

Land adjoining 9 Highmead Close, Reading, RG2 7NG

Full planning application for the erection of three dwellings

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

July 2021

Version: 1

Version control	Name	Date
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in accordance with article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. It has been prepared on behalf of GME Portfolios (the applicant) and is submitted in support of a full planning application to erect three dwellings on land adjoining 9 Highmead Close, Reading (the site).
- 1.2 This statement shows how the proposal addresses the provisions of development plan policies and relevant national and local material considerations.
- 1.3 The application comprises:
- Completed application forms.
 - Completed ownership certificates.
 - Plans and drawings, including:
 - Block and Location Plan Dwg No: J.14.2021-01, Various scales@A3
 - Site Plan Dwg No: J.14.2021-02A, Scale: 1:200@A3
 - Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations (Plot 1), Dwg No: J.14.2021-03A, Scale: 1:100@A3
 - Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations (Plot 2 and 3), Dwg No: J.14.2021-04A, Scale: 1:100@A3
- 1.4 The application is accompanied by:
- This Planning, Design and Access Statement;
 - Completed Application Form and Ownership Certificates;
 - Completed CIL 1 Form;

2. The application site and surrounds



Figure 1: Aerial Photo with the site outlined in red courtesy of Google

- 2.1 The site is located on the western side of Highmead Close, at the end of a cul-de-sac. It comprises a large triangular shaped garden located between properties 9 and 10 Highmead Close.
- 2.2 The immediate character of the area is that of five similar terraced rows positioned around the cul-de-sac, all of similar design, some of which have been extended.
- 2.3 To the immediate west of the site is an area designated as the East Reading Wooded Ridgeline. This feature is identified by the Council as a 'major landscape feature'.



Figure 2: Street view image of the application site courtesy of Google

- 2.4 The character of the area is predominately residential. Materials comprise a mixture of brick and render and many of the dwellings being of two storey, terraced form with pitched roofs.
- 2.5 There are no heritage assets on site or nearby that would be affected by the proposal and the site lies within Flood Zone 1, at the lowest probability of tidal flooding. It is also at the lowest risk of surface water flooding.

3. Relevant planning history

9 Highmead Close

- 3.1 On 05 March 2019, planning permission was granted for a two-storey dwelling attached to 9 Highmead Close (Planning Reference: 180641).



Figure 3: Approved Site Plan (Application Reference: 180641) courtesy of Ian Hunt Associates

- 3.2 The approved two storey dwelling was attached to No.9 Highmead Close on land forming the side garden of No. 9 Highmead Close, with its own amenity space and parking. The dwelling measured 7.2m width, 8.4m depth and with an overall ridge height of 7m.
- 3.3 The proposed dwelling was considered to sit comfortably within the plot and retaining sufficient space around the site, with a suitable gap between the site and the neighbouring property at 10 Highmead Close. In its determination, the Officer stated:

“The proposed dwelling would be set back from the front elevation of No. 9 and would be set below the main roof ridge, allowing it to achieve a level of subservience. Albeit the gable end on the rear elevation would be somewhat bulky, it would not be readily visible from the public

domain, and, as above, given the position of the dwelling in the plot, it would not be highly visible within the street scene. The dwelling is proposed to be painted white render. Whilst this would not match the adjoining No.9, it would match other properties within the terrace as well as the adjacent No. 10 and in this instance is considered acceptable.”

- 3.4 There has been other applications approved in Highmead Close for two storey extensions at 15 Highmead Close (Planning Reference: 181379) and 18 Highmead Close (Planning Reference: 990814) and replacement garages to 1-11 and 16-22 Highmead Close (Planning Reference: 041253).

Pre-Application Consultation

- 3.3 Prior to the submission of the planning application, an application for pre application advice was sought for the erection of four new terrace dwellings with parking and landscaping on land at 9 and 10 Highmead Close (Reference: 201369/PREAPP Ms. Ethne Humphreys).

In terms of the principle of development, the Council acknowledge that redeveloping private residential gardens in themselves could be acceptable, subject to meeting criteria within Policy H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) and other material considerations.

4. The proposed development

- 4.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of three new dwellings with parking and landscaping with a GIA of approximately 244.62sqm. The proposed dwellings would be served by a shared access point which is positioned between No’s 9 and 10 Highmead Close.
- 4.2 The design philosophy works in harmony with the site’s opportunities and constraints, the varied character of the locality, as well as well as the need set out in the NPPF to make the optimal use of land. The scheme has been carefully conceived to adhere to the residential uses found in the immediate locality as well as the desire to maintain a good relationship with neighbouring properties and achieve a positive assimilation into the street scene.

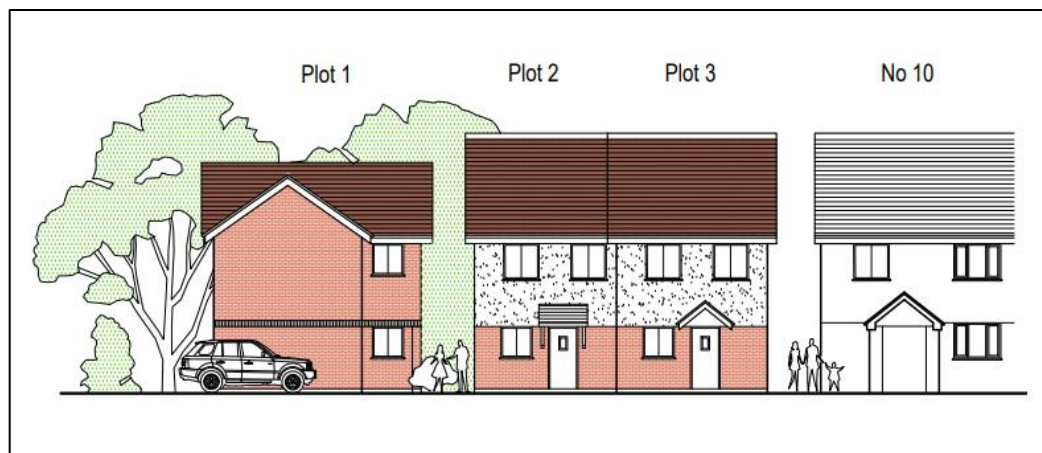


Figure 4: Excerpt of the proposed street scene courtesy of Barry Mills Ltd

- 4.3 The proposed scheme is for the construction of a detached property along with a semi detached property alongside, with parking provided at the front of the properties. The detached property (plot 1) will measure between 6-9m width, 7m depth, 4.89m to the eaves and 7.5m to the ridge. The semi-detached pair (plots 2 and 3) measure a combined width of 9.9m, 9m depth, 4.89m to the eaves and 8.5m to the ridge.

5. Planning policy context

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, defined as encompassing economic, social and environmental dimensions:
- An **economic** objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - A **social** objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - An **environmental** objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 5.2 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 explains that for decision-taking this means:
- *'approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; or*
 - *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - *the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole'.*
- 5.3 Paragraph 9 confirms that *'decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area'.*

- 5.4 Paragraph 38 requires councils to *‘approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way... and work proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible’*.
- 5.5 The NPPF encourages the delivery of a wide choice of high-quality homes and widening the opportunity for home ownership and the creation of sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities (chapter 5). Paragraph 59 of the NPPF supports the Government’s objective of *‘significantly boosting the supply of housing’*, stating that *‘it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay’*.
- 5.6 Paragraph 68 promotes the development of small and medium-sized sites, which *‘can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built out relatively quickly... local planning authorities should support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes’*.
- 5.7 Paragraph 103 supports sustainable transport, stating that *‘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’*.
- 5.8 The NPPF makes clear that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land, encouraging multiple benefits, where possible. Development should take place at appropriate densities, making *‘as much use as possible of... brownfield land’* (paragraph 117). Paragraph 123 advises that *‘where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site’*.
- 5.9 Paragraph 124 places great importance of good design, which is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 127 sets out that decisions should ensure developments:
- *‘Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;*
 - *Are visually attractive;*
 - *Are sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change;*
 - *Establish or maintain a strong sense of place;*
 - *Optimise the potential of the site; and*
 - *Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible’*.
- 5.10 Paragraph 130 goes on to state that *‘permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides*

in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision maker as a valid reason to object to development’.

5.11 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides further context on design principles¹, confirming that the National Design Guide² sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. The following sections of the guide are relevant to this application:

- Context – enhances the surroundings.
- Identity – attractive and distinctive.
- Built form – a coherent pattern of development.
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around.
- Nature – enhanced and optimised.
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive.
- Uses – mixed and integrated.
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable.
- Resources – efficient and resilient.
- Lifespan – made to last.

5.12 The picture excerpt below in figure 5 illustrates how the different design principles interact.

¹ Ref ID: 26-001-20191001

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>



Figure 5: National Design Guide excerpt

5.13 The guide confirms at paragraph 21 how:

'a well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels including:...

- **Layout:** how routes and blocks of development are arranged and relate to one another... it defines the structure or settlement pattern; the grain; and the broad distribution of different uses and their densities or building heights.
- **Form:** the three-dimensional shape and modelling of buildings and the spaces they define, including size and shape; height; bulk (volume); and massing (how the bulk is shaped into a form).
- **Scale:** the height, width and length of a building in relation to its surroundings. It relates both to the overall size and massing of individual buildings and spaces in relation to their surroundings.
- **Appearance:** the aspects of a building or space within the development which determine the visual impression the building or space makes. This includes the external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture. In the case of a space, its landscape also influences its appearance.

- **Landscape:** *the treatment of land (other than buildings) for the purpose of enhancing or protecting the amenities of the site, the area in which it is situated and the natural environment. It includes landform and drainage, hard landscape such as surfacing, boundary treatments, street furniture and play equipment. It also includes soft landscape in terms of trees, shrubs and other planting.*
- **Materials:** *the scale, form and appearance of a building influence what materials may be appropriate for its construction. Materials should be practical, durable, affordable and attractive.*
- **Detailing:** *the individual components and how they are put together.*

Development Plan

5.14 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the adopted Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the Development Plan comprises:

- Reading Local Plan 2019

5.15 The Reading Local Plan contains the following relevant objectives:

- Strengthen the role of Reading, including central Reading, as the hub for the Thames Valley, providing an accessible focus for the development of employment, housing, services and facilities, meeting the needs of residents, workers, visitors, those who study in Reading Borough, and the wider area;
- Make the most efficient use of Reading's limited land, particularly previously developed land, to ensure that as many new homes as possible are delivered to meet identified needs, particularly needs for affordable housing;
- Improve the quality of life for those living, working, studying in and visiting the Borough, creating inclusive, sustainable communities with good access to employment, open space and water space, transport, education, services and facilities (such as sustainable water supplies and wastewater treatment, healthcare services, social and community facilities, sport and recreation, etc.) to meet identified needs;
- Ensure new development and existing areas are accessible and sustainable, in accordance with the sustainability appraisal objectives, including reducing its effects on, and adapting to, climate change;
- Maintain and enhance the historic, built and natural environment of the Borough through investment and high quality design, and capitalise on these assets to contribute to quality of life and economic success.



Figure 6: Reading Local Plan Proposals Map Extract (blue denotes the Major Landscape feature policy EN13 and green denotes Local Greenspace and Public Open Space policy EN7)

- 5.16 Policy CC1, titled *'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development'* essential repeats the sentiment of the NPPF'S presumption in favour.
- 5.17 Policy CC2, titled *'Sustainable Design and Construction'* states that proposals for new buildings will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.
- 5.18 Policy CC5 titled *'Waste Minimisation and storage'* states that development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste. This includes the promotion of layouts and designs that provide adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.
- 5.19 Policy CC6 titled *'Accessibility and the intensity of development'* requires the scale and density of development to be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations.
- 5.20 Policy CC7 titled *'Design and the Public Realm'* states that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Development proposals will be assessed to ensure they make a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives:
- Character – a place with its own identity and sense of place
 - Continuity and enclosure
 - Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping
 - Ease of movement and permeability

- Legibility – clear image and easy to understand
- Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time
- Diversity – meets a wide range of needs

5.21 Policy CC8 '*Safeguarding Amenity*' seeks to protect the living environment of existing residential properties and the living conditions for new residential properties in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development, harm to outlook, noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, vibration, dust and fumes, smell and crime and safety.

5.22 The policy states that the position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy.

5.23 Policy EN12 titled '*Biodiversity and the Green Network*' states that development proposals should retain protect and incorporate features of biodiversity. Permission will not be granted for development that negatively affects the sites with identified interest or fragments the overall Green Network which includes areas with potential for biodiversity value.

5.24 Policy EN14 titled '*Trees, hedges and woodlands*' states that new development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is location, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change.

5.25 Policy EN18 titled '*Flooding and sustainable drainage systems*' states that development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance. Wherever possible, development should be designed to reduce flood risk, both on and off site.

5.26 Policy H1 titled '*Provision of housing*' states that provision will be made for at least an additional 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2013-2036.

5.27 Policy H2 titled '*Density and Mix*' states that the appropriate density of residential development will be informed by:

- the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located, including the housing mix, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscape or townscape areas;
- its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;
- the need to achieve high quality design;

- the need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and
- the need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

5.28 Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing in particular for family homes of three or more bedrooms.

5.29 Policy H3 titled '*Affordable Housing*' requires residential development to make appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading. On sites of 4 or more dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.

5.30 Policy H5 titled '*Standards for new housing*' states that new build housing should be built to the following standards unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable:

a. All new build housing outside the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map will comply with the nationally-described space standard.

b. All new build housing will be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations⁷⁹.

c. All major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes.

d. All other new build housing will achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.

e. All new build housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless it is built in line with M4(3) (see below).

f. On developments of 20 or more new build dwellings, at least 5% of dwellings will be wheelchair user dwellings in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations. Any market homes provided to meet this requirement will be 'wheelchair adaptable' as defined in part M, whilst homes where the Council is responsible for allocating or nominating an individual may be 'wheelchair accessible'.

5.31 Policy H10 titled '*Private and communal outdoor space*' states that dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas. Home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space.

5.32 Policy H11 titled: '*Development of private residential gardens*' states that proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

- 1) The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:

- The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;
 - A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage;
 - Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc;
 - Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area;
 - The materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary;
 - The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.
- 2) The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking;
- 3) The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;
- 4) The proposal does not lead to tandem development⁸⁹;
- 5) The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;
- 6) The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;
- 7) The emphasis is on the provision of family-sized housing;
- 8) The development provides biodiversity net gain wherever possible, and would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit or in association with adjacent green space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribute to the green network; and
- 9) The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area.
- 5.33 Policy TR3 titled '*Access, traffic and highway related matters*' requires development to meet the following criteria:
- i) Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;
 - ii) The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;

- iii) The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists.

5.34 The policy continues to state that proposals involving either the construction of a new site access, or a material increase in the use of an existing site access, directly onto the Classified Highway Network will not be acceptable if they would be likely to result in the encouragement of the use of the network for short local trips or compromise the safe movement and free flow of traffic on the network or the safe use of the road.

5.35 Policy TR5 titled '*Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging*' states that 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. The policy also requires all new houses with dedicated off-street parking should provide charging points for electric vehicles.

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document SPD (Adopted March 2021)

5.36 This SPD provides further information to supplement policies in the Reading Borough Local Plan in achieving affordable housing.

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (Adopted 31st October 2011)

5.37 The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. Typically, these areas are within 400m of a Reading Buses high frequency 'Premier Route' which provides high quality bus routes to and from Reading town centre and other local centre facilities. A parking provision of 2 car parking spaces per 3 bedroom dwelling is stipulated.

Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (Adopted April 2015)

5.38 This SPD sets out the Council's approach towards seeking planning obligations. The Council will assess each application individually, to determine whether an obligation is needed, and what matters it should address, and will justify the reasons for seeking an obligation.

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (Adopted December 2019)

5.39 This SPD explains planning requirements with regard to energy, climate change, water management and waste reduction. It is intended to supplement the policies of the Local Plan. As part of Reading's sustainability aims, the Council is committed to working with the local community and businesses to respond to the challenges of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the changes that climate change will bring.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 5.40 The Council approved its CIL charging schedule in January 2015. Residential development is charged at a Borough wide £156.71 (charge per square metre 2021 CIL rate).

6. Design

Use

- 6.1 The use of the proposed development is residential. This is entirely compatible with neighbouring uses and the character of the locality. In line paragraph 123 of the NPPF, it constitutes an effective use of land, taking place at an appropriate density and making '*optimal use*' of the site.
- 6.2 The application site is located within the built-up area of the Borough, within a sustainable transport corridor. The proposed development will deliver three new residential houses consistent with the aims of policy H1.
- 6.3 The development of this large space also meets with the objectives of Policy H11, as follows:
- a) The proposal would make a positive contribution to the character of the area;
 - b) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development;
 - c) The proposal has a suitable access;
 - d) The proposal would not lead to an unacceptable tandem development;
 - e) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas;
 - f) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities;
 - g) The proposal delivers family housing;
 - h) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity; and
 - i) The proposal does not prejudice the development of the wider area
- 6.4 The introduction of residential units within this site, in this sustainable location, is supported by the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that planning decisions should '*promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)*'. In addition, the Local Plan identifies the importance of windfall sites in delivering residential units to help meet the Council's identified housing need.
- 6.5 In terms of the proposed use and its relationship with its context and the established character of the area, it is considered, as demonstrated below, that the proposal has been

designed in a manner which integrates with the established settlement pattern and has an arrangement and scale of the built form appropriate to the area. As such, it is considered that the proposed use will not detrimentally alter the established character of the area.

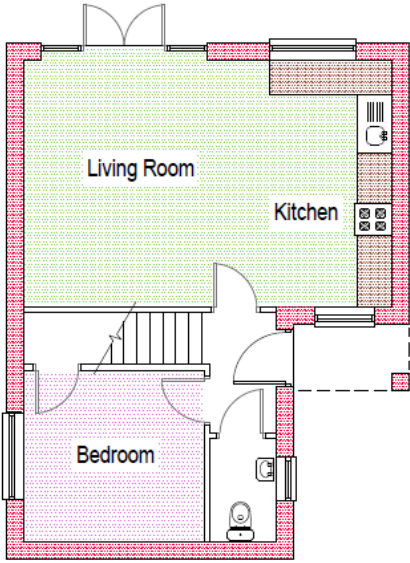
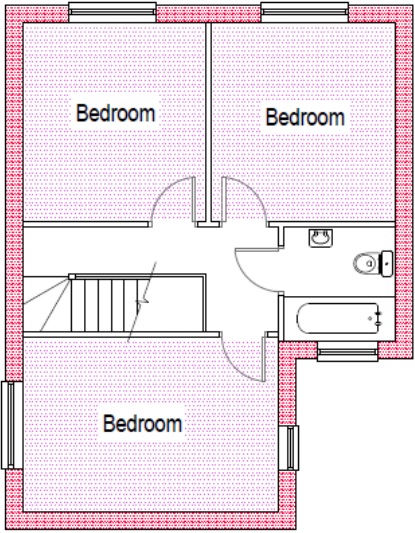
Amount

- 6.6 The proposal will provide three new residential dwellings to Highmead Close. Plot 1 is a four-bedroom detached property with a GIA of 93.42sqm. Plots 2 and 3 are a semi-detached pair of three-bedroom units each measuring 75.60sqm GIA. This reflects the built form of other properties in the immediate vicinity.
- 6.7 The proposed dwellings will be arranged in the corner of the cul-de-sac allowing for a private garden for each property and parking at the front. The proposal has been designed to address the urban environment, enhancing the townscape value of the site's setting.

Layout

- 6.8 The layout of the proposed development has been designed to ensure that the built form respects the rhythm and spacing of the streetscene and the privacy of neighbouring plots and future occupants.
- 6.9 The proposed scheme sets the semi-detached pair (plots 2 and 3) behind No. 10, with plot 1 orientated at a ninety-degree angle as it turns the corner of the cul-de-sac. This helps to blend in with the prevailing pattern of properties in Highmead Close. Not only is there adequate spacing between the proposed dwellings, but there also remains a gap in the built form for access and parking.
- 6.10 The overall bulk and massing of the scheme's footprint has been designed to work with the form of the site so that it adheres to the character of the area, while providing three properties that sufficiently fit into the character of the cul-de-sac.
- 6.11 The proposed dwellings will all front onto Highmead Close and follow the existing arrangement of the cul-de-sac, where parking is typically in front of dwellings and with adequate private garden space at the rear. This makes the most efficient use of the space the site offers, without impacting upon neighbouring properties.
- 6.12 At the pre application stage, a proposal of a terrace containing four properties was considered to appear cramped, representing an overdevelopment of the site. In responding to this comment, the current proposals have successfully reduced the number of dwellings sought and broken up the layout of development in order to preserve and enhance the character of the area in keeping with Policy CC7.
- 6.13 The proposal is sufficiently sited away from the designated Major Landscape Feature to the west of the site, so as not to detract from this feature and in accordance with Policy EN13.
- 6.14 The neighbouring properties most likely to be affected by the proposals are No. 9 and No. 10 Highmead Close, located to the south and east of the site respectively. No 10 has a two

ground floor windows, but no first-floor windows on its flank elevation. There are no windows proposed on the flank elevation of plot 3 and a gap of 1.6m would be maintained between the two properties. The front building line of the proposal would sit 1.4m back from No. 10 and the proposed rear building line would be roughly in keeping with that of its immediate neighbour.

	
Proposed Ground Floor Plan Plot 1	Proposed First Floor Plan Plot 1

6.15 In relation to No. 9 Highmead Close, which contains a ground and first floor window, plot 1 would be sited approximately 9m away, with intervening access, parking and landscaping. The principal elevation of plot 1 is also orientated at a ninety-degree angle to this property and with no windows on its nearest flank elevation. While the proposal will introduce a ground floor kitchen window and first floor bathroom window, these would be sited approximately 12m away from the neighbouring property. Proposed plots 2 and 3 are sited 12.2m and 10m respectively from this neighbour. While this falls below the recommended 15m, it should be noted that the first-floor window at this neighbouring property serves a landing and not a habitable room.

Scale

6.16 The scale of the proposed housing is in keeping with the surrounding dwellings, with the width and height of properties comparable to the neighbouring built form. It is considered that the proposal respects the pattern of development in the area without harming the amenity of neighbouring properties or the character of the area.

- 6.17 Plot 1 measures between 6.0-9.0m width, 7.0m depth, 4.89m to the eaves and 7.5m to the ridge. The semi-detached pair (plots 2 and 3) measure a combined width of 9.9m, 9.0m depth, 4.89m to the eaves and 8.5m to the ridge.
- 6.18 Policy H5 '*Standards for New Housing*' sets out the standard to which all new build housing should be built. It requires all new housing outside the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map will comply with the nationally prescribed space standard. The table below (Figure) shows the nationally prescribed space standards for new development:

Table 1 - Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)					
Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

Figure 7: Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard from Department for Communities and Local Government (March 2015)

Plot 1 proposes a four-bed property measuring 93.42sqm and the technical housing standards require 97sqm for a two-storey property. While this constitutes a 3.58sqm shortfall, it should be noted that one of the bedrooms is downstairs and could arguably be used as a dining room or study space as opposed to a bedroom and therefore, the proposal would be classified as a three-bedroom property where the GIA would comfortably comply with the technical space standards.

Plots 2 and 3 are three-bedroom properties, each measuring 75.60sqm. While this is slightly smaller than the space standards (84sqm), it should be noted that the difference is marginal and there is no loss in headroom height with a conventional two storey pair of dwellings proposed and no accommodation in the roof space or the use of dormer windows.

In terms of the additional requirements stipulated in Policy H5, namely the higher water efficiency standards, zero carbon design standards and a minimum of 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building

Regulations and all new build housing to be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of Building Regulations, which can be examined during the course of the application.

Appearance

- 6.19 Through the use of modern design and a high-quality material finish, the proposal sits harmoniously within the Highmead Close street scene and has a positive relationship with neighbouring properties.
- 6.20 The proposal incorporates a combination of red brick with rendered and colour washed walls on the semi-detached pair, while the detached property utilises only red brick. The existing properties in the cul-de-sac are a mixture of red brick, render or a combination of both.



Figure 8: Proposed streetscene courtesy of Barry J Mills Ltd

- 6.21 The proposed built form is hipped which is appropriate in this urban context with plain tiled roofs. The properties also feature a simple porch canopy, a feature which is in keeping with the existing properties.

Landscaping and Trees

- 6.22 The proposed ratio of built form to soft landscaping is commensurate with that of the existing character of the area. Each of the properties would have a sizeable rear garden which would result in a pleasant outdoor space for future residents, as well as biodiversity gain and drainage benefits in accordance with Policy CC7.
- 6.23 The application site is located immediately adjacent to the East Reading Wooded Ridgeline major landscape feature. The site features existing trees along the northern and western boundaries, all within neighbouring land / woodland. The application is supported by a full Arboricultural Method Statement prepared by Heritage Tree Services Ltd which confirms that the proposed development has broadly been designed to avoid existing tree Root Protection Areas (RPAs), albeit some minimal incursion of plot 1 into a tree, yet this is considered minimal with adequate protection measures in place. It concludes that with compliance to the tree protection measures by the contractor and supervision and guidance from the nominated arboriculturist, the retained trees should not experience trauma, damage or a shortened expected lifespan.

Access

- 6.24 The proposal shows a new shared access arrangement to serve the three dwellings, which retains two car parking spaces for No's 9 and 10 Highmead Close. A total of 5 spaces are provided which is in keeping with the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, where the site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, which requires a parking provision of 1.5 spaces for the proposed dwellings.
- 6.25 Policy TR5 requires each new house to be provided with an electric vehicle charging point and this provision can be conditioned accordingly. Similarly, the Council's Parking Standards and Design SPD requires a minimum provision of 1 No. cycle storage space be provided per dwelling. Stores can be provided in the rear garden area of the proposed dwellings with access easily obtainable without any obstruction, which can be conditioned.
- 6.26 The site is well served by public transport facilities. It is located in close proximity to a number of bus routes. The application site locality will continue to remain a highly sustainable location in the future and will continue to be a hub for community facilities and services. These features demonstrate the sustainable nature of the site which underpins the principle of its redevelopment to provide residential units.

Sustainability

- 6.27 The proposal has been designed to maximise light penetration and solar gain. The design will ensure that the development benefits from good levels of sunlight and daylight and will reduce the reliance on artificial lighting and heating within units. The position of windows and doors allows for flow of air through individual dwellings and access to outdoor garden space.
- 6.28 The hipped roof form provides an opportunity to install an array of suitably orientated solar PV panels and the dwellings can be fitted with Dimplex Edel air source heat pump and hot water cylinders. In combination with high levels of building fabric efficiency and reduced air permeability, this should meet with the sustainability requirements specified in Policy H5.
- 6.29 The HBF Housing Calculator illustrates that the building of 27 homes is estimated to support the employment of 9 people, increase open space, community sports, leisure spending by £2,418.64 generate £2,418.6 towards education spending which could provide up to 1 classroom spaces, generate £36,159 in tax revenue including £3,388.38 in council tax revenue.

7. Flood risk

- 7.1 The site is located within Flood Zone 1. Land and property in flood zone 1 have a low probability of flooding. The site is located in an area at very low risk of surface water flooding. It should be considered that development on site is unconstrained by flood risk.
- 7.2 All areas of new hardstanding will be constructed from porous materials to ensure that all run-off is managed within the boundaries of the site.

- 7.3 The use of permeable surfaces and areas of soft landscaping will ensure that if there is a long period of rain, then the rainfall can be absorbed into the ground without impacting on public sewers.

8. Planning obligations

- 8.1 The application will attract the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) at a rate of £156.71/sqm.
- 8.2 The applicant also proposes the following S106 Heads of Terms:
- Financial contribution towards affordable housing in accordance with Policy H3

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of GME Portfolios (the applicant).
- 9.2 The proposal presents a sustainable form of development, contributing to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Reading Borough Council:
- The proposed apartments would make more efficient use of urban land;
 - The design and finish are appropriate to the locality; and
 - The design has been carefully conceived to avoid harm to neighbour amenity and ensure that a comfortable relationship subsists.
- 9.3 This statement serves to demonstrate how the proposal complies with policies set out within the Development Plan, as well as relevant national and local material considerations. The proposal would actively contribute towards the realisation of the following spatial objectives:
- Strengthen the role of Reading, including central Reading, as the hub for the Thames Valley, providing an accessible focus for the development of employment, housing, services and facilities, meeting the needs of residents, workers, visitors, those who study in Reading Borough, and the wider area;
 - Make the most efficient use of Reading's limited land, particularly previously developed land, to ensure that as many new homes as possible are delivered to meet identified needs, particularly needs for affordable housing;
 - Improve the quality of life for those living, working, studying in and visiting the Borough, creating inclusive, sustainable communities with good access to employment, open space and water space, transport, education, services and facilities (such as sustainable water supplies and wastewater treatment, healthcare services, social and community facilities, sport and recreation, etc.) to meet identified needs;
 - Ensure new development and existing areas are accessible and sustainable, in accordance with the sustainability appraisal objectives, including reducing its effects on, and adapting to, climate change;

- Maintain and enhance the historic, built and natural environment of the Borough through investment and high quality design and capitalise on these assets to contribute to quality of life and economic success.

9.4 For the reasons set out above, the applicant respectfully requests that this application be determined favourably.