

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE		
DATE:	13 November 2019		
TITLE:	ADOPTION OF THE READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN		
AUTHOR:	Mark Worringham		
JOB TITLE:	Planning Policy Team Leader	E-MAIL:	Mark.Worringham@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 Over recent years, the Council has been working on the production of a new comprehensive Local Plan for Reading, to set out policies and proposals up to 2036. At the time of writing, this is expected to have been adopted at the meeting of Full Council on 4 November, which means that it will be the main consideration for planning applications determined from that date, and that existing development plans will cease to apply. This report summarises the implications of this for decision-making.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Committee notes the adoption of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the replacement of the existing Development Plan Documents.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The need to review the local plan as a single, comprehensive document was identified in a Local Development Scheme, which is the programme for producing planning policy documents, the latest version of which was agreed by Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 23rd November 2016. The production of the plan went through three stages of community involvement, with a consultation on Issues and Options between January and March 2016, a Draft Local Plan consultation during May and June 2017 and a Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan consultation between November 2017 and January 2018.
- 3.2 The Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2018, which began a process of public examination of the document by an independent Planning Inspector. This included public hearings in September and October 2018. The Inspector identified a number of main modifications to the document, which required additional consultation during June and July 2019. The final Inspector's Report was received on 24th September 2019. This concluded that, subject to a number of main modifications (virtually identical to those that had been subject to consultation in June and July), the Local Plan was sound and legally compliant and could proceed to adoption.
- 3.3 The Local Plan is expected to be adopted at the meeting of full Council on 4th November 2019.

4 LOCAL PLAN ADOPTION

- 4.1 The Local Plan is the main consideration in determining planning applications under S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Adoption of the Local Plan means that the three existing 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) - are replaced and cease to be used in determining planning applications as of the 4th November.
- 4.2 The adoption of a new set of planning policies does pose some issues for new developments that have already gone some way through the process, and a pragmatic approach will be needed. This will particularly apply where a resolution to grant permission subject to Section 106 agreement has already been made, and it is suggested that in those cases the decision should not be reopened to comply with new policies. However, for the most part, developments determined after that date will be expected to have taken these new policies, which have been in the public domain for some time and in most cases since at least March 2018, into account.
- 4.3 In some cases, existing planning policies have been broadly carried forward to the new Local Plan, albeit with some minor amendments. However, this Local Plan is more ambitious in a number of areas and makes some significant changes to the approach to development in Reading that are worth highlighting.
- 4.4 Firstly, the amount of housing that is planned has increased substantially, from 521 dwellings per year in the Core Strategy to 689 dwellings per year in the new Local Plan. The need for an up-to-date approach to housing need was one of the main reasons for preparing a new plan, and this figure represents a challenging but deliverable target to help to provide much needed housing. The plan cannot meet the full need of 699 dwellings per year, which leaves a small shortfall of 230 dwellings over the plan period to be met in neighbouring authorities.
- 4.5 In order to meet the need for housing, as well as uses such as employment, retail and leisure, there are a new set of allocated development sites across the town. This includes a number of as-yet unimplemented sites from the previous development plans, but also a range of wholly new development allocations.
- 4.6 The Local Plan raises the bar in terms of sustainability of new development. The main headline is the requirement for major new build residential to be developed to zero carbon homes standards¹, which places Reading as one of the most ambitious authorities in the country. Standards for minor residential development and major non-residential development are also raised. In addition, the plan requires the highest level of water efficiency set out in the Building Regulations for new homes, and includes new requirements for charging points for low emission vehicles. These policies will form a key plank of Reading's response to the Climate Emergency.
- 4.7 Other standards for new housing are also increased. The Local Plan requires that new build housing complies with the nationally-described internal space standards, whereas the previous documents did not set any standards. The Local Plan also requires that new build housing be built to be accessible and adaptable as defined in the Building Regulations, with 5% of units in developments of 20 dwellings or more providing wheelchair user housing. These accessibility standards will need to be secured by condition.
- 4.8 Affordable housing continues to be a major emphasis of Local Plan policies. The policy requirements remain broadly the same as those that were set out in the

¹ As a baseline, this involves a 35% in emissions improvement over 2013 Building Regulations plus a contribution of £1,800 per tonne of carbon for carbon offsetting.

amended Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document in 2015. However, since those documents, national policy has changed to seek to exempt sites of less than 10 dwellings from the need to provide affordable housing. This is a matter which, when it was introduced through a Ministerial Statement, this Council, together with West Berkshire District Council, challenged in the High Court. Although that challenge was successful, the decision was reversed in the Court of Appeal. Therefore, the Council needed to demonstrate to the Planning Inspector that there was a strong justification for an exception to national policy in Reading to continue to seek affordable housing from sites of one dwelling upwards. After substantial amounts of additional evidence were provided, the Inspector has supported the Council's position. The main difference is that financial contributions would now also be sought in the first instance for developments of 5-9 dwellings.

- 4.9 New policies are also included to address some of the types of development which have become more prevalent than at the time of adopting the previous documents. This includes build-to-rent accommodation, the first example of which in Reading, Thames Quarter, is currently under construction. It also includes new student accommodation in off-campus locations, particularly the town centre, as well as betting shops and payday loan companies.
- 4.10 The new Local Plan also includes a much stronger emphasis on heritage. The previous documents contained one development management policy on heritage assets, but did not provide a particularly positive approach. There are now six policies on aspects of the heritage of Reading, which include much more proactive proposals for enhancing assets and taking account of heritage in new development.
- 4.11 The above summary is by no means comprehensive, and there are a number of other changes to the policy approaches throughout the document.
- 4.12 Appendix 1 lists the policies from the previous development plan documents and identifies if and how that policy is replaced in the new Local Plan. Where it lists a policy as a replacement, it means that it covers the same issue, but does not necessarily mean that it has the same approach.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The Local Plan, through setting out the way Reading will develop to 2036, will contribute to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan 2018-21:
- Securing the economic success of Reading;
 - Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs;
 - Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe;
 - Promoting great education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The Local Plan has been through three community involvement stages, plus an additional consultation on main modifications. All consultation stages were in accordance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (adopted March 2014)

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Sustainability Appraisal process that has been conducted alongside the Local Plan incorporates the requirement to carry out a screening stage of an Equality Impact Assessment. A full Sustainability Appraisal that examines the effects of each policy and development site within the plan was submitted alongside the Local Plan on 29th

March 2018. It did not identify any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Adoption of the Local Plan will mean that this document is the development plan for Reading. Under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications have to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The previous development plan documents will be replaced and will no longer be material considerations.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None of this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reading Borough Local Plan, November 2019
Report to Council on 4th November 2019 on Adoption of the Reading Borough Local Plan

APPENDIX 1: REPLACEMENT OF POLICIES IN PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS

Development plan policy to be replaced	Where and if replaced in the Local Plan
Policy	
Core Strategy	
CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design	CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction H5: Standards for New Housing
CS2: Waste Minimisation	CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
CS3: Social Inclusion and Diversity	No direct replacement
CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development	CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CS5: Inclusive Access	CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CS6: Settlement Boundary	No direct replacement
CS7: Design and the Public Realm	CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CS8: Waterspaces	EN11: Waterspaces
CS9: Infrastructure	CC9: Securing Infrastructure
CS10: Location of Employment Development	EM2: Location of New Employment Development
CS11: Use of Employment Land for Alternative Uses	EM3: Loss of Employment Land
CS12: Maintaining a Variety of Premises	EM4: Maintaining a Variety of Premises
CS13: Impact of Employment Development	CC9: Securing Infrastructure
CS14: Provision of Housing	H1: Provision of Housing
CS15: Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix	H2: Density and Mix
CS16: Affordable Housing	H3: Affordable Housing
CS17: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock	H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
CS18: Residential Conversions	H8: Residential Conversions
CS19: Provision for Gypsies and Travellers	H13: Provision for Gypsies and Travellers
CS20: Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006-2011)	TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
CS21: Major Transport Projects	TR2: Major Transport Projects
CS22: Transport Assessments	TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
CS23: Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans	TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
CS24: Car/Cycle Parking	TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
CS25: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development	RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
CS26: Network and Hierarchy of Centres	RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
CS27: Maintaining the Retail Character of Centres	RL3: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading
CS28: Loss of Open Space	EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space EN8: Undesignated Open Space
CS29: Provision of Open Space	EN9: Provision of Open Space
CS30: Access to Open Space	EN10: Access to Open Space
CS31: Additional and Existing Community Facilities	OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities
CS32: Impacts on Community Facilities	CC9: Securing Infrastructure
CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment	EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance

Development plan policy to be replaced	Where and if replaced in the Local Plan
Policy	
	EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
CS34: Pollution and Water Resources	EN15: Air Quality EN16: Pollution and Water Resources EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
CS35: Flooding	EN18: Flooding and Drainage
CS36: Biodiversity and Geology	EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
CS37: Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space	EN13: Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space
CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands	EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
Reading Central Area Action Plan	
RC1: Development in the Station/River Major Opportunity Area	CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area
RC2: Development in the West Side Major Opportunity Area	CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area
RC3: Development in the East Side Major Opportunity Area	CR13: East Side Major Opportunity Area
RC4: Other Opportunity Sites	CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area CR14: Other Sites for Development in Central Reading
RC5: Design in the Centre	CR2: Design in Central Reading
RC6: Definition of the Centre	CR1: Definition of Central Reading
RC7: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in the Centre	CR4: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading RL6: Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses
RC8: Drinking Establishments	CR5: Drinking Establishments in Central Reading
RC9: Living in the Centre	CR6: Living in Central Reading
RC10: Active Frontages	CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading
RC11: Small Shop Units	CR8: Small Shop Units in Central Reading
RC12: Terraced Housing in the Centre	CR9: Terraced Housing in Central Reading
RC13: Tall Buildings	CR10: Tall Buildings
RC14: Public Realm	CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading EN7: Local Green Space
Sites and Detailed Policies Document	
SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
DM1: Adaptation to Climate Change	CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
DM2: Decentralised Energy	CC4: Decentralised Energy
DM3: Infrastructure Planning	CC9: Securing Infrastructure
DM4: Safeguarding Amenity	CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
DM5: Housing Mix	H2: Density and Mix
DM6: Affordable Housing	H3: Affordable Housing
DM7: Accommodation for Vulnerable People	H6: Accommodation for Vulnerable People
DM8: Residential Conversions	H8: Residential Conversions
DM9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation	H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation
DM10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space	H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
DM11: Development of Private Residential Garden Land	H11: Development of Private Residential Gardens

Development plan policy to be replaced	Where and if replaced in the Local Plan
Policy	
DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters	TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
DM13: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres	RL3: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres
DM14: Impact of Main Town Centre Uses	RL5: Impact of Main Town Centre Uses
DM15: Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses	RL6: Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses
DM16: Provision of Public Open Space	EN9: Provision of Open Space
DM17: Green Network	EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
DM18: Tree Planting	EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
DM19: Air Quality	EN15: Air Quality
DM20: Hazardous Installations	OU2: Hazardous Installations
DM21: Telecommunications Development	OU3: Telecommunications Development
DM22: Advertisements	OU4: Advertisements
DM23: Shopfronts and Cash Machines	OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
SA1: South Reading Development Principles	No direct replacement – see South Reading key principles
SA2: South Reading Strategic Development Sites	SR1: Island Road Major Opportunity Area SR2: Land North of Manor Farm Road Major Opportunity Area SR3: South of Elgar Road Major Opportunity Area SR4: Other Sites for Development in South Reading
SA3: Retail, Leisure and Culture Uses in South Reading	RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
SA4: Dee Park	WR1: Dee Park
SA5: Park Lane Primary School, The Laurels and Downing Road	WR2: Park Lane Primary School, The Laurels and Downing Road
SA6: Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading	ER2: Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading
SA7: Crescent Road Campus	No replacement – development completed
SA8: Other Sites for Housing Development	CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area SR4: Other Sites for Development in South Reading WR3: Other Sites for Development in West Reading and Tilehurst CA1: Sites for Development in Caversham and Emmer Green ER1: Sites for Development in East Reading
SA9: Other Sites for Mixed Use Development Including Housing	WR3: Other Sites for Development in West Reading and Tilehurst ER1: Sites for Development in East Reading
SA10: Other Sites for Leisure Development	SR5: Leisure and Recreation Use of the Kennetside Areas
SA11: Settlement Boundary	No direct replacement
SA12: Core Employment Areas	EM2: Location of New Employment Development
SA13: Transport Improvements	TR2: Major Transport Projects
SA14: Cycle Routes	TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
SA15: District and Local Centres	RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
SA16: Public and Strategic Open Space	EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space
SA17: Major Landscape Features	EN13: Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
New policy areas	

Development plan policy to be replaced	Where and if replaced in the Local Plan
Policy	
	EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest EN6: New Development in a Historic Context EN17: Noise Generating Equipment H4: Build to Rent Schemes H12: Student Accommodation H14: Suburban Renewal and Regeneration RL4: Betting Shops and Payday Loan Companies CR15: The Reading Abbey Quarter CR16: Areas to the North of Friar Street and East of Station Road CA2: Caversham Park ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital