

Appl No: 16/P/00976 **8/13 week deadline:** 30/09/2016
Appl Type: Full Application
Parish: Wisley **Ward:** Lovelace
Agent: Montagu Evans **Applicant:**
Location: Royal Horticultural Society Gardens, Wisley Lane, Wisley, Woking,
GU23 6QS
Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of a two storey building
accommodating science, education, research and restaurant facilities,
associated landscaping including a landscape bund and other works
associated with the development.

Site description.

The application site comprises a section of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Gardens at Wisley. The gardens extend to approximately 67ha and comprises a mixture of formal and informal decorative gardens and arboretum. The site also include a number of large buildings, including the laboratory building, glass houses, office buildings and visitor/catering facilities. The site is a major visitor attraction and includes a large car and coach park to the front of the site.

The site the subject of this application is known as Hilltop and includes an area previously occupied by glasshouses as well as a number of workshop buildings, events space, a cafe and other buildings associated with the function of the gardens.

The site is within the Green Belt. The gardens are Grade II* Listed and the Laboratory building is Grade II listed.

Proposal.

The application seeks permission for the erection of a two-storey building to provide new herbarium, laboratories, library, offices and meeting rooms, class rooms and a cafe. The application also includes the demolition of a number of existing buildings including some existing workshops, glass houses, poly tunnels, events building and cafe.

The proposed building would have a contemporary design and would be laid out in a 'Y' shape with projecting wings of a central atrium space. The application also includes setting out of formal gardens around the new building.

Relevant planning history.

The application site has a long and complex planning history however none of this is relevant to the consideration of the current application.

This application forms one of a series of applications to redevelop the site and to improve the visitor experience at the Gardens. The following applications are inter-related to this proposal.

Reference:	Description:	Decision Summary:
16/P/01081	Listed building consent for the erection of new part single-storey part two-storey building accommodating	Pending

retail, entrance and visitor facilities and alterations to the car parking and hard and soft landscaping with associated alterations to the Laboratory building including the demolition of the existing extensions and alterations to the fenestration, demolition of Aberconway Cottage and part of Aberconway House.

16/P/01080	Erection of new part single-storey part two-storey building accommodating retail, entrance and visitor facilities and alterations to the car parking and hard and soft landscaping and following the demolition of the existing plant centre, the extensions to the Laboratory building, toilet blocks, Aberconway Cottage and part of Aberconway House.	Pending
16/P/00954	Erection of a new single storey building for offices, ancillary to the use of RHS Wisley, and associated works.	Approved
16/P/01037	Erection of three single storey electricity substations to serve RHS Wisley and associated works.	Approved

Consultations.

County Highway Authority: No objection subject to conditions

English Heritage: No objection

Ripley Parish Council: No comments received

Ockham Parish Council: No comments received

Natural England: No objection subject to conditions

Lead Local Flood Authority: No objection

Third party comments:

No representations received.

Planning policies.

The following policies are relevant to the determination of this application.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Core planning principles

Chapter 1. Building a strong, competitive economy

Chapter 3. Supporting a prosperous rural economy

Chapter 7. Requiring good design

Chapter 9. Protecting Green Belt land

Chapter 12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 (as saved by CLG Direction 24 September 2007):

G1 General Standards of Development

RE1 The extent of the Green Belt

RE2 Development within the Green Belt

HE4 New development which affects the setting of a Listed Building

HE12 Historic Parks and Gardens

Planning considerations.

The main planning considerations in this case are:

- the principle of development
- the impact on the Green Belt
- the impact on Heritage Assets
- the impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area / biodiversity

The principle of development

The application site is located within the Green Belt; paragraph 89 of the NPPF advises that the erection of buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate except in a limited range of circumstances. This includes the redevelopment of previously developed land (PDL) provided that the new development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

Previously developed land is defined by the NPPF as "Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time."

While RHS Wisley includes an element of horticulture its primary function is research and development and as a visitor / members destination open to the public. The use of the land is not considered to fall within the definition of agriculture. The area of the application site is currently occupied by a number of buildings and includes an area of open space that previously contained glasshouses. The site is considered to be PDL as defined by the NPPF and accordingly the relevant consideration is whether the proposed development would have a greater impact on the

openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

The impact on the Green Belt

The application proposes the erection of a new two-storey building to include new herbarium, laboratories, library, offices and meeting rooms, class rooms and a cafe following the demolition of a number of existing buildings. The proposed building would have a floor area of approximately 6,590sq.m compared to approximately 5,879sq.m of floorspace to be demolished, this represents an increase in floor area of 12.1% while the volume of the built form would increase by 16.6%.

While the proposed buildings represent an increase in both floor area and volume the development would rationalise the floorspace into a more compact area and would allow what is an unattractive and functional part of the gardens to be greatly improved in terms of its visual appearance. Furthermore the proposed building would consolidate a number of dispersed structures into a more compact area with a smaller footprint. This consolidation helps off-set the small increase in the volume of the buildings.

Moreover, the gardens as a whole are characterised by a small number of large structures, such as the front of house buildings and the millennium glasshouse, and it is not considered that the development would result in a greater impact on the openness of the green belt when viewed in the context of the whole planning unit.

Taking all of the above into consideration it is concluded that the development would not result in a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and accordingly is not inappropriate development. For these reasons the development complies with the objectives of Policy RE2 of the Guildford Local Plan 2003 (as saved) and with the policy set out within the NPPF.

The impact on Heritage Assets

The application site is within the RHS Wisley gardens, which are Grade II* Listed and the laboratory building is also Grade II Listed in its own right.

The Hilltop area is currently home to a number of sheds, greenhouses and other back of house facilities necessary for the functioning of the garden as well as a toilet block and café open to the public, there are no objections to the demolition of any of the existing buildings which do not contribute to the special interest of the gardens. Although the site for the proposed building contributes little to the significance to the wider grade II* registered garden it is at a high point in the landscape. Notwithstanding this the addition of this building would have little impact on the special interest of the garden and it quickly disappears from view as you move away from the site as the existing tree belt will partially screen it. The character of the park is also one of a small number of large pavilion buildings set into the landscape and the proposed development would reflect this character well.

Both English Heritage and the Council's Design and Conservation Manager have advised that the development would not impact on the significance or the setting of these designated heritage assets. No material harm to the designated heritage assets has been identified and having due regard to Section(s) 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 permission may be granted.

The impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area / biodiversity

The development is located within close proximity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area however no residential accommodation is proposed. The proposed development is for a visitor and research facility well within the gardens and the proposed development is not likely to have a significant impact on the protected site. Natural England have confirmed that it has no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions to manage any potential impacts from development. Suitable conditions are set out below.

The application is supported by a detailed ecological appraisal which considers the potential for the development to impact on protected species. The report concludes that subject to mitigation and avoidance measures, the development would not adversely impact on protected species and presents the opportunities for biodiversity enhancements within the site.

Parking and access

The proposed development would be access through the existing gardens and parking for visitors would continue to be provided in the surface car park to the front of the site. Alterations and improvements to this car park are to be undertaken as part of a sperate planning application.

Conclusion.

The development would deliver a high quality new building that would support the work undertaken by the RHS and would provide an attractive new visitor centre. The application is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt, would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and would not materially impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The development would not materially impact on the setting or the significance of the designated heritage assets and would not impact on highway safety.

Given the relatively modest net increase in net floor space it is not necessary to refer this application to the Secretary of State.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to the following condition(s) and reason(s) :-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. No development (excluding demolition, site preparation and groundworks) shall take place until details and samples of the proposed external facing and roofing materials including colour and finish have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and samples.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.

3. No development (excluding demolition, site preparation and groundworks) shall

take place until 1:20 scale details of all eaves, verges, windows (including head, sill and window reveal details), doors, rainwater goods, and canopies have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.

4. No works (excluding demolition, site preparation and groundworks) shall take place until a sample panels of the external walls and roofing showing materials, face bond and pointing and joinings, has been constructed on site, inspected and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The panel shall remain on site until the completion of the development for comparison. The works shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved sample panel.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory.

5. No new development shall be occupied until space has been laid out within the site in accordance with the approved plans, Drawing No. 150327-20, Revision E, for vehicles to be parked and for vehicles to turn so that they may enter and leave the site in forward gear. The parking/turning area shall be used and retained exclusively for its designated purpose.

Reason: In order that the development should not prejudice highway safety nor cause inconvenience to other highway users.

6. No development shall commence until a Construction Transport Management Plan, to include details of :
 - (a) parking for vehicles of site personnel, operatives and visitors
 - (b) loading and unloading of plant and materials
 - (c) storage of plant and materials
 - (d) programme of works (including measures for traffic management)
 - (e) provision of boundary hoarding behind any visibility zones
 - (f) measures to prevent the deposit of materials on the highway
 - (g) on-site turning for construction vehicles

has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Only the approved details shall be implemented during the construction of the development.

Reason: In order that the development should not prejudice highway safety nor cause inconvenience to other highway users.

7. The development hereby approved shall not be first opened for trading unless and until the following facilities have been provided in accordance with the approved plans for:

(a) The secure parking of bicycles within the development site,

(b) The provision of electrical vehicle charging bays

thereafter the said approved facilities shall be provided, retained and maintained to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that satisfactory facilities for the parking of cycles are provided and to encourage travel by means other than private motor vehicles.

8. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented upon first occupation of the development and for each and every subsequent occupation of the site thereafter maintain and develop the Travel Plan to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To encourage travel by means other than private motor vehicles.

9. Prior to the commencement of development (excluding site clearance, demolition and groundworks) details of measure to ensure that construction activities will not adversely impact on the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include details of dust management and control, lighting control, pollution runoff control and areas for the storage of plant and materials. The development shall be undertaken only in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the construction would not impact on the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area.

10. The development hereby approved shall be undertaken in accordance with the mitigation measures contained with section 6 of the Ecological Appraisal dated April 2016. There shall be no variation to the approved details unless first agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity.

11. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority detailing biodiversity enhancements to be delivered through the proposed development or on the land surrounding the application site. The agreed measures shall thereafter be implemented within 1 year of the first occupation of the development.

Reason: To ensure that the development would make a contribution to delivering biodiversity enhancements.

12. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved full details, of both hard and soft landscape proposals, including a schedule of landscape maintenance for a minimum period of 10 years, shall be implemented in accordance with a scheme that has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of an

appropriate landscape scheme in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality.

13. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, a certificate of compliance from an accredited assessor confirming that the development has achieved a BREEAM rating of Very Good shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development is sustainable and makes efficient use of energy, water and materials.

14. Prior to the commencement of development (excluding demolition, site preparation and groundworks) the following information on the proposed Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- a) results from infiltration testing in accordance with BRE Digest 365
- b) details of storage volumes for each Sustainable Drainage system feature
- c) a drainage layout detailing the location of SuDS elements and all associated works such as soakaways/ manholes/ chambers/ pipes/ points of connection to other SuDS elements (If applicable) etc
- d) a pervious / impervious area plan showing whole area(the value for proposed development area
- e) long or cross sections of each SuDS elements
- f) details of how the SuDS will cater for system failure or exceedance events, both on and offsite
- g) details of the proposed maintenance regimes for each of the SuDS elements
- h) details of how the SuDS will be protected and maintained during the construction of the development

The Sustainable Drainage System shall be implemented and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the principles of sustainable drainage are incorporated into the development.

15. The development hereby approved shall be undertaken in accordance with the Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement contained in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment dated 24th April 2016. There shall be no variation to the approved details unless first agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of good arboricultural practice.

16. Within 6 months of the first occupation of the approved development, the buildings shown to be demolished on the approved plans shall be demolished and the sites cleared of demolition spoil.

Reason: In the interests of the openness of the Green Belt.

19. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans as detailed in the schedule of drawings titled Schedule WHT2 and dated 29th April 2016.

Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and in the interests of proper planning.

Informatives:

1. This statement is provided in accordance with Article 35(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Guildford Borough Council seek to take a positive and proactive approach to development proposals. We work with applicants in a positive and proactive manner by:
 1. Offering a pre application advice service
 2. Where pre-application advice has been sought and that advice has been followed we will advise applicants/agents of any further issues arising during the course of the application
 3. Where possible officers will seek minor amendments to overcome issues identified at an early stage in the application process

In this case pre-application advice was sought and provided which addressed potential issues, the application has been submitted in accordance with that advice and no further issues have arisen.

2. If you need any advice regarding Building Regulations please do not hesitate to contact Guildford Borough Council Building Control on 01483 444545 or buildingcontrol@guildford.gov.uk

Paul Sherman
Majors Planning Officer
Signed: