REPORT **14TH JANUARY 2026**

DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

54 DENMARK STREET, WOKINGHAM, RG40 2BB

REPLACEMENT OF FENESTRATION WITH INSTALLATION OF NEW HEAT PUMP, AC UNITS & SOLAR PV PANELS.

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This report has been prepared by:

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

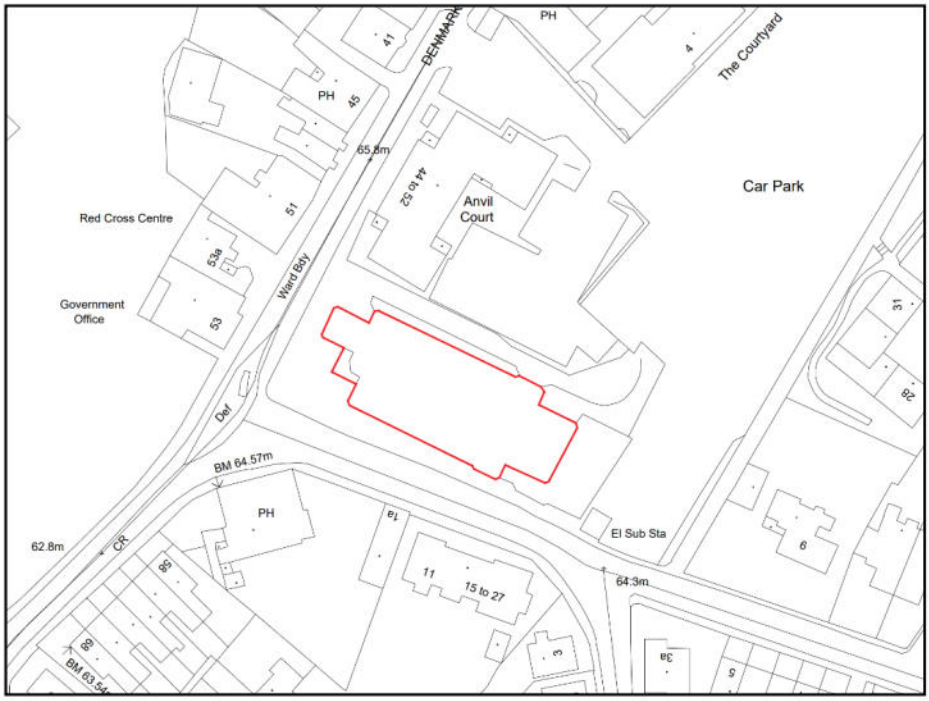
1.1. PURPOSE OF THE DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

This Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared by RLB (Rider Levett Bucknall) at the request of our client WBC (Wokingham Borough Council). The applicant of this submission for planning permission proposes to undertake improvement works to the site and elevations of 54 Denmark Street, Wokingham, RG40 2BB.

The intention is that the building will be improved through upgrading of external fenestration considering new building services that are to be installed as part of wider refurbishment works occurring internally. The first floor of the building is to become a new post-16 SEND educational hub. In order to ensure that the pre-existing building is fit for this purpose, various design investigations have been undertaken alongside analysis of the indoor environment. Replacement materials shall generally share the same design in which meet the criteria of both the latest UK Building Regulations and WBC policy requirements. This document is provided in support of a planning application and aims to provide written and visual explanations of the proposed works at Denmark Street, Wokingham. An overview of the historical and existing context has been described, along with descriptions of the proposed development that include areas concerning use, layout, scale, landscaping, access and justification of the proposed scheme.

The building forms an important role within its primary location among the major Wokingham high street and is within the Wokingham Town Centre & Langborough Road conservation area. Construction dates to the mid-1990s and the design was intended for the original use of the premises as the former Wokingham Library. This proposal involves allowing for all external fenestration to be replaced. This is including the window, frame, cills/surrounds, air transfer grilles and all associated ironmongery. Furthermore, a new heat pump system has also been proposed, which is to be situated externally. Linking to this, both the roof level AC units and solar PV panels are also to be upgraded.

2.0. SITE INFORMATION



Street Address: 54 Denmark Street (Formerly Wokingham Library),
Wokingham,
RG40 2BB
United Kingdom

Site Area: Approx. 1,987sqm

2.1. CONTACT DETAILS

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council

Agent/Consultant: Rider Levett Bucknall,
Level 11, The Shard,
32 London Bridge Street,
London,
SE1 9SG
United Kingdom

2.2. APPRAISAL

Denmark Street is a busy high street road typical of the surrounding region. It is one of Wokingham town centre's historic commercial zones in which forms a key role within the conservation area. The street has a strong traditional character despite many buildings being 20th century adaptions constructed for housing. Generally, the more modern buildings still reflect the historic elements of the area and respect the wider streetscape. As documented within the Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) for Wokingham Town Centre and Langborough Road, most structures are typically gable-fronted buildings, 2-3 storeys in height. Materials generally involve red brick. It has been said that the curvature of the street provides a sense of anticipation as a pedestrian may travel Southernly along the road. The location of this site at that point therefore provides added consideration of its visual impact against the area.

The application site is not listed and dates from the mid-1990s, constructed as a purpose-built library. It is of modern design and materials and does not contribute positively to the historic character of the conservation area. The surrounding townscape is defined by narrow plots, traditional red brick buildings, and several Grade II listed properties, including The Crispin Public House and 47–53 Denmark Street to the west, and the Dukes Head Public House opposite. These buildings illustrate the area's historic development and architectural significance. The proposed works comprise replacement of external fenestration, installation of a heat pump, AC units, and solar PV panels. All changes are minor in nature, maintaining the existing building footprint and scale. Fenestration will be replaced on a like-for-like basis with modern, durable materials, and colour changes will harmonise with recent town centre regeneration schemes. No alterations are proposed to the building's structure or surrounding landscaping. Given the building's lack of intrinsic heritage value and the limited scope of works, the proposal will have no discernible impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area or the setting of nearby listed buildings. The works will enhance energy performance and sustainability without harming heritage significance.

The site had historically operated as Wokingham Library (use class F1), prior to the relocation of that facility to Carnival Hub. In December 2022, the Council secured planning permission for a change of use of the property from library to storage and distribution (use class B8) – application reference 223290. The application was to support the Council's SILVER Cost of Living response and the building was subsequently let out to the Hardship Alliance/local charities to store materials they were collecting and giving out in care packages to those in need. The change of use however was only granted on a temporary basis and, following the cessation of the use of the building to provide cost of living crisis support, the lawful use of the building reverted back to use class F1. It is confirmed that the current building (including the ground floor) is currently unoccupied pending delivery of the Post-16 Hub at first floor. The Post-16 Hub falls within use class F1 (provision of education) and therefore falls within the lawful use of the building such that planning permission for the use of the building as a Post-16 Hub is not required. Consent is however sought for the changes to the external elevations of the building.

54 Denmark Street is approximately 11 minutes walking distance from Wokingham Train Station and has all the access requirements expected of a street within the town centre.

3.0 USE, AMOUNT & SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT

3.1. USE

This application involves works in which support the adaption of the first floor of the building into a post-16 SEND educational hub. No changes to residential usage of the property have been considered as part of these works. External fenestration and building services are to be replaced to provide an improvement in thermal, ventilation and energy performance in accordance with the UK Building regulations. The new SEND hub shall be the first of its kind within the borough and will provide essential development opportunities for younger people who require the appropriate facilities.

3.2. AMOUNT

Below is a breakdown of the present and proposed internal areas of the site. The existing amount of area per type and overall size will remain the same, with both existing and proposed internal areas matched:

- GROUND FLOOR, 54 Denmark Street, Wokingham, RG40 2BB – Approx. 675sqm total GIA.
- FIRST FLOOR, 54 Denmark Street, Wokingham, RG40 2BB – Approx. 666sqm total GIA.

3.3. SCALE

As detailed above, the building consists of 2 main storeys, plus the roof void level which includes a tank room. The building is approximately 12m from ground level (South) and approximately 8.5m from the top level of the access ramp serving the first floor only (North).

The overall footprint of the buildings will be maintained as existing given that there will be no changes to the shape or structure of the site.

Under the proposed works, the height of the buildings will not vary and the overall horizontal dimensions (width and length) of the buildings will remain the same for the reasons above.

3.4. LANDSCAPE

This application concerns the replacement of fenestration and building services only. Trees and landscaping shall remain largely unchanged. During the works however, some shrubs will need to be removed or cut back in order to allow adequate space for scaffolding. The intended works do not propose any alteration to the site boundary or its total area.

3.5. ACCESS TO DEVELOPMENT

Denmark Street provides easy access to various transportation options, including nearby bus routes and the primary train station, allowing convenient commuting to other parts of the local area and county. The street itself is also in close proximity to notable attractions and landmarks, such as parks, cultural centres and shopping districts.

No general road and pedestrian access points (including disabled/inclusive access to the building) will be removed as part of these works. This includes any respective internal access points or egress routes. However, due to the nature of the split occupancy and uses of both the ground floor and first floor areas of the building, pedestrian traffic behaviour and access habits may change given convenience factors will differ in comparison to the originally intended use of the building as a public library.

4.0 DESIGN, APPEARANCE, MATERIALS & COLOURS

Wokingham Borough Council continues to review the condition and provision of its properties and has committed to investing in both fabric and user improvements across the region. The objective behind this approach is to improve both environmental and occupancy conditions for assets and visitors. Many older building fabric materials on these properties have become worn and brittle over the years, where parts may have broken away on operable sections of building elements, for example. Due to the age of some buildings, many components have now reached the end of their natural life span which is compromising the architectural heritage that has characterised these properties, alongside optimal functionality. As well as updates to UK Building Regulations regarding energy efficiency, the need for an upgrade in some elements of these buildings has become a must.

This statement forms part of an application for planning permission for the performance enhancement of all existing fenestration at the building. Where units don't necessarily need to be replaced (perhaps simply due to reaching end of serviceable life), all glazed walls, windows and doors are still to be replaced in order to provide greater consistency in appearance across elevations. New units will also provide greater longevity and prevent regular disrepair through this consolidated replacement approach. Furthermore, the building services upgrades also included within this application support the design principles of the wider proposal. This has a singular aim; to enhance indoor environments for the benefit of occupants whilst simultaneously upgrading overall energy performance for greater efficiency and sustainability within the building. All new external windows and glazed doors are to be double-glazed, power-coated aluminium, with the introduction of trickle vents.

Generally, the appearance of these new units is to be like-for-like in terms of the windows characterised as existing. However, along with the enhanced ventilation performance delivered by incorporating trickle vents within each unit, we are also proposing a colour change from red (existing) to RAL 7005 (mouse grey). Recent new-build regeneration projects led by Wokingham Borough Council in the town centre have utilised this particular colour for fenestration throughout 2017 to 2020.

The Peach Place and Elms Field projects share close proximity to 54 Denmark Street and both feature RAL 7005 amongst external windows and doors. With this in mind, we wish to take advantage of the opportunity to improve visual cohesion in the area through updating these colours to a more neutral, modern standard, harmonising the old library premises with newer buildings within the same scene.

As illustrated across the drawings supplied within this application, features on windows and doors need to be specific distances from one another which influences the final appearance of the units and subsequently, the building itself. With this in mind, the design team has thoroughly considered both the overall appearance and user safety/satisfaction in every decision throughout this process.

Photo 01: Aerial View of Denmark Street

Photo 02: Existing East Elevation Windows

Photo 03: Existing North Entrance Door Soffit

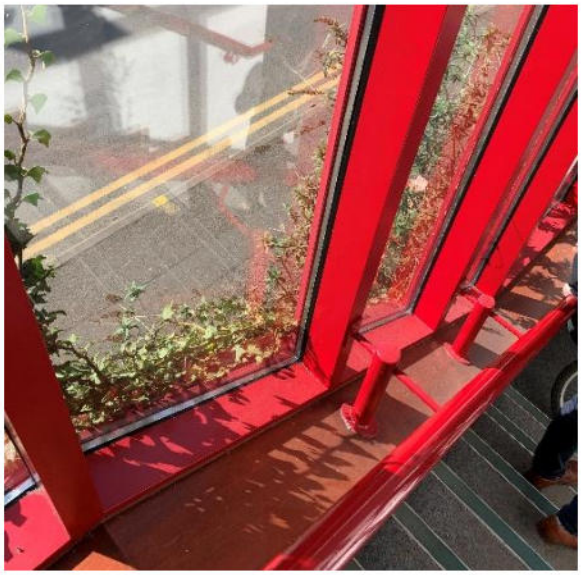


Photo 04: Internal View of Existing Windows

Photo 05: External Ramp Access and North Elevation

4.1 PROPOSED WINDOW AND DOOR TYPES

The selection of materials for the new fenestration systems requires an efficient and durable option to satisfy the needs of both the proposal and conservation area requirements. Given the relatively recent construction of the building itself, current units are already comprised of modern designs meaning that a like-for-like replacement is suitable in balancing energy upgrade considerations. As detailed above, the primary differences between existing and proposed windows are the introduction of trickle vents among each unit, plus the change of colour to RAL 7005.

Photo 06: Elms Field Development (Opposite the Site) Showcasing Grey Windows (RAL 7005)

4.2 PROPOSED ENTRANCE AREA

In order to address ongoing maintenance issues that have been reported for the existing first floor entrance specifically, a new, simplified double door has been proposed in place of what is currently a glazed automatic sliding structure. It has been identified by building caretakers that the mechanical functionality of these electrical entrance units present various challenges. At Denmark Street, the existing automatic doors have regularly failed due to various faults, which have in turn required additional attention and intervention. With the first floor of the building becoming a SEND hub, issues with access that impact daily operation of the provision must be considered and avoided before problems arise. We are also aware of previous fire risk assessments in which noted the automatic door as not preferred for means of escape. Furthermore, the new reception space at the hub is located beyond this entrance. We wish to ensure that staff situated behind the main desk here do not suffer from a constant cold breeze from repeated air flow through an otherwise large, automated (and

sometimes sensitively triggered) opening. Linking to this, the smaller dimensions of the new double door will require brickwork infill beyond the bounds of existing external walls. This work will be completed to a seamless standard, matching the build-up and finish of all other current external walls. Finally, in order to provide adequate natural light to this area, a new transom window shall be installed above this double door; its design reflecting the general appearance of the top portion of the existing entrance glazing that meets the nearby soffit. As this door is located externally, it is considered an external pedestrian door-set under UK regulations and is therefore required to meet UKCA compliance.

4.3 PROPOSED HEAT PUMP SYSTEM AND SUSTAINABILTY WORKS

As part of this project, all building services have been reviewed against the requirements of the proposed post-16 SEND hub provision. As a result, it was immediately clear that new equipment with a focus on sustainability was needed to serve as a whole-building approach, similar to the fenestration works. We have therefore proposed that a new heat pump system is to be installed, sized to meet 130kW heating. This equipment is intended to be positioned as discretely as possible in order to ensure that noise pollution and visual impact are kept to a minimum. An option proposed for where the heat pump system may be located is within the lightwell space along the North elevation, to the left of the first-floor entrance. Additionally, the existing solar PV panels installed at the building are to be expanded upon by increasing the total number of panels fixed to the roof. Finally, the existing AC units found on the roof are also to be replaced as part of these improvement works in order to maintain minimum levels of operation required for this new provision.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Replacing and upgrading the external fenestration of 54 Denmark Street is necessary to align with current regulations and ensure the safety and comfort of building occupants. It is a proactive measure to mitigate the risks associated with inadequate indoor environments within SEND spaces. These works shall improve both the thermal and ventilation properties of the building through ensuring each glazed unit is operating as designed. The introduction of trickle vents shall provide enhanced ventilation performance through the establishment of background flow.

These works go hand-in-hand with the other proposals outlined within this application, which includes installation of a new heat pump system, expansion of solar PV layouts and replacement of external AC units. By ensuring that a whole-building approach to sustainability and energy efficiency has been chosen for 54 Denmark Street, we are safeguarding the longevity of these works whilst also managing both carbon footprint and end-user satisfaction.

We believe that the works outlined within this planning application are of minimum architectural impact, meaning that no damage is caused to the protected identity and characteristics of the both building and its immediate area. All proposed alterations have been strongly contemplated against the existing building and seek to provide enhancement alone. Where design decisions have been made to differentiate from existing characteristics, we have justified any resulting difference using practical reasoning as detailed within this report.

6.0 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Please refer to the following documents that have been supplied in support of this application:

- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_01_Location Plan_P01
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_02_Existing Site Plan_P03
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_03_Existing Elevations_P05
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_04_Proposed Elevations_P06
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_05_Window Types 1_P03
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_06_Window Types 2_P02
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_07_Existing First Floor Plan_P01
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_08_Proposed First Floor Plan_P01
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_09_Existing and Proposed Roof Plans_P01
- P-023739-W_RLB_D_A_S5_Denmark Street_10_Proposed Site Plan_P03
- P-023739-W_RLB_T_A_S5_Denmark Street_Planning Statement_P02