



RCC TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANCY



Site: Farm building associated with Hales Farm, Crookwood Lane,

Urchfont

Proposal: Change of use of agricultural building to car repair workshop

On behalf of: Mr G Potter

Date of Issue: January 2026



RCC TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANCY

PLANNING STATEMENT

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1.0 BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant to support their planning application for the change of use of an agricultural workshop building associated with Hales Farm, in Crookwood Lane, to a car repair workshop and MOT centre, in order that it can be utilised by Urchfont Garage who will have to leave their current site later this spring. The new site is located approximately 1 mile (a 3 - 4 min drive) from the current site in the centre of the village and is therefore conveniently located for Urchfont residents who make up many of their clients.
- 1.2 The applicant is seeking consent for a change of use of the building only. It is not proposed to make any alterations to the building. It is planned that all work and ancillary storage (other than customer parking) will take place within the building.
- 1.3 As the Council will be aware, Urchfont Garage is hugely supported by those in the village and therefore finding them a new site locally is very important for Parish residents. In commenting on the planning application for the redevelopment of the existing garage site, the Parish Council stated that *"The garage provides a much-needed community service and is greatly valued by residents ..."*
- 1.4 The application relates to a building located within a relatively new farmyard on the outskirts of Urchfont. The applicant and his family previously owned Hazel Green Farm located on the edge of the village, to the east of the current application site. Hazel Green Farm was allocated for housing development in the Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Once the farmyard had been developed, the applicant needed a new base for his agricultural business and so applied for consent under prior approval arrangements for a new farmyard on the current site in Crookwood Lane.
- 1.5 Prior approval for the agricultural buildings was considered under reference numbers 18/08667/APD and 19/04899/APD. In both cases the officer's report advised that the siting and external appearance of the buildings were considered to be acceptable. The farm buildings have since been constructed and brought into use.
- 1.6 The building the subject of this application is currently used as a workshop for the farm. Whilst it is still in use, it is planned that the applicant will rationalise the use of the other buildings in order to free up this building to provide a new location for Urchfont Garage.
- 1.7 It is noted that when agricultural buildings are approved under permitted development rights, if they are no longer required for agricultural purposes within 10 years of the building being completed then they must be removed. This requirement can however be overridden by a new planning application for an alternative use, such as the current submission.
- 1.8 The statement will examine how the proposed development relates to the site and its context, as well as provide an explanation and justification for the scheme having regard to as national and local plan policy and guidance.



2.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The application site is located on the northeast side of Crookwood Lane in Urchfont, approximately 850m to the west of the village. The farm is the principal base for the established farming business operated by the applicant. Figure 1 below shows the location of the site in relation to Urchfont, whilst figure 2 identifies the building the subject of this application.

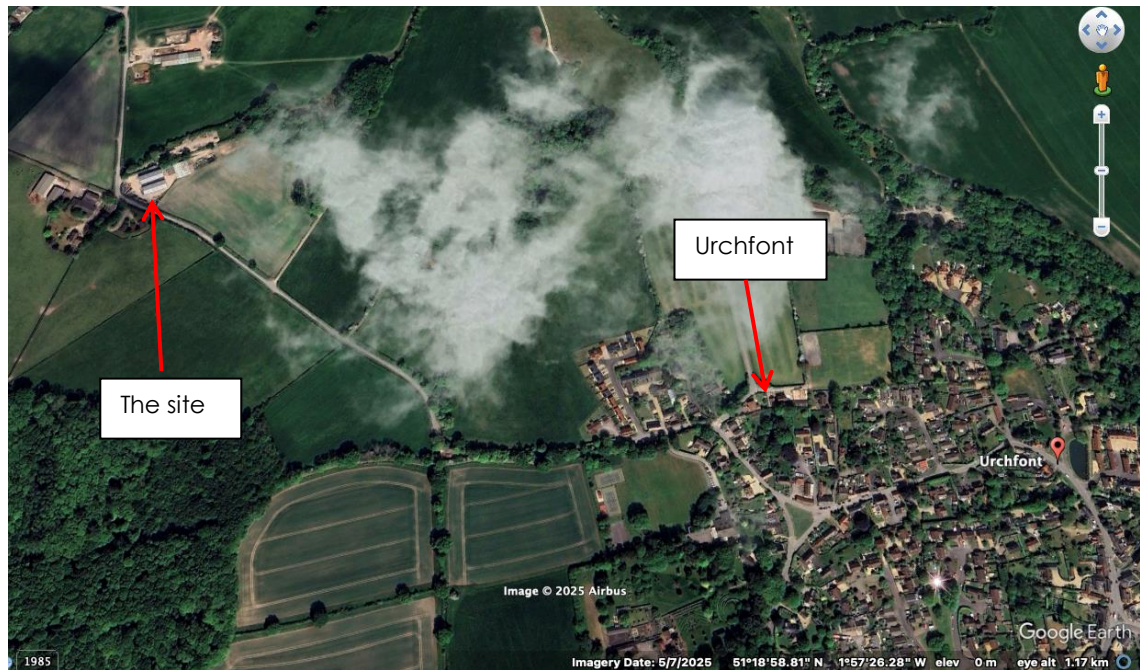


Figure 1 – Application site location



Figure 2 – Application building within the farmyard

- 2.2 This application relates to the northernmost agricultural building currently used as the farm workshop. The floor area of the building amounts to c341m². It is a typical modern farm building with a steel frame, concrete panels around the lower walls and corrugated metal cladding to the upper walls and roof. It has a roller shutter door and personal door on the front (west) elevation, see figures 3 and 4 below.



Figure 3 – Application building



Figure 4 –internal view of application building

- 2.3 The building is set back from Crookwood Lane and sits alongside two other agricultural buildings of a similar scale. All the buildings are set within a large

hard surfaced farmyard. Vehicular access to the building is via the existing farm access from Crookwood Lane. There is a mature hedgerow along the road frontage and a row of mature trees along the northern boundary of the site,

- 2.4 Immediately to the north of the site is the former Devizes Mini Skip site currently used as a waste transfer station. Further to the north and to the west lie two other farmyards, which each include a residential property. There are three holiday cabins to the south. Beyond this, the site is surrounded by agricultural fields.
- 2.5 There are no landscape designations covering the site or the locality and it is located in Flood Risk Zone 1 (at lowest risk of flooding).



3.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1 The planning policy framework relevant to this proposal is the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 (WCS).
- 3.2 The designation of the Urchfont, Wedhampton and Lydeaway Neighbour Plan (NP) was approved in April 2017.
- 3.3 Material considerations comprise the following:
- National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF)
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- 3.4 The relevant policies and guidance are set out in the associated tables:

WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

Policy	Title
CP1	Settlement strategy
CP2	Delivery strategy
CP12	Devizes community area
CP34	Additional employment land
CP48	Supporting rural life
CP51	Landscape
CP57	Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
CP60	Sustainable transport
CP61	Transport and new development
CP64	Demand management

URCHFONT, WEDHAMPTON AND LYDEWAY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Policy	Title
D1	Design
TIC1	Local traffic and movement
CN1	Protecting the landscape
LB2	New or expanding businesses

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Policy	Title
6	Building a strong competitive economy
9	Promoting sustainable transport
11	Making an effective use of land
12	Achieving well designed places
15	Conserving and enhancing the natural environment



4.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

4.1 The main planning issues to be discussed are:

- Principle of proposed change of use
- Design and wider impact on visual amenity and surrounding landscape
- Highway safety
- Residential amenity
- Ecology/BNG

Principle of Development

4.2 At the national level, the NPPF sets out the broad planning policies and objectives of National Government with the purpose of supporting and achieving sustainable development. It is structured around a number of overarching themes, which collectively achieve the Government's desire of sustainable growth, which references economic, social, and environmental factors.

4.3 Chapter 6 of the NPPF recognises the importance of supporting the development needs of businesses, emphasising that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can "invest, expand and adapt". Paragraph 88 confirms that:

"Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings;*
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses..."*

4.4 Planning policy and guidance at all tiers aims to not only support the diversification of agricultural businesses, but also support the retention and growth of existing businesses. This proposal offers an ideal opportunity not only for Urchfont Garage who were looking for premises in the local area in order to relocate their business but also for the applicant as a form of diversification to supplement their agricultural income.

4.5 Urchfont Garage is a small business currently operating from a site in the village that is due to be redeveloped for housing. This proposal is simply to provide new premises for the business in the immediate locality in order that they can continue to serve their loyal local customers. The change of use of the farm building offers an excellent opportunity to achieve this and make the best use of an existing rural asset.

4.6 At the local level, the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) is an economic led Plan that prioritises the need to build a competitive economy for the long term, encouraging new jobs to the area and importantly, seeking to retain existing



businesses. Policy 34 encourages and supports farm diversification proposals. Policies CP1 and CP2 offer support for economic development in suitable and sustainable locations such as the market towns and larger villages. However, these policies also recognise that there will be circumstances in which other forms of development are acceptable. These are permitted as an 'exception' and are noted in paragraph 4.25. Amongst others, one such exception policy is 'Core Policy 48: Supporting Rural Life' which specifically covers the conversion and re-use of rural buildings, including for employment purposes. It reads:

"Proposals to convert and re-use rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses will be supported where they satisfy the following criteria:

- i. The building(s) is/are structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building.*
- ii. The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas.*
- iii. The building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure.*
- iv. The site has reasonable access to local services. OR*
- v. The conversion or re-use of a heritage asset would lead to its viable long term safeguarding.*

Where there is clear evidence that the above uses are not practical propositions, residential development may be appropriate where it meets the above criteria."

4.7 In response to criteria i) to iv), of CP48 we would comment that:

i. The building(s) is/are structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building.

4.8 It is evident from inspection that the modern building in question is structurally sound and capable of reuse for the proposed purpose without major rebuilding. There is no need for any extension or structural alteration or adaptation. The steel frame and cladding to the walls and roof will be retained as existing and consequently the building would retain a utilitarian character, in keeping with the adjoining buildings and its rural surroundings.

ii. The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas.

- 4.9 The building forms part of a group of farm buildings and, once the new use has commenced, the building would still be in keeping with and read as part of this small cluster of built form. Views of the building and the parking area would be largely localised from close to the access point and from Crookwood Lane as it passes the site. However, the existing trees along the northern boundary of the site and the hedgerows both within the application site, and the surrounding landscape, intervene and serve to soften and partially screen views of the site.
- 4.10 The building will therefore continue to sit comfortably within the site and its surroundings. The local area is not a residential area, instead it is working rural environment, with three farmyards and a waste transfer station. Furthermore, due to the intervening distances between the building and its nearest neighbours, and the existing uses on the site and within the local area, the proposed change of use would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas. These issues are discussed in further detail in the relevant sections below.

iii. The building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure.

- 4.11 The building is served by adequate access and infrastructure. It is sited within a farmyard where both vehicular access and infrastructure (connections to water and electricity) are already in place. The proposed scheme includes provision for a treatment plant as there is no foul sewage available at the site.
- 4.12 The yard area is currently serviced by large agricultural machinery - tractors, trailers and can easily accommodate the traffic movements associated with the change of use.
- 4.13 The short section of Crookwood Lane leading from the site to the village is narrow in width but already accommodates agriculture related traffic and benefits from a fairly straight alignment, passing places and slow traffic speeds. This issue is discussed in further detail in the relevant section below.
- 4.14 Consequently, it is considered that the site is already served by adequate access and infrastructure.

iv. The site has reasonable access to local services

- 4.15 Turning to the final criterion regarding the location of the site, it must firstly be remembered that policy CP48 is a policy which seeks to permit rural development within the countryside, outside of the usual 'sustainable' settlements. It therefore follows that 'access to services' in this regard should not be assessed in the same manner as non-exceptional development located within the settlements, and that there will necessarily be reliance on the private car.
- 4.16 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF recognises 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*". Nonetheless, we submit that this site is not unduly remote; being just

a short distance from the village of Urchfont and the proposal aims to provide a much-needed service for existing customers and local residents who would otherwise have to drive into Devizes for car garage services.

- 4.17 In terms of sustainability, there are no other suitable sites available in the village. If this site were to be rejected, Urchfont Garage would have to relocate further afield, resulting in longer journeys for their customers to access vehicle repair facilities and MOT services. The proposal will therefore be of benefit in terms of an overall reduction in customers' vehicle movements following the loss of the existing site in the village centre.
- 4.18 In terms of the NP, one of its key objectives is to protect and enhance local opportunities for employment. In order to achieve this aim, policy LB2 supports the establishment or expansion of small scale employment enterprises in existing premises or on new sites subject to a number of criteria.
- 4.19 As set out above, whilst the site is not immediately adjacent to the development boundary of the village (criteria a), the site is not a significant distance from the boundary and there are no other alternative sites available that would comply with this criterion.
- 4.20 Criteria (b) to (h) are addressed in the relevant sections below.
- 4.21 In terms of criteria (i) Urchfont Garage is clearly very well supported by local residents and as such the retention of the business in the local area would make a positive contribution to sustainability and well-being of the Parish Community.
- 4.22 It is therefore considered that the proposal complies with all the criteria set out in policy CP48 of the WCS and in policy LB2 of the NP. Furthermore, although the scheme is to be assessed against CP48 as it is a conversion of a rural building, it is also important to emphasise that the application also represents a farm diversification proposal supported by CP34 of the WCS.

Design and wider impact on visual amenity and surrounding landscape

- 4.23 Policy CP57 requires development to be of a high standard of design, having regard to the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, CP51 places high importance on conserving the wider landscape.
- 4.24 Similarly, the aims of policy D1 and appendix A in the NP are to ensure that new developments are designed to be appropriate to the character of the surrounding area. Policy CN1 of the NP seeks to protect the scenic qualities and unique elements of the parish landscape.
- 4.25 Section 12 of the NPPF, also highlights the significance of good design to the principles of sustainability and paragraph 135 requires that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.
- 4.26 Externally, the building will remain as it is as present as the proposals involve no alterations to the building. As a result, there would be no impact upon the



external appearance of the existing building, and it would continue to be read within the context of the existing yard and farm complex and would not be seen as isolated nor unduly prominent.

- 4.27 It is proposed that all work and ancillary storage (other than customer parking) will take place within the building. Customer parking will be provided within the existing hardstanding as shown on the submitted drawings. This will ensure that the appearance of the site will remain in an orderly and uncluttered condition. The applicant has confirmed that they are happy to accept a suitably worded condition to control this.
- 4.28 Car parking within the existing farmyard will be largely screened from public views by the roadside hedging, boundary trees and the other large-scale buildings within the site. The existing trees and boundary hedgerows will be retained and protected. Furthermore, any views of the site from the road would be short-lived and highly localised. Figures 5 to 7 over show public views of the site from Crookwood Lane.



Figure 5 – View of application site from Crookwood Lane looking south



Figure 6 – View of application site entrance from Crookwood Lane



Figure 7 – View of application site from Crookwood Lane looking north west

- 4.29 Having regard to this established context and coupled with the modest scale of the external changes to the site, the proposals are not going to affect the established visual character of the area as a whole. As such we submit that the proposal would not have any adverse impact on the visual amenities of the area. Consequently, the proposals accord with the relevant guidance and policies in the NPPF, policies CP51, CP57 and the relevant criteria contained within CP48 of the WCS and policies D1 and CN1 and with the relevant criteria contained within LB2 of the NP.

Parking and Highway Safety

- 4.30 Turning to matters of highway safety, policies CP60 and CP64 deal with the traffic impacts of development and parking standards. These policies aim to ensure developments adequately address matters of access arrangements and road safety alongside adequate parking provision. Similarly, Policy TIC1 of the NP relates to local traffic and movement.
- 4.31 Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that:

“Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios”

- 4.32 As set out in section 2 of this statement, the building is accessed via the farm yard entrance which affords reasonable visibility at its junction with Crookwood Lane which then leads on towards Urchfont. The access is already used by large agricultural machinery - tractors, trailers and can easily accommodate the traffic movements associated with the change of use.
- 4.33 Although Crookwood Lane leading from the site to the village is narrow in width, it already accommodates agriculture related traffic. It is also reasonably quiet, includes passing places and traffic speeds tend to be low. There is ample space for **more than 12** parking spaces and associated turning for customers.
- 4.34 In terms of sustainability, as mentioned above, this is the only site available within the village for Urchfont Garage to relocate. If this application is refused, the existing garage would have to set up further afield, resulting in longer journeys for their customers to access a vehicle repair facility and MOT services. Currently, other than Urchfont Garage, the closest MOT facilities to Urchfont are located in Devizes. The proposal will therefore be of benefit in terms of an overall reduction in vehicle movements in the local area.
- 4.35 Having regard to highway safety and parking provision, the scheme is considered to comply with the requirements of CP60, CP64 and with the relevant highway criteria of CP48 of the WCS and policy TIC1 and with the relevant highway criteria of policy LB2 of the NP.
- 4.36 For the reasons set out above, it is submitted that the proposal would not have a severe impact on the road network and instead that it includes and provides adequate parking and suitable access to the site and therefore refusal on these grounds cannot be warranted.

Residential Amenity

- 4.37 Core Policy 57 of the WCS sets out the general principles for the design of development, including impacts on neighbours. Similarly, policy H2(i) of the NP supports development proposals which have an acceptable effect on the living conditions of residents in the locality.



- 4.38 The closest residential dwelling is Wickham Green Farmhouse together with the holiday chalets located to the south of the site. These properties are separated from the site by the existing working farmyard at Wickham Green Farm and Crookwood Lane. The agricultural activities on the existing farm site (including within the farm workshop building), on Wickham Green Farm and within the adjoining waste transfer station have potential to generate a considerable level of noise.
- 4.39 The applicant is keen that all work and storage should take place within the existing building to ensure the proposal will not result in harm to neighbour amenity. The applicant has confirmed that they will accept a suitably worded condition to control this. As a result, it is not considered that proposed use would create noise issues that are harmful to residential properties, or the wider area.
- 4.40 We therefore submit that no adverse impact upon the amenities of these dwellings would therefore arise. The scheme therefore complies with the relevant amenity criteria of CP57 and CP48 of the WCS and the relevant criteria of policy LB2 of the NP.

Ecology

- 4.41 The development site encompasses an existing agricultural farmyard/storage area with compacted artificial hard surfacing or bare land. There is a limited amount of vegetation along some of the site boundaries. The submitted drawings indicate that all existing vegetation will be retained.
- 4.42 The planning application is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain as the existing agricultural storage area with compacted artificial hard surfacing has a biodiversity value of zero. The development does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 sqm of on-site habitat and less than 5m of on-site linear habitats.



5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 In conclusion, we submit that the proposed development does not result in any material harm and, moreover, will contribute to supporting the local economy. It will support and assist an existing local business that is highly valued by the Parish Council and local residents by providing new premises in the immediate locality in order that they can continue to serve their loyal customers. It will also support the existing farm enterprise as a form of diversification to supplement the agricultural income.
- 5.2 It complies with both local planning policies and national planning guidance and represents a sustainable form of development. The Council is therefore requested to approve the planning application.

