

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260600
Site Address:	6 King Street Lane, Winnersh, Wokingham, RG41 5AS
Expiry Date:	24 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	8 April 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use from mixed Class E (retail)/Class B8 use to Class E (gym).	

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 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking TB15 – Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development TB16 – Development for Town Centre Uses TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	The JMWP does not apply to the scale and type of development proposed within the site's location.
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU) (N.B. the LPU is deemed to overall hold limited weight at this time)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER5 – The hierarchy of centres ER6 – Town, district and local centres and shopping parades ER7 – Strengthening the role of centres
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
VAR/2014/2276	Application to vary condition 12 of planning	C/A –

	consent 10027 and condition 10 of planning consent 15944 for the erection of single storey warehouse. Condition 12 and 10 relates to the warehouse being occupied and used only by the applicant company, the variation proposes to remove the restrictive occupancy of the unit.	06/05/2015
15944	Single storey extension to warehouse to provide additional storage.	C/A – 07/08/1981
12753	Single storey building for sale and storage and distribution of joinery and ancillary products.	C/A – 16/04/1980
10027	Single storey warehouse for the sale, storage and distribution of manufactured joinery products and ancillary products (outline).	C/A – 15/03/1979

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health: No objection subject to condition
WBC Highways: Object on the following grounds: In the absence of vision-led traffic mitigation measure(s), the scheme fails to offset the cumulative residual effects on the local highway network, contrary to the NPPF and Policies CP1, CP3, CP4 and CP6 of the Core Strategy.
WBC Landscape and Trees: No objection
WBC Ecology: No comment

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd: No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Winnersh Parish Council raised no objection in principle to the proposed change of use but raised concerns regarding the lack of information on parking provision, usage, staffing levels and potential noise nuisance from 24/7 operation. <i>Officer's Comment: Additional information relating to parking provision was submitted and this is assessed in the 'Highway Safety and Parking Provision' section of the report. Potential noise disturbance impact is assessed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report.</i>
Ward Member(s)	Cllr Prue Bray raises no objection in principle to the proposed gym use. Concern is raised regarding the lack of information on parking provision, including the number and allocation of spaces, staff levels and likely usage, meaning the adequacy of parking cannot be assessed. Objection is also raised to the absence of cycle parking and the potential for noise disturbance arising from 24-hour operation. <i>Officer's Comment: Additional information relating to parking provision was submitted and this is assessed in the 'Highway Safety and Parking Provision' section of the report.</i>

	<i>Potential noise disturbance impact is discussed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report.</i>
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site comprises a vacant warehouse building located off King Street Lane within Winnersh District Centre. The unit has a lawful storage and distribution (Class B8) use with ancillary sales (Class E) and was previously occupied by a kitchen fittings retailer with a showroom. The warehouse is set well back from the highway, with a parking and service area to the front. The site backs onto housing on Reading Road and Rainbow Park and is adjoined by a timber merchant and an industrial unit.

Proposal & Procedural Matters:

This application proposes the change of use of the site to a gym (Use Class E). The intended occupier of the site, PureGym, would introduce 24/7 opening hours. There would be no gym classes or staff presence overnight. No external works are proposed under this application, with the existing highway access and parking area to be utilised.

During the course of this application, the applicant amended the red line site boundary to demonstrate the true boundaries of the freehold title after it was identified that an area to the rear of the site under different ownership had been erroneously included within the red line boundary. The red line boundary was also enlarged to show the accurate site boundary adjacent to the adopted highway (King Street Lane).

Article 7(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (DMPO) requires that an application must include:

“a plan which identifies the land to which the application relates.”

Once validated, that land is fixed unless the LPA agrees otherwise. There is no provision in the DMPO that gives an applicant a right to amend the application site boundary after validation; this is discretionary.

In terms of case law, *Bernard Wheatcroft Ltd v SSE* [1982] discusses tests that can be applied to help establish whether a change to the red line boundary would be acceptable:

- Substantial Difference
- Procedural Fairness
- Minor vs Material

The amended red line plan was accepted during the application because it corrected the site boundary to reflect the true ownership position and included only a minor additional area adjacent to the access. The amendment did not change the nature of

the proposal, did not require a change to the ownership certificate, and did not give rise to any materially different planning impacts. Applying the principles of substantial difference and procedural fairness, the amendment was considered minor and did not prejudice interested parties.

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.

Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan sets out the development limits for each settlement as defined on the policies map. The site is located within a major development location and as such the principle of development should be acceptable subject to other material considerations.

The site lies within a designated Small Town/District Centre under Core Strategy policy CP13 and MDD Local Plan policy TB15. These policies seek to maintain the vitality and viability of centres by supporting proposals that are of an appropriate scale and form, compatible with the retail character of the centre, and that contribute to a mix of uses. In this case, the proposal would support the district centre's day-to-day role by bringing a vacant unit back into active Use Class E use and increasing the choice of amenities available to local residents. It would therefore not prejudice the centre's overall function or character as a retail centre.

The proposal would contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of the district centre by enhancing the existing provision of day-to-day shopping facilities and other retail/commercial uses and facilitating the return of a vacant building back into use. The proposal therefore complies with Core Strategy policy CP13 and MDD Local Plan policy TB15.

Loss of B8 Floorspace

Core Strategy policy CP15 supports the redevelopment or refurbishment of buildings in employment use within development limits (outside of designated Core Employment Areas). However, it also resists the loss of storage & distribution floorspace stating: *"Any proposed changes of use from B1, B2 & B8 should not lead to an overall net loss of floorspace in B Use within the Borough."* Prior to vacancy, the building was last occupied by a kitchen unit manufacturer with an ancillary showroom for sales.

The proposed gym use is a 'main town centre use' as defined by the Glossary at Annex 2 of the NPPF. Paragraph 90 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. This is supported by the Use Classes Order and the Permitted Development Order's flexible approach to changes of use within town centres.

Due to the nature of the existing use and its location outside of a defined Core Employment Area, the fairly modest amount of commercial floorspace that would be lost (approximately 1,300sqm), and the principle of the proposed change of use being supported by national and local policy, it is considered that the proposal's conflict with policy CP15 is minimal and would not have an adverse impact on net employment floorspace within the borough. This attracts limited weight in the planning balance.

Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with the wording of Policy CP15 insofar as it would result in the loss of existing B8 floorspace. However, for the reasons set out above, that conflict is considered limited in the particular circumstances of this case and does not outweigh the policy support afforded to the re-use of a vacant unit for a main town centre use within a designated district centre.

In reaching this view, as alluded to above, weight is given to the site's district centre location, the mixed lawful/previous use including ancillary retail/showroom activity, the lack of designation as a Core Employment Area, the re-use of the building for another employment-generating Class E use, and the absence of evidence that the loss of this individual unit would materially undermine the Borough's overall supply of B-class floorspace.

Character of the Area:

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 together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.

No external alterations to the existing building are proposed under this application. Any subsequent alterations to facilitate the change of use would require separate planning permission, and any signage may require advertisement consent.

It is acknowledged that the proposed use of the site would be more intensive than the former uses in terms of scale of activity, particularly in respect of its 24/7 opening hours. However, the site is an existing commercial premises with no restriction on traffic movements. The application site benefits from an existing lawful commercial use and the building has historically accommodated commercial activity associated with customer visits, servicing and deliveries. The existing relationship between the site and other commercial premises within the district centre is also well established.

On this basis, it is considered that the proposed scale of activity would not have an adverse impact on the immediate surroundings or the wider area purely from a character perspective. The impact of the proposal on the amenity of neighbouring land users, including residential dwellings, is assessed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report. The scale of activity proposed in terms of traffic impacts is assessed in the 'Highway Safety and Parking Provision' section of the report.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Core Strategy policy CP3 aims to protect the amenity of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life. Due to the nature of the

proposed change of use, with no external operational development proposed under this application, there are no concerns relating to potential impact on neighbouring amenity in terms of loss of light, overbearing or overlooking impact.

Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. Paragraph 198 of the NPPF states that LPAs should mitigate and reduce to a minimum, potential adverse impacts arising from noise from new development and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life.

The closest neighbouring residential properties are located on Rainbow Park, approximately 9m from the building's north-western elevation. The applicant has advised that between the hours of midnight and 6am, an average of 5-10 users per hour would be expected to visit the gym on weekdays, and fewer than 5 per hour on weekends.

The applicant has submitted an Acoustic Planning Report (RBA Acoustics, 10 March 2026) in support of the application. This has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health Officer and informed their opinion on whether the proposed 24/7 gym use would be acceptable within the site's location. The report assesses the predicted noise impacts associated with typical gym activities, background music and any fixed plant, taking account of the existing building fabric and the surrounding environment. The assessment concludes that, subject to the implementation of the identified mitigation measures and operational controls, including limits on amplified sound and appropriate acoustic treatment of the building, the proposed use would not result in unacceptable noise impacts at nearby residential properties.

The Environmental Health Officer has raised no concerns with the methodology of the noise assessment and concludes that the recommended mitigations would minimise potential disturbance to neighbouring occupiers and are capable of being secured by condition. Critically, overnight usage is expected to be limited, with no night-time classes proposed and activities contained entirely within the building envelope.

No extraction equipment or other plant is proposed as part of this application. If any future occupier requires externally mounted plant, ducting or extraction equipment, this would be likely to require separate planning permission and would be assessed at that time having regard to amenity impacts. Internal fit-out works would also need to ensure compliance with Building Regulations where applicable.

It is recognised that 24-hour opening represents a material change in operational characteristics when compared to the site's previous occupation. However, having regard to the findings of the acoustic assessment, the Environmental Health consultation response, the expected low overnight patronage and the containment of activities within the building, this factor does not justify refusal. Hence, subject to the recommended mitigation being secured by condition, the proposal would avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP3 and MDD Local Plan policy CC06.

Highway Safety and Parking Provision:

Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Core Strategy policy CP6 concerns issues relating to highway safety and access, stating that planning permission will be granted for schemes that, amongst other requirements, provide appropriate vehicular parking, enhance road safety and do not cause highway problems. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan set out the recommended minimum parking requirements for development proposals.

Parking and Access:

The proposed change of use would utilise the existing vehicular access off King Street Lane. The Council's Highways Officers have raised no objection to this arrangement. Following discussions with the applicant, a revised parking assessment and parking provision plan were submitted to demonstrate that there is sufficient parking on-site for the proposed use. The parking assessment concludes that the highest parking accumulation is forecast to occur from 9am to 11am, with a total of 30 cars parked within the car park during this period.

The amended plan demonstrates that the existing hardstanding can accommodate 34 parking spaces, including 2 disabled bays. The Council's Highways Officers have reviewed the assessment and raised no concerns with its methodology, concluding that the proposed provision of 34 spaces meets the Council's standards and is acceptable.

In the interest of promoting travel by sustainable transport modes, the provision of four cycle parking spaces on-site was requested by the Highways Officers. This has also been included within the amended parking provision plan and can be secured by condition. As such, there is no objection from the Highways Officers on parking or access grounds.

Traffic:

During the course of this application there has been significant discussion between the applicant and the Council's Highways Officers regarding potential traffic impact on the local highway network. The amended Technical Note dated 22/06/2026 sets out how trip generation for the existing and proposed uses of the site have been calculated, and concludes that the change of use would generate net increases (two-way traffic) of 9 vehicles during the AM peak hour and 16 vehicles during the PM peak hour.

The Council's Highways Officers disagree with the methodology informing the applicant's trip generation calculations. Having carried out their own assessment of the available TRICS data, the Officers conclude that the proposed change of use would generate net increases (two-way traffic) of 16 vehicles during the AM peak hour and 23 vehicles during the PM peak hour.

While the Highways Officers acknowledge that the anticipated net increase in traffic is still relatively modest, both existing junctions within close proximity to the site (B3030 King Street Lane / A329 Reading Road / B3030 Robin Hood Lane, and B3030 King Street Lane / Hatch Farm Way / Longdon Road) are operating close to, or at times beyond, capacity. The applicant was invited to assess the effects of the proposal on these junctions, but this was not forthcoming.

The Highways Officers therefore conclude that the proposal would materially affect this part of the B3030 corridor, particularly during peak hours. The Council is working with partners, including developers, to advance the Borough Infrastructure Delivery Plan to offset the cumulative residual effects of development in the Borough. As the application is not liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the Officers conclude that the application should explore appropriate mitigation measures to offset the traffic impact arising from the change of use.

Paragraph 115(d) of the NPPF states that any development proposal should ensure that any significant impacts on the transport network (in terms of capacity or congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach. On this basis, the applicant was invited to consider a range of options which could include improvements for sustainable transport modes. The Highways Officers advise that any proposed mitigation measure(s) should be proportionate to the scale of effect, which is determined to be small.

Two potential mitigation measures were recommended to the applicant for their consideration: a financial contribution to cover the introduction of a segregated cycle route along the western side of the B3030 King Street Lane, between Hatch Farm Way and the A329 Reading Road, to provide a safer and more attractive environment for site users and promote active travel; or a financial contribution towards the junction reconfiguration of B3030 King Street Lane / Hatch Farm Way / Longdon Road to improve the junction performance along the B3030 corridor. If either option was agreed it would be secured via a planning obligation.

However, in order for planning obligations (like s106s) to be attached to planning permissions, they should meet the relevant tests stipulated in regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, paragraph 58 of the NPPF and paragraph 002 of the NPPG (Reference ID: 23b-002-20190901) which are outlined below:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- directly related to the development; and
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

Paragraph 115(d) of the NPPF directs LPAs to agree appropriate mitigation measures where there would be a significant impact on the highway network. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF is clear that an application should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if the impact on the highway network would be severe. As acknowledged in the Highways Officers' comments on this application, the proposed change of use would result in a relatively modest increase in traffic during the AM and PM peak hours.

While the identified increase in traffic would contribute to the existing capacity issues on the two junctions, it has not been demonstrated that the cumulative effect on the highway network would be significant or severe. The scale of the application, a change of use of an existing commercial building with no increase in floorspace, is also relatively modest and as noted above an existing B8 commercial use could re-establish the use of the site at any time without planning permission. Accordingly, the baseline position is not a vacant building generating no trips, but an occupied commercial unit operating within its lawful use.

It is also important to acknowledge that the site is located within a designated district centre at the heart of Winnersh, a designated Major Development Location. The site is highly accessible by sustainable transport modes including bus and rail and is conveniently located at the centre of Winnersh for local residents. As such, users of the proposed gym would not be wholly reliant on the private car to access the site.

Therefore, it is considered that the recommended mitigation measures to offset the increase in traffic arising from the development are disproportionate in scale and kind to the development, and are not necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. Having regard to the magnitude of the forecast trip increases, the existing lawful fallback position, the district centre location and accessibility of the site, the development itself is not considered to result in a significant transport impact within the meaning of paragraph 115 of the NPPF, nor a severe residual cumulative impact within the meaning of paragraph 116 of the NPPF. The recommended mitigation measures therefore fail to comply with paragraph 58 of the NPPF and regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010.

While the Highway Authority's objection is afforded weight, the objection must be considered against the statutory development plan, the NPPF and the tests for planning obligations. The identified net increase in peak-hour trips is modest in absolute terms and arises from the re-use of an existing commercial building within a designated district centre. The evidence before the Council does not demonstrate that the residual cumulative impacts of the development on the road network would be severe, nor that the suggested strategic mitigation schemes are necessary, directly related and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to this specific development. On that basis, the absence of such mitigation does not justify refusal in this case.

Other:

Due to the scale of the proposed development and the site's location, there would be no impact on biodiversity, trees or landscape matters. The proposal is also exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, as it would not impact any priority or other on-site habitats. As the proposal comprises a change of use within an existing building with no external works or habitat loss proposed, no adverse ecological effects have been identified.

Conclusion:

The proposal would bring a vacant commercial building within Winnersh District Centre back into active use and would provide a main town centre use in a

sustainable and accessible location. The development would support the vitality and viability of the centre and would not involve external alterations. Limited conflict with CP15 is identified due to the loss of B8 floorspace; however, this attracts limited weight having regard to the site's location, the mixed/ancillary nature of the previous use, and the continued employment-generating nature of the proposed Class E use. Subject to conditions, the proposal would not result in unacceptable noise or amenity impacts.

While the Highway Authority's objection is noted, the evidence does not demonstrate that the residual cumulative impacts on the highway network would be severe, and the suggested mitigation would not meet the relevant planning obligation tests. In undertaking the planning balance, substantial weight is afforded to the re-use of a vacant unit in a district centre for a main town centre use, while limited weight is afforded to the identified conflict with Policy CP15 and moderate weight is afforded to the Highway Authority's objection. Overall, the benefits of the proposal outweigh the limited conflict identified, and the development accords with the development plan when read as a whole. As such, 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 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:	22 July 2026
Earliest date for decision:	9 April 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	22/07/26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Insert where relevant