

PLANNING REF : 262274
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 27 Sonning Meadows
: Sonning Meadows Sonning Meadows, Sonning, Berkshire
: RG4 6XB
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Robert Hulley
DATE SUBMITTED : 13/10/2026

COMMENTS:

Objections to Planning Application 262274

My name is Mr Robert Hulley and I live at No. 27 Sonning Meadows.

I am writing to you to register my objections to the construction of the proposed Data Centre planned to be built in Thames Valley Park. My objections are based on the following reasons :-

Need.

I do appreciate that there is a genuine need for some Data Centres. However a little research indicates that there are already some 500 Data Centres in operation in the UK, and that government projections suggest that perhaps another 100 may be needed to meet their (government) targets. We already have what is probably the highest density of Data Centres in Europe, given the small size of the UK. The question has to be asked, just how many Data Centres are really needed in a small country the size of the UK? The answer obviously cannot be an infinite number, though the current frenetic and speculative rush to build more suggests that we will soon reach a point of over-supply. A data bubble?

Location

Thames Valley Park is a public open area on the banks of The Thames. The popular long distance Thames walking path passes through it. With a wide variety of vegetation, ponds and a wooded slope to the east, it is a recognised nature reserve and a home to many sensitive species. The construction of a noisy, polluting piece of industrial plant immediately next to it will effectively destroy it's value as a nature reserve. For this reason alone the project should be rejected.

Energy requirements.

Frequent media reports indicate that the UK National grid does not have anything like the necessary energy carrying capacity to supply existing Data Centres, let alone those proposed or actually under construction.

This claim is supported by observations in the Planning Statement and the Energy and Sustainability Statement to the effect that the Grid is not expected to be able to provide all of the 110 Mw needed until 2037. Prior to that time, power will be provided by way of fuel cells burning natural gas and/or diesel generators, with consequent massive emissions of CO₂, which are projected to exceed 8 million tonnes over the total working life of the data centre (E&SS, Section 6.7), even in the event that the grid is able to supply some of the power needed.

This use of natural gas drives a coach and horses through Wokingham Borough Council's stated energy target to be carbon neutral by 2030. This should also be seen in the context of estimated total UK fossil fuel CO2 emissions in the order of 360 million tonnes annually; a total of over 500 Data Centres are clearly primary contributors, either directly or indirectly.

Do not forget that, even if the Data Centre is eventually able to draw its full power requirement from the Grid, the same amount of CO2 will simply be emitted from somewhere else to supply that power. (or at least for as long as the UK generates electricity from the combustion of fossil fuels.)

Given the known heavy load on the national grid, and the need for 24/7 operation of Data Centres, it is easy to see situations in which power supplies to homes and industry could be unexpectedly constrained. I note that fuel cells and diesel generators have been built in to provide against this eventuality, but these resources take time to come on line, particularly if they are only in occasional use. If push comes to shove, who gets priority? The developers would not invest in backup power supplies if they did not realistically expect to need them.

Diesel generators.

Large diesel generators are to be installed to provide top up or emergency power as required. While the stated height of the new building is projected to be 30.5 metres, the drawings indicate that the height of the diesel exhaust stacks will necessarily project above this level, the final height presumably to be determined as part of the reserved matters procedures. It is important to appreciate that the residents of the nearest properties, in an Easterly direction, live in Sonning Meadows, which sits at a level of only 25 metres above ground level in Thames Valley Park. The roof of the projected building, at 30.5 metres, therefore sits at 5.5 metres above ground level in Sonning Meadows. The exhaust stacks will emit diesel exhaust fumes at something above this height. At all times when the generators are in use, the prevailing Westerly winds (see wind roses in the application) will therefore carry these fumes across the residential area at roughly bedroom height. A distance only 650 metres. Residents tend to sleep with windows open on warm summer nights. Are they to be expected just to breathe these fumes in without complaint? This cannot be seen as acceptable. Other local residents, by the A4, and also elevated relative to the Data Centre, may not be exposed quite as often, but they are much closer and the wind does blow towards them when the weather dictates. Being closer, their exposure will be worse.

Misleading energy information.

At the public meeting held in Pearson hall on July 7th 2026, we were told that the Data Centre would consume 72 Mw of electrical power. We now know that this figure relates only to the energy requirements of the data halls, and that the total load will be 110 Mw, made up from the data hall requirement of 72 Mw, plus the

cooling system load of 38 Mw (E&SS, Section 6.1) This approach to providing open "data" does not inspire confidence in the developer.

Visibility.

I note from the Ordnance Survey map that the ground level datum for Thames Valley Park, or in particular for one of the old Microsoft buildings to be demolished, sits on the 35 metre contour line. My property in Sonning Meadows sits on the 60 metre contour line, some 25 metres above the ground level in TVP. The Planning Statement, subject to reserved matters, states that the Data Centre will be 30.5 metres high. In other words it will project some 5.5 metres above my ground level visual horizon - I will certainly be able to see it from my neighbourhood. This conclusion is supported by the Zones of Theoretical Visibility diagram provided in the package. While this visual intrusion will certainly be unwelcome in the rural setting of Sonning, it is more important to point out that a direct visual sight line is also a direct path for sound and wind carrying exhaust fumes.

Noise

Given that, if I can see it, I can hear it, I have every reason to be concerned about the constant noise generated by the chiller systems located on the roof. I find the statements made in the proposal about noise mitigation to be unconvincing. Almost everything one reads about Data Centres eventually comes down to complaints about incessant noise. Often referred to as "The helicopter that never goes away". My wife and I are only 650 metres from the site, and are essentially directly down wind of it, according to the wind roses published in EIA Vol 3 Appendix 6.3. I do not look forward to trying to sleep with the bedroom window open on a hot summer night. Or trying to get young children to sleep

I object strongly to this application being allowed to proceed.

R M Hulley BSc, DLT, FRSA