

East Reading Mass Rapid Transit Scheme

Planning Statement

On behalf of **Reading Borough Council, Highways and Transport Department**



Project Ref: 28791 | Rev: AA | Date: September 2018

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP, now part of Stantec (PBA), in respect of a new planning application (referred to hereafter as the '2018 Planning Application'), for a new mass rapid transit (MRT) scheme to the east of Reading, Berkshire (referred to as the 'Proposed Development'). The purpose of the East MRT scheme is to provide a fast track public transport, cycle and pedestrian route into the town centre. It is designed to improve accessibility and support continued sustainable growth in Reading and Wokingham Boroughs and the wider area.
- 1.1.2 A full planning application, with an ES, was submitted in 2017 for an earlier iteration of the MRT scheme. Reading Borough Council (RBC) was minded to grant the application at committee held on 30 May 2018. However, the application was refused by WBC in June 2018 on the grounds that the scheme would be *'harmful to the landscape character'*. A new full planning application is therefore being submitted that, inter alia, responds to the reasons for refusal and comments received from consultees.
- 1.1.3 The Application Site boundary is shown in **Appendix F**.
- 1.1.4 The proposed development straddles the two Local Planning Authority areas of RBC and Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), and therefore duplicate planning applications will be submitted to both RBC and WBC for determination.
- 1.1.5 The project is being promoted by RBC, working with WBC, and Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP). The public-sector led project has been allocated funding by TVB LEP from the Local Growth Fund.

1.2 The Application Site

- 1.2.1 The Application Site is located to the south of the River Thames and to the north of the Great Western Main Line Railway that is raised on an embankment. The Application Site is characterised by a retail superstore to the west, the TVP P&R site to the east and the confluence of the River Thames and the River Kennet to the centre.
- 1.2.2 A more detailed description is provided in **Chapter 3 of this Planning Statement**.

1.3 The Proposed Development

- 1.3.1 The Proposed Development comprises the construction of a segregated fast-track public transport, pedestrian and cycle route via bridge and viaduct, junction improvements and landscaping. The purpose of the East MRT Scheme is to improve accessibility and support continued sustainable growth in Reading and Wokingham Boroughs and the wider area.
- 1.3.2 The description of the 2018 Planning Application is as follows:

"Construction of a segregated fast-track public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge and viaduct, comprising concrete bridge structure supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced soil embankment, together with new footway links and existing footway alterations, junction improvements and landscaping."

- 1.3.3 The proposed scheme and the design evolution since the submission of the 2017 Planning Application is explained further in **Chapter 3 of this Planning Statement**.

1.4 Planning Background

- 1.4.1 The planning background for the proposed scheme is summarised below:

- **2017 Planning Application including an ES (Refs:171108 and 172048):** this was submitted in July 2017 to RBC and WBC;
- **2018 (June) Amended Application and ES Addendum (Refs:171108 and 172048):** this was submitted in June 2018 in response to comments received from consultees. The scheme design was amended to address these responses and additional information was submitted. The planning application was refused by WBC, albeit RBC was minded to grant – see paragraphs 1.4.2 and 1.4.3 below
- **2018 Planning Application including an ES:** this planning application and ES has been prepared to assess the likely significant effects in relation to the amended scheme design.

- 1.4.2 At the RBC Planning Committee held on 30th May 2018, RBC was minded to grant planning permission to the proposed development.

- 1.4.3 WBC refused permission for the development at the Planning Committee on 25th June 2018 for the following reason:

‘The proposed MRT link, including bridge structure, due to its height and scale and its prominent and sensitive location, particularly its proximity to the River Thames and River Kennet, would be harmful to the landscape character of the area including its riparian appearance. This would be contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy’

- 1.4.4 A design review has been undertaken to consider how to blend the structure into the landscape/ backdrop of grass, shrubs, railway embankments, bridges, overhead electricity lines and electricity pylons, and riparian foreground.

- 1.4.5 The project team has considered a number of alternative designs to respond to the comments from WBC at the Planning Committee for the 2017 Planning Application. These alternatives are outlined below.

- **Planters at high level:** Planters beside the parapets containing ivy to spill over the deck of the viaduct. This would provide ‘greening’ of the structure.
- **Gabion Cladding:** Additional gabion cladding with ivy across the lower areas of the structure. The type, shape, size, roughness and tone of stone could be carefully selected to help blend the structure into the lower-level surroundings;
- **Coloured pigment and/or textured concrete:** Pigmented concrete would help to blend the structure with ground level colours. Texture on the surface of the concrete would potentially have a positive impact on very close views where this can be seen and/or surfaces in direct sunlight; and
- **Additional Landscaping:** Further low-level planting and/or public art sculptures could be provided to enhance the landscape around the structure. There is limited opportunity for taller trees and substantial planting due to the easements required for the underground electricity cables.

- 1.4.6 Planters have been selected as the preferred option, as this would correspond with the proposed approach of a 'living green wall' at the TVP P&R development and would provide 'greening' of the upper level of the viaduct for local views from the Thames Path and river. Maintenance will be required, however automatic irrigation, a planting replacement programme and CCTV could keep this to a minimum. Provided the planting is successfully established and maintained, this option would have the greatest effect on softening and greening the appearance of the viaduct.

1.5 Supporting Documentation

- 1.5.1 This Planning Statement is submitted as part of the planning application for the proposed development. In addition, a package of documents has been prepared to support this planning application, comprising the following:
- Consultation Report (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Design and Access Statement (prepared by Doyle Town Planning and Urban Design);
 - Environmental Statement: Volume 1 Main Report, comprising the following assessment chapters:
 - Socio-economics (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Transport & Access (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Air Quality (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Hydrology and the Water Environment (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Ground Conditions (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP)
 - Landscape & Visual inc. Lighting (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Ecology (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Archaeology and Heritage (prepared by Orion Heritage);
 - Environmental Statement: Volume 2 Appendices, including:
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Phase 1 Ground Conditions Assessments (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Phase 2 Ground Conditions Assessments (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Tree Survey (prepared by Treework Environmental Practice);
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment (prepared by Treework Environmental Practice);
 - Lighting Assessment (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);

- Heritage Desk-Based Assessment (prepared by Orion Heritage);
- Environmental Statement: Non-Technical Summary (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
- Landscape and Ecology Strategy (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
- Sustainability Statement (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP);
- Transport Statement (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP); and
- Utilities Statement (prepared by Peter Brett Associates LLP).

1.6 Structure of the Report

1.6.1 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

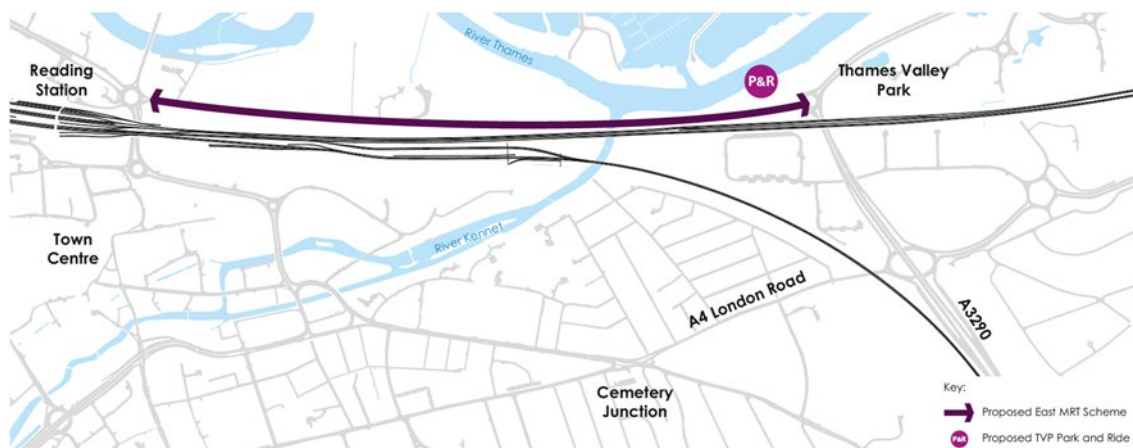
- Section 2 sets out the site location and context, including a description of the site and surrounding area, and a summary of any relevant planning history;
- Section 3 describes the proposed development for which planning permission is sought;
- Section 4 details the applicant's approach to pre-application and community engagement in respect of this proposal;
- Section 5 sets out the approach to and scope of Environmental Impact Assessment which has been undertaken in support of this application;
- Section 6 sets out the relevant planning policy context at the national and local level and identifies the development plan for both RBC and WBC local authority areas;
- Section 7 provides an assessment of the development proposals with reference to local planning policies; and
- Section 8 sets out the approach to planning conditions and obligations; and
- Section 9 provides an overall summary and conclusion to the report.

2 Site Location and Context

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1 The site of the proposed development is located at land between Thames Valley Business Park and Napier Road, Reading, to the south of the River Thames and north of the Great Western Main Line Railway. The site boundary straddles across the two administrative areas of RBC and WBC which is defined by the River Kennet.
- 2.1.2 The western end of the site, within RBC jurisdiction, lies adjacent to Napier Road, approximately 1 km to the east of Reading railway station and just south of the Tesco retail superstore and car park. The site runs linear to the south of the River Thames and the north of the Great Western Main Line Railway which is raised on an embankment. The site crosses the River Kennet into Wokingham Borough and runs south of the proposed TVP site, connecting with the roundabout to the west of Thames Valley Park.
- 2.1.3 An indicative site location plan is provided at Figure 2-1 showing the site located between the approximate Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid References (NGR) of 472553(E) 173856(N) to the west and 473579(E) 173891(N) to the east.

Figure 2-1 Site Location (showing indicative route)



2.2 Site Description

- 2.2.1 The western area of the site (within Reading Borough) where the proposed development would connect with Napier Road is characterised by a retail superstore and associated petrol filling station and car park. Residential apartment blocks are located to the west of the site and north of Napier Road at Luscinia View. The land immediately to the south and west at this point is characterised by commercial development and surface level car parking and hard standing, with the Great Western Main Line Railway running east-west beyond on a raised embankment.
- 2.2.2 The central area of the site where the proposed development crosses the River Kennet is characterised by the confluence of the River Thames and the River Kennet. There is an existing railway bridge over the River Kennet and an attached horseshoe footbridge allowing access over the River Kennet for the Thames Path National Trail (Thames Path). To the south of the railway is a gas storage facility.
- 2.2.3 The eastern area of the Site (within Wokingham Borough), where the proposed development would run adjacent to the proposed Thames Valley Park Park and Ride (TVP P&R), to the west of Thames Valley Park, is undeveloped flood plain adjacent to the River Thames. The Thames Valley Park Rowing Club and Wokingham Waterside Canoe & Kayak Centre are in close

proximity to the north-east. There are also temporary moorings along the western bank of the River Thames. The Thames and Kennet Marina and Redgrave and Pinsent Rowing Lake are located approximately 100 m to the north on the opposite side of the River Thames. The Suttons Business Park is located beyond the Great Western Main Line Railway to the south.

- 2.2.4 The Application Site within WBC is safeguarded land for strategic transport network including mass rapid transit along the A4/A329 corridors (in accordance with Wokingham Borough Council (2014) Development Plan – Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC08) and so the site has remained largely undeveloped for much of its length and currently comprises grassland, scrub and trees.

2.3 Surrounding Context

- 2.3.1 Reading is a large town and unitary local authority area located in the Thames Valley at the confluence of the River Thames and the River Kennet within the County of Berkshire. The Borough of Reading has a population of 160,825 (ONS Population Estimates - mid 2014) whereas the town of Reading (which includes the large suburbs of Early, and Woodley) has a total population of 232,662. As such, Reading is the most populous town in the UK not to have city status and outsizes many of the country's smaller cities. Reading therefore holds many of the functions, appearances and characteristics of a major city.
- 2.3.2 The site is located on the eastern perimeter of Reading, approximately 1.4 km from the Town Centre, 1 km to the east of the train station and within commuting distance of London (68 km to the west). The site is located alongside an existing transport corridor accommodating the Great Western Mainline as well as utilities infrastructure (e.g. overhead pylons, underground electricity cables and gas holders) and commercial development (e.g. Tesco and Thames Valley Park).
- 2.3.3 Figure 2-2 further illustrates the context surrounding the route of the East Reading MRT scheme.

Figure 2-2 Surrounding Context



2.4 Environmental and Historical Setting

- 2.4.1 As noted, the proposed route is located alongside the River Thames, which flows west to east, north of the site, and passes over the River Kennet at its confluence with the River Thames at the Kennet mouth.
- 2.4.2 The Environment Agency (EA) 'Flood Map for Planning' shows that the western part of the proposed route lies within Flood Zone 2 'Medium Probability' (between 1 in 100 (1%) and 1 in 1000 (0.1%) annual probability of river flooding). The eastern part of the proposed route lies within Flood Zone 3 'High Probability' (greater than 1 in 100 (1%) annual probability river flooding).
- 2.4.3 The land to the west of the River Kennet is situated on a historical landfill that was used in the past for railway sidings. The land to the east of the River Kennet comprises undeveloped land with two historical gravel pits.
- 2.4.4 The closest designated heritage asset to the site is the Grade II Listed Railway Bridge and attached Accommodation Bridge over the River Kennet. This lies immediately beyond the southern perimeter of the site and is screened by woodland which runs along the River Kennet, so that only glimpsed views of the bridge are possible from the Site.
- 2.4.5 RBC has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) due to exceedances of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective. The AQMA comprises Reading town centre and extends out along the major arterial roads and along the rail line. The part of the site located within Reading Borough falls within the designated AQMA. However, the exceedance in this area is primarily as a result of the railway line emissions, which should be improved by the electrification of the line which is currently underway.
- 2.4.6 The Thames Path National Trail and National Cycle Route 4 / Route 5 – Thames Valley pass through the Site alongside the River Thames.
- 2.4.7 Part of the Coal, Kennetmouth and Kings Meadow East Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is located within the site and is classed as 'open mosaic habitat on previously developed land'. Full ecological assessment of the site has been undertaken and the findings submitted alongside this planning application.

2.5 Planning History

- 2.5.1 A review of the RBC and WBC online planning registers has been carried out and has confirmed that there are no known planning applications associated with the application site itself, except the recent TVP P&R planning application.

Thames Valley Park, Park & Ride

EIA Screening

- 2.5.2 On behalf of WBC, in advance of a full planning application submission, applications were submitted to WBC planning department seeking to determine whether the proposed TVP P&R development constitutes 'EIA development'. An initial request for an EIA Screening Opinion was submitted to WBC in March 2013 (Ref: SO/2013/0376) in respect of a proposed P&R facility at the 1.35ha site, comprising:

"Development of a 1.35ha site to provide a Park and Ride facility with approximately 370 parking spaces, 2x bus stops, space for motorcycle/cycle parking and bus shelter facilities for the public."

- 2.5.3 WBC provided a formal Screening Opinion on 14th May 2013 concluding that the proposed P&R facility as submitted did not constitute EIA development.
- 2.5.4 A subsequent application requesting an updated EIA Screening Opinion was submitted to WBC in June 2015 (Ref: 161514), seeking further updated confirmation as to whether the proposed P&R facility, as outlined above, constituted EIA development. However, following the application submission, the proposals were reduced in size and scale to a P&R facility comprising 277 parking spaces.
- 2.5.5 As per the 2013 application, WBC provided a second formal Screening Opinion in September 2016 concluding that the proposed P&R facility as submitted did not constitute EIA development.

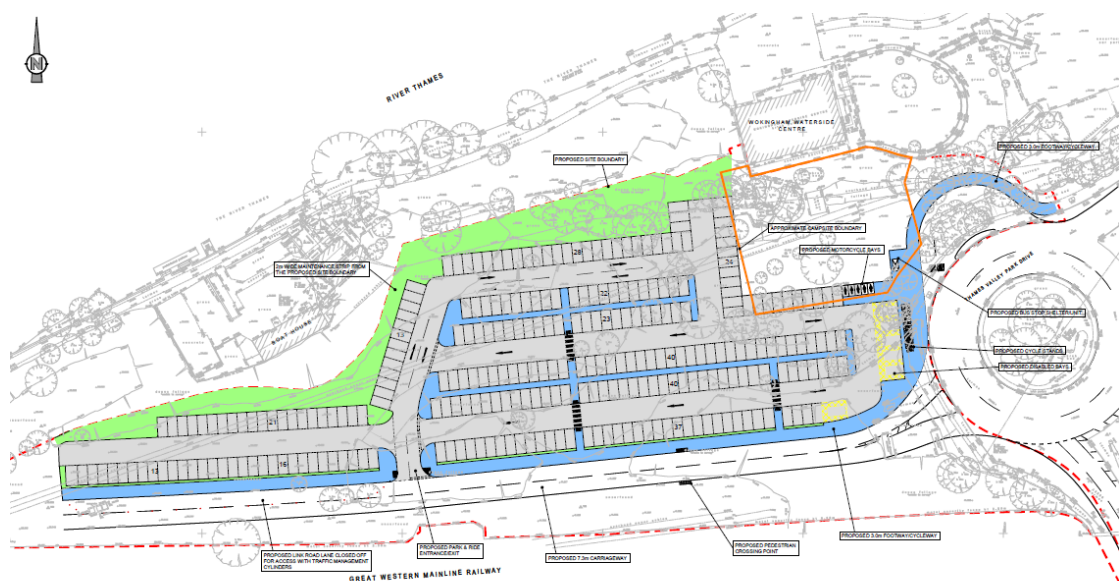
Full Planning Application

- 2.5.6 On behalf of WBC, a full planning application was submitted to WBC planning department on 9th June 2016 (Ref: 161596), at land to the west of Thames Valley Park Drive, for:

“Full application for the proposed development of a Park and Ride facility providing approximately 277 vehicular spaces, motorcycle parking's and associated vehicular access and landscaping.”

- 2.5.7 A plan of the proposed site layout is provided at Figure 2-3 below.

Figure 2-3: TVP P&R Site Layout (approved)



- 2.5.8 As shown in Figure 2-3, the TVP P&R development is proposed to be accessed via a new access road running west off the existing TVP roundabout junction, adjacent to the south of the P&R parking area. As explained further below, the route of the East Reading MRT scheme is proposed to connect with the permitted P&R access road, running up to the TVP roundabout junction.
- 2.5.9 Further to the EIA Screening Opinion, referred to above, the submitted full planning application was accompanied by the following documentation: Design and Access Statement, including Statement of Community Involvement; Arboriculture Study; Archaeology Study; Ecology Surveys and Assessment; Traffic Surveys; Topographical Surveys; Landscape and Visual

Impact Assessment; Transport Assessment; Sustainability Report; Flood Risk Assessment; Land Contamination Survey; and Construction Management Information.

- 2.5.10 WBC granted full planning permission for the proposed TVP P&R development, subject to conditions, on 10th November 2016.
- 2.5.11 The site has been cleared to allow detailed site surveys and investigations to be undertaken for detailed design and construction. It is understood that detailed design work is currently being undertaken for the TVP P&R development, following the grant of full planning permission, and it is currently scheduled to commence construction in 2019.
- 2.5.12 The TVP P&R development and the East Reading MRT development are being progressed separately and have been designed to be capable of operating independently. However, it is anticipated that the proposed East MRT scheme and TVP P&R uses would complement each other once both developments become operational.
- 2.5.13 A Section 73 application (182496) was submitted for the TVP P&R site on 7th September 2018. This application seeks to vary aspects of the planning permission. Both the TVP P&R and the East MRT have been amended in ways to support the improved operation, design and deliverability of both schemes. This was approved at planning committee on 10th October 2018.

Surrounding Area

- 2.5.14 A review of planning applications within the vicinity of the site identified a number of notable planning applications which are summarised in Appendix A and B.
- 2.5.15 Notably, the current planning application at the former Cooper BMW site (Ref: 162166) incorporates a strip of land fronting Kings Meadow Road / Napier Road at the roundabout junction with Vastern Road, which is proposed for future road widening (see Figure 2-4). It is proposed that this strip of land will accommodate a segregated bus lane providing bus priority at the roundabout junction. These proposed highway improvements will thereby further support the implementation of the East Reading MRT scheme, however the proposed improvements will be progressed independently to the current planning application.
- 2.5.16 The planning application is currently pending determination at 13/06/2017.

Figure 2-4 Former Cooper BMW Site Layout (Proposed)



3 The Proposed Development

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The purpose of the East MRT scheme is to improve access to and from Reading eastwards for buses, pedestrians and cyclists. This will help accommodate the forecast increase in travel demand along the heavily congested A4 corridor, which provides access to existing residential employment and educational sites, as well as Reading town centre, Reading railway station and substantial planned development in Wokingham Borough and Reading town centre. An indicative area of works for the Proposed Development is included in **Appendix A.1**.

3.1.2 The scheme seeks to achieve the following key aims:

- Provide a sustainable alternative solution to accommodate future travel demand on the London Road corridor;
- Increase capacity for movement of people thereby reducing journey times and forecast congestion, as well as improving reliability of journeys along the corridor;
- Support economic development in Reading Town Centre, east Reading, Wokingham and within the Thames Valley;
- Develop a high quality, sustainable system which provides a sustainable alternative to the private car;
- Facilitate a future MRT network for Reading and the Thames Valley; and
- Allow access for mobility impaired and pushchairs.

3.1.3 The design of the East MRT Scheme includes design options which respond to the comments from WBC at the Planning Committee for the 2017 Planning Application. Planters have been identified as the preferred option to green the structure. These options are discussed further in the consideration of alternatives section below (**Section 3.4**).

3.2 Description of the Proposed Development

3.2.1 The description of development for which full planning permission is hereby sought is:

“Construction of a segregated fast-track public transport, pedestrian and cycle bridge and viaduct, comprising concrete bridge structure supported by concrete columns, steel beams and reinforced soil embankment, together with new footway links and existing footway alterations, junction improvements and landscaping.”

3.2.2 The proposed development comprises:

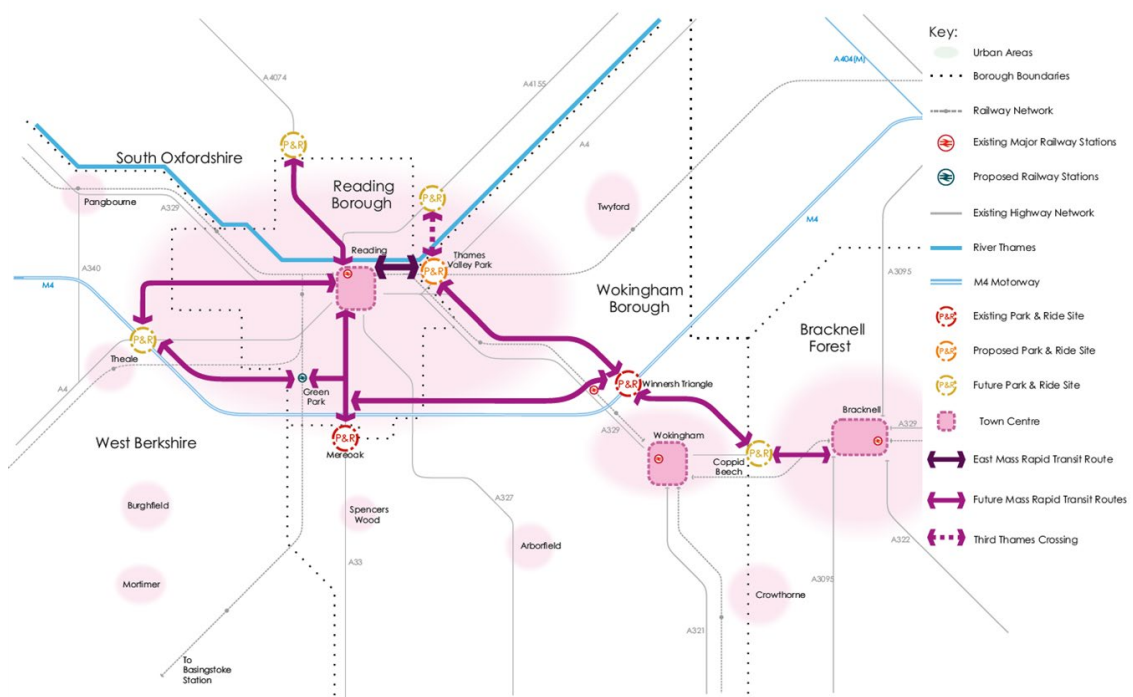
- creation of a new route for public transport only, including cycle path and footway between Napier Road and the A3290 at Thames Valley Park Thames Valley Park and Ride;
- the erection of a new bridge over the River Kennet;
- formation of a new T-junction with Napier Road;
- connection to the proposed TVP P&R;

- development of new and improved footpath links to Tesco and the towpath; and
- associated infrastructure and landscaping.

3.3 Project Rationale

- 3.3.1 The A4 London Road is currently the main strategic route for vehicles travelling to and from Reading Town Centre to the east and the link to M4 junction 10. It is heavily constrained comprising two narrow lanes for traffic travelling towards central Reading and a single narrow lane exiting towards the A3290. The A4 corridor and the A3290 are suffering from significant levels of congestion, particularly in the peak periods, which are forecast to increase with the projected level of growth in Reading and Wokingham Borough.
- 3.3.2 The purpose of the scheme is to improve access to and from Reading eastwards for buses, pedestrians and cyclists. This will help accommodate the forecast increase in travel demand along the heavily congested A4 corridor, which provides access to existing residential employment and educational sites, as well as Reading town centre, Reading railway station and substantial planned development in Wokingham Borough and Reading town centre.
- 3.3.3 The scheme will provide an attractive, direct, fast and sustainable transport solution to encourage a change in people's transport choices.
- 3.3.4 This eastern section will form part of a longer term MRT network for the Thames Valley or operate as a standalone MRT route. The link also provides future opportunity to link to a Third Thames Crossing to provide MRT to a Park & Ride north of the River Thames.
- 3.3.5 Figure 3-1 shows Reading's public transport strategy to provide significantly improved radial and orbital MRT routes.

Figure 3-1 Reading Borough Council Public Transport Strategy



- 3.3.6 Notably, Reading is also planned to benefit from significant investment in the following strategic networks over the next few years:

- Crossrail, which is planned to start running in 2018 and is reported to be generating the most homes of all the new rail lines.
- The Western Rail Access to Heathrow (WRAtH) will provide direct access to Heathrow Airport from Reading and is planned to be completed in 2021.
- HS2, which should be completed in the next decade, will reduce journey times from London to Birmingham to 49 minutes, making it easier to commute from Britain's second city to the capital. London's rail commuter network will then encompass Brighton, in the south, Southend, in the east, Reading, in the west, and Birmingham, to the north.
- M4 Junctions 3-12: Smart Motorway.

3.3.7 The scheme will provide urban connectivity and access to wider strategic transport networks, by allowing residents from existing and planned development living to the east of Reading to reach the rail services or visitors arriving from the motorway to use the P&R at TVP, Winnersh or Mere oak into Reading.

3.4 East Reading MRT Route

3.4.1 The route of East Reading MRT scheme is approximately 0.9 km in length, running from Napier Road in the west to the Thames Valley Park Drive roundabout in the east.

3.4.2 The western end of the proposed route connects at Napier Road with a new junction, where the existing highway bends north towards the main Tesco entrance. A right turn filter lane from Napier Road is proposed to accommodate two buses turning right from Napier Road into the new route. A relatively wide bell mouth with a central island has been accommodated at the Napier Road junction to allow pedestrians and cyclists to more safely cross the end of the East MRT route and join the surrounding highway network.

3.4.3 The western section of the proposed route comprises an 11.5m wide corridor with 6.5m two-way carriageway for buses (on the southern side closest to the railway), 3m two-way cycle lane, 2m footway (on the northern side closest to the Tesco car park). Landscaping strips are proposed either side of the route along the western approach.

3.4.4 The route narrows at the approach to the bridge on both the western and eastern sides from an 11.5m wide carriageway to an 8.5m wide carriageway, as the bus route becomes a single one-way carriageway. Road markings are proposed at both approaches to the bridge approximately 190m apart to allow for shuttle-working over the bridge itself. The segregated 3m cycle lane and 2m footway are retained across the bridge. The bridge will be aligned parallel to the adjacent listed bridge, at a slight angle across the mouth of the River Kennet.

3.4.5 To the east of the bridge, the route widens out to a maximum of 11.5m carriageway (as per the western approach) to accommodate a 6.5m two-way carriageway for buses (on the southern side closest to the railway), 2.5 to 3m two-way cycle lane, 1.2m to 1.7m footway and 0.3m to incorporate planting on the deck edge (on the northern side closest to the River). There is a range of the pedestrian and cycle lanes as the viaduct narrows by 1m where it travels closest to the River Thames, to locate the viaduct away from the river edge and towpath, creating a more open aspect and increasing direct sunlight on the towpath. The width of the scheme through this section is 10.5m and comprises a 6.5m two-way carriageway for buses, 2.5m two-way cycleway, 1.2m footway and 0.3m edge treatment.

3.4.6 The route continues to run parallel between the Great Western main line railway and the River Thames towards the TVP P&R. The route returns to grade the route is 11.5m wide with 6.5m two-way carriageway for buses (on the southern side closest to the railway), 3m two-way cycle lane, 2m footway (on the northern side closest to the TVP P&R).

- 3.4.7 The route continues east, running adjacent to the south of the proposed TVP P&R parking area.
- 3.4.8 Owing to the presence of an SGN gas valve at the south-western edge of the TVP P&R, the East MRT route divides to avoid the facility.
- 3.4.9 Beyond this short 100m section, the East MRT route replicates that of the access road approved as part of the TVP P&R planning permission (i.e. a 7.3m wide two-way carriageway with a 2.4m to 3m shared foot/cycleway) thereby also facilitating access into the south of the TVP P&R and including a new junction arrangement with the existing roundabout at the eastern end of the East MRT route.
- 3.4.10 Notwithstanding that the East MRT route also incorporates the majority of the approved TVP P&R access road, the application site for the East MRT route includes this section and extends to the existing roundabout at TVP in order to provide certainty of deliverability.

3.5 Bridge and Viaduct Design

- 3.5.1 The proposed bridge form comprises a single span of 59.5m along a gentle camber across the mouth of the River Kennet. The bridge will be aligned parallel to the adjacent listed bridge, at a slight angle across the mouth of the river.
- 3.5.2 The bridge comprises an in-situ concrete bridge deck with galvanised and painted steel parapet, and supported by weathering steel bridge girders. The eastern bridge pier comprises of a single column, with the western abutment comprising a concrete retaining wall faced with rock-filled gabion cages, supporting a soil embankment slope behind it.
- 3.5.3 The mid-span soffit level of the bridge will be 6.8m above Standard Head Water Level, matching that of the adjacent rail bridge, so as to minimise impacts on views and the setting of the listed bridge and support navigation.
- 3.5.4 The scheme rises approximately 5.6m at a steady 1:42 gradient from ground level in the east, adjacent to the proposed TVP P&R, to the new bridge across the River Kennet in the west. The 204m viaduct is raised up on concrete columns in order to accommodate flood flows beneath the structure and minimise flood impacts to the structure itself.
- 3.5.5 The viaduct comprises an in-situ concrete deck with galvanised and painted steel parapet, and supported by weathering steel girders. It stretches across 8 equal spans of 25.5m supported by concrete column piers with the eastern abutment comprising a concrete retaining wall.

3.6 Landscaping and Public Realm

- 3.6.1 The proposed development has been designed in parallel with a high-quality landscape strategy which seeks to complement the design and respond to the environmental setting.
- 3.6.2 A Landscape and Ecology Strategy has been developed in parallel with the design of the East Reading MRT itself. Key features of the Strategy include:

- Retention of existing trees and vegetation where practicable, including the Willow tree T88 east of the Kennet Mouth
- Height of the proposed bridge element to correspond to that of the Listed railway and accommodation bridge;
- Low-level parapet lighting;
- Planting of new native trees and shrubs;
- Selective management and re-planting of the Coal Woodland, this includes new individual trees and also the new woodland shrub and understorey planting;
- Retention and enhancement / extension of the existing area of grassland with acid characteristics at the western end of the MRT East route, with scattered new tree planting to create a glade with dappled shade;
- Mooring enhancement with associated new marginal shelf and riverside planting in front of the existing concrete retaining wall at the edge of the River Thames (east of Kennet Mouth);
- Creation of tussocky grassland between the River Thames and the MRT, and wildflower hydro-seeded grassland on the MRT embankment, marshy areas created beneath the viaduct and new marshy planting including Loddon Lily;
- One-column viaduct design and viaduct narrowed by 1m to the east of the River Kennet, with narrowed foundations;
- Relocation and repair of the existing mosaic, provision of new seating and storyboards in public realm area (public information);
- High-quality biodiverse habitat will be installed, to include:

On-site

- Habitats on-site to be retained and new habitat to be created through inclusion of native and species rich planting, to be managed for biodiversity. Habitat
- types to include: acid grassland, woodland, including native understorey planting, tussocky grassland and trees.
- Installation of a marginal shelf to provide a naturalised river edge of value to biodiversity.

The Coal, Kennet Mouth and Kings Meadow East LWS:

- Removal of invasive, non-native plant species (e.g. Himalayan balsam and butterfly bush);
- Selective tree management; and
- Native understorey planting, this includes new individual trees and also the new woodland shrub and understorey planting.

King's Meadow and Hills Meadow:

- Planting of four black poplar within King's Meadow;

- Rotational management to reduce invasive species within the belt of vegetation at the north of King's Meadow;
 - A one-off project to resolve tree and undergrowth management, followed by rotational annual maintenance of the belt of vegetation at the south of Hills Meadow; and
 - Installation of bird and bat boxes within Hills Meadow and / or the off-site portion of The Coal, Kennet Mouth and Kings Meadow East LWS (6 x bird boxes, 6 x bat boxes (general) and 1 x bat box (hibernation)).
- 3.6.3 Once operational, habitat associated with the proposed development will mature into biodiverse habitat of value to protected and notable species, as well as being of intrinsic ecological value in its own right. The proposed development presents the opportunity to deliver a net gain in biodiversity, as demonstrated in the Biodiversity Matrix appended to the Environmental Statement.
- 3.6.4 The landscape strategy incorporates seating along the route with additional 'greening' of the open space and planting to further enhance the public realm.
- 3.6.5 Beneath the viaduct, areas of marshy wetland and grasses will be created, providing an area for seasonal flooding, and a diverse marshy habitat, which includes the locally-occurring Loddon Lily which grows in swampy or damp soil. The area under the viaduct is proposed to remain open and unfenced to allow people to see beneath the viaduct, whilst discouraging public access beneath the viaduct.
- 3.6.6 Provision is made within the amended proposals for the potential for fencing to be installed beneath the viaduct at a later date, if proven to be desirable.
- 3.6.7 As a direct result of the reason for refusal by WBC, high level planters are proposed. Planters beside the parapets containing ivy which spill over the deck to extend over the side of the viaduct and be encouraged to grow downwards, providing 'greening' of the structure. This would correspond with the approach of a green wall at the TVP P&R development and provide local 'greening' of the upper level of the viaduct in local views from the Thames Path and river. Maintenance will be required, however automatic irrigation, a planting replacement programme and CCTV could keep this to a minimum. Provided the planting is successfully established and maintained, this option would have the greatest effect by softening and 'greening' the appearance of the viaduct.

3.7 Lighting

- 3.7.1 The design of the proposed development is supported by a lighting strategy to facilitate the safe and secure functioning of the scheme. The lighting strategy is based on Secured by Design principles focusing on crime reduction and promoting people's safety.
- 3.7.2 Lighting is proposed along the length of the route to support operational requirements, with different types proposed dependant on the requirements of that area and the location of sensitive receptors.
- 3.7.3 Along the Proposed Development, 6m columns are proposed along the footway and cycleway, oriented towards the road junction to avoid light spillage. The footway and cycleway along the bridge/viaduct will be lit by LED lighting on the top rail of the bridge parapet, at approximately 1.5 m in height, to reduce light intrusion. No lighting is proposed on the bus carriageway itself to minimise impacts on the surrounding Operation.
- 3.7.4 The operation of the route will link the A3290 at Thames Valley Park, adjacent to a new Park & Ride facility, to Napier Road, Reading town centre and the railway station. Once the proposed

TVP P&R becomes operational, the East MRT route will also facilitate travel directly to and from the TVP P&R facility itself.

- 3.7.5 It is proposed that buses will use the East MRT route running at regular intervals throughout the day, with more frequent bus services running during the peak AM and peak PM periods. It is proposed that the existing fleet of buses, currently travelling to and from TVP via the A4, will instead use the East MRT route.
- 3.7.6 The East MRT scheme also provides the opportunity for the TVP P&R to operate at weekends and for extended hours during the week due to additional bus services serving the TVP P&R.
- 3.7.7 Cyclists and pedestrians will be able to use the route at all times via the segregated cycleway and footway. The route will not be open to any other forms of traffic including taxis and motorcycles.

3.8 Off-Site Improvements

- 3.8.1 In addition to the proposed development for which permission is hereby being sought, a number of additional off-site improvements are proposed which will further support the implementation of the East Reading MRT scheme. These elements do not however form part of the current planning application.
- 3.8.2 A 100m bus priority lane and signalised pedestrian crossing are proposed on the Napier Road approach to Reading Bridge roundabout. The bus lane provides bus priority from the end of Napier Road, along from the East MRT route, towards the Reading Station Northern Interchange. There is currently bus priority on both the access and egress to the Northern Interchange to/from Reading Bridge Roundabout.
- 3.8.3 In addition, off-site flood compensation areas, together with replacement tree planting and biodiversity enhancements, are proposed within the vicinity of the application site in order to support the delivery of the proposed development. Further details of the proposed off-site mitigation measures are provided within the ES which accompanies this planning application.

4 Pre-Application Consultation

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The applicant undertook extensive consultation associated with the 2017 application and subsequent addendum. This is all detailed in Appendix A to the Consultation Statement submitted with this planning application. It is therefore not the intention to repeat that here.
- 4.1.2 Consultation has been undertaken with officers of both local planning authorities, statutory consultees and local residents in respect of this 2018 planning application.
- 4.1.3 A public exhibition was held on Wednesday 12th September 2018 at Wokingham Waterside Centre, Thames Valley Park Drive, Earley, RG6 1PQ between 1.00pm and 7.00pm. The results of that consultation are clearly set out in the Consultation Statement, accompanying this planning application and have informed the design now being put forward.
- 4.1.4 It is important to note that following the press release and from the extensive number of letters distributed (to approximately 3000 homes and 77 businesses within the vicinity of the applications site inviting residents and occupiers to attend) and distribution to 160 local community facilities in the wider area that only a small number (a total of 123 feedback forms), have been returned. Although a significant element of these were either an objection or neutral, this is overall a small percentage of responses and any consideration of the feedback from the public consultation exercise should be taken in that context.

4.2 Response to Pre-Application Consultation

- 4.2.1 The key outputs from comprehensive consultation undertaken in respect of the 2017 application as amended and the 2018 application now submitted have informed the final development proposals as summarised below:
- Lightweight, slender and elegant bridge form which respects the setting of the listed bridge and the landscape context;
 - 6.77m bridge height (above normal water level) to replicate the listed bridge, minimise visual and heritage impacts, and provide legibility of design;
 - Elevated viaduct to minimise impacts on towpath and noise and air pollution;
 - Retaining openness of area beneath the viaduct to limit 'urbanisation' and visual impacts and retain the open and undisturbed public realm setting
 - Narrowing of route at key sections to minimise visual and environmental impacts
 - Detailed design treatment to minimise sheltering and anti-social behaviour beneath the viaduct, including raised viaduct height, rounded columns, anti-graffiti material and planting;
 - Links between MRT route and surrounding uses including Tesco on western approach;
 - Use of sustainable materials where feasible and appropriate;
 - Detailed landscape and lighting strategy respecting the surrounding context and addressing potential amenity impacts visual and environmental context; and
 - Use of coloured materials to respond to the surrounding context.

- Use of planters at high level to address concerns raised by WBC in refusing the 2017 application.
- Potential impacts on natural environment and landscape require full consideration e.g. Full details of the response to the feedback received during the pre-application consultation process are set out in the Consultation Statement submitted in support of this planning application.

5 Environmental Impact Assessment

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The process of EIA for this development is governed by Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended), referred to as the 'EIA Regulations'. The EIA Regulations implement EC Directive 2014/52/EU into domestic legislation.
- 5.1.2 The Proposed Development is considered to constitute Schedule 2 (Section 10 Part (f) 'Construction of roads') development under the EIA Regulations as an Infrastructure Project for which the area of development exceeds 1 hectare and could result in significant environmental effects.
- 5.1.3 The application site is smaller than the 'indicative criteria and threshold' in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) to be used when considering if there are likely to be significant environmental effects; however, the sensitivity of the receiving environment and river crossing means that there remains the potential for likely significant effects.
- 5.1.4 On this basis the applicant has undertaken an EIA, and a full Environmental Statement (ES) has been submitted in support of this planning application, in compliance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations.

5.2 EIA Scoping

- 5.2.1 A Scoping Opinion Request for the development now proposed was submitted to RBC and WBC on 29th August 2018. The request was supported by an EIA Scoping Report which set out the required information under the Section 15 (2) of the EIA Regulations. This included a description of the Application Site and the Proposed Development, the topics to be assessed as part of the EIA, the methodology for assessment and those topics to be scoped out of the EIA.
- 5.2.2 The formal Scoping Opinion was received from RBC on 15th October 2018.
- 5.2.3 RBC previously provided its EIA Scoping Opinion (contained within the Environmental Statement Appendices) on 25th November 2016. The response advised that the scope of the EIA should be extended as follows:
- The scope should consider the impact of the proposed East MRT scheme plus the TVP P&R in combination;
 - The indicative area of works needs to cover the TVP P&R land within the Wokingham Borough;
 - Greater consideration should be given to alternatives; and
 - The magnitude of effects should be examined more fully in the ES.
- 5.2.4 WBC subsequently provided written correspondence on 23rd December 2016 confirming that WBC agrees with the response provided by RBC.
- 5.2.5 The ES has been prepared to fulfil the requirements of the EIA Scoping Opinion and subsequent discussion.

6 Planning Policy Context

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 In accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, development control decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This section sets out the relevant planning policies of the development plan and supplementary planning policy documents to be considered in the determination of this application. As the extent of the proposed development straddles both the boroughs of Reading and Wokingham, we set out the development plan for each local authority area along with the national context.

6.2 RBC Planning Policy Context

- 6.2.1 The site is predominantly located within the jurisdiction of Reading Borough where the adopted development plan comprises;
- Core Strategy (adopted January 2008, altered January 2015);
 - Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted October 2012, altered January 2015); and
 - Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted January 2009).
- 6.2.2 The Council is currently working on a new Local Plan which, when adopted, will replace the current adopted development plan. The plan will set out how Reading will develop up to 2036. The Local Plan was submitted for examination on 29th March 2018 the inquiry has now ended and publication of the Inspector's report is awaited.
- 6.2.3 A number of supplementary planning documents are also relevant to the proposed development. These comprise:
- Planning Obligations under S106 SPD (adopted April 2015);
 - Employment, Skills and Training SPD (adopted 2013) and
 - Sustainable Construction and Design SPD (adopted July 2011).
- 6.2.4 The Council also has a number of adopted plans and strategies relating to the provision of transport and infrastructure. Those relevant to the proposed development are listed below.
- Local Transport Plan 2011 – 26;
 - Public Transport Strategy; and
 - Infrastructure Delivery Plan (May 2017).

6.3 RBC Development Plan

Core Strategy (January 2009)

- 6.3.1 RBC adopted the Core Strategy in January 2008, with alterations to the Core Strategy document made on 27th January 2015. This version of the Core Strategy forms the most up to date version of the Core Strategy.

6.3.2 Below is an extract from RBC's Contextual Information Map which shows that the proposed route is located within an Air Quality Management Area (DM19), an area safeguarded for Crossrail extension (SPDP para 15.3.6) and within the Boundary of Flood Zone 2 (at November 2010).

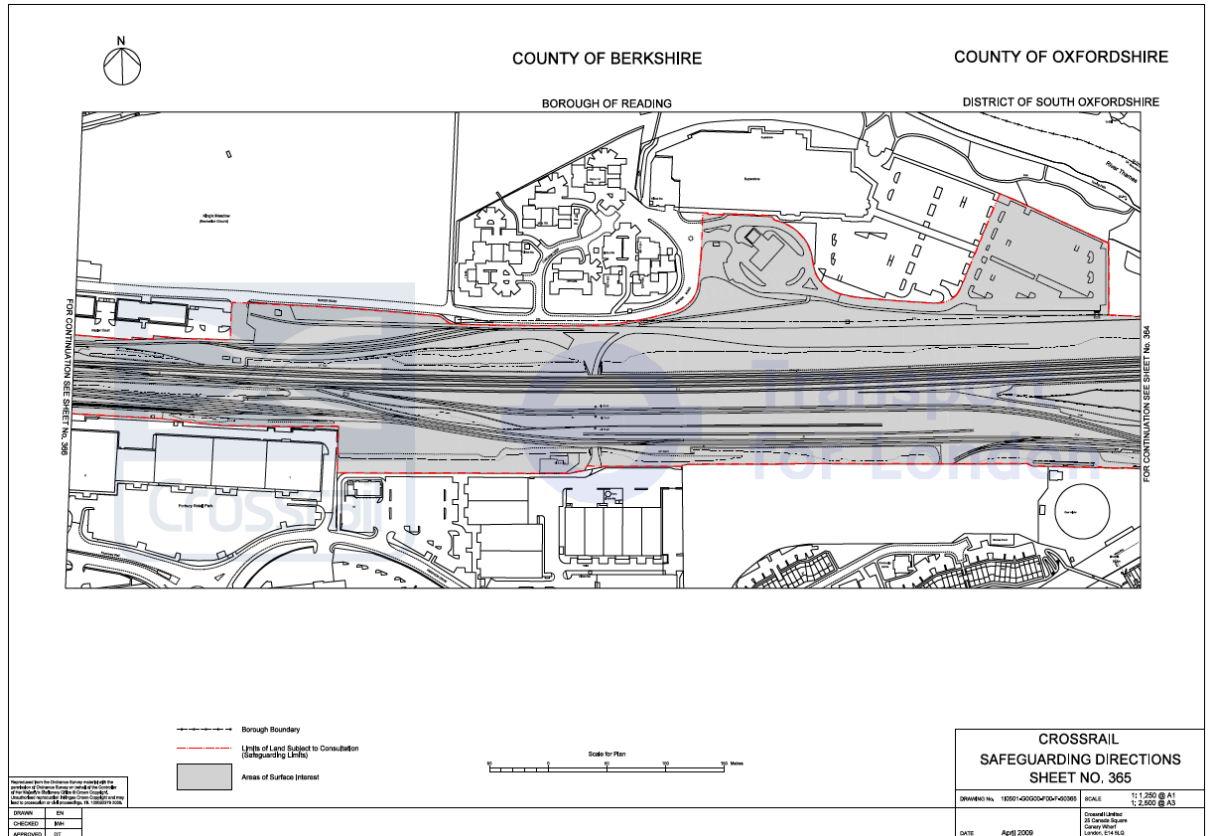


Figure 6.1 Crossrail Safeguarding Directions Volume 9, April 2009

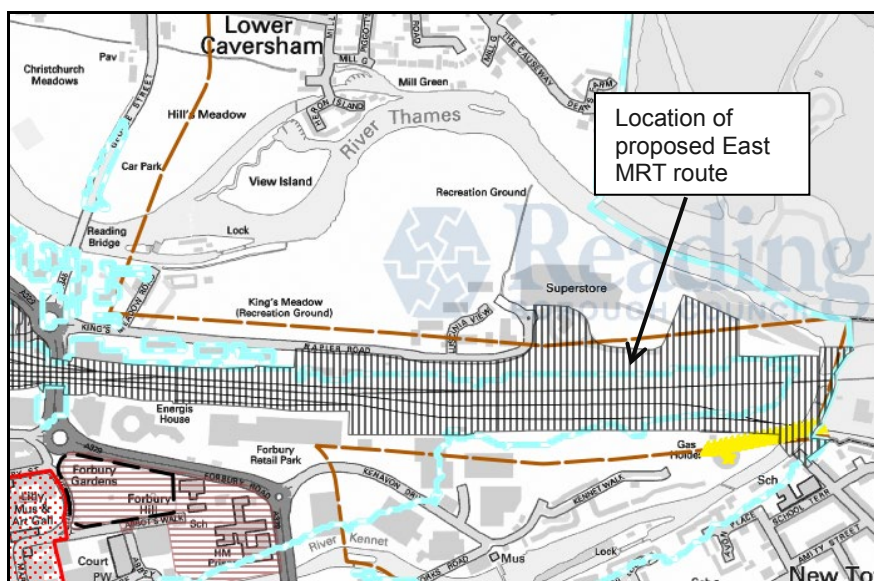


Figure 6.2 RBC Contextual Information Map Inset

Key

-  Boundary of Flood Zone 2 at November 2010
-  Area safeguarded for Crossrail extension (SDPD para 15.3.6)
-  Air Quality Management Area (related to Policy DM19)

- 6.3.3 The key Core Strategy policies which are relevant to the determination of this planning application are set out at Appendix C.

RBC Sites and Detailed Policies Document (October 2012)

- 6.3.4 RBC adopted the Sites and Detailed Policies Document in October 2012, with alterations subsequently made in January 2015. The document provides detailed policies and identifies the specific development sites and designations necessary to deliver the Core Strategy.
- 6.3.5 The key policies within the Sites and Detailed Policies document which are relevant to the determination of this planning application are set out at Appendix C.
- 6.3.6 Below is an extract from the RBC Sites and Detailed Policy Designations map which indicates that the site is identified as an Existing and Potential Green Link (Policy DM17), is located within an Area of Archaeological Potential (Policy CS33, SDPD para 9.1.15-9.1.20) and lies adjacent to a Major Landscape Feature (Policies CS37, SA17). A designated Cycle Route (Policy SA14) is located at the start of the proposed East MRT route.

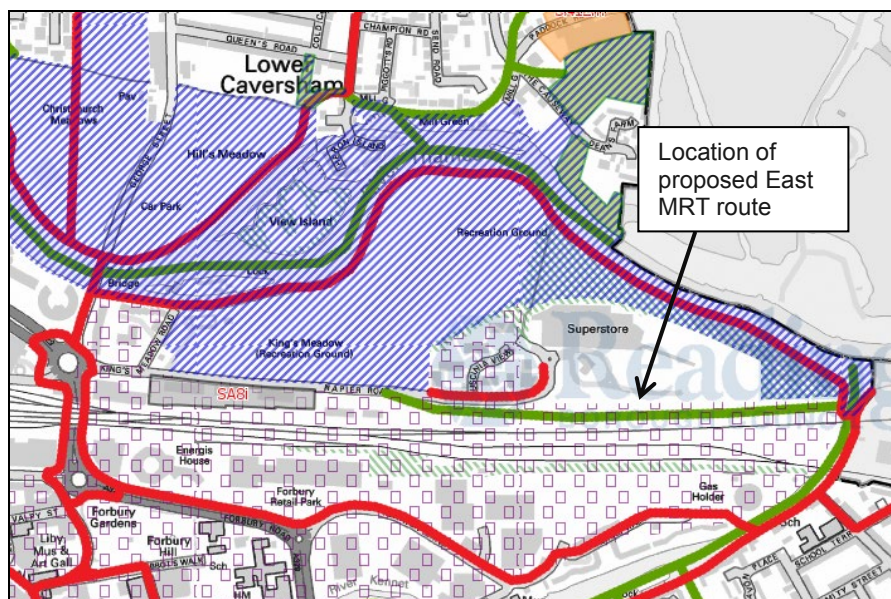


Figure 6.3 RBC Sites and Detailed Policies Map Inset

Key

-  Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Areas of Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat (Policies CS36, DM17)
-  Major Landscape Feature (Policies CS37, SA17)
-  Cycle Routes (Policy SA14)

Existing and Potential Green Link (Policy DM17)



Area of Archaeological Potential (Policy CS33, SDPD para 9.1.15-9.1.20)

Reading Central Area Action Plan (January 2009)

6.3.7 RBC adopted the Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) in January 2009. The role of the RCAAP is to establish a planning framework for the Reading Central Area. The below extract shows the proposed route is located within the Reading Central Area boundary.

6.3.8 The frontage of the River Thames, which lies adjacent and near to the proposed route, is designated within the RCAAP as an Important Area of Open Space (Policy RC14).

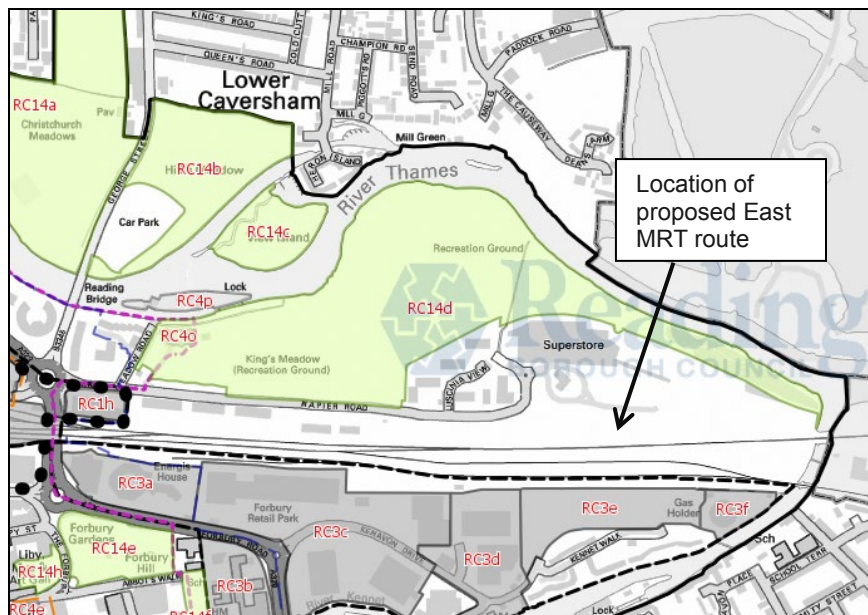


Figure 6.4 Reading Central Area Action Plan Map Inset

6.3.9 The proposed East MRT route subject of this application is designated within the RCAAP as a preferred route for the MRT corridor. The key AAP policies which are relevant to the determination of this planning application are set out at Appendix C.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Planning Obligations under S106 SPD

6.3.10 This SPD sets out clearly that site related environmental mitigation measures such as dealing with contamination issues, climate change mitigation, air pollution mitigation measures and tree planting will be secured through Section 106 agreements.

Employment, Skills and Training SPD

6.3.11 The Employment Skills and Training (EST) SPD focuses on securing skills improvement and employment opportunities through new development. Planning obligations secured through S106 will be used to assist local residents to receive training during the construction phase. In addition, during the construction phase, developers will be expected to make best efforts to employ local contractors, subcontractors, apprentices and trainees.

Sustainable Construction and Design SPD

- 6.3.12 This SPD provides practical advice on the forms of sustainable design and construction plus waste minimisation in order to assist in meeting sustainable policy requirements through policy CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design and CS2: Waste Minimisation of the adopted Core Strategy.

Plans and Strategies

RBC Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026

- 6.3.13 Reading Borough Council's Local Transport Plan (2011 – 2026) provides the following detail with regards to their Transport Vision for Connecting Reading:

“Transport in Reading will better connect people to the places that they want to go: easily, swiftly, safely, sustainably and in comfort. We will meet the challenges of a dynamic, low-carbon future to promote prosperity for Reading. Whichever way you choose to travel, by foot or bicycle, motorcycle, bus, rail, car or boat whether to work or education, to leisure or the services you need, our transport system will help you get there.”

- 6.3.14 The LTP provides a number of Area Action Plans (AAP's) for the different areas across the borough, with each of these supporting the implementation of MRT through 'Opportunities for Addressing Challenges'.

Eastern AAP includes:

- *“To continue to work with Wokingham Borough Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Bracknell Forest District Council to find cross-boundary solutions to transport challenges.*
- *To carry out targeted neighbourhood or area studies, working with Wokingham Borough Council to build on previous work to deliver multi-targeted benefits, including the improvement of public transport journey times and reliability and the management of development pressures. One focus would be on strategic radial routes into Reading and the potential provision of a mass rapid transit supporting a park and ride strategy.*
- *To work with the private sector and Wokingham Borough Council to innovate and secure delivery of integrated transport choices associated with new development proposed within Wokingham Borough.*
- *To work with Wokingham Borough Council to deliver an East Reading Transport Link and associated Park & Ride facilities”*

- 6.3.15 The LTP notes that: *“An MRT system must be designed to meet a set of standards above and beyond a quality local bus. The long-term vision incorporates a network that expands the public transport offer rather than replacing existing networks, and it will be branded as such. The MRT network extends beyond Reading to offer public transport and interchange options to the wider travel to work area. The Park and Ride objectives and policies support the MRT and interchange options, aiming to reduce private transport mileage and improve journey times and air quality on some of Reading's busiest roads.”*

Public Transport Strategy

- 6.3.16 Reading's Public Transport Strategy (PTS) lays out the Council's approach to public transport over the period 2011 – 2026 and identifies that future developments, such as Mass Rapid Transit, will provide more travel options to more people, improving accessibility of the of the public transport network.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan (May 2017)

- 6.3.17 The latest published Council IDP continues to identify the East Reading MRT as an infrastructure scheme which is central to delivering the Council's long term vision.

Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) (2015/16 – 2020/21)

- 6.3.18 The TVB LEP's SEP provides the following overarching vision for achieving the objectives contained within their Implementation Plan:

"By 2021, the vibrancy of our business community will be internationally envied. The ambition and creativity of our established businesses will be energised through strong, knowledge rich networks. Our workforce will be the lifeblood of our economy: young people will be inspired and older workers valued. Our infrastructure will match the scale of our ambition and potential. And people will choose Thames Valley Berkshire as the place to live and work."

- 6.3.19 TVB LEP's SEP contains four High Level Programmes, used to deliver the LEP's Implementation Plan. Within the Implementation Plan, a key objective of the SEP is to enhance urban connectivity; this is translated into one of the key themes within the Infrastructure Package.

- 6.3.20 The East Reading MRT scheme is contained within the TVB LEP Strategic Economic Plan (2015/16 – 2020/21). It forms part of the Infrastructure Package: Enhancing urban connectivity, and has been earmarked for funding through the Local Growth Fund.

6.4 Wokingham Borough Council Planning Policy Context

- 6.4.1 The site is partially located within WBC where the adopted development plan comprises:

- Core Strategy (adopted January 2010)
- Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted February 2014)

- 6.4.2 The Council are currently working on a new Local Plan Update (LPU) which, when adopted, will replace the current adopted development plan. The plan will set out how Wokingham will develop up to 2036. The Council undertook consultation on Issues and Options between August and September 2016. The new Local Plan is anticipated for adoption in 2019.

- 6.4.3 A number of supplementary planning documents are also relevant to the proposed development, comprising:

- WBC Borough Design Guide SPD (Adopted May 2012); and
- WBC Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (Adopted May 2010)

- 6.4.4 The Council also has a number of transport plans and strategies. Those relevant to the proposed development are:

- WBC Local Transport Plan 3 (2011 – 2026); and
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (June 2012, supporting the MDD Local Plan)

6.5 Wokingham Development Plan

Core Strategy (adopted January 2010)

- 6.5.1 WBC adopted its Core Strategy in January 2010 and it sets out the Council's vision for how the borough will develop up to 2026. The key Core Strategy policies which are relevant to the determination of this planning application are set out at Appendix D.

Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted February 2014)

- 6.5.1 WBC adopted its Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan in February 2014. The MDD supplements the Core Strategy and includes more detailed policies for development within the borough.
- 6.5.2 The key MDD Local Plan policies which are relevant to the determination of this planning application are set out at Appendix D.
- 6.5.3 Below is an extract from the WBC Policies Map showing the eastern section of the proposed East MRT route, where it meets the P&R. The proposed route is located partially within Major Development Location and Allocated Site and within an area of flood risk.
- 6.5.4 The Application Site within WBC is safeguarded land for strategic transport network including mass rapid transit along the A4/A329 corridors (policy CC08).

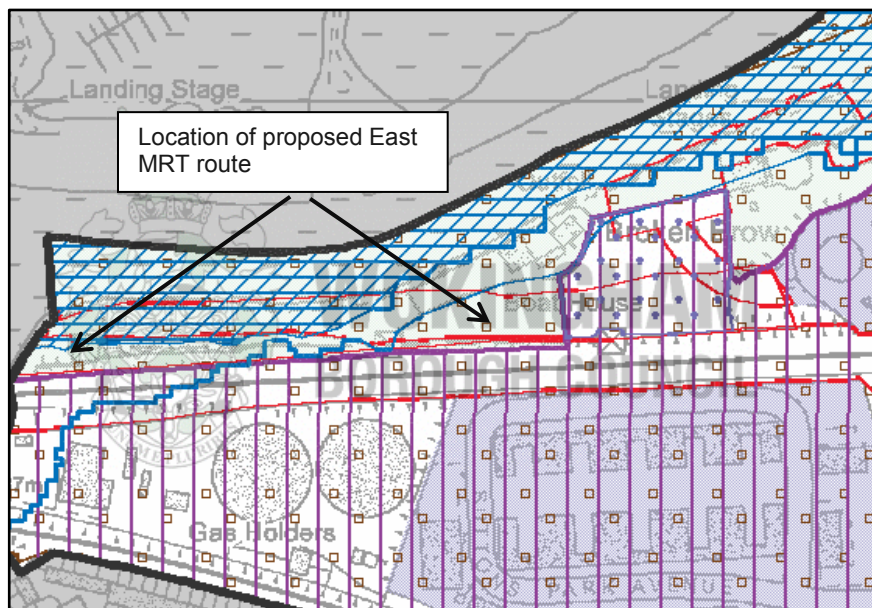
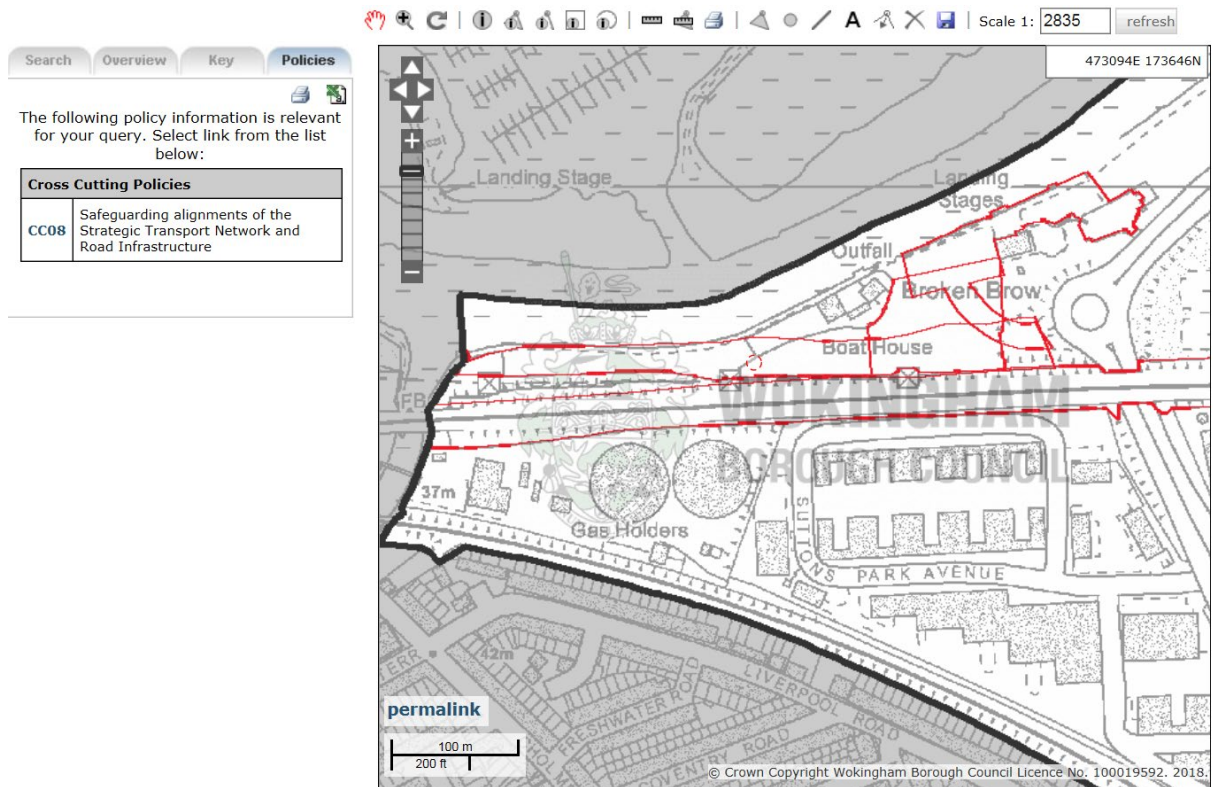


Figure 6.5 WBC Policies Map Inset

Key

	Major Development Locations
	Allocated Sites
	Core Employment Areas
	Countryside

-  Proposed Site for Employment / Commercial use
-  EA Flood Zone 2
-  EA Flood Zone 3
-  Areas with the strongest presumption against allowing sharp sand and gravel extraction (Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire, Nov 1995)



Key

-  Allocated Sites

Figure 6.6 WBC Policies Map Inset (Allocated Sites Only)

- 6.5.5 Land is also safeguarded for Crossrail according to Crossrail Safeguarding Directions Volume 9, April 2009.

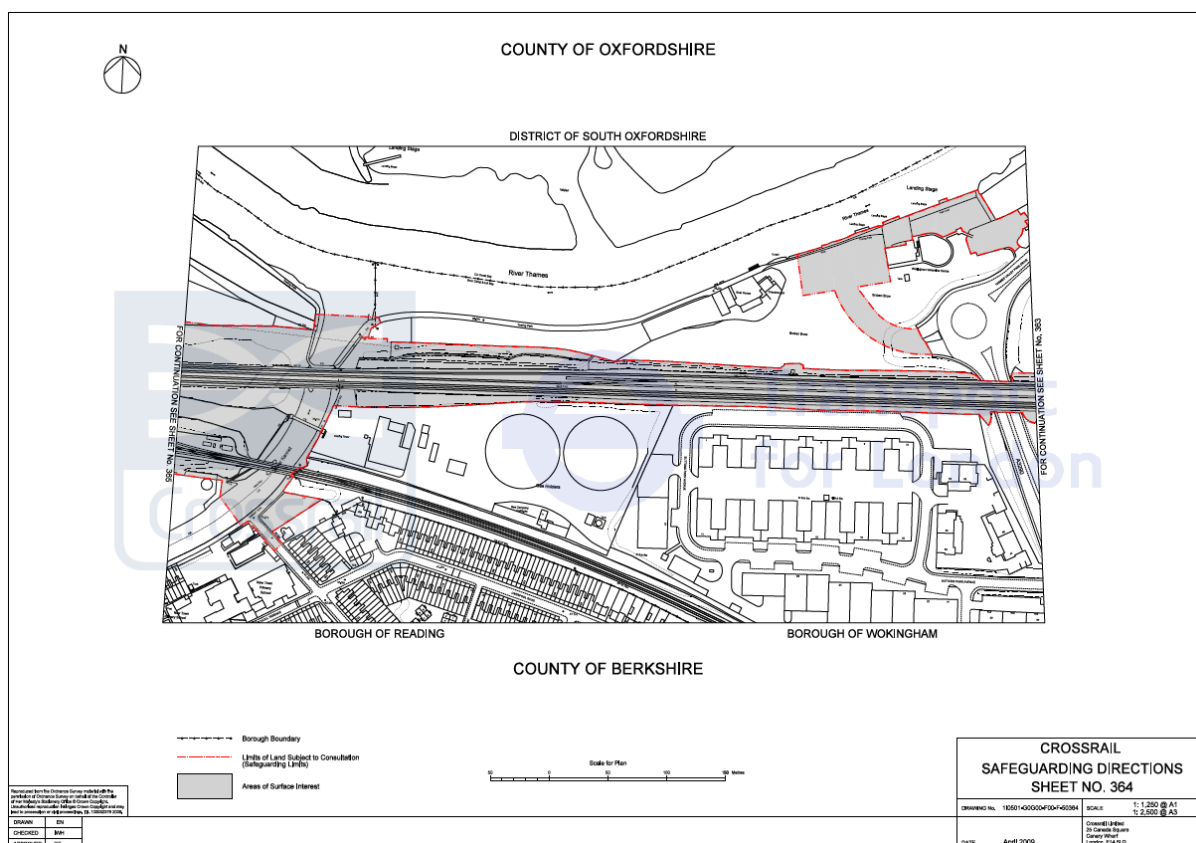


Figure 6.7 Crossrail Safeguarding Directions Volume 9, April 2009

Plans and Strategies

WBC Local Transport Plan

6.5.6 Wokingham's third Local Transport Plan (LTP) provides details of how the Council intends to improve transport and accessibility over the period 2011-2026.

6.5.7 Within the LTP, Policy PT8 Park & Ride states that:

"The council will promote the use of Park & Ride services and will support the future introduction of new sites in the borough where feasible."

6.5.8 The document specifically identifies a number of supported schemes including:

- *"Park & Ride located in Thames Valley Park to complement the high quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 or A329 corridors into central Reading."*

6.5.9 Policy SP1: Support for Major Infrastructure states that:

"The Council will actively support development of suitable major transport projects that are necessary to support the future growth and success of the Borough."

6.5.10 The document supports the policies within the Core Strategy and the projects detailed within those policies, including:

- *“High quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors”*

6.6 National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and outlines how these are expected to be applied to both plan-making and decision-making. The NPPF was published on 27 March 2012 and revised in July 2018. The NPPF consolidates the guidance set out in precursor Planning Policy Statements, Planning Policy Guidance notes and a number of related circulars into a single document. The NPPF forms the statutory national planning policy guidance against which applications for new development must be assessed and is therefore an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 6.6.2 The key paragraphs from the NPPF relevant to the determination of this application are listed below at Appendix E.

6.7 National Planning Practice Guidance

- 6.7.1 On 6 March 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched the national planning practice guidance (NPPG) web-based resource. This resource replaced a number of previous planning practice guidance documents and now provides practical planning advice to support the overarching principles set out in the NPPF and to inform development proposals. The current development proposals are being progressed in the context of relevant guidance set out in the NPPG.

7 Planning Assessment

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 This section of the Planning Statement sets out an assessment of the application proposals against the main planning policy considerations and any other material considerations which are relevant to the determination of this application.
- 7.1.2 As this proposal straddles the two local authority areas of RBC and WBC, we have provided an independent assessment for each local authority area, where relevant, which includes reference to the NPPF where required. This is provided for clarity and to assist in the decision making process. There will inevitably be crossover and some repetition between each section; however, the conclusion section at the end of the Planning Statement provides a cohesive summary of the proposed development as a whole.
- 7.1.3 The main considerations are:
- Principle of development
 - Sustainable development
 - Economic impacts
 - Transport impacts
 - Design and visual appearance
 - Impact on health and communities
 - Climate change and flood risk
 - Impact on the natural environment
 - Impact on the historic environment.

7.2 Principle of Development

RBC

- 7.2.1 The application site is located within the Settlement Boundary as identified on the proposals map and through RBC Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) Policy SA11. Development proposals within the boundary will be considered acceptable, subject to their accordance with other development plan policies.
- 7.2.2 The RBC Core Strategy sets out a spatial strategy for the Borough and identifies opportunity areas for growth. Paragraph 3.14 notes that development within these areas is dependent upon critical transport infrastructure which includes, *inter alia*, implementation of MRT works.
- 7.2.3 Core Strategy Policy CS20 requires proposed development to contribute appropriately to the provision of a balanced transport network, as outlined in the Reading Transport Strategy. This includes the implementation of core transport infrastructure projects including those that encourage the use of alternative transport to private cars. This proposal provides infrastructure to support walking, cycling and the use of public transport as a more attractive option and contributes to the improved accessibility of Reading and Wokingham Boroughs in accordance with the principles of CS20.

- 7.2.4 Core Strategy Policy CS21 gives priority to the implementation of the transport projects identified in the LTP including MRT and associated transport improvements. To this end the policy confirms that land needed for the implementation of such projects will be safeguarded from development, to enable their future provision.
- 7.2.5 The Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) also refers to transport improvements which are set out in the LTP and specifically identifies the MRT as being central to the Council's Transport Strategy and Core Strategy. Whilst the RCAAP does not specifically safeguard a route for the East MRT, the document does identify the preferred route at Figure 5.2 of the RCAAP. The proposed East MRT route subject of this planning application accords with the Council's preferred route identified within the RCAAP.
- 7.2.6 The application site is allocated within RBC's Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) as an 'Area Safeguarded for Crossrail'. This is as a result of a Safeguarding Direction which was issued on 29 April 2009, identifying land which should be safeguarded for a potential extension of the Crossrail scheme from Maidenhead to Reading. Effectively this means that Crossrail Limited should be consulted on all planning applications that fall within the identified land. However, the proposed development would not preclude future improvements to the rail line to facilitate Crossrail development within this location.
- 7.2.7 Given the above, it is clear that this proposal is not only supported in principle by RBC's development plan, but its implementation is at the heart of the Council's spatial strategy and transport strategy. Although a proportion of the of the site is allocated within the RCAAP as an 'Important Area of Open Space', the works proposed here extend to footpath realignment and access improvements only and so will contribute to the purpose of the open space rather than jeopardise the use and enjoyment of the open space.

WBC

- 7.2.8 Policy CP6 of the WBC Core Strategy supports schemes that, inter alia, provide for sustainable forms of transport, minimise travel distances and improve existing infrastructure.
- 7.2.9 Policy CP10 of the Core Strategy sets out specific proposed improvements to the Strategic Transport Network, including:
- High quality express bus services or mass rapid transit along the A4 and A329 corridors;
 - High quality express bus services or mass rapid transit between Reading and Woodley town centres
 - Improvements to the quality and frequency of public transport services along any part of the network
 - Improvements to increase the use of bicycles, including cycle paths
 - Enhancements to footpath and cycle networks to improve access to services and facilities.
- 7.2.10 The strategic transport improvements in CP10 are further protected and safeguarded by Policy CC08 and Appendix 3 of the MDD Local Plan. Appendix 3 itself refers to safeguard areas identified for improvements to the strategic transport network including mass rapid transit along the A4/A329 corridors, improvements to public transport services and improvements to footpath and cycle networks
- 7.2.11 The proposed development provides a direct and sustainable route for buses, cyclists and pedestrians and therefore meets the requirements of Policy CP6 and CP10. The proposed East Reading MRT is specifically addressed within Policies CP10 and CC08.

7.3 Sustainable Development

- 7.3.1 The NPPF adopts a clear pro-growth stance and introduces a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It identifies that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local place the country needs.
- 7.3.2 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF establishes the three dimensions to sustainable development, an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective. This proposal contributes to all three dimensions through the provision of infrastructure (economic objective), through the improvement of accessibility (social objective) and by assisting in the reduction of pollution and mitigation of climate change impacts through the modal shift from car to public transport, cycling or walking (environmental objective).
- 7.3.3 Given the purpose and the likely benefits as a result of this proposal it is clear that this development is an example of sustainable development in accordance with RBC Core Strategy Policy CS1, RBC SDPD Policy SD1, WBC Core Strategy Policy CP1, WBC MDD Local Plan Policy CC01 and the golden thread for sustainable development which runs through the NPPF.

7.4 Economic Impacts

- 7.4.1 RBC Core Strategy Policy CS26 refers to Reading as a Regional Centre and places it at the top of Borough's hierarchy of centres. The policy requires that the vitality and viability of these centres is maintained and enhanced through a number of measures including widening the range of uses, environmental enhancements and improvements to access.
- 7.4.2 The 'Spatial Vision for Wokingham Borough' outlined within the WBC Core Strategy states that, *"By 2026, this Core Strategy will deliver the development necessary to sustain the area's economic growth and ensure the needs of all groups including children, the young, the elderly and the vulnerable have been met. This includes the borough fulfilling its role within the wider sub-regional and regional economies."* Accordingly, WBC Core Strategy Policy CC09 seeks to focus development at major locations within the borough, appropriate to its level of services, facilities and accessibility.
- 7.4.3 This proposal supports and improves the accessibility of Reading and Wokingham through the provision of a more efficient and reliable public transport service, walking and cycling facilities.
- 7.4.4 This proposal comprises an infrastructure scheme which will proactively drive and support economic development within Reading and Wokingham, maximising the use of public transport, walking and cycling in accordance with the NPPF.
- 7.4.5 The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does all it can to support sustainable economic growth and that planning should encourage and not impede such growth. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF places great weight on the need to support economic growth and so this great weight should be applied to the economic growth and benefits that will result through the delivery of this proposal.
- 7.4.6 Delivery of significant capacity and reliability enhancements to support sustainable travel to/from eastern and central areas of Reading will inevitably support future growth, through modal shift and increasing capacity in the transport network. This improved capacity will assist in unlocking housing development already committed in Reading and Wokingham boroughs, improve accessibility and will act as a catalyst for improving the vibrancy of the town centre and the reliability of the network will encourage employers to locate here.
- 7.4.7 This is further reinforced in the Socio-Economics assessment undertaken as part of this application (chapter 7 of the ES), which concludes that the proposed scheme will enable high value employment opportunities and new housing that is required for a study area characterised

by above average population growth and high levels of economic activity, skills and qualifications.

- 7.4.8 Given the requirements of paragraph 81 of the NPPF, for LPA's to plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and set out a clear economic vision and strategy which encourages sustainable economic growth. The above economic benefits should be given great weight in the planning balance and in accordance with paragraph 80 of the Framework.

7.5 Transport and Access

- 7.5.1 Section 7.2 sets out how the principle of the proposed development is acceptable and in accordance with policies CS20 and CS21 of the RBC Core Strategy, and policies CP10 and CC08 of the WBC Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan, given that the purpose of the scheme is to implement measures to make sustainable alternatives to the use of private cars and the land has been specifically safeguarded for mass rapid transit.
- 7.5.2 As required by RBC Core Strategy Policy CS22 and the principles of WBC Core Strategy Policy CP6, this planning application is supported by a Transport Statement (TS), demonstrating that a full assessment of the scheme has been undertaken. The assessment concludes that the proposed East MRT scheme would provide a number of substantial benefits to sustainable travel between central and east Reading and encourage sustainable economic growth by promoting walking, cycling and public transport usage and reducing the reliance on the private car. Such benefits are also in line with the requirements of RBC Core Strategy Policy CS23 and WBC Core Strategy Policy CP6 which seek a commitment from development to implement measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities.
- 7.5.3 Policy DM12 of the RBC SDPD provides a list of requirements for determining planning proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network. It states that development will be permitted where:
- *Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;*
 - *The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;*
 - *The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;*
 - *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;*
- 7.5.4 The proposed East MRT scheme would have a material improvement on the network and would improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists through the provision of a designated cycle and walking route alongside the link road. Furthermore, the proposal will not impede the future delivery of other improvement schemes identified in RBC SDPD Policy SA13 or WBC MDD Local Plan Policy CC08.
- 7.5.5 Paragraph 148 of the NPPF requires that encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion and this is one of the main aims of this proposal.
- 7.5.6 Furthermore, the proposal responds positively to the provisions of Paragraph 110 of the NPPF which states that developments should be located and designed where practical to:
- *give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;*

- *create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians.....;*
- *incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles; and*
- *consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.*

7.5.7 In summary, there will be significant transport and accessibility improvements in both Reading and Wokingham as a result of this proposal which is entirely in accordance with the transport related policies of the development plan for both RBC and WBC.

7.6 Design and Visual Appearance

7.6.1 This application is supported by a Design and Access Statement (DAS) which sets out in detail the evolution of the project and specific details relating to design. The proposed East Reading MRT scheme is a functional infrastructure project which is located between the Grade II listed Great Western Railway Bridge and attached Accommodation Bridge and the River Thames. Therefore, sensitive design has been key to the evolution of this project in order to respect the amenity of the landscape environment and the heritage value of the listed bridge, which is considered to be of medium architectural and historic interest but of no archaeological or artistic interest

7.6.2 Policy CS7 of the RBC Core Strategy requires that all development is of a high design quality and that it maintains and enhances the area within which it is located. Specifically, and of relevance to this proposal, Policy CS7 refers to:

- Layout;
- Landscape;
- Height and massing; and,
- Architectural detail and materials.

7.6.3 Similarly, Policy CS3 of the WBC Core Strategy sets out a number of principles for new development to achieve high quality design. This includes the need for the proposals to be of an appropriate scale, activity, mass, layout, built form, height to the site and surrounding area.

7.6.4 The proposal comprises a highway viaduct structure and bridge as the East MRT route crosses the River Kennet. The proposed bridge is a steel-concrete composite construction in order to create a structure which is both economic yet lightweight and slender. The proposed structure responds to the presence of the adjacent listed bridge and a number of other locational and operational requirements including, the amenity value of the setting, the need to maintain the functional floodplain and a focus on a high quality, low maintenance design.

7.6.5 The proposal is also supported by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (chapter 12 of the ES). This concludes that the visual effects of the proposed route will be relatively limited due to the amount of screening provided by the existing and proposed vegetation and the limited viewpoints, with moderate effects only occurring in the immediate vicinity of the site. Upon completion of the development and once the landscaping has matured, the proposed development would have further reduced impacts on the quality of the majority of available views within the vicinity, including those of the users of the Thames Path.

7.6.6 In accordance with RBC Core Strategy Policy CS7 and WBC Core Strategy Policy CS3, the proposed design and landscaping scheme seeks to achieve development that is of a high design quality, of an appropriate scale and form, which will both maintain and enhance (through landscaping) the quality of the environment within which it is located.

- 7.6.7 This scheme responds positively to the local context, including the natural and built environment and both protects and enhances the value of the public realm and amenity space along the banks of the River Thames. The proposal seeks to create a safe and accessible environment for pedestrians and cyclists and through the appropriate use of materials, landscaping and lighting will assist in reducing the potential for anti-social behaviour, crime and fear of crime along the route.
- 7.6.8 Paragraph 124 of the NPPF acknowledges the importance of high quality and inclusive design as this is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 127 also requires development to function well for the lifetime of the development. The proposed steel and concrete bridge structure is both lightweight and appropriate in design terms and provides a low maintenance and economic solution that will have longevity and will not deteriorate quickly.
- 7.6.9 The proposed East MRT scheme embodies the requirements of NPPF paragraph 91 which requires proposals to promote social interaction which allows for easy pedestrian and cycle connections between neighbourhoods. This therefore promotes connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment. This proposal will enable people to move more freely between Reading and Wokingham and improves connections to the open space along the River Thames. The applicant has worked closely with those effected by this proposal through public consultation and pre-application engagement to enable the evolution of this scheme and this is in accordance with best practice set out at paragraph 124 of the NPPF.
- 7.6.10 In conclusion, paragraph 131 of the NPPF states clearly that:
- 'In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.'*
- 7.6.11 As set out above, the proposed development has been designed to effectively mitigate any harm or concern in respect of its visual impact and the impact on the adjacent listed bridge structure; and therefore the proposed East MRT route is entirely compatible within this location. We are satisfied that the significant benefits of this proposal in terms of economic, social and environmental contributions far outweigh any minor or residual concerns in respect of incompatibility of the proposed development within this location. This is in accordance with the spirit of paragraph 65 of the NPPF.

7.7 Healthy and Safe Communities

- 7.7.1 Paragraph 117 notes that planning policies and decisions should involve improvements in the quality of people's lives through, inter alia, making it easier for jobs to be created and improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure. The primary purpose of this proposal is to improve the way in which people in Reading and Wokingham can travel, improving the accessibility of the area and the desirability of employers to locate jobs here.
- 7.7.2 The purpose of the proposed development is to maximise opportunities for travel between Reading and Wokingham Borough's to be more sustainable and to reduce reliance on car travel. This will support the expected growth within the wider area and reduce transport barriers to employment.
- 7.7.3 RBC Core Strategy Policy CS3 focuses on social inclusion and diversity and requires major developments to demonstrate measures to enhance social inclusion in terms of access to housing, employment and community services and facilities. Similarly, WBC Core Strategy Policy CP2 requires that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long term needs. This proposal aims to do exactly that by enabling pedestrians and cyclists to travel in the area more safely and by improving the attraction of public transport. The proposal has been subject of public consultation and engagement which is also central to the requirements of RBC Policy CS3 and WBC Policy CP2.

- 7.7.4 In terms of safeguarding amenity, the primary consideration in respect of this proposal relates to the amenity value of the river corridor which is an important area of open space. This proposal aims to improve access for all to and from this area and in particular encourage cycling and walking. Therefore, the long-term amenity value of this location will be secured.
- 7.7.5 Whilst there will be some disruption during construction, this can be managed through appropriate conditions and once complete, the East MRT and associated activity will be experienced in context with the existing rail activity. Therefore, there will be no loss to the amenity value of the area.
- 7.7.6 The nearest residential development is at Luscinia View. The proposed East MRT route does not directly pass the apartment blocks at Luscinia View. Furthermore, whilst the proposed East MRT brings life to this otherwise underused strip of land, this could increase the risk of the space being used for anti-social behaviour. In response to this concern the proposed scheme has been designed to address such concerns and will include appropriate use of materials, signage and lighting. Consequently, the proposed East MRT will not cause any detriment to the amenity of the nearest residents or recreational visitors to the area in accordance with the requirements of RBC SDPD Policy DM4, WBC Core Strategy Policy CP3 and MDD Local Plan Policy CC06.

7.8 Climate Change and Flood Risk

- 7.8.1 The application site is located adjacent to the River Thames and parts of the site are at risk of flooding. In accordance with RBC Core Strategy Policy CS35 and WBC MDD Local Plan Policy CC09, this application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Sustainability Statement to demonstrate in detail how the proposal addresses matters of climate change and flood risk and constitutes sustainable development.
- 7.8.2 Paragraph 148 of the NPPF states that, to support the move to a low carbon future, local planning authorities should, *inter alia*:
- plan for new development in locations and ways which reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- 7.8.3 This proposal seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly by facilitating a modal shift from car travel to public transport and provides improved cycling and pedestrian facilities. As such, the local planning authority should give great weight to the emission reduction benefits within the planning balance that will result from this proposal.

Flooding and Drainage

- 7.8.4 The EA Flood Zone map indicates that the majority of the land on the west side of the confluence of the River Kennet (within RBC), lies within Flood Zone 2 'Medium Probability', with a narrow corridor of Flood Zone 3 'High Probability' running partly along the southern side of the Tesco site and south of the proposed route. On the east side of Kennetmouth (within WBC), the route lies in Flood Zone 3 'High Probability', until it reaches the site of the proposed TVP P&R which is classed as Flood Zone 1 'Low Probability'.
- 7.8.5 RBC Core Strategy Policy 35 states that planning permission will not be permitted for development in an area identified as being at high risk of flooding, where development would reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding.
- 7.8.6 WBC MDD Local Plan Policy CC09 states that all sources of flood risk must be taken into account in new development proposals in order to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.

- 7.8.7 The supporting FRA confirms that flood risk will be appropriately mitigated through measures including:
- The proposed bridge soffit levels are designed so they are a suitable freeboard above the reference 1 in 100 annual probability plus climate change flood level, in accordance with EA and Reading Borough Council (RBC) requirements;
 - A flood compensation scheme to mitigate impacts on fluvial floodplain storage capacity;
 - Incorporation of surface water drainage arrangements, including on-site attenuation and controlled discharge, to achieve no detrimental impact on surface water and no increase in flood risk elsewhere.
- 7.8.8 Paragraph 155 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The FRA demonstrates that, through incorporation of the above appropriate mitigation, the development is safe, there will be no increased flood risk elsewhere and the scheme does not detrimentally affect third parties, in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF.
- 7.8.9 RBC Core Strategy Policy CS1 and RBC SDPD Policy DM1, as well as WBC MDD Local Plan Policy CC10, require developments to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and techniques as part of the layout of a development as appropriate and as advised by the Lead Local Flood Authorities, in order to reduce run-off where possible and to ensure it is no greater than the original conditions of the site.
- 7.8.10 The proposal includes a surface water drainage strategy so that the development is capable of restricting run-off to ensure that there will be no increase in surface water flood risk as a result of this proposal, in accordance with the above policies.

7.9 The Natural Environment

- 7.9.1 A full ES has been produced in support of this application which details the environmental impacts of the proposed scheme alone and in combination with other committed development including the TVP P&R. The ES concludes that the overall potential impacts of the proposed development are not significant.

Air Quality

- 7.9.2 One of the key purposes and benefits of this proposal is to improve air quality by improving the attraction of public transport and reducing the amount of car vehicle journeys carried out between Reading and Wokingham. RBC Sites and Detailed Policies policy DM19 requires development to have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.
- 7.9.3 RBC Core Strategy Policy CS34 states that: *'Development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment through air, land, noise or light pollution; where it would preserve or ideally enhance ground and surface water quality; and where existing water resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure are adequate to support the proposed development.'*
- 7.9.4 WBC Core Strategy Policy CP1 also states that new developments should avoid areas where pollution may impact upon the amenity of future occupiers.
- 7.9.5 This proposal will result in improvements to forecast air quality and will not result in any unnecessary levels of noise or light pollution. As set out above, surface water will be managed to prevent a reduction in surface water quality.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 7.9.6 RBC Core Strategy CS36 states that development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site into their schemes. This is also echoed at paragraph 170 of the NPPF which sets out that planning should minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity.
- 7.9.7 WBC Core Strategy Policy CP7 states that development should not harm designated sites, habitats or species of principal importance unless there is an overriding need for the development and appropriate mitigation can be provided.
- 7.9.8 As set out within the ecology chapter of the ES, habitats within the East MRT site and wider area are generally of low intrinsic ecological value. Although the construction phase of the proposed development will result in minor (local) adverse effects on a small number of important ecological features, once operational, no significant effects are anticipated as a result of the development. Taking into account ecological enhancement measures (within The Coal, Kennetmouth & Kings Meadow East LWS and the wider Kings Meadow and Hills Meadow), the proposed development provides the opportunity to deliver measurable net gain in biodiversity. Accordingly, the proposed development meets the objectives of RBC Core Strategy Policy CS36 and WBC Core Strategy Policy CP7.

Green Infrastructure

- 7.9.9 According to RBC Core Strategy Policy CS8, Reading's waterspaces will be protected, so that they can continue to contribute to local and regional biodiversity and ecology, local character and visual amenity, and the provision of accessible leisure and recreational opportunities. Where development in the vicinity of waterways is acceptable, it will provide:
- Appropriate, attractive uses and buildings that enhance the relationship of buildings, spaces and routes and creates a high quality public realm;
 - Positive contributions to the distinct character, appearance, landscape and amenity of the waterways;
 - A strengthened role for waterways as important landscape features, wildlife corridors and recreation opportunities;
 - Good, level access to the waterways for all those who want to use them; and
 - Improved quality of waterway environment through protecting habitats and ensuring that habitat creation is balanced with access and urban uses.
- 7.9.10 The proposed route is located along a Green link, which form part of the boroughs Green Network (RBC SDPD Policy DM17). In accordance with Policy DM17, this Green Link shall be maintained, protected and enhanced as a result of this proposal.

7.10 The Historic Environment

Archaeology

- 7.10.1 RBC Core Strategy Policy CS33 states that historic features and areas of historic importance, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced.
- 7.10.2 WBC MDD Local Plan Policy TB25 states that, where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential, appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ.

- 7.10.3 A desk-based assessment has been undertaken and finds no evidence of any buried archaeological remains of interest being located within the Application Site. Furthermore, archaeological trial trenching has been undertaken within the Application Site in the past (HER ERM1139), at the eastern end of the Application Site, which found only evidence of Post-Medieval finds, with no remains of archaeological significance discovered.
- 7.10.4 As explained within the ES, with the implementation of an appropriate mitigation strategy the residual effects of the proposed East MRT development to these assets would in no instance be more than negligible to minor adverse, and no significant effects would result from the proposed East MRT development. The effect of the Combined Site, with the permitted TVP P&R development was also considered, and with archaeological mitigation the Combined Site would not result in a higher significance of effect than the proposed East MRT development.

Heritage Assets

- 7.10.5 RBC Core Strategy Policy CS33 states that historic features and areas of historic importance, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. WBC MDD Local Plan Policy TB24 states that development should conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets and their settings
- 7.10.6 The proposed development is located in close proximity to the Grade II listed railway bridge and attached accommodation bridge. Accordingly, a sensitive and considered design approach has been adopted, as explained above, to respect the setting of this heritage asset.
- 7.10.7 On this basis, as explained within the ES, the proposed development would not result in any significant effects to designated heritage assets, such as listed buildings, with only a minor adverse significance of effect identified to the listed Railway Bridge and Accommodation Bridge, and no other effects above negligible.

7.11 Conclusion on Policy Compliance

- 7.11.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that development control decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Further, Paragraph 11 of the NPPF explains the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the requirement to approve development that accords with the development plan without delay.
- 7.11.2 As set out above, the proposed development is fully in accordance with the development plans of both RBC and WBC in their entirety, such that planning permission should be approved without delay in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

8 Planning Conditions and Obligations

8.1 Planning Policy

8.1.1 RBC's approach towards seeking planning obligations is set out within the Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (2015) and Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (2015), together with overarching guidance contained within the Core Strategy (2008) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012).

8.1.2 RBC Core Strategy Policy CS9 states that:

"Proposals for development will not be permitted unless the local planning authority is satisfied that 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 or re-provided at the appropriate time, in order to ensure that the development is both sustainable and contributes to the proper planning of an area in accordance with relevant planning policies."

8.1.3 WBC's approach towards seeking planning obligations is set out within the Core Strategy (2010) and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), together with the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (2015).

8.1.4 WBC Core Strategy Policy CP4 states that:

"Planning permission will not be granted unless appropriate arrangements are made for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services, community and other facilities required for the development taking account of the cumulative impact of schemes are agreed."

Arrangements for provision or improvement to the required standard will be secured by planning obligations or condition if appropriate."

8.2 Planning Conditions and Section 106 Heads of Terms

8.2.1 The proposed development will make appropriate arrangements for infrastructure, services and other facilities via planning conditions and planning obligations as required, in accordance with the provisions of RBC Core Strategy Policy CS9 and WBC Policy CP4 and relevant policy guidance, and further to pre-application discussions.

8.2.2 The necessary planning conditions and obligations for the East MRT scheme will take into account the likely effects of the proposed development during construction and operation (as assessed within the EIA and set out in the ES) as well as the delivery of the TVP P&R development.

8.2.3 It is proposed that the necessary provision of infrastructure, services and other facilities is secured via planning condition where possible; however, if required, planning obligations could be entered into, as deemed necessary, in respect of:

- Scheme delivery and phasing;
- Local employment and training provision;
- Open space, green infrastructure and biodiversity;
- Public realm and environmental enhancements;
- Leisure and culture; and

- Flood mitigation and protection.

8.2.4 The applicant is willing to enter into negotiations with RBC and WBC in order to agree the planning conditions and obligations required as part of the proposed development. Further details required to support a Section 106 agreement can be provided upon request.

8.3 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

8.3.1 RBC adopted its CIL Charging Schedule in January 2015 and therefore all new developments consented on or after 1st April 2015 are eligible to pay the RBC CIL. However, the proposed development is classified within 'All other chargeable developments' in the CIL Charging Schedule and is therefore not liable to pay the RBC CIL.

8.3.2 WBC adopted its CIL Charging Schedule in February 2015 and therefore all new developments consented on or after 6th April 2015 are eligible to pay the WBC CIL. The proposed development is classified within 'All other development types' in the CIL Charging Schedule and is therefore not liable to pay the WBC CIL.

8.3.3 Notwithstanding the above, the planning application is accompanied by relevant CIL forms in accordance with validation requirements.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1.1 The proposed East MRT scheme is key to the delivery of future growth within Reading and Wokingham and its delivery is fundamental to addressing future predicted capacity issues on the A4 corridor. The eastern corridor has reached its capacity during the daytime and limited further growth can be accommodated. If the Council was to adopt an “do nothing” approach, then this would seriously restrict economic growth within the area plus increase the risk of businesses relocating outside of the Thames Valley or possibly elsewhere in Europe.
- 9.1.2 We have set out above in Section 3 the clear benefits of the proposed East MRT which include, improved connectivity, reduced journey times and improved reliability for public transport services, improved pedestrian and cycling facilities, and reduced reliance on the private car to therefore provide the ability to ease future forecast congestion, improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gases. There are also substantial wider, spin off benefits that are likely to occur as a result of this proposal including; the unlocking of already committed housing development in Reading which is dependent upon improvements to the A4 public transport corridor, improving accessibility to stimulate a vibrant town centre and act as a catalyst to attract new development and businesses to the Thames Valley.
- 9.1.3 This project is being promoted by RBC, working with WBC and Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP). The public-sector led project has been allocated funding by TVB LEP from the Local Growth Fund and so should planning permission be granted, there is a realistic prospect of this scheme being delivered.
- 9.1.4 We have described the site locality and the details of the proposed scheme and included detailed assessment of the likely impacts as a result of this scheme. This extends to an Environmental Statement which concludes that there will be no significant effects resulting from the proposed development.
- 9.1.5 We have demonstrated how the proposal accords with the development plan and that there are no unsurmountable technical constraints that cannot be overcome to achieve the safe and successful delivery of the proposed scheme.
- 9.1.6 We have demonstrated how the design of the proposed development has responded to feedback from consultation and most notably how we have sought to address the concerns raised by WBC in refusing the 2017 application.
- 9.1.7 We have also explained how this development constitutes sustainable development and how it is exactly the type of development that is advocated by the NPPF, particularly in terms of supporting economic growth, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting a shift to sustainable and low carbon transport.
- 9.1.8 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Accordingly, we conclude that the application should be supported and approved without delay.

Appendix A Key Planning Applications in Surrounding Area in RBC

Reference	Location	Description of Development	Decision Date
162166	Former Cooper BMW, Kings Meadow Road, Reading RG1 8BN	Erection of a part 12 storey, part 23 storey building comprising 315 apartments. Demolition of existing multi-storey car park.	Application permitted 23/11/2017
170509	Kenavon Drive, Reading	Demolition of the two existing retail (Homebase and Toys R Us) structures and the erection of new buildings ranging between 2 and 11 storeys in height, providing 765 (18 x studio, 302x1, 409x2 and 36x3- bed) residential units (Class C3), 5 commercial units (3x flexible Class A1-5, B1 or D1-2 uses, 1x flexible Class A1-A5 use, 1x flexible Class A3 or A4 use), various works to the public realm, including a new riverside square, landscaping, accesses, parking and associated works.	Recommendation to grant subject to S106 10/01/2018
162087	Kings Point 120 Kings Road Reading RG1 3DA	Demolition of existing building and the erection of a part seven, part nine, part eleven, part twelve and part seventeen storey building comprising 103 residential units and 351.5 sqm GIA of commercial (A1/A3) floor space at ground and mezzanine floor level together with parking and associated landscaping.	Application permitted 09/02/2017
180909	Clarendon House 59-75 Queens Road Reading Berkshire RG1 4BG	One storey roof extension, part six, part ten storey side/rear extension and mews houses comprising 4,108 sqm (GEA) of new development, providing 46 residential units together with associated services enclosures, parking and landscaping.	Application received 31/05/2018
180683	Land Adjacent 300 Kings Road Reading RG1 4HP	Construction of a part five part three storey building of 14 residential apartments (C3) and associated under croft car parking.	Application received 23/04/2018
180358	Bristol & West Arcade Market Place Reading RG1 1JL	Demolition of vacant former Bristol & West Arcade (173 – 175 Friar Street) and erection of an eight storey mixed –use building (plus basement) to provide 35 residential units, 4,212 sqm of B1 office floorspace, and 5 retail units (A1/A2/A3), demolition of rear parts of 29 – 31 and 32 Market Place, the change of use of the retained units at 27 – 28, 29 - 31 Market Place at first, second and third floors to provide 8 residential units, change of use at ground and basement level of 32 Market Place from A2 to flexible retail use (A1/A2/A3).	Application valid 28/03/2018

Appendix B Key Planning Applications in Surrounding Area in WBC

Reference	Location	Description of Development	Decision Date
161066	Units 27, 28, 68 And 69, Suttons Business Park Suttons Park Avenue Earley RG6 1AZ	Full application for the demolition of existing Class B1 office buildings (Units 68 and 69) and the erection of three industrial units with ancillary office space and car parking/ landscaping, refurbishment of existing storage and distribution building (Unit 27-28) and reconfiguration of car parking area; the erection of a new industrial unit with ancillary office space together with new car parking and landscaping; erection of a new security hut.	Application permitted 29/06/2016
171903	Units 62-67 Suttons Business Park Reading RG6 1AZ	Full planning application for the redevelopment of site to provide a new class B2/B8 industrial unit with ancillary office space and associated storage areas, car parking and landscaping	Application permitted 09/11/2017
161666	Unit 21 Suttons Park Avenue Earley RG6 1LA	Full application for demolition of existing industrial unit (Unit 21) and the erection of a retail supermarket (use class A1) and a drive- through coffee shop/cafe (mixed use class A3/A5) with associated car parking and landscaping.	Application permitted 15/09/2016
152354	Units 62-67 Suttons Business Park Reading RG6 1AZ	Full application for the proposed redevelopment of site and the erection of new building for B2 use including office space and storage areas, plus associated car parking and landscape works.	Application permitted 11/11/2015
162736	Units 68 and 69, Suttons Business Park Suttons Park Avenue Earley RG6 1AZ	Full application for the proposed erection of 1no class B2/B8 industrial unit with ancillary office space and associated car parking, landscaping and recycling building, following demolition of existing buildings.	Application permitted 15/12/2016

Appendix C Relevant RBC Planning Policies

Core Strategy (January 2009)

- Policy CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design;
- Policy CS2: Waste Minimisation;
- Policy CS3: Social Inclusion and Diversity;
- Policy CS6: Settlement Boundary;
- Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm;
- Policy CS8: Waterspaces;
- Policy CS9: Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities;
- Policy CS26: Network and Hierarchy of Centres;
- Policy CS20: Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006-2011);
- Policy CS21: Major Transport Projects;
- Policy CS22: Transport Assessments;
- Policy CS23: Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans Policy;
- Policy CS28: Loss of Open Space Policy;
- Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment;
- Policy CS34: Pollution and Water Resources;
- Policy CS35: Flooding;
- Policy CS36: Biodiversity and Geology;
- Policy CS37: Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space;
- Policy CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands.

RBC Sites and Detailed Policies Document (October 2012)

- SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- DM1: Adaptation to Climate Change;
- DM4: Safeguarding Amenity.
- DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters;

- DM17: Green Network;
- DM18: Tree Planting;
- DM19: Air Quality;
- SA11: Settlement Boundary;
- SA13: Transport Improvements (para 15.3.6 Crossrail)
- SA14: Cycle Routes;
- SA16: Public and Strategic Open Space;
- SA17: Major Landscape Features;

Reading Central Area Action Plan (January 2009)

- Policy RC1: Development in the Station/River Major Opportunity Area;
- Policy RC3: Development in the East Side Major Opportunity Area;
- Policy RC5 Design in the Centre;
- Policy RC14: Public Realm (RC14d Kings Meadow and Coal Woodland)

Appendix D Relevant WBC Planning Policies

Core Strategy (adopted January 2010)

- CP1: Sustainable Development;
- CP3: General Principles for development;
- CP4: Infrastructure Requirements;
- CP9: Scale and location of development proposals;
- CP6: Managing Travel Demand;
- CP7: Biodiversity;
- CP10: Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network;
- CP11: Proposals outside the development limits (including countryside);

Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted February 2014)

- Policy CC01: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- Policy CC02: Development Limits;
- Policy CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping;
- Policy CC06: Noise;
- Policy CC08: Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure;
- Policy CC09: Development and Flood Risk (from all sources);
- Policy CC10: Sustainable Drainage;
- Policy TB21: Landscape Character;
- Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development;
- Policy TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas);
- Policy TB25: Archaeology;
- Policy SAL07: Sites within Development Limits allocated for employment/commercial development (6);
- Policy SAL09: Transport site allocations (1.ii).

Appendix E Relevant National Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Achieving Sustainable Development

- Paragraph 7;
- Paragraph 8;
- Paragraph 9;
- Paragraph 10;
- Paragraph 11.

Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

- Paragraph 80;
- Paragraph 81;
- Paragraph 82.

Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

- Paragraph 91;

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- Paragraph 110;

Making Effective Use of Land

- Paragraph 117;

Achieving Well-Designed Places

- Paragraph 124;
- Paragraph 125;
- Paragraph 127;
- Paragraph 131;

Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

- Paragraph 148;
- Paragraph 155;

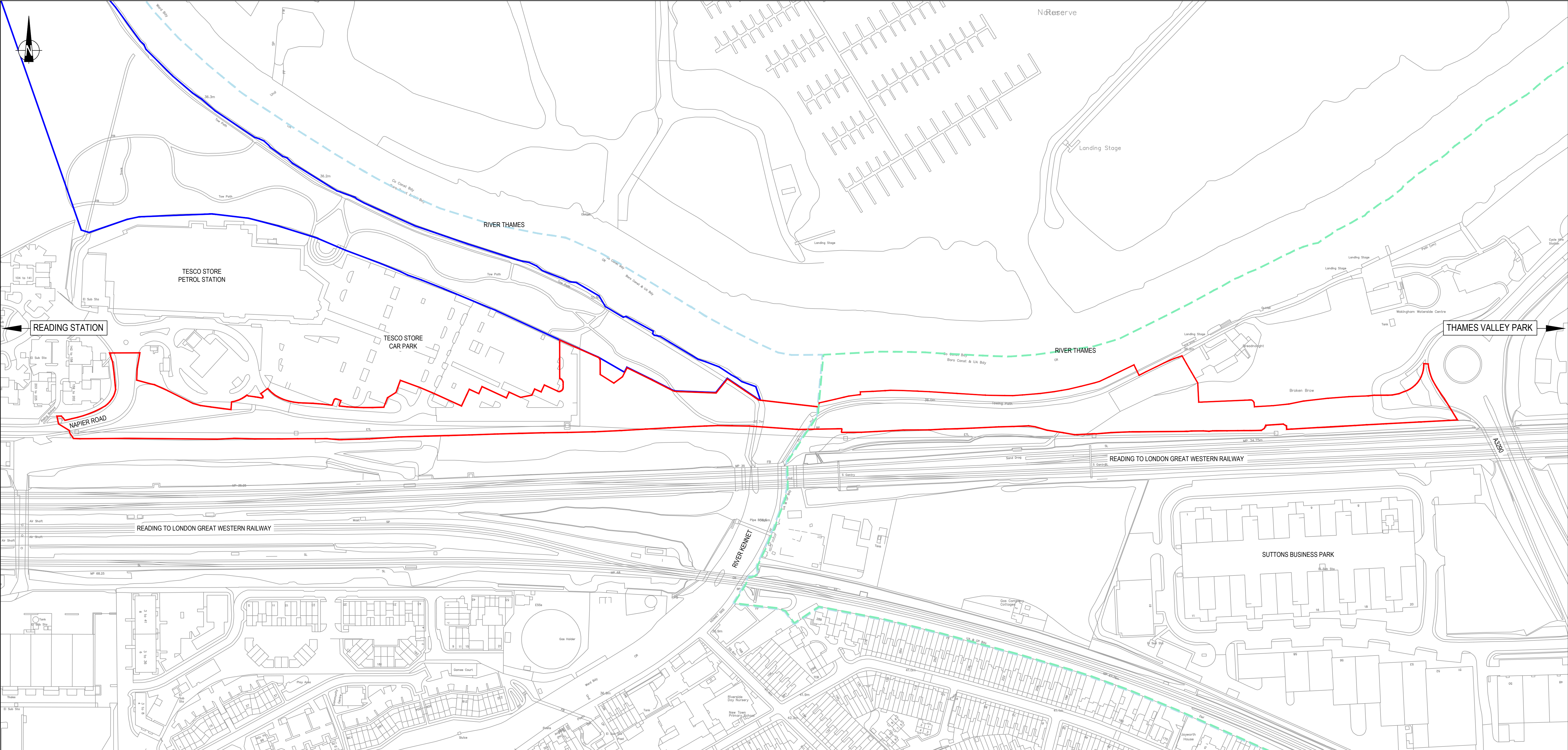
Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

- Paragraph 170;

Conservation of the Historic Environment

- Paragraph 184;
- Paragraph 185;
- Paragraph 187;
- Paragraph 188.

Appendix F Site Location Plan



- NOTES:**
- DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING, IF IN DOUBT PLEASE REQUEST FURTHER INFORMATION.
 - ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN METRES UNLESS OTHERWISE SHOWN.

- KEY:**
- PLANNING APPLICATION RED LINE BOUNDARY
 - OTHER LAND IN APPLICANTS CONTROL
 - READING BOROUGH COUNCIL BOUNDARY
 - WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL BOUNDARY

C	RED LINE BOUNDARY AMENDED	04.10.18	LC	LC	SM
B	RED LINE BOUNDARY AMENDED	28.05.18	LC	LC	SM
A	COUNCIL BOUNDARIES ADDED	30.06.17	SF	SE	SE
Mark	Revision	Date	Drawn	Chkd	Appd

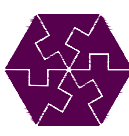
SCALING NOTE: Do not scale from this drawing. If in doubt, ask.
UTILITIES NOTE: The position of any existing public or private sewers, utility services, plant or apparatus shown on this drawing is believed to be correct, but no warranty to this is expressed or implied. Other such plant or apparatus may also be present but not shown. The Contractor is therefore advised to undertake his own investigation where the presence of any existing sewers, services, plant or apparatus may affect his operations.

Drawing Issue Status
FOR PLANNING

EAST READING MASS RAPID TRANSIT

SITE LOCATION PLAN

Client

**Reading**
Borough Council
Working better with you

Date of 1st Issue 22.06.2017	Designed LC	Drawn SF
A1 Scale 1:1500	Checked SE	Approved SM
Drawing Number 28791/2009/CIV/002		Revision C



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