

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: PL/25/0036 Full planning permission

Address: The Oracle, House Of Fraser, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2AS

Proposal: Proposed installation of HVAC Unit / Air Conditioning Unit.

Applicant: Mr Paul Snelling

Received date: 08/01/2025

Target Decision date: 07/04/2025

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is above the former House of Fraser unit for a sub divided unit, within the existing area for plant and machinery on the roof and plant area of the Oracle shopping centre. The Oracle shopping centre is located within the Reading Central area, primary shopping area, central core and air quality management area, with nearby residential accommodation at Riverside House on Fobney Street. The building is not listed, nor is it located within a conservation area but can be seen from the St Marys Butts and London Street Conservation areas.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed installation of nine condenser HVAC Units and a single air handling / Air Conditioning unit within the previously approved plant area is required following the sub-division of the former larger House of Fraser unit at The Oracle.

Plans submitted

TKM_REO_C50_PLANT_1 External Plant elevations

TKM_REO_SP_PLANT_0 – Location & Site Plan

CIL

As received 8 January 2025

Q240126-00-M101_CO2 Mechanical services HVAC schedules mall level

Q240126-RF-M100_CO2 Mechanical services HVAC layout

Planning statement v1.0 February 2025, Rpa group for TK Maxx, 10.02.2025

REP-1011201-05-BJ-20190911 Rev 5 Noise Impact Assessment, 2 June 2020, HOF Oracle Reading, 02/06/2020

~~1015947-HLE-RP-AC- Rev 01 Noise Impact Assessment, 6 February 2025~~

As received 10 February 2025

1015947-HLE-RP-AC- Rev 02 Noise Impact Assessment, 13 March 2025

As received 14 March 2025

Relevant Planning History

PL/90/0447/FUL - Redevelopment and change of use comprising new retail (41183sqm), 51 residential units, leisure (9308sqm), offices (20433sqm), car parks, catering (a3)(2814sqm), community uses, servicing, plant, circulation, landscaped open space, highways, Permitted 12/06/1992

PL/15/0998 Extension of The Oracle Shopping Centre at Level 6 (Car Park Level 1) to accommodate the relocated Management Suite with associated new/ relocated plant. Permitted 12/08/2015

PL/16/0923/NMA Non-material amendments to planning permission 150998 for the reduction in width of the external plant area, the replacement of the proposed roof light with two smaller roof lights, the removal of an existing smoke vent, the use of metal mesh as the material for the proposed balustrade on

the car park elevation and the reduction of the access to the roof plant area to a ships ladder. Permitted 14/06/2016

PL/17/1556 Erection of two tier plant deck with screen at levels 6&7 facing the Riverside and provision of two additional parking spaces at level 6 following removal of plant. Permitted 15/11/2017

PL/19/1477 Installation of new ventilation and air conditioning units within existing service deck located at roof Level 7 of The Oracle Shopping Centre. Proposed plant to serve new Nat West branch located at Lower Mall Unit L11. Permitted 27/09/2019

PL/19/1841 Subdivision of three-storey retail unit (Class A1) and change of use to form: 1x flexible retail/restaurant/bar unit (Class A1/A3/A4), 1x flexible retail/restaurant unit (Class A1/A3) and 1x assembly and leisure unit (Class D2) at Riverside level; 1x retail unit (Class A1) and 1x assembly and leisure unit (Class D2) at lower ground level; 1x retail unit (Class A1) at upper ground level, together with alterations to the Riverside frontage and associated plant, car parking and external alterations at car park levels. Permitted 31/07/2020

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.

3. CONSULTATIONS.

A site notice was displayed at the site for the required period of time. No letters of representation have been received.

The following were consulted:

- Environmental Protection Consultations – No objections following the submission of additional information, subject to condition.

4. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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’. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12). In this case the development plan consists of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the 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). The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and

national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the advice given below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

Existing policies can be referred to in conjunction with the NPPF, with reference to the emerging policy particularly in reference to policy CC7 <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/new-local-plan/local-plan-partial-update/>

Accordingly, ***the National Planning Policy Framework*** and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Policy and Guidance
National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
2. Achieving sustainable development
4. Decision-making
12. Achieving well-designed places

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC3 Adaption to Climate Change
CC7 Design and the Public Realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
EN16 Pollution and Water Resources
EN17 Noise Generating Equipment
TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
CR2 Design in Central Reading

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

APPRAISAL

Land use

The area proposed for the addition of existing plant and the principle of development is supported subject to compliance with any other relevant policy within the Local Plan.

Design and Character

The proposal is located at roof level and will be hidden largely behind existing roof structures. As such, the development will not be visible from the public realm. The works should not result in any harm to the public realm, including the public highway, and St Marys Butts Conservation area to the east or London Street Conservation area to the south.

The proposal is therefore not considered to cause a detrimental impact to the surrounding character of the area and complies with Policies CC1, CC7 and EN1 of the development plan.

Neighbouring Amenity

The RBC Environmental Protection team has assessed the effect of the cumulative impact of any additional plant proposed to be installed. The location is within close proximity to residential accommodation at Riverside House on Fobney Street. The noise assessment submitted has been carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014 and the methodology has been correctly applied and is considered acceptable. The proposal is considered acceptable and not to result in a detrimental impact on neighbouring residential amenity and to comply with policy CC8, EN16 and EN17. A condition is recommended in respect of noise levels and hours of operation.

Transport

There are no transport issues to this application as the proposed changes do not impact the public highway.

5. CONCLUSION

The development is not considered harmful to the character or appearance of the site or its surroundings and does not have a detrimental impact on the original building or neighbouring properties. Subject to relevant conditions concerning noise levels, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the Policies set out within the Local Development Plan, and as such planning permission is recommended for approval.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Grant Planning Permission

Recommended Conditions:

Time limit
Materials
Noise limits
Hours of operation

Informatives:
Terms
Building regulations
Construction
P&P