
SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

Demolition of offices and erection of a two-storey reception and office extension to the existing workshop building

Brimington Road North, Chesterfield S41 9BE

GH Preston

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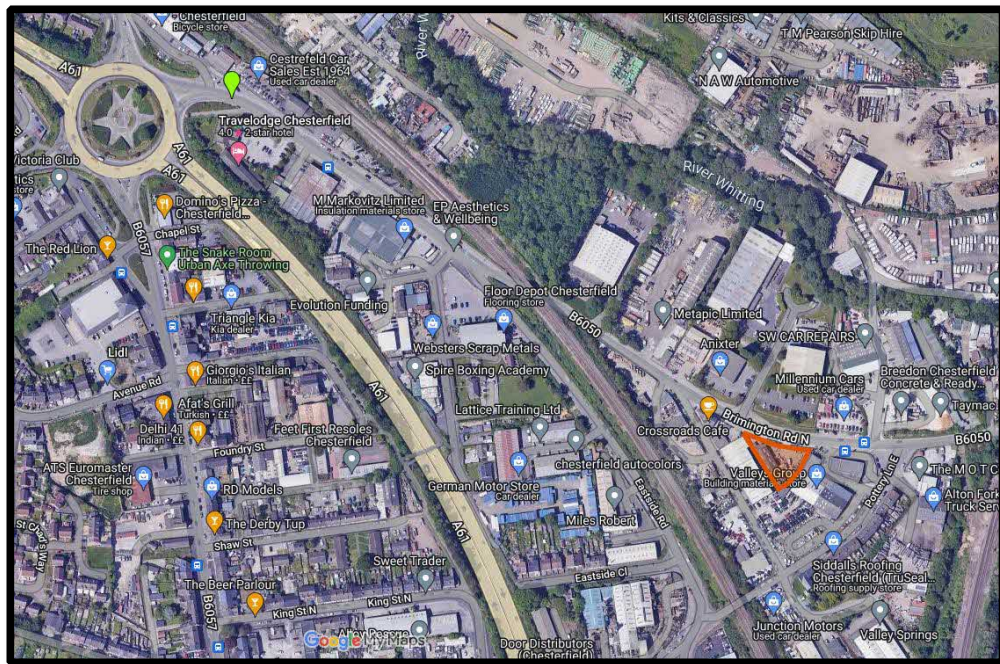
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1.0 Executive Summary

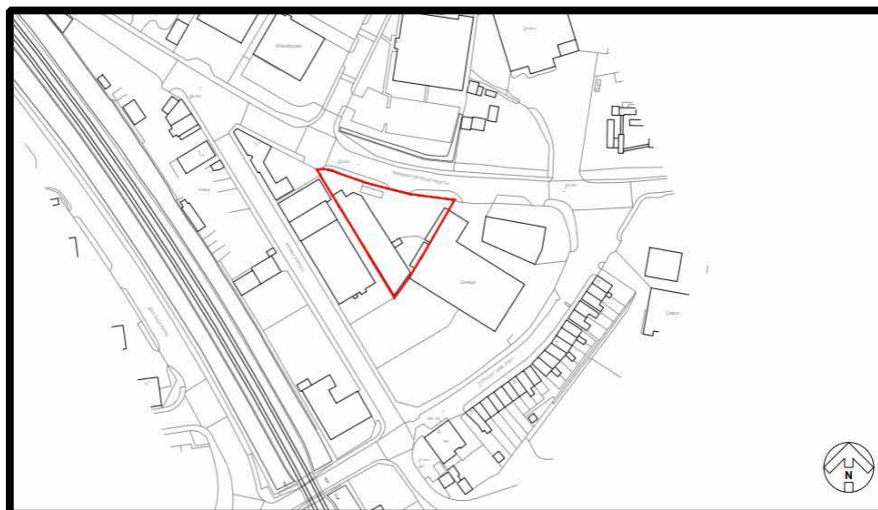
- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Charlotte Stainton MRTPI, trading as Stainton Planning, and accompanies a full planning application for demolition of the existing single storey offices to the front of this commercial site, and the erection of a two storey reception and office extension in its place.
- 1.2 The planning application is also accompanied by a full set of existing and proposed plans, Design Statement and a Coal Mining Risk Assessment.
- 1.3 This planning statement explains the site location and planning policy context and describes the proposed development. It is demonstrated that the proposal would result in an appropriate employment development on this existing commercial site which would enable the existing business to operate more efficiently.
- 1.4 The plans and design statement which accompany the application demonstrate how the replacement extension would be accommodated comfortably on this employment site. The location of the site is within the established built-up area of the industrial estate where commercial operations are appropriate. The proposed use of the site would comply with Economic Growth Policy CLP6 of the Chesterfield Local Plan 2018-35.
- 1.5 To grant permission would therefore be in accordance with Government Policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework which aims to “build a strong, competitive economy”.

2.0 Site Description

- 2.1 The application site is situated to the north of Chesterfield to the east side of the A61 dual carriageway. The site is accessed off the south side of Brimington Road North west of the junction with Pottery Lane East. The position of the application site is shown by the polygon on the Google image below.



- 2.2 In all directions from the application site there are existing business units and yards which are occupied by a range of business users. This includes offices, manufacturing and storage activities as well as ancillary uses such as a nearby cafe. There are residential properties situated to the south east along Pottery Lane East. The site boundaries are shown below on a plan prepared by Brightman Clarke Architects.



- 2.3 The application site is occupied by the applicant, GH Preston, a specialist welding and steel fabrication company. The majority of the site is occupied workshops, storage and yard areas accessed via the yard access off Brimington Road North shown below.



- 2.4 The area of the site relevant to this current planning application is situated to the front north-west corner of the site where the single storey office can be seen on the photograph below.



- 2.5 The office element of the site benefits from its own separate access off Brimington Road North, which leads to seven parking spaces to the front of the offices.



- 2.6 Internally, the existing offices are cramped and out-dated, there is no dedicated reception desk for greeting visitors, no meeting room, and toilets are shared with the workshop staff.



2.7 To the front of the existing offices (north), the site frontage is open onto Brimington Road North and there is a grass verge opposite and an industrial premises behind palisade fencing.

2.8 To the east, west and south of the application premises there are numerous commercial properties and yards in a variety of business uses.

3.0 Site History

3.1 There is no relevant planning history for this site listed on the Council website.

4.0 The Proposed Development

4.1 The proposal is to demolish the existing single storey office and construct a two-storey modern reception and office extension to the front of the existing workshop/warehouse.

4.2 As shown in the photographs earlier in this statement, the existing office accommodation is outdated and cramped.

4.3 The applicant wishes to achieve the following to enhance the operation of their existing business:

Two storey office extension to the front of the existing workshop building

Reception with a desk and waiting area

Desk spaces for 8 existing office staff

Toilet facilities for office staff and visitors

Small staff kitchen

Staff room for breaks

Meeting room with a large table and screen for virtual meetings

Company name to the front to identify the location of the business and the position of the entrance

- 4.4 The details of the design of the proposed reception and office extension is explained in the Design Statement and are not unnecessarily repeated here. The proposed extension would be a modern addition to the existing workshop whilst reflecting the commercial proportions and materials in the locality of the site. The image below produced by Brightman Clarke Architects shows the proposed front elevation of the extension.



- 4.5 The proposed extension would reflect the footprint of the existing office element of the building, with the addition of a fill-in section to the northeast front corner.
- 4.6 The seven existing parking spaces to the front of the offices would be retained.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

- 5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. One of these material planning considerations is the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) but the starting point must be the local policies.

Local Development Management Policies

- 5.2 The site is within the administrative area of Chesterfield Borough Council. In terms of Section 54a of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the starting point for the consideration of this application are the policies of the Chesterfield Local Plan 2018-2035.
- 5.3 The site is within an area allocated as an Economic Growth Area in the Chesterfield Local Plan. In this area the potentially most relevant local policy is CLP6.
- 5.4 Policy CLP6 states that in such areas development should deliver sustainable economic growth by supporting existing jobs and businesses and delivering inward investment. Proposals that facilitate a mix of uses will be encouraged. Planning permission will be granted for new employment developments where they accord with the council's overall spatial strategy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)

- 5.5 At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 5.6 Paragraph 8 states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure

a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 5.7 Paragraph 9 states that these objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.
- 5.8 So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).
- 5.9 Section 6 of the NPPF relates to the Government's desire to build a strong, competitive economy. Of particular relevance to this application is Paragraph 86 of the NPPF which states:
- “Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential”.

- 5.10 The NPPF focus is very clearly on the need to positively and proactively encourage sustainable economic growth and specifically states that planning policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan. NPPF policies which seek to encourage economic growth do not distinguish between different business use classes.

6.0 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The Chesterfield Local Plan identifies this site as falling within an Economic Growth Area.
- 6.2 The NPPF states that planning permission should be granted without delay if development proposals accord with the development plan. The NPPF focus is very clearly on the need to positively and proactively encourage sustainable economic growth and specifically states that planning policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan. NPPF policies which seek to encourage economic growth do not distinguish between different business use classes.
- 6.3 This existing business is very clearly an employment use which is most appropriately located in an employment area such as this Economic Growth Area.
- 6.4 GH Preston was established in 1945 by George H Preston as a blacksmiths and agricultural engineers and it remains a family business today. Focusing on their expertise with specialised welding and steel fabrication GH Preston employ a significant number of coded welders as well as mechanical and civil engineering personnel. This combination of skills enables the business to meet their customer needs through the provision of project management, design, manufacture, installation and maintenance services. The company is proud to undertake projects on behalf a number of major companies including; National Grid, North London Gas Alliance, Severn Trent Water, Tube Lines Limited, Fastline, UK Coal and SGN. The key elements of the business relate to the gas industry, welding and civil engineering.
- 6.5 GH Preston is a customer focused, specialist, company that contributes significantly to the economy of Chesterfield Borough and beyond.

- 6.6 The business has identified however that they urgently need to upgrade the customer facing element of their premises in Chesterfield by replacing their existing offices.
- 6.7 The existing offices are cramped and outdated and do not give a modern, efficient impression of the business to their occasional client visitors. The office working environment is also not attractive or comfortable for the existing office staff, including lack of a kitchen, toilets or staff room. There is also no separate reception, office or meeting spaces which can lead to issues of confidentiality and disturbance to other office staff when projects are being discussed.
- 6.8 There is no current proposal to increase the number of existing office staff (eight), the proposal is to modernise the reception and office facilities for existing staff and the occasional visitors.
- 6.9 The intention is to provide modern office facilities to ensure the continued prosperity of the existing business and to enable them to continue to be located on this site in Chesterfield Borough. The NPPF sets out the Government's commitment to securing economic growth to create jobs and prosperity. The scheme will also deliver business rates and other tax income which is a material consideration.
- 6.10 The scheme would not prejudice the future functioning or viability of employment uses on nearby employment sites by reason of conflicting activities, access arrangements or movements of traffic or people.
- 6.11 It is therefore considered that the principle of the proposed reception and office extension is acceptable in this location.

Character and Appearance of the Area

- 6.12 The existing office element of the business is outdated and not particularly attractive either internally or externally.

- 6.13 The proposed reception and office extension would significantly enhance the appearance of the building as viewed from Brimington Road North.
- 6.14 The scale of the proposed extension would reflect the style and proportions of the existing workshop/warehouse building and other nearby commercial properties.
- 6.15 The proposed materials would also reflect the character of the area at the same time as introducing an attractive modern character to this part of the streetscene.
- 6.16 The forecourt to the office extension would be retained as hardstanding for parking.
- 6.17 It is considered that the proposal would have a significant positive impact on the visual amenity and character of this area.

Impact on Neighbouring Uses

- 6.18 The proposed extension would be situated close to the numerous existing businesses and the proposal would replace an existing office block.
- 6.19 This is an Employment Growth Area and the site is adjacent to a variety of different employment uses.
- 6.20 There are no residential properties in the immediate vicinity of the site and there is no reason to believe that the proposed office extension would have a material impact on the amenity of the area.
- 6.21 The proposed development would be in keeping with, and respect, the character of the neighbouring commercial uses and would not impact on the operations of any other business nearby.

Noise, Disturbance and Pollution

- 6.22 There is an existing office block at this site that will be replaced by the current proposal. The proposed office extension would be a modern energy efficient addition to the existing business.
- 6.23 The proposed extension replaces existing offices and there is no reason to believe that the proposed reception and office would have any impact on the amenity of the area in terms of noise or disturbance.
- 6.24 A Coal Mining Risk Assessment is submitted with the application to provide initial consideration of any mining legacy stability issues. Any issues of stability or pollution would be addressed during the construction. This is a benefit of replacing the existing offices, rather than modernising them in situ.
- 6.25 It is acknowledged that the site is in flood zone 2 (medium flood risk). There is already an office block at the site and the remainder of the development area is a non-permeable hardstanding area. There will be no increase in impermeable area as a result of the proposed development. The site toilet facilities are connected to the mains sewer. There are no changes proposed to the drainage arrangements and no reason to believe that the proposed development would result in increased run-off or drainage requirements compared with the previous use.
- 6.26 The proposed offices would result in traffic movements along Brimington Road North but there is no reason to conclude that this would result in a material change in the number of vehicles using the local highway network. Particularly given that this road already serves numerous large businesses.
- 6.27 Employees and client vehicles would not have a material impact in terms of noise, disturbance or pollution. There are also opportunities for employees and clients to walk and cycle to the property, or to use the bus services.
- 6.28 There is no reason to conclude that the replacement office extension would cause a detrimental impact to the local area.

The Impact of Traffic

- 6.29 Any transport implications of the proposed development need to be considered in the context of the fact that the application is for replacement of the existing offices.
- 6.30 There are eight existing office staff who will continue to work in the offices. It is very rare for all eight office staff to be at this site at the same time. Two of the senior partners work at their London premises two days a week every week, and three others work four days a week in London. The proposed meeting room with a screen on the wall will enable virtual meetings to be held with staff and clients elsewhere in the country, without interruptions from the office. The ability to have successful virtual meetings will reduce the need for clients and members of the team to visit the office.
- 6.31 It is acknowledged that parking is at a premium along various sections of Brimington Road North, although it is a wide road and there are no particular problems caused by on-street parking. There will continue to be seven parking spaces marked out at the front of the offices, which is sufficient for both employees and any visitors. Staff will be encouraged to carshare, walk, cycle or use the local bus services, but there will be sufficient parking spaces if they choose to travel by car.
- 6.32 The access off the highway is sufficiently wide and has good visibility. The road is wide and the use of this road to accommodate the vehicles associated with the proposed development would not change the character of the area. There is no evidence that the office extension would result in an unacceptable traffic or parking impact, particularly given that it would be a replacement office.
- 6.33 There is no evidence that there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or that the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe, in terms of the test set out at paragraph 115 of the NPPF (2023). The highway impacts of the proposed use need to be considered in the context of the fact that this is an existing commercial site with ancillary offices and there is no proposed increase in office staff as a result of this development.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The site is within an Employment Growth Area as defined by the Chesterfield Local Plan where new employment development is encouraged by planning policies.
 - 7.2 The proposed development will deliver modern reception and office facilities ancillary to this existing established business. The proposed extension will significantly enhance the work environment for the existing office staff and provide attractive reception and meeting facilities for visitors.
 - 7.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme would be a sustainable employment development that would help ensure the retention of this business in Chesterfield Borough.
 - 7.4 The proposed extension would result in significant visual enhancement to the appearance of the front of this business premises. The extension would provide a clear business identity and customer entrance and give the business a more modern and attractive interface with the streetscene,
 - 7.5 No unacceptable impacts of the proposals have been identified and conversely numerous benefits have been evidenced. It is entirely appropriate for this office extension to be constructed in this employment growth area.
 - 7.6 To grant permission would therefore be in accordance with the Government economic objective set out in the National Planning Policy Framework which aims to “build a strong, responsive and competitive economy”.
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