

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Commercial Building and Offices with Staff Welfare Facilities

Birchfield Nursery, London Road, Henfield

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Application

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the construction of a commercial building incorporating offices, staff welfare facilities, and toilets at Garden Sage, London Road, Henfield.

1.2 Site Location

The site is located on London Road, Henfield, within an existing commercial premise operating as Garden Sage. The proposed development will enhance the operational capacity of the existing business by providing essential staff facilities that are currently absent from the site.

1.3 Applicant

The applicant operates the commercial business at Birchfield Nursery and requires purpose-built facilities to provide adequate staff welfare provision and administrative office space to support the ongoing operations and businesses onsite.

2. SITE CONTEXT AND ASSESSMENT

2.1 Existing Site Conditions

The site currently operates as a commercial garden centre business premises serving the local community. **Critically, the existing site does not have proper staff facilities**, including adequate toilets, office space, or dedicated staff welfare areas. This deficiency impacts staff wellbeing, operational efficiency, and compliance with modern workplace standards.

The proposed building will be positioned on the location of an existing polytunnel, thereby replacing one structure with another rather than introducing built form to a previously undeveloped part of the site. This represents an efficient use of land already occupied by an existing structure.

2.2 Site Constraints and Opportunities

- **Constraint:** Lack of existing staff infrastructure
- **Existing Structure:** The site currently has a polytunnel on the proposed building location
- **Opportunity:** Replacement of temporary polytunnel structure with permanent purpose-built facilities
- **Opportunity:** Integration of purpose-built facilities within the existing commercial operation
- **Opportunity:** Enhancement of employment conditions and business efficiency
- **Opportunity:** Improved compliance with workplace health and safety requirements
- **Opportunity:** More efficient use of the site with a permanent structure replacing a temporary one

2.3 Planning Policy Context

The proposal aligns with the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) adopted in November 2015 and local planning policies that support:

Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development: The proposal represents sustainable development by improving the economic conditions of an existing commercial site through provision of essential staff infrastructure, supporting the viability of local employment without requiring greenfield development.

Economic Development Priority Theme: The HDPF identifies "Economic Development: Plan for a successful local economy with high levels of employment" as one of six priority themes. This proposal directly supports this objective by:

- Enhancing an existing employment site with proper facilities.
- Supporting the retention and wellbeing of existing staff.
- Enabling the business to operate efficiently and sustainably.
- Demonstrating investment in local employment infrastructure.

Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development: The proposal supports the economic vitality of the rural area by improving facilities at an existing commercial operation, enabling it to function effectively and contribute to the local economy.

Policy 33 - Development Principles: The proposal accords with development principles by:

- Making efficient use of previously developed land (polytunnel location)
- Providing appropriate facilities for the use.
- Respecting the character and amenity of the surrounding area.
- Demonstrating high-quality design (as approved under DC/24/1448)

The proposal also supports:

- Enhancement of existing employment sites.
- Provision of appropriate workplace facilities.
- Sustainable economic development.
- Improvements to existing commercial premises without expansion of the commercial footprint.

3. THE PROPOSAL

3.1 Development Description

The application seeks permission for a commercial building comprising:

- **Office accommodation** for administrative and management functions.
- **Staff welfare facilities** including break room/rest area.
- **Toilet facilities** meeting current building regulations and accessibility standards.
- **Ancillary storage** and support spaces as required.

3.2 Justification for Development

The proposed development is essential for the following reasons:

Current Deficiency: The existing site lacks proper staff facilities, which is unsustainable for a modern commercial operation. Staff currently have inadequate access to toilets, no dedicated office space for administrative work, and no proper welfare facilities for breaks and rest periods.

Operational Need: The business requires office space for:

- Administrative tasks and record keeping.
- Staff management and coordination.
- Customer service and booking management.
- Health and safety compliance documentation.

Staff Welfare: The provision of appropriate welfare facilities is essential to:

- Comply with workplace health and safety legislation.
- Provide dignified and adequate toilet facilities.
- Offer proper break areas for staff wellbeing.
- Demonstrate duty of care to employees.

Business Efficiency: Purpose-built facilities will:

- Improve operational management.
- Enhance staff morale and productivity.
- Support business growth and sustainability.
- Enable better service delivery to customers.
- **Allow the site to move forward and develop in a sustainable manner without over-development**
- Provide essential infrastructure that prevents the need for multiple future applications or ad-hoc additions.

3.3 Scale and Massing

The design of the building is exactly the same as the previous approved application DC/24/1448. This application benefits from an established design precedent that has already been deemed acceptable by the Local Planning Authority.

The proposed building will be positioned on the location of an existing polytunnel, replacing one structure with another. This approach ensures that:

- No additional land is being developed beyond what is already occupied.
- The built footprint on site remains similar.
- The permanent structure replaces a temporary structure, representing an improvement in visual quality.

The proposed building has been designed to be proportionate to the existing commercial premises and appropriate to its context. The scale reflects:

- The functional requirements for offices, welfare, and toilet facilities
- Sympathetic integration with existing built form
- Consideration of neighbouring properties and amenity
- Efficient use of the available site area
- Consistency with the approved design under DC/24/1448

4. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

4.1 Use

The building will provide:

- **Ground floor:** Toilet facilities (including accessible WC), staff welfare/break room, and entrance lobby with access to the sales areas and dry storage for products.
- **Office accommodation:** Flexible workspace for administrative and management staff.
- **Circulation:** Efficient layout maximising usable floor area.
- **Storage:** Practical ancillary space as required.

4.2 Amount

The quantum of development has been carefully calculated to provide:

- Sufficient toilet provision for anticipated staff numbers.
- Adequate office space for business administration.
- Appropriate welfare facilities meeting workplace standards.
- No excessive or speculative floorspace.

4.3 Layout

The layout prioritises:

- **Accessibility:** Clear circulation routes and accessible facilities.
- **Functionality:** Logical arrangement of offices, welfare, and toilet areas.
- **Privacy:** Appropriate separation where required.
- **Efficiency:** Minimal circulation space, maximum usable area.
- **Natural light:** Windows positioned to provide good daylight penetration.

4.4 Appearance and Materials

The design of the building replicates the approved design under application DC/24/1448. The architectural treatment has already been assessed and approved by the Local Planning Authority as appropriate for this site.

The architectural treatment will:

- Complement the existing commercial buildings on site
- Use materials appropriate to the local context and commercial character.
- Provide a well-designed, professional appearance.
- Incorporate durable, low-maintenance materials suitable for commercial use.
- Respect the character of London Road and Henfield.
- Match the previously approved scheme in all material respects

Proposed materials palette (as approved under DC/24/1448):

- **Vertical timber cladding** - aesthetically pleasing external finish providing natural warmth and contemporary appearance.
- **Aluminium sheet roofing** - durable, low-maintenance roofing material suitable for commercial buildings.
- Appropriate fenestration providing natural light.
- Durable entrance door with glazed panel for natural light.

The combination of vertical timber cladding and aluminium sheet roofing creates a modern, practical aesthetic that is well-suited to the commercial context while maintaining visual quality and long-term durability.

5. ACCESS

5.1 Vehicular Access

The development will utilise the existing vehicular access arrangements to the site from London Road. No changes to the access point are proposed. The addition of office and welfare facilities will not materially increase vehicle movements as:

- The facilities serve existing staff already working on site
- No additional employment is anticipated from these facilities alone
- The use is ancillary to the existing commercial operation

5.2 Pedestrian Access

A safe and accessible pedestrian route will be provided from the main site to the new building entrance. The route will be:

- Level or gently graded.
- Well-lit for safety.
- Clear of obstacles.
- Appropriately surfaced for all-weather use.

5.3 Inclusive Access

The building has been designed with inclusive access as a fundamental principle:

Level Access: The entrance will be at ground level or provided with a suitable ramp to ensure wheelchair access.

Accessible WC: A fully compliant accessible toilet will be provided meeting Building Regulations Part M requirements, including:

- Adequate manoeuvring space
- Appropriate fixture heights and positions
- Emergency pull cord alarm
- Clear opening widths

Circulation: Internal corridors and doorways will provide adequate width for wheelchair users.

Signage: Clear, accessible signage will be provided throughout

5.4 Parking

Parking provision will be considered as part of the wider site layout. The proposal serves existing staff and does not generate additional parking demand beyond current levels.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The proposal incorporates sustainable design principles:

6.1 Energy Efficiency

- High levels of insulation exceeding Building Regulations.
- Energy-efficient lighting throughout (LED)
- Efficient heating system with appropriate controls.
- Maximum use of natural daylight to reduce artificial lighting.

6.2 Water Efficiency

- Water-efficient toilet fixtures and taps.
- Compliance with Building Regulations water efficiency standards.

6.3 Sustainable Construction

- Locally sourced materials where practical.
- Durable materials reducing maintenance and replacement.
- Consideration of embodied carbon in material selection.

7. COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The proposed development delivers significant benefits:

7.1 Staff Welfare

- **Improved working conditions** for existing employees.
- **Dignified facilities** meeting modern workplace standards.
- **Staff retention** supported by appropriate amenities.
- **Duty of care** demonstrated by employer.

7.2 Business Sustainability

- **Operational efficiency** through proper office facilities.
- **Professional image** enhanced by quality premises.
- **Regulatory compliance** with workplace legislation.
- **Long-term viability** of local employment.
- **Planned development approach** - by providing essential facilities now, the site can develop sustainably without over-development or piecemeal additions in the future.
- **Infrastructure foundation** - proper staff facilities enable the business to grow organically within its existing footprint.

7.3 Economic Benefits

- Retention of existing employment on site.
- Support for local commercial enterprise.
- Contribution to local economy through construction phase.

- Enhanced business capability supporting potential growth.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Visual Impact

The proposed building is identical in design to the previously approved application DC/24/1448, which has already been assessed by the Local Planning Authority and found to be acceptable in terms of visual impact and design quality. **The building will replace an existing polytunnel on the same location**, thereby replacing a temporary structure with a permanent, purpose-built facility. This represents a visual improvement, as the new building will be:

- More architecturally considered than the existing polytunnel
- Constructed with high-quality materials (vertical timber cladding and aluminium roofing)
- Better integrated with the overall site aesthetic.

The proposed building has been designed to integrate sensitively with the existing site and surrounding area:

- Appropriate scale and massing (as approved under DC/24/1448)
- Complementary materials and architectural language.
- Respect for neighbouring properties.
- Enhancement of overall site appearance.
- Design consistency with approved scheme.
- Replacement of temporary structure with permanent building.

8.2 Residential Amenity

The development will not adversely impact neighbouring residential amenity:

- Appropriate separation distances maintained.
- No overlooking or loss of privacy.
- Quiet ancillary use (offices and welfare facilities)
- No noise, odour, or disturbance beyond existing commercial operations.

8.3 Traffic and Transportation

The proposal will not generate additional traffic movements as it serves existing staff already working on site. No material change to the current traffic situation is anticipated.

8.4 Ecology and Biodiversity

The development occupies a modest footprint within an existing commercial site.

Where possible:

- Native planting will be incorporated in landscaping.
- Bird boxes or wildlife features may be integrated.
- Existing vegetation will be retained where practical.

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 Pre-Application Engagement

The applicant has carefully considered the requirements for staff facilities and the appropriate design response for the site context.

9.2 Stakeholder Input

The proposal responds to the needs of:

- Staff requiring adequate workplace facilities.
- Management requiring office space for business administration.
- Regulatory requirements for workplace standards

10. CONCLUSION

This application proposes a well-designed commercial building to provide essential office and staff welfare facilities at Birchfield Nursery, London Road, Henfield.

Compliance with Planning Policy: The proposal accords with the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), particularly:

- **Policy 1 (Sustainable Development)** - by improving economic conditions at an existing site
- **Economic Development Priority** - supporting a successful local economy with high levels of employment
- **Policy 10 (Rural Economic Development)** - enhancing the economic vitality of the rural area
- **Policy 33 (Development Principles)** - efficient use of land and high-quality design

The design is identical to the previously approved application DC/24/1448, providing consistency and certainty that the design has already been assessed and deemed acceptable by the Local Planning Authority.

The proposal is justified by clear operational need: The existing site currently lacks proper staff facilities, including adequate toilets, office space, and welfare areas. This deficiency is unsustainable for a modern commercial operation and impacts staff wellbeing and business efficiency.

The proposed development will provide:

- Purpose-built toilet facilities including accessible WC
- Office accommodation for business administration
- Staff welfare facilities for breaks and rest periods
- Compliance with workplace health and safety requirements

The design is contextually appropriate, sustainably conceived, and fully accessible. The building design has been previously approved under DC/24/1448, demonstrating that the visual impact, scale, and architectural treatment are acceptable in this location.

By providing these essential facilities now, the site can move forward and develop sustainably without over-development. Rather than requiring multiple future applications or incremental additions, this single, well-planned building provides the necessary infrastructure foundation for the business to operate efficiently and grow organically within its existing footprint.

The proposal will deliver significant benefits for staff welfare, business operations, and regulatory compliance without adverse impacts on neighbours or the wider area. The development represents a modest but essential enhancement to an existing commercial site, supporting local employment and demonstrating responsible business practice through provision of proper workplace facilities. It directly supports the Council's priority theme of "Economic Development: Plan for a successful local economy with high levels of employment."

Planning permission is respectfully requested.

Document prepared for planning application purposes

Site: Birchfield Nursery, London Road, Henfield

Date: October 2025