
Open Space Statement

97a-117 Caversham Road, Reading

August 2022



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Open Space Statement has been prepared on behalf of Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley) and supports a planning application for the development of 60 homes at 97a-117 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 8AN ("the site").
- 1.2. The proposed development comprises:

Redevelopment of 97a-117 Caversham Road and associated land to the rear, including demolition of existing buildings to provide 60 dwellings, including affordable housing, together with associated access, parking and landscaping.
- 1.3. The purpose of this statement is to identify and consider open space provision associated with the proposed development in the context of areas of existing open space adjoining the application, how they are to be managed in the future and how they can be enhanced or integrated into the proposal. This statement has been written with regard to the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).



2. Planning Policy Background

- 2.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that all planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this particular case the Development Plan comprises the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan and accompanying Proposals Map (November 2019). Other material considerations include guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework ('the NPPF'), updated in July 2021.
- 2.2. The following Reading Local Plan policies are relevant to the consideration of public open space provision for the proposed development:
- Policy EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space
 - Policy EN9: Provision of Open Space.
- 2.3. Policy EN7 confirms the areas of Local Green Space and Public Open Space in the Borough and confirms these areas will be protected from development.
- 2.4. Policy EN9 requires new development to make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development, which can be achieved through on or off-site provision, contribution toward provision or improvement of existing leisure or recreational facilities. The policy confirms that on sites of 50 or more dwellings, new provision will be sought where the availability and quality of existing open space has been identified as deficient.
- 2.5. An Open Spaces Strategy for Reading was published in March 2007 and was amended by an Update Note in January 2018. The key objectives of the Open Spaces Strategy is to:
- *'Safeguard Reading's environmental endowment*
 - *Ensure that there is no net loss of recreational POS*
 - *Secure additional open space where opportunities arise.'*
- 2.6. The Strategy confirms that the amount of open space in Reading is adequate, but there are issues in regard to access, quality and green links to existing public open space.
- 2.7. NPPF Paragraph 98 states that access to a network of high quality open spaces is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for the nature and support efforts to address climate change.

3. Proposed Development Open Space Considerations

- 3.1. The proposed redevelopment of the site includes good-quality private amenity space in the form of gardens and balconies for all of the proposed dwellings in addition to areas of landscaped communal areas.
- 3.2. The size of the site and its location in central Reading mean that provision of significant areas of open space within the boundary is not practicable.
- 3.3. The site is however accessible to a number of areas of designated public open space around the town centre area, including extensive areas along the river to the north. These are shown in relation to the site at Figure 1, and include:
- Christchurch Meadows, an 11.06ha area of Local Green Space, approximately 350m to the north and north-east of the site (identified as Local Green Space ref: EN7Ca in Local Plan Policy EN7)
 - Hills Meadow, a 4.26ha area of Local Green Space, approximately 500m to the north-east of the site (identified as Local Green Space ref: EN7Cc in Local Plan Policy EN7)
 - The Rivermead and Thameside Promenade, an area of 16.83ha Local Green Space, approximately 500m to the north-west of the site (identified as Local Green Space ref: EN7Wp in Local Plan Policy EN7)
 - Kings Meadow and Coal Woodland, a 16.17ha area of Local Green Space, approximately 650m to the east of the site (identified as Local green Space ref: EN7Cd in Local Plan Policy EN7)



Figure 1: Local Green Space and Public Open Space

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The Savills logo, consisting of the word "savills" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with the 's' in red and the rest in black, set against a yellow rectangular background.

Section 106 Agreement

- 3.4. Given the location of the site and in accordance with Reading Borough Council Planning Obligations under Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document, a contribution towards improving existing open space to cater for additional use resulting from the redevelopment of 97a-117 Caversham Road, Reading would be appropriate in this instance.
- 3.5. The nearby areas of public open space in the vicinity of the site are those future occupiers would likely use and a reasonable contribution towards improving these areas is expected.
- 3.6. This approach was endorsed in the pre-application advice from Reading Borough Council taken in relation to the proposed development, which confirmed that:
- “As an inner urban location, it is accepted that it would not be possible to meet open space needs set out in relevant policy. Therefore, there would be an expectation that off-site contributions would be made towards improvements to nearby Christchurch Meadows, Kings Meadow and the adjacent Thames Parks to mitigate the impact of the development and make the scheme acceptable in Planning Terms. These existing open spaces are currently well used, and investment would be required to increase capacity in order to accommodate the increase in demand directly caused by the proposal and/or provision of safe movement corridors to integrate the proposal with these existing areas of open space.”*
- 3.7. An obligation to make a financial contribution can be included any Section 106 agreement pursuant to the proposed development, with the specific requirements to be negotiated during the application process.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The statement has identified public open space within the vicinity of the site at Christchurch Meadows, Hills Meadow, the Rivermead and Thameside Promenade and Kings Meadow and Coals Woodland as areas of existing open space identified in the Reading Borough Council Local Plan, that are in the vicinity of the application site and would be accessible to future occupiers of the proposed development.
- 4.2. It is considered that the proposed development could enhance the existing open space through reasonable off-site contributions via a S106 Agreement.
- 4.3. It is considered that the proposed on-site provision of open space, alongside the financial contribution for improving open space in the immediate vicinity of the site, would meet the requirement of the Local Plan in this regard.

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