

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Whitley Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0052 Full planning permission

Address: Reading Gateway, Gateway Projected End South, Reading, RG2 0GG

Proposal: Creation of charging zones, erection of EV chargers, sub-station enclosure, feeder pillars and associated works.

Applicant: C/o Agent

Received date: 19 January 2026

Extended Target Decision date: 13 August 2026

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site relates to part of the existing car parking area within the Reading Gateway Retail Park, on Proctor End South. The retail park contains a mix of commercial and leisure units, with car showrooms adjacent to the site which is surrounded by residential uses. The edge of the retail park has landscape buffer around the site. Reading Gateway forms part of the wider Worton Grange development.

The A33 is located to the west and B3031 to the south. It is within an Air Quality Management Area (Policy DM19). The proposal site is not within a Conservation Area or Listed. The southern edge of the site falls within a green link (EN12).

Site visit photo 10/03/2026



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal is to improve the electrical vehicle infrastructure provision within the existing car park at the Reading Gateway retail park, to include the creation of 12 vehicle charging bays, the erection of 6 EV chargers, sub-station enclosure, feeder pillars and associated works.

Plans considered

D210164 139 04 - EV Charger Details

CIL

As received 19 January 2026

CSC1322 Covering letter, Carney Sweeney, 26 January 2026

As received 26 January 2026

Arboricultural Report Reading Gateway Retail Park, Silverback arboricultural consultancy Ltd February 2026

As received 19/02/2026

DRAFT FOR INFORMATION_Biodiversity Gain Plan_v1-0

6852_Post-development Habitat Map_V1-0_BW

6852_Baseline Habitat Map_V1-0_BW

6852_Condition Assessment Sheets_V1-0_BW

As received 8/04/2026

D210164 139 03 Rev E – Proposed Detail Plan, Raw Charging Network Ltd

D210164 139 02 Rev E – Existing and Proposed Block, Raw Charging Network Ltd

D210164 139 05 Rev B – Feeder Pillar and Substation, Raw Charging Network Ltd

37505211_SGN: 1016 utilities overview map of worksite p1, Wortin Drive & Imperial Way p2, Ruston Close & Tidman Road p3, Little Lea Farmhouse p4, Whitley Wood Road p5.

As received 2 July 2026

CA-RGW-2026-01 Rev F Reading Gateway Existing Features

CA-RGW-2026-02 Rev F Reading Gateway Existing Features and Overlay

CA-RGW-2026-03 Rev H Reading Gateway Landscape Proposals

CA-RGW-2026-03 Rev D2 Reading Gateway Landscape Proposals Substation Options

CA-RGW-2026-06 Rev A Reading Gateway Landscape Substation Area

CA 2026 Reading Gateway Planting Schedule rev 20 July 2026

As received 27/07/2026

D210164 139 01 G - Site Location Plan

As received 03/08/2026

Reading Gateway Retail Park Landscape Statement rev 5 August 2026

CA-RGW-2026-04 Rev H Reading Gateway Landscape Specifications and Sections

As received 05/08/2026

Relevant planning history

151944/HYB - A Hybrid application seeking outline planning permission for the development of up to 175 new homes, including affordable housing(with all matters reserved apart from access), and full planning permission for the development of 12 commercial units in flexible use within Classes B1(c),B2 and B8,two car showrooms with MOT and servicing(Sui Generis), three retail warehouse units (Class A1),120 bed hotel (Class C1),pub with restaurant facility (Class A4),coffee shop (Class A1), restaurant (Class A3), and bank (Class A2). New vehicular access from Basingstoke Road and Imperial Way. Bus stop facilities, hard and soft landscaping and other ancillary development (Summarised Description). – Approved 14/4/16

161672/NMA - Application for a non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission (151944) - Agreed 20/10/16 - Relating to the A1 retail units A (now Wren), B (application site) & C (vacant Toys-R-Us) to amend the range of goods and remove hours restriction for Bank Holidays.

162257/FUL - Application for the Erection of a 557 sq. m Building [Unit D as was] for use within Class A1/ A2/ A3/A5 and Associated Parking and Landscaping Works – Approved 3/3/17 – Originally referred to as Unit D and had an original permitted use for A2– occupied now by Schmidt – kitchens and bedrooms.

190890/FUL - Change of use of unit from retail (Class A1) to gym (Class D2) and insertion of 1,105sqm GIA mezzanine floor – Application Permitted 05/12/2019

221908/FUL Use of Unit 6 (Unit C) for the sale of food, external alterations, installation of electric vehicle charging bays and associated alterations to car park.

241329/FUL - External alterations to the existing hotel and Sui Generis (Drinking Establishment with expanded food provision) building to provide additional hotel bedrooms, reconfigured ancillary hotel restaurant and all associated works. Approved 21/11/2024

240051/ADV Replacement fascia signage, pylon sign, service signage and entrance gateway. New directional signage and parking signage.

3. CONSULTATIONS

Internal Consultations

- RBC Transport Development Control – No Objections. The application site comprises an existing car parking area within the Reading Gateway Retail Park. The proposed development involves the installation of 6 no. electric vehicle (EV) charging units and the creation of 12 no. dedicated EV charging bays to support their operation.

The works also include the provision of a substation enclosure, feeder pillars, and all associated infrastructure and groundworks required to facilitate the EV charging facilities.

Although the proposals will result in the loss of three existing car parking spaces, this reduction is considered minor within the context of the wider car park and will not materially impact the operational capacity of the retail park.

The installation of new electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure directly supports national and local policy objectives aimed at reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and encouraging the transition towards low emission transport modes. Providing accessible, high quality EV charging facilities will also future proof the retail park by meeting increasing public demand for electric vehicle charging opportunities.

In this context, the slight reduction in parking provision is justified by the significant contribution the scheme makes to promoting sustainable travel choices and supporting long term environmental goals. Therefore, there are no transport objections to this application.

- RBC Planning Natural Environment – Comments received on 16 April 2026 - The proposal requires the construction of a new sub-station on the existing landscape zone around the car park, with the associated loss of landscaping space including a category A Lime tree and one category B Hornbeam. The landscape buffer was deemed important to soften the car parks as part of the development; the reduction of which is undesirable. These trees were secured as part of the landscaping for the development and have been growing for at least 8 years, so have successfully established. The principle of removing trees to allow for an electricity sub-station feeding EV chargers is not acceptable. The benefit of trees outweighs the benefit of EV vehicles and citing the benefit of e-vehicles is a flawed argument if you are removing trees. Given the location of the sub-station, I would also suggest that it will be visually intrusive at the entrance to the estate – location shown by red rectangle below:



I note hedging is proposed around it, but planted at 60-90cm high, with no maintenance height stated, when the substation is 2.4m at its maximum.

As a default, the substation should be sited on existing hard standing to avoid incursion into the soft landscape zone.

I note that 6 trees are proposed, along with other planting as mitigation, hence providing a net gain.

Amendments are required to preserve the green buffer.

Comments 12 August 2026 – Following the submission of revised documents and plans, conditions are required for landscape implementation. Regular maintenance and watering is required.

- RBC Ecology – Following revision to plans submitted, the loss of two trees is still disappointing, but the applicant has provided some fairly robust reasons for why this is required and the proposed compensatory planting/landscaping is significantly improved.

So on balance, there would be no longer sufficient ecological reasons to continue to object - however the development is still subject to statutory BNG. Consequently, if planning permission is granted, it will be contingent on meeting the pre-commencement general biodiversity net gain condition. This condition requires the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, demonstrating how a 10% increase in biodiversity value will be achieved for the development – I've attached the wording below. (nb the Biodiversity Gain Plan should be consistent with the approved landscaping plans to secure the delivery of the planting and trees they have proposed in the latest plans)

Standard BNG wording

Informative:

Please note that this permission is has been granted subject to the statutory condition ("the biodiversity gain condition") that development may not begin unless:

(a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Failure to submit a Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to the commencement of development is a breach of planning consent and may lead to formal enforcement action being taken that will require all development on site to cease.

You should ensure that works do not commence until Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the council and "the biodiversity gain condition" has been discharged.

- RBC Environmental Protection – There are no comments on this application, as it is sufficiently far from residents to mean that there is no concern about noise emissions.

A site notice was displayed at the site on 10 March 2026. No letters of representation have been received.



4. EQUALITY ACT 2010

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)
CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)
EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network)
EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland)
EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources)
EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment)
TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-related matters)
TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging)

Other

Reading Council Tree Strategy, March 2021
Carbon Plan 2020-2025
Reading's Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030
Reading Climate Action Plan 2025-2030

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A pre-submission draft was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 9th of May 2025 and is currently at examination.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

6. APPRAISAL

a) Principle of development

Subject to consideration of other material considerations, the principle of expanding the infrastructure is considered acceptable in order to improve provision in line with Carbon Plan 2020-2025, Reading’s Climate Emergency Strategy 2025-2030, Reading Climate Action Plan 2025 - 2030 and to meet aims of the Reading Climate Action Network.

b) Design and impact on the character of the area

Policy CC7 requires that all development be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Policy CC8 states development should ‘not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.’

The design of the proposed substation works has been set back away from the edge of the Proctor End South Road and pedestrian footpath to a location set behind vegetation, to reduce the visual impact of the proposed substation enclosure within the public realm and soften the appearance of the development. The remaining works are located within the existing car park and their appearance will be softened by additional landscaping at the site. There is not considered to be any significant noise impact, due to the distance between the development and neighbouring residential amenity. RBC Environmental protection did not object to the proposal. From the documents supplied it is not expected that the proposal will cause any adverse harm to the character and appearance of the entrance to the Reading Gateway retail park and appearance of the car park. It is therefore considered acceptable in terms of character and residential amenity, in accordance with Policies CC7 and CC8.

c) Impact on biodiversity and the green link

The proposed works will result in the removal of planted tree in the area of works for the substation. Following discussion as with the applicant, a revised planting scheme was proposed, with maintenance plan to retain a landscape buffer around the site. The revisions are considered satisfactory to offset the impact of the works to be undertaken. As such the proposal is considered acceptable subject to conditions for landscaping and maintenance, in accordance with Policies CC7, EN12 and EN14.

Conditions are required for landscape implementation, compliance with the arboricultural method statement and a BNG informative is required.

d) Loss of parking spaces

RBC transport did not object to the proposed works and confirmed that on balance, in this instance, a loss of parking spaces would be acceptable and justifiable due to sustainable travel choices that support long term environmental goals.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable in terms of design and appearance in the public realm, noise and impact on amenity and biodiversity and on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION
GRANT

Recommended Conditions:

Time Limit

Plans

Materials

Landscaping and maintenance

AMS