

From: Hinxtton Parish Council

To: Leanne Palmer, The Planning Inspectorate,

3/J, Temple Quay House, Bristol BS1 6PN

Application reference: South Cambridgeshire District Council, S/4099/17/OL; Applicant: Emma Fletcher, SmithsonHill Ltd

**Appeal reference: APP/W0530/W/18/3210008 – further response from Hinxtton Parish Council**

1. SmithsonHill Ltd submitted an outline planning application for the development of an 'AgriTech technology park' on fields in the parish of Hinxtton, Cambridgeshire. Hinxtton Parish Council submitted its formal objections on 22 January 2018. These objections are attached and should be taken into account in reading this further response. The application was refused in March 2018. The refusal was appealed against on 17 September 2018. In the following comments we summarise our main objections and draw attention to some subsequent evidence. References relate to the version of the South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) Local Plan approved in September 2018.
2. Hinxtton Parish Council strongly endorses the SCDC's nine reasons for refusing planning permission on 13 March 2018.
3. Hinxtton Parish Council wishes to take the opportunity to defend its objections at any formal hearing that the Planning Inspectorate may hold on this appeal.
4. The proposed SmithsonHill development would be built entirely within the parish of Hinxtton, 300m from the village's High Street. Sited on what are currently exclusively arable fields, the proposed business park employing several thousand people would have a deeply damaging impact on our village of about 150 homes.
5. The proposal does not comply with SCDC Local Development Framework adopted in 2007 or with the National Planning Policy Framework announced in 2012. It is not included in SCDC's Local Plan adopted in September 2018. The site is not one of SCDC's Established Employment Areas (E/15)<sup>1</sup>. The proposed development is contrary to Hinxtton's explicit designation as an 'infill village' (S/11; 2.63) where 'development of any scale would be unsustainable..., as it will generate a disproportionate number of additional journeys outside the village' and it does not meet the 'very exceptional' criterion of 'the sustainable recycling of a brownfield site bringing positive overall benefit to the village.'<sup>2</sup>
6. Hinxtton Parish Council is not opposed in principle to a manageable level of commercial development, agritech or otherwise, within the parish. The grounds of Hinxtton Hall have a long tradition of this, having hosted the Wellcome Trust Genome Campus for the past 25 years and before that the laboratories of Tube Investments. However, information available since the original application was submitted further confirms that the SmithsonHill proposal is of a fundamentally different nature. Whatever its 'agritech' aspirations, there is no evidence that it has any scientific leadership or focus, as is the case, for example, with the Wellcome Trust Genome Campus. Nor is there any justification for its being classified for planning purposes as B1(b) (Premises for Research and Development). By default it would become a general

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<sup>1</sup> SCDC adopted Local Plan, 2018, p187

<sup>2</sup> SCDC adopted Local Plan, 2018, p37

business and warehouse park. No significant science-based activity has been identified by which the site could benefit from its purported potential to offer high quality arable land for proximal crop trials. The plant breeding institution NIAB, named early on by the applicants as a possible tenant, has confirmed that this is not the case. Instead NIAB has announced its intention to develop the Cambridge Centre for Crop Science (3CS) with Cambridge University to enhance research in crop sciences and resilience in food security.<sup>3</sup> 3CS is to be situated on the north side of Cambridge in accordance with the stated aspiration of SCDC planners that the focus of agritech industrial development should be in the Cambridge-Norwich corridor, not to the south of the city.

7. The traffic analysis supporting the SmithsonHill application is not credible. Our earlier submission provided evidence that it was deeply flawed in terms of both data and technique. The potential congestion effects of the development were greatly understated and the mitigation measures in terms of roundabout improvements and modal shift were wholly inadequate. The models used are apparently based on employee numbers and ignore associated service traffic. They ignore nearby developments that are in clear or possible prospect on the A1301 and A505<sup>4</sup>.
8. Our concerns about the adverse environmental impact of the SmithsonHill proposal are undiminished. These relate to (i) aquifer damage, (ii) increased flood risk, (iii) air, water and light pollution, (iv) bio-diversity, and (v) landscape. The drought of the summer of 2018 drew attention to the extent to which global warming is expected to increase the severity of both peaks and troughs of rainfall. The recent 2018 UN Interglobal Panel on Climate Change report has emphasised the increasing confidence and urgency of such predictions. The SmithsonHill hydraulic modelling is wholly inadequate, despite the fact that the site is on groundwater source protection zones of High to Intermediate vulnerability and in a flood-prone part of the Cam valley. Hinxton, as a village prone to flooding, in the most water-stressed part of the United Kingdom, with a water supplier (Cambridge Water) almost entirely dependent upon ground water sources, has good reason to be concerned at the inadequacy of the SmithsonHill analysis.
9. Hinxton Parish Council is not aware of any members of our community who support the SmithsonHill application. We remain of the view that this is a purely opportunistic proposal by landowners and developers to make money by building a general purpose business park on these fields. The proposal is misdescribed and misplaced. Its impact on the traffic and environment of our locality is grossly underestimated by the developers. Any proposed mitigation measures in the application are wholly inadequate and under-financed. We call on the Planning Inspector to turn down the appeal.

William Brown (Chair of and on behalf of Hinxton Parish Council)

24<sup>th</sup> October 2018

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<sup>3</sup> NIAB website

<sup>4</sup> Current ongoing or possible developments within 5 kilometers on the A1301 and A505 are the former Spicers site at Whittlesford, Sawston Trade Park, Wellcome Trust Genome Campus, North Uttlesford Garden Community, Chesterford Research Park, Granta Park and Babraham Research Campus