

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261133
Site Address:	The Courtyard, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham, RG40 1AD
Expiry Date:	28 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	10 June 2026
Proposal:	Full application for the installation of two roof-mounted air source heat pump condenser units, associated plant, access and safety equipment, and ancillary works.

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping CP14 – Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre
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 TB15 – Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development TB16 – Development for Town Centre Uses TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops TB21 – Landscape Character TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	NA
Wokingham Borough Local Plan	CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way ER5 – The hierarchy of centres ER6 – Town, district and local centres and shopping parades

Update (LPU)	ER8 – Wokingham town centre NE7 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH3 – Shopfronts
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Wokingham Town Centre SPD

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
261134	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.	Live Application
251024	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed addition of film to external windows.	Approved 24/06/2025
200242	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 192800 dated 18/12/2019 Condition 3 Method of fixing.	Approved 11/02/2020
192800	Application for a Listed Building consent for the proposed installation of 5No external Closed Circuit Television Cameras and 4No internal cameras to the existing town hall building.	Approved 18/12/2019
122351	Listed building application for the erection of additional external notice boards and the replacement of existing ceremonial flag pole wall brackets, plus one additional flag pole bracket.	Approved 04/01/2013
070189	Proposed conversion of redundant male & female WC to display cabinet and replacement of existing doors.	Approved 05/06/2007
050051	Proposed internal alterations to listed building with the addition of dado rails to first floor corridor.	Approved 01/12/2005
041144	Proposed change of use of part of Town Hall (market hall/courtyard) to class A3 restaurant.	Approved 02/02/2005
042322	Proposed internal alterations & refurbishment to listed building to form restaurant plus replacement timber doors with glazing behind.	Approved 02/02/2005

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways – No objection, subject to condition.
WBC Built Heritage Officer – Objection to the original proposed location of the ASHP condenser units. To address the officer concerns, a revised Heritage Statement was submitted, alongside revised plans relocating the ASHP units. Following a re-consultation, no objection was raised, subject to conditions.
WBC CIL – No comments received.
WBC Sports Development (Places and Neighbourhoods) – No comments received.
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received.
WBC Green Infrastructure – No comment to make.

External

Historic England – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received.
Neighbours	No comments received.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site consists of a two-storey detached building which houses the offices for Wokingham Town Council and Wokingham visitor centre, plus commercial units including 'Honesty' restaurant; the subject premises of this application.

The building is in a prominent position in the centre of Wokingham Town and is part of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area. The Town Hall stands on the site of the Medieval Guildhall which was demolished in 1858. The new Town Hall was opened in 1860 and originally housed the Town Hall and police station.

The heritage building is Grade II* Listed and was officially listed in October 1969 with Historic England recognising the 1860 building with late 29th century alterations. Historic England reference the red brick with blue brick and Bath stone dressings and the steeply pitched slate roofs. Also referenced is the 'deep 'X' pattern brick frieze, and view to the numerous chimneys, gables and fleche of the higher ranges.

Surrounding the building are numerous other designated heritage assets including Grade II Listed 'The Old Bull and Bush' to the north, Grade II Listed 'Ye Olde Rose Inn' to the east, Grade II* Listed 'Red Lion Public House' to the south and a row of five Grade II and Grade II* Listed buildings to the west.

Proposal:

This application seeks approval for the installation of no. 2 roof mounted air source heat pump (ASHP) condenser units with associated paraphernalia including two internal AC cassettes suspended from the structural frame ceiling with the services routed through modern fabric and voids. To facilitate the installation of the units, no. 6

of the existing rooflights would be removed and replaced with a flat boarded deck upon which the units would be fixed. A further no. 3 rooflights would also be removed to enable a safe access deck.

To provide access to the roof, a site safe ladder security hook would be fixed to the southwestern parapet wall. The hook would be painted black to minimise its visual impact. The temporary ladder would then be put in place during maintenance of the units.

Also proposed is a stainless steel safety wire system fixed to brickwork just above roof level. The system proposed avoids the requirement for any permanent safety railings which would have a more significant visual impact on the appearance of the heritage asset.

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 (MDD) 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.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy (CS) 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 without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Policy TB24 of the MDD seeks to conserve and, where possible, enhance designated heritage assets and their settings within Wokingham Borough. It applies to listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, and historic parks and gardens. In the context of conservation areas, policy TB24 requires decision-makers to give particular attention to whether a proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, recognising that the significance of a conservation area derives not only from individual buildings but also from the wider townscape, setting, views, spaces and historic street pattern.

The proposal has been assessed against Policy HE6 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Policy HE6(3) requires any harm to a designated heritage asset to be afforded considerable importance and weight. Where harm arises, it must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Policy HE6 also confirms that substantial harm to, or the total loss of, a designated heritage asset should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where substantial public benefits outweigh that harm. For assets of the highest significance, including Grade II* listed buildings, substantial harm or total loss should be wholly exceptional. In this case, the proposal preserves the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II* listed building and accords with Policy HE6 of the NPPF.

Character of the Area:

The application site comprises the Grade II* listed Town Hall and former Police Station, a designated heritage asset of national importance located at the heart of Wokingham Town Centre and within the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area. The building occupies a prominent position within the Market Place and is a key landmark within the historic core of the town, with views available from surrounding streets including Peach Street and Denmark Street. As a Grade II* listed building, it is afforded a particularly high level of statutory protection, reflecting its special architectural and historic interest.

The proposed works relate to the flat roof area above the café accommodation. This part of the building comprises a modern circa 1980s flat roof structure incorporating rooflights, exposed structural elements and visible service installations. Externally, the roof is enclosed by a parapet wall constructed from dentilled Bath stone, red and blue brick. While the flat roof is read as a later intervention within the evolution of the building rather than part of its principal historic fabric, the parapet wall is specifically referenced in the Historic England listing for its architectural significance.

The surrounding streetscape is characterised by a mix of historic commercial, civic and retail buildings focused around the Market Place, which forms one of the most active and visually important public spaces within Wokingham. Owing to the prominence of the Town Hall within the conservation area, any rooftop alterations have the potential to affect the character and appearance of the area. However, the proposed ASHP condenser units would be positioned centrally on the flat roof, approximately 6m from the roof edge and adjacent to existing walls. The units, associated safety equipment and access arrangements would be substantially screened by the existing parapet wall and their setback position, limiting visibility from the surrounding public realm. The proposed safety wire would also be fixed at a low level to existing walls and, due to the height of the roof and the screening provided by the parapet, would be largely concealed from views within the Market Place.

Consequently, whilst the site occupies an exceptionally prominent location within both the conservation area and the setting of a Grade II* listed building, the affected roof area is largely modern in character, and the proposed works would have limited visibility from public viewpoints. The character of the area would therefore remain defined by the historic civic architecture of the Town Hall and the established townscape qualities of the Market Place. Accordingly, the proposals accord with Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, Policy HE6 of the NPPF and Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Built Heritage:

The council's Built Heritage Officer was consulted and raised objection to the original location of the units. Revised plans were submitted to address the objection and the units were repositioned. Following a re-consultation, the Officer raised no objection subject to conditions relating to further details and method of installation regarding the safety ladder, safety wire system and installation process of the ASHP units.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking, Loss of Light & Overbearing:

Due to the nature of the proposed development, there are no adverse overlooking, loss of light or overbearing impacts that would be generated to neighbouring residential amenity.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The application building is surrounded by adopted Highways land and the council's Highways team were consulted. They raised no objection to the proposed development, subject to an informative relating to incidental works that affect the highway. The informative outlines that incidental works affecting the adjoining highway would require approval and a licence from the council's Highways Assets team.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is considered that the proposal would not result in significant harm to the listed building or setting of the local conservation area. Therefore, the proposal would not conflict with Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan or chapter 20 of the NPPF and is recommended for approval.

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:

Yes

Recommendation:

Approve

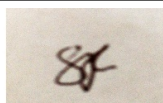
Date:

22 July 2026

Earliest date for decision:

30 June 2026

**Recommendation agreed by:
(Authorised Officer)**



Date:

1.10.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location

Primary Shopping Area

Town Centre Retail Centre

Public Right of Way – Footpath

Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area

Listed Building – The Town Hall Grade II* Listed Building

Wescott Ward

Norreys Ward

Wokingham Parish