

Application: 261796

Submitted by: Karen Robinson

Date: 10.08.2026

Comments:

I wish to object to application 261796.

I appreciate that this is a Section 73 application seeking to vary only **Condition 2 (Approved Details/Plans)** and **Condition 5 (Landscaping)** of planning permission 214108.

However, these are not simply administrative changes. In particular, variation of Condition 2 would substitute a substantial suite of revised drawings for those approved in 2022 and would thereby authorise a number of significant physical changes to the approved development.

My concern is therefore whether the cumulative effect of those changes remains acceptable, particularly having regard to the Green Belt and to the environmental and landscape benefits which formed part of the planning balance when 214108 was approved.

Condition 2 – Revised approved plans

The most important comparison is between the development approved under 214108 and that which would be authorised by the revised plans under 261796.

The approved scheme contained approximately **4,154 m² of internal floorspace**. The revised proposal contains approximately **5,246 m²**.

This is an increase of approximately **1,092 m², or 26.3%, over the development actually approved in 2022.**

The revised plans also include, amongst other changes:

- retention of approximately **685 m² of glasshouse** which was previously approved for demolition;
- an increase in the principal garden-centre building from approximately **3,000 m² to 3,261 m²**;
- an increase in the café/store from approximately **600 m² to 934 m²**;
- changes to the outdoor sales/canopy areas;
- retention of additional existing structures;
- revised servicing arrangements and use of the southern access; and
- associated changes to parking and the site layout.

I acknowledge that there are also changes which may reduce particular impacts, including a reduction in the height of the principal garden-centre building.

However, the changes need to be assessed **cumulatively**, rather than considering each alteration in isolation.

This is particularly important because the substantial reduction in built floorspace, footprint and volume formed part of the case for the development approved in 2022.

The approximately **58% reduction in floorspace** promoted in connection with the approved scheme would now be approximately **47.4%**.

The applicant understandably compares the proposal with the much more heavily developed historic site. However, because this application seeks to vary permission 214108, the Council should also clearly assess the revised development against **the scheme it actually approved in 2022**.

On that comparison, the amount of development is increasing substantially.

Condition 5 – Revised landscaping

I am also concerned about the proposed variation of Condition 5.

The approved Landscape Strategy contained a specifically identified **“Carbon Capture Managed Woodland”**, using Paulownia tomentosa and managed for carbon capture, timber/biomass and landscape screening.

The revised Landscape Strategy retains the title “Carbon Capture Managed Woodland”, but changes the planting to native trees and shrubs and introduces a different management regime.

I do not object to the use of native species in principle. My concern is whether the revised scheme provides an equivalent level of environmental and landscape mitigation to that which was approved.

In particular, the wording of the landscape strategy appears to have changed from maintaining **“screening to and from the site”** to maintaining only **“some screening”** while also providing **“some views into the site.”**

That difference should be considered carefully.

Woodland screening was specifically referred to when the 2022 application was considered as a means of reducing the visual impact of the development within the Green Belt. It is therefore important to understand why the screening objective is now being reduced at the same time as the revised plans would authorise a greater quantum of development.

Before varying Condition 5, I ask the Council to satisfy itself that the revised landscape scheme provides an appropriate and equivalent level of mitigation, including consideration of:

- the area and density of woodland planting;
- tree rather than shrub content;
- anticipated canopy cover;
- carbon sequestration; and
- the effectiveness of the proposed screening.

The continued use of the description “Carbon Capture Managed Woodland” should not, by itself, be taken as evidence that the revised provision is equivalent to that approved in 2022.

Allotments and revised servicing

The revised arrangements also reduce the allotment area to accommodate changes to the service track and yard.

The allotments formed part of the community and environmental provision associated with the approved scheme. The Council should therefore consider whether their reduction, together with the altered landscaping and increased development, changes the overall balance of benefits and impacts.

The revised servicing arrangements should also be assessed for their effects on landscape, neighbouring amenity, noise, lighting and vehicle movements.

Green Belt and cumulative impact

I recognise that the applicant now relies upon the current national planning policy position concerning Previously Developed Land/Grey Belt and that the application must be assessed against the policy framework in force at the time of determination.

Nevertheless, the 2022 permission remains an important baseline because 261796 seeks to vary that permission.

The issue is not simply whether the revised proposal contains less development than existed historically. The Council should consider whether the **additional development and reduced/altered mitigation compared with the approved 2022 scheme** remain acceptable in terms of Green Belt openness, landscape character and visual impact.

I also ask the Council to consider whether the cumulative changes proposed through Condition 2, together with the revised landscaping under Condition 5, are capable of being appropriately authorised through this Section 73 application.

Conclusion

I therefore object to the proposed variation of Conditions 2 and 5 in their current form.

Before determining application 261796, I ask Wokingham Borough Council to undertake a clear comparison between the **214108 approved scheme and the 261796 revised scheme**, rather than relying principally on comparison with the historic pre-2022 development.

In particular, the Council should be satisfied that:

1. the approximately **26.3% increase in floorspace over the approved scheme**, together with the retention and enlargement of other development, remains acceptable in Green Belt and landscape terms;
2. the revised carbon-capture woodland and landscaping provide appropriate mitigation for the enlarged development;

3. the reduction in woodland screening and allotment provision is properly taken into account;
and
1. the cumulative changes proposed through the variation of Conditions 2 and 5 remain within the proper scope of a Section 73 application.

These matters should, in my view, be resolved before the revised plans and landscaping are approved.

Just a quick screen shot below shows a huge change in size position and layout of the new buildings/canopy and the reduced carbon capture area.

Regards

Karen Robinson



new plans

HARE HATCH - SHEEPLANDS

