

SUPPORTING STATEMENT



FORMER MONKTON GARDEN CENTRE, OCLE PYCHARD, HEREFORDSHIRE



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1. Site Location and Description

- 1.1 The site is located south of the A465 on the western fringes of Ocle Pychard Parish, which includes the settlements of Ocle Pychard and part of Burley Gate, 1.7 KM north east of the site.
- 1.2 This brownfield site extends to 0.69 hectares and was operated as a farm shop, garden centre and pick your own fruit and vegetable farm until approximately four years ago. The site is broadly rectangular in shape and is served by a wide double gated access on to the A465. The roadside (north), east and west boundaries are enclosed with a mixture of mature native hedge and trees whilst the southern boundary is currently defined with a mixture of post and wire and timber close boarded fence. Levels fall within the site from east to west and away from the road to the south. The site is largely surrounded by agricultural land, the nearest residential properties being 150 metres to the north east.
- 1.3 The aerial image below illustrates the site in 2009 when the garden centre was in full operation. Extensive polytunnels can also be seen in the field to the rear.



- 1.4 A number of buildings and other structures associated with the former garden centre use currently exist on site. These include a single storey

building near the site entrance used as a café, alongside which are several lorry containers and a water storage tank.



Former café



Storage building

- 1.5 To the rear of this is a steel frame brick and block storage building with planning for it to be used as a café. Alongside here is a large polytunnel, plant display and sales area and children's play area.



Polytunnel



Parking area

- 1.6 The north east quarter of the site is tarmacked and was used for customer parking and further polytunnels existed on land to the east and south of the site. Along the rear boundary are five mobile homes that were used by workers at the garden centre and fruit farm.



- 1.7 The buildings have now fallen into disrepair and the site now appears rather unsightly and in need of re-development.

2 The Proposal

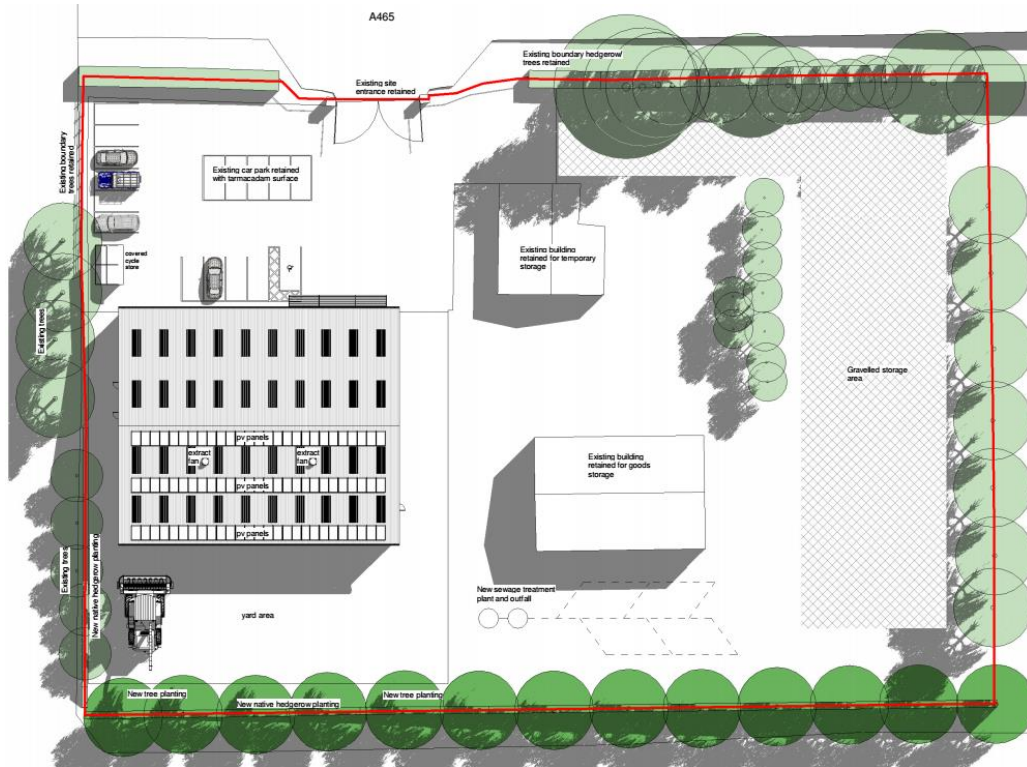
- 2.1 Planning permission is sought for the following:
‘Change of use of the site and buildings from retail garden centre to agricultural machinery dealership to include the construction of a new workshop, parts store and office building’.
- 2.2 The site has a lawful retail use being operated originally as a farm shop in the late 1990’s. The business then progressively grew to a full retail garden centre also encompassing a café. The proposal is a sui generis use i.e. a use that does not fall within an identifiable use class bracket and therefore even though both the existing and proposed uses are predominantly retail, a change of use is required.
- 2.3 The applicants, Morris Corfield is a thriving family owned business, established in 1956 selling, servicing and repairing agricultural machinery. Operating for over 50 years they are the main dealer in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Cheshire for the agricultural machinery manufacturer, CLAAS, who manufacture various agricultural vehicles, machinery and implements ranging from tractors and combine harvesters to bailers and telehandlers.



- 2.4 The applicants also hold franchises for several other manufacturers of cultivation machinery, trailers, feed and yard implements, vegetation control machinery and smaller agricultural equipment supplies such as fencing products and grain augers.



- 2.5 The proposed building will be a standard steel frame construction clad with a mixture of horizontal and vertical insulated composite panel. It is predominantly to be used as a workshop but will also include a parts store, staff offices, kitchen and toilets and a reception/display area. This is to be positioned on the site of the existing polytunnel in the south west corner of the site.



- 2.6 A new package treatment plant foul drainage system will be installed to serve the new building. The existing building is to be used for the storage of new machinery whilst the former café will be temporarily used for further storage. The eastern half of the site will be surfaced with gravel and used for further storage of machinery and implements.
- 2.7 New hedge and tree planting is proposed along the southern boundary to minimise the visual impact of the new development.

3. Planning Policy and Technical Considerations

Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy

- 3.1 The Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy (hereafter referred to as CS) was adopted on 16th October 2015 and this document now replaces the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan and constitutes the Development Plan for decision making purposes. The Core Strategy runs from the period 2011 to 2031.
- 3.2 The principal CS policies against which the principle of the development will be judged are:
- Policy E1 – Employment Provision; and
 - Policy E6 – Rural Economy.
- 3.3 Policy E1 states that development proposals which enhance employment provision will be encouraged where:
- the proposal is appropriate in terms of its connectivity, scale, design and size;
 - the proposal makes better use of previously developed land or buildings;
 - the proposal is an appropriate extension to strengthen or diversify an existing business operation;
- 3.4 Being an agricultural based business serving Herefordshire's farming community, it is logical for the business to be located in a more rural location. The site is also previously developed and therefore capable of accommodating the scale and impact of the development. Initially, eleven people will be employed on site but this new site will enable the expansion of the business creating two additional full time jobs in the first two years with the potential for further job creation in the medium term. Thus, the proposal meets the objectives of Policy E1.
- 3.5 Paragraph 5.2.13 of the Core Strategy is also particularly relevant and states that:

'The areas outside of market towns are also supported for continuing economic growth, particularly in areas which allow for the diversification of uses either through strengthening food and drink production,....'

RA6 - Rural Economy

3.6 This supports economic activities in rural areas including proposals which:

- support and strengthen local food and drink production, and;
- support the retention and/ or diversification of existing agricultural businesses;

3.7 The proposal is directly associated with agriculture and the production of food in the county and will help support the retention and expansion of this agricultural business. In other words, the proposal also satisfies the principles of CS policy RA6.

3.8 With regards to the criteria contained within this policy, the development is considered compliant for the following reasons:

- *To ensure that the development is of a scale which would be commensurate with its location and setting*

3.9 Being a brownfield site, it is appropriate to judge the scale of the proposal against the previous and lawful use of the site. In this regard, the site operated as modern day garden centre for several years encompassing significant retail sales of plants and ancillary items, a shop, coffee shop and café and pick your own fruit and vegetable farm.

3.10 The scale and intensity of the previous business was significant and during weekends, the car park did not have sufficient capacity to accommodate the number of customers. The site also contained several polytunnels and other structures and further extensive polytunnels were located in the field to the rear.

3.11 The intensity of operations associated with the proposed use will be significantly less than the lawful use in terms of activity within the site, vehicle movements and footprint of structures.

3.12 The scale of the new building is larger than other buildings presently on site but it is not inconsistent with the general scale of a modern

agricultural building. The site has capacity to absorb the scale and impact of the development.

- *Does not cause unacceptable adverse impacts to the amenity of nearby residents by virtue of design and mass, noise and dust, lighting and smell;*

- 3.13 The nearest residential properties are 150 metres away adjacent the main road north east of the site. This distance is sufficient to ensure there is no adverse impact on the amenity of nearby properties. Additionally, all noisy activities will be contained within the new workshop building and the business will generally operate normal daytime working hours.

- *Does not generate traffic movements that cannot safely be accommodated within the local road network,*

- 3.14 The existing access is wide allowing a vehicle to enter and leave the site simultaneously and has good visibility in both directions. The site is also served off an 'A' classification highway with capacity to accommodate the development traffic.
- 3.15 Furthermore, the trip generation associated with the proposed use will be considerably less than with the lawful use of the site. During the peak season between May and October, each of the different uses within the site attracted its own customers and delivery/collection traffic. For example, the shop and café attracted daily deliveries of bread, milk, eggs, meats and cakes from local suppliers whilst the pick your own attracted significant customers on weekends.
- 3.16 To further illustrate this, a comparative breakdown of the average daily vehicle movements between the lawful use (when it was fully operational during the growing season) and the proposed use (during the busiest period through the summer harvest) is set out in the table on page 11.

	Lawful garden centre use	Proposed Development	Difference
Staff	15	11	-4
Customers	125	30	-95
Van and HGV Deliveries / collections	11	9	-2
Total	151	50	-101

Note - The existing use also operated 7 days a week during the growing season

- *Does not undermine the achievement of water quality targets in accordance with Policies SD3 and SD4.*

3.17 There are no watercourses within close proximity to the development site. A new package treatment plant is to be installed to manage foul drainage from the building to replace the existing septic tank. Modern such systems are now both odorless and also have sustainable drainage discharges with a cleaning efficiency factor of up to 99%. The discharges from this along with surface water will be managed sustainably through soakaways.

3.18 The development is therefore compliant with both the more general objectives set out in employment policy E1 and the more specific criteria relating to employment proposals in rural areas set out in policy E6

Ocle Pychard Neighbourhood Development Plan

3.19 The Parish Council are in the early stages of pursuing a Neighbourhood Development Plan and are currently in the process of designating a Neighbourhood Development Plan area. As such, no draft plan has yet been produced.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 3.20 This introduced a national policy framework centered on achieving a presumption in favour of sustainable development and a requirement that the planning system is geared towards 'making this happen'. The relevant sections and paragraphs are as follows:

Section 2 - Building a strong economy

- Paragraph 19- *'The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic development. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth.'*
- **Paragraph 28** specifically concerns supporting a prosperous rural economy. Criteria 1 and 2 are particularly applicable:

To promote a strong rural economy, local plans should:-

1. Support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
2. Promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses

- 3.21 The NPPF therefore support the principle of new employment buildings in rural areas that support and promote agricultural and other land based rural business, as is the case with this proposal.

Policy SD1 - Design, Energy and Water Efficiency

- 3.22 This is a brownfield site where the buildings and site have now become unsightly and in a dilapidated state. Simply re-developing the site will therefore achieve a design and environmental enhancement.
- 3.23 The scale of the new building is somewhat dictated by the need to accommodate the largest machinery such as combine harvesters for servicing and repair but is still comparable to a modern agricultural building and therefore will not appear uncharacteristic. The new building is also sited to the rear of the site alongside the existing building and therefore will not appear prominent from the roadside.

- 3.24 The roof is to be clad with dark grey composite panel sheets. To break up the elevations and enhance the design by emphasising the reception and pedestrian entrance area, two different shades of grey vertical and horizontal cladding is proposed with larger areas of glazing around the pedestrian entrance.
- 3.25 Internally, the majority of the floorspace is devoted to the workshop area but front (norther third) is split between a parts store, offices, reception area and staff facilities. The larger existing building on site will be used for general storage of machinery and equipment such as fencing products.
- 3.26 The construction sustainability of development is also key to making buildings more energy efficient thus reducing running costs and CO2 emissions. The government has concluded that the most appropriate way to address this issue is to progressively increase the requirements of Building Regulations. This is being achieved with greater floor, wall and roof insulation and reduced heat loss through thermal bridging.
- 3.27 Materials will be sourced that are 'A' rated in the BRE green materials whilst PV panels are proposed on the south (rear) roof to supplement the power supply to the site. A low energy lighting system will also be installed.
- 3.28 Water efficiency measures will also be employed including the use of dual flush toilets, sensor taps and installation of a rainwater harvesting tank to the rear. Although not a policy requirement with this development, this will enable a water efficiency objectives set out in policy SD3 to be achieved.
- 3.29 Ample parking is available within the site frontage for staff and customers along with appropriate storage for refuse and recycling to the rear.
- 3.30 For these reasons, the development accords with the sustainable design requirements of CS polices SD1.

Other Matters

- 3.31 The site does not fall within a protected landscape and is well screened by existing mature hedge and trees to the north, east and west. New

planting in the form of a native hedge and occasional hedgerow trees (oak and field maple) is proposed to the rear (south) boundary, which will then create a continuous landscape buffer around the site. This will also assist in enhancing the biodiversity value of the site. The proposed landscaping is fully compliant with the requirements of CS policy LD1.

- 3.32 A review of the Environment Agency records indicate that the development site is not at risk of flooding and there is no evidence of any localised surface water flooding issues on the site or locality.
- 3.33 A sustainable drainage solution is proposed in line with the requirement of CS policies SD3 and SD4.

4. Summary

- 4.1 Morris Corefield are an established regional business that have been serving Herefordshire's farming community for over 50 years. This new site and building will allow the business to maintain and grow their position in the market with consequential local economic benefits that will arise including the creation of additional jobs in the short term. There is also potential for more jobs to be created in future years as the applicants are able to realise their growth plans in order to keep pace with customer demands and expectations.
- 4.2 The development is supported by one of the Core Principles of the NPPF (para 17) which is that the planning system should support economic development whilst Chapter 3 of the NPPF (paragraph 28) encourages the planning system to support a strong rural economy which, in Herefordshire is primarily the agricultural sector.
- 4.3 The relevant Core Strategy policies chime with the NPPF and are geared towards supporting economic development across Herefordshire, subject to specific criteria being satisfied. This report demonstrates that the relevant policy criteria are met.
- 4.4 The proposal will result in the sustainable re-use of this brownfield site for an appropriate rural business and is entirely consistent with the development plan and national policy and there are no technical reasons why permission should be withheld.