

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Whitley

App Ref: PL/26/0156 Full planning permission

Address: 452 BASINGSTOKE ROAD, READING, RG2 0QE

Proposal: Removal of 21 No. external condensers and their replacement with 6 No. external plant units, vehicle protection barrier and associated works (retrospective consent); and the installation of 4 No. additional vehicle protection barriers.

Applicant: C/O Agent

Received date: 05/02/2026

Target Decision date: 1/5/2026 (Ext)

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

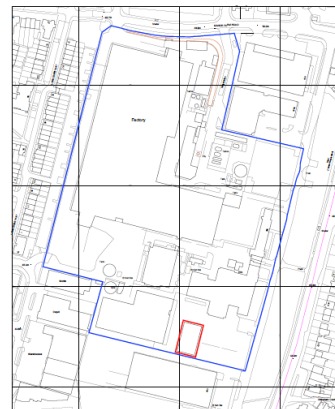
The application building, Building F, is part of the Proctor and Gamble site on Basingstoke Road, which includes offices, laboratories and factory buildings. Prior to the installation of the 6 plant units and vehicle protection barriers, for which retrospective permission is now sought, there were 21 external condensers, for which no planning permission was sought, but it would appear from Google images, that these had been in situ since at least 2017 until their removal in 2024 to accommodate the current 6 units, therefore, it is considered that they were in situ in excess of the four year period for establishing lawfulness pursuant to s171(B) (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Residential properties are located approximately ca100m to the east on Basingstoke Road and ca 175m away along Longships Way to the west.

Whilst the application site is not listed itself, it is located near to the 1930's red brick front building of Gillette including the clock tower, which is Locally Listed by Reading Borough Council. The application site is not within a conservation area.



Google Aerial View application site circled in red



Location Plan

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Removal of 21 No. external condensers and their replacement with 6 No. external plant units, comprising 3 condensers, 1 heat pump and 2 chiller units, vehicle protection barrier and associated works (retrospective consent); and the installation of 4 No. additional vehicle protection barriers at ground level adjacent to the F Building.

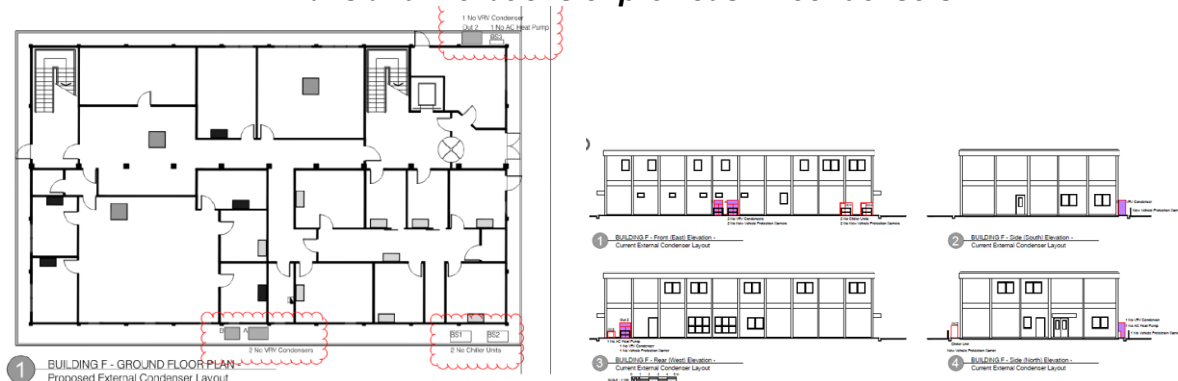
3.2 The barriers are constructed from steel frame sections, bolted to the ground, and painted yellow for visibility. They would be of the same design as the already installed barrier, as shown in Photograph 01.

Plans and other information considered as received 5th February 2026:

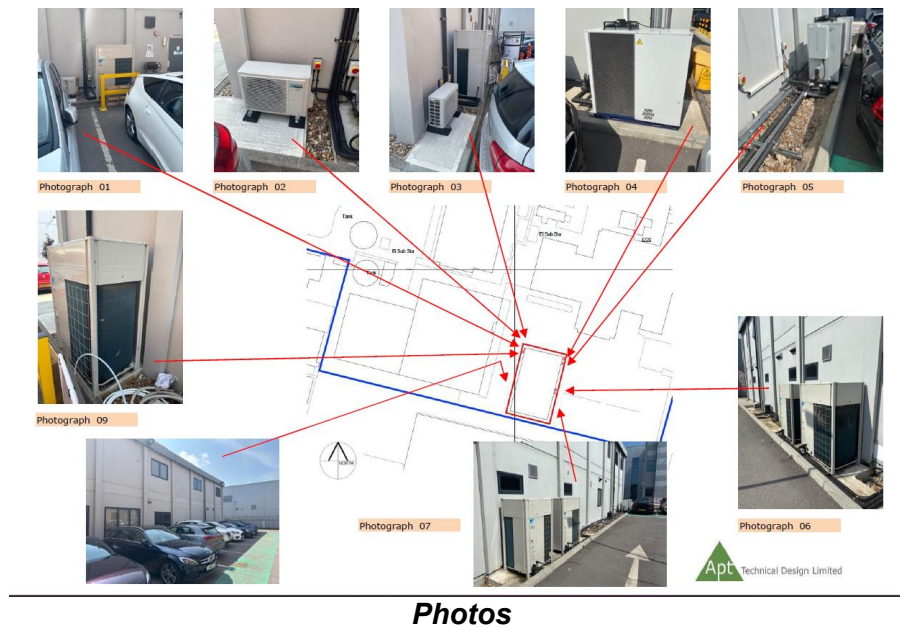
- Location Plan
- Drawing no: A010, dated September 2025 – Site Location and Block Plans
- Drawing no: A010, dated November 2025 – Previous Floor Plans and Elevations
- Drawing no: A020, dated November 2025 – Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations
- Retrospective Noise Impact Assessment Report, document ref: PAG-CDL-XX-XX-T-AS-45201 Rev P01, dated 18/11/25, prepared by Cundall Johnston & Partners LLP
- Planning Statement, dated Feb 2026, prepared by Westbournes
- Existing Photographs



Plans and Elevations of previous 21 condensers



Proposed Scheme (part retrospective)



3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There is a very extensive planning history. The following is some of the most relevant recent history:

Building 'F' – application site

01/01340/FUL (New ref: PL/01/0847/FUL) - Construction of 2 storey test facility, demolition of building 460, with modifications to associated external works and car parking arrangements – Approved 6th March 2002

Other applications within the overall site

PL/16/1810/FUL - Installation of a single storey plant and control room – Approved 23rd November 2016

PL/16/2108/FUL – Part retention and refurbishment of the existing Gillette building, erection of a two storey research and development building (Class B1/B8), with associated access, surface car parking, servicing, landscaping and engineering works – Approved 13th October 2017

PL/18/2101/FUL – Minor amendment to planning permission 162108 including to external materials, entrances, warehouse roof pitch, glazing, and additional roof plant – Agreed 7th February 2019

PL/25/0391/FUL – Replacement roof plant including enclosures, roof walkway and new spiral staircase access – Approved 6th June 2025

PL/25/1594/FUL – Replacement roof plant including enclosures, roof walkway and external staircase access – Approved 9th January 2026

4. CONSULTATIONS

Internal Consultees

Environmental Protection – No objection - the noise assessment shows that the plant meets policy criteria.

Planning Officer Note: The survey was undertaken on 5-6th November 2024 when the 21 units were in situ and prior to the installation and bringing into use of the 6 now being applied for retrospectively (from 18th November 2024).

Planning Officer Note:

Transport - There are no transport objections to the proposal. The external plant units and associated vehicle protection barriers are to be located entirely within the site boundary, and, therefore, will not affect the public highway.

The proposal will have no impact on the existing parking provision or internal circulation routes within the site, and all vehicle manoeuvring can continue to operate safely and efficiently. Accordingly, the scheme is considered acceptable in highway and transport terms.

Neighbour Consultation

A site notice was erected on 9th March 2026. No comments have been received.

5. 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.

6. 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 2021

National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

Local Plan Partial Update

The current version of the Local Plan turned five years old on 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 and the submission draft submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 9th May 2025 and is currently at examination.

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. The objectives of the policies listed above remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan, and although at present they have some weight in the decision - making process the current policies can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

7. APPRAISAL

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of Development
- b) Noise and Impact on Residential Amenity
- c) Design and Impact on the Character of the Area

a) Principle of Development

The proposal involves a building in commercial use within a core employment area (EM2d), where the continued use of buildings for employment-generating activity is encouraged and the continued optimisation of such buildings for their intended use. The principle of the condenser units and vehicle protection barriers are acceptable, as the proposals improve energy efficiency, provide for an improved office environment for employees and are considered appropriate to the use of the building and its location within a commercial setting. This is subject to demonstrating acceptable noise impacts, which is addressed below.

b) Noise and Impact on Residential Amenity

The Noise Impact Assessment is based on data from an assessment undertaken in early November 2024. This was at a time when the 21 previous condenser units were in situ. Although these did not have planning permission it is considered that there is sufficient evidence that these would have been lawful due to the time expired since their installation. Therefore, inclusion as part of the baseline background noise assessment is considered reasonable.

The Environmental Protection Officer has confirmed that the conclusion of the assessment shows that noise emissions from the proposed plant would meet the noise criterion set by Reading Borough Council, i.e. to be 10dB below background noise. The proposal is considered acceptable in terms of noise, and it is considered, therefore, that it would comply with Policy EN17 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

The units would be located proposed changes would be located a minimum of ca 100m away from the nearest residential properties located on Basingstoke Road. It is considered that the proposals, by virtue of the small scale, would not harm residential amenity, subject to noise controls as proposed and would comply with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

c) Design and Impact on the Character of the Area

The existing external condenser units and vehicle protection barriers and proposed vehicle protection barriers are and would be located on the ground level adjacent to the building and are and would be publically visible and also from within adjacent commercial sites. The visual impact

is lessened due to the small number of replacement units compared to the previous scheme and in any case their nature would be consistent within a commercial location and would not harm the character of the area and would comply with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

8. RECOMMENDATION

The proposal has been considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and relevant SPDs and is considered acceptable. The recommendation is, therefore, to GRANT, subject to the following conditions and informatives:

Conditions

- Standard 3-year time limit
- Approved Plans
- Materials as specified
- Noise Mitigation

Informatives

Terms and conditions

Positive & proactive