morphology:** The historic pattern and grain of development.

**Multi-modal interchange:** A transport interchange which is served by a number of modes of transport.

**Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA):** A fenced, non-turf surfaced area, marked out, and an adequate size for, at least two of the following sports: tennis, netball, basketball and five-a-side football. (*Source of definition: Sport England*)

**National Landscape:** A landscape protected at national level due to its character and natural beauty. Formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** A document setting out national planning policy for England. This replaces a variety of previous national guidance within a single document.

**Net zero carbon:** Achieving a balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it (source of definition: Energy Saving Trust)

**Park and Ride:** A transport system where drivers leave their cars in a car park and continue their journey on public transport.

**Passivhaus:** A standard for houses that are very environmentally friendly because they can be kept at a comfortable temperature using no or almost no energy, or a house that meets this standard (source of definition: Cambridge Dictionary).

**Permeability:** 'The degree to which an area has a variety of pleasant, convenient and safe routes through it' (source of definition: By Design, 2000).

**Permitted development:** A type of development that is specifically excluded from the need to apply for planning permission.

**Picocell:** A picocell provides more localised coverage than a microcell. These are normally found inside buildings where coverage is poor or there are a high number of users such as airport terminals, train stations or shopping centres.

**Planning appeal:** There is a right for applicants to appeal against a decision on a planning application.

**Planning briefs:** Documents setting out planning principles for a specific site. Also known as development briefs.

**Planning condition:** A condition that is attached to a planning permission.

**Planning Inspector:** A Planning Inspector is appointed by the Secretary of State to examine planning proposals and documents, and issue a binding report.

**Planning Practice Guidance (PPG):** National guidance on planning practice that can be found at [Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-practice-guidance)

**PM<sub>2.5</sub>:** "The mass per cubic metre of air of particles with a size (diameter) generally less than 2.5 micrometres (µm)" (source: DEFRA)

**PM<sub>10</sub>:** "Particulate Matter of less than 10 millionths of a metre in diameter. These particles have the greatest potential of reaching the furthest parts of the lungs." (source: Health Protection Agency)

**Previously developed land:** Land which has been previously developed. Also known as brownfield.

**Projecting box type signs:** A box-shaped sign projecting from a building or structure, often illuminated internally.

**Proposals map:** A map on an Ordnance Survey base which shows the sites and locations to which policies apply.

**Public realm:** ‘The parts of a village, town and city (whether publicly or privately owned) that are available, without charge, for everyone to use or see, including streets, squares and parks’  
(source of definition: *By Design*, 2000).

**Purpose built student accommodation (PBSA):** Living accommodation provided specifically for those in education.

**Reading Affordable Rent:** A locally-set level of affordable rent which is designed to be affordable to those needing affordable housing in Reading, and which is calculated in accordance with paragraphs 4.5 to 4.10 of the Affordable Housing SPD<sup>150</sup>

**Registered provider:** Landlords of affordable housing, including local housing authorities and housing associations, which are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing.

**Reading’s Economy & Destination Agency (REDA):** The economic and marketing company for Reading, formed as a Community Interest Company.

**Retail and Leisure Study:** A study identifying the needs for retail and leisure space in an area.

**Retail warehouse:** A large, often single-level store, often specialising in the sale of bulky goods such as furniture or DIY, catering for mainly car-borne customers.

**Retrofit:** In the context of this plan, to alter a building that has already been built to improve its environmental performance.

**Scheduled Ancient Monument:** Specified nationally important archaeological sites. The two scheduled ancient monuments in Reading are Reading Abbey and the High Bridge.

**Section 106 agreement:** A legally binding agreement or obligation entered into by the local authority and a land developer over an issue related to a planning application, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

**Sequential approach:** A method of considering and ranking the suitability of sites for development, so that one type of site is considered before another. Different sequential approaches are applied to different uses.

**Serviced apartments:** A use falling between hotels and housing, providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living but also the amenities of a hotel, and let on short-term tenancies, often less than three months. Generally classed as C1 hotels for planning purposes.

**Serviced land:** The roads and necessary infrastructure including drainage are provided by the developer. Plots are then available to build a house and connect it to relevant services.

**Shared ownership:** An affordable housing product where a proportion of the property is purchased and the remainder rented from the Registered Provider.

**Small cell technologies:** A type of wireless communication infrastructure that is designed to enhance network capacity and coverage in areas with high user density or limited space (source of definition: Mpirical)

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<sup>150</sup> [Affordable Housing SPD, adopted March 2021 \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://reading.gov.uk/affordable-housing-spd)

**Soundness:** When holding an examination into planning documents, the role of the Inspector is to decide whether the documents are 'sound'. Under paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) plans are sound if they are positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

**Spatial options:** Options for the future development which covers specific areas or sites.

**Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP):** The methodology used by the Government to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings.

**Standard methodology:** The methodology for assessing housing needs set out in Planning Practice Guidance.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):** A European directive means that an SEA must be completed for all local development documents. This has been made part of the sustainability appraisal process.

**Strategic policies:** Policies and site allocations which address strategic priorities in line with the requirements of section 19(1B-E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

**Submission:** The stage at which a draft Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

**Sui Generis:** A use not specifically defined in the use classes order (2004), which has its own category.

**Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):** Planning documents which provide more detailed information than development plans, but do not have the same weight.

**Supplementary Plan:** A planning document introduced by the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act which provides more detailed information than the Local Plan but which has development plan status.

**Surface Water Management Plan:** 'Surface water flooding describes flooding from sewers, drains, small water courses and ditches occurring during heavy rainfall in urban areas. A SWMP is a framework through which key local partners with responsibility for surface water and drainage in their area work together to understand the causes of surface water flooding and agree the most cost effective way of managing surface water flood risk. The purpose is to make sustainable urban surface water management decisions that are evidence based, risk based, future proofed and inclusive of stakeholder views and preferences'.<sup>151</sup>

**Sustainability Appraisal:** A sustainability appraisal should be completed for all local development documents at all stages. It highlights the main environmental, economic and social effects of the document.

**Sustainability Appraisal Framework:** A document setting the basis for carrying out the sustainability appraisal, including setting the objectives and establishing baseline information.

**Sustainability objectives:** The twenty objectives against which policies and documents are appraised in the sustainability appraisal.

**Sustainable development:** Development to improve quality of life and protect the environment in balance with the local economy, for now and future generations.

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<sup>151</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/flooding/documents/manage/surfacewater/swmp-guide.pdf>

**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS):** For the purposes of this document, this term is taken to cover the whole range of sustainable approaches to surface water drainage management.

**Tall building:** For the purposes of Reading's planning policy, a building of 10 commercial storeys or 12 residential storeys or greater.

**Tree Preservation Order (TPO):** An order made by a local planning authority in respect of trees and woodlands. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of trees without the LPA's consent.

**Undercroft parking:** Car parking located beneath a development.

**Uplighters:** A type of lighting where the light is projected upwards – in the case of advertisements often illuminating a sign above.

**Urban design:** 'Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, ... and the establishment of frameworks and processes which facilitate successful development' (*source of definition: By Design, 2000*).

**Urban Greening Factor (UGF):** A planning tool to improve the provision of Green Infrastructure (GI), particularly in urban areas.

**Urban renaissance:** Making towns and cities places where people want to spend time and live.

**Use Class Order:** A piece of legislation, most recently in 2020, which divides uses into separate use classes, where planning permission is required to change between use classes unless permitted development rights exist.

**Veteran tree:** A tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition (*source of definition: Natural England*).

**Waterspace:** The areas alongside and close to main river and canal corridors.

**18-hour welcome:** A reference to provision of a strong economy across most of the day, but not for a full 24 hour period, approximating to the period between 7-8 AM and 1-2 AM.

**2FE:** 2-Form Entry. A school which admits two forms of new pupils per year.

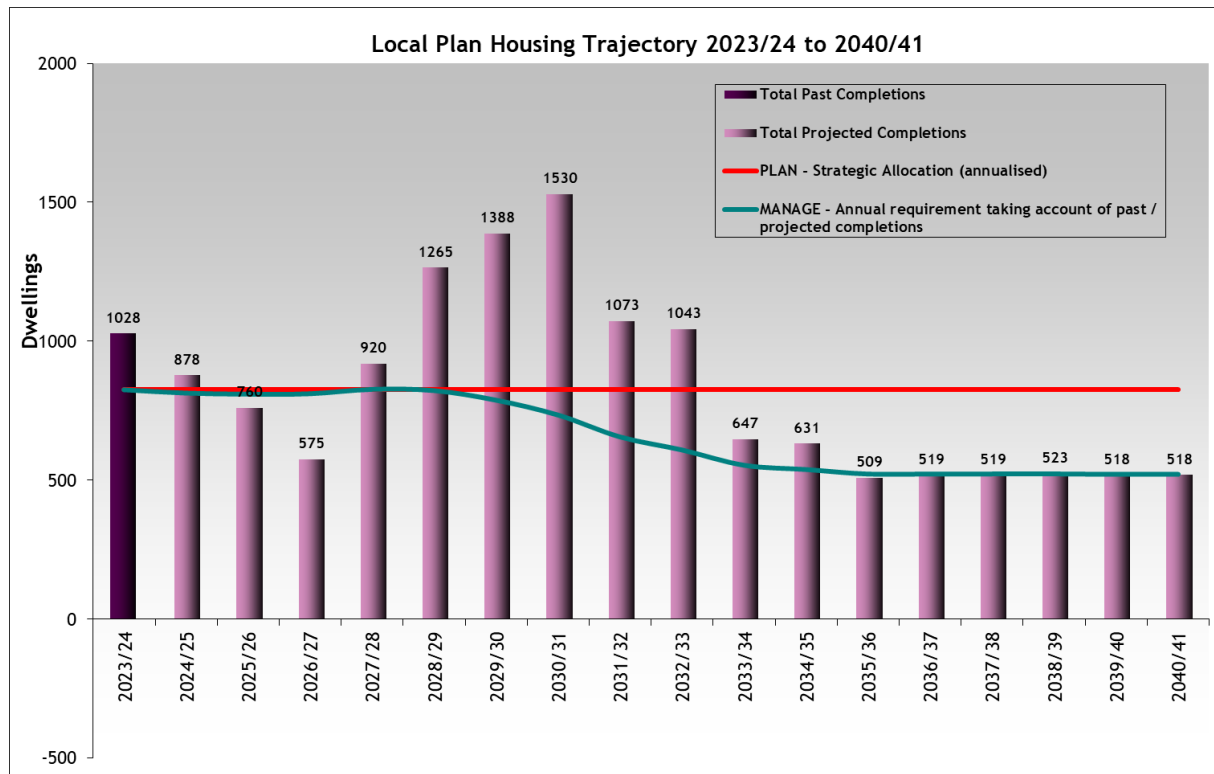
## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Housing Trajectory 2023/24 to 2040/41 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	2036/37	2037/38	2038/39	2039/40	2040/41	TOTAL
Small Scale unidentified sites (<10 units)	91	96	96	96	96	96	91	91	91	91	91	87	87	87	87	87	82	82	1625
Local authority new build	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	52	52	23	23	23	27	27	27	32	32	32	400
Permitted and under constr (10+), no lapse rate	-	782	736	150	53	53	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1774
Permitted and not started (10+), incl lapse rate	-	0	-47	335	740	864	383	523	211	211	139	118	0	6	6	6	6	6	3507
Permitted subject to S106 (10+), incl lapse rate	-	0	-25	-6	31	236	138	138	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	512
Sites in Local Plan, incl lapse rate	-	0	0	0	0	16	724	726	718	718	395	395	395	395	395	395	395	395	6063
Other HELAA sites, incl lapse rate	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	4	4	4	4	4	29
Past completions (C3 housing)	1021																		1021
Past completions (non-C3 residential) <sup>152</sup>	7																		7
Total past completions (all)	1028																		1028
Total projected completions	-	878	760	575	920	1265	1388	1530	1073	1043	647	631	509	519	519	523	518	518	13818
Cumulative completions	1028	1906	2666	3242	4161	5426	6814	8344	9417	10460	11108	11739	12248	12767	13286	13809	14327	14846	
PLAN - Housing (per annum)	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	825	14850
MONITOR - No dwellings above or below cumulative allocation	203	256	191	-58	36	476	1039	1744	1992	2210	2033	1839	1523	1217	911	609	302	-4	
MANAGE - Annual requirement taking account of past / projected completions	825	813	809	812	829	822	785	731	651	604	549	535	519	520	521	521	520	523	

<sup>152</sup> Expressed as a dwelling equivalent – see paragraph A1.3





- A1.1 The Housing Trajectory shows how much housing is expected to be delivered and when, and how this relates to the housing provision in the Local Plan. It shows the components of expected supply. An updated version of the Housing Trajectory will be included in each Annual Monitoring Report.
- A1.2 In general, the trajectory deals with dwellings within the C3 use class. Where residential accommodation falls within the C3 or C4 use class, it is considered to be a single dwelling. However, in line with National Planning Practice Guidance, other types of residential accommodation can be counted towards meeting housing needs on the basis that it frees up existing residential accommodation, as long as the need for those forms of accommodation are also part of the calculation.
- A1.3 The way that the different types of accommodation are converted into dwelling equivalents in the Housing Trajectory is set out below:
- Student accommodation: There is potential for new student accommodation to free up existing housing. Where there is a cluster of bedrooms with shared kitchen and living room facilities, this is considered to be equivalent to a single dwelling, as are studios which are entirely self-contained. More frequently, accommodation is in the form of study bedrooms with some shared facilities, and in these cases we assume that four bedrooms equates to one dwelling.
  - Houses in multiple occupation: The approach to HMOs is largely similar to that for student accommodation. Small C4 HMOs are already counted as 'dwellings' in the Council's monitoring in any case. For larger 'sui generis' HMOs, it is considered that, where it is a cluster of bedrooms in a dwelling style with shared kitchen and living facilities, it is equivalent to a single dwelling. Where it comprises bedsits with shared toilet facilities, it is assumed that four bedsits equates to one dwelling.
  - Residential care and other accommodation for older people: Some accommodation for older people, such as extra care housing, tends to count as a C3 dwelling anyway, where it is a wholly self-contained residential unit. In care accommodation with shared facilities, the assumption is that two new residential care spaces free up one new home.
  - Serviced apartments (where authorised) are considered to fall within the C1 hotel use class and will not be counted against housing supply.

## Appendix 2: Criteria for Locally Listing Buildings and Structures

### **CRITERIA FOR LOCALLY LISTING BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES**

#### **Exclusions**

Buildings and structures will not be considered for the Local List when they are already part of a Conservation Area, Scheduled Monument, or subject to an Article 4 direction relating to historical or architectural interest.

#### **Principles of Selection for the Local List**

This guidance sets out the general principles that Reading Borough Council applies when deciding whether a building, group of buildings or structure should be added to Reading's List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures:

- a. pre-1840: Any building, structure or group of buildings where its/ their original character and form are clearly identifiable.
- b. 1840 - 1913: Any building, structure or group of buildings that is/are of clearly-defined significance in the local context and where elements that contribute to its/ their heritage significance remain substantially complete.
- c. 1914 - 1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings where the elements that contribute to a high level of significance in the local context remain substantially complete.
- d. post-1939: Any building, structure or group of buildings where the elements that contribute to its/ their exceptional heritage significance in the local context are wholly complete and unaffected by inappropriate changes.

In identifying significance in the local context it must be shown that the building, structure or group of buildings contribute(s) to the heritage of the Borough in accordance with at least one of the significance criteria detailed below:

#### **Historic interest**

- a. Historical Association
  - i. The building or structure has a well authenticated historical association with a notable person(s) or event.
  - ii. The building or structure has a prolonged and direct association with figures or events of local interest.

- b. Social Importance

The building or structure has played an influential role in the development of an area or the life of one of Reading's communities. Such buildings/structures may include places of worship, schools, community buildings, places of employment, public houses and memorials which formed a focal point or played a key social role.

c. Industrial Importance

The building or structure clearly relates to traditional or historic industrial processes or important businesses or the products of such industrial processes or businesses in the history of Reading or are intact industrial structures, for example bridges.

**Architectural interest**

a. Sense of place

- i. The building or structure is representative of a style that is characteristic of Reading.

b. Innovation and Virtuosity

- i. The building or structure has a noteworthy quality of workmanship and materials.
- ii. The building or structure is the work of a notable local/national architect/engineer/builder.
- iii. The building or structure shows innovation in materials, technique, architectural style or engineering.

c. Group Value

- i. The buildings/structures form a group which as a whole has a unified architectural or historic value to the local area.

The buildings/structures are an example of deliberate town planning from before 1947.

## Appendix 3: Urban Greening Factor User Guide and Calculator

This calculator is to be used by applicants, or their agents, to easily calculate the Urban Greening Factor Calculator (UGF) of a proposed development.

It is intended to be a simple way for a developer to demonstrate that a development will have a positive impact on the environment by ensuring that natural green coverage is of an appropriate level and type, and that it will comply with policy EN19.

Because BNG is now mandatory, and to avoid duplication, habitat definitions have been aligned with those given in DEFRA's Statutory Metric where possible.

Every development type described in policy EN19 and listed below must submit an UGF calculator with associated accurate and scaled plans.

1. Major developments that are predominately residential (more than 50% as-built internal floor area)
2. Major developments that are predominately commercial (more than 50% as-built internal floor area)
3. Non-householder applications that are Biodiversity Net-Gain (BNG) exempt (as they are below the de-minimis threshold)
4. Development where more than 60% of land within the existing site boundary is hard surfacing
5. Development that results in a net loss of biodiversity using BNG
6. Self-build and custom-build housing
7. Householder applications where the proposals will result in more than 30% of the site as building(s) or hard-surfacing
8. All other applications where the proposals will result in more than 30% of the site as building(s) or hard-surfacing

**Step 1** – Assign all proposed habitats, excluding any buildings or hardstanding, to one of the Surface Cover Types defined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 - Surface Cover Type definitions**

ID	Surface Cover Type	Definition	Comments
1	Semi-natural habitats	Areas of woodland, infrequently cut grassland etc., and wetland habitats which are outside of private gardens but still within the red line boundary.	Any 'medium' distinctive habitat as defined in the Statutory BNG Metric other than those listed below

ID	Surface Cover Type	Definition	Comments
2	Intensive or biodiverse green roof	<p>'Intensive green roofs' are roof gardens which have been planted with a diversity of plants, trees and shrubs. The definition is as per that given in the Statutory BNG Metric.</p> <p>Biodiverse green roofs are roofs that have been specifically designed for wildlife. The definition is as per that given in the Statutory BNG Metric.</p>	
3	Other green roof	<p>Green roofs, including wildflower turfs and Sedum blankets, that are neither biodiverse nor intensive.</p> <p>The definition is as per that given in the Statutory BNG Metric.</p>	
4	Individual trees	A tree for the UGF is an individual tree, normally planted in a tree pit, and not planted as woodland.	There is a calculator within the UGF spreadsheet that provides an area for the UGF based on canopy size at maturity, with larger canopy trees having a higher score. This is to encourage the planting of large canopy trees.

ID	Surface Cover Type	Definition	Comments
			<p>The tree calculator also includes a separate value for 'Environmentally beneficial Trees' which are either trees that are native to the UK or have known benefits for wildlife or have been assessed as being resilient to climate change.</p> <p>Applicants should not include unrealistic numbers of trees in their plans and should ensure that where trees are proposed there is sufficient space for them to grow and sufficient soil volume (this applies to all trees, but particularly large canopy)</p> <p>Small, medium and large canopy trees must be clearly distinguished on the UGF plan.</p>
5	Modified grassland	This is grassland outside of a garden, normally amenity grassland, that will be managed as short cut grass.	

ID	Surface Cover Type	Definition	Comments
		For the avoidance of doubt this will be all 'modified grassland' that is in poor condition as defined in the Statutory BNG Metric	
6	Modified grassland with extra species	This is modified grassland, as detailed above, but augmented with extra species and to be managed as infrequently cut grass.	Augmentation can include bulb planting.
7	Garden planting	<p>This is all garden areas within the curtilage of a dwelling house or a block of flats or apartments. It includes all grassland and shrub planting but not hard surfaces.</p> <p>It also includes communal grassland and shrub planting within areas outside of private gardens such as around the edge of commercial developments.</p>	<p>It does not include trees, ponds or hedgerows which are detailed below and should be listed separately within the calculator.</p> <p>This will encourage the creation of ponds, and the planting of trees within private gardens.</p>
8	Native spp. rich hedge	This is all hedgerows described as a "Species-rich native hedgerow" within the Statutory Metric i.e. >5 native species per 30m length.	<p>Trees are to be counted separately (as above)</p> <p>Length x 1m (i.e. enter length in metres)</p>



ID	Surface Cover Type	Definition	Comments
9	Mixed native hedgerow	<p>This is all hedgerows described as a “native hedgerow” within the Statutory Metric i.e. &lt;5 native species per 30m length.</p> <p>It excludes single species native hedgerows such as hornbeam, yew, holly or beech, which have limited wildlife value.</p>	<p>Trees are to be counted separately (as above)</p> <p>Length x 1m (i.e. enter length in metres)</p>
10	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	“Non-native and ornamental hedgerow” as per the Statutory BNG Metric	Length x 1m (i.e. enter length in metres)
11	Green wall	“Facade-bound green wall” or “Ground based green wall” as defined in the Statutory Metric	Multiply the length of the base of the wall by its height
12	Ponds	<p>This includes the following habitats as per the Statutory BNG Metric:</p> <p>“Lakes - Ornamental lake or pond”</p> <p>“Lakes - Ponds (non-priority habitat)”</p>	“Lakes - Ponds (priority habitat)” should be included under “Semi-natural habitats” above
13	Permeable paving.	Permeable paving is a paving type with a porous surface that is composed of concrete, open pore pavers or asphalt with an underlying stone reservoir. Also	

ID	Surface Cover Type	Definition	Comments
		considered as green pavement, it allows water to run through it rather than accumulate on it or run off of it.	
14	Artificial grass	Artificial grass, also known as artificial turf, is a man-made material that looks like natural grass and is made from synthetic fibres (often plastic).	This has been assigned a negative multiplier to deter its use. This multiplier does not apply to sports pitches where it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no feasible alternative to its use.
15	Artificial hedge	Artificial hedges are a man-made non-living hedge that is made from synthetic fibres (often plastic)	This has been assigned a negative multiplier to deter its use.

**Step 2** – Measure the total area of the site within the Red Line Boundary (RLB) and enter this into the spreadsheet

**Step 3** – Measure the total area of each Surface Cover Type in M<sup>2</sup> (excluding trees and hedgerows) and enter these into the metric

**Step 4** – Measure the length of hedgerows in M and enter them into the spreadsheet.

**Step 5** – Count the number of retained and proposed trees, assign these to a size category based on their ultimate canopy size, and enter these into the spreadsheet.

**Step 6** – Check to see if the UGF is above the threshold and modify plans if it is not

**Step 7** - Produce an accurate, north facing site plan, scales to 1:250 or 1:500 that clearly shows the habitat types that will be within the red line planning boundary post development.

The plan should be additional to a detailed landscaping scheme which often contains more information than is needed for the UGF calculator which clearly shows the habitats below. It should nevertheless accord with the landscaping plan.

If landscaping details have not been provided and (for example where it is an outline application or landscaping will be a reserved matter) then the UGF plan should be provided in any case. The purpose of the plan will be to give the council confidence that, if approved, the development would deliver as a minimum the UGF score set out in policy EN19.

Site address				
Description of development				
Application type				
Target UGF				
<b>Enter total site area in M2 within the Red Line Boundary</b>				
<b>Total UGF contribution</b>				
UGF for this scheme				
Pass or fail				
<b>Enter Surface Cover Type Values below</b>				
<b>Surface Cover Type</b>	<b>Area M2</b>	<b>Area for calculator</b>	<b>Multiplier</b>	<b>UGF contribution</b>
Semi-natural habitats		0	1	0
Intensive or biodiverse green roof		0	0.8	0
Other green roof		0	0.7	0
Modified grassland		0	0.7	0
Modified grassland with extra species		0	0.8	0
Garden planting		0	0.7	0
Green wall		0	0.6	0
Ponds		0	0.8	0
Permeable paving.		0	0.1	0
Artificial grass		0	-3	0
			<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>Individual trees - non native</b>	<b>Count of trees</b>			
Small canopy		0	0.65	0
Medium canopy		0	0.65	0
Large canopy		0	0.65	0
			<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Individual trees - environmentally beneficial</b>	<b>Count of trees</b>			
Small canopy	0	0	0.8	0
Medium canopy	0	0	0.8	0
Large canopy	0	0	0.8	0
			<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Hedgerows</b>	<b>Length in metres</b>			
Mixed native hedgerow		0	0.9	0
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow		0	0.5	0
Artificial hedge		0	-3	0
			<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>

TYPE	UGF target	
All other applications where the proposals will result in more than 30% of the site as building(s) or hard-surfacing	25%	
Development that results in a net loss of biodiversity using BNG	25%	
Development where more than 60% of land within the existing site boundary is hard surfacing	25%	
Householder applications where the proposals will result in more than 30% of the site as building(s) or hard-surfacing	60%	
Major developments that are predominately commercial (more than 50% as-built internal floor area)	25%	
Major developments that are predominately residential (more than 50% as-built internal floor area)	25%	

Non-householder applications that are Biodiversity Net-Gain (BNG) exempt (as they are below the de-minimis threshold)	50%	
Self-build and custom-build housing	50%	
Small Trees	greater than 7.5cm and less than or equal to 30cm	41
Medium	greater than 30cm and less than or equal to 60cm	163
Large	greater than 60cm and less than or equal to 90cm	366