

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Melissa Tyler.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/00720/FP	Decarbonisation works, including: the provision of insulated rendering to external walls, air source heat pump and associated enclosure, photovoltaic panels on roofs, substation, and the erection of a 2-storey, front extension to the leisure centre and associated infrastructure and BNG. (Amended plan received 14/05/25).	Royston Leisure Centre Woodcock Road Royston Hertfordshire SG8 7XT

Submitted Plan Nos

RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-00502-P03 RLC-SBA-XX-00-DR-A-00020-P03 RLC-SBA-XX-00-DR-A-10010-P02 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-10210-P03 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-10111-P01 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-10110-P01 RLC-SBA-XX-01-DR-A-10011-P02 Royston Plant Sketch - Level 00 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-10213-P01 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-10211-P04 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-10212-P01 RLC-SBA-XX-RF-DR-A-10012-P03 710 D Tree Removal and Protection Plan RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-00504-P04 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-00503-P07 RLC-QOD-XX-00-D-E-00501-P03 100 J Landscape Plan RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-00221-P04 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-00220-P04 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-00121-P04 RLC-SBA-XX-XX-DR-A-00120-P04 RLC-SBA-XX-RF-DR-A-00022-P04 RLC-SBA-XX-01-DR-A-00021-P03 EDS 07-3102.01 A Sheet 1 of 3 EDS 07-3102.01 A Sheet 2 of 3 EDS 07-3102.01 A Sheet 3 of 3

1.0 Policies

Policies

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
Section 8 - Promoting healthy communities
Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
Section 11 – Making effective use of land
Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Supplementary Planning Documents and other.

GDPO
Design SPD 2011
Sustainability SPD 2024
Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development SPD

North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 Local Plan and Proposals Map

Policy SP2 Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
Policy SP9 Design and Sustainability
Policy SP10: Healthy Communities Policy
SP11: Natural resources and sustainability
Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity
Policy T1 Assessment of Transport Matters
Policy T2 Parking
Policy ETC3 New retail, leisure and other main town centre development
Policy D1 Sustainable Design
Policy D3 Protecting living conditions
Policy HC1 Community facilities
Policy NE4 Biodiversity and geological sites
Policy NE12 Renewable and low carbon energy development

2.0 **Site History**

- 2.1 **04/00669/1** Approval of details of sports and leisure centre with associated car and coach parking, landscaping, formation of vehicular and pedestrian access and ancillary works (as amended by plans received 18th May 2004) **CP**
- 2.2 **19/0177/FP** Single story side extension to provide additional storage **CP**
- 2.3 **24/02243/PRE** Two storey extension and internal and external alterations

3.0 **Representations**

Statutory Consultees

3.1 **Herts Highways –informatives**

The HA is being reconsulted on a revised Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) which has taken on board the HA's comments dated 7 May 2025. The HA has reviewed the revised CTMP (28-05-25 Rev 5) and all the comments raised by the HA have been satisfactorily addressed in the revised CTMP. Consequently, the HA has the following comments to make but with the CTMP condition removed.

- 3.2 **North Herts Environmental Health** : Thank you for consulting Environmental Protection on this application.

The application is supported by a noise assessment which concludes that there will be a low impact from the proposed plant. I agree with this conclusion and raise no objections to the proposals subject to the plant installation being in accordance with the submitted supporting information.

3.3 **North Herts Ecology –**

The March 2025 Statutory Biodiversity Metric records the site as achieving a 10.32% gain in Habitat Units. Thereby meeting the mandatory requirement of 10%. The preliminary ecological appraisal advised further bat roost assessment and this has not found any bat interest associated with the building.

The case officer should note Biodiversity Gain condition wording should be added to the decision notice, the biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition having its own separate statutory basis and is deemed to apply to every planning permission granted for the development of land in England. To ensure the applicant is clear about this distinction the biodiversity gain condition should not be included in the list of conditions imposed in the written notice when granting planning permission but should remain separate.

3.9 **Neighbour Representations**

None received

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site and Surroundings

- 4.1.1 The Royston Leisure Centre is located off Woodcock Road and was built in 2005 and consists of a 25m pool, sports Hall, Fitness Studios and associated changing facilities. A new single storey extension was constructed around 2020 to the south corner elevation containing Sports Hall storage. The centre is located next to King James Academy School to the south and residential properties to the north adjacent the site next to the existing car park.

4.2 Proposal

- 4.2.1 Planning permission is sought for the decarbonisation works, including: the provision of insulated rendering to external walls, air source heat pump and associated enclosure, photovoltaic panels on roofs, substation, and the erection of a 2-storey, front extension to the leisure centre and associated infrastructure and BNG.
- 4.2.2 The two-storey extension will create 300m² of new floorspace for the leisure centre, on the ground floor offering a multi-purpose studio space and the first floor offering additional gym floorspace.
- 4.2.3 A new cycle parking area is proposed to be sited to the side of the building, providing existing spaces and supplemented with an additional 14 cycle parking spaces (7 stands) to account for the additional floor space to be created. A new secure staff cycle parking area is proposed to the rear of the leisure centre.
- 4.2.4 Additional works being undertaken are set out below and included on the provided plans; this has been done for transparency purposes and because they feed into the wider sustainability benefits (which the submitted Energy Statement captures). However, it is emphasised that these works are not subject to consideration as part of the application.
- Internal changes (do not require planning permission)
 - Thermostatic Radiator Valves and zonal controls for heating
 - Storing the rejected heat from the Combined Heat and Power
 - Passive Infrared Sensor in office areas
 - Replace existing heat emitters for low temperature hot water Air Source Heat Pump
 - De minimis works (as confirmed with Case Officer as part of pre-application process, but included on plans for completeness)
 - Replace existing insulated panels for like for like higher performing panels
 - Insulate the roof from above and install new roof membrane.

4.3 Key Issues

4.3.1 The key issues are:

- Principle of development and Policy compliance
- **Decarbonisation works and extension:**
 - Design and layout, visual impact on the character of the area
 - Impact on neighbouring properties
- Highway impacts
- Biodiversity net gain, Landscape and Ecology
- Planning Balance

Principle of development and Policy compliance

- 4.3.2 The proposal includes works to the existing leisure centre, located within the settlement boundary of a main town in North Hertfordshire (Policy SP2), which will secure environmental improvements to the building, reducing its carbon impact. This is supported under Policies SP1, SP2, NE12 and D1 of the Local Plan.
- 4.3.3 'Policy SP1: Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire' supports development that will 'secure any necessary mitigation measures that reduce the impact of development, including on climate change'.
- 4.3.4 Policy NE12: Renewable and low carbon energy development' and 'Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability' broadly support the provision of renewable and low carbon energy development in appropriate locations.
- 4.3.5 Policy D1: Sustainable design' further seeks to ensure that development proposals 'reduce energy consumption and waste'. Specific requirements/provisions are subsequently set out in the Sustainability SPD
- 4.3.6 The principle of the decarbonisation works are also supported at a National level through legislation, National Policy Statements and the Net Zero Strategy. The NPPF states *'in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights).'*
- 4.3.7 In assessing renewable and low carbon energy proposals the Council will give significant weight to their local and wider benefits, particularly the potential to reduce greenhouse gas and other harmful emissions, and the social benefits of community owned schemes.
- 4.3.8 On 21 May 2019, the Council passed a Climate Emergency motion which pledged to do everything within the Council's power to achieve zero carbon emissions in North Hertfordshire by 2030. As one of the first councils to pass this motion, NHDC is leading the way on climate action. This declaration asserted the Council's commitment toward Climate Action beyond current government targets and international agreements.

- 4.3.9 Within the submitted Energy Statement it is stated that the proposed works would achieve low carbon energy at the silver standard, as per the North Herts District Council Sustainability SPD.
- 4.3.10 They go on to state that in regards to optimizing passive design & fabric performance the proposed development would meet Silver Standard criteria in the Sustainability SPD—*Being an existing building with minor extension there is limited opportunity for the optimisation of orientation and layout. In addition, leisure centres have a high energy consumption compared to many other building types, due the hot water demand, making EUI targets unrealistic to achieve. All other silver criteria has been surpassed, including an on-site carbon reduction of 71.2% against the existing building being achieved, which far exceeds the 35% identified in the SPD. In addition, provision of numerous low carbon alternative technologies have been specified.*
- 4.3.11 Also in regards to achieving low carbon energy – Silver Standard has also been met – *several low carbon technologies have been considered with the most appropriate systems being implemented, to maximise the carbon/energy saving in respect to and feasibility of implementation. Furthermore, the building has maximised its PV provision where feasible, generating electricity equivalent to 12.56% of the building operation energy through PV generation onsite. This is expected to be further optimised during commissioning and in-use to maximise the use of generated electricity on site, by the heat pumps.*

Decarbonisation works

- 4.3.12 The proposed decarbonisation works for Royston Leisure centre include
- *the provision of external insulated render to existing masonry external walls,*
 - *external ASHP compound adjacent to the existing plant entrance;*
 - *air source heat pump and associated enclosure,*
 - *installation Photovoltaic (PV) panels to the roofs over the Pool Hall, Sports Hall and Sports Store and*
 - *a new substation*
- 4.3.13 The decarbonisation works constitute enhancements to the building and these will help to support the ongoing operation of Royston leisure centre, reducing operational costs and the long-term suitability of the building for its purpose; this will ensure that it can continue to act as a facility which supports and improves health outcomes in line with the aspirations of policy SP10 – Healthy Communities.

Design and layout, visual impact on the character of the area

- 4.3.14 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted provided that development responds positively to the site's local context in addition to other criteria. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan further considers that new development will be supported where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context. These considerations are echoed in Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 4.3.15 The insulated render will be applied to the majority of the exposed external blockwork, predominantly on the North, East and South sides of the building. The existing insulated

cladding panels at first floor level will be replaced for similar panels that provide greater amounts of insulative performance.

- 4.3.16 The Solar panels are proposed to be placed on the main existing roof except the Pool Hall. The PV panels will be mounted on the existing standing seam curved aluminium roof, set back from the edges of the roof which will minimise visibility from ground level. The angle of the PV panels are to follow the curvature of the roof on the main roofs
- 4.3.17 The proposed Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) enclosure sits alongside the main Pool Plant room on the southeast corner of the building. The proposed enclosures will be a mix of 2.7m high timber close-boarded fencing and open metal fencing.
- 4.3.18 The proposed rendering has been designed and located and is sympathetic to the existing building in terms of its scale, massing and appearance. The solar panels on the roof have been located to be as visually un-obtrusive as possible.
- 4.3.19 Overall, it is considered that the design and layout of the proposed scheme are acceptable. As such, the proposal would accord with Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan and Section 12 of the NPPF in terms of the design and layout of the scheme.

Impact on neighbouring properties

- 4.3.20 Local Plan policy D3 Protecting Living Conditions states that: *"Planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions. Where.....the living conditions of an existing development would be affected by a proposed use, the Council will consider whether there are mitigation measures that can be taken to mitigate the harm to an acceptable level. If the Council is not satisfied that mitigation proposals would address the identified harm, development proposals will not be permitted."*
- 4.3.21 The proposed development is unlikely to have negative impact on nearby residential dwellings given the existing distances from the host building.

Proposed Extension

- 4.3.22 'Policy SP10: Healthy Communities' seeks to ensure that healthy, inclusive communities are maintained and created, with the policy notably adding that the Council will seek to *'protect, enhance and create new physical and green infrastructure to foster healthy lifestyles'*. The proposed extension to the existing leisure centre which is intended to improve this facility and increase its leisure offering as a result of the demand for services (in turn supporting health outcomes); this proposal can therefore be considered to qualify as the provision of new physical infrastructure under Policy SP10.
- 4.3.23 The proposed two storey fitness extension to the primary (north) elevation will consist of the following (as per submitted documents)
- *approximately 310m² GIA extension comprising ground floor multi-purpose and store, along with a first floor extended fitness suite, cycle studio and escape stairwell.*
 - *The roof will be curved and with a metal standing seam finish to match the existing main roofs above the Swimming Pool and Sports Hall,*

- *Ground Floor external walls will be of masonry construction with a insulated render finish to match the proposed insulated render system under the Decarbonisation works.*
- *First floor external walls will be light-grey composite cladding panels to match the existing cladding panels being retained around the Sports Hall.*
- *Proposed glazing will be dark grey double-glazed units to match the existing glazing / curtain walling around the entrance and Swimming Pool wing.*
- *Externally 30 Sheffield Stands, which provide 60 cycle spaces, will be relocated and supplemented to provide approximately 14 additional spaces.*

Design and layout, visual impact on the character of the area

- 4.3.24 In terms of design, the two-storey element is proposed to be built adjacent to the main entrance though it is of lower height, keeping it subservient to the main body of the building. The proposed extension is functional in appearance and would match the existing in form and materials. The proposed curtain walling on the extension will match the appearance of the retained curtain walling on the existing building, with the frames to be the same anthracite grey colour and of a similar profile size.
- 4.3.25 The proposed extension has been designed to be sympathetic to the existing building in terms of its scale, massing and appearance. Therefore I do not raise any issues in regards to the proposed extension.

Impact on Neighbours

- 4.3.26 The extension is located next to the entrance to the Centre and located on the front elevation. The proposal is set at a considerable distance from the residential properties the other side of the car park therefore, in my opinion the extension would not have a detrimental impact on the residential amenities. There is already existing windows on the side flank at first floor.
- 4.3.27 The proposed development is unlikely to have negative impact on nearby residential dwellings given the existing distances from the host building.

Highway access and car parking

- 4.3.28 'Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters' requires that development proposals assess their impact on the highways network. 'Policy SP6: Sustainable transport' further requires proposals to promote the use of sustainable transport modes insofar as reasonable and practicable.
- 4.3.29 'Policy T2: Parking' seeks to secure appropriate parking provision on sites. Within the Planning Statement the agent has outlined that *No additional car parking is proposed on site. The site is located in a sustainable location the heart of Royston and the use of sustainable modes of transport to travel to this site should be encouraged. It is also noted that parking surveys have been undertaken which confirm that there is existing*

parking capacity to justify this approach and it is noted that there is limited land available on site to deliver additional car parking spaces in any case.

- 4.3.30 The proposal includes the relocation of 30 existing cycle parking stands (equivalent to 60 spaces) to a new location, in addition to the provision of 12 new cycle parking spaces in line with the Council's requirements for the additional floor space being proposed. The proposal further includes a new long-term, staff cycle parking area for 10 cycles as an enhancement to the sustainable transport provision on site.
- 4.3.31 No changes are proposed to the existing access or egress routes from the building or to the site. Vehicular access to the ASHP enclosure and substation for maintenance access will be via existing vehicular access routes.
- 4.3.32 A Construction Management Plan has been submitted and amended during the application process. Highways have raised no objections subject to informatives.

Biodiversity net gain, Landscape and Ecology

- 4.3.33 Consultation with North Herts Ecologist has confirmed that the new landscaping is proposed on site forms part of the BNG strategy which will secure a net gain on site of 10.32% in compliance with legal requirements.
- 4.3.34 The development will retain existing trees and hedges where possible to support biodiversity and provide a mature landscape setting. It is identified that 3 trees will require removal in order to facilitate the proposed layout. The new tree planting proposed as part of the scheme is also considered to mitigate the loss of the trees proposed for removal.
- 4.3.35 Ecology surveys have been undertaken in relation to the site, with the development confirmed not to impact on a number of species and mitigation proposed as necessary.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 The proposed development in terms of its design, impact on amenity issues, ecology impacts, landscape impacts, highways and parking standards, is acceptable and considered to comply with the provisions of the Local Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed extension will support ongoing business operations, will contribute towards positive health outcomes and will help to ensure the continued use of the leisure centre by the local community – all of which are supported under Local Plan policy. The general principle of the decarbonisation works is also supported under local policy by virtue of the environmental improvements that will be delivered and the NPPF gives significant weight to these benefits in the planning balance.

5.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:
(a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
(b) the planning authority has approved the plan.
The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Hertfordshire District Council.
There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>).
Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted proactively through early engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Informative/s:

1. Should this application be approved HCC recommends inclusion of the following Advisory Notes:

(ANs) to ensure that any works as part of this development are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highways Act 1980 and other relevant processes.

Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence.

Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developerinformation/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

Obstruction of public highway land: It is an offence under Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developerinformation/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

Road Deposits: It is an offence under Section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit mud or other debris on the public highway, and Section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible. Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developerinformation/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 18 June 2025	