

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT

Application Ref: F/26/101180

Site Address: GARDEN CENTRE, WINCHESTER ROAD, FAIR OAK, EASTLEIGH, SO50 7HD

Case Officer: David Huckfield

Description: Provision of hardsurfacing for additional car parking and erection of single storey extension

Particular Site Constraints?	Yes ☒	No ☐
Outside of the Urban Edge Within Designated Countryside Within Flood Zone 1		

Relevant Planning History?	Yes ☒	No ☐
• Z/13732/003 Extension to car parking area PERMIT – 27/10/1978 • Z/13732/004 Use of land for sale and display of greenhouses and portable buildings and use of display building for office REFUSED – 27/07/1979 • Z/13732/005 Extension to car park and construction of new vehicular access PERMIT – 20/02/1980 • Z/13732/006 Erection of 4620sq. ft. glasshouse for horticultural purposes PERMIT – 03/12/1980 • Z/13732/007 Use of land as garden centre – to regularise the existing use PERMIT – 11/02/1982 • Z/13732/008 Erection of a single storey building to be used for retail purposes REFUSED – 29/07/1982 • Z/13732/009 Erection of a single storey building for retail purposes WITHDRAWN – 1982 • Z/13732/010 Use of buildings as barn, riding stables, warehouse and storage yard, glasshouse for lawnmower sales, café/office, leather craft, fish and aquatics, iron craft and lawn mower repairs REFUSED – 17/09/1985 • Z/13732/011 Erection of a single storey building for use as an office and horticultural store PERMIT – 06/02/1988 • Z/13732/012 Construction of car park and use of land for garden buildings display PERMIT – 11/07/1989 • Z/13732/014 Continued use of first floor as office REFUSED – 30/04/1991 • Z/13732/015 Outline: erection of covered sales area, extension to garden shop and erection of new sales buildings with associated car parking, improvements to access and landscaping following demolition of existing house and nursery buildings GRANT OUTLINE PERMISSION – 18/05/1992 • Z/13732/013 Regulation 10: Erection of radio aerial RAISE NO OBJECTION – 04/03/1993 • Z/13732/016 Retention of polythene canopies PERMIT – 28/09/1998 • Z/13732/017 Relief from conditions 2 and 9 of planning permission 13732/007 to allow for the sale of cold water and tropical fish – fish supplies – ponds and tanks and for the open storage of peat compost and soil improves PERMIT – 28/09/1998 • A/13732/019 Display of 1no. non-illuminated composite sign board on frontage CONSENT TO ADVERT DISPLAY – 28/09/1998 • A/13732/020 Display of 1no. non-illuminated composite sign board on frontage CONSENT TO ADVERT DISPLAY – 15/02/1999 • Z/13732/018 Application for certificate of lawfulness for an existing use for the manufacture, sale and display of wrought iron goods from a building CERTIFICATE ISSUED – 12/03/1999 • Z/13732/021 Extension to polytunnels and erection of covered walkway PERMIT – 06/08/1999		

- Z/13732/022 Variation to condition no. 3 of planning permission 13732/021 to allow for the display of pebble ponds, water pumps, tubs, gravel, slug pellets, pots, plant fertilizers and manure in extended polytunnels PERMIT – 22/11/1999
- F/15/77191 Single storey garden centre concession building following demolition of existing building and erection of retaining wall – PERMIT – 23/12/2015
- F/16/78956 Retrospective: Change of use of part of car park for hand car wash & valet service, siting of portacabin & erection of canopy & shed – PERMIT – 20/09/2016
- F/20/88608 Redevelopment of garden centre to remove redundant storage barns and provide new industrial storage unit, indoor + outdoor soft play, toilets, entrance and staff room, to include retrospective permission for two open sided canopies – PERMIT 26/11/2021

Site Visit?	Yes ☒	No ☐
A site visit was undertaken by the Case Officer to consider the proposals in context.		

Publicity:	Letters ☒	Site Notice ☐	Newspaper ☐
Representations:			
None received.			
Consultation Responses (Summarised):			
Fair Oak and Horton Heath Parish Council	Fair Oak and Horton Heath Parish Council wishes to make an observation regarding surface water drainage. The submitted information refers generally to disposal via a sustainable drainage system, but provides no detail on how surface water will be managed in practice. The site is located on high ground at Crowd Hill, where natural springs flow continually. Surface water is frequently observed running down Winchester Road, and Southern Water signage confirms this is a known issue rather than a burst main. The Parish Council is concerned that the introduction of additional hardstanding, replacing land that is currently able to absorb water, could exacerbate existing drainage problems. The Council considers that the scheme should demonstrate that surface water will be retained and managed entirely on site, and that the development will not add to existing off-site runoff or drainage issues. Further clarification and detail on proposed drainage measures would therefore be welcomed.		

HCC Highways	In regard to application F/26/101180, having reviewed the information contained within the application pack, there would be no objection to the proposals from a highway perspective. In terms of the extension to the building, it is understood that this will provide additional retain space, enabling an increase in choice of existing goods currently sold on site, and as such is considered a betterment of an existing facility for its customers, rather than a specific generator of an additional customer base and associated vehicle trips. It is also noted that the car park extension is simply a formalisation of an existing area of the site that provides car parking for staff, and as such it is not anticipated that the facility will specifically generate any additional trips on the local highway network. It is noted however that no plan of the proposed staff car park layout has been provided, and whilst it will not be open for public use, the applicant may wish to submit one for comment and checking. General details are that aisle widths should be a minimum of 6.0m to allow for easy movement in and out of the parking bays, and in accordance with the EBC Parking Standards, the parking bays themselves should be a minimum of 2.5 x 5.0m.
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Relevant Policy and Legislation:

Legislative Background:

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan:

The Development Plan comprises of the Policies of the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-2036. The following policies are of relevance to the application: S1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), S2 (Approach to New Development), S5 (New development in the countryside), DM1 (General Criteria for New Development), DM2 (Environmentally Sustainable Development), DM3 (Adaption to Climate Change), DM8 (Pollution), DM11 (Nature Conservation), DM13 (General Development Criteria – Transport), DM14 (Parking), DM18 (Extension and replacement of non- residential buildings in the countryside), DM21 (New retail development).

Other material considerations:

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):

The following SPDs and Background Papers are of relevance to the proposals:

- Parking Standards

National Planning Policy and Guidance:

The latest iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF or Framework)

was published in December 2024 and, as set out within paragraph 231, the policies contained within it are material considerations which should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication.

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides additional guidance in support of the policies within the Framework and is also a material consideration in the determination of the application.

Assessment:

Principle of development:

The application site lies outside of the urban edge and within designated countryside where Policy S5 seeks to restrict development to only that which is essential within a countryside location. This policy does however allow for the extension and replacement of existing authorised non-residential buildings in the countryside subject to the criteria of Policy DM18 being adhered to.

This policy states that extensions will be permitted providing that: a. the existing building is in lawful use and is not subject to a temporary permission; b. the extension or replacement building is for a non-residential use; c. the extension or replacement building would not have an urbanising effect on the countryside in terms of its density, scale, massing, layout and height; d. access, car parking, landscaping and services can be provided without having a detrimental impact on the character of the countryside; e. so far as possible the property is sustainably located in terms of accessibility by means of transport other than the private car; f. the extended building or its replacement would be located within the existing curtilage unless its relocation or extension would contribute to improving the character and quality of the local area; g. in the case of a replacement building, the proposal also includes the demolition of the building to be replaced; and h. the development would not by itself or cumulatively with other recently permitted schemes undermine the Council's strategy for the development of employment-related floorspace.

The existing garden centre has a lawful permanent use as authorised by planning permission Z/13732/007 and the proposed extension, which is for a non-residential use, would be situated within its existing curtilage. As the proposal is for the expansion of an existing use and is relatively modest in size, it is also not considered that it would by itself or cumulatively with other recent permitted schemes undermine the Council's strategy for development of employment-related floorspace. Subject to the proposals being acceptable in terms of design and layout, as well as in relation to their highway related and countryside impacts (which they is considered to be as covered in the sections below), there is deemed to be no conflict with Policy DM18 of the Local Plan.

It is also necessary, however, in this respect to have regard to the use of the development which will be for retail purposes (in the form of the sale of garden furniture). The provisions of Policy DM21 therefore apply. This policy seeks to focus retail development in defined town, district and local centres, with a sequential test being required where such development is proposed outside of these centres. In this case, however, and whilst no such test has been undertaken, the extension is to provide for improved facilities for an existing authorised retail use (a garden centre) which operates from the site. In addition, the extension is fairly modest in size, with it representing an approximate 13% increase in the floorspace of current garden centre. Providing, therefore, that the extension is used only for purposes that are ancillary to the existing garden centre (which the sale of garden furniture is considered to be) which can be covered by condition, the principle of the development is accepted and would not serve to undermine the viability or vitality of existing centres.

There are no concerns in respect of the principle of the re-surfacing and formalisation of the car park area which forms the other component of the development proposals. This

would provide for parking for the staff of the garden centre and is, to a degree, already in informal use for this purpose. Again, its usage moving forward can be covered by condition.

Design, layout and impact on the character of the area:

The proposed extension is comparatively modest in scale and size when seen against the extent of the existing garden centre building which it will adjoin. It is also complementary in design, appearance and external materials to the current structure, whilst its siting at the rear of the premises will notably limit any impacts on the public realm and prevailing character of the area and surrounding countryside.

In terms of the proposed car park, this area of the site due to its unsurfaced nature and present informal usage currently appears somewhat untidy, so its formalisation through resurfacing will visually tidy it up whilst also allowing for improvements in its functionality. The surfacing of the car park with porous paving (as opposed to simply tarmacking it) along with the addition of some perimeter landscaping which has been added to the plans during the course of the application process, will assist in breaking up the expanse of hardstanding and soften the visual appearance of the development from its surroundings. The final details of the landscaping measures will be covered by condition.

Taking account of these factors, the development is considered to comply with the requirements of Policies DM1 and DM18 of the Local Plan and is acceptable in design, layout and its impacts on the character of the area.

Residential amenity:

Due to the separation distance to the nearest residential properties, the development will not be unduly overbearing or adversely affect light, privacy or outlook for any neighbouring residents. Whilst the car park may lead to a degree of intensification of use in this area of the site due to its formalisation, this will not be to an unacceptable degree and will occur against the backdrop of the operations on the wider garden centre site which already include vehicular movements from visitors, staff and deliveries. It was also noted during the Case Officer's site visit that, whilst more informal and to a lesser degree, the area was already being used for purposes of overflow parking. It is not, therefore, considered that any undue noise or disturbance would arise from the development. Accordingly, the application complies with Policies DM1 and DM8 of the Local Plan in respect of the matter of residential amenity.

Highway matters and drainage:

The access to the site will remain unchanged and is considered suitable for the development. Whilst the site is not in the most sustainable location, the development is for a modest extension to an existing authorised use and, therefore, the more limited connectivity by sustainable modes of travel would not be deemed to be of sufficient weight to justify the refusal of planning permission in this case.

It is also not anticipated that the proposals will result in a significant material increase in movements on the highway network, with the extension providing for a betterment of facilities for the existing garden centre and the surfacing works formalising an area of car parking which is already currently used to some degree for this purpose as noted above. Accordingly, no objection has been raised by the Highway Authority in this respect and no planning obligations towards highway infrastructure have been sought.

In respect of the car park layout and in response to the comments of the Highway Authority, an updated site plan has been provided during the course of the application process with this being satisfactory in terms of aisle widths, car parking space dimensions and access arrangements. With regards to the matters raised by the Parish Council, these

plans also show the drainage arrangements for the car park which incorporates the use of a sustainable drainage system including porous block paving for the surface and a permeable sub-base. These provisions are considered suitable for the development and will be secured by condition.

Accordingly, the proposals comply with Policies DM6, DM13 and DM14 of the Local Plan in respect of the highway and drainage related impacts of the proposals.

Ecology:

The proposals would be subject to the *de minimus* exemption in respect of the mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements as the development will impact less than 25sqm of on-site habitat and not impact any priority habitat. Having regard to the nature of the development and the location of the application site, there are no other ecological concerns including in respect of the impacts of the proposals on European protected sites and, as such, the application complies with the provisions of Policy DM11 of the Local Plan.

Climate change:

In July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Change and Environmental Emergency. In doing so it agreed, among other things, to: (a) put in place measures to ensure the Council's own operations and functions achieve carbon neutrality; (b) work with partners to aim for all projects and services delivered in the Borough to achieve carbon neutrality; (c) ensure that the Council's procurement policy recognises carbon neutrality as one of its primary considerations; and (d) recognise the urgency of action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in every decision taken by the Council. This is underpinned by the Climate and Environment Emergency Strategy 2020–2030 and the supporting Climate and Environmental Emergency Action Plan – Update June 2020.

The declaration of the Climate Change and Environmental Emergency demonstrates a strong commitment from the Council to achieve net zero. The NPPF, development plan and adopted local plan policy do not set this as a specific target, but it is a material consideration to be considered alongside all other material considerations. In any case addressing climate change is a core part of the NPPF and local plan policy. The need to support the economy is part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted Local Plan, as is an assessment of climate impacts.

The NPPF supports economic growth and productivity with the aim of building a strong competitive economy, and Policy S2 of the Local Plan sets a target for 103,500sqm of new employment development to be provided within the borough over the plan period as noted earlier in this report. The NPPF, Policies S1, DM2 and DM3 of the Local Plan and the Council's adopted Environmentally Sustainable Development SPD require development to be sustainable in terms of resource use, climate change and energy use. Taking account of the nature of the proposals and the site context, the development is expected to be resilient to the potential effects of climate change.

Equalities implications:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:

- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When making policy decisions, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups. It is considered that this application does not raise any equalities implications.

Recommendation:	PERMIT subject to conditions
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