

PLANNING REF : 262274
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Maple Lodge
: Mill Lane, Windsor, Berkshire
: SL45JE
SUBMITTED BY : Ms Jasmine Boothroyd
DATE SUBMITTED : 04/10/2026

COMMENTS:

I am writing to object to the proposed AI data centre at Thames Valley Park.

My main concern is the impact that a development of this size and scale will have on the environment, wildlife and people living nearby.

This is not simply a brownfield office site - Although the proposal is on an existing office site, it is right next to the Thames Valley Park nature reserve and wetland areas. These areas are home to a wide range of wildlife and are an important part of the local environment.

A large data centre will operate 24 hours a day, every day. It will have substantial cooling equipment, generators and other plant running continuously. The potential effects of the resulting noise, heat, lighting and air pollution on the surrounding wildlife need to be properly considered.

Heat is a particular concern - A data centre of this size will generate a huge amount of waste heat. Unless that heat can be effectively reused, it will have to be released into the surrounding environment.

I am concerned about the effect of continuous heat discharge on the nearby wetlands, wildlife and local environment. The Council should require the applicant to clearly explain how much heat will be produced, how much can realistically be reused and where the remaining heat will go.

The use of natural gas is also concerning - The proposed development includes natural-gas-powered fuel cells. Natural gas is a fossil fuel and using it to provide power for a new development of this scale will result in significant carbon emissions.

This seems difficult to reconcile with Wokingham Borough Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

The Council should require a clear assessment of the development's total carbon emissions over its lifetime, including the energy used to operate it and the emissions from the proposed on-site power generation.

It should not be assumed that cleaner fuels such as hydrogen or biomethane will be available in the future. The assessment should be based on what is actually being proposed now.

Backup generators will create additional noise and pollution.

The development will also require backup power generation. If diesel generators are used, they will produce additional noise and air pollution when they are tested or operated.

Even if they are described as emergency equipment, they still need to be considered as part of the overall impact of the development. The Council should assess the noise and emissions from the generators, including when several generators may operate at the same time.

For the sake of homeowners property value, there is huge impact on nearby. homes

There are homes on the other side of the railway embankment which could be affected by the development.

The railway embankment should not simply be assumed to provide a protection from noise. A data centre will have cooling systems, fans, transformers, generators and other mechanical equipment operating around the clock.

Night-time noise is particularly important because background noise is lower and residents are more likely to notice continuous mechanical noise.

The Council should make sure that noise is assessed at the actual nearby homes and should consider not just average noise levels but also low-frequency and tonal noise, which can be particularly intrusive.

There are also potential concerns about lighting, visual impact, air emissions and waste heat.

Not least, the impact on wildlife is enormous.

The nature reserve and wetlands are valuable local habitats. Wildlife can be affected by more than just the physical loss of habitat. Continuous noise, artificial lighting, heat and air pollution can also change the conditions in which animals, birds and insects live.

The fact that the development may provide a Biodiversity Net Gain elsewhere does not necessarily remove the need to protect the habitats and wildlife already present around Thames Valley Park.

The first priority should be to avoid or minimise harm to the existing environment.

Plus, a much more intensive use of the site nonstop.

The existing office use and a 24-hour data centre are very different.

This proposal would introduce a large industrial-scale operation, with significant energy requirements, cooling equipment, power infrastructure and backup generation.

The Council therefore needs to consider the combined effect of all

these things noise, heat, air pollution, lighting, carbon emissions and the impact on wildlife and nearby residents - rather than looking at each issue separately.

I recognise that data centres are an important part of modern technology and the digital economy. However, that does not mean that their environmental and local impacts should be overlooked.

I ask Wokingham Borough Council to properly assess the impact of this development on the Thames Valley Park nature reserve and wetlands, wildlife, nearby residents, noise levels, air quality and the Council's own carbon-neutrality objectives.

If these impacts cannot be adequately avoided or mitigated, I believe the application should be refused.