

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242598
Site Address:	Recreation Ground, Millworth Lane, Shinfield, Wokingham, RG2 9EN
Expiry Date:	17 September 2025
Site Visit Date:	07/11/2024
Proposal: Full application for proposed works to modify the existing recreational facilities to provide an outdoor fitness zone, including the erection of a covered canopy, 2no. storage boxes, hard surfacing and boundary treatment.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11- Countryside
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM10 - Flood Risk
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain HC1 – Promoting healthy communities

	HC2 – Community infrastructure HC3 – Local Green Space HC4 – Open spaces, sports, recreation and play facilities
Other	National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

960780	Proposed Permanent Siting Of Mobile Home For Warden	Approved 10/05/1996	–
961363	Proposed Installation Of Floodlights.	Approved 19/03/1996	–

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objection subject to condition
WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments received
WBC Green Infrastructure – No comments received
WBC Public Rights Of Way – No comments received
WBC Sports Development (Places and Neighbourhoods) – No objection
WBC Ecology – No comments received

External

Ramblers Association - No comments received
Open Spaces Society - No comments received
Sport England – No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	The applicant is Shinfield Parish Council – No objections received.
Ward Member(s)	Cllr Jacqueline Rance raised concern with the initial loss of sports pitches resultant of the originally proposed works which sought their removal (in part). Subsequent revisions were received which retain all existing pitches and permit sufficient space for an additional 'fitness zone'.
Neighbours	Comments were received by 64 residents in total, with 5 comments in support and, 6 observations and. The objections received can be summarised as follows: Loss of football facilities (Shinfield Rangers FC) (<i>Officer note: this element has been removed from the scheme</i>). Inadequate consultation with local clubs / users (<i>Officer note: responses have been received by Shinfield Rangers FC, and since the proposals have been modified to prevent the loss of pitch space</i>).

	No viable alternative football pitches in the area (<i>Officer note: this element has been removed from the scheme</i>). Impact on youth, girls', and grassroots football (<i>Officer note: this element has been removed from the scheme</i>). Flawed design / poor alignment with community needs Mental health / social wellbeing impact (<i>Officer note: the proposal would provide additional sports facilities for a wider demographic, whilst retaining existing sport fixtures</i>). Concerns over financial motives / commercialisation (<i>Officer note: this is not a material planning consideration</i>). Parking and traffic concerns (<i>Officer note: following the notable reduction in the scale of the scheme, there are no amendments proposed to the highway or parking provision on site</i>). Loss of green / passive recreational space (<i>Officer note: no objections have been raised by Sport England or WBC Sports with the reduction in modified grassland to provide additional recreational facilities</i>). Environmental / drainage / biodiversity impact (<i>Officer note: the proposal would achieve over 10% biodiversity net gain and no objections have been received by the LLFA subject to compliance with the submitted flood risk assessment</i>).
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APPRAISAL

Site and Proposal Description:

The application site is located bordering the major development location of Shinfield, within the designated countryside off Millworth Lane. This site forms public open space and recreational grounds, known as the 'Millworth Lane Recreation Ground'.

The site itself whilst directly adjacent to residential form to the north, south and east sports verdant characteristics, strong self-containment via a mixture of residential boundary treatments east and south as well as tree lined edges comprising native species. This clearly delineates its position in the open countryside away from settlement limits.

Millworth Lane Recreational Ground is home to the Shinfield Rangers FC, with numerous existing pitches for both adult and youth use, in combination with cricket, tennis and youth play facilities.

This submission seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 'fitness zone' on behalf of Shinfield Parish Council including the erection of 2no. store buildings, a

covered canopy, permeable hard-surfacing and palisades fencing.

Procedure:

The application has been subject to three public consultations. The first round of consultation was published on 31/10/2025 which reflected the original proposal for the provision of additional car parking and new sports pitches, modification of existing pitches, installation of an events mounds, equipment storage and climbing wall, fitness zone, exercise track and bicycle pump track. Within this consultation, a statutory objection was received from Sports England and notable objections received from residents with respect to the loss of football pitches which play host to Shinfield Rangers Football Club.

Further to proactive discussion with the applicant and Sports England, the proposal has been revised to retain all existing sporting fixtures, removing initially proposed elements such as an outdoor pump track. The redline has remained the same which characterises the development as 'major' by virtue of site area, however, the 'gross developable area' sits at a modest circa 317m². A second full consultation was published on 30/06/2025 to reflect these changes, within such no letters of objection were received, however, Sport England upheld its statutory objection on grounds of loss of cricket provision.

On 03/09/2025 revised plans and information was received which clarified the proposal would result in no loss of formal cricket provision. Sport England withdrew its statutory objection on 05/09/2025, acknowledging the proposal would be policy compliant, meet the Sport England 'exception test' and thus no objection was raised.

Following receipt of the no objection response from Sport England, the LPA noted that the initially agreed description of development did not reflect the associated operational development forming the fitness zone. The description of development as agreed by the applicant was subsequently amended to *"Full application for proposed works to modify the existing recreational facilities to provide an outdoor fitness zone, including the erection of a covered canopy, 2no. storage boxes, hard surfacing and boundary treatment"* and a subsequent full public re-consultation was issued on 18/09/2025 for the purposes of transparency. This consultation period ceased on 16/10/2025. Within this time, no objections were received and letters of support were submitted by WBC Sports Development and Sport England.

Principle of Development:

Section 70(2) TCPA 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA 2004) sets out that applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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.

Countryside:

The site is located outside of settlement limits, within the designated countryside as prescribed by CP9 of the Core Strategy. As such, development is only acceptable if it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy, namely CP11. This restrictive policy outlines several exceptions where development within the open countryside may be accepted, where generally there is a presumption in favour of protection, echoing that of the NPPF (p187).

Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy requires development to maintain and enhance the high quality of the environment and prevent the coalescence of settlements. To achieve these aims, the policy outlines that subject to compliance with some of the 7 exceptions (1-3), 4, 5, 6 or 7, development will be permitted. It does however outline a degree of flexibility in that even if the 7 exceptions are not met, development is not 'normally' permitted.

In the case of this submission, the proposal complies with parts 1 and 2 and it assists in promoting recreation in the countryside and does not constitute excessive encroachment, however, does not comply with part 3 as it does not involve the conversion of an existing building. Whilst the proposal technically fails to meet the prescribed exceptions and thus would not 'normally' be accepted, as above, it is important to consider the context of the overarching aims of CP11. In this respect, the proposal is compliant, in that an increase in built form to create complimentary recreational uses would maintain the quality of the environment which in this location is tied with outdoor sport. Furthermore, given the location and modest scale of the proposal, the development would not lead to the coalescence of settlements.

Joint Minerals and Waste Plan:

The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Joint Plan) was adopted by Wokingham Borough Council on 19 January 2023. The Joint Plan identifies site allocations and extensions to help provide a future supply of sand and gravel extraction. However, despite these allocations, there remains a shortfall of supply during the plan period. The policy response to address the shortfall is the identification of a 'Minerals Safeguarding Area' (MSA), where Policy M2 of the plan applies, and also an 'Area of Search' where Policy M4 applies. This approach is to demonstrate the potential for, in effect, windfall provision within the Plan area.

Policy M2 aims to seek to protect mineral resources against unnecessary sterilisation by non-minerals development. The application covers an area approximately 317m² in size and this 3ha threshold is reflected in the supporting text under Policy M2, which states *"A minimum plot size of 3 hectares will apply in the safeguarding process to avoid repeated consideration of prior extraction where this can be assumed to be uneconomic, due to the small size of the parcels of land involved."* Considering the site's limited incursion into an area of sharp sand and gravel deposits within the defined MSA and the limited size of the site, the proposal does not stand contrary to the JMWP.

Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan:

Policy 1 of the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan echoes the settlement limits identified within Wokingham's Development Plan, placing the proposal outside of development limits. Policy 1 does however state "*development adjacent to the Development Limits will only be supported where the benefits of the development outweigh its adverse impacts.*" Applying this to the proposal, expansion of the sports provision at Millworth Lane Recreational Ground constitutes a benefit, which whilst privately run provides the community with an element of choice for their fitness needs. This tempers the weight afforded to the face conflict with Policy 1, with respect to development outside of settlement limits.

Emerging Local Plan Update:

In considering the weight to be given to Wokingham Borough Council's emerging Local Plan Update (LPU), it is necessary to refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024), Paragraph 49 states that decision-makers may give weight to emerging policies according to:

- o The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- o The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given);
- o The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan with the NPPF (the closer the policies are to the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

Stage of Preparation

Regulation 19 version of the LPU was published and subject to consultation in September-November 2024. The Regulation 22 plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2025, and two Planning Inspectors have been appointed to examine (EiP) the plan. The examination of the local plan is ongoing, and the council responded to initial questions and requests from the Inspectors in May 2025, with hearings arranged for November 2025.

As seen in High Court judgements, even when an emerging plan is at an advanced stage, it may still attract limited weight if further consultation and modifications are required, and the Inspector has yet to issue a final report. Wokingham's LPU has several stages yet to be completed, including the examination hearings and main modifications stages, which restricts the weight that can currently be afforded to non-substantive unless there are limited objections received and the policies are otherwise consistent with the framework.

Unresolved Objections

The plan has been submitted with an accompanying Regulation 22 Consultation Statement. Appendix 15 to the Regulation 22 Consultation Statement sets out the main issues raised in representations to each policy and area of the LPU Proposed Submission Plan and the council's response. This can be used to understand the

scale of objections and so inform the weight that might be applied. These vary across policies and thus as relevant, LPU policies and their relevant weight are explained throughout this report.

Consistency with the NPPF

Although Officers are confident that the emerging LPU, and its policies align with the NPPF, the degree of consistency has not yet been tested through examination and cannot be guaranteed. As per other cases, consistency with the NPPF is only one factor, and its relative importance depends on the extent to which the LPU impacts the planning balance in decision-making.

LPU Policy SS2 Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy is relevant to assessing the principle of development of this application, placing the application site outside of settlement limits. LPU Policy SS2 states that:

“The distribution of growth will be based on the following actions:

- a) Making the most efficient use of available and suitable previously developed land within defined settlements;*
- b) The sustainable extension of defined major and modest settlements;”*

Alike to CP11 of the existing Core Strategy, SS5 of the LPU is tailored for development within the countryside and outlines numerous examples of where development may be acceptable. Criterion I states *“Outdoor sports, recreation, leisure and nature conservation development that is demonstrated to be necessary, reasonable and proportionate for the use”*. The proposal complies with this and thus is acceptable when assessed against the LPU with respect to development within the countryside. However, this is afforded no greater than limited weight alike to the minor face conflict with the proposed spatial strategy.

Accordingly, the principle of development, in providing a fitness zone within Millworth Lane recreational ground is acceptable, subject to material considerations as indicated below.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment.

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.

R1 and RD1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area and R11 requires a coherent street character, including in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion and height.

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states: *“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.”*

The proposal involves the erection of a fitness zone including a covered dome constructed using tensioned fabric to weatherproof the exercise equipment. This is proposed to be sited adjacent to the existing allotments on the western extent of the site and south of the existing pavilion, encapsulated in palisades fencing with permeable hard surfacing internally to permit safe use when the surrounding 9 and 11 aside football pitches are being utilised concurrently.

The character of the Millworth recreational ground can be summarised as formally for mixed public recreational purposes, with a variety of sporting fixtures offered from 11 aside football (open field with line marking/ goals), to tennis (permeable hard surfacing encapsulated in circa 4 metre palisades fencing). These create a degree of openness on site (the sports pitches) but further establish built form (structures and buildings) on its peripheries including a pavilion building, maintenance shed, tennis court, play area and boundary treatment. Accordingly, considering the site's existing character qualities forming a baseline assessment, expansion of the recreational facilities to form a fitness zone would not detrimentally impact its underlying character and thus does not stand contrary to CP1 or CP3 of the Core Strategy, as well as the Borough Design Guide.

The fitness zone itself would host a covered dome which would be of circa 5.6 metres in height, 6.1 metres in depth and 16.8 metres in width. The surrounding 'zone' encapsulated in palisades fencing covers circa 317sqm which is modest in the context of the site with permeable hard surfacing internally. Officers note that the proposed covered dome is not an insignificant structure in the site's relatively undeveloped context, however, it is one commonly associated with outdoor public recreation and thus would not appear alien to users of the remaining open space.

The particular surfacing to be used within the fitness zone has not however been explicitly clarified within the submitted documentation, however, further to request it was confirmed by the applicant that the whole c317m2 area will feature permeable hard surfacing (such as polymeric sports surfacing). To secure details of the colour, material and drainage qualities of the permeable surfacing intended to be used, a condition has been appended to the recommendation.

Whilst it is noted that the palisades fencing surrounding the proposed fitness zone may reduce the open qualities of the site, particularly when viewing the open fields to the direct south from the access point, this harm is tempered given the presence of the existing pavilion building and associated boundary treatment. Thus, whilst the proposal would not necessarily enhance the character of the area given the presence of additional built form, it equally would not harm it to the extent that it could be considered a significant policy breach with paragraph 187 of the NPPF. To secure details, colour and materials of the palisades fencing a condition has been appended to the recommendation.

In conclusion, the proposal would have a minor degree of harm to the character of the open landscape south of the site and intermediary views, however, as an overarching

theme it would maintain the quality of the environment, is of appropriate scale and mass for its location and complements the existing wider use of the Millworth Lane Recreational Ground. Accordingly, the proposal complies with the objectives of CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, as well as the recommendations within the Borough Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity:

CP3 of the Core Strategy requires development to be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.

The proposal would not detrimentally impact neighbouring amenity with respect to overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing impacts given its proximity away from residential dwellings and its respective height and bulk.

Whilst lighting is proposed and the scale of activity would generate a degree of greater acoustic output (though likely minimal given its nature), this would be limited given the site's proximity away from residential dwellings and modest scale/ scale of activity. This would not stand contrary to CP3 of the Core Strategy, nor CC06 of the MDD Local Plan.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

CP1 of the Core Strategy requires development to demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car in line with CP6.

CP6 of the Core Strategy seeks to steer development to sustainable locations, reducing the need to utilise the private motor vehicle. It further seeks to secure adequate parking within developments pursuant to appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan.

The proposal would not impact the existing access, nor parking provision on site further to confirmation from the applicant following reduction of the proposals initially put forward. The site benefits strong pedestrian connectivity with the adjacent settlement of Shinfield and is proposed to be utilised by those within the adjacent settlement. For those wishing to utilise the proposed facilities from further afield, the site is benefitted by multiple bus stops within reasonable walking distance which supports active transport initiatives outlined in CP6, including bus services defined as 'good services' as CP6. These are summarised below in table 1:

Bus Stop	Service(s)	Distance
Shinfield View	92 + 600 (Park and Ride)	C380 metres
School Green	3 Leopard, 92 + 600 (Park and Ride)	C480 metres
Clarendon Row	92 + 600 (Park and Ride)	C675 metres
Lawrence Place	92 + 600 (Park and Ride)	C740 metres

Furthermore, the walking environment within Shinfield has recently improved due to the adjacent South of the M4 SDL affording strong pedestrian and cycle connections from the development, through School Green to Millworth Lane recreational ground. Considering the proposal is for an outdoor fitness zone, it is reasonable to assume local users would access the site via active transport methods such as cycling, walking or jogging, however, the existing parking provision on site would be appropriate for those potentially coming from further afield.

The proposal would not exacerbate the need for additional parking provision and furthermore is served by strong public transport options with a positive walking environment. Accordingly, the proposal complies with CP1 and CP6 of the Core Strategy.

Flooding and Drainage:

CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires development to consider flood risk, and mitigate/ manage appropriately where and if required.

Most of the site is within flood zone 1, with just the eastern boundary being within flood zone 2 and the southern boundary experiencing surface water flooding for the low-risk flood event. The developable area is located solely within flood zone 1.

The submitted FRA outlines that the proposals do not represent an increase in stormwater run-off from the site considering the use of permeable hard surfacing materials. To secure these details, a hard landscaping condition has been appended to the recommendation which will secure finer details of the permeable surfacing intended to be used (as confirmed by the applicant on 15/10/2025). Subject to compliance with the submitted FRA (though covering the extent of the initially proposed works), WBC Drainage raises no objections to the proposals.

Outdoor Recreation:

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF outlines that planning decisions should enable leisure development that respects the character of the countryside and the retention and development of community facilities (including sports provision).

Paragraph 103 of the NPPF states *“Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.”*

Whilst the applicant's intention is to rent this space out to a private company, its provision on site would constitute a facility for the community to utilise similar to the existing tennis courts to the east of the site (operating under 'pay-as-you-play'). It is noted that the site at current affords leisure use free of charge for the community (noting some chargeable services), however, the offerings proposed are broader in nature and would appeal to a larger demographic of the local community outside of formal 'sport', instead focusing on general fitness. This supports Sports England's initiative *“Uniting the Movement”* which seeks to provide alternative recreational activities to invite more people to be active.

It is appreciated that the applicant intends for this fitness zone to be a chargeable service for the community, which does create financial barriers to entry, but marks a similar approach taken elsewhere within the recreational ground. This approach is common within Parish owned recreational grounds which contribute to the upkeep and maintenance of the wider site. Whilst significant positive weight cannot be attributed to the proposal with respect to its nature being a 'true community facility', it equally affords no conflict to the provision of a variety of publicly accessible fitness for the community. This, as per correspondence received by the applicant will not require a membership and will be operated on a 'pay as you go' basis.

In terms of operation, the roof covering proposed (of which details are to be secured via condition) further means that the outdoor fitness area can be used year round, and is not dependent on the weather such is the case for the majority of sports occurring on site at current. In this respect, the proposal represents a safe and adaptable scheme in compliance with CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy. Furthermore, its overarching aims are consistent with paragraph 88 of the NPPF. Accordingly, they are acceptable in this respect and positive weight is afforded to their provision, albeit tempered given the private nature of the operation as outlined above.

Sport England/ Cricket/ Football

It is noted that the scheme has evolved following initial statutory objections from Sport England on the matter of loss of football and cricket facilities. Amendments made by the applicant within the application process resulted in the removal of substantial parts from the scheme initially proposed and instead reduced the extent of the works to a fitness zone only with associated operational development.

Further to reduction in the scale of the proposal, Sport England have confirmed that no loss of sports pitches will occur from the development, and the location of the football pitches (including drainage) would not be hindered by the provision of a fitness zone in the location proposed. This no objection approach is shared by the FA.

Turning to cricket provision, whilst the remnants of the previous cricket activity remain at the site, no cricket has been played at Millworth Lane Recreational Ground since 2023. In this time, the Cricket Club vacated Millworth Lane and moved to the nearby new purpose-made facility at Manor Ground, provided in conjunction with the South of the M4 strategic development location.

Whilst the proposal may result in marginal loss of former formal cricket space, Sport England and the ECB raise no objections to the proposal on the basis of compliance with Sport England Exception 5. This reads *"The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor facility for sport, the provision of which would be of sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss, or prejudice to the use, of the area of playing field."*

It is noted that the proposal would result in the marginal loss of former formal cricket space, but following amendment and receipt of additional information, it would not

impact football provision on site, nor prejudice the use of Millworth Lane Recreation Ground for existing sporting activities it actively plays host to. Accordingly, the proposal is compliant with paragraph 103 of the NPPF and does not raise conflict with the development plan.

Archaeology:

TB25 of the MDD Local Plan requires applicants to provide a detailed assessment of the impact on archaeological remains in areas of high archaeological potential. It goes on to state that where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential

or an area which is likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ. Where this is not practical, applicants shall provide for excavation, recording and archiving of the remains.

Paragraph 218 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should “*require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible*”.

There are potential archaeological implications with this proposed development as demonstrated by Berkshire Archaeology’s Historic Environment Record. The site lies in an area with extensive Pre-historic activity. Pre-historic worked flint has been found c160m and c300m to the north whilst Field Walking to the east of the site, c.230m, has established extensive Mesolithic to Bronze Age evidence of lithics, with worked flints, cores and blades. C.175m to the east, a number of cropmarks suggest an area with significant past activity including enclosures, field system, pits and settlement. Investigations in this area have identified a late-Iron Age to early-Roman settlement and field system c.200-310m east of the proposal site.

An early-Iron Age settlement has also been excavated c.420m to the west, where evidence was also excavated for late-Neolithic to early-Bronze Age ring-ditch and middle Bronze Age pits. These suggest that the whole landscape was actively used during the Prehistoric and it is possible, given the early-Iron Age to the west and late-Iron Age to the east, that a middle-Iron Age site remains undiscovered in this area. Although this is not a largescale development, it is likely the plot has never previously been developed and therefore any archaeology may remain undisturbed below ground. With the above in mind, a condition has been appended to the recommendation to secure a written scheme of investigation and compliance with the approved document.

Landscape and Trees:

Policy TB21 of the MDD Local Plan requires development to retain and enhance the landscape character of the area as well as accord with the site’s classification within the Landscape Character Assessment

The site itself is located within the Loddon River Valley, high quality landscape

character area, however, represents a modest part of a mown field of little landscape merit that does not notably contribute to its valuable characteristics.

Whilst the presence of a relatively large dome-like structure could hinder long spanning views of the open countryside to the south, this is not considered to be detrimental and thus no objections are raised in this respect, particularly considering the character of the site is defined by formal sports provision and palisades fencing exists elsewhere in close proximity to the proposed developable area.

Ecology:

Biodiversity Net Gain

As of the 12th February 2024, all major developments (which the proposal represents by virtue of site area) must demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain in accordance with the Environment Act 2021 (as amended).

A biodiversity metric has been submitted in support of the application which details a net gain of circa 10.2% on-site, with no off-site credits/ delivery required. No objections have been received from WBC Ecology concerning the submitted baseline assessment.

Considering the relatively low habitat unit figure (c0.7 units pre-reduction in scale), it is appropriate to secure its delivery and maintenance for a 30 year period via a planning condition (the mandatory condition) as opposed to a s106 planning obligation.

Protected Species

The application is supported by a preliminary ecological appraisal undertaken by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy. The proposal would involve the re-use of a parcel of c317m² modified grassland which is proposed to be development via the introduction of hard surfacing, the outdoor exercise dome and palisades fencing.

The preliminary ecological survey identified negligible ecological value and further outlined the wider site has limited potential for roosting bats, however, did not rule out their presence. Considering the amended proposal represents the creation of a fitness zone on closely mown grass, excluding any trees/ buildings, the proposal would have no detrimental impact on any protected species, however, considering the site's proximity to a dark corridor suitable for foraging, a condition has been appended which requires the submission of a lighting strategy.

Conclusion:

Overall, with the above in mind, the proposal represents a positive addition to the Millworth Lane Recreational Ground which maintains the quality of the environment, does not harm neighbouring amenity, secures biodiversity enhancements and whilst intended to be privately managed provides a safe, adaptable and useable space for the wider community. The proposal is compliant with development plan and national policy when read as a whole, and accordingly, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

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, 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.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approval subject to conditions
Date:	17 October 2025
Earliest date for decision:	16 October 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	17.10.2025

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Scale and location of development proposals

Bat roost suitability area

Forestry Commission Low Risk Area

AWE Burghfield: Outer Zone

Loddon River Valley

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone

MSA - Sharp Sand and Gravel