Chalkevalley watercress Ltd

Slate house,

Broadchalke,

Salisbury,

Wiltshire,

SP5 5HJ. 28/11/2023

New packaging store at Chalke Valley Watercress Ltd.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Chalke Valley Watercress Ltd is now into its sixth generation of growing watercress here in Broadchalke. Years ago we supplied mainly greengrocers and street markets, this has changed, primarily now we are supplying hotels and restaurants across the country. The service industry requires us to supply all year round, as a result we need much larger volumes of packaging stock; all of our packaging is now recyclable and is simply more bulky, requires more room and manual handling when delivered. At present we are unable to use a forklift inside the buildings, this has been flagged up as a potential health and safety/staff welfare issue, as we have to climb using ladders etc.

We also now use mechanical harvesters, a forklift, pump trucks, crates and various small plant to carry out the crop production, all requiring more storage space. Security is now an issue for us all, we now have to lock every piece of plant away, also fertilizers must be securely stored.

At present we have two very old wooden sheds, these are used for storage, and one timber frame fridge, clad in galvanise, built back in the late 50s, all three are now very much at the end of their useful life. Under the rules of Assured produce (Red Tractor) we are required to inspect regularly for the ingress of rodents, insects, birds, or any other creature in any of our buildings, as they would be a food safety contamination problem. I know that Bats can be a concern when removing old buildings, but there has never been any evidence of Bat activity, ie droppings, signs of entry, sightings, in any of the buildings.

The building we propose will incorporate all three old buildings, give us the extra storage we now require, the ability to use mechanical lifting equipment, room for a new fridge, plus room to install watercress washing facilities, something many of our competitors already have in place, therefore very important to our survival.

We wish to use a steel frame building, with dark green metal cladding, the colour will help it to blend into the surrounding area and match with the present staff room and Bunch House roof, the metal cladding is also ideal because it offers the robust rodent protection a food packaging store should have, as stated by APS, (Red Tractor) 'The building is designed to prevent the entry of pests, and minimise the accumulation of dirt.'

At present when entering the yard, the view on the east side is of a galvanized fridge, sited in this position, the new proposed green clad building incorporates two roller shutter doors, we have considered cladding in timber, but feel this would offer very little improvement, it would increase the food hygiene potential from insects and birds and would need regular weather proofing, also a possible cross contamination problem.

We enjoy a good working relationship with our local community and hope this will continue, with this in mind the new building has been kept to the lowest possible workable height, only slightly higher than the packaging house here at present. The proposed scheme has been met favourably with our neighbours especially on the east side who it will affect the most.

If you require any additional information, please contact me on.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Hitchings.