

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Two Additional Commercial Buildings for Storage and Distribution

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 erection of two additional commercial buildings, to be used for storage and distribution, at Garden Sage, London Road, Henfield.

1.2 Site Location

The site is located on London Road, Henfield, within an existing commercial premises operating as Garden Sage. The two proposed buildings will be sited on areas of existing hardstanding land within the existing commercial curtilage, supporting the ongoing storage and distribution needs of the business.

1.3 Applicant

The applicant operates the commercial business at Birchfield Nursery and requires additional storage and distribution space to support the efficient day-to-day operation of the site, including the handling, storage and onward distribution of goods and materials.

1.4 Relationship to Approved Scheme DC/24/1448

This application follows the recently approved commercial building at the site under application DC/24/1448 (office and staff welfare facilities). The two buildings proposed under this application replicate the external design, scale, materials and architectural treatment approved under DC/24/1448, providing a consistent architectural approach across the site while extending the site's storage and distribution capability.

2. Site Context and Assessment

2.1 Existing Site Conditions

The site currently operates as a commercial garden centre business, serving the local community. The business currently has limited dedicated storage and distribution space, which constrains the efficient handling of stock, deliveries and outgoing orders.

The two proposed buildings are to be positioned on areas of existing hardstanding within the existing commercial site. The land to be developed is not currently occupied by any building or temporary structure (such as a polytunnel); it is already laid to hard surfacing and is used informally for yard, parking and outdoor storage purposes in connection with the existing business. As such, no existing structure will be removed or replaced as part of this proposal, and no undeveloped, greenfield, or growing land is affected. This land is already within the operational curtilage of the business and is not used for growing or public-facing retail purposes.

2.2 Site Constraints and Opportunities

- Constraint: Limited existing storage and distribution capacity
- Constraint: Reliance on ad-hoc or temporary storage arrangements for stock and materials
- Opportunity: Provision of purpose-built storage and distribution buildings within the existing commercial operation
- Opportunity: Consistent architectural treatment with the recently approved DC/24/1448 building
- Opportunity: Improved operational efficiency for goods handling, storage and distribution

- Opportunity: Efficient use of existing hardstanding land without encroaching on growing or retail areas

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 sustainable rural economic development:

Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development: The proposal represents sustainable development by improving the operational and economic capacity of an existing commercial site through the provision of essential storage and distribution 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 the facilities required to operate efficiently
- Supporting the retention and growth of existing staff and operations
- Enabling the business to store and distribute goods efficiently and sustainably
- Demonstrating continued investment in the site's commercial infrastructure

Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development: The proposal supports the economic vitality of the rural area by improving the operational capability of an existing commercial business, 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 existing hardstanding land within the site
- Providing appropriate facilities for the established commercial use
- Respecting the character and amenity of the surrounding area
- Demonstrating a high-quality, consistent design approach (as approved under DC/24/1448)

The proposal also supports enhancement of an existing employment site, provision of appropriate operational facilities, sustainable economic development, and improvements to the existing commercial premises without expanding the retail footprint.

3. The Proposal

3.1 Development Description

The application seeks permission for two commercial buildings, each comprising:

- Storage accommodation for stock, materials and products
- Distribution and loading space to support the receipt and despatch of goods
- Ancillary circulation space to support safe vehicle and pedestrian movement around the buildings

3.2 Justification for Development

The proposed development is justified for the following reasons:

Current Deficiency: The existing site has limited dedicated storage and distribution space, which is unsustainable for a growing modern commercial operation. Stock and materials are currently managed without purpose-built facilities, constraining efficient day-to-day operations.

Operational Need: The business requires additional storage and distribution space for:

- Secure, weatherproof storage of stock and materials
- Efficient receipt, handling and despatch of deliveries
- Organised distribution of goods to customers and other business locations

- Reduction of reliance on temporary or ad-hoc storage solutions

Business Efficiency: Purpose-built storage and distribution buildings will:

- Improve operational and logistical management on site
- Support business growth and sustainability
- Enable more efficient service delivery to customers
- Allow the site to develop in a planned, sustainable manner without the need for further piecemeal additions
- Provide essential infrastructure that reduces the need for multiple future applications or ad-hoc structures

Local Need: There is a clear and demonstrable need for storage and distribution buildings of this type in the local area. Rural and semi-rural commercial businesses of this nature, including garden centres and similar horticultural or retail operations, routinely require dedicated storage and distribution space to manage stock, seasonal deliveries, and outgoing orders efficiently. The lack of appropriately located, purpose-built storage and distribution facilities in the immediate area increases reliance on off-site storage, third-party logistics, or ad-hoc on-site solutions, none of which represent a sustainable long-term approach. Providing this capacity on-site, in a form and scale consistent with an already-approved design, meets a genuine local business need while minimising additional travel and transport movements associated with off-site storage.

3.3 Scale and Massing

The design of both buildings replicates the recently approved application DC/24/1448. This application benefits from an established design precedent that has already been assessed and deemed acceptable by the Local Planning Authority.

The overall height of the two proposed buildings is, in fact, lower than that of the approved DC/24/1448 building, to take account of changes in ground level across the site. The ridge height of each building will nonetheless be exactly the same as that of the existing approved building, ensuring a consistent roofline and architectural datum across the site. The reduction in overall height reflects the specific ground conditions at each building's location rather than any change to the approved design, and represents a sensitive response to the site's topography.

The two buildings will be sited on existing hardstanding land within the site. This approach ensures that:

- The built footprint is proportionate to the operational needs of the business
- The buildings sit within the established commercial curtilage rather than extending into open land
- A consistent architectural approach is maintained across the site

The proposed buildings have been designed to be proportionate to the existing commercial premises and appropriate to their context. The scale reflects:

- The functional requirements for storage and distribution operations
- Sympathetic integration with existing built form, including the DC/24/1448 building
- 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 two buildings will each provide:

- Storage floor area: Racking and floor storage for stock and materials
- Distribution/loading area: Space for the receipt, sorting and despatch of goods, including vehicle loading and unloading

- Circulation: Efficient layout maximising usable floor area and safe movement for staff and vehicles

4.2 Amount

The quantum of development has been carefully calculated to provide:

- Sufficient storage capacity for anticipated stock and material volumes
- Adequate distribution and loading space for efficient goods handling
- No excessive or speculative floorspace

4.3 Layout

The layout of each building prioritises:

- Functionality: Logical arrangement of storage and distribution/loading areas
- Accessibility: Clear circulation routes for staff and delivery vehicles
- Safety: Segregation of vehicle movement and pedestrian routes where practicable
- Efficiency: Minimal circulation space, maximum usable floor area

4.4 Appearance and Materials

The design of both buildings 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, and its repetition across the two new buildings ensures a coherent and consistent appearance across the wider site.

The architectural treatment will:

- Complement the existing commercial buildings on site, including the DC/24/1448 building
- Use materials appropriate to the local context and commercial character
- Provide a well-designed, professional appearance
- Incorporate durable, low-maintenance materials suitable for commercial and distribution 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 - providing natural warmth and a contemporary, consistent appearance across the site
- Aluminium sheet roofing - durable, low-maintenance roofing material suitable for commercial and storage buildings
- Appropriate fenestration providing natural light where required
- Durable loading doors and entrance doors suitable for distribution use

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, long-term durability, and consistency with the approved scheme.

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 two buildings have been positioned to allow safe and efficient vehicle movement for deliveries and distribution, including:

- Adequate manoeuvring space for delivery and distribution vehicles

- Clear sightlines around loading areas
- Retention of existing site circulation patterns

5.2 Pedestrian Access

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

- Level or gently graded
- Well-lit for safety
- Clear of obstacles, including segregation from vehicle loading areas where practicable
- Appropriately surfaced for all-weather use

5.3 Inclusive Access

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

- Level Access: Entrances will be at ground level or provided with a suitable ramp to ensure ease of access
- Circulation: Internal routes will provide adequate width for staff carrying out storage and distribution duties, including where mobility equipment is used
- Signage: Clear, accessible signage will be provided throughout

5.4 Parking and Servicing

Parking and servicing provision will be considered as part of the wider site layout. The proposal serves the existing operational needs of the business and is not anticipated to generate parking or servicing demand materially beyond current levels, given that deliveries and distribution already occur at the site.

6. Environmental Sustainability

6.1 Energy Efficiency

- High levels of insulation exceeding Building Regulations
- Energy-efficient lighting throughout (LED)
- Maximum use of natural daylight to reduce artificial lighting where compatible with storage use

6.2 Sustainable Construction

- Locally sourced materials where practical
- Durable materials reducing maintenance and replacement
- Consideration of embodied carbon in material selection
- Consistent material specification with the approved DC/24/1448 building, reducing the need for bespoke design and material sourcing

7. Community and Business Benefits

7.1 Business Sustainability

- Operational efficiency through purpose-built storage and distribution facilities
- Professional image enhanced by quality, consistent premises
- Long-term viability of local employment
- Planned development approach - by providing essential storage and distribution facilities now, the site can develop sustainably without piecemeal additions in the future

- Infrastructure foundation enabling the business to grow organically within its existing footprint

7.2 Economic Benefits

- Retention and support of existing employment on site
- Support for local commercial enterprise and its supply chain
- Contribution to the local economy through the construction phase
- Enhanced business capability supporting potential future growth

8. Impact Assessment

8.1 Visual Impact

The proposed buildings are identical in design to the recently 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 overall height of the two buildings is in fact lower than the approved scheme, reflecting changes in ground level across the site, while the ridge height of each building matches the existing approved building exactly. This ensures the proposal remains, if anything, more modest in visual terms than the design already found acceptable, while maintaining a consistent roofline across the site.

The buildings will be sited on existing hardstanding land within the established commercial curtilage. The proposed buildings have 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, consistent with the rest of the site
- Respect for neighbouring properties
- Enhancement of overall site appearance through a coherent architectural approach

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 (storage, with distribution activity consistent with existing site operations)
- No material increase in noise, odour, or disturbance beyond existing commercial operations

8.3 Traffic and Transportation

Deliveries and distribution activity already occur at the site as part of its existing commercial operation. The proposal consolidates and improves the facilities available for this activity rather than introducing a new use, and is not anticipated to generate a material increase in traffic movements beyond current levels.

8.4 Ecology and Biodiversity

The development occupies existing hardstanding land within an established commercial site. Where possible:

- Native planting will be incorporated in any remaining landscaped areas
- Existing vegetation will be retained where practical
- Any biodiversity enhancements will be considered in line with site-wide planting

9. Consultation

9.1 Pre-Application Engagement

The applicant has carefully considered the requirements for additional storage and distribution space and the appropriate design response for the site context, drawing on the recently approved DC/24/1448 scheme.

9.2 Stakeholder Input

The proposal responds to the needs of:

- Staff requiring adequate storage and distribution facilities to carry out their roles
- Management requiring efficient logistics and stock-handling infrastructure
- Regulatory requirements for workplace and operational standards

10. Conclusion

This application proposes two well-designed commercial buildings to provide essential storage and distribution 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 the operational and economic capacity of 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 existing hardstanding land and consistent, high-quality design

The design of both buildings is identical to the recently 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 has limited dedicated storage and distribution space, which is unsustainable for a growing modern commercial operation and constrains efficient day-to-day handling of stock and deliveries. There is also a wider, demonstrable need for storage and distribution buildings of this type in the local area, given the requirements of comparable rural and semi-rural commercial businesses.

The overall height of the two buildings is lower than the approved DC/24/1448 scheme, reflecting changes in ground level across the site, while the ridge height of each building matches the existing approved building exactly. The proposal therefore represents a sensitive, contextually responsive approach to the site's topography while maintaining the visual and architectural consistency already established and approved on site.

The proposed development will provide:

- Purpose-built storage accommodation for stock and materials
- Dedicated distribution and loading space for the efficient handling of deliveries and despatch
- A consistent architectural approach across the site, in line with the approved DC/24/1448 building

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 storage and distribution facilities now, the site can move forward and develop sustainably without over-development. Rather than requiring multiple future applications or incremental additions, these two well-planned buildings provide the necessary infrastructure foundation for the business to operate efficiently and grow organically within its existing footprint.

The proposal will deliver significant benefits for business operations and logistical efficiency 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

the provision of proper operational 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: July 2026