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Norfolk House Farm

Salad Storage & Dispatch Upgrade

Planning Statement

Gedney Marsh Spalding PE 12 9PB, UK

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1. INTRODUCTION

This planning statement supports the proposed upgrade of the existing salad storage and dispatch facilities at Norfolk House Farm. The development will provide temperature-controlled crop intake, additional chilled storage, a dedicated dispatch area, tray-return and washing facilities, refrigeration plant rooms, improved vehicle access and hardstanding, and surface-water attenuation. Together, these measures will improve cold-chain integrity, operational efficiency, site circulation and environmental performance.

The application falls to be determined in accordance with the adopted [South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011–2036](#), read alongside relevant national planning policy. The principal local policies engaged are Policy 1 (Spatial Strategy), Policy 2 (Development Management), Policy 3 (Design of New Development), Policy 4 (Strategic Approach to Flood Risk), Policy 7 (Improving South East Lincolnshire's Employment Land Portfolio), Policy 23 (The Natural Environment), Policy 25 (Pollution), Policy 26 (Climate Change and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy), Policy 28 (Delivering a More Sustainable Transport Network) and Policy 30 (Vehicle and Cycle Parking). This statement assesses the proposal against those matters in Sections 5–8.

JE Piccaver and Co (JEPCO) have been growing fresh leaf produce from its Lincolnshire base since 1946, providing a wide range of conventional and organic leaves and salad onions to the Manufacturing, Retail, Foodservice and Wholesale sectors.

Committed to continuous innovation, the business seeks new methods in conventional and organic varietal development and adopts cutting-edge technologies to help JEPCO and the wider industry progress in a sustainable and reliable manner.

Maintaining a strong position in the fresh-food industry depends on supplying customers with a high-quality product and preserving that quality for as long as possible on supermarket shelves.

Since any fruit or vegetable will immediately begin to degrade when picked, it is crucial that the crop is swiftly processed and stored in a suitable environment to preserve its quality until consumption.

2. BACKGROUND

At ambient temperatures, lettuce begins to degrade after one or two days and must therefore be processed swiftly and stored at a controlled temperature, typically 0–4°C, and a high relative humidity, typically 90–95%. The product must be cooled from ambient to chilled conditions within a short period, after which the required temperature must be maintained as consistently as possible until consumption.

This temperature-controlled supply chain is known as the cold chain. It provides an uninterrupted storage and distribution process within a specified temperature range, helping to extend and protect the shelf life and marketability of fresh fruit and vegetables. It requires careful logistical planning and appropriate facilities for transporting temperature-sensitive products while protecting the integrity of each consignment.

A cold chain is the interaction between these three areas:

- **Product:** A product requires specific temperature and humidity conditions. These conditions dictate its transport.
- **Origin/Destination:** The respective locations of where the fruits and vegetables are grown and consumed. Because of advances in cold chain logistics, it is possible to use increasingly distant sourcing strategies.
- **Distribution:** The methods and infrastructure available to transport a product in a temperature-controlled environment which can involve tractors, trucks and warehousing facilities.

The cold chain combines science, technology and process. The science involves understanding the chemical and biological processes associated with perishability. The technology provides

the physical means of maintaining appropriate temperatures throughout the supply chain. The process comprises the tasks required to prepare, store, transport and monitor temperature-sensitive products.

The first and most crucial stage is the journey from field to fridge. Once the crop has been picked, its temperature must be reduced from ambient conditions as quickly as possible to maintain quality. Time spent on a trailer in the field or waiting at the storage unit for checking and weighing accelerates product degradation and reduces quality.

Once the product has entered the chilled environment and reached its optimum temperature, those conditions must be maintained throughout storage and distribution. This process, known as cold-chain maintenance, requires the product to be stored under controlled conditions, transferred to refrigerated vehicles through a controlled loading environment and handled correctly through to the retailer's display cabinets.

This in essence is the driver for the project which seeks to enhance the current infrastructure and thus facilitate the swift field to fridge step and then maintain the environment right through to the Customer.



Figure 1 Fresh Product Storage and Distribution

3. Existing Site and Operations

JEPCO occupies over 300 hectares of essentially flat and fertile land approximately 2.5km from the Lincolnshire coast and the Wash, an expansive protected area designated as a Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest bordering the site to the North and East.

Due North on the coast is the military weapons range of RAF Holbeach, which is also a designated low-flying area. Directly to the west of the site is an array of 6x 100m tall (to tip height) wind turbines and an associated weather monitoring mast. The Southern side of the site is bounded by similar Agricultural land.

The primary crops grown at the farm are green salad leaves, the growing of which is currently undertaken predominately in open fields, to be harvested and packed within dedicated building infrastructure on Norfolk House Farm. Growing currently occurs throughout the year, with yield fluctuation dependent on weather patterns.

In addition to its commitment to excellence in the production of high-quality fresh salad, JEPCO takes its environmental stewardship responsibilities seriously. To this end, JEPCO has dedicated 127 acres to two schemes that include reed-bed recreation, new woodland, pollen and nectar mixes, and buffer strips alongside watercourses, with the aim of maintaining and improving the ecosystem.

The application site is within the existing Norfolk House Farm complex on the B1359, between Gedney Drove End and Gedney Dyke. The site is currently used as JEPCO's main processing facility, and the purpose of this project is to consolidate and improve its infrastructure and operations. The site is bounded to the north, east and west by additional JEPCO landholdings and to the south by the B1359.



Figure 2 Existing Site.

4. EXISTING BUILDING

This application relates to the existing chill store and dispatch building on the eastern side of the site, as identified in Figure 3 above. The building comprises:

- Reception Area
- Vacuum Cooler
- Chill Store A, B & C
- Loading, Dispatch Area
- Tray storage

The existing infrastructure comprises three separate chill-store areas linked by a covered loading and unloading area. As its elevations are open, the connecting area remains exposed to ambient conditions. A stand-alone vacuum cooler is housed beneath a canopy extending southwards from the eastern end of the main building; the canopy also covers the tray-return and storage area. The outer enclosure consists of metal roof cladding supported by cold-rolled metal members and portal frames. Beneath this covering, insulated wall and ceiling panels enclose the three distinct chill-store areas.



Figure 3 Existing Site.

4.1 Existing Operations

Currently, field-based picking teams place the harvested product into plastic trays, which are then stacked in trailers and brought to the farmyard through the main entrance. The trays are unloaded and stacked externally beneath the covered canopy. The quality department checks each load against the required standard; once accepted, the load is weighed and placed in the relevant chill store.

When ready for dispatch, the stored product is removed from the chill store, assembled into a load at the western side of the canopy and placed by forklift into the rear of a dispatch vehicle. Dispatch vehicles then leave the site through the same main entrance by which they arrived.

4.2 Limitations of existing operations

The current site operation does not satisfy the requirements of cold-chain maintenance and management. Unloading, checking and weighing are undertaken in ambient conditions, delaying the required cooling process and jeopardising product freshness. Loading and dispatch also interrupt the cold chain because products stored in a controlled environment are moved back into ambient conditions before being loaded onto dispatch vehicles.

5. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development is intended to address these issues by creating a dedicated chilled intake and product-administration area on the southern side of the existing building cluster and a separate temperature-controlled dispatch area on the northern side. Harvested product will be unloaded directly into the temperature-controlled intake area for administration, quality control and weighing, after which it will remain within the controlled environment throughout the facility.

For dispatch, the product will be transferred to a dedicated, temperature-controlled loading area against which the refrigerated vehicle will seal. In this way, the cold chain will be maintained until the load reaches its destination.

In addition, the storage capacity of the facility shall be increased by the construction of a new chill store in the location of the existing loading area.



Figure 5 Proposed Layout.

The proposed development comprises proportionate extensions and alterations to an established rural food-production and distribution facility. It will consolidate existing operations, improve cold-chain integrity and support the continued efficiency and competitiveness of JEPKO without increasing production throughput. The principle of improving an existing employment use is consistent with the Local Plan's support for sustainable economic activity, subject to acceptable design, landscape, amenity, flood-risk, drainage and highway effects. The works comprise:

- Crop Intake Building
- Proposed Store
- Proposed Dispatch Area
- Proposed Tray Returns/Wash Store
- Proposed refrigeration plant rooms
- Proposed Truck hardstanding Access Roadway
- Proposed Surface Water attenuation

5.1 Crop Intake Building

The Crop Intake Building shall be located in the southern side of the existing store A and extend eastwards as far as store A, closing of the entire southern side of the building. The building shall be formed in a monopitched structural steel frame supported from strengthened foundations on the existing building and a new line of columns on the southern side. The roof shall be clad in Kingspan panels with mocrorib cold store panel walls.

The building shall be formed with a multi-span structural steel portal frame spanning east-west on 6m grids in a north-south direction. These frames shall be supported from ground bearing pad foundations and shall support standard trapezoidal insulated roof containing 100 mm insulation spanning between cold rolled purlins.

Lateral stability to these frames shall be provided in the non-span direction by a system of a

roof and wall bracing and in the span direction by the portalisation of the frames.

The extended wall construction shall be integral to the internal walling system with the main steelwork columns being exposed on the outside of the building and flashed at their head by an additional horizontally spanning long span micro rib insulated panel wall which shall further enclose a hidden gutter behind a small parapet wall. Hot rolled steel sections shall be installed around doors to support the panels as they are trimmed to form opes.

In general, throughout the pack house building it is proposed to install a ceiling and wall system comprising a proprietary insulated core composite panel steel faced with a polyester finish such as the Kingspan Ultratech KS1100 CS panel with a micro rib finish which has been designed specifically for food-production environments.

The insulated core is formed with 100mm PIR or quadcore which features an environmentally sustainable closed-cell PIR insulation core which is non-deleterious with Zero Ozone Depletion Potential (Zero ODP) with mineral wool being utilized where fire resistance is required. The external skin of the panel shall be formed with continuously hot dip coated strip and sheet of structural steel and finished coat of Kingspan clean safe 55 on the production room side which is a polyester coating suitable for moderately aggressive internal environments, providing good chemical and humidity corrosion resistance. The Polyester coating measures 25µm with an overall Nominal thickness of 0.63mm including coating and Protection film.

The walls will be 100mm thick, with 50mm thick encasing internal columns. The ceilings will be 125mm thick and suspended at 6.0 m centres from the main portal rafters above.

All internal corners shall be coved using proprietary cove material. Return air plenums shall be installed at 6000mm centers on the outside walls of the clean room and shall be formed with a single 50mm thick panel which shall be cut on one face and bent to provide a three-sided shape thus effecting good air movement within the Production Space. These plenums shall in turn be flashed and sealed against the Production room Wall.

Integral to the system is flush-fitting food safe personnel doors sliding doors with a clear opening size of 1800mm wide x 2400mm high to provide access between the various rooms shall be installed throughout the area. The floors shall be prepared through a system of sandblasting and coated with a variety of finishes. Within areas such as packing, chill store and dispatch a dry shake hardener and sealer shall be installed.

5.2 Proposed Store

The proposed store will be located on the western side of the existing building and will extend eastwards from Store A to the proposed dispatch area. It will be accommodated within the existing building envelope and enclosed using the insulated panel wall and ceiling system described below.

The building shall be formed with a multi-span structural steel portal frame spanning east–west on 6m grids in a north–south direction. These frames shall be supported from ground bearing pad foundations and shall support standard trapezoidal insulated roof containing 100 mm insulation spanning between cold rolled purlins.

Lateral stability to these frames shall be provided in the non-span direction by a system of a roof and wall bracing and in the span direction by the portalisation of the frames.

The extended wall construction shall be integral to the internal walling system with the main steelwork columns being exposed on the outside of the building and flashed at their head by an additional horizontally spanning long span micro rib insulated panel wall which shall further enclose a hidden gutter behind a small parapet wall. Hot rolled steel sections shall be installed around doors to support the panels as they are trimmed to form opes.

In general, throughout the pack house building it is proposed to install a ceiling and wall system comprising a proprietary insulated core composite panel steel faced with a polyester finish such as the Kingspan Ultratech KS1100 CS panel with a micro rib finish which has been designed specifically for food-production environments.

The insulated core is formed with 100mm PIR or quadcore which features an environmentally sustainable closed-cell PIR insulation core which is non-deleterious with Zero Ozone Depletion Potential (Zero ODP) with mineral wool being utilized where fire resistance is required. The external skin of the panel shall be formed with continuously hot dip coated strip and sheet of structural steel and finished coat of Kingspan clean safe 55 on the production room side which is a polyester coating suitable for moderately aggressive internal environments, providing good chemical and humidity corrosion resistance. The Polyester coating measures 25µm with an overall Nominal thickness of 0.63mm including coating and Protection film.

The walls will be 100mm thick, with 50mm thick encasing internal columns. The ceilings will be 125mm thick and suspended at 6.0 m centres from the main portal rafters above.

All internal corners shall be coved using proprietary cove material. Return air plenums shall be installed at 6000mm centers on the outside walls of the clean room and shall be formed with a single 50mm thick panel which shall be cut on one face and bent to provide a three-sided shape thus effecting good air movement within the Production Space. These plenums shall in turn be flashed and sealed against the Production room Wall.

Integral to the system is flush-fitting food safe personnel doors sliding doors with a clear opening size of 1800mm wide x 2400mm high to provide access between the various rooms shall be installed throughout the area. The floors shall be prepared through a system of sandblasting and coated with a variety of finishes. Within areas such as packing, chill store and dispatch a dry shake hardener and sealer shall be installed.

5.3 Proposed Dispatch Area

The Proposed Dispatch Area shall be located on the northern side of the existing building. The extension shall be formed in a monopitched structural steel frame supported from strengthened existing foundations on the existing building and a new line of columns at the Northern side. The roof shall be clad in Kingspan KS 1000 RW panels with CS Microrib panels forming the walls.

The building shall be formed with a multi-span structural steel portal frame spanning east–west on 6m grids in a north–south direction. These frames shall be supported from ground bearing pad foundations and shall support standard trapezoidal insulated roof containing 100 mm insulation spanning between cold rolled purlins.

Lateral stability to these frames shall be provided in the non-span direction by a system of a roof and wall bracing and in the span direction by the portalisation of the frames.

The extended wall construction shall be integral to the internal walling system with the main steelwork columns being exposed on the outside of the building and flashed at their head by an additional horizontally spanning long span micro rib insulated panel wall which shall further enclose a hidden gutter behind a small parapet wall. Hot rolled steel sections shall be installed around doors to support the panels as they are trimmed to form opes.

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Integral to the system is flush-fitting food safe personnel doors sliding doors with a clear opening size of 1800mm wide x 2400mm high to provide access between the various rooms shall be installed throughout the area. The floors shall be prepared through a system of sandblasting and coated with a variety of finishes. Within areas such as packing, chill store and dispatch a dry shake hardener and sealer shall be installed.

5.4 Tray Returns Area

The Tray Returns and Wash Area shall be formed with a monopitched external roof. It shall be extended alongside the east side of the building.

6. LANDSCAPING

The proposed development represents a minor and contained increase to the existing operational infrastructure at Norfolk House Farm. It is located within the established built complex and is remote from existing trees, hedgerows, woodland, watercourses and other established landscape features. The works will therefore be read in the context of the existing agricultural buildings and are not expected to result in the loss of, or material effect on, the principal landscape and habitat features of the wider holding. This approach accords with Local Plan Policies 3 and 23 by responding to the site's established character and avoiding harm to valued landscape and biodiversity assets.

Where the connection to the existing internal road requires the temporary removal or disturbance of verge planting or associated soft landscaping, the affected area will be reinstated and augmented with appropriate native planting. The works will be confined to the minimum area necessary to form the connection, with existing landscape and habitat features retained and protected wherever practicable. Any disturbed ground will be made good promptly so that the road connection integrates with its existing setting and does not create a lasting break in adjoining vegetation.

This proportionate approach should be considered in the context of JEPCO's wider biodiversity and environmental stewardship. As outlined on [JEPCO's stewardship webpage](#), the business has dedicated 127 acres to two environmental schemes intended to maintain and improve the ecosystem. The schemes incorporate reed-bed recreation, new woodland, pollen and nectar mixes and buffer strips alongside watercourses, providing a connected range of wetland, woodland, pollinator and riparian habitats across the wider holding.

These managed areas provide habitat for Red Listed birds including Cuckoo, Curlew, Mistle Thrush, Kingfisher, Yellowhammer and Spotted Flycatcher, together with breeding raptors; JEPCO also maintains 35 owl boxes within its carefully managed woodland. The stewardship programme extends to water conservation: JEPCO states that it captures and conserves water through rainfall harvesting, seepage systems and technologies such as hydroponic growing, thereby reducing the environmental impact of its operations. The company's environmental work has been recognised through the Silver Lapwing Award, the AW Water Management Award, the Lincolnshire Environmental Award and its status as a Waitrose Demonstration Farm for biodiversity. Against that established background, the limited scale and contained location of the present development, together with reinstatement and augmentation of any locally affected planting, will avoid material landscape harm and remain consistent with JEPCO's continuing commitment to biodiversity enhancement, water stewardship and responsible land management.

JEPCO's established stewardship programme provides substantial evidence of the company's long-term commitment to biodiversity enhancement and responsible land management and is a material consideration in assessing the proposal against Local Plan Policy 23. It does not, however, itself disapply the statutory biodiversity gain condition. If the application site is no more than 0.2 hectares, or the proposal otherwise falls within a statutory exemption—such as the applicable de minimis threshold—and no priority habitat is adversely affected, the application should identify and evidence that exemption. In that circumstance, a statutory biodiversity metric and Biodiversity Gain Plan would not be required, while the retention, protection, reinstatement and native enhancement measures described above would remain part of the proposal's positive environmental case.

7. SITE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

The proposal is an upgrade to the existing salad storage and dispatch operation at Norfolk House Farm. Its purpose is to improve product quality and cold-chain performance by providing better temperature-controlled intake, storage and dispatch arrangements. It does not increase crop production, processing throughput or the volume of goods handled at the site.

All vehicle movements associated with the upgraded facility already occur as part of JEPCO's established operations. Since the project will not increase production or dispatch volumes, it will not generate any increase in staff cars, service vehicles, deliveries or HGV movements above current levels. The nature, frequency and routing of traffic on the B1359 and the wider highway network will therefore remain materially unchanged.

The access and circulation arrangements previously described in this section related to the approved hydroponic grow-centre development on adjoining JEPCO land and do not form part of the operational justification for this application. This proposal does not seek a new primary access, a general redistribution of site traffic or the access works associated with that separate development.

The only connection with the previously approved access scheme is the proposed use of its entrance road as an egress route for dispatch vehicles leaving the upgraded facility. Dispatch vehicles will travel from the existing dispatch area along the internal site road and leave by that approved route. Other existing access arrangements will continue to operate as at present.

Using the approved road for outbound dispatch traffic will provide a clear and direct route away from the operational yard, reduce interaction between departing HGVs and other internal movements, and improve circulation without adding vehicle trips to the local highway network. The proposal is therefore neutral in traffic-generation and parking-demand terms and represents an operational and safety improvement rather than an expansion of activity. Subject to the submitted access drawing demonstrating suitable geometry, visibility, surfacing and safe manoeuvring, the arrangement is consistent with Local Plan Policies 2, 28 and 30.

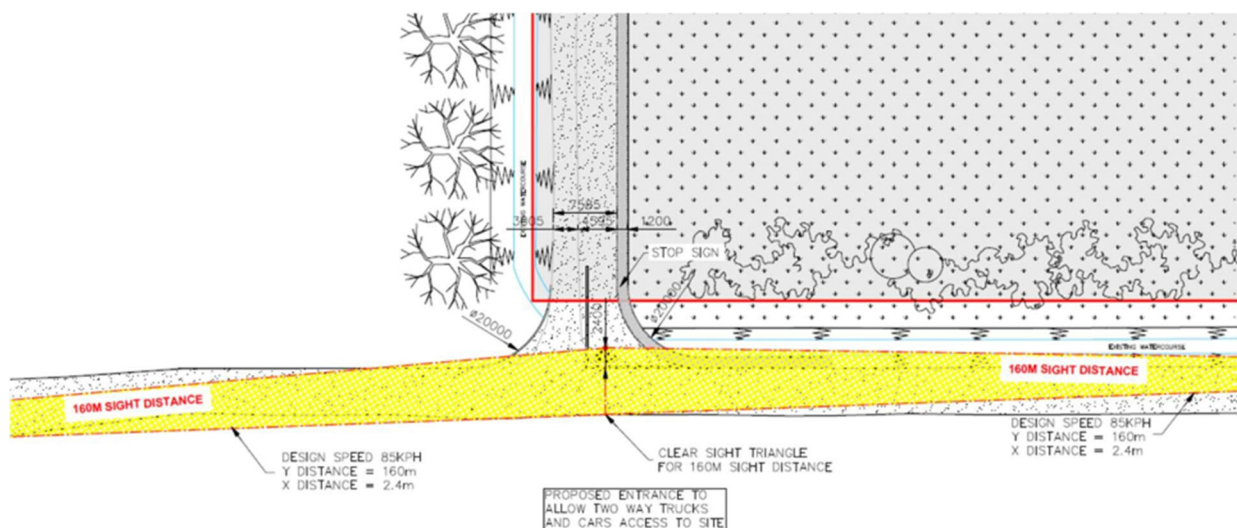


Figure 5 Approved Entrance Layout.

8. PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT AND SUMMARY

Principle and economic role. J E Piccaver & Co (JEPCO) proposes a proportionate upgrade of its established salad storage and dispatch facilities at Norfolk House Farm. The scheme consolidates existing rural employment activity and improves the quality, resilience and efficiency of the food supply chain without increasing production throughput. It therefore supports the Local Plan's presumption in favour of sustainable development and its objective of maintaining a diverse and competitive employment base. The countryside location is operationally necessary because the facilities serve crops grown on the holding and are physically and functionally connected to the existing farm complex.

Design, amenity and environmental performance. The temperature-controlled crop-intake area, chill store, dispatch area, tray-return and washing facilities, refrigeration plant rooms, hardstanding and access works are grouped with the existing buildings and use an agricultural/industrial form and material palette appropriate to the operational setting. The arrangement improves hygiene and cold-chain continuity while limiting additional built form and land take. Detailed drawings should demonstrate coherent scale, massing, materials, boundary treatment, lighting and servicing in accordance with Policies 2 and 3. Any plant, refrigeration, extraction or external lighting should be designed and controlled so that noise, odour, glare and other effects do not materially harm neighbouring amenity or the natural environment, consistent with Policy 25. The application should also be supported by the flood-risk and surface-water drainage information required by Policy 4 and the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, demonstrating safe development, no increase in flood risk elsewhere and an appropriate attenuation and maintenance strategy.

Landscape, biodiversity and transport. The development is contained within the established complex and is remote from the principal trees, hedgerows, woodland, watercourses and other landscape features of the holding. Retention and protection of those features, together with reinstatement and native enhancement where the internal-road connection disturbs verge planting, responds positively to Policy 23 and complements JEPCO's substantial existing stewardship interventions. Those interventions do not themselves remove the statutory biodiversity gain requirement; where the proposal meets a statutory exemption, including the exemption for a development site of no more than 0.2 hectares or the applicable de minimis exemption, the submitted application should identify and evidence that basis. Vehicle and parking demand will remain at current levels because the proposal improves product handling rather than increasing output. Use of the previously approved entrance road solely for dispatch-vehicle egress will improve internal circulation and safety without increasing trips, subject to an access plan confirming appropriate geometry and visibility. On the evidence set out in this statement, and subject to the accompanying plans and proportionate technical reports confirming flood risk, drainage, amenity and access matters, the proposal accords with the relevant provisions of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan when read as a whole.