

# Hillside House

## Garden Design Support Statement



For: Turner Estates

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## Executive Summary

The following Design Support Statement (to be read in conjunction with Weston and Co. Architects, Design and Access Statement 16002.9.1 DAS 17.1.23 and submission drawings) has been composed to show information that has influenced the proposed new garden design at the Grade II listed 'Hillside', in Allcroft Road, Reading.



This Statement shows the location within the Conservation area of The Mount, the historical evolution of the site using maps and photographs, and discusses the depletion of the historic site and the loss of significance of Hillside in its modern-day context. It also proposes what we hope to create to redress this situation.

## Contents

|                                                                                                                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Executive Summary .....                                                                                                                | 1  |
| Table of Figures .....                                                                                                                 | 4  |
| Introduction.....                                                                                                                      | 6  |
| Proposal: To enhance the Setting of Hillside House by establishing a garden which reflects the architectural heritage of the site..... | 7  |
| 1 Location .....                                                                                                                       | 7  |
| 2 1 Hillside .....                                                                                                                     | 9  |
| 2.2 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990                                                                                   | 10 |
| 3.1 New Design in Conservation Areas.....                                                                                              | 10 |
| 3.2 Design Influences.....                                                                                                             | 10 |
| 4. 1 Historical Research .....                                                                                                         | 11 |
| 5.1 Historical Photographs .....                                                                                                       | 15 |
| 6.1 Impact of the Existing University Buildings .....                                                                                  | 17 |
| 7.1 Using the Past to Develop the New.....                                                                                             | 21 |
| 8.1 New Hillside Garden Design .....                                                                                                   | 23 |
| 8.2 Hillside Garden Design Dynamics .....                                                                                              | 24 |
| .....                                                                                                                                  | 28 |
| Conclusion .....                                                                                                                       | 31 |
| Appendices .....                                                                                                                       | 32 |
| Appendix 1.....                                                                                                                        | 32 |
| William Isaac Palmer J.P. ....                                                                                                         | 32 |
| The Quakers.....                                                                                                                       | 33 |
| President of the Reading Temperance Society .....                                                                                      | 33 |
| Appendix 2.....                                                                                                                        | 35 |

|                                                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| The Suttons of Hillside.....                                                   | 35 |
| Leonard Noel Sutton MA JP (1893-1965) .....                                    | 37 |
| 2.2 The Lost Sutton Sons. ....                                                 | 38 |
| Eric Guy Sutton, Lieutenant, 7th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment: ..           | 38 |
| William Victor Ross Sutton, Lieutenant, Royal Berkshire Yeomanry Egypt 1916 .. | 38 |
| Alexander Gordon Sutton, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Rifle Brigade              | 39 |
| Eustace Martin Sutton, Royal Engineers 35 <sup>th</sup> Signals ...            | 39 |
| Appendix 3.....                                                                | 40 |
| ‘Uniting Reading with a Ribbon of Green’ .....                                 | 40 |
| Bibliography/References .....                                                  | 41 |
| Principle Sources .....                                                        | 41 |
| Secondary Sources/References .....                                             | 41 |

## Table of Figures

|                                                                                                                                                               |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1 Location of Hillside in Reading shown circled in red. Image courtesy of Planning Application Maps 93003.....                                         | 7  |
| Figure 2 The Mount Conservation Area. Image courtesy of Reading Borough Council .....                                                                         | 8  |
| Figure 3 Architect's drawing of Hillside by Morris and Stallwood 1879. Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library .....                                  | 9  |
| Figure 4 Photo of 2nd edition O.S. Map 1899. Image courtesy of Berkshire Records Office .....                                                                 | 11 |
| Figure 5 Photo of 1911 O.S. Map. Image courtesy of Berkshire Records Office .....                                                                             | 12 |
| Figure 6 Photo of 1932 O.S. Map. Image courtesy of Berkshire Records Office .....                                                                             | 12 |
| Figure 7 Aerial Photo taken by the RAF, 4237 1646, 10-7-46, 541 Squadron. Image Courtesy of the National Monument Record (licence).....                       | 13 |
| Figure 8 Aerial, Oblique RAF 30003 0035 13 Aug 1947. Image courtesy of National Monument Record (licence).....                                                | 14 |
| Figure 9 Aerial Photo O.S./98023 19-3-1998. Photo courtesy of National Monument Record....                                                                    | 14 |
| Figure 10 View from the front drive with Monkeypuzzle Tree. Image courtesy of Museum of English Rural Life .....                                              | 15 |
| Figure 11 The Front elevation seen from the Stables. Image courtesy of the Museum of English Rural Life.....                                                  | 15 |
| Figure 12 North Elevation. Image courtesy of Museum of English Rural Life .....                                                                               | 16 |
| Figure 13 View of east elevation and Stable block. Courtesy of the Museum of English Rural Life .....                                                         | 16 |
| Figure 14 West elevation of Hillside showing sloping lawn, proximity of University block and overgrown holly on the south west corner. Gaila Adair 2016 ..... | 17 |
| Figure 15 West elevation shows close proximity of Student Blocks. Gaila Adair 2016 .....                                                                      | 18 |
| Figure 16 South access path leads to the proposed new Raised Terrace. Gaila Adair 2016.....                                                                   | 18 |
| Figure 17 South West corner. Gaila Adair 2016 .....                                                                                                           | 19 |
| Figure 18 Close Proximity of Student blocks seen from the south west corner of Hillside. Gaila Adair 2016 .....                                               | 19 |
| Figure 19 View of the Student Accommodation Blocks from the proposed Raised Terrace area. Gaila Adair 2016 .....                                              | 19 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 20 The ornate North elevation obscured by undergrowth. Gaila Adair 2016 .....                                                                                                                           | 20 |
| Figure 21 Aerial photo showing old features. Image courtesy of National Monument Record ...                                                                                                                    | 21 |
| Figure 22 The old Glass House and Orangery, Hillside 1936. Photo. Image courtesy of Turner Estates .....                                                                                                       | 22 |
| Figure 23 New Hillside Garden Design: GAA 001B 10-4-17 Issue B. Gaila Adair 2017 .....                                                                                                                         | 23 |
| Figure 24 Design Dynamics 2 drawn by Gaila Adair .....                                                                                                                                                         | 24 |
| Figure 25 Sketch 1 The Raised Terrace steps. Drawn by Gaila Adair 2016 .....                                                                                                                                   | 28 |
| Figure 26 Sketch 2 The Gazebo seen from the William Victor Ross Sutton Terrace. Drawn by Gaila Adair 2016 .....                                                                                                | 29 |
| Figure 27 Sketch 3 View of the Hillside from the end of the Raised Terrace. View shows the circular lawn, raised terrace and steps, curved hedges and Carpinus aerial hedging. Drawn by Gaila Adair 2016 ..... | 29 |
| Figure 28 Sketch 4 Looking towards the Alexander Gordon Sutton Terrace. Drawn by Gaila Adair 2016.....                                                                                                         | 30 |
| Figure 29 William Isaac Palmer J.P. Image courtesy of Reading University Library .....                                                                                                                         | 32 |
| Figure 30 Terracotta detailing of fruit and flowers at Hillside. Gaila Adair 2016.....                                                                                                                         | 34 |
| Figure 31 L.G. Sutton as Mayor of Reading, introducing King George V and Queen Mary to a local dignitary in 1929 . Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library .....                                       | 35 |
| Figure 32 L.G. Sutton as Mayor, welcoming The Prince of Wales to Reading in 1926. Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library .....                                                                        | 36 |
| Figure 33 L.G. Sutton as Mayor of Reading, accompanying The Prince of Wales for the official opening of Caversham Bridge in 1926. Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library.....                         | 36 |
| Figure 34 Captain Leonard Noel Sutton. Image with thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust.....                                                                                          | 37 |
| Figure 35 Lieutenant Eric Guy Sutton. Image thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust .....                                                                                               | 38 |
| Figure 36 Lieutenant William Victor Ross Sutton. Image thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust .....                                                                                    | 38 |
| Figure 37 2nd Lieutenant Alexander Gordon Sutton. Image thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust .....                                                                                   | 39 |

Figure 38 Lieutenant Eustace Martin Sutton. Image thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles  
Wardrobe and Museum Trust ..... 39

## Introduction

Using the Planning Policy Statement 5, (PPS 5) 'Planning for the Historic Environment' as guidance, we have taken on board specific criteria to form our methodology.

A quotation from PPS 5, the Government's objectives 7. states:-

'the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations'

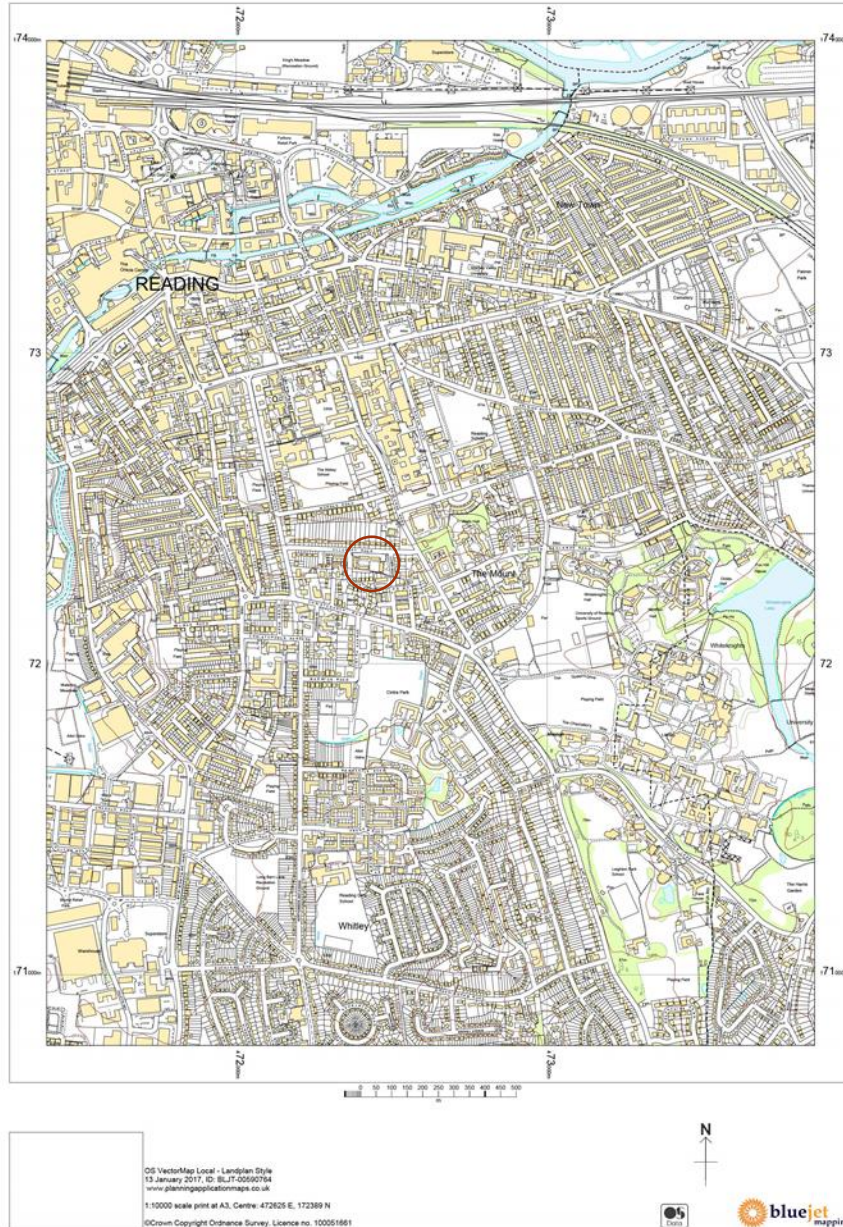
We believe that the new garden design will fulfil this criteria. The following points are of particular note. We believe:-

- The physical and visual damage to the site at Hillside has been incremental over the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- The existing University student blocks have 'influenced the character of the environment and an area's sense of place' [PPS 5, HE3.1 (1)] in a negative way.
- The creation of a new artistically aesthetic garden will redress the negative impact of the existing University student blocks and knit well with the distinctive architecture of Hillside.
- The garden design proposal has a positive not harmful impact on the significance of this designated heritage asset.
- The new garden design and infrastructure will use sympathetic materials in keeping with existing and minimise waste.
- We believe that the new garden will help to 'secure the long-term future of the heritage asset' and, 'its continued use sympathetic to its conservation'. [PPS 5, HE7.5]

## Proposal: To enhance the Setting of Hillside House by establishing a garden which reflects the architectural heritage of the site

### 1 Location

Hillside House is a Grade II listed property in Reading, Berkshire, lying within the Conservation Area known as 'The Mount', Appraisal 0309.



**Figure 1 Location of Hillside in Reading shown circled in red. Image courtesy of Planning Application Maps 93003**



Figure 2 The Mount Conservation Area. Image courtesy of Reading Borough Council

The Mount lies 2 km and to the south of the old historic nucleus of Reading, within close proximity to the Royal Berkshire Hospital and University. The Conservation area, designated on 24th of April 1987, encompasses Allcroft Rd in the north section, (where Hillside is situated) Lower Mount, The Mount and part of the A327 Christchurch Rd. The area has a mixture of, Victorian, Edwardian and 20th Century development reflecting a mixture of styles.

The first houses were built by the Palmer family (Huntley and Palmer biscuit dynasty) in 1876 for Huntley and Palmer employees, including clerks, foremen and managers.

## 2 1 Hillside

Hillside, dated 1880, was built for William Isaac Palmer, (a partner of Huntley and Palmers) by Reading Architects, Morris and Stallwood and described in the listing appraisal as being a 'good example of a slightly later large Victorian House, which also retains its original walls and railings'. The house was extended in 1898 by the same architects. In the Conservation Area appraisal, it is noted as being 'built of grey brick, red brick and terracotta dressings, slate roofs and red tile cresting', and 'one of the most opulent buildings of this period in Reading'.



**Figure 3 Architect's drawing of Hillside by Morris and Stallwood 1879. Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library**

Hillside later became the home of Leonard Goodhart Sutton and his family (of Suttons Seeds fame) before becoming a Reading University Hall of residence in 1949. Planning permission for University student accommodation blocks to be built within the grounds was granted in 1979. Building was also carried out in the 1970s when the land on the adjoining property 'Sutherlands' was granted to form Lancaster Close and in the 1980s Sutton Walk.

Even in the Conservation Area Appraisal (5.2 p13) it is noted that The Mount 'does not benefit from any obvious open spaces, not least since the grounds of Hillside were developed to add to the University accommodation'.

In 2014 Hillside and the student blocks were sold by the University to the present owner, Turner Estates. Considerable renovations and refurbishments have since been made to the existing student blocks by Turner Estates, who have a good working reputation and relationship with Reading Borough Council, (using Weston and Co Architects) to improve student welfare and the overall ambience of the site.

## 2.2 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990

In section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, it states that 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' is then followed by 'quality and interest of an area, rather than individual buildings that is of prime consideration'. This seems to nullify the importance of the individual to make up the whole. An area needs individual buildings of importance and character to influence the overall feel and character of an area. We can already see that other buildings of equal importance in the area have already gone. Think how much they would have architecturally accentuated the area of The Mount. The gardens of these houses would have also added considerable horticultural appeal to the area. We cannot afford to keep on depleting our architectural heritage in Reading by not thinking about the future in an holistic way.

With buildings come environs, gardens, the breathing spaces, which have been proved by scientific research to lift the spirits, whether you live in the immediate vicinity or enjoy the overall visual amenity that they bring to a wider region.

## 3.1 New Design in Conservation Areas

By creating a new garden at Hillside we believe we can make a contribution to the area by respecting and enhancing the architectural and visual qualities and achieving a high standard of design.

In the Listing Appraisal it states that, 'although the grounds have been built over in the past, the house retains its entrance drive, gates and railings and some of its garden, giving it its scale, space and context'

Context to what? The damage to the environs and the setting of the house has been gradually eroding any context. It is a visually imposing house with a car park, tired lawn, dull grey tarmac paths and hideous lampposts. The context now is more of a municipal building, tired and un-appreciated.

## 3.2 Design Influences

The following chapters research the history and development of the site at Hillside. This will help to clarify what has existed, why it disappeared and how we can redress the problem by pulling on the past to re-create a new garden for the future.

## 4. 1 Historical Research

The following information has been included to establish how Hillside and its grounds were established and how circumstances can influence the further development of a site, and why we think it is necessary to safeguard the future of Hillside by developing a garden.

Chronological mapping of the area shows the changes that Hillside has endured. In 'A' the properties 'Sutherlands' (residence of Arthur Warwick Sutton and later Leonard Noel Sutton) and 'Cintra Lodge' (the residence of Martin H. Sutton and Martin John Sutton) exist before Hillside was built. From this we can see that the Suttons were already well established in the area and that the gardens are landscaped to a high quality. The Hillside site is a field with ponds linked by ditches and a track. Extensive glasshouses and orchards are evident at Sutherlands.



Figure 4 Photo of 2nd edition O.S. Map 1899. Image courtesy of Berkshire Records Office

In 'B', Hillside has been built and conservatory, stable block and further glasshouses are shown. A walled yard is shown to the south end of the building where the kitchens were situated.



Figure 5 Photo of 1911 O.S. Map. Image courtesy of Berkshire Records Office

By 'C', the glasshouses in Sutherlands are depleted, the orchard has increased in size. At Hillside, the kitchen yard has been incorporated in to an extension.



Figure 6 Photo of 1932 O.S. Map. Image courtesy of Berkshire Records Office

Image 'D' shows an Aerial photograph taken by the RAF in 1946. Hillside is still surrounded by extensive gardens, conservatory, paths to Sutherlands and the kitchen gardens. A round feature, thought to be a rose garden, to the right (on the north end) of the house can be seen which is no longer evident.



Figure 7 Aerial Photo taken by the RAF, 4237 1646, 10-7-46, 541 Squadron. Image Courtesy of the National Monument Record (licence)

In image 'E' the 'Palladian inspired villa of Cintra Lodge (arrowed in red) and its more compact garden rooms can be seen. From this we can gauge that the new, more intimate garden at Hillside is feasible and can be in keeping with a house of larger proportions. It also shows that it would not be out of place in a property associated with the Sutton family.

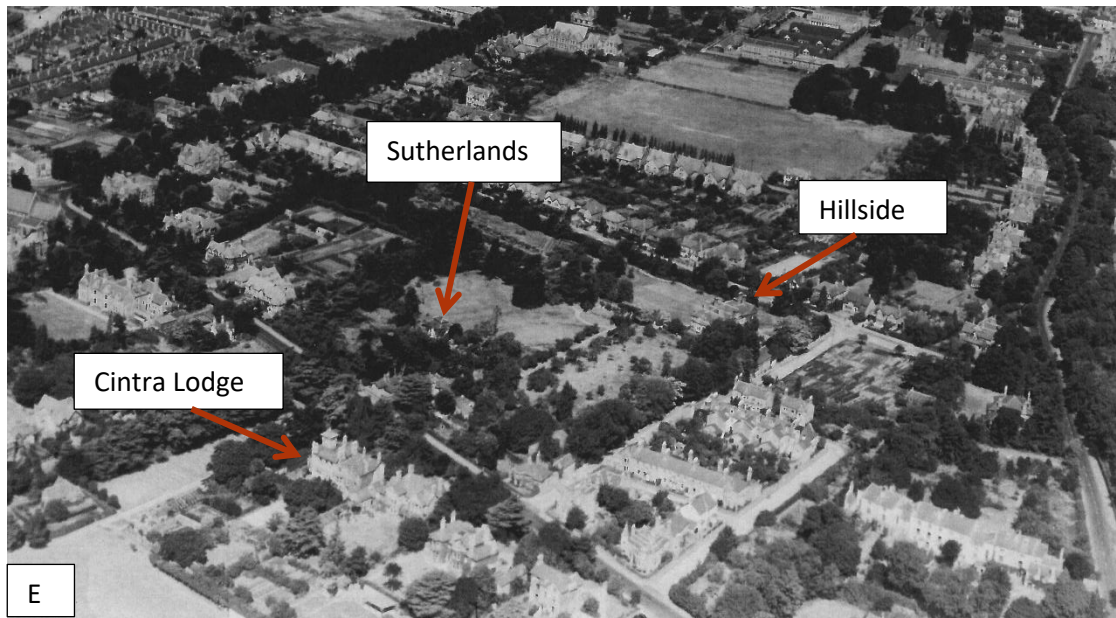


Figure 8 Aerial, Oblique RAF 30003 0035 13 Aug 1947. Image courtesy of National Monument Record (licence)

Image 'E', August 1947 shows all of the Sutton properties still in evidence. By 'F' in 1998 they have been demolished except Hillside, whose land has been built on, firstly with houses on the



Figure 9 Aerial Photo O.S./98023 19-3-1998. Photo courtesy of National Monument Record

old kitchen gardens and more recently, University student accommodation nearer the house. From these images we can see that the quality of heritage of this area has been diluted and the original curtilage of Hillside has been steadily eaten by incremental development.

## 5.1 Historical Photographs

The following images of Hillside were taken by Dann-Lewis, Reading photographers in the 1930s.



Figure 10 View from the front drive with Monkeypuzzle Tree. Image courtesy of Museum of English Rural Life



Figure 11 The Front elevation seen from the Stables. Image courtesy of the Museum of English Rural Life



**Figure 12 North Elevation.** Image courtesy of Museum of English Rural Life

The North elevation and island beds. Part of the lost rose garden can just be seen on the left. The view leads straight into the property of 'Sutherlands' past the conservatory.

View of Hillside and the stable block (demolished in the 1980s)

The house once sat in plenty of space but now that has been diminished by successive building



**Figure 13 View of east elevation and Stable block.** Courtesy of the Museum of English Rural Life

## 6.1 Impact of the Existing University Buildings

The listing notes 5.2 p14 'Although the grounds have been built over in part, the house retains its entrance drive, gates and railings and some of its garden, giving it its scale, space and context'.

We believe that this statement is misleading. From the exterior this may be true, but from within the confines of the rear garden, a totally different experience is found.

The impact of the existing University buildings on a Grade II listed building are severe. They visually impose on Hillside and negate the importance of the main house. Hillside House has become divorced from its environs and its history by the location of the characterless University buildings. There are ugly lampposts highlighting tarmac access paths increasing the dull, urbanisation of what was once a high status artistically designed family home. The expanse of grass is the only remaining feature, and that is worn, tired and a distant relic of a larger area.



Figure 14 West elevation of Hillside showing sloping lawn, proximity of University block and overgrown holly on the south west corner. Gaila Adair 2016



Figure 15 West elevation shows close proximity of Student Blocks. Gaila Adair 2016

Close proximity of Student blocks, grey paths and tired lawn.



Figure 16 South access path leads to the proposed new Raised Terrace. Gaila Adair 2016

Refuse bins, utility railings, grey tarmac and lamppost give a municipal feel to the south elevation access path. This leads to where the new Raised Terrace on the old footprint of the Orangery will be built. New gates in the style of the new iron railings used elsewhere on site will keep the garden secure. The old refuse area will be for Visitors to park their bicycles and for residents to clean their own bicycles before taking them in to the cycle store.

View of the south west corner of Hillside, showing lamppost and overgrown holly.



Figure 17 South West corner. Gaila Adair 2016



Figure 18 Close Proximity of Student blocks seen from the south west corner of Hillside. Gaila Adair 2016

Evidence of the current owner to provide better accommodation for the students can be seen with the introduction of patio doors to the living rooms and outdoor sitting areas.



Figure 19 View of the Student Accommodation Blocks from the proposed Raised Terrace area. Gaila Adair 2016



**Figure 20 The ornate North elevation obscured by undergrowth. Gaila Adair 2016**

The north elevation of Hillside is now obscured by undergrowth and cannot be seen from the drive as you enter the property. It is the most ornate of all the elevations and once had a circular garden below from where the architecture could be enjoyed. We propose to re-instate a garden of this nature and bring back the view from the entrance drive in the new design proposal by removing obscuring material.

## 7.1 Using the Past to Develop the New

Our research has shown that Hillside consisted of a large expanse of land split into different zones. Large sweeping lawns were directly to the rear of the property facing west. These were punctuated with island beds and paths which linked the main areas. This was primarily a multi-functional area, used as a tennis court and a site large enough to hold pageants and celebrations whilst Leonard G. Sutton was the Mayor of Reading. To the west were the kitchen gardens, to the north was a circular rose garden, and to the south was a main upper terrace of Orangery and glass house. A pathway then went from this area beyond the boundary wall to link with further greenhouses and orchard in the property called Sutherlands next door. None of these features exist today, except the area of grassed lawn.

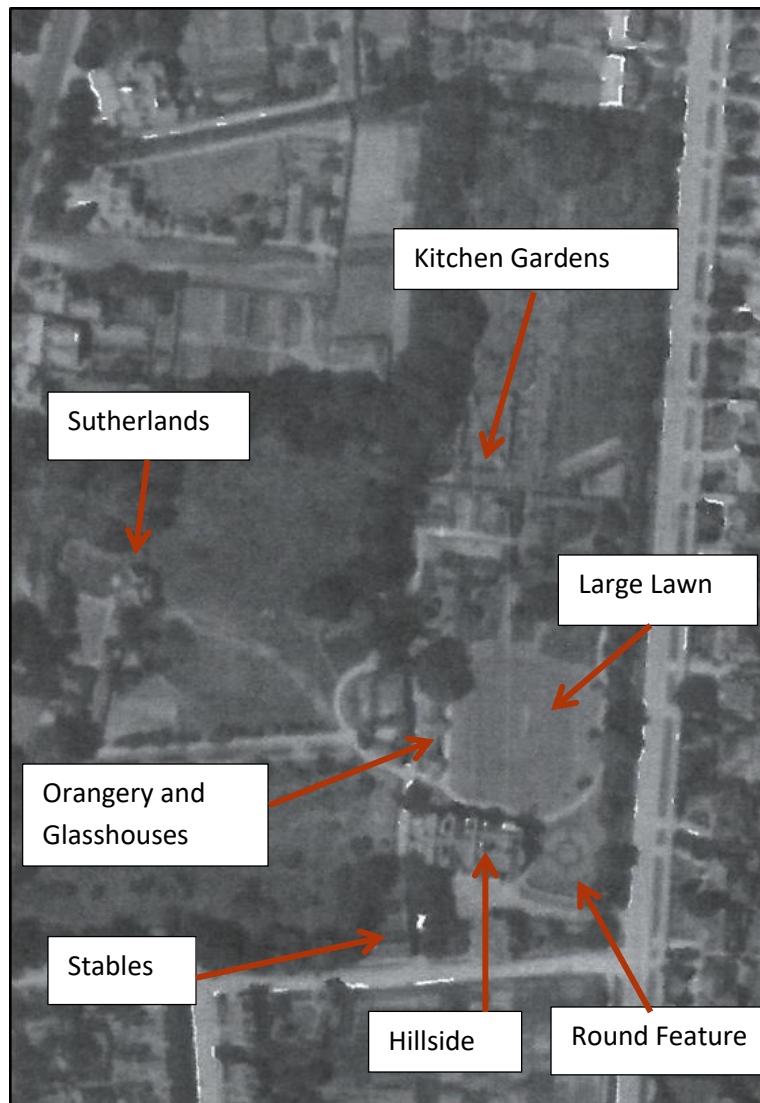


Figure 21 Aerial photo showing old features. Image courtesy of National Monument Record



Figure 22 The old Glass House and Orangery, Hillside 1936. Photo. Image courtesy of Turner Estates

From this evidence we can see that circumstances have materially changed and it is therefore considered by us that a new garden design, pulling on some of the historic features could breathe a new vitality to the site and offset the negative effects of 20<sup>th</sup> century building encroachment

When the University buildings were planned, Hillside was seen as having the capacity to accommodate a different form of development, because the grounds were so large. Now a different form of development is proposed to enhance and organise all the existing features into a coherent design.

Please refer to Drawing number GAA 001B 10-4-17, Issue B, size A1 scale 1:100



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## 8.2 Hillside Garden Design Dynamics

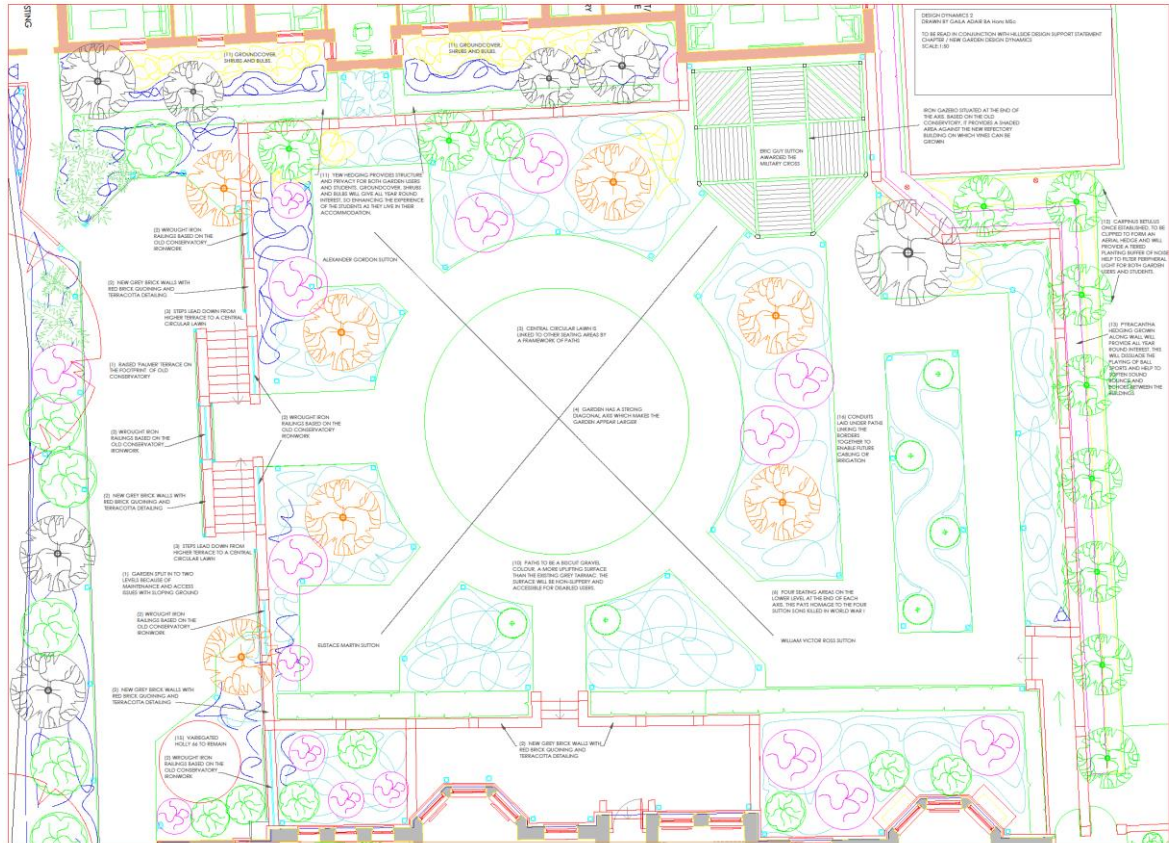


Figure 24 Design Dynamics 2 drawn by Gaila Adair

Please refer to Garden Design Dynamics 2 for further information

1. The new garden design covers the area to the immediate rear of Hillside to the extent of the old Orangery and the side areas of the house. The existing sloping ground, (if left as it is) would cause maintenance issues and sloping paths would prevent access for all. The new design proposes to split the levels of the garden, levelling the lower area and creating a raised terrace on the footprint of the old Orangery and raised border by the new student block extension facing Hillside. Terracing the ground will also enable all of the Hillside airbricks to be uncovered. One in particular is below soil level. This will help to secure the fabric of the building and allow it to breathe as intended.
2. New grey brick walls with red brick features and terracotta detailing have been designed to retain the ground, forming a large paved terrace on the higher level. Wrought iron railings with a design based on the old conservatory ironwork afford glimpses of the garden from one level to another. Level access to this area is from the path on the south side of Hillside.

3. Steps lead down from this terrace to a circular lawn which is linked to other seating areas by a framework of paths.
4. The garden has a strong diagonal axis which makes the garden appear larger, creating interesting oblique angles and views, where the architecture of the house can be appreciated. Specific features of the house have influenced the setting out of the garden. The house by nature of the extension and eclectic mix of architectural features is asymmetrical. The central lawn and steps have therefore been lined up with the axis of the window as shown on the plan. The Leonard Goodhart Sutton Terrace has been created at this point to allow significant views and axis from three windows to enjoy unobscured views to and from the house. It also creates a usable space, sitting comfortably with the house and links well to the rest of the garden. A further important axis lines up with the first and second bay windows near the William Victor Ross terrace. The long border in line with this axis creates a long perspective and links the Gazebo visually to the house.
5. A Corten weathered, steel framed gazebo is situated at one end of the axis, (Weston and Co architects have based the design on the wrought iron detailing of the old Orangery) to provide a shaded area over the Eric Guy Sutton terrace and help to complement the vaulted roof line of the proposed common room building. Vines are to be grown on this structure.
6. There are four seating areas on the lower level. The figure 4 is used within the design as it pays homage to the four Sutton Sons that were killed during World War I. Hillside was their family home and it is fitting that they should be remembered in a garden where they once played. Each area will have a reference to one of the sons. The Sutton sons, are named on the war memorial in Cemetery junction, Reading, but were not mentioned on the Suttons Seeds company War memorial which was moved to Brock Barracks in 1962. Second Lt William Victor Ross Sutton has recently been included in the Roll of Honour at the Trooper Potts Memorial next to Forbury Gardens in Reading and on the Repton School War Memorial Second Lt Alexander Gordon Sutton is mentioned. However, there is no single memorial to all the four sons in one place and this is what we would like to do at Hillside in the garden. Like many young men who fought in the 1914-1918 War, they are buried in War Cemeteries abroad. See Appendix 2.2.
7. In a recent survey carried out by the Berkshire Garden's Trust there are no gardens of remembrance in Berkshire for the First World War, plenty of memorial crosses, but no gardens. It is hoped that as part of the National Heritage Open Days' scheme, that the garden at Hillside can be open for visitors and that they can learn about Hillside and the people that lived there. See Appendix 3 Uniting Reading with a Ribbon of Green.
8. The Palmers and Suttons are intrinsically linked to Reading's Victorian and Edwardian heritage. The planting reflects the evergreen structure and formality of the Victorian era with the more adventurous planting of the subsequent 'Edwardian style' Arts and Crafts

- movement. There are also references to the plants that were mentioned in the Auctioneers sale of Hillside in 1893. Appendix 1. Planting also reflects the Victorian and Edwardian fascination and development for collecting trees and plants from around the world.
9. To open up the North elevation currently hidden from view. To re-create a circular rose garden as featured in aerial photos and on Dann-Lewis images. This view was meant to be seen from the drive and entrance and is currently hidden behind a fence and undergrowth.
  10. Paths to be a biscuit gravel colour. These will be more uplifting, than their present dull grey, especially during the winter months. The surface will be non-slippery and easily accessible for disabled users.
  11. Yew Hedging provides structure and privacy for both garden users and students. The groundcover, shrubs and bulbs will give all year round interest, so enhancing the experience of the students as they live in their accommodation.
  12. *Carpinus Betulus* will be clipped once established to provide aerial hedging by the north boundary wall and will provide a tiered planting to help buffer noise and filter peripheral light for both garden users and students.
  13. *Pyracantha* hedging grown along this wall will provide all year-round interest, dissuade the playing of ball sports and help to soften sound bounce and echoes between the buildings.
  14. Yew hedging, where the steps lead from the back door to the garden will frame the steps and also disguise the changes in wall height at this point.
  15. Existing Trees G64 Group of Crab Apples (refer to Ian Keene Ltd Tree Protection Plan Dec 2014) will be removed, but they will be mitigated by plenty of new trees including blossom and fruit trees.
  16. Existing variegated holly 66 (refer to Ian Keene Ltd Tree Protection Plan Dec 2014) will be kept, but will be re-shaped in to a cone as it has become misshapen and woody.
  17. Conduits will be laid under paths linking the borders together. This will be for future ease of installing lighting cable and irrigation should it be required.
  18. The care and maintenance of the garden will be undertaken by professional garden maintenance contractors who will take seasonal pruning waste from site on a regular contractual basis. These will be employed by Turner Estates.
  19. The naming of the terraces and seating areas. Each area is named after significant people who have lived at Hillside. William Isaac Palmer who instigated the building and commissioned the artistic architecture is afforded a prominent position on the upper terrace where the old Orangery used to be. The four Sutton sons are named at the four

corners of the garden on equal parity except Eric who was awarded the military cross and is honoured by having the Gazebo as a mark of his esteem. Noel's walk is named after the last surviving son and is positioned next to the long border with the four topiary features (the brothers) and links to the other areas. The terrace by the house is named after Leonard Goodhart Sutton because of his stoic and grounded nature, the Patriarch, he sits well with the house. The rose gardens are named after Mary Charlotte the Mother and Emily May the daughter. Not only does the naming of the areas create a sense of a story to be told. It helps to cement the memories of the two major families of Reading in a creative and tangible way. The names also help the gardeners identify where work needs doing. It is easier to reference to a name of a place rather than a long description of, 'the terrace to the left of the first window you come to' etc. This has worked on other sites.

### 8.3 Visualisation of the new Garden at Hillside



**Figure 25 Sketch 1 The Raised Terrace steps. Drawn by Gaila Adair 2016**

The above drawing shows the lower half of the garden leading to the steps of the raised terrace. The central lawn gives a feeling of space and light and the symmetrical planting either side of the path leading to the steps softens and complements the formality and structure of the raised walling. Wrought iron railings influenced by the old Orangery design will afford glimpses from one area to another.

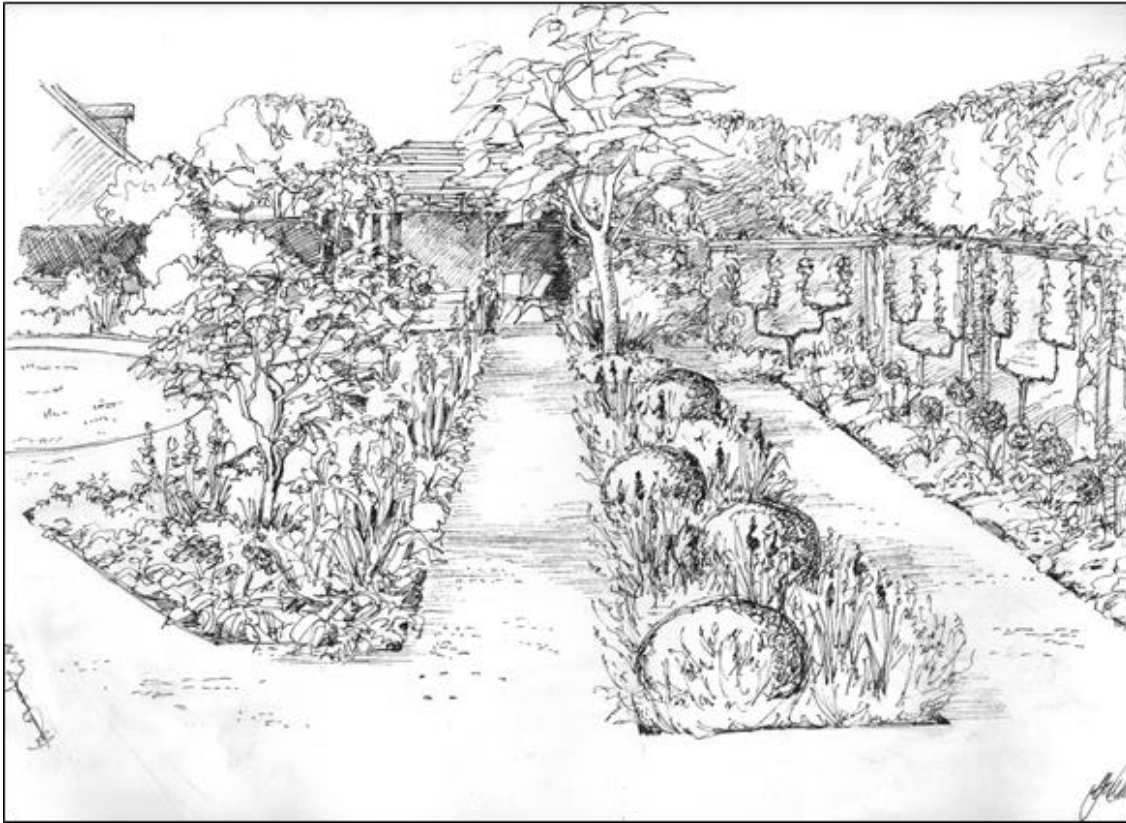


Figure 26 Sketch 2 The Gazebo seen from the William Victor Ross Sutton Terrace. Drawn by Gaila Adair 2016

The view of the Gazebo from the William Victor Ross Sutton Terrace. There is structure in the planting, showing a tiered effect mentioned in bullet point 12.



Figure 27 Sketch 3 View of the Hillside from the end of the Raised Terrace. View shows the circular lawn, raised terrace and steps, curved hedges and Carpinus aerial hedging. Drawn by Gaila Adair 2016

View of Hillside from the raised terrace, showing the hedging mentioned in bullet point 14.



Figure 28 Sketch 4 Looking towards the Alexander Gordon Sutton Terrace. Drawn by Gaila Adair 2016

The east elevation of Student Block 'Unit D5', has been cleverly designed by Weston and Co Architects to resemble a Pavilion, using materials sympathetic to Hillside. The raised retaining wall and border at this point helps to create a walled garden, with elevated planting providing privacy for both students and residents of Hillside.

This has given the opportunity for the central feature of the pavilion to be incorporated in to the garden, thereby creating an attractive 'borrowed landscape', an extension of the garden in a visual term.

Trees behind the yew hedging will help to soften the changes in roof lines of the student block, and seasonal planting will provide colour and interest throughout the year for the students.

## Conclusion

Our research has shown that the gardens at Hillside once consisted of a large expanse of land split into different zones. Large sweeping lawns were interspersed with more intimate areas with island beds, glasshouses and kitchen gardens. None of these features exist today, except a small area of grassed lawn.

Circumstances have materially changed and it is therefore considered by us that a new garden design, pulling on some of the historic features could breathe a new vitality to the site and offset the negative effects of 20<sup>th</sup> century building encroachment.

We believe this would enhance the architecture of Hillside and return a 'sense of place' back to the property.

We believe the design objectives, *'To enhance the Setting of Hillside House by establishing a garden which reflects the architectural heritage of the site'* is a positive proposal. Hillside will no longer be an isolated commodity on its own but will enjoy a new symbiotic relationship with a garden.

This new garden will restore pride, a sense of ownership, emotional attachment and care which will ultimately prolong the longevity of the building and one of Reading's most 'opulent' assets.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### William Isaac Palmer J.P.

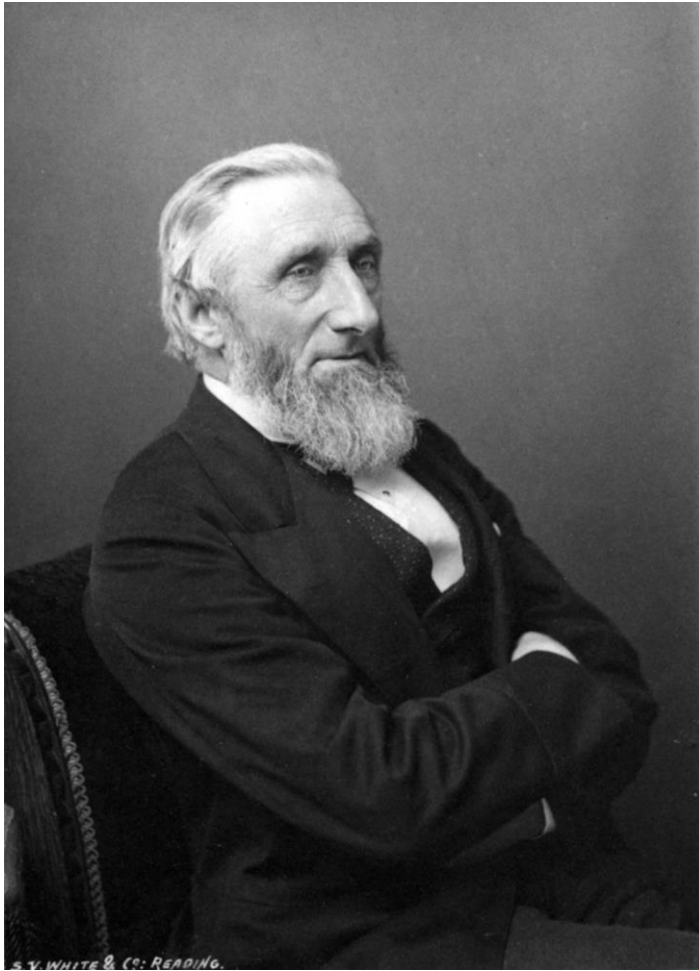


Figure 29 William Isaac Palmer J.P. Image courtesy of Reading University Library

Hillside was designed and built for W.I. Palmer, of Huntley and Palmer's biscuit fame.

William Isaac Palmer was born at The Old Manor House in Elberton Gloucestershire on May 31<sup>st</sup> 1824 into a Quaker family. Of Grammar School education, he was greatly influenced by one of his teachers and helped him produce and print a publication called the 'Sidcot Teetotaller' [Blue Ribbon Gazette and Gospel Temperance Herald].

He started work in Reading as an apprentice to Joseph Huntley in his tin making and ironmongery shop. This was opposite the shop of biscuit baker Joseph Huntley (senior) who started selling biscuits in his son's tins to stage coach travellers. On his retirement he passed the

reins over to his son Thomas in 1838 and in 1841 he signed a partner in to the business. This was distant cousin and fellow Quaker, George Palmer (William Isaac's brother) to form Huntley and Palmers Biscuits. On the death of Thomas Huntley in March 1857, William Isaac and another brother Samuel also became partners of the now successful and expanding firm.

### The Quakers

Known as the Society of Friends, the Quakers believe that there is

'something of God in everyone' and that Faith lived through action 'positively and creatively in others' [www.quaker.org] is a commitment that is worth pursuing.

In the past Quakers financed railways, innovation, construction and banking, not to mention three major confectionary producers in Britain. They were also great Philanthropists and invested and provided for the poor and invested in the creative arts and education.

### President of the Reading Temperance Society

William Isaac invested huge amounts of money in to the town of Reading. He was the President of the Reading Temperance Society and set up the 'Reading Help Myself Society' and set up the W.I. Palmer Memorial Hall in West Street in Reading, which has a later ornate façade by Spencer Slingsby, Stallwood, one of the architects he later employed to design Hillside. Spencer Stallwood often used the local firm Colliers of Tilehurst to make terracotta detailing on other work completed in Reading and it would be interesting to see if they produced the friezes for Hillside.

A bust of W.I. Palmer was presented to him by the Mayor of Reading who addressed onlookers,

'If you would learn more in the direction of the philanthropic work with which our townsman's name will be for ever associated'

The artist of the sculpture bust was William Charles May R.A. 1853-1931 who produced the terracotta frieze on the outside of Reading Museum.

It is believed that W.I. Palmer subscribed at least £20,000 to the building of the New Town Hall, (later to become Reading Museum) with its free library, public reading rooms and also funded the Schools of Science and Art. It is also believed that the art collection of Reading Museum was founded in 1892 by a bequest of paintings by him. From this we can see that W.I. Palmer actively supported and commissioned 'The Arts' in Reading and wanted to produce a house of similar quality of expression at 'Hillside'.

W.I. Palmer never married, and on his death it was found that his benefactions had exceeded his wealth. Hillside was put up for auction with all the contents, and his brothers paid for any outstanding promises of funds from their own pockets.

The architectural details on Hillside show reliefs of leaves, fruit and flowers and that a sales catalogue of the house and gardens note many exotic plants, indicating a considerable interest in this field of study.



Figure 30 Terracotta detailing of fruit and flowers at Hillside. Gaila Adair 2016

Hillside is noted in the 1893 sale catalogue by Eggington Auctioneers of Reading as :

‘Hillside’, Reading, the very charming and perfect Residence with Stabling, Glass Houses, Lawns and Gardens. Built by the late William I. Palmer Esq. JP is for sale by Private Treaty’

Many horticultural buildings and plants were listed including a Vinery, Strawberry plants and Azaleas in pots, Arum lillies, Hydrangeas and Geraniums. In ‘Pit Lights’ were Chrysanthemums, Hardy Ferns, Cyclamen, and Francoa. A stove house included Palms and in the Orangery were Phormium Tenax and Marguerites. The kitchen garden was also planted with protective shrubberies including Camelia, Azaleas, Haresfoot Ferns, Deutzia Gracilis, Spiraeas, Lily of the Valley and tulips.

From this we can see that a basic framework of established shrubs was already evident, but it is with the Suttons that we have concentrated our attentions. The rose garden and the Suttons’ expertise in flower cultivation have given us a basis on which we can progress the garden to suite the house.

## Appendix 2

### The Suttons of Hillside

Leonard Goodhart Sutton CBE JP (1863 -1932) was the next owner of Hillside. He became a partner in Suttons Seeds in Sept 1885. He was the youngest son of Martin Hope Sutton and the Flower Department was his main area of supervision, particularly flower culture expertise.

He married Mary Charlotte Seaton, who bore him six children, five sons and a daughter. It is believed she died after giving birth to her daughter May.

L.G. Sutton was elected Mayor of Reading three times, the first in 1914, just after the start of World War I, for two years and the last between 1925 and 1926. During the war he was responsible for raising three companies of Royal Engineers.

He was awarded a CBE in 1920 for 'valuable public service in Reading during the war'.

He declined a Knighthood after the war, even though he was a proud Royalist and had met the Royals on various official duties as Mayor of Reading.



**Figure 31** L.G. Sutton as Mayor of Reading, introducing King George V and Queen Mary to a local dignitary in 1929 .  
Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library



Figure 32 L.G. Sutton as Mayor, welcoming The Prince of Wales to Reading in 1926. Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library



Figure 33 L.G. Sutton as Mayor of Reading, accompanying The Prince of Wales for the official opening of Caversham Bridge in 1926. Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library

In an obituary, the Mayor of Reading F.G. Sainsbury declared L.G. Sutton,

‘an outstanding personality, a true English gentleman, beloved by his fellow citizens, a God-fearing man, ever willing to lend a helping hand to the poor and the needy’

Amongst many things, he was President of Reading’s Working Men’s Regatta and President of Reading Amateur Football Club.

He spent 46 years as the chairman of the Suttons firm right up until his death.

He died on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1932 at Hillside. The King and Queen sent a telegram of commiseration to Noel his surviving son, on hearing of his death.

The five sons all went to fight in World War I. Four of the sons were killed and the fifth, the eldest, Leonard Noel was allowed home as the authorities had thought the family had suffered enough. On his way home his ship was torpedoed, but he still managed to make it back.

Perhaps L.G. Sutton’s deeply religious beliefs helped him deal with the loss of his sons, we can only imagine.

### **Leonard Noel Sutton MA JP (1893-1965)**



**Figure 34 Captain Leonard Noel Sutton. Image with thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust.**

Eldest Son of L.G. Sutton, he was a Captain in the Berkshire Yeomanry. Known as Noel.

He carried on in the armed forces in the 395<sup>th</sup> Berks Yeomanry and Field Battery Royal Artillery and retired in 1937 in the rank of Major. He married Dorothy Jeans in the 1950s.

Noel joined the Suttons Seeds firm on 2<sup>nd</sup> of June and became the director in charge of flower seed from New Zealand and Australia. He was the author of ‘The Cool Greenhouse’

Noel was the High Sheriff of Berkshire in 1933-34 and the Deputy Lieutenant in 1936.

He died at his home ‘Sutherlands’ in Christchurch Road Reading and was buried with his Father and Mother in the family grave, Cemetery Junction, Reading.

## 2.2 The Lost Sutton Sons.

### Eric Guy Sutton, Lieutenant, 7th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment:



Figure 35 Lieutenant Eric Guy Sutton. Image thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust

Awarded the Military Cross 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1916

Killed 8<sup>th</sup> April 1916, aged 21.

Buried, Vermelles British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, grave 11. D. 20

### William Victor Ross Sutton, Lieutenant, Royal Berkshire Yeomanry Egypt 1916



Figure 36 Lieutenant William Victor Ross Sutton. Image thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust

Killed in action 13<sup>th</sup> November 1917 aged 20.

Buried, Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel, grave Q.27

### Alexander Gordon Sutton, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Rifle Brigade



Figure 37 2nd Lieutenant Alexander Gordon Sutton. Image thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust

Killed in action 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1918 aged 19.

Buried, Oxford Road Cemetery, Ypres. Grave V.H.9

### Eustace Martin Sutton, Royal Engineers 35<sup>th</sup> Signals



Figure 38 Lieutenant Eustace Martin Sutton. Image thanks to the Trustees of The Rifles Wardrobe and Museum Trust

Died 24<sup>th</sup> March 1918 aged 22.

No Known Grave but his name is mentioned on Poziers Memorial, Somme.

## Appendix 3

### **‘Uniting Reading with a Ribbon of Green’**

Between 2011 and 2014 a garden was recreated in the garden of Watlington House, Watlington Street, Reading.

Watlington House is a Grade II \* listed property. Similarly to Hillside, the garden had become encroached upon until its use was little more than a muddy car park. The Trustees of the house and members of the Berkshire Gardens Trust endeavoured to change this. A garden was designed and constructed which suited and accentuated the architecture of the house. The Trustees and the Berkshire Garden Trust, felt that now a beautiful garden had been created, it should be seen and enjoyed by the public on occasions and that Watlington House should not be seen in isolation on the other side of the River Kennet, but be linked to other historical garden sites and the Thames footpath in the form of a ‘Ribbon Walk’. This would showcase and unite the existing horticultural gems of Reading and promote and encourage new visitors and a flourishing ‘green economy’.

During ‘National Heritage Open Days’ 2014, a walk was organised by the members of Watlington House, The Berkshire Gardens Trust, and the Chairman of the Caversham Court Gardens which started at Watlington House and included, the Huntley and Palmer garden, Chocolate Island, the Oscar Wilde walk, the Abbotts Walk, Forbury Gardens and Caversham Court Gardens. The members of public who came on the walk announced it was a great success and more are planned in the future.

Hillside is within easy walking distance of Watlington House and could become another link in this ‘green’ chain. With connections to the Sutton family and the commemorative nature of the garden to the Sutton Sons, it would be a real asset to the heritage of Reading. The garden at Hillside could be open to the public on specific days of the year so that the buildings, garden and history could be truly appreciated to the full.

A memorial stone plaque is going to be fixed to the wall of the Gazebo, but further interest could be made by instigating a commemorative arts challenge. Local artists could submit ideas for how the Sutton Sons could be commemorated on a more personal nature within the garden. This could take the form of sculpture, stained glass or wood carving. The garden could also then be opened up as part of the Whiteknights Studio Trail held each year in the area.

Both the garden at Watlington House and Hillside have been designed by Gaila Adair BA (Hons) MSc.

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