

Your Ref: Change of Use Application
Our Ref: CP0130

SENT VIA PLANNING PORTAL

4 August 2026

Planning Department
Development Management
Wiltshire Council
Bourne Hill
Salisbury
SP1 3UZ

Dear Planning Team

RE: CHANGE OF USE APPLICATION – LAND AT WELLHEAD FARM, WESTBURY

Copperfield has been instructed by the landowner to submit a planning application to Wiltshire Council for change the use to an existing agricultural farmyard at Wellhead Farm, Westbury. We set out below the context to this application, the description of development, details of the site and supporting documents submitted for your consideration. We also set out our policy analysis to inform your determination of this application.

Context

The land is owned by The Trustees of the Victor Paul Francis deceased Will Trust. The Trust is managed by Mogers Drewett LLP on behalf of the remaining family members with the Trust formed following the death of Mr Francis. The Trust main responsibility is the ongoing management of Wellhead Farm to the benefit of surviving family members including dependents whose primary income relates to the activity at the farm.

The Trust have received a letter from Wiltshire Planning Enforcement Team relating to an alleged breach of planning control within one of the farmyard barns occupied by HughTech, a small independent car mechanic business who have operated on the site since 2021. This unit form part of a small group of commercially let barns at Wellhead Farm with the majority of the farmyard currently used by Frome Scaffolding for storage since 2019.

On Instructions from the Trust, Copperfield have reviewed the planning history and visited Wellhead Farm. Following this review and after further dialogue with the Wiltshire Enforcement Team the landowners have instructed Copperfield to regularise the current and ongoing use of Wellhead Farm in accordance with the information submitted.

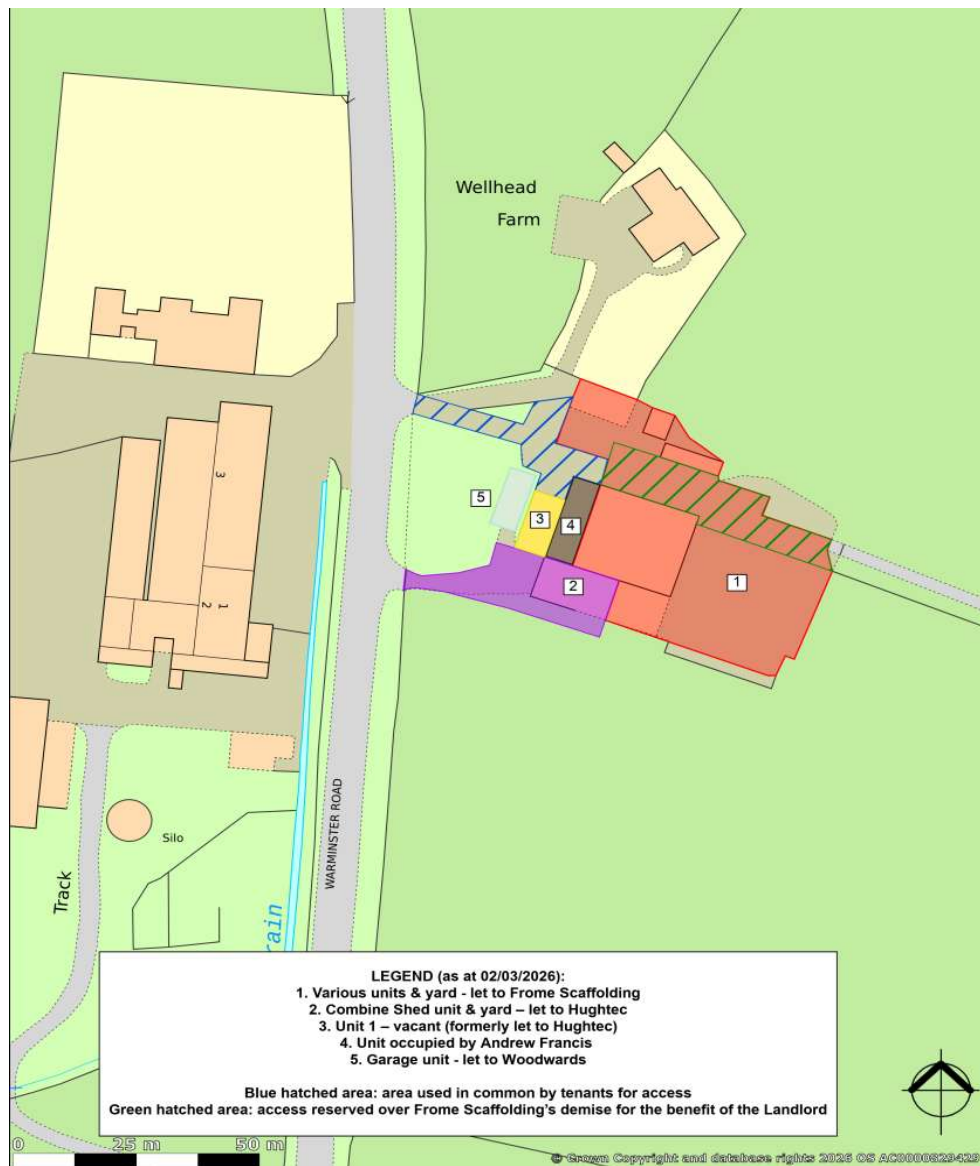
The description of development is as follows:

“Change of Use to Existing Barns at Wellhead Farm to allow B2 and B8 uses”

For reference, leases have been in place with Frome Scaffolding and Hughtech since 2021 before the Trust was formed. Not all of the space is currently occupied. No development on site has taken place and all on site operations relate to the existing barn structures.

The Site

The Wellhead Farm commercial area is shown below for ease of reference.



The commercial land is split into five parcel areas. The area is typically made up of agricultural sheds typified by corrugated metal roofs and walls with steel frame or breeze block construction as seen in many farms across Wiltshire. The buildings have been in their current form for over 50 years.

The site is situated some 350m from the southern end of Westbury on the Warminster Road in a rural setting with similar commercial units located on the opposite side of the A350.

Only area 1 (Frome Scaffolding) and area 2 (Hughtech) are in occupation but the application seeks to regularise units 2,3,4,5 as B2 use. The balance, and majority, of the site is now in B8 storage use with some incidental car parking also included on the proposed plans near to the road frontage. The site has been operating in its current form since at least 2021.

Submission Documents

The following documents are submitted in support of this application:

- Planning Forms and Notices (via Planning Portal submission by Copperfield)
- Ownership Certificates, Agricultural Land Declaration (via Planning Portal submission by Copperfield)
- Planning Fee
- Location Plan 1:1250/1:2500 – COP101_1001
- Land Site Boundary Plan 1:200/1:500 – COP101_1002
- Land Use Plan Proposed 1:200/1:500 – COP101_1003A
- Covering Letter including Planning Policy Assessment (by Copperfield)
- Farm Diversification Letter from Mogers Drewett on behalf of the The Trustees of the Victor Paul Francis deceased Will Trust
- Design and Access Statement (by Copperfield)
- BNG Exemption Statement / Biodiversity Nett Gain Calculation (Note: proposals are 'de minimus' in this instance as no net new development is proposed)
- CIL Forms

Given the modest nature of the proposals relating to the regularisation of a change of use, we do not consider the application should require further technical evidence to validate and assess the proposals.

Planning History

The Barns at Wellhead Farm relate directly to the sites historic use as a farm and have been in place since at least the 1970's. The buildings themselves all pre-date the recent on site B2 and B8 uses and no new construction works have been undertaken.

The site has two notable planning records for the Wellhead Farm Workshop area.

Two of the records date from the 1980's and relate to unit 3 only being used as a car repair workshop. The permissions were both temporary consents:

- W/82/00247/HIS – Continued Use of Workshop - approved with conditions

- W/87/00656/FUL – Workshop Renewal - approved with conditions

Within the W/82/00247/HIS planning file is the following quoted reference submitted by the then applicant Mr Whitfield and replicated by the officer in his notes:

“Planning permission for the use of this workshop was granted on a personal basis to the owner of the farm, Mr V.P. Francis in 1976.

The current application is made by Mr .J Whitfield and is supported by letters both from him and the owner Mr Francis. Mr. Whitfield writes, "I have been self employed since June 1974 as a panel beater, sprayer. I started in business at Bretton but had to move to alternative premises owing to the owner's expansion plans. This is the reason I have been working at Wellhead for the past 5 years, as the workshop is very suitable for my work."

I do not advertise for work as all of my work is supplied by two local garages and by word of mouth from satisfied customers. I do not undertake large accident repair work, which would require crashed cars to be stored awaiting inspection and subsequent repairs."

Based on the above there are evidenced records of car repair related use being undertake on the site between 1976 for a temporary period up to the 30th April 1992.

We would also reference Permitted Development Rights allowances under Class R covering Agricultural to B8 (and other flexible commercial uses) as part of Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended.

We acknowledge that the extent of the permitted development at Wellhead exceeds the 1000sqm threshold when factoring in external storage areas, which is why this application is needed to regularise the use. It is however relevant context that the GPDO supports a change of use of a farm building and any land within its curtilage from a use as an agricultural building to Class B8 (storage or distribution).

Policy Context

The Statutory Development Plan for Wiltshire is the basis for planning decisions and includes:

- **Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015):** Sets out the long-term vision and broad locations for housing and jobs.
- **Saved Policies of the West Wiltshire Local Plan:** Provides some specific "Development Management" policies used to assess the details of planning applications.
- **Westbury Neighbourhood Plan:** This is a statutory document that sits alongside the District Council's Local Plan.

The site would be classed as rural land outside any settlement limits. It carries no specific site allocation but falls within the Westbury Special Landscape Area. No Flood Zone or flood risk issues have been identified using Environment Agency mapping tools, and there are no heritage assets, such as listed buildings or conservation areas, on site.

Under the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), an application to change the use of agricultural buildings to Class B2 (General Industrial) and Class B8 (Storage or Distribution) is primarily governed by Core Policy 48 (Supporting a Sustainable Rural Economy).

Core Policy 48 is supportive of farm diversification, favouring the conversion of existing barns over the construction of new industrial units. The buildings at Wellhead Farm are structurally sound and have been shown to be capable of conversion without rebuilding or alteration to the original barn structures. All external storage areas are located on the existing farmyard hardstanding, and there has therefore been no material change to the site's rural character. Were the uses on site to cease, the buildings could readily be returned to agricultural use with no alteration.

There are no adverse impacts on the character or appearance of the landscape, and the site makes use of existing access infrastructure and services to support the modest onsite operations.

The B2 use is secondary to the main B8 storage use, and is confined to three smaller barns occupying a modest proportion (20%) of the overall site. Having visited the site, it is clear that the current use does not harm the local landscape, its rural setting, or any historic features of the farm. The scale of both uses is relatively small and consistent with the character of the surrounding area, where adjacent farm buildings have similarly been converted to productive small scale business uses.

The enclosed landowner letter sets out the significant contribution these diversification activities make to the ongoing viability of Wellhead Farm. Without the continuation of these uses, the farm would be at direct risk of becoming commercially unviable, potentially necessitating a forced sale and impacting the beneficiaries of the trust.

The NPPF's section on "Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy" encourages local planning authorities to take a positive approach to sustainable economic growth in rural areas. Paragraph 88 states that planning decision should enable developments like the one proposed to support sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, including through the conversion of existing buildings.

This application is for a change of use only so no new buildings, extensions or external alterations are proposed, and the barns will retain their existing form, scale and appearance. This is a material consideration in the assessment of the relevant policies. We note the site falls within the Wellhead Valley Special Landscape Area, engaging Policy HL1 of the Westbury Neighbourhood Plan, however, as no change is proposed to the scale, siting or external appearance of the buildings, and all external storage will remain on existing farmyard hardstanding, there is no material change to the visual character of the site or its contribution to the landscape setting. The proposal is therefore considered to have a neutral effect on the key characteristics of the Special Landscape Area and accords with Policy HL1.

The site also lies within the Salisbury Plain SPA buffer and the core roost buffer for the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC, engaging Policy DSNE1 (Habitat Regulations Assessment) of the Neighbourhood Plan. As the buildings use are ongoing and no works of alteration or re-roofing are proposed, the potential for this application to disturb any existing roost features is negligible.

Taken together, given the change of use nature of this proposal and the absence of any external physical works, the application is considered to accord with Core Policy 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and to be consistent with Policies HL1 and DSNE1 of the Westbury Neighbourhood Plan.

Conclusions

In summary, this application seeks to regularise the existing, long-established B2 and B8 uses at Wellhead Farm, which have operated without incident since at least 2021 and, in the case of vehicle repair use, can be evidenced back to 1976. No new buildings, extensions or external alterations are proposed, and the site's traditional agricultural form, scale and appearance will be retained in full.

The proposal makes efficient use of existing farm buildings in line with Core Policy 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, supports the continued economic viability of Wellhead Farm and the family members reliant on it, and is consistent with the Government's clear support for rural diversification and the re-use of existing rural buildings set out in the NPPF.

We respectfully request that Wiltshire Council validate and determine this application favourably, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of the submission with your officers prior to determination.

Yours sincerely,

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Director
on behalf of Copperfield L&P Ltd

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Encs.

