
Case No: 1001403FUL (FULL PLANNING APPLICATION)

Proposal: DEVELOPMENT OF EX WWII AIRFIELD SITE TO PROVIDE TWO PURPOSE BUILT FACTORY UNITS, WITH ASSOCIATED HARDSTANDING AND EXTERNAL STORAGE

Location: LAND NORTH OF HIGHFIELD HOUSE, FENTON ROAD

Applicant: RUSTON'S ENGINEERING CO LTD

Grid Ref: 530149 278795

Date of Registration: 26.08.2010

Parish: WARBOYS

RECOMMENDATION – APPROVE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The scheme of delegation requires that an application for developments of more than 5000 sq metres of gross office or mixed commercial floor space where it is contrary to the provisions of the Approved Development Plan (even if it accords with the Draft Development Plan) and which is recommended for approval by the Development Management Panel is not delegated and needs to be referred to Full Council for a decision.
- 1.2 This application is before the Council for a decision as it is a departure from the development plan that exceeds this threshold and the Development Management Panel was minded to approve the application when it considered it at its meeting on the 15th November 2010.
- 1.3 Under a previous now superseded Direction, if Council was also minded to approve the application it would then need to be referred to the Government Regional Office. This is no longer necessary.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 2.1 The application relates to a largely flat 4.31ha site on the eastern side of the B1040 approximately 1.4km south of the centre of Warboys. Most of the site is grassland. A former radio station building and tower remain in the southwest corner of the site close to the existing access to the site from the B1040. The site is bounded by a metal fence on all sides with an average 11m wide landscaped margin, mainly comprised of Leyland cypress with additional deciduous species.

- 2.2 Car sales and repair premises and two residential properties are located some 170m to the south. Part of the Pathfinder Long Distance Walk runs to the north west and west beyond the B1040.
- 2.3 The site is within the Environment Agency's Flood Zone 1.
- 2.4 The application proposes the erection of 2no. buildings totalling 13,620 square metres to be used for B2 (General Industrial) and ancillary storage and office purposes. Both buildings would be approximately 7m high to eaves and 10.5m high to ridge. The application has been submitted on behalf of RECO and would enable one of their companies, Ruston's which primarily imports agricultural and ground care machinery, to vacate their existing Brampton Road site within the West of Huntingdon AAP area and relocate their 40 or so staff to this site. The development would also enable RECO to consolidate its business on one site by also accommodating its specialist wheel equipment and electric granule and seed distributors, Stocks Ag Ltd and its 30 or so employees, currently based in Wisbech, on the site and thereby reducing time travelling between the premises and avoiding duplication of facilities. Working hours are indicated to be 0730-1800 Monday to Friday and 0800-1400 on Saturdays.
- 2.5 A new access would be provided on to the B1040. A total of 80 car parking spaces, 4 of which would be disabled spaces, are proposed. Two 2.1m high cycle stores (one 5m x 4.5m and the other 10m x 4.5) are proposed close to the site frontage.
- 2.6 A Design and Access Statement, Flood Risk Assessment, Phase 1 Habitat and Protected Species Survey, Phase 1 Contamination Assessment Report, Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Transport Assessment and Travel Plan have been submitted as part of the application.

3. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 3.1 **PPS4: "Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth" (2009)** sets out the Government's comprehensive policy framework for planning for sustainable economic development in urban and rural areas.
- 3.2 **PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010)** sets out the Government's planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment.
- 3.3 **PPS7: "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas" (2004)** sets out the Government's planning policies for rural areas, including country towns and villages and the wider, largely undeveloped countryside up to the fringes of larger urban areas.
- 3.4 **PPS9: "Biological and Geological Conservation" (2005)** sets out planning policies on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system.

- 3.5 **PPG13: “Transport” (2001)** provides guidance in relation to transport and particularly the integration of planning and transport.
- 3.6 **PPS23: “Planning and Pollution Control” (2004)** is intended to complement the new pollution control framework under the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 and the PPC Regulations 2000.
- 3.7 **PPG24: “Planning & Noise” (1994)** guides planning authorities on the use of planning powers to minimise the adverse impact of noise.
- 3.8 **PPS25: “Development and Flood Risk” (revised 2010)** sets out Government policy on development and flood risk. Its aims are to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas of highest risk. Where new development is, exceptionally, necessary in such areas, policy aims to make it safe, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, reducing flood risk overall.

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

4. 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

- 4.1 Policies from the East of England Plan (2008) are relevant.
- ◆ **T2: “Changing Travel Behaviour”** – to bring about significant change in travel behaviour, a reduction in distances travelled and a shift towards greater use of sustainable modes should be promoted.
 - ◆ **T14: “Parking”** – controls to manage transport demand and influencing travel change alongside measures to improve public transport accessibility, walking and cycling should be encouraged. Maximum parking standards should be applied to new commercial development.
 - ◆ **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.

4.2 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

4.3 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.
- ◆ **E13:** The District Council will not permit industry where it would cause serious traffic, noise, or pollution problems or other damage to the environment.
- ◆ **En12:** "Archaeological Implications" – permission on sites of archaeological interest may be conditional on the implementation of a scheme of archaeological recording prior to development commencing.
- ◆ **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.
- ◆ **En22:** "Conservation" – wherever relevant, the determination of applications will take appropriate consideration of nature and wildlife conservation.
- ◆ **En23:** "Conservation" – development which has a significant adverse effect on the interests of wildlife in an area will not normally be permitted.
- ◆ **En24:** "Access for the disabled" – provision of access for the disabled will be encouraged in new development
- ◆ **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.

- ◆ **CS9:** “Flood water management” – the District Council will normally refuse development proposals that prejudice schemes for flood water management.
- 4.4 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
- 4.5 Policies from the Adopted Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2009 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning then click on Planning then click on Planning Policy and then click on Core Strategy where there is a link to the Adopted 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.
 - ◆ **CS2:** “Strategic Housing Development” – during the period 2001 – 2026, a total of at least 14,000 homes will be provided in areas including a mixed use development in Huntingdon in the area west of the town centre.
 - ◆ **CS3:** “The Settlement Hierarchy” – states that any area not specifically identified are classed as part of the countryside, where development will be strictly limited to that which has essential need to be located in the countryside.
 - ◆ **CS7:** “Employment Land” – About 85ha of new land for employment will be provided before 2026, in key identified areas including in a mixed use redevelopment in Huntingdon for B1 uses to the west of the town centre.
 - ◆ **CS8:** “Retail and Town Centre Uses” – Complimentary and appropriate development that does not jeopardise the delivery of further redevelopment of Chequers Court will be located in a significant mixed use redevelopment in the area west of the town centre covered by the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan.
- 4.6 Policies from the Development Management DPD: Proposed Submission 2010 are relevant.
- ◆ **C1:** “Sustainable Design” – development proposals should take account of the predicted impact of climate change over the expected lifetime of the development.
 - ◆ **C2:** “Carbon Dioxide Reductions” – major development proposals will include renewable or low carbon energy generating technologies. These should have energy generating capacity equivalent to 10% of the predicted total CO² emissions of the proposal.
 - ◆ **C5:** “Flood Risk and Water Management” – development proposals should include suitable flood protection/mitigation to

not increase risk of flooding elsewhere. Sustainable drainage systems should be used where technically feasible. There should be no adverse impact on or risk to quantity or quality of water resources.

- ◆ **E1:** “Development Context” – development proposals shall demonstrate consideration of the character and appearance of the surrounding environment and the potential impact of the proposal.
- ◆ **E2:** “Built-up Areas” – development will be limited to within the built-up areas of the settlements identified in Core Strategy policy CS3, in order to protect the surrounding countryside and to promote wider sustainability objectives.
- ◆ **E3:** “Heritage Assets” – proposals which affect the District’s heritage assets or their setting should demonstrate how these assets will be protected, conserved and where appropriate enhanced.
- ◆ **E4:** “Biodiversity and Protected Habitats and Species” – proposals should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Opportunities should be taken to achieve beneficial measures within the design and layout of the development. Developments will be expected to include measures that maintain and enhance important features.
- ◆ **E5:** “Tree, Woodland and Hedgerows” – proposals shall avoid the loss of, and minimise the risk of, harm to trees, woodland or hedgerows of visual, historic or nature conservation value, including ancient woodland and veteran trees. They should wherever possible be incorporated effectively within the landscape elements of the scheme.
- ◆ **E8:** “Sustainable Travel” – proposals must demonstrate how the scheme maximises opportunities for the use of sustainable travel modes, particularly walking, cycling and public transport.
- ◆ **E9:** “Travel Planning” - To maximise opportunities for the use of sustainable modes of travel, development proposals should make appropriate contributions towards improvements in transport infrastructure, particularly to facilitate walking, cycling and public transport use. Proposals should not give rise to traffic volumes that exceed the capacity of the local or strategic transport network, nor cause harm to the character of the surrounding area. A Travel Plan will be required where the development involves large scale employment/commercial development in excess of national guideline figures. The Travel Plan will need to demonstrate that adequate mitigation of the transport impacts of the proposal can be achieved.
- ◆ **E10:** “Parking Provision” – car and cycle parking should accord with the levels and layout requirements set out in Appendix 1 ‘Parking Provision’. Adequate vehicle and cycle parking facilities shall be provided to serve the needs of the development.
- ◆ **P1:** “Large Scale Businesses” – proposals for major industrial or warehouse uses (other than B1a) will be considered favourably subject to environmental and travel considerations where the site is within the built-up area of a Market Town or Key Service Centre or an identified Established Employment Area, or a site

allocated for that type of use, or the proposal is for the expansion of an established business within the existing site.

- ◆ **P7:** “Development in the Countryside” – development in the countryside is restricted to those listed within the given criteria.
 - a. essential operational development for agriculture, horticulture or forestry, outdoor recreation, equine-related activities, allocated mineral extraction or waste management facilities, infrastructure provision and national defence;
 - b. development required for new or existing outdoor leisure and recreation where a countryside location is justified;
 - c. renewable energy generation schemes;
 - d. conservation or enhancement of specific features or sites of heritage or biodiversity value;
 - e. the alteration, replacement, extension or change of use of existing buildings in accordance with other policies of the LDF;
 - f. the erection or extension of outbuildings ancillary or incidental to existing dwellings;
 - g. sites allocated for particular purposes in other Development Plan Documents.

Supplementary planning guidance/documents

4.7 Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment (2007)

4.8 Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2007)

5. PLANNING HISTORY

5.1 Various development proposals were considered in the 1970's. Permission for the temporary storage of farm machines on the site was granted in 1979 and 1981.

6. CONSULTATIONS

6.1 **Warboys Parish Council - recommends approval** (copy attached)

6.2 **HDC Environmental Health Officer** has no objections subject to conditions limiting the working hours and noise limit.

6.3 **Local Highway Authority** has no objections in principle to the proposed access arrangement and subject to appropriate staff travel planning.

6.4 **County Archaeological Office** states that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential (medieval occupation) and therefore recommends a condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a programme approved before development commences.

6.5 **Environment Agency** has no objections subject to the imposition of a condition requiring a surface water drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles to be approved and implemented.

- 6.6 **East of England Development Agency** commenting in its role to improve the region's economic performance, recommends that unless the Council are able to advise on a suitable alternative location for the applicant to relocate to, the Council gives favourable consideration to the proposal and may wish to consider the application of a first occupier condition to the planning consent.

7. REPRESENTATIONS

- 7.1 None received.

8. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- 8.1 The main issues in this case are: whether there are any material considerations that indicate that this development is acceptable in this countryside location; the design and layout of the development and its impact on the visual amenities of the countryside; neighbour amenity; car parking and highway issues; biodiversity; foul and surface water drainage; ground contamination; and energy.

Principle of this use in this location

- 8.2 The site is within the countryside and the proposed development is not in the list of developments that Local Plan Policy En17 and Development Management DPD Policy P7 indicate are appropriate in principle in the countryside. The development is therefore a departure from the development plan. A decision on this application must be made in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise. It must therefore be determined whether there are material planning considerations that outweigh the proposal's conflict with Policies En17 and P7.
- 8.3 The Adopted Core Strategy promotes a significant mixed use redevelopment in the area west of Huntingdon town centre covered by the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan in order to support the regeneration and economic revitalisation of Huntingdon. Planning permission has already been granted for a new road linking Brampton Road and Ermine Street through this area. This link road, and the wider redevelopment of this area, requires Ruston's Engineering to vacate their current Brampton Road premises. The relocation of Ruston's is an integral part of the jigsaw that will facilitate the redevelopment of the area west of Huntingdon town centre. Neither the business nor the Local Planning Authority would want to see jobs lost, and to this end Ruston's has been looking for alternative sites to relocate to. The relocation of Ruston's would help meet two key objectives of the Core Strategy, the redevelopment of the area west of Huntingdon town centre (Policies CS2, CS7 and CS8) and retaining/providing employment opportunities.
- 8.4 The company needs to benefit from the development to justify leaving its current Brampton Road premises and the main benefit of this proposal is the opportunity to bring its Huntingdon and Wisbech operations on to one site. They have been looking for sites to

accommodate the building and external storage needs between Huntingdon and Wisbech with good road links and retained a local firm of planning and development consultants to assist in their search. Ruston's existing site in Huntingdon provides 4520 square metres of office, covered storage, workshop and ancillary facilities with a further 1850 square metres of covered storage and 12,300 square metres of open storage. Stock's existing site in Wisbech provides 3700 square metres of manufacturing, storage, office and ancillary areas and 2835 square metres plus 216 square metre leased premises on adjacent industrial area.

- 8.5 The site is in a location where new commercial development would not normally be allowed in that planning policy seeks to protect the countryside and opportunities for employees to walk, cycle or use public transport to get to the site are limited. However, this development necessarily provides benefits to RECO as an incentive to vacate its Huntingdon site and thereby help facilitate redevelopment in the area west of the town centre necessary to meet the objectives of the Core Strategy. Officers are not aware of any other more appropriate sites for Ruston's to relocate to that are available, suitable and viable. Planning permissions normally run with the land but in this instance, to ensure the delivery of the benefits of relocation, it is important that it is RECO that first occupies the proposed site and vacates its existing Huntingdon premises. This would be secured through a S.106 obligation. The S.106 Advisory Group supported these proposed terms of the Obligation when it met on the 15th November 2010.

Design and layout of the development and its impact on the visual amenities of the countryside

- 8.6 The proposed layout logically faces the B1040 with staff and visitor car parking to the front of the buildings behind the landscaped margin. The use of a row of ridges roofs has helped limit the height of the buildings and whilst the proposal undoubtedly involves a major new development on the site, the building's position, its height, the use of appropriate coloured cladding, the existing and proposed landscaped boundaries, control over the height of the external storage by condition and the presence of other large buildings along the B1040 (which form part of the character of the area), limit its impact on its surroundings.
- 8.7 The proposed landscaping involves strengthening of the existing boundary planting with appropriate native species, including the removal of all conifers along the western boundary where there are already large gaps and the understorey and other vegetation is more established, and selected removal of individual conifers along the northern and southern boundaries.
- 8.8 No details of external lighting have been submitted. A condition is necessary to ensure that lighting does not significantly detract from the visual amenities of the area.

Neighbour amenity

- 8.9 Subject to the imposition of hours and noise level conditions, and given the distance to residential and commercial properties, neither the buildings themselves nor the proposed use would have a significant detrimental impact on local residents and businesses.

Highway and parking matters

- 8.10 The Local Highway Authority has raised no objections to the application. Applying the maximum car parking standards in the Development Management DPD, a maximum of 227 car parking spaces should be provided for a General Industrial building(s) of this size. Breaking down the buildings into the indicated office, manufacturing and storage/distribution areas, a maximum of some 170 car parking spaces should be provided. The proposed 80 car parking spaces may seem generous for the indicated 70 staff plus visitors and as RECO should remain the occupiers of the site for some time. Notwithstanding this level of provision, the objectives set out in the Travel Plan (including the provision of a minibus from Huntingdon and Wisbech) will also still need to be met. Taking all of this into account, the proposed level of parking proposed is not considered unreasonable for buildings of these sizes. Two cycle stores are to be provided as part of the scheme.

Biodiversity

- 8.11 Some deciduous trees will be retained and new landscaping is to be provided which will provide a wildlife habitat. The buildings should be demolished and the thickest of brambles and shrubs cleared after the bird nesting season or checked for active nests immediately prior to demolition/clearance, and the external lighting will need to be designed to leave the boundaries in shadow as recommended in the submitted Habitat and Protected Species Survey.

Foul and surface water drainage

- 8.12 Foul sewage is to be dealt with by means of a package treatment plants as indicated on the plans. An acceptable surface water drainage condition would be secured by condition.

Ground contamination

- 8.13 No ground contamination has been identified but the submitted contamination assessment notes the requirement for an intrusive investigation.

Energy

- 8.14 The application indicates that a minimum of BREEAM 'very good' rating will be achieved. A condition should be attached to any permission requiring a scheme of energy efficiency/generation to be agreed and implemented. The details will need to take account of the requirements of Policy ENG1.

Conclusion

- 8.15 Subject to the imposition of conditions and the completion of a S106 Obligation, the proposal would not significantly harm the amenity of the occupiers of dwellings and commercial premises in the locality, it would have only a limited visual impact on its surroundings, it is acceptable in terms of biodiversity, highway matters and drainage and, critically, it would help enable the delivery of the new road linking Brampton Road and Ermine Street in Huntingdon and the redevelopment in Huntingdon of the remainder of the area to the west of the town centre without the loss of employment. For these reasons, and the latter reason in particular, the benefits of the development are considered to outweigh the limited harm of the development in terms of its impact on the countryside and its limited accessibility other than by car (and the proposed minibus). These are therefore considered to be material planning considerations which justify the approval of this application as a departure from the development plan.

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8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 **APPROVAL** subject to the prior completion of a S106 Obligation to ensure RECO is the first occupier of the proposed site and to secure the cessation of the use of the existing site in Huntingdon by the company following its occupation of the proposed development and conditions to include those listed below.

- 02003 - Time Limit (3yrs)
- 05004 - Notwithstanding submitted material details required
- 17001 - Levels Building/Site
- Nonstand** - Limit on working hours
- Nonstand** - Noise limit
- Nonstand** - Lighting scheme
- Nonstand** - Height of external storage
- Nonstand** - Energy efficiency/generation
- Nonstand** - Landscape implementation
- 11003 - Investigation archaeology programme
- Nonstand** - Surface water drainage
- Nonstand** - Ground contamination

Nonstand - Highway matters

Nonstand - Car/cycle parking

Nonstand - Travel Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning Application File Reference: 1001403FUL

East of England Plan 2008

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003

Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995

Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration, 2002

Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy 2009

Development Management DPD: Proposed Submission 2010

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