



**REPORT of
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

to
**DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEE
16 OCTOBER 2025**

Application Number	25/00666/FUL
Location	Blackwater Leisure Centre, Park Drive, Maldon, Essex CM9 5UR
Proposal	Internal alterations and new glazed openings to south elevation serving proposed fitness suite; Installation of photovoltaic panels to southern, eastern and western roof slopes of main building.
Applicant	Mr Martin Anderson - Places For People Leisure Management Ltd
Agent	Mr Edward Rawle - Pozzoni
Target Decision Date	30.09.2025
Case Officer	Matt Bailey
Parish	MALDON TOWN
Reason for Referral to the Committee	Referred by the Assistant Director: Planning and Implementation under Part 3, 1d of the District Planning Committee Terms of Reference due to matters of strategic importance and interest to the District. Site is also in Council Ownership and must be determined by a Committee.

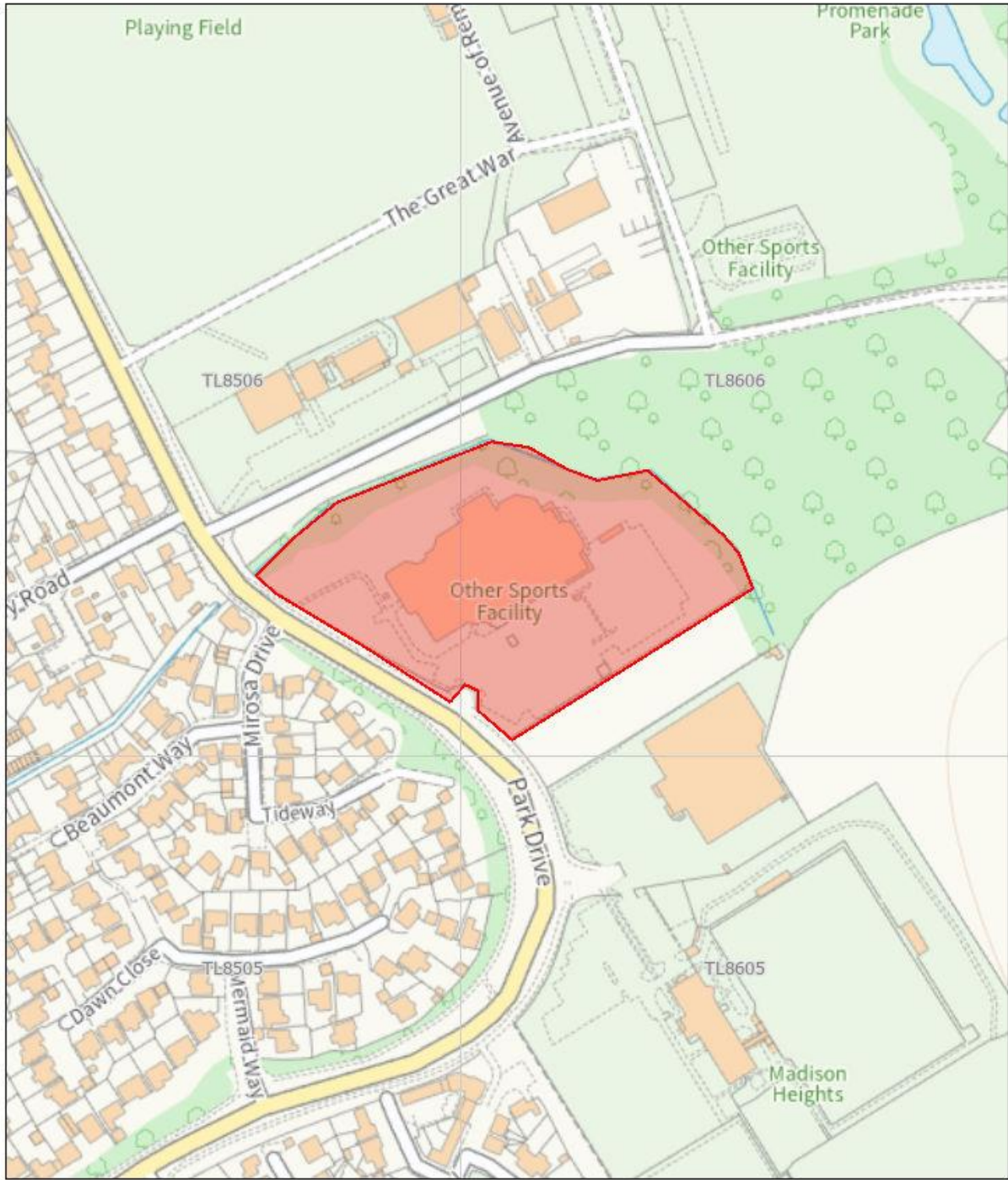
1. RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to the conditions (as detailed in Section 8 of this report).

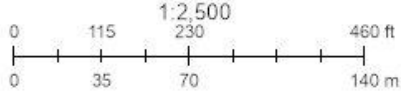
2. SITE MAP

Please see below.

25/00666/FUL



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3. SUMMARY

3.1 Proposal / brief overview, including any relevant background information

Site Description

- 3.1.1 The application site is located north-east of Park Drive, within the settlement boundary of Maldon. The site comprises the Blackwater Leisure Centre and associated car park.
- 3.1.2 The site is located within the defined development boundary of Maldon and is an area with a mix of uses. To the south-east of the site is Madison Heights, a recreational centre with bowling facilities, a children's play centre, a roller skating facility, bar and restaurant. To the immediate north of the site is Park Drive Health Club and the waste depot. Beyond this is Maldon Promenade Park. The application site, Park Drive and Madison Heights sites are all allocated in the Local Plan for leisure centre purposes.
- 3.1.3 The existing building is set back from the roadside and can be accessed on foot via an existing footway leading from Park Drive, diagonally opposite Mirosa Drive. The main vehicular entrance to the site is further south along Park Drive.

The Proposal

- 3.1.4 Planning permission is sought for internal alterations and new glazed openings to the south elevation serving the proposed fitness suite, together with the installation of photovoltaic panels to the south and western roof slopes of the main building.
- 3.1.5 The proposed glazed openings, facing the leisure centre car park, would be inserted between existing brick piers to provide improved daylight to the fitness suite within the building. The windows would be aluminium framed and Anthracite Grey in colour.
- 3.1.6 In addition, the scheme proposes the installation of photovoltaic panels to the southern, eastern and western roof slopes of the "pyramid" roof of the centre. The siting of the panels as indicated is provided for information only since they would otherwise be installed under permitted development rights (see discussion at section 5.1 below).
- 3.1.7 The proposed alterations to the building for which permission is sought are associated with wider refurbishment works of the leisure centre, which also include a number of internal alterations and replacement of existing plant and machinery throughout the facility (albeit these elements of the refurbishment do not require planning permission).

Conclusion

- 3.1.8 The alterations to the Leisure Centre as proposed by the application are minor in nature and sympathetic in design and scale to the host buildings. The glazed openings at ground floor level facing the car park are positioned so as not to result in any harmful impact upon the appearance of the building or amenity of neighbouring occupiers.
- 3.1.9 The renewable energy provided by the proposed photovoltaic panels at roof level would comprise a sustainable form of development and assist in achieving local and national objectives of increasing the use of low carbon technologies and reducing

carbon emissions. The overall appearance of the roof would not be significantly altered as a result of the installation.

- 3.1.10 The proposed development accords with all other relevant policies contained within the approved Maldon District Local Development Plan (LDP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and is recommended for approval.

4. MAIN RELEVANT POLICIES

Members' attention is drawn to the list of background papers attached to the agenda.

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework including paragraphs:

- 7 Sustainable development
- 8 Three objectives of sustainable development
- 10-12 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- 38 Decision-making
- 47-50 Determining applications
- 54-58 Planning Conditions and Obligations
- 85-89 Building a strong, competitive economy
- 108-117 Promoting sustainable transport
- 123-127 Making effective use of land
- 128-130 Achieving appropriate densities
- 131-141 Achieving well-designed places
- 157-175 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding, coastal change
- 180-194 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.2 Maldon District Local Development Plan 2014 – 2029 approved by the Secretary of State:

- S1 Sustainable Development
- S2 Strategic Growth
- D1 Design Quality and Built Environment
- D2 Climate Change & Environmental Impact of New Development
- E1 Employment
- E3 Community Services and Facilities
- H4 Effective Use of Land
- T1 Sustainable Transport
- T2 Accessibility
- I2 Health and Wellbeing

4.3 Relevant Planning Guidance / Documents:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
- Maldon District Design Guide (MDDG)
- Vehicle Parking Standards (VPS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

5. MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Principle of Development

- 5.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Section 70(2) of the 1990 Act and paragraph 47 of the NPPF require that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan comprises of the approved LDP.
- 5.1.2 The principle of carrying out alterations to existing properties is considered acceptable in line with Policies S1, E3 and H4 of the LDP (2017). Policy E3 states that the Council will encourage proposals and other measures which will help to improve the provision of, and accessibility to, community services and facilities in a local area – including the relocation, co-location, modernisation and expansion of existing services.
- 5.1.3 In this instance, the proposed external alterations and solar panel installation form part of a wider programme of refurbishment of the Leisure Centre – which will result in an improved leisure facility for public use. The modernisation of the buildings as proposed by the application is considered wholly compliant with policy E3.
- 5.1.4 On the basis of the strong policy support for improvements to existing community facilities, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable. The merits of the scheme are assessed below.

5.2 Design and Impact on the Character of the Area

- 5.2.1 The planning system promotes high quality development through good inclusive design and layout, and the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities. Good design should be indivisible from good planning. Recognised principles of good design seek to create a high-quality built environment for all types of development.
- 5.2.2 It should be noted that good design is fundamental to high quality new development and its importance is reflected in the NPPF. Furthermore, the basis of policy D1 of the approved LDP seeks to ensure that all development will respect and enhance the character and local context and make a positive contribution. Policy H4 of the LDP requires development which includes alteration, extension and / or addition to a building to maintain, and where possible enhance, the character and sustainability of the original building and the surrounding area; be of an appropriate scale and design that makes a positive contribution to the character of the building and the surrounding area and where possible enhance the sustainability of the original building; and not involve the loss of any important landscape, heritage features or ecology interests. Similar support for high quality design and the appropriate layout, scale and detailing of development is found within the MDDG (2017).
- 5.2.3 As already noted, the works proposed by the application form part of a wider refurbishment programme for the leisure centre – mainly relating to internal alterations and improvements to plant and machinery. The elements of the refurbishment for which planning permission is sought are minor relative to the overall scheme and would not result in a significant change in appearance to the building overall.
- 5.2.4 A series of glazed openings to the upgrade fitness suite are proposed to the south-eastern elevation. The aluminium framed windows are sensitively designed and

sympathetic in style to the host building, and in any event are positioned well away from any views from the public highway, facing onto the car park area.

- 5.2.5 Photovoltaic panels are also proposed to the southern, eastern and western slopes of the “pyramid” roof of the main building. Given the existing metal standing seam form of the roof it is considered that the introduction of a series of solar arrays atop this surface would not result in a significantly different appearance to the building.
- 5.2.6 It is noted that the installation of photovoltaic panels on non-domestic premises is classed as permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J of the General Permitted Development Order (2015). In this sense the proposed installation would not require permission, provided that the criteria set out by the above Class are satisfied.
- 5.2.7 Nevertheless, in the interest of transparency, the applicant has incorporated the proposed photovoltaic panels into the submitted plans, to provide the Council with a complete picture of the proposed refurbishment and effect on the external appearance of the building.
- 5.2.8 Overall, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any harm to the character and appearance of either the host buildings or the surrounding area, and would therefore accord with Policies S1, S8, and D1 of the LDP, and the policies and guidance in the NPPF.

5.3 Impact on Residential Amenity

- 5.3.1 The basis of policy D1 of the approved LDP seeks to ensure that development will protect the amenity of its surrounding areas taking into account privacy, overlooking, outlook, noise, smell, light, visual impact, pollution, daylight and sunlight. This is supported by section C07 of the MDDG (2017).
- 5.3.2 The application site is located approximately 45 metres from the nearest residential properties along Mirosa Drive and Tideway to the west, separated by dense vegetation and trees along the western side of Park Drive. The fitness suite windows are positioned well away from the main highway and are oriented south-eastwards, away from public or private views and as such no concerns are raised in relation to possible impacts upon residential amenity resulting from the new openings.
- 5.3.3 As already noted, the proposed photovoltaic panels to the three roof slopes would not significantly alter the appearance of the overall roof, given the existing standing seam finish. The panels would extend a maximum of 20cm from the existing roof slope and would therefore not result in any noticeable change to the massing of the building. Consideration has also been given to potential glare from the installed panels, however as above the building is relatively screened from view from either the public highway or properties to the west. As such no concerns are raised in this regard.
- 5.3.4 Overall, it is considered that the proposed additional fenestration at ground floor level, together with the proposed photovoltaic panels to the roof slopes, would not materially harm the amenity of the occupiers of nearby residential properties, in compliance with the NPPF and Policy D1 of the LDP.

5.4 Access, Parking and Highway Safety

- 5.4.1 Policy T2 aims to create and maintain an accessible environment, requiring development proposal, inter alia, to sufficient parking facilities having regard to the

Council's adopted parking standards. Similarly, policy D1 of the approved LDP seeks to include safe and secure vehicle and cycle parking having regard to the Council's adopted parking standards and maximise connectivity within the development and to the surrounding areas including the provision of high quality and safe pedestrian, cycle and, where appropriate, horse riding routes.

- 5.4.2 The application proposes external alterations to the building only and does not result in any increased floorspace available for recreational use within the facility; as such the scheme would not have any effect upon existing parking provision at the site. For this reason, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with policy T2 of the LDP and the Maldon District VPS SPD.

5.5 Sustainability

- 5.5.1 Policy S1 of the LPD states that as part of its decision making the Council will seek to ensure development adapts to the effects of climate change by "limiting greenhouse gas emissions through the efficient use of energy and use of renewable alternatives, coastal management, and mitigating against flooding". This approach reflects that taken at 167 of the NPPF, which states that "Local planning authorities should also 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)".
- 5.5.2 The proposed installation of solar panels to three roof slopes of the main pyramid roof is considered to comply with the above objectives and therefore represents a sustainable form of development that would fully accord with the provisions of LDP Policy S1 and the NPPF.

6. ANY RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

Application Ref.	Description	Decision
98/00396/OUT	Construction of multi-purpose sports hall and ancillary facilities to existing leisure centre	Approved
00/00538/FUL	Proposed single storey extension to existing swimming pool to provide new entrance, sports hall, health and fitness, aerobics studio, consultation rooms and changing facilities	Approved
01/00093/FUL	Proposed erection of temporary accommodation to provide a Fitness Suite, Male/Female changing facilities and covered glazed link to existing building	Approved
01/00679/FUL	Erection of temporary accommodation to provide a temporary crèche	Approved
02/00820/ADV	Erect unilluminated totem signboard adjacent to site entrance and install 2 no. unilluminated signs on south east elevation of building	Approved
14/00570/FUL	Extension to Leisure Centre to create Aerobics Studio	Approved
16/01252/FUL	Retrospective - Change of use of 3No. parking bays for use as mobile car wash	Refused
18/00699/FUL	Provision of building to be used as a community hub and associated boundary treatments (nursery, childcare provision, children's holiday club, crèche for the leisure centre, private hire by community groups).	Approved

7. CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

7.1 Representations received Parish / Town Council *(summarised)*

Name of Parish / Town Council	Comment	Officer Response
Maldon Town Council	The Town Council recommends approval of this application	Noted

7.2 Statutory Consultees and Other Organisations *(summarised)*

Name of Statutory Consultee / Other Organisation	Comment	Officer Response
Cadent Gas	No objection, but proximity to intermediate pressure pip noted (along Park Drive)	Noted – proposal is not positioned in a location that would result in groundworks affecting pipework

7.3 Internal Consultees *(summarised)*

Name of Internal Consultee	Comment	Officer Response
Environmental Health	No comments	Noted

7.4 Site Notice / Advertisement

7.4.1 The application was advertised by way of two site notices posted on 14 August 2025 (with expiry date for comments set at 5 September 2025). The notices were affixed at eye level to lampposts at the eastern corner of the site and adjacent to the site entrance.

7.4.2 Notice was also given by way of newspaper advertisement posted in the Maldon and Burnham Standard, published on 14 August 2025 (with expiry date for comments set at 4 March 2025).

7.5 Representations received from Interested Parties *(summarised)*

7.5.1 No third-party comments have been received in relation to the proposals.

8. PROPOSED CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
REASON To comply with Section 91(1) The Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans stated on the Decision Notice.
REASON To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the details as approved.

- 3 The materials used in the construction of the development hereby approved shall be as set out within the application form / approved plans.
REASON To ensure the external appearance of the development is appropriate to the locality in accordance with policy D1 of the approved Local Development Plan and the guidance contained in the Maldon District Design Guide SPD.

APPLICATION PLANS

- 1000 Rev P02 - Location Plan
- 1100 Rev P02 - Existing Site Plan
- 1101 Rev P02 - Existing GA Plan - Ground Floor Plan
- 1102 Rev P02 - Existing GA - Roof Plan
- 1120 Rev P02 - Proposed Site Plan
- 1200 Rev P02 - Proposed GA Plan - Ground Floor Plan
- 1201 Rev P04 - Roof Plan
- 1300 Rev P01 - Existing GA Elevations
- 3000 Rev P04 - Proposed GA Elevations