

**GSP Ref: 3937.SC**

**TRANSPORT STATEMENT  
(Addendum to Planning Statement)**

**COURT LODGE FARM, DALE ROAD,  
SOUTHFLEET, DA13 9NQ**

**November 2023**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** This Transport Statement is prepared as an addendum to and should be read in conjunction with the Planning and Heritage Statement already submitted on behalf of Mr M Gedney of D & M Gedney Ltd in support of a planning application for the use of existing buildings for importation, processing, cold-storage, packaging and dispatch of produce including ready-meals/produce, on land at Court Lodge Farm, off Dale Road, Southfleet.
- 1.2** The Planning and Heritage Statement provides the context to the development, the site's planning history and the context provide by National Guidance and adopted Development Plan Policy.

## **2.0 SITE CONTEXT**

- 2.1** The buildings to which the application relates are located within the main farmstead area at Court Lodge Farm. The proposed use will occupy a range of buildings, with the total floorspace to be used extending to approximately 3000 m<sup>2</sup>. The same buildings and land as the application buildings and land within the yard have been used for the importation, cold storage, processing, packing and distribution of agricultural and non-agricultural produce for many years. The farmstead is accessed from Dale Road via the existing road that serves the farmstead. The site area including the access road as far as Dale Road extends to approximately 1.5 ha.
- 2.2** Current means of access to the site is from Dale Road which connects Hook Green Road (at the centre of Southfleet village) to the B262 Station Road which in turn connects to the Strategic Road Network (A2) at the Pepper Hill Junction. Dale Road and Station Road are subject to the National Speed Limit 60mph for cars and 50mph for HGV's. The site is signposted from the Pepper Hill Junction on the local road network. Dale Road is not lit and has no dedicated footways along it and is around 6m in width for much of its length, there are spaces suitable for passing along its length.
- 2.3** No alterations to the existing access to the site are proposed. This was purpose-built several years ago and has appropriate vision spays in either direction at the point where it joins Dale Road.

## **3.0 PROPOSALS**

- 3.1** Permission is sought for the change of use of the existing buildings for the importation, processing, cold-storage, packaging and dispatch of produce including ready-meals. The intended occupier is PrepKitchen who would produce ready-to-eat food packs. PrepKitchen prepare and market pre-ordered and prepared meals/produce (in a similar manner to 'Hello Fresh' or 'Gusto'). PrepKitchen have already commenced operations on the site.
- 3.2** The same range of buildings that have been used for many years would still be used for the on-site operations. No extensions to or external changes to the buildings would be required to accommodate PrepKitchen.

**3.3** Additional information on the operations of PrepKitchen has been provided now that they are operating from the site. The applicant has confirmed the following details of staffing numbers and working arrangements.

- One daily shift
- Working hours 07:00 to 18:00.
- Maximum number of staff on site 50 (per shift)
- 15 cars are generally parked on the site during the working day. The rest of the staff arrive in and are collected by 2 minibuses at the beginning and end of the working day.

## **4 ASSESSMENT**

**4.1** Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 42-004-20140306 of the NPPG states as follows;

*‘Transport Statements are a ‘lighter-touch’ evaluation to be used where this would be more proportionate to the potential impact of the development (ie in the case of developments with anticipated limited transport impacts).’*

**4.2** In this case, the change of use should be seen and assessed in the context of previous operations on the site.

**4.3** Permission is sought for the continued use of the existing buildings for the importation, processing, cold-storage, packaging and dispatch of produce including ready-meals. The intended occupier is PrepKitchen who would produce ready-to-eat food packs. PrepKitchen prepare and market pre-ordered and prepared meals/produce (in a similar manner to ‘Hello Fresh’ or ‘Gusto’).

**4.4** The same range of buildings that were used for many years would still be used for the on-site operations. No external changes to or extensions to the buildings have been or are required to accommodate PrepKitchen. Parking provision is located within the farmstead and the buildings will be serviced as shown on the submitted plans.

**4.5** The PrepKitchen occupation shows that activity on the site is considerably reduced from that of PrepWorld who previously occupied the site and also from the operations of the applicants prior to this. This is clearly seen in the table below.

SITE OPERATOR	OPERATING YEARS ON SITE	PRODUCTS BEING PROCESSED	PROCESSES ON SITE	PEAK STAFF ON SITE	DAILY STAFF VEHICLE MOVEMENTS	DAILY HGV MOVEMENTS	DAILY SMALL VEHICLE DELIVERIES
D&M.GEDNEY LTD & PREP DIRECT	1961 - 2016	READY TO EAT SALAD PACKS VEGETABLE PACKS THAI READY MEALS FRUIT PACKS	WASHING DICING SLICING DRYING PROCESSING PACKING DISTRIBUTION	140	80 CARS AM AND PM 160 TOTAL + 3 BUSES	30 HGV's CONTRACTED + 3 OWNED, 7.5 TONNES	APPROX 20
PREP WORLD	2010-2022 (Tenancy 2016-2022)	FRUIT PACKS	WASHING DRYING PEELING PROCESSING PACKING DISTRIBUTION	450	120 CARS AM AND PM 240 TOTAL + 8 MINIBUSES	60 HGV's CONTRACTED + 20 @ 7.5 TONNES	APPROX 40
PREP KITCHEN	TBC	READY TO EAT FOOD PACKS	SLICING COOKING PACKING DISTRIBUTION	80	40 CARS AM +PM 80 TOTAL	10 HGV's	APPROX 5

4.6 As indicated on the site/building layout plan submitted with the application, production levels are likely to be 100,000 meals (packs) and 164 pallets of finished goods **per week**. This compares to the average of **200 pallets per day and 1.2 million packs per week** that were produced and sent out by D&M Gedney and/or PrepWorld from the site.

4.7 As set out in paragraph 3.3 above, given that PrepKitchen are now operating from the site it has been possible to refine the information set out in the table above. Operations on the site are as follows

- One daily shift
- Working hours 07:00 to 18:00.
- Maximum number of staff on site 50 (per shift)
- 15 cars are generally parked on the site during the working day.
- The rest of the staff arrive in and are collected by 2 minibuses at the beginning and end of the working day.

The HGV and smaller vehicle movement 10 and 5 /day respectively remain as shown in the table above.

4.8 Traffic generation and thus any impact on the local highway network will be significantly less than was previously the case. Some 70% of the workforce are brought to the site by minibus the proportion of car borne staff is low and much lower than that related to the PrepWorld/D& M Gedney operations.

4.9 Even if it is considered that the application should be assessed in terms of a change from an agricultural use to the current use, it is considered that given modern farming practices and requirements, the numbers of employees on a modern farm used in the preparation and dispatch of produce together with associated trips is likely to be very similar to that of PrepKitchen. It is also now common for agricultural workers to be 'bussed-in' from accommodation sites elsewhere to work in packing and distribution and crop growing operations.

- 4.10** The site is well located relative to the highway network. Traffic to the site is signposted along the B262 Station Road from the direction of the A2 at Pepper Hill. The centre of Southfleet village, and the bus stops, is located 200m east of the site along a PROW and Church Street.
- 4.11** A Framework Travel Plan has also been submitted. This recognises that due to the site's location and the current availability of alternative modes of transport, particularly public transport, encouraging modal shift will be problematic. Nevertheless it is recognised that PrepKitchen have sought to address these problems by transporting the majority of the workforce to the site on a daily basis. Steps to encourage car sharing or even changing the routing of the minibuses to encompass nearby railway stations to collect staff have been identified as potential measures to encourage modal shift that can be adopted.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1** It is considered that the level of traffic generated by the use will be significantly and demonstrably less than that of previous uses on the site. Given the guidance at paragraph 111 of the NPPF and the fact that the impact on the local highway network will not be severe, the development should not therefore be refused on highway grounds.