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Document Title: **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

Project: **STUDENT HOUSING AND LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS**

Site Address: **HILLSIDE HOUSE AND HILLSIDE COURT, ALLCROFT ROAD,
READING, RG1 5DJ**

Client: **TURNER ESTATES**



Fig.1: Illustrative view of proposed student housing unit D5 and Hillside House Garden, extract from Weston & Co Architects drawing number 16002-PL-22

prepared by

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1.0 Introduction

This Design and Access statement is written as support for the full planning and listed building consent application with Reading Borough Council for the proposed student housing and landscaping improvements at the Hillside House / Hillside Court site on Allcroft Road, Reading. The application is submitted on behalf of Turner Estates who manage the site.

This statement is to be read in conjunction with the following information:

- Weston & Co Architects drawings: 16002-PL-1, 16002-PL-2, 16002-PL-3, 16002-PL-4, 16002-PL-5, 16002-PL-6, 16002-PL-7, 16002-PL-8, 16002-PL-9, 16002-PL-10, 16002-PL-11, 16002-PL-12, 16002-PL-13, 16002-PL-14, 16002-PL-15, 16002-PL-16, 16002-PL-17, 16002-PL-18, 16002-PL-19, 16002-PL-20, 16002-PL-21, 16002-PL-22, 16002-PL-23.
- Gaila Adair / Designer Landscapes Garden Design Support Statement and Management Plan
- Gaila Adair / Designer Landscapes drawings: GAA 001B and Design Dynamics

2.0 Executive Summary

This planning and listed building consent application aims to gain approval for student housing and landscaping improvements at Hillside House and Hillside Court, Allcroft Road, Reading. The proposed development involves the following key elements:

- Providing appropriate separation between the student housing use of Hillside Court, from the residential and office use within Hillside House in order to enhance the amenity for all occupants and visitors
- Enhance the setting of Hillside House, a significant heritage asset for Reading, with sympathetically designed garden and building proposals
- Provide an additional purpose built student housing unit, assisting with the shortage of purpose built student accommodation in the town
- Provide a centrally located student Common Room and Laundry building in order to improve the facilities for the student tenants of Hillside Court



Fig.2: Existing good quality shared courtyard serving Hillside Court



Fig.3: Existing poor quality amenity space serving the occupants of Hillside House

3.0 The Site Location

The application site is located 1.5 kilometers south of Reading's town centre, to the southern side of Allcroft Road, and between Lower Mount to the east and Whitby Drive to the west.

Local context surrounding the site is predominantly residential in use, mainly single family houses at a suburban density.



Fig.4: Aerial view of site context, Hillside House / Hillside Court site highlighted by red line.
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The Hillside Court student housing blocks are located 0.64 kilometers away from the Reading University main Whiteknights campus which is an 8 minute walk. Reading University's London Road campus is also only 0.64 kilometers and an 8 minute walk away from the Hillside Court site. The site's close proximity to these two main University campuses make the Hillside Court site an extremely popular and sustainable location for purpose built student accommodation.

4.0 Site Context

The application site is located within 'The Mount' Conservation Area, with the grade II listed Hillside House identified as a building of 'special interest' within Reading Borough Council's Conservation Area Appraisal dated April 2009.

Hillside House was originally built by W I Palmer (Huntley & Palmer biscuits) in 1880 and was later significantly extended to the south in 1898 and became home to L. G. Sutton (Suttons Seeds) and his family. The Palmer and Sutton families are both of great significance to the historic development and heritage of Reading town.

Hillside House and its stable buildings were designed by Morris & Stallwood Architects who are considered as 'prolific and accomplished local architects' by English Heritage within the buildings listing text. English Heritage describe Hillside as 'one of the most opulent buildings of this period in Reading', it is apparent that Hillside House is a very important heritage asset for the town in both a physical and social sense.



Fig.5: Artists impression of original Hillside House by Morris & Stallwood Architects, 1879. Image courtesy of Reading Local Studies Library.

In 1949 Hillside became property of Reading University, the University later developed Hillside House's garden to the west by constructing four student housing blocks, Hillside Court, in the late 1970s. Although these four buildings have been designed as buildings sitting within the grounds of Hillside House, little care was taken to create a development which was sympathetic to the House and its garden. The result is a situation where these four housing blocks, particularly Blocks A and D, have a detrimental effect on the setting of this significant listed building.

For further details of the history of Hillside House along with the Palmer and Sutton family relationship to the property, please refer to Gaila Adair / Designer Landscapes Garden Design Support Statement

Turner Estates gained control of the Hillside House and Hillside Court site when Reading University sold it in 2014. Turner Estates have since completed significant improvements to the existing Hillside Court student housing accommodation and landscaping, defined by planning application number 150090. Conditional planning approval has also been granted for an additional eight room student housing unit in the south western corner of the site, defined by planning application number 160753 which is due to commence construction later this year.



Fig.6: Photograph illustrating Block A's detrimental effect on the setting of Hillside House, there is also no privacy between the external amenity spaces associated with different uses.



Fig.7: Historic photograph of Hillside House and garden. Image courtesy of the Museum of English Rural Life

5.0 Use

5.1 Current Use

The current use of Hillside Court Blocks A, B, C and D is as purpose built student housing, planning use class C2. The student housing units are served by good quality external amenity space, an access road with temporary parking (for servicing and emergency use), along with bin and cycle storage developed as a result of planning application number 150090.



Fig.8: Existing uses site plan diagram

Hillside House is predominantly in use as residential flats, planning use class C3, with Turner Estates' office space located on the ground floor, planning use class B1. The Hillside House accommodation is served by appropriate car parking to the east and cycle storage to the southern end of the building, external bin storage and collection area is provided to the southern end of the car park adjacent to the detached garage building. The occupants of Hillside House are poorly served with external amenity space of any real quality appropriate to the grandeur of Hillside house. There is currently a poor quality lawn with unattractive tarmac footpaths and utilitarian lampposts with no privacy between the very different housing tenures at Hillside Court and Hillside House. This lawn to the west of Hillside House is completely open and overlooked by the Hillside Court student housing units.

Currently within the lower ground floor of Hillside House a laundry room is located serving the Hillside Court student housing blocks. This is an extremely impractical location with student tenants towards the western end of the site having to travel over 100metres to do their laundry.

The large rooms within Hillside House coupled with the grandeur of the internal architectural features and detailing determine the possible use of the listed building as student accommodation completely inappropriate and impractical.

5.2 Proposed Use

It is proposed to provide appropriate separation between the student housing use of Hillside Court, from the residential and office use within Hillside House to enhance the amenity for all occupants and visitors to the site.

An additional student housing unit D5 is proposed as an extension to the eastern end of Block D presenting an opportunity to improve the appearance of the building's east elevation and also the setting of Hillside House.

Adjacent to the proposed unit D5 to the north, a Common Room and Laundry building is proposed serving the student tenants of the four Hillside Court blocks. This accommodation is strategically placed in the centre of the site, providing the most convenient travel distances for all tenants.

The current student housing units A1 and A2 are also proposed to be modified, both of which are currently two bedroom units to become a single six-bedroom student housing unit.

The area of lawn to the west of Hillside House and also the overgrown area of garden to the north are proposed to be enhanced to become landscaped gardens improving the setting of Hillside House. The new landscaped gardens create privacy between the two external amenity spaces for mutual benefit. The Proposed Hillside House Garden will serve as high quality amenity space to the occupants and visitors of Hillside House.



Fig.9: Proposed uses site plan diagram

6.0 Amount

The area of the proposed application site is 2,096 square metres, which forms part of the overall Hillside House and Hillside Court site with a total area of 7,910 square metres.

The proposed seven-bedroom student housing unit D5 has a gross internal floor area of 161.3 square metres over two floors.

The combined gross internal floor area of the proposed single storey Common Room and Laundry building is 62.6 square metres.

The gross internal floor area of the current two storey student housing units A1 and A2 proposed to be altered into a six bedroom student housing unit (A1) is 117.6 square metres. No extensions are proposed to this building.

There are no proposed car parking spaces allocated to the Hillside Court student housing units in accordance with the requirements of Reading Borough Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD.

Including the proposed unit D5, and altered unit A1, the number of student bedrooms across all four Hillside Court Blocks will total 127 (including the as yet un-developed unit C5 in the southwestern corner of the site). Reading Borough Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD requires for Halls of Residence C2 use that 1 cycle space per 5 students is provided. Thirty cycle spaces are currently provided within the existing cycle store in the northwestern corner of the site, which will more than satisfy the proposed requirement of 26 cycle spaces.

The Existing Bin Store 1 is capable of accommodating 8no. 1100 litre wheeled bins, 4 intended for general refuse and 4 intended for mixed recyclables. The Existing Bin Store 2 is capable of containing 12no. 770 litre wheeled bins, 6 intended for general refuse and 6 intended for mixed recyclables. The potential combined capacity should comfortably be able to accommodate the proposed student occupancy level. As there are no clear waste management requirements for purpose built student housing within Reading Borough Council's guidance, this matter may require discussion with the Waste Minimisation Officer.

7.0 Layout

The proposed overall layout is designed in order for the new student housing unit D5, the Common Room and Laundry to form a partial division between the Hillside Court and Hillside House areas of the site.

The proposed student housing unit D5 is designed as a continuation of the Block D terrace. A single-storey element extends to the south which accommodates the communal kitchen, living and dining accommodation. There is a west facing glazed doorset which provides access from this space to an external terrace serving unit D5. Accessed from the hall and landing of unit D5 are the following shared sanitary facilities: one WC, two shower rooms, and one bathroom. The seven student bedrooms are located against the building's eastern elevation. The bedroom window configuration and garden landscaping has been carefully considered to protect the privacy of the students as well as the proposed Hillside House Garden. An offset hedge away from the eastern elevation will provide the student rooms with views into a micro-garden within the raised planting bed. Adjacent to the southern boundary a shed and composting area are proposed serving the Hillside House Garden.

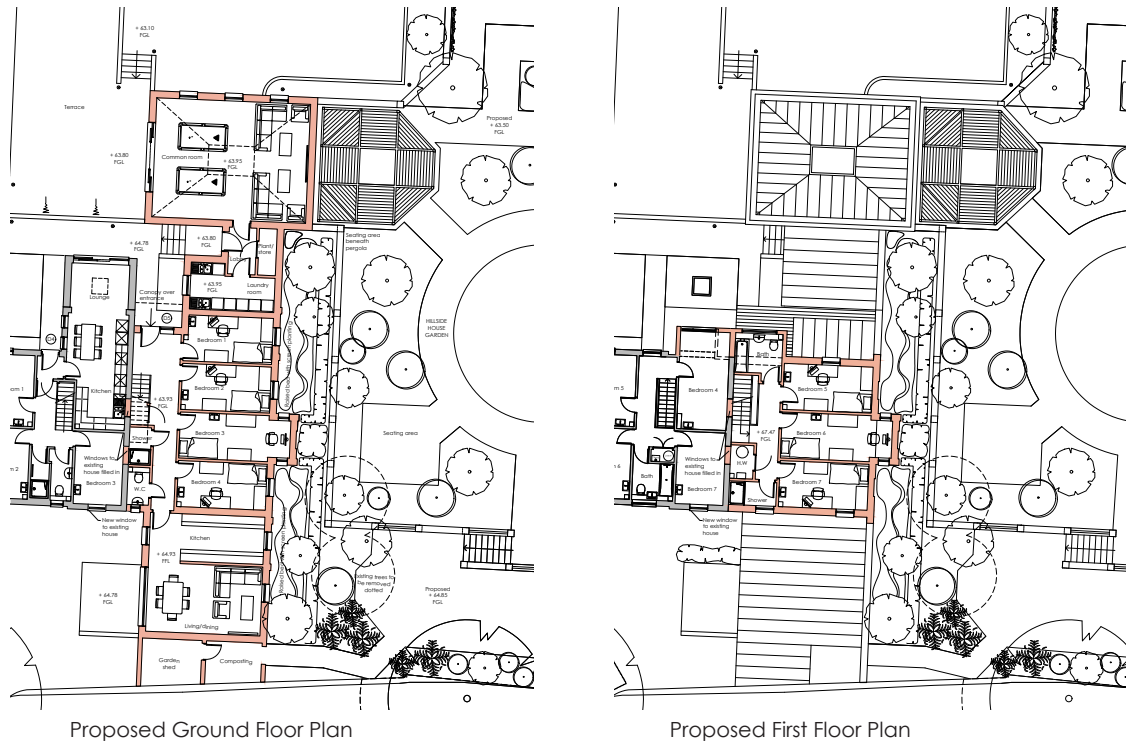


Fig.10: Proposed student housing unit D5, Common Room and Laundry Plans, extract from Weston & Co Architects drawing number 16002-PL-11

The Common Room and Laundry building is positioned in a central location for convenient use by all occupants of the Hillside Court student housing blocks. The Common Room element is positioned to act as a pavilion building serving the Hillside Court shared courtyard amenity space. The Laundry is located to the south of the main access lobby, and provides suitable clothes washing and drying facilities for the Hillside Court student blocks.

To the east side of the Common Room within the proposed Hillside house landscaped garden, a Gazebo structure is proposed which acts as focal point and structural feature within the landscaping scheme. From the northeast corner of the Common

Room building the proposed Hillside House garden wall begins running eastward towards the northwest corner of Hillside House. At the north west corner of Hillside House a steel access gate is positioned allowing for clear visual and physical separation between the proposed wall and Hillside House.

The current student housing units A1 and A2 are two separate two-bedroom units, A1 occupying the ground floor and A2 on the first floor. It is proposed to combine the two units into a single six-bedroom unit by modifying the internal layout to become similar to the rest of Block A. All existing openings to the east elevation are proposed to be blocked-up in order to allow climbing plants to be grown up this façade and become part of the Hillside House Garden landscaping design.

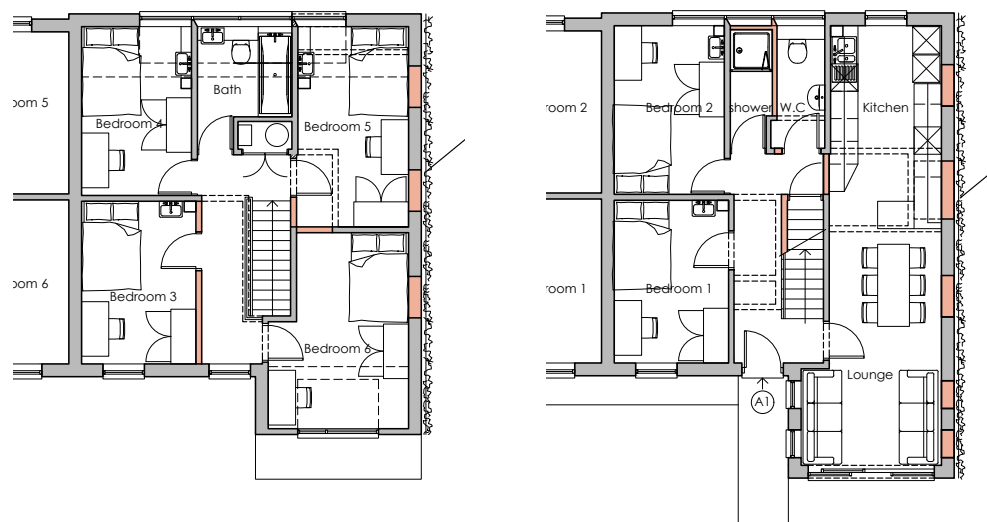


Fig.11: Proposed student housing unit A1 Plans, extract from Weston & Co Architects drawing number 16002-PL-07

It is proposed to demolish the dilapidated and overgrown wall to the east of the existing unit A1 which defines a private garden area in order to create a clearer view of the impressive north elevation of Hillside House. An additional area of Hillside House Garden is proposed in this location, enhancing the setting of the listed building.

For an explanation of the layout of the proposed Hillside House Garden, please refer to Gaila Adair / Designer Landscapes' Garden Design Support Statement.

8.0 Scale

All of the development proposals are congruous with the scale of existing buildings on the site.

The proposed student housing unit D5 is an extension to the existing Block D terrace, extending the existing two storey ridge and eaves lines eastward. Single-storey, subservient elements of the building project to the southern site boundary, and link the Common Room to the north.

The single-storey Common Room building element is designed to be a little more prominent than the Laundry and entrance lobby which link it to the student housing unit D5. The Common Room is designed as a centrally located 'object' building within the overall Hillside Court and Hillside House site.

There is no alteration in scale proposed to the modified existing student housing units A1 and A2 which are proposed to become a single, six bedroom student housing unit.



Fig.12: Illustrative view of Common Room, student housing unit D5 and Hillside House Garden, extract from Weston & Co Architects drawing number 16002-PL-22

9.0 Landscaping

For further details of the landscaping design, please refer to Gaila Adair / Designer Landscapes' Garden Design Support Statement and proposed landscaping plan reference GAA 001A.

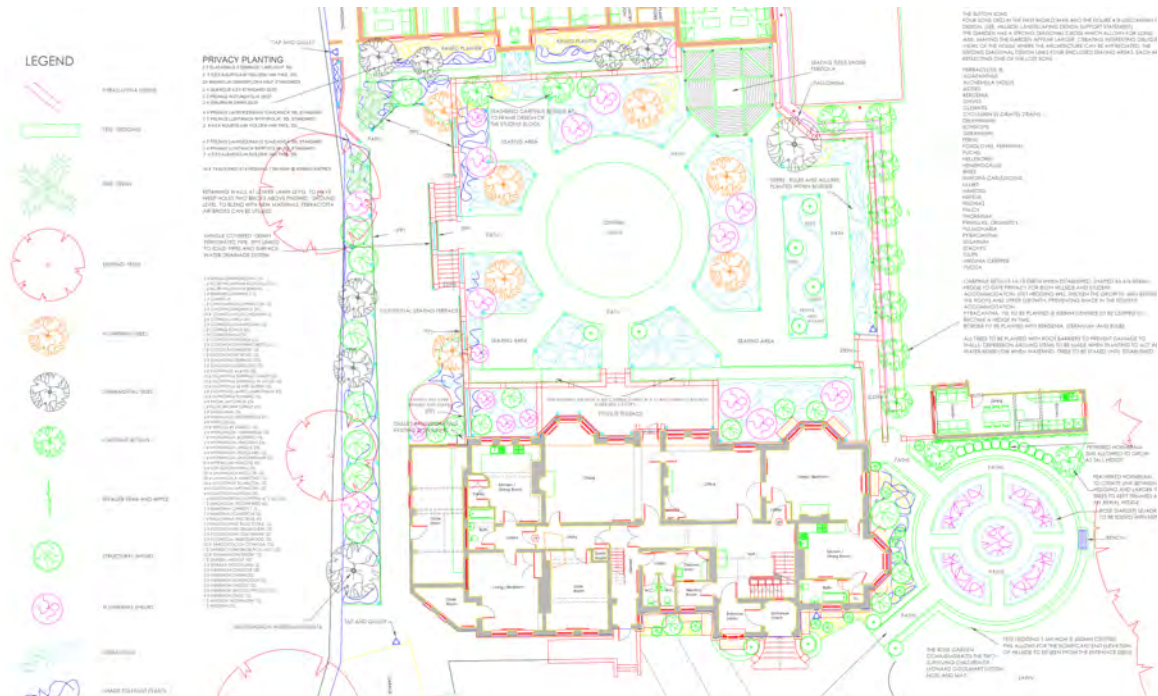


Fig.13: Extract of Designer Landscapes proposed landscaping plan reference GAA 001B

10.0 Appearance

A very un-attractive eastern elevation of Block D currently faces Hillside House which is detrimental to the setting of the listed building. Developing the proposed student housing unit D5 presents an opportunity to provide required purpose built student housing whilst enhancing the setting of this significant listed building.



Fig.14: Photograph of east elevation of Hillside Court Block D which faces Hillside House.

The proposed student housing unit D5 has been designed as a mediating building, transitioning between the contrasting conditions of the opulent Hillside House and the utilitarian Hillside Court student housing blocks.

The northern and southern elevations of unit D5 are designed to be in-keeping with the rest of Block D, with consistent material use, roof pitches, ridge and eaves positions. The walls of D5's eastern elevation are pronounced with a parapet along the single storey elements, a projecting pier to the north east and south east corners, and a parapet gable. This pronounced wall has the effect of creating the walled western extent of the proposed Hillside House Garden, with the projecting bay and gable creating a focal point constructed from brickwork which references Hillside House. The raised planting bed offset from the east elevation has the effect of creating a visual plinth to the elevation, moderating between the lower Hillside House garden level and the higher level of Hillside Court's Block D.

It is proposed to use high quality materials with an enduring appearance especially to the east elevation facing Hillside House. The brickwork proposed to this eastern elevation and all of the garden walls is predominantly the grey / blue English bond brickwork with red brickwork features to match Hillside House. The red brickwork features have been kept to simple plinths, piers, corbelling and window surrounds. Replication of the ornate detailing of Hillside House has been avoided as the principle is to propose structures which reference and are sympathetic to the architecture of Hillside House whilst remaining subservient, and recognizing they are constructed at a

different time. Grey coloured aluminium framed windows, doorsets and rainwater goods are proposed to provide a high quality and contemporary appearance.



Fig.15: Proposed east elevation of student housing unit D5, the Laundry and Common Room. Extract from Weston & Co Architects drawing no. 16002-PL-13

The proposed Common Room element is designed to appear as an 'object' building which serves as a pavilion primarily to the Hillside Court shared courtyard, but also to the Hillside House Garden by defining the proposed Gazebo structure. The brickwork to the Common Room is proposed as grey / blue English bond brickwork similar to Hillside House and incorporating Staffordshire Blue brick headers creating a geometric diapering pattern. The Common Room is designed with a vaulted zinc standing seam roof with a central rooflight, introducing architectural interest and natural light to the interior whilst further defining this building element as a focal point.

The proposed Gazebo structure echoes the vaulted form of the Common Room roof and rooflight. The primary structure of the Gazebo is proposed as Corten weathering steel which will develop an orange / red patina providing long lasting protection to the structure without maintenance. The colour of this primary structure will sit comfortably with the proposed red brickwork features and complement the blue / grey brickwork. The secondary structure of the Gazebo is proposed as black steel and incorporates an ellipse motif which references the structure of the original Orangerie building belonging to Hillside House. It is proposed within the Hillside House Garden design to cultivate vines over the Gazebo structure creating a pleasant shaded seating area and visually interesting garden feature.



Fig.16: Photograph of original Hillside House Orangerie (no longer in existence). Elliptical structure motif referenced in the proposed Gazebo structure, balustrades and gates. Image courtesy of Turner Estates.

The proposed modifications to reconfigure the existing units A1 and A2 into a single unit involve relatively minor alterations to the appearance of the building. A grey coloured aluminium framed glazed sliding doorset is to be introduced to the living room on the south elevation, along with a new window to the rear elevation (all to match existing). The openings to the eastern elevation are all proposed to be blocked-up and finished with facing brickwork to match existing. It is proposed to cultivate climbing plants up this un-attractive end elevation to create a 'green wall' and significantly improve the view of Hillside House's impressive north elevation.



Fig.17: Hillside View from North

11.0 Access

Currently there is pedestrian access to the Hillside Court student housing blocks via: a footpath with a boundary gate in the northwest corner of the site, the gated access road between blocks A and B, and via footpaths to the north and south of Hillside House. It is proposed that there will no longer be pedestrian access for the occupants of the student housing blocks from the eastern Hillside House side of the site. The student occupants of Hillside Court would use the footpath with gate at the boundary in the northwest corner of the site, and the gated access road between blocks A and B as their means of access into the Hillside Court side of the site. No longer providing free pedestrian access across the site to the north and south of Hillside House assists with protecting the privacy of occupants of Hillside House and Hillside Court, as well as improving the overall security of the site as a whole.

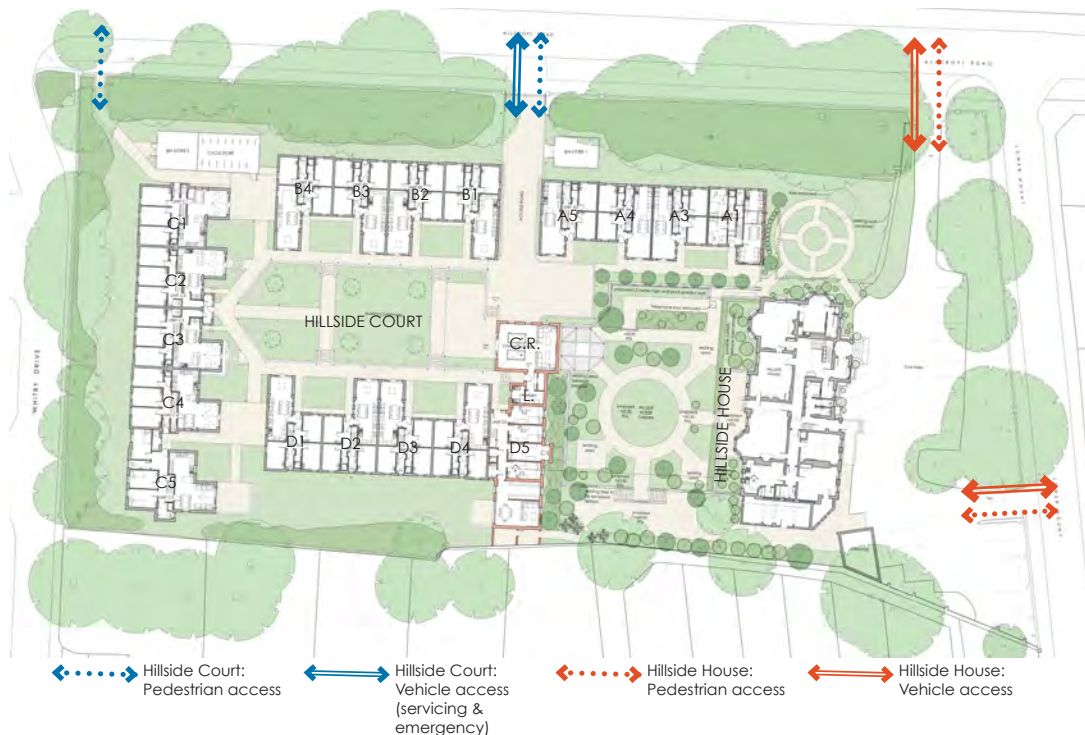


Fig.18: Proposed site access diagram

A stepped access is proposed into the entrance lobby of the proposed Common Room and Laundry building, dictated by existing constraints of the significantly sloping site. We suggest that given the constraints of the existing student housing units and the significant slopes of the site, wheelchair access is wholly impractical, and therefore a stepped access into the proposed Common Room and Laundry building is a suitable proposal.

There are no modifications proposed to vehicular access across the whole Hillside House and Hillside Court site.

12.0 Conclusions

This application for planning approval and listed building consent aims to redress the negative impact of the existing Hillside Court student housing blocks on the setting of Hillside House. The carefully considered garden and building designs rationalise the current situation at the site and unite buildings with landscape in a more harmonious relationship.

The proposals for a purpose-built Common Room and Laundry building serving the Hillside Court student housing units will significantly improve the student occupants welfare. Providing an additional seven-bedroom student housing unit will also make a small contribution to meeting the current shortage of student rooms serving the University of Reading, which is a serious on-going problem in the town. The financial cost associated with creating the proposed garden to a standard appropriate for Hillside House will be significant, the additional student housing unit D5 and modified unit A1 will make a serious contribution to the viability of the Hillside House Garden.

The development proposals described will improve the privacy of the occupants of the distinct uses of Hillside Court and Hillside House within the overall site. Providing appropriate separation between these uses will significantly improve the security of the site and overall welfare of all occupants.

Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The student housing and landscaping improvement development proposals enhance the setting of a significant heritage asset and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the site as whole.

Reading Borough Council Core Strategy, Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

In accordance with policy CS33 we suggest that the development proposals have no adverse impact on the Hillside House heritage asset and it's setting.