

9th March 2026

Development Management
Wokingham Borough Council
Civic Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: PLANNING APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE – FORMER MAGNET, 6 KING STREET LANE, WINNERSH

Please find enclosed a full application for change of use of the former Magnet store at Winnersh from mixed Class E (retail) and Class B8 use to Class E (gym) use. This application is submitted on behalf of Pure Gym Limited.

Background

The former Magnet Store at 6 King Street Lane is a freestanding building located within the boundaries of the district centre at Winnersh. It is set back to the north of King Street Lane and comprises a vacant retail warehouse the provides floorspace of 1,278 sq. m with car parking for approximately 23 vehicles and servicing facilities located to the front of the unit. The site is adjoined by a timber merchants and gymnastics centre with residential properties to the rear on Rainbow Park. To the opposite side of King Street Lane there is a large Sainsbury's foodstore.

Planning permission for the existing building was originally granted in 1979 (ref. 10027). This permission was for a single storey warehouse for the sale, storage and distribution of manufactured joinery products and ancillary products. In 1981, planning permission was granted for a single storey extension to provide additional storage (ref. 15944). The 1979 planning permission was varied in 2015 (ref. VAR/2014/2276) to remove restrictive occupancy conditions that required the site to be only occupied and used by the applicant. It is understood that the site was in longstanding use by Magnet until it vacated the premises in April 2025.

Proposed Use

Magnet has previously operated a retail showroom and warehouse facilities at the application site and the existing use is considered to comprise a mixed Class E (retail) and Class B8 (storage and distribution) use. This use is currently controlled by condition no.2 of planning permission ref. VAR/2014/2276 which states that the premises can be only used for the sale, storage and distribution of manufactured joinery and ancillary products or for Class B1 and B8 uses with an ancillary retail showroom (to a maximum of 33% of the floor area). Planning permission is therefore now sought for change of use from mixed Class E and Class B8 use to Class E use to enable the application site to be used as a gym.

The applicant, Pure Gym Limited ('PureGym'), is the intended operator of the proposed gym. It is the largest gym group in the UK with over 400 locations, providing accessible health and fitness facilities on a low-cost, no-contract basis. The nearest existing PureGym facilities are at Basingstoke Road and Caversham Road in Reading and at the Princess Square Shopping Centre in Bracknell. The proposed gym at Winnersh will provide a range of high quality cardiovascular, strength and functional training equipment together with group exercise classes and personal training services. It will do so on an affordable and flexible basis, including 24-hour opening, to meet the needs of different users and to enable it to serve the widest cross-section of the local community.

Principle of the Proposed Use

The development plan for Wokingham currently comprises the Core Strategy (adopted in 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery Document (adopted in 2014). As noted above, the application is located within the district centre boundary of Winnersh as shown on the policies map associated with the development plan. It is not subject to any other site-specific policies or allocations.

The proposed gym use is a 'main town centre use' as defined by the Glossary at Annex 2 of the NPPF. The application site is situated within the district centre at Winnersh and is therefore a preferred location for this use. Policy CP13 (Town centres and shopping) of the Core Strategy confirms that the centre at Winnersh is '*suitable in principle to accommodate town centre uses*'. Policy TB15 ('Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development') of the Managing Development Delivery Document states that planning permission will only be granted for proposals for main town centre uses within the district centres and other centres where they can demonstrate that they will meet four criteria.

These criteria include that the proposed development is of a scale and form that is compatible with the retail character of the centre and its role in the hierarchy of retail centres, that it contributes to the provision of day and evening/night-time uses and is compatible with other uses, and that it enhances vitality and viability. This proposal is inherently compatible with the scale and form of the district centre at Winnersh as it involves the change of use of an existing building. It does not seek to expand the district centre and will not alter its role in the Borough's hierarchy of centres. The proposed gym use will make a positive contribution to the provision of day and night-time uses within the centre and, as discussed further below, will be compatible with other uses. It will support the vitality and viability of the district centre at Winnersh and bring a large, vacant site back into active use. It will expand and diversify the range of uses within the centre and enhance its ability to meet the day-to-day needs of local residents.

Policy TB15 also requires proposals to demonstrate how they retain or enhance the provision of Class A1 uses in primary shopping frontages and the provision of other Class A uses in secondary shopping frontages. These requirements are complicated by the introduction of Class E which provides considerable flexibility to change between town centre uses without the need for planning permission. Nevertheless, we note that the application site is outside of the primary shopping frontage for Winnersh (as shown on the policies map) and is therefore the preferred location for non-retail uses within the district centre. It will therefore also satisfy this criteria of Policy TB15.

This application proposes a main town centre use within a defined centre. This use will support the vitality and viability of the district centre at Winnersh and enhance its ability to meet the needs of local residents. It is therefore clear that the proposed use is acceptable in principle and accords with the requirements of Policies CP13 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB15 of the Managing Development Delivery Document and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Other Matters

In common with many similar modern-day facilities, the proposed gym will operate on a 24/7 basis. This is part of the applicant's flexible model and will increase the accessibility of the proposed health and fitness facility by providing access for those who work shifts or wish to use the gym at less busy times of the day. Between the hours of midnight and 6am, it would be expected that an average of 5-10 users would visit the gym per hour on weekdays and less than 5 per hour at weekends. Gym classes will not be held at night and only background music will be played within the gym. The existing car parking at the application site is screened from noise-sensitive properties by intervening buildings. PureGym also installs extensive security measures at all sites including comprehensive CCTV systems that are remotely monitored at all times, individual PIN and QR entry systems designed to prevent tailgating and similar secure entry arrangements for changing facilities.

This application is supported by an Acoustic Planning Report that has been prepared by RBA Acoustics and considers the potential for noise-break out from the proposed use at the application site

to sensitive receptors, including residential properties to the rear of the site on Rainbow Park. The Acoustic Planning Report has reviewed potential impacts based on typical activity noise levels and sound insulation testing of the existing building. In order to mitigate the impacts of certain gym activities, the report sets out a range of recommendations including noise limiters and physical mitigation measures to ensure no unacceptable impacts on amenities. The report also considers potential impacts associated with future plant items. Based on environmental noise monitoring at the application site, it is recommended that plant items are sited within a lidded enclosure to ensure that plant noise targets are met. These measures could be secured via an appropriately worded condition to ensure compliance with the recommendations of the Acoustic Planning Report. The proposed use will therefore accord with the relevant requirements of Policy CC06 ('Noise') of the Managing Development Delivery Document.

Existing access and parking facilities at the application site are well established and we are not aware of any issues with their operation. The application site is also sustainably located with good pedestrian access from surrounding residential areas. There are bus stops within 100 metres of the site on King Street Lane and Reading Road. These stops are served by services 4, 4a, 128 and 129 which provide connections to Reading, Workington, Bracknell, Twyford, Woodley and intervening destinations. The railway station at Winnersh is located approximately 150 metres to the north with access to services between Reading and London Waterloo. The application site therefore benefits from good access to sustainable modes of transport and the proposal therefore accords with the relevant requirements of Policy CP6 ('Managing Travel Demand' of the Core Strategy.

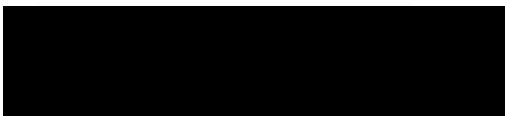
Summary

This application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the former Magnet store at Winnersh from a mixed Class E (retail) and Class B8 use to Class E (gym) use to enable it to be occupied by PureGym for the operation of a high-quality, affordable fitness facility.

The application site is located within the district centre at Winnersh and is a preferred location for the proposed use which will bring vacant premises back into use and make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of the centre. It will also expand services for local residents, promote health and wellbeing, and create up to 15 new jobs. In doing so, the proposed use will not have any unacceptable impacts on the amenities of neighbouring properties and will not have any significant impacts in terms of access and transport. The proposals therefore comply with the relevant requirements of the development plan for Wokingham and the NPPF.

If you have any queries or require any further information, then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



JONATHAN WADCOCK
Director