

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261148
Site Address:	54 Denmark Street, Wokingham, RG40 2BB
Expiry Date:	12 August 2026
Site Visit Date:	22 June 2026
Proposal: Refurbishment and external alteration of the former Wokingham Library, including replacement of external fenestration, glazed entrance doors, installation of a new heat pump system, removal of existing AC units at roof level and installation of additional solar panels (part retrospective)	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping CP14 – Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	The JMWP is not applicable to this application site
Wokingham Borough Local	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources)

Plan Update (LPU)	FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH5 – The historic environment HC4 – Open spaces, sports, recreation and play facilities HC5 – Environmental protection HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
223290	Full application for the proposed change of use from library to storage and distribution	Approved 02/12/22
252868	Full application for the proposed change of use of first floor of former Library (use class F1(d)) to post-16 SEND hub (use class F1 (a)), including full replacement of external fenestration, installation of a new double-door entrance at first floor level, installation of a new heat pump system, replacement of existing AC units at roof level and installation of additional solar panels	Withdrawn 18/05/2026

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services – No comments received
WBC Environmental Health – No objection subject to condition
WBC Drainage – No objection
WBC Highways – No objection
WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments received
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to condition
WBC Health and Wellbeing – No comments received
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection
WBC CIL – No comments received
WBC Ecology Newts – No comments to make
WBC Ecology – No comments received
WBC Adult Social Care – No comments received
WBC Waste Services – No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received
South East Water – No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	Wokingham Town Council support the application
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	1 comment in support of the application has been received stating: <i>The Executive Committee of the Wokingham Society wishes to support this application. This is a significant public building, and it is important that its value to the community should continue through the necessary investment in making it fit for purpose for the special educational use intended. Section 3.4. of the Design, Access and Heritage Statement recognises that some shrubs will need to be removed to allow adequate space for scaffolding. Any shrubs removed should be replaced once the work has been completed.</i> Officer comment: <i>The above is noted. Discussion on replacement planting will be contained in the report.</i>

APPRAISAL
Site Description: The application site relates to the former Wokingham Library which occupies a corner plot at the intersection of Denmark Street and Langborough Road. It is a two-storey building (plus lower ground floor) with rear car park approved and constructed in the mid-1990s as a contrast to the predominance of listed buildings within the Wokingham Town Conservation Area. The building is now vacant, having relocated to new Library at the Carnival Hub in September 2022. A car park adjoins to the rear, residential (and a pub) to the south and the new redeveloped town centre development to the south west. Proposal: Full planning permission is sought for the replacement of the building's fenestration and glazed entrance doors, installation of a new heat pump system, removal of existing AC units at roof level and installation of additional solar panels. The development has already commenced and so the proposal is part retrospective. Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy outlines the spatial strategy for the borough and directs development to be located within defined settlement limits. The application site is located in the major development location of Wokingham. Given this, and the

proposal being for external alterations to an existing building, the principle of development is accepted.

Design, Impact on the Character of the Area and Heritage Assets:

Policy CP3(a) of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design.

Policy TB24 of the MDD states that the Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings

In this case, the following heritage assets are of note:

- Wokingham Town Conservation Area – the site is located within this Conservation Area
- The site is within the setting of:
 - Duke's Head Public House – Grade II listed
- Nearby is the Wokingham Memorial Orthopaedic Clinic (Red Cross Centre) which is considered to be a non-designed heritage asset

Upon consultation with the WBC Built Heritage Officer, it is considered that the application site 1990s building offers a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, together with the setting of the Duke's Head. The red brick elevations under hipped tiled roofs reflect the architectural vernacular of the town, and whilst very much of its time, the building does not seek to harm the significance of the heritage assets identified.

The proposed external alterations are relatively minor in nature, the primary change to the appearance would be the introduction of the grey colour for the window frames, and whilst the red is the 'original' hue, no concerns are raised to the change in colour given the varied surroundings. Other proposed changes would have a negligible impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and surrounding area generally given there are existing PV panels on the building and the plant area is also to be located in an existing lightwell area to minimise visual impact.

As such, the proposals would not seek to harm the significance of the designated heritage assets and would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of the listed building. Consequently, the impact on the surrounding area more generally is also acceptable.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP3(a) of the Core Strategy states that development should be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users.

Due to the works being to the external fabric of the building only, it will not result in overlooking, loss of light or privacy to surrounding residential occupiers.

Environmental Health:

Policy CP1(2) of the Core Strategy states that development should minimise pollutants into the wider environment. Policy CC06 of the MDD states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) from noise impacts.

The proposed equipment is intended to be positioned discreetly within the existing lightwell area adjacent to the building to minimise both noise and visual impact. Upon consultation with WBC Environmental Health, they have advised that given the town centre location of the site, the nature of the proposed use and the position of the plant within the lightwell and away from sensitive residential receptors, the proposed installation is unlikely to give rise to a significant noise nuisance.

Council records indicate that the site lies within an area identified as having the potential for land contamination. Whilst the proposal is principally a refurbishment and building upgrade project, there remains the potential for previously unidentified contamination to be encountered during any excavation, or construction works associated with the development. Accordingly, a condition will be attached advising of the procedure for the applicant to undertake in the event unexpected land contamination is found.

Highway Matters:

Policy CP6(g) of the Core Strategy states that development should not lead to highway problems.

Given the proposal is for external alterations to the building only, there are no highway or parking impacts as a result of the development.

Landscape and Trees:

Policy CC03(d) of the MDD states that proposals should protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and CC03(e) states that schemes should incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.

Due to the proposal being for external alterations to the building only, the proposal will not result in any harm to trees.

In terms of landscaping, the submitted Design and Access Statement details that some shrubs will need to be removed or cut back in order to allow adequate space for scaffolding. As such, replacement planting will be secured via condition to ensure the proposal will not result in an overall net loss of soft landscaping.

Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the MDD states 'all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding'. Policy CC10 of the MDD states 'all development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner'.

The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 which means the site has a low

probability of flooding.

Due to the proposal being for external alterations to the building only, there are no flooding or drainage concerns raised as a result of the proposal.

Ecology:

Policies CP7 of the Core Strategy and TB23 of the MDD seek to protect biodiversity and protected species.

The site is not located within (but is adjacent to) a bat roosting area and as such, despite there being proposed works to the roof, no surveys with regard to bats are required.

Upon consultation with NatureSpace, it was confirmed that there would be no likely impact on great crested newts or their habitats.

As such, the proposal would not result in foreseen harm to biodiversity.

Conclusion:

The proposal does not result in adverse harm in respect of relevant material considerations and as such the recommendation is to grant planning permission.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve subject to the following conditions: 1. Approved Plans 2. Materials as specified on the plans 3. Landscaping 4. Unexpected Land Contamination
Date:	28 July 2026

Earliest date for decision:	16 July 2026
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Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>BJC</i>
Date:	29.07.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Major Development Location (Wokingham)
- 7km Zone – Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area
- Green Route
- Public Rights of Way
- Amber Great Crested Newt Zone
- Bat Roosting Area (Adjacent)
- Potentially Contaminated Land
- Archaeological Site
- Conservation Area
- Water Utility Consultation Zone
- Electricity Sub Station
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones