

Town & Country Planning Act 1990

**Change of Use of a former agricultural storage building
at Hall Farm, West Street, West Butterwick,
to use as a warehouse for goods in transit
produced by Axxgro Foods Ltd.**

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



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Change of Use former agricultural storage building to use as a storage building in connection with an adjacent food processing factory, West Street, West Butterwick

This Design & Access Statement accompanies an application submitted to North Lincolnshire Council for planning permission to change the use of a former agricultural storage building to general storage in connection with the adjacent food processing business.

This statement is to support an application for the renewal of a temporary planning permission granted in August 2009. Discussions have taken place with the Planning Authority in order to measure the proposed development against the planning policies of the Authority and assess any potential impact of the proposal may have on the community.

1. Overview

- 1.1 The Design & Access Statement gives an assessment of the proposed change of use having regard to the provisions of the development plan and to address any relevant planning and highway issues that may arise from the proposal. It also has regard for the operational needs of the company.
- 1.2 The site is located to the south of West Street, West Butterwick. The storage unit is part of a complex of former farm buildings on the southern fringe of the village which have been established over a considerable number of years. A central concreted area, formally the crew yard, allows for adequate parking and turning facilities for both the existing storage unit and for the other uses that have been established on the site.
- 1.3 West Butterwick is a linear village comprising a ribbon of development along the two major routes that run west to east towards the River Trent and north to south along the west bank of the River Trent. The site and its buildings on the southern periphery of the village have been established over a considerable number of years and are now well assimilated into the framework of the village.
- 1.4 In June 2009, an application to retain the Change of Use of the building to B8 food storage and distribution at Hall Farm was submitted to the North Lincolnshire Council. The proposal was granted planning permission but only on a temporary basis until 18th August 2010. The reason for the imposition of this condition is *"Permission is granted on this basis in order to allow time to assess the impact of the development on the surrounding area"*.
- 1.5 Condition No. 5 of this planning permission is also relevant in this re-assessment of the use of the building in that it restricts access to the site by articulated lorries.

- 1.6 Over the past year of operation the use of the building and site by the Applicants has been closely monitored. Deliveries and collection of goods have been restricted to the hours specified in the Approval Notice; operations within the building have similarly restricted to the specified hours; and there have been no deliveries by articulated lorries, to the building operated by the Applicants.
- 1.7 Enquiries with the Planning Enforcement Team of the Council have confirmed that during the past year, there have been no complaints from local residents about the use of the building.
- 1.8 The use of the building on a short approval previously granted i.e. a year is too restrictive for effective business planning. To grant a further planning permission for the change of use for a minimum of five years, will help to retain the existing building in economic use. Equally as important, it will help to secure the operations of a local company and help support the rural economy in this part of North Lincolnshire.

2. Planning Policies

- 2.1 The current development plan for the area is the North Lincolnshire Local Plan, adopted in November 2002. In September 2007, as part of the emerging Local Development Framework policy document, certain policies were 'saved' and are still relevant.
- 2.2 In relation to the North Lincolnshire Local Plan, policies ST2, RD2, RD3 and RD6 are considered relevant to this application. Regard should also be had for Government guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.
- 2.3 In the context of the application it should be noted that the appended inset plan from the North Lincolnshire Local Plan identifies the site as lying outside the development limit and in an Area of High Landscape Value. However, policy LC10 which controlled development in such areas was not saved in the transition period leading to the LDF. Therefore the assessment of the proposed development against relevant planning policies should only be considered against the provisions of 'saved' policies.
- 2.4 Policy RD2 indicates that in open countryside development should be strictly controlled and that planning permission will only be granted in certain circumstances. Two related elements of this policy are the acceptance of employment related development appropriate to the open countryside and the re-use and adaption of existing rural buildings.
- 2.5 The policy criteria for the re-use of rural buildings are clarified in Policy RD6 of the Local Plan. This policy indicates that proposals for the re-use and/or adaption of rural buildings for industrial or commercial use will be permitted. The criteria that the

Planning Authority will assess a project in relation to this policy are : a) that the building is of substantial and permanent construction; b) there will not be a need for a new building to accommodate the displaced use; and c) the general design of the conversion is in keeping with the buildings.

- 2.6 In relation to Policy RD2 and RD6, the proposed use of the building for storage conforms to these policies. Policy RD3 – Industrial and commercial development in Minimum and Medium Growth settlements also has relevance to the re-use of the building. The policy advocates the re-use of buildings and sites for commercial and industrial use, in rural areas. One particular criterion which is relevant to this application site is that the site should be within walking or cycling distance of the local workforce. In relation to this criterion the site is located on the periphery of the village, close to the factory.
- 2.7 The Government's policy in relation to the re-use of buildings in the countryside is set out in Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas). Paragraphs 17 and 18 support the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings where this would meet sustainable development objectives. In the case of the application site the re-use of this building will result in a significant reduction of vehicle movements particularly those away from West Butterwick.

3. Use

- 3.1 Axgro Foods is a West Butterwick company that processes local grown crops for the food market. The company which currently operates from other sites in the village (School Farm and Red House Farm), provides significant employment to the local community, currently a workforce of 180 people. The company also generate around £7 million into the local economy. Due to an increased demand for their products there is a need to assess the availability of storage so that it more closely matches the output of the factory. There are insufficient storage facilities available within the School Farm site or the Red Farm site, therefore the company has through necessity, sourced alternative facilities within the village.
- 3.2 The rational for the choice of this additional site (Hall Farm) centres on the need for reducing the number of vehicle movements and maintaining a close relationship between factory and storage. By restricting vehicle movements to the confines of the village, the company can ensure a more efficient and sustainable form of development.
- 3.3 The Hall Farm complex contains a number of buildings which were previously used in connection with a large potato growing and packing business. The building the

subject of the current planning application was used for the storage of potatoes and on occasion, sugar beet. There was also grain storage and drying facilities on the site. With the previous use for storage and processing of various agricultural products, there were a considerable number of day to day traffic movements to and from the site by articulated lorries (approximately 8 each day), six-wheeled fixed chassis lorries and tractors. These vehicles brought potatoes and other crops to the site, some of which were from other farms, for storage and processing before being distributed away from the site. In addition there were small vehicles and cars associated with the running of the farm enterprise. As a result of the farm activities there was significant unrestricted movement of vehicles or the times of operation.

3.4 The proposal to continue to use the current agricultural storage building at Hall Farm will result in a significantly reduced level of vehicular movement than that of the previous use. This has been a proven fact over the past year of operation. The processing and production facility is centred on the School Farm site. When packed the goods are transported by mini tractor and trailer, to the Red House Farm site which is on the southern side of West Street, a distance of approximately 200 metres from the factory.

3.5 Because of limited on-site storage capacity, the additional facilities that are available at Hall Farm can be utilised for transit storage. The products can be moved from the factory in small loads by the current vehicle (mini tractor and trailer) to the Hall Farm site, approximately 8 movements per day. To meet specific outloading or collection to UK based customers, the products are transferred on demand to the Red House site. This arrangement ensures that in excess of 95% of outloadings from the factory take place from the Red House Farm site. The remaining surplus production stock, consisting of packed and raw produce is exported. This stock is to be held at the Hall Farm site for collection by carriers. The export stock is collected in bulk by one specific haulier using articulated lorries. The frequency of collection is a maximum of two lorries per week.

4. Appraisal of Context

4.1 The existing building is surplus to the requirements of the owners, RJ & AE Godfrey Farms. The substantial building is a sheeted steel clad portal frame structure. The concrete hardstanding to the front of the building provides for an adequate turning facility, without the necessity to reverse even the largest vehicle that attends the site. There is also a provision for the parking on the site any cars associated with the business, on the site.

- 4.2 There are no plans to alter the structure of the building neither is there are a requirement to alter the access from West Street to the site as this meets the requirements of the Highway Authority.
- 4.3 The use of the building for storage ensures the efficient re-use of a building within the confines of the village. It also helps secure the continued viability of a local company that provides significant local employment and which processes local grown crops. In doing so it significantly contributes to a sustainable development framework as advocated in the policies of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan.
- 4.4 Over many years there has been an assessment of suitable alternative locations for the food production enterprise. Sites at Sandtoft and Scunthorpe have been considered. The movement of the operation away from West Butterwick will in itself create operational difficulties for the business. Currently the processed food can be moved by a small tractor and trailer, to storage at Hall Farm, then on demand transferred to Red House Farm for despatch – a distance of around 200 metres. If the storage provision was at Sandtoft or Scunthorpe, both approximately six miles away from the factory, there will be a marked increase in traffic movements involving larger vehicles not only throughout the village but along the connecting highways also.
- 4.5 The additional burden on economics of the factory operation by moving the storage away from West Butterwick is also a consideration that must be taken into account. The extra distance associated with the movement of goods to storage away from the centre of operations; the recall of goods from distant storage; the recall of goods from a distant location for export overseas; and the marrying up of goods from different sources, all contribute to burden of additional vehicle movements and associated costs. The alternative storage options away from the factory cannot even remotely be sustainable.
- 4.6 The change of use for a significantly longer period than that given in 2009 will help the company to be more efficient. It will simplify vehicle movements between its existing production and storage facilities. The site provides for better vehicle servicing and there is the opportunity to provide car parking for staff. The capacity of the building will help the more efficient assembly of full loads of outward bound products, thereby reducing HGV vehicle movements within the village.
- 4.7 In summary, the use of an existing storage building at Hall Farm will help to secure the viability of Axgro Foods, a company that provides local employment and processes local crops. In doing so it helps reduce unnecessary journeys away from the village and brings about a more sustainable form of development. It is a sustainable local industry supporting the local rural economy.

5. Access

- 5.1 The site is situated within a complex of former farm buildings (Hall Farm) to the south of West Street, West Butterwick. The building the subject of this application was previously used for the storage and despatch of potatoes, sugar beet and grain, with the inherent uncontrolled movement of both large commercial and farm vehicles.
- 5.2 Access to the site from West Street, is along an existing private road of adequate width and construction to support the movement of HGVs. There is an adequate facility within the site to turn both HGVs and other vehicles thereby ensuring that all vehicles enter the adjacent highway in forward gear. There is a facility for the parking of employees' vehicles within the site confines. A drawing of the entrance to the site indicating the swept path of a large HGV vehicle entering the site is appended.
- 5.3 Vehicle movements to and from the site will in the main comprise of a small tractor and trailer conveying finished products between the factory and the current and proposed storage facilities. The capacity of the building will assist the assembly of full loads of outward bound products more effectively than at present thereby reducing HGV vehicle movements within the village. Operational use of the building and site over the past year has shown that there have been limited calls at the site each week by lorries; about two per week, and none by articulated vehicles. The larger vehicles are operated by a single contractor.
- 5.4 As at present, the out-loading of produce will be arranged, where possible, outside peak traffic periods. Similar operating hours to those at other Axgro Foods units would be applied.

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