

LAND AT LOWFIELD ROAD READING

PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

PREPARED BY PEGASUS GROUP | READING BOROUGH COUNCIL | APRIL 2016 | BRS.6499



PLANNING APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY PERMISSION (5 YEARS) FOR 28 NO. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION UNITS

LAND AT LOWFIELD ROAD, READING, RG4 6NL

PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004**

Prepared by: Amy Hickson

Pegasus Group

First Floor | South Wing | Equinox North | Great Park Road | Almondsbury | Bristol | BS32 4QL

T 01454 625945 | **F** 01454 618074 | **W** www.pegasuspg.co.uk

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CONTENTS:

Page No:

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	SITE DESCRIPTION	3
3.	THE PROPOSAL (DESIGN AND ACCESS)	5
4.	PLANNING POLICY	12
5.	SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT	20
6.	PLANNING ASSESSMENT	22
7.	CONCLUSION	28

APPENDIX 1: RECORD OF MEETING WITH PLANNING OFFICER, 21 JANUARY 2016

APPENDIX 2: CAVERSHAM PARK LISTED DESCRIPTION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Sustainability, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Reading Borough Council's Environment and Neighbourhood Services Department in support of a planning application for the temporary erection of 28 no. accommodation units on land at Lowfield Road, Reading, RG4 6NL.
- 1.2 The wider purpose of this application is to assist the Local Authority in its duty to provide temporary accommodation to those who are homeless, eligible for support and are in priority need. Over the past three years there has been a significant increase in the number of homeless households approaching the Council for assistance. The Council's existing stock of accommodation is not sufficient to support those in need and as a result, households are placed in Bed and Breakfast emergency accommodation. This situation is neither suitable for those in the accommodation nor cost effective for the Council's General Fund.
- 1.3 This Statement will provide further justification for the proposed development (including the rationale for its temporary nature) by reviewing the site and its surroundings in terms of the relevant physical, social, economic and planning context as well as the relevant planning history and local and national planning policies.
- 1.4 The main justification section then explores whether the proposal is compliant with the policies in the adopted and emerging Development Plan and considers the proposal against other material considerations including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to which the appropriate weight is given.
- 1.5 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the associated drawings and supporting documentation listed below:
- i. Application and CIL Forms, duly signed and completed;
 - ii. Suite of Drawings including:
 - Block, Site and Location Plans (Drg No. 16/007/02A);
 - General Arrangement Plan (Drg No. 16/007/01);
 - Landscape Masterplan (Drg No. BRS.6499_01 - A);

- Detailed Landscape Proposals (Drg No. BRS.6499_02 – A); and
 - Landscape Management Plan (Drg No. BRS.6499_03 - A);
- iii. Phase I Ecological Survey, prepared by J Taylor Ecology Consulting;
and
- iv. Phase I Geo-technical Study, prepared by Geo-Environmental Services
Ltd.

Pre-application Consultation

- 1.6 Prior to the submission of this application, consultation on the proposals took place amongst varying departments of Reading Borough Council. This includes: (i) approval of the proposal in terms of its need and likely Council expenditure from the Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee on 18th November 2015; and (ii) a pre-app meeting with the Council Planners held on 21st January 2016. A copy of the meeting notes from the Pre-app meeting is provided at Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1: RECORD OF MEETING WITH PLANNING OFFICER, 21 JANUARY 2016

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is located within Caversham, an urban extension of Reading located approximately 3km north east of the town centre. Access into the site is from the east via Lowfield Road.
- 2.2 The application site is approximately 0.6 hectares in area and comprises a central road with approximately 19 no. concrete pads either side. Mobile homes were once positioned on these concrete pads however, satellite imagery suggests these were demolished in the mid to late 2000's. A telegraph pole is noted to pass over the central road while street lighting is present either side of the road. The site is contained within a belt of trees and vegetation along all perimeters with the exception of the access point.
- 2.3 The site is in a predominantly residential area and is surrounded by other detached and semi-detached properties to the south and east. The architectural detail of these properties varies although they are typically of a brick construction.
- 2.4 Beyond the site's vegetation, land to the west comprises the grounds of the Reading Cemetery & Crematorium, while land to the north is open green space, comprising part of Caversham Park. The Park, Cemetery and Crematorium combined are identified as a 'Major Landscape Feature' in the Local Plan.
- 2.5 Caversham Park is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. Contained within Caversham Park is the BBC Records Building, a Grade II Listed Building. Beyond the Cemetery and Park, the surrounding area is in residential use. The southern section of the park, noted to be closest to the site, comprises meadow land and includes 2 no. copses of mature trees. The land slopes southwards and overlooks the suburban settlement of Caversham.
- 2.6 A copy of the Listing Description for Carversham Park is provided at Appendix 2.

APPENDIX 2: CAVERSHAM PARK LISTING DESCRIPTION

- 2.7 Beyond the site boundary to the north east of the site lies a strip of unmanaged scrub vegetation, approximately 10m wide. This has been identified by the Council's Proposals Map as a strip of vegetation which is of ecological value, however, wider searches undertaken as part of the ecological assessment confirm that this is neither a statutory nor a non-statutory protected wildlife site.

- 2.8 In terms of local amenities, local shops are present along the ground floor level of Rosemore House, approximately 219m east of the site. The ground floor frontage is occupied by takeaways and local convenience shops while part of the associated car park is occupied with a mini recycling centre.
- 2.9 In terms of public transport connections, the following bus services stop on Lowfield Road:
- Reading Bus Route 23 (20 mins frequency Mon-Sat; 30 mins frequency on Sundays); and
 - Community Link 28 (Council contracted service).
- 2.10 Mickland's Primary School is located approximately 330m south west of the site.
- 2.11 The site falls within Flood Zone 1, an area at least risk of flooding.

Planning History

- 2.12 A review of the Council's Planning Portal raises no planning history for the site however, it is noted that this piece of land, owned by RBC, had been used for mobile home accommodation in the past.

3. THE PROPOSAL (DESIGN AND ACCESS)

3.1 The application seeks planning permission for the temporary erection of 28 no. accommodation units. These units will be brought onsite in modular form and stacked to create 7 no. two storey blocks.

3.2 The full description of development reads:

“Temporary permission (5 years) for the erection of 28 no. (2 bedroom) self-contained temporary accommodation units with associated vehicular access; car parking; communal amenity space; refuse and bicycle storage; a play area and landscaping”

Need for Temporary Accommodation

3.3 The Council's Neighbourhood Services Department has identified a significant increase in the number of homeless households approaching the Council for assistance over the past three years.

3.4 The number of households that the Council has a statutory duty to house has nearly tripled over the past three years, increased from 148 in 2012/13 to 218 in 2013/14 and 339 in 2014/15. A significant number of these households have been placed in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) emergency accommodation as there has been no alternative accommodation available.

3.5 In a report to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee (dated 18th November) relating to the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020, this increase is partly due to the locality's buoyant economy and high level of demand for rented accommodation. The Report states:

“Reading's economy is such that housing is in high demand across all tenures and house prices are amongst the highest outside London. A number of factors have resulted in an increase of homeless households. The cost of renting in the private sector has increased, driven by factors including fewer households buying property, high demand from student and young professional markets, and households moving out of London to seek more affordable accommodation. Landlord concern about the impact of Universal Credit and a rising market has led to a reduced willingness to house benefit claimants and increasing private sector evictions, often through no fault of the tenant.”

- 3.6 The Report also identifies that the availability of affordable housing is in scarce supply, stating that:

“...due to the limited pipeline of new build affordable housing, reducing social housing stock through Right to Buy sales, high land prices, and a reducing supply of affordable private rented sector housing at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels (Housing Benefit will only be paid up to this amount). Further, new measures announced in the Chancellor’s autumn budget (and flowing through into primary legislation) have dramatically reduced the Council’s capacity to deliver its planned programme of new Council housing – resulting in an estimated 200 fewer new homes being developed over the coming 5 years.”

- 3.7 Due to a shortage of affordable permanent accommodation, the use of temporary accommodation and B&B has grown – with an increase in the number of placements and length of stay over recent years. This is unsuitable, unsettling and disruptive for homeless households. The sharply increasing demand in Reading for emergency housing has also led to a need to make B&B placements out of borough in some instances, which creates further problems for households.
- 3.8 To overcome this and to ensure the Council fulfils its duty to accommodate these households, the Draft Homeless Strategy 2015-2020 seeks to introduce measures which will firstly reduce homelessness; reduce the use of B&B accommodation by increasing the supply of temporary accommodation; and increase the supply of permanent affordable housing.
- 3.9 In line with the Council’s emerging Homeless Strategy 2015-2020, the site at Lowfield Road has been identified and approved by the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee (HNL Committee) as a suitable site for temporary modular accommodation.
- 3.10 The Council’s rationale for the scheme to be temporary relates to the availability of funding. At this stage, the HNL Committee have granted the expenditure of £1.2 million¹ from the Housing Revenue Account for the site’s development, including site clearance, provision of services and procurement of the units. Realistically, it would not be feasible to develop permanent housing on such a limited budget.

¹ Based on 18 units of accommodation and 20% contingency. Additional funds are likely to be required on the basis that the proposals seek to develop 28 no. units.

- 3.11 The proposal forms part of the Council's wider strategy for the next 5 years as the temporary use of this site responds to the sharp increase in homelessness which needs to be accommodated immediately. In effect this is a short term yet effective solution to alleviate the chronic levels homelessness given the restricted availability of funding.

Design Principles

- 3.12 The policies stated in Section 4 in conjunction with an assessment of the area's local character have been considered and, as far as practicable, have influenced the design of the development. Every site presents unique opportunities and constraints which can be exploited or adapted to with an appropriate design. Opportunities and constraints for the site are indicated below:

- 3.13 **Opportunities** for the development include:

- Effective use of previously developed land;
- The site forms 'transitional' space between Caversham Park and the residential housing to the south and east;
- It will alleviate the chronic shortage of suitable temporary accommodation;
- Sustainably located within the settlement boundary;
- Highly vegetated perimeter providing screening and sense of enclosure; and
- Plot is of an adequate size to accommodate the proposed units and amenity space;

- 3.14 **Constraints** for the development include:

- Preservation of the adjacent 'Major Landscape Feature' and Registered Park and Garden;
- Restricted funding; and
- Chronic need to develop the proposal immediately.

- 3.15 The remainder of this section explains how the proposed development addresses the site context and local characteristics in respect of its:

- i. Use;
- ii. Amount;
- iii. Layout;
- iv. Scale;
- v. Materials and Appearance;
- vi. Landscaping; and
- vii. Access.

Use

- 3.16 The proposal seeks to develop 28 no. temporary accommodation units on a derelict plot of land situated within the settlement boundary.
- 3.17 Provision has been made for 32 no. car parking spaces, amenity space (including drying areas and refuse storage), additional landscaping and a play area.

Amount

- 3.18 The development comprises 28 no. units each with a GIA of 50.6 sq m. Each bedroom is 12.2 sq m in area and the living area is approximately 24.4 sq m.

Layout

- 3.19 The site will be laid in a linear format and follows the sites previous arrangements with built form either side of the central road. This layout makes the most efficient use of space and is a cost effective solution in terms of ease of construction, connection to utility services and ongoing management.
- 3.20 The site will be occupied by 7 no. blocks of development with communal amenity space and car parking located adjacent to each block. Play space is provided at the south eastern end of the development.
- 3.21 The layout of each unit is illustrated on the General Arrangements Plan (Drg No. 16/007/01). Each block will have a ground and first floor comprising of 4 no. modular units. Between each unit a 'service strip' of 1m will be provided. Each unit

will be laid out to provide self-contained living accommodation with bathroom, kitchen-diner, living room and 2 no. bedrooms.

Scale

- 3.22 Each block will be approximately 5m in height with a footprint of circa 126 sq m.
- 3.23 The proposed blocks are of a height which is sympathetic to the single storey residential properties within the locality.

Appearance

- 3.24 A detailed materials schedule is provided on the proposed plans (Drg No's 16/007/02A and 16/007/01). In summary, each block is proposed to be timber clad with UPVC windows and doors and painted metal staircases. Canopies will be provided above the external staircase.
- 3.25 Street lighting is proposed in the form of LED Streetlight Columns and Heads which match the Council's standard installation. LED bulkhead lights will be provided above the external staircases. Boundary treatment will comprise close board 1800mm timber fencing with concrete posts and gravel boards.
- 3.26 In this case, the sites functionality is priority and to a large extent has informed the proposals simplistic appearance. Nonetheless, the sites appearance and how it sits within its context has been a key consideration.
- 3.27 The site is noted to be a 'transitional' space located between an area of open space to the north and west and residential to the east and south. As such, strong focus has given to site landscaping. Timber cladding is considered an acceptable material as it is noted that a number of properties within the locality have clad detailing.
- 3.28 The height of the buildings, coupled with their natural appearance will ensure minimal impact to the nearby 'Major Landscape Feature' and Registered Park and Garden. It should be noted that the site has remained derelict for approximately 5-10 years and offers little in terms of contribution to the setting Caversham Park. The temporary proposals are an enhancement to the sites existing appearance.

Landscaping

- 3.29 The site's perimeter is occupied by an established tree/hedgerow belt which largely screens the site from the adjacent Cemetery and nearby Caversham Park. As such the purpose of the proposed landscaping scheme is to create an attractive setting for the proposed dwellings and provide opportunities for play along with the creation of wildlife habitats.
- 3.30 Within the northern and southern amenity green spaces, the boundaries of the site will be enhanced by the use of shrub and tree planting. This will soften the existing close boarded fence boundary of the site which is to be retained and will complement the existing offsite vegetation which surrounds the site. There are opportunities for informal play and recreation within the southern amenity space with the siting of naturalistic play features which provide a variety of play experiences for all ages along with the provision of seating and a bin.
- 3.31 A combination of trees, hedges, and areas of shrub planting along with amenity and species rich long grass creates attractive and seasonally diverse communal gardens and amenity green space. Planting species will be chosen to suit the character of the street as well as meet the required function. Within the amenity green spaces, native species will be favoured in order to create habitats for wildlife which will help to integrate the proposals within the existing landscape framework surrounding the site.
- 3.32 The landscape design for the communal gardens and along the street aims to create a sense of place through definition of each garden with planting, amenity grass with hedgerow against the boundary close board fence. To the rear of the parking spaces there will be low shrub planting to soften the transition from the street to the private communal gardens. Within the communal garden there are opportunities for storage and refuse areas as well as an area of hard surfacing for drying.
- 3.33 Overall the landscape proposals for Lowfield Road aim to integrate the development into the surrounding area whilst defining the communal gardens and amenity green spaces to become functional and aesthetically pleasing spaces with the opportunity for play for residents.

- 3.34 The Proposed Site Plan (Drg. No. 16/007/02A) and supporting Landscape Masterplan (Drg No. BRS.6499_01 - A) illustrate that the proposed landscaping scheme are in accordance with Local Policies DM10, DM17 and DM18.

Access

- 3.35 The site's existing access from Lowfield Road will be used to gain vehicular and pedestrian access into the site.
- 3.36 The proposals include 32 no. car parking spaces, providing one space per unit plus 4 no. visitor spaces. This is in accordance with the Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which applies a **maximum** of 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling plus 1 space per 4 dwellings for visitor parking.
- 3.37 Bicycle sheds are proposed within the amenity area for each block. Each unit will be allocated a shed which has sufficient space to accommodate 2 no. bicycles. This exceeds local guidance which requires a minimum of 0.5 cycle spaces per unit.
- 3.38 In accordance with local policy CS5, all ground floor units will be provided with ramps for the safe access/egress of pushchairs or mobility impaired.

Summary

- 3.39 In summary, the proposal responds positively to its local context by providing a design which is suitable for the site given its 'transitional' location between Caversham Park and an established residential area.
- 3.40 In terms of impacts upon the adjacent landscape and heritage designation, the existing vegetation will largely screen the development from Caversham Park, particularly given the low rise scale of the development and additional landscaping. The proposals represent a temporary improvement to the site which in its current form, is noted to bring no benefit to the setting of Caversham Park.
- 3.41 The proposals have been carefully designed in line with the criteria set out in Local Policy CS7. Further assessment of this is provided in Section 6 (Planning Assessment).

4. PLANNING POLICY

4.1 The following policies are considered relevant to the proposal.

National Planning Policy

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework was published in March 2012 and outlines how the Government expects to promote and stimulate economic growth. The following sections are considered relevant to this planning application:

4.2 The Ministerial Forward confirms:

“Development that is sustainable should go ahead, without delay – a presumption in favour of sustainable development that is the basis for every decision.”

4.3 **Paragraph 14** states that, for decision taking, a presumption in favour of sustainable development means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

4.4 Core land use principles are set down at **Paragraph 17**. These include the need to proactively drive and support the delivery of homes; encourage the effective use of land; conserve heritage assets; and **improve health and wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community services to meet local needs.**

4.5 The NPPF provides no specific policies on the matter of accommodation for the homeless but nonetheless states at **Paragraph 50** the need for Local Authorities to ***‘plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community... and to identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand.’***

4.6 **Paragraph 59** states that design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and **Paragraph 60** confirms that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes.

4.7 The NPPF places great emphasise on the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings. **Paragraph 134** states, *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage*

asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use."

National Planning Practice Guidance (published 2014)

- 4.8 On 6th March 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) launched the planning practice web based resource, the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which comprised a full and consolidated review of planning practice guidance documents to be read alongside the NPPF.
- 4.9 There is no specific practice guidance referring to accommodation for the homeless.

Design

- 4.10 The NPPG has a separate section on the subject of 'Design' which at paragraph 004 (ID: 26-004-20140306 revision date 06.03.2014) states the following:

"Development proposals should reflect the requirement for good design set out in national and local policy. Local planning authorities will assess the design quality of planning proposals against their Local Plan policies, national policies and other material considerations."

DCLG Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard March 2015

- 4.11 This nationally relevant Technical Housing Standards note was published in March 2015 and sets out minimum Gross Internal Areas for residential developments. The minimum standards expected are identified in the table below:

Table 1 - Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)

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

Local Planning Policy

4.12 Local planning policy is taken from the following documents:

- Core Strategy (Adopted January 2008 with alteration adopted 27 January 2015);
- Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Adopted October 2012 with alteration adopted 27 January 2015);

4.13 Additional policy and supporting information is drawn from:

- Affordable Housing SPG; and
- Revised Parking Standards; and
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (February 2016).

4.14 Reading's 'New Local Plan' is currently at an early stage of preparation. Consultation on the Issues and Options paper closed on 7th March and the results of the consultation are awaited and therefore this holds no weight in the determination of this application.

Core Strategy 2008 (amended 2015)

4.15 **Policy CS1** relates to sustainable construction and design and requires that new development:

- Achieves Eco-Homes standard 'Very Good' or higher;
- On developments of 10 dwellings or more, 50% of the provision must meet Eco-Homes 'Excellent' standard;
- Maximises the use of energy efficiency and energy conservation measures in their design, layout and orientation to reduce overall energy demand;
- Sites of more than 10 dwellings should incorporate on-site energy generation to off-set at least 20% of predicted carbon dioxide emissions;
- Reduces mains water use and demonstrates that water conservation measures are incorporated so that predicted per capita consumption does not exceed the appropriate levels set out in the Code for Sustainable Homes standard;
- Incorporates sustainable urban drainage facilities as part of the layout of development as appropriate, including minimising the size of impermeable areas so that run off is reduced where possible and is no greater than the original conditions of the site.

- 4.16 **Policy CS2** requires that measures to minimise the generation of waste through construction, use and the life of the building are demonstrated, including the promotion of layouts which provide sufficient space for waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.
- 4.17 In terms of the density of development, **Policy CS4** states that within the Borough, this will be related to the level of accessibility by a range of means from the site to a range of services and facilities.
- 4.18 **Policy CS5** relates to inclusive access and states that all buildings should be designed to provide suitable access to, into and within its facilities for all potential users so that they can be used safely.
- 4.19 **Policy CS7** relates to design and the public realm. It states that the various components of the form of development including scale, density, layout and appearance will be assessed to ensure that the proposal makes a positive contribution in terms of urban design. It further states that developments should:

- *“Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them; and*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.”*

4.20 **Policy CS16** deals predominantly with the thresholds and levels of provision of affordable housing associated with various types and scales of development. **Of relevance to this proposal, for a 100% affordable site, is the statement that the Council will assess the site size, suitability and type of units to be delivered in relation to the current evidence of identified needs.** An appropriate tenure mix will be sought which will include social rented, affordable rent, intermediate rent and shared ownership.

4.21 Priority needs for 2014 were stated to be family sized housing, specialist accommodation for vulnerable people and extra care housing. This need is updated below taking into account the findings of the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

4.22 The northern boundary of the site lies adjacent to Caversham Park, a Registered Historic Park. **Policy CS33** states that Historic Features and areas of historic importance, including their settings will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. It further states:

“Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.”

4.23 With reference to contaminated land, **Policy CS34** states that development will be permitted on land affected by contamination where it can be demonstrated to the

satisfaction of the LPA that the contamination can be satisfactorily remediated so that it is suitable for the proposed use.

4.24 **Policy CS36** ensures that development retains, protects and if possible, incorporates features of biodiversity into the scheme. Development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on an ecological designation, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: i) the need for development outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and ii) appropriate mitigation are provided.

4.25 **Policy CS38** seeks to protect trees, hedges and woodlands from damage or removal.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document

4.26 **Policy DM1** sets out the Council's policy to ensure that new developments are resilient to climate change. It states that new buildings should be orientated to maximise opportunities for natural heating and cooling and shield against the elements. It also advocates the use of trees and planting to shade amenity areas, buildings and streets.

4.27 **Policy DM5** relates to housing mix and, for developments of more than 10 dwellings, states that at least 50% of dwellings should be of 3 bedrooms or more and that the majority of dwellings will be houses rather than flats, **having regard to all other material considerations.**

4.28 **Policy DM 6** restates the aims of Core Strategy Policy CS16 in relation to affordable housing.

4.29 **Policy DM10** seeks to ensure that new dwellings have functional outdoor amenity space. It states:

"Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. ...flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens."

4.30 In relation to highways matters, **Policy DM12** states that in proposals involving either the construction of a new site access or a material increase in the use of an

existing site access will not be acceptable if they would be likely to result in the encouragement of the use of the network for short local trips or compromise the safe movement and free flow of traffic on the network or the safe use of the road.

- 4.31 **Policy DM17** states that Green Links shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. New development must demonstrate how the location and type of open space and landscaping features within a scheme have been arranged to maintain or link into the existing Green Network.
- 4.32 **Policy DM18** requires that new development provides for tree planting within the application site, or off site in appropriate situations.
- 4.33 **Policy SA8h** allocates the application site for housing development. The Sites and Detailed Policies Document states that the site is suitable for residential development of 21-34 dwellings but that the potential for contamination and important landscape close to the site should be considered.
- 4.34 Supplemental text (paragraph 14.5.7-8) identifies that there is potential for allocated sites such as the application site to accommodate other uses which have not been anticipated by the Local Plan. This includes the potential for specialist housing provision for groups such as vulnerable people. Differing uses for these sites could reduce the amount of housing allocated for the site. This will be appropriate provided that it does not harm the chances of delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy.

Affordable Housing SPD 2013

- 4.35 The Affordable Housing SPD was adopted in 2013. More recently, affordable housing policy in the Borough has been reviewed and updated with a revised Policy CS16 (and consequently DM6) adopted after independent Examination in January 2015. Consequently, the detail of the SPD has been superseded however the aims of the SPD remain relevant.
- 4.36 The SPD details the need for affordable housing in the Borough. It states (at Paragraph 4.14 that the largest need is for smaller accommodation (one or two bedroom) which should be let at target rents to best serve urgent needs. There is also a significant need for larger family homes of three bedrooms or more. For this reason a mix of housing types is preferable.

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD October 2011

- 4.37 This document sets out the absolute parking requirements for residential accommodation in the Borough.
- 4.38 For one to two bedroom flats, 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling are required. In addition, 1 space per 4 dwellings is required for visitor parking.
- 4.39 A minimum provision of 0.5 cycle spaces should be provided for each 2 bedroom unit. Provision should be in the form of a communal store which is covered.

Strategic Market Housing Assessment February 2016

- 4.40 This document examines the need for affordable housing (amongst other housing types) in the Borough.
- 4.41 The affordable housing needs model looks at the arising need against the supply of affordable housing. For Reading, the net need for affordable housing is estimated to be 406 dwellings per annum. Once completions between 2013 and 2015 are taken into account, this is adjusted to 387 dwellings per annum.

Annual Monitoring Report and Five Year Housing Supply

- 4.42 The Council's latest 5 year housing land supply is provided at Appendix II of Reading's Annual Monitoring Report 2014/15.
- 4.43 Included within the 5 year trajectory is the development of 28 homes on the application site (allocated site SA8h). The site does not benefit from any planning permissions at this stage. As such, development is not anticipated until 2017/18. The 15 units are anticipated to be developed in years 2017/18 with the remaining 13 to be completed across years 2018/19 to 2020/21.
- 4.44 The Council can demonstrate a housing land supply for 4,516 homes over the next five years. When measured against the housing objectives identified within the Core Strategy², this equates to 8.43 years housing land supply. When measures against objectively assessed need³, this equates to 6.01 years housing land supply. This represents a very healthy land supply.

² 536 homes to be completed per annum over the next 5 years

³ 699 homes per year in Reading up to 2036 as identified within the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Berkshire (Oct 2015).

5. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

- 5.1 As far as practicable, the proposed units have been designed to cope with and mitigate against the effects of climate change.

Sustainable Location

- 5.2 The site comprises previously developed land within an urban area which is residential in character. The site is within close proximity to bus routes, local shops, schools and open space.
- 5.3 Facilities within walking distance of the site include:
- i. Rosemore House, approximately 219m east of the site, where local shops and takeaways are present;
 - ii. A mini recycling centre, approximately 219m east of the site;
 - iii. Public transport connections, the following bus services stop on Lowfield Road:
 - Reading Bus Route 23 (20 mins frequency Mon-Sat; 30 mins frequency on Sundays); and
 - Community Link 28 (Council contracted service).
 - iv. Mickland's Primary School approximately 330m south west of the site; and
 - v. Caversham Park, north of the site.

- 5.4 As such, the proposed use and its location is considered sustainable.

Energy Efficiency Measures

- 5.5 The proposed development is of modular construction. The construction methods for this type of development has improved significantly in recent years. Each unit is designed and engineered with particular attention to thermal and acoustic performance and have fire resistant walls. This means each unit is better insulated and are warmer, safer and quieter.
- 5.6 All fenestrations will be installed with double glazed UPVC for optimum thermal performance and solar heat gain efficiency.

- 5.7 For maximum solar gain, the buildings are orientated within 20 degrees facing north to maximise the windows facing the north.
- 5.8 The development is surrounded by a dense belt of vegetation which performs as a shield against the elements and provides shade to the amenity space at various times of the day.
- 5.9 There are no proposals to include artificial cooling as part of these works. Cross ventilation and appropriate internal shading such as blinds and curtains will be used to mitigate against the effects of overheating from the sun.

Water Efficiency

- 5.10 Water use will be conserved by installing flow restrictors to taps and showers, including installation of a dual flush toilet.

Waste & Recycling

- 5.11 During construction, waste residues will be minimal on the basis that the modular units will be constructed offsite. Any waste generated onsite will be dealt with responsibly and in accordance with the waste hierarchy, opting to reuse and recycle where possible.
- 5.12 Adequate waste and recycling storage has been incorporated into the layout, ensuring that recyclables and waste is separated before collection.

Renewable Energy

- 5.13 No on-site energy generation is proposed due to the temporary nature of the development and limited availability to funding (scheme viability).
- 5.14 As far as practicable, sustainability measures have been incorporated into the development. The measures identified above confirm that the development is partially compliant with sustainability policies CS1, CS2 and DM1. In this unique circumstance, partial compliance is accepted in light of the strong material considerations which exemplify the immediate social need for this type of accommodation.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 This section of the Statement assesses the acceptability of the proposal against the following key considerations:

a) Principle of Development;

b) Impact on Residential Amenity (future and neighbouring residents);

c) Impacts on the adjacent Landscape Feature and Registered Park and Garden; and

d) Other environmental factors;

6.2 Note that the Design and Access Statement (Section 3) assesses the application against the latest landscape and design policies, and as such this is not intended to be repeated in this section.

Principle of Development

6.3 A number of factors conclude that this development is accepted in principle. Firstly, and as discussed in Section 5 (Sustainability Statement) the site is located within Caversham, an urban area situated to the north east of Reading town centre. The site is within close proximity to local amenities including public modes of transport. As such, the site is sustainably located in accordance with Local Policy CS4.

6.4 Secondly, the site is on previously developed land which both the NPPF and Local Plan seek to develop in preference to the development of greenfield land. The scale of development (28 no. units) is considered appropriate, in accordance with the NPPF's policy to maximise the efficiency of brownfield land, and compliant with Local Policy SA8h which stipulates that the site can accommodate between 21-34 dwellings.

6.5 Thirdly, local policy identifies that in some cases allocated sites may be used for alternative purposes such as for the development of specialist housing for vulnerable people. As such, the proposed use for the application site is considered acceptable providing it does impact upon the Council's ability to meet its housing targets.

6.6 The Council's 5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) includes the trajectory that 28 no. dwellings will be developed on the application site. While the proposed use for

the site is noted to be temporary and will not prejudice the sites future use for permanent housing, it will alter the Council's 5YHLS.

- 6.7 As identified within Reading's Annual Monitoring Report 2014/15, the Council can demonstrate land supply for 4,516 homes over the next five years. When measured against the housing objectives identified within the Core Strategy, this equates to 8.43 years housing land supply and when measured against objectively assessed need, this equates to 6.01 years housing land supply.
- 6.8 In light of the Council's healthy 5YHLS, the proposed temporary development of the application site will not impede the Council's ability to meet its housing objectives or delivery of homes based upon objectively assessed need.
- 6.9 Lastly, the temporary nature of the development is acceptable in light of other material considerations such as: (i) the Council's homelessness records, illustrating a sharp rise in the number of homeless households eligible for assistance; (ii) Legislation including the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 which places a duty on Local Authorities to accommodate homeless households in priority need; and (iii) Reading's Draft Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 which identifies this site for temporary development as part of the Council's wider strategy to tackle homelessness and over use of unsuitable B&B accommodation.
- 6.10 These material considerations hold significant weight and place strong emphasis on the social need for this development. As such, the proposal is acceptable in principle.
- 6.11 Local policy DM5 seeks to make provision for 3+ bedroom dwellings where developments are proposing 10 or more dwellings however, identifies that regard may be given to other material considerations. Given the temporary nature of the development and importantly their temporary occupation by households in immediate need, limited weight is given to this policy. Other material considerations which identify the immediate social need for this development hold greater weight.
- 6.12 Other factors to be considered as part of the balancing exercise are assessed below.

b) Impact on Residential Amenity

- 6.13 The proposed layout and landscaping scheme seek to provide a visually attractive and safe environment for occupants and neighbouring residents.

i) Would the proposal constitute an acceptable living environment for its future occupiers?

- 6.14 The proposed layout and landscaping scheme seek to provide a visually attractive and safe environment for occupants. Parking and communal amenity areas are located immediately adjacent to each block, providing adequate provision of outdoor amenity space including passive surveillance of these area and parked vehicles.
- 6.15 In terms of National Space Standards, a two bedroom (4 person) flat would need to have a minimum floor area of 70 sq m and a two bedroom (3 person) flat would need to be 61 sq m. Each unit is 50.6 sq m, falling short of the National Space Standards however, it is noted that these standards apply to permanent dwellings and are not strictly applicable to this type of development which is intended to be occupied by households for a temporary period.
- 6.16 Of consideration is the Council's Adopted Internal Floorspace Standards⁴ which sets a minimum of 6.5 sq m of useable bedroom floorspace for 1 person or 10.5 sq m for 2 people, and 7 sq m of kitchen space. While these standards are applicable to Houses of Multiple Occupation, they can be applied to this development as minimum standards to ensure sufficient space for temporary occupation. The proposed units exceed these standards with bedroom sizes approximately 12 sq m and the living area approximately 24 sq m in area. The areas proposed are therefore sufficient to meet the short term needs of prospective occupiers.
- 6.17 The proposed layout demonstrates the site is large enough to accommodate outdoor amenity space for future occupiers. Additionally, bin storage is shown on the proposed Block Plan, allowing the occupants of the units to safely access their refuse and recycling.

⁴ Appendix 1 of Residential Conversion SPD (Nov 2013)

6.18 Overall, the proposal would provide suitable living accommodation for the temporary occupiers of these units and as such is in accordance with local policies CS2, CS7 and DM10.

ii) Would the proposal unacceptably harm the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers?

6.19 The site is enclosed within an established belt of hedgerow along all boundaries. This vegetation screens the site from nearby properties. As a result the proposals will not affect privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, noise and disturbance, visual dominance or overbearing effects from the development.

6.20 Overall, the proposal will not cause any harm to the amenity of existing residents and will provide an enjoyable living environment for future occupiers. Therefore the proposal is compliant with local policy CS7.

c) Impacts on the adjacent Registered Park and Garden and Local Landscape Feature

6.21 This section demonstrates that the proposals will not harm the setting of the nearby Registered Park and Garden and heritage asset, Caversham Park.

6.22 Caversham Park is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. Contained within Caversham Park is the BBC Records Building, a Grade II Listed Building. Beyond the Cemetery and Park, the surrounding area is in residential use. The southern section of the park, noted to be closest to the site, comprises meadow land and includes 2 no. copses of mature trees. The land slopes southwards and overlooks the suburban settlement of Caversham.

6.23 In terms of setting, the Listing Description identifies that the park is enclosed by 20th Century development with allotments and the Reading Cemetery and Crematorium to the south. The house and park are noted to be on a plateau to the north where views of Caversham and Reading are noted to the south.

6.24 The site in its current, derelict condition contributes very little to the setting of the heritage asset. However; the mature vegetation surrounding the sites perimeter is likely to contribute positively to the setting of Caversham Park.

6.25 Given that views to the south, towards the residential area of Caversham are noted, the principle of additional accommodation is accepted as a suitable form of

development which is unlikely to significantly harm the heritage asset. In terms of design, the proposals are deliberately low rise to ensure they are not a focal point of any panoramic views experienced from the house within Caversham Park. Furthermore, the proposals will be screened to a large extent by the sites existing perimeter vegetation.

- 6.26 As such, the proposals will continue to conserve the setting of this heritage asset. Notwithstanding the above, if the Council were minded to assess the application against Paragraph 134 of the NPPF (whereby 'less than substantial harm' to the heritage assets was perceived) the public and social benefits of the proposal will substantially outweigh any perceived harm.
- 6.27 In summary, the proposals accord with both national and local guidance relating to development affecting heritage assets.

d) Other Environmental Factors

i) Land Contamination

- 6.28 Policy SA8h identifies possible land contamination issues. As such, a Phase I Geotechnical Survey has been undertaken to ascertain the likely risks. The Survey concludes that the risk to human health and the environment from potential contamination is low to moderate. The Report provides comfort that land stability is not an issue (i.e. no mines are present beneath the site). It is possible in this case that land remediation is required however, the Report provides comfort that this could suitably be undertaken and secured by planning condition if necessary. As a result, the proposals accord with local policy CS34.

ii) Ecology

- 6.29 The site's perimeter is occupied with dense vegetation and part of the vegetation along the north eastern site boundary is identified within the Council's Proposals Map (2012) as part of the wider Green Network. To enhance this network the proposed landscaping will include native species and will be incorporated with the wider vegetation to create a habitat corridor.
- 6.30 Other ecological enhancements proposed including the installation of bird and bat boxes.

- 6.31 The Ecology report concludes that the proposals will not adversely affect any ecological designations within the area and recommends mitigation measures during construction to ensure the proposals will not impact protected species. Further bat and bird surveys may be required prior to the commencement of development, and if required may be secured by planning condition.
- 6.32 The proposed landscaping scheme including the mitigation measures and ecological enhancements expressed within the Phase I report ensures the proposal will not have an adverse impact upon local flora and fauna. As such the proposals are found to be in accordance with Local Policies CS36, DM17, DM18.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Planning, Sustainability, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group in support of an application for the erection of 28 no. temporary accommodation units on land at Lowfield Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 6NL.
- 7.2 This Statement has demonstrated that the principle of the proposal is entirely acceptable in this residential location with no unacceptable impacts on the amenities of the nearby residents.
- 7.3 It is considered that the proposal respects the character of the local area in terms of scale, mass and appearance. Additional landscaping has been incorporated into the scheme to respect the nearby landscape features and heritage assets. The proposals will not impact the setting of the nearby Registered Park and Garden.
- 7.4 This Statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is compliant with both the NPPF and local planning policy and it is therefore considered that planning permission should be granted for the application proposal.
- 7.5 As far as practicable, sustainability measures have been incorporated into the scheme however, due to the temporary nature of the development and financial restrictions, the proposals represent a minor departure from local policy CS1 (sustainable construction and design). Despite this and **on planning balance the social need for this development is afforded significant weight over and above any minor departures from local policy** therefore, it is respectfully requested that this application be permitted without delay.

APPENDIX 1

RECORD OF MEETING WITH PLANNING OFFICER, 21 JANUARY 2016

Lowfield Road – Use of Site for Temporary Accommodation

Record of Meeting with Allocated Planning Officer – Andrew Amery, on the 21st January 2016

Those present: Mike Carpenter – Property Services
Sharon Povey – Property Services
Andrew Amery – RBC Planning Services

No.	Observation	Comment
1.	In RBC Site Allocation Document 2012, the Lowfield Road site is identified at Site No. Sa8i and is allocated for permanent residential development – Why is the current proposal not for permanent development.	The Housing, Neighbourhood and Leisure Committee approved the use of the Lowfield site for temporary accommodation on the 18 th November 2015.
2.	Planning requirements would also require a mix of housing types.	The proposal is not to create a permanent development, but to maximise the usage of the site and therefore the number of units that can be accommodated within the available land
3.	It would also require the development to fit into the Character and Context of the area.	As the development is temporary and therefore time limited, within reason external appearance is dictated by the construction methods used. The proposal to treat the exterior of the units with treated natural timber will provide a contemporary look that will blend into the natural surrounding very quickly.
4.	The Site Allocation Plan lists the site as having potential for contaminated land.	An environmental walk over survey will be conducted and the recommendations in respect of further testing followed.
The following were comments made by the planning dept. upon the basic proposals submitted for discussion. The items were discussed individually at length and the planners are fully aware of why the proposed layout was arrived at, but the following is listed just as a summary of the planners wishes. If we look to proceed with the planned development, the planners would be interested in negotiating on the proposals.		
5.	The current proposal would not fit into any of the planners standard criteria for the area. Therefore, a	A Planning statement will be prepared outlining the case for temporary accommodation on the site in line with the

Lowfield Road – Use of Site for Temporary Accommodation

	planning statement to support the application would have to state that Housing are aware of the policies, but that the Immediate/Emergency requirement for a short term solution to the current Housing [crisis] would mean that the development would need to proceed as per the application.	application as the best solution to alleviate the short term need for additional accommodation as an alternative to out of region Bed and Breakfast provision.
6.	The planners feel that wood [timber cladding] is not a 'Reading' material and therefore not the most appropriate for this usage. They would also want to see a mix of colours giving some individuality to each of the units. They suggested keeping the basic green colour and standard finish of the units, but having different colours of doors and window reveals.	The temporary nature and requirement to provide maximum units for the budget prevent individual stylisation, the opinion of the Local Councillor is in favour of the proposed natural timber cladding
7.	They also felt it important that we added a 'lid' to the unit, to isolate the unit from rain noise (they are well insulated internally) and that the lid would also form overhangs at all edges of the units and contain concealed down lighting.	The addition of a roof covering both modular units would add unnecessary cost to the project due to the structural complexity and beyond providing a basic weather protection would offer little in the way of benefit.
8.	They would prefer to see more of a street scene (rather than the fairly regimented format of the proposal). This would involve altering the footprints of the blocks so that orientation and alignment of the units would differ along the streets. This would be to try to avoid the army barracks feel and create more of a community feel.	The proposed layout balances overall cost with maximising unit capacity, orientating units in an opposed fashion would mean alterations to the existing service road and increased cost in respect of services installation.
9.	They would like to see individual garden areas set out to the rear of some of the ground floor units and these ones be targeted more for usage by families with children. Single people or those without children would be more suited to the upper units.	Creating separate gardens is not feasible due to land limitations and the additional costs of fencing and maintaining during the period that the site will be in use. It is proposed to include a play area at the south end of the site within the amenity space.
10.	They are 'not keen' on seeing external staircase units and would prefer to see these 'internally'	Whilst external stairways are not an ideal solution they are cost effective. Creating an internal stairway would require

Lowfield Road – Use of Site for Temporary Accommodation

		a redesign of the internal layout of the units and reduce available space. An enclosed stairway in the location proposed could provide the circumstances for ASB issues.
11.	A CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) is payable on all new developments. This is currently set at £100 per M2. If we had 28No. 14 x 4m units, the Levy would amount to £156,800.	The CIL is not payable on temporary planning applications. A temporary application would perhaps be granted for a 5 year period. If an extension to this was applied for, they development could then be considered as permanent and the CIL would be applied.

APPENDIX 2

CAVERSHAM PARK LISTED DESCRIPTION



Historic England

CAVERSHAM PARK

List Entry Summary

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by English Heritage for its special historic interest.

Name: CAVERSHAM PARK

List entry Number: 1000524

Location

The garden or other land may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Reading

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first registered: 30-Sep-1987

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: Parks and Gardens

UID: 1503

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Garden

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

A country house with the remains of an early C18 formal garden by Stephen Switzer flanking mid C19 formal terraces, surrounded by the remains of a landscape park laid out in the 1760s by Lancelot Brown.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Lord Craven owned the Caversham Park estate during the mid to late C17, rebuilding the Elizabethan manor house after 1660, probably with William

Winde as the architect. The estate was sold in 1697, passing by the 1720s into the hands of William, first Baron, and later Earl, Cadogan (d 1726). Cadogan, a soldier and friend of the Duke of Marlborough, rebuilt the manor house in grander style, probably on a new site. A detailed agreement of 1718 between Stephen Switzer (1682-1745) and the Earl of Cadogan (Berkshire RO) describes a proposal to make terraces, canals, fisheries and a great formal parterre, for £1394, which corresponds closely with a plan of 1723 published by Colen Campbell in *Vitruvius Britannicus* III, 1725 (Bisgrove and Stoneham 1993). Campbell's accompanying description mentions a Mr Acres, who was probably employed to lay out the extensive formal garden surrounding the house, which was constructed around an axis described as a 'noble terrace, which is twelve hundred feet long'.

In the mid 1760s Lancelot Brown (1716-83) was employed by the second Baron Cadogan to landscape the grounds, at which time the formal gardens, still present in the 1750s (Rocque, 1761), were largely swept away, although Brown incorporated major structural elements into his own designs. It appears that none of Brown's drawings survive, nor his account books for this period. The results of Brown's work are described by Thomas Whately in his *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770), and again by Thomas Jefferson in his 'Memorandums Made on a Tour to Some of the Gardens in England' (1786), in which are mentioned three canals to the south of the house. The house burnt down during this period, being replaced by a smaller building, enlarged by Major Charles Marsack following his purchase of the estate in 1784. William Crawshay bought the estate in 1838, following a period of some dilapidation (National Trust 1990) and in 1850 the house burnt down once more, to be rebuilt again, this time possibly by J T Crews. The Crawshays sold the estate in 1920, it being occupied by the Oratory School until the Second World War. During the War the BBC moved into the house, which remains the home of their Monitoring Service. Large parts of the parkland were engulfed by Caversham Park Village in the 1960s and 1970s.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Caversham Park lies enclosed by the C20 development of Caversham, once a separate village but now a suburb of Reading. The c 40ha site is bounded largely by the mid to late C20 development of Caversham Park Village, with to the south the open

spaces of allotments and Reading Cemetery and Crematorium. The house and park to the north lie on a plateau at the top of a south-east-facing slope. Panoramic views extend southwards from the house and garden terraces at the top of the slope across Caversham and Reading, towards low, distant hills, probably formerly with views of the Thames which lies 2km to the south.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Caversham Park is entered at the north-west corner of the park, off Peppard Road, 250m west of the house. Here the drive is flanked by two stone gate piers, topped with ball finials, supporting iron gates, in turn flanked by iron pedestrian gates and beyond this iron railings terminated by a further pair of stone piers (c 1850, listed grade II). The drive passes a single-storey lodge standing adjacent to the south, continuing east through the park and passing to the north of the stuccoed former stables (now converted to accommodation) standing close to the west end of the house. The drive arrives at a tarmac carriage sweep adjacent to a porte-cochère on the north front of the house, overlooking the north park which is now maintained as playing fields.

Formerly, during the C19 and until the mid C20 (OS) and the development of Caversham Park Village, the drive continued from the north front north-east through the park, curving south-east past Milestone Wood to a lodge standing by the Henley Road 1.2km south-east of the house. Part of the course of this drive is now incorporated in a pedestrian path running parallel and to the east of Galsworthy Drive. In the early C18 (Vitruvius Britannicus) the house was approached directly from gates to the north via a straight avenue arriving at a formal forecourt on the north front.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Caversham Park (1850s, possibly J T Crews, listed grade II) stands at the centre of the northern half of the site, at the top of a slope down to the Thames to the south-east, overlooking Caversham and Reading and beyond this a low range of wooded hills. The three-storey ashlar house replaced a series of houses, the last of which, dating from the late C18, burnt down in 1850. The house has been modified and extended for office use during the mid to late C20.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens consist of formal 1720s and mid C19 terraces descending south from the garden front of the house, flanked by wooded pleasure grounds containing further remains of the formal

1720s layout.

The south, garden front of the house opens onto a broad gravel path running along the top of an adjacent terrace. From here three flights of stone steps descend a grass bank to a rectangular lawn, from the south side of which three further flights of stone steps descend to a lower rectangular lawn bounded on the south side by an iron fence dividing the lawn from a paddock beyond. The paddock is now (1998) part of the parkland, but formerly (OS 1877; 1914) was part of the pleasure grounds, divided from the parkland by a ditch and bank, possibly part of a former ha-ha. The remains of the ditch, lying c 150m south of the house, are bounded by a sporadic, informal hedgerow.

The upper terrace extends 200m from the west end of the house, laid to grass flanked by clipped laurel hedges and beyond this woodland, and terminated at the west end by a stone temple (C19, on the site of an earlier structure, listed grade II) with a tetrastyle Doric portico overlooking the length of the terrace to the east. From here a path runs south-east down the hillside on which is situated the west arm of the wooded pleasure grounds. The path passes the west end of a 200m long canal situated 250m south-west of the house. Surrounded by a grass path, the canal is set within woodland, overlooking to the east the lower lawn lying south of the house. From the canal the grass path continues south-east along the west boundary of the pleasure grounds, turning north-east 300m from the house to run along the northern boundary of the former walled kitchen garden. Some 150m south of the house the path turns north to arrive at the east end of the canal from where informal lawns planted with specimen trees and shrubs extend north to the upper terrace by the house.

The broad gravel path on the upper terrace extends through the wooded eastern arm of the pleasure grounds, terminating at the boundary, 250m east of the house. An informal path encircles this arm of the pleasure grounds, leading south-east off the gravel path at the east end of the house. A small, south-facing wooden pavilion stands within the southern half of the woodland, close to the southern edge, possibly having formerly overlooked the park sloping away to the south, before trees obscured the view. The area north of the west/east axial path has recently been replanted with specimen trees set in informal meadow, and also contains transmitting equipment. A

brick wall (C18/C19, listed grade II) encloses parts of the boundary of this arm of the pleasure grounds to the north and east.

In the 1720s Switzer's grand garden surrounding the house (described and depicted in *Vitruvius Britannicus* 1725) contained parterres to the east and south. Two 200m long canals were constructed, possibly with cascades and amphitheatres at the outer ends as quoted for by Switzer (Berkshire RO: D/EX 258/9), on the hillside to the south-west and south-east of the house. The present canal appears to be one of these two, and was at that time flanked to the south by a wilderness containing a serpentine path. This area, now wooded, retains some mature yew trees and sculpted land formation. By the mid C18 (Rocque, 1761) the axial terrace walk was dominant in the garden, terminated at the west end by a garden building. A third canal appears to have been added by this time, lying adjacent to that lying south-west of the house, and several of the parterres seem to have been removed and others simplified. Brown's landscaping retained the axial terrace path and the canals. By the 1870s (OS 1878) the two terraced lawns had been constructed below the centre of the great axial terrace, the lower one being dotted with small, oval flower beds. Additionally, two of the canals had gone, leaving that shown on Switzer's plan lying to the south-west of the house, although in shorter and wider form than that advocated by Switzer, and more rounded in outline.

PARK The remains of the park are divided into two sections, the area north of the house, and that extending south from the garden and pleasure grounds. The northern section, occupying a plateau, is now largely given over to playing fields with trees planted around the northern perimeter. The north park is overlooked by the north, entrance front of the house, and enjoys views north towards a low, wooded hillside lying beyond Caversham Park Village. The Village occupies land that was formerly part of the park.

The southern section of the park, laid to pasture with two clumps of trees, occupies the south-facing slope overlooking Caversham, Reading and beyond this low, wooded hills. Formerly (before Caversham's C20 development) the park probably enjoyed views down to the Thames.

In the early C18 (*Vitruvius Britannicus*, plan of 1723) the broad entrance avenue extended from the north front across what became the north park,

flanked by four rows of trees to either side. To the east lay open parkland containing a sequence of formal ponds and a farm complex. To the west of the avenue lay a formal arrangement of trees, possibly an orchard, and a further rectangular pond. Three parallel avenues extended from the gardens on the south front across extensive lawns which subsequently became the south park, flanked to west and east by belts of trees laid out in rows. In the description accompanying the Vitruvius Britannicus plan, the park beyond was mentioned as being well-wooded, watered and stocked with deer, with reference to an excellent pheasantry and a menagerie. This arrangement remained largely intact until the mid C18 (Rocque, 1761), Lancelot Brown landscaping the estate in the 1760s. The park retained much of Brown's work until the 1960s and 1970s, when it was much reduced on all sides by the construction of Caversham Park Village and associated items including Reading Crematorium, Cemetery and allotments, and a school.

KITCHEN GARDEN The brick-walled kitchen garden (C18/C19, listed grade II) lies 200m south-west of the house, at the south-west corner of the park, and is now (1998) largely filled with mobile homes. Brick cross walls divide the area into several compartments, connected by communicating arches, and support mid C19 potting sheds. The walled garden is reached via a straight lane from the Peppard Road to the west, the entrance being marked by a C19, two-storey lodge lying 500m south-west of the house.

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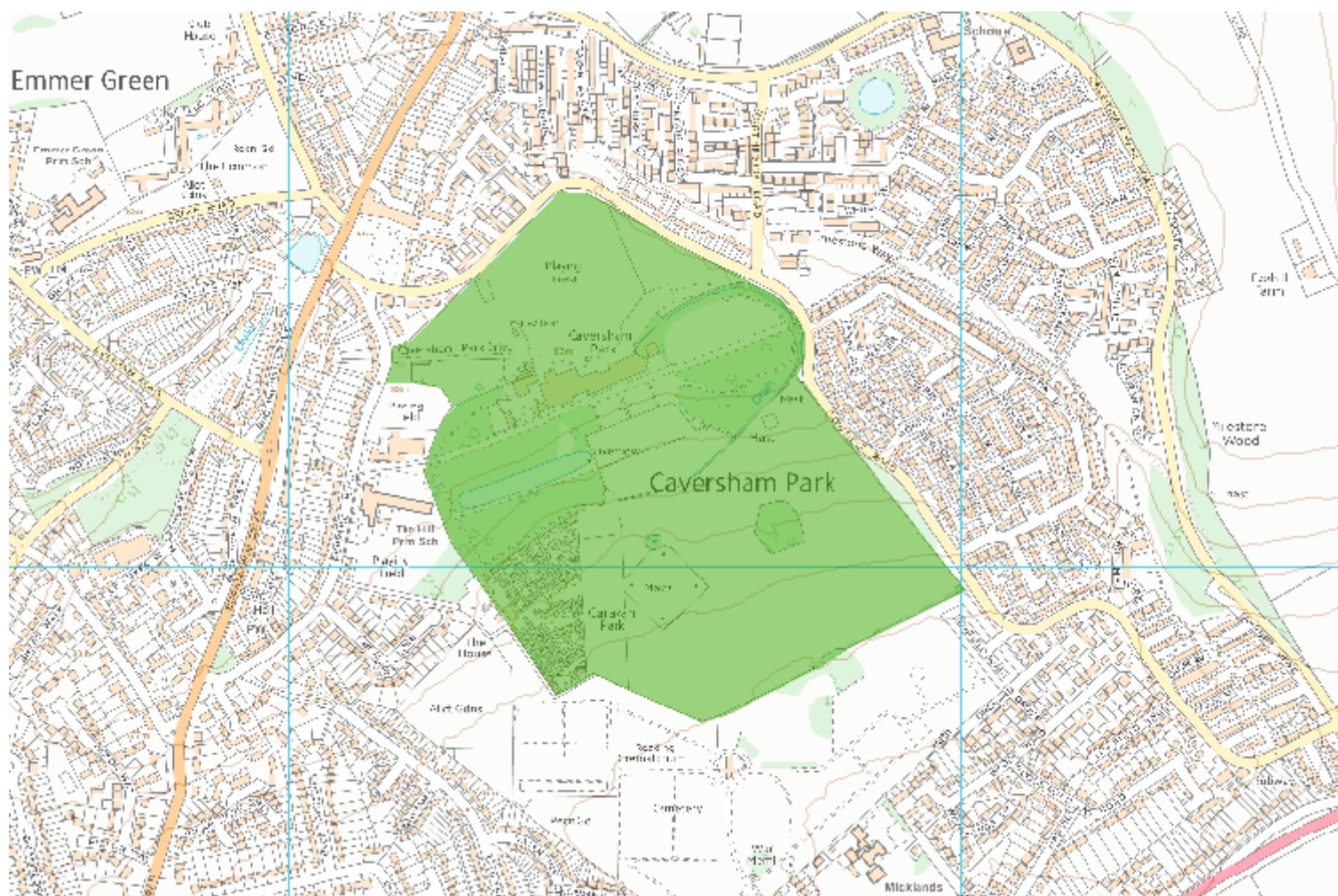
Description written: September 1998 Register Inspector: SR Edited: March 2000

Selected Sources

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details

National Grid Reference: SU 72574 76133

Map



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pegasuspg.co.uk



Pegasus Group

First Floor
South Wing
Equinox North
Great Park Road
Almondsbury
Bristol
BS32 4QL

E Bristol@pegasuspg.co.uk
T 01454 625 945

