

**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

---

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Development and Conservation Control Committee	6 <sup>th</sup> July 2005
<b>AUTHOR/S:</b>	Director of Development Services	

---

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

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

Members of Committee will visit the site on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2005.

**Site and Proposal**

1. The application site is a 15.1 hectare area of land situated in the countryside on the south-east side of the A11 trunk road, approximately 600 metres away from the A11 Wilbraham interchange.
2. Along the northern boundary of the site is a footpath and byway beyond which lies a working chalk pit. The land on the site rises to the east and south. To the east is a small copse of trees and to the south on the higher land there is a tree line. Some 400 metres to the west are two residential properties, West Wratting Valley Farm and Valley Farmhouse. Approximately 3 kilometres to the north, beyond the A11, is the village of Great Wilbraham whilst Balsham village lies approximately five kilometres to the south-east. Access to the site is from Old Cambridge Road which leads to the A11.
3. The full application, submitted on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2004, seeks to erect a grain store, office building (incorporating offices, laboratory and administration floorspace and meeting room), weighbridge and approximately 20 silos on the site as well as to carry out improvements to the A11 junction.
4. The development proposes a total floorspace (excluding the silos) of 9392m<sup>2</sup> of which 8550m<sup>2</sup> would be used for grain storage and 842m<sup>2</sup> as offices. The development would have a total capacity of 90,000 tonnes. It is anticipated that there would be 5 office employees at the site (with 3 of these being transferred from the Linton store) and 2 industrial employees (1 of whom would be transferred from Linton). The grain stores and silos would range in height from approximately 17 metres to 23 metres. The office building would be a two storey high red brick and tile/slate building measuring 25 metres x 13 metres and standing 8.2 metres high to the ridge (5 metres high to eaves).
5. Two grain storage flatstores are proposed close to the entrance of the site. Their siting in this location serves in part to screen the hoppers and dryers to the rear which will be constructed on level ground. Accordingly, the base of the site will be cut into the field with the topsoil from this operation and the construction of the drainage swale to the west being used to construct bunding around the edge of the site.

The drawings show the general concept of placing bunding and supplementary planting in the most sensitive locations. Landscaping is shown around the edge of the immediate site. Also, in order to protect longer distance views, new landscaping areas are planned on the eastern edge. The landscaping belt that runs parallel to the eastern boundary has accounted for any future expansion of the site although there are no current plans to develop the area between this landscaping belt and the planned flatstores/silos.

### **Supporting Planning Statement and Transport Statement**

6. The application has been accompanied by a planning statement which states that, in view of the concerns raised by the Highways Agency to an earlier application for a 30,000 tonne grain storage facility, the current proposal seeks a more feasible development proposal in terms of meeting substantial costs in highway improvements and meeting the commercial aspirations of existing and new members.
7. The statement explains that Camgrain was established in 1983 to provide grain storage for local and regional farmers and is now the largest single storage co-operative in the UK, with 130,000 tons of storage available in 2004 and 300 farmer members. Camgrain currently operate from their base in Linton which has sophisticated grading, drying, damping and segregation equipment. Camgrain provides storage for all types of combinable crop farming and allows farmers to store their produce in a safe, hygienic and secure environment, thereby facilitating better marketing and enabling farmers to meet increasingly stringent health and safety and food hygiene standards. The Company also allows economies of scale to be achieved in grain storage which would not otherwise occur if storage was left to individual farmers. This therefore increases the efficiency and competitiveness of British farms. The Linton site has reached capacity and further storage is therefore required.
8. The Linton site has a 30 mile radius catchment area, an area that contains some of the most productive farms within the Eastern region. There are limitations on the expansion of the Linton site in terms of topography, flood risk, land ownership, overhead electricity lines and proximity to Linton. As such, Camgrain has had to consider other sites within the catchment area.
9. The nature of Camgrain's operation means there are site specific requirements to bear in mind. The use is not compatible with an industrial use and is an extension of the farmer's own business. Existing co-operative stores are deliberately sited away from industrial premises. The nature of the grain facility does attract traffic movements, particularly HGV movements, and a site close to the main highway network is therefore essential. In order to reduce traffic levels through the villages, Camgrain has sought to consider sites which have as much direct access to the primary road network as possible. In addition, due to the size of the facility, an inconspicuous location was sought.
10. Sites were explored along a number of main road routes. Locations outside the Green Belt were preferred due to more stringent policy requirements in the Green Belt. Both the A603 and A10 routes beyond the Green Belt are largely constructed at ground level allowing for views across the wider landscape. In addition, both routes are close to villages and east-west movement across the District would potentially be more difficult. On the M11, only the Duxford interchange would provide the necessary accessibility but the nature of the landscape, likelihood of available land and Council policy resistance to development here rules out this location.

The A505 has open landscape on either side of its length whilst the A1307 has a strong rural character.

11. The eastern side of the A11 beyond the A505 is outside the Green Belt, lies in a cutting and is distant from villages. Two all-movement junctions lie along this stretch of road at the Fulbourn crossroads and the Great Wilbraham turn. The landscape around the former is particularly sensitive but the Great Wilbraham turn is less sensitive. Particularly relevant in this context is the chalk pit located at the end of the road. Views of the chalk pit are limited from most public vantage points and Camgrain has therefore concentrated on this location.
12. The topography of the site and its location away from the A11 means that the impact of the development will be greatly reduced. The inconspicuous nature of the chalk pit is a barometer of impact although substantial and significant landscaping proposals are proposed as part of a mitigation strategy to reduce the site's impact.
13. The application has also been accompanied by highways, noise and flood risk assessments. The highways statement confirms that pre-application discussions have taken place with the Highways Agency in respect of the proposed junction improvements. At present, the A11 junction does not meet design configuration standards with relatively short merge and diverge slip roads. The existing A11 overbridge is 4.5 metres wide with limited forward visibility and generally operates with one way vehicle shuttle working. Information suggests the existing interchange was introduced predominantly to accommodate HGV movements associated with the chalk pit thereby avoiding heavy vehicle movements through Great Wilbraham. The report states that the existing road between the site and the A11 is 3.3 metres wide and is therefore limited to one way vehicle movements.
14. The highways statement explains that there would be general office and some HGV traffic throughout the year. However, the majority of inbound activities take place during the harvest period from mid July to the end of September, with the store being emptied from mid October till the end of June. The site is open from 6am to 6pm other than during the harvest period when it is open until 8pm. During the peak harvest period, based on experience of the existing Camgrain operation and a 29 tonne net load per lorry, a maximum of 75 HGV deliveries are expected per day, equating to 150 two way daily vehicle movements. Over a 12 hour day, this equates to just over 6 deliveries per hour. Throughout the rest of the year during the emptying period, up to 60 movements per day or 5 trips per hour are anticipated. These movements are in addition to those generated by the adjoining chalk pit which generates up to 50 HGV trips per day.
15. It is proposed to improve the junction by increasing the merging length of the northbound slip road from 77 metres to 130 metres and the southbound slip road from 95 metres to 130 metres. No increase is proposed in the lengths of the slip roads coming off the A11 in both junctions although modifications would be made to the road curvature and kerb radii. The submitted road improvements diagram also shows that three passing bays would be provided along the Old Cambridge Road between the A11 and the application site.

### Planning History

16. **S/0623/03/F** - Application for a 30,000 tonne grain store on the same site. The Highways Agency raised concerns in respect of the adequacy of the existing A11 junction to cater for the increase in traffic and stated that modifications would need to be carried out to the junction. The costs of carrying out these modifications meant

that the 30,000 tonne facility would not be a financially viable option. This application is to be withdrawn.

17. The adjacent chalk pit has been worked for chalk since the 1950's under various consents. Under planning consent **ref: S/1377/97/F**, the use of the site for the extraction of chalk is required to cease by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. In 1993, planning permission was granted for the infilling of the chalk quarry with inert waste material (**Ref: S/0621/93/F**). Consent was renewed in 1996 subject to a requirement that the site be restored to agriculture by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2001 (**Ref: S/1120/96/F**). Both permissions were subject to a lorry routing agreement prohibiting landfill vehicles from travelling through the villages of Great Wilbraham, Little Wilbraham and Fulbourn. A further application for inert landfilling was submitted to the County Council in 2002 and the County intended to reapply the Section 106 agreement to prevent traffic going through the above nearby villages. At the time, the applicants were not prepared to enter into the legal agreement and the scheme was refused (**Ref: S/1648/02/F**). They are now in agreement with such a proviso, however, and have submitted a further application for inert landfill that is being considered by the County Council at present. The Highways Agency has requested the submission of a traffic assessment for this application and to date it remains undetermined.

### Planning Policy

18. **Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas)** aims to promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors where farming achieves high environmental standards, minimising impact on natural resources, and manages valued landscapes and biodiversity; contributes both directly and indirectly to rural economic diversity; is itself competitive and profitable; and provides high quality products that the public wants. PPS7 states that planning authorities should support development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises and that enables farmers and farming to become more competitive, to adapt to new and changing markets and to comply with changing legislation.
19. Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) circular 02/98, "Prevention of Dereliction through the Planning System" suggests that Local Planning Authorities might wish to impose conditions on planning permissions for non-mineral developments to ensure the future restoration and after use of a site. This is more likely in the open countryside where policy constraints may restrict the range of acceptable alternative uses for a site and the structures permitted are unlikely to be reusable for an alternative purpose.
20. **Policy P1/2** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 states that development will be restricted in the countryside unless proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
21. **Policy EM7** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 states that development for the expansion of existing firms within village frameworks or on suitable brownfield sites next to or very close to village frameworks will be permitted subject to the provisions of **Policies EM3 and EM6**. The supporting text to this policy states that whilst the expansion of existing firms will generally be acceptable, it will also be important to consider the local impact of the development. Development will not be permitted where it would cause problems of noise, traffic or pollution.
22. **Policy EN1** of the Local Plan states that, in all planning decisions, the Council will seek to ensure that the local character and distinctiveness of Landscape Character Areas is respected and retained. Planning permission will not be granted for

development which would have an adverse effect on the character and local distinctiveness of these areas. This site lies within the East Anglian Chalklands which is defined as an area of smooth sloped and rolling chalk hills. Large arable fields are punctuated by small beech copses or hangers on some of the hills.

23. **Policy EN3** of the Local Plan states that, in cases where new development is permitted in the countryside, the Council will require the scale, design, layout and landscaping of the scheme to be appropriate to the particular landscape character and to reinforce local distinctiveness wherever possible.
24. **Policy EN12** of the Local Plan requires the retention where possible of features and habitat types of nature conservation value and states that appropriate management of these features and habitat types will be sought by the imposition of conditions.
25. **Policy EN45** presumes against development which will have an adverse environmental impact on the water environment, nature conservation, fisheries and water related recreation.
26. **Policies ES6 and ES7** of the Local Plan seek to minimise the impact of noise and pollution, including road traffic noise, upon dwellings by means of appropriate planning conditions.

### Consultations

27. **West Wrattling Parish Council** objects to the application stating:
  - “1. We consider the objections to the original application for a 30,000 tonne facility remain valid and indeed are more so as the site is bigger with increased traffic movements.
  2. We would note that no substantial case for permitting this development in a rural area is put forward. Statements that it could not be on an industrial/commercially zoned site are incorrect. The activity is a processing/blending business using raw foodstuffs stored on site or brought in from other stores. Many foodstuffs are processed or manufactured within modern industrial zones (see local telephone directory). Locally we have IFF in Haverhill, Chivers at Vision Park and a producer on the Huntingdon Business Park off the A14.
  3. Such a large and high development would not sit comfortably within the specially designated landscape of the area.
  4. The traffic, many times greater than previously (with the smaller application), will give rise to potential for accidents at the A11 interchange. The improvements proposed are minimal and would not create a junction suitable for the slow acceleration and braking of laden grain lorries. The slip roads remain seriously sub-standard (letter has been sent to HA regarding this matter).
  5. The office and weighbridge buildings are not compatible with the stated employment. Five office employees and 2 industrial workers do not require 840m<sup>2</sup> (9000ft<sup>2</sup>) of office accommodation, nor do they need a total of 14 toilet facilities! *Something is proposed which is beyond this application to justify the cost of this extent of office space and facilities.*
  6. Whilst for only 7 staff the location requiring all to access from some distance and hence normally by car may not be of great concern in terms of sustainable

transport, the development must be designed to take more attendees due to the size of the office accommodation. For this it is located in an area producing an unsustainable travel pattern and hence in conflict with National and County policies on location and travel.

7. Without pointing to all the conflicts with Local Plan policy we note 3 below:

1. *EN1 states ‘.....Whilst recognising that landscape is a dynamic concept, planning permission will not be granted for development which would have an adverse effect on the character and local distinctiveness of these areas.’*

The size and height of this scheme will clearly impact on the area and create a need for major screening, again impacting on the relatively open landscape of the rising land.

2. *EN3 states ‘...(a) the scale, design and layout of the scheme, (b) the materials used within it, (c) the landscaping works are all appropriate to the particular “landscape character area”, and reinforce local distinctiveness wherever possible.*

Again the size and height of this scheme ensure that it cannot conform with any reasonable interpretation of this policy.

3. *EM7 ‘Development for the expansion of existing firms within village frameworks or on suitable brown field sites next or close to village frameworks will be permitted....’*

The site chosen for this application is not within or close to a village framework nor is the site a brown field site. FPD Savills choose to ignore this within the text of their submission; it is suggested purely because they have nothing they can say to mitigate this non-conformity with policy.

**Conclusion:** On the above grounds, which we reserve the right to expand upon if this is taken to Appeal, we object to the Application.”

28. **Great Wilbraham Parish Council** objects to the application stating:

“The Parish Council are unanimous in recommending REFUSAL for this application on the grounds of what we consider to be an extremely large development in an inappropriate location.

Our overall concern is one of safety for vehicles leaving or entering at a very difficult junction on the A11, where many accidents have already occurred. This has already been recognised in various reports (as substantially sub-standard) and as a result alterations to this junction are due to be done in the next few years, after continual complaints. An estimated 12,000 vehicular movements per year will inevitably greatly increase the risk of yet more serious incidents both at the slip roads and on the single track bridge. Having seen the very minor improvement suggested by the applicant, we fear that this will have a negligible impact and go nowhere near achieving the necessary standards for this level of usage by HGV's.

The projected lorry movements are very unlikely to be evenly spread. Our experience with another local grain store is that movements are likely to peak at particular times to cause queuing along a narrow single-track road. This will inevitably compromise

the safety of the local road users and possibly create problems backing up to the A11. We are also concerned about potential for queuing at the junctions to the M11.

Despite the assurances given by the applicant that no traffic will come through our village, we are not convinced that this will be adhered to, as we already experience problems with lorries using the village as a cut through.

The impact on this hitherto undeveloped virgin landscape will be shocking due to the sheer size of the proposed commercial enterprise. It is near to an area of best landscape and was recently described as being “an environmentally sensitive area”. The proposed bundings and planting will take many years to establish and will not screen the site effectively, as the land rises on this plot.

A development of this size is bound to have a significant impact on light pollution, additional noise and potential for local dust pollution.”

29. **Little Wilbraham Parish Council objects** to the application stating:

“The Councillors have each examined the planning application for the above proposal. Although they agree that the case is well presented, there is unanimous concern that there are traffic risks which have not been sufficiently addressed, particularly that there is no major connecting route for travelling between the Chalk Pit location and west to and from the A14, which will avoid the local villages. Included below is a representative list of comments from the Councillors’ individual written responses;

1. “there could be considerable traffic problems and the statements in the report (final sentence page 6 and item 6.12 on page 15) are questionable”
2. “it is not accepted that there would only be 2 HGV per hour during the busy harvest period”
3. “there will be a number of lorries using the Quy to Six Mile Bottom, to the detriment of the residents of Six Mile Bottom”
4. “the proposal will inevitably involve 40 ton axle weight lorries passing through Rectory Farm Road, Little Wilbraham, and Great Wilbraham village”
5. “the massive movements during the peak periods in August would undoubtedly cause a tail back effect, possibly both north and south directions; this coincides with holiday traffic motoring further north into Norfolk and traffic from the north making its way via the A11 towards the M11 and M25, Stansted, London etc.”
6. “further improvements to slip lanes/roads on the A11 approaching the Wilbrahams’ junction should be obligatory. All local users know well that the vehicles being too large or misjudging the small turning space frequently destroy the signing of this junction”
7. “would undoubtedly involve unsuitable vehicular movements through Fulbourn, Great Wilbraham, Little Wilbraham, Six Mile Bottom and then south on the A11”
8. “the impact would seriously affect the quality of life in these villages, from the point of view of pollution, noise, road safety and vibration damage to listed buildings”

9. Six Mile Bottom “already experiences problems with HGV’s, in particular grain lorries which use the Wilbraham Road and the B1604 through Six Mile Bottom as a short cut from the A14 to A11 (and vice versa) to use the grain depot at Camgrain at Linton”
10. “based on the busy Harvest period of 2004, there was certainly one HGV (grain lorry) using the Wilbraham/B1304 every 5 minutes and I seriously question the assurances made in the WSP document, page 6, 3.4-3.10”
11. “Cambridgeshire County Council have already identified that there is a problem associated with traffic through Six Mile Bottom. The village is shortly to have yet another traffic calming scheme introduced which will involve bollards being erected to ‘narrow’ the B1304; there will be safety issues arising out of HGV’s slowing down to negotiate these bollards creating more noise and pollution”
12. “the planning statement page 13 (6.2) states that the nearest village is Great Wilbraham, but Six Mile Bottom is equally close and likely to suffer an increase in traffic”

The Parish Council wish these comments to be given serious consideration and would ask that specific responses are given.”

30. **Weston Colville Parish Council** recommends approval although states:

“We remain concerned about the increased large lorry traffic, but trust that this is being addressed and monitored.”

31. **The Highways Agency** states that the proposed improvements to the A11 junction comprise upgrading of the existing sub-standard compact grade separated junction. The proposed junction improvements would result in the merge and diverge arrangements to/from the A11 being brought up to the standard required by TD40/94 of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. However, the internal arrangement of the junction, including the connector roads and over bridge, would still remain severely sub-standard. The worst case traffic estimate provided by WSP (75 HGV or 150 two-way HGV movements per day over the 11 week harvest period) is accepted in principle. A condition limiting traffic to this number should be attached to any planning consent. Any consent should also be subject to the following conditions:

- No development to commence until agreement of design details - (a) how the improvement interfaces with the existing highway alignment and carriageway markings; (b) full construction details; (c) full signing and lighting details; (d) confirmation of full compliance with Departmental Standards and Policies; (e) an independent Stage 2 Road Safety Audit; (f) an Appraisal Summary Table;
- Development not to be brought into use until the highways improvements have been implemented satisfactorily;
- No more than 90,000 tonnes of grain to be stored on the site at any one time.

32. **The Local Highways Authority** states that the proposed internal arrangements for the site are acceptable. The main concern that the proposal raises is inter-visibility over the A11 bridge which is, in effect, a single track road. The forward visibility is poor and the proposed give-way system will not be sufficient safe traffic control during peak periods of use and will present a significant hazard for vehicles using the access to the A11 from adjacent villages. This situation would be sufficient grounds to

recommend refusal of the application. This concern could be alleviated by a Section 106 Agreement to provide traffic signals on the bridge prior to commencement of the proposed use. This agreement should also include a commuted sum for the maintenance of the lights.

The LHA subsequently contacted the Highways Agency who raised no objections in principle to the recommended traffic signals. The HA advised that it would need to be involved in the technical aspects of the signal installation in relation to signal timings and the installation of loops in the road to prevent stacking of HGV's that may back up onto the A11.

33. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer** states that the submitted figures are based on the worst case scenario, using levels obtained from the Linton works and manufacturer's details to predict levels to be experienced at West Wrattling Valley Farmhouse. Machinery noise and fans could be operating for 24 hours a day and the noise levels assume that the driers and fans are operating for 100% of the time. The reality is that the driers normally only operate for about 5% of the time. Taking into account the tonal nature of the noise, the submitted noise report demonstrates that the proposed works can operate within the guidance given in the Environmental Standards of the Local Plan.

Further information was requested on the effect of HGV movements to and from the site. The worst case scenario compared with the lowest background levels shows that the likely increase in background noise levels due to HGV movements would be + 1.7dB. This is generally felt in guidance to have a barely discernible noise impact. Noise from operation of the site will be audible to the occupant of West Wrattling Valley Farmhouse. However, the report does demonstrate that the works can operate within the guidance set out in the Local Plan.

Any planning permission should be subject to the following conditions:

- Details of the location and type of power driven plant or equipment to be submitted and approved before the installation of such equipment;
  - Restriction of hours of use of power operated machinery during the construction period;
  - A method statement for the construction of the noise barrier to ensure this takes place at the start of the construction process and provides mitigating effects to reduce noise and dust emissions from the site.
34. **The Landscape Design Officer** expresses concern about the form of the spoil bunds in terms of the shape and angles of slopes, construction, depth of top soil and method statement for practical establishment. Need planting to south side and clear cross sections of mounding.
35. **The Ecology Officer** requests that an ecological site assessment be undertaken in order to establish the site's present value with respect to arable plants, sky lark, grey partridge and brown hare. The landscaping provisions must include the use of an approved chalk grassland seed mix in order to provide a greater biodiversity gain over a standard grass mix.
36. **The Environment Agency** states that the proposed development overlies a major aquifer with geology believed to be middle chalk. No objections are raised in principle. However, as the site is within an area of vulnerable aquifer, environmental concern and where landfill gas may be present, any approval should be subject to

conditions requiring details of surface and foul water drainage and protection of buildings against ingress/ignition of landfill gas.

37. **David Brown Landscape Consultant**, who has been employed by this Authority to advise on the potential landscape effects of the development, states that the development would only have very localised effects on the landscape and its users and that these effects could be mitigated effectively by the landscape treatments put forward in the application.

This report states that the grain store is a substantial built form and is industrial in scale and appearance. It is therefore inevitable that there will be a level of adverse impact arising from the character of the development and its visibility.

The site lies within the Chalklands landscape character area. The area is characterised by a series of spurs limiting intervisibility between valleys. Visibility of the proposed site is limited by the spur of higher ground that extends from Old Cambridge Road Plantation to the east in an arc around to the south-west of the site at Dotterell Hill on Balsham Road. To the north, the generally low level of available viewpoints together with the slight intervening rolls in landform combine to preclude visibility of the site from much of this area.

The principal significant views of the site are largely restricted to the continuation of Mill Road approaching the site from the A11 overbridge and the footpath that runs directly along one boundary of the site. The unmitigated effect on these localised views would be severe. The wider visual effects are quite limited and would be of a low order of magnitude, especially given the mitigation proposed.

The local character is typified by the presence of linear tree belts defining large scale fields. Linear features would be appropriate in this landscape. The planting shown alongside the footpath would make a positive contribution to the maintenance of landscape character. Providing the contouring of the bunds is handled sensitively at the detailed design stage, the mitigation measures proposed would be appropriate and beneficial to local landscape character. The immediate local visibility and adverse visual impact would be severe but the mitigation would reduce this level of harm and within five years or so the adverse visual effects would only be seen from a very limited area along Balsham Road and the nearby lane.

If the proposed facility is needed, this is a good site for it as it sits within a visually contained compartment. Visual effects are localised and can be effectively mitigated. There are no wider effects on landscape character.

38. **The County Footpaths Officer** states that the existing bridge over the A11 between Mill Road and Valley Farm Road is a key link in the soft user countryside access network and expresses concern that developing the junction for regular HGV traffic associated with the grain store should not compromise the safety of vulnerable road users. In order to mitigate the impact of the development upon byway and bridleway users, a soft track should be provided for byway traffic alongside the improved road. The proposed passing bays should not obstruct soft traffic. At the bridge crossing, the road design should incorporate a separate safe carriageway together with suitable 1.8m parapets to safeguard equestrians.
39. **The County Access and Bridleway Officer (BHS)** raises no objections subject to the right of way being unobstructed both during and after development takes place. Any changes to the surface of the right of way must be to the satisfaction of the

Highways Authority and a condition to this effect should be included in any permission.

40. **The Ramblers Association** - no objections in principle subject to surface of footpath remaining undisturbed during building work, no materials being stored/dumped on the right of way, vehicles visiting the site not impeding safe passage of pedestrians and no footpath signs being obscured or removed during building work. Due to increased traffic along the road, there should be adequate warning for lorry drivers and users of the byway.

### **Representations Against**

41. 168 letters of objection have been received, 2 of which have subsequently been withdrawn. Objections have been received from the two nearest residents as well as residents within Great Wilbraham, West Wrattling, Little Wilbraham, Six Mile Bottom, Balsham and numerous addresses throughout the country. The main points raised are:

42. **Highway Safety/Traffic Impacts**

- There are 4 vehicle movements for every 29 tonnes of grain. This equates to about 12,400 movements per year for a 90,000 tonne grain store;
- The worst case traffic scenarios are understated;
- Does the large increase in HGV's fit in with the Cambridge infrastructure plan?
- In July and August when the Newmarket Races are held traffic jams Six Mile Bottom. This is peak harvesting period, coinciding with holiday traffic going to Norfolk. Vehicles would turn off at Gt Wilbraham to avoid the traffic jams leading to congestion, shunts, gridlock and bad accidents;
- Based on activity at Vogans Silo in Fulbourn, high activity and hence HGV movements should be expected throughout the year;
- This proposal would take some of the capacity of Fengrain's site near March. About 20% of traffic would be directly from the Linton store to enable blending of other qualities of grain to suit market requirements. There will be a significant amount of traffic between the Linton site and the proposed site;
- Traffic from the Fengrain site will have to come from the A10 and A14 to the A11 and cannot avoid coming through Quy, Little Wilbraham, Great Wilbraham or Six Mile Bottom;
- Gt Wilbraham (which is used as a rat run) already has a lot of HGV's passing through it to access the grain store at Fulbourn. Volume of lorries passing through the village will increase resulting in danger to children/families walking and cycling to the primary school and nursery. Main road through the village is narrow and bendy and unsuited to heavy traffic;
- Wagons from the chalk pit are using roads through Great Wilbraham on a daily basis despite restrictions placed when planning permission was granted;

## APPENDIX

- Traffic calming measures at Six Mile Bottom have improved safety in the village but cause tail backs which regularly stretch back onto the A11 exit and beyond to the Wilbraham junction. Many HGV's will pass through Six Mile Bottom to gain access to the A14 making delays worse;
- Existing HGV's pay little attention to traffic calming in Six Mile Bottom. Grass verges on Wilbraham Road are frequently damaged by HGV's and the proposal will exacerbate this situation;
- HGV's should be barred from travelling through Great and Little Wilbraham and Six Mile Bottom except when collecting grain from local farms. Access should be directly from the A11;
- Type and scale of junction inadequate for the proposal. It was designed for use by light local traffic and occasional tractors going to fields. The chalk quarry was disused when the bridge was built but low level quarrying has started again. The busy period in the quarry - July, August and September coincides with peak grain movements and peak holiday traffic;
- There have been many accidents/incidents at this junction;
- The slip roads on and off the A11 are far too short and have poor visibility due to their proximity to the bridge. Poor visibility for slow merging traffic makes the junction dangerous;
- The bridge over the A11 is inadequate for the scale of traffic envisaged. It is a humpback with poor visibility of oncoming traffic. It should be rebuilt to 2 lanes wide to enable 2 HGV's to pass. The Traffic Assessment ignores what will happen when 2 HGV's meet on top of the bridge. One would have to reverse resulting in potential back ups/queues on the A11;
- Fast moving traffic on the A11 will have to swerve into the fast lane to avoid slow moving HGV's joining the carriageway;
- Assessments do not show braking distance/deceleration required by fully laden and empty HGV's to make a safe turn off on the short slip road or the effect of slow moving HGV traffic joining or leaving the carriageway;
- The correct standard of slip road for this interchange is defined in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Vol 6, Section 2, Part 6 TD 42/95. The deceleration slips should be 110 metres long and the entry slips 130 metres long. The slips do not provide this level of deceleration or acceleration length and, given the use by slower moving HGV traffic, the provision of full standards is essential. Any other course of action should be subject to a safety audit and any decision that did not provide for the accepted standards could leave the officials or Council open to corporate manslaughter charges in the event of an accident;
- A definitive figure for the maximum number of HGV and other traffic that is safe to use this junction should be given;
- The Highways Agency should carry out a Highways Safety Audit 1 on the junction. The Safety Engineering Assessment carried out is based on a 30,000 tonne grain store not the 90,000 tonne store applied for. This report should also take into account the potential increase in traffic from the planning application for

inert landfill in the chalk quarry which has a similar extra number of HGV movements. Both proposals represent around a 5 fold increase in HGV movements compared to the safety report carried out;

- There is insufficient room for a single HGV to enter the site. The bottleneck at the entrance to the site will be dangerous for all vehicles using the site. The application is therefore contrary to Policy EM10 (5);
- A planning application has been submitted by Wilbraham Chalk Pit for inert landfill, which was granted a while ago and then recently expired. They are reapplying for permission to infill the quarry with inert waste and return it to chalk grassland. The chalk pit traffic projections state that up to 50 HGV movements per day would use the junction which is more than 15000 movements per year;
- The current site at Linton already suffers from inadequate planning for the current volume of traffic;

### 43. ***Visual Impact***

- The pattern of settlement in the immediate region is of scattered small scale agricultural clusters and concentrated villages. The development proposed is industrially scaled and inappropriate;
- The development will ruin the character and distinctiveness of the area - contrary to Policy EN1;
- Contrary to Policies EN3, EN12 and EN45;
- This would create a dangerous precedent for large scale development on green field sites;

### 44. ***The need for this site***

- Expansion should be at Linton. This site is not within or close to any village framework nor on a brownfield site. The development is an industrial processing plant and not a farming facility and the proposal is therefore contrary to Policy EM7 (Expansion of existing firms at villages);
- This proposal is symptomatic of a trend to render localised facilities on individual farms redundant and replace them with development on the scale of an industrial installation within a rural landscape;
- The proposal does not support agricultural diversity. SCDC should encourage diversity in agriculture for the benefit of the local community (more jobs, fewer transport requirements etc) and should resist the development of industrial scale infrastructure in the heart of this environmentally sensitive area;
- Study of alternative sites should be carried out - eg - existing Fengrain site, at a suitable location on a railway line, near Granta Park, between the A11 and the A14 - see Policy EM6 (New employment at Rural Growth and Limited Rural Growth Settlements);

- The site should not be developed for any use other than agricultural storage. Use of offices for meetings other than those involved with Camgrain should be forbidden;
- A business case, proving a need for this scale of development, should be submitted with the application;
- In January 2005, an advertisement in Anglian Farmer stated that Camgrain has 145,000 tonne capacity at its Linton stores - isn't this sufficient for the catchment area?;
- Stores such as these should be located close to suitable rail depots and transported by freight trains. Suitable sidings are available in Duxford, Fulbourn and Whittlesford;

### 45. **Environmental Health Issues**

- The spoil bunding on the west elevation should be raised to reduce noise;
- Will floodlighting be required at night? If so, this could lead to light pollution of West Wratting Valley Farm;
- The noise assessment report has errors - it states the predicted noise from HGV's will be quieter than the quietest measured background noise; the site boundaries on the site map bear no resemblance to the scale of the site; assumptions on the noise assessment plan do not clearly demonstrate how the height of the bunding will reduce the noise at Valley Farm;
- Vehicle movement noise restrictions must be included in any planning consent;

### 46. **Flooding Issues**

- A flood risk assessment should be carried out. West Wratting Valley is an enclosed rainwater catchment of approximately 1150 hectares. Extra surface run off created by the site will cause short to medium term raising of the water table exacerbating the flooding problem. The flood report does not mention the volume, intensity and duration of precipitation used in the calculations. Do predictions match the actual events in the area?
- Catchment water balance calculations and modelling should be performed;

### 47. **Other Issues**

- Will this proposal become a bio-diesel refining plant for oil seed rape?
- The proposal does not address the sustainability of the site;
- There is no water supply on the site;
- How will the development benefit the local community? Why not build some houses next to the site? Are there limits on operating hours of sites?;
- Changes to CAP subsidies and replacement by the single farm payment scheme will make crops less competitive at unsubsidised world prices;

- Proposals should include sites for bats and barn owls that inhabit the local area;
  - The proposal does not state any position on crime prevention;
  - There have been several grant funded grain storage facilities built within 20 miles over the past few years that have closed down or changed use to industrial. Without grant funding, this proposal is not viable. With falling grain volumes predicted over the next 5 years, there is every chance this proposal will be unviable;
  - The development is only acceptable if the silo in Fulbourn is closed and its capacity transferred to the proposed new silo;
  - A report should be requested from the police on the suitability and safety of this road junction which is not suitable for large number of trucks to enter and exit safely due to short entry and exit slip roads;
  - The grain store should be considered against the context of the development of the Eastern fringe of Cambridge;
  - There would be a danger from lorries to users of the bridleway and public footpath;
  - Volume of lorries would result in damage to the roads;
48. An objection has also been received from the County Heavy Commercial Vehicles Route Manager, (although it must be noted that this is a personal opinion and not the formal response of the Local Highways Authority). The main points raised, which are based on a figure of 20,000 - 60,000 HCV movements per annum, are:
- The existing southbound exit slip road is 40 metres long, well short of the 110 metres required;
  - The egress from the northern side has the same problems. To access the site from here it is necessary to go over a bridge that is not wide enough for 2 HGV's to pass;
  - It would not be desirable for HGV's to use Mill Road given the narrowness of this highway towards Great Wilbraham;
  - The section of road between the bridge and site is low in quality and a survey to ascertain its quality should be carried out;
  - The slip roads should be extended. However, the bridge probably prevents this. As such, any permission should be subject to vehicle movements being prohibited between 7am - 9am and 4pm - 6pm;
  - A survey of the bridge should be carried out. Consideration should be given to widening the bridge to allow two vehicles to pass. If this is not possible, traffic signals should be introduced in order to control movement across the bridge;

- The road to the barn should be widened to allow two vehicles to pass and the surface of the route improved to accommodate large numbers of vehicle movements

### Representation by James Paice MP

49. "I wish to express my support, in principle, for this application.

The need for increased co-operation in agriculture production is self-evident given the huge changes taking place within the industry and the success of Camgrain in providing those services to its members is obvious from the continued and substantial expansion at its existing site at Linton. It is that expansion which has led to the increasing traffic problems on the A1307 and the obvious conclusion that not withstanding other planning considerations, that site simply cannot continue to expand and cause increasing traffic issues. It is, therefore, essential in my view that further substantial expansion takes place at a site away from Linton and I believe that this proposed new site has considerable advantages, not least the inconspicuous and somewhat hidden nature of its location. It has the added advantage that it would involve an improvement of a junction which is far from adequate given today's traffic movements and is the frequent site of incidents caused by traffic failing to slow down sufficiently for the junction.

I trust that in considering this application the Council will take into account the importance of this business to the local agricultural community."

In a further letter he states:

"I must stress that this support is for the principle of a new grain store because of the changing needs of the agricultural industry. Its suitability will depend very much on the proposed changes to the junction with the A11 which is currently wholly inappropriate for further traffic let alone considerably Heavy Goods Vehicles. I am also aware of the objections by those who live in the vicinity of the proposed new site and I have no doubt the Council will take those concerns fully into account in reaching their decision."

### Representations For

50. 32 letters of support, predominantly from farmers and businesses using the Camgrain service but also including a few local residents, have been submitted. The main points raised are:
- There is strong local demand from farmers willing to invest in centralised high quality and hygienic storage capacity. The importance of Camgrain to the agricultural economy has resulted in the Linton site reaching full capacity;
  - Farmers are required to produce, handle and store their grain against a backdrop of demands for ever higher standards in food safety and environmental management. A modern, efficient facility of the kind proposed will help Camgrain members to meet those standards while reducing the number of haulage movements in the countryside;
  - Farmers are being encouraged by Government and the NFU to work in cooperatives so that the industry can benefit from the economies of scale;

## APPENDIX

- EFFF is a national body set up to promote collaboration within the farming and food industry. In the wake of foot and mouth disease, EFFF's role is to strengthen the profitability and competitiveness of England's farming, food and related farm-based industries. The need for collaboration is paramount, Ongoing reforms of the CAP mean that farmers are going to have to become more market focused and rely less on support and protection from government policies. Cereal farmers in England face an increasingly competitive environment due to trade liberalisation and enlargement of the EU from 15 to 25 countries. Farmers need to become more efficient and integrated with their partners to deliver value and quality to consumers around the world. The ability for farmers to produce, handle and store their grain to the highest professional standards, yet at a competitive price, remains intense. Camgrain has a record as one of the best collaborative grain stores in the country. Further development of the business is precisely the type of initiative needed to secure a successful business for the English farming and food industry;
- Central storage gives farmers the ability to aggregate and blend, thereby adding value to their produce;
- In difficult harvests the ability to capture the harvest in a short timeframe can safeguard its quality. The 2004 wet harvest season would have been disastrous had it not been for Camgrain. Premium crops were dried from very high moisture levels and the quality preserved. On farm driers could not have coped with such a difficult season;
- This type of storage is prevalent in the key countries that UK grain competes with for business;
- Fengrain state that there is no truth in a statement in an objector's letter that Camgrain "wishes to take over some operations of Fengrain and replace its uneconomic facilities. "Fengrain has no intention of sending grain destined for its store at Wimblington down to the proposed new store. Fengrain and Camgrain are managed and operated completely independently with Fengrain purely acting as marketing agents for Camgrain's members;
- Some farms have very limited storage and are dependent on Camgrain to provide the required storage for farms that do not have the funds available to build grain stores to the necessary specification
- The site is central to the area that Camgrain serves;
- Use of Camgrain reduces the use of inner village grain stores;
- The service Camgrain gives to farmers and the food industry is second to none and continued development should be encouraged;
- New regulations on traceability, hygiene and assured quality have made many old grain stores unusable;
- It is essential for the wellbeing of the area's agricultural industry that Camgrain continues to expand and provide for the increasing demand for this service;
- Barclays - At a time when profit margins in arable farming are very small, and capital for investment on individual farms is limited, a central store such as this is

necessary if East Anglian farmers are to compete effectively in national and world markets, and thus maintain rural employment and their contribution to the rural economy generally.”;

- Movement of grain into central store at harvest on 44 tonne lorries reduces the number of tractors pulling trailers on country lanes;
- All grain delivered to Camgrain is cleaned, dried and graded to tight specifications required by the end user. Grain delivered straight from a farm is more of a lottery. This can lead to rejections and return to farm which is expensive to all concerned;
- Farmers are taking on more land in the form of contract farming agreements due to historically low grain prices. Modern combine harvesters cut more grain per hour than an average farm grain store can dry. Therefore central storage is the only way for large acreages to be harvested successfully;
- The only lorries using a route through the villages will be carrying grain to the store from local Camgrain members. These lorries are already using the same route on their way to the existing Linton store;
- Rented agricultural land now only comes on short term tenancies so it is not economic or practicable to put up small stores on this land;
- The site is well away from residential areas;
- The proximity of the site to the A11 without access through villages is one of the most important arguments that militate in favour of this location;
- The site with direct access to the A11 and good links to the A14 and M11 is ideally placed to meet increasing demand for central storage;
- High Street, Great Wilbraham resident states that at present continuous flows of heavy vehicles leave the A11 and go through Great Wilbraham to access the Fulbourn grain store and vice versa. This resident has not heard of any difficulties at the A11 turn off. If the proposal does anything to reduce this traffic, it should be welcomed;
- Other than Hawk Mill Farm in Little Wilbraham, there are no farms in Little or Great Wilbraham or in the surrounding area that will need to travel through either village to access the store. The owner of Hawk Mill Farm has never seen either an empty or loaded chalk pit lorry in either village. They presumably use the A11 and why should Camgrain be any different?;
- The site is close enough to Linton to be run by the existing management team;
- Any proposal that provides lasting investment in the rural economy should be welcomed;
- If the access from the A11 is improved sufficiently and traffic discouraged from using nearby villages, this is an excellent use of poor agricultural land;

- The projected road improvements will benefit the community.

### **Letters from the applicant's agent**

51. The applicant's agent has responded in writing to the responses received in respect of the application.
52. It is argued that some comments made have misrepresented the proposal and it is important to be aware of the realistic position rather than the negative vision suggested by some.
53. The proposals to improve the A11 junction have been produced in consultation with the Highways Agency who has confirmed that it does not object to the proposals subject to appropriate conditions. The improvements to the A11 are entirely appropriate and will address existing safety concerns to the benefit of existing users. With regards to the issue of HGV's travelling through the villages of Little and Great Wilbraham, it is pointed out that Camgrain themselves control the routes of the HGV's which pick up and deliver grain to their grain store and the only occasions when HGV's may travel through these villages is when they access farms in the local area to collect grain. The manager of Camgrain directly controls the routes of the HGV's and seeks to avoid villages wherever possible. The proposed site allows traffic to access the strategic road network via the A11 and there is therefore no need for vehicles to go through the villages.
54. With respect to concerns that traffic congestion will occur at the entrance to the site, it is stressed that the frequency of vehicles entering the site will be around 10 per hour. It has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Highways Agency that there are sufficient gaps in traffic for a system such as the one proposed to operate without excessive queuing. Camgrain has extensive experience of routeing at Linton and this has never been challenged.
55. The applicant's agents also stress that the Highways Agency's recommendation to the Council on the application was taken in the full knowledge of the application for filling/working the chalk pit.
56. With respect to the impact of the development on the landscape, it is noted that David Brown Landscape Design's report concludes that the development would only have very localised effects on the landscape and that these effects could be mitigated effectively by the landscape treatments put forward.
57. The Camgrain site at Linton is not capable of being expanded due to a number of physical constraints including the existing electricity power lines that prevent expansion to the north and west. There are also areas of land around the site that flood at depths of up to three metres during heavy rain and would therefore not be suitable for expansion. There is an urgent need to meet the enormous demand for Camgrain's services in order to enable farmers to supply best quality produce to consumers. The site can best address these matters and there is considerable support for the proposal.
58. The proposed office building is similar to that in operation at Fengrain and Hampshire Grain and other farmer co-operative central stores around the country. The building is large relative to staff numbers. However, this is essential in order to cope with data storage and computer hardware and software. The office building has a large meeting room to enable farmer members of Camgrain to hold meetings in this location (eg - AGM's and monthly Director meetings) instead of having to book hotels

or erect marquees as at present. This building will allow better operational efficiency of the site. The plans were based on the facilities provided at Hampshire Grain to serve their 50,000 tonne store. The office will release some pressure on accommodation at the Linton site, where outmoded portakabins are presently used, and all of the space will be used in connection with the expanded business.

### **Planning Comments - Key Issues**

59. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- 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;
  - Ecological Issues;
  - Flooding/drainage issues;
  - Footpath issues

### ***Principle of development and need***

60. The site lies within the countryside where planning policies state that development must be restricted to that which requires a rural location and that is essential to the operation of local farming.
61. It is clear from the success of the existing Camgrain store as well as from the comments made within letters of support received in response to this application (including from the NFU, EFPF, James Paice MP, maltsters/mills and local farmers) that the proposed development is essential to the operation of local farming. Government guidance specifically supports the type of facility proposed in this application which is considered to be an important part of the farming sector and vital to the livelihood of farmers and the future of British farming in general. The use therefore complies with the requirements of Policy P1/2 of the Local Plan and, subject to consideration of other material planning issues, is appropriately sited in principle in a countryside location. The development also accords with PPS 7 in that it enables farmers to become more competitive and efficient, to adapt to changing markets and to comply with changing legislation.
62. This leads to the question of why a development of this scale is needed, why it needs to be sited in this location and, specifically, why it cannot be sited at Camgrain's existing premises in Linton. The planning statement submitted with the application explains that a new site is required as the Linton site has reached full capacity and, due to high demand, further grain storage facilities are required in the area. The Linton site cannot be expanded due to various constraints such as the presence of overhead lines, flood risk issues and proximity to the village etc. I consider that due to the scale of buildings required, the size of the site and the need to have easy access to the primary road network, it would be difficult if not impossible to accommodate the type of development proposed within any of the immediate area's existing village frameworks. A number of objectors have argued that this is an industrial process that should be sited on an industrial estate and not in the middle of the countryside. However, to the best of my knowledge, existing industrial estates in the area are located in or on the edge of villages and tend to comprise a number of small units. I cannot think of a site that could take development of this scale in terms of the likely visual, traffic and neighbour impacts.

63. Accepting that a new site is needed and that a village framework/industrial estate site would not be appropriate, the applicants have carried out an investigation of possible available sites within the search area. I agree that the proposed development needs to be located outside the Green Belt given the tighter policy controls in such locations and also that proximity to a primary road network is essential to minimise the likelihood of HGV's needing to travel through villages. The chosen site clearly meets these criteria. However, it is not the role of the Authority to assess the best available site for this development within these search criteria, rather it is the merits of the application itself that need to be considered.
64. Concern has been raised in respect of the scale of and need for the office development. The applicant's agents acknowledge that the offices are large compared to the numbers of staff employed at the site. It is argued that a building of this size is required for office accommodation, data storage and as a meeting facility for Camgrain members. It would also relieve pressure on the Linton site where office accommodation is contained within portakabins. On this basis, I consider the scale of the offices to be appropriate although any planning consent should be subject to a condition restricting their use to Camgrain only, given that an unrelated office development would be contrary to countryside policies.

### ***Landscape and visual impact***

65. The proposal represents a vast development in the open countryside in an area that is characterised by rolling chalk hills and small groups of farm buildings. The site lies within the East Anglian Chalklands Landscape Character Area and Policy EN1 of the Local Plan states that development will not be permitted if it would harm the character of these areas.
66. Officers were concerned about the impact of the development on the landscape and David Brown Landscape Consultants were therefore requested to carry out an assessment of the application on behalf of the Authority. This assessment admitted that the impact on the immediate landscape when viewed from Mill Road bridge and from the footpath/byway that runs along the northern edge of the site would be severe. However, it also states that these impacts could be ameliorated by the proposed landscaping and soil bunding, precise details of which would need to be conditioned and agreed as part of any planning consent. Due to the lie of the land and the fact that the site sits in a valley, the report also concludes that there would be no material harm to the longer distance views of the site.
67. The Council's Landscape Design Officer has expressed concern about the lack of planting proposed on the south side of the development. There are no public views of this side of the site, which would be concealed by the brow of a hill, and David Brown has not specified that planting would be required here. I am satisfied that this matter could be dealt through a landscaping condition.

### ***Highways Issues***

68. Much concern has been expressed about the highway safety and traffic implications of the development. Firstly, many objections have focused on the inadequacy of the existing junction with the A11 due to the short length of slip roads both on and off the A11 and the geometry of the junction.
69. The Highways Agency had previously advised, in respect of an application to site a 30,000 tonne grain store on this land, that the junction was inadequate to cater for the

traffic increases that would be generated by the proposed development. Since that application and the current submission, the applicants have had lengthy discussions with the Highways Agency (based on a larger 90000 tonne store) and a Safety Audit of the junction has been carried out in order to determine the modifications required to the junction to bring it up to standard.

70. The current application and transport statement have been forwarded to the Highways Agency who has raised no objections, stating that the proposed improvements to the A11 junction are adequate to meet the demands of the development, providing the tonnage of grain stored on the site and vehicle movements are restricted by condition. I would argue that the recommended restriction on HGV movements be encompassed within a Section 106 legal agreement rather than a condition given the likely difficulty involved in enforcing such a condition. The Highways Agency has confirmed that it was aware that the existing chalk pit was functioning when the Camgrain proposals were first tabled and that the traffic associated with the chalk pit has been taken into account in the Highway Agency's consideration of the present application. In addition, issues such as peak seasonal movements and the potential for traffic to back onto the A11 have also been taken into account.
71. A local resident has queried whether a Safety Audit 1 needs to be carried out in respect of the current 90,000 tonne grain storage proposal. A safety audit has been carried out but this was based on the earlier 30,000 tonne proposal. The Highways Agency has advised verbally that a safety audit looks at the physical layout and geometry of a junction rather than specifying any restriction on traffic numbers and that a further audit is not required in respect of the current proposal.
72. The junction improvements will benefit the wider community by improving the safety of the junction for existing road users.
73. The Local Highways Authority has recommended refusal of the application as it stands due to the poor intervisibility on the bridge over the A11. However, the LHA's concerns can be overcome through the imposition of a Section 106 Agreement requiring traffic signals to be installed in order to control traffic movements over the bridge. Clearly, if traffic signals are installed, this raises concerns about the potential for queuing traffic to back up onto the A11. However, the Highways Agency has raised no objections to this in principle subject to being involved in the timing of signals.
74. Having used this junction when visiting the site, I do have concerns about the highway safety impacts of the development. When coming off the southbound A11, it was necessary to commence braking on the A11 due to the short length of the slip road together with the very tight curvature of the road on the junction itself. Although modifications to the junction itself are proposed, there would be no increase in the slip road lengths off the A11. In light of this, I am very concerned about the likely impact of a large number of HGV's using this junction, in terms of the effect on fast moving traffic on the A11 and the potential for congestion on the junction and backing up of vehicles onto the A11, particularly in light of the Local Highways Authority's request for traffic signals at the bridge. However, in the absence of any objection from either the Highways Agency or Local Highways Authority and having regard to conditions and obligations which can be imposed in respect to works referred to above, this Authority could not sustain any objection on highway safety grounds.
75. A further highways concern, principally raised by residents in adjoining villages, concerns the potential for HGV's associated with this site to travel through nearby villages resulting in danger to road users and pedestrians as well as noise

disturbance, pollution and damage to verges/property. Whilst grain is collected from farms within an approximately 30 mile radius, it is distributed to maltsters and mills, many of which are located in the north of England, as well as to businesses abroad. The A11 provides easy access to the eastbound A14 towards the ports. However, to travel northwards via the primary road network, it is necessary to go south on the A11, then north on the M11 in order to connect with the A14. Great Wilbraham is an obvious short cut onto the A14 and the residents are understandably concerned that drivers will take this route through the villages. Figures of 12,000 HGV movements a year through nearby villages have been quoted in numerous responses but, in my view, this figure is unrealistic as it takes no account of the fact that most traffic will arrive via the A11. I have been assured by the applicants that its routeing agreements would require HGV drivers to access and egress the site via the A11. On previous applications for landfill at the adjoining chalk pit, a lorry routeing agreement has been applied to ensure that traffic associated with the development would not go through the villages of Great and Little Wilbraham and Fulbourn. Any approval on this site should be subject to an identical agreement, other than when HGV's are collecting grain from farms within those villages. The agreement could also require the submission of monitoring reports.

### ***Residential amenity issues including noise, light and dust pollution***

76. The application was accompanied by a noise assessment report, a copy of which was forwarded to this Authority's Chief Environmental Health Officer. The EHO advised that the impact of the development upon the amenities of nearby residents, in terms of noise from the site and from HGV's, would be acceptable and would fall within the limits set out in the Local Plan. No specific reference has been made to the need to reduce the height of the spoil bunding along the western edge of the site.
77. Concerns have been raised about the likely impacts of any floodlighting. This is not proposed as part of the present application and would need to be the subject of a further planning application.

### ***Ecological Issues***

78. Concerns have been raised in respect of the ecological value of the site. The Council's Ecology Officer was consulted on this matter and considered that an assessment should be carried out to establish the present value of the site with respect to arable plants, skylark, grey partridge and brown hare. He later advised that, if such species are proven to exist on the site, the impact of the development could be overcome through appropriate mitigation measures. As the findings of any assessment will not affect the principle of developing the site, this can be required by a condition of any planning consent rather than needing to be undertaken prior to the further consideration of the proposal.

### ***Flooding/drainage issues***

79. Objections have been raised to the development on the basis of its flood risk. The application was accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment, a copy of which was forwarded to the Environment Agency for its consideration. The EA advised that the development overlies a major aquifer and, in accordance with the EA's recommendations, any consent should be subject to conditions requiring foul and surface water drainage details to be agreed before the commencement of any development.

### ***Footpath issues***

80. No specific objections have been raised in respect of the impact of the development upon the adjacent footpath/byway. Standard informatives reminding the applicants of the need to avoid any obstruction to this footpath as well as the need for consent for any resurfacing works should be attached to any consent.
81. The County Footpaths Officer has, however, requested that a soft track be provided alongside the improved road and a separate safe carriageway for pedestrians/riders be provided at the bridge crossing along with 1.8 metre high parapets. I have requested a diagram from the Footpaths Officer showing the precise position/width of the aforementioned soft track and parapet. In addition, these comments were made prior to the receipt of the Local Highways Authority's request that any consent be conditional upon the provision of traffic signals at the bridge. This requirement will effectively make the bridge one way as well as slowing traffic down. I have therefore also asked the Footpaths Officer if the LHA's requirements would overcome his concerns and specifically override the need for a soft track and parapet to be provided. I am still awaiting the Footpaths Officer's comments on this matter and hope to be in a position to advise Members further at the Committee meeting.
82. Finally, having regard to the provisions of DETR circular 02/98 (see para. 19 above), it is suggested that a condition be imposed on any permission requiring the restoration of the site in the event of the cessation of the approved use.

### **Recommendation**

83. Subject to clarification of the County Footpaths Officer's requirements and the submission of an amended plan if required and 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 and Fulbourn 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, approve the application, subject to:
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).

## APPENDIX

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 Authority (Reason - The A11 Trunk Road at Wilbraham is unfit 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).

### **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);
  - 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 Files Ref: S/2494/04/F and S/0623/03/F.

**Contact Officer:** Senior Planning Assistant - Lorraine Casey  
Telephone: (01954) 713251