

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242833
Site Address:	57 Oakey Drive, Wokingham, Wokingham, RG40 2DT
Expiry Date:	17 January 2025
Site Visit Date:	13/01/2025
Proposal: Householder application for proposed installation of 1No air source heat pump to the front of the dwelling.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Water Utility Consultation Zones
Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Local Authorities
Affordable Housing Thresholds
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Borough Parishes
Scale and Location of Development Proposals
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Railways
Borough Wards
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation

(JMWP)	
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no planning history relevant for this site.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – no comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
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Ward Member(s)	No comments received
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Neighbours	No comments received
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site comprise a two storey, end-of-terrace dwelling, with open front garden and enclosed rear garden. The site is flanked by the railway to the rear and by a block of garages and associated driveway to the western side.

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.

Paragraph 161 of the NPPF (2024) states that *“The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should help*

to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.”

When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, paragraph 168a) of the NPPF (2024) states that local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal’s contribution to a net zero future; whilst para 168b) recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Core Strategy Policy CP1 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that contribute towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon developments as soon as possible by including appropriate on-site renewable energy features.

The proposal for installation of an air source heat pump (ASHP) to the subject property would comply with the NPPF and local plan sustainable development goals of mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy and using renewable energy features.

Character of the Area:

Core Strategy policy CP1 states “planning permission will be granted for development proposals that ‘maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment”.

Core Strategy policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted if development is ‘of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design’ and contributes ‘to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings, without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

The application site is located on a residential road close to Wokingham Town Centre. Surrounding residential dwellings range from detached, semi-detached and terraced houses, with ample, open front gardens. Within close proximity there are also commercial/industrial buildings, including Carnival Hub and Multistorey carpark to the north-east and those within Molly Millars Industrial Area to the western side. Notwithstanding, the character of Oakey Drive is that of verdant, open frontages. Particularly, the application dwelling is an end-of-terrace property with an open front garden, and given its corner location its front elevation is notable from several public vantage points when walking along Oakey Drive.

The proposed heat pump would measure approximately 1.25m x 0.40m, with an overall height of 0.82m (as measured from the plans). It would be located at the frontage of the dwelling, below the ground floor front window and approximately 1.04m from the side-end wall. The overall scale of this unit would result in it being a

prominent feature. Particularly, being to the front of the house, it would be clearly evident from the road, noting as previously mentioned that the property has an open garden with low hedge as boundary treatment. The unit would undoubtedly be at odds with the simple façade design of the host dwelling and would be unacceptably harmful to the character and appearance of the row of terraced properties and overall street scene. The utilitarian structure will appear quite prominent and incongruous within the street scape, noting that no other property along Oakey Drive has a heat pump located to the front, where these type of structures are generally located within the rear gardens to minimise visual impact.

There is general government support for the installation of heat pumps including within the NPPF, and it is clear that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050, including facilitating radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; and supporting low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Whilst this is not disputed, clarification has been sought regarding the chosen location to the front, to which the agent has advised that it is the applicant's preference to have it at the front. The local planning authority does not consider this is a justified need for the heat pump to be located in the front garden where it would have a detrimental effect on the visual appearance of the street scene. The agent also contends that when they surveyed the property, siting the heat pump at the back would have meant the noise assessment was higher as the position would have had to be closer to a habitable window, and that the front location as proposed has a lower decibel level. Whilst this may be the case, no assessment has been submitted to support such claim, i.e. number of decibels/noise levels and distance to nearest neighbouring windows.

On the basis of the above, the proposal would be contrary to Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3. In the local planning authority's view, the benefits of the proposal do not provide sufficient weight in favour of the proposal to outweigh the main concern particularly given there may be more suitable alternative options.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity. Given the nature of the proposal which would only involve a small ASHP unit located at ground level and separated over 2m from the shared boundary with the adjoining property no. 58 Oakey Drive, it is not considered there would be any detrimental impact upon neighbouring amenities by way of loss of light or overbearing. Moreover, given the nature of the proposal, overlooking impact is not relevant in this case.

Noise:

The installation of an air source heat pump should be supported by a Microgeneration Certification Scheme Noise Assessment (MCS).

The Government, through DEFRA has prescribed a scheme to inform the installation of ASHP and other micro generation units called the Microgeneration Certified Scheme. Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) transfer to MCS Service Company - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Following the MCS scheme, this will allow the certified installer to make a calculation according to a formula prescribed in this Government sponsored scheme to inform the best type of install and anti-vibration mountings. The Environmental Health Officer can look at the assessment to guide them as to whether there is a likely nuisance from the equipment.

A formal noise assessment would be required if the MSC guidelines aren't met, e.g. where the ASHP is to be installed very close to neighbouring properties or is of a large design, or there is more than one noise source with potential to output a significant amount of tonal noise that may cause a nuisance to neighbours. If a noise assessment is required, although there is an initial cost to the applicant, having a professional acoustic consultant involved will mean there is a significantly reduced risk of there being complaints after the install is completed.

In this case, whilst no comments have been received from the WBC Environmental Health Officer, the submitted MSC assessment identifies a final result of 40.57dBA, which is lower than the permitted development noise limit of 42dBA. As such, as per current government guidelines, the local planning authority would have no objection on noise grounds as the heat pump proposed on the location proposed would pass the MCS assessment and would be unlikely to result in any adverse noise impact upon nearby neighbouring residential amenities.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

There is no impact on the existing parking provision.

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, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. 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	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refusal
Date:	16 January 2024
Earliest date for	4 December 2024

decision:	
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Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>HMM</i>
Date:	17 January 2025