



# PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

on behalf of Alfred G Pearce Ltd.

Erection of new cold storage building.  
Alterations to existing store to form a new packing shed.

Middle Farm, Wormegay, Kings Lynn, Norfolk.

Prepared by: Nick Moys, Associate Partner

For and on behalf of Brown & Co.

*Brown & Co is a leading provider of agency, professional and consultancy services across the whole range of rural, commercial, residential, and agricultural markets.*

Date: June 2022

Reference: PP22/41030

## INTRODUCTION

**1.1** This Planning Statement has been prepared by Brown & Co to support a full planning application submitted on behalf of Alfred G Pearce Ltd for building works at their vegetable processing plant at Middle Farm, Wormegay.

**1.2** Middle Farm is a vegetable processing plant located close to the centre of Wormegay. The plant is operated by Alfred G Pearce Limited, who have occupied the site for more than 25 years. Alfred G Pearce is a family-run business supplying the food industry with processed vegetables. Around 50 people are employed at the Middle Farm plant typically, although this figure can increase to around 80 people at peak times, such as the Christmas period.

**1.3** There are two principal elements to the proposed development:

- i. alterations/extensions to an existing cold store and its re-use as new packing shed; and
- ii. the erection of a new cold store building.

**1.4** The purpose of this statement is to set out the background to the applicant's proposals and the key planning issues raised by them.

**1.5** This statement should be read in conjunction with the following application documents submitted as part of the outline application:

- Planning application form;
- Site location plan (22-041030-02);
- Proposed Site Layout Plan (22-041030-05);
- Proposed Chill Store Plan/Section
- Proposed Chill Store Elevations
- Proposed extension to existing chill store-proposed plans and section (E13686/1)
- Proposed extension to existing chill store-proposed elevations
- Noise Report (Create Consulting)

## APPLICATION SITE

**2.1** The vegetable processing plant operated by A G Pearce Ltd occupies around 1.3 hectares of land on the southern edge of the Wormegay. Existing buildings include the main processing plant, offices, staff facilities, workshop/stores and a cold store. Access to the site is gained from Castle Road. The site is bounded to the north by residential development and to the south and west by open countryside.

**2.3** The existing cold store is located in the south-east corner of the site, to the rear of the main processing building. The building is adjoined to the north and west by areas of concrete hardstanding; whilst to the south and east there are open fields.

**2.4** The site of the proposed cold store presently forms part of the open yard serving the business, and includes part of an existing effluent plant which is now defunct. There are areas of hardstanding to the south and east, and are open fields to the west beyond the remainder of the effluent plant. To north is a building used for washing vegetable containers and the staff car park.

**2.5** The site of the proposed storage buildings falls outside but immediately adjacent to the development boundary for Wormegay, as defined in the Local Plan.

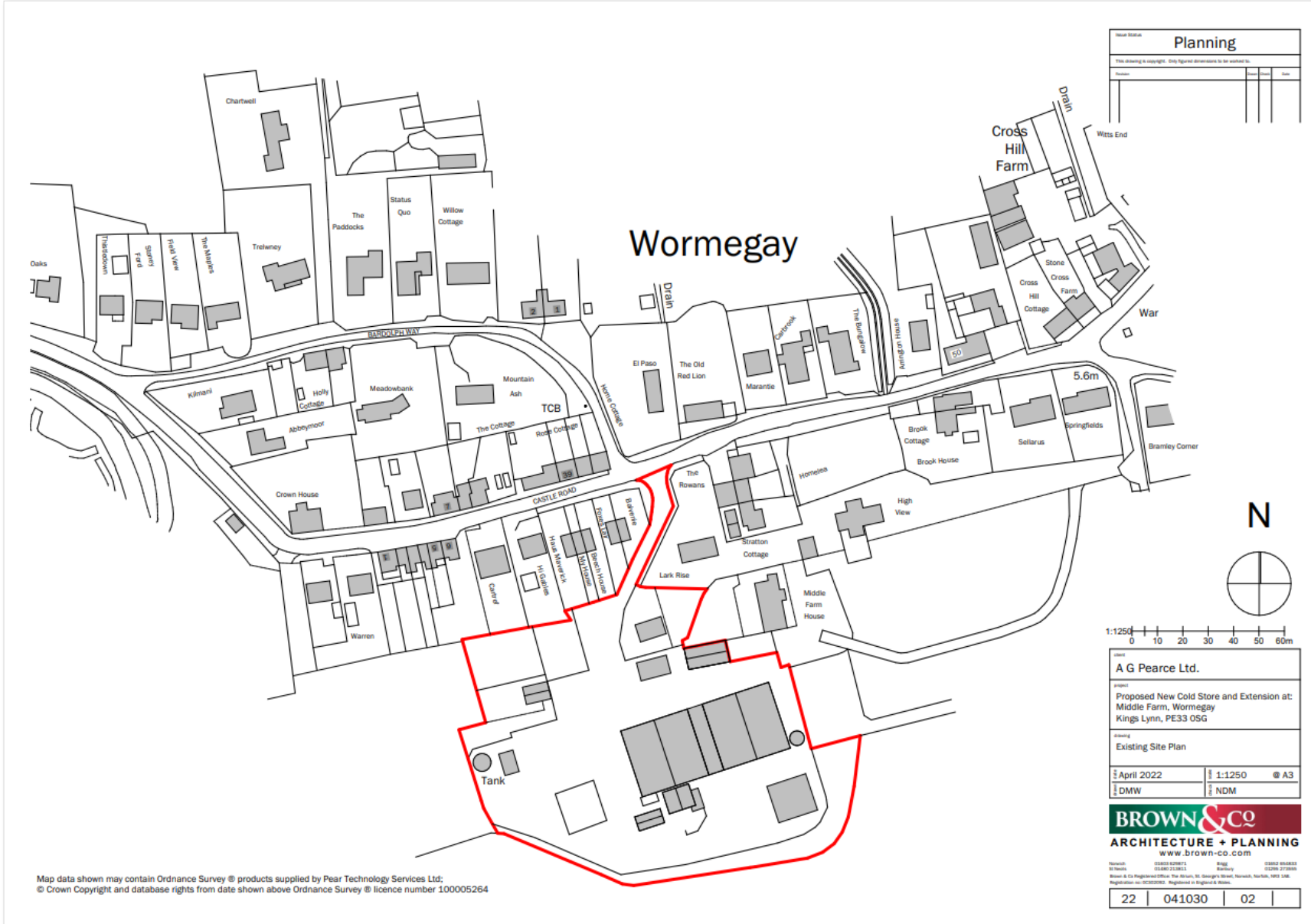


Figure 1 - Existing Site Plan

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

**3.1** Lean-to extensions are proposed to the side and rear of the existing cold store building to enable its use as a packing shed. A new roller shutter entrance would be provided in the side extension, with staff facilities and a workshop located to the rear. The extensions would be clad externally in metal profiled sheeting to match the existing building. The proposed additions would increase the footprint of the building by around 103m<sup>2</sup>. The existing cold store building would be adapted for use for vegetable packing.

**3.2** The proposed new cold store building would be very similar in size and appearance to the existing cold store. The building would be around 16 metres long and 15 metres wide, with a maximum height of 5.5 metres. It would be clad in profiled metal sheeting in olive green to the walls and goosewing grey to the roof. The main access to the building would be located in the south elevation. External cooling plant would also be positioned on the southern elevation.

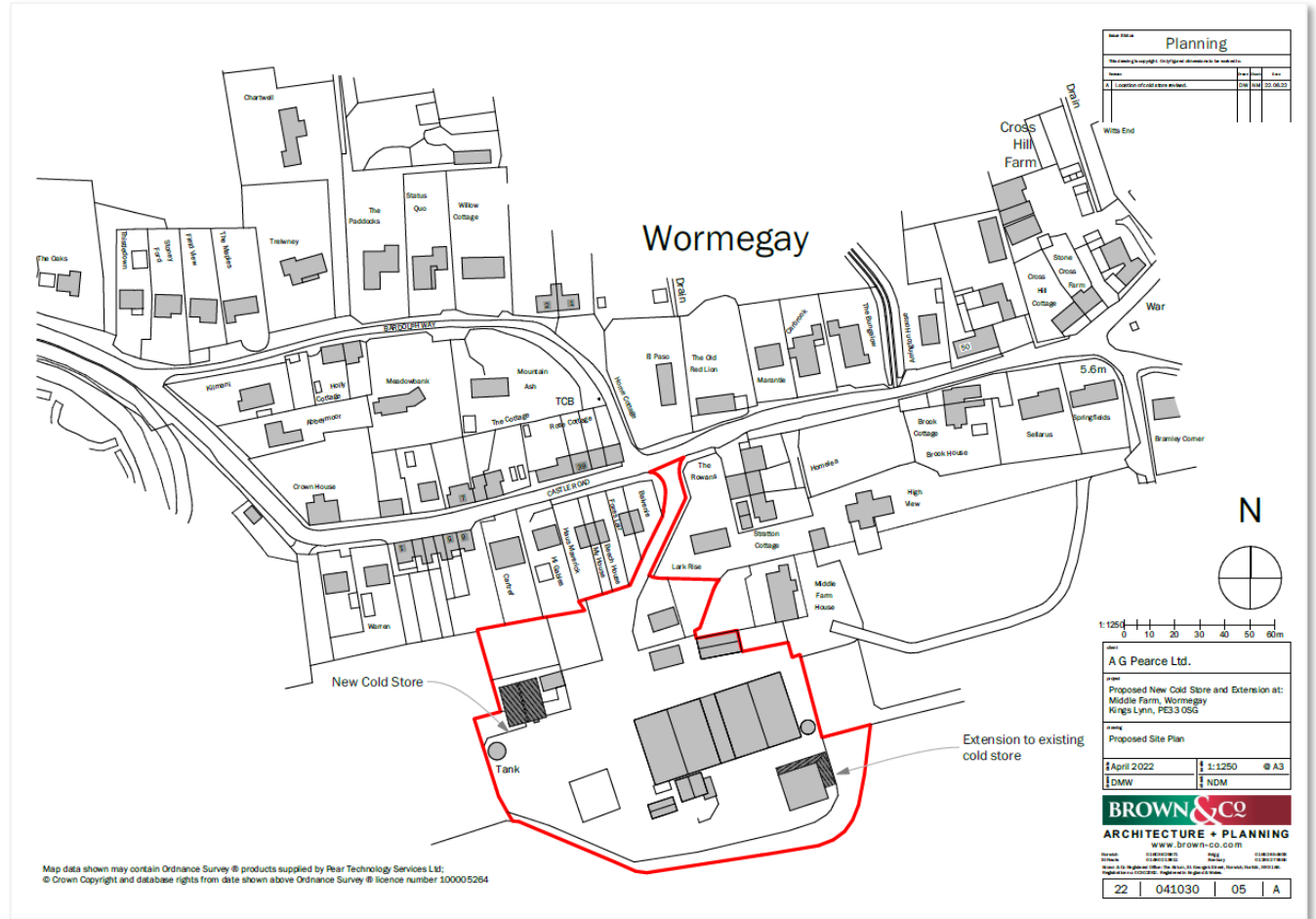


Figure 2 - Proposed Site Plan

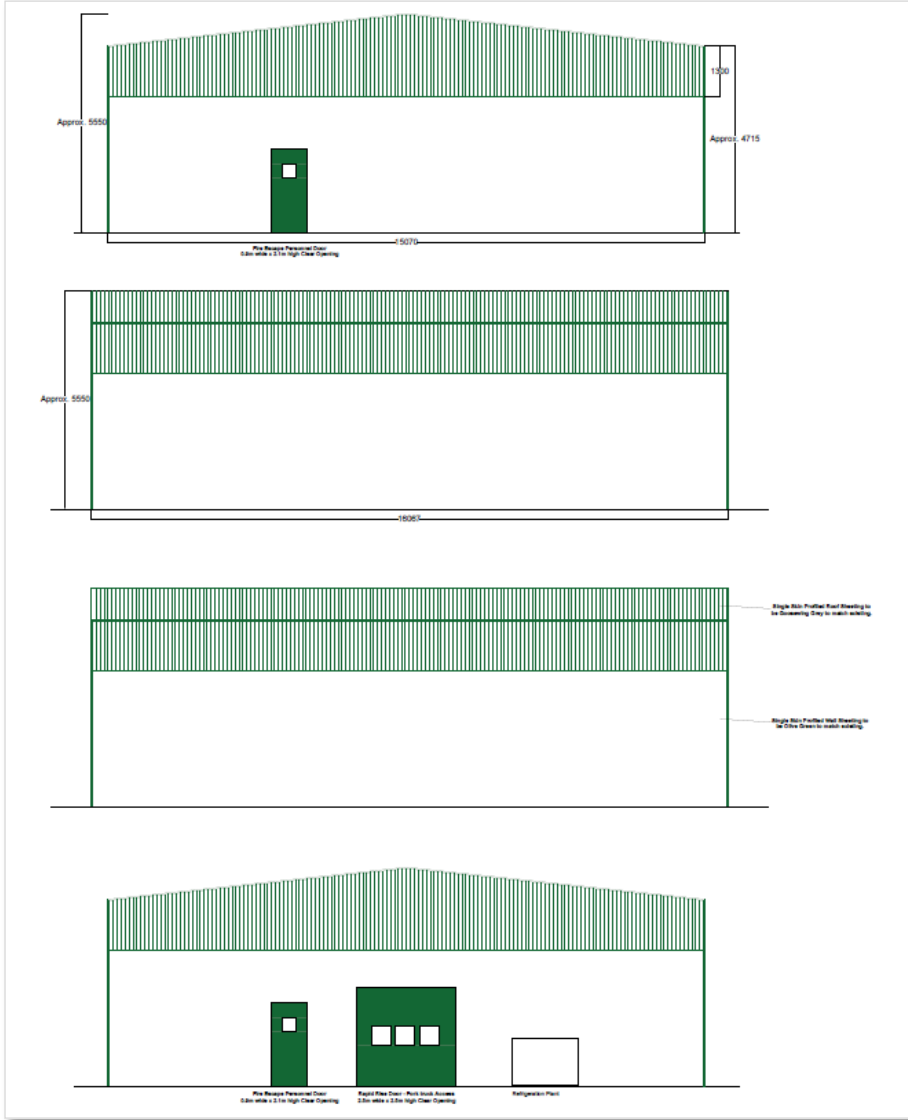


Figure 3 - Proposed cold store elevations

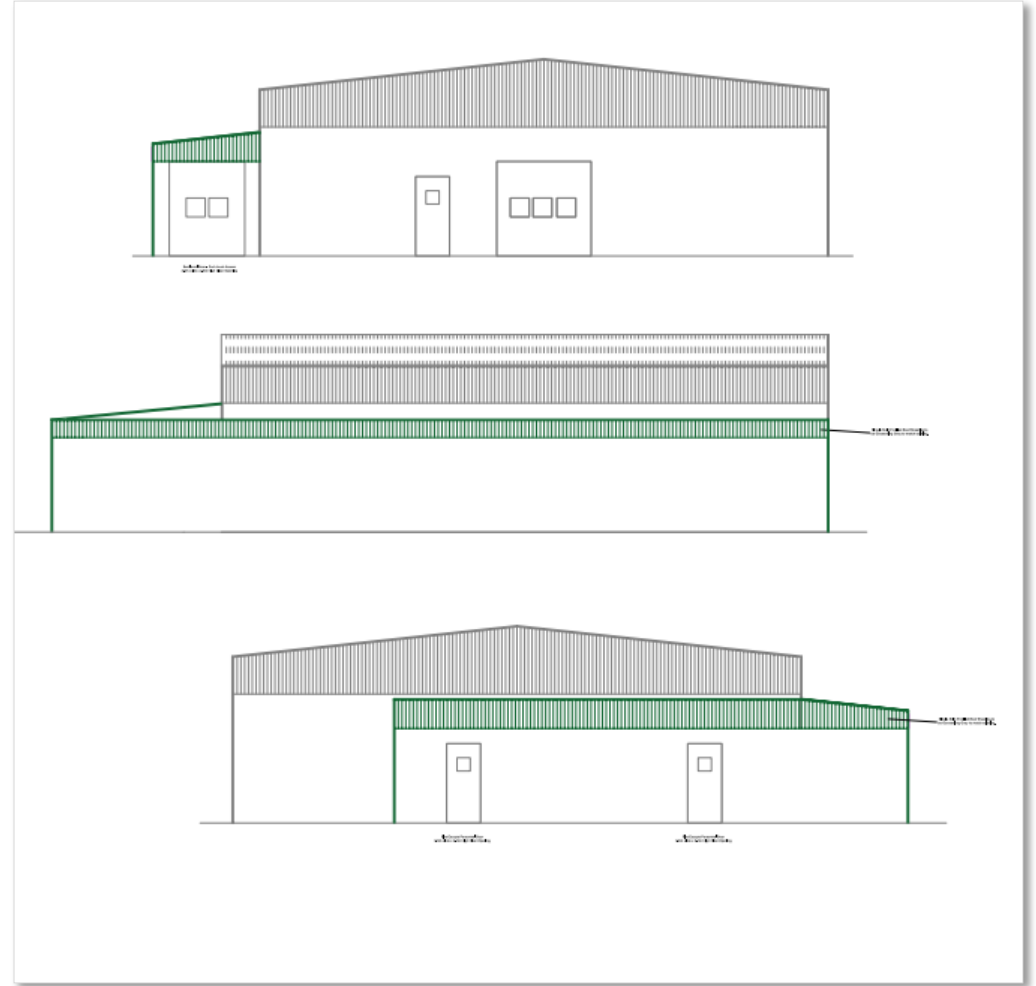


Figure 4 - Proposed alterations to existing cold store to form packing shed

## PLANNING HISTORY

**4.1** The recent planning history of the site includes various permissions for commercial and residential development. Permissions granted include:

- Erection of storage building - permission granted May 2019. (LPA ref. 19/00526/F).
- Retention and extension of effluent treatment plant - granted April 2019. (LPA ref. 18/01008/F).
- Erection of cold store and staff facilities - granted January 2018 (LPA ref. 17/01916/F).
- Extension to processing plant – permission granted October 2012. (LPA reference 12/00821/F).

**4.2** It is a condition of the planning permission for the cold store in 2018 that the building shall only be used for the storage of vegetables.

## PLANNING POLICY

### Development plan

**5.1** In the Borough of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk, the development plan comprises the:

- Local Development Framework – Core Strategy (adopted 2011) (the Core Strategy); and the
- Site Allocations & Development Management Policies Plan (adopted 2016) (the SADMP Plan).

**5.2** National planning policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance, is also a material consideration.

**5.3** Development Plan policies of particular relevance include:

- Core Strategy Policy CS06 ‘Rural Areas’
- Core Strategy Policy CS08 ‘Sustainable Development’
- Core Strategy Policy CS10 ‘The Economy’
- Core Strategy Policy CS12 ‘Environmental Assets’
- SADMP Policy DM2 ‘Development Boundaries’
- SADMP Policy DM15 ‘Design, Environment and Amenity’

### National policy

**5.4** The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies, and advises that the purpose of the

planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Three objectives of sustainable development are identified: economic, social and environmental.

**5.5** Economic considerations include ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth. Social considerations include supporting healthy communities by creating high quality environments with accessible local services. Environmental considerations include protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environments.

**5.6** At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking, the presumption in favour means approving developments that accord with the development plan without delay, and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or specific NPPF policies indicate that development should be restricted.

### Emerging policy

**5.7** The Council has prepared a new Local Plan to cover the period between 2016 and 2036. The draft plan was submitted to Government for examination in March 2022.

**6.1** Local planning policies permit new business development in rural areas provided that various criteria are satisfied. National planning policies encourage the sustainable growth of all types of business in rural areas.

**6.2** It is noted, in particular, that Core Strategy Policy CS10 is supportive of employment development, including on rural sites outside of development boundaries where this would meet a local business need. In such situations, development must also be of an appropriate scale, adjacent to a settlement and avoid harm to the local environment and amenities. These criteria are considered further below.

#### *Business need*

**6.3** Prior to the pandemic, vegetables processed at the plant were generally supplied to the food industry unpackaged. However, since then, demand for packaged vegetables has increased significantly. To meet this requirement, the applicant wishes to increase its packing capacity. This would be achieved most effectively by converting and extending the existing cold store to form a new packing shed.

**6.4** To replace the cold storage facilities lost to the proposed packing shed, a new cold store building is required. Cold storage is an essential element of the business of supplying fresh vegetables. The proposed location of the new cold store would allow

for the safe and efficient movement of produce around the site.

**6.5** Part of the existing effluent plant would be removed to make way for the proposed cold store. Changes to the way in which vegetables are processed have resulted in a much reduced requirement for the treatment of dirty water, and so the space given over to the effluent plant can be reduced.

**6.6.** For these reasons, it is considered that there is a clear business case for the proposed development, as required by Policy CS10.

#### *Amenity*

**6.7** Careful consideration has been given to potential impacts on the amenities of local residents.

**6.8** To minimise impacts, it is proposed to position the cold store away from the northern site boundary, with external refrigeration plant located on the southern elevation facing away from neighbouring properties. The nearest neighbouring properties would be around 75 metres away.

**6.9** Likely impacts from noise are considered in detail in the accompanying Noise Report<sup>1</sup>. The Monitoring of existing background noise levels and modelled impacts of the proposed plant indicate that the proposal would have a negligible impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties, with

attenuation of noise being provided by the screening effects of the proposed building and separation distances.

**6.10** In terms of visual amenity, the proposed cold store building would not be unduly large and good separation distances would be maintained to neighbouring properties. Established boundary planting would help to screen the new building from the housing to the north. As a result, the proposal would have little visual impact on neighbouring properties.

#### *Local character*

**6.11** Although the land proposed for development falls outside the development boundary for Wormegay, as defined in the Local Plan, it is closely-related to the existing built up area of the village and forms part of an established commercial premises. The proposal would not therefore result in an isolated development in the countryside.

**6.12** The proposed development would not generally be visible from nearby public viewpoints, being screened from Castle Road by existing housing. When viewed across open fields to the south, the proposed development would be seen against the backdrop of existing buildings and as a

---

1. Noise Report, Create Consulting, April 2022.



## CONCLUSIONS

minor element in the existing complex of commercial buildings. Consequently, the scheme would have only a minimal impact on the rural setting of the village.

**6.13** The proposed buildings would be simple and utilitarian in design in keeping their intended commercial use. The scale and external appearance of the proposed buildings would also be consistent with the existing processing plant.

**6.14** For these reasons, it is considered that the proposal would be compatible in scale with its surroundings and would not result in unacceptable effects on local amenity. The proposal would thus accord with Core Strategy Policy CS10 in these respects.

**7.1** Alterations to an existing building and the erection of a new cold store are proposed in order to allow the business to accommodate changing demands and working practices. The use of the site for vegetable processing would remain unchanged.

**7.2** For the reasons set out above, it is considered that there is a clear business case for the proposed works. The development would be in keeping in scale and appearance with the existing processing plant, and would not result in adverse impacts on local amenity. On this basis it is considered that the proposal would accord with local and national planning policies, which support the economic development in rural areas.