

Application No: 11/2156N

Location: BRIDGEMERE NURSERIES, LONDON ROAD, BRIDGEMERE,
NANTWICH, CHESHIRE, CW5 7QB

Proposal: Demolition of Buildings and Erection of Two Storey Garden Centre
Sales/Restaurant Building

Applicant: Bridgemere Nursery & Garden World

Expiry Date: 14-Sep-2011

Date Report Prepared: 31st August 2011

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve with Conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Impact on Character and Appearance of Streetscene/Open Countryside
- Impact on the Amenity of Neighbouring properties
- Impact on Highway Safety

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is to be determined by the Southern Planning Committee as it forms floorspace that exceeds 1000sqm.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site is a garden centre and gardens site located within the Open Countryside as defined by the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan Proposals Map. The site is located to the south of the Borough and straddles the administrative boundary with Shropshire Council. The complex comprises a number of large buildings and large areas of external retail sales, gardens and car parking. The site is accessed from the A51 via separate in and out points of access.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application proposes the construction of a two storey structure within the complex of the garden centre. The building would comprise a ground floor retail sales area and first floor restaurant. The scheme proposes 620sqm of retail floorspace, 620sqm as restaurant and areas for toilets, kitchens and servicing. The footprint of the building would be 797.5sqm. The height of the structure would be 8.3m at its highest point and 5.3m to eaves. The proposed structure would be sited largely on the footprint of the existing “bulb market” and Ice Cream Parlour which have a footprint of 1,121sqm.

RELEVANT HISTORY

Extensive Planning History on the site, the most appropriate applications being:

P06/0288 – Planning permission approved for Erection of Polytunnel on 5th May 2006.

P04/1244 – Planning permission approved for Creation of Additional General Retail Sales Area and Storage Facilities and Improvements to Loading Area on 16th November 2004.

P04/1243 – Planning permission approved for Porch Extension to Existing Retail Area and Polytunnel Nursery Stock Protection to Replace Existing Shaded Plant Area in 2004.

P02/1078 – Planning permission approved for demolition of Glass Houses and Erection of New Structure on 20th December 2002.

P01/1034 – Planning permission for new glass house and covered walkway on 5th March 2002.

7/17179 – Planning permission approved for erection of sales building on 6th July 1989.

7/15525 – Planning permission approved for retail sales building and canopy on 9th June 1988.

7/13744 – Planning permission approved for covered area to be used for additional retail sales on 18th December 1986.

7/13743 – Planning permission approved for new detached glazed building for additional retail sales on 18th December 1986.

7/12991 – Planning permission approved for erection of building for display and sale of power machinery for use in gardens on 12th May 1986.

POLICIES

Local Plan Policy

- NE.2 (Open Countryside)
- BE.1 (Amenity)
- BE.2 (Design Standards)

- BE.3 (Access and Parking)
- BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources)
- BE.5 (Infrastructure)
- BE.6 (Development on Potentially Contaminated Land)
- E.6 (Employment Development within the Open Countryside)
- TRAN.9 (Car Parking Standards)
- RT.6 (Recreational Uses in the Open Countryside)
- S.10 (Major Shopping Proposals)

Other Material Considerations

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
 PPS4 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
 PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
 PPG13 – Transport

Draft National Planning Policy Framework

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Shropshire Council – Do not wish to comment

Strategic Highways Manager – Main Road has a 30mph speed limit with good forward visibility. The proposed accesses will be able to meet the correct visibility. The shared surface access is over designed and should be constructed as a vehicular crossing only. An amended plan will be required for Highways approval.

United Utilities – No objection. Should be drained on a separate system with only foul drainage connected to foul sewer.

Environmental Health – No objection subject to contaminated land conditions and conditions relating to construction hours.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Doddington and District – No objection, agree with comments made by Environmental Health and Cllr Clowes.

Wybunbury Parish Council – No objection in principle. However suggest restriction of opening hours due to sound travelling from first floor restaurant at unsociable hours, people leaving by car at the same time.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Comments received from Cllr Clowes stating no objection in principle to the proposed development subject to relevant conditions being attached to the permission relating to noise resulting from opening hours/late night opening.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning, Design and Access Statement (Prepared by Gregory Gray Associates dated June 2011)

Retail Statement

Retail Statement Addendum (prepared by Gregory Gray Associates dated 25th August 2011)

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of development

The application proposes the removal of existing structures and the construction of a new building for retail at groundfloor level and a restaurant at first floor level. Policy EC.10 of PPS4 states that a positive and constructive approach should be taken for applications for economic development. Policy EC.12, with reference to economic development in Rural Areas states that support should be given to small scale economic development where, if remote from service centres, the site may be an acceptable location for development even if not readily available by public transport.

The Draft National Planning Policy Framework identifies that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that significant weight should be attached to proposals of economic growth and proposals which enable the delivery of sustainable development proposals. With regard to the rural economy the Framework identifies that the support should be given to the sustainable growth of a rural business, and to support the expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met.

Policy S.10 of the Local Plan refers to Major Shopping Proposals which are outside the town centres for Crewe and Nantwich. That policy refers to proposals which have a gross retail floorspace of over 2,500sqm. The proposed net retail floorspace proposed as part of this application would be 620sqm in a footprint of 798sqm. Therefore the proposed development would not be required to satisfy the requirements of that policy and is not in conflict with the policy. It should be noted that the proposed development would replace existing retail floorspace in the form of the bulb market. Notwithstanding that cumulatively with existing development the proposal would exceed the 2,500sqm threshold. However the policy is not clear on the requirements for cumulative considerations.

Policy EC.14 of PPS4 states that an assessment of impacts may be necessary for retail developments below the threshold of 2,500sqm when they are not in an existing centre, in accordance with an up to date Local Plan and would be likely to have a significant impact on other centres. The proposed retail expansion of Bridgemere Garden World has the potential to cause an impact on other centres and it is therefore considered necessary to assess this. As such an Impact Assessment has been submitted by the applicant. The Impact Assessment has been carried out in accordance with the requirements outlined within PPS4 and identifies that, with the nature of the goods proposed to be sold associated with garden centres that there would be little demonstrable harm cause to the vitality and viability of nearby town centres.

In light of the above, the proposed development for unrestricted/controlled retail could lead to the retail element of the scheme being used for retail purposes which would not be appropriate to the site. Therefore a condition restricting the type of goods sold would be considered relevant in this instance. Furthermore, the change of use from a restaurant to shop can be carried out without planning permission under the Use Classes Order. A condition to ensure that the shop is not converted without the consent of the Local Planning Authority is also considered to be necessary as further retail development could have an impact on the vitality and viability of nearby town centres.

Furthermore, the site is identified in Policy RT.6 of the Local Plan as being an important visitor attraction in the Borough. The proposed development would help to increase the draw and attractiveness of the site for tourism purposes.

Impact on character and appearance of the streetscene/open countryside

The proposed development would be sited within the existing complex of Bridgemere Garden World. The proposals would replace existing structures within the complex including the “Bulb Market” which is a high roofed polytunnel structure. As the proposals are set deep within the complex, some 120m away from the A51. Whilst the proposed development is a taller structure than existing development, its siting away from the public highway, with structures and screening in between, it is considered that there would be no significant harm caused to the character and appearance of the streetscene.

To the rear (east) is a strong established line of vegetation which would screen the proposed development from open fields to the east. The siting within the complex would mean that there would be little harm caused to the character and appearance of the open countryside.

The proposed development would require the removal of some trees and would be in close proximity to a mature willow tree next to the women’s institute garden. It is recommended that a condition be attached to ensure that the tree is fully protected during construction.

Impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties

There are no residential properties within the immediate area outside of the ownership of the applicant. There will therefore be no harm caused to the amenities of neighbouring properties through loss of daylight, privacy or overlooking.

Some concern has been raised with regard to the potential noise impact that the proposed first floor restaurant could have on properties which are sited further afield through noise and disturbance. No opening hours have been specified within the application. The site is relatively isolated from nearby residential properties and as such the impact from the proposed development is unlikely to cause any detrimental harm, even from its first floor level. Furthermore, Environmental Health have not suggested any conditions to restrict the use or mitigate noise in any way from the first floor restaurant. It would appear from the planning history that there is no restriction in opening hours at the site as a whole and to restrict the opening hours of a small part of the overall complex would therefore be unreasonable.

Impact on Highway Safety

The application site benefits from a large customer car park. It is considered that the size of the car park is adequate to accommodate the proposed increase in retail and restaurant floorspace resulting from the proposed development.

Other matters

Environmental Health have stated that given the historic nursery use, as the scheme includes an area of landscaping, which is a sensitive end use, a contaminated land survey would be required. There is other legislation external to Planning which controls contaminated land and such a condition is considered to be unreasonable in this instance.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The proposed development includes economic development in a rural location within an established garden centre/tourist attraction site. The proposed development for increased retail space and a restaurant would be acceptable in principle as conditioned. The proposals would not result in any significant harm on the character and appearance of the open countryside, the amenity of nearby properties or highway safety. The proposal is therefore in compliance with Policies NE.2 (Open Countryside), BE.1 (Amenity), BE.2 (Design Standards), BE.3 (Access and Parking), BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources), BE.5 (Infrastructure), BE.6 (Development on Potentially Contaminated Land), E.6 (Employment Development within the Open Countryside), TRAN.9 (Car Parking Standards), RT.6 (Recreational Uses in the Open Countryside) and S.10 (Major Shopping Proposals) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011, and guidance contained within PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS4 – Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, PPG13 – Transport and the Draft National Planning Policy Framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Approve subjection to conditions:

- 1) Commencement of Development**
- 2) Plans**
- 3) Materials to be submitted and approved**
- 4) Tree Protection Measures to be submitted**
- 5) Restaurant to remain in A3 use, no retail sales**
- 6) Restriction of sale of goods to non food, associated to garden centre**
- 7) Construction Hours**

