

Reference	S62A/2026/0157
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Site Address	Storage Land To Rear Of, Laugherne Villa, Martley
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Applicants Name and Address	Agents Name and Address
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Description of Development

Proposed extension to existing workshop, construction of 2 new (Use Class E (g) buildings, including associated infrastructure, parking and landscaping.

Site Constraints

SWFR - Surface Water: 1 in 30 extent. - Distance: 0

SWFR - Surface Water: 1 in 1000 extent - Distance: 0

ODBR - Outside SWDPR Development Boundary - Distance: 0

PROW - Public Right of Way: Type- Footpath. Path No- MT-723 C - Distance: 0

SWFR - Surface Water: 1 in 100 extent. - Distance: 0

ANCW - Ancient Woodland within 100m - Distance: 72.45

SWS - Local Wildlife Site within 100m: Laughern Brook - Distance: 85.12

Is the development CIL Liable ? No

Relevant Development Plan Policies

South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) – adopted 2026

SWDPR 01 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

SWDPR 02 Employment and Housing Requirements

SWDPR 03 The Spatial Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy

SWDPR 05 Design and Sustainable Construction

SWDPR 06 Transport

SWDPR 14 Non-Allocated Employment Development

SWDPR 15 Employment in Rural Areas

SWDPR 16 Effective Use of Land

SWDPR 28 Design

SWDPR 29 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

SWDPR 30: Biodiversity Net Gain

SWDPR 34 Landscape Character

SWDPR 35 Amenity

SWDPR 38 Management of Flood Risk

SWDPR 39 Sustainable Drainage Systems

SWDPR 41 Air Quality

SWDPR 42 Land Stability and Contaminated Land

- 1.1.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 establishes the fundamental principle that planning applications and appeals must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This statutory duty is central to the planning system and requires that adopted policies are given full weight unless there is clear justification for departing from them.

Principle of Development

- 1.1.2. The principal development plan policies relevant to the determination of this application are Policies SWDPR02 and SWDPR03 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review ("SWDPR"), adopted on 26 March 2026, together with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). These policies form part of the statutory development plan and therefore attract full weight in decision-making in accordance with Section 38(6).
- 1.1.3. Policy SWDPR02 establishes the overall spatial strategy for South Worcestershire, requiring the delivery of 18,852 dwellings and 313.80 hectares of employment land between 2025 and 2041. This policy seeks to ensure a coordinated and sustainable approach to meeting housing and economic needs across the plan area.
- 1.1.4. Policy SWDPR03 defines open countryside as land outside development boundaries and applies a restrictive approach to development in such locations, permitting it only where justified by other policies within the development plan. The purpose of this approach is to protect rural character and direct growth towards sustainable locations.
- 1.1.5. The application site is located around 235 metres from the defined settlement boundary of Martley, as identified within the Policy SWDPR03 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review 2026, the application site is located to the South of the B4204. As such the application site is considered to be within the Open countryside as designated under Policy SWDPR03, as such Policy S5 of the National Planning Policy Framework is of relevance.
- 1.1.6. Policy S5(1) of the National Planning Policy Framework states that Only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements, as set out in the following list. These should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework. Policy S5(1.B) states that b. Development for rural businesses and services, including tourism, where a location outside settlements is shown to be necessary would be acceptable within this location.
- 1.1.7. Policy SWDPR14 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (2026) is of direct relevance to the proposal as it provides the specific policy framework for new employment development involving Use Class E(g), B2 or B8 floorspace, together with buildings associated with intensive horticultural uses. The policy states that such proposals will be supported where it has been demonstrated that there is no suitable allocated employment land available. The policy therefore requires the applicant to establish both a need for the proposed development and a justification for its proposed location.
- 1.1.8. In addition, proposals are required to provide evidence of the need for the business use and the jobs to be provided within the locality, including consideration of the size and type of development proposed. The applicant must also demonstrate that the proposed location

is appropriate for the intended use and occupier. This includes providing a written assessment of the physical and functional relationship between the site and the adjacent settlement, together with an assessment of the impact of the proposal upon the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring and nearby properties.

- 1.1.9. The policy also requires an appropriate assessment of the transport implications of the development. This should demonstrate the relationship of the proposal to the local highway network and assess the likely impact of traffic generated by the development. It should also demonstrate that the site can be accessed conveniently and safely by pedestrians and cyclists and consider the availability of public transport services. In addition, the proposal is required to incorporate a clear and implementable strategy for minimising the use of non-renewable resources and reducing energy consumption.
- 1.1.10. Accordingly, SWDPR14 establishes a number of specific tests which must be addressed before the policy support for employment development can be relied upon. The policy is not an unrestricted acceptance of new employment development in rural locations, but instead requires the applicant to demonstrate that the proposed development is necessary, appropriately located and capable of being accommodated without unacceptable impacts upon the surrounding area.
- 1.1.11. Policy E2(1) of the National Planning Policy Framework states that To support business growth, substantial weight should be given to: a. The economic benefits of proposals for commercial development which allow businesses to invest, expand and/or adapt; especially where this would support the economic vision and strategy for the area. Policy E2. 2 (b) (i) states that Where a development proposal is required to demonstrate whether an unmet need exists (including under policy S5) consideration should be given to whether: The specific locational requirements of the proposal are met by existing allocations in the development plan. This includes, but is not limited to, situations where Existing businesses plan to expand or improve their premises, or clusters or networks of businesses need to grow (such as clusters of knowledge and data driven, creative or high technology industries and associated facilities and infrastructure)
- 1.1.12. The applicant has not provided sufficient information to fully demonstrate the specific need for the proposed development or to establish that there is no suitable allocated employment land available which could accommodate the proposed use, as required by Policy SWDPR14. There is wider policy support for the provision and retention of business premises and for enabling existing businesses to invest, expand and adapt. The Worcestershire Commercial Property Report 2026 provides relevant market context, identifying continued demand for commercial premises within the county and supporting the general proposition that the provision of suitable business accommodation can contribute to local economic activity.
- 1.1.13. In this instance, the Planning Statement confirms that the proposal would support an existing business, Pencroft Earth Moving, through the provision of additional office accommodation. The development would therefore not represent a wholly new or speculative commercial use, but would facilitate the continued operation and potential expansion of an established local business..

Landscape, Design, and Appearance.

- 1.1.14. Policy SWDPR28 establishes a clear expectation that all development proposals should achieve a high standard of design quality, ensuring that new development is visually attractive, functional and responsive to its surroundings. The policy requires proposals to demonstrate a positive relationship with their context, integrating successfully with the existing built environment whilst reinforcing local distinctiveness and contributing to a strong sense of place. Development should respond appropriately to site constraints and opportunities, maintain the character of the surrounding area, and safeguard residential amenity. Importantly, the policy also requires that proposals conserve and, where possible, enhance cultural and heritage assets and their settings. Whilst supporting good contextual design, the policy also recognises that innovative or contemporary architectural approaches may be acceptable where they demonstrably improve the quality of the built environment and remain sensitive to local character.
- 1.1.15. This design-led approach is reinforced by Policy SWDPR34, which places significant emphasis on the conservation and enhancement of landscape character. The policy requires development proposals and associated landscaping schemes to be informed by the Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment and its accompanying guidance. Development should respond positively to the prevailing landscape setting, integrate sensitively with surrounding features, and avoid unacceptable harm to the defining characteristics of the relevant landscape type. In addition to mitigating harm, the policy encourages opportunities to enhance landscape quality through the retention and reinforcement of important natural features, vegetation and established landscape patterns within the wider land parcel.
- 1.1.16. Policy DP3 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires development proposals to respond appropriately to their context, having regard to the history, character and features of the site and its surroundings, so that new development integrates with and, where possible, enhances its setting. This includes consideration of the arrangement and form of buildings, the relationship between built and undeveloped areas, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets where relevant. The policy therefore requires development to be assessed not only in terms of its individual appearance, but also in relation to the character and appearance of the wider area and the way in which it would integrate into its surroundings.
- 1.1.17. The proposal would introduce additional built form to the southern and western parts of the application site, extending the existing developed area into land which is currently undeveloped and contributes to the open character of the countryside. The development would consequently result in a degree of encroachment into the open countryside towards Martley and to the south of the site. The proposed buildings would be positioned adjacent to existing built development associated with Pencroft Limited. The development would extend an existing built-up area rather than introduce a wholly separate or isolated group of buildings into an otherwise undeveloped part of the countryside. The proposal would have a degree of physical and visual association with the existing built form and would not be perceived in the same manner as an isolated development within an open rural landscape.
- 1.1.18. The extension of built form into the countryside would result in some change to the existing character of the site. The proposal would increase the extent and prominence of built

development and would reduce the amount of undeveloped land between the existing business premises and the surrounding countryside. The proposed units are utilitarian in their architectural form, reflecting their intended commercial and operational function. The proposed use of profiled steel cladding would provide a functional appearance which is commonly associated with agricultural and rural commercial buildings and would retain a degree of agrarian character.

- 1.1.19. The simple form and material palette of the proposed buildings are capable of achieving an acceptable relationship with the existing development, particularly given their location adjacent to the established business premises. The appearance of profiled steel cladding can have a relatively prominent visual presence within an open landscape, particularly where buildings are viewed against open fields or from longer-distance public viewpoints. The final appearance and colour of the buildings will therefore be important in determining the extent to which the development successfully integrates with its surroundings.
- 1.1.20. No detailed colour scheme has been submitted as part of the application. The colour and finish of the external cladding could materially influence the visual prominence of the buildings and their ability to assimilate into the surrounding landscape. The use of appropriate colours and finishes could therefore provide an effective means of mitigating the visual effects of the proposal.

Residential Amenity

- 1.1.21. Policy SWDPR35 sets out the key design considerations for development, stating Development proposals must be designed to create a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers
- 1.1.22. The application site is located approximately 85 metres to the south-west of the neighbouring site. Given the separation distance between the two sites, together with the limited scale and nature of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposal would not result in any adverse impact upon the residential amenity of occupiers of the neighbouring property.
- 1.1.23. Furthermore, the existing built form between the application site and the neighbouring property provides a degree of visual screening and separation. As a result, the proposal would not give rise to unacceptable levels of overlooking or loss of privacy. Similarly, owing to the modest scale and siting of the development, there would be no material increase in overshadowing or overbearing effects when viewed from the neighbouring property.
- 1.1.24. Overall, the combination of the substantial separation distance, intervening built form and the limited scale of the proposal ensures that the development would preserve the existing levels of residential amenity. The proposal would therefore have no unacceptable impact in terms of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing effects and is considered to accord with the relevant residential amenity considerations.

Highways

- 1.1.25. Policy SWDPR06 requires development proposals, having regard to their nature and location, to demonstrate that they minimise reliance on the private car, provide appropriate infrastructure to support active travel, avoid unacceptable impacts on highway safety, and ensure that any residual cumulative impacts on the road network are not severe following mitigation. It also requires regard to the objectives of the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP), which seeks to promote safe, sustainable, and efficient movement.
- 1.1.26. TR6(4) of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development proposals should be refused if they would have a severe adverse impact on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion, including cumulative impacts), or an unacceptable impact on highway safety; taking into account any mitigation measures proposed as well as any wider network improvements, including measures to support sustainable patterns of movement. This applies both during the construction phase and following completion
- 1.1.27. The proposed development would make use of the existing site access, thereby avoiding the need for the creation of a new access onto the highway network. The existing access arrangements are considered appropriate to serve the proposed development, with sufficient visibility available to ensure safe ingress and egress. In addition, the site would provide adequate on-site parking and vehicle stacking capacity to accommodate the anticipated level of activity associated with the proposed use.
- 1.1.28. The proposal would, however, result in a moderate increase in vehicle movements as a consequence of the intensification of the existing business operation. Notwithstanding this increase, the development is not anticipated to result in a material or unacceptable impact upon the operation or safety of the surrounding highway network, given the scale of the proposed intensification and the existing use of the site.
- 1.1.29. It is acknowledged that the proposal would not fully meet the requirements of Policy TR6(4) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Nevertheless, when considering the development as a whole, the existing access arrangements, available parking provision and on-site vehicle stacking capacity would ensure that the site can continue to operate safely and efficiently without giving rise to unacceptable highway impacts.

Ecology

- 1.1.30. Policy SWDPR29 states that Development likely to have an adverse effect on nationally important sites, including a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will only be considered where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats or features including (but not limited to) Ancient Woodland and Ancient and Veteran Trees will not be supported unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.
- 1.1.31. Policy SWDPR30 states that Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a statutory requirement. All qualifying development proposals must deliver the statutory minimum measurable BNG attributable to the development in line with legislation, which currently is at least 10%. In calculating the BNG requirement, the statutory Biodiversity Metric and/or the Small Sites Metric tools must be utilised.

- 1.1.32. The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, which has assessed the ecological value of the site and the potential impacts of the proposed development. The appraisal identifies no adverse impacts upon protected species and does not identify any ecological constraints that would prevent the proposed development from proceeding. The proposal would also be subject to the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements. The development would deliver a 20% uplift in biodiversity value, exceeding the minimum 10% BNG requirement and therefore representing a significant enhancement to the site's biodiversity value.
- 1.1.33. Accordingly, the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to protected species or ecological interests and would provide a measurable enhancement to biodiversity through the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the relevant ecological and biodiversity policy requirements.

Drainage

- 1.1.34. Policy SWDPR38 - Management of Flood Risk seeks to ensure that development is directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding. SWDPR39 requires proposals to demonstrate that drainage and run-off will be managed in a sustainable way through a Water Management Statement and requires development proposals to incorporate sustainable drainage systems where appropriate. Together these policies ensure that flood risk is properly considered and managed as part of the planning process.
- 1.1.35. Given the proposed increase in hardstanding and the site's location within a flood risk area, the Local Planning Authority would reasonably require further information to demonstrate that the proposed drainage arrangements are technically feasible and would not result in an increased risk of surface water flooding. This is likely to include **BRE365-compliant infiltration/percolation testing**, together with a detailed surface water drainage strategy setting out the proposed drainage infrastructure, attenuation measures and discharge arrangements.
- 1.1.36. The application site is located within Flood Zone 1. The proposed development would introduce a limited increase in hardstanding, including areas of non-permeable surfacing, which has the potential to increase surface water runoff if not appropriately managed. The intention is for surface water drainage to be managed on-site, with infiltration to the ground proposed as the primary means of disposal, subject to the results of appropriate infiltration testing and the confirmation of a suitable detailed drainage design. This approach would seek to minimise surface water discharge from the site and ensure that runoff is appropriately managed in accordance with the principles of sustainable drainage.
- 1.1.37. Subject to satisfactory infiltration testing and the submission and approval of an appropriate detailed drainage strategy, it is considered that surface water arising from the development can be adequately managed on-site and that the proposal would not give rise to an unacceptable increase in flood risk.

Other Matters

- 1.1.38. Within the submitted Planning Statement, the applicant contends that Policy SWDPR15(A) is relevant to the consideration of the proposal. The Local Planning Authority considers this to be an incorrect interpretation of the policy and does not consider that the current proposal falls within its scope.

- 1.1.39. Policy SWDPR15(A) states that, in order to help promote rural regeneration across South Worcestershire, existing employment sites in rural areas which are currently, or were last, used for Use Class E(g), B2, B8, tourism, leisure and/or recreation-related purposes will be safeguarded for employment-generating uses. The purpose of this policy is therefore to safeguard existing employment sites from inappropriate loss or redevelopment to non-employment uses and to retain established employment opportunities within rural areas.
- 1.1.40. The wording and purpose of Policy SWDPR15(A) indicate that it is principally concerned with the protection and continued use of existing rural employment sites. It does not provide a general policy basis for the creation of new employment development within the open countryside, nor does it remove the requirement for a proposal for new commercial development to demonstrate compliance with the other relevant policies of the development plan, including Policy SWDPR14.
- 1.1.41. In this case, the proposal is not seeking to safeguard an existing employment site which is currently or was last used for one of the specified employment-generating uses. Rather, the application seeks permission for new development within a site which is located outside the defined settlement boundary and within the open countryside. Consequently, the circumstances of the proposal do not correspond with the specific purpose or criteria of Policy SWDPR15(A).
- 1.1.42. The Local Planning Authority therefore considers that reliance upon Policy SWDPR15(A) is misplaced. While the proposal may support an existing business and provide additional employment-related accommodation, this does not bring the development within the scope of a policy which is intended to safeguard existing rural employment sites. The economic benefits associated with supporting Pencroft Earth Moving remain a material consideration, but they should be considered under the relevant policies relating to new rural business development and economic growth rather than under Policy SWDPR15(A).
- 1.1.43. Accordingly, Policy SWDPR15(A) is not considered to provide policy support for the proposed development. The proposal should instead be assessed principally against Policy SWDPR14, together with Policies SWDPR02 and SWDPR03 and the relevant provisions of the NPPF concerning development in the open countryside and rural economic development.
- 1.1.44. Similarly, Policy SWDPR15(B) is not considered to be applicable to the proposal. Policy SWDPR15(B) provides support for proposals which seek to diversify agricultural and other land-based rural businesses for employment, tourism, leisure and recreation uses, subject to a number of specified criteria. These include ensuring that the proposal does not detract from or prejudice the original agricultural undertaking or its future operation as an agricultural or other land-based rural business, that the scale, layout and design of the development are appropriate to the rural character of the area, that existing buildings are used wherever possible to minimise the need for additional built development, and that appropriate consideration is given to sustainable transport and the impact of the proposal upon the highway network.

- 1.1.45. The policy is therefore specifically directed towards the diversification of an existing agricultural or other land-based rural business. Its purpose is to enable such businesses to broaden their economic activities whilst retaining and supporting the underlying rural enterprise. It does not provide a general policy basis for new employment development on land which happens to be located within a rural area.
- 1.1.46. In this case, the application form describes the site as “Vacant Amenity Land associated with Pencroft Limited”. On the information submitted, there is no evidence to demonstrate that the application site forms part of an existing agricultural undertaking or other land-based rural business of the type contemplated by Policy SWDPR15(B). Furthermore, the Planning Statement identifies the purpose of the proposal as supporting Pencroft Earth Moving through the provision of office accommodation. An earth-moving business, in itself, does not constitute an agricultural or other land-based rural business for the purposes of Policy SWDPR15(B), and the submitted information does not establish that the proposal represents diversification of an existing agricultural or land-based rural enterprise.
- 1.1.47. The description of the site as vacant amenity land associated with Pencroft Limited is therefore significant. It indicates that the land is ancillary to an existing business rather than forming part of an established agricultural or land-based rural enterprise which is seeking to diversify its activities. The proposal would consequently represent the introduction of additional commercial floorspace rather than the diversification of an existing rural business within the meaning of Policy SWDPR15(B).
- 1.1.48. Accordingly, the Local Planning Authority considers that the applicant's reliance upon Policy SWDPR15(B) represents an incorrect reading of the policy. The criteria within Policy SWDPR15(B) cannot reasonably be applied to the proposal because the fundamental prerequisite for the policy, namely the diversification of an existing agricultural or other land-based rural business, has not been demonstrated. The fact that the development would support an existing commercial business does not, in itself, bring the proposal within the scope of this policy.
- 1.1.49. This does not mean that the economic benefits associated with supporting Pencroft Earth Moving are irrelevant. Those benefits remain a material consideration and can be given appropriate weight under the wider economic development policies of the development plan and the NPPF. However, they do not establish compliance with SWDPR15(B). The proposal therefore falls to be assessed principally against the policies governing new employment development and development within the open countryside, including Policy SWDPR14 and Policies SWDPR02 and SWDPR03, together with the relevant provisions of the NPPF.