

APPLICATION REPORT – 21/01465/FUL

Validation Date: 5 January 2022

Ward: Chorley North East

Type of Application: Full Planning

Proposal: Erection of two storey extension to south side, installation of over-cladding to existing store frontage, installation of solar photovoltaic panels, and alterations to car park layout and associated works

Location: Doorway To Value 50 Preston Road Whittle-Le-Woods Chorley PR6 7HH

Case Officer: Mr Iain Crossland

Applicant: Stokers Ltd

Agent: Mr Thomas Lord, Turley

Consultation expiry: 26 January 2022

Decision due by: 2 March 2022

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

SITE DESCRIPTION

2. The application site is located within the Green Belt and lies off the A6 Preston Road c.1.2km to the south of Whittle-le-Woods, c.2.5km north of Chorley town centre and c.10km south of Preston. It extends to 0.93 hectares (ha) and is occupied by a single storey commercial unit (Use Class E), which comprises 4,235m² (GIA) of retail floor space with associated storage and administrative accommodation and has direct access from Preston Road (A6).
3. The existing building is a warehouse type building that has been extended and clad and has large window openings. It is faced in buff coloured Forticrete ashlar masonry with random courses and formed coping, bronze coloured polyester powder coated aluminium windows and insulated profiled clad roof. The building is of a scale and appearance that stands out in the locality and occupies a prominent position on a main highway although it is set back from and at a higher level to the highway.
4. Land to the south and west of the furniture store building comprises hard surface car parking for visitors and staff, with vehicular access/egress to the A6 from the north west and southwest. Existing landscaping is situated along the western boundary of the site, adjacent to the A6. A gated area of hard surfacing is also located to the north of the store, providing staff parking and delivery access. To the east and north east, the application site boundary is landscaped with tree planting and a grass embankment.
5. The site lies to the south and east of residential development with two dwellings and a public house situated to the south. There is open agricultural land to the east, whilst the west and north of the site display a suburban character, being of a predominantly residential development.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6. This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a two storey extension to the south side of the existing building and includes the installation of over-cladding to the existing store frontage, installation of solar photovoltaic panels, and alterations to the car park layout and associated works. The proposed extension would be of modern appearance with a flat roof, large glazed panels and a lower level link between that and the existing building. The proposed extension would provide approximately 906m² of additional gross external area (GIA).

REPRESENTATIONS

7. Representations have been received from the occupiers of 2no. addresses citing the following grounds of objection:
 - Impact on amenity of residential occupiers due to the scale of what is proposed.
 - Loss of privacy for residential occupiers opposite due to overlooking impact.
 - Loss of light to residential dwellings due to elevated position.
 - Impact on highway safety and capacity due to increased parking requirement.
 - Lighting would harm amenity of neighbouring occupiers.
 - Issues with run off from development.
 - The development may alter surface water run-off.
 - Potential structural impacts on houses and buildings opposite the site.
 - Can it be guaranteed that there will be no impact on nearby residents during construction?

CONSULTATIONS

8. Whittle le Woods Parish Council: Have commented that they wish to ensure that due consideration is provided to the neighbours of the property, that all materials used are in keeping with the established dwelling and area, and that property boundaries are not encroached upon in any way.
9. Greater Manchester Ecology Unit: Have raised no objection.
10. Waste & Contaminated Land: Have confirmed that they have no comments to make.
11. Lancashire County Council Highway Services (LCC Highway Services): Have no objection subject to conditions.
12. United Utilities: No comments have been received.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of development

13. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
14. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
 - a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
15. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).
16. For decision-taking this means:
- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
 - where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
17. Paragraph 81 of the Framework covers Building a Strong Competitive Economy and states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
18. The application site is located wholly within the Green Belt, and national guidance on Green Belt is contained in Chapter 13 of the Framework which states:
- 137. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.*
- 138. Green Belt serves five purposes:*
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*
- 147. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*
- 148. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.*
- 149. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:*
- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
 - b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and*

allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) limited infilling in villages;*
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
– not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
– not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

19. Policy BNE5 of Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2016 relates to previously developed land within the Green Belt and reflects guidance contained within the Framework as follows:

The reuse, infilling or redevelopment of previously developed sites in the Green Belt, will be permitted providing the following criteria are met:

In the case of re-use

- a) The proposal does not have a materially greater impact than the existing use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it;*
- b) The development respects the character of the landscape and has regard to the need to integrate the development with its surroundings, and will not be of significant detriment to features of historical or ecological importance.*

In the case of infill:

c) The proposal does not lead to a major increase in the developed portion of the site, resulting in a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

In the case of redevelopment:

d) The appearance of the site as a whole is maintained or enhanced and that all proposals, including those for partial redevelopment, are put forward in the context of a comprehensive plan for the site as a whole.

20. The application site is occupied by a large building, used as a furniture retail business, that has been extended over time with significant areas of hard surfacing within its curtilage that are used for parking, manoeuvring and loading of vehicles, whilst there is landscaping to the periphery. The established use of the site must be considered to be previously developed land in the Green Belt.

21. The proposed development involves an extension to the existing building. One exception to inappropriate development in Green Belt set out at paragraph 149.c) is the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

22. Whether the proposed extension would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building is a subjective judgment. Objective criteria could include the volume of the existing buildings although it is important to note that the Framework does not include such an allowance or capacity test. The Central Lancashire Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document does, however, set out that when considering what may be a disproportionate addition increases of over 50% of the volume of the original building that stood in 1948, will be considered inappropriate. albeit it is noted that this volume criteria is intended to relate to residential dwellings rather than commercial buildings.

23. The proposed extension would be of a greater massing than the existing building as it would have a flat roof with a height greater than the eaves height of the existing building and

slightly above that of the ridge. However, the width of the proposed extension would be considerably less than the expanse of the existing building frontage facing the highway, as would the footprint resulting in a degree of subservience despite the height. Notwithstanding this, as a result of previous extensions, the cumulative increase in floorspace following the proposed development would be 130% larger than the floorspace of the original building, whilst the cumulative increase in volume would be significantly greater than 50% of the volume of the original building. As such the proposed development would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and would not meet with the relevant exception set out at paragraph 149 of the Framework. The proposed development is considered to represent inappropriate development and is, therefore, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.

24. As it has been established that there is harm to the Green Belt by definition, any other harm caused by the development must also be considered and added to the definitional harm. The part of the site in which the development would be carried out is currently open, although it is hard surfaced. The proposal would introduce a two storey structure that would project to the south of the existing building and would extend the built form on this side of the A6. As the site is highly prominent from the public highway and the development would be clearly visible it would inevitably diminish openness to some extent particularly when viewed from the south and west. It must, therefore, also be considered that the development would result in some harm to openness.
25. Considering each of the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out in the Framework in turn:
26. Purpose 1 (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas)
The proposed development would extend the built form of development further south, however, as it would be an extension of the existing building into the existing hard standing within the site it would be read as part of the existing building and, therefore, would not result in, or contribute to, the unrestricted sprawl of the built up area.
27. Purpose 2 (to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another)
The development of the site would not result in neighbouring towns merging into one another.
28. Purpose 3 (to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment)
The proposed development would be contained within a previously developed site on an area of hardstanding and would not, therefore, lead to any encroachment into the countryside beyond the developed area.
29. Purpose 4 (preserve the setting and special character of historic towns)
The site is not located within or near to a historic town, and the proposed building would not be located within the setting of any listed buildings.
30. Purpose 5 (to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land)
There would be no material impact on this purpose given that the proposed development is small scale development and specifically related to an existing business that has been established on the site for a significant period of time.
31. On the basis of the above it is not considered that there would be any other harm to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
32. In consideration of other matters of principle this part of Whittle le Woods lies outside the settlement area, is not specified as an area for growth within Core Strategy Policy 1 and falls to be considered as an 'other place'. Criterion (f) of Core Strategy Policy 1 reads as follows: *"In other places – smaller villages, substantially built up frontages and Major Developed Sites – development will typically be small scale and limited to appropriate infilling, conversion of buildings and proposals to meet local need, unless there are exceptional reasons for larger scale redevelopment schemes."*

The proposed development would be small in scale and therefore complies with this policy.

Delivering economic prosperity - Shopping

33. Paragraph 87 of the Framework states that Local Planning Authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.
34. Paragraph 88, goes on to state that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and Local Planning Authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.
35. Central Lancashire Core Strategy policy 11 reflects this approach setting out that main town centre uses should be focussed in the defined town centres. The application site is not within a town centre or edge of centre location and must be considered out of centre.
36. Policy EP9 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 specifically relates to development in Edge-of-Centre and Out-of-Centre Locations, and reflects the thrust of the Framework. This states that:

Outside the town, district and local centres, change of use and development for small scale local shopping and town centre uses (either as part of mixed use developments or in isolation) will be permitted where:

 - a) *The proposal meets a local need and can be accessed in its catchment by walking, cycling and public transport; and*
 - b) *Does not harm the amenity of an adjacent area; and*
 - c) *The Sequential Test and Impact Assessment are satisfied setting out how proposals do not detract from the function, vitality and viability of the borough's hierarchy of centres.*
37. In relation to criteria a) the application site is located to the southern extent of Whittle le Woods and lies at the very edge of the settlement area. Whittle le Woods has grown significantly over the last decade and as such the site is within walking distance of a reasonably large catchment. It also lies adjacent to a high frequency bus route and as such is accessible to a large catchment via public transport. Although the retail development serves a need beyond the locality it is also serving a local need and is a well established existing business that is seeking to expand within their own site.
38. The site is well established and is set within an area of mixed vernacular and character. The development would be within the existing site and designed to form a visual link with the existing building. It would be viewed in that context and as such would not be harmful to visual amenity. In relation to any impacts on residential amenity these are considered later in the report, however, it is considered that the building can be extended without harm to the amenity of nearby residential occupiers.
39. Turning to criterion c) paragraph 6.26 of the Local Plan states that - *To maintain the balance between the role and function of Chorley Town Centre, the District Centres and Local Centres, Chorley Council will apply the sequential test and impact assessment to new retail development and main town centre uses, as set out in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. The Sequential Test requires major retail, cultural and service development to be located on the most central sites in town centres before considering less central sites. A sequential test will apply to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre. The aim is to minimise the need to travel, provide a diverse range of services in the one central location and make facilities accessible to all. This approach is intended to sustain and focus growth and investment in the Town Centre.*

40. Paragraph 6.27 of the Local Plan goes on to state that - *The Impact assessment is required for planning applications for retail, leisure and office development outside of town centres where the development is 2,500sq m and over, to ensure they would not detrimentally impact the function, vitality and viability of the borough's hierarchy of centres. The Impact assessment will be particularly relevant to edge-of-centre and out-of-centre proposals. In assessing vitality and viability consideration will be given to pedestrian flows, vacancy rates, numbers and range of facilities, quality of the urban environment and the general performance of the centre.*
41. The proposal does not require an Impact Assessment as it falls well beneath the threshold. The Sequential test must, however, be satisfied. Retail development is defined in Annex 2 of the Framework as a main town centre use. A sequential test is provided in line with EP9 c).
42. The sequential test considers whether there are any sequentially preferable sites within 300m of, Chorley Old Road Local Centre, Whittle-le-Woods, and finds there are none. It is noted that the Central Lancashire Retail and Leisure Study (2019) review of this local centre concludes that *Chorley Old Road centre is not currently fulfilling a role as a local centre for residents as it does not include a range or mix of shops and services or even a convenience store. The long-term vacancy of one of the units in the centre and the more recent departure of two further operators indicates a lack of demand from operators to locate in the centre.* The applicant used the Council's brownfield register, as well as a commercial property database and the Council's planning database in order to identify potential alternative sites. No sites are identified and it is noted that the application is for an extension to the existing building, which is a large furniture store.
43. As the store is long established and fixed in its location the additional floorspace proposed could not realistically be provided in an alternative location, and would not deliver the trading format required to sustain the business in the long term. Similarly it would not be feasible for the business to relocate to an alternative location to achieve the destination store format sought by the applicant to achieve the longevity of the business, and given the level of investment embedded in the existing site and facilities.
44. It has been demonstrated that there are no in-centre or edge-of-centre opportunities that are suitable and available and which should be favoured over and above the application site, whilst there are no other sites for consideration.
45. It is considered that the applicant has addressed policy EP9 criterion a) and c) of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026. The proposal has been designed to respond to a particular type of need, and can be readily accessed by walking, cycling or public transport. Given the scale of the proposed development and circumstances that it would be an extension to an existing building to support and existing business, it would not detract from the function, vitality and viability of Chorley Town Centre or any nearby district centres. The impact of the proposal on the amenity of an adjacent area – criterion b) EP9 is addressed later in the report.
46. The proposal is considered to comply with policy EP9 of the Chorley Local plan 2012-26, however, as the proposed development would result in definitional harm to the Green Belt and harm to openness, there would have to be very special circumstances to justify the grant of planning permission that would outweigh this harm.

Design and impact on the character of the area

47. The application site is located on a main arterial highway that carries a significant volume of road traffic to access the M61 and Chorley, and is a key gateway into Chorley. The site is occupied by a large furniture retail store that is of an individual design and appearance and is of notable scale in this locality. It is set back from the highway and sits at a higher level which results in a high degree of prominence. The character of the surrounding area is somewhat mixed with dwellings of traditional design faced in red brick and local stone, whilst most properties are two storey in height and of domestic scale.

48. The proposal includes the erection of a two storey extension of contemporary modern design style with a flat roof and full length window openings. It would be of a different form and scale to the existing building, which has a dual pitched roof and would exceed the eaves and ridge height of the existing building. As such it would purposefully result in a contrasting form of development attached to the main building via a lower level link, which would provide a sense of separation. The proposed extension would be faced in similar materials to the existing building and although its scale and form would differ it would not be harmful to the appearance of the existing building, which is it noted would be re-clad in order to enhance the degree of assimilation.
49. Although the proposed extension would be set back within the site it would have windows facing onto Preston Road creating some degree of active frontage and natural surveillance across the site and associated car parking. The peripheral landscaping that would be retained would help to frame the development and soften the visual impact. Given the significant scale of the existing building the proposed development is considered to be commensurate with it despite the height and massing. The existing building would be re-clad and the proposed extension would result in a contrasting form of development that would create a degree of interest rather than harm the appearance of the site, and would not appear discordant when viewed in the context of the wider site. Overall, the proposed development would not be harmful to the character of the area in the context of the existing development. The proposed development is, therefore, considered to be in accordance with policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026.

Impact on neighbour amenity

50. The application site is located to the east of dwellings located on the opposite side of Preston Road, whilst it is noted that there are also dwellings located on the same side of Preston Road to the north and south of the site.
51. The proposed extension would be situated to the south side of the existing building and as such would be nearest to dwellings at nos.21 to 31 Preston Road on the opposite side of the highway to the west. The proposed extension would be two storeys in height and would be sited at a higher level relative to these properties. The extension would be located over 40m from the front elevations to these properties, which is a significant degree of separation, whilst there is also an intervening highway and landscaping. Although the proposed extension would be visible from the front of these dwellings, the scale of development and degree of separation are such that there would be no unacceptably harmful impact on light, outlook or privacy. Although some degree of inter-visibility may be possible, views from the windows within the proposed extension would be fleeting as customers and staff would move around within the building engaged in the activity of buying and selling items of furniture, rather than seeking out windows from which to spend time enjoying the visual amenity that they may provide. Furthermore the degree of separation is such that it is well in excess of the inter-visibility distance guidelines that are applied to facing windows between dwellings, whereby window views are more readily enjoyed for the visual amenity that they provide.
52. The nearest dwelling to the south at no.14 Preston Road has a side elevation facing the proposed development and would be further removed from the extension. As such there would be no unacceptably harmful impact on light, outlook or privacy. It is noted that this dwelling is close to an existing site entrance that would be retained, whilst no.54 Preston Road would be located close to the northern site entrance. No.51 Preston Road would be directly opposite this entrance, whilst nos.11 and 13 Preston Road would be directly opposite the southern entrance. It is recognised that there may be some potential for noise and disturbance from the site in relation to the occupiers of these nearby properties if there were to be a significant increase in vehicles accessing the site.
53. The applicant has carried out a parking accumulation exercise that demonstrates that the parking requirement for the site would experience a small increase in excess of current patronage levels, such that it is not anticipated that the proposed development would result in significantly higher numbers of vehicles entering and exiting the site than already occurs, or has occurred in the past. It is also noted that Preston Road is a main arterial route and as

such the area is already dominated by traffic along the main road. The predominant activity from the proposed development would also have the character of general traffic and so should be aurally indistinguishable from it, and any impact on amenity of residential occupiers would not be materially greater than currently levels of amenity.

54. In order to provide safe access for customers to the store and for vehicle parking, the proposed development incorporates five LED luminaires, which are located along the front elevation of the building. The application is supported by a technical note that provides an evaluation of the technical aspects of external lighting to the proposed extension and the impacts on lighting spill up to the boundary. The lighting plot indicates that the boundary lux level is approximately 5 lux to the south, approximately 6 lux to the west and no illuminance to the east of the development beyond the boundary. These levels of illuminance are considered such that there would be no unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby residential occupiers through light pollution, given the context of a well-lit major highway.
55. On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in any unacceptable harm to the amenity and living conditions of nearby residents, and the development complies with criterion b) of policy EP9 and policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026.

Highway safety

56. Lancashire County Council (LCC) as the Local Highway Authority (LHA) is responsible for providing and maintaining a safe and reliable highway network. With this in mind, the present and proposed highway systems have been considered and areas of concern that potentially could cause problems for the public, cyclists, public transport, motorists and other vehicles in and around the area have been identified.
57. The site is to the east of Preston Road, Whittle-Le-Woods, between Buckshaw Avenue and the B6229 Moss Lane. It is an existing furniture retail store of 4235m² gross floor area (gfa) with two existing accesses onto Preston Road. There are 93no. existing car parking spaces on site, including 1no. disabled bay.
58. A total of 11 traffic accidents were recorded in the most recent 5-year period from 2016-2020 on the section of Preston Road fronting the site from Buckshaw Avenue in the south to Moss Lane in the north. 6 of the accidents occurred at the traffic signal at Preston Road/Buckshaw Avenue, while 2 occurred at the junction of the site's south access with Preston Road. An accident each occurred at Preston Road/Foxglove Drive and Preston Road/Moss Lane and on Preston Road at a point midway the site frontage.
59. Nine of the accidents were recorded as slight while 2 were recorded as serious. The serious accidents occurred on Preston Road at a point approximately 70m north of the site's south access involving a motorcyclist and at the traffic signal. 2 slight accidents at the traffic signal and 1 at the site's south access involved pedal cyclists.
60. The level of traffic accidents within the short length of Preston Road from Buckshaw Avenue to Moss Lane is comparatively higher than the local average rate, therefore, the applicant will be required to implement mitigation measures towards alleviating the accident problems.
61. The proposal is to carry out a two storey extension to a scale of 998m² gfa at the south end of the existing building and re-organise the existing car parking spaces on site to include provision of 12 space staff car park at the north end of the existing building.
62. The parking re-organisation would lead to a reduction in the overall parking provision on site from the existing 93no. spaces to 84no. (including 6no. disabled spaces and 12no. spaces for staff). In support of the proposed reduced parking, the applicant conducted a parking accumulation survey of the existing parking situation between the hours of 12:00-16:00 on Saturday 18 September 2021. The survey shows that during the site's busiest parking demand period of 15:00 and 15:10, a maximum of 47no. parked cars were counted on site, which is approximately 51% occupation of the existing 93no. spaces.

63. The proposed extension of 998m² gfa equates to 24% increase in scale from the existing 4235m² gfa to 5233m². The applicant assumes that parking demand due to the extension would be proportionate to this percentage increase and therefore estimates that the maximum peak parking demand of 47no. spaces would increase by 24% following the extension to 58no. spaces, thus demonstrating that although the proposed extension would result in the loss of existing parking spaces, the proposed 84no. spaces would be adequate to meet the site's parking requirements. The applicant's assumption and the method used in assessing the required level of future parking demand is acceptable.
64. Overall, the proposal is acceptable, however, as indicated above, given the level of traffic accidents at this location, there is need for measures to be implemented to ensure safe access and egress of the site. It is considered that the applicant rationalises the existing site accesses and renew the existing road markings on Preston Road from Buckshaw Avenue to the B6229 Moss Lane.
65. The corner radii of the site's south access are excessive and appears to encourage motorists to turn earlier than they should when accessing and egressing the site. The access should be standardised with the provision of a vehicle dropped crossing and new kerb realignments to reduce the existing corner radii to 6.0m. The improvements should include the installation of dropped kerbs and tactile pavings at the ends of the footways on both sides of the access. The hedgerow at the corners of the access should be reduced to less than 1.0m in height for improved visibility.
66. The site's north access should also be rationalised as a properly constructed vehicle access with 6.0m corner radii extended to the edge of carriageway. The existing vehicle dropped crossing overlaps the adjacent residential boundary causing motorist to undertake turns in and out of the site without clear sight of approaching hazards and the pedestrian dropped kerbs provided at the end of the footway on the south side of the access is overrun by vehicles egressing the site. As part of improvements of the access, the pedestrian dropped crossing should be reinstated and; new dropped kerbs and tactile pavings provided at the end of the footways on both sides of the access.
67. In addition, LCC Highway Services consider that the existing carriageway markings on Preston Road from its junction with Buckshaw Avenue to its junction with Moss Lane should be renewed as part of the safety measures.
68. The proposal is acceptable subject to the improvements set out above, which would be undertaken through the s278 agreement of the Highways Act 1980 with the applicant responsible for all costs. It is, therefore, recommended that conditions are attached to any grant of planning permission requiring a scheme for the construction of the site access and the off-site works of highway improvement and its implementation.
69. LCC Highway Services raise no objection to the proposed development on highway safety grounds and have not identified any severe residual cumulative impacts on the local highway network. The Framework is clear in stating that *'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'*. On this basis there are no highway grounds that would meet the threshold for any refusal of the proposed development.

Ecology

70. The Council's ecology advisors GMEU have considered the proposal and raise no objection. The application is accompanied by an ecology report that includes a Preliminary Ecological Assessment. This found the building to be extended to have negligible bat roosting potential. GMEU consider that the ecological assessment has been undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist and followed best practice guidelines, and the findings of the assessment are accepted.

Flood risk and drainage

71. The application site is not located in an area that is at risk of flooding from pluvial or fluvial sources, according to Environment Agency mapping data. In accordance with the Framework and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the site should be drained on a separate system with foul water draining to the public sewer and surface water draining in the most sustainable way.
72. The NPPG clearly outlines the hierarchy to be investigated by the developer when considering a surface water drainage strategy. As such the developer should consider the following drainage options in the following order of priority:
1. into the ground (infiltration);
 2. to a surface water body;
 3. to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;
 4. to a combined sewer.
73. It is recommended that the applicant implements a scheme in accordance with the surface water drainage hierarchy outlined above.

Other matters

74. *Potential structural impacts on houses and buildings opposite the site:* This is a civil matter that should be addressed between private parties in the event that structural damage is caused.
75. *Can it be guaranteed that there will be no impact on nearby residents during construction?:* It is inevitable that there would be some impact on the amenity of nearby residential occupiers during the course of any development scheme, however, such impacts are temporary and relatively short lived, whilst it is also noted that there is a good degree of separation between residential dwellings and the application site.

Green Belt balancing exercise

76. It has been established that there is definitional harm to the Green Belt as the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and there would be harm to openness. It is considered that there would not be any further harm. Development of this type should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
77. With a view to demonstrating very special circumstances the applicant has advanced several factors and benefits for consideration in the planning balance.

Economic Sustainability and Direct Job Creation

78. The proposed development represents a significant and essential investment by the Applicant to expand and enhance the retail store, delivering opportunities for the expansion of product lines and the associated enhancement of revenues generated by increased sales. Such investment is essential to securing the long-term financial sustainability of a local business, enabling it to respond to changing market and economic conditions, particularly in light of changes to consumer behaviours and the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
79. Furthermore, as set out within the Design & Access Statement, the existing Doorway to Value (DTV) store employs a total of 37no. staff, with an additional five staff employed by the concessionary retail outlets. The creation of additional retail floorspace would not only secure these roles but would also create a need for additional staff to assist in the operation and management of the store. It is, therefore, anticipated that the proposed development would create 15no. additional jobs, increasing total employment to 52no. staff members (excluding concession staff). In addition, the proposed development would generate direct local employment during the construction as well as supporting other businesses within the supply chain.

The Absence of Alternatives

80. The proposed development seeks to deliver additional floorspace which is required to create a destination retail store which can compete within the modern retail sector (including with on-line offerings).
81. The additional floorspace is not footloose and its provision in an alternative location would not deliver the trading format required to sustain, in the long term, the DTV business. Similarly, it would not be feasible for the DTV to relocate to an alternative location to achieve the destination store format required, given the level of investment embedded in the existing site and facilities. Simply put, the trading format required and the benefits of the proposed development which stand to be realised can only be achieved through expansion of the existing store in the manner proposed.
82. In the circumstances the purpose and benefits of completing a sequential assessment of alternative sites (as required by national and local policy) is limited. Notwithstanding this primary proposition a Sequential Test assessment has been completed and is submitted alongside this application. The assessment demonstrates that there are no 'suitable' and 'available' sites within or on the edge of Chorley Old Road Local Centre (the search area) that could realistically accommodate the scale and form of development for which planning permission is sought, even demonstrating reasonable flexibility.

Improving the Built Environment

83. The proposal would create a high-quality development, seeking to enhance the visual appearance of this gateway site at the edge of Chorley along the A6 and provide an attractive retail setting for customers. It would incorporate high quality materials which reflect and complement the local context and seek to integrate the development into the existing built environment. The proposed development would enhance the visual amenity of the site and improve the setting of the A6 Preston Road.

Contribution to Reduction of Carbon Emissions

84. As demonstrated by the Energy & Sustainability Statement, the proposed development would incorporate a series of energy efficiency and low carbon construction measures which would result in a 33.65% improvement in CO2 emissions above the Building Regulations baseline. In particular, this includes the installation of solar PV panels to the roof of the proposed extension. This contribution to reducing carbon emissions and mitigating the impact of the development on climate change is a hugely important benefit which should be afforded substantial weight.
85. Paragraph 81 of the Framework states that *planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.*
86. The proposal would result in an additional 15no. direct jobs in addition to the protection of existing jobs, which is in line with the Framework and the Local Plan, paragraph 6.1 of which states that *the long term sustainability of Chorley depends on developing the local economy and providing enough jobs for existing and future generations.* The applicant also sets out that the expansion of the store is a necessity for the business to remain viable and sustainable into the future. As such the proposed and existing jobs are dependent upon the proposed development. This is considered to carry significant weight in the planning balance.
87. The proposed expansion can only take place on the application site, as this is the established location of the business. As such there are no alternative locations and the proposed development on the site is the only way in which the business can expand to adapt its offer and retain its presence and economic value to the Borough. This is considered to carry significant weight in the planning balance.

88. The proposed extension and overhaul of the existing building would rejuvenate the site to some extent, and given that the site and extended area is previously developed land this has some moderate benefits. Climate change is a priority for the Council and a new Climate Change Strategy for Chorley is being prepared. Approval for a public consultation on the new strategy was given at Executive Cabinet on 20th January 2022. The Climate Change Strategy will help the Council to deliver on its 2019 declaration to be net zero carbon by 2030. It is considered that the proposed installation of solar panels as part of this application fits with the Council's climate change priority and, therefore, carries great weight.
89. When taking into account the considerations in respect of this application, it is considered that the case put forward by the applicant cumulatively amounts to very substantial weight. This cumulative weight is such that it is considered to amount to very special circumstances that carry substantial weight and in this instance amounts to the very special circumstances required to overcome and outweigh the definitional harm to the Green Belt, which must be accorded substantial weight in line with the Framework.

CONCLUSION

90. The proposed erection of a two storey extension to the south side of the existing building is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is, however, considered that in this instance there are very special circumstances to overcome the definitional harm to the Green Belt. The impact on the character and appearance of the area and amenity of neighbouring occupiers is considered to be acceptable, and there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on highway safety. It is, therefore, recommended that the application be approved subject to conditions.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE

- Ref:** 5/1/01355 **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 2 January 1960
Description: Flat wall sign
- Ref:** 75/00974/ADV **Decision:** PERADV **Decision Date:** 9 February 1976
Description: Fascia Board and Trade Mark Advertisement located on New Storage Building
- Ref:** 76/00032/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 9 February 1976
Description: New entrance and Cold Store
- Ref:** 76/00382/ADV **Decision:** PERADV **Decision Date:** 7 December 1976
Description: Illuminated sign
- Ref:** 76/00936/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 4 January 1977
Description: Amended position of refrigeration rooms
- Ref:** 79/00670/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 12 September 1979
Description: Change of use of hatchery to meat packaging and cutting building
- Ref:** 80/00046/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 9 April 1980
Description: To retain permitted use of Maple Leaf Hatcheries as a meat packaging and cutting building without complying to Condition 2 of Planning Permission 9/79/670 and to remove that condition
- Ref:** 80/00374/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 28 April 1980
Description: Extension to loading bay enclosing existing refrigerator stores and providing open bin stores
- Ref:** 80/00391/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 9 June 1980
Description: a) New vehicular crossing, car park and landscaping. b) Alterations to existing crossing

Ref: 82/00116/FUL **Decision:** REFFPP **Decision Date:** 24 November 1983
Description: Change of use of the former hatchery building to a home improvement/DIY shop

Ref: 86/00201/FUL **Decision:** REFFPP **Decision Date:** 19 August 1986
Description: Change of use of former hatchery to provide extension to existing shop and formation of new link

Ref: 86/00642/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 21 October 1986
Description: Change of use of former hatchery building to home improvement/diy shop

Ref: 87/00867/OUT **Decision:** WDN **Decision Date:** 11 January 1988
Description: Outline development of a site of 1.26 hectares with a foodstore of 43,000 sq. ft with appropriate car parking facilities

Ref: 88/00830/ADV **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 29 November 1988
Description: Display of Floodlit Fascia and Individual Letter Signs

Ref: 89/01186/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 3 April 1990
Description: Rear and side extensions

Ref: 94/00095/ADV **Decision:** PERADV **Decision Date:** 26 April 1995
Description: Display of two non- illuminated free standing post signs

Ref: 04/00891/OUT **Decision:** PEROPP **Decision Date:** 30 September 2004
Description: Outline application for the demolition of an existing warehouse and the erection of an extension to the existing store

Ref: 00/00980/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 14 February 2001
Description: Extension to link two buildings, front extensions and alterations to elevations and roof

Ref: 01/00573/ADV **Decision:** PERADV **Decision Date:** 29 August 2001
Description: Display of non-illuminated sign

Ref: 02/00993/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 3 December 2002
Description: Formation of entrance canopy to existing front entrance

Ref: 05/00125/REM **Decision:** PERRES **Decision Date:** 4 April 2005
Description: Erection of single storey extension to rear to provide 600sqm of retail accommodation for display and storage of goods following demolition of existing detached warehouse

Ref: 09/00766/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 25 November 2009
Description: Extension to north elevation of existing furniture showroom

Ref: 11/00079/HDG **Decision:** WDN **Decision Date:** 14 February 2011
Description: Removal of hedgerow

Ref: 12/00959/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 16 November 2012
Description: Section 73 application to extend the time limit for implementation of planning permission ref: 09/00766/FUL (which was for extension to north elevation of existing furniture showroom)

Ref: 12/01213/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 8 February 2013
Description: Erection of extension to rear (east) of existing furniture showroom and ground remodelling

Ref: 13/00526/TPO **Decision:** PERTRE **Decision Date:** 24 July 2013
Description: Crown lift by 3 metres Beech trees within G1, remove an Ash tree T1 and remove Beech tree T2 within Chorley Borough TPO No. 3 1977

RELEVANT POLICIES: In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan (the Central Lancashire Core Strategy, the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposal has had regard to guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the development plan. The specific policies/ guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

Suggested conditions

To follow