

Graham Anthony Associates

# Written Update Statement

Greenark Woodland Nursery

## **Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by GA Associates to support a resubmission application following the refusal of application Ref: 23/00363/FUL, which sought permission for *'Erection of an agricultural building, 2 polytunnels, 2 seed storage containers, 1 welfare unit, creation of hardstanding, and creation of new vehicular access off Tithe Barn Lane'*. The infrastructure and works are necessary to support a horticultural business that is currently operating from site.
  
- 1.2 The application site falls within the countryside as shown on the adopted local plan (WLP31) and development in such a location needs to accord with Policy SP4 *'Countryside Areas'*. SP4 allows development for the purposes of agriculture but provided that it does not adversely impact on the open and rural character of the countryside and that it satisfies policy EP8 *'Rural Economy'* which supports the expansion of an existing business within countryside areas. It is accepted that the business onsite is within its infancy, however there is nothing within the Policy that sets a threshold time limit or obligation to be considered *'well established'*.

1.3 This is similar to permitted development requirements that obligate an existing agricultural trade or business need to be in operation on the land in order for the farmer/landowner to benefit from agricultural permitted development rights. However, there is no requirement for that trade or business to be profitable or of a certain scale.

1.4 To confirm, a business plan has been provided that discusses the nature of the business and the horticultural operations undertaken.

#### **The Building - Principle of Development & Policy Compliance**

1.5 A primary consideration in this planning application is whether the building is required for the purposes of agriculture. We affirm that the building is needed in association with the surrounding land use and is to be used for storage. Whilst not a requirement the applicant has submitted a business plan for the enterprise which provides an understanding of the intended operations and justification for the size of building.

1.6 To mitigate concerns the building has been redesigned retaining full height to allow for storage of the necessary tractor but reducing height elsewhere. The following information has been provided to afford more detail on the items to be stored within the building and how they will be used for the purpose of agriculture at this site:

- Storing Crates 1000 number Dahlia bulbs, Tulips on rotation;
- Soaker Hoses stored for winter frost 50meter lengths;
- 500litre Water Butts stored for winter;
- Tractor and trailer; (Please see appendix further information)
- Quad Bike and Trailer; (Please see appendix further information)
- Seed tray storage;
- Plant pot storage;
- Hoops and Plant supports for winter storage;
- Crop Drying 40% of flowers are sold dried the process occurs by hanging from ceiling or leaving in shallow water buckets;
- Packaging Area work benches;
- Dispatch area;

- Tool station for strimmers, shovels, forks, wheel barrows, rakes, hoes, shears, snippers, and loppers;
- Outdoor Clothing Drying area; and
- Chemical storage. Diesel Unleaded fuel, fertiliser, foot dip disinfectant and foot dip trays.

1.7 When taking into account the amount of land available, the proposed use of the building and the size of it, in relation to those factors, it is considered that the size of building proposed is sufficiently required. It is important to recognise that the information provided in support of this submission exceeds the justification provided for application Ref: 22/00204/FUL and the land holding is comparable. A condition can also be attached linking the building to the business and obligating removal should the commercial operations come to an end.

1.8 However, the principle of the development, as set out in SP4, would only be considered acceptable provided that there is no adverse impact on the openness of the countryside, or any harm is outweighed by substantial public benefits.

1.9 It is accepted that the proposal would have some impact on the existing landscape character of the area, as new built infrastructure is proposed. The building would be located immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the field, approximately 20m north of the access off Tithe Barn Lane. The main impact of the development will be from views east from Tithe Barn Lane and across the field from the public right of way. The building would be masked within the wider landscape by the mature planting on the northern boundary and the natural topography.

1.10 To mitigate visual concerns the building has been reduced in height adjacent to the road, with the higher tractor storage placed against the woodland. The changes combined with the site topography ensure that any resulting impact is not considered so detrimental that it is unacceptable. This area of the countryside, whilst displaying a typical character, is not of a sensitive nature that would give rise to any special consideration beyond that which would be reasonably expected. The land is influenced by the adjacent motorway flyover. The more sensitive landscape area located to the east is set on higher ground so wouldn't be impacted by the proposal. The area is characterised by sporadic agricultural buildings and holding and as the field

and proposed development is to be used for agricultural purposes it is considered that the built development will not form an incongruous or alien feature in the local landscape. As such taking the above into account, the proposal is considered acceptable and will not have a detrimental impact to the character of the area.

#### **Welfare Mobile Unit - Principle of Development & Policy Compliance**

- 1.11 The welfare facility is a direct requirement for the purposes of agriculture specific to the horticultural land use on this site. To contextualise, the nature of horticultural work requires staff to be outdoors in extreme heat, heavy rain and extreme cold. The nature of the working hours specific to horticulture also means that staff are outside for long hours. Thus, there is a need to provide some facilities that will allow some respite from the prevailing elements and free from insects and pests. This unit will also be used to house the site security and climate control systems which is evidently critical for a business of this nature.
- 1.12 Following the comments from the planner the plans have been updated to afford further clarification on the use and requirement of the welfare unit and how this will perform a necessary ancillary function on the site. The unit will be a prefabricated, single storey, timber clad structure, perfectly suited to the rural location. The location onsite has also been set to ensure that primary views would be buffered by the agricultural building and the public footpath would only get partial views at the narrowest point.

#### **Seed Storage - Principle of Development & Policy Compliance**

- 1.13 The seed storage sheds as required to allow the business to operate on a self-sufficient basis while increasing profits, reducing vehicle movements and improving the quality of growing stock. Seeds will be harvested from the flower farm prior to flower bed rotation, then confined to the seed storage sheds. Half of the container will be for seed conditioning or extracting the viable seed from the flower head. Floor plans have been updated to provide further information:

- 1.14 Equipment contained in the sheds
- Climate control system;
  - Workbench area and storage;
  - Threshing equipment, Sieves, Grinders and Graters;
  - Collecting Boxes;
  - Waste Plant material collection area; and
  - Wash Basin and drainer.

Use of the building within the wider operation:

- Collect healthy, ripe seeds;
- Separate and clean the seeds;
- Dry the seeds to the correct moisture level for storage;
- Meanwhile, germinate some of the seeds to make sure that they are good;
- Pack the seeds for storage;
- If you store the seeds for a long time, germinate a sample from time to time to make sure that they are still good; and
- Prepare the seeds for sowing: Seeds stored very dry need preparation before sowing.

#### **Polytunnels - Principle of Development & Policy Compliance**

- 1.15 The proposed tunnels will be soil foundation, sized at 24ft x 36ft which is the largest size available using this low impact foundation method. The tunnel will have a clear roof to blend into the surrounding environment, with green netting to the sides. The size of the tunnels has been calculated to allow growth of a sufficient volume of stock crops to enable the business to remain viable. The nature of the foundation type ensures that there will be no lasting legacy should the tunnels need to be removed or relocated in the future.
- 1.16 The tunnels are required to elongate the flower season covering specific events such as Valentines Day which fall outside typical field grown UK seasons. The tunnels are clearly critical to the viability of the wider business and two are required as they work on rotation. The tunnels also offer security to production should weather affect the field grown crops which are susceptible to heavy rain and wind.

## Conclusion

- 1.17 The proposed application for the erection of an agricultural building, access, hardstanding, poly tunnels, welfare building, and seed storage is considered acceptable in principle and will not have any detrimental impact to the visual amenity of the area nor to the amenity of nearby neighbouring properties. All other material considerations have been assessed and subject to conditions it is considered that the proposal complies with Policies SP2, SP4, CDMP1, CDMP2, CDMP3, CDMP4 and CDMP6 of the adopted Wyre Local Plan (2011-2031), the NPPF and the relevant habitats legislation and should be recommended for approval.

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## Appendix – Further technical information

### Tractor and Trailer Usage

*This is not an exhaustive list but for example only:*

*Daily – Moving of equipment around 7.5 acre field to ensure best practice Manual Handling. Compost, Topsoil, Seed Flats.*

*Weekly- Cutting of grass, leaf fall harvest to create compost. Removal of weeds and greening from flower beds.*

*Monthly- Turning compost to aerate. Pull in irrigation lines to reels, Move to storage. Refresh flower beds with compost before resowing or planting.*

*Annual – Seasonal cutting and harvesting of hedges and shrubs. Clearing snow, frost from entrance. Emergency power.*

*Grow and cultivate a variety of shrubs and plants in the field by using ploughs, disks, seed drills and cultivators.*

*Cropping flower beds to create a second flush of blooms.*

*Two hands will not be able to carry and shift heavy compost, soil, logs or branches from one place to another, we will be needing a tractor for such tasks. The front-end loader present in a tractor has been specially made for accomplishing tasks like pushing, lifting, and carrying.*

*Running saws, drills, lights, computers, and communication equipment can be done with the help of a tractor as well by Connect a 110-inverter with the battery of your tractor.*

*Clearing Road by Removing Snow - Roads getting blocked because of heavy snow being a hurdle is something that almost all cold countries face. For such occurrences, a tractor is the handiest thing that you will find. The tractor's front-end loader and blade can dig out and remove the snow from the path.*

### Quad and Trailer Usage

*This is not an exhaustive list but for example only:*

*Moving of equipment around 7.5 acre field to ensure best practice Manual Handling*

*Speed of checking flower beds and equipment without causing significant soil damage.*

*Providing more bespoke transporting for the delicate products.*

*Numerous other daily tasks looking at increasing productivity and efficiency.*

### Propagation/ Seed Germination

*Seeds will start in the seed storage containers, where light and heat would be monitored and not effect local wildlife. Seed flats would always be established in the tunnels and following the planting season.*

An example would be a Flower Bed 30m x 3m would require 175-250 plants so sow 500 seeds to guarantee germination 1 plant maybe produce 1 – 12 stems depending on variety Stems in a Bouquet 15-50stems

I am looking to produce approx. 3000 Bouquets. Total Stems 150,000 divided by 4 Total 37500 Plants.

### Seed Storage

While going through all these steps, keeping good records. Each step is described in more detail below. These instructions are for “orthodox” seeds. “Intermediate” and “recalcitrant seeds” require different measures. If the seeds are “intermediate”, storage is trickier. You need to store them refrigerated.

Drying temperature Storage temperature 25°C/77°F 5°C/41°F -18°C/0F° (room) (refrigerator) (freezer) 25°C/77°F (room temperature) 20% 33% 46% 5°C/41°F (refrigerator) 14% 20% 32% At 32-33% relative humidity.

*Drying in a Self-Defrosting (No-Frost) Refrigerator* The self-defrosting unit naturally keeps the air inside the refrigerator dry. You can make use of this to dry seeds by using the following procedure:

Spread the seeds in a thin layer (1 seed deep is ideal, if possible) in a container with an airtight lid but leave the lid off.

Place the container into the refrigerator and leave it there for a month or so for the seeds to dry. (Large seeds with thick, hard coats such as beans may take longer.)

When ready to store the seeds, open the door of the refrigerator and immediately put the lid on the container so that moisture does not condense on the seeds. Take the container out from the refrigerator and let it come to room temperature before opening it.

Once it has come to room temperature, open it and pack the seeds for storage. Alternatively, you can just store the seeds inside the refrigerator in open storage, but this will take up more space.

*Room Temperature Drying in Plastic Containers* If you do not have space inside of the refrigerator, you can dry seeds inside of airtight plastic containers. Spread the seeds into a shallow container in a thin layer (1 seed deep is ideal, if possible), then put the container into an airtight plastic container with drying agent. For seeds to be stored at room temperature, recommended using silica gel as the drying agent.

The seeds to be refrigerated or frozen, we recommend glass container until most of the water is driven off. Use silica gel or calcium chloride, The drying container in a cool place, away from the sun. Check the container from time to time to see whether the silica gel or calcium chloride needs replenishing. If the silica gel becomes saturated, replace it with fresh silica gel. If the calcium chloride dissolves completely, add some more crystals, or recharge as described in the previous paragraph. Allow the seeds to dry for about a month (longer for large seeds with thick, hard coats), then pack them for storage.

Storage in airtight containers at specific locations with Racking Numbers quantity and dates and temperature log.