

10 DCNC2004/0107/F - PROPOSED EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING STORAGE FACILITY TO FORM BULK STORAGE AND GENERAL PURPOSE GRADING AREA AT LARKSFIELD, KIMBOLTON, HEREFORDSHIRE

For: HVR Smith & Co. per Mr. P. Dunham, Dunham Associates, 19 Townsend, Soham, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5DD

Date Received:
13th January, 2004

Ward:
Upton

Grid Ref:
53489, 61639

Expiry Date:
9th March, 2004

Local Member: Councillor J. Stone

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 Larksfield is a 37 hectare (92 acres) parcel of land which lies on the southern side of the A4112 between Kimbolton and Leysters.
- 1.2 The site lies in an Area of Great Landscape Value with the contours rising parallel to the road allowing views of the site from some distance. The nearest property to the site is Lea Bungalow which lies approximately 150 metres to the north east.
- 1.3 The proposal is to expand the potato storage facility on the site to incorporate a new bulk storage and grading building. The larger building, which measures 48m long x 24m wide, abuts the existing building and is tucked against an embankment. It is of a steel frame construction with external cladding to match the existing. The elevation facing the road, however, will be constructed on a stone plinth from materials sourced from the site.
- 1.4 It is also proposed to erect a stone retaining wall adjacent to the existing building to break up its bulk and soften its impact.
- 1.5 The second new building proposed for the site is much smaller, measuring 18m x 33m, to be used for grading the potatoes. It is proposed to construct this building in timber Yorkshire boarding with a clad roof to match the colour of the existing building. This building will be located on the south-east end of the site abutting and partly obscuring the existing and proposed building.
- 1.6 Associated with the development is the provision of additional structural landscaping around the building and adjacent farm land. This will include a small area of woodland planting which has been laid out to correspond with recommendations of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment for the area.

2. Policies

- 2.1 PPG7 – The Countryside and Rural Economy

2.2 Hereford & Worcester County Structure Plan

A3 – Agricultural Buildings

2.3 Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire)

A09 – Safeguarding the Rural Landscape

A24 – Scale and Character of Development

2.4 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Deposit Draft)

DR1 – Design

DR4 – Environment

LA2 – Landscape character and areas least resilient to change

3. Planning History

NC01/1278/F - Cold store potato building, alteration to access. Approved 7.8.01.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 Environment Agency: No objection in principle subject to the imposition of conditions regarding surface water drainage and the prevention of pollution of the water environment.

4.2 River Lugg Internal Drainage Board: The proposed development is up to 2 Km beyond Drainage Board boundary. No response was necessary.

Internal Council Advice

4.3 Head of Engineering and Transport: No objection subject to the imposition of conditions (H16, HN1).

5. Representations

5.1 Kimbolton Parish council: The Council set out a detailed response expressing their concern regarding the proposed development, which has been copied in full as Appendix 1.

5.2 Letters of representation have been made. These include:

45 letters of objection

1 petition against the development

2 letters in support

3 letters of mixed/non-committal comments.

The main areas of concern are:

Environmental

- existing building is discordant intrusion and an eyesore
- proposal is inappropriate semi-industrial site
- could be accommodated on vast industrial site in Leominster, instead of 'blot on the landscape'
- elevated position ensures negative visual impact
- Kimbolton does not need industry
- scale of building is monstrous over-development of greenfield site
- the new buildings will increase the size of the existing potato shed by over three times
- buildings should be erected further away from the road
- building will become a 'continuous working area', possible day as well as night
- fridges and potato handling machinery will produce more noise
- operating times must be controlled
- no matter how many trees are planted, can't disguise building
- proposal will ruin views even further
- the building is nowhere near where potatoes are sourced
- proposed use will introduce an industrial processing element into this open and rural location
- employment will not be increased
- workers and immigrant workers sourced from miles away
- proposal is not going to enhance our community
- given the importance of tourism to Herefordshire economy, unwise to place 'blot on the landscape' on this approach to the county

Highway

- concerned about extra traffic
- during the potato season vast numbers of vehicles travel up and down the road
- road is narrow with blind bends
- danger to children travelling by car, coach and on foot
- overnight parking of lorries and cars
- conditions needed to stop movements of potatoes through the village
- as few farmers grow potatoes locally presume will rely on importing from outside our parish
- large trailers damage hedges and fences of properties abutting the road

Drainage/Pollution

- design of existing 'sludge-door' considered incorrect
- existing door will have difficulty handling volume of water
- potential pollution from oil and diesel spills/residue making their way into York drainage system
- increased risk of flooding to nearby dwelling from surface water run-off
- no toilet facilities on site lead to use of side of shed as 'open-air' toilet
- maintenance of ditches required
- potential spread of pest and disease from waste soil and washings

5.3 In support of the proposal:

MBM, the largest potato business in the UK, states that the new storage facility will enable the applicant to continue to produce long-term stored potatoes of the highest quality.

McCain Foods also give their support to the proposal stating that they continue to encourage all dedicated suppliers to invest in their efforts to target production of this specialist market.

5.4 A letter withdrawing an earlier letter of objection was received from H and S Evans stating that their original letter was a response to an unsigned, rather irresponsible letter from another member of the village. Having met the applicant, they are now satisfied that the impact of heavy traffic in Kimbolton will be minimal and will lessen the number of vehicles travelling through the village to access the sheds on the A49. Strong efforts have also been made to ensure the sheds are as aesthetically pleasing as possible, with cladding, stonework and planting of climbers and trees.

5.5 The applicant has also written in response to letters of representation to correct inaccuracies:

- the applicant's farm business, established in the 1950s, has always been in the area
- the equivalent of 10 full-time people are employed, with 4 partners in the business
- there have never been caravans on the land to house anybody
- any noise will be reduced by having a grading shed to work in; the fan to control the temperature of the potatoes is within the store
- all lighting will be within the building
- indoor grading will keep mud and dust to a minimum
- the store will be filled in a very short period, during September and October; the potatoes will then be unloaded April to July, limiting the level of activity

5.6 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

6.1 The principal issues which relate to the determination of this application are:

- Impact on environment
- Impact on highway safety
- Impact on drainage and water course

Impact on environment

6.2 The proposed new buildings represent large-scale agricultural development in the open countryside and will be visible to both near and longer distance views. It is not, however, a form of development which would be directed to or considered appropriate for location on an industrial estate.

6.3 The Council's supplementary planning guidance on landscape Character Assessment identifies that this area could support the introduction of additional planting, in the form of small woodlands or coppices.

- 6.4 The application includes additional landscaping consistent with the character of the area. The intention is to soften and integrate the impact of the new development. It is not intended to surround the development in a block of planting, in order to ensure the existing field patterns of the area are maintained.
- 6.5 The impact of the development in terms of noise will be minimised by the siting of the cooling fans within the building and grading machinery within the new structure.
- 6.6 It is not considered that the proposed buildings will adversely affect tourism within Herefordshire. The buildings instead reflect that the area is a working agricultural landscape and supports a variety of employment and tourism opportunities. Within the agricultural holding are a number of public footpaths, whose routes will not be affected by the development.

Highway issues

- 6.7 The Transportation section has confirmed that there is no objection to the development on highway safety grounds.
- 6.8 The applicant has confirmed that the impact of heavy traffic will be minimal and will reduce the need for tractors and lorries to travel through the village from the north and east to the existing store on the A49.

Drainage/Pollution

- 6.9 The Environment Agency is satisfied, subject to the imposition of conditions, that the proposed drainage systems will be adequate to cater for the increased capacity.
- 6.10 The provision of oil interceptors will ensure that the risk of pollution is contained.
- 6.11 Waste water from washings will not contaminate arable crops but will be drained within the applicant's site.
- 6.12 The proposal will support an established farm enterprise which grows potatoes and operates within the area. Alternative sites are not suitable and concentrating the operations on a single site is considered the most appropriate and least harmful form of development.
- 6.13 The provision of the new buildings are part of a high quality production process which will meet an expanding demand for processed potato products.
- 6.14 Whilst the concerns regarding the visual impact of the development are acknowledged, the buildings have been reduced in height, with associated landscaping, design to minimise their impact.
- 6.15 It is therefore considered that subject to appropriate restrictive conditions the proposal is acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 - A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 - A09 (Amended plans)

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the amended plans.

- 3 - B10 (Details of cladding (agricultural and industrial buildings)

Reason: To minimise the visual impact of the development.

4. No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a scheme for the provision of surface and foul water drainage works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall include alternative measures for limitation of flows and details of pollution control. Such scheme shall be implemented before the first use of the development hereby approved.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding by ensuring the provision of a satisfactory means of surface water disposal and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

- 5 - F28 (No discharge of foul/contaminated drainage)

Reason: To prevent pollution of the water environment.

- 6 - F32 (Details of floodlighting/external lighting)

Reason: To safeguard local amenities.

- 7 - F48 (Details of slab levels)

Reason: In order to define the permission and ensure that the development is of a scale and height appropriate to the site.

- 8 - G04 (Landscaping scheme (general))

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

- 9 - G05 (Implementation of landscaping scheme (general))

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenities of the area.

- 10 - G06 (Scope of landscaping scheme)

Reason: In order that the local planning authority may be satisfied that the deposited scheme will meet their requirements.

11 - H16 (Parking/unloading provision - submission of details)

Reason: To minimise the likelihood of indiscriminate parking in the interests of highway safety.

12 - H21 (Wheel washing)

Reason: To ensure that the wheels of vehicles are cleaned before leaving the site in the interests of highway safety.

13 - F26 (Interception of surface water run off)

Reason: To prevent pollution of the water environment.

14 - Collection of roof water and connection via downpipes into the existing surface water drainage system shall take place upon completion of the roof structure and external cladding and prior to the buildings first being brought into use.

Reason: In the interest of proper drainage of the site and to prevent the risk of flooding.

15 - Prior to the building first being brought into use a scheme for the regular inspection and maintenance programme for the drainage system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of proper drainage of the site and to prevent the risk of flooding.

Informative:

1 - N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.