

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260394
Site Address:	Billingbear Park Golf Course, The Straight Mile, Wokingham, RG40 5SJ
Expiry Date:	19 May 2026
Site Visit Date:	20 April 2026
Proposal: Full application for phased leisure development comprising the erection of padel tennis courts and pickleball courts, formation of an outdoor putting course, erection of a simulator building, and erection of an extension to the existing clubhouse following demolition of the existing marquee, with associated alterations to car parking, access/paths, external lighting, and hard and soft landscaping.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Countryside
Green Belt
Green Infrastructure Route
Local Historic Park, Billingbear
Flood Zone 2

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 CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS5 – Development in the countryside SS15 – Securing infrastructure SS16 – Safeguarded routes C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging

Update (LPU)	FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows HC4 – Open spaces, sports, recreation and play facilities HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality 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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY – Wokingham Borough

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
002683	Proposed erection of detached double garage.	Approved 02 Nov 2000

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY – Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
26/00128	Full application for phased leisure development comprising the erection of padel tennis courts and pickleball courts, formation of an outdoor putting course, erection of a simulator building, and erection of an extension to the existing clubhouse following demolition of the existing marquee, with associated alterations to car parking, access/paths, external lighting, and hard and soft landscaping.	Approved 07 May 2026.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objection subject to conditons
WBC Highways – Requested further information
WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) -No comment
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection
WBC CIL
WBC Ecology – Requested further information
WBC Sustainability – No comment

External

Southern Gas Networks - No comment
Thames Water Utilities Ltd - No comment
South East Water - No comment

Active Travel England - No comment
Crime Prevention Design Advisor - No comment
Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks - No comment

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received.
Neighbours	11 no. comments received in support of the application.

APPRAISAL

Site Description: Billingbear Park Golf Course (BPGC) is a public 'pay and play' facility that is located approximately 4k north-east of Wokingham and 4.8km south-east of Twyford. All of the proposed operational development will be contained within the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) Borough. However, the boundary between RBWM and Wokingham Borough bisects the car park, and the existing vehicular access into the site is also in Wokingham Borough. Therefore, a cross-boundary application has been made due to the location of the access and car park being within Wokingham Borough.

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 in Countryside and in Green Belt where Core Strategy Policies CP11 and CP12 apply. Policy CP11 states that proposals outside of development limits will only be permitted that do not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings. Furthermore, proposals outside development limits will not normally be permitted except where it contributes to and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside. Policy CP12 states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Proposal: Within RBWM, the erection of padel tennis courts and pickleball courts, formation of an outdoor putting course, erection of a simulator building, and erection of an extension to the existing clubhouse following demolition of the existing marquee, with associated alterations to car parking, access/paths, external lighting, and hard and soft landscaping. However, no operational development is proposed within the Application site that is within Wokingham Borough (shown in Figure 1). Therefore, the extent of what is required to be assessed by Wokingham Borough Council, as local planning authority, is limited to the vehicular entrance and part of the car park on the western boundary and adjacent to the Straight Mile.



Figure 1 Annotated plan to show the Borough boundary as a dashed pink horizontal line

Location in Green Belt

The application site is located within designated Green Belt, and the government attaches great importance to Green Belts with national policies for the protection of Green Belt land covered by Chapter 13 of the NPPF. Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that, “The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”. Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that the Green Belt serves 5 purposes, the one most relevant to this proposal is, “(c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment”.

In this case, most of the application site lies outside Wokingham Borough. Figure 1 shows that the vehicular entrance and part of the existing carpark would not be altered under the proposed scheme. Although there may be a slight increase in traffic accessing the site, this would not significantly impact the openness of the Green Belt. RBWM have assessed the proposed operational development under a separate planning application (26/00128) and concluded that the alterations to the main building, the proposed indoor simulator rooms and the racket courts will not harm the openness of the Green Belt.

Overall, the proposal would comply with Policy CP12 in relation to Green Belt within Wokingham Borough.

Location in Countryside and Character of the Area

The site is in Countryside and Core Strategy Policy CP11 states that to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

1. It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and
2. It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
3. It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for

conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or

4. In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
5. In the case of replacement dwellings, the proposal must: i) Bring about environmental improvements; or ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
6. Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building.
7. Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.

In this case, the western boundary of BPGC is within Wokingham Borough and adjacent to the Straight Mile which is a verdant rural road and designated a Green Route. The vehicular access from The Straight Mile will be retained and the additional 125 designated parking spaces will be achieved by marking out bays on existing hardstanding areas. Furthermore, the vehicular entrance will not be altered, and the development will not impact views of the countryside within Wokingham Borough. Therefore, the proposal will not harm the character of the area within Wokingham Borough.

Overall, the proposal would comply with CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy in relation to location in countryside and character of the area.

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. In this case, the nearest residential property to the entrance at BPGC would be located approximately 200m away at Twyford Lodge. Therefore, there would be no harmful impact on neighbour amenity in terms of overlooking, loss of Light or overbearing in relation to the entrance and car park.

Overall, the proposal would comply with Policy CP3 in relation to neighbour amenity.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The WBC Highways Officer has no objection on sustainability grounds given the site is retained as Use Class F2(c) but requests further information:

- Access: Likely acceptable for two-way use, but capacity clarification required; any changes may require visibility splay assessment based on actual speeds.
- Vehicle Manoeuvring: Need to demonstrate fire tender access and potentially refuse vehicle tracking, depending on waste demand.
- Servicing: A Delivery and Servicing Plan may be required to manage operations and emergency access.
- Operations: Clarification needed on opening hours, booking system, staffing levels, and operational changes.
- Traffic Impact: Assessment required of trip generation and peak-hour impacts on the highway network.
- Parking: Uncertainty over adequacy of parking provision, particularly during peak events; Parking Management Plan required.
- Construction: A Construction Management Plan will be required to manage impacts during build phase.

***Officer Comment:** The additional information requested by the WBC Highways Officer was shared with the RBWM Planning Officer. As a result, the following conditions have been secured by RBWM in accordance with ref 26/00128:*

RBWM Highway conditions ref permission 26/00128

- *Condition 8: Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity)*
Condition 10: Parking Plan
- *Condition 21: Vehicle Parking*
- *Condition 23: Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP - Environmental)*
- *Condition 24: Delivery And Servicing Plan*
- *Condition 25: Car Park Management Plan*

Furthermore, while no operational development is proposed within Wokingham's borough, the existing access does allow construction traffic onto Wokingham roads which requires assessment by Wokingham's Highways team. Therefore, it is recommended that a Construction Management Plan also be added as a pre commencement condition if this application is approved.

Flooding and Drainage: The Drainage Officer raises no objection subject to a pre-commencement condition requiring submission and approval of a detailed surface water drainage scheme. Development shall not commence until the detailed drainage scheme has been approved in writing by the LPA. The LLFA's response relates solely to surface water drainage. Approval from the Environment Agency is required in respect of fluvial flood risk and floodplain matters.

***Officer comment:** The WBC Drainage Officers request was shared with the RBWM Officer and the following conditions have been secured by RBWM in accordance with ref 26/00128:*

RBWM Drainage conditions ref permission 26/00128

- *Condition 12: Surface Water Drainage Scheme*
- *Condition 14: Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan (FEP)*
- *Condition 15: Foul water Drainage*

Therefore, as no operational development is proposed within Wokingham's borough and a Surface Water Drainage Strategy has been satisfactorily secured by condition via RBWM it would not be reasonable to add a further Drainage Condition should this application be approved.

Landscape and Trees: The Tree Officer raises no objection subject to conditions. It is noted that a veteran Oak (T44) requires a 25.5m buffer (diameter ×15) and layout revisions are likely to be needed to accommodate a buffer. Hedgerow enhancements are encouraged.

Requested conditions will be added to the decision tice if the application is approved:

- CL7 – Tree Protection (correct Buffer zone for T44 to be included)
- CL5 – Hard and Soft landscape proposals.

***Officer comment:** The WBC Tree Officer comments were shared with RBWM. The*

following conditions have been secured by RBWM in accordance with ref 26/00128. Therefore, given no operational development is proposed within the Wokingham borough, it would not be reasonable to add conditions CL5 and CL7, were this application to be approved:

RBWM Landscape and Tree conditions ref permission 26/00128

- *Condition 3: Protection of Retained Trees*
- *Condition 5: Landscaping Plan*

Ecology: The Ecology Officer requested further information and commented as follows:

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Ecology Officer requested further information on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment to meet the 10% statutory requirement. The Baseline habitat assessment is accepted, supported by evidence. The Ecology Officer recommends that either habitat land within the red line boundary is included or off-site land is registered for 30 years on BNG register.

Bats

Building B1 had moderate roost potential but surveys confirmed no roosting bats. The site supports foraging/commuting bats (noctule, Daubenton's, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared). No further surveys are required due to low habitat value and retention of vegetation. A sensitive lighting strategy is required (secured by condition) to protect bat activity.

Reptiles

The site has moderate suitability for reptiles but is heavily managed and disturbed. Precautionary phased clearance during active season supported. ECoW supervision will be required if works occur outside active season. Measures to be secured via CEMP condition.

Officer comment: *The WBC Ecology officer comments were shared with the RBWM. The following conditions have been secured by RBWM in accordance with ref 26/00128. Therefore, it would not be reasonable to add conditions for a Lighting Strategy, CEMP and Biodiversity Enhancements were this application to be approved:*

RBWM Ecology conditions ref permission 26/00128

- *Condition 6: Ecological Mitigation Scheme*
- *Condition 7: Biodiversity Gain Plan*
- *Condition 8: CEMP*
- *Condition 9: Biodiversity Enhancements*

Built Heritage: The Heritage Officer raises no objection. The western strip of the site within Wokingham Borough has vehicular driveway from off the Straight Mile road, forms part of northerly wedge of land recognised as the local historic park and gardens of Billingbear. From a historic perspective, the proposal will have no significant impact on the Local Historic Park & Garden within Wokingham borough.

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:	Approve
Date:	12 May 2026
Earliest date for decision:	2 April 2026

Recommendation agreed by:	
(Authorised Officer)	
Date:	12/05/26