

# SUPPORTING STATEMENT



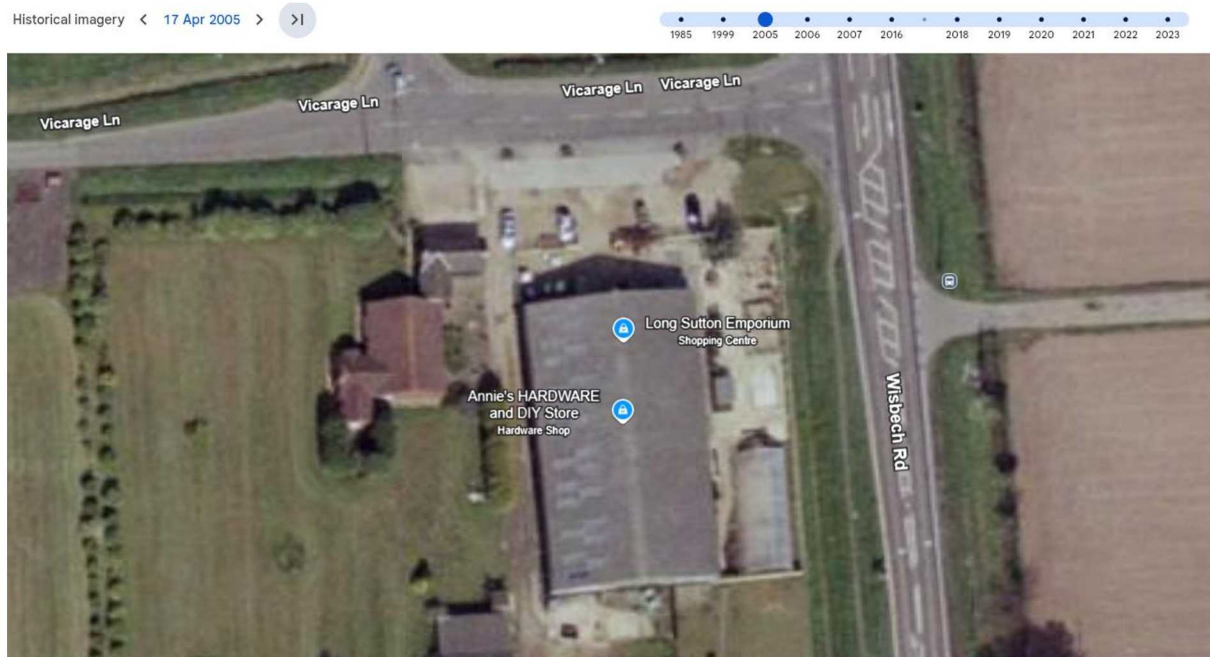
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Job No. 108  
Client: Mr F White  
Date: June 2025  
Location: Land to side of. Long Sutton Emporium, Vicarage Lane  
Long Sutton, PE12 9AF  
Reference/Description: Proposed Retail Unit

This retrospective application seeks consent for an arrangement of former shipping containers with metal frame abridging to an existing outbuilding/log cabin, to form a hardware store to serve the local community.

The aerial image below indicates the site to the east side of the large warehouse building, known as 'Long Sutton Emporium'. The site has previously been used for sales of garden sheds and plants, the 20-year-old historical image below assisted in confirming the previous use. The adjacent Long Sutton Emporium is well known locally for offering a diverse range of products and services. The perimeter of the application site was fenced several decades ago, sales from the hardstanding have varied over the years.



Aerial Image, Source Google Earth Historical Imagery ~ 17 April 2005



2009 – Sheds & Garden Plants. The site is covered in hardstanding, trays of plants are sold from the hardstanding and examples of garden sheds for sale are presented.



2015 – Garden Plants can be seen through mesh fencing. Garden sheds were still being sold at the time.



2021 - Ongoing sales of sheds and plants. A lodge/log cabin had been erected prior to 2021 (possibly 2018) this can be seen at the southern end of the site (dark grey on left), this acted as the sales office.



2023 – Sales ongoing with office and storage shed still present.

The proposal is to be managed by family members that are involved in the Long Sutton Emporium, the applicant aims to supply and provide products relating to domestic gardening, tools and homewares as a general convenience hardware store. The family have named the store after their youngest family member Annie.

The applicant has stated this is to be; *‘a family-run hardware store aiming to bring back the ‘human touch’ to customers, we are a warm and welcoming family and we want to keep the tradition of good customer service alive.’ ..... ‘this is for the community.’*

This retrospective proposal includes the dark grey log cabin seen in the historical imagery. In the proposal the cabin has been moved further north toward the front of the site to act as the main entrance. To form the covered sales area; four 40ft shipping containers have been set behind the log cabin, whilst a frame abridges between the containers and the log cabin, with cladding to the sides and roof. Two 20ft containers are set to the rear of the sales area, these provide storage only, a metal cladded roof covers the open space between the storage and sales containers.

All containers and cladding are to be painted in a light olive green to visually soften the proposal alongside the grass verge of Wisbech Road.

Signage is to be placed above the main entrance and on top of the containers. The signage on top of the containers is sized sufficiently and angled at 45 degrees so as to be easily visible, at a glance, when travelling along Wisbech Road.

Staff and customers can use the WC provisions found at the adjacent Long Sutton Emporium. Further staff facilities are available at both Long Sutton Emporium and 59 Vicarage Lane.

The containers are placed on an existing hardstanding. With all comprising of essentially flat roofs, there is no or negligible gain in any surface area. Surface water drainage therefore remains as it currently is as runoff from the hardstanding.

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The proposal seeks to create an additional 195m<sup>2</sup> (approx.) of covered sales area with additional storage/backup space. The proposed floor area is less than 250m<sup>2</sup> of net retail floor space, therefore an assessment of impact on nearby town centres is not required.

The retail unit proposed aims to provide sales of general hardware/DIY, with elements of convenience need e.g. light bulbs, batteries and birthday cards.

Whilst there is a hardware store in Long Sutton Market Place, this does not have a car park and it competes with the other 'high street' businesses for available parking, this is perhaps more useful for those travelling on foot or by public transport. The nearest national retailers for hardware/DIY are a minimum of 8 miles away in Wisbech or 13 miles away in either Kings Lynn or Spalding.

The Long Sutton Emporium site is an established mixed shopping and services centre comprising of a mixture of small local businesses. Adding hardware/DIY sales will support the adjacent units by increasing the range of products available locally. The location near to the A17 (Spalding - Kings Lynn) and A1101 (Wisbech – Long Sutton) roundabout has some potential to attract people that are passing through the area, though this is likely to be limited to those familiar with the area and the existing shops and services found onsite.

The emphasis on serving and engaging with the local community in a service-led fashion is as key to the applicant, as being convenient and easy to access. An appropriate amount of parking, including disabled spaces and access into the premises will be provided.

The proposal is outside of the typical retail hierarchy, however the diverse mix of local businesses already in very close proximity onsite, combined with other businesses such as A1 Storage Solutions and the caravan storage site opposite, along with the McDonalds next door, Starbucks, BP garage, Benny's Diner and a Travelodge all within 200m indicate this area could be considered as a small neighbourhood cluster.

The existing varied mix of onsite shops and services makes a start in meeting the needs of local residents, this proposal would complement that provision, we therefore believe the proposal should be viewed as being in accordance with Policy 24(C) of the SELLP with the greater use of this site being supported.

Policy 27 of the SELLP states; *'there is no quantitative need for additional convenience goods floor space in the Local Plan area before 2021. There is expected to be a quantitative need for an additional 3,365 sqm (net) floor space by 2031. Such provision should be provided as small-scale units of up to 500 sqm (net) either within a new Local Centre to serve a Sustainable Urban Extension or to provide for an underserved area.'* Long Sutton is very limited in provision of DIY/hardware sales, yet the town serves other small settlements such as Sutton Bridge, Lutton and various surrounding hamlets. Policy 27 continues, explaining; *'Proposals for retail use outside the Primary Shopping Areas as identified on the Policies Map, or for other main town centre uses, outside the town centre boundaries and where not provided for under Policy 27, will be required to demonstrate their suitability through a sequential test in line with the National Planning Policy Framework'*.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines a sequential test for retail development to prioritize town centres and promote their vitality. This test directs new retail developments to first consider locations within existing town centres, then edge-of-centre locations, and lastly, out-of-centre locations that are well-connected and accessible. The goal is to direct major town centre uses towards town centres, ensuring their continued viability and vibrancy.

#### **Existing Town centre considerations:**

Online searches and discussion with a local agent indicate that whilst there are two properties for sale within the town centre, neither have sufficient onsite or allocated parking for such a proposal, nor are they appropriate without extensive remodelling that would make them unviable in the context of the proposal. There is currently no development land for sale either. Given the bulky nature of some of the DIY/Hardware goods to be sold onsite, it is considered that most customers would prefer to drive to such a shop.

#### **Edge-of-centre considerations:**

If suitable town centre sites are unavailable, the test then directs development to edge-of-centre locations, which are adjacent to the town centre and well-connected. There are currently no opportunities available.

#### **Out-of-centre locations:**

Only when no suitable town centre or edge-of-centre locations are available should out-of-centre locations be considered. Preference is given to sites that are well-connected to the town centre.

The application site is well connected being adjacent the main road into Long Sutton and near the junction of the A17 (Spalding - Kings Lynn) and A1101 (Wisbech – Long Sutton) main roads, with good road links to the wider area.

#### **In summary**

The site already has retail use adjoining it, there is room to expand and to include the necessary and practicable parking arrangements. The old town centre has limited parking shared amongst several businesses with practically no opportunities or plans to expand the provision.

The proposal occupies a site that has been used for the sale of goods and services previously, the type of sales proposed complements the adjacent businesses. The use of shipping containers is not incongruous with the nature of the neighbouring buildings, nor setting (opposite a storage site comprising of shipping containers). The applicant is and will operate this as a local business primarily for the local community's benefit.