

In respect of an Application for a proposed Installation of Air Conditioning to Building

The site to which the application for planning permission and listed building consent for the proposed installation of air conditioning units (heating and cooling) refers to, is a Grade II listed building which is currently occupied by the Royal Meteorological Society and the building lies on the northern side of Oxford Road, on the corner with Eaton Place and opposite the Russell Street/Castle street conservation area. The surrounding area comprises of premises with a range of uses; most notably commercial and retail.

The building is officially named “Mannson House”, as described in the listing of the building by Historic England:

OXFORD ROAD 1. 5128 (North Side) No 104 (Mannson on House) SU 7073 12/219 II 2. Early C19. 2 storeys. Red brick, small moulded stucco cornice and blocking. course. Slate roof (hipped). Glazing bar sash windows, 5 on 1st floor, 4 on ground floor. Central Doric portico with moulded steps, arched fanlight to 6 panelled door.



Front of the site as viewed from Oxford Road

See Site Plan and Location Plan for detailed images of site location.

As part of the ongoing maintenance of the site the Royal Meteorological Society (applicant) reviewed and assessed the current heating and cooling options of the site and after lengthy consideration believe the installation of air conditioning (both heating and cooling) is the best option.

They then secured the services of a local installer, Air Intelligence suppliers of such equipment, to provide a report to establish a clear understanding of the impact such an installation would have on the fabric of the building. The report advised that the air handling units could be located on the rear wall of the building as shown in photo below and these would be out of sight of the public.



The report also indicated a number of penetrations into the exterior and interior walls of the site to allow access of pipes would need to be made.

It was at this juncture a Pre-Application was submitted with feedback from the council, without prejudice, concluding that careful consideration must be made to demonstrate how proposed works would impact the character of the listed building. As such further justifications and supporting evidence (such as through a supporting statement and heritage statement) would be required to show that any proposal would result in minimal harm to the character and physical structure of the listed building, and the surrounding area more generally.

Based on this feedback the applicant assessed what was required, then COVID-19 happened and the project was held in abeyance during 2020. In late December of 2020 the applicant then secured the services of a Heritage Consultant, Archway Heritage and also secured the services of an acoustic specialist, Paragon Acoustic Consultants to undertake an acoustic assessment.

The Heritage consultant undertook a detailed review of the proposed installation and produced a report, to be found in supporting documents in application. Their findings indicate the applicant as current custodian of the site have taken great care to maintain the fabric of the building and in conclusion that the system is considered low risk in terms of installation and unlikely to have more than localised impact on the fabric if the recommendations for inspection and maintenance schedules are adhered to. It would ensure the current occupants will continue to reside in the

building, which is desirable because they have proven to be responsible custodians of this building, having occupied it since the 1990s.

The acoustic assessment was undertaken during the 05/02/2021 to the 09/02/2021. A background noise survey has been undertaken to determine the noise climate likely to exist in locality of 104 Oxford Road, Reading, where the installation of new mechanical plant is proposed. Appropriate external criteria have been identified on the basis of Local Authority noise policy, and predictions of the proposed mechanical plant noise emissions have been undertaken. Predictions indicate that the noise mitigation measures will be required in order to meet with the derived noise limits and following implementation and achievement of the noise mitigation recommended, it is predicted that its noise emissions will meet the existing noise policy implemented by Reading Borough Council. The full report and findings of the acoustic assessment can be found in supporting documents of application with further details and specification of noise mitigating equipment and provider/installer.

Based on the works undertaken and the findings of the experts appointed as prescribed by the advice in the Pre-planning application it is the belief that the proposed works, as described, will have little effect on the setting and that any works undertaken on the interior of the site is reversible, though the very small impacts on fabric cannot be avoided.