

68-70 PEACH STREET, WOKINGHAM, RG40 1XH

HERITAGE STATEMENT

SIGNAGE CHANGE (GYM TO GROCERY)



Executive summary

The heritage statement for the proposed development at 68-70 Peach Street, Wokingham, RG40 1XH in the Wokingham borough Council.

The scheme comprises the signage change (Gym to Grocery).

The site lies in Wokingham Borough Council, at Peach street near the Saxons Court. The site is situated in mixed-use zone having residential and commercial area nearby.

The new 'Grocery collection' will be named as "SAFA SUPERSTORE".

This desk-based study assesses the possible impacts of the proposed development on built heritage assets in and around the site. Although below ground heritage assets (historic structures) are not discussed in detail, they have been noted where they assist in the archaeological interpretation of the site.

- *There are no designated or undesignated heritage assets on the site.*
- *The site is within Wokingham town Centre Conservation Area (CA), designated in 1970 and was extended in both 1986 and 1996.*

Policy

The proposal accords with all relevant national and local heritage policy and advice.

Conclusions

The changes in the existing building shop signage will result in no harm to the significance of any heritage asset.

The replacement of the existing shop signage with a new, appropriately designed building will not affect the surrounding environment.

Recommendations

No further heritage work is recommended at this point.



Fig: Google Earth Image of Site

1 Introduction

The scheme comprises the change of shop front (Gym to Grocery). The proposal is on the front part of the building. The proposal is for the replacement of the existing shop signage with a new.

This desk-based study assesses the impact of the scheme on built heritage assets (standing buildings). It forms an initial stage of investigation of the area of proposed development (hereafter referred to as the 'site') and may be required in relation to the planning process in order that the local planning authority (LPA) can formulate an appropriate response in the light of the impact upon any known or possible heritage assets. These are parts of the historic environment which are considered to be significant because of their historic, evidential, aesthetic and/or communal interest.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the assessment is to:

- identify the presence of any known or potential built heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals;
- describe the significance of such assets, as required by national planning policy;
- assess the likely impacts upon the significance of the assets arising from the proposals; and
- provide recommendations for further assessment where necessary of the historic assets affected, and/or mitigation aimed at reducing or removing completely any adverse impacts upon buried heritage assets and/or their setting.

Policy Baseline

Introduction

There is potential for the proposed development to impact on the significance of designated and undesignated built heritage assets and Conservation Areas. These impacts will likely take the form of demolition or other physical alteration to buildings, demolition and new construction that may alter the setting of designated heritage assets, and demolition and new construction that may affect the character and setting of Conservation Areas.

The following lays out the general criteria upon which the proposed development will be assessed.

National Planning Policy Framework 2018

- Planning law relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 16(2-3) of the Act states that:

(2) In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

(3) Any listed building consent shall (except in so far as it otherwise provides) ensure for the benefit of the building and of all persons for the time being interested in it.

- Section 66 of the Act deals with the responsibilities of local planning authorities – the decision makers - when dealing with planning applications that could impact on heritage assets and in virtually repeating Section 16(2) states that:

'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development or permission in principle which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.¹

- Section 72 of the same Act states that, in relation to conservation areas:

'with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.²

- In March 2012 the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) replaced all other separate *Planning Policy Guidelines* and *Planning Policy Statements*.³ Revised versions were published in July 2018, February 2019, July 2021, September 2023, December 2023 and December 2024.⁴ The glossary of the NPPF described 'heritage assets':

'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).'

- The main relevant paragraphs in the NPPF reiterate the sections of the 1990 Planning Act. Paragraph 207 states that:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'.

- Paragraph 208 states that:

'Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'.

Greater London regional policy

The London Plan

- The overarching strategies and policies for the whole of the Greater London area are contained within the London Plan of the Greater London Authority (GLA March 2016). The current 2016 consolidation Plan is still the adopted Development Plan. However consultation on a draft new London Plan is open until 2nd March 2018, and the Draft London Plan is a material consideration in planning decisions (GLA website, 2017).

Policy 7.8 of the adopted (2016) London Plan relates to Heritage Assets and Archaeology:

- A. London's heritage assets and historic environment, including listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens and other natural and historic landscapes, conservation areas, World Heritage Sites, registered battlefields, scheduled monuments, archaeological remains and memorials should be identified, so that the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and of utilising their positive role in place shaping can be taken into account.
- B. Development should incorporate measures that identify, record, interpret, protect and, where appropriate, present the site's archaeology.
- C. Development should identify, value, conserve, restore, re-use and incorporate heritage assets, where appropriate.
- D. Development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to their form, scale, materials and architectural detail.
- E. New development should make provision for the protection of archaeological resources, landscapes and significant memorials. The physical assets should, where possible, be made available to the public on-site. Where the archaeological asset or memorial cannot be preserved or managed on-site, provision must be made for the investigation, understanding, recording, dissemination and archiving of that asset.
- F. Boroughs should, in LDF policies, seek to maintain and enhance the contribution of built, landscaped and buried heritage to London's environmental quality, cultural identity and economy as part of managing London's ability to accommodate change and regeneration.
- G. Boroughs, in consultation with English Heritage [now named Historic England], Natural England and other relevant statutory organisations, should include appropriate policies in their LDFs for identifying, protecting, enhancing and improving access to the historic environment and heritage assets and their settings where appropriate, and to archaeological assets, memorials and historic and natural landscape character within their area.
- Para. 7.31A supporting Policy 7.8 notes that 'Substantial harm to or loss of a designated heritage asset should be exceptional, with substantial harm to or loss of those assets designated of the highest significance being wholly exceptional. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimal viable use. Enabling development that would otherwise not comply with planning policies, but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset should be assessed to see if the benefits of departing from those policies outweigh the disbenefits.'
- It further adds (para. 7.31B) 'Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of and/or damage to a heritage asset the deteriorated state of that asset should not be taken into account when making a decision on a development proposal'.
- Para. 7.32 recognises the value of London's heritage: '...where new development uncovers an archaeological site or memorial, these should be preserved and managed on-site. Where this is not possible provision should be made for the investigation, understanding, dissemination and archiving of that asset'.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies in Wokingham Borough Council, at Peach street near the Saxons Court. The site is situated in mixed-use zone having residential and commercial area nearby.

The building lies to the rear of the 1960's parade of shops along Peach Street and immediately to the south of the slightly later and much large 'U-shaped' development to the north-east. To the south is a large car-parking and service yard and to the north-west, the rear gardens of properties along the south side of Rose Street.

The building is a detached tall but only two-storey commercial building, rectangular in shape, presumably of concrete-frame construction but largely faced, in between concrete uprights and a broad concrete band at first-floor level, in machine-made brick laid to a stretcher bond. Apart from vehicular and pedestrian access doorways at the south-western corner the ground floor is largely devoid of openings.

The fenestration on the first floor is erratic with no obvious attempt at symmetry. The roof is flat. Overall it is a large, plain and utilitarian structure lacking any architectural quality or historic interest.



Fig: The north side of Peach Street, the frontages of Nos.68-70 arrowed.



Fig: Rear view of Nos.68-70 Peach Street from the north-west

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies in Wokingham Borough Council, at Peach street near the Saxons Court. The site is situated in mixed-use zone having residential and commercial area nearby. The site is within the Wokigham Town Centre Conservation Area.

Conservation Area

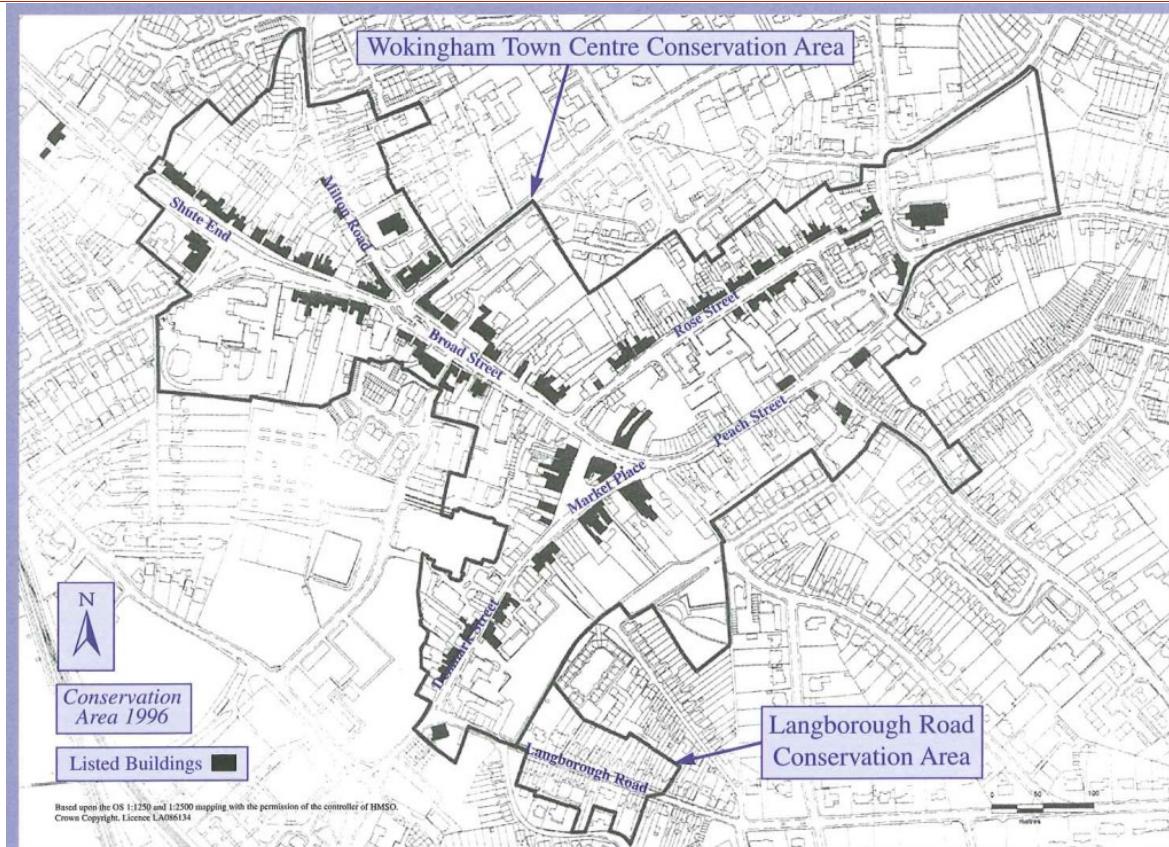


Fig: Wokingham Town Centre Area Boundary

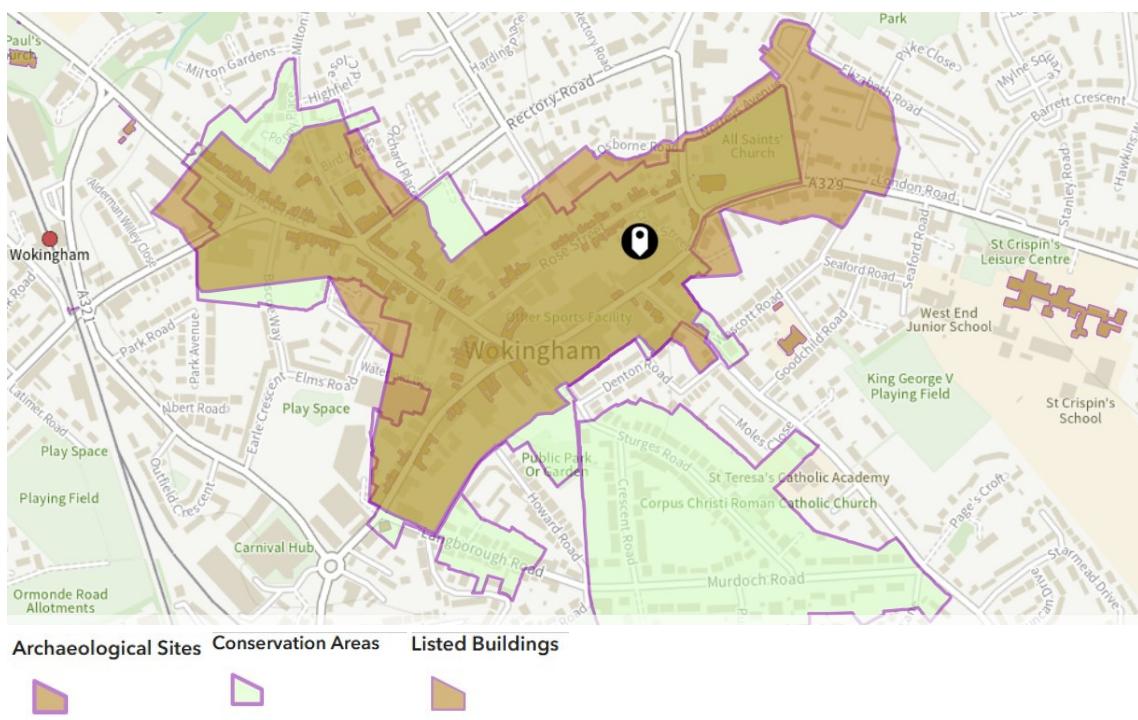




Fig: Map showing locations of listed buildings and sites

Heritage Impact assessment

Impact on Adjacent Designated Heritage Assets

Despite its location in the historic core of Wokingham, there are surprisingly few listed buildings in the eastern portion of Peach Street. The older surviving buildings in that street are on the south side and any reciprocal views to the study building are blocked by the modern developments in between. There are more surviving historic buildings in Rose Street and some of the rear elevations of those buildings, and their grounds where these survive, are visible from the study building – though largely screened by trees and mature boundaries.

However, despite these reciprocal views it is evident that the minor changes to the windows of the 1960's buildings will have no impact at all in heritage terms to the significance of the settings of any of these listed buildings on Rose Street, or on the nearby All Saints church, or on any other adjacent heritage asset – designated or non-designated. Consequently, neither Section 66 of the 1990 Planning Act nor Paragraphs 214-6 of the NPPF would be engaged.

Impact on the Conservation Area

The site lies within the extensive Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area. Conservation areas are designated heritage assets under the auspices of the National Planning Policy Framework and have been protected – with a varying degree of success - from the adverse impact of unsuitable development through the passing of various planning Acts since 1967, the last being the consolidation Planning Act of 1990.

The Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area was initially designated in 1970 and extended in 1986 and 1996; the present Conservation Area Appraisal appears to be tied in with the 1996 extension. The Appraisal recognised that the architectural palette of the conservation area is extremely varied, and that much of the central section, especially along Peach Street, had been considerably redeveloped in the recent past and that few historic buildings survived.

To the rear of the street front the ancillary blocks, car-parking areas and service yards have considerably eroded the historical topography and morphology of the town that was still evident in early-20th century mapping.

Consequently, the general historical character of the area has thus been somewhat fragmented and it is suggested that in the vicinity of the study area is essentially of the second half of the 20th century – demonstrating the commonly accepted fact that not all parts of a conservation area contribute positively the characteristics that give it its significance in heritage terms.

There is an element of surviving historic townscape on Rose Street to the north of the site and some of the listed buildings on its south side retain their long linear curtilages. However, the proposed changes to the building are so limited in their external impact that there would be no harm resulting. Consequently, it is considered that there would be no harm to the character of significance of the conservation area as a result of these minor proposals.

Archaeological Issues

The site lies in the medieval core of Wokingham, although much of the area has been considerably altered and the degree of groundworks in the recent past which would have impacted on buried archaeological deposits has clearly been substantial. It is also, of course, the case that these proposals are to a standing building and will not result in any groundworks. There are, therefore, no archaeological issues arising.

Setting

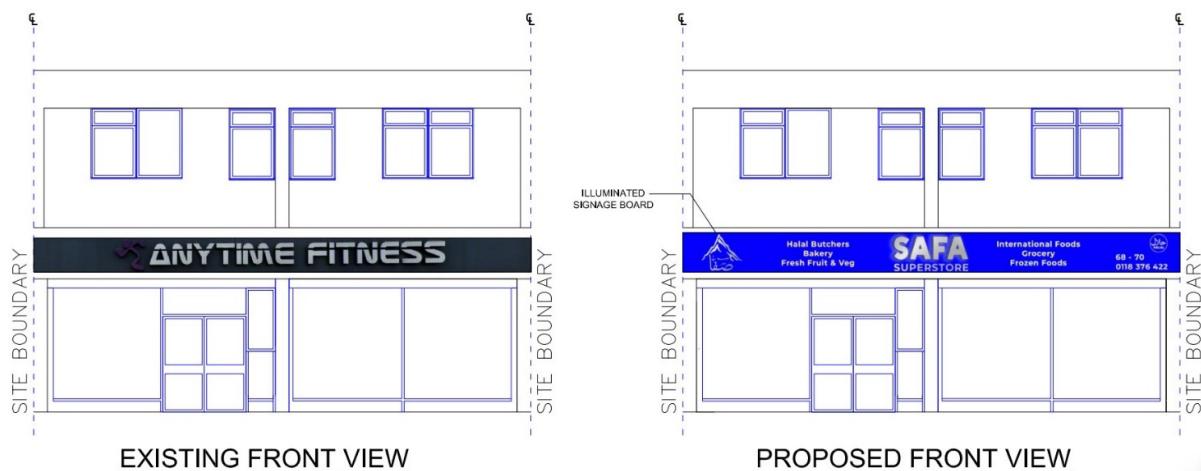
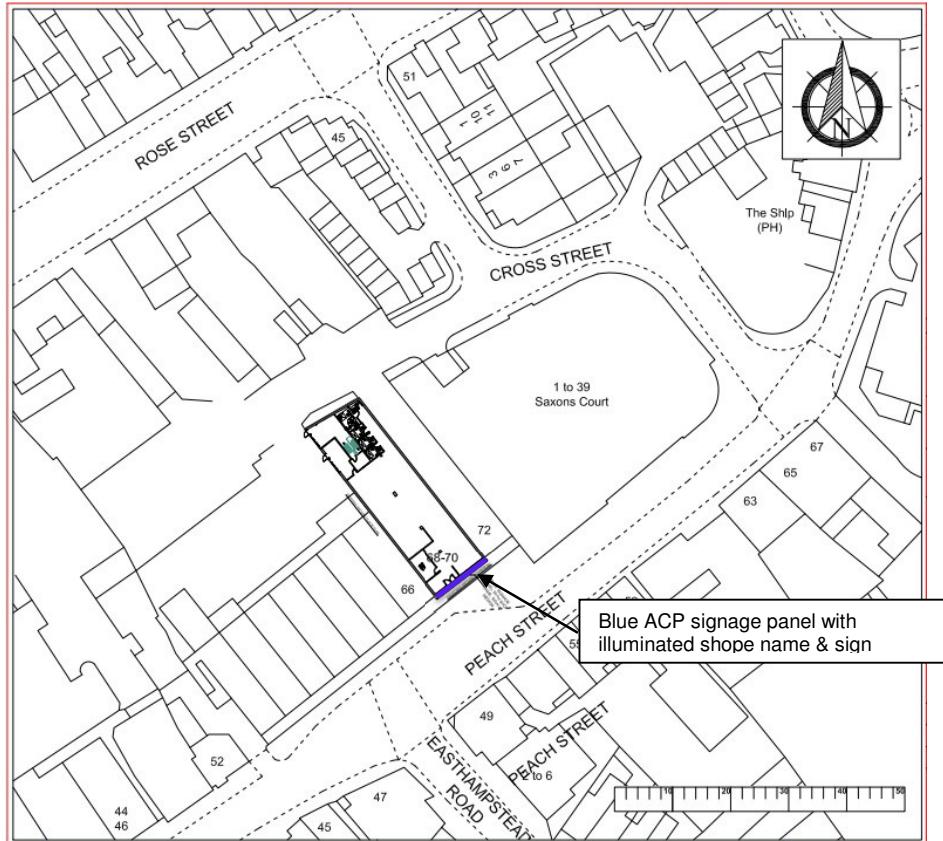
- The contribution of setting to the significance of assets is an important consideration. The site is within the Conservation Area however and therefore the setting of any asset is contiguous with it.
- The setting of the listed buildings to the north will not however be materially impacted upon, due to relative disposition, intervening urban and sub-urban forms and lack of a causal link.
- The setting of the CA itself is dominated by Ryland House, the tall, mid-C20th building directly

Proposed development

Proposal

The proposal is for change in shop signage at front(Gym to grocery). The signage panel will be crafted from Aluminium Composite Panel (ACP) with a 3mm thickness and a blue finish. The **SAFA** letters will be designed in **3D** for a more striking and professional look using aluminium coil and yellow or warm white for the letters. Fretcut technique with cool white LED's light is used to create shapes, letters, or design.

It is not the purpose of this report to comment on the architectural solution *per se*; however, it is considered that the form, materials and overall finish of the proposed development will not affect the character and appearance of the CA.



Impact of Proposed Development

Impact on site

- The proposal for changes in shop signage will not affect the character of the area.

Impact on nearby heritage assets

- By virtue of relative disposition, intervening forms and lack of causal relationship, it is considered that the development will have no impact on the significance of nearby heritage assets.

Setting

- The site is within the CA; setting of this element and the designated and undesignated heritage assets nearby is contiguous with the CA.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Policy

- The proposal accords with all relevant national and local heritage policy and advice.

Conclusions

- The changes in the shop signage will result in no harm to the significance of any heritage asset.
- The replacement of the existing signage with a new shop signage as the proposal is for change in gym to grocery and overall finish of the proposed development will not affect the character and appearance of the CA.
- Consequently, it is considered that there will be no harm – substantial or less than substantial – to any adjacent heritage asset – designated or non-designated – or to the conservation area.

Recommendations

- No further heritage work is recommended at this point.