

Supporting Statement: Reasoning for Replacement Structure

1. Background and Context

The application site features a distinct change in ground levels that requires a robust, long-term retaining solution to maintain stability. Historically, this boundary and earth mass were supported by a traditional masonry/blockwork wall.

2. Reason for Replacement

The original blockwork wall had significantly degraded over time due to structural age, hydrostatic pressure from retained earth, and shifting ground conditions. It began to crack, bow outward, and show clear signs of imminent structural failure. Furthermore, large laurel trees and various established shrubs and brambles had grown over and around the wall. The root systems and weight of this vegetation added significant pressure to the structure, contributing further to the failure of the original wall. Left unaddressed, a collapse would have compromised both ground stability and safety on-site.

Because the original wall was no longer fit for purpose, immediate intervention was required to safely secure the bank.

3. Choice of Gabion Design

The choice to replace the failing masonry with stone-filled wire gabion baskets was made based on several critical engineering and environmental factors:

- **Free Drainage:** Unlike a solid block wall, gabion baskets are naturally porous. They allow groundwater to drain freely through the stone fill, completely eliminating the hydrostatic pressure buildup that caused the failure of the previous wall.
- **Flexibility and Strength:** Gabion structures possess inherent flexibility, allowing them to settle and move slightly with the natural shifts of the earth without cracking or failing.
- **Environmental Compatibility:** The natural stone look blends seamlessly into the surrounding wooded landscape and earthen banks at Glen Lea, offering a highly durable, low-impact visual solution compared to massive concrete or brick alternatives.

As shown in the attached annotated photos, the new structure strictly follows the line of the previous boundary, sits entirely within the applicant's ownership, and provides a permanent, safe, and stable retaining solution.

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