

**LOCATION:** LONGACRES NURSERY, LONDON ROAD, BAGSHOT, GU19 5JB  
**PROPOSAL:** Erection of an attached glass house following part demolition of existing glass house for garden centre.  
**TYPE:** Full Planning Application  
**APPLICANT:** Mr De Kerckhove  
Longacres Garden Centre Ltd  
**OFFICER:** Duncan Carty

## 1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application site relates to a garden centre lying within the Green Belt. The proposal is to erect a glasshouse extension to the garden centre following the demolition of an existing glasshouse extension and four linked structures. The proposal would provide no overall increase to the floorspace of the garden centre, but would increase its height/mass.
- 1.2 The proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt because by virtue of the increase in size, it would have a limited harm on openness. However, as explained at Paragraph 9.3.4, there are very special circumstances that outweigh the harm.
- 1.3 With the limitations on the retail sales as proposed to be re-imposed for this garden centre extension, as set out in previous planning permissions (see planning history below), and no overall increase in retail sales area and building footprint, the extension is not considered to have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of local retail centres. In addition, there are no objections raised on highway safety or residential amenity grounds.
- 1.4 In view of the above, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and is accordingly recommended for approval.

## 2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site extends to 5.41 hectares and falls within the Green Belt. It is located on the north side of A30 London Road, east of the Camberley to Ascot rail line and immediately north of the roundabout junction with Grove End and Hall Grove School. The site is triangular in shape. Longacres Nursery is a well-established and large garden centre operation, which has gradually expanded over the years.
- 2.2 The existing site comprises a garden centre building with associated car parking to the front and retail sales and storage areas to the rear. There are warehouse and ancillary office buildings to the west of the main garden centre building. The existing garden centre has a floorspace of approximately 5,043 square metres. The main garden centre building had comprised of a series of co-joined glasshouses of different ages, but with the east wing and central atrium built more recently

replaced under permission SU/10/0291. The glasshouse to be demolished includes the oldest remaining part of the glasshouse structure.

## 5.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

The application site has an extensive planning history of which the following is the most relevant:

- 5.1 SU/93/0747 Continued use of glasshouses and polyhouses, other buildings and land for mixed nursery and garden centre purposes; retrospective consent for glasshouse extensions, formation of new access to London Road, closure of existing access, extension of and alterations to existing car park, construction of secure open storage area and access roadway within the site together with associated landscaping. Approved in November 1994.

Condition 11 of this permission states:

*“The development hereby approved shall be used for the retail sales of house plants and garden shrubs, trees, gardening sundries, including gardening tools and equipment and chemicals, garden associated objects such as statues, containers, garden furniture, landscaping materials, country craft produce such as dried flowers, baskets, greeting cards, Christmas trees and decorations, fresh flowers, wreaths and bouquets and for no other purpose...”*

- 5.2 SU/96/0658 Erection of extension to existing glasshouse following the demolition of existing glasshouses, polyhouses and sheds. Approved in September 1996.

*This relates to the front part of the structure to be replaced under the current application.*

- 5.3 SU/01/1283 Erection of an extension to main glasshouse building following the demolition of existing glasshouses. Approved in February 2002.

*This relates to the rear part of the structure to be replaced under the current application.*

- 5.4 SU/03/1044 Variation of Condition 11 of planning permission SU/93/0747 to widen the range of goods sold within the premises to include pet food/sundries, books, pottery, glass, clothing, toys and introduction of coffee shop. Approved in February 2005.

Condition 1 of this permission indicates:

*“No more than 15% of the total floor area of the existing main glasshouse building shall be used for the sale of goods the subject of this application and no more than 7% of the total annual retail sales of the Garden Centre, the subject of this application, shall compromise goods the subject of this application.*

*Pursuant to this condition details of annual retail sales are to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. Each year, no later than 31 January.”*

- 5.5 SU/10/0291 Erection of a glasshouse extension following the demolition of part of existing glasshouse. Approved in October 2010.

Condition 4 of this permission indicates:

*“Except for further retail sales allowed by Condition 5 below, the development hereby approved shall only be used for the retail sales of house plants and garden shrubs, trees, gardening sundries, including gardening tools and equipment and chemicals, garden associated objects such as statues, containers, garden furniture, landscaping materials, country craft produce such as dried flowers, baskets, greeting cards, Christmas trees and decorations, fresh flowers, wreaths, and bouquets, and for no other purposes...”*

Condition 5 of this permission indicates:

*“Except for the retail sales allowed by Condition 4 above, the development hereby approved shall only be used for the retail sales of pet food and sundries, books, pottery, glass, clothing, toys and the provision of a coffee shop and for no other purpose...The retail floorspace provided for the retail sales allowed by this condition shall only be provided on no more than 15% of the total floor area of the main glasshouse building.”*

- 5.6 SU/10/0516 Variation of Condition 11 of planning permission SU/93/0747 (as amended by planning permission SU/03/1044) to widen the range of goods sold within the main garden centre greenhouse to include the sale of food and drink (retrospective). Approved in October 2011.

Condition 1 of this permission indicates:

*“The retail area provided for the sale of food and drink shall not exceed an area of 275 square metres...”*

## **6.0 THE PROPOSAL**

- 6.1 The application proposal is to demolish an existing glasshouse and replace this with a glasshouse extension to the garden centre. The proposal would lead to the demolition of the western half of the existing main garden centre building, amounting to approximately 1,386 square metres. Its replacement would have an identical floor area and footprint but would be a higher structure.
- 6.2 The existing glasshouse (to be demolished) has a series of seven pitched roofs to a maximum height of 4.4 metres, reducing to a minimum height of 2.8 metres. The proposed glasshouse extension also provides a series of four pitched roofs and would have a maximum height to 4.7 metres at the ridge and 3.6 metres to the eaves. The resulting roof would not exceed the existing maximum height of the

existing building (which is the roof ridge of the atrium at 6.9 metres), but there would be an overall increase in mass for this part of the structure.

- 6.3 The proposed extension would have a brick wall of 1.1 metres in height to all elevations, and would be predominantly glazed to the front and rear elevations above, and roof over. To the flank elevation, there would be a polycarbonate panelled finish above the brick wall. No alterations to the existing access and car parking arrangements are proposed.
- 6.4 The current proposal is seen as the last phase of the reconstruction and upgrading of the garden centre, with the earlier phase as approved under SU/10/0291. The roof height, design and external materials are proposed to be similar to those provided for this earlier phase.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

- |     |                                  |  |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 7.1 | County Highway Authority         | No objections received.  |
| 7.2 | Local Lead Flood Authority (SCC) | Further details requested.   |
| 7.3 | Windlesham Parish Council        | No objections are raised, so long as the footprint of the proposed development does not exceed the existing footprint. |

## **8.0 REPRESENTATION**

At the time of preparation of this report, no representations have been received.

## **9.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 The proposal relates to a retail development (with no increase in floorspace) on the Green Belt. The relevant policies relating to the above proposal are Policies CPA, CP2, CP8, CP9, CP11, DM1, DM9, DM10, DM11, DM12 and DM13 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposal is not CIL liable.
- 9.2 The main issues in the consideration of this application are:
- Impact on Green Belt;
  - Impact on retail centres;
  - Impact on the character;
  - Impact on residential amenity;

- Impact on highway safety; and
- Impact on drainage.

### 9.3 Impact on the Green Belt

9.3.1 The proposed development would not extend the footprint/floorspace of the existing garden centre. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF confirms that the provision of extensions to buildings need not be inappropriate where *“limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use..., which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.”* The existing building in this case has 5,034 square metres and the existing proposal would not increase the floorspace nor change the use of the building. The only change will be an increase in the height of the eaves/ridge by 0.8/0.3 metres, respectively. This would provide a development which would not have any greater impact on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, but by virtue of its increase in size, there would be a marginal impact on openness. As such, it is considered that, although the changes to the built form are minor, the proposal still represents an inappropriate form of development.

9.3.2 Paragraphs 87 and 88 of the NPPF indicate that:

*“As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. “Very special circumstances” will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”*

The applicant is seeking the demolition of the remaining older structure and replace with a similar structure to that approved for the east part and central atrium (under SU/10/0291).

9.3.3 The proposal would not increase the maximum height of this part of the garden centre building, over the existing structure. In addition, the structure would remain light in form to the front and rear elevations. However, there would be a resulting increase in mass resulting from an increase in the eaves height of the structure (particularly with the proposed flank wall finish), which would have a very limited harm on the openness of the Green Belt.

9.3.4 It is acknowledged that the site is an important employment generator in the Bagshot area, and the proposal would improve the internal visual appearance of this part of the garden centre, by increasing internal ceiling heights (resulting from the increased eaves heights) and providing a better ventilated glasshouse structure. In addition, the existing glasshouse is in a poor condition and generates high heating costs in the winter and cooling costs in the summer. These benefits outweigh the very limited harm this proposal would have on the Green Belt. No objections are therefore raised to the proposal on Green Belt grounds with the proposal complying with the NPPF.

## **9.4 Impact on retail centres**

9.4.1 The application site falls outside of the designated retail centres, falling within the Green Belt. In such out-of-centre locations, retail development would not normally be supported where it is considered it would affect the vitality and viability of local centres. However, the proposal would not increase the retail floorspace for the garden centre. With the addition of conditions, as proposed below, to reflect the existing limitations on retail sales at the site, no further impact on retail centres is envisaged. As such, no objections are therefore raised on these grounds with the proposal complying with Policies CPA, CP9, DM1, DM11, DM12 and DM13 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the NPPF.

## **9.5 Impact on local character**

9.5.1 The existing garden centre buildings are set back on the application site behind a landscaped strip and large car park. The proposed glasshouse extension would have a very similar appearance to the existing structure as viewed from London Road. The proposal is therefore not considered to have a significant impact, bearing in mind the set back of the proposal and the landscaped screening to the site frontage, on local character and the streetscene.

9.5.2 No objections are raised on the impact of the proposal on local character or the streetscene complying with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012.

## **9.6 Impact on residential amenity**

9.6.1 The nearest residential property to the application site is Dellwood House, set 50 metres approximately from the proposal. This property is owned by the applicant with the next nearest residential property (Field House) being set 95 metres away. The limited height increase of the proposal over the existing situation, the existing built form between these properties and large separation distance would limit the impact of the proposal on the occupiers of Field House.

9.6.2 No objections are therefore raised on the proposed development on residential amenity grounds complying with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012.

## **9.7 Impact on parking and highway safety**

9.7.1 The parking arrangements are to remain as existing with 533 spaces provided for the garden centre. The proposal would increase internal retail accommodation, but not overall retail provision (internal/external sales areas). No objections to the proposal have been received by the County Highway Authority. The proposed development is considered to be acceptable on parking and highway safety grounds complying with Policies CP11 and DM11 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the NPPF.

## **9.8 Impact on drainage**

- 9.8.1 In 2015, the Government introduced new guidance requiring, along with the responsibility for surface water drainage (i.e. the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA)) transferring from the Environment Agency to Surrey County Council, which has required greater scrutiny of the required drainage strategy prior to determination (rather than dealing later with these details by condition). This has provided more robustness in the decision making process on drainage matters.
- 9.8.2 The application site is in an area of low flood risk (Zone 1) and is predominantly hardstanding around the existing buildings. The current proposal would replace an existing structure with no increase in footprint or hardstanding. Whilst the comments of the LLFA are noted, the proposal would not increase built or hardstanding cover on the site and it is not considered appropriate to request further details under this application. However, to ensure that the development does not add to surface water run-off, it is considered prudent to agree details/connections to the existing system. This approach has been agreed with the Council's Drainage Engineer. As such, no objections are raised to the proposal on these grounds, complying with Policy DM10 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the NPPF.

## **10.0 CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 The proposed development is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The very special circumstances put forward by the applicant outweigh the very limited harm the development has on the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal is also acceptable in terms of its impact on retail centres, character and streetscene, residential amenity, parking and highway safety, and drainage. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

## **11.0 ARTICLE 2(3) DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) ORDER 2012 WORKING IN A POSITIVE/PROACTIVE MANNER**

In assessing this application, officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner consistent with the requirements of Paragraphs 186-187 of the NPPF. This included the following:-

- a) Provided or made available pre application advice to seek to resolve problems before the application was submitted and to foster the delivery of sustainable development.
- b) Provided feedback through the validation process including information on the website, to correct identified problems to ensure that the application was correct and could be registered.

## 12.0 RECOMMENDATION

GRANT subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions and in accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The building works, hereby approved, shall be constructed in external fascia materials to match those of the existing building.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area and to accord with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012.

3. The proposed development shall be built in accordance with the following approved plans: 14051-502 Rev. C, 14051-522 Rev. B and 14051-542 Rev. B, unless the prior written approval has been obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning and as advised in ID.17a of the Planning Practice Guidance.

4. The development hereby approved shall not commence until surface water drainage details, including an implementation programme has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Once approved the agreed works shall be carried out prior to first occupation and retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development and to accord with Policy DM10 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. Except for the further retail sales allowed by Conditions 6 and 7 below, the garden centre shall only be used for the retail sales of house plants and garden shrubs, trees, gardening sundries, including gardening tools and equipment and chemicals, garden associated objects such as statues, containers, garden furniture, landscaping materials, country craft produce such as dried flowers, baskets, greeting cards, Christmas trees and decorations, fresh flowers, wreaths, and bouquets, and for no other purpose in Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) or in any other provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order.

Reason: To ensure that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of local retail centres and to comply with Policies CP1, CP9, CP10 and DM12 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and



Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. Except for the retail sales allowed by Conditions 5 above and 7 below, the garden centre shall only be used for the retail sales of pet food and sundries, books, pottery, glass, clothing, toys and the provision of a coffee shop and for no other purpose in Classes A1 and A3 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) or in any other provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order. The retail floorspace provided for the retail sales allowed by this Condition shall only be provided on no more than 15% of the total floor area of the main glasshouse building.

Reason: To ensure that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of local retail centres and to comply with Policies CP1, CP9, CP10 and DM12 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. The retail area provided within the garden centre for the sale of food and drink shall not exceed an area of 275 square metres unless the prior written approval has been obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of local retail centres and to comply with Policies CP1, CP9, CP10 and DM12 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. No development shall take place until a Method of Construction Statement, to include details of:

- (a) parking for vehicles of site personnel, operatives and visitors
- (b) loading and unloading of plant and materials
- (c) storage of plant and materials
- (d) programme of works (including measures for traffic management)
- (e) provision of boundary hoarding
- (f) hours of construction

has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Only the approved details shall be implemented during the construction period.

Reason: The condition above is required in order that the development should not prejudice residential amenity or highway safety; nor cause inconvenience to other highway users and to accord with Policies CP11, DM9 and DM11 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.