

25 June 2025



<b>Title</b>	<b>PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT</b>
<b>Ward</b>	Redlands
<b>Planning Application Reference:</b>	PL/24/1385/REG3
<b>Site Address:</b>	146 Hexham Road, Reading, RG2 7UB and 199- 211 Newcastle Road READING, RG2 7TW
<b>Proposed Development</b>	New External Wall Insulation, Windows, Communal Exit Doors, Roof Tiles, PV Panels & ASHP at 199-221 Newcastle Road and 146-168 Hexham Road
<b>Applicant</b>	Reading Borough Council
<b>Report author</b>	Nathalie Weekes
<b>Deadline:</b>	02/07/2025
<b>Recommendations</b>	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions.
<b>Conditions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. TL1 Time Limit</li><li>2. AP1 Approved plans</li><li>3. Materials as specified.</li><li>4. Noise levels for air source heat pumps and mitigation as specified in the submitted noise assessment</li><li>5. Submission and approval of a landscaping scheme (to plant a minimum of x2 trees at each site)</li><li>6. Details of any solar PV to be submitted prior to installation</li></ol>
<b>Informatives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Terms and conditions</li><li>2. Positive and proactive – approval</li><li>3. Pre-commencement conditions</li><li>4. Building Regulations compliance</li><li>5. Environmental Protection Act</li></ol>

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This report concerns an application for various external elevation refurbishment and improvement works and the installation of Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) units around the perimeter of the flatted blocks comprising nos. 199-221 Newcastle Road and 146-168 Hexham Road. This refurbishment improves the sustainability of the properties and is part of a wider programme of refurbishment being undertaken by the Council to existing housing stock. There are no significant detrimental effects of the proposal, and it is considered that it accords with adopted policies and the submitted information demonstrates there is no risk to the residential amenity of the occupiers from resultant noise levels. It is recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.

## 2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The application is referred to Committee as it has been submitted by the Council's Housing Property Services Team.
- 2.2. The application site consists of two separate red line areas and comprises two, two-storey blocks, each containing 12 flats. The external appearance of buildings within this wholly residential area comprise a mix of wall finishes including some of painted render, tile-hanging and some pebbledash render. Roofs in the area are tiled with a grey or brown appearance.
- 2.1 The current materials on these two flatted blocks consist of:
  - A variety of plain and interlocking tiles in various colours and types
  - Walls – comprise narrow cavity brick and block walls finished in cement render or pebbledash
  - Windows and rear doors- upvc double glazed white frames.
  - Front doors – a variety of materials and styles
- 2.3. The surrounding areas are predominately residential, comprising two- and three-storey apartment blocks, and terraced dwellings of a similar character. Other properties at 56 Bamburgh Close, Denton Court (Hexham Close), Redesdale Court, (Bamburgh Close), Kielder Court (Hexham Road), Kershope Court (Banburgh Close) and Rothbury Court (Stanhope Road) have undergone a similar refurbishment.
- 2.4. The road is not covered by any specific local plan policy designations and the proposal, therefore, is assessed against the general relevant policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP, 2019) as set out under Section 6. below.

Site location plan 199-221 Newcastle Road:



Site location plan 146-168 Hexham Road:



## The Proposal

- 2.5. In the Council Plan, Reading Borough Council is committed to working towards achieving a net zero carbon, resilient Reading by 2030 and to help achieve this is upgrading its own housing stock. Planning permission is sought for 24 ASHP units to be installed at the rear of each

premises (12 at each site). Planning permission is required as unlike C3 houses, there are no permitted development rights for flats.

2.6. As part of the application, the two apartment blocks are proposed to be refurbished, with the external finishes comprising cream/grey render to match other Reading Borough Council properties in the local area. Planning permission is required for the proposed change in the external appearance of the buildings. The proposal is part of a Council-wide property improvement programme within Reading and will improve the buildings' energy performance.

2.7. Works will comprise external works only:

- replacement of the external elevations to be refurbished with a light cream and grey external wall insulated render.
- replacement of external windows, communal doors in a grey colour
- replacement grey roofing slates and replacement grey guttering and drainpipes
- replacement of existing (internal) gas boilers with the external air source heat pumps
- replacement of existing front entrance porches.
- Solar PV is also proposed, (although this element is dependent on receipt of funding).

2.8. Submitted plans and documentation:

MAB-C5012-590-A\_3DViews-ProposedGA

~~aerona3-r32-data-sheet\_feb-2022-superseded~~

MAB-C5012- Planning Design and Access Statement

MAB-C5012-001-A\_Plans-Location

MAB-C5012-111-A\_Plans-GroundFirstSecondandRoofLevel-ExistingGA

MAB-C5012-180-A\_Elevations-ExistingGA

MAB-C5012-211-A\_Plans-GroundFirstSecondandRoofLevel-ProposedGA

MAB-C5012-280-B\_Elevations-ProposedGA

MAB-C5012-290-A\_3DViews-ProposedGA

MAB-C5012-301-A\_Plans-Location

MAB-C5012-411-A\_Plans-GroundFirstSecondandRoofLevel-ExistingGA

MAB-C5012-480-A\_Elevations-ExistingGA

MAB-C5012-511-A\_Plans-GroundFirstSecondandRoofLevel-ProposedGA

MAB-C5012-580-B\_Elevations-ProposedGA

MAB-C5012-001-A\_Plans-Location

CIL - Hexham and Newcastle.

As received 17 October

AS13936.250417.R2 Noise assessment Newcastle Road - As received 7 May 2025

AS13936.250414.R1 Noise assessment Hexham Road - As received 12 May 2025

### 3. Planning history

- 3.1. 146 Hexham Road - PL/91/0028 Temporary change of use from residential to community facility, construction of canopy and door to front elevation. REGULATION 4 Permitted 04/04/1991.
- 3.2. No other relevant planning history for 199-221 Newcastle Road and 146-168 Hexham Road, however other similar refurbishments have been permitted at:
  - 131792 Rothbury Court, Stanhope Road External refurbishment of the block of flats consisting of the renewal of cladding, removal of some balconies and of satellite dishes. Installation of a communal dish. Internal refurbishment and upgrade. Permitted 0/02/2014
  - 151231 Kershope Court, Bamburgh Close, Internal and external refurbishment including the complete replacement of non-loadbearing elevations to the front and rear elevations including insulation, windows and doors, the replacement of gutters, fascias, soffits and ancillary works all as detailed in the specification and internally, electrical rewiring, new kitchens and bathrooms, sheet flooring. Permitted 20/10/2015
  - 161771 Kielder Court, Hexham Road, External refurbishment. Permitted 21/11/2016
  - 180185 Redesdale Court, Bamburgh Close, Various external and internal refurbishments including replacement of cladding and fenestration. Permitted 04/04/2018
  - 190808 Denton Court, Hexham Road, Various external and internal refurbishments including the complete replacement of non-loadbearing elevations to the front and rear including insulation, windows and doors; the replacement of gutters, fascia and soffits; and internally, the installation of new kitchens and bathrooms. Permitted 05/06/2019
  - 221649 56 Bamburgh Close, Various external and internal refurbishments include the complete replacement of non-load bearing elevations including wall insulation/cladding, windows, communal doors, gutters, fascias and soffits altering the external appearance of the building, and internally, the removal of internal walls within communal halls. Permitted 02/02/2023

#### 4. Consultations

##### 4.1. Non-Statutory:

- 4.1.1. **RBC Environmental Protection** – Due to the number of ASHP units in proximity to each other a detailed noise assessment was requested for each site, to ensure the units together do not create unreasonable noise levels. The submitted noise assessments were subsequently considered acceptable in accordance with local noise limits and policy (EN17).
- 4.1.2. **RBC Planning (Natural Environment) Team** (Tree Officer)– Suggests that additional landscaping should be provided on site. Each site can accommodate x3 trees. A range of suitable species can be recommended to require minimal maintenance and upkeep.

##### 4.2. Public consultation:

- 4.2.1. Site notices were displayed each of the sites for the required 21 day period.
- 4.2.2. No letters of representation have been received.

#### 5. Legal context

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of

sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

- 5.2. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 5.3. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024, as amended February 2025).

The following chapters are the most relevant (others apply to a lesser extent):

2. Achieving Sustainable Development
4. Decision-making
12. Achieving Well-Designed Places
14. Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

#### Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Policies:

- CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2 Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3 Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC4 Decentralised Energy
- CC7 Design and the Public Realm
- CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
- EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN17 Noise Generating Equipment
- H10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space

#### Supplementary Planning Documents:

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019

#### Local Plan Update

- 6.4 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) became five years old on 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan were considered still up to date. However, the remainder need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan, to reflect changing circumstances and national policy updates, was published on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024, the consultation period for which ended on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024.
- 6.5 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere states that policies automatically become "out of date" when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have

been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

- 6.6 Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application, listed above, is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

## **6. Appraisal**

- 6.1. The main considerations are:

- I. Sustainability
- II. Design and appearance
- III. Amenity and noise implications

### **I) Sustainability**

- 6.2. Policy CC2 requires proposals primarily for new development, to have a sustainable design and construction and to improve emissions where possible and improve insulation. However, officers advise that it is also important for building refurbishment schemes to result in an improvement in energy efficiency too. Separately, the works will need to comply with the current Building Regulations
- 6.3. Policy CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change, requires that, "*all developments demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.*" This includes maximising resistance and resilience to climate change through building improvements to existing buildings.
- 6.4. Currently, Policy CC4: is not relevant, as it applies to new major developments, however in the Local Plan Partial Update Draft, November 2024, any proposal for new or extended decentralised energy schemes will only be supported if the scheme is 'renewable-based'. Air source heat pumps are a form of renewable energy.

- 6.5. The works will refurbish the properties to improve the thermal performance of these properties for the benefit of the occupiers. It is considered that the proposed refurbishment and air source heat pumps will meet the policy requirements of Policies CC2, CC3, and CC4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the SPD.

### **II) Design and appearance**

- 6.6. Policy CC7 requires that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The ASHP units are proposed to be placed at the rear of each block. Each of the properties are in need of refurbishment:



146-168 Hexham Road – proposed change in external elevations, with additional insulation on the frontage, replacement windows and new front porches/canopies, with air source heat pumps at the rear of the building



Proposed 3D Illustration - Front



Proposed 3D Illustration - Rear

199-221 Newcastle Road – current site



199-221 Newcastle Road – proposed change in external elevations, with additional insulation on the frontage, replacement windows and new front porches/canopies, with air source heat pumps at the rear of the building



Proposed 3D Illustration - Front



Proposed 3D Illustration - Rear

- 6.7. The proposed external wall insulation has been selected to improve energy efficiency at the respective properties. The colour of the render finish is different from the predominantly pebble-dash render character of the existing properties, however, it is considered that the new render coating and light cream and grey colour selected would not be harmful to the appearance of the application properties or the surrounding area and would complement the proposed grey triple glazed UPVC windows.
- 6.8. The render and finish at the depth that has been proposed will very minimally increase the appearance of the window 'reveals', but this is considered to be so limited as to not cause any harm to the character and appearance of the proposal site and surrounding area.
- 6.9. It is noted that there is a slight loss in the detailing of the properties including change from red brick to render. The loss of such features is not considered harmful and has been weighed against the positive benefits of the scheme and varied character of the area.
- 6.10. Overall, the appearance of the proposed works to refurbish and alter the properties is considered acceptable and not to cause significant harm to the appearance of the properties nor the wider streetscene, in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
- 6.11. As noted above, it is not clear at present if the budget for these works will stretch to the installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels, however, it is acceptable for these to be permitted and then the applicant to 'under-implement' this part of the permission. However, due to insufficient information being provided (only indicative illustrations have been supplied) a condition is recommended for the product specifications and siting to be submitted for approval by the local authority, prior to installation of any PV.
- 6.12. Both sites currently have communal grass amenity areas surrounding them on this open-plan estate, with little shading or vegetation and the air source heat pumps will add a small amount of additional development on each site, but the appearance and the number of these boxes will detract from the character of the area. The RBC Natural Environment Team has advised that each of the sites would benefit from additional landscaping to increase the on-site biodiversity. In this instance, officers advise that a condition is recommended for a small landscaping scheme to be submitted before development commences, commensurate with the scale of development proposed for a minimum of two trees to be planted on each site to compensate for the loss of previous landscaping on each site, to complement the refurbishment of the accommodation, to soften appearance of each site, and to improve the character of the area to offset the appearance of the air source heat pumps, whilst improving amenity and tree cover in accordance with Policy EN14.

### **III) Amenity and noise implications**

- 6.13. Local Plan Policy CC8 states that "*Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties... in terms of:* • Privacy and overlooking; • Access to sunlight and daylight; • Visual dominance and overbearing

*effects of a development; • Harm to outlook; • Noise and disturbance; • Artificial lighting; • Vibration; • Dust and fumes; • Smell; • Crime and safety;....”*

- 6.14. Due to the 12 ASHP units that are proposed to be installed at each site, the Environmental Protection Team requested a more detailed noise assessment which considers the cumulative impact of the ASHPs. The noise assessment which was subsequently submitted demonstrated that the ASHPs met the British Standard noise requirements, with noise mitigation including inclusion of an acoustic screen/canopy and absorptive lining on the wall behind the ASHPs to meet the requirements of Policy EN17, which requires mechanical equipment to perform at -10dB below the background noise level.
- 6.15. Overall, the proposal is not considered to cause a risk of unacceptable harm to the amenities of nearby sensitive receptors (either the residents of the buildings or other nearby neighbours) and is therefore acceptable based on the noise assessments submitted, in accordance with policies EN17 and CC8.

## **7. Equality implications**

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues, and priorities in relation to this particular application.

## **8. Conclusion & Planning Balance**

- 9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 In accordance with policies CC2, CC3 of the Local Plan 2019 and material considerations in respect of sustainable development, including policies within the NPPF, the scheme is considered to meet the environmental objectives of mitigating and adapting to climate change through improving the thermal efficiency of the properties. .
- 9.3 The proposal is acceptable with regard to the effect on the appearance of the properties and does not harm the overall character and appearance or amenity of the dwellings or neighbour amenities or the wider area in accordance with policies CC7 and CC8.
- 9.4 As such, this application is recommended for approval of Planning Permission subject to the recommended conditions.

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

## Plans & Appendices

### 1. Proposed elevations 146-168 Hexham Road



### 199-221 Newcastle Road

