PLANNING STATEMENT

Address: Knolton Cheese Farmhouse, Overton
Client: Knolton Farmhouse Cheese

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of the application for a new office building at Knolton Farmhouse Cheese Ltd, Overton-on-Dee, Wrexham.

Knolton Farmhouse Cheese is a long-established family business producing award-winning cheeses for national and international customers. The company has experienced sustained growth, with increasing staff numbers and expanding business operations. However, the existing office accommodation is outdated, undersized, and no longer fit for purpose.

The proposed office will provide modern, functional, and sustainable workspace that meets current and future needs, improves the working environment for staff, and strengthens the professional image of the business when dealing with major clients.

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2. Need for the Development

The proposal arises from several operational and staff-related challenges with the existing office:

- Age and appearance: The current office is over 50 years old and gives a poor impression to customers. Modern offices are required to reflect the quality of the company's products and meet the expectations of major clients such as Müller.
- Insufficient space: The main office was designed for 4 desks but now accommodates 11. Staff are cramped, reducing efficiency and comfort.
- Fragmented facilities: Staff are spread across multiple office areas, including temporary containers, making collaboration difficult.
- Meeting space: Only one small meeting room is available, which is already used for desks. Temporary containers are being used to host meetings.
- Private workspace: Senior management lack confidential office space, impacting operational efficiency.
- Welfare facilities:
    - Changing rooms are undersized and unisex only.
    - Showers are inadequate (currently one shared shower for 80 staff).
    - Toilet provision is below the required level (4 for 80 staff).

- Canteen provision: Staff currently use four separate tea rooms. A single, larger canteen will support healthier eating, allow a company caterer to provide meals, and foster a stronger team environment.
- Events and staff wellbeing: A larger space will allow the business to host annual events such as staff BBQs.
- Storage: Current storage for PPE and materials is overloaded and inadequate.
- Accessibility: The new office will include an accessible toilet, improving inclusivity across the business.

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3. Benefits of the Proposal

The proposed new office will deliver the following benefits:

- A modern, professional building that improves customer confidence and reflects the company's high standards.
- A more efficient, collaborative workplace by consolidating staff in one location.
- Improved welfare facilities (showers, changing rooms, toilets, canteen) that meet current needs and promote staff wellbeing.
- Dedicated meeting and private office space, enhancing confidentiality and professional working practices.
- Improved accessibility for disabled staff and visitors.
- Space to host company events and meetings, strengthening team cohesion.
- Additional storage space for essential PPE and equipment.

Importantly, the existing office buildings will be repurposed for storage rather than retained as additional office accommodation. This means there will be no increase in staff numbers or additional parking demand beyond what is already accommodated on site. Suitable car parking for the number of staff is on site already.

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4. Planning Policy Context

The proposed development aligns with key planning objectives, including:

- Supporting rural businesses: The office expansion supports the sustainable growth of a successful local employer, in line with local and national planning policy objectives for rural economic development.
- Improving design and sustainability: The new building will be modern, energy-efficient, and better integrated with the site than the current outdated and fragmented arrangements.
- Enhancing wellbeing: Improved facilities contribute to staff health, comfort, and productivity, consistent with planning objectives to support sustainable communities.

- Minimising impact: Reuse of the existing office buildings as storage ensures no material increase in car parking requirements or trip generation.

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5. Conclusion

Knolton Farmhouse Cheese has a clear and urgent operational need for new office facilities. The proposed development addresses longstanding issues with space, welfare, and professional image, while delivering significant benefits for staff, visitors, and the business as a whole.

By repurposing the existing offices for storage, the scheme avoids additional parking demand or traffic impacts, ensuring the development can be delivered without adverse effect on local infrastructure.

The scheme represents a sustainable investment in the future of a key rural employer, consistent with planning policies that support economic growth and rural enterprise.

Planning permission is therefore respectfully sought for the proposed new office building.