

PLANNING AND DESIGN STATEMENT

Land at Laugherne Villa / Pencroft Earth Moving
Martley Road (B4204), Martley, Worcestershire

Proposed Development

- Two new single-storey Class E units (light industrial / office), comprising one 288sqm unit with 12 parking spaces and one 576sqm unit with 23 parking spaces (864sqm total and 35 spaces total).
- Extension to existing steel-framed workshop building (Pencroft Ltd), 180sqm, with no increase in staffing (additional internal repair/maintenance space for vehicles and plant).

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning and Design Statement supports a planning application for development at Laugherne Villa / Pencroft Earth Moving, located on Martley Road (B4204), Martley.

1.2 The proposals comprise a modest extension to the existing workshop building (180sqm) to support internal vehicle/plant repairs and maintenance, and the construction of two new single-storey Class E buildings on land adjacent, comprising one 288sqm unit and one 576sqm unit, served by the existing access.

1.3 The application site is in the open countryside (outside any defined settlement boundary). The key planning consideration is whether the proposed intensification and diversification of an established rural employment site is acceptable in principle and compliant with the Development Plan and other material considerations.

1.4 The Statement explains how the scheme supports the rural economy, reflects the existing pattern of development, safeguards open land for biodiversity and landscape buffering, and provides sustainable drainage and renewable energy measures consistent with the adopted Development Plan.

2.0 Site Context and Surroundings

2.1 The site forms part of the wider Laugherne Villa / Pencroft Earth Moving landholding and includes existing employment buildings, hardstanding and yard areas used for operational activity.

2.2 The site lies within a rural setting, with dispersed development and vegetation boundaries. It is not within a settlement boundary and is therefore classed as open countryside for planning policy purposes.

2.3 The existing land use and built form has a clear employment character, with buildings and yard arrangements oriented to servicing, parking, turning, and operational requirements.

2.4 The proposals are located adjacent to the established built core of the employment site, on land that is already influenced by existing development and activity, rather than representing an isolated new incursion into undeveloped countryside.

3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 Workshop extension (Pencroft Earth Moving)

3.1.1 The proposal includes a 180sqm extension to the existing steel-framed workshop building.

3.1.2 The extension is required to provide additional internal space for vehicle and plant repairs/maintenance. It does not create new desk space or offices, and there is no increase in staffing proposed as a result of this element.

3.1.3 No additional marked parking is proposed for the extension. The existing yard provides ample capacity for current operational requirements and staff.

3.2 Two new Class E units

3.2.1 Two new single-storey Class E units are proposed, comprising one 288sqm unit and one 576sqm unit (864sqm total). The units are intended to provide flexible accommodation suitable for a range of light industrial and office-type uses.

3.2.2 The 288sqm unit will be served by 12 formally laid out parking spaces and the 576sqm unit will be served by 23 formally laid out parking spaces, providing 35 spaces in total.

3.2.3 Circulation and turning provision within the site is designed to allow safe manoeuvring for service and delivery vehicles.

4.0 Planning History and Existing Employment Use

4.1 The Laugherne Villa / Pencroft Earth Moving site is an established rural employment location supporting Pencroft's business and associated small-scale commercial activity.

4.2 Pencroft Earth Moving provides plant and earth moving services supporting the local and wider rural economy, including construction, infrastructure and land management activity.

4.3 The site has been the subject of ongoing investment and improvement, with the pattern of employment use and built form reinforced by recently approved and delivered commercial development in the immediate vicinity.

4.4 The proposals represent the next logical step in the continuing redevelopment and consolidation of the site, using vacant/underutilised land that is well related to existing buildings and infrastructure.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 The Development Plan includes the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) (adopted). This application must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 The site is in the open countryside where development is generally more restricted. However, the Development Plan includes policies that support the rural economy and rural employment development where it is appropriate in scale, well related to existing uses and development, and does not give rise to unacceptable impacts.

5.3 The key Development Plan policies relevant to this proposal are:

5.3.1 SWDPR14 (economic development / employment policy) which supports appropriate economic development where it delivers economic benefits and can be accommodated without unacceptable impacts.

5.3.2 SWDP15 Part A and Part B, which support rural commercial development in the countryside, including where it enables appropriate intensification of existing employment sites and diversification of rural businesses/uses, subject to criteria.

5.4 National planning policy supports a prosperous rural economy, including the sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses and the provision of employment opportunities in rural areas.

6.0 Planning Assessment: Principle of Development and Policy Compliance

6.1 Overview and principle in the open countryside

6.1.1 The proposals relate to an established rural employment site and do not represent the creation of a new isolated employment use in the countryside.

6.1.2 The scheme comprises (i) a small extension to an existing workshop that improves operational efficiency without increasing staff, and (ii) two Class E units, one 288sqm and one 576sqm, that will support rural enterprise and deliver additional employment opportunities.

6.1.3 The development is focused alongside the existing built core, consolidating and completing the established pattern of employment development rather than spreading development into less disturbed countryside land.

6.2 Assessment against SWDPR14 (positive)

6.2.1 SWDPR14 is engaged because the proposals support existing employment activity and provide additional employment floorspace.

6.2.2 Economic benefits and rural employment

6.2.2.1 The two new Class E units, providing 864sqm of new commercial floorspace in total, will provide modern, flexible rural business accommodation suitable for small and expanding enterprises, supporting job creation and retention in the rural area.

6.2.2.2 The workshop extension supports the continuing growth and resilience of Pencroft Earth Moving by improving the ability to repair and maintain vehicles and plant within enhanced internal space, benefiting business continuity and efficiency.

6.2.3 Location and relationship to existing development

6.2.3.1 The site is already characterised by employment buildings and yard activity. The proposals are well related to this existing cluster and reinforce the established employment character.

6.2.3.2 The scheme represents consolidation and completion of an existing redevelopment pattern at Laugherne Villa rather than an isolated countryside incursion.

6.2.4 Scale, form and impacts

6.2.4.1 The proposed buildings are single storey and adopt a straightforward rural commercial typology, limiting visual prominence and enabling the development to sit comfortably within the existing site context.

6.2.4.2 Parking and servicing are contained within the site. The 288sqm unit is served by 12 marked spaces and the 576sqm unit is served by 23 marked spaces, providing 35 new spaces in total. The workshop extension does not require new parking because there is no staffing increase and the existing yard provides capacity.

6.2.5 Environmental safeguards

6.2.5.1 The layout safeguards a dedicated area of open land to the south for biodiversity and landscape buffering, strengthening the site edge and supporting integration with the surrounding countryside.

6.2.6 Overall, SWDPR14 supports the proposal as it delivers economic and rural employment benefits at an appropriate location and scale, with mitigation and safeguards embedded in the scheme.

6.3 Assessment against SWDP15 Part A (rural commercial development criteria)

6.3.1 SWDP15(A) supports rural commercial development where it meets relevant criteria. The proposal complies as follows.

6.3.2 Support for rural enterprise and economic activity

6.3.2.1 The two new Class E units broaden the rural employment offer and provide flexible accommodation for small and expanding businesses to establish and grow locally.

6.3.2.2 The workshop extension supports an established rural business and enables improved internal maintenance of vehicles and plant.

6.3.3 Appropriate siting and relationship to existing development

6.3.3.1 The buildings are located adjacent to the established built form and yard areas, maintaining a compact and coherent development pattern.

6.3.3.2 The proposals do not create a standalone or sporadic employment outpost; they consolidate the existing site.

6.3.4 Landscape and countryside impact

6.3.4.1 The development is concentrated within the existing site's visual and functional envelope and avoids unnecessary spread into open countryside.

6.3.4.2 The retention of southern open land for landscaping and biodiversity delivers a structured and softened countryside edge and helps mitigate visual effects.

6.3.5 Highways, access and parking

6.3.5.1 The site benefits from an established access onto Martley Road.

6.3.5.2 Parking provision is appropriate for the scale of the Class E units, with 12 spaces serving the 288sqm unit and 23 spaces serving the 576sqm unit. The workshop extension does not increase staffing and therefore does not trigger additional parking demand.

6.3.6 Amenity and operational compatibility

6.3.6.1 The proposed uses are compatible with the established employment character of the site.

6.3.6.2 The single-storey form and orderly layout reduce the potential for adverse effects on nearby receptors.

6.4 Assessment against SWDP15 Part B (intensification and diversification of existing uses)

6.4.1 SWDP15(B) is the most material policy support for this proposal because the scheme represents both intensification of an established employment site and diversification through additional commercial units.

6.4.2 Intensification (efficient use of land)

6.4.2.1 The proposal makes efficient use of vacant/underutilised land that is already associated with and influenced by existing employment development.

6.4.2.2 This consolidates development where infrastructure and access already exist, avoiding pressure for dispersed employment development elsewhere in the countryside.

6.4.3 Diversification (broadening rural economic activity)

6.4.3.1 The two Class E units, one 288sqm and one 576sqm, add flexibility to the site and broaden the range of rural employment uses, supporting business start-ups, SMEs and growing rural enterprises as well as ancillary services that may complement existing activity.

6.4.3.2 The proposal supports the continuing growth of Pencroft Earth Moving while also providing additional accommodation for other small commercial uses on site, strengthening the overall resilience of the rural employment location.

6.4.4 Relationship to site grain and completing redevelopment

6.4.4.1 The layout reflects the existing pattern of grain and yard structure, aligning new built form with established circulation, turning and parking arrangements.

6.4.4.2 Architecturally and spatially, the development reads as an extension of the existing employment cluster and would effectively complete the redevelopment pattern at Laugherne Villa by filling a gap in the established developed envelope in a coherent manner.

6.4.5 Built form and materials

6.4.5.1 The units will be single storey and use insulated profiled cladding typical of rural commercial buildings and consistent with the typology of recently approved buildings nearby.

6.4.5.2 This ensures that the new development reads as part of the established employment site rather than a discordant or suburban form of development.

6.4.6 Environmental safeguards and countryside integration

6.4.6.1 The scheme safeguards an area of open land to the south as biodiversity and landscaping space. This provides a buffer to the countryside, enhances visual integration, and provides space for habitat creation and additional planting.

6.4.7 Overall, the development aligns strongly with SWDP15(B) by intensifying and diversifying an established rural employment site in a controlled, coherent and mitigated manner.

6.5 Workshop extension and staffing clarification

6.5.1 The workshop extension is proposed solely to increase internal repair and maintenance space for vehicles and plant.

6.5.2 There is no increase in staffing associated with the extension. Accordingly, there is no corresponding increase in staff-related parking demand or staff commuting trip generation.

6.5.3 This supports the acceptability of the proposal in the open countryside by ensuring that the operational uplift is focused on improved facility provision rather than increased intensity through headcount growth.

6.6 Policy compliance conclusion

6.6.1 The proposal is supported by SWDPR14 and, most materially, SWDP15 Parts A and B. It delivers 864sqm of new Class E rural employment floorspace, supports the continuing growth of an established rural business, and provides diversification through two appropriately scaled commercial units.

6.6.2 The development is well related to existing and recently approved buildings, reflects the established grain and typology, includes appropriate parking and servicing, and safeguards land for biodiversity and landscape buffering.

6.6.3 Overall, the scheme represents a sustainable and policy-compliant intensification and diversification of an established rural employment site in the open countryside.

7.0 Design, Layout and Landscape

7.1 Design approach and typology

7.1.1 The proposed buildings are single storey and of a simple, robust rural commercial form.

7.1.2 External appearance will use insulated profiled cladding, with colours and finishes selected to align with the existing and recently approved commercial buildings in the locality.

7.1.3 This consistent approach ensures the new development reads as an extension of the existing employment site and avoids visual discord.

7.2 Layout and site grain

7.2.1 The layout follows the established site pattern: buildings arranged to define operational space with clear circulation, turning, and parking areas.

7.2.2 The scheme reinforces a coherent and legible employment site structure that is typical of rural commercial clusters.

7.3 Landscape strategy and visual integration

7.3.1 The development is located adjacent to existing buildings and hardstanding, minimising the extent of change to countryside land.

7.3.2 The scheme safeguards an area of open land to the south which will be used for biodiversity and additional landscaping.

7.3.3 This southern buffer will help soften views, strengthen the site edge, and provide ecological connectivity and an appropriate transition to the wider countryside.

8.0 Access, Parking and Servicing

8.1 The site will continue to use the existing access onto Martley Road (B4204).

8.2 Parking provision for the new development comprises 12 spaces for the 288sqm unit and 23 spaces for the 576sqm unit, providing 35 formally laid out spaces in total.

8.3 No new parking is proposed for the workshop extension as staffing levels will not increase and the existing yard provides adequate parking capacity.

8.4 Servicing and turning are accommodated within the site, supporting safe operation and reducing the likelihood of overspill or highway interference.

9.0 Biodiversity Net Gain and Green Infrastructure

9.1 The layout safeguards open land to the south as a biodiversity and green infrastructure area.

9.2 This area provides space for additional planting and habitat creation, acting as a buffer to the countryside and delivering ecological enhancement alongside the operational employment use.

9.3 The final biodiversity approach and landscaping specification can be confirmed through the application's ecological submissions and secured by condition where necessary.

10.0 Water Management and Drainage Statement

10.1 The adopted Development Plan seeks to ensure that development does not increase flood risk and manages surface water sustainably through SuDS.

10.2 The surface water strategy will follow an infiltration-first approach where ground conditions permit, supported by infiltration testing.

10.3 Roof and surface water will be directed to SuDS measures such as permeable surfacing (where feasible), soakaways or infiltration trenches, and attenuation as required, to control discharge rates and provide water quality benefits.

10.4 The intention is to discharge surface water into the ground on-site via infiltration as the primary means, subject to testing and detailed design.

11.0 Energy Statement

11.1 The adopted Development Plan supports measures that reduce energy demand and increase renewable and low-carbon energy generation.

11.2 The new Class E units will incorporate efficient building fabric and services design to minimise operational energy use.

11.3 Solar photovoltaic panels are proposed on the new units and will be sized to deliver the requisite 20% renewable/low-carbon contribution for the commercial units, subject to final roof design, orientation and shading.

11.4 Final details (PV layout, installed capacity and predicted annual generation) can be secured by condition where required.

12.0 Summary and Planning Balance

12.1 The proposals support the continuing growth and resilience of Pencroft Earth Moving through a modest workshop extension that improves internal repair capacity without increasing staffing.

12.2 The two new Class E units provide needed rural employment accommodation, with one 288sqm unit and one 576sqm unit offering flexible space to support rural enterprise demand and boost employment opportunities locally.

12.3 The scheme is well related to existing and recently approved buildings, reflects established site grain and architectural typology, and would complete and consolidate the employment redevelopment pattern at Laugherne Villa.

12.4 The layout safeguards open land to the south as a biodiversity and landscaping buffer, supporting countryside integration and ecological enhancement.

12.5 Sustainable drainage and renewable energy measures are embedded in the proposal through infiltration-first SuDS and solar PV provision targeting the requisite 20% contribution.

12.6 Overall, the development is supported by SWDPR14 and, most materially, SWDP15 Parts A and B, representing a policy-compliant intensification and diversification of an established rural employment site in the open countryside.