

## **2484: Proposed Additional Polytunnels adjacent to existing, at J Parker Dutch Bulbs, Anwick Garden Centre.**

### **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT:**

**6 June 2022**

- **The Proposed Development:** The development proposed on this occasion is the fifth phase of alterations and improvements to the existing business premises at Anwick Garden Centre, Church Lane, Anwick, Sleaford, NG34 9SS for J Parker Dutch Bulbs Ltd. The proposal is for an additional array of polytunnels to support the existing business activities on the site.

The first phase of these works (the construction of a new facilities building to the rear of the site) was granted consent by North Kesteven District Council on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2012 under application number 11/1455/FUL. This development was completed in Spring/Summer 2012 and has been a highly successful addition to the existing premises. The second phase of the works comprised improvements to the Garden Centre part of the business, and was approved in March 2014 (application 13/0041/FUL, approved 28 March 2014). This scheme has been implemented in full, and has been a great success, making significant visual improvements to the Garden Centre itself, and the surrounding area, but also seeing business growth and significant growth in popularity of the Garden Centre in general. The third phase of works was granted consent under application number 17/1731/FUL, on 28 February 2018. This work has now been completed (for some two years in fact). The building that resulted has been a great success and has facilitated the planned relocation of the (previously) Manchester based operation to the Anwick site. The fourth (and most recent) phase of development at the site was the initial application for the erection of polytunnels (November 2019 ref 19/1521/FUL). These polytunnels are now (long since) erected and have been in full service for some considerable time.

There are a number of key factors which give rise to the necessity for the additional polytunnels at the Anwick site:

- The single most important key factor dictating the need for the additional polytunnels is the need for a far greater number of the plants sold through the wholesale business to be home-grown. At present, a large proportion of the nursery stock is imported from Europe in a process which, at best, can be described as 'inefficient'.  
The construction of this latest phase of polytunnels will enable a far greater proportion of nursery stock to be home-grown, resulting in better plant quality, better stock control, and better ability to respond to customer demands without import/export issues which (in recent years) have been compounded by Covid and Brexit. At times, the combination of these two factors has made importation of an adequate supply of live plants extremely difficult and inefficient. As such, these additional polytunnels are seen as being essential to the long-term well-being of the business.

- The proposal will allow a greater proportion of the companies packing capacity (nursery stock related) to be relocated from the Manchester site (previous applications refer). Presently a substantial part of this activity is still ongoing at the Old Trafford (Manchester) site, but it will be feasible to relocate this activity to Anwick following completion of the proposed development. When this happens, the packing activity will be dramatically rationalised with duplicate plants no longer being handled, packed and dispatched from two separate sites. Instead all plants will be dispatched from a single (Anwick) site.
- The concentration of the packing capacity into a single site location will dramatically increase the efficiency of the inventory management process for the entire J Parker's operation (single site instead of two). Whilst it may appear that the above processes are primarily of benefit trading entity itself, in fact (and as well as helping sustain existing employment levels at the site) these will bring significant benefits through reduction in transportation movements across both Manchester and Anwick sites. In turn, these will help the business move towards its aspiration for carbon neutrality. In simple terms, instead of two partially-loaded lorries leaving each of the Manchester and Anwick sites, a single fully-loaded lorry will leave the Anwick site.

- **Employment:**

Staff numbers and the nature of these staff (some part time, some full time) will remain similar to the existing arrangements. Although it is expected that some small degree of additional employment will be created by the content of this application, with perhaps a further 3 full time (or part time equivalent) jobs being created in the post of nurseryman/person.

- **Policy Matters:** The following policy matters have been previously identified as being relevant to development proposals at this site, and although the proposals in hand on this occasion are minimal in impact, the Policy matters are reiterated as, in part at last, these remain relevant.

**Policy LP5: delivering prosperity and jobs:** The proposal will assist in the delivery of economic prosperity and job growth within the North Kesteven District. In particular, the proposal underpins the existing employment at the site. Furthermore, the proposal is broadly in accordance with all relevant aspects of Policy LP5 as listed:

***Appropriate proposals for new B1/B2/B8 employment development and/or redevelopment of sites for B1/B2/B8 uses on non-allocated but existing local employment sites will be supported where:***

- *they do not conflict with neighboring land uses;*
- *their scale does not harm the character of the locality and/or the amenities of neighbouring occupiers; and*
- *they will not impact unacceptably on the local and/or strategic highway network.*

**Other employment proposals in locations not covered by SES, ESUE, EEA and LES categories above will be supported, provided:**

- *there is a clear demonstration that there are no suitable or appropriate sites or buildings within allocated sites or within the built-up area of the existing settlement;*
- *the scale of the proposal is commensurate with the scale and character of the existing settlement;*
- *there is no significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area, and/or the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers*
- *there are no significant adverse impacts on the local highway network*
- *there is no significant adverse impact on the viability of delivering any allocated employment site; and*
- *the proposals maximize opportunities for modal shift away from the private car.*

**Expansion of Existing Businesses**

*The expansion of existing businesses which are currently located in areas outside allocated employment sites will be supported, provided:*

- *existing buildings are reused where possible;*
- *they do not conflict with neighboring land uses;*
- *they will not impact unacceptably on the local and/or strategic highway network; and*
- *the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area.*
- **Location/Layout:** The location and layout of the proposed polytunnels is clearly portrayed within the site location and block plan drawings which accompany this planning application. The overall site is located immediately to the North of the core of the village of Anwick and the proposal is contained entirely within the existing curtilage and existing buildings/site which form the entirety of Anwick Garden Centre/J Parker Dutch Bulbs.  
  
The proposed polytunnels occupy a well screened part of the site which, to a substantial extent, is in any case screened by either existing landscape features or existing buildings. In addition, the scheme proposes further landscaping to the northern site boundary, with details of the exact planting arrangements to be the subject (it is proposed) of an imposed planning condition.
- **Scale and Proportion of the Proposal:** The scale and proportion of the proposed polytunnels is set out in the application drawings. The polytunnels concerned have been selected to be as low as possible so as to minimise any perceived impact to the visual amenity of the application site area.

The scale, proportion, and detail of these are virtually identical to those utilised in the previous phase (Phase 4 as described above). The overall size of the proposed development is described in detail in the application drawings, to which the reader's attention is drawn.

- **Landscaping:** Out of necessity, upon completion of this particular element of the proposals, a substantial part of the site area will be occupied by either buildings, external hardstanding for plant storage, or polytunnels. As a result, and although the Northern site boundary is already quite well landscaped, additional landscaping to this part of the site is also proposed. Details of this landscaping are expected to be conditioned by the LPA in their determination of the application, and this situation is welcomed by the applicant.
- **Appearance:** The appearance of the proposed polytunnels is portrayed within the application drawings, to which the reader's attention is now drawn
- **Use:** The proposed use of the poly tunnels will be exactly as described within the balance of this document. The proposed additional poly tunnels are intended to supplement the existing and allow the sustenance and expansion of the applicants existing business activities at their Anwick site.
- **Access, Transportation, and Employment:** Access to the site itself will remain unaltered from the existing access arrangement in terms of the direct link to the public highway.
- **Staff transportation:** As explained above, the proposal is considered likely to give rise to an additional 3 full time (equivalent) time staff positions. Given the existing staff numbers and generous spaces retained on site for staff parking, it is proposed that these minimal numbers can be easily accommodated and need not be analysed in any greater detail at this time. It is also expected that part of this employment may well be generated by existing part time employees taking up additional hours or for that matter switching to full-time positions so that there is no increase in the need for staff transportation and/or staff vehicle movements into/out of the site. The existing car-sharing scheme will also continue to operate and to assist in this respect
- **Transportation (deliveries and dispatches):** As reported at the time of the previous application (17/1731/FUL), over a two-year period prior to finalising plans for their Anwick site, the applicant had carried out an extensive and detailed survey of the vehicle movements at both their Manchester and Anwick sites. This (entirely objective) appraisal indicated that, as a result of the proposed development, and utilising live data from the then-current Manchester operation, the proposal for the new process building (consented in application 17/1731/FUL) would result in an increase of heavy goods vehicle traffic into the Anwick site of 41 vehicle movements per year, or, in other terms, less than one additional HGV movement per week.

A key factor driving this proposal is the need to grow additional product in this country in order to ensure quality and consistency of supply. Doing so will further reduce the number of deliveries into the site of stock previously grown overseas, imported to the Anwick site. As such, it is expected that the proposals will result in a net DECREASE in HGV movements into the site as a direct result of the reduced number of deliveries of European-grown live plants. Clearly this also had a significant (albeit largely unquantifiable) effect on the 'green' credentials of the end product with far more of the live plant sales being 'home produced' rather than imported.

- **Summary:** The proposal constitutes a further entirely logical continuation of the applicant's development proposals for their Anwick site, and will support the existing business activities in a manner which has no physical impact upon the site/surroundings whatsoever. The proposed polytunnels have a minimal foundation and would be easily removed from site in the future should they become redundant and, should the LPA see fit, they would of course be at liberty to impose a condition requiring the removal of all elements of the polytunnel installation to be removed should they became redundant in the future.

The proposed polytunnels are contained entirely within the existing site area, and do not require any intrusion into the surrounding countryside. Furthermore, there is no fundamental change in the activities ongoing at the site which might (otherwise) bring-about undesirable change in business activities at the site. Policy broadly supports the proposal, and the scheme represents the entirely logical development of an existing/established business use at this site.

**Statement ends.**

## Appendix A

### Statement by the Applicant in support of the application:

*We would like to erect polytunnels adjacent to our existing and newly constructed building to support the ongoing growth of the production and packing operation in Anwick.*

*We hope to position the polytunnels on recently purchased land, which has been granted consent (Planning Application reference 17/1731/FUL) for storage to support our horticultural business operation adjacent.*

*The polytunnels will be naturally screened from all sides of the site. We propose to erect the lowest possible polytunnels to minimise any visual impact on the surrounding area. The sunken ground level of the site also naturally helps reduce the visual impact from all directions.*

*Details of the natural screening from 4 directions are as follows:*

- *From the East by our existing building and soon to be completed New Building.*
- *From the South by a tall hedge which borders the cemetery.*
- *From the West with tall windbreak fencing (short term) and Landscaping (planting of Native hedges in the Long term).*
- *From the North with Tall hedging and a Wooded area.*

*As a horticultural business, we intend to use the polytunnels to grow an increased range of perennial plants from seed. In so doing we are trying to vertically integrate our operation and increase the amount of home-grow plants produced on site which would otherwise be provided by a supplier-nursery in mainland Europe. The polytunnels would also be an essential part of the operation for the potting-on of bare/loose rooted plants and plants in small pots at the end of our spring season into larger containers. Usually this type of product would have to be scrapped, however this new facility will allow us to grow-these-on in the larger pots to produce a saleable product by the end of the Summer. This product would then be sold either through our existing Mail Order Horticultural Business or through our existing Garden Centre.*

*The erection of polytunnels would have no negative impact on traffic to the site in the long term. I would expect less traffic to the site due to us bringing some growing functions on site reducing the need to import and transport finished product to the site.*

*Water storage tanks are proposed to be built next to the polytunnels in order to harvest rainwater so that the site would be self sufficient in terms of irrigation water.*

*The erection of polytunnels will provide full time employment for an additional 3 nursery employees and their integration with the existing and soon to be completed extension of our packing facilities on site, will allow us implement our relocation plan next year. This plan is to move our retail mail order packing operation from Manchester to Anwick, detailed in previous planning applications (see 17/1731/FUL). This will increase our employment on the site from 28 Full Time and 65 Part Time to 31 Full time and 67 part time, as well as providing long term assured employment for the existing workforce.*