

Sexton Paul

From: Andrew S Campbell Associates Ltd. [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 May 2015 12:15
To: Sexton Paul
Cc: Koch John; Tony Bowman
Subject: Hackers Fruit Farm and garden Centre - Proposed expansion
Attachments: PhilHacker letter.pdf; Hackers - MasterPlan (DJM) May 2015 - annotated with existing view point.pdf

Dear Paul

I refer to our various discussions and emails, and the decision to defer the above item to your planning committee on Wednesday 3rd June. As I said I have no criticism of the content of your committee report but your recommendations clearly beg the question as to the real needs behind the necessary expansion of the Hacker's business and the extent to which it is inevitable that Green Belt land is taken. Phil Hacker himself will be attending the meeting with ourselves and would rather his views be expressed in writing for members to see beforehand, as he feels this would be the best way for him to express his views personally. After all it is his business that is at stake and which he desperately wishes to revitalise to become competitive but which he will be prevented from doing if the proposals are refused.

The main points that he outlines are as follows:

Present Business - The present business has seen substantial decline over recent years, in the first instance due to the imports of fruit and more latterly, the growth of other garden centres, all within the Green Belt around Cambridge.

Future Growth - Future growth can only be achieved with the construction of a modern single building sufficient to generate £4-5m of business to compete with Coton Orchard, Scotsdale (south of Cambridge), and even Oakington.

Access - The construction of the A14, and the alternative access provided to the site off the Oakington Road, together with the increased density and in speed in traffic, has steadily reduced the attractiveness of Hacker's site. A business originally employing upwards of 150 staff developing a turnover equivalent today of perhaps £1.5m, has steadily declined to the extent where the Hacker's family have had to take part time jobs in compensation. Any cash injection into the business however has to be associated with the necessary expansion particularly to attract trade from an alternative access which will be moved some 300 m westwards along the Oakington Road, away from the present operation.

Present site constraints - The present site is a mixture of residential dwellings and outmoded buildings. The proposal, as previously stated, is to demolish most of the existing buildings, but this will not allow a place to erect a suitable large modern building to house the business without expanding into the Green Belt. The present 4 dwellings are spread along the A14 frontage, associated with accesses to the A14, are to be closed in favour of a rear service road as shown in the site layout plan. That will allow the new access to be provided, an improvement in residential amenity and also create areas of storage for the fruit farm and some car parking. Any new garden centre will have to extend into the Green Belt if it is to be of the necessary size and location to compete in the open market place

Green Belt - The whole of the Hacker's site, including the existing operation, is located within the Cambridge Green Belt. The proposed extension which is only a net 1200 sq m in size is now proposed to the north of the present operation, alongside the present access from the Oakington Road, which will then need to extend to the new point of access 300 m to the west, as shown in the site layout plan. The site, I think we agree, is the best location for the necessary expansion. It is largely hidden from view from the Oakington Road because of height and will be set against a back cloth of existing trees around three sides of the site. It will remove any development in the open views across the site, and is substantially different from the development of the site that was previously refused.

Landscape - Along with impact of the Green Belt, this is the other objection to the proposal. You accept however that there is already a significant impact upon the landscape on the northern and western side of the application site as a result of the approved A14 proposals. The Hacker's site loses 6-7 acres of land as part of those proposals, and the proposed extension and the new access road will be encapsulated along the northern side of the site where new roads and associated landscaping is proposed as part of the A14 proposals. The remainder of the site will be left open as agricultural land, much replanted with orchards and fruit to revitalise the fruit farm. When viewed from the existing complex of buildings, all the of the view will be open, by stark contrast to the previous proposals for the

garden centre and WWI Museum. The openness of the Green Belt and as a consequence, the landscape as existing, will be significantly maintained and only interrupted by the new roads proposed as part of the A14 improvements. This again is shown clearly in the revised site layout plan, copy of which I attach for convenience with the view point as described shown clearly upon it.

I would be grateful if this email together with the attached letter from Mr Phil Hacker be concluded in your agenda papers, as discussed and agreed and to be read alongside your existing report and now to be presented to your June Planning Committee.

I have been asked to present the proposal at that meeting, but given the shortness of time, I trust that you and your members will find the attached documentation self explanatory and fully explains the position of the applicant and the need for their expansion.

Regards

ANDY CAMPBELL

Mrs J Mills
Director of Planning and New Communities
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cambourne Business Park
Cambridge CB23 6EA

15th May 2015

Dear Mrs Mills

Andy Campbell has told me that I can speak at the planning meeting on 3rd June but I would find it difficult to do that so I hope that you will accept this letter instead and include it for the planning committee to read before they decide.

I hope to carry on with the business that my grandfather started and my family continues to run but it has been in decline for many years since the A14 was changed and we lost passing trade. The new changes to the A14 will make the access even further away and will be the last nail in our coffin.

All our competitors, who are also in the green belt have been allowed to expand. That is Scotsdales, Coton orchards and Oakington. The extension that was allowed at Scotsdales is much larger than we are proposing. Even the garden centre at Oakington, which is also in the Green Belt, has expanded in recent times. I hope that we can be treated the same.

To compete we need to build a single multi-purpose building of 2,800 sq m which is only 1200 sq m more than the old buildings that we use now. But because the present site contains 4 residential dwellings there isn't enough room for the new building. When a rear service road to the houses is built when the A14 is upgraded there will be even less. So we need to put the new building as close as we can, but in the field. Which is in the green belt

What we are proposing is the minimum to allow us to compete. We have agreed to alter the position of the new building and car parking so that they won't spoil the view. Also they will be screened by the flyover ramp and the existing trees and many new trees. Most of our site will stay in agricultural use and continue as part of the fruit farm.

What we want to build will look as rural and local as we can. We want it to look like a bigger version of our old fruit farm, farm shop and garden centre. We still want Dad's chickens to be seen and for people to feel as if we haven't changed our approach to good service from a local family. Hackers is nearly 100 years old and we are part of local business history.

We have discussed these matters with our local district councillors who support our plans. They see Hackers as a long established local business that is already part of the green belt rather than a new business that wants to open a new store. I hope very much that the committee will feel the same so that we can carry on. Otherwise when the new road comes our business will die.

Yours sincerely


Philip Hacker