

Chapter 1

## **INTRODUCTION**

# 1 Introduction

## Background

- 1.1 SmithsonHill is applying to South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) for outline planning permission (all matters reserved) for the development of a park for AgriTech on land east of the A1301 and south of the A505 at Hinxton in South Cambridgeshire. This application seeks approval for up to 112,000 m<sup>2</sup> (gross internal) employment floorspace, supporting infrastructure, amenities and landscape works, including publicly accessible informal open space, enhancements to parkland; vehicle and cycle parking; service areas; bus / cycle interchange on land west of the A1301 / north of the A505; and infrastructure works including new vehicular accesses, highway improvement works, pedestrian and cycle links with bridge crossings over the A1301 / A505 and River Cam, site re-profiling, drainage works, foul and water pumping stations and primary electricity sub-station; telecommunications infrastructure and other associated works.
- 1.2 Figure 1.1 shows the application boundary and the location of the application site in relation to Hinxton.
- 1.3 The proposed development was reviewed in the context of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) National Planning Practice Guidance: *Environmental Impact Assessment* (NPPG; updated 2017). The review concluded that environmental impact assessment (EIA) was necessary because the proposed development falls under schedule 2 of the Regulations and the nature, scale and location of the proposals meant that there was the potential for significant environmental effects.
- 1.4 The 2011 EIA Regulations implement the requirements of Directive 2011/92/EU 'on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment'. This Directive has been amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, which was transposed into UK regulations on 16 May 2017. As the assessment of the proposals, including the submission of a scoping request to SCDC, commenced prior to 16 May 2017, the 2011 EIA Regulations continue to apply.

## Environmental impact assessment

- 1.5 EIA is a process for ensuring that the likely significant effects on the environment of a new development are fully understood and taken into account before development is allowed to proceed. The aim of EIA is defined in the DCLG's online NPPG (paragraph 002, reference ID: 4-002-20140306) as:

*"to protect the environment by ensuring that a local planning authority when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project, which is likely to have significant effects on the environment, does so in the full knowledge of the likely significant effects, and takes this into account in the decision making process."*

- 1.6 EIA is integral to the planning process, but it is also a separate and objective assessment of the potential effects of the proposals, allowing the local planning

authority to make an informed decision. To satisfy the requirements of the EIA Regulations, an ES must address the matters listed in table 1.1. It should also include such of the information set out in table 1.2 as is reasonably required to assess the environmental effects of the development and that the applicant can reasonably be required to compile.

Required topic	Location in ES
A description of the development, comprising information on the site, design and size of the development	Chapter 2
A description of the measures envisaged in order to avoid, reduce and, if possible, remedy significant adverse effects	Chapters 4 to 13 (mitigation sections) and chapter 14 (summary of mitigation measures)
The data required to identify and assess the main effects that the development is likely to have on the environment	Chapters 4 to 13 (baseline and predicted effects sections)
An outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant or appellant, and an indication of the main reasons for the choice made, taking into account the environmental effects	Chapter 2 (alternatives section)
A non-technical summary of the information provided in rows 1 to 4 above	Non-technical summary at the front of this document
<b>Table 1.1: Summary of matters that an ES must address</b>	

Topic	Location in ES
A description of the development, including in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A description of the physical characteristics of the whole development and the land use requirements during the construction and operational phases</li> <li>• A description of the main characteristics of the production processes, for instance nature and quantity of the materials used</li> <li>• An estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation etc) resulting from the operation of the proposed development</li> </ul>	Chapter 2
An outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant or appellant and an indication of the main reasons for the choice made, taking into account the environmental effects	Chapter 2 (alternatives section)
A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development, including, in particular, population, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, including the architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the inter-relationship between the above factors	Chapters 4 to 13 (baseline sections). Note that the influence of climate change on flood risk is examined in chapter 7 (ground conditions and the water environment)
A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, which should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development, resulting from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The existence of the development</li> <li>• The use of natural resources</li> <li>• The emission of pollutants, the creation of nuisances and the elimination of waste, and the description by the applicant or appellant of the forecasting methods used to assess the effects of the environment</li> </ul>	Chapters 4 to 13 (predicted effects and cumulative effects sections) and chapter 14 (summary of residual effects)
A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment	Chapters 4 to 13 (mitigation sections) and chapter 14 (summary of mitigation measures)
A non-technical summary of the information provided in rows 1 to 5 above	Non-technical summary at the front of this document
An indication of any difficulties (technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered by the applicant in compiling the required information	Chapters 4 to 13 (methodology sections)
<b>Table 1.2: Further information that an ES should also address where possible</b>	

- 1.7 This ES has been produced in accordance with the 2011 EIA Regulations and best practice guidance issued by the government and other organisations, such as the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). It has been prepared by Terence O'Rourke Ltd based on information gathered during a formal EIA of the proposals.

### **The applicant**

- 1.8 SmithsonHill is a joint venture between local farmers Russell Smith Farms and Hill Commercial Investments. The partnership is looking to facilitate initiatives that will create hubs for ground breaking discoveries – bringing together and encouraging interaction and the exchange of knowledge. Through the combination of land, cutting edge farming, construction expertise and community solutions, the partnership aims to facilitate the future success of both business and local communities, as well as to help Cambridge retain its global economic position and contribute to the region's future prosperity.
- 1.9 Russell Smith Farms currently grows 1,500 acres of cereals and sugar beet and 1,000 acres of organic and conventional vegetables. Operating in the heart of Cambridge's biotech cluster, it is aware of the importance of synergy between farming and science and technology and has strong ties with some of the larger seed and plant breeding companies. It is one of the early members of Agri-Tech East and works closely with some of the leading agricultural companies in the research and development field to help bring new products to market. Russell Smith Farms is environmentally and socially responsible and is signed up to the government's entry-level and higher-level environmental stewardship schemes and is also a LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) demonstration farm.
- 1.10 Hill Group has considerable experience in delivering development through joint ventures. This experience is used to assist its partners in securing planning permission, maximising assets, and delivering infrastructure and buildings. Before setting up Hill Commercial Investments, Hill Group had already completed a number of commercial developments, including a new primary school at Walden School (formerly Friends' School) in Saffron Walden, doctors' surgeries, community buildings, its own Head Office at Waltham Abbey and a multiscreen cinema and commercial units in Walthamstow.

### **The consultant team**

- 1.11 The coordination of the EIA, the preparation of the ES and the assessment of community and social, cultural heritage, landscape and visual, and natural heritage effects have been undertaken by Terence O'Rourke Ltd. Assessments of other environmental issues have been undertaken as follows:
- Agriculture – Richard Stock
  - Air quality and noise – ACCON UK Ltd
  - Economic – Collison & Associates Ltd
  - Ground conditions and the water environment – Hydrock
  - Traffic and transport – Alan Baxter Ltd
  - Waste – Envision

## **The structure of the ES**

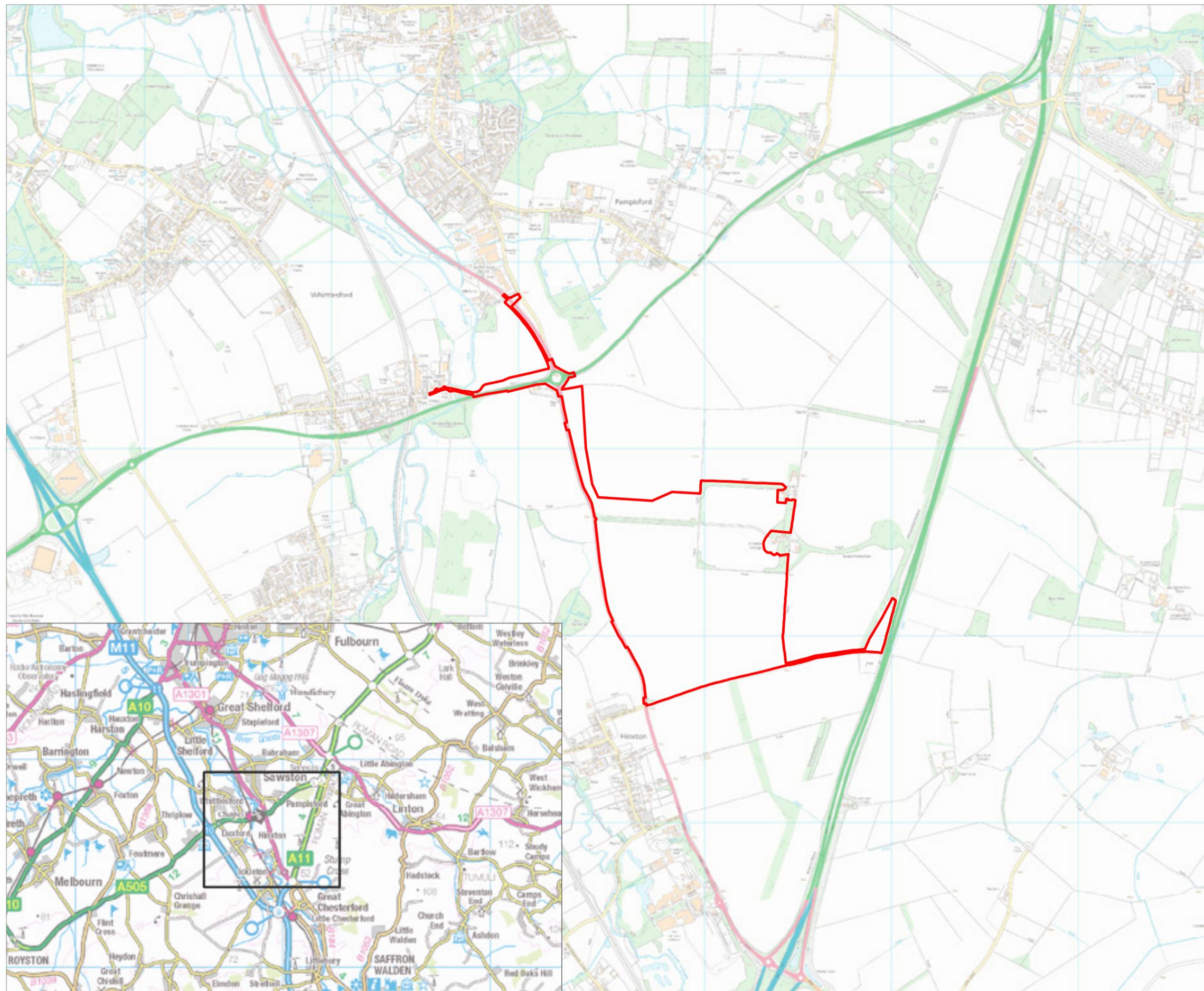
- 1.12 This ES is divided into three main sections. Part one (chapters 1 to 3) provides the background to the application site, describes the proposed development and identifies the environmental issues that have been considered as part of the EIA. Part two (chapters 4 to 13) sets out the potential environmental effects of the proposed development and highlights the mitigation measures that will be employed to reduce the overall environmental impacts of the proposed development. Part three (chapter 14) summarises the proposed mitigation measures and the significant residual effects.
- 1.13 A glossary is included at the back of this ES to explain essential terminology used in the text. Technical appendices have been produced providing detailed information on the environmental issues. The non-technical summary (NTS) of the ES, which forms the frontispiece of this folder, is also available as a separately bound document.

## **Further information**

- 1.14 Copies of this ES and the technical appendices have been sent to SCDC. The full ES with its technical appendices may be inspected at:
- South Cambridgeshire District Council – Planning Department  
Cambourne Business Park  
Cambourne  
Cambridge  
CB23 6EA
- 1.15 All the planning application documents should also be accessible from the council's website: [www.scambs.gov.uk/content/search-planning-application](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/content/search-planning-application).
- 1.16 Comments should be addressed to South Cambridgeshire District Council – Planning Department at the above address and copied to Terence O'Rourke Ltd at the address below. Additional copies of the ES (paper copy or CD) and any further information about the project may be obtained at a reasonable charge to reflect printing and distribution costs by contacting:

Terence O'Rourke Ltd  
Everdene House  
Deansleigh Road  
Bournemouth  
Dorset  
BH7 7DU

Tel: 020 3664 6755  
E-mail: [maildesk@torltd.co.uk](mailto:maildesk@torltd.co.uk)



 Site boundary

0 475 m



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