



South Holland District Council
Planning Department

Attn David Gedney

18 December 2020

Dear Sir,

Long Lane Nursery, Long Lane, Gedney Hill, PE12 0PP
Extension of operating hours

Variation of Condition 5 of permission H05/0396/17 to allow for extended operating hours

You Garden are nursery growers and suppliers, with plant growing and distribution direct to the customer. They have recently increased their nursery growing capacity with a larger packhouse to process these plants (completed in late 2017, aided by the *Leader* grant programme). The company have expanded in line with early projections. They now also source from local growers, thereby having secondary local economic benefits.

However, changed working practices are required only for the peak period March to June of trading given (a) the influence of the pandemic and (b) increased demand. *This requires, during that period only, extending the current permitted working hours by a fifth.*

A prompt decision is requested to enable forward planning, protect business continuity, and to assist management of this company's growth as it enters its peak period in 2021.

a. Pandemic related changes.

Changed working arrangements arise from the need to spread shift patterns to aid *employee separation*. Work can continue as before the pandemic but must now be spread over a longer working day, thus at any one-time reducing employee density.

b. Trade related changes and growing employment.

Increased demand has also resulted from the popularity of home ordering. This has forced a change in operating practices and a need to extend working hours in the peak period.

You Garden now currently employ 85 full time permanent staff and seasonally add between 90 -150 agency staff (March to June). Many of these staff (both permanent and agency) live locally. Current staffing reviews are likely to lead to 20-30 *additional* permanent staff later in 2021. This is subject to an assessment of Post -Pandemic market conditions.

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c. Changes in working hours March – June only

Condition 5 of permission H05/0396/17 currently states:

No packing operations shall be carried out and no deliveries shall be taken at or dispatched from the site outside the following hours:

- 07:00 and 20:00 hours on Mondays to Fridays inclusive between the period 15 March and 15 June;*
- 07:00 and 18:00 hours at all other times including Saturdays, Sundays and Bank or Public Holidays.*

For the period of 1st March to 30th June only it is requested that this condition is varied to allow for an extension of hours by 22%. The new range of hours will be:

Weekday operation 0600-2200.
Saturday/Sunday operation 0700-2000.

The early starts are a necessary part of operations given a need to supply some customers promptly. It supports an extended working day reducing the chance of work peaking. Collections are then efficiently spread throughout the day, rather than drivers crowding to meet the present narrower range of permitted hours.

The following table compares present and proposed hours.

Table: You Garden Hours - Peak time working March – June only

Old peak time working (as authorised by Condition 5 of H05-0396-17)

	<i>Times</i>	<i>Hours a day</i>	<i>Total hours</i>
Mon - Fri	0700-2000	13	65 (5 days)
Sat -Sun	0700 - 1800	11	22 (2 days)
Hours per week			87

New peak time working (current application)

	<i>Times</i>	<i>Hours per day</i>	<i>Total hours</i>
Mon- Fri	0600-2200	16	80 (5 days)
Sat - Sun	0700-2000	13	26 (2 days)
Hours per week			106
			(a 22% increase)

A very brief review of other distribution companies locally has been undertaken. This has included in Spalding - Bakkavor, Flamingo, or Butters; and in a village context - K Martin & Sons at Moulton Chapel. This shows that their operations are not constrained by hours restrictions, but officers may have other information on this.



d. Residents' possible concerns

In previous planning applications for new buildings, residents have expressed concerns about on-site noise and disturbance. On site management effectively manages this and Conditions 4, 6, and 7 of H05-0396-17 were designed to allow control by the Council. We are not aware of any unresolved complaints, but *You Garden* will be continually responsive to unintended nuisance.

Noise and disturbance might also arise away from site operations from large vehicles using local roads. This must be judged in the context that the practice of horticultural produce management throughout the district generates similar traffic. A note on Highways impact is appended demonstrating that activity over longer working hours *reduces* vehicle movements per hour at this site.

In conclusion, the extension of working hours will reduce the apparent intensity of operations by allowing activity over a longer period. It is hoped that the Council will support the growth of this successful business in difficult times.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Smith, MRTPI



Background notes

Jobs.

Growth is consistent with projections made in 2017 when the new Packhouse was permitted (permission H05-396-17).

FTE jobs. There are now presently 85 FTE jobs with a potential increase of 20-30 over the next few years.

Agency workers. The employment levels increase in line with trade. Between 90- 150 agency workers are employed at any one time March to June. This will increase by only a small amount (5%) as growth will be met by settled full-time employees.

Highways matters.

Whilst there is no change to the nature of the use (it is still horticulture), likely traffic levels have been reviewed. This will be the main way that local people will experience the proposed change. There will be a different pattern of use from the proposed extended working hours that will have a beneficial impact on traffic movements.

The company's operations peak in the 4 months of March to June period each year, driven by Spring weather and consumer demand. For 8 months of the year during July – February, traffic levels are low. The figures below thereby only apply to the period March to June inclusive.

Some 15% of the collection vehicles are small and medium (up to 7.5 tonne) and 85% are large (over 7.5 tonne).

Lorry Movements.

In the peak period for 2021 (March to June) the number of lorry movements will increase but will be spread over a longer working day. This is shown below.

2020 - 87 hours of working time per week - lorry movements averaged 2.66/hour.

2021 - based on an extended 106 hours of working time - lorry movements will be a reduced 2.20/hour.

Staff car movements.

There has been an increase in staff arriving in individual cars given the present Covid restraint on car sharing or minibus collections. This will not reduce until Pandemic restrictions are relaxed. However if this application is permitted, arrivals will be spread over a longer period thereby reducing the apparent vehicle arrival numbers.

2020 – there were 18 different shift timings over 6 days of the week for 190 people – therefore 63 cars /shift/day

2021 – there will be 24 different shift timings over 7 days of the week for a few more – 200 people – 58 cars /shift per day



The site in May 2018 - looking south



End.
