

ALCONBURY PARISH COUNCIL – Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18th June 2007 in the Memorial Hall

Present:

Mr. Senior (Chairman), Mrs Aylott, Mrs Adams, Mr Brown, Mrs Dyer, Mrs Elphick, Mr Hardy, Mrs Hathaway, Mrs Watkin and Mr Watson. District Councillor Keith Baker. Mrs Lancey (Clerk). 6 members of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Mrs Williams.

2. Councillors' Declaration of Interest for items on the Agenda

None recorded.

3. Planning Applications

0701697FUL – Temporary use of former runway for external storage – Alconbury Developments Limited

0701698FUL – Temporary use of hardstanding for external storage – Alconbury Developments Limited

0701699FUL – Temporary use of existing building for employment (B1,B2,B8) – Alconbury Developments Limited

Mr Watson summarised the above three planning applications. Application 0701697FUL related to the south eastern half of the runway towards Stukeley where further storage of containers was planned. Application 0701698FUL related to a further storage area around the existing containers currently visible from the gate at the top of Rusts Lane. Application 0701699FUL related to the use of 7 buildings within the site that are currently unused. B1 use means offices and light industry, B2 is manufacturing type uses and B8 means storage and distribution uses.

Transport Statement

If these applications were permitted it would mean in total an additional 171,000sqm of storage space. Added to the existing temporary permissions, this would bring the total up to 466,000sqm which is only 164,000sqm less than that which required a rail link to the site. The traffic assessment provided by the developers estimated a modest level of additional HGV and LGV vehicles at peak times, but even these modest levels equated to an additional vehicle every 45 seconds.

Ecology

Various wildlife species had been identified on the site. The developers did not consider the new proposals would adversely affect any of these species.

Landscape & Visual

The landscape assessment was based on the application for containers to be stored up to 11.6 metres high and dealt largely with views from the north and east, not from the roundabout/road at the top of Rusts Lane. No height restrictions had been placed on the original application, although the subsequent Secretary of State's decision stated that containers should be stacked no more than 10 metres high.

These applications were discussed at length by the Parish Council and it was unanimously agreed that all three applications should be refused on the grounds of adverse traffic impact, visual impact and noise impact. It was felt that further development in the area would be a genuine threat to the village. Mr Senior thanked Mr Watson for his work on behalf of the Council who were very appreciative of his knowledge and expertise. Mr Watson would prepare a report for return to HDC Planning (also attached to these minutes). The Clerk would forward this report to County Councillors Peter Brown and Laine Kadic and also Jonathan Djanogly MP. She would also request that Mr. Watson be able to speak at the next Development Control Panel meeting.

#### 4. The Bus Shelter

Mr Senior outlined the current situation. When the Parish Council had agreed to the replacement bus shelter on the village green, it was only on the understanding that the new shelter would have a seat and sides which were deemed necessary for the fundamental use of a bus shelter. Many residents in the village were bitterly disappointed with the shelter that had subsequently been erected by the Huntingdon Community Safety Partnership with no seat and no sides, affording no protection from bad weather. This new shelter had been installed in spite of e-mails received from HCSP, stating that the shelter would indeed have a seat and sides. HCSP had now informed the Parish Council that they would have to pay an additional £1150 in order for sides to be installed.

The situation was discussed at some length. It was agreed that HCSP should be allowed to proceed with the installation of the seat and sides in the shelter before additional payments by the Parish Council were discussed. In the meantime the Clerk would liaise with CALC as to the current situation. It was agreed that a working party should now proceed with all matters relating to this bus shelter and they would report back to the Parish Council as appropriate. Mrs Aylott, Mrs Dyer and Mrs Hathaway would form this working party.

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Objection of Alconbury Parish Council in respect of Applications:

1. Ref: 07/01699/FUL – Temporary Use of existing buildings for employment (B1, B2 and B8).
2. Ref: 07/01698/FUL – Temporary Use of hardstanding for external storage.
3. Ref: 07/01697/FUL – Temporary Use of the former runway for external storage.

#### 1. Traffic impact

1. The Parish council is concerned that the existing temporary permission which allows the use of the site for circa 85,000sqm of internal and 210,000sqm of external storage already has a detrimental impact on the surrounding road network, particularly the Rusts Lane / A14 interchange in morning and evening peak times. Residents already find it difficult to leave the village in the morning with lorries queuing at the Rusts Lane entrance to the base thereby blocking access to Huntingdon and the A14 for significant periods. The applications now proposed would only serve to exacerbate this situation.

2. These new temporary applications combined propose a further:  
8,500 sqm internally

36,500 sqm on the hardstanding areas  
126,000 sqm on the runway.

171,000 sqm in total

3. When added to the existing areas this gives a total of 466,000sqm on the base as a whole. The proposed 60% increase in the area currently used for storage over and above the existing situation which already causes traffic problems is proposed without any mitigation or measures to seek to reduce or minimise this additional traffic impact. The 466,000 figure is also somewhat flexible as it is understood that no height restriction was placed on the existing temporary permission for storage. Therefore the developers are utilising the area to great advantage by stacking 4 – 5 containers high in places to increase the volume which is stored. The developers traffic assessment estimates a modest level of additional HGV and LGV traffic at peak times would result from the proposals now put forward. In the morning peak it suggests an additional 83 vehicle movement between 8.00 and 9.00am. Whilst this does not sound greatly significant when put in that way this translates to an additional vehicle every 45 seconds!

4. By way of comparison, the Council will be aware that on 10 December 2003, the Secretary of State granted planning permission (your reference 97/1500) for the redevelopment of the base to provide for 630,000sqm of warehousing / storage uses. This 630,000sqm is only 164,000sqm more than the existing temporary permission plus what is now being proposed by the developer. In effect if permitted, the developer would be in a position where he will have the ability to operate 74% of the space permitted under the Secretary of States decision without the mitigation required by that permission.

5. You will be aware that when the secretary of state granted permission a number of conditions were attached that were deemed vital to mitigate the impacts of the uses on Alconbury and the surrounding road network. Those most relevant as taken from the decision letter are:

15) No building hereby permitted shall be occupied unless and until the following works have been completed:

I. Works to improve the A14/A1126 Spittals Interchange as shown on Plan No 43566/SHF/0004 Rev P6;

II. Improvements to the A14/A1 Brampton Hut Interchange as shown on Plan No 43566/SHF/0005 Rev P4; and

III. Improvements to the A14 Rusts Lane Interchange as shown on Plan No 43566/SHF/0008 Rev P2.

16) No building hereby permitted shall be occupied until a scheme for the improvement of the A141/C339 roundabout to facilitate bus priority and improve cyclist provision has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.....

17) No part of the development shall be commenced unless and until a scheme of traffic calming works to the C339 through the Stukeleys prepared generally in accordance with The Stukeleys Traffic Calming (shown on Savill Bird & Axon drawings nos 1 – 4 dated 16 November 1998) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.....

22) No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until a raillink to the

East Coast Mainline is provided in accordance with the Order made under the Transport and Works Act 1992 and associated with these proposals or such other link as may otherwise be approved by the Local Planning Authority.

24) Operational rail sidings shall be provided to a minimum of 90% of the Class B8 floorspace in the development hereby permitted .....

6. Given that the Inspector, as supported by the Secretary of State recognised that these measures were a vital requirement in allowing such large levels of B8 storage at the site, (and clearly traffic conditions have not improved since 2003), it is submitted that as the current applications propose no such measures then they can only reasonably be refused for failing to make adequate provision for the necessary road and rail improvements to mitigate the impacts of the traffic that will be generated.

## 2. Visual impact

7. The applications propose to stack containers up to four high. This is 11.6 metres or 38 feet. The Parish Council has serious concerns over the visibility of these containers given the experience with the existing situation at the base where containers are already stacked on the northern part of the runway under the benefit of the existing temporary permission. These containers are highly visible from the Rusts Lane / A14 interchange. It is understood that this permission was granted before the secretary of states decision was released and was not the subject of a height restriction condition.

8. However, the secretary of states decision as referred to above contained a condition relating to external storage stating:

48) No items shall be stored or stacked in a designated storage compound so as to exceed the height of the approved boundary treatment with the exception of the area marked "Rail freight handling" on the scheme Masterplan, where containers shall be stacked no more than 10 metres high.

9. The Secretary of State was therefore clearly of the view that any external storage except in small designated areas where 10 metres was permitted, should not exceed the height of the boundary fencing (approx 2 – 3 metres). It is submitted that the current applications should be refused due to the inappropriate visual impact that they would have on the local landscape.

## 3. Noise

10. The Parish council considers that the noise already generated by the comings and goings of vehicles, the loading and unloading of containers etc. has an adverse impact on the residents living in close proximity to the site. Clearly a significant increase in the base activity would exacerbate this situation. It is submitted that in the absence of any noise mitigation measure the application should also be refused for this reason.