



PLANNING STATEMENT

38-48 Mount Pleasant, Reading, RG1 2TD

Erection of 6 dwellings (amendments to scheme approved under application reference PL/20/1880)

March 2026

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by SF Planning Limited to support a planning application for the erection of 6 dwellings which are already present on site. This is therefore a retrospective application under s73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The dwellings were built by the client pursuant to planning permission PL/20/1880 (the Original Permission). This earlier permission is discussed further in section 2.0 of this statement.
- 1.2 The proposal seeks to retain the homes as built. There will be a careful redesign of the hard landscaping, replacing the majority with soft landscaping features. The timber fencing fronting the main A327 will be replaced with a combination of hedging and low walls with architectural railing. Waste storage will not be further towards the rear of the site in a purpose-built structure designed to further enhance 'greening' on site.
- 1.3 This planning statement outlines the site description and context, provides a comprehensive planning history, details the proposed development, and offers a robust justification for the proposals.

2.0 The Application Site, Planning History & Proposed Development

The site

- 2.1 The site is located on the west side of Mount Pleasant, south of the MAP Community Centre and north of 50 Mount Pleasant which is a two and a half storey Grade II listed building (along with 52 and 54 Mount Pleasant). The MAP Community Centre is a large two storey building with high chain-link fencing and there are two storey residential terrace properties to the east and west. The surrounding area is predominantly residential with a mixture of types, styles and design.
- 2.2 The site was previously an area of hardstanding used for car parking with a group of single storey vehicle repair garages located at the rear.
- 2.3 The site is situated in close proximity to the town centre, with shops and access to employment in the town centre a 13-minute walk away or a 4-minute drive. There is easy access to public transport links. Silver Street and Whitley Street bus stops are located along Mount Pleasant Road, no more than a 2-minute walk. They are connected to line emerald 5 which connects Reading city centre to Whitley Wood. Access to Reading train station is a 10-minute drive or 18-minute walk. All routes are accessible.
- 2.4 As outlined previously, there are 6 dwellings on the 623 sqm site comprising 3 storey homes with gardens to the rear and a south facing roof terrace on the second floor of each. A modern wall to the rear completes the boundary with No. 50 Mount Pleasant which is within the same ownership.
- 2.5 50 Mount Pleasant is adjacent to the site on the southern edge. It is a two and a half storey, Grade II Listed semi-detached building. The brick-style elevation of No. 50, facing towards the site, is a blank wall of brickwork which appears to have once formed part of a terrace along the street.
- 2.6 The development is now complete and is ready to be occupied but recent sales have been halted due to the Council's concerns about the changes to the development. During construction, several minor differences arose between the approved and built scheme, primarily relating to landscaping, and ancillary structures. The planning history section below covers this in more detail.
- 2.7 The development is not located near any natural water sources which could result in flooding. The only risk is from surface water flooding, but the environment agency

classifies the site in the lowest risk zone for flooding (Flood Risk Zone 1). It further categorises the site with a yearly chance of flooding at 'very low'. The sustainability statement accompanying this application provides further details.

- 2.8 In addition, the development is located in an Air Quality Management Area. This is considered further in the submitted air quality information.

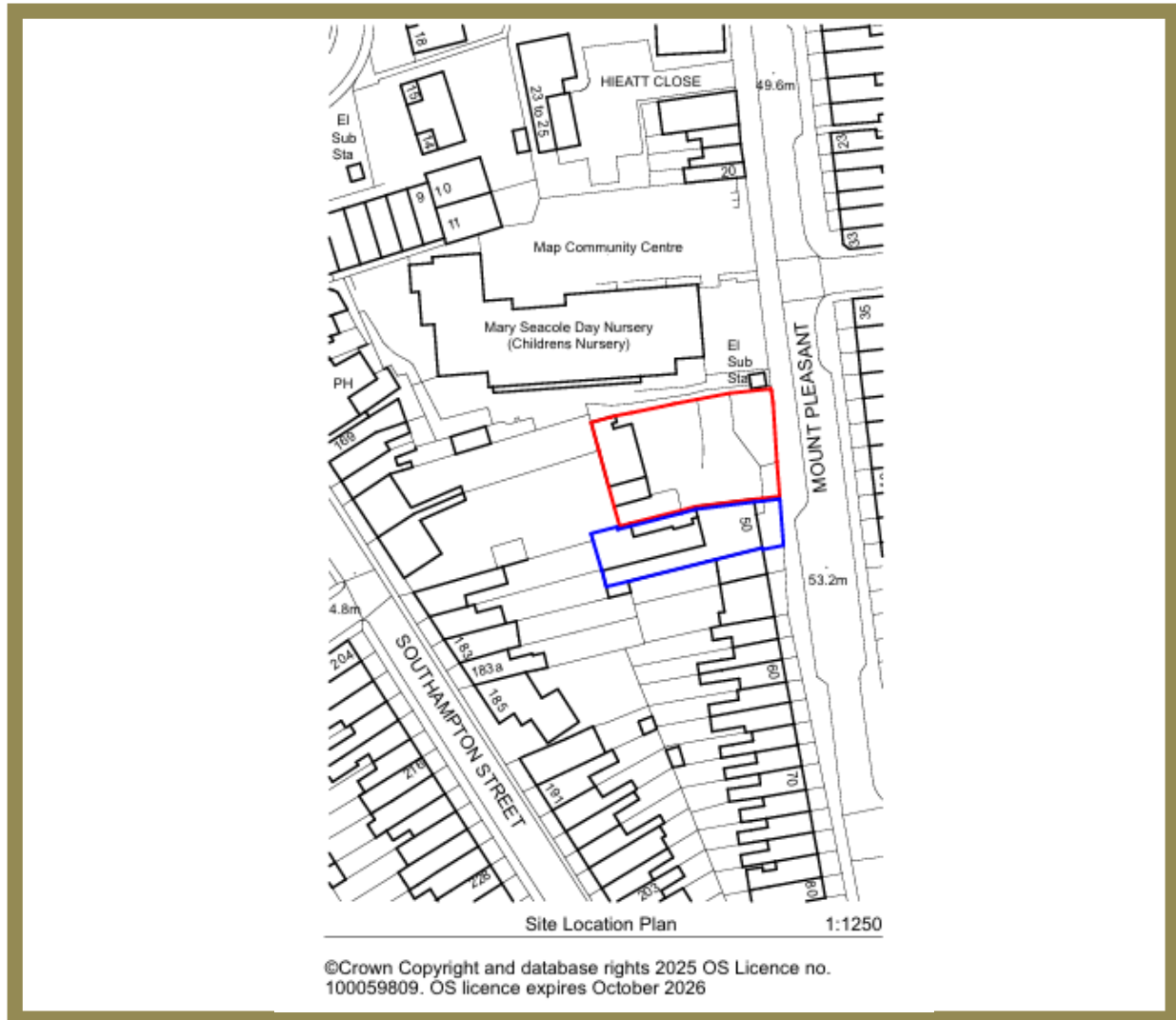


Figure 1: Ordnance Survey map showing the site and its surroundings

Planning History

2.9 The site has an extensive recent planning history many recent planning applications relating to 6 dwellings:

- January 2022: Application for demolition of existing car repair garages and erection of 6 family dwellings and associated landscaping, waste and bicycle storage (PL/20/1880) was permitted. Consequently, work commenced on the site and was completed with building control sign off. (This is referred to throughout this statement as the Original Permission).
- July 2025: this sought to vary condition 2 (Approved Plans) of the Original Permission (PL/25/0687) due to some discrepancies between the approved plans and the as built situation. This was refused.
- August 2025: Application for approval of details reserved by conditions 6 (Boundary Treatment) and 14 (EV Charging) of the Original Permission (PL/25/0998) was withdrawn.
- October 2025: Variation of Conditions 5, 6, 14, 11 and I11 of the Original Permission - Amendments to the landscape bin store location and boundary treatment. Renegotiation of associated S106 agreement in respect of affordable housing condition (PL/25/1173) was withdrawn.
- November 2025: A pre-application request was submitted by SF Planning (04/11/2025) on behalf of the client seeking advice in relation to minor amendments to the approved residential development and to confirm whether they could be appropriately dealt with through a Section 73 application. This is discussed further below.

2.10 The Council has indicated via the pre-application advice that the following are required to mitigate the harm caused by the deviation from the approved plans:

- i. Retain the houses as built.*
- ii. Retain a hard paved pedestrian only 'mews' to the western edge of the houses, largely as existing but with front gardens provided to each house fronted by hedging and other soft landscaping.*
- iii. Remove the bin store in its entirety to allow for soft landscaping. Bins should be stored at each house to the front or rear and presented on the frontage on collection day. Each householder takes responsibility for their own bin.*
- iv. Remove the car parking spaces. Vehicle parking is no longer appropriate given the space now remaining for landscaping etc.*

- v. Remove all hard paving across the frontage except for fire access and a suitable space to allow bins to be presented for collection.*
- vi. Provide a well-designed landscaping scheme to create a belt of trees and other planting across the frontage, designed for visual impact and biodiversity (trees) and the amenity of occupiers of the development (choice of planting, paths, seating).*
- vii. Remove all timber fencing to the front and replace with a combination of hedging and architectural railings.*
- viii. Carefully design any emergency access route so that it is only possible to be used by emergency vehicles and to ensure that it is integrated into the landscaping scheme.*

2.11 It is acknowledged that there have been changes to the scheme compared with the approved plans. The applicant and the Council differ in their views as to the extent and impact of these. The differences between the approved scheme and as built are as follows:

- i) House 6 sits 29.4 cm further forward than previously approved*
- ii) House 5 sits 28.3 cm further forward than previously approved*
- iii) House 4 sits 26.8 cm further forward than previously approved*
- iv) House 3 sits 25.1 cm further forward than previously approved*
- v) House 2 sits 24.8 cm further forward than previously approved*
- vi) House 1 sits 24.3 cm further forward than previously approved and is 4.6cm further away from the road.*
- vii) The bin store has been rotated by 90 degrees, is a smaller footprint (area is approximately 1.5sqm smaller) and is approximately 2.1m closer to the western boundary of the site (taken from the rear of the as built structure). – this is one element which will change as a result of the reconsideration of the external areas.*
- viii) There is a reduction in garden size for House 1 of approximately 0.6sqm – this is one of the elements which will change as a result of the reconsideration of the external areas.*
- ix) There is a reduction in garden size for House 3 of approximately 0.2sqm*
- x) There is a reduction in garden size for House 4 of approximately 0.2sqm*

- xi) There is a reduction in garden size for House 6 of approximately 0.3sqm*
- xii) There is an increase in garden size for House 2 of approximately 0.1sqm*
- xiii) There is an increase in garden size for House 5 of approximately 0.7sqm*
- xiv) Fire gates (opening only one way in the direction of escape) have been installed in the rear gardens.*
- xv) A reduced area of soft landscaping has been provided compared to the approval (by approximately 8sqm) – this is one element which is proposed to be changed in the reconsideration of the external areas.*

2.12 All of the above are considered by the applicant to be minor deviations. However, the Council has suggested that the Original Permission was not correctly implemented. This is a point of contention between the applicant and the Council. The aim of this submission is to regularise acknowledged breaches of planning control, so we are not seeking to press this point in significant detail however, this section contains points we feel are worth noting, and the previous scheme is a material consideration in any event. Principally, the pre-application advice plans which are included below show that there are only minor deviations from the approved scheme, primarily in relation to matters reserved by conditions. The only changes relating to the dwellings themselves are slightly different garden sizes and movement of the buildings at most 29cm from their approved position. The precise placement of openings are consequentially affected, but not materially in the applicant's view.

2.13 *Faisal Hussain v SSCLG [2017] EWHC 687 (Admin), 2017 confirms that "...it is possible to commence a development for the purpose of section 56 and thereby meet a deadline forming a condition of the permission, and then later to deviate from the permitted works in a manner that later becomes an enforcement issue without retrospectively altering the fact that the commencement of the development had occurred for section 56 purposes".* Whilst some commentators consider that this case does not represent good law, it has not been officially overturned and therefore remains applicable. We consider that this has happened in this case and the Original Permission was correctly implemented prior to the permission expiry date before deviating from the approved plans.

Proposed Development

2.17 The dwellings on site will remain as built. This submission seeks to regularise the breach of planning control which has occurred at the site. The development is now intended to be car free, save for access for emergency vehicles. Pedestrian access to the side of the listed building for 50 Mount Pleasant will be retained and a remodelled shared amenity space is proposed to the front of the dwelling.

2.18 Response to Pre-application advice

Pre-application Advice	Design Response
Retain the houses as built.	The 6 dwellings will remain as built.
Retain a hard paved pedestrian only 'mews' to the western edge of the houses, largely as existing but with front gardens provided to each house fronted by hedging and other soft landscaping.	Front gardens will be provided to each dwelling with planting. Permeable surfaces will be used throughout all the surrounding landscaping. A hard paved path will run from part way into the site, up to unit 6 as can be seen on the drawings. The more open paved area is the minimum needed for emergency vehicle access.
Remove the bin store in its entirety to allow for soft landscaping. Bins should be stored at each house to the front or rear and presented on the frontage on collection day. Each householder takes responsibility for their own bin.	The solution now proposed on site will involve a communal bin store however this will be a light pergola structure which supports planting and conceals a non-curtilage listed (modern) wall along the boundary of No.50 Mount Pleasant. Individual bin stores outside each property were felt to be less appropriate as they may take up significant space and impact the shared/access amenity and front gardens. The proposed solution allows planting to be increased and bins to be removed from direct line of sight.

	Also, additional areas of hardstanding would be needed to accommodate them. Please see the waste management note submitted with this application for further information.
Remove the car parking spaces. Vehicle parking is no longer appropriate given the space now remaining for landscaping etc.	Although car parking was found to be acceptable as part of the Original Permission with only 8.2 additional square metres of soft landscaping, car parking spaces have been removed to allow for a range of soft landscaping such as hedges, shrubs, meadow grass and a range of larger and smaller trees. Signage will be used to deter visitor parking.
Remove all hard paving across the frontage except for fire access and a suitable space to allow bins to be presented for collection.	Hard paving has been minimised as much as possible, ensuring fire access in accordance with requirements. A suitably sized bin collection area has been dedicated near the entrance to the site for use on bin collection day.
Provide a well-designed landscaping scheme to create a belt of trees and other planting across the frontage, designed for visual impact and biodiversity (trees) and the amenity of occupiers of the development (choice of planting, paths, seating).	Biodiversity is significantly improved through the removal of hard landscaping and the introduction of additional hedges, shrubs and meadow grass. Plants will be used on the new bin store structure.
Remove all timber fencing to the front and replace with a combination of hedging and architectural railings	The timber fence will be removed for a metal railing which will reflect the boundary treatments at No 50 Mount Pleasant.

Carefully design any emergency access route so that it is only possible to be used by emergency vehicles and to ensure that it is integrated into the landscaping scheme.	This can be seen on the submitted plans; the area provided for emergency service vehicles complies with their requirements in terms of minimum width, maximum distance to reverse out of the site and maximum distance from furthest property. Our client is happy to introduce any other features the Council considers is appropriate as a pre-occupation condition.
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2.19 In summary, the scheme aims to address the issues identified in the pre-application advice through reducing hard landscaping, increasing soft landscaping and biodiversity, better concealing the bin store and providing each dwelling with a front garden. From the street perspective, along the A327, the overall appearance is greatly improved through an increase in vegetation, reducing the current stark appearance identified by the Council.

3.0 Planning Policy Context and Justification

- 3.1 In order to consider the acceptability of this application, it is necessary to assess it against both the adopted development plan and relevant national planning policy.
- 3.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.3 The development plan for Reading comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted in 2019). The National Planning Policy Framework is also a material consideration along with the emerging local plan, the NPPF Draft Text for Consultation, 2025 and the following SPDS:
- Design Guide to House Extensions (Adopted March 2021)
 - Sustainable Design and Construction (Adopted December 2019)
 - Revised Parking Standards and Design (Adopted October 2011)
- 3.4 Relevant national policy includes the 'Brownfield Passport: Making the Most of Urban Land' (Updated February 2025) developed by The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This policy aims to streamline the development of brownfield land through the establishment of acceptable development criteria. The objective is to provide greater clarity in the reuse of previously developed land and recognise the importance of small sites in delivering housing and facilitating growth.

Principle of Development

- 3.5 Policy CC1 confirms that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF.
- 3.6 Paragraph 11c (the presumption in favour of sustainable development) of the NPPF states that approval should be granted when development proposals accord to an up-to-date development plan. This is considered to be the case here.
- 3.7 It should be noted that the Council's current housing requirement is from a local plan adopted in accordance with a previous version of the NPPF therefore, subject to progress with the emerging local plan, from 1 July 2026 the Council may be required to include a 20% buffer if their local plan requirement is less than 80% of local housing need assessed using the standard method.

- 3.8 In the event that a 20% buffer is required, it is likely that the Council's housing land supply will drop below 5 years, as the latest available information confirms that it stands at 5.15 years (as of April 2025)¹. If that happens, paragraph 11d of the NPPF would be engaged and planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the Framework protecting assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 3.9 Proposed policy S4 in the emerging NPPF confirms that "*development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects*". This is material to the decision given that the draft NPPF will apply immediately on adoption and will reduce the weight of any local policies which are not in accordance with national policy.
- 3.10 The site is recognised as brownfield land. Development on brownfield sites is generally encouraged by national policy for example paragraph 124 of the NPPF supports local plans which make "*as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land*". This is reflected in the SPDS Brownfield Passport which invites views on further action that could be taken through the planning system to support the development of brownfield land in urban areas.
- 3.11 The proposal is also in line with Policy H1 in the Reading Local Plan (Provision of Housing) as it will contribute to the housing need in Reading and will provide family housing for which there is a need in Reading.
- 3.12 Policy EM3 was relevant to the Original Permission given the former use of the site. Although the applicant believes that the Original Permission was implemented and housing at the site is therefore lawful (see above), for completeness we note that the site is not located within a Core Employment Area. In terms of the remainder of the policy, we note that the site is easily accessible with good links into and out of Reading. The previous use as a car repair workshop was carried out within a predominantly residential area and did not contribute positively to the streetscene or the character of the area. Furthermore, this use did not enhance the setting of the listed buildings. It is considered that the improvement of the site compared with a car repair use, as well as the need for housing renders the need for alternative uses stronger than retaining the employment use.

¹ <https://images.reading.gov.uk/2025/05/EV014-Housing-Implementation-Strategy-April-2025.pdf>

- 3.13 Accordingly, the principle of residential development should be considered acceptable subject to meeting the relevant planning policies and other material considerations below.

Housing Mix

- 3.14 Policy H2 states that wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6, in particular for family homes of three or more bedrooms. Also, paragraph 4.4.9 states however that *“homes with two or more bedrooms, capable of accommodating families, represent the majority of the need”*.

- 3.15 The scheme comprises 6 houses:
- 1 x 3 bedroom / 4 person house
 - 5 x 2 bedroom / 3 person houses

This therefore complies with Policy H2 as the scheme provides family homes with 2 or more bedrooms which contributes towards the need for required housing in Reading.

- 3.16 In terms of affordable housing, our client is proposing a contribution. This is detailed in the affordable housing statement submitted with this application, along with relevant policy considerations.

Design and Layout

- 3.17 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2024) ensures that planning policies and decisions will function well and add quality to the area over the lifetime of the development. In addition, they will establish a strong sense of place, be sympathetic to local character and optimise the potential of the site.
- 3.18 Policy CC6 of the Reading Local Plan states that new development should be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to the level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. As discussed in paragraph 2.3, the site is sustainably located for a wide range of employment, services, leisure, education and health facilities are easily accessible through a variety of different modes of transport.
- 3.19 Policy CC7 of the Reading Local Plan identifies that the built form should exhibit a coherent pattern of development that is usable and easy to understand for all potential users. Proposals should be visually attractive to occupants and other users with a strong focus on high-quality architecture.
- 3.20 It continues to say that development should employ appropriate scale, architectural

detail and materials. Streets should be tree-lined and provide high-quality public realm. The policy is keen to optimise nature through integrating new natural features to support quality of place and new trees should be established. The previous design was considered to be of a high quality as explored further below however the revised design improves upon this through additional careful and considered planting.

- 3.21 Policy CC7 of the Reading Local Plan also maintains that all developments must be of high-quality design and embody characteristics to create, maintain and enhance physical character. Proposals will be assessed to ensure that any development will make a positive contribution to the public realm and surrounding landscape.
- 3.22 The proposals will allow occupants to have space outside the front or rear of their dwellings for their own personal bins, allowing for the removal of the communal bin store. Policy CC5 of the Reading Local Plan emphasises that layouts and designs should provide adequate, well-designed spaces to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.
- 3.23 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF (2024) advocates for a clear design vision and expectations which are grounded in each area's defining characteristics. These should be reflected in development of design policy, guidance and codes by local authorities and developers.
- 3.24 The scheme is not competing with neighbouring properties, or harming visual amenity within the street. The proposal is considered to create a well-balanced street scene which works well given the size and shape of the site. The planning officer in respect of the Original Permission previously commented:

"The height of the proposed dwellings are lower but similar in scale to the listed building and the last dwelling at the rear, steps forward of the building line to form a 'book-end' to the new street. Overall the proposed development creates a well-balanced ensemble with features of the listed building introduced into the development. The design of the scheme has taken into account the tight constraints of the site, such as orientation and limited amenity space, by introducing a shared amenity area to the front and south facing roof terraces... As such, the proposed development is considered of high design quality that enhances the character and appearance of the area, and which improves the setting of the listed buildings in comparison to the existing use and is in accordance with Policies CC7 and EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan."

- 3.25 Taking the above into account, the development is considered to comply fully with relevant local plan requirements in respect of design and improves the setting of the

listed building compared to previous uses.

- 3.26 In addition, the Visual DAS supplementary document outlines the history and changes proposed to the site in response to the Reading Borough Council planning comments. These include adjustments to the landscaping, which overall has been significantly increased through the removal of the bin store at the front of the site, larger front gardens and increased shrubbery, trees and planting. The bin store will be relocated to the block wall (avoiding the listed building wall) and will be covered in climbing plants and a proposed over pergola structure. The timber cladding will be removed and a new black metal railing in line with the original application and listed building will be installed. The statement goes into more detail with visuals to represent the details of these proposals.

Amenity

i) Neighbouring properties

- 3.27 Policy CC8 of the Reading Local Plan focuses on the end results of development and identifies that new development should not cause detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties. The construction of the new homes have not diminished the quality of the living environment in the surrounding area. The proposed changes to the bin store area and the removal of the parking spaces will increase the quality of the living conditions. Furthermore, the proposed soft landscaping will increase the environmental quality of the urban landscape in the local area.

- 3.28 In respect of the Original Permission, which utilised the same design ethos and is almost identical in terms of layout and scale, the planning officer commented:

"The proposed dwellings will not impact 50 Mount Pleasant, this building only has one side window at the top of the gable and the orientation is such that there will be no loss of light or overshadowing from the proposed dwellings. The proposed dwellings are separated from the MAP Community Centre to the north by the rear gardens and the main external area to the MAP Community Centre is located to the north of this building. Although there are windows to the side elevation of this building it is not in residential use and not permanently occupied. Although views of the MAP Centre will be possible from first and second floor windows, these are bedrooms windows and less regularly occupied."

- 3.29 Officers added:

"Residents of neighbouring properties on the east side of Mount Pleasant will notice the proposed buildings however they are a sufficient distance away and had the proposed dwellings directly faced the road this would not be an unusual arrangement. There is also sufficient distance from the proposed houses with regards to views of the rear gardens of properties within the row to the south to ensure there is no loss of privacy or overlooking." A similar conclusion was drawn in relation to Southampton Street properties where the long gardens placed sufficient distance between the side of the dwellings and the original rear elevations of these houses and sufficient opaque glazed privacy screening had been included for the roof terraces.

- 3.30 The officer also noted: *"Although the neighbouring properties along Southampton Street will notice the additional height and depth of the proposed dwellings, the orientation and the distances between the properties is sufficient to ensure there is no harm in terms of visual dominance or overbearing effects of the development and there is not considered to be any loss of privacy or overlooking."*
- 3.31 It is considered that, as with the Original Permission, the proposals are *"not considered to have a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties and in accordance with policy CC8"*. The amendments to the scheme do not change this conclusion.

ii) Occupants of the new dwellings

- 3.32 Policy H5 of the local plan requires dwellings to comply with nationally prescribed space standards. The submitted design and access statement confirms the measurement of the properties as follows:
- Dwelling 1: 84.7 m²
 - Dwellings 2-5: 87.1 m²
 - Dwelling 6: 108.4 m²
- 3.33 This exceeds national standards for 2 and 3 storey dwellings based on standards set in the statutory guidance, 'Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard' (2015) published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.
- 3.34 The dimensions of the properties have not changed since the Original permission where officers concluded that *"the internal layouts are acceptable with adequate sized bedrooms (which meet the size requirements in Policy H5) and living accommodation. The proposed development therefore, provides an acceptable standard of accommodation and is in accordance with Policy H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan."*

- 3.35 As with the Original Permission, it is accepted that due to the orientation of the dwellings, the rear garden areas will be overshadowed. Accompanying this application is a daylight and sunlight assessment, updated to account for the minor deviations from the approved plans. As with the Original Permission this assessment demonstrates that adequate levels of light can be achieved. The reduced light to the rear gardens has been mitigated by providing south facing roof terraces and additional landscaping to the front of the dwellings. This was considered to be an acceptable strategy for the Original Permission and it has been enhanced now by further planting to the front of the properties, in addition to what was approved by condition.
- 3.36 Policy H10 requires functional private or communal open space wherever possible, including space for a number of activities such as play, refuse storage and drying space. Policy itself does not prescribe what is an appropriate size of space although some guidance is provided in the accompanying text. H10 also requires the design of outdoor areas to respect the size and character of similar spaces in the vicinity, are safe and relate well to the property.
- 3.37 The site is relatively constrained which officers accepted in respect of the Original Permission. This proposal seeks to improve the amenity space by establishing additional amenity space to the front of the properties. Plot 1 which previously had the smallest private garden now has increased space due to the removal of the bin store. The roof terraces are as approved. Although the combined amenity space is still small, it was accepted in respect of the Original Permission, but it was noted that the combined space was larger than was generally seen for flats.
- 3.38 The secondary fire escape solution has evolved since the Original Permission was granted. One-way opening gates with a code for access are included through each of the gardens which will only be used in case of a fire. This is not considered to impact on the general use of the space day to day and is not the primary means of escape. It is a common solution for terraced properties in an urban environment such as this. Given the arrangement of the dwellings and access to sunlight, the roof terrace provides excellent private amenity space in addition to the gardens, and it is anticipated will be an equally well used amenity space for the occupants; this was the case with the approved scheme and has not changed as a result of the build.
- 3.39 Additionally, our client agreed to make an open space contribution given that the space remained small and is happy to do so again in respect of this submission.
- 3.40 The planning officer considered it appropriate to remove permitted development rights given the shape and size of the site, which can be introduced to this permission too.

- 3.41 We consider that the officer's conclusion in respect of the Original Permission remains valid:

"Taking all of the above in to consideration it is considered that the design approach to the scheme has given sufficient thought to the amenity of future occupiers and would ensure that the development provides an acceptable living environment for future occupants and would not feel overly cramped or unpleasant. The proposed development is therefore considered in accordance with policies CC8, H5, H10 and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan".

Landscaping

- 3.42 Landscaping has been introduced directly to the front of the properties and extended landscaping and tree planting to the front of the site and between the proposed dwellings and No.50 Mount Pleasant. The vegetation to the northern boundary is to be retained.
- 3.43 As described in the Design and Access Statement, the new proposed plans demonstrate that the bin store will be removed at the front of the site, along the A327, allowing for increased landscaping. No vegetation has been proposed directly along the listed building to avoid potential root damage to the foundations. Each dwelling will have a larger front garden. Increased shrubbery, trees and planting is proposed in all these areas. In addition, a new bin store is proposed on the south side of the site, opposite dwellings 3-5. This will be covered by a timber pergola with climbing plants and there will be a proposed hedge over a planter to further landscape the area.
- 3.44 Specific landscape details include:
- Grass in the back gardens of every dwelling.
 - Trellis with vegetation on the side of dwelling 1.
 - The landscaping at the front of the site will include new trees, planters, a wild lawn, native shrubs, a hedge and railing.
 - Permeable hard surfaces will include brick pavers on sand.
 - Opposite dwelling 6 will be small flowering trees/bushes.
 - Trees will be located in the garden of dwelling 6, opposite the front of dwelling 6, along the boundary wall of dwelling 1 and within the front of site landscaping.
- 3.45 Plants have been selected for hardiness, ease of maintenance and wildlife potential. In addition their speed and ease of establishment, eventual scale and density of screening, and finally colour, form and purely visual interest. A specific plant list is as detailed on the submitted plan.
- 3.46 The site is within an AQMA and a low canopy ward, as well as within a designated tree

corridor.

- 3.47 The Reading Tree Strategy, 2021 states that identified 'tree corridors' within the previous 2010 Tree Strategy remain within the new Strategy (applicable until 2030) and are priority routes for tree planting to address high air pollution areas within the Borough. Further greening is to be identified to 'green' the cycle and walking network to make these routes more pleasant for users. Therefore, the identified trees on the street should be protected as best as possible.
- 3.48 There is capacity for rainwater collection via a water butt to intercept run-off from the roofs for manual watering of the trees/large bushes. Although, the plants will be in liners to contain the root spread away from foundations. They will therefore become saturated if additional water is directed to them as well as the 'share' of water hitting the surface area.
- 3.49 As was the case with the Original Permission, it is considered that the scheme will provide a suitable natural environment to enhance the site and its setting.

Highways/Transport and access

- 3.50 The submitted transport note takes account of the proposals to remove the two parking spaces included in the Original Permission and assesses the sustainability of the site including access to safe and convenient walking and cycling routes.
- 3.51 The transport note confirms
- The dwellings are located within an extremely sustainable area
 - the site benefits from access to a good network of pedestrian and cycle links, which connect the site to the public transport network that serves the local area and a range of local facilities.
 - the proposed development is ideally located to encourage people to travel by more sustainable modes of transport in accordance with the aims of the local plan and NPPF.
- 3.52 The site is sustainably located and can therefore support a car free development. Delivery vehicles can utilise shared parking bays located on Mount Pleasant.
- 3.53 Cycle storage is to be provided within the private gardens of each dwelling in a small shed. This is the same solution as was agreed in respect of the Original Permission and is considered to be suitable.

- 3.54 The paved area proposed to the front of the dwellings provides safe access to each of the houses whilst retaining access to the rear of the listed building. All hardstanding areas use permeable paving.
- 3.55 The hardstanding which has been retained on the submitted plans is the minimum required for paved pedestrian access to the properties (including No.50), emergency service vehicle access and bin storage and collection. Our client is happy to introduce bollards to prevent parking as well as signage and markings stating that access is for emergency service vehicles only.
- 3.56 It is considered therefore that the scheme complies with relevant local plan policies relating to highways and transportation.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 3.57 The site is located next to the Grade II listed 50 Mount Pleasant.
- 3.58 A heritage statement has been submitted with this application. It concludes that, the proposed amendments to the scheme *'will not impact on the contribution that setting makes to the significance of the nearby designated assets and there will be no harm'*.
- 3.59 It continues that *'by virtue of intervening urban and suburban forms, relative disposition, lack of inter-visibility and absence of casual links, it is considered that the setting of other designated and non-designated assets will be materially unaffected. There will be no harm to significance'*.
- 3.60 Overall, the heritage statement concludes that the scheme will cause no direct harm to significance and will have no material impact on any designated asset. It understands that the site and surrounding environment have changed over the last 90 years through appearance, character and use terms, and this development will not cause significant impact or harm to its surroundings.
- 3.61 Importantly, it can be seen that the scheme preserves the setting of the adjacent listed building and maintains compliance with Policy CC7.
- 3.62 Policy EN6 of the Revised Reading Local Plan recognises the need for sensitivity to historic context and that new development should contribute to the historic character of the area through respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities. It is considered that these requirements have been met through a design which is sympathetic to the characteristics and architectural features of No.50 Mount Pleasant.

- 3.63 To further this, the NPPF (2024) states that when considering proposed developments, great weight should be given to the historical asset's conservation.
- 3.64 The proposed dwellings are about 6m away from the side of the listed building at No.50 Mount Pleasant and set slightly back from its building line which will retain the prominence of the listed building. Design cues from the listed building have also been incorporated into the design of the development.
- 3.65 In respect of the Original Permission, the site was found to be within an area of archaeological significance and a condition requiring a programme of archaeological works including a Written Scheme of Investigation was required. This was in accordance with Paragraph 199 of the NPPF which states that local planning authorities should 'require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible'. Although the works are now completed, should the Council have any concerns, our client is happy to agree to an appropriately worded condition which would cover the process of erecting the pergola and landscaping the site.

Sustainability and Environmental Impacts

- 3.66 The accompanying sustainability statement sets out relevant local plan policies and explains how the proposals seek to reduce carbon emissions and water consumption.
- 3.67 Also submitted with the application is a waste management note which explains the proposed arrangements further.
- 3.68 Conditions were imposed on the Original Permission as follows:
- a) *Condition 5: No development shall commence on site until a comprehensive scheme of hard and soft landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*
 - i. *b. Hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and other ancillary structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc);*
 - ii. *c. Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable;*
 - iii. *d. A maintenance programme detailing all operations to be carried out in order to allow successful establishment of planting;*

- iv. e. routes and details of proposed and existing functional services above and below ground including foul and surface water drainage, soakaways and SUDs details, power, communications cables and water and gas supply pipelines, including access points, tree pit specifications;
- b) Condition 16: No development shall commence on site until a detailed scheme, informed by an assessment of the current noise environment, for protecting the dwellings from the external noise environment of the area has been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority.
- c) Condition 18: No materials or green waste produced as a result of the clearance of the site, demolition works or construction works associated with the development hereby approved shall be burnt on site.
- d) Condition 21: No development shall commence on site until written verification has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority demonstrating that the dwellings hereby permitted have achieved a minimum of a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate as defined in The Building Regulations for England Approved Document L1a: Conservation of Fuel and Power in New Dwellings (2013 edition), and built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3). Such evidence shall be in the form of a 'design stage' Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), produced by an accredited energy assessor.
- e) Condition 22: No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until written verification has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority demonstrating that the dwellings hereby permitted have achieved a minimum of a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate as defined in The Building Regulations for England Approved Document L1a: Conservation of Fuel and Power in New Dwellings (2013 edition), and built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3). Such evidence shall be in the form of an 'As Built' Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), produced by an accredited energy assessor.

3.69 The applicant is happy to agree to similar ongoing conditions on this permission.

3.70 In accordance with the Reading Borough Local Plan, policy EN15, the development has regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality. The submitted air quality information considers this matter in more detail.

3.71 The applicant recognises that, in accordance with paragraph 187 of the NPPF, developments should be "*minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support*

priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs"

- 3.72 It is considered that the landscaping enhancements will improve the visual attractiveness of the site, particularly in terms of its relationship with the street, and provide habitat enhancements in accordance with local plan policies relating to ecology and trees. A condition is expected requiring the maintenance of planting for a reasonable period.
- 3.73 Wildlife friendly features have been incorporated into the development already such as swift bricks; these are not proposed to change in this application.

Other considerations

- 3.74 We consider that, as the Original Permission was implemented (see section 2) the dwellings on site are lawful and the approved scheme represents a viable fallback. We accept though that the current situation on site would not be a fallback and the scheme would need to revert to the approved plans in the event that planning permission is not granted for this scheme (or any similar proposal in future).
- 3.75 We understand that the Council may not share this view however, the Original Permission is material in any event, particularly in terms of the need for consistency in decision making as set out in planning case law (for example R (Midcounties Co-Operative Limited) v Forest of Dean District Council [2017] EWHC 2050). Given that local policy has not significantly changed since the Original Permission was granted and national policy has only enhanced its support for housing development, especially on brownfield land within settlements, the Original Permission and associated officer's report should be given significant weight.
- 3.76 Government policy is increasingly seeking to promote small to medium sites recognising that they *"make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes and are often built-out relatively quickly"* (NPPF paragraph 73).

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The proposed development represents a carefully considered solution to the issues raised by the planning officers in their pre-application advice.
- 4.2 Where possible, pre-application recommendations have been incorporated and in the limited circumstances where recommendations have not been followed (bin storage solutions), a suitable solution has been found.
- 4.3 Specifically, the proposal offers improved amenity spaces, increased soft landscaping and planting and overall visual improvement of the site when compared to both the Original Permission and the as-built situation on site.
- 4.4 The scheme offers substantial, sustainable improvements while respecting the heritage significance of the listed building at No 50 and the context specific needs of the local area.
- 4.5 The proposal involves the sustainable re-use of previously developed land, in close proximity to the town centre and public transport routes, offering residential development at a time when there is a severe national shortage of suitable dwellings.
- 4.6 The proposal is considered to be in accordance with local plan policies as well as national and local guidance and supplementary planning documents.
- 4.7 Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted for this development.



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