



HERITAGE STATEMENT



Buxhall Vale, Buxhall, Suffolk, IP14 3DH

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ben Elvin Planning Consultancy were commissioned by Last and Tricker Partnership on behalf of Mr and Mrs R Stewart to provide a Heritage Assessment to accompany a planning application for a new conservation pond in the grounds of Buxhall Vale, Buxhall, Suffolk.

1.2 This statement should be read in conjunction with the following drawings;

- 5614-4B Proposed Site Layout Plan
- 5614-5 Proposed Section A-A
- 5614-6 Proposed Section B-B
- 5614-7 Proposed Section C-C

1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes a proportionate approach to the description of the impact of proposals on the significance of any designated or un-designated heritage asset. It identifies that *“the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”*.

1.4 The heritage statement will, therefore, provide a proportionate assessment of both the building’s significance and the impacts of the proposed development on the heritage asset.

2. RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings (Sections 16 and 66).

2.2 Section 16 of the NPPF sets out the Government's position on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Paragraph 194 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the impact of proposals on the significance of any heritage asset to a level of detail proportionate to the assets' importance. As set out above, this should be no more than is sufficient to understand the potential of that impact on the significance. Paragraph 195 requires local planning authorities to 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.

2.3 Paragraph 197 sets out that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

2.4 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF apportions great weight to a designated asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. The NPPF highlights that significance can be harmed or lost through physical change and any harm requires clear and convincing justification.

- 2.5 Paragraphs 200 and 201 address how local planning authorities should deal with situations where the assessment of impacts has identified harm to a heritage asset.
- 2.6 At the local level, saved policy HB01 deals with listed buildings and their settings and provides a number of criteria against which to assess proposals that affect listed buildings.
- 2.7 These legislative and policy provisions thereby identify a need to assess the significance of the heritage asset in a proportionate manner, identify the impact of the proposed development on that significance, balance any harm arising against the public benefits and ensure that the special character of the building is preserved and, where possible, enhanced.

3. THE SITE AND HERITAGE ASSETS

3.1 Buxhall Vale is a Grade II listed building, added to the statutory list in December 1955.

3.2 The listing describes the building as;

“House, early C19 with earlier core, possibly C17. Timber-framed and plastered. Hipped slated roof, low-pitched with paired modillions beneath the eaves. Rear chimneys of red brick, two with panelled shafts in the C17 manner. 3 storeys (the upper storey added C19). 7 windows. Early C19 small-pane sashes. Greek Doric portico porch with fluted columns and entablature with triglyphs. A pair of 3-panelled doors with panelled reveals”.

3.3 Buxhall Vale is believed to date from the 15th century as a Georgian Manor House to the main estate in Buxhall. The Georgian manor house and cottage were set in several 100 acres of paddocks, gardens and woodland including several other cottages. The frame of the Medieval hall house on which it is based remains largely intact and is partially exposed.

3.4 The house has evolved and there is evidence of building work in the 16th and 17th centuries. Significant changes were made during the 19th century, when the top floor was added giving the house the Georgian proportions.

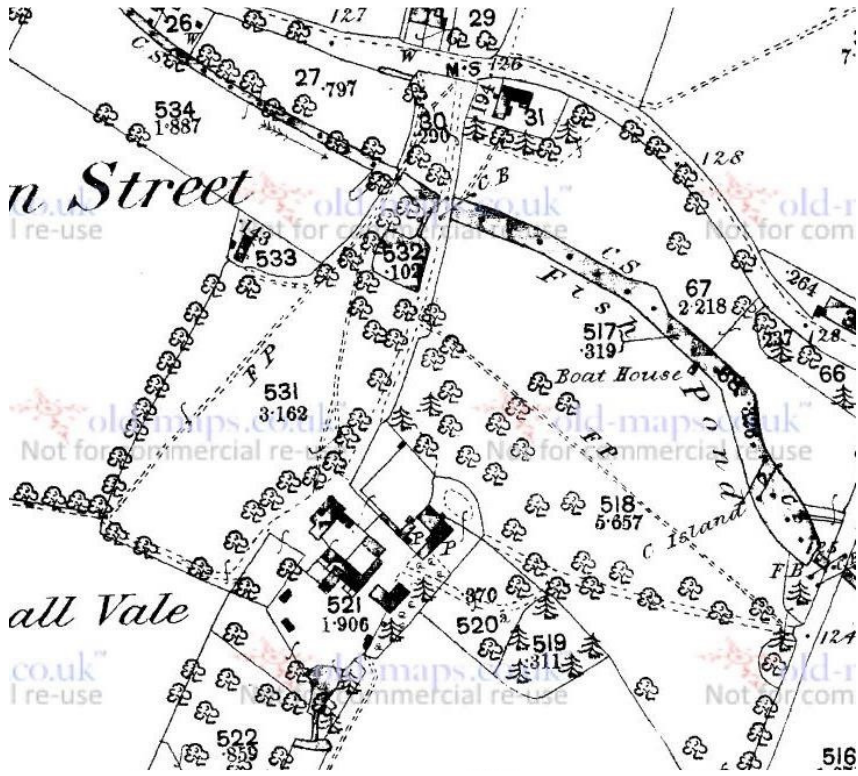
3.5 The grounds are an appealing feature of Buxhall Vale, comprising attractive parkland grazing and woodland, paddocks and a former orchard.

3.6 At the turn of the 20th century, Buxhall Vale, in Buxhall, near Stowmarket, was owned by Eugene Wells, who was a Justice of the Peace and Master of the Suffolk Hunt, shown in this photograph. It therefore has a well-established relationship with the countryside.

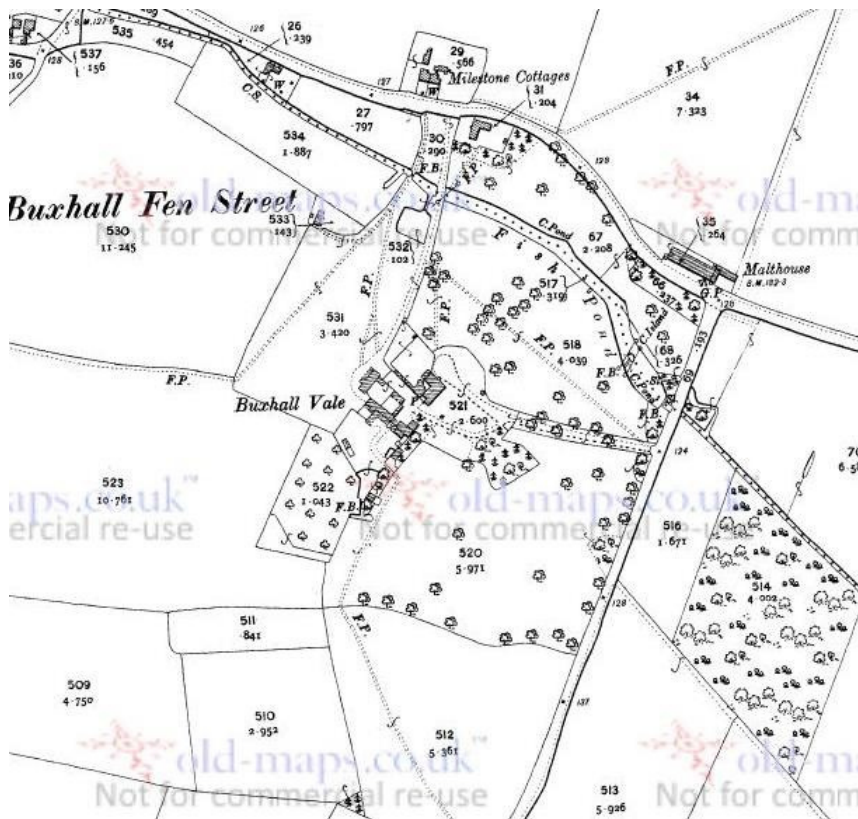


3.7 The property lies in a remote location to the north of the village of Buxhall and to the south of Lower Road. The River Rat runs to the north of the property.

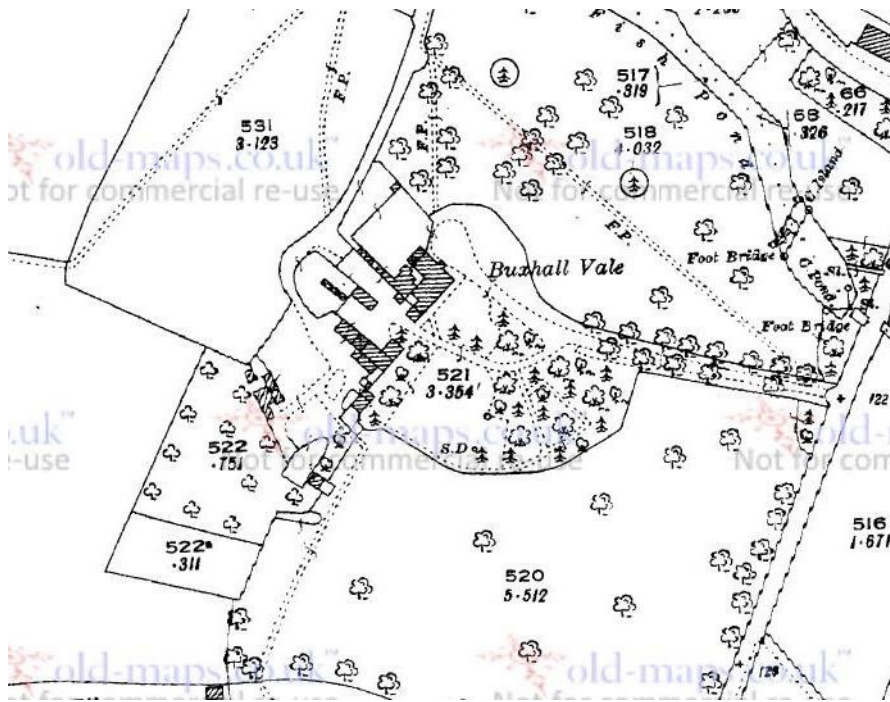
3.8 The image below, dating from 1885, shows the building at that time in the context of adjacent premises. The river can clearly be identified and many of the land boundaries remain visible today.



3.9 This can be seen more clearly in the image below, which dates from 1904



3.10 The 1926 extract below. Shows some change in the site, particularly to the eastern side.



3.11 However, by 1968, there can be seen further changes in the form and siting of buildings on the land. Compared with a recent aerial image, it can be seen that there have been further significant changes on the site over the last 50 years.



3.12 This basic map regression is sufficient to demonstrate that Buxhall Vale has evolved in terms of its plan form, with a more consolidated amount of development on the site now than historically existed.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal seeks planning permission for the construction of a conservation pond to the northeast of the property.
- 4.2 Appended to this Heritage Statement as Appendix 1 is an assessment of the proposal prepared by Miles Water Engineering which provides a detailed appraisal of the proposal and its context.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 As per the requirements of paragraph 194 of the NPPF, the assessment of Buxhall Vale has recognised its status as a Grade II listed building and thereby a heritage asset for the purposes of the definition provided by the NPPF. However, the significance of the curtilage listed coach house, stated on site to be an early C20 replacement to a previous outbuilding, and the setting of Lodge Cottage, a Grade II Listed likely early C16 timber-framed one-and-a-half storey dwelling to the north, were also identified as important when pre-application advice has been sought by the applicant in respect of the proposal and other works that have been proposed on the site. The site is, therefore, historically sensitive and one where the impacts of change must be carefully managed.
- 5.2 The proposed works comprise the formation of a new conservation pond within the immediate setting of Buxhall Vale. The impacts here are, therefore, two-fold, being both the land use relative to the use of the heritage asset and the physical impacts of this proposal on the setting and significance of the asset.
- 5.3 In recognition that the proposal would change the character of this land, the applicants sought pre-application advice from the Council. This took the form of both Planning Officer advice and consultation with the Council's Heritage Team. This statement will focus on the comments from the Heritage Officer primarily.
- 5.4 The Heritage officer's response identified that the potential to site a pond in the location now proposed was not, as a matter of principle, unacceptable. However, some concerns were

expressed as to specific aspects of the proposal that would need further consideration/clarification as part of the continued development of this scheme. We understand the minor query raised given that advice was sought in principle with approximate details provided as to the size and form of the pond proposed.

- 5.5 The Heritage officer's comments can be considered in turn under the following quotations from the pre-application response.

"Firstly, the land level appears to rise from the river to the front of the house"

- 5.6 The land has been the subject of a detailed survey so as to inform the layout and profile of the pond and each of the submitted drawings clearly show the levels across the site and the wider land.

- 5.7 There is a rise in the land in the manner suggested by the Heritage Officer. Taking a section through the centre of the pond (see plan 5614-6), there is a rise of 680mm from north to south through the section of excavation to form the respective pond banks.

- 5.8 However, the water level in the pond would be contained at a height over 2.5m below the land level immediately adjacent to Buxhall Vale, with the conservation pond thereby sitting some distance below the house. The impacts of the excavation have been carefully considered, and are best considered under the subsequent commentary.

"Consequently, the creation of a pond may also require the creation of embankments on either side. This could give the whole pond feature an overly artificial appearance that would be at odds with the natural parkland setting of the house, which is an important aspect of its significance"

- 5.9 As can be seen, the proposal does not seek any artificial building up of land levels or the formation of banks to the pond. The proposal seeks instead to simply use the natural land levels to contain the pond with the variance across the span of the pond not being such that would mean there would be a significant difference in level (approximately two feet) from one side to the other. Given the span of the pond, this is not a notable difference, as evidenced by the section drawings provided.

5.10 The conservation pond would, thereby, appear as a natural feature in the land rather than exhibiting an artificial appearance, with the absence of banks or land-filling a positive aspect of the proposal.

“The proposed size of the pond may exacerbate this”

5.11 On the basis that the proposal does not give rise to artificial embankments, the size of the pond would not exacerbate any changes in landform.

5.12 The size of the pond is addressed separately below.

“I would require existing and proposed section drawings showing the existing land profiles and the proposed, to confirm how the overall landscape topography would be affected”

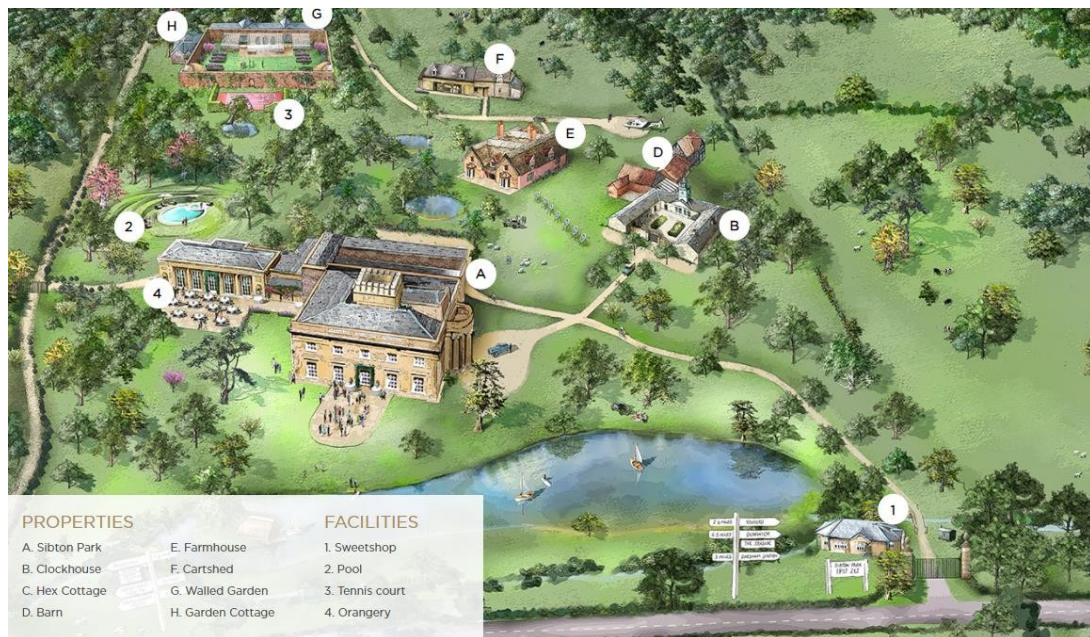
5.13 The application is supported by a suite of sectional drawings taken from three points through the proposed conservation pond.

5.14 The image below also shows how the pond would be seen in the context of the house.



5.15 As can be seen, and as supported by the commentary from Miles Water Engineering at Appendix 2, the pond’s central position in the landscape helps to frame the building, with the house and pond working together to create a more distinctive feature and add value to one another. The pond is seen to compliment the house and it is not unusual to see houses of this stature supported by ponds of this form. Indeed, an example of this can be seen at the Sibton

Park estate in Suffolk (now known as Wilderness Reserve, see image below) where the Grade II* Hall is supported by a gatehouse and pond precisely as is proposed for Buxhall Vale.



5.16 The Council have also recently approved a new conservation lake at The Old Rectory, Drinkstone (Council Ref: DC/20/03495). That lake also lies in the setting of a listed building, with the Planning Officer stating that;

The proposed conservation lake would be unobtrusive in this part of the countryside and would in turn have biodiversity and habitat benefits for the area.

No visual harm to the setting of the heritage asset, neighbouring properties or wider locality of the site has been identified.

5.17 The applicants consider that this is a recent example of a very similar proposal of a lake of an equivalent distance from the listed building that raises the same issues as those that are to be considered here. The benefits of the scheme and the absence of heritage harm in that case are noted and a similar conclusion is considered reasonable here.

“Independently, I also have concerns that the size of the pond may be such that would be too prominent and would actually distract from an appreciation of the house”

- 5.18 The applicants have responded to these comments, reducing the conservation pond to the extent of a substantial 10% reduction from that proposed at the pre-application stage.
- 5.19 The image at paragraph 5.14 above, supported by the submitted plans, demonstrate that the pond would compliment the asset and would not detract from the setting of the house.
- 5.20 The Historic England Document entitled “Conservation Principles – Policies and Guidance” states, at paragraph 84, that;

“Conservation involves people managing change to a significant place in its setting, in ways that sustain, reveal or reinforce its cultural and natural heritage values (Principle 4.2). Conservation is not limited to physical intervention, for it includes such activities as the interpretation and sustainable use of places. It may simply involve maintaining the status quo, intervening only as necessary to counter the effects of growth and decay, but equally may be achieved through major interventions; it can be active as well as reactive. Change to a significant place is inevitable, if only as a result of the passage of time, but can be neutral or beneficial in its effect on heritage values. It is only harmful if (and to the extent that) significance is eroded”.

- 5.21 Conservation is the process of managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance, and it is well versed that significance may be derived not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence but also from its setting. However, it is also recognised (para.78 of Conservation Principles) that;

“Understanding the importance of a place by comparing it with other places that demonstrate similar values normally involves considering:

- how strongly are the identified heritage values demonstrated or represented by the place, compared with those other places?*
- how do its values relate to statutory designation criteria, and any existing statutory designations of the place?”.*

5.22 The proposal here seeks to provide a conservation pond within the grounds of a significant Manor House. There are many such comparable examples in the Suffolk countryside, including (but not limited to);

- Sibton Hall/Wilderness Reserve;
- Heveningham Hall;
- Haughley Park (see image below);
- Chantry Mansion, Ipswich;
- Melford Hall;
- Helmingham Hall;
- The Old Rectory, Drinkstone.



View Towards Eastern Elevation of Haughley Park

5.23 Each of these properties demonstrate ponds in a parkland setting, such that this is not an unusual or alien feature and is entirely reflective of such a setting. Comparisons can, therefore, be drawn with the proposal hereby submitted.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Paragraph 194 of the NPPF requires a description of the potential impact of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets to a level of detail proportionate to the importance of those assets and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential of that impact.
- 6.2 The site is of particular heritage significance. Buxhall Vale is a Grade II listed building consisting of a timber-framed three storey manor house with a likely C16-C17 core, with an adjoining walled garden and curtilage listed early C20 coach house.
- 6.3 The applicants have engaged in pre-application discussions with the Council's Heritage Team. The proposal has been amended and finalised in a manner consistent with the advice given, ensuring that the conservation pond can be accommodated without artificial banking and at a scale that has been reduced from that submitted for consideration at the pre-application stage.
- 6.4 Whilst recognising that there would be a physical change in the setting of Buxhall Vale, not all change is harmful. Indeed, the Historic England 'Conservation Principles' documents tells us that change is inevitable, and that it is the management of change that will determine the acceptability of those changes.
- 6.5 The proposed works have been found to result in no harm to the character and significance of the heritage asset. The creation of a pond in this setting would see a change in the character of this land, but has been designed to be an appropriate landscape response that takes advantage of the land levels to this aspect of the property and provides a conservation pond that will bring significant ecological benefits to the site.
- 6.5 This statement has demonstrated the significance of the asset and how the development would impact upon both the character and setting of the building and the wider appreciation of the heritage assets. In light of the conclusions reached above, the proposal does not give rise to harm and it is not necessary to weigh the public benefits against harm as the requirements of paragraphs 202 and 203 of the NPPF are not engaged.

6.6 For these reasons, the proposal is in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF and with the elements of policy HB01.

Miles Water Engineering - Buxhall Vale 20180 – Pre App Response Document

These comments are in response to the Pre Application Comments from Thomas Pinner Ref: DC/20/04483

Landscape Visual Assessment

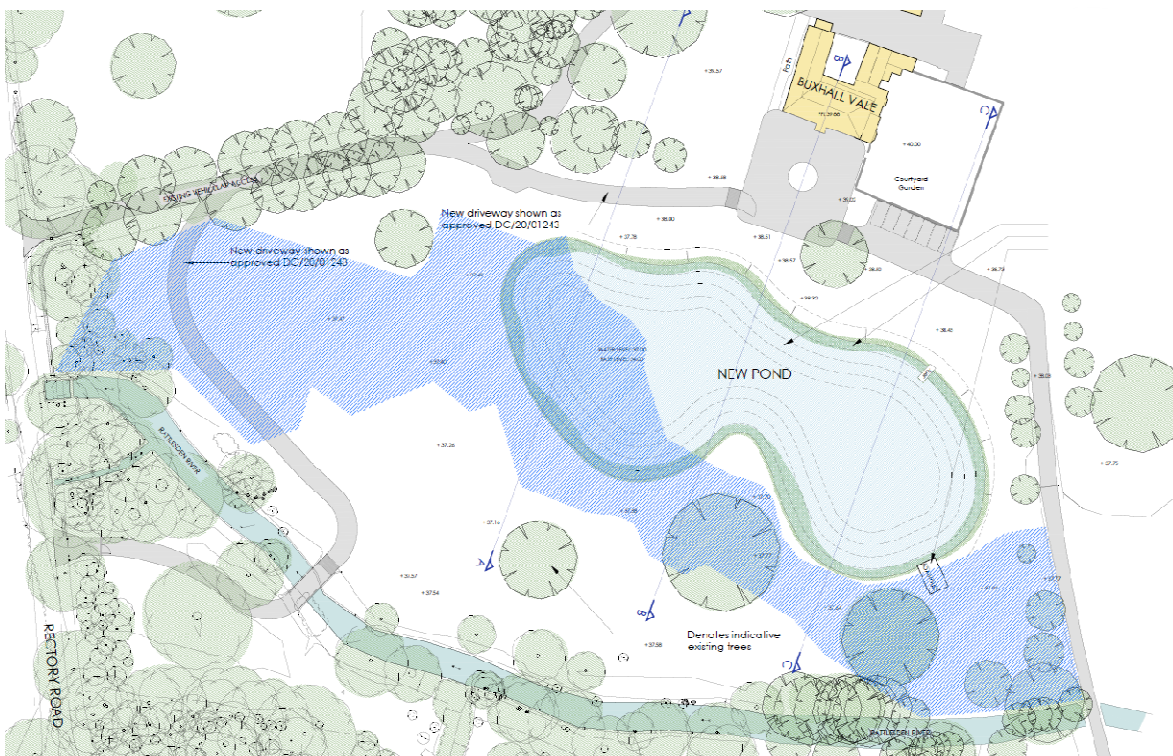
It can be seen from the Site Plan 5614-4B that the proposed conservation pond sits comfortably within its landscape context. The gently undulating edge of the pond weaves naturally around the existing mature trees on site, merging the land and water into one. A pond at a different scale and location would not interact with its surroundings in this way.

The pond's central position in the landscape and located to the front of the main façade of Buxhall Vale helps to frame the building and show it up to its potential. The house and pond work together to create a more distinctive feature and add value to one another, just as any good landscape design should do.

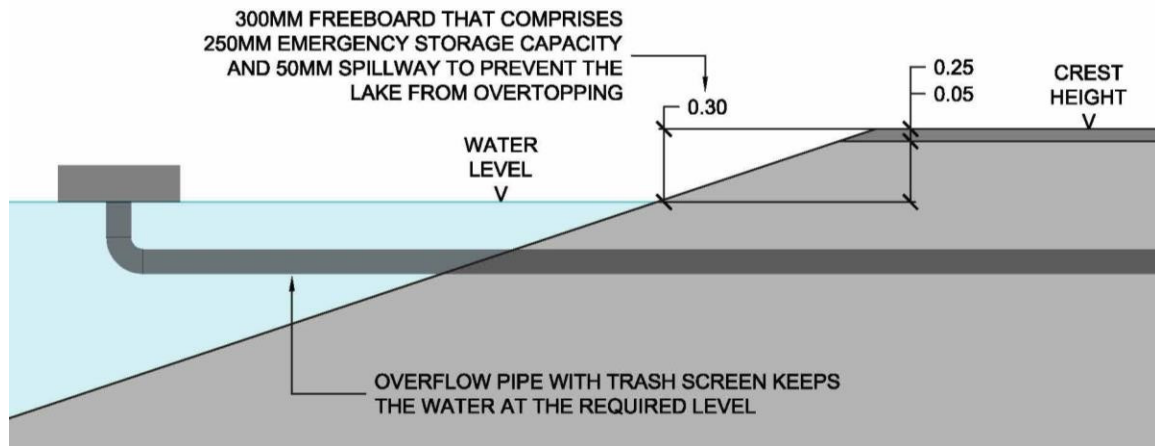
The sections 5614-5,6 and 7 demonstrate that the pond is dug down into the existing ground plane and as a result the existing landscape and pond merge seamlessly into one another. This means that there are no artificial embankments or slopes which might detract from the visual appeal of the scheme.

Flood Risk Assessment

The flood zone from the river Rattlesdon is overlaid onto the pond layout as taken from pre Application Document P7. It can be seen that the proposed pond partially interacts with the flood zone. However because the pond is fully sunken into the existing ground plane the design does not reduce the river's ability to discharge water and will not detract from the capacity of the landscape to accommodate flood water – as shown by the sections A to D.



Additionally the pond acts as a SUDS (Sustainable Drainage System) within the wider landscape, storing water during periods of high rainfall and releasing it over time. This is achieved through the water storage available within the freeboard.



The water level is maintained at the specified level by an overflow which discharges at a specified rate. The 300mm free board can accommodate 250mm of emergency storage capacity from an extreme weather event before it overtops at a spillway set 50mm below the crest height. In this situation this emergency storage capacity of the pond is 930m³ of storm water. In this regard it is an asset to the management of flood water along the River Rattlesdon and will help to mitigate against the effects of future flooding.