

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242913
Site Address:	Berks County Sports Club, Sonning Lane, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6ST
Expiry Date:	27 June 2025
Site Visit Date:	14 January 2025
Proposal: Full application for proposed erection of 3no. covered padel tennis courts and 3no. outdoor tennis courts with associated flood lighting, parking and club huts.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Conservation Area – **Sonning**
Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – **Countryside (CP11)**
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – **Amber and Red Risk Zones**
Nuclear Consultation Zone – 12km Zone
Public Open Space
Landscape Character Assessment Area
Land Terrier
Land Terrier Leasing
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone
Ordinary Watercourses Consultation Zone
Ordinary Watercourse

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) National Design Guide
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 CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
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 CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage

	TB04 – Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sonning Parish Design Statement Sonning Design Appraisal

PLANNING HISTORY			
Application No.	Description	Decision Date	&
F/2006/7491	Proposed formation of 2 artificial pitches plus floodlighting, fencing, bunding and landscaping	Approved 21/8/2006	on
VAR/2009/0875	Application for variation to condition 4 of planning consent F/2006/7491 to extend hours of permitted floodlighting by 30 minutes to 09.30pm, Monday - Friday.	Refused 19/06/2009 allowed on appeal 02/02/2010	on on on
F/2012/1148	Extensions and alteration to existing clubhouse to provide additional gym facilities, wc's and changing rooms	Approved 07/08/2012	on
F/2012/2071	Proposed installation of walkover lighting along path from clubhouse to pitch and 2 bollard lights at each end of path	Approved 05/12/2012	on
152174	Full application to replace existing walkover pathway lights and bollards with 5no galvanised lamp posts	Approved 12/10/2015	on
182027	Full application for the proposed erection of 15m x 6.7m high floodlights to tennis courts	Not proceeded with	
191526	Application to vary condition 4 of planning consent(F/2006/7491) for the proposed formation of 2 artificial pitches plus floodlighting, fencing, bunding and landscaping. Condition 4 refers to floodlight operating hours.	Approved 19/08/2019	on
193377	Application to vary condition 4 of planning consent (F/2006/7491) for the proposed formation of 2 artificial pitches plus floodlighting, fencing, bunding and landscaping. Condition 4 refers to floodlight operating hours and the variation is to extend the hours of operation of pitch 1 on weekdays.	Approved 05/02/2020	on
201422	Full application for the proposed installation of 15 x 8 metre high floodlights on existing tennis	Approved 28/09/2020	on

	courts.	
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CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services – No comments received
 WBC Environmental Health – No comments received
 WBC Drainage – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Highways – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Green Infrastructure – No comments received
 WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Public Rights Of Way – No comments received
 WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objections
 WBC CIL – CIL commentary
 WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received
 WBC Ecology Newts – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Ecology – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Sports Development (Places and Neighbourhoods) – No comments received

External

Historic England – No comment
 Natural England – No comments received
 Sport England – No objections

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council

Sonning Parish Council has carefully considered this application and can find no reason to object. There are however the following concerns, which they would like see addressed.

1. Noise from the activity. It is understood that the level of noise from those playing the game can be very high at times. The proposal is in close proximity to 3 dwellings, and the sound might easily affect their amenity. A noise assessment report would allay any concerns, particularly as the materials to be used are described as 'fabric, which would not appear to provide good sound insulation.

2. The access road is tarmac and prone to potholes. The proposal will require the use of large vehicles to deliver materials etc to the site, for the buildings and resurfacing the courts. The Parish Council would like reassurance that the cost of any repairs to the access road will be borne by the contractors or the Sports Club rather than the householders and Parish. ***(Officer Comment: The Council cannot reasonably control who is liable for repairs to the surface during the temporary construction period; this is a civil matter that must be dealt with outside of the planning application process.)***

Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	47 letters of support received: - Padel is a fast growing sport, support more variety to support healthy lifestyles - Helps people stay active - Increase in facilities at the club - Padel courts in high demand currently - Bring social benefits to local community - Boosts local economy - Padel is an inclusive and social sport - Lack of availability in Wokingham Borough currently 2 letters received raising concerns on the following grounds: - Concerns regarding proximity of lighting to adjacent residential properties - Impact on existing vehicular access - Lighting should be restricted to reduce light spillage and noise impacts onto adjacent residential properties.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

Berkshire County Sports Club is located at the end of a narrow private road accessed from Sonning Lane (B4446) to the West. The northern entrance to the site consists of a parking area that immediately leads to the main clubhouse building which is predominantly single storey except for one flat roof element on its eastern façade.

To the immediate east of the application site are 4no. tennis courts, enclosed by green mesh fencing that is densely lined with coniferous hedging. At the time of the Case Officer's visit, a temporary set of padel courts was visible on the court closest to the club house. Surrounding and lighting the courts are 15no. 8 metre high floodlights, previously consented under application 201422.

To the south of the clubhouse and tennis courts are the club's cricket, football and rugby pitches. The fields are densely lined with mature vegetation on all boundaries, reflective of the site's rural setting.

In the wider context, to the west and on the opposite side of Sonning Lane is Reading Blue Coat School, a historic private school set within extensive grounds. Immediately east of the site are a handful of detached dwellings. Further south there is Reading Cricket & Hockey Club and to the north is the settlement of Sonning, largely designated (and adjacent to the application site) as a Conservation area.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed erection of 3no. covered padel tennis courts and 3no. outdoor tennis courts with associated flood lighting, parking and club huts.

The proposals would largely adopt the footprint of the existing courts, except for an 8 metre encroachment of court space eastwards. 6no. external floodlights for the tennis courts are proposed, with the padel courts lit internally.

The boundary treatment for the tennis courts would be 2.75 metre high wire mesh fencing to match the existing. The padel courts would be housed within an 8.5 metre tall triple span steel structure canopy, with the elevations lined with wire mesh, all covered by a fabrix roof cover.

2no. small tennis and padel huts are proposed, both are modest in footprint and single storey in scale. Each respective hut is located adjacent to the relevant activity area.

Principle of Development:

Policy Context:

Core Strategy 2010:

Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of:

- a) An ageing population, particularly in terms of housing, health and wellbeing;
- b) Children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs;
- c) People with special needs, including those with a physical, sensory or learning disability or problems accessing services; and
- d) The specific identified needs of minority groups in the borough, including Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and black and minority ethnic groups. Proposals for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople (including allocations in other Development Plan Documents) will demonstrate that:
 - i) The site is located either within or close to the development limits of a settlement in policy CP9 in order to maximise the possibilities for social inclusion and sustainable patterns of living; and
 - ii) The proposed site is not disproportionate to the scale of the existing settlement whether singly or cumulatively with any existing sites in the area.

The site lies within the Countryside as designated in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. Core Strategy policy CP11 states, in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except in certain circumstances. These exceptions are:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the

borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and

3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or

4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;

5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:

i) Bring about environmental improvements;

or ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.

6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;

7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDDLDP) 2014:

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

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.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings;
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
- d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to

ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Paragraph 103 of the NPPF states access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.

Paragraph 104 of the NPPF states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

Assessment:

The proposals are compliant with Core Strategy Policy CP2 in that the proposed development would increase the provision of sports and recreational facilities for the local community, thereby addressing the requirements of residents listed in section b.

Furthermore, the proposal contributes and promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside by reason of the provision of 3no. modern tennis courts and 3no. padel courts. The proposals are therefore compliant with criterion 1 of CP11.

Turning to criterion 2 of CP11, the proposals do involve the encroachment of development footprint approximately 8 metres eastwards to accommodate the new tennis courts. This is not considered excessive in the context of the application site and would remain enveloped by developed land to the east and west. The fencing enclosing the courts would match the scale of the existing and would be visually offset by the replacement hedging. Similarly, the scale of the huts proposed are both very modest and consciously sited as to avoid encroachment of development southwards.

With regards to the padel court structure, its 8.5 metre height is relatively significant given the predominantly single storey nature of the adjacent clubhouse. Despite this, views would be partly screened by the two storey clubhouse element and partly by the proposed hedging and boundary treatment. Furthermore, it would not be an alien element in this Countryside setting that is largely characterised/surrounded by other recreational facilities. The structure's siting adopts the footprint of an original tennis court so spatial wise, there would be no increase in footprint in this regard. Overall,

the proposals would not lead to the excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings and are considered to comply with criterion 2 of CP11.

Lastly, with regards to criterion 3 of CP11, the proposals do involve the appropriate replacement/conversion of existing tennis courts with the development proposed. In terms of environmental improvements, the padel court structure would be more visually intrusive than the existing courts but this would be neutralised by the additional landscaping provision and biodiversity gains. Overall, broad compliance is achieved with criterion 3 of CP11.

As the proposals comply with all three of the first criteria set out within CP11, the proposals are considered acceptable in principle.

Turning to the National Planning Policy Framework, the proposals comply with paragraph 103 due to increased provision of sports facilities. In this regard, Sport England have raised no objections to the proposals.

The proposals also comply with paragraph 104 of the NPPF as whilst the proposals do involve building on existing sports/recreational facilities, the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.

Character of the Area/Landscape Character:

Policy Context:

With regards to well-designed places, paragraph 135 of the NPPF states planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short
- b) term but over the lifetime of the development;
- c) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- d) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

Paragraph 187(a) of the NPPF requires planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

Paragraph 187(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.

Policy CP11 supports development in the countryside only where it maintains the high quality of the rural environment. Policy CP1(1) similarly only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment, with

policy CP3 supporting development of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area CP3(a) and which makes a positive contribution to the sense of place contributes to the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings CP3(f).

Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan required development proposals to provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development. The Countryside is identified as one of the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks.

Policy TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues. Proposals should retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

The Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document provides further guidance for developers with general guidance that development should respond positively to its site and local context (G1) and respond positively to the local character of the area (G2).

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Assessment:

The increase in the width of the court area 8 metres eastwards would have a negligible impact on the character of the area, especially as the boundary treatment proposed would be almost identical to that which currently exists.

With regards to the padel, it has already been highlighted that its 8.5 metre height is relatively significant given the predominantly single storey nature of the adjacent clubhouse. Despite this, views would be partly screened by the two storey clubhouse element and partly by the proposed hedging and boundary treatment. Furthermore, it would not be an alien element in this Countryside setting that is largely characterised/surrounded by other recreational facilities.

Lighting wise, the proposals involve a net decrease in external floodlights which is welcomed in this sensitive rural setting. They would match the form of those already existing and would have no greater harm on the character of the area. A lighting strategy condition will be imposed to ensure it is sensitively designed to both protect the character of the countryside and to protect the amenities

The club huts, as previously mentioned, are both very modest in scale and enveloped within the existing development footprint. They would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area.

The orchard proposed to the south of court 3 would be a welcome addition to the

site's rural surroundings. The extended footpath and post & rail fencing would also have a negligible impact on the character of the area.

Heritage:

The site is located adjacent to the Sonning Conservation Area. The WBC Built Heritage Officer has stated that the sporting facilities are long established in this vicinity, and form part of the character of the setting to the Conservation Area, particularly when entering the village along Sonning Lane from the south.

No concerns are raised over the re-organisation of the tennis courts, along with the associated landscaping, parking, infrastructure given the existing context. Whilst the padel fencing is larger and more dominant from an aesthetic perspective, it is not out of character for this area.

As such, no objection is raised to the application from a heritage perspective as the proposals would not seek to harm the significance of the Conservation Area through the alteration to the setting.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

There are no concerns on these grounds.

Loss of Light and Overbearing:

The extended tennis courts/fencing, in particular court 3, would be within 3 metres of the boundary shared with the adjacent dwellinghouse known as South Meadow Cottage. The distance between the two is considered sufficient to avoid any adverse impacts on these grounds, particularly as the boundary fencing for the courts would not exceed 3 metres in height.

Noise:

The operating hours for the courts would be 07:00 – 22:00, times that fall within recognised 'daytime' hours as per the World Health Organisation.

It is recognised that the nature of the courts' usage would involve padels/rackets regularly hitting balls, with some occasionally hitting the walls of the padel enclosures and mesh fencing. Therefore, the impact on the dwellinghouses closest to the site (South Meadow Cottage) must be considered.

WBC Environmental Health have reviewed the application proposals and have no objections to the hours of operation and increased activity on site; the operating hours are similar to that currently consented and when considering the existing noise emissions from the existing court usage, the increase in noise events is unlikely to have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties.

Light Pollution:

Compared to the lighting already installed on site as per consent 201422, the proposed development involves a net decrease in lighting poles, all of which are consciously angled to avoid any adverse light overspill onto neighbouring residential properties.

WBC Environmental Health raise no objections to impact of the lighting onto neighbouring properties as it would have no greater an impact on the properties as per the existing lighting situation. The hours of the lighting's operation will be restricted via condition, alongside that of the courts' operating hours, to 07:00 – 22:00.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

General Highway Safety:

There are 4 x existing standard tennis courts in this location. The proposal will result in 3 x standard tennis courts and 3 x padel tennis courts, so a net increase of 2 x courts. The maximum number of participants on a single court would be 4 people, therefore up to 8 additional participants may be using the courts. With potential car sharing and access by sustainable modes, this could result in fewer than 8 cars.

WBC Highways do not consider the increase to have a significant impact on the highway network.

Parking:

There is an existing main car parking area, however, the submitted drawing indicates that an additional 7 parking spaces are to be provided, and these are located in closer proximity to the tennis courts. The overall level of parking is considered acceptable.

Cycle parking:

It is not clear from the submission with regard to the location and extent of the existing cycle parking. Highways recommend that cycle parking is provided in a convenient, and accessible location to the tennis courts. This will be secured via condition.

Locational Sustainability:

Sonning Parish Council have raised concerns regarding the sustainability of the site, stating that the proposal will increase the need to travel to the facilities by private car. Whilst this is noted, the site is already an established sports facility in the Borough and the minor increase in provision proposed, which would likely result in a maximum increase of 8 cars, is not considered adverse as to warrant a reason for refusal.

Secondly, the Parish Council have raised concerns about the fact that it is apparent from the residents supporting the application that the facilities are already used extensively by non-Sonning residents. This is a matter irrelevant to planning and

cannot be reasonably controlled, nor is it a concern that influences the determination of this application.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is at a low risk of surface water flooding. WBC Drainage have no objections to the proposals providing a drainage strategy is secured via condition, but the LPA consider this unnecessary for the scale of the scheme, especially when the application site is in the lowest risk zone for flooding and surface water issues.

Landscape and Trees:

Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan required development proposals to provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development. The Countryside is identified as one of the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks.

An existing hedge to the west of the courts needs to be removed, but it is proposed to replace this with a new hedgerow that lines the asphalt path and the southern edge of the courts which created an area of grass with new fruit trees. The type of hedge proposed has not been stipulated.

WBC Landscape and Trees propose that the infill hedging around the courts matches that of the existing – this refers to the infilling of the main gaps, but also to enhance the existing hedge to bulk it up. The rest of the new hedging should be a native mix that contains species which will knit together to create a dense structure that is easy to maintain.

The hedges will need to be protected during demolition and construction with a fence against the hedges such as Hera fencing, which should remain in situ until the project is complete.

Overall, WBC Landscape and Trees have no objections to the proposals, subject to a condition ensuring the submission of a detailed landscaping plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

As of 2nd April 2024, a 10% Biodiversity net gain (BNG) for minor developments is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This can be achieved through either on-site or off-site mitigation.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition").

The biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition: once planning permission has been granted, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development.

The habitat baseline for the existing site is 0.80 habitat units and 0.53 hedgerow units. The number of units required to achieve a 10% gain would be 0.98 habitat units and 0.67 hedgerow units.

The BNG metric provided demonstrates that a 22.62% gain in habitat units and a 24.87% gain in hedgerow units can be achieved on-site. WBC Ecology have reviewed the baseline and accept that the gains proposed are likely to be achieved and exceed the 10% mandatory gains required.

Final details of the BNG mitigation off-site will be secured within the Biodiversity Gain Plan, automatically applied to the permission if approved. Appropriate monitoring of the on-site gains will also be secured via an S106 Legal Agreement, ensuring compliance with the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) secured via condition.

Ecology:

Bats:

WBC Ecology have no objection to the proposals' impact on bats, providing a biodiversity-sensitive lighting strategy is secured prior to the commencement of development. This will be imposed as a condition.

Great Crested Newts:

The application site falls within an amber Impact Risk Zone for great crested newts, indicating an area of suitable habitat and potential great crested newt presence. Three ponds appear on OS mapping within 500m of the application site and these are located approximately 110m north, 120m north, and 150m north, forming a small cluster of ponds in close proximity to each other.

The applicant has supplied an ecological report (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Arbtech Consulting Ltd, dated 19th September 2024). Within this report it states:

“Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to great crested newts, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented for common amphibians during construction”

A search for local records of great crested newts in the area surrounding the application site was not undertaken, but the above recommendation for a non-licensed precautionary working approach was made under the assumption that great crested newts are present in the ponds to the north.

WBC Ecology Newts agree that the application site offers relatively low suitability for great crested newts, limited to small areas of grassland and the hedgerows which surround the existing tennis courts. Great crested newts are confirmed to be present in all three ponds to the north, two of which are in Ali's Pond Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and adjoining Sonning Field nature area. Ali's Pond LNR was designated in

part for the presence of great crested newts and is rich in many forms of wildlife. There are also many further records of great crested newts within 500m of the application site. While these records do not pertain to ponds which appear on OS mapping, they are likely indicative of small garden ponds, some of which are visible on satellite imagery.

I agree that due to the limited suitability of the application site, a non-licensed precautionary working approach should provide appropriate mitigation for the small risk of harm to individual great crested newts, which are confirmed to be present within 110m of the application site. Recommendations for some precautionary measures are provided in the ecological report. One of these measures reads:

“A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any amphibians to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter amphibians from the working area.”

WBC Ecology Newts recommend that a Great Crested Newt Precautionary Working Methods Statement (GCNPWMS) is produced to safeguard individual great crested newts. This must be written by a suitably qualified ecologist and submitted to the local planning authority for approval prior to determination or secured via a pre-commencement condition.

In addition to the measures proposed in the ecological report and the wording amendment recommended above, WBC Ecology Newts recommend that the GCNPWMS also includes measures relating to:

- Sensitive timing of vegetation clearance to minimise the risk of encountering great crested newts
- The presence of an appropriately experienced great crested newt ecologist during vegetation clearance
- A ‘toolbox talk’ delivered by the ecologist before the start of works
- Fingertip searches of vegetation immediately before clearance works
- Appropriate storage of materials
- Prevention of trapping newts in excavations (if these are required)
- Great crested newts must not be handled if they are found – all works must stop and a professional ecologist must be contacted for advice. It may be necessary to obtain a licence before works can resume.

Conclusion:

Overall, the proposed development is considered to accord with the development plan and would not result in any adverse impacts on any of the material grounds raised above. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

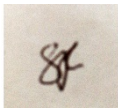
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. 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:	Approval subject to a S106 Legal Agreement
Date:	26 June 2025
Earliest date for decision:	13 February 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	26.6.25