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2110 – Forest School, Reading

Planning Statement

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PLANNING STATEMENT

The Forest School
Robin Hood Lane, Winnersh, Wokingham, RG41 5NE
Salix PSDS Phase 4 Heating Replacement

1 Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the installation of low carbon heating infrastructure and associated electrical works at The Forest School, Robin Hood Lane, Winnersh.
The proposals form part of a wider decarbonisation programme funded under the Salix Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS Phase 4) and involve:

- Installation of external air source heat pump compounds
- Installation of a new DNO substation within a GRP enclosure
- Installation of a new external LV main switchgear enclosure
- Underground ducting and service trenching
- Construction of associated concrete bases
- Localised landscaping works including limited tree removal and path alterations

The application relates solely to operational infrastructure within the established school campus.

2 Site Description

The Forest School is an established secondary school campus comprising multiple buildings, hardstanding areas, pedestrian pathways and landscaped grounds.
The site is fully developed and operates as an educational facility. The proposed works are located within operational areas of the campus, adjacent to existing buildings and plant areas.
The school is currently heated via life-expired gas-fired plant, which is to be removed and replaced as part of this project.

3 The Proposed Development

The application seeks permission for:

3.1 External Heat Pump Compounds

Formation of fenced external compounds housing air source heat pumps. These will be positioned adjacent to existing buildings and located within service areas of the campus.
Acoustic considerations have been incorporated into the plant selection and compound layout.

3.2 New Electrical Infrastructure

Provision of:

- A new DNO substation enclosure
- A new external LV main switchgear enclosure
- Associated underground cabling and duct routes

The infrastructure is required to facilitate the increased electrical capacity necessary to support the low carbon heating system.

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3.3 Groundworks and Landscaping

Works include:

- Excavation for underground services
- Construction of concrete bases
- Localised path adjustments
- Limited tree removal
- Reinstatement of disturbed hard and soft landscaping

All reinstatement will match existing materials where practicable.

4 Planning Policy Context

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides strong support for:

- Transition to a low carbon economy
- Renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure
- Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions
- Upgrading of public sector buildings to improve energy performance

Paragraphs within the NPPF support renewable energy development where impacts are acceptable and recognise the importance of climate change mitigation.
The proposed development directly aligns with national policy objectives by replacing fossil fuel heating with electrically driven heat pump technology.

4.2 Local Planning Policy

Local planning policy supports:

- Sustainable development
- Carbon reduction initiatives
- Infrastructure necessary to support community facilities
- Improvements to educational facilities

The proposal represents operational infrastructure within an existing educational site and does not change the primary use of the land.

5 Assessment of Planning Considerations

5.1 Principle of Development

The principle of upgrading infrastructure within an existing school site is acceptable.
The works are ancillary to the lawful educational use and are necessary to maintain and improve operational resilience.

5.2 Visual Impact

The proposed plant compounds and enclosures:

- Are positioned adjacent to existing built form
- Are located within operational areas
- Do not introduce new standalone buildings into undeveloped areas
- Are functional in character and limited in scale

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The development does not materially alter the visual character of the site.

5.3 Landscape Impact

Landscaping impacts are limited and proportionate.

- Tree removal is restricted to the minimum necessary to facilitate infrastructure installation
- No protected woodland or boundary vegetation is affected
- All disturbed hard and soft landscaping will be reinstated
- Path adjustments are localised and do not alter overall site circulation

A separate Landscaping Statement accompanies this application.

5.4 Noise

The heat pump equipment has been selected and positioned to minimise noise impact.
The compounds are located within a school campus environment where plant and operational noise already exists.
Given the siting and specification of the equipment, no unacceptable noise impacts are anticipated.

5.5 Ecology

The works are confined to managed operational areas of the campus.
There is no loss of designated habitat and no impact on protected sites.
Tree removal is limited and necessary for infrastructure installation.

5.6 Highways and Access

There is no change to site access arrangements.
Construction traffic will be temporary and managed via contractor logistics.
The completed development does not increase traffic generation.

5.7 Heritage

There are no listed buildings directly affected by the proposal.
The works are contained within the operational school site and do not impact heritage assets.

6 Sustainability and Public Benefit

The development delivers clear public benefit by:

- Removing life-expired gas-fired heating plant
- Significantly reducing operational carbon emissions
- Supporting national net zero objectives
- Improving long-term energy resilience of a public educational facility

The scheme directly contributes to government decarbonisation targets and enhances the environmental performance of the school estate.

7 Conclusion

The proposed development comprises essential low carbon infrastructure within an established school campus.
The works:

- Are operationally necessary
- Are policy compliant
- Deliver significant sustainability benefits

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- Have limited and proportionate landscape impact
- Do not result in unacceptable visual, ecological or highway effects

The development accords with national and local planning policy and should be supported.

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