

**PLANNING DESIGN STATEMENT**

**FOR**

**TRUSTEES OF  
SIRI GURU SINGH SABHA READING**

**ON**

**PROPOSED ADVERTISEMENT APPLICATION FOR**

**FLAG STAFF AND ENSIGN  
(The Nishan Sahib)**

**AT**

**612 READING ROAD WINNERSH RG41 5HE  
BERKSHIRE**

**NOVEMBER 2025**



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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Planning Statement is submitted to Wokingham Borough Council ('WBC') in support of an Advertisement application for a proposed Flag Staff and Ensign at the former Mizuno House, 612 Reading Road, Winnersh, Wokingham, RG41 5HE ('The Site') which is currently undergoing change of use works from an office building (Use Class E) to a Gurudwara (place of worship (Use Class F1(f)) and community centre (Use Class F2(b))
- 1.2. Planning Permission for the Change of Use was granted under reference 231077 by WBC on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2023 to Siri Guru Singh Sabha Trustees (the 'Applicant').

**Proposal:** The description of proposed Advertisement is:- The erection of a flag post and ensign (also known as the Nishan Sahib in Sikh Faith) erected in the North-East forecourt of the premises.

### **Background & key data**

- 1.3. The proposal has evolved from the currently underway conversion works for the new Sikh Gurudwara & Community Centre and an established specific need. The community, historical, cultural and social contexts and need of the advertisement are all detailed in Appendix A of this statement.

**Applicant:** The Trustees, Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Reading  
**Address:** 612 Reading Road, Winnersh, Wokingham, RG41 5HE.  
**Package:** Display of a 14.7 meter tall flag pole mast (Nishan Sahib) within front courtyard with Insignia.  
**Agent:** Mr. R S Kalsi, RK Designs

### **Application Documentation**

- 1.4. Alongside this Design Statement, the application comprises the following plans and documents:

- Application Form
- Application Fee
- Precedent Guidance Reports / Statements (Gravesend Gurudwara & Ramgarhia Sabha Reading)
- Lighting details product information
- OS Plan 1:1250 on drawing PLG-01
- Drawing No. PLG-01 – Proposed Site, Block & Location Plan.
- Drawing No. PLG-02 – Contextual and Detailed Mast Elevations
- Drawing No. PLG-03 – Detailed Laid down Plan & Tilt Study (Pt.1)
- Drawing No. PLG-04 – Hydraulic System Concept & Tilt Study (Pt.2)
- Flood Study Report – Odyssey Report No. 23-084 dated 12<sup>th</sup> August 2025

### **Structure of this Statement**

- 1.8 The remainder of this statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2: Describes the Site and its surroundings;
  - Section 3: Describes the Proposed Advertisement;
  - Section 4: Sets out relevant planning policy context of the adopted Development Plan & NPPF
  - Section 5: Provides a planning assessment of the proposal through the pertinent considerations; and
  - Section 6: Provides a summary and conclusions.
  - *Appendix A: Provides information on the symbolic context of the advertising of the Nishan Sahib.*
  - *Appendix B: Nishan Sahib Precedents / Installations*

## **2. Site and Surroundings**

### **The Site:**

- 2.1. The whole Site Boundary encapsulates approx. 0.35ha and is located to the west of Winnersh, along the Reading Road. It comprises a former office building known as 'Mizuno House' with associated access and parking. The building is currently undergoing conversion works to a community centre as per Planning Approval No. 231077.
- 2.2. The Site is bound to the north by Reading Road, to the east and south - by an MOT and plant hire yard, and to the west by a retail and auto parts centre. Residential dwellings border the north side of Reading Road.
- 2.3. The Site is located within the settlement of Winnersh at approximately four miles south east of Reading Town Centre and about three miles to the north west of Wokingham.
- 2.4. The Site lies wholly within Flood Zone 2 as per Government's flood mapping tool. A robust, high level, flood risk assessment was submitted for application 231077 some two years back. That report is extant to date although an updated report No. 23-084 was issued on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2025 by Odyssey. This is submitted as part of the application with pertinent highlights.
- 2.5. The Site is outside any conservation area. No inclusion of it could be found in the Heritage England's Map listing heritage assets. So, it seems to be free of historical constraints that might preclude the proposal. Similarly, it is unconstrained from any ecological or landscape designations prohibiting such installation on the site.

## ***Surrounding Area***

- 2.6 The immediate surrounding area comprises a mixture of commercial, retail and residential uses. To the west of the Site lies Winnersh Retail Park comprising 'Wickes', 'Halfords' & 'Pets at Home'. To the east are an MOT centre & a tool plant hire business. Residential properties sit north of the Reading Road.
- 2.7 The Site enjoys strong public transport connections with Reading and Wokingham Centres, and beyond, although these are not material to the proposal (a non traffic generating) consideration.

## ***Planning History***

- 2.8 Checks at Wokingham Borough Council reveal the following planning history for the site:
- 2.9 Application No. 34046, for demolition of existing buildings and erection of new (B1) building of 1950 sqm. plus plant room and provision of 78 parking spaces, approved on 19 April 1990
- 2.10 Application No. 40073 for change of colour of metal elements around main entrance to match white windows, approved on 22 Jan 19
- 2.11 Application No. 231077 for change of use to community (Class F1 (f1)) & place of worship (Class F2 (b))use, approved on 01.08.23.

## **3. The Proposed Advertisement**

3.1 This Statement Section summarises the proposed development for which Advertisement Consent is sought.

### ***Description of Proposal***

3.2 Full Advertisement Consent is sought for the following: "Display of a 14.7 meter tall flag pole mast (Nishan Sahib) within front courtyard with Insignia."

### ***Overview***

3.3 The place of worship & integrated social inclusion community centre uses at the site were approved under, Application No. 231077, by Wokingham Borough Council in August 2023. Internal conversion works for these are currently progressing on site. The Advertisement proposal is totally dedicated to these uses. It does *not seek to intensify them* in any way. It is scaled to respect all existing features & is largely screened from the street scene by vegetation fencing. No existing feature shall be altered. The mast shall be a complementary implant.

3.4 In essence, the Nishan Sahib is more than a conventional flag, an advertisement, or a decorative architectural feature. It is a mandatory and inherent faith element of any Sikh Gurudwara globally. Its acceptance here is considered implied by approval of Planning Application No. 231077 for a change of use of the premises to a Sikh place of worship (Use Class F1(f) and community centre (Use Class F2(b)). That approved change of use, for a nominated Sikh place of worship, would normally expect the principle of a Nishan Sahib at the site for process completeness. The Nishan Sahib, in itself, is a portrayal of worship, community support, tradition, and ceremonial majesty.

## **4. Planning Policy Context**

4.1 This Statement section identifies, as backdrop, the relevant national & local planning policies or guidance to consider for the proposal. Wokingham Borough Council is the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for The Site:-

**National:** National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012), i.e. under heading 7- Requiring good design, such as paragraph 67 & heading 11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, such as Para. 125  
National Planning Policy Framework (2018) (Feb. 2025 update) Sect. 12 – Achieving Well-designed places  
The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended)  
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Advertisement Control Policy Guidelines

**Regional:** N/A

**Local:** The principal historic guidance was as per Wokingham Local Plan Policies WOS3 & PPG19 & the Berkshire Structure Plan Policy DP5. That guidance is covered in subsequent documents referred further in this statement.

4.2 Reference is also made to (1) Core Strategy (2010) policy CP3 - General Principles of the Core Strategy (2010), (2) Wokingham Town Centre Master plan SPD (2010) and (3) Borough Design Guide (2012)

4.3 Currently their *principal Document referring to Outdoor advertisement control* appears to be the Managing Development Delivery Plan of 2014 which describes Policy TB19 – on page 54 therein:

### **Policy TB19: Outdoor advertising**

TB19 states: - The Council will only permit outdoor advertisements where they demonstrate:

- d) There is no adverse impact upon highway safety
- e) There is no harmful impact on the amenity of the adjoining land uses

f) There is no harmful impact on the character or appearance of the area.

**Specific Material Policy Considerations are expanded upon as applicable, in like sequence, as follows:**

**National:**

*National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) ('the Framework')*:

4.4 The latest Framework update of Feb. 2025 sets out the Government's planning policies for England and their expected application. Although the NPPF is a high level strategic policy document there is clear & pertinent support to be found in various texts there-in for the proposal - particularly within:

Section 4 "Decision Making" Paras. 39 & 48

Section 8 "Promoting healthy and safe communities" Paras. 96a, c; & 98 a, b

Section 12 "Achieving well-designed places" Paras. 131, 135 & 139

Section 15 "Conserving and enhancing the natural Environment" Paras. 187 d, e; 188; 192a, b; & 193d.

4.5 NPPF Para. 93 states that "planning decisions should plan positively for community facilities such as places of worship and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments."

*National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)*

4.6 The DC&LG first published the Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG'), the web-based resource to reflect and support the NPPF on 6th March 2014; the advice there-in is updated on-line on a "category" basis. It guides that when assessing applications, local planning authorities consider amenity, public safety, design, size, materials, illumination, and impact on the street scene. From the current information it appears the latest update of April 2025 only updated the Planning Fee Rates. Otherwise the afore-listed categories of the NPPG are considered amply relevant to this proposal for Appropriate assessment, Biodiversity net gain, and Healthy and safe communities

**Local:**

Wokingham Borough's relevant Development Plan documents in this case consist of the Core Strategy (January 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery Plan (February 2014).

**4.7 Core Strategy (2010)**

The Council adopted their Core Strategy in 2010 & relevant policies from that are set out below:

CP1 – Sustainable Development and CP2 – Inclusive Communities

CP3 – General Principles for Development

CP7 – Biodiversity and CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals

**4.8 Managing Development Delivery Plan (MDD) (2014)**

The Council adopted the MDD Plan in February 2014; policies considered relevant from it are set out below:

CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development & CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction

CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping

CC09 – Development and Flood Risk / DM10 - Flood Risk and DM15 - Site History

TB19 – Outdoor advertising

TB23 – Biodiversity and Development & DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species

DM7 - Conserving the Historic Environment

DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity

**Policy TB19: Outdoor advertising**

TB19 states: - The Council will only permit outdoor advertisements where they demonstrate:

d) There is no adverse impact upon highway safety

e) There is no harmful impact on the amenity of the adjoining land uses

f) There is no harmful impact on the character or appearance of the area.

4.9 It continues: "Advertisements and signs are important to the commercial activities of shops and businesses both within the built and rural environments. The Council will support well designed signs and advertisements which are in keeping with the scale and character of buildings on which they are displayed and which do not lead to a detrimental impact on the quality of visual amenities, particularly around architectural heritage and on the natural environment. Signage and advertisements should not cause adverse impacts on highway safety.

4.10 The P & CP Act 2001 (as amended) ('The Act') provides in S.38 (6): "the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless materials considerations indicate otherwise." for the set statutory test(s).

*Supplementary Planning Documents*

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (May 2010)

4.11 The Council adopted their Sustainable Design and Construction SPD on 28th May 2010. It provides an up to date and comprehensive approach to considering sustainable design & construction of new development.

4.12 It further states “The Council will encourage all developments to be built to higher standards than required at a regional or national level. The Council will encourage developers to set new standards of excellence. It is also important that the sustainable design aspects of applications be balanced with other LPA design guidance.”

#### *Emerging Development Plan:*

4.13 The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) local plans, is still at a consultative stage of preparation. It is considered therefore, at the time of writing, the LPU has limited weight in the decision-making process for this application.

## **5. Planning Assessment**

5.1 This section of the Planning Statement assesses the proposed installation against the adopted Development Plan and other material considerations as outlined in afore-detailed Section 4.

#### *Principle of Development Site History and Context*

5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.4 Policy CP2 seeks that new development should “contribute to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs.” It states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of specific minority groups such as the Sikh community on the Borough (as well as ageing population, children, young people and families) which the Gurudwara supports.

5.5 An advertisement is defined by S. 336(1) of the T & CP Act 1990 (as amended) (The Act), as “ means any word, letter, model, sign, placard, board, notice, awning, blind, device or representation, whether illuminated or not, in the nature of, and employed wholly or partly for the purposes of, advertisement, announcement or direction, and (without prejudice to the previous provisions of this definition) includes any hoarding or similar structure used or designed, or adapted for use and anything else principally used, or designed or adapted principally for use, for the display of advertisements, and references to the display of advertisements shall be construed accordingly.”

5.6 Section 220 of The Act relates to the formulation of regulations for controlling display of advertisements; Section 222 of The Act sets out that planning permission is not needed for advertisements complying with regulations. The regulations formulations for controlling display of advertisements are the T & CP Act (Control of Advertisement) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended).

5.7 In light of all above, only advertisement consent is required for the proposed advert, which comprises both the flag / ensign and the flagpole, being the “*device employed wholly or partly for the purposes of, advertisement, announcement or direction, and policy context includes any similar structure used or designed, or adapted for use for the display of advertisements...*”

5.8 In terms of the merits of the submission although the NPPF recognises that poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on appearance of the built & natural environment, it reinforces that ***the only considerations for advertisement submissions are amenity & public safety.***

5.9 General policy requires applications be examined in the light of the Borough Council’s adopted policy guidelines for advertisement control and states that displays which are detrimental to public safety or amenity will be resisted.

#### *Location*

5.10 The Site is wholly located within the development limits of Winnersh (as identified by Policy CC02) and Core Strategy Policy CP9 advises that development proposals here are / will be acceptable in principle.

5.11 The flag staff installation is in response to an historically identified faith emblem needed in conjunction with the main usage of the premises, but, without intensification.

5.12 On the above basis, it is considered that the proposal complies with Policies CC02, CP9 and CP1 and the site location is considered appropriate and acceptable in principle.

#### *Support for Community Facilities*

5.13 The Core Strategy (CS), seeks to ensure that development addresses the needs of all community sectors via ‘the growth of ethnic / cultural mix within the population. The CS Vision reflects this: “all will have improved access to high quality services such as ...community facilities ...social wellbeing, health & quality of life’.

5.15 Criterion D of Policy CP2 sets out to support proposals that address the requirements of: ‘The specific identified needs of minority groups in the borough, including .....minority ethnic groups.’

5.16 Criteria D (i) and (ii) provide measures that need to be demonstrated for acceptability of the proposals. The policy stated Circumstances for acceptable proposals are:

- (i) The site is located either within or close to development limits of a settlement in policy CP9
- (ii) The proposal is not disproportionate to the scale of the existing ....

5.17 The Site is located within the identified existing development limits as shown in the adopted policies. It is therefore considered to fully satisfy criterion (i) as stated above.

5.18 In regard to criterion (ii) of Policy CP2, the proposal is considered to comply as it only seeks to *complement and address* the main building usage within the terms of scale & mass.

#### *Compliance with Policy CP3*

5.19 On the basis of the above assessment and evidence of all supporting documentation, it is considered that the proposal complies with relevant advertisement policies, and therefore acceptable in principle.

#### *Technical Considerations, Design and Public Safety*

- 5.20 It is considered that the flag mast location within the site forecourt will not have any adverse impact on public footpath or private ground pedestrians or general highway safety or vehicular traffic, and therefore should raise no objection. For context the documentation includes a tilt study plan of the mast, in its lowered position, ensuring there is no conflict with vehicular movement, parking or pedestrian routes/access. Notably, the ceremonial mast lowering will only be maximum 2 – 3 annual events.
- 5.21 The flag pole will be lowered towards the North West within the site / premises forecourt and there will be no adverse impact on the safety of pedestrians or vehicles, In addition, the introduction of an hydraulic raising / lowering tilt system shall minimise risk to the operators and the public attending the flag changing ceremonies. A scaled drawing for tilt study is included, for safety confirmation, in the application documents
- 5.22 The proposal structural stability and public safety shall be ensured by specified *robust professional engineering design assessments*. It is expected, the foundation base will be a 0.85 meter deep mass concrete block, hexagonal in plan for stability ~2.0 m side length. The actual steel mast shall be fixed to the base via a high strength steel tilt table operable with proprietary engineered hydraulic ram system installed at the base centre.
- 5.23 In summary no adverse impact on public safety is considered to occur. Nor is the proposed flag advertisement, including the flag mast, considered to conflict with national or local planning policy & guidance or other relevant legislation on safety.

#### *Highway Access, Safety and Parking Provision:*

5.24 The proposal has no inherent traffic generation potential for the non-patron general public and therefore has nil highway use or parking impact. It is subservient & ancillary to the main building usage without activity intensification. The design has considered the proposal and eliminated its potential impact on the frontage highway. It aims to ensure there is no conflict with vehicular access or movement, parking or pedestrian routes/access in either erect or lowered position. Its structural stability and public safety shall be ensured by specified *sturdy and robust professional engineering assessments*. The mast location has been selected so as not to obscure or hinder the ready interpretation of, any road traffic sign, or otherwise to render hazardous the use of any highway as per LPA / NPPF guidance. There are no other transport modal implications that could be impacted.

#### *Flooding and Drainage*

- 5.25 Policy CC09 requires planning proposals in Flood Zone 2 to take into account their vulnerability to floods. Policy CC10 of the MDD states that all proposals must also ensure surface water arising there-of is managed in a sustainable manner including taking into account climate change, through a Surface Water Drainage Strategy.
- 5.26 A resilient flood analysis for the whole site was included in an FRA by Odyssey in spring 2023. That resilience was robustly re-examined in their updated report No. 23-084, of 12<sup>th</sup> August 2025, included in the application. That assessment has also fully accounted for the mast base and shown that the proposal shall comply with EA and WDC (MDD) requirements for flood water handling with a nominal compensation volume requirement. The latter is shown on the plans in line with their findings.
- 5.27 Odyssey state: that a ‘non-residential institution’ i.e. a Gurudwara use is a ‘less vulnerable use’ for Flood Risk purposes. The proposal itself is sterile from flood risk damage. Overall the design also ensures no increase in flood risk elsewhere as a result of the proposal. The hydraulic mechanism casing shall itself be waterproofed for electro-mechanical safety and corrosion protection. It is believed the proposal thus supports the aims of Policy CC09 & CC10

#### *Character of the Area:*

5.28 Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design. Only the minimal essential sizes are proposed for the “monument” structure and all materials are selected for respect, aesthetic affect and weather durability.

#### *Visual and Neighbourhood Amenity:*

5.29 The mast shall be about 14.7 metres height and installed on the site forecourt at 612 Reading Road. It will be *set back a good 10 metres* from the site boundary, with significant parts screened by green hedging and trees. It is

therefore considered to have no adverse impact on the street scene. The tallest street lamps in the neighbourhood, on the main junction roundabout, westwards of the application site are estimated to exceed the proposal mast height by a good margin. It is considered therefore that the proposal would be neither overbearing nor negatively impact on the neighbourhood.

5.30 In order to safeguard the visual amenities of neighbouring properties and the locality the proposal site is largely curtained from the street scene by vegetation. It is located in the front forecourt of the premises on the north east elevation and the nearest residential properties, on the east side of Reading Road, are between 35 m and 48m to the north of the site. Between the mast and these dwellings are some prominent mature trees (all retained), a metal grill fencing and 2.5 metre wide 1.5 metre high green hedging marking the application site boundary. Beyond the application boundary, are the Reading Road carriageway and footpaths and a 7 metre wide verge bordering the residential plot boundaries farther. The actual residential buildings are set additionally and generously further back into their plots.

5.31 It is considered therefore that the size and design of the proposed flagpole and associated hydraulic system is acceptable in the detailed location. Given the nature of the proposal, there would be no adverse visual impact or other amenity issues which might detract from acceptability. It is also considered that the presence of the flagpole and the flying of a flag would not detract from the wider mixed commercial / residential surroundings of the application site to a point where it should be regarded as being unacceptable.

5.32 A gentle warm low impact illumination up-light system is proposed for night visibility from all directions. The typical light colour and specification url link is at: <https://amzn.eu/d/8ufw4JP> (warm white, 120w). This will be cluster of 2-3 LED lights, providing up ward illumination, towards the building facade, away from the public highway as per locations in the plan drawing.

#### *Noise/Odours:*

5.33 No continuous noise or odour issues arise in connection with this installation.

#### *Landscape, Trees and Street Scene:*

5.34 The site is located on a Green Route; the proposal protects all existing vegetation intact. Indeed, the installation shall be predominantly obscured by the vegetation from Reading Road street view and some future tree planting is planned further east in the forecourt area. Overall, the proposal will be quite modest in scale on the building façade and sensitive to the existing greenery, not appearing as a cluttered feature or out of site context. Only static external illumination with is proposed for the mast it self.

#### *Ecology & Bio-diversity Net Gain matters:*

5.35 The proposal is for a minimal footprint based installation (~ 4-6 sqm.) with the original turf ground cover restored. No long term eco-regime changes shall occur to any soft ground, existing landscaping or vegetation areas. Therefore, it is considered the proposal is unlikely to impact on any protected species or biodiversity regime and falls under the *de-minimis* category – exempt from the *BNG* obligations, all as per Statute. Indeed, as per Sikh faith teachings on the natural environment, a non-obligatory enhancement opportunity presents itself here for taking e.g. by providing a potted plant base feature, subject to structural & weathering suitability, and tree planting as per Para. 5.28 above.

#### *Other Matters:*

5.36 An overhead HV cable occurs on the neighbouring land at 580 Reading Road, some 48 metres distant from the mast or nearest tilt point. The minimum Electricity Transmission Regulation Specified clearance for the highest power, 400kV, cables is 7.3 m. The advertisement location secures a safety factor of seven

#### *Specific Aesthetics and design demands*

5.37 The overall design approach has been to achieve balance between traditional material and styling with modern concepts to sit well site specific needs and restrictions. Several illustrations of traditional designs are presented in Appendix B. For the application site the design is specifically guided by a number of factors. (2) A hydraulic tilt system is incorporated for operational safety & (2) there is an additional need to prevent flood water penetration there-of for mechanical system mobility and (3) shielding from corrosion. (4) There is also the need that the mast level, when fully laid horizontal for re-shrouding, is no higher than 1.4 metres above ground for safe working upon by congregational volunteers. (5) Modern ecological thinking also demands the maximum protection of existing greenery; trees and soft ground for flood water soak up area. (6) Structural safety and public protection necessitate a sturdy, durable and robust steel column sizing, with a stable base installation for local weather conditions. (7) It is also essential to avoid conflict with existing building features, or utility services, above and below ground, and generate a suitably attractive design with minimum negativity and maximum positive impacts.

5.38 The presented design has therefore been developed to meet the specified demands of Para. 5.37. An attractively styled hooding is built in to protect the base assemblies. The translucent hooding shall have low intensity internal, halo level, illumination with a time controlled switch system. This high durability hooding shall also have a bonnet flap door for mast tilt facility. The proprietary casing sides will have Khanda emblem mountings on its sides for

silhouette effect adding an element of unique-ness over traditional Nishan Sahib designs generally found at Gurudwaras.

5.39 Keeping up with an aesthetic design philosophy – only smooth high quality fast colour shrouding and ensign fabrics shall be selected for long term weather and fading resistance, although these will be renewed annually at least, Other features incorporated for a durable design include an anti-flood basin to exclude water penetration, an hydraulic ram lifting / tilting system for safety, and an optimum site location selected for the shortest and safest tilt orientation and spread distance, with maximum greenery protection – all with minimum ground take up. It is considered all this adds to a well processed out, majestic but modest, scheme in the interests of all concerned.

## 6. Summary and Conclusions

6.1 This Planning Statement is submitted on behalf of Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara, in support of an advertisement application for an essential faith symbol / feature. It is a community need.

### 6.2 *Summary of Reasons for Recommendation*

6.3 It is considered that the size and design of the proposed flagpole and associated hydraulic system is acceptable in this location. Given the nature of the proposal, a flag mast as detailed would be of no negative visual impact or other amenity issues which might justify refusal. It is considered that the presence of the flagpole and the flying of a flag would *not detract* from the wider mixed commercial residential surroundings of the application site to a point where the proposal should be regarded as unacceptable. The location of the flag pole within the forecourt of the Gurudwara would not result in any highways or public safety issues as demonstrated in the full drawing plans. In summary it is considered that advertisement consent can be granted as per case made in all documentation attached.

6.4 The proposal is to install a new 14.7 metres tall flag mast. The mast need arises in connection with the Sikh Gurudwara Use (Community & Worship Classes F2 (b) & F1 (f)) of the premises as approved in August 2023. The conversion works for that are currently underway with due completion & opening expected circa January 2026.

6.5 The flag pole will be lowered and re-raised for 2 – 3 annual ceremonial occasions via an electro-hydraulic system which will mitigate any health and safety risks to the users and operators. The flag which will be attached to the flag pole is 1.85 m by 1.25 m. (or less). Every Gurudwara site in the world has a similar mast and it feature is an integral part of the identity of a Sikh Gurudwara and the Sikh religion. *It is akin to a Church Spire or Tower for the Christian Faith.*

6.6 The application is made in order to address an identified community need for this particular feature in this location. The site is approved for a community and worship use.

6.7 Section 38(6) of the T&CP Act 2004 is clear in requiring that planning applications should only be approved where they accord with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Council's development plan recognises the need for facilitation of community support projects / proposals, and evidence, overall, suggests the proposal would be compliant with the Core Strategy and MDD local plans.

6.8 The proposed Mast Installation is considered acceptable in principle and details. It shall facilitate a practical and efficiently compliant community “inclusivity” support project for approved activities for inherent social benefits. The mast setting, in a front forecourt environment, shall be a non-invasive street scene feature with lower parts showing in a hit and miss fashion, through an aesthetic natural vegetation screening. All the existing large/dense tree vegetation is to be retained thus conserving the visible street scene intact. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the Development Plan. On overall safety, it is noted that the flagstaff: (a) shall not endanger persons using the highway, (b) shall not obscure, or hinder the ready interpretation of, any traffic sign, and c) it shall not hinder the operation of any device used for the purposes of security.

6.9 There are several requirements for due regard under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010). Among the protected equalities are race, religion & belief. The application is submitted on behalf of the Board of Trustees from Siri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara Reading who are a religious organisation - Sikhism is a monotheistic religion. The application supports the Sikh community. Persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular proposal. There shall be no significant adverse impacts from the proposal. Indeed positive equality impacts may arise there-of. The Gurudwara Trustees, as Applicants, are aware of their responsibilities that any advertisement displayed, and the site used for its display must be (a) maintained so as not to impair the visual amenity of the site and (b) the structure or hoarding erected or used for the purpose of advertisement must be maintained in a condition that does not endanger the public.

6.10 Overall it is considered that the proposed flagpole and flag /ensign shall be in line with Policy TB19 of the Wokingham Local Plan - the Borough Council's *principal adopted Advertisement Control Policy* Guidance. It is therefore considered that the proposed signage is neither harmful to public amenity nor public safety and therefore, an appropriate **ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT** is requested.

## Appendix A

(Report Reference Paras 1.3 & 1.8)

### Nishan Sahib Contexts

The Sikh Nishan Sahib is a triangular, saffron-colored flag that represents the Sikh faith and marks Sikh places of worship, known as Gurudwaras. It is displayed on a flagpole / mast placed outside all Sikh Gurudwaras. It symbolizes Sikh values like equality and selfless service and is flown on a tall mast to be publically visible; it acts as a local identification symbol for the Gurudwara. The flag bears the Khanda, a symbol of Sikhism, and is considered a sacred and honorable ensign. *It is akin to a Church Spire or Church Bell Tower for the Christian Faith*

It symbolizes that there is a place of worship, a place for shelter, sanctuary or refuge, at times of distress, and community kitchen and many forms of social support available.

Every Gurudwara in the world has a similar mast on site and it is an integral part of the identity of Sikh Gurudwara and the Sikh religion. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion.

#### Summary of definitions

**Name:** "Nishan" is a Persian word for "flag," and "Sahib" is an Arabic term of respect meaning "master" or "lord," so the name means "holy flag" or "exalted ensign".

**Symbol of faith:** It represents the core principles of Sikhism, including the oneness of God, equality for all humans, and a life of service and dedication.

**Symbol of sovereignty:** It signifies the presence of Sikh identity in a neighborhood and can be seen from far away to guide people to the Gurudwara.

**Khanda:** The flag typically features the Khanda symbol, which represents Sikhism and consists of a double-edged sword, a circular quoit, and two single-edged swords.

#### Physical characteristics and tradition

**Color:** Traditionally saffron-coloured or navy blue is also an option, especially for historic Gurudwaras and tradition.

**Shape:** It is a triangular, high durability fabric flag, about 1.8 metres in horizontal length and 1.2 metres height

**Display:** It is flown from a tall flagpole, often wrapped in cloth, and is a focal point at the entrance of a Gurudwara.

**Annual replacement and salutation:** The flag and mast shroud are replaced annually in April during the festival of Baisakhi. The mast is lowered, all fabric removed from it, cleaned as appropriate, for re-enshrining and the new flag mounting. The whole assembly is then re-raised to the correct erect position for the annual Salutation.

#### Role in Sikh life

**Identification:** It serves to identify a Gurudwara as a place of worship and a refuge for anyone seeking spiritual or physical support.

**Processions:** During Sikh processions, the flag is carried at the head of the group by a designated flag bearer called a "Nishanchi".

**Respect:** Great reverence is shown to the Nishan Sahib; it is treated as a holy object, not a mere national symbol.

**Appendix B: Nishan Sahib Precedents / Installations**



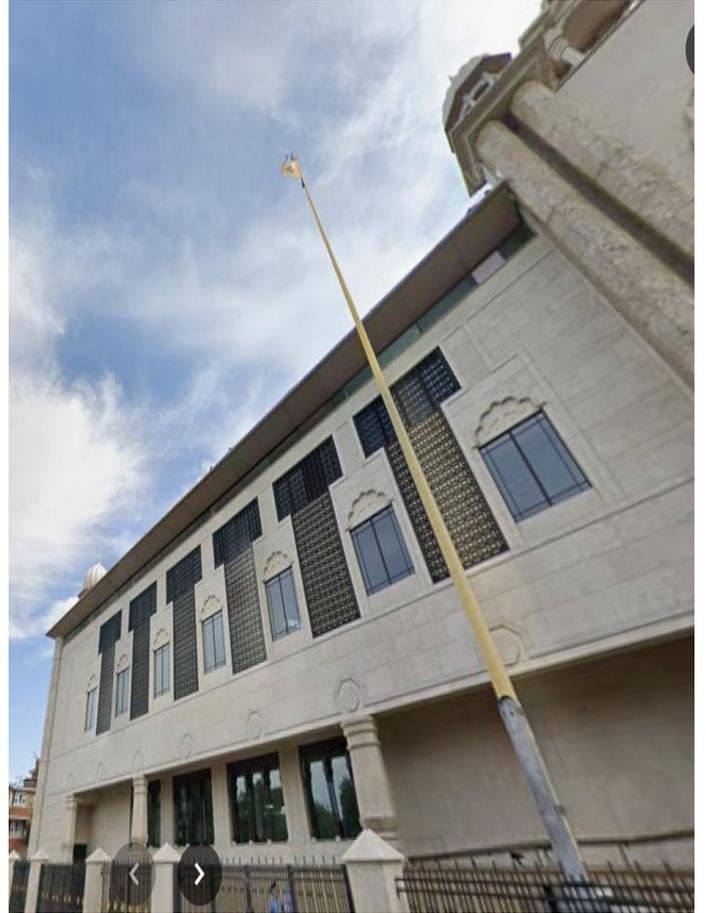
CUMBERLAND ROAD READING



LONDON ROAD EARLEY



WOODLANDS ROAD SLOUGH



GURU NANAK ROAD SOUTHALL



GRAVESEND



PARK ROAD SOUTHALL



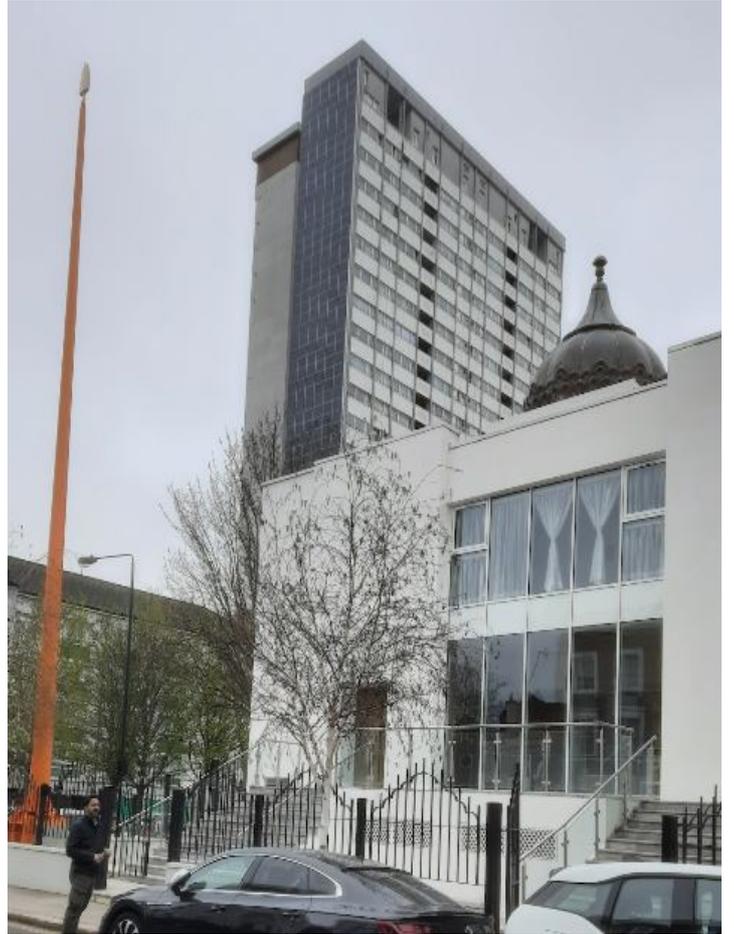
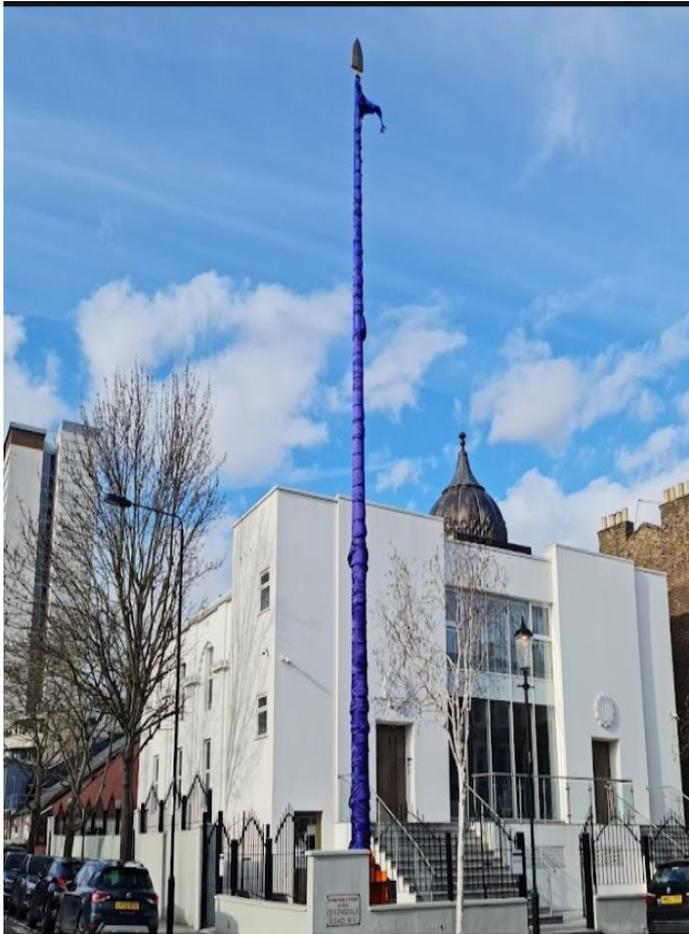
LEICESTER



BARKING EAST LONDON



MAJESTIC "BUILDING MOUNTED" CONCEPT MODEL



SHEPHERS BUSH LONDON

## Appendix C: Applicant's Précis

### The Nishan Sahib: An Essential Operational Requirement for an Approved Sikh Gurudwara

As shown in Appendix C, The Nishan Sahib is more than a conventional flag, an advertisement, or a decorative architectural feature. It is a mandatory and inherent faith element of any Sikh Gurudwara worldwide. Its amenable acceptance here is considered rather lawful by approval of Planning Application No. 231077 for a change of use of the premises to a Sikh place of worship (Use Class F1 (f)) and community centre (Use Class F2 (b)). That approved change of use, for a nominated Sikh place of worship, would normally imply acceptance of the principle of a Nishan Sahib at the site for completeness. The Nishan Sahib in itself is a portrayal of worship, community support, tradition, and ceremonial majesty. Its installation is thus a foreseeable and real requirement arising from the approved Change of Use.

**Integral Function:** The mast installation is integral to the site's function for the following reasons:

**Religious & Spiritual Necessity:** It symbolizes the basic faith function of a Sikh Gurudwara, i.e. worship, spiritual refuge, and the availability of essential community services such as Langar (free community kitchen).

**Ceremonial Requirement:** It is central to annual Sikh ceremonies, including the formal lowering, re-shrouding, salutation, and raising of the ensign— all traditions ingrained into Sikh communal practice.

**Primary focal Identifier:** It acts as the principal, silent but discernible identifier of a Gurudwara, equivalent in status and purpose to a church spire, tower, or bell structure in Christian practice.

**Sacred Status:** It is treated as a banner for respect in the faith, an ensign of dignity, a badge of honor. It is not a commercial advertisement per say. It's not an *ad* for promoting goods, services, or economic activity.

For these reasons, the Nishan Sahib is not an intensification of use or an introduction of new activity. It is ancillary to the lawful approved use of the building for operation as intended and understood for grant of permission in 2023.

### Planning Policy Relevance

The proposal meets all relevant planning criteria and is supported by national policy:

**Policy TB19 – Outdoor Advertising:** Even when tested against the criteria for advertisements, the proposal complies.

**Highway Safety:** The mast is positioned well back into the forecourt, is safety-tested, and ensures no interference with sightlines, pedestrian routes, or traffic signage, satisfying TB19 (d).

**Amenity:** The structure is modestly sized, substantially screened by existing hedging and trees, and set back over 10 metres from the boundary, ensuring no harm to neighbouring amenity, satisfying TB19(e).

**Character/Appearance:** The mast is a customary religious feature, in keeping with the mixed-use surroundings and in line with the afore-approved worship use. It will not detract from the character of the area, satisfying TB19 (f).

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Paragraph 93 requires planning decisions to support community facilities such as places of worship. The installation of the Nishan Sahib is crucial to the functioning of a Sikh worship premises, fully supporting the aims of the NPPF by enabling religious practice and enhancing inclusivity.

**Material Consideration – Religious Necessity and Equality Duty:** The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires decision-makers to consider the needs of religious groups. As the Nishan Sahib is integral to Sikh worship, places - enabling its installation directly aids the needs of a protected faith group. The proposal causes no adverse impacts. It represents a positive equality outcome - facilitating religious practice as intended under the approved use.

In summary, the installation of the Nishan Sahib is a functional and operational necessity stemming directly from the approved Use Class F1 (f) and F2 (b), and is therefore an inseparable component required for the proper and intended operational functioning of the Gurudwara.