

**REPORT OUTLINE FOR AREA PLANNING COMMITTEES****Report No.3**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	30 May 2017
<b>Application Number</b>	17/00829/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	Old Airfield Site, Bells Lane, Stourton, Wiltshire
<b>Proposal</b>	Store building for wood and woodchip for biomass with associated landscaping works (Resubmission of 16/12294/FUL)
<b>Applicant</b>	The National Trust
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	Stourton with Gasper Parish Council
<b>Electoral Division</b>	Mere - Cllr George Jeans
<b>Grid Ref</b>	
<b>Type of application</b>	FULL
<b>Case Officer</b>	Mrs. Becky Jones

**Reason for the application being considered by Committee:**

Cllr. Jeans has called the application to committee to be determined on the grounds of local concern.

**1. Purpose of Report**

To consider the above application and the recommendation of the Area Development Manager that planning permission be **APPROVED**.

**2. Report Summary**

The main planning issues to consider are:

1. Principle of the development
2. Scale, design and impact on the character of the landscape of the AONB
3. Impact on Heritage Assets
4. Ecology and Archaeology
5. Highway Safety
6. Neighbouring amenity and public protection
7. Community Infrastructure Levy

The application has generated 1 letter of objection from Stourton with Gasper Parish Council and 5 letters of objection from third parties.

**3. Site Description and Proposal**

The application site lies within the Area of Outstanding Natural beauty, and affects the concrete perimeter track of a World War 2 Zeals Airfield. The airfield is disused, unlisted and does not lie within a Conservation Area. The site is currently used for storage of logs and wood.



The Conservation Area lies to the north about 250metres away from the site. The nearest dwelling, 4 Bells Lane, is also approximately 250m to the north. Public footpath STGA 12 bisects the field in a north west/south east direction, close to the site of the propose store. The agricultural land classification of the field is Grade 2, which defines it as the best and most versatile agricultural land along with Grades 1 and 3a. However, the site already includes substantial hard standing in the form of the perimeter track of the airfield.

The applicant is proposing to:

- construct a new open front woodchip store within a 2 mile radius of the new woodchip boiler at Stourhead. Building would be bolted down to the existing concrete base. Steel frame building clad at high level (above 2.4m concrete wall) with timber battens and boards (local Western red cedar felled on site) with corrugated box profile sheeting roof, to give agricultural appearance. The store building would be 20m long by 6m wide with eaves height of about 5m, to enable wood drying
- create a soakaway for surface water
- chip wood on 4 days per calendar year
- restore stiles and access to the “lost” footpath
- retention, trimming and ongoing management of existing hedge screen to south of site. No excavation within root protection zones.
- beech tree planting (10 No) along the line of the boundary between the existing beech plantation and the site entrance.
- additional hedgerow planting

#### **4. Planning History**

16/01483/FUL and 16/01568/LBC Extensions & alterations to outbuildings to form biomass boiler house including works to gardens and access ways. Approved with Conditions

16/03949/FUL Storage building for wood and woodchip for biomass. Withdrawn

16/12294/FUL Storage building for wood and woodchip for biomass. Withdrawn

#### **5. Local Planning Policy**

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** para 17 and 93 on renewable energy  
**NPPG**

##### **Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS):**

Core Policy 41: Sustainable construction and low carbon energy

Core Policy 42: Standalone Renewable Energy Installations

Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Core policy 51: Landscape

Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping

Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment

Core Policy 60, 61 and 62 Transport and transport impacts

*Saved policies of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (Appendix D)*

##### **Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**

Section 66: Special considerations affecting planning functions

Section 72: General duties of planning authorities

Policy WCS3 of the **Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy 2006-2026**.

**The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, EC Habitats Directive when as prescribed by Regulation 3(4) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). Circular 06/2005**

**The National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949**

## **6. Summary of consultation responses**

**Public Protection** – No objection subject to conditions

**Highways** – No objection subject to condition

**Archaeology** – No objection

**Conservation** - No comment

### **Stourton with Gasper Parish Council – Object**

**The Stourton with Gasper Parish Council would like this application to be rejected on the grounds of the detrimental effect and impact it would have with regard to dust, noise, increased traffic, the ANOB and wildlife habitat.**

Further details were then received from the applicant regarding transport impact and chipping frequency. The Parish Council responded:

*Further to our telephone conversation on 30 March and the National Trust's recent response re this planning application, I have been asked to confirm that Stourton with Gasper Parish Council's view has not changed and their objection still stands.*

## **7. Publicity**

The application was advertised by site notice. Adverts were also placed in the Blackmore Vale and Salisbury Journal.

### **5 letters of the objection on the following general grounds:**

- Traffic impact and congestion on Bells Lane, danger to all users
- Use of chipping machine is industrial process, unacceptable noise impact
- Visual impact of the store building on AONB landscape
- Second biomass boiler is planned and will lead to activity increase (*Officer note – the LPA is not aware of a second biomass boiler proposal – see NT note below*)
- Impact on historic value and significance of airfield, Grade I listed house and garden
- General absence of information regarding numbers employed, days of use, machinery types and specs, current use of site, source of wood, explanation for location, 2<sup>nd</sup> biomass boiler, AONB impact, setting of listed house and garden, traffic impact on village, impact on residential amenities, consultation with Historic England. (*Officer note: the application contains reports and assessments which cover most if not all of the details listed above. Historic England are not required to be consulted on this application*).

- Lack of consultation (*Officer note: The application has been correctly publicised according to statutory requirements and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The LPA is only required to consult neighbours **immediately adjoining** the boundary of a site, but is legally required to post a site notice – see photo above. Adverts were posted. All third parties were notified regarding the additional information received).*)
- Impact on wildlife from noise and disturbance

The National Trust has responded in full to the comments in the letters received and their response can be viewed on the website.

## 8. Planning Considerations

Planning permission is required for the development. The applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. (Section 70(2) of the Town and Country planning Act and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004). The NPPF is also a significant material consideration and due weight should be given to the relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency of the framework. (Paragraph 215 at Annex 1).

### 8.1 Principle of development

The National Planning Policy Framework supports a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The 12 Principles in the NPPF state that planning should:

*Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);*

Para 93 goes on to say:

*Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.*

The principle for the biomass boiler has been established by 16/01483/FUL and 16/01568/LBC and under Core Policy 41 (Sustainable construction and low carbon energy) and Core Policy 42 (Standalone Renewable Energy Installations) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

CP42 supports the development of standalone renewable energy installations *subject to satisfactory resolution of all site specific constraints. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate how impacts on the following factors have been satisfactorily assessed, including any cumulative effects, and taken into account:*

- i. The landscape, particularly in and around AONBs*
- iv. Biodiversity*

v. *The historic environment including the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and its setting*

vi. *Use of the local transport network*

vii. *Residential amenity, including noise, odour, visual amenity and safety, and*

viii. *Best and most versatile agricultural land.*

*Applicants will not be required to justify the overall need for renewable energy development, either in a national or local context*

The development of most standalone renewable energy installations within Wiltshire require careful consideration due to their potential visual and landscape impacts, especially in designated or sensitive landscapes, including AONBs. Core Policy 51 (landscape) should be considered alongside this policy.

Therefore, the proposals submitted to support a wood chip store in association with the new biomass boiler house would be acceptable in *principle*, subject to the detailed requirements of the policies discussed below.

## **8.2 Scale, design and impact on the character of the landscape of the AONB**

The proposals include the erection of a store building against an existing boundary hedge, upon an area of existing concrete hardstanding. Landscaping and planting proposals are included. Core Policy 57 sets out the design criteria for new development and states:

*A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complimentary to the locality. Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire...*

Core Policy 51 states that *Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures:*

*i. The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies*

*ii. The locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings*

*iii. The separate identity of settlements and the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the urban fringe*

*iv. Visually sensitive skylines, soils, geological and topographical features*

*v. Landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value*

*vi. Important views and visual amenity*

*vii. Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion*

*viii. Landscape functions including places to live, work, relax and recreate, and*

*ix. Special qualities of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the New Forest National Park, where great weight will be afforded to conserving and enhancing landscapes and scenic beauty.*

*Proposals for development within or affecting the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), New Forest National Park (NFNP) or Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site (WHS) shall demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in the relevant Management Plans for these areas.*

The site is in the Kilmington Terrace landscape character area of the Greensand Terrace landscape character type. The AONB office has been consulted on the proposals and concluded that in their view, the application was **not good enough to approve** for the following reasons:

- The application has not taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in the relevant Management Plan for the AONB, including tranquillity. The inherent sensitivity of the AONB – our study 2007 – shows the overall sensitivity of the landscape in the vicinity of the site is ‘moderate – high’.
- The old airfield site is predominantly flat and without the existing hedges the scope for long and extensive views is substantial. The existing hedges are therefore, crucial.
- The application is dismissive of the footpath PRoW through the site and the potential impacts the proposed development could have on the amenity value of that path and the users of it.
- Documents differ stating building would be 5m high and ACLA stating 6m. *Officer note: submitted plans clearly show 5m to eaves. NT have confirmed height below.*
- The extended landscape report is vague about mitigation, not mentioning materials, precise planting and hedge management in the narrative. *Officer note – precise planting details would be subject to a landscaping condition, including replacement if plants are removed or die within 5 years.*
- Plan P10 C does not show the full height of the proposed building; the 5m height only goes to the underside of the roof. The concrete walls do not appear to comply with the AONB guidance note on new agricultural buildings. Timber should be given a dark stain in line with our guidance on colour in the countryside and ‘fabric doors’ colour should also comply with the AONB’s guidance. *Officer note – this can be conditioned to ensure precision and suitability. Roof height is confirmed by NT below.*
- Plan P13 E is less than clear in relation to the hedge on the southern side of the site. The red and blue lines appear to follow the edge of the concrete. Hedge is not within either the blue or the red lines. *Officer note – 13E is a location plan only. The hedge is stated by NT below to be in their ownership and control. The hedge is clearly marked on Plan P9D and can be “Grampian” conditioned for retention, management and reinforcement planting accordingly under the landscape condition.*
- The issues of traffic, associated noise, and the extent and frequency of chipping are touched upon lightly. However, tranquillity is a significant attribute of this AONB. Could be a significant accumulation of disturbing activities in and around Bell Lane. The use of large vehicles could also conflict with visitor traffic to the Gardens and the Farm Shop in the narrow lanes of the village. *Officer note – Visitor Access Management Plan has subsequently been submitted along with details of chipping frequency – see highways and public protection comments below.*

The National Trust has responded to the AONB Partnership points:

- **Tranquillity is significant attribute in AONB, this has not been addressed.**

An assessment of noise impact of the chipping process has been conducted with a contractor who will conduct our wood chipping for Stourhead. As stated in the Justification Statement for the Planning Application:

Mobile wood chipping equipment used in forestry and arboriculture generates high levels of noise **at source**. The company that currently completes the chipping process has confirmed the following sound data regarding the equipment they use. They confirmed their use of "HEIZOHACK CHIPPERS" of the following type: HM8-500K, HM10-500K and HM14-800K.

When in operation the above models provide the decibel levels as listed below

<u>Distance</u>	<u>Measured Values</u>	<u>Average</u>
1 metre	93 – 97 DBA	95 DBA
10 metres	85 – 91 DBA	88 DBA
20 metres	70 – 78 DBA	74 DBA
50 metres	68 – 74 DBA	70 DBA

The building is proposed 45m from the highway, and some 268m from the closest property boundary to the North of the site. Therefore we feel that any disturbance that may be created to nearby properties would be minimal, short term and mainly to anyone using the footpath adjacent to the building, which (as per our comments below) does not appear to be used at present. Our contractor uses a HM 10 – 500K wood chipper.

The operation of a tractor and trailer to move the wood chip between Zeals and the boiler house would fit in seamlessly with surrounding farming operations.

- **Number of days of chipping activity**

We would like to take this opportunity to correct an error in our planning application as the 20-22 days of chipping activity we indicated was based on generic data taken from a public biomass information source relating to much larger biomass schemes, not the specific planned process at Stourhead to meet the needs of our much smaller biomass system. **Chipping activity is actually expected to take place on site by our contractor for 4 days per year.** The round wood will be stacked neatly and blown directly into the proposed chip store.

The biomass boilers serving Stourhead House have been calculated to consume 440m<sup>3</sup> of wood chip in a 12 month period. Our chipping process will chip approximately 100m<sup>3</sup> of round wood in a day. One cubic metre of dry round wood at 30% moisture content will create two and a half cubic metres of chip, meaning 250m<sup>3</sup> of chip can be produced in an 8 hour period. Due to the angle of repose of wood chip when piled, this amount would effectively fill the building. However, a rotation of wood chip would be preferable to prevent the risk of degrading of chip that can occur if large volumes are stored in a single place over a long period of time. Therefore our proposal is for a more sensible chipping operation of 4 days per year creating the 440m<sup>3</sup> of wood chip the biomass boilers have been calculated to consume in a 12 month period.

- **Unspecified trips bringing timber to the site.**

The following summarises the operational plan and provides clarity on vehicle movements. One lorry carries around 20 cubic meters of timber. One cubic meter of dry timber will produce 2.5 m<sup>3</sup> of dry chip, therefore 1 lorry load of timber will equate to

around 50 m<sup>3</sup> of dry chip. An estimated 440 m<sup>3</sup> of chip will be used in a 12 month period meaning **9 lorry loads of timber will need to be delivered to site per year.** Each year's supply of chip will vary slightly depending on the weather, therefore an estimated 8 – 10 lorry loads of timber would be expected per year (or 16-20 vehicle movements in total per year). This is a low level of additional vehicle movement and it will be managed by the Trust in keeping with our Visitor Access Management Plan (2008), which we have recently submitted as part of our response, and our proposal for managing vehicle movement's specific to this activity at quiet times outside of higher level traffic times as set out above.

- **Use of large vehicles could conflict with visitor traffic to the gardens.**

The wood chip will be hauled using the National Trust's tractor and trailer which already uses the village roads for access to its land including the airfield. We will avoid busy periods when visitor traffic is high by hauling the chip at quiet times in keeping with our current sensitive approach to vehicle movements around the property and neighbouring areas.

- **Hedges crucial to absorb building into landscape. Landscape report vague about mitigation, not mentioning materials, precise planting or hedge management (management of the southern hedge).**

The National Trust agrees the hedges are important in absorbing the building into the landscape. The height of the southern hedge (at the back of the proposed building) will be maintained at a height no lower than 4 metres. The hedge will be trimmed using tractor and flail once a year to help maintain and improve the thickness of the hedge thus screening the proposed building from the south. The part of the hedge immediately behind the building can be cut using a handheld hedge cutter. The hedge to the north of the proposed building could be allowed to grow taller if required to help absorb the building into the landscape further still. If a further scheme of landscaping was required to determine this fully, we would be happy to discuss this with Wiltshire Council.

- **Dismissive of the footpath**

The National Trust is aware of its obligation to maintain public footpath access. Although the footpath that cuts across the airfield close to the proposed new wood chip store does not appear to have been used for a number of years, meaning that the stiles in the hedgerow have grown in completely, we will reinstate these stiles as soon as possible. The footpath will remain open at all times.

- **Building dimensions, colour staining of timber and gale breaker fabric doors**

As stated in the planning application, the building will be 20 metres in width, 6 metres in depth and at a total height of 5.034 metres (5 meters to underside of roof with the additional 34mm in height is due to the profile of the proposed roof sheeting material).

The timber cladding of the building can be colour stained to a preferred colour from that proposed if required. The gale breaker fabric doors have three colour options: black, dark green or pale olive. The National Trust would prefer dark green or olive. We are happy to take guidance from both the AONB and Wiltshire Council.

- **Plan BGV 04 shows 10 new trees but only 9 listed in the plant schedule. Cawse design drawing P9 D is different to the above – which is correct?**



*Our assessment is that 10 new trees are required for planting to aid screening of the building from Bells Lane. If a further scheme of landscaping was required to determine this fully, we would be happy to discuss this with Wiltshire Council.*

- **Southern hedge not within blue or red lines.**

*We confirm that the southern hedge is fully within the ownership of the National Trust and will be managed by us as set out above.*

The impact on the immediate surroundings and more distant views has been fully assessed in the Impact Assessment by Cawse Design. Subject to conditions requiring careful selection of colours for the building materials, the retention and reinforcement of the hedge on the southern boundary and also the proposed planting of 10 Beech trees in the existing west belt along Bells Lane, then it is considered that the proposed building would have a very limited impact upon the views within the AONB.



This photo was taken with a staff set at 5m (highlighted in red) to show the eaves height of the proposed building.

It is considered that the tranquillity (noise) issues have been fully assessed by the public protection officer (below) and Core Policy 51 has therefore been satisfactorily addressed. Officers do not consider that a reason for refusal on the grounds of harm to the landscape and the visual impact of the development could be adequately supported for the reasons set out in this report. Therefore, subject to conditions the proposal would be in accordance with CP57 and CP51.

### **8.3 Impact on Heritage Assets**

The site lies to the south east of Stourhead House (Grade I listed) and the Stourhead Park (registered Grade I historic park). The Stourton Conservation Area lies about 250m to the north of the site. The site lies within part of the Zeals Airfield which is a redundant WW2 site.

There is a duty placed on the local planning authority under section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building and its setting. Section 72 also requires local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

The NPPF states:

*Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.*

*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.*

The Conservation policies of the local plan and the NPPF seek to ensure that the settings of nearby listed buildings would not be harmed and the existing character of the Conservation Area would be preserved or enhanced. Core Policy 58 aims to ensure that Wiltshire's important monuments, sites and landscapes and areas of historic and built heritage significance are protected and enhanced in order that they continue to make an important contribution to Wiltshire's environment and quality of life.

Heritage assets include Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and also undesignated local features.

**Stourhead House and Garden:** The National Trust has assessed the impact of the development from the windows of Stourton House and the wider estate in the Design and Access Statement. It concludes that the proposed building would not be visible from any room within the building, due to the tree screening that exists to the south and the elevation difference between the mansion and the application site. Some windows are also obscured by the parapet wall.

**The Conservation Area:** The site lies some 250m to the south of the Conservation Area. The proposed building may be viewed from within the Conservation Area against the background of the existing south boundary hedge. The suitability and conditioning of materials has already been discussed under the landscape section of this report.

**Zeals Airfield:** The site is not listed but is recognised as having some historical benefit. The extent of the site has been reviewed against historical maps and aerial photos. There are no documented structures within the application site of historical importance and there is no perceived impact on the heritage asset, given that the proposed building would be constructed upon the former concrete perimeter road. It is likely that in its day, there would have been numerous buildings associated with the airfield, as shown at the bottom of the aerial photo (site in red):



Having been consulted, the Council's Conservation Officer wished to make no comment on the application. Therefore, it is perceived that the development would not harm the significance of the Grade I listed building (Stourhead House), its curtilage and setting, the Grade I listed garden, the setting of the Conservation Area or the historical significance of the Zeals Airfield. The proposal would comply with Policy CP58 and the NPPF.

## 8.4 Ecology and Archaeology

### Ecology

Core Policy 50 states:

*Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Where it has been demonstrated that such features cannot be retained, removal or damage shall only be acceptable in circumstances where the anticipated ecological impacts have been mitigated as far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures can be secured to ensure no net loss of the local biodiversity resource, and secure the integrity of local ecological networks and provision of ecosystem services. All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.*

The NPPF para 118 states:

*When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:*

- *if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- *development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted;*

- *opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged*

The NPPG also sets out guidance and the ODPM circular 06/2005 still applies and is listed under current policy and guidance on the planning portal. Paragraph 99 states *“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances....However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, **developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development.** Where this is the case, the survey should be completed and any necessary measures to protect the species should be in place, through conditions and/or planning obligations, before the permission is granted”*.

The proposal does not seek to destroy any buildings or remove any landscaping that might provide habitats for protected species. The proposed building would be secured on the existing concrete base and existing hedges would be retained and reinforced. The proposed tree planting is likely to improve wildlife habitats in the vicinity of the site. The proposed chipping would take place on 4 days per year and when compared with agricultural activities that could take place on the site without the need for planning permission, this level of disturbance is low. It is considered that the storage building and chipping activity poses a very low risk to protected species and habitats are likely to be created and enhanced by the landscaping proposals.

### **Archaeology**

Core Policy 58 aims to ensure that Wiltshire’s important monuments, sites and landscapes and areas of historic and built heritage significance are protected and enhanced in order that they continue to make an important contribution to Wiltshire’s environment and quality of life. Heritage assets include Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

The Archaeologist stated:

*Although this site lies within an area of archaeological interest, there appears to be a small new footprint of below ground impact. Therefore, on the evidence available to me at present, I consider it unlikely that significant archaeological remains would be disturbed by the proposed development and so have no further comment to make.*

In conclusion, no objection is raised to the proposed ecological mitigation, in accordance with Core Policies 48, 50 and 58, the guidance in the NPPG and the ODPM circular 06/2005.

### **8.5 Impact on highway safety and public right of way**

The highways officer initially responded to the scheme:

*The proposal is to provide a new building for the storage of wood/ woodchip, which will be used to fuel the existing biomass boiler located near Stourhead House. This will involve the*

*transport of wood from the surrounding area to the site, as well as the transport of the chippings to the biomass boiler.*

*The site is located off Bell Lane, which is subject to a derestricted speed limit (60mph) and is generally considered to be a single track road with no centreline markings. An increase in the number of large vehicles using Bell Lane could therefore create conflict with other road users, due to the width of the lane. Additionally, the route from the site to the biomass boiler will involve negotiating the junction of Bell Lane/ High Street, which is substandard in terms of visibility to the west.*

*Prior to making any further Highway recommendation, I would invite the applicant to submit additional information, including traffic flow data for Bell Lane, options for the improvement of the visibility at the Bell Lane/ High Street junction and potential measures to mitigate conflict with large vehicles on Bell Lane, such as proposed new passing places.*

Further details were then submitted in the form of the National Trust Stourhead Visitor Access Management Plan June 2008. The highways officer concluded:

*The Visitor Access Management Plan deals with traffic associated with Stourhead and gives a good impression of the levels of traffic and the subsequent issues it creates on a particularly busy day, such as a bank holiday. The report also cites issues with Bells Lane, including its narrow width. The report is considered to be a draft (by its authors) and its recommendations are that the Bells Lane access to Stourhead should be utilised as the primary entrance on peak days and that this option should be further considered with the Local Highway Authority (Wiltshire Council). The report is dated June 2008 and I assume that no further work has been completed since, nor have conversations with the Local Highway Authority taken place with regards to the access recommendations.*

*The proposed biomass operation at the former airfield site could significantly conflict with not only Stourhead visitor traffic, but also general traffic in the area, especially due to the substandard width of Bells Lane and the likely size of the vehicles needed to operate this facility. I also still retain concerns about the visibility at the junction of Bells Lane/ High Street and whilst I note that vegetation has been cleared from the bank since I first visited the site, which has made improvements, the visibility to the west remains substandard.*

*It is clear that due to the heavily trafficked roads in the vicinity of the site, deliveries of wood and biomass, both to the site and between the site and Stourhead, need to be carefully managed and scheduled to reduce potential conflicts. As such, the applicant will be required to produce a traffic management plan for the biomass operations and this should include vehicle counts on the surrounding roads to establish general traffic patterns throughout the year and not just at peak times. All site movements should be considered, including wood deliveries, biomass transportation and staff access. The Visitor Access Management Plan should help inform this process to an extent, however, primary importance should be placed on the biomass movements and how these can be managed on a daily basis, avoiding conflict with other road users. This could, for example, lead to vehicle movements being restricted to certain times of the day.*

*I therefore recommend that no Highway objection is raised, subject to a condition for a traffic management plan being attached to any consent granted.*

Therefore, subject to conditions, no highway objection is raised under CP60, CP61 and CP62.

## **8.6 Impact on neighbouring amenities and public protection**

Core Policy 57 states: *A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complimentary to the locality. Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through:*

*vii. Having regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants, and ensuring that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself, including the consideration of privacy, overshadowing; vibration; and pollution (such as light intrusion, noise, smoke, fumes, effluent, waste or litter)*

The public protection officer has considered the objections by third parties relating to potential noise and disturbance and the details submitted by the National Trust. Initially, the application was for 20 days chipping and the public protection officer considered:

*I write regarding the above application for development of a store building for wood and woodchip. I note from the documentation submitted the proposal is to chip the wood on site at this location with an estimate that this process would take place on approximately 20 days each year as and when required, and will not take place on consecutive days.*

*Whilst the process of wood chipping on this site will introduce a new noise source to the area, the frequency of the wood chipping is not considered to be detrimental to amenity.*

*The nearest residential property is approximately 240m from the development site. I recommend that the following conditions are applied to any approval to avoid loss of amenity to nearby residents as the result of vehicle noise from chipping the wood and vehicle movement:*

- *Wood chipping shall only take place between the hours of 0900hrs and 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays and between 0900hrs and 1300hrs on Saturdays and shall not take place at any time on Sundays and Bank/ Public Holidays,*
- *Wood chipping will not take place on consecutive days,*
- *Wood chipping may occur on a maximum of 20 days per calendar year,*
- *No deliveries shall be made to or collections made from the development hereby approved except between the hours of*  
*0900hrs and 1800hrs Monday to Friday*  
*0900hrs and 1300hrs Saturdays*  
*With no deliveries or collections on Sundays and Bank/ Public Holidays*

The National Trust then amended the application to reduce the number of chipping days to 4 per year. The public protection officer responded:

*Thank you for drawing my attention to the additional document dated 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017, submitted by the National Trust in respect of the above application. I note that they have recalculated the amount of days that wood chipping would need to take place at this location, and have reduced the number of days from 20 to 4 days per year.*

*I therefore recommend that the condition:*

- *Wood chipping may occur on a maximum of 20 days per calendar year*

*Be replaced with:*

- *Wood chipping may occur on a maximum of 4 days per calendar year*

The National Trust also responded to the concerns raised by local residents in relation to potential noise and disturbance:

- ***'Chipper will only operate 40 days a year, but who will police this?'***

*As stated above, we now expect the chipper to operate for 4 days per year, not 40 as stated in error in the planning application. The operation will be managed by Trust staff experienced in forestry operations and management. The chipping contractor will be managed under formal contract and will adhere to the conditions agreed for safe and sensitive operation. The biomass boiler heating system at Stourhead only requires a set amount of wood chip per year to meet the heating requirements of the House, which it has been designed to do. As stated above this should not exceed 440m<sup>3</sup> per year. The proposed activity is therefore well-defined by these measures and will not exceed the proposed level of timber, chip production and vehicle movements calculated on this basis and as is described throughout this response. We are willing to discuss with Wiltshire Council how this can be monitored if required.*

- ***'Further requests to enlarge and expand this operation'***

*There are no plans in the property's operational plan to enlarge or expand the operation. The Bulk Chip Store has been designed only to meet the wood fuel requirements of the biomass heating system installed for Stourhead House. There are also no plans to install a second biomass boiler at the property.*

- ***'Noise levels, proximity and wildlife'***

*As stated in the data provided above regarding noise levels at specified distances, the chipping operation is noisy if in close proximity. However this decreases markedly from proximity of 50 meters and significantly from 200 metres and beyond. The nearest residence is 260m from the proposed site. Chipping will only take place 4 days a year. The proposed building would be on an uninhabited brownfield site. Four other potential sites were investigated but rejected for the reasons stated in the planning application. Given that some agricultural operations can be noisy for a period of time, we consider that the impact on any wildlife would be negligible.*

- ***'Wood chipping machines to be installed in the building'***

*Wood chipping machines will not be installed into the proposed building. The building is solely for the purpose of storing wood chip. A contract chipper will be brought onto site and will operate immediately outside the building blowing the wood chip directly into the*

*building for 4 days per year. When the chipping operation has finished the chipper and all ancillary machinery will leave site.*

In conclusion, subject to the restrictive conditions recommended by the public protection officer, it is considered that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development and no objection is raised under Policy CP57.

## **8.7 Community Infrastructure Levy**

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities in England and Wales can put on new development in their area to raise funds to help deliver the infrastructure necessary to support this development. However, this type of development is not included within the CIL Charging Schedule.

### **Conclusion**

The proposal seeks to erect a wood chip store on the site of a former World War 2 airfield, utilising an existing concrete base. The site has good levels of existing landscaping and screening, which would be reinforced with additional tree planting as part of the application. The wood chip store would support an existing biomass boiler on the Stourhead estate and wood chipping would take place on the site on 4 days per year. The NPPF and Wiltshire Core Strategy policies consider this to be a sustainable form of development in principle.

Officers have raised no objections to the proposals, subject to conditions that would secure appropriate levels of amenity within the development and ensure that neighbouring amenities are not unduly affected by the increased activity. Highways have also assessed the Stourhead Visitor Access Management Plan and recommended a condition requiring submission of a traffic management plan to manage the vehicle movements.

The airfield is an undesignated heritage asset, and the development is considered unlikely to cause harm to the character of the nearby Conservation Area or the setting of the Grade 1 listed house and garden at Stourhead. Ecological habitats are likely to be enhanced by the planting proposals.

An existing hedge on the south boundary would form an important landscape screen for the development and should be retained, reinforced and protected throughout the lifetime of the development.

In conclusion, and on balance of all the issues, the proposal would be in accordance with CP42.

### **RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE subject to the following conditions:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans listed in schedule

National Trust Stourhead Visitor Access Management Plan June 2008 13579/TR01



Impact Assessment Issue 2 by Cawse Design dated 15/12/16 ref 1968-2016-GJC  
Justification Statement Issue 3 by Cawse Design dated Dec 2016 ref 1969-2016-GJC  
Design and Access Statement Issue 4 by Cawse Design dated 3/1/17 ref 1967-2016-GJC  
Letter from T. Holmes, Senior Facilities Co-Ordinator, National Trust, dated 22 March 2017  
Proposed Location Plan 1300120-P13E dated Dec 2016  
Proposed Block Plan and Elevations 1300120-P10C dated March 2016  
Proposed Plan 1300120-P11E dated Dec 2016  
Landscape Plan 1300120-P9D dated Dec 2016

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. No development shall commence on the biomass store building hereby approved above ground level until the exact details, colours and samples of the materials to be used for the external walls and roofs have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, in the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area and AONB.

4. Prior to the development being first brought in to use, a traffic management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan will include details with regards to the number of vehicle movements, types of vehicles, baseline traffic data for the area and a recommended schedule of vehicle movements to help avoid conflict with other road users. The site operations will thereafter be conducted in accordance with the approved plan in perpetuity.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety.

5. The wood chipping process hereby approved shall only take place between the hours of 0900hrs and 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays and between 0900hrs and 1300hrs on Saturdays and shall not take place at any time on Sundays and Bank/ Public Holidays

Reason: In the interests of neighbouring amenities

6. The wood chipping process hereby approved may occur on a maximum of 4 days per calendar year and shall not take place on consecutive days in any calendar year.

Reason: In the interests of neighbouring amenities

7. No vehicular deliveries shall be made to or collections made from the development hereby approved except between the hours of:  
0900hrs and 1800hrs Monday to Friday and  
0900hrs and 1300hrs Saturdays

There shall be no deliveries or collections made to or from the site on Sundays and Bank/ Public Holidays.

Reason: In the interests of neighbouring amenities

8. No development shall commence on the biomass store building hereby approved above ground level until a scheme of tree and hedge planting has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the details of which shall include :-

- location and current canopy spread of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land;
- full details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development;
- a detailed planting specification showing all plant species, supply and planting sizes and planting densities for the south boundary hedge and its future management;
- Trees of a size and species and in a location on the west boundary to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, shall be planted in accordance with BS3936 (Parts 1 and 4), BS4043 and BS4428

REASON: The application contained insufficient information to enable this matter to be considered prior to granting planning permission and the matter is required to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before development commences in order that the development is undertaken in an acceptable manner, to ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.

9. All soft landscaping comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the first occupation of the building or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner. All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting for the development and the protection of existing important landscape features.

### **Informatives**

1. STGA 12 public footpath: please be advised that nothing in this permission shall authorise the diversion, obstruction, or stopping up of any right of way that crosses the site, during or after construction
2. The applicant is requested to allow the existing hedge running east/west between Bells Lane and the direction of the B3092 Frome Road, to gain height and thickness, for screening purposes. The hedge is interrupted by a field gate when travelling from Bells Lane to the B3092. The hedge needs to thicken and grow from the field gate to Bells Lane Stourton. (Bells Lane Stourton continues to Bells Lane Zeals). With reference to condition 8 above, the applicant may also wish to include details of this hedge in the landscape details submission.