

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Development and Conservation Control Committee

6th July 2005

AUTHOR: Director of Development Services

S/2531/04/F - Bourn Erection of Maintenance and Repair Hangar at Bourn Airfield

Recommendation: Approval
Date for Determination: 15th March 2005 (Major application)

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. This is a full application, received on 14th December 2004, for the erection a new hangar at Bourn Airfield, to be sited to the north west of the existing buildings occupied by Rotortech and to be used for the maintenance and repair of helicopters.
2. Since the application was originally submitted the proposals have been amended. The original proposals and the amended plans both relate to a proposed building measuring approximately 50 metres long by 20.5 metres wide. The amended proposals incorporate a ridged roof rising from 6.4 metres at the eaves to 10.9 metres at the ridge which runs across the shorter dimension of the building.
3. The south western elevation, facing the company's existing buildings, would incorporate projecting entrance lobbies and windows to serve a reception area, offices, storage, toilets and rest facilities on the ground and first floors at that end of the building. The three remaining elevations include no windows. A single pedestrian door is proposed to the north eastern elevation. The north western elevation, fronting the adjoining runway, would have large doors for the majority of its length, evidently to provide access for aircraft. The remaining, south eastern, elevation contains no windows or doors. The submitted plans indicate 48 roof lights. The amended plans do not specify the intended facing materials.
4. In support of the proposal the applicant company and its agent have variously stated that the Company currently operates from an existing building, with approximately twice the floorspace of the building now proposed. Consent was previously granted for a similar hangar which was required for the maintenance and repair of heavy helicopters. This was not constructed. The Company now wishes to develop its existing business relating to smaller helicopters. The proposed building would therefore be smaller than that previously approved. It is stated that the building could house four small helicopters at a time and that it is usual for aircraft to be at the Rotortech facility for up to six months. There would, therefore, be few aircraft movements. Indeed, some aircraft are expected to arrive by lorry.

Planning History

5. The planning history includes several applications relating to the surrounding area, the most relevant being the following consent, referred to above, relating to a similar proposal on approximately the same site:

Planning Policy

6. **Policies TP8** of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 ("The Local Plan") relates primarily to new airfield or flying sites or the expansion of existing facilities.
7. **Policy EM7** of the Local Plan relates to the expansion of existing firms within village frameworks or on suitable brownfield sites next to or very close to village frameworks.
8. **Policy P1/2** of the County Structure Plan 2003 states that development will be restricted in the countryside unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural area.
9. **Policy P2/6** of the Structure Plan states that development in rural areas will be facilitated, where it contributes to one or more objectives, including helping to maintain or renew the vitality of rural areas.

Consultations

10. **Bourn Parish Council:** Initial proposal: No recommendation.
Revised proposal: Approve.
11. **The Chief Environmental Health Officer:** Discussions have taken place regarding appropriate means of sound insulation. A condition is recommended relating to the hours of operation and installation of any plant at the site.
12. **Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service** request that adequate provision is made with regard to fire hydrants.
13. **Environment Agency:** The site overlies a major aquifer. An appropriate condition is recommended with regard to pollution control of the water environment.

Representations:

14. Representations, one by e-mail and one by letter, have been received from two households in West Drive, Highfields, Caldecote commenting as follows:
 - Policy P1/2 of the Structure Plan states that development in the countryside will be resisted unless the proposals can be demonstrated to be essential in a particular rural location.
 - The look, size and feel of this hangar, being forward towards the road of any other building on this part of the Airfield, will diminish the rural nature of this part of Cambridgeshire. Building it beside or behind would have looked better.
 - The proposals might extend to the already horrendous noise that emanates from the industrial premises on the site. The vast majority of the noise comes from TKA Tallent Chassis.
 - At the moment little noise comes from Rotortech, except when they appear to be testing an engine after repair. This happens infrequently. If the new hangar added to the noise it would be of concern.

- If the proposal involves increased engine testing or running an objection would be raised.

Planning Comments - Key Issues

15. The application falls to be determined by reference to the relevant policies of the Development Plan together with any other material considerations.
16. Members are reminded that the Village Frameworks, identified in the Local Plan relate to residential development only. They are not therefore directly relevant to this application.
17. Policy TP8 of the Local Plan refers to aviation-related development proposals but relates primarily to new airfield or flying sites, or the expansion of such facilities, rather than to industrial developments of the type now proposed.
18. Policy EM7 of the Local Plan relates to the expansion of existing firms within village frameworks, which this clearly is not, or on suitable brownfield sites. It is acknowledged that parts of Bourn Airfield could be regarded as brownfield.
19. There are some merits, as suggested below, in the proposed development being located alongside the existing industrial premises to demonstrate that the proposal was essential in a particular rural area, as required by Policy P1/2 of the Structure Plan. It relates to the expansion of an existing specialised firm which could not easily relocate.
20. At a more general level, however, the proposal could be said to accord with Policy P2/6 of the Structure Plan insofar as the skilled jobs likely to be created by the proposed development could help to maintain or renew the vitality of rural areas. In that context, the application forms state that there are 15 industrial employees at the existing premises. This compares with an anticipated total of 27 at the completed development.
21. The above comments suggest that the proposed development accords with some, but potentially not all, of the relevant development plan policies.
22. Turning to detailed considerations it is noted that the site would use the existing access onto the A428, with good visibility in both directions.
23. With regard to the impact upon the countryside, the proposed building when viewed from the north including whilst travelling along the A428, would be viewed against the backdrop of the existing aircraft hangar and other industrial buildings in the vicinity. When viewed from the south, including the village of Caldecote, the proposed building would be obscured from view by the existing industrial buildings. The potential impact upon the countryside is therefore likely to be limited. This could be further reduced by an appropriate landscaping scheme although it is acknowledged that this would never be likely to totally screen the building and would take several years to have any significant impact.
24. With regard to potential noise nuisance, it is suggested that this could potentially be controlled by restrictions upon the hours of work. Any attempts to exercise further control by means of restrictions upon aircraft movements are likely to prove unenforceable given the relationship of the site to the adjoining airfield. Nevertheless, the distance from the site to the nearest village, combined with the acoustic screen

provided by the existing intervening buildings, are likely to limit the extent of any nuisance caused to local residents.

25. In accordance with the above analysis, the proposed development may be held to constitute a departure from the development plan. The application has been advertised as such. The application has not been called in for determination by the Deputy Prime Minister, nor is it above the threshold to be referred to the Government Office for the East of England. There are, therefore, currently no procedural restrictions that would preclude the grant of consent.
26. Having regard to the policies of the Development Plan, the above comments and all other material considerations it is concluded that consent should be granted subject to the conditions indicated below.

Recommendation

27. APPROVAL

Conditions

1. SCA (5 years) (Standard Reason)
2. This consent relates to the amended plan (drawing number CBN 24319) submitted to the Local Planning Authority under cover of the agents' letter dated 25th April 2005.
(Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.)
3. SC40 (restrictions upon use) "the maintenance and repair of helicopters"
"Class B2"
RC40(b)
4. SC5 (a) (materials) "walls and roof"
(RC5 (a) (ii))
5. Prior to the commencement of any works on site the developer shall submit for the consideration of the Local Planning Authority a scheme relating to the sound attenuation of the building hereby approved. No works shall commence on site until such a scheme has been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be completed in accordance with the approved plans.
(Reason: In order to restrict the level of noise emanating from the building having regard to amenity.)
6. Prior to the commencement of any works on site the developer shall submit for the consideration of the Local Planning Authority a scheme relating to the provision of vehicle parking to serve the building hereby approved together with the other nearby buildings in the ownership or control of the applicant. No works shall commence on site until such a scheme has been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be completed in accordance with the approved scheme.
(Reason: In order to ensure the provision of adequate parking facilities within the vicinity of the proposed development.)
7. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of pollution control of the water environment, which shall

include foul and surface water drainage, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans prior to the development being put into beneficial use.

(Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory method of foul and surface water drainage and to prevent the increased pollution of the water environment.)

8. Development shall not begin until a scheme for the provision and location of fire hydrants to serve the development to a standard recommended by the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. No development shall take place otherwise than in accordance with the approved scheme.
(Reason: To ensure adequate water supply for emergency use.)
9. SC51 (landscaping scheme) delete “, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, “
(RC51)
10. SC52 implementation of landscaping and replanting requirement.
(RC52)
11. No works of maintenance or repair to aircraft, nor installation of plant or machinery to the building, shall take place outside the hours of 08.30 to 17.30 Monday to Fridays or 08.30 to 13.00 on Saturdays. No such works shall take place at any time on Sundays or on Bank Holidays.
(Reason: In order to restrict the level of noise emanating from the building having regard to amenity.)

Reasons for Approval

1. Although the development is not in accordance with Policy P1/2 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 it is considered to be acceptable as a departure from the development plan having regard to the likely employment generation, the limited impact upon the countryside and the expansion of this existing specialised and local firm.
2. The development is considered generally to accord with the following Development Plan policies:
 - **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003:**
P2/6 (Rural Economy);
 - **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004:**
TP8 (Aviation-Related Development Proposals)
EM7 (Expansion of Existing Firms at Villages)
3. The development is not considered to be significantly detrimental to the following material planning considerations which have been raised during the consultation exercise:
 - Impact upon the countryside
 - Amenity including noise.

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

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Planning files Ref. S/2531/04/F and S/1816/90/F

Contact Officer: Steve Anderson
Telephone: (01954) 713165