

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	Full Planning Committee - 21/09/2011	Item No: 5.3
Report Originator	Alex Jelley Development Officer	Application No: KET/2011/0230
Wards Affected	Welland	
Location	Hangar 1, Desborough Airfield, Desborough Road, Stoke Albany	
Proposal	Full Application: Agricultural storage building	
Applicant	Mr J Saunders Watson Rockingham Castle Farms,	

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 the following Condition(s):-

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. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match, in type, colour and texture those on the adjacent 'Hangar 1' building.

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

3. 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 character of the surrounding open countryside in accordance with PPS7, and Policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

4. Before the development hereby permitted is begun, a scheme demonstrating how the development will incorporate techniques of sustainable construction and energy efficiency, provision for waste reduction and recycling and provision for water efficiency and recycling shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with these approved details.

REASON: In the interests of energy efficiency and sustainable construction in

accordance with policy 14 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

5. The building shall be used only for agricultural storage and the maintenance of agricultural equipment and for no other purpose whatsoever (including any other purpose in Class B8 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 or in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

REASON: To ensure against inappropriate uses of the building in accordance with PPS7 and 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 is in accordance with national and local policies as set out in Planning Policy Statements/Guidance Notes PPS1, PPS4, PPS7, PPS9, and PPG13, Policies 1, 2, 3, 20, 24, 26, 31 and 39 of The East Midlands Regional Plan, Policies 1, 5, Policy 9, 13 and 14 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and Policy 7 of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough. The issue relating to development within the open countryside is a material planning consideration and, in reaching the decision to approve the proposal, has been carefully weighed against all relevant policy considerations.

Officers Report

3.0 Information

Relevant Planning History

KET/1986/0817 – Change of use of 3 hangars to storage – Approved
14/09/1988

KET/2007/0395 - Change of use from grain store to manufacture of concrete slab work – Refused 03/09/2007

KET/2007/1171 - From grainstore to manufacture of concrete slabwork with associated outside storage – Approved 06/03/2008

Site Description

Officer's site inspection was carried out on 22.08.2011

The application site consists of land within the Desborough Airfield site. The wider airfield is a mixture of agricultural land and concrete runways, with a number of old hangars now used as agricultural storage areas. The specific site, which lies adjacent to hangar 1, is an area of previously developed scrub land with a few immature trees on it. It lies to the north of Desborough, and to the south of Wilbarston and Stoke Albany, and is accessed to the southwest via unclassified roads.

To the northwest of the site is an area of woodland called Walter Wood, which is a Local Wildlife Trust prime site. Bowd Wood and Pipewell Wood, which are both SSSIs, are located to the west and east of the site respectively – though not directly adjacent to it.

The site is on a plateau of high land, and is almost entirely hidden from view from the public realm. A public footpath which goes around the old runway of the airfield offers the only views of it.

Proposed Development

This application seeks permission for a new agricultural building measuring 72m x 15m x 9m, adjacent to an existing agricultural building at Hangar 1, Desborough Airfield, Desborough Road, Stoke Albany.

Any Constraints Affecting the Site

Open Countryside

Public Right of Way

SSSI – Bowd Wood (to the west of the site)

SSSI – Pipewell Wood (to the east of the site)

LWT Prime Sites – Walter Wood (to the northwest of the site)

4.0 Consultation and Customer Impact

Environment Agency

No objection

Wildlife Trust

No objection

Highways Authority

No objection

Natural England

No objection

Northants Bat Group

No objection

Wilbarston Parish Council

Objection. Inappropriate to the open character of the airfield, and concerns relating to traffic issues.

Environmental Health

No objection

5.0 Planning Policy**National Policy Guidance**

PPS1. Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS4. Planning For Sustainable Economic Growth

PPS7. Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

PPS9. Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPG13. Transport

East Midlands Regional Plan

Policy 1. Regional Core Objectives

Policy 2. Promoting Better Design

Policy 3. Distribution of New Development

Policy 20. Regional Priorities for Employment Land

Policy 24. Regional Priorities for Rural Diversification

Policy 26. Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Cultural Heritage

Policy 31. Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape

Policy 39. Regional Priorities for Energy Reduction and Efficiency

North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy

Policy 1. Strengthening the Network of Settlements

Policy 5. Green Infrastructure

Policy 9. Distribution & Location of Development

Policy 13. General Sustainable Development Principles

Policy 14: Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Construction

Local Plan

Policy 7. Environment: Protection of the Open Countryside

6.0 Financial/Resource Implications

None

7.0 Planning Considerations

The key issues for consideration in this application are:-

1. Principle of Development
2. Location of Development and Extent of Farming Enterprise
3. Farming Enterprise Requirements
4. Alternative Locations/Buildings
5. Design and Environmental Impact

1. Principle of Development

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy 7 of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough states that “*planning permission for development within the open countryside will not be granted except where otherwise provided for in this [Development] plan*”. Policy 9 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) also states that new building development in the open countryside will be strictly controlled.

Policy 1 of the CSS and Policy 3 of the East Midlands Regional Plan (EMRP) both highlight that development with the rural area should be focused on previously developed land and existing buildings where possible, highlighting the importance of strengthening existing rural enterprises. This latter point is furthered via Policies 20 and 24 of the EMRP, which state that local planning authorities should treat favourably those proposals that involve a sustainable pattern of development and environmentally sound countryside management.

This approach is supported by national planning policy guidance in the form of PPS1, PPS7 and PPS4. PPS1 refers to the need to provide for improved productivity and maintain high and stable levels of economic growth and employment, while recognising that all local economies (and therefore businesses) are subject to change. It also establishes a need for local planning authorities to protect and enhance the natural environment, with a focus on the landscape and biodiversity quality.

Policy EC6 of PPS4 states that local planning authorities should strictly control economic development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, while supporting the re-use of appropriate buildings and previously developed land. Policy EC12 provides support for development that enhances the vitality and viability of rural areas and enterprises, and states that local planning authorities, when determining a planning application, may sometimes need to accept that a rural location is suitable even if it is not accessible by public transport.

PPS7 allows for the expansion of rural-based business premises in order to facilitate healthy and diverse economic activity in rural areas, particularly where this is linked to farming enterprises. Local planning authorities should, according to PPS7, enable farming and farmers to become more competitive, adapt to new and changing markets and comply with changing legislation and associated guidance.

Policy 13 of the CSS provides for development of the kind proposed, where it is in accordance with national planning policy guidance and the rest of the Development Plan, subject to specific criteria being satisfied. These criteria relate to matters of design and character, amenity, highways, environmental considerations and biodiversity. Policy 2 of the EMRP states that new development should take a design-led approach, and that there should be an efficient use of land; particularly previously developed land. Policy 31 of the EMRP states that proposals should respect the intrinsic character of the open countryside.

In summary, the policy position is that there is a need to protect the intrinsic character and appearance of the open countryside; while also supporting and encouraging the rural economy and seeking to ensure farming enterprises are able to develop appropriately. It is considered that the proposals are acceptable in principle, provided they are able to meet the detailed criteria set out within the Development Plan. The following sections will assess the various justifications put forward for the proposed building, as well as assessing the impact of the building itself.

2. Location of Development and Extent of Farming Enterprise

The applicant is Rockingham Castle Farms, which has an estate of roughly 4,000 acres located to the north and south of Wilbarston, and the west of Corby. The estate comprises approximately 2,400 acres of arable land and 400 acres of grass land. The application site lies in the middle of part of the arable land referred to above, to the south of Wilbarston. The proposed storage building would be used solely in conjunction with Rockingham Castle Farms. The central location of the site in relation to the majority of the arable land is such that vehicle movements will be kept to a minimum. Indeed, the focus for traffic generation will be on the airfield site as there are already two existing storage buildings on site. The Highways Authority was consulted on the application and has no objection to the proposals. It is considered that the central location, adjacent to existing storage facilities, means that the proposed development is in accordance with PPG13, PPS4 and Policy 13 of the CSS in relation to its impact on the highway network.

The airfield itself is a mixture of agricultural land and access tracks. The specific location, adjacent to an existing storage building, is previously developed land that appears to offer no agricultural potential due to its size and the rubble-nature of the land itself. If existing farming enterprises are to be enabled to grow, then it seems logical that the location for this development should be on land within, or adjacent to, existing building compounds. Furthermore, development on high-quality agricultural land should be avoided in favour of development on land with a relatively low yield-potential. It is

considered that the proposed location for the storage building accords with this approach.

However, the proposed location is only considered to be in accordance with the aims of the Development Plan, as set out above, so long as there is a justification for the scale of the proposed development, and that other more sustainable locations are not available.

3. Farming Enterprise Requirements

The applicant has provided information that sets out the crop production as follows:

- 5,000 tonnes of wheat (comprising 4,000 tonnes of feed wheat and 1,000 tonnes of milling wheat)
- 1,400 tonnes of oilseed rape
- 480 tonnes of beans

These figures relate to the following storage requirements:

- Feed wheat: 5,400 cubic metres (1.35 cubic metres per tonne)
- Milling wheat: 1,350 cubic metres (1.35 cubic metres per tonne)
- Oilseed rape: 2,030 cubic metres (1.45 cubic metres per tonne)
- Beans: 560 cubic metres (1.17 cubic metres per tonne)
- Fertiliser: 520 square metres (0.70 square metres per tonne at 2 bags high)

Furthermore, the estate requires space for the storage of farm machinery.

The proposed building would enable the farm to be more flexible in terms of its crop rotation through increasing storage capabilities. The applicant has submitted a detailed account of how different crops and other commodities need to be stored, which indicates that each type of grain/bean/fertilizer needs to be stored separately – something which limits the capacity of storage buildings due the concrete blocks, etc required for internal separation.

The above crop production figures are based on 570m tonnes of fertiliser being used. Current HSE guidance, which the applicant has submitted, states that ammonium nitrate fertiliser stacks should be limited to a maximum of 300 tonnes, and so the 570 tonne requirement would be split between the proposed building and existing storage facilities. It is considered that the applicant has robustly evidenced the need for storage space with regards to crops and fertilizer.

There is a viability argument relating to the farming enterprise's requirements too. The difference between buying fertiliser in August 2010 and March 2011 was approximately £100 per tonne – which equates to £570,000 based on storage requirements of 570 tonnes. To be able to buy more fertiliser in bulk while it is cheaper will clearly enable the business to run more cost-effectively. Furthermore, the additional storage space would enable the business to hold on to the crops for longer – ensuring that they are delivered to market when returns can be maximised, rather than when the market is flooded with competition.

It is considered that the applicant has clearly evidenced the need for additional storage space, and explained in detail how the proposed building will enable them to be more flexible and adopt a more cost-effective method of running the farming enterprise. As such, the application is in accordance with the aims of PPS1, PPS4, PPS7, Policy 1 of the CSS and Policies 3, 20 and 24 of the EMRP: All of which, as detailed in Section A above, establish the requirement for local planning authorities to support development that strengthens rural enterprises.

4. Alternative locations/buildings

The applicant was asked to provide evidence of existing buildings within the estate that are used for storage, or could be used for storage. Other than the two existing storage buildings on the Desborough Airfield site, one other building is currently used for storage – at Atcost Barn in Rockingham. This building is a relatively small property, with a footprint of approximately 380 square metres. Furthermore, it is located some distance from the majority of the arable land within the estate. Considering the extent of the storage requirements as set out above, as well as the close working relationship that is envisaged between the proposed building and the existing buildings on the airfield site, it is considered that no other existing buildings would offer the same benefits to the farming enterprise.

The applicant was asked to provide details of any applications for new agricultural buildings within the estate, and applications for changes of use of existing buildings from agricultural to non-agricultural uses. The last agricultural buildings erected on the estate were in the 1980s. Section 1 of this report details the planning history of the site itself. While approval was granted for the change of use of the hangars to non-agricultural uses in 1986 and again in 2007, it is clear from my site visit that these use were not implemented. The existing hangars are clearly used for the storage of grain, fertiliser and machinery related to the farming enterprise.

The proposed building would also enable the storage and occasional maintenance of farm machinery. At present these machines - tractors, combines, etc – are stored wherever there is space in any of the storage buildings on the airfield site. During my site visit they were being backed in and out of the existing buildings at different times to enable them to be moved around and used. It was clear to me that additional space would enable a better organised approach to be set up. With regards to the machines themselves, they are solely related to Rockingham Castle Farms – and the building would not host machines from other farming enterprises.

It is considered that the evidence submitted, coupled with my officer research into the planning history of the estate are such that no alternative sites exist that would be more suitable than the application site. As such, it is considered that the objectives set out within of PPS1, PPS7, PPG13 Policy 1 of the CSS and Policies 3, 20 and 24 of the EMRP with regards to ensuring that

development in the countryside takes place in the most sustainable locations are met.

5. Design and Environmental Impact

The proposed design is fairly standard for an agricultural building of this type: concrete panels to the base of the walls, with corrugated metal sheeting above this. A low ridge along the length of the building and large doors at either end to provide access for machinery etc, with smaller pedestrian doors also at either end. The materials are to match those on the existing building. The building would be subordinate to the existing building, which is considerably larger. Considering the agricultural character of the proposed building, as well as its subordinate role and proximity to the existing storage building, the proposals would be an appropriate form of development from a design and character perspective which would not adversely impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside. As such the proposed development is in line with the advice contained within PPS4, particularly Policy EC12 of that document, as well as Policies 20, 24, 26 and 31 of the EMRP, and policy 13 of the CSS.

The applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Assessment, which highlighted that the site is considered to be of very low ecological value. Though the woodland close to the site represent areas of much higher ecological value, the report concludes that there will be no likely impacts beyond those already currently present with the existing buildings on the site. Natural England, Northants Wildlife Trust and Northants Bat Group were consulted, and none have any objections to the scheme. It is therefore considered that the application is in accordance with PPS9.

Conclusion

The site is previously developed land, and of a very low agricultural quality. The benefits of the proposed building in terms of the viability and flexibility of the farming enterprise are sufficient to outweigh any minor impact the proposals might be considered to have on the character of the open countryside. The proposed development is in accordance with national and local policies in PPS4, PPS1, PPS7, Policies 3, 20 and 24 of the East Midlands Regional Plan and Policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

Background Papers

Title of Document:

Date:

Contact Officer:

Alex Jelley, Development Officer on 01536 534316

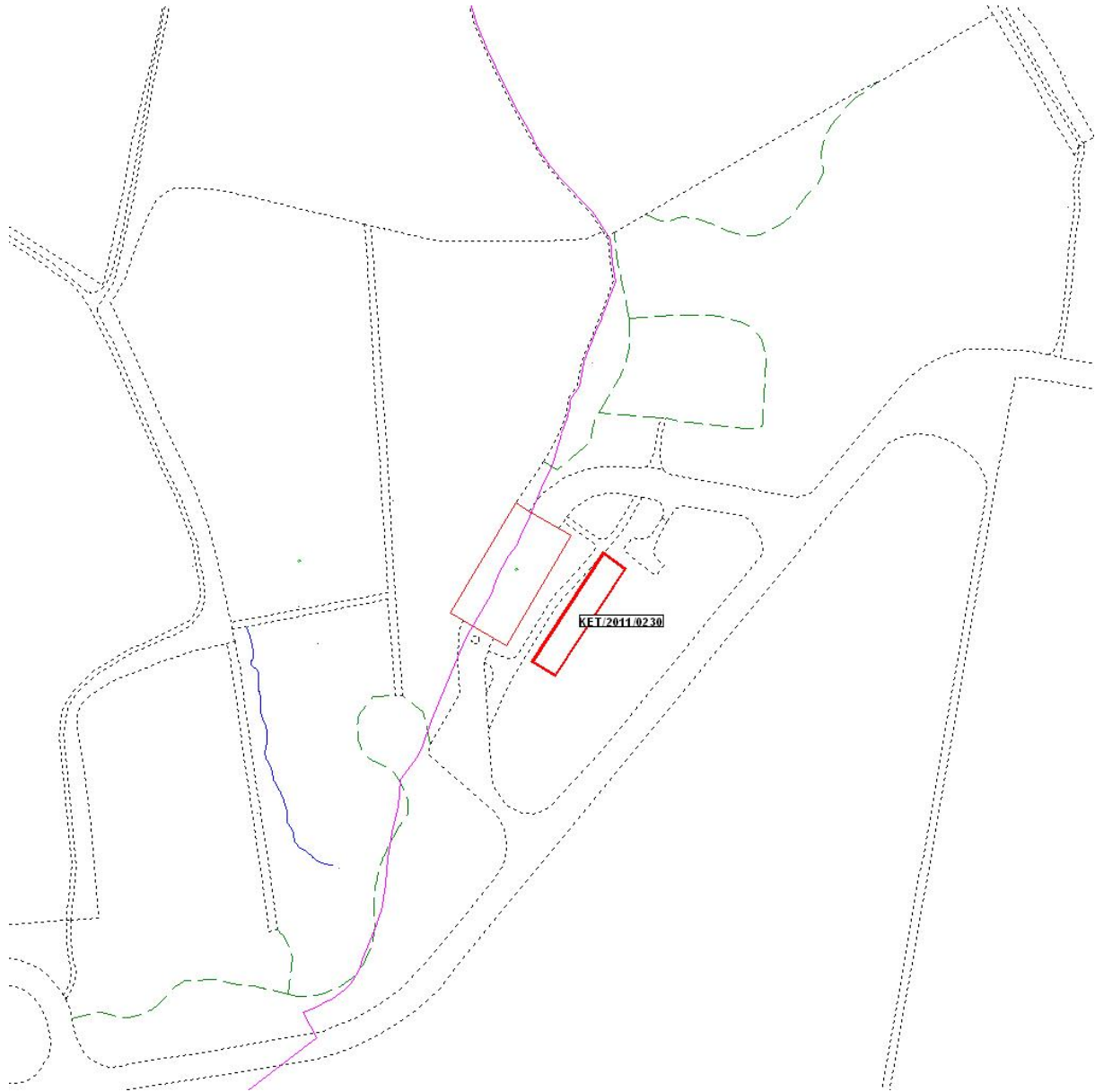
Previous Reports/Minutes

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Date:

SITE LOCATION PLAN

Hangar 1, Desborough Airfield, Desborough Road, Stoke Albany
Application No.: KET/2011/0230



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