

2787 C01 P2 - 24-12-2020

Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement

40-48 Mount Pleasant

Reading, RG1 2TD



To be read in conjunction with:

2787 001 Site Location Plan

2787 002 Block Plan, Urban Grain, 3D views

2787 010 Combined Floor Plans

2787 011 Combined Roof Plan

2787 013 Existing Plans

2787 014 Existing and Proposed Elevations

2787 015 Proposed Elevations in Context

2787 111 House 1 Detailed Plan

2787 112 House 2,3,4,5 Detailed Plan

2787 113 House 6 Detailed Plan

Passivhaus Planning Report - December 2020

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Introduction

40-48 Mount Pleasant is an area of open hard-standing surface used for car-parking with a group of single storey vehicle repair garages located to the rear of the site. The current use of space does not positively impact on the surrounding residential area and there is an opportunity for improvement.

Hives Architects were appointed by Mr Nigel Flawn to prepare a planning application changing the site into a residential scheme. We propose to demolish existing structures, even out the terrain and provide quality housing scheme comprising of 6 2.5 storey dwellings of 2-3 bed housing.

Context

Locality



Site Aerial View

The location is highly sustainable with very good public transport and amenities nearby.

There are numerous public green spaces available nearby for residents to use, including Spring Terrace (350 m), Aveley Walk Play Area (650 m) and Swainstone Road (750 m).

Mount Pleasant is well served by public transport. It is located in Reading Zone Area 2, bordering the Central Core Area.

Reading Railway Station is 15 min walk away, providing a direct link to London.

The nearest bus stop is only 1 min walk away and buses 5, 6, 6a and 7 go past the site. This provides direct links to Northumberland Avenue, Basingstoke Road /Tesco depot/Whitley Wood and Spencer's Wood/Riseley/Hartley Wintney/Fleet, as well as the town centre.

The area is mostly residential however, there are some pubs, cafes and retail stores available in the vicinity along Mount Pleasant, providing further local amenities.

Site

The site is located along the western side on Mount Pleasant. The site is roughly rectangular in shape with a narrower edge along Mount Pleasant. The site area is roughly 623 m².

The proposed site forms an area of open hard-standing used for car-parking with a group of single storey buildings located to the rear of the site which are used as vehicle repair garages. There are railings and close boarded fencing to the roadside front of the proposed site, as well as a large advertising sign.

The site slopes from west to east, reaching a level difference of up to 3.5m from rear of the site to the edge of the street. There is also a horizontal slope from south to north with a varying level difference of up to 0.8m, which makes the proposal sit lower than the existing listed building, lower at the street level and higher at the rear. The levels will be amended as part of the proposal to even out the slope and access path.

50 Mount Pleasant is adjacent to the site on the southern edge. It is a two and a half storey, Grade II Listed semi-detached building. The brickwork side elevation of No. 50, facing towards the proposed site, is a blank wall of brickwork which appears to have once formed part of a terrace along the street. The stretch of Mount Pleasant between No. 40 and No. 50 was once a terrace of small houses, which was demolished, we believe, in the 1930's.



1922 map showing Mount Pleasant with a continuous terrace of houses alongside number 50. Note that number 50 appeared to be the last building with a greater set back from the street



Site Location Plan



View from Mount Pleasant - No 54, 52 and 50 – listed buildings adjacent to site (left to right)



View from Mount Pleasant - Notable listed building wall of No 50 Mount Pleasant

The site area is surrounded by numerous listed buildings, including 3 along the Mount Pleasant (No 50, 52 and 54).



Map of listed buildings

50 Mount Pleasant - Grade II Listed Building (Listing NGR: SU7191972571) "Mount Pleasant 1. 5128 (West Side) No 50 SU 7172 NE 4/214 22.3.57. II GV 2. 1727 (Deeds). 2 storeys, attic and basement. Silver grey brick with red quoins and window surround. Rubbed brick window arches. String at 1st floor level. Moulded brick cornice, parapet with old tile roof. 2 hipped casement window dormers. Glazing bar sash windows, 4 on 1st floor. 6 panel door with rectangular overhead and early C19 trellis porch. Early C19 spearhead rails and gate with square standards topped with urns on stone base to road. Interior: very good panelling on 1st floor (fireplace in front room has fluted frieze). Contemporary marble fireplace in ground floor front room, also panelled."

52 Mount Pleasant - Grade II Listed Building (Listing NGR: SU7192472564) *"Mount Pleasant 1. 5128 (West Side) No 52 SU 7172 NE 4/213 II GV 2. Late C18. 3 storeys, red brick. Old tile roof. 6 panel door in recessed brick arch with blank tympanum. Glazing bar sash windows, 1 on ground floor and 1 central window on 1st floor. 2 small windows on 2nd floor. Parapet renewed. Early C19 arrow head railings. Included for group value."*

54 Mount Pleasant Grade II Listed Building (Listing NGR: SU7192472558) *"Mount Pleasant 1. 5128 (West Side) No 54 SU 7172 NE 4/212 22.3.57. II GV 2. Early C19. 3 storeys. Red brick, now painted. Slate roof. 3 windows to upper floors, glazing bar sashes, contemporary wrought iron guard rails on 1st floor. Modern casements on 2nd floor. Central door with raised and fielded panels, fanlight of curved and circular glazing pattern, recessed brick arch. Contemporary spearhead rails and gates and square standards topped with urns, on stone base, to road."*

175 and 177, Southampton Street - Grade II Listed Building, located to the rear of the site, and approximately 27m away from the rear boundary to the site, and thus would be less impacted by proposals.

The current use of the site at Nos. 40-48 as a car repair workshop does not contribute positively to the street scene nor does it enhance the settings of the listed building. There is a clear opportunity to improve the urban setting of the listed building.



Panoramic view of the site including car repair garages and hard-standing surfaces – the current use is at odds with the residential nature of the area



Panoramic view of the site from Mount Pleasant – existing site does not contribute to the urban setting (Advertising sign since removed)

To the north of the site is the MAP Youth Centre, which is a large, two storey building with high chain-link fencing site and a small electrical transformer which do not enhance the street scene.



View from Mount Pleasant - MAP Youth Centre and Sub Station

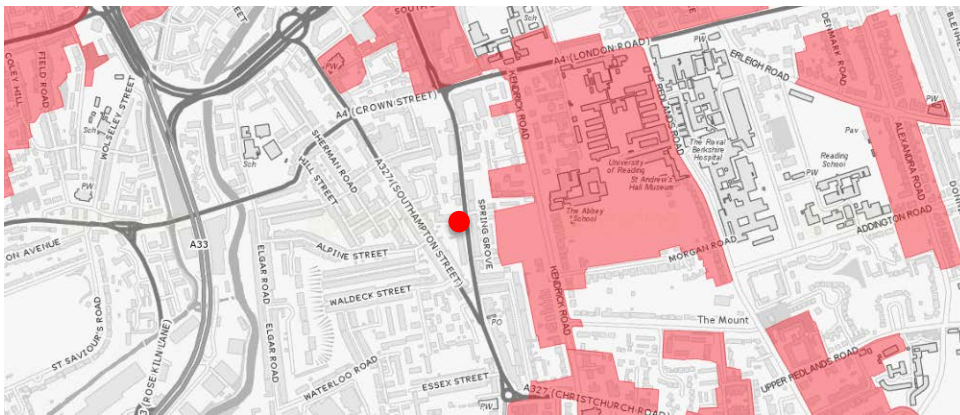
A row of 2 storey brick housing with slate roofs facing the site on the eastern edge. On the southern edge the site faces back gardens of residential properties.



Residential properties facing the site on the eastern edge

There is a significant potential to improve the street scene and increase density within an urban setting.

The area along Mount Pleasant has a fairly uniform materiality, mainly red and silver brick, render and slate or occasional clay-tiled roofs. The buildings vary between 2-3 storeys, progressively increasing in height towards the city centre. The variety mainly comes from various opening sizes, proportions and detailing.



Map of conservation areas

The site is not located within a conservation area; however, Kendrick Conservation Area is located nearby (69m). The features of the site do not impact the conservation area as there is a terrace of houses to the east of Mount Pleasant to form a barrier between the site and the conservation area.

Predominant use

Mount Pleasant is characterised as predominantly residential in use, with a small number of shops, cafes and other commercial uses. The current use of a car repair garage is out of character.

There is a great demand in Reading for family housing of 2-3 beds (66.5% of overall market demand) and this site offers great opportunity to provide such dwellings.

Figure 4.6: Estimated size of accommodation type required in Reading (Source: SHMA 2016)

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom
Market	10.3%	29.6%	41.5%	18.5%
Affordable	43.4%	32.9%	21.6%	2.1%
Overall	18.6%	30.5%	36.5%	14.4%

Planning

Planning History

Various applications for signage and minor alterations to the site have been made over the years, but nothing substantial and relevant to this new application.

Pre-app Scheme

A pre-app was undertaken in August 2020. At this point the proposal was to provide a maximum development of 1- and 2-bed flats along Mount Pleasant. The proposal was based on historic mapping showing that previously there had been a completion of the terrace along Mount Pleasant which the listed buildings formed part of.

The proposal intended to extend forwards of the listed building frontage in order to match the original building lines and included an undercroft 'bridge' building to link to the listed building.

This original proposal was characterised by a neo-classical vertical emphasis with a highly regular and stylised façade.

Parking for the scheme of 10 flats was proposed at the rear of the site, and below the undercroft, with further parking proposed for the listed building within its rear garden area.

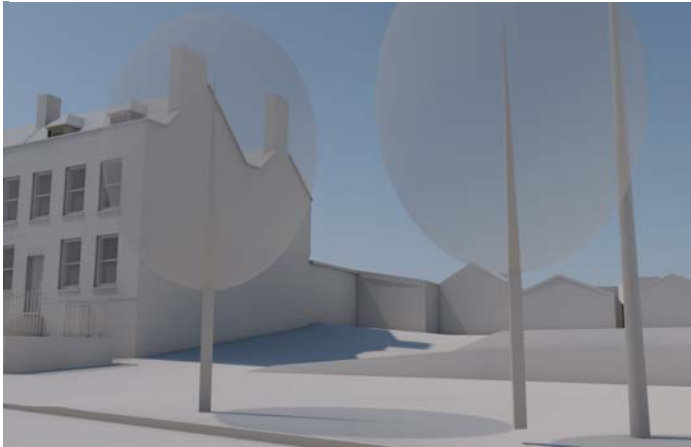
The height of the proposal matched the level of the parapet and roofs of the listed building, but due to the street levels dropping across the site, was in fact taller and more imposing than the listed building.



Original pre-app scheme with classically proportioned building and 'bridge' attaching to the listed building.



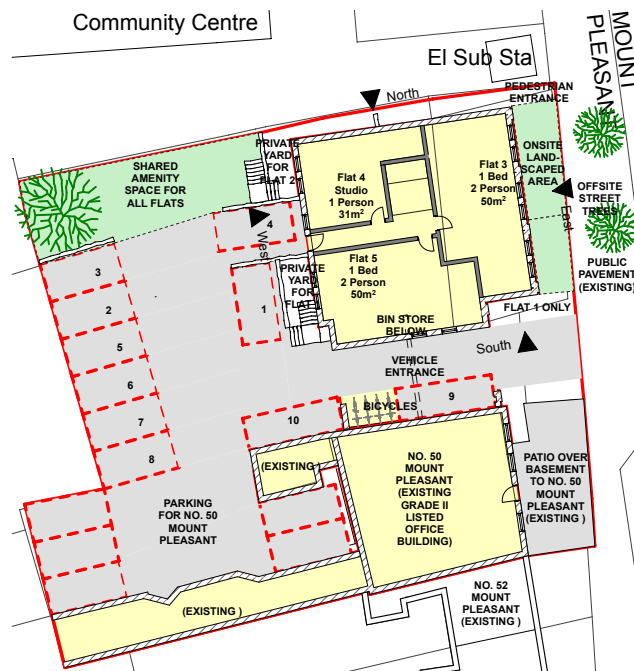
Original pre-app scheme showing massing concentrated to the front of the site, with a building that would obscure any views of the double gable of the listed building at 50 Mount Pleasant



Existing site model showing visibility of prominent double gable and negative impact of the sub station and fencing around the community centre.



Original pre-app scheme showing the impact of proposed massing near the front of Mount Pleasant



Original pre-app scheme with excessive parking levels pushing the built volume towards the road. Note undercroft resulted in further floor area at upper levels, whilst a basement further increased the total floor areas.

Pre-app / DRP Meeting Response

The proposal was not particularly well received by the officer and her colleagues. We have extracted below some of the comments from the planning officer and other departments:

Officer comments: "In principle there is no objection to residential development on the site however the proposal as currently submitted is considered too large and dominant in the street scene. I agree with the comments provided by our Heritage Consultant who states 'the building itself would be much larger and more dominant in the street scene than the Listed Buildings. This is because whilst the two and half storey entrance building would be slightly set back from the front elevation of the Listed Building, the adjoining three storey element would project forward of the adjacent Listed Building (No.50). The proposed new building would also be around 8 bays wide, across the front, in comparison to the four bays for the Listed Building. The proposed new building would also be three-and-a-half storeys high in comparison to two-and-half storeys of the Listed Building and it would also have a greater depth.' He also concludes 'at present the indicative design would represent an over-development of the site which, due to its greater mass, height and alignment, would detract from the setting of the Listed Building and harm its significance by dominating the street scene. Something much more modest, set back from the 'building line' established by the Listed Buildings in order to maintain their dominance, could be considered appropriate on this site, subject to detailing. This could consist of a two to two-and-a-half storey building, separated from the Listed Building by a driveway between them, without the attached flying entrance.'

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states 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 whilst policy EN1 states that historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. Setting the proposal back in line with 50 Mount Pleasant and removing the smaller two storey element will be one way to overcome the concerns raised.

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable 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; crime and safety; and wind. The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important”

The officer goes on to say: “There are a number of amendments required to the scheme following the comments above and taking the consultation responses into consideration. This is a scheme that is considered suitable for review at the Reading Design Review Panel (DRP) and it is suggested that prior to submitting a planning application and as part of the current pre-application enquiry an amended scheme be presented to the DRP for expert advice on the design content of your proposal.”

Historic Consultant: see notes copied above in the ‘officer’ section.

Natural Environment Trees: “In support of the Council’s aims to increase tree canopy cover within the Katesgrove Ward, any scheme to redevelop the site will also need to allocate adequate areas for soft landscaping and which should include a robust scheme of landscape planting which will include additional trees on site”

Archaeology: “This site ... has an archaeological potential and it is likely that any future development of this site will require some form of archaeological mitigation, secured by an appropriately worded condition. Some form of pre-commencement archaeological investigation is likely to be sought subject to finalisation of the details of any proposed scheme”

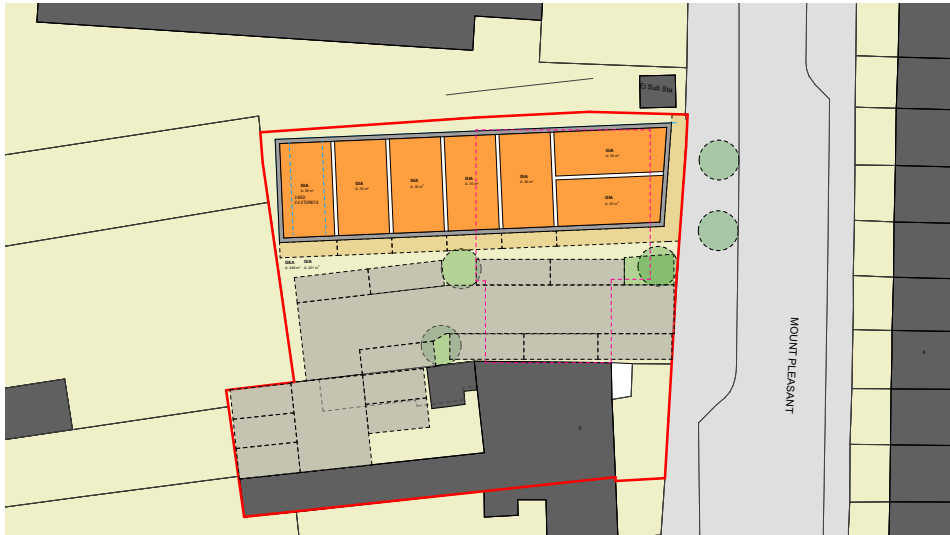
Environmental Health: Conditions were recommended for noise assessment and resultant scheme design to achieve noise levels similar to MVHR environment, which we would achieve as MVHR is proposed as part of this revised scheme

Environmental Health: A condition is proposed to ensure protection of health of future occupants in terms of noise pollution also, which again might be addressed by installation of MVHR.

Other conditions proposed for noise and disturbance during construction and between units.

It was clear after pre-app advice that a different approach would be needed on this site, and we used the opportunity of a meeting with the Design Review Panel, held on the 13th October, to suggest alternative site layouts in order to address urban and conservation

The meeting was quite informal and useful for design development “The session was used as a design workshop for the architect, with the Panel debating the pros and cons of various options for the site”



Sketch site options were presented to the DRP to open up a conversation about alternative forms of development, including schemes for pure ‘mews’ type development without rear gardens

The DRP panel concluded:

Abutting the neighbour – The majority of the Panel felt that not directly abutting the neighbour was the appropriate response. However, the case was made that the historic building line and manner of the construction for the listed asset implied that abutting and continuing the existing façade line could also be a relevant approach, if other considerations were appropriately addressed.

Building Line – A successful scheme needs to respond to the differing building lines of the plots to the North & South. Landscape zones to the street edge should be detailed for the urban character of Mount Pleasant.

Parking – The provision of parking for the retained commercial use and the new development is having a detrimental effect on the options available for the site. In such a central location, with the unit typology yet to be determined it seems obtuse to assume parking is required and to allow this to drive the design.

Massing – The articulation of the massing needs to respond to the neighbours both in terms of overall heights and through a response to appropriate datums, openings and proportions within those facades.

Responding to the Listed Asset – A clear and consistent narrative needs to be developed illustrating how the proposals enhance the setting of the Listed Asset and Mount Pleasant.

The conversations with the DRP created opportunity for a wider look at the site and approach to working alongside the listed building.

It was clear from conversations that design proposals at 90 degrees to the road could be successful, and that there was a strong desire to set away from the listed building.

It was also clear that the original desire to provide parking for each unit stood in the way of a successful use of the site, which ultimately resulted in our proposal being car-free in order to make space for more amenity, and better relationships between our building and the listed building and street scene.

There also appeared to be some reluctance to a 'pastiche' building style, and more interest in either creating something with an industrial language to refer to historic uses along this road, or a modern interpretation.

Design Development in Response to Pre-app

Our design developed with options to look at development of houses rather than flats, in the shape of a street alongside the listed building, with terraced units relating in width to the terraced housing opposite on Mount Pleasant.

Early proposals sought to mimic London mews style housing, at 2 storeys, and without any amenity space, as this type of property is often back-to-back and at very high density. However, it was felt that some amenity space should be provided, and that provision of some family accommodation required this in any case.

Options included originally for the roof volumes to be the full length of each unit, but it was felt that reducing this in favour of roof terraces to aid amenity space shortage at ground floor level was also beneficial for the profile of the street, and for the visual separation of roof and main building volume.



Initial design development aimed to mimic the listed building with small dormers, whilst creating covered balconies to the front of new houses, and parking alongside the listed building. This option also included angled walls to re-enforce the notion of individual houses. Note the larger overhangs and raised planters were proposed to house bicycle stores for each house.

Proposal

Description of Proposed Development

The proposed planning description is “Demolition of single storey buildings used for car repairs, and construction of 6 new terraced houses with ancillary landscaping, bin store and bicycle store.”

The proposal is to remove unattractive buildings at the rear of the site, to level out current steps within the site and to create an attractive mews style development with family housing.

The dwellings will benefit from the semi-private ‘street’ as shared amenity, and each have small private amenity space at ground floor level, as well as a roof terrace to the south.

The development will be car free but would provide a disabled and visitor space at the front of the site. Access to the rear and side of the listed building at 50 Mount Pleasant would be retained as before.

Design (Massing)

The proposed development is set behind the building line of the listed building. This ensures that the listed building remains prominent on the street scene, whilst views of the frontage and side double gable are retained as much as possible.

The width of the proposed street fronting façade is similar to that of the neighbouring listed building and is designed to match the simple rhythm of 4 bays with ground and first floor window openings aligned. A parapet has been created by balustrades to the roof terraces at second floor level, and this line is continued below the slate finished roof elements beyond this level.



The proposal creates a new semi-private street and open space with a positive impact on the character of Mount Pleasant.

The height of the proposed dwellings is lower but similar in scale to the listed building, ensuring a well-balanced ensemble and place making of the central space between these elements. The roof pitch is also similar to that of the listed building whilst the multiple gables mimic the double gable to re-enforce this locally unique feature.



The proposed scheme relates to the height and width of the listed building with a similar separation between main building volume up to parapet height and clearly defined roof above.

The development is located a significant distance away from the listed building to ensure the listed building is not negatively affected by the new development.

The last dwelling towards the rear of the site creates an end to development and creates a new connection between the listed building and the new development by stepping forward to the general building line to form a 'book-end' to the new street.

The 6 dwellings are clearly defined as individual volumes by a stepping up the slope and stepping forward along the new street. This aids the character of individual dwellings, achieved through massing rather than different materials as would be the case along the terrace of housing opposite. Vertical scale and footprint of the houses is comparable to the 2.5 storey terraced houses along most of Mount Pleasant.

The stepped modelling allows for a more textured and tactile character matching the uneven surface and interest of the listed building's flank wall.



The proposal creates an attractive space along side the listed building. Roof level accommodation is located towards the centre of the site to reduce impact on neighbouring buildings.

Similar to the listed building the roof is set back from the parapet level below, which is achieved through a change in materials and continuation of the parapet level at the front of the building below the roof volume, which is defined on all sides from the level of brickwork below.



The roof shape of the proposed development matches the roof of the existing listed building to help maintain local character.

The proposed character is in keeping with the listed building, through the use of similar materials and scaling to suit the locality and vicinity of the building.

Massing along the street takes the form of a single storey volume masking the adjacent substation and creating a natural connection with fencing and building volumes further north along Mount Pleasant.

Area (Dwellings)

The proposed gross internal area of the development is 544m².

All proposed houses meet, and on some levels exceed, the Nationally Described Space Standards for floor areas and room sizes.

The National Space Standards do not include a requirement for a 2-storey 2B 3P dwelling, however the 2-storey 2B 3P house requires 70m². The difference between 2 and 3 storey dwellings is 6m², to allow for an additional stair, which translates to a floor area requirement of 76m². This requirement has been exceeded with proposed floor areas of 79 to 82m². The National Space Standard for 3B4P dwellings is 90m², which is also exceeded at 101m².

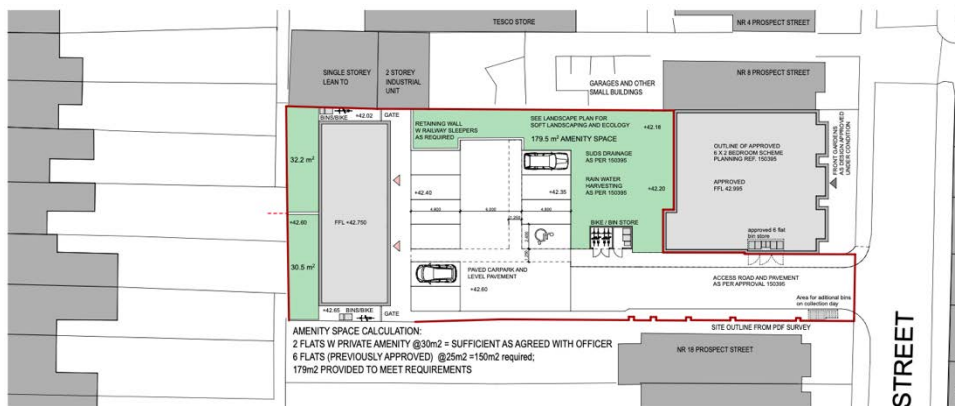
	L00 GIA m ²	L01 GIA m ²	L02 GIA m ²	Total GIA m ²	Private Amenity m ²
House 1 – 2B 3P	29.7	31.3	17.8	78.8	32
House 2 – 2B 3P	31.1	33	18.7	82.8	31
House 3 – 2B 3P	31.1	33	18.7	82.8	32
House 4 – 2B 3P	31.1	33	18.7	82.8	32
House 5 – 2B 3P	31.1	33	18.7	82.8	33
House 6 – 3B 4P	37.8	39.4	23.9	101.1	40

Area (Private Amenity)

The new proposal will provide a shared urban hard surface at the front of the new row of dwellings as well as private gardens and private south-facing roof terraces for each dwelling. The proposed combined private amenity space varies from 30-40 m² per dwelling. This is a relatively small amenity space, but much better than would be provided for flats, such as the ones at 16 Mount Pleasant, and should be deemed acceptable within this practically town centre location.

There are numerous public amenity spaces available within a walking distance of the site. Spring Terrace public amenity space is a 4-minute walk away and Aveley Walk play area is only a 7-minute walk.

The overall amenity space provided per dwelling is similar to the approved scheme for new dwellings on Highgrove Street (application 171477) That application was also a car-free scheme. It is also comparable to a scheme for two houses at Prospect Street (application 152313).



Prospect Street Reference Scheme – application 152313



Highgrove Yard Reference Scheme – application 171477. Our proposal is a much better scheme in terms of connection to the street, place making, and creation of a connected community. Our proposal also creates significant benefits in energy use in it's compact form, and south facing character which is not present within this scheme.



Private Amenity Space is split between private patios at ground floor, and roof terraces facing due south. Further shared amenity space is provided by the mews street and green space provided by a green roof over the bin and bicycle store.

Design (Materials)

The proposal will be finished in attractive and durable materials, which are part of the local vernacular.

We propose red brick for the main part of the building, this will match the existing colour of brick in the listed building at 50 Mount Pleasant. The development would thus create good place making by use of materials and reference to the listed building flanking façade which faces the proposed development.

Roofs are proposed to be slate tiled. This material will also be used locally to clad areas of walls above the parapet level, to establish a clear break in volume, and in reference to the parapet and roof of the listed building. Slate hanging is also proposed to some of the infilled openings at ground and first floor along Mount Pleasant, to give the appearance of the set-back volume continuing behind the brick façade, and to establish a regular pattern of openings in the street façade.

Dark grey window and door frames would match the roof in colour, and also contrast with the brick finishes. Similar darkly coloured grey frames can be seen at 52 Mount Pleasant. Frames at the front façade are set level with brickwork, to match the windows of the listed building. Windows along the South are inset deep into the façade to provide natural shading for summer sun.

Building Access

The site can be accessed as currently directly from the wide pavement along Mount Pleasant, and alongside the attractive listed building flanking wall. The development proposes a new semi-private street from which all 6 houses would be accessed. Each of the houses has a private front door to their dwelling along this street.

The new street provides safe access to each of the houses but would also retain access to the rear of the listed building, where a number of small workshops are in commercial use. Access to the basement of the listed building, located near Mount Pleasant is also retained.

Disabled Access

As this proposal is a minor development, it is required to be designed in line with Building Regulations of M4(2).

To the front of the site there is a disabled parking bay to help provide disabled access to the properties. The intention would be that this is for use by a disabled resident or visitor.

A ramp from the front of the site to the furthest property has been integrated into the landscape which allows disabled access to all properties.

Level landings at the front of every dwelling have been provided as well as level access on the ground floor.

Internal layouts provide living accommodation and wc at ground floor level, and all rooms and bedrooms meet the M4(2) room requirements, which lists sizes and items of furniture, to be accommodate with the required clearance.

Arboriculture

Mount Pleasant is a designated 'Treed Corridor' and located in an area of the Borough identified as an Air Quality Management Area where retention of large canopy trees is of greater importance. The Borough Council seeks to enhance tree numbers in areas with limited tree cover and along these designated 'Treed Corridors' with a commitment to protect the existing trees.

There are two young street trees to the front which would be retained and protected during the course of any building works. The building design is set away from the street edge in order to protect future growth of these trees. The local bin and bicycle store includes a green roof in order to enhance the setting of the site and help mitigate the long-term impact of climate change.

In support of the Council's aims to increase tree canopy cover and ecology within the Katesgrove Ward, our scheme provides small areas of soft landscaping, a green roof and 3 trees. One of the trees will be planted to form part of the group that already exists, whilst the other trees, along the listed building will add interest and define the semi-private street created by the scheme, as an 'entrance' and 'end point' tree.

The planting of these new trees will benefit the 'Treed Corridor'

Further detail of planting, and hard and soft landscaping generally would be provided under condition.

Ecology

Pre-app advice confirmed that it is unlikely for there to be "any objections with regards to ecology", however swift bricks and bat bricks/boxes will be incorporated into the proposal in combination with some soft landscaping locally.

Ecology surveys, if they were required, and details of mitigating measures can be dealt with at condition stage.

Bicycle Storage

Secure cycle storage has been integrated into the design of the development. At the front of the site there is a large bike store with 6 individual secure cupboards for each household. Each bike store cabinet can house two bikes and is accessed via a private lockable door. This approach has the benefit of providing individually lockable and secure units, which can also be used for storage of prams, buggies or mobility aids if needed.

Further private storage could be provided in rear gardens if required.

The bicycle storage encourages use of alternative transport and provides a suitable alternative for the car free development in this sustainable location.

Architecturally the bicycle store and bin store are located to obscure views of the unattractive substation located behind.

Parking

The development will be car free generally but will have two spaces at the front of the site including 1 disabled parking space intended to be used by a disabled resident or allocated to the 3-bed house. A visitor space is provided also.

The parking spaces would be provided with a shared electric charge point.

The car free development is a suitable option in this highly sustainable area with excellent access to public transport and amenities, very close to the central Reading area and will aid Reading's 2030 goal of becoming carbon neutral by reducing car emissions.

The development is comparable to the similar permission for new dwellings granted at Highgrove Street (171477). Our site location is approximately 500m closer to the town centre than the Highgrove Street reference scheme, equivalent to a 4 minute walk.

Bin Storage

The development provides a large, shared bin store towards the front of the site. The bin store contains bins for waste, recycling and green waste, in the form of three 1100L bins and three 240L bins, which is sufficient to provide for 6 houses.

The bin store is fitted with a sliding door to aid access, directly off the street, and can be locked to ensure it is reserved for waste collectors and residents.

The bin capacities and spacings meet the council's standards.

Drainage

The current site is an area of mostly tarmac and buildings, this means there is a significant water run-off into public drainage from the existing site.

The proposal aims to improve matters by provision of permeable paving, a green roof system on the bike/bin store, and small areas of soft landscaping and planting on the site.

At the Design Review Panel meeting a clear preference for hard landscaping was evident, due to the urban location, but despite this the proposal would result in reduced storm water run-off, by providing some buffer on site.

Air Quality

The proposed development is located within an air quality management area that has been identified with monitoring as being a pollution hot-spot and introduces new exposure / receptors in the form of new dwellings.

The proposal however also reduces pollution locally, by omission of a number of car parking spaces, and the car repair garage.

The proposal would deal with local air pollution levels by provision of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, which apart from comfort and energy benefits, also has the benefit of being able to filter air and allow ventilation without open windows. Intake air can be located away from the road.

This proposal will therefore include sufficient mitigation measures to protect the residents from the effects of poor air quality, whilst also positively improving local air quality.

Energy

The proposed development has been designed with energy use in mind. The proposals have the potential to perform significantly better than the policy requirement which is to achieve better than 19% improvement over 2013-part L requirements.

The proposals are designed around the Passivhaus principles of:

- Compact Form
- Continuous Insulation
- Airtightness
- Solar Gains
- Heat Recovery Ventilation

Please refer to the detailed Passivhaus Low Energy Design report for further detail. The dwellings are capable, subject to further detailed design, of achieving space heating at less than 15kWh/m² per year. This is significantly better than the policy requirement for new homes in Reading.



Sketch from energy report modelling solar shading and solar gains.

Impact on neighbours

The impact on amenity of 50 Mount Pleasant is minimal in any case as this is in commercial use, and pedestrian access to the side is maintained.

The careful positioning of the dwellings provides space either side to reduce the impact on the neighbouring buildings.

The proposed gardens are used as a buffer to the neighbouring community centre, however it should be noted that the playground areas with the centre are located away from our site, to the west of the MAP. Again, the community centre not being a permanently used facility and not being of residential character aids with impacts. The proposed dwellings are located 9 meters away from the community centre.

To the rear of the site the building does not unduly impact on neighbours as the proposal backs onto large deep gardens, and there is significant distance of 27 meters between the proposed and existing buildings, particularly when considering windows of those building (32m). No west facing windows are proposed to overlook the neighbouring garden.

The neighbours to the front of the property across the street are a significant distance of 22.6 meters away.

The proposal being a car free development means that neighbours will not be impacted by an increase of traffic, whilst the removal of the noisy and unattractive car repair use will benefit neighbours as well as the public in general.

Impact on the listed building

The proposal is set away from the listed building by 5.8 meters to ensure that the visibility of the attractive double gable, and historically interesting side wall of this property, is maintained.

The proposal enhances the setting of the listed building by provision of a more public access alongside the flanking wall, and by provision of trees, planting and more attractive paving and use alongside the listed building.

The proposal for the 6 new dwellings has been distanced from the listed building to ensure it retains as much visibility of the listed building and side wall as possible, whilst being set behind the building line of the listed building along the street.

The bin and cycle store will not cause any significant impact on the listed building due to being single storey, green roofed, and in materials matching the listed building. It is also located to the farthest corner of the site away from the listed building.

Materials proposed for paving and the new houses would be chosen to improve the setting significantly in comparison with the existing situation, which includes unattractive buildings, surfaces and signage.

Planning Statement

Policy H1 (Provision of Housing)

This is a general housing policy in the Local Plan, which identifies that 15,847 homes are required between 2013 – 2036, with the Local Plan falling 230 dwellings short of that target. This development of six units will help contribute towards that target.

Policy H2 (Density and mix)

This policy covers a number of important considerations, including potential overdevelopment.

It covers whether the density is appropriate to the character of the area, and impact on any nearby heritage or important townscape areas. The key factor here of course is whether the density adversely effects the character of the adjacent listed building. In our view it does not and is a significant improvement over the current use of the site.

The density of 6 units on the site manages to include sufficient separation with the listed building and would not as a consequence have any adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining occupiers. The design is a high-quality proposal which makes the most efficient use of land whilst improving visibility and setting of the listed building.

This policy also states that wherever possible developments should contribute towards meeting an appropriate mix, which for Reading is particularly a need for family homes of three or more bedrooms. This is achieved through provision of three bed dwelling, whilst also providing useful two bed family accommodation. We feel that this is very positive and indeed, the relevant policy only has strict requirements for developments of ten or more houses, so the inclusion of a single three-bedroom dwelling in the proposed 6-unit scheme is a positive benefit.

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing)

Reading Council put a lot of effort into ensuring that the Local Plan required affordable housing contributions for all developments despite Government guidance being that developments of less than 10 units should not have to provide a contribution towards affordable housing.

With all 6 units proposed as market housing, the requirement of this policy will be met through financial contribution via S106. A financial contribution equivalent to 20% of the housing being provided as affordable housing, will allow the provision for affordable housing to be provided elsewhere in the Reading area.

Policy H5 (Standards for new Housing)

This policy requires that all new dwellings comply with the national space standards and are built to water efficient standard Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations, designed to achieve minimum 19% improvement in dwelling emission rates over the target rate defined by 2013 building regs, and all new build housing needs to be accessible in line with M4(2) of building regs.

We have designed with these standards in mind and can meet the requirements.

National Space Standards are met as can be seen in the 'Area' section of this report.

Water usage can be limited to 110 litres per person per day, only the three bed house benefits from a bath, and fittings will be chosen to suit the requirement.

The sustainable energy requirements at a rate of 19% improvement on 2013 dwelling emission targets will be achieved and bettered as can be seen in our Passivhaus report with this application.

Accessibility wise, we believe we have achieved the requirements as set out in the access section of the report.

Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

The key requirements for amenity space include the need to be "functional", it must be able to fulfil the role it is intended for, including space to sit out, for children to play, general storage and drying space. For houses the requirement is private outdoor space, for flats it is communal/balconies; the scheme we have designed includes both.

The amenity space needs to avoid overlooking on each other, which is achieved, and in this regard, it is beneficial that there are no residential properties front or rear, so this is not an issue.

We feel that it is positive that we have provided the largest amenity area to the largest three bed unit, as it is this unit which is most likely to be occupied by a larger family. With the other units we believe they have a fluidity with which space can be used in the dwelling and outside into the private amenity space; this coupled with private roof terraces provides residents with alternative places to spend their time.

It is important to note that we have both achieved south facing private amenity, which is most useful, and a private amenity space connected to the ground floor living space, which would not have been possible within a single outdoor space on this site. It is also relevant to note that the dwellings themselves are oversized compared to national space standards.

The Council confirm (paragraph 4.4.83 of the Local Plan) that the ability to walk to public open space nearby reduces the need for private open space.

Elsewhere in the Plan the Council confirm that Reading Town Centre is within walking distance of this area and as such there will be a range of public open spaces available.

We are convinced that the nearby open spaces available, coupled with how the design of the private amenity space enables that space to work harder, smarter and more efficiently for the occupants, are of a scale that would be appropriate and fall within the spirit of the policy requirements.

Policy H14 (Suburban Renewal and Regeneration)

This policy covers the regeneration of Reading's suburban residential areas to improve the built environment, improve and modernise the housing stock and deliver additional homes.

The re-development of this site covers all those items, and the policy seeks to support such development subject to some fairly basic criteria including protecting buildings which make a positive contribution to an area's character (such as the adjacent listed building) and that it would not cause an unacceptable impact on the highway network.

The area has some on-street parking, but those bays are subject to resident permits; the proposed car free development will limit any impact on the highway network. Notwithstanding there may be some vehicle movements, the amount from 6 dwellings would be negligible, and any entering and leaving the site would be able to enter, turn and leave the site in a forward gear.

Policy TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy)

This policy considers the need to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all transport modes, including public transport, walking and cycling; essentially promoting the Council's sustainable transport strategy.

We feel that the site is well suited in this regard and within walking distance of the town centre, whilst also providing secure private bicycle spaces in a suitable location to encourage the use of non-motorised transport.

Policy TR3 (Access, Traffic and highway related matters)

Key elements of this policy concern the need to not have a material detrimental impact on the highway network and highway safety.

In terms of highway safety, there is good visibility out of the access, and it is an existing access which would see less movement, all of which helps. Vehicles entering would need to enter and leave in a forward gear but given the width this would not be an issue.

Waste bins are to the front of the site for collection so there would be no need for servicing vehicles to enter the site.

We don't foresee any complications on general transport matters.

Policy TR5 (Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging)

The proposed development is a car free development, with two spaces for disabled /visitor only. As such, the content of this policy doesn't have complete relevance. Charging points will be provided with our disabled/visitor spaces to the front of the site.

The Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (adopted 2011), sets out that the site is within Zone 2, but is very near the "Primary Core Area" which means the Council consider it is within walking distance of the centre, and is well served by public transport.

Parking standards for Zone 2 is typically 1 space per 2-bed dwelling and 2 spaces for each 3-bed dwelling, this makes a total of 7 spaces, or 8 with a visitor parking space. We are proposing 2 disabled parking/visitor spaces.

The side of the new dwelling which faces Mount Pleasant retains some fenestration detail which gives it the appearance of a front elevation.

We feel the site's proximity to the centre and abundance of non-car options to the private vehicle means that it is reasonable to promote this as a car-free development and would be consistent with other Council decisions in Zone 2

Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change)

This is a general policy that requires buildings to, wherever possible, orientate themselves to maximise opportunities for natural heating, ventilation and reducing exposure to wind; we feel that the proposal performs particularly well in terms of natural heating from their orientation, which was an important design consideration as part of our Passivhaus approach.

This policy also requires consideration of planting, which we have proposed to the front in recognition of the Council's desire for a tree lined corridor along Mount Pleasant. Further planting at the front and rear of the new street provides potentially useful shading in summer, whilst green roof areas also help as a heat sink.

Policy CC5 (Waste minimisation and storage)

This covers waste minimisation and storage, this is a general policy about designing space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.

Bins have been proposed to the front to accommodate these uses, and design is in line with policy.

Policy CC6 (Sustainable Development locations)

This concerns how the intensity of development should relate to how sustainable the location is.

In the case of the site, it is within a convenient walking distance to the town centre, the University and public transport and as such, it would seem appropriate to propose a higher-than-normal density on the site.

The site is only a short distance from the central core of Reading where the Council promote higher residential densities in any case.

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

This policy returns to design considerations of the scheme, particularly;

Layout, landscape, density and mix, scale, height and massing, architectural detail and materials, character, continuity and enclosure, quality of public realm, permeability, legibility, adaptability and diversity, respond to local character, safe/accessible, visually attractive.

We feel that our proposed scheme respects the listed building by being subordinate to it. The scheme is much larger than the development it replaces, however, it is also visually much more appealing and in keeping with the listed building. In this sense it is a much higher quality development that responds to local character and is visually attractive.

The design is more modern than local dwellings, so it could be a matter of taste, but in our opinion, it fits well into the character of the surrounding area, whilst providing a new quality space alongside the listed building, thus improving it's setting within the street.

Policy CC8 (Amenity Space)

This policy considers amenity, we do not see any reasonable concerns on amenity grounds, other than the relative privacy of the amenity areas between each of the proposed dwellings.

We have addressed this by including boundary treatments and screening where required, including at roof terrace level.

Policy EN1 (Historic Environment)

The main relevance of this policy is the adjacent listed building and the need to protect its setting and enhance it. It is for this reason, that for the purposes of

this application we have avoided affecting the curtilage wall of the listed building as it would have brought into question potential harm to the character and setting of the listed building, despite historic evidence of development against this wall.

In our opinion the proposals are acceptable in this regard, pulling back from the building line of the listed building, displaying a subordinate height and design, and being of a high-quality design.

We feel we have put careful consideration to the materials chosen and have justified why they are appropriate adjacent to the listed building.

Policy EN15 (Air Quality)

A full Air Quality assessment can be provided under condition if required. The Air Quality assessment would consider mitigation given the proposal to introduce sensitive uses (residential) into what is an Air Quality Management Area.

Within this report we have set out the benefits of the scheme on air pollution locally, whilst also explaining that the proposed ventilation strategy would reduce impact of poor air quality on the residents.

Planning statement Summary

The amended scheme is in our opinion an appropriate proposal for the site.

It would provide much needed (family) housing on a brownfield site in a highly sustainable location near the town centre, at a suitable level of development and density.

The proposals do not adversely affect the listed building adjacent, but in fact enhance the setting by the change of use and creation of a new street alongside the double gabled flank wall.

The ground floor garden amenity areas are small, but the dwellings benefit from additional amenity space at roof terrace level, which is south facing and therefore the combination is more useful than a single north facing garden. Garden space has been designed to be of a regular and useful proportion, so that it is usable for seating, playing and hanging washing.

Overall, the proposals would improve the site, the use and the wider setting whilst also providing quality, low energy dwellings for our, and future generations.

Conclusion

The proposal is for six new build family houses, on a currently unattractive site used by a car repair garage.

In our approach, we have considered the neighbouring listed building, 50 Mount Pleasant as well as local and national planning policies to provide an attractive and modern ensemble of buildings.

The proposal would benefit Reading by providing much needed housing in a desirable and sustainable location and benefit the local area by providing a visually attractive and sustainable design.

Good quality and appropriately sized private amenity space will be provided in the form of gardens and roof terraces, whilst the site is in a central location with very close access to various public amenity areas.

The proposal will provide more homes in the area in line with housing policy, and the new semi-private street creates an improved setting for the listed building.

We trust that you will support the proposal, which aims to provide a quality development of much needed housing for Reading.