

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

IN RELATION TO

A PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE APPLICATION
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF UP TO 9 DWELLINGS

AT:

LEIGHFIELD FARM
LEIGH
SWINDON
WILTSHIRE
SN6 6RQ

APPLICANT: MR ROGER BAKER

PREPARED BY:
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Introduction

This supporting statement has been prepared by WebbPaton LLP in support of a permission in principle (PiP) application on behalf of Mr Roger Baker at Leighfield Farm, Leigh, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN6 6RQ. This proposal is to repurpose the existing farmyard to residential use, which would involve demolishing the existing agricultural buildings and locating 9 new build dwellings on this site.

Proposal

WebbPaton LLP have been instructed by Mr Roger Baker to prepare and submit an application to obtain permission in principle (PiP) to construct 9 dwellings within the farmyard at Leighfield Farm. The concept of a PiP was introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017 and the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017. It is possible to apply for PiP for this development because it is not:

- a. Major development;
- b. Habitats development;
- c. Householder development; or
- d. Environmental Impact Assessment development.

The scope of PiP applications are limited to location, land use and amount of development. Other matters should be considered at the Technical Details Consent (TDC) stage. Details of the initial plans and supporting information are outlined below in this supporting statement.

A PiP application sets the principle for a maximum of 9 residential dwellings on an area of up to 1 hectare. This application falls within this maximum number and area.

Background

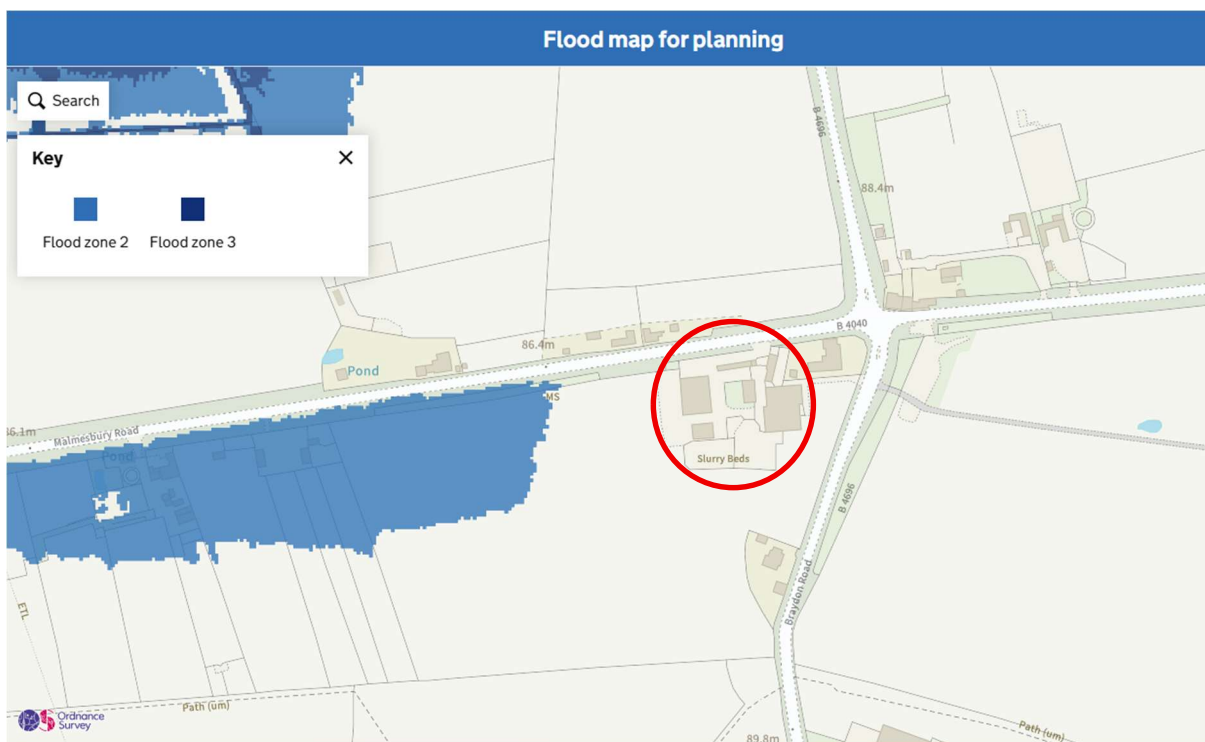
The farmyard at Leighfield Farm has always been classified as agricultural use, with the applicant's father moving into the farm in 1964 and at that time the farm was already an established dairy. As outlined under the 'Use' heading, the farmyard has been utilised as a dairy farm up until the winter of 2022/2023. However, in the winter of 2022/2023, the dairy herd

was dispersed, and the farmyard was utilised for less intensive agricultural operations which meant livestock were no longer kept on farm.

Application Site, Location & Description

The application site is located at the crossroads of the Braydon Road (B4696) and the Malmesbury Road (B4040). The site is situated between the villages of Leigh and Minety in North Wiltshire. While the site is not situated directly within a residential settlement, there are a number of properties (owned by third parties) situated along the Malmesbury Road and Braydon Road. The closest being opposite the farmyard and less than 40m away. Currently these surrounding properties are overlooking a farmyard in an increasingly dilapidated state, becoming more of an eye sore, detracting from the local amenity of the area. Given the farmyard is located right next to the crossroads, all passing traffic can also see the dilapidated farmyard.

The site lies outside of the following designations: National Landscape, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monuments, and Special Area of Conservation and does not lie within a flood zone.



The site is situated within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone but this is of little relevance when repurposing the farmyard for residential purposes. There are no public rights of way through

the site directly, but there are links to nearby footpaths i.e LEIG17 and LEIG18, therefore adding to the sustainability of locating potential dwellings on the application site.



Livestock to support the dairy enterprise were sold and moved off site during the winter of 2022/2023. Since then, the farmyard has been utilised for less intensive agricultural activities and without investment will become dilapidated. The existing farmyard includes the below buildings and infrastructure and can be seen on the accompanying “Existing Site Plan (Aerial View)”:

- A red brick former dairy parlour
- A concrete portal frame barn used for cubicle housing
- 3 steel portal frame buildings (2 with lean-to) used for general storage
- A dutch barn used for general storage
- 1 enclosed steel portal frame building with low eaves height
- Silage Clamp
- Previous slurry lagoon now filled in

The site is considered dilapidated and many of the buildings in their current state are unsuitable for housing livestock. While there is infrastructure on site, as it stands the infrastructure does not conform with legislation and would be condemned by the Environment Agency if livestock were housed in the farmyard. Although currently the farmyard is now used for less intensive

agricultural operations, the farmyard remains in a very poor state of repair and would be more suitable as a non-agricultural use.

Use

1. Previous Use & Ceasing Dairy Operations

Leighfield Farm previously operated as a dairy farm for many years. However, the size and layout of the holding made dairying at the site increasingly unviable. During the summer months, cattle were required to cross the B4696 four times daily to reach the grazing land within the boundary of the farm. This raised road safety concerns and prompted complaints from the council at the time. Furthermore, the farmyard required significant investment in order to continue to comply with the Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (England) Regulations (otherwise known as SSAFO). Therefore, the decision was made to sell the dairy herd in the winter of 2022/2023 as the applicant was aware the farmyard could no longer operate as a dairy holding without being in contravention of legislation. Further to this, in 2024 the Environment Agency undertook an inspection and deemed the farmyard at Leighfield Farm to not be SSAFO compliant. Enforcement action would have been taken by the Environment Agency to stop dairying at the site, but the applicant had made the decision to stop dairying prior to this. However, the applicant has continued using the farmyard for less intensive agricultural use such as storage of agricultural machinery and fodder. But the farmyard will still require further investment to remain in such agricultural use as demonstrated by the letter received by the Environment Agency in 2024, attached in Appendix 1.

2. Viability

It was deemed unviable to undertake the works needed to ensure the farmyard became SSAFO compliant and to continue the dairying at Leighfield Farm. The significant investment required (which at minimum would have been at least £500,000) would have proved unviable for the farming business to support. The herd nor farm was at a scale to support or fund such investment and therefore there was no alternative but to cease dairy operations before the EA took enforcement action. Although the farmyard is currently used for less intensive agricultural use (storage of machinery and fodder) this use is certainly not maximising the potential of the

farmyard and in time, will fall further into disrepair meaning even the current agricultural use will be unsuitable for the existing farmyard.

It should be noted that the wider economic climate undermines the viability of farming, especially at a small scale such as that seen at Leighfield Farm. Therefore, investing in the farmyard to be used solely for agricultural use is not sustainable for the site seen at Leighfield Farm. The key factors include:

- Lack of farming subsidies: The main agricultural subsidy (most recently known as the Basic Payment Scheme) which has supported farming since 1993 has now been all but completely phased out by the current Government. Furthermore, there are currently no environmental subsidy schemes for farmers to enter at this moment in time. This leaves many farms, particularly those which are small with no diversification on farm already (such as Leighfield Farm), with serious cash flow and profitability issues.
- Falling farmgate prices: The agricultural sector is extremely volatile due to a number of factors, one being that farmers are at the mercy of farm gate prices. The anticipated downturn of milk prices has yet again been seen in recent weeks due to global and domestic market pressures. This is not helped by the increase of supply in the market resulting in negative market movement. While prices in the dairy sector remain volatile and profit margins are squeezed, the farmyard requires significant, and unviable, investment to be SSAFO compliant.
- Rising input costs: Poor 2025 forage yields due to dry weather conditions have driven up silage, maize and straw prices. Further eroding profit margins for those with livestock enterprises. However, this also applies where fodder (silage) is being made as farmers are at the mercy of high input prices such as fertiliser and seed.
- Climate change: The impact of climate change continues to cause further extremes in the weather patterns experienced in this country. From flooding issues in the winter of 2024 through to drought conditions in summer 2025, the unpredictable weather patterns continue to make farming at a small scale (such as that at Leighfield Farm) to become increasingly difficult.
- Upcoming inheritance tax changes: Amendments to APR/BPR from April 2026 are encouraging restructuring or exit strategies across the sector. It is also forcing farmers to diversify, which this application seeks to do.

Given the above reasons, this application seeks to explore alternative and more sustainable uses of the site rather than to continue farming which remains unviable for the applicant.

3. Design

The farmyard infrastructure at Leighfield Farm is in a poor condition and becoming increasingly dilapidated. Due to the close proximity of residential properties, the farmyard is increasingly becoming an eyesore. The scale of investment required to make the farmyard compliant for agricultural use is disproportionate to the income achievable. Residential development, however, provides a viable means of securing the future use of the site and delivering a return that justifies the investment required. Accordingly, residential use represents the most sustainable and deliverable option for Leighfield Farmyard.

Therefore, this application aims to establish the use of the site for 9 residential dwellings. If it is felt by the Local Planning Authority that nine dwellings would be too concentrated, then the applicant would be prepared to consider a lesser number of dwellings. The indicative site plan accompanying this application provides an overview of how 9 dwellings could be arranged within the application site to ensure each dwelling has their own garden and parking whilst benefitting from a shared storage area for refuse collection and cycle storage. This indicative plan is by no means fixed but simply demonstrates the principle of 9 dwellings could be located on this site with adequate space for access and turning areas. Obviously, the details of such a scheme would be set out at the Technical Details Consent (TDC) stage.

4. Access & Highways

As seen on the accompanying maps the farmyard has multiple existing access points and it is proposed, if residential use is granted, the farmyard would have a one way system in place. You can see on the indicative site plan that one access (to the north) would be used to enter the site, whilst the other existing access (to the east) would be used to exit the site. We are conscious of highways and any traffic arising should be carefully considered as we are aware the application site sits adjacent to the Braydon crossroads. This crossroads, at times, can be a busy junction and therefore we would be conscious not to exacerbate any traffic issues. A one way system in and out of the site would allow traffic to continue to flow at the junction. This application provides an opportunity for the Council to regularise the traffic in and out of this site, compared

to the large, slow moving vehicles which currently enter and exit the farmyard for agricultural purposes.

It should also be noted that there is a further access which could be utilised, west of the site boundary, as marked in red on the “Alternative Access” plan accompanying this application. This is within the applicant’s ownership and could be utilised if the LPA wanted traffic entering and exiting the site further away from the Braydon crossroads.

It should be noted that a bus service passes the site daily, this is the 93A run by Coachstyle. Additionally, the Wiltshire Connect service is available in the area.

Planning History

The below list of planning applications demonstrates previous attempts by the applicant to secure a residential use on the existing farmyard. This is because the farming enterprise has been unsustainable and diversification of the farmyard has previously been considered. You will be able to see all the previous applications have looked to secure change of use through Class C3 or Class Q. This PiP application is being submitted as none of these applications have been successful due to not complying with the policy of such change of uses. The application now wishes to establish if residential use of this site would be considered as a planning principle. The previous applications include:

- **REF: 16/09938/PNCOU-** Prior approval for a Proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Buildings to 3 Dwellinghouses (Class C3), and for Associated Operational Development. The application was refused on the 15th May 2016. This application was refused on a highway objection for sustainable transport grounds.
- **REF: 17/07959/PNCOU-** Notification for Prior Approval under Class Q - Change of Use of Agricultural Building to Dwellinghouse. The application was refused on the 4th October 2017. The application was refused due to livestock still being housed at the site. This is due to noise and odour from the livestock impacting the amenity of the occupants of the dwellings.
- **REF: 17/11396/PNCOU-** Notification for Prior Approval under Class Q - Conversion of Agricultural Building to a Single Dwellinghouse (C3) and

Associated Operational Development. This application was refused on the 11th January 2018. The application was refused due to the farm still being in agricultural use and the movement of livestock and machinery would impact on the amenity of the future occupants of the proposed development. The building selected for conversion was described as impractical and undesirable to change from agricultural use to residential.

It should be addressed that the previous applications for change of use from agriculture to residential only included part of the farmyard. Therefore, some of the buildings were still in agricultural use and therefore impacting the amenity of the proposed dwellings. The redline boundary for this application includes the entirety of the farmyard and therefore if the application was accepted all farming operations would cease at the site once details had been confirmed through the Technical Details Consent (TDC) stage.

Policy

This section of the supporting statement sets out the context for determining the PiP for the proposed development in terms of national development plan policies. The compliance of the proposal with these policies is considered in detail below.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that the determination must be made in accordance with the [development] plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan consists of Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy 2015.

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This sets out that approval should be given without delay for development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan. The proposal aims to set the precedent for 9 residential properties within the farmyard as seen on the enclosed plan. In this case, the significant environmental benefits of redeveloping an EA condemned farmyard which seeks to prevent any further pollution or contamination, appears to deliver key sustainability and environmental benefits. The application also seeks to demolish the existing farmyard buildings which are becoming increasingly dilapidated and not only

unsafe, but an eyesore to the local community. By redeveloping the site, it undeniably becomes more sustainable.

The NPPF recognises that rural areas will naturally have fewer sustainable transport options. Paragraph 109 of the PPG states *“that an agricultural building is in a location where the local planning authority would not normally grant planning permission for a new dwelling is not a sufficient reason for refusing prior approval”*. Accordingly, the re-use of a rural building or, in this case farmyard, to meet the rural housing demand, is the correct approach. That being said, the application site is not completely isolated with public bus stops being approximately 94 meters away from the application site, just east of the Leigh cross roads. The Leigh crossroads bus stop has the C54 bus service operated by Pulhams Coaches, providing a direct service to Cricklade, Cirencester and the village of Minety. This bus stop is shown on the supporting plan titled ‘Alternative Accesses’. It should also be noted that the 93A bus service run by Coachstyle also passes the application site daily. Additionally, the Wiltshire Connect service is available in the area.

Paragraph 72 of the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to maintain a five-year housing supply and Paragraph 78 adds a 5% buffer to this requirement. According to Wiltshire Council’s ‘Housing Land Supply Statement’ published June 2025, the Local Housing Need deliverable supply is currently only at 2.42 years, as seen in the snip below of Table 2a from page 12 of said statement. Therefore, Wiltshire Council are far below the required land supply required to meet housing needs and certainly do not meet the 5% buffer required. It is therefore considered that this PiP should be considered favourably, with Wiltshire Council not having sufficient housing land supply. Although this proposal is on a small scale, it will still help towards meeting the housing supply and should be supported by the LPA.

Table 2a: 5-year Housing Land Supply position for Wiltshire (using Local Housing Need)

Area	Annual Local Housing Need (LHN)	5-year housing requirement	5-year housing requirement plus buffer*	Deliverable supply 2024-2029	Number of years deliverable supply
Wiltshire	3,525	17,625	18,506	8,945	2.42

** The Council's 2023 Housing Delivery Test result indicates that there is a requirement to add a 5% buffer to the housing requirement (see section 4 above)*

Paragraph 88(a) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed beautiful new buildings and Paragraph 88(b) supports the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. The proposal is for the redevelopment of a dilapidated farmyard. The buildings are in very poor condition and will only become dilapidated further over time, if an alternative use is not sought. The most sustainable option is for the farmyard to be converted for residential use.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states the overarching objectives for the framework. One of which is an environmental objective outlining there must be efficient use of land. A much more efficient use of the site would be for residential use instead of agriculture as outlined previously in this statement.

The NPPF glossary confirms that 'brownfield land' is equivalent to 'previously developed land'. The farmyard at Leighfield Farm should be considered as 'brownfield land' given it has previously been developed for agricultural use and is not a greenfield site. The NPPF explicitly supports PiP applications on brownfield sites and therefore the LPA should look to support this PiP application.

APPENDIX 1- ENVIRONMENT AGENCY ASSESSMENT REPORT



Mr Baker
Leighfield Farm
Leigh
SN6 6RQ

Our ref: 45/055/0045

Date: 28th May 2024

Dear Mr Baker

Visit Assessment Report – Leighfield Farm

When we, the Environment Agency visited your farm on 28th May 2024, it was stated that Leighfield Farm was to be sold for development at the end of May 2024 and the Leighfield Farm would no longer operate as an agricultural business. Due to this information, an inspection of the land, buildings and necessary paperwork was not undertaken. However, if for whatever reason the sale of Leighfield Farm is not completed and the farm is to continue as an agricultural business an inspection will need to be conducted and you must inform the Environment Agency.

An Action plan, in this instance, will not be issued.

Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter, the accompanying email or the regulations.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Field
Agriculture Regulatory Inspection Officer

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