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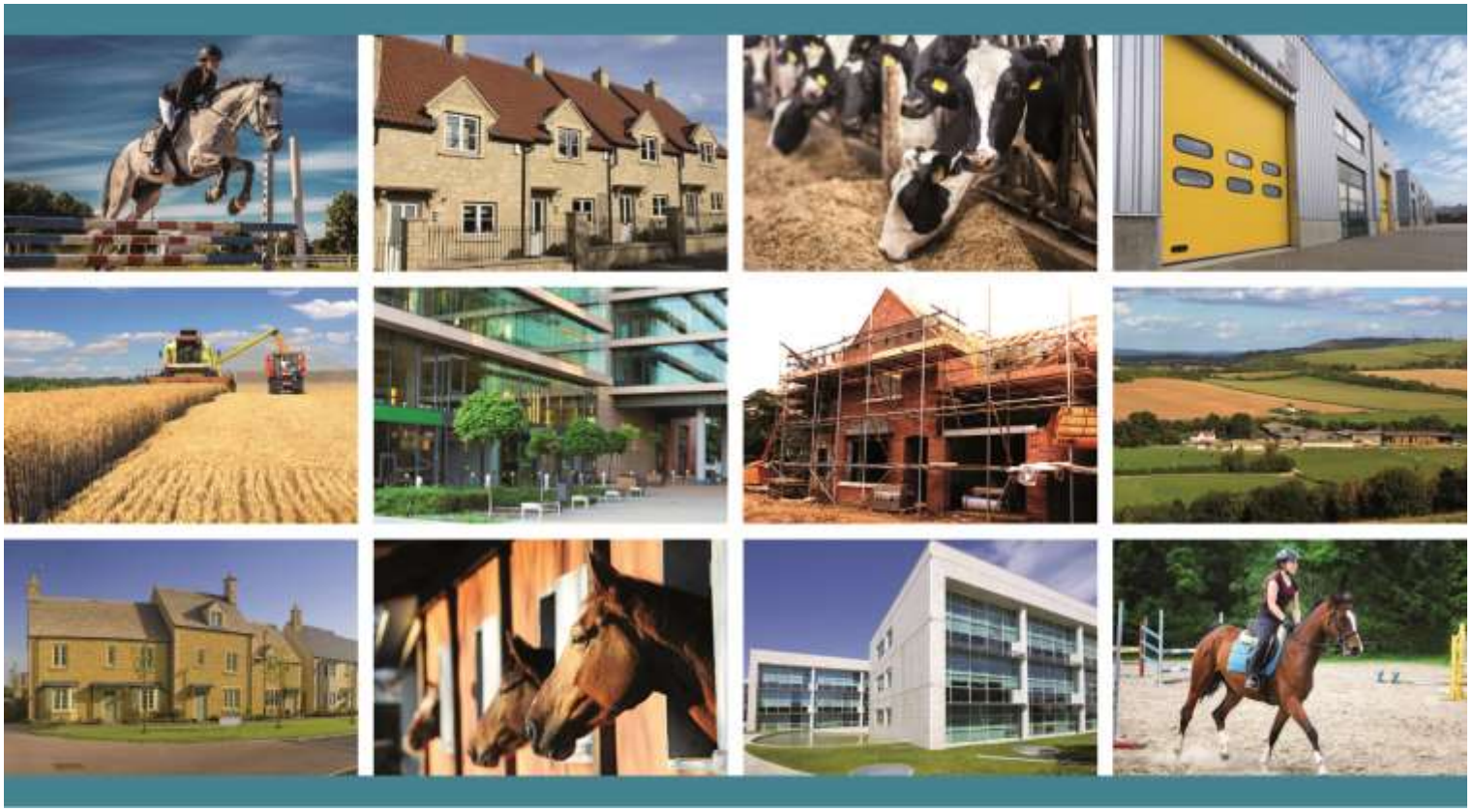

Site: Chittoe Mill, 125 Westbrook, Bromham SN15 2EE

Proposals: Retention of summerhouse

On behalf of: Mr and Mrs M Fletcher

Date of Issue: July 2023

RCC TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANCY

PLANNING STATEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant to support their full planning application for retrospective consent for the retention of a summerhouse.

1.2 The statement will examine how the development relates to the site and its context. The statement will also provide an explanation and justification for the development having regard to the national and local plan policy context.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND PLANNING HISTORY

2.1 This application seeks retrospective consent for the retention of a summerhouse situated just to the west of a brick garage/outbuilding at Chittoe Mill in Westbrook. The summerhouse was erected in 2021. The applicants believed that the building did not require planning consent as it was permitted under Class E of the GDPO as a building incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse within the residential curtilage of Chittoe Mill. They have however added a veranda in the late autumn of 2022 to provide an outdoor covered area that was not permitted under Class E.

2.2 The land to the west of the garaging/office where the summerhouse is located forms part of the residential curtilage of Chittoe Mill. Historically in the early part of the last century, it was used as a small holding, with the land on which the summerhouse is located being used for keeping pigs. It reverted to part of the residential curtilage of the Mill in the 1950's.

2.3 In terms of the planning history relating to the site, planning permission was granted in April 2000 for the change of use and restoration of the historic mill building at the site for use as ancillary accommodation to Mill Cottage (K/038526). This building is known as Chittoe Mill. This approval was linked to a S106 agreement. At the time of preparing this statement we do not have a copy of the S106, and the council has been unable to provide us with one but have advised that they are were awaiting details from the Council's archives. However, we believe that it is an anti-severance S106 to prevent the mill site being sold off separately from the Mill Cottage.

2.4 In October 2013, planning permission was granted for the erection of a summerhouse and ancillary annex at the property (13/03522/FUL). This permission was subject to a condition restricting the occupancy of the additional accommodation for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the main dwelling, known as 125 Bromham (sic). This building is located to the east of the pond and is known as the Pond Building.

2.5 The Council are currently considering an application to allow Chittoe Mill and the Pond Building to retain the approved usage as ancillary residential accommodation and also to allow both buildings to be used as holiday accommodation (reference no PL/2023/02388). This application initially included the retention of the summerhouse, but this element was withdrawn on the advice of the planning officer.

2.6 The applicants both work from home with Mr Mark Fletcher being a renowned wildlife editor. His office is located in part of the existing brick garage/office building, situated just to the west of Chittoe Mill. The production company is a small rural business that makes internationally award-winning wildlife films. Mrs Samantha Fletcher is a journalist and author, with several published books. Her home office is located in the new summerhouse, the subject of this application.

3.0 CONTEXT

3.1 This application relates to the summerhouse situated to the west of Chittoe Mill and close to the garage/office building at Westbrook in Bromham. Figure 1 below shows the context of Chittoe Mill.



Figure 1 – Context of Chittoe Mill

3.2 Figure 2 shows the close relationship between Chittoe Mill and the locations of the Pond Building, the garage/office building, and the new summerhouse. All three outbuildings are located within the residential curtilage of Chittoe Mill, close to the mill stream and pond. They are situated within a wooded setting, surrounded by dense trees and hedgerows.

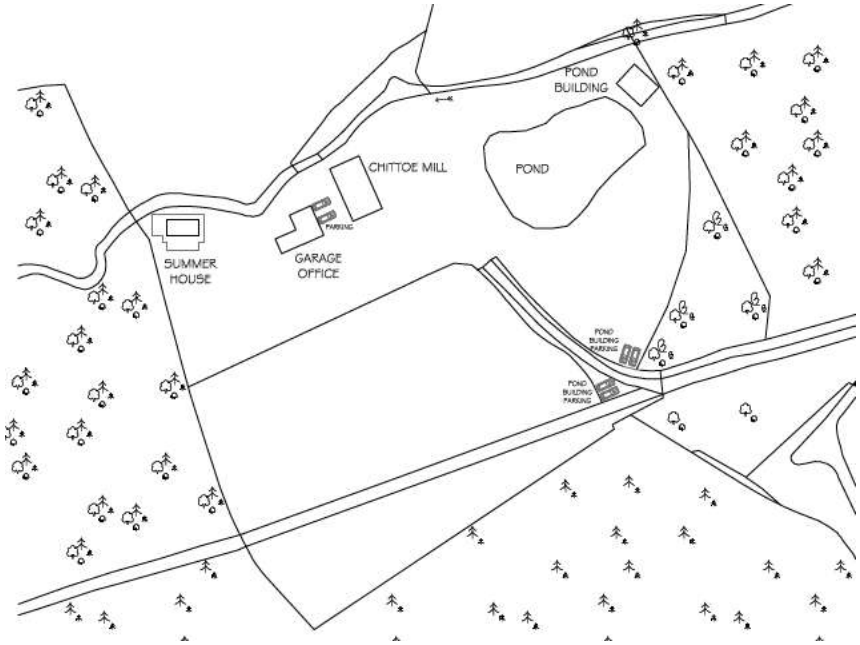

Figure 2 – Site layout plan

3.3 Chittoe Mill is a very attractive three-storey stone building with a natural slate roof, see figure 3 below. Prior to its renovation in the early 2000's the building was rundown and rather derelict.



Figure 3 – Front elevation of Chittoe Mill

3.4 The garage/office building is a brick structure with a tiled roof situated just to the west of Chittoe Mill, see figure 4 below



Figure 4 – Garage/office building

5.1 The building to which this application relates is a small summerhouse, located just to the west of Chittoe Mill and the brick garage/office, see figure 5 over. It is a single storey timber building with a pitched roof clad in corrugated grey metal sheets. A timber deck and a covered veranda has been erected

around the building. The existing translucent plastic veranda roof is to be replaced with an opaque roofing material as suggested in the Ecology Technical Note.



Figure 5 – Summerhouse

3.5 The building is used as a private office space for Mrs Samantha Fletcher, as set out in section 2 above. It will also be used occasionally for wildlife watching activities and it is not planned that anyone will sleep over in the building. The building has been connected to mains electricity. Foul water runs through an underground sewer pipe down to the Mill's system, which is a Klargestor Biodisc system, regularly serviced and checked. The external lighting on the building is to be removed as suggested in the Ecology Technical Note.

3.6 The letter from Bill Ayers, included as part of this application provides details of the background and history to Prickmore Wood, Chittoe Mill and the area of land surrounding it.

3.7 Together with renovating the original Mill building, the applicants re-excavated the pond 25 years ago to recreate some of the wildlife habitat that existed when the Mill was last used in the early 20th century. It is now surrounded by mature trees and plants, enhancing the local natural environment for the benefit of wildlife.

3.8 A public right of way (BROM 5) follows the track from the Westbrook Road to the south, passes between Chittoe Mill and the garage/office building and then crosses the stream. On the opposite side of the stream the PROW divides in to three routes and continues to the north, northwest and east.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 The main planning policy framework relevant to this proposal is the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 (WCS). No saved policies of the Kennet Local Plan (2004) are considered of relevance to the application.

4.2 At the national level, National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) is the foremost material consideration. This is supplemented with the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

4.3 The Bromham Neighbourhood Plan is we believe at its early stages with no published documentation.

4.4 The relevant policies and guidance are set out in the tables below:

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Chapter	Title
12	Achieving well-designed places
14	Climate change, flooding and coastal change
15	Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

Chapter	Title
CP50	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
CP51	Landscape
CP57	Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping

5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

5.2 The key planning issues for the consideration of this proposal are;

- Design and landscape impact
- Impact on biodiversity
- Flood Risk

Design and Landscape Impact

5.3 Policy CP57 of the WCS recognises that good design in new developments can help to provide a sense of place through drawing on local context and being complementary to the locality. Policy CP51 seeks to protect, conserve and enhance Wiltshire's distinctive landscape character.

5.4 The summerhouse is a small single storey timber clad structure located within the domestic curtilage of Chittoe Mill. Figure 6 below shows the building in context during the summer months before the veranda was added. As can be clearly seen it is a modest building surrounded by mature trees and planting. Over time the timber cladding will weather down to a silvery grey finish.



Figure 6 – Summerhouse

5.5 The summerhouse sits in close proximity to a number of established domestic buildings as set out in section 2 above. Whilst a PROW runs down the access track and then crosses the site between Chittoe Mill and the garage/office building, as the summerhouse is located to the west of the garage/office building it is screened from most close-range public views. Where it can be

seen, it will be viewed in the context of a very modest timber structure set amongst other larger domestic buildings.

5.6 The site is not visible from any long-range views, as a result of the wooded setting and the naturally sloping contours of the land.

5.7 In considering a similar application in 2013 for a larger summerhouse on this property (known as the Pond Building), the Planning Officer noted that dense hedgerow would obscure views of the building from public vantage points and stated that the use of timber will further help to assimilate the building into the rural character of the area. Concluding that no harm would be caused.

5.8 It considered that as a result of the modest scale of the new summerhouse structure and the materials used, the building fits very comfortably in this wooded setting, surrounded by dense shrubs and trees.

5.9 It can therefore be concluded from this assessment that the summerhouse has not had a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and of the surrounding landscape. The scheme is therefore considered to comply with policies CP51 and CP57 of the WCS.

5.10 The development will also accord with Sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF, which highlights the significance of good design to the principles of sustainability and paragraph 130, which requires that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. setting.

Impact on Biodiversity

5.11 Policy CP50 of the WCS recognises that Wiltshire's natural environment is one of its greatest assets and requires that development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation. The policy also advises that development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Chapter 15 of the NPPF provides further guidance on conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

5.12 In considering the earlier application, the Council advised that:

"The development appears to have been built within the buffer zone for Ancient Woodland (shown on both our internal GIS and Natural England) where new development is typically not acceptable. It is also a country wildlife site and appears to have bat roosts close by and therefore would be sensitive to light spill, noise etc."

5.13 To address these points, this application is informed and accompanied by an Ecology Technical Note (TN) prepared by Malford Environmental Consulting Limited and a letter from Bill Ayers of Ayers Forestry Limited, the Spye Park Estate and the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT).

5.14 The TN establishes the original and current ecological baseline conditions at the application site. It notes that the location of the building was chosen in consultation with Bill Ayers, selecting an area of the lowest

ecological/conservation value due to landform and previous usage for keeping pigs. The site does not from an integral part of the Chittoe Mill Meadow Local Wildlife Site, and as such the placement of the building over this land has had a negligible impact.

5.15 The summerhouse is also located outside of Prickmoor Wood Local Wildlife Site, with the building being 10m from the nearest tree, which is a hybrid black poplar (non-native and planted as part of a commercial crop in the 1980's).

5.16 In terms of the building, the TN concludes that the summerhouse is very low impact, using construction techniques to sit the building above the land on zero-impact footings. No trees were removed to facilitate the construction of the building, other than a few Ash suffering die-back. There are no predicted direct, physical impacts on the adjacent woodland, with mitigation embedded within the scheme.

5.17 The building design and use is benign and low impact. It is generally only used in the daytime as additional office space, thereby minimising any potential adverse impacts on nocturnal wildlife. There are no predicted significant indirect impacts on the adjacent woodland and associated wildlife.

5.18 Finally, the TN recommends further mitigation and enhancement measures, including the removal of the external lights, the replacement of the translucent plastic veranda roof with an opaque material and the provision of five bat boxes. The applicants have confirmed their willingness to make these changes.

5.19 Having regard to the above, the development has avoided harm to trees, habitats, wildlife and protected species. The suggested mitigation and enhancement measures would result in an overall enhancement to the biodiversity and wildlife value of the site and its contribution to the surrounding area and therefore meets the requirements of policy CP50 of the WCS and the guidance contained in section 15 of the NPPF.

Flood Risk and Drainage

5.20 According to the Environment Agency's Indicative Flood Maps, part of the site area is in flood zone 3 and therefore has a high probability of flooding from rivers and the sea. The maps also show that summerhouse location has a medium/high risk of surface water flooding.

5.21 However, the EA flood maps utilise pixelated computer-generated mapping and do not take account of the contours and actual variations in levels across the site. In reality the building is in an elevated position, outside of the actual flood plain.

5.22 This is confirmed in the letter, accompanying the application, from Mr Bill Ayers:

> *"The topography makes it almost impossible. It's never been known, and the fact that the mill is right there, shows that historically it's extremely unlikely to even rise more than a few inches. The fall in height of the stream over the 100m or so along Chittoe Mill is significant, and so can drain rainfall easily. The stream originates in Spye, from a lake where the level is controlled, less than a*

mile away, and the catchment area is small. As it originates from a small lake, the flow is pretty constant all year round."

5.23 A proportionate flood risk assessment is therefore included as part of this application. This concludes that the development will not be at risk to flooding and neither will it give rise to flooding elsewhere.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 This statement has set out a clear and substantiated case as to why the proposed scheme complies with the Development Plan as a whole and the NPPF and constitutes an acceptable form of development.

6.2 This statement together with the submitted plans have shown that the proposed scheme is acceptable, with no adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the locality and the wider landscape. Matters of flood risk and ecology have also been addressed

6.3 As such, the proposal is considered appropriate for the context of the site and complies with planning policy at all levels, and it is therefore requested that the application be approved.