

MC/23/0935

Date Received: 19 April 2023  
Location: Hoo Library Church Street Hoo St Werburgh Rochester  
Proposal: Proposed installation of four air source heat pumps (ASHP Units) to the side.  
Applicant: Medway Council  
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Agent: Ethical Partnership  
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NE2 1AN  
Ward: Hoo St Werburgh and High Halstow  
Case Officer: Amanda Barnes  
Contact Number: 01634 331700

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**Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 5th July 2023.**

**Recommendation - Approval with Conditions**

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.  
  
Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:  
  
Received 12 May 2023  
  
506\_HL\_ASHP\_P\_001 Rev 02 -Site Location Plan  
506\_HL\_ASHP\_P\_003 Rev 03 - Proposed Site Plan  
506\_HL\_ASHP\_P\_004 Rev 03 - Existing and Proposed Elevations 01  
506\_HL\_ASHP\_P\_005 Rev 01 - Existing and Proposed Elevations 02  
506\_HL\_ASHP\_P\_006 Rev 01 - Existing and Proposed Elevations 03  
506\_HL\_ASHP\_P\_007 Rev 01 - Existing and Proposed Elevations 04

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

**For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.**

## **Proposal**

The application is for the proposed installation of four air source heat pumps (ASHP Units) to the north side of Hoo Library.

The units are approx. 1m in height, 1.8m in length and 0.6m m in width. They are to be placed in a line approx. 0.5m apart on the northern elevation.

The ASHPs will be used to meet the heating requirements for Hoo Library for 100% of the year. The new heat pumps will provide the hot water source to replace one existing boiler with no modification of the existing piping distribution within the building. The boilers will be replaced with three water-to-air split ASHP. One new buffer tank will be installed to avoid cycling of the compressor. The exterior units of the heat pumps will be installed adjacent to the Northern elevation of the library.

The ASHPs will be installed on an existing concrete plinth which will be extended by approx. 1.2m in depth and 5.10m in length to the West, adjacent to the Northern elevation of the library.

## **Planning History**

MC/23/0361            Application for a Lawful Development Certificate (Proposed) for installation of roof mounted solar photovoltaic systems.  
LDC granted 8 June 2023.

## **Representations**

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

**Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Parish Council** raise objections and concerns regarding the proposals to install four air source heat pumps (ASHP Units) to the side the Hoo Library. We feel that this is out of keeping with the area, it is close to the Hoo Church which is a Grade 1 Listed Building, built in the 12th Century, and we feel that if approved, this will be out of character with the local environment.

## **Development Plan**

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) and are generally considered to conform. Where non-conformity exists, this is addressed in the Planning Appraisal section below.

## Planning Appraisal

### *Background*

The installation of the ASHP's is part of a suite of projects proposed by Medway Council to reduce energy costs and improve operational resilience. At Hoo Library, these include various other proposals, such as a new supply of Solar PV panels which are a part of the recently granted application for a Lawful Development Certificate (MC/23/0361). The system's overarching goals are to maximise consumption of the electricity generated on site by the proposed Solar PV panels and increase the efficiency of the onsite heat generation.

Air source heat pumps (ASHP) absorb heat from the outside air to heat buildings and provide hot water. Air source heat pumps need electricity to run; however, as they are extracting renewable heat from the environment, the heat output is greater than the electricity input. This makes them an energy efficient method of heating.

### *Principle*

The NPPF states at paragraph 7 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF states that "*The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, .... and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.*" and at paragraph 155 "*To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should ... (b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co locating potential heat customers and suppliers.*"

Paragraph 158 sets out that "*When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should: a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable*".

The principle of ASHPs is therefore fully compliant with National Policy.

### *Design and the historic environment*

The surrounding area to the north and west mainly consists of residential areas such as White House Close (north), Everest Drive (west) and Branta Field (southwest). To the east and south of the site, there is Hoo War Memorial grounds and St Werburgh Church.

Paragraphs 126 and 130 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of good design and Policy BNE1 of the Local Plan states that development should be satisfactory in terms of scale and mass and should respect the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

The application seeks to install 4 air source heat pumps to the side of the building and increase the size of the existing concrete plinth on which they will sit.

While the units will be visible from the highway and may be seen within the same view as the church when looking south along Church Street, the units are not considered to be overly prominent within the street scene due to their location to the side of the library and small size. Any harm of the units to the setting of the Listed Church is considered to be less than substantial especially when weighed against the public benefits of the ASHPs. The units are considered to be in accordance with Paragraphs 126, 130, 199 and 202 of the NPPF and Policies BNE1 and BNE18 of the Local Plan.

### *Neighbourhood amenities*

Due to the size and siting of the units with regard to the closest residential property it is considered that the proposal will not have any issues with regard to loss of daylight, outlook, sunlight or privacy.

On the basis of the noise assessment, which indicates a negligible impact from noise associated with the ASHPs, no objection is raised in terms of the impact of noise on the surrounding neighbours.

No objection is raised under Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan and paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF.

### *Highways*

Due to the nature of the proposal, there will be no impact with regard to access to the highway or parking, as such there is no objection under Policy T1 or T13 of the Local Plan and paragraph 111 of the NPPF.

### *Local Finance Considerations*

None considered relevant.

## **Conclusions and Reasons for Approval**

It is considered that the proposed units are acceptable with regard to the design, neighbours and highways with regard to Policies BNE1, BNE2 T1, and T13 of the Local Plan and to the NPPF. The application is accordingly recommended for approval.

The proposal would normally be determined under officers delegated powers, however due to the letter of representation received from Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Parish Council the case is being referred to the Planning Committee for determination.

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## **Background Papers**

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection on Medway Council's Website <https://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>