

Dear Samantha,

I am writing to formally object to the statements submitted by [REDACTED] Fowler Architecture and Planning at 05:14 on Thursday 14th May 2026 regarding the application PL/2026/01525. The assertions made regarding employment loss, site history, and planning policy protection are inaccurate and misleading. Also, the business has been trading most recently and that this can be proven if required.

Please see the factual corrections and policy rebuttals below:

1. Active Employment Use & Site History

- **Applicant Claim:** The site is not in active employment use and has not been for some time.
- **Rebuttal:** This statement is factually incorrect. The site has a long-standing, continuous history of active commercial and employment use. Temporary vacancy or a change in tenancy does not constitute a permanent abandonment of its employment status.

2. Employment Capacity

- **Applicant Claim:** The previous use did not employ many people.
- **Rebuttal:** This is a subjective and unsupported minimization of the site's economic value. Small businesses form the backbone of the rural economy. The site provides essential, localized employment space that accommodates viable workforce numbers relative to its scale.

3. Wiltshire Core Strategy (Core Policy 35)

- **Applicant Claim:** Core Policy 35 only protects sites in Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Service Centres, and Principal Employment Areas.
- **Rebuttal:** This is a misinterpretation of Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) policy. Core Policy 35 seeks to protect *all* robust employment situations. It explicitly requires a rigorous marketing exercise to prove a site is no longer viable for commercial use before redevelopment can be considered. The applicant has failed to provide comprehensive marketing evidence to demonstrate a lack of commercial demand.

4. Neighbourhood Plan Protection

- **Applicant Claim:** The Purton and Lydiard Millicent Neighbourhood Plans do not afford protection to this employment site.
- **Rebuttal:** Neighbourhood Plans must be read in conjunction with the overarching Development Plan. Both the Purton and Lydiard Millicent plans

strongly emphasize sustaining local services and rural businesses. Retaining existing employment land directly aligns with the strategic objectives of these local policies to prevent the area from becoming a purely commuter zone for Swindon.

5. Strategic Economic Value

- **Applicant Claim:** The site's contribution to the economy is "extremely small," especially given its proximity to Swindon.
- **Rebuttal:** Proximity to Swindon increases, rather than decreases, the value of small, independent employment sites. Micro-businesses and local trades require accessible, affordable premises outside of large-scale urban industrial parks. Losing this site permanently reduces the diversity of the local rural economy. I know of two firms that have shown interest and I am certain there would be more.

6. Landscape and Visual Amenity

- **Applicant Claim:** Re-development provides landscape benefits by "tidying up" non-descript buildings and hardstanding.
- **Rebuttal:** Visual tidy-up is a minor cosmetic factor that does not justify the permanent, irreversible loss of an employment asset. The existing structures are characteristic of functional, rural commercial sites. Any minor visual disamenity can be resolved through property maintenance rather than total demolition and residential redevelopment.

7. Housing Land Supply vs. Employment Loss

- **Applicant Claim:** Housing supply shortages (cited as 2.42 years) outweigh the adverse impacts of losing this employment site.
- **Rebuttal:** The Council's housing land supply position does not grant a blanket license to bypass strict employment protection policies. A tilted planning balance does not apply when the negative impacts—specifically the permanent loss of rural employment opportunity and sustainability—significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of delivering just four houses.

Conclusion

The applicant's position that the loss of employment is "entirely justified" is flawed. The proposal fails to satisfy the retention and marketing criteria demanded by Wiltshire's planning frameworks. I urge the Economic Development Team and Planning Officers to robustly reject these claims and protect this local employment asset.

Yours sincerely,

Mr K R Merrick LCGI