

**Proposed Development at
Highdown Garden Centre
Littlehampton Road
Ferring
Worthing
West Sussex
BN12 6PW**

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Prepared on behalf of

Mr George Lisher

by

Malcolm Scott Consultants Limited

February 2026

Number 4
The Triangle Business Park
Wildwood Drive
Worcester, WR5 2QX

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Introduction

Malcolm Scott Consultants Limited were instructed by Mr George Lisher, owner of Highdown Garden Centre, to submit a Detailed Planning application for the replacement, and extension of, the existing retail canopies at the garden centre.

The following Supporting Statement briefly explains the background to the proposed development, an assessment of the relevant planning policies contained in the Local Plan, an assessment of the retail and transport impacts of the development and any other considerations.

1. The Existing Site

Highdown Garden Centre
Littlehampton Road
Ferring, Worthing
West Sussex BN12 6PW

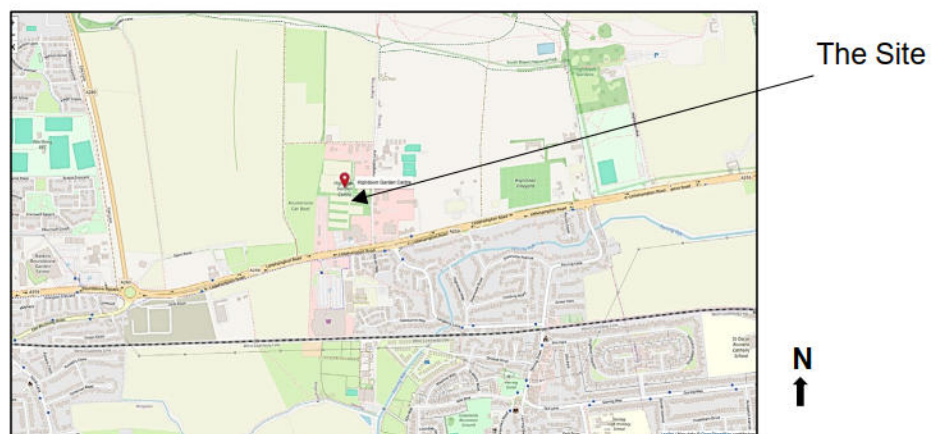
Highdown Garden centre extends to approximately 1.6ha's and is located on the north side of the A259. Immediately to the south is the settlement of Ferring, with a self-storage business to the west, the applicant's production nursery to the north and light industrial development to the east. Please refer to drawing MSC2116-40A: Location Plan.

The garden centre was established over 25 years ago and since Mr Lisher bought the business in 2019 it has, with the injection of over £2 million of capital expenditure, now become one of Arun District Council's leading garden centres supporting 71 full and part-time staff.

Mr Lisher also owns the adjacent nursery (Cobbins Nursery) which produces over 1.5 million plants a year and which also supplies his garden centre.



Aerial Photograph



Map

2. Background to the Proposed Development

The existing retail canopies are 25 years old and both the roof material and structure have deteriorated and are in need of replacement. In addition, with the increased range of plants and outdoor garden ornaments over the past 10 years the existing 628m² of retail canopy is now insufficient and an additional 500m² are required. The proposed development is to remove the existing canopies and erect 1,127m² area of new canopies. The structures are open-sided except where it abuts the existing shop.

The range of goods to be sold from underneath the canopy is the same as the current range and includes plants, garden sundries, garden features, trellis, fencing, compost, soil conditioners, garden leisure products, plant pots etc.

In addition to the proposed retail canopies a small (30m²) lobby building is proposed at the entrance to the coffee shop to provide an improved customer access because the existing entrance/exit door has become congested at peak times.

3. The Design and Access Statement

3.1 The Design Statement

The planning application is for 2 proposed developments:

- the erection of 1,127m² of open-sided retail canopies (and demolition of 628m² of existing open-sided structures.
- the erection of 30m² for an entrance lobby to the coffee shop

a) The Open-Sided Retail Canopies

These structures are designed to provide a roof over the plant benches to protect tender plants from frost, hail and cold winds together with garden sundries such as bags of compost, soil conditioner, plant pots and containers, fencing, statuary and so on.

The structure comprises a galvanised steel frame over sheeted with polycarbonate roof. The frame is approximately 3.79 metres to gutter to enable access by a forklift truck and at its highest point the roof apex is 5.98 metres above ground level. The polycarbonate has sufficient opacity to allow the transmission of light for the plants displayed beneath.

b) The Coffee Shop Lobby

The building is tucked between the existing coffee shop, the main shop building and the existing (and to be replaced) canopy. The walls are glazed above low brick plinths to match the existing coffee shop.

The roof is clad with composite metal panels to match the roof of the coffee shop.

3.2 Accessibility

Both the proposed structures are accessible to customer and staff with restricted mobility with no ramps or steps required.

In the wider context the garden centre is accessible by bus with the nearest bus stop being on the south side of the A259 approximately 82 metres from the site entrance with a regular bus service.

The garden centre has a cycle rack for customers and staff located at the entrance to the shop.

There are 10 accessible parking spaces available.

3.3 Sustainable Development

Roof water will be collected in tanks and recycled for plant irrigation.

Due to the requirement for light transmission for the plants displayed beneath the canopy PV cells cannot, at present, be fixed to the roof of the structures.

4. The Town Planning Statement

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that applications for planning permission are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan is the Adopted Arun Local Plan 2011-2031 (July 2018).

Material considerations include the NPPF, NPPG and relevant Arun Council's supplementary planning guidance.

4.2 The Proposed Development

The erection of 1,127m² of open-sided retail canopies to replace 628m² of existing canopies and the erection of a 30m² lobby for the existing coffee shop.

4.3 The Arun District Local Plan

The garden centre lies in an area designated in the Local Plan as a "Gap Between Settlements".

The following policies are considered relevant to the determination of the planning application.

i) Policy SD SP3 Gaps between Settlements

The proposed development will not reduce the gap between Angmering and Durrington. The replacement canopy height has been kept to the same height as the coffee shop and is lower than the main shop facing the A259. The canopies are set back into the site by some 68 metres located behind the existing glasshouse shop. As noted in paragraph 7.4.5 of the Local Plan the designation of gaps is not intended to rule out all development but to allow for "appropriate, small scale development which is in keeping with the rural nature of the gaps".

Comment

The proposed development is to replace the existing canopies which are in keeping with the location. The canopies will not have an adverse impact on the settlement gap.

ii) Policy RET DM2: Garden Centres

This policy states that extension to existing garden centres will be permitted subject to several provisos. The proposed replacement canopies do not conflict with the 8 provisos set down. The garden centre is related to an existing nursery; the canopies replace existing structures; the same range of existing goods will be sold from the replacement canopies and given the nature of goods sold these cannot be retailed from town centre premises; there will be no adverse impact on the character, appearance and amenities of the area; there are adequate vehicular access arrangements; there will be no material increase in visitor numbers to the garden centre; there is an adequate water supply to the garden centre; and as a replacement structure there are no other options to be considered.

iii) Policy EMP SP1: Strategic Economic Growth

The Council's aim is to promote sustainable growth in the District and to "provide for the needs of modern business".

Comment

The proposed development will assist in meeting the needs of the business. There are currently 71 people employed on the site and with the proposed development a further 2 full time staff will be required.

iv) Policies D DM1 and DM4: Extensions and alterations to existing buildings

The proposed replacement canopies and coffee shop lobby have taken into consideration the criteria set down in these policies.

The canopies make the best possible use of the available land. Their design reflects their purpose namely to protect plants from adverse weather conditions. The scale is dictated by their function and is in keeping with the surrounding development in terms of visual interpretation.

v) Policy T SP1: Transport and Development

The proposed development will not increase traffic to the garden centre. The garden centre is accessible by bus but due to the nature of the goods sold such as garden furniture, bags of compost, shrubs etc it is not practicable for customers to travel by bus.

4.4 Material Considerations

The following are considered to be material considerations in the determination of the planning application.

i) The NPPF (2024)

The proposed development takes into consideration the relevant policies contained in the NPPF. Paragraph 87 notes that planning decisions should recognise and address the specific requirements of businesses when building a "strong, competitive economy" and that such decisions should enable "the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural area...."

ii) Arun Design Guide

Consideration has been given to the advice contained in the Design Guide. Given that specific requirements of the replacement canopies their design reflects their function.

4.5 Summary

The proposed development complies with the relevant policies set down in the development plan and in the NPPF.

5. The Retail Statement

5.1 The Replacement Retail Canopies

The proposed replacement retail canopies will have no impact upon high street vitality and viability within the garden centre's catchment area. The products sold beneath the canopy are rarely sold in the high street (shrubs, trees, statues, pots etc). Not only would it be economically unviable to rent shop space given the low profit generated per m² by selling these products (typically around £35/m²) compared with the rent of around £230/m² for a high street shop in Littlehampton but it would not be practical (deliveries of plants, compost etc typically coming in an articulated lorry, the need for plenty of watering for the plants, the need for plenty of natural light). The extension to the existing canopies covers over an existing outside retail area and therefore there would only be a small increase in sales.

A sequential site assessment and retail impact assessment is therefore considered not required for this particular development.

5.2 The Proposed Coffee Shop Lobby

This development of 30m² is essentially to provide a more spacious entrance lobby to the coffee shop for greater customer convenience and it will not result in increased retail sales.

6. Transport Statement

6.1 Traffic Generation

The proposed development will not increase traffic generation to the garden centre. Both the proposed developments (the replacement canopies and the coffee shop lobby) cover over existing retail areas and therefore there is no increase in retail floor space.

6.2 Car Parking

The 499m² extension to the canopy and the 30m² lobby might lead customers to stay longer on site. It is difficult to estimate the possible impact on car parking capacity but if one applied the West Sussex County Council's parking standard (non-food, there is not a standard for garden centres) the requirement is 1 space per 20m² of gross floorspace. The gross floorspace is 2,684m² giving, therefore, a requirement for 134 spaces. There are 179 spaces in the car park (with 10 staff parking spaces at the rear of the site). There is, therefore, sufficient car parking capacity.

There are 10 accessible spaces (6% of the total) which is in accordance with the car parking standard for accessible spaces.

6.3 Accessibility

The garden centre is easily accessible by bus with the nearest bus stop being approximately 82 metres from the garden centre. There is a regular bus service every 30 minutes between Worthing and Littlehampton.

There are 6 cycle racks provided for staff and customers.

7. Other Considerations

7.1 Flood Risk

The site lies in Flood Risk Zone 1.

The proposed development does not increase the level of surface water run-off because the application site is already hard surfaced. A surface water scheme has been designed and is included with the planning application (please refer to drawing A9803-140 (date Jan 2026) by AJS Structural design).

7.2 Biodiversity

As the proposed development utilises already developed land there is no impact upon biodiversity.



The existing canopy to be replaced.

7.3 Amenity of Adjoining Properties

The proposed development will have no impact upon the amenity of adjoining properties.

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