

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260497
Site Address:	The Forest Comprehensive School, Robin Hood Lane, Winnersh, Wokingham, RG41 5NE
Expiry Date:	25 May 2026
Site Visit Date:	10 April 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed installation of low-carbon heating and hot water systems comprising air-to-water heat pumps, air-to-air heat pumps, and water-source heat pumps, together with associated enclosures, infrastructure, plant and control systems and landscaping, following removal of existing gas-fired heating and hot water infrastructure.	

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
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
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 CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
241747	Application for advertisement consent for 2 no. non-illuminated post and panel signs. (Retrospective)	Approved 20/09/24
241220	Full application for the installation of new entrance doors and canopy to the front of the building, following the demolition of the existing double doors and windows, plus replacement of cladding and windows to the rear/side of the building.	Approved 30/07/24
213030	Full application for the proposed erection of a 60 space cycle store, following demolition of existing cycle store. (Retrospective).	Approved 28/10/2021
203457	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 162885 dated 14/06/2017. Condition 14(a) Certificate for artificial grass pitch has met FIFA quality concept for football turf (b) Registered on football associations register of football turf pitches.	Approved 01/03/2021
201245	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 162885 dated 14/06/2017. Condition 12. Community Use Agreement - Northern Playing Fields.	Approved 14/01/2021
201379	Non- material amendment application for the substitution of approved plans: RG-L-02D – Illustrative Landscape Master plan, RG-L-04-01B – General Arrangement, RG-L-04-02B –GA Plan Detailed Inset FOR: RG-L- 02F –Illustrative Landscape Master plan, RG- L-04-01D – General Arrangement, RG-L-04-02D –GA Plan Detail Inset and other plans, including the addition of fencing, changes to hard surfacing, kerbs and materials and changes to drainage details.	Approved 27/07/2020
200914	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 162885 dated 14/06/2017. Conditions 13. Details of Artificial Pitch Surface. 15.Northern Playing Fields Ground Assessment. 16.Playing Field Maintenance Schedule.	Approved 10/06/2020
193352	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 162885 dated 14/06/2017. Condition 8. No	Approved 03/02/2020

	building shall be occupied until the access has been constructed. 9. Details of drainage system	
192824	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 162885 dated 14/06/2017. Condition 2. Samples and details of materials. 5. Details of secure and covered bicycle storage/parking facilities. 7. Construction Method Statement. 23. Details of proposed external lighting.	Approved 26/11/2019
191244	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 162885 to allow realignment of new access road.	Approved 06/06/2019
162885	Full planning application for indoor sports facility; means of access and parking; ancillary outbuildings and associated landscaping	Approved 14/06/2017
152260	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed erection of a changing rooms block linked to the existing swimming pool	Approved 15/10/2015
142923	Proposed erection of two cycle stores following the demolition of existing cycle store plus construction of 30 space car park	Approved 10/04/2015
141448	Proposed erection of new sixth form learning centre, provision of additional car parking and enhancements to existing rear access	Approved 10/12/2014
132017	Proposed erection of 2no modular buildings and retrospective permission for 2no modular buildings.	Approved 02/08/2013
111593	Application for the installation of solar panels on part of main school roof and safety railings around roof perimeter	Approved 29/02/2012
111554	Application for a non-material amendment to planning consent F/2011/0144 to allow a change to proposed supplier of solar panels, type of panel and mounting system, with reduction in number of panels and lower angle of pitch	Approved 24/11/2011
111174	Installation of solar panels on the main school roof	Approved 02/03/2011
F/2003/0399	Proposed single storey extension to school sports hall to provide female changing for community use	Approved 12/12/2003
F/2001/5204	Proposed two storey extension to school to create 4 new classrooms	Approved 30/01/2002

F/2000/2195	Proposed single storey side extension to school plus porch	Approved 18/10/2000
F/1999/70592	Proposed Single Storey Extension To Form Shower Room	Approved 25/11/1999
F/1999/70250	Proposed Pitched Roofs To Replace Flat Roofs At School	Approved 14/10/1999
F/1998/67664	Proposed Two Storey Extension To Teaching Block	Approved 23/07/1998
18923	Provision of dome to cover existing swimming pool and provision of air lock	Approved

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services: No comments received

WBC Environmental Health: No objection

WBC Landscape and Trees: No objection subject to conditions

WBC Ecology: No comments received

External

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks: No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Winnersh Parish Council's Planning and Transport Committee support the proposal in principle; however, they have raised concerns regarding potential noise from the heat pumps and have requested that noise mitigation measures be reviewed. The height of the proposed wall is considered inadequate to sufficiently reduce noise, particularly given that nearby residents are located approximately 22 metres away. Officer response: Following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Officer, the submitted Noise Assessment is considered adequate and acceptable, and there is no objection to the proposed development on noise grounds. See Environmental Health section of report for more detail.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	9, 10 & 11 Kelburne Close, Winnersh: Potential noise impacting neighbouring residential properties Post installation sound monitoring for an adequate length of

	time should be included in the plans with mandatory remediation if the plant is found to be operating outside allowed acoustic limits. No details or explanations for the two plant areas linked along the boundary of neighbouring residential properties behind the swimming pool. <i>Officer response: Following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Officer, the submitted Noise Assessment is considered adequate and acceptable, and there is no objection to the proposed development on noise grounds. See Environmental Health section of report for more detail.</i> <i>The following conditions will be included: Noise Mitigation Installation (Pre Operation), Operational Noise Limits & Plant Operation and Maintenance in order to protect the amenities of nearby residential occupiers ensuring the development does not result in unreasonable noise impacts (see decision notice for full details).</i> <i>There is no work proposed along the linked area between the two plants as shown on the BNG site maps. Revised plans have been submitted to make this explicit for clarity-the purple cables going across the buildings and not along the side of the pool.</i>
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APPRAISAL

Site Description: The Forest School is an all-boys secondary school and mixed sixth form, located west of Robinhood Lane, in Winnersh. The immediate surrounding area is mainly residential, with the Winnersh train station in close proximity to the south of the school.

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.

The proposal supports the continued effective operation and longevity of an

established secondary school, which is an important piece of local social and community infrastructure. In this respect, the development aligns with Core Strategy Policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities), which seeks to ensure that existing community facilities are retained and enhanced to meet the needs of local residents. The proposed upgrade to low-carbon heating infrastructure will assist in maintaining a safe, functional and sustainable learning environment, thereby supporting the delivery of education services. The development also accords with the wider objectives of the NPPF in promoting healthy, inclusive communities and supporting the provision and retention of accessible community facilities, including schools.

The proposal also directly supports Policies CC04 and CC05 by incorporating low-carbon and renewable energy technologies, contributing towards carbon reduction and sustainable construction objectives.

Character of the Area: The proposed infrastructure would be located around various points of the school and noting that the school is considerably set back from the main road, views from the public realm would be very limited if any, and so the proposal would have negligible impact on the overall appearance of the building.

Neighbouring Amenity: Given the limited physical nature of the proposal there is no overlooking, loss of light or overbearing concerns.

Landscape and Trees: There are no protected trees on the Site but there are various mature trees of value at the school's entrance and around the perimeter creating an important visual screen, noise mitigating buffer between the campus environment and neighbouring residential dwellings and the trainline. The linear band of trees will also have ecological value too.

As per the Arboriculture Site Plan drawing referenced above and the Biodiversity Gain Plan, six (6) silver birches will be planted to fulfil the Biodiversity Net Gain as described below:

"To achieve Biodiversity Net Gain, the scheme includes the planting of six medium standard native trees within the school grounds. These trees will be positioned within suitable soft landscaped areas to enhance canopy cover, strengthen ecological connectivity across the site, and provide long-term biodiversity enhancement. The proposed tree planting exceeds the baseline canopy loss and contributes to measurable uplift when assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric."

(Ref: Joe's Blooms, Ltd, Biodiversity Gain Plan, 23/02/2026)

The Officer has reviewed these plans and accepts the location, specification, and planting details for these trees.

Additionally, two tree stumps will need to be removed to accommodate a new path. A category U single tree and category C group of trees are also recommended for removal in section 6.1 of the AIA – T9 Birch (dead) and G14 Sycamore (inappropriate location). The Officer has no objection to these tree works being carried out.

As a condition, existing trees near the proposed development should be protected as

per the AIA and TPP referenced above.

Environmental Health: Background noise monitoring was undertaken over a representative multi-day period using Class 1 calibrated equipment. The methodology and duration of the survey are considered appropriate to establish baseline noise conditions at the nearest noise-sensitive receptors.

The nearest residential dwellings are located approximately 22 metres from the proposed plant compound and have been appropriately assessed as the worst-affected receptors. Predicted noise levels have therefore been assessed at the façades of these dwellings, representing a suitably worst-case and precautionary approach.

The Noise Assessment adopts design noise criteria of 41 dB LAeq during the daytime period and 35 dB LAeq during the night-time at the nearest residential façade. These criteria are consistent with Environmental Health expectations for plant noise and are considered protective of residential amenity.

The assessment identifies that predicted noise levels from the proposed heat pumps would exceed the adopted criteria in the absence of mitigation. However, the Noise Assessment identifies and quantifies appropriate mitigation in the form of a solid acoustic fence enclosure around the main plant compound. The assessment confirms that, with this mitigation in place and with the plant operating in the specified modes, predicted noise levels would comply with the adopted daytime and night-time criteria at the nearest residential receptors.

On this basis, Environmental Health is satisfied that, subject to the installation of the approved acoustic fence prior to the first operation of the plant, and its retention and maintenance thereafter, the development would not give rise to an adverse impact on residential amenity or a statutory noise nuisance.

The submitted Noise Assessment is therefore considered adequate and acceptable, and there is no objection to the proposed development on noise grounds.

Conditions have been included as part of the decision notice relating to Noise Mitigation (Pre-Operation), Operational Noise Limits & Plant Installation, Operation and Maintenance.

A condition requiring the installation of the mitigation measures identified within the submitted acoustic report prior to first use is necessary to ensure that the development is implemented as assessed. Without such control, there is a risk that the plant could be brought into operation without the specified attenuation measures, resulting in noise levels that exceed those predicted and assessed, thereby causing material harm to residential amenity.

Given the proposed plant and proximity to the residential dwellings, it is necessary to impose a condition limiting operational noise levels. This provides a clear, measurable and enforceable benchmark to ensure that noise emissions remain within acceptable limits during both daytime and night-time periods.

A condition requiring installation, operation and maintenance in accordance with

manufacturer specifications and instructions is necessary to ensure the plant is properly maintained which is essential to safeguard residential amenity on a continuing basis thereby ensuring the development operates as proposed which does not lead to increased noise output.

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:	Approved
Date:	21 May 2026
Earliest date for decision:	22 April 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	21/05/26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS**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	District Centre	Winnersh

Scale and Location of Development Proposals | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Major Development Locations	Winnersh

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.
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Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

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

Wokingham Borough Council Owned Land | Total count: 1

#	Address	Tenure	Title_no
1	Land on the south side of Arbor Lane, Winnersh, Wokingham	Absolute Freehold Estate in Land	BK423657

Risk of Flooding from Surface Water | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk extent
2	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk extent

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability | Total count: 6

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	SL751	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team

2	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	SL752	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
3	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	SM751	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
4	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	SN753	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
5	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	SO754	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
6	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	SP754	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Amber	For Householder applications check HH Layer. Consult NatureSpace for all other types of development

SSSI Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	IRZURL
1	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0101000322302&notes=&location=479921,172819%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	Name
1	Landscape Character Assessment 2019	Wokingham-Winnersh Settled and Farmed Clay

Wards | Total count: 1

#	Name of area	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Winnersh Ward	0 m

Parishes | Total count: 1

#	Name of area	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Winnersh CP	0 m