



DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Number:	203085
Site Address:	Ladds Garden Village, Bath Road, Hare Hatch, Wokingham, RG10 9SB
Expiry Date:	15 February 2021
Site Visit Date:	27 January 2021
Proposal: Full application for the proposed replacement of the roof and new cladding plus changes to fenestration on the main building; enclosure of existing café terrace and creation of new external café terrace and pergola; re-levelling of the external sales area and erection of a replacement covered sales area, plus demolition of existing structures. (Part Retrospective)	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Local Authorities
Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Heathrow Aerodrome Consultation Zone
Affordable Housing Thresholds
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Borough Parishes
Scale and Location of Development Proposals
GC Newt Consultation Zone
Green Belt
Ground Water Zones
Borough Wards
Radon Affected Area
Landscape Character Assessment Area
Local Plan Update Submitted Sites
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone
Ordinary Watercourses Consultation Zone
Listed Building Buffer Zone
Ordinary Watercourse

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand

	CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP12 – Green Belt CP15 – Employment Development CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB18 – Garden Centres and other small rural units outside Development Limits TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

The site as a whole has extensive planning history dating back to the 1970s. The most recent and relevant applications are outlined below.

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
34011	Regularisation of use of the existing horticultural holding to include the sale and display of landscaping materials and garden goods which are not produced on site	08.07.1992 Approve
CLU(E)78	Application For A Certificate Of Lawful Use For Sale Of Pet Animals And Pet Supplies	Approve 1 October 1996
A/1997/64922	Proposed Erection Of Non Illuminated Sign Boards	Approve 30 May 1997
F/1997/66895	Proposed erection of polytunnels canopy	Refused 24.02.1998
F/2000/1096	Erection of plant protection area	Refused 2 July 2000
AG/2002/6060	Proposed erection of a general purpose agricultural building	Approved 15.07.2002
AG/2002/2445	Application for advertisement consent for the erection of 2 non illuminated fascia signs	Refused

		22.01.2010
AG/2004/2613	Application for prior agricultural determination for the proposed erection for a multispan polytunnels	Approved 25.08.2004
F/2004/1044	Proposed erection of one multispan polytunnels (Retrospective)	Approved 19.07.2004
F/2009/1392	Erection of roof canopy to replace existing pergola	Refused - 09.09.2009
F/2011/2208	Front porch / pergola (Retrospective), proposed use of existing buildings as a birds of prey centre & erection of 177 sqm of display canopies	Approved - 05.03.2014
F/2012/2213	Proposed external car washing & valeting facility plus erection of cabin for customer reception & storage	Refused – 28.01.2013 App/X0360/A/13 /2195162 Dismissed

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received.

WBC Drainage – recommend approval subject to conditions requiring further drainage details.

WBC Enforcement – Works took place at the site prior to the application being received the application is therefore retrospective to include the unauthorised works requiring permission. This will regularise the unauthorised development - RFS/2020/085829

WBC Highways - No impact on the highway network, a demolition and construction method statement would need to be submitted, highways is content for this to be secured by condition

WBC Landscape and Trees – Recommend conditions CL5 - Landscaping Details (Large Scale); CL7 - Protection Of Existing Trees Etc (Small Sites)

WBC Ecology – Recommend CEMP if any further demolition works take place and recommend ecological enhancement condition.

WBC Heritage – No objections

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	Objection – impact on openness of Green Belt
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	<p>Summary of comments</p> <p>OBJECTIONS The key areas of which are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highways Safety 2. Lack of adequate parking 3. Contrary to purposes of Green Belt 4. Impact on protected species/wildlife 5. Loss of trees 6. Loss of community facilities 7. Flood Risk/inadequate drainage 8. Design not appropriate for Conservation Area 9. Landscape impact <p>SUPPORT The key areas of which are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compatible with purposes of Green Belt 2. Enhancement of existing facility 3. Benefit to economy and local area 4. Good design <p>These are addressed in the forthcoming report.</p> <p><i>[Officer Note: A number of issues raised below do not constitute material considerations in determining this planning application. These are not included in the above list but are summarised below for completeness.]</i></p>
Objections	
43 Chadwick Mews, Bracknell	Works are taking place before planning permission has been granted
12 Steggles Close, Woodley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting comments are not from local area. • Tenants are being thrown out with little notice • No respect for planning process
The Beeches, Woodley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt should be protected • The redevelopment has already ruined wildlife habitats and ignored Health and Safety regulations • Asbestos roof requires proper disposal • No need for another garden centre • Dangerous access onto road
Rosehill Lodge, Henley on Thames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already plenty of garden centres • Detrimental environmental impact
52 Gervaise Close,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants being removed during Covid is unbelievable.

Slough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parking for 86 cars and 60 staff taking up these. Not enough parking provided • A4 is a fast and dangerous road • 60 jobs to be provided, no information as to what these jobs are.
17 St. Chads Road, Cox Green, Maidenhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ladds requires updating but not at the detriment to the current tenants • Small businesses have been lost from this site • No enough parking provided • Trees have been felled which is against the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency • Wooden buildings removed with no consideration of ecology e.g. hibernating hedgehogs • Concreting over the Green Belt when the surfacing was previously gravel. • This hardstanding is also a flood risk
Wargrave Road, Wargrave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of play room facilities to the local residents. Next nearest is 7 miles away. Play room can accommodate children with disabilities. Loss of a community/recreational facility
52 Gervaise Close, Slough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encroachment into Green Belt • The area is a Conservation Area for wildlife hedgerows and trees. Significant loss of trees and hedgerows already taken place • The bespoke business on site was a valuable assets to the community. Removal of tenants during pandemic has resulted in business closures, job losses and losses to the community • Planning breaches and health and safety breaches should be investigated • Concerns relating to the asbestos roof • No need for another garden centre in the area
26 Vernon Drive, UB9 6EG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary development when other garden centres nearby • Building on the Green Belt with damaging effect on wildlife • Closure of local businesses which reside on the site
41B Plackett Way, Slough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disappointing removal of tenants particularly soft play for disabled children • Detrimental to health and wellbeing of children • Plenty of garden centres in the area
12 Suffolk Road, Maidenhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment in Green Belt not necessary • Works started prior to application submission • Blatant disregard for small businesses on site
Flat 3, Mayfield Avenue Road, Maidenhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of tenants disappointing, particularly soft play for special needs children – devastating for families
176 Westwood Road,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another garden centre is not needed

Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main entrance is dangerous onto A4 • Not enough parking provided • Excessive flooding on one of the car parks • Cladding is higher than original building • Not objecting to refurbishment but the lack of sympathy with the rural conservation area and the design of the proposals
4 Stowmarket Close, Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of tenants will cause loss of employment in a global pandemic
38 Binfield Road, RG42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of wooden buildings on Green Belt should be objected to as these are inkeeping with the environment • The cladding is higher than the existing frontage • Removal of tenants is a loss to the community • No need for another garden centre • Where are the new jobs coming from; a lot of jobs have been lost • Entrance to A4 is dangerous • Not enough parking
12 Steggles Close, Woodley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of tenants is disgraceful during the pandemic • Ecological carnage taking place at the site, owls and bats lost as the site change without any care • Disregard for health and safety • Asbestos removal unsafe • Disregard for planning laws
38 Binfield Road, Bracknell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No planning permission for site as Garden Centre • The nursery was respected as a Green Belt and Conservation Area site • Granary Group have no respect for the site • Trees are being felled • Another garden centre is not required • Loss of wildlife on site • Cladding is a fire hazard
Lynwood Village, 16 Cedar Lodge, Ascot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need for another garden centre • Dangerous access to A4 • Concrete has already been laid and trees felled
28 Newbury Close, Charvil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new buildings and encroachment beyond existing footprint of site • Damage to Green Belt
4 Munday Court, Binfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objections to design. Previous garden centre rural and timber. • Need smaller business units to serve the community • Do not need another Dobbies • Concern regarding demolition of buildings and loss of habitat e.g. hedgehogs • Concrete has been laid, running rural landscape

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dangerous access to A4 • Not enough parking - where will the staff park?
1 Southlake Cottage, Shurlock Row	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't need any more garden centres • Small independent businesses needed not national concessions
38 Binfield Road, Bracknell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of existing tenants does not serve the local community as it removes small independent businesses • Removal of soft play is a loss to the special needs community • Don't need another garden centre in this location • Entrance is dangerous onto A4 • Impact of demolition on hibernating hedgehogs – some buildings have already been demolished • Concrete has been laid and trees have been felled • The pond is a hazard and should be removed • Many health and safety issues at the site
63 Malone Road, Reading, RG5 3NL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works have started on site prior to planning permission granted • The site is in the Green Belt • Wildlife has been impacted by demolition of buildings • Another garden centre is not required • Established businesses have been removed from the site at the detriment to the community • Felling of trees taking place
15 Shepherds Hill, Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to remove local businesses and will affect local community
Langhams Way, Wargave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrary to policy CP12 • Detrimental effect on Green Belt • Impact on wildlife • No increase of employment as they have removed many businesses
Murdoch Road, Wokingham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need for another garden centre • Dangerous access on to A4 • Impact on Green Belt • Have concreted over the mains drain • Lies on the application • Small local tenants have been evicted • Impact on wildlife – hedgehogs, nesting birds and bats
64 Beechwood Avenue, Woodley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of tenants during pandemic is unacceptable • Loss of independent businesses detrimental to the community
20 Tottenham Walk, GU4 0YT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt land should be protected • Loss of local businesses
38 Colliers Way, Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will spoil the landscape

16 Watmore Lane, Winnersh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works have already started on site • The land is Green Belt and should not be built on • There is a coffee shop next door and a pub/cafè
107 Lowestoft Drive, SL1 6PB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt should be reserved for public use
43 Chadwick Mews, Bracknell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selfish and ruthless removal of existing tenants • No need for this business in the area.
Lynwood Village, 16 Cedar Lodge Rise Road, Ascot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt Land • Trees have been felled • New concrete walkway has been built • No need for another garden centre • No enough car parking • Cladding is higher than existing building • Café extension requires felling of two trees (already felled)
Bell Lane, 26 Bellsfield Court, Eton Wick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Object – no reasons given
3 The Palmer RG30 2SD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The owner is a disgrace
74 Clonmel Way, Burnham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of concern for Green Belt
Bath Road, Wargrave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need for another garden centre • This won't increase jobs or help economy • What about Phases 2 and 3?
15 Silverdale Road, Wargrave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of existing tenants/local businesses during a pandemic • Will severely impact our family due to the special needs soft play that exists here
Hurst Road, Twyford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees felled against Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency • Not advertising of the planning application • Large area of concrete laid in the Green Belt which was previously gravel/shingles • Contrary to policy CP12
1 Queensway, Maidenhead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objects to removal of tenants • Objects to works taking place without planning permission.
Support	
8 Nursery Place, Sevenoaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will improve unsightly dilapidated buildings • Support the Granary Group and their plans • Development will provide employment opportunities • Not a new garden centre but a re-development • Many garden centres locally but each provide a unique place to visit
11 Oxmead Close,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the application – no reasons provided

Cheltenham		
Two Hedges Road, Cheltenham		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the application – no reasons provided
Barons Cross, HR6 8RL		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family business improving the area Good to support local businesses in the current economic climate
Amwell Lane, St Albans		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great addition to the area Creating of new jobs and revenue
43 Guildford Road, Woking		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the application – no reasons provided
17 Greenfinch Close, Telford		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Granary Group and their plans Environmentally conscious Good community facility Creation of new jobs and a sustainable business
17a Two Hedges Road, Cheltenham		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the application – no reasons provided
Gemini Road, RG5, 4TF		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the expansion of the garden centre
Cornflower Way, GL3 4XJ		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solid redevelopment creating jobs which is important in the current economic climate
47 Tippets Mead, Binfield		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much needed investment of the site Creation of jobs and supporting the community Can't wait to shop here!
21 Battle Walk, BA1 9AX		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much needed redevelopment of the garden centre Benefit to local community and wider area
Westbury Road, GL53 9EN		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive redevelopment – current establishment is run down and poorly maintained, outdated and unattractive Will improve the aesthetics of the building Good community asset including garden centre and cafe
11 Mill Close, Henley on Thames		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will improve the garden centre
12 Oakley Close, Addlestone		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the application – no reasons provided
17 Norton Road, Woodley		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the plans particularly the café extension
2 Croft Cottages, Iver		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would be good for the area Great use of land and beneficial to the local community and area
77 High Street, Wargrave		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garden Centre needs updating

32 High Street, RG10 8BY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleased to see independent Garden Centre investing in the site Much needed improvement to the facilities
70 London Road, Twyford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the application – no reasons provided
5 Beverley Gardens, Wargrave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great asset to the area.
Mentmore, Parsonage Lane, SL2 3NX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking forward to the changes at Ladds
64 Beech Hill Road, Sunningdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathe new life into this community business
90 Highfield Park, Wargrave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great idea Building needs replacing
Drumellzier, The Loaning ML12 6TN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will result in an aesthetically pleasing store More environmentally friendly Improved community asset
Warren House, Scarlett Lane, Kiln Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visually enhance the untidy site In keeping with the Green Belt No information on how the new trees will be introduced and not shown on all plans Eviction of tenants is not relevant to the planning application and should be pursued by proper legal channels Disappointing that independent traders will leave but proposal overall benefit the area and improve the site

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is comprises a mixed use. The site comprises established garden centre (A1) and horticultural use with a sui generis use (Bird of Prey Centre) to the rear of the site. The site is accessed from the A4 with parking area (85 parking spaces) to the front of the site.

The site is located outside the settlement limits, within the Countryside and land designated as Green Belt. The site lies outside the Hare Hatch, Wargrave Area of Special Character the boundary of which abuts the western edge of the site.

Proposal:

The proposed development is for various alterations to the existing buildings in order to upgrade the existing garden centre/nursery business at the site. The development comprises the following:

1. Demolition of various buildings and structures within the 'outdoor sales area' to the south west of the main garden centre building and car park.
2. Removal of canopy on front elevation of main garden centre building and

- cladding the building ‘thermo wood with anthracite grey trim’
- 3. Replacement windows to main building
- 4. Replacement of roof of main building
- 5. Enclosing the existing “outdoor ‘café’ terrace” with a flat roof and thermo wood cladding walls.
- 6. Extension to rear of main building comprising a thermo wood clad ‘polytunnel’
- 7. Erection of raised terrace and pergola structure to west of main building
- 8. Alterations to levels and surfacing of outdoor sales area
- 9. Implementation of hard and soft landscaping within outdoor sales area.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located outside any defined settlement limits and is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and Countryside. As such, any development is ordinarily resisted. The principle of development is only acceptable following consideration on the Green Belt, countryside, character of the area and the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy and Policy TB01 of the MDD Local Plan provide guidelines for development within the Green Belt. Whilst Policy CP12 predates the NPPF, it is consistent with the national planning policy in prohibiting development that would be inappropriate in the Green Belt; inappropriate development includes development that would harm the open character of the area. This is reinforced by policy TB01 of the MDD which states that development must maintain the openness of Green Belt. Policy TB01 further clarifies the Local Plan position regarding development within Green Belt and states that *“Within the Green Belt, development for the purposes set out in the National Planning Policy Framework will only be permitted where they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt. The alteration and/or extension of a dwelling and the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling in Green Belt over and above the size of the original building(s) shall be limited in scale”*.

Policy TB18 allows for expansion of retail development outside development limits providing that the development is connected to the primary use and any commercial uses are ancillary to the primary existing use

The supporting text to this policy at 3.88 focuses on garden centre development and states *“Garden centre retailing has grown considerably within the Borough. The range of goods, services and facilities on offer at garden centres has diversified to include those not directly related to the primary purpose of garden centres. While uses that remain ancillary to the primary business of the site as a*

garden centre may be acceptable, it is important to ensure that the main garden centre use remains and that a separate commercial use is not established on site”

Green Belt

The NPPF stresses the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy being to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and the essential characteristic of Green Belts are their openness and permanence (para. 133). The NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (para. 143), and that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations (para 144). The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to certain exceptions (paras. 145 and 146).

The construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in Green Belt except in certain circumstances (para. 145). Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages,
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan;
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

The assessment of development within the Green Belt is twofold. It comprises an assessment of whether the proposal constitutes inappropriate development and whether the development impacts on the openness of the Green Belt.

Whether the proposal represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt

Paragraph 143 of the NPPF makes it clear that inappropriate development within the Green Belt is by definition harmful. The proposal meets exceptions (c) & (d) within paragraph 145 and can therefore be considered appropriate development within the Green Belt.

Impact on the openness of the Green Belt

Para. 133 of the NPPF indicates that 'openness' is an essential characteristic of

the Green Belt. The term openness is not defined in the NPPF, however given the lack of definition, it could reasonably be interpreted as the absence of built development. Openness can be harmed by (among other things) new built form, external storage, extensive hard standing, car parking and boundary walls or fencing. Landscapes are very important to the openness and amenity of the Green Belt. The visual impact on landscape forms part of the consideration of harm and is not just associated with views from public vantage points.

Openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt, and it is clear that openness should not only be viewed in its visual context, but also its spatial context. The presence of permanent built form where there was none previously is contrary to the intention of Green Belt policy, and therefore is harmful to the Green Belt. This view is supported by various High Court judgements. Screening does not negate the fact the openness of the Green Belt would be adversely impacted.

It has been outlined above that the proposed development does not represent inappropriate development in the context of the Green Belt. However, redevelopment of this site would only be acceptable providing there is no greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt than the existing buildings. Officers are of the view that, providing the applicant can demonstrate that the proposal would be similar in terms of volume of built form and footprint.

Many of the buildings and structures on the site to be demolished have been in situ since at least 2010 (see Google Earth aerial maps). These are therefore established structures and due to the passage of time are immune from enforcement action. Those within the red line, have been included in the below calculation. Structures for example hot tubs have been excluded from the below calculations as they do not constitute development.

	As existing	To be demolished	As proposed
Floorspace (sqm)	2583.2	749	2228.04
Volume (cubic metres)	10028.2	1888	9392.2
% change	-13%		-6%

Note: Calculations have been made based on floorspace and volume information submitted by applicant.

The proposal reduces the built form on the site in terms of both floorspace and volume. It is also noted that further buildings (outside the red line, but inside the blue line) are to be demolished (see building 54 Demolition Plan 9961 PL011 Rev B) further reducing the built form on this site however this building has not been included in the above calculation. The proposed development is consolidating the built form on the site. The scheme would result in the 'greening' up of a site, move the built form away from the edge of the site and result in a lower volume of built development within the site.

The creation of one larger central building which will assist in reducing the spread of buildings and structures across the site as a whole which further assists in

reducing the visual impact of the development. On this basis, it is not considered that the proposal would not harm the openness of the Green Belt and therefore the proposal is considered to comply with paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

VSC therefore do not need to be considered.

Other principal considerations

There are many representations which note the changing tenants at the site; however, the way in which the owner wishes to run their business at the site is not a material planning consideration.

The proposed development is for extensions to the existing garden centre use and complies with the requirements of policy TB18. Furthermore, the proposed development is considered to contribute to and enhance an existing rural enterprise within the Borough and does not lead to excessive encroachment of development away from existing built form, the proposal is therefore considered to comply with the policy requirements of CP11 and is appropriate development within this Countryside location.

In summary, the proposed development is acceptable principle. The proposal is considered to constitute appropriate development within the Green Belt subject to all other material considerations.

Character of the Area:

Paragraph 170(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by '*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.*'

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high quality design.

The A4 is a main road which is heavily vegetated along the frontage and the buildings are set back from the road fronting the car park. The site trains sufficient space to the frontage to enable this landscape buffer to be reinforced with additional planting and maintain the character of the area.

The proposal would replace ad-hoc buildings, many of which have only gained lawfulness through the passage of time and respect the pattern and form of garden centre development along the A4. Although the main building is being extended, much of this is to the side and rear and with appropriate soft landscaping will have limited impact within the streetscene.

The cladding of the main building seeks to enhance the aesthetics and appearance of the building itself.

Overall, the proposal is considered to be appropriate in the context of policy CP3 and CP11 and will conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Due to the location of the development and considering the development comprises alterations to the existing established Garden Centre. The proposed development will have no detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. The nearest residential property to the site is The Hollies (56m from the site boundary) which is understood to be in the same ownership as the Garden Centre itself.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Highways Officer has offered the following comments on the application:

Whilst this proposal will have no impact on the highway network, a demolition and construction method statement would need to be submitted, highways is content for this to be secured by condition (CH8).

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum, and only used where they satisfy the following tests:

1. necessary;
2. relevant to planning;
3. relevant to the development to be permitted;
4. enforceable;
5. precise; and
6. reasonable in all other respects.

As a large proportion of the work is retrospective; the demolition and a large amount of the construction has already taken place (and the application is submitted retrospectively) it would not be necessary or reasonable to insist on a demolition and construction management plan.

The existing parking provision is stated as 85 spaces. There is no proposed change to the parking arrangements as part of this proposal. The application is for extensions and aesthetical changes to the building; the use of the site as a garden centre remains as existing.

It is noted that the representations raise issues regarding both highways safety and parking. There are no objections from the Highways Officer with regard to either highways safety or parking for this existing business, the application does not therefore warrant refusal on these grounds.

Flooding and Drainage:

The Lead Local Flood Authority has offered the following comments on the application:

“The development is in Flood Zone 1 according to the EA mapping. The main Garden Centre building fronts onto the car park and then to the rear several smaller buildings used for sales and storage purposes. There will be increase in impermeable area and we would have no objection to the principle of the development but as drainage details have not been provided and the existing drainage details has not been mentioned, we would recommend a suitable condition”

It is understood from the floorspace table above and the drawings that there will be a reduction in impermeable surfaces on the site (i.e. buildings) and the previously tarmacked sales area is to be finished in paving which is likely to be more permeable than the existing surfacing. A drainage plan (9961 PL014A Proposed Drainage Plan) has been submitted with the application, therefore, from a planning perspective, it would not be reasonable to impose the aforementioned condition for minor extensions/alterations to an existing garden centre site.

Landscape and Trees:

The site is located in the Countryside designated as Green Belt. The Bath Road is designated as a Green Route. There are no TPO trees within or adjacent to the site however trees to the front and west of the site contribute to the wooded character of the area.

The majority of the site at present consists of considerable areas of existing hard standing and a variety of structures which have been erected in an ad hoc manner over the years.

There are no objections to the proposed changes including the new café terrace and replacement of the covered sales area to the rear of the existing building as this will be balanced by the removal of a number of existing structures as shown on the demolition plan. These changes are not fundamentally different to the existing development on site and will therefore not have any additional impact on the wider landscape character than the existing development does at present.

There are a number of trees growing in this location and we will therefore need to understand how any new drainage system can be implemented without damage to the existing trees. The Drainage Officer has requested a drainage condition is included to provide further information on the drainage proposal, should be co-ordinated with a tree survey and arboricultural method statement to ensure that the existing trees adjacent to the site frontage can be retained as part the drainage proposals. This can be dealt with via conditions (CL5 and CL7).

As the application is made retrospectively and a large proportion of both the demolition and construction works have already taken place, it would not be reasonable to require a tree survey or arboricultural method statement to protect

the trees during the construction period. However, a landscaping condition should be applied to any approval to ensure there is enhancement to the landscaping at the site reduce any impact to visual amenity or impact on the wider character of the Countryside and the Green Belt.

Ecology:

The current buildings on site and the nature of the proposed works will be unlikely to lead to loss of a bat roost or a reduction in the local conservation status for bats (as a protected species group). The submitted Design and Access Statement has proposed installing bat and bird boxes within this phase of development. There is not sufficient detail in the current plans to secure this net gain but I propose that this could be resolved by an ecological enhancement condition

The WBC Ecologist requested a Construction and Ecological Management Plan prior to commencement of any groundworks and demolition works. However, it is noted from the Officer's site visit that the majority of demolition and construction work has already taken place at the site therefore the need for the mitigation measures during construction is greatly reduced. On this basis, it would therefore not be necessary to require a construction and environmental management plan in this instance.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	CA5; CB2; CL5; I12; I16; I17; I18; I37
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	26 January 2021
Earliest date for decision:	14 January 2021

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
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Date:	12/02/21
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