

## **Planning Statement – Woodland Nurseries, Stamford Hill, Lowca, Whitehaven**

**Proposal:** Erection of new glasshouse for plant production facility as an extension to existing nursery, with associated drainage and landscaping



Blomfields Ltd

March 2025

SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy

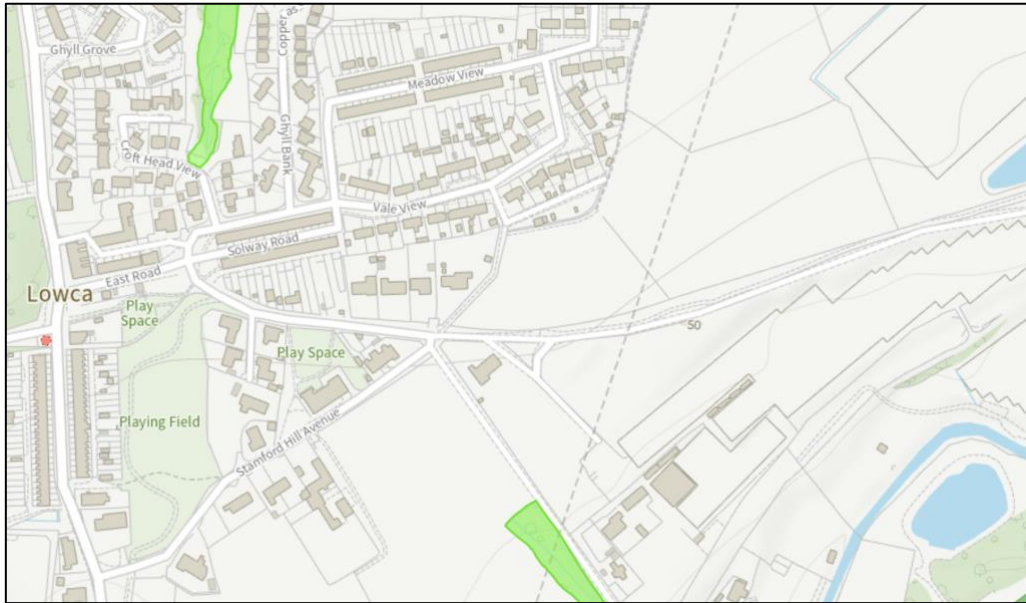


## **1.0 Introduction**

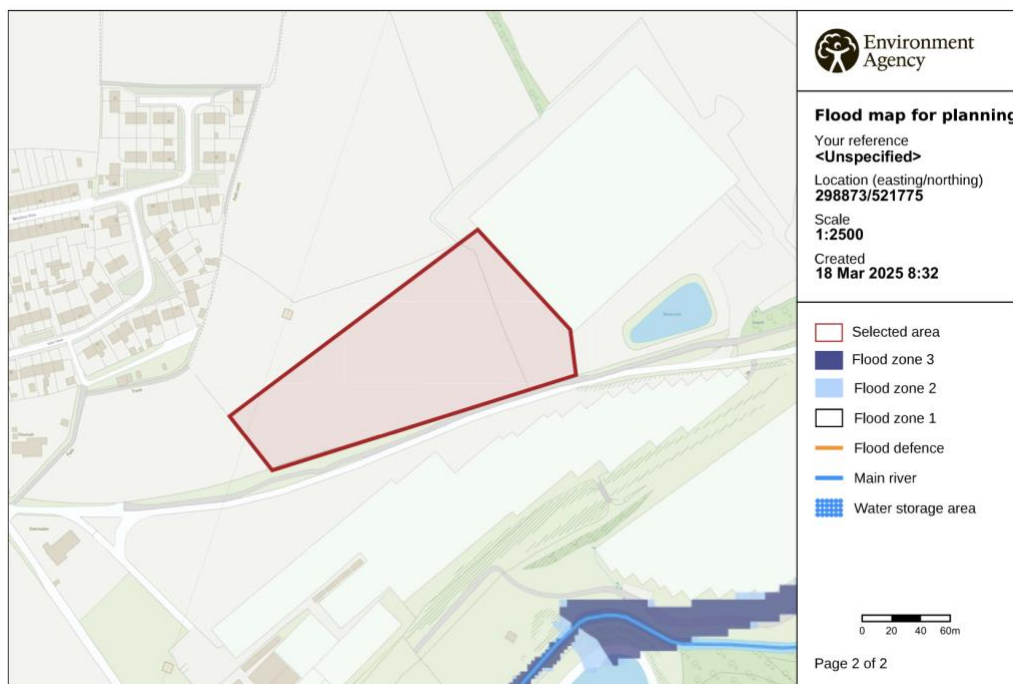
- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant in support of a planning application for a new glasshouse as an existing to an existing building, on land at Woodland Nurseries, Stamford Hill, Lowca, Whitehaven.
- 1.2 The application is submitted in full, covering the principle of the development and all matters. The purpose of this statement is to set out the planning case in support of the development of the site, and it should be read in conjunction with the plans and documents submitted.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this Statement will set out the site's context, Section 3 covers the proposed development, Section 4 relates to the planning history of the site and surroundings, Section 5 will set out the planning policy context against which the application must be considered and undertakes a planning assessment of the proposed development and Section 6 will draw together the conclusions.

## **2.0 The Site**

- 2.1 The application related to an area of land which lies to the northwest of the existing development at Woodland Nurseries. The development adjoins further agricultural land to the west and north, to the east it will join to an existing glasshouse, and to the south it adjoins further agricultural land surrounding the building, and the site access which is also a public footpath.
- 2.2 The site is currently agricultural land. The topography of the land raises up towards the north and west of the site, and it is contained by hedgerows and post and wire fence to the sides of the field, and some domestic boundary fences to the north.
- 2.3 The application site is situated within the village of Lowca and adjoins the settlement boundary for the village within the Local Plan. It is located less than a mile from the A595 which provides bus route access to Whitehaven, which is the Main Service Centre in the Borough as detailed in the Copeland Local Plan.
- 2.4 The A595 to the South provides easy access to Whitehaven and continues north towards Carlisle, and Egremont to the south. The A595 links to the A66, 13 miles north of the site which connects to Penrith and Junction 40 of the M6 to the east. Most of the existing produce from the site goes across the country, using the above transport route.
- 2.6 There are no Conservation Areas or Tree Preservation Order's on or directly adjacent to the site.
- 2.7 There are no Listed Building's on or near to the site. The nearest Listed Building is the War Memorial in Lowca, as detailed on the Copeland GIS map below:



- 2.8 The site is located in an area that the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning has noted as Flood Zone 1, and as such have a low probability of flooding.



### 3.0 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The application is a full planning application therefore covering the principle of development and all details regarding access, scale, layout, landscaping and appearance of the development proposed on the site and all associated infrastructure.
- 3.2 For access, the proposed development would use the existing point of access from Stamford Hill Road, that serves the existing nursery property, and in particular the existing nursery building. No new access or access tracks would be created or necessary for the development.
- 3.3 The proposed scale of the development is a glasshouse type building, which is around 18,000sqm in size, which is detailed on the submitted site layout plans. It is around half the size of the existing building on this area of the nursery site.
- 3.4 The layout of the proposed development would see the glass house directly connected to the western elevation of the existing glasshouse on the land. Therefore, as an extension, the existing glasshouse access, loading bays, parking and infrastructure etc will be utilised for this development.
- 3.5 The glasshouse (existing and proposed) comprises glazed aluminium framed structures that contain glazed panels. The glasshouses are under dual pitched roof structures with eaves and ridge heights of 4m and 5m respectively. It is proposed to both part excavate, and part fill the land within the application site to create a level area on which to site the building.
- 3.6 The site adjoins agricultural land to the north and west, the existing building to the east and the site access road to the south. It will be around 75m from the nearest dwellings on Vale View, which is considered appropriate given that it is effectively a single storey building and set at a lower land level.
- 3.7 To the western elevation of the building, the existing hedgerow to provide a boundary with the adjacent agricultural field, which is also within the applicant's ownership. A swale channel will run around the edge of the building between that and the retained agricultural land.
- 3.8 The application site is considered well related to the existing development to the east and south, the road network and it is considered that the development of the site in the proposed form is possible without having any adverse impact on residential amenity to the surrounding properties.

### 4.0 Planning history

- 4.1 There is no previous planning history directly on the application site.
- 4.2 Below are nearby applications considered relevant to the proposal:
- 4/20/2022/0F1 - NEW GLASSHOUSE COMPRISING OF 3.2ha OF BUILDING WITH ACCESS, HARD STANDINGS, ATTENUATION POND AND LANDSCAPING – Approved
  - 4/13/2501/0F1 – Erection of a glasshouse - Approved



Both of the above application are the most recent approvals for extensions to Woodlands Nurseries.

## 5.0 Planning Policy and its application to the proposed development

- 5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Local Development Plan consists of policies within the Copeland Local Plan 2021 – 2039, adopted in November 2024. The policies in the following paragraphs are considered relevant to the proposed development.
- 5.3 The Local Plan sets out a long-term spatial vision which is that it *“will be a key driver for change over the period 2021-2039 identifying opportunities to enhance Copeland’s strengths, address its weaknesses and ensure that Copeland is a place where people and business can thrive”*. It was adopted before the recently updated NPPF (December 2024) but it is considered to generally follows the principles of NPPF and in particular, sustainable development, as defined by national policy and delivering sustainable housing in accordance with that policy.

### Strategic Policies

- 5.4 **Strategic Policy DS1** covers the settlement hierarchy in the Borough. Within this, Lowca listed as a Sustainable Rural Village. The text regarding this tier states: *“The focus will be to support the retention and small-scale growth of existing services and businesses. Development will be focussed on existing employment allocations, moderate housing allocations, windfall and infill development.”*
- 5.5 **Policy DS4** is regarding Design and Development standards.
- “The Council will expect all new development to meet high-quality design standards which contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of residents. This means that developments must:*
- a) Make use of existing buildings on site wherever practicable and deliverable, unless they have a negative impact upon the street scene;*
  - b) Create and enhance locally distinctive places which are sympathetic to the surrounding context of the built, historic and natural environment and local landscape character;*
  - c) Use good quality building materials that reflects local character and vernacular and are sourced locally where possible;*
  - d) Incorporate high quality, inclusive and useful open spaces;*
  - e) Create layouts that provide safe, accessible and convenient pedestrian and cycling routes that encourage walking and cycling based on Active Design principles and provide connections to existing walking and cycling routes where possible;*
  - f) Not give rise to severe impacts on highway safety and/or a severe impact on the capacity of the highway network and allow for the safe access and manoeuvring of refuse and*

**SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy**



*recycling vehicles. Should a development create such an impact then mitigation measures will be sought;*

*g) Take the needs of people with mental and physical disabilities into consideration, including through adopting dementia friendly principles;*

*h) Create opportunities that encourage social interaction;*

*i) Be built to an appropriate density that enables effective use of land, whilst maintaining high levels of amenity;*

*j) Be of flexible and adaptable design where appropriate;*

*k) Incorporate measures to design out crime and reduce the fear of crime, taking into consideration secured by design principles;*

*l) Be laid out in a way that maximises solar gain to internal spaces to promote energy efficiency and sustainable solutions;*

*m) Use appropriate levels and types of external lighting that does not create light pollution and helps maintain dark skies in line with up-to-date good lighting guidance;*

*n) Mitigate noise pollution through good layout, design and appropriate screening;*

*o) Address land contamination and land stability issues with appropriate remediation measures;*

*p) Include water efficiency measures such as rainwater recycling measures, green roofs and water butts where possible and appropriate; and*

*q) Ensure there is appropriate provision to allow residents to recycle household waste.”*

- 5.6 With regards to the above, it is considered that the proposed development accords with this policy. The proposed finishes to the glasshouse extension are designed to reflect the use, and the existing glasshouses on the site.

There are no highway issues or safety problems that arise from the proposed development and the site has a suitable access onto an ‘A’ road within a short distance. The development is of a suitable size for the site and is not considered to impact upon the existing housing outside of the site boundary due to the site topography and building type. This is detailed in the section plans provided in the application documents, as requested in the Council Pre-application advice.

- 5.7 **Policy DS5** is regarding hard and soft landscaping. This states:

*“Where appropriate a high-quality landscaping scheme should be submitted with all proposals for development. This should include:*

*- A management plan which identifies all existing trees, hedgerows, ponds and other wildlife features and demonstrates how they will be integrated within the development. Landscaping should be well assimilated into the wider surrounding landscape.*

- Details of the position, species and number of new trees, hedgerows and landscape features. Species used should be appropriate for the location and should be native where possible with consideration given to future growth rates and proximity to buildings.
- Details of any trees, hedgerows and landscape features that will be lost or replaced
- Details of any hard landscaping proposed including materials, levels etc.
- Details of future maintenance of the landscaping and replacement/replanting should the landscaping fail.

Ancient hedgerows or woodlands should only be removed in exceptional circumstances in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Consideration should be given to the role landscaping can play in reducing surface water discharge, for example through the planting of trees, the use of permeable surfacing for driveways etc.

Opportunities should be taken to connect new areas of soft landscaping to existing areas of green infrastructure networks where possible.”

- 5.8 The planning application is submitted with a landscaping plan, which detailed specifics regarding the proposed hedgerows, boundaries and planting within the site. It is considered that the landscaping proposals are appropriate for the site development, and in particular, retain and improve the existing hedgerows where possible, and utilise planting to soften the edges of the development and views into the site from wider viewpoints, including a new hedgerow.

- 5.9 **Policy DS6** sets out the Councils position in relation to flood risk. This states:

The Council will ensure that flood risk is reduced and mitigated in Copeland through:

- a) Directing development to allocated sites outside areas of flood risk where possible, unless it can be demonstrated that it would provide wider sustainable benefits outweighing the flood risk and that the development would be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere;
- b) Only permitting wind fall development in areas of flood risk where applicants have carried out the flood risk sequential and exception tests to the satisfaction of the Council and appropriate mitigation is provided;
- c) Supporting measures to address the constraints of existing drainage infrastructure capacity;
- d) Avoiding development in areas where the existing drainage infrastructure is inadequate, unless appropriate mitigation is provided;
- e) Supporting new flood defence measures to protect against both tidal and fluvial flooding in the Plan area, including appropriate land management as part of a catchment wide approach;

- f) Ensuring that any development that incorporates flood mitigation strategies does not have adverse effects on water quality;
- g) Requiring the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems where appropriate; and
- h) Working with partners to manage the risk associated with coastal erosion and flooding and ensure that all new development is located outside areas identified as being at risk either now or in future revisions of the Shoreline Management Plan.
- 5.10 The application is accompanied by a comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment document, which covers that the site is within an area classified as Flood Zone 1, and that the risk of flooding from both surface water and ground water is low.
- 5.11 **Policy DS7** sets out an approach to ensure that sustainable drainage is incorporated into new build development unless it can be demonstrated that it is not possible. The proposed development includes a suds pond as part of the proposed drainage strategy as detailed on the submitted plans, which is already in place from the existing glasshouse. It was previously oversized in capacity. In addition, the rainwater is recycled for use in watering the plants growing with the glasshouses.
- 5.12 **Policy E1** is regarding Economic Growth in Copeland. This states as follows:
- ‘The economy of Copeland will be strengthened and broadened to provide a diverse range of employment and economic opportunities that will attract new key industries and provide the flexibility to accommodate existing businesses and new initiatives by:*
- *Maintaining, enhancing, regenerating and where appropriate extending the employment base in our towns and settlements in accordance with the Development Strategy, and supporting the economies of our rural communities;*
  - *Developing a positive brand for the area, building on the ‘Energy Coast’ to attract inward investment and drive exports;*
  - *Maximising Copeland’s expertise and innovation in energy, nuclear decommissioning and clean growth through innovative businesses, and supporting the clustering of such businesses;*
  - *Prioritising high-quality office provision within Whitehaven and the Key Service Centres to meet inward investment needs;*
  - *Supporting flexible workspace, collaborative spaces and touch down zones;*
  - *Creating a broader based and resilient economy, that encourages a skilled work force to remain in or relocate to Copeland;*
  - *Placing digital and data at the heart of Copeland’s economy;*
  - *Promoting investment in the public realm of employment sites and working with owners to achieve improvement and regeneration of appropriate sites;*



- *Supporting the establishment and success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with the inclusion of provision for starter units, start-up businesses, collaborative space for business to grow, live-work units on new and regenerated employment sites and offices;*
- *Working with learning and training bodies, job centres and higher education providers to develop a skilled workforce and improve employability;*
- *Supporting economic development associated with learning and training centres;*
- *Helping the economy in rural areas by supporting rural enterprises and rural diversification that will encourage, tourism, recreation, rural regeneration, and farm diversification, and complement new appropriate agriculture and forestry development where appropriate.'*

5.13 The above policy is considered important in the consideration of the application. Firstly, this is an application to enhance an existing employment base, of a long-established local business, which will increase employment on the site, which is on the edge of a village settlement near to the Principal Town in the Borough.

By approving this application, the development will be supporting the success of a local Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) with space for the business to grow.

5.14 **Policy N1** is regarding conserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity. This details that the Council is committed to conserving Copeland's biodiversity and geodiversity including protected species and habitats. Potential harmful impacts of any development upon biodiversity and geodiversity must be identified and considered at the earliest stage. In terms of this particular policy, an ecology survey has been undertaken and is submitted with the application.

5.15 **Policy N3** is regarding biodiversity net gain (BNG). This details that all development, with the exception of that listed in the Environment Act 2021 and any documents which may supersede it must provide at least 10% biodiversity net gain over and above existing site levels, following the application of the mitigation hierarchy set out in Policy N1 above. This is in addition to any compensatory habitat provided under Policy N1. Net gain should be delivered on site where possible.

5.16 The application is supported by BNG calculations and plans to ensure that the 10% gain is firstly met, and secondly that it is achieved on site in accordance with the above. This concludes that the BNG can adequately be delivered on the site.

5.17 **Policy N6** is regarding Landscape Protection. This details that

Copeland's landscapes will be protected and enhanced by:

- Supporting proposals which enhance the value of Copeland's landscapes;
- Protecting all landscapes from inappropriate change by ensuring that development conserves and enhances the distinctive characteristics of that particular area in a manner commensurate with their statutory status and value;
- Ensuring development proposals demonstrate that their location, scale, design and materials will conserve and where possible enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural

heritage of the Lake District National Park and Heritage Coast where proposals could impact on their setting and views into and from the National Park or Heritage Coast;

d) Requiring a Landscape Appraisal, and where appropriate a Landscape and Visual

Impact Assessment, to be submitted where development has the potential to impact upon landscape character or a protected landscape. Where harm is identified the development will only be permitted where the benefits of the development outweigh any potential harm and mitigation and compensation measures must be provided.

Proposals will be assessed according to whether the proposed structures and associated landscaping relates well in terms of visual impact, scale, character, amenity value and local distinctiveness and the cumulative impact of developments will be taken into account as part of this assessment.

Development proposals must be informed by the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, Settlement Landscape Character Assessment the Cumbria Landscape Character Guidance and Toolkit and where appropriate, the Lake District National Park Landscape Character Assessment from the earliest stage.

5.18 Landscape planting plans are included as part of the full planning submission which detail significant planting within the site, and around the exterior boundary, including a new hedgerow to ensure that the edge of settlement location and landscape character is appropriately addressed in the development plans. In addition, a Landscape Analysis document is provided to details the proposed development from different viewpoints.

5.19 **Policy N14** is the policy regarding Woodland, Trees and Hedgerows. This states that existing trees and hedgerows which contribute positively to the visual amenity and environmental value of their location will be protected. Developers should incorporate additional native tree planting and hedgerows into new developments where possible and appropriate.

5.20 As previously mentioned, the existing hedgerow will be retained as much as possible within the site design as detailed on the site plan, with additional planting to supplement it. In addition, the landscaping plan details the planting of an additional area of hedgerow.

Principle – National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") (as revised December 2024)

5.21 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF states that sustainable development has three objectives social, economic and environmental.

5.22 The social and economic are as follows:

*"a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

*b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with*

**SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy**



*accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being. "*

It is noted in the above that a central aim of the NPPF is to ensure that the right type of land is available in the right areas.

- 5.23 Paragraph 11 covers the issue of the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

*"For **decision-taking** this means:*

*Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*

*Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

*The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

*Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."*

- 5.24 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF regarding the rural economy, states as follows:

*"Planning policies and decisions should enable:*

*a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings;*

*b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*

*c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*

*d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship."*

- 5.25 As detailed previously in this statement, this is an application to enhance an existing employment base, of a long-established local business, which will increase employment on the site, which is on the edge of a village settlement near to the Principal Town in the Borough.

By approving this application, the development will be supporting the success of a local SME with space for the business to grow.

- 5.26 The proposed site adjoins the built area of Lowca. This is a Sustainable Rural Village within previous versions of the Local Plan, and in the recently adopted Copeland Local Plan 2021 – 2039. Therefore, it is considered that it is compliant with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF and given that the Local Plan has been recently adopted, the application should be approved without delay.

- 5.27 The proposed development is considered appropriate to the size, character and role of the settlement. The submitted application will not cause any significant increase in terms of traffic within the locality from the development. The proposed development is situated adjacent to existing development and is therefore a logical extension of the existing nursery operation.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 The proposed application provides the opportunity for an extension to an existing long-established business in the Borough.
- 6.2 The development is a significant investment in the site and will increase employment in the business.
- 6.3 The proposed development has been sensitively designed to take into account the site characteristics, surroundings, wider location and separation distances to residential properties.
- 6.4 It is considered that any impact on the adjacent dwellings outside of the site has been minimised by the proposed size and siting.
- 6.5 It is contended therefore that the proposed development is acceptable and is in accordance with both national and local planning policy, and therefore should be approved.

Simon Blacker MRTPI