

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261111
Site Address:	United Reformed Church Hall, Church Street, Twyford, Wokingham, RG10 9DR
Expiry Date:	31 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	12/01/2023 – See PA 230072
Proposal: Full application for provision of 2 No. Air Source Heat pumps in Environ Attenuation enclosure on ground level bases.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC09 – Development and Flood Risk TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH5 – The historic environment HC8 – Noise pollution
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
252065	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 230072 for inclusion of acoustic enclosures and relocation of the 2 no. heat pumps to ground level.	Refused, 18/09/2025
230072	Full application for the installation of 2No air to air heat pumps to the existing roof.	Approved, 13/06/2023
050309	Proposed single storey extension to church to form conservatory.	Approved, 13/06/2005

CONSULTATION RESPONSES**Internal**

WBC Environmental Health – No objections, subject to a condition.
WBC Drainage – No objections.
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections.
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objections.
WBC Ecology Newts – No objections.

External

None consulted.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Twyford Parish Council – No objections
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL**Site Description and Planning History:**

The application site relates to a Church building, located to the south of Church Street within the Twyford Village centre. Planning permission is sought for the for provision of 2 No. Air Source Heat pumps on ground level bases.

Planning permission was previously granted on 13 June 2023 (ref. no. 230072) for the installation of two air source heat pumps on the flat roof of the store room. Following further assessment of the proposed equipment, including noise considerations, it was identified that attenuation enclosures would be required, resulting in the units being unsuitable for the approved roof location.

A non-material amendment application (ref. no. 252065) was subsequently submitted on 29 August 2025 to relocate the approved air source heat pumps to ground level. This was refused on 18 September 2025 as the proposed changes were considered to fall outside the scope of a non-material amendment, with a new planning application required; the current application has therefore been submitted to seek

approval for the revised ground-level siting of the air source heat pumps.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) published the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2020, which sets out a vision for achieving a Net Zero Carbon Borough by 2030. Targets 12 and 13 seek to increase the generation of renewable energy, while Target 14 aspires to retrofit all Council-owned buildings to carbon neutral standards by 2028.

The proposed installation of two air source heat pumps (ASHPs) would support these objectives by improving the energy efficiency of the building and contributing towards the Council's wider carbon reduction and net zero ambitions.

Character of the Area and Heritage:

The United Reform Church was constructed in 1897, with an ancillary hall added to the north-west in 1934. By virtue of their age, architectural and historic interest, and their positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Twyford Conservation Area, the United Reform Church (including the main church building, rear school room and ancillary hall) is identified as a non-designated heritage asset.

The site is located within the Twyford Conservation Area. The proposed ASHPs would be installed adjacent to the north-western ancillary hall. Due to their modest scale, limited visual prominence and location, which would be largely screened by the main church building, the proposed equipment would not result in harm to the character of the area appearance.

The Council's Built Heritage Officer raises no objection to the principle of the development but initially requested further details regarding the type and appearance of the proposed attenuation enclosures. It was noted that ASHPs are modern additions which could appear incongruous within the traditional historic setting of the church and its surroundings, and therefore appropriate mitigation was required to ensure they were suitably integrated.

Following discussions, the agent confirmed that a louvred enclosure would be installed, which was considered acceptable by the Built Heritage Officer. No

objections are therefore raised in respect of the impact of the proposal on the heritage significance of the non-designated heritage asset or the character and appearance of the Twyford Conservation Area.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed ASHPs would be suitably located and of modest proportions not to pose any unreasonable concerns of overbearing or loss of light impacts.

Noise impacts

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the submitted Plant Noise Assessment (Ref: 23-11241 Rev B, August 2025) relating to the proposed installation of two air source heat pumps. The assessment, undertaken with reference to BS 4142:2014, demonstrates that the predicted noise levels from the proposed equipment would be significantly below the existing background noise level during the most sensitive operating period, indicating a low impact on nearby noise-sensitive receptors.

Whilst the assessment is accepted in principle, Environmental Health notes that the findings rely on mitigation measures, including the installation of an acoustic enclosure, and that operation is proposed during a sensitive morning period. It is therefore considered necessary to secure appropriate safeguards through conditions to ensure the plant is installed and operated in accordance with the submitted noise assessment and associated mitigation measures.

A suitable condition will be attached to any approval.

Flooding and Drainage:

The Council's Drainage Officer has reviewed the application and notes that the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and an area known to experience high groundwater levels. However, given the modest scope of works proposed, no objection is raised to the development as shown on drawing no. 26374 [PL] 01 dated April 2026.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the

development.

RECOMMENDATION	
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Conditions agreed:	Not required
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Recommendation:	Approval
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Date:	7 July 2026
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Earliest date for decision:	16 July 2026
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Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
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MC

Date:	14.07.2026
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