

Plans Committee Date:	14th December 2023
------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Item No:

Application Reference Number: P/22/2163/2

Application Type: Full **Date Valid:** 20th Sept 2022

Applicant:

Proposal: Part change of use of airfield runway to Storage and Distribution of motor vehicles (Class B8) with associated infrastructure (Retrospective Application).

Location: Land off Prestwold Lane, Prestwold, Leicestershire

Parish: Prestwold **Ward:** The Wolds

Case Officer: Jim Worley **Tel No:** 07591 947043

1 Background

1.1 This application is referred to Plans Committee as the development is a major application, set outside the Limits to Development, or Primary Employment Area as indicated on the adopted Proposals Map for the Local Plan 1991-2006 (2004). Therefore, it represents a departure from the development plan.

2 Description of the application site

2.1 The site forms a section of the disused Wymeswold Airfield Runway approximately 4.5ha in size and is situated towards the centre of the former airfield.

2.2 Vehicular access to the site is achieved via Prestwold Lane to the west. To the north west lies the closest settlement of Hoton, circa 300 away. To the north is Wymeswold Road linking Hoton and the settlement of Wymeswold to the North East. Directly to the lies the Wymeswold Industrial Estate. To the south is Prestwold Hall and its parkland. The Hall and its associated buildings are Grade II Listed.

2.3 The land immediately surrounding the former runway is occupied by the Wymeswold Solar Farm.

2.4 To the south and west of the application site and within the former airfield is populated by a number of uses including an HGV/PSV Driving Training School and Everyman Racing. These uses are lawful.

2.5 Public footpath H92a runs through Prestwold Park to the south parallel with and is circa 600m from the edge of the disused runway. Some of the remnants of the wartime development can be seen in contemporary aerial photography, together with portable buildings used as site offices during construction of the site to the

west. The concrete roads and hard standing evident in the historic photograph can still be seen on the site today.

2.6 The application site is located within the countryside and also within the Wolds Landscape Character Area and within a Mineral Safeguarding Area.

3 Description of the proposal

3.1 The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the following:

- A change of use of an area of the disused runway for the storage of motor vehicles (Use Class B8);
- Erection of a 2 metre high V mesh security fencing around the application site;
- Erection of administration and facilities building used for serving and inspecting the vehicles;
- Provision of Surface Mounted Wash Pad; and
- Installation of 7 modular cabins. Two of which form the gatehouse buildings where vehicles are checked in and out, one is used as an office with the remaining four joined together to form a staff room

3.2 The site is operated by an Online Vehicle Auction Group and is principally used for the storage of vehicles sold via the online auction. The inspection and valeting of the cars is carried out as an ancillary use. There is no direct public sales from the site, with vehicles moved in bulk via car transporters to off site distribution points. An average of 10 transporters visit the site each day with individual vehicle movements typically restricted to staff movements.

3.3 The application is supported by a transport assessment setting out the number, nature and frequency (timing) of vehicle movements associated with the site, and their anticipated routing.

4 Development Plan Policies

4.1 The Development Plan comprises the Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted 9 November 2015), the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (adopted 12 January 2004) (saved policies), the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2019) and the Wolds Villages Neighbourhood Plan 2021.

4.2 The policies applicable to this application are as follows:

Charnwood Local Plan Core Strategy 2015

- Policy CS1 Development Strategy
- Policy CS6 Employment and Economic Development
- Policy CS10 Rural Economic Development
- Policy CS11 Landscape and Countryside
- Policy CS14 Heritage
- Policy CS18 The Local and Strategic Road Network

- Policy CS25 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (adopted 12 January 2004) (saved policies)

4.3 Where they have not been superseded by Core Strategy policies previous Local Plan policies remain part of the development plan. In relation to this proposal the relevant ones are:

- Policy ST/2 Limits to Development
- Policy CT/1 General Principles for areas of countryside
- Policy CT/2 Development in the Countryside
- Policy TR/18 Parking in New Development

4.4 The Wolds Village Neighbourhood Plan 2021

- Policy WV1 Landscape Character and Locally Important Views
- Policy WV7 Heritage Assets
- Policy WV16 Design
- Policy WV17 Transport

Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2019)

4.6 This document includes the County Council's spatial vision, spatial strategy, strategic objectives, and core policies which set out the key principles to guide the future winning and working of minerals and the form of waste management development in the County of Leicestershire over the period to the end of 2031.

4.7 Policy M11 seeks to safeguard mineral resources including sand, gravel, limestone, igneous rock, surface coal, fireclay, brick clay and gypsum. The policy sets out that planning permission will be granted for development that is incompatible with safeguarding minerals within a Mineral Safeguarding Area provided certain criteria are met.

4.8 Planning applications for non-mineral development within a Mineral Safeguarding Area should be accompanied by a Mineral Assessment of the effect of the proposed development on the mineral resource beneath or adjacent to it.

5 Other material considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)

5.1 The NPPF policy guidance of particular relevance to this proposal includes:

- Section 2; Achieving sustainable development
- Section 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 9: Promoting Sustainable Transport

- Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Planning Practice Guidance

- 5.2 This national document provides additional guidance to ensure the effective implementation of the planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The guidance sets out relevant guidance on aspects of flooding, air quality, noise, design, the setting and significance of heritage assets, landscape, contaminated land, Community Infrastructure Levy, transport assessments and travel plans, supporting the policy framework as set out in the NPPF.

National Design Guide

- 5.3 This is a document created by government which seeks to inspire higher standards of design quality in all new development.

Leicestershire Highways Design Guide

- 5.4 The purpose of the guidance is to help achieve development that provides for the safe and free movement of all road users, including cars, lorries, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Design elements are encouraged which provide road layouts which meet the needs of all users and restrain vehicle dominance, create an environment that is safe for all road users and in which people are encouraged to walk, cycle and use public transport and feel safe doing so; as well as to help create quality developments in which to live, work and play. The document also sets out the quantum of off-street car parking expected to be provided in new housing development.

Landscape Character Appraisal

- 5.5 The Borough of Charnwood Landscape Character Assessment was prepared in July 2012. The purpose of the report was to assess the baseline study of the landscape character, at a sub-regional level that gives a further understanding of the landscape resource. The document 'provides a structured evaluation of the landscape of the borough including a landscape strategy with guidelines for the protection, conservation and enhancement of the character of the landscape, which will inform development management decisions and development of plans for the future of the Borough'.

Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)

- 5.6 The Council as Local Planning Authority is obliged in considering whether to grant planning permission to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive and Habitats Regulations in so far as they may be affected by the grant of permission. Where the prohibitions in the Regulations will be offended (for example where European Protected Species will be disturbed by the development)

then the Council is obliged to consider the likelihood of a licence being subsequently issued by Natural England.

Equality Act 2010

- 5.7 Section 149 places a statutory duty on public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality.

Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended)

- 5.8 As the application proposals are for urban development on a site of more than 0.5 hectares, the proposals fall under Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning
- 5.9 (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017. Such projects only require an EIA if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. Given the nature and location of the application proposals, it is not considered that the application would constitute EIA development.

The Draft Charnwood Local Plan 2019-37

- 5.10 This document sets out the Council's strategic and detailed policies for the Borough over the period 2021-37. The local plan was submitted for examination in December 2021 with hearings concluding in February 2023. It is anticipated that the Inspectors will issue a letter setting out the requirement for main modifications to be made to make the plan sound. These modifications will be published for six weeks of public consultation so that the responses can assist the Inspectors in preparing their final report. The precise timings of these events are dictated by the Inspectors although, subject to their report, it is anticipated the Local Plan will be adopted by the Council in early 2024.
- 5.11 In accordance with NPPF paragraph 48, the relevant emerging policies in the plan may be given weight in determining applications, according to:
- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater weight it may be given),
 - b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given),
 - c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 5.12 The following policies are considered applicable to this application, and the weight they can be assigned is addressed in the 'Planning Considerations' part of this report.

- Policy DS1: Development Strategy
- Policy C1: Countryside.
- Policy E1: Meeting Employment Needs
- Policy E3: Rural Economic Development
- Policy T2: Car Parking Standards
- Policy CC1: Flood Risk Management
- Policy CC2: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Policy CC5: Sustainable Transport
- Policy EV1: Landscape
- Policy EV6: Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy EV8: Heritage
- Policy INF2: Local and Strategic Road Network

Planning Guidance for Biodiversity (June 2022)

- 5.13 This planning guidance seeks to provide further clarification to Core Strategy Policy CS13 insofar as ensuring development proposals secure biodiversity net gain on-site to contribute towards the overall sustainability of development proposals.

6 Relevant Planning History

- 6.1 The site, given the variety of uses within it has an extensive planning history. However, none are specifically relevant to this application.

7 Responses of Consultees & Other Comments Received

- 7.1 The table below sets out the responses that have been received from consultees with regard to the application. Please note that these can be read in full on the Council's website www.charnwood.gov.uk

Consultee	Response
Leicestershire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority	An FRA has been provided. Since there is no proposed change regarding impermeable area, the current surface water regime will remain. Therefore, the existing drainage system is to be utilised. Conditions requested regarding water management during construction and long term maintenance of the drainage system
Leicestershire County Council – Highways	Based on the information provided, the development therefore does not conflict with paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), subject to conditions. These highway observations are in response to the Transport Assessment which has been submitted. Traffic Flows: The proposed development would result in 80 two way

Consultee	Response
	<p data-bbox="624 282 1406 566">movements per day with a limit of 10-15 movements per hour period. Whilst no breakdown per AM/PM peak periods has been supplied, the Local Highways Authority is satisfied that the proposed development would not result in more than 30 two-way trips in any peak period. The Local Highways Authority therefore advise that on this basis, no further trip generation analysis is required.</p> <p data-bbox="624 607 911 638">Junction Capacity:</p> <p data-bbox="624 678 1414 963">The applicant has demonstrated splays of 2.4m x 160m and 4.5m x 160m in both directions of the site access. The splays are contained within the highway boundary or land within the Applicants ownership. In accordance with the LHDG the demonstrated splays are acceptable for vehicles travelling up to 53 mph. Prestwold Lane is a classified C road subject to a 40mph speed limit, the demonstrated splays are therefore acceptable.</p> <p data-bbox="624 1003 1414 1151">From drawing number 23031-02-01 the vehicle tracking demonstrated using the largest vehicle expected to access the site, that being a Car Transporter with an over length of 20m and width of 2.5m.</p> <p data-bbox="624 1191 1382 1440">The tracking demonstrates marginal overhang of the vehicles body immediately opposite the site access when accessing the site from a southern direction. Present in this location is a narrow footpath which measures to be approximately 1.8m in width from the above drawing, the footway provision on this side of Prestwold Lane terminates at this point also.</p> <p data-bbox="624 1480 1398 1628">Upon consideration of the location of the development site and noting that this footway does not provide a connection to any immediate local amenities, it would unlikely be highly trafficked by pedestrians.</p> <p data-bbox="624 1668 1398 1809">Presently in this location is an existing dropped crossing therefore any overhang would not obstruct an existing raised kerbs thus not incurring any unnecessary maintenance burden.</p> <p data-bbox="624 1850 1406 2029">The Transport Assessment notes that the site could generate up to 5 trips per day undertaken by the above mentioned vehicle transported, movements of this nature would therefore be considered infrequent. The Local Highways Authority therefore considers on</p>

Consultee	Response
	<p>balance, that the existing access already caters for HGV movements in conjunction with the wider site, the Local Highways Authority is satisfied that the existing access can suitably accommodate for the proposals. The Local Highways Authority advises the following conditions are required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of sightlines • Provision of 10 parking spaces on site
LCC Mineral Planning Authority	<p>No Objection: In addition, the site lies partially within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for gypsum, therefore Policy M11: Safeguarding of Mineral Resources of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan is relevant. However, while the proposed development may sterilise mineral, the nature, scale and location of the proposal does not raise significant safeguarding concern. A Minerals Assessment is not required in this instance and the County Council does not object.</p>
Charnwood Borough Council Environmental Health	No objections
Charnwood Biodiversity	No objections
National Grid	No objections

Ward Councillor and Parish Council Response	
Cllr Bokor (Ward Councillor)	<p>Notes the concerns regarding highway safety from both Parish Council's and suggests traffic should be routed through the industrial estate to the east rather than onto Prestwold Lane.</p>
Burton on the Wolds, Cotes & Prestwold Parish Council	<p>Object, on the following grounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request that traffic from this development does not access the site via Burton on the Wolds. There is significant concern about the impact of the increased traffic relating to this application on the local roads and especially those passing through the village. • There are temporary structures relating to the operations but it is believed that these have become permanent structures due to the passing of time from when the operations commenced through to the present day. This is becoming a permanent operation by stealth. • There are a huge number of vehicles stored on the site related to the application and the volumes of transporters accessing the site, to

	<p>move the vehicles both on and off site, is creating an adverse impact on the local roads. These vehicle transporters should not be allowed to turn and pass through the village.</p>
<p>Hoton Parish Council</p>	<p>The Parish Council has concerns with an increase in volume of traffic and the site access.</p> <p>Hoton has a longstanding issue with traffic within the village and it remains a concern that is highlighted by both villagers on a regular basis and a topic of discussion/action at Parish Council meetings. Therefore this planning application causes us further concern with the anticipation of an increase in vehicles using the village to reach their destination. The volume of traffic utilising both the site access point and travelling through the village has increased enormously and rapidly in recent years. On top of a longstanding issue with the volume of traffic within the village, we have seen an increase of events on the site, which brings both vehicles transporting items to and from the site for the events and participants of the events.</p> <p>HDT who occupy premises on the site have increased their vehicle capacity from 3 to 20+ with all of these vehicles traveling through the village to the access point numerous times throughout the day. The Fleet Auction Group have again greatly increased the capacity of vehicles traveling through the village and utilising the access point and we have been informed that the site is currently working at low capacity, which therefore means the volume of vehicles will increase.</p> <p>As you can appreciate this raises concerns for us both in terms of physical volume of vehicles but also environmentally and in a health and safety capacity. The levels of traffic should not be detrimental to the rural infrastructure or health & safety of the village and we feel the increase in traffic will impact both. Many of the junctions in and around the village were not built to withstand large vehicles and this causes concerns with health and safety due to the ability of these vehicles being able to negotiate the junctions safely and without causing harm to both people and vehicles and damaging the village infrastructure i.e. curb stones and roads, which has happened on many an occasion.</p>

	<p>Whilst we have no issue with the Fleet Auction Group or the Prestwold Estate, we do have concerns with the increase in traffic approving this planning application will cause for the village. Through discussions with the owner of the Fleet Auction Group, the owner of the Prestwold Estate and the site Manager it has been highlighted to the Parish Council that with some investment from them both, there is a more suitable access road located on the other side of the site that they expressed favour in exploring.</p> <p>This alternative access point is by far more suitable for such a vehicle capacity and we urge this to be explored further and reviewed by the Council when considering this planning application.</p>
--	--

Responses to publicity

From	Comments
<p>One letter of objection received (from a resident of Hoton)</p>	<p>The site erected for Fleet Auctions, was done knowingly without planning permission. Although current access to it is off the Prestwold Road, an existing gateway has been opened up and improved off the Wymeswold Road. It will, I have no doubt, become more used as this site is developed further. This is a quiet country road that takes local traffic and some transport of goods to and from Hoton Stores.</p> <p>In those months lorry bodies started to be stored along the edge of the airfield.</p> <p>The numbers increased and kept increasing. They are a real eyesore, this storage area is OUTSIDE of the site location that planning has been applied for. The airfield manager advised temporary storage, under the 28 day rule, and the lorry bodies were awaiting collection by their new owners. They continue to be there, they come they go in a kind of rotating storage facility .</p> <p>Also, there is more of the same further along the edge of the airfield but still adjacent to the road towards Wymeswold. Here storage is more intermittent and behind just two rows of solar panels so still visible.</p> <p>They are ugly, there are way too many, the whole appearance from the road gives the impression of one huge long haulage scrap yard.</p>

	<p>Although the hedging will be in leaf for some months of the year and partially screening this eyesore, it won't be enough.</p> <p>My concerns are that the Wymeswold to Hoton road will become busier and will have too many transport vehicles turning in and out.</p> <p>That the site was built there with no surveys undertaken whatsoever, of any kind, as they would be if planning was applied for first. The environmental and wildlife impact needs to be addressed and particularly nesting birds at this time. The development wilfully flaunted the rules and made a mockery of our planning system.</p>
--	---

8 Consideration of the Planning Issues

- 8.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires the decision taker to have regard to the development plan, so far as it is material to the application. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that: "If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."
- 8.2 The most relevant policies for the determination of this application are listed above and are contained within the Development Plan for Charnwood which comprises the Core Strategy (2015), "saved" policies within the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan 1991-2026 (2004) which have not been superseded by the Core Strategy (2011-2028), the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2019) and the Wolds Villages Neighbourhood Plan (2021).
- 8.3 The Core Strategy and Charnwood Local Plan are over 5 years old, and it is important to take account of changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy. The relevant policies listed above are generally up to date and compliant with national guidance. There is no reason for these to be given reduced weight.
- 8.4 Amongst the material considerations are the emerging Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37 (ELP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 8.5 The main planning considerations applicable to this application are considered to be:
- The Principle of the Development
 - Impact on the character and appearance of the countryside and visual amenity
 - Impact on residential amenities
 - Parking and Highway Safety

- Biodiversity

9. Key Issues

9.1 Principle of the Development

- 9.1.1 The principle of development is guided by Policy CS1 of the Charnwood Core Strategy (2015), which outlines the development strategy for the borough and the distribution of sustainable growth.
- 9.1.2 Policy CS1 defines a hierarchy of settlements for the Borough. After the Leicester Principal Urban Area Loughborough and Shepshed are expected to provide for the majority of the remaining growth.
- 9.1.3 Saved Local Plan Policy ST/2 and Proposals Map of the Charnwood Local Plan identify Limits to Development for various settlements in the Borough. This site sits outside the limits of development for Loughborough.
- 9.1.4 Policies CT/1 and CT/2 allow development outside the limits defined by ST/2 in very limited defined circumstances. Saved Local Plan Policy CT/1 explains that development within the countryside, as areas of generally open land, will be strictly controlled. It identifies a range of uses that are permissible in the countryside. These include those which “facilitate the diversification of the rural economy” but other exceptions relate to agricultural and leisure uses, and key infrastructure. It is therefore considered that the development is contrary to this part of the Development Plan.
- 9.1.5 Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy provides for sustainable growth and expansion of businesses economic growth in rural areas provided that the scale and character of the development is designed and operated so as to cause no detriment to the character and appearance of the countryside. Policy CS10 of the adopted Core Strategy identifies a range of uses support which includes “supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings” but its other criteria are not applicable. The development is not considered to represent ‘sustainable growth and expansion’ as it is not connected to other, existing, businesses but is separate and, so far as understood, independent of them. Nor does it comprise ‘the conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings’.
- 9.1.6 The submitted draft Local Plan 2021-37 is a material consideration. Policy DS1 defines a future development strategy for the Borough. At this date it carries limited weight due to the nature and extent of unresolved representations made during the Independent Examination. It is supportive of sustainable development within the defined Limits to Development and allocations defined in that plan. The application site is outside the Limits to Development, and in the Countryside. Policies for the Countryside include C1, which carries moderate weight. No further discussion of that policy is planned, and there are no unresolved representations. It is consistent with NPPF paragraphs 11, 16, 20, 23, 80, 84 and 174. Policy C1 aims to protect the

largely undeveloped character of the countryside, whilst providing for some limited forms of development. The form of development proposed herein is not amongst those exceptions and is therefore in conflict with the policy.

- 9.1.7 Draft Local Plan Policy E3 supports “small scale, sustainable growth and expansion of existing businesses in rural areas both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings” (its other objectives not applicable). It has limited weight at this date but is consistent with NPPF paragraphs 84 & 85. Similarly emerging Policy C1 supports rural economic development which has a strong relationship with the operational requirements of agriculture, horticulture, forestry and other land-based industries by supporting development for the reuse and adaptation of rural buildings and small scale new built development) and for the same reasons as Core Strategy Policy CS10 above, it is not considered that support is achieved from these policies.
- 9.1.8 The NPPF paragraph 219 guides decision makers give due weight to policies, according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. The most important policies for determining the application are up-to-date, and consistent with the NPPF.
- 9.1.9 The NPPF para 84 encourages “the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings”, however the development does not comprise either ‘the conversion of existing buildings’ or ‘well-designed ‘buildings’.
- 9.1.10 It is acknowledged that the site is situated in the open countryside and the relevant countryside policies do not make provision for the type of use proposed. However, whilst it may be desirable, the provision of large areas of land for the storage of vehicles within settlements limits is not always practical or achievable.
- 9.1.11 It is a material consideration that the former airfield has a number of lawful commercial and industrial uses across the site. It is considered that whilst storage of vehicles would be a new type of development on the site, it is keeping with the character of the existing use of the site.
- 9.1.12 The scale of the storage facility, whilst large, is not substantial when considered in the context of the wider site. Due to its location, it is mostly screened from the wider area and reads as being another use within established commercial and industrial use of the former airfield as a whole.
- 9.1.13 Given the above context, it is considered that despite the proposal not according with Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy, saved Policy CT/1 of the Local Plan, Policies C1 and E3 of the Draft Charnwood Local Plan along with the NPPF, the circumstances of the application site in terms of its surrounding uses and ‘brownfield’ status are material considerations of such significance to justify a departure from their terms (in principle). This is providing that the character and appearance of the countryside are not damaged by the scale and character of the development, and other policy requirements, which are is discussed later in this report.

9.2 Landscape and Visual Impact

- 9.2.1 Policies CS11 (Landscape) of Charnwood Core Strategy and saved Policies CT/1, CT/2 and require that new development does not harm the character and appearance of the countryside. Saved Policy EV/1 seeks to ensure a high standard of design that respects and enhances the area and is of a scale, mass, and design that is compatible with the locality. These policies generally accord with the National Planning Policy Framework and do not directly impact on the supply of economic development projects. As a result, it is not considered that there is a need to reduce the weight that should be given to them.
- 9.2.2 Core Strategy Policies CS2 and Wolds Neighbourhood Plan Policy WV16 include the requirement to provide high quality design, require new developments (inter alia) respect and enhance the character of the area, having regard to scale, density, massing, height, landscape and layout. Wolds Neighbourhood Plan Policy WV1 requires development to conserve or enhance the local landscape.
- 9.2.3 Emerging Local Plan Policies EV1 and C1 are concerned with protecting the landscape, its local distinctiveness and ensuring new development does not result in visual harm. Policy EV1 (Landscape) can be afforded moderate weight, given the nature and hearing of representations, and its consistency with NPPF paragraphs 20 and 130. Emerging Local Plan Policy DS5 (High Quality Design) can be afforded moderate weight, given that there are no unresolved representations, and its consistency with NPPF paragraph 130.
- 9.2.4 As referred to above, Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy and supports businesses, provided that the development causes no detriment to the character and appearance of the countryside.
- 9.2.5 Emerging Local Plan Policy E3 (Rural Economic Development) will succeed CS10. Also qualifies its support to development that is not detrimental to the character and appearance of the Countryside in terms of its scale, character or operational requirements.
- 9.2.6 Development proposals should make a positive contribution to Charnwood, assessed across a range of design measures, including the appearance, mass and scale of buildings, and landscape. New developments should protect landscape character, having taken account of local Landscape Character Assessments. It is acknowledged that industrial buildings need to be large in scale in order to serve their purpose, which makes the mitigation of potential landscape harm more difficult.
- 9.2.7 Policies C1 and E3 of the Draft Local Plan support new small scale development in the countryside as discussed above, but seek to ensure that the landscape is not harmed by such proposals. This is also reflected by draft Local Plan Policy EV1 which requires new development to “protect landscape character and to reinforce sense of place and local distinctiveness”.

9.2.8 The application site lies within the Wolds Landscape Character area which is a large scale rolling landscape with exposed ridges with small villages and isolated farmsteads. The landform is punctuated by woods, copses/spinneys and hedgerow trees. Agriculture is dominated by pasture, meadow and arable. Ash, oak and sycamore predominate as high canopy species.

9.2.9 Guidance for this character area of relevance includes:

- Conserve and enhance the rural character of the rolling Wolds landscape
- Conserve long distance views across the landscape, particularly of the crest of ridges
- Focus built development within valleys and lower slopes to avoid breaking of horizon lines
- Carefully manage development in prominent locations to minimise the impact on the open rolling landscape character of the Wolds
- Enhance tree cover by encouraging the planting of trees within field hedgerows
- Take opportunities to increase tree cover around farmsteads, large farm buildings and rural dwellings to provide shelter and assimilate into the rolling landform
- Strengthen the distinctive rural character of the Wolds by encouraging the removal of particularly tall non-native trees from prominent locations in the open countryside, and replacing with native trees where possible
- Preference will be given to the use of trees and shrubs that are locally native to the Wolds character area in planting schemes
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees to grow on as standards
- Small woodland planting.

9.2.10 It is acknowledged that in ordinary circumstances the provision of such a large area of vehicle storage on an open area of land with ancillary buildings within the countryside would be undesirable due to its likely impact on the wider landscape. However, the application site is set within the former airfield towards the centre with the main vehicle storage area surrounded by the solar farm and therefore doesn't read as an isolated development in the open countryside. The site is set 650m from the boundary with Prestwold Lane and is entirely screened from this viewpoint. To the north, intervening glimpses across the site can be achieved from Wymeswold, however the appearance of the vehicles is somewhat masked by the much larger Solar Farm. To the east views of the development are screened by the Wymeswold Industrial Estate and solar Farm. To the south sits Prestwold Hall and its Park. The closest part of the development is circa 300m away from the boundary with the Park. Given that the Park extends along much of the southern boundary of the former airfield, views of the development are obscured from this viewpoint.

9.2.11 Public footpath H92a runs through the parkland where intervening glimpses of the development could be achieved through the Park landscaping. Given that the development is circa 500m away from the footpath and also screened by the solar farm it is not considered that quality and tranquillity of the footpath adversely impacts upon user experience.

9.2.12 Overall, whilst the development is within a countryside location where the rural landscape should be protected and development should be sympathetic, the development is almost entirely screened from view. Given this and the context of the existing lawful uses on and around the site, it is considered the development does not result in harm to the character and appearance of the landscape or its distinctiveness. Indeed, it is complementary to its character, now dominated by the solar farm and other commercial activities.

9.2.13 The development is therefore considered to comply with the provisions of policies Core Strategy Policies CS2, CS10, CS11, Saved Local Plan Policies CT/1 CT/2, EV/1, policies WV1, and WV16 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and draft Local Plan policies C1, EV1 and E3 in terms of impact on the countryside and landscape. There is also no conflict with the Landscape Character Assessment.

9.3 Impact on residential amenities

9.3.1 Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy, saved Policy EV/1 of the adopted Local Plan, Policy DS5 of the Draft Local Plan and the NPPF seek to protect the amenity of nearby residential properties.

9.3.2 The nearest independent residential properties are on the opposite side of Wymeswold Road to the north with the nearest dwelling being approximately 100m north of the application site. Given this distance, the intervening landscaping and solar farm use, these dwellings are not impacted by the development in terms of loss of privacy, light or outlook.

9.3.3 With regards to noise, concern has been expressed regarding vehicle movements to and from the site and the likely disturbance from the intensification of the road network as a result of the development. The road network around the site is formed of unrestricted classified roads. As discussed below the Highway Authority has commented that the road network is suitable for this type of development and does not seek to secure any off-site highway improvements to mitigate the impact of the proposal. There have also been no concerns raised regarding noise from the Environmental Health Officer. However, given the semi-rural location of the site it is acknowledged that in the evenings the level of traffic noise is likely to reduce in the locality and this could be interrupted by noise from, particularly, empty car transporters using the site. To overcome this issue, it is recommended that no deliveries or collections of vehicles should take place between the hours of 6:30pm – 8:00am Mondays to Saturdays or at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

9.3.4 Whilst a request has been received for vehicles to be diverted away from the local villages or an alternative access be found, it is not considered reasonable in this case. This is because the road surrounding network is unrestricted and can accommodate larger vehicles. The other lawful uses on the site also generate a number of vehicular movements in the locality, meaning it would be difficult to identify a negative impact from movements associated with the use proposed when the current vehicular movements from the former airfield are taken as a whole.

The Highway Authority has also reviewed the proposal and is satisfied that the proposal will not result in an unsatisfactory intensification of the highway network.

9.3.5 Taking account of the above, it is considered that the proposal would accord with Policies CS2 of the Core Strategy and saved Policy EV/1 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan, Policy DS5 of the Draft Local Plan, the NPPF and the Design SPD in terms of residential amenity.

9.4 Parking and Highway Safety

9.4.1 Policies CS2 of the Core Strategy and TR/18 of the Local Plan seek to ensure safe access is provided to and around new development. Neighbourhood Plan Policy WV17 requires new development to provide suitable access arrangements. Emerging Local Plan Policy T3 requires new development to provide car parking in accordance with the latest published guidance of the County and Borough Councils.

9.4.2 Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states that; new development should only be resisted on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impact on the road network would be severe.

9.4.3 The submitted proposals have been amended throughout the application process following consultation with the Leicestershire County Highway Authority. The following final comments have been provided as set out in section 7 above.

9.4.4 Planning conditions are requested to implement improved sightlines at the access and provision of 10 parking spaces. The former can be imposed with an implementation timetable, the latter already exists and planning conditions can require their permanent availability.

9.4.5 Consequently, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with Policies CS2 and CS18 of the Core Strategy, TR/18 of the Local Plan, WV17 of the Neighbourhood Plan and emerging local plan policy T3 which seek to ensure safe access is provided to new development and suitable parking provision. Furthermore, the proposal would not have a severe highway impact as set out in Paragraph 111 of the NPPF and would accord with the provisions of the Leicestershire Highways Design Guide where appropriate.

9.5 Heritage

9.5.1 Core Strategy Policy CS14 along with Wolds Neighbourhood plan Policy WV7 seeks development to conserve and enhance historic assets for their own value and the community, environmental and economic contribution they make, developments are expected to not only protect the assets, but also their setting. Emerging Local Plan policy EV8 Heritage seeks to protect and enhance heritage assets and prevents harm to their significance and setting. Wolds Neighbourhood Plan Policy WV7 is concerned only with non-designated heritage assets.

- 9.5.2 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides a statutory duty for local authorities to have special regard to Listed Buildings, including their setting. Section 66 (1) of the Act refers to the desirability of preserving Listed Buildings, the setting of Listed Buildings and the features of special architectural and historic interest which it possesses
- 9.5.3 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and para 202 that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 9.5.4 Prestwold Hall and its associated buildings are Grade II Listed Buildings and as such designated heritage assets. Their significance can be set out as follows:

Hall

- *Remodelled by William Burn in 1842-4 but incorporating a mid C18 H-plan house which influenced Burn's plan and choice of style.*
- *Is of interest as one of Burn's earlier English commissions*
- *The earlier brick house has been replaced and extended using Ancaster stone, ashlar throughout with angle quoins, sill courses and a modillion eaves cornice with balustraded parapets.*
- *The entrance (west) front is 3 storeys, 3-3-3, with the central bays recessed. In the centre is a projecting porte cochere, Roman Doric with 4 columns, triglyph frieze and cornice*
- *All windows are sashes in shouldered architraves.*
- *To the left, a Doric colonnade leads to the return wall of the stable yard and its entrance, The flanking wall is relieved by projecting pilasters, and a plain frieze and cornice*
- *Garden front, 3 storeys, 2-3-3-3. Sash windows with shouldered architraves.*
- *Internally, the finest room is the entrance hall with richly coloured marble walls and coffered ceiling painted in imitation-of Raphael's Vatican grotesques, with arabesques etc.*
- *An arcade opens on to a vaulted corridor leading to a top lit inner hall, these spaces also marbled.*
- *Other rooms include the library, drawing room and dining room, which all have plaster cornices, light plaster panelled ceilings, fine doorcases, and marble fireplaces*
To the rear (North) of the house the service wing extends, forming one range of the stable courtyard.

Stable Block

- *Stable block, forming the North side of stable courtyard, c1840. Brick, with slate roof. A low 2 storeys, 6 bays with 2 central shallow arched carriage entrances, and various windows with stone sills and gauged brick heads*

Garden Walls

- *Garden walls forming terrace 1842-4*
- *Low coped stone walling, with alternating sections of solid ashlar and balustraded parapet*
- *Curved projection in centre of S range, and stone seats incorporated in W and E angles. Ornamented with urns*

North Lodge

- *Picturesque Cottage, 1850. Brick with slate roof and central stack 1½ storeys, asymmetrical road front has projecting gable to right, and a bay of 1½ storeys with gabled dormer and staircase window*
- *All windows have ornamental brick hoodmould a projecting gabled porch with 4-centred arched opening, and beyond this, 2 further latticed windows with hoodmoulds*

Sunday School House

- *Built as a girls' school in 1834 later made into a Sunday school, and now modified to form a dwelling house*
- *1½ storeys, brick with Swithland slate roof, and gable to left.*
- *Central archway beneath gable, hoodmoulds to pointed arched door and to windows, which are triple lancets beneath flat lintels*
- *To left a late C19 extension with similar detailing, gable windows with stone dressing and hoodmoulds, and decorative strapwork over upper window dated with initials CJP over doorway. To right of main facade an additional bay of C20*

Laundry Cottage

- *Cottage, late C16, sole survivor of former village of Prestwold*
- *Timber framed in large panels, 4 x 2 high with arch bracing on a brick and rubble plinth, infilled with wattle and daub and brick.*
- *Thatched roof.*
- *Rear wall has no openings, door and windows (horizontal sliding sashes) along front (E) wall*
- *Built in 2 distinct parts, separately roofed, with brick stack between the 2 parts*
- *Large outshut, also thatched, to North and South*

Church of St Andrew

- *Medieval parish church largely rebuilt 1890 by Sir A. Blomfield*
- *Mainly of random rubble with ashlar dressings but with some coursed rubble walling to S wall of chancel.*
- *Late C14 buttressed west tower with 4 principal stages, 2-light traceried openings to bell chamber, west door and 2-light traceried window above, with corbel heads to hoodmould, decorated frieze below embattled parapet*
- *Nave of 4 bays, all of 1890, random rubble with sandstone dressings, curvilinear tracery to windows, that to SE having a stilted arch*

- *Chancel retains much medieval masonry, showing 2 builds in S wall, and a 2-light reticulated traceried window with shafts*
- Is of interest for being almost the sole reminder of the medieval village of Prestwold

9.5.5 The application site does not physically intrude upon the heritage assets and there is intervening landscaping between the application site and the boundary of the Parkland. This provides a physical break from the development. The land use around the application site is of a commercial/industrial nature meaning the development does not form an isolated development at odds with the immediately locality. The existing lawful uses on the site are also situated closer to the heritage assets than the use subject to this proposal thereby having a greater impact on their setting than the proposal.

9.5.6 Due to the location of the site within the setting the identified designated heritage assets an assessment as to the potential impact on the setting of designated heritage assets must be made. The development does not physically affect any heritage assets and taking into account the above context and with reference to paragraphs 199-204 of the NPPF, it is overall considered that the development would result no harm to the setting of the designated heritage assets either, that of Prestwold Hall and its associated buildings.

9.5.7 The proposal therefore complies with the provisions of Core Strategy Policy CS14, Draft Local Plan Policy EV8, and the NPPF in this regard.

9.6 Ecology and Biodiversity, including trees

9.6.1 Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy seek to conserve and enhance the natural environment with regard to biodiversity and ecological habitats.

9.6.2 Emerging policy EV6 of the Draft Local Plan seeks 10% biodiversity net gain and the protection and enhancement of habitats, species and networks. Although the Environment Act 2021 makes provision for 10% biodiversity net gain, the relevant sections of the Act have not yet been brought into force to make it a legal requirement and is not currently required by national policy. Therefore, draft Local Plan policy EV6 can be given only limited weight until the emerging policy is further progressed towards adoption.

9.6.3 Emerging policy EV7 (trees) supports the retention of existing trees and new tree planting and can be afforded moderate weight.

9.6.4 The site is situated in the open countryside. Whilst the wider location of the site could give rise to species of ecological interest being present, the application site and its access are predominantly concrete/tarmac and therefore clear of any vegetation. The Borough Council's Senior Ecologist has been consulted on the proposals and raises no objections on this basis.

9.6.5 No trees are affected by the development.

9.6.6 It therefore not considered that the proposal would result in a significant loss of existing habitat on the site. The trees and hedges in and around the site would be retained which provide some ecological function in the locality. Given this context it is therefore considered that the development does not result in a net biodiversity loss and therefore development complies with the provisions of Core Strategy Policy CS13 and the NPPF along with draft Local Plan policies EV6 and EV7.

9.7 Impact on mineral resources

9.7.1 The site lies partially within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for gypsum, therefore Policy M11: Safeguarding of Mineral Resources of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan is relevant. However, while the proposed development may sterilise mineral, the nature, scale and location of the proposal does not raise significant safeguarding concern. A Minerals Assessment is not required in this instance and the County Council does not object.

10 Conclusion

10.1 Whilst the proposed development is contrary to policies at national, local and Neighbourhood Plan level regarding commercial development in the countryside, it is considered the surrounding environment provides justification for the use of the site, as previously developed land, for the purposes proposed. The development is considered acceptable in principle and in terms of residential amenity, landscape impact, heritage interests and highway safety and there are no tenable reasons to support a refusal of planning permission.

11 **Recommendation**

11.1 It is recommended to grant conditionally, subject to the imposition of the following draft conditions and reasons and that the Head of Planning and Growth be given delegated authority to determine the final detail of planning conditions, in consultation with the Chair of the Plans Committee:

Recommended Conditions:

1 The following plans are hereby approved:

- a) Location Plan (A0L-2210-PLA66-L01)
- b) Existing Site Plan (A0L-2210-PLA66-L01)
- c) Existing Elevation Building 1 (A1L-2210-PLA66-E02)
- d) Existing Elevation Building 2 (A1L-2210-PLA66-E03)
- e) Existing Elevation Building 3 (A1L-2210-PLA66-E04)
- f) Existing Elevation Building 4 (A1L-2210-PLA66-E05)
- g) Existing Elevation Building 5 (A1L-2210-PLA66-E06)
- h) Existing Elevation Building 6 (A1L-2210-PLA66-E07)
- i) Pump Statetin450 LT (17-001-001)
- j) Installation Operation Guidelines (013488 GL0113B-07 E6 - E18)
- k) Fencing Details (V- Mesh Ribbed Fencing System)
- l) DTA drawing number 23031-02

2 REASON: To define the terms of this permission

3 The land shall be used only for the storage of motor vehicles and its associated ancillary use and for no other purpose, including any other purpose in Class B8 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification, without the prior consent of the Borough Council.

REASON: To ensure that the use remains compatible with the surrounding area in accordance with policies CS2, CS10 and CS11 of the Charnwood 2011-2028 Core Strategy, saved policies CT/1, CT/2 and E/V1 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004), policies WV1 and WV16 of The Wolds Villages Neighbourhood Plan, emerging Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37 Policies C1 and D5, the Council's adopted Design Supplementary Planning Document and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

4 There shall be no delivery of vehicles to or from the site at any time other than between 0800 hours and 1830 on weekdays, 0800 hours and 1300 hours in Saturdays or at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

REASON: The development is close to the rural village of Hoton and a restriction on the loading and unloading of vehicles and the resultant vehicle movements at times when neighbouring residents are likely to suffer the greatest disturbance and loss of amenity is necessary in accordance with policies CS2 of the Charnwood 2011-2028 Core Strategy, saved policy E/V1 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004), policy WV16 of The Wolds Villages Neighbourhood Plan, emerging Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37 Policy T3, the Council's adopted Design Supplementary Planning Document and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

5 Within two months of the date of this planning permission the access arrangements shown on DTA drawing number 23031-02 shall be implemented in full. Visibility splays shall thereafter be permanently maintained with nothing within those splays higher than 0.6 metres above the level of the adjacent footway/verge/highway.

REASON: To ensure that vehicles entering and leaving the site may pass each other clear of the highway, in a slow and controlled manner, to afford adequate visibility at the access to cater for the expected volume of traffic joining the existing highway network, in the interests of general highway safety and in accordance with policies CS2 and CS18 of the Charnwood 2011-2028 Core Strategy, saved policy E/V1 and TR/18 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004), policy WV17 of The Wolds Villages Neighbourhood Plan, emerging Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37 Policy T3 and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

6 Notwithstanding the submitted details, within two months of the date of this

planning permission, 10 off-street car parking spaces along with parking (including turning facilities) for 2 HGV's shall be provided, hard surfaced (and demarcated) and made available for use within the application site. Thereafter the onsite parking (and turning) provision shall be maintained and kept available for such use in perpetuity.

REASON: To ensure that adequate off-street parking provision is made to reduce the possibility of the proposed development leading to on-street parking problems locally (and to enable vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward direction) in the interests of highway safety and in accordance with policies CS2 and CS18 of the Charnwood 2011-2028 Core Strategy, saved policy E/V1 and TR/18 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004), emerging Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37 Policy T3 and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

- 7 No public access to the site for either the viewing, purchasing or collection of vehicles shall be allowed at any time.

REASON: To avoid an intensification of unsustainable vehicle movements in the countryside location and to prevent noise and disturbance to nearby residents in accordance with policies CS2, CS10 and CS11 of the Charnwood 2011-2028 Core Strategy, saved policies CT/1, CT/2 and EV/1 of the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004), policies WV16 and WV1 of The Wolds Villages Neighbourhood Plan, emerging Charnwood Local Plan 2021-37 Policies C1 and D5, the Council's adopted Design Supplementary Planning Document and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

APPLICATION SITE

