

PLANNING REF : 262274
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 73 Marks Road
: Wokingham, Berkshire
: RG41 1NR
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Marc Adams
DATE SUBMITTED : 12/10/2026

COMMENTS:

I object to the application in its present form. Three unresolved matters arise from the applicant's own assessments and other relevant evidence: the much higher carbon emissions if gas generation continues; significant heatwave and drought risks, including the need to assess the large quantities of waste heat released into the surrounding air by the data centre's cooling equipment; and the lack of a final plant-specific noise assessment. I recognise the value of digital infrastructure and reusing this employment site, but these issues need to be resolved within the proposed outline permission.

1. Carbon emissions and uncertain transition from natural gas

The Energy Strategy models 8.38 million tonnes CO₂e of energy emissions over 2028-2088 if gas fuelcells are retained, against 2.10 million tonnes if the site transfers to grid electricity. Yet the transition depends on future grid capacity, which is not fully secured. The lower-carbon scenario should not be given substantial weight unless its delivery is demonstrably realistic and appropriately enforceable. Otherwise, the Council should assess the acceptability of prolonged gas generation and its higher emissions explicitly in the planning balance (MDD CC05; NPPF CC2). [1-2]

2. Significant climate-resilience risks

The Environmental Statement identifies significant adverse residual risks from heatwaves and drought to buildings/infrastructure, human health and ecology (Table 8-26). It assesses climate impacts on the facility, but I could not identify an analysis of whether the heat produced by the facility would warm its surroundings. Recent academic research has found increased air temperatures downwind of operating data centres (Sailor et al., 2026). Given the proximity of residential housing, I ask the Council to require an assessment of whether this waste heat could increase local air temperatures, particularly during severe heatwaves and periods of little wind, and affect nearby residents, public spaces and wildlife habitats. This should address possible effects on nearby homes, public routes and local wildlife, alongside water demand, fossil-fuel generation, air emissions and operational noise. Any necessary mitigation should be specified and secured (MDD CC04; NPPF CC3). [2-3]

3. Operational noise and generator impacts

The Environmental Statement proposes plant-noise limits but says detailed quantitative assessment is not yet possible because final plant specifications and locations are unknown. Can the worst-case scheme permitted by the outline parameters meet cumulative and night-time noise limits, including maximum summer cooling loads? The Council should require evidence that compliance is achievable,

together with enforceable operating controls, design-stage verification and post-commissioning tests. The land-use effects of testing and credible emergency operation of the 36 diesel backup generators also warrant scrutiny (MDD CC06; NPPF P3). [2]

I would be very grateful if these three matters could be explicitly addressed in the planning report. Where impacts remain uncertain, I would hope that the necessary evidence is gathered before determination. Where the acceptability of the proposal depends on future design, operating limits or a transition away from fossil gas, I think it will be vital to secure appropriate and enforceable planning controls. If the Council cannot establish that the development would be environmentally acceptable within the outline parameters, I ask that permission be refused.

Evidence and policy references: [1] Energy Strategy Report (24 Sept 2026), executive summary pp. 1-2 and lifecycle scenarios p. 15; [2] Environmental Statement Vol. 2 (25 Sept 2026), Ch. 7 7.5.4.2 and Ch. 8 Tables 8-25-8-26; [3] Sailor, D.J. et al. (2026), "Data Center Waste Heat as an Emerging Urban Thermal Hazard", Journal of Engineering for Sustainable Buildings and Cities 7(2), DOI: 10.1115/1.4071922.

Adopted Wokingham MDD (2014) policies CC04-CC06; NPPF (29 Sept 2026) policies CC2, CC3, P3 and DM6; Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, s. 38(6); Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017.