

Planning Statement for the Field Shelter on land adjoining The Old Lodge

Prepared for: Mr Will Lynch
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Project Details

Site: The Old Lodge, Brantridge Lane
Balcombe, RH17 6JR
Description: Field Shelter
Date: 22 January 2024
Applicant: Mr. and Mrs. Lynch
Architect: Shirin Alavi, Shirin Alavi Architects
Arboriculturist: James Bell, Arbortrack Systems Ltd.

Overview

This statement contains supporting documentation for a planning application for the proposed outbuilding and landscaping on land adjoining The Old Lodge.

This application has been prepared in conjunction with specialist arboricultural input. It should be read alongside the submitted drawings and the Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement. The pre-application engagement associated with this application can be found under references DM/22/1187 and later DM/23/0949.

The proposal comprises a single storey field shelter on land adjacent to, and subordinate to, The Old Lodge. The proposal also comprises the addition of native hedging and trees around the proposed shelter and boundary.

The statement demonstrates that the proposed field shelter is sensitively conceived to complement the existing house, meets with advice given by the planning officers and is carefully incorporated into the landscape to further enhance the setting. The statement also demonstrates the need for the equipment required to maintain the land and its safe and secure storage.

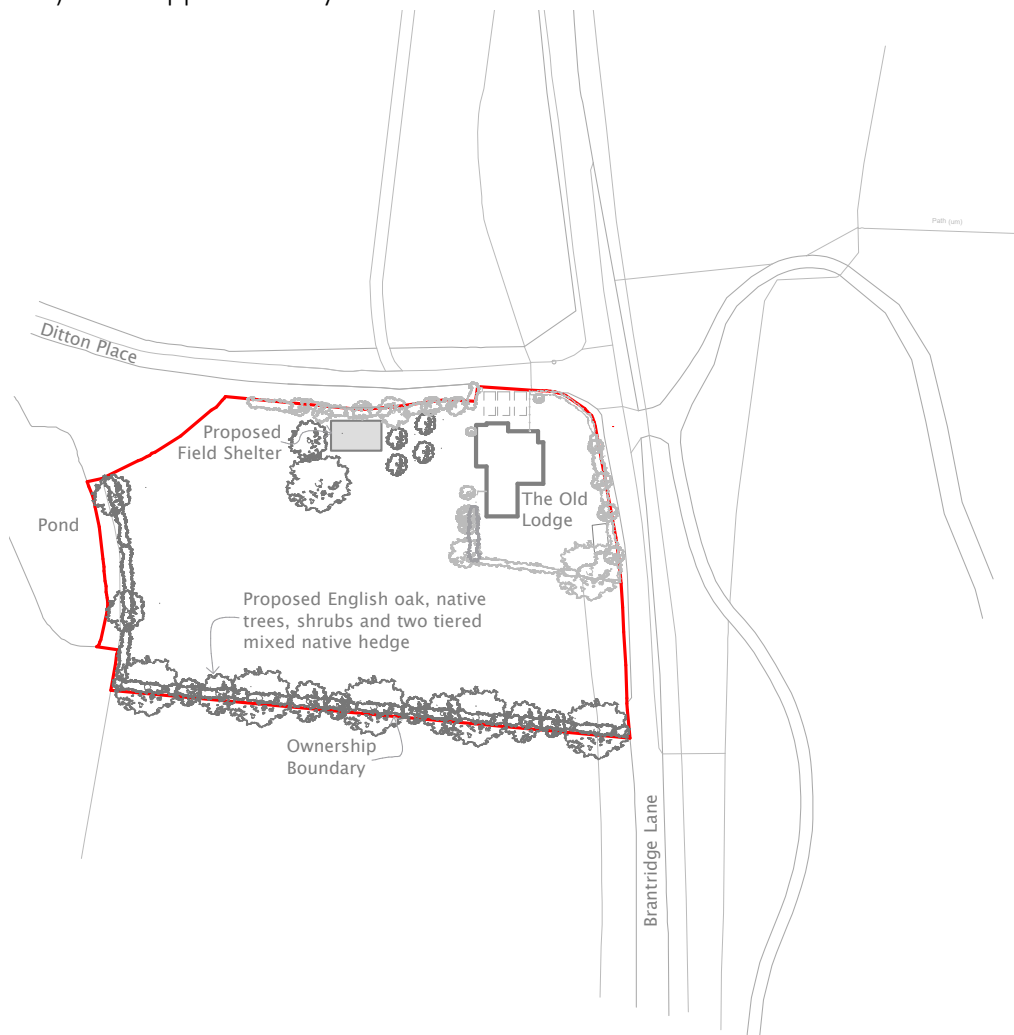


Site

The application site consists of The Old Lodge and the adjoining land. The site sits within the countryside and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), on the approach to Ditton Place House, a Grade II* listed house.

The Old Lodge is situated on the corner of Brantridge Lane and Ditton Place, at the entrance and within the grounds of Ditton Place.

The surrounding properties are predominantly detached houses set within large plots with outbuildings. The Old Lodge (0.4 acres) has no outbuildings and together with the adjoining land (1.2 acres) totals approximately 1.6 acres in area.



The house and land are partially hidden from view. Along Ditton Place, to the North, the site is mostly obscured by a raised bank, established trees and vegetation. To the East, along Brantridge Lane, there is a barrier of dense and mature vegetation and a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees. The South and West of the land is bound by timber fencing, a pond, hedging, vegetation, mature trees and further land beyond. Public views of the site are from the South and along Ditton Place, they are limited to glimpses from the access drive.

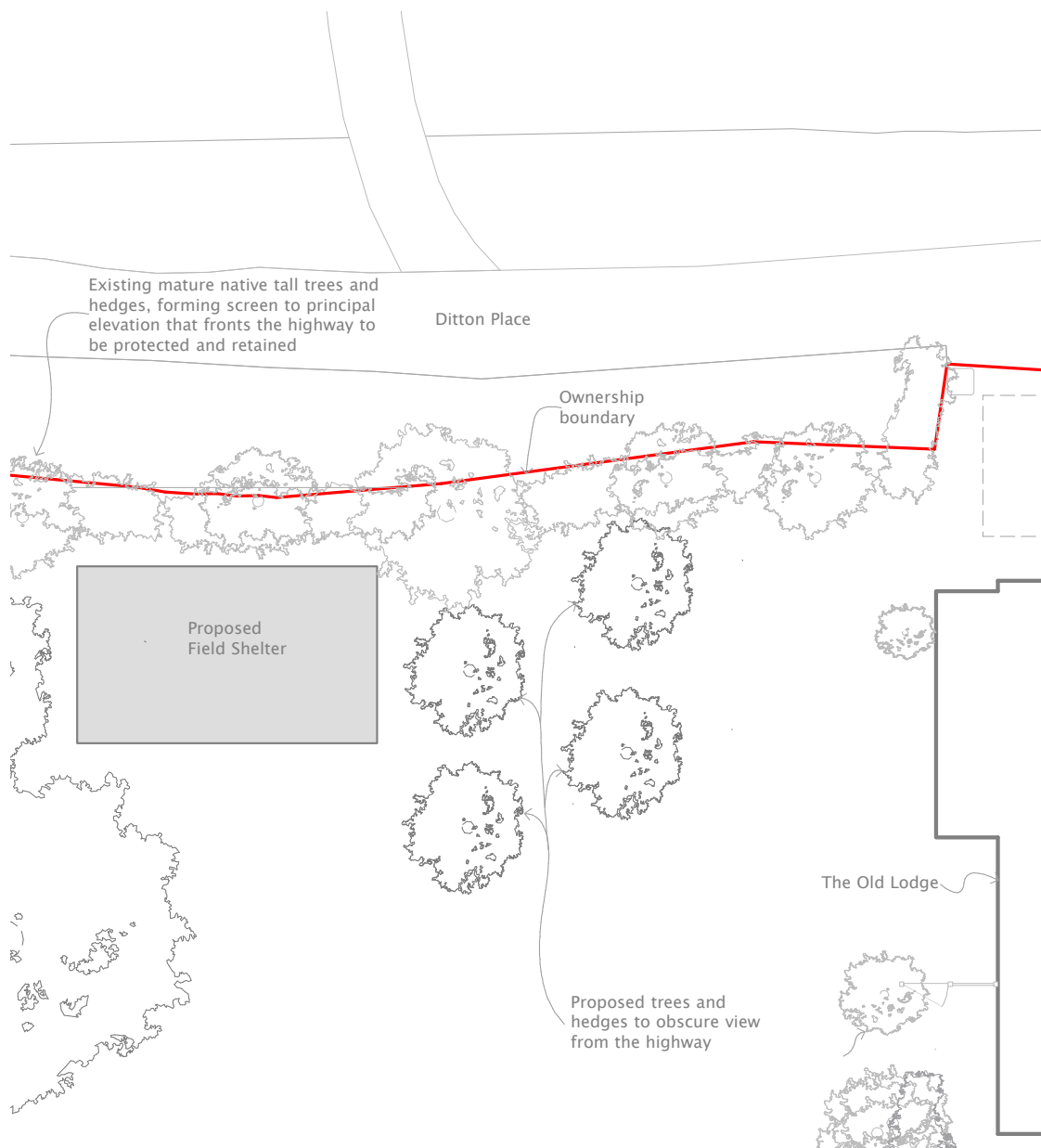
The adjoining land was purchased in April 2021; the title has yet to be registered with Land Registry.

Proposal

The proposal is for a timber frame field shelter and additional vegetation on land adjoining the existing house, The Old Lodge. The proposed field shelter is for agricultural purposes only and essential for the maintenance of the land. It will not affect the use of the house and land; it is ancillary and incidental to the house and not for business or any other purpose.

The proposed vegetation incorporates the addition of native hedging, medium size fruit trees and large native trees. The vegetation will add to screening the shelter from Ditton Place and breaking up the view from the South.

The intention is to work with the council to ensure that the proposal meets the agricultural needs whilst adding value to the surrounding area.



Position

The proposed location of the field shelter strives to minimise the visual impact on the landscape and for users of the countryside. The proposed location is in the north of the site; 2m from the boundary with Ditton Place, 3m from the electrical kiosk and approximately 20m west of The Old Lodge. It is a tucked away position, behind mature hedging and above the sight line from Ditton Place. The proposed location will avoid the removal of or harm to any existing trees.

Due to the need for vehicular access the proposed field shelter cannot be sited within the existing curtilage of The Old Lodge. In fact, it cannot be sited any further east due to access restrictions, site level changes, the existing electricity kiosk, below ground cables and the impact on outlook.

The field shelter will have minimal impact on neighbours and their amenity.

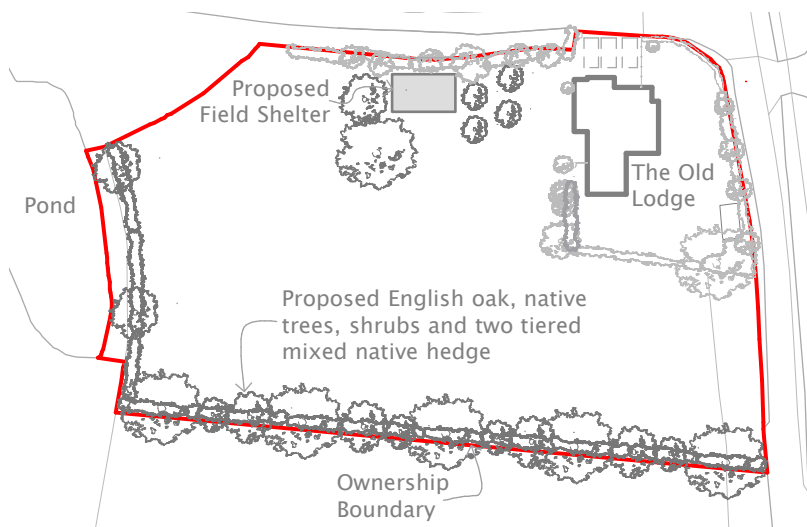


View of the field from the access to The Old Lodge on Ditton Place

Orientation

The proposed field shelter has been orientated to minimise its visual impact. The only view of the proposed field shelter, to the public, from Ditton Place, is an oblique view from the main access to The Old Lodge. If the shelter were orientated with its rectangular footprint at right angles to the road, it would fall directly within this line of sight. For this reason, the shelter has been orientated parallel to the road. This will mostly obscure the view and result in the least impact to the public.

Additionally, the proposal incorporates staggered tree planting between this access and the shelter to minimise the visual impact from Ditton Place.



The view of the shelter, from neighbours to the south, will be softened by the addition of a continuous native hedge along the southern boundary. Also proposed, to break up and improve this view, is a distribution of medium and large trees along this boundary as well as directly to the south of the shelter.



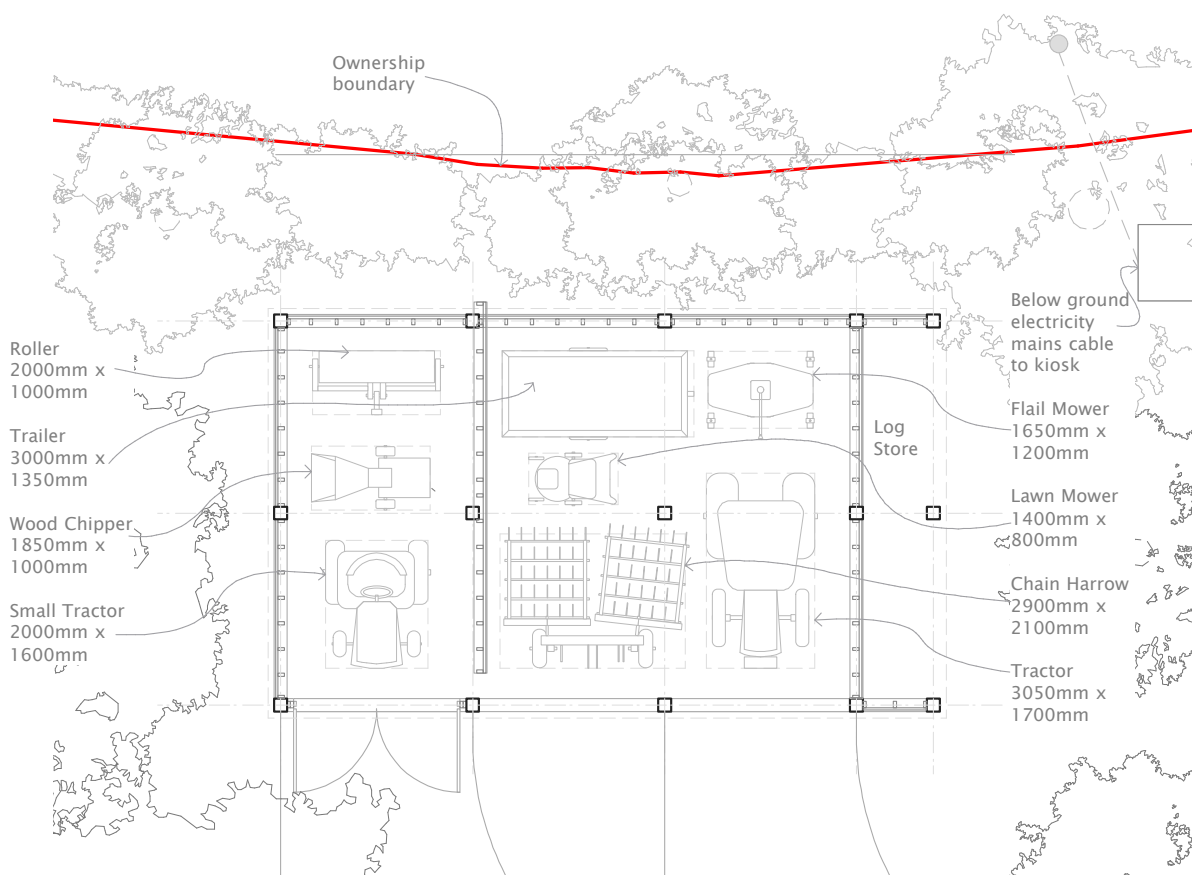
View along Ditton Place

Size and Scale

The proposed field shelter is modest in size and scale. In striving to achieve the shared goal, with Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC), of minimising the visual impact of the proposed field shelter; the planning officer's comments have been considered and the size of the shelter has been reduced. All dimensions have been decreased and kept to a minimum. The following changes will have a positive impact:

- Removal of external stairs
- Removal of the first floor
- Removal of the associated first-floor door and window
- Positioning the shelter further from the boundary (This is informed by the arboriculture report.)

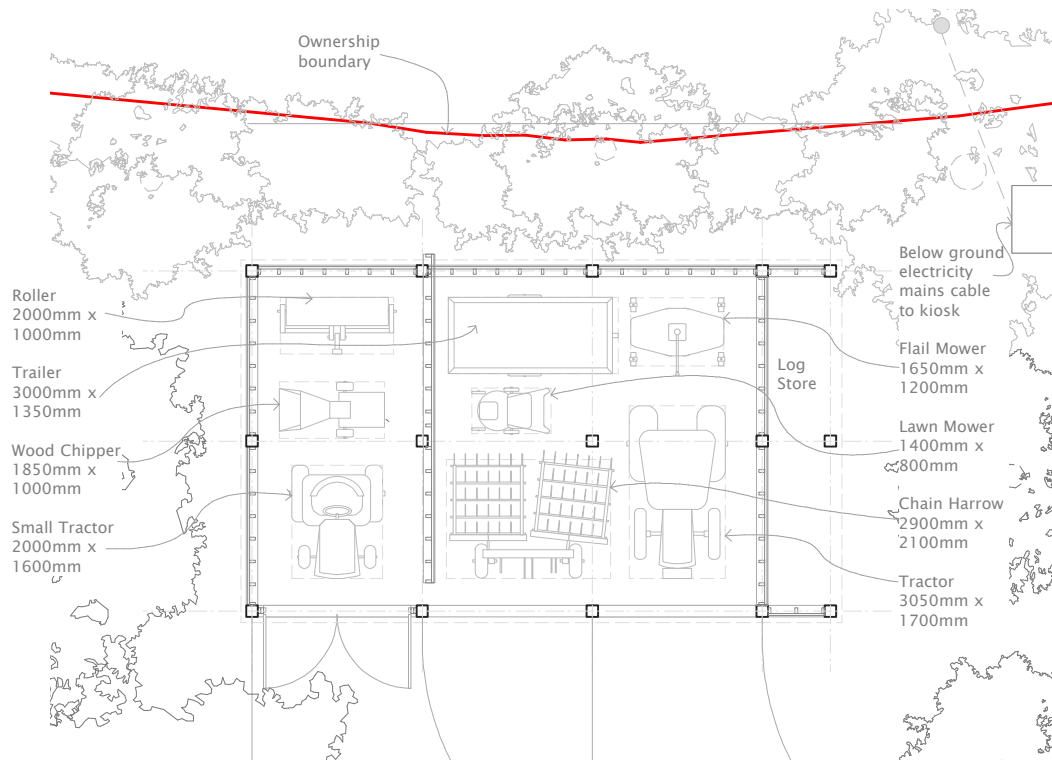
The proposed field shelter is 10.4m in length and 6.2m in depth and the ridge height of 6.1m is less than the main house. Removing the stair, reduces the overall length and the resulting floor area totals 58sqm GIA. This reduced size has the positive impact of lessening the scale of the shelter, maintains the rectangular footprint as requested, and creates the appearance of a shelter that is sub-ordinate to the dwelling house.



Proposed Ground Floor Plan

With this reduced depth, numerous layouts for the storage of the agricultural machinery have been drawn and it has been established that this is the absolute minimum floor area that will accommodate the equipment in a practical and safe way whilst allowing it to be accessible.

Within the shelter, an area is required for wood working that will require a work bench and table saw. The challenge of accommodating this necessary equipment within the reduced footprint has been resolved by planning to move the chain harrow outside the field shelter when the work bench and saw are in use. When they are not in use, they will have to be disassembled and packed away. It is a compromise, as the space is valuable, however it allows the proposed reduced footprint.



Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Proposed Roof Plan

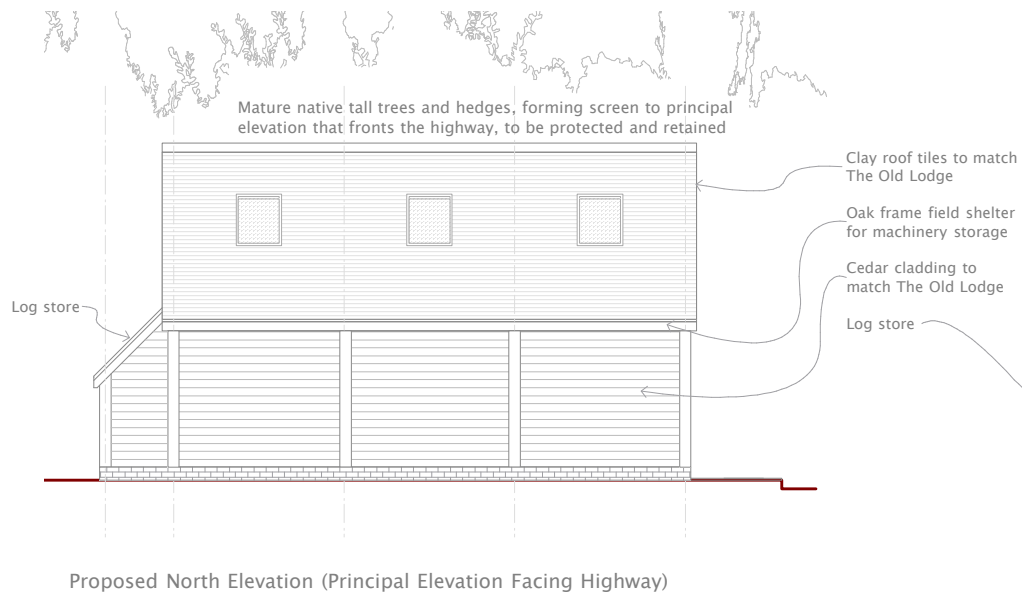
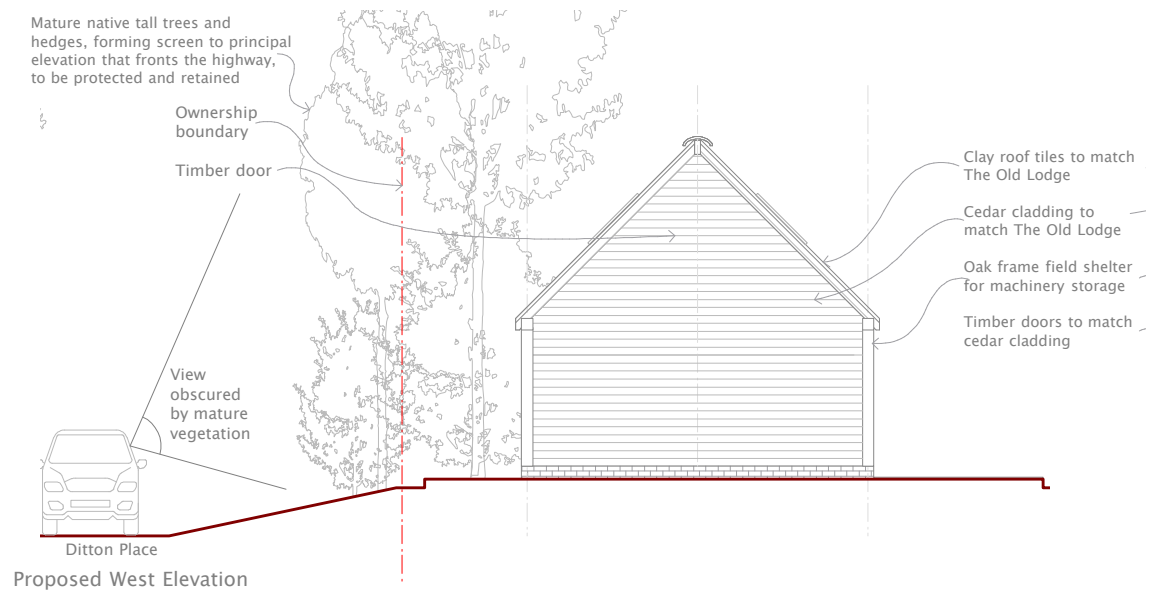
Appearance and Materials

The proposed field shelter is modest in appearance and reflects the style, proportions, materials and features of the area. Careful consideration has been given to create a well-balanced and harmonious addition to the adjacent house.

The Old Lodge is a two storey, pitched roofed, detached house. The walls are characterised by render and cedar cladding with a mix of timber and aluminium framed doors and windows.

The field shelter is devised as a small single storey block, secondary to The Old Lodge, with a pitched roof ridge running east-west. The intention is to create a well-balanced addition that will match the design, style and character of agricultural buildings in this area. Through deference to form, proportions and materials, the proposed field shelter will also emulate the existing house.





The materials used in the construction of outbuildings around the locality are predominately brick, timber cladding and clay roof tiles. Advice in relation to materials, received from MSDC on 19 May 2022 states, “This style of building is considered sympathetic to the rural character of the area; however, my informal opinion is that side hung timber doors would appear more in keeping than the proposed steel roll-down door.”

For these reasons, the proposed field shelter has a brick plinth and an oak frame. Taking from The Old Lodge, the shelter is faced with cedar cladding. Doors will be side hung timber doors. The roof will be covered with the same clay roof tiles and rainwater goods as the adjacent house. Detailing will be restrained and authentic.



Demonstrating the Need

The purpose of the proposed field shelter is to serve the site which comprises:

- 1.6 acres of agricultural land
- Meadow for pasture
- 400 linear metres of fencing
- 400 linear metres of hedging
- 65 linear metres of ditches
- A large pond
- Semi mature and mature deciduous trees
- The existing five-bedroom house and garden for a family of five

The land demands specific tasks necessary for its upkeep throughout the year. Some tasks are regular and frequent such as cutting the meadow, others are seasonal, such as harrowing, pruning and sowing. Others are less predictable such as clearing tree damage and repairing broken equipment.

Responsibilities for the land include:

- Maintaining the large pond to the west of the land
- Securing the boundary to protect children from the pond
- Fencing along boundaries
- Pruning, felling and care of trees
- Fertilising the field
- Raking and weed removal from the field
- Cutting the grass
- Aerating the land
- Maintaining and cutting hedges
- Transporting equipment and wood around the field
- Breaking up uneven clay soil which moves and cracks through weather changes
- Maintaining the appearance of the landscape to the high standard expected within an AONB

The proposed field shelter is essential for:

- Storing maintenance equipment
- Safely securing essential and costly equipment from theft
- Storing securely and within a certain distance from the house – this is an insurance company requirement
- Protecting equipment and workspace from weather; keeping dry and away from the elements

Currently there is no provision for the storage of any agricultural equipment at all on this land.

Maintenance equipment

Maintenance and repairs to the land and associated equipment require mechanical, electrical and handheld gear, materials and supplies.

Storage is essential for the protection of mechanical equipment. Protection is required from damp, harsh weather and rainfall. Additionally, protection is required for security from theft which is rife in this area. In the first week of January 2024 alone, within a 1km radius, numerous vehicles were broken into and stolen. Reports to the police, during this week, include attempted break-ins, the theft of an off-road car and in a separate incident, two large tractors. Sadly, theft is common in this area and security measures must be high.

Maintenance equipment is expensive, and it is in fact a requisite of insurance companies that the insured equipment is stored securely and within a certain distance from the main house.

Large mechanical equipment, essential for the maintenance of the land and requiring immediate protection includes:

- Tractor
- Chain harrows
- Roller
- Flail mower
- Woodchipper
- Trailer
- Smaller tractor
- Lawn mower
- Rotary cutter
- Grooming mower

Smaller handheld equipment and necessary items requiring storage includes:

- Chainsaw
- Hedge trimmer
- Strimmer
- Leaf blower
- Axe
- Irrigation equipment
- Fertilisers
- Weed killer containers
- Grass seed bags
- Timber and logs

Throughout the year the shelter is necessary to create a safe and dry environment, away from the elements, for the following work:

- Repairs and maintenance to equipment and machinery
- Workbench and table saw use
- Timber and log cutting
- Engine oil changes
- Air filter replacement
- Sharpening of blades









Planning Policies

This proposal is considered alongside relevant policies and principles contained within the following documents:

- Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP)
- Mid Sussex Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Ansty and Staplefield Neighbourhood Plan (ASNP)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- High Weald AONB Management Plan (HWMP)

The policies are addressed in the following corresponding subheadings.

Conserving Natural Beauty

The policies relating to conserving the natural beauty of the landscape are MSDP DP12, DP16, ASNP AS1, NPPF Paragraph 176, HWMP Paragraph 174 and Paragraph 176.

The District Plan policy DP12 states that: 'Development will be permitted in the countryside... provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character... and is necessary for agricultural purposes...'

The proposal, in particular the landscaping element, conserves and enhances the natural environment and protects the character and beauty of the countryside. The field shelter is inherently necessary for agricultural purposes. The intention is to support the traditional interaction of people with nature through appropriate land management and with the addition of well-planned native vegetation to not only conserve but further encourage wildlife.

The council also has a statutory duty to preserve the setting of the listed building at Ditton Place; this stance is followed under policy DP34 of the District Plan.

Landscaping and Ecology

The policies relating to trees and vegetation are MSDP DP37. NPPF Paragraph 180 addresses conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

The proposal protects and enhances biodiversity. Care has been taken to ensure that the building is effectively sited so that it protects existing trees, woodland and hedgerows.

This submission is accompanied by an arboriculture report. The proposed field shelter does not require the removal of any trees. The report demonstrates the feasibility of construction without harm to the existing trees and hedges on and adjoining the site. The proposed development will adhere to the method statement that will form part of the building contract. Additionally, the proposal includes the planting of further trees and dense, native hedging along the boundary line and around the shelter. The benefits are numerous and include reducing the visual impact from the highway and enhancing biodiversity.

Beneficial for all, is the enrichment of the ecology and this will be done by planting and growing fruit trees for example.

Habitats and biodiversity

The policies relating to habitats and biodiversity include NPPF Paragraph 185.

The proposal encompasses additional vegetation which includes planting trees and native hedging along an existing boundary fence. This will enhance biodiversity and conserve wildlife by creating a new habitat that connects two areas of more dense native vegetation. In effect, it will create a new corridor for wildlife.

Planning Guidance Compliance

The planning officers have indicated in correspondence in relation to pre-application DM/22/1187 and later DM/23/0949, acceptance of the principle of the development and the size of the building to which they helpfully contributed.

We have taken into consideration all the advice, preferences and comments, made by MSDC, on the proposed shelter. Fortunately, it was possible to make the changes suggested. The comments raised by MSDC are summarised below:

- The potential siting of an outbuilding in the adjoining land, if used in association with maintaining the land, is acceptable
- The building position should be away from the hedge and trees and informed by a tree survey and arboricultural assessment to ensure they are not harmed
- Reduce the depth of the proposal to reduce the overall size and create a rectangular footprint
- Scale the outbuilding to appear subordinate to the existing house
- Remove the first floor and external stair
- Reflect the character of a field shelter
- The style is sympathetic to the rural character of the area
- Side hung timber doors appear more in keeping
- Site the outbuilding further east, adjacent to the existing house.

All these comments have been encompassed. The only advice that is impossible to implement is siting the outbuilding further east. As explained, the shelter cannot be sited further east due to access restrictions, site level changes, the existing electricity kiosk, below ground cables and the impact on outlook.

Conclusion

The proposed field shelter, to this secluded and partially screened detached house and land, is of a modest scale and sits carefully within its setting. It is essential for the maintenance of the land adjoining The Old Lodge. Furthermore, it is necessary for the secure storage of equipment.

The shelter has been designed to appear subordinate to the existing house and positioned to have the minimum impact on the setting and biodiversity. The proposed planting of vegetation will enhance the natural beauty and ecology.

All planning guidance has been observed and met. The proposed shelter and vegetation represent an appropriate form of improvement to the site, are considered to preserve the character and appearance of their setting and are consistent with relevant planning policies. The proposal preserves the scenic qualities of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.