



Full Planning Application

Reading Sewage Treatment Works – Proposed Operational Building

Planning Application Supporting Statement

April 2026

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1. Introduction & Background to Development

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Thames Water Utilities Limited (the applicant) in relation to a proposed new operational building development at Reading Sewage Treatment Works (STW) site located off Island Road, Reading RG2 0RP.
- 1.2. The proposed operational control building is required to provide capacity to support increased monitoring demands in line with OFWAT requirements and will be located on an existing hardsurfaced depot area located within the north western corner of the operational Reading STW site adjacent to Island Road.
- 1.3. This Planning Statement sets out the details of the proposed development at the STW site and assesses the proposal against relevant national and local planning policies together with other material considerations. It should be read in conjunction with the following plans and details that have been submitted with the application:
 - Application Drawings:
 - Red/Blue Line Boundary Plan
 - Site layout on Aerial Photo of Site Approx Ref:1760-260420
 - Site layout on Aerial Photo of Site Approx 1:1000 Ref:1760-260420
 - Existing Site Layout Plan Ref: 1760/P901/04
 - Proposed Site Layout Plan Ref: 1760/P911/06
 - Proposed Building Layout Plans Ref: 1760/P101/05
 - Proposed Elevations Ref: 1760/P102/05
 - Proposed Building Cross Sections Ref: 1760/P103/04
 - Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by Maydencroft dated April 2026
 - BNG Documents by Maydencroft
 - Reading STW BNG Statement V2
 - Reading STW Condition Assessment Sheets V2
 - Reading STW Post-development Habitat Map V2
 - Reading STW Pre-development Habitat Map V2
 - Reading STW Statutory Biodiversity Metric V2
 - Preliminary Arboricultural Impact Assessment by Maydencroft
 - Utilities Statement

2. Application Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1. The planning application site is located within the existing operational Reading Sewage Treatment Works (STW) site boundary. The existing operational STW covers an area of approximately 11 hectares. The STW site incorporates various treatment tanks, buildings plant and machinery of various sizes. The application site measures 2.127m² (0.2 hectares).
- 2.2. Planning permission was granted to relocate the STW from the old Manor Farm site on opposite side of the A33 to the current Island Road site in October 2002 (Application Ref: 01/01469/FUL) and the new STW was opened in 2005.
- 2.3. The location of the proposed operational building is within an existing depot area located within the north western corner of the STW site adjacent to Island as shown on the aerial below (application location annotated with red arrow):



- 2.4. The location of the building is on an existing hard surfaced depot area previously used by Thames Water's sewerage contractor, Lanes (as shown on photo below). The Lanes Depot area has recently been relocated to the grassed area to the south under Permitted Development Rights.

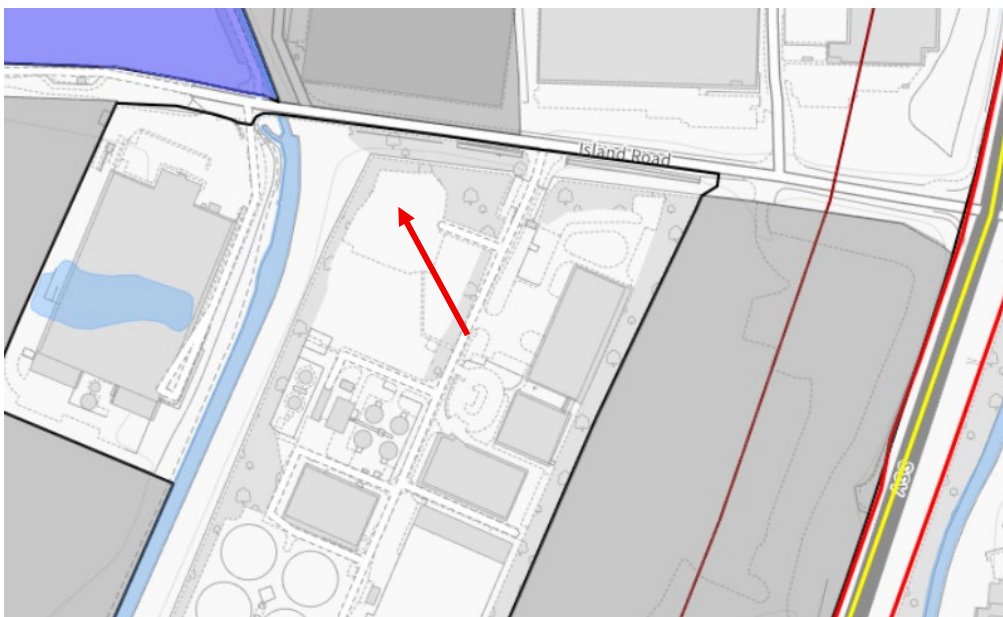
Photo of new building location in NW corner of Reading STW prior to Lanes Depot being relocated:



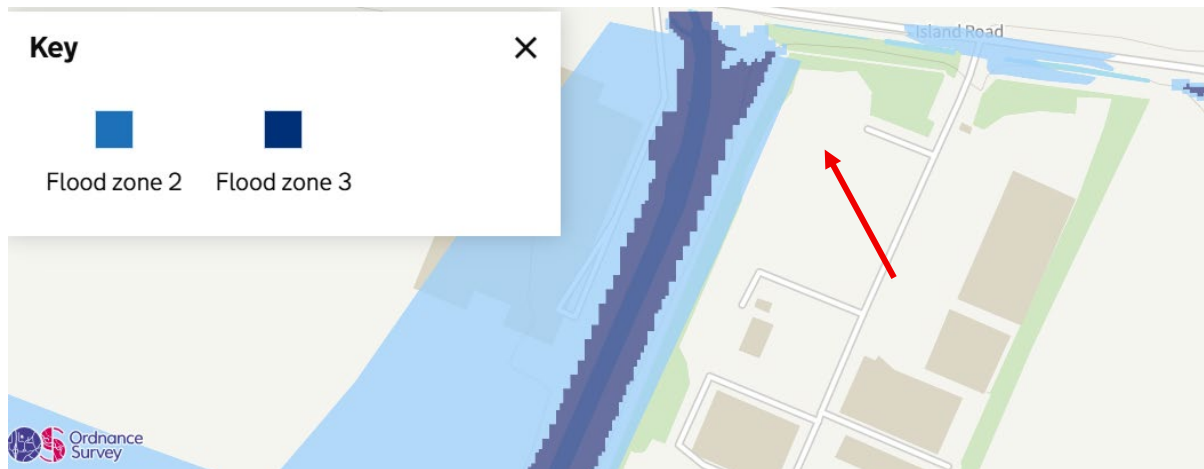
Photo of new building location in NW corner of Reading STW following relocation of Lanes Depot:



2.5. Reading STW and the application site are not covered by any restrictive designations on the adopted Reading Local Plan Policies Map:



- 2.6. The application site (and the majority of the STW site) is located within Flood Risk Zone 1 as shown on the government flood risk map and hence a Flood Risk Assessment is not required to support this planning application.



3. Proposed Development

- 3.1. The proposals involve the provision of a new operational building within a separate fenced compound with car parking area in the north western corner of the STW site.
- 3.2. The proposed building is rectangular in shape and measures 22.2m x 16m externally with a gross external area (GEA) of approximately $2 \times 354\text{m}^2 = 708\text{m}^2$. The building will be 9.2m high with a flat roof incorporating integrated solar panels.
- 3.3. The building will have an external emergency stair and substation on the eastern elevation along with a combined smoking shelter and cycle store and bin store on the southern elevation.
- 3.4. The building will be constructed of insulated concrete formwork (ICF) with a metal mesh cladding to the upper half of the building set 3m from ground level. The metal mesh cladding will also encapsulate the external staircase. The foundations are a piled ground beam system with suspended hollowcore precast concrete planks to ground and first floor and roof level. The roof is an insulated warm deck roof with a liquid applied waterproofing system (Centech PU25).
- 3.5. The proposed building and parking area is to be largely constructed on an existing hard surfaced area. However, to create a secure fenced compound some of the landscaping along the western and northern boundaries will need to be cut back. The majority of the landscaping along Island Road frontage will be retained so any impact will be minimal. The fenced compound will measure 1,789m².
- 3.6. The car park area will incorporate 15 spaces including 2 EV charging spaces and 2 disabled spaces. Covered cycle storage will be provided including 6 Sheffield stands.

- 3.7. The new building and parking area will be secured by a new weldmesh fence measuring 3m in height with a 0.9m flat wrap barbed tape topper. Vehicular access to the car park area will be via a bi-fold speedgate and pedestrianised access is via a turnstile with an additional accessible gate. External lighting will be provided to the car park area along with bulkhead lighting above the emergency exits.
- 3.8. 35 employees will have the building as their primary working location, for of which will be contractors. Peak operational occupancy will be 23 employees.

4. Planning Policy

- 4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2. The Council's Development Plan currently consists of:
- The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted 4th November 2019; and
 - The adopted Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Plan West Sussex Waste Local Plan (2014); and
- 4.3. Other material considerations in planning policy terms include:
- National Planning Policy Framework (2024);
 - Planning Policy Guidance (2014 or as amended);
 - Circular 17/91 Water industry investment: planning considerations

Development Plan

Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

- 5.1 Policy W3 is relevant to STWs and states:
".... 2. Hazardous waste management facilities, waste water or sewage treatment plants and non-hazardous waste landfill for residual waste will be supported, in appropriate locations which comply with all relevant policies in the Plan, where there is a clear and demonstrable need."

Reading Local Plan, adopted November 2019

- 4.4. The STW is not covered by any restrictive designations on the Reading Local Plan Policies Map and is surrounded by existing or allocated development.
- 4.5. Paragraph 10.3.1 of the Local Plan relates to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and states:
"Infrastructure is required to support new development within the Borough through the Plan period to ensure that communities are sustainable. The requirement for local authorities to assess quality and capacity of infrastructure, as part of the Local Plan process, is identified in the National Planning Policy Framework. The suggested broad categories are physical, green and social infrastructure."

- 4.6. Paragraph 10.3.2 goes on to state: *“In preparing this Local Plan, the Council has been in liaison with a range of infrastructure providers to determine long term strategic infrastructure needs which would result from the level and distribution of planned growth within the Borough. This has resulted in an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which sets out in full how infrastructure to support the levels of development set out in this plan will be provided, and the IDP is on the Council’s website...”* The IDP includes a section on water and wastewater infrastructure as follows:

Water and Wastewater	To ensure sufficient capacity to accommodate future growth	There are a number of areas within the Borough including some parts of west and south Reading where Thames Water has identified potential capacity issues with water and wastewater, in particular with the overall scale of development in the catchment draining to Blakes Lock SPS. For these areas, detailed investigation and modelling will be required to determine if a local infrastructure upgrade is required.	Costs to be determined by Thames Water with developer	To be confirmed as and when a development comes forward and where issues have been highlighted by Thames Water. Thames Water has indicated that upgrades to assets can take up to 3 years lead in time.	Thames Water and relevant developer
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National Planning Policy

- 4.7. The Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in 2024, sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF is a material consideration in all planning decisions.
- 4.8. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out that strategic policies should make sufficient provision for infrastructure for wastewater and that local planning authorities should adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, taking full account of flood risk, coastal change and water supply and demand considerations.
- 4.9. The December 2025 draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation proposes updates to national planning policy. The draft highlights the importance of resilient water infrastructure, with Policy W4: Water Infrastructure supporting the delivery and upgrade of water supply and treatment facilities. The policy recognises the benefits of improving capacity, reliability, and water quality, stating that proposals for such infrastructure should be given ‘substantial weight’.
- 4.10. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) has a specific section on water supply and wastewater and identifies the importance of adequate water supply and wastewater infrastructure in supporting sustainable development. The NPPG states: *“Why should planning be concerned with water supply, wastewater and water quality? Adequate water and wastewater infrastructure is needed to support sustainable development. A healthy water environment will also deliver multiple benefits, such as helping to enhance the natural environment generally and adapting to climate change.”* (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 34-001-20140306).

- 4.11. Circular 17/91 provides guidance to planning authorities on the need to plan for the long-term requirements and implications of water industry investment programmes. The Circular advises local planning authorities to “*give sympathetic consideration to development proposals aimed at enhancing the treatment of sewage*” (Paragraph 7). It highlights the need to avoid delays in obtaining planning consent and the need to expedite works that meet water companies’ obligations and paragraph 14 states that: “*...Delays in obtaining planning consent for minor works can be as disruptive as those relating to major elements of a scheme. Expedited handling should be given to all proposed works, irrespective of size, which are aimed at meeting water companies’ obligations.*”

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 4.12. The Council Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule became effective in 2015. The most up to date charging schedule confirms CIL is only payable on residential, retail and office developments and that there is a nil charge for ‘All Other Uses’ and therefore this proposal would not be liable to pay the CIL.

5. Development Appraisal

Principle of Development

- 5.1. Government and Development Plan policy support the upgrade of existing sewage/wastewater treatment and water supply infrastructure. The proposed building will facilitate the smooth operation of Thames Water’s infrastructure.
- 5.2. The proposed building will be located within the operational boundary of the Reading STW site on an existing depot area where it will have no appreciable impact on the surrounding area and therefore is considered to be acceptable in principle.

Design and character of the area

- 5.3. The design approach is appropriate to the industrial nature of the site and provides flexibility to respond to future operational demands.
- 5.4. The new building is located within the operational STW where similar buildings exist. The new building will be well screened from Island Barn Road by existing landscaping that is to be retained.

Ecology & BNG

- 5.5. The welfare building Site is largely located on an existing hardsurfaced depot area within the built up STW site and therefore ecological impact will be negligible. However, some of the boundary landscape planting will need to be removed to facilitate the development. The site is not covered by any ecological designations.

- 5.6. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) was undertaken to inform the proposed development , which will require removal of boundary planting/ mixed deciduous woodland. The EclA which accompanies the application concludes: *"The proposed works on Site are not considered likely to impact any internationally, nationally or locally designated sites. The habitats on Site include; other lowland mixed deciduous woodland and other developed land, and are considered likely to support; badgers, nesting birds, hedgehogs, reptiles and foraging and commuting bats.....As habitat is to be permanently lost, a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment has been produced to ensure a net gain in biodiversity from the scheme. This should be read in conjunction with this report.... A low negative residual effect is anticipated as a result of the development, arising from the loss of habitat and the presence of light-sensitive bat species in the local area. A minor negative residual impact is also expected due to the removal of nesting bird habitat. No further residual effects are anticipated if the aforementioned mitigation measures are followed"*
- 5.7. As on-site creation cannot replace woodland units, the scheme will meet mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements through the purchase of off-site habitat units from a third-party provider, achieving the required 10% net gain. Mitigation includes pre-works checks for protected species, lighting controls and phased vegetation clearance. With mitigation and off-site compensation secured, ecological effects are minimised and policy-compliant.

Trees

- 5.8. The Preliminary Arboricultural Impact Assessment submitted with the application sets out that: *"In accordance with the current proposed plan provided by Thames Water, 100% of a Category C group, 10 % of a category B group and 2 Single Category C trees, 5 single Category B trees, 1 Category A tree and 1 Category U tree will require removal to facilitate this project."* As shown on the image below:
- 5.9. Although some landscaping will need to be removed, a wide landscape strip will still remain along the Island Road frontage and the proposed development will not be visible from public viewpoints and will have no appreciable impact on the appearance of the area.

Archaeology

- 5.10. The proposed building is to be located on the site of an existing hardsurfaced depot on a previously disturbed area within the built up STW site and therefore archaeological impact will be negligible.

Drainage

- 5.11. Water from the roof of the buildings will drain into a new underground surface water network which connects to the existing surface water network on site.
- 5.12. The application site (and the majority of the STW site) is located within Flood Risk Zone 1 as shown on the government flood risk map and hence a Flood Risk Assessment is not required to support this planning application.

Transport

- 5.13. The building proposed will provide office/welfare accommodation for 23 members of staff (peak operational capacity) and as such there will be only a small increase in the number of vehicle movements moving to and from the STW Site.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The proposed development is required to provide capacity to support increased monitoring demands in line with OFWAT requirements.
- 6.2. The development will be located on an existing depot area within the operational STW site with no appreciable impact on the surrounding area.
- 6.3. Overall, the development is considered to comply with existing relevant national and local planning policies and as such permission should be granted.

