

Design and Access Statement

Proposed Courtyard Extension

Newbank Garden Centre Ltd – Radcliffe

Irwell Bank Farm, Bury Road, Radcliffe, M26 2WW

Date: February 2026

Ref: C-0636



1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the enclosure of an existing courtyard including provision of new toilet facilities at Newbank Garden Centre, Bury Road, Radcliffe.

The proposals seek to enclose an existing external café terrace and retail display area within an open courtyard, and to modernise and enhance the existing café, dining, WC and associated customer facilities to help maintain Newbank Garden Centre as a premier shopping destination for customers wishing to enhance their gardens and homes.

The application relates to land at Irwell Bank Farm, Radcliffe, originally acquired by the company in 1986 and now operating as its principal trading site, selling plants, gardening equipment and furniture.

2. Background and Context

Newbank Garden Centre Ltd was formally incorporated in the early 1980s. In 1986, the business acquired the Irwell Bank Farm site in Radcliffe. At that time, the site comprised largely derelict farmland and agricultural buildings. Under the direction of its founder, John Hartle, the site was progressively developed into a high-quality independent garden centre.

A significant fire in 2003 destroyed many of the older buildings on the site. While a major setback, this enabled substantial rebuilding and modernisation, contributing to the site's transformation into a destination garden centre, attracting customers from a wide geographical area.

Today, the Radcliffe store is widely recognised as one of the leading independent garden centres in England. It functions not only as a retail destination, but also as a valued community hub, offering dining and leisure facilities for a wide range of customers.

3. The Site

3.1 Location and Surroundings

The site is broadly oriented west to east and is situated between Bury Road to the east, (where the primary access to the site is located), and Wharf Fold Road to the west. To the north lies Hutchinson's Goit, beyond which is the River Irwell. To the south lies open land (not forming part of this application).

Vehicular access is taken from Bury Road, leading to an extensive car park running along the northern side of the site.



3.2 Existing Layout

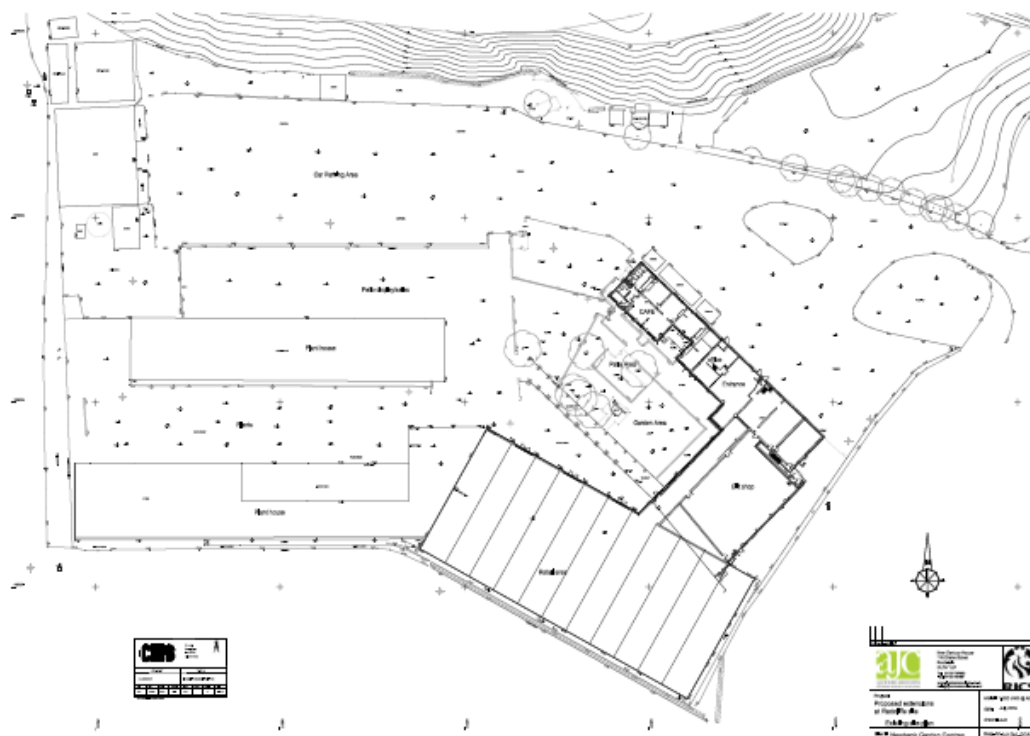
The garden centre site comprises:

- Generous car parking area
- Extensive external plant display areas
- Covered retail areas for garden products
- Portal-framed structures forming enclosed and semi-enclosed display areas for plants
- Traditional single-storey buildings used for storage of retail produce and equipment

The built form predominantly occupies the southern portion of the site and wraps around a central courtyard at the east end.

The application area relates to an existing, external courtyard, positioned centrally and toward the eastern side of the garden centre complex. Surrounding elements include:

- North: dated, single-storey, traditional looking buildings currently housing a café, associated kitchen area and toilet facilities
- East: existing garden centre entrance and gift shop
- South: main covered retail area
- West: circulation space connecting the main retail areas to wider plant display areas



4. The Need for Development

Newbank Garden Centre has evolved significantly over several decades. However, parts of the existing complex, including the café, kitchen and WC facilities, are now outdated and no longer meet modern customer expectations or operational requirements.

In particular:

- The existing kitchen layout is too constrained and inefficient in use for the number of customers who would like to purchase food and beverages while visiting the garden centre
- WC provision is below modern standards in layout and quality of finish
- The café area is fragmented and partially external (which restricts its use for large parts of the year), with changes in level which make self-service dining difficult for many customers, many of which are aged.
- Accessibility provision requires improvement.

Modern garden centres increasingly operate as experiential destinations. Dining and refreshment facilities form a key component of the visitor experience. To maintain its reputation, competitiveness and sustainability, the Radcliffe site requires modernisation.

Without these improvements, the business risks reduced customer satisfaction, limited growth potential and declining competitiveness when compared with other garden centre destinations within the north west region.

Photographs



View towards existing café and toilets



View towards main entrance (from courtyard) including first floor admin area



View towards two storey entrance / admin block



View towards plant display area within courtyard

5. The Proposed Development

The proposals comprise the following elements:

5.1 Internal Remodelling

1. Remodelling of the existing, enclosed café and office areas, to create a new food preparation area with improved workflow and service efficiency, including better quality staff welfare facilities.
2. Provision of new male and female customer WC facilities.
3. Provision of:
 - Baby changing facilities
 - Fully accessible WC

The proposed enclosure of the external courtyard for all year round café and dining use, high quality display areas, including much better toilet facilities, significantly enhance inclusivity, hygiene standards and customer comfort / satisfaction.

5.2 Enclosure of Existing Courtyard

The existing open courtyard will be covered with a new portal-framed structure to create a predominantly internal dining and display area. The roof will extend to the courtyard perimeter, with the existing, external elevations forming the internal walls to the enclosed area.

Key features include:

- Insulated profiled metal roof covering, including glazed rooflights distributed throughout to maximise natural daylighting to the internal café and display areas.
- Hipped roof ends to reduce perceived bulk and visual scale of the courtyard enclose.
- A flat roof section to the south where the new structure adjoins the existing retail building.
- Creation of a new display area on the eastern side beneath the newly created roof structure.
- Formation of a new entrance on the western side leading to an external terraced area which can be used for café seating during the summer months..

The enclosure transforms an underutilised external courtyard into a high-quality, weather-protected dining and display environment.

6. Design Principles

6.1 Amount

The proposal represents a modest infill development within the existing courtyard display area footprint. No significant outward expansion of the overall site boundary is proposed and where existing facilities will be enhanced to improve the offering to customers.

The development optimises an existing courtyard space rather than extending into open land.

6.2 Layout

The layout has been designed to:

- Improve circulation between retail and dining areas.
- Provide logical separation between kitchen operations and customer areas.
- Integrate dining with retail and display spaces.
- Maintain clear access to entrances and exits.

The new dining space will be creatively arranged with curved forms and distinct zones to enhance the customer experience.

6.3 Scale

The scale of the new roof structure reflects the established character of the site, which already includes portal-framed, retail structures.

The inclusion of:

- Hipped roof ends
- Integration with existing rooflines
- A flat roof transition

The above ensures the extension reads as a natural continuation of the existing built forms on the site.

6.4 Appearance

The proposed materials are consistent with the existing architectural language of the site:

- Retention of existing and provision of new facing brickwork walls
- Insulated profiled metal roofing
- Portal frame construction
- Glazed rooflights to introduce natural daylight into the café and display area.

The design maintains the functional / utilitarian, yet cohesive garden-centre aesthetic, while improving internal comfort and visual quality for customers.

6.5 Landscaping

The proposal does not reduce external planting or landscaped areas. The retention / improved arrangement of the plant display and relocation of the terraced area enhances the relationship between internal dining and external spaces within the remaining courtyard area.

Given the site's proximity to Hutchinsons Goit and the River Irwell, the development remains contained within the existing developed envelope and does not encroach upon wooded or riverside areas.

7. Access

7.1 Vehicular Access/parking

No changes are proposed to vehicular access arrangements. Access remains from Bury Road with parking provided on-site.

Parking arrangements are unaffected with no significant increase in vehicle numbers envisaged.

7.2 Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access from the car park remains clear and legible. The existing entrance remains unaltered.

The new western entrance improves internal flow and access to the new dining terrace and plant/garden display areas.

7.3 Inclusive Access

The proposal significantly improves accessibility through:

- The provision of café and toilet facilities all on one level and accessible from within the enclosed garden centre building.
- Provision of a compliant and dedicated accessible WC.
- Rationalised and level internal circulation.
- Improved spatial standards within dining and display areas.

The enclosed courtyard removes weather-related barriers to access and enhances year-round usability.

8. Sustainability and Economic Impact

The proposal contributes to sustainability in several ways:

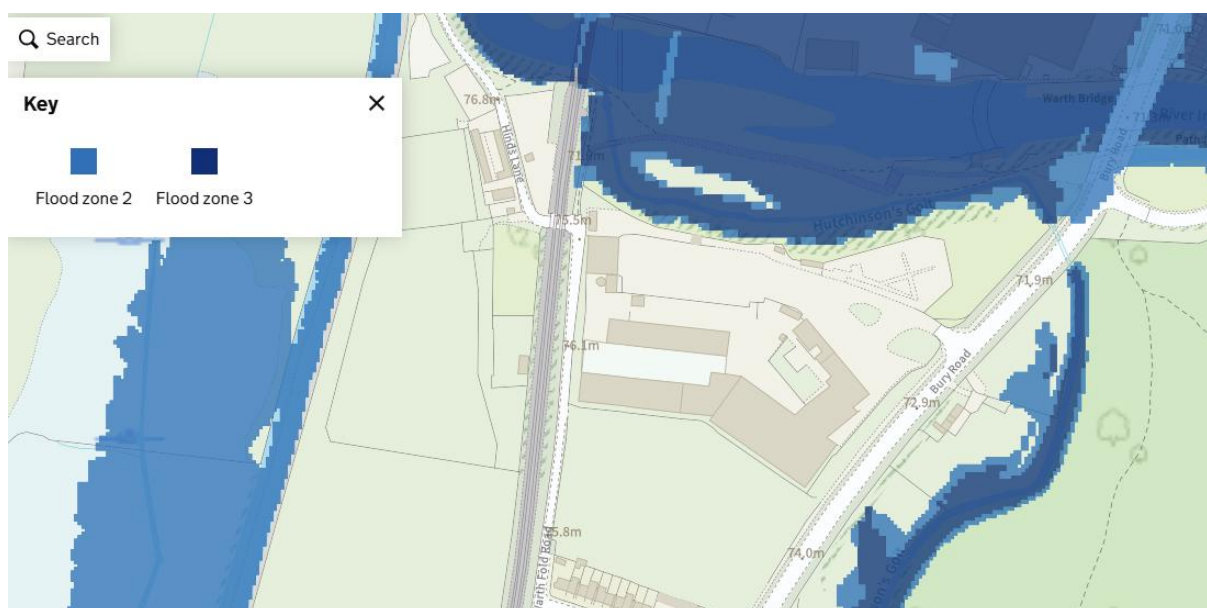
- Reuse and enhancement of existing developed land and buildings.
- Insulated roof construction improving thermal performance.
- Glazed rooflights reducing reliance on artificial lighting.
- The capture of rainwater from the proposed roofs can be harvested for use within the garden centre for plant irrigation and general cleaning.
- Use of solar panels on the proposed roof surfaces reduces the load on the local electricity network.
- Strengthening of a long-established local business which attracts visitors from far and wide.

Economically, the development:

- Supports continued employment of local people.
- Enhances productivity.
- Secures the long-term viability of the flagship store.
- Reinforces its role as a destination within Bury and the wider region.

The site is not located within any of the Flood Zones (2 or 3) indicated within the Environment Agency's Flood Map. The site area is 1,757m² (0.17 hectares) and therefore a flood risk assessment is not required.

Flood Map Extract from Environment Agency's Flood Map Website



9. Community Benefit

The Radcliffe site has become a valued community asset. It serves not only as a retail outlet but as a social and leisure destination.

The improved dining facilities will:

- Enhance the visitor experience.
- Encourage longer dwell times.
- Support local social interaction.
- Improve comfort and inclusivity for families and older visitors.

This development ensures that the business can continue serving the people of Bury while remaining competitive in a changing / challenging retail environment.

10. Conclusion

The proposed enclosure of the existing courtyard at Newbank Garden Centre, Radcliffe:

- Modernises outdated facilities.
- Enhances accessibility and inclusivity.
- Improves operational efficiency.
- Strengthens the customer experience.
- Secures the long-term viability of a highly regarded independent garden centre business.

The development is contained within the existing built footprint, respects its surroundings and represents a logical and sensitive evolution of the site.

It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission should be granted.