

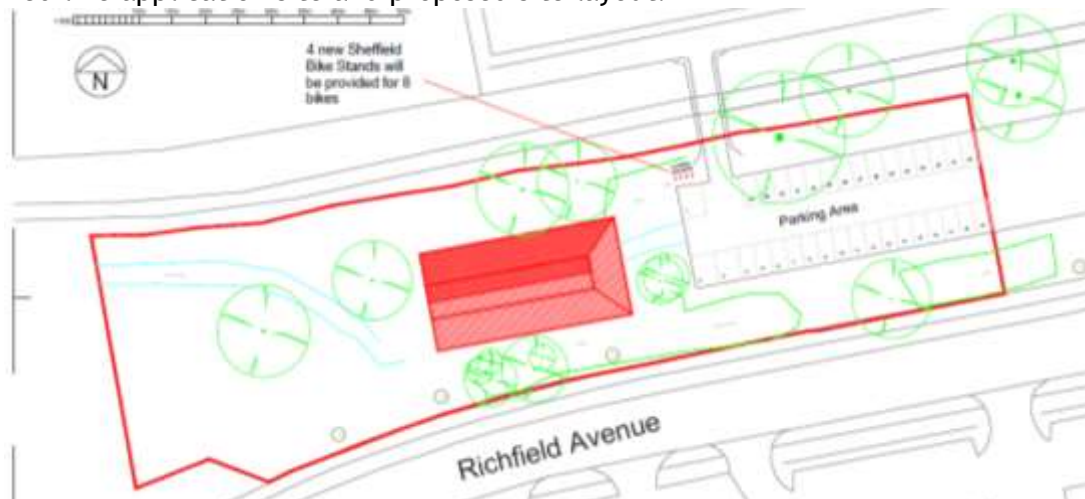
Delegated report 191532/FUL

Construction of a Garden Centre building with a kitchen and WC facilities

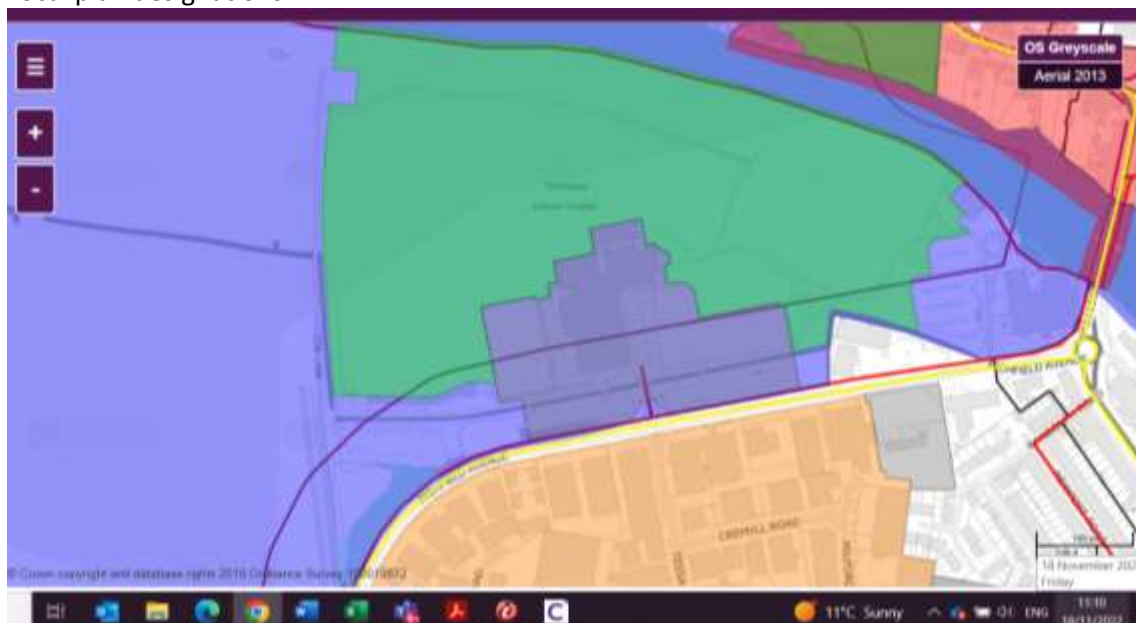
Application site

The site is approx. 0.4 hectares in total, situated on the north side of Richfield Avenue. It is accessed from the east via the end of the overflow car park to the Rivermead leisure centre and from the west via some gravelled open ground which leads to Cow Lane. The site is near the Thames Major Landscape Feature and is flood zone 2/3. The site is currently in informal use as a garden centre, which is mainly uncovered in nature, save for a large canvas tent, and has been in this use since around 2017. However, this does not have planning permission and it is clear that the former planning permission has not been implemented (applicant agrees this, contribution not paid, no conditions discharged). The lawful current use of the site is therefore considered to be incidental to the main leisure centre, including incidental parking.

Red line application site and proposed site layout:



Local plan designations:



Of note within/near site:

WR3d Rivermead Leisure Centre

EN13 Thames Major Landscape Feature

EN16 AQMA

EN7Wp Rivermead and Thameside Promenade

TR3 Richfield Avenue is a Classified Road. Cycle route runs along north side

Employment area on south side of Richfield Avenue

GoogleEarth shows the current temporary garden centre (tent) in situ:



Proposal

The proposal is to remove the current unauthorised garden centre operation (part external, part under the marquee) and its replacement, in approximately the same position, with a built-for-purpose timber building and landscaped garden centre yard. Servicing access is to be from the west (via Cow Lane) and staff/customer parking will use part of the Rivermead car park (34 spaces).

Relevant Planning History

140329/FUL Erection of a single storey timber clad building with monopitch roof for plant centre and change of use of land to form plant centre. PERMISSION 15/12/17 with s106 agreement. Not implemented. S106 was for Transport/RUAP (not paid).

Also relevant are the following nearby recent planning permissions:

201734/FUL for the redevelopment of the Rivermead Leisure Centre (under construction); and

212061 the recent permission for a new secondary school (River Academy), with access from Cow Lane (also under construction).

Consultations

RBC Planning Natural Environment Team: no objections

RBC Planning Policy Manager: consulted on matters of sequential preference, see Appraisal below.

RBC Transport Strategy: no objections. No objections, subject to the CP spaces being shared with the leisure centre being part of the lease

RBC Leisure Service:

RBC Valuation: involved due to lease situation with the site.

RBC Environmental Protection: no objection although advised any kitchen extract equipment would need details via condition.
Environment Agency currently objects, but no response to later revised information. See discussion below

Public consultation:

A letter was sent to the (then) golf driving range in 2019, however, this operation latterly ceased trading. The land is currently being developed as the school known as River View Academy. Cannot consult this address, as it is not yet an address/functioning school. A site notice was displayed at the site in 2019. Given the passage of time in dealing with this application, a second notice was displayed in 2021. No objections have been received.

Legal Context and Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF, 2021) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

Planning policy

NPPF 2021 is relevant, in particular sections: 6. promoting sustainable transport; and 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.
National Planning Practice Guidance is relevant, including Flooding

This planning application was originally submitted in September 2019, but not finally validated until December 2019, ie. after the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) came into force and it shall be assessed against the adopted policies.

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) policies:

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN8: UNDESIGNATED OPEN SPACE

EN11: WATERSPACES

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN13: MAJOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT

EN18: FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES

RL2: SCALE AND LOCATION OF RETAIL, LEISURE AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

SPDs

Sustainable Design and Construction Parking Standards and Design

APPRAISAL

Introduction

Permission 140329/FUL was not implemented, so the weight to be attached to that decision in this assessment is considered to be limited, although it is helpful as a guide. This report should be read in conjunction with the copy of the report for the previous planning permission (see Appendix 1) and for ease of cross-referencing I shall use the same headings in that report, which are:

1. Principle of development
2. Visual impact, trees, landscaping and ecology
3. Retail sequential test
4. Flooding
5. Land contamination
6. Transport matters and parking
7. Surrounding amenity
8. Sustainability
9. S106

1. Principle of development

The proposed garden centre and existing car park are located within the defined Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature and Area of Open Space where planning permission will not be granted for development that would detract from the character and appearance of the landscape. Policy EN8 states that development which would reduce the amenity value of open space should be refused unless (exceptionally) improvements on the remaining open space can be provided to a sufficient level to outweigh the loss of the open space. Richfield Avenue is also designated as a Green Link and Cycle route.

Whilst within the Major Landscape Area, it is recognised that the proposed building has a limited footprint, the design is simple with a relatively low level roof, and materials incorporate timber cladding giving a quite rural appearance. The structure and small area of new parking would be sensitively located on the eastern edge of the designated area adjacent to, and to a certain extent shielded by, the new secondary school (which is now under construction) and the Rivermead car park. As such, it is considered that the impact of this level of development on the existing physical landscape would be minimal and combined with the additional landscape planting proposed, can be considered acceptable.

With regard to the loss of open space, again it is considered, with the enhancement of the open land to the west through new tree planting, that adequate screening can be provided to mitigate the use of the land as a garden centre and erection of the proposed building, seen in the context of the Rivermead Leisure Centre. The nature of the use of the external areas for trees and plant storage is considered to be appropriate in this location, and the use of the building can be conditioned to be a garden centre use only to prevent general retail or any other commercial use of the site. Additionally, in this instance, a temporary permission is being considered. The proposal is therefore on balance considered to accord with the above policies. Further to the above considerations, Policy CC1 provisions also

apply and it is noted that the proposal would continue to provide retail-related employment. The principle of a garden centre in this location is continued to be supported

2. Visual impact, trees, landscaping and ecology

The previous proposal was for a single storey permanent retail building with insulated roof. The approach this time is different, with the proposal for a largely unheated garden centre metal-frame commercial building, with an office space at first floor which will be insulated. The building itself appears to be designed on a roughly 5mx5m grid basis, the ground floor being approx. 430 sqm plus the first floor offices (a further 115 sqm GIA). The building is proposed in timber and the applicant has indicated that this will be a high-quality solid timber, to give the building a New England 'Shaker Style' finish, with an indicative timber choice of Scottish or Siberian Larch boarding. For the roof material the applicant has confirmed a tiled roof.

Overall, the appearance of the building, although quite large, is understated and would appear more reminiscent of an agricultural building. But with good quality timber and tiles and openings - details of which can be secured by condition). The previous report considered tree/landscaping matters as follows:

The application was submitted with a tree survey report (July 2013) that assessed the existing trees on site. The protection measures for trees to be retained are considered to be acceptable and it is agreed that the nature of the scrub vegetation that covers the site and the removal of T8 and groups 2,3,4,6 and 7 would not have a negative effect on vistas from outside the site subject to new planting. Additional planting shown on the final updated 'Landscape Proposals Plan' (Rev D) is located on the boundary with Richfield Avenue, to the south; and the northern boundary to the existing car park and is considered to enhance the landscaping of the site. The submitted details, as amended, are therefore considered to be acceptable, subject to condition, and the proposal is considered to accord with Policy CS37 and CS38 and DM18.

The previous proposal included tree protection, an arboricultural report and landscaping proposals. The Natural Environment (tree) Officer advises that for this application, there are no objections to the proposals on ecology grounds, but a condition is required to ensure that any scrub clearance does not impact upon nesting birds, but there is unlikely to be any demolition as such, involved, apart from the removal of the large tent. As a precaution, the condition can be applied. The nature of the operation, and the landscaping, should be compatible with the green link.

It is important that the proposal is suitable in terms of mitigating landscaping, given the openness of the area and the sensitivity of the Major Landscape Feature. Two new 2m wide pedestrian accesses are proposed from Richfield Avenue to the garden centre entrance. In relation to boundary treatment the proposed fences and gates, the detailed finish of which can be subject to condition, are considered to be acceptable in visual terms in this location. Any external lighting required will also be subject to condition to ensure it is in keeping with the character of the area.

Therefore, having considered the visual impact of the structures and works within an area of open space with landscape value, the scale and design of the proposals coupled with addition planting is considered acceptable and would not conflict with Policy CC7 of the Local Plan.

3. Retail sequential test

The previous planning permission was assessed against the 'retail sequential test' at that time and found to be acceptable. The Planning Policy Manager has advised that under current policies/PPG guidance, the current proposal is for a retail use which is under 1,000 sq.m. and therefore does not need to be subject to the retail sequential test, so this consideration no longer applies. In short, this facility (a comparatively small retail garden centre) is not currently provided for in the Borough and its provision in this location does not conflict with the Retail policies in the Local Plan, nor would it harm the vitality and viability of the town centre or any other District or Local Centres. It is therefore acceptable in retail locational terms and complies with Policy CC6 of the Local Plan.

4. Flooding

The NPPF (as supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance) and Policy EN18 direct development to areas which are at least risk of flooding.

Sequential test

The site is approximately 3900 sqm (0.39 hectares) in area and largely consists of a relatively flat gravelled site with some trees and part of the tarmac car park to the Rivermead Leisure Centre at the eastern third.

The previous planning permission was granted on the basis of passing a sequential test, in that there were no alternative sites for this kind of facility in the borough. That permission has since lapsed. The situation in terms of site availability for a garden centre is considered to be largely unchanged. The reasonable search area, given that this is quite a specialised use for a largely urbanised borough, is considered to be the whole borough area.

There is currently no other 'garden centre' in the Borough. However, there are garden and plant supplies available as part of several DIY and homeware stores, for instance B&Q (A33, Reading Gate Retail Park), B&M store (Oxford Road Retail Park) and The Range (homeware store on Vastern Road). The nearest standalone garden centres all lie beyond the borough, typically NE of Reading in Wokingham district (Playhatch and further along the A4), but also Englefield (in WBerks) and Winnersh (also Wokingham District).

In seeking a site for a standalone garden centre in the search area, it would firstly need to be of a suitable size. Although the application proposal would appear to be towards the smaller end of the scale for such a use - 430 sq.m. building on a 0.39 hectare site), it is nonetheless quite a large area to be finding readily available in the borough. It would also need to be reasonably accessibly located and have a good availability of car parking (again, ruling out the majority of opportunities). There are the industrial areas, but on advice from the Council's Planning Policy Manager, retail-type uses would be in conflict with Local Plan policies seeking to retain land in employment-generating floorspace use.

Other sites which become available are likely to be brownfield land, whose most efficient use is likely to be residential-led. There are considered to be no obvious alternatives. There are no allocated sites for garden centres in the Local Plan and the Plan provides no specific guidance on uses of this type, and this is largely considered to be a function of the type of borough Reading is (tightly urban and therefore constrained).

For the above reasons, it is considered that there are no suitable available sites to consider for the proposed use which would be sequentially preferable in flooding terms.

Flood vulnerability classification

Garden centres are not specifically listed in the Guidance, but this is considered to be a 'Less Vulnerable' land use (uses which are Less Vulnerable include shops, and agriculture and forestry land and buildings).

From the EA floodmap the flood zone appears to be flood zone 2/3. Zone 2 is medium probability. The Rivermead Ditch is probably fz3b and part of the 'functional floodplain' of the Thames. The Council's GIS system shows that the land has historically flooded. The majority, if not all of the site appears to be in Flood zone 2.

With regard to Table 2 Flood risk vulnerability and flood zone incompatibility:

Within zone 2, for a less vulnerable use, the Exception Test is NOT required.

Within fz3a, a Less Vulnerable use is appropriate, within fz3b (Functional floodplain) a less vulnerable use is NOT appropriate. It is clear from the red line of the application (either as originally submitted or even as adjusted) the application site is not within fz3b.

In accordance with guidance, this is essentially considered to be a 'less vulnerable' use in flood zone 2 and hence a compatible use.

In summary on this matter, officers conclude that the application is acceptable in strategic flooding terms, as officers are satisfied that there are no reasonably available sequentially-preferable sites and the use is compatible in Flood Zone 2.

Other technical flooding considerations

The site itself is currently largely gravelled, with the eastern portion part of the tarmac car park to the leisure centre. To the north of the site is the Rivermead Ditch. The majority of the site is currently therefore largely permeable and the aim should be to maximise this as far as possible in this area, which could flood. In terms of rain/stormwater percolation, the majority of the site will remain as existing, although the obvious difference is the site coverage by the building. The application has provided a FRA and supplemental information on this matter but at the time of writing, there is an objection from the Environment Agency and they remain dissatisfied with the conclusions of the FRA.

The FRA para. 2.1.6 confirms that the present site varies from 38.34m AOD to 39.62m AOD. The site is mainly FZ2 (medium chance of flooding ie. between 1 in 100 years and 1 in 1000 years). The FRA identifies the main source of surface water flooding to come from surrounding hard surface areas e.g. car parking areas and roadways, but the EA advises that this is a very low risk and would principally affect the drainage ditch. Sewage flooding and groundwater flooding are not highlighted as issues in the FRA

In terms of the risk of fluvial flooding, the main issue will be the area taken up by the building itself, which will affect flood flows and 'compensation' is necessary. The application includes no designed information on guttering or drainage and the opportunity of using SUDS methodology is considered to be limited (extent of permeable area is quite large already and no built development is to occur at all on the tarmac parking area.

However, the applicant has advised that a number of mitigation design elements are proposed, which are a combination of resilience and attenuation:

- The development should be undertaken in accordance with the FRA, including a FFL proposed at 39.40m AOD for the garden centre building.
- The proposed building shall include flood resilient construction to 300mm above finished floor level. This will ensure resilience in the fabric of the building for the

residual risk up to a 1 in 1000 year event. These include the specification of water resilient materials and fittings. Proposed electrical work to the building should have circuits set a minimum of 600mm above the finished floor level. The electrical circuits should be run to sockets and switches from the ceiling cavity, where possible to ensure that they are not affected should any flood water enter the building. Critical plant should be elevated to a level of 300mm from the proposed finished floor level, where possible.

- Any impermeable hardstanding areas to the outside of the building should fall away from entrance points to the building, wherever possible, with a minimum gradient of 1 in 100 and shed to adjacent permeable areas.
- Compensatory flood storage is a point which the EA had not agreed. The applicant proposes an attenuation system to deal with the need as identified in the FRA, although no details of the siting of this have been provided. Details of attenuation tank for compensation of 41 cu.m and flow details and connections thereafter (soakaway, mains connection, or what combination) and flow rates.

The above points can be covered in suitably-worded conditions.

Fencing and gates must not impede flood flows (covered in landscaping condition proposed). Evacuation warnings and dry access is not necessary as there would be adequate warning time and this is not a habitable building anyway, being a less vulnerable use.

On balance, given the lack of response from the EA and the efforts by the case officer and the applicant to attend to this issue, it is considered that with conditions, the risk is considered to be low and the application is suitable in technical flood risk terms and complies with Policy EN18.

5. Land contamination

The Rivermead area, very likely including the application site, was an area of former domestic landfill site until the 1980s. The Environment Agency has previously confirmed that the site was investigated by WSP on behalf Reading Borough Council in May 2004. One borehole (number 'WS2') was drilled on or near the site and detected at least 2 metres of made ground and fill material. The material yielded low levels of hydrocarbons and metals. While the Environment Agency acknowledge this is a low level development and ground disturbance may be small, it is not an ideal area for infiltration drainage as it may have the potential to mobilise contaminants within the fill materials. Therefore the suggested infiltration/piling condition previously sought by the Environment Agency is considered to be reasonable and ought to be reapplied. The applicant has advised that at this point (as at October 2022) the type of foundations to be employed is not finalised and agrees that this condition is required and that it shall be pre-commencement. The four standard contaminated land conditions are required and additionally given the possibility of land gas identified in the Rivermead redevelopment proposals, this should also be included within the first contaminated land condition. With these conditions, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy EN16 of the Local Plan.

6. Transport matters and parking

Regarding general locational issues and continuing the discussion above regarding sequential issues, this is considered to be a generally suitable location for this facility in the Borough and would meet the aims of Policy CC6, which relates the nature and accessibility of a site to the intensity of development.

This application needs to be assessed in the context of surrounding land uses and in particular, commercial uses on Richfield Avenue, the redeveloped Rivermead car park (which it would share/use), and the new school, River View, and at times, Reading Festival.

The Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) states that *“Where comprehensive and mixed-use development schemes are likely, developers are encouraged to provide shared parking facilities which are likely to generate peak parking levels during different periods of the day.”*

The proposal aims to use/share part of the furthest accessible spaces in the Rivermead car park, 34 spaces including 2 disabled spaces. The Transport Development Control team advises that they would expect Saturdays to be one of the busiest days for both uses. Therefore, they have reviewed the figures for the leisure centre application, and are satisfied that there will be sufficient car parking capacity for both uses and found no issue when combined with the operation of the new Secondary/SEND school either.

Cycling to the facility is likely to have limited appeal, given that purchases tend to be bulky items needing a car. That said, the application site is adjacent to the cycle route on Richfield Avenue and given the temporary nature of the use, a limited number of Sheffield stands are considered to be sufficient for the limited demand anticipated. A condition is recommended.

In summary, there are no issues from a transport perspective subject to RBC Valuers agreeing the lease for the spaces (Valuers have been made aware of this Recommendation and have not objected) and the application proposal complies with Local Plan policies TR3 and TR5 and the adopted parking standards.

7. Surrounding amenity

Accesses to the east and west of the site are to be kept as existing and the increase in traffic movements including HGVs, are not considered to cause undue noise or disruption to surrounding business properties or the general public utilising the Rivermead Leisure Centre. There are no residential properties in the vicinity of the site. The material change in circumstances since the assessment of the previous application is the approval of the secondary school (under construction) but there is not considered to be any issues of disturbance to this or any other use.

The issue of possible relevance to any disturbance is that the applicant wishes the flexibility of providing a pizza oven/kitchen for an integral café and if so, details of any extraction facilities will be required via condition to meet policies EN16 and CC8.

Operational hours recommended are long and proposed to mirror those of the leisure centre, so the use should close down and brightness lessened in autumn/winter.

Standard conditions for hours of use in construction and for a CMS are recommended, in order to preserve general amenity and control the development in terms of delivery movements, etc. In summary, the transport and environmental policies concerned with disturbance are considered to be satisfied. It is also noted that the temporary garden centre appears to have been operating satisfactorily in the meantime.

8. Sustainability

The previous permission was for a permanent retail building. However, this is a more semi-temporary approach and officers consider that a more tailored response is appropriate in

this instance. The main building will be 'insulated' to a certain extent, but not heated. The first floor areas will be insulated and heated to habitable standards, which would be appropriate. This is considered to be a largely a sustainable approach (you do not need to heat a garden centre). The building would have timber framed glazed doors and windows. The large windows should afford reduced lighting.

The applicant has confirmed that the building would be compliant with the current Part B of the Building Regulations. Officers are generally satisfied that what is proposed is a generally energy-benign approach to the majority of the structure and there are other similar examples of such temporary buildings in the Thames area (boat houses, for example). Officers agree that in this instance, no specific energy build requirement is needed over and above the Building Regulations and the development complies with policies CS1, CS2 and the SPD.

Other issues

Equality Act: there are not considered to be any issues raised in terms of the protected characteristics as a result of this application.

Access for all: a lift is proposed to offices and must be retained via condition. Suitable disabled parking and easy ramped access must also be possible from the car park.

Access rights/lease(s): the applicant is a current Leaseholder of the majority of the application site. Terms are still to be considered in relation to the remainder. But this is a detailed matter between the Leaseholder and Freeholder and the Freeholder (the Valuation section of the Council) is fully aware of these proposals and therefore the precise nature of any such agreements is not a material consideration to this assessment.

9. S106

The previous planning permission secured a financial contribution towards sustainable transport schemes in the Borough, this has now been replaced by CIL. However under the Council's CIL charging schedule, there is no charge for garden centres. As a result, no contribution or CIL charge is appropriate/required.

Conclusion:

Overall, officers are satisfied that the proposal is supportable. It proposes a more temporary building as an alternative proposal to the previous permission. Given the nature of the building, a long, temporary permission is considered to be appropriate. The proposal is appropriate in visual and locational terms and would integrate satisfactorily with surrounding land-uses. However, it is not suitable for permanent retention, and a condition is required to restore the site, to prevent a deteriorating structure from harming this sensitive area.

Recommendation/Conclusion:

GRANT 25 year temporary planning permission, subject to conditions as follows:

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans, which were received by the Local Planning Authority on the dates indicated below:

CBGC.L01 B Site Location plan (received 4/9/22)

CBGC.P01 B Proposed Site Plan (received 4/9/22)

CBGC.P02 - Proposed Plans & Elevations (23/9/19)

CBGC.P03 - Proposed Parking and Delivery Areas Plan (4/9/22)

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. The building which is the subject of this permission shall be removed, the use and all materials shall cease and the land shall be restored to its former condition as amenity leisure and associated car parking/servicing (except for the landscaping scheme which shall have been approved and implemented by Condition 14 below) on or **before 25 YEARS from date of this planning permission** in accordance with a scheme of works which shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: The type of building is not one that the Local Planning Authority is prepared to approve in this location other than for a limited period, having regard to the materials and type of structure proposed. Permission is only given because of the suitable nature of the development in this sensitive location and benefits of the temporary retail facility, currently not provided for in the Borough.

4. No development shall commence on site until details of finished floor levels relative to existing floor/ground levels have been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: These details are required due to insufficient information being contained within this submission and in order to ensure a satisfactory relationship between the proposed development and adjacent development, and to protect views in and out of the development in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policies CC7 and EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

5. No development shall commence on site including demolition and any preparatory works until an assessment of the nature and extent of contamination (including land gas) has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This assessment must be undertaken by a competent person, and shall assess any contamination on the site, whether or not it originates on the site. Moreover, it must include:

(i) a survey of the extent, scale and nature of contamination;

(ii) an assessment of the potential risks to:

- human health,
- property (existing or proposed) including buildings, crops, livestock, pets, woodland and service lines and pipes,
- adjoining land,
- groundwaters and surface waters,

- ecological systems,
- archaeological sites and ancient monuments;

REASON: These details are required due to insufficient information being contained within this submission and to ensure the development is suitable for its end use and the wider environment and does not create undue risks to occupiers of the site or surrounding areas in accordance with Policy EN16 of the Reading local Plan 2019.

6. No development shall commence on site including demolition and any preparatory works until a detailed remediation scheme to bring the site to a condition suitable for the intended use by removing unacceptable risks to human health, buildings and other property and the natural and historical environment has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme must include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, an appraisal of remedial options, and proposal of the preferred option(s), and a timetable of works and site management procedures. The scheme must ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation.

REASON: These details are required due to insufficient information being contained within this submission and to ensure the development is suitable for its end use and the wider environment and does not create undue risks to occupiers of the site or surrounding areas in accordance with Policy EN16 of the Reading local Plan 2019.

7. The approved remediation scheme under Condition 6 above shall be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable of works. A validation report (that demonstrates the effectiveness of the remediation carried out) shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before construction above foundation level.

REASON: To ensure the development is suitable for its end use and the wider environment and does not create undue risks to occupiers of the site or surrounding areas in accordance with Policy EN16 of the Reading local Plan 2019.

8. In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development not previously identified, development shall be halted on that part of the site the contamination reported in writing to the Local Planning Authority.

An assessment of the nature and extent of contamination shall be undertaken and where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme, together with a timetable for its implementation, shall be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority for its written approval.

The measures in the approved remediation scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable. Halted works shall not be re-commenced until the measures identified in the approved remediation scheme have been completed and a validation report has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure the development is suitable for its end use and the wider environment and does not create undue risks to occupiers of the site or surrounding areas in accordance with Policy EN16 of the Reading local Plan 2019.

9. Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods (not set out in conditions 6-8 above) shall not be permitted other than with the express written consent of the Local Planning Authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: piling has the potential to create contaminant pathways from the historic landfill into the underlying chalk aquifer and it should therefore be demonstrated that any proposed piling will not result in contamination of groundwater, in accordance with Policy EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

10. No development shall commence until a schedule and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, including the wooden cladding (and any proposed treatment, if relevant), roofing tiles, doors and windows and drainage goods. The development shall be carried out and thereafter maintained in accordance with the details approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: These details are required due to insufficient information being contained within this submission and in the interests of visual amenity and ensuring the new development responds positively to the local context and character in accordance with policies CC7 and EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

11. No construction, demolition or associated deliveries shall take place outside the hours of 0800hrs to 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 0800hrs to 1300hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays without prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to protect occupiers of nearby properties from unreasonable disturbance from works connected with implementing this permission in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

12. No development of the building hereby approved shall commence on site until a site specific Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Statement shall provide for:
- a) Space on site where vehicles of site operatives and visitors can be parked with details of how site operatives and visitors will be required to make use of the parking area provided;
 - b) Location on site for storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
 - c) The erection and maintenance (including removal of any graffiti or fly posters) of security hoarding around the site;
 - d) Identification of any footpath closures or road closures needed during construction;
 - e) Required wheel washing facilities on site;
 - f) A scheme for recycling waste resulting from the construction works.
 - g) Measures for controlling the use of site lighting whether required for safe working or for security purposes;
 - h) Required measures to control the emission of dust, dirt and other airborne pollutants during demolition and construction;
 - i) Provisions to be made for the control of noise coming from the site during demolition and construction;
 - j) Full details of pest control measures following any demolition required. Where necessary, capping of drains/sewers and baiting arrangements.

The measures within the approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the demolition and construction period unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: These details are required due to insufficient information being contained within this submission and in the interests of protecting the amenity of local land uses or neighbouring residents, the character of the area and highway safety in accordance with Policy CC8 and TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

13 tree retention plan submission/protection plan to mirror Rivermead DN

No development shall commence on site (including demolition or preparatory works) until an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan in accordance with the relevant recommendations of appropriate British Standards or other recognised Codes of Good Practice for all existing trees that are not shown as being removed on the approved drawings, both within and adjacent to the site, has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan.

REASON: In order to ensure that appropriate protection is given to trees of amenity value within and adjacent to the site in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

14 Prior to commencement of the building hereby approved, a scheme of hard and soft landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This scheme shall specify -means of treatment for hard surfaced and gravelled/permeable areas

- the layout of landscaped areas and garden centre yard display/retail areas -specify gradient and treatment for a disabled accessible path from the car park to the garden centre building
- means of enclosure, including floodable fencing with mammal gaps
- external lighting
- ecological enhancements
- specify species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees/shrubs to be planted (including replacement trees and tree pit specifications where appropriate, and
- must include a maintenance programme detailing all operations to be carried out in order to allow successful establishment of planting.

Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building for use by the public or in accordance with a timetable agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All other approved landscaping works shall have been completed no later than commencement of public use of the garden centre building hereby approved and these works shall be retained thereafter.

REASON: In the interest of ensuring that the landscaping of the development enhances the visual local environment and in accordance with policies CC7 and EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

15 Vegetation clearance (and any associated demolition works which may be required) shall only be undertaken outside the bird-nesting season (March - August inclusive) or if clearance during the bird-nesting season cannot reasonably be avoided, a suitably qualified ecologist will survey the areas to be demolished immediately prior to clearance and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded, no vegetation clearance or other works that may disturb active nests shall proceed until all young have fledged the nest.

REASON: To ensure that wildlife is not adversely affected by the proposed development in accordance with Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

16. No materials or green waste produced as a result of the clearance of the site, demolition works or construction works associated with the development hereby approved shall be burnt on site.

REASON: In the interests of air quality, the amenity of neighbours, and to promote more sustainable approaches to waste management in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

- 17 No first use of any commercial kitchen on site shall take place until an odour assessment has been carried out and a detailed odour management plan to include scaled plans, odour control specifications and a maintenance plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Reference shall be made to the DEFRA guidance on the Control of Odour and Noise from Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems (Jan 2005) when assessing potential odours and selecting appropriate odour control methods. Thereafter, the development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved scheme/plan unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: These details are required due to insufficient information being contained within this submission and to safeguard the amenity of adjoining properties and to protect the general environment in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

18. No occupation of the garden centre building hereby approved by members of the public shall commence on site until plan GBGC.P03 showing access and parking within the site has been completed and the car parking spaces (34 total, including 2x disabled spaces) in relation to the use have been marked out for use.

The access and car parking spaces shall thereafter be kept free of obstruction and retained in accordance with the approved plan and shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times.

REASON: In order to encourage travel by sustainable alternatives to private vehicle in accordance with Policy TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

- 19 The garden centre building hereby permitted shall not be occupied by the public until a plan of the direction signage and markings within the car park area within and to the east of the application site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the plan shall be implemented and retained as such thereafter for the duration of the use.

REASON: To ensure that the development is provided with adequate parking facilities to meet the needs of future occupiers and reduce the likelihood of roadside parking which could be a danger to other road users in accordance with Policy TR1, TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

- 20 No development of the building hereby approved shall commence on site until plans and details of how cycle parking spaces (4x Sheffield stands) can satisfactorily be provided on site is submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle parking spaces shall be provided in full accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of the building for public use and thereafter kept free of obstruction and retained in accordance with the approved details and shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times.

REASON: These details are required due to insufficient information being contained within this submission and in order to encourage travel by sustainable alternatives to private vehicle in accordance with Policy TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

- 21 The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied for first use by the public until details of refuse and recycling bin stores have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing the bin stores.

The approved bin storage, including pest and vermin control measures, shall be provided in accordance with the approved details prior to school development being open for use by pupils and shall not be used for any purpose other than bin storage at all times thereafter.

REASON: In the interests of general amenity, to ensure convenience of arrangements for refuse and recycling storage and collection and to ensure that no obstruction is caused on the adjoining highway, in the interest of highway safety and in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

Opening hours, these are long but mirror those at the redeveloped Rivermead

- 22 The development hereby permitted shall not be used by members of the public outside the hours of 06:00 to 23:00 on Mondays to Saturdays and 06:00 to 21:30 Sundays and Bank Holidays.

REASON: In order to protect local residents from unreasonable disturbance arising from the use in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

- 23 The lift shown on the approved plans in Condition 2 above shall be installed and operational no later than substantial completion of the garden centre building hereby approved and shall thereafter remain in good working order in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions for the lifetime of the development. Reason: in order to provide equality of access to all staff of the development, to comply with Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

- 24 For the avoidance of doubt, this planning permission is for use as a retail garden centre only and no other use within Class E of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 2020.

Reason: Because permission is only given because of the suitable nature of the development in this sensitive location and benefits of the temporary retail facility, currently not provided for in the Borough and any other use may have unsuitable impacts on trip generation or other disturbance. Policies CC8, TR1 and TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

- 25 The development hereby approved shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment by Sanderson Associates, 'Flood Risk Assessment Caversham Bridge Garden Centre Limited' ref. 11531/TW/001/03, dated 15 April 2021, including the following: the garden centre building shall have a finished floor level (FFL) of 39.40m AOD. Furthermore, the proposed building shall have flood resilient construction to industry standard 300mm above finished floor level; all electrical work to the building should have circuits set a minimum of 600mm above the finished floor level. Any impermeable hardstanding areas to the outside of the building should fall away from entrance points to the building, wherever possible, with a minimum gradient of 1 in 100 and shed to adjacent permeable areas. Reason: as insufficient information has been submitted with the application and to ensure suitable management and attenuation of storm/rainwater to mitigate flooding, in accordance with Policy EN18 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

- 26 No development on the garden centre building hereby approved shall commence until details of the siting and design of compensatory flood storage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include a tank (or tanks) to provide for not less than 41 cu.m, drainage systems details (guttering, etc.),

all flow details and connections thereafter (soakaway, mains connection, or whatever combination). The development shall thereafter be carried out only in accordance with the approved details, which shall have been completed in their entirety and retained for the duration of the use. Reason: as insufficient information has been submitted with the application and to ensure suitable management and attenuation of storm/rainwater to mitigate flooding, in accordance with Policy EN18 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Informatives:

- No encroachment/no access rights conferred
- T and c
- B regs
- Pre-commencement conditions (starred)
- CIL (no charge)
- S59 Highways Act
- EPA complaints during construction
- Thames Water informative
- The applicant should note the site's proximity to the Rivermead Ditch and should take care during construction and use to avoid silting, contamination or obstruction of the watercourse through demolition or construction waste.
- With regard to Condition 19, directional signage may require separate Advertisement Consent.

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

SITE ADDRESS: Land to the west of Rivermead Car Park, Richfield Avenue, Reading
APPLICATION NUMBER: 140329
PROPOSAL: Erection of a single storey timber clad building with monopitch roof for plant centre and change of use of land to form plant centre.

Site Description and Proposal

The application site is designated within the defined Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature and an Area of Open Space. The site is linear incorporating an area of open land to be developed at the western end and existing car parking and access via Richfield Avenue to the east. The site is bordered to the north by a Golf driving range and associated buildings; the Rivermead Leisure centre complex and car park. Further parking to serve the leisure centre is set to the east of the site with open land to the west. Richfield Avenue forms the southern boundary to the site with commercial/ industrial units set further south designated within a Core employment Area.

The applicant, who runs the 'Caversham Plant Centre', has an established customer base in the Caversham area and has previously traded for temporary periods on Richfield Avenue. The applicant is seeking to create a permanent base for the business in this location where the specific operational and locational requirements of this type of business, for example external space adjoining the building for outdoor garden display, can be accommodated.

The proposed plant centre will have a floor area of approximately 425m² and external sales area of 515m². The proposal is for the erection of a new building on the western part of the application site this is to incorporate a retail area, staff office and store and café element on the western elevation. The proposed building has a simple modular form with a gently sloping roof. The building is 29m long parallel to Richmond Road and 15m wide. The height of the roof reduces from 4.2m high facing Richfield Avenue sloping to 3.7m. The building elevations are detailed as cedar wood cladding with aluminium glazing panels, the elevation fronting onto Richfield Avenue is to be constructed of green wall and red cedar cladding, with the 'bulkhead' constructed of aluminium and the roof incorporating a sedum green roof system.

External to the retail unit to the west is an area of external 'garden' and decking shown to serve the café element via bi-folding doors. To the north the and east are additional areas of external market displays. The entrance is orientated east toward the car parking area. This existing parking area contains 120 car parking spaces and is allocated to Rivermead Leisure centre as overflow parking.

The retail area is to be enclosed by a perimeter fence, and two new foot bridges are shown to link pedestrian and cyclists from the existing footpath on the north side of Richfield Avenue to the site. Car parking and access for customer is from the east with deliveries from the west utilising the existing access from Cow Lane.

In relation to landscaping the site contains at present scrub vegetation and trees. 18 trees and 8 groups of trees have been surveyed due to their proximity to the proposed development. In order to facilitate the development five groups of trees containing semi mature and semi mature trees and one individual tree would have to be removed in order to facilitate the development. The remaining trees can be retained and adequately protected. Additional planting is shown in the form of new London Plane trees the boundary

adjacent to Richfield Avenue as an addition to the existing recent tree planting; and new Black Poplars on the north of the parking area and delivery access.

Plans and supporting documentation:

13.200/001 Rev A	Location Plan	dated 5.3.2014
001 Rev D	Site Plan	dated 3.3.2014
002 Rev C	Floor Plan	dated 25.3.2014
003 Rev A	Elevations	dated 15.7.2013
0170 L1 Rev D	Landscape Proposal	dated 12.08.2014
0170 L2	Tree Removal Plan	3.04.2014

Waste Water Plan A3 dated 26.04.2013
Clean Water Plan

Supporting documentation:

Planning Design and Access Statement	dated March 2014
Tree Survey Report	dated July 2014, Revised August 2014
Transport Statement	dated March 2014
Transport Statement Appendices	dated March 2014
Flood Risk Assessment	dated November 2013
Flooding Sequential Test	dated June 2014
Retail Sequential Test Report	dated June 2014
BREEAM Pre-Assessment Report	dated February 2014

Relevant Planning History

PRE APP 13/00130/ PREAPP issued March 2013

Public Consultation

Consultation letters were sent to the Rivermead Leisure Complex.
No letters of representation have been received.

One e-mail query received seeking clarification of tree works and proposed planting sought.

The applicant has confirmed they erected a site notice, which was noted on site by officers.

Statutory Consultations

Environment Agency: No objection subject to conditions in relation to the development being carried out in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and that there be no infiltration of surface water.

Non-Statutory consultations

Transport: Following considerations of access, parking and vehicle trip generation, no objection subject to conditions; and a S106 to secure a financial contribution and rights of access.

Landscape Officer: No objection to final revised landscape scheme and Tree survey report received August 2014.

Ecology: No objections to the proposals on ecology grounds, but the following condition required to ensure that any scrub clearance does not impact upon nesting birds.

Leisure: No objection, no contribution sought

Environmental Health: No objection.

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough Local Development Framework (RBLDF)

Core Strategy, (2008)

- CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design
- CS4 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CS5 Inclusive Access
- CS6 Settlement Boundary
- CS7 Design and the Public Realm
- CS9 Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities
- CS13 Impact of Employment Development
- CS20 Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy
- CS24 Car/Cycle Parking
- CS25 Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture
- CS26 Network and Hierarchy of Centres
- CS28 Loss of Open Space
- CS34 Pollution and Water Resources
- CS35 Flooding
- CS36 Biodiversity and Ecology
- CS37 Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space
- CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

Reading Central Area Action Plan, (2009)

Policy RC14 (Public Realm)

Sites and Detailed Policies Document, (2012)

Policy DM1 (Adaption to Climate Change)

Policy DM2 (Decentralised Energy)

Policy DM3 (Infrastructure Planning)

Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)

Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters)

Policy DM18 (Tree Planting)

Policy SA16 (Public and Strategic Open Space)

Policy SA17 (Major Landscape Features)

4.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

SPG - Planning Obligations under s.106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (adopted July 2004, amendments adopted September 2004)

SPD - Sustainable Design and Construction (adopted 2011)

APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The proposed garden centre development and existing car park is located within the defined Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature and Area of Open Space. Core Strategy Policy CS37, reiterated in Policy SA17 states that planning permission would not be granted for development that would detract from the character and appearance of the landscape. Policy CS28 reiterated within Policy SA16, states that development which would reduce the amenity value of open space should be refused unless (exceptionally) improvements on the remaining open space can be provided to a sufficient level to outweigh the loss of the open space. Richfield Avenue is also designated as a Green Link and Cycle route.

Whilst within the Major Landscape Area, it is recognised that the proposed building has a limited footprint, the design is simple with a low level roof, and materials incorporate timber cladding and a 'green roof'. The structure and small area of new parking would be sensitively located on of the eastern edge of the designated area adjacent to the existing golf driving range building and Rivermead car park. As such, it is considered that the impact of this level of development on the existing physical landscape would be much reduced and, with the significant additional landscape planting, can be considered acceptable.

With regard to the loss of open space, again it is considered, with the enhancement of the open land to the west through new tree planting, that adequate mitigation can be provided to mitigate the use of the land as a garden centre and erection of the proposed building, seen in the context of the Rivermead Leisure Centre. The nature of the use of the external areas for plant storage is considered to be appropriate in this location, and the use of the building can be conditioned to be a plant centre use only to prevent general A1 use of the site. The proposal is therefore on balance considered to accord with the above policies.

Visual Impact, Trees, Landscaping and Ecology

The application was submitted with a tree survey report (July 2013) that assessed the existing trees on site. The protection measures for trees to be retained are considered to be acceptable and it is agreed that the nature of the scrub vegetation that covers the site and the removal of T8 and groups 2,3,4,6 and 7 would not have a negative effect on vistas from outside the site subject to new planting. Additional planting shown on the final updated 'Landscape Proposals Plan' (Rev D) is located on the boundary with Richfield Avenue, to the south; and the northern boundary to the existing car park and is considered to enhance the landscaping of the site. The submitted details, as amended, are therefore considered to be acceptable, subject to condition, and the proposal is considered to accord with Policy CS37 and CS38 and DM18.

Two new 2m wide pedestrian accesses are proposed from Richfield Avenue to the plant centre entrance. In relation to boundary treatment the proposed fence and gates, the detailed finish of which can be subject to condition are considered to be acceptable in visual terms in this location. Any external lighting will also be subject to condition to ensure it is keeping with the character of the area. Therefore having considered the visual impact of the structures and works within an area of open space with landscape value, the scale and design of the proposals coupled with addition planting would not conflict with Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy SA16 and SA17 of Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

There are no objections to the proposals on ecology grounds, but a condition is required to ensure that any scrub clearance does not impact upon nesting birds. As such there should be no ecology related constraints to the proposals and the development is considered to accord with Policy CS36.

Retail Sequential Test

In relation to the change of use of the application site to retail function the site is located outside of the town centre Primary Shopping Area as defined by RCAAP Policy RC6. The NPPF (paragraph 23) recognises town centres as the heart of their communities and advocates policies to support their viability and vitality. A Retail Sequential Test should be applied for main town centre uses, including retail, that are not in an existing centre. The NPPF also sets out that applicants and LPA's should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale (paragraph 24).

The applicant has submitted a Retail Sequential Test. This sets out that the Caversham Plant Centre has an established customer base in the Caversham area as it has historically traded for temporary periods on Richfield Avenue. Plant Centres also have specific operational and locational requirements for example external space adjoining the building for outdoor garden display; and adjacent surface level parking and service bays due to the bulky nature of goods sold. The vacant units assessed in Reading Town Centre and Caversham are not considered to be the appropriate size and/or did not have adequate on site parking and therefore are not considered suitable, available or viable.

Therefore the submitted Retail Sequential Test is considered by officers to be satisfactory. The development therefore is not harmful to the vitality and viability of the centres and accordingly is deemed to be acceptable when considered against the NPPF and to Core Strategy Policy CS26.

Flooding

The applicant's FRA considers, erroneously, that the site has an existing lawful use as a garden centre, which it does not and then uses this as the basis for indicating that the sequential test has been passed. The discussion below deals with the issue in detail.

The site is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3a (within the north east corner of the site). The site therefore has a high (Zone 3) and medium (Zone 2) probability of flooding by fluvial flooding from the River Thames. The limited area of the site located within Flood Zone 3A will remain undeveloped.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development to areas of lowest risk (Zone 1). In this regard, development should be subject to a Sequential Test. Development should not be permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding. This is to prevent or minimise risks to property and human life.

For the Sequential Test to be passed, it would need to be demonstrated that there are not any reasonably available sites for the type and scale of proposed development, within Reading, with a lower flood risk. The applicant who operates at present as Caversham Plant Centre has an existing customer base in the Caversham area. The applicant has therefore submitted a Sequential Test considering sites located the Caversham Area. This set out that there are a limited number of premises for rent or purchase and those assessed have been

considered to be unsuitable due to insufficient floor area or being within an area of higher risk of flooding than the application site. The applicant also states that due to particular operational requirements of a plant centre, premises not specifically designed for this purpose are unsuitable for the proposed use. The proposed garden centre use in this location is therefore considered to have passed the Sequential Test and is considered to be acceptable in principle subject to a detailed Flood Risk Assessment.

The Exception Test is not required as in accordance with the Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework as is considered to be a 'less vulnerable' use and less vulnerable uses of land are appropriate in Zone 2 and 3a.

The applicant has also submitted a Flood Risk Assessment which has been considered by the Environment Agency. The site at present is 100 % permeable, the permeable area of the site will be reduced by the proposed built form but this can be mitigated by the finished floor levels being raised to the specified levels and the impermeable areas of the site to be designed to ensure surface water is not shed into the local drainage network where possible. Therefore drains within the site should be regularly inspected and any impermeable hardstanding outside the building should fall away from entrance points to the building. The proposal is considered to be acceptable by the Environment Agency subject to the development being carried out in accordance with two conditions. Firstly that the development is carried out in accordance with details set out in submitted Flood Risk Assessment; and secondly that there is no infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground, unless, permitted for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to controlled waters

The Environment Agency has been consulted and raises no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions. Providing that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and Policy CS35 of the LDF Core Strategy.

Flooding from surface water sources, is considered by the FRA to be a low risk

Fluvial flooding (the Thames) is identified as being the main risk. The 1 in 100 year flood level is 38.60m AOD and the 1 in 1000 year level is 39.40m AOD

Land contamination

The site overlies an area of former landfill. The Environment Agency have stated that the site was investigated by WSP on behalf Reading Borough Council in May 2004. One borehole number WS2 was drilled on or near the site and detected at least 2 metres of made ground and fill material. The material yield low levels of hydrocarbons and metals. While the Environment Agency acknowledge this is a low level development and ground disturbance may be small it is not an ideal area for infiltration drainage as it may have the potential to mobilise contaminants within the fill materials. Therefore the suggested Infiltration condition sought by the Environment Agency is considered to be reasonable and the proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy CS34 of the LDF Core Strategy.

Transport Matters and Parking

The application was supported by a Transport Statement which has been prepared in line with the agreed scope. Vehicular access for staff and customers is proposed via the

existing four arm roundabout from Richfield Avenue. On entry to the site, vehicles will turn left at the first junction and left again into the existing 90 space car park located directly to the east of the site. Additionally separate delivery access will be via the existing vehicular access from Cow Lane to the rear of the plant centre. The proposed delivery access is situated on a public right of way, this land is within Reading Borough Council ownership and RBC has agreed to grant access rights as part of the lease agreement. A swept path drawing has been submitted to demonstrate that a HGV is able to access, turn and exit the site in forward gear; however a delivery management plan should be required by condition detailing how service vehicle deliveries to the site will be managed to ensure there is no conflict with pedestrians or other vehicular users of Cow Lane. This is considered to be acceptable in relation to Policy DM12.

In relation to trip generation by the proposed development this has been calculated using the Trip Rate Information Computer System (TRICS) which is deemed acceptable to calculate the proposed trip generation. Given the nature of the proposed business, it was agreed in the scoping process that the plant centre would result in seasonal variations in the peak trading months. Given these seasonal variations it is normal practice to calculate trip generation for a 'typical' month. In this case, June is taken to be 'typical' and the trip rates taken from the survey sites have been factored up accordingly.

The Transport Statement has also assessed the impact of non-primary trips ('passby' and 'diverted' trips that will already be on the network) based on a number of Inquiry decisions for new garden centre developments (Refer to Appendix A of the Transport Statement.) The proposed approach is to discount the likely trip generation by 30% on a weekday and 10% on a Saturday. Therefore, majority of trips generated by the plant centre will be in off peak periods on the weekdays or at the weekends. The development is expected to generate 16 additional primary trips during a Saturday peak hour.

Given the existing flows along Richfield Avenue and the small numbers of vehicle trips generated in the weekday peak hours, the proposed plant centre will not have a material impact on the overall number of peak hour trips. Further, the Transport Statement confirms that plant centre will close for an eight week period in August/September during the Reading Festival when there is a significant increase in vehicle and pedestrian trips in the immediate area.

In relation to parking the application site is located within Zone 2 (Primary Core Area) of the Councils Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. The proposal (for non-food retail development up to 1,000m²) requires a maximum of 1 space per 50m² which would equate to 19 car parking spaces. The proposed garden centre would utilise the existing 90 space car park located directly to the east of the site which forms part of the Rivermead Leisure Centre car park, providing approximately 600 pay & display car parking spaces in total. This area is currently allocated to Rivermead Leisure Centre as an overflow parking facility, but also used by Leaderboard Golf Centre and Lightning Motorcycle School. The Transport Statement confirms that an agreement is in place with Rivermead Leisure Centre enabling the use of this car park by the plant centre.

Therefore weekday and Saturday car parking occupancy surveys were undertaken in the proposed car park to determine whether the existing car parking facilities could accommodate the parking demand generated from the proposed development. The Car Park Accumulation Survey demonstrates that there is capacity in the existing car park to accommodate the additional parking demand generated by the proposals and any existing demand generated by Leaderboard Golf Centre and Lightning Motorcycle School without having any impact on the main leisure centre car park. Therefore the proposed car parking

arrangements are considered to comply with the Council's adopted parking standards and Policy CS24.

In relation to cycle parking, the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD requires a minimum of 1 cycle parking space per 6 members of staff and 1 space per 250m². The proposal includes the provision of 5 'Sheffield' type stands located in a convenient position close to the building entrance. This arrangement is acceptable subject to the provision of a shelter being required by condition. Therefore the proposed cycle parking arrangements are considered to comply with Policy CS24.

Surrounding Amenity

The vehicle accesses are to be retained as existing and the increase in traffic movements including HGVs, are not considered to cause undue noise or disruption to surrounding business properties or the general public utilising the Rivermead Leisure Centre. There are no residential properties in the vicinity of the site. Therefore these proposals are not considered to be in conflict with Policy CS34 of the LDF Core Strategy or Policy DM4.

Sustainability

The submitted BREEAM Pre-Assessment sets out that the applicant is aware of the Council's sustainability requirements contained within Core Strategy policy and the SPD guidance and the A BREEAM level of 'Very Good' required for developments of less than 1,000sqm non-residential floorspace can be achieved this will be secured by condition.

S106

In accordance with Section 5 (Transport) of the Council's Supplementary Planning Document on planning obligations, November 2013, developments will be expected to contribute to wider and strategic transport improvements in relation to roads, public transport, and facilities for cycling and pedestrians. The proposals are likely to generate 70.4 daily vehicle trips equating to a contribution of £21,260 (taking into account seasonal variations and weekend/weekday traffic generation).

The application is not a major development, and the proposed structures seek to replace existing buildings primarily used for storage, due to this and the limited increase in new floor area financial or other mitigation measures are not required in relation to demand for affordable housing, labour and skills or leisure provision. In accordance with Policy CS13.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. The site will provide level access. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Conclusion

The proposed new building is considered of an appropriate design and appearance within this landscape designation; although vegetation is to be removed the replacement trees are considered to adequately mitigate this impact; and the proposal will not raise additional risk of flooding or effect highway safety. As such it is considered in accordance with Core Strategy Policies CS7 (Design and the public realm), CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources), CS35 (Flooding), CS38 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands), Reading Sites and Detailed Policies document Policy DM18 Tree Planting, SA16 (Public and Strategic Open Space) and SA17 (Major Landscape Features).

Recommendation - Grant permission subject to Conditions.

Suggested Informatives:

Your attention is drawn to conditions above. These are pre-commencement conditions or conditions "precedent" and require the terms of the conditions to be satisfied before development commences. If development commences in contravention of these conditions, the development taking place may be made unauthorised in planning terms. This may result in the Council taking enforcement action against the unauthorised development. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.

2. The Council has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to overcome issues in relation to the proposal to enable permission to be granted within an agreed time period.

3. The applicant's attention is drawn to the requirement for submission of a Building Regulations application for the proposed development. Please contact RBC Building control on 0118 937 2449 for advice.

4. The site overlies an area of former landfill. The site was investigated by WSP on behalf Reading Borough Council in May 2004. One borehole number WS2 was drilled on or near the site and detected at least 2 metres of made ground and fill material. The material yield low levels of hydrocarbons and metals. While we acknowledge this is a low level development and ground disturbance may be small it is not an ideal area for infiltration drainage as it may have the potential to mobilise contaminants within the fill materials.

5. Any works affecting the highway shall be in accordance with Reading Borough's Council's document "Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway within the Borough of Reading". The applicant should be made aware that compliance with this document is mandatory and licences to work on the highway will only be issued if the requirements contained within it are met. A copy can be obtained at <http://www.reading.gov.uk/ltp/General.asp?id= SX9452-A782F664> (within the Transport Strategy area of the Transport Section on the Reading Borough Web Site).

6. Any advertisements sought in relation to the permitted use are required to be subject to a separate Advertisement Consent Application in accordance with the Advertisement Regulations.