

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Address: Apex Plaza, Forbury Road

Application No: 220437/FUL

Proposal: Replacement and installation of plant and associated works at roof level to serve Block A, C and D

Target Decision date: 09/06/22

Case officer: Connie Davis

1. Site description and Surrounding Area

Apex Plaza is a large office building constructed in the late-1980s, adjacent to Reading Railway Station, located within Reading Central Area. The building is not listed, nor is it located within a conservation area, although in close proximity to the Market Place/ London Street conservation area. It is also within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Tree Protection Orders are present on a number of trees along the frontage of the site on Forbury Road.

The building is a well-known local landmark with distinctive pink external facades. However, a Certificate of Lawfulness was recently granted stating that the building could lawfully paint the exterior of the building (grey) without planning permission which is part of the wider scheme to upgrade the building.

The site is specifically referenced in the Local Plan under Policy CR11d of the Reading Borough Local Plan which states that:

This area will be developed for a mix of uses at high density, including residential and/or offices. Retail and/or leisure uses will activate the ground floor facing the southern station square. Development should seek to enhance the setting of nearby heritage assets, and views from within the conservation area and Forbury Gardens should be carefully considered.

2. The Proposal

The proposal is to install new heat pumps on to the plant deck on the roof to serve Blocks A, C and D of Apex Plaza.

3. Consultation

Internal Consultation

Environmental Protection - no objections subject to condition

Transport - No objection subject to condition

External Consultation

A site notice was displayed between 05/04/22 - 26/04/22

No responses have been received.

4. Plans and Documents Considered

M407/22/38 P1 - Existing Roof Plant

M407/22/39 P1 - Proposed Roof Plant Block Plan
M407/22/40 P1 - Existing Roof Plant North Elevation
M407/22/41 P1 - Proposed Roof Plant North Elevation
M407/22/58 P1 - Existing Roof Plant South Elevation
M407/22/59 P1 - Proposed Roof Plant South Elevation

Received 12th April 2022

Supporting Statement dated 17th March 2022

Application Form

CIL Form

Plant Impact Noise Impact Assessment prepared by NSL Noise Solutions Ltd

M407/22/36 P1 - Location Plan

M407/22/37 P1 - Block Plan

M407/22/42 P1 - Existing Roof Plant West Elevation

M407/22/43 P1 - Proposed Roof Plant West Elevation

M407/22/50 P1 - Existing Roof Plant

M407/22/51 P1 - Proposed Roof Plant Block Plan

M407/22/52 P1 - Existing Roof Plant North Elevation

M407/22/53 P1 - Proposed Roof Plant North Elevation

M407/22/54 P1 - Existing Roof Plant East Elevation

M407/22/55 P1 - Proposed Roof Plant East Elevation

M407/22/56 P1 - Existing Roof Plant

M407/22/57 P1 - Proposed Roof Plant Block Plan

Air Conditioning Product Information

Received 28th March 2022

5. Relevant Planning History

210632 - Replacement and Installation of Plant and Associated Works at Roof Level -
Application Permitted

6. Discussion with applicant/ agent

None.

8. Relevant Planning Guidance

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. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

The '*National Planning Policy framework*' ('NPPF') 2021 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Reading Borough Local Plan, 2019) according to their degree of consistency with the 'NPPF' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the 'NPPF', the greater the weight that may be given). Accordingly, the 'NPPF' and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

9. Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework;
National Planning Policy Guidance;

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 Design and the Public Realm
TR3 Traffic, Access and Highway-Related Matters
CR2 Design in Central Reading
CR3 Public Realm in Central Reading
CR11 Station/ River Major Opportunity Area
EN16 Pollution and Water Resources
EN17 Noise Generating Equipment

10. Appraisal

a) Principle of Development

The proposal is to remove obsolete plant equipment and for the replacement and installation of plant and associated works at roof level.

The principle of development is supported subject to compliance with any other relevant policy within the Local Plan.

b) Impact of the proposal on the surrounding area

The building has an existing designated plant deck. The positioning of new equipment on to it has been carefully considered to ensure that there will continue to be minimal, if any, impact on views of the building from the public highway, Walter Parsons Corn Stores and from the nearby Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area. The proposed units will continue to be set back from the building's edges.

Whilst it is acknowledged that more extraction units are proposed to be installed than removed, it is not considered that this would result in a harmful level of visual clutter given the location at roof level, and in comparison to the size of the building.

The site is also surrounded by commercial premises (bars, restaurants, shops), and so the proposal is not considered to be out of keeping with the equipment likely found in the vicinity to support these types of units.

As such, due to its placement at roof level, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

c) Neighbouring Amenity

The proposal located at roof level resulting in small scale changes is considered far enough away to not impact neighbouring amenity. Given the nature of the proposal, no detrimental impact will be caused upon the amenity of neighbours as a result of this proposed development and so is considered acceptable in relation to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

d) Environmental Health Matters

Applications which include noise generating plant when there are nearby noise sensitive receptors should be accompanied by an acoustic assessment carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019 methodology. A noise assessment has been submitted to support the application.

The noise assessment submitted has been carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019 and the methodology has been correctly applied. The assessment concludes that the specific noise level of the proposed plant will not exceed -10dB below the background noise and the rating level does not exceed the background noise so adverse impact on the local noise climate is unlikely. A condition will be included to secure this.

With the inclusion of these conditions, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policies EN16 and EN17 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

e) Transport matters

Whilst the proposal is concentrated at roof level rather than the highway, given the site's central and busy location, it is considered that a Construction Method statement is submitted to ensure that the highway is not adversely affected as a result of the works being carried out to comply with Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

11. Recommendation

Grant planning permission, subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

Pre-commencement condition agreed by the applicant

1. TL1
2. Approved Plans
3. CMS [**Pre-commencement**]
4. The specific sound level of the plant/equipment hereby approved, (LAeq,TR) (with reference to BS:4142) as measured at a point 1 metre external to the nearest noise-sensitive facade shall be at least 10dB below the pre-existing background sound level, LA90,T when all plant/equipment (or any part of it) is in operation. The rating level, LAr,Tr (specific sound level plus any adjustment for the characteristic features of the sound) as measured at a point 1 metre external to the nearest noise-sensitive facade (habitable window of a dwelling) shall not exceed the pre-existing background sound level, LA90,T when all plant/equipment (or any part of it) is in operation.

REASON: To safeguard the amenities of the adjoining premises and the area generally, in accordance with Policy CC8 and EN17 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives

1. Terms
2. Building Control

3. Complaints about construction
4. Encroachment
5. Highways
6. Pre-commencement conditions
7. Positive and Proactive