

Item 3h **14/01336/FULMAJ**

Case Officer **Caron Taylor**

Ward **Lostock**

Proposal **Construction of two glasshouse blocks (158m x 106m and 90m x 117m) and two associated irrigation reservoirs including demolition of some existing farm buildings.**

Location **Nook Farm
Holker Lane
Ulnes Walton
Leyland
PR26 8LL**

Applicant **Lovania Nurseries Ltd**

Consultation expiry: **29th January 2015**

Decision due by: **7th April 2015**

Recommendation
That the application is approved.

Representations

Ulnes Walton Parish Council		
Object to the application on the grounds that the size, scale and nature of the proposal is such that it is considered to have a significant adverse impact on the visual amenity and openness of the Greenbelt.		
In total 5 representations have been received which are summarised below		
Objection	Support	Not specified
Total No. received: 1	Total No. received: 3	Total No. received: 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have virtually unbroken views and is one of the major features of their property; • Two huge glasshouses in the middle of their sightline will cause them much distress; • Even though it is maybe 1km away it makes no difference as there is nothing to screen the proposed development; • To say that within 15yrs some screening would be in place is not acceptable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully supportive of proposal to turn it back into a working farm once again; • Their own farm is opposite and adjacent Nook Farm and the proposed glasshouses would be directly in front of their farmhouse; • They do not feel the development will have any adverse or detrimental bearing on their ability to carry out their own farming; • It will not spoil or interfere with the use and enjoyment of Holker Lane; • When many farm come on the market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main concern is glasshouses that would be seen approx. 50 ft. from their property; • If evergreen hedging is going to be planted they would accept the application; • Concern over road use as only single width and people use their drive as a stopping/waiting place and it has cost them money to put dam age right. The applicant has assured them that appropriate measures will be put in place to stop this from happening.

	<p>they are often used as a dormitory with the occupants working miles away;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is good the tradition of living and working at Nook Farm will continue as this is the tried and tested method of keeping the countryside in good and productive order; • The applicant is willing to make a heavy investment in the future of Nook Farm as a business and make it their home as well this should give confidence to surrounding farms and the village that their own future should be safer as well; • None of the agricultural land will be lost and it will provide rural employment; • The site will be tidied up. 	
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Consultees

Consultee	Summary of Comments received
Environmental Health	<p>The agent has confirmed that the greenhouses will not be lit inside or out and they will be using the current security light. The agent has also confirmed that there will be no heating of the glasshouses so no generator is proposed therefore they do not anticipate that the proposed construction will cause a statutory nuisance in terms of light or noise.</p> <p>If the application is approved and complaints are received, an investigation can be carried out to determine whether a statutory nuisance exists. Where a statutory nuisance is identified, action can be taken to abate the nuisance.</p>
LCC Highways	<p>The site is on Holker Lane, located approximately 300m west of its junction with Leyland Lane. Holker Lane is a single 2- way local access road, subject to the national speed limit. Heavy commercial vehicles above 7.5 tons are prohibited from using the lane as a through road, unless it is for access. The carriageway seems narrow, but have grass verge on both sides, which, given the presence of vehicle tyre impressions at various locations suggests inappropriate use of the verges by drivers to give way to oncoming traffic. However, there is an existing passing place</p>

	<p>on Holker Lane, centrally located between the site and Leyland Lane. This should provide the required waiting area for vehicles when faced with oncoming traffic. Notwithstanding the weight restriction on the lane, the applicant proposes use of 17.5 and 7.5 ton vehicles for deliveries. While this is in excess of the allowable weight, it is acceptable as the delivery vehicles are only being used for access purposes only. The applicant should however be aware that it is not permissible for vehicles in excess of 7.5 ton weight to enter Holker Lane from one end and exit from the other.</p> <p>It is indicated that 10 employees will be engaged on site during the period of March and July, possibly the busiest period of the year for growing and dispatching of plants on site. The employees will car share, thereby reducing the rate of vehicular trips to the site. There will be deliveries to the site on a weekly basis, while crops will be dispatched from site 3 days a week between March and July, using heavy commercial vehicles. On each delivery/dispatch day, the applicant estimates that vehicles will on average enter and leave the site 3 times, similar to the movement generated by the site when it previously operated as a dairy farm, involving milk tankers, tractors, trailers, and other farm vehicles/machinery going in and out of the site daily.</p> <p>Additional information included in the application submission shows that there may be slightly more vehicle movements in and out of the site during certain periods than indicated above. However, considering the proposal in the round and taking the proposed number of vehicles into account, and how frequent the site will be accessed and egressed during the busy periods of March and July, they do not envisage any adverse impacts on the smooth operation of Holker Lane, Leyland Lane, and the wider highway network.</p> <p>There is adequate visibility at the existing access that would serve the proposal and the applicant's tracking information shows that heavy commercial vehicles can enter and leave the site without any safety implications. There are therefore no highway objections to the proposal, however, as no proposal is submitted for parking, it is suggested that a condition is applied requiring details of parking to be provided.</p>
Council's Ecology Advisor	<p>The existing 'semi-natural' character of the pond should be retained to maintain and where possible enhance biodiversity value.</p> <p>The proposed new pond is described as an 'attenuation pond'. They are unclear whether this pond will receive just surface water drainage or will be used as part of the water supply system for the glasshouses, although the application does state that "surface water stored in the irrigation reservoirs will be recycled by using it for irrigation as and when conditions permit". There is therefore a possibility that the pond(s) will be subject to eutrophication. Details of the management of inflows and outflows from the pond(s), and the drainage / irrigation system in general, are therefore important.</p> <p>They are unclear as to the proposals for lighting the glasshouses. Artificial lighting of the glasshouses may impact on nocturnal</p>

	<p>wildlife (particularly bats) and may have landscape impact implications. The applicant should be asked to provide details of lighting proposals for the scheme. Emphasis should be placed on the design of any lighting scheme to minimise impacts on nocturnal wildlife and to minimise potential landscape impacts.</p> <p>Will there be composting / waste facilities supporting the operation? If so where will these be located and how will they be managed?</p> <p>They would advise that a Method Statement be prepared giving details of Reasonable Avoidance Measures to be taken during any construction period to avoid any possible harm to amphibians. Once approved the Method Statement must be implemented in full.</p>
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Assessment

Background information

1. Nook Farm is a former dairy farm however this use has now ceased. It has been bought by the applicant, Lovinia Nurseries Ltd.
2. Lovania Nurseries Ltd. principally focus on the production of high quality ornamental plants which are grown on contract for high street multiples (such as Aldi) and garden centres. They currently operate from 11 nursery sites, all of which are within 7 miles of the main Blackgate Lane premises in Tarleton. The total area currently in production amounts to 30 acres. All packaging, labelling and distribution of grown plants takes place at the Blackgate Lane premises. The company employs over 70 staff over all the sites.
3. The expansion of the business in recent years has necessitated both the erection of new glasshouse blocks at their other nurseries and the renting of existing glasshouses from other growers in the area. However, no reliance can be placed on the latter source, other than in the short term. The applicant has lost the use of a glasshouse at Brookfield Farm, Guide Road, Hesketh Bank, which has previously been rented. Longer term supply contracts with the national multiples, upon which the business depends, require security of tenure and that the glasshouses themselves are of an age, design and condition to meet the strict quality control requirements of the customers.
4. The applicant is therefore proposing to construct 2 no. glasshouses to meet growing demand. A crop of bedding plants will be grown on the land in the proposed glasshouses.
5. There is an associated farmhouse next to the site that is also owned by the applicant and will be lived in as part of the proposals. It is unaffected by the application proposal so is in the 'blue edge'.

Principle of the Development

6. The site is in the Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out what is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this include buildings for agriculture (which includes horticulture) and forestry. The proposal is therefore acceptable in principle.
7. Policy 13 of the adopted Core Strategy covers the Rural Economy and aims to achieve economic and social improvement for rural areas by sustaining and encouraging appropriate growth or rural businesses.

Design, Appearance, Visual Impact of the Proposal and Impact on Nearby Properties

8. There is an associated Supplementary Planning Document covering Rural Development. In terms of farm buildings it states that new agricultural buildings will be required to meet

operational agricultural needs and protect the visual character of the landscape. This will include a consideration of the siting, design, choice of colour materials and any additional planting sympathetic to the surroundings of the development.

9. There are two substantial glasshouses proposed of the following sizes. :
 - Northern glasshouse – 89.6m (w) x 117.0m (l) x 5.5m (height to ridge);
 - Southern glasshouse – 105.6m (max) 38.4m (min) (w) x 157.5m (max) 117.0m (min) (l) x 5.5m (height to ridge), the southern gable end of which is set back approximately 25m from Holker Lane.
10. Both glasshouses would be functional in their design consisting of a steel frame structure on concrete strip foundation with steel mullions attached to the structure to support the glass panels. The roof would consist of a sequence of small roof pitches and valley gutters. Gutters would be installed at eaves level to collect rainwater and the attenuation ponds proposed would store rainwater run-off from the glasshouses.
11. The proposed position of the glasshouses maintains the existing field boundaries with hedgerows and trees also retained.
12. The application has been accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. This has been reviewed by the Council's Parks and Open Space Officer (a qualified landscape architect). They advise that the methodology that has been used is appropriate to the scale and nature of the application proposals and have provided the advice below.

Effects of the proposal on landscape Character

13. In terms of the effects of the proposal on landscape character, the assessment describes the potential effects as being minor adverse. Having visited the site, they advise it is clear that the landscape character of the site itself will change noticeably with the introduction of the proposed development. However, the landscape character of the wider area, influenced as it is by the built / agricultural context to the site, and the presence of other glasshouse developments within the local area, would not be greatly reduced in its quality. In this context, it is their opinion that the landscape and visual assessment presents a good summary of the effects on landscape character and they are generally in agreement with the findings.

Effects on visual amenity

14. In relation to the effects on visual amenity the assessment identifies residual visual effects of moderate significance for the following visual receptors:
 - The public right of way located along the western boundary of the application site.
 - The Bungalow on Holker Lane, Nook Farm Farmhouse (the house associated with the application site) and Holker Cottage.
15. The visual effects for all other visual receptors are described as being low to negligible. Having visited the site to review the publicly accessible viewpoints, they are in general agreement with the findings of the landscape and visual assessment with the receptors identified above as having the most significant changes to their views. Whilst those receptors located further afield to the west and north west may still be able to view the proposed development, it is not considered that it would appear incongruous in the agricultural and built context to the site and would be only a small component part of these wider views.

Effect on the openness of the green belt

16. The landscape and visual assessment concludes that the proposed development would have a small adverse effect on the openness of the green belt. The introduction of structures on the application site would reduce the openness of the greenbelt, however given the agricultural / built context to the site, the 5m height of the proposed structures and the transparent qualities of glasshouses, it is considered that the potential harm to the openness of green belt would be very limited. In this context they are in general

agreement with the findings of the landscape and visual assessment with regard to any potential harm to the openness of the greenbelt.

Mitigation Proposals

17. Mitigation planning has been proposed as part of the application. They consider the mitigation planting is appropriate in term of the size and spacing of plants proposed. However, they advise that the planting of further standard hedgerow trees, at 10-12cm girth, within the southern section of new hedgerow along the public right of way running adjacent to the site would assist with the integration of the development into its context. They also advise that the proposed ponds should be reviewed to create a more naturalistic form, enhanced by native marginal planting and associated wetland trees/shrubs would further reduce the visual effects for users of the adjacent public rights of way.
18. These matters were put to the applicant and the ponds have been remodelled to take on a more natural form. They have also agreed that the proposed landscape design will be amended accordingly in line with the above comments. This will be updated on the addendum.
19. Therefore, considering the comments of the Parks and Open Spaces Officer it is considered acceptable subject to amendments to the proposed planting scheme.
20. The proposal will include the demolition of approximately 1131m² of existing agricultural buildings to the south of the site, close to Holker Lane and their replacement with hard standing. Those to be demolished are steel portal framed buildings. As part of the proposals the majority of the existing hard standing on the site will be retained, some will be removed and a new section created immediately adjacent to Holker Lane.
21. It should be noted that the existing barn immediately adjacent to the access point has planning permission to be converted to a dwelling (ref: 13/01124/FUL granted 12th March 2014). It has not been implemented. This would be one of the main properties affected by the proposal, it is however within the blue edge of the application and is there in the ownership of the applicant and if it is converted is likely to be associated with the site.

Ecology

22. The Council's ecology adviser recommended that the existing 'semi-natural' character of the pond should be retained to maintain and where possible enhance biodiversity value. The ponds have been amended as part of the application process so they have a more natural form (something that was also requested on landscape grounds in relation to views from the adjacent public right of way).
23. It has been established as part of the application process that there will be no artificial lighting of the glasshouses inside or outside, so it is not considered that the proposal will impact on nocturnal wildlife (particularly bats). It is also considered this may have been unacceptable in the landscape. The only lighting will be the existing security lights that are on motion sensors. The applicant has also confirmed that the glasshouses will not be heated nor will hydroponics be used. The plants will be watered, but that is all. The Council's ecologist states their concerns on these matters have therefore been addressed.
24. The one outstanding issue is the management of inflows and outflows from the ponds/drainage system. No mechanisms have been put forward for managing water inflows / outflows, however they advise this matter of detail could be the subject of a condition. The applicant advises they are in the process of drawing the plans to show how this will work and this will be updated on the addendum if they are received prior to the committee meeting. If not it will be covered by a condition.
25. In relation to waste and composting the applicant advises that the proposal will generate little or no waste because the applicants have a composting plant on another of their sites so nothing goes to waste. Soil is also recycled contributing to sustainability.

26. A condition is also proposed in relation to securing a Method Statement giving details of Reasonable Avoidance Measures to be taken during any construction period to avoid any possible harm to amphibians and requiring it to be implemented in full as recommended in the applicant's ecology survey and by the Council's ecology adviser.

Levels

27. The applicant advises the glasshouses would be built onto the existing landform of the site without the need to remove large areas of earth to level it. A condition is proposed requiring the finished floor levels of the greenhouses to be submitted.

Traffic and Transport

28. There are currently two access points into the site. An access between the farmhouse and barn (outside the red edge for this application) and a gate further to the west between the brick barn and existing steel portal framed building (the latter to be demolished) fronting Holker Lane. The proposal will use the access where the gate currently is. A section of grass verge will be removed and hard surfacing put in to facilitate this. The application is accompanied by vehicles swept path analysis plans showing that large vehicles can manoeuvre and turn round within the site.
29. LCC Highways advise there are adequate visibility splays at the existing gate that will be used to access to the site. Although they ask for details of parking on the site, there will be extensive hard standing on the site sufficient for many cars as well as large vehicles. It is not considered necessary for the Council to control exactly where this is on the site and it will be down to the operators of the site to dictate where staff park (which may change between seasons depending on if large vehicles will be visiting the site or not).
30. The proposal will involve heavy good vehicles (HGVs) visiting the site, however the previous use of the site as a dairy farm would also have involved large vehicles coming and going. Holker Lane is narrow but is in an agricultural area with other farms (and an agricultural contractor) also using the lane. It is not considered that the proposal could be refused on the grounds that large vehicles would be accessing the site, in terms of neighbour amenity or highways, given its current lawful use as a dairy farm.
31. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in highway terms.

Public Right of Way

32. There is a Public Right of Way (no. 10 Ulmes Walton) that runs up the western edge of the site from Holker Lane towards Hollins Brook. This is within the application site for a length of approximately 225m (southern section) before it swaps to the other side of the hedge line adjacent to the site as it continues to Hollins Brook (northern section).
33. The above Public Right of Way will be the main public view of the site that will be affected by the proposal as members of the public will have close up views almost next to the proposed glasshouses, particularly from the southern section of the Public Right of Way. From the northern section views of the glasshouses will have views filtered by a tall hedgerow with hedgerow trees. The Visual Impact Assessment measures the impact as moderate adverse significant on this footpath. A new hedgerow would be planted along the east side of the footpath to help filter views of the green houses and the existing hedgerow providing some screening of the glasshouses from the northern section of the path would be strengthened with the addition of new hedgerow trees.

Coal Mines

34. The site is not in a high or low risk coal mining area as identified by The Coal Authority.

Drainage and Flooding

35. The glasshouses will have gutters on to catch the rainwater falling on the roof. This will be collected and piped to two irrigation ponds. One of these ponds will be to the west of the northern most glasshouse and is an existing pond that will be re-modelled to increase capacity. The second pond will be a new pond to the north the northern most

glasshouse. If the water is not used to irrigate the plant the ponds will overflow into the existing ditch system and to Hollins Brook to the north. It is not therefore considered that the proposal will result in a greater risk of flooding as the rainwater falling on the site will be held in the ponds and used for irrigation of the plants, unless the fill up when the outflow will be to Hollings Brook.

Overall Conclusion

36. The application is acceptable in principle in the green belt and details of the proposal have also been found to be acceptable.

Planning Policies

37. 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 Borough Local Plan Review 2003 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposals has had regard to guidance contained with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the development plan and the emerging Local Plan 2012-2026. The specific policies/ guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Date
13/01124/FUL	Conversion of existing barn in to a dwelling	Permitted	12 th March 2014

