

Agenda Item 66.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
192244	19 December 2019	Wokingham Without	Wokingham Without

Applicant	The Owner and/or Occupier
Site Address	Heathlands Farm, Honey Hill, Wokingham RG40 3BG
Proposal	Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey extension to the east elevation of the existing soft fruit processing plant to provide additional space for automated processing and packaging
Type	Full
Officer	Simon Taylor
Reason for determination by committee	Major application (site >1ha)

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Monday 16 December 2019
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

SUMMARY
<p>Hall Hunter Partnership are the largest soft fruit producer in Europe, producing over 12,000 tonnes of fruit annually across a total of 566 hectares. Of this, 82 hectares is at the Heathlands and Birch Inhams sites on Heathlands Road with production including strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries and employment extending to over 400 permanent and 2,000 seasonal staff.</p> <p>The proposal comprises a 454m² extension to the eastern side of the existing packhouse, processing and packaging building and will include specialised processing plant dealing with grading, packing and labelling of soft fruits. It has been submitted concurrently with application 192245 for a similar extension on the western side of the same building, which is intended to be used for storage.</p> <p>The existing building has been expanded extensively and regularly and changed use since its original construction in 1962. Cumulatively, the proposed works across both buildings represent modest extensions to the existing building and will house existing materials and machinery that are currently stored outside of the building, thereby enabling a more ordered arrangement. The building is not readily apparent in views, if at all, from the public roadway and no objections were received from neighbouring properties or from internal and external consultations. The application is recommended for approval, subject to Condition 3 which requires consistency in building materials, Condition 4 which requires the removal of the extensions if the approved use ceases and Condition 6 which prohibits any mezzanine levels. Condition 5 also carries over from the most recent approval for the building in 2007, which was imposed to limit the amount of imported produce brought onto the site to ensure no adverse impacts arising from traffic movements.</p>

PLANNING STATUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside • Site promoted by owner for inclusion as residential land in the Local Plan update • Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (5km zone) • Bat consultation zone • Grade 4 agricultural land classification

- Contaminated land consultation zone
- Nitrate vulnerable zone (surface water)
- Farnborough Aerodrome consultation zone
- Heathrow Aerodrome wind turbine safeguarding zone
- Minerals consultation zone
- Adjoins non-classified road

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions and informatives:

Conditions

1) Timescale

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2) Approved details

This permission is in respect of the plans numbered 3852/4 and 3852/5, both dated July 2019 and received by the local planning authority on 28 August 2019 and plans numbered 3852/1A and 3852/2, both dated July 2019 and received 24 September 2019. 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.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3) External materials

Except where stated otherwise on the approved drawings, the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall be of similar appearance to those used in the existing building, unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.
Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3.*

4) Limitations of use

The extension hereby approved shall be used only for the storage, processing and/or packaging of agricultural or horticultural products and for no other purpose. The extension hereby approved shall not be used for any purpose other than those associated with the agricultural production on the farm and handling of imported produce. If the extension hereby approved should cease being used for

this purpose within the unit within 10 years from the date of substantial completion or first use, whichever is the later, then it shall be removed from the land, and the land shall be restored to its condition before the development took place within 3 years of the date that the use ceased.

Reason: The extension hereby approved would constitute inappropriate development in the countryside if it were not for the proposed use.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP11 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB21.

5) Imported produce

The extension hereby approved and in F/2007/1307 shall be used for the storage or packaging of agricultural or horticultural products primarily grown on site. Imported produce shall not exceed 540 tonnes in any one calendar year. Imported produce is defined as produce grown outside of Wokingham Borough Council. The applicant shall maintain records of produce imported to the site and make such records available to the Council within one month of any written request.

Reason: To prevent an over-development of the site that would result in additional traffic movements and parking demand.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

6) Additional floorspace

No additional floorspace, including mezzanine floors, shall be constructed within the extension hereby approved without prior written permission of the local planning authority.

Reason: To prevent an over-development of the site and to ensure adequate access arrangements and parking.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

Informatives

1) Legal agreement from F/2005/4929

HGV movements remain subject to an s106 agreement dated 10 March 2006 (in relation to F/2005/4929) which includes a lorry routing plan and prohibits the use of Honey Hill for HGV access.

2) Changes to the approved plans

The applicant is reminded that should there be any change from the approved drawings during the build of the development this may require a fresh planning application if the changes differ materially from the approved details. Non-material changes may be formalised by way of an application under s.96A Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3) Protected species

This permission does not convey or imply any approval or consent required under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for protected species. The applicant is advised to contact Natural England with regard to any protected species that may be found on the site.

4) Discussion

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

PLANNING HISTORY		
(Note: Applications relating to the subject building are highlighted)		
App Number	Proposal	Decision
104/1956	Conversion of dairy to farm living accommodation	Approved 13 March 1956
441/1956	Conversion of dairy to farmhouse	Approved 10 July 1956
PD/292/1962	Dutch barn	Approved 12 July 1962
R/245/1965	Implement shed and loose boxes	Approved 28 October 1965
O/149/1967	Conversion of annexe into staff living accommodation	Approved 31 August 1967
R/358/1967		Approved 26 October 1967
O/26/1969	New farmhouse (outline)	Approved 20 March 1969
610/1970	Additions and conversion of farmhouse roof to store	Approved 31 December 1970
1426/1971	Extension to farmhouse	Approved 30 December 1971
324/1972	Renewal of O/26/1969	Approved 11 May 1972
18700	CoU of farm buildings to agricultural workers dwellings	Approved 13 January 1983
30299	CoU of barn to residential	Approved 20 October 1983
33335	Potato and general store	Approved 8 June 1989
33620	CoU of farm buildings to residential	Refused 3 August 1989
36241	Replacement agricultural dwelling	Approved 24 October 1990
-	Appeal against conditions in 36241	Upheld 17 September 1992
36794	Conversion of reservoirs to fishing ponds	Approved 20 December 1990
41246	CoU of farm buildings to B1(c) use	Approved 1 September 1993
42282	Replacement dwelling	Approved 22 March 1994
42356	Temporary mobile home	Permitted development
FP/1994/2512	New dwelling	Refused 20 June 1994
43290	CoU of farm buildings to B1(c) use	Approved 12 October 1994
44381	Extension to agricultural building for storage	Approved 18 August 1995
44633	CoU of farm building to B1(a) use	Approved 4 September 1995
FP/1995/3839	Garage block	Approved 29 August 1995
F/2000/1295	Replacement dwelling	Approved 22 November 2000

F/2000/2161	Extension to horticultural unit for covered storage	Approved 14 September 2000
F/2001/3757	New dwelling (amendment to F/2000/1295)	Approved 18 May 2001
F/2001/5114	New dwelling (amendment to F/2001/3757)	Approved 14 December 2001
F/2002/5626	Replacement barn	Approved 15 April 2002
F/2003/0167	Replacement Class B1 building with access and parking	Approved 28 November 2003
F/2005/4929	CoU of horticultural packhouse to including handling imported produce and new HGV access	Approved 13 March 2006
AG/2006/6664	Storage area for pallets and packaging	Refused 25 January 2006
AG/2006/7068	Agricultural storage building	Approved 23 March 2006
AG/2006/7067	Winter storage reservoir (prior app)	Approved 3 October 2006
F/2006/8284	Extension to packhouse	Withdrawn 19 October 2006
F/2006/9473	Replacement conservatory to dwelling	Approved 20 February 2007
F/2007/1307	Extensions to packhouse with relocated loading bay	Approved 5 September 2007
CLE/2010/1310	Siting of 21 mobile homes for occupation of agricultural workers with bunds, fencing and drainage	Refused 18 August 2010
CLE/2010/1314	Siting of 12 mobile homes for occupation by agricultural workers with bunds, fencing and drainage	Approved 16 August 2010
F/2010/1326	CoU of agricultural land for over winter storage of vacant mobile homes	Withdrawn 7 December 2012
F/2012/0176	Solar PV panels to refrigeration unit	Approved 22 March 2012
CLE/2014/2769	Conversion and use of premises for Class C4 HMO	Approved 18 March 2015
153182	Earthworks to create reservoir (prior app)	Approved 23 December 2015
183529	Two storey side extension to dwelling	Approved 11 March 2019
191827	New agricultural building	Approved 15 October 2019
191645	Three agricultural workers dwellings with access to Honey Hill	Pending
192245	Extension to western side of packhouse	Pending

SUMMARY INFORMATION	
Site Area	40 hectares (approximate)
Existing land use(s)	Agricultural packhouse for soft fruit farm and handling of imported produce (industrial use with ancillary offices) within an agricultural farm
Proposed land use(s)	Class B1(c) light industrial (processing and packaging of fruit)
Existing floor space of building	2,981m ²
Proposed floor space of building	3,435m ² (increase of 454m ²)

Proposed floor space of building (inclusive of application 192245)	3,979m2 (increase of 998m2)
Parking spaces	No formal change to parking

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Ecology	No objection.
WBC Highways	
WBC Drainage	
WBC Environmental Health	
WBC Tree and Landscape	
Southern Gas Networks	
WBC Cleaner and Greener	No comments.
WBC Community Infrastructure	
WBC Planning Policy	
SSE Power Distribution	
National Grid	
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	
Crime Prevention Design Advisor	
Minerals and Waste	
Thames Water Utilities	

REPRESENTATIONS	
Wokingham Without Parish Council	No objection.
Local Members	No comments.
Neighbours	

APPLICANTS POINTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit B will link directly with the existing packhouse and will be largely screened on the west and northern sides by existing buildings and by hedgerows and earth banking to the south and east The scale of the proposed unit is compatible with adjacent buildings with the ridge level maintained below those of the adjacent buildings Provisions for protection of other species have been made in the immediate vicinity of the proposed buildings as part of the strong environmental awareness and creation of suitable habitats within the Heathlands Estate The proposal will meet the requirements of Building Regulations and provide for level access for disabled and wheelchair use The proposed building will be very similar to the existing packhouse and storage buildings with matching profiled roofing and cladding and blockwork plinths 	

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
	NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
Core Strategy 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP2	Inclusive Communities
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP8	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP11	Proposals Outside Development Limits

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC06	Noise
	CC07	Parking
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
Borough Design Guide	BDG	Section 4

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development

1. The proposal involves the construction of a 12.3m (w) x 36.9m (l) x 4.9m-6.1m (h) extension to the south eastern corner of the existing packhouse building that is currently used for the storage, processing and packaging of soft fruits and associated equipment. It will be positioned within existing hardstanding and will replace an existing temporary and lightweight polytunnel. It will be used to house specialised processing plant and will include a rear facing roller door.

Site Description

2. Heathlands Farm is a 40 hectare soft fruit farm (operating as part of a larger agricultural business) bounded by Heathlands Road to the west and Honey Hill to the east. It comprises a variety of buildings at the north eastern corner, including several residential dwellings for on-site workers, office buildings and car parking as well as the subject packaging and processing building and loading bay immediately to the south. Mobile homes for seasonal workers line the eastern boundary and the remainder of the site is comprised of polytunnels for fruit growing, reservoirs for water supply and trees, including along a significant length of the farm boundary.
3. The surrounding area is countryside and comprises a mixture of woodland and farmland and numerous non-agricultural buildings, including The Crooked Billet pub and some dwelling houses, including those interspersed along Honey Hill to the north and east and Squires Garden Centre and several office and commercial buildings along Heathlands Road to the west.

Principle of Development

4. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan 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.

Existing and proposed use

5. The subject building was first constructed as a barn in 1962 before being enlarged and converted to a potato store in 1989 (application 33335). Part of the building was changed to Class B1(c) light industrial in 1993 (application 41246) before a

formalisation of its use as a packhouse to include the processing, production and packaging of fruit, including imported produce from other farms and improved access to accommodate HGVs, in 2006 (application F/2005/4929). A further extension in 2007 (application F/2007/1307 included offices, cold store, additional packing space and staff mess room. It was subject to Condition 9 which limited the amount of imported produce to 540 tonnes in any calendar year in order to ensure that it did not result in excessive HGV movements and parking demand.

6. The subject application would expand on the existing industrial use by enlarging the processing and packing area of the packhouse building. There are currently items stored in the open in and around the storage bay, including pallets and packaging and this would likely allow for some internal storage, including as part of 192245. The continued unchanged use as light industrial (Class B1(c)) remains acceptable in the current context. However, given the two current applications (192244 and 192245) have a total area of 998m², Condition 5, which limits the amount of imported produce, is carried over from F/2007/1307 to ensure the continued management of traffic. It is noted that there has been no application to alter this aspect of the development as part of these applications.

Location with the Countryside

7. The site is located outside the settlement boundary and in the countryside and in order to maintain the quality of the environment, Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy does not permit development outside of development limits unless it represents a sustainable rural or recreational enterprise, where it does not lead to excessive expansion away from the original building and is contained within a building suitable for conversion.
8. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF also states that decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.
9. The proposal satisfies the requirements of Policy CP11 on the following grounds:
 - It involves the sustainable expansion of an existing business
 - The extension is modest in relation to the existing building
 - There is no excessive encroachment away from the existing building
 - It would be sited on existing hardstanding and would maintain the quality of the environment
10. It is also broadly consistent with the intent of Paragraph 83 of the NPPF as the business is clearly operating successfully, with continued business investment and high levels of permanent and seasonal employment.

Character of the Area

11. 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.*'

12. 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. NR1, NR2 and RD1 of the Borough Design Guide state that development should respond to and improve key characteristics and features of the site. Furthermore, NR9 states that large floorplates must be designed to minimise potential impact upon the character of the area and NR11 requires that servicing be screened
13. RD11 and Section 8.5.4 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states that extensions are acceptable where there is no impact upon the countryside and where there are environmental improvements. As a reference, a 50% increase in volume for a one storey development is acceptable when compared with the original building.
14. The existing building has been substantially extended and enlarged since its original construction in 1962 and the subject proposal results in the following increases in floor area and volume against the original and existing buildings:

	Footprint	Volume	Height	Width	Length
PD/292/1962 (Original)	137m ²	714m ³	6.1m	18.3m	7.4m
33335 (1 st extension)	800m ²	5,112m ³	7.7m	36.5m	25.4m
41246 (2 nd extension)	1,124m ²	7,438m ³	7.7m	54.5m	25.4m
44381(3 rd extension) ¹	1,867m ²	12,102m ³	7.7m	78.7m	37.9m
F/2000/2161 (4 th extension)	1,635m ²	9,865m ³	6.1m	54.5m	36.3m
AG/2006/7068 (5 th extension) ¹	2,111m ²	11,555m ³	4.4m	54.5m	8.7m
F/2007/1307 (existing)	2,981m ²	20,014m ³	5.8m	78.2m	68.4m
192244 (proposed)	3,435m ²	22,511m ³	6.1m	79.6m	68.4m
Inclusive of 192245	3,978m ²	25,231m ³	5.9m	79.6m	69.1m
% increase from original	2407%	3052%	0%	335%	824%
% increase from existing	15%	12%	0%	2%	0%
% increase from original ²	2803%	3433%	0%	335%	833%
% increase from existing ²	33%	26%	0%	2%	1%

¹ Not implemented

² Inclusive of 192245

15. Whilst substantial, the enlargements over the years are representative of the expansion and successful growth of the fruit farm. No objections have been raised in previous applications, with the exception of a prior approval where it was deemed that the extension would not satisfy the requirements of permitted development.
16. Relative to the existing building, the proposal represents a modest and measured extension. It is well contained on the eastern side of the building, with no increase in the overall length of the building, a ridge height that sits below the main ridge height and an existing earth bund screening its visibility and form in views from the east. The increases in footprint and volume are acceptable when accounting for its partially concealed location on the farm and its position within existing hardstanding and location amongst other buildings, leading to the conclusion that there is no excessive encroachment. More particularly, when acknowledging the continued growth of the existing business, the benefits from the scheme outweigh any apparent harm to the character of the area. Notwithstanding, Condition 4 requires the removal of the works if they are no longer used for their approved use.

Height

17. NR5 of the Borough Design Guide SPD note that height, bulk and massing should respond to the local context and NR7 requires that roofs be designed to the context of the area, including visibility. The existing building has a maximum ridge height of 7.8m and secondary ridge of 6.1m. The proposed extension will match the height of the secondary ridge (and eaves), which is a comfortable relationship and will not be imposing or out of character when viewed from surrounding vantage points.

Materials

18. RD7 and NR8 require materials, colours and details that are of high quality and respond to the distinctive elements of the locality. Materials include aluminium cladding, brickwork plinth, timber doors and a metal framed roller shutter. This broadly matches the materials of the existing building and there are no objections on character grounds or in terms of the building retaining an agricultural form and appearance suitable for the surrounding countryside. Condition 3 requires consistency in materials as confirmation.

Residential Amenities

19. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity. The nearest residential dwellings are 140m to the north and 230m to the south, which is sufficient separation to ensure no additional harm in terms of acoustic privacy, sense of enclosure or loss of light. On that aspect, the Council's Environmental Health Officer raised no concern on noise disturbance grounds.
20. Within the farm itself, there are numerous mobile homes for seasonal workers immediately adjoining the extension to the east and several other permanent rural workers dwellings to the north within 75m. However, given these are dwellings that are limited to on site workers only and these workers will likely be undertaking the noise generating activities within the extension and the wider farm, there is not perceived to be any long term residential harm and no objection is raised.

Access and Movement

Car Parking

21. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards. The extension measures 454m² in area and it is feasible that this will result in increased production and employment across the site, implying that there will be an increase in parking requirements.
22. No parking plan was submitted with the application but a review of the site indicates that there is formal parking for at least 50 cars across several separate parking areas. These spaces are used by office employees and farm workers. The building is used for agricultural storage and for processing and packaging but also includes offices and a staff room.
23. The extension would generate a maximum of an additional 18 spaces. However, the actual increase in demand for parking is likely to be significantly less as the

increase in employment generation would not correspond with the supposed increase in parking demand. Moreover, there is ample space within the site for formal and informal parking and because of the large numbers of seasonal workers that are housed on site, the Council's Highways Officer has not raised any objection on parking grounds.

Access and Traffic Generation

24. The extension to the building would likely allow for a more efficient operation and has the potential to result in an increase in traffic movements to and from the site, including larger HGV vehicles.
25. The farm is currently subject to an s106 agreement dated 10 March 2006 (in relation to F/2005/4929) which includes a lorry routing plan and prohibits the use of Honey Hill for HGV access. This would be maintained as part of this application and it is considered that the existing business currently operates without any wider disruption to traffic movements on local roads and the likely increases are not envisaged to alter this arrangement. As noted in paragraph 6, Condition 5 does not allow any increase in imported produce as part of this extension or that in 192245. On the basis of the above, the Council's Highways Officer also raises no objection.

Landscaping and Trees

26. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.
27. The site is in the Wokingham District Landscape Character Area N1 'Holme Green Pastoral Sandy Lowland', a landscape of moderate character and quality with a modest sensitivity to change. The key issues affecting the character area include the loss of hedgerows associated with the expansion of fields and the intensification of agriculture.
28. The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer notes that the building is located on existing hardstanding and because there are no impacts on any existing landscape features, no objection is raised.

Ecology

29. Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network.
30. The existing building is unlikely to host roosting bats and the hardstanding which on which it will be located is of no ecological value. As such, the proposal is unlikely to affect protected species or priority habitats and the Council's Ecology Officer raises no objections on ecological grounds.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

31. Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy states that where development is likely to have an effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA), it is required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.
32. The subject property is located within 5km of the TBH SPA but the scope of the works are minor whereby there will be no foreseeable impact upon the SPA. The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of Policy CP8.

Building Sustainability

33. Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD require sustainable design and conservation. The proposed works are of modest construction for agricultural related use and are considered to be acceptable on sustainable design grounds.

Waste Storage

34. The building extension will enable a more managed approach to storage of items and collection and disposal of waste. On this basis, no objections are raised and it is considered unnecessary to impose any specific conditions.

Flooding and Drainage

35. Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding. The site and access thereto is located within Flood Zone 1 and the proposal represents no additional flood risk or vulnerability.
36. Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow. The building will be sited on existing hardstanding such that there will be no increase in runoff, which will be directed into the existing drainage system for the existing building. The proposal is therefore acceptable.

Environmental Health

37. The area is listed as potentially contaminated on Council's inventory but primarily because of its agricultural use. As the extension is sited on existing hardstanding, there are no foreseeable contamination concerns and the Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection.

Community Infrastructure Levy

38. The application is not liable for CIL payments because of its agricultural use.

Employment Skills

39. Given the scale and form of the extension and because there is a cumulative floor area of less than 1000m², an Employment Skills Plan is not required.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

40. 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 the protected groups 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 upon protected groups as a result of the development.

CONCLUSION

41. The proposal represents a modest and appropriate extension to an existing packaging and processing building. It will enable the ongoing growth and expansion of a successful local soft fruit producer and contribute to some employment growth and there are no immediate adverse impacts upon neighbour amenity, the character of the area or highway movements. It is acceptable, subject to Conditions 4-6, which seek to limit the use of the building, require its removal if not used for its approved use, prohibit additional floor area and limit the amount of imported produce, all for traffic and character related reasons.

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