

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
193417	17/04/2020	Wokingham Without	Wokingham Without

<b>Applicant</b>	Martin Breddy
<b>Site Address</b>	Squires Garden Centre Heathlands Road Wokingham RG40 3AS
<b>Proposal</b>	Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey structure to form a kitchen with associated fridge/freezer unit plus extension of existing café terrace, installation of an infill canopy over rear entrance and erection of a new 2 metre high metal mesh fence to the southwestern part of the site boundary
<b>Type</b>	Full application
<b>Officer</b>	Baldeep Pulahi
<b>Reason for determination by committee</b>	Major application (site area > 1 hectare)

<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 11 March 2020
<b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>	Assistant Director – Place

<b>SUMMARY</b>
<p>The application site is located outside of settlement limits and is within the Countryside.</p> <p>The site is known as Squires Garden Centre on Heathlands Road and comprises a two storey building with pitched roof with green houses to the side and rear. There are two separate gates, one entrance and one exit, leading directly into the carpark and the surrounding area consists of a mixture of residential properties, commercial sites and Heathlands Farm to the east.</p> <p>The application seeks to enlarge the kitchen facilities associated with the existing garden centre café at the eastern side of the building and includes the erection of a single storey kitchen structure to the rear of the building with associated fridge/freezer unit, relocation and extension of the existing café terrace and enlargement of the internal restaurant space as well as the installation of an infill canopy over the northern/rear entrance to the retail part of the garden centre and erection of a new 2 metre high metal mesh fence to part of the southwestern boundary.</p> <p>The proposed alterations/additions are modest works with an acceptable volume increase which do not harm the character and appearance of the wider area and accord with local planning policy. No objections are raised by consultees, neighbours, the ward member or Parish Council. It is considered the proposal complies with the Council's Development Plan and is recommended for approval without any restrictive conditions.</p> <p>The application is before the planning committee as it is a major development as the red line site area is in excess of one hectare.</p>

<b>PLANNING STATUS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countryside</li> <li>• Farnborough Aerodrome consultation zone</li> <li>• Special Protection Area – 5 and 7 km</li> <li>• Groundwater protection zone</li> </ul>

- Landfill consultation zone
- Minerals consultation zone
- Nuclear consultation zone
- Contaminated land consultation zone

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:**

*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 submitted application plans and drawings numbered Existing Site Plan PL1901, Proposed Site Plan PL1902, Existing Elevations PL1903, Proposed Elevations PL1904, Existing and Proposed Elevations and Plan of New Fence PL1905, Existing Floor Plan PL1906, Proposed Floor Plan PL1907 and received by the local planning authority on 23/12/2019. 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 the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.*

3. Materials

The materials to be used in the extensions to the garden centre and the new boundary fencing are as specified on the approval drawings and application form

*Reason: To ensure the appearance of the building and fencing is satisfactory.*

*Relevant policy – Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3.*

4. Drainage

No construction shall take place until details of the drainage system for the site have been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include how the site currently drains and will be drained after proposed development with consideration to SuDS.

*Reason: This is so prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy Policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policies CC09 and CC10.*

## 5. Landscaping

Prior to the commencement of the development, there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a scheme of landscaping and boundary treatments and fencing, which shall include additional tree planting and a new hedgerow. The tree planting shall include species such as Oak, Scots pine, Hornbeam infilled where appropriate along the Heathlands Road frontage. The new hedge shall comprise native and mixed species found in the locality, including prickly plants such as Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Holly and planted to the rear of the tree screen. The boundary fencing is to be located behind the new hedgerow, consist of green mesh materials and comprise a 300mm gap between the bottom of the fence and ground level.

Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building(s). Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting (or within a period of 5 years of the occupation of the buildings in the case of retained trees and shrubs) die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species or otherwise as approved in writing by the local planning authority.

*Reason: To ensure adequate planting in the interests of visual amenity and to ensure the protection of existing trees and the free movement of wildlife through the site. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP7 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03, TB21 and TB23.*

### *Informatives:*

1. 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.
2. 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.

<b>RECENT PLANNING HISTORY</b>		
<b>Application Number</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Decision</b>
F/2004/1098	Proposed erection of a horticultural plant shade for the protection of plants & shrubs.	Approved 03/11/2004
153311	Four advertising signs and four directional signs	Approved 22/02/2016
161461	Full application for the reconfiguration of car park including formally laying out an additional 27 spaces and the relocation of compost area.	Approved 20/07/2016
192349	Application for advertisement consent for 4 no. non-illuminated directional hoardings and 1 no.	Approved 22/10/2019

	double-sided information hoarding at the accesses to the site onto Heathlands Road.	
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<b>CONSULTATION RESPONSES</b>	
WBC Environmental Health	No objections
WBC Drainage	No objections subject to conditions
WBC Highways	No objections
WBC Ecology	No objections
WBC Green Infrastructure	No comments received
WBC Landscape and Trees	No objections subject to conditions
WBC Cleaner and Greener	No comments received
WBC Sports Development (Planning Policy)	No comments received
South East Water	No comments received
Thames Water Utilities Ltd	No comments received

<b>REPRESENTATIONS</b>	
Wokingham Without Parish Council	No objection
Ward Members	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

<b>APPLICANTS POINTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new fence is proposed as the existing fence on the south west boundary is mostly missing and damaged- further to this it is a weak security area which encourages trespass and crime</li> <li>• The installation of a canopy is to cover the main entrance into the garden centre building as this area currently is not covered and is uncomfortable and unwelcoming for customers. The proposed canopy will match the existing canopies at the site.</li> <li>• The existing food preparation and pot wash facilities for the café/restaurant are inadequate and the restaurant staff are working in confined spaces not fit for purpose which can become unsafe and prevent staff from offering the best service</li> <li>• The proposed kitchen structure will accommodate efficient food preparation and separate pot wash facilities that will provide the staff with safer and better working environment.</li> <li>• To gain the lost café terrace space taken up the proposed kitchen structures it is proposed the café terrace will be extended approximately 7 metres to the south.</li> </ul>

<b>PLANNING POLICY</b>		
National Policy	<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	<b>CP1</b>	Sustainable Development
	<b>CP3</b>	General Principles for Development
	<b>CP6</b>	Managing Travel Demand
	<b>CP7</b>	Biodiversity
	<b>CP8</b>	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	<b>CP9</b>	Scale and Location of Development Proposals

	<b>CP11</b>	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	<b>CC01</b>	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	<b>CC02</b>	Development Limits
	<b>CC03</b>	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	<b>CC04</b>	Sustainable Design and Construction
	<b>CC07</b>	Parking
	<b>CC09</b>	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	<b>CC10</b>	Sustainable Drainage
	<b>TB18</b>	Garden Centres and Other Small Rural Units outside Development Limits
	<b>TB21</b>	Landscape Character
	<b>TB23</b>	Biodiversity and Development
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	<b>BDG</b>	Borough Design Guide

<p><b>PLANNING ISSUES</b></p> <p><b>Description of Development:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The proposal includes the erection of a single storey structure to form a new kitchen with associated fridge/freezer unit on the eastern side of the site plus the relocation of the existing café terrace (including a net reduction of 18m<sup>2</sup>), a 104m<sup>2</sup> increase in the restaurant seating area within the garden centre building and relocation of the soft play area.</li> <li>2. The proposed single storey structure would be 10.1 metres deep, 6.1 metres wide and 2.6 metres high The associated fridge would be 3.6 metres deep 2.4 metres wide and 2.1 metres high The freezer would be 1.8 metres deep 1.8 metres wide and 2.1 metres high The proposed single storage structure with the associated fridge and freezer would be constructed in materials to the match the existing café.</li> <li>3. The proposal also includes the installation of an infill canopy over rear entrance and erection of a new 2 metre high metal mesh fence. The infill canopy would be installed to cover an area between the main entrance and into the garden centre building. The proposed fence would be located on the south west boundary of the site. It would 2 metres high and would span across the boundary for 15 metres. The proposed fence would be constructed of mesh material and would be positioned behind the existing hedging on the boundary</li> </ol> <p><b>Principle of Development:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.</li> </ol>
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## Location in the Countryside

5. The site is located outside of settlement boundary and within the countryside. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy would not normally permit development proposals outside of development limits except where:
  1. It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the Borough or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes or promotes recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside and
  2. It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings
  3. It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion or in the case of replacement building would bring about environmental improvement or
  4. In the case of residential extensions does not result in inappropriate increases in scale from or footprint of the original building
  5. In case of replacement dwellings the proposal must
    - a. Bring about environmental improvement or
    - b. Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale for of footprint of the original building
  6. Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the reuse/replacement of an existing building
  7. Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with Policy CP9
6. In this case the proposal would contribute towards a sustainable rural enterprise within the borough and would not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.
7. It is also consistent with Paragraph 83 of the NPPF, which 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, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses and the sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

## Rural Retail

8. Policy TB18 of the Core Strategy states that proposals for the expansion of retail development outside development limits may be permitted where it is demonstrated that it is connected to or adjacent to the primary holding, it is economically related to the primary holding and is ancillary to the primary existing use and that there would be no adverse impact on the vitality or viability of retail centres, neighbourhood or village shops within the locality.
9. The proposal involves a 138m<sup>2</sup> increase in the café use, as a result of the kitchen extension and relocation of the soft play area into an existing storage area. The rest of the garden centre comprises of 1775m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace, 935m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor greenhouses and 675m<sup>2</sup> of storage and stock room. At 545m<sup>2</sup>, the café and soft play area represents 13% of the rest of the garden centre i.e. the garden centre buildings on the site, including of retail space, greenhouses and back of house which is comfortably within the scope of being ancillary. It also remains connected to the main garden centre use and would not pose any adverse impact upon the viability of other cafes in the locality, including in terms of the relationship with the

Holme Grange Craft Village, which includes Class A3 cafés. It would therefore be acceptable in terms of Policy TB18.

### Sustainability

10. Policies CP1, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy permit development where it is based on sustainable credentials in terms of the promotion of sustainable transport. The site is not sustainably located in terms of proximity to public transport. However, the increase in floorspace is modest and as it retains an ancillary form. Moreover, most customers visiting the café will have already visited the retail section of the garden centre and as such, there is likely to be a minimal increase in additional car movements.

### **Character of the Area:**

11. The site currently comprises a two storey building with pitched roof with greenhouses to the side and rear. There are two separate gates, one for entrance and one for exit, leading directly into the carpark.
12. The proposed single storage structure with the associated fridge and freezer would be located within the garden centre grounds at the rear of the site. As such, it would not be visible from the public highway. It is also modestly proportioned in terms of height and volume and in relation to the existing garden centre building. Therefore the development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the wider area.
13. The proposed infill canopy would be installed to cover an area between the main entrance and into the garden centre building. The design of the canopy would match the existing canopies on site and would not be visible from outside the perimeter of the garden centre, therefore there is no adverse effect on the character and appearance of the wider area.
14. The proposed fence would be installed on the south west boundary of the fence and would be positioned near but not on the boundary, being behind the existing trees and hedging on the boundary. The design of the fence (including height and materials, which is conditioned as green weldmesh) would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the wider area.
15. Notwithstanding this, the Council's Landscape Officer has recommended that the fence be screened by vegetation with a 100mm gap between the base of the fence and the soil. There are opportunities for the existing tree screen to be enhanced by new tree planting such as Oak, Scots pine, Hornbeam etc with a new native hedge to the rear of the tree screen with species found in the locality such as prickly plants such as Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Holly, with the fence behind. This would necessitate a minor change to the location of the fencing as part of the submission of a planting plan as a pre-commencement condition in Condition 4.

### **Residential Amenities:**

16. There are no immediate residential neighbours and there are no foreseeable amenity issues for neighbouring amenity and no objection is raised.

**Access and Movement:**

17. The indoors restaurant space will increase from 146m<sup>2</sup> to 250m<sup>2</sup> and the terrace seating will decrease from 117m<sup>2</sup> to 99m<sup>2</sup>. Overall, the seating area will increase by 86m<sup>2</sup>. There are also increases to the back of house kitchen area allowing for a more efficient kitchen arrangement associated with the café. Despite its ancillary nature of the café in relation to the main garden centre, this would represent an increase of 17.2 car spaces (at a rate of one space per 5m<sup>2</sup>).
18. The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection. There is an existing carpark to the western side of the garden centre consisting of 61 car spaces with an additional overflow carpark to the north, with the last enlargement approved by planning application 161461. The car park is sufficient to accommodate the likely parking generation of the café and existing demand. The additional floorspace relates to improved kitchen facilities as part of an existing café with an appropriate reallocation, rearrangement and increase in seating area. It is not envisaged that there will be any significant increase in footfall to the café, particularly given its ancillary nature and it is unlikely that it will result in any detrimental highway impact.
19. An existing delivery area is located to the eastern side of the garden centre, which is sufficient for delivery requirements. There are also no objections in terms of traffic generation with the existing access arrangements to Heathlands Road satisfactory.

**Flooding and Drainage:**

20. The development is in Flood Zone 1 and whilst there will be increase in impermeable area the Council's Drainage Officer has no objection to the principle of the development. As no existing and proposed drainage details have been provided such details are to be secured via a planning condition.

**Landscape and Trees:**

21. The site is located in the countryside and in Landscape Character Area N1 'Holme Green pastoral Sandy Lowland' a landscape of moderate quality and sensitivity and a modest capacity for change. The landscape strategy is for enhancement of the existing character. The key issues affecting the landscape in this area is hedgerow loss and decline in hedgerow management as a result of the loss of small farms. The recommendations are to conserve the remaining hedgerows as important wildlife habitats and landscape features and promote management of hedgerows as coppice with Oak standards to form future timber trees. Reinststate hedges in highly visible locations such as roadsides.

The Council's Landscape Officer raises no objection, subject to the aforementioned screening to the fence line, achieved via a Planting Plan secured via a planning condition. By ensuring that the fence does not extend to the ground, it would ensure that there is no adverse harm posed by groundworks on the root system of existing vegetation.

**Environmental Health:**

22. The area is listed as potentially contaminated on Council's inventory but given the minor scope of works, the WBC Environmental Health Officer has no objections to the proposal.

**Ecology:**

23. The site is located in habitat which matches that where bat roosts have previously been found in the borough and is surrounded by habitat suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats. However, the Council's Ecology Officer notes that it appears unlikely that the buildings would host roosting bats. Moreover, the habitats to be affected are of low ecological value and bats (and other protected species) are unlikely to be affected by the proposal and there are no objections on ecological grounds.

**Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area:**

24. 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. 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.

**Community Infrastructure Levy:**

25. The application is not liable for CIL payments because whilst it comprises additional retail floorspace, it is less than 100m<sup>2</sup> in area (The net increase of Class A floorspace irrespective of its specific use is 61m<sup>2</sup>).

**The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)**

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that 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**

The proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle as it would contribute towards a sustainable rural enterprise and would not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings within the countryside. The proposal would not have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the wider area.

No harmful impacts would occur in regards to highways, drainage, landscape and trees, and environmental health. Therefore the proposal is considered to accord with local and national planning policy and is recommended for approval.

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