

PLANNING REF : 262274
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 77 Blenheim Road
: Reading, Berkshire
: RG4 7RP
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs C Johnson
DATE SUBMITTED : 05/10/2026

COMMENTS:

Objection to Planning Application 262274 - Thames Valley Park Data Centre

I object to planning application 262274 for the proposed Thames Valley Park data centre. My objection is based on the scale of the development and its potential impacts on biodiversity, climate change, noise, air quality, landscape character, drainage and residential amenity.

1. Biodiversity and wildlife

The site is immediately adjacent to the Thames Valley Park Local Wildlife Site and a valuable wetland environment containing ponds, wetlands, grassland, woodland and other habitats supporting a wide range of wildlife.

The proposal would introduce a very large, continuously operating industrial facility into this sensitive environment. Its impacts cannot be assessed solely by considering the building's physical footprint. Noise, artificial lighting, heat, air emissions, drainage and other operational effects may affect wildlife beyond the site itself.

The council should therefore require a robust assessment of direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the adjoining Local Wildlife Site and wetland habitats.

The proposed 10% Biodiversity Net Gain should not be treated as evidence that ecological harm is acceptable. Newly created habitats cannot necessarily compensate for disturbance to an established functioning ecosystem.

2. Climate change and natural-gas generation

The proposed approximately 72MW data centre would initially rely on natural-gas fuel cells while additional grid capacity is developed.

This is difficult to reconcile with Wokingham Borough Council's declared climate emergency and commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030. The council should require full disclosure of the expected natural-gas consumption, annual and whole-life carbon emissions, duration of gas-powered operation and the arrangements guaranteeing a transition to genuinely low-carbon electricity.

The assessment should also consider what happens if grid reinforcement is delayed and whether renewable electricity and battery storage could reduce reliance on gas.

A development of this scale should demonstrate that its overall energy strategy is compatible with the transition to net zero.

3. Noise and air quality

The facility will contain substantial cooling, electrical and mechanical plant and will operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Nearby residents could therefore be exposed to continuous mechanical noise, low-frequency or tonal noise, generator testing and other plant noise, particularly at night.

The proposed diesel backup generators also create potential air-quality and noise impacts. Their operation during prolonged power outages should be assessed, including the possibility of multiple generators operating simultaneously.

The council should require evidence that noise and air-quality impacts will remain acceptable at the nearest residential properties under normal, testing and emergency operating conditions.

4. Scale, visual impact and landscape character

At approximately 5.3 hectares and 72MW, this is a substantial industrial-scale development rather than a conventional office building.

The council should carefully assess the visual impact of the building, rooftop plant, cooling equipment, exhausts, substations, lighting and security infrastructure from nearby homes, recreational areas, public routes and the surrounding green and wetland environment.

Existing vegetation should not simply be assumed to screen a development of this scale, particularly during winter. Any landscaping proposed as mitigation should be secured and maintained through planning conditions.

5. Waste heat

The facility will consume enormous quantities of energy and reject much of it as heat. References to potential heat reuse are not sufficient unless there is a realistic and deliverable scheme.

The council should establish how much waste heat can actually be recovered and assess the environmental implications of the remainder being discharged into the surrounding environment.

6. Construction traffic and disruption

Construction is expected to continue for several years and could generate substantial HGV movements, worker traffic, noise, dust and disruption.

A detailed and enforceable Construction Traffic Management Plan should be required before construction begins, covering HGV numbers and routes, delivery times, abnormal loads, construction parking, pedestrian and cyclist safety, dust, highway cleanliness and resident complaints.

7. Drainage and flood risk

The site's proximity to the River Thames, wetlands and ponds makes

water management particularly important.

The council should be satisfied that the development will not increase surface-water runoff or flood risk, overload drainage infrastructure, alter natural drainage patterns or result in polluted runoff entering surrounding wetlands or watercourses.

A robust, climate-resilient SuDS and drainage strategy should be secured before permission is granted.

8. Cumulative impact

The principal concern is the combined effect of the proposal: a very large building, 24-hour operation, extensive cooling plant, gas generation, diesel backup generators, noise, lighting, waste heat, construction activity and altered drainage immediately adjacent to sensitive wildlife habitats and residential properties.

These impacts should not be considered in isolation. Compliance with an individual noise limit or a 10% biodiversity metric does not necessarily mean that the overall environmental impact is acceptable.

Request

I ask Wokingham Borough Council to require robust evidence that:

- the Local Wildlife Site and surrounding wetland habitats will not suffer unacceptable direct, indirect or cumulative harm;
 - noise and air-quality impacts at nearby homes are acceptable, including night-time, testing and emergency conditions;
 - the development's whole-life carbon emissions are compatible with the council's 2030 carbon-neutral objective;
 - there is a clear and enforceable transition away from natural-gas generation;
 - the scale and visual impact are appropriate for Thames Valley Park;
 - construction traffic and disruption can be effectively controlled;
- drainage will not increase flood risk or harm surrounding wetlands;
- and
- the proposed Biodiversity Net Gain genuinely adds to, rather than substitutes for, avoidance and mitigation of ecological harm.

Given the exceptional scale of this proposal and its proximity to both sensitive wetland habitats and residential properties, I ask the council to give these concerns significant weight when determining application 262274.