DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed expansion of nursery and glasshouses. Rookery Farm, Joys Bank, Holbeach St John, Spalding Lincs, PE12 8SG.

Introduction

This planning application has been prepared by Peter Humphrey Associates acting as agent for the applicant Mr David Robinson.

Rookery Farm is a 90 hectare arable farm based in Joys Bank, Holbeach St Johns. It has been in the hands of the Robinson Family for 96 years. The farm currently crops 56ha of wheat, 15 ha of oilseed rape, and 9ha of spring beans. 8 years ago the farm diversified into the growing and packing of flowers and plants for the horticultural mail order industry, this is now the primary income source of the business.

The farm is also the home of The National Cut Flower Centre (www.nationalcutflowercentre.co.uk), which is a HDC funded project for the research and development of commercial cut flower growing. This section of the business has designated trial growing areas on site and see's visitors from flower growing companies all over Europe to inspect the growing trials which take place on site.

The business now has 28 full-time employees, including 9 from the local village, who grow, pack and dispatch over 2 million plants per annum for its mail order customers.

As a result of the farm's diversity, the business and site has expanded rapidly to cope with demand. Mr Robinson now requires a second glasshouse to meet the demand/supply of new contracts; however they're simply isn't the space within the current nursery curtilage. Mr Robinson is therefore proposing to extend the nursery into his grade II field behind the main site, as shown on the proposed site plan.

Pre-application Discussions

A pre-app was submitted to S.H.D.C prior to the submission of this application. Planning officer David Gedney confirmed that the proposal met policy and could be supported. See extract below:

> *"Policy SG4 of the South Holland Local Plan, 2006 makes provision for agricultural development in the countryside subject to it having an acceptable impact upon the landscape character of the area. Moreover, the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 promotes sustainable economic growth.*

Paragraph 28 specifically indicates that planning polices should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, LPAs should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas.

In terms of visual impact, agricultural holdings such as this are a common feature within the fenland landscape. Glasshouses presently exist on the holding. It is likely that the Authority would take the view that the development would not harm the character/appearance of the fenland countryside, subject to additional landscaping as indicated."

Design, Appearance & Layout

The proposed glasshouse is of traditional construction; please see elevational drawings provided with this planning application.

As highlighted by David Gedney, the development on site will have very little visual impact on the area with the site already being a nursery and where glasshouses already exist site.

As shown on the proposed site plan, a new dense landscape buffer consisting of hawthorn hedge and native trees will follow the new site perimeter to provide screening.

The proposed glasshouse has been positioned for best access between the existing packing house and other glasshouses on site, to ensure it works well with existing site operations.

Access

The proposed development will utilise the existing site access into Rookery Farm.

Soft Landscaping

As shown on the proposed site plan, the new site perimeter boundary will be landscaped with dense Hawthorn hedging and native trees.

Proposed dense landscaping to new site perimeter consisting of native Hawthorn and Field Maple trees.

Hedging planting size: 30-60cm. Planted in double rows 30cm apart. Plants to be 30cm apart in rows and staggered. 6 plants per metre of hedge.

Field Maple trees to be evenly spaced around site perimeter as shown. Size 10-12cm planted at 20m centres.

*Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

Employment

As mentioned earlier, the existing business now has 28 full-time employees, including 9 from the local village. The proposed development will create 4 additional full time jobs in the new glasshouse.

Flood Risk Assessment

In accordance with the Environment Agency's flood zone maps, the application site falls within flood zone 3.

The Environment Agency has been consulted on all previous developments on site. Christopher Hayes the Planning Liaison Officer for South Holland stated the following:

"The site is located within an area defined as Flood Zone 3 'high probability' according to the Environment Agency's Flood Zone Maps. Therefore, the application would have to accompanied by a supporting Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). That said the site is located within the white 'low risk' area according to the South Holland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and therefore we would **not** wish to see the flood risk assessment for this site (the council would determine the application following our standing advice).

It must also be noted that the development is purely a glasshouse, with no habitable rooms or sleeping accommodation.

Please see that a separate document has been prepared by a specialist to detail the handling of surface water from the new development.