

Item No. 18**SCHEDULE B**

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/11/01395/FULL
LOCATION	Woodlands Nurseries, Biggleswade Road, Upper Caldecote, Biggleswade, SG18 9BJ
PROPOSAL	Extension to warehouse, glasshouse, store and new office building
PARISH	Northill
WARD	Northill
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllr Mrs Turner
CASE OFFICER	Lisa Newlands
DATE REGISTERED	16 May 2011
EXPIRY DATE	15 August 2011
APPLICANT	Chessum Plants Ltd
AGENT	Fitch Butterfield
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE RECOMMENDED DECISION	Major development which is a departure from Local Plan Policy
	Full Application - Granted

Site Location:

The application site lies to the south-east of Upper Caldecote immediately to the west of the A1 and south of Biggleswade Road. The site is a large horticultural business with associated buildings located within the open countryside.

The area of the site for the proposed works is flat and comprises of horticultural land and glasshouses with ancillary buildings. The area around the site is of similar agricultural and horticultural use. There are two tree screens between the site and the A1 and these consist of a mixture of Oak, Sycamore, Cherry and Common Ash.

The site is well established and has been for many years for the production of horticultural plants in open fields and within the many glasshouses on the site. The business 'Chessum Plants Limited' are established in Upper Caldecote and operate both from this site at Woodlands Nurseries and at Briar Patch Nursery in Ickwell Road, Upper Caldecote.

The Chessum Plant business has grown considerably in recent years and it is a significant employer in the area. The business expanded with the construction of an agricultural warehouse in 2008, which allowed the business to centralise their operations and reduce plant movements to operate more efficiently. The business has grown considerably since the construction of the warehouse and it is expected to grow by 400% over the next three years. Further development is now necessary to accommodate the expansion and increase job security for local employees and provide additional employment which will assist in sustaining the local rural economy.

The Application:

Planning permission is sought for an extension to the warehouse, glasshouse, store and new office building.

It is proposed to extend the existing warehouse to enable plants which are currently held off site and delivered as required to be held on site to improve the efficiency of the business. This will result in a significant reduction in plant movements. The extended warehouse will be used for the processing and assembly of orders for distribution to stores. The proposed warehouse extension would accommodate twelve covered loading docks on the south elevation for distribution vehicles and the existing warehouse is to be extended to the south to provide a covered loading area. There are some alterations within the existing warehouse to provide secure storage with a mezzanine floor above.

New polytunnel structures are to be constructed on the north side of the existing and proposed warehouse building. These will be used for the growing of hardy nursery stock, primarily roses but with a wide range of other nursery plants. Hardstanding areas are also to be provided for the delivery and assembly of stock.

In addition to this the current staff facilities are inadequate, and with the anticipated increase in staffing levels, it is proposed to construct a new staff facility building and offices. The offices will replace the existing temporary portable buildings currently used for offices.

The access to the development will be from the new vehicle access track from Biggleswade Road as approved for planning permission reference 09/01913/FULL.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Policies (PPG & PPS)

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG13: Transport
PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control
PPG24: Planning and Noise
PPS25: Development and flood risk

Regional Spatial Strategy

East of England Plan (May 2008)

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies for Central Bedfordshire (North)

CS1: Development Strategy
CS4: Linking Communities - Accessibility and transport
CS9: Providing Jobs
CS10: Location of Employment Sites
CS11: Rural Economy and Tourism

CS16: Landscape and Woodland
DM3: High Quality Development
DM9: Providing a range of transport
DM12: Horticultural and redundant agricultural sites
DM14: Landscape and Woodland

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design in Central Bedfordshire: A guide for development

Related Planning History

MB/08/1913/FULL	Full: Proposed Access road/ track way. Granted
MB/07/01940/FULL	Full: Erection of agricultural storage building. Granted
MB/01/01258/FA	Full: Erection of rolling roof greenhouse for horticultural production and associated hardstanding. Granted
MB/01/01151/AG	Agricultural Determination: Erection of rose processing building. Further information not required

Representations: (Parish & Neighbours)

Parish/Town Council No objection

Neighbours

5 representations have been received from the following addresses: 195, 197, 205, 213, 215 Biggleswade Road Upper Caldecote raising the following concerns:

- Chessum Plants have not been the only business using this site and the access point - all HGV movements of all companies need to be taken into account;
- The business has expanded considerably and there are more than 40 HGV movements a day - clarification should be sought on the expected number of movements per day as it states that the business will increase by 400% but still only expects 40 movements per day.
- There may be a reduction in plant movements but there will be an increase in car traffic due to the increase in staff numbers;
- Clarification in terms of the proposed goods in office is required - will this be staffed? One of the main problems is that lorries turn up at all times of the night and day and there is no one to advise them where they should park.
- The need for adequate sign posting;
- Would recommend that the same conditions be applied as were imposed on the 2008 access track permission.
- A condition requiring the approved access road to be completed before the erection of any of the planned extensions.

Consultations/Publicity responses

Highways Agency Highways Public Protection	No objection No objection subject to a condition requiring the new access route to be constructed as set out in the approved planning permission prior to the occupation/use of the extension.
Environment Agency IDB	No objection - subject to conditions No objection

Determining Issues

The main considerations of the application are;

1. The principle of development
2. The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
3. The impact of the proposal on the residential amenities of any neighbouring properties
4. Highway Implications
5. Any other issues

Considerations

1. The principle of development

The application site is outside of any settlement envelope and is therefore considered to be within the open countryside where there is a presumption against new development. However, there is already an established use on the site and this application seeks to expand this use.

Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies for Central Bedfordshire (North) states that the Council will support the rural economy and that it will safeguard rural employment sites in the district, it also states that the Council will provide new small-scale employment allocations in the rural area where appropriate and there is a demand locally. The pre-text to this policy states that the rural economy is an important part of the economy in the former Mid Bedfordshire area and the East of England. The Employment Land Review survey found that 39% of the 166 employment sites which exist in the district have been converted from a non B1-B8 use, often agricultural buildings. This indicates that farm diversification has provided a significant contribution to the Mid Bedfordshire economy. In addition to this it states that further growth in new types of rural employment is therefore necessary to help maintain the rural economy, therefore continued rural diversification will help to give people greater access to a range of jobs closer to home.

Policy DM12 of the same document also states that proposals for commercial development on horticultural or redundant agricultural sites in the countryside will be approved if they are considered acceptable when considered in terms of their:

- Scale, layout and design in relation to their setting;
- Assimilation into the rural setting and impact on the surrounding countryside;

- Relationship with the road network and neighbouring rural settlements;
- Potential impact on existing local retail facilities;
- Provision of suitable vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements.

In addition to this there is an emphasis within the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies for Central Bedfordshire (North) on the creation of jobs and supporting the rural economy. Policies CS9 and CS10 recognise the importance of employment and job opportunities within the rural economy.

National Planning Guidance seeks to protect the open countryside and therefore there is a presumption against development in these areas. PPS7 whilst seeking to protect the countryside however, states that planning authorities should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas and facilitate and promote sustainable patterns of development and sustainable communities in rural areas.

It is acknowledged that the emphasis within national and local planning policy is that of protecting the open countryside with a presumption against new development. However, this application seeks to safeguard an existing employment site by providing facilities to expand the business and increase employment within the local area. The application states that the proposal will create approximately 6 new management positions, 12 new full time line worker positions and up to 120 casual positions. The business is a horticultural business which has evolved and expanded over the years. It is considered that this is an important element of the rural economy and given the close proximity to the A1 it is considered to have good accessibility to important transport links. In addition to this the proposed extension seeks to reduce plant movements and centralise their operations and therefore be more sustainable in terms of reducing vehicle movements where possible.

It is considered that given the job creation and the existing thriving business on site that the proposed extension would be acceptable in principle and would allow a more sustainable development.

2. The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area

The proposed warehouse extension would effectively double the size of the warehousing facilities on site and in conjunction with this is the proposed polytunnel area and new hardstanding and office/ staff facilities building.

The proposed warehouse extension and loading docks are proposed to be constructed in a similar manner and materials to the existing warehouse. The extension will be a steel portal frame building clad in plastisol coated profiled wall cladding, in olive green with matching roller shutter doors and personnel doors. The roof will be clad in Merlin Grey plastisol coated profiled cladding with roof lights to provide natural lighting. The height to eaves will be 6.1 metres with an overall ridge height of 8.8 metres to match the existing. It is considered that the scale and size of the building reflects the horticultural nature of the site and is in the style of a traditional farm agricultural building.

The proposed staff and office building has been designed in a similar agricultural style with the same materials as the existing warehouse building reflecting the nature of the site. The height to eaves will be 2.6 metres with an overall ridge height of 5 metres.

It is considered that although the proposal is fairly large in scale, given the design and construction materials, it would not appear out of keeping within the area. The landscaping on the eastern side of the site onto the A1 is substantial with an approximate height of 10 metres, it is considered that this will assist in screening the site from the A1.

Given the foregoing appraisal it is considered that the proposed development would not appear out of keeping within the rural area, and would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area to warrant refusal.

3. The impact of the proposal on the residential amenities of any neighbouring residential properties

There are a number of residential properties within the vicinity of the site and there have been five representations received in relation to this application. The representations received express concern regarding the number of HGV movements and clarification as to whether the approved access road will be implemented prior to the occupation of the proposed extension. They have also raised concern regarding the increase in general vehicle traffic with the number of employees increasing.

Public Protection have raised no objection to the application subject to a condition being imposed on the grant of any planning permission that the proposed access road be constructed and completed prior to the occupation of the proposed extension, to assist in directing HGV movements away from the existing access on Biggleswade Road, which involves HGV's entering the site in close proximity to a number of residential properties. The new approved access is closer to the A1 and would not be in close proximity to a large number of residential properties.

The proposed warehouse extension and associated facilities are set within the middle of the site and are some distance from any residential properties, it is therefore not considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the residential amenities of any neighbouring properties in so far as privacy, loss of light or appearing overbearing. In terms of the noise and disruption caused by HGVs it is considered that a condition requiring the new access road be implemented and completed prior to the occupation of the proposed extension facilities would overcome any concerns in relation to the access arrangements and would result in a minimal impact on the residential amenities of any neighbouring properties. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the residential amenities of any neighbouring properties to warrant refusal of the application.

4. Highway Implications

During the application process the applicant provided additional information in relation to traffic generation and the number of HGVs accessing the site, these figures were based on the traffic generation for this year up to July this year, the remainder of the year is based on last years figures plus 10%.

Accordingly for 2015 it has been estimated the development will generate 64 daily HGV movements of which it has been estimated 10%, 6 will turn left to travel through the village and 58 will turn right towards the A1. Biggleswade Road is 5.5m wide which cannot accommodate two way HGV traffic leading vehicles to mount the verge which is not satisfactory. It is therefore required to widen Biggleswade Road to 7.3m from the new access up to the A1. It is therefore necessary for a condition to be imposed on any granting of planning permission requiring this section of road to be widened.

Additional information has also been provided in terms of the car journeys to the site, Chessum Plants own a number of houses within Upper Caldecote and approximately 20 employees currently live in these houses. In addition casual staff are employed through agencies at peak time only and arrive at the site by minibus or as a minimum 5 per car.

Given the traffic generation figures it is considered necessary to impose a traffic management plan condition and a travel plan on any grant of planning permission to ensure control over the movements of HGVs and the managing car journeys to and from the site.

5. Any other issues

Whilst it is considered that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable in this instance based on the job creation and the continued use of the site for horticulture, it is not considered that a general storage and distribution use would be acceptable on this site given the amount of HGV movements and additional traffic generation this may create, therefore it is considered appropriate to grant a personal permission to Chessum Plants Limited only. This would ensure that if the site was later sold on that it would bring the use of the site under planning control.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission be granted subject to the following:

- 1 The development hereby approved shall be commenced within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which is designed to ensure that a planning permission does not continue in existence indefinitely if the development to which it relates is not carried out.

- 2 This permission shall not be exercised by any person other than Chessum Plants Limited and shall not enure for the benefit of the land.

Reason: The Local Planning Authority considers that the exceptional personal circumstances of the applicant override the planning objections which would normally compel the authority to refuse permission for the development hereby permitted.

- 3 All external works hereby permitted shall be carried out in materials to match as closely as possible in colour, type and texture, those of the existing building.

Reason: To safeguard the appearance of the completed development by ensuring that the development hereby permitted is finished externally with materials to match/complement the existing building(s) and the visual amenities of the locality.

- 4 Prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved, the new access road shown on plan number 1381/02C and approved on planning permission MB/08/01913/FULL shall be implemented and constructed in full and maintained in this form thereafter.

Reason: To protect the amenities of residential properties.

- 5 Before development commences a scheme for the widening of Biggleswade Road from the new access to the A1 shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and the approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first brought into use.

Reason: To ensure the highway is to the standard required to accommodate the development traffic in the interest of highway safety.

- 6 Before the development commences a traffic management plan which includes methods to ensure HGV traffic when leaving the site will turn right to join the A1 and ways of managing the casual labour staff travelling to the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the approved plan shall be implemented when the development is first brought into use and thereafter maintained during the duration of the development.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of highway safety.

- 7 Prior to occupation of the development hereby approved, details of a Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the recommendations of the Travel Plan shall be implemented in full within 6 months of the development being occupied. In addition, the plan should be monitored and the results of this monitoring be reviewed on an annual basis and further recommendations for improvements shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to reduce reliance on the private car.

8 Full details of both hard and soft landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include:-

- proposed finished levels or contours;
- materials to be used for any hard surfacing;
- minor structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, signs, etc);
- proposed and existing functional services above and below ground level;
- planting plans, including schedule of size, species, positions, density and times of planting;
- cultivation details including operations required to establish new planting;
- details of existing trees and hedgerows on the site, indicating those to be retained and the method of their protection during development works.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to ensure that the landscaping is carried out within a reasonable period in the interest of the visual amenities of the area.

9 The scheme approved in Condition 9 shall be carried out in accordance with a timetable previously agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Thereafter the planting shall be adequately maintained for a period of five years from the date of planting. Any of the trees or shrubs or both which die or are removed, or which become severely damaged or seriously diseased (during the said period of five years) shall be replaced with trees or shrubs or both, as the case may be, of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted and the same shall be maintained until properly established.

Reason: In order to ensure that the planting is carried out within a reasonable period in the interest of the visual amenities of the area.

10 The development permitted by this planning permission shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) dated June 2011 by Geoff Beel Consultancy and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:

1. Limiting the surface water run-off generated by the 100 year (1% AEP) critical storm so that it will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site and not increase the risk of flooding off-site.
2. Finished floor levels are set no lower than 26.60m above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

Reason:

1. To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/ disposal of surface water from the site.
2. To reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants.

- 11 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers 1381/01A; 1381/02C; 1381/03C; 1381/04D; 1381/05A; 1381/06; 1381/07; 1381/08; 1381/101381/11; 1381/12; ASC.10.383; ASC.10.384.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

Reasons for Granting

The proposed development by virtue of the existing horticultural use, the design, and siting of the proposal and the significant job creation would be acceptable in principle and would ensure the continuance of an existing rural employment site. In addition to this it is not considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, the residential amenities of any neighbouring properties or the highway network; as such the proposal is in conformity with national planning guidance PPS1, PPS7, PPG13, PPS23, PPG24 and PPS25. It is further in conformity with Policies CS4, CS9, CS11, DM3, and DM12 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies for Central Bedfordshire (North).

Notes to Applicant

1. The applicant is advised that implementation of the works in condition 5 of this permission requires the developer of the site to enter into an agreement with Central Bedfordshire Council as Highway Authority under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the satisfactory completion of the road improvements. Further details can be obtained from the Highways Development Control Group, Development Management Division, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5TQ.

DECISION

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