

**Parish:** ACTON

**Location:** Quansboro Plastics Ltd, Acton Place Industrial Estate, Acton, CO10 0BB

**Proposal:** Erection of 2 No. B1 Units: Removal of Portacabins, Sheds and Lorry Containers

**Applicant:** Mr Laurence Wilshere

**Case Officer:** Graham Chamberlain

**Date for Determination:** 19/01/08

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**This application is reported to Development Committee as it is a departure from Local Plan Policies CR01 and EM12 and Officers are recommending approval.**

#### **THE SITE**

1. The site is a parcel of land owned by Quansboro Plastics Ltd, a company trading from the Acton Place/Bull Lane Industrial Estate. The site is located on the south western boundary of the estate. To the immediate south west is a redundant building related to Misbourne Farm; past this is open fields.
2. The Acton Place/Bull Lane Estate is an industrial estate; the area is characterised by this use which a number of functional and utilitarian buildings arranged around a spine road.
3. To the north west of the site is a residential property. Commercial units bound the site in every other direction.
4. Quansboro Plastics is not separated from the proposed location of the buildings by any physical constraint such as a fence or wall. The northern unit would be erected on what is currently derelict scrub land. The eastern building would be erected within the existing compound of Quansboro Plastics in the location of existing structures and portacabins used in conjunction with the factory.

#### **THE PROPOSAL**

5. The proposal can be split into two parts. The first part is for the erection of a B1 light industrial unit measuring 13m in width, 19m in depth and 4.7m in height. The building would be of a functional design with a simple gabled ended form with a shallow roof and wide span. The building would be finished in a light grey profiled metal with white UPVC windows. The building would be used for storage purposes with three offices a canteen and toilet. It would also house the reception. This building is located within the defined built up area boundary of Acton Place/Bull Lane Industrial Estate.
6. The second proposed unit is a smaller light industrial unit measuring 15.8m in depth, 6.9m in width and 4.5m in height. The design and finish is the same as the larger unit. This unit would be located outside of the defined industrial estate indicated in Policy EM12.

## RELEVANT HISTORY

7. B/97/00561 Siting of portacabin for use as a site office for a period of 5 years – Approved  
B/97/00593 Erection of storage building – Approved

## NATIONAL GUIDANCE

8. **PPS1:** (Delivering Sustainable Development)  
**PPS7:** (Delivering Sustainable Development in Rural Areas)

## PLANNING POLICIES

9. The Development Plan comprises the East of England Plan, adopted 2008, saved policies in the Suffolk Structure Plan, adopted 2001, and the Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No. 2) adopted 2006. The following policies are relevant to this proposal:

### **East of England Plan - 2008**

- **E2:** (Provision of Land for Employment)
- **ENV7:** (Quality in the Built Environment)

### **Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No.2) 2006**

- **CR01:** (Development in the Countryside)
- **EM01:** (General Employment )
- **EM12:** (Bull Lane/Acton Place)
- **CN01:** (Maintaining Local Distinctiveness)
- **EM20:** (Expansion of Existing Employment Uses)

**The relevant documents can be viewed via the internet. Please see Page 4 for details.**

## OBSERVATIONS

10. Acton Parish Council – No objection (asked the Council to investigate the impact of the development on two beech trees on the SE boundary)
11. Local Highway Authority – No objections subject to conditions
12. Environment Agency – No Objections (standard supplementary information has been set by the EA to the applicants agent)
13. BDC Environmental Health – No Objection
14. BDC Arboricultural Officer – Awaiting comments (Members to be updated)

## REPRESENTATIONS

15. None received

## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### Location outside the Industrial Estate

16. Policy CR01 of the Babergh District Local Plan sets out what development is acceptable in the countryside. The development listed being that which is essential to the efficient operation of agriculture, forestry or horticulture and appropriate outdoor recreation.
17. Policy EM12 defines the boundary of the Acton Place Industrial Estate allocating it as an employment site for Class B1 and B2 development. Development within the limits of the industrial estate is acceptable in principle. Consequently the larger of the two units proposed is acceptable in principle being within the limits of the industrial estate. The larger unit does not therefore conflict with the provision of Policy CR01.
18. However, the smaller unit is outside the defined industrial estate and is technically located within the countryside in planning policy terms. This unit would conflict with Policy CR01 as it is not the type of development listed within the policy as being acceptable.
19. Normally the erection of a light industrial unit (B1) in the countryside would not be supported as it would erode the countryside which should be 'protected for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and so it may be enjoyed by all.' (PPS7, Para 1). However, in this instance there are circumstances which justify a departure from the development plan and normal countryside policies.
20. These circumstances which need to be given due weight are as follows:
  - The site is located on the edge of the industrial estate abutting its boundary.
  - The site is previously developed land being part of the former farming complex of Misbourne Farm.
  - The site reads as part of the industrial estate and not open countryside; the site is not rural in character.
  - There is no physical separation between the site and Quansboro Plastics/the Industrial Estate
  - The proposed building would be seen against the backdrop of the industrial estate, it would not stand out to the detriment of the countryside
  - The proposed unit is relatively small with a ridge height of only 4.5m
  - The building is screened from the countryside by a former agricultural barn building
  - Quansboro Plastics is a local firm, the unit will enable the business to consolidate and grow providing four extra full time jobs (13 in total)
  - Policy EM20 supports the extension of existing employment sites
21. Taking these factors into account the lack of any material harm to the countryside and the growth of a local firm outweigh any harm in principle from developing outside the industrial estate.
22. This approach to this specific site would not set an undesirable precedent which could result in the industrial estate sprawling into the countryside. The circumstances of the site are very specific and would be difficult to replicate. This application has been considered on its merits. Further development into the 'open' countryside would clearly be harmful however what is proposed does not read on the ground as development in the countryside, but a consolidation of a small section of a former farm yard site into the industrial estate.

### **Design and Impact on Character**

23. The two units proposed are of a functional design which is considered to be in character with the industrial estate setting. The low profile and proposed locations would ensure that they would have minimal impact.
24. The larger unit would only be glimpsed from the spine road of the estate. The smaller unit would not be visible to anyone but the users of the building and the redundant barn at Misbourne Farm. The buildings would not be harmful or incongruous being appropriate to the context of an industrial estate.

### **Impact on Neighbour Amenities**

25. There is a single residential property to the north east of the proposed smaller unit. The Councils Environmental Health Team have assessed the impact and have no objections to the unit.
26. B1 units are considered to be acceptable in residential area (this is part of the definition of a B1 unit). The site is not located in a residential area but regard must be had to the impact on the occupants of the dwelling to the north east. The activity and noise would not be harmful and would be no greater than the adjoining units. The building would have a low profile and there would be no loss of light. The building would be visible from the residential property being approximately 2m above the intervening fence. It would to some extent box in the garden space of the dwelling but due to the distance between the building and house (c15m), the low profile of the buildings and the character of the area, there would be no harm or overbearing impact on the occupants of the house.
27. A B2 use would not be supported without being assessed due to the close proximity to the dwelling; therefore a condition has been recommended restricting the use to B1.

### **Impact on Trees**

28. Two large beech trees are located to the SE boundary of the site. The larger unit would be located within the root protection area of these trees although the trees are located outside the application site area. The applicant has undertaken an arboricultural assessment at the request of Officers. At the time of writing this report it was being considered by the Councils Arboricultural Officer; Members will be updated accordingly.

### **Highways and Parking**

29. The block plan submitted with the application shows a parking and manoeuvring area based on the existing with allocated staff parking. The Local Highway Authority has no objection to this subject to this being retained by the imposition of a condition.

### **REASONS FOR APPROVAL**

30. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies EM20 and EM01 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No. 2 (2006). The lack of any material harm to the countryside, the site specific design solution and the provision of four additional jobs outweigh the harm in principle to the countryside set out in Policy CR01 of the Babergh District Local Plan Alt 2 (2006).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That, subject to a no objection from the Councils Arboricultural Officer, the Chief Planning Control Officer be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the following conditions

- Standard time limit
- LHA condition retention of parking/manoeuvring
- Restriction of use to B1 only
- Any conditions which may be recommended by the Councils Arboricultural Officer.