OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00287/FUL **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Demolition of restaurant unit (Class E) and erection of a drive-thru coffee shop (Class E use with ancillary sui generis take-away), landscaping and associated works to the site layout**

Location: **Dough & Co Woodfired Pizza Towerfields Huntingdon**

Applicant: **N/A**

Grid Ref: **524009 274151**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application seeks approval for the demolition of an existing restaurant unit (Use Class E) and the erection of a drive-thru coffee shop (Use Class E with ancillary Sui Generis take-away), landscaping and associated works at Dough & Co Woodfire Pizza, Towerfields, Huntingdon.

The site is located in the north of the settlement of Huntingdon and forms part of the Towerfields Leisure Park. The application site currently comprises a single-storey, detached building of a hipped roof design that is constructed with a facing brick and white render finish. The proposal will have a footprint of 196 sq m.

The Leisure Park as a whole currently incorporates a Cinema complex, two drive- through units (McDonald's and KFC) and four restaurant units - two of which are occupied by Nando's and Bella Italia. The other two are vacant, one of which, the former Dough & Co restaurant is the subject of this application, and will be occupied by Starbucks.

The site and wider Towerfields Leisure Park is accessed directly from a roundabout connecting Huntingdon Road, St Peters Rad and Kings Ripton Road.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (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 2021 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 May 2019

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Waste Water Management
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP21: Town Centre Vitality and Viability
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026 - adopted September 2019

Policy E1: Opportunities for Employment
Policy E2: Business Investment
Policy TC1: Retail Development
Policy BE1: Design and Landscaping
Policy BE2: Local Distinctiveness and Aesthetics

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

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
Developer Contributions SPD 2011
Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017

The National Design Guide (2021)

* C1 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
* I1 - Respond to existing local character and identity
* I2 - Well-designed, high quality and attractive
* B2 - Appropriate building types and forms
*M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
* N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
* H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
* H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
* H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities

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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There is extensive planning history for Towerfields Leisure Park with the most relevant being:

96/01194/OUT - Leisure, hotel and motor related uses - approved

98/00545/REM - Approval of layout, siting, design and landscaping for erection of buildings for use as cinema and lodge - approved

98/00546/FUL - Erection of family pub/restaurant & drive through restaurant - approved

9911838FUL - Erection of two restaurants (A3) - approved

1400372FUL - Change of external finishes - approved

CONSULTATIONS

Huntingdon Town Council - Recommend approve. Members felt the proposal was appropriate for the area and was supported by Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan Policy E1.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary Designing Out Crime Team - Made comments in relation to highway safety but raised no concerns in relation to crime, disorder and vulnerability for crime.

Cadent Gas - No objections. Request an Informative on decision.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority - No objections to the proposed development. The access is within the private leisure park and it is unlikely that any queues would be sufficient to affect the traffic flow on St Peters Road. Therefore no significant effect upon the Public Highway.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Economic Development Officer - Raised no objections to the proposal.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Protection Officer - No objections to the proposed development.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Urban Design Team - No objections to the proposal following the receipt of amended plans, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted.

REPRESENTATIONS

No third-party representations were received during the course of the application.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the

development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".

In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan consists of:

o Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
o Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
o St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029
o Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)
o Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)
o Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)
o Bury Village Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 (2022)
o Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036 (2023)
o The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)
o Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)

The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

The main issues to consider are:

o The Principle of Development
o Design and Visual Amenity
o Residential Amenity
o Highway Safety and parking
o Flood Risk and Surface Water
o Biodiversity

*The Principle of the Development

The site is located within a built-up area of Huntingdon, which the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 identifies as a Spatial Planning Area (Policy LP7). The site is also located within the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan area.

This application seeks approval for the demolition of an existing restaurant unit (Use Class E) and the erection of a drive-thru coffee shop (Use Class E with ancillary Sui Generis take-away) and associated works at Dough & Co Woodfired Pizza, Towerfields, Huntingdon.

Policy LP7 states that a proposal for a main town centre use will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement. This is re-iterated in the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan to 2026, which also states that the regeneration and intensification of previously developed land will be particularly supported.

Main town centre use includes restaurants and drive-through restaurants as defined on page 270 of the Local Plan. Policy LP21 (Town Centre Vitality and Viability) states a proposal for a main town centre use involving over 600m2 net internal floorspace outside of a town centre will be supported where it is in accordance with the sequential approach. The proposed drive-thru coffee shop would have a floor space of 170sqm which is below the threshold for the sequential approach and the proposal does not therefore conflict with Policy LP21.

As this application seeks to replace an existing building (Use Class E) with a smaller building in the same location, also within Use Class E, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the aims of the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan, the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

It is also worth noting that while the site is located outside the Huntingdon Town Centre, the proposal would replace an existing building, would remain within Use Class E and be within a built-up area of Huntingdon in an area with existing commercial properties.

As such, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the principle of development is acceptable in this instance, subject to all other planning matters being addressed.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact Upon the Character of the Area

Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

This application seeks approval for the demolition of an existing restaurant unit (Use Class E) and the erection of a drive-thru coffee shop (Use Class E with ancillary Sui Generis take-away), landscaping and associated works at Dough & Co Woodfire Pizza, Towerfields, Huntingdon.

The existing building is single-storey in height, of a hipped roof design and constructed with a facing brick and white render finish. The character and appearance of existing buildings in the Towerfields Leisure Park and immediate vicinity is varied with a mix of modern and traditional designs and finishing materials with hipped and flat roof designs.

The proposed new building is single storey in height, and rises to 4m with a flat roof and features a 6.2m 'tower' above the drive through kiosk. It would be of a modern design with a mix of finishing materials (grey render and timber cladding) as well as large portions of glazing on the southern and eastern elevations. During the course of the application, amended plans were received at the request of the Councils Urban Design Officer to include additional glazing on the front (southern) elevation to ensure a more active frontage that better reflects the existing building and that of other buildings in the vicinity.

The scale and siting of the proposed replacement building is considered to be acceptable as the proposal would be smaller in scale to the existing and would be situated in the same location. Furthermore, the application has been amended to improve movement and connectivity within the site following concerns raised by the Council's Urban Design Officer.

With regard to the proposed landscaping, it is proposed to plant a new hedgerow along the northern boundary and two small areas of meadow turf planting to the front of the building. The proposed soft landscaping scheme is a welcomed addition to soften the visual appearance of the site and break up the hardstanding - however, notwithstanding this, there is concern the provision of 'meadow turf' planting would do little to break up the expanse of hard standing in front of the building, neither would it help separate the entrance and external seating areas from the car parking. A condition would therefore be imposed to secure native shrub planting to the front of the building.

Overall, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its scale, siting and design and would not result in any harm to the character and/or appearance of the site, streetscene or surrounding area. As such, the proposal is deemed to be in accordance with Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policies BE1 and BE2 of the Huntingdon

Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*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.

Given the scale and nature of the proposed development and the distance to the closest neighbouring residential properties, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any detrimental impacts on the amenity of any neighbouring properties.

As such, the proposal is deemed to be in accordance with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Highway Safety

Policies LP16 and 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 proposal would utilise an existing vehicular access that is shared with two adjacent units to the west and would remain unaltered as a result of the proposal. A Transport Statement has been submitted which concludes that the proposal will have a low impact on the local highway network. The Local Highway Authority have noted that while the access geometry is not ideal, given the access is within the private leisure park and it is unlikely that any queues would be sufficient to affect the traffic flow of St Peters Road, they are satisfied that the access arrangements are acceptable in this instance.

Various works are proposed to the internal configuration of the site to facilitate the drive-thru including a drive-thru lane wrapping around the unit and additional pedestrian crossings. The proposal will result in the net loss of six car parking spaces, however, the two existing accessible parking spaces are to be retained. A shared car parking area is also available for customers of the unit and the adjacent Nando's to the west, providing 32 car parking spaces, 3 disabled bays and 1 waiting bay.

Furthermore, it is proposed to provide three Sheffield bike stands to the front of the building, providing six cycle parking spaces in total. This is in accordance with the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD (2017).

Given the nature of the proposed use (drive-thru coffee shop) and the available off-street car parking within the wider Towerfields Leisure Park, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied with the provision of off-street car parking and cycle parking.

As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Flood Risk

National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 seek to steer new developments to areas at lowest risk of flooding and advises this should be done through application of the Sequential Test, and if appropriate the Exceptions Test (as set out in paragraphs 172-182 of the NPPF (2024).

The application site is situated in Flood Zone 1 based on the Environment Agency Floods Maps and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024). This results in a low probability of fluvial flooding and is not subject to the sequential and exception tests as set out within the NPPF. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 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, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been submitted with the application which identifies a low risk to foraging and commuting bats and nesting birds. In terms of mitigation, the PEA identifies that sensitive lighting of the site should be used and any vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside of nesting bird season.

Subject to a condition being imposed on any planning permission granted to ensure development is carried out in strict accordance with the mitigation recommendations detailed within the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any harm to any protected species.

The application has also been accompanied by a Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Note which concludes that the proposal will result in a Biodiversity Net Gain of 48.56% area habitat units and 27.22% linear habitat units. This is in excess of the 10% Legislative requirement.
Given the predominantly hard surfaced existing site, the scale and nature of the proposed development, including the planting of a hedgerow along the northern boundary and soft landscaping within the site, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would result in a biodiversity net gain.

Overall, the proposed development is broadly considered to be in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Other

*BREEAM

Policy LP12 requires non-residential uses meet Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards (or successor or equivalent standards) 'Good' as a minimum. The accompanying planning statement notes that the proposed unit aims to achieve a BREEAM rating of "Very Good". A condition is recommended to ensure that the development is constructed to meet the required standard.

*Community safety

The application has been assessed by Cambridgeshire Constabulary who raise no objections to the development. It is considered that the proposed development would not impact adversely on the safety and security of the users and the general public and therefore, it is in accordance with Policy LP14 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

*Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it is:

* Acceptable in principle
* Would not be harmful to the character or appearance of the area;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Would not be detrimental to highway safety in the locality;
* Is acceptable with regards to the impact on biodiversity;
* There are no other material planning considerations which lead to the conclusion that the proposal is unacceptable.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
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