

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

18 July 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager – Planning and Sustainable Communities

**S/0506/09/F – GREAT WILBRAHAM & WEST WRATTING
Extension to Camgrain APC Comprising Additional Grain Storage Facilities
and Ancillary Works Including Drainage Proposals and Landscaping and
Highway Improvements – Camgrain APC Site, London Road, Balsham for
Camgrain Stores Limited**

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Date for Determination: 9th July 2009

A. Update to the report

Agenda report paragraph number 15

Linton Parish Council – Recommends approval.

Agenda report paragraph number 17

The Ecology Officer – In accordance with the advice provided in April 2009 the previous time this application was considered, the findings of the ecological assessment are considered to be acceptable and no significant areas of arable plants are likely to be affected by the development. In these previous comments, the Ecology Officer stated it would be desirable if a landscape buffer could be provided so that new habitats could be established within it and also commented that the pond/soakaway was a poorly designed feature that, with a greater degree of thought, could be landscaped to improve its habitat potential. It was also requested that a pole mounted barn owl nest box be erected on the site to provide further biodiversity gain.

Since these original comments provided in April 2009, the proposed landscape buffer has been adjusted (with the input of the Ecology and Landscape Design Officers) to include chalk grassland habitats, the pond/soakaway has been redesigned to include a variety of habitats, giving significant biodiversity gain, and the erection of a pole mounted barn owl box has been agreed on the edge of the wetland area.

Agenda report paragraph number 55

This paragraph contains an error, in that the construction compound for the wind farm is located to the west, rather than east, of the Camgrain site.

Additional Representations

James Paice MP – Supports the application, commenting:

“I understand your committee will be considering the application by Camgrain to regularise the situation regarding the approval which they thought they had received but which was quashed by the courts. Whilst I fully understand that the Council must

ensure that the proper procedures are followed this time, I very much hope that the permission will be granted. Camgrain is an important part of the agricultural economy in the region and has already provided considerable benefit to many farm businesses.”

Robert Sturdy MEP – Supports the application, stating:

“Subsequent to my letter of 13 February 2009, regarding the application by Camgrain Stores Ltd to expand the APC store from 90,000 tonnes to 300,000 tonnes, I write further to express my support for the scheme. Food security is of paramount importance as we need to ensure adequate food production for an ever-increasing population. Cambridgeshire is known as the “bread basket of Europe” and Camgrain provides the region’s farmers with a first class facility for storage, grading and marketing of grain and it is important that this Company has our support. Job opportunities in the region need to be maintained and increased where possible and this development will ensure additional jobs in the agricultural sector in our area. I respectfully request that you look at this application favourably.”

County Councillor Nick Clarke (for the Fulbourn Division) – Supports the proposal, commenting:

“I would like to support the planning application S/0506/09. I am aware the parish councils are split on this issue but I fear that this has more to do with frustration about HGVs generally rather than from Camgrain, who I believe to be a responsible organisation. The area needs successful business and this is an excellent example.”

Philip Darke, Managing Director of Camgrain – Has provided further information in support of the application:

- Camgrain offers farmers a direct step into the food supply chain, bringing added value to customers and farmers. The agreement to supply Sainsburys in store bakeries with 100% Camgrain wheat is ground breaking and has displaced previously imported wheat from Canada, saving thousands of food miles and improving food security.
- On-farm stores are filled to capacity at harvest with basic commodity grains and have little or no segregation. Camgrain has over 250 different grades of members crops which all require careful segregation according to crop year, variety, quality, type and customer requirements. It is impossible to have all silos full when running such a sophisticated food storage facility. There is a need to clean, grade and dry grains of different types to different silos and at any one time there will be at least two dozen silos in states of transfer.
- Camgrain provides old crop to the milling and malting industry and, through harvest, many silos will be only 10% full of old crop.
- Wheat is cleaned and prepared for direct inclusion in the food chain. Camgrain is BRC approved, the global standard for food hygiene, and is the only store of its type to carry this standard. On-farm grain stores do not have the ability, segregation or quality to achieve this.
- Camgrain has details of all lorries entering and leaving the site so these details can be cross-referenced with any details supplied by local residents. Great Wilbraham Parish Council have been told to contact the company if a

Camgrain lorry is seen in the village. Only two calls have been received in three years and, on both occasions, the lorry has been banned.

- Collection and deliveries takes place 24 hours a day, and any restriction on collection or delivery hours would seriously disrupt the operation of the business.

Additional Letters of Objection

An additional 8 letters of objection have been received from residents within Balsham and Waterbeach. The key points raised are:

- The combined visual impact of this site, together with the wind farm and chalk pit, would destroy the visual quality of the landscape.
- An EIA is essential to assess the impact of the huge increase in traffic and its affect on highway safety, residential amenity, and wildlife, and to assess the visual impact on the landscape.
- The local road infrastructure was not designed to cope with the increase in lorries that would be generated by the development. The turning off the A11 is too short and the bridge over the A11 inadequate.
- A bulk rail service should be provided to take grain from the site.

A representation has also been received from the owners of Valley Farm Cottage and this has been forwarded to Members by email.

Additional Letters of Support

An additional 24 letters of support have been submitted. 17 of these are from Camgrain members and reiterate the points set out within paragraph 29 of the report as well as making the following additional points:

- Centralised grain storage in modern buildings is more cost-effective for individual farmers, more efficient in terms of energy usage, and more in line with food industry requirements, than outdated farm buildings. This is the way forward for agriculture throughout Europe.
- The ability to dry wet grain has proved vital in recent years.
- The development provides local jobs (approx 150 people employed during peak harvest period).
- The extension is required in order to meet demands for more capacity from farmers.
- The application accords with PPS7, which supports development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises, and that enables farmers to become more competitive, and comply with changing legislation.
- Such a facility constructed in a village or industrial estate would result in problems of noise from traffic and machinery, and potential access problems.

- £1.5m has been spent by Camgrain to improve the A11 junction and widen the approach road to the site. The junction and access roads therefore have ample capacity to accommodate the increase in traffic.
- Noise heard in the villages of Great Wilbraham and West Wratting is from traffic on the A11.
- The nearest village to the site is Six Mile Bottom, and its Parish Council has raised no objections, nor have any objections been received from Linton Parish Council.
- An EIA should not be required. The two most recently approved central grain storage facilities in Kettering and Montrose did not have an EIA.
- Camgrain has planted over 10,000 trees and enhanced the wildlife habitat.
- The routing plan prevents grain lorries using roads in Wilbraham and Fulbourn and this has operated effectively for several years.

A letter from the Vice-Chairman of Camgrain comments that the proposal is crucial to the success of the cooperative and its farmer members, and that the main benefits of Camgrain are:

- Offers cost effective and efficient grain storage where grain is stored, cleaned and dried to a higher standard than in on-farm storage and allows farmers to concentrate on crop production.
- Food safety and quality retention and traceability are guaranteed at Camgrain, whereas on farm storage doesn't provide this guarantee.

The Deputy President of the National Farmers Union (NFU) urges the Council to support the application, stating that the project is in line with both NFU policy, of cooperation and encouraging farm controlled businesses, and Government policy on the need to increase global food production by 70% by 2050. Sainsburys, Kelloggs, Nestle and Jordans are all purchasing wheat and malting barley at Camgrain, and the development adds value to locally produced cereals.

The Chairman of the Home Grown Cereals Authority, a division of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (a non departmental government body sponsored by DEFRA) states that the development of centralised grain storage is vital to maintain competitiveness and to ensure the UK does not fall behind international standards. It is difficult to achieve the required hygiene and food safety in outdated farm stores, whilst buyers of grain also require delivery of exact specification loads into processing plants, and it is easier for central stores to achieve this than individual farmers.

Openfields, a national farmer-owned business, marketing in excess of 20% of UK's production of crops, makes reference to the UK's current inefficiency of cereal supply chains compared to EU countries. To address this, part of the strategy is to develop a network of storage and processing facilities across the UK that are owned by farmers. Scale is vital to ensure improved service levels to food processors by eliminating rejections, and ensuring consistent quality material.

Three letters of support have also been received from companies that have been involved in the construction/design process and, hence, have suffered financial

consequences from the delays in the planning process. Should the application fail, these companies would need to make people redundant and may cease to operate altogether. Brice-Baker, who develop, design and install grain stores, point out that the scale of the site is not unusual compared to other similar sites being built throughout Europe. It also stresses that it is vital to ensure there is enough segregation to store the different grain types, varieties and quality grades required, thereby meaning the silos will not all be used to capacity at one time.

Planning Comments

The majority of the issues summarised above have already been discussed in the main committee report. The Managing Director of Camgrain has provided further information regarding the capacity of the silos and an explanation as to why the silos will never operate at the capacity their volume would suggest. As referred to within paragraph 44 of the report, the capacity of the proposed development would be restricted through a condition of any planning permission.

With reference to the points raised within the representation and photographs received from Valley Farm Cottage, Camgrain has advised that Mill Road and the site junction are monitored by CCTV coverage whilst, during harvest time, the junction is manned by the company's own traffic management supervisor. The company has advised that there is no evidence to indicate the give way sign is ignored by vehicles. The sugar beet pad referred to is owned by Wadlow Farm, and not therefore under Camgrain's control, and convoys are not allowed to build up on this area. After going through the weighbridge, lorries need to pull clear of the area to re-sheet the load after sampling, and the company has advised that this is what is happening in one the photographs submitted with the representation.

The recommendation remains one of approval, as set out within paragraph 57 of the report.

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