

Appendix 6.3

Townscape Character Areas

Table 1: Townscape Character Areas

Townscape Character Area	Key Characteristics	Importance or Value
Character Areas as derived from the 'Reading Tall Buildings Strategy' (2008)		
1: Station Hill	The character area forms the commercial centre of Reading, inclusive of the recently re-developed Central Railway Station and part of the consented Station Hill development which will form a tall building cluster of up to 128mAOD. It includes the recently re-furbished Thames Tower (14 storeys) as well as a number of listed buildings, including Great Western House and the Edward XVII statue. It is a busy townscape, with regular pedestrian and vehicular movement, characterised by the station approach. It also forms a focus to views from the higher ground within Caversham to the north, including views from Balmore Park. It has a strong block form, which would appear to follow Reading's historic street pattern. <i>(Note: Whilst the Readings Tall Building Strategy 2008 included the block to the north of Tudor Road within the Reading Station West character area, given the recent re-development of this block, to include the 'Pinnacle building' it is considered that it is now more closely associated with character area '1: Station Hill' than character area '7: Reading Station West'. As such, the boundary between character area 1 and 7 has been re-defined in this assessment)</i>	Medium
2: Station Area East	This is a further part of the Reading town centre which has seen recent re-development in the shape of Forbury Place and the Apex Plaza to the north of Forbury Road; the former includes the tall building of No. 3 Forbury Place. These are contemporary buildings set within a streetscape which includes specimen tree planting and ornamental (formal shrub planting). The townscape character area, including No. 3 Forbury Place are visible within views from Balmore Park to the north. <i>(Note: Whilst the Readings Tall Building Strategy 2008 included the block to the south of the Apex Plaza within this townscape character area, with the recent re-development of areas to the north of Forbury Road, this block is considered as having greater commonality with the townscape of the 'St. Lawrence and Market Place' character area to the south of Forbury Road. As such, the boundary between these two-character areas has been re-defined in this assessment)</i>	Medium
8: Forbury Gardens	The character area includes formal Victorian gardens (Forbury Gardens), which are partially walled with a pond, bandstand and Maiwand Lion Statue. Within the east of the character area are the remains of Reading Abbey. The gardens are a Registered Park and Garden and these, together with the remains of the abbey (which date from 1121), are part of a Scheduled Monument. Aside from the gardens, building styles within the south of the character area are variable and include 5 storey, glass fronted offices on the southside of a pedestrian only square.	High
10: Forbury Retail Park	A linear area of uniform townscape character to the south of the railway line to the east of Reading Railway Station comprising large building blocks set within extensive areas of hard surfacing for car parking. It is centred on Kenavon Drive.	Low
11: Napier Road	A further linear character area to the immediate north of the railway line, centred on Napier Road. It includes Tesco's, as well as smaller commercial premises to the south of Napier Road. Napier Road itself, is lined with vegetation and its setting is in part provided (and locally enhanced) by Kings Meadow to the north. The character area includes the residential estate on Luscinia Way, which includes buildings of up to 10 storeys.	Medium
12: Caversham	This is a predominantly residential area comprising 2 storey terraced housing with private, back to back, rear gardens. Streets	Medium

Townscape Character Area	Key Characteristics	Importance or Value
Road	tend to have a broadly north-south or east-west orientation and are straight. Residential buildings are predominantly brick with bay windows and slate roofs. Part of Caversham Road itself is tree-lined (London Planes), elsewhere soft landscape is generally confined to private front gardens. There are some small and contained areas of commercial development and some recent residential developments which have also imposed their own character, i.e. those bordering the River Thames between Brigham and De Montfort Road. <i>(Note: This townscape character area has been expanded from that defined in the Reading Tall Building Strategy 2008, to include the residential area to the south and west of Caversham Road, as far as Addison Road and Randolph Place, inclusive of Denbigh Place. These areas of residential development share common townscape characteristics with those of character area 12 as defined in the Reading Tall Buildings Strategy)</i>	
13: Cattle Market	Whilst landuse within this character area is mixed-use, other than some attractive 3 to 4 storey brick residential buildings bordering Caversham Road, the remainder is largely commercial. It includes the soon to be re-developed Weldale Street site (currently occupied by the now dis-used Iceland building) which will include tall buildings, and the Cattle Market. These are generally medium size development blocks with car parking areas, albeit the prevailing building scale is slightly smaller between Weldale Street and Great Knollys Street.	Medium
14: Oxford Road and Surroundings	Landuse is primarily residential with some commercial mainly fronting onto Oxford Road. Strong north-south and east-west orientation of streets, lined with 2 to 3 storey properties with private front gardens. Predominantly brick buildings. No street trees. A small-scale, compact townscape of low-rise buildings. <i>(Note: This character area has been expanded from that shown in the Reading Tall Buildings Strategy, 2008, to include residential areas to the west of the railway line but reduced to exclude the northern edge of the Russell Street/ Castle Hill Conservation Area.)</i>	Medium
15: Chatham Place	A further large-scale townscape character area comprising a predominantly retail landuse, albeit the recent Chatham Place development at the junction of Chatham Street with the A329 has introduced a residential tall building of up to 18 storeys to the northern part of the character area. There is also some residential above the ground floor commercial properties along Oxford Road. These are 4 to 5 storey high buildings of red brick and stone lining part of Oxford Road and Cheapside. The character area also includes the Broad Street Mall shopping centre.	Medium
20: London Street	A character area with a mixed-use landuse, albeit residential prevails. Generally compact and small-scale, fairly intimate townscape. Some areas of more recent infill housing of similar low-rise, but of a lesser architectural quality than the older parts of the character area which include 2 to 3 storey brick buildings. Some commercial on the ground floor of buildings fronting onto the A327 London Street.	Medium
22: Vastern Road	An area containing buildings with a large floor space, but generally of 2 to 3 storey height, including a retail park and the former Post Office Sorting office within the Project Site. Buildings generally set within large expanses of hard surfacing providing car parking. Historically, the townscape character area is associated with the railway and growth of manufacturing and commerce within the town, post 1840. However, other than more recent development within the eastern part of the character area, adjacent the junction between Vastern Road and the B3345, its townscape dates from the latter parts of the 20th century. Building materials include coloured, metal cladding, with some brickwork on buildings within the Vastern Road retail park. It includes the	Low/ Medium

Townscape Character Area	Key Characteristics	Importance or Value
	Reading Station multi-storey car park and Station Square to the north of the northern entrance to the railway station. Given its location, to the immediate north of the railway line, the character area has an obvious association with the commercial centre of Reading to the south of the railway line and also reads as part of the central area within views from the rising ground to the north with Caversham, including Balmore Park. The Thames Quarter development (yet to be built) will form a new tall building (over 10 storeys) within this character area to the immediate south of Reading Bridge House.	
23: Kings Meadow	An area of mainly public open space (inclusive of Christchurch Meadows), with some small areas of development, inclusive of car parking, bordering the River Thames. It includes an island within the Thames. The meadows also support sports, including tennis. Landscape features include woodland and specimen, parkland trees and tree grouping with informal surfaced footpaths. The Thames National Trail also runs through the character area.	High
24: Kennet Walk	Character area includes a number of apartment blocks of up to 4 storeys in height bordering the northbank of a section of the River Kennet and Kennet and Avon Canal. The character area includes the island of land between the canal and the River Kennet.	Medium
Character Areas as derived from the 'Newbury Landscape Character Assessment' (1993)		
27: Thames Valley	Low-lying landscape with some references to that of an enclosed agricultural landscape afforded by its field pattern of hedgerows, albeit this is a landscape with a strong recreational landuse. It supports special events, allotments as well as the Rivermead Leisure Complex. There is also a clear network of surfaced tracks throughout the character area supporting these varied landuses. Extensive areas of grass, with hedgerows and specimen tree/ tree groups bordering the Thames Path National Trail which also runs through this character area. <i>(Note: Whilst based on the Thames Valley character area as defined within the Newbury landscape character assessment, this part of the character area has stronger association with Reading given its close proximity to the town than the more rural landscape described in the Newbury study)</i>	Medium
Other Townscape Character Areas defined by RPS as part of the Assessment		
28: Thames Valley East	An area of low-lying land, former gravel workings, now forming a network of waterbodies interspersed with woodlands and meadows, inclusive of the River Thames. Includes the 'Redgrave Pinsent' rowing lake and marina.	Medium
29: New Town	The character area is laid out on a tight grid of narrow roads lined with terraced brick gardens, largely 2 storeys with back to back rear gardens and narrow front gardens generally defined by brick walls. Car lined narrow streets, reducing road width to a single lane, is a characteristic. Some commercial on ground floor of buildings lining Kings Road, otherwise residential landuse. Reading cemetery provides some greenspace. Riverside character adjacent River Kennet. Tightly packed residential area with a strong northerly street arrangement. Occasional glimpsed views to taller buildings within commercial centre of Reading from streets but otherwise little awareness of proximity to town centre.	Medium
31: Mount Pleasant to Elgar Road	Residential area of predominantly 2 storey terraced houses with brick and rendered (painted) facades generally of a neutral colour. Narrow front gardens defined by low brick walls or railings. Late Victorian/ Edwardian terraces forming a tight, dense network of streets with a strong north/ south and east/ west alignment. Some infill with flats of 3 and 4 storeys and post-war terraced housing on Waterloo Road. The character area occupies rising ground up to about 67-70m AOD.	Medium

Townscape Character Area	Key Characteristics	Importance or Value
33: Southcote	Generally mid-twentieth century residential area of detached 2 storey buildings set out at a low density with grass verges to roads and tree planting. Medium sized gardens. Wide main arterial roads with some earlier terraced housing. Includes railway sidings and buildings within the triangle between railway lines.	Medium
34: Portman Road/ Richfield Avenue Light Industrial Area	Medium scale character area of commercial and light industrial buildings set within areas of car parking with limited soft landscape confined to grass verges on Portman Road and Richfield Avenue with occasional specimen trees. Generally, buildings of about 2 storeys in height. An area of weak and commonplace townscape.	Low
35: Caversham	Detached, semi-detached and terraced housing with front garden boundaries at the back of pavements. Includes urban areas on lower lying land adjacent to the River Thames at 35-40mAOD (Lower Caversham) and rising ground to Caversham Heights, Balmore Park and Reading Crematorium; rising up to 80-85mAOD at the limits to the study area. Hemdean Road follows a valley between Caversham Heights and the ridge containing Balmore Park. The character area is well tree'd and has a 'leafy' urban character.	Medium
Conservation Areas (Listed in alphabetical order) <i>(Note: That part of the Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area from which the ZTV indicates that the proposed development may be visible is within townscape character area 20 as defined within the 'Reading Tall Buildings Strategy', 2008; and as such, is covered above)</i>		
Alexander Road	The character area is on land rising gently southward from the River Kennet. It comprises a 19 th century street pattern, late 19 th century development with period details. Specifically, it includes Alexandra Road, with its Victorian buildings and tree avenue, Denmark Road, with its late 19 th century dwellings and boundary treatment, local detailing afforded by stone kerbing, gulleys, post boxes and street name signs. Front boundaries are also notable for their brick walls, iron railings and evergreen hedges. Buildings of note include ST Luke's Church, avenues of trees and specimen garden trees.	High
Christchurch	The character area comprises a tightly drawn, largely Victorian/ Edwardian suburb of Reading, broadly centred on Christchurch itself (Grade II* listed). Buildings form a continuous frontage of 2 to 3 storey properties with front gardens to the back of the pavement edge. There is good tree-cover, with boundaries formed by brick walls and railings. The 'Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal' (RBC, September 2010) divides the Conservation Area into 3 separate character areas; Christchurch and surrounding larger properties, Christchurch Road terraced properties and Western street block bounded by Christchurch Road, Glebe Road, Christchurch Gardens and Basingstoke Road.	High
Kendrick	The character area contains buildings dating from the late 18 th century, the 19 th century and the inter-war years. These include late Victorian and Edwardian dwellings in Kendrick Road and Redlands Road. Kendrick Road is also noted as a "planned mid-19 th century urban road, designed as a tree-lined avenue aligning with the spire of Christ Church". The character area also includes the twentieth century planned campus of the University of Reading (the only University established between the two World Wars) and the unusual 1930s housing estate of Kendrick Court. It is also noted for its mature trees, especially the avenue of Plane trees along Kendrick Road. Cultural associations include associations with the Palmer family of Huntley and Palmer (famous Reading biscuit manufacturers) and the author Mary Russell Mitford. Typical boundary features include red brick boundary walls and iron railings.	High
Redlands	The character area comprises a tightly drawn, essentially Victorian/ Edwardian suburb of Reading with a diversity of architectural styles from these periods. It is broadly centred around Christchurch Green. The character area is generally level and comprises	High

Townscape Character Area	Key Characteristics	Importance or Value
	continuous frontages of two, three and four storey buildings with front gardens to the back of pavement edge, fronting streets of varied length and width. It is essentially a residential area. Boundary features include brick walls and railings and significant tree cover is some of the larger gardens.	
Russell Street/ Castle Hill	The character area lies to the west of the medieval core of Reading. Land falls steeply to the east, towards the River Kennet, with elevation falling slightly across the character area to the north. The character area is centred around Castle Hill and Russell Street and comprises residential suburbs. Properties lining Castle Hill are mainly Georgian and have front gardens with nature trees which are important elements within views along Castle Hill. Within the south of the character area, terraces are of early 19 th century origin (Coley Hill) with detached and semi-detached properties of late 19 th century origin (Castle Crescent). Residential suburbs within the north of the character area are of early to late 19 th century origin. The character area has a strong grid pattern of streets and is predominantly rural, albeit there is some commercial development along Oxford Road. Some important vistas over the town centre from Howard Street, Castel Street and Garnet Street. The 'Russell Street/ Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal' (April 2004) describes four-character areas within the Conservation Area; Castle Crescent and Coley Hill, Castel Street and Castle hill, Russell Street, Baker Street and the surrounding residential roads and Oxford Road.	High
St Peters	The character area includes St Peters Church, Caversham Court and St. Peters Rectory and properties fronting Church Road, Caversham and St. Peters Hill. Visible within views from and to the River Thames. Mainly 2 storey cottage scale properties in an informal arrangement with a green and wooded urban character. Boundary features include brick and flint walls and/or railings. The 'St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal' (RBC, April 2009) sub-divides it into four areas of distinct character; St Peters Church and churchyard, Caversham Court, the southside of Church Road and the north side of Church Road/ St Peters Hill. Both the churchyard and Caversham Court are green spaces with public access.	High
Surley Row	Character area comprises a linear lane of domestic scale, mainly Victorian, properties with a 'village street' character but of a diverse architectural form and detailing. It contains a number of listed buildings with some infill development, forming one of the oldest parts of Caversham. Mainly lacks footpaths and the sides to the lane are largely defined by high brick walls. There is significant tree cover throughout the character area.	High