

Report to District Development Management Committee

Date of meeting: 27 March 2019



Address: Villa Nursery, Reeves Lane, Roydon

Subject: Planning Application EPF/2732/18: Erection of 2.7-hectare extension to existing glasshouse and construction of attenuation and irrigation lagoon with provision of perimeter maintenance track and associated landscaping

Officer contact for further information: S. Dhadwar (01992 564597)

Democratic Services Officer: S. Tautz (01992 564180)

Recommendation(s):

That planning application EPF/2732/18 be granted planning permission, subject to the completion within six months of a Section 106 Agreement to secure appropriate financial contributions towards mitigation of air pollution impacts on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and to the following planning conditions:

- (1) The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this notice;
- (2) The development hereby permitted will be completed strictly in accordance with the approved drawings no's:

SK02, SK03, SK07 REV B, SK09, 3452/10, Tree Schedule (BS5837) dated 22/6/18, TCTC-15117-PL-01, CLS18072001 Rev1, Transport Statement dated September 2018 by EAS, 11th October 2018, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment, Great crested Newt HSI Survey, by Reid and Co dated October 2018, Heritage Impact Assessment by Asset Heritage Consulting dated Sept 2018 reference: PB/9681, Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, December 2018 by EAS, PLANNING STATEMENT/DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT, REF: 3452/PS/DAS, Arboricultural Planning Report: Impact Assessment and Method Statement by Tracy Clarke dated October 2018 reference TCTC-15117 and email dated 12/3/18;

- (3) The external finishes of the development hereby permitted shall match in material, colour, style, bonding and texture those of the existing building;
- (4) Prior to any above ground works, full details of both hard and soft landscape works (including tree planting) and implementation programme (linked to the development schedule) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These works shall be carried out as approved. The hard landscaping details shall include, as appropriate, and in addition to details of existing features to be retained: proposed finished levels or contours and

lighting and functional services above and below ground. The details of soft landscape works shall include plans for planting or establishment by any means and full written specifications and schedules of plants, including species, plant sizes and proposed numbers /densities where appropriate as well as details of additional Poplar trees to be planted along the edges of the site which will surround the extension hereby approved. If within a period of five years from the date of the planting or establishment of any tree, or shrub or plant, that tree, shrub, or plant or any replacement is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies or becomes seriously damaged or defective another tree or shrub, or plant of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation;

- (5) If any tree, shrub or hedge shown to be retained in the submitted Arboricultural reports is removed, uprooted or destroyed, dies, or becomes severely damaged or diseased during development activities or within 3 years of the completion of the development, another tree, shrub or hedge of the same size and species shall be planted within 3 months at the same place, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation. If within a period of five years from the date of planting any replacement tree, shrub or hedge is removed, uprooted or destroyed, or dies or becomes seriously damaged or defective another tree, shrub or hedge of the same species and size as that originally planted shall, within 3 months, be planted at the same place;
- (6) Within 6 months of the completion of the development hereby approved, 1 Electric Vehicle Charging Point per every 10 spaces shall be installed and retained thereafter;
- (7) No works shall take place until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme should include but not be limited to: Detailed engineering drawings of each component of the drainage scheme. A final drainage plan which details exceedance and conveyance routes, FFL and ground levels, and location and sizing of any drainage features;
- (8) A written report summarising the final strategy and highlighting any minor changes to the approved strategy. Additional safety features should be put in place due to the use of a 1 in 1.5 side slope for the attenuation lagoon. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented prior to occupation;
- (9) No works shall take place until a scheme to minimise the risk of offsite flooding caused by surface water run-off and groundwater during construction works and prevent pollution has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented as approved;
- (10) No works shall take place until a Maintenance Plan detailing the maintenance arrangements including who is responsible for different elements of the surface water drainage system and the maintenance activities/frequencies, has been submitted to and agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. Should any part be maintainable by a maintenance company, details of long term funding arrangements should be provided;

- (11) The applicant or any successor in title must maintain yearly logs of maintenance which should be carried out in accordance with any approved Maintenance Plan. These must be available for inspection upon a request by the Local Planning Authority;**
- (12) The development be carried out in accordance with the flood risk assessment (Dated 04-12-2018) and drainage strategy submitted with the application unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority;**
- (13) The proposed use of this site has been identified as being particularly vulnerable if land contamination is present, despite no specific former potentially contaminating uses having been identified for this site. Should any discoloured or odorous soils be encountered during development works or should any hazardous materials or significant quantities of non-soil forming materials be found, then all development works should be stopped, the local planning authority contacted and a scheme to investigate the risks and/or the adoption of any required remedial measures be submitted to, agreed and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the recommencement of development works. In such instances, following the completion of development works and prior to the first occupation of the site, sufficient information must be submitted to demonstrate that any required remedial measures were satisfactorily implemented or confirmation provided that no unexpected contamination was encountered;**
- (14) This permission shall not be implemented unless and until the recommendations set out in section 6 and 7 of the Preliminary Ecological Assessment by Reid Co dated October 2018 are followed have been fully undertaken and these mitigation measures shall be maintained for the duration of the use. These concern a lighting strategy, great crested newt precautionary methodology (or survey), a method statement for reptiles and breeding bird methodology, the creation of a new pond, tree and wildflower planting, bird and bat boxes and enhancements for hedgehogs and invertebrates; and**
- (15) All material excavated from the below ground works hereby approved shall be removed from the site prior to first use of the extension and lagoon hereby approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

Report:

This application is referred to the District Development Management Committee for determination since it proposes an extension which has a floor area in excess of 10,000 sqm and therefore is required to be reported directly to the Committee, in accordance with Article 10 of the Council's Constitution

Description of Site:

1. The application site known as Villa Nursery covers an area of 10.6ha and is a well-established working nursery. It contains 3.73 ha of glasshouses and other ancillary buildings. The nursery is located on Reeves Lane within the settlement of Roydon. It specialises in the growing of salad vegetables for distribution to local retailers. Excluding the northern section of the site (the area of the proposed development), the majority of the site is covered in glasshouses and there is a large packing shed
2. The application related to an area of land which is currently in agricultural use and covered in grass. The application site is located within the boundaries of the

Metropolitan Green Belt and it is within in the Nazeing and South Roydon Conservation Area. The site lies on the edge of but outside the designated glasshouse area under policy E13A.

3. The business employs 20 full time staff throughout the year plus an additional eight staff who are employed during the 33-week growing season. All but two of the staff live on site.
4. Access to the site is by a surfaced lane that runs east from a priority junction with Reeves Lane. The lane leads to various farms with glasshouses and Villa Nursery is at the east end with a farmhouse, a packing shed, extensive glasshouses and ancillary facilities. There is also a service yard where vehicles are parked.

Description of Proposal:

5. Permission is sought for the erection of 2.7-hectare extension to existing glasshouse and to carry out ancillary development related to this, including the erection of additional buffer tanks, and water storage tanks or a reservoir.
6. The existing glasshouses would be extended northwards by 60-112m and westwards by 56-72m. They measure 6m to the eaves and 8m to the ridge of their bays and will be constructed of Aluminium framed glazing panels to match the existing glasshouses. To create a level glasshouse base, land on the western side of the development would be used to fill in land on the eastern side of the glasshouses. Therefore, on the western side the ground levels to the glasshouses will fall by between 0.4 and 2m and to the east would be raised by between 1.7m and 1.9m.
7. Construction of attenuation pond and irrigation lagoon with provision of perimeter maintenance track and associated landscaping.
8. All existing field boundaries hedgerows and significant trees are to be retained or enhanced.

Relevant History:

EPR/0115/48 Erection of 10 greenhouses - Granted

EPF/0962/94 Erection of glasshouses (9216 sq. metres) - Refused and dismissed on appeal

EPF/0851/99 Installation of gas supply pipeline - Approved

EPF/0785/05 Change of use of horticultural site to a mixed use of horticulture and packing and distribution use - Refused

EPF/0362/07 Change of use of horticultural site to a mixed use of horticulture and packing and distribution use - Granted

EPF/0705/07 Change of use and conversion of domestic outbuilding to bungalow annexe including replacement of flat roof with pitched roof. For use of extended family of occupants of Villa Nursery - Granted

EPF/2051/15 The installation of a new biomass boiler with flue stack and the construction of a boiler house - Granted

EPF/0477/17 Installation of a small-scale 'back-up' biomass boiler system including flue stack, and construction of boiler house - Granted

Policies Applied

Epping Forest Local Plan (1998) and Alterations (2006):

CP1 – Achieving sustainable development objectives
CP2 – Protecting the quality of the rural and built environment
CP3 – New development
CP4 - Energy Conservation
CP5 - Sustainable building
CP9 – Sustainable transport
GB2A - Development in the Green belt
GB11 – Agricultural Buildings
RP4 – Contaminated land
DBE9 – Loss of amenity
LL10 – Adequacy of provision for landscape retention
LL11 – Landscaping schemes
E13A New and Replacement Glasshouses
HC6 – Character, Appearance and setting of the Conservation Area
HC7 – Development within Conservation Areas
ST1 – Location of development
ST4 – Road safety
ST6 – Vehicle parking
NC1 - SPAs, SACs and SSSIs
NC3 - Replacement of Lost Habitat
NC4 - Protection of established Habitat

The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been adopted as national policy since July 2018. Paragraph 213 states that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the framework. The above policies are broadly consistent with the NPPF and should therefore be given appropriate weight.

Epping Forest District Local Plan (Submission Version) 2017:

The Epping Forest Local Plan Submission Version 2017 was submitted for independent examination in September 2018. Accordingly, it can be endorsed as a material consideration to be used in the determination of planning applications and be given appropriate weight in accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 48 provides that decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

In general terms it is considered that the Submission Version of the Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and the policies are considered to be consistent with the NPPF. As regards unresolved objections, some policies within the Submission Version have more unresolved objections than others. All of these factors have been taken into consideration in arriving at the weight accorded to each of the relevant policies in the context of the proposed development listed below:

SP1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SP6 - Green Belt and District Open Land
SP7 - The Natural Environment, Landscape Character and Green and Blue Infrastructure
E3 - Food Production and Glasshouses
T1 - Sustainable Transport Choices
DM1 - Habitat Protection and Improving Biodiversity
DM2 - Epping Forest SAC and the Lee Valley SPA
DM3 - Landscape Character, Ancient Landscapes and Geodiversity
DM4 - Green Belt
DM5 - Green and Blue Infrastructure
DM7 - Heritage Assets
DM9 - High Quality Design
DM11 - Waste Recycling Facilities on New Development
DM15 - Managing and Reducing Flood Risk
DM16 - Sustainable Drainage Systems
DM17 - Protecting and Enhancing Watercourses and Flood Defences
DM18 - On Site Management of Waste Water and Water Supply
DM20 - Low Carbon and Renewable Energy
DM21 - Local Environmental Impacts, Pollution and Land Contamination
DM22 - Air Quality

Consultation Carried Out and Summary of Representations Received

Number of neighbours consulted: 44
Site notice posted: Yes

Objections received from the following:

3 LANGLAND PLACE, 4 LANGLAND PLACE, 5 LANGLAND PLACE, 6 LANGLAND PLACE, 11 LANGLAND PLACE, 12 LANGLAND PLACE, 13 LANGLAND PLACE, 15 LANGLAND PLACE, 16 LANGLAND PLACE, 18 LANGLAND PLACE, 19 LANGLAND PLACE, 20 LANGLAND PLACE, 21 LANGLAND PLACE, BENMORE HARLOW ROAD: on the following grounds:

- Loss of outlook of the countryside as result of the sheer size of the greenhouses proposed;
- Drainage problem is of paramount importance. Greenhouses must have adequate and regular drainage fully maintained. Water needs to be directed to the drainage area and must be guaranteed not to flood in Langland Place. The major concern is that the small brook at the back of Langland Place could overflow and flood. With greenhouses of an area of 2.7 hectares 1in of rain would generate 180,000 gallons of rain water. Question whether the proposed system is adequate to handle such volumes of water and avoid flooding the surrounding area;
- With bigger greenhouses creating more waste products, concern this proposal will increase the burning that is regularly occurring at this site. As a development here, we have already contacted the environment manager at Epping Council with problems

with smoke pollution earlier this year which appears to be going against the London Mayor Khan's policy of clean air;

- Too large for the area;
- Harmful to the Environment and wildlife;
- Increased risk from pollution;
- Increased HGV movements on narrow lane causing congestion and harm to highway safety especially to cyclists. Condition that vehicles to this site only use Tyler's Road.;
- Condition that local people be employed on site;
- Although not located directly on to Reeves Lane, the latter suffers now from severe flooding. Excess water will raise the water table locally; and
- Constraints document states land is contaminated yet another documents states land is not contaminated. Need to clarify this point.

PARISH COUNCIL: COMMENT: The Parish Council has serious concerns about the strain this expansion will have on the local road network particularly Reeves Lane which is a road which suffers from regular HGV damage. (Policy E3). Query whether there is on site contamination and there are concerns that the lagoon is of an insufficient size and that this could result in an increased flood risk. Can a condition be added restricting any future pack house development (which would have a more detrimental effect on the road network) and can attempts be made to recruit from the local population?

Agent Response:

Lagoon size: *The lagoon and whole drainage system have been designed by expert drainage engineers and the comments of the District Council's Land Drainage Team and County Council's Development and Flood Risk Team have been dealt with.*

Packhouse development: *There is already an approved packhouse at the site and so any traffic generated by this is irrelevant.*

Local Road Network: *The submitted transport statement concluded that the only additional peak hour traffic generated by the development would be one lorry movement during the growing season carrying produce, plus occasional other movements carrying supplies. Essex County Highways has raised no objection and states: "The associated traffic movements with the proposed expansion is minimal and will not be detrimental to highway safety or efficiency at this location". To the north of the site entrance Reeves Lane is narrow in places and not ideal for large vehicles. Therefore, the applicant encourages all vehicles associated with the site to enter and leave via the southern end of Reeves Lane and will continue to do so.*

Local Recruitment: *The applicant already makes attempts to recruit from the local population and will continue to do so, although the nursery, like the horticultural industry as a whole, is largely dependent on migrant workers from Eastern Europe. The attempts to attract local workers include several initiatives over the last few years by the Lee Valley Growers' Association (LVGA) to promote horticultural careers to the local workforce via Job Centres, Jobs Fairs and apprenticeship schemes.*

Flood Risk: The lagoon and whole drainage system have been designed by our expert drainage engineers and were supported by a Flood Risk Assessment. Initial comments were received from the District Council's Land Drainage Team (8/11/18) and the County Council's Development and Flood Risk Team (2/11/18). I submitted our drainage expert's revisions to their FRA on 5/12/18. The District Council's Land Drainage Team subsequently withdrew its objection on 10/12/18 subject to a condition.

The County Council's Development and Flood Risk Team responded on 5/12/18. They upheld their objection on the basis of requiring infiltration testing (despite the clay geology) and stated that the sides of the lagoon were too steep (despite no public access).

Unfortunately, this response for some reason did not make it onto your website, but our drainage experts spoke to the County Council yesterday and I understand they are now going to withdraw their objection subject to a condition requiring suitable safety features around the lagoon. EFDC Land Drainage Team also required a fence around the lagoon so this has already been offered. You need to make sure you get this response from them and publish it on your website. Please notify me if they raise any further concerns and we will deal with them immediately.

Land Contamination: We paid for a pre-application consultation with the Council and the pre-application response said that no contamination risk was likely. This has been confirmed by the comments of the Council's land contamination expert on the planning application, who has recommended that a suitable condition be imposed.

Outlook from Langland Place: Layout plan SK09 shows the position of the Langland Place houses and the detached house at Fair View in relation to the development.

The development at Langland Place was permitted in 2015 immediately to the east of the existing glasshouses at Villa Nursery. The rear wall of the house at no.13 Langland Place was permitted under EPF/0487/16 (approved drawing 15-215-002) to be approximately 20m from the existing glasshouses, and nos. 11 & 12 were approved only slightly further away.

The proposed development would extend the existing glasshouses northwards but would be a couple of metres indented to the west. No part of the new development would be closer to the houses than the existing glasshouses. The nearest house (no.14) would be about 30m from the nearest part of the new glasshouses, but at an oblique angle to them. Directly to the rear of no.14 the glasshouses would be about 65m away. The distance between the glasshouses and nos.15-18 would be even greater.

New native species planting is shown indicatively on the proposed site layout plan between the glasshouses and the rear of nos.14-18. I suggest that a condition is imposed to require full details of the landscaping to be approved by the Council before the commencement of the development. Once mature this landscaping would screen and soften the impact of the development still further.

Impact on Fair View: The design of the north-western corner of the glasshouses was indented to increase the distance between Fair View and the glasshouses. New native species planting is shown indicatively on the proposed site layout plan between the glasshouses and Fair View. I suggest that a condition is imposed to require full details of this landscaping to be approved by the Council before the commencement of the development. Once mature this landscaping would screen and soften the impact of the development still further. As requested by the neighbour the applicant would be happy to erect a fence between the development and his property, preferably an open chain link fence, to minimise the impact on the green belt.

Waste Burning: I am advised there was an issue with waste burning at the site recently and the site was attended by an environmental health officer. The applicant has made changes to his waste disposal arrangements to meet the EHO's requirements. Following the construction of the new glasshouses the main area of activity at the nursery would be confined to the area west of the glasshouses about 150-200 metres from the houses in Langland Place.

Ecology: The report submitted by our ecological expert explains how species found at the site and their habitats would be protected. It also describes various measures for biodiversity enhancement. Epping Forest Countrycare supports approving the scheme subject to conditions to ensure that the ecologist's recommendations are followed.

Loss of Light: The new development is mostly to the north of the houses in Langland Place. Since the sun travels east to west across the southern half of the sky no loss of sunlight or overshadowing could be caused.

Main Issues and Considerations:

9. The issues which are relevant to the determination of this application are:
 - (a) Is the development appropriate for the Green Belt?
 - (b) Would the development detract from the openness of the Green Belt?
 - (c) Is the site suitable for the employment use?
 - (d) Impact on the character and appearance;
 - (e) Impact on neighbouring residential amenity;
 - (f) Impact on highway safety; and
 - (g) Impact on surface water drainage.

Background

10. The application was initially submitted as a pre-application request under reference EF\2014\ENQ\01112. The previous case officer found the principle of the scheme to be acceptable.

Green Belt

11. Government Guidance states that new development within the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it falls within the list of exceptions set out in paragraphs 145 and 146 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provided it does not harm the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with the five purposes of including land within it than the existing development.
12. Local Policy GB2A is broadly in compliance with the aims and objectives of national Green Belt Policy. The NPPF states that one of the exceptions to inappropriate development within the Green Belt is the construction of buildings for agriculture and forestry; since the proposal is for horticultural use, it accords with this exception.
13. Since the principle of the proposal is not inappropriate and the proposal will infill an area already characterised by large green houses and subject to conditions requiring additional planting of mature trees, the overall impact on the openness of the Green Belt will be less than substantial. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the requirements of chapter 13 of the NPPF, GB2A of the adopted Local Plan and DM4 of the Submission Version Plan.

Economic Benefits

14. The NPPF 2018 requires that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.
15. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF requires that *“Planning policies and decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.”*
16. The proposed development would benefit food security in England. It will create up to a maximum of 18 new jobs which will contribute to the local economy. Officers consider these features to be significant benefits, and as such the proposal accords with the requirements of chapter 6 of the NPPF and the economic strand of sustainable development.

Workers' Accommodation

17. South west of the proposed extension are two warehouse buildings. The larger warehouse contains two units and the smaller warehouse contains four units. These buildings are being used to house existing workers. This residential accommodation has been in existence for over 4 years and therefore is lawful. The 3 caravans could in the short term accommodate seasonal workers. The applicant advises this will be a short-term solution until funding is received as a result of planning permission being given. They then propose to convert existing underutilised buildings on the site to provide additional worker accommodation. This will require a new planning application.
18. Other options open to the applicant include the provision of overtime for existing staff and to bus in 'agency' staff to meet peaks in crop production, especially during the summer. Therefore, the labour requirements of the expanded nursery can be adequately accommodated through a combination of utilising the existing buildings, occupying three existing caravans on a seasonal basis, and a single mini-bus bringing in additional staff when necessary.
19. It is recommended that an informative be attached to any permission requiring that the accommodation must meet current Environmental Health Standards.

Sustainability

20. The increased production of salad vegetables will reduce carbon emissions as a result of the reduction in need for this type of food from overseas.
21. A combined heat and power unit (CHP) was approved under EPF/2051/15 and EPF/0477/17. CHP technology works by using a fuel source, typically natural gas, to generate electricity which can be either utilised by the applicant via a private wire, sold back to the grid, or a combination of the two. The CHP engine harnesses the waste heat generated from this process to distribute hot water through insulated district heating pipework to provide heating and hot water for the applicant's buildings, after which it returns to the energy centre to be reheated by the CHP. By generating the electricity and heat through one fuel simultaneously, it is much more efficient than traditional power generation as there is less wasted energy, providing a solution that improves energy efficiency by 40-45%. The agent advises that it is currently operating at a fraction of its capacity. The reason for its installation was that it was better able to cope with increased size of the nursery business. At present only one of the two gas turbines is required to support the nursery.

22. The CHP unit incorporates two gas turbines. The turbines generate electricity, a small amount of which is consumed by the nursery, but the majority of which is sold to the electricity network as it is not being used to capacity. Water is used to draw heat from the turbines and this hot water is stored in buffer tanks then used to heat the glasshouses at night. The carbon dioxide generated as a by-product to the gas combustion process is piped into the glasshouses, where it increases the rate of photosynthesis and therefore improves plant growth and crop productivity. This type of heating system is less reliant on fossil fuels than more conventional methods of energy generation.
23. Furthermore, the worker accommodation is predominately on site and therefore the need for employees to travel is significantly reduced. The Planning Application Case Officer when carrying out her site visit, found only 1 staff car parked on the site along with numerous bikes.
24. It is for these reasons considered that the provision of on site worker accommodation and the use of sustainable modes of transport will ensure that the number of additional motor vehicle trips generated by staff will be low. The proposal is therefore supportive of moving towards a low carbon future in accordance with the NPPF, policies ST1 and CP5 of the adopted Local Plan along with T1 and DM20 of the Submission Version Plan. This is a significant benefit in favour of the scheme.

Impact on the character and appearance of the Nazeing and South Roydon Conservation Area.

25. S66(1) of the Planning and Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act 1990 makes it clear that a Local Planning Authority (LPA) should have special regard to the desirability of preserving the Listed Building and its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
26. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF requires that “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.”
27. The development will be located within the boundaries of the Nazeing and South Roydon Conservation area. The purpose of conservation in this location is to preserve the open, medieval pattern within the settlements of Middle Street, Halls Green and Bumbles Green.
28. The proposal has been reviewed by the Conservation Officer, who has made the following comments:

“Such an extensive new expanse of 6m high glasshouses will lead to a moderate adverse impact upon the character and significance of the Nazeing and South Roydon Conservation Areas.

If there is to be a justification for this harm, it would have to be based upon environmental impacts – reducing carbon emissions by growing more salad crops in the UK, rather than air-freighting them in from abroad etc. Having said that, it should still be possible to reduce the harmful impact of this large industrial scale agricultural facility through the creation of a new planted screen of e.g. a double offset row of poplar trees – this could be added via a planning landscaping condition. Provided that

the impact is lessened, I think that it could be possible to justify the harmful impact in terms of public benefits – in relation to new employment / environmental benefits.”

29. It is for these reasons considered that, on balance, the harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is not so significant as to justify refusal of the scheme. It is for this reason that the proposal accords with the requirements of chapter 16 of the NPPF, HC6 and HC7 of the adopted Local Plan and DM7 of the Submission Version Plan.

Trees

30. The Trees team are satisfied that subject to further conditions which require the retention of trees and shrubs, the removal of excavated material and further details of how trees will be protected, the details contained within the submitted arboricultural reports is sufficient to ensure that the proposal will not unduly harm the existing protected trees on the site. The proposal on this basis complies with the requirements of policy LL10 and LL11 of the Local Plan.

Impact on the living conditions of neighbouring residential dwellings

31. The assessment made by the planning agent in para. 11 above is agreed with.
32. The proposed extension is a minimum of 22m away from the application site's mutual boundary with Fair View.
33. The elevation closest to Langland Place will as a result of changes in land levels, have a maximum height of 10m. It will appear as a continuation of the existing glasshouses. This additional presence is weighed against the fact that Villa Nursery has been in operation for at least 60 years, and the Linden's development approved under reference EPF/2535/14 now known as Langland Place is already dominated by views of the existing nursery.
34. The rear boundary of properties at 11, 12 and 13 already adjoin existing glasshouses to the rear. The properties at 14-18 Langland Place are almost perpendicular to the extension and are positioned a minimum of 20m away.
35. A condition is recommended which requires that the extension is screened by trees from neighbouring residential dwellings.
36. All other neighbouring residential properties are sufficiently distant as to not be materially affected by the proposal.
37. It is for these reasons that the proposal will not cause excessive harm to neighbouring amenity in terms of loss of light, outlook, dominance or privacy.
38. The applicant informed Officers that the burning of plastic is no longer carried out on site. Instead waste materials are put in a skip and transferred to a waste disposal area. It is on this basis that the proposal complies with the requirements of DBE9 of the Local Plan and DM9 of the Submission Version Local Plan.

Highways

39. The Transport Assessment submitted by EAS dated indicates that all but 2 employees live on the site. Therefore, no expansion of the existing 60 vehicle car park is proposed. The assessment makes the following conclusions.

“It is expected that the extension of the glasshouse will lead to a maximum of 18 additional staff being employed. These additional workers will either live on the nursery; travel to work by an employer provided minibus or they will travel to work by bike from other nearby accommodation and therefore do not need a car to travel to work. The company’s experience is that nursery workers do not normally own or run a car. At present the site yields one rigid lorry load of up to 26 pallets per day during the growing season. It is anticipated that the yield will increase by 50%, requiring the use of two lorries (assuming that produce continues to be exported on the day that it is picked). There will be a corresponding increase in deliveries of other materials such as fertiliser, pesticides and equipment but these movements will occur only occasionally.

While there will be staff travel to and from the site, for shopping or social reasons, this is not expected to take place during the traffic peak hours of 08:00 – 09:00 or 17:00 – 18:00. It may be concluded that the only additional peak hour traffic generated by the extension will be one lorry movement during the growing season carrying produce plus occasional other movements carrying supplies. The HGVs will reach the wider road network via Tylers Road and the B181, from which they can reach the M11 or the A414. They will thus travel over only 1.1 kilometres of minor road in each direction.

Although Reeves Lane is relatively narrow, the section that they will use is only 50 metres long. The access lane from Reeves Lane is adequate, with room for vehicles to pass.

For these reasons the traffic impact of the proposed extension may be regarded as negligible.”

40. Essex Highways is satisfied with the evidence submitted within this report and as a result does not consider that the proposal will lead to an excessive additional harm to highway safety or congestion. The proposal therefore complies with the requirements of policies ST4 & ST6 of the Local Plan and policy T1 of the Local Plan Submission Version 2017.

Ecology

41. The proposal has a size and position which indicates that the proposal may have an impact on protected species. The application includes a Preliminary Ecological Assessment by Reid Co dated October 2018. The Countrycare team have reviewed the application and are satisfied that the information submitted and subject to conditioning the recommendations made in the assessments, will ensure that the proposal will make adequate provision for the protection and suitable management of established habitats of local significance for wildlife in accordance with Chapter 11 of the NPPF and policy NC4 of the Local Plan.

Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation

42. As set out in DM 22 of the Local Plan Submission Version Dec 2017, issues have been identified with respect to the effect of development on the integrity of the SAC as a result of relatively poor local air quality alongside the roads that traverse the SAC. The Council is currently developing with partners a strategy for the monitoring of poor air quality. This will include measures to be funded through the securing of financial contributions from new development in accordance with Policy DM 22 and therefore this matter and financing amount will be concluded through a section 106 legal agreement. However, at the time of writing this report, the Council is awaiting agreement from Natural England as to what the exact amount of contribution and type

mitigation will be. Notwithstanding the fact that this work is yet to be completed the applicant has confirmed willingness to enter into a S106 agreement and recognises that the level of contribution is to be agreed after the committee.

43. The site is outside the 3.2km distance as measured from the edge of the SAC, therefore no contribution is required towards mitigating recreational impact on the Forest.

Education Development

44. The Infrastructure Planning Officer has not requested an education contribution as the size of the scheme is below threshold for this contribution to be required.

Land Drainage/ Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDs)

45. The applicant has provided a flood risk assessment with the application and whilst concerns were raised, the applicant supplied a revised Flood Risk Assessment dated 04-12-2018. The details contained within this assessment, addressed the concerns made by the Land Drainage team in relation to details required to ensure that surface water flooding is mitigated. They therefore recommend a condition requiring that the development be carried out in accordance with the flood risk assessment (Dated 04-12-2018) and drainage strategy submitted with the application. The County SuDs team are also satisfied with the revised assessment subject to further conditions. It is on this basis that the proposal complies with the requirements of policies in accordance with the Utilities policies of the Local Plan and policies DM15, DM16, DM17 and DM18 of the Submission Version Plan.

Conclusion:

46. The proposal is not inappropriate development within the Green Belt which subject to conditions relating to tree screening will cause limited harm to the openness and character of the Green Belt.
47. The harm to character and appearance of the Nazeing and South Roydon Conservation Area is less than substantial when weighed against the benefits to the rural economy and in the long-term viability of the nursery industry within the District along with features within the proposal being supportive of the Council's aim to move towards a low carbon future.
48. The parking requirements of the proposal can be accommodated on site and overall, the proposal will not significantly decrease highway safety.
49. The additional impact on the living conditions of neighbouring residential dwellings will not be excessive.
50. The applicants are willing to enter into a legal agreement which will ensure that the development will aid the management and monitoring of air quality within the District in order to protect the integrity of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.
51. For these reasons, and those outlined in the report above, it is recommended that conditional planning permission is granted subject to the applicant entering into a S106 agreement in respect of appropriate financial contributions towards mitigation of air pollution impacts on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC).