



Birdworld and Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment

Retail Planning Statement

Client: Haskins Garden Centres
Date: January 2024

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Alder King Planning Consultants have been instructed by Haskins Garden Centres Ltd to prepare a Retail Planning Statement (RPS) in connection with a planning application at Birdworld and Forest Lodge Garden Centre, Farnham Road, for:

Improvements to, and new facilities at Birdworld including a new Entrance Building, Play Barn, Conservation and Breeding facility and an external Adventure Play Area. The re-development of Forest Lodge Garden Centre to include the demolition of the existing garden centre and the adjoining Garden Style structures to create a new garden centre (with covered and open sales areas, restaurant, plant, and warehouse). New service areas and car parking for both operations, accessed from a new roundabout on the A325. The closure and removal of the existing Forest Lodge access. Enhanced landscaping throughout.

Context for this Statement

- 1.2 This statement provides an analysis of the retail planning issues associated with the application proposal. It addresses the relevant retail planning policy tests set out in the statutory development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The relevant Development Plan is the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (Part 1 Local Plan) (June 2014), the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Housing and Employment Allocations (Part 2 Local Plan) (April 2016) and saved policies from the Local Plan Second Review (2006).
- 1.3 The RPS assesses the proposal against the two retail policy tests set out in the Development Plan and the NPPF:
1. The sequential approach to site selection; and
 2. Retail impact on existing defined centres (impact on centre vitality and viability and in-centre investment).

Evidence Base and Methodology

- 1.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 'Town Centres and Retail' section (paragraphs 1-18) confirms how the Government intends policies within the NPPF should be applied in practice. It provides recommendations and advice for applicants when preparing retail/town centre use statements in support of planning applications. The guidance is intended to help developers, retailers, and operators of other key town centre uses when preparing planning applications involving town centre uses and to assist LPAs when considering these types of applications.
- 1.5 The NPPG sets out advice on the key evidence which is required to support applications and confirms how the sequential approach and impact tests should be applied.

1.6 The evidence base and methodology adopted in this RPS has full regard to the advice and recommendations set out in the NPPG.

Structure of Statement

1.7 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Section 2: provides a description of the application site and proposals.

Section 3: considers the sequential approach.

Section 4: provides a retail impact.

Section 5: sets out the conclusions of the assessment.

2.0 Application Site, Background and Proposal

Introduction

- 2.1 This section of the statement provides a description of the application site and surroundings, provides background in relation to earlier redevelopment schemes granted planning permission by East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) in 2014 and 2018, and summarises the application proposal.

Application Site and Surroundings

- 2.2 The 13.5ha application site is located off the A325, which runs along its south eastern boundary, linking Farnham to the north east and Whitehill and Boredon to the south. The site lies approximately 1km to the north of the village of Bucks Horn Oak and 1km to the south west of the village of Rowledge.

Figure 2.1: Existing Site Plan



- 2.3 The application site comprises the existing Haskins Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Birdworld and associated car parking. The Garden Centre also incorporated Garden Style, an external sales area to the south of the main garden centre building. However, Garden Style has recently ceased trading, albeit it could be reoccupied.
- 2.4 Haskins is a family-run garden centre business founded in 1882 by Harry Haskins on the south coast. Today, Harry Haskins' great grandson Warren Haskins is the Chairman and is very much involved in developing the business. The company is well respected nationally and internationally for its innovative and inventive approach to garden retailing. The company currently own four other centres: Roundstone near Littlehampton, Ferndown in Dorset, West End just north of Southampton and Snowhill near East Grinstead.

2.5 Haskins acquired the Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Birdworld in January 2020 and have developed the garden centre business in the intervening period to bring it in line with their other centres. There are now 102 staff employed in the Garden Centre and 69 at Birdworld. Both operations have significant shortcomings in terms of layout and physical state of the existing buildings. The garden centre business also continues to subsidise the adjoining Birdworld operation. This redevelopment proposal aims to improve both facilities so that they can deliver the very best customer and visitor experience and be viable, sustainable businesses for the future.

2.6 In retail planning policy terms, Birdworld and the garden centre are located in an out-of-centre locations. The existing garden centre floorspace has no retail or goods restrictions. Accordingly, it is permitted to sell the full range of retail goods (including clothing and footwear) and could be sub-divided into a number of units.

The 2014 Birdworld/Garden Centre Redevelopment Approved Scheme

2.7 Planning permission was granted in March 2014 for the partial redevelopment of Birdworld and Forest Lodge Garden Centre and a joint single vehicular access (LPA Ref: 20533/054). The permission comprised the demolition of existing structures amounting to 7,362sq m gross floorspace; the erection of new structures measuring 13,034sq m gross floorspace; hard and soft landscaping; a light railway within Birdworld; enabling development comprising 5 detached houses and associated access works.

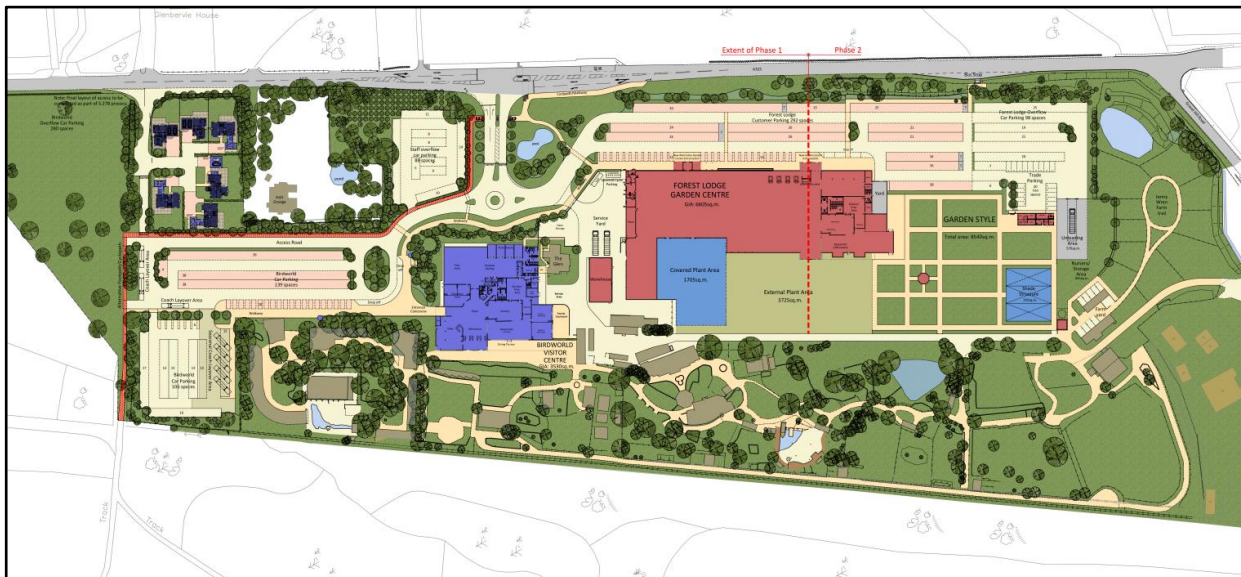
The 2018 Birdworld/Garden Centre Redevelopment Approved Scheme

2.8 Following the above permission, a further application for the partial redevelopment of the site was submitted to EHDC in December 2016 and approved in December 2018 (LPA Ref: 20533/059) (the '2018 Approved' Scheme). The scheme included:

- The demolition of the existing visitor centre and structures and the erection of a new visitor centre at Birdworld.
- An 'enabling' development of 6 detached dwellings.
- Provision of a new larger car and coach parking area to serve Birdworld.
- Implementation of a recently consented warehouse building to serve Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Garden Style.
- Provision of additional car parking at Forest Lodge Garden Centre.
- A phased extension to the Forest Lodge Garden Centre.
- Relocation of Garden Style.
- Associated access works.

2.9 In total, the 2018 Approved Scheme created a total floorspace of 7,786sq m for Birdworld (including retained buildings and aviaries and a new entrance building); 8,708sq m internal / 3,725sq m external floorspace for the Garden Centre, plus buildings used in association with Garden Style and the residential buildings.

Figure 2.2: Proposed Masterplan – 2018 Approved Scheme (LPA Ref: 20533/059)



- 2.10 The planning officer's committee report (attached at **Appendix A**) noted that the Retail Statement submitted in support of the application was independently assessed by EHDC's retail planning consultants, Lichfields. Lichfields concluded that *'the impact of the extension to the sales area of Forest Lodge would be unlikely to have an impact on town centres'*. Whilst Lichfields did also conclude that the extension would compete with other garden centres in the locality they noted that this would be offset by general increases in expenditure growth. The officer therefore concluded in the committee report that the proposal would *'not have an adverse impact on neighbouring town centres'* subject to appropriate conditions.
- 2.11 The committee report also confirmed that Lichfields agreed that there were *'no alternative sites available in or around town centres which are large enough to accommodate the proposal or parts of it'*.
- 2.12 Accordingly, the officer concluded in the committee report that the proposal complied with the NPPF and relevant development plan in terms of maintaining the vitality and viability of the District's centres.
- 2.13 The application was subsequently approved in December 2018.

Application Proposal

2.14 The application seeks planning permission for:

Improvements to, and new facilities at Birdworld including a new Entrance Building, Play Barn, Conservation and Breeding facility and an external Adventure Play Area. The re-development of Forest Lodge Garden Centre to include the demolition of the existing garden centre and the adjoining Garden Style structures to create a new garden centre (with covered and open sales areas, restaurant, plant, and warehouse). New service areas and car parking for both operations, accessed from a new roundabout on the A325. The closure and removal of the existing Forest Lodge access. Enhanced landscaping throughout.

2.15 The proposals for Birdworld include the erection of a new entrance building to welcome visitors to the attraction. A playbarn is also proposed to the east of the new entrance building, alongside outdoor adventure play areas. A new Conservation and Breeding facility is also proposed. Overall, the Birdworld element of the proposal involves an increase in floorspace from 6,801sq m gross to 7,453sq m gross.

2.16 In terms of the garden centre proposals, the scheme involves the demolition of the existing garden centre, the adjoining Garden Style structures and external plant sales area and the erection of a new garden centre building including a restaurant and warehouse. The garden centre building is to be located further to the south when compared to the existing garden centre building. At the rear of the building a covered sales area will be provided alongside an external (uncovered) plant sales area.

Figure 2.3: Proposed Site Plan



- 2.17 The scheme includes the creation of a new car park for both operations with a total of 840 car parking spaces provided. Whilst the car parking will be shared between the two operations, the proposed layout of the site provides approximately half of the spaces in front of the garden centre building, with the remaining spaces located in front of the proposed Birdworld entrance building. Car parking spaces for EV charging will be provided, alongside accessible and car share spaces. Cycle, motor cycle and coach parking is also proposed.
- 2.18 Table 2.1 below sets out a summary of garden centre floorspace of the existing, proposed and 2018 Approved schemes.

Table 2.1: Existing, Approved & Proposed Garden Centre Floorspace Schedule (sq m)

	Existing	Approved	Proposed
Forest Lodge Garden Centre			
Internal Sales Area	1,604	4,930	2,810
Open-sided/External Sales Area	5,394	5,524	5,897
Front of House	257	455	483
Restaurant	609	762	1,036
Warehouse	341	304	614
Back of House	215	458	602
Total	8,420	12,433	11,442
Garden Style			
Internal Sales Area (Polytunnels)	717		
External Sales Area	6,886	6,052	
Office and Staff Facilities	123		
Retail Sales Information Chalet	28		
Tractor/Fork Lift Shed & Storage	25		
Total	7,779	6,052	
Total	16,199	18,485	11,442

- 2.19 As demonstrated in Table 2.1 above, the current application scheme involves a significant reduction in floorspace/external sales area than that provided within the existing garden centre and Garden Style area (-4,757sq m). It also involves significantly less floorspace/external sales area when compared to the 2018 Approved Scheme (-7,043sq m).

Summary

- 2.20 In summary, the application proposal seeks to redevelop the existing garden centre and Birdworld site.
- 2.21 Planning permission was granted back in 2018 for the redevelopment of the garden centre and Birdworld. The current proposals comprise a redevelopment involving not only a significant reduction in garden centre/external sales area floorspace to what has previously been granted planning permission, it also involves a significant reduction in floorspace/external sales area to what is currently existing.

- 2.22 In granting planning permission for the larger garden centre redevelopment scheme EHDC concluded that the proposal was in accordance with the retail planning policy tests. We are not aware of any material change in circumstances that would lead EHDC to come to a different conclusion in relation the subject redevelopment scheme, which proposes a lower level of floorspace/external sales area.
- 2.23 Notwithstanding the foregoing, the following sections of this statement provides a retail planning assessment of the proposed development to assess whether the Council's previous conclusions would continue to apply.

3.0 Sequential Approach to Site Selection

- 3.1 The NPPF sets out that local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan (paragraph 87).
- 3.2 Saved Policy TC2 of the Local Plan Second Review (2006) (LPSR) requires that large scale retail uses outside existing centres will only be permitted if a sequential approach has been adopted to show there are no sites that are suitable or available for such development in or on the edge of town centres.

Sequential Approach Requirements

- 3.3 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan (paragraph 91). Paragraph 91 continues by stating that main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.
- 3.4 Paragraph 92 of the NPPF identifies when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. The NPPF requires applicants and local planning authorities to demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.

Sequential Approach Guidance

- 3.5 The NPPG was published in March 2014. Confirmation of how the sequential test should be used in decision taking is set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPG 'Town Centres and Retail' section. It notes that the application of the test should be proportionate and appropriate for the given proposal. A checklist is provided which sets out the considerations that should be taken into account in determining whether a proposal complies with the sequential test:
- With due regard to the requirement to demonstrate flexibility, has the suitability of more central sites to accommodate the proposal been considered?
 - Is there scope for flexibility in the format and/or scale of the proposal?
 - If there are no suitable sequentially preferable locations, the sequential test is passed.

3.6 Paragraph 12 of the NPPG identifies that the ‘use of the sequential test should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations’. It notes that where this is the case robust justification will need to be provided.

3.7 Finally, paragraph 13 provides guidance on how viability should be promoted. It identifies that LPA’s need to be realistic and flexible in terms of their expectation as promoting new development on town centre locations can be more expensive and complicated than building elsewhere.

The 2018 Approved Scheme – Council Conclusions

3.8 As noted in Section 2, the 2018 Approved Scheme was assessed independently by the Council’s retail planning consultants, Lichfields. In their Retail Critique report, dated March 2017, Lichfields concluded:

- A site of more than 1ha would be required to accommodate a garden centre of around 12,000sq m gross with customer car parking.
- Large sites in excess of 1ha, located within or on the edge of town centres, are unlikely to be viable for a low density use such as a garden centre due to the high land value.
- A 20 minute drivetime primary catchment area (PCA)/area of search was reasonable.
- The only site physically capable of accommodating a large garden centre within the PCA was the East Street Regeneration Area in Farnham. The site was consider to be unavailable and also not suitable for a garden centre format development.

3.9 More generally, Lichfields advised EHBC that any large site in excess of 1ha located within or on the edge of town centres are unlikely to be suitable for a garden centre format development due to high land values.

Locationally Specific Need for Proposed Development/Retail Floorspace

3.10 Due to their large space requirements, the bulky nature of goods sold, external sales area requirements and low sales densities, garden centres are primarily located in rural area. As recognised by Lichfields in their assessment of the 2018 Approved Scheme, any large sites within or on the edge of town centres sites are unlikely to be suitable for a garden centre development because of higher land values. Garden centres have a much lower sales density than typical town centre uses, such as clothing stores and other land uses.

3.11 The proposals seeks to replace/redevelop an existing garden centre which has been located at the site for a number of years. The garden centre requires a large site to allow space for an internal sales area as well as external areas for plants and more bulky goods such as garden furniture. The garden centre also

requires space for ancillary storage and appropriate servicing arrangements as well as adjacent car parking to allow customers to easily transfer bulky goods to their vehicle.

3.12 The garden centre proposals are also intrinsically linked to the proposals for Birdworld. Neither element of the scheme will progress without one another. The garden centre business subsidises the adjoining Birdworld operation and the redevelopment of both operations is required to fund and improve the facilities of both Birdworld and the garden centre to meet the modern customer's demands and expectations.

3.13 Accordingly, given the foregoing, it is evident that there is a clear locational specific requirement for the proposed development. Locating the development elsewhere would not meet the locationally specific needs of improving both the garden centre and Birdworld facilities.

3.14 Notwithstanding and without prejudice to the clear locationally specific requirements, for robustness the remainder of this section provides a sequential site assessment of the proposed development.

Methodology

3.15 The approach adopted in this sequential site assessment is consistent with the recommendations and guidance set out in the NPPG regarding the sequential approach to site selection.

3.16 The remainder of this section provides details on:

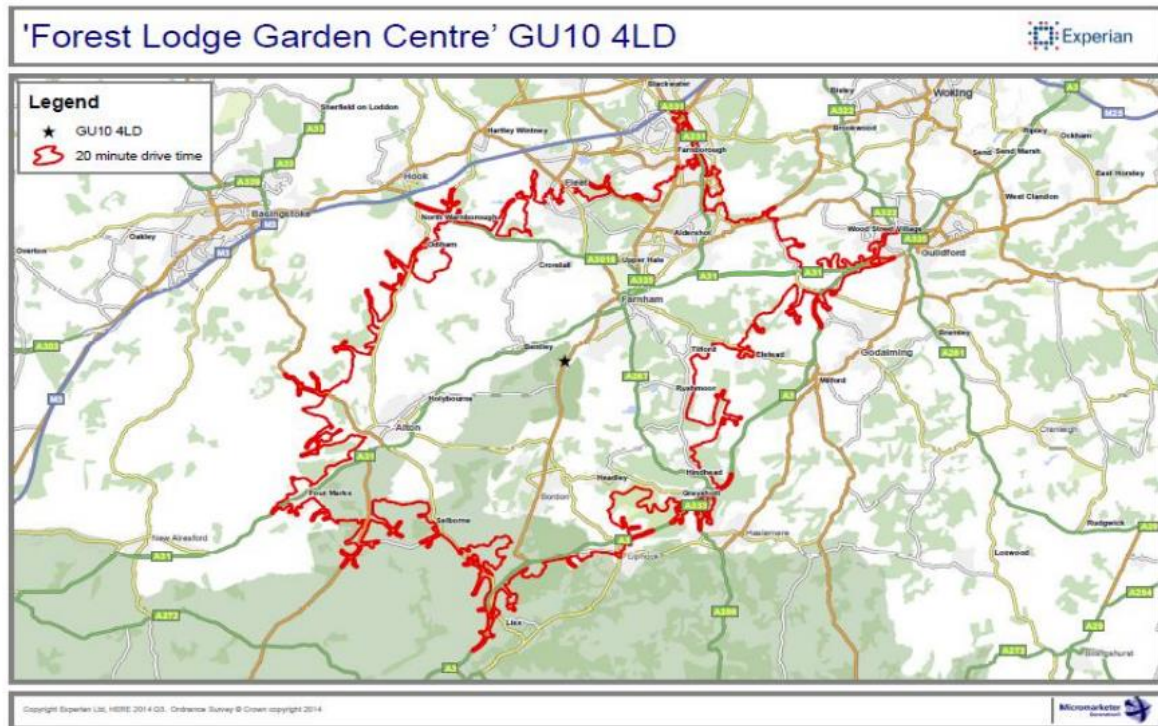
- The site search parameters
- Flexibility of format and scale
- Definition of availability
- The site analysis undertaken

Site Search Parameters

3.17 In establishing site search parameters the approach should be to consider the Primary Catchment Area (PCA) of the proposal and identify potential sequentially preferable alternative sites which could accommodate the proposed development within the catchment area.

3.18 As noted earlier, a 20 minute drivetime from the site has previously been accepted by the Council and their retail planning advisors, Lichfields, as a reasonable PCA for the garden centre. We have checked this with Haskins who have confirmed that, having regard to customer transaction data, they are also of the view that this is reasonable and realistic. Accordingly, we have adopted a 20 minute drivetime as the PCA. The PCA is shown in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Primary Catchment Area / Area of Site Search



3.19 As shown in Figure 3.1, the PCA covers an area including Alton to the west, Farnham and Aldershot to the north east and up to Liphook to the south east.

3.20 The following defined centres are located within the PCA of the proposal:

- Alton Town Centre;
- Farnham Town Centre;
- Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre (currently High Street/Chalet Hill Local Centre);
- Aldershot Town Centre;
- Liphook District Centre;
- North Camp District Centre;
- Forest Local Centre, Bordon;
- Four Marks Local Centre; and
- Grayshott Local Centre.

3.21 In total, there are five district/local centres within the PCA. However, with the exception of High Street/Chalet Hill Local Centre, which is to form part of the emerging Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre, these smaller centres have not been assessed as they serve a different role in meeting the day to day needs of local residents, typically including a small convenience shop, post office and pharmacy. A large garden centre development would not be appropriate or in accordance with the centres role and function in the shopping hierarchy. Notwithstanding this, we are not aware of any large sites in these small centres which could physically accommodate the proposed development.

Flexibility of Format & Scale

3.22 The definition of suitability is pertinent to the consideration of flexibility of format and scale. The definition has been clarified in February 2012 by the Supreme Court in Tesco Stores v Dundee City Council. Since this time the Judgment has been recognised and applied by the High Court, Secretary of State and Inspectors as being applicable to the NPPF. The Dundee Judgment identifies that provided the applicant has demonstrated flexibility with regard to format and scale, the question is whether the alternative site is suitable for the proposed development, not whether the proposed development could be altered or reduced so that it can be made to fit the alternative site. (#29).

3.23 Whilst past retail policy and guidance has adopted a requirement for applicants to demonstrate scope for disaggregation there is no such requirement in either the NPPF or NPPG. This was confirmed in the Warners Retail Court of Appeal judgement¹ and by the Secretary of State in his decisions on Rushden Lakes, Northamptonshire²; Scotch Corner, North Yorkshire³ and most recently on Cribbs Causeway⁴.

3.24 Thus, there is no normal requirement to disaggregate constituent parts of the proposal and that the sequential approach should be carried out for the development as proposed i.e. whether it can be accommodated on a town centre site (or sites).

3.25 The Mansfield Judgment affirms that, in applying the sequential test, the decision maker will generally be required to consider the type and format of the proposed development, rather than the requirements of any specific named operator. It identifies that the area and sites covered by the sequential test search should not vary from applicant to applicant according to their identify, but from application to application based on their content. Accordingly, it is clear from the Mansfield Judgment that, in applying the sequential test:

- 'suitable' and 'available' generally means suitable and available for the 'broad type of development which is proposed in the application by approximate size, type and range of goods';

¹ Warners Retail (Moreton) Ltd v Cotswold District Council & Or, Court of Appeal – Civil Division [2016] EWCA Civ 606

² Appeal reference: APP/G2815/V/12/2190174

³ Appeal reference: APP/V2723/V/3132873 & APP/V2723/V/16/3143678

⁴ Appeal reference: APP/P0119/V/17/3170627

- ‘flexibility’ generally excludes the ‘identity and personal or corporate attitudes of an individual retailer’; and
- ‘available’ relates to the site’s availability for the type of retail use which permission is sought and not its availability to a particular retailer.

3.26 Provided that an element of flexibility is exercised on issues such as format and scale, any potential sequential sites should be considered only in terms of whether they could accommodate a broadly similar development proposal.

3.27 In this case, the applicant’s development proposal includes:

- The redevelopment of a 13.54 ha site;
- 16,748sq m of floorspace, including 7,453sq m to be used in association with Birdworld and 11,442sq m (including internal and external areas) to be used in association with the garden centre.
- The provision of 840 car parking spaces, plus parking for cycle, motorcycles and 3 coaches.
- Outdoor adventure play areas; and
- Extensive landscaping.

3.28 As noted in Section 2 of this statement, both Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Birdworld are owned by Haskins and combined they employ over 170 people. The garden centre business subsidises the adjoining Birdworld operation and the redevelopment of both operations is required to fund and improve their facilities to meet the modern customer’s demands and expectations.

3.29 As clearly set out by case law, the sequential approach assessment should be undertaken to establish whether other site opportunities are available or suitable to support the whole of the proposed development – in this instance both the Bird World and the garden centre.

3.30 Without prejudice to the position set out above and the clear case law that disaggregation is not required, in order to provide a robust assessment Alder King has reviewed the sequential approach to establish whether other site opportunities are available or suitable to support only the garden centre element of the development. Accordingly, any potential site would need to accommodate a broadly similar garden centre development which includes:

- a site area of 4.9ha (equating to 36% of the total site area);
- a building with an internal footprint of circa 5,500sq m gross;
- open-sided/external sales area of circa 5,900sq m;
- a single storey building with both internal and external sales area of one level.

- a building with roof height of up to 6.8m at ridge level;
- appropriate servicing requirements, including access for large HGV's;
- a prominent road frontage; and
- car parking for 422 spaces to allow customers to easily transfer items to their vehicle.

3.31 Adopting a degree of flexibility, as required by both the NPPF and NPPG, we have widened the potential site size requirements to be between 4.4ha and 5.5ha, which represents approximately a 10% reduction/increase on the proposal to establish whether other site opportunities are available and suitable to support the applicant's development.

Definition of Availability

3.32 In accordance with the NPPF, any sequential sites need to be available or expected to be available within a reasonable period.

3.33 If there is any uncertainty on a site/unit coming forward for development, for example there are practical/feasibility/viability issues to resolve or investment/occupier interest or funding is still to be secured, then a site cannot be considered to be available. If a potential alternative site does not satisfy the availability test it is not sequentially preferable, irrespective of the position in terms of suitability.

3.34 Subject to receiving planning permission, the construction of the proposed development is anticipated to commence in 2026. The development is then expected to be completed and open to customers in 2027. Accordingly, for a potential alternative site to be considered available in the context of the subject proposals it must be available in a timeframe that could allow a garden centre to be open by 2027. In this instance, a reasonable period allowing for a degree of flexibility, is considered to be no later than 2028 (an additional 12 months).

Sequential Site Analysis

3.35 In accordance with guidance set out in the NPPF and NPPG, the applicant has undertaken a sequential site analysis of potential in-centre, edge-of-centre, and sequentially preferable out-of-centre sites. This process has included:

- An analysis of adopted and emerging development plan policy documents.
- A review of potential town centre, edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites in Alton, Farnham, Whitehill and Bordon and Aldershot.

3.36 The above process has identified eight sites for consideration:

Farnham

- 1) East Street, South Street and Dogflud Way, Farnham;
- 2) The Woolmead, Farnham;

Whitehill and Bordon

- 3) Regeneration of Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre;

Aldershot

- 4) The Galleries, Aldershot;
- 5) Union Street East, Aldershot;
- 6) Hippodrome House, Aldershot;
- 7) Westgate Phase II, Aldershot; and
- 8) Aldershot Railway Station and Surrounds, Aldershot.

3.37 We are not aware of any large vacant units in any of the centres that would need to be assessed as part of this sequential assessment. All are significantly smaller and are therefore not suitable for the proposed development in size grounds alone.

3.38 Each site is considered in turn below.

- 1) East Street, South Street and Dogflud Way, Farnham

3.39 The site at East Street, South Street and Dogflud Way is allocated for mixed use development including retail, residential, a cinema and multipurpose space and day care facilities in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) (Policy FNP21).

3.40 Planning permission for the allocated site (excluding Sainsbury's) was granted back in 2012 for mixed use redevelopment comprising 9,814sq m of retail, restaurants and café-bar floorspace, 239 residential units, a multi screen cinema, car parking and associated works (LPA Ref: WA/2012/0912). There have been numerous related applications submitted and approved since 2012, including several Section 73 applications. The application site extended to 3.95ha.

3.41 The permission, as subsequently amended, has been implemented and as we understand is scheduled to open in phases. The regeneration scheme is now known as Brightwells Yard. Given that this regeneration scheme has now been built out, the site is not available for the proposed development.

3.42 In any case, at less than 4ha, even if the site was available, it is physically too small to accommodate the proposed development, which allowing for flexibility, requires a site of at least 4.4ha.

3.43 Accordingly, the available evidence identifies that this site is not available or suitable for the proposed development.

2) The Woolmead, Farnham

3.44 The site at the Woolmead is allocated for mixed use development including retail at ground floor and residential above in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan.

3.45 Planning permission was granted in October 2018 for the erection of a building to provide 138 dwellings, approximately 4,097sq m of mixed use commercial floorspace with associated access, parking and landscaping (LPA Ref: WA/2018/0458). Since this permission, planning conditions have been discharged and several applications for non-material amendments to the permission have been submitted to the Council with the most recent application in 2020. This application sought to vary the approved list of drawings to allow alterations to the basement layout (LPA Ref: WA/2020/0105). This application was allowed on appeal in May 2021.

3.46 At the time of our visit, this scheme was under construction as such it can be concluded that the site is not available for the proposed development.

3.47 In any case, the site only measures 0.8ha and so would be significantly smaller than the required site area of at least 4.4ha.

3.48 Given the foregoing, the site is not available nor suitable for the proposed development.

3) Regeneration of Whitehill & Bordon Town Centre

3.49 Whitehill and Bordon is identified in the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy as a Strategic Development Area ('eco-town') to include 4,000 new homes and 5,500 new jobs, including the regeneration of the town including a new town centre with up to 23,000sq m of retail floorspace. Policy CSWM3 of the Joint Core Strategy relates to the new town centre and identifies land for a new town centre.

3.50 The Joint Core Strategy recognises that the new town centre will comprise a major retailer which will be located at its heart together with other large units to attract more quality retailers (Policy CSWB3). Policy CSWB3 seeks to ensure that the proposed development comprises proposals for new shops, recreation and leisure, entertainment, cultural facilities, offices and commercial developments and high density housing.

- 3.51 A hybrid planning application was submitted in December 2014 seeking: outline permission for up to 2,400 dwellings, up to 23,000sq m of town centre floorspace, two schools, up to 10,000sq m employment floorspace, replacement sports changing/pavilion facility and associated works; and full permission for the creation of an area of suitable alternative natural greenspace at Hogmoor Enclosure and the delivery of the southern section of a new relief road (LPA Ref: 55587/001). Planning permission was granted in November 2015.
- 3.52 There have been numerous applications submitted following the above permission including a reserved matters application for erection of Phase 1 of the new town centre (LPA Ref: 55587/065). The application was for retail units (including a new foodstore), professional and financial services, drinking establishments, cafes, restaurants, offices, a cinema and heritage/arts space, offices, residential and a new town park and town squares. The application was approved in January 2019.
- 3.53 Numerous other planning applications have also been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority, including for a new leisure centre within the town centre.
- 3.54 The leisure centre has been built and is open, as is The Shed, an entertainment and dining space, and an outdoor cinema. Other parts of the centre are to be completed in accordance with the reserved matters permission or any subsequent permissions.
- 3.55 We are not aware of any units or sites within the new town centre which would be large enough to accommodate the proposed garden centre development. In any case, the purpose of the new town centre was to create a mixed use centre comprising shops, recreation and leisure, entertainment, cultural facilities, offices and residential uses. A low density garden centre, requiring a site that would take up a large portion (if not all) of the remaining new town centre area, would not be consistent with the overall vision for the new town centre as set out in the development plan.
- 3.56 It can therefore be concluded that the new town centre at Whitehill and Bordon is not available and would not be suitable for the proposed garden centre development.

4) The Galleries, Aldershot

- 3.57 The Galleries site is located in the eastern part of the town centre between Wellington Avenue to the north and Victoria Road to the south.
- 3.58 The Rushmoor Local Plan (RLP) (2019) allocates The Galleries for comprehensive redevelopment comprising at least 500 residential units, enhanced retail provision comprising a mix of active town centre uses, a new public space and public car parking (Policy SP1.4).
- 3.59 The site comprises three separate sites, which are adjacent to each other but split by High Street and Little Wellington Street. Combined the sites measure less than 2ha.

3.60 Planning permission was granted in September 2022 for the redevelopment of The Galleries site comprising 596 flats, flexible commercial uses within Use Class E and/or Use Class F.1 and associated works (LPA Ref: 20/00508/FULPP). A subsequent non/material amendment was approved in February 2023 to allow a revised car park layout (LPA Ref: 22/00779/REVPP).

3.61 Owing to the small size of the site, as well as its nature, divided by two streets, it would not be suitable for the proposed development which requires a site of at least 4.38 ha.

3.62 Furthermore, it is evident from the planning history of the site that the site is to be redeveloped for mixed uses, in accordance with its allocation as set out in the RLP, and so is considered to be neither available nor suitable for the proposed garden centre development.

5) Union Street East, Aldershot

3.63 The Union Street East site is located in a central location within the town centre to the south of High Street. The site measures approximately 0.5ha.

3.64 The RLP allocates the site for redevelopment and refurbishment to deliver at least 140 residential units, an enhanced gateway to the town centre from the north and active ground floor uses (Policy SP1.5). The RLP notes that a number of the properties offer value to the townscape, hence the refurbishment of part of the site as identified by the policy.

3.65 Given the small size of this site it would not be suitable for the proposed development which requires a site at least eight times larger. The site would also not be suitable owing to the likely need, as identified in the RLP, to retain some of the buildings which offer value to the townscape.

3.66 Planning permission was granted in January 2021 for the demolition of the existing buildings and construction of 100 residential units and 128 student units together with 2,237sqm of flexible retail/commercial/business/community floorspace and associated works (LPA Ref: 20/00171/FULPP). It is understood that this development is currently under construction and is scheduled to be completed later this year. The site is therefore not available for the proposed development.

3.67 Having regard to the above assessment, the site at Union Street East is neither suitable nor available for the proposed development.

6) Hippodrome House, Aldershot

3.68 The Hippodrome House site is located in the south eastern part of the town centre at the junction of Station Road and Birchett Road. The site currently comprises Hippodrome House, an office building with primarily retail uses at ground floor.

- 3.69 The site is allocated for either a comprehensive redevelopment or a refurbishment scheme with active mixed town centre uses at ground level with upper floors having the potential to provide at least 70 residential units (Policy SP1.6).
- 3.70 At only approximately 0.2ha, the site would provide less than 5% of the site area required for the proposed garden centre development. It is therefore unsuitable for the proposed development based on its size alone.
- 3.71 In addition, the site is currently the subject of a planning application seeking change of use to residential together with external alterations (LPA Ref: 23/00019/FULPP). Accordingly, there are current plans for refurbishment of the building for residential purposes. It therefore also not available.
- 3.72 In summary, it can be concluded that the site at Hippodrome House is not suitable or available for the proposed development.

7) Westgate Phase II, Aldershot

- 3.73 The Westgate Phase II site is located in the western part of the town centre, to the south of Wellington Avenue and to the west of Princes Way. The site comprises the Princes Hall multi-purpose centre and the Police Station/Magistrates Court and covers an area of approximately 1ha.
- 3.74 The site is allocated in the RLP for a comprehensive redevelopment scheme that will reinforce the established evening economy role within this part of Aldershot comprising a revamped theatre building and residential development (Policy SP1.7). The RLP notes that, owing to the current uses on the site, it is likely to come forward in the medium to long term (five to fifteen years). Given the time that has lapsed since the adoption of the RLP, this is now within the next ten years unless there have been any change of circumstances.
- 3.75 As with the other town centre allocations, at only 1ha, this site is significantly smaller than that which would be required for the proposed garden centre development. Even allowing for flexibility, a site of 4.4ha would be required. The site's allocation for theatre and residential purposes is another factor in determining that the site is not suitable for a garden centre use.
- 3.76 Owing to the existing uses on the site, and as recognised by the RLP, this site will take some time to come forward as it is likely that a suitable alternative location for the Police Station and Magistrates Court will need to be found before this site can be redeveloped. There have been no planning applications submitted for the redevelopment of the site in accordance with its site allocation. Given the existing uses on the site and its allocation for non-retail uses the site is not available for the proposed development.
- 3.77 Given the foregoing, it is evident that this site is not suitable for the proposed development and is unlikely to become available/available within a reasonable time for the proposed development.

8) Aldershot Railway Station and Surrounds, Aldershot

- 3.78 The site is located in an edge of centre location to the south east of the town centre. The site is an irregular shape, comprising the bus station, the railway station forecourt and car park and Penmark/Progress House. The site measures approximately 1.3ha.
- 3.79 The site is allocated in the RLP for primarily residential development of the existing bus station site (subject to its appropriate re-provision), a reconfigured railway station forecourt and the redevelopment of Penmark/Progress House for residential use (Policy SP1.8). Policy SP1.8 also identifies the provision of ancillary retail uses at ground floor level on the bus station part of the site.
- 3.80 At 1.3ha, the site is physically incapable of accommodating the proposed garden centre development, which requires a site in excess of 4ha.
- 3.81 Whilst some retail use is included as part of the site allocation, this is only ancillary uses in connection with the proposed residential use of the site and so would comprise facilities such as a small convenience store and/or café/takeaway type uses.
- 3.82 In conclusion, the foregoing assessment identifies that the site is not suitable for the proposed development.

Conclusions Regarding the Sequential Approach

- 3.83 It has been demonstrated that there is a clear locational specific requirement for the proposed development at the existing garden centre and Birdworld site. Furthermore, both the Birdworld and the garden centre elements of the proposal are intrinsically linked and the scheme will not progress without it all coming forward at the same time.
- 3.84 Notwithstanding this, and without prejudice to planning case law in relation to there being no requirement to disaggregate a scheme, this section of the statement has provided a sequential site assessment for the garden centre element of the proposed scheme.
- 3.85 The assessment demonstrates that there are no suitable or available sequentially preferable site in Farnham Town Centre, Alton Town Centre, Aldershot Town Centre or the emerging Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre.
- 3.86 Accordingly, it is concluded that the proposed development passes the sequential test requirements set out in the LPSR and NPPF.

4.0 Retail Impact

Introduction

- 4.1 This section of the statement provides an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development on nearby centres.
- 4.2 The NPPF sets out that when assessing applications for retail development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold. If there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500sqm gross.
- 4.3 Policy TC2 of the Local Plan 2nd review (2006) sets out a retail impact threshold of 500sq m gross. As noted in Section 2, the proposal involves a reduction in overall internal and external garden centre retail floorspace. Accordingly, in this instance it is not considered necessary to undertake an assessment of retail impact.
- 4.4 It is also important to note that the proposal involves a significant reduction in retail floorspace in comparison to the previously consented 2018 Garden Centre redevelopment scheme.
- 4.5 Notwithstanding and without prejudice to the position set out above, in order to provide a robust assessment we provide a proportionate assessment of retail impact of the proposed garden centre redevelopment within this section of the statement

NPPF – Retail Impact Requirements

- 4.6 Paragraph 90 of the NPPF identifies that planning applications for town centre uses outside town centres and not in accordance with an up-to-date plan should be assessed in terms of the following impacts on centres:
- 1) The impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planning public and private investment in a centre or centres within the catchment area of the proposal; and
 - 2) The impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).
- 4.7 The NPPF advises that planning permission should only be refused where it is likely to have a significant adverse impact on one or more of the above factors. However, even in the event this presumption of refusal is triggered, this presumption is just one consideration which must be weighed against all other factors to establish whether or not the presumption is outweighed.

NPPG - Retail Impact Guidance

- 4.8 Confirmation of how the retail impact test should be used in decision taking is set out in paragraph 17 of the 'town centres and retail' section. The guidance states that the impact test should be undertaken in a proportionate and locally appropriate way, drawing on existing information where possible.
- 4.9 This impact assessment has also been undertaken in a proportionate and locally focussed way taking into account the nature and scale of the application proposal and utilising.

The Approved 2018 Birdworld/Garden Centre Redevelopment Scheme – EHDC's Impact Conclusions

- 4.10 In determining the larger 2018 Scheme, the Council, and their retail advisors, Lichfields, concluded that:
- Trade diversion and impact is likely to be spread over a wider area.
 - Impacts on town centres are likely to range from 0.5% to 1.1%. These are modest levels of trade diversion and impact and are unlikely to be considered to be significant.
 - Similar levels of impact were previously concluded to be acceptable in granting planning permission for the 2014 Birdworld/Garden Centre Redevelopment Scheme.
 - It is unlikely the development proposals will have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of any designated centre.
- 4.11 As noted earlier in this statement, when compared to the 2018 Approved Scheme the proposal involves a significant reduction in floorspace (-7,573sq m net internal /external non-food (comparison goods) sales area / -226sq m food (convenience goods) sales area). Accordingly, it should follow that the proposal's impact on defined centres will be much lower than that previously assessed to be acceptable by EHDC.
- 4.12 In light of the Council's conclusions on the larger 2018 Approved Scheme and in the absence of any trading overlap between the proposed garden centre redevelopment and the local service/shopping role of the smaller district/local centres in the PCA, with the exception of High Street/Chalet Hill Local Centre, which is to form part of the emerging Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre, we do not consider it proportionate or necessary to undertake updated vitality and viability health checks of the district/local centres in the PCA or consider impact on these centres further. We have visited each district/local centre and do not consider there is any evidence to suggest that any could be considered to be vulnerable to retail impact.

Impact on Existing, Committed and Planned Investment

- 4.13 Paragraph 15 of the NPPG notes that where wider town centre developments or investments are in progress it will be appropriate to assess the impact of relevant applications on that investment. Key considerations will include:
- The policy status of the investment (i.e. whether it is outlined in the Development Plan).
 - The progress made towards securing the investment (for example if contracts are established).
 - The extent to which an application is likely to undermine planned development or investments based on operator demand and investor confidence.

- 4.14 In reviewing whether there is any public or private investment planned in centres in the PCA we have had regard to the development plan and our own visits of each centre.

Farnham Town Centre

Land at East Street

- 4.15 Land at East Street, South Street and Dogflud Way is allocated for mixed use development including retail, residential, a cinema and multiperformance space and day care facilities in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) (Policy FNP21). Planning permission has been granted for mixed use redevelopment on the site comprising 9,814sq m of retail, restaurants and café-bar floorspace, 239 residential units, a multi screen cinema, car parking and associated works. The scheme, known as Brightwells Yard, is currently being implemented and scheduled to open in phases.
- 4.16 Having regard to the different high street format of commercial/retail floorspace being delivered on this site, the proposed garden centre format development could not adversely impact this investment.

The Woolmead

- 4.17 Land at the Woolmead is allocated for mixed use development including retail at ground floor and residential above in the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan. Planning permission for the site has been granted for the erection of a building to provide 138 dwellings, approximately 4,097sq m of mixed use commercial floorspace with associated access, parking and landscaping. The planning permission is currently being implemented. Given that the scheme is being delivered and doesn't involve a garden centre, the proposed development is very unlikely to result in a significant adverse impact on this investment.

Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre

- 4.18 As noted in section 3 of this statement, Whitehill and Bordon is identified in the JCS as a Strategic Development Area to include 4,000 new homes and 5,500 new jobs, including a new town centre with up to 23,000sq m of retail floorspace. Planning permission has been granted for Phase 1 of the new town centre. Other applications have also been granted planning permission, including permission for a new leisure centre. Much of the approved development has been built out and is now open.
- 4.19 Given the stage of development of the new town centre, and the fact that it does not involve a garden centre, it is very unlikely that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on this investment.

Alton Town Centre

- 4.20 There are no allocations for town centre or mixed uses in Alton Town Centre and we are not aware of any existing, planned or committed in-centre investment in Alton Town Centre that would need to be considered as part of this retail impact assessment.

Aldershot Town Centre

- 4.21 There are a number of relevant planning permissions/investment in Aldershot Town Centre. We consider each in turn below.
- The Galleries, Aldershot - Planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of The Galleries. The redevelopment involves 596 flats, flexible commercial uses within Use Class E and/or Use Class F.1 and associated works. The planned investment is currently being delivered. Given the different format of retail floorspace and uses proposed it is considered that the proposed development would not prevent, prejudice or delay this investment being delivered.
 - Union Street East, Aldershot - Planning permission has been granted for the demolition of the existing buildings and construction of 100 residential units and 128 student units together with 2,237sqm of flexible retail/commercial/business/community floorspace and associated works. The development is currently under construction and is scheduled to be completed later this year. Given these type and format of uses proposed for the site, there is no trading overlap with the proposed garden centre redevelopment and therefore no significant adverse impacts could arise on this investment.
 - Westgate Phase II, Aldershot - This 1ha site is allocated in the RLP for a comprehensive redevelopment scheme that will reinforce the established evening economy role within this part of Aldershot comprising a revamped theatre building and residential development. Whilst there is currently no existing, planned or committed investment to impact upon, the proposed garden centre redevelopment would not impact on this non-retail redevelopment scheme coming forward.

4.22 Overall, the foregoing assessment demonstrates that the proposed garden centre redevelopment is unlikely to result in any significant adverse impact on in-centre investment within centres in the PCA.

Impact on Centre Vitality and Viability

4.23 Taken as a whole, consideration of the effects on the development plan, committed and planned investment and impact on the centre turnover provide a good indication of the overall effects of a proposal on the vitality and viability of town centres.

4.24 Impact on committed and planned investment in centres within the PCA has already been considered in the preceding paragraphs. The following paragraphs assess the potential impact of the proposal on in-centre turnover. It then considers the health of the four town centres before concluding on whether the proposal would have any significant adverse impact on their vitality and viability.

Impact on In- Centre Turnover

4.25 The NPPF requires applicants to assess the likely turnover of proposed retail floorspace, the level of expenditure to support that floorspace, and where the new floorspace would be likely to derive its trade from. We have applied a step-by-step methodology to demonstrate anticipated trade diversions and trade impacts on existing provision.

4.26 The assessment is conducted using the following step-by-step approach:

1. Estimate the comparison goods turnover of the proposed development.
2. Establish the comparison goods turnover of relevant retail facilities.
3. Ascertain whether there are any comparison goods retail commitments/planning permissions that need to be taken into account in assessing retail impact.
4. Calculate the quantitative impact of the proposed development through allocating reasoned trade diversions, thereby allowing analysis of the percentage reduction in trade at each store/centre.

4.27 As noted previously the NPPG identifies that impact assessments should draw on existing information where possible. Accordingly, where available, shopping pattern/turnover data has been drawn from East Hampshire District Council Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study Update, 2023 and the Rushmoor Borough Council and Hart District Council Retail, Leisure and Town Centres Study, 2015.

4.28 Guidance contained in the NPPG identifies that the design year for testing impact “*is conventionally taken as the second full calendar year of trading*”. The proposed development is anticipated to commence redevelopment in 2026. The redeveloped garden centre is then expected to be completed and open to customers in 2027. Accordingly, in accordance with the NPPG, the design year for testing impact should be 2029.

4.29 Given that proposed development involves the redevelopment of an existing garden centre which already generates a turnover, it is only necessary to consider the uplift in retail turnover resulting from the proposal.

4.30 The statistical retail impact tables referred to in this section are provided at **Appendix B**. The statistical tables adopt a price base of 2021 for consistency with the price base adopted in the EHDC Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study Update, 2023.

Existing & Proposed Development Turnover

4.31 Table 1 (partly reproduced in Table 4.1 below) sets out the turnover of the proposed garden centre redevelopment at the design year (2029).

Table 4.1: Existing & Proposed Floorspace and Turnover Details, 2029

	Net Floorspace (sq m)	Turnover (£m)	Inflow Expenditure (£m)	PCA Derived Turnover (£m)
EXISTING				
Forest Lodge Garden Centre	7,607			
Internal Non-Food Area	1,531	2.8	0.6	2.2
Internal Food Area	73	0.2	0.0	0.1
Open Sided/Outdoor Non-Food Retail Area	5,394	2.1	0.4	1.7
Garden Style	7,603			
Internal Non-Food Area (Polytunnels)	717	0.1	0.0	0.1
Outdoor Retail Area	6,886	1.0	0.2	0.8
Total Non-Food	14,528	6.0	1.2	4.8
PROPOSED				
Forest Lodge Garden Centre	9,743			
Internal Non-Food Area	2,706	5.3	1.1	4.2
Internal Food Area	104	0.4	0.1	0.4
Open Sided/Outdoor Non-Food Retail Area	5,897	3.1	0.6	2.4
Total Non-Food	8,603	8.4	1.7	6.7
FLOORSPACE/TURNOVER DIFFERENCE				
Internal Non-Food Area	+458	+2.4		+2.0
Internal Food Area	+31	+0.3		+0.2
Open Sided/Outdoor Non-Food Retail Area	-6,383	-0.1		-0.1
Total Non-Food	-5,925	+2.3		+1.9

Source: Table 2, Appendix B

4.32 A summary of how the turnover of the existing and proposed floorspace has been calculated is provided below.

- 4.33 It should be noted that Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Garden Style have no restrictions in terms of the types of retail goods that could be sold or any other retail restrictions such as sub-division. The existing garden centre could therefore be occupied by one or a number of ‘high street’ retailers which would result in a much greater impact on nearby defined centres than the proposed redevelopment/improvement of the existing garden centre. This is an important and weighty consideration in considering the retail impact of the proposal.
- 4.34 An assessment for the ancillary convenience goods sold at the garden centre has not been undertaken. The existing garden centre currently provides a foodhall of 73sq m net and this will marginally increase to just 104sq m net (+31sq m net). The foodhall floorspace will continue to represent a very small area (1%) of the sales area relative to the size of the garden centre. Its marginal increase in floorspace and subsequent increase in turnover (+£0.3m) will have no discernible effect on shopping patterns and or to the trading performance of any defined centres within the PCA.
- 4.35 Whilst Garden Style is currently vacant, it could be re-occupied by an operator (or Haskins could extend into the area). It is therefore reasonable to take this floorspace and subsequent turnover into account in setting out the existing floorspace/turnover position. This is a widely adopted and accepted approach in undertaking retail impact assessment.

Existing

- The net floorspace figures for both Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Garden Style have been provided by Haskins.
- The turnover and sales density figures for Forest Lodge Garden Centre have been provided by Haskins for financial year 2022/23. An allowance has been made for floorspace efficiency changes between 2022 to 2029. Utilising Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 20 (Feb 2023).
- The turnover and sales density figures for Garden Style are an Alder King Planning judgement having regard to the scale of floorspace/sales area. It should be noted that a low sales density of £150/sq m has been adopted for robustness which is less than half of Forest Lodge Garden Centre.
- It is assessed that 20% of turnover derived from the Garden Centre and Garden Style is derived from outside the PCA (inflow expenditure). This has been confirmed by Haskins as being reasonable and was also confirmed as appropriate by EHDC’s retail planning consultant, Lichfields in determining the 2018 approved scheme.
- Overall, the existing PCA derived 2029 non-food / comparison goods turnover of Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Garden Style is assessed to be £4.8m.

Proposed

- The net floorspace figures for the proposed redeveloped Forest Lodge Garden Centre have been provided by Haskins.
- The turnover and sales density figures for the redeveloped Forest Lodge Garden Centre have also been provided by Haskins for the financial year 2022/23. Again, an allowance has been made for floorspace efficiency changes between 2022 to 2029. Utilising Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 20 (Feb 2023).
- As with the turnover of the existing garden centre, 20% of the proposed redeveloped garden centre turnover is also assessed to be derived from outside the PCA (inflow expenditure).
- Overall, the existing PCA derived 2029 non-food / comparison goods turnover of the proposed redeveloped Forest Lodge Garden Centre is assessed to be £6.7m.

4.36 Overall, the proposal involves an uplift in PCA derived non-food/comparison goods turnover at 2029 of £1.9m.

4.37 Table 1 also sets out the non-food/comparison goods turnover of the 2018 Approved Scheme (LPA ref: P.S.490/2017). It shows that, even after adopting the same sales density figures as the existing garden centre (in reality they would be higher and similar to those adopted for the proposed scheme), the proposal would involve a comparison goods turnover at 2029 of £2.3m less than the approved scheme.

Turnover of Existing Comparison Goods Facilities

4.38 Column 1 of Table 2 sets out the estimated comparison goods turnover of relevant facilities within the PCA at 2029.

4.39 The comparison goods turnovers of Alton Town Centre, Whitehall & Boredon Town Centre, Liphook District Centre and Four Marks Local Centre has been derived from EHDC's Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study Update, 2023.

4.40 The comparison goods turnovers of Farnham Town Centre, Aldershot Town Centre and North Camp District Centre has been derived from the Rushmoor Borough Council & Hart District Council Retail Study, 2015. We have converted turnover figures from 2013 Prices used in the Retail Study to 2021 Prices in accordance with EHDC Retail Study Update, 2023, and this impact assessment. Whilst it is acknowledged that more up to date comparison goods expenditure projections have been published since the study, the turnover figures provided in the study are considered appropriate for the purpose of establishing broad turnover figures for the centres. Given the limited increase in comparison goods turnover derived from the proposed garden centre redevelopment and the very limited overlap with high street format stores within these centres, it is not considered proportionate to undertake a comprehensive update of the Retail Study.

4.41 The turnover of the out-of-centre garden centres and retail warehousing/DIY stores has been derived from MT Town Planning’s Retail Statement prepared in support of the 2018 Approved Forest Lodge Garden Centre redevelopment planning application (LPA ref: 20533/059). These turnover figures have previously been accepted by EHDC and their retail planning advisors Lichfields. We have made an allowance for floorspace efficiency increases utilising Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 20 (February 2023).

Comparison Goods Commitments/Planning Permissions

4.42 We are not aware of any garden centre comparison goods retail commitments/planning permissions within the PCA that would need to be taken into account in this retail impact assessment.

Trade Diversion/Trading Effects

4.43 Columns 2 and 3 of Table 2 set out the trade draw of the proposed Garden Centre redevelopment. In assessing the 2018 Forest Lodge Garden Centre redevelopment planning application, the Council’s retail planning advisors, Lichfields, undertook a retail impact ‘sensitivity analysis’. Whilst we do not necessarily agree with the trade draw patterns adopted by Lichfields, in order to provide a robust assessment we have adopted the Lichfields trade draw patterns in our impact assessment. Table 4.2 below summarises the trade draw patterns.

Table 4.2: Assessed Trade Diversion Patterns

Location	%	£m
Centres within PCA		
Alton Town Centre	7	0.1
Farnham Town Centre	18	0.3
Whitehall & Boredon Town Centre	2	0.03
Aldershot Town Centre	8	0.2
Liphook District Centre	2	0.03
Garden Centres within PCA		
Squires Garden Centre, Badshot Lea, Farnham	5	0.1
Country Market, Bordon	10	0.2
Redfields Garden Centre, Church Crookham	8	0.2
Squires Garden Centre, Frensham	3	0.1
Avalon Garden Centre, Churt	2	0.03
Garthowen Garden Centre, Four Marks	2	0.03
Avenue Nurseries Garden Centre, Lasham	2	0.03
Out of Centre Retail Warehousing/DIY Stores		
Homebase, Farnham	7	0.1
Wickes, Alton	3	0.1
The Range, Aldershot	3	0.1
Elsewhere in PCA	8	0.2
Retail Facilities/Garden Centres Outside PCA	11	0.2
Total	100	1.9

Source: Table 2, Appendix B

Notes: Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre is currently High Street/Chalet Hill Local Centre

4.44 It is considered, having regard to: (1) the character of the proposal and the general assumption that ‘like affects like’; and (2) the existing shopping patterns and the location of existing retail facilities, the level of trade assessed to be drawn from centres, in particular Farnham Town Centre, is very robust. Given our review of Liphook District Centre we do not consider there is likely to be any trading overlap with the proposal. In reality, more trade is likely to be drawn from garden centres in the PCA with a lesser amount drawn from centres.

Assessed Levels of Trade Diversion

4.45 The assessed levels of trade diversion for the proposal are shown in Table 2, **Appendix B**, and partly reproduced in Table 4.3 below.

4.46 The impact of the proposal on the calculated 2029 comparison goods turnover of centres within the PCA range from just 0.1% to 0.3%. These levels of impact are very low and are lower than that previously assessed by the Council’s retail planning advisors, Lichfields, as acceptable and not resulting in a significant adverse impact on the centres (0.5% to 1.1%).

Table 4.3: Trading Effects of Proposal, 2029

Location	Impact on 2029 Comparison Goods Turnover
Centres within PCA	
Alton Town Centre	-0.2%
Farnham Town Centre	-0.3%
Whitehall & Boredon Town Centre	-0.1%
Aldershot Town Centre	-0.1%
Liphook District Centre	-0.2%
Garden Centres within PCA	
Squires Garden Centre, Badshot Lea, Farnham	-2.4%
Country Market, Bordon	-2.8%
Redfields Garden Centre, Church Crookham	-2.4%
Squires Garden Centre, Frensham	-1.6%
Avalon Garden Centre, Churt	-1.1%
Garthowen Garden Centre, Four Marks	-1.2%
Avenue Nurseries Garden Centre, Lasham	-1.2%
Out of Centre Retail Warehousing/DIY Stores	
Homebase, Farnham	-1.5%
Wickes, Alton	-1.5%
The Range, Aldershot	-0.6%

Source: Table 2, Appendix B

Notes: Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre is currently High Street/Chalet Hill Local Centre

4.47 Whilst the impact levels on the individual comparison goods sector in the town centres are very low, the NPPG confirms that the retail impact test relates to impact on the town centre as whole. Accordingly, these impact levels would be even lower if the turnover of other retail facilities, such as convenience retailers, was also taken into account.

4.48 Even, if it was unrealistically assumed that the proposed garden centre drew 100% of its turnover from just one single town centre in the PCA, given the minimal turnover increase (£1.9m) and the large retail turnover/strength of each centre, quantitative impact is very unlikely to be at a level which would constitute a 'significant adverse impact'.

4.49 Finally, whilst the impact on garden centres and retail warehousing/DIY stores are higher, these facilities are located in an out-of-centre location and not afforded any retail planning policy protection. Notwithstanding this, none are anticipated to close as a result of the proposal.

Overall Impact on Centre Vitality & Viability

4.50 In assessing whether the proposal results in a 'significant adverse impact' on the vitality and viability of town centres in the PCA, vitality and viability health check assessments of Farnham, Whitehall & Bordon, Alton and Aldershot town centres have been undertaken. The vitality and viability health check assessments of the town centres are contained at **Appendix C**. The health check assessments are proportionate and adopt, where information is available, the health check indicators set out at paragraph 006 of the NPPG. They have been informed by our own fieldwork and site visits carried out in January 2024.

Farnham Town Centre

4.51 The health check assessment of Farnham Town Centre identifies that the centre displays good levels of vitality and viability. The centre:

- contains a good mix of goods and services from both independent and large retailers;
- the vacancy rate in the centre is below the national average;
- the layout of the centre creates a good natural flow for pedestrians. With good numbers being found within the centre;
- the centre is accessible by a variety of modes of transport in addition to the car. It also provides plentiful centrally located car parking provision;
- the centre is considered to be safe and easy to traverse, with good natural surveillance and wide streets; and
- there is a strong sense of place within the centre, with a good environment throughout.

4.52 It is assessed that the proposals will not have any significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Farnham Town Centre for the following reasons:

- The evidence shows that the town centre is good levels of vitality and viability.

- The proposals will not materially harm the trading position of existing comparison goods facilities in the centre. The level of trade/turnover assessed to be diverted to the proposal is very low (0.3%).
- There is no prospect of any realistic impact upon any current or planned investment in the centre.

4.53 Accordingly, the assessed impact on the vitality and viability of Farnham Town Centre is acceptable and is not considered to be at a 'significant adverse' level.

Whitehall & Bordon Town Centre (currently High Street/Chalet Hill Local Centre);

4.54 Our vitality and viability health check assessment of Whitehall & Bordon Centre identifies that it is both vital and viable for the following reasons:

- it has an extremely low level of vacancy, 8% below the UK average.
- the centre has a reasonable diversity of uses for a centre of its size, including a large Tesco supermarket;
- it has a good range of services and goods to provide for the day to day needs of the local community;
- the centre is easily accessible by a range of means of transport and will be easily accessible to the emerging new town;
- there are a number of hot takeaways that will attract people to the centre into the evening; and
- pedestrian activity is at a level commensurate with a centre of its size.

4.55 The currently being developed Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre located to the west, which High Street/Chalet Hill Local Centre will form part of, will significantly enhance the vitality to the area and once completed by attracting more people to the area.

4.56 It is assessed that the proposed garden centre redevelopment will not have any significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Whitehall & Bordon Town Centre for the following reasons:

- The health check identifies that the centre is both vital and viable and will be further significantly enhanced following the completion of the new town centre.
- Given the different and limited comparison goods provision in the centre it is assessed that there is likely to be very limited trade (£0.03m) drawn from the centre and in turn very limited impact (0.1%).
- Given the stage of development of the new town centre investment, and the fact that it does not involve a garden centre, the proposed development would not have any adverse impact on investment.

4.57 Accordingly, it is evident that the proposed garden centre redevelopment will not result in any adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Whitehall & Bordon Town Centre

Alton Town Centre

4.58 Our vitality and viability health check assessment of Aldershot Town Centre identifies that the centre has good levels of vitality and viability. The centre:

- the town centre has a good range of retailers and services, both in terms of the ranges on offer and the mix of national and independent brands;
- the vacancy level in the town centre is very low and is significantly below the national average;
- the centre had a good flow of pedestrians, with the central area being the busiest;
- it provides attractive traditional environment which is considered to be safe and well designed for pedestrians;
- it is easily accessible by a wide range of means of transport; and
- the nighttime offer is not extensive but the centre does provides a good range of bars, pubs, and restaurants.

4.59 The proposals is not considered to have any significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Alton Town Centre for the following reasons:

- The evidence shows that the town centre is healthy and has good levels of vitality and viability.
- The proposals will not materially harm the trading position of existing comparison goods facilities in the centre with the level of trade diversion assessed to be very low. The level of trade/turnover assessed to be diverted to the proposal is just £0.1m (0.2%).
- There is currently no existing, planned or committed in-centre investment to impact upon.

4.60 Accordingly, the assessed impact on the vitality and viability of Alton Town Centre is not considered to be at a 'significant adverse' level.

Aldershot Town Centre

4.61 Finally, in terms of the vitality and viability of Aldershot Town Centre. Our health check assessment identifies that the town centre displays reasonably good levels of vitality and viability:

- There is a reasonable range and choice of shops, including some major anchor retailers, and services, with a mix of indoor and outdoor shopping areas.

- Although there is a high vacancy rate there are redevelopment areas where circa half of the vacant units identified on the Goad Plan are located.
- The centre is well laid out to allow for good pedestrian access across the centre, although the western part of the centre is more isolated.
- There is a good mix of transportation options to access the centre, including train, bus, and a number of car parks.
- The centre is well illuminated and has good footfall in the centre leading to centre feeling safer.
- There is a good mix of leisure activities within the centre, with a good nighttime offer for those coming to the centre later.

4.62 The proposed garden centre redevelopment is not considered to have any significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Aldershot Town Centre for the following reasons:

- The centre displays reasonably good levels of vitality and viability with it seeing ongoing investment and redevelopment, notably The Galleries redevelopment.
- With the level of trade/turnover assessed to be diverted to the proposal being very low (0.1%), the proposals will not materially harm the trading position of existing comparison goods facilities in the centre.
- Given the lack of trading overlap, there is no prospect of any realistic impact upon any current or planned investment in the centre.

Conclusions on Impact

4.63 The proposal involves a reduction in overall garden centre retail floorspace. It is therefore not considered necessary to undertake an assessment of retail impact. The proposal also involves a significant reduction in retail floorspace in comparison to the previously consented 2018 Garden Centre redevelopment scheme. Notwithstanding this, in order to provide a robust assessment this section of the statement has provided a proportionate assessment of the potential retail impact of the proposal.

4.64 This impact assessment demonstrates that the proposed garden centre redevelopment will not adversely impact:

- any existing, committed or planned public and private investment within Farnham, Whitehall & Bordon (local or emerging), Alton or Aldershot town centres
- the vitality and viability of Farnham, Whitehall & Bordon (local or emerging), Aldershot or Alton town centres.

- 4.65 Of particular note, the assessed quantitative impact levels on the town centres in the PCA are very low (0.1-0.3%) and are lower than that previously considered by the Council's retail planning advisors, Lichfields, as acceptable and not resulting in a significant adverse impact on the centres (0.5% to 1.1%).
- 4.66 It is therefore concluded that the proposals are acceptable in terms of the test set by prevailing development plan and NPPF planning policy insofar as retail impact is concerned.

5.0 Conclusions

Introduction

5.1 This Retail Planning Statement has been prepared by Alder King Planning Consultants in connection with a planning application at Birdworld and Forest Lodge Garden Centre, Farnham Road, for:

Improvements to, and new facilities at Birdworld including a new Entrance Building, Play Barn, Conservation and Breeding facility and an external Adventure Play Area. The re-development of Forest Lodge Garden Centre to include the demolition of the existing garden centre and the adjoining Garden Style structures to create a new garden centre (with covered and open sales areas, restaurant, plant, and warehouse). New service areas and car parking for both operations, accessed from a new roundabout on the A325. The closure and removal of the existing Forest Lodge access. Enhanced landscaping throughout.

5.2 The application proposal seeks to redevelop the existing garden centre and Birdworld site. Planning permission was granted back in 2018 for the redevelopment of the garden centre and Birdworld. The current proposals comprise a redevelopment involving not only a significant reduction in garden centre/external sales area floorspace to what has previously been granted planning permission, it also involves a significant reduction in floorspace/external sales area to what is currently existing.

5.3 In granting planning permission for the larger garden centre redevelopment scheme EHDC concluded that the proposal was in accordance with the retail planning policy tests. We are not aware of any material change in circumstances that would lead EHDC to come to a different conclusion in relation the subject redevelopment scheme, which proposes a lower level of floorspace/external sales area.

5.4 Notwithstanding the foregoing, this statement has assessed the proposal against the two retail policy tests set out in the Development Plan and the NPPF:

1. The sequential approach to site selection; and
2. Retail impact on existing defined centres (impact on centre vitality and viability and in-centre investment).

Sequential Approach to Site Selection

5.5 Section 3 of this statement demonstrates that there is a clear locational specific need for the proposed development at the existing garden centre and Birdworld site. Furthermore, both the Birdworld and the garden centre elements of the proposal are intrinsically linked and the scheme will not progress without it all coming forward at the same time.

- 5.6 Notwithstanding this, and without prejudice to planning case law in relation to there being no requirement to disaggregate a scheme, this statement has provided a sequential site assessment for the garden centre element of the proposed scheme.
- 5.7 The assessment demonstrates that there are no suitable or available sequentially preferable site in Farnham Town Centre, Alton Town Centre, Aldershot Town Centre or the existing/emerging Whitehill and Bordon Local/Town Centre.
- 5.8 Accordingly, it is concluded that the proposed development passes the sequential test requirements set out in the LPSR and NPPF.

Retail Impact

- 5.9 The proposal involves a reduction in overall garden centre retail floorspace and therefore it is considered not necessary to undertake an assessment of retail impact. The proposal also involves a significant reduction in retail floorspace in comparison to the previously consented 2018 Garden Centre redevelopment scheme. Notwithstanding this, in order to provide a robust assessment this statement has provided a proportionate assessment of the potential retail impact of the proposal.
- 5.10 This impact assessment demonstrates that the proposed garden centre redevelopment will not adversely impact:
- any existing, committed or planned public and private investment within Farnham, Whitehall & Bordon, Alton or Aldershot town centres
 - the vitality and viability of Farnham, Whitehall & Bordon, Aldershot or Alton town centres.
- 5.11 It is therefore concluded that the proposals are acceptable in terms of the test set by prevailing development plan and NPPF planning policy insofar as retail impact is concerned.

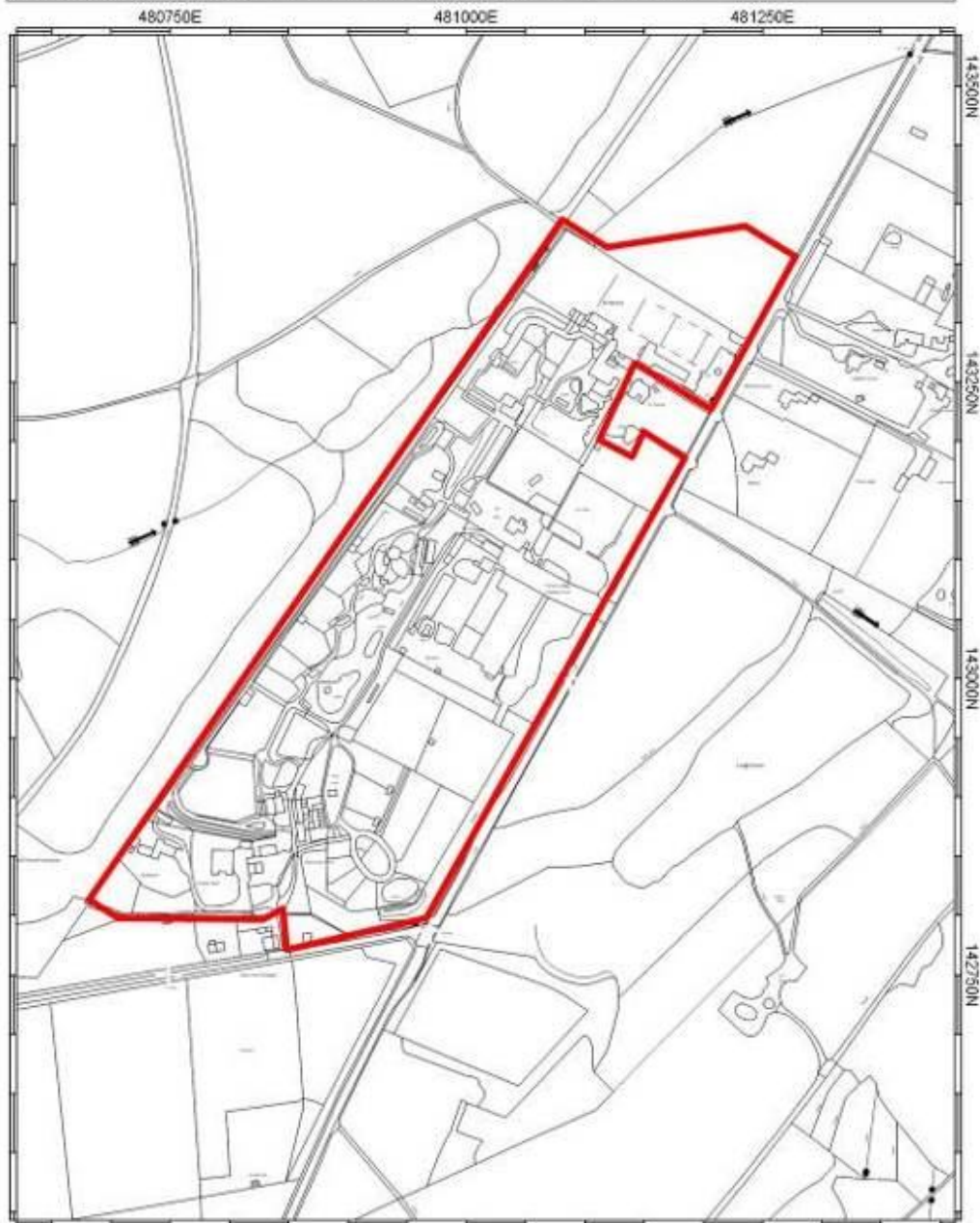
Overall Conclusions

- 5.12 Overall, in the light of our detailed analysis, it is concluded that the proposals are consistent with the requirements of current planning policy relating to retail impact and the sequential approach. Accordingly, the proposals are acceptable from a retail planning perspective.

Appendix A: 2018 Approved Scheme (LPA ref: 20533/059) - Planning Officers Report to Committee



Birdworld and Forest Lodge Garden Centre, Farnham Road, Holt Pound



Site and Development

The site

Birdworld and Forest Lodge (both owned by the applicant) are situated on the western side of the A325, in the north-east of the District. The site lies outside any settlement policy boundary. Birdworld and Forest Lodge in total extend to 13.76 ha, with an extensive range of buildings, ancillary structures and parking areas.

Birdworld comprises a visitor centre with restaurant and offices, an aquarium building ('Underwater World'), numerous aviaries and enclosures for birds and other animals ('Jenny Wren Farm') and other small buildings associated with servicing visitor and staff requirements.

Most of the buildings are old and do not meet modern husbandry or visitor standards. There is very limited shelter on the site if the weather is poor, which is a particular problem for school parties. Birdworld as well as being a visitor attraction also contains important collections and breeding programmes for endangered species, carries out research, works with local and international conservation groups and is an education centre.

Forest Lodge is a retail garden centre with one main building and a service yard building to the side. The main building has a two storey brick section at its northern end whilst the remainder is single story, single glazed, glass house style structure. To the rear of the building is a covered restaurant area and open retail area.

In 2013, planning approval was given for an extension to the restaurant area, including a covered seating area, and this has been implemented.

More recently, in 2016 approval has been given for a new warehouse building, which has not yet been implemented, however also forms part of the current application. Approval was given in 2016 for the relocation of the 'Garden Style' business (also owned by the applicant) from its former site in Waverley Borough to the Bird World/Forest Lodge site. This relocation is currently being implemented.

There are two separate vehicular accesses and parking areas serving the site and with Holt Grange located between the two. Holt Grange, a dwelling with some commercial activity (a chandelier business is based at the property), is in separate ownership and is not connected to the enterprise. It has a separate access onto the A325 with poor visibility.

Birdworld was established in 1967 and the Garden Centre in 1981, from a former plant nursery. The Garden Centre owners purchased Birdworld in 1996. As a result, the two businesses are closely linked, with profits from the Garden Centre subsidising the running of Birdworld.

There is a pedestrian link between the sites and the same service entrance is used by both.

The office building ('The Glen'), a former dwelling and located between the two, provides shared office services for both businesses.

Birdworld is an important visitor attraction within the District; however, visitor numbers have been in decline since 2000 and this is attributed to the poor facilities, changing customer habits, and competition from other attractions offering more modern facilities.

A supporting statement from the applicant advises that approximately 8,000 school children visit the site each year for education purposes and in addition to an Outreach programme to schools, the site also carries out/hosts the following activities:

- Educational provision to students from Sparsholt college, Merrist Wood college and Surrey university through a work experience program offering towards a 100 placements per year.
- Provides a resource and opportunity as a place of research for university students on their projects.
- Provides all visitors with education through entertainment on wildlife, nature and an improvement in the understanding of the environment.
- The current collection of 850 birds includes threatened species and the site works in close collaboration with other zoos both in the UK and around the world.
- The site's success in breeding has helped raise a large number of birds including Penguins for other collections.
- Through the site's own fundraising they have been able to support local, national and international projects. In 2016, £15,000 was raised. Previous donations have included to the Penguin Conservation project (SANCOBB) in South Africa and support for the Great Bustard group initiative in Wiltshire.

Birdworld and Forest Lodge combined currently employ up to 208 people in a combination of full-time, part-time, and holiday positions. This number would be expected to rise to 333 as a result of the proposals.

The site is subject to the following designations/constraints:

- Lies outside of any Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB) and thus within a countryside location
- A small part of the Birdworld overflow parking is located within the South Downs National Park
- Lies within a Minor Groundwater Vulnerability Zone
- Lies within an SPA 5km Buffer Zone
- Lies within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone
- Lies within an SSSI 2km Buffer
- Subject to an area Tree Preservation Order (TPO)

Previous Permission

This application follows a recently expired permission (ref. 20533/054) in respect of the partial redevelopment of Birdworld and Forest Lodge garden centre and the provision of a joint single access. The approved scheme included the following works:

- a) The demolition of existing structures (approximately 7,362m² gross floor area over both sites),
- b) The erection of new structures (13,034m² gross floor area over both sites),
- c) Hard and soft landscaping between structures,
- d) A light railway within Birdworld,
- e) Enabling development comprising 5 detached houses (ref. 20533/055 – a consented outline proposal with only access as a detailed consideration),
- f) Access and highway proposals, including:
 - i) Provision of single signalised T junction including pedestrian/cycle crossing to provide access to both Birdworld and Forest Lodge,
 - ii) Alterations to existing Birdworld access to provide emergency access to Birdworld and access to enabling development (5 houses),
 - iii) Provision of bus stop and shelter, and
 - iv) Provision of footpath/cycleway with associated alterations to A325

All for use in connection with the existing use of the site as a garden centre and bird park with associated and ancillary uses.

Current Proposal

The works proposed under this application are very similar in scope however would be split into two phases, comprising the following:

- a) Demolition of existing visitor centre and structures at Birdworld (1478m²) within phase 1.
- b) Erection of new visitor centre at Birdworld (3530m²) within phase 1.
- c) An 'enabling' development of 6 detached dwellings within the site, with associated parking and landscaping, the capital receipts of which would only be used to subsidise the works to Birdworld. The total floor space of the dwellings would amount to 1222m² (excluding garages) and the dwellings would be constructed within phase 1 following completion of the visitor centre.

- d) Narrowing and landscaping of the existing Birdworld access to serve the residential development and Birdworld during phase 1. On completion of phase 2, this access would then only serve the residential development and provide an emergency access.
- e) Provision of a new larger car and coach parking area serving Birdworld and to be sited in the location of the former visitor centre. This would be provided in phase 1.
- f) Provision within phase 1 of a grassed 'overspill' parking area for Birdworld located adjacent to the single access and accessed from the new car park.
- g) Implementation of the recently consented warehouse building within phase 1 and which would serve Forest Lodge and Garden Style.
- h) Provision within phase 1 of additional frontage parking at Forest Lodge approved as part of the relocation of Garden Style to the site, and the creation of a separate staff car park.
- a) Some extension of the Forest Lodge building and covered open-sided and open plants area, within phase 1.
- b) Remainder of the expansion of Forest Lodge within phase 2.
- c) The relocation of Garden Style within phase 2, such that it would be relocated further south-west within the site, enabling additional frontage parking to be provided.
- d) Provision within phase 2 of a single signalised T junction, including pedestrian/cycle crossing, to provide access to Birdworld, Forest Lodge, and Garden Style.
- e) Provision within phase 2 of a footpath/cycle path to the front of the site, linking through the site, to a public foot path to the north.
- f) Relocation of existing south bound bus stop to opposite the main entrance within phase 2.
- g) Provision of associated areas of landscaping within each phase.

The indicative phasing plan is detailed in section 10 of the report and the interim/phase 1 and final master plan/phase 2 drawings are appended to this report.

The works are intended to rationalise both the design and the functions within the site within the parameters of the overall consented floor space. There are, however, some changes. The previously approved light railway within the Birdworld site has been omitted and the scheme now includes the relocated Garden Style business.

Birdworld

The existing Birdworld visitor centre and Aquarium, which have a combined floor area of 1122m² square metres, were formed by extension and adaptation of former two and three storey farm buildings, principally a barn and adjoining Oast house. As part of the development, both would be demolished and the area used to provide a new car and coach parking area.

The visitor centre consolidates all of the uses previously consented as part of both the visitor centre and education and events buildings into one single visitor facility (with the same consented floor space of 3530m²). The building is a part single/part storey building with a footprint of 2994m², and partial first floor cover of 536m² to provide office accommodation, ancillary staff facilities, and general storage for scenery and props used for seasonal events

The entrance concourse provides direct access to a gift and book shop, admissions area and 150 cover restaurant that would replace the existing visitor centre facilities. The information desk, first aid room and customer toilets are accessed directly from this central area. Additional accommodation provides and centralises essential all-weather facilities to counteract seasonality, which is currently a problem at the site due to a lack of shelter and activities for visitors during inclement weather.

A large single volume hall would house a fully themed internal play area for children up to 11 years, with its own reception, a seating area for parents and carers, dedicated toilet facilities, and refreshments servery. Adjoining the main space, four dedicated themed 'party rooms' are shown to accommodate functions and entertainment for children. The education area would lead directly off the central space, creating an exhibition area for the education team to promote and further interest in a knowledge of birds, conservation and the environment, and would be capable of being sub-divided to provide assembly space and small group rooms for the visiting school classes.

Adjacent to the restaurant dining is a flexible events space, linked to an external walled courtyard, that would facilitate horticultural lectures and demonstrations, as well as host major seasonal events such as Halloween and Christmas.

The majority of existing aviaries would be replaced and relocated within the site to accommodate the new visitor centre building. This is operational development that would not require a separate permission.

With all the improvements in place, it is anticipated that visitor numbers would not exceed the peak number in 1989, of approximately 250,000 visitors. In 2007/08 Birdworld received some 118,000 visitors however numbers have since continued to fluctuate but generally decline, and are now at a level of approximately 112,000 visits per year.

Forest Lodge

The proposal retains all of the existing garden centre buildings with the exception of a detached single storey building of 99m², which would be demolished to make way for an extension of the protected plant area at the northern end of the external plant sales space.

The main building is made up of a two storey brick section at its northern end, whilst the remainder is a series of conjoined glasshouse structures that were extended at the southwest end in 2014 to form the new restaurant extension. It is proposed that Forest Lodge is extended through a series of phased extensions that will make up the overall expansion of the garden centre as represented in the final masterplan: each would enable a concurrent programme of refurbishment of the existing structures and consequent reconfiguration of the retail areas, all of which will be structured to enable continuity of trading and minimise disruption for both customers and staff.

Phase 1 of the master plan comprises three operations to extend and reconfigure the garden centre within its existing curtilage adjoining the relocated Garden Style nursery. A glass house extension of 992m² to the covered plant area at the northern end (adjoining the service yard) would provide additional space for protected plant sales. This would also allow part of the existing covered plant area to be fully enclosed and incorporated into the internal retail area.

In turn, this would facilitate a refurbishment programme to include relocation of the till hall combined with an entrance and exit accessed from the front car park. At the southern end of the building, the glass house-style bay that was erected in 2014 to form the restaurant would be extended and adjoined by two matching bays that would add 508m², providing a larger kitchen to serve an additional 100 covers for the self-service restaurant, in addition to a new 100 seat full-service dining room. This extension would be built up to the current curtilage with Garden Style, removing an area currently used for external plant sales. This loss of space would be compensated for by an extension to the Forest Lodge plant sales area into a small part of the Garden Style nursery.

All of the expansions works within phase 1 would continue to be served by the existing garden centre access from Farnham Road and the customer parking approved in 2016 as part of the relocation of Garden Style.

Phase 2 of the master plan involves further extension and remodelling of the garden centre buildings as well as a reconfiguration of the southern part of the site to relocate Garden Style in order to provide additional customer and trade car parking. The requirement for an additional 136 spaces within phase 2 is due to the expansion of retail space and the need to compensate for the loss of 64 spaces at the north east end of the site. The loss of these 64 parking spaces is due to the fact that the quantum of car parking ultimately required to serve the final master plan proposals would require implementation of the previously-approved single joint access from the A325 to serve all three businesses.

The final building phase of master plan implementation is made up of three operations to extend and reconfigure the garden centre to provide a total 6605m² (as per the previous approval) of covered enclosed space and 1799m² of weather protection in the form of covered plant areas.

The covered plant area at the northern end of the external plant display would be, in part, extended by 833m² with matching open -sided glass house bays, and also reduced by 573m² with the enclosure of its most northern bay (adjoining the service yard) to provide further internal sales area for garden sundries.

A substantial south wing extension would provide an additional 1368m² of floor space to re-orientate the entire garden centre around a new entrance located centrally within the customer car park. At this point the long-term proposals assume that the entire internal layout will be reconfigured. New customer toilets and till hall would be oriented around the new entrance.

Immediately adjoining the entrance bay would be a further addition to the south west providing 1000m² for new restaurant facilities, made up of a 400 cover dining area, new servery, kitchen and preparation areas, with shared staff facilities, storage, and a dedicated service yard for deliveries and refuse collection

The service yard would be retained to serve both Forest Lodge and Birdworld, together with the office building ('The Glen'). The previously consented warehouse (ref. 20533/020) would be implemented within phase 1.

A comprehensive landscaping plan is proposed which would enhance the existing site and provide additional landscaping along the frontage of the site adjoining the A325.

Garden Style

The submitted supporting statement advises that in 1991, the company opened Garden Style as a specialist tree and shrub nursery on a separate site just outside Wrecclesham, Waverley and less than a mile from the Birdworld/Forest Lodge site. Garden Style supplies larger trees and shrubs to a mix of customers in both trade and retail. This is a specialist nursery and offers more unusual varieties and sizes of plants and has been involved in many large commercial projects as well as regularly supplying plants for the Chelsea flower show and many other of the Royal Horticultural Society's events.

Permission was granted in 2016 for the relocation of Garden Style from Wrecclesham to the site and this is in the process of being implemented. The location and layout of Garden Style would remain the same through phase 1, until phase 2 where it would be relocated and re-orientated to follow the western boundary with Birdworld, extending to the south into land currently occupied by Jenny Wren Farm (part of the Birdworld site and attractions).

Although the component parts of Garden Style would remain the same, with structures relocated, and access for trade vehicles and deliveries via the Forest Lodge car park, the nursery area would be reduced overall by approximately 1000m².

Enabling development

This comprises 6 x 4 bedroom, two storey, detached houses with a total gross floor area of 1,222m² excluding garages (307m² less than the approved scheme).

The enabling development has been revised from the previously approved 5 larger dwellings to 6 smaller dwellings in response to market conditions, which currently reflect a demand for smaller rather than larger homes. The current application originally proposed 8 dwellings, however, was amended at the request of Officers to reduce the number of dwellings to 6.

The properties would be arranged around a private courtyard on a self-contained area of 0.4 hectares currently occupied by Birdworld car parking and the aquarium buildings towards the northern end of the site. Access to the houses would be via the access currently serving Birdworld, which would continue to serve Birdworld into phase 1.

Substantial perimeter landscaping is proposed to screen the houses from their respective neighbours and the A325.

The land for the dwellings would be disposed of within phase 1 to enable the capital receipts from the sales to subsidise the works to Birdworld.

Since the site lies outside of a Settlement policy Boundary and is not allocated for housing, the provision of new market dwellings in the countryside would be contrary to the principles of policies CP10 and CP19 of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS). In order to justify the provision of these dwellings, the development has been subject to a viability assessment in order to verify that the scale of the residential development is necessary to fund the works to Birdworld, and thus a balanced judgement will need to be made about the benefits this would lead to, when weighed against the policies of the Development Plan. This is discussed further on in this report.

Access arrangements

Phase 1 comprises the implementation of all of the works proposed within the Birdworld site and associated parking and landscaping, the construction and occupation of the residential development, and a proportion of extensions and alterations to the Forest Lodge garden centre with associated vehicular, coach and cycle parking and landscaping.

Phase 2 comprises the further extension of the Forest Lodge garden centre with associated parking and landscaping, the relocation of the Garden Style nursery further south-west into the site.

Up until the completion of phase 1 works to Birdworld and Forest Lodge, both parts of the site would continue to be served by their respective accesses from the A325. On completion of phase 2 and the installation of the single, signalised T junction access, the Birdworld access would remain open only to serve the residential development and as an alternative emergency access.

The signalised T-junction proposed is similar to that approved under application 20533/054 and would include a crossing point within the site with dropped kerb and tactile paving, and crossing point within the A325 with tactile paving and dropped kerbs. A 3m wide shared use foot path/cycle way would be installed and a new bus layby on the opposite side of the A325, allowing pedestrians to safely use the crossing point. As per the previous approval, the T-junction would lead into a proposed central roundabout to direct traffic to the two uses and the central service yard.

Within phase 2, a new footpath would be provided through the site to the northbound bus stop at the south-east of the site.

The cycle / footpath through the site would also connect with the existing track at the north-western part of the site (to the rear of the Birdworld) which continues westwards through Alice Holt towards Bentley station and through other Forestry Commission areas.

Additional tree planting and landscaping is to take place along the road frontage.

The central service yard would be separated from the two uses, resulting in less pedestrian conflict, and the southern service yard to Birdworld, accessed from Gravel Hill Road, would remain.

A supporting statement from the applicant advises that although planning permissions for development were approved in 2010 and renewed again in 2014, the company has not been in a position to move forward with implementation. This has mainly been because of financial implications and the need to ensure that the company overall remained in a stable position during years of lower turnover. The business has, however, been able to move forward with some projects and initiatives which have helped to improve their performance, for example the restaurant expansion to Forest Lodge. The supporting statement advises that this current application has provided an opportunity to re-evaluate the implementation of the proposals, through introducing a phased approach, and which would make the practicality of moving forward much more feasible.

The application is supported by the following documents:

Application form

CIL form 1

Design and Access Statement (November 2016)

Retail Statement (October 2016)

Housing - Floor Space and Parking Provision (February 2017)

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report (November 2016)

Supplementary Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report (November 2016)

Supplementary Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy Report (March 2017)

Lighting Strategy and Lighting Strategy Plan

Transport Assessment (November 2016)

Travel Plan (November 2016)

Landscape and Visual Appraisal (November 2016)

Landscape Strategy (November 2016)

Statement of Community Involvement (November 2016)

Ecological Impact Assessment (November 2016)

Arboricultural Assessment & Method Statement (November 2016)

Noise Impact Assessment

Heads of S106 Agreement Statement

Planning Statement (December 2016)

Business Statement from Applicant (Roger Head)

Energy Statement (2016)

Cover Letter (December 2016)

1198 L001 - Location plan

1198 P001 - Existing site plan

1198 P002 D - Interim Masterplan (received 15/03/17)

1198 P003 C - Proposed Masterplan (received 15/03/17)

1198 P010 - Existing gardens centre block plan
1198 P011 - Existing garden centre plans
1198 P012 - Proposed garden centre block plan
1198 P013 - Proposed garden centre plans
1198 P014 - Existing elevations
1198 P015 - Proposed elevations
1198 P016A - Proposed Forest Lodge block plan - Interim
1198 P017A - Proposed Forest Lodge plans - Interim
1198 P018 - Proposed Forest Lodge Elevations - Interim
1198 P020 - Existing Birdworld block plan
1198 P021 C - Proposed Birdworld block plan (received 15/03/17)
1198 P022 - Proposed Birdworld Visitor Centre
1198 P023 - Elevations of building being demolished
1198 P024 - Proposed elevations
1198 P025 - Proposed elevations
1198 P026 - Proposed site section adjoining Holt Grange
1198 P031 - Proposed residential development Type A (received 15/03/17)
1198 P032 A - Proposed residential development Type B (received 15/03/17)
1198 P033 - Proposed residential development Type C (received 15/03/17)
1198 P034 A - Composite elevation looking south (received 15/03/17)
1198 P035 C - Interim Masterplan - Demise plan
1198 P036 B - Proposed Masterplan - Demise plan
2016/3296/003 C - Proposed residential access (received 21/04/17)
16256-BT3a
16256-BT3b
16256-BT3c
Amended Annex - Parking summary (received 19/5/17)
Amended Annex - Floor space summary (received 19/5/17)
Indicative Phasing Matrix (received 17.10.17)

Relevant Planning History

Forest Lodge

20533/021 - Formation of new plant centre with ancillary trade car park, load/unloading area, storage area, shade structure, equipment shed, sales building and reception/office/staff building with access from Forest Lodge Garden Centre – Permitted (15/06/16)

20533/020 - Proposed replacement warehouse following demolition of existing warehouse and enlargement of car park – Permitted (14/06/16)

20533/019 - Restaurant extension with covered open sided seating areas, first floor plant room, and screening of covered and open yard – Permitted (16/05/14)

Birdworld and Forest Lodge

20533/055 - Outline application for five detached dwellings and improved access – Granted consent (17/03/16)

20533/054 - Partial redevelopment of Birdworld and Forest Lodge garden centre and joint single access – Permitted (17/03/14)

20533/049 - Partial redevelopment of Birdworld and forest lodge garden centre and joint single access (as amended by plans received 14/08/2009) – Permitted (04/11/2010)

20533/048 - Outline application for five detached dwellings and improved access - (layout, scale, landscaping and appearance reserved for subsequent consideration) (as amended by plans received 14/08/2009) – Granted consent (01/11/2010)

20533/044 - Outline application for re-development and enhancement of Birdworld, reconstruction and expansion of Forest Lodge garden centre, provision of steam railway and joint single access, and enabling development of 5 houses (two existing) - Withdrawn (26/01/2005)

20533/051 – Various tree works – Granted consent (19/04/2013)

Development Plan Policies and Proposals

East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (2014)

- CP1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CP2 - Spatial Strategy
- CP4 - Existing employment land
- CP6 - Rural economy and enterprise
- CP7 - New retail provision
- CP8 - Town and village facilities and services
- CP10 - Spatial strategy for housing
- CP11 - Housing tenure, type and mix
- CP14 - Affordable housing for rural communities
- CP19 - Development in the countryside
- CP20 - Landscape
- CP21 - Biodiversity
- CP22 - Internationally designated sites
- CP24 - Sustainable construction
- CP25 - Flood Risk
- CP26 - Water resources/ water quality
- CP27 - Pollution
- CP29 - Design
- CP31 - Transport
- CP32 - Infrastructure

East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review (2006)

- HE2 - Alterations and Extensions to Buildings
- IB3 - Industrial or Business Development in the Countryside
- T3 - Pedestrians and Cyclists
- S7 - Garden Centres
- TM1 - Tourism Development

R1 - Outdoor Sport and Recreation
H14 - Other Housing Outside Settlement Policy Boundaries
C6 - Tree Preservation

Planning Policy Constraints and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF was published in March 2012 and came into force with immediate effect. At the heart of it is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that the development plan is the starting point for consideration of planning applications, and planning applications must be determined in accordance with it, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The sections of particular relevance to this proposal are:

17. Core planning principles

1. Building a strong, competitive economy
2. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
3. Supporting a prosperous rural economy
4. Promoting sustainable transport
5. Delivering a high choice of quality homes
7. Requiring good design
10. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Consultations and Town/Parish Council comments

Natural England – No objection.

Environment Agency – No objection.

NHS South Eastern – No objection.

Forestry Commission – No objection however requests that any approved drainage scheme take into consideration potential impact of run-off on Lodge Pond (a reservoir covered by the Reservoirs Act 1975) and that any drainage scheme needs to mitigate against any possibility of flooding down stream. It is also requested that the Root Protection Zones of any trees adjoining the site are protected in addition to any ecology.

Waverley Borough Council – No objection.

South Downs National Park – No comment received.

EHDC Forward Planning – No objection. The site lies within open countryside where restrictive planning policies would normally apply. On the other hand, the site already

accommodates well established businesses. Critically, there already extant planning consents for a similar amount of development that is proposed in this scheme.

The overall concept of redevelopment at the location has been supported by previous granting of permissions. No significant details have changed from the earlier applications or in terms of local planning policy and therefore there is no planning policy reason why a different outcome should be reached on this occasion. As with previous planning consents, the proposed extensions to the garden centre and other retail elements would not have an adverse impact on neighbouring retail centres, subject to relevant conditions being imposed. It is considered it would still be appropriate to restrict the upper amount of retail sales area for non-core garden centres sales.

The current proposal is formulated within the confines of previously approved parameters. The only apparent deviation may be that the applicant is now seeking 8 houses rather than 5 houses. However, whilst the number may have increased, they are smaller units and the total gross floor-space proposed is the same as previously approved. It is considered this aspect needs to be further assessed in terms of design and its impact on the character of the local area.

The application will need to be CIL compliant for both the residential and retail elements proposed. Further evidence will need to be provided to justify any exceptions to the other contributions required. The residential element of the proposal is based solely on the need for enabling development, therefore, the application needs to be fully justified on this basis, especially considering the further increase in the number of dwellings. The relationship between the capital released from the dwellings and the use this will be put to in the improvements at Birdworld needs to be clearly set out, with details shown and subject to a satisfactory legal agreement.

Overall, planning policy supports the proposals subject to the relevant retail conditions and further evidence justifying the increased residential elements of the application and its associated contributions.

EHDC Drainage Consultant – No objection subject to conditions being attached to any approval requiring details of foul and surface water drainage supported by a detailed drainage layout, run-off calculations, drainage construction details and geotechnical site investigation, being submitted to the LPA for approval prior to development commencing.

EHDC Housing Development Officer – Objection. The residential development is located outside of any Settlement Policy Boundary and should therefore be for affordable housing only.

EHDC Environmental Health (Pollution) – No objection subject to a condition being added to any approval requiring the development be carried out in accordance with the submitted Noise Impact Assessment and that conditions attached the previous approval (20533/054) relating to opening hours and deliveries etc. be replicated within any new approval.

EHDC Environmental Health (Contamination) – No objection subject to a condition being attached to any approval requiring details of any contamination being found on site being submitted to the LPA.

EHDC Landscape Officer – No objection subject to a condition being attached to any approval requiring a detailed and phased landscaping plan be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to any development commencing.

EHDC Refuse and Recycling – No objection.

EHDC Arboricultural Officer – No objection subject to a condition being attached to any approval requiring an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and tree protection plan be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to development commencing and which should be in line with the recommendations of BS 5837:2012 and should include (but not be limited to) all details listed in section 2 of the submitted AMS.

EHDC Traffic Management Team – No objection.

HCC Ecologist – No objection subject to a condition being attached to any approval requiring that the development proceed in accordance with all ecological mitigation, enhancement, and compensation measures as detailed within the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA). It is also requested that a condition be attached to any approval requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to development commencing detailing measures to ensure that

HCC Drainage – No objection subject to a condition being attached to any approval requiring detailed surface water drainage strategy be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to development commencing.

HCC Highways Authority – No objection subject to conditions being attached to any approval requiring details of a Construction Method Statement be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to development commencing, that parking provision for each element be made in accordance with the approved plans, and that a detailed phasing plan is submitted to the LPA for approval prior to development commencing. It is also requested the applicant enter into a S278 agreement with the Highways Authority in respect of the highways works and that a detailed Travel Plan and Travel Plan measures are secured.

HCC Archaeology – No objection subject to conditions being attached to any approval requiring details of an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation be submitted to the LPA for approval and which details any required mitigation, based on the results of trial trenching.

Southern Gas Networks – No objection however advise the applicant that a

Thames Water – No objection.

South East Water – No objection.

Police and Crime Commissioner – No objection.

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services – No objection.

Binsted Parish Council – No objection.

Representations

15 representations have been received in objection to the proposal and on the following grounds:-

- a) The number of dwellings has been reduced from 8 to 6 however the location and design of the dwellings is still not acceptable and it is still an overdevelopment of the site;
- b) the area is not suitable for new residential development due to slow broadband and reliance on private motor vehicles;
- c) the residential development is not in keeping with the open character of the area, whereby dwellings are large and set within spacious plots;
- d) building a hamlet of houses half way between Wrecclesham and Bucks Horn Oak would remove the open countryside between the villages and damage that intrinsic character;
- e) the A325 is a fast moving road and increasing the number of cars as a result of new residential development will lead to more accidents;
- f) no safe access to pavements or public transport;
- g) the increased amount of hardstanding as a result of the works within the site may increase flooding onto the A325;
- h) the speed limit on the A325 must be reduced to cope with the additional traffic from the development and from the existing Gravel Hill road;
- i) the previously approved 5 larger dwellings was the maximum amount of dwellings that should be allowed;
- j) concerns over the use of the 'green' Birdworld over flow car parking and the impact of this on the landscape;
- k) increase in traffic on the A325 as a result of the Whitehill and Bordon development;
- l) there is no point having cycle paths within the site if there is not safe cycle access to the site and,
- m) the alteration in location of the dwellings from approved will result in a detrimental impact on the amenities of Holt Grange, which is surrounded by the site. In the previous approval, the 5 dwellings enveloped Holt Grange and provided a buffer between the Holt Grange and the Birdworld site however in this scheme the dwellings are within a cul-de-sac formation and Holt Grange will adjoin a large car park to its rear.

2 representations have been received which neither object/nor support the proposal:-

- 1) This is a thoughtfully designed major application and hopefully the LPA are minded to approve;
- 2) the footpath connection between the end of the track through the Alice Holt forest towards the bus stop and then crossing to the enlarged Forest Lodge Centre is particularly welcome and provides a sustainable pedestrian and wheelchair accessible link from the village of Rowledge and,
- 3) requested that consideration be given to CIL or S106 contribution towards the construction of a new and additional footpath alongside the A325 between the bus stop near the Fullers Road junction and new section within the current Masterplan.

Determining Issues

1. Principle of the development
2. Retail impact
3. Enabling development
4. Design
5. Impact on neighbours
6. Trees/landscaping and visual impact on the surrounding area
7. Layout, parking, servicing, highways works, and Travel Plan
8. Ecology
9. Drainage
10. Sustainability
11. Phasing of the development
12. Developer contributions and East Hants District Council Community Infrastructure Levy (EHDC CIL)

Planning Considerations

1. Principle of development

JCS policy CP2 states that new development growth in the period up to 2028 will be directed to the most sustainable and accessible locations in the District in accordance with the Spatial Strategy. New development will make the best use of previously developed land and buildings within existing built-up areas.

JCS policy CP7 states that provision will be made for a limited amount of additional retail floor space in the town centres of Alton and Petersfield and small scale retail development opportunities will be allowed for in the other centres.

JCS policy CP9 states new development will be permitted for new tourism facilities, visitor attractions and visitor accommodation. in towns and villages; in the countryside through the re-use of suitable rural buildings or as part of farm or rural business diversification, particularly where these would also benefit local communities and support the local economy; and where it retains and enhances existing tourism facilities, visitor attractions and visitor accommodation.

JCS policy CP10 states that housing should be accommodated through development and redevelopment opportunities within existing settlement policy boundaries in the first instance. In addition to sites allocated to meet the housing numbers set out above, and development in accordance with Policies CP14 and CP19, housing and other small scale development outside settlement policy boundaries will only be permitted where it:

- meets a community need or realises local community aspirations;
- reinforces a settlement's role and function;
- cannot be accommodated within the built up area; and
- has been identified in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan or has clear community support as demonstrated through a process which has been agreed by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Parish or Town Council.

JCS policy CP11 states that to address housing requirements and to help to create sustainable communities new residential development will be required to:

- a) maximise the delivery of affordable housing;
- b) provide a range of dwelling tenures, types and sizes to meet housing needs;

JCS policy CP14 states that outside settlement policy boundaries, residential development will only be permitted if:

- a) it provides affordable housing for local people who are unable to obtain accommodation on the open market;
- b) there is a proven local affordable housing need;
- c) the need cannot be met within the settlement to which that need relates;
- d) the settlement provides a range of local services and facilities, or has accessibility to larger settlements nearby which provide a wider range of services and facilities;
- e) the site is modest in scale and relates well, in terms of location and in size, to the existing settlement;
- f) it provides dwellings which will be available as affordable housing for local people in perpetuity;

JCS policy CP19 states that the approach to sustainable development in the countryside, defined as the area outside settlement policy boundaries, is to operate a policy of general restraint in order to protect the countryside for its own sake. The only development allowed in the countryside will be that with a genuine and proven need for a countryside location, such as that necessary for farming, forestry, or other rural enterprises.

Saved policy H14 states that outside settlement policy boundaries, residential development will only be permitted where it is essential to house a full-time worker in agriculture, forestry or other enterprise who must live on the site rather than in a nearby settlement.

Saved policy S7 states that Planning permission for garden centres will be granted on sites within or adjacent to settlement policy boundaries provided that the proposal:

- a. is not intrusive in the landscape;
- b. would not result in inconvenience or danger on the public highway;
- c. is not harmful to the character of the settlement; and
- d. will not harm the viability of retail facilities in any nearby town or village due to the scale and scope of retailing proposed.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Paragraph 8 elaborates further and states that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

The 12 core planning principles of the NPPF include the following:

- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth.
- Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution

This application follows on from previous approval 20533/054 in 2014 for similar works and which expired on the 17th March 2017. Since the previous approval, the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (JCS) was adopted on the 8th May 2014.

This application is very similar in nature to previous consents and although the JCS has subsequently been adopted, there does not appear to be any significant changes to planning policy that would result in a different outcome. The NPPF is supportive of re-using previously developed land and the majority of development would be on what constitutes brownfield land.

As with previous consents, the application should be considered in the context of being an exception to certain policies. The proposal needs to be considered on its merits based upon the needs of the business and overall economic and tourism requirements, judged against the impact of the development in the countryside.

The key considerations are whether the additions to Forest Lodge, the replacement visitor centre for Birdworld, and the enabling residential development are still considered to be acceptable in this rural location.

Birdworld is an important regional tourist attraction and educational facility in the area whilst Forest Lodge is a significant retail facility.

Forest Lodge is an established garden centre and such development is subject to policy S7 of the Local Plan: Second Review (2006). Saved policy S7 sets out that permission would normally be granted for garden centres within or adjacent to settlement policy boundaries. Whilst the impact of the development meets the other relevant criteria of the proposal (see below - landscape, highway considerations and retail impact), this site is clearly in a rural location.

Having regard to the fact that this is a well-established site, the other relevant criteria of Policy S7 are met and the increased retail area (which is within the parameters of the previous approval) is considered, in this particular instance, to still be acceptable. The impact on the nearest similar businesses and retail centres is discussed further on this report below.

The relocation of Garden Style to the site already has approval under application 20533/021.

Birdworld is an important visitor attraction to the area as well as an internationally important breeding and research centre. It is a regional visitor attraction catering for families, school parties, science students with facilities for young, elderly and disabled visitors. The main buildings on the site no longer meet visitor expectations and are clearly in need of upgrading/rebuilding. It is still considered that the provision of the facilities within one visitor centre building would be the best approach, leaving the majority of the site in its existing form with aviaries set in a well treed environment. The building is not considered to be excessively large given the size of the attraction overall.

There is an identified need for improved education facilities at the site, especially in poor weather. The site offers little shelter for school parties or areas where children can be taught away from the general public. Improved education/exhibition facilities such as those proposed are now common features at many educational visitor attractions and it is considered that this modest building is appropriate on this site and in the secluded location shown.

In addition to floor space for educational use, the visitor centre would include floor space to be used for events and a small ancillary shop. The upper floor would comprise ancillary office space and staff welfare facilities.

As an established tourist facility, the replacement of the aviary structures and other minor development associated with the use within the Birdworld site would also be acceptable in principle.

Improvements to the access arrangements for the site and new footpath cycle crossing/routes within phase 2 are also still considered to be acceptable in principle, subject to the detailed approval from the Highways Authority.

Conclusion

The floor space schedule in section 2 below summarises the differences between the previous approval (20533/054) and current application (20533/059) and confirms that the floor spaces of the proposed extensions and alterations to Birdworld and Forest Lodge are similar to those as previously approved and that the only increases in floor space are from the erection of a new warehouse (314m²) and the addition of the Garden Style nursery business to the site (9600m²), both of which have already been approved and could be implemented.

The increased retail floor space and enabling residential development is a departure from the Development Plan, as it was with the previous application, however they are an integral part of this application. As it currently stands, Birdworld is subsidised by the other businesses and without an expansion to Forest Lodge and the enabling residential development, the applicant advises improvement works to Birdworld could not be undertaken. The requirement for the residential development has also been subject of viability testing to demonstrate need, and which is discussed further on in this report.

The exception to policy must be weighed against the major improvement to Birdworld and the tourism, economic and educational benefits this would secure.

Whilst the enabling residential development is contrary to the restrictive Countryside policies of the Development Plan, it is considered that the benefits to be gained from the proposed works to Birdworld would, on balance, outweigh the harm from the provision of 6 modest residential dwellings within the site. This would be subject to a viability testing to demonstrate that the scale of the residential development proposed is the minimum level required to deliver the improvements to Birdworld. This is discussed further in section 3 below.

2. Retail impact

JCS policies and the NPPF seek to focus new retail development within town centres.

JCs policy CP8 states that the vitality and viability of the District's centres will be maintained and improved according to the role of the various centres set out in the hierarchy of centres set out below:

- Town centres - Alton, Petersfield and Whitehill & Bordon
- District centre - Liphook
- Local centres - Clanfield, Four Marks, Grayshott, Horndean, Liss and Forest Centre, Whitehill & Bordon
- Local parades and small local centres

Proposals for new retail, leisure, entertainment and cultural facilities in the centres set out above will be permitted provided that the proposal: a) sustains and enhances the range and quality of provision, and the vitality and viability of the centre; b) is in keeping with the scale and character of the centre; c) would not harm the function of the centre, particularly its shopping function; and d) is readily accessible by bicycle and on foot.

Saved policy S7 states that Planning permission for garden centres will be granted on sites within or adjacent to settlement policy boundaries provided that the proposal:

- a. is not intrusive in the landscape;
- b. would not result in inconvenience or danger on the public highway;
- c. is not harmful to the character of the settlement; and
- d. will not harm the viability of retail facilities in any nearby town or village due to the scale and scope of retailing proposed.

Paragraph 6.90 of the justification text to policy S7 states that Garden centres in the countryside can be very intrusive and attract high volumes of traffic onto rural roads. Such facilities should, therefore, be located on suitable sites within or adjacent to settlement policy boundaries and be in keeping with the character of the surrounding area. The goods and services sold or provided from a garden centre will be limited to requisites closely associated with gardening. Any permission for such a use may limit the range of the goods to be sold.

Forest Lodge is an existing garden centre and which is located outside of any town centre/village. Garden centres are typically found outside of town/village centre locations.

The current retail use of the garden centre (excluding Garden Style) is currently unrestricted, allowing all types of retail goods to be sold, not just garden centre core goods.

The sale areas are set out below.

Item	Existing (m2)	Consented (m2)	Consent ref.	Interim /Phase 1 (m2)	Masterplan/ Phase 2 (m2)
Existing Garden centre and recent restaurant expansion	2605	-	-	-	-
Garden Centre building including restaurant and pet shop	-	6605	20533/054	-	-
Master plan Garden Centre building including restaurant	-	-	-	3520	6605
Covered open-sided space	940	1799	20533/054	1445	1799
External plant area	4950	6667	20533/054	3975	3725
Garden Style – open area – with cabin sales area		9600	20533/021	9600	8540

As per the previous application, a Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) has been submitted with the application. This has assessed the need for the development, the scale of the development, applied the sequential approach to site selection, assessed impact of the proposal and the nearest similar businesses and local centre and considered accessibility.

The RIA as been independently assessed and the assessors conclude that the impact of the extension to the sales area of Forest Lodge would be unlikely to have an impact on town centres but would compete with other garden centres in the locality, however this would be off-set by general increases in expenditure growth.

The scale of the expansion is concluded in the assessment to be appropriate. In terms of site selection, there are no other alternative sites available in or around town centres which are large enough to accommodate the proposal or parts of it. Subject to appropriate conditions being attached to any approval, the proposal is not considered to have an impact on the area due to the increase in comparison goods floor area and the fact that the town centres do not rely on sales of core garden centre goods for their viability and vitality.

The accessibility of the site remains as existing with most visits being car generated due to the nature of the business.

The Council's Planning Policy section has not raised any objections to the proposal subject to the conclusions of the assessment of the submitted Retail Impact Assessment not being adverse.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed extension to the garden centre and small retail area within the Birdworld visitor centre would not have an adverse impact on neighbouring town centres subject to conditions being imposed to restrict the upper amount of retail sales area for non-core garden centres sales, restaurant area, etc.

The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with the provisions of the NPPF and the provisions of policy CP8 of the JCS in terms of maintaining and vitality and viability of the District's centres as well as saved policy S7 of the EHDLP Second Review.

3. Enabling development

JCS policies seek to focus new residential development within Settlement Policy Boundaries and the most accessible/sustainable locations. JCS policy CP9 supports tourism related development within the countryside, although policy CP19 restricts residential development unless it is to provide housing for rural workers. JCS policy CP14 allows residential development within the countryside if it is to provide affordable housing. The NPPF seeks to focus new development within the most sustainable locations and avoid isolated homes within the countryside.

There are no policies within the Local Plan which consider 'enabling development' and the circumstances under which such contrary to policy development should be acceptable, however there is some guidance within the NPPF relating to enabling development and the securing of heritage assets:

Paragraph 55 states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:

- where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;

Paragraph 140 of the NPPF states that Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the dis-benefits of departing from those policies.

The principle of the residential 'enabling development' was assessed as part of the original approval and at that time considered to acceptable on balance.

The enabling development of 6 market dwellings would provide capital funding for building works at Birdworld only, from the sale of the land for the houses.

The visitor centre and education/events building at Birdworld plus parking and highways works, would have a build cost of £6.7million, with the associated costs (relocation of aviaries, demolition of existing buildings, construction of new parking areas and improvements to existing overflow parking) costing approximately £1.15 million. The disposal of the land for the residential development is expected to raise £1.34million, which leaves approximately £6.51 million in Birdworld build costs to be funded from other sources, including the sale of the former Garden Style site in Waverley which has permission for a residential development of 65 dwellings.

Financial details of the proposal have been independently assessed and it has been verified that the residential development is necessary to enable the works to Birdworld.

The enabling development has been demonstrated by the applicant as being necessary to partly meet the capital cost of the visitor centre at Birdworld. The sale of the land would take place after the opening of the visitor centre for Birdworld and this phasing would be secured through a legal agreement.

4. Design

Policies CP29 and HE2 of the Local Plan require that new development and alterations and extensions to buildings are designed to take account of the design, scale, and character of the original building, its plot size and its setting.

Birdworld

The floor space provided within the visitor centre is within the parameters set by the previous approval, however the treatment has changed from a traditional, wooden clad, pitched roofed building to a more modern design with low rise, partly domed, roof and small central projecting tower feature. The building would be of the same maximum height as the previously approved visitor centre (8.3m) and the small tower feature would project 0.7m above that.

The modern design is considered acceptable and is welcomed since it would provide a more distinct identity to Birdworld from Forest Lodge and it is considered the building would enhance the appearance of the site. Although the maximum height of the building would be the same as that approved, the design is considered an improvement on the approved visitor centre as the mixture of roof heights, with low rise elements and partly domed roof, have resulted in a building that would have its own presence and identity but not appear as overly prominent within the site.

Materials proposed are profiled metal panels, natural stone, copper cladding, zinc cladding, fair-faced masonry brickwork, and aluminium framed windows and doors. Materials will be key to ensuring a high quality development and as such it is appropriate to attach a condition to any approval requiring details of all materials be submitted to the LPA for approval prior any development commencing above slab level.

Forest Lodge and Garden Style

The extensions and alterations to Forest Lodge are within the same floor space parameters set by the previous approval and the design treatment is very similar, however the maximum height of the proposed building (approximately 6m) is less than that of the approved building (approximately 9.5m).

The current scheme also differs in layout in terms of the proportions of different floor spaces:

	Existing (m2)	Consented (20533/054) (m2)	Interim/Phase 1 (m2)	Masterplan/Phase 2 (m2)
Garden centre building	2605	6605	3520	6605
Covered plant area	940	1977	1445	1705
Open plant area	4950	6667	3975	3725
Total	8495	15249	8940	12035

Garden Style does not have any buildings associated with it other than a small sales/office chalet and shade structure. The chalet and shade structure would remain as approved within phase 1 and if the development is implemented to phase 2, the chalet would remain as existing but be repositioned further south into the site. The shade structure would be relocated a small distance to the south west, however would double in footprint from 309m² to approximately 700m². This increase in floor space is considered acceptable given its location well within the site and obscured from public views.

No elevations have been provided for the shade structure within phase 2 however it is expected to be similar to existing and final details can be required by condition to be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to any phase 2 works commencing.

Residential dwellings

Six dwellings are proposed and in a variation of three different designs. The number of dwellings has been reduced from 8 to 6 and the size of dwellings reduced at the request of Officers because the development appeared cramped within the site, contrary to the more spacious and linear layout of the previous approval and the wider area.

The properties are of a more traditional, pitched roofed design, and materials proposed are plain clay roof tiles, timber weather boarding, facing brick work, and zinc cladding, however final materials would be subject to approval by the LPA prior to development commencing above slab level. The properties would result in a new, albeit acceptable, 'intrusion' within the site frontage and again, final materials and landscaping will be key.

The cul-de-sac layout is considered acceptable and, in adjoining Holt Grange, results in the overall site being more clearly split in terms of residential and commercial uses.

The proportion of soft to hard landscaping within the cul-de-sac is also acceptable and reflective of this semi-rural location.

5. Impact on neighbour amenity

Policy CP27 requires that developments do not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties through loss of privacy or excessive overshadowing.

The nearest residential property is Holt Grange which is partially enveloped by the site and which also hosts some commercial activity (a chandelier retail business). Birdworld is located on its northern and western boundaries and Forest Lodge to the south.

The two storey and single storey buildings which stand close to its northern and western boundaries would be demolished as part of the proposal and replaced with the new residential development to the north and parking area serving Birdworld to the west. This would be a betterment to the existing situation as the nearest dwellings and parking area would be located further from the boundaries of Holt Grange than the buildings to be demolished.

The nearest dwelling would be sited 8m from the boundary with Holt Grange and 23m from the side elevation Holt Grange itself as opposed to the 1m from the boundary and 15.5m from Holt Grange to the existing aquarium. The aquarium is single storey. The existing Birdworld visitor centre is located 1m from the boundary with Holt Grange and 6m from the rear elevation of Holt Grange. The visitor centre is part single storey/part two storey. The new visitor centre would be located 82m from Holt Grange and is also part single/part two storey.

The access road and pedestrian walkway leading in from the main Birdworld entrance and into the parking area would be 6.5-2.5m from the boundary with Holt Grange and 10.5 - 6.5m from the rear of Holt Grange.

It is considered that the dwellings would not result in a detrimental impact on the outlook, daylight/sunlight, or privacy of the occupiers of Holt Grange due to their distance and orientation in relation to this property, and similarly the occupiers of the new dwellings would not suffer a loss of outlook, daylight/sunlight, or privacy as a result of their location and orientation relative to Holt Grange or the redevelopment of the site.

The siting of the parking area adjacent to the western boundary of Holt Grange would result in increased noise disturbance however this can be mitigated through control of opening hours and delivery times to Birdworld and Forest Lodge and through suitable acoustic and vegetative planting along the adjoining boundary. This can be secured through conditions attached to any approval.

The Council's Environmental Health (Pollution) Officer has not raised any objection to the proposal subject to a condition being added to any approval requiring the development be carried out in accordance with the submitted Noise Impact Assessment and that conditions attached to the previous approval (20533/054) relating to opening hours and deliveries be replicated within any approval.

The changes in the relationship of the development to the neighbours on the opposite side of the A325 involve the alterations to the access to be implemented in phase 2 only. In phase 1, the existing accesses would be retained and used.

The joint access would be closer to the southern property, Killarney, which is set back from the road and well screened. The level of activity associated with the Birdworld access would be significantly reduced once the joint access was operational since it would only then serve the residential dwellings and provide an emergency access to the Birdworld site. It is considered that moving the access approximately 20m to the north and the change to the nature of the access would not have a material impact on the amenity of those neighbours on the opposite site of the A325.

There is an existing public address system within the site used for talks and demonstrations and this is likely to remain as part of the proposal. In order to protect the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, a condition can be attached any approval controlling the hours of use.

It is considered the works would have an acceptable relationship with neighbouring occupiers and would comply with the aims of policy CP27 of the Joint Core Strategy.

6. Trees/landscaping and visual impact on the surrounding area

Policies CP20 and CP29 seek to ensure new development contributes to local distinctiveness and sense of place and is sympathetic to its setting in terms of overall design but also local landscape features.

Within phase 1 the works most visible within the public realm would be the new dwellings and the provision of new staff/overflow parking for Forest Lodge, which would result in the loss of some trees/vegetation along the site frontage. The new visitor centre and associated parking, and works to Forest Lodge and Garden Style would be set further back within the site and would not be as visible from the public realm.

The construction of phase 2 works (single access and associated pedestrian/cycle ways) and further extension of the Forest Lodge and Garden Style parking area would result in the further loss of some trees and vegetation along the site frontage.

There is no special landscape designation for this area however since the site is bounded by the South Downs National Park, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted with the application. This has concluded that the only negative impact on the wider landscape would arise from the dwellings and phase 2 joint access and associated works, since they would result in the loss existing vegetated areas and provide further views into the site. The LVIA considers that the impact of these elements could be mitigated through appropriate landscaping.

The majority of trees to be removed were approved for removal in principle as part of the previous application and a landscaping scheme has been submitted which shows indicative landscaping for the frontage and all areas not covered by hard-standing. The landscaping is extensive and final details of species, location, and timing of planting could be secured through a condition attached to any approval.

The Council's Landscape and Arboricultural Officers advise that whilst the loss of some trees of amenity value is regrettable, there is no objection to this scheme subject to a detailed scheme of landscaping and an Arboricultural Method Statement being submitted to the LPA for approval.

The works within the Birdworld site would have a minimal impact on the surrounding area as the site is well set back from roads and public vantage points. The visitor centre would be visible from the footpath/cycleway to the north, across a car park, but would be no more intrusive than the existing visitor centre or aquarium building.

On balance, the loss of some trees subject of an area/group Tree Preservation Order (TPO) in order to accommodate the new visitor centre would not have an unacceptable impact on the visual amenity of the wider surrounding area, subject to suitable replanting taking place, since these trees are located more centrally within the site and not readily visible from the public realm.

Furthermore, by its nature, a group TPO does not take into consideration the individual quality of the trees subject to it and thus there are trees which would not normally be considered worthy of retention, still covered by it.

The approved relocation of Garden Style to the site would result in the loss of a Leylandii hedge that separates the existing building from open paddock to the south and would be visible from the south on approach the site along the A325. This was considered as part of the approved application and found to be acceptable since the frontage screening would be retained and the associated structures would be set well into the site.

The only alterations to the approved Garden Style location and layout would arise if phase 2 were to be built out and it would move 32.5m further south into the paddock area. This is considered acceptable in landscaping and visual terms as both Garden Style and additional Forest Lodge overflow parking would be suitably screened with landscaping.

The existing screening to both the A325 and Gravel Hill Road would be retained and it is considered that with the proposed additional planting, that the building and parking areas would not be overly intrusive within the landscape or street scene.

For these reasons, the proposal is considered to comply with the aims of policies CP20 and CP29 of the Joint Core Strategy.

7. Layout, parking, servicing, highways works, and Travel Plan

JCS policy CP31 states that the fullest use of sustainable modes of transport (including cycling, walking and public and community transport) and reduced dependence on private car will be encouraged.

The site is located between the settlements of Farnham and Bordon, along the A325, which is a single carriageway road, subject to a speed limit of 50mph. The site is served a bus service to/from Aldershot and Haslemere. Bentley station is approximately 2.5km from the site.

Given the nature of the uses of the site i.e. retailing of larger more bulkier/heavier items and a tourism and education use frequented by a high number of children, private car is likely to be the dominant form of travel to and from the site.

A Transport Assessment (T.A) and Travel Plan (T.P) have been submitted with the application and have been assessed by HCC Highways Authority (H.A).

Layout

The main change to the site layout from the previously approved scheme is in relation to the location of the new dwellings and the relocation of Garden Style to the site. Garden Style was not part of the previous application and with the previous scheme, the dwellings were located more centrally within the site, separating Holt Grange from the Birdworld Parking.

Within the current application, the dwellings are in cul-de-sac formation to the front of the site, adjoining the existing Birdworld access. The relocation of Garden Style to the site has already been approved under application 20533/021 and the amendment to the location of the dwellings is considered acceptable since they would still adjoin Holt Grange to the north and would provide a better separation of residential uses from the commercial uses of the site.

This proposed relocation of the residential development has resulted in the Holt Grange now adjoining the main Birdworld parking area however, as discussed earlier in this report, this is considered acceptable as the additional noise disturbance to that property could be mitigated with acoustic fencing and vegetative planting.

The internal layout separates the central main service yard and warehouse from public areas, avoiding conflicts in the current layout, as presently it is possible for visitors to Birdworld to 'cut through' to Forest Lodge past the servicing area and vice versa. This 'cut through' would be removed as part of the development and visitors to the site wishing to visit Birdworld and Forest Lodge, would use the new walkways connection to both, resulting in an improvement to the existing situation.

The layout allows for retention and provision of additional planting along the A325 frontage and retention of the planting along Gravel Hill Road. This is in addition to extensive landscaping within the site.

The frontage to Birdworld is currently open and this would be obscured by acoustic fencing and tree planting screening the rear gardens of the closest new dwellings to the A325. The access road would be straightened within phase 1 and landscaping would run along side it, screening the new dwellings from the overflow parking area to the other side.

Access

The site is currently accessed via two junctions which serve the separate elements; Birdworld and Forest Lodge garden centre (and imminently, Garden Style nursery). There are limited pedestrian facilities in the vicinity and it is acknowledged that due to the nature of the uses of the site, private car use is likely to be high.

Bus stops are located adjacent to, and opposite, the Birdworld access and a short distance from the Forest Lodge access, and which are served by bus route 18/18A, Aldershot to Haslemere/Haslemere to Aldershot. This route operates hourly from Monday to Saturday and every 2 hours on a Sunday. Bentley train station is located approximately 2.5 km walking distance from the site and can be accessed via a Public Right of Way footpath, however the HCC Highways Authority (H.A) advises this is considered to over the desired walking distance as set out in Providing Journeys on Foot guidelines.

Within phase 1, the site would continue to be served by the two existing accesses and should the development proceed to phase 2, a joint T-junction single access would be installed in addition to new pedestrian/cycle ways and new relocated bus stop opposite the site. A pedestrian link would also be provided around the perimeter of the Birdworld car park and leading to an existing public footpath to the north leading into the wider countryside. These works were agreed as part of the previous approval.

The access arrangements within phase 2 would provide safe access on to the A325, with capacity to cope with peak periods. The flow of traffic along the A325 would not be significantly disrupted by the traffic lights as the site would not be in use at peak flow times in the morning.

The evening peak flow would be less but over a longer period of time which would again not be significantly disrupted by the traffic control. The lights would potentially decrease traffic speeds along this part of the road, benefiting vehicles joining the road from other nearby junctions or driveways. The increased traffic movements to the site would not have an adverse impact on the safety or capacity of the local road network.

Further improvements to the highway within phase 2 include provision of a safe crossing point for users of the existing footpath/cycle route link from Bentley Station to Alice Holt Forest and beyond.

The H.A is satisfied that the proposed junction would be adequate and raises no objection to the proposal however the details of the accesses (streamlined existing access within phase 1 and new single access within phase 2 and associated works) would still need to be agreed and finalised with the H.A and be delivered via a S278 legal agreement, secured through a S106 legal agreement.

Parking/Cycling

The existing, consented, and proposed parking and cycle provision is detailed in the table below:

Item	Existing provision	Consented provision	Consent ref.	Interim/Phase 1 provision	Masterplan/Phase 2 provision
Forest Lodge - customer	194 (Inc. 12 disabled spaces)	390 (Inc. 32 disabled spaces)	20533/054	192 (Inc. 12 disabled spaces)	292 (Inc. 27 disabled)
Forest Lodge – overflow	90 (Inc. staff)	123	20533/054	90 (Inc. staff)	98

Forest Lodge - staff	-	50	20533/054	-	88
Forest Lodge - total	284	563	20533/054	282	478
Forest Lodge cycles	-	28	20533/054	20	30
Birdworld - customer	225	209 (Inc. 21 disabled spaces)	20533/054	245 (Inc. 26 disabled spaces)	245 (Inc. 26 disabled spaces)
Birdworld - overflow	125	329	20533/054	280	280
Birdworld - total	350	538	20533/054	525	525
Birdworld - cycles	-	28	20533/054	10	20
Birdworld - coaches	-	-	-	3-8 flexible	3-8 flexible
Garden Style [trade car/ van spaces]	-	20	20533/021	20	20
Site total [cars]	634	1101	20533/054 & 20533/021	827	1023
Enabling development – 5 units	-	Not stated	20533/054	-	-
Enabling development – 6 units	-	-	-	21	21

It is noted that the masterplan parking provision is lower by 78 spaces than the previous consented planning application. The proposals include the provision of 1,023 parking spaces (of which 53 would be disabled parking spaces), which are split into 498 for Forest Lodge/Garden Style and 525 for Birdworld (including overflow parking spaces).

The T.A includes details of the observed parking demand for both car parks on a Sunday in September which has then been uplifted to a Saturday in April by using the agreed methodology. It shows that it is forecasted that during a peak hour (12:00 to 13:00) in the peak month (April) on a Saturday, the combined car parks would still have 29.4% of spaces unused. The proposed level of parking is therefore considered acceptable. The residential development will include at least 4 parking spaces per dwelling though garages and parking to the front, and whilst this is an over-provision of spaces measured against EHDC parking standards, this is considered acceptable to the H.A.

There are no minimum parking standards for A1/D1/D2 uses, however the proposed parking provision, including disabled and motorcycle parking, and cycle parking, are considered acceptable by the H.A and with the overflow parking areas, would be more than sufficient to cope with peak demand.

Deliveries and servicing

Deliveries and servicing to Birdworld and Forest Lodge would be carried out within the central delivery/servicing area and deliveries and servicing to Garden Style would be carried out within a dedicated storage and trade parking area to the south and adjoining Garden Style area.

In order to protect the amenities of the occupiers of Holt Grange and the new dwellings, it is considered appropriate to control hours of deliveries and servicing through a condition attached to any approval.

Travel Plan

The two sites are in a semi-rural location but have access to alternative transport measures in terms of footpath and cycle routes nearby and are located on a bus route. The Transport Assessment includes a Travel Plan for both sites. It sets out that non-car modes of transport are difficult to promote for the garden centre due to the nature of the goods sold (bulky, heavy, awkwardly shaped, delicate or chemical in nature). The main focus of the Travel Plan has, therefore, been staff, with some 200-300 employees on the two sites, and influencing customers travel to the site by other means than the car. The Travel Plan sets out various options for staff and visitor travel but details of the travel plan would need to be finalised and secured through a condition.

Conclusion

The Highway Authority raises no objection to this application subject to the submission of an updated Travel Plan inline with their comments and the following being secured:

1. Implementation of the residential site access
2. Implementation of the single point of access, as shown indicatively on drawing
3. An approved Travel Plan in respect of Birdworld and Forest Lodge
4. The applicant entering into a S287 agreement with the H.A in respect of the amended existing access to Birdworld and Phase 2 highways works.

The Highway Authority has also requested that conditions be attached to any approval in respect of Construction Method Statement, phasing plan, and parking provision.

The proposed development is considered to comply with the aims of policy CP31 of the Joint Core Strategy.

8. Ecology

Policies CP20 and CP21 seek to ensure that new development does not result in a detrimental impact on local wildlife and flora.

The site is currently in tourism and retail use and there would be the loss of some existing landscaped/paddock areas as a result of the phase 1 and phase 2 works. The site is adjoined to the north, west, and south by the South Downs National Park, and lies within an SPA 5km Buffer Zone, an SSSI Impact Risk Zone and within an SSSI 2km Buffer thus there are ecological considerations associated with any major development within the site.

Natural England and the HCC Ecologist have not raised any objections to the proposal subject to a condition being attached to any approval requiring the mitigation measures detailed within the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) being implemented.

The Forestry Committee has raised concerns regarding potential presence of 'C.Helmsii' (a plant which can cause major problems within freshwater aquatic habitats) within the site and as such it is recommended that any submitted Construction Method Statement include measures for the remediation of this plant if found within the site.

The proposal is considered to comply with policies CP20 and CP21 of the Joint Core Strategy.

9. Drainage

JCS policy CP26 states that development will be required to protect the quality and quantity of water and make efficient use of water.

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 (less than 0.1% (i.e. less than 1:1,000) of flooding) and within a Minor Groundwater Vulnerability Zone.

The Environment Agency, HCC Lead Local Flood Authority, and EHDC Drainage Consultant have not raised any objections to the proposal subject to a condition being attached to any approval requiring a detailed foul and surface water drainage scheme (including measures for its maintenance) being submitted to the LPA for approval prior to development commencing.

The proposal is considered to comply with the aims of policy CP26 of the Joint Core Strategy.

10. Sustainability

Under JCS policy CP24, new residential development would normally need to meet Code 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes, plus an additional 10% in the way of energy consumption / efficiency savings or equivalent. However on the 27th March 2015 the Government withdrew the Code for Sustainable Homes aside from the management of legacy cases.

Under JCS policy CP24 all new non-residential development of 500m² would normally need to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'excellent' in terms of energy efficiency.

A Sustainability Statement has been submitted which details some potential measures for energy efficiency/generation within the development.

In replacement of the former Code for Sustainable Homes, the requirement is now for the incorporation of measures that provide energy savings of no less than 10% above Building Regulations in force at the time the development is to be constructed, and this is secured by way of planning condition to ensure the development meets this requirement.

The nature of the works to Forest Lodge and the extent of open-sided floor space means that any BREEAM standards would be difficult to meet.

The Birdworld visitor centre could however be designed in such a way to meet current BREEAM standards however this would have a cost implication, which would undermine the viability of the development. Paragraph 7.24 of the justification text to policy CP24, and which carries the same weight as the policy, advises that in some instances sustainable construction may not be viable or suitable, for example in a conservation area, and in these instances a more flexible approach will be taken. In this instance, it is considered that it would be inappropriate to require the highest level of BREEAM rating be achieved for the visitor centre given the costs and the requirement for non-policy compliant enabling development.

11. Phasing

An indicative phasing plan has been submitted with the application and which lists the order of development within phases 1 and 2 as follows:

Phase 1

1. Relocation of exhibits and aviaries
2. Start the construction of new Birdworld Visitor Centre
3. Demolition of existing Birdworld visitor building, Underwater World and older exhibits
4. Construction of new parking area on site of existing Birdworld building
5. Completion and opening of the new Birdworld visitor centre
6. Implementation of the enabling development housing scheme
7. Refurbishment of existing outdoor plant area.
8. Demolition of garden products building.
9. Construction of open sided sales area.
10. Refurbishment of existing garden centre building.
11. Enclosure of part of older open sided sales area.
12. Restaurant extension to south end of building

Phase 2

13. Relocation of Farm and exhibits within Birdworld
14. Consolidation / relocation of Garden Style
15. Extension and remodelling of parking on site frontage
16. Start of extension to garden centre building including remodelling of covered plant area and relocation of restaurant
17. Construction of new joint access and relocation of frontage parking to north of access

The final phasing plan would be secured through a legal agreement as part of any approval.

The applicant has been made aware during the course of the previous application that the Council's focus and priority has always been the implementation of the works to Birdworld since this is an important tourist, education, and employment resource within the District and as such any phasing plan should reflect this.

The phasing plan will ensure that the visitor centre and associated parking and landscaping, would be constructed and ready for occupation before the enabling development was disposed of and that any associated highways works were submitted to the LPA for approval and completed within the appropriate time.

The requirement for the new joint access, associated pedestrian/cycle ways, relocated bus stop, and residential only access would only occur once the extensions and alterations to Forest Lodge progressed beyond those of phase 1.

12. Developer contributions and East Hants District Council Community Infrastructure Levy (EHDC CIL)

JCS policy CP32 states that where the provision or improvement of infrastructure is necessary to meet community or environmental needs associated with new development or to mitigate the impact of development on the environment, the payment of financial contributions will be required through planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to ensure that all such development makes an appropriate and reasonable contribution to the costs of provision.

EHDC CIL was implemented on the 8th April 2016. This enables the Council to raise, and pool, contributions from developers to help fund additional infrastructure required to support new development including roads, schools, green spaces and community facilities. EHDC CIL has replaced Section 106 agreements as the principal means by which pooled developer contributions towards providing the necessary infrastructure should be collected except for affordable housing.

The Councils 'Planning Contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy' Supplementary Planning Documents lists A1 (retail) and C3 (residential) uses as CIL liable thus these elements of the development will attract a CIL contribution.

The previous scheme was approved prior to the adoption of CIL and the dwellings would have been liable to pay financial contributions towards open space and other infrastructure. In that instance however, given that the dwellings were 'enabling' development and necessary to partially fund the works to Birdworld, it was considered inappropriate to further reduce the contribution of the capital receipts by requiring the payment of these financial contributions and they were waived. CIL however, is non-negotiable and must be paid for all CIL liable developments.

Response to Parish/Town Council Comments

The Parish Council has not raised any objection to the proposed development.

Conclusion

The application proposes the same nature of works as that within the previously approved scheme namely, the demolition of the existing Birdworld visitor reception/admissions building and aquarium and erection of replacement single visitor centre with associated parking and landscaping, extensions and alterations to the Forest Lodge building to increase the internal, open-sided covered, and external plan area floor space, with associated parking and landscaping, and the erection of an enabling residential development with associated parking and landscaping. A joint single access and associated pedestrian/cycle way/bus stop works were also part of the approved scheme as they are with this current one.

The main changes since the previous approval relate to the design of the visitor centre, the amended location of the enabling residential development and increase in dwellings from 5 to 6, the inclusion of Garden Style within the site (already granted approval), and the phased approach to the implementation of the development if it were to be approved.

Although the residential development is contrary to local and national policy, the applicant has demonstrated that the capital receipts from the dwellings are necessary to partially fund the works to Birdworld. On balance, the tourism, education, and employment gains for the District and beyond in terms of the works to Birdworld are considered to outweigh the departure in policy for the residential elements of the scheme.

The works to Forest Lodge and Garden Style have been independently assessed in terms of their impact on other nearby garden centres and town centres and this has concluded that the scale of development would not result in a detrimental impact on either. The applicant has also demonstrated, in line with the sequential approach required, that there are no other suitable sites within the locality which could accommodate the development.

The overall design of the development is considered acceptable and with suitable landscaping and controls on lighting and signage, the wider landscape impact would be adequately mitigated and appearance of the site enhanced.

Aside from the adoption of the Joint Core Strategy, local planning policy has not changed since the previous approval and taking into account all other material considerations, Officers consider that there is no reason to take an alternative view on the scheme in this instance.

The proposals would improve the quality of this regionally important tourist attraction and provide visitors with better facilities. In this respect the proposals are in line with the District Council's objective of basing development upon present assets, rather than introducing major new activities. The proposals would also bring wider economic benefits to the area and create additional employment.

The proposal would not result in an adverse impact on neighbours or the appearance of the surrounding area. Within phase 2, if built out, the proposal would improve highway safety, provide improved footpath and cycle way provision, and would continue to provide adequate parking and servicing areas.

On balance, the proposal is considered to comply with the overall aims of the relevant policies of the East Hampshire District Council: Joint Core Strategy, saved policies of the East Hampshire District Council Local Plan: Second Review, and provisions of the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION Provided that:

- A) The Solicitor to the Council be authorised to draw up a Section 106 Undertaking or Agreement, and;

- B) Provided that by the 31st January 2018 all parties enter into the Section 106 Undertaking or Agreement with the District Council to secure:
 - 1. Not to dispose of in any way any of the 6 houses subject of planning application 20533/059 until the Birdworld Visitor Centre and associated car parking has been completed;
 - 2. No development to commence until a final Phasing Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority;
 - 3. Within two years of the implementation of the joint Birdworld/Forest Lodge Garden Centre single access, an 'alternative footpath' shall be constructed as shown indicatively on drawing P.003 C;
 - 4. Not to commence construction of the 'alternative footpath' until the Local Planning Authority has approved the proposals including siting, construction, and means of maintenance;
 - 5. To keep the 'alternative footpath' open for public pedestrian access in perpetuity and maintained in a safe condition;
 - 6. Prior to development commencing in connection with the implementation of the residential development details of the re-aligned existing Birdworld access (including any associated landscaping, hard surfacing, and boundary treatments) from the A325 (as shown indicatively on drawing no. 007 C) shall be submitted to, for approval in writing, by the Local Planning Authority;
 - 7. Details of the joint single Birdworld and Forest Lodge access, associated pedestrian / cycle ways and new/relocated bus stops (as shown indicatively on drawing no. 005 B) shall be submitted to, for approval in writing by, the Local Planning Authority;
 - 8. Prior to the implementation of the joint single Birdworld and Forest Lodge access, details of revisions to the Birdworld/residential vehicular access including any signage, landscaping, hard surfacing, and boundary treatment, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority;

9. Prior to the commencement of any highway works, those works shall be first agreed with Hampshire County Council as Highway Authority and implemented as necessary via s278 Agreement[s] under the Highways Act.

in accordance with the saved policies of the Local Plan: Second Review and the Joint Core Strategy then the Executive Head Planning and Development be authorised to grant **PERMISSION** subject to the conditions set out below.

However, in the event that all parties do not enter into a legal agreement to secure the above requirements 1-9 by 31st January 2018, then The Head of Planning is authorised to refuse the application under the adopted scheme of delegation, unless the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, authorises further time extension(s) for the completion of the legal agreement.

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun **before the expiration of three years** from the date of this planning permission.
Reason - To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- 2 Notwithstanding any indication of materials that may have been given in the application or in the absence of such information, no development above slab level shall commence on any building within each phase as defined within an approved Phasing Plan until samples / details including manufacturers details of all materials to be used for external facing, roofing, windows and doors for that building hereby approved have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The development works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
Reason - To ensure that the materials used in the construction of the approved development harmonise with the surroundings.
- 3 Elevations and details of materials to be used for the revised Garden Style shade structure and relocated loading area, to be provided as part of 'phase 2' within the indicative phasing plan, shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval in writing prior to the commencement of works in respect of the relocation of the shade structure and loading bay.
Reason - To ensure that the materials used in the construction of the approved development harmonise with the surroundings.
- 4 No development within each phase, as defined within an agreed Phasing Plan, shall commence until plans of the site showing details of the existing and proposed ground levels, proposed finished floor levels, levels of any paths, drives, garages and parking areas and the proposed completed height of the developments and any retaining walls have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The details shall clearly identify the relationship of the proposed ground levels and proposed completed height with adjacent buildings.

The development thereafter shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure that a satisfactory relationship results between the new development and adjacent buildings and public areas. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as these details relate to the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

- 5 No hard surfaces within each phase as defined within an approved Phasing Plan shall be constructed until details of the surfacing of those parts of the site not covered by buildings or soft landscaping, including any parking, service areas or roads, footpaths, hard and soft, have been submitted in writing for approval by the Local Planning Authority. No works that are the subject of this condition shall be carried out until the details are approved, and the development shall not be occupied / the use of the development hereby approved shall not commence until the details have been approved and works to which this condition relates have been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure a satisfactory standard of development.

- 6 No development above slab level within each phase as defined within an approved Phasing Plan shall take place until details of all walls or fences within that phase, including details of acoustic fencing bounding the approved residential dwellings adjoining the A325 and along the rear boundary of Holt Grange adjoining the approved parking area, are submitted in writing for approval to the Local Planning Authority. No works which are the subject of this condition shall be carried out until the details are approved, and the approved development shall not be occupied/used until the details are approved and works to which this condition relates have been carried out in accordance with the approved details. The walls and fencing shall be permanently retained thereafter.

Reason - To ensure a satisfactory and safe development and in the interests of the amenities of existing and future occupiers of the residential dwellings within and adjoining the site.

- 7 No building hereby approved shall be first occupied until details of secure cycle parking facilities to serve that building for the occupants of, and visitors to, the development (residential dwellings, Birdworld and Forest Lodge) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved facilities shall be fully implemented and made available for use prior to the first occupation/use of the development and thereafter retained for use at all times.

Reason - To ensure satisfactory facilities for cycle parking are provided.

- 8 No external lighting/ floodlighting shall be installed on the site until such details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The lighting shall be installed, operated, and maintained in accordance with the approved details.
Reason - In the interests of the amenity of the occupants of neighbouring properties and the interests of highway safety.

Note: When submitting details for approval, it is requested that a report from a competent Lighting Professional is provided, confirming that the external lighting installation meets the Obtrusive Light Limitations for Exterior Lighting Installations for Environmental Zone (*to be specified for the circumstances*) as set out in the "Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light GN01:2011" issued by the Institute of Lighting Professionals.

- 9 No development aside from demolition shall commence until a fully detailed landscape and planting scheme for the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and in accordance with the recommendations of the appropriate British Standards or other recognised codes of good practice. These works shall be carried out in the first planting season after practical completion or first occupation of the development, whichever is earlier, unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced as soon as is reasonably practicable with others of species, size and number as originally approved unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - In the interests of the visual amenities of the locality and to enable proper consideration to be given to the impact of the proposed development on existing trees.

- 10 No construction of any dwelling hereby permitted shall commence on site until a scheme has been submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Local Planning Authority to demonstrate that the dwelling incorporates measures that provide energy savings of no less than 10% above Building Regulations in force at the time the development is to be constructed.

Before any dwelling is first occupied a verification report and completion certificate shall be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority confirming that the dwelling has been constructed in accordance with the approved scheme.

The developer shall nominate a competent person for the purpose of assessing and providing the above required report and certificate to confirm that the completed works incorporate such measures as to provide the required energy savings.

The energy saving works set out in the above report shall thereafter be maintained so that the required energy saving is sustained at the certified level for the lifetime of the development.

Reason - To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of sustainability and makes efficient use of resources. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as such details need to be taken into account in the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission

- 11 The residential dwellings hereby approved shall be constructed in accordance with the details as contained within the approved Noise Impact Assessment by Clarke Saunders Acoustics and shall be permanently retained and maintained as such. If the glazing or any fencing is at any time replaced, it shall be replaced with glazing and fencing of comparable sound insulation properties and shall be permanently retained and maintained as such.
Reason - In the interest of the amenities of future occupiers of the development.
- 12 No new public address system shall be installed until details of that system have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be installed, operated, and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme.
Reason - In the interests of the amenity of the occupants of neighbouring properties.
- 13 The café/restaurant uses hereby permitted within the Birdworld Visitor Centre shall not commence until detailed plans and specifications of a kitchen ventilation system, including details of sound attenuation for a kitchen ventilation extract system and odour control measures have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The kitchen ventilation extract system shall be installed in accordance with the approved plans and specifications before the use commences and shall be permanently retained as such thereafter.
Reason - To safeguard the amenities of the area and the occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- 14 All deliveries, loading, unloading or other servicing activities of the commercial elements of the scheme shall take place between the hours of 07:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 16:00 Saturday, Sunday, and public holidays.

Reason - To safeguard the amenities of the area and the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

- 15 Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order, 2015 (or any Order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order) no extension or alterations to the dwellings within Classes A, B and E of Part 1, Schedule 2 and Class A of Part 2, Schedule 2 shall be made except with prior planning permission being granted by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason- It is considered that further extension/alteration of the dwellings could result in an adverse effect upon the adjacent properties and the character and appearance of the area.

- 16 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order) the domestic garages hereby approved shall only be used for the purpose of parking private motor vehicles in connection with the residential use of the properties and shall not, at any time, be used for living accommodation, business, commercial, industrial purposes or for the storage of boats, caravans or trailers.

Reason - To ensure the adequate provision of on site parking for the purposes of highway safety

- 17 No development shall start in connection with any phase as defined within an approved Phasing Plan until a Construction Method Statement and Environmental Management Plan covering that phase as defined within an approved Phasing Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, which shall include:

- A programme of phasing of demolition and construction work;
- The provision of facilities for contractor parking;
- The arrangements for deliveries associated with all construction works;
- Access and egress for plant and machinery;
- Protection of roads and pedestrian routes during construction;
- Location of temporary site buildings, compounds, construction material, and plant storage areas;
- Provision for storage, collection, and disposal of refuse from the development during construction period; and
- Re-use of on site material and spoil arising from any site clearance or demolition work
- Measures to control noise, dust, and odour arising from demolition and construction works
- Measures to control the deposit of mud on the public highway

- Measures required to ensure that the construction phase of

development is guided by the identified ecological constraints as per the approved Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA (EAD, November 2016)) and which should also provide details of roles and responsibilities for those tasked with ensuring the implementation of the development in line with the EIA.

- Measures to control any presence of *C.Helmseii* within the application site and to ensure there is no possible threat to the habitats downstream from the application site.

Demolition and construction work shall only take place in accordance with the approved method statement.

Reason - In order that the Planning Authority can properly consider the effect of the works on the amenity of the locality. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as these details relate to the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

- 18 The approved development shall be implemented in accordance with the ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures detailed within the Ecological Impact Assessment (EAD, November 2016) unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
Reason - To protect biodiversity in accordance with the Conservation Regulations 2010, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, the NERC Act (2006), the provisions of the NPPF, and Policy CP21 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy.
- 19 No development, including demolition, pursuant to this consent shall commence until an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan, drafted in accordance with the recommendations and guidance set out in BS 5837:2012 and which should include (but not be limited to) all details listed in section 2 of the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the approved details have been installed. The details and measures as approved shall be retained and maintained, until the completion of all site operations.
Reason - To ensure that trees, shrubs and other natural features to be retained are adequately protected from damage to health and stability. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as these details need to be agreed prior to the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.
- 20 Notwithstanding the changes of use permitted within Part 3 of Schedule 2 Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order) the Birdworld Visitor Centre hereby permitted shall only be used connection with the existing tourism (D2) uses of the site and for no other purposes within class D2 of the Town and Country (Use Classes) Order (or any order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order) 1987.

Reason - In order to maintain control over future use of the premises in the interests of the general amenity of the area and highway/pedestrian safety.

21 The uses hereby permitted within the Birdworld Visitor Centre and associated site shall only be carried out within the site between 09:00 and 20:00, Mondays to Fridays, 09:00 to 20:00 on Saturdays and 09:00 to 18:00 on Sundays and Public Holidays.

Reason - To ensure that the amenities of the area and adjacent properties are not detrimentally affected by the use of the site outside reasonable working times.

22 Prior to first occupation of the Birdworld Visitor Centre, an Events Management Plan detailing measures to mitigate against noise and other disturbance from events held within the site shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason – In the interests of the amenities of the occupiers of the adjoining and nearby properties.

23 The ancillary retail use located within the approved Birdworld visitor centre hereby permitted shall not exceed 270m², shall only sell associated Birdworld merchandise, and shall be used for no other purposes within Class A1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order (or any order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order) 1987.

Reason – To protect the vitality and viability of the nearby town and village retail centres.

24 The restaurant/kitchen floor space within the Birdworld Visitor Centre hereby permitted shall only be used as a restaurant/kitchen, ancillary to the main use of the site as a tourist attraction and for no other purpose.

Reason - To retain control over the use of the site in the interests of the viability and vitality of nearby town and village centres.

25 The Class A1 retail use hereby permitted is for a garden centre (Forest Lodge) selling only gardening related products as follows:

a) Plants and houseplants, seeds and bulbs dried, artificial and cut flowers and goods associated with their care and maintenance.

b) Composts, peats, chemicals and other goods associated with plant/garden care, tools, watering equipment and garden machinery. Bird food, bird tables and feeders.

c) Garden, patio and conservatory furniture, table and picnic ware; garden furnishings and accessories. Garden lighting, heating and accessories; barbecues, fuels and accessories, and between the 1st October to 15th January only, external and internal Christmas

decorations.

d) Garden and specialist outdoor activities' clothing and footwear, outdoor and country pursuits, camping equipment and accessories.

e) Trees and plants of all kinds, rockery and statuary, ponds, pools, fountains and accessories including cold water fish, compost, peat and other garden care products.

f) Garden buildings, greenhouses, conservatories, gazebos, summerhouses, swimming pools spas with all accessories, landscape and building material, fencing and timber products and accessories.

Reason - To protect the viability and vitality of nearby town and village retail centres.

26

A) The covered, enclosed, 'Phase 1/Interim' Forest Lodge garden centre floor space/s permitted, and as shown on drawing P.017A shall not exceed a total floor area of 3520 sq.m gross.

B) The open-sided covered area/s and the external open area/s of the Forest Lodge garden centre floor space permitted shall not exceed a total floor area of 5,520 sq.m gross.

C) The ancillary restaurant/café permitted shall not exceed a total floor area of 1,000sq.m gross.

D)The food sales/farm shop permitted shall not exceed a total floor area of 330 sq.m gross unless the Local Planning Authority has given planning permission for any variation.

E) No more than 2,145 sq.m in total covered, enclosed, or open-sided covered area, or external open areas of the Forest Lodge garden centre shall be used for the sale of seasonal/ancillary goods.

There shall be no mezzanine floors or other internal alterations which would increase the gross retail floor space above that permitted, without prior approval in writing from the local Planning Authority.

Reason - The Local Planning Authority would wish to retain control over any further change of use of these premises in the interests of safeguarding the amenities of the area and to protect the viability and vitality of nearby town and village retail centres.

27

A) The covered, enclosed, 'Phase 2/Masterplan' Forest Lodge garden centre floor space/s permitted and as shown on drawing P.012 shall not exceed a total floor area of 6,605 sq.m gross.

B) The open-sided covered area/s and the external open area/s of the Forest Lodge garden centre floor space permitted shall not exceed a total floor area of 5,524 sq.m gross.

C) The ancillary restaurant/café permitted shall not exceed a total floor area of 1,000sq.m gross.

D)The food sales/farm shop permitted shall not exceed a total floor area of 330 sq.m gross unless the Local Planning Authority has given planning permission for any variation.

E) No more than 2,950 sq.m in total covered, enclosed, or open-sided covered area, or external open areas of the Forest Lodge garden centre shall be used for the sale of seasonal/ancillary goods.

There shall be no mezzanine floors or other internal alterations which would increase the gross retail floor space above that permitted, without prior approval in writing from the local Planning Authority.

Reason - The Local Planning Authority would wish to retain control over any further change of use of these premises in the interests of safeguarding the amenities of the area and to protect the viability and vitality of nearby town and village retail centres.

28

The Forest Lodge restaurant/kitchen floor space hereby permitted shall only be used as a restaurant/kitchens, ancillary to the main use of the site as a garden centre and for no other purpose.

Reason - To retain control over the use of the site in the interests of the viability and vitality of nearby town and village centres.

29

The approved Garden Style garden nursery floor space and buildings/structures shall only be used for garden nursery and ancillary product storage/sales area use (non-food retail) and for no other purpose, (including any other purpose within Class A1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes Order) 1997), or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification.

No part of the approved floor space or buildings/structures shall be used for the sale of the following goods or services: electrical goods (other than electric garden tools and machinery, and electrical products for garden features, climate control and irrigation), carpets and other floor coverings, chemists and medical products for humans, newspapers and magazines,

(other than local newspapers and garden magazines), CDs, DVDs and videos (other than those relating to gardening, tourism and hobbies), caravans, motor vehicles and parts, photographic equipment, musical instruments, DIY goods and decorators supplies and hardware (other than products for garden construction, improvement and maintenance) tobacco and tobacco products, dry cleaners and launderettes, hairdressers, funeral directors, travel agents, Post Office

Reason - The Local Planning Authority would wish to retain control over any further change of use of these premises in the interests of safeguarding the amenities of the area and to protect the viability and vitality of nearby town and village retail centres.

30 The uses hereby permitted within the Forest Lodge Garden Centre and Garden Style Nursery shall only be carried out within the site between 08:30 to 20:00 Mondays to Fridays, 09:00 to 18:00, Saturdays, and 10:30 to 16:30 on Sundays and Public Holidays

Reason - To ensure that the amenities of the area and adjacent properties are not detrimentally affected by the use of the site outside reasonable working times.

31 Notwithstanding any indication shown on the approved plans and notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order) no materials or products shall be stacked, stored or deposited within the car parking or landscaped areas within the site at anytime. All materials and products shall be contained within the approved sales, warehouse, and service yards.

Reason - To ensure that the visual appearance of the area is not adversely affected and an adequate amount of staff and customer parking provided at all times.

32 No part of the Birdworld or Forest Lodge and Garden Style development hereby approved shall be occupied until details for the on site provision to be made for the storage of refuse, crates, animal waste, and packaging etc. have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be occupied until the waste and refuse storage facilities have been constructed in accordance with the approved details and thereafter retained and kept available.

Reason - To ensure the adequate provision of adequate on site waste facilities and to safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of properties within an adjoining the site.

33 No development shall commence on site until details of a scheme for foul and surface water drainage (supported by and including the elements below has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. Such details should include provision for all surface water drainage from parking areas and areas of hardstanding to prevent surface water from discharging onto the highway and should be based on site investigation and percolation tests.

- a) Detailed drainage design drawings and calculations identifying the proposed drainage details.
- b) Existing and proposed run-off rate and volume calculations completed according to a suitable method such as IH124 or FEH. This must include a climate change allowance
- c) Evidence of sufficient attenuation on site for a 1 in 100 year plus climate change event
- d) Details of the proposed water treatment including the number of steps in the SuDS management train Confirmation on maintenance regimes and adoption of SuDS features Details of the long term maintenance drainage
- e) Measures to prevent run-off from the site draining into Lodge Pond (a reservoir covered by the regulations in the Reservoirs Act 1975 as amended)

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before any part of the development is first occupied and shall be permanently retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason - To ensure adequate provision for drainage. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as such details need to be taken into account in the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

Note: The applicant is requested to contact the Council's Drainage Consultant and Hampshire Country Council Lead Local Flood Authority as soon as possible to discuss the details required for the discharge of the above condition.

- 34 The proposed hard surface/s with the development shall either be made of porous materials or provision shall be made to direct run-off water from the hard surface/s to a permeable or porous surface within the site.
Reason - To ensure adequate provision for surface water drainage and avoid discharge of water onto the public highway.
- 35 No development within any phase as defined within an approved Phasing Plan shall commence on site, including demolition, until protective fencing has been erected around all trees, shrubs and other natural features not scheduled for removal and shall be retained for the duration of the works and shall be in accordance with the recommendations of BS5837:2012, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

No unauthorised access or placement of goods, fuels or chemicals, soil or other materials shall take place inside the fenced area.

No burning of materials shall take place where it could cause damage to

any tree or tree group to be retained on the site or on land adjoining.

No soil levels within the root protection area of the trees/hedgerows to be retained shall be raised or lowered.

Reason - To ensure that trees, shrubs and other natural features to be retained are adequately protected from damage to health and stability. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as these details need to be agreed prior to the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

- 36 That no development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological assessment in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) that has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in order to recognise, characterise and record any archaeological features and deposits that may exist here. The assessment should take the form of trial trenching, with trenches positioned within the footprints of proposed new buildings where these are not located within the footprints of currently existing structures.

Reason - To assess the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits that might be present and the impact of the development upon these heritage assets. It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as these details need to be agreed prior to the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

- 37 No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological mitigation of impact, based on the results of the trial trenching, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation that has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - To mitigate the effect of the works associated with the development upon any heritage assets and to ensure that information regarding these heritage assets is preserved by record for future generations. . It is considered necessary for this to be a pre-commencement condition as these details need to be agreed prior to the construction of the development and thus go to the heart of the planning permission.

- 38 Following completion of archaeological fieldwork a report shall be produced in accordance with an approved programme including where appropriate post-excavation assessment, specialist analysis and reports, publication and public engagement and submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval.

Reason - To contribute to our knowledge and understanding of our past by ensuring that opportunities are taken to capture evidence from the historic environment and to make this publicly available.

39 Before first occupation of each phase as defined within an approved Phasing Plan, provision for the associated car parking, disabled parking, motorcycle parking, and coach parking shall have been made within the site to serve that element, in accordance with the approved plans and shall be retained thereafter.

Reason - To ensure adequate on-site car parking provision for the approved development.

40 Occupation of the 'Phase 2'/'Masterplan' extensions and alterations to Forest Lodge shall not occur until Travel Plans in respect of Birdworld and Forest Lodge have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and shall include:

- (i) Targets for sustainable travel arrangements for staff and visitors;
- (ii) Effective measures for the on-going monitoring of the Plan;
- (iii) A commitment to delivering the Plan objectives from the occupation of the development;
- (iv) Effective mechanisms to achieve the objectives of the Plan by both present and future visitors and employees of the development.

The development shall be implemented only in accordance with the approved Travel Plans.

Reason - In the interests of promoting sustainable forms of transport to and from the sites.

41 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and particulars:

Application form

CIL form 1

Design and Access Statement (November 2016)

Retail Statement (October 2016)

Housing - Floor Space and Parking Provision (February 2017)

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report (November 2016)

Supplementary Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report (November 2016)

Supplementary Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy Report (March 2017)

Lighting Strategy and Lighting Strategy Plan

Transport Assessment (November 2016)

Travel Plan (November 2016)

Landscape and Visual Appraisal (November 2016)

Landscape Strategy (November 2016)

Statement of Community Involvement (November 2016)

Ecological Impact Assessment (November 2016)

Arboricultural Assessment & Method Statement (November 2016)

Noise Impact Assessment

Heads of S106 Agreement Statement

Planning Statement (December 2016)
Business Statement from Applicant (Roger Head)
Energy Statement (2016)
Cover Letter (December 2016)
1198 L001 - Location plan
1198 P001 - Existing site plan
1198 P002 D - Interim Masterplan (received 15/03/17)
1198 P003 C - Proposed Masterplan (received 15/03/17)
1198 P010 - Existing gardens centre block plan
1198 P011 - Existing garden centre plans
1198 P012 - Proposed garden centre block plan
1198 P013 - Proposed garden centre plans
1198 P014 - Existing elevations
1198 P015 - Proposed elevations
1198 P016A - Proposed Forest Lodge block plan - Interim
1198 P017A - Proposed Forest Lodge plans - Interim
1198 P018 - Proposed Forest Lodge Elevations - Interim
1198 P020 - Existing Birdworld block plan
1198 P021 C - Proposed Birdworld block plan (received 15/03/17)
1198 P022 - Proposed Birdworld Visitor Centre
1198 P023 - Elevations of building being demolished
1198 P024 - Proposed elevations
1198 P025 - Proposed elevations
1198 P026 - Proposed site section adjoining Holt Grange
1198 P031 - Proposed residential development Type A (received 15/03/17)
1198 P032 A - Proposed residential development Type B (received 15/03/17)
1198 P033 - Proposed residential development Type C (received 15/03/17)
1198 P034 A - Composite elevation looking south (received 15/03/17)
1198 P035 C - Interim Masterplan - Demise plan
1198 PO36 B - Proposed Masterplan - Demise plan
2016/3296/003 C - Proposed residential access (received 21/04/17)
16256-BT3a
16256-BT3b
16256-BT3c
Amended Annex - Parking summary (received 19/5/17)
Amended Annex - Floor space summary (received 19/5/17)
Indicative Phasing Matrix (received 17.10.17)

Reason - To ensure provision of a satisfactory development

Informative Notes to Applicant:

- 1 All development shall be stopped immediately in the event that contamination not previously identified is found to be present on the development site and details of the contamination shall be reported immediately in writing to the Local Planning Authority.

Development shall not re-start on site until the following details have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority:-

(a) a scheme outlining a site investigation and risk assessments designed to assess the nature and extent of any contamination on the site.

(b) a written report of the findings which includes, a description of the extent, scale and nature of contamination, an assessment of all potential risks to known receptors, an update of the conceptual site model (devised in the desktop study), identification of all pollutant linkages and unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and identified as unnecessary in the written report, an appraisal of remediation options and proposal of the preferred option(s) identified as appropriate for the type of contamination found on site and (unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority)

(c) a detailed remediation scheme designed 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. The scheme should include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, timetable of works, site management procedures and a verification plan outlining details of the data to be collected in order to demonstrate the completion of the remediation works and any arrangements for the continued monitoring of identified pollutant linkages; and before any part of the development is occupied or used (unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Planning Authority) a verification report demonstrating the effectiveness of the remediation works carried out and a completion certificate confirming that the approved remediation scheme has been implemented in full shall both have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority.

The above site works, details and certification submitted shall be in accordance with the approved scheme and undertaken by a competent person in accordance with DEFRA and the Environment Agency's 'Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination, CLR 11'.

Environmental Health recommends developers follow the risk management framework provided in 'CLR 11 Model procedures for the Management of Land Contamination? when dealing with land affected by contamination. A leaflet entitled "Development on Potentially Contaminated Land" is available as a download on the following East Hampshire District Council website

<http://www.easthants.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/ContaminatedLandGuide.pdf>

and which contains a template for a Completion Statement. This should be completed by the applicant at the end of the development, regardless of whether contamination was investigated/discovered on site. Approval of this statement will enable discharge of the unsuspected contamination condition.

2 The developer advised that this permission does not confer any approval which may be required under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements Regulations) 2007 for the display of advertisements. For further advice on this matter please telephone the Development Management Section at East Hampshire District Council.

3 The proposed development referred to in this planning permission is a chargeable development liable to pay Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) under Part 11 of the Planning Act 2008 and the CIL Regulations (as amended)

In accordance with CIL Regulation 65, East Hampshire District Council will issue a Liability Notice in respect of the chargeable development referred to in this planning permission as soon as practicable after the day on which planning permission first permits development. Further details on the Council's CIL process can be found on the East Hampshire District Council website:

<http://www.easthants.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Planning%20Contributions%20and%20CIL%20Supplementary%20Planning%20Document%20-%20April%202016.pdf>

4

In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the NPPF East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) takes a positive and proactive approach and works with applicants/agents on development proposals in a manner focused on solutions by:

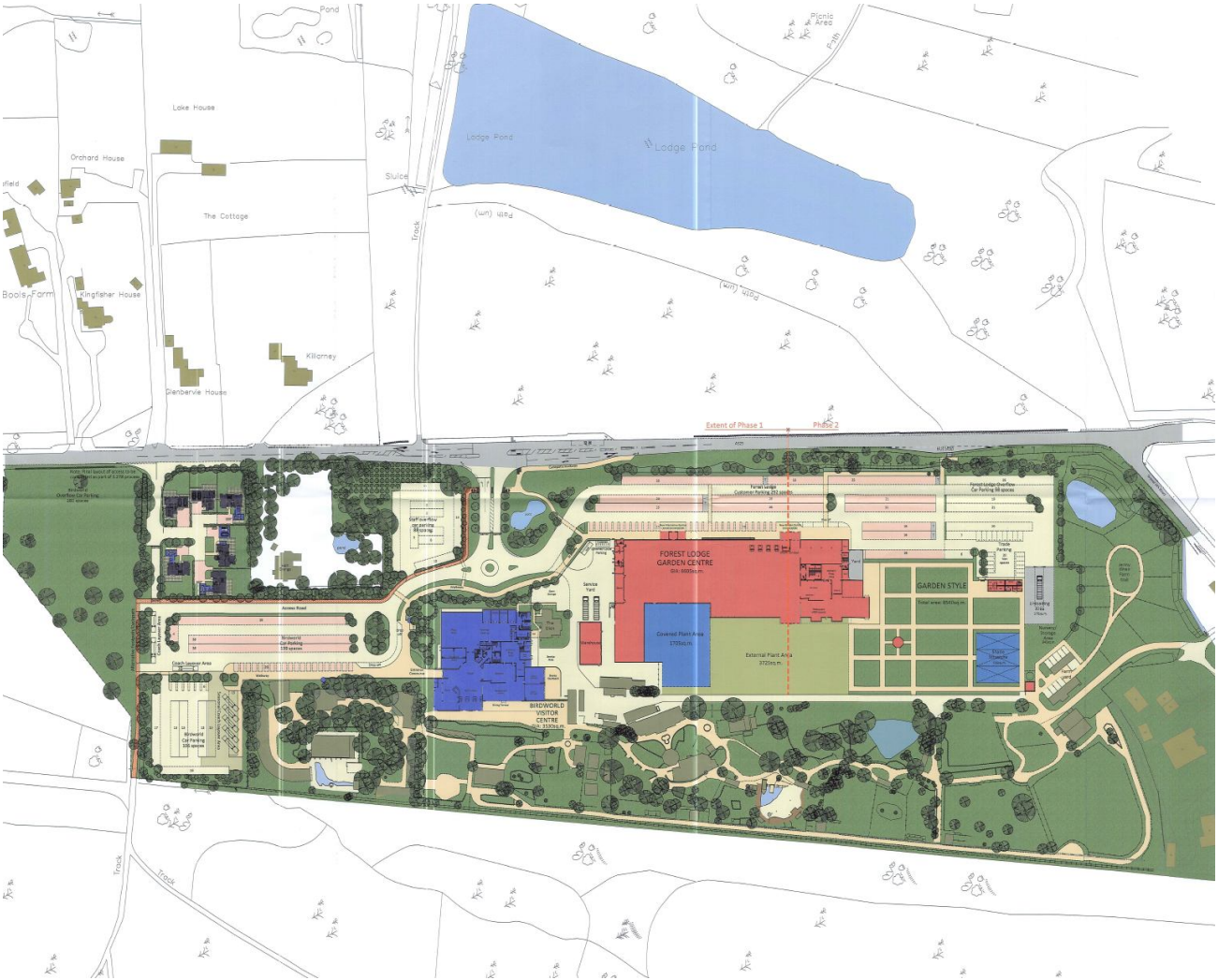
- offering a pre-application advice service,
- updating applicant/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions.

In this instance:

- the applicant was updated of any issues after the initial site visit.

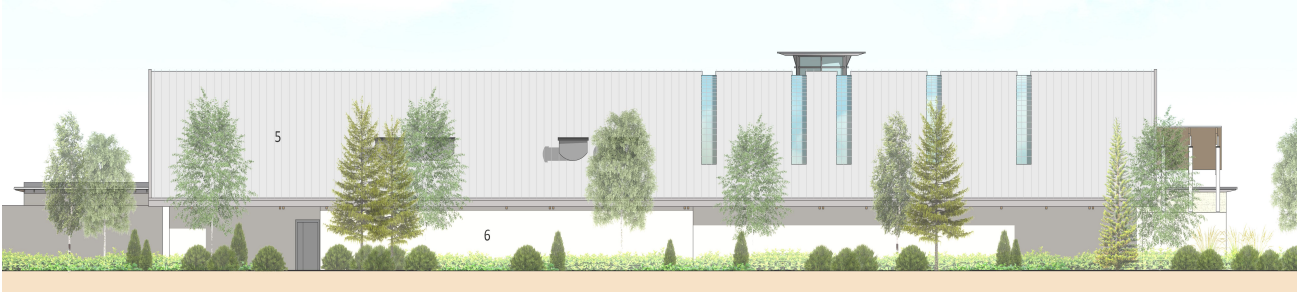
CASE OFFICER: Ms Sabah Halli 01730 234229

SECTION 1 Item 1 Forest Lodge Garden Centre, Farnham Road, Holt Pound, Farnham, GU10 4LD



Masterplan

SECTION 1 Item 1 Forest Lodge Garden Centre, Farnham Road, Holt Pound, Farnham, GU10 4LD



Proposed south east elevation to new access road



Proposed north west elevation to park

SECTION 1 Item 1 Forest Lodge Garden Centre, Farnham Road, Holt Pound, Farnham, GU10 4LD



Proposed front elevation



Proposed front



View from access drive looking south

Appendix B: Retail Impact Statistical Tables

**HASKINS GARDEN CENTRES
REDEVELOPMENT OF FOREST LODGE GARDEN CENTRE, HOLT POUND, FARNHAM
RETAIL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Table 1: Existing, Approved and Proposed Turnover Details, 2029

	Net Sales Floorspace (sq m)	2029 Sales Density (£/sq m)	2029 Turnover (£m)	Inflow Expenditure / Expenditure from Outside PCA (£m)	PCA Derived 2029 Turnover (£m)
EXISTING					
Forest Lodge Garden Centre	7,607				
Internal Non-Food/Comparison Goods Area	1,531	1,804	2.8	0.6	2.2
Internal Food/Convenience Goods Area	73	2,459	0.2	0.0	0.1
Open Sided/Outdoor Non-Food/Comparison Goods Retail Area	5,394	392	2.1	0.4	1.7
Garden Style	7,603				
Internal Non-Food Area (Polytunnels)	717	150	0.1	0.0	0.1
Outdoor Retail Area	6,886	150	1.0	0.2	0.8
Total Non-Food/Comparison Goods	14,528		6.0	1.2	4.8
2018 APPROVED SCHEME (LPA REF: PS.490/2017)	11,216				
Forest Lodge Garden Centre					
Internal Non-Food/Comparison Goods Area	4,600	1,804	7.7	1.5	6.2
Internal Food/Convenience Goods Area	330	2,459	0.8	0.2	0.6
Open Sided/Outdoor Non-Food/Comparison Goods Retail Area	5,524	392	2.0	0.4	1.6
Garden Style	6,052				
Internal Non-Food Area (Polytunnels)					
Outdoor Retail Area	6,052	150	0.9	0.2	0.7
Total Non-Food/Comparison Goods	16,176		10.6	2.1	8.5
PROPOSED	9,743				
Forest Lodge Garden Centre					
Internal Non-Food/Comparison Goods Area	2,706	1,962	5.3	1.1	4.2
Internal Food/Convenience Goods Area	104	4,317	0.4	0.1	0.4
Open Sided/Outdoor Non-Food/Comparison Goods Retail Area	5,897	518	3.1	0.6	2.4
Total Non-Food/Comparison Goods	8,603		8.4	1.7	6.7
FLOORSPACE/TURNOVER DIFFERENCE					
Proposed vs Existing					
Internal Non-Food/Comparison Goods Area	458		2.4		2.0
Internal Food/Convenience Goods Area	31		0.3		0.2
Open Sided/Outdoor Non-Food/Comparison Goods Retail Area	-6,383		-0.1		-0.1
Total Non-Food	-5,925		2.3		1.9
Proposed vs Approved					
Internal Non-Food/Comparison Goods Area	-1,894		-2.4		-1.9
Internal Food/Convenience Goods Area	-226		-0.3		-0.2
Open Sided/Outdoor Non-Food/Comparison Goods Retail Area	-5,679		0.1		0.1
Total Non-Food	-7,573		-2.3		-1.8

Notes:

Existing and Proposed Net Sales Floorspace figures taken from planning application submission / provided by Haskins
2018 Approved Scheme (LPA ref: PS.490/2017) floorspace figures derived from Retail Statement dated October 2016 submitted with planning application
Existing and Proposed sales density and turnover details for Forest Lodge Garden Centre provided by Haskins
Sales density and turnover derived from public for Garden Style is AK Planning judgement
For robustness sales densities of 2018 Approved Scheme assessed to be same as existing garden centre
Allowance made for floorspace efficiency increase between 2024-2029 utilising Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 20 (Feb 23)
Figures may not add due to rounding

2021 Prices

**HASKINS GARDEN CENTRES
REDEVELOPMENT OF FOREST LODGE GARDEN CENTRE, HOLT POUND, FARNHAM
RETAIL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Table 2: Estimated Comparison Goods Trading Effects of Proposed Garden Centre Redevelopment, 2029

	2029 Estimated Comparison Goods Turnover		Trade Diversion to Proposal		Residual Comparison Goods Turnover		% Impact	
	£m		%	£m	2029 £m		2029 £m	
	[1]		[2]	[3]	[4]		[5]	
RETAIL FACILITIES/CENTRES INSIDE PCA								
Centres								
Alton Town Centre	51.8		7	0.1	51.6		-0.2	
Farnham Town Centre	134.1		18	0.3	133.8		-0.3	
Whitehall & Boredon Town Centre	21.9		2	0.03	21.9		-0.1	
Aldershot Town Centre	116.6		8	0.2	116.4		-0.1	
North Camp District Centre	7.1				7.1			
Liphook District Centre	14.9		2	0.03	14.9		-0.2	
Four Marks Local Centre	1.5				1.5			
Garden Centres								
Squires Garden Centre, Badshot Lea, Farnham	3.8		5	0.1	3.7		-2.4	
Country Market, Bordon	6.6		10	0.2	6.4		-2.8	
Redfields Garden Centre, Church Crookham	6.3		8	0.2	6.2		-2.4	
Squires Garden Centre, Frensham	3.8		3	0.1	3.8		-1.6	
Avalon Garden Centre, Churt	2.7		2	0.03	2.7		-1.1	
Garthowen Garden Centre, Four Marks	2.5		2	0.03	2.5		-1.2	
Avenue Nurseries Garden Centre, Lasham	2.5		2	0.03	2.5		-1.2	
Hazelbank Nursery, Tilford	0.3				0.3			
Peacocks Nursery, Ewshot	1.3				1.3			
Blackmoor Nurseries, Blockmoor	4.1				4.1			
Compton Nursery, Compton	0.2				0.2			
Van Arnhem Nursery, Priorsfield Road, nr Compton	3.8				3.8			
Millais Nurseries, Churt	3.6				3.6			
Redleaf Nursery, Green Ln, nr Charleshill	1.2				1.2			
Out-of-Centre Retail Warehousing/DIY Stores								
Homebase, Farnham	8.3		7	0.1	8.2		-1.5	
Wickes, Alton	4.1		3	0.1	4.1		-1.5	
The Range, Aldershot	9.5		3	0.1	9.4		-0.6	
Elsewhere								
			8	0.2				
Retail Facilities/Garden Centres Outside PCA								
			11	0.2				
Total			100	1.9				

Notes

[1] Turnover of centres derived from East Hampshire District Council Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Study Update, 2023 / Rushmoor Borough Council and Hart District Council Retail, Leisure and Town Centres Study, 2015 (prices converted to 2021 Prices)

[1] Turnover of garden centres and out-of-centre retail warehousing/DIY stores derived from MT Town Planning Retail Statement prepared for 2018 Approved Forest Lodge Garden Centre redevelopment planning application (LPA ref: 20533/059) which have previously been accepted by the Council. Allowance made for floorspace efficiency increase utilising Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 20 (Feb 23)

[2] % trade draw patterns derived from Council's retail planning consultants, Lichfields, 'Retail Critique' (dated March 2017) of 2018 Approved Forest Lodge Garden Centre redevelopment (LPA ref: 20533/059) - Table 2.3: Impact Sensitivity Analysis (page 6)

[3] Turnover increase derived from Table 1 - 'Proposed vs Existing Floorspace/Turnover Difference - Total Non-Food'

[4] = [1]-[3]

[5] = ([4]-[1])/[1]%

Figures may not add due to rounding

2021 Prices

Appendix C: Town Centre Vitality and Viability Health Checks

Birdworld & Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment Retail Planning Statement Appendix C - Vitality and Viability Health Checks



This Appendix provides vitality and viability health check assessments of the following centres:

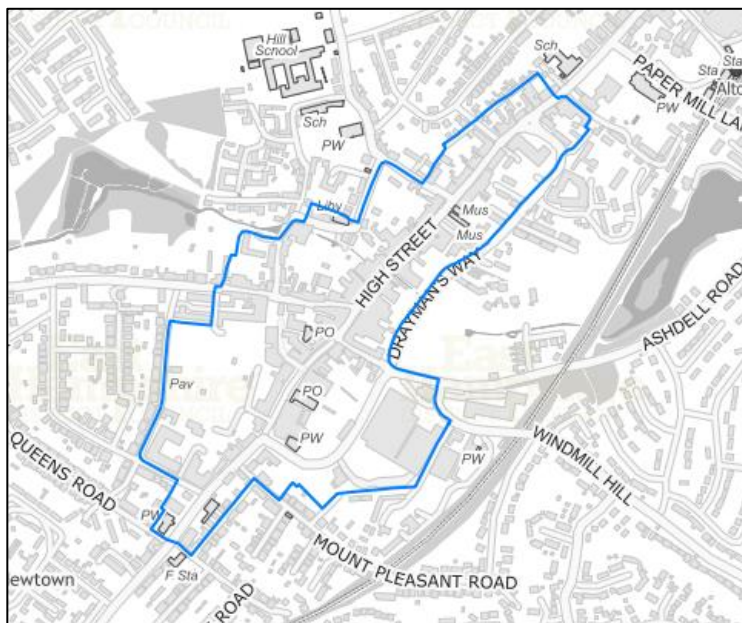
1. Alton Town Centre;
2. Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre (currently High Street/Chalet Hill Local Centre);
3. Farnham Town Centre; and
4. Aldershot Town Centre.

1. Alton Town Centre

Introduction

- 1.1 Alton is defined as a town centre within the local centre hierarchy. The centre is noted as being a market town and is considered one of the main comparison-shopping centres in the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (JCS) (2014) and main leisure destination in the area. The centre is linear and is focused on High Street, which contains the majority of frontages for the centre. **Figure 1** shows the boundary of the local centre.

Figure 1: Boundary of the centre from the East Hampshire JCS



- 1.2 JCS Policy CP2 relating to the town is focused on supporting the commercial development of the centre while preserving its market town feel and scale. The town acts as a gateway to the South Downs National Park.

Diversity of Uses

- 1.3 Alton Town Centre comprises 231 retail and service units which are occupied by a range of users. The level of retail and service floorspace provided in the town centre totals 44,620 sqm

Birdworld & Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment Retail Planning Statement Appendix C - Vitality and Viability Health Checks

gross. A breakdown of uses is provided in **Table 1 and Figure 2** below, alongside the most recent Goad national averages.

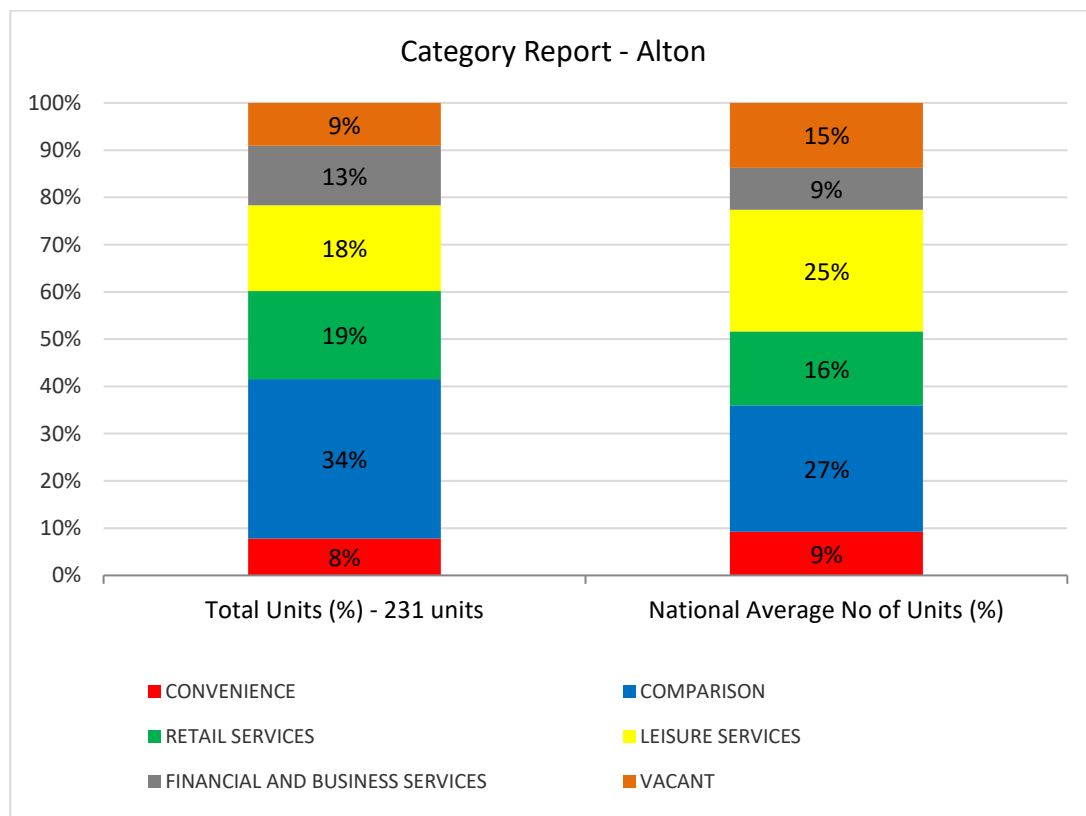
Table 1 and Figure 2: Unit Composition – Alton Town Centre

Category	No.	%	UK Average (%)
Convenience	18	8	9
Comparison	78	34	27
Retail Services	43	19	16
Leisure Service	42	18	25
Financial and Business Service	29	13	9
Vacant	21	9	15
Total	231	100	100

Source: Experian Goad Survey, April 2023

Notes: Goad UK Averages, January 2024

Figures may not add due to rounding



Birdworld & Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment

Retail Planning Statement

Appendix C - Vitality and Viability Health Checks

-
- 1.4 The table shows in terms of numbers of units, Alton Town Centre has a strong comparison goods offering, with 34% of all units occupied by comparison retailers. The centre also has an above national average level of retail services. The number of convenience goods retailers is 8% which is broadly in line with the UK average.

Vacancy Levels

- 1.5 The latest Experian Goad Survey of the town centre identifies that just 9 units were recorded vacant. This represents a vacancy rate of 9% which is significantly below the national average (15%). The majority of vacant units are located towards the south of the centre, along Market Street and Westbrook Walk. The largest vacant unit is the former cinema at the northern end of the centre.

Retailer Representation

- 1.6 Alton has a good range of national multiple brands and independent local shops. Key retailers include Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's, Iceland, Boots and Pizza Express. There is a street market every Tuesday and every second Saturday and there is a farmers' market in the square. There is a wide variety of comparison goods on sale within the town centre.
- 1.7 There is representation from several major banks within the centre, along with accounting, insurance, and legal services. There is a good level of beauty and hairdressing services distributed around the centre, along with leisure services such as cafes, bars, and restaurants.

Pedestrian Flows

- 1.8 Alton is a linear centre which primarily stretches along High Street and Market Square. The highest levels of pedestrian flow were observed in the middle of the centre on High Street, in between Cross and Pillcry Lane and Market Street. As there is a high level of parking located towards the south of the centre, behind Marks and Spencer, this area was particularly busy. The northern end of the centre felt quieter in terms of pedestrians than the south.

Accessibility

- 1.9 Alton Train Station is located approximately 250 metres from the junction of Normandy Street and York Mews, on the northern edge of the centre. The station provides a regular service to London Waterloo via Farnham, Aldershot, Brookwood and Woking.
- 1.10 There are several bus stops within the centre along High Street. There are a number of different bus services which provide connections to Basingstoke, Winchester, Farnham and Liphook.
- 1.11 There are ten public car parks within or close to the centre, with the majority being located behind Marks and Spencer and close to Sainsbury's. The town has good access to the highways network via the A31 and the A339.
- 1.12 The centre is relatively flat and has pavements throughout. The market area to the west is open and pedestrianised. The traffic coming along High Street is speed and directionally controlled. The pavements are busy at certain points where they could be difficult to navigate in a wheelchair when the path is busy.

Perception of Safety

- 1.13 The centre was monitored to have a good level of footfall and is open, meaning there is a good level of surveillance during the day. There is streetlighting throughout the centre and controls on the speeds of cars using High Street. At the time of our visit the centre felt safe for pedestrians navigating around it.
- 1.14 The only areas which could be perceived as having a lower quality of safety are the linking walkways through to the car parks from the main street, such as John Trimmer Walk. These more enclosed spaces lack the same level of visibility from either the car park or High Street.

Environmental Quality

- 1.15 Alton Town Centre is an attractive and well maintained centre, with a traditional high street feel. There are several historic buildings within the centre which add to the character of the area, along with the presence of trees along the street adding to the vibrancy. The level of litter overall

in the centre appeared to be low with multiple public bins around the centre. There are also additional street furnishings which added to the quality, including flower boxes and benches.

- 1.16 The high street is traffic calmed and the area along Cross and Pillory Lane is pedestrianised with outside seating. This contributes positively to the sense of a pleasant environment.

Night-time Economy Offer

- 1.17 There are a good number of bars, pubs, and restaurants within the centre which would encourage footfall within the centre in the evening. Restaurants include Giggling Squid, Pizza Express, Slug and Lettuce, and The Botanist.
- 1.18 The centre however lacks other leisure facilities which would attract people to the centre in the evening. The night-time offer within the centre is not extensive but provides options to those visiting the centre later or spending the evening in the area.

Summary of Alton Town Centre Health Check

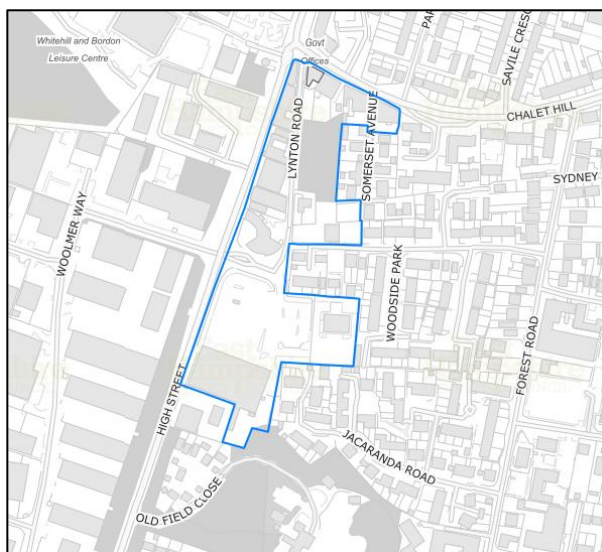
- 1.19 Overall, Alton Town Centre is considered to have a good level of vitality and viability for the following reasons:
- the town centre has a good range of retailers and services, both in terms of the ranges on offer and the mix of national and independent brands;
 - the vacancy level in the town centre is very low and is significantly below the national average;
 - the centre had a good flow of pedestrians, with the central area being the busiest;
 - it provides attractive traditional environment which is considered to be safe and well designed for pedestrians;
 - it is easily accessible by a wide range of means of transport; and
 - the nighttime offer is not extensive, but the centre does provide a good range of bars, pubs, and restaurants.

2. Whitehill / Bordon Town Centre

Introduction

- 2.1 Land is allocated at Whitehill and Bordon for a new Town Centre in the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (JCS) forming part of the wider Strategic Development Area which includes 4,000 new homes and up to 23,000sq m of retail floorspace.
- 2.2 The JCS notes that The Forest Centre at Whitehill and Bordon, which was previously designated as a District Centre, will take on a lesser role as a result of the new town centre to become a Local Centre. The JCS states that the existing Local Centre at High Street/Chalet Hill will be included within the new town centre.
- 2.3 It is noted from reviewing the vast planning history of the redevelopment of Whitehill and Bordon that the Town Centre boundary appears to lie to the west of the existing Local Centre, i.e. to the west of the A325 rather than to the east which is where the Local Centre lies.
- 2.4 Given the foregoing, for completeness and for the purposes of this health check assessment, we provide below an assessment of the existing local centre at High Street/Chalet Hill. We also provide comment on the emerging town centre proposals, albeit given the development is still ongoing a full vitality and viability assessment has not been undertaken.

Figure 3: Boundary of the centre from the East Hampshire District JCS



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Diversity of Uses

2.5 The local centre comprises 33 retail and service units which are occupied by a range of users. A breakdown of uses is provided in **Table 2 and Figure 4**, alongside the most recent Goad national averages.

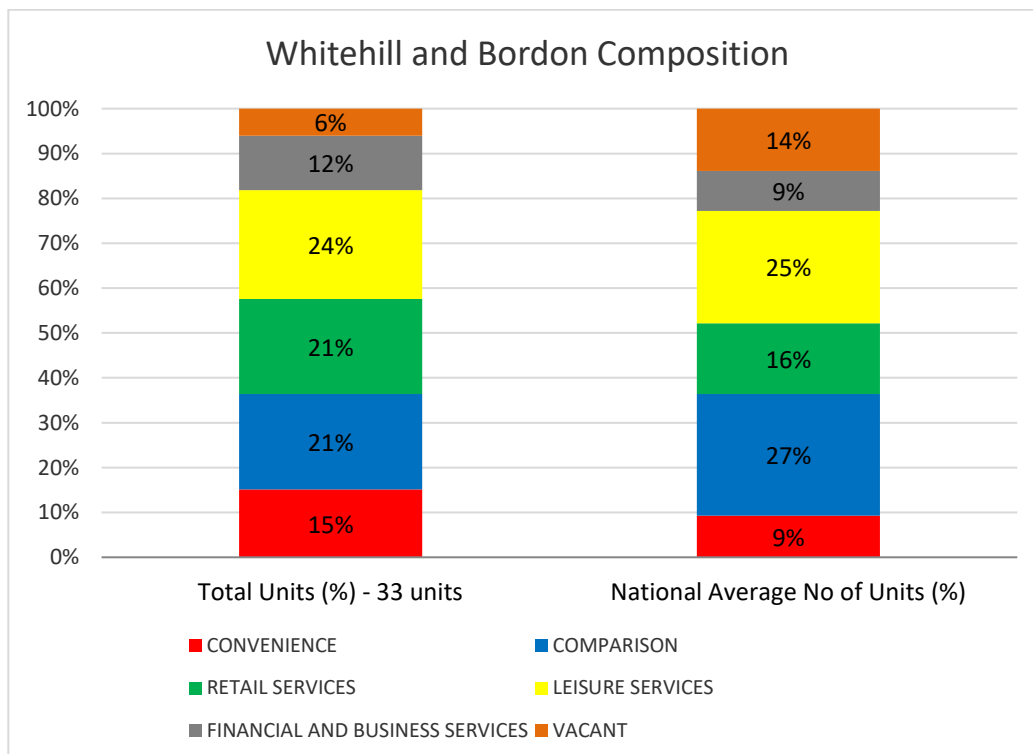
Table 2 and Figure 4: Unit Composition – Whitehill / Bordon

Category	No.	%	UK Average (%)
Convenience	5	15	9
Comparison	7	21	27
Retail Services	7	21	16
Leisure Service	8	23	25
Financial and Business Service	4	12	9
Vacant	2	6	14
Total	33	100	100

Source: Experian Goad Survey, April 2023

Notes: Goad UK Averages, January 2024

Figures may not add due to rounding



Birdworld & Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment

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Appendix C - Vitality and Viability Health Checks

2.6 The table shows, in terms of numbers of units, the leisure service sector occupies the highest number of units. However, whilst only 15% of the total number of units are occupied by convenience users, primarily due to the Tesco foodstore, a large proportion of the floorspace in the centre is convenience goods.

Vacancy Levels

2.7 Two units were recorded vacant in the April 2023 Experian Goad survey which represents a vacancy rate of 6%, which is significantly below the national average of 14%. There was one vacant unit on High Street and one on Chalet Hill.

Retailer Representation

2.8 Owing to its position in the retail hierarchy, serving local daily needs, the centre has a limited range of retailers. That being said, there are national retailers located within the centre, namely Coral, Domino's Pizza and Tesco. The remaining retailers are independent non-chain retailers.

2.9 There is a reasonably high number of independent leisure and financial and business users including hot food takeaways and estate agents. This is to be expected for a centre of its size.

Pedestrian Flows

2.10 The centre is L shaped located around the junction of two roads (High Street / Chalet Hill). High Street was the busier of the two streets with lower levels of footfall monitored as you move away from the centre. The units at the end of Chalet Hill on the edge of the centre are separated by a road which may discourage pedestrians walking that far.

Accessibility

2.11 Whitehill and Bordon is located along the A325 which runs between the A3 and A31. This means the centre is connected by car to Farnham, Petersfield, Guildford. There is a on street parking along High Street, along with a small public car park located to the west of the centre.

2.12 There are several bus stops along High Street and one on Chalet Hill. The bus routes provide links to Basingstoke, Aldershot, Shortheath, Haslemere, and Blackmoor.

-
- 2.13 There is no train station nearby to the centre. The closest is Liphook which is approximately 6km away.
- 2.14 The centre is on a slight hill, with the highest point being the junction of High Street and Chalet Hill. The surrounding roads are limited to 30 mph and the pavements are relatively wide and able to accommodate pedestrians.
- 2.15 It should also be noted that the centre is easily accessible to the new town centre being developed to the west of the A325.

Perception of Safety

- 2.16 There is good visibility throughout the centre because of its open nature, meaning there is good visibility from both the retail units and the residential dwellings close to the centre. There is streetlighting throughout the centre. The road is limited in speed at this point with two crossings across High Street located at either end of the centre.
- 2.17 The lack of night-time business, apart from takeaways, could lead to parts of the centre feeling quieter during the evening which could lead to some areas of the centre feeling unsafe.

Environmental Quality

- 2.18 The environmental quality of the centre is considered to be reasonable. However, the location of the centre, at the junction of two roads, negatively impacts on the environmental quality of the centre. There also isn't a consistent theme in the design of the buildings with a mix of styles and designs detracting from the sense of place in the surroundings.

Night-time Economy Offer

- 2.19 There are not any restaurants or bars within the centre which would promote a strong night-time economy. This is not particularly surprising given its current role and status as a local centre. There are numerous takeaways which are open late which would be the only possible draws for the centre during the evening.

Summary of Whitehall & Bordon Centre Health Check

2.20 Overall, the centre is considered to be a vital and viable centre for the following reasons:

- it has an extremely low level of vacancy, 8% below the UK average.
- the centre has a reasonable diversity of uses for a centre of its size, including a large Tesco supermarket;
- it has a good range of services and goods to provide for the day to day needs of the local community;
- the centre is easily accessible by a range of means of transport and will be easily accessible to the emerging new town;
- there are a number of hot takeaways that will attract people to the centre into the evening; and
- pedestrian activity is at a level commensurate with a centre of its size.

2.21 The currently being developed Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre, located to the west of the existing centre, will significantly enhance the vitality to the area once completed by attracting more people to the area.

The New Whitehill and Bordon Town Centre

2.22 As noted above, a new town centre for Whitehill and Bordon is currently being developed to serve the expanded community following to the closure of the Garrison and an additional 4,000 new homes being built/planned for the town.

2.23 The JCS recognises that the new town centre will comprise a major retailer which will be located at its heart together with other large units to attract more quality retailers (Policy CSWB3). Policy CSWB3 seeks to ensure that the proposed development comprises proposals for new shops, recreation and leisure, entertainment, cultural facilities, offices and commercial developments and high density housing.

Birdworld & Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment

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Appendix C - Vitality and Viability Health Checks

2.24 A reserved matters application was granted planning permission in January 2019 for Phase 1 of the new town centre, which included retail units (including a new foodstore), professional and financial services, drinking establishments, cafes, restaurants, offices, a cinema and heritage/arts space, offices, residential and a new town park and town squares (LPA Ref: 55587/065). **Figure 5** below shows the proposed site layout.

Figure 5: New Whitehall & Bordon Town Centre - Proposed Site Layout



2.25 Numerous other planning applications have been submitted to the local planning authority. Parts of the new town centre have been developed with some parts still under construction/subject to planning applications.

2.26 The leisure centre, in the southern part of the town centre, has been built and is open, as is The Shed, an entertainment and dining space, and an outdoor cinema.

2.27 Whilst the town centre is still under construction/to be developed, the sections of the centre that have been completed to date provide a modern centre for local people to enjoy with numerous shops, restaurants, entertainment and leisure facilities on offer. The centre will also provide a pleasant environment with the creation of the new town park and other well landscaped areas.

Birdworld & Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment Retail Planning Statement Appendix C - Vitality and Viability Health Checks



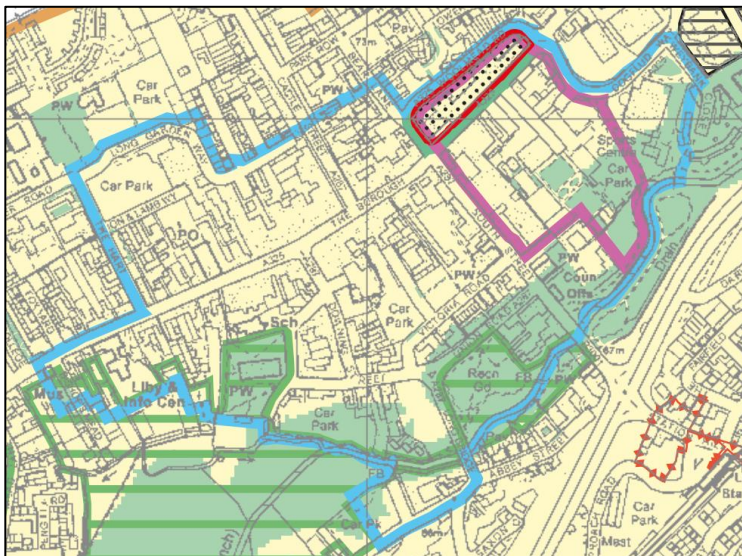
2.28 We understand that a number of pre-lets have been agreed with occupiers for a number of the retail units currently being developed. The evidence available indicates that the modern town centre, once completed, will provide an attractive, busy and diverse centre and will be both vital and viable.

3. Farnham Town Centre

Introduction

- 3.1 Farnham is a large town centre in the Waverley Borough Council administrative area, designated in the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1 (2018). Within the local plan it is noted that the centre was performing extremely well at the time of the Council’s Town Centre Retail Study (2013) and has an excellent range of independent and specialist traders. **Figure 6** below shows the boundary of the centre.

Figure 6: Boundary of the Centre (outlined in blue)



- 3.2 Local Plan Policy TSC1 relates to town centres and states that the Council recognises the town centres’ role in providing an extensive range of convenience and comparison shopping and that the centre serves not only local needs but the needs of those further away.

Diversity of Uses

- 3.3 Farnham Town Centre comprises 237 retail and service units which are occupied by a range of users. A breakdown of uses and retail floorspace is provided in **Table 3 and Figure 7**, alongside the Experian GOAD national average.

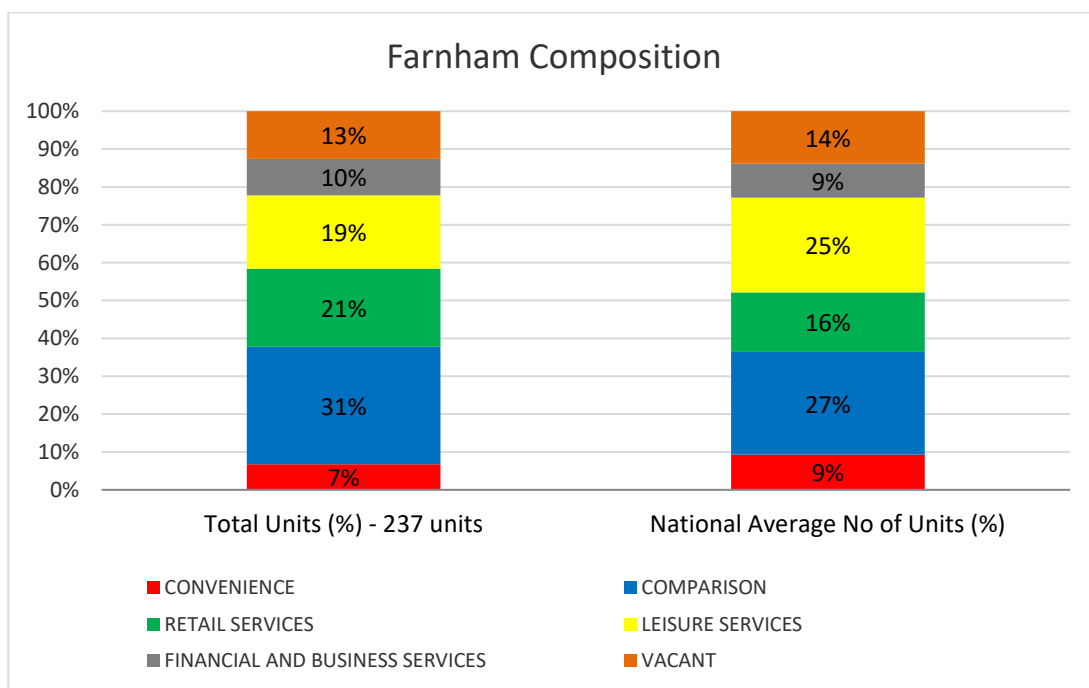
Table 3 and Figure 7: Unit Composition – Farnham Town Centre

Category	No.	%	UK Average (%)
Convenience	16	7	9
Comparison	74	31	27
Retail Services	49	21	16
Leisure Service	46	19	25
Financial and Business Service	23	10	9
Vacant	30	13	14
Total	237	100	100

Source: Experian Goad Survey, updated by Alder King, January 2024

Notes: Experian Goad UK Averages, January 2024

Notes: Figures may not add due to rounding



3.4 The table shows in terms of number of units, reflecting its role in the shopping hierarchy, Farnham comprises a large proportion of comparison goods retailers. The proportion of units in comparison goods use (31%) is higher than the national average (27%). Retail services in the centre are 5% above national average while leisure services are noted to be 6% below. This could be because the centre has a high level of retail services. The level of convenience units is 4% below the national average.

Vacancy Levels

- 3.5 30 units were recorded vacant in the January 2024 survey which represents a vacancy rate 2% below the national average. The vacant units are distributed across the centre with the highest levels being along West Street and within the Lion and Lamb Yard.

Retailer Representation

- 3.6 There are several major national retailers within the centre. This includes Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Waterstones, Boots, Lidl, Boots, Starbucks, Slug and Lettuce, Clarks and EE. There are also regular markets within the centre, including an annual food and drink festival.
- 3.7 There are several major banks operating within the centre, including Barclays, Santander and Nationwide. The centre also provides a good mix of hair and beauty service facilities, along with other retail services such as opticians and shoe repairs.
- 3.8 There is also a wide variety of comparison goods retailers available within the centre, with a good mix of national retailers and independent stores.

Pedestrian Flows

- 3.9 The centre has a main loop around The Borough, Downing Street, Union Road, and South Street, with different streets coming off at different points. The centre contains several small yards containing smaller units which break up the streets. The larger units within the centre are spread out towards the edges of the centre.
- 3.10 The highest levels of pedestrian flows were found to be along The Borough, being the connection point in the middle of the centre. Pedestrian numbers were monitored to be lower towards the south of the centre along Union Road.

Accessibility

- 3.11 Farnham Train Station is located approximately 500 metres southeast of the centre. The station provides regular services to Alton, Guildford, and London.

Birdworld & Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment

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Appendix C - Vitality and Viability Health Checks



-
- 3.12 There are multiple bus stops within the centre along South Street, West Street, and East Street connecting the centre by bus to numerous locations including Rowledge, Guildford, Bordon, Haslemere and Wrecclesham.
- 3.13 There are several car parks located within or close to the centre. In addition to the car parks for the large foodstores there are 11 car parks close to or within the centre. The centre also has good access to the highway network via the Farnham By-Pass.
- 3.14 The centre is relatively flat and has pavements throughout. The individual yard areas are pedestrian only, but roads do run through the rest of the centre. Traffic is limited to 30 mph with sections of the centre being one way only.

Perception of Safety

- 3.15 The centre has a good level of footfall, and a mixed economy of day and evening uses, meaning there is a good level of surveillance in most of the centre. There is good lighting throughout the majority of the main parts of the centre and controls on cars passing through. There are also a good number of crossings throughout the centre to allow pedestrians to move safely between pavements.
- 3.16 The yard areas have a more enclosed feeling and were relatively busy because of the number of units within them. These could potentially be areas where the perception of safety could be lower but they still have good visibility from the main streets.

Environmental Quality

- 3.17 Farnham Town Centre has a very good level of environmental quality and a strong sense of place throughout. The general design of the buildings is of a high quality and the yard sub areas, particularly the Lion and Lamb Yard, were very well maintained and gave a strong sense of character to the area. There was also no evidence of litter or graffiti in the centre.
- 3.18 The historic elements of the centre are highlighted in an effective way to develop the character of the area. However, a number of vacant buildings within the centre are poor quality elements, along with the areas where the streets narrow which can cause congestion on both the road and pavements.

Night-time Economy Offer

- 3.19 There are a mix of bars and pubs within the centre which would encourage a night-time economy. The pubs and bars at latest at the weekend close 11pm to 12am.
- 3.20 Given the size of the centre overall the night-time offer is not particularly diverse but provides opportunities for those wishing to stay later within the centre.

Summary of Farnham Town Centre Health Check

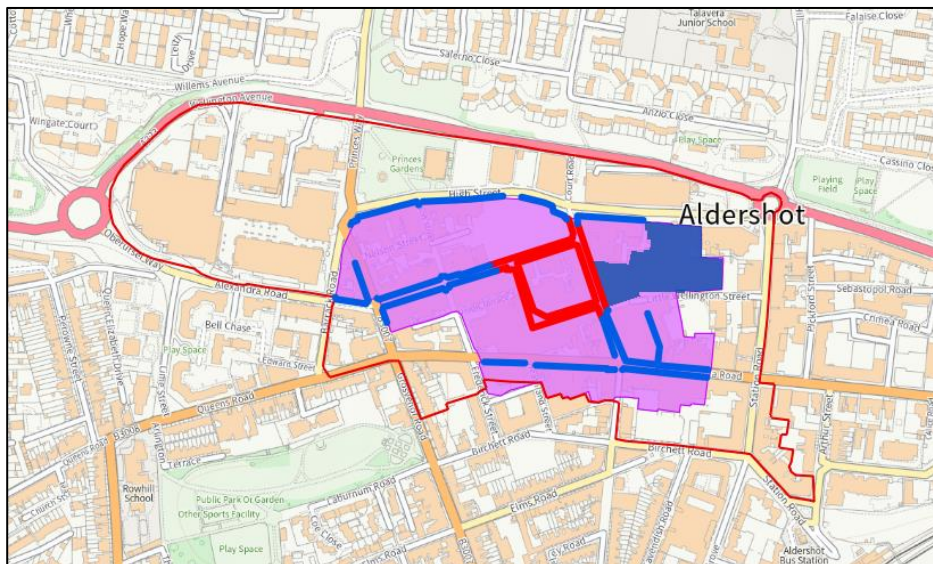
- 3.21 Overall, Farnham Town Centre is considered to have a good level of vitality and viability for the following reasons:
- the centre contains a good mix of goods and services from both independent and large retailers;
 - the vacancy rate in the centre is below the national average;
 - the layout of the centre creates a good natural flow for pedestrians. With good numbers being found within the centre;
 - the centre is accessible by a variety of modes of transport in addition to the car. It also provides plentiful centrally located car parking provision;
 - the centre is considered to be safe and easy to traverse, with good natural surveillance and wide streets;
 - there is a strong sense of place within the centre, with a good environment throughout; and
 - for its size night-time economy is not considered to be particularly diverse.

4. Aldershot Town Centre

Introduction

- 4.1 Aldershot is identified in the Rushmoor Local Plan (2019) as being a centre to meet the shopping, leisure and servicing needs of the local area with it being designated as a secondary regional centre. **Figure 8** shows the boundary of the centre.

Figure 8: Boundary of the Town Centre from the Rushmoor Local Plan



Notes: Town Centre boundary is the outer red line.

- 4.2 Local Plan Policy SP1 identifies that a good mix of active uses is important to the vitality and viability of the town centre. The Council’s strategy for the area is to widen the shopping role of the centre and provide opportunities for an improved range and quality of shopping. The centre is identified as being a ‘Step-Up Town’, meaning it has high growth potential.

Diversity of Uses

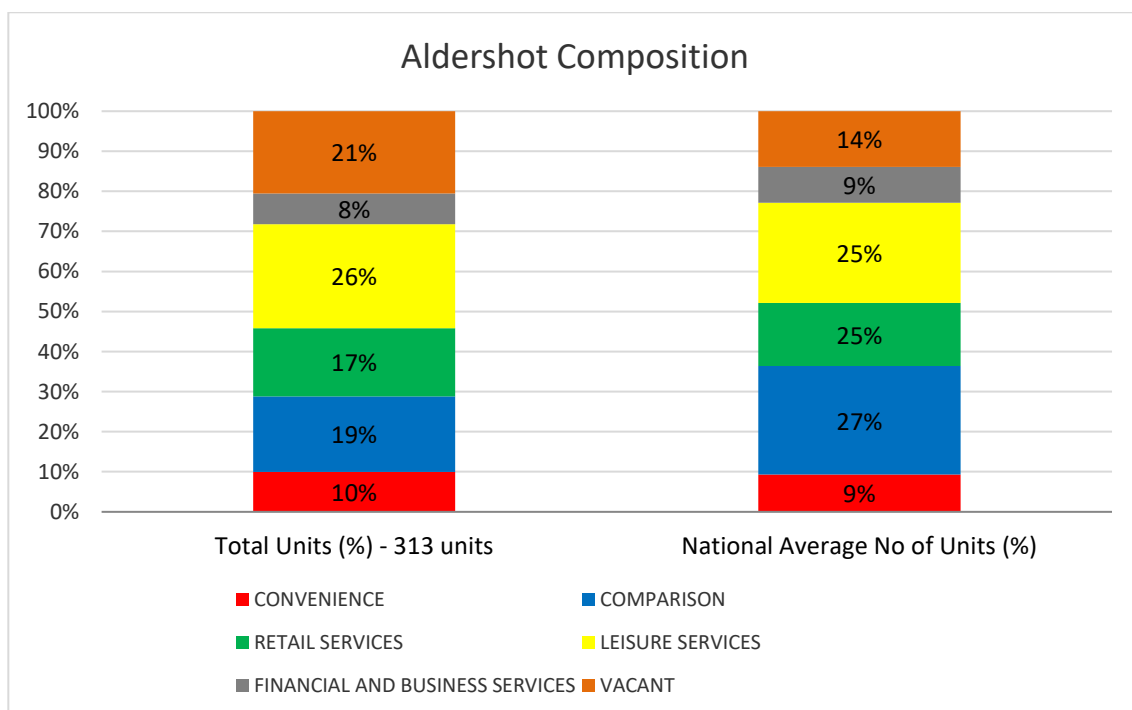
- 4.3 Aldershot Town Centre comprises 313 retail and service units which are occupied by a range of users. A breakdown of users is provided in a breakdown of uses and retail floorspace is provided in **Table 4 and Figure 9**, alongside the Experian GOAD national average.

**Birdworld & Forest Lodge Garden Centre Redevelopment
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Table 4 and Figure 9: Unit Composition – Aldershot Town Centre

Category	No.	%	UK Average (%)
Convenience	31	10	9
Comparison	59	19	27
Retail Services	53	17	16
Leisure Service	81	26	25
Financial and Business Service	24	8	9
Vacant	64	21	14
Total	313	100	100

Source: Experian Goad Survey, updated by Alder King, January 2024
Experian Goad UK Averages, January 2024
Notes: Figures may not add due to rounding



4.4 Table 4 above shows that there is a mix in the types of units within the centre. The levels of comparison retailers within the centre are below the national average with leisure service users occupying the highest proportion of units. The number of convenience and financial service units is broadly comparable with the most recent national averages.

Vacancy Levels

- 4.5 The centre is above the national level for vacant units with there being 64 vacant units within the centre. This number is inflated primarily due to the current redevelopments works of The Galleries and The Arcade shopping centres. Excluding these units under alterations, the actual vacancy level in the town centre is significantly less with 32 units identified on the Goad Plan falling within the redevelopment areas.

Retailer Representation

- 4.6 The centre has a reasonable representation of key multiple retailers, including Boots, Peacocks, New Look, and Trespass. The centre also contains a reasonably good level of independent retailers.
- 4.7 The centre has a good convenience offer, with a mix of smaller and larger stores, this includes a large Morrisons, Tesco and Lidl. There is a good retail and leisure service offer within the centre, including a large mix of services on offer throughout the centre, with a good number of cafes, restaurants and beauty facilities.
- 4.8 The centre also contains several major banks, including NatWest and Lloyds, along with a mix of estate agents and other financial services.

Pedestrian Flows

- 4.9 Aldershot is a large centre which focuses around the pedestrianised areas on Union Street and Wellington Street, with the Wellington Shopping Centre passing through the middle. The centre can easily be traversed on foot with the shape of the centre allowing for several looped paths around.
- 4.10 The areas to the west of the centre are slightly isolated from the main central area making them harder to get to on foot. The walk from the Wellington Shopping Centre to the Tesco on the western edge of the centre would be approximately 14 minutes and it involves crossing the A323. The central part of the centre around Union Street and Wellington Street was the busiest part of the centre with numbers decreasing towards its edge.

Accessibility

- 4.11 Aldershot Train Station is located at the south eastern edge of the centre. The station provides a regular service to Ascot, Guildford, Farnham, Alton, and London.
- 4.12 The bus station is located adjacent to the train station and there are various bus stops throughout the centre linking Aldershot with the nearby towns and villages.
- 4.13 There are six public car parks close to or within the centre providing a good level of private car parking for those travelling to the centre. The A323 links to the A331 to the east of Aldershot.
- 4.14 The centre is generally flat but contains a number of roads which would prove challenging to cross for those with mobility issues. The central area is pedestrianised which greatly improves the accessibility of this central area.

Perception of Safety

- 4.15 The streets and roads are relatively wide and open within the centre allowing for good visibility and illumination from streetlights.
- 4.16 The central pedestrianised areas seemed noticeably busier than the outskirts of the centre. The increased number of people and open shops contributes to these areas feeling safer than the areas around the edges.

Environmental Quality

- 4.17 The quality of the environment within Aldershot is mixed. The centre is generally constructed of modern buildings or those from the inter war period. The indoor shopping areas are well maintained but around the edges of the centre the overall quality of environment falls. There is a noticeable level of litter and damage to some shops, with vacant units being of particularly low quality.
- 4.18 The pedestrianised roads help to keep the central part of the centre quieter and free of pollution but areas with higher levels of traffic are noticeably lower in terms of overall amenity.

Night-time Economy Offer

- 4.19 Aldershot has a reasonably good mix of night-time provision, including several pubs, bars, and clubs to choose from. Overall, this creates the feel of an active centre during the later hours of the day.
- 4.20 The bars are primarily focused on Victoria Road in the middle of the centre.

Summary of Aldershot Town Centre Health Check

- 4.21 Overall, Aldershot Town Centre is considered to display reasonably good levels of vitality and viability for the following reasons:
- There is a reasonable range and choice of shops, including some major anchor retailers, and services, with a mix of indoor and outdoor shopping areas.
 - Although there is a high vacancy rate there are redevelopment areas where circa half of the vacant units identified on the Goad Plan are located.
 - The centre is well laid out to allow for good pedestrian access across the centre, although the western part of the centre is more isolated.
 - There is a good mix of transportation options to access the centre, including train, bus, and a number of car parks.
 - The centre is well illuminated and has good footfall in the centre leading to centre feeling safer.
 - There is a good mix of leisure activities within the centre, with a good nighttime offer for those coming to the centre later.



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