

Application No: 15/2256M

Location: Robinsons Nurseries, BOLSHAW ROAD, HEALD GREEN

Proposal: GLASS HOUSE WITH ASSOCIATED WATER TANKS AND HEAT STORAGE TANK

Applicant: PETER ROBINSON, W ROBINSONS NURSERIES LTD

Expiry Date: 18-Aug-2015

**Date Report Prepared:** 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015

#### **SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

- The proposed development would support the growth of the existing horticultural business.
- The proposed is acceptable development in the Green Belt within the context of Green Belt policy.
- Though the proposals would have some impact on the openness of the Green Belt, it is considered that the would be of a limited and acceptable degree.
- The impact on the landscape and character and appearance of the surrounding area is considered to be acceptable.
- The proposals would not result in any significant adverse impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties.
- Access arrangements remain as existing; the projected limited increases in vehicular movements to/from the site do not create any highways safety issues.
- The proposals do not have any significant ecological impact.
- It is considered that the proposed would not result in any significant drainage/flooding issues.
- All representations have been borne in mind.
- Overall, it is considered that the proposed development constitutes a sustainable form of development and accords with all relevant Development Plan policies and other material considerations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve, subject to outstanding consultations, conditions & informatives.

## **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

Full planning permission is sought for 1) a large glass house measuring approx. 144m by 235m at a height of approx. 7.8m (with a footprint of approx. 33,360sqm), and 2) 5 No. associated water tanks measuring approx. 12.7m diameter by 4.6m high (though the water tanks are sunk into the ground a depth of 1m) and 1 No. heat store measuring approx. 16m diameter and 12m high.

The proposal will form an extension to the existing and established commercial horticultural business (W Robinson and Sons), which operates from Yew Tree Farm. The glass house is to be used for the production of high value, low yield tomato varieties. The water storage tanks are designed to collect roof run off water for re-use in the production process. The heat store tank is designed to store water heated during the day as a by-product of CO2 production and is then used at night to maintain the correct temperature in the glass house, thereby providing a more efficient heat storage system.

## **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The application site is a field adjacent to an existing commercial horticultural business (W Robinson & Sons) operating from Yew Tree Farm, off Bolshaw Road, Heald Green. The wider site is located both within the Borough of Stockport and Cheshire East. The area of land to which the application relates is located within the Borough of Cheshire East, hence, the reason for the application being submitted to Cheshire East Council.

The eastern side of the northern boundary of the site is adjacent to the rear gardens of residential properties on Davies Avenue; the western side of the northern boundary and the northern half of the western boundary face existing glasshouses and plant associated with the existing horticultural business; the southern half of the western boundary faces trees; the southern and eastern boundaries abut fields; beyond the field adjacent to the southern boundary the SEMMMS relief road is being constructed and beyond the field adjacent to the eastern boundary is a small residential development at Bolshaw Farm on Bolshaw Lane.

Public Footpath No. FP119 (Wilmslow) passes along the western boundary of the site.

The site is relatively flat. Access to the site will be via the existing access to the wider site which is located at the western end of Bolshaw Road.

This site is identified within the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan as forming part of the North Cheshire Green Belt.

It is noted that revised plans have been received during the course of the application, reducing the indentation slightly in the north-eastern corner of the proposed glass house in order to improve the relationship a little with some neighbouring properties on Davies Avenue.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

The most recent planning history of note is 14/3395M , which was for a Woodchip Biomass Boiler and was approved on 27.03.2015. The woodchip biomass boiler is to be located to the west of the current application site, within the wider site of the nursery.

## **POLICIES**

By virtue of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan for Cheshire East currently comprises the saved policies from the Congleton Borough (January 2005), Crewe and Nantwich (February 2005) and Macclesfield Local Plan (January 2004).

### **Macclesfield Borough Local Plan, Saved Policies**

BE1- Design guidance  
GC1- New buildings in Green Belt  
DC1- New build  
DC3 - Residential Amenity  
DC6 - Circulation and Access  
DC8 - Landscaping  
DC13 and DC14 - Noise  
DC17, DC18 and DC20 - Water Resources  
DC28 - Agricultural Buildings  
DC38 - Space, light and privacy  
DC63 – Contaminated Land

### **Other Material Considerations**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

Since the NPPF was published, the saved policies within the Macclesfield Borough Council Local Plan are still applicable, though they should be weighted according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The Local Plan policies outlined above are considered to be consistent with the NPPF and therefore should be given full weight.

The particular chapters of the NPPF relevant to the determination of this application are:

- Chapter one: Building a strong competitive economy
- Chapter two: Supporting a prosperous rural economy
- Chapter four: Promoting sustainable transport
- Chapter seven: Requiring good design
- Chapter nine: Protecting Green Belt Land
- Chapter ten: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Chapter eleven: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

#### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

The National Planning Practice Guidance came into force on 6th March 2014 and replaces a plethora of policy guidance notes with a streamlined, web-based resource.

## **Cheshire East – Local Plan Strategy (Submission Version)**

The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

SP1 – Promoting economic prosperity by creating conditions for business growth  
SP3 – Protecting and enhancing environmental quality  
MP1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development  
PG3 – Green belt  
SD1 - Sustainable development in Cheshire East  
SD2 - Sustainable development principles  
EG1 – Economic prosperity  
EG2 - Rural economy  
SE1 - Design  
SE3 - Biodiversity and geodiversity  
SE4 - The landscape  
SE5 - Trees, hedgerows and woodland  
SE8 - Renewable and low carbon energy  
SE9 - Energy efficient development  
SE12 – Pollution, land contamination and land instability  
SE13 - Flood risk and water management  
CO1 - Sustainable travel and transport

Relevant legislation also includes the EC Habitats Directive and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1992 and Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Highways (Strategic Infrastructure Manager):**

No objections

### **Environmental Health:**

The Environmental Protection Team have raised no objections to the development subject to a condition regarding hours of construction (to be limited to between 08.00 to 18:00 hrs Mondays to Fridays, 09:00 to 14:00 hrs on Saturdays and Nil on Sundays and Bank Holidays) and an informative advising that the applicant is obliged to adhere to all relevant regulations regarding contaminated land.

### **Heritage & Design – Nature Conservation:**

No objections, subject to conditions re 1) development in accordance with the Great Crested Newt Survey, 2) up-dated Badger survey and 3) survey to check for nesting birds if development carried out between April and August.

### **Heritage & Design – Landscape:**

The Landscape officer raises no objections, subject to conditions for landscape screening and implementation.

Awaiting formal comments, though it is noted that the Landscape Officer has verbally indicated that the proposal would not significantly impact on the character of the landscape and that appropriate landscape screening could be accommodated.

**Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council:**

No objections, subject to a condition requiring a Delivery Management Plan.

**Countryside Rights Of Way:**

No objections, subject to an informative advising the applicant of the need to ensure the public are able to use the footpath continuously and in a safe manner and to inform the applicant what to do if a temporary closure is required.

**Manchester Airport (safeguarding):**

No objections, subject to a condition requiring that no coniferous trees are planted and an informative requiring the safe use of cranes on site, if used during construction.

**Environment Agency:**

No comments received to date

**Flood Risk Management Officer:**

The Flood Risk Management Officer notes that, although there doesn't appear to be any flood risk concerns, some additional, quantified, information is required regarding surface water and drainage management.

**REPRESENTATIONS**

Representations have been received from 43 No. properties within the area, details of which can be read on file. The planning issues raised are summarised as follows:

Development within the area

- General concerns about progressive development on surrounding land, eg. development of the A34 by-pass, Manchester Airport (SEMMMS) relief road, Cheshire East Council's intention to build thousands of houses in the area

Green belt, landscape, character of the area

- Loss of green belt land; changing to brownfield land; contrary to 'Handforth Town Strategy' – reduction in green gap between Handforth and Heald Green and encroachment into countryside; contrary to purposes of including land within the green belt (as outlined in the NPPF)
- Detrimental impact on the landscape
- Impact on character of the area

- Increase of 40-50%; larger than any other development of this type in the area and adjacent to residential properties

#### Highways safety

- Additional traffic having a detrimental impact on road surfaces; detrimental impact on residential amenity and generating highways safety issues

#### Residential amenity

- Impact on residential amenities, resulting in loss of outlook, increased noise & pollution, loss of privacy and overshadowing
- Will transform the site into an industrial site
- Impact of construction traffic
- Impact on footpaths
- Additional staff required will impact on local facilities & services

#### Design

- Unsightly buildings; too large; size out of proportion
- Present structures are unsightly and should have been screened

#### Ecology, drainage, other

- Impact on wildlife
- Drainage problems stemming from development on the site; increased flooding in the area
- Claims that there has been a lack of notification to residents about the proposed development

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

### **Handforth Parish Council:**

Object, on the grounds that the site is within the green belt, poor visual appearance and increase in vehicles in the area.

## **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

In support of this application, the applicant has submitted the following additional documents, details of which can be read on file; some key points are extracted from the documents as/when required in this report

‘Design and Access Statement’

This document outlines what the proposal is for, the background of the company, the rationale for the proposals, a description of the designs of the proposals, the policy context, the planning issues and other material considerations.

‘Horticultural Appraisal’

This document provides general details of the British tomato industry, the tomato market, energy, the environment and food safety and specific factors relating to the application,

‘Letter of support from National Farmers Union (NFU)’

This letter emphasises the need for tomato growers to be more sustainable and efficient and to get longer and greater yields.

‘Letter of support from British Tomato Growers Association (TGA)’

This letter of support points out that the UK only produces 18% of total crop consumed in the UK and that there is a need to reduce reliance on imports. It emphasises the importance of modern glasshouses.

‘Letter of support from large salad and vegetable distributor (EVG)’

This letter stresses the need for investment in order to remain competitive. EVG act as marketing agents for smaller growers such as Robinsons Nurseries and have secured contracts with Sainsbury’s for the crop. It is pointed out in the letter that UK supermarkets want to double the amount of British food sold in the next six years and there is a guaranteed market for quality produce; however, they (EVG) need to be able to guarantee continuity of supply of high value speciality tomatoes.

‘Preliminary Ecological Appraisal’

This document provides an assessment of the potential ecological impacts of the proposals, broadly covering trees & hedgerows, breeding birds, amphibians (Great Crested Newts), bats and badgers. Additional work and mitigation measures are highlighted where required.

‘Great Created Newt Method Statement’

The proposed development needs to be carried out under a European Protected Species Licence issued by Natural England. This document outlines the mitigation and compensation measures provided in this to ensure that there are no direct impacts on individual Great Crested Newts and that any habitat loss is minimised through landscaping and planting design and other suitable mitigation and compensation measures.

During the course of the application the applicant submitted a response to the representations made and, as noted above, amended plans.

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

The key issues are:

- Sustainability
- Principle of the development
- Green Belt issues (appropriateness of the development/impact on the Green Belt)
- Design, impact on the landscape & character of the surrounding area
- Impact on residential amenity
- Highway safety
- Ecological impact

### **Sustainability**

The 'Foreword' to the NPPF states that: "*The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development.*" Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that

*There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles: an economic role... a social role and an environmental role.*

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that there is "a presumption in favour of sustainable development" and that such development should be approved without delay.

### **Principle of the development and Green Belt issues**

As noted, the application site is located within the Green Belt. Policy GC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan advises that approval will not be given, except in 'very special circumstances', for the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt, unless it is for one of a small number of exceptions, one of which is the provision of buildings for *agricultural and forestry purposes*. This advice is consistent with paragraph 89 of the NPPF, which states that:

*A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt.*

However, again there are a number of exceptions to this, one of which is

*Buildings for agriculture and forestry*

Within Section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) 1990 the definition of agriculture

*...includes horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, dairy farming, the breeding and keeping of livestock (including any creature kept for the production of food, wool, skins of fur, or for the purpose of its use in the farming of land), the use of land as grazing land, meadow land, osier land, market gardens and nursery grounds, and the use of woodlands where the use is ancillary to the farming of land for other agricultural purposes, and agriculture shall be construed accordingly.*

The applicant advises that the proposed glasshouse is for horticultural purposes, required for the production and control of an artificial growing environment for tomato plants and would form an extension to an existing and established agricultural business.

Hence, the proposed development would fall within the exception criteria in both policies GC1 and the NPPF, i.e. a "*building for agricultural*" purposes, and therefore complies with Policy GC1 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan and guidance within the NPPF regarding development within the Green Belt. The proposed development is not 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt and therefore 'very special circumstances' do not need to be presented to justify the proposals.

### **Impact upon the openness of the Green Belt**

Paragraph 79 of the NPPF states that the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are its openness and permanence. The proposed glasshouse and associated water tanks and heat store will inevitably have some impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. However, it is considered that, as such development is deemed not to be inappropriate in respect of Green Belt policy and guidance, it appears to be implicitly accepted within such policy and guidance that there will be some impact on the openness of the Green Belt from such development of an acceptable degree.

In addition, the glass house will be constructed primarily of glass, which is lightweight in appearance. The water tanks and heat store are sited adjacent to the proposed glass house and existing glass houses, buildings and infrastructure.

Bearing the above factors in mind, it is considered that, with appropriate landscape screening to soften the appearance when viewed from neighbouring residential properties, the impact of the proposals on the openness of the Green Belt will be of a limited and acceptable degree.

### **Design/impact upon the landscape and character of the surrounding area**

Policies BE1 and DC1 promote high standards of design and seek to ensure that the layout, siting, scale, design and materials of development reflect and are sympathetic to local character and respect surrounding buildings and their setting. Policy DC8 seeks to ensure appropriate landscaping for developments as required.

Policy DC28 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan sets out criteria to be met for new agricultural buildings. Of relevance to this application, this policy requires (amongst other things) a) the siting, design, scale, and materials of proposals to harmonise with the existing landscape and buildings, b) proposals should not have a significant adverse impact upon residential amenity and c) conditions for landscaping may be imposed.

The application site is currently agricultural land, forming part of the larger horticultural site, W Robinson and Sons. The site currently comprises a number of glass houses, other buildings and associated infrastructure. The proposed glass house, water tanks and heat store are to be sited in the south-eastern corner of the wider site adjacent to existing glass houses, buildings and infrastructure.

There are residential properties located broadly north-east of the wider site and there is open countryside immediately to the north, west, south and south-east of the site (with the SEMMMS Airport relief road currently under construction beyond the southern boundary of the site). There is a public footpath (FP119) that passes along the western boundary of the site. The site is relatively flat and accessed via the existing access located at the western end of Bolshaw Road.

The proposed glass house measures approx. 144m by 235m with a max. height of approx. 7.8m and is to be constructed from a steel frame set in concrete with clear glass panels. The 5 No. associated water tanks measure approx. 12.7m diameter by 4.6m high but are sunk into the ground a depth of 1m. The associated heat store measures approx. 16m diameter and 12m high and is proposed to be finished in the colour of goosewing grey.

The Council's Landscape Office notes the following:

- *The structure is unlikely to be visible from Bolshaw Lane or the B5358 Wilmslow Road due to good roadside hedges and existing developments. There would be distant filtered views from Clay Lane about 450 metres to the south. (The proposed airport relief road will however significantly alter views from this direction).*
- *The glasshouse would obviously be prominent from public footpath Wilmslow FP119 where it passes through the site but these views are already impaired by the existing glass houses, chimney and other structures. A native hedgerow along the southern site boundary would, when established, screen views from this footpath when approaching the site from the south*
- *Views from the properties at Bolshaw Farm, 130 metres to the east, could be reasonably well screened and filtered by a native hedgerow with trees on the eastern site boundary. The structure would be in closer proximity to the rear of the properties on Davies Avenue but there is scope to plant a native tree and shrub belt which, when established, would screen and filter views from these properties.*

Bearing all the above in mind, subject to appropriate landscape screening conditions the proposals are considered to be of appropriate size, scale and design with the use of appropriate materials. As such, the proposals are considered to be in keeping within the context of the site and the surrounding area; therefore the proposed development complies with Local Plan policies BE1, DC1, DC8 and DC28.

### **Impact on residential amenity**

As noted above, there are residential properties located broadly to the north-east of the wider site. More specifically, the eastern end of the proposed glass house is located to the rear of properties on Davies Avenue; other properties to the east of these along Davies Avenue will have oblique views of the proposed development. There is also a small development of approx. 8 No. dwellings east of the site at Bolshaw Farm, on Bolshaw Farm Lane.

It is noted that revised plans have been submitted as a result of Officer questioning the impact on the amenities of neighbouring residential properties. The amendment is relatively minor but does improve the relationship a little between the proposed glass house and some dwellings on Davies Avenue.

The range of amenity concerns expressed within the submitted representations relate broadly to: outlook, noise, pollution, privacy, overshadowing, additional construction traffic, impact on footpaths and local facilities & services.

The nearest residential properties to the proposed glass house are numbers 30–38 Davies Avenue. The rear elevation of number 38 (the nearest property) will be approx. 30m from the northern facing elevation of the glass house; the rear elevation of number 30 (which is oriented at an angle of approx. 45deg to the glass house) will be approx. 48m from the glass house and approx. 50m the most easterly, and nearest, water tank. Hence, the distances between the rear elevations of numbers 38–30 Davies Avenue and the northern facing elevation of the proposed glass house ranges between 48m to 30m.

It is noted that the proposed heat store is sited a distance of approx. 145m from the rear elevation of the nearest dwelling; also, relative to the dwellings of concern, it is located behind, west of, the proposed glass house. The nearest dwellings located to the east on Bolshaw Lane are located approx. 130m from the eastern boundary of the site.

Recall that 1) the proposed glass house measures approx. 144m by 235m with a max. height of approx. 7.8m; 2) the 5 No. associated water tanks measure approx. 12.7m diameter by 4.6m high but are sunk into the ground a depth of 1m, and 3) the associated heat store measures approx. 16m diameter and 12m high. Hence, the height of the proposed glass house is similar to that of a modest house. Though it is acknowledged that the relationship between dwellings and agricultural buildings differs to that of the relationship between dwellings and other dwellings, it is noted, as a means of comparison, that if residential properties were constructed to the rear of dwellings on Davies Avenue the max. distance required in policy DC38 (back to back of dwellings) is 25m. Hence, at between 30m and 48m the distance between the existing dwellings and the proposed glass house is greater. In addition, landscape screening is proposed to soften the impact. The height of the water tanks above ground level will be approx. 3.6m, and it is noted these will not be visible from neighbouring residential properties, given their siting in relation to existing buildings and hedgerows and the position of the proposed glass house. It is also noted that the applicant has proposed landscape screening within the north-eastern corner of the site and along the eastern boundary of the site to mitigate against any visual impact or perceived loss of amenity (some hawthorn hedging has already been planted along the eastern and southern boundaries). Should the application be approved, details of such landscape screening could be secured via condition.

Hence, bearing the above factors in mind it is considered that the proposed would not have a significant impact on the amenities of immediate or surrounding residential properties in respect of outlook, privacy or overshadowing.

As noted above, no objections have been received from the 'Countryside Rights Of Way' Officer. Hence, the proposed development is considered not to have any detrimental impact on local footpaths.

It is stated in the 'Design and Access Statement' (para 4.6) that it is expected that additional production on site would not add noticeably to traffic generation, as there will be more efficient use of existing deliveries, which currently have space capacity for increased loads. Para 4.5 states that all vehicular activity would remain within the nursery itself, the new build being serviced off the existing internal yard area (using electric buggies and trailers to move materials and crops around the site). It is also stated that the proposals would not generate any noise and no lighting is required and para 4.6 also notes that an additional 9 No. full-time staff and 9 No. seasonal staff will be required.

Although the size of the proposed glass house is relatively large, the additional traffic generation, number of additional employees on site and noise and/or pollution generated on site or with deliveries to/from the site are considered to be of a nature and scale that would not significantly harm the amenities of local residents re noise, pollution, traffic or use of local facilities and services.

Finally, it is noted that the applicant has submitted a response to concerns raised (details of which can be read on file). He notes that a siren currently sounds on site to demarcate working times during the day (and this has occurred on site prior to the neighbouring housing estate being built). As a gesture of goodwill, the applicant has proposed to switch the siren off. This gesture is noted and if the applicant wishes to do this they are entitled to do so. However, it is not considered reasonable nor necessary to require this.

Hence, bearing all the above factors in mind, subject to conditions, it is considered overall that the proposed development will have a limited and acceptable degree of impact on the amenities of occupants of neighbouring and surrounding properties. As such, the proposed development accords with policies DC3, DC13, DC14 and DC38 of the Local Plan.

### **Highways safety**

The Council's Strategic Infrastructure Manager has been consulted on the application and raises no objections. It is noted that the access to the site (off Bolshaw Lane) lies within the Borough of Stockport and therefore is outside the jurisdiction of Cheshire East Council. (Note: As noted above, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council was consulted on the application and has recommended a condition requiring a Delivery Management Plan to ensure safety on the surrounding road network following development). The Strategic Infrastructure Manager also notes that the 'Design and Access Statement' indicates that the development proposals will result in nine additional full time employees and nine seasonal staff and that HGV delivery traffic generation associated with proposals would be unlikely to increase noticeably, as the existing delivery vehicles which have spare capacity will be largely utilised to service the proposed glass house. Accordingly, it is concluded that the commuter peak hour and daily traffic generation associated with the development proposals would not be expected to have a material impact on the operation of the adjacent or wider highway network. Bearing these comments in mind, subject to a condition requiring a Delivery Management Plan, it is considered that there would be no highways safety concerns arising from the proposed and therefore proposed accords with policy DC6 of the Local Plan.

### **Ecological impacts**

The Council's Nature Conservation Officer has been consulted on the application and makes the following observations, comments and recommendations:

#### Great Crested Newts

Great Crested newts have been recorded at two ponds within 250m of the proposed development. In the absence of mitigation the proposed development would result in the loss of a sizable area of low quality terrestrial amphibian habitat. The proposed works would also result in the risk of any newts present on site being killed or injured during the construction process.

It should therefore be noted that since a European Protected Species has been recorded on site and is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed development, the planning authority must have regard to whether Natural England would be likely to subsequently grant the applicant a European Protected Species License under the Habitat Regulations. A license under the Habitats Regulations can only be granted when:

- the development is of overriding public interest,
- there are no suitable alternatives and
- the favourable conservation status of the species will be maintained.

To compensate for the loss of terrestrial habitat associated with the development the applicant is proposing to provide areas of rough grassland and the proposed glass house together with a number of hibernacula. The risk of amphibians being killed or injured during the construction phase would be mitigated through the exclusion of amphibians through the use of fencing under the terms of a Natural England license.

Bearing in mind the above, the Nature Conservation Officer advises that if planning permission were to be granted the submitted great crested newt mitigation and compensation measures would be adequate to maintain the favourable conservation status of the species concerned. It is recommended a condition is attached to secure the mitigation and compensation measures.

#### Badgers

Evidence of badgers has been recorded in the broad locality of the proposed development; however there is no evidence of badgers on the actual application site. As the status of badgers can change within a short time scale the Nature Conservation Officer advises that if planning consent is granted a condition should be attached requiring a updated badger survey to be undertaken and submitted to the LPA prior to the commencement of development.

#### Breeding birds

If planning consent is granted the Nature Conservation Officer recommends a condition be attached to safeguard nesting birds.

Bearing in mind the Nature Conservation Officer's comments above, it is noted that the favourable conservation status of Great Crested Newts will be maintained and that, with various conditions, this can be secured along with ensuring the protection of badgers and breeding birds. It is considered that there are significant benefits resulting from the increased tomato production on site and as such the development can be considered to be of overriding public interest. The submitted supporting information concludes that there are no suitable alternative sites. It is concluded that, subject to conditions, the proposed would not have any significant ecological impacts and therefore the proposed accords with policy NE11 of the Local Plan.

#### **Other Material Considerations:**

#### **Drainage & Flooding**

The site lies within Environment Agency Flood Risk Zone 1, which has a low probability of flood risk. Although a formal Flood Risk Assessment has not been submitted with the application, it is stated in the 'Design & Access Statement' (para 4.7) that there are a) no sewers within the vicinity of the site, b) no risk of flooding on site due to overloading of local sewers, c) no other local bodies of water likely to present a flood risk and d) no incidences of local groundwater flooding in the area. Para 4.9 states that at present all rainfall falls to a natural soakaway, which is a field which drains gradually to the south towards the new link

road. The nursery areas and hard-standing drain to a land drainage system. The proposed 5 No. water tanks are to store, re-use and re-cycle rain water for on site irrigation...and will serve as a sustainable drainage system. Any surplus rainfall will be released in a controlled manner (rates equivalent to green-field run off into the existing drainage system and sustainable drainage area at the northern end of the nursery) (para 4.10).

Para 4.11 of the 'Design & Access Statement' concludes that,

*"Subject to the attenuation and storage measure...the proposed would not lead to any risk of off site flood risk whilst at the same time providing clean rain water for irrigation purposes."*

Consultation comments are awaited from the Environment Agency and, as noted above, CE Flood Management Team has requested further details. This matter will be dealt with in a committee up-date. However, given that the site is in a Flood Risk Zone 1, if the measures proposed are demonstrated to be satisfactory, then the proposed would accord with policies DC17, DC18 and DC20.

### **Very special circumstances**

Should the Council conclude that 'very special circumstances' are required, the 'Design & Access Statement' states that, broadly, there are 2 No. factors that would constitute 'very special circumstances that outweigh any harm to the Green Belt re impact on openness: 1) the need for the site to be located where proposed and 2) the potential benefit from UK production (paras 6.4 – 6.15).

### **Sustainability (conclusions)**

#### **Environmental sustainability**

From the issues outlined above it is considered that the proposed would protect the natural and built environment, help to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and mitigate and adapt to climate change, in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF (para 7).

#### **Economic sustainability**

The information outlined in the 'Horticultural Appraisal' provides a detailed case of the economic benefits of the proposed development. For example, a) a capital investment in the company of some £2.25 million, yielding an annual income to the order of £1.9 million, creating 18 No. additional jobs; b) the proposed development is necessary to improve and maintain the efficiency and competitiveness of existing operations and meet the growing demands from new customers; c) the site is well served by the existing road network, transport services, utility provision and potential employees. Hence, the proposed would contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF (para 7).

#### **Social sustainability**

Some of the environmental and economic benefits outlined above would in themselves provide some social benefits and the spin-offs from some of these would also provide social benefits, for example a) employment opportunities, b) locally produced food and c) energy efficiencies, all of which contribute to strong, vibrant, healthy communities, in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF (para 7).

## **PLANNING BALANCE, CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION**

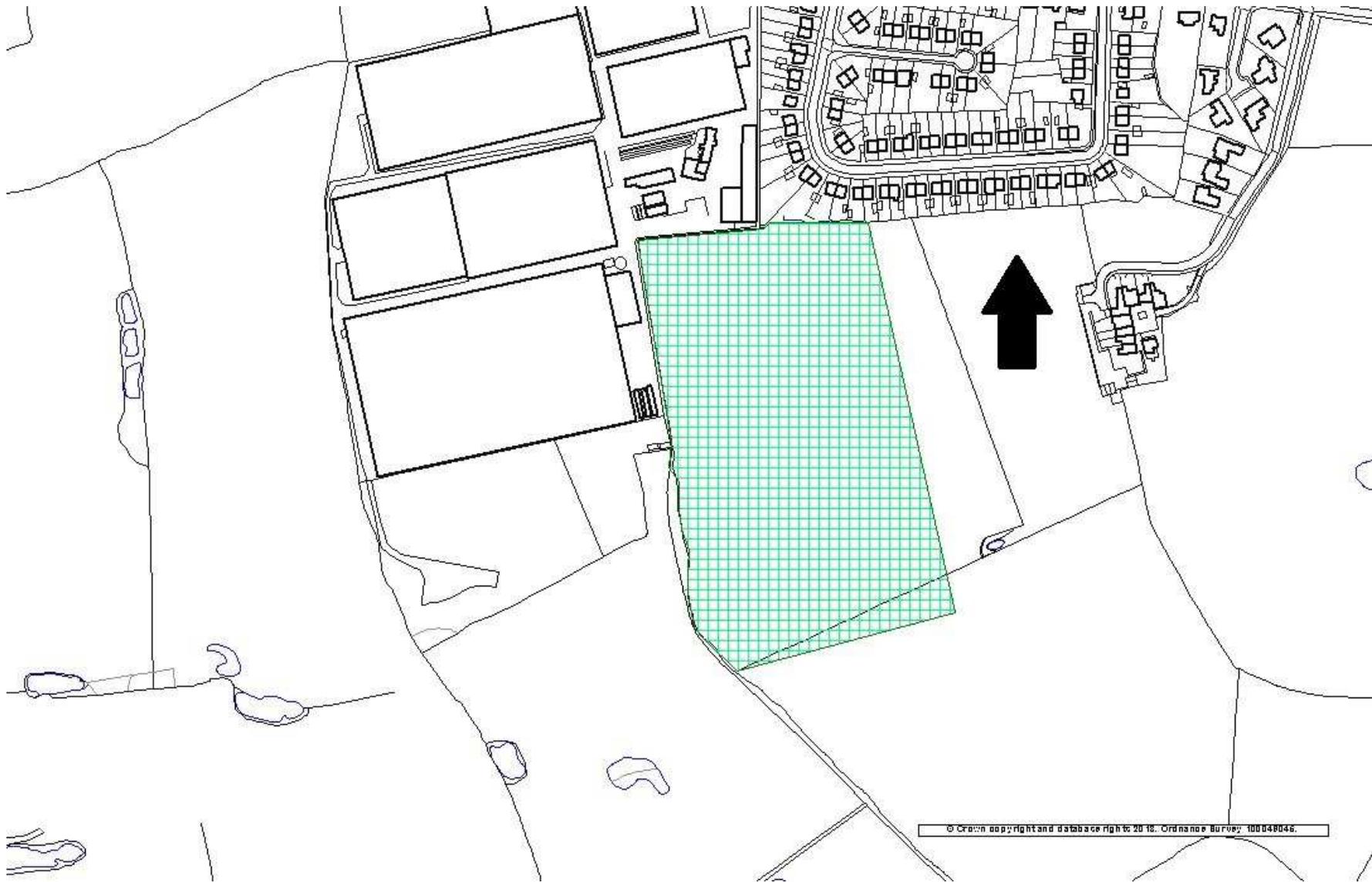
The proposed development would support the growth of the existing horticultural business and is not an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt. Though the proposals would have some impact on the openness of the Green Belt given a) the implicit policy acceptance of such development and its impact on openness, b) the lightweight nature of the proposed glass house, c) the proposed siting of the water tanks and heat store and d) suitable landscape screening conditions, it is considered that the impact of the proposed on the openness of the Green Belt is of a limited and acceptable degree. The impact of the proposals on the landscape and character and appearance of the surrounding area is considered to be acceptable, given the nature and context of the existing site within the area. The proposals would not result in any significant adverse impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties. Access arrangements remain as existing; the projected limited increases in vehicular movements to/from the site do not create any highways safety issues. Subject to conditions, the proposed does not have any significant ecological impact. Subject to outstanding consultation comments re Environment Agency and Flood Management, it is considered that the proposed would not result in any significant drainage/flooding issues. All representations have been borne in mind and the matters raised addressed within the report. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development constitutes a sustainable form of development and accords with all relevant Development Plan policies and other material considerations. As such, it is recommended the application be approved, subject to outstanding consultations, conditions and informatives.

Application for Full Planning

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

1. Development in accord with approved plans
2. Submission of landscape screening scheme
3. Development in accordance with Great Crested Newt Method Statement
4. Commencement of development (3 years)
5. Landscaping screening (implementation)
6. Details of materials and colour of the water tanks to be submitted
7. Materials for glass house and heat store as specified in the application
8. Up-dated Badger Survey to be submitted

9. Breeding birds
10. Delivery Management Plan
11. Hours of construction (and associated deliveries)
12. No coniferous trees
13. Use of cranes (if used)
14. Contaminated land
15. Public Rights Of Way
16. Paras 186 and 187 of the NPPF



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