

CHAPTER 12 WASTE AND RECYCLING

Introduction

Waste is produced in Reading by all of the activities of our society, from households, offices, shops, factories and construction. Because of its potential to cause pollution and the significant quantities in which it is produced, the safe disposal of waste is becoming an increasing problem for society. Reading faces particular problems due to the acute shortage of local landfill space, traditionally the major disposal route for the UK's waste.

As unitary authority for the area, Reading has a number of roles in waste management: as waste disposal authority, making arrangements for the safe disposal of household waste in a sustainable manner; as waste collection authority, ensuring that the waste is safely transported to these facilities; and as waste planning authority with responsibility for development control matters within its boundary and planning policy matters, including the preparation of a waste local plan. The bringing together of all of these functions following the establishment of the unitary authority will for the first time provide an opportunity to provide an integrated strategy for sustainable waste management in Reading.

Following the abolition of the county council, the six unitary authorities have agreed to work together on waste planning policy matters through the Joint Strategic Planning Committee to ensure a consistent and strategic approach. To this end both the existing Berkshire Structure Plan, which sets out broad strategic planning policies, and the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire, will continue to be a matter for the Joint Committee.

The council works closely with the Environment Agency, which upon its establishment in April 1996 inherited the waste regulation duties formerly carried out by the county council, including the issuing of waste management licenses and the regulation of licensed waste management sites.

This section of the report begins by outlining the legislative framework and guidance which sets the context for waste management in Reading, looks at the current situation and identifies opportunities for the future.

Contents

Legislation and Guidance

- Waste Generated
- Waste Disposal
- Recycling
- Options for the Future
- Waste Strategy for Reading
- Main Issues
- Key Contact(s)
- Reference Documents

Legislation and Guidance

European Legislation

The EC has a significant role in setting the standards for sustainable waste management in the UK through a series of directives on waste. The following are of particular significance:

- **The Waste Framework Directive**

This introduced a hierarchy of waste management methods, established a need for member states to have regard to the protection of human health, and the need to establish an

appropriate network of waste management facilities in accordance with the *proximity principle*. This principle, which states that waste should be disposed of as closely as possible to where it is produced, has been fully adopted into UK policy.

- **The Landfill Directive**

The Landfill Directive sets targets for reduction in the landfilling of untreated biodegradable waste, and institutes provisions for the control, monitoring, reporting and closure of landfill sites. Separate legislation will be required to bring the terms of the directive into force in the UK.

- **The Packaging Directive**

This led to the Producer Responsibility Initiative whereby large manufacturers are required to meet targets for the recovery of packaging waste. These targets are now contained in UK legislation.

National Guidance

- **Legislation**

The principal legislation governing waste regulation is contained in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Environment Act 1995. Among other things, the Environmental Protection Act requires the Secretary of State to prepare a national waste strategy for England and Wales. Legislation governing the planning aspects of waste is contained in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- **Sustainable Development – The UK Strategy**

This sets out the government's overall environmental strategy including waste management.

- **Making Waste Work (1995)**

The previous government's policy document, which sets out the UK's own hierarchy to substitute landfill disposal for more sustainable options including waste minimisation, recycling, and waste treatment.

- **A Way with Waste (1999)**

This is the final draft version of the national waste strategy required by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and supersedes a consultation document entitled *Less Waste More Value* which was published in 1998. It aims to promote a sustainable approach to waste management, based on the principle of adopting the 'Best Practicable Environmental Option' for future waste treatment or disposal. This in turn is supported by a waste hierarchy favouring reduction, re-use and recovery ahead of waste disposal. The final version of the national strategy is due to be issued in late 1999/early 2000

- **Planning Policy Guidance Note 10: Planning and Waste Management**

This provides advice on the waste planning framework and the planning system's role in achieving sustainable waste management. The guidance contains advice on the main organisations involved in waste planning and the relationship between the planning system and waste management licensing, as well as the issues to be addressed in development plans and development control, including a detailed annex giving considerations and conditions relevant to waste management development.

Regional Guidance

- **Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (1994)**

This provides guidance to local authorities on the future development of the region. It sets out the position of the South East as a whole in respect of waste disposal, and provides guidance to local planning authorities, in a regional context, on the provision of waste management facilities.

- **A Sustainable Development Strategy for the South East (1998)**

This document, produced by SERPLAN (the regional planning body for the South East), sets out an overall strategy for the development of the region, and will lead to the publication by government of revised Regional Planning Guidance. The document highlights the key features of SERPLAN's waste strategy for the region (see below) and recommends this for adoption as government policy.

- **Revised Waste Planning Advice – A Sustainable Waste Planning Strategy for the South East 1996-2010 (1997)**

SERPLAN has produced advice to the region's waste planning authorities which sets targets for recycling and for reductions in the disposal of waste to landfill in the region, including reductions in the export of waste from London for disposal to landfill in the surrounding authorities.

Local Policy and Initiatives

- **Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006 (1995)**

The plan sets the context for development in the former Berkshire area. On the subject of waste the plan includes strategic waste policies and provides broad criteria for the identification of broad areas of search for waste management sites in the preparation of waste local plans, having regard to national and regional guidance.

- **Waste Management Plan for Berkshire (1995)**

This was prepared by the former county council to provide detailed information on the waste disposal requirements of Berkshire, and the principles of sustainable waste management in the county. The proposed waste strategy in the document forms the basis for the identification of suitable sites in the Waste Local Plan.

- **The Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (1998)**

This statutory local plan sets out detailed policies against which planning applications will be judged, and identifies preferred sites for the location of waste management facilities.

- **What Shall We do with our Rubbish – A Green Paper on the Future of Waste in Reading (1998)**

This is a consultation document produced by Reading Borough Council which raises the issues which will need to be considered by the council in identifying the options for the future disposal of its waste. The document provides information on the current arrangements for waste recycling and disposal in Reading, and looks at the different waste management methods that will need to be considered. The consultation period for the document runs from late 1998 through until Spring 1999, and provides an opportunity for local people to have a say in the decisions that will have to be taken.

Waste Generated

Household waste, including refuse collected from households, street sweepings, litter bin emptying and waste from civic amenity sites, accounts for only 7% of the total waste

produced in the UK (Source – *Making Waste Work*, DoE 1995).

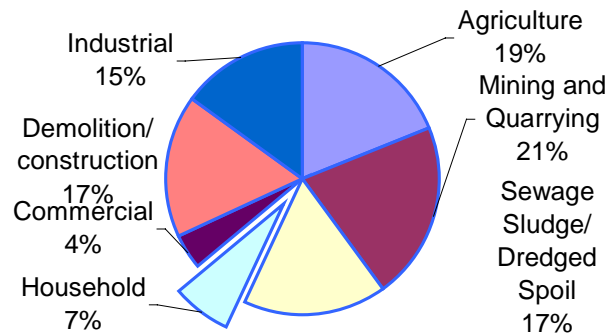
The remainder includes construction and demolition waste, commercial and industrial waste, and agricultural waste (see Figure 12.1). However, the biodegradable nature of household waste causes particular problems, including potential to cause groundwater pollution, methane generation and odour. In Reading, the total amount of waste collected from households in 1998/99 was just over 69,000 tonnes. Table 12.1 shows the amount of household waste collected in Reading in recent years.

	1992/3	1993/4	1994/5	1995/6	1996/7	1997/8	98/99
Total waste collected	34698	34734	35183	54442*	58046*	62758*	69009*
Waste collected for recycling	2029	2513	3166	4400	4450	4554	5368

* Includes civic amenity street sweeping; litter and bulky collections not included in earlier data.

Source: Reading Borough Council
Table 12.1 Household Waste Collection and Recycling 1992 – 1998 (tonnes)

Unlike household waste, disposal of these other forms of waste is not the responsibility of the council but the responsibility of waste producers by arrangement with private waste companies. The council does, however, have a responsibility to make planning provision for sites for the disposal of all of these wastes through the Waste Local Plan, and information on the overall quantities of waste is important. Provision of this information is the responsibility of the Environment Agency.



Source: *Making Waste Work*, DoE 1995
Figure 12.1 Waste Arisings in UK

Waste Disposal

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 required that local authorities could not operate their own waste disposal facilities. For Reading, with the exception of that waste which is collected for recycling, all of the town's household waste is disposed of at the Smallmead landfill site in the south of Reading. The site, which also takes waste from Wokingham and Newbury, has

about six years of life remaining at the current rates of disposal. Both the government and the council are, however, committed to reducing the current reliance on landfill, and following the closure of this site intend to adopt alternative solutions.

A list of licensed waste management facilities is set out in Table 12.2.

Site	Location and Grid Ref.	Acceptable Wastes
Landfill		
Smallmead Farm (Section A)	Island Road SU 697704	Household, commercial, industrial and selected difficult (A, B, C and D)
Reading Football Club	Bennet Road, SU 710700	Industrial
Civic Amenity Site		
Smallmead Civic Amenity Site	Island Road SU 710708	Civic amenity, industrial, commercial, difficult
Transfer Stations and Treatment Plants		
Darwin Close	Darwin Close SU 712703	Household, commercial and industrial
Darwin Close	Island Road SU 710703	Inert (A)
Lakeside	Smallmead Road SU 696702	Inert, commercial and industrial (A,B)
Scrapyards		
EGW Carter	Gower Street SU 704736	Gower Street SU 704736
Elliott Metals	Battle Farm Ind. Est.SU 702738	Metal and Batteries

Source: Environment Agency
Table 12.2 licensed Waste Management Sites in Reading July 1998

Recycling

The council has carried out recycling in Reading for some time, starting with the introduction of bottle banks in 1981. The network of facilities has over time been extended and now incorporates glass, cans, plastics, textiles and paper. At the same time, recycling by industry is on the increase. Valpak, a recycling body set up and funded by businesses to help them meet their obligations to reduce packaging waste, are active in Reading.

In 1996 the council wrote a recycling plan for Reading with the aim of increasing the level of household waste recycling to 12% by 2000. Following consultation on an overall waste strategy for Reading, the council may reconsider the recycling plan in order to meet targets adopted in the Berkshire Waste Management Plan, and adopted by the Borough, to achieve the following by 2005/6.

Waste type	Recycling target 2005/6

Inert waste	40%
Household waste	35%
Industrial / commercial waste	25%

Source: Waste Management Plan for Berkshire, Policies WM16, WM18 & WM20
Table 12.3 Waste Recycling Targets

Reading residents recycled 7.2% of their household waste in 1998/99, including paper, glass and textiles, through waste collected at 27 recycling sites throughout Reading. The quantities of waste collected during 1998/99 are set out in Table 12.4.

Materials	Quantity of household waste recycled (tonnes)	
	1997/98	1998/99
Textiles	88	98
Glass	1108	1069
Cans/ Plastics	180	Cans 161
Paper	2319	3049
Other	Nil	991
TOTAL	3692 3692	5368

Source: Reading Borough Council
Table 12.4 Quantities of Waste Recycled in Reading Borough 1997/99

Options for the Future

The highest priority for society must be to reduce the amount of wastes it produces in the first place (commonly known as waste minimisation). However, there will always be a quantity of waste that will need to be managed. The following waste management methods which will need to be considered in the development of an integrated waste management strategy:

- **Landfill** – As the disposal method for around 90% of the UK's waste, this is currently the most popular method of waste disposal in the UK. Waste is deposited in holes in the ground, commonly the result of previous mineral excavation. The waste decomposes and gives off methane, which is collected and either burnt in flares or used to generate electricity. Modern landfill sites are engineered to prevent groundwater pollution from the deposited waste.
- **Recycling** – Recycling and re-using waste is often seen as the most environmentally friendly disposal option. Rubbish made from paper, card, tin and glass can all be recycled. For local councils recycling may be carried out by householders bringing their separated waste to local recycling facilities, or by householders' separated waste being collected at their homes for recycling (known as kerbside collection). In addition, considerable opportunities exist for commercial and industrial recycling, and in the construction industry for the re-use of demolition waste in new development.

- **Composting** – this process breaks down organic wastes to form a material that can be used for horticultural or agricultural purposes. Composting is regarded as a form of recycling by the Government and there is a national target to compost one million tonnes of household waste by the turn of the century.
- **Anaerobic Digestion** – this process is similar to composting and breaks down organic waste to produce a substance similar to compost and a gas which can be used in agriculture.
- **Incineration with Energy Recovery** – this involves the controlled burning of waste at very high temperatures in specially constructed plants, which significantly reduces the volume of material that will require disposal to landfill. The heat produced can be used to generate electricity and to produce steam or hot water for local heating. Modern incinerators have to comply with strict emissions standards set by the EC.

Waste Strategy for Reading

Reading's strategic objectives for waste management are contained within the Berkshire Waste Management Plan (1995) and the Berkshire Waste Local Plan (adopted in 1998). The council consulted widely on how to implement the strategic objectives of these plans in early 1999. The consultation process has included more than 20 public meetings, a questionnaire and site visits for councillors and members of the public. This exercise concluded in a summit meeting to identify common principles.

It is widely recognised that landfill will always be needed for the residues of waste treatment and for waste that cannot be recycled or treated, but the disposal of large volumes of untreated waste to landfill is unsustainable, and opportunities for further local landfill for the Reading do not exist. In any case the Landfill Tax, introduced by the government in April 1997, has significantly increased the cost of landfilled disposals, and is set to increase further after April 1999. Central to any strategy for Reading, therefore, will be the need to dramatically reduce reliance on landfill over a relatively short period of time. This will require a combination of: reducing the amount of waste which is produced; meeting challenging targets for recycling; and the development of more environmentally sustainable technologies for the management of waste.

A further objective of a sustainable waste strategy is to move as much waste as is possible by means other than road transport. At present all of Reading's waste is transported by road, but opportunities should be investigated to increase the amount transported by rail.

Reading Borough Council, Wokingham District Council and Bracknell Forest Borough Council have jointly commissioned an option study for future provision of waste management services, and are currently preparing an outline business case for government backing.

A number of key policies in the Waste Management Plan and the emerging national Waste Strategy will form the basis of any future strategy for Reading:

- **Policy WM 23** – To ... 'seek to minimise the disposal to landfill of putrescible waste in and out of Berkshire by the year 2000'
- **Policy WM 24** – To ... 'seek to treat as much household waste as is practicable via alternative technologies to landfill and will encourage treatment of as much waste as is possible by these means; ensuring that the best available technology not entailing excessive cost is used taking account of any emerging statutory requirements as far as these are known; the sensible recovery of recyclables from the waste is maximised; where energy from waste is generated, as much is recovered as is practicable and economic; as much waste as is practicable is processed into useful resources or products; and as much waste as is practicable is treated, thereby minimising that going to landfill'

Main Issues

- What role can the council play in encouraging residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce?
- What are the ways in which rates of recycling could be increased?
- What are the ways in which we can treat as much waste as practicable?
- Should landfill space be identified for the future local disposal of residues from waste treatment and waste which cannot be recycled?
- Should a joint approach to waste disposal be adopted with other unitary authorities across the former Berkshire area?

Key Contact(s)

For further information, please contact Andrew Withey on 0118-939 0941.

Reference Documents

Berkshire County Council: Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006 (adopted November 1995)
Berkshire County Council: Waste Management Plan for Berkshire (adopted July 1995)
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (June 1999): A Way with Waste – A Draft Waste Strategy for England and Wales
Joint Strategic Planning Unit: Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (adopted December 1998)
Reading Borough Council (November 1998): What Will We Do With Our Rubbish – A Green Paper on the Future of Waste in Reading
SERPLAN (March 1997): Revised Waste Planning Advice – A Sustainable Strategy for the South East 1996 – 2010