

MEMORANDUM

From:	Built Heritage Officer		
Service	Green Infrastructure	App No:	261134
Address:	The Courtyard, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham, RG40 1AS.		
Proposal:	Application for Listed Building consent for the proposed installation of two roof-mounted air source heat pump condenser units and associated plant, together with the erection of a roof-level fall-prevention guardrail at The Courtyard, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham.		
Heritage Asset:	The Town Hall – Grade II* since 1969 Wokingham Town Conservation Area Setting of: 3 and 4, Market Place – Grade II 5 Market Place – Grade II 6 Market Place – Grade II* Roebuck Public House, Market Place – Grade II Fosters, Market Place – Grade II K6 Telephone Kiosk, Market Place – Grade II Drinking Fountain, Market Place – Grade II Ye Olde Rose Inne – Grade II Red Lion Public House – Grade II* 22 Market Place – Grade II 23 and 34 Market Place – Grade II Listed buildings, along with conservation areas, are classed as being designated heritage assets under the NPPF (2024) and in the Council’s Local Plan policies		
Site Visited	Yes – 14/07/26		

Summary Of Recommendations

Further information required.

The submitted details are considered insufficient to be able to adequately assess the impact of the proposed works on the appearance and significance of this grade II* listed building.

Comments On Proposal

These additional Built Heritage comments relate to the submission of an amended heritage statement, uploaded onto NEC docs on 13th July and made following visiting the site and gaining views over the roof to the Courtyard from inside the Town Hall.

With respect to the amended heritage statement, it is noted the main body of statement would appear little changed from the original, with the most notable amendment however being in paragraph 4 (Need and Public Benefits, which has been amended to now say that there was 'no other feasible means of effectively cooling the premises.' There however appears to be no evidence given to substantiate that claim.

The amended heritage statement does however now include two appendix pages to it that expand on the works intended for the roof mounted ASHP units and reveal other works seemingly required but not referred to previously.

The additional information, whilst of help to understand what is being proposed, is however considered to lack sufficient details to be able to accurately assess the potential impact of the proposals on the significance and appearance of the grade II* listed building. And having been able to gain views of the Courtyard roof from first-floor windows of the Town Hall raises further questions as to the suitability of the intended location for the ASHP units and their visibility above the Courtyard wall, in those views in Market Place not only from not only the vicinity immediately around the Courtyard but also in those longer views of the Town Hall/Courtyard from the pedestrianised area/shared highway of Market Place towards Denmark Street.

Location of ASHP Units /Alteration to Roof

It is noted the submitted roof plan in depicting the intend location for the 2no. ASHP unit would appear to have each of them positioned on one of the shown rooflights, which having viewed the roof are of a half barrel form.

The Courtyard roof the main body of the roof made up curving half barrel Perspex rooflights, laid out longitudinal in rows across the width of the Courtyard roof in manner somewhat remanence to agricultural poly tunnels), with small flat roof area to the side and front of the roof. Having been able to view the Courtyard roof from within the Town Hall it was seen these half barrel Perspex rooflights are each set on raised base such that together the top of each rooflight units is estimated stand around 300mm high from the area of flat roofing. This roof structure is set below the top of the historic original curving walling enclosing the Courtyard, which has a created a parapet to the roof that I am led to understand itself is only approximately 300mm high, and which is sufficient to mean the barrel rooflights cannot be seen above the line of the Courtyard from the ground, even from the far end of Market Place where it joins with Denmark Street. It is assumed the design of the Courtyard roof was intentionally designed to avoid the rooflights being visible in views of the Town Hall and Courtyard from Market Place and surround public realm.

Given then the somewhat ambiguous nature of the roof plan there is first of all a need to confirm the location of the ASHP units and as to whether or not they are to be positioned on top of existing rooflights or if it is the case that the rooflights in question are to be removed to allow for the ASHP units to be sited in their place instead. Such details are thought to have a direct bearing on the still to be answered question concerning just how visible the units would be from the public realm. The heritage statement (page 2, point 5) does say that the ASHP units would be 'set back a minimum 1.5 m from the nearest parapet/roof edge and kept

below the line of parapets/any lanterns so they are not visible in typical ground-level views across Market Place', however details or evidence has been provided by the applicant to substantiate these claims or confirm what they mean in saying 'in typical ground-level views across Market Place'. As already pointed out the openness of Market Place towards where it joins with Denmark Street allows for important long views.

It is to be noted the heritage statement (page 2, point 5) goes to say that 'if screening is requested, a simple, recessive louvred screen will be employed', this which would seemingly imply that is thought likely for the units to be visible otherwise why make that statement.

Unknown Overall Height of ASHP Units When Installed

Presently it is noted no details other than the measurements for a ASHP unit has been provided that say what the overall height of the units would be with their anti-vibration mounts and any required fixing/mounts measures. This is especially thought to be of importance were to be that the units are to be sited on top the existing rooflights, as to do further adds to the overall height of the 890mm tall ASHP unit as installed.

This overall height information for the units as installed it is believed needs to be measured/shown from the flat level of the Courtyard roof is considered pertinent with respect to this application to be able to adequately assess the potential for them to be visible give the low height of the parapet upstand to the roof. Here it also believed it is necessary for the applicant to also provide a roof cross-section drawing that shows ASHP units as intended to be installed, shown in context is the flat roof, the rooflights and the parapet upstand.

Safety Guard, Fixing Points & Safety Access Ladder

It is noted that it is stated that enlightened by the proposals including has raised additional questions concerns with respect to the intended safety measures in terms of what is actually intended, and where on the building these are to be. There be a lack of specific details provided.

- **Safety Guardrail**
Given the parapet upstand to the flat roof is only around 300mm, the proposed position of the 1100mm tall safety guardrail beside the upstand will mean it would be very much an unwelcomed visible feature that as with potentially the ASHP units will be seen above the line of the Courtyard walling, disrupting the present clean lines.
- **Rooflight Protection Measures**
It is proposed to install purpose-designed, safety protection grilles to be fitted over the existing glazing of the existing rooflight, for which no details are given as to the exact nature of the safety grilles nor is it stated which of the rooflights these are to be fitted on. Given the apparent low height of the parapet upstand wall and the understood overall height of the rooflights any such safety grilles that would sit much higher than the rooflight has a potential, especially with respect to those closest to the parapet, to be visible over the parapet wall.

- **Safety Ladder**

No details are provided that confirm either the intended location of the removable safety ladder or the nature and location for the fixing points on the brickwork of the Courtyard Wall. In terms of the likely location for a ladder, it seems somewhat questionable, given the presence of a bin store, the buttress of the Courtyard wall and the presence of fixed pedestrian bench, of a suitable location close to the ASHP units for the intended ladder. Furthermore, it is understood the removable ladder is to have permanent 'high level mounting bracket' embedded into the brickworks, with the ladder connection point to have 'multiple mechanical fixings installed into holes of up to approximately 20 mm diameter, with suitable metal anchors and chemical resin fixing where required.' With no actual details provided on the actual fixings (size, finish) and the position on the Courtyard walling there is a genuine concern the fixings will not only be highly visible but could be harmful walling's brickwork and to the decorative band to the top of it. As such, without further information the potential implications of the intended ladder on the appearance and significance of the listed building cannot be adequately assessed at this point.

- **Safety Clip-On Anchorage Points**

It is noted that information the intention is for 'permanent safety system will incorporate certified anchorage (clip-in) points fixed directly into the existing brickwork' which involves drilling a number of 'holes of up to approximately 30 mm diameter' to take the fixing points apparatus. No detail is given to indicate where the fixing points would be other than into the existing brickwork however it is not clear if this the brickwork of the parapet upstand on the roof side or what seems to be more likely the intention is the brickwork of the Town Hall adjacent to where the ASHP units are to be situated as it is assumed the clip-on point need to be at an accessible height for those working up on the roof. There is concern that in that location the fixings would be visible from the ground. As such the applicant needs to confirm their intentions with respect to the fixing points. Would it not be possible for the safety anchorage clip on points be on the flat roof rather than the walls?

In summary, the submitted information is still not considered adequate enough to properly understand the nature and extent of the works intend and there it remains unclear as to what potentially would be the effects of the proposals on the appearance and significance of the grade II* listed building of the Town Hall.

- Confirmation as to the location of the ASHP units and whether the existing rooflights are to be removed or whether the units are to be sited on top of them?
- Details of the rooflight protective grilles.
- Roof cross-section drawing showing flat roof with the existing roof lights, ASHP unit and mounting in the context of the parapet/top of Courtyard walling.
- Details for the stated 'low-profile anti-vibration frames not projecting above the unit tops.' (heritage statement, page 2, point 5)

- More details as to the location and form for the 'certified anchorage (clip-in) points fixed directly into the existing brickwork' - with the parapet only 300mm high would suggest then that the fixing points would be into the end walling of the first-floor part of the Town Hall and as such could prove quite visible as a result. (safety fixing points and details of what the fixing points comprise of (including materials and dimensions for the fixings)
- Details to confirm the form of the intended safety guardrail and where on the roof it is to be installed?
- Details for the rooflight protection measures and on which rooflights to be installed.
- Confirmations as to location of safety points into the walling – where on the building this would be?
- Details to confirm the form of the access ladder, it is intended location along with any permanent fixing for it (and where they would be on the external face of Courtyard elevation wall)?

It is believed that the location of the ASHP units needs further consideration along with the intended safety measure to avoid or at least minimise the visual and physical harm of the proposals. To that end it is noted that there a strip of flat to the back of the Courtyard roof where it abuts the first-floor of the Town Hall, which present the least likely location for the ASHP units to be seen or any associated guardrail with seemingly the potential for access to this area of flat roof to be gained from one of the first-floor windows

Given the collective issues that exist with the present Courtyard roof in part due to its construction form, and large number of roof lights (with only 3no. are understood to be openable), collectively creating problems of solar gain/excessive heat when summer months and of heat loss during colder period, due to the roof light seemingly having no insulation qualities to them, would suggest a redesigned roof to the courtyard could address those issue and that of access and safety in a holistic, elegant and effective manner rather than a series of piecemeal patch solutions.

Date:	27/07/26	Signed:	Keith Frost Built Heritage Officer
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An example of a cantilevered free-standing railing. An example of anti-vibration mounts for a ASHP unit,

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but does not require to be sent via secure methods.

Public: Information that can be seen and used by everyone inside and outside the Council.



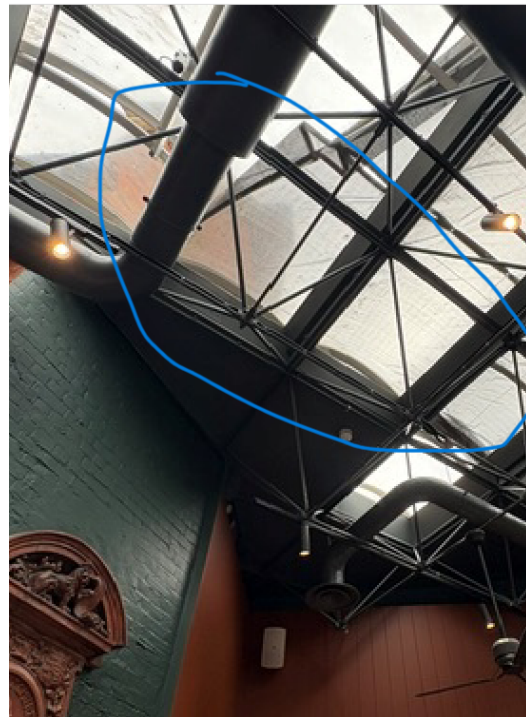
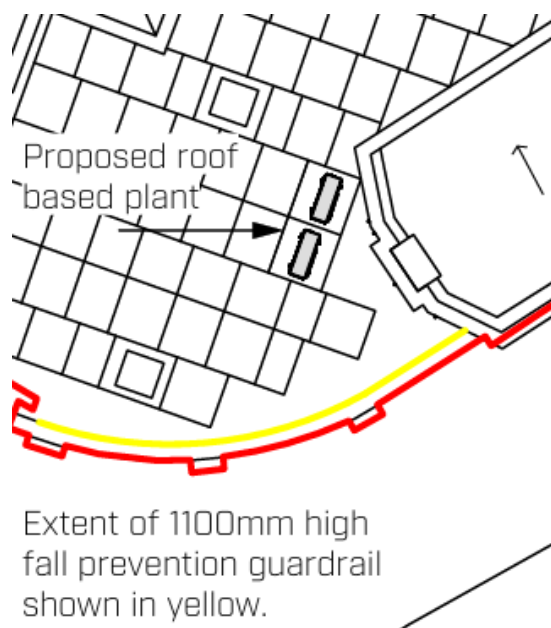
View toward the Courtyard/Town Hall from within Market Place

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Aerial photograph of courtyard roof,



Location on roof for the ASHP as shown by blue line in photo

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Courtyard roof raised Perspex lights. Top line of the parapet upstand around courtyard circled in blue. The 2no. Perspex rooflights (one covered in black cloth) would be where ASHP to be situated.



I speculate that course of black bricks to the left of the image that is in line with the end of the blue line highlight the parapet upstand is the same course of brick in the photos between, on the Town Hall that runs two courses of brick above the coping to the top of the Courtyard walling.

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Views of Courtyard wall with decorative top parapet band to it

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