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Proposed Replacement of Fire-Damaged Building

Sundown Products Ltd, Station Road, Huntingdon

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Project	Sundown Products Ltd
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1 Introduction

1.1 JMI Planning is a Midlands based town planning consultancy. Its directors are chartered town planners with over 30 years' combined experience in both the public and private sector.

1.2 This application is supported by drawings completed by AJS-Rees Developments, requesting planning permission for a replacement building of a commercial storage unit.

2 Site Description

2.1 The application site comprises of an existing commercial yard and buildings operated by Sundown Products Ltd. The company prepare a range of straw based animal feeds and bedding at the premises.

2.2 There are a large number of buildings on the site that are used for the manufacturing process of feed and bedding as well as feed silos. The site is located in the open countryside some 15km from the town of Huntingdon.

3 The Proposed Development

3.1 The company specialise in the manufacture of animal feed and bedding from straw. The manufacturing process involving straw requires significant energy and can also result in the creation of a significant amount of dust.

3.2 In 2015, the original storage building along with several lorries were burnt. The company are intending to replace a fire-affected building with a new commercial storage unit to reinforce the operational efficiency of Sundown Products Ltd.

3.3 The proposed building extension measures approximately 30 x 24m x 10.4m with an eaves height of 8.3m and a ridge of 10.4m. The unit will be constructed with concrete panels and green metal cladding, with grey cladding used for the roof

4 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It explains that in the context of decision taking, this means approving proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

4.2 The Huntingdonshire Local Plan is up-to-date.

4.3 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states

Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

4.4 Under the heading 'Supporting a prosperous rural economy' Paragraph 88 advises that *planning policies and decisions should enable:*

a) *the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings;*

b) *the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*

c) *sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*

d) *the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*

4.5 Paragraph 89 states

Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

4.5 Chapter 12 of the Framework includes a number of paragraphs relating to the importance of appropriate design. Paragraph 131 encourages the creation of high-quality buildings which raise the quality of the built environment and create better places in which to live and work.

Huntingdonshire Local Plan

4.6 **LP 10 The Countryside**

Development in the countryside will be restricted to the limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan. All development in the countryside must:

a. seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value:

i. ii. avoiding the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) where possible, and

ii. avoiding Grade 1 agricultural land unless there are exceptional circumstances where the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh the loss of land;

b. recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and

c. not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others

4.7 LP 19 Rural Economy

In the countryside there are limited and specific opportunities for sustainable development related to maintaining a healthy rural economy. A proposal for business development in the countryside will only be supported where it fulfils the requirements of one of the following categories.

New business development

A proposal for business uses (class 'B') will be supported where it:

a. is within a defined Established Employment Area;

b. immediately adjoins and is capable of being integrated with an Established Employment Area;

c. involves the reuse of land in use or last used for business uses (class 'B'); or

d. involves the reuse or replacement of existing buildings as set out in policy LP 33 'Rural Buildings'.

In all cases office uses (class 'B1a') will be limited to a total of 600m2 floorspace.

Expansion of an existing business

A proposal for the expansion of an established business within its existing operational site will be supported.

A proposal for the expansion of an established industrial or rural business on land outside of its existing operational site in the open countryside will be supported where it is demonstrated that:

e. opportunities to reuse existing buildings have been fully explored; and replacement or new build are only proposed where it can be demonstrated that no suitable reuse opportunities are available;

f. any opportunities to make more efficient use of land within the existing site boundary are not suitable for the proposed use;

g. it avoids the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) particularly Grade 1 where possible and should use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value; and

h. the scale, character and siting of the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape.

A rural business is one which has a legitimate reason to be located in the countryside, including but not limited to agriculture, horses, horticulture or forestry.

Farm diversification

A proposal for farm diversification will be supported where it is demonstrated that it is complementary and subsidiary to the ongoing agricultural operations of the farm business, and that it meets criteria e-h above

5 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

5.1 The applicant is seeking to replace a fire-affected commercial storage unit within their existing facility to accommodate straw / animal feed. This will support the ongoing operations of Sundown Products Ltd on the site.

5.2 The site lies in the open countryside; however, the site has been operated by Sundown for a significant period of time. The scheme therefore constitutes the expansion of an existing commercial business.

5.3 The principle of development is supported by Paragraph 85 of the NPPF which prescribes that significant weight is placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. In addition to this, paragraph 88 specifically refers to the rural economy and advises that planning decisions should enable '*the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings'.*

5.4 In addition, Policy LP19 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan supports proposals for the expansion of an established business within its existing operational site, as is the case with this application.

5.5 The proposal will help to support the needs of the business by delivering increased storage space for straw / animal feed, replacing the original unit to improve the operational efficiency of Sundown Products Ltd. The scheme therefore has clear compliance with the requirements of the NPPF and the Huntingdonshire Local Plan in relation to the expansion of existing rural businesses.

Visual Impacts

5.6 The design appears functional and attractive and assimilates well with the form, scale and materials of existing buildings. The new unit will be constructed from concrete panels and metal cladding to match existing buildings on site and will not appear incongruous or inappropriate in this location.

5.7 The proposal will be viewed in the context of surrounding industrial units of similar size and appearance and will not be visually prominent. The site is located within the existing complex operated by Sundown Products Ltd and sits acceptably within this context.

5.8 There are no distinctive landscape features or any land or areas of nature conservation interest.

Highway Impacts

5.9 The existing vehicular access will continue to be utilised and no alterations are proposed to this. Existing parking arrangements within the yard will be retained. The scheme will not result in a material increase in the number of traffic movements associated with the site.

5.10 The proposals will not therefore prejudice the safe or efficient use of the highway network.

Other Considerations

5.11 The Environment Agency shows the site lying entirely within Flood Zone 1 where there is a low probability of flooding. Development in this location is therefore suitable.

5.12 The proposed extension is located a significant distance from neighbouring residential properties, therefore the proposal will not adversely impact on the reasonable amenities of the occupiers of these dwellings.

5.13 The site is formed of an industrial yard which is part tarmacked and part surfaced and there are no trees or hedges on site which could provide habitat for protected species. The proposal will not therefore result in negative ecology impacts.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The application is for the erection of a replacement commercial unit for the storage of hay / animal feed at the existing Sundown Products Ltd facility at Station Road, Tilbrook, Huntingdon.

6.2 The proposal brings forward economic benefits in line with Paragraphs 85 and 88 of the NPPF.

6.3 The replacement is of a functional design and sits acceptably alongside existing built form on the site.

6.4 The proposal will not result in any adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbours, flooding or ecology.

6.5 The statement demonstrates that the proposal constitutes sustainable development as required by the National Planning Policy Framework and is in broad compliance with the requirements of the policies of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan.