

20.828 ASTON RISE

PLANNING DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

SEPTEMBER 2024

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& P A R T N E R S

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This Planning Design and Access Statement has been jointly prepared by S&P and JPPC in support of a Householder Planning Application submission proposing the extension and alteration of Aston Rise, a detached late 19th Century country house located on the southern side of Remenham Lane in the village of Aston.

This statement sets out the design approach for the proposed works and outlines how this has been carefully considered against the context, historical precedents and local vernacular. It also assesses the proposal in the context of relevant national planning guidance (contained within the NPPF) and Development Plan policies contained within the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (WBCS) and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDDLDP).

The proposal seeks to sympathetically alter and extend the existing house to provide living accommodation to meet the requirements of a new owner.

Pre-Application advice was sought from Wokingham Council in February 2024.

The Response letter of 12th March 2024 identified that there were no objections to the design, form and detailing of the proposed extensions and alterations but identified that the following additional information should be provided as part of any follow-up Householder Planning Application:

- A review of the volume calculations. This has been carried-out and recorded in Section 11 of this document;
- Preliminary bat surveys and follow-up emergence and re-entry surveys have been undertaken in respect of the principal buildings on the site and the relevant findings and mitigation recommendations are incorporated within separate reports prepared by Ecology by Design;
- An Arboricultural Assessment, which has been carried-out by Sylva Trees and included as a separate report;
- A Drainage Strategy including 'Run-Off' calculation which has been carried-out by Centrespace Design and submitted as a separate report; and
- A Heritage Assessment in accordance with Paragraph 200 of the NPPF (Dec. 2023), using appropriate expertise where necessary. This has been provided by Jamie Preston, of JP Heritage, and is included as a separate document.



Figure 1. Aerial view of the site

SITE CONTEXT

Aston Rise is located in Aston, a picturesque small village on the outskirts on Henley on Thames, very close to the River Thames.

The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and falls within the area covered by the Greenlands Covenant, overseen by the National Trust with whom full consultation has taken place and confirmation provided that they are supportive of the proposed changes to the property.

Whilst Aston (village) does feature an Area of Special Character, Aston Rise does not fall within its designation. It is also relevant to note that the site does not fall within a designated National Landscape Area (formerly AONB) and that no other national landscape or ecological designations (SSSIs etc) are relevant to this site.

The property, with access from Remenham Lane, benefits from a generous plot which slopes up southwards from the road quite markedly (i.e. away from the Thames). The site area totals approximately 2 hectares.

The Main House is set back from Remenham Lane by approximately 140m, and is separated from the two nearest dwellings (namely Highway Cottage to the east and Aston Lodge to the north) by approximately 120m, with mature trees and planting in the intervening land providing the property with an excellent degree of natural screening and privacy. The quality of the site's natural screening can be seen in Photos B and C.

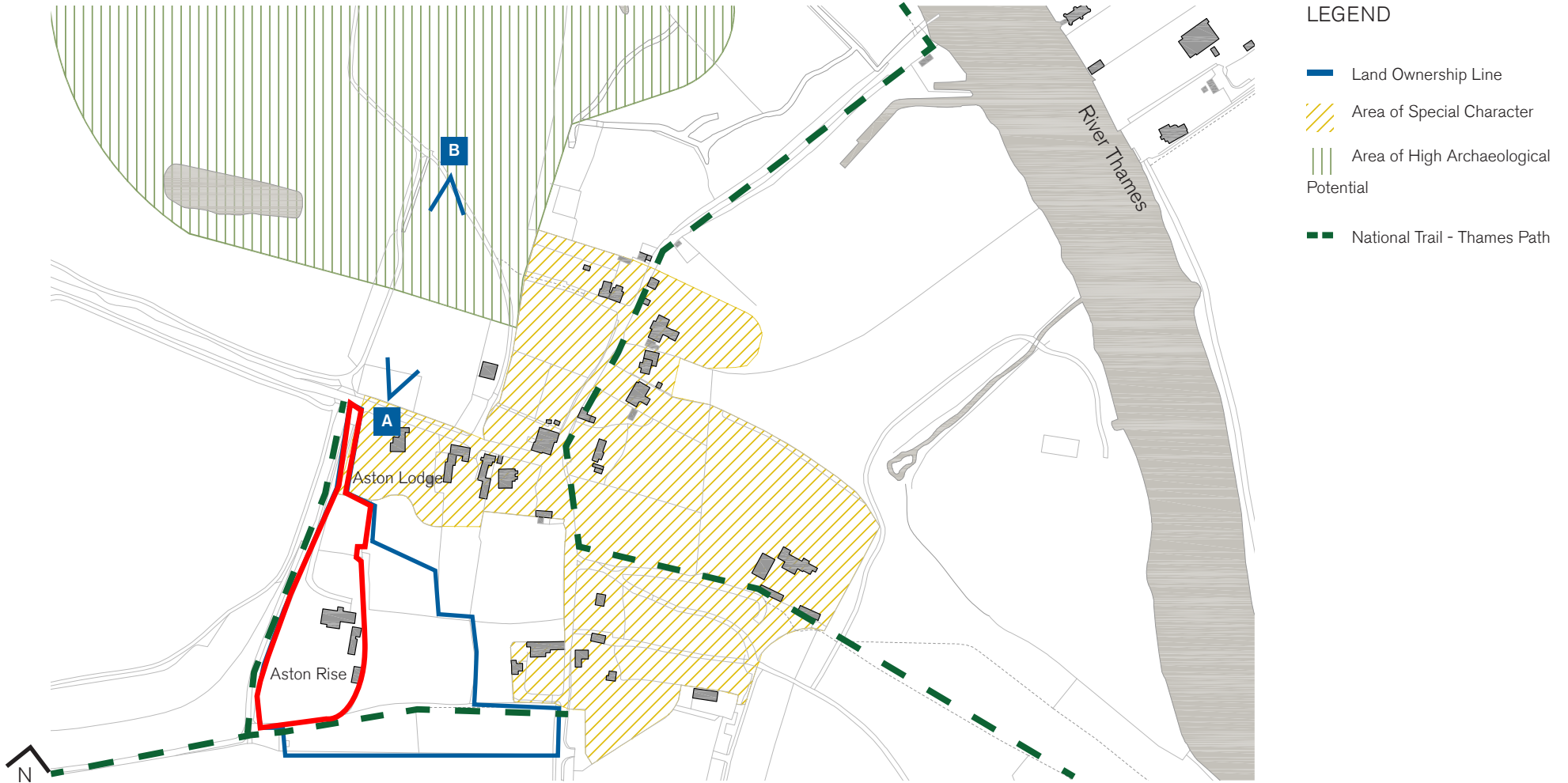


Figure 2. Site assessed against relevant planning framework and wider picture of the land's structure. Photograph locations have been indicated in blue.

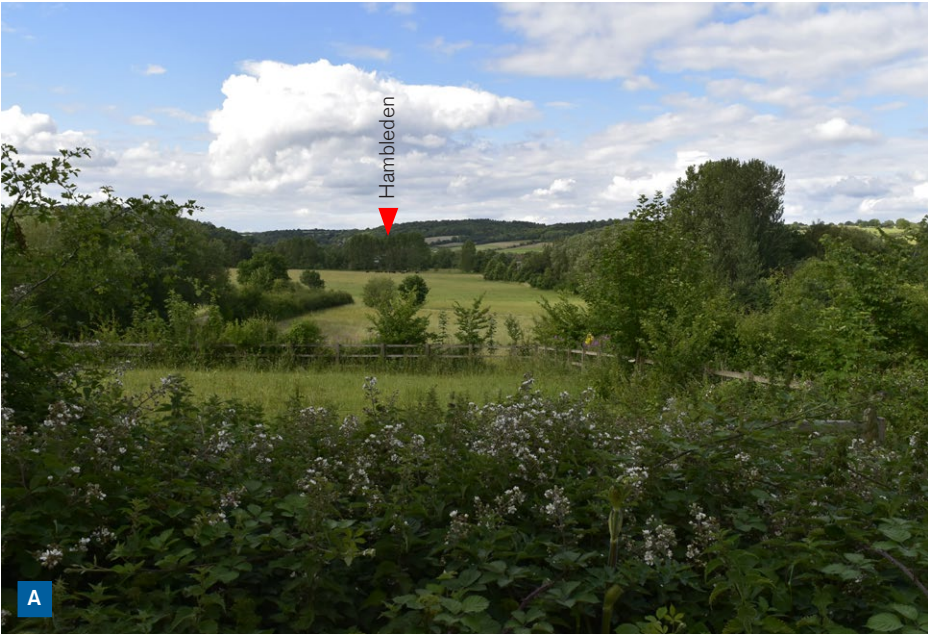


Figure 3. View from Remenham Lane



Figure 4. View from Footpath

Aside from the Main House, there is a detached Cottage lying to the south-east of the house which also provides primary (self-contained) residential accommodation. The Cottage is believed to be contemporaneous with the Main House (see Heritage Statement) and, in combination, both buildings reasonably comprise 'the original dwellinghouse' in planning terms.

As far as secondary accommodation is concerned, a garage extension was added to the northern end of the cottage following the granting of application 16595 in 1981 and, in turn, a detached garage and store was erected to the south-east of the main house and cottage/garage following the granting of application 981311 in 1998.



Figure 5. Aerial view illustrating image C. location



Figure 6. View from Mill End

ACCESS

Remenham Lane is a rural road that runs parallel to the River Thames and connects the village of Aston with Henley on Thames.

The site is currently accessed from the north through a gate and into a private driveway. The drive continues upwards and along the western boundary and crosses the site in front (to the north) of the Main House to an area for drop off and access to the garage.

The plot is primarily set out as lawn with some hedgerows to boundaries, small decorative landscaped areas surrounding the house and some vegetation with medium and large mature trees.

LEGEND

- Land Ownership Line
- 1 Access
- 2 Remenham Lane
- 3 Main House
- 4 Garage
- 5 Cottage
- 6 Workshop



Figure 7. Existing Site Plan



Figure 8. View from within the private garden back towards the main dwelling



Figure 9. Entrance gate from Remenham Lane

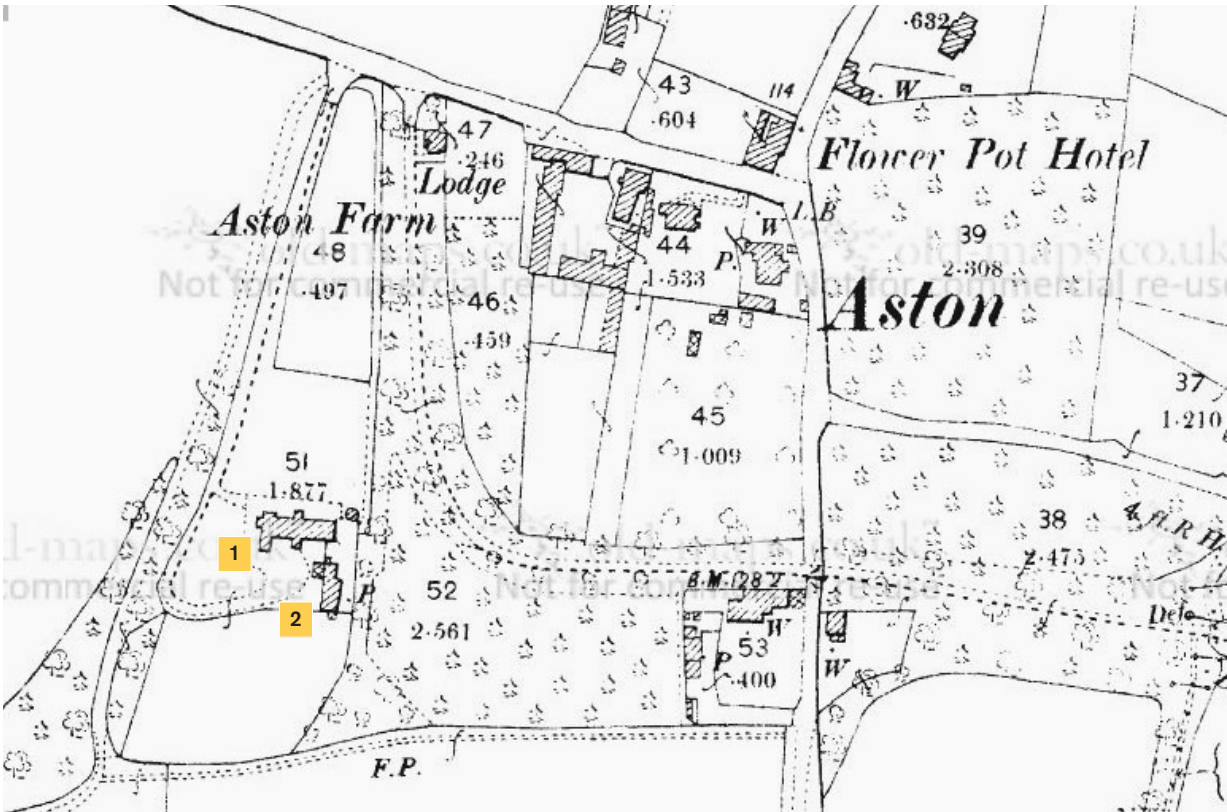


Figure 10. 1898 OS County series

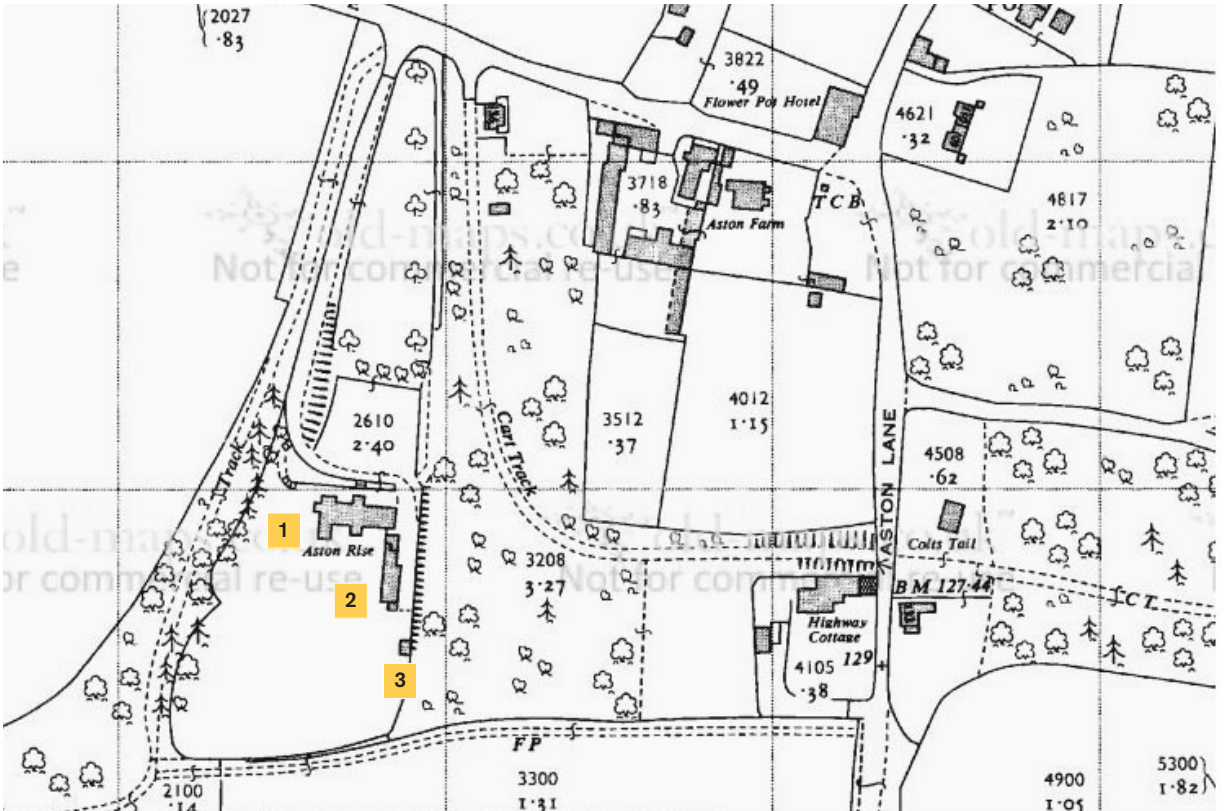


Figure 11. 1962 OS Plan

R/4/68

Description: Sun lounge extension =.

Decision: Planning permission January 1968.

16595

Description: New double garage and store also new front entrance porch.

Decision: Planning permission November 1981.

950153

Description: Renewal of consent 37246 for the erection of garage.

Decision: Planning permission January 1996.

981311

Description: Proposed erection of detached garage.

Decision: Planning permission November 1998.

LEGEND

- 1 Main House
- 2 Cottage
- 3 Outbuilding

HISTORIC & EXISTING PHOTOS

As shown in the below historic photos, the Main House has experienced various renovations and alterations in the past. Work such as changing size and scale of fenestration has altered the building's appearance. The change to the drive, likely when the Sun Room was added in the 1960s, reversed the front and rear entrances to the current configuration.

Photographs showing the appearance of the property as it existed in 1948 below.



Figure 12. 'Front' Elevation - 1948



Figure 14. Front Elevation - 1980



Figure 16. Front Elevation - 1990



Figure 13. 'Rear' Elevation - 1948



Figure 15. Rear Elevation - 1980



Figure 17. Rear Elevation - 1990

EXISTING DWELLING & COTTAGE

The Main House dates from the late 1890's and is a three-storey detached five-bedroom house built in the Arts and Crafts style. External walls are mainly exposed brickwork, featuring gables and bay windows in render.

Excluding the entrance porch and extensions to the rear, the original form has been retained albeit that doors and windows have been replaced at various times such that the existing fenestration now lacks the visual cohesion that would once have existed and, indeed, can be seen with reference to the 1948 photographs in section 5.1 of this report.

Submitted with this application, a Heritage Statement notes that the most historically and architecturally important elevations of the Main House are its Northern (front) and Western (flank) elevations. This is due to the extent of alteration in the 1960's & 70's to the South and East of the building.

As evidenced by the photographs on the previous page, the driveway and main entrance were originally located on the southern side of the Main House. The legibility of this is concealed by the '60s Sunroom and the early '80s replacement porch (the time of its addition presumed to correspond with the alterations to the drive)

The Cottage is a pitched-roof structure which is clad with horizontal timber boarding to walls under a plain clay tile roof. It provides self-contained accommodation comprising an open-plan kitchen and living room, a bathroom and bedroom on the ground floor with an additional living area/ study within the roof void at first floor level.



Figure 22. Existing side view of cottage towards workshop



Figure 18. Existing Front Elevation



Figure 21. Existing Rear Elevation



Figure 23. Existing front view of cottage



Figure 19. Existing Bay Window & Rendered Gable to Front



Figure 20. Existing West Elevation

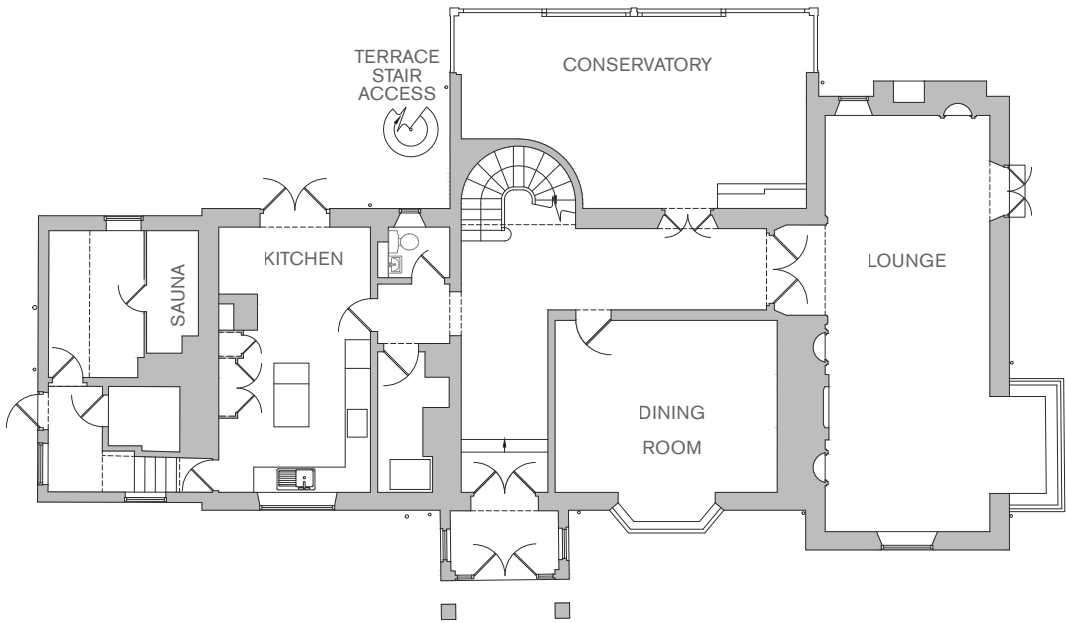


Figure 24. Existing Ground Floor Plan

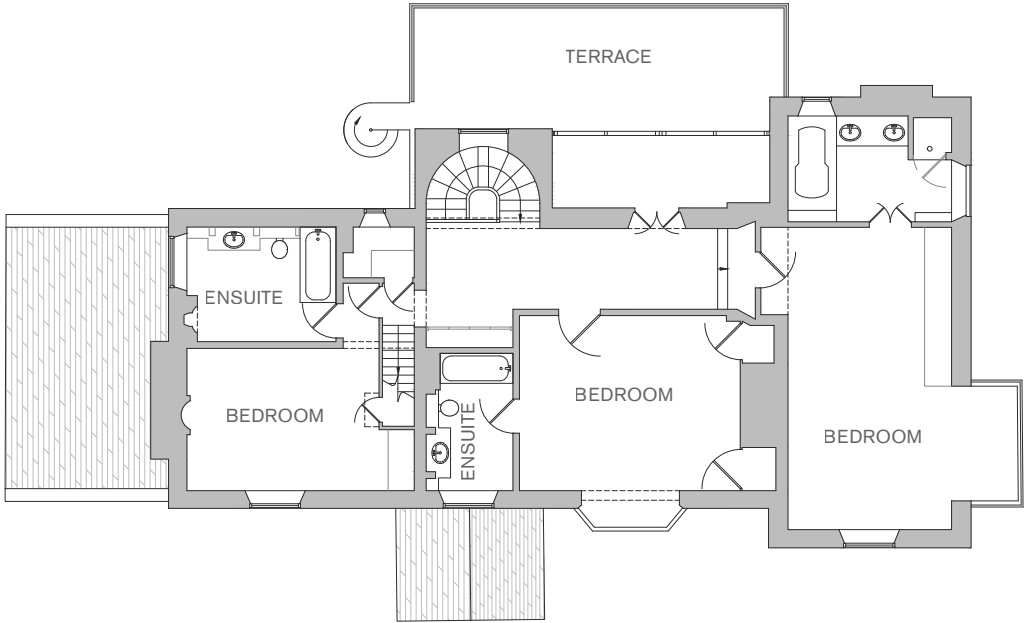


Figure 25. Existing First Floor Plan

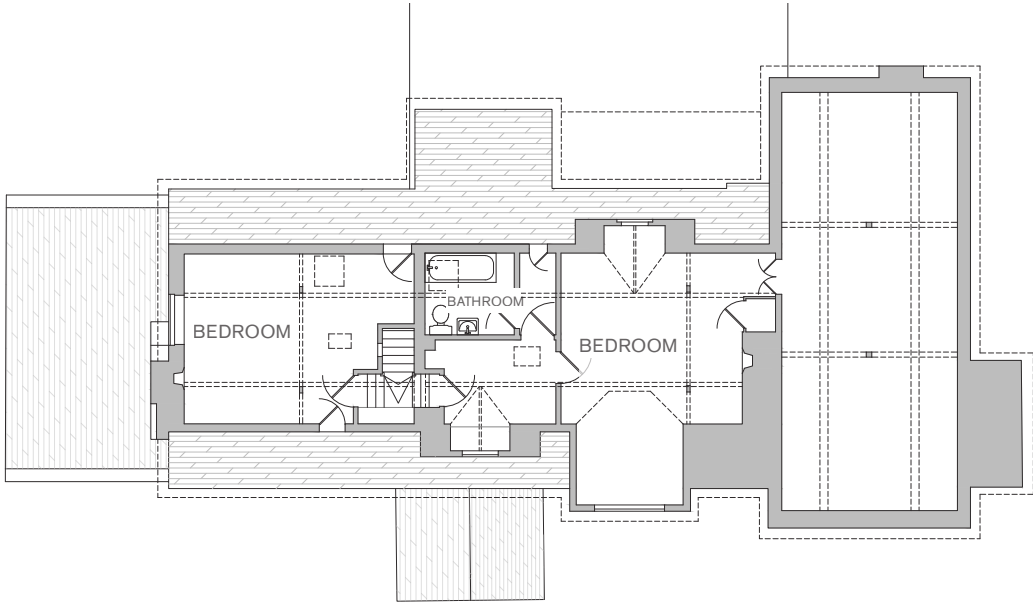


Figure 26. Existing Second Floor Plan

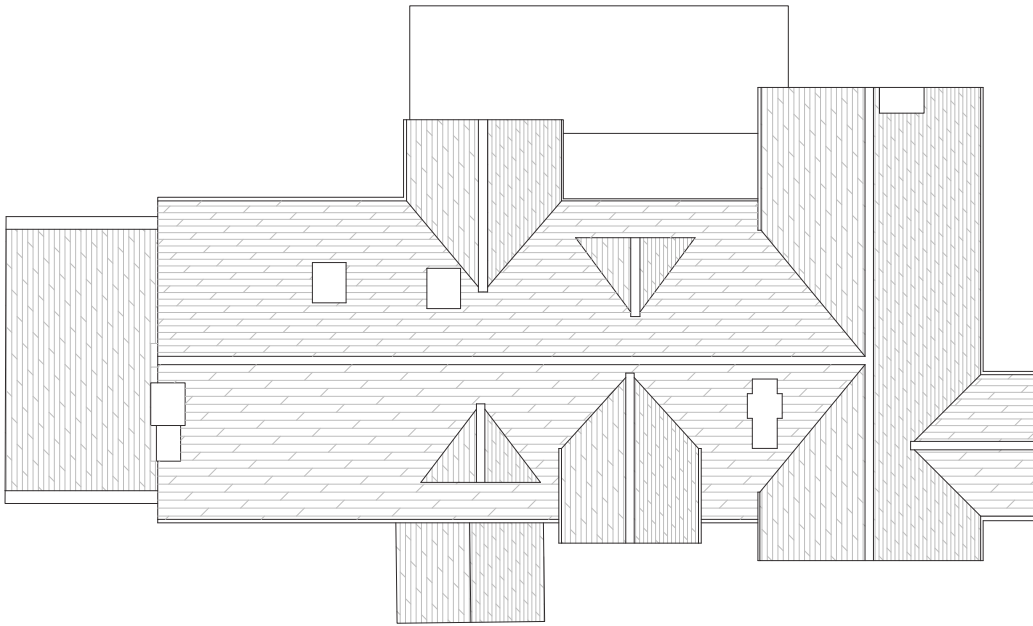


Figure 27. Existing Roof Plan



EXISTING HOUSE ELEVATIONS



Figure 28. Existing Rear Elevation (South)



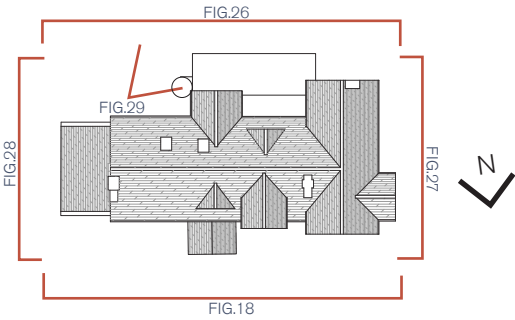
Figure 31. View from dwelling towards rear garden



Figure 29. Existing West Elevation



Figure 30. Existing East Elevation



EXISTING COTTAGE PLANS & ELEVATIONS

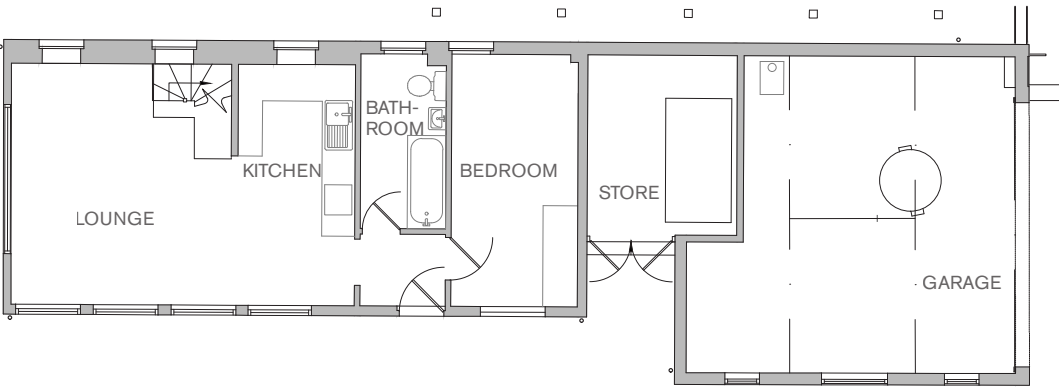


Figure 32. Existing Ground Floor Plan

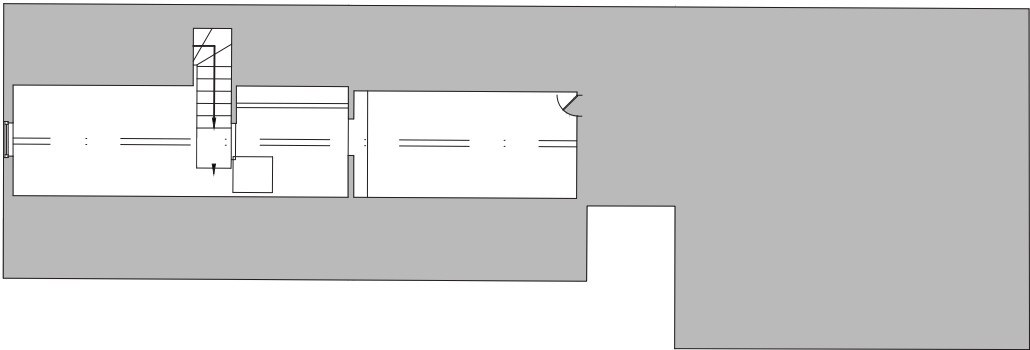


Figure 33. Existing First Floor Plan

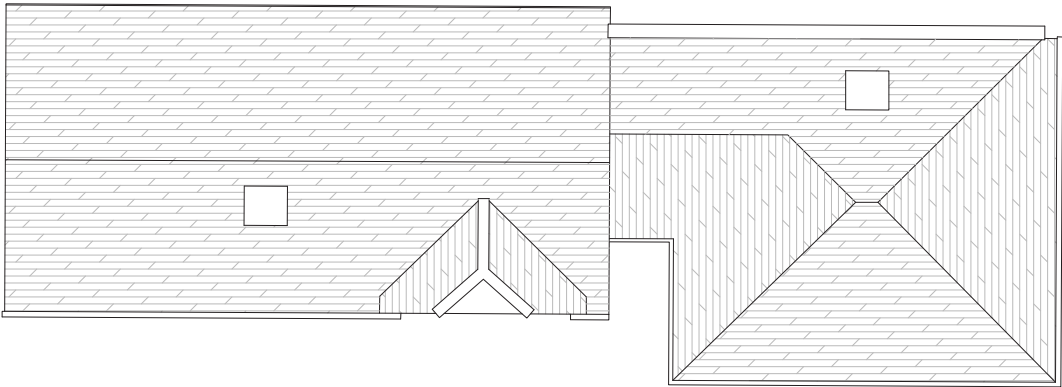


Figure 34. Existing Roof Plan

NOT TO SCALE

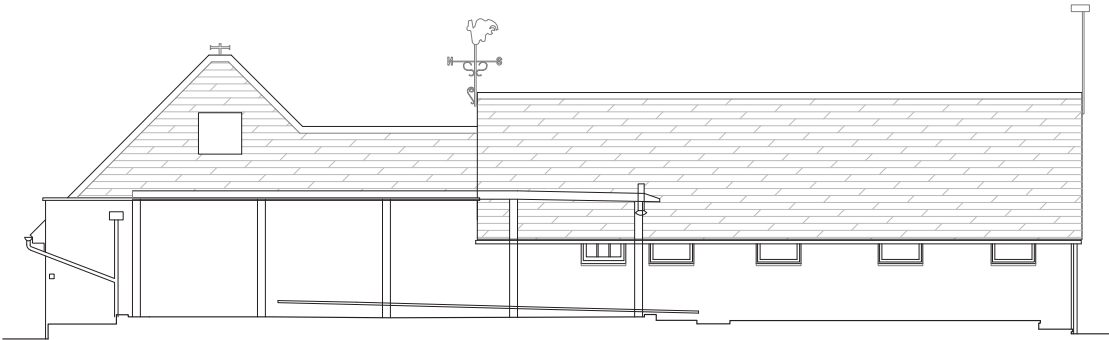


Figure 35. Existing West Elevation



Figure 36. Existing East Elevation

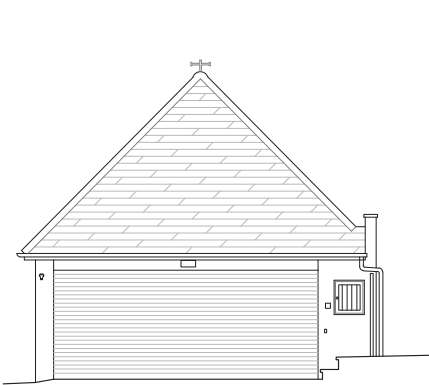


Figure 37. Existing North Elevation

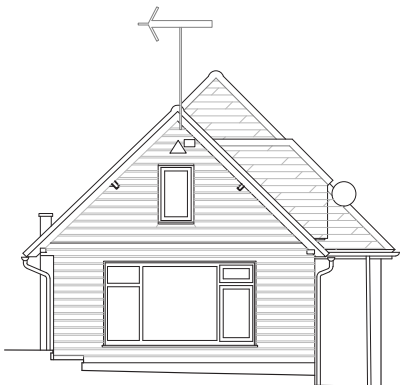


Figure 38. Existing South Elevation

PROPOSED SITE PLAN

As part of this application, there are no proposed changes to the existing vehicular access to the property. The site would remain accessible via the existing gate off Remenham Lane and the drive would remain in its current configuration. As previously mentioned, the mature trees and planting around the perimeter of the site and adjacent to the driveway screen the house from the public domain and, as such, are important natural features to be retained and protected.

LEGEND

Residential Curtilage

Land Under Same Title Ownership

1

Access

2

Remenham Lane

3

Main House

4

Workshop

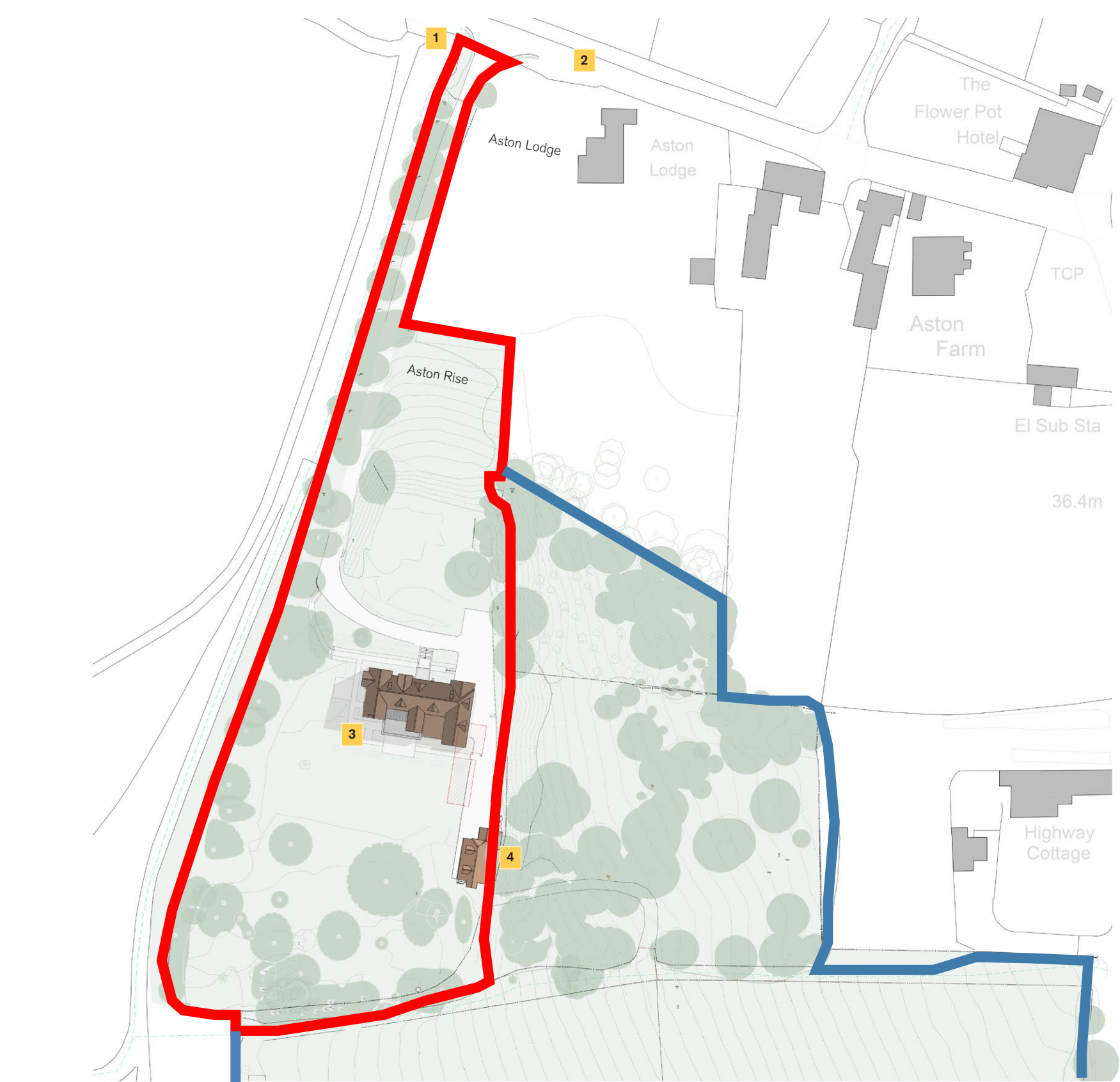


Figure 39. Proposed Site Plan

The proposals seek to alter and extend the Main House to provide living accommodation to meet the needs of a new owner with an improved internal layout. Consequently, the application proposes the demolition of the existing Cottage (and attached garage) to allow for the provision of all of the primary (living) accommodation within a single building. At present, the Main House contains five bedrooms and there is a sixth within The Cottage. As proposed, there will still be six bedrooms in total, of which four will be at first floor level with the additional two being on the second floor of the Main House.

Externally, all interventions to the Main House will be sensitively massed and detailed with references to the Arts and Crafts style evident in the existing house.

The current main entrance will be retained with a new porch designed to be more in keeping with the architectural style of the building. A secondary entrance has been proposed to the east for direct access from the parking area to the Utility Room.

Adaptations to the principal elevation include the following: replacement of the existing, non-original porch and uPVC windows, and alteration of the existing bay window.

A two-storey extension is proposed on the eastern side of the house, in place of the existing single storey lean-to, which will provide accommodation over three levels, albeit with a lowered ridge and eaves height to ensure that this gable-fronted extension will remain subservient to that on the western side of the house.

To the rear, the existing ground floor single storey extension will be replaced with an open plan living space, taking advantage of the southerly aspect and views across the garden. At first floor level, the extrusion of the existing gable and the adaptation of an existing modern sunroom will provide space for an en-suite bathroom and dressing room for the master bedroom.

As referenced above, the existing Cottage will be removed as part of the proposal and, in addition, the attached garage (secondary accommodation) will also be demolished. The existing workshop and store building (also secondary accommodation) will, however, be retained.

The material palette selected for this project is directly linked to the materiality of the existing dwelling with the absolute aim being to achieve design cohesiveness.

The massing and façade treatment of the house is of a 'Domestic Scale' with the intention to relate to the village vernacular, using the language of materials appropriate to this context.

The proposed extensions, including the entrance porch, will be constructed in matching materials: medium red brickwork in English bond and hand-made clay roof tiles.

Vernacular details such as 45 degree pitched gables and arched brick details above window and door openings are proposed.

Poor quality existing uPVC windows will be replaced with painted hardwood joinery which will undoubtedly enhance the appearance of the house. Details of all of the proposed external changes to the house are set out in section 10.1 below.



Figure 43. Example of Brick Cornice Proposed to Porch and Family Room Extension



Figure 42. Handmade Plain Clay Roof tiles



Figure 40. Painted Hardwood Joinery

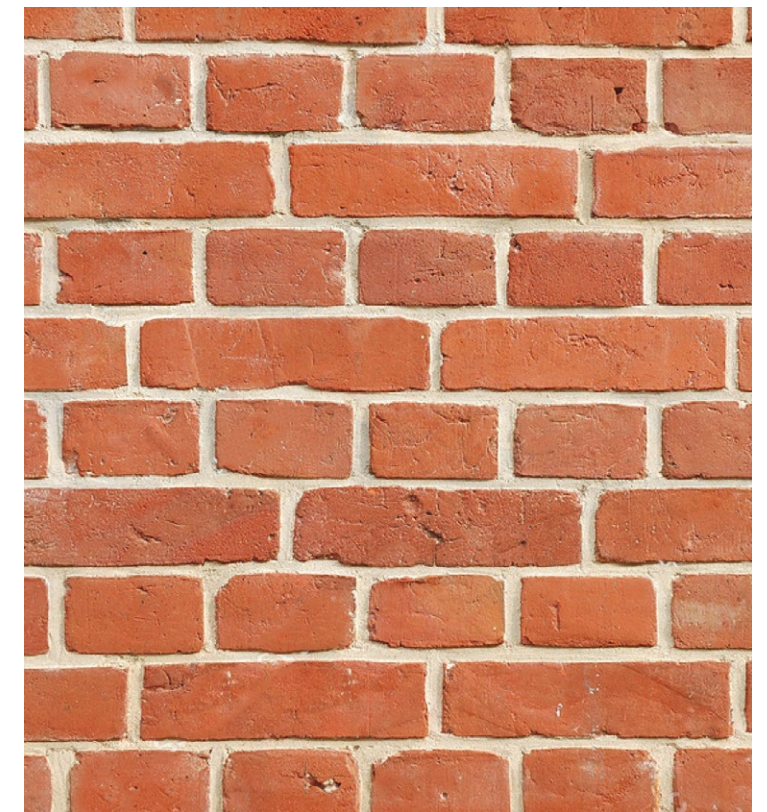


Figure 41. Red brickwork to walls. English bond

PROPOSED PLANS

As can be seen, the proposed extensions and internal alterations will allow for the provision, at ground floor level, of an open-plan kitchen, dining and family room, a study, utility room and boot room and will allow for the re-purposing of the existing lounge and dining room for use as a formal sitting room and playroom respectively. It is also proposed to provide an enhanced and more spacious entrance hall together with the provision of a new main staircase.

At first floor level, it is proposed to reconfigure and enlarge the existing master-bedroom suite and alter the two existing bedrooms and bathrooms to provide three bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms.

At second floor level, the two existing bedrooms and shared bathroom will be reconfigured such that the two new bedrooms would each also have their own en-suite bathroom

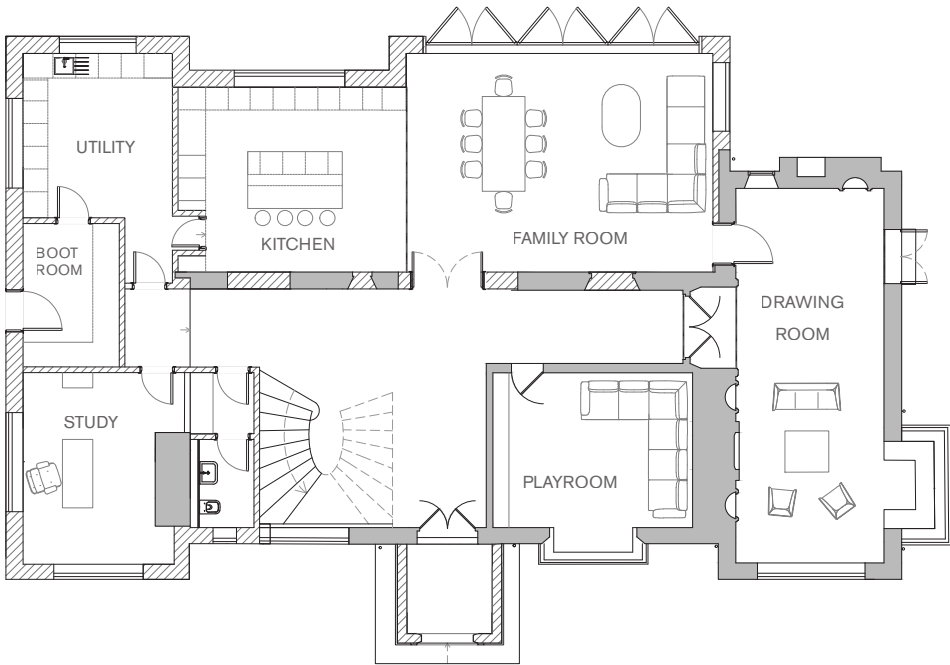


Figure 44. Proposed Ground Floor Plan

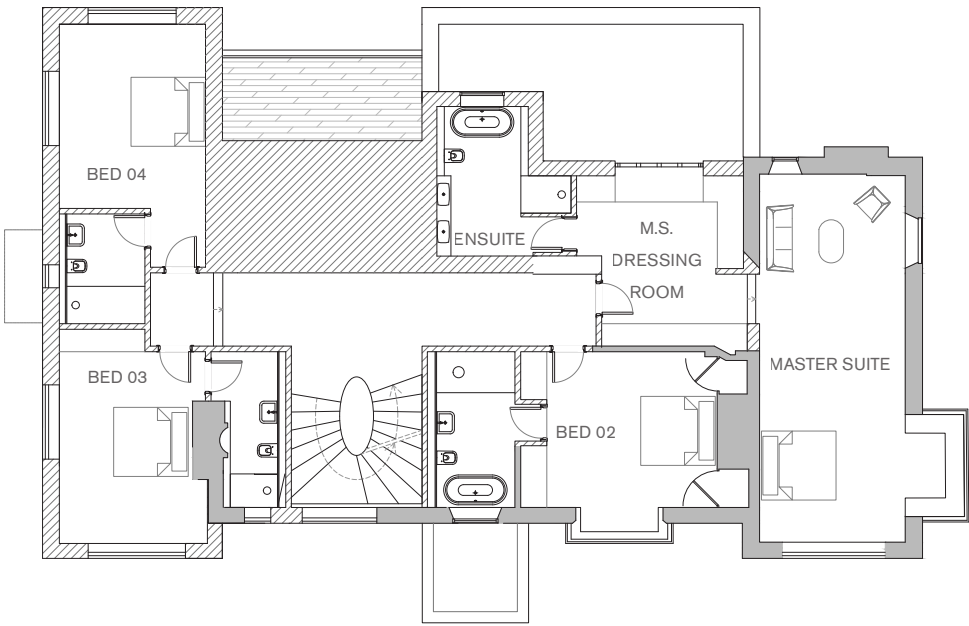


Figure 45. Proposed First Floor Plan

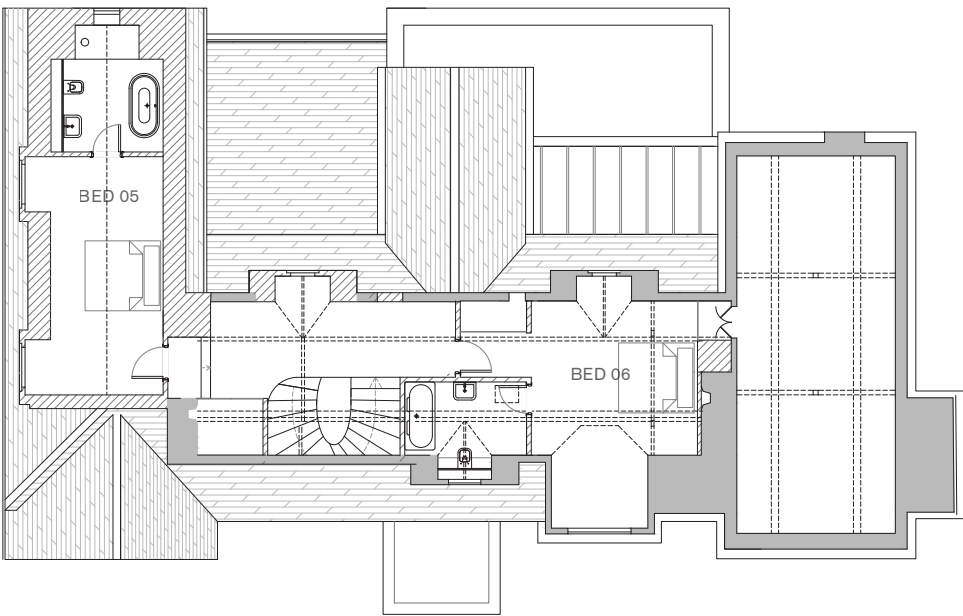


Figure 46. Proposed Second Floor Plan

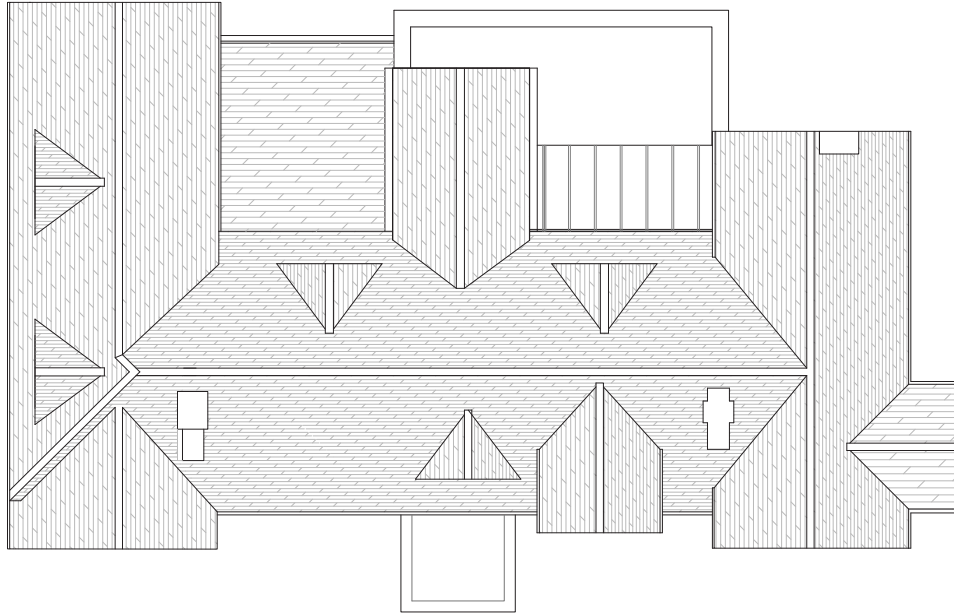


Figure 47. Proposed Roof Plan

NOT TO SCALE

- Generally, existing masonry and tiled roof to be cleaned and made good; existing windows to be replaced with painted hardwood joinery; additional dormer windows to match existing triangular rendered dormers

- 1
- Proposed Eastern extension to be subservient to the existing Western wing. Material treatment and detailing to complement the property's existing Arts and Crafts style. The proposed external door (with canopy) provides service entrance directly between car parking and internal utility spaces.
- 2
- Existing Western wing, largely exposed brickwork with some rendered accents.
- 3
- Existing Bay window to existing Western wing
- 4
- Proposed brick entrance porch to replace existing, non-original.
- 5
- Proposed GF extension to replace existing non-original conservatory. New brickwork to match (as closely as possible) existing brick and include details to match proposed porch. New windows and doors to be painted hardwood and match detailing of whole property.

- 6
- Existing gable to be extended. Detailing and materiality to match existing.
- 7
- Existing Sunroom modern glazing replaced with masonry walls with retained traditional lead seam and welt roof above.
- 8
- Existing Roof to be extended to create 'catslide' roof, over new Kitchen accommodation at Ground Floor level.
- 9
- Additional windows two small rectangular openings to provide natural light and ventilation to WC (GF) and Bathroom (1F)
- 10
- Fenestration extended to suit new stairwell.
- 11
- Bay window made rectangular at GF & 1F levels to suit existing rectangular footprint at 2F.
- 12
- Proposed dormer windows to match existing triangular rendered dormers.
- 13
- Existing window openings enlarged.
- 14
- Head of existing windows raised.



Figure 48. Proposed Front Elevation (North)



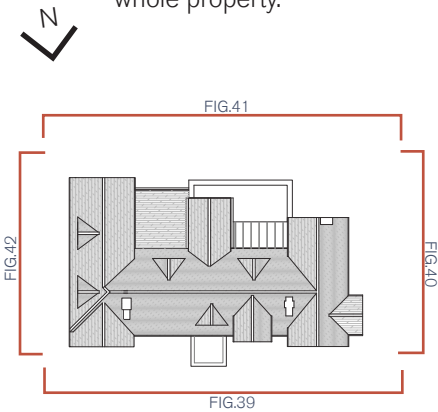
Figure 49. Proposed West Elevation



Figure 50. Proposed Rear Elevation (South)



Figure 51. Proposed East Elevation



0 1 2 3 4 5

All following volumes for the original dwelling calculations have been based on the site survey by Greenhatch Surveys Ltd carried out in June 2020.

Original Dwelling (as at July 1948)

- 1 Main House:** 1480m³
- 2 Cottage:** 213m³
- Total Volume:** 1693m³

Original Dwelling +35%:

Volume: 2285.5m³

(Maximum Permissible Enlargement as per MDDLp policy TB01)

Non-Original Outbuildings:

- 3 Garage:** 128m³
- 4 Workshop:** 224m³

KEY

- Original Dwelling as it existed in 1948
- Existing Extension (not inc. in Volume Calc.)
- Non-Original Outbuilding (not inc. in Volume Calc.)

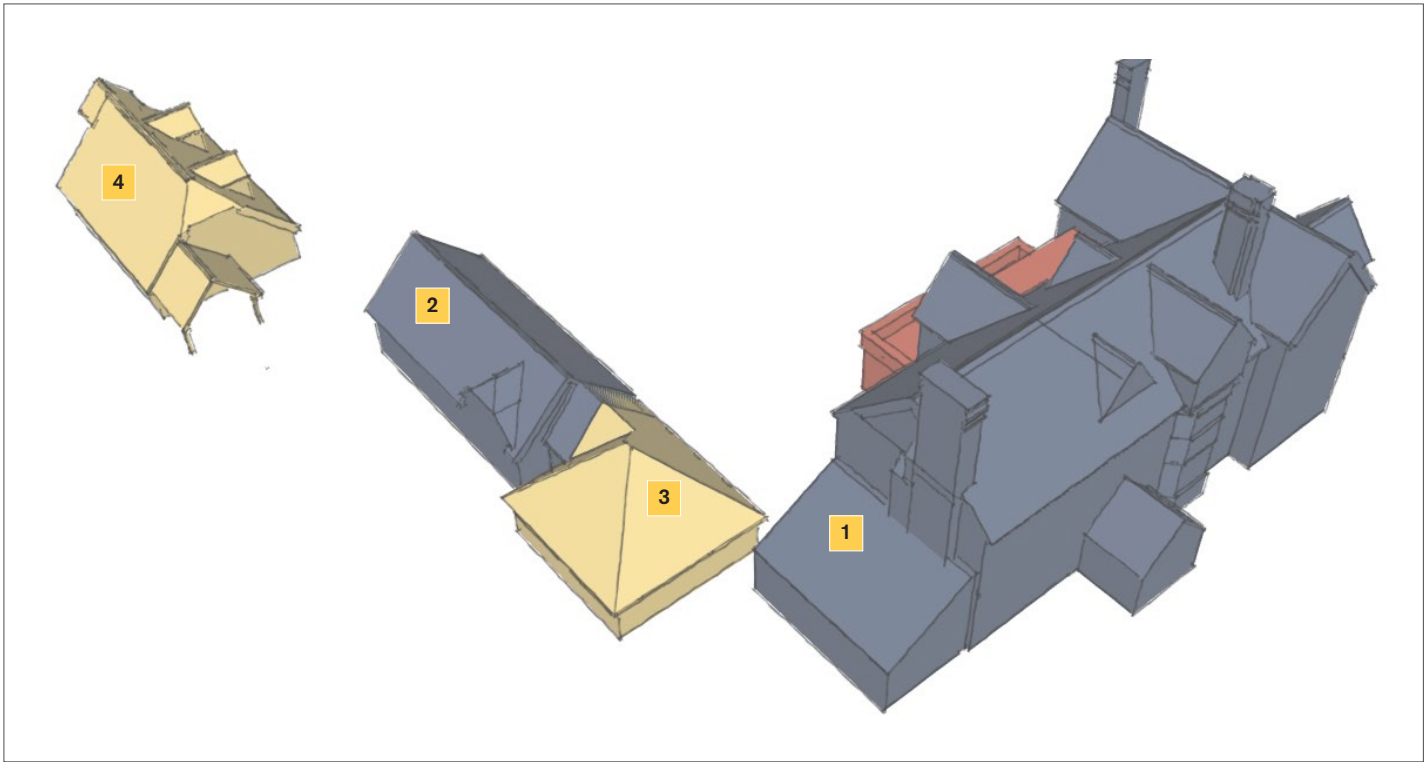


Figure 52. Existing Massing Model - Front View

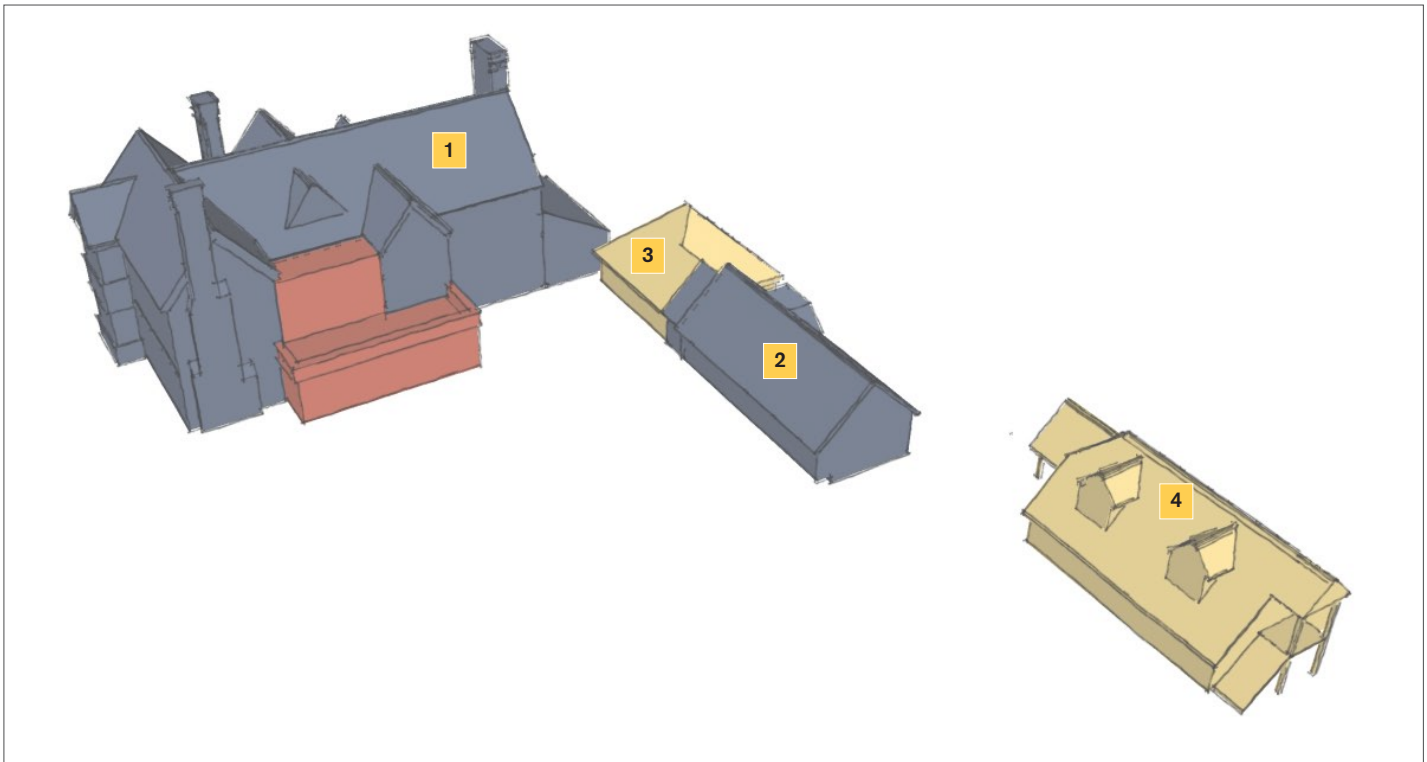


Figure 53. Existing Massing Model - Rear View

All following volumes for the original dwelling calculations have been based on the site survey by Greenhatch Surveys Ltd carried out in June 2020.

Original Dwelling (Main House and Cottage as at July 1948)

Total Volume: 1693m³

1

Proposed Dwelling:

Retained Existing Volume: 1361m³

Additional Volume: 877m³

Total Volume: 2238m³

(32% Enlargement on Original Dwelling)

4

Workshop (retained): 224m³

KEY

- Original Dwelling as it existed in 1948
- Proposed Extensions
- Non-Original Outbuilding Retained
- Demolished Original Cottage
- Demolished Non-Original Outbuilding
(not inc. in Volume Calc.)

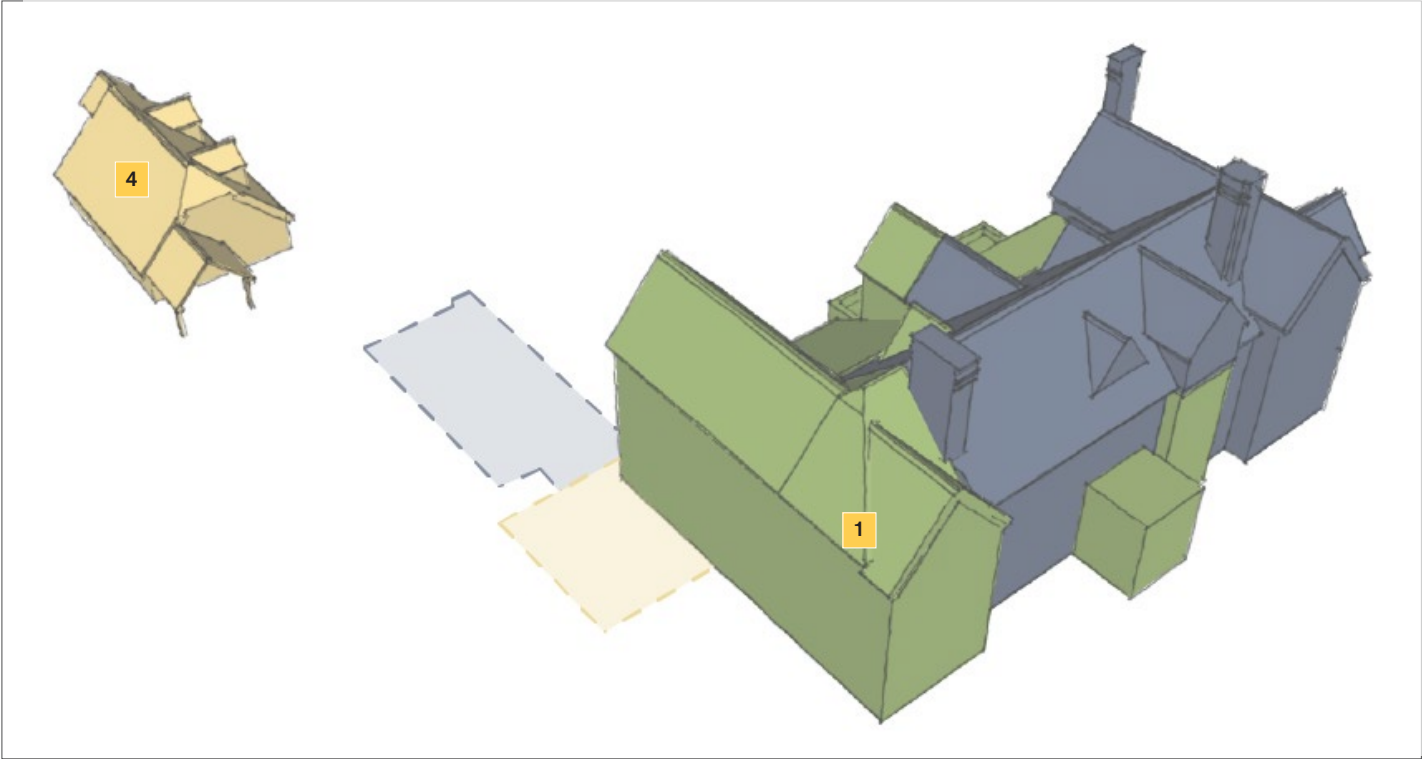


Figure 54. Proposed Massing Model - Front View

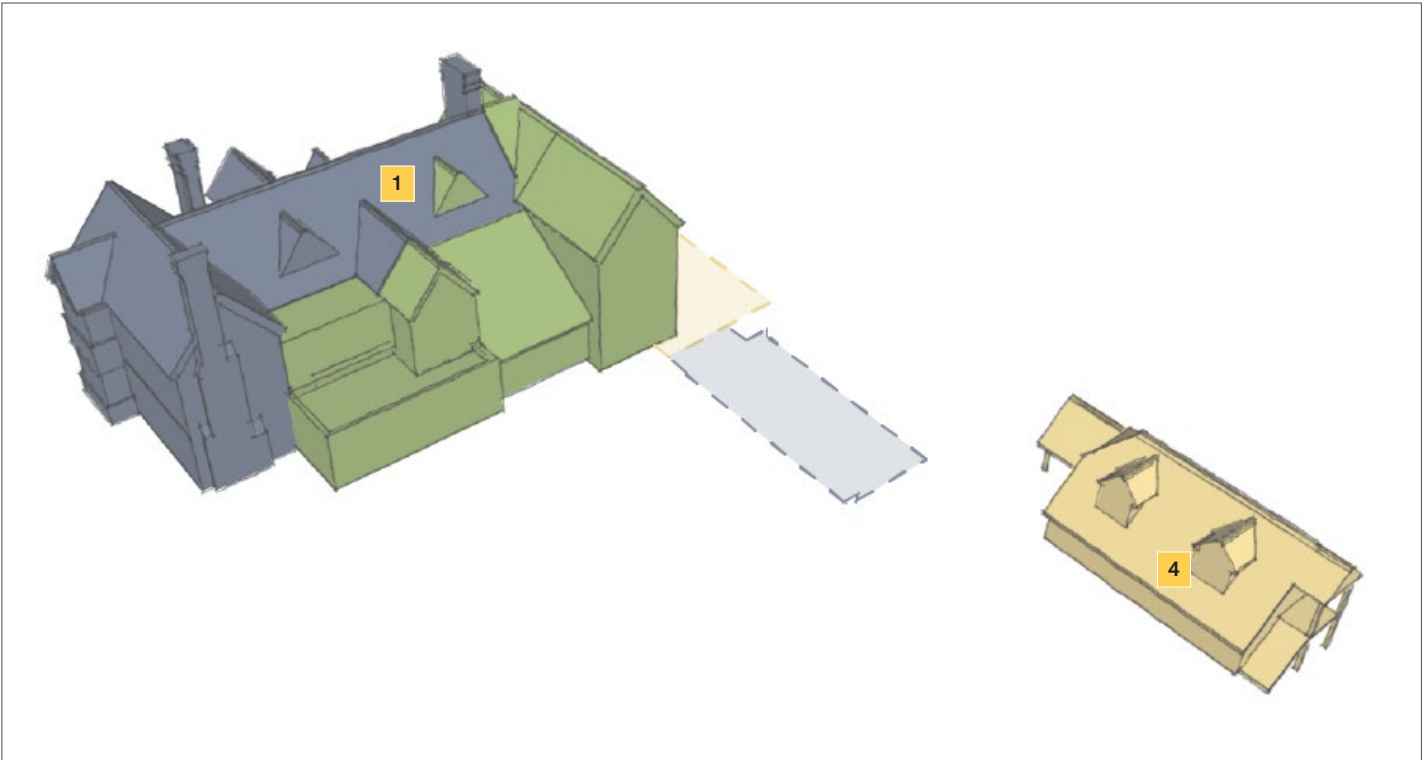


Figure 55. Proposed Massing Model - Rear View

	Original Dwelling	Proposed
	Volume (m3)	Volume (m3)
Main House	1480	2238
Cottage	213	-
TOTAL	1693	2238

Main House	GEA (m2)	GEA (m2)
Ground Floor	187	318
First Floor	161	257
Second Floor	67	95
SUBTOTAL	415	670

Cottage	59	0
TOTAL	474	670

Main House	GIA (m2)	GIA (m2)
Ground Floor	163	274
First Floor	139	220
Second Floor	59	95
SUBTOTAL	361	589

Cottage	55	0
TOTAL	416	589

The construction and standards of wall, floor and roof insulation of the existing dwelling require upgrading in order to improve its EPC rating. It has an oil-fired heating system and does not currently feature any low and zero (LZC) carbon technologies to provide any of the building's energy needs.

Carbon Reduction

The opportunity will be taken to improve the energy efficiency of the existing house, such as replacement windows and enhanced insulation of the thermal envelope, whilst the new extensions will be built with a 'fabric first' approach to ensure that the new-build performs as sustainably as possible, and energy demand will be further minimised through careful specification of M&E systems. Products with a high recycled content will be specified wherever possible.

A modernised heating system, including a more energy efficient boiler, combined with low energy lighting, water-controlled fittings, energy saving appliances, passive ventilation systems and renewable technologies will also help to drastically improve the thermal performance and carbon footprint of the proposed scheme.

Refuse & Recycling

As much material as possible will be recycled from any proposed demolition works. The re-use of non-deleterious material on site for hardcore and backfill will be considered where practical. Provision will be made to accommodate waste recycling storage and composting within the site.

Water Efficiency

The proposal will be designed to a water efficiency standard of 110 litres/head/day (l/h/d). Water-saving appliances and sanitaryware items with low flow-rates will be specified throughout the development to minimise water usage where possible. Further to this, there is the potential to investigate water-harvesting strategies where appropriate to minimise mains water usage.

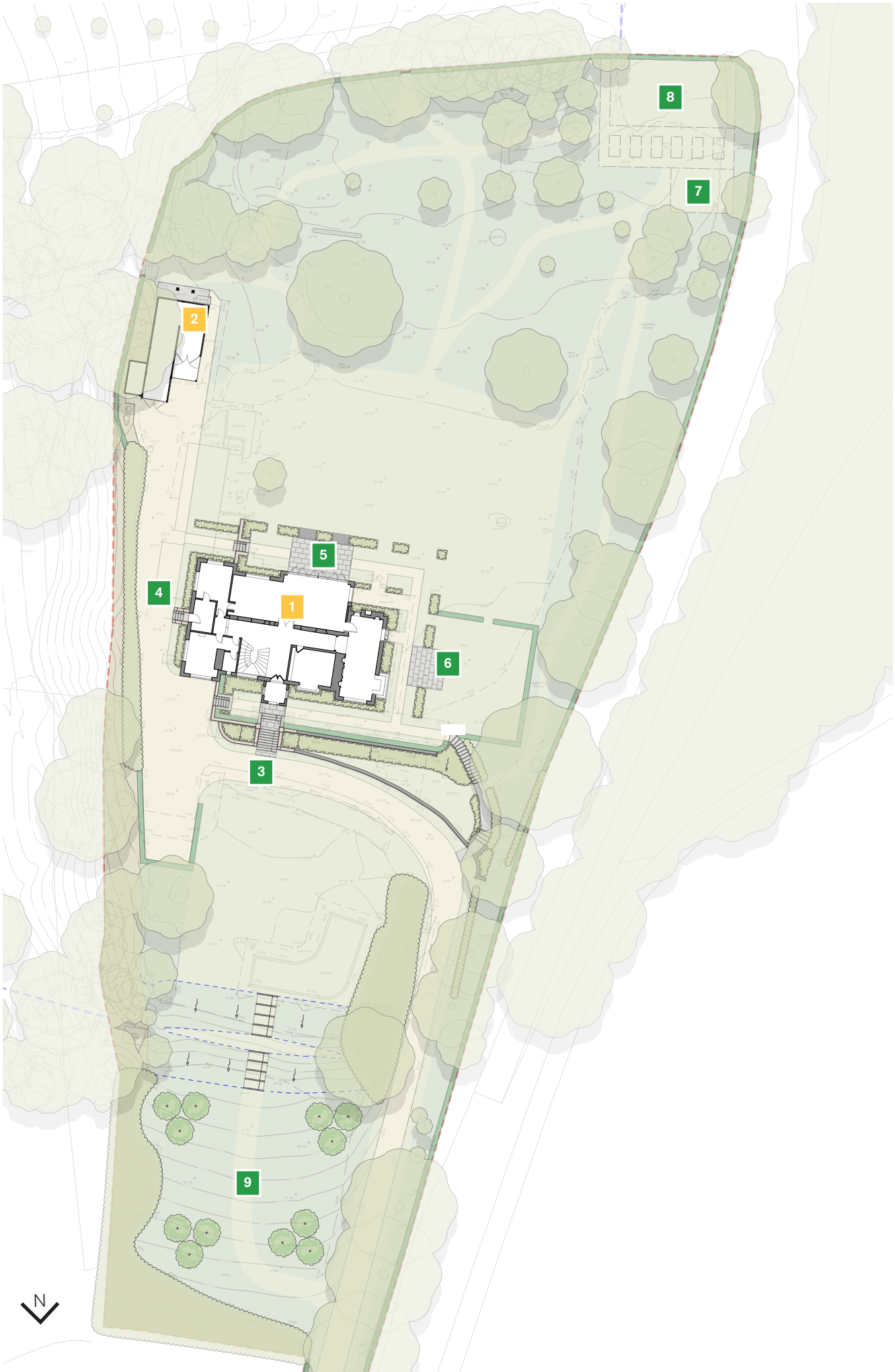
LANDSCAPE - CONTEXT

Aston Rise benefits from a substantial amount of existing mature trees which line the driveway as well as the perimeter of the site's residential curtilage.

As part of this submission, it is proposed to bolster and enhance the quality of the existing planting with the provision of new formal and informal planting and the reconfiguration of terraces. This proposal has been prepared by Nicholsons.

Alongside the introduction of Yew hedging and Apple & Pear trees, herbaceous and shrub planting will include:

- 1 Main House
- 2 Existing-Retained Workshop
- 3 Reconfigured steps up to house
- 4 Proposed side entrance. Herbaceous & Shrub Planting around the perimeter of the house.
- 5 Family Room Terrace with Herbaceous & Shrub Planting
- 6 Drawing Room Terrace with Herbaceous & Shrub Planting & Yew Hedging
- 7 Children's Play Aea
- 8 Chicken Run
- 9 Pear and Apple Trees



GREEN BELT CONSIDERATIONS

In Green Belt policy terms, the NPPF identifies that most new build development is likely to be considered 'inappropriate' and, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt (NPPF, para 152 refers). The NPPF also makes clear that where a proposed development does not fall within one of the categories of appropriate development that it should not normally be permitted except in 'very special circumstances' i.e. where the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations (NPPF, para 153).

The specified exceptions, as set out at para 154 of the NPPF, that would not fall to be considered as 'inappropriate' development, include:

'c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building'

The NPPF does not seek to define what level of increase might potentially be permissible in this context, but it is noted that MDDL policy TB01 identifies that residential extensions that increase the volume of an original dwellinghouse by no more than 35% will potentially be acceptable. For Green Belt planning purposes 'original' is taken to be the size of the building as it existed in July 1948 or as built if constructed after July 1948.

The relevant part of policy TB01 and its supporting text is set out below:

POLICY WORDING (POINT 3)

'The alteration and/or extension of a dwelling and the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling in the Green Belt over and above the size of the original building(s) shall be limited in scale'

SUPPORTING TEXT (PARAS 3.4 AND 3.5)

'3.4 With regard to the alteration and/or extension of a dwelling and the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling, proposals will be assessed against the original building(s), as defined in the NPPF. Due to the restrictive policies that apply to the Green Belt and the need to retain the openness of the countryside, only limited extensions to a dwelling will generally be permitted. 'Limited' means a cumulative increase of generally no more than a 35% increase in volume over and above the original dwelling.'

'3.5 For the purposes of clarity, any assessment of increase in volume of a dwelling will not include any other buildings on the site. With regard to the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling, changes should not result in disproportionate additions to the original building(s) or cause detrimental alteration to the scale of the dwelling or to the scale of development on the site'.

As already mentioned within this report, there are two buildings on the site that contain primary accommodation – the Main House and the Cottage – and, as such, it is reasonable to assess that these two buildings together – at the size they existed in 1948 – comprise the 'original' dwellinghouse in this particular instance.

The volumetric calculations included at section 11.0-11.1 demonstrate that the proposed development -involving the partial demolition of parts of the existing Main House (both pre and post 1948 parts) and the total demolition of The Cottage – will result in a total volumetric increase of around 32% over and above the size of the 'original' dwellinghouse.

The development would, therefore, comply with the requirements of policy TB01 and with NPPF guidance contained at paragraph 154.

In the pre-application response, a query was raised as to whether the volume of the detached workshop/store building (as approved by application 981311) within the rear garden should also be taken into account when assessing existing and proposed volumetric increases. However, as referenced above, the supporting text to policy TB01 (at para 3.5) states that any assessment of increase in volume of a dwelling 'will not include any other buildings on the site' and, as such, it is reasonable to exclude the volume of the workshop/store. In a similar vein, please note that the volume of the existing garage which is proposed to be demolished has also been excluded when assessing the total volumetric increase.

In the context that the proposal has been shown to comply with MDDL policy TB01, there is no requirement to demonstrate that 'very special circumstances' (VSC) exist to justify the proposed development (as per NPPF, para 153). However, even if it was considered that VSC needed to be demonstrated, it is considered that they would exist in this instance given that the proposal would:

- Significantly enhance the design quality and interest of the Main House and remove poorer quality elements;
- Significantly improve its sustainability credentials/energy efficiency;
- Result in a more consolidated built footprint; and
- Facilitate the undertaking of extensive new landscaping works which would tangibly improve the landscape quality and biodiversity interest of the site.

HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS

NPPF guidance of relevance in this regard is set out in section 16 of the NPPF and, in turn, the Development Plan policy of greatest relevance is MDDL policy TB24. The application proposal is assessed fully within this policy context in the submitted Heritage Statement but, in brief, it is assessed that the development would sympathetically enhance the architectural and historic interest of the Main House and the site more generally.

OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

In this instance, other planning issues of greatest relevance relate principally to the design quality and the sustainability of the proposed development and to its landscape and ecological impacts.

With reference to design issues, the NPPF identifies at section 12 that that the Government assesses that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is

fundamental to what the planning and development process should be seeking to achieve. Consequently, at paragraph 135 it is stated that planning policies and decisions should ensure, inter alia, that developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; and
- Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

In accordance with the NPPF design guidance, it is noted that WBCS policy CP3 identifies the ‘general principles for development’ in the Borough and, inter alia, requires that all new build proposals:

- Are of an appropriate scale, mass, layout, built form, height and materials having regard to the character to the area;
- Are of a high quality of design and do not result in harm to the amenities of adjoining occupiers; and
- Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping.

Design issues also need to be considered in the context of the adopted Borough Design Guide (BDG). With reference to residential extensions and alterations, the BDG identifies (at section 4.1) that such proposals should:

- Be well-designed;
- Respond positively to the original building;
- Contribute positively to local character; and
- Relate well to neighbouring properties.

As far as responding positively to the original building is concerned, the BDG also offers the following advice:

- Proposed extensions should be clearly subservient to the form and scale of the original building in most situations, although there may be exceptions where it is more appropriate to design a seamless continuation;
- The design of a proposed extension should complement the existing building, either by adopting its style, or by a carefully considered contrast; and
- The materials used for alterations or an extension should match or improve upon the quality of those of the existing building.

Within this policy context, it has been demonstrated within this statement that the proposed extensions and alterations to the Main House would be subservient in scale and fully respectful

of the design, form and materials of the building and, overall, would respond positively to its character and appearance.

As noted above, on the basis that the site lies within the National Trust Greenlands Covenant area, the National Trust has been consulted throughout the design process and it is relevant to note that the final iteration – as per this application submission – has a design, scale and detailing that has been approved by the National Trust’s Regional Covenants Board. As Officers will be aware, securing approval from the National Trust is an exacting process and it is reasonably assessed that this confers a high degree of design quality to the proposal.

On the question of neighbourliness, the plans and photographs attached within this document demonstrate that the boundaries of the site are marked by mature planting and that there are extensive separation distances with the existing dwellings nearby. On this basis, it is not considered that the proposed extensions on the eastern or southern elevations would actually be visible to the occupiers of any other property and, that being the case, it follows that the proposed works could not result in tangible harm in terms of increased overlooking or overshadowing to the occupiers of the nearest properties to the north and east of Aston Rise.

Turning attention to issues relating to sustainability and energy efficiency, the NPPF states, at paragraph 7, that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in economic, social and environmental terms and, in turn, that a presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the NPPF.

This is further emphasised in section 14 of the NPPF, where it is stated that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future and, more specifically, the NPPF states at paragraph 164 that when determining applications, local planning authorities ‘should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic’.

MDDL policy CC01, in accordance with the NPPF, identifies that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that applications that accord with other Development Plan policies should be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. MDDL policy CC04, in turn, states that planning permission will only be granted for proposals that seek to deliver high quality sustainably designed and constructed developments which are both energy and water efficient.

In this context – and as set out in section 13 of this statement – a range of ‘fabric first’ measures are proposed that will result in tangible improvements to the Main House as far as levels of insulation are concerned and, in addition, that a more energy efficient heating system will be utilised that, collectively, will significantly reduce the energy demands of the building following the completion of the proposed works. Additionally, it is proposed that the water efficiency of the building will be improved with a range of water-saving appliances and sanitaryware being utilised and the potential for rainwater-harvesting will also be fully investigated.

Finally, on the subject of landscape and ecology matters, section 15 of the NPPF, at paras 180-182, identifies that the planning system has an important role to play in the protection or enhancement of the natural environment, particularly when assessing development proposals in highly valued and protected landscapes. In turn, at paragraph 185 it is stated that opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged.

As far as Development Plan policies are concerned, Core Strategy policies CP3 (criteria c and d) and CP7, together with MDDL policies CC03, TB21 and TB23 are the most relevant policies against which to assess the potential impact of the development upon biodiversity and the natural environment.

Collectively, these policies seek to ensure that new development does not harm the landscape setting of a given site or result in the loss of important trees, hedgerows and other landscape features and, additionally, seek to ensure that all new landscaping is of high quality. In biodiversity terms, the policies require that all new development has regard to the importance of biodiversity and thereby provide opportunities, through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing features.

The proposed landscaping of the site – which has also been formulated in discussions with the National Trust – would provide for the protection of existing boundary and other important planting but, in addition, would involve the planting of native fruit trees in the lower terrace (to the north of the house) and would also involve the planting of new hedgerows and species rich herbaceous and shrub planting around the Main House.

With reference to the ecological impact of the development, preliminary bat roost appraisals and follow-up emergence and re-entry survey reports have been undertaken for the Main House and Cottage/Garage. The reports identify that whilst the existing Cottage/Garage has limited bat interest and significance, the Main House has greater significance and, inter alia, features a loft void area that provides a small maternity roost for soprano pipistrelle bats. Both reports make recommendations (at s.5.1) regarding potential mitigation or enhancement measures and the applicants are happy for these recommendations to be incorporated into the final scheme design.

As far as Biodiversity Net Gain is concerned, as this is a Householder application the proposal is exempt from the 10% net gain requirements that apply to Major and Minor development proposals (as per the Environment Act 2021). Nevertheless, it is evident that the areas where the extension works are proposed are generally already developed/hard-surfaced parts of the site and, therefore, that the development of these areas will not result in the loss of biodiversity. The proposed new landscaping measures will, however, provide notable enhancements in both habitat and hedgerow units and thereby ensure, overall, that there is a quantifiable enhancement in landscaping and ecological terms deriving from this scheme.

CONCLUSIONS

Aston Rise lies in a fantastic location which offers panoramic views towards the river and benefits from an extensive and attractively landscaped curtilage. The Main House at the centre of this site was constructed in the Arts and Crafts style but, as evident from a review of current and historic photos, various renovations and extensions in the past 80 years or so have, unfortunately, detrimentally altered its original form, appearance and detailing.

This application seeks to extend and renovate the main house in order to improve the internal layout for the new owners of the property but will do so in a manner that is respectful of the openness of the Green Belt in terms of the amount, scale and siting of new build elements. The proposal will enhance the character and appearance of the Main House and facilitate improvements to its energy and water efficiency and, through careful and considerate new planting, will also enhance the quality of landscaping and biodiversity interest within the property's curtilage.

It is hoped, therefore, that Officers will be supportive of the application and will be happy to recommend that planning permission is duly granted subject to the imposition of any conditions that are considered reasonable and necessary in this instance.

