

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

3 February 2016

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

Application Number: S/0499/15/FL

Parish: Bourn

Proposal: Part change of use of runway to external storage

Site address: Former runway, Bourn Airfield

Applicant(s): R Taylor and sons

Recommendation: Delegated Approval

Key material considerations: Principle of Development
Impact on character of the surrounding landscape
Residential Amenity
Environmental Health
Highway Safety

Committee Site Visit: Yes

Departure Application: No

Presenting Officer: David Thompson, Principal Planning Officer

Application brought to Committee because: Bourn and Caldecote Parish Council object to the application and officer recommendation is approval

Date by which decision due: 25 November 2015 (extension of time agreed)

Executive Summary

1. The proposed development would be located on a brownfield site which has approved uses for container storage on other parts of the wider site. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed use would be on a larger scale than those existing container storage uses, the section of the runway that is the subject of this application is significantly further into the site and less visible from public views than those existing storage locations.
2. The amended proposal has created significant areas at the northern and southern ends of the site where the storage would be restricted in height to 6 metres, reducing the visual impact of the development in the sensitive viewpoints from Broadway and ensuring a substantial separation distance between the higher storage areas and the northern boundary of the site.
3. The Local Highway Authority have raised no objections to the proposals following the

submission of a Transport Statement and it is considered that a condition limiting the number of vehicle movements associated with the use to the level suggested (i.e. 12 per hour) would limit the scale of the operation to an acceptable degree.

4. Subject to the mitigation measures contained within the noise assessment being attached as conditions of a permission, it is considered that an unreasonable impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents would be avoided, through the restriction on the hours of HGV movements and the installation of sound reducing measures at the entrance to the site.

Planning History

5. **Site**
No planning history relevant to the determination of this planning application
6. **Adjacent Sites**
S/1068/08/F – change of use of part of runway (to west of this application site) for parking of caravans and siting of self storage containers - approved
S/1201/07/F – part change of use of the runway for the siting of storage containers, HGV trailers and Associated equipment (section to the north and east of this application site)
S/0106/96/F – change of use of land and buildings (to the west of this application site) for vehicle storage and servicing – approved
S/0816/75/F – erection of storage building (to the west of this application site) – approved
S/0759/91/F outside storage of plastic pipes – approved

National Guidance

7. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Development Plan Policies

8. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007**
DP/1 Sustainable Development
DP/2 Design of New Development
DP/3 Development Criteria
DP/4 Infrastructure and New Developments
DP/7 Development Frameworks
ET/1 Limitations on the Occupancy of Firms
ET/5 Development for the Expansions of Firms
NE/14 Lighting Proposals
NE/15 Noise Pollution
TR/1 Planning For More Sustainable Travel
TR/2 Car and Cycle Parking Standards
9. **South Cambridgeshire LDF Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):**
District Design Guide SPD - Adopted March 2010
10. **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Submission 2014**
S/1 Vision
S/2 Objectives of the Local Plan
S/3 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

S/7 Development Frameworks
SC/10 Lighting Proposals
SC/11 Noise Pollution
TI/2 Planning for Sustainable Travel
TI/3 Parking Provision

Consultation

11. **Bourn Parish Council** – Initially raised no objection subject to a 4 metre restriction on the height of the storage. On receipt of the additional information (noise assessment and transport statement), object to the proposals on the basis of the landscape impact of the proposed height of the storage and the impact of noise generated by activity on the site at anti social hours on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties. The Parish Council (PC) also raise an objection to the number of HGV movements to and from the site and the detrimental impact that this will have on highway safety (in terms of the safety of the junction onto Broadway and also the conflict with cycle traffic). The PC also consider that the public consultation on the application was inadequate. The PC submitted an independent noise report which has been assessed by the Councils Environmental Health Officer. An update to this report will be provided to Members once the consultation response has been received
12. **Cambourne Parish Council** - recommend refusal. Concerns raised regarding the impact of HGV movements and the impact on the already congested road network – particularly around the Caxton Gibbett roundabout.
13. **Caldecote Parish Council** – Initially raised no objection. On receipt of the additional information (noise assessment and transport statement), object to the proposals on the basis of the landscape impact of the proposed height of the storage and the impact of noise generated by activity on the site at anti social hours.
14. **Knapwell Parish Council** – object to the application on the basis that the junction to the site is considered unsuitable for HGV traffic as the slip lanes allowing traffic to turn from St. Neots Road are insufficient in length. HGV's travelling along St, Neots Road and onto the A428 will conflict with the traffic associated with Cambourne – both cars and bicycles. The proposed routing arrangements will be difficult to enforce and traffic and HGV's likely to be travel through Knapwell. The non-HGV traffic associated with the use will add additional pressure in terms of the capacity of the highway network. The proposal will result in unreasonable harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents through light pollution and noise and vibration. The PC also express concerns about the way that the application was advertised.
15. **Local Highways Authority** – No objection following the submission of the Transport Statement which outlines the routes of access and egress for delivery vehicles and details of the number of vehicular movements
16. **Environmental Health Officer** – No objection following the submission of a noise impact assessment which lists a number of mitigation measures, including the erection of a sound proof barrier adjacent to the property at Little Common Bungalow and restrictions on the hours of access and egress for vehicles.

Representations

17. 16 letters of objection have been received which raise the following concerns (summarised):

- The proposal has not been the subject of sufficient public consultation
- The proposed number of HGV movements and the additional volume of traffic generated by the proposed use would have a detrimental impact upon highway safety
- The proposal will be detrimental to the residential amenity of neighbouring properties through noise from HGV's, particularly in the early morning and the operation of the site and light pollution during night time operation
- Bicycle traffic enters Broadway from Cambourne opposite the entrance to the site and there will be conflict between this and HGV movements and the hours in which HGV's will be allowed to access the site conflict with peak times (between 0630 and 0930 and between 1630 and 1900)
- Cranes moving containers around at night will result in noise during anti-social hours at night
- The section of Broadway adjacent to the entrance of the site is not well lit and this presents a highway safety hazard outside of daylight hours
- The proposed sound barrier will not prevent noise travelling from the site to neighbouring properties as the existing situation allows noise from the A428 to be heard from nearby properties
- HGV's turning right out of the site will result in a highway safety hazard as the access is adjacent to a brow in the hill along Broadway
- The crane company that currently operate on the site use the exit on the eastern side of the airfield, not the access onto Broadway as would be the case in this proposal
- The noise assessment submitted with the application is flawed and inadequate – the noise impact statement should be analysed and questioned to its fullest and the claims that noise will be reduced to 3db on the site boundaries should be tested
- The application should state that the proposed use will be a 'distribution centre' rather than 'container storage' as the latter is misleading in terms of the scale of the proposal
- How will the routing arrangements proposed be policed?
- The containers will be visible along Broadway and this will be detrimental to the visual amenity of the surrounding landscape
- The property at Blackmore Farm is directly level with zone C where the container movement and storage is proposed to take place
- The Wincanton operation at the existing Alconbury site has resulted in a number of complaints over the years
- A 24 hour operation of this nature should not be approved so close to neighbouring residential properties.
- The proposal will result in traffic turning south and routing through Bourn village.
- The roads leading to the site are single carriageway roads with no cycle paths – HGV traffic will result in a dangerous situation for cyclists
- The proposed use will generate 12 HGV movements per hour which is excessive given the access constraints and the close proximity to neighbouring properties
- The entrance to the site has limited visibility in both directions from the junction

Planning Assessment

18. The key issues to be assessed in the determination of this planning application are the principle of development, the impact of the proposals on the character of the landscape, the residential amenity of neighbouring properties, environmental health and highway safety.

Principle of development

19. The application site is located in the open countryside, outside of the development framework boundaries of Bourn and Caldecote. Policy DP/7 of the current LDF and policy S/7 of the emerging Local Plan state that only development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside will be permitted.
20. However, section 3 of the NPPF (entitled 'supporting a prosperous rural economy') states that LPA's should 'support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas.' The site of Bourn Airfield is currently used for a variety of storage uses, in different parts of the site, as demonstrated by the planning history. Whilst located in the open countryside, the site is not within the Green Belt and given the permitted uses on the site and the connectivity to the highway network, is considered to be a sustainable location for the type of storage use proposed. The existing uses on the site reflect the fact that the site has not operated for any of the purposes listed in policy DP/7 as being suitable in the countryside either when it operated as an airfield or since that time.
21. It is also considered that the proposed use would not be appropriate in a built up residential area. The proposed use, in common with the other permitted uses on the site, will involve HGV deliveries to the site and the noise impact associated with these vehicle movements and the movement of storage containers would not be acceptable in a residential area. Given the fact that this is a brownfield site and that there are existing storage uses on the wider site, it is considered that the more flexible advice provided by the more recently published NPPF in terms of economic development in the countryside should be afforded greater weight than local policy DP/7.
22. Whilst a personal planning permission would not be appropriate in this case, there is an intended end user, in the form of Wincanton Storage, which currently operates on Alconbury Airfield within the Huntingdonshire District. The operation at Bourn Airfield would be on a much reduced scale to the operation at Alconbury, as indicated by the assumptions made to support the Transport Statement and the restrictions to be placed on the height of the storage on this site, should planning permission be granted.
23. The applicant has also agreed to a time limit restriction should planning permission be granted. In accordance with the guidance contained within PPG, it is considered that the longer term regeneration aspirations for Bourn Airfield (proposed allocation site for residential development in the emerging Local Plan) is an appropriate reason to limit the planning permission for a two year period. It is considered that the use will provide an appropriate use for a currently vacant part of a wider site which currently contains storage uses, another aspect which meets the guidance on the issuing of temporary planning permissions.
24. Following the above assessment, the overall principle of development is considered to be acceptable, subject to all other material considerations being satisfied.

Impact on the character of the landscape

25. Bourn Parish Council stated in their initial comments that the height of the storage should be restricted to 4 metres in height. This was not considered to be a viable option for the prospective user of the site. An image based Visual Impact Assessment has been submitted which indicates how visible the storage containers would be with a maximum storage height of 6 metres at the northern and southern ends of the site

and 12 metres in the central section of the runway when viewed from the highway running parallel with the western boundary of the airfield (Broadway).

26. The images submitted indicated that the northern element of the 12 metre section as originally proposed would be directly visible in part of the view afforded from Broadway, through a gate adjacent to the western edge of the runway. The scheme has therefore been amended to extend the section where the storage would be restricted to a maximum of 6 metres in height at the northern end of the runway southwards, so that the 12 metre section would not be directly visible from this viewpoint.
 27. It is considered that this is sufficient to reduce the visual impact of the storage containers from this view point, given that the containers would sit well below the height of the trees which form the backdrop to the section of the runway to which this application relates. The distance from the site boundary to the western edge of the runway is in excess of 450 metres and from the northern edge of the storage area of the site to the northern boundary of the airfield is in excess of 600 metres. At these distances, it is considered that the fact that significant sections at either end of the runway would be limited to 6 metre high storage is sufficient to mitigate an overbearing impact on the character of the surrounding landscape, particularly within the context of the existing established uses on other parts of the site.
 28. The section of the site that would have a 12 metre limit on storage heights would be located to the east of the dense tree coverage which screens the adjacent buildings within the site from views from Broadway. Viewpoint 4 of the images submitted in the Visual Impact Assessment is taken from Broadway looking eastwards, along the line of the hedgerow which forms the southern boundary of the farm located to the west of the southern section of the runway. From this view, the height and density of the screening between the site and the highway are evident. At viewpoint 3, the 12 metre high storage is shown as visible between a gap in the hedgerow and in the revised submission, this section has been included within the 6 metre high limit. From the sections of hedgerow that can be seen through along the section where storage at 12 metres in height would occur, it is apparent that the planting further east completely screens the existing buildings and given the substantial separation distance to be retained, it is considered that the proposal would not have an overbearing impact on the character of the surrounding landscape from these views.
 29. In relation to the southern end of the runway, the last 110 metres of storage space would be restricted to 6 metres in height. The Visual Impact Assessment images demonstrate that, where visible from Broadway, the containers would remain well below the height of the trees on the eastern side of the airfield which form the backdrop and the trees located between Broadway and the western edge of the application site also assist in reducing the landscape impact of the containers.
 30. Whilst it is the case that the two existing permissions on the site for storage use are subject to a condition that the containers are stacked single storey in height, it is noted that both of those sites (one in the north eastern corner, the other the south western corner of the site) are significantly closer to the boundaries of the site and are therefore considered to be more visible in public views. The planning permissions relating to those uses are also permanent, whereas this permission would be granted on a temporary basis only.
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Highway safety

31. The Highway Authority initially objected to the application on the basis that a lack of

information. Bourn Parish Council also made comment that vehicles should enter and leave the site from the northern boundary and not travel through Bourn village. A Transport Statement has subsequently been submitted based on the proposed use of the site by Wincanton. The Statement indicates that 8 office staff and 15 employees related to the distribution business would be based on site, split over 2 shifts, with 40 HGV drivers parking at the site but then transporting items to other destinations. It is acknowledged that the safety of the junction for use by HGV's, the potential conflict with cyclists and vehicle traffic on the site and the volume of HGV traffic are concerns that have been raised by the Parish Councils and neighbour representations received.

32. The proposal would utilise an existing access onto Broadway, which is used by some of the existing operators on the site. The Statement assesses the number of trips that would be generated by the proposed use, with 250 two way trips anticipated over a 24 hour period – equating to approximately 12 per hour. Due to noise considerations (discussed later in this report) the hours of deliveries are to be restricted and so the total number each day would be less. Nevertheless, the Highway Authority is satisfied that the traffic generated by the proposed, when taken cumulatively with the other used on the site, would not result in a detrimental, impact upon highway safety.
33. The Statement indicates that visibility splays of 180 metres can be achieved when measured from 2.4 metres back from the edge of the highway. The assessment acknowledges that splays measuring 4.5 metres x 215 metres are required to meet the standards and the access in this case falls short of this requirement. However, as the report indicates, this access is used by 2 other operators on the site which involve HGV traffic, as well as other uses. The Highway Authority have raised no objection to the safety of the access, given that it is an existing arrangement and there has not been a history of incidents on this junction.
34. The Transport Statement indicates that cycle and vehicle parking will be provided on site and considered that there is sufficient space within the site to accommodate parking spaces for the traffic generated by employees. The details of the location of this and cycle storage can be secured by condition.

Residential amenity and Environmental Health

35. The Environmental Health Officer (EHO) originally raised concerns about the proposal and objected to the operation of the site, in terms of deliveries to and from the site, 24 hours a day. The Noise Impact Assessment subsequently submitted includes a number of mitigation measures, including restricting the hours during which HGV's can access and egress the site to within 06:15 and 19:15 and the erection of a 4 metre high acoustic sound barrier along the southern boundary of the access (adjacent to Little Common Bungalow). The report assesses the level of noise generated by 3 cranes on the site and that these would not result in an unacceptable impact on the closest property to the runway itself (The Grange). The potential impact on the closest property to the entrance to the site (Great Common Cottages) is assessed in the report and the proposed use is considered to be within acceptable noise levels, given that background noise levels during the daytime will be higher at that property as it is adjacent to Broadway.
36. On the basis that the mitigation measures within the report are secured by condition, it is considered that the proposal would not result in noise levels that would harm the residential amenity of any of the adjacent properties. Given the substantial separation distances to be retained between the dwellings and the location of the storage containers, it is considered that development within the height limit restrictions to be conditioned would ensure that noise levels associated with the movement of storage

units would not be harmful to the residential amenity of those properties. The EHO has not recommended there should be any restriction placed on those properties.

Other matters

37. Concern has been raised by a number of residents and the Parish Councils in regards to the description of the proposed development. The description of the proposal includes reference to external storage and the fact that the storage could include containers. It is acknowledged that there is no reference to the distribution element of the proposed use by Wincanton. However, the storage use would fall under Use Class B8 and that use class is entitled 'storage and distribution' within the Use Classes Order. It therefore would not require a separate planning application. It is also the case that the permission would not be personal to Wincanton and that they are only a potential end user. The temporary planning permission would be attached to the land, not a specific operator. Whilst the information in the noise report and transport statement are based on Wincanton's operations, the conditions recommended would apply to any end user.
38. A number of the representations received make comments on the extent of public consultation which was undertaken by the District Council. Notices were displayed on site, the neighbouring property adjacent to the site entrance was sent a written notification and in addition an advert was placed in the press. This meets the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and the Council's responsibilities. All of the neighbouring Parish Councils were consulted for the required 21 days, although it is acknowledged that these consultations were sent out later than should have been the case.

Conclusion

39. The proposed development would be located on a brownfield site which has approved uses for container storage on other parts of the wider site. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed use would be on a larger scale than those existing container storage uses, the section of the runway that is the subject of this application is significantly further into the site and less visible from public views than those existing storage locations. The amended proposal has created significant areas at the northern and southern ends of the site where the storage would be restricted in height to 6 metres, reducing the visual impact of the development in the sensitive viewpoints from Broadway and ensuring a substantial separation distance between the higher storage areas and the northern boundary of the site.
40. The Local Highway Authority have raised no objections to the proposals following the submission of the Transport Statement and it is considered that a condition limiting the number of vehicle movements associated with the use to the level suggested (i.e. 12 per hour) would limit the scale of the operation to an acceptable degree. Subject to the mitigation measures contained within the noise assessment being attached as conditions of a planning permission, it is considered that an unreasonable impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents would be avoided, through the restriction on the hours of HGV movements and the installation of sound reducing measures at the entrance to the site.
41. Following the above assessment, it is considered that the amended proposals accord with the relevant local and national planning policies and there are no material planning considerations that would justify a refusal.

Recommendation

42. Officers recommend that the Planning Committee approves the application subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

- (a) Time limit to implement
- (b) Approved plans
- (c) Temporary planning permission – 2 years
- (d) Limits on height of storage as indicated on approved site plan
- (e) Restriction on number of two way movements – 12 per hour
- (f) Restriction on hours of HGV access and egress – not outside the hours of 06:15 and 19:15
- (g) Noise mitigation measures as detailed in Noise Assessment
- (h) Details of location and design of the acoustic attenuation barrier
- (i) Details of lighting scheme to be agreed
- (j) Details of the location of the car parking area and cycle storage for employees within the site

Background Papers:

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents
- South Cambridge Local Plan Submission 2014
- Planning File Reference S/0499/15/FL

Report Author:

David Thompson
Telephone Number:

Principal Planning Officer
01954 713250