

Heritage Statement for Listed Building Consent

The Elms, 26 Broad Street, Wokingham, RG40 1AB

Grade II* – List Entry No. 1118045

Prepared by:

Paul Butler, Flat 1, The Elms, 26 Broad Street, Wokingham, RG40 1AB

1. Introduction

This heritage statement supports an application for listed building consent for the installation of a dehumidifier extractor serving Flat 5 at The Elms. It describes the building's significance, sets out the proposed works, assesses impacts on the building's special interest, explains why alternatives are not appropriate, and identifies mitigation measures to conserve the heritage asset.

2. Site and designation

- Address: The Elms, 26 Broad Street, Wokingham, RG40 1AB.
- Designation: Listed Building, Grade II*, List Entry No. 1118045.
- Context: Substantial historic building converted to seven apartments in 2011. The building's special interest resides in its exterior elevations, roofscape and surviving historic interior fabric and fixtures.

3. Significance

- Architectural: High significance deriving from original façade composition, fenestration, materials and decorative detailing (historic roof form, chimneys and principal elevations).
- Historic: Contributes positively to Broad Street townscape and reflects local architectural development.
- Internal: Following the 2011 conversion, important interior elements (staircases, joinery, fireplaces, mouldings) remain and contribute to the building's special interest.
- Overall: Grade II* indicates a particularly important building of more than special interest; therefore alterations must conserve character and minimise harm.

4. Proposed works and location

- The dehumidifier extractor unit will be installed inside Flat 5. Only a small external discharge vent/grille and minimal ducting will be visible on the side elevation; the main plant and equipment will remain wholly within the apartment.
- The proposed vent will be sited on the same side elevation which already contains two existing bathroom extractors and a boiler flue, allowing the new

outlet to be grouped with existing services to minimise additional visual clutter and fabric interventions.

- External works comprise mounting a small vent/grille, short duct through mortar course or existing opening where feasible, local making good with matching materials and painting of exposed fixings. No internal structural alterations to the building's primary fabric are proposed.

5. Need and alternatives considered

- Need: Persistent elevated internal humidity and associated mould/decay have been diagnosed in the affected apartment (Flat 5). The primary cause is insufficient ventilation provision.
- Alternatives exhausted: Passive ventilation, internal relocation of extraction, increased passive trickle vents, use of portable dehumidifiers without an external discharge and other non-invasive measures were investigated and tested but proved insufficient to control humidity to acceptable levels or were impractical given the apartment layout and fabric constraints.
- Conclusion: An internal dehumidifier extractor with a small external discharge vent is the least invasive and most effective solution to prevent ongoing moisture-related damage to historic fabric and to protect occupant health.

6. Impact assessment

- Visual impact: Grouping the new small vent with the two existing bathroom extractors and boiler flue on the side elevation will minimise additional visual clutter. When finished in a muted colour and sited sensitively on a secondary elevation, the external vent will be discreet and have minimal impact on principal elevations and the streetscape.
- Physical impact: The side wall where the extractor will be fitted is rendered and painted white, so there is no effect on the visual appearance of any brickwork. A short, carefully routed duct through mortar only minimises loss of historic material.
- Acoustic and functional: The proposed unit will be fitted inside Flat 5. The specified unit, Vent-Axia PoziDry Compact Pro (Model 479188), has a sound level between 11.6 dB(A) and 29.7 dB(A) measured at 3 metres depending on fan speed (11.6 dB(A) at lowest setting; 29.7 dB(A) at highest). Anti-vibration mounts and correct installation will minimise noise and vibration transmission to the structure and neighbouring properties.
- Overall heritage impact: With the mitigation measures set out below, the installation will have negligible to low and reversible impact on the special architectural and historic interest of The Elms. The intervention is justified to prevent progressive damp-related decay of historic material.

7. Mitigation and specification

- Siting: Position the vent on the secondary side elevation, grouped with the two existing bathroom extractors and boiler flue, avoiding principal façades, decorative features and historic joinery. Prefer positions below sill level or behind projections where practicable.
- Penetrations: Where possible route ducts through existing openings or mortar courses; if new penetrations are unavoidable, drill minimal-diameter holes through mortar only and make good with matching lime mortar.
- Appearance: Specify a small, low-profile vent/grille and ducting with a matt white finish sympathetic to the rendered elevation to reduce visual contrast.
- Acoustic performance: Use a low-noise dehumidifier extractor and anti-vibration mounts to minimise disturbance.
- Reversibility and maintenance: Install so the internal unit and external vent can be removed without permanent damage; ensure access for servicing without invasive interventions.
- Recording: Undertake a photographic and brief written record of the installation area and any fabric affected prior to works (proportionate recording).
- Contractor and oversight: Use contractors experienced with historic buildings. Submit final siting, fixing details, vent/colour and acoustic specification to the local planning authority's conservation officer for approval prior to installation.

8. Residual impact and justification

- The proposed small external vent, grouped with existing services on the side elevation and installed using reversible methods and sympathetic finishes, will cause only negligible to low and reversible harm to historic fabric and appearance.
- The installation is justified as necessary to prevent continuing moisture-related decay of historic material and to protect occupant health. Given that less invasive alternatives have been exhausted, the proposed works represent the minimum necessary intervention.

Prepared by: Paul Butler,
Resident Director,
The Elms Wokingham Freehold Limited

Flat 1, The Elms, 26 Broad Street, Wokingham, RG40 1AB

Date: 26th October 2025