

**Application No: 17/00278/FULL Full Application**

**Site:** Saughtrees, Hatchet Green, Hale, Fordingbridge, SP6 2NB

**Proposal:** New double garage; re-alignment of driveway

**Applicant:** Mr A McGibbon

**Case Officer:** Liz Young

**Parish:** HALE

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**1. REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION**

Contrary to Parish Council view

**2. DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESIGNATION**

Conservation Area

**3. PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES**

DP1 General Development Principles  
DP12 Outbuildings  
CP8 Local Distinctiveness  
CP2 The Natural Environment

**4. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

Design Guide SPD

**5. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Sec 7 - Requiring good design  
Sec 12 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment  
Sec 11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

**6. MEMBER COMMENTS**

None received

**7. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Hale Parish Council: Recommend permission:

- Applicant has confirmed that construction would avoid damage to the access track.
- Work on the tennis court would be undertaken at the same time.

- More trees would be planted than felled.
- The design of the garage would be sympathetic to the main house.
- No harmful impact upon neighbours.
- Minimal impact upon trees in the context of a larger landscape management plan.

## **8. CONSULTTEES**

8.1 Tree Officer: No objection subject to conditions.

8.2 Ecologist: Objection raised:

- Submitted ecological survey inadequate due to the time of year it was undertaken, the lack of appropriate assessment for dormice and reptiles and the fact that the report acknowledges loss of habitat with high suitability for reptiles.
- Proposal would lead to the likely fragmentation of habitats and loss of some features capable of supporting nature conservation interests.

8.3 Landscape Officer: Objection raised:

- Proposed access track would lie outside the established residential curtilage and within a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (Ancient woodland) and Conservation Area.
- Proposal would amount to an incursion into a woodland landscape setting unacceptably altering the thickly wooded character of the site.
- Landscaping details are minimal.

## **9. REPRESENTATIONS**

9.1 Three letters of objection received from neighbouring residential properties raise the following concerns:

- Construction traffic associated with the proposed development would be detrimental to the access track.
- Tradesmen to the site often leave the gate open leading to a risk of livestock entering the woodland.
- Development would be harmful to the rural character of the area.
- Harmful impact upon bridle way.

9.2 One letter of support from the applicant (along with additional plans):

- It is not accepted that the re-aligned driveway would fall outside the curtilage and there are a number of different red line plans on previous planning files.
- Only two trees of low value are to be lost.
- The sweep of the track is not unreasonable given the size of

the site.

- A significant length of existing track would be removed.
- The Ecological Consultant is currently discussing the ecological survey with the Authority Ecologist.
- Conservation Area designation should not impose constraint on development within the residential curtilage.
- Proposals to restore other areas of land within the applicant's control have not been considered (creating new habitats, improved drainage and new planting).

## **10. RELEVANT HISTORY**

- 10.1 Tennis court; 3m high chain link fence; retaining wall; associated landscaping (17/00278) Pending decision
- 10.2 Retention of outbuilding (15/00935) approved on 8 February 2016
- 10.3 Conservatory; Timber Cladding at first floor level (remove existing cladding) (11/96742) approved on 12 October 2011
- 10.4 Replacement dwelling; Outbuilding (10/95526) Approved on 24 September 2010
- 10.5 Existing track surfaced with gravel (10/95023) approved on 30 April 2010
- 10.6 Demolition of dwelling, barn and outbuildings (Application for Conservation Area Consent) (10/94988) approved on 26 April 2010

## **11. ASSESSMENT**

- 11.1 Saughtrees is a substantial two storey dwelling located within remote and wooded surroundings south west of Hatchett Green. The site lies within the northern reaches of the Western Escarpment Conservation Area (Character Area B, Hale Park). The application site does not directly adjoin any residential properties and occupies a fairly low lying position surrounded by woodland. The site is accessed by two steeply sloping gravel tracks to the north and the land continues to slope southwards away from the rear of the dwelling. The site (including the house and curtilage) lies within a Site of Importance for nature Conservation (SINC) incorporating 1A (Ancient semi-natural woodlands), 1B (other woodland) and 6A (Sites which support more than one notable species) and also within the Western Escarpment Conservation Area and just over 100 metres from the New Forest SSSI.
- 11.2 Consent is sought is sought to construct a detached double garage infilling the corner immediately north of the house. The

garage would be clad in vertical timber with tiles to match the main house. In addition to this a new domestic driveway would be formed providing vehicular access to the building from an existing gravel layby off the main access track to the north west (and outside the curtilage boundary). Due to the steeply sloping wooded nature of the land immediately north of the house the slope would be regraded and a new retaining wall formed. The proposed driveway would be in the form of a sweeping curve and would necessitate the removal of a number of trees and understorey vegetation. This scheme has been submitted alongside another application (reference 17/00278) for a tennis court to the west of the house. This corresponding proposal would encroach partly on the existing vehicular access to the house and has led to the current scheme which effectively re-aligns the vehicular access to the property.

11.3 There are no neighbouring residential properties which would be directly affected by the proposed development and the main issues under consideration would be:

- The impact the proposed development (including the outbuilding and the new access track would have upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and forest landscape (having regard to impacts upon both the intrinsic character of the site and views from public rights of way).
- The extent to which the proposal could be considered to relate to the established residential curtilage of the property whilst avoiding harmful encroachment into ancient woodland.
- The impact the development would have upon the ecological integrity of the Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

11.4 The character of the existing site is essentially rural and the main garden incorporates an informal and wooded edge with no formal enclosure or hard landscaping. The mixed woodland and understorey planting are therefore a key element to the intrinsic character of the site. As set out within the Conservation Area Character Appraisal trees play an important part in wooded copses of the Hale Park Character area and traditional rural boundaries are also noted as an important feature within the document. The Landscape Character Assessment document (2013) refers to the ancient woodlands of the Northern Heath and Forest Landscape Character Area as a key positive attribute and sets out objectives to protect and manage the ancient woodland and manage and enhance the Inclosures' ground flora and habitats.

11.5 Having regard to the special qualities of the site (and its historic importance in the context of Hale Park) as set out above it is considered that the siting, scale and uncompromising form of the proposed works (specifically the track, regraded bank and retaining wall) would have an unacceptably harmful and irreversible impact upon the intrinsic landscape character of the

site. Whilst the removal of the gravel track specified on the corresponding application could be argued as bringing about some degree of benefit when considered in isolation, this would not mitigate the impact of the proposed tennis court and its associated engineering works. Furthermore the proposed new track would lead to additional impact as a result of its wider sweep to the east and the removal of trees and vegetation (a vital component of the intrinsic rural character of the site). As noted by the Landscape Officer, there is insufficient information relating to the proposed edging of the hardsurfacing, the proposed topography (in cross section) and the hardurface materials and this adds further to concerns over the potentially suburbanising impact of the proposal.

- 11.6 As noted in the case of the corresponding application for the tennis court there is no formal enclosure or boundary treatment around the garden perimeter and the general extent of the curtilage was defined by the red line plan which accompanied the approved planning consent for the replacement dwelling (reference 10/95526). This lack of enclosure highlights the rural character of the site. None of the subsequent applications have deviated significantly from this delineation and it is also evident from aerial photographs dated 2005 that the domestic curtilage area has gradually increased over the last 10 years (with much of the proposed development area falling outside the managed garden area and lawn). Whilst the proposed garage itself would appear appropriate in siting and appearance it is considered that the proposed new access track and retaining wall would encroach beyond the established residential curtilage and would not be contained within the established lawn, hard surfacing and area of domestic built development associated with the main house.
- 11.7 Policy CP8 (Local Distinctiveness) states that the potential cumulative impact of individual proposals over time also needs to be considered when assessing development proposals and this is of particular relevance with regards to the encroachment of domestic uses onto open countryside (in terms of plot characteristics and precedent). There is considerable pressure across the New Forest for this form of development and the proposal would (in light of the concerns over the impact upon the character of the site also) be contrary to the requirements of Policies DP1 and CP8 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy.
- 11.8 As noted by the Authority's Ecologist the ecology survey accompanying the application notes that it was carried out at a time when flora could not be adequately assessed, and furthermore the assessment for dormice appears based on a method that is not fully appropriate to ascertain presence/absence. The National Planning Policy Framework makes reference to habitats such as ancient woodland that cannot be recreated and it is anticipated that some of the areas

affected by this proposal and the corresponding application can provide important supporting functions for the designated interests. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland is also listed by the Government as a habitat of principal importance for biodiversity and it has not been demonstrated that the impacts would be outweighed by measures to avoid, mitigate and compensate for effects. There is also concern that previous ecological surveys for the site have cited potential for protected species around the site and this would appear to be at odds with the current ecological assessment. The current report also acknowledges that the proposal would lead to loss of habitat with high suitability for reptiles. However no appropriate survey work has been undertaken to quantify, mitigate or compensate for these impacts. The development would therefore be contrary to the requirements of policy CP2 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraphs 109, 115, 118).

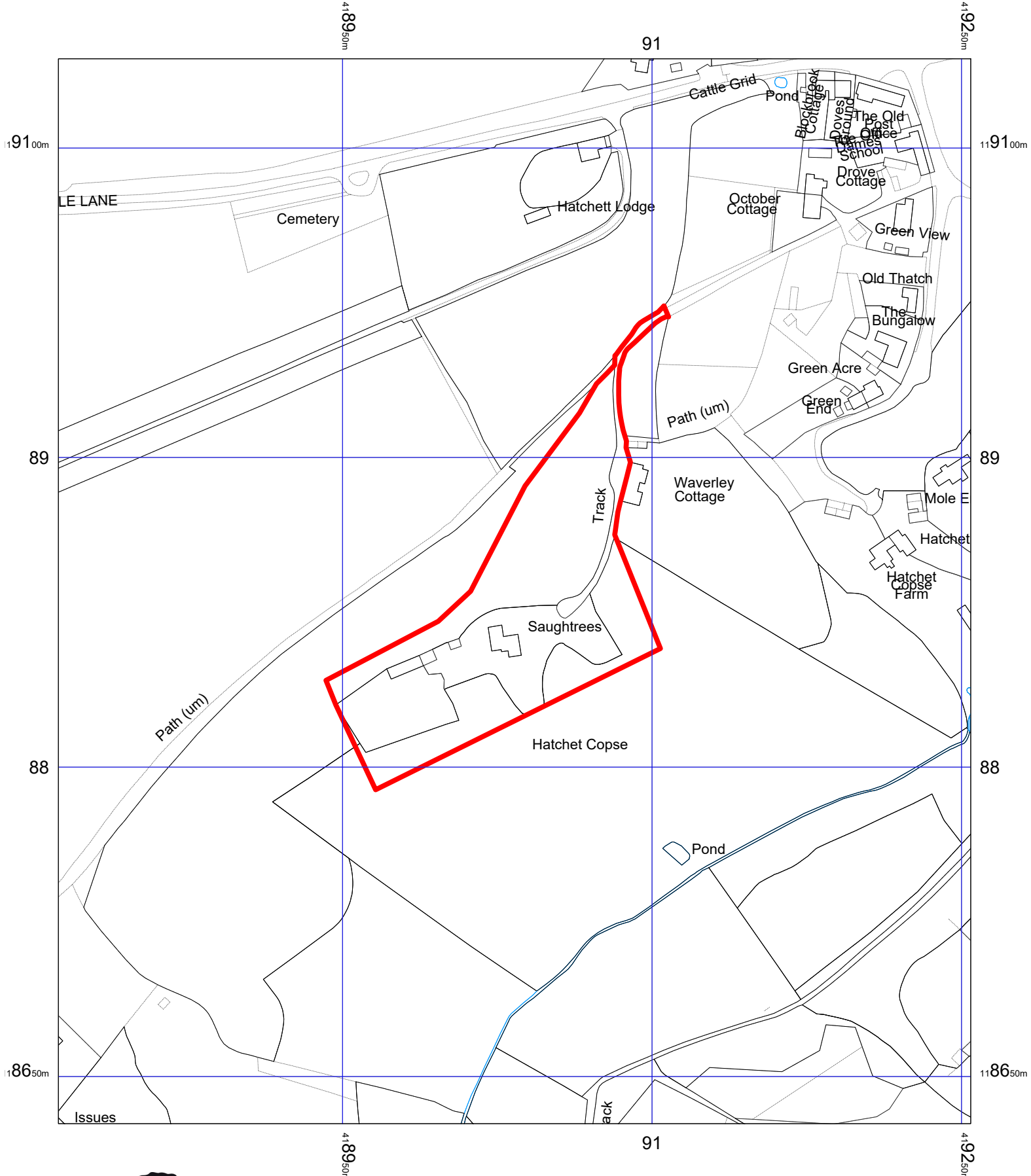
- 11.9 The agent has submitted additional information to the Authority (dated 6 July) incorporating a letter, a cross section for the proposed track and clarification of surface materials. A further site plan has also been provided detailing the location of trees to be removed. The Breedon Gravel proposed with metal edging would however unfortunately be at odds with the rural and informal appearance of hoggin tracks which prevail around the copse and outside the domestic curtilage and the additional cross-section only serves to highlight the Authority's concerns over the extent of engineering works proposed. The ongoing woodland management and improvement has been noted. However this could take place independently of the development proposal and would not directly mitigate the harmful impacts of the development as set out above (particularly in terms of intrinsic landscape character).
- 11.10 With regards to the concerns raised by neighbouring residents in respect of construction vehicles this is not (in the context of the development of an individual site) considered to be a planning issue. Notwithstanding this, however the proposed access track and retaining wall would fail to relate to the main house, its outbuildings and curtilage, and would amount to an unjustified encroachment onto ancient woodland to the detriment of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the ecology of the New Forest National Park. It is therefore recommended that the application should be refused.

## 12. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

**Reason(s)**

- 1 The proposed access track would, by virtue of its siting, scale and uncompromising form, along with its encroachment beyond the established residential curtilage and necessary removal of vegetation, have an unacceptably harmful and irreversible impact upon the intrinsic landscape character of the Western Escarpment Conservation Area and the historic setting of the Hale Park Character Area. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policies DP1 and CP8 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy along with Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
  
- 2 There is insufficient information to demonstrate that impacts associated with the development would be outweighed by measures to avoid, mitigate and compensate for effects. Furthermore it is acknowledged that the access could cause loss of habitat with high suitability for reptiles, however no appropriate survey has been undertaken to quantify impacts and no information is provided with regards to mitigation of impacts. The development is likely to give rise to the fragmentation of habitats and loss of some features capable of supporting nature conservation interests. The development would therefore be contrary to the requirements of policy CP2 of the New Forest National Park Core Strategy and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraphs 109, 115, 118).



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