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## PLANNING STATEMENT

**SITE:** Land adjoining Chelworth Lodge Industrial Estate, Cricklade, Wilts, SN6 6HP

**APPLICANT:** Michael Lindsey

### Introduction:

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application seeking permission for the change of use of land formerly in agricultural use for commercial purposes at the land adjoining Chelworth Lodge Industrial Estate, Cricklade.

The application follows previous submissions and appeal decisions relating to the use of the land and has been prepared having careful regard to the planning history of the wider site.

The purpose of this submission is to address the matters previously identified by the Council and the Planning Inspectorate. It presents a clearly defined proposal which reflects the established character of the surrounding area and the operational needs of the existing businesses.

The application seeks to regularise and appropriately manage an established commercial yard which functions as part of the wider Chelworth employment cluster, without extending into the surrounding countryside.

The application is supported by a Unilateral Undertaking which secures the removal of all unauthorised temporary buildings from the site within 56 days of any grant of planning

permission, thereby ensuring a reduced and more appropriate form of development compared to that previously considered at appeal.

### Site Description:

The application site comprises a parcel of land measuring approximately 0.6ha located immediately to the south of Chelworth Lodge Industrial Estate, to the north of Braydon Lane.

The established Industrial Estate is located some 130m northwest of the B4040 and the Ashton Keynes/Chelworth crossroads, to the southwest of Cricklade. It is a brownfield site with significant vehicular movements associated with the operational commercial uses.

See the indicative map below:



Historically the land formed part of a wider agricultural holding and was previously laid to pasture. The site is accessed via an existing route which passes through the established commercial yard to the north before crossing a small watercourse via an existing bridge. The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of commercial, storage and transport-related uses associated with the wider Chelworth employment area, together with areas of open agricultural land.

Existing built form and activity within the immediate vicinity includes a range of industrial and commercial units, vehicle movements and open storage areas. The site itself contains areas of hard standing and is currently used for the parking and manoeuvring of commercial

vehicles together with ancillary storage associated with existing businesses operating within the wider site.

The boundaries of the site are defined by established vegetation, including mature hedgerows and evergreen tree planting, which provide a high degree of screening from the surrounding road network and public vantage points. In wider views, the presence of existing commercial development within the adjoining industrial estate forms the predominant visual context.

To the south of the site lies open land which remains in agricultural use. The site is therefore read in the context of a transition between established commercial activity to the north and more open rural land beyond.

The application site is already in established use as a commercial yard associated with the wider Chelworth Industrial Estate, a function it has performed for a number of years. The site accommodates the parking and manoeuvring of commercial vehicles, together with ancillary storage and office facilities required to support day-to-day operations. This includes the use of containers and a portacabin for storage and administrative purposes, as well as the partial use of the existing agricultural building for commercial storage. The site is accessed via, and operates as part of, the wider industrial estate, and therefore functions as an integral component of the established employment area rather than as an isolated or standalone form of development.

#### Economic Activity and Employment

The application site forms an integral part of an established and active employment area, supporting a range of transport, logistics and associated commercial businesses. The site accommodates several independent operators, collectively contributing to a significant level of local employment and economic activity.

The current businesses operating from the site include S.L. Newman Grab Hire, PMJ Logistics, BCA Automotive, Stakia Limited, Baco Trans Limited, BMT Logistics, Oysstta Limited, Logistics Consult and Atlas Transport. Across these businesses, there are approximately 55–60 employees directly associated with operations on the application site, comprising predominantly drivers and operational staff, together with a smaller number of administrative roles. There are full commercial workshop facilities, toilets and shower are available 24 hrs per day.

In addition, a large building located to the eastern part of the wider site is occupied by Trolley Maintenance Services, a business specialising in the repair and supply of supermarket trolleys. This operation employs a further 8–10 staff and requires continuous access to the site to undertake its activities.

Signed affidavits from some of the business tenants operating from the site can be seen at Appendix 2.

The wider Chelworth employment area within which the site sits accommodates approximately 70 additional staff, including HGV mechanics, administrative personnel and drivers, alongside a significant number of commercial vehicles. The application site plays a supporting role to these wider operations, providing essential space for vehicle parking, manoeuvring and day-to-day logistics functions.

The businesses operating from the site are largely reliant on a locally sourced workforce. It is understood that, in the event that the application site was no longer available for commercial use, there would be a need for operators to relocate to alternative sites within the wider area. This would likely result in operational disruption, the loss of administrative roles, and a risk that some businesses would cease trading entirely due to the practical difficulties of relocation and workforce retention.

The site therefore makes a meaningful contribution to sustaining local employment and supporting established businesses. The proposal seeks to retain and formalise this existing function, rather than introduce new or speculative commercial activity.

In addition, the provision of a secure, managed yard for commercial vehicles helps to reduce the incidence of informal or unauthorised parking elsewhere. It is understood that unauthorised commercial vehicle parking is an existing issue within the wider area, and the retention of an appropriate, purpose-built facility such as the application site assists in managing this pressure in a controlled and appropriate manner.

Overall, the application site performs an important role within the local economy, supporting a cluster of interrelated businesses and providing employment opportunities for the surrounding area.

### **Planning History:**

The site and the wider landholding have been subject to several planning applications over recent years relating to both agricultural and commercial activities.

Planning permission was granted in 2014 (Ref: 14/02108/FUL) for the erection of an agricultural building, confirming the lawful agricultural use of the land at that time. Subsequent permissions have been granted within parts of the wider site area for operational

development including hardstanding and storage (Ref: 12/07948/FUL) and equestrian-related proposals (Ref: 15/08925/FUL).

More recently, a retrospective planning application (Ref: PL/2024/09385) sought permission for the change of use of agricultural land for commercial purposes together with associated operational development. This application was refused by the LPA in January 2025 for reasons relating principally to the spatial strategy, landscape impact, flood risk and transport sustainability. A subsequent appeal against that decision was dismissed, with the Inspector identifying concerns regarding the suitability of the location in policy terms and the potential impact of built form on the rural character of the area (see the appeal decision in Appendix 1).

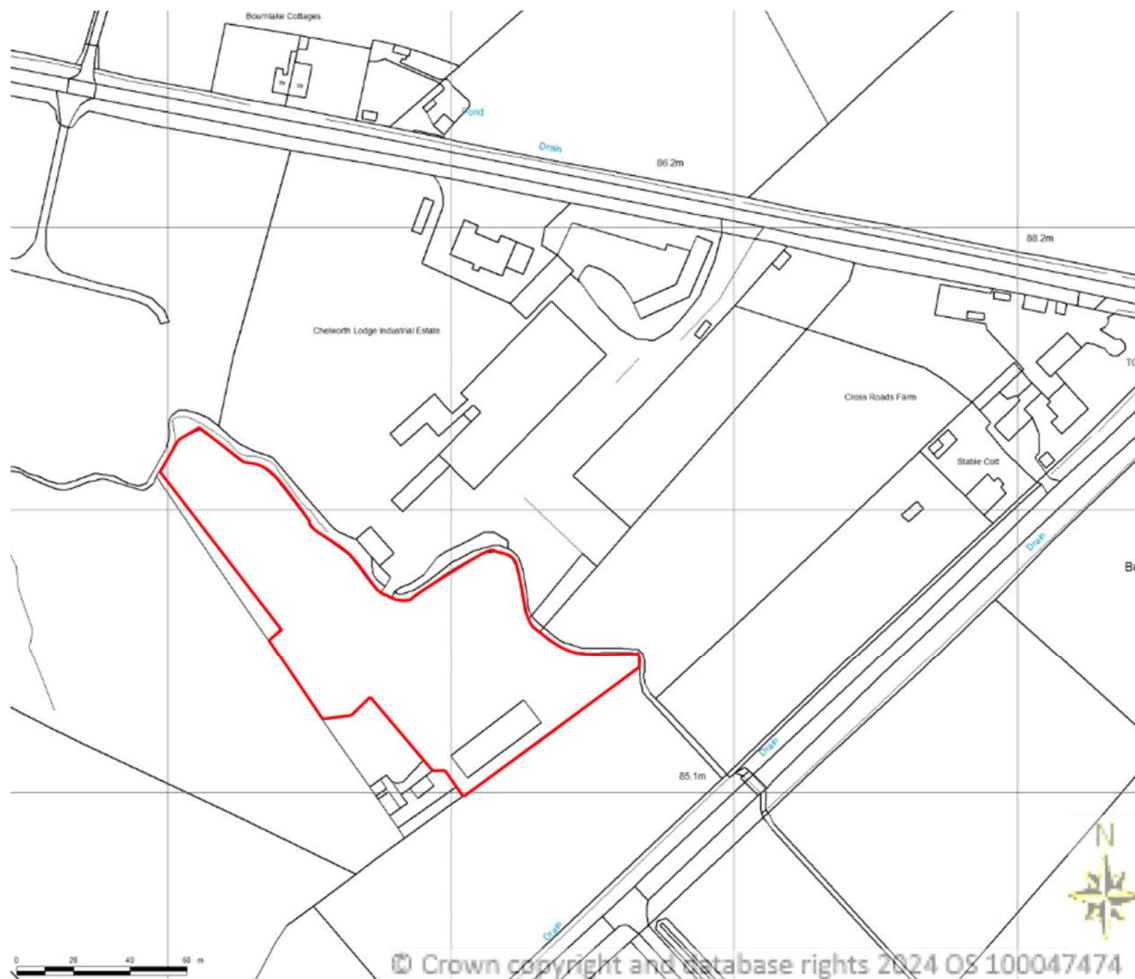
An application for a Certificate of Lawfulness (Existing Use) (Ref: PL/2025/04540) was submitted seeking to demonstrate that commercial use of the land had occurred for a continuous period exceeding ten years. The application was refused on the basis that the evidence provided did not, on the balance of probability, demonstrate continuous use of the entirety of the site for the required period. That matter is being progressed separately and is not determinative of the planning merits of the current application.

#### **Application Description:**

This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the application site from agricultural use to a commercial yard for storage, parking, and associated operational activities linked to existing businesses operating from the adjoining Chelworth employment area.

The proposal relates primarily to the continued use of the existing areas of hardstanding for the parking and manoeuvring of commercial vehicles, together with ancillary storage and operational activity. Where necessary, minor works are proposed to rationalise the layout of the site and improve its appearance and function.

No significant new built form is proposed as part of this application. Temporary or ancillary structures currently present on site can be repositioned or removed as required and this can be secured via a unilateral undertaking a draft of which can be found in appendix 3. Additional landscape planting is proposed to reinforce the existing boundary screening and further reduce the already limited visual impacts, the details of the landscape planting can be conditioned. See the site plan below:

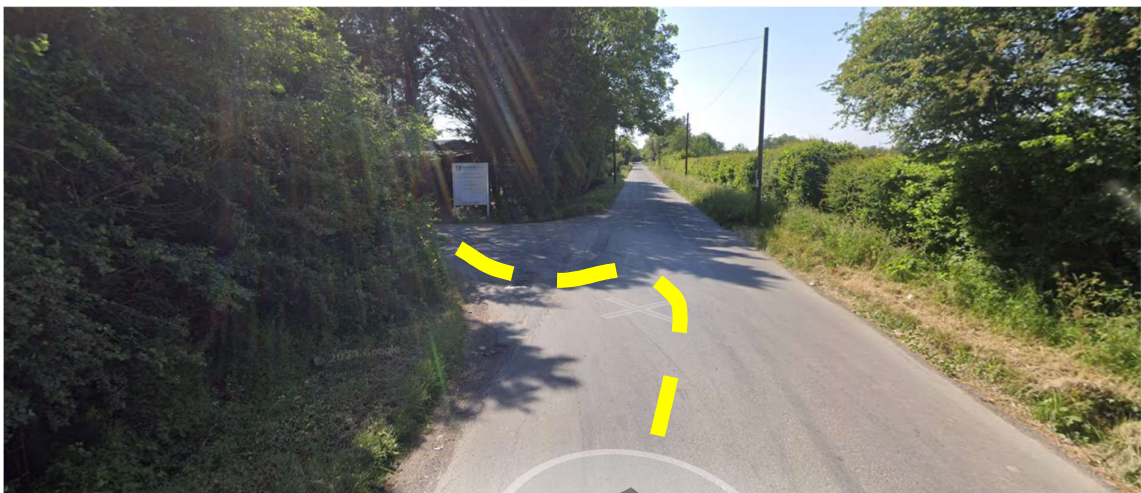


The application defines a clearly contained operational area, with land to the south retained in agricultural use. The proposal therefore represents a consolidation and formalisation of an existing commercial yard associated with the wider employment cluster rather than an extension of built development into open countryside.

The site is accessed through the Industrial Estate across a small stream that runs from the main industrial area through and under the C70 road, as indicated on the satellite image below:



See the industrial estate access point from the main road:



The site will continue to be served by the established access arrangements, with vehicle movements and operational activity reflecting the established pattern of use in the locality.

The site-specific Flood Risk Assessment previously prepared and assessed as part of the appeal process is appended to this submission for completeness. As confirmed by the Planning Inspector (Appeal Decision paragraphs 52–54, see Appendix 1), the assessment demonstrated that fluvial and pluvial flood levels, including a 70% climate change allowance, were appropriately modelled, that finished floor levels and access would be set above the maximum design flood levels, and that the development would not be at unacceptable risk of flooding.

There have been no material changes to the site layout, finished floor levels, access strategy or the Environment Agency flood mapping since the appeal decision. Accordingly, the Inspector's findings in respect of flood risk remain directly applicable to the current proposal. The sequential approach has previously been confirmed as correctly applied and, in accordance with paragraphs 173–175 of the NPPF, flood risk considerations have been satisfactorily addressed.

#### **National Planning Policy Framework:**

It is important to respectfully draw to the LPA's attention to relevant sections of the NPPF. The following sections in particular are highlighted as requiring attention.

At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paras. 7–11), which requires proposals that accord with the development plan to be approved without delay, and where there is conflict, for decision-makers to apply the planning balance.

In relation to employment development, paras. 88–89 supports the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, including the retention and development of accessible local employment opportunities. This is particularly relevant where proposals support economic activity and local jobs in locations outside defined settlement boundaries.

The Framework also sets out national policy on transport in paras. 109–118, which require transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of development. These paragraphs emphasise that development should promote sustainable transport modes where possible but also recognise that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas, and that this should be taken into account when assessing proposals.

Flood risk and drainage matters are addressed in paras. 171-175, which require a sequential, risk-based approach to development in areas at risk of flooding. Para. 175 confirms that where a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that no built development would be located within areas at risk of flooding, including access and egress, the sequential test is not required.

Taken together, national policy supports proposals which sustain existing rural employment, are appropriately scaled to their context, and can operate without unacceptable impacts, subject to the application of the planning balance.

#### **Local Planning Policy Context:**

The statutory development plan for the site comprises the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted 2015) and the Cricklade Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2018).

Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy set out the settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy, directing most new development to defined settlements. It is acknowledged that the application site lies outside the recognised limits of development. However, the Core Strategy also recognises that development proposals in rural locations must be assessed on their individual merits, having regard to their function, scale and relationship to existing development.

Core Policies 19 and 34 relate to employment development. While the site is not allocated for employment use, the policies recognise the importance of supporting economic activity and employment within the wider Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Community Area, particularly where proposals relate to the retention and operation of existing businesses rather than speculative expansion.

Core Policies 51 and 57 seek to ensure that development conserves landscape character and responds positively to its setting. The current proposal has been informed by these policies through the containment of the operational area, the absence of significant new built form, and the provision of landscape enhancement to reinforce existing screening.

Core Policy 61 addresses transport and new development. The policy requires development to be appropriately located and to mitigate transport impacts where necessary. Previous assessments have confirmed that traffic associated with commercial activity at this location can be accommodated on the local highway network, and the current proposal reflects an established pattern of vehicle movements associated with the wider employment area.

The Cricklade Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the development plan and Policy B5 is of particular relevance. This policy seeks to prevent the outward expansion of the Chelworth Commercial Area into the surrounding countryside. The proposal has been formulated to respond to this policy by defining a limited and contained operational area, retaining land to the south in agricultural use, and avoiding the introduction of extensive new built development.

The proposal must therefore be assessed in the context of the development plan as a whole, having regard to the specific circumstances of the site, the established character of the surrounding area, and the contribution the site makes to the operation and retention of existing employment.

### **Conclusions:**

This full application seeks permission for the change of use of land to support an established commercial operation, with a defined and contained operational area and without extensive new built form. The proposal has been informed directly by the previous appeal decision and has been refined to address the matters previously identified, including landscape containment and technical considerations. In addition, the development is secured by a Unilateral Undertaking requiring the removal of unauthorised temporary buildings, ensuring that the overall form and visual impact of the site is reduced and that the scheme represents a materially different and improved proposal to the previous.

The proposal will support and sustain a significant level of existing local employment associated with the wider Chelworth employment area, the loss of which would likely result in operational disruption, job losses and potential business closures within the local economy.

Flood risk has been robustly assessed and previously accepted by the Planning Inspector as compliant with national policy. Traffic impacts have similarly been found not to result in severe or unacceptable effects on the local highway network. The proposal is therefore supported by appropriate technical evidence and does not give rise to unacceptable environmental or highway impacts.

While the site lies outside defined settlement limits, the development represents the consolidation and continued operation of an existing employment use rather than speculative expansion. In this context, and having regard to national policy support for rural economic activity and the development plan as a whole, it is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development for which planning permission should be granted.

**Recommendation:**

The Planning Authority is respectfully requested to approve this application.

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**Appendices:**

1. Appeal Decision APP/Y3940/W/25/3367117
2. Affidavits from Business tenants
3. Draft Unilateral Undertaking