

Fuller Long

2nd October 2023

Planning Department
Hillingdon Council

Dear Sir/Madam

Application for Full Planning Consent at Highgrove Pool and Fitness Centre, Eastcote Road, Hume Way, Ruislip, HA4 8DZ

This planning letter is written in support of a full planning application on behalf of Ameresco. The application seeks consent for the installation of Photovoltaic panels on the roof of the property, two new substations, one new switchroom and 3x ASHPs with enclosures to the north east corner of the building.

The application site comprises the Highgrove Pool and Fitness Centre in the London Borough of Hillingdon. The proposals put forward seek to improve the energy performance of the complex and replace council assets that are now at the end of their useable lives i.e boilers and calorifiers. The proposals will therefore secure longevity, as well as to assist the Council in meeting its climate change targets.

This planning letter will set out the proposal, as well as an assessment of the scheme against national and local planning policy.

Site and Surrounds

The site is located in the Eastcote area of Hillingdon, approximately 1.5 miles from Eastcote Underground Station. The building is modern in nature and around 3 storeys in height (Image 1). It includes a swimming pool and fitness centre, with parking to the front of the building.



Image 1. Highgrove Pool and Fitness Centre

The site is located adjacent to Highgrove Woods to the east, and residential development to the west and north. Immediately to the south is the Bishop Ramsey Church of England School.

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The site is not designated within the Council's Local Development Plan, however the adjacent woodland is recognised as a nature reserve and a nature conservation site of borough grade II or local importance. An extract from the Council's planning policy map is included below (Image 2).

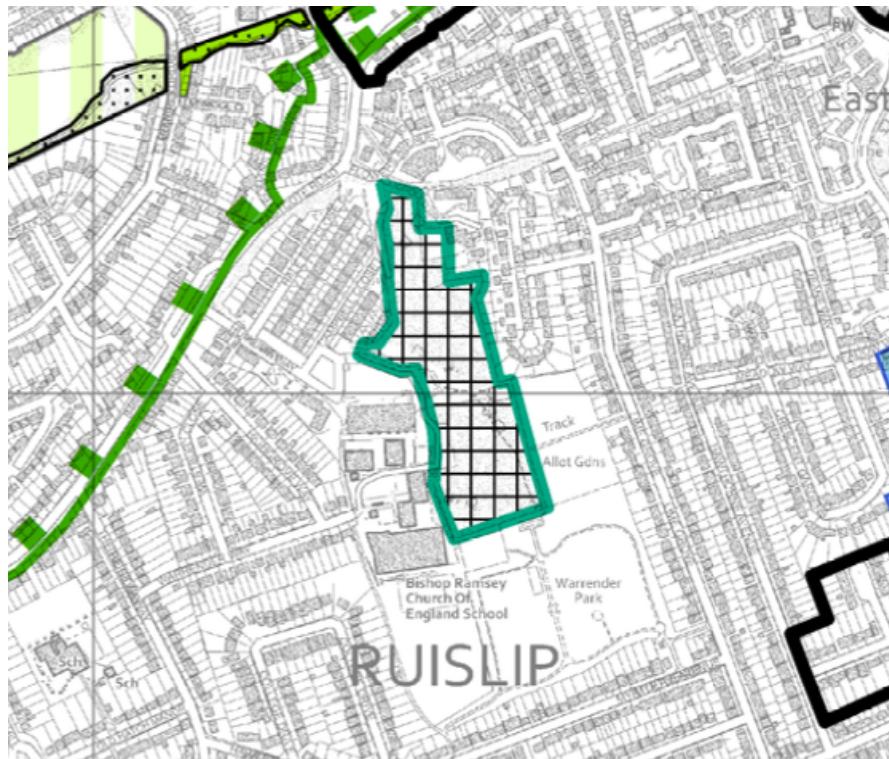


Image 2. Extract from Council's policy map

Proposal

The proposals include the following

- Photovoltaic panels to the roof of the building. There will be 358 modules on the roof which will be pitched at 10 degree angle facing south to best capture the sun.
- Three air source heat pumps within the North east corner of the car park, each 1.5m (w) x 10.2m (l) x 2.5m (h) and will be surrounded by a 2.1m grey metal louvre fencing .
- Two substations and one switchroom within Glass reinforced plastic (GRP) enclosures, each 3 m (l) x 3m (w) x 2.4m (h)
- Replacement windows

No change is proposed to the use of the building, the operating hours, or the access.

Planning Policy Context

The Development Plan for the London Borough of Hillingdon comprises:

- The London Plan (2021);
- The Hillingdon Local Plan Part 1 - Strategic Policies (2012); and

- The Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies, Site Allocations and Designations (2020).

Other material considerations include:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2021); and
- National Planning Policy Guidance (2021).

The most relevant planning policies are outlined below.

The London Plan

Policy CG3 of the London Plan seeks to create a healthy city, focussing on reducing health inequalities and improving Londoner's health. It states that healthy and active lifestyles should be promoted, alongside ensuring that buildings are appropriately equipped to ensure they are well insulated and sufficiently ventilated.

Policy S5 expands upon this further and aims to protect existing sports and recreation facilities, as well as encouraging the provision of new facilities.

Chapter 9 of the London Plan relates specifically to sustainable infrastructure and reducing emissions and creating sustainable developments.

Local Plan Part 1

Policy EM1 of the Local Plan Part 1 has the aim of reducing climate change. It states that the Council will work with developers to provide efficiency initiatives and it further states that they will promote decentralised energy. The Council also confirms through this policy that they will encourage the installation of renewable energy.

Safeguarding and enhancing the network of sport and leisure spaces is the desire of **Policy EM5**. The Council has an overarching aim to promote healthy and active lifestyles in the Borough and protecting existing facilities is key to achieving this aim. This is expanded upon in **Policy CI2** which confirms the importance of leisure and recreation facilities. The policy seeks to secure good quality and well maintained facilities to meet the needs of local communities.

Local Plan Part 2

Policy DMCI 6 further confirms that indoor sports and leisure facilities will be protected and enhanced.

With regards to transport, **Policy DMT1** seeks to manage the highways impacts associated with development. The policy states that development proposals will be required to meet the transport needs of the development. **Policy DMT 6** relates specifically to parking, confirming that the proposals must comply with the Council parking standards which are assessed on an individual basis for leisure complexes.

The design of new development is guided by **Policy DMHB 11**. It expects all development, including extensions and alterations to existing buildings, to be of the highest standard and incorporate principles of good design. Good design will take account of the local character and context and use high quality building materials and finishes.

Planning Consideration

An assessment of the proposals against planning policy is provided below.

Principle of Development

The proposals put forward will help to support the running of the existing leisure centre, ensuring it can operate more efficiently. Leisure centres are notoriously expensive to operate owing to the necessity to constantly heat and filter swimming pools, as well as the lighting and cleaning associated with the provision of such facilities with extensive opening hours.

Employing the use of photovoltaic panels will allow electricity to be generated which can be used to run various parts of the facility. Similarly, the air source heat pumps are a far more efficient way of heating and cooling the property, again reducing costs.

Both national and local planning policy places a strong emphasis on promoting and encouraging healthy and active lifestyles. In order to do this, local policy specifically seeks to protect existing leisure facilities through policies EM5, CI2 and DMCI 6. Allowing the proposals within this application will enable the facility to keep operating and will help to safeguard it for the future. This is entirely in line with policy aims and therefore we contend that the principle of development is accepted.

Sustainability

The key aim of the proposals is to increase the sustainability of the facility by incorporating sustainable energy technologies. Electricity will be generated on site that will be used to provide electricity for the heat pumps and other site electricity users. The heat pumps will be used to heat the building and the pool and will help to decarbonise the thermal component of the site's energy usage in a very efficient manner. The proposals therefore meets the requirements of Policy EM1.

Parking

As a result of the installation of the air source heat pumps 10 car parking spaces will be lost. There are currently 124 parking spaces on site and these are rarely all full. There is also an overflow car park to the rear of the facility. As such, it is not considered that the loss of these spaces will have a negative impact on the operation of the facility, or create additional pressure on the surrounding road system.

Amenity

The photovoltaic panels will not cause any issue in terms of amenity. The air source heat pumps will be located to the front of the property which faces onto the car park. They are located to the side of the building which is furthest from residential development.

A noise report is submitted in support of the application which concludes that the proposed plant meets the London Borough of Hillingdon's requirement that the plant is 5db below the background noise level at the nearest residential receptor.

As such, it is not considered that there will be any negative impact on neighbouring amenity as a result of the scheme.

Design

The photovoltaic panels will be pitched at an angle to best capture the sun. There is a parapet surrounding the roof, which is approximately 0.3m in height which will largely screen the panels. The PV panels will not be visible from ground level and will be greater than 1m away from the roof edge on all sides.

The heat pumps will be 1 They will be mounted on a concrete plinth that is flush with the car parks surface and screened by a 2.1m grey metal louvre fencing

Whilst they are located to the front elevation they have been placed to the side of this elevation to reduce their visual prominence.

The enclosures for the new substations and switchroom will be small in scale, enclosed by Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) measuring 3.5m by 2.5m and a height of 2.5m. Given the proximity to the south west corner of the building, they will be discreet in appearance.

The windows will be aluminium double glazed casements to match the existing in terms of appearance and will therefore have no detrimental impact upon the appearance of the building.

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Conclusions

This planning application seeks consent for the installation of photovoltaic panels, three air source heat pumps and a new substation and switchroom within GRP enclosures at Highgrove Pool and Fitness Centre, within the London Borough of Hillingdon.

The proposals will help to achieve a more energy efficient facility which will consequently help to ensure the sustainability of the leisure centre and its continued operation into the future. It will also help to decarbonise the leisure centre by removing all of its natural gas users i.e gas fired boilers and calorifiers.

The proposals will not give rise to any negative impact in terms of amenity, and the reduction in car parking spaces is considered to be negligible when compared to the remaining provision and will comply with the relevant Hillingdon planning policies

Promoting healthy and active lifestyles, and in turn maintaining and enhancing leisure facilities, is a key national and local planning priority and these proposals will help to achieve this aim. It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

We look forward to hearing from you. .

Your sincerely

Clare Preece
Planning Director

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