

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Thames Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0050 Full planning permission

Address: Thames Valley University, Kings Road, Reading, RG1 4HJ

Proposal: Installation of Air Source Heat Pumps and Thermal Storage, BESS, and associated transformers and switchgear GRP enclosures to replace the existing carbon based heat network.

Applicant: Mr Philip Waddup

Received date: 19/01/2026

Target Decision date: 17/04/2026 (EoT)

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

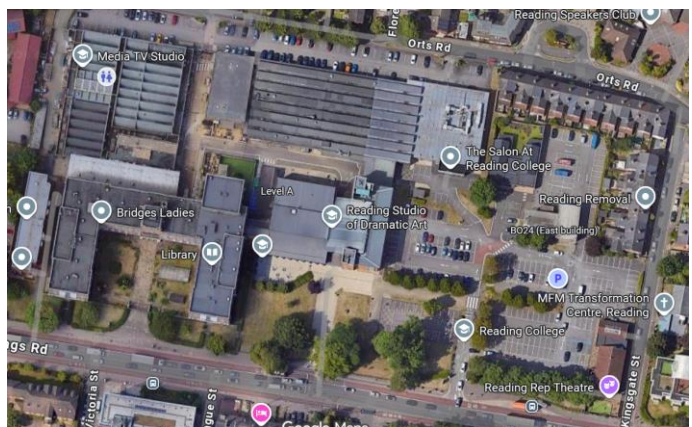
1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is the Thames Valley University Campus buildings on Kings Road. It is within an Air Quality Management Area (Reading Borough Local Plan Policy EN15), and within the Reading Central Area (Policies CR1 – CR 10). It is very close to the Eldon Square Conservation Area, which lies just to the west.

Mandela Court is a residential property located to the west of the application site, but outside the boundary wall. The application site comprises an enclosed rear car park area to the north, accessed from Orts Road.



Site Plan

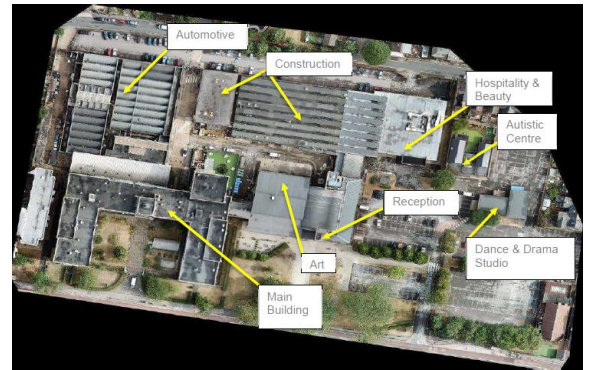
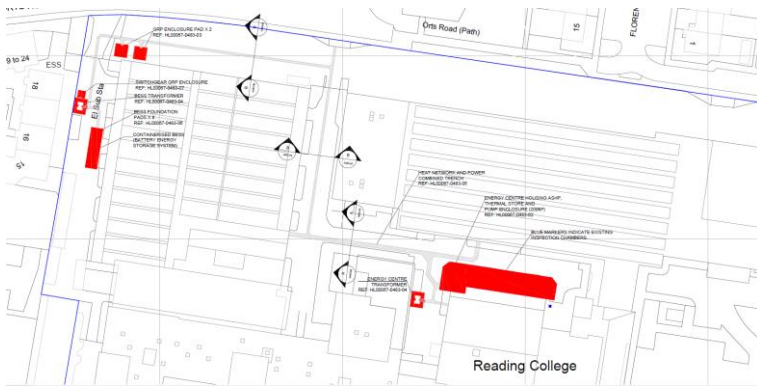


Google Aerial image

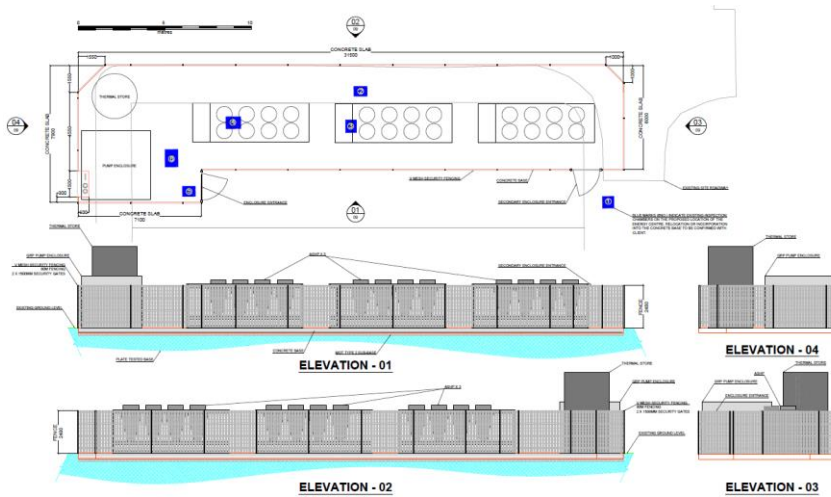
2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal seeks planning permission for the installation of 3no. Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP), which are supported by the thermal storage battery and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), are to replace the existing carbon-based heat network. The proposal also includes associated transformers and switchgear Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) enclosures. The proposed ASHPs and their supported BESS would be fully enclosed by a security fence of approximately 2.5m in height. The associated transformers enclosure would also be measured at ca 2.4m, while the GRP enclosures are of ca 2.55m and 2m, respectively. Two transformer enclosures would be the same, enclosed by a palisade security fence of ca 2.4m.

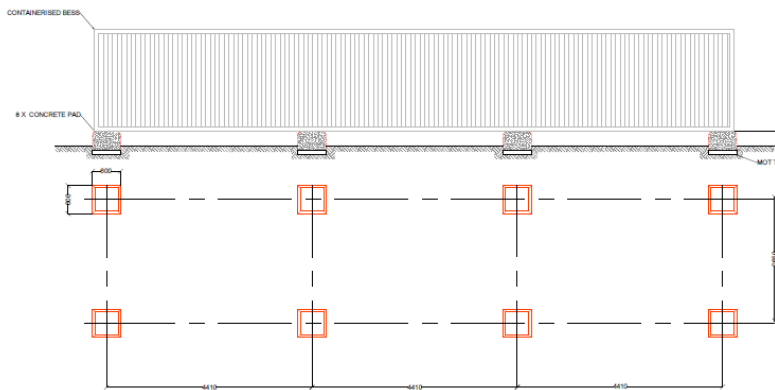
The proposed Energy Centre Housing ASHP and the associated energy centre transformer would be installed to the north and west of the Art Building. The supporting BESS, its associated transformer, and the switchgear GRP enclosure would be located to the west of the Automotive Building. Two additional GRP enclosures would be installed within the existing rear car park. Please refer to the following images for detailed layouts and locations.



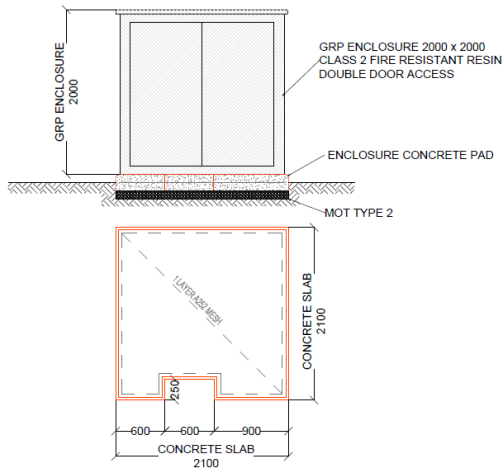
Proposed Block Plan submitted & Building Information Provided by Applicant



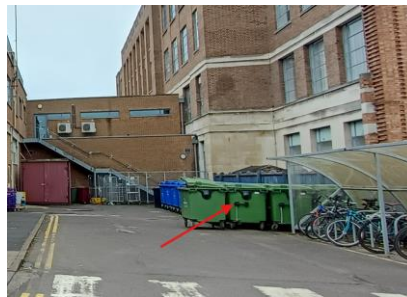
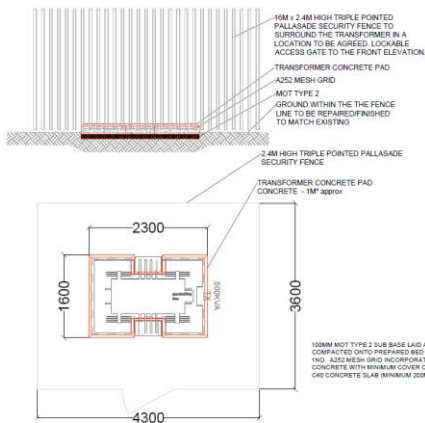
Energy Centre Plan and Elevation Detail & Site Photo Taken 27/02/2026



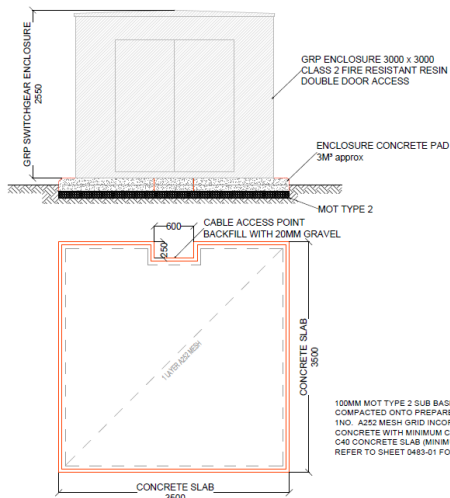
Containerised Bess Foundation Pads & Site Photo Taken 27/02/2026



Switchgear GRP Enclosure Pad – BESS & Site Photo Taken 27/02/2026



Transformer Enclosure Plan and Elevations x2 & Site Photos Taken 27/02/2026



Switch Gear GRP Enclosure Pads x2 & Site Photo Taken 27/02/2026

Plans/documents considered:

- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0442-01-A-RC-GA-GEN-LOCPLN-A, received 19/01/2026.
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-06-C-RC-GA-GEN-BESSFOUNDPADS-T-01, received 19/01/2026.
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-04-C-RC-GA-GEN-TRFMRCONPAD-T-01, received 19/01/2026.

- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-03-C-RC-GA-GEN-SWGEARCONPAD-T-01, received 19/01/2026.
- ~~Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-07-C-RC-GA-GEN-BESSWGEARGRPPAD-F01, received 19/01/2026.~~
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-09-C-RC-GA-GEN-ECDETAIL-T-01, received 19/01/2026.
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-07-C-RC-GA-GEN-BESSWGEARGRPPAD-T-01, received 19/01/2026.
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0466_RC_DAS_ASHPFPP, prepared by HI Group Ltd, dated 14/01/2026, received 19/01/2026.
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-01-C-RC-GA-GEN-A1SITEGA-F01, received 20/01/2026.
- Doc. Ref: P2905-REP001-TLH P01 – Plant Noise Impact Assessment, prepared by Sol Acoustics Limited, dated 09/02/2026, received 09/02/2026.
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-10-C-RC-GA-GEN-ECBLDELEVATIONDETAIL-T-01, received 25/03/2026.
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-07-C-RC-GA-GEN-BESSWGEARGRPPAD-T-02, received 25/03/2026.
- Doc. Ref: HL00067-0483-03-C-RC-GA-GEN-SWGEARCONPAD-T-02, received 25/03/2026.

Planning Officer's note: Doc. Ref. HL00067-0483-07-C-RC-GA-GEN-BESSWGEARGRPPAD-T-01 and Doc. Ref. HL00067-0483-07-C-RC-GA-GEN-BESSWGEARGRPPAD-F01, both received on 19/01/2026, refer to the same plan. The only difference is the use of the letters "T-" and "F" in the document reference.

3. PLANNING HISTORIES

- PL/91/1102 - Renewal of temporary consent for temporary classrooms A,B,C,D, E,F,G,H,J & K (REG 4). Decision made 14/02/1992.
- PL/94/0680 - External spiral fire escape staircase. Decision made 14/10/1994.
- PL/95/0358 FUL - Proposed alterations to form new exit doors. Decision made 30/05/1995.
- PL/95/0453 ADV - 7 signs on Kings Rd campus: 4 signs on building elevation and 3 free standing signs. Decision made 11/07/1995.
- PL/95/0726 FUL - Renewal of temporary consent for buildings F, G, K, H for 5 years. Decision made 21/11/1995.
- PL/96/0460 FUL - Temporary consent for the erection of an air monitoring station. Decision made 09/04/1997.
- PL/97/0458 FUL - South Boundary - Replacement of existing entry/exit gates and new boundary fence with one new pedestrian gate. Decision made 09/07/1997.
- PL/97/0814 OUT - Demolition of existing ex-salvation army citadel and construction of three storey office with parking for 10 cars (2 disabled spaces). Decision made 07/05/1998.
- PL/99/1947 FUL - Demolition of existing buildings erection of new art and design building together with improvement to access and related landscape works. **Permitted** subject to Legal Agreement 02/11/2000.
- PL/00/0351 FUL - New workshop building infill between two existing workshop buildings. **Approved** 12/10/2000.
- PL/00/0963 FUL - Student housing with small conference room / bar as part of Reading College and School of Arts and Design campus. **Permitted** subject to Legal Agreement 16/01/2002.
- PL/05/0220 ADV - 1 no. non-illuminated lettering sign (to be located on the building at the Kings Road/ Kingsgate Street junction), 1 no. internally illuminated panel sign (Kings Road frontage), 2 no. internally illuminated totem signs (outside the Hall of Residence and inside the main campus entrance), 4 no. wall mounted panel signs (main campus entrance, outside the Hall of Residence and at the entrance to the rear deliveries area). **Approved** 19/12/2005.
- PL/07/1268 FUL - Demolition of 2 single storey buildings and erection of 5 storey academic building. **Permitted** subject to Legal Agreement 13/06/2008.

- PL/10/1854 FUL- Construction of a new reception atrium to Block 3 and cladding of South and East elevations of Block 3. **Approved** 11/02/2011.
- PL/11/0061 FUL - Construction of an plant with enclosures to the roof of Block 3; removal and in filling of windows to the North and East elevations; installation of a roof access ladder and 2 new doors to the North elevation. **Approved** 24/08/2011.
- PL/12/1054 REG3 - New single storey teaching facility for pupils with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) and associated hard and soft landscaping. **Permitted** subject to Legal Agreement 18/03/2013.
- PL/26/0032 HPA - Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed: Installation, Alteration or Replacement of other Solar Photovoltaics (PV) equipment on the Roofs of Non-domestic Buildings. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J. **Approved** 12/03/2026.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Environment Protection – No objection.

This is to confirm that if there is no noise emitting plant other than the proposed ASHPs, I am satisfied with the noise assessment submitted, and the noise from the proposed plant meets our policy criteria.

Planning Officer's note: the agent confirmed via email dated 25th March 2026 that “the only noise emitters on the project are the Air source Heat Pumps located in the Energy Centre Housing.”

- RBC Transport Development Control – No objection.

The proposed development consists of the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump system supported by a thermal storage battery and BESS to provide a non-polluting and sustainable energy source. The location of the proposed Energy Centre is the hard standing between the Construction and Art buildings. The proposed location of the BESS is in the service yard to the west of the automotive building.

I have reviewed the locations of the proposed air source heat system and associated equipment. I am satisfied there will be no impact on the existing access arrangements or parking provision within the site. Therefore, there are no transport objections to this application. No CMS is required.

- Two site notices were displayed on King's Road and Ort's Road near the application site, respectively. The 21-day consultation period was from 27 February 2026 to 20 March 2026. No letters of representation have been received.



Site Notice Photos

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.

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

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2. Achieving Sustainable Development

4. Decision -making

12. Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption In Favour of Sustainable Development

CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change

CC7: Design and The Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

EN15: Air Quality

EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

CR1: Definition of Central Reading

CR2: Design in Central Reading

CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading

SPD

Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted December 2019)

Local Plan Update

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 submission draft of the Local Plan was submitted on 9th May 2025 and the Examination held in February 2026.

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 is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft

updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

6. APPRAISAL

Sustainability

Policy CC1 states that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Policy CC3: All developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.

The Council Plan, Reading Borough Council, is committed to achieving a net-zero carbon, resilient Reading by 2030. The installation of 3no. air source heat pumps would provide space heating to support the building's comfort needs while reducing gas and electrical baseload demand at the Reading College Campus, thereby delivering a low-carbon heating solution that accords with Policies CC1 and CC3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the associated SPD.

Design and Appearance

Policies CC7 and CR3 require that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.

Policies CR1 and CR2 state that development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.

The proposal site is located within a campus environment. The proposed ASHP units, supported by the BESS, thermal storage, and associated transformers enclosure and switchgear enclosure, would be installed primarily to the north of the campus, where there is a lower level of activity. Except for two items of switchgear enclosure proposed within the rear car park, all proposed items would be surrounded by the educational buildings and would not be visible from the street scene. Furthermore, they would be enclosed by a security fence or box.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of scale when assessed within the context of the existing built environment. It is not considered to detract from the character of the local environment or the street scene.

Although two GRP switchgear enclosures would be visible from the street scene, they are not considered to be detrimental to its appearance, given their modest scale and their location within the enclosed car park area.

It is acknowledged that the application site lies on the boundary of the Eldon Square Conservation Area, and that there are listed buildings within the wider surrounding area. The proposal would be surrounded by the educational buildings of Thames Valley University, none of which are listed or located within the Conservation Area. Accordingly, the proposal is not considered to result in any harm to the setting of heritage assets.

Amenity and Noise Implications

Policy CC8 requires that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development, noise, disturbance and safety.

Policy EN15 requires that development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.

Policy EN17 states where noise generating equipment is proposed, the noise source specifies (plant noise level) should be at least 10dBA below the existing background level as measured at the nearest noise sensitive receptor.

The closest residential property to the application site is Mandela Court, which lies to the west of the site boundary wall. Based on the submitted Plant Noise Impact Assessment prepared by Sol Acoustics Limited (ref: P2905-REP001-TLH P01) and confirmation provided by the applicant's agent, it is confirmed that the ASHP units would be the primary source of noise. The predicted noise levels and the assessment results indicate that plant noise would comply with Reading Borough Council's standards and noise-generating equipment policy and would result in a low impact in accordance with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019. The Council's Environmental Protection team has also confirmed that it raises no objection. On this basis, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of noise impact.

The proposed installation of the ASHP units is considered to contribute positively to improving air quality and reducing the effects of poor air quality, through decreasing reliance on fossil fuels and reducing the electrical baseload.

All proposed plant would be enclosed and accessed via lockable doors. In addition, the plant would be located within an area of restricted access for students. Accordingly, the proposal is not considered to raise any safety concerns and is acceptable in terms of safety.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Approve with conditions

Time Limit

Approved Plans

Materials (As Specified)

Hours of Construction

In Accordance with the Approved Noise Assessment