



PLEASE READ FIRST: PLANNING STATEMENT (30/01/26)

Portway House, Old Sarum Park, off Lysander Rd, Old Sarum, Salisbury SP4 6EB

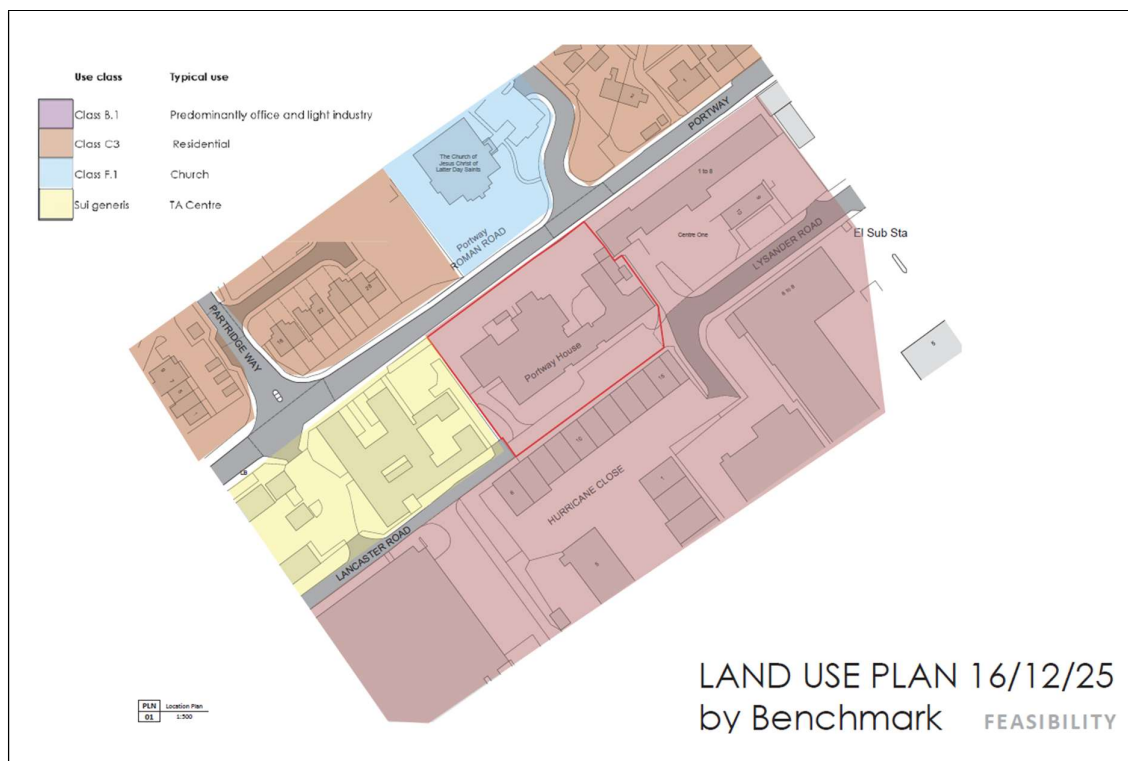
[1] Class MA application for 20 flats &

[2] Planning application for new access (to serve Class MA):

"Proposed construction of a new vehicular and pedestrian access, and dropped kerb to Portway House from the road: "Portway" – including removal of two trees (replacement with x4 trees) - removal of x3 temporary structures, (all to enable - separate application PL/2025/0997 - a long term viable alternative Class MA C3 residential use for 20 flats)."

Introduction

Wessex Archaeology (WA) own and occupy Portway House as a lawful B1 (a) office over ground and first floor (c.1,080 sqm), with about 60 car parking spaces, all set within a 0.4 ha site. There are trees and hedges and small areas of lawn. The office is accessed via Lysander Rd, from within Old Sarum Park – in this area there are only B.1 office and light industrial uses (see land use plan below).

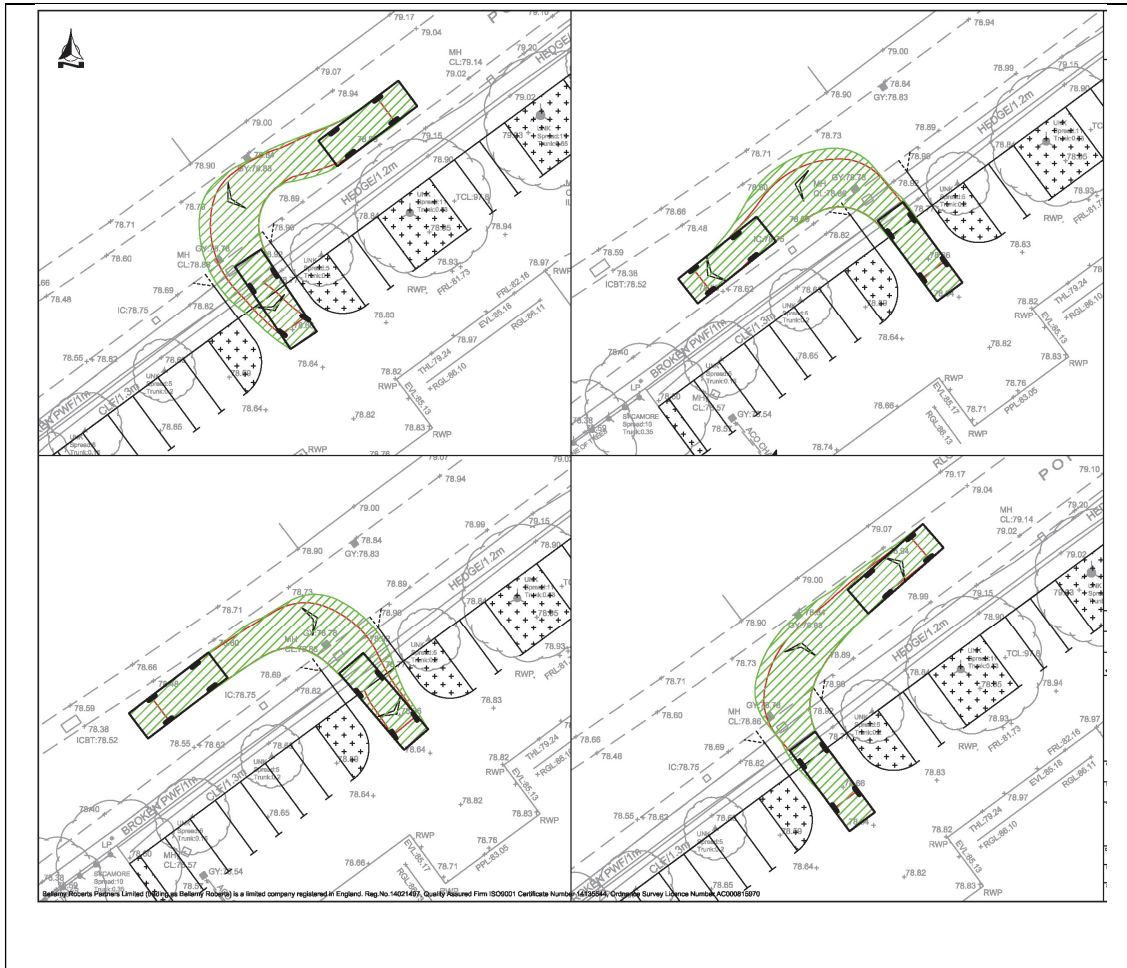


By January 2026, WA will have decanted almost all of their office staff and equipment – and most of their archive - from Portway House to a modern and fit for purpose building in Amesbury. Portway House, will be empty and the site 'mothballed'.

In anticipation of the site falling vacant in 2026, and to avoid long term costs fighting dilapidation, WA has taken two steps during 2025.

Step 1 Pre-App: In the Spring of 2025, WA submitted a bundle of preliminary reports and plans to Wiltshire Council with a Request for Pre-Application Advice (“**a pre-app**”). The pre-app proposal was to create a new access from the distributor road known as “Portway”. We indicated the site may, if a new non-industrial access was created, be suitable for (individually or as a mixed use) - education, health, residential and/or hotel. Details plans were submitted demonstrating how the access would work, in technical terms (extracts below)

The pre-app's new access was designed by Highway Engineers Bellamy Roberts and offered compliant new visibility splays of 2.4m x 120m in both directions and full 'tracking details':



The whole pre-app received a tepid response. Wiltshire Council expressed several preliminary concerns regarding the principle, heritage, trees, visibility splays and also a concern because we could not confirm what the precise proposed long term viable use of the building and site might be.

The disappointing Pre-App Reply from The Authority was received on 31/07/25. Next, because the pre-app reply did not give us any direction, particularly on heritage matters, we approached the Planning and Heritage Officers involved with the pre-app with a request to meet on site to discuss the challenges posed by this property. Alas, both Officers declined politely (August 2025). This led to WA taking another approach.

Step 2 Go directly to the market. Myddelton & Major (M&M) started to market Portway House in August 2025 with a reasonable guide price of £850K. To date – c.6 months 'on' - there has been no (zero) offers to buy it, as an office. There has only been one – potential - conditional offer to convert Portway House into flats, subject to:

- (a) securing a residential Class MA prior approval; and,
- (b) a fit for purpose residential access from Portway (road).

Step 3a: Class MA: WA submitted a Class MA application for 20 flats (PL/2025/0997) – due for determination on or before 17/03/26 - because:

The only likely viable long-term use for the building is currently residential.

Step 3b: Heritage: WA has completed a report setting out a better understanding of the heritage significance and also an impact assessment regarding the proposed conversion to residential – in all respects:

In summary, WA consider Portway House to be a Non Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA). See Heritage Report by WA.

WA also consider the significance of Portway House and The Old Sarum Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings. WA conclude that the internal layout and position of external doors and windows of the office, lends itself to conversion to flats and that the proposed new access is acceptable, in all respects.

Step 3 c: New Access: To complement and complete the 20 Class MA flat scheme, WA has instructed a Team of Professionals to submit a fit for purpose full planning application for a new access from “Portway”, plus all the minor alterations to provide adequate visibility splays, sufficient car parking, amenity space, landscaping, bike and bin stores, etc for the flats.

We are therefore submitting two robust applications capable of approval and implementation independently and/or together.

Both applications are supported by robust upbeat evidence and we therefore commend them for approval, because:

The Council's pre-application assessment of July 2025 correctly identified that any application must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The present proposal does precisely that.

It responds directly and substantively to the concerns raised at pre-application stage and is supported by clear, compelling, and up-to-date evidence which materially alters the planning balance.

While the site lies within the settlement boundary of Salisbury, a Principal Settlement, the earlier assessment properly identified competing policy constraints relating to employment land designation, heritage sensitivity, and environmental considerations.

Each of those matters has now been addressed in full.

The proposal before the Council is not a reiteration of the pre-application scheme; it is an evolved and evidence-led response to it.

Principle of Development and Employment Land

At pre-application stage, the Council placed significant weight on Core Policies 20 and 35 and the protection of land within a Principal Employment Area. That approach was entirely orthodox. However, the policy framework expressly allows for departure where there is robust evidence that a site no longer has a realistic or viable long-term employment function.

That evidential threshold is now met. A detailed Marketing Report prepared by Woolley & Wallis (January 2026), specialist commercial and planning agents with local expertise, demonstrates almost six months of genuine, sustained marketing, conducted on reasonable terms, without any market interest in re-occupation for employment purposes. There is no suggestion that this outcome is anomalous or unrepresentative. On the contrary, it confirms that continued employment use is no longer viable.

In those circumstances, residential use is not merely acceptable in principle; it is the only realistic means of securing the long-term use and conservation of the building. Prolonged vacancy would be inimical to both policy objectives and heritage stewardship.

Heritage and Conservation

The site's location within the Old Sarum Airfield Conservation Area and its relationship with nearby listed buildings is acknowledged and embraced. The building is rightly treated as a non-designated heritage asset of significance. The applicant, Wessex Archaeology, brings particular expertise and commitment to that task.

A new Heritage Assessment (January 2026) provides compelling evidence that the proposal, including the revised access strategy, would not result in harm to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, nor to the setting of designated heritage assets.

Importantly, the assessment identifies tangible and deliverable public benefits, including the opening of views to the Haskard Ranges, which were not before officers in summer 2025. Any residual impact would, in heritage terms, be neutral or beneficial.

Highways and Access

The Council's earlier highways concerns are understood. However, they were necessarily formed in the absence of the information now provided. Updated market evidence demonstrates that residential occupation cannot realistically function via Lysander Road and that access from The Portway is both appropriate and necessary.

Fresh technical and heritage evidence confirms that the proposed access would not set an undesirable precedent, would not result in visual harm, and would not erode the character of the highway or Conservation Area.

The loss of two low-value Category C trees is fully mitigated by replacement planting. On a fair assessment, the earlier highways objections no longer apply.

Environmental Matters and Infrastructure

Potential amenity, ecological, and infrastructure issues have been carefully examined. Updated land-use analysis confirms neighbouring uses are office-based and compatible. Biodiversity Net Gain, nutrient neutrality, and recreational mitigation are standard matters capable of being secured by condition or obligation. The applicant is willing to enter into a Section 106 agreement if required.

Conclusion

Taken together, the new evidence fundamentally alters the planning balance. The proposal now accords with employment land policy, safeguards and enhances heritage interests, provides an appropriate access solution, and satisfactorily addresses environmental and infrastructure considerations. The cumulative weight of these material considerations plainly supports the grant of planning permission.

Richard Greenwood BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI
Director