OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 24/02279/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Revision of units 23-24 to be split into 4 seperate units within same footprint

Location: Oakwood Business Park Old Great North Road Sawtry

Applicant: D Dawney

Grid Ref: 517623 283787

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site comprises of part of a wider business park to the east of the A1 and off Old Great North Road. To the east of the application site is an industrial building permitted under 18/01604/FUL and known as Phase 1. This application relates to Phase 2 of the business park which was granted full permission for the development of a business park comprising use classes E, B2 and B8. The application only relates to units 23-24 permitted under application ref 20/02138/FUL and subsequent application 24/00024/S73 which have not yet been built out.

This application seeks to subdivide the permitted units (units 23-24) into four smaller commercial units. The footprint of the permitted building would remain the same however, alterations to the permitted fenestration is sought as part of this application. The applicants claim the reasoning behind the application is that larger units on the site had a lack of commercial interest. Roller shutters and new entrances would be formed as part of the application.

Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (12th December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'
The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide are also relevant and material considerations.
For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019):
*LP1: Amount of Development
*LP2: Strategy for Development
*LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
*LP5: Flood Risk
*LP10: The Countryside

*LP14: Amenity
*LP15: Surface Water
*LP16: Sustainable Travel
*LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
*LP18: Established Employment Areas
*LP19: Rural Economy
*LP37: Ground Contamination and Groundwater Pollution

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:
Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022) (adopted 17 March 2022)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2017) (adopted 20 April 2017)
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (December 2024)
Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD (2017) (adopted 16 March 2017) and Huntingdonshire's Design Guide SPD 2017 - Compatibility Statement (2021)
Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
Huntingdonshire Tree Guidance Note 3
Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply.

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY
24/00786/FUL- Change of Use of Unit 7 from Use Class E, B2, B8 to Use Class F2(d) for indoor swimming facility-Permitted 12.07.2024

24/00024/S73- Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans) to add the submitted and altered elevational and floor plans (Units 14-18) to the list of approved plans and vary Condition 9 (Hard and Soft Landscaping) trigger point of 20/02138/FUL.-Permitted 26.06.2024

23/01807/NMA- Addition of approved plans list to decision notice and alteration to design of units 14 - 18 to provide straightened rear elevation for 20/02138/FUL - Refused

22/01701/NMA- Non-material amendment of 18/01604/FUL - Retrospective changes to the south elevation of the subservient office part of the building, whereby a window and doors have been changed around. Additionally, the internal space within that office extension now proposed to be open plan rather than divided into individual offices as previously approved. There is a consequent change to the design of the staircase.-Approved

22/01211/FUL-Change of Use from a use falling within Use Class B2 to a variable use falling within either Use Class B2 or Use Class B8 (Only relevant to Unit 30 of Oakwood Business Park)- Approved

20/02138/FUL- Business park comprising use classes E, B2 and B8 - Approved

19/02194/NMA- Amendment to 18/01604/FUL for changes to building 1 comprising of a curved roof over offices revised to simple pitch, reduction of eaves overhang, revision of cladding materials, reduced amount of microrib panels and omission of canopy to office rear doors- Approved

18/01604/FUL- Erection of industrial buildings -Approved

Other applications relevant to this application:
24/80296/COND-Discharge of Condition 9 (Hard and Soft Landscaping) for 24/00024/S73- Undetermined at the time of writing.

CONSULTATIONS
Parish Council- No objection. No issues raised.

CCC Highways- No Objection. The units are situated on a private business park with an access from the B1043 Old Great North Road. No significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway should result from this proposal should it gain benefit of Planning Permission.

The Highways Officer did raise that the LPA should be satisfied that 20 parking spaces are sufficient for 4 units. This is addressed in a preceding section of this report.

REPRESENTATIONS

No third-party representations have been received in support or objection to this application at the time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- The Principle of Development
- Design, Visual Amenity and the impact upon the Character of the Area
- Impact upon Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access
- Biodiversity, trees and landscaping.

*Principle of development

Policy LP2 of the Local Plan sets out Huntingdonshire's strategic approach of concentrating development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities and encouraging limited development for rural communities to support social and economic sustainability.

As the application site is separated by the A1(M) and Old North Road, it is not considered to be within the built-up area of Sawtry nor does the site and wider business park form part of an established Employment Area. For planning policy purposes, the site falls within the countryside whereby Policy LP10 of the Local Plan applies. The application relates to a building (units 23-24) which is to be constructed pursuant to planning permission 20/02138/FUL for use classes E, B2 and B8. Given the proposal only seeks alterations to the fenestration of the building and parking layout, the proposal is considered to comply with Policy LP10 a., b. and c. in this regard.

Policy LP10 of the Local Plan states that development in the countryside will be restricted to the limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan. Nonetheless, the principle of development has already been established under application 20/02138/FUL. The erection of units 23-24 limited to use classes E, B2 and B8 was permitted on the site on the 27.05.2022. A subsequent application to vairy the list of approved plans and the wording of condition 9 (Hard and Soft Landscaping) (application ref 24/00024/S73) was submitted and approved on the 26.06.2024 however, no amendments to units 23-24 were sought at this point.

Application ref 20/02138/FUL was permitted with a condition which stipulated that the development shall not exceed 8,636 square metres of floorspace (Condition 15). In this application the footprint of the permitted building (Units 23-24) would remain the same however, alterations to the permitted fenestration and parking arrangement are sought as part of this application. The proposed subdivision would, therefore, still remain in accordance with Condition 15 of 20/02138/FUL should the development be permitted.

A condition permitting the use of the building to Use Classes E, B2 and B8 only shall be imposed in line with the extant permission, should the development be permitted.

It is therefore concluded that the principle of subdividing a commercial building into smaller units (Use Class E, B2 and B8) is acceptable and accords with Policies LP2 and LP10 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, subject to the following material planning considerations.

*Design and Visual Amenity

Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 state that developments should respond positively to their context, draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings and contribute positively to the area's character and identity.

Unit 23 was permitted with a gross internal area (GIA) of 434m2 and Unit 24 with 439m2. Two roller shutter doors, two ground floor windows/doors and two first floor windows/doors were permitted on the north (front) elevation of the building.

The proposed subdivision would result in the building (Units 23 and 24) being separated into four individual commercial units with a GIA footprint of 211m2 each (844m2). By virtue of the proposed subdivision, the side elevations (east and west) would each have roller shutter doors and first and ground floor windows. The units front and rear elevations would remain the same as permitted. Whilst the siting of the building would not be altered from what has already been permitted on the site, to facilitate access to the rear units (south) formed by the subdivision, the parking layout has been altered.

The proposed material palate of black aluminium doors and windows, linear and vertical grey cladding and grey roller shutter doors match the materials permitted on Phase 2 of the site and are considered acceptable. A condition ensuring the development is constructed in accordance with the submitted details shall be imposed on any consent.

The hight (to the eves and to the ridge), width and length of the building all accord with the design permitted for units 23-24 under application ref 24/00024/S73 (20/02138/FUL). The scale, mass and bulk of the proposal is therefore considered acceptable.

The buildings front elevation is designed with an active frontage at the end of the highway, offering natural surveillance of the street and communal areas of the wider business park, and bring interest and variety to the building frontage. In comparison to the scheme permitted and extant permission, this amended scheme includes additional windows and doors to the east and west elevations of the building. These additions are considered a betterment to the design of units 23-24 of the extant permission.

An external lighting scheme was approved for the wider business park (P2) under application reference 23/80081/COND, this included external lighting along the spine road of the development. A condition can be imposed on any consent to ensure the development complies with permitted lighting scheme.

Details for the provision of bin storage can be imposed by condition should the development be permitted.

Given the above, the proposed intensified use of units 23-24 is considered to accord with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard, subject to the imposition of a condition seeking the details of bin storage.

*Impact on residential amenity
Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

The site is located in an established business park which is directly adjacent to the Old North Road and further afield the A1 Motorway. The closest residential dwelling, No 59 the Old North Road, is located to the southwest of the application site.

Whilst it is acknowledged the proposal would intensify the use of the site as additional traffic generation may occur from the additional units which may increase noise impacts. Nonetheless, the

site is located in a predominately industrial area and is separated from the closest residential neighbour by 50 metres. As such, the proposed intensification of the site is not considered to unruly cause noise impacts to the occupants of the closest residential dwelling.

Overall, it is considered that a high standard of amenity would be maintained for neighbours. The development is considered acceptable and would not have a significant detrimental impact upon residential amenity. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 and paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF (2024).

*Highway Safety and Parking
Policy LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.

The County Council Highways Officer was consulted as part of this application and raises no objection to the proposal on highways safety grounds as the units are situated on a private business park with an established access from the B1043 Old Great North Road.

The Highways Officer did, however, raise that the LPA should be satisfied that 20 parking spaces are sufficient for 4 units.

The proposal provides a maximum of 5 vehicle parking spaces per individual unit. A total of 18 vehicle parking spaces are proposed. To facilitate access to the rear units (south) formed by the subdivision, the parking layout has been altered and five vehicle parking spaces have been removed from the plans previously permitted. Given HDC do not have a parking policy to stipulate the number of vehicle parking spaces to building use, Officers are therefore satisfied there is sufficient off-street parking for the building proposed.

Notwithstanding the above, to ensure the proposed parking remains sufficient for the subdivided use of the building a condition can be imposed to prevent the insertion of mezzanine floors to ensure there would be no increased demand for vehicle parking.

It is also noted that a compliance condition imposed on Phase 2 of Oakwood Business Park, ensured that bin and cycle stores were installed in accordance with the approved plans. The cycle storage permitted, serviced units 11 and 12 of the wider business park and the location of the bin storage was not detailed on the approved plan. As this application can be implemented as a stand-alone permission, it is recommended that a condition securing the details of secure covered customer cycle parking is imposed in line with Local Plan Policy LP17.

The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in highways safety and parking terms in accordance with Policy LP 17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF 2024 in this regard, subject to the imposition of a condition seeking the details of customer cycle parking.

*Biodiversity, trees and landscaping.
Policy LP30 of the Local Plan requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible.

The application is accompanied with a Biodiversity Checklist. In this instance, the submission of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) is considered unnecessary as the site is considered to have low ecological value and therefore below the checklist threshold for a PEA. Officers visited the site and note the wider business park is under construction and the application site at present comprises of hardstanding. Officers consider the proposal would cause negligible impacts to biodiversity and geodiversity in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP30.

In regard to mandatory biodiversity net gain, as of the 2nd of April 2024 a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was imposed on small sites. As the application site primarily comprises of hardstanding its ecological value is considered to be low. The proposed development would not result in impacts to more than 25 square metres of on-site habitat or 5 metres of on-site linear habitats. This application is therefore exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain as per the de minims threshold detailed in the NPPG.

It is noted that at the time of writing the landscaping scheme to be discharged as part of Phase 2 of the business park is still to be agreed (application ref 24/80296/COND). As such a landscaping condition can be imposed on any consent to secure details of hard and soft landscaping within the area edged in red on the submitted site location plan (dwg non. 28-29/01 A3)

*Conclusion
Having regard to applicable national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is therefore recommended that full planning permission for the subdivision of the commercial units should be granted subject to the imposition of conditions, for the following reasons:

*The principle of development is supported by local and national policies;
*The design, visual amenity and impact on the character of the area is acceptable;
*The proposal would not have a significant impact on the residential amenity of the adjacent neighbours;
*The proposed access and parking provision is considered acceptable and appropriate for the type of development;
* The proposal would have a negligible impact on biodiversity and geodiversity.

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.

CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Charlotte Dew**