

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

6th April 2005

AUTHOR/S: Director of Development Services

S/0121/05/F - Fulbourn
Chlorine and Sulphur Dioxide Cylinder Storage Building at Fleam Dyke Pumping Station for Cambridge Water Company

Recommendation: Refusal

Site and Proposal

1. Fleam Dyke pumping station is located off Balsham Road to the southeast of Fulbourn approximately 1/3rd of the way between Fulbourn and Balsham. The pumping station itself is located at the end of a 400 metre long vehicular access. This access is shared with a pair of semi-detached cottages, one of which is owned by Cambridge Water sited immediately outside the site entrance. The site itself (2.4 hectares) is within the Green Belt and adjacent to Fleam Dyke, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Within the formal 2m high steel security railings that mark the site is an area of grassland recognised as a County Wildlife site.
2. This full application, submitted on the 24th January 2005 seeks planning permission for a new chlorine and sulphur dioxide bottle storage building. The new structure would be located on an existing raised concrete plinth to the northwest side of the existing building. The new structure (single storey) would adopt an 'L' shape with a 2.95m high flat roof. Two doors would be used to access the new building which would house two separate bottle storage areas giving additional floor space of 22m²
3. The application is required in connection with the relocation programme of Cambridge Water from the Rustat Road site to the edge of Cambridge at the new Cherry Hinton site. This relocation will result in permanent staff at Fleam Dyke, where, at present there are currently none.

Planning History

4. None relevant

Planning Policy

5. Structure Plan 2003 **Policy P1/2** restricts development in the countryside unless they can be demonstrated to be essential or would adversely affect nature conservation areas or Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
6. **P1/3 'Sustainable Design in Built Development'** of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 ("Structure Plan") states that a high standard of design and sustainability should be adopted for all new forms of development.
7. **P9/2a 'Green Belt'** of the Structure Plan sets out the purpose and limitations of development within the area designated as the Cambridge Green Belt.

8. **GB2 ‘Principles of Development’** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2004 (“Local Plan”) sets out forms of development considered to be appropriate in the Green Belt.
9. **GB3 ‘The Location of Development’** of the Local Plan requires appropriate Green Belt Development to be located within or adjoining existing complexes in order to protect the rural nature and openness of the Green Belt
10. **EN9 ‘Nature Conservation: Identified Sites’** of the Local Plan requires decisions affecting County Wildlife Sites and SSSIs to safeguard and wherever possible enhance the intrinsic features of natural and/or geological interest.

Consultation

11. **Fulbourn Parish Council:** Approves
12. **Environment Agency:** No planning comment
13. **Ecology Officer:** The proposal can be permitted without any loss or impact to the grassland interest of the site as the application appears to utilise an area that is currently hardstanding and suitable access tracks are already in place. If the application is approved conditions must be used to ensure no damage occurs (during construction).
14. **The Wildlife Trust:** While having no objections to the proposals, the CWT wishes to point out that the grasslands within Fleam Dyke pumping station are recognised as a County Wildlife Site because they are one of the few remaining examples of species-rich chalk grasslands in the County. It is therefore essential to ensure that during construction activities no accidental damage occurs to the species-rich grassland. This can be achieved through the use of appropriate conditions.

Representations

15. Cambridge Water Company, in support of the application, notes the following points
 - **“Existing situation** Fleam Dyke is an operational water producing site where treatment already takes place using chlorine and sulphur dioxide cylinders which are delivered from our Rustat Road Depot by our own lorry, using our own staff, on a weekly basis.
 - **Proposal** The need is to provide a store. To make one outward delivery around specified sites, and one return journey back to the store once each week. We currently deliver from Rustat Road to Fleam Dyke most weeks and some of the other 24 sites in the company supply area. Not all of the sites require bottles of chemical every week; this depends on water demand and speed of treatment at each site. Fleam Dyke is one of our highest producers.
 - **Current transport arrangements** We deploy an average of 10 bottles to sites every week and a preferred route is chosen from Rustat Road. It could well be that Fleam Dyke is the first delivery point as it is near to Rustat Road. So all 10 bottles travel up the track to the site and all 10 bottles (1 or 2 empty) come back down the track. The vehicular movement is already established as part of what we do.

- **Proposed transport arrangements** With the proposal to locate the store at Fleam Dyke there will be no perceived delivery to the same place. The deliveries will be to the other sites as necessary, but still every week. The proposed chemical store will relinquish full cylinders and accept empty ones. Fresh Cylinders are delivered by our supplier on a fortnightly basis. Approximately 22 chlorine cylinders and 12 Sulphur Dioxide cylinders. The number of vehicular movements in respect of this entire process will be six per month.
- **Reasoning** Transportation of chemical cylinders in the Cambridge Water Company area is ongoing; at the moment journeys commence and finish at Rustat Road. We do not use chemicals at Rustat Road or in Cambridge, but every week we make journeys with cylinders through Cambridge. Every fortnight another delivery to Rustat Road is made by our supplier. The proposal to commence journeys with cylinders made from Fleam Dyke would not, by design, generate a route-plan that involved Cambridge.
- **Other Vehicular Movements** Because Fleam Dyke is an operational pumping station, there will always be other vehicular movements associated with the processes that take place there, these are also established and do not relate to this proposal to construct a bottle store.”

Planning Comments - Key Issues

16. The key issue to consider in respect of this application is the intensification of the site and its use as a storage depot within the Green Belt and the Countryside location.
17. ***Impact on the character and appearance of the Green Belt and countryside.***
The site is accessed along a 400m long established road and the curtilage is screened on all sides by 2m high-security railings, painted green and softened with various large shrubs and hedging. The presence of the pumping station is not significantly noticeable when travelling along Balsham road even though the building is of substantial size (floor area 933m²).
18. Criteria 2 of GB2 accepts the principle of buildings providing essential facilities for uses of land, provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt. It is argued that this storage building is not essential to this site, as it has been operating without such a need before hand. Although it is unlikely that the proposed storage building itself would detract from the open character and appearance of the Green Belt given it is a low key, single storey, structure sited on a large area of existing hardstanding, the use of the storage space as a depot has wider implications.
19. The new space will allow the distribution of gas cylinders to the other 24 sites within the catchment area as part of the wider operations of Cambridge Water Company (CWC). This particular site is located within a fairly isolated part of the Countryside and although Cambridge Water intends to locate permanent staff at the site (beyond the Council's control) on account of their relocation programme it is not something I would encourage given the sensitive nature of the surrounding area.
20. Notwithstanding CWC's ongoing relocation programme it is considered that the proposed storage facility would increase activity at the site, including timetabled pick-ups and drop off's which, by the applicants own admission, is not something that can necessarily be controlled as it is based on the water demand and speed of treatment. In essence if more water is being produced/distributed it could result in more frequent or larger visits/deliveries. I am not convinced that this storage building is essential in this Green Belt location. The principle of encouraging and allowing increased activity

at the site as a result of the storage facility would be inappropriate given the location within the Green Belt and countryside which could potentially harm the character of this rural location.

21. **General**

The applicant has not provided sufficient information or justification regarding the site selection process to outweigh the potential harm that may be caused. It is therefore recommended that the application be refused and that CWC liaise with the Council to assess a potential alternative site for this type of distribution.

Recommendation

22. Refuse on the following grounds

- 1) Fleam Dyke Pumping Station is located within the Countryside and Green Belt and comprises a designated County Wildlife Site. The creation of a new storage facility within the site would result in additional activity and traffic movements at the site causing an unacceptable level of intensification that would be a direct result of the proposed storage facility and would be inappropriate in the Green Belt and this countryside location. The application is not considered to be essential development as part of the use of the land and is therefore contrary to Policy GB2 of South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and Structure Plan Policy P1/2.
- 2) The application provides insufficient information and justification regarding the site selection process and therefore the Council is unable to consider whether all other alternative solutions have been considered to avoid the potential harm of the proposed scheme. The Council can only assess the application on the information provided and it is considered the justification submitted does not outweigh the potential harm that may be caused to the character, openness and appearance of this Green Belt countryside location. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated to outweigh the harm of this inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The application is therefore contrary to Policy GB2 of South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and Policy P9/2a of the Structure Plan 2003.

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

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Planning Application File S/0121/05/F

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