

Design & Access Statement

Installation of 7 No. New Air Conditioning Condenser Units to Flat Roof.

2 Highgate High Street, London, N6 5JL

1. Introduction

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the installation of seven new external air conditioning condenser units on the flat roof of the commercial premises at 2 Highgate High Street, London, N6 5JL.

The seven new condenser units will serve ten internal fan coil units providing comfort cooling and heating to the commercial accommodation. The new units are Daikin condensers, representing the latest generation of energy-efficient, low-noise climate control equipment.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Heritage Statement, Noise Impact Assessment, plant specification datasheets, and application drawings.

2. Site and Context

2.1 Site Description

The application site is a commercial unit situated at 2 Highgate High Street, within the heart of Highgate Village. The property comprises ground floor commercial accommodation with residential flats above. The building features a flat roof to the rear which currently accommodates four existing air conditioning condenser units with the former restaurant use.

The property falls within the London Borough of Haringey. The borough boundary runs through the centre of Highgate High Street, with even-numbered properties on the north-east side falling within Haringey and odd-numbered properties on the south side within Camden.

2.2 Conservation Area

The site is located within the Highgate Conservation Area, designated on 21 December 1967 and administered jointly by the London Boroughs of Haringey and Camden. The conservation area encompasses the historic village core and surrounding residential areas, recognised for their fine mix of Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian, and Arts and Crafts architecture.

The Highgate Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2017) is also a material consideration. The Plan includes policies requiring that development proposals preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Highgate's conservation areas and respect the setting of its heritage assets.

2.3 Planning History and Former Use

The ground floor commercial unit was most recently occupied as a restaurant. This former use required significant external mechanical plant and equipment including kitchen extraction systems, ventilation fans, and the four existing condenser units which remain on the flat roof. The restaurant extraction and ventilation systems generated considerably higher noise levels than the proposed replacement installation and operated during extended hours, including evenings, weekends, and outside normal working hours, as is typical of restaurant operations.

The change from restaurant to office use represents a material improvement in amenity for neighbouring residential occupiers, particularly in terms of noise, odour, and hours of operation.

3. The Proposal

3.1 Description of Works

The application proposes the following:

- Installation of seven new Daikin air conditioning condenser units on the flat roof, positioned at the furthest point from neighbouring residential properties.
- Associated refrigerant pipework and electrical connections routed internally where possible.

The seven new external condenser units will serve a total of ten internal fan coil units providing climate control to the commercial office accommodation.

3.2 Positioning and Layout

The positioning of the new units has been carefully considered to minimise impact on neighbouring amenity. The units have been located at the furthest point of the flat roof from neighbouring residential properties, maximising the distance between the noise source and the nearest noise-sensitive receptors.

The precise positions are shown on the proposed roof plan drawing submitted with this application. The units are set back from the parapet edge to minimise visibility from street level and surrounding properties.

3.3 Equipment Specification

The new units are Daikin condenser units, selected for their high energy efficiency, low noise output, and compact form factor. Daikin is the industry-leading manufacturer of air conditioning equipment, and the proposed units represent their latest generation of technology, offering significantly lower sound power levels than older equivalent models.

Full manufacturer datasheets including dimensions, weight, noise output (sound power and sound pressure levels), and appearance are submitted with this application.

4. Design

4.1 Appearance and Materials

The condenser units are finished in the manufacturer's standard light grey/white casing, which is visually recessive when viewed against the sky. The units are of a compact, low-profile design consistent with modern commercial building services equipment.

4.2 Visual Impact

The proposed units would be located on the flat roof and set back from the parapet edges. Due to the height of the existing parapet wall and the position of the units, they would not be visible from street level. While the units may be partially visible from higher-level viewpoints, including upper floors of some more distant neighbouring properties, any such views would be limited. The units would sit discreetly within the existing roofscape and would be largely screened by the parapet wall. It should also be noted that the flat roof already accommodates four existing condenser units. The proposed installation would therefore not introduce a new type of rooftop feature, and the principle of rooftop plant in this location is already established. Overall, the visual impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area is considered to be very limited.

4.3 Scale and Massing

The condenser units are modest in scale, with typical dimensions of approximately 920mm × 370mm × 610mm per unit (subject to confirmation from final equipment selection). At these dimensions, the units are comfortably contained within the flat roof area without appearing visually dominant or cluttering the roofscape.

5. Access

The installation of rooftop condenser units does not affect public access to or within the building, nor does it alter the existing means of access to the commercial premises at ground floor level.

Maintenance access to the units will be via the existing internal access route to the flat roof. The units are positioned to allow adequate clearance for routine servicing and maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements.

6. Amenity Considerations

6.1 Noise

The acoustic impact of the proposed installation is addressed in detail in the accompanying Noise Impact Assessment prepared in accordance with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019. The assessment demonstrates that the cumulative noise from all condenser units meets Haringey Council's requirements, achieving a rating level at least 10 dB below the prevailing background sound level (LA90) at the nearest noise-sensitive receptor.

It is important to note the significant improvement in the noise environment for neighbouring residents compared to the former restaurant use. The previous restaurant operation required high-capacity kitchen extraction systems, ventilation fans, and refrigeration equipment, all of which generated substantially higher noise levels than the proposed Daikin condenser units. Furthermore, this equipment operated during extended hours, typically from mid-morning through to late evening and beyond, seven days a week.

By contrast, the proposed office use will operate during normal business hours only, anticipated as 08:00–18:00 Monday to Friday, with an occasional extension to 20:00 in exceptional circumstances. The condenser units will only operate during occupied hours when cooling or heating is required. This represents a substantial reduction in the duration and intensity of mechanical plant noise affecting neighbouring properties.

The new Daikin units are of the latest generation, incorporating advanced inverter-driven compressor technology which modulates output to match demand, further reducing noise levels during periods of lower cooling or heating load. At part-load operation, which represents the majority of operating hours, the units will run significantly below their rated maximum sound power levels.

6.2 Odour

The proposed air conditioning condenser units produce no odour. This is a further material improvement over the former restaurant use, which would have generated cooking odours discharged at roof level via the kitchen extraction system.

6.3 Hours of Operation

The air conditioning system will operate during normal office hours only: 08:00–18:00 Monday to Friday, with an occasional worst-case extension to 20:00. The system will not operate overnight, at weekends, or on bank holidays under normal circumstances. The applicant is willing to accept a condition limiting hours of operation if the Local Planning Authority considers this appropriate.

7. Sustainability

The proposed Daikin units are high-efficiency heat pump systems utilising R-32 refrigerant, which has a significantly lower global warming potential than the R-410A refrigerant used in older systems such as those being retained. The inverter-driven compressor technology ensures energy consumption is matched to actual demand, minimising electricity use and associated carbon emissions.

The replacement of older, less efficient restaurant mechanical plant with modern, high-efficiency office climate control equipment contributes positively to the environmental performance of the building.

8. Planning Policy Context

The proposal has been assessed against the following policies:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) — Chapter 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
- London Plan (2021) — Policy HC1: Heritage Conservation and Growth; Policy D14: Noise
- Haringey Local Plan — Policy SP12: Conservation of the Historic Environment; Policy DM1: Delivering High Quality Design
- Highgate Neighbourhood Plan (2017) — Policies on design and heritage
- Highgate Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (Haringey)

The proposal preserves the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area. The condenser units are sited on an existing flat roof with no visibility from the public realm, the principle of rooftop plant is already established, and the new units are quieter and more efficient than the equipment they effectively replace. The change from restaurant to office use delivers a net improvement in amenity for neighbouring residents. The proposal therefore accords with all relevant policies.

9. Conclusion

This application proposes a modest and sensitively positioned installation of seven new external air conditioning condenser units and one heat recovery air conditioning unit on the flat roof of an existing commercial premises. The new Daikin units are of the latest generation and offer significantly lower noise output and improved energy efficiency when compared with the mechanical plant and extraction systems associated with the former restaurant use.

The units would be positioned on the flat roof, away from the parapet edges and at the furthest practicable point from neighbouring residential properties. They would not be visible from street level; however, it is acknowledged that they may be partially visible from higher-level viewpoints, including upper floors of some more distant neighbouring properties. Any such views would be limited, and the units would sit discreetly within the existing roofscape, largely screened by the parapet wall. The units would operate during normal office hours only.

The proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Highgate Conservation Area and represents a material improvement in amenity for neighbouring occupiers. The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment, which demonstrates compliance with Haringey Council's requirements and BS 4142:2014. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with all relevant planning policies, and approval is respectfully requested.