

Case No: 0900134FUL (FULL PLANNING APPLICATION)

Proposal: CHANGE OF USE AND ALTERATIONS TO BUILDINGS 1 AND 5 AND DEMOLITION AND REPLACEMENT OF BUILDINGS 2, 3 AND 4 FOR B1, B2 AND B8 USE

Location: HOUGHTON HILL FARM HOUGHTON HILL HOUGHTON

Applicant: MR T J SMITH

Grid Ref: 529546 272598

Date of Registration: 30.01.2009

Parish: HOUGHTON & WYTON

RECOMMENDATION - REFUSE

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 The site is located to the north of the A1123 and B1090 and outside the village limits of Houghton. The site is approximately 0.2kms from the edge of St Ives. The application site is set to the rear of the working farm and at present access is gained using the existing farm access. Two of the five buildings are currently occupied and have already been altered, internally and externally. The proposed new access road is also currently under construction.
- 1.2 This application seeks to rectify the existing situation on site. Previously consent was granted for a change of use of five agricultural buildings to B2 and/or B8 (general industry and storage or distribution). This application seeks the change of use and alterations of buildings 1 and 5 and demolition and replacement of buildings 2, 3 and 4 for B1, B2 and B8 use (namely business, general industry and storage and distribution use). Buildings 1 and 5 have already been converted, building 1 is occupied by a printing company, the eastern part of building 5 contains the offices for a company involved in the production and supply of self adhesive products and the western part is occupied by a company involved in the production and storage/distribution of large format printing products.
- 1.3 Buildings 2, 3 and 4 would be replaced with larger buildings and would take on a more industrial appearance, the relevant details are provided below:
- Buildings 2 currently provides approximately 600 sq metres of floor area, the replacement building would provide approximately 775 sq metres and would be approximately 6 metres in height compared to the existing building which is approximately 5 metres and would provide 5 starter units

- Buildings 3 is approximately 110 sq metres and its replacement would provide approximately 169 sq metres, the buildings would also be increased in height from approximately 7.2 metres to 8.5 metres
- Building 4 is approximately 396 sq metres and would be increased to provide approximately 553 metres. The height of the building would also be increased from approximately 5.25 metres to 7.5 metres

1.4 In addition to the above, the proposal also seeks the retention of the roadway, currently being constructed, which provides an alternative access on to Sawtry Way, car parking and additional landscaping.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

2.1 **PPS1: "Delivering Sustainable Development" (2005)** contains advice on the operation of the plan-led system.

2.2 **PPG4: "Industrial and Commercial Development and Small firms"(1992)** contains advice on the role of the planning system in relation to industrial and commercial development.

2.3 **PPS7: "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas" (2004)** - concerns development proposals in the countryside with development to be strictly controlled and requiring good quality design, which respects the character of the countryside and safeguards the distinctiveness of its landscape.

2.4 **PPG13: "Transport" (2001)** contains advice on the integration of planning and transport.

2.5 **PPG24: "Planning & Noise" (1994)** guides planning authorities on the use of planning powers to minimise the adverse impact of noise.

For full details visit the government website <http://www.communities.gov.uk> and follow the links to planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Policy.

3. PLANNING POLICIES

Further information on the role of planning policies in deciding planning applications can also be found at the following website: <http://www.communities.gov.uk> then follow links Planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Information and Guidance, Planning Guidance and Advice and then Creating and Better Place to Live.

3.1 **East of England Plan - Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (May 2008)**

East of England Plan - Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (May 2008) Policies viewable at <http://www.go-east.gov.uk> then follow links to Planning, Regional Planning then Related Documents.

- **SS1: "Achieving Sustainable Development"** – the strategy seeks to bring about sustainable development by applying: the guiding principles of the UK Sustainable Development

Strategy 2005 and the elements contributing to the creation of sustainable communities described in Sustainable Communities: Homes for All.

- **E1:** “Job Growth” – Identifies indicative targets for net employment growth in Cambridgeshire.
- **ENV7:** “Quality in the Built Environment” - requires new development to be of high quality which complements the distinctive character and best qualities of the local area and promotes urban renaissance and regeneration.
- **ENG1:** “Carbon Dioxide Emissions and Energy Performance” – for new developments of 10+ dwellings or 1000sqm non residential development a minimum of 10% of their energy should be from decentralised and renewable or low carbon resources unless not feasible or viable.

3.2 **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003)**

Saved policies from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk> follow the links to environment, planning, planning policy and Structure Plan 2003.

None relevant

3.3 **Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995)**

Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan95

- **E1:** “Economic and Employment Growth” – will be promoted, commensurate with the planned residential and population growth and the Council’s aims to provide a range of employment opportunities and reduce commuting.
- **E7:** “Small Businesses” will normally be supported subject to environmental and traffic considerations.
- **E10:** “Reuse of Buildings in Rural Areas” – will normally be allowed to create employment subject to: buildings being of a bulk, form, general design in keeping with its surroundings; of substantial construction requiring no major adaptation or addition to the proposed use; no overriding objection on traffic or environmental grounds.
- **E13:** “Industry, Warehousing or high technology and office developments” – will not be permitted where it would cause serious traffic noise or pollution problems or other damage to the environment.
- **En17:** “Development in the Countryside” - development in the countryside is restricted to that which is essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, permitted mineral extraction, outdoor recreation or public utility services.

- **En18:** "Protection of countryside features" – Offers protection for important site features including trees, woodlands, hedges and meadowland.
- **En20:** Landscaping Scheme. - Wherever appropriate a development will be subject to the conditions requiring the execution of a landscaping scheme.
- **En25:** "General Design Criteria" - indicates that the District Council will expect new development to respect the scale, form, materials and design of established buildings in the locality and make adequate provision for landscaping and amenity areas.
- **CS8:** "Water" – satisfactory arrangements for the availability of water supply, sewerage and sewage disposal facilities, surface water run-off facilities and provision for land drainage will be required.

3.4 **Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations (2002)**

Saved policies from the Huntingdon Local Plan Alterations 2002 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan - Then click on "Local Plan Alteration (2002).

None relevant

3.5 **Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007**

Policies from the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning, then Planning then Planning+Policy then Informal policy statements where there is a link to Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007.

- **P8** – Development in the Countryside – Outside the existing built framework of the Smaller Settlements development will be restricted to: that which is essential to the efficient operation of agriculture, horticulture or forestry, or required for the purposes of outdoor recreation; the alteration, replacement or change of use of existing buildings in accordance with other policies; limited and specific forms of housing, business and tourism development, as provided for within the Local Development Framework; or land allocated for particular purposes.
- **G2** – Landscape Character - development proposals should respect and respond appropriately to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape
- **G3** – Trees, hedgerows and Other Environmental Features - development proposals should minimise risk of harm to trees, hedgerows or other environmental features of visual, historic or nature conservation value.

- **B1** – Design Quality - developments should demonstrate a high quality of design in terms of layout, form and contribution to the character of the area.
- **B4** – Amenity - developments should not have an unacceptable impact upon amenity of existing or future occupiers.
- **B5** – Energy and Water use – developments should aim to maximise the level of energy efficiency through sustainable design and construction.
- **B6** – Re-use and Redevelopment of Buildings in the Countryside – identifies the criteria to consider for proposals to re-use or redevelop an existing building in the countryside for economic or residential purposes
- **E1** – States proposals for office developments (of less than 500m² gross floorspace, or a site area of less than 0.5ha) will be allowed within the defined limits of the Market Towns and Key Centres (Potential and Limited Growth), and within the existing built-up framework of Smaller Settlements.
- **E2** – Location of Industrial and Warehouse Development – A proposal for a large industrial or warehouse development on unallocated land should be limited to: iii) situations where an existing firm requires additional space to expand; the conversion or redevelopment of suitable existing buildings in the countryside, as provided for elsewhere in the core strategy.
- **T1** – Transport Impacts - development proposals should be capable of being served by safe convenient access to the transport network and should not give rise to traffic volumes that exceed the capacity of the local transport network.
- **T2** – Car and Cycle Parking - development proposals should limit car parking and provide cycle parking facilities to the levels set out in the Council's parking standards.

3.6 **Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework submission Core Strategy 2008**

Policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework submission Core Strategy 2008 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning then click on Planning and then click on Planning Policy where there is a link to the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

- **CS1:** “Sustainable development in Huntingdonshire” – all developments will contribute to the pursuit of sustainable development, having regard to social, environmental and economic issues. All aspects will be considered including design, implementation and function of development.

3.7 **Supplementary Planning Guidance – Re-use and redevelopment of Farm Outbuildings and Outbuildings**

3.8 Supplementary Planning Guidance - **External Artificial Lighting**

4. PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 **0802438FUL** - Alterations to buildings 1 and 5 and erection of rear building as a replacement for building 4 - withdrawn

4.2 **0703250FUL** – Change of use of agricultural buildings to B2 (general industrial) or B2/B8 (industrial/storage and distribution) or B8 (storage and distribution) – permission granted (copy attached of approved layout)

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **Houghton & Wyton Parish Council** – recommend **APPROVAL** (copy attached)

5.2 **CCC Highways** – **NO OBJECTIONS**, conditions to be attached

5.3 **HDC Environmental Health** – **NO OBJECTIONS**, condition to be imposed for noise limit

6. REPRESENTATIONS

None received

7. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

7.1 The main issues to consider are the principle of the development, the impact on the surrounding locality and protected trees, the impact on highway safety, and impact on amenity.

History

7.2 The principle of a change of use of buildings 1 to 5, as identified on the applicant's plan, for B2 and/or B8 use has already been established on the site under application 0703250FUL. This application only considered a change of use of the buildings, no alterations, although did indicate that a new access would be provided. In 2008, an application for change of use and alterations was submitted and later withdrawn. The conditions relating to application 0703250FUL have not been discharged. Given that works had already taken place on the site and some of the buildings were already occupied, it was not considered that these conditions could be discharged retrospectively and in addition that application did not include any proposed alterations. The site at present does not therefore benefit from planning permission and the applicant was advised that this situation would need to be rectified. This application seeks to rectify this situation.

Principle

7.3 The site lies within the open countryside. The principle of re-using these buildings for a B2 and/or B8 use has already been accepted with the granting of planning permission 0703250FUL. Development in the countryside is restricted to that which is essential for the

efficient operation of agricultural and other similar uses. Planning policy permits the replacement and conversion of existing buildings, subject to certain criteria being met.

- 7.4 This application seeks permission for B1, B2 and B8 uses. From the floor plans submitted, building 5 is the only building which would be a predominate office use, the remainder of the units appear only to accommodate ancillary office facilities. As well as the alterations to buildings 1 and 5, the proposal also seeks to demolish and replace three of the five buildings; buildings 2, 3 and 4.
- 7.5 There are no objections, in principle, to the proposed re-use of the existing buildings, although there are concerns regarding the replacement of buildings 2, 3 and 4, as the proposal seeks to introduce a larger scale of development into the countryside.
- 7.6 Policies E1 and E2 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement identify the criteria to consider for the location of (i) office development and (ii) industrial and warehouse development, respectively. This indicates that industrial and warehouse development proposals of over 500 metres sq should be located in sites within the defined limits of Market Towns and Key centres; or sites within established industrial estates, distribution and business parks and where an existing firm requires additional space in order to expand, or the conversion or redevelopment of existing buildings in the countryside. For office developments over 500 metres sq proposals should be limited to defined limits of market towns and within town centres where capacity exists, where this cannot take place a sequential approach should be taken.
- 7.7 This proposal, in replacing the existing buildings, seeks to introduce a total floor area for B1 of 775 sq metres, B2 169 sq metres and for B8 553 sq metres. When examining the proposed uses it is evident that buildings of these sizes should be located, in accordance with planning policy, in more sustainable locations, than the site proposed. In considering new development the applicant should have sought a sequential approach when selecting a site, first considering the most sustainable locations such as town centre or key centre locations and established industrial estates or business parks and then considering other areas, as identified in policies E1 and E2 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007.
- 7.8 The reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings in the countryside is considered in policy B6 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement. There are four criteria to consider when assessing such an application:
- a. The proposal should conserve or enhance the character of any buildings or visual interest.
 - b. Be limited to situations where the existing building is substantially intact
 - c. Not involve a significant increase in the scale of the built development.
 - d. Not entail the loss of a building of historic interest or visual interest

- 7.9 This proposal seeks the replacement of buildings, which are considered to be of little visual interest. The buildings are all standing, but they may in parts be in a poor condition. The applicant has however not submitted a structural survey to support the application.
- 7.10 The replacement buildings, would however be of a larger scale. The total floor area of the existing buildings equates to approximately 1106sq metres. The proposal seeks to increase this floor area to 1497sq metres. As well as an alteration to the floor area, the proposal seeks to increase the height and mass of these buildings and ultimately their visual appearance. The proposal does not comply with this criteria, the sub text of the policy indicates that a proposal should not result in an increased scale of development.
- 7.11 It is noted that building 4 is required by an existing firm on the site, as part of their ongoing operations. It is not considered that this would justify permitting the replacement of these buildings with a larger scale development and as no sequential test has been carried out there is no reason to assume that there would not be suitable alternative sites in nearby St Ives or other areas.
- 7.12 Whilst planning policy seeks to support, the establishment and expansion of small businesses it is also recognised that where it may not be possible to expand an existing business, firms shall be encouraged to relocate elsewhere in the district. Whilst the applicant has indicated that some firms may be forced to leave the site if planning permission is not granted, it is necessary to highlight that other industrial sites appear to be available in the district and in addition, the main concern relates to the proposed replacement of these buildings and not the change of use of these buildings, which are being occupied without the benefit of planning permission.
- 7.13 PPS7 indicates that 'The replacement of buildings should be favoured where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion, for example, where the replacement building would bring about an environmental improvement in terms of the impact of the development on its surroundings and the landscape'.
- 7.14 The application in 2007 for a change of use of these buildings for B2 and/or B8 use did not demonstrate that these buildings were structurally unsound. The onus is on the applicant to ensure that the building they seek a change of use for are fit for purpose. It would seem apparent, in this instance that these buildings are not considered to be suitable for re-use by the applicant. Whilst the applicant has indicated this, a structural survey or report has not been submitted to justify that these buildings are not suitable for conversion, nor is there any clear reason why the replacement buildings are larger than the existing buildings.
- 7.15 The following criteria in PPS7 also needs to be considered, when assessing this application:

Impact on the countryside

- 7.16 The site is relatively open, situated on Houghton Hill in the open countryside and as such is in a relatively prominent position within the central claylands landscape. The central claylands are characterised by arable farmland, gently undulating, the large field sizes in the area creates a strong sense of openness and exposure, which is enhanced by the lack of trees across much of the area. This is clearly the case with the application site, the site is generally open with the exception of a small cluster of trees and hedgerows to the north west, where the access roadway is being constructed.

Buildings

- 7.17 The proposal seeks to increase the overall scale of three of the existing buildings and as such, these buildings would have more presence in the landscape. However, given the location of the site, behind an existing agglomeration of buildings, the impact buildings 1 – 5 would have on the landscape, when viewed from the highway, is limited. The main exception is the proposed replacement of building 3, which would be a metre taller than the existing building. This increase in height would result in a more prominent feature within the landscape. Views of this current building can be gained across the fields to the site from Sawtry Way. On balance however, this is not considered to have a significant detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and to mitigate any potential impact, the proposed materials could be conditioned, should the application be approved to ensure they are appropriate in this rural context.

Local economic and social needs and opportunities

- 7.18 At present there are three companies occupying the site, although this is unauthorised. This would suggest that there is a local economic need for premises and the application indicates that the replacement of building 4 is necessary to provide adequate facilities for an existing firm on the site for production and warehouse purposes. It is unclear, where at present this company houses its production and warehouse facilities, if this is not on the site. The existing building is considered unsuitable and its current size would not be commercially viable to install steel pallet racking, there are also concerns over Health and Safety Standards and the applicant considers that this building would not be suitable for any alternative economic use. Whilst noting this, the application lacks the justification to support these concerns. No information has been provided that would demonstrate that there are no alternative premises available in more sustainable location to accommodate this firm.

Settlement patterns and accessibility to service centres, markets and housing

- 7.19 This site, in the open countryside, is not considered to be sustainable for the location of new industrial and office development. As detailed in policies E1 and E2 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement, a sequential approach should be taken, considering town

centre locations first, as being the most sustainable location when siting new development.

- 7.20 Whilst the supporting Economic Statement puts forward the case for the applicant and the need to replace the existing buildings, in part for an existing firm on site, it is important to reflect on the location of the site. The site is located in the open countryside where development is restricted. Although planning policy supports the redevelopment of existing buildings in the countryside, this is subject to a number of criteria, one of which includes the scale of the replacement development and is detailed in policy B6 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement. In terms of the replacement buildings, this is not considered to be acceptable. The application lacks justification and the scale of the development is inappropriate. It is not considered that the need to retain employment on this site would outweigh the development of new buildings of the scale proposed in the countryside. The development is therefore not considered to accord with planning policy.

Access and roadway

- 7.21 The proposed roadway to serve the site is currently being developed and is visible within the landscape. Whilst visible it is not considered that this would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. This new roadway replaces an existing track, which serves the cottages to the north west of the application site.
- 7.22 The applicant also intends to light the roadway. The proposed lighting columns along the access would measure approximately 6 metres in height and as such would be a visible feature in the landscape. Whilst at present the specification of the lighting is not acceptable, it is not considered that the addition of a lit access would have a detrimental impact on the landscape. Suitable lighting could be provided to ensure that any lighting is not prominent and should the application be approved, it is recommended that this be conditioned. It may also be reasonable to consider limiting the hours of operation for lights, to ensure the lights are not on when unnecessary.

Landscaping

- 7.23 The applicant seeks to implement a landscaping scheme to provide further screening to the site. There are no objections to this proposal, as this would assist in mitigating the potential impact on the built form of the landscape, this should be conditioned.

Trees

- 7.24 There is a TPO tree situated by the new access and in relatively close proximity to Sawtry Way. The access works are still currently taking place and an assessment is still being made by the Trees Officer.

Highway safety

- 7.25 The applicant is at present constructing the roadway for the alternative access to Sawtry Way. Whilst this is currently

unauthorised it is considered to be in accordance with the details required by the Local Highways Authority. It is not considered that this would result in a detrimental impact on highway safety.

- 7.26 The development proposes 47 spaces on the site in total to be distributed across the site. In accordance with the floor area proposed the site should provide approximately 58.9 spaces, in accordance with the guidance contained with the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement Maximum car parking provisions. Whilst this equates to an under provision, these are maximum standards only and as such the provision proposed is considered to be acceptable.
- 7.27 Cycle parking figures have not been provided with the application, although it is recommended that approximately 15 spaces of secure cycle parking should be provided. If the application is approved it is recommended that this detail is conditioned.
- 7.28 The applicant has also submitted a Green Travel Plan to promote more sustainable modes of transport. However this travel plan is the same as that submitted by the applicant under the 2007 application. This is therefore not acceptable as the previous proposal did not include the provision of a B1 use. It is therefore recommended that, should the application be approved, a condition is imposed requiring the submission of a revised travel plan.

Residential amenity

- 7.29 There are two dwellings located to the south of the application site and a small grouping of dwellings to the west, where the proposed access roadway being constructed. Environmental Health does not object to the proposal, however would seek to condition daytime noise limits. To ensure an acceptable level of residential amenity is retained it would also be reasonable to condition hours of operation, to ensure that vehicular traffic is not using the access way during unsociable hours. Subject to conditions, it is not considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact on residential amenity.

Sustainability

- 7.30 This proposal seeks to replace and create over 1000sq metres of floorspace, it would be reasonable to request, in accordance with Policy ENG1, that 10% of their energy should be from decentralised and renewable or low carbon resources, unless not feasible or viable. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that this would take place or that this would not be a viable option, as such it is not considered to address the need for sustainable development and does not seek to reduce carbon emissions.

Conclusion

- 7.31 There are no objections to the retention of buildings 1 and 5 and the proposed change of use to B1, B2 and B8, subject to suitable conditions. However, the replacement of buildings 2, 3 and 4 would amount to new development in the countryside, without reasoned justification. The scale of development would be increased beyond the existing buildings. This would not assist in promoting more

sustainable patterns of development, introducing further development into the countryside. The replacement of these buildings would not be a sustainable form of development. The applicant has also failed to secure 10% of their energy from decentralised and renewable or low carbon resources or demonstrate that this is not feasible or viable. The proposal is therefore not considered to be acceptable and it is recommended that the application be refused.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

8. RECOMMENDATION - REFUSE for the following reasons:

- 8.1 The proposed demolition and replacement of buildings 2, 3 and 4 would result in a larger scale industrial development in this rural location. The proposal would amount to new development in the countryside without reasoned justification. The replacement of these buildings would not result in a more acceptable or sustainable development. The proposal is therefore contrary to PPS1, PPS7, policy SS1 of the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy, policy E10 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995, policies P8 and B6 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement, policy CS1 of the Submission Core Strategy and SPG Re-use and redevelopment of Farm Outbuildings and Outbuildings.
- 8.2 The applicant has failed to demonstrate how the proposed development would minimise the need for new resources or that 10% of their energy shall be from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources. The proposal is therefore contrary to PPS1, Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1, policies SS1 and ENG1 of the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy and policy B5 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Planning Application File Reference: 0900134FUL
East of England Plan – Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy May 2008
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003
Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995
Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration, 2002
Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007
Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy 2008
Supplementary Planning Guidance – Re-use and redevelopment of Farm Outbuildings and Outbuildings
Supplementary Planning Guidance – External Artificial Lighting

CONTACT OFFICER:

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