

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION

OPEN SPACE STATEMENT

LAND AT VASTERN ROAD, READING

FOR BERKELEY HOMES, OXFORD AND CHILTERN

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Contents

	Page No:
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. OPEN SPACE	2
3. CONCLUSION	5

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Open Space Statement has been prepared by Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern). It supports a planning application for the development of **209** homes, on land at 53 - 55 Vastern Road, Reading ("the site").
- 1.2. The proposed development comprises;

'Demolition of the existing structures and erection of a series of buildings ranging in height from 1 to 11 storeys, including residential dwellings (C3 Use Class) and leisure floorspace (A3 use class), together with a new north-south pedestrian link, connecting Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road'
- 1.3. The purpose of this statement is to identify and assess 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), in conjunction with the Reading Borough Council's Planning Validation Checklist.

2. OPEN SPACE

- 2.1. The Development Plan for the area against which applications should be determined was the Reading Borough Core Strategy, adopted in January 2018. However, Reading Borough Council have recently adopted a new Local Plan, November 2019, which supersedes the old Reading Borough Core Strategy.
- 2.2. The council also have a series of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), including the Reading Open Space Strategy, adopted in 2007.

Reading Borough Council Core Strategy (OSS), 2008

- 2.3. The key policies that are relevant to the sites application are CS29 and CS30. As there is no existing open space on the site, CS28 is not seen as relevant.
- 2.4. Policy CS29: Provision of Open Space
- 2.5. *"All new development should make provision for the open space needs of the development through appropriate on or off-site provision, or through contributions towards the provision or improvement of leisure or recreational facilities, including open space. New provision will be sought on residential sites of 50 or more units, or for developments where the availability and quality of existing provision has been identified as deficient in the provision for open space. The provision and improvement of children's Play Areas and Neighbourhood Recreation Areas should be made, as appropriate, in order to ensure a satisfactory level of provision within the urban area. 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/ enhancements will be sought through appropriate contributions".*
- 2.6. CS30: Access to Open Space
- 2.7. *"In areas with relatively poor access to open space facilities (possibly 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."*

Reading Borough Local Plan, 2019

- 2.8. The new Local Plan accesses existing areas of Public Open Space (POS) in line with National Planning Policy Framework and in the context of proposed development. Policy **EN7, Local Green Space and Public Open Space**, acknowledges Christchurch Meadow as a significant area of POS within Reading. Stating that it will be protected from development and that any proposals will not erode their quality or jeopardise their use or enjoyment by the public.
- 2.9. Policy **EN9, Provision of Open Space** builds upon policy **CS29**, from the Core Strategy:
- 2.10. "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.
- 2.11. 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.

- 2.12. 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.
- 2.13. 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.
- 2.14. 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.
- 2.15. Reading Borough Open Space Strategy, 2007**
- 2.16. The OSS sets out the aims and approaches that Reading Borough Council will adopt in its role as custodian of Reading's POS. The document sets out a 13 year plan (2007 – 2020), adopting the Reading 2020 Community Strategy vision for public open space (POS) in Reading. The strategy identifies three key policy objectives:
- Safeguard Reading's environmental endowment
 - Ensure that there is no net loss of recreational POS
 - Secure additional open space where opportunities arise
- 2.17. The assessment of the current POS within Reading is suggested to be adequate. However, there are a few elements noted as to be improved. Firstly access to areas of POS due to poor distribution through the city centre along with severance lines such as the River Thames that restrict access. Secondly, the quality of existing parks, with a fragmented distribution of green links connecting homes to parks.
- 2.18. The site is located near two of the larger central Local Green Spaces; Christchurch Meadow and Kings Meadow and the Coal Woodland.

Open Space EN7Ca, Christchurch Meadow

- 2.19. The nearest POS to the application site is a Local Green Space, Christchurch Meadows. The space is identified within the Local Plan as EN7Ca and is shown within Figure 2.1 below.



1.1 Christchurch Meadow highlighted orange

- 2.20. The Local Plan suggests that Christchurch Meadows would benefit from the following improvements:
- 2.21. “Increase capacity and quality of facilities to cater for increased growth in population and demand”
- 2.22. “Enhance sports facilities including team sports, tennis and update leisure facilities”

Proposed Indicative Masterplan

- 2.23. The application is to be submitted as a hybrid, and thus the layout should be taken as a detailed design. The aspirations of the Local Plan have been taken into account during the design process of the masterplan
- 2.24. The masterplan includes an additional new extension to Christchurch Bridge, which improves the connections to LGS EN7Ca. This addresses aspirations set out within CS30 of the Core Strategy and EN10 of the Local Plan. This connection is also part of a 3m cycle footway that will run through the site, providing connection benefits to not only new residents, but also those traveling between Caversham and the town centre/ train station.
- 2.25. The masterplan also provides an area of amenity space along the tow path which will be accessible from both the site and the towpath. The inclusion of this zone, as well as the access to the towpath address elements of policies EN11 and CR11g.
- 2.26. The indicative masterplan also includes extensive tree, shrub and hedgerow planting throughout the external spaces of the site. The aim of which is to enhance biodiversity through the site, as well as provide the aspirational “green link” to the town centre, that is discussed within policies EN10 and EN12

Section 106 Agreement

- 2.27. Reading Borough Council have an adopted Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule in place which explains that CiL monies will be used for . As such, any financial contributions are to be agreed through Section 106 Agreement.
- 2.28. Through the agreement, there is an opportunity for the facilities to be improved, for example, by improved leisure facilities within Christchurch Meadow, as set out within the Local Plan. This could be undertaken through the inclusion of a financial contribution within any Section 106 agreement pursuant to the proposed development.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1. The statement has identified and assessed an area of existing open space adjoining the application site, identified within Reading Borough Council Local Plan as EN7Ca.
- 3.2. This statement has demonstrated how the proposed development can provide key connections and areas of open space to improve the open space provision within Reading, and improve access to existing areas of POS. This connection and provision will serve to increase the accessibility of POS to both residents of the proposed development, but also to existing residents south of the site.
- 3.3. The proposed development can also enhance the existing open space through creation of a green link through the proposed site, better connecting Caversham and the town centre/ train station.