

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

5th April 2006

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0060/06/RM – Gamlingay

Erection of Production and Office Buildings, Ancillary Parking, Sewage Treatment Plant, Outside Storage and Construction of New Access, Land at Potton Road for Potton Ltd

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval/Refusal
Date for Determination: 14th April 2006 (Major Development)**

Site and Proposal

1. This application for approval of reserved matters for the siting, design and external appearance of production buildings and office, ancillary parking, sewage treatment plant and outside storage, along with the means of access and landscaping for Potton Ltd was registered on 13th January 2006.
2. The site is a 3.1 ha parcel of vacant land to the east of Potton Road, Gamlingay, to the south of the village. Immediately to the north of the site is a rectangular area of land owned by Potton Ltd containing a series of industrial buildings. The site is currently not in use. There is a line of tall conifer planting along the majority of the north boundary of the existing site.
3. To the south of the site is a detached dwelling, Woodview Farm, and outbuildings. To the north of the existing Potton Ltd site (the Old Mill site) is a pair of cottages fronting Potton Road. The south boundary of the cottages comprises high conifer planting. Opposite the site and to the rear is agricultural land. There is currently substantial hedge planting along the front boundary of the site and more limited planting along the south and east boundaries.
4. The submitted drawings propose the erection of two production buildings. The larger building measures 91m x 20m (1820m²) and is positioned east-west, 25m in from the southern boundary of the site. The smaller building measures 72m x 20m (1440m²) and runs north-south towards the east side of the site. The ridge height of each building is stated to be 6m on the application drawing, although it scales at 7m.
5. In addition to the two production buildings there is a proposed office building measuring 20m x 24m (480m²) sited towards the west boundary of the site. This building has an eaves height of 3m and ridge height of 7m.
6. Materials proposed for all buildings is coated steel with aluminium windows. Colours are to be agreed although reference is made to light and dark green.
7. A total of 77 car parking spaces are provided in two blocks to the south and east of the proposed office building and provision for the parking of 76 cycles. The application form states that up to 100 people will be employed on the site.
8. A new vehicular access to the site is proposed, south of the existing entrance. The proposed access, which was agreed at the outline stage, will include the provision of a

right turn facility. A substantial section of the existing hedge along the front boundary will need to be removed in order to provide the new access and visibility splays. This loss was recognised and accepted at the outline stage.

9. The main access road into the site is located to the south of the existing screening on the north boundary. Large areas of hard surfacing are provided within the site for the storage of materials. A 6m wide roadway is shown to the rear of the building close to the south boundary of the site.
10. A 10m wide planting belt is proposed along the front boundary of the site, including across the access to the existing site, which is required to be closed by condition of the outline consent. An 8m wide planting belt is shown for the south boundary and a 10m wide belt for the east boundary. A proposed planting scheme has been submitted.
11. A foul water treatment plant is indicated behind the proposed planting at the front of the site, although details are not provided.
12. The site will be used for the production of prefabricated structures. Buildings within the existing site are shown to be used for storage and manufacture, equipment storage, and a mess room.

Planning History

13. Outline consent was originally granted for the development in December 2001 (**Ref S/2331/00/O**). Conditions attached to that consent required, amongst other matters, the submission of a Green Travel Plan, substantial landscaping, and the upgrading of the access onto Potton Road with the provision of a right-turn facility.
14. Consent was granted at the January 2005 meeting for an additional 12-month period for the submission of reserved matters (**Ref S/2238/04/F**). An application for a further 12-month period was approved in March 2006 (**Ref S/0059/06/F**). A copy of the outline consent is attached at Appendix 1.
15. Planning consent was granted on the site in 1991 (**Ref S/0715/89/F**), and subsequently renewed in 1996 (**Ref S/0131/96/F**) for the erection of a production barn, offices, sewage treatment plant and outside storage. The production barn measured 40m x 10m, substantially smaller than that granted in 2001.

Planning Policy

16. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("The County Structure Plan") states that development in the countryside will be restricted to that which is demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
17. **Policy EM7** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") states that development for the expansion of existing firms within village frameworks or on suitable brownfield sites next to or very close to the village frameworks will be permitted subject to the provisions of Policy EM3 (Local User) and EM6 (no adverse impact on residential amenity, traffic conditions, village character and other environmental factors, and the development contributing to a greater range of local employment opportunities, especially for the semi-skilled and unskilled, or where initial development is based upon the use of locally-based skills and expertise). A firm or business will be considered as "existing" if a significant element of its operations has been based in the Cambridge Area for a minimum of two years prior to the date of any application for development.

Consultation

18. **Gamlingay Parish Council** recommends approval. “The Parish Council has no objection to the plans in principle. Two issues of concern were highlighted – the hours of operation should be restricted, as the area does have residential properties adjacent. Planting – Councillors would prefer a more random arrangement of tree planting/groupings in order for it to appear more natural.”
19. The **Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board** comments that the site is approximately 300m from the Board’s drainage district. The natural drainage from the site is towards the Board’s watercourse 85, known as Millbrook. The Board notes that the proposed method of storm water disposal is by way of soakaways. If the method of storm water is to be by way of soakaways then the ground conditions should be investigated and if found satisfactory the soakaways constructed in accordance with the latest BRE Digest 365.
20. The **Trees and Landscapes Officer** comments that approaching the site from Potton although a critical boundary on the edge of the village, the site is located at a lower level than the adjacent land south of Woodview Farm and the nursery. It is therefore not quite as exposed as would appear from the plan. There is enough space to increase the width of the belt to 10m which will add an additional line of planting. The eastern boundary of the site is at a lower level to that of the western boundary and is open to views in from the surrounding countryside. The width of the belt shown on the plan is 10m and this should be increased to 12m to accommodate an extra row of planting. The specification of planting needs to be looked at in more detail to avoid a ‘plantation’ effect, and achieve a more pleasing visual effect.
21. The **Environment Agency** has no objection but points out that details in respect of surface and foul water drainage and pollution control remain outstanding and must be submitted prior to the commencement of development. The site is on a major aquifer. It is suggested that the site should be subject to a detailed scheme for the investigation and recording of contamination. The Agency queries what materials are to be stored on the hard surfaced areas, whether there will be any refuelling on site, and points out that any vehicle wash facilities will need to be agreed with the Agency.
22. The **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** requests that adequate provision should be made for fire hydrants by way of condition or Section 106 Agreement.
23. The comments of the **Chief Environmental Health Officer and Local Highways Authority** have been requested and will be reported to the meeting.

Representations

24. Letters have been received from the occupiers of Nos 5 and 7 Mill Hill and Woodview Farm.
25. The occupier of 7 Mill Hill is concerned that there was previously an unauthorised use of the site by the Company which caused disturbance and therefore there is suspicion concerning the Company’s tactics and motives as well as the Council’s ability to control the firm. There are positive aspects of the application in that the entrance is being moved and the development is planned for the far side of the Old Mill site.
26. It is questioned what the Old Mill site will be used for and whether existing restrictions on the use of it honoured? What manufacturing will be undertaken in the large building

at the bottom of the Old Mill site? During what hours will manufacturing be allowed to take place? How much of a boundary is proposed between the garden of No7 and the Old Mill site? Is the application simply a Trojan horse for future development simply because the principles will be conceded by default?

27. It is not clear from the highways plan whether the road is to be widened at the point where a middle lane is installed to allow vehicles coming from Potton to turn right. There is no way that the current road is wide enough to accommodate a central lane.
28. There is no speed restriction on this stretch of road – has consideration been given to extending the 40mph restriction?
29. There are serious reservations about the adequacy of the size of area allocated to storage, manoeuvring, loading and unloading. It is strongly suspected that it is not enough and that the slack will be taken up by using the Old Mill site. The Council should take into account the width and length of modern trailers; the manoeuvring space required by trailer and tractor units; the proposed flow routes and facilities for vehicles delivering goods to the site as well as this distributing from it; the manoeuvring space required by fork lift trucks; anticipated production levels and peak stock levels – do these correlate to the anticipated vehicle movements of 20; does this figure include goods delivered to the site as well as those delivering the finished product? What happens if this number is exceeded?
30. There is no provision for waste disposal or recycling
31. Details required by conditions attached to the outline consent are not addressed. No details are given on the disposal of surface water or the sewage treatment plant; the type of equipment to be installed is not mentioned; the hours of operation of power equipment is not mentioned; there is no green travel plan; there is no 15m wide planting strip around the boundaries of the site.
32. No planting is shown between the applicant's property and the existing site. As the Old Mill site will be included in any new use there should be similar boundary treatment to that given on the boundary of Woodview Farm.
33. The use of the swiss chalet style building as a mess room is questioned. It is far too small to cater for 100 people and is at the opposite end of the site from the proposed working areas. It is less than 2m from the boundary fence with No7 Mill Hill and would be a gross intrusion into the privacy and peaceful use of the garden. There is no objection to the use of the building for storage but not for a canteen.
34. There is concern that planting could be removed after 5 years.
35. Confirmation is sought that the 4m height restriction of storage of materials will apply to the existing site.
36. Will the Company be able to seek further development in the future?
37. The location plan is inconsistent with the application.
38. The occupier of 5 Mill Hill is concerned at the impact of additional traffic. Although it is noted that a new access is to be formed, because this is a busy road, any additional traffic, especially the lorries, would be a potential traffic hazard.

39. The quality of life in the area would be affected as there is currently little noise in the area apart from traffic. A timber production plant just two doors away would radically change this
40. How will the value of the property be affected?
41. The occupiers of Woodview Farm are concerned at the proposed 6m wide roadway along the south boundary. If used by lorries and fork lift trucks outside reasonable working hours it could become a source of complaint as Woodview Farm is situated quite close to this.
42. Production building No1 is also quite close and again there is concern about production/working hours. The noise from air tools and machinery inside this building on a very late shift may also be cause of complaint.
43. Otherwise it is felt that the Company has made an effort through screen planting and the location of the storage and loading areas to be a 'good' neighbour.

Planning Comments – Key Issues

44. Outline consent has been granted for the use of the site. This application seeks approval for the siting, design and external appearance of the buildings, the means of access and landscaping of the site. It is therefore these issues that Members should concern themselves primarily at this stage.
45. Although a reserved matter, a plan demonstrating the proposed access was agreed at the outline stage and is required to be carried out in accordance with the agreed plan by condition 13 of the outline consent. Condition 14 requires the permanent closure of the existing access once the new one is brought into use. Any comment of the Local Highways Authority will be reported at the meeting
46. The new entrance is positioned 35m to the south of the existing one, taking it further away from the pair of cottages to the north. In the longer term the landscaping scheme will compensate for the loss of the existing planting on the front boundary of the site that will result from the creation of the new access and visibility splays.
47. I have queried with the applicant's agent the need to provide a 6m wide roadway to the south of the proposed main production building and have suggested that it be omitted if possible to minimise the impact of the use on Woodview Farm to the south.
48. I have queried the height of the production buildings with the applicant's agent, as there is a discrepancy between the height specified on the drawings and the height at which the drawings scale. It has been indicated that the application should be considered on the basis of the height specified on the drawing which is 6m. Revised drawings will be required that scale at that height.
49. The fact that the applicant has managed to keep the ridge height of the proposed production buildings down at 6m will help to minimise the visual impact of the development in this countryside location. The smaller office building has a 7m ridge and will be viewed from the new entrance to the site however the visual impact will be minimised by the proposed landscaping. The final choice of the colour of materials will be important.
50. Condition 11 of the outline consent states that the landscaping scheme should incorporate a 15m wide planting strip around the boundaries of the site unless the

Council agrees any variation to that width. The submitted drawings propose a maximum width of 10m for planting. Having visited the site and considered the proposed layout and buildings, the Trees and Landscapes Officer is of the view that the width of the planting strips along the south and east boundaries should be increased to 10m/12m to allow for an additional row of planting. The site is in the countryside and it is therefore important that the boundaries of the site are adequately planted to minimise the impact of the development. The rear of the site will be viewed across open countryside from a public right of way that runs north west to south east, 200-300m from the site.

51. I have passed on the comments of the Trees and Landscapes Officer onto the applicant's agent and have requested that the width of the planting strip be increased accordingly. There is adequate space within the proposed layout for this to be achieved. In response to the comments from the occupier of 7 Mill Hill I have asked for consideration to be given to providing additional planting along the north boundary of either the application site or the existing site to further protect that dwelling.
52. Although details of the proposed planting scheme have been submitted the Trees and Landscapes Officer has suggested that revisions to the specification will be required to avoid a 'plantation' effect. These revisions will also hopefully address the comments made by Gamlingay Parish Council. Again I have passed these comments onto the applicant's agent but am happy that the specification of planting can be dealt with by condition.
53. I will discuss with the Trees and Landscapes Officer whether a Preservation Order should be placed on the perimeter planting strip in due course to help ensure its retention beyond the normal 5 year period provided for within the landscape condition.
54. The operations of Potton Ltd require that large areas of the site will be used for outside storage. The submitted drawings indicate the location of these areas as required by the outline consent, which also specifies that the height of any storage should not exceed 4m, although this condition does not relate to the existing old Mill site I am of the view that the location of the proposed storage areas, with appropriate landscaping, is acceptable in respect of the potential visual impact. I have asked the applicant's agent to respond to the request from the Environment Agency on the use of these areas, in addition to other points it raises.
55. The hours of use of power operated machinery on the site is restricted by condition 6 of the outline consent. Condition 5 requires details of the location of plant within the buildings to be agreed. These conditions remain in force and the applicant will need to comply with the various provisions.
56. The submissions of schemes for foul and surface water drainage are required by condition 4 of the outline consent. The applicant needs to comply with this condition prior to the commencement of development, but full details are not necessary at this stage.
57. I have passed on various concerns of the occupiers of 7 Mill Hill to the applicants agent, including the question of whether the proposed area allocated for storage, manoeuvring, loading and unloading and the proposed use of an existing building as a mess room. I have asked for a response before the meeting. It may well be possible to locate the mess room elsewhere within the site, further from the neighbour's boundary.

58. The relocation of the 40mph sign was not a requirement of the outline consent. Although the application form states that the estimated vehicular traffic flow to and from the site during a normal working day, excluding employee's vehicles, will be 20 this is not a figure, which I could enforce, should it be exceeded. Any application for further development on the site will be considered against relevant development plan policies at that time.
59. I will report the response of the applicant's agent to the various points that have been raised with them, and the comments of the Local Highway Authority and Chief Environmental Health Officer. I will seek delegated powers of approval subject to all outstanding issues being resolved before the determination date but will seek delegated powers of refusal should that not be the case.

Recommendation

60. That delegated powers of approval/refusal be granted subject to the satisfactory resolution of outstanding matters referred to above. Any approval to be the subject of safeguarding conditions

Informatives

61. Any informative of the Chief Environmental Health Officer, Environment Agency and reminding the applicant that various conditions attached to the outline consent remain extant.

Reasons for Approval

1. Although the development does not accord with the Development Plan policies that restrict development in the countryside the site benefits from an extant outline consent for the proposed development that was approved as a departure from the development plan. The application proposes reserved matters pursuant to the Outline planning permission.
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Residential amenity including noise disturbance
 - Highway safety
 - Visual impact on the locality
3. All other material planning considerations have been taken into account. None is of such significance as to outweigh the reason for the decision to approve the planning application.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning File Refs: S/0060/06/RM; S/0059/06/F; S/2238/04/F, S/2331/00/O, S/0131/96/F and S/0715/89/F

Contact Officer: Paul Sexton – Area Planning Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713255