

Your ref: H15-1023-20
Our ref: 1456 1 LMS MAG

21 April 2021

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For the attention of Mr D Grant

Planning Manager
South Holland District Council
Priory Road
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE11 2XE

Dear Sir

**J B ROBINSON & SON
USE OF BUILDING FOR STORAGE FOR OFF SITE PRODUCE (FOR PART OF THE
YEAR)
PROVIDENCE HOUSE, NORTH DROVE, QUADRING FEN, PE11 4QS**

We are instructed by J B Robinson & Son in the above matter. We understand that the planning application was submitted following discussions with the local planning authority.

The applicant farms some 348ha of land for cut flowers, 145ha for cereals and 61ha for potatoes. Providence House is the principal farmstead and consists of a number of modern agricultural stores, some of which are chilled. The buildings (excluding offices and plant rooms) equate to approximately 4,720sqm. The building, which is used for only parts of the year to store third party produce, the subject of this application, is 720sqm, or roughly 15% of the total floorspace.

Like every other agricultural and horticultural business in the country, there are seasonal peaks and troughs in production and occasionally poor weather can see whole flower crops destroyed (recently 16ha of planted flowers was lost in one freak weather incident). Like many other producers, the farming company ensures that the buildings are made best use of rather than standing empty for parts of the year. The building which is the subject of this application is a modern chilled facility and is, therefore, particularly useful for storing the type of perishable, non-native or out of season produce routinely imported into this country in order to satisfy customer demands. Accordingly, when it is known that the building in question is likely to be under-utilised, the applicant will store third-party produce such as oranges, grapes, broccoli, and calabrese. The time/periods when the building is used for this type of storage varies throughout the year, but it is for only parts of the year. The produce can only be stored one pallet high because each pallet contains pre-packed produce and cannot, therefore, be stacked on top of each other. Depending on the type of produce, the store will hold up to 300-350 tonnes. By way of comparison, when the building is used to store the applicant's own potatoes, these are stored 6 high at the eaves and the building will hold 1200 tonnes.



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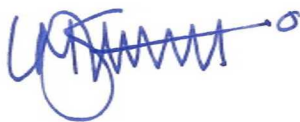
Each year, the applicant's farming and horticultural activities generate approximately 25,000 boxes of Sunflowers, 2 million stems of Snowberry which equates to 4,000 boxes, 1.5 million stems or 1000 boxes of Hypericum, 2,000 boxes of Sweet William, 700 boxes or ornamental brassica flowers grown across 348ha, 3,750 tonnes of potatoes across 61ha and 1,250 tonnes of cereal grain across 145ha. To put the third-party storage into perspective, it uses 15% of the floorspace available on the farming complex to store between 300 and 350 tonnes of third party produce for probably no more than 6-8 weeks; or around 5% of the year. The traffic generation associated with the proposal also makes up a small percentage of the use of the building in question and an even smaller percentage of that attributable to the planning unit.

The planning unit consists of the farmstead with all its buildings and the principal use of the site is easily identified as agricultural. The site is in a single ownership and the building in question forms part of the planning unit being used in the main for agriculture.

It is most likely, therefore, that despite the local planning authority's insistence that a planning application be submitted, it does not appear that a material change of use requiring planning permission has actually taken place. This conclusion is in part informed by the recent consideration by the local planning authority of a case at Fleet (H05-0851-20) where the planning officer indicated that, *"The approach normally taken is that the majority of the produce, in this case potatoes, should be grown on the agricultural holding. I understand that appeal decisions relating to similar proposals have in the past used a rough figure of 80%"*. We estimate that in excess of 95% of produce stored at Providence House is grown on the holding.

We should, therefore, be grateful for the local planning authority's comments on whether, based on the information set out here, there remains a case for the need to apply for planning permission for this modest operation.

Yours faithfully



Lewis M Smith MRTPI



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