

AGENDA ITEM NO: 8/2(c)

Parish:	Northwold	
Proposal:	Demolition of existing piggery buildings and construction of industrial buildings to provide additional warehousing/storage of timber based fuel and charcoal products, with associated processing (drying and saw/splitter) buildings, an office/amenity block, weighbridge, staff and visitor car parking, log storage lanes, and associated access, circulation, landscaping and drainage works.	
Location:	The Piggeries 49 Methwold Road Whittington King's Lynn	
Applicant:	Big K Ltd	
Case No:	21/00794/FM (Full Application - Major Development)	
Case Officer:	Mrs C Dorgan	Date for Determination: 29 June 2021 Extension of Time: 12 November 2021

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Referred by the Assistant Director.

Neighbourhood Plan: No

Case Summary

The application site is situated between the A134 and the B1112 Methwold Road, to the south of the settlement of Whittington, and is adjacent to the existing Big K Ltd site. The application site extends to approximately 3.95 hectares and comprises a range of 6 large piggery buildings, a pole barn, a slurry pit, and the adjacent fields. Access to the application site is via the B1112 to the south, with no access to the A134. The site is separated from the existing Big K site to the east by Stone Drove, a Restricted Byway (Northwold RB10) which connects the A134 and the B1112.

The application seeks full planning permission for the expansion of the existing operation onto the application site, through the provision of additional timber storage and processing facilities, consolidated office provision and parking facilities.

The site is to the east of the built extent of the village of Whittington, which is categorised as a Smaller Village or Hamlet in the adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADMPP). The site is on land designated as countryside.

Key Issues

- Principle of Development
- Highways / Access
- Impact on visual amenities and landscape
- Residential amenity
- Ecology
- Other material considerations

Recommendation

APPROVE

THE APPLICATION

The application site is situated between the A134 and the B1112 Methwold Road, to the south of the settlement of Whittington, and is adjacent to the existing Big K Ltd site. The application site extends to approximately 3.95 hectares and comprises a range of 6 large piggery buildings, a pole barn, a slurry pit, and the adjacent fields. Access to the application site is via the B1112 to the south, with no access to the A134. The site is separated from the existing Big K site to the east by Stone Drove, a Restricted Byway (Northwold RB10) which connects the A134 and the B1112.

Big K supplies fuel products, such as charcoal and logs, to the restaurant and domestic market. The company owns and runs two warehouse and distribution sites in the UK with the other in Tottenham Hale, North London. The current site in Whittington covers approximately 7.5 acres, and consists of warehousing with loading bays, production lines, biomass boiler and office area.

The application seeks full planning permission for the expansion of the existing operation onto the application site, through the provision of additional timber storage and processing facilities, consolidated office provision and parking facilities. A key driver for the expansion is the change in regulations relating to firewood moisture content and as a result the additional capacity required for storing wood. Furthermore, currently wood and charcoal are stored in a number of locations elsewhere but are brought onto site for weighing before being stored, brought back onto site for processing and are then distributed to the customer. As a result the number of vehicle movements would be much reduced. Finally the staff numbers have increased over years and accommodation and parking is not sufficient. The proposal will provide a new office and amenity block, with a large car park adjacent.

In terms of the proposed layout the access will be via the existing access onto the Methwold Road (B1112), which will be upgraded to provide visibility splays of 2.4m x 215m in both directions. A weighbridge will be constructed close to the access, with an office and amenity block and car park occupying the southern corner of the site. To the west of the access, the southern part of the site will be occupied by seven large warehouse buildings, which will be used for storage and drying of wood and charcoal, and three smaller buildings which will comprise a dryer building, housing the kiln which is heated by a biomass boiler, a saw/splitter building and a workshop. The northern part of the site will be used for the construction of eleven log storage lanes, for uncovered storage of raw timber. A new vehicular access will be created on the eastern boundary of the site, to provide a link across the adjacent Byway (Stone Drove) into the existing Big K site. New planting/landscaping belts will be created along the western and southern site boundaries, and part of the eastern boundary. In total, the proposal will create just under 12,000 sqm of new internal floorspace.

The buildings will be constructed from trapezoidal composite wall and roof panels. All units will be coloured Moss Green apart from Unit 1, which will be Anthracite Grey to aid thermal gain and assist in the passive drying process. The warehouse buildings will measure approx. 8m at the eaves and 9m at the ridge. The saw/splitter and dryer buildings will measure 8.3m at the ridge and will be constructed from Moss Green cladding. The cyclone fan enclosure will be the tallest structure on site, measuring 12m in height, and will be enclosed on three sides. The buildings will be surrounded by concrete roads, which will operate as part of a one-way traffic system. The proposed office and amenity block will be two-storey in height, with a

monopitch roof extending to 7.8m at the highest point. It will be constructed from red brick at ground floor, with moss green trapezoidal wall cladding and matching roof cladding. In addition the log lanes will reach approximately 4m in height.

An access gate is to be installed, set 20m from the edge of the highway to increase site security. Sufficient space is provided to allow two vehicles to wait on the access road, preventing queuing on the B1112.

The application proposes an access track/crossing to the east of the site, crossing the existing Public Right of Way (PROW) to connect the extended site with existing premises. This access point will be used by mini tractors and trailers to disperse goods between the two sites. There will be no access between the two sites for HGVs.

55 car parking spaces will be provided for site employees and visitors, adjacent to the proposed office and amenity block. Of these, 2 parking bays will be dedicated accessible spaces and a further 2 parking bays will be dedicated to electric vehicle charging stations. The 43 parking spaces on the existing Big K premises will be retained. A covered bicycle stand will also be provided on site to provide secure storage for up to 10 bicycles.

SUPPORTING CASE

Big K is a family owned business, which has operated from its existing site on Whittington Hill since 1989. It supplies fuel products such as charcoal and logs, to both the restaurant market, and the domestic market, and is proud to be one of very few large-scale firewood producers who cut and process British timber. The business has gradually expanded over the past 30 years, and the site currently has three production lines packing summer, winter and restaurant products, providing 57 permanent jobs across a variety of roles, with up to 10 additional agency staff employed at peak times. As such, it is a long-standing and important employer in the local area.

Big K have acquired the application site, adjacent to their existing operation, in order to consolidate and expand their storage capacity, through the construction of seven new warehouses and the creation of an external log storage area, and provide improved office accommodation and parking facilities for their staff and visitors. At present, wood and charcoal are stored in a number of off-site locations, some of it being brought onto site initially for weighing before it is stored off-site, then brought back onto site for processing, before finally being distributed to the customer. As a result, there are a significant number of vehicle movements associated with each load, which would be eradicated through the consolidation of the storage and processing facilities on this site.

Recent changes to the Regulations relating to firewood moisture content have also resulted in a need for more storage space. All wood sold to domestic customers must now have a moisture content of less than 20%. There are 2 ways of drying wood: one is to cut and then dry the wood in ovens or kilns, the second is to let nature do its work and season the wood both before and after cutting. The second method is the cheapest and the most environmentally friendly. Big K has been seasoning and drying wood in their onsite oven for a number of years and this has been sufficient to produce the volumes required. However, given the changes in legislation, additional capacity for storing wood both prior to and after cutting is required, to minimise the amount of time needed in the oven to achieve the 20% moisture content.

As the existing site has gradually expanded over the years, and staff numbers have increased, the existing office accommodation has become increasingly crowded and cramped. Parking provision on the existing site is also now insufficient for the existing number of staff and visitors. The proposal will provide a new office and amenity block, with a large car park adjacent. The

existing office accommodation and parking on site will be retained, but the proposed development will enable a return to a more comfortable and less crowded working environment.

Technical evidence has been prepared to support the planning application, which confirms that it can be delivered with no significant adverse impacts, subject to suitable mitigation where appropriate. Big K are committed to being a 'good neighbour' and propose to install acoustic barriers in key areas of the site to ensure that there is no adverse impact on neighbouring residents. In addition, extensive planting and landscaping is proposed, including 63 new trees and a wildflower area, to help soften views of the buildings, and enhance the biodiversity value of the site. HGV movements across the combined Big K site will increase by just 4%, and there will be a reduction in traffic movements on the A134.

The application represents a significant investment by Big K, and signifies their commitment to West Norfolk. The principle of the development is supported by Policy CS10 of the Adopted Local Plan, as it comprises employment development required to meet a local business need. In addition, it strongly supports Policy CS01, and the key development priorities of the Borough, which include encouraging economic growth and inward investment. If it is not possible to expand the operation at Whittington Hill, Big K will need to consider relocating, meaning the loss of a number of jobs, or switching to importing timber from Eastern Europe as many of their competitors do, rather than continuing to promote British timber.

PLANNING HISTORY

20/00115/PREAPP: INFORMAL - Approve with amendment: 15/10/20 - PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE (with consultations and meeting): storage of cut timber, erection of weighbridge and formation of byeway crossing and change of use to B2/B8. - Big K Charcoal Merchants

11/00611/F: Application Permitted: Delegated Decision: 19/07/11 - Erection of a slurry store - The Piggeries, Methwold Road

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Parish Council: SUPPORT

Highways Authority: NO OBJECTION subject to conditions

As you will be aware, we have previously provided pre-application advice with regard to similar proposals. At this time, we outlined that it would be unlikely we would object to an application subject to improvements to the access onto the B1112.

Having considered the information submitted, it is noted that the applicant has outlined that the proposals would not result in a significant increase in production on the overall site (which are restricted by the capabilities of the existing buildings and operations of the factory) but allow for an increased 'on site' storage facility. In addition, it is intended to relocate the existing staff / office facilities onto this part of the site.

It is noted that the applicant is intending to significantly improve the existing access onto the B1112 through widening, visibility and surfacing improvements to cater for the development and to cater for the change in traffic profile from the current site access to this one.

The applicant is proposing a haul crossing of the adjacent PROW to provide a link between the two sites. As per our pre-application advice, you will need to consult with our PROW colleagues to seek their views on this arrangement.

As per our earlier discussion, whilst I don't doubt the applicants intent for a modest increase in traffic proposed given the size of the buildings I do believe that it would be sensible to restrict the use of the buildings to that proposed. I would therefore support the inclusion of a suitably worded condition to restrict the use of the buildings (to low traffic generating uses) as outlined.

Based upon the above, I can confirm that I would have no objection to the proposals. Should you be minded to approve the application, I would be grateful for the inclusion of conditions and informative notes relating to access, visibility splays, and the parking/ turning / access areas.

Public Rights of Way (NCC): NO OBJECTION subject to conditions

The Public Right of Way, known as Northwold Restricted Byway 10 is aligned within the red line plan. We note the proposal for a haul road crossing the Public Right of Way and we would request the applicant obtain a Highway Boundary plan so that the position and extent of the highway can be examined in more detail. This will enable us to ensure that the development does not impact on the Public Right of Way. This process can be secured via a condition on the consent.

We note the inclusion of gates across the haul road adjacent to the PROW, we would request that these open inwards (away from the PROW) to ensure that the legal extent of the PROW is not obstructed at any time. Any proposed surface improvements to the PROW must be approved by the Highway Authority prior to the commencement of any works. A Temporary Closure Order may be required if the PROW is to be unavailable for any length of time, again this must be applied for and approved prior to the commencement of any works. The full legal extent of this Restricted Byway must remain open and accessible for the duration of the development and subsequent occupation.

Community Safety and Neighbour Nuisance: NO OBJECTION subject to conditions

Lighting - No objection to the lighting shown on drawing 26215/500 Rev 0, given the acoustic fencing will exceed the lighting height of 1.8m. Please condition compliance with the drawing.

Drainage - Drawing No 26215/805 Rev A (within the FRA only) shows details in relation to the foul water treatment plant and drainage field, and soakaways. These are acceptable. Please condition compliance with the drawing.

Dust - No details have been provided to indicate that dust will be generated from site activities. The internal roads are concrete, with a tarmac parking area. The log lane area will have grassed and concrete roads nearest the boundary with residential dwellings. Type 1 roads will be deeper within the log lane site and ultimately 'shielded' by the stacked logs. All buildings are enclosed or have the capacity to be enclosed.

Noise – Welcome the revised documents submitted and the co-operation of the applicant to commit as good neighbours with regard to noise. Please condition in association with these documents. Please also condition the hours of operation of the completed site (as per agent email) –

06:00 – 18:00 Monday to Friday and occasional Saturdays during busy periods. 07:00 – 15:00 Easter Monday and May Bank Holidays only. No Sunday working is proposed. Subsequent discussions have agreed Saturday working hours of 9am to 3pm.

CMP/Demolition - Please condition a Demolition and Construction Management Plan, to ensure that the site clearance and construction phases do not have a detrimental impact on surrounding residents. We do not usually permit hours outside of Monday to Friday 0800-1800 and Saturdays 0900- 1300.

Anglian Water: NO COMMENTS

Having reviewed the development, there is no connection to the Anglian Water sewers, we therefore have no comments.

Lead Local Flood Authority (NCC): NO COMMENTS

Environment Agency: NO OBJECTION

Surface Water Drainage and Infiltration Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) - Only clean, uncontaminated surface water should be discharged to any soakaway, watercourse or surface water sewer. Surface water from roads and impermeable vehicle parking areas shall be discharged via trapped gullies. Site operators should ensure that there is no possibility of contaminated water entering and polluting surface or underground waters.

Where soakaways are proposed for the disposal of uncontaminated surface water, percolation tests should be undertaken, and soakaways designed and constructed in accordance with BRE Digest 365 (or CIRIA Report 156), and to the satisfaction of the Local Authority. The maximum acceptable depth for soakaways is 2 metres below existing ground level. Soakaways must not be located in contaminated areas. If, after tests, it is found that soakaways do not work satisfactorily, alternative proposals must be submitted.

Arboricultural Officer: NO OBJECTION subject to condition

No objections. Please condition in accordance with the arb report and plans authored by Plandecil.

Environmental Health & Housing – Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION

Air Quality - The proposed development will contain 55 new vehicular parking spaces for employees and visitors. Two of these spaces will be dedicated to EV charging stations. We welcome this addition as it will facilitate the uptake of low emission vehicles.

A Transport Assessment has been submitted as part of the application, with the projected future traffic movements outlined in Table 5.1.2. It is projected that development will result in a maximum of 56 HGV movements, 24 LGV movements, and 120 car movements per day. This is not deemed a significant change in line with EPUK and IAQM Planning for Air Quality Guidance. Regarding sustainable transport, a covered cycle stand will be provided with space for 10 bicycles. There are also bus stops located along Methwold Road and Whittington Hill.

We therefore have no objections to the proposed development regarding air quality.

There are no comments regarding contaminated land.

Historic Environment Service (NCC): NO COMMENTS

There are no known archaeological implications.

Norfolk Constabulary: NO OBJECTION.

I would encourage the implementation of the security measures & specifications found within Secured by Design (SBD) Commercial 2015 V2, as the principles and products used have a proven track record in defeating known criminal methods of committing crime, details can be found on: www.securedbydesign.com .

Layout, Perimeter Security & Site Access: The warehousing, processing buildings and an office & amenities building along with on-site parking will be positioned on the southern portion of the site, with the log storage to the north. I have no comment with regards the layout and was encouraged to read within the D&A Statement that 'Along the perimeter of the site and for security purposes, a galvanised steel palisade fence (powder coated in green) and lockable access gates will be included to provide a means of securing the site. Access to the site is strictly controlled by the Applicant.' This is very much supported (height of 2.4m–1.8m is recommended for commercial sites).

Landscaping: Consideration is required to maximise opportunities for natural surveillance, therefore it is generally recommended that plant growth above 1m and below 2m be absent to provide a 'window of surveillance' across the site.

Vehicle Parking: Allocation is to the south of the plot and front of the office/amenities block and will benefit from surveillance & movement around these area, unfortunately surveillance from this building's windows are limited – dependant on proposed occupancy of the upper floor communal office. Two-wheeled motor vehicle parking & bicycle parking: A covered cycle stand will be on site to provide secure storage of cycles x 10, this provision would benefit from additional surveillance of occupied units.

Signage: Commercial building reception entrances and car park should be clearly signposted from entrances onto the site, likewise signs that identify areas that are not open to public access act as a reminder that unauthorized persons should be challenged.

Shell of Building: Due to the remoteness of units and/or reduced activity at night and over the weekends on such sites some buildings become prone to criminal attack through walls/roofs, bypassing security doors and shutters. The wall material should therefore be designed to withstand such attacks - where lightweight construction is being considered, a reinforced lining such as welded steel mesh can enhance the security of the building fabric.

- Preventing easy access to roofs should be considered at the design stage of the building. Accessible ledges, parapets, indentations and protrusions may provide means of assisting unlawful entry.
- Details of door and window fittings are not in the scope of the application however the installation of good quality physical security fittings within the building is recommended - please refer to the SBD Commercial guide for standards and certification required.
- Some areas of the units may wish to consider access control to prevent opportunist style offences, with external entry into the building restricted to those using the correct key, key code or other access control media such as a key fob.

External Waste Storage: Waste containers, particularly those with wheels, can be used for climbing and the contents used to start fires (consider using waste containers with lockable lids). They should be kept inside a secure, externally accessed store, or roofed compound located well away from the buildings.

Intruder Alarm System: A suitably designed, fit for purpose, monitored alarm system should be installed if valuables are left in an unoccupied building. Such an alarm should be installed and maintained regularly by an NSI (National Security Inspectorate) or SSAIB (Security Systems and Alarm Inspectors Board) accredited company.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue: NO OBJECTION.

I acknowledge receipt of the above application and I do not propose to raise any objections providing the proposal meets the necessary requirements of the Building Regulations 2010 – Approved Document B (volume 2 – current edition, or as revised) including any requirements in relation to B5 access, facilities and arrangements for emergency service vehicles, as administered by the Building Control Authority.

Natural England: NO COMMENTS.

REPRESENTATIONS: THREE letters of OBJECTION received from neighbouring residents. The issues are summarised below-

- No consideration given to residents.
- The noise from the existing factory units of the sawmill ,reversing horns of fork trucks and drying fans is already a constant annoyance so please consider this as its new position is only 30 meters from housing.
- Would it not be possible for the proposed units to be moved north to nearer the A134 on this site?
- It seems unjust to build a new factory units in a developing residential area when more suitable locations in industrial locations are available.
- Buildings of some size are to be located opposite dwelling. The noise form the site with the sawmill and traffic will be unbearable.
- Site has caused extreme anxiety to residents and the scheme has no place near residential areas.
- Am happy to see a local/well established business flourishing after the last 18 months of very uncertain times and being in a position to consider expanding but I see an access is to be put leading to/from site via b1112 Methwold Rd. The recent speed limit of 40mph is not being adhered to nor is it being monitored or policed, it is not a safe option for the large vehicles to be using to enter/exit the site until something is done about the speed of drivers on this road.

LDF CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

CS12 - Environmental Assets

CS01 - Spatial Strategy

CS02 - The Settlement Hierarchy

CS06 - Development in Rural Areas

CS08 - Sustainable Development

CS10 - The Economy

CS11 - Transport

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES PLAN 2016

DM2 – Development Boundaries

DM12 - Strategic Road Network

DM15 – Environment, Design and Amenity

DM17 - Parking Provision in New Development

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
National Design Guide 2019

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The key issues for consideration are as follows, and discussed below-

- Principle of Development
- Highways / Access
- Impact on visual amenities and landscape
- Residential amenity
- Ecology
- Other material considerations

Principle of Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states in paragraph 84 the intention to support a prosperous rural economy; 'planning...decisions should enable: a) sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.'

Paragraph 85 goes on to say '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.'

Policy CS06 Rural Areas of the Core Strategy (CS) (2011) outlines the strategy for rural areas is to:

- promote sustainable communities and sustainable patterns of development to ensure strong, diverse, economic activity;
- maintain local character and a high quality environment;
- focus most new development in key rural service centres selected from the Settlement Hierarchy Policy CS02;
- ensure employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities are provided in close proximity.

In Core Strategy Policy CS10 The Economy the Council supports the rural economy and diversification through a rural exception approach to new development within the countryside; and through a criteria based approach to retaining employment land and premises.

Permission may be granted on land which would not otherwise be appropriate for development for an employment generating use which meets a local business need. Any development must satisfy the following criteria:

- It should be appropriate in size and scale to the local area;
- It should be adjacent to the settlement;
- The proposed development and use will not be detrimental to the local environment or local residents.

The application seeks consent to expand an existing well-established business within the borough, which would enable them to expand their offer and consolidate the storage of wood which currently takes place over a number of sites elsewhere. The site is located approximately 200m east of the main built extent of the settlement of Whittington, which is categorised as a Smaller Village and Hamlet in the adopted Local Plan. As such Whittington does not have a development boundary and so the application site is located on land designated as countryside in the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADMPP) (2016).

The policy framework outlined above supports the principle of the expansion of an existing rural business, and it is accepted that this may need to take place outside of development boundaries beyond existing settlements and in areas not well served by public transport. Policy CS10 allows for employment generating development which is appropriate in size and scale to the locality, and adjacent to the settlement. The scale of the development proposed is substantial given the rural location, and the impacts of this are discussed in detail below, however it would be viewed against the existing Big K site to the east and the established residential development to the west. Also, while not immediately adjacent to a settlement it is within reasonable proximity to. Finally, both the NPPF and Policy CS10 refer to the need for the development to be sensitive to its surroundings, and not detrimental to the local environment or residents. Furthermore, the scheme should not have an unacceptable impact on local roads. Again, these issues are discussed in full below.

In summary, the principle of the development proposed is in line with the NPPF, and Policies CS06 and CS10 of the CS (2011).

Highways / Access

Vehicular access to the site will be retained via the existing access onto Methwold Road (B1112), to the south of the site. A second access track/crossing will be added in the east of the site, connecting the proposed development to the existing premises, crossing the Public Right Of Way (PROW). This second access will be used by mini tractors with trailers as they ferry the goods between the two sites.

It is anticipated that vehicles will mainly be accessing and egressing the wider site from the Methwold Road (B1112), however, a proportion of the existing movements will be maintained to and from the existing premises off Whittington Hill.

The applicant has submitted a Transport Statement which considers the existing traffic movements to the existing site, and how this will change as a result of the development. The significant change will be that the number of movements to the existing site will be drastically

reduced, with the new access on the B1112 used more heavily. In total though it is predicted that there would be no increase in LGV movements; a maximum of 9 additional HGV movements per week (or maximum of 3 per day) and a maximum of an additional 25 cars per week (or 5 per day) which reflects the intention to employ an additional 5 members of staff. After querying why traffic movements will not be reduced as a result of on-site storage, the applicant has confirmed that the expansion of the business will be generating additional traffic to the site. They will bring onto site the raw materials (logs) and transport to off-site storage is being replaced by some movement across Stone Drove between the existing and proposed sites. So, while the business is expanding the increase in traffic associated with this growth is off-set by the fact that the storage will now be on site, rather than elsewhere. Hence the small increase in vehicle movements.

Neighbouring residents have raised concerns about the potential safety of using the existing access onto the B1112, given that the current 40mph speed limit is not adhered to. The applicant will significantly improve the existing access onto the B1112 through widening, visibility and surfacing. The Local Highway Authority (LHA) does not object to the scheme but does request a condition is attached to the planning consent to restrict the use of the application site to that specifically proposed rather than a general employment-generating use which would be likely to generate more traffic. In addition, the LHA requests conditions and informatives are attached relating to the proposed access, visibility splays and the parking/turning/ access areas.

The creation of a new 55 space car park will enable better parking for staff and visitors to the site. Demand has exceeded the existing car parking area, but the applicant intends to also retain this in addition. In addition two EV charging points are proposed in the new car park. In terms of alternative forms of transport for staff; there are bus stops nearby which are provided for the No.40 bus from Thetford/ Brandon to King's Lynn. Also, the development proposes a cycle storage shed/provision for up to 10 cycles.

In summary, in terms of the access proposed and impact on the local highway network, the scheme is in accordance with the NPPF and CS Policies CS08, CS10 and CS11, as well as DM10 of the SADMPP. Removing traffic from the A134 and diverting it onto the B1112 also accords with Policy DM12 of the SADMPP, which seeks to protect the strategic road network across the borough.

Impact on visual amenities and landscape

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states that decisions should 'recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'. Chapter 12 sets out the need to achieve well designed places, with paragraph 130 stating; developments should function well and add to the quality of the area over the lifetime of the development; be visually attractive; and sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

The National Design Guide reinforces these principles and can be used to consider all the elements of the development proposed; the local context, the landscape, the layout proposed and the form and scale of buildings, their appearance, the materials and any detailing.

In terms of the local context the application site is located between the existing Big K employment site to the east, which consists of a number of large-scale industrial buildings and provides a backdrop to the application site and scheme proposed. To the north and south of the site is predominantly agricultural land but moving towards the northwest is the start of the village of Whittington, established residential development. The strategic road, the A134 is to the north of the site and Methwold Road (B1112) to the south. The gradient of the land falls from the north to south by approximately 5/6m, and also from west to east by approximately

1m. The site currently consists of a number of agricultural buildings the tallest of which is 7m in height and the remaining between 3m and 5m.

The applicant has submitted a Landscape and Visual Assessment as part of the application which draws on the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment, baseline landscape information and topography. In addition, a visual assessment was carried out at seventeen different viewpoints of the site. The Assessment reached the view that the impact on local landscape character would be moderately adverse in the winter, with the impacts in the summer less. These would be expected to decrease over time as proposed planting began to mature. The parts of the site proposed for built development would obviously see a significant change however no significant landscape features would be lost, and the new development would be situated within an area enclosed by existing development and an established landscape structure.

In terms of visual amenity, the cottages at the north-east corner of the site would be most affected. These are 110m from the closest building but adjacent to the log lanes proposed. For the residents of the cottages the impact would be moderately adverse. While the proposed planting will reduce the visual impact from ground level the buildings will be visible at first floor levels and are higher than the existing piggery buildings. Similarly, there will be a moderate adverse impact on visual amenity for the dwellings to the south and southwest of the site. While there is existing screening in place, and additional proposed the development would be visible from these dwellings over the existing hedgerows. In terms of residents further west, and road users, the visual impacts are considered minor adverse because of the relationship and views of the existing Big K site adjacent. Impacts on Public Rights of Way users is said to be minor.

In terms of the effects of the development on the 17 viewpoints; the majority of potential views are from a south-east to westerly direction from the lower land or from the A134 and Methwold Road. Close views will be managed by the existing and proposed vegetation to provide screening. Plus, for those travelling along these routes the impact is brief and the landscaping mitigation will reduce this further. Views from the south and south-east will be viewed against an established wooded backdrop within an area already developed. While the buildings will be visible the impact is considered minor due to the context and partial screening.

The site layout proposed, the scale and nature of the buildings proposed are largely dictated by the operational requirements of the business. The mitigation proposed to minimise the impact of the development is in the form of the colour of the buildings proposed and the landscape proposals. The industrial large-scale buildings are proposed to be moss green in colour, with only unit 1 (anthracite grey) and the office (red brick and moss green wall and roof panels) differing.

The site currently has existing hedgerows to the north south and east. The southern boundary is relatively dense providing screening while the others are more sparse. A 5m conifer hedge is situated on the western boundary with Hill Farm House and Hill Farm Barn to the west of the site. There are also a number of existing trees around the edge of the site which are all to be protected during construction and retained. Approximately 15m of hedgerow will need to be removed to secure necessary visibility splays at the access.

The applicant has submitted a proposed landscaping scheme and management plan for the development. This proposes a tree belt to be planted along the full length of the western boundary, 5/6m deep and in total approximately 190m long (in addition to the existing conifer hedge). This tree belt will then come along the southern site boundary for 60m in length and will be 7m in depth. Beyond this on the southern boundary is a wildflower meadow planting area. Additional planting will reinforce and fill gaps in the existing hedgerows along the rest of the southern boundary and the northern and eastern boundaries where necessary. The

Arboricultural officer has no objections to the scheme and has requested the consent is conditioned in accordance with the landscape scheme and plan.

In summary, the development proposed is of a significant scale, industrial in nature and within a rural location. There will inevitably be an impact on the landscape and visual amenity in the locality. However, with the proposed mitigation measures in place, and in consideration of the context of the site, it is considered that the visual/ landscape impacts alone do not warrant refusal of the application. On balance it is considered that the scheme goes some way to addressing the NPPF and National Design Guide, accepting the nature of the development proposed, and is therefore in accordance with national policy and the Local Plan (Policies CS08 and CS12 of the CS and DM15 of the SADMP).

Residential amenity

There is a terrace of dwellings to the east of the site, adjacent to the A134, between the site and the existing Big K site. There are also three dwellings to the west of the site, two on the north side of Methwold Road, and one on the south side of Methwold Road. There have been three objections raised to the scheme raising concerns about the impact on neighbouring residents in terms of noise and disturbance from both traffic, onsite movements and the onsite operations/ machinery.

Neighbour representations also object on the grounds of the visual impact of the scheme, and in terms of residential amenity it is important to consider whether the development proposed would be overbearing or would cause overshadowing. As discussed above, the development will impact on the visual amenity of neighbouring residents to differing extents. For those dwellings to the immediate south/ west of the site the development is/ will be largely screened by existing hedging and a proposed tree belt. For Hill Farm House and Hill Farm Barn to the west (at the closest point 39m from the dwelling to the shared boundary) there is an existing 5m conifer hedge and so while the top of the buildings will be visible above this, the existing hedgerow will mean the development will not be considered overbearing. For the dwelling to the south, 28m from the site boundary on the opposite side of Methwold Road, there is some separation because of the road and also the private amenity space of the dwelling faces south. Given the busy road between the dwelling and the site, and the tree belt proposed it is considered that the buildings would not be overbearing. Due to the orientation of the houses, separation distances and existing and proposed planting the buildings will not cause substantial overshadowing to the dwellings or the immediate private amenity space. For the row of cottages to the northeast of the site; these dwellings already overlook the existing Big K site to the south and the east. However, as a result of the development from the first floor they will overlook the log piles (approx. 20m in distance at the closest point). These will be approximately 4m in height and given the nature of these and separation between it is not considered these would be overbearing or cause overshadowing to the neighbouring dwellings. There will be no overlooking or loss of privacy for neighbouring dwellings as a result of the development proposed.

In response to the objections raised and queries from the CSNN officer the applicant has carried out a Noise Impact Assessment for the proposal which has been submitted as part of the application. CSNN has been consulted on the findings of this. The report assessed current noise levels and then considered adverse noise impacts generated by the development, including vehicle movements, at different noise sensitive receptors located primarily by existing neighbouring dwellings. The report concluded that the outdoor operations associated with the site is likely to exceed the existing background level when the log stack along the north-eastern boundary is at a low level and therefore an acoustic barrier is proposed along this site boundary (at 2.5m in height). The potential adverse impact during the night-time is evaluated indoors and likely to comply with the Council criterion, therefore no further mitigation would be necessary. The report states that it is based on robust and worst-case assumptions

and therefore demonstrated that with the installation of the acoustic barrier, the development should not have a significant adverse impact upon neighbouring residents.

In addition to the acoustic barrier required to the north east of the site the applicant also proposes to provide additional acoustic barriers along the southern boundary of the gardens of Stone Drove Cottages within the existing Big K site. Also, in addition it is proposed that a 2.5m acoustic fence is provided for the full length of the warehousing units along the western and southern boundaries so impacts on residents to the north-west and south-west are further minimised. The acoustic barriers are shown on Drawing No 26215/1005 Rev J.

CSNN were consulted on the scheme and have no objections to the development subject to the inclusion of particular conditions relating to the fixed opening hours of the site, drainage arrangements, lighting and acoustic barriers. Furthermore, that a Construction Management Plan is produced to manage neighbour impacts during this phase. The applicant has stated their intention to erect acoustic barriers prior to construction and so a pre-commencement condition is attached to secure this information prior to any works. With the mitigation measures in place it is considered that the development proposed would not have a significantly adverse impact on neighbouring residents, and therefore the scheme is in accordance with Policy CS08 (of the CS) and DM15(of the SADMPP).

Ecology

There are no environmental designations within the site and the site is over 4km to the nearest edge of Breckland SPA and 4km to Foulton Common SSSI. No significant effects on protected sites are envisaged given the separation distance and nature of the proposal. The site lies outside of the buffer zone for the Stone Curlew Special Protection Area and no other Schedule 1 species are likely to breed on the site. Natural England has no objections to the application.

The applicant has submitted a Preliminary Ecological Assessment which identifies that there is potential for reptiles on the site in particular common lizards and also roosting bats are a consideration but only with regard to tree roosts. While there is potential for badgers on site there is no evidence of their presence. The Assessment states additional survey work should be undertaken as detailed in Section 5.1 and does provide recommendations for both the construction phase and for enhancement on the site. The additional surveys required and an updated mitigation and enhancement scheme (following the survey work) are conditioned. However, in line with regulations (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019) there is a duty for the Local Planning Authority to consider whether, if protected species such as badgers are found on the site, an EPS license would be likely to be granted by Natural England. The tests of derogation enables the LPA to exercise their duty in this regard.

LPA consideration of the tests:

1. NE's guidance advises that a public interest can be economic in nature. In this case, the site would expand an existing successful business which contributes to the Council's objectives to support the local economy.
2. No satisfactory alternatives – the site is adjacent to the existing premises and therefore it would not be appropriate to be sited elsewhere for operational reasons. If necessary, mitigation measures could be provided.
3. Population maintenance - it appears to be unlikely that development of this site, subject to mitigation measures specified will affect the conservation status of the protected species. In any case, there is no evidence of badgers on site at the current time and additional survey work will be carried out prior to the commencement of development.

In this case the application meets the tests of derogation and therefore the LPA can reasonably form the view, from the information submitted to it for this planning application, that NE would not be unlikely to grant a derogation licence under the Regulations in relation to this development.

Other material considerations

Flood Risk – The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore not at risk of flooding.

Public Right of Way – Links between the application site and the existing Big K site span the existing Public Right of Way known as Northwold Restricted Byway 10. The PROW officer has requested that the applicant provides a highway boundary plan to clearly identify the position and extent of the highway and will ensure that the development does not impact upon the Public Right of Way. The applicant has liaised with Norfolk County Council on this matter and we have received confirmation by email that they are satisfied for this matter to be dealt with via condition. The wording of the condition is yet to be confirmed and will be provided as late correspondence prior to the Committee meeting.

Crime and Disorder – Norfolk Constabulary (NC) raise a number of points in their consultation response. In terms of the secured by design security measures and specifications, the alarm systems, construction methods, window and door fittings and key fob entry these are outside of the requirements/ detail of the planning application. Similarly, the directional/ authorisation signage recommended within the site is unlikely to warrant planning consent in its own right and is not included within this application. The NC officer supports the inclusion of a site perimeter fence (green steel palisade fence and lockable access gates). The NC officer would welcome additional surveillance of the vehicle and cycle parking areas but given the proximity to the office, the nature of the site and the other security measures in place this is considered acceptable. It is requested by Norfolk Constabulary that landscaping is not between 1m to 2m in height to enable a degree of surveillance across the site. The site is already bordered by existing hedging / planting and it is proposed this is further enhanced across the site. While the point is noted; the nature of the site, the scale of the development proposed and the need to balance the benefits to visual amenity of the landscaping scheme proposed, are also considerations in terms of the proposed scheme. Finally, recommendations are made regarding the secure storage of waste, and the plans submitted do not indicate an external waste storage area within the application site.

CONCLUSION

The application seeks full planning consent for a large expansion of an existing business onto land designated as countryside. In terms of the principle of development, which is in support of an existing rural business, and which will employ 5 additional staff, the scheme proposed is broadly in accordance with the NPPF, Policies CS06 and CS10 of the Core Strategy.

Careful consideration has been given to the impact of the scheme on residential amenity for those neighbouring dwellings, and objections were raised on these grounds. CSNN has requested a number of conditions including restrictions on working hours, lighting, installation of acoustic barriers and a Construction Management Plan to manage this relationship and minimise the detrimental impacts. This impact is not considered so detrimental as to warrant the refusal of the application.

An assessment has also been carried out with regard to the impact of the proposal on visual amenities in this locality and the wider landscape, however the applicant proposes considerable planting and screening and the site will be viewed against the existing neighbouring Big K site. On balance this impact is considered acceptable.

Finally, it should be noted that there are no objections to the scheme from statutory stakeholders and the Parish Council does not object.

Based on the detailed discussion above the recommendation to Members is to approve the scheme subject to the detailed conditions set out below.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to the imposition of the following condition(s):

- 1 Condition The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
- 1 Reason To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004.
- 2 Condition The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans Drawing Nos-

26215/600 D Site Access Visibility Splay Plan received 21 Oct 2021
26215/020 A Site Location Plan received 31 Aug 2021
26215/1005 J Site Master Plan received 31 Aug 2021
26215/117 B Floor Plan & Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/010 Hardstanding Details received 26 Apr 2021
26215/050 Proposed Site Elevations received 26 Apr 2021 received 26 Apr 2021
26215/135 Proposed Cyclone Canopy Floor Plan & Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/500 Proposed External Lighting Scheme Plan received 26 Apr 2021
26215/001 A Topographical Study received 26 Apr 2021
26215/100 A Proposed Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/101 A Proposed Elevations 2 received 26 Apr 2021
26215/110 A Unit 1 Proposed Floor Plans received 26 Apr 2021
26215/111 A Unit 2 Proposed Floor Plans received 26 Apr 2021
26215/112 A Unit 3 Proposed Floor Plans received 26 Apr 2021
26215/113 A Unit 4 Proposed Floor Plans received 26 Apr 2021
26215/114 A Unit 5 Proposed Floor Plans received 26 Apr 2021
26215/115 A Unit 6 Proposed Floor Plans received 26 Apr 2021
26215/116 A Unit 7 Proposed Floor Plans received 26 Apr 2021
26215/117 A Proposed Dev Dryer Building Floor Plan & Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/118 A Proposed Dev Saw Building Floor Plan & Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/119 A Proposed Dev Workshop Floor Plan & Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/120 A Unit 1 Proposed Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/121 A Unit 2 Proposed Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/122 A Unit 3 Proposed Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/123 A Unit 4 Proposed Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/124 A Unit 5 Proposed Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/125 A Unit 6 Proposed Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/126 A Unit 7 Proposed Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215/130 A Proposed Office & Amenities Block Floor Plans received 26 Apr 2021
26215-131 A Proposed Office & Amenities Block Elevations received 26 Apr 2021
26215-150 A Proposed Log Lanes Typical Elevations received 26 Apr 2021

- 2 Reason For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 Condition Any access gates/bollard/chain/other means of obstruction shall be hung to open inwards, set back, and thereafter retained a minimum distance of 20 metres from the near channel edge of the adjacent carriageway.
- 3 Reason In the interests of highway safety enabling vehicles to safely draw off the highway before the gates/obstruction is opened.
- 4 Condition Prior to the commencement of the use hereby permitted the vehicular access indicated for improvement on Drawing No. 26215/1005 Rev J shall be upgraded/widened in accordance with the Norfolk County Council industrial access construction specification for the first 20 metres as measured back from the near channel edge of the adjacent carriageway in accordance with the approved plan/details to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Arrangement shall be made for surface water drainage to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge from or onto the highway carriageway.
- 4 Reason To ensure construction of a satisfactory access and to avoid carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway in the interests of highway safety and traffic movement.
- 5 Condition Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted visibility splays measuring 215 metres x 2.4 metres shall be provided to each side of the access where it meets the near edge of the adjacent highway carriageway (as measured back from the near edge of the adjacent highway carriageway).The splay(s) shall thereafter be maintained at all times free from any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.
- 5 Reason In the interests of highway safety in accordance with the principles of the NPPF.
- 6 Condition Prior to the first occupation/use of the development hereby permitted the proposed access/on-site car and cycle parking/servicing/loading/unloading/turning/waiting area shall be laid out, demarcated, levelled, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plan and retained thereafter available for that specific use.
- 6 Reason To ensure the permanent availability of the parking/manoeuvring areas, in the interests of satisfactory development and highway safety.
- 7 Condition The drainage details shall be constructed in accordance with Drawing No.26215/805 Rev A (within the FRA only) before any part of the development hereby permitted is brought into use.
- 7 Reason To ensure that there is a satisfactory means of drainage in accordance with the NPPF.
- 8 Condition The lighting scheme shall be implemented in accordance with Drawing No. 26215/500 prior to the occupation of the development or any phase of the development to which it relates, and thereafter maintained and retained as agreed.
- 8 Reason In the interests of minimising light pollution and to safeguard the amenities of the locality in accordance with the NPPF.
- 9 Condition Prior to commencement of demolition or development a detailed construction management plan must be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; this must include proposed timescales and hours of the demolition and construction

phase, deliveries/collections and any piling. The scheme shall also provide the location of any fixed machinery, their sound power levels, the location and layout of the contractor compound, the location of contractor parking, the location of plant, machinery, waste and materials storage, all proposed attenuation and mitigation methods to protect residents from noise, dust and litter, and the prohibition of any bonfires. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

- 9 Reason To ensure that the amenities of future occupants are safeguarded in accordance with the NPPF.
- 10 Condition Notwithstanding details shown on the approved plans, prior to the commencement of development full details of the acoustic barriers as shown on Drawing No 26215/1005 Rev J shall be submitted and agreed by the Local Planning Authority. The acoustic barriers shall be installed subject to a timetable to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority and shall be retained thereafter in perpetuity.
- 10 Reason In order that the Local Planning Authority may retain control over the development in the interests of the amenities of the locality in accordance with the NPPF.
- 11 Condition The application site/ premises shall only be used between the following hours 06:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday, 09:00 - 15:00 Saturdays, and 07:00 - 15:00 Easter Monday and both May Bank Holidays, and at no time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays (excluding those specified above) unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- 11 Reason In order that the Local Planning Authority may retain control over the development in the interests of the amenities of the locality in accordance with the NPPF.
- 12 Condition Prior to the commencement of development the further ecological surveys required as set out in Table 5.1 of the Preliminary Ecological Assessment completed by Small Ecology Limited and dated March 2021 shall be carried out in accordance with the timescales specified unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority. Prior to the commencement of development the results of the surveys shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.
- 12 Reason To ensure ecological impacts are fully assessed in accordance with the NPPF.
- 13 Condition Notwithstanding the mitigation and enhancement measures detailed in the Preliminary Ecological Assessment, full details of the mitigation and enhancement measures proposed (taking into account the survey results required in condition 12) shall be submitted and agreed by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the mitigation and enhancement measures thereafter.
- 13 Reason To ensure necessary ecological enhancement and mitigation measures are delivered, in accordance with the NPPF.
- 14 Condition The development hereby approved shall be built in strict accordance with the Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Tree Protection Plan with Proposed Landscaping Scheme and Management Plan produced by Plandescil dated March 2021.
- 14 Reason To ensure that the development is properly landscaped in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with the NPPF.

- 15 Condition All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation or use of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants that within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species as those originally planted, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written approval to any variation.
- 15 Reason To ensure that the development is properly landscaped in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with the NPPF.
- 16 Condition The premises shall be used for the processing and storage of charcoal and timber products and no other purpose, including any use within Classes E(g), B2 or B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) 1987, as amended, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification.
- 16 Reason In order that the Local Planning Authority may retain control over the use of the premises where an alternative use otherwise permitted by the above mentioned Order would be detrimental to the amenities of the locality.
- 17 Public Rights Of Way condition to follow