Planning Statement

Planning application by H E Smith for the erection of a retaining wall and associated engineering works on Land at R E Knowles Ltd. Industrial Estate Buxton Road Furness Vale Derbyshire SK23 7PJ

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Dowd Town Planning - Chartered Town Planners
Suite Two, 2a King Edward Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 1AA
t: +44(0)1625 669648 info@dowdplanning.com www.dowdplanning.com

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Statement is submitted on behalf of R E Knowles Limited, in support for an application which in addition to seeking planning permission for the erection of a retaining wall and associated engineering works also seeks to regularise some unauthorised works on the application site.

2.0 The Site

2.1 The application site comprises some 0.6 ha to the south west of the Furness Vale Industrial Estate on Buxton Road in Furness Vale.

2.2 The site includes an industrial building and an area of associated hard standing area. Although there are no trees within the central area of the industrial site, there are a number of trees, within the ownership of RE Knowles Ltd (the applicant), surrounding the industrial units.

2.3 The site, in part, falls within an area covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), relating to Furness Clough, which was made in October 1970; and confirmed in August 1971.

3.0 The Proposal

3.1 The application works fall into distinct, but related categories:

- Proposed works comprising the erection of a permanent retaining wall; to be constructed from stone gabions and associated works to ground levels etc;
- Unauthorised earth moving works (**see pdf drawing – see dot-hatched area)** together with associated works to the said trees affected by these works.
- Removal of specified trees (see –drawing CW/6146-P3/C), to facilitate light getting into the woodland. This would help the growth of the supplementary planting that is proposed – see the aforementioned plan and paragraph 3.5 below.

3.2 The works include the tree and woodland management works specified on Cheshire Woodlands' drawing CW/6146-P3/C.

3.3 These works were undertaken in order to deal with a number of problems that have arisen on the site including

- Encroachment of vegetation from the neighbouring woodland onto the distribution area to the rear the industrial buildings,
- Land -slippage at the south-western end of the site, due to differences in levels between the industrial land and the adjacent woodland.

3.4 As a result of some of the works referred to above, surplus earth has needed to be re-distributed. This earth has for the most part been banked around trees immediately adjacent to the woodland. Although an unusual procedure this is considered by Cheshire Woodlands to have no detrimental impact upon the longevity of the existing trees.

3.5 The woodland management works include the establishment of 213 new trees within the adjacent woodland area. Of these new trees 65% will comprise Common Oak Common Ash and Silver Birch; with the remainder being a mix of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Holly and Rowan.

4.0 Policy Background

4.1 The application site comprises land which for the most part is designated as being within the settlement area and which is also classified as being part of a "*Primary Employment Zone*"; covered by Policy EMP4. However a small proportion of the application site, to the south-west includes land, which is designated as Countryside, and as such is subject to the requirements of policy OC1.

4.2 Therefore, because the trees, which were the subject of the unauthorised works, lie within the area designated as countryside, the requirements of Policy OC1 will need to be addressed in the determination of this application. Additionally the requirements of Policy OC10, which consider the any proposals involving the loss of, or work to, trees should be considered.

4.3 Additionally it is noted that an area of woodland that lies to the immediate west and south west of the industrial land, is designated on the Proposals Map as Green Belt; the land to the north also being a Special Landscape Area and land to the west is a designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance for wildlife credentials. However it is considered that the neither the proposed works nor those undertaken without, will be detrimental to the character of the area and it is considered that the proposed works would serve to improve the situation.

5.0 Assessment

5.1 It is noted that the boundaries of the area of land afforded these designations agrees with those set out in the Tree Preservation Order relating to Furness Clough, which abuts the industrial estate. However this, but this does not reflect the current situation on the ground.

5.2 The land in question forms part of the land surrounding the commercial buildings that constitute the industrial estate, and is given over to hard-surfacing and there are no trees within this area of the site; albeit that there are some tree branches, which overhang the area of hard standing. This reality is reflected in the plan submitted with this application prepared by Cheshire woodlands and referenced CW/6146-P3/C.

5.3 It is against this background that the situation needs to be assessed.

5.4 Policy OC10 states that development will not be granted permission, where it will result in the loss or injury to all, or part of, a woodland. Although the works have been undertaken without consent, none of the works are considered to have had any detrimental impact upon either the individual trees or the wider woodland environment.

5.5 Policy OC1 states that the countryside will cover all areas beyond the built-up area boundaries. While the Policy makes no specific distinction between land which is rural and that which urban or sub-urban in character, it does recognise that the countryside is not homogenous.

5.6 In determining what development may be acceptable the policy will allow some development in designated countryside areas where it would neither have a significant impact on the character and distinctiveness of the countryside nor detract from its open character.

5.7 Neither the land, the subject of this application nor the countryside, which surrounds it, could be described as “open”. However, the works, which were undertaken without the necessary consent, were not considered to have caused any harm to the character of the site or its wider setting. Additionally the retaining wall would provide a more definite boundary between the commercial uses and the woodland beyond. It will also assist in protecting the woodland from further, unintentional, encroachment

5.8 Furthermore, as part of this woodland management programme it may be necessary to remove some young specimens of naturally colonised ash and sycamore, in order to facilitate the establishment of the new tree planting. This new planting will help to enhance the quality and the longevity of the woodland that surrounds the site; which will serve to improve of the visual character of the site's setting. It would also serve to enhance the quality of the natural environment, by increasing the range of flora and fauna which could be found on the site.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 None of the works, for which planning permission is sought, are considered to be at odds with the “saved” policies of the High Peak Local Plan, nor are they considered to be detrimental to the character of the site and the wider area. In all aspects the works are not considered to be detrimental to any interests of acknowledged importance.

6.2 As such the Local Planning Authority is respectfully requested to grant planning permission.