

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date: 20/12/21

Application No's: 211659/FUL & 211660/LBC

Address: 104 Oxford Road

Proposal: Installation of 3no. air conditioning units to rear, to support 8no. internal units

Case Officer: Tom Hughes

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site comprises a Grade II listed early 19th century villa, occupied by the Royal Meteorological Society. The site is within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area, at the junction of Oxford Road and Eaton Place. A single storey extension projects to the side and rear of the building. A large office building is located immediately to the rear of the site. The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial, business and residential uses.

Proposal

The proposal is for the installation of 3no. air conditioning units to the westward elevation of the extension at the rear of the building. The air conditioning units would be positioned one on top of the other, and would not be visible from public areas. Pipework from the units would lead into the building within white trunking on the rear elevation of the building. The air conditioning units would support 8no. internal units, across the ground, first and second floors, to enable controlled heating and cooling of the building. The proposed installation would replace an existing boiler system which has become obsolete.

Plans Considered

The agent supplied the following, received 11/10/21:

Design and Access Statement

Heritage Assessment, ref: AH_RMETS-HS-Final.doc, by Archway Heritage, dated 28/09/21

Environmental Noise Survey and Plant Assessment, ref: 20210228_4773_ENS01, by Paragon Acoustic Consultants, dated 28/02/21

Site Location

Site Plan

Subsequently the agent supplied the following, received 25/10/21:

Proposed Floor Plans

Proposed Rear Elevation

Proposed Side Elevation

Indicative Illustration and Product Visuals (External)

Indicative Illustration and Product Visuals (Internal)

Relevant Planning History

890656/FUL - Reconstruction of extension rear wall and installation of disabled access ramp to side - Permitted 02/11/89

890825/LBC - Reconstruction of extension rear wall and installation of disabled access ramp to side - Permitted 02/11/89

901083/LBC - Replacement of external lettering to portico - Permitted 27/12/90

090939/PRE - Replacement of windows - Observations sent 09/11/09

091523/LBC - Removal of internal wall - Permitted 10/02/10

101287/LBC - Replacement of external steps - Permitted 18/10/10

120370/LBC - Installation of solar panels to roof - Permitted 02/04/12

120805/FUL - Installation of solar panels to roof - Permitted 13/04/12

160385/LBC - Repair and painting of first floor window sills - 24/05/16

161057/LBC - Partial replacement of roof - Permitted 31/08/16

161850/LBC - Replacement of roof and associated repairs - Permitted 05/01/17

190647/PRE - Installation of air conditioning units - Observations sent 21/05/19

Consultation Responses

Neighbouring owners and occupiers at 104a-112 (evens) Oxford Road and 1a Eaton Place were consulted by letter. Site notices were displayed. No letters of representation were received.

Reading Borough Conservation and Urban Design Officer

No response to consultations.

Reading Borough Environmental Protection

Confirmed that the noise assessment had been carried out in accordance with the current British Standard and the methodology had been correctly applied. Raised no objections to the proposal subject to a condition restricting noise from the plant.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee

No response to consultation.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Local Planning Authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Local Planning Authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Policy Framework

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC2 - Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy CC3 - Adaption to Climate Change

Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity

Policy EN1 - Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

Policy EN3 - Enhancement of Conservation Areas

Policy EN6 - New Development in a Historic Context

Policy EN17 - Noise Generating Equipment

Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal

Appraisal

The proposed installation of external air conditioning units would have a minimal impact on the setting of the listed building and the character of the conservation area. Sited to the westward elevation of the extension, the units would not be visible from public areas and would have only limited impact on the historic significance of the building. The internal units would have a minor impact on the architecture and aesthetic appeal of the building, with no significant harm being caused to the heritage asset.

The proposed installation is required due to an existing obsolete boiler system. As set out in the Heritage Statement, alternative methods of heating/cooling the building have been considered, with the proposals deemed to be the most environmentally sensitive option and least intrusive to the fabric of the building. The proposed installation is suitable for the ongoing modern occupation of the building, and the changes would be broadly reversible. On this basis the proposals are not considered to comprise the significance of

the listed building or cause harm to the historic character of the area, in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1 and EN3 of the Local Plan.

As set out in the Noise Assessment, and corroborated by the consultation response from Environmental Protection, no significant harm would be caused to neighbouring residential amenities as a result of the proposed installation. A condition is applied restricting the noise level of the units. On this basis, the proposals accord with Policy EN17 of the Local Plan.

Conclusion

The proposal has been assessed and found to be acceptable as it accords with the identified policy and guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Listed Building Consent and Planning Permission subject to conditions.