

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252312
Site Address:	East Reading Retail Centre, Unit 5, Shepherds Hill, Woodley, Wokingham, RG6 1FE
Expiry Date:	10 February 2026
Site Visit Date:	21 October 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of existing property to Dermatology Health Centre (Use Class E) plus erection of a single storey front extension.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

Major Development Location – Woodley
Local Centre – Shepherds Hill
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Amber Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts

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 CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping CP15 – Employment Development
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 CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character
Wokingham Borough Local	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS8 – Meeting our employment needs

Plan Update (LPU)	CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER6 – Town, district and local centres and shopping parades FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH3 – Shopfronts 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 Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Woodley Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
051297	Proposed erection of an A1 retail unit and a D1 community facility with on-site servicing and car parking.	Approved 19 December 2005
060196	Proposed erection of one A1 unit and one D1 unit with on-site servicing and car parking. Amendment to consent 051297	Approved 5 April 2006
062680	Proposed erection of 3 units for the following alternative uses Unit 4- A1 or A3, unit 5 - A1 and unit 6 - A1 or D1 with servicing and car parking.	Approved 7 July 2006
190916	Full application for a proposed change of use from A1 retail to Sui Generis (Tanning Salon).	Approved 24 May 2019

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Internal
WBC Environmental Health – No comments received WBC Highways – No objection WBC Public Rights Of Way – No comments received WBC CIL – No comments received

WBC Ecology – No objections subject to a condition.
WBC Waste Services – No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Woodley Town Council – No objections
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	Comments received from one resident raising the following concerns: - One of the adjacent units is incorrectly referred to as a different business name (<i>Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration.</i>) - The plans don't acknowledge the presence of nearby dwellinghouses (<i>Officer comment: Whilst noted, the assessment of this application will still consider the impact on these properties as part of its determination.</i>)

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site consists of a mid-terrace commercial unit located within the Shepherds Hill Local Centre in Woodley, Wokingham.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the change of use of the unit from a tanning salon (Sui Generis) to a Dermatology Health Centre (Use Class E). It is important to note that this proposal would amalgamate Unit 5 with Unit 4, which is already under use as a Dermatology Health Centre.

Further to the above, the application seeks approval for a single storey, flat roofed front extension to Unit 5, which would be approximately 3 metres in depth and would maintain the roof height of the existing unit. The unit, overall, would employ 13 full time equivalent employees.

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 site is also located within the Shepherds Hill Local Centre, recognised by MDD Local Plan Policy TB17. This policy states that:

- Proposals that retain and enhance the provision of day-to-day shopping facilities in Local Centres, neighbourhood and village shops will be supported.
- Use Class A1 (Now Class E), whether within Local Centres or in individual neighbourhood or village shops, shall be retained unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - a) Alternative day-to-day shopping facilities are available within reasonable walking distance from the existing retail use
 - b) The existing retail use is no longer viable.

Whilst the proposals technically involve the amalgamation of two units, it does involve an increase in Class E floorspace (previously A1) since the existing use is Sui Generis. Both units could very easily be separated in the future should the proposed use cease, and therefore the proposals would reasonably retain the provision of day-to-day shopping facilities within the Shepherds Hill Local Centre, complying with TB17.

Character of the Area:

The change of use of the unit from a Tanning Salon to a Dermatology Health Centre would have a negligible impact on the character of the area; vehicle movements associated with the two uses are very similar, as are the opening hours and general level of activity associated with them.

With regards to the front extension, it is overall modest in scale would its depth would align with the frontage of the adjoining Unit 5. It would be located within immediate proximity to the adopted highway, but its appearance would not be out of keeping with the site's well-urbanised and commercial surroundings, with the remaining planting acting as a buffer between the extension and the public realm. Overall, the extension would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The nearest residential property is located are 22 Shepherds Hill (opposite side of the road to the south) and 31 Shepherds Hill (opposite the site's car park to the west). The proposed extension would retain separation distances from both properties in excess of 25 metres. Therefore, there are no neighbouring amenity concerns related to this element of the proposals.

With regards to the change of use, the operating hours of the unit would replicate that of Unit 4, namely:

- Monday to Friday – 7am to 10pm
- Saturdays – 8am to 5pm
- Sundays – 11am to 4pm

These hours are reasonable given the site's urban/commercial setting and all fall within recognised daytime hours. The nature of the use would generate little to no external noise emissions (with the exception of plant equipment that is already in situ). The only other anticipated legible noise resulting from the development would be vehicle movements to and from the application site which, due to the distance from neighbouring properties and the fact Shepherds Hill is a busy arterial road through the Wokingham Borough, do not raise any additional noise concerns in terms of impacts onto nearby residential properties.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Unit 4 and 5's parking is located to the immediate west of Unit 4. No changes to the existing access are proposed.

WBC Highways are satisfied that the traffic generation associated with the proposed use is largely comparable to that of the existing Tanning Salon use. As such, they do not anticipate any adverse impacts on highway safety or parking provision.

Initial concerns were raised regarding the proximity of the proposed extension to the adopted Highway, namely due to the site's proximity to underground utility lines. Following discussions between the relevant officers, it was concluded that this did not raise any material planning objections as there was no perceived impact on the visibility splays of the highway.

However, it will be important that prior to construction, the developer does a series of trial holes to identify the location of the relevant utility lines. In the event a line conflicts with the intended construction approach for the extension, it is likely that revisions to the design of the extension will be required. The applicant is advised to contact the Local Planning Authority should this occur.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 and has a very low risk of surface water flooding. The front extension proposed is modest in scale would be located on an area of existing hardstanding. Therefore, no objections are raised regarding the development's impact on fluvial or surface water flooding.

Landscape and Trees:

There are no arboricultural or landscape character concerns related to the proposed development.

Ecology:

Bats:

The application site is located within a Bat Roost Suitability Habitat. WBC Ecology have responded stating they have no objections to the impact onto bats, as the proposed development does not result in any notable incursions into the existing roof space, which is already unsuitable for roosting bats.

WBC Ecology have requested a restriction on any further lighting by condition. This is not considered necessary to make the development acceptable as it primarily relates to a minor single storey extension. Shepherds Hill is also a well-lit urban area in the Wokingham Borough, recognised as a Local Centre as per MDD Local Plan Policy

TB17.

Great Crested Newts:

The site is also located within an Amber Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts. Despite this, the very modest scale of the extension proposed and the fact it would be located on areas of existing hardstanding means that there are no concerns of an adverse impact on this protected species.

Conclusion:

Overall, the proposed development complies with the development plan. Subject to conditions, this application is recommended for approval.

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:	Approval
Date:	5 February 2026
Earliest date for decision:	4 November 2025

Recommendation agreed by:	
(Authorised Officer)	
Date:	5 February 2026