

Comments from the Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) on the main modifications to the Reading Borough Council Local Plan - July 2019

B1 Main Modification	B2 Whether Sound	B3 Comment	B4 Suggested Revision
MM6	Yes	CADRA welcomes the modification	
MM7	Yes	CADRA welcomes the modification	
MM15	No	<p>The Local Plan succeeds in accommodating almost all of its substantial housing requirement within a tight geographical boundary. However, that combination impels a big increase in the number of apartments and, particularly, in the height of residential development. This is already having a dramatic and unwelcome effect on the townscape of central Reading, which is being changed beyond recognition. Reading is being severely stretched to accommodate its own predicted housing needs.</p> <p>The reasons for that are understood. So too is the wish avoid the situation where beneficial windfall employment growth, beyond the plan's allocations, would have to be rejected because of insufficient housing and the consequent inflation of this market. We assume that is the logic behind this policy, but suggest it is misplaced in its revised form.</p> <p>As drafted, it means that additional employment development could provide a pretext for additional housing beyond current allocations. It provides a loophole for developers to coordinate applications for offices and housing, enabling them to exceed the Plan's targets for both. In our view, the town's capacity to absorb more of either is badly enough stretched by existing allocations, without such a potentially open-ended increase beyond them.</p> <p>With a very high proportion of potential sites within Reading already identified and allocated, such pressure would place renewed pressure for development on the town's fringes which hitherto, for good reasons, has been successfully resisted.</p>	<p>CADRA suggests that the risk of windfall employment inflating the housing market could be overcome by reinstating the previous references to affordable housing, which would have the opposite effect, and by omitting references to the provision of new housing.</p> <p>MM15 would then read:</p> <p>"...will need to either (a) demonstrate that it will not result in additional need for local housing; or (b) mitigate its impacts on the need for local housing through contributions to affordable housing".</p>
MM32	Yes	CADRA welcomes the modification	
MM34	Yes	CADRA welcomes the modification	
MM44	No	The requirement that any replacement for the Hexagon should be in the same area is damagingly restrictive. The possibility of a new theatre could be	Remove the first proposed amendment and revert to the original. Delete 'which is expected

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		<p>decisive in building the critical mass needed for a new cultural quarter centred on a regenerated Reading Gaol.</p> <p>The policy as amended unnecessarily restricts this possibility. Removing the amendment, to make the policy non-site specific, would not preclude either location.</p>	to be in the same area' from the second amendment.
MM45	No	<p>CADRA urges revisions to make this policy proactively supportive of the re-use of the Gaol as the core of a new cultural quarter for Reading. For a town of its size and prosperity, Reading lacks many of the cultural facilities one might expect: for example, a high-quality dedicated gallery, a producing theatre, and easy-terms accommodation for creative businesses. Smaller and less prosperous places out-perform it markedly in these respects, and restoration of the Gaol for these purposes would be a double win, through not only their provision but also the exciting restoration of this important historic building for purposes of wide community benefit.</p> <p>CADRA appreciates the huge financial and other problems in achieving this, so suggests that this aspiration be expressed as a strong first preference for the site. The other uses mentioned in the policy should be cast very much as fall-backs, only applicable should there be conclusive evidence that this aspiration cannot be delivered.</p> <p>The bland current reference to including 'some cultural or heritage element' within a scheme devoted primarily to other uses is a wholly inadequate response to this great potential.</p>	
MM59	Yes	CADRA welcomes this revision. The issues of extensive development north of the Thames have been extensively considered.	
MM62	Yes	CADRA broadly welcomes a policy which should enable a new use for this important building while retaining its important historic features. Our only concern is that important internal features should be protected as well as its external appearance, and we suggest a slight amendment below to reinforce this point.	"... if it sustains the significance of the listed building, including any important internal features and the building's major internal spaces."