

Technical Note: Definition and Application of “Noise-Sensitive Location” (BS 4142 and Planning Practice Guidance – Noise)

1. Definition in planning and acoustic context

In both BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 – Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound and the Government’s Planning Practice Guidance (Noise), a “*noise-sensitive location*” (or “*noise-sensitive receptor*”) is defined by the *use of the premises* and the degree to which its occupants require protection from external noise for health, rest, or amenity.

Examples given in the relevant guidance typically include:

- Residential dwellings (including gardens and amenity spaces)
- Hospitals and care homes
- Hotels and hostels
- Educational buildings (schools, nurseries)

These are all Class C or equivalent “noise-sensitive uses” in planning terms.

Industrial or commercial premises, including offices, laboratories, or research and development facilities (such as within Hexagon Tower), are not generally classed as noise-sensitive under BS 4142 because:

- Their primary function is not rest or sleep.
- Internal noise criteria are not generally based on amenity, but on occupational comfort or productivity.
- Internal activities (e.g. fume cupboards, ventilation, plant) often generate a baseline noise environment considerably above that expected in a dwelling.

Accordingly, EHOs and acoustic consultants normally assess plant noise emissions at the façade of the nearest residential dwelling or equivalent Class C receptor, unless a planning condition explicitly specifies another receptor.

2. Application to Hexagon Tower

In this case, the receptor **107 Old Market Street**—the nearest residential development directly east of the site—was identified and accepted by Environmental Health within the approved acoustic report *JO421 – Hexagon Tower, Crumpsall Vale, Manchester M9 8QG – BS 4142 Noise Assessment* (approved under **CDN/24/0739**, decision dated 4th October 2024).

This report formed the technical basis for the agreed planning condition and therefore defines the relevant receptor for compliance purposes.

Internal spaces within Hexagon Tower—being laboratory and commercial research uses (Use Class E)—do not meet the planning or acoustic definition of “noise-sensitive locations.” Assessing against these spaces would not align with BS 4142 methodology or the intent of the planning condition.

3. Summary conclusion

For compliance with the approved noise condition and alignment with national guidance:

- The correct assessment location remains the nearest residential receptor at 107 Old Market Street.
- Noise levels within Hexagon Tower’s laboratory or office spaces should not be used as compliance points for the planning condition, though they can be investigated separately if there are operational or occupational comfort issues.