

Fargro Limited, Vinery Fields, Arundel Road, Poling, Arundel, West Sussex NB18 9PY

**Proposed amendment of Condition 4 (relating to hours of operation) of planning permission
A/74/13 to allow for longer hours of operation**

Planning Statement

March 2022

Paul Airey Planning Associates Ltd

1. Planning permission was granted by Arun DC on 24th January 2014 for the proposed distribution warehouse and covered storage, trade counter and associated offices.

Hours of operation

2. The site has been operational for 6 years and the company has grown significantly during this time supporting both growers and retailers in the local area and nationally.
3. The approved hours condition states the following:

Condition 4 The storage and distribution warehouse hereby permitted shall not be operated on Sundays or Public Holidays or at any time otherwise than between the hours of 06:00 and 18:00 on Mondays to Fridays and 0700 to 1300 on Saturdays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of neighbouring properties in accordance with GEN7 of the Arun District Local Plan

4. It is proposed that the revised condition should read as follows:

Condition 4 External operations of the storage and distribution warehouse including deliveries and despatches hereby permitted shall not be permitted on Sundays or Public Holidays or at any time otherwise than between the hours of 06:00 and 20:00 on Mondays to Fridays and 07:00 to 18:00 on Saturdays. Internal operations only of the storage and distribution warehouse hereby permitted shall not be restricted.

5. The purpose of the application is to allow limited extended hours of operation in the early evening within the external areas of the site, and the ability to undertake certain packing and logistical operations within the main warehouse building on an unrestricted basis.

Background

6. The operating hours restrictions for the Vinery Fields site were guided by those originally applied in relation to the planning application approved in November 2005 (A/14/05) to allow for the Change of Use of the adjoining site from mushroom production facility to industrial B1 and B8 uses. The restrictions on that permission were one hour different from the approved Fargo restrictions being 07:00 to 18:00 Monday to Fridays and 07:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays.
7. The Fargo approval in 2013 required a significant improvement to the access into the Vinery site and the junction with the A27, which provided a through route to the Fargo site. This improvement to the junction significantly improved the access to and from the A27 to the benefit of the Vinery development and the adjoining residential properties, as well as Fargo itself.
8. The nearest residential building is over 100 metres away from the operating areas of the site and it is considered that the impact of the changed hours of operation will have no significant impact on these residential neighbours.
9. It should be noted that a relaxation in the hours of operation will not lead to additional overall traffic visiting the site, but will allow the company greater flexibility to resource its workforce and operations in response to business pressures. Internal operations will generally apply to the process of order consolidation and palletisation within the main warehouse to facilitate prompt HGV loading for outbound logistics. This will allow the company's HGVs to avoid peak morning traffic on the A27. Only a small number of employees will arrive and depart the site outside of the hours approved for external operations - mostly by private car. The internal activities that will occur outside the currently permitted hours will not involve the use of any noisy machinery and will not be noticeable outside the building.
10. Being able to better plan and flex deliveries will help allow peak time travel to be avoided and facilitate additional benefits for other related businesses in the local economy to operate more efficiently. Fargo's operations are critical to the local horticultural sector, much of which is based around Chichester. The West Sussex horticultural industry is the largest employer in the region, with annual revenues of approximately £1bn and employing 6,500 permanent employees and 3,500 seasonal workers. Fargo currently has a payroll of 69 employees, although not all are employed at site. There are currently 5 designated commercial fleet drivers and a permanent warehouse staff of 13. This increases with temporary employees in the busy season by up to 18 (2021 maximum)
11. In 2016 the company turned over £19.3m and by 2021 this had grown to £31m. 2022 is expected to be roughly the same as 2021. From 2023 and beyond, there are plans to further grow the company which will support both local and national horticulture.
12. In support of this application it is noted that there have been two recent planning approvals adjacent to the site, which are relevant
 - i) The Tributes building (B1/B8) A/177/19/PL for which no hours restrictions have been included in the conditions and,
 - ii) Amendment to operating hours at The Vinery A/165/21/PL

Summary:

- This application seeks a review of the working hours restrictions currently imposed on the Fargo site through a small extension of the operating hours in the early evening and unrestricted internal operations.
- The operating hours relaxation will directly support the company in better meeting the needs of its customers and the wider local economy.
- The proposed changes are not considered likely to have any significant effect on the amenity of residential neighbours.