

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

LAND AT SEAWAYS FARM, PORTHLOO, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY,
TR21 ONF

P/16/025

PP – 04924981

PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the erection of a 314 sq metre agricultural building in the vicinity of Seaways Farm's existing main agricultural buildings.

APPRAISAL OF CONTEXT

FEATURES ON THE EXISTING SITE

The land at Porthloo forms part of a holding of approximately 30 hectares producing mainly Scented Narcissi cut flowers and bulbs. There are two buildings currently on the existing site (i) a stockade boarded typical farm building and (ii) a polytunnel which between them occupy around 660 sq metres. The site is relatively low lying, level and the buildings are set back from Porthloo road by 50 meters behind a field system with pittosporum and elm fences.

USE ON THE EXISTING SITE

This covers activities associated with the production and processing of Scented Narcissi cut flowers (October until April) and bulbs (May until September). Activities include the temperature control of flowers (cooling) and bulbs in ton bins (heating), the grading of flowers and the storage of packing materials etc, together with a wide range of farming machinery. The site is the base for the farm's 3 full time and up to 9 seasonal employees. An important bi-annual activity is the seasonal packing of flowers by a well-established off-island based postal flower business which makes use of the space, temperature controlled and other facilities.

The actual land on which the proposed building would stand is rough agricultural land currently used for parking agricultural equipment and the storage of materials.

LAYOUT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed that the new building will largely occupy a 'jib' piece of land in an adjacent field on a similar building line to the existing. Although the base of the new building would be around 1.5 metres higher than the existing it would be screened from the road by the existing structures, which are, in turn, screened by the fences. The new building would be just under 10 metres apart from the existing and the good, established concrete track-way would link the two. Alternative locations for the building on the site have been explored with the Duchy of Cornwall (owners of the site) and the Council of the Isles of Scilly's senior planning officer. The proposed site is considered optimal because of its (i) distance from public highways and footpaths and neighbours (ii) discreetness, it

would be seen from few public (or private) locations, and (iii) the opportunity cost of the site which currently is underutilised because of its poor soil and shape / orientation.

My interpretation is that this proposal accords with the relevant principles identified in the Council of the Isles of Scilly's Isles of Scilly Design Guide, as well as with the various criteria including economic development and productivity headings in the Isles of Scilly Local Plan, A 2020 Vision.

USE ON PROPOSED SITE

Two very significant efficiency / productivity improvements would be facilitated.

First, the handling and processing of Scented Narcissi bulbs would be consolidated on this one site, rather than as present on two sites, the other being Peninnis Farm. Seaways harvests bulbs which fill approximately 130 bulk bins, annually. It is necessary to handle / process each bin on up to 8 separate occasions during the season. Currently it is estimated that up to 400 bins are carried by road, each way, between Peninnis and Porthloo, that is over 60 return trips with a tractor and trailer carrying 6 full bins. There are in addition a further 30 – 40 return trips carrying empty bins. This proposal would do away with ALL of these journeys thereby enhancing productivity with bulbs being moved directly from the fields to Porthloo and then, ultimately back to the fields for replanting, or elsewhere for sale. It would also reduce traffic movements giving rise to environmental and public realm benefits.

Second, the proposal would allow significant efficiencies and growth potential for our own Scented Narcissi flower business as well as that of a third party; the off-island based mail order flower business who employ dozens of individuals producing tens of thousands of products over the peak 4 – 5 weeks per year. This is through the freeing up of space and facilities in the existing buildings for these operations to take place and expand.

In addition to the points above there would be many other benefits to our farming business arising from a better working environment for our staff, and other productivity gains. Seaways would look to recruit and train one additional full time skilled employee, and up to 3 seasonal employees, as a direct consequence of this project.

SCALE / APPEARANCE AND ORIENTATION ON THE PROPOSED SITE

Boundaries: No changes to the existing boundaries are proposed.

Site Constraints: No constraints have been identified.

Visual appearance: The proposed building has been designed to mirror the existing building on the site and the recently refurbished Rope Barn on the farm, and follow the established design principles of recent agricultural buildings on the islands. The exterior will be of timber stockade boarding. The windows and doors will be made of timber. The roof will be of dark grey big 6 fibre cement corrugated sheets with translucent sheets to allow ingress of natural light. All these materials are considered fitting for the site, they are also natural and easily replaceable. No foul or grey water drainage is required from the building. Electrical power will come from a transformer on the neighbouring property approximately 20 metres distant, and will be run underground. The 23.5 metre north/ eastern elevation will be close to and screened by the existing mature elm boundary fence. Shelter to the building's access point is provided by the natural topography of the site. The building will be partially visible from relatively few public or private standpoints.

Effect on neighbours: No visual, noise or any other effects have been identified. During construction there would be some increased traffic movements and noise generated but both are

approximately 100 metres distant from the nearest neighbour and so unlikely to be a cause of nuisance.

Consultation: Conversations have taken place with neighbours, landlord (Duchy of Cornwall) planning authority (Council of Isles of Scilly) and power distributor (Western Power).

ACCESS POSITION

Vehicle and pedestrian access to the site would be via the existing concrete track way off Porthloo Road, opposite the pond. The existing concrete track way continues all the way to the site of the proposed new building. As already noted, net vehicle movements would be reduced in number as a result of this project. Very minor works would be required to join this to the proposed new hard standing. Access is also available through the farm on an established mostly hard core track from the north west, from Porthloo Road adjacent to the Rope Barn. It is envisaged that, as at present, this would be relatively little used.

Andrew May

Friday 26th March 2016.