

Wokingham Planning Team
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

Our ref: L10001819

Date: 22 July 2026

Dear Wokingham Planning Team

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021 & T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 & Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990

**Town Hall, The Courtyard, Market Place, Wokingham, Wokingham, RG40 1AS
Application No. 261134**

Thank you for your letter of 13 July 2026 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice.

Historic England Advice

The Wokingham Town Hall was designed by the Victorian architects William Ford Poulton and William Henry Woodman. The building is listed at grade II* and is an impressive example of the High Victorian Free Gothic style. It's polychromatic effect brickwork, steep slate roof, corbelled chimneys and trefoil headed lancets windows make it a very impressive building. Situated in the heart of Market Place the building was designed to be seen in the round. It dominates its historic setting when viewed from all approaches and exudes the building importance civic and authoritative status.

The ability to appreciate the building from all sides provides the breathing space to appreciate the exceptional architectural quality of all these buildings elevations and adds a sense of drama and anticipation before entering this remarkable building.

The proposals seek to install two roof-mounted air source heat pump condenser units and associated plant, together with a roof-level fall- prevention guardrail. The roof mounted air source heat pumps would be located towards the middle of the Courtyard roof, and unlikely to be visible from street level. The guardrail is proposed to the southeast perimeter would however have a visual impact and detract from the architectural quality of this elevation. In our view this would cause some harm to the significance of the building. In our view the harm would be less than substantial in the language of the NPPF.

Historic England fully supports the aims of the scheme, to introduce more efficient and low carbon climate control measures into the Town Hall. Such proposals help support the long-term sustainable use of the building. Our sole concern with these proposals is the impact of the proposed guardrail. We would therefore encourage your council to seek further clarity over the

need for this guardrail and what alternative option have been explored to ensure the harm presented is the minimum necessary and can't otherwise be avoided, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 208.

Other measures, such as Lifeline systems or single point anchor points would be more sensitive alternatives, but we appreciate these systems require users to be trained to use them. If only professional contractors are accessing the roof, they may have this required training.

The application is not clear why a guardrail is only proposed to one side of the Courtyard roof. We assume this is due to the proximity of the air source heat pump to the roofs edge. Therefore, the alternative option is whether repositioning the air source heat pumps further away from the perimeter edge could avoid the need for the guardrail entirely. We recommend further clarity is sought from the applicant.

We understand the guardrail would be self-supporting and would not require fixing into the roof coverings, this is welcomed and make this element of the scheme fully reversible. Should any roof fixing be required, we would advise caution and suggest those fixings are clearly detailed for your council. This is because other historic properties that have installed fixed guardrails have found these to cause water ingress and damage to the property, so the detailing of this fitting would need careful consideration.

Recommendation

Historic England recommends that your Council should approve this application, which, broadly, would conserve the significance of Wokingham Town Hall, provided that the following amendments are made unless it finds that other considerations indicate otherwise.

- Applicant clarifies what alternatives to a guardrail system have been explored and why they were discounted
- Could the air source heat pumps be repositioned to avoid the need for the guardrails.

Subject to your Authority receiving satisfactory further information, the application should determine in accordance with national and local planning policy and in consultation with your specialist conservation advice.

Yours sincerely

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