

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 136152/VO/2023

Date registered valid: 28 February 2023

Proposal: City Council Development - Installation of air source heat pumps within a "living wall" compound

Address: Didsbury Library , 692 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DN

Ward(s): Didsbury West Ward

Applicant: Mr Conal Spellacy Manchester City Council

Agent (if any): Mr Robert Swiatek AA Projects

Case officer: Robert Griffin
Tel: 0161 234 4527
Email: robert.griffin@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Approve

Date of recommendation: 25.04.2023



Didsbury Library – Wilmslow Road Frontage

Application details

Type of application: Regulation 3 Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 28th March 2023

Standard consultations:

Printed: 2 March 2023 Expired: 23 March 2023

Neighbour notifications

Printed: 2 March 2023 Expired: 23 March 2023

Site notice

Posted: 8 March 2023 Expired: 29 March 2023

Press advert

Published: 7 March 2023 Expired: 28 March 2023

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Grade II

Conservation area: Blackburn Park Conservation Area 1979

Tree Preservation Order: N/A

Description of area

The application site is the Grade II Listed Didsbury Library and associated car parking area to the rear. There are a number of Grade II listed buildings adjacent the application site including the Emmanuel Church on Barlow Moor Road; the War Memorial to the front of the Library; 694 Wilmslow Road and number 6 Barlow Moor Road.

Didsbury Library was erected in 1915, founded by Fletcher Moss, designed by City Architect Henry Price and funded by American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The building occupies a prominent position off Wilmslow Road, with pedestrian access gained via the leading approach to the principal elevation and main entrance.

The library is constructed in the fifteenth century gothic style, with facades of red brick and Portland stone, which is well harmonised with the surroundings within and outside the curtilage of the library. Tracery windows and emblems of Science, Knowledge, Literature, Music and Arts and Crafts are distributed over the building in stone.

To the west of the building is the vehicular access via the tarmac surfaced drive off Barlow Moor Road, leading into the small car park, enclosed by local red brick boundary walls. Planting and shrubbery are prominent around the site and softens the setting of the building, with trees in some cases obscuring views of the building's elevations.

Description of development

The proposals are part of a wider City Council project to decarbonise its estate through the introduction of low and zero carbon infrastructure to provide heating and power and remove carbon based gas boilers and other equipment. In terms of this applications the proposals are for the Installation of air source heat pumps within a "living wall" compound. A supporting listed building consent application has been submitted relating to internal works at the library to connect this external equipment into the building, that application is being considered under application reference 136153/LO/2023.

The proposed ASHP are to be located in the northwest corner of the existing car park, backed against the existing masonry wall. The new ASHP will be screened visually using a 2.4m high living wall screen to minimise the visual impact of the installation on the external surroundings of the library.

Trenching will be required from the ASHP location into the basement plantroom of the building.

The ASHP will draw additional electrical load from the grid and this requires an improved incoming mains supply to the building. This will be installed by Electricity North West (ENW) and will be gained via trench from the south of the site on Barlow Moor Road to the service entry point in the basement window of the building.

The proposal is to screen the ASHP using a living wall, or 'green screen', consisting of low maintenance planting on a 2.4m high framework, to create a wall of plants. The plants will be evergreen and low maintenance and be selected to increase biodiversity to this corner of the car park.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Neighbouring properties were notified of the proposals, a site notice was posted and an advertisement placed in the Manchester Evening News as a proposal affecting a listed building, no responses were received.

Councillor Debbie Hillal - Contacted on behalf of a constituent to enquire whether a cold water supply could be included as part of the works.

MCC Environmental Health - Recommend a condition be attached to any approval relating to noise.

Policy

Relevant policies within the Development Plan for the consideration of the application proposals are:

Manchester Core Strategy

SP1 - Spatial Principles

DM1 - Development Management

EN3 - Heritage

EN4 - Reducing Co2 Emissions

EN6 - Target framework for Co2 reductions

Saved Unitary Development Plan

DC18'Conservation Areas'

DC19'Listed Buildings'

DC26'Noise'

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 10 &11 (presumption in favour of sustainable development); 154 (reduce greenhouse gas emissions); 155 (increase use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat); 158 (approve applications for renewable and low carbon development if impacts are acceptable) 199-202 (conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

Issues

The principle for the provision of low and zero carbon energy infrastructure is generally considered acceptable subject to further consideration of impacts on residential and visual amenity; and impacts on the settings of, and to the Listed Building and the character and appearance of Blackburn Park Conservation Area in this instance.

Residential amenity – Impacts from the proposals primarily arises from the potential introduction of a new noise source in the area. The ASHP compound has been located adjacent the existing boundary wall to the Library and Emmanuel Church in the north western corner of the site. There are residential properties lying to the north of the boundary wall along Norgate Street and others located on Barlow Moor Road opposite the entrance to the Library car park.

Given the location of the proposed compound it is not anticipated that the proposals would give rise to harmful levels of noise, the existing boundary wall would afford some level of mitigation from the noise particularly to those closest properties on Norgate Street and the Church whilst it is in use. In line with the recommendation of MCC Environmental Health a condition is proposed for further details of the acoustic performance of the ASHP to be submitted for approval with a post completion verification requirement.

It is not anticipated that the proposals would give rise to other residential amenity impacts, the siting and height would not give rise to impacts of overshadowing or loss of light to neighbouring properties and the installation would be expected to require limited maintenance so overlooking or loss of privacy is not anticipated to arise.

The other works proposed are internal to the Library building and are subject to a separate but connected Listed Building Consent application. These would not give rise to impacts on residential amenity.

Visual amenity – The compound enclosing the ASHP would be 8.1m in width, 2.4m in depth and 2.4m in height. The compound would be screened with a 'green living wall' feature. The compound would be taller than the neighbouring boundary wall (1.7m - 2m) in height but would be set off this feature that separate the two grade II Listed Buildings of the Library car park and the Emmanuel Church. albeit the compound would still be visible within the setting of the Listed Library and from within the Blackburn Park Conservation Area. Views of the compound would be limited but it will appear as a new feature within the boundary and setting of the Library. The screening would allow the softening of the compound and ASHP equipment that would otherwise be visible both within the car park and from Barlow Moor Road. As such this feature screening would assist to reduce the visual impacts of the proposal.

As the compound is taller than the surrounding boundary wall there would be views of the green screening from within the grounds of the adjacent church and rear outdoor spaces of properties to the north together with first floor and rear dormer windows in the residential properties to the north. It is not considered that such views of the compound would be so harmful as to warrant refusal of the proposals.

Details of the maintenance and management and planting of the "living wall" green are required to ensure this feature retains it's screening properties. As such an appropriately worded condition is required to be attached to any approval of the proposals.

Impacts on Designated Heritage Assets – The proposals are located within the setting of the Didsbury Library Grade II Listed Building and are set in close proximity but set off the boundary walls between the Library and the Grade II Listed Emmanuel Church. The application is accompanied by a commensurate Heritage Statement which identifies the archaeological, historic and aesthetic values of the building and significance.

As well as the Listed Buildings on and adjacent the site, the proposals also lie within the Blackburn Park Conservation Area. As such consideration on all designated heritage assets is considered below.

The proposed compound is located within an existing hard standing area that is located to the rear of the library accessed by vehicles from Barlow Moor Road. Areas of low levels planting and trees are located around the library and the vehicular entrance from Barlow Moor Road, with the boundary wall and tarmac dominating the appearance of the area where the proposed compound and ASHP equipment is to be located. Whilst appreciation of the boundary wall would be diminished as a result of the proposal, the wall has clearly undergone several periods of rebuilding and strengthening. The wall would still be retained and would be still form the physical separation between the listed buildings. In this instance the introduction of planting within the living wall screen around the compound would assist in reducing the visual impacts on the setting of the listed building and views from public viewpoints within the conservation area. It is considered that there would be less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage assets in this area. In this instance the public benefits derived from the proposed decarbonisation project outweigh the visual harm of the introduction of this compound.

Trees – There are a number of trees in the vicinity of the proposals and the identified areas of trenching to introduce the infrastructure. The application has been supported by an Arboricultural Report that assesses the impacts of the proposals on nearby trees and roots. It is recommended that the final design and details of the structural slab for the proposed ASHP be subject to approval and also excavation trenches for cabling and piping, these would be subject to specific conditions to agree.

Other Matters – The proposals would result in the loss of some hard surfacing used as car parking associated with the Library. Two disabled car parking spaces would be retained and reconfigured as part of the works. In this instance given the overall intention of the works to decarbonise the energy used within the library the loss of some area of hard surfacing is considered acceptable. The library is located within the District Centre and is in a highly accessible location close to pedestrian footways, dedicated cycle lanes, bus and Metrolink network.

Conclusion – The application proposals are to decarbonise the energy use of the Listed building and reduce the overall amount of energy used. The works have been identified as essential as part of the Manchester City Council Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). In this instance the proposed works are considered to be acceptable and harm identified has been minimised by the proposed Living Wall which would be subject to specific conditions to ensure it's ongoing maintenance and management. The public benefit derived from the proposals is considered to outweigh the identified harm to the setting of the Listed Building caused by the siting of the equipment and compound.

Other Legislative Requirements

Equality Act 2010

Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Approve

Article 35 Declaration

The application has been dealt with in a positive and proactive manner, issues that have arisen during consideration of the application have been discussed with the applicant and conditions are proposed to be attached to the decision.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:

19972-DL-010 Rev A 'Proposed External Works'; 19972-DL-204 'Proposed Elevations 1-3'; 19972-DL-205 'Proposed Elevations 4-6'; Design and Access Statement and; Heritage Statement prepared by AAP Projects all as received by the City Council as local planning authority on the 3rd February 2023

Arboricultural Statement prepared by Cheshire Woodlands as received on the 20th April 2023

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. Pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

3) a) Externally mounted ancillary plant, equipment and servicing (which shall include the electricity sub station) shall be selected and/or acoustically treated in accordance with a scheme designed so as to achieve a rating level of 5dB (LAeq) below the typical background (LA90) level at the nearest noise sensitive location. Prior to the first use of the hereby approved development the scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as local planning authority in order to secure a reduction in the level of noise emanating from the site. The scheme shall be implemented in full before the use commences.

b) Prior to the operation of the scheme a verification report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as local planning authority to validate that the work undertaken throughout the development conforms to the recommendations and requirements in the approved acoustic report. The report shall also undertake post completion testing to confirm that the noise criteria have been met. Any instances of nonconformity with the recommendations in the report shall be detailed along with any measures required to ensure compliance with the agreed noise criteria.

Reason - To minimise the impact of the development and to prevent a general increase in pre-existing background noise levels around the site pursuant to policy DM1 of the Core Strategy and saved policy DC26 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester.

4) Prior to the installation of the 'Living Wall' as set out on the approved drawings and documents, full details of the system to be used including the types and species of planting; growing medium; section drawings of the supporting structure; irrigation system and drainage; timescales for its implementation; together with a long term maintenance and management plan

for the 'Living Wall' shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the City Council as local planning authority. The development shall be undertaken and maintained and managed in accordance with the agreed details.

If within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting of the 'Living Wall' any planting is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, or becomes, in the opinion of the local planning authority, seriously damaged or defective, additional planting shall be planted at the same place.

Reason – In the interests of the visual amenity and special character of the area in which the site is located pursuant to policy SP1, EN3, and DM1 of the Core Strategy and saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC18 and DC19.

5) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations set out within the approved Arboricultural Statement prepared by Cheshire Woodland and the Arboricultural Method Statement within Appendix 2 of that document.

Reason - In order avoid damage to trees/shrubs adjacent to and within the site which are of important amenity value to the area and in order to protect the character of the area, in accordance with policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

6) Prior to the installation of the ASHP platform identified within the approved Method Statement details and specification of the engineer-designed structure shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the City Council as local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason - In order avoid damage to trees/shrubs adjacent to and within the site which are of important amenity value to the area and in order to protect the character of the area, in accordance with policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

7) No hard landscaping works or excavation for cables or any other service shall be carried out within the 'tree protection area' as identified within the approved Method Statement without the prior written consent of the City Council as local planning authority.

Reason - In order avoid damage to trees/shrubs adjacent to and within the site which are of important amenity value to the area and in order to protect the character of the area, in accordance with policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notifieds

Environmental Health
Heritage & Urban Design
Didsbury Civic Society

Didsbury War Memorial, Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DN
Home Cafe, St James And Emmanuel Church, Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TR
2 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TR
St James And Emmanuel Church, Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TR
LA CANTINA, 653B Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 6QZ
Flat At, Station Hotel, 682 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DN
23A Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
17 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
29A Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
21A Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
19A Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
696 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DN
694 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DN
688 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DN
684 - 686 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DN
Station Hotel, 682 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2DN
TESCO Express, 653A Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 6QZ
5 Norgate Street, Manchester, M20 2DG
29 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
23 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
25A Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
17A Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
O'Neills, 655 - 657 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 6RA
9 Norgate Street, Manchester, M20 2DG
7 Norgate Street, Manchester, M20 2DG
3 Norgate Street, Manchester, M20 2DG
1 Norgate Street, Manchester, M20 2DG
21 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
27 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
25 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
19 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN
15 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 6TN

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Aircraft Safeguarding Zone - Aircraft Safeguarding Zone - All Exceeding 90M
Conservation Area - Blackburn Park Conservation Area 1979
Susceptible to Surf Water Flood (Less) -
Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH AREA