

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	Full Planning Committee - 01/02/2011	Item No: 5.3
Report Originator	Michael Boniface Development Officer	Application No: KET/2010/0710
Wards Affected	Queen Eleanor and Buccleuch	
Location	Newton Road (North of) / Rockingham Road (East of), Kettering	
Proposal	Full Application: Central grain storage facility and ancillary works including drainage proposals, landscaping and highway improvements	
Applicant	Camgrain Stores Ltd	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To describe the above proposals
- To identify and report on the issues arising from it
- To state a recommendation on the application

2. RECOMMENDATION

THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MANAGER RECOMMENDS that this application be APPROVED, subject to a S.106 OBLIGATION being entered into, and to the following conditions:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. No development shall commence on site until details of the types and colours of all external facing and roofing materials to be used, together with samples, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

3. No development shall take place until a plan prepared to a scale of not less than 1:1000 showing details of existing and intended final ground and finished floor levels has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To preserve the character of the area in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

4. There shall be no external illumination on the site at any time other than in

accordance with a detailed scheme which shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

5. The landscaping scheme shall be fully implemented in accordance with drawing 1358.05 and the landscape mitigation proposed in section 9 of the submitted Landscape Report received by the Local Planning Authority 22nd October 2010. The scheme shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner. Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: To improve the appearance of the site and provide appropriate visual screening in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

6. No development shall take place on site until a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

REASON: To ensure that due regard is paid to the continuing enhancement and maintenance of amenity afforded by landscape features and nature conservation in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

7. A management plan for enhancement and creation of biodiversity, including long-term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the first occupation of the development. The management plan shall include measures for the management and maintenance of the on-site balancing pond/nature area. The management plan shall be carried out as approved.

REASON: To protect and enhance ecological interests in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and PPS9.

8. No development shall take place other than in accordance with the recommendations specified in section 5 of the submitted 'Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Ecological Risk Appraisal Report' (October 2010).

REASON: To protect and enhance ecological interests in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and the principles contained within PPS9.

9. No development shall take place other than in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment '1214/FRA' dated October 2010 and the subsequent addendum 1214/FRA dated 10th December 2010.

REASON: To prevent the risk of flooding in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and the principles contained within PPS25.

10. No development shall take place until a surface water drainage scheme (including details for provision, implementation, ownership and maintenance) for the

site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of any dwelling hereby approved.

REASON: To prevent an increased risk of flooding or water contamination to the site and surrounding area in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and the principles contained within PPS25.

11. No development shall take place other than in accordance with the submitted Noise Assessment Report dated 6th October 2010 and the addendum information dated 17th December 2010.

REASON: To protect the amenity of neighbouring properties in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

12. No development shall take place until a scheme demonstrating how the development will be compliant with a BREEAM/Eco-building assessment rating of at least 'very good' has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with these approved details.

REASON: In the interests of tackling climate change and creating a sustainable development which meets standards for energy efficiency, water efficiency and sustainable construction in accordance with PPS 1, PPS Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS 1, Policies 2, 32 and 39 East Midlands Regional Plan (2005) Strategic Policy 3 of the Milton Keynes-South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (2005) and Policy 14 (a) of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (2008).

13. Prior to commencement of development, a low or zero carbon (LZC) Feasibility Study to establish the most appropriate LZC energy source for the development in order to achieve a target of at least 30% of the demand for energy shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The study shall cover as a minimum; energy generated by LZC source per year, payback, land use, noise, whole life cost impact of potential specification in terms of carbon emissions, any available grants, all technologies appropriate to the site, energy demand of the development, reasons for excluding other technologies. If the 30% target cannot be met the study must include a technical and economic viability assessment to justify any lower percentage. Any revisions to the study shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the findings of the approved feasibility study.

REASON: In the interest of tackling climate change, reducing carbon emissions and creating a sustainable development in accordance with PPS 1, PPS Planning and Climate Change Supplement to PPS 1, PPS 22, Policy 1, 2 and 39 East Midlands Regional Plan (2009) and Policy 14 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (2008).

14. No development shall take place until full engineering, drainage, street lighting (where applicable), road markings, signage and constructional details of all off-site highway works including the site access junction, pedestrian access improvements to the bus stops on the A6003, improvements/widening of Newton Road, and highway improvements to the A6003 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented in full prior to occupation of the development.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

15. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied, or the use commence, whichever is the sooner until the existing access from the site to Newton Road has been permanently closed in accordance with details which shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

16. No development shall take place on site until details of measures to be taken to prevent spoil or mud being deposited on the public highway from vehicles leaving the site during the construction works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved measures shall be fully implemented before the development commences and retained for the duration of the construction period.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

Notes (if any) :-

- This planning permission is subject to "pre-commencement" conditions which require details/drawings to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before ANY development may lawfully commence. Any development commenced in breach of these "pre-commencement" conditions will be unauthorised, a breach of planning control, and liable to immediate Enforcement and Stop Notice action.

Justification for Granting Planning Permission

The proposal conflicts with national and local policies as set out in Planning Policy Statements 1, 4 and 7, Policies 1 and 9 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and Policy 7 of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough to the extent that development is to be dissuaded in open countryside. However, the proposal is otherwise in accordance with national and local policies as set out in Planning Policy Statements/Guidance Notes 1, 4, 7, 9, 13, 23, 24 and 25, Policies 3, 11, 18, 20, 21, 24, 39, 43, 55, MKSM SRS Northamptonshire 1 and MKSM SRS Northamptonshire 4 of The East Midlands Regional Plan, and Policies 1, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 14 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy. The proposal is also in accordance with adopted Supplementary Planning Document 'Sustainable Design (February 2009). The development would increase productivity within the local agricultural sector, provide 22 jobs to the benefit of the local economy and meet a local need for grain processing and storage in a sustainable manner. The proposed site is considered appropriate for the scale and nature of the development and provides opportunities for effective screening and landscaping in order to minimise the adverse visual impacts of the scheme and detriment to the character of the countryside. The development is also in broad accordance with other national and local planning policies as set out above. These material considerations are considered to outweigh the policy presumption

against development in the open countryside in this instance and these extraordinary circumstances indicate that planning permission should be granted in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Officers Report

3.0 Information

Relevant Planning History

KET/2010/0074 – Screening Request: New grain store facility and ancillary works – EIA REQUIRED 22/02/2010. APPEAL DECISION: NO EIA REQUIRED 30/03/2010

KET/1988/1388 – Renewal of consent KE/82/355C for infilling of old ironstone workings with inert materials – APPROVED 27/09/1987

Site Description

Officer's site inspection was carried out on 12/11/2010.

The site covers an area of 20.34Ha and is located in open countryside to the north of Newton Road, close to Rockingham Road (A6003) which stands to the West. Dense woodland planting adjoins the site to the East and beyond Newton Road to the South. The village of Newton stands beyond the wooded area to the East. A small group of cottages known as Storefield Cottages stand to the West between the site and the A6003. Beyond the Northern site boundary is largely undeveloped open countryside. The land is undulated although a general incline can be noted from Newton Road in a Northerly direction.

Proposed Development

Central grain storage facility and ancillary works including drainage proposals, landscaping and highway improvements. The facility proposed the following buildings and infrastructure:

- An intake facility
- 3 screening bins
- A plant house
- 12 holding bins
- 10 bulk outloading bins
- Driers
- Electrical power distribution compound
- Fuel tanks
- Quality control centre including laboratory
- Rest room

The facility would be capable of accommodating 90,000 tonnes of grain.

Any Constraints Affecting The Site

- Open Countryside
- County Wildlife Site adjacent
- SSSI to the south (Ise River)

Consultation and Customer Impact

Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley Parish Council

Support the application subject to the Parish Council being witnesses to the signed agreement and steps being taken to prevent lorries accessing the site via Newton Road. A physical barrier should be installed at the site access to prevent left turns towards Newton.

Rushton Parish Council

Objection for the following reasons:

- The access to the site from the A6003 is poor/dangerous
- Unwelcome industrial development in Ise corridor
- Previous site south of Grange Road was better concealed
- How will proposal fit with proposed by-pass road
- Newton Road is not wide enough for two passing grain transporters

East Northamptonshire Council

No objection.

Borough Council of Wellingborough

No objection.

Corby Borough Council

No objection.

Highway Agency

No objection.

Highway Authority

No objection provided the LPA are satisfied that the proposed routing agreement is practical, reasonable, enforceable and legal, and that appropriate conditions are attached to secure the proposed off-site highways improvements and junction works. A construction management plan should also be secured.

Natural England

No objection. The submitted ecological assessment identifies a breeding colony of Great Crested Newts within the adjacent Newton Old Railway & Pit Local Wildlife Site and suitable terrestrial habitat was found to be located along the boundaries of the site. The presence of Great Crested Newts cannot therefore be ruled out. The ecologist has identified suitable procedures which should be incorporated into a method statement and secured by condition.

The Wildlife Trust

The submitted ecological assessment is acknowledged and the broad scope and content are accepted. That said, the single site visit undertaken is considered less than optimal for surveying. The recommendations made in section 5 of the ecological assessment should be secured by condition. A

method statement should be secured for protection of Great Crested Newts. It would appear that the site may have accommodated grass land in the past and DEFRA's EIA (Agriculture) 2006 Regulations may have applied in clearance of this area. An ecological management plan would benefit the site along with a landscaping plan. The site stands within a strategic Green Infrastructure corridor and ecological enhancements and connectivity should therefore be incorporated within the scheme.

Northants Bat Group

No objection.

North Northants Badger Group

No objection.

Northamptonshire Police

No objection.

JPU Energy Advisor

Generally it is accepted that the new processing facility will be more energy efficient than a number of smaller, older facilities. Energy consumption has been predicted with reference to similar facilities and it is proposed that rapeseed oil diesel engine will be used to achieve a 30% reduction in CO2 emissions, with a backup generator that will be used to supplement availability from the local network. The policy requirement for a scheme of this size would be to achieve 30% of the energy demand from renewable sources, which is different to achieving a CO2 reduction. Regardless of this, the principles have been appropriately considered and a condition should be used to secure the proposed measures.

Government Office for the East Midlands

No objection.

Environmental Health

The submitted noise assessment is accepted and should be secured by condition. A further noise assessment should be carried out post completion so as to verify the effectiveness of the mitigation measures proposed.

Environment Agency

No objection. It is considered that the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and addendum has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of PPS25 and the assessment is appropriate in terms of scale and nature. Conditions should be used to secure a scheme of surface water drainage for the site and to prevent infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground.

NCC Archaeology

No objection.

National Grid

No objection.

Anglian Water

No objection.

Neighbours

6 letters of objection for the following reasons:

- Traffic
- Highway safety and inappropriate highway network
- Light pollution
- Noise and disturbance
- Dust
- Odour
- Visual impact and amenity
- Impact on wildlife
- Increase of seagulls, rooks and pigeons
- Construction noise
- Invasion of privacy due to size of facility
- Design and height of silos
- Impact on the value of adjacent properties
- Loss of green space

19 letters of support for the following reasons:

- Current storage and drying facilities (at individual farms) are out of date, inefficient and in need of replacement
- Central grain storage is more efficient and cost effective
- Currently have to use central storage facilities in Cambridge, and grain is often then brought back to Northamptonshire
- East Midlands facility would be much closer and more sustainable
- High-tech efficient facilities reduce wastage
- Allows modern standards to be met
- Smaller grain storage facilities cannot cope with the current demand, particularly at peak harvest time
- Would be a boost for the local economy
- Allows traceability and provenance to be easily identified
- Local availability of quality produce avoids the need for importation from other areas and abroad
- Helps prevent climate change
- Reduction in the supply chains carbon footprint
- Brings certainty to the market that produce will be available and high quality
- The facilities required to grade crops, and ensure that current and future food hygiene levels are met are not viable on an individual basis
- Provides excellent connections to the marketplace improving sales
- Expansion of a similar facility in Cambridge was part funded by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) which demonstrates endorsement of these important facilities
- Ability to grow more high quality crops

5.0 Planning Policy

National Policies

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS4 – Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPG13 – Transport
PPS23 – Planning and Pollution Control
PPG24 – Planning and Noise
PPS25 – Development and Flood Risk

Development Plan Policies

East Midlands Regional Plan

2 – Promoting Better Design
3 – Distribution of Development
11 – Development in the Southern Sub-area
18 – Regional Priorities for the Economy
20 – Regional Priorities for Employment Land
21 – Strategic Distribution
24 – Regional Priorities for Rural Diversification
39 – Regional Priorities for Energy Reduction and Efficiency
43 – Regional Transport Objectives
55 – Implementation of the Regional Freight Strategy
MKSM SRS Northamptonshire 1
MKSM SRS Northamptonshire 4

North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy

1 – Strengthening the Network of Settlements
5 – Green Infrastructure
8 – Delivering Economic Prosperity
9 – Distribution and Location of Development
11 – Distribution of Jobs
13 – General Sustainable Development Principles
14 – Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Construction

Local Plan

7 – Environment: Protection of the Open Countryside

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design SPD (February 2009)

6.0 Financial/Resource Implications

None

7.0 Planning Considerations

The key issues for consideration in this application are:-

1. Principle of Development;
2. Design, Appearance and Landscape Impact;
3. Residential Amenity;
4. Environmental Matters;
5. Highways and Parking;
6. Sustainable Design and Construction;
7. Crime and Disorder;
8. Ecology;
9. Flooding and Drainage.

1. Principle of Development

The application proposes a strategic grain storage facility which it is envisaged would serve the East Midlands region. The facility would provide rapid intake, drying and secure storage for combinable crops, along with grading and ultra cleaning facilities. It is proposed that the facility would provide high quality ingredients for use by the local food and drinks industry. A similar facility exists in Cambridgeshire and comments received in response to this application suggest that many customers from the North Northamptonshire area are currently making effective use of this facility. The applicant suggests that grain from local farms is currently being transported to the Cambridgeshire facility for processing, before being returned to millers and other businesses linked to the food and drink industry in North Northamptonshire. Clearly this does not represent a sustainable long term prospect and the proposed development therefore seeks to meet this identified local need. Some weight can be placed upon this argument although it must be recognised that contracts have not been secured for custom within the vicinity of the site and the end users cannot therefore be ascertained at the current time.

The supporting information submitted explains that demands within the agricultural industry and food sectors have changed significantly over the past few decades. In the past, manufacturers were prepared to buy commodity grade cereals and carry out the first storage preparation themselves, however it is now expected that cereals are provided as ingredients prior to delivery. This is particularly the case for large scale consumers such as supermarkets who apply the most stringent standards to the ingredients purchased. It is now often an expectation that ingredients are provided with full guarantees as to origin, purity and freedom from harmful mycotoxins. Such requirements place significant pressures on the agricultural industry and can be very costly to implement. It is these pressures and requirements that have led to the concept of central grain storage, whereby local farms can join a cooperative central facility meaning that crops can be collected and processed promptly following harvest, and then stored until supplied to consumers. In addition, central processing allows access to the retail market, who can be confident that the products will meet the rigorous quality requirements and be available throughout the year.

Details of a number of similar facilities to that now proposed have been

submitted and some examples are set out below:

- Arable Crop Storage, Stratford Upon Avon
- Camgrain, Linton, South Cambridgeshire
- Cannington Grain, Somerset
- Camgrain APC, South Cambridgeshire
- Coastal Grain, Northumberland
- Fengrain, Wimblington, North Cambridgeshire
- Kernow Grain, Cornwall
- Hampshire Grain, Hampshire
- Wiltshire Grain, Wiltshire
- Weald Granary, Kent

No facility currently exists within the East Midlands region and this development therefore seeks to fill this gap in the market.

The proposed development is therefore relatively unusual, and as such there is no specific policy guidance relating to the provision of central grain storage facilities. That being said, PPS7 recognises the important and varied roles of agriculture and states “Planning policies in RSS and LDDs should recognise these roles and support development proposals that will enable farming and farmers to:

- Become more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly;
- Adapt to new and changing markets;
- Comply with changing legislation and associated guidance;
- Diversify into new agricultural opportunities (e.g. renewable energy crops); or
- Broaden their operations to ‘add value’ to their primary produce.”

The proposed development is considered to accord with many of these principles allowing local farmers to become more competitive through reduced costs, adapt to a changing market, meet legislative and market requirements in relation to food hygiene and quality and broaden their operations to ‘add value’.

While there is therefore broad support for agricultural development in national planning policy, it is questionable whether the proposed development can truly be classified as an agricultural operation. No agricultural activity would in fact take place within the site and the facility would simply be used for the processing and storage of grain. The produce would be brought to the site by lorry, processed, stored and then distributed to local millers and other consumers. It is therefore considered that the development is better characterised as a storage and distribution use (B8). The application should therefore be considered on this basis although it is accepted that that the use is strongly linked to the agricultural sector and that the development would be likely to support the above objectives laid out in PSS7.

PPS4 sets out national guidance on uses which contribute to economic development; for planning purposes this covers all ‘B’ Use Classes, public and community uses and main town centre uses. The PPS is also applicable to any development which provides employment opportunities, generates wealth, or produces or generates an economic output or product. The proposed

development is clearly therefore 'economic development' which must be considered against policies within PPS4.

The governments overarching objective is sustainable economic growth and development proposals which contribute towards these aims should be viewed favourably. The proposal is not a main town centre use as defined by PPS4 and clearly the scale and nature of the development are such that a town centre location would not be inappropriate. As such, those policies relating to town centres with PPS4 are not applicable to this scheme.

Policy EC6 (Planning for Economic Development in Rural Areas) states "Local Planning Authorities should ensure that the countryside is protected for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and to ensure that it may be enjoyed by all" (EC6.1). It also suggests that Local Planning Authorities should "strictly control economic development in open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development in development plans" (EC6.2.a). Saved policy 7 of the Local Plan supports this stance, suggesting that development will not be allowed in open countryside unless provided for elsewhere in the plan; as discussed above, there are no policies directly relating to central grain storage facilities. There is therefore a clear emphasis on protection of open countryside.

Most development should be located in or on the edge of existing settlements where employment, housing and other facilities can be provided close together. Policy 9 of the CSS supports this stance, requiring that development is distributed to strengthen the network of settlements in accordance with policy 1 which designates Kettering as a Growth Town, a focus for new development. Although the site in question is some distance outside of the town boundary, it is located adjacent to a primary road between Kettering and Corby, and relatively close to North Kettering Business Park. The A6003 also provides an established bus route to the town. The policy guidance above states that development should be located within or on the edge of existing settlements and it can therefore be argued that the development should be located adjacent to the industrial estate or elsewhere on the edge of an existing settlement. The applicant has submitted information however which suggests that the scheme is not compatible with such uses, given the noise and dust created by the drying and processing operations, and the need for a large supply of clean air which is free from contaminants that could taint produce; this cannot be guaranteed on an industrial estate where a range of industrial uses can potentially operate. The applicant must consider impacts on neighbouring properties when considering a potential site and clearly the scheme will not be viable where neighbours are likely to raise concerns in the future that could lead to the site being shut down under Environmental legislation. The development will involve significant expenditure and the applicant must have certainty that the future operations will not be impacted in this manner.

The above policies seek to protect the character and appearance of the countryside and promote more sustainable patterns of development and

schemes would normally be dissuaded in the current location on these grounds. Having considered the unique circumstances of this development however, it is clearly the case that the development would not be suitable within or adjacent to an existing settlement. A demand exists for such a facility as demonstrated by the numerous letters of support and the applicant's intention to invest significant expenditure on the required infrastructure. A location within open countryside is likely to provide the only viable option for such a facility and it is considered that the specific characteristics of the proposed development along with the likely benefits in terms of employment, increased productivity within the agricultural sector, provision of local ingredients that would be likely to anchor and attract the food and drinks industry, along with minimisation of visual impact outweigh the policy presumption against development in open countryside in this instance.

The visual impact of the development on the character of the open countryside is considered in more detail below, however the site the subject of this application is well screened to East and South by woodland, and it is proposed that bunds and tree planting would provide effective screening to other boundaries. The site would also be seen in the context of the adjacent A6003 and a run of electricity pylons which present a somewhat industrial and utilitarian appearance to the West site boundary. It is suggested that this site would allow the development to be sensitively integrated into the landscape although it is accepted that it would not be possible to screen these large structures entirely. Effective screening and integration is far less likely to be achievable on the edge of a settlement given the scale of the buildings and the site area required. It is therefore likely that a facility of the edge of a settlement will be far more prominent and visually intrusive than the site in question.

As discussed, development is usually required to be located on the edge of existing settlements to make use of existing facilities and infrastructure and to prevent reliance of private motor vehicles. The applicant has suggested that the site will generate other sustainability benefits in that individual farms will not need to operate drying fans and equipment which consume large amounts of energy, and individual farms will not need to transport grain to suppliers. In addition, the large number of farms currently using the Cambridgeshire facility would be able to make use of a more local site.

It is noted that objective 7 of the CSS seeks to build a more diverse, dynamic and self reliant economy, which is not overly dependent on commuting, through provision of the workplaces, jobs and skills necessary in the local area. CSS Policies 8 (Delivering Economic Prosperity) and 11 (Distribution of Jobs) are the key policy drivers in delivering objective 7. Policy 8 sets an ambitious growth target for North Northamptonshire of 47,400 net increase in jobs over the plan period to 2021 (16,200 for Kettering Borough). Paragraph 3.72 states that as well as securing sufficient jobs, the plan aims to diversify the economy into higher value-added activities (that generate wealth and higher paid jobs); this will allow a shift away from the recent reliance on strategic distribution development, although this remains a growth sector and will continue to be important to the North Northamptonshire economy.

It is also acknowledged that the Kettering Borough Employment Land Requirement LDF Background paper (July 2008) suggests the following needs for employment provision:

Summary of Employment Land Area required in Kettering Borough in the period 2008 - 2021	
Use Class	Land Required
B1	12.66 ha
B2	12.83 ha
B8	-14.77 ha

The Borough has no requirement for additional B8 uses at present, with comparatively few B1 and B2 uses. While this is so, it is again suggested that the proposed use is somewhat unique compared with other B8 uses requiring a high level of specialist skill in the processing and testing of grain ready for sale. As discussed previously, this site is located in open countryside and would not normally be viewed favourably for commercial use. If permission were therefore granted, it would not impact upon the spatial vision to deliver more B1 and B2 uses or to diversify the economy. The site would not be suitable for these uses and any employment generated by the development would be in addition to any B1 or B2 development which comes forward. The site will however create 22 jobs which would contribute to the local economy, along with the numerous lorry drivers that would be involved in operations and this can only benefit the local economy.

Policy EC11 advises that in determining planning applications for economic development other than for main town centre uses which are not in accordance with the development plan, local planning authorities should:

- Weigh market and other economic information alongside environmental and social information;
- Take full account of any longer term benefits, as well as the costs, of development, such as job creation or improved productivity including any wider benefits to national, regional or local economies; and
- Consider whether those proposals help to meet the wider objectives of the development plan.

As discussed above, the proposed facility will serve the East Midlands region allowing a number of local farms to benefit from the reduced costs and increased efficiency of a cooperative approach. The environmental impacts are likely to be limited to visual impacts on the countryside and this can be reduced significantly through a robust landscaping scheme. Although the facility will result in significant numbers of vehicle movements, these impacts would be offset by the reduced energy usage of individual dryers and processing of grain on a site specific basis and through reduced transporting from individual farms to consumers. The development would generate 22 jobs which would contribute to the local economy as well as increasing productivity within the agricultural sector. These factors will contribute towards the objectives of the development plan in creating a strong economy and increasing jobs. It is therefore considered that the proposals accord with the above policy.

2. Design, Appearance and Landscape Impact

The proposed facility is functional and utilitarian in its appearance and has been influenced by the applicants experience in development and operation of similar central grain stores such as the Cambridgeshire example. The store would have a capacity of 90,000 tonnes and as a result, substantial buildings and silos are required. The structures present a variety of designs and heights in order to allow the grading and separation of different produce, drying and ventilation and to accommodate the necessary equipment and infrastructure.

The proposed vehicular access would meet Newton Road requiring removal of part of the existing hedgerow however the scheme proposes to minimise removal as far as possible and to reinforce the remaining hedgerow in order to fill the current gaps and increase the visual screening offered.

A two storey Quality Control Centre incorporating a weighbridge, offices and laboratory would be provided on the site access road but would be set back from the highway boundary by some 129m behind landscape bunds and tree screening; this element of the scheme would therefore be relatively inconspicuous within the landscape.

Other buildings are of course much larger. The proposed flat store takes on a warehouse like appearance with a simple rectangular plan form under a pitched roof. The building would measure 60m x 240m, with a maximum height of 22.6m. The structure would be clad with metal sheeting. The plant house would be the tallest building within the site and would stand at 34m in height in order to accommodate the necessary plant required for the facility operations. These structures would be supported by a variety of smaller silos constructed from galvanised steel. These would appear silver initially but would weather to a matt blue/grey colour over time. The intake facility, dryers, electrical power distribution compound, fuels tanks and rest room are all smaller in scale, but again present a distinctly functional appearance.

The unique nature and scale of this development is such that its appearance will inevitably appear industrial and utilitarian, however the buildings have been sited in a close group in order to concentrate the visual impacts of the scheme. It will not be possible to screen the structures in their entirety and it is accepted that an adverse visual impact will result to the character of the open countryside. While this is so, the application is accompanied by a detailed Landscape Report which seeks to minimise the adverse impacts of the scheme and integrate the development into the countryside as sensitively as possible.

The site falls within the 'Rockingham Forest' environmental character area designated within the Northamptonshire Environmental Character Assessment (ECA). More specifically, the Current Landscape Character Assessment designates the 'Wooded Clay Plateau' (7A Geddington Chase). The local landscape demonstrates some of the key characteristics of this designation such as the undulating landform and extensive woodland cover combined with arable fields. While this is so, the submitted Landscape Assessment suggests that the area lacks the historical continuity that is characteristic across much of

the landscape type. The woodlands around the site are not remnants of the Royal Hunting Forest of Rockingham described within the ECA and the landscape pattern is not evocative of the area's landscape history.

The area presents undulating landscape on the northern edge of the Ise Valley characterised by medium to large arable fields bounded by clipped hedgerows. There are substantial blocks of broadleaf woodland but hedgerow trees tend to be infrequent. The area was subjected to extensive ironstone quarrying during the early 20th century and evidence of that industrial past can still be seen in the local landscape. Much of the current landscape is of recent origin, following the progressive restoration of several ironstone quarries. The site and surrounding landscape are not therefore a good example of the 'Wooded Clay Plateau' character area. The site is not subject to any statutory landscape designation and a number of discordant features exist in the local landscape that has eroded the rural quality of the area including the nearby pylons, railway line and the A6003.

The site is well contained visually to the south and east by existing established woodland. To the west, views are restricted by the tree lined railway route. Although the site is more open to the north, distant views are restricted by the rising ground levels and intervening vegetation. The development will not be screened entirely and views will be possible from some distance away given the scale of the scheme. The submitted landscape assessment does however propose a number of mitigation techniques to reduce the visual impact of the scheme including reinforcement of the existing hedgerow, construction of landscape bunds with tree planting on top and a native landscaping scheme. These measures will significantly reduce the visual impact of the scheme although it is noted that the tree planting will take some time to become established. The mitigation measures and landscape proposals should be secured by condition. The colour and finish of the proposed buildings will of course be important and it is suggested that details are also secured by condition in these regards.

It is considered that the proposed site represents an opportunity to minimise the visual impact of the development without significant detriment to amenity. Some harm will result to the character of the open countryside however the site has been shown to have capacity for accommodating the use and the visual impact is likely to be significantly less than a similar development on the edge of a settlement. The proposed buildings are of a significant scale and are unique in their appearance, they are unlikely to be seen as compatible with other land uses and in this instance, a more isolated location with good potential for screening and landscaping opportunities is seen as the appropriate solution.

3. Residential Amenity and Environmental Matters

A Noise Assessment and addendum have been submitted to support the application which considers the potential impacts of development on the neighbouring properties from both plant noise and lorry movements. The buildings have been sited so as to screen the noisiest equipment such as the dryers and conveyors from residential properties and the flat store has been

located to the west of the site in order to provide an acoustic barrier. The nearest residential properties are Storefield Cottages, close to the A6003 and approximately 170m away from the proposed flat store. The report proposes mitigation measures to be incorporated within the scheme including the installation of silencers and enclosures. Subject to the proposed mitigation measures being secured by condition and the noise levels specified within the report being achieved, no significant adverse impact would result to residential amenity.

The proposed equipment incorporates dust filters which are sufficient to avoid detriment to residential properties. A condition should secure details of any external lighting to prevent unacceptable light pollution in the open countryside.

4. Highways and Parking

Policy 21 of the Regional Plan suggest that in allocating sites for strategic distribution uses, priority should be given to sites which can be served by rail freight, and operate as inter-modal terminals. The proposed facility will provide the strategic storage and distribution of grain within the East Midlands and the applicants have specifically chosen the site in question for its central location relative to its targeted market. The site has access to the A6003, a primary road identified within the CSS which provides good transport links to Corby and Kettering, as well as the A14. Although the site does not benefit from rail links, the nature of the development, which will largely be transporting grain from rural farms, is such that a rail link would be of limited use.

The submitted Transport Assessment asserts that the development does not generate additional traffic. The need relates to the production of food crops which are currently transported on the highway network by lorries or tractors with trailers from individual farms in any case. At worst, it is expected that no overall increase in traffic movements will result however the central facility offers potential to make a net reduction in grain transport mileage.

The applicant suggests that grain grown in Northamptonshire is currently transported to the Cambridgeshire facility for processing, storage and subsequent distribution. Often, grain is then transported back to North Northamptonshire for end users resulting in a significant number of grain miles. A number of comments have been received in response to this planning application which support this claim, including a number of large local employers within the food and drink industry.

In addition, the prompt collection of grain for drying, processing and storage at the central facility allows for large quantities of grain to be processed which might otherwise be spoiled. Where local produce can meet local market demands, there is no need for importation from elsewhere in the country or abroad. The number of tractor/trailer trips on local roads can also be significantly reduced by collecting grain from farms in large capacity (29 tonne) grain lorries thereby reducing multiple trips by smaller vehicles. The development therefore offers an opportunity for significant reductions in mileage.

Although the site is located outside of the nearest settlement and in open countryside, the site is accessible by public transport. A bus service currently operates between Kettering, Corby, Peterborough and Milton Keynes and a bus stop is located within 400m walking distance. Whilst the majority of employees are likely to visit the site using private vehicles, opportunity does exist for more sustainable modes of travel which can be further encouraged through requirement for a Travel Plan.

The Corby Link Road has been granted planning permission, and if built, would be located in close proximity to the site. Although this development is not reliant upon the link road being delivered, scope does exist to make use of it in the future. The proposed development does not interfere with the approved route and will not impact delivery.

To ensure that heavy vehicles do not travel east along Newton Road and through the village of Newton, the applicant has proposed a combination of physical constraints, signage and a heavy vehicle routing agreement. The new vehicular access has been designed to prevent left hand turns when exiting the site (through alignment) thereby forcing heavy vehicles towards the A6003. In addition, a Unilateral Undertaking has been submitted which prohibits heavy vehicles from travelling east from the site. In order to assist the enforceability of the routing agreement, the development will also provide CCTV monitoring which will be made available to the Local Planning Authority upon request. The routing agreement will also prohibit grain lorries from turning right into Newton Road from the A6003 which would require vehicles to cross the opposing lane of traffic and generate highway safety concerns. A passing place is to be installed on Newton Road to allow two heavy vehicles to pass one another and appropriate signage and road markings are also to be provided. The Highway Authority is satisfied that no highway safety issue will result, subject to the above measures being secured.

The submitted Transport Assessment provides details of the expected vehicular movements associated with the development. The movements vary significantly on a seasonal basis, impacted by the harvest season. For 10 months of the year, the peak hour flows will rarely exceed one heavy vehicle movement per hour. During the build up to the harvest season (early July), the frequency will rise to a maximum of 2 heavy vehicle movements per hour during the peak hours on the highway network. On the busiest day of the year during the peak harvest season (likely to be August), the maximum frequency will rise to 10 movements per hour. This level of traffic is expected on one day per year and it should be remembered that the year round heavy vehicle movements are significantly less.

The biggest traffic impact is expected on the A6003 however the actual impact is relatively small, estimated at 0.3% increase for the majority of the year. Even on the busiest day of the year, the increase in traffic is not expected to exceed 0.8%. The junction capacity modelling provided suggests that the development will not have a material impact on the capacity of the highway network. Furthermore, the junction modelling predicts that the site access junction to Newton Road and the proposed passing spaces will operate with

ample capacity even at peak times.

The Highway Authority has considered the submitted information and raises no objection to the proposals subject to the proposed routing agreement and conditions.

5. Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy 14 of the Core Spatial Strategy requires that development meet the highest viable standards of resource and energy efficiency and reduction in carbon emissions. Proposals for large developments should demonstrate that non-residential development will be compliant with a BREEAM/Eco-building assessment rating of at least 'very good', and that a target of at least 30% of the demand for energy will be met on site (the actual figure to depend upon technical and economic viability), and renewably and/or from a decentralised renewable or low carbon energy supply.

The application is supported by a Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency Statement which predicts the energy consumption based upon similar facilities. It is proposed that a rapeseed oil diesel engine will be used and that this will provide a 30% reduction in CO2 emissions, with a backup generator that will also be used to supplement availability within the network. A 30% reduction in emissions is not the same as securing 30% of the demand for energy through renewable sources.

It is noted that the development can achieve further sustainability enhancements in that central grain storage and processing is more energy efficient than individual facilities on farms in terms of fuel consumption and emissions. While this is so, no firm justification has been provided to support a lower provision of energy from renewable sources and a condition should therefore be used to secure additional information.

It is also noted that no reference has been made to the BREEAM/Eco-building assessment as required by condition 14 and a further condition would therefore be necessary in this regard.

6. Crime and Disorder

The applicant has provided a great deal of information regarding the proposed security measures to be incorporated within the scheme. These measures include earth bunds, gated main entrance, security personnel, alarm system and CCTV. The site is in a rural location and the potential for crime and disorder is considered to be relatively low. Northamptonshire Police has raised no objection.

7. Ecology

A county wildlife site is designated within the woodland to the east of the site and a SSSI is located to the south east adjacent to the River Ise. The application is therefore accompanied by a robust Habitat Survey and Ecological Risk Appraisal Report which considers the potential impacts to ecological interests and proposes appropriate mitigation.

The report identifies a breeding colony of Great Crested Newts within the adjacent Newton Old Railway & Pit Local Wildlife Site and suitable terrestrial habitat was found to be located along the highway boundary of the site which is defined by hedgerows. The presence of Great Crested Newts cannot therefore be ruled out however the risk is considered to be low. It is however prudent to take a precautionary approach and the report suggests a working method statement is secured to ensure that Newts are not adversely affected. In fact, following the proposed landscaping within the site there is likely to be a net gain in habitats suitable for Great Crest Newt foraging and movement. This enhancement is consistent with the principles of PPS9.

The report concludes that no significant impacts are likely to result to ecological interests given the current arable use of the site however a number of mitigation measures are proposed in order to minimise the impact of the development such as appropriate timing of the works, a watching brief for badgers and birds and tree protection. A condition should ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with these recommendations.

It should also be recognised that the site falls adjacent to the Ise Valley Sub-regional corridor. Policy 5 of the CSS suggests that development should contribute towards the establishment, enhancement or ongoing management of a series of local corridors linking with sub-regional corridors. As discussed above, the proposed development will not result in a significant impact upon ecology or biodiversity. Furthermore, the proposed landscaping scheme proposes significant areas of tree planting and hedgerow reinforcement which will improve the connectivity of the corridor and provide new habitat for wildlife. In addition, it is considered reasonable to require an ecological management plan to maximise the potential of the site.

8. Flooding and Drainage

The site is not located within a flood risk area defined by the Environment Agency however a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been provided due to the size of the development proposed. The Environment Agency is satisfied that the FRA has been carried out in accordance with PPS25 and that it is appropriate for the scale and nature of the proposed development. The report concludes that the development is not at undue risk of flooding, nor would it result in flooding elsewhere. It is however necessary to secure a surface water drainage scheme and an appropriate condition has been recommended. A further condition should also require that the development is carried out in accordance with the FRA and addendum.

Conclusion

The proposed development conflicts with policies which seek to restrict development in the countryside and avoid detrimental impact to landscape character. Whilst this is so, the unique circumstances of the proposed development are such that a location within or adjacent to an existing settlement would not be appropriate. The development would increase productivity within the local agricultural sector, provide 22 jobs to the benefit of

the local economy and meet a local need for grain processing and storage in a sustainable manner. The proposed site is considered appropriate for the scale and nature of the development and provides opportunities for effective screening and landscaping in order to minimise the adverse visual impacts of the scheme and detriment to the character of the countryside. The development is also in broad accordance with other national and local planning policies as set out above. These material considerations are considered to outweigh the policy presumption against development in the open countryside in this instance and these extraordinary circumstances indicate that planning permission should therefore be granted.

Background Papers

Title of Document:

Date:

Contact Officer:

Michael Boniface, Development Officer on 01536 534316

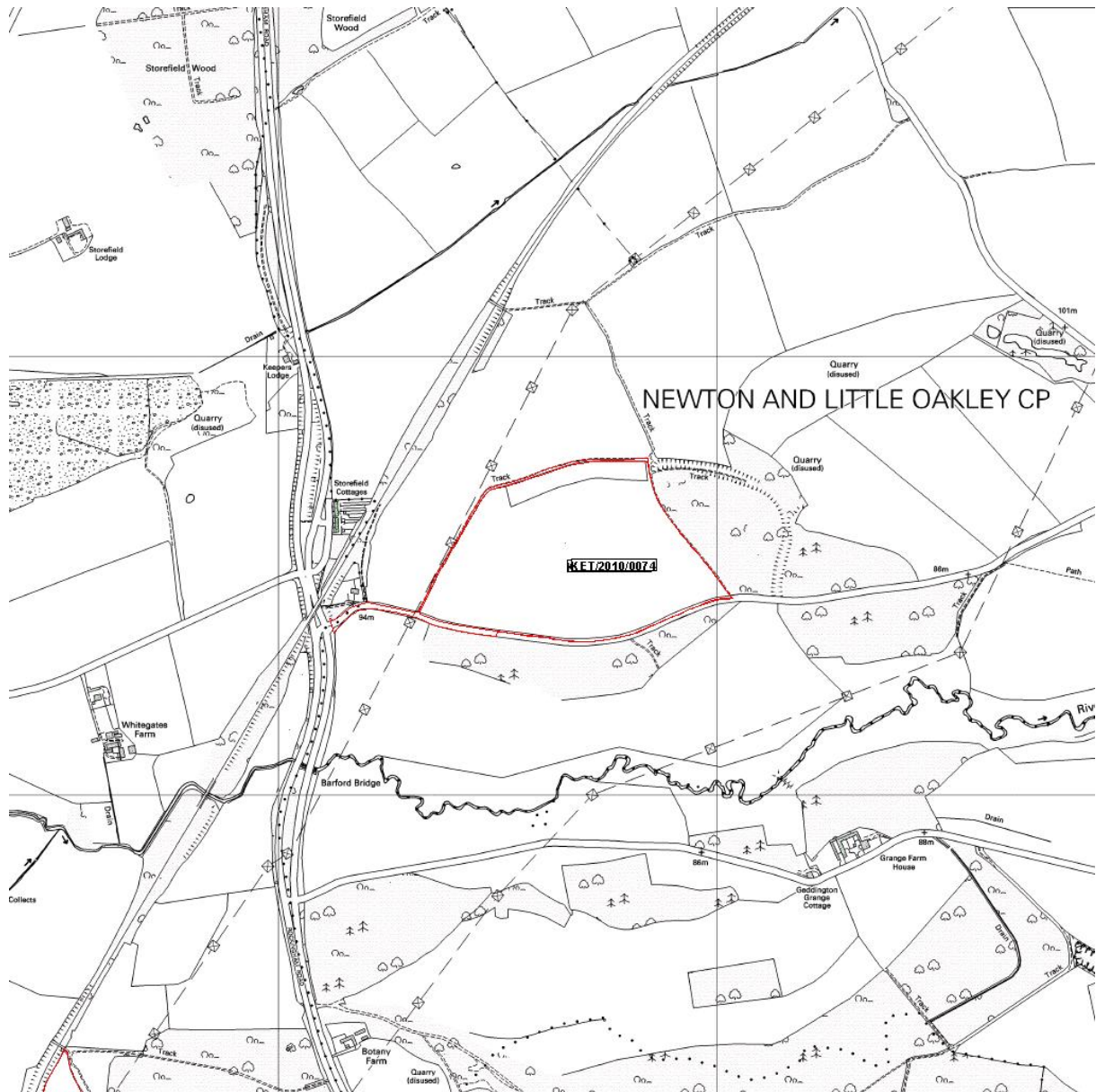
Previous Reports/Minutes

Ref:

Date:

SITE LOCATION PLAN

Newton Road (North of) / Rockingham Road (East of), Kettering
Application No.: KET/2010/0710



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