



Active
Travel
England

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Your Ref: PL/25/1706
Our Ref: ATE/26/00205/OUT
Date: 02 March 2026

Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: Reading Borough Council

Application Ref: PL/25/1706

Site Address: FORBURY RETAIL PARK, KENAVON DRIVE, READING,
RG1 3HS

Description of development: 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.

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

Deferral: ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.

Background

ATE welcomes the opportunity to comment on this application: an outline application for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of up to 700 residential units, 3000 sqm of commercial space, 183 car parking spaces, 600 cycle parking spaces and associated works at the Fornaby Retail Park, Reading.

It is recognised that a previous application on the same site was submitted, and reviewed by ATE, but has since been disposed. The schemes share many similarities, but alterations have been made.

The site is allocated for redevelopment in the Reading Local Plan (2019) as site CR13b. The site currently houses a retail park and car parking, with the proposals retaining the same net floorspace with reduced car parking.

Outlined below are relevant areas of national and local policy

NPPF

109. Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. This should involve: a) making transport considerations an important part of early engagement with local communities; b) ensuring patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places; c) understanding and addressing the potential impacts of development on transport networks; d) realising opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated; e) identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use;

110. The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health.

111. Planning policies should: a) support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities; b) be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned; c) identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development; d) provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks with supporting facilities such as secure cycle parking (drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans);

115. In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that: a) sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location; b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code.

117. Within this context, applications for development should: a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and

appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use; b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport; c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards; d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles;

Reading Local Plan (2019)

TR1: Planning permission will not be granted for major development proposals unless there is a commitment to implement measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, such as through provision to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport; and through agreed travel plans, safe routes to local facilities and services, including schools and parks, and similar measures. All development proposals should make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with any agreed transport assessment submitted as part of the application.

TR4: Developments will be expected to make full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development and to integrate cycling through the provision of new facilities. Development of new facilities for cycling, such as cycle hire points and cycle parking, will be acceptable. The cycle routes identified in the most up-to-date Cycling Strategy will be maintained, enhanced and added to or extended. Development will not detrimentally affect an identified cycle route. Where opportunities exist, improvements to that route, including the provision of connecting routes, and/or cycling facilities will be sought within developments or through planning contributions.

TR5: Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

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.

Trip generation and assignment

ATE is pleased with aspects of the trip generation, especially the assumed distribution of walking and cycling trips. However, ATE requests this to be broken down to provide an hourly distribution for both walking and cycling instead of just relying on peak time figures. This is particularly important to ensure school journeys are accounted for correctly.

Whilst ATE is satisfied with the active travel audit in terms of its presentation and details, especially regarding walking routes to schools, it is regarded that the assessment is based on a minimum viable provision. ATE encourages the applicant to consider interventions which can be used to increase active travel mode share and notes that given the urban context of the development site it is important to consider a 'vision-led' approach (as outlined by NPPF 109)

ATE considers the 2011 Census for the travel plan targets to be outdated and requests the use of the DfT National Travel Survey (2024.)

Whilst the targets show a reasonable mode share for active travel and public transport, ATE considers 20.4% car modal share to still be high considering the city centre location and connectivity of this site, as well as the limited parking spaces. Whilst it is accepted that a certain percentage of car journeys is unavoidable, ATE encourages the applicant to be more ambitious in this regard considering that there will only be 130 car spaces available for 700 units (roughly 18%) and it should be assumed that most of those with access to a car are unlikely to use it for every journey.

ATE requests that specific remediation measures be provided at this stage to be enacted if the travel plan targets are not met. This could take the form of additional funding for active travel delivered to the LHA for example.

Walking

The site is located in a town centre, close to a range of amenities. This puts much of Reading town centre within walking distance of the site and ensures that residents should be able to meet a majority of their needs without needing a car, as well as providing substantial employment opportunities. For this reason, it is vital the routes to the town centre must be as good as possible to make walking pleasant and the easiest choice for short journeys.

The nearest primary school is 1km away via an acceptable walking route. This has been outlined in the active travel route audit.

ATE requests improvements to the western leg of the Forbury Road/Kenavon Drive roundabout to improve walking routes to the bus stop on Forbury Road. It is noted that this crossing is uncontrolled, has multiple wide lanes and lacks tactile paving. This position is supported by the LHA. A controlled crossing here would be preferable to cater for the desire line towards the bus stops and access to Kings Road.

ATE supports a crossing on Kenavon Drive in the location outlined.

Cycling

ATE has concerns regarding the ability of the cycling infrastructure to cater for the additional expected active travel journeys. The main route between the site and the train station has the potential to introduce conflict between pedestrians and cyclists at its narrowest points. Furthermore, there is no safe cycle route travelling south to cross the River Kennet.

Fornaby Road is designated as an "Orbital" cycle route as part of the Reading LCWIP, but it is unclear how this will be delivered. The carriageway is very wide with four lanes of traffic making on carriageway cycling unsafe, however there is plenty of available space. ATE would like to see this be addressed in conjunction with the LHA and would like to reiterate that shared use is generally not considered appropriate as per LTN 1/20, especially in such an urban area with high expected pedestrian and cyclist flows.

Public transport

The site is located around 500m from Reading train station, approximately a 7-minute walk. A walking route is provided, which ATE deems to be acceptable but requires walking alongside and crossing a dual carriageway which is poor for such an urban environment.

A variety of bus services are available around 250m to the south on Forbury Road. ATE requests alterations to be made to ensure these bus stops meet LTN 1/24 Bus User Priority (6.10, p49-50) through the installation of a shelter, seating and real time bus information.

Masterplanning and permeability

At 4.1 the Design Code sets out that Secondary and Tertiary Movement routes, which play a key role in enhancing permeability across the site, should be designed as welcoming, lively and diverse spaces as part of the public realm proposal. It further states that the design of all streets, routes and footways must consider DfT's 'Inclusive Mobility A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure' (2021). This is welcomed, however ATE would request that a reference to LTN 1/20 should also be included here in order to ensure that routes comply.

At 4.3 the Design Code shows an illustrative example of recommended minimum spacing for a standard cycle parking arrangement. ATE would request that parking provision is also made for non-standard cycles, such as accessible cycles, tricycles and cargo bikes. This should be a minimum of 5% of the total spaces as outlined in LTN 1/20 11.3.2.

Within the site, ATE requests cycle and pedestrian provision to be separated to reduce the risk of conflict, and ensure the route is LTN 1/20 compliant to allow people to use it as an onward connection.

ATE is satisfied with the location of site accesses and requests these to be safeguarded at this stage.

Furthermore, ATE would welcome the widening of the eastern connection towards the railway underpass to provide a segregated pedestrian/cycle link in line with LTN 1/20 principles. The current path is narrow and contained and invites pedestrian and cyclist conflict. This provides access to the Tesco supermarket and further connections to the north.

Cycle parking

It is unclear how many units of each type are being proposed here, therefore ATE is not able to determine whether the cycle parking meets the Reading's cycle parking guidelines. However, ATE considers the 600 proposed spaces, whilst substantial, to be unambitious considering the expected number of residents, and instead recommends providing cycle parking of one space per bedroom in line with LTN 1/20 11.3. Considering the urban location of this development and very limited car parking, it is even more important to ensure enough cycle parking is available to provide a 'genuine choice of modes.' A minimum of 5% of cycle parking should accommodate non-standard cycles.

ATE generally recommends against the sole use of two-tier racks due to accessibility concerns. If they are to be used, they should be supplemented with Sheffield stands for users who are not able to use the racks or have bikes which do not fit. This has been mentioned by the applicant and ATE expects to see this at the reserved matters stage. Cycle stores should also be secure.

Next steps

ATE requests this response be shared with the LPA case officer, agent and applicant. ATE is content to revisit this application if more information becomes available or changes are made to address concerns outlined in this response.