



# Garden Centre Pulborough

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## Landscape & Visual Statement

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## Introduction & Contents

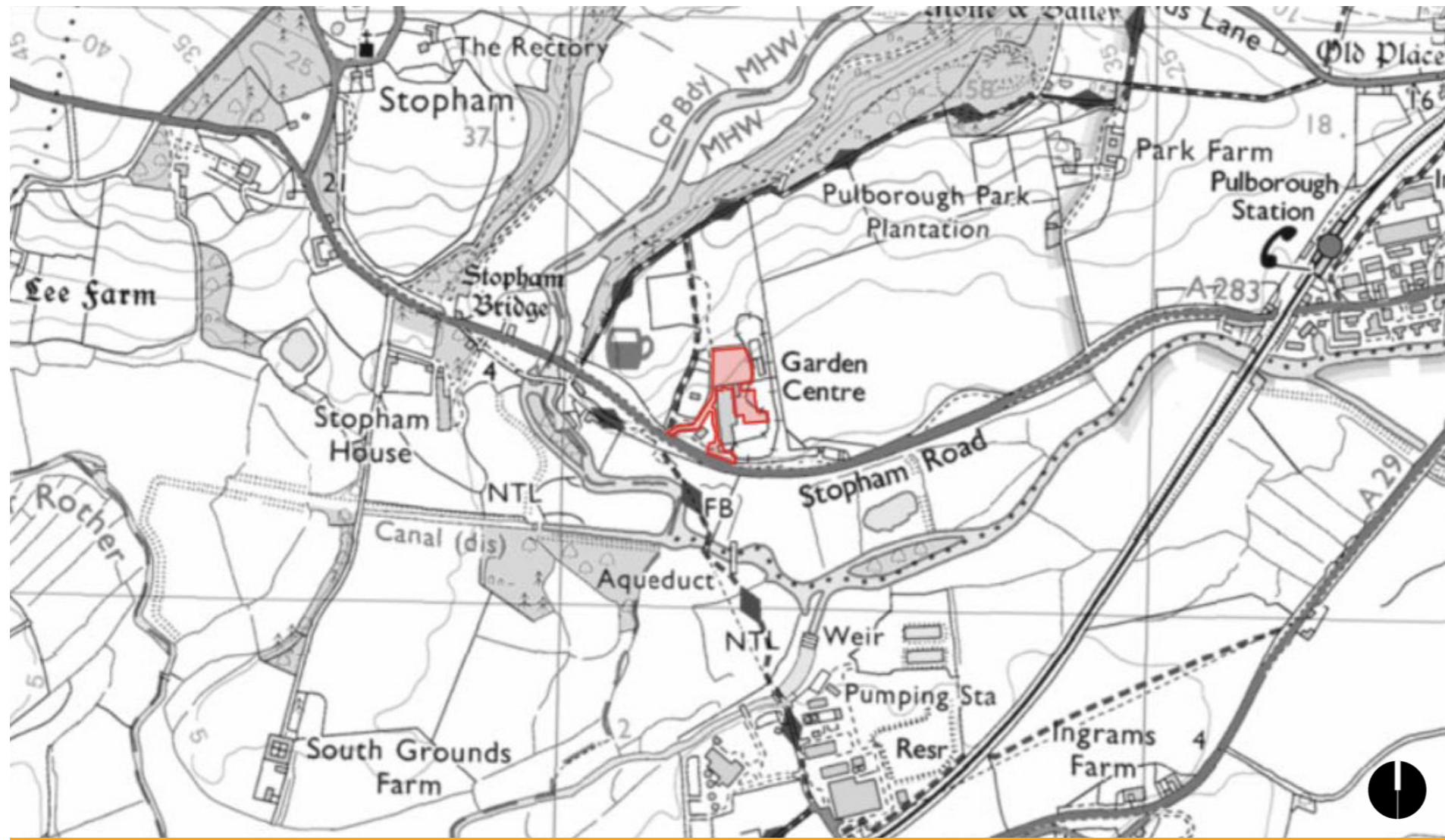
This Landscape Visual Statement (LVS) has been prepared by Deacon Design on behalf of British Garden Centres for: a proposed warehouse unit to the east of the existing northern car park.

The statement summarises the key landscape characteristics and visual envelope associated with the site and local context that have been informed by desktop and field-based study. This understanding of the site and setting within the South Downs National Park has formed the basis for the landscape design of the proposal.



Pulborough Garden Centre main site entrance from Stopham Road (A283)

## Site Context



Site Location Plan



Photograph from the eastern garden centre boundary, looking NW towards the application site beyond the external display area (screened by existing internal & perimeter vegetation).

### Site Location

The application site is located within the South Downs National Park, close to the north eastern boundary. It is contained within the ownership of a larger operational garden centre premises, which is accessed from the A283 Stopham Road and sited within 1 km to the west of the railway line that defines the edge of Pulborough.

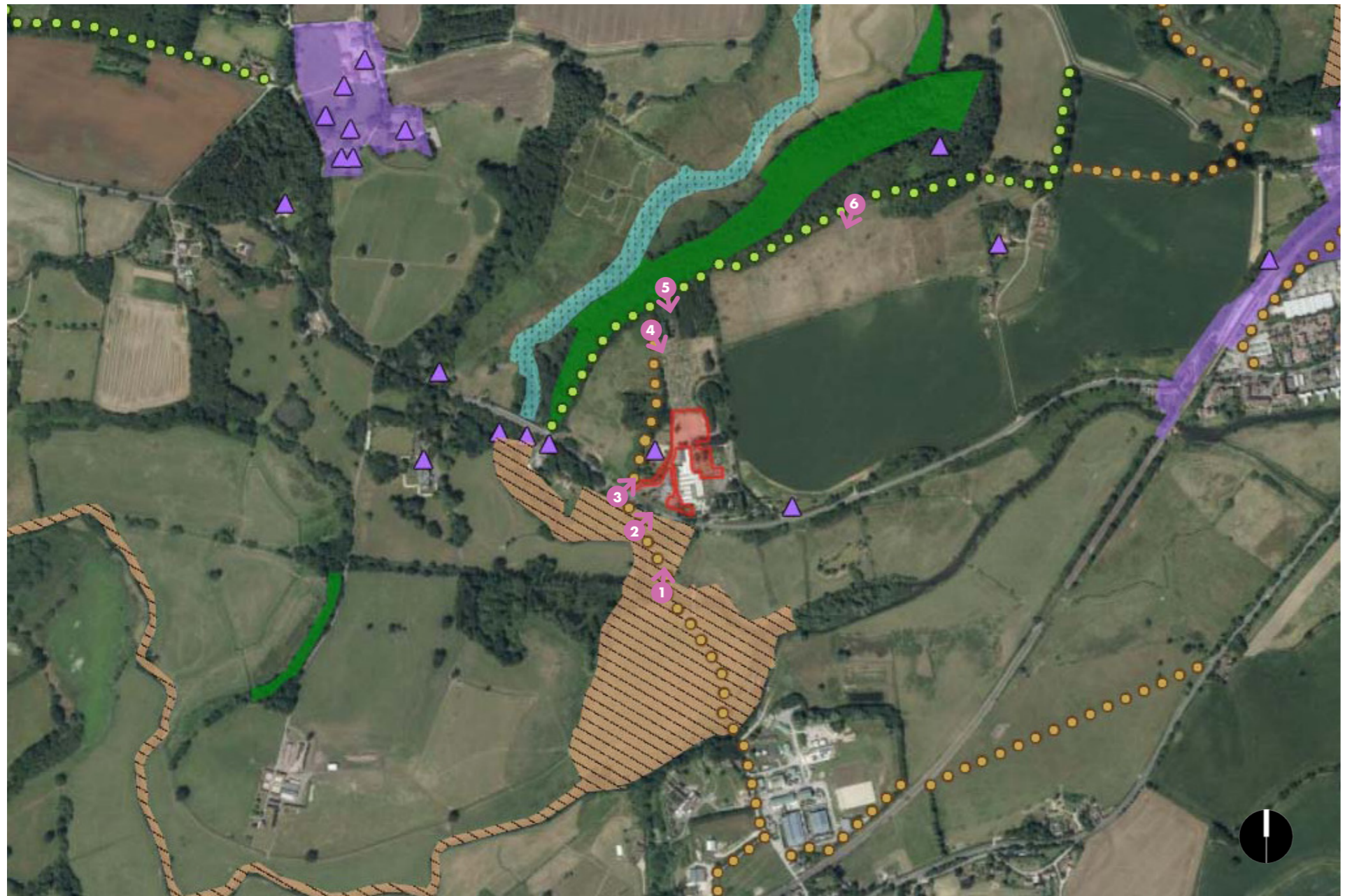
The existing garden centre premises comprises a vehicular access, formal car park and frontage to the Stopham Road (A283) highway, a primary garden centre sales centre with a number of extensions and ancillary structures, an external plant sales display area and a further overflow car park to the north of the sales centre. A Public Right of Way (footpath route 2326) extends north to south through the garden centre premises alongside the existing access and through the northern car park. This PRoW route affords access northwards through the existing woodland of Pulborough Park Plantation and southwards across the River Rother towards the River Arun on the eastern side of Coldwaltham.

A large, private dwelling that is sited to the west of the existing garden centre premises, which is set within a generous garden curtilage enclosed by ornamental trees and hedge planting. An existing allotment occupies the rising slope to the north of the existing carpark. From the northern edge of the allotment, the landscape transitions through informal heath towards Pulborough Park Plantation - a mixed woodland that extends along the ridge and sloping bank down to the River Arun. There are existing arable fields and paddocks adjoining the eastern site boundary of the garden centre site. The A283 Stopham Road defines the southern edge of the garden centre premises. Further south of the road, the River Rother flows eastwards to join the River Arun.

### Key Site & Context Features

- From an elevation close to 5m AOD along the site frontage with the A283 highway, the landform gently rises towards 15m AOD where the public footpath leaves the northern car park. The PRoW route continues rising alongside the allotments, where it joins the Wey South Long Distance Footpath that passes alongside Park Mound - a motte and bailey fortification (SAM) at 58m AOD.
- The garden centre premises lie just to the north of the River Rother and River Arun confluence. The low-lying valley affords open views south towards the steep scarp slopes at Amberley.
- The Pulborough Park Plantation encloses the site from wider landscape setting of the National Park to the north. The presence of the A283 diminishes the existing sense of rural character and tranquility.

# Site Location & Landscape Context



Designations provide an indication of landscape value. They are areas that have been recognised for qualities such as scenic beauty and recreational potential.

## South Downs National Park (SDNP)

The National Park covers an area of over 1,600km<sup>2</sup>, stretching 140km from Winchester to Eastbourne. It comprises rolling hills, heathland, river valleys, ancient woodland, villages and market towns and the white cliffs along the Heritage Coast. There are 7 Special Qualities for SDNP that include:

- diverse, inspirational landscapes and breath-taking views;
- tranquil and unspoilt places; and
- great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences.

## Ancient Woodland & Ecological Designations

Pulborough Park Plantation is an elongated band of Ancient Woodland within 0.2km north of the site along the river valley ridge. North of this woodland, the River Arun channel is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). South of the site, the landscape surrounding the confluence of the River Rother and River Arun is a designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), which continues east along the River Rother.

## Public Rights of Way










The site context benefits from strong network of public footpaths and bridleways. The Wey South Path (Long Distance Path) extends eastwards alongside the valley ridge past Park Mound (Motte & Bailey Scheduled Ancient Monument). To the south of the site, the Wey-South Path crosses the Rivers Rother and Arun towards Amberley, where the rising elevation affords a connection onto the South Downs Way atop the steep scarp slope.

## Heritage Assets

The setting of heritage assets is another indication of landscape value and a consideration for landscape and visual impact studies.

Stopham Bridge is a Grade I Listed structure and a Scheduled Monument. Park Mound is another Scheduled Ancient Monument within 0.6 km of the site. The closest Listed Building is the neighbouring dwelling called Cokehurst (Grade II Listed). Pulborough (east) and Stopham village (west) are both designated Conservation areas within 1 km distance.

## Key

	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)		Conservation Area		Public Right of Way Footpath
	Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)		Heritage Asset (Scheduled Ancient Monument / Listed Building)		Public Right of Way Bridleway
	Ancient / Ancient Replanted Woodland		Site Boundary		Viewpoint Location

# Landscape Character

Review of the published National, County and District landscape character assessments in combination with field based site studies informs our understanding of key attributes that contribute to the local and wider landscape setting.

## Landscape Character Assessments

The site is set within the following National, County and District Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and Landscape Character Types (LCTs):

- National Character Area (NCA) 120 Wealden Greensand (2013)
- South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (updated 2020) relates to landscape context to the site and context to the east and north within LCT N: Valley Farmland and LCA N1: Rother Valley Farmland. To the south of the A238, the landscape transitions to LCT Type H: Wealden River Floodplains.

## Key Characteristics of Valley Farmland (LCT N)

A distinctive open sandy arable landscape which is located on the Sandgate Beds of the Lower Greensand formation that occur along the Rother Valley to the north of the main spine of chalk that forms the South Downs.

- Gently undulating lowland sandstone landscape with well-drained, easily eroded sandy soils.
- A simple, open arable landscape divided into large scale geometric fields representing 20th century re-organisation of the landscape. Fields are bounded by denuded hedgerows.
- Mature standard oaks and ancient woodland remnants are key ecological and visual features in this predominantly arable landscape.
- The River Rother and its associated floodplain habitats provide an important green corridor.
- Small nucleated sandstone villages, usually of mid-late Saxon origin, comprising nucleated groups of former farmsteads situated around the church and manor house.
- Historic parkland and estate cottages are characteristic features of this landscape.
- The relatively low-lying nature of the landscape makes it a convenient route for road infrastructure.

## Key Characteristics of Wealden River Floodplains (LCT H)

Covers the floodplains of the rivers that flow through the Wealden geology of the South Downs – the River Rother and part of the River Arun.

- Flat and expansive valley floors underlain mostly by river alluvium, giving rise to periodically waterlogged silty soils supporting permanent pasture.
- The floodplain is etched by narrow channels ('wet fences') which divide pastures, as well as the meandering courses of rivers, sometimes flowing between artificial flood banks.
- Groups of willows and alders occur sporadically alongside the river and drainage channels providing important visual and ecological features. Wooded islets, wet woodlands, reedbeds, fen, marsh and swamps are also features of visual and ecological interest.
- Ditch systems and seasonally flooded water meadows ('brooks innings') have a particularly rich flora and are of high biodiversity interest, as well as supporting large numbers of birds.
- General absence of settlement, with the exception of the occasional farm.
- Historic stone bridges cross the rivers, sometimes with stone cottages at the bridgehead. Other historic features such as mills and weirs are associated with the rivers.
- The low incidence of woodland and settlement results in a large scale, open landscape with extensive views across the floodplain.
- Away from transport corridors the valleys retain an unspoilt and tranquil pastoral character.

## Site Landscape Character

The application site lies within an operational Garden Centre, close to the centre of the eastern boundary. The existing eastern boundary is well vegetated and there is an area of made-up ground close to the northern edge of the application site that is similarly well-vegetated.

The application site and the wider garden centre are not representative of the Valley Farmland or the Wealden River Floodplain because they do not exhibit any particular key characteristics. In contrast, the immediate and surrounding wider landscape does more strongly accord with the published characteristics.

Where changes are proposed for the existing site, they would not directly change any components of landscape character. Consideration is required for the potential of site changes to impact the landscape character of the surrounding setting and wider context of the South Downs National Park.

# Visual Envelope

The following pages provide a representation of views from public rights of way and public highway surrounding the site where the viewers tend to seek an appreciation of the existing National Park landscape setting.

Visual receptors that may be able to obtain views from publicly accessible viewpoints into the site include:

- Walkers, horse riders and cyclists from Public Rights of Way network
- Vehicle users travelling along public highway
- Residents in dwellings and settlement areas

The National Park and other relevant designations attribute an increased landscape value to the site context. The emphasis of the study looked at publicly accessible locations for viewpoints where the site may contribute to the experience and enjoyment of the landscape.

## Views From the Site & Garden Centre Premises

Eastern and western views from the garden centre are partially screened and filtered by the existing vegetation at the site perimeter. This limits the existing intervisibility westwards to the neighbouring dwelling that comprises a Grade II Listed building.

The gently rising site topography affords long distance views southwards across the low-lying Wealden River Floodplain towards the steep rising scarp slope south of Amberley. The scale of the setting is broad and open and the views are attractive. Pockets of existing development within the view are few in number, which affords a distinctly rural landscape character.

The existing woodland associated with Pulborough Park Plantation and the rising topography to the north of the garden centre prevents opportunity for views further north towards the landscape of the Low Weald.

There is no intervisibility with Pulborough village or Stopham village Conservation Areas. There is no intervisibility with Park Mound or Stopham Bridge Scheduled Monuments.

## Views Toward the Site & Garden Centre Premises

Existing views of the site and surrounding garden centre tend to be limited by a combination of distance, intervening topography, woodland and tall field boundary vegetation.

Dense scrub within surrounding the River Rother and River Arun confluence limits the scope for views from the south. Closer to the garden centre frontage with the A238, there are filtered views of the sales centre premises, which are available via existing scrub during the winter months. Closer to the River crossing, however, the visibility of the garden centre from the elevated bridge is much more reduced by vegetation density.

Open views across the garden centre premises are available from the existing public footpath. Views towards the application site are afforded from this route as it runs alongside the western edge of the northern car park. From this PRow route, however, the garden centre frontage, existing sales premises and the northern overflow parking area are far more visually prominent than the application site, which is screened by intervening vegetation.

Recreational / strategic views from the elevated long distance routes alongside Pulborough Park Plantation afford partial mid-distance views of the garden centre premises. Although partially screened by existing vegetation, the existing site is a detractive element within the view. The steep scarp slope of the South Downs Way to the south of the river floodplain is the prime and more dominant landscape component of character within the field of view.

## Viewpoints



Viewpoint 01: View from public footpath 2326 footbridge crossing over the River Arun (within the River Floodplain SINC) looking north towards the garden centre premise which are screened by dense scrub



Viewpoint 02: Closer view from public footpath 2326 on approach to the Stopham Road A283 (within the River Floodplain SINC) looking north towards the garden centre frontage. Gaps via vegetation afford filtered frontage views. Road noise diminishes any sense of tranquility

## Viewpoints



Viewpoint 03: View from the main garden centre access from the Stopham Road (A283) looking north. Views towards the neighbouring dwelling (Grade II Listed) are screened by ornamental, evergreen planting. Application views are screened by intervening buildings.



Viewpoint 04: View from the existing northern car park to the north of the garden centre building, looking SE towards the distant chalk escarpment. The southern part of the application site is visible beyond the car park and intervening trees.



## Viewpoints

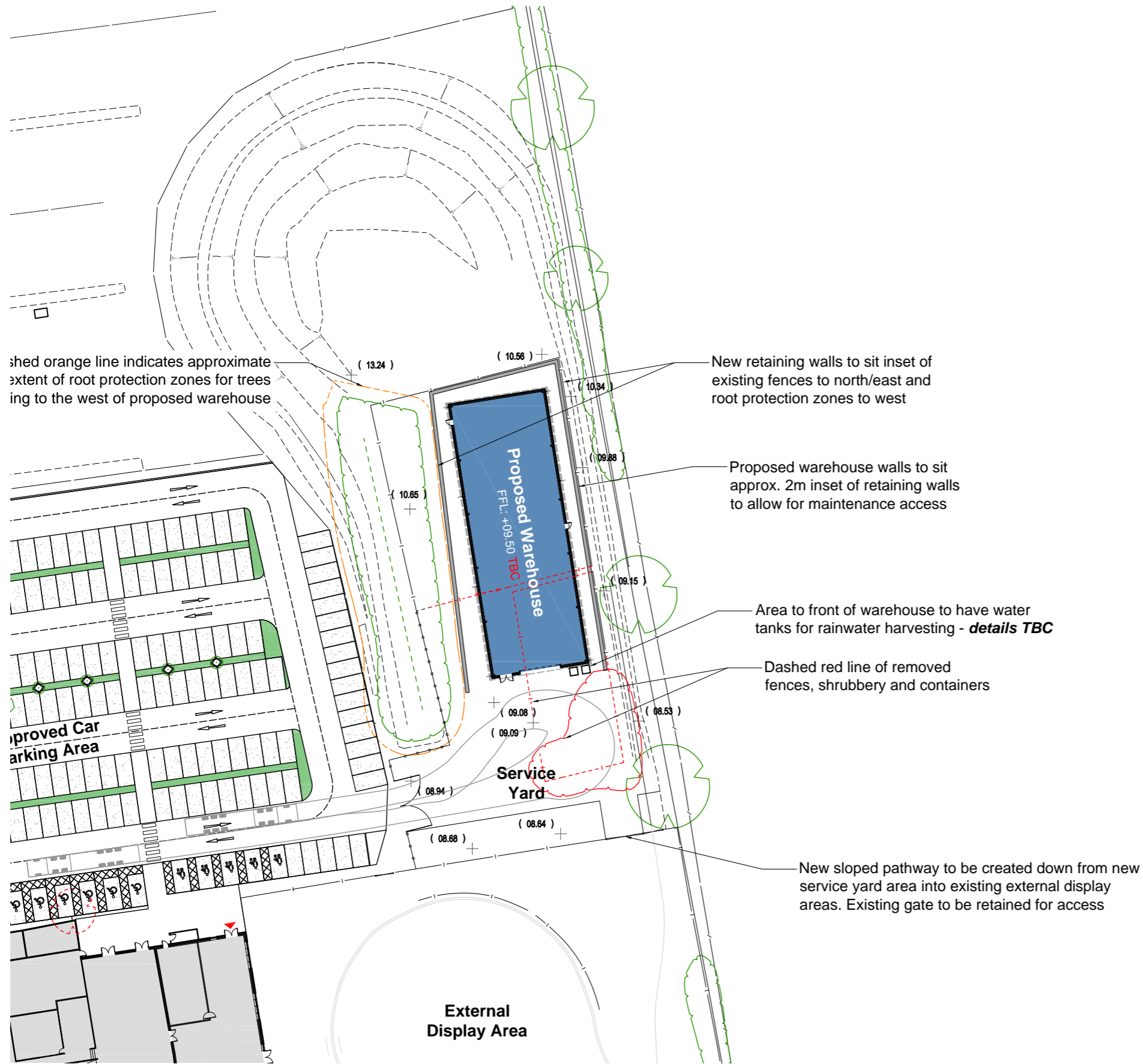


Viewpoint 05: View from public footpath 2326 looking south across the existing allotments that adjoins the northern parking area. Views of application site and wider garden centre are screened by intervening vegetation, with the chalk scarp ridge visible above the treeline



Viewpoint 06: View from public bridleway 1993 (Wey-South Path) looking southwest. The garden centre and allotments are partially screened by perimeter vegetation. The ridge of the steep chalk scarp and the floodplain landscape is visible from this elevated route.

# Summary & Landscape Mitigation



The existing site presents an opportunity to accommodate the proposed changes without unacceptable change to the existing landuse, landscape setting and associated visual amenity afforded to local residents, PRoW and road users.

The proposal has been guided by design advice to integrate the existing site within its landscape setting. The retaining walls will enable the proposed unit to be recessed into the rising landform to keep the ridgeline as low as possible. At a proposed elevation close to 10m AOD, the floor level will be set more than:

- 3m below the existing mounded site area to the north,
- 5m below the SW corner of the allotment site,
- 10m below the northern edge of the allotment site,
- 15m below the Wey-South LDP as it joins Footpath 2326

Placement of the unit to maximise the retention of existing vegetation alongside the eastern boundary and edge of the car park is further intended for screening mitigation and ecological benefit. There is scope for these existing areas to be managed by the garden centre for long-term screening density and biodiversity with operations such as rotational coppicing and supplementary planting with native species.

Combined with other wider garden centre proposals that are already approved, these measures to increase native species diversity enhance vegetation connectivity afford scope for benefit to the wider green infrastructure network.

The proposed development is proportionate and appropriate in scale to the existing site. Landscape mitigation and enhancement measures have potential for beneficial change to existing views from public rights of way, particularly along the Wey-South long distance route to the north of the site.

The proposals seek to accord with the local landscape character by:

- Retention & enhancement of existing boundary hedgerows & trees as components of existing landscape character and green infrastructure that will afford screening benefit for the proposal
- Introduction of new native trees and shrubs associated with the approved northern car park layout will contribute screening benefit for PRoW users passing through the garden centre premises
- Avoidance of lighting proposals to minimise impact on the National Park Dark Skies status, for benefit to bats and other nocturnal species

# Thank you

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Talk to the Deacon team

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