

## REPORT FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>Application Number</b>	19/09327/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	Land adjacent to Salt Depot at High Post Business Park High Post Durnford Salisbury SP46AT
<b>Proposal</b>	Erection of two new factory facilities and associated access road, parking, service yard and refuse storage areas, for Naish Felts Ltd and Wallgate Washrooms Ltd.
<b>Applicant</b>	Mr Geoff Naish
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	DURNFORD
<b>Electoral Division</b>	Bourne and Woodford Valley
<b>Grid Ref</b>	415158 136427
<b>Type of application</b>	Full Planning
<b>Case Officer</b>	Lynda King

### Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application comes before Committee due to the provisions of paragraph 6.13 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy which requires that proposals for strategic employment development on land outside of existing settlements and not allocated for employment use, that are to be assessed against the criteria in Policy CP 34 (Additional Employment Land) should be considered by the relevant planning committee.

#### 1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of the proposal against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations and to consider the recommendation that the application be approved with conditions.

#### 2. Report Summary

The application has been subject to two periods of formal consultation and has resulted in 35 representations of objection and 5 comments at the time of compiling this report (17<sup>th</sup> December). Any further representations received will be reported to Members at the meeting.

The Key Issues for consideration in respect of this proposal are:

- The Principle of Development
- Impact on Highways, with reference to the Woodford Valley
- Impact on Amenity of neighbouring Units
- Impact on Heritage Assets
- Impact to the Character, Appearance & Visual Amenity of the Locality
- Impact on Ecology

### 3. Site Description

The application site covers 1.3ha and is currently the corner of a larger agricultural field outside the defined employment site of High Post, south of Amesbury. It is generally flat, with a very slight fall to the south and west.

The site lies to the west of the larger High Post Business Park, and immediately to the south of the Wiltshire Council Salt Barn depot (See planning application 19/10043/Ful elsewhere on this agenda). It lies in open countryside and has a substantial hedge along the southern boundary, and backs onto the substantial landscape belt around High Post to the east. To the north is the Council's Salt Barn depot which has minimal landscaping around it. There is no defined western boundary as the site is part of a much larger arable field.

Access to the site is proposed off the existing access serving the Salt Barn depot, which in turn is accessed from the road serving the Woodford Valley. This access lies close to the traffic light controlled junction with the A345 Salisbury to Amesbury road.



Site Location Plan

#### 4. Planning History

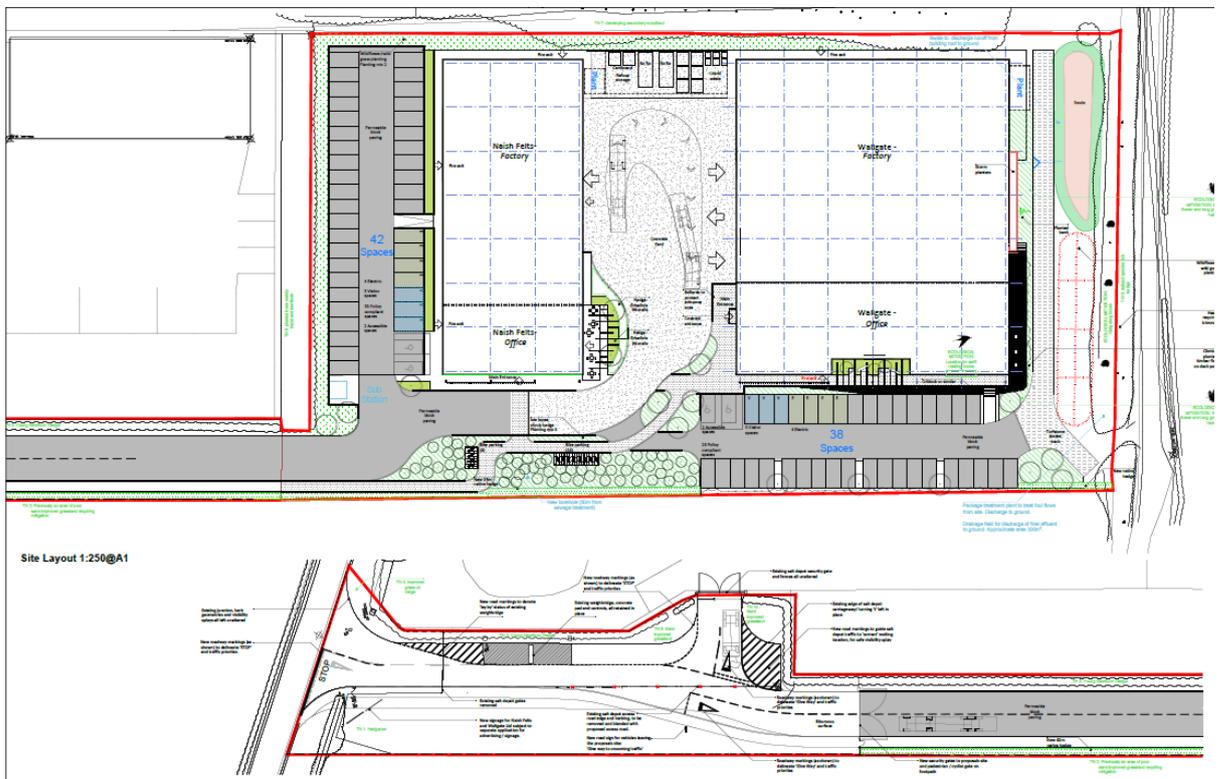
19/10043/FUL Demolition of the existing salt store building from 1500, and construction of larger salt store of 2500 tonnes capacity. Extend existing 6no bay vehicle store to a 10 bay facility (additional bays to allow for deeper plan for snow plough attachments to vehicles). Welfare building to be extended to provide increased storage space accessed from vehicle bays. (Adjacent site – application to be determined)

#### 5. The Proposal

The application proposes the erection of two new factory units, associated access road, parking, service yard and refuse storage areas for Naish Felts Ltd and Wallgate Washrooms Ltd. The buildings would be used for a mix of B1 Business and B2 General Industrial uses. The total gross floor area of the buildings would be 5105sqm, with 1866sqm being B1 and 3239sqm being B2. Landscaping around and within the site is also proposed.

The Naish Felt building measures approximately 7.05m to the eaves, and 9.15m to the ridge. It is more than 53m long and nearly 23m wide.

The Wallgate building has eaves heights of between 5.05m and 6.65m and a ridge height of 9.58m. This building is about 53m x 45m in area.



Site Layout

The external appearance and detailing will be of a simple industrial design, finished in profiled metal cladding coloured to blend with the landscaped backcloth and minimise

the visual presence within the landscape. Both buildings have low profile roofs to further minimise the impact of the buildings. The servicing area for vehicle manoeuvring is shown to be between the two buildings to again reduce the visual impact of the development on the surrounding area. Vehicle parking for staff and visitors is shown adjacent to the Salt Barn boundary to serve the Naish Felts building, and along the western boundary to serve the Wallgate building. Both parking areas have spaces dedicated for electric vehicles with charging points, and provision has been made for cycle storage, including electric charging points for cycles.



*View from the West*

Access to the site is proposed as an extension to the current access used by the adjacent Salt Barn. Plans have been submitted which indicate an appropriate form of access to the site which does not conflict with the use of the Salt Barn depot.

The proposal indicates that the buildings will be constructed with high levels of energy efficiency and that there will be a significant number of solar panels on the roofs of both to assist in the development's sustainable performance.

The businesses currently operate from a scatter of buildings within the town of Wilton within a cramped site where there are issues with traffic movements along narrow streets and has operated in the town for about 150 years. A number of the buildings on that site are old and have reached the end of their useful life and others are in need of replacement as they do not meet current business requirements. Planning permission to redevelop the site was obtained in March 2018 following an appeal (planning ref. S/2003/1016 and 16/07192/FUL). The permission is outline consent for the mixed-use redevelopment of land at Crow Lane to provide 61 residential units, two commercial units of B1 use, one retail unit, and associated car parking, and to allow for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site. This development will finance the replacement factory units, the subject of this application.

## **6. Local Planning Policy**

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan for an area, except where material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan in this case comprises the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and saved policies from the Salisbury Local Plan (2003).

Wiltshire Core Strategy –

- CP1 – Settlement Strategy
- CP2 – Delivery Strategy
- CP3 – Infrastructure Requirements
- CP4 – Amesbury Area Strategy
- CP34 - Additional Employment Land

CP35 – Existing Employment Land  
CP36 – Economic Regeneration  
CP50 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity  
CP51 - Landscape  
CP57 – Ensuring high quality design and place shaping  
CP60 - Sustainable Transport  
CP61 – Transport and Development  
CP62 - Development Impacts on the Transport Network

NPPF - Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Development plan proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date then permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of approval would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF or specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. Where development is found to be wholly or partially inconsistent with the provisions of the Development Plan, then the decision maker must determine whether there are other material considerations that should influence the decision.

Relevant NPPF sections include:

Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development. Para 8 states that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives which are interdependent (a) an economic objective, (b) a social objective and (c) an environmental objective.

Section 6 – Building a Strong, Competitive Economy. Para 80 comments that decisions should help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Para 81 comments that the local strategy should encourage sustainable economic growth.

Section 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport. Para 103 comments that significant development should be focused at locations which are, or can be made, sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

Section 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places. Para 127 requires development to be sympathetic to local character, including landscape setting.

## **7. Summary of consultation responses**

Durnford Parish Council – Object on the grounds of the traffic impact on the Woodford Valley; the site is not allocated for employment use and is in the open countryside; alternative sites have been too easily dismissed by the agents; and the proposed screening of the site is inadequate and there is little scope to improve this.

Full details of the Parish Council's comments are set out in appendix A to this report.

Woodford Parish Council – 5 specific objections, all of which are explored in more detail in the response set out in appendix 1 to this report.

- 1) The proposal will generate increased traffic within an already over-stretched road system in the Woodford Valley;
- 2) The proposed site is in an area designated as open countryside and is in conflict with WCS policies 34, 60, 61 and 62;
- 3) There has been unsatisfactory consideration of alternative sites, and no evidence is shown of consideration of separating the two businesses which are unrelated apart from common ownership;
- 4) The applicant dismisses evidence that unexplored archaeological remains are likely to be found at the site;
- 5) The proposed screening at the site is completely inadequate.

Full details of the Parish Council's comments are set out in appendix B to this report.

Shortly before completion of this report, Durnford and Woodford Parish Councils submitted a joint submission adding further comments. This is attached as Appendix C to this report.

Wiltshire Council Spatial Planning – The proposal is to relocate 2 businesses from their existing facilities in Wilton that no longer meet either company's long-term needs. To retain their existing employees both companies need to re-locate within a commutable distance of the existing facilities. Whilst other sites are available and have been considered, the land at High Post Business Park is felt to be the most appropriate site for the requirements of both companies.

The site is not within the boundary of the existing employment site (CP35) and therefore is identified as being within open countryside.

Planning for job growth and meeting the needs of business are central to the aims of the Wiltshire Core Strategy – Strategic Objective 1.

As this is an area of open land outside the existing Business Park in open countryside, Policy CP34 "Additional Employment Land" is most relevant. This policy allows new employment opportunities to come forward outside, but adjacent to, employment land allocated by the Core Strategy where such proposals are considered to be essential to the economic development of Wiltshire. There are 5 main criteria that need to be met, relating to:

- (a) Meeting sustainable development objectives,
- (b) Proposals are consistent in scale with their location and do not adversely affect nearby buildings or dwellings.
- (c) Supported by evidence that they are required to benefit the local economy
- (d) Would not undermine the delivery of strategic employment allocations
- (e) Are supported by adequate infrastructure.

Having assessed the submitted information it is considered that sufficient evidence has been provided to prove that the proposal meets the requirements of the WCS and in particular CP34. Therefore, the principle of development is considered acceptable

unless there are other material considerations (design, landscape, access etc) that suggest otherwise.

Wiltshire County Archaeology – Support, subject to conditions.

Wiltshire Council Economic Development – From an economic regeneration perspective the investment in two new factories is welcome.

Independently of the company and its agents we conducted an extensive search of other sites in the South Wiltshire area and have been unable to find another suitable location within a reasonable travel to work area for the existing skilled workforce.

The development will safeguard over 110 jobs in the local economy, deliver modern, sustainable and energy efficient buildings and allow the companies to fulfil their potential. By contrast the loss of these long-established manufacturing businesses will have a severe negative effect on the local economy.

These plans contribute to, or are aligned with, a number of policies and strategies supporting economic growth in the area, including the Swindon and Wiltshire Strategic Economic Plan which includes a strategic objective that is focused on supporting business development.

Wiltshire Highways - the proposal is contrary to Core Policies 60 and 61 and the key aims of reducing the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives. Whilst additional detail has been provided showing where existing staff live and their current / preferred travel options, this represents the present situation and staffing may change. Furthermore, as the application is for the use rather than the end-user, should the owner change the use will remain and the future travel arrangements would be unclear.

The site is located in a remote area with no pedestrian links to the nearest settlements. This is reflected in the submitted schedule of responses from staff which indicates that no one would walk from home to the site. There are bus stops located on the A345 close to the signalised junction which serve the High Post Business Park. However, there are no pedestrian links shown between High Post Business Park and the site meaning that those travelling by bus would have no option but to walk along the side of the road or on the verge to reach the factory site. With no separate pedestrian facilities and no street lighting this would not be a desirable option and would be exacerbated in poor weather and dark mornings and evenings of the winter months. Consideration should be given to the hierarchy of transport users (CP61) where the use of all alternative modes must be explored before the private car. It is acknowledged that some car sharing is likely to occur, and this could be further encouraged through a Travel Plan.

On the basis of the submitted supporting statements I have not been convinced to change my view in respect of the wider sustainable issues and I am therefore bound to recommend a refusal reason on this ground.

On the matter of capacity of the surrounding road network, I note that it is anticipated that the majority of drivers would access the site from the east via the A345 and the High Post crossroads. I am aware that the signalised junction at the crossroads already experiences queuing traffic at peak times. An analysis of this junction is necessary to understand the potential impact that the proposed development will have on the functioning of the junction.

Wiltshire Council Drainage – No objection subject to conditions

Wiltshire Council Ecology – No comment

Wiltshire Council Landscape – no objection.

Wiltshire Council Public Protection – No objection to matters of noise, odour and dust, subject to conditions

## **8. Publicity**

The application was publicised by way of a site notice and neighbour notifications. A total of 35 letters of objection were received, and 5 letters of comment.

The Salisbury and Wilton Swift group endorse the Design and Access Statement regarding the inclusion of swift nesting boxes.

The objections can be summarised as follows:

- Concerns about employees using the Woodford Valley as a rat run to and from work with the consequent increase in traffic.
- Lorries using the same route, and with no pavements and narrow roads the dangers to pedestrians will increase.
- The Woodford Valley is an AONB and vehicles are slowly destroying it.
- The site is zoned as open countryside, not allocated in the Wiltshire Core Strategy as employment land, therefore the development is contrary to CP 34, 60, 61 and 62.
- Development should be directed to development sites around Salisbury/Wilton.
- Do not believe all the commercial vehicles will use only the A345
- Noise impact on nearby dwellings
- Land is Green Belt and development should be elsewhere
- Light pollution exists at the moment from the Salt Store and it will increase due to this development.
- The visual impact of the scheme should be mitigated by sufficient planting, to result in a screen like the one around the existing High Post site.
- Why must the two factories be together?
- The application appears to dismiss the archaeological research
- No sufficient justification for not finding an alternative site

- Linked to the objections relating to increased traffic through the Woodford Valley are concerns as to whether the road infrastructure and bridge can cope with the increased traffic.
- The development should take place on existing brownfield land
- The site is in a prominent location and visually will dominate the skyline
- High Post has a record of traffic accidents and the increase in traffic will heighten this danger.

## 9. Planning Considerations

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF (2019) makes it clear that where development is found to be wholly or partially inconsistent with the provisions of the Development Plan, then the decision maker must determine whether there are other material considerations that should influence the decision.

### 9.1 Principle of development

Core Policy 2 (Delivery Strategy) states that

#### ***“Within the defined limits of development***

*Within the limits of development, as defined on the policies maps accompanying the Core Strategy, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the Principal Settlements, Market Towns (including Westbury), Local Service Centres and Large Villages.*

#### ***Outside the defined limits of development***

*Other than in circumstances as permitted by other policies within this plan, identified in paragraph 4.25 (of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy), development will not be permitted outside the limits of development, as defined on the policies map. The limits of development may only be altered through the identification of sites for development through subsequent Site Allocations Development Plan Documents and neighbourhood plans”.*

The exceptions policies referred to in paragraph 4.25 are as follows:

- **Additional employment land (Core Policy 34)**
- Military establishments (Core Policy 37)
- Development related to tourism (Core Policies 39 and 40)
- Rural exception sites (Core Policy 44)
- Specialist accommodation provision (Core Policies 46 and 47)
- Supporting rural life (Core Policy 48)

The site the subject of this application lies in open countryside and is not allocated for additional employment development in Policy CP 35. It therefore has to be considered against the provisions of Policy CP 34, which are as follows:

*Additional employment land*

*Proposals for employment development (use classes B1, B2 or B8) will be supported within the Principal Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres, in addition to the employment land allocated in the Core Strategy. These opportunities will need to be in the right location and support the strategy, role and function of the town, as identified in Core Policy 1 (Settlement Strategy) and in any future community-led plans, including neighbourhood plans, where applicable. Proposals for office development outside town centres, in excess of 2,500sq metres, must be accompanied by an impact assessment which meets the requirement of national guidance and established best practice, and demonstrate that the proposal will not harm the vitality or viability of any nearby centres. All such proposals must also comply with the sequential approach, as set out in national guidance, to ensure that development is on the most central site available.*

*Outside the Principal Settlements, Market Towns and Local Service Centres, developments will be supported that:*

- i. are adjacent to these settlements and seek to retain or expand businesses currently located within or adjacent to the settlements; or*
- ii. support sustainable farming and food production through allowing development required to adapt to modern agricultural practices and diversification; or*
- iii. are for new and existing rural based businesses within or adjacent to Large and Small Villages; or*
- iv. are considered essential to the wider strategic interest of the economic development of Wiltshire, as determined by the council.*

*Where they:*

- a. meet sustainable development objectives as set out in the policies of this Core Strategy and*
- b. are consistent in scale with their location, do not adversely affect nearby buildings and the surrounding area or detract from residential amenity and*
- c. are supported by evidence that they are required to benefit the local economic and social needs and*
- d. would not undermine the delivery of strategic employment allocations and*
- e. are supported by adequate infrastructure.*

As has been set out in Section 5 of this Report, the applicants operate two long-established businesses from within the town of Wilton in cramped premises that do not meet their current needs. There are also environmental issues associated with the continued operation of this site, in particular access to the premises by large commercial vehicles in conflict with the surrounding area.

The businesses currently employ about 120 full time equivalents and are important contributors to the local economy.

The Company has considered three options for the businesses:

- Re-develop the existing site with modern buildings.
- Re-locate to a suitable site and construct purpose-built premises to meet their needs in the future.
- Cease trading.

The latter option (closure of the businesses) is a highly undesirable proposition as this would have a significant negative economic effect and lead to the direct loss of circa 120 full time equivalent local jobs, along with further indirect losses.

The option to redevelop the current site with new higher intensity industrial operations has also been determined to be inappropriate by the applicants for the following reasons. The site is predominantly surrounded by residential uses, and community uses such as the recreation ground, and contains parts of the River Avon, which are subject to highly sensitive ecological designations (Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest). If the site were to be redeveloped for increased industrial uses, these disturbances are also likely to increase. As stated above, the access to the site is not suitable for the commercial vehicles that should be serving the operations. The existing site accesses would therefore make redevelopment for industrial uses unsuitable and would limit the growth potential that the factories could achieve, whilst potentially further damaging the physical and heritage aspects of the Conservation Area.

Therefore, in order for Naish Felts and Wallgate to continue trading the applicants concluded that the most suitable option was the relocation of the business to alternative premises, ideally in the local area to enable the existing workforce to be retained.

Local Land agents were appointed to search for a suitable site which would allow for the construction of purpose-build premises to meet the specific needs of each business, and to allow for future expansion of the operations. The area of search was confined to a 10-mile radius of Wilton on the justification that such a distance would allow for the retention of the majority of the existing workforce.

The following sites were considered:

- Land at Wilton Hill, The Avenue, Wilton (Redrow Homes)
- Land at The Avenue, Wilton (Wilton Estates)
- Harnham Business Park, Netherhampton Road
- Employment Land at Old Sarum
- Sarum Point Business Park, Old Sarum
- Solstice Park, Amesbury

The very specific requirements of the applicants, largely relating to the desire to retain the existing workforce by not re-locating very far from the existing premises, limited the choice of suitable alternative locations. The local land agents concluded that the only suitable site meeting the applicants' needs was the current application site as more distant premises were to be discounted.

(The most recent joint submission from the two parish councils makes reference to the planning permission granted in 2017 at the Imerys Quarry land off the A36 and suggests that this would be suitable as an alternative site – however, it should be pointed out that the permission granted in 2017 was specifically not for any employment use per se, but for an alternative restoration scheme. The permission will expire in February 2020 if not implemented).

An assessment therefore has to be made as to whether the justification submitted by the applicants is sufficient to meet the tests of Policy CP 34, and to allow this development to take place on land in the open countryside outside of any employment allocation.

It is acknowledged that the applicants are major employers in Wilton, and the loss of these businesses from the local economy would have a negative impact on the viability of the area. It is considered that the applicant's arguments for not re-developing on the existing site are credible due to the environmental constraints in the vicinity of the premises, and if they are to avoid closure, then re-location is the only option. It is understandable that the companies wish to retain as many of their skilled workforce as possible, and that this has consequently restricted the location of any possible sites for re-location of the premises.

Durnford Parish Council and Woodford Parish Council, as well as a number of objectors, have asked why the businesses have to re-located together as they appear to operate as separate entities, and why they could not therefore find two smaller sites for each business. The applicant's agent was asked for clarification of this matter and the justification is set out below:

*The objections assume that, other than ownership, the businesses operate independently. However, the businesses which are indeed under the same ownership, operate collaboratively in the following ways and these are important for the efficiency and viability of each: The businesses share transport and distribution services, including vehicles and fork lift trucks, reducing the amount of vehicles on the road; they share storage capacity between the buildings; distribution and servicing areas within the site; groundsman and cleaning services; and management efficiencies. The clear preference and commercial imperative is that the two business locate together, so the ability of one to move without the other would not be sufficient to sustain the operational/commercial decision to move.*

*Having regard to the need identified above for both companies to be able to move at the same time to be able to make the commercial decision to leave the current site, both of the 'assumed' recipient sites would need to be available and ready for occupation, with the appropriate consents and facilities in place at a reasonable cost, at the same time and the deals secured simultaneously to justify the move and sale of the current site.*

*However, the agent looking for sites was asked to look for smaller, single sites as well, but concluded that: "The smaller site we did consider was at Wilton Hill, The Avenue, Wilton. It comprises 1.45 acres and would not be suitable for B2 use due to the proximity of the new housing development. In discussions with the agents it was clear*

*that there would be restrictions on hours of operation particularly with regards to HGV traffic which would make the site very difficult to operate for our clients.”*

*In conclusion notwithstanding the clear operational preference for and benefit of the firms to the continue to coexist on a single site, there are not in any case two suitable sites in the locality that would enable the businesses to relocate simultaneously.*

The Council's Economic Generation team have carried out their own assessment of the availability of suitable sites and have concluded that there is no-where that meets the applicant's needs better than the application site.

The Spatial Planning team, as set out in section 7 above, conclude that the development meets the requirements of Policy CP 34, unless there are other material considerations such as access, landscape, ecology etc to the contrary.

In these circumstances, it is considered that the need for the development can be justified, and that the loss of these businesses would have an adverse impact on the local economy and would result in the loss of employment, which is contrary to the Objectives of the Core Strategy.

The development has then to be assessed against the criteria of Policy CP34 a-e.

9.2 Assessment of proposal against criteria a-e of policy CP34:

**a. Sustainability objectives.**

The application proposes the re-location of two long-established manufacturing businesses from the town of Wilton, which are located in unsatisfactory premises, to modern purpose-built premises within travelling distance of the majority of the existing workforce. The justification for the re-location has been set out above.

The Council's Highway team object to the proposal on the grounds of the comparatively remote nature of the location. Their comments are set out in more detail in Section 7 above. It is argued that as the site lies in a remote location where no employee could walk to work, and although there is a bus stop at the High Post cross roads, access to the site itself is along an unlit country road with no pavements. Therefore, the vast majority of staff would be presumed to access the site using private cars. This form of development is contrary to the aims of policies CP 60 and 61 which seek to reduce the need to travel using the private car.

The comments of the Highways officers are noted, and it is acknowledged that every effort needs to be made to reduce private car usage on developments. However, this site is adjacent to land identified as an Existing Employment Site (High Post Business Park) where the sustainability considerations have deemed it an acceptable location for further business growth and it lies immediately adjacent to the Council's own Salt gritting depot. The agents have submitted information about the travel patterns of the existing employees of the Wilton site, some of whom travel significant distances to work. A number of employees live in the Amesbury area, and will therefore have a shorter travel

to work distance than their existing commute to Wilton. The company have canvassed staff and have received expressions of interest in providing electric bike charging points at the premises and have included electric car charging points for staff as part of the proposed development. A number of the employees (27) already car-share and it is anticipated that this could increase and efforts will be made to achieve this aim via a Travel Plan. It is accepted that there will be a small increase in commuter traffic via the Woodford Valley, but due to the location of the existing employees, the fears of the local residents and the two Parish Councils that this increase will be significant does not appear to be borne out by the information supplied by the applicants.

Para 109 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 would be severe.*

It is considered that the scale of vehicle travel is not materially different between the existing site and the proposed site, and on balance the benefit in retaining the two businesses in the area outweigh the objections raised on Highway sustainability grounds.

The existing premises occupied by the businesses are largely at the end of their useful life and are not fit for purpose. They are not energy efficient and are located in an environmentally sensitive location close to protected water courses, residential properties and a Conservation Area. The operation of the existing site can cause problems in the locality, especially around large vehicle movements. The aim of the current application is to deliver two purpose built factory units that meet the current and future needs of the operators, that are built to the highest sustainable standards, including solar panels on the 'green' roof, efficient use of water, re-cycling of products from the factory operations and high building standards to the internationally recognised BREEAM standards (BREEAM is an international scheme that provides independent third party certification of the assessment of the sustainability performance of individual buildings).

On balance, therefore, it is concluded that the proposed development does meet the sustainability standards required by the Core Strategy and the NPPF in that it provides the opportunity for two long-established businesses to remain and expand in the locality, in purpose built efficient premises, which will also facilitate the removal of an inappropriate use in an urban area and the re-development of that site by much-needed housing.

#### **b. Site specific considerations**

The application site is currently part of a much larger arable field which abuts the High Post Business Park. Two of its boundaries adjoin existing employment uses, and the remainder are formed by a mature hedge and an open field. It is not allocated for development and therefore stands in open countryside. The landscape is designated as being in a Special Landscape Area, which is a non-statutory landscape designation saved as a policy from the Salisbury Local Plan.

The site is not visible in the landscape when viewed from the south due to the neighbouring hedge line, nor from the east due to the location of the High Post Business Park. This development has a substantial mature planting screen around it which totally obscures the buildings within it from the outside. The application site is screened from the north by the existing Salt Depot. Therefore it is only visible in the landscape when viewed from the west, with glimpses from the road serving the Woodford Valley to High Post crossroads. Due to the contained nature of the site it is not highly visible in the wider landscape of the surrounding area, and a proposed planting scheme has been amended following comments from the Council's Landscape team to minimise its impact on the locality. It will be largely seen against the back drop of the planting belt around the High Post development.

The design of the proposed buildings is rather utilitarian, with low profiles and simple forms, and with a limited pallet of materials. It will appear agricultural in form and will sit in the landscape comfortably against the backdrop of the strong planting scheme around High Post.

There are no residential properties in the vicinity of the site. The buildings in the area are all commercial, namely the High Post employment site, the adjacent Petrol Filling station and associated shop, and The Stones hotel. Further to the west is the substantial Chemring Counter Measures commercial premises. The Council's Public Protection Officers have assessed the information submitted in support of the application in terms of noise, odour and dust and have concluded that the measured proposed will not give rise to any environmental concerns.

It is therefore considered that the proposal meets criterion (b) of policy CP 34 set out above in that it will not significantly detract from the appearance of the area or any residential amenity.

The site lies in an area of archaeological sensitivity, and a study has been carried out in to the preliminary likelihood of features of importance on the land. The County Archaeologist has raised no objection to the development, subject to the applicants first carrying out an agreed archaeological appraisal and investigation on the site, and any finds recorded in an agreed manner.

The application site is currently a corner of an arable field which is largely devoid of any biodiversity interest. It is proposed to enhance the biodiversity of the site as part of the development by planting native species that are rich in berries and nectar for the benefit of wildlife, along with wild flower species. Hedgehog boxes and swift nesting boxes are included in the biodiversity mitigation strategy, as is a green roof on the buildings. The roofs will also have extensive solar panels for energy production and add towards the sustainability of the development.

### **c. Benefit to the local economy and social needs**

As has been identified above, the proposal is not speculative, but will facilitate the relocation of existing businesses in a more suitable location, thus benefiting the local economy and in maintaining local jobs, assisting to meet social needs.

### **d. Not undermining the delivery of Strategic employment allocations**

The proposal does not undermine the delivery of strategic employment allocations as there are no suitable allocated sites available in the locality that meet the combined needs of these businesses.

### **e. Supported by adequate infrastructure**

There are no infrastructure constraints that give rise to any objection to the development of this site for the purposes proposed.

## **10. Conclusion (The Planning Balance)**

This application proposes the development of land for employment purposes outside of any allocated site, on land classified as open countryside. To meet the requirements of Policy CP2 (Delivery Strategy) and CP34 (Additional Employment Land) the application needs to be considered against a number of criteria, the most applicable in this instance being: *'are considered essential to the wider strategic interest of the economic development of Wiltshire, as determined by the council.'*

If it is deemed that the development meets this criterion, then it has to be further considered against the detailed provisions of policy CP34, including that the development is sustainable and does not adversely impact on the surrounding area.

Evidence has been provided by the applicants to indicate that they need to re-locate from their existing premises in Wilton which are no longer fit for purpose, and that the application site is the most suitable as it meets one of the applicants' main objectives of being able to retain the existing skilled workforce by staying in the vicinity of the existing operation. Support for this application has been provided by the Council's Economic Generation and Spatial Planning Officers on the grounds that it retains a major employer in Wiltshire and that the application site is the most suitable to meet this requirement.

Objection to the development on the grounds of sustainability has been received from the Council's Highways Officers due to its relatively remote location and the consideration that the employees are likely to access the site via the private car. This view has also been expressed by a number of local residents and the two local Parish Councils, concerned about the impact of additional traffic using the sensitive Woodford Valley.

An assessment has been undertaken as to whether the highways objection on sustainability grounds is sufficient to warrant the refusal of planning permission. The conclusion is that due to the advantages of retaining a major employer in the area, in

buildings that will enable the businesses to expand and which are designed to be more sustainable in their construction and operation than the existing premises, coupled with the ability of the existing site to be re-developed for housing, then the test in the NPPF at para 109 that the impacts on the highway network would be severe have not been met and the application should be granted.

This position is further supported by the requirements of para 80 of the NPPF which states that: - *Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.*

In sum, it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with the provisions of policy CP34 of the development plan and in line with the guidance in the NPPF. Accordingly, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the conditions set out below.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **That planning permission be granted, subject to the following conditions.**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans:

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. No development shall commence on site until the exact details and samples of the materials to be used for the external walls and roofs have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, in the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

4. No development shall commence on site above slab level until a scheme of landscaping and ecological mitigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the details of which shall follow the principles set out in Drawing P004 and the recommendations set out in paragraph 4.2 of the ecological appraisal, but which shall make provision for a hedgerow along the new western boundary of the site with the remainder of the field.

REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is

required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, to ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development.

5. All soft landscaping and ecological mitigation measures comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the first occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner; All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development.

6. No development shall commence within the area indicated (proposed development site) until:
  - A written programme of archaeological investigation, which should include on-site work and off-site work such as the analysis, publishing and archiving of the results, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority; and
  - The approved programme of archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To enable the recording of any matters of archaeological interest.

- 7 No development shall commence on site until a scheme for the discharge of surface water from the site including SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) and all third-party approvals, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Scheme details shall include any required off-site capacity improvements needed to allow the site to be served, and to include a programme allowing sufficient time for the delivery of any required improvements.

REASON: To comply with Core Policy 67: Flood Risk within the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015) and to ensure that the development can be adequately drained without increasing flood risk to others.

- 8 No building shall be first occupied until surface water drainage, including any required off-site capacity improvements to allow the site to be served, have been constructed in accordance with the approved scheme.

REASON: To comply with Core Policy 67: Flood Risk within the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015) and to ensure that the development can be adequately drained without increasing flood risk to others.

- 9 The parking, cycling and turning facilities for the respective units shall be provided in accordance with the approved plans before that unit is first occupied, and these facilities shall thereafter be retained.

REASON: To ensure the provision of adequate parking and turning facilities, in the interests of road safety.

- 10 No external lighting shall be installed prior to the submission of and approval in writing by the local planning authority of a lighting strategy. Any external lights shall be installed in accordance with this approved strategy.

REASON: To protect the character and appearance of the area.

**Informatives:**

Archaeological evaluation excavation should be undertaken that may then highlight the need for further archaeological mitigation. The work should be conducted by a suitably experienced, professionally recognised archaeological contractor, in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation approved by this office and in line with the Standards and Guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. There will be a financial implication for the applicant.