

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Development and Conservation Control Committee

5<sup>th</sup> July 2006

**AUTHOR/S:** Director of Development Services

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**S/2494/04/F – West Wratting  
Grain Storage and Drying Facilities Building and Associated Offices and  
Improvements to A11 Junction – Land Adjacent to Wilbraham Chalk Pit and A11 for  
Camgrain Stores Ltd**

**Recommendation: Approval  
Date for Determination: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005 (Major Application)**

### **Background**

1. Members may recall that this application was considered at Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005, where it was deferred to enable independent highways advice to be sought. A copy of the Committee report is enclosed as Appendix 1 and verbal update reported to Members at that Committee meeting enclosed as Appendix 2.
2. In summary, the application seeks to erect a 90,000 tonne grain store/drying facility together with associated offices on a 15 hectare site located on the south-east side of the A11 trunk road. The application proposes a number of improvements to the junction with the A11 as well as the provision of passing bays along the road connecting the site to the A11. There is a working chalk pit on the north side of the site. Consultations were carried out with the Highways Agency and Local Highways Authority.
3. The Highways Agency raised no objections to the proposal and recommended that any approval be subject to the following conditions:
  - a. The capacity of the grain store being restricted to 90,000 tonnes;
  - b. The junction improvements being carried out prior to the development being brought into use;
  - c. Traffic being restricted to 75 HGV or 150 two-way HGV movements per day.
4. The Local Highways Authority (LHA) raised concerns about inter-visibility over the A11 bridge and stated that the application should be refused on highway safety grounds unless the applicants entered into a Section 106 Agreement to provide traffic signals on the bridge. If this matter could be resolved, the LHA stated that any consent should be subject to the provision of the 3 passing bays proposed within the application and to a routing agreement to prevent HGV's associated with the development travelling through adjacent villages.
5. A significant number of objections were received on the highway safety aspects of the development. However, in the absence of any objection from the Local Highways Authority or Highways Agency, the application was recommended for approval by Officers subject to a Section 106 Agreement and conditions as recommended by the LHA and Highways Agency.

## **Additional Representations – Objections**

### **6. West Wrattling Parish Council** objects further stating:

“This note mainly concerns the type and quality of the junction with the A11 and the potential safety implications. It is prepared by lay people having regard to certain published documents. The Parish Council continues, however, to have a grave concern about the suitability of the site in planning terms as it sees this as setting a precedent which may then be cited for other developments on prime agricultural land. It seems clear to this Council that the store is intended to provide a significant degree of ‘processing’ in so far as it is clear from the documentation with the application that the site will draw in grain from other storage locations as well as directly from farms, many of which have already constructed grain stores which will thereby become redundant creating a further problem of finding storage uses for these in the open countryside fed by minor roads. The bringing in of this other stored grain and the subsequent blending of grains is a process operation which should take place within a commercial zone, albeit of high quality due to the nature of the product, being a human food source. There are high quality industrial/commercial sites within East Anglia, some on brown land.

### **The A11**

7. The A11 is one of the main trunk roads, of which there is now or will shortly be a reduced number due to the de-trunking of a number of these main roads. It is, for example, understood that some or all of the A10 is being or has been recently detrunked. The A11 will be the only main route into the northern part of East Anglia from London and the South to be to dual carriageway standard, although this has not been fully provided to date. The section of concern in this case has been dualled to a high standard and provides a continuous route of very high standard for many miles, including the M11 and the A14 Newmarket Bypass. The section of A11 here is fully grade separated and operates with high speed traffic. The recorded traffic flow (Cambridgeshire Annual Monitoring Report 2004) in the area is 31,900 vehicles per day. The A11 is thus an important road both now and into the future, serving a major part of a growing region of the Country. Indeed with the completion of the Fordham Bypass, linking with the Soham Bypass this route is rapidly becoming the route into Ely and north to Kings Lynn as well as to Norwich and the northern core of East Anglia. It will thus replace that part of the A10 south of Ely as the main route.

### **Grain Store Vehicle Movements**

8. Whilst the capacity of the store is set at 90,000 tonnes it is clear that grain will be brought in for this blending activity and this could come from other storage sites (eg March or Linton) and hence as some grain goes out to users the likelihood is of other grain coming in to achieve further blending, leading possibly to a throughput in the year of twice the actual capacity, as consignments leave and further supplies for blending are introduced. Hence if the loads are as high on average as 20 tonnes per vehicle there would be over 18,000 lorry movements and in peak times this could easily give some 150 movements per day (probably around the harvest period), with one every two or three minutes at such times. This is when the A11 would be busy in its normal inter-regional role and as a holiday traffic route, with cars travelling at high speed to and from the Norfolk coast and countryside.

## **The Junction**

9. A letter from HA refers to the proposed junction meeting standards as being a Compact Grade Separated Junction (TD 40/94) as distinct from a standard Grade Separated Junction (TD 22/05). We have concerns about the suitability of this standard of junction related to both the quality and volume of traffic on the main line of the road, the A11, and the type of vehicle that it is intended will use the junction as a result of the proposed grain store development. The introduction to TD 40/94 states that this standard is to be applied 'in those situations which are not appropriate to the full levels of provision covered in TD22' [within para. 1.1]. The standard [at para. 1.2] states that 'the standards contained in TD22 and TA 48 can be economically justified at design flows above 30,000 AADT on the main line'; we are therefore concerned as the A11 already carries approximately 32,000 and with the growth of the Cambridge sub-region, Stansted Airport, the continuing improvement of the A11, and the growing use of the A11/A142 route it is entirely reasonable to expect traffic levels of 40 – 45,000 in the relatively near future (40,000 is only a 25% increase so could occur within about seven years; - a compound growth rate of some 3¼%). Well within the Standard TD 40/94 [at para. 5.3] the range of flow suitable for this form of junction is again reinforced with 'Compact grade separated junctions appear to be suitable for use where mainline flows are between approximately 12,500 and 30,000 AADT'. Probably by the time this junction has been constructed, and certainly within 5 years of its construction the A11 flow will be well above this range, thus making this an unsuitable junction arrangement for this location.
  
10. The use of Compact Junction Designs appears not to be primarily for main dual carriageways such as the A11. The Standard refers [para. 1.1] to 'principally for use on rural and inter-urban roads.' Whilst the A11 is such a road it is an inter-regional dual carriageway. Single lane dualling of the main road is referred to as a means of providing a Compact Junction [at para. 1.3], whilst the following is stated at paragraph 1.4 – 'This standard....effectively extends downwards the range of flows and conditions over which grade separation could well be justified economically to around 12,500AADT on the through route'. On the A11 we will very shortly have 3 times this volume of traffic! Reference is made [at para. 2.1] to the following: 'On existing dual carriageways the provision of compact grade separation may be applied to a route which consists of a number of grade separated junctions and roundabouts interspersed with major/minor at grade priority junctions.' The A11 is not such a route; it is fully grade separated over many miles from M11 through to well north of the Newmarket Bypass and towards Barton Mills.

## **Junction Safety**

11. The aspect of concern to the Parish Council with this form of compact junction is the potential risk to safe operation due to the volume and speed of traffic on the A11, the increases expected in this traffic and the implications of slow moving, accelerating and braking traffic associated with the proposed development. The area of the County already experiences the long delays from accidents on the A14 and M11, which are unfortunately far too frequent and the Council fears incidence of similar accidents at this junction. The General Principles state [in para. 2.1] that 'At all stages in the design and construction of the junction it is of paramount importance that safety aspects are fully investigated and considered.' To us (on the Parish Council) that means assessing the ability of the laden grain lorries to decelerate/brake safely within the diverge length and accelerate equally safely fully within the merge length of the junction.

12. The safety aspect is indeed paramount, but the design for compact junctions requires [at para. 6.1 and 6.5] the design to be for a 'design speed of 30kph which is 3 design speed steps below the current minimum; referred to within the text as 50kph. 30kph is the equivalent of 18.6 mph, whilst 50kph is 31mph. Speeds on the A11 are often at or above the national limit, due to the very high quality of the road and its straight alignment; this is 70mph or almost 113 kph (it is believed the design standard for the road – the A11 – is set at 120kph). Thus vehicles entering have to be able to reach these higher speeds, or risk making the through traffic take avoiding action. The large laden grain lorries have therefore to lose or gain 95kph (nearly 60mph) to match the speed of the traffic. In reality this does not occur as the larger vehicles are limited by engine management and/or the speed limits applied to large commercial vehicles, but they should reach a speed of 50 to 60 mph (the latter believed to be the limit for such vehicles). This would involve a speed change of about 35mph over the length of the junction.
13. At this point it is necessary to make certain assumptions related to the characteristics of such vehicles as grain lorries. It is expected that they will when loaded accelerate relatively slowly due to the load they carry; if this is taken at a rate giving a speed change of 60mph over 30 seconds it is believed this is as high a speed change as they would ever achieve and is a rate of 2mph per second (a normal family car needs between 12 and 18 seconds when pushed but more often would take 15 to 20 seconds for comfort, a rate of between 3 and 4mph per second). In stopping the Highway code advises in emergency from 60mph to zero in dry conditions needs 73m (240ft), but again the norm would be at least 100% longer as such braking is both very uncomfortable and may not be achieved in wet conditions. Hence to achieve a speed appropriate to join the main stream of traffic would require a grain lorry starting from 30kph (18.6mph) some 276 metres (905 ft) to get to 53.6 mph, and this should be largely or wholly achieved within the merge length. Similarly to slow by – say 40 mph – would need some 120 metres, and this would be difficult for a fully laden lorry. In day to day reality a longer distance is likely to be required.
14. Dimensions for slip roads are given in TD22/05, but TD 40/94 (for compact junctions) refers to the use of TA 20 (The Layout of Major – Minor Junctions). This latter document allows for a lower standard of slip road and is clearly inappropriate given the nature of the traffic through the junction and the quality of the main road and the volume and speed of traffic on that main road (A11). The Parish consider that due to the accepted volume of HGV movement the standards within TD 22/05 should be provided at this junction to accommodate the proposed Grain Store use. TD22/05 quotes a merge taper of 150m and a nose of 85m, giving in total 235m for a mainline design speed of 120kph (205m for a 100A design speed)). For the diverge the figure is 220m (200m for 100A design speed). These dimensions at least approach the distances needed by the type of laden vehicle expected with this development.

## **Conclusions**

15. The use of the Compact Junction is not suited to this location due to the high quality of the existing road as a dual carriageway, the high traffic flows now and expected, which do not accord with the stipulated use of this standard of junction. Finally therefore we do not accept that the letter from HA to our Chairman which pointed to the use of the Compact Junction Design Standard has true relevance as the conditions are not those appropriate for that standard. Our concern that any accidents resulting from the present scheme would be at least in part due to the negligent application of the standards of design still therefore stands in our view. The Parish Council considers the design should therefore abide by the requirements of TD22/05

for the lengths of all the slip roads to and from the A11 in order to meet standards and promote safe operation.”

16. Since the Committee meeting, 6 further letters of objection have been received, 5 of these being from residents who have previously objected and 1 being a new objection from No.59 High Street, Little Wilbraham. The main points raised are:
  - a. The owner of the nearest property, Valley Farmhouse, states that it is clear from reported accident data that the number of accidents officially reported on the A11 Wilbrahams junction and the number of repairs and remedial action taken as a result of un-reported accidents do not tally by a very long way. It would also seem that repairs made as a result of accidents on this junction occur on an alarmingly frequent (monthly or weekly) basis and this is not reflected in the official accident statistics.
  - b. In addition, concerns regarding the visual impact on the landscape, the lack of benefit to local residents and problems associated with traffic passing through nearby villages are reiterated.

### **Additional Representations – Support**

**Linton Parish Council** states:

17. “Camgrain is a good neighbour and has supported the village over the years. We believe the new site to be very logical for further development of the grain store in this area.”

**James Paice MP**, who has previously written in supporting the application, states:

18. “I know that decisions were deferred pending an independent highways’ assessment for the District Council. I understand that generally that reaffirms the original proposals are acceptable in meeting highways’ standards. I have also seen the independent landscape assessment report produced, I believe, for the County Council. I am therefore writing to reaffirm my support for this application. The recent development at the Linton site has, I understand, now completed all outstanding planning approval and further development there would have serious local impact. Camgrain as an organisation has expanded dramatically over the years and given the huge pressures on agriculture its role is ever more important in enabling farmers to cooperate and compete in the global market. I trust that the Council will bear that in mind in reaching its decision.”

**Robert Sturdy MEP for the Eastern Region** states:

19. “I write to express my support for the planning application submitted by Camgrain Stores Ltd, for an additional central grain store at Wilbraham. Due to the location of the site there will be almost no impact on local villages as it is off the main road and behind a chalk pit which will be landscaped. I understand the Highways Agency has approved improvements to the junction of the A11 and that these improvements will be made prior to the development of the grain store, which will also ensure that local villages are not affected.
20. In my opinion the application is justified as there is continued demand and Government support for central grain storage. It encourages farm re-structuring and co-operation in line with European and National policy, thereby improving the industry’s competitiveness. At a time when agriculture needs all the support it can get,

I feel central grain storage is the way forward. The new store will allow better marketing of produce and also satisfy increasing health and safety, and hygiene issues. The capital costs of constructing a new store far outweigh the efficiency of on-farm storage, allowing relocation of storage away from villages.”

21. In addition, 26 further letters of support have been received, predominantly from Camgrain members but also from Barclays, the NFU and EFFF. 17 of these bodies have previously commented with 9 new letters received. The main points raised are:
- a. Importance of service Camgrain provides to arable farmers;
  - b. Lot of on farm grain storage is obsolete or sub-standard. Central grain store reduces need for buildings in the countryside;
  - c. Makes harvest more efficient;
  - d. Camgrain have a good record re lorry routing agreements. Lorry routing agreement will address concerns regarding traffic through nearby villages, except when collecting grain from farms in those villages;
  - e. Limitations of existing site at Linton;
  - f. Higher quality lower cost grain storage essential considering margins in arable farming are thin;
  - g. Professional advice shows A11 junction would be safe once alterations are made, and safer than existing layout;
  - h. Improved food hygiene;
  - i. Reduction in grain movements on local roads

#### **Further Investigation into Highways Issues**

22. Following the resolution at the Committee meeting in July 2005, the Council employed W S Atkins Consultants who agreed to assess the highway safety implications of the development (both in terms of the impact on the A11 trunk road and on the local highway network) having regard to the existing highway situation and to the improvements proposed to the A11 junction within the application. They were also asked by Officers to comment on a number of highways improvements suggested by some objectors, namely:
- a. The provision of a new slip road onto the southbound side of the A11 (to the west of the bridge over the A11);
  - b. The provision of a level 2 carriageway bridge;
  - c. 2 carriageway wide feeder roads from the site to the junction;
  - d. Wide access into the grain store in order to prevent congestion on the road;
  - e. Restricting HGV movements during peak hours (ie – 7am – 9am and 5pm – 6pm)
23. WS Atkins, in their initial response, raised concerns about the existing A11 junction, advising that the existing diverge lanes result in heavy braking in order to safely negotiate the entry radii. The form of the diverge is a direct taper meaning vehicles are still on the main carriageway of the A11 until just prior to the traffic island in the junction. This situation would be worse for HGV's which will need to slow for a longer period of time and remain on the A11 for longer increasing the potential of nose-to-tail collisions. The potential for nose-to-tail collisions will also increase with the increase in HGV's joining the A11 as the merge is not long enough for drivers to accelerate to a similar speed as users on the A11. WS Atkins stated that a parallel diverge/merge layout would reduce this type of conflict. Concerns were also raised with regards to the bridge over the A11 but it was acknowledged that the visibility problems could be overcome with the provision of traffic signals or priority working. The restriction of HGV movements during peak hours and the provision of 2 carriageway wide feeder

roads from the site to the junction were both discouraged as they would introduce additional hazards and safety concerns.

24. WS Atkins were subsequently asked by Officers to advise whether they considered the junction improvements proposed to be inadequate to cater for the traffic likely to be generated by the development. They commented that they had not undertaken a junction capacity assessment as they were asked by this Authority to assess the highway safety implications of the development. The junction road safety appraisal undertaken by WS Atkins highlighted the safety problems associated with the proposed junction design – namely, due to the increased potential for nose-to-tail collisions, the introduction of slow moving HGV's combined with high traffic speeds on the A11 merits the introduction of parallel merge/diverge arrangements that are over and above the standard required from a consideration of highway capacity alone. WS Atkins expressed concern that a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, specifically relating to the current 90,000 tonne rather than previous 30,000 tonne application, had not been carried out suggesting that the highway safety implications of the development had not been fully taken into account in the Highways Agency's response. They also stressed that, as highway safety auditors, they cannot directly recommend whether a planning application should be accepted or refused. They can only highlight safety problems and suggest recommendations to minimise the identified risks.
25. The Highways Agency was asked by this Authority to comment on the views received from Atkins. The HA advised that, as the junction would comply with design standards, a refusal on highway grounds could not be sustained at appeal. They reiterated their support for the improvements proposed within the application, considering them adequate in terms of geometry and capacity to accommodate background traffic and grain store related traffic to safeguard against significant impact on the A11. With regards to Atkins' recommendations, the HA acknowledged that parallel provisions would constitute a more substantial upgrading of the existing junction. However, these parallel merges could not be justified given the traffic flows on the A11 and using the junction, even including the extra traffic generated by the proposal. The provision of parallel merges would result in higher speeds which could lead to problems – these would also be a departure from standard and would require approval from the design team. It is stressed that Atkins comments are not supported by objective design procedures and are not supported by a Stage 1 independent road safety audit. The All junction is in a rural setting and subject to relatively low traffic flows and would remain so taking into account traffic associated with the proposal.
26. Following the comments from Atkins, the applicants commissioned the preparation of a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, which was carried out specifically with reference to the current proposal.
27. The Highways Agency was consulted on this revised safety audit and raised no objections.
28. WS Atkins, however, reiterated their safety assessment of the junction, stating that a parallel merge/diverge layout would give road users sufficient time to slow to safely negotiate the entry radius and to accelerate to increase speed to safely join the main highway. They advised that the format of the Road Safety Audit is not in accordance with HD 19/03 (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges). The SA states that each of the auditors responses is classified as either a 'comment' or 'problem'. Items classed as a 'problem' denote matters likely to result in significant road safety hazards. Items marked as comments are less serious but worthy of consideration by the designer.

29. HD 19/03 states that a recommendation for a designer to consider a potential problem should be avoided as this means that a safety issue could be easily dismissed. The RSA highlights the safety problems at the end of the deceleration lanes, noting clear evidence of crashes at the end of the north and southbound deceleration lanes with damage to vehicles and chevron signing; and the fact that vehicles are reaching the end of deceleration lanes at too high a speed to negotiate the bends. These have been classified as 'comments' in the report. The classification of this safety issue as a comment rather than problem leaves the designers room to dismiss it. WS Atkins state that the RSA shows that the existing short deceleration lanes are causing a problem and advise that the introduction of parallel lanes would help to mitigate this issue. They go on to state that there is more accident reduction potential with a parallel diverge than a parallel merge as road users do not always appreciate how much they have to reduce their speed to safely negotiate the radius at the end of a direct taper until it is too late resulting in loss of control incidents. Also, due to the high speed of road users on the mainline, it is difficult to slow to the appropriate speed to negotiate a direct taper when there is a following vehicle close behind. With HGV's joining and accelerating onto the A11 road users travelling on the mainline should be able to see the HGV and move to the offside lane. The problems arise when the A11 is busy and the road user in the nearside lane of the A11 has no room for manoeuvre and has to break hard and/or take avoiding action.
30. WS Atkins were asked by Officers to advise if they would be prepared to defend a refusal on highway safety grounds at appeal in light of the lack of objections from the LHA and Highways Agency. They advised they would be prepared to defend their *highway safety assessment of the A11 access junction* at appeal.
31. Following this objection, a meeting was held between WS Atkins and the applicant's highway safety consultants, WSP, & their Safety Auditors, Jacobs Babbie, in order to discuss the issues further. A full note of the meeting is enclosed at Appendix 3 and has been agreed by all parties who attended.

***Note of meeting***

32. At the meeting, WSP tabled a plan of the existing A11 junction together with a plan showing the proposed improvements. They confirmed there are parts of the existing junction that are substandard in terms of Highways Agency standards but that the proposals bring all elements up to current standards based on the tapering slip road layout.
33. Atkins confirmed their view that the parallel diverge lane layout may be a suitable alternative and has the potential to minimise the risk of accidents. Direct taper diverges have often been replaced with parallel lane diverges due to accident patterns that can emerge with direct taper layouts. Accidents at this junction involving collisions into street signs etc indicate the problem of the existing junction.
34. The Highways Agency reaffirmed their support for the simple taper arrangement proposed in the application and their reluctance to alter the form of a junction without a proven need to revise it. They also advised that a parallel diverge layout would not comply with standards and would be required to go through the departure procedure (although Atkins were not convinced that this would be the case).
35. Jacobs Babbie confirmed they had undertaken a full Stage 1 Safety Audit. They stressed that it was in the interests of all parties involved to ensure the junction works, is safe and meets the necessary standards. In 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years between January 1998 and

June 2003 there has been a collision frequency of 0.54 per annum on the northbound off-slip and 0.36 on the southbound off-slip, each involving a single car losing control. There were no collisions either side associated with the on slips. This rate is a low frequency that could be reduced further by improvements to the signing conspicuity and use of flexible rather than rigid signs. They stated that the question to ask is whether the application makes the existing problem any worse. The proposal introduces mainly HGV movements in small numbers to existing traffic. Reported incidents involve cars and a motorcycle suggesting that existing HGV's (which are already using the junction in association with the adjacent chalk pit) are not encountering any significant problem either involving them in collisions or causing incidents involving other vehicles. Babbie expressed their view that the application does not introduce significant new or increased risk of collisions compared to the existing condition; and that the proposed type and number of movements arising from the application are capable of being undertaken within the improved junction which will be brought up to current standards. The introduction of parallel diverge arrangements could encourage drivers to leave the A11 at higher speed and no change should be made to a junction unless there is reason to believe it will result in a net improvement. Babbie also confirmed that capacity is not a problem at this junction.

37. Atkins reiterated their view that a parallel diverge could be a suitable alternative. However, they were satisfied that the applicant's highways consultants had demonstrated that all safety issues had been properly addressed, with the meeting being part of the safety audit process. Atkins also pointed out that there was no dispute between the two audit teams, only a difference of opinion as to how the issues identified should be addressed. Atkins again advised that their role was not to support or object to the proposal but to comment in the context of the safety audit procedure.
38. The applicants advised that, if this Council refused the application on highway safety grounds based upon the comments and advice received by Atkins, they would intend to appeal the decision. Atkins were then asked by Officers at the meeting whether they would be able to support the Council at an appeal. Atkins advised that they would not object to the submitted proposal although it must be recognised that an objection could not be raised through the Road Safety Audit process and nor can Atkins raise an objection as they are working under a commission from the Council.
39. After the meeting, a further letter was received from the Highways Agency who state that the proposed road improvements have been the subject of a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and would result in the merge taper and diverge taper arrangements onto and off the A11 being brought up to the standard required by TD 40/94. The stopping site distance from the internal connector road to the A11 northbound carriageway would be less than the minimum 50m required by TD 40/94 but the HA has agreed this Departure from Standard. The connector roads and bridge would remain substandard but no objection has been raised by the Local Highways Authority. It is considered that the provision of a parallel arrangement could potentially give rise to drivers maintaining higher speeds only to misjudge the turning radii into the junction's connector roads. Also it would be inappropriate to alter the form of the junction without a proven need. No accidents have been recorded between 2003 and 2005 involving the existing taper arrangements. The HA therefore state that they prefer the use of merge taper and diverge taper arrangements.

### **Additional Representation from the applicant's agent**

40. The applicant's agent stresses that Officers and Members must consider the application as submitted. Members concerns at the 2005 Committee meeting were directed towards safety matters and it is therefore appropriate to acknowledge the following:
- a. The applicant has procured independent road safety audit and advice to address Members concerns. Atkins have separately evaluated the junction and scheme, on behalf of the Council, and are in agreement with the applicant's advisors (Jacobs Babtie) about the nature and scale of the problem, namely a loss of control causation. The most updated collision records for 2003 – 2005 indicate that there has been a marked reduction in collision frequency and in the last 3 years there were no reported incidents at all of the type which Jacobs Babtie and Atkins safety audit teams had identified as a concern;
  - b. Atkins do not suggest that the likelihood or severity of collisions would be worsened by the proposed scheme;
  - c. Both safety teams agreed that improving signing conspicuity and road marking condition, and changing from rigid to flexible warning signs, would improve driver response and reduce the consequence when drivers make an error;
  - d. Atkins are not making an objection to the application. They are looking to ensure that the safety aspects of the junction improvements have been fully explored. Through the work done by Camgrain's highways consultants WSP and the Safety Auditors, Jacobs Babtie, Camgrain has demonstrated to Atkins that the safety aspects of the junction improvement have been thoroughly investigated and are reflected in the design;
  - e. The proposals will improve the junction by bringing it fully into line with current Highways Agency standards. There are no objections from the LHA and Highways Agency that cannot be addressed through legal agreements or conditions. The road safety audit process will continue to include a valuation at detailed design stage before works begin, after construction and at one year and three years after opening.

### **Planning Comments – Key Issues**

41. Since the previous Committee meeting a year ago, the highway safety issues have been thoroughly explored. It is clear that concerns regarding the bridge over the A11 and internal connector roads can be overcome through the conditions and Section 106 Agreement previously requested from the Local Highways Authority; and that residents' concerns regarding the increase in traffic travelling through nearby villages can be overcome through a lorry routing agreement.
42. The key issue remains the suitability of the A11 junction. Prior to the meeting involving Atkins and the applicant's highways consultants and advisors, Officers interpreted Atkins response as a clear objection to the application. Atkins highlighted the problems with the existing form of the junction, stating that the short slip roads result in single car loss of control collisions and that the introduction of HGV movements gives rise to the potential for nose-to-tail collisions. They stressed that a parallel merge/diverge layout would be an improvement to the existing situation,

although acknowledged that the requirement for this would be over and above the standards.

43. The problems with the existing junction layout are not disputed. They are acknowledged in the Stage 1 Road Safety Audit undertaken by Jacobs Babbie. Atkins clearly consider there to be merit in introducing a parallel merge/diverge layout and the Highways Agency acknowledges that parallel merges would constitute a more substantial upgrade of the junction. It must be noted, however, that this is not a consensus view and that there was some debate at the meeting as to the relative merits of such layouts which have their own inherent safety problems.
44. With regards to the comments received from West Wratting Parish Council regarding the incorrect application of the standards, the Highways Agency has provided traffic flow figures demonstrating that the flows do fall well below 30,000 daily movements and that the correct standard is TD 40/94 as quoted in the Highways Agency's response.
45. This Authority must consider the application as submitted. The junction improvements proposed within this application comply with the standards and the Highways Agency has consistently reiterated its support for the proposal, advising that a parallel merge layout cannot be insisted upon on highway safety grounds. Although Atkins have advised that they would be prepared to defend their safety assessment of the existing junction at appeal should this Authority refuse the application. I must stress that these comments would relate purely to problems associated with the design of the existing junction (views that would not be disputed by other parties) and, critically, that Atkins would not raise an objection to the junction layout proposed in the application.
46. Finally, I would like to draw Members attention to Item 5 of the verbal update within appendix 2 to this report. The applicant's agents objected to the proposed condition 18 requiring the demolition of the buildings and restoration of the site to its current state if the site ceases to operate as an agricultural grain store for a period of 12 months or more. It is argued that such a non-time limited condition would impose a significant liability on Camgrain's members. Camgrain is firmly committed to the site – however, future social or economic changes cannot be predicted and the planning system should be able to address alternative proposals for the site. It is argued that a condition that would apply for a 10 year period within 10 years from the date of substantial completion of the works would be a sensible compromise and would provide the safeguard the Authority requires for a reasonable period of time to give some solace that the proposals are long term. Officers consider this to be a reasonable compromise and Members are therefore requested to consider the rewording of the previously suggested condition for a time limited 10 year period.

### **Recommendation**

47. In light of Atkins comments that they could not specifically substantiate an objection to the junction improvements proposed in this application at appeal (and hence the lack of highway safety reasons to refuse the application), my recommendation remains one of approval, as amended by Stage 1 Safety Audit dated 12<sup>th</sup> December 2005, subject to the prior completion of a Section 106 agreement consisting of (a) a routing agreement to prevent HGV's travelling through the villages of Great and Little Wilbraham, Fulbourn and Six Mile Bottom unless collecting grain from farms within those villages, (b) the provision of traffic signals on the bridge, (c) a commuted sum for the maintenance of the traffic lights, (d) restriction of development generated traffic to 75 HGVs per day, or 150 two-way HGV movements per day with provision for annual monitoring reports to be submitted.

1. Standard Condition A – Time limited permission (Reason A);
2. Sc5a – Details and samples of materials for external walls and roofs (Reason – To minimise the impact of the development upon its surroundings);
3. Sc51 – Landscaping, including details of the mound construction angles and heights of the spoil bunds and cross sections of the mounding (Rc51);
4. Sc52 – Implementation of landscaping (Rc52);
5. Sc60 – Details of boundary treatment (Rc60);
6. Sc5f – Details of materials to be used for hard surfaced areas within the site including roads, driveways and car parking areas (Reason – To minimise disturbance to adjoining residents);
7. Sc5b - Surface water drainage details (Rc5b);
8. Sc5c - Foul water drainage details (Rc5c);
9. All buildings and related services shall be protected against the ingress/ignition of landfill gas based on modern guidance such as CIRIA report 149 and Building Research Establishment Report 212 (Reason – The development is adjacent to a gassing landfill site. Development commences 40 metres south of the fill, the current gassing status of which is unknown);
10. During the period of construction no power operated machinery shall be operated on the premises before 08.00 hours on weekdays and 08.00 hours on Saturdays nor after 18.00 hours on weekdays and 13.00 hours on Saturdays (nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays) unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority in accordance with any agreed noise restrictions (Rc26);
11. Sc27 – Control of Emissions (Rc27a);
12. A method statement for the construction of the noise barrier shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority and the noise barrier constructed before commencement of the development, hereby permitted. (Reason – To ensure that the noise barrier provides mitigating effects to reduce noise and dust emissions from the site);
13. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the improvements to the A11 junction, shown on drawing number PH09A, have been carried out and completed to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highways Agency (Reason – The A11 Trunk Road at Wilbraham is unfit in its present state to accept the additional traffic that the development would generate until the proposed improvement has been satisfactorily completed);
14. No more than 90000 tonnes of grain shall be stored on the site at any one time (Reason – The proposed improvement to the A11 Trunk Road has been assessed on the basis of the number of HGV movements. An increase in this number may invalidate the assessment and could lead to congestion and/or weaving problems on the A11. This would be unacceptable in safety terms);

15. No development pursuant to the development, hereby permitted, shall commence until the following design details relating to the required improvement to the Trunk Road have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highways Agency;
  - i. how the improvement interfaces with the existing highway alignment and carriageway markings including lane destinations,
  - ii. full construction details relating to the highway improvement. This should include any modification to existing structures or proposed structures, with supporting analysis,
  - iii. full signing and lighting details,
  - iv. confirmation of full compliance with Departmental Standards (DMRB) and Policies (or approved relaxations/departures from standards),
  - v. an independent stage 2 Road Safety Audit (taking account of any stage 1 Road Safety Audit recommendations) carried out in accordance with Departmental Standards (DMRB) and Advice Notes, and
  - vi. An Appraisal Summary Table (AST) in accordance with the requirements of D.E.T.R publication "A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England: Guidance on the new approach to appraisal – July 1998"  
(Reason – The Highways Agency must be satisfied with all the details of the proposed improvement to the A11 Trunk Road prior to the commencement of construction work)
  
16. Before the development hereby permitted commences an ecological assessment, which establishes the site's present value in terms of arable plants, skylark, grey partridge and brown hare, and sets out habitat mitigation and compensatory measures if such species are shown to exist on the site, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the scheme shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details (Reason – To conserve locally important flora and fauna as required by Policy EN12 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004)
  
17. The offices, hereby permitted, shall not be used other than by Camgrain and its members and for purposes ancillary to the permitted use of the site for grain storage and drying (Reason – The creation of an office use, unrelated to the needs of agriculture, would contravene Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003)
  
18. Condition requiring the removal of all buildings and silos and the restoration of the land if the site is not used for the permitted use for a continuous period of 12 months (Reason – To avoid dereliction in this countryside location)
  
19. Condition requiring provision of 3 passing bays shown on drawing number PH10A (Reason – In the interests of highway safety)

## **Informatives**

### **Reasons for Approval**

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the Development Plan and particularly the following policies:
  - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003: **P1/2** (Environmental Restrictions on Development); and **P8/1** (Sustainable Development - Links Between Land Use and Transport).
  - South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004: **EN1** (Landscape Character Areas), **EN3** (Landscaping and Design Standards for New Development in the Countryside), **EN12** (Nature Conservation), **EN45** (The Water Environment), **ES6** (Noise and Pollution) and **ES7** (Noise from Road Traffic)
2. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
  - The principle of development in the countryside and justification/need for the development;
  - Visual impact;
  - Highway safety and traffic issues;
  - Residential amenity issues including noise and pollution;
  - Flood risk/drainage issues;
  - Ecological issues

### **General**

1. The comments of the Environment Agency, set out in letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005, are enclosed for your attention.
2. The adjacent footpath/byway must remain open and unobstructed at all times. Building materials must not be stored on the byway, contractors vehicles must not be parked on it and it must not be used for access to the site.
3. No alteration to the surface of the footpath/byway is permitted without the consent of Cambridgeshire County Council (it is an offence to damage the surface of a public right of way under Section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971).

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

- Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Planning File Ref: S/2494/04/F

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