[redacted]

Subject: RE: 25/00406/FUL - The Old Camp Site Molesworth Road Old Weston - Erection of new storage building and extension to existing building to provide office accommodation
Date: 11 November 2025 11:41:34
Attachments: image008.png
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I cannot comment on previous applications that included the removal of trees. However, in this case the impact will be high.

> A tree count by species was undertaken within the proposed build area with a +/- 5% accuracy depending on the precise building footprint, a range of diameters to give an average per species was also recorded, the average diameters by species are in brackets.
>
> Field Maple 3 (240), Oak 4 (165), Corsican Pine 17 (235), Ash 19 (325), Sycamore 8 (243).
>
> The proposed footprint was marked out with pegs on the ground; the area is approximately 25m wide from east to west and 52m from north to south, with 17m of tree cover extending from the proposed northern build-out edge to the road boundary.
>
> This assessment extended a further 3m beyond the edges of the building footprint to allow for workspace and RPA clearances.

This application seeks to remove 51 well established mature trees. Please note the recent tree survey concluded that the trees are all 'Category B' trees which should be retained wherever possible in planning considerations. The applicant states below that they are of poor form, and that there are a number of dead or dying trees within the group – this is not the case. A number of dead trees would be perfectly normal for a woodland as less healthy trees decline, and gaps in the crown are filled by surrounding trees. The Tree Survey states that the trees are all in 'fair' structural condition and vitality.

Ref.	Species	Full Structure	Measurements	Survey Notes	Retention Category	RPA	Condition	Recommendations
W1	Mixed species *(Mixed species)*	Group	Height (m): 17 Stem Diam(mm): 300 Spread (m): 5N, 5E, 5S, 5W Crown Clearance (m): 2 Life Stage: Semi Mature Rem. Contrib.: 20+ Years	6 rows of mixed species Ash, Field Maple, Corsican Pine, Oak, Sycamore. Crown - minor deadwood < 100mm Dimensions estimated and averaged 1 or 2 standing dead Early dieback in some of the Ash, along with seedpods indicating stress. 5 of the rows have missing trees, this is either natural selection or they have been manually removed. Most of the broadleaf species are of average quality in terms of timber value. Beyond the most western row the woodland composition changes into thicket stage trees i.e smaller. There is a 5m ride between the 2 distinct woodland types which is the boundary.	B1,2	Area: 1368 sq m.	Physiological Cond: Fair Structural Cond: Fair Public Visual Amenity value: Medium	No action required.

I would also question why the trees have a reduced life expectancy of 20 years. All of the species listed other than Ash will have a significantly longer lifespan than that, so it appears the applicant is trying to downgrade the trees under consideration.

We have not been provided with any in-depth information regarding the condition of the individual trees, just grouped information and guesstimated average Stem Diameters.

It should be noted that Ecological consultations reveal there is not adequate compensation for bio-diversity net gain off setting.

1. The economic and social imperative of supporting an existing and established local business which needs to expand - Noted
2. The low value of the trees to be removed many of which are dead or dying. – The trees are not 'low value' and nowhere does it state that a significant number are dead or dying, these are categorised as 'B' and should therefore be retained wherever possible.
3. The additional tree planting which will be undertaken to mitigate the loss. – Confirmed as not reaching BNG 110% Gain.
4. The biodiversity enhancement resulting from the planting proposals. – Net loss confirmed
5. The limited Visual Impact associated with development on the application site rather than a more exposed site. – The Visual impact would not take into account the ecological loss.
6. The containment of development within an otherwise screened site. - Noted
7. The precedent set by permission on the adjoining site. - Noted

Relevant Policy References

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

- *Paragraph 136 (Section 12)* – Planning policies and decisions should ensure that existing trees are retained wherever possible and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees into new developments.

- *Paragraph 180 (Section 15)* – Development should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services.
- *Paragraph 186 (Section 15)* – If significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided, mitigated, or compensated for, planning permission should be refused. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensatory strategy exists. [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]

Huntingdonshire Tree Strategy (2020–2030):

- The strategy emphasises the protection and enhancement of tree cover as a key contributor to biodiversity, climate resilience, and landscape character.
- It sets out a presumption in favour of retaining trees of moderate or higher quality and requires that any unavoidable loss is mitigated through appropriate replacement planting and biodiversity enhancement measures. [huntingdon...ire.gov.uk]

Government Guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain:

- Under the Environment Act 2021, all developments must deliver at least a **10% biodiversity net gain** relative to the pre-development baseline. This is a statutory requirement and must be secured through a Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to commencement.
- Loss of woodland or trees must be compensated on a like-for-like basis, and irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland cannot be offset except in wholly exceptional circumstances.

Should you need anything further please let me know,

Kind regards,

[redacted] **BSc, MArborA, DipArb L4(ABC)**
Arboricultural Officer
[redacted]

Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL

You are advised that to undertake work to a listed building without listed building consent (or the undertaking of work without the prior discharge of conditions attached to a listed building consent) is a criminal offence under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990. These works may lead to the Council instigating a prosecution or enforcement action against you.

Please be advised that the contents of this Email represents the informal opinion of an Officer of Huntingdonshire District Council. These comments are made without prejudice to the eventual determination of any planning application that may be submitted.

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