



11 March 2026

Title	Adoption of the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Mark Worringham, Planning Policy Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the responses received during the consultation on the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 2) be noted.2. That the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 3) be adopted.3. That the Eldon Square Conservation Area be extended as set out in the Appraisal (Appendix 3).

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Eldon Square Conservation Area was designated in 1972 under the Town & Country Planning Act 1971 (as amended), the first conservation area in Reading, and the most recent full conservation area appraisal was produced in 2007. Following discussions over the Council's approach to the historic environment, the Council agreed to support the setting up of a Reading Conservation Areas Advisory Committee (CAAC). One of the primary concerns of the CAAC was the length of time since many conservation area appraisals had been prepared and adopted. According to best practice appraisals should be updated every 5-10 years and many of these appraisals are now in need of review. It was subsequently agreed that the CAAC would lead on reviews of conservation area appraisals in consultation with local communities.
- 1.2. The Eldon Square appraisal is the fourth review to be completed, following St Peters in 2018, Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road in 2020 and Christchurch in 2024. This Committee approved consultation on a Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal on 19 November 2025 (Minute 12 refers). The results of consultation are summarised in Appendix 2. This report recommends the adoption of the final version of the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal attached as Appendix 3.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the National Planning Policy Framework impose a duty on local planning authorities to review their existing conservation areas and designate as conservation areas any 'special areas of architectural or historic interest'.
- 2.2 Although not required by law, Historic England recommends that Conservation Area Appraisals are reviewed and updated regularly, every five to ten years. Conservation Area Appraisals are material considerations in the determination of relevant planning

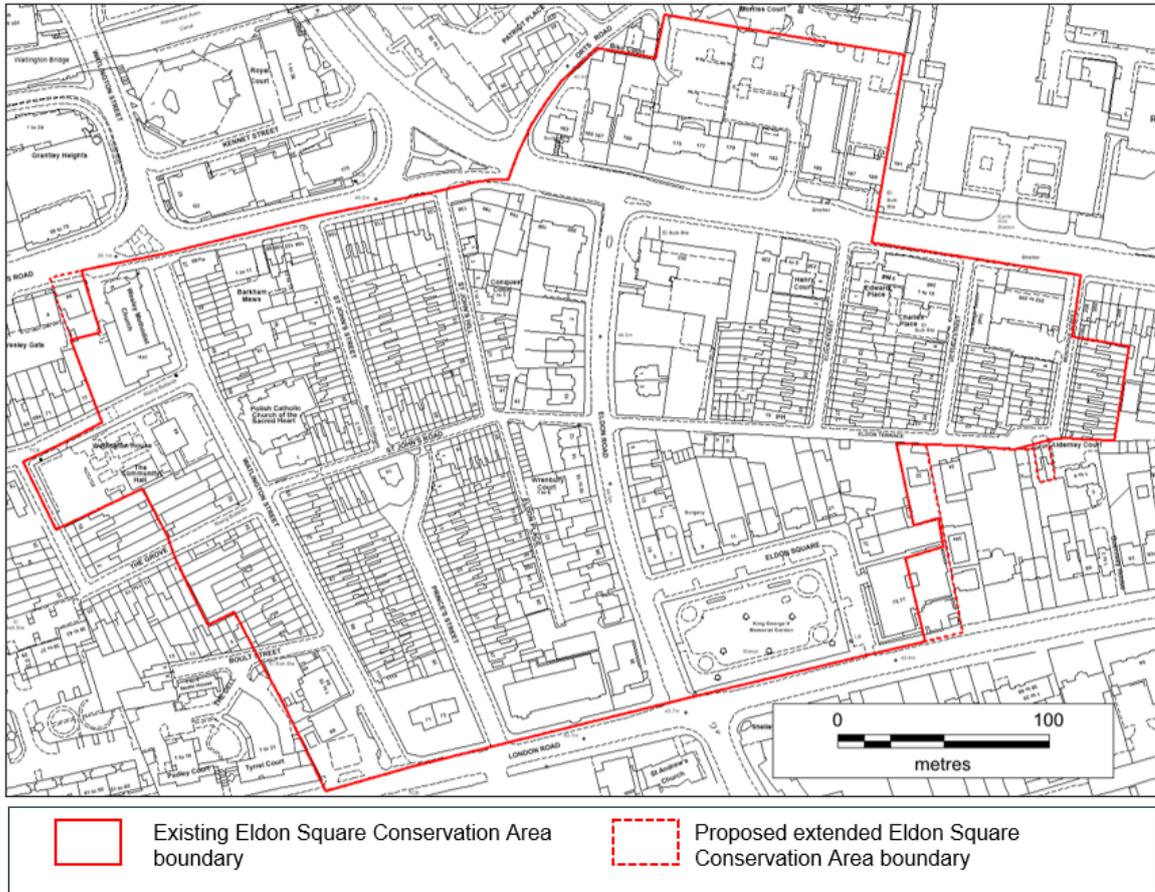
applications and are specifically referred to as a consideration in policy EN3 of the Local Plan. They can also form a key piece of evidence for the preparation of planning policy.

3. The Proposal

Current position

- 3.1 The Eldon Square Conservation Area was originally designated in 1972 and was Reading's first designated Conservation Area. The area was extended to include Watlington Street, Eldon Street, Victoria Street and Montague Street in 1982. The most recent appraisal was prepared in 2007. That appraisal recommended that 84 Queens Road be considered for inclusion in the Conservation Area, but no extension resulted from the appraisal.
- 3.2 A review and the updated appraisal has been carried out as a community-led project by the CAAC, with assistance from RBC planning officers and interested local community representatives. The review made use of the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit, which was recommended by officers of Historic England. This provided a methodology for preparing assessments of the character of the landscape and built environment of the area, but the methodology has been adapted to local circumstances by the CAAC.
- 3.3 Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 19 November 2025 agreed a Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal for consultation (Minute 12 refers). As well as assessing the conservation area, identifying issues and vulnerabilities and setting out an action plan for the area, the appraisal also identified some minor extensions to the boundary to bring an additional five addresses into the area. The existing and proposed amended boundary are shown on Figure 1.

Figure 1: Existing and proposed extended Eldon Square Conservation Area boundary



- 3.4 Consultation was carried out between 25 November 2025 and 20 January 2026. A total of 14 responses were received. The Statement of Consultation in Appendix 2 summarises the consultation undertaken and the representations received. Some of the main points made during the consultation are as follows:

- Matters of detail relating to wording changes or map changes
- Questioning whether the climate emergency has been considered in expanding the conservation area
- Concerns about traffic and waste management in this area
- Concerns about newly painted double yellow lines in the area

Option proposed

- 3.5 Committee is recommended to adopt the revised version of the Conservation Area Appraisal as attached at Appendix 3.
- 3.6 The main changes that have been made to the Appraisal compared to the version that was consulted upon are detailed changes to wording or maps mainly to correct errors and keep the document, for instance the reopening of the former Eldon Arms on Eldon Terrace as Sip n'Spin. The Statement of Consultation in Appendix 2 highlights the changes that have been made in response to the comments.
- 3.7 Adoption of the Appraisal will result in the recommended extensions to the conservation area being confirmed. This will have implications for the operation of planning powers in the area, as it will alter the permitted development rights that will apply. The Appraisal will also be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the area.

Other options considered

- 3.8 The main alternative option to the proposed option is to not adopt the Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 3.9 Not adopting the Appraisal will mean continued reliance on an Appraisal from 2007 which is now out-of-date. This will have implications for planning decisions within the area and the degree to which those decisions can respond to an up to date assessment of the area. It will also mean that those areas proposed to be included in the extension will not benefit from conservation area status and will not benefit from the enhanced protection as a result of that status.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 The Eldon Square CAA, through identifying areas of particular heritage importance and their significance, will contribute to the following priority in the Council Plan 2025-2028:
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint: The CAA will contribute to the objective to 'Further improve the physical environment of Reading by improving air quality, access to green space, and the quality of public spaces' by offering enhanced protections and identifying improvements to one of Reading's most historic and characterful areas.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 There are a variety of ways in which the appraisal could have environmental and climate implications.
- 5.2 Bringing more buildings within the conservation area exercises greater control over demolition, which in turn makes it more likely that buildings will be reused rather than demolished and redeveloped, albeit that this will be a matter to consider site by site through the planning application process.
- 5.3 Extending the conservation area, and providing an updated appraisal, will give further protection to the trees within the area, which play an important role in terms of air quality and adapting to climate change.
- 5.4 The inclusion of new areas within the extended conservation area could have implications in terms of the ability of those premises to make physical alterations to improve their environmental performance without needing planning permission. In particular, there are

greater restrictions on solar panels and equipment, wind turbines, air source heat pumps and flues associated with biomass heating or combined heat and power where they would face the highway or be closer to the highway than the existing building. This would need to be addressed on a site by site basis through the planning application process, taking account of policies in the Local Plan.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1 Community involvement exercises were undertaken by the Conservation Area Advisory Committee as part of undertaking the review before the Draft was finalised, as included in Appendix 1 of the appraisal document. Following approval of the draft, a formal consultation was carried out over an eight week period between 25 November 2025 and 20 January 2026. There were 14 responses to this consultation, which have been considered in preparing this final version. Details of the consultation are set out in the Statement of Consultation in Appendix 2.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 It is not expected that there will be any significant adverse impacts on specific groups due to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age or religious belief. An equality scoping assessment is included in Appendix 1 of this report.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1 There are none.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 Areas within the Conservation Area, including the proposed extensions if agreed, will benefit from the controls set out within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The legislation would control the demolition of buildings as well as ensure a closer control over new development in the area.

- 9.2 The following would apply:

- a. In the exercise of planning powers the Secretary of State and planning authorities are under a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of the area;
- b. the demolition of buildings within the conservation area requires planning permission;
- c. "Permitted Development" rights are more restricted in Conservation Areas, and Article 4 Directions restricting "permitted development" rights in Conservation Areas do not (as is the case elsewhere) have to be referred to the Secretary of State for consent;
- d. more controls exist in relation to works to any trees, not necessarily just TPO trees;
- e. more exacting standards of advertisement control should be applied to advertisements in the Conservation Area, so long as the authorities are sensitive to the needs of businesses within the Conservation Area;
- f. development proposals within conservation areas should either make a positive contribution to the preservation of the character or appearance of the area, or leave the character or appearance unharmed.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 There are no significant financial implications arising from this report.
- 10.2 Existing budgets are sufficient for the publication of the final documents and to notify occupiers affected. The bulk of the work on the draft has been undertaken by CAAC members on a voluntary basis and any Council work on the draft has been funded from existing budgets.

- 10.3 Some of the actions within the Action Plan fall to the Council to undertake. Some would be accommodated within existing budgets, albeit would be reliant on officer time, such as progressing an Article 4 direction. Where additional resources may be required, e.g. on maintenance of the gardens, the action plan identifies alternatives including support of voluntary groups.
- 10.4 Steve MacDonald, Strategic Business Partner, has cleared these Financial Implications.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1 Following adoption of the appraisal, it will immediately be a material consideration in determining planning applications for the area. The extensions to the area that it proposes will be applied immediately, subject to a number of notification requirements in the legislation.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. Equality Impact Assessment
2. Statement of Consultation on the Draft Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal
3. Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal (adoption version)