



23 June 2026

Title	The Mount Draft Conservation Area Appraisal
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Mark Worringham, Planning Policy Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Council priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That The Mount Draft Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 2) be approved for consultation. 2. That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to The Mount Draft Conservation Area Appraisal in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets, prior to the start of consultation on the draft document.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Mount Conservation Area was designated in 1987 under the Town & Country Planning Act 1971 (as amended), and the most recent full conservation area appraisal was produced in 2009. 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 Mount Conservation Area Appraisal is the fifth review to be undertaken, following St Peters in 2018, Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road in 2020, Christchurch in 2024 and Eldon Square in 2026. This report seeks approval of the draft review of The Mount Conservation Area Appraisal. Committee is asked to approve the draft appraisal for consultation commencing in July 2026.
- 1.3 Appendix 2 contains a copy of the draft appraisal and associated documents. The results of the consultation will feed into a revised appraisal to be adopted later in 2026.

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 Mount Conservation Area was originally designated in 1987. The most recent appraisal was prepared in 2009, which did not recommend any changes to the boundary.

3.2 The boundaries of the conservation area are provided in the plan below.

Figure 1: The Mount Conservation Area boundary



3.3 The review and the updated appraisal is the result of a community-led project carried out by the CAAC, with assistance from RBC planning officers and interested local community representatives. The review made use of an adaptation 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. The appraisal has been updated partly as a result of that assessment.

3.4 The appraisal does not identify any proposals for changes to the conservation area boundary.

3.5 The updated appraisal identifies issues and vulnerabilities (page 11), including:

- Some walls and railings overgrown or in need of repair;
- Lack of traditional street furniture, including street lighting;
- Poor street and pavement surfaces with little use of traditional materials; and
- Mixed 'conservation area' signage;

3.6 Recommended measures (within the Action Plan, section 8) include:

- Achieving consistency of street signage
- Providing information to householders on walls and railings

- Provide street care information document on importance of materials
- 3.7 CAAC will manage the action plan but responsibility for some of these actions can only rest with RBC. Other actions can be undertaken by local volunteer organisations and community groups (e.g. CAAC) with limited support from council officers.
- 3.8 An informal consultation exercise on the review of the Conservation Area was carried out by the CAAC in March 2026 and this has fed into the draft.
- 3.9 Committee is recommended to approve The Mount Draft Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 2) for further consultation.

Other options considered

- 3.10 The two alternative options considered are;
- Not to progress the draft conservation area appraisal; and
 - To include a proposed boundary extension in the appraisal.
- 3.11 To not progress the appraisal at this stage would fail to capitalise on the good work done by volunteers of the CAAC, and would mean that the appraisal for the conservation area is somewhat out of date and is of less use for decision making on planning applications, as well as failing to take the opportunity to protect the character and interest of a wider area not currently falling within the conservation area.
- 3.12 In terms of inclusion of a possible boundary extension, there is no clear opportunity for an extension that would meet the tests of having special architectural or historic interest, and therefore an extended boundary would risk watering down the importance of the protections of the area. In any case, this is an area of Reading in which there are a number of other conservation areas including Christchurch (recently extended), Kendrick Road and Redlands, and special interest in the local area is generally within one of those areas.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 The Mount 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 The appraisal will have limited environmental and climate implications. Putting an up-to-date appraisal in place will serve to better conserve the significance of the area which will maximise the quality of the environment. This includes identifying important trees, which will better ensure their protection, with the multiple environmental benefits that trees bring. The proposed actions are small-scale in nature and would have minimal climate implications, whilst they would enhance the quality of the general environment.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1 The Council's consultation process for planning policy, as set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, adopted June 2025), is that the widest and most intensive community involvement should take place at the earliest possible stage, to allow the community a genuine chance to influence the document. Although the SCI deals mainly with development plan documents, the general principles are useful for documents such as a Conservation Area Appraisal. Community involvement exercises have been undertaken by the Conservation Area Advisory Committee as part of undertaking the review. Details of community involvement on the initial stages are set out

in Appendix 1 of the appraisal document. These included walks around the conservation area, a community meeting and questionnaire.

- 6.2 A formal consultation led by the Council will be undertaken on the Draft Conservation Area Appraisal. Responses received will be considered in preparing a final draft appraisal for adoption. The draft conservation area appraisal consultation will be based around making the document available for comment.

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 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 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.
- 10.2 Consultation exercises can be resource intensive. However, the Council's consultation process is based mainly on electronic communication, which helps to minimise resource costs, and costs of the consultation exercise for the Conservation Area Appraisal will be minimal and met 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, the action plan identifies alternatives including support of voluntary groups.

11 Timetable for Implementation

11.1 The expectation is that, subject to the results of consultation on the draft, a report will be submitted to a future meeting and a final version of The Mount Conservation Area Appraisal will be adopted in November 2026.

12 Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. Equality Impact Assessment
2. The Mount Draft Conservation Area Appraisal