

The Mount Conservation Area

Conservation Area Appraisal

Draft V4.0



THIS IS THE **FOURTH DRAFT** OF A REVISED APPRAISAL FOR THE MOUNT CONSERVATION AREA. IT INCLUDES CONTENT CARRIED FORWARD FROM THE 2009 APPRAISAL, ADDITIONAL MATERIAL AND FEEDBACK FROM THE CONSERVATION OFFICER (05.11.2025).

THE MAPS INCLUDED ARE SKETCH DRAFTS AND THE FINAL VERSION WILL INCLUDE PROFESSIONAL MAPS PRODUCED BY RBC.

OTHER CHANGES TO BE INCLUDED SHALL BE THE COMBINATION OF THE THREE 'VIEW' MAPS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA INTO ONE MAP; TEXT REGARDING THE CREATION OF THE MEMORIAL GARDEN AT HILLSIDE COURT; CLARIFICATION ON HERITAGE STREET SIGNS; ADDITIONAL TEXT ON THE PROGRESS THEATRE; AND INPUT FROM THE TREE OFFICER.

A COPY OF THE EXISTING APPRAISAL CAN BE FOUND ON READING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S WEBSITE <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage-and-conservation/conservation-areas-listed-buildings/>

The Mount Conservation Area Appraisal

**Foreword by Councillor Micky Leng,
Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets for Reading Borough Council.**

(To be provided at a later date)

The Mount Conservation Area, Reading

A community-led Conservation Area Appraisal

Initial Statement

Reading has fifteen Conservation Areas. Each Conservation Area (CA) has an individual Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA).

Historic England (HE) recommends that appraisals should be undertaken for each Conservation Area and that these should be reviewed every five years to ensure that they reflect the up-to-date situation and are continuing to do the job they are designed for – to protect ‘the character or appearance of an area which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) is an independent community led body set up in 2016 to advise Reading Borough Council when reviewing Conservation Area Appraisals or policies for the preservation and enhancement of CAs, heritage sites or other features of historic importance.

The Mount Conservation Area was formally designated on 24th April 1987, following a period of public consultation. It was last appraised by the Council’s external consultants, The Conservation Studio of Cirencester, in April 2009. Their report was formally adopted by the Council at that time and, as many of that report’s findings and recommendations have been found to remain relevant today, they have been carried forward in this Appraisal where appropriate.

This Appraisal has been prepared by the Reading CAAC, using the Reading Toolkit, an adaptation of the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, an approach to carrying out appraisals recommended by Historic England.

The Appraisal is preceded by a one page summary of the CA. The first part of the appraisal comprises a Statement of Special Interest, which summarises the key qualities and features which give the area its character and which justify the special protection afforded by a conservation area. This is followed by a more detailed analysis of each of the key elements and areas.

An action plan sets out recommendations for the future management of the area to maintain its special character.

The appendices document the consultation process, archaeology and historic development of the area, and there are photographic appendices for listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit, views and trees and green spaces.

The existing boundaries of the CA have been reviewed and all of the areas currently included merit retention. An extension to the boundary of the CA is not proposed.

We are grateful to Berkshire Archaeology, Reading Borough Libraries, Reading Museum and Royal Berkshire Archives for their assistance with producing this revised appraisal and permission to reproduce images and maps as noted in the text.

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Statement of Special Interest

SS1 Introduction and Summary

The Mount Conservation Area is located to the south of the town centre of Reading on a contour ridge that runs east-west. The Conservation Area (CA) comprises two parallel streets running south to north, linked by two shorter streets of the same name running west-east at the northern end and middle of the south-north “arms”. The majority of the buildings in The Mount itself comprise a unique and distinctive group of buildings of both architectural and local historic value. They form the core of the conservation area. They are listed Grade II. These buildings date from c.1876 and were built for Huntley and Palmers’ clerks, foremen and managers. They comprise a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses with common design and decorative features. All the properties were constructed of gault bricks with paler detailing and banding, and with slate roofs.

Below is a summary of elements which create the area’s character and justify its designation as a CA to assist key decisions on its development and enhancement. Later sections of this appraisal provide fuller details can be found. The key characteristics are:

- The close-knit street block listed houses purpose-built for Huntley & Palmers’ employees;
- The distinctive and unique character of the houses, constructed of gault bricks with paler brick banding and detailing;
- The consistent retention of much of their original character and appearance with few detrimental changes by way of the addition of inconsistent materials;
- Retention of original brick walls including frontage and railings throughout the area;
- Retention of the urban grain, with few detrimental changes by way of new development;
- Distinctive local details such as the use of Caithness Flagstone Series of stone to form roadside kerbs and channels – only found elsewhere in Reading in Fatherson Road - close to the Eldon Road Conservation Area - and iron drain covers manufactured in Katesgrove;
- Good tree cover within the grounds of individual properties and throughout the area;
- Properties fronting Christchurch Road within the CA are of a similar age, but of a different style, more typical of this area of Reading, and again retaining original walls and/or railings;
- The CA has three character areas distinguished by age, architectural style and building materials:
 - Character area 1: The Mount and its Christchurch Road frontage – the ‘core’ of the CA
 - Character area 2: Hillside, Lower Mount/Allcroft Road – green with less urban density
 - Character area 3: 53, 53A, Linden Mews, 55 Christchurch Road and the Progress Theatre – to the west of the core of the CA
- The curtilage of the Hillside site is enhanced by its extensive boundary tree cover;
- Together, Hillside and The Mount represent an urban and industrial counterpart of the country landowner’s estate village and “big house”.

SS2 Significance and Key Positive Features

The core of the designated Conservation Area clearly demonstrates a planned form being built specifically for a group of Huntley and Palmers workers, and formed part of the continuing development spread of substantial suburban villas in this south east direction out of Reading.

Features that make a positive of the conservation area: contribution to the historic character and appearance:

- Retention of original buildings and their settings with few detrimental changes by way of new development and/or addition of non-traditional materials;
- Retention of original brick walls and railings throughout the area;
- Good tree cover within the grounds of individual properties and throughout the area;
- The tranquil nature of area: it is a tranquil environment in the core area, away from Christchurch Road, reflecting the original street pattern and urban development.

SS3 Issues and vulnerabilities

Features that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:

- Loss of original brick wall and railings at number 6 The Mount;
- White painted brickwork at number 25 The Mount;
- Some walls in need of repair on the Christchurch Road frontage;
- Some overgrowth of walls and railings with hedges along Christchurch Road obscuring these features;
- Lack of traditional street furniture, including street lighting;
- Poor street and pavement surfaces with little use of traditional materials;
- Mixed 'conservation area' signage
- Over-reliance on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses within;
- The absence of parking restrictions in The Mount itself leads to daytime parking by commuters and users of the Christchurch Road shopping parade to the east;
- Heavily trafficked route to the south of the conservation area.

SS4 Recommended measures

In order to address the issues and vulnerabilities set out above, Section 8, The Conservation Area Action Plan, sets out in tabular form a series of measures with timescales which should be undertaken to ameliorate these issues.

SS5 The 2025 Boundary and Character Area Adjustments



Figure 1 The existing boundary is marked by a solid line

Map 1 Existing Conservation Area Boundary

Conservation Area Appraisal

1.Introduction

1.1 Policy context

The purpose of an Appraisal document is to ensure that the special interest justifying designation of the CA is clearly defined and analysed in a written statement of its character and appearance. This provides a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for development plan policies and development control decisions, and also forms the basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals.

This Appraisal describes and defines the particular historical and architectural character and interest of The Mount CA, highlighting those features of its character and appearance that should be preserved or enhanced and identifying negative features that detract from the area's character and appearance, and issues that may affect it in future.

The Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) has been produced within current national and local planning policy guidelines. Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment* - states that *'When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.'*

Sustainable development

The government has outlined a presumption in favour of sustainable development with economic, social and environmental objectives. In relation to the environmental objective the NPPF states:

"...to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'

New development in conservation areas

In relation to new development in conservation areas the NPPF states:

"Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

In order to accurately make these judgements clear, evidence must be laid out detailing the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area.

Local Plan (*this will need updating when local plan updated*)

Reading adopted a new Local Plan in November 2019 which set out policies for the protection of Reading's historic environment including designated heritage assets such as conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets. A partial update to the plan commenced in 2023.

This Appraisal cannot hope to mention every building or feature within the CA that might be of value. Any omission should not be taken to imply that it is not of any interest or value to the character of the area.

1.2 Public consultation

This Appraisal is in a format recommended by Historic England in its Advice Note 1 (Second edition) 'Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management' (2019) . It has been prepared by the Reading CAAC and includes a management plan and photographic appendices. In this CA, there are many local residents to consult with one business and one theatre group. Consultation has been aimed at engaging with residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the area to help define what is of special significance and worthy of protection and/or enhancement.

2. Landscape setting

The Mount CA lies less than 2km south east of Reading town centre. It is centred on The Mount, which lies immediately to the north of the west-east aligned Christchurch Road, which is part of the busy main A327, leading to Shinfield Road and points south out of Reading. Immediately to the north is Allcroft Road, which runs parallel to Christchurch Road. Christchurch Road and Allcroft Road were once linked by The Mount (and the Lower Mount to the north of the Mount), but this through route was closed off as part of a conservation area enhancement scheme implemented shortly after the formal designation of The Mount Conservation Area on 24 April 1987.

The geology is similar to Christchurch: a ridge with clay over gravel beds.

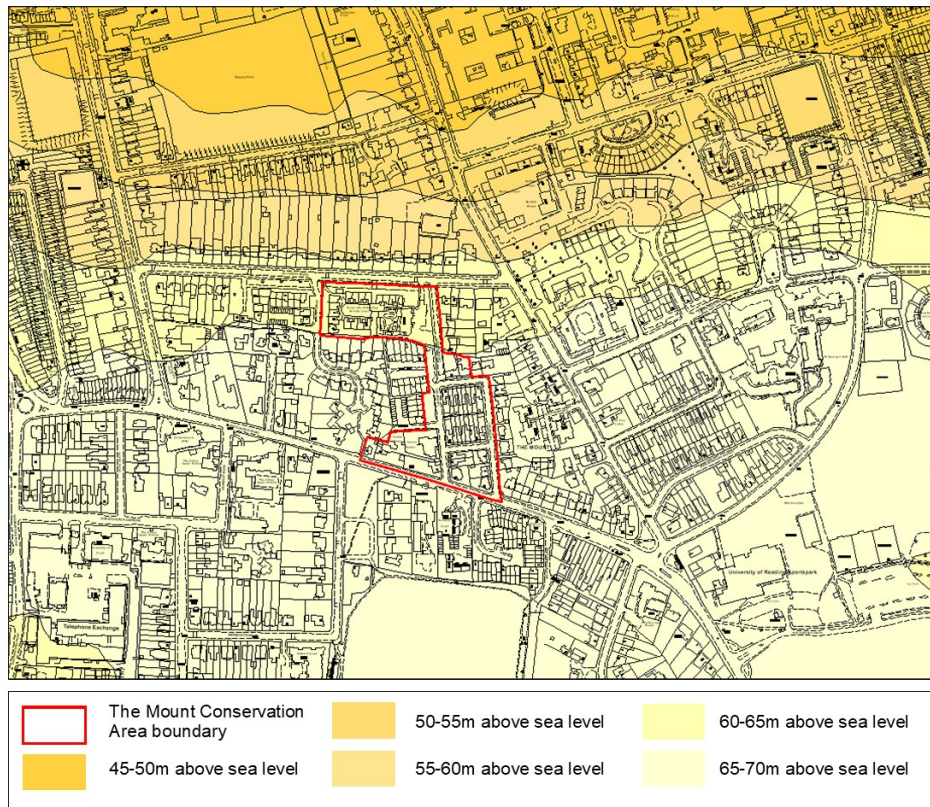


Figure 3 The height above sea level within the conservation area

Map 2 Landscape map of the conservation area

3. Brief History and Development of the Area

The Kennet and Avon Canal was opened in 1810 bringing London and Bristol, two major sea ports, into direct communication by water. Of much greater significance, however, was the construction of the Great Western Railway which reached the town in 1840. The coming of the railway resulted in a rapid growth of major industries, notably Huntley & Palmers and Suttons Seeds, which provided work for a rapidly increasing population.

The history of The Mount Conservation Area is inextricably tied up with the growth of Huntley & Palmers in its heyday. William Isaac Palmer (1824 – 1893) developed the estate of 24 properties on The Mount in the 1870s (Character Area 1) and Hillside (Character Area 3) as his own home in the early 1880s. Progress Theatre apart, The Mount Area dates almost wholly from the 1870s, and shows few real changes since that period.

A more detailed history can be found in Appendix 2.

4. Spatial Analysis

4.1 Key characteristics and plan form

The core of the designated Conservation Area clearly demonstrates a planned form being built specifically for a group of Huntley & Palmers' workers, and formed part of the continuing development spread of substantial suburban villas in this south east direction out of Reading. Unfortunately, in the immediate vicinity of, and except for, the conservation area itself, few of the original Victorian buildings remain, having been redeveloped.

The Conservation Area generally speaking, does not benefit from any obvious open spaces, not least since the grounds of Hillside were developed to add to the university accommodation. There is however an important linear open strip on the west side of The Mount and Lower Mount containing trees and frontage railings which contributes to softening the general built up feel within the core of the conservation area as well as defining the edge of this part of the conservation area.

Except for the extensions in the grounds of Hillside, the defined area is not one which has been subject to pressures for significant (re)development in recent years. Although areas immediately outside the defined conservation area have experienced more development pressures, only the aforementioned site within the CA – Hillside – has experienced development in its grounds. However, to quote the list entry description, “the house retains its entrance drive, gate piers, gates and railings and some of its garden giving it its original sense of scale, space and context”, (Historic England, 2025).

Apart from the Christchurch Road frontage and the Progress Theatre site, the area exhibits a certain formality to the layout of the dwellings within it, and in general terms the area has in its core a fairly compact and formal “urban” rather than “suburban” feel to it (also serving to distinguish it from surrounding areas, which includes single storey bungalows facing the CA along the east boundary).

Some alterations and extensions to original dwellings have taken place but these generally reflect the character and appearance of the original buildings by using compatible materials and retaining important boundary wall and railing details. Certainly from the front, the properties appear little changed, but the rear elevations indicate examples of inappropriate additions, including flat-roofed dormers.

The properties in the conservation area have varying depths, but none have particularly large rear garden spaces. Single storey garages at the rear of corner-plot properties open directly onto the road. There is a communal alleyway to the centre of the largest block of properties, secured at each end with a gate. The houses all have front gardens with many retaining their original chequerboard tiling from the street to the front door.

Throughout the area, front boundaries are defined by brick walls and railings - whose design is consistently of a fleur-de-lys style - which are a key element of the character of the conservation area as a whole as well as providing a good setting for individual properties.

As previously stated, there has been little pressure for redevelopment here. Nevertheless there is significant tree cover throughout the area and without, which gives the area some verdant character. There are important trees around the Hillside site, on the west side of The Mount and Lower Mount, on the Christchurch Road frontage and outside the area. These are shown on Map 6, Figure 10.

The Progress Theatre relocated from the centre of Reading to The Mount in 1950 into what had been 'Mildmay Hall', constructed in 1881 adjoining Mildmay Cottage. The Mildmay Hall had been the second venue for Reading's Mildmay Club - established in 1879 by A.W.Sutton.

4.2 Views

Views into, within and out of the CA contribute to its special character. Despite the slight rise from north to south, the conservation area is generally approached "on the flat" from the levels of Allcroft Road to the north and Christchurch Road to the south. The Hillside site is prominent at the Allcroft Road side of the conservation area not only because of its intrinsic size but also prominent tree cover and original surrounding boundary walls and railings. Whilst these trees, walls and railings are visible from along the length of Allcroft Road itself, they (and Hillside itself) are not highly visible from any great distance.

Similarly, the core buildings in The Mount and on its Christchurch Road frontage are more prominent close up than from a distance although, again, these walls and railings, and some trees on the frontage, are visible from along the length of Christchurch Road itself.

4.2.1 Views into the area

These views contribute to the sense of arrival when approaching the CA. Photographs of each of the views can be found in Appendix 5.

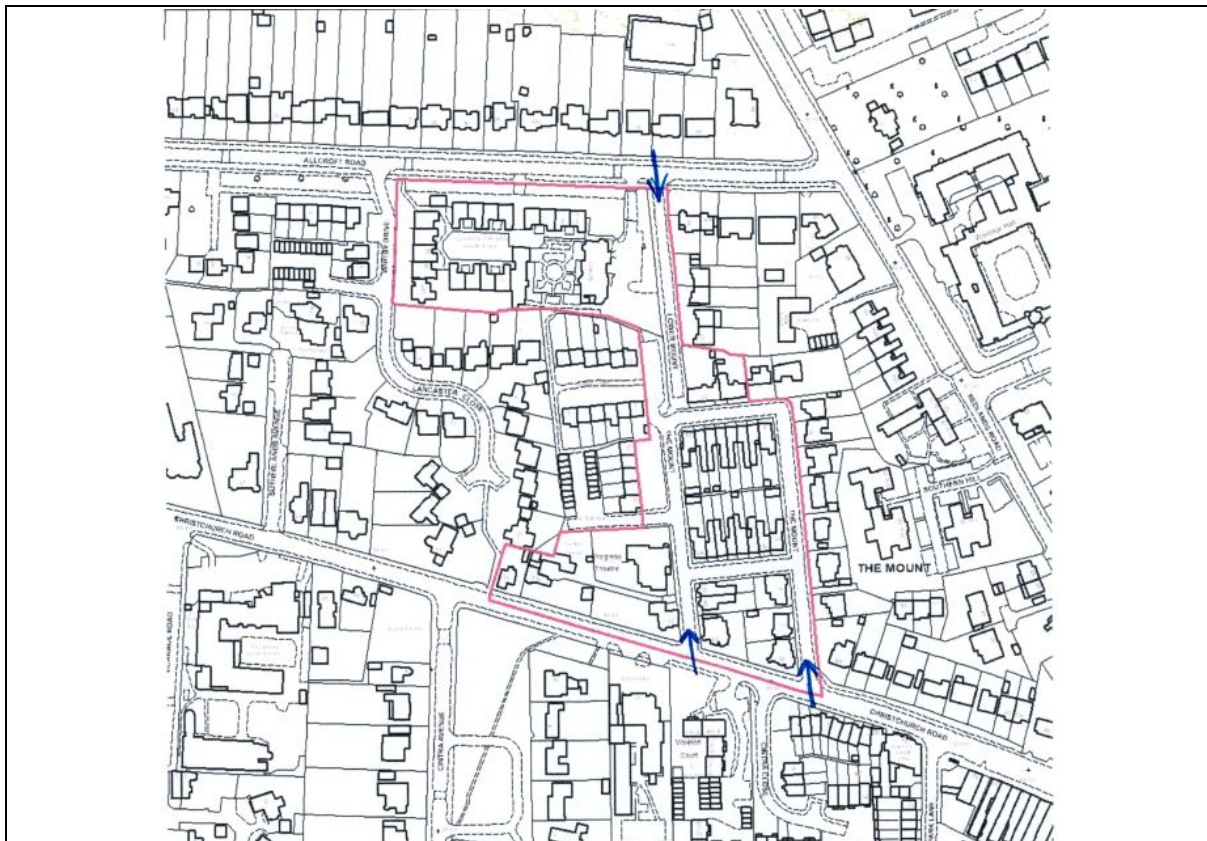


Figure 5 Views into the conservation area shown with blue arrows

Map 3 Views into The Mount CA



Figure 5 Views into the CA: View 2 - northwest at the corner of 'The Mount' (east) and Christchurch Road (image Claire Truman)

Views into the area are north-south along the grid between Christchurch Road (to the south boundary) and Allcroft Road (to the north boundary). The view looking north from the south is from the higher vantage point in the conservation area. The roads forming the north-south/west-west grid are all called 'The Mount'

- Looking north along 'The Mount' (east) road – View 2
- Looking north along 'The Mount' (west) road – View 1
- Looking south from the lower position of Allcroft Road along Lower Mount which rises up toward the Mount – View 3

4.2.2 Views within the area



Figure 6 Views within The Mount CA shown with green arrows

Map 4 Views within The Mount CA



*Figure 7 View 4 – view west towards the Progress Theatre along The Mount (south)
(image Claire Truman)*

Views within the area are more enclosed but are enhanced by the landscape setting. Photographs of each of the views can be found in Appendix 5.

Within the area:

- an interesting stopped off view looking up the Lower Mount from the north towards number 22 The Mount;
- all the corner properties within The Mount represent key views within the conservation area as these tend to be the larger end-terrace, semi-detached and detached properties;
- open space, trees and railings fronting Sutton Walk to the west of The Mount and Lower Mount are an important visual element and aspect for the properties immediately opposite them. These form part of a conservation area enhancement scheme implemented shortly after designation of the conservation area in 1987.
- A less attractive internal view is that along the road in front of numbers 24-36 The Mount towards Progress Theatre and from numbers 38 and 40 opposite.

4.2.3 Views out of the area

There are a limited number of good views out of the area.



Figure 8 Views out of The Mount CA shown with red arrows

Map 5 Views out of The Mount CA



Figure 9 View 8 - west along The Mount (north) (image Claire Truman)

Photographs of each of the views can be found in Appendix 5.

Generally “views out” from the front and rear of properties in the CA where they are not protected by tree cover, are to 1930s and later dwellings outside the CA. The Mount (north) offers views further afield towards the spire of Christ Church to the west, and Wantage Hall to the northeast.

4.3 Open Spaces

The CA benefits from a linear open strip on the west side of The Mount and Lower Mount containing trees and frontage railings which contributes to softening the general built up feel within the core of the CA, as well as defining the edge of this part of the CA. The large open front gardens without boundaries laid to lawn along the west boundary facing onto The Mount also contributes a green and open character to the setting. There are no planned green open spaces, such as a park, with the CA itself.

4.4 Character of massing

The properties in the CA are 2-3 storeys in height with pitched and hipped roof profiles. It is possible to view the rear of some of the properties which reveal some original pitched dormer roofs, and create a regular rhythm to the rear of the large central block. The massing of the corners of the blocks are softened at times with hipped roof profiles, angled wall planes, turrets and turret roofs to bay windows, and the stepping down of garden walls that flank the end-of-terrace properties. The roofscapes are broken up with regular chimney stacks.

The longer terrace facades are organised into 4-5 bays, articulated with projected semi-detached pitched entrance porch roofs. The building plots are of varying depths with the semi-detached and detached houses having relatively larger rear gardens, albeit none have particularly large spaces.

4.5 Trees and green spaces

The CA generally comprises mature trees, and although these tend to have small gardens (The Mount and Christchurch Road) and/or little garden space around them, there is important tree cover on the Christchurch Road and “Hillside Court” frontages, which gives a general verdant feel to the area of buildings and trees in harmony. Street trees exist to the west side of The Mount/Lower Mount in front of Sutton Walk which generally make a significant contribution to this urban conservation area’s special character and sense of identity (see Appendix 6). Tree cover immediately adjacent to the CA (some protected by Tree Preservation Orders) also contribute to the setting of the CA, and in particular those in the adjacent Christchurch Conservation Area and Redlands Conservation Area. Trees therefore make a significant contribution to the CA’s special character and sense of identity. Significant tree groups are shown on the Appraisal Map at Appendix 1.

Because of their importance to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, where they are not already protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), it is necessary to give the local planning authority 6 weeks’ notice of any intention to cut down, top or lop any tree in a Conservation Area, which also enables a local planning authority to consider whether the trees should be formally protected by the making of a TPO. There are currently TPOs covering trees at 55 Christchurch Road (type T2) and 79-81 The Mount (type T1) (part of the Sutton Walk development). In the 2009 appraisal there was a TPO tree outside the Progress Theatre (order number 2/003) however this has since been removed and replaced (*TPO number tbc*). Planters to Lower Mount were constructed following Community Infrastructure Levy funding received in 2021 and were first fully planted in 2024. These are maintained by a group of local residents of The Mount and Lower Mount.



Figure 10 Trees (with TPO trees), other significant trees and green spaces within and adjacent to the CA

Map 6 Trees and green spaces within the conservation area

4.6 Building Plots

Throughout the area, the front of the building plots are defined by brick walls and railings which are a key element of the character of the conservation area as a whole as well as providing a good setting for individual properties. The terraced houses have low level brick walls and railings to the front, while taller brick boundary treatment is also common on The Mount. These compare to the semi-detached and detached properties which have railings and hedging. These larger properties have their own vehicular entrances while the terraced houses do not other than four garages serving the end properties.

5. Buildings and Public Realm

5.1 Key positive characteristics

The pre-eminent local detail throughout this CA, and “unifying” it, is the presence of rich, often unique, examples of traditional polychromatic brickwork from the late Victorian period and of brick walls and railings on property boundaries. Much of the history of The Mount Conservation relates to its connection with the Huntley and Palmer biscuit factory, with housing in The Mount itself provided for senior employees of the factory and “Hillside” providing a Palmer family house. “Hillside” is also attributable to the prolific and important local architects, Morris and Stallwood.

5.2 Materials, styles and features

The CA is essentially a residential area, clearly highly prized because of its location close to local amenities, Reading University and the Royal Berkshire Hospital. It contains properties from the late Victorian period.

The buildings in The Mount itself are of slate roof and gault brick with paler facings, with cast iron fleur-de-lys style railings atop low brick walls. “Hillside” is built of grey brick with red brick and terracotta dressings. The remaining Victorian properties fronting Christchurch Road are rendered, but all of them possess intricacies of detailing prevalent in the “richer” houses of the period and reflecting Reading’s heritage of Victorian patterned brickwork.

Conceived as an urban block, The Mount’s houses are designed as a collective whole: the two main approaches from Christchurch Road are turrets to the two detached properties, whose forms are echoed within The Mount with turret roofs to projecting two-storey bay windows at the ends of the terraces and act as a unifying feature with the remaining properties. Bands of pale brick are used across the blocks to define a common datum between the properties, and do not step with the contours across the site.

Altogether, these (different) brick built buildings therefore possess the distinguishing features of Reading’s architecture and there are examples of good quality brickwork throughout the CA. Brick was a popular building material in the 19th century and the ready availability of different coloured bricks provided the opportunity for the lively polychromatic brickwork found throughout this part of Victorian/Edwardian Reading.

The Progress Theatre presents to the street a 1960’s style architecture and largely conceals the pitched roof of the original Mildmay Hall towards the rear. Whilst this is a contrasting style and use of materials, it adds another historic layer, not a competing one, to the CA.

5.3 Buildings listed by Historic England and Buildings of Townscape Merit



Map 7 Listed Buildings and Buildings of Townscape Merit

5.3.1 Listed Buildings

There are 9 listing entries in the CA – many of the buildings are listed as groups. Geographically north to south these are:

Gatepiers, Walls, Gates and Railings on Allcroft Road and Lower Mount to Hillside, Allcroft Road (List Entry Number 1392868)

Hillside, Allcroft Road (List Entry Number 1392866)

The Mount, 23 and 25, The Mount (List Entry Number 1154876)

The Mount, 8- 22, The Mount (List Entry Number 113439)

The Mount, 24- 36, The Mount (List Entry Number 113438)

The Mount, 38 and 40, The Mount (List Entry Number 1321967)

The Mount, 57 and 57A, The Mount (List Entry Number 113440)

Uplands, 59, The Mount (List Entry Number 1321968)

Wall Between Nos 57 and 59, The Mount (List Entry Number 1154887)

The buildings and structures are all identified on Map 7 and are also listed in Appendix 3 where images are provided along with a short summary and link to the Historic England listing entry.

5.3.2 Buildings of Townscape Merit

Buildings of Townscape Merit help create a conservation area's distinctive and interesting historic townscape. As recommended in Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment, the general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Buildings identified as having "townscape merit" will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered 19th century and later buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a positive contribution to the special interest of the CA.

There are 5 buildings of townscape merit. The following non-listed buildings are considered to have townscape value or "buildings of townscape merit":

- 53, 53A and 55 Christchurch Road;
- 2 and 4 The Mount.

These are identified on Map 7 and listed with a short description in Appendix 4.

5.4 Public Realm

5.4.1 Floorscape, street lighting and street furniture

Road and footway surfaces are predominantly modern i.e. tarmac and concrete kerbs. Whilst generally in average condition (there is evidence of repairs by "utilities" throughout the area), these surfaces are not attractive and not "traditional" in conservation area terms.

Street lighting columns, signage and street furniture are modern, and this is another area with considerable potential for improvement. There are no examples of traditional lighting in the Area.

Properties in the CA rely on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses.

Brick walls and railings are to be found throughout the area and are clearly an essential part of the public realm and character of the CA. The cast iron railing design across the CA is consistently of a fleur-de-lys style. No.6 has lost its double leaf gate: it was one of what was 4 pairs. The other three, at No.s 8 and 22 (opposing pairs) and No. 24 (opposing pair to No.6) remain. It is notable the railings that have been well maintained and repaired in the CA create a positive enhancement to the wholistic character of the CA. The repair and re-painting of railings is encouraged; it is notable there is a conflict between enlarged tree roots which threaten the retention of historic railings.

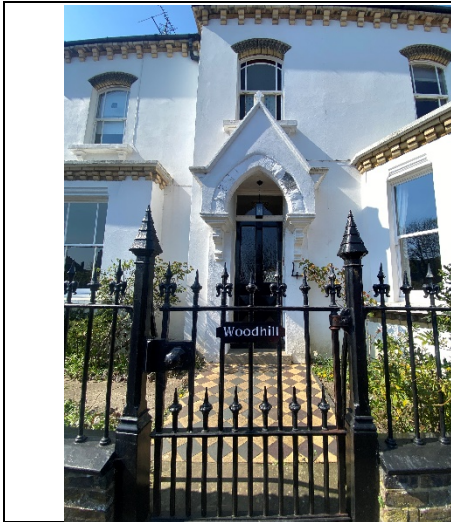


Figure 12 Single leaf gate at No.4 – also at No.s 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 38, 40 and side gates to No. 40 and 57 as a reflected pair.



Figure 13 Double leaf gate at No. 24; and opposing detached houses No.s 22 and 8.

Road and footway surfaces are a mixture of finishes: the original kerbs and channels are a distinctive local detail of the stone 'Caithness Flagstone Series' of stone – only found elsewhere in Reading in Fatherson Road (adjacent to the Eldon Road Conservation Area); iron drain covers are partially retained and were manufactured in nearby Katesgrove; the surfaces are tarmac.

5.4.2 Local details and features



Figure 14 Diagram of location of stone (blue) and concrete (pink) kerbs, and original ironworks (circles) at The Mount (compiled by local resident)

6. Character Areas

The CA divides into three character areas defined according to the predominant age, style of architecture and urban grain.

The CA is a tightly drawn area centred on the Grade II listed properties in The Mount itself and includes adjacent properties of similar age on the Christchurch Road frontage to the south and the listed Hillside to the north fronting Allcroft Road and Lower Mount.

The area is therefore clearly defined as dating from the late Victorian period, specifically circa 1870s. Two anomalies to this historical period is the Progress Theatre whose modern extension to the 1881 Mildmay Hall is an architectural expression of the late 1960s, and the 1990's development in the grounds of Hillside. Apart from these, the area has generally resisted pressure for (re)development, and in this respect must be considered to be quite unique. The character of the area therefore remains strong. The area can be divided into the following three character areas:



Figure 15 Character Areas 1-3

Map 8 Character Areas

6.1 Area 1: The Mount and its Christchurch Road frontage

The Mount itself comprises a close knit street block of listed houses with local historic interest being originally built for Huntley & Palmers' employees. These houses comprise a unique and distinctive group of buildings of both architectural and local historic value and form the core of the conservation area. They are listed Grade II. These buildings date from c.1876 and were built for Huntley & Palmers' clerks, foremen and managers. They comprise a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses with design and decorative features in common. All the properties were constructed of gault bricks with paler detailing and banding, and with slate roofs. They retain much of their original character and appearance, including frontage walls and railings. An east-west service alleyway central to the main urban 'block' is located to the rear of these terraced houses.

Common unifying architectural details throughout Character Area 1 are (refer to Figure 13):

- gault bricks with white brick bands
- cast iron flower basket guards retained at No.s 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 26, 30, 36 and 38
- modillion eaves cornice
- chevron-moulded first floor brick window arches
- moulded stone lintels to ground floor and some first floors
- paired doorways with bracketed arch entrance and joint gable over
- 4-panelled door design with upper panels glazed, cast iron central door knob, scrolled knocker and vertical post box
- Chequerboard black and white encaustic tiles to pathway from entrance gate to door – largely retained at The Mount
- Sash windows, some with margin lights expressing a hierarchy of design for the respective occupants (at No.s 4, 6, 8, 22, 24, 25, 38 and 40, and two upper windows at No.2); at the ground floor windows (only) of No.s 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18).
- Slate roofs: some with fish scale courses (e.g. at No. 57 and 57A The Mount), some with geometric shaped courses (e.g. at Uplands and 23 The Mount)
- the inclusion of turret designs at key corner locations
- prominent brick chimneys with dogtooth brick course details
- Fleur-de-lys railing design on a low brick wall.



Figure 16 Unifying architectural details (*image Claire Truman*)

The properties were planned to reflect social hierarchy within Huntley & Palmers' employees. The two substantial properties at the east and west 'entrances' to The Mount – are listed separately: No.s 59 'Uplands', list entry no. 1321968, and 57/57a list entry no. 1113440. These may have been designed for managers at the biscuit factory. The architecture of both include a palette of Gothic features, such as turrets, canted bays, diaper brickwork, bespoke to each property.

The Mount was designed as an urban group, and is expressed in a number of ways:

- Unifying walls between properties – such as the enclosing wall with paired garden access between No.s 57 and 40 (refer to Figure 18) illustrate the holistic urban design.
- The consistent brick band details are located at the same height across the north and south 'blocks' despite the fall in gradient north-south along the road, and internal level changes between rooms and between properties. In particular the band detail carried through between No.6 and No.8 (refer to Figure 18) remains consistent yet the internal floor levels of the two properties differ in their relationship with the banding.
- The unifying architectural details, as listed on the previous page.



Figure 17 Unifying urban design (*image Claire Truman*)



Figure 18 Unifying yellow brick bands between properties in the north-south road directions (*image Claire Truman*)

6.2 Area 2: Hillside, Lower Mount/Allcroft Road

Hillside, to the north of The Mount, is a good example of a large Victorian detached house, which also retains its original walls and railings. It is dated 1880 by Morris and Stallwood for W I Palmer of Huntley & Palmers, and was extended and dated 1898 by the same Stallwood alone for Leonard Goodhart Sutton (1863-1932), grandson of John Sutton founder of Suttons Seeds, moved to Hillside after the death of W I Palmer. It is built of grey brick with extensive red brick and terra cotta dressings, slate roofs and red tile cresting. The listing describes it as “one of the most opulent buildings of this period in Reading, which has a rich diversity of late C19 housing. Morris and Stallwood were prolific and accomplished local architects, well-tuned to the tastes and trends in public and private building, suited to a wealthy client wishing to invest in a building of the highest quality”. The building is now owned by Turner Property and subdivided into flats. Although the grounds have been built over in part, the house retains its entrance drive, gates and railings and some of its garden, giving it its original sense of scale space and context.

The gate piers, walls, gates and railings form two sides of the boundary to Hillside to Allcroft Road and Lower Mount. These date from circa 1880-1900 and are valuable in putting the house in context, and are listed separately (List Entry Number 1392868). A pair of brick piers with an enriched terracotta frieze of rosettes are located either side of the main driveway, inscribed with ‘Hillside’. At the entrance off Lower Mount two less ornate paired brick gatepiers remain: the original timber gates are currently in storage at Hillside awaiting repair and reinstatement.

The quality of the Hillside site is also enhanced by its extensive boundary tree cover.



Figure 19 View of the east elevation of Hillside from Lower Mount (*image Claire Truman*)



Figure 20 The brick piers and railings to Hillside are falling into disrepair – view along Lower Mount (*image Claire Truman*)

6.3 Area 3: 53, 53A, Linden Mews, 55 Christchurch Road and the Progress Theatre

Nearby properties fronting Christchurch Road are of a similar age, if different style, being of rendered finish, but again retaining original walls and/or railings. 53, 53A, Linden Mews and 55 Christchurch Road, are all shown on the 1877 map of Reading and are therefore of the same date or earlier than the properties in Areas 1 and 2. They are included in the Conservation Area for their group value and character. Number 53 is a single storey classic lodge building which adjoined the main entrance to “Sutherlands”, which site was redeveloped in the 1970s as Lancaster Close (accessed from Allcroft Road). Part of the original pierced and decorative wall also remains. 53A and Linden Mews were formed from “Sutherlands” outbuildings, and although altered and extended, these retain their original spatial pattern. 55 is a prominent two storey white rendered building of classic proportions located at the west ‘entrance’ to The Mount, however the Georgian style windows to the main elevation have been replaced with uPVC since the last appraisal, which deteriorates its status as a building of townscape merit. Original railings enclose the frontage, however their condition is noted as deteriorated.

The Progress Theatre, founded in 1947, moved in 1950 from the W I Palmer Memorial Hall in West Street to new premises in The Mount which had formerly been the Mildmay Club, a working men's club founded in 1879 by Arthur Warwick Sutton which moved to the newly built hall in 1881, sufficiently large to hold 200 people. The hall has been enlarged in phases since its initial occupation, particularly after securing the freehold in 1964. The design of the main entrance façade onto The Mount dates from 1968.



Figure 21 The Progress Theatre today (Image Claire Truman)

The Progress Theatre has social and cultural importance whose origins are directly associated with the Sutton family. Its avant-garde design contributes substantially to the layers of history within the CA, and specifically to the setting of Character Area 1; every effort should be made to keep the property and the associated external spaces well maintained and managed.



Figure 22 The Progress Theatre today (Image courtesy Progress Theatre)

6.4 Contributions to character

6.4.1 Features that make a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:

- Retention of original buildings and their settings with few detrimental changes by way of new development and/or addition of non-traditional materials;
- Retention of original brick walls and railings throughout the area;
- Good tree cover within the grounds of individual properties and throughout the area;

Surrounded by much more modern buildings, the conservation area itself and the buildings within it have generally retained their original character. Although there have been relatively few pressures to redevelop sites in the past, these have generally respected the prevailing character and appearance of the conservation area.

6.4.2 Positive changes that have occurred since the 2009 appraisal that were identified as opportunities for enhancement:

- Reinstatement of brick wall and railings at 6 The Mount.
- The top of Lower Mount has received attention with new planters installed to reduce incidences of bikes travelling at high speed through The Mount, however the previous bench and rubbish bin were also removed advised as owing to anti-social behaviour.

6.5 Activities and uses

The area has historically been and currently is a residential area of individual family houses to the north of Christchurch Road. Hillside – now named Hillside Court - is now home to the offices of Turner Property on part of the ground floor, who acquired the site from Reading University in 2014. Hillside Court offers flat accommodation for private rent within the main house, and halls of residence with a common room to Reading University students within the 15no. 1970s and 1980s' houses in the grounds. Turner Property since added two more houses within the grounds. The Progress Theatre is the only building in non-residential use.

It is only on the outside of the area, particularly on the south side of Christchurch Road that non-residential uses have prevailed, but recent (re) developments have introduced more residential uses here. At the time of its original designation there was a car sales/repair garage immediately opposite the conservation area, which was a source of complaint for using The Mount for overflow and visitors car parking. However, its redevelopment for housing has had the effect of removing that problem, to the benefit of the conservation area.

Properties in the area appear to very much in demand and therefore generally fully occupied and in a good state of repair.

Despite its position just north of the busy Christchurch Road the area possesses a quiet (residential) atmosphere, which is helped by the cul-de-sac arrangement of both the Mount and Lower Mount which are separated by bollards introduced as part of a conservation area enhancement scheme implemented shortly after the conservation area was designated. This prevents rat runs through the area between Allcroft Road and Christchurch Road.

However, with no parking restrictions in The Mount itself this appears to lead to daytime parking by commuters and users of the Christchurch Road shopping parade to the east.

6.6 Ambience

During the daytime the ambience is quiet within The Mount, away from Christchurch Road – this contrasts with the ambience in the evenings – refer to paragraph 7.2.6.

7. Negative features, issues and opportunities for enhancement

The general state of repair of the properties in the Conservation Area is good with

properties not remaining vacant for any length of time. However, in common with many of Reading's conservation areas, the Area is lacking in the quality, if not the state of repair of the highway environment (roadways, footways and street furniture).

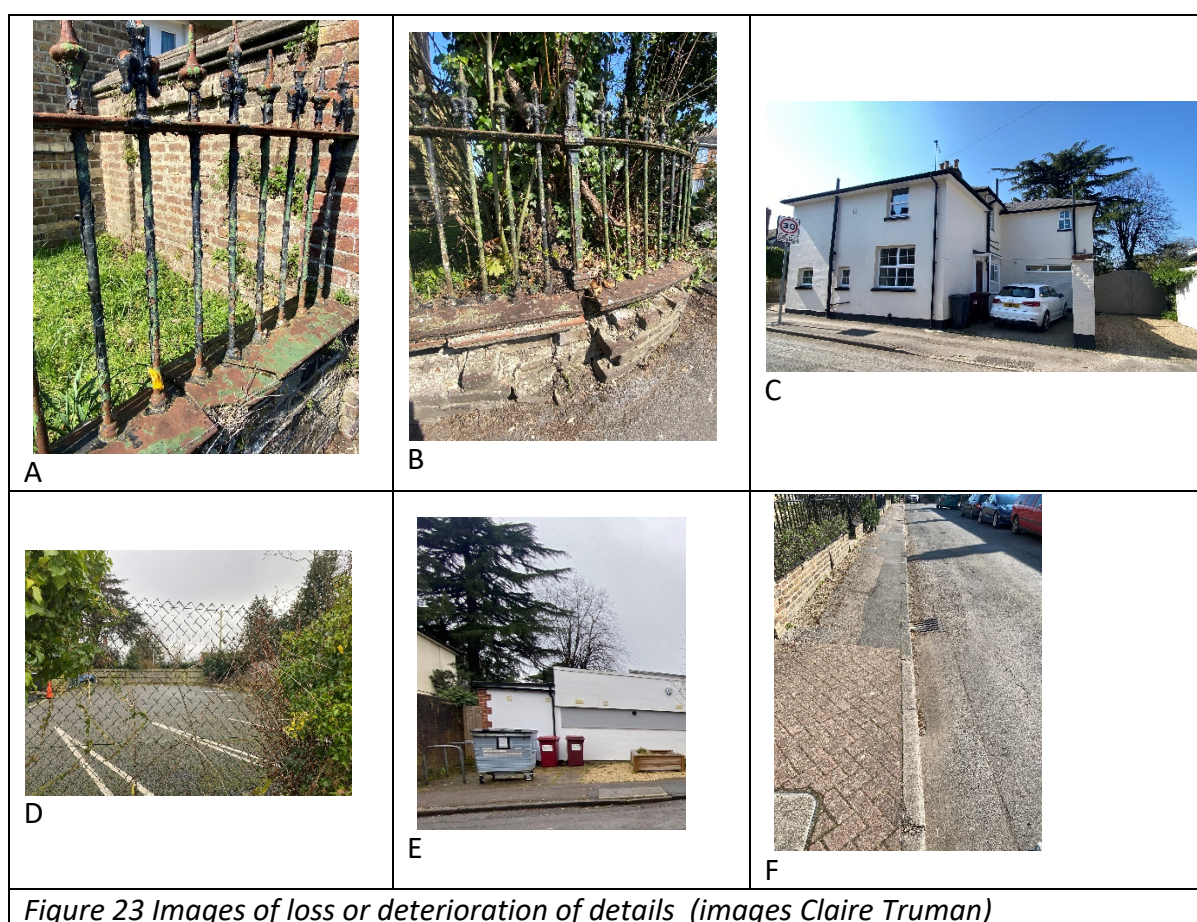
All of these areas would benefit from continued monitoring, and the seizing of opportunities for improvement as they arise.

Features that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the conservation area:

- Flat-roofed dormer appear out of keeping with the roofscape character
- Railings and low wall damaged by overgrown tree at number 79 Christchurch Road – this has dramatically changed since the last appraisal;
- Deterioration of original railings
- White painted brickwork at number 25 The Mount;
- Out of character building at Progress Theatre;
- Some walls in need of repair on the Christchurch Road frontage;
- Over growth of walls and railings with hedges along the Christchurch Road frontage obscures walls and railings and impeding upon the pavement;
- Lack of traditional street furniture, including street lighting;
- Over-reliance on individual telegraph poles throughout the area with attendant wires radiating out to the houses within;
- The absence of parking restrictions in The Mount itself leads to daytime parking by commuters and users of the Christchurch Road shopping parade to the east.

Within the CA itself there are few recent developments, but these have generally respected the character, scale of buildings and materials used in the conservation area, thus maintaining its character and appearance. A small number of elements within the conservation area detract from its character. Generally developments immediately outside the CA heed their context adjoining or nearby The Mount Conservation Area and do not have a notably negative effect on its character and appearance. The design of new development within and adjoining/near the conservation area should however remain an issue.

7.1 Loss of original architectural features and detail



- A – Deteriorating railings
- B – Deteriorating low brick wall and railings
- C – uPVC windows to building of townscape merit
- D – Chain link fence with unmanaged vegetation forming boundary of CA
- E – Euro bin at front of building not stored away
- F – Pavements and kerbs a ‘patchwork’ of finishes

In general terms the loss of original features, particularly front elevation and boundary features is very limited. There are few examples of non-traditional windows in the buildings in the conservation area. The worst examples of inappropriate changes tending to be at the rear of properties. There is a clear issue here in terms of respecting the setting of individual buildings as well as enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area, in accordance with advice contained in the Reading Borough Local Plan.

For unlisted buildings it is recommended that an Article 4 direction is considered to remove permitted development rights within the CA or parts thereof and prevent further erosion of the special character and appearance of the area. The management plan (Table 2) sets out to remedy some of these issues.

7.2 Neglect and opportunities for enhancement

Floorscape (refer to image 22F) and street furniture improvements should be considered in this area, including replacing telegraph poles.

Selected examples and opportunities are highlighted below:

7.2.1 Tree loss

The TPO tree outside of the Progress Theatre has been lost, however this has been replaced with a sapling. *[TPO tbc]*.

7.2.2 Street furniture and surfacing

New seating has been installed to the front of the Progress Theatre, however the street elevation of the Progress Theatre building offers an opportunity for sensitive decoration to minimise the impact of the plain white and grey painted walls.

The boundary treatment of the Progress Theatre car park forms the boundary of the conservation area, adjacent to an access road to garages to the rear of Sutton Walk. The boundary treatment is chain link fencing and supports the growth of weeds (refer to image 22D).

7.2.3 Rubbish and bins

Large Euro bins are stored to the front of the Progress Theatre (refer to image 22E) – there is an opportunity to create a dedicated bin enclosure or to manage the bins to be stored at the rear of the building until collection day.

7.2.4 Development pressure and changing skyline

Surrounded by much more modern buildings, the conservation area itself and the buildings within it have generally retained their original character. Although there have been relatively few pressures to redevelop sites in the past, these have generally respected the prevailing character and appearance of the conservation area. However there is clearly scope to redress some quite modest failings apparent in the foregoing list.

7.2.5 Traffic noise and pollution

The character and environmental quality of the CA to its southern edge is impacted by noise and pollution of traffic using the main A327 Christchurch Road running along the southern boundary of the area, particularly during the rush hours, which contrasts with its otherwise tranquil environment.

7.2.6 Ambience

In the evenings, when dark, The Mount (west) is less overlooked than the other roads within The Mount and has become subject to anti-social behaviour, such as damage to parked cars along the street, and fast-moving cyclists 'cutting through' the urban environment. This specific street is less naturally overlooked by houses and directly links to Lower Mount to facilitate the cut through.

8 Action Plan

Table 1 – All Conservation Areas

Policies, attitudes and actions which need to be applied to all of Reading's Conservation Areas if the town's remaining historic character is to be protected and enhanced as it should be. These apply to the Christchurch Conservation Area as fully as they do to all, particularly with regard to the careful protection of architectural detail in any building alterations. It is acknowledged that these proposals have resource implications, especially for Reading Borough Council, at a time when resources are stretched and limited.

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO
Loss of original architectural features and details (see 7.1). Insensitive change and development not requiring planning permission, permitted development	<p>Guidance: Provide guidance document on 'approved' methods for common small scale alterations</p> <p>Awareness: Provide householder information on the added value of 'period detail' and detail on economic alternatives for energy efficiency savings</p> <p>Material prepared by other planning authorities could be used as a model for preparing written guidance</p>	<p>RBC and CAAC</p> <p>Update as at December 2025. A Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was published in March 2021. This has general guidance on and examples of roof dormers, roof lights and extensions which would be acceptable or unacceptable in conservation areas.</p> <p>Update as at December 2025. A guidance leaflet for householders has been drafted by RBC, reviewed by CAAC.</p>

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO
Loss or change to original boundary features.	<p>Awareness: Provide householder information document on the added value and visual importance of boundary walls and railings</p> <p>Policy: Article 4 directions could be implemented as resources allow (see Table 2 for further recommendations on what this should cover in this CA)</p>	RBC and CAAC
Insensitive development undertaken without permission <i>(see 7.2 e.g. window replacement in listed buildings)</i>	<p>Guidance: Provision of property owner guidance on legal requirements for alterations/development/tree works in conservation areas.</p> <p>Enforcement: Legal enforcement by RBC to secure reversal of changes</p>	<p>RBC and CAAC</p> <p>Update as at December 2025.</p> <p>This is partially covered in the guidance leaflet for householders has been drafted by RBC, reviewed by CAAC.</p>
Redevelopment within or adjoining the Conservation Area should respect the general height, massing and alignment of existing buildings and use a palette of materials which reflect its existing character.	<p>Guidance, Policy: Supplementary Design guidance planning document for development in historic areas.</p> <p>Support: Use CAAC to gain informed comment on planning applications affecting Conservation Areas</p>	<p>Enforcement RBC</p> <p>RBC and CAAC</p>

Table 2 – The Mount Conservation Area

Policies and actions which are specific to this Conservation Area, to retain and enhance its important contribution to the life of Reading as a whole. They may require some limited revenue resources, which it is recommended should be given high priority, but little or no public capital expenditure.

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO
?	Policy: ?	tbc

APPENDIX 1 PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

1. Members of CAAC met with local residents twice to walk together around The Mount; members of CAAC met with the owner of Turner Property twice; and with the manager of The Progress Theatre.
2. The initial community meeting was held on 10 December at the Queens Head public house on Christchurch Road. Draft 4.0 of the revised appraisal was presented and feedback resulted in...

OTHER CONSULTATIONS WHICH WILL FOLLOW

3. *A second community meeting was held on XX (probably March 2026) and an informal public consultation questionnaire was issued and was also available online. Two copies of the draft appraisal were placed in the nearest libraries following the XX event along with questionnaires.*
4. *XX responses to the questionnaire were received either at the launch event or online. There were XX responses from the copies in the libraries. Feedback from the questionnaire was collated and is summarised below:*
5. *The revised appraisal was endorsed for formal public consultation by the Strategic Planning and Environment Committee on XX (probably June 2026). The consultation took place from XX to XX.*

APPENDIX 2 ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

(see separate document v4.0)

PHOTOGRAPHIC APPENDICES 3, 4, 5 and 6 form separate documents

(see separate document for appendix 3 v4.0)