

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251639
Site Address:	Shop Unit 7, Loddon Vale Centre, Woodley, Wokingham, RG5 4UL
Expiry Date:	19 September 2025
Site Visit Date:	21 August 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed installation of 2 no. remote gas cooler units and 3 no. floor-mounted AC units with protective railings, plus erection of a 2.4m high timber fence enclosure and access gate with associated barriers, following removal of existing plant and enclosure.	

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 CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB15 – Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development TB16 – Development for Town Centre Uses TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character
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 SS8 – Meeting our employment needs SS15 – Securing infrastructure CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging

	ER1 – Core Employment Areas ER5 – The hierarchy of centres ER6 – Town, district and local centres and shopping parades ER7 – Strengthening the role of centres ER9 – Woodley town centre and Lower Earley district centre FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC1 – Promoting healthy communities HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Woodley Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
26152	Erection of a local centre by removal of one flat and replacement by dentists surgery.	Approved 15/09/1986
26859	Temporary landscaped area to improve visual amenity of local centre until future adwest building commenced	Approved 05/01/1987
32470	Creation of new shop front and new access (including fire exit) to retail shop (retrospective).	Approved 31/01/1989
991653	Proposed Erection Of 1.2 Metre Roof Mounted Satellite Dish	Approved 25/10/1999
030067	Proposed erection of internally illuminated shop signs	Approved 16/06/2003
030068	Proposed alterations to shopfront and installation of ATM.	Approved 16/06/2003
101861	Advertisement consent for the replacement of internally illunminated fascia signs, projecting sign and window vinyls.	Approved 26/05/2010

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection subject to conditions.

WBC Highways – Additional information required. *Officer comment: This is discussed within the main report below.*

External

SSE Power Distribution – No response received

REPRESENTATIONS

Woodley Town Council | No objection

Ward Member(s) | No responses received

Neighbours | One objection received from an owner of a nearby flat. The following concerns were raised:

- The proposed enclosure would obstruct emergency egress from Flat M, is made of flammable wood, and may collect debris that increases fire hazard. The vertical fan direction could channel flames and smoke toward Flat M. No evidence of independent fire or safety assessments has been provided.
Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration. Fire safety aspects of the proposal would be controlled under Building Regulations.
- The proposed enclosure would significantly alter the view from Flat M, replacing natural scenery with an industrial structure, potentially affecting tenant mental health. It would also trap rubbish and vegetation becoming a health hazard.
Officer comment: Individual views/vistas are not a material planning consideration. However, the potential impact on residential amenity and character and appearance of the area is considered in the report below. Unspecified potential mental health issues that may be perceived to be attributed to this development are not a material planning consideration.
- Concerns about increased CO₂ and dust affecting respiratory health in upper flats.
Officer comment: No concerns have been raised by the Council's Environmental Health team in this respect. Therefore, the issues are considered inconsequential in respect of the impact of the proposal.
- The area around the proposed enclosure may attract antisocial behaviour: public urination, loitering, vandalism, rough sleeping and drug activity. The cage may create an intimidating environment, especially for lone individuals at night.

	<i>Officer comment: Potential crime and design issues are dealt with in the report below.</i> - The proposed enclosure would obstruct access for window cleaning and external maintenance, including use of cherry pickers. Electric and water meters for Flat M will be harder to reach and more vulnerable to damage. <i>Officer comment: These issues are not material planning considerations.</i> - Contrary to planning claims, four marked parking spaces will be lost or compromised, affecting tenants and visitors. <i>Officer comment: Parking issues are dealt with in the report below.</i> - The development may reduce property value and desirability, affecting resale and rental potential. <i>Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration.</i>
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site features a Tesco Express convenience store situated within a local centre in Woodley. The shop is located with an area predominantly made up of mixed-use commercial units and surrounding residential properties. The site includes parking spaces which are located in front of Shop Unit 6 and the applicant has confirmed that these spaces are part of the Tesco-designated parking area for Store 7. There are flats directly above Shop Unit 6 and these would have a direct outlook above the proposed enclosure (see Figure 1 below).



Figure 1: Photograph showing residential windows looking out across the application site.

An access to the store has been created underneath the flats (see Figure 2 below) into the retail units below and this has been identified on the submitted plans as 'MOE'. From looking at the site's planning history, it does not appear that planning permission has been granted for this access.



Figure 2: Photograph showing new access.

Proposal:

This application seeks permission for the proposed installation of 2 no. remote CO2 gas coolers, and 3 no. floor-mounted air conditioning units which would have one side surrounded with a protection rail. These units would be located within a 2.4m high timber fence enclosure that would have an access gate and Armco barrier on two sides. The total dimension of the enclosure, including the Armco barriers is 5.15m x 7.2m.

The applicant has clarified that the new plant enclosure will be installed within the Tesco-designated parking area for Store 7. To accommodate the structure, three existing parking spaces within this area would be removed. The existing pavement would separate the enclosure from the buildings leaving a gap of 2.15m to the side of unit 7, and a gap of 1.85m to the front of unit 6.

It is noted that the proposed plant enclosure would obscure the door to Shop Unit 6 and it would also partially obscure the new access identified as 'MOE' on the submitted plans.

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 Core Strategy. 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.

Character of the Area:

Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character, together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users, including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life. CP3 also aims to create a sense of place in the way buildings integrate with their surroundings including the use of appropriate landscaping. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy requires developments to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Additionally, Policy TB17 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals which enhance the provision of day-to-day shopping facilities in local centres will be supported.

Figure 3 below shows a screenshot taken from Google Street View (Nov 2022) of the existing plant enclosure located on the pavement adjacent to the side of the Tesco store. The existing enclosure is a metal framed structure that is taller than the proposed enclosure. Additionally, there are a number of AC units mounted on the wall above Shop Unit 6. It is noted that these AC units and the enclosure had been removed when the site visit was carried out on 21/08/2025.



Figure 3: Screenshot from Google Street View of existing plant enclosure.

The proposed new plant enclosure would be sited in the three parking spaces shown in Figure 3 above. The CO2 gas coolers and the floor-mounted AC units would be screened by the proposed 2.4m high timber fence enclosure. The enclosure would project 9.4 metres from the side of Tesco and would project 7.1 metres forward of Shop Unit 6. Compared to the existing enclosure which only projects 1.75 metres from the side of Tesco, there would be an increase in the level of built form. However, the proposed location for the enclosure is to the rear of the shop in the service area and it is away from the main public car park.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that proposals should contribute to a sense of place by integrating with their surroundings and through the use of appropriate landscaping. Given the location of the proposed enclosure, there are no opportunities here to soften or screen the development through any soft landscaping. However, with the enclosure being located away from the main public car park, it is deemed that it would not cause sufficient harm upon the character of the area to warrant withholding permission on this basis.

Crime and Design:

Core Strategy Policy CP1 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and for those that provide attractive, secure and safe schemes. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy goes on to state that proposals should provide a safe and secure scheme whereby they contribute to a sense of place through the buildings and spaces and the way that they integrate with their surroundings. Policy TB21 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals should retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. Additionally, Point NR13 of the Council's Borough Design Guide (BDG) states that non-residential development should contribute to the quality of the public realm by creating high quality new spaces or by enhancing the existing public realm in terms of its safety.

The proposed enclosure would wholly obstruct the door to Shop Unit 6 and it would partially obstruct the set-back access that has been created (labelled 'MOE' on the submitted plans). By virtue of its location and combined with the height and scale of the built form these entranceways would be visually enclosed, and a restricted space would be created on the pavement behind the enclosure. This space would be cramped, unlit and it would not benefit from passive surveillance, and this could potentially lead to unnecessary instances of crime and/or antisocial behaviour. By virtue of its poor design legibility, the proposal would increase public safety concerns contrary to Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, and Point NR13 of the BDG.

The above warrants the first reason for refusal of this application.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that development proposals should not result in a detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers

and their quality of life. Point NR1 of the BDG stipulates that non-residential development should be designed to respond to key features of the site and its local context. In this instance, there are flats located directly above the proposed enclosure, and they would have an outlook across the enclosure.

Given that the proposal is for gas coolers, AC units and an enclosure, there are no concerns on neighbouring amenity grounds relating to overlooking. Additionally, there are no windows serving neighbouring properties at ground floor level and therefore there are no concerns on loss of light grounds. The proposed enclosure would be slightly overbearing on the door serving Shop Unit 6, however it would not be significant enough to warrant a reason for refusal of the application.

A Noise Impact Assessment was submitted alongside this application, the purpose of which was to determine the impact of the installation of the replacement plant on the residential flats above and the nearby commercial premises. Section 6.6 of the submitted report states that noise levels from the proposed mechanical equipment would comply in full with the Local Plan and that the levels would be unlikely to give rise to complaints from residents. The Council's Environmental Protection Team have raised no objection to the proposal, however they suggested a condition that would require all plant, machinery and equipment to be enclosed and/or attenuated.

The flat located above the application site would have an outlook across the proposed enclosure. However, given flat windows above are a significant level above the ground level, it is not deemed that the enclosure would significantly impact upon views from the flat above as one would have to be close to the window to see the proposed enclosure. Additionally, it is noted that the existing views below the window are of the parking spaces and existing smaller enclosure. Therefore, it is not considered that proposal would significantly and detrimentally impact the outlook from the flat, as the proposed situation would not differ substantially from the existing.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

MDD Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards. Core Strategy Policy CP6 requires developments to provide appropriate vehicular parking, having regard to car ownership. P1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD notes that the layout and design of parking areas for all uses and purposes must accommodate cars satisfactorily, and P3 of the Borough Design Guide SPD notes that parking spaces should be safe and convenient for users.

The Council's Highways Officer requested further information regarding the allocation of parking spaces on site and queried whether the spaces to be removed were allocated parking to Shop 7. The proposal stated that 3 spaces were to be removed, and the Highways Officer highlighted that additional clearance would be required between the proposed structure and the adjacent space which would result in the reduction of another space. The Highways Officer's concerns were put to the applicant, and they responded to clarify that the enclosure is being installed within the Tesco-designated parking area for Store 7. Additionally, following a review of current usage and overall capacity across the wider site, even with the loss of the spaces, the remaining parking provision would continue to meet the existing and anticipated

parking demand for Store 7 and the wider site. The Highways Officer was satisfied that the parking would likely be acceptable in this instance.

Flooding and Drainage:

MMD Local Plan policy CC1O states that all development proposals must reproduce greenfield runoff characteristics and return run-off rates and volumes back to the original greenfield levels, for greenfield sites and for brownfield sites both run-off rates and volumes be reduced to as near greenfield as practicably possible.

Given that the proposal is on an area of existing hardstanding, there are no concerns on flooding or drainage grounds.

Conclusion:

For the reasons stated above, the application is therefore recommended for refusal.

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.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

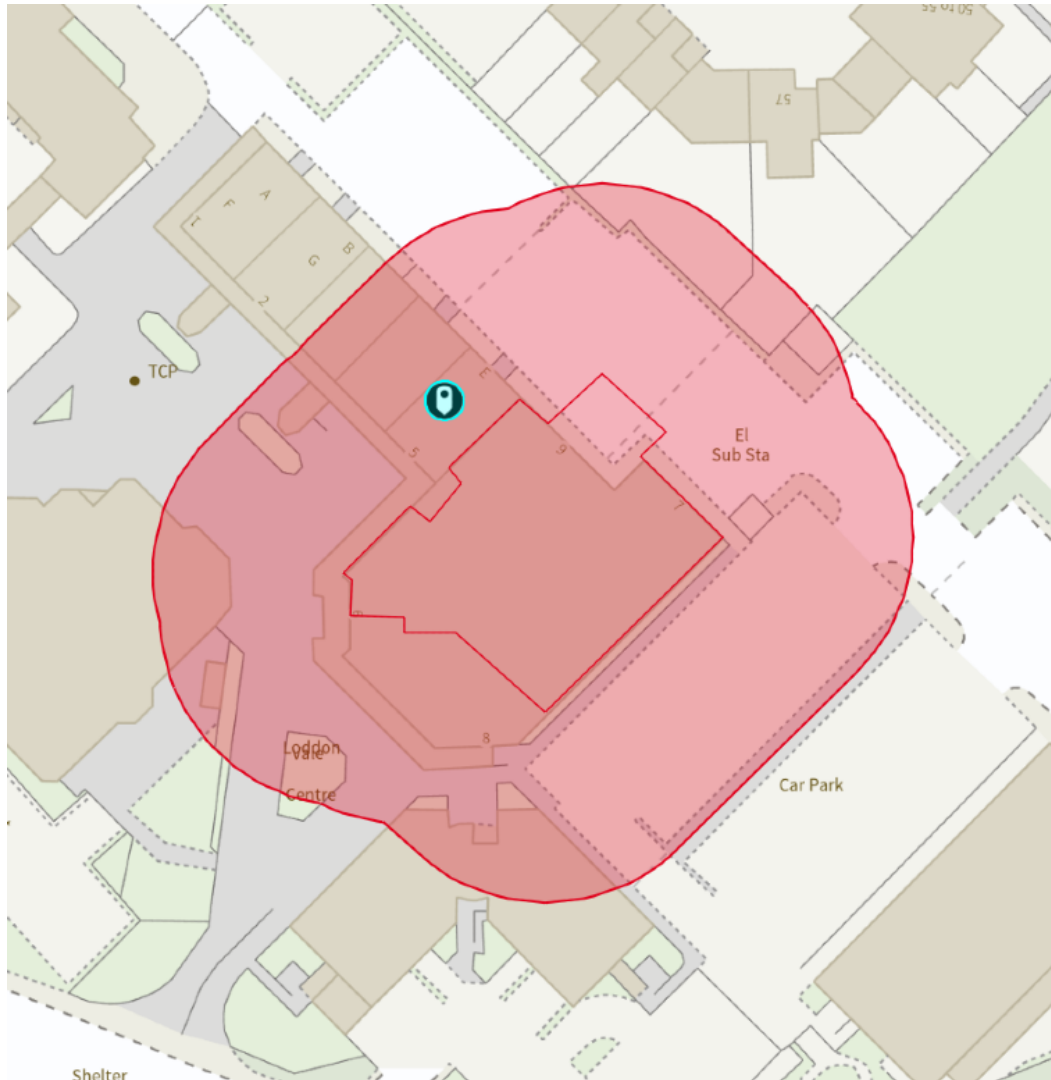
When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date:	19 September 2025
Earliest date for decision:	18 August 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>BJC</i>
Date:	19.09.25

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS



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Affordable Housing Thresholds | Total count: 3

#	NAME
1	Within Major Development Locations
2	Within Major Development Locations
3	Within All Development Locations

Retail Centres | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Local Centre	Loddon Vale, Woodley

Scale and Location of Development Proposals | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Major Development Locations	Woodley

Mineral Safeguarding Areas | Total count: 3

#	Type	SubType
1	Soft Sand	Construction sand: Palaeogene: Thanet Sand Formation, Lambeth Group, Harwich Formation, London Clay Formation
2	Sharp Sand and Gravel	River Terrace deposits
3	Soft Sand	Construction sand: Palaeogene: Thanet Sand Formation, Lambeth Group, Harwich Formation, London Clay Formation

Major Nuclear Sites Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	PLANNING_NOTE
1	Consultation Zone - Major Nuclear Site	AWE: 12km Zone	This is the 12km Zone. A circular zone of 12km radius around all nuclear sites, for certain types of significant development due to the potential for such developments to pose an external hazard to sites.

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	Height Band	Wind Turbine	Aviation
1	All works exceeding 150 metres (492.1 feet)	YES	YES

Electricity Sub Station Consultation Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	CONSULT
1	Electricity Sub Station Consultation Zone	SSE Power Distribution

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Green	Consult NatureSpace for Major developments only

SSSI Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	IRZURL
1	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0101054322201&es=&location=479258,173155%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)

Potentially Contaminated Land Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	OBJECTID
1	Potentially Contaminated Land Consultation Zone	1

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	Name
1	Landscape Character Assessment 2019	Woodley-Earley Settled and Farmed Clay

Wards | Total count: 2

#	NAME	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Loddon Ward	0 m
2	Bulmershe & Coronation Ward	13.34 m

Parishes | Total count: 1

#	NAME	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Woodley CP	0 m