

Boyer

The Gardening Club Hare Hatch

Section 73 Minor Material Amendment
Planning Statement



REPORT CONTROL

Project:	The Gardening Club Hare Hatch
Client:	The Gardening Club
Reference:	25.1005
Document and revision number	Document No. IMS-F-18, Revision 3
File Origin:	Click to add file location.
Primary Author	GS
Checked By:	AJ

Issue	Date	Status	Checked by
1	03/07/2026	Draft	AJ
2	09/07/2025	Final	AJ

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Moondrop Ltd (also referred to as The Gardening Club Hare Hatch), ('the Applicant') to seek approval for a Section 73 Variation to planning permission ref: 214108 comprising minor amendments to the Site layout and approved plans, relating to the Site formerly known as Hare Hatch Sheeplands.
- 1.2 It is considered that the modifications proposed to amend the approved plans attached to the planning permission are not significant and do not warrant a new application.
- 1.3 The proposed variation does not introduce any substantial changes to the approved Site layout and continues to support the garden centre use. The application seeks minor amendments to improve the operation of the Site and continue to deliver the benefits associated with the approved development.
- 1.4 The amendments have been developed to facilitate the efficient and effective operation of the garden centre, responding to evolving operational requirements, particularly given the change in ownership, changing market conditions, and customer expectations. The proposed changes will enhance the functionality and efficiency of the development, supporting the long-term viability of the business while retaining the benefits secured through the original planning permission.

The Approved Development

- 1.5 Full Planning Permission for the redevelopment of the Site was granted (Ref. 214108) on 21 March 2022. The description of development was:

'Full application for the proposed redevelopment of existing mixed use site to a new garden centre with associated play area, allotments, reconfigured parking and servicing, landscaping and other associated infrastructure, replacement cafe, demolition of existing glasshouses, and retention of existing farm shop, site office/toilet block.'
- 1.6 A number of Conditions on the permission have been discharged either in full or in part, including: Condition 3 Phasing Plans; Condition 4 Species Enhancements; Condition 5 Hard and Soft Landscape (part); Condition 6 Landscape Management Plan; Condition 8 Construction Method Statement (part); and Condition 11 Proposed Access Plan.
- 1.7 The planning permission has been implemented. One of the glasshouses has been demolished and removed from Site (adjacent to the toilet block) and the access approved by Condition 11 has been constructed in accordance with the approved scheme. Other general improvements allowed for under the phasing plan have also taken place, including the erection of an undercover area to the north of the Site and the relocation of the main entrance into a glasshouse to improve security.

The Proposed Variation

- 1.8 The Applicant is seeking to make minor amendments, set out in full in Section 4 of this Statement, to the previously approved Site layout and building design by varying Condition 2,

which relates to the approved plans, as well as Condition 5 which relates to a specific landscape plan.

1.9 The description of development for which planning permission is sought is:

“Planning application under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) seeking variations of planning conditions pursuant to planning permission ref: 214108 to allow for amendments to approved plans listed within Conditions 2 (Approved details) and 5 (Landscaping).”

1.10 All other 22 conditions of the planning permission can be re-imposed without change. Therefore, the various pre-commencement/occupation requirements would fall to be approved in the same way as the existing Condition requirements, reinforcing that the proposals do not materially alter the planning consent.

1.11 This Application is accompanied by the following document updates:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement (ADDENDUM)(ref: M07.188(c).R.004A.)(July 2026))
- Biodiversity Impact Assessment (RSE_10426_L2_V1) (dated 3 March 2026))

1.12 Alongside this S73 application, the applicant is also looking to re-discharge Conditions 3 (Phasing), Condition 4 (Species Enhancements), and Condition 6 (Landscape Management Plan).

Structure of Planning Statement

1.13 The Planning Statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the context for the proposed development, including a description of the Site and the surrounding area;
- Section 3 describes the planning history of the Site that relates to this S73 proposal;
- Section 4 provides a description of the proposed variation and the conditions which are to be re-discharged for the application;
- Section 5 considers the relevant planning policy against which the planning application will be determined and assesses the proposals accordance with the framework;
- Section 6 provides an assessment of the proposed amendments to the original permission;
- Section 7 sets out and reasserts the planning benefits of the proposed scheme which is the subject of this S73 application; and
- Section 8 provides a summary of the application and conclusions.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

Site Description

- 2.1 The application site, as with the original permission, comprises the entire Site complex (including the southern fields) extends up to 3.57 hectares in size and has a frontage onto the Bath Road (A4), with access to the Site from London Road. The approved red line Site location plan can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 Prior to the implementation of the planning permission, the Site was occupied by six glasshouses totalling 9,280 sqm; outdoor plant area/canopies; a farm shop with butchers and fishmongers, a café, an administrative building with customer toilets/showers, 201 car parking spaces (40 yet to be re-implemented), a service yard with service/storage building and an area of unused land to the north. There is also a field situated in the southern part of the site.
- 2.3 The boundaries of the Site are marked by hedgerow and fencing along the northern boundary and associated signage for the site. The eastern boundary is largely marked by hedging and fencing which abut the tree sales area and glasshouses along its length. The southern boundary is marked by hedging and trees along the field boundary. The access to the Site is on the south-western boundary with double metal gates which are closed when the Site is closed with hedging and lit signage.
- 2.4 Subsequent to the implementation of the planning permission, Phasing Plan 1, approved under Condition 3 (Application Ref: 250441) has been implemented. This has involved the removal of a glass house, the erection of an undercover area, relocation of the main entrance into the glasshouses etc.

Surrounding Area

- 2.5 The Site is located in an area known locally as the 'Floral Mile'. To the north of the Site (on the opposite side of the A4) Squires Garden Centre (formerly Dobbie's Garden Centre). To the west of the Site is Farol Ltd, garden machinery equipment suppliers on the opposite side of London Road. To the north east is the Berkshire Gardner (previously known as Ladds Garden Village).
- 2.6 To the south of the Site sits a residential property, Primrose Cottage, Primrose Nursery. Primrose Nursery has a series of small industrial units.
- 2.7 To the east of the Site are a number of residential properties which face onto the Bath Road, including Wakefield Cottages, stables and open fields, which are located to the immediate east of the site.
- 2.8 The Site is located approximately 10km from Reading to the east, 8km to the west of Maidenhead and 2.25km north east of Twyford/ Ruscombe and 1.4km south east of Wargrave. The Site can be accessed on foot from Twyford via a paved footpath along the London Road.

- 2.9 There have been no changes to the surrounding area subsequent to the grant of planning permission. It is noted that there is a planning application under consideration (Ref: 252257) at the former Ladds Garden Village for 19 dwellings.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 While Hare Hatch Sheeplands ('HHS') Site has an extensive planning history, the grant of planning permission for the new garden centre created a new planning chapter. Therefore, the planning history that relates to this S73 proposal is the subject planning permission (ref: 214108) approved in October 2022 and subsequent S74A discharge of condition applications (ref: 223527 & 250441). These are detailed below.

Full Application (Ref. 214108)

- 3.2 In December 2021, a Full planning application was submitted with the following description of development:

"Full application for the proposed redevelopment of existing mixed-use site to a new garden centre with associated play area, allotments, reconfigured parking and servicing, landscaping and other associated infrastructure, replacement cafe, demolition of existing glasshouses, and retention of existing farm shop, site office/toilet block."

- 3.3 The application proposal sought to enable the consolidation and redevelopment of the Site with a new garden centre structure and associated ancillary facilities, as well as wider landscape and biodiversity improvements to the site.
- 3.4 Planning permission was granted on 21 March 2022 and is subject to 25 conditions and a S106 legal agreement related only to an Employment Skills Plan.

Discharge of Condition Applications

- 3.5 To date the following conditions have been approved/part-discharged:

- Condition 3 Phasing Plans (subsequently amended)
- Condition 4 Biodiversity Enhancements
- Condition 5 Hard and Soft Landscape
- Condition 6 Landscape Management Plan
- Condition 8 Construction Method Statement
- Condition 11 Proposed Access Plan

- 3.6 Following the approval of planning application (ref: 214108), the Applicant sought to discharge the conditions of the full planning through the following application (ref: 223527):

"Application for submission of details to comply with Condition 3 (Phasing), 4 (Species Enhancement), 5 (Landscaping), 6 (Landscape Management Plan), 8 (Construction and Method Management Plan) and 11 (Vehicular Access) of planning consent 214108."

- 3.7 Conditions 3, 4 and 6 and 11 were approved in full, while Condition's 5 and 8 were partly discharged in relation to Phase 1 of planning permission 214108. This was approved on 23 February 2023.

- 3.8 A further application was later submitted (ref: 250441) to re-discharge Condition 3 relating to the phasing of the development:

“Application for submission of details to comply with the Condition 3 (Phasing) of planning consent 214108. The Council found the Condition to be acceptable in principle.”

- 3.9 The application was approved on 31 March 2025.
- 3.10 The phasing changes reflected how the new owner of the Site could continue operations through the demolition and construction period, to ensure the viability and stability of the business throughout. It would not be financially or commercially feasible to close the business during construction; therefore, the development will be brought forward in four Phases (Phase 1, Phase 2, Phase 3a and Phase 3b), generally across the Site from south to north, as allowed for by the permission
- 3.11 The latest key Phasing stage components are as follows:

Phase 1 – Approved Amendments

Implemented

- Temporary Uses Area in the temporary structure for existing and proposed uses during demolition and construction (including for retail, temporary cafe, stock/storage, construction office, etc).
- A temporary covered walkway / plant shelter to the north of the glasshouses;
- Servicing Area and Service Yard adaptations;
- Temporary entrance and exit into the Temporary Uses area (garden centre) to enable the Site to be secured;
- Frontage between the new access and the old farm shop shed structure fenced/secured to maintain safety and security;
- Temporary uses area for retained/ancillary uses, relocated existing uses and proposed garden centre uses (now in place);
- Deconstruction of one glasshouse shown in orange hatch on the Phase 1 Plan (replaced by the Temporary Uses Area); and
- Temporary Use Area for compost storage and sales.

To be Implemented

- Temporary construction access to the south of the main site;
- Temporary covered walkway and access to the farm to ensure continued during construction;
- Increase in area for glasshouse demolition in this phase to facilitate delivery of the new café and area of open space;
- Deconstruction of part of the remaining existing glass house shown in orange hatch on the Phase 1 Plan;
- Works in relation to the informal recreational field, with associated landscaping and biodiversity enhancements to be secured by Conditions 4 and 5;

- Works to relation to the eastern most section of the farm field to farm shop allotments/demonstration gardens and associated hard and soft landscaping; and
-
- Outdoor Covered Temporary Uses for retained/ancillary uses, relocated existing uses and proposed garden centre uses.

Phase 2

Phase 2 is yet to be implemented and will include:

- Erection of the new Café; shown in orange hatch on the Phase 2 plan;
- Works in relation to the cafe gardens and play area;
- Continued use of the Temporary Uses Area for retained/ancillary uses, relocated existing uses (to including the café) and garden centre uses;
- Continued use of the Outdoor Covered Temporary Uses for retained/ancillary uses, relocated existing uses and garden centre uses; and
- Continued use of the Temporary Use Area for compost storage and sales
- Temporary uses area for retained/ancillary uses, relocated existing uses and proposed garden centre uses;
- Outdoor Covered Temporary Uses for retained/ancillary uses, relocated existing uses and proposed garden centre uses;
- The Site will be secured through the provision of a temporary entrance along with a 1.8m high fence to secure the premise;
- Temporary covered walkway / Plant Shelter; and
- Area for servicing existing and service yard

Phase 3a

Phase 3a will include Amendments arising from Phase 1 but no other new changes:

- Demolition of glasshouse previously used as temporary use area.
- Relocation of temporary use into existing glasshouse (opposing recreational field.)
- Temporary covered access to be demolished.

Phase 3b – Completion Stage

Phase 3b will include:

- Erection of the new Garden Centre building;
- Deconstruction of the remaining glasshouses shown hatched in orange on the Phase 3b Plan;
- Removal of the covered canopy shown hatched in orange on the Phase 3b Plan;
- Removal of the existing store shown hatch in orange on the Phase 3b Plan;
- Works in relation to the western part of the farm field to farm shop allotments/ demonstration gardens and associated hard and soft landscaping; laying out of the car parking and servicing area;
- Landscaping of the carbon capture managed woodland;
- All other associated works; and

- Transition of Temporary Use Areas into the Garden Centre (while keeping the business operating) and which may extend pass the opening of the Main Garden Centre Building.

S106 Agreement

- 3.12 In addition, there was a S106 agreement which was attached to the original planning permission in 2022 with a single obligation for either an Employment Sills Contribution be paid to the Council or an Employment Skills Plan to be agreed. The previous owner elected to submit and agree an Employment Skills Plan which was submitted and approved by the Council on 21 November 2022 and is triggered by commencement on the Main Garden Centre Building.
- 3.13 Should the Employment Skills Plan not be implemented a payment of £15,0000 index linked is due to be paid, however the calculation is based on the anticipated build cost of the approved garden centre building. Any change in proposals that result in a change to the overall build cost and the associated payment under the Employment Skills Plan schedule may require updating accordingly in light of these proposals.
- 3.14 The Employment Skills Plan has not yet been implemented but will so prior to the occupation of the Main Garden Centre building.

4. PROPOSED VARIATION

- 4.1 This Section 73 Minor Material Amendment planning application seeks to vary the full planning permission and to amend the approved plans referenced under Condition 2 (Approved details), and Condition 5 (Landscaping).
- 4.2 The description of development is as follows:
- 4.3 *“Planning application under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) seeking variations of planning conditions pursuant to planning permission ref: 214108 to allow for amendments to approved plans listed within Condition 2 (Approved Details) and 5 (Landscaping).”*
- 4.4 Condition 2 (Approved Details) is now proposed to read as (see deletions in ~~strike through~~ and additions in red):

*“This permission is in respect of the plans numbered **M07.188(c).D.011 Rev B, M07.188(c).D.012, M07.188(c).D.016 Rev A, M07.188(c).D.017 Rev A, M07.188(c).D.018 Rev A, M07.188(c).D.019 Rev A, M07.188(c).D.020 Rev A, M07.188(c).D.021 Rev B, M07.188(c).D.022 Rev B, M07.188(c).D.009 Rev D, RSE_10426_BIAP_0226_V2R1 and RSE_10426_L2_V1, M07.188.D.017 Rev K, M07.188.D.018 Rev D, M07.188.D.023 Rev K, M07.188.D.024 Rev H, M07.188.D.025 Rev G, M07.188.D.026 Rev B, M07.188.D.027 Rev I, M07.188.D.029 Rev E, M07.188.D.030 Rev B, M07.188.D.031, 21.103-001, Rev A, RSE_5316_BIA Proposed Rev V1 and RSE_5316_BIA Baseline Rev V1**, all received by the Local Planning Authority on [INSERT DATE RECEIVED]. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.”*

- 4.5 Condition 5 (Landscaping) is now proposed to read as:

“Prior to the commencement of each phase of the development hereby permitted, details of hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Hard landscaping details shall include, as appropriate, car parking layout, pedestrian and cycle access and circulation to the A4 (including any directional signage), hard surfacing materials and minor structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse, ancillary sheds, signs, external services, etc) and areas assigned for external storage of materials, plant, machinery, containers, equipment and any items for retail sale. Soft landscaping details shall include a planting plan, specifications, schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

*The scheme of landscaping shall be in line with the submitted BIA Proposed Habitats Plan ~~Habitats with enhancements~~ (**Drawing: RSE_10426_BIAP_0226_V2R1, dated 24/02/2026**) (~~Drawing: RSE_5316_BIA Proposed, revision V1, November 2021~~) and demonstrate habitat and hedgerow biodiversity net gain of at least 10%.*

All hard and soft landscape works, including the woodland planting in the north western corner of the site, shall be carried out in accordance with the phasing details approved under Condition 3 of this permission. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.”

- 4.6 All other conditions on the approved Decision Notice will remain unchanged and a number of other conditions will be re-discharged in accordance with the updated plans and reports.
- 4.7 The proposed amendments have been driven by a detailed review of site’s operational requirements and consumer behaviours following a change in ownership subsequent to the grant of planning permission in 2022, together with a need to enhance the long term viability, efficiency and sustainability of the business.
- 4.8 All the changes are considered to fall within the scope of Section 73.

Summary of Changes

- 4.9 The minor amendments which this S73 seeks to make are illustrated in the **Appendix 1** and include:
 - Amendments to the design of the Main Garden Centre building, including a beneficial reduction in the overall height of the structure, revisions to the approved roof form to replicate the existing and incorporation of the farm shop structure;
 - Reorientation of the approved canopy structure to extend along the northern facade of the main Garden Centre building rather than projecting northward, set further back from the site’s northern boundary and the A4, together with a minor increase in the outdoor sales area resulting from the change in landscaping to a native planting scheme;
 - Amendments to the layout of the gardens & children’s play area and associated outdoor amenity areas;
 - Proposed retention of the existing 685sqm glasshouse (previously proposed for demolition) located in the south-eastern corner of the Site to be used for ancillary horticultural purposes;
 - Increase in total GEA of buildings from 4154sqm to 5246m3, which still remains significantly below the existing Site GEA of 9973sqm;
 - Main service yard to retain existing ancillary covered goods-in area (previously proposed for removal) and reconfiguration of southern service yard and permanent provision of associated access to the south of the existing glasshouses (as temporarily approved under Condition 3 Phase 1);
 - Reduction in car parking from 283 to 272 spaces, while retaining the same approved EV charging, accessible parking, motorcycle parking and cycle parking provision.

Amendments to the Main Garden Centre Building

- 4.10 A principal change proposed is a substantial beneficial decrease in height and volume of the Main Garden Centre Building and alterations to the roof form. This amendment seeks to ensure the development is more in keeping with the character of the surrounding area and the existing structures on Site.
- 4.11 The proposed amendments seek to reduce the height of the main building from 6.6m to 5.4m and alter the roof form from three roof pitches to a traditional venlo system, which features narrow, distinct spans with multiple, lower but steeper pitches, which optimizes light penetration.
- 4.12 The roof structure will now comprise of glass instead of metal cladding but will still be able to accommodate a larger number of PV panels as a renewable energy source.
- 4.13 The glazed feature entrance will be retained on the western elevation of the building, and the majority of the western principal elevation will be clad in timber material reflective of the agricultural context. While a small area of the eastern elevation will be clad in timber material, the rest of the eastern elevation and the southern and northern elevation will be clad in composite metal material. There will also be glazing where the café/store sits at the southern end of the building. The composition of materials proposed is the same as what has already been approved in the original application.

Incorporation of Retained Farm Shop into Main Garden Centre Building

- 4.14 Following a review of the existing operations of the site, it has been identified that the former farm shop building performs poorly in terms of energy efficiency and accessibility and no longer adequately supports the operational requirements of the business.
- 4.15 As such, the opportunity has been taken to consolidate the retail elements on the Site within a single building structure, which will also result in a beneficial reduction in height in the structures on the Site. The proposed amendments will support the continued operation of the farm shop enterprise, which remains an important component of the wider business offering.
- 4.16 The approved new Main Garden Centre Building will therefore be extended to cover the area currently occupied by the farm shop structure, following its removal, to accommodate the combined retail functions and achieve a more efficient floorspace area.

Table 4.1 *Proposed Variation – Farm Shop Building and New Plant and Garden Centre Floorspace Area Changes*

Building Type	Existing GEA (m2)	Approved GEA (m2)	Proposed GEA (m2)	Change from Approved (m2)
Farm Shop Structure	386	386	0	-386
Main Garden Centre Building	0	3,000	3,261	+261



Total	386	3,386	3,261	-125
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- 4.17 As demonstrated in Table 4.1, the increase in the size of the approved Main Garden Centre Building is 261sqm by consolidating the retail uses, but with an overall reduction of 125sqm. The consolidation will also see a reduction in height from 6.6m to 5.4m by incorporating the former farm shop building into the Main Garden Centre Building, with an associated reduction in volume.

Outdoor Plant Area Reconfiguration

- 4.18 Following the approval of the original application in 2022, the Applicant has undertaken a detailed review of the various components of the business, with particular focus on the business and consumer sales of outdoor plants, which constitute an important component of the overall trading activity.
- 4.19 The external plant sales area will be located in the same area as that of the approved Site but is proposed to be extended further north towards London Road. An appropriate native plant species buffer of broadleaf woodland will be maintained along the northern boundary, containing the development within the Site, replacing the previously proposed Paulownia which was noted to be out of place and potentially invasive in the original application WBC landscape consultation response.
- 4.20 There are also changes proposed to the outdoor canopy area, which will increase by 474m² from 750m² as approved to 1,224m². However, the outdoor canopy area will be set back further from London Road than previously permitted, now extending across the entire width of the northern elevation of the Main Garden Centre Building (as partly already erected under the approved Phasing Plans). There will be a slight increase in height of the proposed canopy area intended to optimise natural light, improve air circulation, and to accommodate for larger stock such as mature trees and tall shrubs.

Retention of Existing Horticultural Glasshouse

- 4.21 It is proposed retain the existing 685sqm glasshouse (previously proposed for demolition) located in the south-eastern corner of the Site which will be used for ancillary horticultural purposes including 'growing' and 'growing on' of seasonal bedding plants in particular.
- 4.22 The greenhouse will be located adjacent to the new Café. The retention of the structure will also provide a 'barrier' between the play area and the adjacent property on the boundary. A new glasshouse link structure is proposed between the Main Garden Centre Building will be created to ensure suitable and covered access to the proposed retained glasshouse. This will be controlled as staff only access which will not be attainable to the general public.
- 4.23 From an operational perspective, the continuation of in-house horticulture within this greenhouse will support the seasonal requirements of the business. This capability is important to the business's commercial strategy and its ability to meet consumer demand effectively in peak periods.

Reconfigured Service Yards and Access to Secondary Service Yard

- 4.24 Following a review of the day-to-day operational management of the Site as well as security, together with an assessment of the current arrangements for transferring plants and goods via both larger and smaller vehicles, the proposed amendments seek to retain the existing goods-in area in the main service yard, which covers an area of 139sqm.
- 4.25 This change is necessary to support the operational requirements of a modern garden centre, where operators typically require large volumes of stock to be delivered to Site in bulk and put in a covered goods-in area to protect it from the elements, before being distributed around the garden centre. Such deliveries enable the operators to maintain product availability and meet customer demand.
- 4.26 The secondary service yard area to the south will primarily serve the café and farm shop, allowing for daily smaller deliveries of food and fresh produce for example from local suppliers. It is proposed that this would be relocated further south and increased in size to allow for easier vehicle manoeuvring and would be served by the temporary access (approved under Condition 3 Phasing Plan 1) which is proposed to be made permanent. The access would run adjacent to the existing residential property, Loggers Leap, before turning eastwards, running parallel to the fields and farm shop allotments to serve the secondary yard. The access road would be situated entirely within the footprint of the eastern glasshouses and would extend southwards.
- 4.27 By reviewing the approved secondary service yard access which was previously taken from the front of the garden centre and re-evaluating the design has enabled the potential conflict between vehicles and users on the Site, to be resolved.

Café with Integral Store

- 4.28 The proposed café will be located in the same position as that approved to the south of the Main Garden Centre Building. Given the operational requirements of the café, a store room to service the café is required (as with most cafés). In line with the changes proposed to the Main Garden Centre Building, the ridge height of the café area will be reduced from 4.7m to 3.8m, and the venlo roof will be incorporate multiple roof pitches.
- 4.29 The floorspace of the café with store will increase from 600sqm to 934sqm, a 334sqm increase.

Children's Outdoor Play Area Layout and Amenity Area

- 4.30 The approved community children's play area will continue to be provided on the Site with the same facilities, albeit with a slight reconfiguration and improved access arrangements.
- 4.31 The proposed changes seek to improve the connection between the café and other external amenities. A key feature of this proposal is the introduction of direct access to the gardens and play area from the café via a newly constructed raised terrace and an accessible ramp. The new design serves two principal functions. Firstly, it creates an environment that facilitates enhanced parental supervision of the play area from the café's seating area. Secondly, it provides a practicable and accessible solution to tackle the change in levels

which characterises the southern part of the Site rather than relying on the sloped access path from the main car park.

- 4.32 To ensure appropriate amenity for users, trees planting will screen the play area on the western edge to screen the secondary service yard with further planting on the southern boundary with an informal southern connection will also continue to be retained that leads to the informal recreational field. The existing ancillary horticultural greenhouse, proposed to be retained will be situated on the eastern edge of the area.

Parking Strategy

- 4.33 As a result of retaining the existing goods-in and an associated extension of service yard, a total of 11 car parking spaces are proposed to be lost, however this will also ensure enhanced safety of movements of HGV vehicles within the service yard and reduced risk of conflicts with pedestrians at crossing points.
- 4.34 The total number of spaces within the Site will therefore be reduced from 283 spaces to 272. This includes the retained provision of the approved 91 overflow car parking spaces to the north of the Site to be provided on permeable grasscrete surfacing.
- 4.35 The approved Travel Plan (under Condition 13) will monitor the garden centres car parking requirements, and it is anticipated that on peak days, such as spring bank holidays, staff parking can be provided within the service yard with deliveries managed to enable this to happen, maximising customer parking availability.
- 4.36 It is proposed that the following commitments will be retained:
- 28 EV parking spaces;
 - 24 accessible and secure bicycle parking spaces; and
- 9 motor-bike parking spaces.

Re-discharge of Conditions 3, 4, and 6

- 4.37 Alongside this Section 73 submission, the applicant is seeking to re-discharge three of the pre-commencement planning conditions attached to the previous permission.
- 4.38 The following Conditions will be re-discharged with updated plans and documents in accordance with the original condition wording:
- Condition 3 (Phasing Plans)
 - Phasing Plans to be amended in accordance with the proposed variations and updated plans (see updated Phasing Plan Drawing refs: M07.188.D.023, M07.188.D.024, and M07.188.D.025)
 - Condition 4 (Species Enhancement) and Condition 6 (Landscape Management Plan)
 - Revised Landscape and Ecological Master Plan (LEMP) and Landscape Strategy submitted in accordance with the proposed variations and updated plans (Drawing/Document Ref: M07.188(c).D.009 Rev D and M07.188(c).R.001A LEMP)

5. PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 This section considers the relevant planning policy against which the planning application will be determined and assesses the proposals accordance with the framework.
- 5.2 Section 38 of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.3 The statutory development plan against which the planning application will be determined comprises the Core Strategy (2010) and the Managing Development Delivery Document (2014).
- 5.4 Alongside the Local Plan policies, Wokingham Borough Council has adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
- 5.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and advice set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are also material considerations in the determination of the planning application.
- 5.6 The planning status of the application Site has fundamentally changed through the grant of planning permission for a garden centre use under the October 2022 planning permission. The Site is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt but is considered Previously Development Land (PDL).
- 5.7 Since the original approval, the Site has also changed in respect to its new Grey Belt status. Revisions to the NPPF in 2024 marked a significant shift in Green Belt Policy, introducing the concept of Grey Belt and thereby reclassify underutilised or poor quality Green Belt land that contributes poorly to Green Belt purposes. Grey Belt land is defined in the NPPF as:

“land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey Belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”
- 5.8 Purpose (a) of the Green Belt seeks to check the unrestricted spiral of large built-up areas, (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another., and (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. The Site does not strongly contribute to any of these purposes.
- 5.9 Paragraph 155 goes on to indicate that the development of Grey Belt sites should not be regarded as inappropriate in the Grey Belt, subject to a number of criteria:

“a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;

c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and

d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below."

- 5.10 The Site and the approved development meets the applicable criteria. The planning status of the land has now changed from prior to the approval both in terms of use and Green Belt status. The purposes of the Green Belt across the plan area will not be undermined. There is an unmet need for the development, as proven in the original application submission supporting documentation and the Site is in a sustainable location within walking distance of Twyford, a Tier 1 Major Settlement and is served by bus stops within the immediate vicinity of the Site, a matter considered in the determination of the original application.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING ISSUES

- 6.1 This section provides an assessment of the proposed amendments to the original permission against relevant legislation, the policy framework set out in Section 5, and any other material considerations. The assessment demonstrates that the proposal remains consistent with the previous permission and does not represent a substantive change to the approved permission.
- 6.2 The section also summarises the findings of technical matters, including a Biodiversity Impact Assessment Proposed Habitat Plan (which is submitted to reflect the updated scheme to be referenced in the new Condition 5) and an updated Landscape Plan on which the BIA Habitat Plan is based (and will be submitted under a separate condition discharge (conditions 4&6), which should be read alongside other application documents.

Legislation and Scope of Section 73

- 6.3 An application can be made under Section 73 (s73) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to make a material amendment by varying or removing conditions associated with the planning permission.
- 6.4 The Government's PPG sets out that there is no statutory limit on the degree of change permissible to conditions under s73, provided that the resulting permission remains consistent with the operative part of the original planning permission.
- 6.5 The proposed amendments sought as part of this application are not considered to fundamentally alter the original planning permission and will deliver a garden centre development with associated facilities, as per the original scheme. The proposals are therefore substantially the same as originally envisaged and as a result fall to be considered under S73.
- 6.6 The proposals will require the variation of specific plan references as set out in Conditions 2, & 5. All of the other 23 Conditions can be re-imposed without change and some are required to be re-discharged in any event. Therefore, the various pre-commencement / occupation requirements would fall to be approved in the same way as the existing Condition requirements, reinforcing the fact that the proposed amendments can fall to be considered under S73.

Principle of Development

- 6.7 The principle of a garden centre (retail) use with associated facilities has already been established through the 2023 planning approval.
- 6.8 While the Site is located within the Green Belt, as indicated in Section 5 of this Statement, the Site constitutes Previously Developed Land (PDL) and under the NPPF (2024) (which was published post the issuing of the original decision) the Site also constitutes Grey Belt by virtue of meeting the tests. The Grey Belt Assessment of the Site is addressed fully in the section below.

- 6.9 The proposed amendments which will see a reduction in the overall height and volume of the Main Garden Centre Building and other design changes, including the incorporation of the retained farm shop into the Main Garden Centre Building, are considered beneficial changes to the proposed development.
- 6.10 The proposed retained ancillary elements that will result in additional floorspace include the retention of the existing goods-in store in the main service yard as well as the retention of the existing glasshouse to the south-east for ancillary horticultural purposes (a use appropriate in the Green Belt in any event). New floorspace proposed relates to the glasshouse link. It is considered that these elements would also be considered as appropriate development in the Green Belt under Paragraph 154 (g) being infill as well as under clause (h) (iv) the re-use of buildings. Further to which, under Paragraph 155 the development would also be considered appropriate being commercial development within the Grey Belt.
- 6.11 For clarity, set out in Table 6.1 is a summary of the proposed changes in terms of floorspace:

Table 6.1 Existing, Approved (214108) and Proposed Floorspace – Buildings & Structures Comparison Table.

	Existing at time of 2023 Application	Approved	S73 Proposed	Difference (Approved/Proposed)
Office Block	168m ²	168m ²	168m ²	0m ²
Farm Shop Structure	386m ²	386m ²	0m ²	-386m ²
Main Garden Centre Building	0m ²	3,000m ²	3,261m ²	+261m ² (+8.7%)
Goods In Store to be retained	139m ²	0m ²	139m ²	+139m ²
Café with Store	0m ²	600m ²	934m ²	+334m ² (+55.7%)
Existing Glasshouse to be retained	0m ²	0m ²	685m ²	+685m ²
Link Structure	0m ²	0m ²	59m ²	+59m ²
Total	9,973m ² (Incl. other structures)	4,154m ²	5,246m ²	+1,092m ² (+26.3%)

- 6.12 Compared with the approved scheme, the overall building footprint has increased from 4,154sqm to 5,246sqm, representing a 26.3% increase. Notwithstanding this change, the proposed amendments would still deliver a substantial reduction in floorspace compared with

the existing development on the Site at the time of the original application in 2022. The proposed scheme would reduce built sqm by 4,727sqm relative to the existing development, equating to a 47.4% reduction. This is only 10.6 percentage points less than the 58% reduction in floor area secured through the approved scheme.

- 6.13 The approved development would result in a reduction of approximately 12,020.34m³ from the existing building and structure volume of 33,747.26m³ across the Site. Taking account of the buildings proposed to be retained, together with the substantial reduction in height of the garden centre shop and café/store extension, and removal of the farm shop building, the amended scheme would result in a reduction of 11,544.19m³ compared with the existing development. This represents an increase of only 476.15m³ (2.19%) in volume relative to the approved scheme.

Table 6.2 Existing, Approved (214108) and Proposed Volume – Buildings & Structures Comparison Table.

Indoor	Existing	Approved	S73 Proposed	Difference
Total	33747.26m ³	21726.92m ³	22203.07m ³	+ 476.15m ³ (+2.19%)

- 6.14 The proposed amendments would therefore continue to deliver significant reductions in both building volume and footprint when compared with the existing development. Furthermore, the reduction in the height and massing of the principal building and removal of existing tall farm shop building will lessen the visual prominence of the built form within the Site and impact on the wider Green Belt.
- 6.15 As a result of the evolving needs of the business, the increasing demand for high-quality plants, and the need for additional space to adapt plant varieties in response to changing consumer preferences, the plant canopy and outdoor plant area as approved has been reviewed and revised.
- 6.16 It is proposed to increase the plant canopy from 750sqm to 1,224sqm, representing an increase of 474sqm, and to expand the outdoor plant sales area from 1,250sqm to 1,731sqm, representing an increase of 481sqm. These amendments will provide the additional capacity required to enhance the range and quality of plants available for sale, while enabling the business to respond more effectively to seasonal demand and evolving market trends.
- 6.17 A 47sqm entrance is also proposed, projecting from the principal western elevation of the building. Modest in scale and height, the canopy will provide a sheltered and inviting entrance space, creating a more welcoming arrival point for customers.

Grey Belt Assessment

Defining Grey Belt

- 6.18 Grey Belt land is defined in the NPPF as “*land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey Belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.*”
- 6.19 It has already been established that the Site constitutes Previously Developed Land, and therefore by definition does fall within the of Grey Belt Land.
- 6.20 Nonetheless, an assessment has been undertaken to assess the Site against Paragraph 143 purposes (a), (b) and (d), which are repeated for reference as follows:
- a. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
 - b. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
 - c. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- 6.21 Set out below is our analysis of how the Site performs against the Green Belt Purposes (a), (b), and (d).
- 6.22 The Applicant has undertaken their own Grey Belt Review of the Site in line with the up-to-date Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on how should the contribution land makes to the relevant Green Belt purposes be assessed (Paragraph 005, Reference ID: 64-005-20250225). This is informed in part by the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) undertaken by KEDD Limited (dated November 2021) which was submitted as part of the original application.
- 6.23 The conclusions of the LVIA and the contribution of the proposed development to the assessment area purposes (a), (b), and (d) of the Green Belt are set out in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 Applicant’s Assessment Against Grey Belt Purposes (a), (b) & (d)

Purpose	Assessment	Contribution
(a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	PPG guidance is clear that this purpose relates to sprawl of large built up areas and that villages should not be considered as large built up areas. As such, the Council’s consideration that the parcel does not directly contain Twyford is insignificant, in so far as the village should not be considered as a large built up area. The Site is located a significant distance away from the nearest large built up areas of the towns Henley, Maidenhead, or Reading. As such, the Site makes no contribution to Green Belt Purpose (a).	<u>None</u>
(b) To prevent neighbouring towns	PPG guidance confirms that purpose (b) only relates to the merging of towns and not settlements.	<u>None</u>

merging into one another	The nearest settlement edge of the town of Henley-on-Thames is located approximately 4.7km north of the Site and is dissected by the River Thames. The settlement boundary of Maidenhead is also located 5.7km west of the Site and Reading is located at least 6.6km to the west. The Site is well contained by other development in the immediate area, known locally as the 'Floral Mile'. To the north of the Site (on the opposite side of the A4) Squires Garden Centre (formerly Dobbie's Garden Centre). To the west of the Site is Farol Ltd, garden machinery equipment suppliers on the opposite side of London Road. To the north east is the Berkshire Gardner (previously known as Ladds Garden Village). To the south of the Site sits a residential property and to the east lies a number of residential properties which face onto Bath Road. The Site comprises Previously Developed Land and does not form part of any discernible spatial or visual gap between Henley-on-Thames, Maidenhead, and Reading. The actual visual influence of both the existing site and activities and the proposed development is very small. It is restricted by a combination of existing and proposed Site peripheral vegetation, a relatively consistent flat topography around its immediate area where both surrounding structures and strong roadside and local area vegetation blocks prevent and / or restrict views of the Site.	
(d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The proposal does not form part of the setting of a historic town given Hare Hatch is a small village and the neighbouring settlement of Twyford is a historic pre-existing village and not a historic town. Furthermore, the Site's considerable distance from the surrounding towns prevents any meaningful visual, physical, or experiential connection to their historic character. As such, the contribution of the Site to Purpose (d) is 'Very Weak or None'.	<u>Very Weak or None</u>

6.24 From the assessment of the above tables, it is evident that the Site does not contribute strongly to Green Belt Purposes (a), (b) or (d).

6.25 Accordingly, the Site would meet the requirements of the first sentence of the Grey Belt definition as set out in Paragraph 143 of the NPPF (2024).

6.26 With regards to the second sentence of the Grey Belt definition, the Site does not fall within any of the protected designations identified under Footnote 7 of the NPPF, such as Sites of

Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or designated heritage assets. The Site is not located within a Conservation Area and does not comprise or directly adjoin any Listed Buildings or locally designated landscape areas.

Assessing Inappropriate Development

6.27 As set above, Paragraph 155 of the NPPF now confirms that commercial development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where it can be classified as 'Grey Belt' land and where clauses (a) to (d) are all fully addressed. For reference, these clauses are repeated below: “

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to Paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules'; and requirements set out in Paragraphs 156-157 below.”

6.28 It has been demonstrated that the Site meets the definition of the Grey Belt, and accordingly, the next requirement is to consider whether the proposed development (minor material amendments to the approved garden centre redevelopment) should be regarded as inappropriate. The following paragraphs set out the assessment of the proposed development against clauses (a) to (d) of Paragraph 155.

a) *'The site is grey belt' and 'Development of the site would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt'*

6.29 As assessed above, the Site Comprises Grey Belt land and makes a very weak or negligible contribution to Green Belt purposes (a), (b), and (d) of Paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

6.30 The Site is also Previously Developed Land, and development is very well contained within the Site itself. Therefore, the proposed minor material amendments are limited to the Site and therefore do not fundamentally undermine Purpose (c) of the Green Belt which is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The proposals also do not fundamentally undermine Purpose (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land, of which the proposals taken in the whole will achieve, as set out in the original application.

b) *'There is a Demonstrable Need for the Proposed Development'*

6.31 As set out in the original planning application and in Section 7 of this Planning Statement which sets out the planning benefits, together with the proposed amendments that are the subject of this application, delivers a significant range of planning benefits, demonstrating a clear and demonstrable need for the proposed development. These benefits include, but are not limited to: supporting the rural economy and the diversification of a long-established business; providing community infrastructure through a diverse range of retail facilities, a

children's play area, and garden-to-shop allotments for charitable use; and delivering employment and training opportunities through the agreed Section 106 obligations.

- 6.32 Importantly, the need for the development was fully considered during the determination of the original planning application. Furthermore, the redevelopment of the Site received significant support from the local community, as evidenced by the Planning Statement and Statement of Community Involvement submitted in support of the original application.

c) 'There is a Demonstrable Need for the Proposed Development'

- 6.33 As accepted in determining the original planning application, the Site is in a sustainable location within walking distance (20 – 25 minutes) from the Tier 1 Major Settlement of Twyford accessed along London Road, which is a paved and lamp posted. There is also a bus which operates hourly (Monday-Saturday) with a bus stop located on the northern side of A4-Bath Road with suitable pedestrian crossing points. It has therefore been sufficiently demonstrated that the Site maximizes sustainable transport solutions, complying with Paragraph 110 of the NPPF.
- 6.34 The village of Twyford offers an appropriate number of services and amenities as well as high quality onward transport connections via railway to London and Reading.
- 6.35 The sustainable location of the Site was a matter also considered in the determination of the original application. In meeting Paragraph 115 of the NPPF, the proposed development and amendments subject to this application continue to prioritise sustainable transport modes, ensure safe and suitable access, appropriate parking design, and will not result in any adverse impacts to the highway network.

d) 'There is a Demonstrable Need for the Proposed Development'

- 6.36 The NPPF 'Golden Rules' as stipulated in Paragraphs 155 – 158 are not applicable to the proposed development given that they relate to housing and not commercial development.

Grey Belt Summary

- 6.37 As demonstrated by the assessment above, the proposed development, including the amendments sought through this Section 73 application, does not constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Other Planning Matters

Character of the Area

- 6.38 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. This is reinforced in the Borough Design Guide SPD, which focus on retaining the character of the area and ensuring that servicing is suitably screened.
- 6.39 The substantial reductions in height of the Main Garden Centre Building by 1.2m and the removal of the taller farm shop structure will further enhance the character and appearance of the Main Garden Centre Building and surrounding area. The new venlo roof form is

consistent with typical garden centre structures, and the retained glazed entrance will continue to appear as an attractive and inviting façade. No changes are proposed to the cladding materials agreed as part of the approved scheme.

- 6.40 The layout of the development has been carefully reconsidered to reflect the changing operational requirements of the business, but to continue to ensure the minimum necessary amount of development is proposed.
- 6.41 The Site layout will remain in general conformity with the approved plans. While it is proposed to retain the existing goods in store and the existing greenhouse, the impact of increase volume is substantially compensated by the reduction in height of the Main Garden Centre Building, farm shop structure and café/ store.
- 6.42 The retained goods-in store in the main service yard is minor has been refurbished so that it is fit-for-purpose to serve its intended use.
- 6.43 The retained glasshouse is one of the smaller of the existing glasshouses and is positioned in an unobtrusive location in the south eastern corner of the Site. By constructing a glasshouse link to connect to the Main Garden Centre Building, the glasshouse will appear as a visually cohesive structure.

Sustainable Construction

- 6.44 As set out in the Design and Access Statement Addendum, the new buildings on the Site will continue to be energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions, and the updated redevelopment scheme will continue to implement the same sustainability and energy strategy as originally envisaged.
- 6.45 The new roof form is still able to accommodate the number of solar panels required to generated 10% of the predicted energy requirement from the development from decentralised renewable energy and low carbon sources, as required by Condition 9 of the planning permission.
- 6.46 The roof space area available for solar is 1044sqm, which is a 21sqm increase from the approved to the proposed scheme. As such, there will be no changes in this regard as the scheme is still expected to deliver a reduction in CO2 emissions across the Site.

Landscape

- 6.47 Through its design, the proposed amendments have sought to reduce any landscaping impacts by following agreed principles set for mitigation and enhancement measures as part of the approved scheme.
- 6.48 In meeting the operational requirements of the business, additional hardstanding is proposed in the southern area of the Site which will provide suitable and safe access for smaller delivery vehicles accessing the southern service yard area via the new single track access road. Whilst this has been identified as a necessary addition to the scheme to allow the efficient flow of goods for the café and farm shop, the road will be sited on existing hardstanding which currently supports the existing glasshouses. Accordingly, when

considered in the context of the wider Site, the proposal results in a modest change to the level of retained hardstanding and does not give rise to any net increase or new hardstanding provision.

- 6.49 Furthermore, and importantly, the changes proposed to the approved Site layout do not fundamentally undermine the landscape strategy on the Site which will continue to significantly enhance Green Infrastructure in accordance with MDDL Policy CC03. The proposed amendments will not have a harmful landscape impact and will sit comfortably within the existing landscape character.
- 6.50 An updated Landscape Strategy (24/04/2025) has been submitted alongside this S73 submission, which provides acceptable details to re-discharge Condition 4 (species enhancements) and Condition 6 (Landscape Management Plan).

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.51 Condition 5 of the planning permission requires that a scheme of landscaping be in line with the approved BIA Proposed Habitats Plan and demonstrate habitat and hedgerow biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, with a specific plan drawing referenced.
- 6.52 As a result of the proposed amendments, an updated BIA Proposed Habitat Plan and statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Metric calculation have been prepared, and it is anticipated that Condition 5 can be updated to reflect the new drawing reference.
- 6.53 The supporting Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA), prepared by RammSanderson (ref: RSE_10426_L2_V1), confirms that the proposed amendments will result in a net gain of +1.56 habitat units (+19.09%) and a net gain of +4.04 hedgerow units (+1925.83%). The scheme therefore meets the requirements of Condition 5, and demonstrates that in respect landscape and biodiversity, the proposal does not represent a substantive change to the approved permission. Accordingly, the proposals accord with policies CC03 and TB21 of the MDDL.

Amenity

- 6.54 With regard to residential amenity, the proposed secondary service yard access is located adjacent to property, Loggers Leap. To ensure any potential impacts arising from the movement of smaller delivery vehicles are appropriately managed, the proposals include the installation of a new boundary fence and associated landscaping. These measures will provide effective screening to the property. Further to which deliveries will only be possible during opening hours when the gates to the Site are open.
- 6.55 Even with the provision of the new yard access along the western and southern boundary extents, there is unlikely to be any impact on Primrose Cottage to the south beyond the Site, particularly due to the Site boundary being heavily screened by trees and existing vegetation which are being retained as part of the Site's landscaping.

Servicing & Parking

- 6.56 The secondary service yard access has been designed to accommodate smaller vehicles with a carriageway width of approximately 4.4m and a grass verge of 2.2m. Traffic will be controlled via an automated traffic light system to avoid two vehicles crossing the access road at the same time. This will be controlled by the operations team.
- 6.57 In terms of parking and servicing, the proposed amendments will result in a reduction of 11 parking spaces in the main car park, resulting in a net reduction from 283 spaces as approved to 272 spaces. The need for these amendments is to improve safety around the approved service yard area and to reduce potential conflicts with service vehicles and customer parking areas.
- 6.58 The 272 parking spaces now proposed still exceed WBC's parking standards for garden centres at an allocation of 233 spaces (1 space per 14m²). The proposed amendments will also retain the same number of accessible spaces, cycle parking spaces, motorcycle parking spaces and EV charging points as previously approved. The Travel Plan will allow parking to be monitored and on peak days staff can park within the service yard.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.59 The proposed amendments would continue to decrease flood risk on Site and elsewhere, due to the reduction of impermeable area on the Site as well as the approved management of on-site risks in accordance with Policy CC09 of the MDDL P.
- 6.60 In terms of surface water drainage across the Site, the impermeable areas of the existing Site drain via drainage channels and perforated pipes to the drainage channel running between the glasshouses and the southern field. The perforated pipes serve to promote infiltration of the runoff as it is conveyed. Gravel and vegetated areas infiltrate naturally, and the new yard access area and associated hardstanding around the southern field will comprise of permeable surfacing.
- 6.61 As such, the proposed amendments will continue to decrease the impermeable area of the Site considerably reducing the rate and volume of runoff leaving the Site significantly. The existing drainage network of 300 mm perforated pipes will be able to cope better with the reduced Site runoff, and the off-site surface water flood risk will be reduced. Therefore, the proposed amendments will accord with the drainage strategy, and the overall risk of surface water flooding will be reduced when compared to the exiting Site and will reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere.

7. PLANNING BENEFITS

7.1 The original scheme with the associated Proposed Amendments which is the subject of this S73 application includes the following planning benefits:

- Significant removal of poor quality glasshouse structures and improvement of the built form;
- Significant landscape and Green Belt improvements;
- Significant improvements and a substantial net gain in biodiversity across the site;
- Economic Benefits to the rural economy and supporting the diversification of a long standing rural business;
- Meeting Customer Expectations;
- Community Benefits (including a mix of facilities, retention of facilities, children's play area, garden to shop allotments for charitable use such as Thrive or other local organisations);
- Employment and training;
- Operational improvements to the approved scheme;
- Viability and sustainability of the business and land use;
- The ability to compete with other local businesses;
- Enhancing a valued community facility; and
- Overwhelming Community Support for this Local Business.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The application is for the variation of an approved and implemented scheme for the redevelopment of Gardening Club Hare Hatch Garden Centre, formerly known as Hare Hatch Sheeplands.
- 8.2 The amendments sought as part of this S73 application include for:
- Amendments to the design of the Main Garden Centre building, including a beneficial reduction in the overall height of the structure, revisions to the approved roof form to replicate the existing and incorporation of the farm shop;
 - Reorientation of the approved canopy structure to extend along the northern facade of the main Garden Centre building rather than projecting northward, set further back from the site's northern boundary and the A4, together with a minor increase in the outdoor sales area resulting from the change in landscaping to a native planting scheme;
 - Amendments to the layout of the gardens & children's play area and associated outdoor amenity areas;
 - Proposed retention of the existing 685sqm glasshouse (previously proposed for demolition) located in the south-eastern corner of the Site to be used for ancillary horticultural purposes;
 - Increase in total GEA of buildings from 4154m² to 5246m³, which still remains significantly below the existing Site GEA of 9973m²;
 - Main service yard to retain existing ancillary covered goods-in area (previously proposed for removal) and reconfiguration of southern service yard and permanent provision of associated access to the south of the existing glasshouses (as temporarily approved under Condition 3 Phase 1);
 - Reduction in car parking from 283 to 272 spaces, while retaining the same approved EV charging, accessible parking, motorcycle parking and cycle parking provision.
- 8.3 Following the grant of planning permission, the new operator of the Gardening Club Hare Hatch, have identified a number of operational deficiencies in the approved layout. The proposed amendments will allow the business to operate viably.
- 8.4 The proposed amendments will deliver beneficial reductions in both building volume and footprint when compared with the existing development as at 2022 and should be regarded as minor changes in the context of the redevelopment proposals already approved.
- 8.5 The S73 application also responds to community needs by retaining and enhancing the facilities proposed, while continuing to support local employment and training.
- 8.6 Approval of the application proposals will allow for the timely delivery of the proposals through phasing including the delivery of a significant number of social, economic and environmental planning benefits that will flow from the development.

- 8.7 In conclusion, it is considered that the application should be duly approved and is therefore commended to WBC for consideration.