



Cambridgeshire
& Peterborough
Campaign to Protect Rural England

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Ms K Christodoulides
Planning and New Communities - Development Control
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CPRE Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is our
local branch of CPRE, a national charity. We
speak up for the English countryside: to
protect it from the threats it faces, and to
shape its future for the better

15 January 2018

Dear Ms Christodoulides

S/4099/17/OL Development of an AgriTech technology park, Hinxton.

CPRE Cambridgeshire & Peterborough objects to this application for the following reasons:

(1) Building in countryside. The site is in open countryside as defined by South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and therefore development would be contrary to policies which limit housing and employment land to within the defined settlement boundaries. The emerging 2014 Local Plan Policy S/7 Development Frameworks states at para.2 'Outside Development frameworks, only development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside or where supported by other policies in the plan will be permitted.' We submit that office blocks do not qualify as permitted development.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2014 has been subjected to extensive review by the Inspectors. The proposed Modifications (published 5 January 2018) do not show that the proposed AgriTech site has been allocated for development

CPRE strongly believes that any major employment development proposals in the countryside should be raised by the review of the Local Plan where the merits of any such proposal can be examined in the light of the employment requirements for the district as a whole.

(2) Green belt. It is noted that a small proportion of the application site is for a bus/cycle interchange site at Whittlesford rail station. While the provision of facilities for buses and cycles can be commended, we object to the apparent necessity to use 7 ha for this purpose. The proposed use would encroach on the value of the green belt in maintaining countryside around settlements within the green belt.

(3) Loss of arable land and effect on the landscape. We note in the Planning Statement para.6.27 that the applicant disparagingly states that 'The proposed development will transform an ecologically barren and intensive agricultural landscape into a high quality parkland setting for the park for AgriTech...' We do not dispute that modern farming practices in the East of England can result in large areas of intensively cultivated land which are low in biodiversity. However we submit that the way to counter this is to plant more wildlife friendly features such as hedges, copses, wide field margins, not by erecting buildings and adding some park-like features.

President
Christopher Vane Percy

Chairman

Vice-Chairman
Lawrence Wragg

The undulating rural landscape around Hinxton is worthy of protection and should not be urbanised by a large cluster of buildings.

Continued

Registered charity number 242809

(4) Biodiversity We are concerned at the loss of habitat, particularly for overwintering birds. While the Planning Statement (para.6.32) states *A number of enhancement measures are proposed to improve the biodiversity of the site, including:*

- *Provision of bird boxes within the parkland*
- *Provision of bat boxes within the parkland*
- *Creating new areas of calcareous grassland*
- *Scrub planting along the proposed bunds*

we do not believe that these mitigating measures would in any way compensate for the loss of this valuable habitat.

(5) Traffic on rural roads. However laudable the intention to increase use of trains, buses and cycles, we believe it is inevitable that a development capable of accommodating 4,000 employees will generate many car journeys and that these will overwhelm the capacity of local roads.

Moreover in the last couple of years, Welch's Transport has been built at the edge of Duxford, erasing an area of countryside surrounding the village. The AgriTech development would be another incremental and permanent erosion of the countryside.

(6) Light pollution We are concerned that the light emitting from the buildings and car parks will add to the light pollution in this rural landscape and further add to the urbanisation of the district.

(7) Flooding. We note that the applicant at Planning Statement para.6.56 discussed the management of flood risk and surface water drainage. We urge the Planning Officers to examine closely whether such management will be effective in reducing flood risk - both at the site and at the nearby River Cam.

(8) Speculative Development. We note that the applicant is keen to describe why the site is best suited to assist the AgriTech business and cites some 13 institutions connected with agriculture and its technology. However, we also noted that only 3 institutions have submitted letters of support for the concept and none has actually said that they desperately need space into which to expand and would definitely be interested in occupying one of the buildings. We therefore urge the Planning Officers to carefully examine the business case for this AgriTech enterprise and to ensure that it would therefore be worth the price of sacrificing a chunk of South Cambridgeshire countryside.

(9) Summary. We urge the Planning Officers to note our eight main objections to the application and to refuse the application.

Finally, please note that our submission is in respect of the proposed development. While we have taken every effort to present accurate information for your consideration, as we are not a decision maker or statutory consultee, we cannot accept any responsibility for unintentional errors or omissions and you should satisfy yourselves on any facts before reaching your decision.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Fieldhouse

CPRE Cambridgeshire & Peterborough