

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260798
Site Address:	Sonning Cutting Filling Station, 709 London Road, Woodley, Wokingham, RG6 1BG
Expiry Date:	7 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	29 June 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed installation of 3 no. Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers to serve 6 no. parking spaces with supporting infrastructure, removal of 2 no. existing EV charging bays and infrastructure, and installation of 2 no. jet wash bays following demolition of the existing car wash and 2 no. storage buildings, plus minor alterations to the existing forecourt infrastructure and landscaping.	

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 CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
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 CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use
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 SS4 – Development within or adjacent to minor settlements SS15 – Securing infrastructure SS17 – Transport improvements C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging C6 – Technology and innovation in transport FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity DH1 – Place making and quality design HC5 – Environmental protection

	HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC8 – Noise pollution HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
072464	Proposed relocation of automated teller machine to shop exterior (Retrospective)	Approved 29/05/2007
041585	Proposed alterations to front of existing building	Approved 16/05/2005
011800	Proposed redevelopment to provide petrol filling station, sales building, ATM, car wash, car care facilities, parking, landscaping and new access/egress	Approved 22/05/2002
970451	Proposed Demolition of Existing Petrol Station and Construction of New Filling Station	Approved 02/09/1997

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services – No response received
WBC Environmental Health – No objection
WBC Drainage – No objection
WBC Highways – No objection
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to conditions

External

Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue – Standing advice

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council – No objection Woodley Town Council – No objection
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description: The application site is located between Shepherds Hill and London Road which forms a one-way traffic route around the site and other development to the east. The site comprises a substantial fuel forecourt, sales building, car wash and jet wash together with services associated with this use. To the west is commercial and retail uses together with residential development beyond that. To the north of the site and Shepherds Hill is retail and office development while to the east of the site residential development. Retail development also exists to the south of the site and off London Road. Parking is provided to the front, side and rear of the sales building.

Access is directly from Shepherds Hill and London Road while egress is onto London Road.

Proposal: The application seeks planning consent for the reorganisation and modernisation of existing forecourt infrastructure. The most significant change is the removal of the existing car wash building and associated infrastructure, which would be replaced with an EV charging hub comprising 6 charging bays and associated charging equipment. This represents an increase from the existing provision of 2 EV charging bays.

The existing jet wash building would also be removed and replaced with two new jet wash bays positioned along the eastern boundary of the site, south of the proposed EV charging hub. In addition, the existing air/water and vacuum facility would be relocated from the eastern side of the forecourt to a position closer to the centre of the site, adjacent to the fuel filling area and existing parking bays. Parking spaces would be reconfigured and relined, associated infrastructure including a new substation, feeder pillar, lighting columns, CCTV, signage and bollards would be installed primarily within the area currently occupied by the existing car wash facility.

Whilst a number of physical alterations are proposed, the development would remain entirely within the existing petrol filling station and would not materially alter its overall function. The proposal would largely utilise existing hardstanding areas, with some new landscaping introduced in areas currently occupied by redundant forecourt infrastructure. Overall, the scheme represents the upgrading of an established facility to accommodate improved vehicle charging requirements whilst retaining the site's existing petrol filling station use.

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 forms part of an established petrol filling station within Shepherds Hill Local Centre. The proposal seeks to upgrade and reconfigure existing forecourt infrastructure, including the provision of EV charging facilities, rather than introduce a new use. As such, the proposal would support the continued operation and viability of an existing local service whilst responding to changing vehicle and infrastructure requirements.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy requires development to be appropriate in terms of its scale, layout, design and character, and to safeguard the amenities of adjoining occupiers. These matters are considered in the relevant sections of this report. In addition, Policy TB17 of the MDD Local Plan supports proposals that retain and enhance day-to-day shopping and service facilities within Local Centres. The continued operation of the filling station, together with the provision of EV charging infrastructure, would maintain and enhance a facility that serves local residents and visitors.

Subject to compliance with the detailed development management considerations assessed elsewhere in this report, the proposal accords with Policies CC01, CP3 and TB17 and the development is therefore considered acceptable in principle.

Character of the Area: The application site occupies a prominent position at the London Road/Shepherds Hill roundabout, which sits at a higher level than the surrounding highway network and is therefore highly visible within the street scene. Notwithstanding this, the proposed development is modest in scale and comprises structures and equipment typically associated with a modern petrol filling station. The proposed works would be read in the context of the existing forecourt infrastructure and would not appear visually dominant, incongruous or out of character with the commercial nature of the site.

Having regard to the form, scale, massing and appearance of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposal would integrate satisfactorily with its surroundings and would preserve the character and appearance of the area. The development therefore accords with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Neighbouring Amenity: The application site is already located within an established petrol filling station, with many commercial and retail uses in close proximity. The proposals relate to the reconfiguration and upgrade of existing forecourt infrastructure, including EV charging provision and jet wash facilities, and are confined largely to existing hardstanding areas.

The nearest residential properties are those to the north-west across London Road, and these are considerably set back (approximately 34 metres) from the main highway with fairly extensive front gardens. Whilst the proposed jet wash bays have the potential to generate some noise, the site has an established commercial use and has previously accommodated car wash operations. As such, no significant change in the character of the site is anticipated.

Given the size and location of the proposed development within the existing filling station, the established commercial use of the site, and the considerable separation distances to residential dwellings, it is considered unlikely that the proposal would result in a harmful impact on neighbouring amenity through noise or disturbance. The proposal is therefore acceptable in this regard.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The existing access arrangements to and from the A4 would be retained, with no alterations proposed to the site accesses. The proposal would result in the loss of three parking spaces; however, the site would continue to provide sufficient parking for its established use, including 6 EV charging bays, one of which would be accessible. The existing bays in front of the retail unit would also be relined to larger dimensions, with the accessible bay brought up to Part M standards.

Given the established use of the site as a petrol filling station, the majority of vehicle movements are likely to remain linked or pass-by trips rather than wholly new trips on the highway network. The proposed EV charging infrastructure would also support upgraded transport infrastructure and lower-carbon vehicle use, in accordance with the

aims of Policies CC06 and CC07 of the Core Strategy. Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of highway safety, traffic impact and parking provision.

Flooding and Drainage: The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is predominantly laid to existing hardstanding. The proposed works would be contained within the existing petrol filling station site and would not involve any material increase in hardstanding or built development. Given the limited scale of the works, the existing developed nature of the site, and the absence of any increase in impermeable surfacing, the proposal is not considered to give rise to an increased risk of flooding or surface water runoff.

The Lead Local Flood Authority has raised no objection to the application. An informative will be added to any permission to remind the applicant that any alterations to the existing drainage arrangements should ensure that surface water runoff is not increased above existing rates or volumes.

Subject to this, the proposal is considered acceptable in flood risk and drainage terms and would accord with the relevant provisions of the Development Plan.

Landscape and Trees: The submitted landscaping plan identifies areas of existing vegetation to be retained, together with additional soft landscaping adjacent to the proposed jet wash bays, around the substation area, and in areas where existing hardstanding/storage buildings are to be removed. The landscaping proposals would therefore provide a modest enhancement to the appearance of the site, particularly given its prominent location and existing hardstanding character.

The Landscape Officer has requested the imposition of the Council's standard landscaping condition. However, having regard to the nature of the proposal, which relates to alterations and upgrades within an existing petrol filling station rather than a new building or comprehensive redevelopment, it is considered that a full pre-commencement landscaping condition would be disproportionate. National guidance requires planning conditions to be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant, enforceable, precise and reasonable. It also advises that standard conditions should not be applied without considering whether they are necessary in the specific circumstances of the case.

In this case, the submitted landscaping plan is considered sufficient to identify the areas where landscaping is to be retained, restored and extended. However, it does not include full planting details such as species, planting sizes, spacing or numbers. A tailored condition is therefore considered appropriate to secure the detailed planting specification and implementation of the landscaping shown on the approved plan, without unnecessarily delaying commencement of the wider development. Subject to this condition, the proposal is considered acceptable in landscape and visual amenity terms.

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:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	27 July 2026
Earliest date for decision:	4 June 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	28.07.2026