

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252695
Site Address:	Harrison Almshouses, London Road, Twyford, Wokingham, RG10 9EX
Expiry Date:	19 June 2026
Advert Publication Date:	4 March 2026
Site Notice Date:	4 March 2026
Site Visit Date:	23 April 2026
Proposal: Application for Listed Building consent for the proposed removal of existing boiler units and installation of new gas boilers and flues with associated works at nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Listed building

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets (where site is within a Conservation Area)

NO RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Conservation	No objection
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REPRESENTATIONS

Twyford Parish Council	No objection
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APPRAISAL

The Harrison Almshouses are single storey terraced properties sited around a grassed courtyard and facilitate 5no. 1-bedroom dwellings. It is a grade 2* listed building.

The Heritage statement provided with this application for listed building consent provides a timeline of the history of the Almshouses. This is reiterated below for reference.

- The Alms-houses on the London Road in Twyford were built circa 1640, at the request of Sir Richard Harrison, a local benefactor.
- By 1954 the Alms-houses condition had deteriorated into such a very poor state that the Charity Commission authorised the sale of the property with new Alms-houses to be built elsewhere.
- Good fortune came with an 'Order' to sell land to the east of the Alms-houses and the trustees auctioned land to the west in 1965.
- The sale of both plots allowed for all the necessary repairs and improvements.
- The London Road Alms-houses re-opened in 1966.
- Further work in 1997 reconfigured the layout to provide 5 apartments.

Changes to the regulations for domestic gas boilers has resulted in a need for the trustees of the historic almshouses to ensure their tenants have compliant gas boilers systems (including flues), with four of the five residential apartments, created in the originally eight celled historic Harrison Almshouses complex, needing to have their gas boiler and flue replaced. This is what has led the submission of this listed building consent application.

A full schedule of works is outlined below:

- Number 2. Install a new gas boiler within the airing cupboard above the existing hot water cylinder, installing a vertical flue up through the roof positioned carefully to avoid any existing rafters above and seal with lead roof flashing. (Scaffolding access equipment to be used to install new flue). Disconnect and remove existing back boiler unit. Run condensate pipe internally to kitchen sink waste.
- Number 3. Install a new gas boiler within the airing cupboard above the existing hot water cylinder, installing a vertical flue up through the roof positioned carefully to avoid any existing rafters above and seal with lead roof flashing. (Scaffolding access equipment to be used to install new flue). Disconnect and remove existing back boiler unit. Run condensate pipe internally to kitchen sink waste.
- Number 4. Install new gas boiler in kitchen on bedroom wall in place of kitchen cupboard. Install a vertical flue up through the roof positioned carefully to avoid any existing rafters above and seal with lead roof flashing. (Scaffolding access equipment to be used to install new flue). Disconnect and remove existing back boiler unit. Run condensate pipe internally to kitchen sink waste.

- Number 5. Disconnect and remove current back boiler unit. Install new gas boiler in fireplace in same location as current back boiler unit. Reconnect to existing pipework Flue horizontally through fireplace through existing wall into courtyard, Run condensate pipe externally to discharge into shingle set in flower bed. Make good to existing brickwork to match existing.

Existing and proposed floor plans and elevations have been provided that further detail the changes along with the schedule of works outlined above.

In response to the submitted scheme, the Built Heritage Officer initially provided the following comments:

Built Heritage response

"It is understood from a previous pre-application meeting with one of the trustees for almshouses that the new gas boilers are to replace the existing, in the same location and without any alterations within the apartment other than the need for a new flue for the gas boilers, which other than with apartment no. 5, are to be routed through the roofs (courtyard facing roof slope). It having been stated at the time of pre-application meeting in September 2024 that new level flues through the external walling adjacent to the location of the gas boilers were being sought to comply with changes in the regulations. At the time of the pre-application meeting the trustee envisage the new level gas flues to be routed through the exterior walling, which as would be required with the intentions for these to installed.

At the time of the pre-application meeting on site the option of having electric water heaters was discounted due to envisioned high running cost for the low income residents of the apartments.

It is noted that at present all four of the apartments the subject of this application has a gas fire and back boiler situated in the fireplace of each apartment. In the case of apartments 2, 3 and 4 the intention is for new gas boiler to be located elsewhere in each apartment, most commonly by the apartment's hot water tank, with the fireplace opening to be covered over. Given the intended removal of the gas fire, this raises the question as to how these apartments are to be heated as there is no forthcoming details and no indication of any other internal works?

In the case of apartment 5, the new gas boiler is to be where the present back boiler is in the fireplace and have a level flue and according to the Schedule of Works a condensate pipe (the size and location of which has not been stated by the applicant). This flue location requires the loss of a small area of historic brickwork to install the flue, which given its location will have a visually harmful impact.

Under paragraph 213 of the NPPF (Dec 2024) states that in the case of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, which includes grade II listed buildings, any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification, and substantial harm to or loss should be wholly exceptional."*

Clarity was then provided in response to the queries raised by the Heritage Officer, primarily how the apartments are to be heated, with the Agent stating via email that; *“The current gas fires have a back boiler which heats the domestic hot water system and the central heating radiators which are present throughout all of the properties. Therefore, no additional works are required to the system save that what has been already specified as the new boilers will heat the existing central heating radiators.”*

The Heritage Officer accepted this response and raised no further concerns. They confirmed that they were not raising an objection subject to several conditions, with these having been imposed on the decision notice.

Conclusion

The proposed works would result in a degree of harm to the significance of the listed building through the introduction of new flues and the limited loss of historic fabric. This harm is considered to fall within the category of less than substantial harm as defined by the NPPF.

In accordance with paragraph 215 of the NPPF, this identified harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, the works are required to ensure that the existing residential units within the almshouses have safe, modern and compliant heating and hot water systems. This is of clear social benefit, particularly having regard to the role of the almshouses in providing low cost accommodation for residents, and the need to ensure their continued viable and optimum use.

On balance, the limited and less than substantial harm identified is outweighed by the public and social benefits arising from securing the continued use and functionality of the listed building. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of the NPPF and Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	11 June 2026
Earliest date for decision:	1 May 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>HMM</i>
Date:	11 June 2026