

APPLICATION REPORT – 22/00888/FULMAJ

Validation Date: 2 September 2022

Ward: Clayton West And Cuerden

Type of Application: Major Full Planning

Proposal: Extension to existing polytunnel building and erection of a new polytunnel building

Location: Armlee Nurseries Apline View Wigan Road Clayton-Le-Woods Leyland PR25 5SB

Case Officer: Mike Halsall

Applicant: Mr Lee Ainscough

Agent: Mr Steven Hartley HP & DA Ltd

Consultation expiry: 26 July 2023

Decision due by: 8 December 2023 (Extension of time agreed)

RECOMMENDATION

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

SITE DESCRIPTION

2. This is an existing commercial plant (horticultural) nursery site that is a wholesale supplier to national supermarket chains. It is located within the Green Belt immediately adjacent to the M6 motorway to the west and the A49, Wigan Road, to the east. A high-pressure gas pipeline runs parallel to the M6 at the western extremity of the site and a small strip of the site adjacent to its northern boundary falls within an area of minerals safeguarded land.
3. A relatively new housing development is located to the east of the site, an allocated housing site (HS1.31) within the settlement of Clayton-le-Woods. The nearest property within this area is located approximately 115 metres to the east of the site. Lydiate Farm complex is located approximately 50 metres to the north of the northern site boundary. A small industrial complex is located between 30 and 50 metres to the south of the southern site boundary.
4. Planning permission (Ref: 07/01220FUL) was granted on the 19th of December 2007 for various plant nursery buildings and a storage reservoir for plant watering purposes.
5. In 2017, under application ref:17/00961/FULMAJ, planning permission was granted for a polytunnel measuring 96m by 85.4m and with a maximum height of 3.962m. including a 5000m³ pond. The development was completed soon afterwards.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6. In order for the business to develop and expand, more protected growing facilities are required. Thus, the proposal is for an extension to the south of the existing polytunnel building and a separate such building to the east. Both would be of similar height and

external appearance to the existing polytunnel building (visqueen diffused polythene), with the proposed extension having a surface area of approximately 5600m² and the separate building of approximately 200m². Some minor changes would be required to the pond to serve the new developments. The areas of the site where the new buildings are proposed are currently set to hardstanding.

REPRESENTATIONS

7. No representations have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

8. Cadent Gas: No objection, following the receipt of additional information from the applicant.
9. National Highways: No objection.
10. Environment Agency: No response.
11. Greater Manchester Ecology Unit: No objection.
12. Waste & Contaminated Land Officer: Have confirmed that they have no comments.
13. Lancashire County Council Highway Services (LCC Highway Services): No objection.
14. Lead Local Flood Authority: No objection subject to a condition.
15. National Grid: No response.
16. Clayton-le-Woods Parish Council: No response.
17. Council's Tree Officer: No objection.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of development

18. The application site is located within the Green Belt. Paragraphs 147 and 148 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) state that development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and 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. Paragraph 149 states that there are exceptions to new buildings being considered inappropriate in the Green Belt, which includes buildings for agriculture and forestry.
19. The definition of agriculture set out at paragraph 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 includes horticulture. Both the existing use and the proposed extension/ new building therefore fall within this definition. The proposal appears to be suitable in terms of size, scale and layout for the intended agricultural purpose. It is, therefore, considered that the proposal is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is acceptable in principle, subject to the other considerations outlined below.
20. Paragraph 81 of the Framework states that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, with emphasis being placed on taking into account local business needs.
21. Paragraph 84 of the Framework relates specifically to supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. Also, paragraph 85 of the Framework states that planning decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements.

22. The company currently has 15 full time staff plus two part time staff. In addition, during the peak season there are a further 12 part time staff. The new proposal would see an increase to 20 full time staff plus 4 part time staff and with an extra 17 part time staff in the peak season.
23. When applying the above paragraphs of the Framework to this proposal, it is considered that the proposed development is not excessive and is appropriate for the described use within the planning application. As a result of this, it is considered that this development carries the support of both paragraphs 81, 84 and 85 of the Framework.

Design, amenity and access

24. Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 states that planning permission will be granted for new development, including extensions, conversions and free-standing structures, provided that (amongst other things):
 - a) *The proposal does not have a significantly detrimental impact on the surrounding area by virtue of its density, siting, layout, building to plot ratio, height, scale and massing, design, orientation and use of materials.*
 - c) *The layout, design and landscaping of all elements of the proposal, including any internal roads, car parking, footpaths and open spaces, are of a high quality and respect the character of the site and local area;*
 - d) *The residual cumulative highways impact of the development is not severe and it would not prejudice highway safety, pedestrian safety, the free flow of traffic, and would not reduce the number of on-site parking spaces to below the standards stated in Site Allocations Policy – Parking Standards, unless there are other material considerations which justify the reduction;*
 - f) *The proposal would not have a detrimental impact on important natural habitats and landscape features such as historic landscapes, mature trees, hedgerows, ponds and watercourses. In some circumstances where on balance it is considered acceptable to remove one or more of these features then mitigation measures to replace the feature/s will be required either on or off-site;”*
25. Paragraph 31 of the Central Lancashire Rural Development SPD, in relating to agricultural buildings, states that new agricultural buildings will be required to meet the operational agricultural needs and protect the visual character of the landscape. It is considered that an agricultural need for the building has been sufficiently justified and the proposed location of the building close to the existing buildings, and its typical polytunnel design, would assist in protecting the visual character of the landscape. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal complies with this section of the SPD.
26. In this case the site is an already established horticultural nursery. It is situated immediately adjacent to the M6 Motorway some considerable distance from any neighbouring residential property. It is considered to be appropriate to the locality and to have no material impact upon the amenity of any neighbouring property, highway safety or the ecology of the area. There are no listed buildings, conservation areas or other heritage assets within the area. The proposed development is, therefore, considered to be in conformity with the Local Plan.

Safety hazard

27. There is a gas pipeline running parallel to the M6 motorway and which crosses the application site. The proposed extension would be located approximately 5.5 metres away from it at its nearest point. The Case Officer used the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) PADHI system for the proposal, which indicated that the HSE does not advise against developing the site. Cadent Gas, the operators of the gas pipeline, have raised no objection to the proposal. As such, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of potential safety hazards as a result of the pipeline.

Mineral safeguarding

28. Part of the northern section of the application site forms part of a designated Mineral Safeguarding Area within the development plan. Policy M2 of the Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (JLMWLP) – Site Allocation and Development Management Policies - Part One 2013 seeks to protect mineral resources in Lancashire from needless sterilisation.
29. Given that the site is already heavily developed, as is surrounding land, it is not considered that mineral extraction at this site would be physically possible due to presence of existing development. As such, any mineral resource beneath the site would not be needlessly sterilised as a result of the proposed development, as is already sterilised by existing development, and there is no conflict with policy M2 of the JLMWLP.

Community Infrastructure Levy

30. The Chorley CIL Infrastructure Charging Schedule provides a specific amount for development. The CIL Charging Schedule was adopted on 16 July 2013 and charging commenced on 1 September 2013. The proposal would not however be a chargeable development if approved.

CONCLUSION

31. The proposed development is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and accords with the Core Strategy and the Chorley Local Plan in terms of supporting the rural economy, and the appearance of the area. There would be no adverse impacts on neighbour amenity, mineral safeguarding, safety, highway safety or ecology. The application is, therefore, recommended for approval.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE

Ref: 07/01220/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 19 December 2007
Description: Construction of glass house, storage reservoir, warehouse building (inc related offices and staff facilities) new access and car parking for wholesale horticulture,

Ref: 17/00961/FULMAJ **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 13 December 2017
Description: Construction of polytunnel building measuring 96m by 85.4m and 5000 cubic metre (5 m litres) irrigation pond.

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

1. The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans below:

Title	Plan Ref	Received On
Location Plan	AL.150822.A.2	6 November 2023
Proposed Site Plan	N/A	5 July 2023
Proposed Elevations	N/A	5 July 2023
Proposed Attenuation Storage Drainage Plan & Details	N/A	27 July 2023

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the principles set out within the surface water sustainable drainage report (100523, dated 10/05/2023, produced by T J Booth Associates). Should further revisions of this occur, that alter the drainage proposals, then the Lead Local Flood Authority requests to be consulted via the Local Planning Authority. The measures shall be fully implemented prior to the first use of the development and in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory sustainable drainage facilities are provided to serve the site in accordance with the Paragraphs 167 and 169 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Practice Guidance and Defra Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems.