

Heritage Statement

Residential Development for multiple occupation,
28, Wokingham Road, Reading RG6 1JQ

Client: Mr. Parmod Sharma

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Revision	Summary of Changes	Date	Rev By	Chkd By

1.00 INTRODUCTION

1.01 AIMS OF THE STATEMENT

This statement seeks to analyse the various features which give the South Park Conservation Area and Reading Cemetery its special architectural and historic interest. There is a presumption that all the features of the area should be preserved and enhanced, as required by legislation.

This statement is based upon national policy precepts as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) – Planning and the Historic Environment and local policy, as set out in Reading Borough Local Plan 1991-2006.

This Heritage Statement accompanies a full planning application by Mr. Parmod Sharma for comprehensive redevelopment of a brownfield site; demolishing the existing garage and constructing 9 dwellings (flats) for multiple occupation, accommodating 28 bedrooms at 28, Wokingham Road, Reading.

The description of development is as follows:

‘Construction of 9 dwellings (flats) for multiple occupation, accommodating 28 bedrooms with associated 7 parking spaces, bicycle, motorbike and bin storage and landscaping’

The aims of this Heritage Statement are to show that the proposed development has been informed by an awareness of the site’s context due to its location alongside the South Park Conservation Area and also its proximity to Reading Old Cemetery.

2.00 HISTORY, ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC CHARACTER

2.01 SOUTH PARK CONSERVATION AREA

'South Park' appears to be local name given to the residential area approximately south of Palmer Park and Reading Old Cemetery, but also situated in the Park Ward of Reading.

The South Park Conservation Area comprises an essentially mid to late Victorian and Edwardian suburb of Reading, mainly centred on Eastern Avenue and Hamilton Road.

The background to the designation of South Park as a conservation Area lies first in the drawing up of a wider area, whose full title was 'South Park: A Planning Policy to protect the Physical Character of a Victorian Suburb.' This was first designated in January 1976 and reinforced in 1988.

The key principles were to avoid redeveloping designated 'important buildings; providing minimum plot sizes for redevelopment in comprehensive schemes; ensuring that new buildings were to be designed to a similar scale, massing and building line to existing buildings; with materials to match those in the locality; and the retention and enhancement of the area's open, tree covered character. This has generally been adhered to since the designation of Conservation area.

Historically and currently, the South Park Conservation Area is essentially a residential area of a rich variety of detached, semi-detached and some terraced properties interspersed with more modern residential developments.

The older properties in the area generally appear to be retained in single family occupation, although there are examples of subdivision or multi-occupancy. The properties in the area to be very much in demand and generally fully occupied and in good state of repair.

The proximity to Royal Berkshire Hospital and Reading University were seen as contributing factors to the problems the area was experiencing; in providing accommodation for all age groups, particularly students and young professionals.

A number of properties do not have their own parking provision, which has resulted in some removal of front garden walls or railings to provide frontage parking, but the area does benefit from good accessibility by public transport and is close to major employers, making this an attractive area to live.

The buildings in the area are generally of brick, which is one of distinguishing features of Reading's architecture.

The pre-eminent local detail throughout the area is the presence of brick walls and railings at the front of the properties.

Two of the features that have a negative impact on historic character and appearance of the conservation area are; the poor appearance of entrances at the northern end of Hamilton Road as it joins with Wokingham Road, and the poor view out of the conservation area to the north.

2.02 GRADE II LISTED READING CEMETERY

Reading Cemetery is registered as Park/ Garden under The Historic Buildings and Monuments Act 1953 within the register of historic parks and gardens by English Heritage for its special historic interest. List entry No: 1001641. Date first registered: 14 August 2002.

Reasons for designation:

Reading Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: 'An early garden cemetery (1842-43) of the third decade of garden cemetery design, for a provincial town'. The site survives largely complete although with loss its two chapels and has suffered some neglect.

The site is of great local and national, historical and social interest with many large memorials, two of which are Grade II listed.

Reading Cemetery 5.5ha triangular site is enclosed by mid-C19 Grade II listed stone wall, separating it from London Road to the north and Wokingham Road to the south.

The Cemetery is planted with wide range of mature specimen trees, many date from mid C19, especially along north and south boundaries.

2.03 GRADE II LISTED ENTRANCE LODGES AND GATES

The main entrance to the cemetery lies at the west corner of the cemetery, at the point where London Road is joined by Wokingham Road. The entrance, aligned on London Road to the west, is marked by a two-storey, Bath stone carriage arch flanked by two lodges to form a Classical-style gateway designed by local Architect William Brown and built in around 1840.

List entry No: 1113554. Date first listed: 22 March 1957. Date of most recent amendment: 14 December 1978.

2.04 GRADE II LISTED ANDREWS AND BARRET FAMILY MONUMENTS

There are several monuments of quality in the cemetery to leading C19 Reading citizens. To the east and west of the site of the north entrance to the former Dissenter's chapel stand the family vault monuments to James Andrews (d 1841) and George Barret (d 1858) – both Grade II listed. The monuments take the form of cast-iron urns with flame-capped lids standing on cylindrical drums flanking the site of the former portico of the chapel.

Monuments list entry No: 1156154. Date first listed: 14 December 1978.

3.00 PROPOSED SCHEME

3.01 IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

The proposed residential development is located at the junction of Wokingham Road and Hamilton Road, on the border of South Park Conservation area and in close proximity (across Wokingham Rd) to Grade II listed Reading Old Cemetery – historic park/garden with Grade II listed Entrance Lodges and Gates and also Grade II listed Andrews & Barret Family Monuments.

The site is not within the Conservation Area but adjacent to it.

The existing site has the appearance of a petrol station but is currently being used as a car wash facility.

This prominent location is filled with a single storey building occupying a small portion of the site and a large oversailing canopy with little evidence of soft landscaping. The majority of the plot is hard landscaped and adds nothing to the surrounding area aesthetically. Indeed the current site use has a detrimental impact on the adjacent Conservation Area.

The proposed scheme is for a two storey building with developed roof space for the third storey which has been scaled to sit nicely between the existing buildings on Hamilton Road and Wokingham Road.

The scheme has been designed to be subservient to the property at 2 Hamilton Road so as to not detract from its aesthetics and that of the conservation area and to sit well alongside the Wokingham Road properties.

The building recreates a more structured building line; more sympathetic to the building lines in existence along Hamilton Road and Wokingham Road and forming a more cohesive section of the urban fabric.

The proposed brickwork building with white framed glazing, hipped roof and dormers will bring the site back into residential use and repair this hole in the city's urban fabric.

The proposed planting along the front of the new building will create a transition zone leading from Hamilton Road with its deep front gardens to the units on Wokingham Road with their shopfront paving.

We believe that the proposed development will be a major improvement on the current development.