

Hamish Evans

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 November 2025 17:31
To: Hamish Evans
Cc: Troy Belliere
Subject: Re: Planning Application – DM/25/2073 – Rock Lodge RH17 7NG
Attachments: Hedges Direct Invoice 1.pdf; Hedges Direct Invoice 2.pdf; Hedges Direct Invoice 3.pdf; Hedges Direct Invoice 4.pdf

Dear Hamish,

Re: Planning Application – DM/25/2073 – Rock Lodge RH17 7NG

As you know, we have been renovating/upgrading the house, Rock Lodge, during the past 10 months. All works have been carried out to a high standard and to the best of our ability, including the new driveway along the western boundary of the garden to a proposed point of exit onto the A272 arterial road.

We have been assisted by architects, Ecotecture, in the design of the new driveway and preparation of drawings but have recently asked them to stand down as our agents in connection with any outstanding issues with this planning application. We propose to deal with these matters ourselves.

We understand that you have consulted with Place Services, ecologists, who have based their requirement for a BNG on their understanding that we propose to remove 2 x Lawson Cypress trees,(referenced T2 and T3 in the PEA Report by Emma Waller, ecologist, dated 18th August 2025). This however is not the case, we have no intention to remove these or any other trees, either within our garden area or on the roadside of the boundary fence, either to the north or the south of the proposed entrance. We do, however, plan to coppice the 13 stands of Hazel to the south as suggested by the arboriculturist, although this is not essential but follows good practice and has no actual impact on the line of sight and no bearing on the planning application.

The only theoretical reason for the removal of trees to the north of the entrance (T2 and T3) would be in order to achieve the required visibility and lines of sight. However, the WSCC Highways Consultation of 17th September 2025 confirms that the proposed new access already achieves appropriate visibility in both directions. The Highways Officer notes that the new access will provide a, “significant improvement to visibility”, compared with the existing shared driveway and that the crest of the hill, “does not obscure visibility... with oncoming vehicles fully visible”, and that the visibility splays are, “wholly maintainable within the public highway”. At no point does the assessment identify any trees as obstructing sightlines, as remains evident to any future site inspection. You may recall that the arboriculturist in his report dated 31st June 2025, commented on the poor condition of these trees but these are the responsibility of the Council, not ourselves.

For the record, since commencing these works, we have removed the Ash tree, referenced T1 by the ecologist, Emma Waller, (Page 7 of the PEA Report, Section 3.3.1), located just inside our garden fence to the south of the proposed new entrance. We had actually wanted to retain this tree but the arboriculturist indicated that it was suffering from Ash dieback disease (ADD) and stated that it presented an unacceptable risk to users of the road and should be removed (Page 3 of Part 1 of his tree survey dated 31st June(?) 2025). We would emphasise therefore, that this tree was removed not as part of our planning application but in view of its potential danger to the adjacent arterial road. We understand that

the Council's policy is to remove all trees impacting a public area which are dead, diseased or damaged and the Ash tree (T1) falls within this category.

We understand that the baseline for application DM/25/2073 should accordingly reflect the current situation that no tree removals are proposed and all remaining trees will be retained. On this basis, the specific BNG trigger identified by Place Services, 'loss of a tree area exceeding the 25m² de-minimis threshold' no longer applies.

You may be aware that the new driveway leading from the original garage forecourt to the opening on the garden side of the boundary has been constructed with a fully permeable surface, to accord with the requirements of Permitted Development. We would clarify that we have set in gateposts a further 3m into our property from the boundary fence, giving a clear 6m between the edge of the carriageway and the entrance gates we propose to install in the future, thereby enabling vehicles to drive clear of the road within this space. This additional 3m within the garden of our property does not therefore form part of the crossover planning application.

The only habitat directly affected by the application is therefore the narrow strip of grass verge within the highway land up to the garden boundary, which falls clearly below 25m² in total and there is no impact on any priority habitat. In these circumstances we consider that the de-minimis exemption under the planning regulations is met and we therefore respectfully request that the Council accepts that the de-minimis exemption for mandatory BNG applies to this application.

Notwithstanding the above points and in case it is of any interest to the Planning Authority, we are undertaking extensive planting, e.g., approximately 100 English Yew shrubs (*Taxus Baccata*) along the eastern side of the new driveway and other planting, including English and Red Oak (*Quercus Robur* and *Rubra*) and Beech (*Fagus Sylvatica*) on the garden side of the boundary and we are enclosing copies of recent invoices by way of evidence of these planned plantings.

We hope this further information will help to clarify our application and look forward to hearing from you again in due course.

Kind regards,

John Bellière

Director

BSW Building Services Limited

Rock Lodge Vineyard

Lewes Road

Scaynes Hill

West Sussex

RH17 7NG

