

Growing Well Egremont Design and Access Statement

Growing Well is thrilled to introduce our unique mental health intervention to the Egremont community. We provide a structured and therapeutic environment that has proven to make a significant, positive impact on the lives of individuals experiencing moderate to severe mental health challenges. Our approach is not only about healing individuals but also about fostering a stronger sense of community and promoting sustainability.

Key features of the proposal

Our planned works in Egremont encompass several key goals of Growing Well:

Site Regeneration: The neglected 1-hectare (2.5-acre) area will be transformed into a vibrant and productive space, including the restoration of six greenhouses, the removal of overgrown vegetation, demolition of a building to remove asbestos risks and the renovation of existing buildings. This regeneration will breathe new life into an area that has been underutilized for the past ten years.

Community Engagement: We believe in the power of community. Through volunteer programs, educational initiatives, and therapeutic activities, we aim to create a space where individuals can connect, support each other, and build lasting relationships. This communal approach strengthens bonds and empowers marginalized groups, providing them with a voice and a sense of belonging.

Sustainable Agriculture: Our project will serve as a small-scale market garden, producing beautiful, organic produce for the local community. This not only promotes healthier eating but also enhances local food chains and supports sustainability. We are committed to the meaningful, accessible production of 100% homegrown produce. Half of our food boxes will be provided to low-income households free of charge to make sure that everyone has access to meet their basic nutritional needs that are becoming increasingly expensive in the current climate.

Mental Health Support: Growing Well offers free, effective support for individuals facing mental health challenges. We provide a safe and nurturing environment where individuals can set goals for their recovery and work towards them alongside our dedicated staff and fellow volunteers.

Skill Development: Through our programs, individuals can acquire valuable skills in horticulture, agriculture, and sustainable living. This not only enhances employability but also boosts self-reliance.

Therapeutic Environment: Our site is designed to be therapeutic, offering solace, relaxation, and a sense of purpose to those seeking healing in nature. It provides a unique space where individuals can practice what they have learned in a supportive environment.

Community Integration: We facilitate connections with other local organizations that can offer additional support and resources. We have already started engagement with different user groups across the community and actively looking to get people involved.

Amount of development for the proposal:

The planned works for the Growing Well site in Egremont encompass three distinct areas, each designed to enhance the site's functionality and support our mission of fostering well-being within the community.

1. **Modular Classroom Installation:** The first phase of the project involves the installation of a modular classroom unit on the existing hard-standing pad adjacent to the entrance of the site. This unit will serve as the cornerstone of our operations, providing essential welfare facilities, much-needed classroom space, and therapy rooms for one-on-one sessions with our beneficiaries. Additionally, it will house a small office for our dedicated Growing Well staff. This classroom unit will be a central hub for education, support, and community engagement.
2. **Strub Area Regeneration:** The second phase focuses on regenerating the Strub area to the east of the site. This transformation entails clearing the overgrown vegetation, removing discarded materials, and reclaiming the chippings previously used for parking. Once cleared and prepared, this revitalized space will become an outdoor growing area, dedicated to cultivating a variety of fruits and vegetables. The objective is to create a functional green space that not only produces fresh produce but also provides a therapeutic and educational environment for our beneficiaries.
3. **Building Refurbishment and Safety Enhancement:** The third component of the project is dedicated to refurbishing the existing buildings and ensuring the site's safety. This phase encompasses minor repairs to restore the glasshouses and planting building to full working order. Additionally, measures will be taken to address the state of disrepair in the existing office and storage block, which features a white asbestos roof. Considering both long-term safety concerns associated with the roofing and the substantial costs required to reinstate the building to a habitable condition, we are proposing the responsible course of action, which is the demolition of this building. This decision aligns with our commitment to creating a safe and functional environment for all.

Layout and Scale of the proposal:

Our proposal aims to repurpose this disused site efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the local community. The primary focus of site utilization revolves around the creation of an outdoor growing area, transforming the previously overgrown scrubland into a productive and visually appealing space that provides organic vegetables to the local community.

The outdoor growing area will cover an approximate total size of 300 square meters. Alongside this, a new single-story building will be constructed, boasting a gross area of 230 square meters. This building will replace the current derelict structure, which spans 170 square meters. Consequently, the net increase in the overall development footprint amounts to 60 square meters.

For a detailed understanding of the proposal's layout and scale, please refer to the provided plan below.

Landscaping and appearance:

Modular Classroom Installation: The modular classroom unit, to be installed on the existing hard-standing pad adjacent to the site's entrance, will be thoughtfully integrated into the site's and local existing landscape. We are in the process of procuring the unit; however, we will follow the below design and obtain final approval from the planning team following the procurement.

Landscaping:

- The landscaping design includes pathways connecting the modular unit to the rest of the site, promoting accessibility and ease of movement.

Exterior Appearance:

- The exterior of the modular classroom will feature a neutral color palette that complements the existing site aesthetics.
- The façade will incorporate windows that face into the site to allow for ample natural light, fostering a welcoming and open atmosphere.
- Signage and wayfinding elements will be integrated to ensure clear navigation for visitors.

2. Strub Area Regeneration: The Strub area regeneration project prioritizes both functionality and aesthetics, transforming an overgrown space into a vibrant outdoor growing area.

Landscaping:

- The area will be cleared of overgrown vegetation, with particular care taken to preserve any significant existing trees.
- A diverse range of vegetable crops will be cultivated, adding color and life to the space.
- Walking paths will be established, creating a network for volunteers to navigate the outdoor growing area.
- Recycled and sustainable materials will be utilized in landscaping features.

Exterior Appearance:

- The appearance of the Strub area will reflect its dual purpose: a productive growing space and a therapeutic environment.
- The use of natural materials, such as timber, will create a rustic and inviting atmosphere.
- Signage will be strategically placed to inform visitors about the crops being grown and the ecological benefits of the space.

3. Building Refurbishment and Safety Enhancement: This phase of the project focuses on the refurbishment of existing buildings and ensuring the overall safety of the site.

Landscaping:

- The area surrounding the refurbished buildings will receive attention to ensure it aligns with the site's renewed appearance and brings the site back to a safe working environment.

Exterior Appearance:

- The exterior of the refurbished buildings will be renovated to maintain a cohesive visual identity with the rest of the site.
- Any necessary repairs or replacements will be made to improve the overall appearance and functionality.
- The removal of the existing office and storage block will be done with care to minimize disruption to the landscape.

In summary, the landscaping and appearance plans for the proposed works on the site emphasize harmony with nature, functionality, and creating an inviting atmosphere for the volunteers gaining mental health support. The goal is to ensure that the site remains aesthetically pleasing while effectively supporting the organization's mission and the well-being of its beneficiaries.

How Access will be addressed:

Approaches to and Around the Site and Entrances:

1. **Unaltered Existing Site Access:** Our proposal respects the existing site access, and no changes will be made to it. This access point is through a lockable double front gate, serving both vehicular and pedestrian traffic from the adjacent cross-side road.
2. **Flat Terrain with Level Entrances:** The site's terrain is predominantly flat, ensuring ease of navigation for all individuals. Additionally, all glasshouses on the site feature level entrances, providing straightforward access.
3. **Proximity to Town Centre and Public Transportation:** The site's strategic location offers convenient access to the centre of Egremont, which is just a 10-minute walk away. This proximity provides Volunteers and staff with access to robust bus links to various local destinations, promoting sustainable and accessible transportation.
4. **Operating Hours:** The site will be open to the public on weekdays, from Monday to Friday, during standard business hours, from 9 am to 5 pm.
5. **Utilization of Existing Hardstanding Paths:** The proposal will optimize the use of existing on-site hardstanding paths to facilitate movement between the glasshouses and buildings. These paths are designed to be accessible and will enhance the overall ease of navigation on the site.

Car Parking:

1. **Limited Number of Vehicles:** On-site parking is anticipated for approximately five cars and one minibus. This allocation will suffice for the operational needs of the site.
2. **Existing Car Parking Area:** The designated parking area for these vehicles will be located near the front gate. This arrangement ensures that vehicles are conveniently accessible while minimizing their impact on the site's operations.
3. **No Vehicular Movement During Operations:** It's important to note that there will be no vehicular movement within the site during its operational hours. This approach prioritizes safety and minimizes disruptions.

New Modular Building:

1. **Ramp Access:** The new modular building, a single-story structure, will feature ramp access. This ensures inclusivity, allowing individuals with mobility challenges to enter the building easily.
2. **Equality Act Compliance:** While the procurement of new modular classroom units is pending, it's essential to highlight that the internal layout of these units will fully comply with the Equality Act of 2010, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all individuals.
3. **Multiple Points of Escape:** The new building will incorporate multiple points of escape, further enhancing safety and accessibility for occupants. These escape routes are strategically designed to meet safety standards and accommodate various scenarios.

Flood risk:

The identified high flood-prone area (1 in 30 year event) within the site boundary due to the adjacent river Ehen. This would affect the proposed outdoor growing area. No new internal spaces in the proposal are affected by a flood risk zone. This outdoor growing area is classed as **less vulnerable** due to it falling under the category of, Land and buildings used for agriculture and forestry. Due to this and the National Planning Policy Framework Annex 3 - Flood risk vulnerability classification the area is deemed to be compatible for development.

The intended demolition will result in a reduction of habitable internal space within the high flood risk zone. To address this, we will replace the lost internal floor space with the modular unit, strategically situated outside this area. It is our commitment to ensure that the finished floor level of the new unit is elevated above ground level. This proactive measure is aimed at mitigating potential future risks associated with the flood zone, especially considering the impact of climate change.

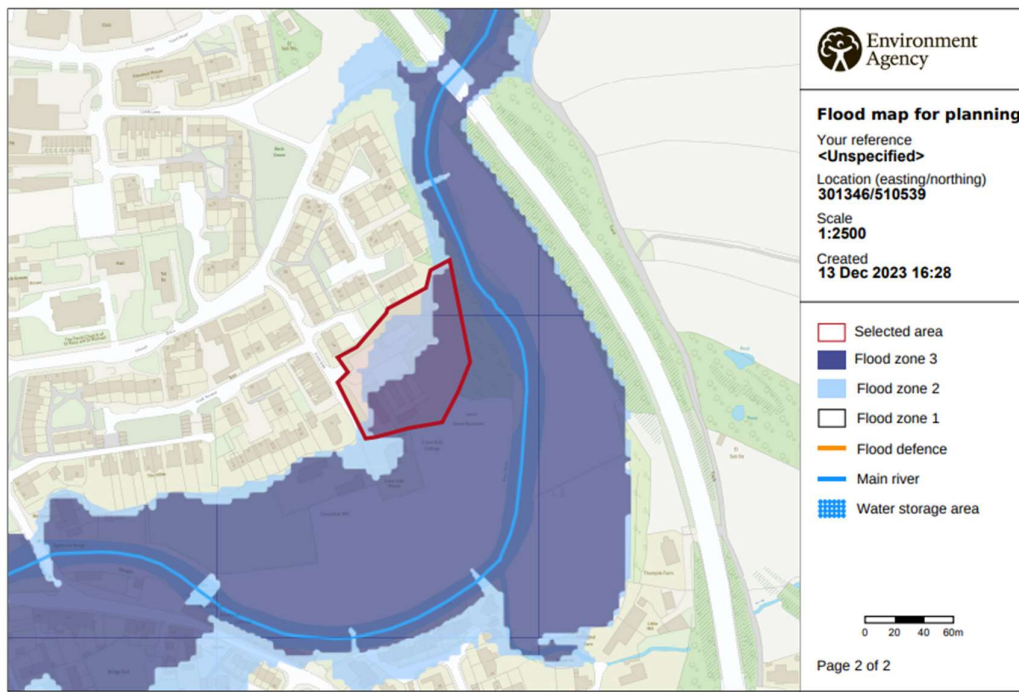
The geographical location of the site plays a crucial role in understanding the flood risk. It is situated alongside the river Ehen, in an area where flooding is more likely to occur during periods of heavy rainfall, which are typically concentrated in the winter months. However, this also coincides with a time when outdoor cultivation activities are naturally scaled back due to seasonal variations in crop growth.

This natural alignment between the flood risk period and the reduced agricultural activity in the outdoor growing area significantly diminishes the potential impact. Essentially, during the times when flooding events are most probable, the outdoor growing area is already out of use. This practical consideration minimizes the risk of damage to crops or any other activity in that area during flood events.

Moreover, our commitment to responsible environmental practices ensures that any potential impact on the watercourse is kept to a minimum. Being a registered organic growing site, Growing Well adheres to strict guidelines that prohibit the use of harmful pollutants, chemicals, or contaminants. Consequently, even in the unlikely event of flooding, there would be no pollutants originating from our site that could enter the watercourse and negatively affect the local ecosystem.

In summary, the flood risk assessment indicates that while there is a recognized flood-prone area within the site boundary, the practical alignment of flood events with the dormant period of outdoor cultivation, combined with our eco-friendly practices, greatly reduces the potential impact. This comprehensive approach to flood risk management reflects our dedication to sustainable and responsible land use while ensuring the safety of our project and the surrounding environment.

Flood map is below:



Demolition plan:

1. Initial Assessment and Planning:

- Structure Analysis:** Conduct a detailed structural analysis to understand the building's layout, load-bearing walls, and the interdependence of structural components.
- Hazard Identification:** Identify potential hazards like electrical lines, underground utilities, and neighbouring structures.
- Demolition Method Selection:** Decide on the demolition method (e.g., mechanical demolition, deconstruction) based on the building's structure, location, and surrounding environment.

2. Asbestos Abatement:

- Asbestos Survey:** Perform a specialized asbestos survey to map out the exact locations and quantities of asbestos-containing materials.
- Containment Procedures:** Erect containment barriers and negative air pressure systems to prevent asbestos fibres from escaping.
- Asbestos Removal:** Carefully remove asbestos materials, keeping them wet to minimize dust, and seal them in labelled, leak-tight containers.

3. Obtaining Necessary Permits:

- Permit Documentation:** Prepare and submit detailed documentation, including the demolition plan, asbestos survey results, and disposal plans for hazardous materials.
- Utility Notification:** Notify all utility companies for disconnection and obtain written confirmations to ensure safety.

4. Safety Measures and Site Preparation:

- a. **Worker Training:** Use trained or conduct specialized training sessions for workers, emphasizing the risks associated with asbestos and demolition work.
 - b. **Equipment Inspection:** Inspect and prepare demolition equipment, ensuring all safety features are operational.
 - c. **Public Safety Measures:** Install appropriate signage, fencing, and traffic control measures if the demolition site is near public areas.
- 5. Demolition Process:**
- a. **Sequential Demolition:** Start the demolition from the top of the building, progressively moving downwards. For an A-frame building, this means starting with the roof.
 - b. **Controlled Techniques:** Use controlled demolition techniques to ensure the stability of the structure during the process. This might include the use of hydraulic excavators fitted with specialized attachments like shears or hammers.
 - c. **Material Sorting:** Segregate materials like metals, wood, and concrete for recycling or proper disposal.
- 6. Debris Removal and Site Cleanup:**
- a. **Waste Segregation:** Continuously segregate hazardous waste (like asbestos-contaminated materials) from non-hazardous debris.
 - b. **Transportation of Debris:** Ensure safe and compliant transportation of debris to designated disposal or recycling facilities.
 - c. **Site Decontamination:** Perform thorough decontamination of the site, especially in areas where asbestos was present.
- 7. Final Inspection and Reporting:**
- a. **Compliance Checks:** Conduct a comprehensive check to ensure all demolition activities complied with local regulations and safety standards.
 - b. **Documentation:** Compile and submit a detailed report of the demolition process, including asbestos abatement records, waste disposal receipts, and a summary of the demolition method.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Growing Well project in Egremont represents a significant opportunity to bring about positive change and transformation in the lives of individuals facing mental health challenges and the wider community. Our vision is rooted in the principles of community engagement, sustainable agriculture, and mental health support, all set within a therapeutic and inclusive environment.

We are excited to collaborate with the local council and stakeholders to turn this neglected area into a vibrant, productive, and welcoming space. This project is not just about site regeneration; it's about fostering connections, building resilience, and empowering marginalized groups. It's about providing accessible mental health support, valuable skill development opportunities, and a sense of belonging.

We are committed to creating a safe, accessible, and environmentally responsible site that aligns with local regulations and safety standards. From the installation of the modular classroom to the regeneration of the outdoor growing area and the refurbishment of existing buildings, our approach prioritizes inclusivity, functionality, and harmony with nature.

Thank you for considering our planning application. We look forward to the opportunity to make a genuine and lasting difference in the lives of those we serve and to create a beacon of hope and resilience in the heart of the Egremont community. Together, we can grow well.