

# Northern Planning Committee

## Agenda

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>Wednesday, 2nd September, 2009</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>2.00 pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1DX</b>

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The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

### **PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT**

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. **Code of Conduct-Declarations of Interest/Pre-Determination**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests and for Members to declare if they have pre-determined any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of the Meeting** (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 August 2009.

4. **Public Speaking**

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For any apologies or requests for further information, or to arrange to speak at the meeting

**Contact:** Sarah Baxter

**Tel:** 01270 529786

**E-Mail:** [sarah.baxter@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.baxter@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

A total period of 5 minutes is allocated for each of the planning applications for Ward Councillors who are not Members of the Planning Committee.

A period of 3 minutes is allocated for each of the planning applications for the following individuals/groups:

- Members who are not Members of the Planning Committee and are not the Ward Member
- The Relevant Town/Parish Council
- Local Representative Groups/Civic Society
- Objectors
- Applicants/Supporters

5. **09/2155M-Extension to Caravan Park to Include the Adjoining Camp Site to provide an additional 25 Caravans, Re-Submission Of 09/0514M, Clayton Field, Schoolfold Lane, Adlington, Macclesfield, Cheshire for Miss Firbank (Pages 5 - 12)**

To consider the above application.

6. **09/1746M-Demolition/Removal of 382msquare of Existing Canopies and Storage Containers, Erection of 683msquare of Open-Sided Canopies, Erection of 312msquare Extension to Existing Coffee Shop for Additional Seating and an Educational Classroom all In accordance with Application Drawing Nos, C0809-03b, 05e, 07b, 09c, 10b And 11a all for the use as a Garden Centre, Wilmslow Garden Centre, Manchester Road, Wilmslow, Cheshire for Klondyke Garden Centres Group Ltd (Pages 13 - 24)**

To consider the above application.

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Northern Planning Committee**  
held on Wednesday, 12th August, 2009 at The Capesthorne Room - Town  
Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1DX

### **PRESENT**

Councillor R West (Chairman)

Councillors C Andrew, J Crockatt, H Davenport, E Gilliland, T Jackson,  
W Livesley, J Narraway, D Neilson, L Smetham, D Stockton, D Thompson and  
C Tomlinson

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mrs N Folan (Planning Solicitor), Mr D Garratt (Development Control  
Manager) and Mrs E Tutton (Principal Planning Officer)

### **Apologies**

Councillors M Hardy and G Barton

### **43 CODE OF CONDUCT-DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PRE-DETERMINATION**

Councillor R J Narraway declared a personal interest in application 09/1509M-Change of Use of Land to allow the Siting of 23 Timber Clad Twin Unit Caravans by virtue of the fact that he was Vice Chairman of North Rode Parish Council and had attended a meeting of Eaton Parish Council where the application had been discussed but he had not participated in the debate nor had he formulated any views and in accordance with the Code of Conduct he remained in the meeting during consideration of the application.

Councillors Miss C M Andrew and Mrs E N Gilliland requested that it be noted that in respect of the same application whilst they did attend meetings of Eaton Parish Council they had not attended any where the application had been considered.

Councillor R J Narraway declared a personal and prejudicial interest in application 09/1069M-Replacement Sales/Storage Building by virtue of the fact that he had a business relationship with the applicant and in accordance with the Code of Conduct he left the meeting prior to consideration of the application.

Councillor Mrs T Jackson declared a personal interest in the same application by virtue of the fact that she was a customer of Chelford Farm Supplies and in accordance with the Code of Conduct she remained in the meeting during consideration of the application.

### **44 MINUTES**

RESOLVED

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**45 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

That the public speaking procedure be noted.

**46 09/1509M-CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO ALLOW THE SITING OF 23  
TIMBER CLAD TWIN UNIT CARAVANS, LAND BETWEEN BACK LANE  
& MACCLESFIELD ROAD, NORTH RODE, CONGLETON, CHESHIRE  
FOR MR & MRS NOAD**

(During consideration of the application Councillor D A Neilson arrived to the meeting).

Consideration was given to the above application.

(The Ward Councillors M Asquith and Mrs H M Gaddum, Parish Councillor J Rowbotham from Eaton Parish Council, an objector and the applicant attended the meeting and spoke in respect of the application).

RESOLVED

That the application be refused for the following reason:-

1. Harm to the appearance of the area, inadequate landscaping (in the short term), contrary to the advice of PPS7 and Local Plan policies.

(This decision was contrary to the Officers recommendation of approval).

(Councillor Mrs E N Gilliland left the meeting and did not return).

**47 09/1329M-SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION TO FORM CHANGING  
ROOMS/CANTEEN, ALL WEATHER PITCH, EXTENSION/ALTERATION  
TO CAR PARKING & ACCESS ALTERATIONS & CHANGE OF USE OF  
NEIGHBOURING AGRICULTURAL FIELD TO FOOTBALL/RUGBY  
PITCHES, EGERTON YOUTH CLUB, MERE HEATH LANE,  
KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE FOR MR SWIFT**

Consideration was given to the above application.

RESOLVED

That the application be approved subject to the following conditions:-

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. A06EX - Materials as application
4. A01LS - Landscaping - submission of details

5. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation)
6. A04HP - Provision of cycle parking
7. A24EX - Details of colour - floodlight columns
8. A01NC - Habitats survey
9. A30HA - Protection of highway from mud and debris
10. A07HP - Drainage and surfacing of hardstanding areas
11. A01TR - Tree retention
12. Provision of car parking
13. Coach parking
14. Formation of access
15. Visibility splays
16. Short stay cycle parking
17. No gates
18. Hours of use - lighting

**48 09/1069M-REPLACEMENT SALES/STORAGE BUILDING, CHELFORD FARM SUPPLIES, KNUTSFORD ROAD, CHELFORD, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE FOR CHELFORD FARM SUPPLIES LTD**

Consideration was given to the above application.

**RESOLVED**

That the application be approved subject to the following conditions:-

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A04AP - Development in accord with revised plans (numbered)
3. A06EX - Materials as application
4. A17MC - Decontamination of land
5. A22GR - Protection from noise during construction (hours of construction)
6. A12LS - Landscaping to include details of boundary treatment
7. A06LP - Limitation on use - non food retail only
8. Submission of appropriate dust control measures during demolition and construction
9. No pile driving permitted
10. Implementation of one way system
11. One way system in car park to be operational prior to first use of the new sales building
12. Submission of revised plans indicating the one-way system
13. Security gates at access point 3 shall remain open when Chelford Farm Supplies is open for business

14. Barriers at access points 1 & 2 shall remain open when Chelford Farm Supplies is open for business
15. Provision and retention of service facilities
16. Provision of 28 parking spaces
17. Provision/ Retention of turning facility.
18. Provision/ Retention of turning facility.
19. Provision / retention of turning facility
20. Access point 4 to be closed from 08.15am daily to prevent deliveries from articulated vehicles
21. No storage of goods within the parking / turning / servicing areas at any time

**49 09/1726M-REPLACEMENT DWELLING, HOLFORD HOUSE, HOLFORD DRIVE, MOSSWAYS PARK, WILMSLOW, CHESHIRE FOR MR FLANNIGAN**

This application was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.25 pm

Councillor R West (Chairman)

**Application No:** 09/2155M

**Location:** CLAYTON FIELD, SCHOOLFOLD LANE, ADLINGTON, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE

**Proposal:** EXTENSION TO CARAVAN PARK TO INCLUDE THE ADJOINING CAMP SITE TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL 25 CARAVANS. RE-SUBMISSION OF 09/0514M

**For** MISS LISA FIRBANK

**Registered** 24-Jul-2009

**Policy Item** Yes

**Grid Reference** 393644 381167

**Date Report Prepared:** 21 August 2009

### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

Refuse Approval

#### **MAIN ISSUES**

- Impact of proposal on visual amenity & openness of the Green Belt
- Sustainability of the location
- Ecological impact of the proposal

### **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The application site is located off Schoolfold Lane in Adlington. The application site is situated within the Cheshire Green Belt and conservation area.

The existing buildings on site are currently used for recreational purposes, the planning statement submitted with the application states that the buildings would be demolished.

### **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The application seeks full planning permission for the extension to Eastwood End Caravan Park into Clayton Field. The extension into the caravan park would provide a further 25 twin caravans to the north of the existing site. The description of the application states that consent is sought for an extension into the adjoining campsite.

However, there is no evidence as to whether the application site has planning consent for this use. The agent has suggested that the land has had an established use for camping since 1924. Within the design and access statement submitted with the application, however, it is stated that the land is used for grazing during closed season. The buildings towards the site's northern end have received planning permission in connection with leisure use of the land but it is far from clear precisely what this amounted to and to what part of the site this use might have applied to. In the circumstances and in the absence of

evidence to answer these questions, it would be inappropriate to give this consideration much weight.

The application site comprises of 2 hectares of grass land, with an existing pond towards the centre. The site also contains some woodland towards the edge. To the south of the application site lies the existing caravan park housing 75 static caravans with associated access and parking.

The 25 caravans would be positioned towards the edge of the site looking onto the existing pond. An access track would be provided to the caravans connecting to the existing access to the field. Parking would also be provided on the site.

The caravans would be static caravans positioned on concrete bases each measuring 6.1m in width, 14.8m in length and an internal ceiling height of 2.6m.

The static caravans would fall within the statutory definition of a 'caravan' under the Caravan Sites Act 1968, as amended by the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and Social Landlords (Permissible Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2006 (Definition of a Caravan) (Amendment ) (England) Order 2006.

The application site falls within an Area of Special County Value and Green Belt as defined within the Local Plan. The site is also bordered by the Canal Conservation Area, therefore the visual impact of the proposal is important to assess.

Due to the relative isolation of the application site it is considered there would be no significant impact on residential amenity as a result of the development.

### **RELEVANT HISTORY**

09/051m	Extension to caravan park to adjoining camp to provide additional 25 caravans Withdrawn 9/6/2009
75747P	Single storey timber building for recreational use Approved 3/11/1993
49109P	Access road Approved 28/5/1987
13920p	25 static caravans and 42 parking spaces Refused 6/7/1978
8863p	Additional 25 recreational static caravans Approved 1968
6307p	Additional 25 recreational static caravans Approved 1963
4942p	25 recreational static caravans Approved 1961



## **POLICIES**

### **Regional Spatial Strategy**

RDF4	Green Belts
DP1	Spatial Principles
DP4	Making Best Use of Existing Resources & Infrastructure
DP5	Manage Travel Demand; Reduce the Need to Travel, and Increase Accessibility
DP7	Promote Environmental Equality
DP8	Mainstream Rural Issues
W6	Tourism and Visitor Economy
W7	Principles of Tourism Development

### **Local Plan Policy**

NE1	Areas of Special County Value
NE2	Protection of Local Landscapes
NE7	Woodland Management
NE11	Nature Conservation
RT13	Promotion of Tourism
GC1	Green Belt: New Buildings
BE1	Design Guidance
BE3	Conservation Areas
BE6	Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area
DC1	New Build
DC3	Amenity
DC6	Circulation and Access
DC8	Landscaping
DC9	Tree Protection

### **Other Material Considerations**

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts  
 Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism  
 Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas  
 Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

## **CONSULTATIONS**

<b>Highways:</b>	No comments to date
<b>Environmental Health:</b>	No comments to date
<b>Leisure:</b>	No comments to date
<b>Manchester Airport:</b>	No objections
<b>MOD Safeguarding:</b>	No comments to date
<b>Environment Agency:</b>	No comments to date

**British Waterways:** No comments to date

## **VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL**

Adlington Parish Council: No comments to date

## **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

None received to date, the publicity expiry date is the 17 September 2009.

## **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The following documents have been submitted in support of the application which are available to view on the planning file and on the Council's website ([www.cheshireeast.gov.uk](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk))

- Planning, Design & Access Statement
- Protected Species Survey

The agent has also provided a copy of the waiting list of potential purchasers of the proposed caravans.

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of Development**

Eastwood End Caravan Park has a long established use for holiday lets. The proposal seeks to extend this into Clayton field with a further 25 twin caravan units.

The application site falls within the Green Belt, and as such the proposal must be assessed in terms of the potential impact to the character and appearance of the countryside, and the impact on the openness of the Green Belt. This assessment must however be assessed against the potential benefits of tourist accommodation within the area.

### **National Planning Policy**

In land use terms the application site currently provides some tourist accommodation within the existing dormitory building formerly utilised by Toc H, a charitable organisation. The surrounding sites in ownership by Eastwood End Caravan Park are used to house 75 tourist caravans, with associated parking facilities.

In order to assess the application the most relevant guidance documents to consider are PPG2, PPS7, PPS9 and the Good Practice Guide.

PPG2 seeks to protect the countryside from inappropriate development. Paragraph 3.12 seeks to protect the openness of the Green Belt, whilst paragraph 3.15 states that development within the Green Belt should not be visually detrimental to the character and appearance of the countryside by means of the siting, materials or design.

Paragraph 36 of PPS7 advises that facilities may be justified in the countryside where there are no suitable buildings or developed sites available for re-use.

Paragraph 39 offers advice on tourist accommodation within rural areas, stating extensions to existing facilities should act to improve facilities and improve the appearance within the landscape.

The Good Practice Guide for Tourism published in May 2006 offers specific guidance in relation to holiday, touring caravan and chalet parks. It advises that parks are the largest provider of rural tourism bed spaces, and planners should carefully weigh the objective of providing adequate facilities and sites with the need to protect landscape and environmentally sensitive areas.

### **Local Planning Policy**

RT13 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (2004) encourages the provision of new tourist attractions. No specific guidance is available within the Local Plan with regards to static caravans.

### **Sustainability**

The site is situated within a rural location with few amenities available in close proximity of the site. Bollington would be the closest town to the application site, located 5.7km away. The main form of transport to the site would be via private car. No alternative means of transport have been put forward by the applicant, however parking facilities are proposed within the site for buses.

Public transportation to the site can be accessed via the bus route off Wood Lane West, approximately 1km from the application site.

The proposal would include an access track surrounding the site that would link to the existing access connecting to School Fold Lane. The site would also include a parking provision for 33 vehicles, 8 of which would be buses. There is no information to suggest why 8 spaces would be required for buses or, indeed, how they would be used and/or visitors encouraged to use them as alternatives to cars.

### **Green Belt & Tourism**

A key consideration when assessing the application is the potential impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The application proposes to clear the existing buildings on Clayton Field and replace them with 25 static caravans. The location of the caravans bears little relation to the existing buildings which are grouped in a small area to the north of the field. In contrast, the proposed caravans would be spread over the majority of the application site.

Paragraph 3.12 of PPG2 states that *“any material change of use of land are inappropriate development unless they maintain openness”*. Whilst it is possible to move static caravans, they are designed to be retained in the same position for very long periods. Accordingly, it is considered that they will have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt and as such, the proposal represents inappropriate development. This inappropriateness would be exacerbated by vehicles and other paraphernalia associated with the proposed development. By its definition, inappropriate development is harmful to

the Green Belt. In order to outweigh harm to the Green Belt, very special circumstances need to exist to allow for a departure from the Development Plan.

Within the planning statement, reference has been made to demand of the site's facilities, justifying the need for the extension to the existing caravan site. The agent has submitted information which is described as a waiting list of potential purchasers of the additional caravans. This consists of a typed list of names, addresses and tel nos. There are no further details or additional information regarding other tourist facilities available within this area.

The information submitted is not considered to offer sufficient justification for the addition to the caravan park. The potential increase in beds available for tourism in the area is noted, however the justification and need assessment is considered to be insufficient in order to assess whether this would offset the harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

In terms of the potential impact on visual amenity the application site is currently reasonably well screened, however views are afforded from nearby vantage points. Clearly the caravans would also be visible from within the site, and would change the character and appearance of site. The views from the Council's landscape architect are currently awaited, and are of particular importance in the determination of this application.

### **Ecology**

A protected species survey was submitted with the application demonstrating the presence of Great Crested Newts on site. At this stage comments for the departments Nature Conservation Officer are awaited, and will be provided to Members in an update report.

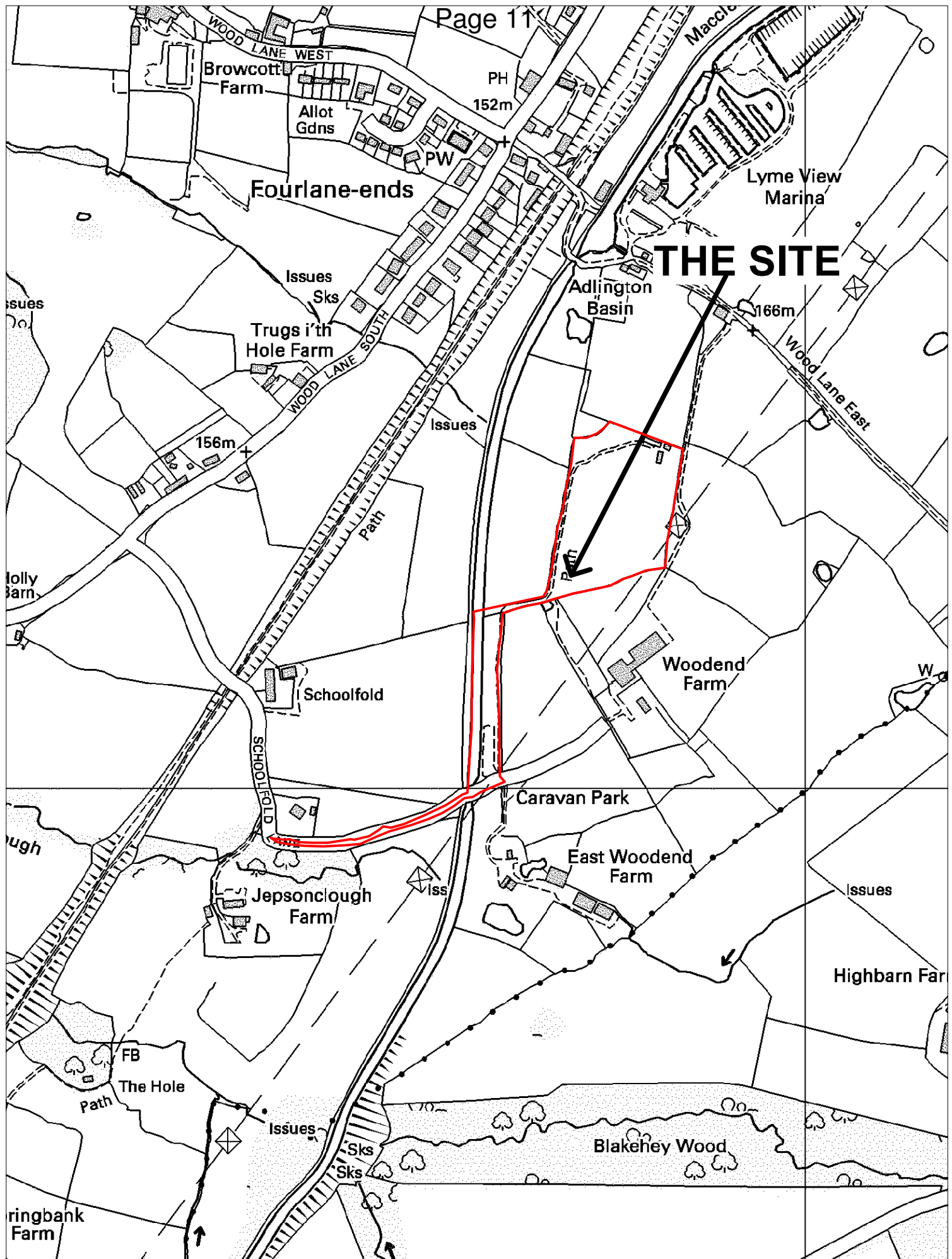
### **CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION**

The proposal would have a significant impact upon the openness of the Green Belt due to the number of caravans proposed at the site, their appearance, and character as well as the cumulative effect of associated activities and developments. The development of the site would provide further provisions for tourism; however the information submitted with the application to justify this level of need is not considered to be sufficient in order to outweigh the harm that would be caused to the Green Belt.

The significant factor in the decision making process of the application is the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and the impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Whilst the addition of tourism facilities is considered beneficial, it is considered that on balance the provision of additional facilities does not outweigh the harm to the openness of the Green Belt. As such the application is recommended for refusal on the grounds of potential harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

It is also noted that views are awaited from the highways, nature conservation, forestry & landscaping and will be provided to the committee as an update report.



09/2155M - CLAYTON FIELD, SCHOOLFOLD LANE, ADLINGTON, MACCLESFIELD  
 N.G.R. - 393,650 - 381,180

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Application for **Full Planning**

**RECOMMENDATION : Refuse approval**

1. R04LP - Contrary to Green Belt / Open Countryside policies
2. Openness of the Green Belt
3. Visual Amenity

**Application No:** 09/1746M

**Location:** WILMSLOW GARDEN CENTRE, MANCHESTER ROAD, WILMSLOW, CHESHIRE, SK9 2JN

**Proposal:** DEMOLITION/REMOVAL OF 382MSQUARE OF EXISTING CANOPIES AND STORAGE CONTAINERS, ERECTION OF 683MSQUARE OF OPEN-SIDED CANOPIES, ERECTION OF 312MSQUARE EXTENSION TO EXISTING COFFEE SHOP FOR ADDITIONAL SEATING AND AN EDUCATIONAL CLASSROOM; ALL IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPLICATION DRAWING NOS, C0809-03B, 05E, 07B, 09C, 10B AND 11A ALL FOR THE USE AS A GARDEN CENTRE.

**For** KLONDYKE GARDEN CENTRES GROUP LTD

**Registered** 17-Jun-2009

**Policy Item** No

**Grid Reference** 385380 382923

#### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

Approve subject to conditions

#### **MAIN ISSUES**

- Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and existing buildings,
- Whether it is appropriate development in the Green Belt or whether very special circumstances have been demonstrated.
- Impact on parking and highway safety.
- Impact on ecology, the existing trees and landscape.
- Any implications for the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

**Date Report Prepared:** 20<sup>th</sup> August 2009

#### **REASON FOR REPORT**

The application site is in excess of 1,000 sq m and therefore is a major planning application to be determined by Committee.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The application site comprises a long-established garden centre occupying the southern part of the site and 11.2ha woodland on the northern part of the site. The existing garden centre comprises a shop of approximately 2,402m<sup>2</sup>, an open-sided canopy of 401m<sup>2</sup>, enclosed polytunnels of 300m<sup>2</sup>, an open sales area of 6,242m<sup>2</sup> and a service yard of 480m<sup>2</sup>.

The shop comprises five glasshouses clad in white polycarbonate roofs and glazed walls. The offices, toilets and coffee shop kitchen are located within two brick and tile clad buildings. The canopy is a white steel-framed

glasshouse with open sides and a white polycarbonate roof. There is car parking for 207 cars, including 9 accessible spaces.

The garden centre site is bounded to the east by Manchester Road, residential dwellings to the south, open fields to the west and the River Dean to the north. The land slopes down towards the River Dean but is highly screened by an area of woodland which is accessible by both customers of the garden centre as well as members of the public.

The application site is located within the North Cheshire Green Belt but it is bounded by a predominantly residential area to the south and east.

## **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

This application seeks full planning permission for the demolition/removal of an existing canopy and storage containers and the erection of a new open-sided canopy and an extension to the existing coffee shop to provide additional seating and an educational classroom. In addition to these works, it is proposed to upgrade the woodland that occupies the northern part of the site and transform it into an attractive place for members of the public/customers to visit.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 08/2739P | Demolition/removal of 458 square metres of existing canopies, walkway and storage containers, erection of 696 metres square of open-sided canopies, erection of 358 square metre extension to existing coffee shop for additional seating and an educational classroom.<br>Withdrawn 10/03/2009 |
| 02/2068P | A canopy in glasshouse, construction of part of an existing plant sales area, the levels of which are to be raised to provide a safe area with retaining walls, balustrades and access ramps<br>Approved with conditions 11/06/2002   |
| 02/0138P | Provision of canopy in glasshouse; construction over an existing external plant sales area with raised levels by provision of retaining walls, balustrades and disabled access ramps; and extension of existing sales and storage glasshouse<br>Refused 27/03/2002                              |
| 01/2243P | Provision of a canopy in glasshouse; construction over an existing external plant sales area and extension of an existing sales and storage glasshouse<br>Withdrawn 07/11/2001  |
| 20240P   | Continuation of use as garden centre with alterations to layout<br>Approved with conditions 31/10/1979  |



## **POLICIES**

### **Regional Spatial Strategy**

DP1 (Spatial Principles)

RDF4 (Green Belts)

EM1 (A) (Integrated Enhancement & Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets – Landscape)

EM1 (B) (Integrated Enhancement & Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets - Natural Environment)

EM1 (D) (Integrated Enhancement & Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets - Trees, Woodlands and Forests)

### **Local Plan Policy**

BE1 (Design Guidance)

GC1 (New Buildings)

NE7 (Woodlands)

NE11 (Nature Conservation)

DC1 (Design – New Build)

DC2 (Design – Extensions and Alterations)

DC3 (Amenity)

DC6 (Circulation and Access)

DC9 (Tree Protection)

### **Other Material Considerations**

PPG2 – Green Belts

## **CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)**

**Highways:** No objection, subject to conditions

## **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

One letter of representation was received from a neighbouring property that raised concerns that the proposed extension would be built forward of the existing building line; the design of the extension is not in keeping with the existing structure and would affect privacy; issues regarding highway safety due to an increase in traffic volumes and pedestrian safety; and queries why the coffee shop could not extend within the existing building. All other concerns are not material planning considerations.

## **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

A Supporting Statement and Woodland Access & Management Plan were submitted with the planning application. The Supporting Statement contains information on the application site, the background to the development proposals, the policy background, a Design and Access Statement, and a Transport Statement. Copies of the documents can be viewed in full on the application file.

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principal of Development**

The main issues in this application are the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and existing building, whether the proposed development is appropriate development in the Green Belt or whether very special circumstances have been demonstrated, the impact on parking and highway safety, nature conservation, existing trees and landscape, and any implications for the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

### **Green Belt Policy**

The application site is located within the North Cheshire Green Belt, adjacent to predominantly residential area. Development is contained within the existing garden centre site, on land that has been previously developed by the laying of hardstanding and the sale of goods, and it would not result in an encroachment into the Green Belt.

In order to protect the openness of the Green Belt only 'appropriate' development is permissible, unless very special circumstances exist. PPG2 and Local Plan Policy GC1 indicate that the proposed development is inappropriate development. Therefore planning permission will only be granted if very special circumstances can be demonstrated. The previously submitted application (Ref: 08/2739P) was withdrawn by the applicant as it was considered that insufficient information had been submitted to justify very special circumstances. Additional information has now been submitted with this application and is contained within the applicant's Supporting Statement. This is available on-line. In summary, the statement explains that;

The site's history and recent trading conditions. The supporting information explains that Wilmslow Garden Centre is a long established garden centre serving a local (i.e. within 5 mile radius) market. However, since 2004 sales at the garden centre have stagnated and, in real terms, have fallen. This decline is blamed on a lack of investment in this garden centre in particular and a drop in the trade in general.

In response the centre's new owners (Klondyke Garden Centres) have undertaken a 5-year business plan to address the problem areas identified. These were the physical layout and operation of the site (e.g. positioning of stock in relation to the exit, too many weather damaged plants, customers put off buying plants when they are not protected from inclement weather) and the future of the 1.1ha woodland.

The proposed canopy would partly cover an existing external area that is used for the display/sale of goods that would cover 683m<sup>2</sup> of a total sales area of 2397m<sup>2</sup>. The size of the proposed canopy (683m<sup>2</sup>) has been dictated by what is to be stored beneath it.

The size of the proposed coffee shop is dictated by the number of covers required and the size of the kitchen/food preparation and servery area. The Supporting Statement provides detailed information in terms of hourly demand, length of customer stay and annual sales that is used to calculate

the required number of covers and hence the required amount of floor area. The calculations show that 156 covers are required and according to the Architects Metric Handbook this would equate to a requirement of 432m<sup>2</sup> (which includes seating, circulation space, kitchen, servery, queuing space etc). The size of the coffee shop proposed is actually slightly lower than the figure calculated at 417m<sup>2</sup>. Once the applicants realised the amount of floorspace they required, they then examined where the coffee shop should be located.

It is proposed to keep the coffee shop at the east end of the shop and to utilise all of the existing brick and tile building for the kitchen and catering staff toilets as this is the required size. It is brick built (unlike the main shop which is a glasshouse construction) which lends itself to a food storage, preparation and cooking environment (it has solid roof and walls which is better for creating a hygienic food environment). Part of the existing customer seating area is located in the brick building, as is the servery. The servery is too small and need to be extended in length by 3.5 metres. This would either have to be in the existing glasshouse or in an extension to the brick building. If it were in the existing glasshouse then the seating area would need to locate in the main shop. This would result in a reduction in sales space amounting to estimated lost sales of over £150,000 per annum. It is not possible to maintain the same product stocking levels with a smaller shop area (indeed the present shop area is too cramped). The alternative is to locate the servery in a new building and to relocate the seating into this building. The proposed building would be no bigger than the area required for the servery (56m<sup>2</sup>) and the 156 covers (253m<sup>2</sup>).

It is proposed to make available spare seating capacity at Wilmslow Garden Centre for outside organisations to use when the coffee shop demand is low on certain days of the week. The classroom will be an area of the coffee shop which can be sectioned off partly with a permanent glazed screen and partly by a retractable screen. The classroom will have available up to 30 chairs suitable for children and be available to school parties, horticultural societies, gardening clubs and other groups. The woodland is available to these parties (accompanied) to learn and observe wildlife and to return to the classroom to carry out projects on the experience. Adjacent to the classroom will be an educational garden that allows children to 'get their hands dirty' and to manage their own school allotment, together with practicing garden designs. An expression of interest has been received from a headteacher of a local school and the e-mail has included in the Supporting Statement.

The space vacated in the existing building by the relocation of the coffee shop would enable a better display of garden furniture to be accommodated and would enable wider customer aisles to be provided. Aisle widths ideally need to be 1.8 metres wide to allow two customers with trolleys to pass easily (which is currently not achieved). A further two checkouts will be needed to meet the increase in sales being targeted, requiring an additional 26m<sup>2</sup>; a larger information desk is also needed and more space at the shop entrance.

With over 28% of the garden centre being the 1.1.ha of woodland that is open to the public as a free recreational facility, it was decided to carry out an assessment of the woodland to establish what is there, whether it should continue to be open to the public and if so, what improvements, if any, could be undertaken. The Environmental Project Consulting Group were commissioned to undertake the work. The main conclusions of the study were:

- That the woodland is poorly managed and becoming overgrown with Hawthorn and Elder;
- There are large areas of hardcore thought to be the remains of the First World War Prisoner of War Camp;
- There is evidence of protected species;
- The woodland could be improved for public access including upgrading the existing paths, creating a picnic site, creation of a demonstration wildlife garden, creation of a new pond, creation of a badger sett and the provision of bird nesting and bat roosting boxes.

In the circumstances, it is considered that the applicant has provided sufficient information to justify very special circumstances; the proposed extensions would be located on an existing sales area of the garden centre and therefore they would not result in encroachment into the Green Belt; the scale and siting of the proposed buildings would not affect the openness of the Green Belt; the impact of the new buildings is off-set somewhat by the improvement of the woodland and the creation of educational gardens for schools and organisations to use; the proposed buildings would result in the removal of some existing unsightly metal containers and polytunnels that currently occupy the site. For these reasons, the proposed development is considered to comply with Green Belt policy.

### **Highways**

There are no Highway objections to the proposals contained within this application since a significant amount of the proposal is a reconfiguration of the site and the increase in the size of the coffee shop/restaurant will have a degree of double counting in respect of the garden centre patrons.

In terms of the parking, it could be argued that the number of spaces exceeds the interim parking standards approved by the former County Highway Authority if only the covered retail element of the garden centre was included. However, if the total of the open sales area with the covered area is accumulated then the parking falls below the maximums set out in local and national guidance. In addition consideration has been given to the estimated traffic levels visiting the development and given that the development is served by public transport, 212 spaces is considered to be an acceptable figure, given the fluctuating demand, both in terms of season and weekly patterns plus the envisaged reduction in car trips through to 2013.

However, in light of Government Guidance on Inclusive mobility, there is a shortfall in spaces for disabled persons. The guidance states that for car parks associated with shopping, leisure and recreational facilities including areas open to the public there should be a minimum of one space per

employee who is a disabled motorist plus 6% of the total capacity for visiting disabled motorists. In this instance the provision should be 12. This is a matter that can be dealt with by way of condition.

Cycle Spaces should equate to 1 per 300 sqm which for the revised covered section of the development is 9 spaces. The applicant is providing 10 spaces. The applicant is also supporting this use by providing shower and changing facilities for staff members. The Highway Department will require the cycle parking to be split between short stay for visitors and long stay for staff members.

In view of the fact that peak visits to the site are outside of the main peak highway flows the Highway Engineer does not have any concerns in respect of traffic generation to the site and impact on the adjacent highway network.

### **Design**

The proposed canopy would be open-sided and would be built of a white powder coated steel frame and a clear polythene roof. It would be attached to the western side elevation of the existing garden centre building and would comprise two bays that measure 10.5 metres by 32.2 metres. The roof of the canopies would be curved and they would have an eaves height of 3 metres and an overall height of 5 metres. The canopy would be one metre lower than the existing garden centre building. This type of structure is a common feature of garden centres and is of a lightweight design.

The proposed café extension would be attached to the northern elevation of the existing café building and would extend across an existing outdoor plant sale/display area and partly across an existing covered sales area. The proposed extension would be clad in timber and have a grey tiles roof (although these materials could be conditioned to be submitted should Members consider that different materials would be more appropriate). The building would have a hipped roof, would have an eaves height of 2.7 metres and a ridge height of 5 metres. It would be approximately 0.7 metres lower than the existing building. This building has been re-sited since the previous submission (Ref: 08/2739M) so that it is located further away from Manchester Road.

The existing buildings at the garden centre comprise a variety of designs, heights and materials and therefore it is not considered that either building would have a detrimental affect on the overall appearance of the site. Due to the height and density of the existing boundary treatments and due to the scale and siting of the proposed buildings, it is not considered that they would be highly conspicuous or detrimental to the character or appearance of the surrounding area.

### **Amenity**

The application site is bounded by residential properties to the southern boundary and on the opposite side of Manchester Road to the east of the site. No objections have been raised by the properties to the south of the site but

one letter of objection was received by a resident from a property on the opposite side of Manchester Road.

The area on which the proposed canopy would be sited is an area that is currently used for the external display of goods associated with the garden centre. The property most affected by this building would be No. 21 Sefton Drive to the south of the application site. The neighbouring property would be sited approximately 22.5 metres from the proposed canopy and a number of trees, hedges and shrubs would largely screen the proposed building from view. As the area is already used for the display/sale of goods, it is not considered that there are any additional impacts on the amenity of this property arising from the associated development.

The proposed extension to the existing café would be largely screened from the residential property to the south of the application site (No. 145 Manchester Road) as it would be positioned behind the existing buildings of the garden centre and would have a lower ridge height. A resident on the opposite side of Manchester Road has raised concerns that the proposed café extension would be detrimental to their privacy. The resident's property would not directly face towards the proposed extension; would be sited approximately 55 metres from it; and the proposed extension would be largely screened by a broad strip of mature shrubs and trees along the eastern boundary. The application also shows that new planting will be positioned along the boundary with Manchester Road, further reducing the prominence of the structure.

Due to the siting and scale of the proposed buildings, the existing and proposed boundary treatments, and the siting of the existing dwellings it is not considered that the proposed extensions would be detrimental to neighbouring amenity.

### **Landscaping**

The developer has considered the landscape context with trees defining the car park area and shrub beds providing privacy and screening. A detailed planting plan is required that demonstrates the type and size of planting that has been chosen, how it will be planted and maintained to ensure good establishment. Screen planting to Manchester Road is welcomed because it creates a pleasant 'garden' area for visitors. It is recommended that this is continued around the side of the grass area to provide screening for the neighbouring bungalow. This will provide additional privacy and envelop this space for visitors.

The existing paths within the woodland are slippery and the steps are in poor repair or none existent. A detailed plan showing where the new paths will be located and the structure of these paths is required. It is suggested that paths should be no wider than 1200mm to allow passing but not too wide to be intrusive and damaging to the woodland. A grit stone surface would be considered appropriate as it is hard wearing and has a complimentary pH for the area. Some work to the trees may be required if the applicant is to encourage visitors into the woodland as part of the education centre.

The existing planting could be enhanced to the entrance of the site by additional shrubs, to compliment the new development and promote the regeneration of the site.

The Landscape Officer recommends that conditions in respect of the submission of a landscaping scheme, the implementation of the approved landscaping scheme, additional information in respect of the woodland paths, and the submission of a woodland management plan would satisfy the above concerns.

### **Trees**

The proposed demolition of existing canopies and removal of storage containers and the erection of a new open-sided canopy and extension to the existing coffee shop will not impact upon any existing trees within the application site. An existing Cypress hedge which forms the boundary between the sales area and the car park will be retained. The slight reconfiguration of the car park, increasing from the existing 209 spaces to 212 spaces will not impact upon any existing trees within the site. The proposed planting within the car park is welcomed.

The Forestry Officer has carried out an initial evaluation of the woodland to the northern boundary of the application site which abuts the River Dean. Generally, he concurs with the findings of the submitted report supplied by '*The Environmental Project Consulting Group*' in support of this application. The report sets out proposals for improved public access into the woodland, upgrading the existing pathway network, incorporating a picnic site and providing interpretive information for a new pond and other nature conservation improvements.

The improved access into the woodland site carries with it certain responsibilities and a 'duty of care' on the owner. It is evident that there are trees within the site which have suffered from wind damage in the past and there is evidence of one Crack Willow that has fallen onto the adjacent highway relatively recently. It is suggested that, whilst the issue of tree safety is not within the remit of this planning application, the applicant should be advised to carry out a risk assessment on the woodland which will then inform any improvements to public access being considered.

### **Ecology**

There are not considered to be any major issues associated with the redevelopment of the garden centre and the proposed works in the adjacent woodland. Overall, the proposed upgrading of the paths in the woodland together with the proposed wildlife interpretation and habitat creation is welcomed and should lead to an overall gain for nature conservation.

Whilst badgers are active at this site there does not appear to be an active sett present. As badgers can excavate a sett within a short time period it is recommended that a further survey should take place immediately before work starts on site. In this instance, the survey can be conditioned.

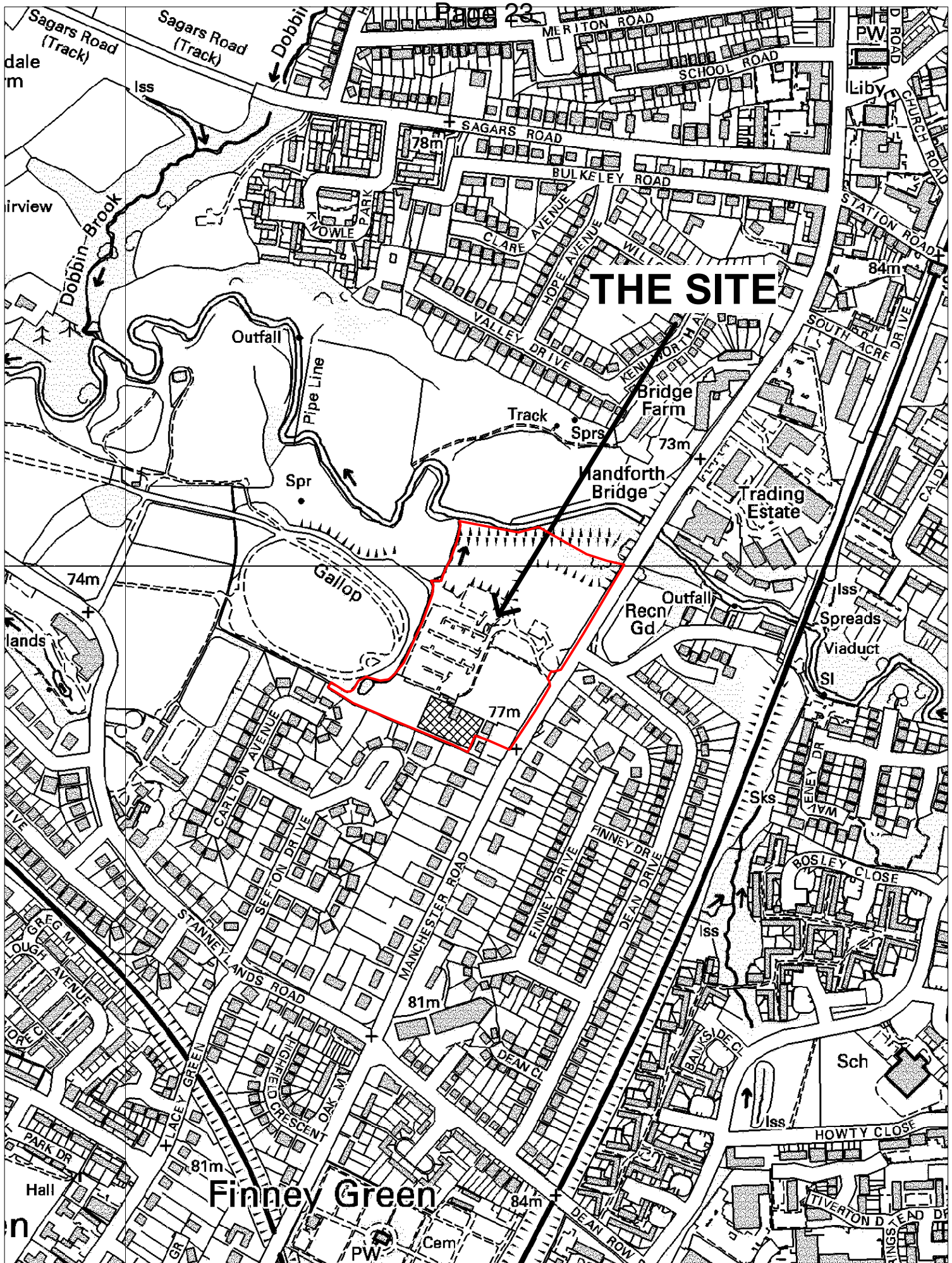
A new pond is proposed within the woodland. This is welcomed and will make a valuable contribution to Local and UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets. To ensure that the nature conservation value of the new pond is maximised the design of the pond should be agreed with the LPA prior to the commencement of development. This can be dealt with by means of a suitable planning condition.

There are likely to be nesting birds on site. Therefore the standard breeding bird condition is recommended in order to protect them if works are undertaken between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August in any year.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION**

For the reasons explained, it is considered that the applicants have now sufficiently demonstrated the very special circumstances required in order that this development might be considered for approval. The garden centre has lacked investment. Thorough studies have been conducted to identify and arrest the drop in trade. This proposal takes these recommendations and applies them so that the scale, design and location of what is proposed is not excessive and will not harm the Green Belt. Planning permission should be granted.





09/1746M - WILMSLOW GARDEN CENTRE, MANCHESTER ROAD, WILMSLOW, CHESHIRE

N.G.R. - 385,320 - 382,910

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Application for **Full Planning**

**RECOMMENDATION : Approve subject to following conditions**

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A04HP - Provision of cycle parking
3. A06NC - Protection for breeding birds
4. A01LS - Landscaping - submission of details
5. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation)
6. A10LS - Additional landscaping details required
7. A16LS - Submission of landscape/woodland management plan
8. A06EX - Materials as application
9. Parking Provision (including disabled spaces)
10. Short-stay/visitor cycle parking
11. Creation of Pond
12. Badger Survey