

Client: Sailesh Tailor
Project: 9 Mays Close, Earley, Reading, RG6 1JY
Reference: 251203-R001B
Report date: January 12, 2026
Author: Tommy Burn BSc (Hons) MIOA
Checked: Rob Cant MIOA MEnvSc

1. INTRODUCTION

ACA Acoustics Limited has been commissioned to carry out a noise impact assessment for the addition of two bedrooms to an existing HMO. Wokingham Borough Council have previously refused the development due to, among other reasons, noise grounds of ingress and egress of the site.

The client is preparing an new planning application for the development, and this acoustic assessment has been prepared to assess the impact of activity at the site on nearby residential properties.

2. ACOUSTIC CRITERIA

2.1 Wokingham Borough Council Decision Notice for Application Reference 181585

Wokingham Borough Council have issued a decision notice for the planning application, detailing refusal on the basis of a number of reasons. Reason 1 within the decision notice states:

“1. The use of the property as a sui generis house in multiple occupancy (HMO) would result in an over intensive use of the dwellinghouse, which would have a detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers and the character of the area through issues including additional pedestrian and vehicle movements leading to increased noise and disturbance, competition for on street parking spaces. As such the proposal is contrary to policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and policy CC07 of the MDD Local Plan.”

The policies referred to within the decision notice do not provide specific acoustic guidance, and in addition there is no specific British Standard or guidance document which considers noise emissions for assessing the potential noise impact from cars or pedestrians entering and leaving a premises.

Therefore, it is necessary to consider guidance within other relevant Standards and documents. Discussion of these is provided below.

Head Office
12 Sheep Street
Highworth
Wiltshire
SN6 7AA

Tel: 01793 766 324

London
3 Shortlands
Hammersmith
London
W6 8DA

Tel: 0203 609 8733

Manchester
Colony
5 Piccadilly Place
Manchester
M1 3BR

Tel: 0161 327 1681

Birmingham
11 Brindley Place
Brunswick Square
Birmingham
B1 2LP

Tel: 0121 769 3422

Email: info@aca-acoustics.co.uk

Website: www.aca-acoustics.co.uk

Registered in England & Wales No: 08228154

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework and Noise Policy Statement for England

The National Planning Policy Framework (referred to as NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and provides guidance on how these are expected to be applied, providing a framework within which Local Authorities can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that,

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ... e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability".

Paragraph 198 also talks specifically about noise and advises,

"Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- *Mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life.*
- *Identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason".*

The Government's long-term policy aims relating to noise are contained in the Noise Policy Statement for England (referred to as NPSE). Stated aims of the NPSE are,

"Through the effective management and control of environmental, neighbour and neighbourhood noise within the context of Government policy of sustainable development:

- *Avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life,*
- *Mitigate and minimise adverse impacts on health and quality of life, and*
- *Where possible, contribute to the improvement of health and quality of life".*

Paragraphs 2.19 to 2.24 of the NPSE clarify the above aims, referring to established concepts from toxicology; NOEL (No Observed Effect Level) and LOAEL (Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level). It also introduces a new concept relating to "significant adverse" of SOAEL (Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level), however noting,

“It is not possible to have a single objective noise-based measure that describes SOAEL that is applicable to all sources of noise in all situations. Consequently, the SOAEL is likely to be different for different noise sources, for different receptors and at different times”.

The first aim of NPPF Paragraph 198 and the second underlying aim of the NPSE refers to the situation where the impact lies somewhere between LOAEL and SOAEL. It requires that all reasonable steps should be taken to mitigate and minimise adverse effects on health and quality of life while also considering the guiding principles of sustainable development, as set out in the NPPF. As neither the NPPF nor NPSE includes any numerical criteria, it is necessary to consider guidance provided in other documents to determine suitable limits that would define the LOAEL on an individual basis.

Finally, it is also of benefit to consider Paragraph 2.7 of the NPSE, which advises that,

“... the application of the NPSE should enable noise to be considered alongside other relevant issues and not to be considered in isolation. In the past, the wider benefits of a particular policy, development or other activity may not have been given adequate weight when assessing the noise implications”.

This provides clear guidance that noise must not be considered in isolation but as part of the overall scheme taking into account the overall sustainability and associated impacts of the proposed development; there is no benefit in reducing noise to an excessively low level if this creates or increases some other adverse impact. Similarly, it may be appropriate in some cases for noise to have an adverse impact if this is outweighed by the reduction or removal of some other adverse impact that is of greater significance.

2.3 Planning Practice Guidance – Noise

Related to the NPSE and the NPPF, The Department for Communities and Local Government has published additional guidance and clarifications within the Planning Practice Guidance – Noise (PPG-N), available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise--2>.

Paragraph 003 of the PPG advises,

“Plan-making and decision making need to take account of the acoustic environment and in doing so consider:

- *Whether or not a significant adverse effect is occurring or likely to occur;*
- *Whether or not an adverse effect is occurring or likely to occur; and*
- *Whether or not a good standard of amenity can be achieved.*

In line with the Explanatory Note of the Noise Policy Statement for England, this would include identifying whether the overall effect of the noise exposure ... is, or would be, above or below the

significant observed adverse effect level and the lowest observed adverse effect level for the given situation.”

This guidance is like that set out in the NPPF and NPSE, however, Paragraph 005 of the PPG provides outline guidance on the definition of ‘*significant adverse effect*’ and ‘*adverse effect*’. A copy of the table appended to Paragraph 005 is repeated in Figure 1.

Although the table in Figure 1 provides descriptive definitions for the NOEL, LOAEL, and SOAEL, as with the NPPF and the NPSE there are no numerical values provided and it is necessary to consider guidance in other documents.

Response	Examples of outcomes	Increasing effect level	Action
No Observed Effect Level			
Not present	No Effect	No Observed Effect	No specific measures required
No Observed Adverse Effect Level			
Present and not intrusive	Noise can be heard, but does not cause any change in behaviour, attitude or other physiological response. Can slightly affect the acoustic character of the area but not such that there is a change in the quality of life.	No Observed Adverse Effect	No specific measures required
Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level			
Present and intrusive	Noise can be heard and causes small changes in behaviour, attitude or other physiological response, e.g. turning up volume of television; speaking more loudly; where there is no alternative ventilation, having to close windows for some of the time because of the noise. Potential for some reported sleep disturbance. Affects the acoustic character of the area such that there is a small actual or perceived change in the quality of life.	Observed Adverse Effect	Mitigate and reduce to a minimum
Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level			
Present and disruptive	The noise causes a material change in behaviour, attitude or other physiological response, e.g. avoiding certain activities during periods of intrusion; where there is no alternative ventilation, having to keep windows closed most of the time because of the noise. Potential for sleep disturbance resulting in difficulty in getting to sleep, premature awakening and difficulty in getting back to sleep. Quality of life diminished due to change in acoustic character of the area.	Significant Observed Adverse Effect	Avoid
Present and very disruptive	Extensive and regular changes in behaviour, attitude or other physiological response and/or an inability to mitigate effect of noise leading to psychological stress, e.g. regular sleep deprivation/awakening; loss of appetite, significant, medically definable harm, e.g. auditory and non-auditory.	Unacceptable Adverse Effect	Prevent

Figure 1: Noise exposure hierarchy, taken from Planning Practice Guidance - Noise

2.4 IEMA Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment

A general principle that can be employed in situations of potential noise disturbance where there is no formal assessment methodology is to consider whether the new noise source will likely cause a significant increase over the current sound level or a change of character compared to the existing noise climate.

This basis for this form of assessment is discussed in the *Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment*, written by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).

Having established the likely change in sound levels due to the new activity, an initial indication of the significance of the change can be determined from the table below, taken from Table 7-12 of the Guidelines.

Effect Description	Definition
None / Not significant	Less than LAeq 2.9dB change in sound level and/or all receptors are of negligible sensitivity to noise.
Slight	A LAeq 3dB to 4.9dB change in sound level at a receptor of some sensitivity.
Moderate	A LAeq 3dB to 4.9dB change in sound level at a sensitive or highly sensitive receptor, or a greater than LAeq 5dB change in sound level at a receptor of some sensitivity.
Substantial	Greater than LAeq 5dB change in sound level at a noise-sensitive receptor, or a LAeq 5dB to 9.9dB change in sound level at a receptor of high sensitivity to noise.
Severe	Greater than LAeq 10dB change in sound level at a receptor of high sensitivity to noise.

Table 1: Effect descriptors for change in sound level taken from Table 7-12 of the *Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment*

Note that defining the change of loudness to one decimal place is not a reflection of the accuracy of any assessment undertaken but rather to provide a clear threshold between adjacent effect descriptions.

Section 7 of the Guidelines advises that the change in sound level provides an initial estimate of the impact, which should then be examined considering the context of the development, the type of noise source, nature of the change, and other factors. Paragraph 7.6 summarises that,

“In some situations, the conclusions about the degree of the impact will be clear and straightforward; but in others it is likely that, ultimately, a professional judgement will have to be made by the assessor. It must be remembered that the effects of noise are primarily subjective, and while it is desirable to include as much objectivity as possible into the assessment process in order to obtain consistency, there should be no concern in allowing professional judgement to

come into the final analysis. However, the basis for the judgement made must be clearly set out so that it is clear how the conclusion has been reached.”

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

The premises, which is an HMO comprising 6 bedrooms, is located in a primarily residential area, adjacent to a large dual carriageway, railway line, and overpass. The site has a car park to the front, with public parking spaces over the road, and nearest noise sensitive receptors are other properties on Mays Close to the north, and east.

Figure 2 below shows the site location and the surrounding area.



Figure 2: Site Location and the surrounding area

4. SURVEY DETAILS & ANALYSIS

ACA Acoustics undertook an unattended sound level survey between the 11th – 17th December 2025. The microphone was set up by Tommy Burn of ACA Acoustics Limited at first floor level to the front western façade of the development site, overlooking the car park and directly above the entrance doorway.

During the survey, the soundscape in the vicinity was influenced predominantly by local road traffic which is dominant at the development site.

The following equipment was used during the survey. An on-site calibration check was conducted on the sound level meter prior to the survey and repeated after with no deviation noted.

Equipment	Serial Number
Svantek Class 1 sound level meter type SVAN971, complete with MOLES weatherproof and lockable outdoor environmental kit	84045
Svantek calibrator type SV33B. Compliant to IEC 60942-1:2003	83826

Table 2: Equipment used for the sound level survey

In addition a camera was set up to monitor ingress and egress activity at the front of the site.

Weather conditions at the time of setting up the survey were cool, calm, dry, and sunny. Weather conditions have been reviewed at www.worldweatheronline.com, using the closest available commercial weather station, along with visual inspection of photographs taken during the survey period. Weather conditions remained predominantly calm and dry with wind speeds below recommended limits over the survey period. Meteorological conditions are considered acceptable and will not have adversely impacted the survey results.

Results of the survey are shown in graphical form in Figure 3 below.

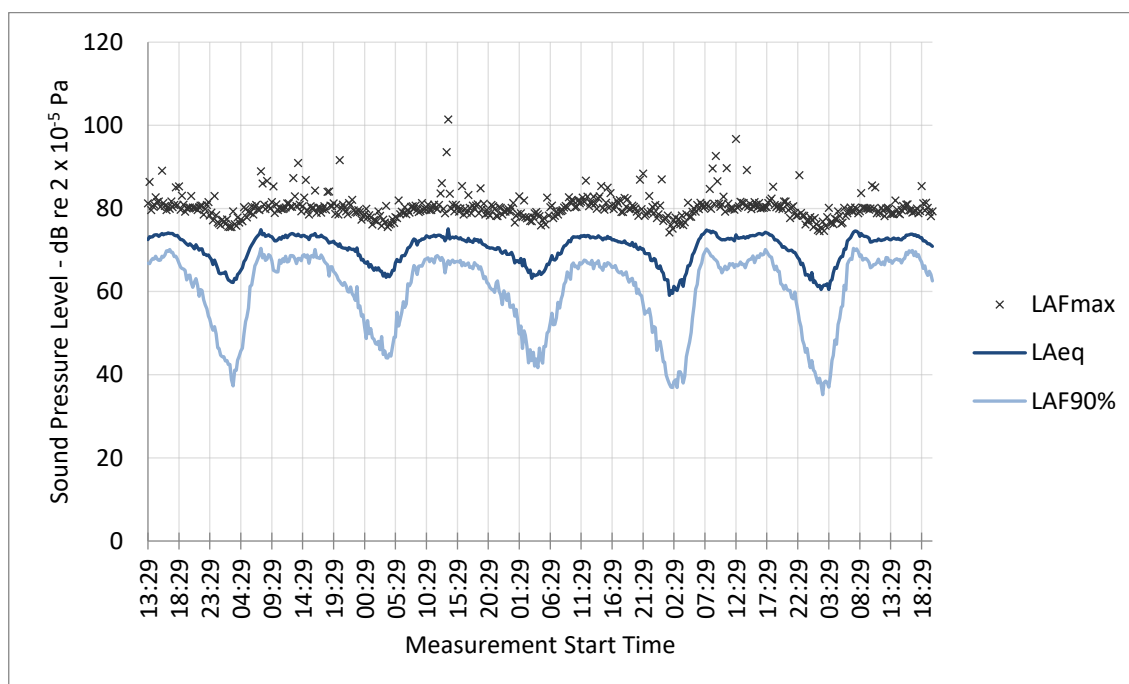


Figure 3: Sound level survey results 11th – 17th December 2025

Table 2 below presents the tabular data of the survey results.

Date	Daytime LAeq	Night-Time LAeq
Thu, 11 Dec 2025	73 dBA	68 dBA
Fri, 12 Dec 2025	73 dBA	67 dBA
Sat, 13 Dec 2025	72 dBA	67 dBA
Sun, 14 Dec 2025	72 dBA	67 dBA
Mon, 15 Dec 2025	73 dBA	67 dBA
Tue, 16 Dec 2025	73 dBA	-

Table 3: Summary of survey results

Existing sound levels are dominated by nearby road traffic on the A3290, along with other traffic routes and the nearby railway line. While on site the author subjectively considered that these masked all other sound sources in the area during the daytime.

The sound level survey was conducted while the HMO was operating at full capacity with six occupants living there, and as such, activity of residents entering and leaving sound levels are representative of typical current activity.

Photographs taken on site by the unmanned motion-sensitive camera show when residents entered or left the site, allowing for comparison of existing sound levels from residents with the proposed occupancy.

Assessment of sound levels from movements to and from the site are shown in Table 4 below.

Day	Ambient sound level (with activity) LAeq, dB	Residual sound levels (periods before/after activity) LAeq, dB	Change, dB	IEMA Impact Outcome
13 th December 09:18 (Vehicle Moving)	72	72	0	None / Not significant
15 th December 00:57 (Resident Leaving)	63	63	0	None / Not significant
15 th December 07:33 (Vehicle Moving)	74	75	0	None / Not significant
15 th December 21:26 (Vehicle Moving)	70	70	0	None / Not significant

Table 4: Results and IEMA Outcome Assessment

It can be seen from Table 4 that during hours of residents entering and exiting the property there is no change in the ambient sound level. This was also the authors opinion while on site. The acoustic climate is dominated by road traffic noise in the vicinity, and the small number of movements from residents arriving and leaving is having a negligible impact over the general acoustic climate in the vicinity.

As a worst case scenario, with all residents entering and leaving together, the acoustic change would go from 6 residents to 8 residents. This would result in an increase of at most 1.25dB ($10 \times \log_{10} \left(\frac{8}{6} \right) = 1.25$), which would result in an IEMA Impact of None/Not significant. Humans start to detect changes in decibels from around 3dB, and so this change is unlikely to be noticeable.

Sound levels from the use includes cars arriving and leaving, and car doors opening and closing. The current use, as well as that of the surrounding areas, are residential properties, and so there is no change to the acoustic climate prior to the development.

The impact has been assessed over the hours directly adjoining residents arriving and leaving. When considered over a daytime assessment period, as required by IEMA, the impact of these sources will be even lower.

Additionally, the Lmax events during the assessment periods do not fluctuate when compared against periods when residents are not arriving and leaving, rather they are primarily controlled by other road traffic activity in the vicinity.

5. CONCLUSION

ACA Acoustics have been commissioned by the client to undertake an assessment of the change in sound levels from the alteration of an HMO from 6 bedrooms to 8 at 9 Mays Close, Earley, Reading, RG6 1JY. ACA Acoustics have undertaken an extended sound level survey aided by a motion sensor camera, and results of the survey indicate that sound levels from the increased numbers of residents entering and leaving the premises will not cause an impact to the wider acoustic climate.

Results of the assessment, when assessed against the guidelines of the IEMA Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment, indicate that the addition of two bedrooms would cause a “None/Not Significant” impact, and as such the planning application should be approved on noise grounds.