

3rd March 2026

R21-003

Planning Department
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Bythesea Rd
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN

Retrospective application for engineering operations comprising alterations to land levels and formation of hardstanding at South Farm, Water Eaton, Swindon, SN6 6JU

Dear Sir / Madam

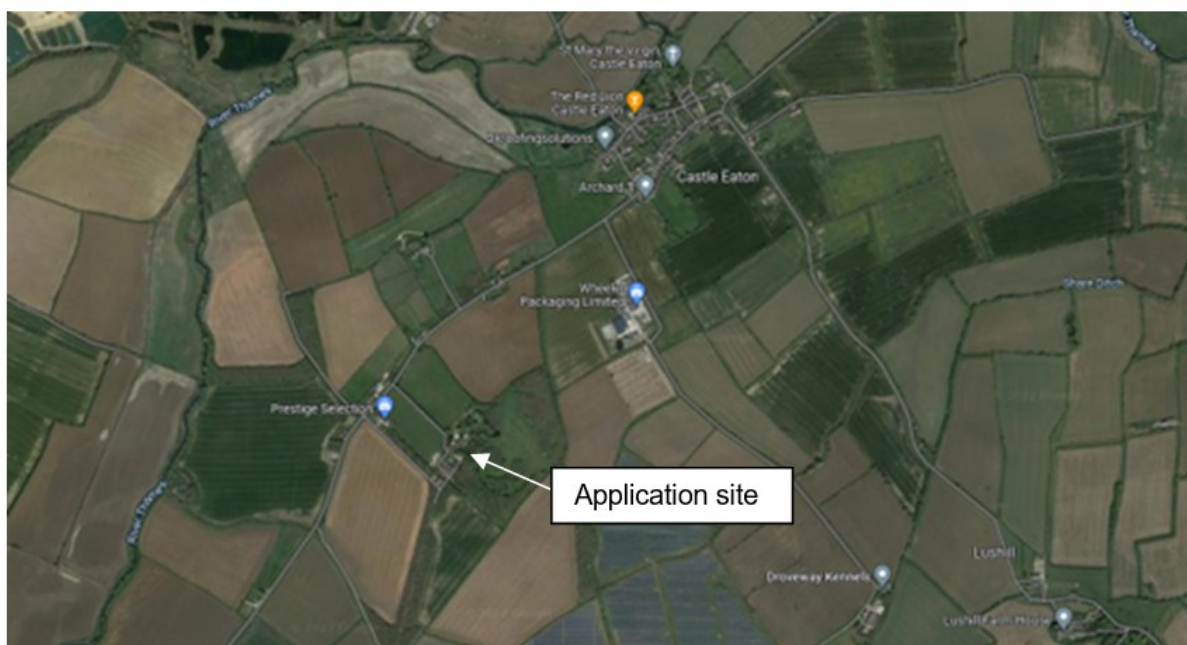
RAW Planning Ltd has been instructed by KES Ventures Ltd to submit a retrospective planning application seeking permission for engineering operations comprising alterations to land levels and the formation of hardstanding at South Farm, Water Eaton. This letter provides a summary of the proposals and the planning considerations.

The application has been prepared following constructive engagement with Wiltshire Council's Enforcement Team in relation to case reference ENF/2025/00602. At the time the works were undertaken, the Applicant understood that the improvements to the existing farmyard surface fell within permitted development rights associated with agricultural operations. Following discussions with the Council, it has been agreed that the extent of engineering works, including alterations to land levels, requires planning permission. This application has therefore been submitted to regularise the development.

Site Description

The application site is located approximately 1 mile south west of the village of Castle Eaton on the eastern side of the road that connects Castle Eaton (to the north east) and the A419 (to the south west).

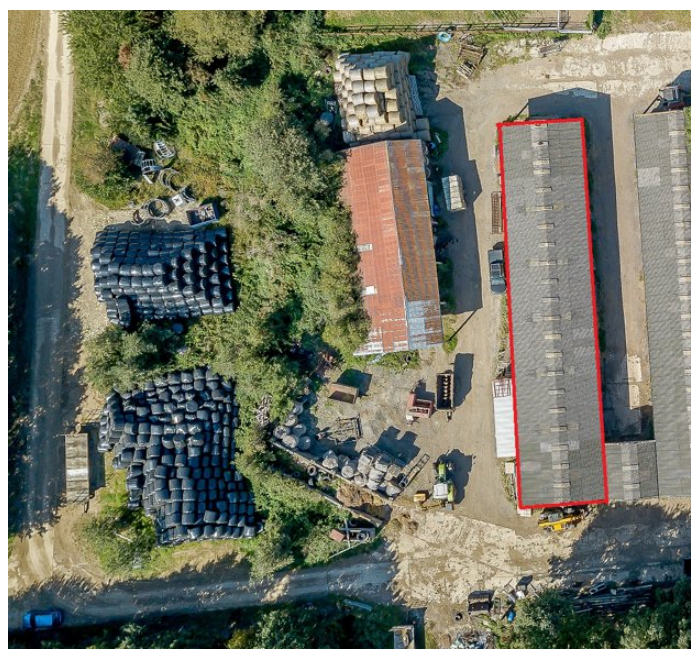
The site is accessed via a concrete access track that first passes the property known as The Lodge (including the business Prestige Cars) on the left (north) and then runs parallel to agricultural land before leading to the application site on the left (north). An aerial photo of the application site and immediate surrounding area is inserted below.



The wider South Farm complex comprises a range of former agricultural buildings, some of which have diversified into commercial uses over time, whilst agricultural activity continues within the wider holding. An aerial photo of the application site is inserted below identifying various buildings at South Farm.



The application site itself comprises a gravelled area located on agricultural land. The site was recently cleared of overgrown vegetation, and a compacted crushed stone surface installed. Prior to this, much of the site already comprised existing hardstanding, including an old concrete slurry ramp and hardstanding surrounding the bales storage area, as demonstrated by the photograph below.



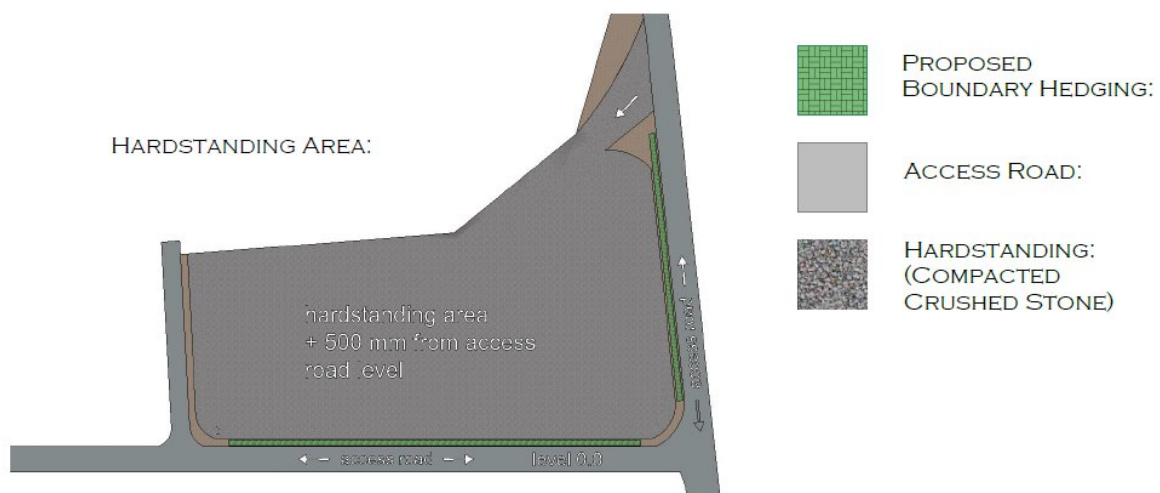
The application site is not subject of any statutory or local landscape, heritage or ecological designations and is located within flood zone 1 which has the lowest probability of flooding. There are no Public Rights of Way that cross or run in close proximity to the site.

The application site has been subject to 2 previous applications for container storage. The first application (LPA ref: PL/2023/10620) related to the current application site and was for 20 containers. The application was refused for reasons relating to the principle of development, impact on the character and appearance of the area as well as ecological impact.

A revised application (LPA ref: PL/2025/08929) was submitted for a smaller area and a reduced number of 8 containers. The application was refused for similar reasons.

The Proposals

This application seeks retrospective planning permission for engineering operations comprising alterations to land levels and the formation of a hardstanding within an existing farmyard area at South Farm. The works involved levelling the site and laying a compacted crushed stone surface to provide a stable and usable area. As shown on the submitted drawings (extract below), the hardstanding has been formed at a level approximately 500mm above the adjacent access road to create a functional working surface.



Prior to the works for which retrospective permission is sought the application site was partially used for the storage of hay bales and general agricultural machinery (by the neighbouring farmer) as shown in the aerial photo above. The Applicant cleared the site with a view to generally tidying up the site and providing a more usable and accessible area compared to the adhoc hardstanding that was generally muddy and uneven. There was an existing ramp into the area and compacted crushed stone was laid to level out the area and the ramp.

As well as tidying up the site the works provide for a more usable area for the neighbouring farmer who uses the land for the storage of hay bales and machinery.

The compacted crushed stone surface maintains a simple rural appearance appropriate to its agricultural setting. Proposed boundary hedging is indicated on the drawings to provide additional visual containment, and an area of proposed scrub planting is proposed by way of ecological enhancement.

For clarity, this application relates solely to the engineering operations and hardstanding and does not include any proposals relating to storage containers, which were subject to a separate application. The land will continue to be in agricultural use and any change of use to the top section for container storage will be subject to a separate application.

Planning Assessment

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for this application comprises the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and the relevant policies are set out in the sections below. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a key material consideration.

The Principle of Development

Core Policy 1 and Core Policy 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy establish the spatial strategy for development, directing most growth towards defined settlements whilst allowing development within the open countryside where justified by a functional rural need or where it supports land-based activities requiring a countryside location.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF confirms that planning decisions should support a prosperous rural economy, including enabling the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. In addition, Core Policy 48 recognises the importance of sustaining rural activity and supporting development that contributes to the ongoing function of the countryside.

The proposed development comprises engineering works within an established farmyard. The hardstanding was laid with a view to tidying up the site and providing a more usable surface which is largely used by the neighbouring farmer for the storage of hay bales and machinery. The works are closely related to the former agricultural buildings which have largely been converted to commercial use and are contained between these buildings and the access road whilst also being closely related to the surrounding agricultural land. The hardstanding will not therefore extend into an area of open undeveloped countryside.

Having regard to the above, the principle of development is considered acceptable and consistent with the spatial strategy of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and national policy objectives for supporting agricultural operations within rural areas.

Landscape Impact

Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character, ensuring that development responds positively to its setting. Core Policy 57 requires development to achieve high standards of design that respect local character and the surrounding environment.

The hardstanding is located within an existing farmyard context and utilises a compacted crushed stone surface typical of agricultural settings. Although the works have involved alterations to land levels, these have been undertaken to create a functional working surface and remain limited in scale and visual prominence.

The development reads as part of the established agricultural yard rather than as an isolated or urbanising feature within the wider landscape.

There are no public rights of way (PRoW) within the vicinity of the application site and the site is not visible from any public roads. The hardstanding will not therefore affect any public views. Notwithstanding this proposed boundary hedging and scrub planting, as shown on the submitted drawings, will help to contain the site. The proposal is therefore considered to respect local landscape character and accords with Core Policies 51 and 57.

Ecology Considerations

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken pursuant to previous reasons for refusal on the site. The PEA concludes that the woodland adjacent to the site is not considered to be priority habitat (as previously advised by the Council) and it is likely that the woodland lost on site had the same composition as the adjacent woodland and therefore no priority habitat was removed on site. The PEA does however conclude that due to the loss of woodland habitat along with mixed scrub and ruderal vegetation there has been some severance of connectivity between the neighbouring woodland bands and parcels. Replacement habitat is therefore proposed, including approximately 50m of species-rich native hedgerow along the southwest boundary of the site. It is also recommended that bat boxes are provided along the existing woodland boundary and that a pile of deadwood or hibernacula is created within the woodland strip adjacent to the site.

Subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation the proposals are considered to comply with Core Policy 50 in terms of encouraging development to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

Given the retrospective nature of the proposals the application is exempt from BNG.

Highways

The proposal utilises existing access arrangements and does not introduce additional traffic generation beyond that associated with the established agricultural use. Accordingly, no highways impacts arise.

Neighbouring Amenity

The works are confined to an established agricultural yard and relate to activity already associated with the site's agricultural use. No new buildings or external lighting are proposed and no unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity are anticipated.

Summary

This application seeks to regularise engineering works within an established farmyard area that were undertaken to tidy up the application site. The hardstanding area will continue to be in agricultural use and will be used by the neighbouring farmer for agricultural purposes. The application site is not visible from any public vantage points and is well related to the existing farmyard at South Farm. Notwithstanding this new hedgerow and scrub planting are proposed around the boundaries of the site. Given the siting of the hardstanding together with the new landscaping the proposals are considered to result in an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of the locality in accordance with Policies 51 and 57 of the Core Strategy.

I trust the above and enclosed provides you with sufficient information to validate this application, however should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Pflieger'.

Kerry Pflieger BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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