RECOMMENDATION - APPROVE

This application is reported to the Development Management Committee (DMC) as it is a Departure from the Development Plan.

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

1.1 The site is located to the east, and outside the built up area of Sawtry. The site is situated directly adjacent to the A1M motorway with access currently gained via Old North Road. The site is open land, actively farmed until recently. It is low grade (Grade 3) agricultural land. The site itself is considered to be in the open countryside and is bound by a cemetery to the north, St Andrews Nursery and the Black Horse industrial park to the south, more open countryside to the east and the A1M to the west.

1.2 The site is segregated from the village of Sawtry by the A1M Motorway which dominates the area's rural fringe character. The wider area is not identified as a sensitive landscape. The site is outside, and just to the east of the built up part of Sawtry Village and cannot be readily seen from the west. It is to the east of the village where the planted road embankments and noise barriers along the A1M screens the majority of views from the village. To the west, rising landform also provides a high degree of containment. Sawtry Brook forms a clear northern edge to the village.

1.3 The landform is relatively flat, elevated along the A1M with the land falling to the east. The B1043 Old Great North Road runs to the west of the site roughly parallel to the A1M. The open Agricultural landscape is clearly visible from the elevated A1M and is the beginning of the 'Fen Margin'. To the east the site is bound by the Middle Level Catchwater drain, which runs in a south-westerly direction along the northern part of the sites eastern boundary before turning to run in a southerly direction along the remainder of the boundary. To the east of this is open agricultural land.

1.4 Although the site is outside the built up part of Sawtry Village it is reasonably well related to the Village being readily accessible by foot, cycle and bus. It is grouped with other industrial services on the Black
Horse Industrial estate. There is a bus stop only 500m away at Chapel End in Sawtry.

1.5 Spirotech wish to relocate from their existing premises in Sawtry. The company is presently located on the northern side of Sawtry in a cramped unit that creates acknowledged environmental problems to residents. The company have outgrown their premises and have purchased this site as they could not find premises elsewhere (an exercise that is documented in the Employment Policy report provided by the Applicant).

1.6 Spirotech are engaged in the cutting, assembly and welding of metal products. They are global leaders in the design, manufacture and delivery of screw conveyors, pressure vessels, elevators, feeders, dischargers and de-watering systems for the most demanding commercial environments worldwide.

1.7 Spirotech is a company that provides local employment and have 65 employees, relocating to the site the subject of this proposal is likely to result in employment numbers growing to 82 – a 20% increase in jobs. The applicants support apprenticeship training, and also propose to build a new training building to support this work. This is on considerable significance to the local economy.

1.8 The proposed site is 3.68 ha in size but only 1.85ha is presently proposed for development, with the undeveloped portion of the site held as reserve expansion land and an area identified for an ecological area. Some 5108m2 of B2 floorspace will be provided in 3 buildings. This includes ancillary office, training and storage space that are component parts of the whole use.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2018) sets out the three dimensions to sustainable development - an economic role, a social role and an environmental role - and outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Under the heading of Delivering Sustainable Development, the Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for: building a strong, competitive economy; ensuring the vitality of town centres; supporting a prosperous rural economy; promoting sustainable transport; supporting high quality communications infrastructure; delivering a wide choice of high quality homes; requiring good design; promoting healthy communities; protecting Green Belt land; meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change; conserving and enhancing the natural environment; conserving and enhancing the historic environment; and facilitating the sustainable use of minerals.

2.2 Planning Practice Guide

For full details visit the government website https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-communities-and-local-government
3. **PLANNING POLICIES**

3.1 Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995)

- E1 – Promotion of economic and employment growth
- E7 – Small business establishment and expansion
- E8 – Small scale employment in villages
- E11 – Expansion of existing firms
- T18 – Access requirements for new development
- En17 – Development in the countryside
- En18 – Protection of countryside features
- En20 – Landscaping schemes for new development
- En22 – Nature and wildlife conservation
- En25 – General design criteria
- CS8 – Water supply, sewerage, sewage disposal and surface water drainage

3.2 Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations (2002)

- None Relevant

3.3 Adopted Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2009)

- CS1: Sustainable development in Huntingdonshire
- CS3: The Settlement Hierarchy
- CS7: Employment Land

3.4 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission 2017 (as amended March 2018 for submission)

- LP2: Strategy for Development
- LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
- LP5: Flood Risk
- LP8: Key Service Centre
- LP11: The Countryside
- LP12: Design Context
- LP13: Design Implementation
- LP15: Amenity
- LP16: Surface Water
- LP17: Sustainable Travel
- LP18: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
- LP19: Established Employment Areas
- LP20: Rural Economy
- LP32: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- LP33: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
- LP38: Air Quality
- LP39: Ground Contamination and Groundwater Pollution

3.5 The LPA consider the Local Plan to 2036 to be a sound plan and it was submitted for examination on the 29th March 2018. The plan has therefore reached an advanced stage and is consistent with the policies set out within the NPPF.

3.6 The Inspector’s note outlining the main modifications required to this plan following the examination hearings held in July and September 2018 advised that the wording of LP2, LP5 and LP11 is recommended to be amended with reference to the word “recognise”
added in relation to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in LP2, with LP5 amended as agreed with the Environment Agency and County Council, and with “protect” replaced with “recognise” in LP11. The Inspector has not required any main modifications to any of the other policies listed above that would have any material implications for this appeal.

3.7 The emerging Local Plan has now reached an advanced stage and in the light of the Inspector’s initial findings should be afforded more weight. Save for policies LP2, LP5 and LP11 it is considered that significant (but not full) weight should now be afforded to the policies referred to within the Local Plan to 2036 (as amended March 2018 for submission). The Local Planning Authority has agreed to the required changes to LP2, LP5 and LP11 but as the required changes to Policies LP2, LP5 and LP11 will be the subject of consultation before adoption, it is considered that moderate rather than significant weight should be afforded to these policies as modified.


3.9 Developer Contributions SPD (2011)

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

4. PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 No relevant recent planning history

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Parish Council - Recommend approval – this is a good use of poor agricultural land, excellent road access, expanding business for the village. The 2 metre high bund and additional planting to preserve the peace of the adjacent cemetery was noted and appreciated.

5.2 HDC Environmental Health – Agree with Noise Assessment. Recommend development is carried out in accordance with the noise report, including 2 metre high bund to protect residential amenity.

5.3 Crime Prevention Design Team – Support – request conditions in relation to boundary treatment, external lighting and details of CCTV if installed.

5.4 CCC Archaeology - The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record indicates significant multi-period archaeological evidence in the vicinity of this site situated above the fen edge. Notable evidence relates to the excavation between 2006-8 of an Iron Age settlement of several houses set in deep enclosure ditches with well-preserved organic content ahead of industrial developments at Nordic House and others to the south of the development area (published: Newton, A.S. 2018, Iron Age Fen-Edge Settlement at Black Horse Farm, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire BAR B640). The Sawtry area thrived in the Roman period as roadside settlement, farms and workshops were established in proximity to Ermine Street Roman road, constructed in
the late 1st century AD (published: Ellis, P., Hughes, G., Leach, P., Mould, C. and Sterenberg, J., 1998, Excavations alongside Roman Ermine Street, Cambridgeshire, 1996. The Archaeology of the A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough Road Scheme, BAR B276, SCB17996). In the Post-Medieval period this section of Ermine Street became incorporated into the Great North Road (the local section now known as the Old North Road). Sawtry village has Saxon origins, though prehistoric and Roman settlements are abundant in the area. The village flourished in the Medieval period and was the location of an abbey and several manors. The Medieval field system is apparent in the landscape in some remaining pasture fields that preserve earthworks of ridge and furrow cultivation remains that would have dominated the large open fields of the parish. These are evident on aerial photos (eg Google Earth 2016) as both broad and narrow rig ploughing intensities that will require detailed earthwork survey to conserve their significance as part of any mitigation strategy should the scheme gain planning consent. Narrow rig is particularly evident around the former Church of St Andrews (MCB1715, demolished 1879) and its cemetery that once stood against the northwest corner of the site.

Pre-application archaeological advice has been supplied to the applicant by this office that informed on the probability of archaeological remains being present in the application area and the need to acquire physical archaeological evidence from the site prior to determining the suitability of development in this location. An evaluation brief has since been prepared, the response to which has been supplied to you in the form of a Written Scheme of Investigation. I have reviewed the WSI and find that it meets the needs of the evaluation brief. It can be considered approved. We expect to be informed of the commencement of the evaluation in due course. The field evaluation will be used to inform the planning process in determining whether the application can proceed on archaeological grounds or not. If archaeological remains of national importance have been discovered, the application for development will be recommended for refusal. Alternatively, if the application is considered appropriate to proceed, the results will be used to formulate the scope of mitigation works or advise on modifications to the development’s masterplan and assist the applicant with the finance and risk management they will conduct in respect of the development.

Officer Response – The proposal is for a resolution to approve subject to the above archaeological work being carried out and submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Final planning decision to be delegated to the Head of Service to issue and provided the above details can be satisfactorily provided to the LPA.

5.5 Wildlife Trust – The Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) report has recommended further surveys for bats and reptiles in 2019. In line with best practice guidance (BS42020), all surveys should normally be completed before planning permission is granted, to establish the presence or absence of protected species and the extent to which they could be affected by the proposals, otherwise all material considerations might not have been considered in making the decision. However, with regards to bats, I understand that the location of the proposed buildings has already been amended to allow trees
with moderate and high bat roost potential to be retained, and a lighting strategy to avoid impacts on bats has been agreed. With regards to reptiles, the area of suitable reptile habitat to be impacted is minimal, and a significant area of new habitat will be created in the northeast area of the site as part of the proposed conservation area. I have discussed the EcIA findings and recommendations for further survey with the applicant’s ecologist and, in this case, it is my understanding that the additional surveys would inform the detailed design of mitigation and enhancement schemes, but would not make a material difference to the information provided in order to determine the application. I consider it would be acceptable in this case for further surveys to be required by condition.

Should permission be granted, the additional surveys for bats and reptiles should be required by way of a suitably worded planning condition(s), prior to commencement of development. The additional mitigation measures as outlined in section 8 of the EcIA should also be required, including the proposed conservation area in the northeast corner of the site, which should be delivered as early as possible, in order to allow the habitats time to establish, and to contribute to a net gain in biodiversity, in line with local and national planning policy.

Should permission be granted, recommend a condition requiring the production of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (or similar document), which would include full details of habitat creation and enhancement measures, and ongoing management.

5.6 **HDC Urban Design** – defer to landscape officer in regards to landscape and visual impacts. Details of landscaping, materials and lighting to be conditioned.

5.7 **CCC Highways** – Following the plans submitted indicating the tracking, vehicle to vehicle visibility, junction geometry and proposed off site works (2070-03 rev c) and (2070-04 rev C) I would have no objections to that proposed subject to conditions.

5.8 **CCC Transport Assessment** – The document reviewed is the additional information submitted by the agent dated 9th November 2018 provided in response to the County Councils comments dated 26th October 2018. The proposals comprise the relocation of Spirotech from their existing site at Brookfield Industrial Estate to the land east of Old North Road, Sawtry. It is agreed the Travel Plan will be subject to a condition should approval be given.

Having reviewed the relative impacts of the development, the following mitigation package is considered to be essential to mitigate development and therefore would seek to be agreed with the applicant as follows:

Prior to first occupation, the developer shall be responsible for the provision and implementation of a Travel Plan to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

5.9 **HDC Tree Officer** – No objection subject to condition requiring development in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Report and Tree Survey.

5.10 **HDC Landscape Officer** – No objection following the submission of the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment. Conditions requested in
5.11 **CCC Lead Local Flood Authority** – No Objection subject to suitably worded conditions

6. REPRESENTATIONS

6.1 Three representations received. 1 neutral and 2 in support. The representations are summarised as follows…

- Totally in favour and will benefit the village
- Fantastic development location
- Provides employment opportunities
- Reduces traffic congestion in the village
- Native species of trees should be planted
- Roof could be used for Solar power
- Construction environmental management plan should be conditioned

7. ASSESSMENT

7.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) identifies that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is reiterated within paragraphs 2, 11 and 47 of the NPPF.

7.2 Under section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, in dealing with planning applications, the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.

7.3 The Development Plan is defined in Section 28(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as “the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area”.

7.4 In Huntingdonshire the development plan consists of:
- Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 (Parts 1 and 2)
- Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration 2002
- Adopted Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2009)
- Huntingdonshire West Area Action Plan 2011
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Development Plan Core Strategy 2011
- St Neots Neighbourhood Plan
- Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan
- Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan

7.5 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 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. Significant weight is given to it in determining this application.

7.6 The fundamental assessments to be made:

- Whether the proposed development conflicts with the policies outlined in the Development Plan;
- If a conflict is identified, whether the application can be considered to be in accordance with the Development Plan when taken as a whole;
- If the proposed development is not in accordance with the Development Plan, whether there are any material considerations, including the NPPF, which indicate that planning permission should be granted.

7.7 This report assesses the following principal, important and controversial issues:

- the principle of development;
- Employment Policy Review
- the visual impact of the proposal,
- the effect on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers,
- highway safety and
- other material planning considerations.

**Principle of Development**

7.8 Policy E1 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) promotes economic and employment growth in Huntingdonshire. Policy E7 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) states that expansion of small businesses will normally be supported subject to traffic and environmental considerations. Policy E11 outlines that the expansion of existing firms can be supported, providing that the scale and location of the development does not conflict with other local plan policies.

7.9 The supporting text to policy E11 notes that it is the LPA's policy to allow such growth within existing curtilages or beyond whenever and wherever it causes no detriment to other interests. Expansion in situ beyond the village limits will be acceptable where the case for protecting existing employment or creating new employment is stronger than any environmental, amenity or other consideration. Environmental and amenity considerations are addressed in the relevant sections of this report.

7.10 Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy (2009) promotes sustainable development and details a range of considerations for new development. Of relevance to the principle of the proposed development are those supporting the local economy and businesses. Within the supporting text of CS1 it is recognised that "due to the limited supply of brownfield land, it is also necessary to use greenfield land in order to accommodate the growth required".
7.11 Policy EN17 of the 1995 Local Plan generally restricts development to “that which is essential to the efficient operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, permitted mineral extraction, outdoor recreation or public utility services”.

**Identified policy conflict:**

7.12 Whilst the proposed development is not considered to conflict with policies E1 and the economic focus of CS1, conflict with policy EN17 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995) is identified as the development is not one of the types listed in the policy wording.

7.13 The prohibition of development (other than the expressly stated forms) in the countryside through the provisions of EN17 requires an assessment as to the extent to which this policy accords with the NPPF.

7.14 It is considered that EN17 does not reflect the more nuanced approach to development in rural areas identified in the NPPF. It is acknowledged that in respect of the specific wording of En17 there is a degree of inconsistency with the NPPF 2018 in so far as it is a policy which is generally restrictive of development in the countryside. Accordingly, EN17 is considered, to a moderate degree, to conflict with the NPPF.

7.15 Therefore, whilst the proposed development conflicts with policy EN17 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995), this degree of conflict does not carry a significant amount of weight, given the inconsistencies between Policy EN17 and the NPPF.

**Emerging local plan position:**

7.16 The recognition of the conflict between EN17 and the NPPF is reflected in the policy direction of the emerging local plan.

7.17 Policy LP20 of Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission 2017 (as amended March 2018 for submission) outlines the criteria upon which a proposal for business development in the countryside needs to be assessed, noting that an established industrial or rural business seeking to expand outside of its existing operational site in the open countryside can be supported, subject to the proposal demonstrating compliance with specified criteria (addressed below)

7.18 The applicant currently operates Spirotech Engineering, a company that manufactures and delivers screw conveyors, pressure vessels, elevators, feeders, dischargers and de-watering systems worldwide from a 30,000 square foot unit on the Brookside Industrial Estate, Glatten Road, Sawtry.

7.19 The current unit on the Brookside Industrial Estate has become a constraint to growth. The company is presently located on the northern side of Sawtry in a cramped unit that creates acknowledged environmental problems to residents. The company have outgrown their premises and have purchased this site as they could not find.
premises elsewhere (an exercise that is documented in the Employment Policy report submitted alongside the application).

7.20 The site subject of this application is located on the edge of the Key Service Centre of Sawtry. The site is situated on the eastern side of the A1M and allows sufficient space for the company to continue to operate within the locality with relocation onto the proposed site resulting an increase up to about 82 skilled engineering jobs in total (a 20% increase).

7.21 The presumption in favour of sustainable development is clearly outlined within the NPPF. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF is explicit in supporting sustainable economic development. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF (Supporting a prosperous rural economy) identifies 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”.

7.22 Whilst recognising the need to protect the countryside and locate development in sustainable locations, the NPPF also seeks to build a strong, competitive economy with one of the core principles set out in the NPPF stating that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver, amongst other criteria, business and industrial units that the country needs. It is recognised that that LPAs should support existing business sectors and take into account when they are expanding or contracting.

7.23 It is appropriate to encourage employment growth in rural areas commensurate with meeting local needs, safeguarding the environment and minimising in-migration and commuting special initiatives to promote employment in the rural parts of the District will be considered. All development will be subject to highway and environmental constraints, in particular regard should be given to Policy EN17 which seeks to restrict development in the countryside to that which is essential to the efficient operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, mineral extraction, recreation or public utility services.

7.24 In this instance new development generating employment in open countryside is normally resisted unless there is a direct relationship to agriculture, horticulture or forestry, or it involves the reasonable expansion of an existing business. Notwithstanding the identified conflict with EN17 of the 1995 Local Plan, for the reasons set out above and having regard to the provisions in paragraphs 8, 83 and 84 of the NPPF (in support of a prosperous rural economy), as well as emerging policies LP2 and LP20, it is considered that the proposed development is capable of being acceptable in principle subject to the assessment of other material planning considerations.

**Employment Policy Review**

7.25 Due to the nature of business that Spirotech operate, the criteria for site selection were as follows…
- Scope for expansion
- Minimum site size 0.8 hectare to accommodate upwards of about 4000m² floorspace
• Bespoke layout sought in a new building to eliminate difficulties in the present factory of triple handling of large fabrications. The premises search showed that reasonable building adaptions were difficult to achieve.
• Gantry cranes need to be installed, and this was not always possible in existing buildings.
• New construction ideal to enable an environmentally resilient building with energy efficient equipment.

7.26 Furthermore the site needed to have good accessibility by strategic and local roads. A search area inside 12 miles of Sawtry was used. The reasons for this criterion are as follows…
• To provide easy access for servicing customers.
• Retention of staff, of present highly trained and specialist staff resource.
• To provide easy access for the Service Centre at York, a location needs to allow transfer of all service personnel from York to Sawtry.
• A major road network is in close proximity. Close access (less than 1/3 mile) is required to the motorway for large vehicles with no overhead bridges.
• Wide loads are common. Such access is critical given a need to accommodate wider loads (e.g. silos) on a regular basis.
• Slow moving vehicles with wide loads require good access for environmental gain. This helps to lower fuel costs as well as lowering high carbon impact of slow moving HGV’s on local roads.

7.27 The location of the site also needed to be in a position that avoided any adjoining land uses that might constrain the use of the site. For example noise sensitive neighbours need to be avoided given high noise impact of the work from manufacturing and handling metal structures. The present site in Sawtry presents a nuisance to adjoining residents.

7.28 The site is also to be purchased not leased. The rationale being that Spirotech’s business model is to generate and build on asset value, this readily enables security in loans for working capital & growth at reasonable rates. The company has always owned its buildings. The alternative of lease and rental creates vulnerability to Landlord’s rent increases, restrictions on the building and absence of any investment by landlords.

7.29 The submitted employment policy review concludes that there are no suitable sites that meet the applicants’ specific needs in existing employment areas. The proposed site is positioned just outside of the Key Service Centre of Sawtry and adjacent to the A1 road, it is within close proximity of the an existing industrial area (the Black Horse Business Park) and offers considerable economic benefits by keeping Spirotech within the locality and expanding to create more jobs. It is therefore suggested that an employment use in this location, on the edge of a Key Service centre, existing in close proximity to the Black Horse Industrial Estate, is a sustainable offer in economic terms. This site will help retain local staff, and help to stem the outward migration of workers from the area.
Impact upon the character and appearance of the area

7.30 The locality of the application site is characterised by a cemetery to the north, St Andrews Nursery and the Black Horse industrial park to the south, more open countryside to the east and the A1 to the west with the settlement of Sawtry beyond.

7.31 The proposed industrial buildings will be suitably positioned and designed in a typical simple form to reflect the functional requirement of an industrial building. The buildings are in 3 clusters. The visual impact will be limited to the form of relatively low industrial units (the highest being 12 metres) all of which are comparable or lower than the commercial units on the nearby Black Horse Industrial Estate to the south.

7.32 The main building has been located tight into the north-western corner of the site to take advantage of landform and existing tree screening. A heavily planted embankment and road side area and additional on-site planting means that the development will not be particularly noticeable from the road to the west. The high level roundabout to the west offers a vantage point for views into the site, and this is partially screened by the semi-mature embankment planting.

7.33 Taking a wider perspective, the site cannot be readily seen from Sawtry village to the west. Planted road embankments and noise barriers along the A1 screen the majority of views from the village. To the west rising landform also provides a high degree of containment. The site will be generally appreciated as an extension of more substantial built development already present at the Black Horse industrial estate to the south.

7.34 There will be limited public views into the site; these will be from pedestrian viewers standing on the roundabout. This is not a key viewpoint; it is not a busy pedestrian area and there is no footpath. Another view is also obtained from the informal footpath alongside the Environment Agency’s Catchwater Drain to the immediate east. Smaller buildings are clustered here; more readily viewed from the river and moderating the impact of the larger building on the site.

7.35 The site is an irregular shaped site and the layout has resulted from a combination of minimising visual impact by locating the main building in the north-west corner of the site, efficient use of the land, and ensuring compactness in site operations. There are 3 building clusters, these being ancillary offices and the main factory, a vehicle servicing area and a training building, machine shop, and a bulk raw materials store.

7.36 The buildings’ positions are influenced by proximity to road access as shown and management of process streams. An internal access road leads from the public highway into the building from the south for raw materials. This same access continues towards the potential expansion area to the south.

7.37 Lorry parking and manoeuvring is allowed for. This is defined by the process stream of raw materials entering and finished products leaving from the southern face of the main building.
Parking and servicing has to take place at the southern end given the need to ensure efficient process flow. Whilst this will be on view to pedestrians it will not be seen by drivers. The low pedestrian presence here is also relevant to reducing visual sensitivity from the public highway.

The smaller buildings in the site have been located adjacent to the Catchwater Drain. The positioning of smaller structures will help moderate the visual impact as viewed from the River. Sufficient covered cycle parking is provided in a convenient location close to the main entrances of the office where it will benefit from natural surveillance for both staff and visitors.

The scale of the development communicates the height width and depth of the development proposals, all related to the surrounding context.

The scale of the main industrial building is required by functional requirements. The height of the building is required to enable the provision of an internal gantry crane. This will lead to a ridge height of 12m for the main building.

Ground levels will be lowered to accommodate the building. A key vantage point to see the building will be from the roundabout that is 5m above site level. Consequently only about 6.8m vertical height of the 12m high roof will be readily seen for drivers approaching the roundabout. This scale, and thereby its visual impact, will not be significantly adverse in the local context.

The site is considered to not be in a particularly sensitive location. It is shielded from Sawtry village by the A1 and natural topography. The building will however clearly be seen from the informal footpath along the river to the east. There will also be longer views from the public footpath to the south, and generally across open Fenland landscape.

It is considered that the limited residual harm is readily outweighed by the significant economic, social and environmental benefits which include enhancements to biodiversity, additional jobs in a sustainable location and a positive effect on the local economy in the form of increased spending on local services and facilities.

The HDC landscape officer and tree officer have reviewed the proposal in relation to the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Report / Tree Survey and offer no objection to the scheme subject to a number of conditions including materials and hard and soft landscaping.

It is not considered that the proposal will have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly the proposal is in accordance with Policy En25 of the Local Plan (1995) and Policies LP12 and LP13 of the Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission 2017.

Impact upon neighbouring amenity

The NPPF’s core principles state that planning should secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and
buildings. Policy LP15 of the Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission 2017 seeks to protect amenity of neighbouring users.

7.48 The site is located in a predominately industrial area directly adjacent to the A1 road, and there is one residential property abutting the site. A noise assessment was submitted as part of the application which concludes that an acceptable noise situation will occur during the daytime and night-time periods for the occupants of this nearest residential dwelling, provided protective bunds are installed as shown on the submitted layout plan.

7.49 An acceptable noise situation would also occur for visitors to St. Andrew's cemetery when assessed at the cemetery boundary location closest to the site, provided recommendations are implemented.

7.50 The proposal is considered to have no significant impact upon any neighbouring occupier amenity due to its location and proposed use. Accordingly the proposal complies with the guidance set out within Policy LP15 of the Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission 2017.

Highway Safety

7.51 The creation of a new access point from the Old North Road is proposed to enable safe and effective access to the site. The location of the site within close proximity of the strategic A1 road allows safe and efficient access to the wider highway network without compromising highway safety within the centre of Sawtry as per the previous situation. It is considered that the location of the proposal will result in a considerable enhancement to traffic within the settlement as the associated HGV movements will be removed the residential streets.

7.52 The CCC Transport Assessment Team and have reviewed the proposal and have no objection subject to a condition for the provision and implementation of a Travel Plan.

7.53 CCC Highways Development Management has also reviewed the proposal and offer no objection in terms of highways safety. A number of conditions are requested and shall be appended to the decision.

7.54 It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in highway safety terms and in accordance with Policy LP17 & LP18 of the Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission 2017.

Ecology

7.55 The applicant has provided a full phase 1 habit survey with full assessments of the potential for protected species, data search records and mitigation and enhancement recommendations.

7.56 The Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) report has recommended further surveys for bats and reptiles in 2019. In regards to bats, the location of the proposed buildings has been amended to allow trees with moderate and high bat roost potential to be retained, and a lighting strategy to avoid impacts on bats has been submitted. With
regards to reptiles, the area of suitable reptile habitat to be impacted is minimal, and a significant area of new habitat will be created in the northeast area of the site as part of the proposed conservation area.

7.57 The Wildlife Trust recommendations further surveys to be required by condition. The additional surveys for bats and reptiles will be required by way of a suitably worded planning condition(s), prior to commencement of development. The additional mitigation measures as outlined in section 8 of the EcIA should also be required, including the proposed conservation area in the northeast corner of the site, which should be delivered in order to allow the habitats time to establish, and to contribute to a net gain in biodiversity, in line with local and national planning policy.

7.58 A further condition requiring the production of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (or similar document), which would include full details of habitat creation and enhancement measures, and ongoing management will also be appended to the decision.

7.59 Given the above, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of ecology and in accordance with the guidance contained within En22 of the Local Plan (1995) and policy LP32 of the Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission 2017.

**Archaeology**

7.60 Cambridgeshire County Archaeology have been consulted and state the following…

The Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record indicates significant multi-period archaeological evidence in the vicinity of this site situated above the fen edge. Notable evidence relates to the excavation between 2006-8 of an Iron Age settlement of several houses set in deep enclosure ditches with well-preserved organic content ahead of industrial developments at Nordic House and others to the south of the development area (published: Newton, A.S. 2018, Iron Age Fen-Edge Settlement at Black Horse Farm, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire BAR B640). The Sawtry area thrived in the Roman period as roadside settlement, farms and workshops were established in proximity to Ermine Street Roman road, constructed in the late 1st century AD (published: Ellis, P., Hughes, G., Leach, P., Mould, C. and Sterenberg, J., 1998, Excavations alongside Roman Ermine Street, Cambridgeshire, 1996. The Archaeology of the A1(M) Alconbury to Peterborough Road Scheme, BAR B276, SCB17996). In the Post-Medieval period this section of Ermine Street became incorporated into the Great North Road (the local section now known as the Old North Road). Sawtry village has Saxon origins, though prehistoric and Roman settlements are abundant in the area. The village flourished in the Medieval period and was the location of an abbey and several manors. The Medieval field system is apparent in the landscape in some remaining pasture fields that preserve earthworks of ridge and furrow cultivation remains that would have dominated the large open fields of the parish. These are evident on aerial photos (eg Google Earth 2016) as both broad and narrow rig ploughing intensities that will require detailed earthwork survey to conserve their significance as part of any mitigation strategy should the scheme gain planning consent. Narrow rig is particularly evident around the former Church of St Andrews (MCB1715, demolished
1879) and its cemetery that once stood against the northwest corner of the site.

7.61 Pre-application archaeological advice has been supplied to the applicant by this office that informed on the probability of archaeological remains being present in the application area and the need to acquire physical archaeological evidence from the site prior to determining the suitability of development in this location. An evaluation brief has since been prepared, the response to which has been supplied to you in the form of a Written Scheme of Investigation. I have reviewed the WSI and find that it meets the needs of the evaluation brief. It can be considered approved. We expect to be informed of the commencement of the evaluation in due course.

7.62 The field evaluation will be used to inform the planning process in determining whether the application can proceed on archaeological grounds or not. If archaeological remains of national importance have been discovered, the application for development will be recommended for refusal. Alternatively, if the application is considered appropriate to proceed, the results will be used to formulate the scope of mitigation works or advise on modifications to the development’s masterplan and assist the applicant with the finance and risk management they will conduct in respect of the development.

7.63 The Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) is considered acceptable, however due to the above consultation response, it is required that the archaeological field evaluation is undertaken prior to decision.

7.64 In this instance due to the cost implications of a full archaeological field evaluation, it is considered that a pragmatic view is to, in the event that approval is recommended based on the WSI, the said approval will not be issued until the field evaluation has been undertaken to determine whether the application can proceed on archaeological grounds or not, if archaeological remains of national importance have been discovered, the approval would not be issued and the proposal will be brought back to DMC to be considered afresh. Alternatively, if the application is considered appropriate to proceed then the field evaluation results will be used to formulate the scope of mitigation works if required.

**Flood Risk**

7.65 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 as identified in the Council’s 2017 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The National Planning Policy Framework states that the SFRA will provide the basis for applying the sequential test and the SFRA 2017 follows the guidance in the Government’s Planning Policy Guidance. Existing raised defences, which the SFRA specifically does not take account of, provide some protection to existing properties in this area.

7.66 In this instance, the proposal is within Flood Zone 1 as confirmed by the 2017 SFRA, which means it will have a low probability of flooding. Nonetheless a Flood Risk Assessment was submitted that demonstrates acceptability in regards to flood risk.
Cambridgeshire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority have been consulted in regards to drainage and offer no objection to the proposal subject to conditions requiring a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site based on the agreed Flood Risk Assessment and Sustainable Drainage Strategy. Details for the long term maintenance arrangements for the surface water drainage system (including all SuDS features) will be secured via condition.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable and complies with policies CS8 of the Local Plan (1995) and LP16 of the Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission (2017).

Conclusion

The Local Planning Authority must determine this application in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. An assessment of those considerations is set out in the main body of this report. If the proposed development is not in accordance with the Development Plan, a balanced judgement as to whether there are any material considerations, including the NPPF, which indicate that planning permission should be granted is required.

A conflict with the Development Plan have been identified in relation to development in the countryside (Policy EN17 of the Local Plan 1995). The application has been advertised as a departure for this reason.

However policy EN17 is not fully consistent with the NPPF. Policy EN17 is considered to conflict to a moderate degree with the more nuanced approach to development in rural areas identified in the NPPF. As such, EN17 is afforded only moderate weight.

The NPPF is given significant weight. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, that is, development which strikes a satisfactory balance between economic, environmental and social considerations.

In this instance:

Economic: The proposed development would contribute toward economic growth, the proposal allows the business to stay within the locality whilst creating an approximate 20% increase in jobs.

Environmental: The visual impacts of the proposed development can be adequately mitigated with the imposition of a condition which ensures adherence to an appropriate landscaping scheme and materials palette. The recommendation is subject to the completion of a full archaeological field evaluation to demonstrate the proposal is acceptable in terms of archaeology.

Social: The proposed development would not result in an unacceptable detrimental impact upon the street scene. CCC Highways have not identified an unacceptable impact on highway safety or severe cumulative impacts on the road network as outlined in paragraph 109 of the NPPF.
7.76 The recommendation is therefore one of a resolution to approve subject to the submission and approval of a satisfactory archaeology report that indicates that the proposal is acceptable in this regard. Final planning decision to be delegated to the Head of Service to issue provided the above report can be satisfactorily provided to the LPA, and is acceptable to the LPA.

8. RECOMMENDATION - APPROVAL subject to conditions to include the following

- Time Limit
- Materials
- Highways
- Travel Plan
- Hard and Soft Landscaping
- Drainage
- Ecology Surveys
- Archaeology

OR

If archaeological remains of national importance are discovered, the approval would not be issued and the proposal will be brought back to DMC to be considered afresh.

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 Peter Baish Senior Development Management Officer 01480 388680
Sawtry Parish Council comments on 18/01604/FUL – Land around St Andrews Graveyard, Old Great North Road – erection of industrial buildings

Recommend approval – this is a good use of poor agricultural land, excellent road access, expanding business for the village. The 2 metre high bund and additional planting to preserve the peace of the adjacent cemetery was noted and appreciated.
Proposed Ground Floor Offices

Proposed First Floor Offices