

Application No.:	20/02453/F
Applicant's Name:	Certas Energy Limited and FINSCO Property Company
Proposal:	A fuel depot including ancillary offices, the installation of plant and hardstanding
Location:	Hornton Grounds Quarry, Hornton

Consultation - Economic Growth Service

Introduction

Certas Energy Limited has for some years been seeking to relocate from its site in central Banbury but this has not been a straightforward matter given the absence of alternative sites dedicated to activities of this nature. The activity is the storage and distribution of heating and other oils which are available to support the homes, workplaces and transportation requirements of local residents and businesses, including the farming community.

Principle

The resilience of energy supply is particularly important in the rural district that is beyond the mains gas network. More sustainable alternatives to oil will become commonplace as demand from local residents and businesses changes. This will lead to such energy storage & distribution sites not being needed.

However, this is not the case currently or in the foreseeable future. Demand is evident by the number of tankers delivering within this rural area – for example, by Red Horse Vale (4.5 miles further north along the A422) or by Certas travelling out from the highly populated town centre.

The principle of the need to accommodate such activity at an appropriate location is therefore clear.

Proposed Site

In considering the appropriateness of the proposed site, I note that it is previously used 'brownfield' and already identified for an employment use. Whilst the proposed use is not a conventional 'b-class' use, it would support the retention of staff and potential creation of new employment.

The environmental and operational factors associated with this proposal deserve very careful consideration by specialist consultees. From a local economic development perspective, controls should ensure that no unreasonable adverse impact is placed upon the natural landscape/ecology, or experienced by neighbouring businesses/residences – especially those located nearby such as Hornton Grounds B&B.

Conclusion

This proposal to relocate an established business and service provider would enable the existing jobs and important supply of oil for heating and transportation to be provided from a local hub away from a centre of population. The availability of alternative sites has been investigated and no suitable alternative is apparent. Therefore, to achieve the Council's aims of job creation/safeguarding and enabling business/community services, the proposed development would be beneficial - but only if appropriate environmental and operational safeguards are established and adhered to.

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