Naylor Flowers Limited

Planning, Design and Access Statement
Erection of a Proposed Flower Packhouse and Store on Land at Vickers Farm, Washway Road, Moulton Marsh, Spalding, PE12 6LP

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDINGS 3

3. PLANNING POLICY 4

4. DESIGN AND ACCESS 7

5. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS 11

6. CONCLUSIONS 12

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by the Robert Doughty Consultancy Ltd on behalf of Naylor Flowers Limited to support a Full Planning Application for the erection of a proposed flower packhouse and store in connection with the applicant's horticultural (cut flower) business.

1.2. Naylor Flowers Limited is a privately-owned family farming partnership based in Mouton Seas End since the 1940s. It is member of the Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) Marque, which is a leading global assurance system recognising more environmentally sustainably farmed products. The marque is held by farm businesses which meet LEAF's rigorous standards of sustainable farming practice.

1.3. In the UK, cut flowers are supplied to the supermarkets via agents who negotiate contracts between grower and retailer.

1.4. Naylor Flowers developed the site at Sycamore Farm, Moulton Seas End to supply Aldi and the Co-Operative (via agents, JZ Flowers Ltd). The Aldi business keeps growing with their new store openings around the country. From 2022, the Co-Operative will not be working with JZ Flowers, however, Naylor Flowers has been fortunate to retain the contract (via agents, MM Flowers Ltd) as well as securing business with Marks & Spencer which has necessitated the expansion proposed at Vickers Farm.

1.5. The Vickers Farm site was chosen because it has excellent access directly on to the A17 and because it is surrounded by 150ha of land which can be accessed from the farm without taking tractors and trailers on to the main road.

1.6. The business produces over 60 million stems of flowers each year and is a leading producer in the British flower industry. The project represents a £5m investment in the expansion of the business.

1.7. There are many macro-economic factors that are creating growth opportunities for British farmers and flower growers – including the need to reduce carbon emissions, the weakening of sterling, the diversion of Dutch flowers into emerging economies and the return of British consumer interest in home-grown produce. These opportunities are particularly great in South Lincolnshire where the soil, infrastructure,

transport links and pool of knowledge and skilled labour are concentrated better than anywhere else in the UK.

1.8. The dominance of a small number of large, national retailers and the shift towards online shopping favour the development of large and established farming/fresh produce businesses who have the scale and experience to invest in facilities that are efficient and able to provide the best working conditions.

1.9. Packing flowers close to where they are grown is essential, both environmentally and from a quality perspective

1.10. The shift towards away from unskilled jobs towards skills-based careers and better wages, is leading businesses like Naylor Flowers to focus on adding value to their products such as more creative bouquet designs. This requires the correct facilities in which the company can operate efficiently and have the ability to accommodate the huge changes which are anticipated as online shopping and low carbon transport become the norm.

2. APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1. Vickers Farm is an established part of the Naylor Flowers Limited's holding, comprising two horticultural stores, one of which includes a workshop and office, and a pair of dwellings used to house agricultural workers. There is also an extant planning permission for temporary workers accommodation north of the pair of the semidetached houses. It is proposed to provide this accommodation as part of the new packhouse development promoted here.

2.2. There are a number of trees along the northern boundary of the site where there is a field drain and a mature hedgerow along part of the western boundary, adjacent to the A17 , neither of which are impacted upon by the proposal.

2.3. The application site is generally flat and save from a low earth bund along the eastern boundary, there are no other features of note.

2.4. There is an existing access to Washway Road (A17) which will be improved and a recently concreted track into the main body of the farmstead.

2.5. The surrounding land is predominantly horticultural under the control of the applicant.

2.6. The Emmett UK vegetable processing building and fenced curtilage lies to the north.

3. PLANNING POLICY

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK POLICY (NPPF)

3.1. The NPPF sets out Central Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

3.2. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF confirms the commitment to sustainable development based on three dimensions:

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

c) **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."

3.3. This is followed by a commitment to a presumption in favour of sustainable development, with paragraph 11 stating,

"For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) 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:

i. 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

ii. 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."

3.4. Paragraph 38 confirms this to be the case stating decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development wherever possible.

3.5. The NPPF commits to supporting a prosperous rural economy, with paragraph 83 stating 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."

3.6. Paragraph 84 also confirms this commitment by stating:

> "Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport)."

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

3.7. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that, "If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

3.8. In terms of planning policy, the Development Plan for the purposes of the application is the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan adopted in 2019.

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan

3.9. The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 (Local Plan) at paragraph 2.4.5 identifies agriculture as a key employment sector in the Region and its horticultural business as the second most important in the UK.

3.10. Policy 1: Spatial Strategy, requires that development in the countryside must demonstrate that it meets the sustainable development needs of

the area in terms of economic, community or environmental benefits. The policy identifies that agricultural uses require a rural location.

3.11. Policy 2: Development Management considers the sustainability of proposals and amongst other criteria, the size, scale, layout, character and appearance of the area and relationship to existing land uses. The policy goes on to consider access and vehicle generation levels, sustainable drainage and flood risk, visual intrusion, noise, odour and visual intrusion.

3.12. The Local Plan Policy 7 focusses on improving the economic prosperity of the district and key to this is supporting agri-business and the food industry.

4. DESIGN AND ACCESS

Use

4.1. The proposal is for the erection of a proposed packhouse and store, together with staff welfare facilities.

4.2. The application site is an existing farmstead where Naylor Flowers Limited operates from and the surrounding 150ha is used to grow a variety of cut flowers which traditionally would have been transported to the Sycamore Farm base just north of Moulton-Seas-End.

4.3. It is proposed to erect a new packhouse with storage facilities to handle the cut flowers grown on the farm and to meet the growth of the business, which at present is 15%-20% per annum. Further land owned by the Crown will be brought into production to add to the existing areas of production to enable the future expansion of the business.

4.4. Locating the new building on site has the advantage of good transport links for getting the produce to the customer, but also avoids the need to run agricultural tractors and trailers on the public highway from east to west across the A17), were the building to be located at Sycamore Farm.

4.5. This development is, therefore, appropriate having regard to the existing horticultural use of the site and is therefore in accordance with LP Policy 1.

Appearance and scale

4.6. The proposed development measures 84m long, 61m wide and 6m to the eaves and 8.7m to the ridge with a 10 degree pitch. The building will consist of two parallel pitched roofs. The significant roofscape will be used to full advantage for photovoltaic cells on the outer eastern and western elevations to assist in the generation of renewable energy.

4.7. The side cladding will consist of plastisol coated Goosewing grey metal box profile sheeting with a grey roof to match the existing buildings on site. There will be photovoltaic panels on the outer, eastern and western roof planes.

4.8. Sunken loading bays will be constructed on the southern elevation to facilitate easy loading and the fresh produce will enter the new building from a door on the western elevation.

4.9. With regard to scale, the proposal is like many other agricultural buildings seen across the district and is of a typical construction and appearance, to cater for modern agricultural machinery and for the distribution of produce to the customer.

4.10. The proposal therefore complies with Local Plan policy 3.

Landscaping

4.11. There is some roadside planting adjacent to the A17/Washway Road and boundary trees on the northern boundary. The southern and eastern boundaries are open.

4.12. There are no public footpaths around the site and public views from the A17/Washway Road are fleeting. When approaching the site from either the north or the south, the alignment of the A17/Washway Road is such that there are no long-distance views of the site from either direction. There are no nearby residential properties and no heritage assets that will be impacted on.

4.13. In the event that the local planning authority consider that additional planting is necessary, this can be secured via a suitably worded condition.

TRANSPORT STATEMENT

4.14. At present, all the flower production from the surrounding 150ha of land once harvested is taken by agricultural tractor and trailer across the A17 and down Common Road to Sycamore Farm closer to the village of Moulton Seas End, approximately 3.3km away.

4.15. The flower production is growing year on year by approximately 15-20% so there is a critical need for better facilities to meet demand and to provide a more efficient horticultural operation.

4.16. Presently, there are between 3 and 6 HGV movements a day and around 30 tractor and trailer movements per day from the application site. There are seasonal spikes most notably Valentine's Day and Mother's Day.

4.17. There is presently no staff accommodation on application site. The applicant company has its own in-house labour agency in order to maintain a reliable skill level and to ensure a good standard of welfare for its employees. The majority of these employees live in Boston and arrive at the application site using car share.

4.18. The new building will generate a further 6 HGV movements per day which will be a net increase over the existing, irrespective of whether the new packhouse and store is constructed at Vickers Farm or Sycamore Farm. Of greatest note will be the reduction in slow-moving agricultural traffic crossing the A17/Washway Road. The agricultural traffic movements are expected to increase as the business grows and, therefore, the movements to and from Sycamore Farm would increase, in the event that the new packhouse was erected there. The table below shows the existing and predicted traffic movements.

TABLE SHOWING DAILY MOVEMENTS OF STAFF AND VEHICLES

	TRACTORS & TRAILERS	HGVS	STAFF
Existing Movements	30	4-6	10-15 car share movements
Proposed Total Movements	15	18	25-30 car share movements

4.19. With regard to staff numbers, there is planning permission to have staff living on site, whereas at present, they all arrive by car. There is planning permission for temporary workers accommodation and for the change of use of the existing semi-detached houses on site to be used as a house in multiple occupation. There will, therefore, be 27 members of staff living on site. There are currently 30 members of staff on site and in the fields and this will rise to 70 of whom 27 of the additional 40 will be living on site. There will also be an additional 40 members of staff needed at seasonal peaks such as on Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. It is a little difficult to exactly state how many additional staff vehicle movements there will be as much depends on the level of car sharing.

4.20. In terms of the directional split of HGVs entering and leaving the site, it is anticipated that all the additional HGV movements will arrive from the Fosdyke direction and leave in the same direction, so left in and right out. The destinations are supermarket distribution centres which are either north or south and accordingly, HGV's need to access the A1. This is also the current pattern of use.

4.21. On a wider sustainability note, growing more flowers in this country does reduce the reliance on importing cut flowers from Holland in particular. Now that the ramifications of the Brexit arrangements are being felt,

there will be an ever-increasing requirement (and opportunity) to switch production to this country.

5. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1. A flood Risk Assessment has been produced and this concludes that the proposal will not be at risk of flooding and a surface water drainage strategy provides for as much rainwater as possible to be retained on site, as this represents a valuable resource for the applicant company. In sequential terms, the proposal is located adjacent to the farmland where the production will take place and, therefore, Vickers Farm represents the most sustainable location for the proposal.

5.2. The application site is devoid of any natural features which might have any ecological value and it is not proposed to demolish any buildings which may accommodate protected species. The surface water drainage lagoon is proposed to be constructed such that it will add biodiversity to the site with margin planting and trees which can be secured via a suitably worded planning condition.

5.3. There are no nearby neighbours (the nearest is some 350m to the south alongside the A17) and so there will be no impact on residential occupiers.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Naylor Flowers Limited has been in operation since the 1940s and is a well-established local horticultural and agricultural business with major national retailers amongst its clients.

6.2. Vickers Farm is surrounded by land under cultivation by the applicant company and provides the most suitable and sustainable location for the proposed building.

6.3. There will be no detrimental impact arising from the proposal and expansion of the horticultural business at Vickers Farm will reduce the number of slow-moving agricultural vehicles using the A17.

6.4. The site is open farmyard and there are no natural features of note on site.

6.5. The proposal represents a sustainable form of development, one that is essential for the applicant company and the UK flower industry and that demands a rural location adjacent to the existing agricultural/horticultural and the A17.

rdc
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