TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

MR P KNIGHT

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

SPRINGWOOD HOUSE
THE RIDGES
FINCHAMPSTEAD
WOKINGHAM
RG40 3TA

Retention of 2no. existing buildings for storage of domestic grounds maintenance equipment together with associated hardsurfacing and a close boarded fence

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

2 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

3 SITE HISTORY

4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5 THE PLANNING APPLICATION

6 DESIGN AND ACCESS

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

APPENDICES

1 PHOTOGRAPHS OF MACHINERY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning, Design and Statement is submitted on behalf of Mr P Knight in support of a full application for the *'Retention of 2no. existing buildings for storage of domestic grounds maintenance equipment together with associated hardsurfacing and a close boarded fence.'*

1.2 The application seeks planning permission retrospectively for the erection of 2no. buildings on the site which are used for the storage of equipment used in connection with the maintenance and upkeep of the surrounding grounds, much of which is heavily wooded and covering in total circa 10 acres (2.83Ha). The associated hardsurfacing provides access to one of the buildings and this largely replaced an existing driveway. Permission is sought for its retention and that of a close boarded fence of approximately 1.2m in height even though the applicant does not consider that most of these elements require planning permission.

1.3 The fence has been constructed along a section of the boundary of the site with Dell Road and is set back from the highway by several metres and separated from it by dense vegetation. Accordingly, it is not considered to be adjacent to the highway and thus is unlikely to require permission. For completeness and as requested by the Council, details of the fence and driveway are included within the application. The application is submitted following discussions with the Council's enforcement section who have conducted a site visit to the property.

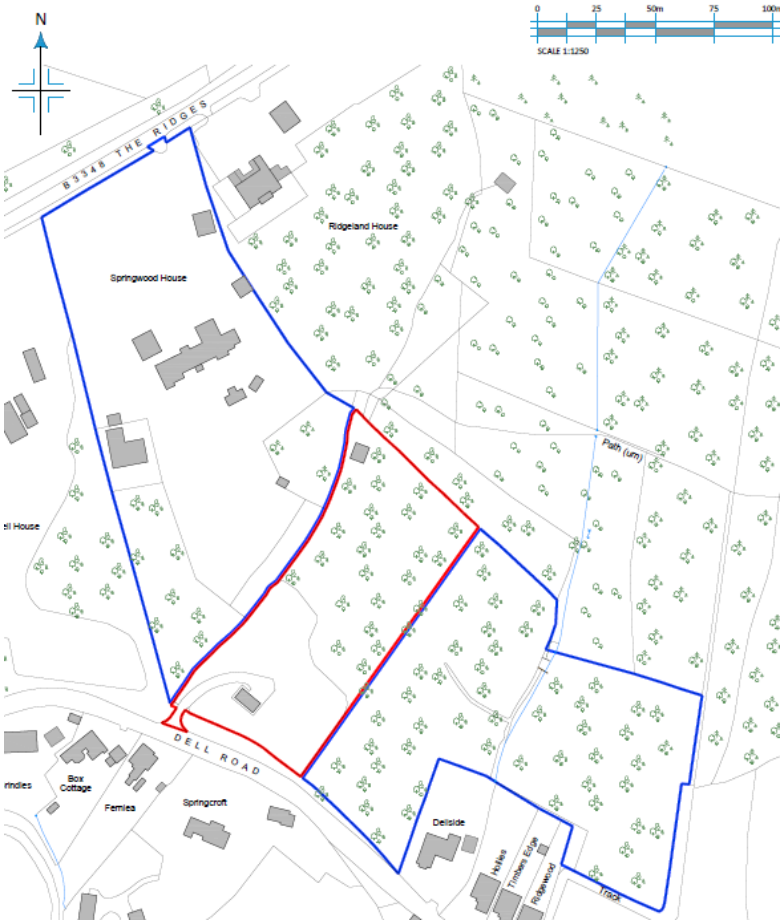
1.4 This statement is divided into the following sections:

- Site and Surroundings
- Site History
- Planning Policy Context
- The Planning Application

- Design and Access
- Summary and Conclusions

1.5 This statement will set out how the two buildings proposed to be retained are required in association with the maintenance of the site and that they are appropriate in terms of their siting, size, scale, bulk and design and compliant with CS Policy CP11. It will demonstrate that the development, including the associated hardsurfacing and fence, has not resulted in any significant harm the character and appearance of the countryside. It will also demonstrate that the development will not have any significant adverse effect on the ecology of the site; flooding/drainage; trees; and other landscape features.

Application site



2 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.1 The application site is located on the southern side of The Ridges, Finchampstead. It comprises of Springwood House, which is a large residential dwelling with associated outbuildings set within approximately 10 acres (3.9Ha) of land, including formal gardens closer to the house and a larger areas at the bottom of the garden including an extensive area of woodland which in itself is over 5 acres in areas (2Ha).

2.2 The application relates to the retention of two buildings that have been constructed to the rear of the dwellinghouse, within an area of land which falls outside of its residential curtilage but within its domestic grounds (garden) and under the same ownership. Part of the boundary of the application site extends along Dell Road and the application also seeks to retain a section of close boarded fencing along this boundary as well as an area of hardsurfacing which provides access to the building which is closest to Dell Road.

2.3 The boundary of the site is well set back from Dell Road and trees and other vegetation adjacent to Dell Road effectively screen the closest building (Building 1) and the close boarded fence that has been constructed along part of the boundary of the site. Building 2 is not visible from outside of the site due to the wooded nature of the land. Land levels vary steeply across this site, with a significant drop in levels from Springwood House where the main curtilage is located and the remaining land to the rear. This makes the maintenance of the land particularly challenging for the owner as it is not feasible to traverse the steep levels with maintenance equipment.

2.4 To the south / south-east of the site are several residential dwellings accessed from Dell Road, with an area of woodland also lying to the north and east of the site.

2.5 The site is located outside the settlement boundary within land defined as being ‘Countryside’ in the Proposals Map. The site is not within a conservation area and

the adjacent dwelling is not Statutorily listed. The site falls within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore within an area of low flood risk.

3 SITE HISTORY

3.1 The site has been the subject of the following applications:

222379 – Householder application for the proposed erection of a detached outbuilding. Approved 13.10.2022.

200952 – Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey rear extension with flat roof including 1no. roof light, first floor balcony extensions and changes to fenestration. Approved 15.06.2020.

153398 – Householder application for the proposed single storey side extension to dwelling plus alterations. Approved 08.03.2016.

F/2012/0211 – Proposed erection of a two storey side extension and balcony, single storey side and erection of two front canopies to dwelling and re-positioning of existing steps. Approved 30/03/2012.

970535 – Proposed erection of boundary wall and gates. Approved 18.07.1997.

4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

i) National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

4.1 Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. There are three overarching objectives to sustainable development which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways: economic, social and environmental objectives. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption is favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10).

4.2 Paragraphs 131-141 are concerned with design. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments (among other things):

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
- Sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.

4.3 Chapter 15 is concerned with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (among other things):

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscaped (para 187.a)

- Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services (para 187.b)
- Minimising impact on and providing net gains for biodiversity (para 187.d)

ii) <u>The Development Plan</u>

<u>Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) (CS)</u>

4.4 Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) requires that a number of criteria are met. These include maintaining or enhancing the high quality of the environment; providing attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes; demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel particularly by the car; and contribute towards reaching zero – carbon development as soon as possible.

4.5 Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) requires, amongst other matters, that new development is of an appropriate scale, mass, activity, built form, height, materials, character and design quality. Proposals should not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring land uses. It also states that proposals should have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscaping or geological features or water courses.

4.6 Policy CP11 (Proposals outside of Development Limits (including Countryside). The policy states that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where they meet certain criteria, including:

- It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the Borough, or in the case of other countryside based activities and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside.
- It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.

Wokingham Borough Managing 'Development Delivery Document (2014) (MDD Local Plan)

4.7 Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) states that there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Planning applications that accord with policies in the Development Plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.8 Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping) sets out the Council's requirements for green infrastructure, trees and landscaping.

4.9 Policy TB21 (Landscape Character). States that proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

iii) Supplementary Planning Guidance

Wokingham Borough Design Guide

4.10 The following guidance is of relevance:

4.11 R1 – Requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.

4.12 R12 – Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.

4.13 RD1 – New development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area.

4.14 RD5 – New development in rural areas should respond to the typical forms of buildings in the village or locality.

4.15 RD6 - The elevations of new buildings must be well composed, well-proportioned and well detailed.

4.16 RD7 – New buildings should respond to the materials, details and colours that may be distinctive to a locality.

5 THE PLANNING APPLICATION

5.1 The application is for the retention of two outbuildings that have been constructed on the site for the storage of domestic grounds maintenance equipment in association with the upkeep of the extensive garden grounds of Springwood House, together with associated hardsurfacing which provides access to one of the buildings and a close boarded fence of around 1.2m in height along part of the boundary with Dell Road.

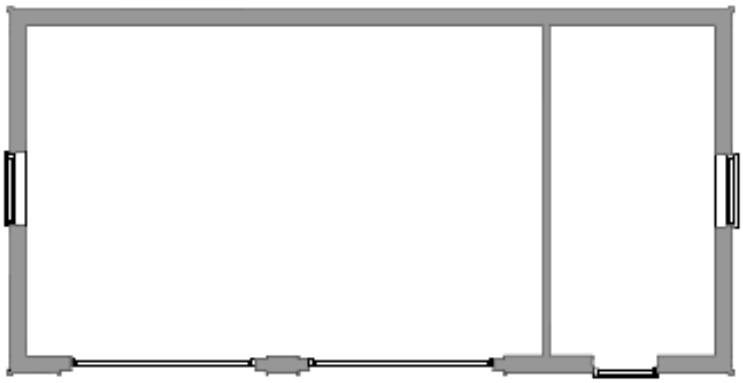
5.2 As stated above, the site is within the countryside where CS Policy CP11 aims to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. The main issue is therefore considered to be the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside.

i) Character and appearance, including the effect on the surrounding countryside and landscape

5.3 The applicant has provided detailed information regarding the need for the buildings for the storage of ground maintenance equipment. The grounds associated with Springwood House amount to a site area of about 10 acres (2.83ha). These include domestic areas closer to the house at the top of the steep incline including areas of flower beds, trees and lawns, as well as open lawns and extensive areas of woodland to the south-east of the dwelling at the base of the steep ascent. A diverse range of ground maintenance equipment is therefore necessary to ensure the upkeep of the site. A particular constraint to the movement of equipment across the site is the very extreme change in levels which characterises the land, with a steep drop in levels from the Springwood House end to the open grassland/wooded area adjacent to the access from Dell Road. Whilst access to the lower part of the garden is possible by foot via a steep winding footpath, it is not possible to negotiate this slope with larger pieces of equipment. It is not appropriate, safe or feasible to continually move such large pieces of machinery by road.

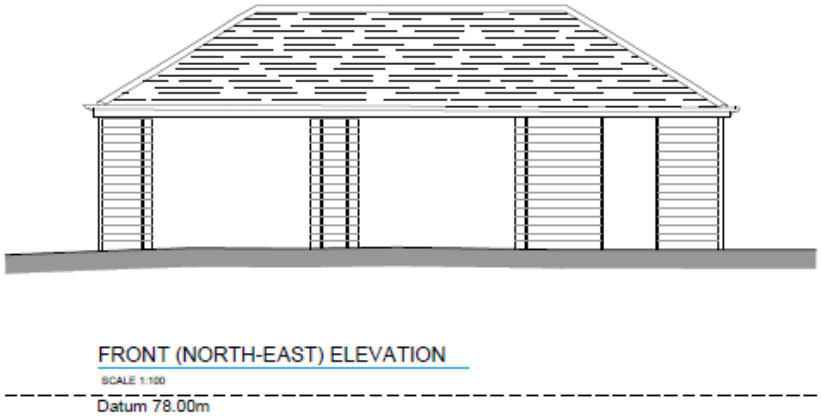
5.4 The main part of the application submission is therefore to retain the two buildings which would house the equipment and machinery (Buildings 1 and 2). Building 1 is located near the south-western boundary of the site, adjacent to the access from Dell Road. It is located within open lawns, with woodland stretching beyond. The building has a floor area of 49sqm, a volume of 154m3, an eaves height of around 2.1m and a pitched roof with a maximum height of 3.8m.

5.5 The building is effectively split into two parts, the larger part to store some of the machinery listed below, and the smaller part which accessed by a door to house the smaller pieces of machinery such as smaller lawn mowers, blowers, strimmers, hedge cutters etc. The main part of the building will have doors sufficiently wide enough to allow easy access for the larger maintenance equipment (see below).



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1:100



5.6 Building 2 is sited closer to the area of woodland near to the north-eastern boundary of the site. It has a floor area of 42sqm, a volume of 138.1m3 and has a varying eaves height of 2m – 2.3m and a ridge height of approx. 3.9m. It is used to store equipment more closely associated with the maintenance of the large woodland area.

5.7 The full list of larger equipment, machinery and vehicles to be housed within the two buildings is as follows:

- Rock Machinery 20T log splitter
- Winton 11-15 tipping trailer
- Ifor Williams P7E cage trailer
- Wessex SC12 sweeper
- Kubota G23-11 ride of mower
- Kubota B2110 compact tractor
- Grillo AWD 27 bank mower

- Bobcat E17 mini digger

5.8 The storage of the equipment in a secure building is essential in order to protect the equipment from the elements but also for security reasons as there have been incidences of theft of valuable equipment on the site. In 2016 a number of items were stolen via the Dell Road entrance. The incidence was reported to the police under crime ref. 4310016689. Items stolen include the following:

- 1 STIHL FS 55R Strimmer
- 1 x STIHL HS45 Hedge Trimmer
- 2 x Kawasaki KLF300 4wd Quad Bike
- 1 Honda HRD536c Lawnmover
- 2 x STIHL BR200 Backpack Blowers
- 1 8ft Boxed Trailer
- 1 Stihl Chain Saw

5.9 A second break-in in 2018 resulted in the theft of a Quad Bike (not insured as it was not within a secure building) and a trailer. This was reported to the police although the applicant is unable to locate the crime reference number.

5.10 In terms of their appearance, the buildings are timber-clad, with a pitched, tiled roof. They have a typical rural design and are constructed in materials appropriate to their countryside location. The buildings are not excessively large, with relatively low eaves and ridge heights as set out above. The provision of secure storage for the equipment listed above is essential to maintain the site, and to ensure that its character and appearance is safeguarded. The equipment listed and set out at chapter 1 to this statement will comfortably fill up both structures.

5.11 The buildings are sensitively sited and have not resulted in any excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.

Building 1 is close to the Dell Road entrance. It is well screened from Dell Road by trees and other vegetation such that only fleeting views of it are obtainable. Its low height and construction in materials that are reflective of its countryside location ensures that the building does not detract from the appearance of the site or result in any material harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

5.12 Building 2 is closer to a wooded area and is not visible from outside of the site ensuring that it would not have any adverse effect on the character and appearance of the site or the wider surrounding area. In summary, both buildings would not have any significant adverse effect on the visual amenity, character and appearance of the area.

5.13 The area of hardsurfacing comprises of a tarmac crossover to Dell Road, a strip of granite sets, and a larger area of driveway laid with gravel. The majority of the hardsurfacing replaced an existing driveway into the site. The hardsurfacing is modest in its extent and is only readily visible from the access onto Dell Road. The materials are sensitive to the location of the site in the countryside and the hardsurfacing on the site has not resulted in material harm to the character and appearance of the site and its surrounds.

5.14 The application submission includes a 1.2m high close boarded fence that has been erected along part of the boundary of the site with Dell Road. This has been submitted at the request of officers although it is set back several metres from the road and separated from it by a dense tree screen. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the fence is not ‘adjacent to’ the highway and is likely to be permitted development. However, even if it is considered to require planning permission, it is low in height, constructed in natural materials and is only fleetingly glimpsed through the existing trees along Dell Road. The fence is therefore acceptable in appearance and has not resulted in material harm to the character and appearance of the site or the surrounding area.

5.15 In conclusion, the proposals do not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings and has therefore not resulted in any significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the countryside (sub-

paragraph 2 of Policy CP11). The accommodation of essential maintenance equipment within safe and secure buildings will promote enjoyment of the countryside as the extensive grounds require regular upkeep. The proposal therefore meets sub-paragraph (1) of Policy CP11. Finally, as it is essential to ensure that the grounds are maintained to achieve an attractive rural environment, the proposal accords with sub-paragraph 3 of Policy CP11. The buildings are sympathetically designed using tasteful materials to blend in with the rural context.

5.16 Accordingly, the proposal complies with the objectives of CS Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 which seek to protect the countryside from inappropriate development and/or encroachment. It would also accord with Policies CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan which promote the protection of the green infrastructure of the Borough. There would also be no conflict with Chapter 15 of the NPPF which is concerned with conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

ii) Amenity

5.17 The buildings are sited substantial distances away from other residential dwellings and are well screened by existing trees and vegetation. The development has not resulted in any harm to the living conditions of nearby occupiers and thus complies with Policy CP3 of the CS and paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF insofar as they seek to protect the amenity of existing and future users.

iii) Access and Parking

5.18 The application does not propose any changes to the existing access arrangement onto Dell Road which is long established. The buildings and associated hardsurfacing have not resulted in any material intensification of vehicle movements to and from the site. The fence that has been erected raises no issues with regard to visibility.

iv) Landscape and Trees

5.19 The development has had no impact on existing trees, hedges or other landscape features. Therefore, the landscape character of the site is and the development complies with MDD Local Plan Policy TB21 in this regard.

v) Flooding and drainage

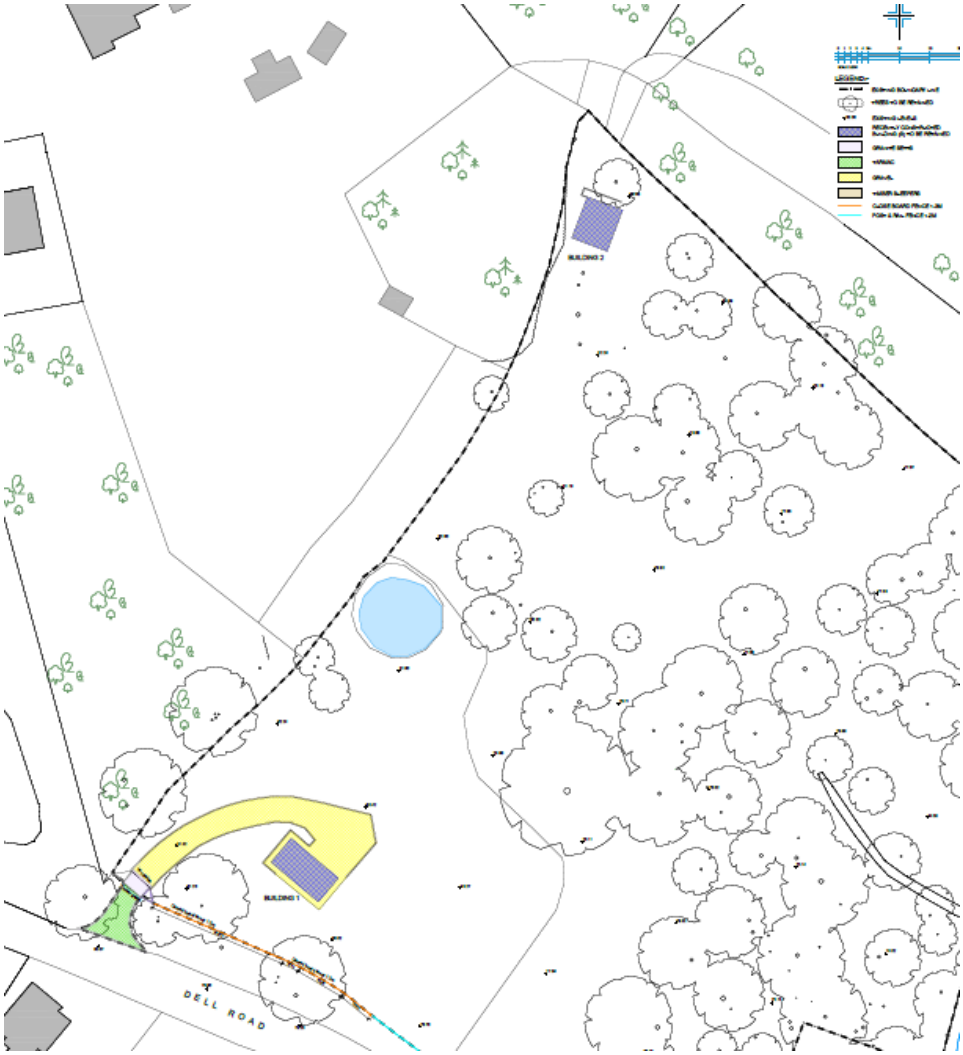
5.20 The site is within Flood Zone 1 so is at a low risk of flooding. There would therefore be no conflict with Policy CC09 of the Local Plan in this regard.

6 DESIGN AND ACCESS

a) Use and Amount

6.1 The application is for the retention of two buildings (91sq.m in total) which are used to store grounds maintenance equipment required for the upkeep of the extensive grounds of Springwood House together with associated hardsurfacing and a close boarded fence of around 1.2m in height.

b) Layout (see site layout extract below)



6.2 Building 1 is located close to the existing established access into the site from Dell Road. Hardsurfacing leading to the building mainly replaced existing hardsurfacing and is required to provide access to the building. Building 2 is located closer to the north-eastern boundary of the site closer to a wooded area. Both buildings are well screened and there would therefore be no significant encroachment into the open countryside as a result of the proposal. No alterations are proposed to the existing access onto Dell Road. The close boarded fence is low in height and is separated and screened from Dell Road by trees and other vegetation.

c) Scale

6.3 The scale, form and height of the buildings is appropriate, and they are of a size that reflects the amount of maintenance equipment and machinery that needs to be securely stored on the site.

(d) Appearance

6.4 The buildings are timber-clad, with a pitched, tiled roof and are of a rural appearance and are constructed in materials appropriate to their countryside location. The hardsurfacing comprises tarmac, granite setts and gravel. The fence is a close boarded timber fence with a height of about 1.2m.

d) Landscaping and Trees

6.5 The development has not had an adverse effect on the landscaping, trees or the biodiversity of the site.

e) Access and Parking

6.6 The existing established access onto Dell Road is unaltered. The hardsurfacing largely replaced existing areas of hardsurfacing. The proposal would not lead to any material increase in vehicle movements to and from the site.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The application should be supported for the following reasons:

i) The application is for the retention of two outbuildings that have been constructed on the site for the storage of grounds maintenance equipment in association with the upkeep of circa 10 acres of land. The proposals include associated hardsurfacing and a close boarded fence of around 1.2m in height along part of the boundary with Dell Road. The storage of the machinery and equipment in secure buildings is essential in order to protect it from incremental weather but also for security reasons as there have been incidences of theft of valuable equipment on the site. The applicant believes that the fence is unlikely to require planning permission given the distance to the highway and the intervening features.

ii) The buildings would not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings. It is not possible to position the buildings closer to the residential dwelling due to the acute change in levels and the need for the equipment to be stored in the lower part of the site where it is needed to maintain the extensive woodland and grassland areas. The buildings, hardsurfacing and close boarded fence are well screened and are not visually prominent when viewed from the site. Accordingly, the development has had no significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the countryside and therefore complies with the objectives of CS Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 which seek to protect the countryside from inappropriate development and/or encroachment, promote enjoyment of the countryside and bring about environmental improvement.

iii) The buildings are timber-clad, with a pitched, tiled roof and are of a design and constructed in materials appropriate to their countryside location. The buildings are not excessively large given the extent of machinery required to

be housed. The proposal therefore complies with the design requirements of CS Policies CP1 and CP3.

iv) The buildings are sited generously away from any other residential dwellings. The development that has taken place has not therefore raised any amenity issues.

v) No alterations are proposed to the existing access onto Dell Road which is long established. The hardsurfacing that has been laid replaced a driveway that existed previously and is similar in its extent. The development has not resulted in any material intensification of vehicle movements to and from the site.

APPENDIX 1

WESSEX SC12 SWEEPER

BANK MOWER

RIDE ON MOWER

MINI DIGGER

KUBOTA COMPACT TRACTOR

ROCK MACHINERY LOG SPLITTER