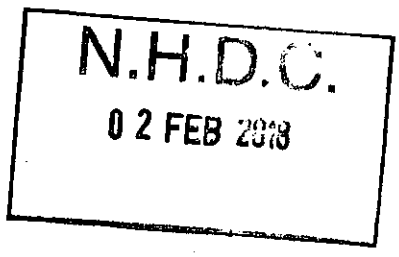
# RICHARD THELWELL

CHARTERED ARCHITECT




## PROPOSED 'SPRINGWOOD' OFFICE EXTENSION

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

January 2018

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# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**Project:**

Proposed 2 No storey Springwood office extension.

Dermal Laboratories, Springwood, Preston Road, Gosmore, Hertfordshire. SG4 7QR

**Prepared For:**

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## 01.00 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSED USE.

Both 'Springwood' and the adjacent Tatmore Place are in the ownership of Dermal Laboratories Ltd (The Applicant) and the development now proposed is to further facilitate the continued planned expansion of Dermal Laboratories Ltd headquarters in Gosmore.

Dermal Laboratories Ltd is a respected local employer, who moved to Tatmore Place in 1970. Since that time the main house and gardens have been diligently and professionally maintained, with a desire to retain the feel of a country house and a separate office/ laboratory block was constructed in two stages, in 1978 and 1983 to accommodate increased staff
numbers.

These facilities are now working to capacity and some additional space requirement is forecast to house further staff, as the business continues to enjoy responsibly controlled growth.

In May 2008 Dermal Laboratories Ltd acquired 'Springwood', which borders their Tatmore Place grounds. The Dermal acquisition of 'Springwood' was particularly fortuitous, as the only access to the property is across land belonging to Dermal Laboratories and 'Springwood' itself cannot be seen or accessed from any other residential building, or indeed seen from Tatmore Place. The original building was demolished and a new highly sustainable office building was built in its place approximately five years ago.

Founded in 1963,Dermal Laboratories is an independent (family owned) Company which develops, manufactures and markets a wide range of prescription and OTC medicines. Well known brands include Ibuleve, Otex, Freederm, Bazuka, Doublebase and Dermol.

Dermal has a caring and long-term perspective and commands great loyalty from it's staff, with exceptionally low turnover rates. The majority of its staff are drawn from the local area.

Annually sales, now in excess of £60m, have increased steadily in recent years, with a commensurate rise in staff numbers. Dermal believes it will need 10-15 more staff at Gosmore over the next few years to maintain planned business growth.

An area of ground to the eastern side of the new 'Springwood' office offers a suitable and practical location for a stand alone extension to 'Springwood', without detriment to the rural environment, any neighbouring property, or 'Springwood' itself. The sustainable design and external materials proposed for the extension are intended to be completely in keeping with the original development.

## 02.00 PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATIONS

Pre-application advice was sought in 2011, when the original 'Springwood' development was considered. The principles of the advice received at that time have been applied to the proposals now submitted as follows:-

*Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone:-* The extension proposed is not significantly closer to any neighbouring property than the original development. Orientation, lighting, acoustics and the hours the proposed extension will be used all take cognisance of the peaceful amenity currently enjoyed by the neighbouring properties.

The building will not normally be used at weekends.

*Effective protection of the environment:-* The development proposed entails the removal of one mature tree which it is proposed to replace with a similar species near to the original location.

An ecological investigation was undertaken for the original development site, which is covered later in this statement.

*The prudent use of natural resources:-* The use of sustainable materials, responsibly sourced, will be a key factor in the selection of products and components for this project, as can be demonstrated they were for the original development in 2012.

Examples of natural resources, consistent with the rural setting in which the building is situated, are shown on the elevation drawings.

*The maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment:-* The introduction section above offers a brief background summary of the demonstrable economic success of The Applicant's business in Gosmore.

Since Dermal Laboratories moved into Tatmore Place in 1970 the business has flourished and staff numbers have increased progressively, thanks to responsibility controlled growth since that time. This has continued to be the position since the construction of the original 'Springwood' development.
The stability of the business has meant that staff turnover is very low, but the forecast continued business growth dictates the need for the additional space now proposed.

The proposed development will have a positive effect on the local economy in that it will help to create additional jobs. Nearly 40% of the staff employed on the site live within the NHDC area and over 70% live within ten miles of the site.

Before taking the decision to extend 'Springwood', Dermal has considered other options for

meeting their requirements moving forward. These are summarised as follows:-

1) Extend the existing Laboratory Block

2) Extend Tatmore Place

3) Develop adjoining land

4) Relocate staff to the Dermal premises at Kempston in Bedfordshire

5) Dispose of Tatmore Place and relocate completely to a new location

6) Home working

Each of the above options has been explored and dismissed, in favour of the more practical and less disruptive extension of Springwood. Items Nos 1,2,3 are complicated by the listed status of Tatmore Place.

Approximately twelve staff have been relocated to the company premises in Kempston since 2013, but there is no desire to relocate further staff away from Gosmore if suitable accommodation can be provided by extending 'Springwood'.

## 03.00 PLANNING POLICY

Planning policy for 'Springwood' site has been previously tested and has seen fit to grant a change of use from residential dwelling ( Class C3 ) to offices ( Class B1 )

This application is made against the background of B1 use being established and acceptable but with a proven improvement in quality and energy efficiently being achieved by the original scheme.The proposed extension will be constructed to the same standards. PPS4- Planning for Sustainable economic growth-Introduction Section 4 & 6, are still relevant to these proposals, with particular emphasis on policy EC10. Sections 1 (i), (ii),(v) & (vi) of the Key Principles of PPS7 are also met.

The key principles of PPS7 include effective protection and enhancement of the environment, prudent use of natural resources, good quality, carefully sited, accessible development and maintenance of the local environment.

Priority should be given to the re-use of previously developed sites and local authorities should establish policies for allowing some limited development in or next to rural settlements that are not designated as local service centres in order to meet local business and community needs and to maintain the vitality of these communities. In particular, authorities should be supportive of small scale development of this nature where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from and have poor public transport links with service centres.

Para 17, the re-use of buildings in the countryside, confirms it in the Government's policy to support the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. The extension to a building constructed to modern sustainable standards, continues to meet those objectives by virtue of the use of similar construction methods and standards.

## 04.00 THE APPLICATION SITE

The site is located on the outskirts of Gosmore village, approximately 2 miles south of Hitchin and 1 mile north of Preston village. The village runs along the main road (Preston Road) which runs north to south, parallel to the A1(M), with the site to the west of Preston Road.

Preston Road is essentially a residential road connecting Gosmore and Preston Villages with small clusters of houses, some terraced and others detached with large areas of countryside on both sides of the road.

In 2011 Planning Permission was granted for a change of use from residential dwelling (Class 3) to offices (Class B1). This change of use was approved on the basis that it 'would cause no harm to the character of the rural area beyond the green belt, to matters of sustainability, neighbouring residential amenity or highway conditions in the vicinity of the site, and as such, would be in accordance with the development plan and national policy.

The B1 scheme as built increased the total floor area over that of original bungalow and garage/workshop total area, but designed on a ground and first floor configuration resulted in an overall built footprint slightly less in area than the existing bungalow and garage workshop total. The extension proposed is also proposed over two storeys to minimise the overall footprint of the whole building.

It is intended that just one of the existing trees be removed for the proposed extension, which would still be completely screened by mature trees which presently screen the existing building. This would ensure that the neighbouring residential amenity is not overlooked or materially affected by the proposed development. The tree proposed for removal would be replaced nearby with a similar species.
The area to the north and west of the proposed building, indicated for parking provision on the application plans, are proposed in broadly the same location as the existing resin paved parking area and would be surfaced with proprietary permeable resin paving.

The present access road from the Tatmore Place access roadway would be retained in its present location, and would remain SMA (tarmacadam) surfaced, similar to the present Tatmore Place access roadway leading down to Preston Road. It is not proposed that an existing gated entrance, further south along Preston Road which only extends to an adjacent log cabin and not up to Springwood, to be used. All site access therefore would be via the present access to Tatmore Place from Preston Road unchanged from its present arrangement, with minimal additional vehicular traffic per day.

It will be seen from the section above that Dermal Laboratories has considered extending or further developing both Tatmore Place and / or the adjacent laboratory building. Tatmore Place, being Grade II listed, and likewise the present laboratory building are both on relatively open sites. Extending the 'Springwood' site clearly offers a far less intrusive or visible alternative to developing Tatmore Place and if approved, a more appropriate, secure, sustainable, energy efficient environment for the continuation and further development of this worthwhile local business.

## 05.00 SPECIFIC ISSUES AFFECTING THE PROPOSED EXTENSION

There are a number of issues which help support the proposal to extend the original development and these include the following:-

**a) Amenity:**
The proposed building will not have any detrimental impact on the adjacent Green Belt Land, or any neighbouring property.

The development will be constructed and positioned with the removal of only one existing tree, which will be replaced nearby with a tree of similar species.

**b) Proximity to Tatmore Place:**
Although the proposed extension function is inherently associated with that of Tatmore Place,the application site is outwith the Listed demise and, if approved, will serve the Dermal business requirements for the foreseeable future without any modification or visual effect on Tatmore Place, thus meeting The Applicant's stated desire to maintain the Tatmore Place house and grounds in a way which retains the feel of a high quality country house.

**c) Bats.**
Bats are known to be present in the wooded area around 'Springwood' and provision was made in the wooded area and the fabric of the original development for their wellbeing.

In May 2017 a Nocturnal Emergence Bat Survey was undertaken. This found continued bat activity, but no bat roosts on the site.
The findings of this report are valid for one year and a copy is submitted herewith.

## 06.00 ACCESS POLICY

Dermal Laboratories will meet the various obligations placed on them by legislation and will ensure that the duty placed on service providers under the Equalities Act 2010 is addressed. The new building will also meet the requirements of Document Part M of the current Building Regulations.

Access to the application site from Preston Road will remain unaltered, and general improvement to the existing track up to Springwood from the roadway to Tatmore Place was completed under the 2012 works.

From the proposed car park areas there will be level access to and into the building. Full disabled and ambulant access and appropriate toilet facilities will be incorporated into the design throughout the proposed development.

## 07.00 TRANSPORT IMPACT

Transport access to and from the Application site will always be via the existing roadway access to Tatmore Place from Preston Road.

In the 1970s and 80's, HGVs would deliver to and collect from Tatmore Place many times a day. This is no longer the case, since the warehousing facilities were moved off site. Vehicular movements in and out the of site are now generally limited to working hours Monday to Friday, the majority being morning and evening commuting by staff, therefore minimising the noise and traffic impact on neighbouring properties.

Nearly 40% of the staff employed on the site live within NHDC area and over 70% live within 10 miles of the site. There are presently 82No car parking spaces on the Tatmore Place/ 'Springwood' campus.

The main modes of transport used by the staff to get to work are car and bicycle. Some staff share cars for the journey to work, which is encouraged and ample cycle storage is available.

A bus service runs to/from the centre of Hitchin 6 times a day during the week and a taxi from Hitchin railway station costs about £10.

Of the company cars based at Gosmore, over 80% have emissions below 150g/km and about 50% are hybrid vehicles.

It is likely that the traffic movements to and from 'Springwood' will be significantly lower if the site is used commercially than if used residentially, as it will be driven to at the start and end of working days, rather than seven days a week at a variety of hours. The provision of free lunches to staff further reduces traffic movements as very few staff have any need to leave site during the working day.

For the purpose of this Planning Application, proposed car parking within the overall 'Springwood' site is indicated as 39no. spaces, **inclusive** of 2no. disabled spaces and 4no. visitor spaces. This is based on *'NHDC . Car Parking Standards* (September 2011), at 1no. space per 30m of gross floor area.
It is not anticipated that all of these spaces will be used every day and visitors will be directed to Tatmore Place, from where they will be accompanied on foot to the Springwood site.

The impact therefore on vehicle movements to and from the site is considered minimal and only at the beginning and end of the normal working day,five days per week.

Turning and manoeuvring space for refuse and emergency vehicles has been provided within the site and it will be the Company's responsibility to ensure that dustbins are taken to an agreed location within the allowable carry distance.

It should be noted that the existing access road to 'Springwood' is considered to be of adequate width to allow vehicles to pass, but as future vehicle movements are likely to all be in the same directions.i.e. upon arrival and then upon departure, there is no proposal to significantly change this access roadway width as part of the development proposals.

## 08.00 SUSTAINABILITY

If approved, the detailed design proposals will seek to incorporate many innovative solutions for demonstrably improving the holistic, energy performance, water management, environmental and waste control, performance, etc, as the original development.

Extensive surveys and analysis have been undertaken on the original structure and fabric of the building and its surroundings, to ensure the new extension has minimal impact on site biodiversity.

A holistic approach to the current needs of the development and those through its life has been taken, this includes future climate change. The design team has considered the building's form and function and wherever possible adapted this to minimise energy demand.

An aspect of the strategy of reducing energy demand and maintaining steady internal conditions through the year is thermal mass. The engineering services have been developed in conjunction with the building design to minimise the reliance on energy for space conditioning.

The proposed construction elements will be designed with heavy weight materials within the insulated envelope, together with robust dense internal surface finishes, such as wet plaster, increasing admittance values as far as possible. The completed build ups have also been selected to optimise decrement factor (heat flow) and decrement delay (time lag), target values for which are generally 0.25 and 9-12 hours. This is generally consistent with the original development.

The ability of the building to act in this way means it is less vulnerable to the instability experienced in many light or even medium weight structures.In other structures, the rapidly changing internal environment can result in cyclic operation of internal conditioning systems. The result is more energy input more frequently to maintain comfort during winter, or overheating in summer. Further, internal casual gains during winter are absorbed during the occupied period and emitted back into the space when internal temperatures drop.

Thermal standards will exceed the already high standards set by the Building Regulations Part L 2010 editions, current when the original development was built. Fenestration will certainly be carefully selected to minimise unwanted heat gains but also to maximise daylight penetration. Coupled with this, photocell control will be provided to already highly efficient lighting installations to automatically reduce the need for artificial lighting whenever possible.

## 09.00 THE PROPOSED DESIGN AND SCALE

The earlier B1 office building has been located on the approximate footprint of the original bungalow, to avoid encroaching significantly towards the nearest neighbouring property and, although two storeys, is well screened by the mature trees and landscaping.

The use of a flat roof on the proposed development is not considered appropriate in the 'Springwood' rural locations a non-reflective matt finished metal pitched roof is proposed to match the original. By using a proprietary standing seam metal finished roof, it is possible to use a much flatter pitch angle than if using traditional tiles or slates, thus keeping to a minimum the height of the building overall. The proposed extension will be fractionally lower than the original 'Springwood' office building.

The orientation of the building is proposed as shown, in order to maximise the benefit of the shading to the south facing elevation provided by the trees.
This orientation, with a slight geometric adjustment presents the secondary front entrance of the building in the same face as the present entrance.

The external appearance to the main body of the building would be responsibly sourced timber boarding, to contribute to the rural setting and to match the original 'Springwood' development.

The fenestration proposed is aimed at providing good daylighting with minimum solar heat gain and minimising the need for permanent artificial lighting.

In conclusion, the proposal seeks to maximise the positive aspects of the original building i.e. position, footprint, orientation, whilst taking the opportunity offered to create further energy efficient, compactly designed, space to accommodate the Applicants clear business needs for the foreseeable future, with aesthetic quality in keeping with the site's woodland setting.

## 10.00 PROPOSED LANDSCAPING

All established planting will be retained and pruned if necessary, mainly along boundaries.

Some adjustments and improvement to the planting are proposed and some additional seeding is proposed to provide nectar-rich wild plants for the bats.

Owing partly to the specialist nature of this element and partly the desire to best manage the planting which exists in the long term it is requested that the detailed landscape design and management be Reserved for future approval by NHDC, before work on site is commenced-subject to Planning Permission being granted.

It is proposed that a single mature horse chestnut tree will be lost to the proposed extension. A similar species, heavy standard, tree will be planted in a position close to the original, by way of ensuring that there is no net tree loss as a consequence of the proposed works.No other alterations are proposed to the general woodland layout.

## 11.00 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions noted in the NHDC Pre-Application advise letter for the original building state that 'whilst the Council's current policies do not support such development within the rural area beyond the Green Belt, there is subsequent government advice that would support a replacement building for economic purposes, but only in certain circumstances'....

The foregoing information is believed to make a demonstrable case for the extension proposed to the sustainable building, on economic, energy efficiency, aesthetic, practical and local employment grounds. The options (see appendix) considered by the Applicant, should Planning Permission be refused, are all still very much 'second preferences' to the proposed extension of 'Springwood'. Dermal Laboratories has an overwhelming desire to stay in the county at Tatmore Place, but the perceived limitations of extending or changing the more open aspected Grade II Listed premises to meet their considered, well planned and sustainable business growth in the long term, are clearly best met by the proposed extension.

The Reason for Decision indicated by NHDC, in approving earlier the change of use, are as valid and applicable to this application as to the earlier consent, but with much more efficient energy use and building fabric characteristics.

Any fears of a significant increase in traffic movements are addressed Section 07.00 above. It is also stressed that the parking provision shown on plans to suit the proposed re-development, is based on NHBC published standards for a stand-alone new development. This provision can be tailored by agreement (if desired) or considered, against the overall parking provision serving the Tatmore Place Campus in addition to the 'Springwood' site.

We therefore submit that these proposals:-

Avoid interference and alteration to a Grade II Listed building.

Offer an appropriate use of previously developed land within an approved Use Class and in a discrete position.

Contribute to additional attractive, safe, secure and efficient workplace environment, which supports the local image of this respected and established Employer in the district.

Contributes to a sustainable high quality building, in keeping with the rural setting of 'Springwood', without detriment to the neighbouring properties of Tatmore Place.

Provides modern efficient workspace which encourages additional high quality employment in the District.

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