

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	253130
Site Address:	David Lloyd Sports Centre, 1 Thames Valley Park Drive, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 1PT
Expiry Date:	27 May 2026
Site Visit Date:	25 February 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed extension to the leisure centre to form an indoor swimming pool, Spa and Spa Garden, plus upper floor health and fitness areas and alterations to existing car park layout.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Core Employment Areas – **Thames Valley Science Park**
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – **Earley (Major Development Location)**
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – **Red Risk Zone**
Nuclear Consultation Zone – **12km Zone**
Public Open Space
Landfill Gas Consultation Zone
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Ordinary Watercourses Consultation Zone
Flood Zones 2 and 3
JCEB Areas of Search for Sand and Gravel
JCEB Mineral Safeguarding Areas

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 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP15 – Employment Development
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

	CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB12 – Employment Skills Plan TB15 – Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development TB16 – Development for Town Centre Uses TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB25 – Archaeology
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation CE8 – Protecting renewable energy generation C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER1 – Core Employment Areas ER2 – Employment uses outside of Core Employment Areas ER4 – Employment and skills plans ER5 – The hierarchy of centres ER6 – Town, district and local centres and shopping parades ER7 – Strengthening the role of centres ER8 – Wokingham town centre ER9 – Woodley town centre and Lower Earley district centre H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H2 – Presumption against residential losses H3 – Affordable housing H4 – Exception sites H5 – Rural workers' dwellings H6 – Self-build and custom build H7 – Specialist accommodation H8 – Conversion and sub-division of buildings H9 – Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople provision H10 – Traveller sites H11 – Houseboat moorings H12 – Residential development of existing private gardens H13 – Retention of mobile home parks FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage FD3 – River corridors and watercourses

	NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC1 – Promoting healthy communities HC5 – Environmental protection HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
43045	a) Reserved matters for approval 28578 for erection of a local centre b) Full application for a nursery building and swimming pool	Approved 29/09/1994
961205	Proposed extension containing four squash courts, changing rooms and ancillary accommodation.	Approved 10/02/1997

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – Request further information
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Highways – No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments received
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections
WBC Ecology Newts – No objections subject to condition(s)
WBC Ecology – No objections subject to condition(s)
WBC Sports Development (Places and Neighbourhoods) – No comments received
WBC Waste Services – No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received
WBC Sustainability – No comments received

External

Sport England – No comments received
Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No objections subject to condition(s)
The Environment Agency – No objections subject to condition(s)
South East Water – No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council raises objection to this application and recommends that WBC refuses the application as it is considered that the provision of one less overall parking space, without the justification of an analysis of the existing users of the facilities travel habits, and a Travel Plan with no concrete provisions for influencing the travel of existing and new customers, nor an assessment of the impact of the increased customer demand on the existing shared spaces, when taken into account with the other users of that shared parking, will result in inadequate parking, contrary to Policy CC07, and to the detriment of the amenity of other users of the surrounding uses, contrary to Policy CP3.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	Eight representations received from local residents raising the following concerns: - The design and access statement states that the loss of parking spaces is five, but the plans indicate a loss of seven. - Concerns regarding whether the site can accommodate sufficient parking for the use. - Lack of submitted Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. - Shortage of disabled and child parking spaces - Plans do not express the full context and impact on the nearby River Thames - Impact on membership fees (Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration.) - Increase in delays for member changing and showering facilities (Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration.) - Loss of outdoor pool impacting health and wellbeing of members. - Proposed application is on a floodplain. (Officer comment: The site is predominantly located in Flood Zone 2 with a small area of car park within Flood Zone 3; not the functional floodplain.) - Lack of emergency vehicle parking - Lack of cycle provision - Concerns about safety of internal pool (Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration.) - No consultations held with club members regarding the proposals (Officer comment: This is not a requirement of this planning application.)

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is made of up of two main sections; firstly, the existing David Lloyd

Sports Centre is located to the east (1 Thames Valley Park Drive). The site is accessed via the roundabout to the immediate south and is comprised of a central sports centre building with car parking surroundings all of its elevations. A children's nursery is located to the south-west of the site.

The access and site boundaries of the sports centre, as is reflective of the site's prevailing rural surroundings to the north and east, are densely lined mature vegetation. Thames Valley Park as a whole is consciously designed with dense areas of landscape buffers in and around each plot, particularly due to its proximity to the Countryside, Thames Valley Nature Reserve and the River Thames to the north.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for a proposed extension to the existing David Lloyd Health Club to form enhanced swimming facilities, a spa and spa garden, plus upper floor health and fitness areas and alterations to the existing car park layout.

Revised plans were received on 18th May 2026 which partly reduced the scale of the main extension proposed. Consequently, this has reduced the proposed floorspace from 1063sqm to 871sqm.

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 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 development plan, including the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy Context:

Core Strategy 2010:

The site is located within Thames Valley Science Park, a Core Employment Area as defined by Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy. Policy CP15 states that development for business, industry or warehousing will be permitted, including the expansion or intensification of existing employment uses provided it is within a Core Employment Area. Policy CP15 also states that any proposed changes of use from B1, B2 & B8 should not lead to an overall net loss of floorspace in B Use within the borough.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy 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.

Core Strategy policy CP2 encourages the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities including provision of community facilities to meet the long term needs of the Borough. Policy CP3 also states that planning permission will be encouraged for

recreational/sporting facilities and that for an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 (MDDLDP):

MDDLDP Policy TB11 relates to Core Employment Areas identified within Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy.

MDDLDP Policy CC04 states that planning permission will only be granted for proposals that seek to delivery high quality sustainably designed and constructed developments.

Open Space, Sports and Recreation Strategy SPD (2013):

The Council's Open space, sports and recreation strategy (2013) SPD sets out the clear approach it envisages for these standards. The Council expects that any new swimming pool provision should be constructed in line with the Sport England Design Guidance Note Swimming Pools Updated Guidance for 2011 (or any successor document should this guidance be updated in due course).

Sport England Design Guide Note – Swimming Pools (2013)

In Appendix 1 of the Sport England Design Note on Swimming Pools (2013), page 3 of the note provides the minimum standards for swimming pools of different natures (Competition, community etc):

Pool Type	Length (m)	Width (m)	No. of Lanes	Lane Width	Side Margin (m)	Depth (m)
Learner Pool **	10.00-20.00	7.00	2	2.00	N/A	0.60 - 0.90
Community 20 m **	20.00	8.50 10.50	4 5	2.00	0.25	0.80 - 1.00/1.50
Community 25 m **	25.00	8.50 10.50 12.50	4 5 6	2.00	0.25	0.90 - 1.50 min 1.00 - 2.00 pref
Competition +	25.00*	13.00	6	2.00	0.50	1.00 - 1.80 min
Short Course Championship +	25.00*	17.00	8	2.00	0.50	1.80
Training Pool	50.00	10.00-17.00	4 - 8	2.00	0.50	1.00 - 1.80 min
ASA National Competition +	50.00*	19.00 21.00	8	2.25 *** 2.50	0.50	1.00 - 1.80 min 2.00 pref
FINA National Competition +	50.00*	21.00	8	2.50	0.20 min 0.50 pref	1.35 min 2.00 pref
FINA International Competition +	50.00*	25.00	8	2.50	2.50	2.00 min

* For competition pools, an allowance should be made for automatic timing touch pads and for the finished dimension between surfaces of the timing touch pads / walls to be certified by an approved surveyor (see page 6).

** Provision of a movable floor allows the pool to be put to multi-purpose community use.

*** Standard timing pad widths are 1.9 m (2 m lanes) or 2.4 m (2.5 m lanes). 2.25 m wide lanes require bespoke timing panels.

+ Spectator and competitor seating provision appropriate to the level of competition should be discussed and agreed with the ASA / FINA

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.

Policy S4 of the NPPF (Principle of development within settlements) says that development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of

doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework.

Policy E2 of the NPPF states that to support business growth, substantial weight should be given to:

- a) The economic benefits of proposals for commercial development which allow businesses to invest, expand and/or adapt; especially where this would support the economic vision and strategy for the area, the implementation of the Industrial Strategy, support improvements in freight and logistics and/or reflect proposals for Industrial Strategy Zones and AI Growth Zones; and
- b) Benefits for domestic food production, animal welfare and/or the environment which can be demonstrated through proposals for development for farm and agricultural modernisation.

TC3: Main town centre uses outside town centres states that a sequential test should be applied to proposals for main town centre uses for which planning permission is required and TC4 states that development proposals for retail and leisure uses located outside town centres should be accompanied by an impact assessment if the proposal exceeds a floorspace threshold set out in an up-to-date development plan, and is not on a site which is allocated for the proposed use in the plan. If no threshold for impact assessments has been set in the development plan, a default threshold of 2,500m² gross floorspace should be applied.

Policy HC1 of the NPPF (Planning for Healthy Communities) states that to promote the creation of healthy and inclusive places, and the provision, retention and enhancement of appropriate community facilities and public service infrastructure, development plans should, at the most appropriate level:

- a) Be informed by an understanding of any existing deficits in the availability of community facilities and public service infrastructure, and additional requirements expected over the plan period, arising from proposed development and wider changes in the local population and public service provision. In doing so, they should take into account both quantitative and qualitative aspects of provision, identified local health needs and opportunities to reduce inequalities through the availability of facilities;
- b) Set out the facilities and contributions expected from development, including as part of allocations for major development involving the provision of housing;
- c) Allocate land specifically for community facilities and public service infrastructure where it is appropriate to do so, and assess whether any land is suitable for designation as Local Green Space in accordance with policy HC2;
- d) Set local standards for the provision of different types of recreational land and facilities, including for play, sport, informal recreation and allotments. In doing so plans should draw upon relevant national standards and best practice, tailoring these as necessary to local circumstances and evidence. Policies for play and informal recreation should aim to secure a connected network of high quality, inclusive and accessible opportunities as part of the wider network of green space provision, secured through both on-site provision in conjunction with land allocated for development and through other contributions and investment; and

- e) Identify wider opportunities to promote good health, prevent ill-health, reduce health inequalities and support social interaction through their spatial strategy and land allocations, including through policies for strengthening town centres, locating development where it will support walking, wheeling and cycling and promoting mixed use developments.

Policy HC4 of the NPPF (Proposals for new and improved community facilities, public service infrastructure and development providing public health benefits) states that substantial weight should be given to the benefits where:

- a) New or improved public service infrastructure or community facilities would be provided; and
- b) Development proposals would make a demonstrable contribution towards promoting good health, preventing ill-health, reducing health inequalities or supporting social interaction in the local community (such as, but not limited to, the provision of new recreation facilities, meeting places and opportunities to grow or purchase healthier food).

Assessment:

The application relates to the extension and enhancement of the existing David Lloyd leisure facility within Thames Valley Science Park. The site is located within settlement limits and a Core Employment Area where development associated with existing uses is acceptable in principle under Policies CP15 and TB11.

The proposal represents the expansion of an established leisure and recreational facility and would increase the range and capacity of facilities available to members. The provision and enhancement of sports and recreational facilities supports the creation of healthy and inclusive communities and contributes towards meeting the recreational and wellbeing needs of existing and future residents. In this regard, the proposal accords with the objectives of Policies CP2 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, which support the provision of community facilities and recreational opportunities within sustainable communities.

The NPPF recognises the importance of high-quality sports and recreational facilities and supports the development and modernisation of facilities that promote health, fitness and wellbeing. The proposal would result in the continued investment in and improvement of an existing leisure facility, providing additional opportunities for sport and recreation in an accessible and sustainable location.

With regards to the provision of sports facilities, the proposals involve replacing the existing, 25 metre x 10 metre community pool with the following:

- A 20 metre x 10 metre community pool
- 2no. 9 metre x 2.75 metre kid's pools

Whilst the proposals do involve a reduction in the length of the main community pool, the main pool's specifications would still meet the minimum length, width and depth guidance outlined in the Sport England Design Note above for a community pool. Additionally, the expansion to include kids pools increases the available facilities at the site for all ages, pursuant of the NPPF's goal of recognising the importance of high-

quality sports and recreational facilities and supports the development and modernisation of facilities that promote health, fitness and wellbeing, as outlined in policy HC4.

Subject to the detailed assessment of design, visual impact, parking, accessibility, amenity and all other material planning considerations, the principle of extending the existing leisure facility is considered acceptable and accords with Policies CP2, CP3 and CP15 of the Core Strategy.

Joint Minerals and Waste Plan:

The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Joint Plan) was adopted by Wokingham Borough Council on 19 January 2023. The Joint Plan identifies site allocations and extensions to help provide a future supply of sand and gravel extraction. However, despite these allocations, there remains a shortfall of supply during the plan period. The policy response to address the shortfall is the identification of a 'Minerals Safeguarding Area' (MSA), where Policy M2 of the plan applies, and also an 'Area of Search' where Policy M4 applies. This approach is to demonstrate the potential for, in effect, windfall provision within the Plan area.

The site is within the MSA and contains sand and gravel deposits. Policy M2 aims to seek to protect mineral resources against unnecessary sterilization by non-minerals development. The application covers an area approximately 0.53 hectares in size and a 3 hectare threshold is reflected in the supporting text under Policy M2, which states:

"A minimum plot size of 3 hectares will apply in the safeguarding process to avoid repeated consideration of prior extraction where this can be assumed to be uneconomic, due to the small size of the parcels of land involved."

Therefore, given the sites relatively modest scale below the threshold specified within Policy M2, it is unlikely to be a viable commercial operation or impact any other commercial operations.

Character of the Area:

Policy Context:

Section 14 of the NPPF promotes high quality, healthy, inclusive and sustainable places, through setting clear expectations about design. Policy DP3 focuses on key principles for well-designed places. It states that development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets. This should not preclude innovation or change where appropriate, especially where an increased scale or density of development is justified in accordance with policies L2 and L3.

The requirements of this policy do not depart from the principles already established within the National Design Guide published in January 2021. Policy DP3 lists seven principles to achieve the overarching goal of well-designed places, which are below:

- Liveability: support healthy, mixed, vibrant and integrated communities, which will function well over the lifetime of the development, by incorporating a range

of uses and tenures, employing features which promote social interaction, and which are robust, durable and easy to look after;

- Climate: contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and the transition to net zero by using building layouts, building orientation, massing, landscaping and materials which conserve energy and other resources, and which minimise risks from the impacts of climate change including overheating;
- Nature: incorporate and/or connect to a network of high quality, accessible, multi functional green infrastructure to provide opportunities for recreation and healthy living, strengthen habitats, improve climate change resilience and improve air and water quality. This should include maintaining and enhancing tree cover and incorporating sustainable drainage systems in accordance with policies N3 and F8;
- Movement: provide transport infrastructure and choices which support the design vision for the site, provide good connections to the wider settlement (or those nearby), and prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport;
- Built Form: use the pattern of buildings to define the arrangement of streets, squares and other spaces, promote compact forms of development to optimise the site's potential, distinguish between public and private areas, create focal points and, where appropriate, enhance views into and out of the scheme;
- Public Space: include spaces that are safe, secure, inclusive, and accessible for all ages and abilities, including for groups such as women and girls; and which facilitate and encourage social interaction, play and healthy lifestyles (for example by providing high quality, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, a variety of recreational spaces and places to meet, integrating lighting and making building entrances and windows face onto streets and other public spaces to provide natural surveillance); and
- Identity: create visually attractive, distinctive and characterful development to establish or maintain a strong sense of place and pride, including through the use of a coherent palette of materials, design features and planting.

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;

Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan states that development at the edge of settlements is acceptable where it is demonstrated that it is within development limits and respects the transition between the built up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.

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 and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.

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).

Assessment:

The main extension proposed would largely adopt the footprint of the existing pool structure to the rear of the site but would also notably extend eastwards by approximately 15.5 metres. The extension would have an extensive flat roof form and a maximum ridge height of 8.4 metres, with its material palette largely reflecting the existing building through the use of red brick at ground floor level and composite vertical cladding.

Whilst a sizeable extension to the existing health club, the visual prominence of the extension when viewed from Thames Valley Park and adjacent commercial sites to the south would not be significant, aided by the screening the existing building would provide. The extension is proportional to the scale of the site and maintains adequate separation distances from neighbouring boundaries.

There would be limited views of the extension's massing from the adjacent footpath within the Thames Valley Park Nature Reserve but the site's well vegetated northern boundary would sufficiently offset the urbanising appearance of the development and overall, wouldn't represent a notable change in character since southward views of the existing health club from the Nature Reserve are already prevalent.

The proposed extension would utilise a material palette comprising brickwork to match the existing building, vertical composite cladding, powder-coated aluminium glazing and louvred screening. These materials reflect those already present on the existing health club and would ensure that the extension appears as a coherent addition to the building rather than a visually separate element. The proposed materials are therefore considered appropriate to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding commercial area and would contribute positively to the overall design quality of the development.

Overall, proposed extension to the rear of the site would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area.

Turning to the spa garden, its overall footprint is modest and would be enveloped by the form of the proposed extension and existing health club building. It would be enclosed by 2 metre tall privacy fencing which is visually appropriate given the site's commercial context and overall, would have a negligible visual impact on the wider character of the area. Similarly, the single storey sauna building proposed would be enveloped by existing built development, with limited views of its form available from public viewpoints. Overall, this element of the scheme would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area.

The alterations to the parking layout would have no material visual impacts on the character of the area. Similarly, the single storey ventilation structure proposed on the

building's existing elevation would be well enveloped within the site's existing urban footprint and would not result in any notable visual impacts.

Neighbouring Amenity:

There are no residential properties within close proximity to the site as it is located within a commercial business park. The extension retains adequate separation distances from neighbouring land uses and overall, does not raise any material concerns on overlooking, overbearing or loss of light grounds.

With regards to noise, there would undoubtedly be an increase in plant noise, but this does not raise any amenity impacts due to the development's significant distancing from neighbouring land uses.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Site Access:

The development would utilise the site's existing access, maintaining a one-way approach around the car park (east to west). WBC Highways have no objections to this approach, assisted by a 6.0m wide manoeuvring aisle which allows enough space for vehicles to ingress/egress each of the parking spaces.

Delivery, Servicing and Refuse Collection:

The applicant has indicated the dedicated servicing area on the western side of the main building, which will be accessed by servicing vehicles outside of opening hours. The applicant has also stated that during business hours, deliveries can be received at the front of the building. Plans have been submitted indicating that the service vehicles can park without obstructing the pedestrian pathway and there will remain 7.5m clear space in front for other vehicles to pass whilst the service vehicle is parked up.

WBC Highways raise no objections to this approach.

Fire Tender Vehicle Access:

Vehicle tracking plans have been submitted which indicate that a fire tender can ingress/egress the proposed development without conflicting with the bollards around the site. WBC Highways raise no objections to this.

Refuse Collection Vehicle Access:

The applicant has demonstrated the manoeuvring of a refuse collection vehicle (ref: PD01_AT01). The plans clearly show that larger refuse vehicles can circulate the site without having to move a bollard. More generally, there are no changes to the existing situation for refuse vehicle access.

Framework and Delivery Plan:

The Framework Delivery and Servicing Plan (DSP) is acceptable. The DSP aims to *"ensure that all delivery and servicing activity associated with the site is managed safely, sustainably and efficiently minimising adverse impacts on the local highway network while supporting the operational needs of the development."*

An existing Vendor Booking System will be retained to schedule and coordinate arrival times, which will consider the arm barrier system access requirements.

The DSP is a “*living document*” and includes “*provision for continual monitoring.*” The responsibility of this falls to the on-site management team led by the General Manager of the Leisure Club.

Traffic Impacts:

The applicant has undertaken a two-week ATC count, with the results seen below:

	Vehicle Trips
AM Peak Hour	53 two-way
PM Peak Hour	86 two-way

A trip generation of the proposal has also been provided within the Transport Assessment. A 29% uplift has been applied to the existing trips, and Highways is in agreement that this is a worst-case scenario and the trip uplift is unlikely to be this high.

	Total Trips Including Proposal	Net Trip Change
AM Peak Hour	91 two-way	+20
PM Peak Hour	137 two-way	+30

WBC Highways have assessed the impact of the net trip change and do not consider it to be detrimental to the operation of the local highway network.

Car Parking:

The parking demand has been examined through a parking accumulation assessment, using ATC data, which has then been uplifted by 29% to account for the proposed changes. The parking accumulation peaks with 126 vehicles between 11:00 – 12:00.

The Transport assessment sets out that there are 70 dedicated car parking spaces for David Lloyd, and 113 shared car parking spaces. It is understood that the shared parking area is for use by the gym, nursery and office building (currently unoccupied). The peak car parking demand would therefore result in a reliance on 56 shared car parking spaces.

It has been clarified that there will be no parking allocated to specifically to staff. The 252 spaces provided comprise: 76 allocated spaces at David Lloyd, 13 allocated spaces at the Nursery, 50 spaces for Offices and 113 Shared Parking Spaces. The transport agent clarifies that there is a total of 252 parking spaces, as shown on the numbered plan. Spare capacity of 78 parking spaces would exist between 11:00 – 12:00.

The forecast demand and provision are tabulated below; for ease of reference compared to the consultant’s tables:

Consultant’s Proposed Parking and Forecast Demand			
Parking Area	Provision	Max Demand (11:00 – 12:00)	Spare
David Lloyd	76	126	-50
Office	50	39	11

Nursery	13	9	4
'Shared' Car Park	113	50	63
Totals	252	174	78

WBC Highways are satisfied that whilst a large amount of the shared parking spaces fall outside the application red-line, the lease agreements for the shared parking areas provide enough confidence that sufficient parking provision is available for the site. Furthermore, the primary purpose of WBC Highways' assessment is to assess the impact on the public highway which, in relation to the parking spaces, is situated over 200 metres away. Ultimately, there are no anticipated impacts on the public highway as a result of the proposals.

Travel Plan:

The Travel Plan submitted provides suitable measures for reducing vehicle trips and an adequate monitoring and reporting strategy. A 5% reduction in car driving is a suitable target for the location of the proposed development.

Compliance with the Travel Plan will be secured via condition.

EV Charging Points:

Building Regulations (Approved Document S) states in Section 4 ('Major renovations of buildings which are not residential or mixed-use buildings'), one EV charging point must be installed and one in five spaces must have access to cable routes.

The Applicant has stated that 4 EV charging points will be provided in the shared parking area. WBC Highways have no objections to this.

Cycle Provision:

Within the Transport Assessment, it says that no new cycle parking is to be provided in the proposed development. There will be 20 cycle spaces retained.

The applicant has stated in the Transport Assessment that the Use Class D2 'Assembly and Leisure' does not align with the nature of David Lloyd as a 'private Leisure Club'. Therefore, they state WBC Standards do not apply.

WBC Highways remain satisfied with the provision of 20 cycle spaces as a result of the above.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site is primarily located within Flood Zones 2, with a small section of the northern car park falling within Flood Zone 3. The site also has a moderate risk of surface water flooding.

Surface Water Flooding:

The proposed development would be on previously developed and presently impermeable land. WBC Drainage have reviewed the submitted flood risk assessment and note that the development proposes connecting foul drainage into the existing pumping station to the Southwest, as is the current situation and continue discharge of surface water runoff into the existing ditch to the west. WBC Drainage also note that

the development does not propose any changes to the site levels or drainage discharge rates.

WBC Drainage have no objections to this approach, subject to a condition which secures a final drainage strategy plan prior to the commencement of development.

Fluvial Flooding:

The Environment Agency have reviewed the amended Flood Risk Assessment in light of their first two sets of objections to the proposals. They consider that the approach proposed satisfactorily addresses our earlier concerns and meets the requirements of paragraphs 20 to 21 of the Flood Risk and Coastal Change Planning Practice Guidance and its site-specific flood risk assessment checklist.

Subject to a condition securing compliance with the mitigation measures contained within the Flood Risk Assessment, they raise no objections to the proposals on fluvial flooding grounds.

Contamination:

The previous use of the proposed development site as a historic landfill presents a medium risk of contamination that could be mobilised during site works and construction to pollute controlled waters. Controlled waters are particularly sensitive in this location because the proposed development site is:

- located upon a principal aquifer/secondary aquifer
- made ground with expected shallow groundwater at certain times, which is also in connection with surface waters

The application's Phase I report demonstrates that it will be possible to manage the risks posed to controlled waters by this development. Further detailed information is however required before built development is undertaken, as detailed within the results of the Phase I report.

Both the Environment Agency and WBC Environmental Health have requested a condition requiring the submission of a Phase 2 Intrusive Ground Investigation Report, which will be secured prior to the commencement of development.

Further to this, the Environment Agency have requested several other conditions pertaining to both the method of ground investigation (boreholes) and the results of the requested phase 2 survey above, namely:

- A verification report pursuant of the Phase 2 results
- A piling/investigative borehole method statement
- A borehole decommissioning method statement
- An unexpected contamination condition, covering the mitigation of any further contamination found during construction.

These conditions will be imposed on the decision notice if this application is recommended for approval.

Landscape and Trees:

There are very limited existing landscape elements within the car park that will be affected by the development, however additional changes proposed at the main entrance to provide 8 replacement car park spaces will require the removal to an existing shrub bed and a few low-quality trees.

The proposed extension will be 2m higher and larger than the existing roof structure over the existing swimming pool, although it will be lower in height than the existing building and will not be any closer to the site boundary than the existing structure. Due to the increased in height, there will be an increase in the visual impact of the proposed extension from the open landscape to the north, however this will be seen in the context of the existing leisure centre and the other office buildings along this edge. Views from the wider landscape towards the site will be mostly restricted by existing trees and other vegetation growing outside the site, although there will be some filtered views of the new extension through gaps in the vegetation.

Overall, WBC Landscape and Trees do not consider there will be any significant increase in landscape harm to the adjacent countryside and surrounding landscape from the proposed development, nor any existing vegetation that encloses the site's northern border within the Thames Valley Nature Reserve.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

The applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment and paired with a Statutory Metric Tool. WBC Ecology agree with the categorisation of baseline habitats and their condition.

The submitted BNG metric demonstrates that the proposal does not achieve the statutory requirement of a minimum 10% net gain in habitat units, as required under the Environment Act 2021. The applicant has indicated that this shortfall will be primarily addressed through the purchase of off-site biodiversity units, plus the enhancement of some areas of on-site modified grassland and the creation of other areas of modified grassland.

Final details of the BNG mitigation off-site will be secured within the Biodiversity Gain Plan, automatically applied to the permission if approved.

Ecology:

Protected/Priority Habitats:

The application site is located approximately 250 metres south of the River Thames and directly borders an area of open green space which adjoins Thames Valley Park East, a designated Local Wildlife Site. This adjacent green space contains a large waterbody, within which multiple Species of Principal Importance, including birds, reptiles and amphibians, have been recorded according to data held by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.

Given the close proximity of the proposed development to ecologically sensitive open space, a Local Wildlife Site, and connecting corridors to the River Thames, it is considered necessary to ensure that construction activities do not result in indirect impacts such as pollution, changes to hydrology, or disturbance to these features.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is therefore required. The CEMP should include measures to protect adjacent habitats outside the red line boundary, with particular focus on nearby waterways and drainage features. Of note is a ditch located close to the application boundary, which feeds into adjacent reedbeds and ultimately the River Thames. Both the reedbeds and the River Thames are classified as irreplaceable habitats under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024, and appropriate safeguards will be required to prevent contamination, sedimentation, or alterations to hydrology during construction.

Invasive Non-Native Species:

Japanese knotweed has been recorded approx. 70m adjacent to the application site boundary. This species is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it an offence to cause it to spread in the wild. Japanese knotweed can spread through very small fragments of plant material (as little as 1–2 cm) and may be unintentionally dispersed through soil movement, surface water runoff, or machinery and vehicle movements.

The applicant's ecologist has recommended that an Invasive Non-Native Species Management Plan be incorporated within the CEMP to ensure appropriate control measures are implemented during construction. WBC Ecology agree with this recommendation and consider it necessary. It is therefore recommended that a planning condition is imposed to secure a CEMP, inclusive of invasive species management measures.

Protected Species:

The application site comprises habitats of generally low ecological value, consisting primarily of hardstanding, buildings, and short-sward modified grassland with some introduced shrub planting. The most ecologically valuable features within the site are the urban scattered trees. Adjacent to the northern and eastern site boundaries is an ecologically valuable treeline, which forms a buffer between the urban environment and the surrounding open green space and neighbouring wildlife site.

Roosting Bats:

The proposed development involves an extension to the existing leisure centre building, which will require works to the roof and therefore has the potential to affect roosting bats. All bat species and their roosts are legally protected under national and European legislation, including the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In addition, several bat species are listed as Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. This legislation makes it an offence to deliberately capture, kill or injure bats, disturb them, or damage or destroy their breeding or resting places.

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken as part of the PEA on 7th August 2025 by the applicant's ecologist, assessing the building and the two trees proposed for removal. The assessment identified no features with the potential to support roosting bats within the building, and the trees were assessed as having no roosting potential due to their age, structure, and ongoing management. WBC Ecology agree with the ecologist's conclusion that the site has negligible potential to support roosting bats and that no further bat survey work is required.

Commuting and Foraging Bats:

The proposed extension will be constructed on existing hardstanding and will not result in the loss of grassland habitat. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) report notes that seven trees were removed prior to 2020, which were not subject to roosting or activity surveys. However, given that these were young trees located close to the leisure centre entrance, it is reasonable to conclude that they were unlikely to have contributed significantly to bat roosting, foraging, or commuting opportunities. I agree with this assessment.

Given the location and scale of the development, a sensitive lighting strategy will be required. The building extension will reduce the distance between the built form and adjacent open space, the adjacent northern and eastern treeline and the nearby Local Wildlife Site. When combined with integrated external lighting, this has the potential to increase light spill into surrounding habitats, which could disrupt bat commuting routes and negatively affect other light-sensitive species.

The purpose of the lighting strategy is to ensure that artificial lighting does not adversely affect the adjacent open space or the treeline along the northern and eastern boundaries. These areas are likely to support a range of nocturnal and diurnal species, including European Protected Species such as bats and badgers, as well as Species of Principal Importance, including hedgehogs and certain invertebrates. The lighting design should therefore maintain a dark corridor along the site boundaries and adjacent treelines to minimise ecological disturbance.

The Sensitive Lighting Plan should include details of the location, type, intensity, and specification of all proposed lighting and should be informed by *Bat Conservation Trust Guidance Note 08: Bats and Artificial Lighting*. It is recommended that a planning condition requiring a Lighting Design Strategy for Light-Sensitive Biodiversity is imposed to secure these measures.

Breeding Birds:

The proposed development will require the removal of two semi-mature trees (alder and poplar), both of which have the potential to support breeding birds. Wild breeding birds and their nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it a criminal offence to intentionally take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bird, or to damage or remove their eggs.

To ensure compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the applicant's ecologist has recommended a precautionary approach. This includes either undertaking vegetation removal outside the bird nesting season (March–October inclusive) or carrying out a pre-works nesting bird check by a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works. Should an active nest be identified, a buffer of 3–5 metres will be established around the nest, within which no construction activities will take place. Works may recommence once the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

WBC Ecology agree with this precautionary approach and recommend that these measures are secured as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

All other species mitigation measures follows best practice and should be secured as part of the CEMP to mitigate risk to reptiles and hedgehogs.

Biodiversity Enhancements:

The Wokingham Borough Development Plan require development proposals to deliver measurable biodiversity benefits through building layout, design, or landscaping.

In order to comply with national and local policy, the applicant's ecologist has recommended the incorporation of bat box and two bird boxes. The PEA itself makes several suitable species-specific recommendations for the types of bat and bird boxes to be installed. To ensure delivery of these biodiversity enhancements, it is recommended that a Species Compensation and Enhancement condition is attached to any grant of planning permission.

Sustainability:

Core Strategy Policy CP1 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that contribute towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon developments as soon as possible by including appropriate on-site renewable energy features. It is also to be noted that within paragraph 4.7 of the supporting text, in line with the rapidly changing climate situation, the Council is taking a flexible approach to the provision of on-site renewables and other sustainable forms of development dealt with in CP1.

Policy CC2 of the NPPF26 states that in order to contribute to climate change mitigation and the transition to net zero, development proposals should, where relevant to the proposal:

- a) Accord with policies TR3 and TR4 so that sustainable patterns of movement are prioritised, opportunities are taken to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, and infrastructure is provided to support the transition to zero-emission vehicles;
- b) Support good access to facilities in order to limit the need to travel, whether through the development's location, through development densities which improve catchment populations for local services, or by incorporating community facilities and premises to support local employment opportunities;
- c) Use design approaches which conserve energy and other resources in accordance with policy DP3(2)(b);
- d) Take advantage of opportunities to reuse existing structures and materials, including by reusing non-contaminated excavated soil and hardcore within the site;
- e) Take advantage of opportunities to draw low carbon energy from decentralised networks (such as district heat networks), where these are available, and to co-locate energy and heat generators and users, especially to take advantage of suppliers of surplus heat and energy;
- f) Contribute to the creation or restoration of habitats which can act as carbon stores, such as through woodland planting and peatland restoration, while avoiding harm to habitats which can act as important carbon stores, including peatland and salt marsh; and

This application is supported by an Energy Strategy Statement. The statement outlines that a range of passive and active energy efficient measures have been carefully assessed and incorporated into the design of the new extension. Key strategies include the use of high performance façades, LED lighting, heat recovery systems, and high efficiency fans, each selected with consideration for the building's intended use and occupancy patterns.

To ensure ongoing performance, these measures will be monitored through a Building Energy Management System (BEMS), enabling continuous evaluation and optimisation of the building's energy efficiency.

In terms of lower carbon technologies, combined heat and power (CHP) units generate relatively high levels of CO₂ compared to alternative technologies. As a result, incorporating this technology into the building leads to non-compliance with building regulations. Consequently, a gas-fired CHP system will not be implemented. Alternatively, several renewable energy systems have been evaluated for the development and are discussed in detail later in this report. A roof mounted photovoltaic (PV) array has been selected, as it offers a 22% reduction in the development's carbon emissions.

Ultimately, the proposed development would result in a saving of 12.8% in carbon emissions compared to 2021 Building Regulations, which is supported. To ensure these sustainability methods are complied with, conditions will be imposed requiring Design State and Post Development Certificates achieved compliance with BREEAM (or equivalent) rating of 'Excellent' as a minimum, plus the submission of an energy strategy demonstrating that at least 10% of the reduction in carbon emissions will be achieved through renewable energy or low carbon technology.

Thames Water:

With regards to the local foul water network, the proposed development is located within 15 metres of our underground waste water assets. As such, Thames Water have requested the following informative attached to any approval granted:

"The proposed development is located within 15 metres of Thames Waters underground assets and as such, the development could cause the assets to fail if appropriate measures are not taken. Please read our guide 'working near our assets' to ensure your workings are in line with the necessary processes you need to follow if you're considering working above or near our pipes or other structures. <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/developers/larger-scale-developments/planning-your-development/working-near-our-pipes> Should you require further information please contact Thames Water. Email: developer.services@thameswater.co.uk Phone: 0800 009 3921 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm) Write to: Thames Water Developer Services, Clearwater Court, Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 8DB"

With regards to the existing water network infrastructure, Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this development proposal. As such, they have requested a condition that, in summary, requires the following:

No development shall be occupied until confirmation has been provided that either:

- all water network upgrades required to accommodate the additional demand to serve the development have been completed; or
- a development and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed with Thames Water to allow development to be occupied.

This condition will be imposed on the decision notice if this application is recommended for approval.

Conclusion:

Overall, the proposed development complies with the development plan. Subject to conditions, this application 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:	Approval
Date:	3 September 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	4 September 2026