

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee 5th July 2006
AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

**S/1041/06/F – Croxton
Change of Use from Warehouse Building (Class B8) to General Industrial Use
(Class B2) and Placement of Refrigerated Unit
at Whitehall Farm Industrial Estate, Cambridge Road**

Recommendation: Approval

Departure from the Development Plan

Site and Proposal

1. The site measuring 2.48 hectares (6.13 acres) is situated to the north-west of the village framework of Croxton, at the junction of the A428 Trunk Road with the C182 (road leading to Graveley). The site now used as an industrial estate comprises of a former farm dwelling, converted farm buildings and warehouses. Access to the site is from the western boundary with the C182. The site is currently occupied by Cambridgeshire Coatings Ltd, Alcast Group, Shred Safe and Eaton Transport.
2. This full planning application received 22nd May 2006 seeks to change the use of part of an existing warehouse building measuring 695sqm to general industrial use. It also involves the placement of a prefabricated refrigerated unit with a floor area of 20sqm on the eastern elevation of the existing warehouse building. The refrigerated unit has a monopitched roof with a maximum ridge height of 2.5m and measures 4m in width and 5m in length.
3. The application forms indicate that the applicant currently employs 9 employees and this is anticipated to increase to 14 or 15. The application plans indicate that 7 additional parking spaces are to be provided on-site. Foul and surface water drainage is intended to be disposed by existing means.

Planning History

Several planning applications have been received on the site for commercial use. These are summarised in reverse date order.

4. **S/0443/06/F** – Change of use from B8 (Storage and Distribution) to B2 (General Industrial) and placement of refrigerated unit was withdrawn on 28th April 2006.
5. **S/2580/04/F** – Siting of portable building to provide toilet, disabled toilet, washdown area and canteen was approved on 14th February 2005. Condition 1 of the consent required the building to be removed and land restored to its former condition on or before the 31 December 2006, or within three months of the date of completion of the internal remodelling of the existing warehouse, whichever is the sooner.

6. **S/1044/03/F** – Change of use of Whitehall Farm Cottage to offices (Class B1) approved on 24th June 2003.
7. **S/1317/02/F** – Extension to industrial building approved on 12th September 2002. The proposal increased the floorspace by 590sqm. This consent has not been implemented to date.
8. **S/0331/02/F** – Erection of warehouse building approved on 13th May 2002. The proposal lead to an increase in floorspace of 1,944sqm. The proposed change of use applies to part of this warehouse building.
9. **S/0618/98/F** – change of use of Whitehall Farm Cottage to Offices (Class B1) (Renewal of period consent **S/1644/93/F**) approved.
10. **S/0709/97/F** – Extensions and Alterations to Existing Building for Warehousing and Offices together with revised parking, new internal road, landscaping and closure of northern access - approved.
11. **S/1644/93/F** – change of use of Whitehall Farm Cottage to Offices (Class B1) – approved for a temporary 5-year period.
12. **S/1643/93/F** – opening of former access (egress only) – refused.
13. **S/1814/92/F** – retrospective change of use of buildings for warehouse/storage (Class B8) – approved.
14. **S/0066/91/F** – retrospective change of use of redundant farm buildings for warehousing/storage (Class B8) – refused.

Planning Policy

15. National guidance in **Planning Policy Statement 7** (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) supports the reuse of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. Planning authorities should support a wide range of economic activities in rural areas. In particular, authorities should be supportive of small-scale development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from, and have poor public transport links, with service centres.
16. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ('Structure Plan 2003') states development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
17. **Policy P2/5** of the Structure Plan 2003 outlines that distribution, warehousing and manufacturing activities which generate large volumes of freight movement will only be located on sites with good access to rail freight facilities, and to motorways, trunk or other primary routes.
18. **Policy P2/6** of the Structure Plan 2003 states that sensitive small-scale development in rural areas will be facilitated where it contributes, *inter alia*, to supporting new and existing businesses, to the re-use of existing buildings and towards helping to maintain or renew the vitality of rural areas.

19. **Policy P8/1** of the Structure Plan 2003 outlines that planning authorities should ensure that new development provides appropriate access from the highway network that does not compromise safety.
20. **Policy EM10** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 specifies that outside village frameworks, planning permission will be granted for change of use and conversion of rural buildings to employment use subject to a number of provisions including:
 - (a) The buildings do not require major reconstruction;
 - (b) The conversion will not prejudice village vitality;
 - (c) The appearance after conversion is in keeping with the surroundings;
 - (d) The conversion does not materially change the material character of the building on the surrounding countryside;
 - (e) Safe access and satisfactory provision for parking and turning of vehicles can be achieved without detriment to the setting of the building or surrounding landscape; and
 - (f) Scale and frequency of traffic generated can be accommodated on the road system without undue effects.
21. Paragraph 5.49 states “Because most rural buildings in South Cambridgeshire are small the potential scale of converted buildings will usually be similarly modest. Any element of increased floorspace contained within conversion proposals will be strictly controlled and usually limited to that which may be necessary to achieve an enhanced design or integrate the scheme with surroundings.”
22. **Policy EM3** of the Local Plan 2004 states that new development in the countryside should reinforce local distinctiveness in terms of scale, design, layout, materials and landscaping.
23. **Policy ES4** of the Local Plan 2004 outlines that “where a proposed development will significantly increase traffic flow or, by virtue of its process, introduce emissions to air, the applicant shall assess the impact of its operation on local air quality by undertaking an appropriate modelling exercise to allow comparison with the local authority’s air quality strategy”.
24. **Policy ES6** of the Local Plan specifies that the “District Council will seek, by the means of appropriate planning conditions to minimise the impact of noise and pollution on noise sensitive development arising from any new industrial, commercial or recreational activities”.

Consultation

25. **Croxton Parish Council – Recommendation** of refusal.

“The Parish Council objects to the proposed development because:

1. The application is again technically invalid – the applications seem to indicate that the change of use relates to only part of the site – yet the redline (indicating the applicable application site area) encloses the whole of the industrial estate – therefore the proposal should be considered to request a change of use of the whole site to general B2 use.

2. In planning policy terms it is considered that this is an unacceptable location for B2 use because:
- (a) It is an unsustainable location (in terms of both national and local sustainability criteria) for B2 use. B2 use employ more people than B8 uses and access to this site (it is a countryside location) is largely car dependant. New B2 uses should be located in more accessible and more sustainable locations (allocated industrial estates).
 - (b) By definition B2 uses are considered to be 'acceptable' generators of pollution. This site, due to its countryside location, must be considered to be environmentally sensitive and a B2 use could/would result in unacceptable impacts upon the local environment.
 - (c) Concern was also raised regarding capacity issues on the A428 and any additional traffic generated by this development could exacerbate existing highway safety issues along this most pressured section of trunk road."
26. **Chief Environmental Health Officer** – Comments to be verbally reported. Nevertheless, it is noted that the officer raised no objection to the previous application in principle, but due to the absence of precise details from the applicant as to the nature of the equipment proposed to be used on the site, conditions are recommended requiring details of power driven plant or equipment and hours of use of power driven machinery.
27. **Highways Agency** – No objection. The application will not adversely affect the A428 trunk road at this location.
28. **Local Highways Authority** – "Provided you are confident that additional parking to meet your standards can be accommodated within the site without compromising existing parking and manoeuvring space, I have no objections to the modest proposal from the highway point of view."
29. **Environment Agency** –Comments to be verbally reported. Nevertheless, it is noted that the Agency made the following comments on the earlier application. The Agency had no objection to the proposed development in principle. However, the application, as submitted, did not sufficiently consider foul and surface water drainage and pollution control. A condition requiring details of the above to be submitted prior to the commencement of development was recommended.
30. **Anglian Water** – Any comments received will be verbally reported.

Representations

31. None received

Representations by Agent

32. A summary of supporting information provided by the agent is provided below:
- (a) Site provides local employment;
 - (b) Site is well screened by vegetation and existing buildings;
 - (c) The proposed refrigerated unit will not be visible from outside the site;

- (d) The proposal is required to provide manufacturing capacity for the production of water based paints;
 - (e) The proposal will not lead to increased environmental pollution. The manufacturing area will include a dust collection filter and 'clean' air extraction duct;
 - (f) The existing warehouse building is a fully bunded building with no external drainage;
 - (g) The proposal will create 5-6 additional jobs on site;
 - (h) Car parking provision and vehicle circulation within the site is plentiful;
 - (i) Proposed additional parking spaces will not affect circulation space or loading or unloading areas. The change of use will not necessitate any other increase in vehicular traffic to the site other than new employees vehicles;
 - (j) The proposal is consistent with planning policy.
33. The agent stated in a letter dated 6 April 2006 in relation to the earlier application, that a degree of manufacturing has been undertaken on the site. "Regrettably my clients were not aware that the relevant consent was required. My client's have undertaken this within the building since the founding of Cambridgeshire Coatings in 1994 and we are in the process of compiling an application for a Certificate of Lawful Use for the manufacturing process take place within the building. The activities at the site by Cambridgeshire Coatings (previously Cambridgeshire Chemicals) have continued since 1994 and have not caused any problems in relation to the operation of the industrial estate..."

Planning Comments – Key Issues

34. The key issues for consideration in the application are
- (a) Principle of change of use to manufacturing and erection of buildings in the countryside;
 - (b) Impact of proposal on visual amenities of countryside;
 - (c) Impact on highway safety;
 - (d) Environmental pollution; and
 - (e) Impacts on amenities of adjacent land users.

Principle of Proposal

35. Planning policies support the principle of changes of use of rural buildings to employment use. I have no in-principle objection to the change of use of part of the existing warehouse to general industry. It is noted that planning permission would not be required for the change of use of part of the existing warehouse (up to 235 square metres) to Class B1, which includes offices and light industry. For purposes of clarity I shall request the applicant to amend the site location plan to exclude buildings, which are not the subject of the proposed change of use.
36. However, Local Plan policies make no provision for the extension of existing employment buildings, as such the proposed freestanding refrigerated unit represents a departure. I am of the view that there are material circumstances in this case which warrant a departure from the approved plan, which include the modest size of this building, the use of the building in direct relation to the proposed change of use, the proposal is for the benefit of an existing company operating from the site and good tree screening which surrounds the site.

Impact of Visual Amenities of Countryside

37. No external alterations to existing buildings are anticipated as a result of the change of use. The proposed refrigerated unit will not be visible from outside the site and has been inconspicuously sited to the side of the existing warehouse building. The proposal will not harm the visual amenities of the surrounding land in the countryside.

Impact on Highway Safety

38. The Highways Agency and the Local Highway Authority in their comments on the current and previous planning applications have raised no concerns regarding impacts on the trunk road A428.
39. Nevertheless, the Local Highway Authority has raised concern about parking capacity on the site itself. It is noted that there is no provision for off-road car parking on surrounding roads. In regards to on-site car parking provision, the proposed parking plan illustrates 40 existing on-site car parking spaces, 15 lorry parking spaces and that a further 7 car spaces will be provided. The additional 7 spaces are consistent with the Council's maximum car parking standard of 1 space per 50 sqm metres of B2 Use, compared to 1 space per 100sqm of B8 Use.
40. Nevertheless, the total car parking provision for the site is below the maximum standard of car parking for existing and proposed spaces (estimated at 103). It was observed during the case officer's site visit that the majority of car spaces on the site are not marked and that existing areas illustrated for car parking on the plan are not currently used as illustrated. Further that car parking is also occurring on other parts of the site. Concern is also raised as to the practicality of some of the proposed new spaces, as it would require the removal of an existing ramp and will lead to car parking directly in front of a roller shutter door.
41. The proposal is considered likely to increase the demand for on-site car parking provision. I am of the view that this additional demand can be accommodated on the site, without harm to the free flow of traffic on surrounding roads. However a condition is recommended, requiring a new plan for car parking to be provided which requires a minimum of 47 car parking spaces to be provided on the site in a practical manner, with individual spaces clearly marked. This condition would require the implementation of the agreed car parking scheme and the permanent retention of car parking spaces.
42. Overall, I am of the view that the proposal will not lead to an increase in traffic generation and car parking demand on the site, above the existing situation, which would result in a loss of highway safety. The proposal applies to a relatively modest proportion (8%) of the total floor area in commercial use (approximately 695sqm out of a total of 8,900sqm) and is anticipated to result in a lower demand for on-site parking by HGV vehicles than the existing B8 use.

Environmental Pollution

43. The Environment Agency and Council's Chief Environmental Health Officer have raised no objection to the proposal on the grounds of environmental pollution in their comments on the current and previous planning applications. The proposed change of use and refrigerated unit is situated approximately 160m from the nearest dwelling (former Spread Eagle Public House) on the opposite side of the A428.

44. I am of the view that the issue of potential pollution can be adequately addressed in this case through recommended conditions of consent, in addition to Environmental Health legislation regarding air and noise pollution.

Impact on Amenities of Adjacent Land Users

45. The site is surrounded by fields on three sides, with residential and commercial development situated to the south and south-west, on the opposite side of the A428. The proposal is not anticipated to harm the amenities of adjacent land users.

Conclusion

46. Having regard to the comments on Paragraph 36 above, I do not consider that the development would significantly prejudice the implementation of the development plan's policies to warrant referring the application to the Secretary of State as a Departure.

Recommendation

47. Approval

Recommended Conditions

1. SCA – 3 years (RCA)
2. Notwithstanding the submitted details of parking provision in Drawing No. JMA/T069/04, no development (including change of use) shall commence until a car parking scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; the development shall be carried out in accordance with the scheme and the permanent space to be reserved on the site for turning, parking and loading/unloaded shall thereafter be maintained. (Reason: to ensure the satisfactory provision of on-site car parking to accommodate the parking requirements of the proposal, in the interests of highway safety.)
3. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of pollution control, which shall include foul and surface water drainage, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Authority. The works/scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans. (Reason: To ensure a satisfactory method of surface water/foul drainage and to prevent the increased risk of pollution to the environment.)

+ any conditions recommended by the Chief Environmental Health Officer.

Informatives

Reasons for Approval

1. The development is considered generally to accord with the following policies in the development plan.
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
 - P2/5** (Distribution, Warehousing and Manufacturing)
 - P2/6** (Rural Economy)
 - P8/1** (Sustainable Development, Links between Land Use and Transport)
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004**
 - EM3** (Landscaping and Design Standards for New Development within the Countryside)
 - ES4** (Air Quality)
 - ES6** (Noise and Pollution)
2. The proposal is considered to be acceptable as an exception to other policies in the Development Plan, notably Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (Environmental Restrictions on Development) and Policy EM10 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (Conversion of Rural Buildings and Future Extensions) because of the small scale of the proposed refrigerated unit which is directly related to the proposed change of use, the proposal is for the benefit of an existing company operating from the site and good tree screening which surrounds the site and prevents any visual intrusion on the surrounding countryside.
3. The proposal is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Highway safety
 - Pollution and Drainage
 - Sustainability

General Informative

For the purposes of clarification, the proposed change of use to general industry applies only to that part of the existing warehouse illustrated in grey on approved site plan JMA/TO69/01 and the area indicated for proposed extent of area for B2 use on approved floor plan JMA/TO69/02.

Environment Agency Informatives

1. All surface water from roofs shall be piped direct to an approved surface water system using sealed downpipes. Open gullies should not be used.
2. Only clean, uncontaminated surface water, should be discharged to any soakaway, watercourse or surface water sewer.

3. All foul sewage or trade effluent, including cooling water containing chemical additives, or vehicle washing water, including steam cleaning effluent shall be discharged to the *public* foul sewer.
4. Notwithstanding the provision of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order), any oil storage tank shall be sited on an impervious base and surrounded by oil tight bunded walls with a capacity of 110% of the storage tank, to enclose all filling, drawing and overflow pipes.
5. All drums and small containers used for oil and other chemicals shall be stored in bunded areas which do not drain to any watercourse, surface water sewer or soakaway.
6. Facilities should be provided to ensure that waste oil is stored and disposed of in a manner that will not lead to pollution.
7. Site operators should ensure that there is no possibility of contaminated water entering and polluting surface or underground waters.

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 Refs: S/01041/06/F, S/0443/06/F, S/2580/04/F, S/1044/03/F, S/1317/02/F, S/0331/02/F, S/0618/98/F, S/0709/97/F, S/1644/93/F, S/1643/93/F, S/1814/92/F and S/0066/91/F

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