

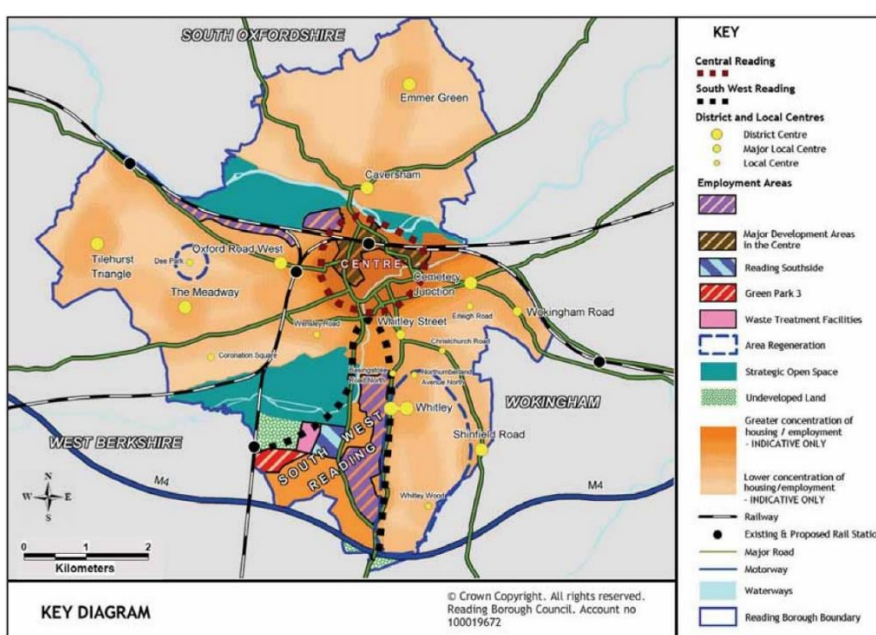
1.0 Introduction

1.01 Further to a meeting with Planning Case Officer Alison Amoah & Planning Manager Kiaran Roughan on 12th October 2017 regarding the submitted detailed and reserved matters planning applications for Phase 6A & 6B respectively, the applicant was requested to review the proposed detailed application (6A) against the following Reading Borough Council Core Strategy Planning Policies

2.0 CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

2.01 Core strategy Policy CS4: *The scale and density of development within the Borough will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities. Sites will be assessed in terms of their level of accessibility to a defined district or local centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and to a bus stop served by a strategic bus service. Unless it can be demonstrated that the accessibility of a site is to be significantly upgraded, for example, by providing high quality pedestrian routes or providing access to good public transport services, any new development must be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to that level of accessibility as set out in other policies in this document, other Development Plan Documents or Supplementary Planning Documents.* Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy Adopted January 2008 (With Alteration Adopted 27th January 2015)

2.02 Applicant Response: Policy CS4 states that the scale and density of development will be related to its accessibility by sustainable transport modes to a range of services and facilities. Paragraph 4.31 states that “*proposals for new development will be assessed in terms of the level of accessibility that exists or will be achieved by the time a development becomes operational, usually by reference to the defined zones. The Key Diagram includes an indicative illustration of the implications for the distribution of high density development in the Borough.*” The Key Diagram (as found on page 4 of the adopted Core Strategy) is reproduced below and it can be seen that Green Park Village is identified on it as ‘Green Park 3’.



2.03 In regard to Green Park 3, the Core Strategy at paragraph 2.44 states, *“This allocation recognises the many positive sustainability benefits of this development (including the provision of a new rail station)... ...The development of the site, which comprises despoiled land of a former mineral extraction site for residential and associated uses, will facilitate the provision of a new Green Park Station early in the plan period, and assumes that the development of a sustainable and accessible community can be provided. The development of Green Park 3 will of course contribute to providing for the housing requirements of the Borough, and does provide some additional flexibility in achieving development requirements.”*

2.04 Core Strategy paragraph 3.10 highlights Green Park 3 as a *“well-connected... sustainable location for future development.”*

2.05 Core Strategy paragraph 3.20 states that proposals for Green Park 3 *“include substantial housing and associated infrastructure, including a new rail station and transport interchange complemented by a mixed-use centre providing local services and facilities.”*

2.06 It is therefore clear that the Core Strategy considers development at ‘Green Park 3’ (i.e. Green Park Village) to be highly accessible and sustainable. This justifies the proposed scale and density of development as proposed. Indeed, the accessibility of the scheme is summarised below:

2.07 Public Transport:

2.07.1 **Train:** Phase 6 of Green Park Village is located immediately adjacent to the consented new Green Park Station which is due to be opened in December 2018;

2.07.2 **Bus:** Green Park Village is already located on the Green Wave bus route with stops along Longwater Avenue. The frequency and number of bus routes is proposed to increase once the transport interchange (including railway station) directly adjacent to Phase 6 of Green Park Village is implemented;

2.07.3 **Mass Rapid Transit (MRT):** The South Reading MRT is currently being implemented along the A33 between the town centre and the MereOak Park and Ride facility (south of M4 Junction 11). The aim of the scheme is to improve the reliability of public transport along the A33 corridor and cut congestion and journey times and will improve the accessibility of the town centre to future residents;

2.07.4 **Park and Ride:** As noted above the MereOak Park and Ride is located to the south of M4 junction 11 and the Madejski Stadium Park and Ride is just to the south of Green Park Village. Both Park and Ride facilities offer regular and frequent routes into Reading town centre (up to five buses an hour at peak times).

2.08 **Cycling:** The scheme proposes secure cycle parking on a basis of 1 space per apartment. This exceeds local authority standards and aims to promote sustainable travel choices for future residents. The scheme also connects with the wider Reading Cycle Network as follows:

2.08.1 Links to R1 on South Reading route on Longwater Avenue;

2.08.2 National Cycle Route 23 to Bramley, Basingstoke & Southampton via Smallmead Road; and

2.08.3 The outline consent condition 25 requires a new footpath/cycle way to connect the site to National Cycle Route 4 via a route adjacent to the railway line.

2.09 **Pedestrian:** High quality footpaths are proposed which link into the wider pedestrian footpath network of Green Park & beyond. Informal pedestrian routes are also proposed as part of the wider Green Park Village scheme, which include the Woodland Walk along the northern boundary of the site.

2.10 Further, the need to travel for everyday services and facilities is reduced by the range of facilities which will be provided within Green Park Village itself. The following services and facilities currently have consent on site:

2.10.1	Primary School	Outline consent
2.10.2	Community Hall	Outline consent
2.10.3	129 Bed Extra Care Home	Detailed consent
2.10.4	122 sq.m GIA of Retail (Market Square Shop/Café)	RM consent
2.10.5	553 sq.m GIA of Retail (Phase 6 Café/Food Store)	Outline Consent

2.11 The following existing service centres are within a 20 minute walk from Green Park Village facilities:

- 2.11.1 Lime Square, Green Park (including Gym, Newsagent, Restaurants, Nursery, Soft Play);
- 2.11.2 Reading Gate Retail Park;
- 2.11.3 Kennet Island (including Circle Hospital, Hotel, Gym);
- 2.11.4 Madejski Stadium (including Stadium, Hotel, Restaurant, Club Shop, Conference Centre).

2.12 In summary, the proposed development benefits from a high level of accessibility by a range of sustainable transport modes – including being located immediately adjacent to the Green Park railway station and associated transport interchange. The site is served by excellent bus services and is in close proximity to the South Reading MRT route and two Park and Ride routes. There are a number of proposed transport improvements which will further promote accessibility to the site and the wider Reading area. The accessibility of the site has been acknowledged by the Council in the adopted Core Strategy and the scale and density of development now proposed is reflective of these considerations. In this way the proposals comply with Core Strategy Policy CS4.

3.0 Policy CS15: Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix

3.01 Core Strategy Policy CS15 states that: *“The appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough will be informed by:*

- *An assessment of the characteristics, including the mix of uses of the area in which it is located;*
- *Its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, as defined in Policy CS4;*
- *The need to achieve high quality design in accordance with Policy CS7; and*
- *The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.*

Developments should provide an appropriate range of housing opportunities in terms of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, in accordance with the findings of a housing market assessment. The mix of dwellings should include an appropriate proportion of units designed to the Lifetime Homes standard.

Net densities of below 30 dwellings per hectare will not be acceptable. Indicative density ranges based on draft PPS3 are set out below:

Location			
Town Centre	Urban¹	Accessible Suburban²	Less Accessible Suburban³
Above 70	40-86	35-55	30-50
Density Range (Dwellings per ha)			

Footnotes to Table:

1 Areas that are generally denser than more suburban areas and comprise a mix of residential and employment areas.

2 Areas of medium housing density, which are predominantly residential in character and are easily accessible to services and public transport routes.

3 Areas of medium housing density, which are predominantly residential in character and are not easily accessible to services or public transport routes. This category replaces the rural category set out in Draft PPS3.

(Our emphasis underlined)

3.02 Core Strategy paragraph 6.20 states: *“The benefits of increased densities, particularly in terms of sustainability are most prevalent in areas of high accessibility to services and facilities. Locations that are highly accessible provide ease of access for residents to services and facilities and conversely benefit from higher concentrations of people...
...There should therefore be a gradation of densities in relation to relative accessibility.”*

3.03 Applicant Response: Phase 6 of Green Park Village (encompassing phases 6A and 6B) proposes 459 dwelling over 2.8 ha, i.e. an average density of 164 dph. As explained in the submitted Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement (e.g. paragraph 7.16), this is a higher density than previous phases of the Green Park Village development, reflecting the relative accessibility of this part of the site (adjoining the railway station and transport interchange) but also resulting from the objective of providing a mix of dwelling sizes and types across the site as a whole. The outline consent for Green Park Village envisaged a mix of dwellings being provided across the site, primarily consisting of housing on the eastern side of the lake and flatted development on the western side of the lake. In line with this approach, other phases of the Green Park Village development have secured larger/family units, predominantly as housing, resulting in a site-wide average density of 50 dph. Phases 6A and 6B cannot be considered in isolation; regard must be had to the wider consented developments and the objectives of providing a sustainable community at Green Park Village. In this context, the density of the development site as a whole meets the indicative net densities provided in Policy CS15 but this would not be achieved without allowing for higher density/smaller units on the western part of the site.

3.04 In any event, recent residential consents within the immediate vicinity of Green Park Village indicate the Council’s acknowledgement that South Reading is a sustainable and accessible location where high density development is acceptable. For example, Royal Elm Park (ref. 160199) has a resolution to grant consent for development of “potentially up to **225 dph**” (page 66 of submitted Design and Access Statement) and Phase 3 of the Kennet Island development has permission for apartment buildings which are c.**150 dph** (page 55 of the submitted Design and Access Statement).

3.05 The proposals for Phase 6 of Green Park Village are considered to be even more accessible and sustainable than these examples, for the reasons outlined above; and the densities proposed are comparable or less.

3.06 Furthermore, engagement by the Applicant with Reading Borough Council’s Design Review Panel has not raised any issues with the quality of design which results from the

density of development. Through pre-application discussions there were two meetings with the Design Review Panel who considered the scale and massing of the proposals as follows:

3.07 Comments DRP #1 19.01.2017 *"Scale/Massing: The Panel has no issue in principal with the proposed massing, or even if this increased within reason."*

3.08 Comments DRP #2 06.03.2017 *"Scale/Massing: The Panel is not troubled by the overall extent of massing on the site."*

3.09 The design evolution of the proposed scheme in response to DRP comments is included within the Design and Access Statement and a subsequent additional information design report. Since this time, at the request of Reading Borough Council Planning Officers during the determination period, the Applicant has further reduced the scale and massing of the proposed scheme and as such there is no design reason pertaining to scale or massing to reduce the density of the scheme further.

3.10 In summary, Policy CS15 provides that the appropriate density of new development will be informed by a number of factors. This includes:

- The characteristics of the site. As noted above should be viewed in the context of the wider Green Park Village development across which densities would accord with the indicative densities provided in the Table in Policy CS15;
- The need to achieve high quality design. The design of the proposals has been accepted by the Council's own Design Review Panel who were happy with the scale and massing of the proposals, as such there is no design reason why the density of the scheme should be further reduced. In fact, the proposed density of this phase of the Green Park Village development is comparable or lower than other schemes recently consented in the locality;
- The current and future levels of accessibility as defined in Policy CS4. The location of the site is highly sustainable and accessible as described above.
- The need to minimise environmental impacts. The suite of documents accompanying the planning application, including the Planning Statement, show how the impacts of the scheme would be mitigated and present no constraint to the density of the scheme in terms of impacts to the environment or to the amenities of neighbouring or future occupiers.

In this way the proposals would clearly comply with Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy.