

Kings Meadow View, Reading Open Space Statement

Outline Planning Application
Planning Application Reference 230822

29 October 2025

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Open Space Statement has been prepared by ABRDN Property Income Trust. It supports a planning application for the development of Forbury Retail Park Forbury Road Reading RG1 3JD ("the site").

1.2. The proposed development comprises;

Outline application with all matters reserved with the exception of access, for site redevelopment involving the demolition of all existing structures & a residential-led mixed use proposal for up to 700 residential units (Class C3) & up to 3,000 sqm (GEA) of commercial uses (Class E), together with various associated works including replacement pedestrian and vehicle access routes, open spaces, hard & soft landscaping & sewer works, partial basement excavation, up to 130 basement level car parking spaces, up to 53 separate car parking spaces for Class E uses, up to 600 cycle parking spaces & servicing facilities. This application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement."

1.3. The purpose of this statement is to identify and assess areas of existing open space adjoining the application, how they are to be managed in the future and how they can be enhanced or integrated into the proposal. This statement has been written with regard to the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

2. OPEN SPACE

2.1. The Proposed Development has been guided by national and local planning policy, planning guidance and other material considerations. The Development Plan relevant to the Site comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted in November 2019).

2.2. The council also have a series of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), including the Reading Open Space Strategy, adopted in 2007.

Reading Borough Council Core Strategy (OOS), 2008

2.3. The key policies that are relevant to the site's application are as follows. As there is no existing open space on the site, CS28 is not seen as relevant.

2.4. Policy CS29: Provision of Open Space

2.5. *"All new development should make provision for the open space needs of the development through appropriate on or off-site provision, or through contributions towards the provision or improvement of leisure or recreational facilities, including open space. New provision will be sought on residential sites of 50 or more units, or for developments where the availability and quality of existing provision has been identified as deficient in the provision for open space. The provision and improvement of children's Play Areas and Neighbourhood Recreation Areas should be made, as appropriate, in order to ensure a satisfactory level of provision within the urban area. On sites of less than 50 dwellings or in areas not identified as deficient in the provision of open space, new open space provision/ improvements/ enhancements will be sought through appropriate contributions".*

2.6. CS30: Access to Open Space

2.7. *"In areas with relatively poor access to open space facilities (possibly as a result of severance lines), new development should make provision for, or contribute to, improvements to road and other crossings to improve access to green space and/ or facilitate the creation or linking of safe off-road routes to parks."*

Reading Borough Local Plan, 2019

2.8. The Local Plan accesses existing areas of Public Open Space (POS) in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and in the context of the proposed development. Policy **EN7, Local Green Space and Public Open Space**, acknowledges Forbury Gardens and Kings Meadow as significant areas of POS within Reading. Stating that it will be protected from development and that any proposals will not erode their quality or jeopardise their use or enjoyment by the public.

2.9 The Local Plan policy EN8: Undesignated Open Space states the following.

"EN8: UNDESIGNATED OPEN SPACE There will be a presumption in favour of retention of undesignated open space, which will include allotments. Development should not result in the loss of or jeopardise use and enjoyment of undesignated open space. Development may be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that replacement open space, of a similar standard and function, can be provided at an accessible location close by, or that improvements to recreational facilities on remaining open space can be provided to a level sufficient to outweigh the loss of the open space. The quality of existing open space should not be eroded by insensitive development on adjoining land."

The is no undesignated open space on the site this policy is not seen as being relevant to this application.

2.10. Policy **EN9, Provision of Open Space** builds upon policy **CS29**, from the Core Strategy:

2.11. "All new development should make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development. This can be achieved through on or off-site provision, contributions toward provision or improvement of existing leisure or recreational facilities.

2.12. On sites of 50 dwellings or more, or for developments where the availability and quality of existing open space has been identified as deficient, new provision will be sought. Development must ensure satisfactory provision of children's play areas and neighbourhood parks.

2.13. A secure maintenance arrangement shall be demonstrated to ensure that any open space is properly maintained throughout the life of the development. In exceptional circumstances where the Council agrees to the adoption of the open space, a commuted sum for future maintenance will be required as part of any legal agreement.

2.13. On sites of less than 50 dwellings, or in areas not identified as deficient in the provision of open space, new open space provision, improvements, or enhancements will be sought, including through appropriate contributions.

2.14. The provision of open space for all developments shall satisfy the most urgent need, subject to considerations of particular deficiencies. The most up-to-date Open Spaces Strategy should guide provision type and size. New open space should:

- Be in usable parcels of land and not be fragmented.
- Be safely and easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier, including a road;
- Be accessible to the general public and be designed so as to feel that it is part of the public and not the private realm.
- Create a safe environment, appropriately considering lighting and layout to reduce the fear of crime.
- Provide some informal landscaping for aesthetic, wildlife and recreational purposes; and
- Link into the Green Network where possible.

2.15. Reading Borough Open Space Strategy, 2007

2.16. The OSS sets out the aims and approaches that Reading Borough Council will adopt in its role as custodian of Reading's POS. The document sets out a 13-year plan (2007 – 2020), adopting the Reading 2020 Community Strategy vision for public open space (POS) in Reading. The strategy identifies three key policy objectives:

- Safeguard Reading's environmental endowment
- Ensure that there is no net loss of recreational POS
- Secure additional open space where opportunities arise

2.17. The assessment of the current POS within Reading is suggested to be adequate. However, there are a few elements noted to be improved. Firstly access to areas of POS due to poor distribution through the city centre along with severance lines such as the River Thames that restrict access. Secondly, the quality of existing parks, with a fragmented distribution of green links connecting homes to parks.

2.18. The site is located near two of the larger central Local Green Spaces: Forbury Gardens and Kings Meadow, and the Coal Woodland.

Open Space EN7Cb, Forbury Gardens and EN7Cd, Kings Meadow and the Coal Woodland

2.19. The nearest POS to the application site is a Local Green Space, Forbury Gardens EN7Cb, Kings Meadow and the Coal Woodland EN7Cd. The spaces identified on the diagram below are an extract from the Design and Access Statement.

The site is located close to the historic and commercial heart of Reading and as a result has limited access to public open space.

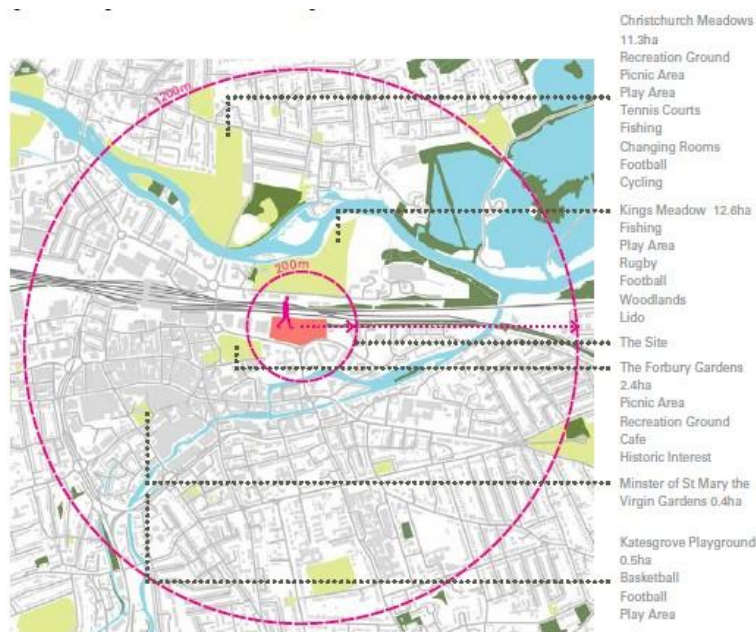
The Reading Open Space Strategy states with regard to the existing distribution of open space across the City:

'There is no particular defined standard. A 4km radius catchment area for local parks and a 1.2km catchment for larger parks is considered a reasonable standard in assessing the distribution of open spaces in urban areas. The standard of 0.2ha minimum local park size is also widely used. By these measures, Reading's provision of green space is close to average, but at the lower end of the range'.

With regard to provision of open space for new developments Reading Borough Council's The Sites and Detailed Policies Document Adopted October 2012 (Revised January 2015), states:

Development in central Reading will not always be expected to comply with the standards set above. Open space is nonetheless required, unless exceptional circumstances prevail, to accommodate modest sitting out areas and clothes drying facilities.

The Open Spaces Strategy states that, 'All guidelines recommend that at least some open space for children to play, whether publically or privately owned, be available within 100-200m of every home. This will primarily affect very high-density developments, like flats....'



The Proposals

2.23 The planning application ref. 230822 was originally submitted on 8th June 2023 and confirmed as valid on 14th September 2023.

Consultation comments have been received and reviewed including requests for conditions as well as comments that requested amendments to the application.

A number of meetings have also been held with the case officer in relation to the design of the outline scheme. As a result of responding to the consultation comments and discussion with Reading Borough Council a design review has been undertaken by the project team. This has led to a number of key changes which can be summarised as follows:

- Reduction in maximum building heights adjacent to the railway and facing Kings Meadow;
- Improved variation in heights of the blocks;
- Reduction of block footprints, reorientation of the spaces within the development and increased sense enclosure;
- Reduction in the size of the basement car park and therefore removal of the podium to the east allowing

seamless integration of the site with surrounding areas;

- Reduction in commercial floorspace;

Overall resulting in a reduction in the maximum number of units from 820 to 700 dwellings

2.24. The proposals form part of an outline application; therefore, the layout should be taken as illustrative. However, the future submission of reserved matters will be controlled by the detailed design codes and the parameter plans, which are submitted for approval. This will include the primary, secondary and tertiary spaces. The aspirations of the Local Plan have been taken into account during the design process and preparation of the application, including the codes and parameter plans.

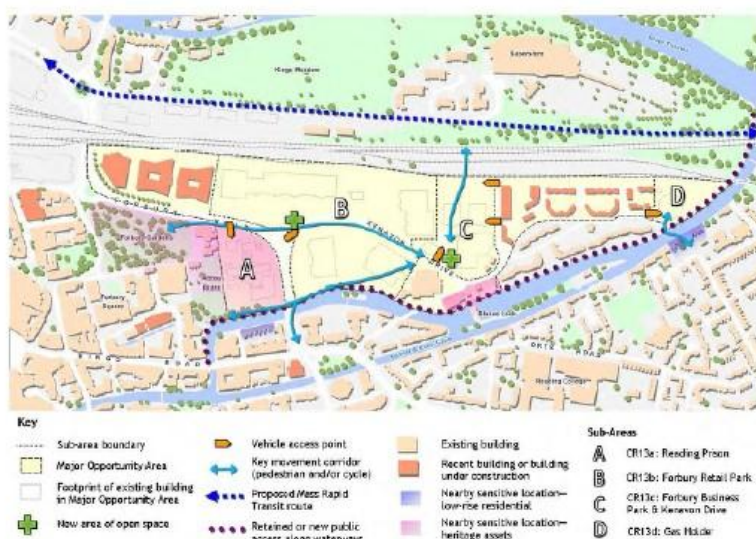
2.25. The proposals include a new public realm connection to link Forbury Gardens and Kings Meadow as far as possible within the applicant's ownership. This addresses aspirations set out within as set out in the Local Plan CR13b Forbury Retail Park. This connection is also part of a cycle footway that will run through the site, providing connection benefits to not only new residents but also those travelling between Huntley Wharf, future eastern development areas and the town centre/ train station. See the extract below of the Local Plan.

CR13b, FORBURY RETAIL PARK:

This site would be the focus of the new residential community, and, alongside residential, additional retail, leisure and community uses at a scale to serve the Kenavon Drive area would be appropriate. It should include a new area of open space and enhance the frontage to the canal, including a buffer zone to the top of the canal bank to reflect its wildlife significance. Implementing this policy may involve complete redevelopment or using new additional development to improve the existing urban form of the area. Some parts of the site are likely to be implemented in the long term.

Site size: 6.99 ha Indicative potential: 1,230-1,840 dwellings, no net gain of retail.

READING BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN Adopted November 2010, p158



2.26. The proposals also provide a robust hierarchy of new streets and spaces to support the development proposals.

2.27. The proposals also include extensive tree, shrub and hedgerow planting throughout the external spaces of the site. The aim of this is to enhance biodiversity through the site, as well as deliver a “green link” to the town centre, Forbury Gardens and Kings Meadow as set out in the Local Plan CR13b Forbury Retail Park. The below extract from the Design and Access Statement is consistent with the proposed design code for approval.

Character Areas

1. Plummary Gardens - Linear Walkway and Rain Gardens
2. Plummary Garden Plazas - Active Thresholds
3. Green Streets / Secondary Streets
4. Woodland Gardens Links
5. Eastern Square - Public Space
6. Central Garden - Public garden
7. Western Courtyard
8. Biodiversity Roofs - with PV
9. Infrastructure Landscape - access road and railway screening

**Section 106 Agreement**

2.28. Reading Borough Council has an adopted Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule in place, which explains what CIL monies will be used for. As such, any financial contributions are to be agreed through the Section 106 Agreement.

2.29. There is an opportunity for facilities to be improved, for example, by improved leisure facilities within Kings Meadow, as set out within the Local Plan, if this is required as a consequence of the development. This is assessed in the Environmental Statement.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1. The statement has identified and assessed an area of existing open space adjoining the application site, identified within Reading Borough Council Local Plan as EN7Cb, Forbury Gardens EN7Cd Kings Meadow and the Coal Woodland.

3.2. This statement has demonstrated how the proposed development can provide key connections and areas of open space to improve the open space provision within Reading and improve access to existing areas of POS. This connection and provision will serve to increase the accessibility of POS to both residents of the proposed development but also to existing residents south of the site.

3.3. The proposed development can also enhance the existing open spaces through the creation of a green link through the proposed site, better connecting those travelling between Huntley Wharf, future eastern development areas and the town centre/ train station.

The development proposals will bring forward a robust hierarchy of high-quality open and accessible spaces that will support the existing and new communities in this part of Reading, which represents a substantial improvement over the current condition of a retail park with surface-level parking. This is a positive on-site improvement in open space. Its delivery will be controlled by the parameter plans and design codes, which are submitted for approval.