

# **Planning and Heritage Statement in Support of the Conversion, Extension and Connection of Two Existing Outbuildings to Form a House and Studio**

## **Grounds of The Old Rectory, Somerton**

**September 2021**



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# Planning Statement in Support of the Conversion, Extension and Connection of Two Existing Outbuildings to Form a House and Studio

Grounds of the old Rectory, Somerton

Client: Mr G Rust

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning statement has been written in support of a planning application for the conversion and extension of two existing outbuildings in the grounds of The Old Rectory in Somerton, to enable their conversion into a single house and studio. This application also includes landscaping around the new house to provide a garden area for the new house.
- 1.2 This proposal makes excellent use of two existing outbuildings. The applicant uses the outbuildings as art studios and for storage of equipment. By linking the buildings and converting them into a house and art studio, this will create a self-contained home and studio space which will be a very efficient use of these existing buildings. The site and outbuilding sit within a residential garden, so there will be no change to the use of the land.
- 1.3 The design has been created by the applicant, Graham Rust, who is an internationally renowned artist, specialising in murals. The proposals are a highly individual design which the applicant has personally designed based on a simplified Regency model which is fitting for the setting in the grounds of the Old Rectory and will result in a beautiful building which will benefit its immediate surroundings and the wider village. It is proposed that the new building will provide the applicant with a home as well as art studios.
- 1.4 The design of the property is reflective of the applicant's art style. Graham Rust specialises in murals which are often of a classical style and been painted in stately homes across the country. One of Graham Rust's most renowned murals is "The Temptation" which was painted across the staircase hall of Ragley Hall in Warwickshire and was commissioned by Lord Herford. An image of this can be seen in figures 1.1 – 1.5 below.



Figure 1.1 - "The Temptation" Staircase by Graham Rust - Ragley Hall



Figure 1.2 - "The Temptation" Staircase Hall by Graham Rust - Ragley Hall



**Figure 1.3 - "The Temptation" Ceiling Image - Ragley Hall**

- 1.5 The design makes excellent use of the existing buildings on the site, and creates a stunning linkage which reflects Graham Rust's artistic style and will be considered part of this long-term legacy.
- 1.6 The newly constructed section of the property will be screened from views from the village to the east west by the existing outbuilding, and also by the extensive hedges and trees boarding the site which will obscure wider views of the new property.
- 1.7 The majority of the site sits within the emerging Babergh Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan settlement boundary for Somerton. Only a small part of the proposal falls outside of the settlement boundary, which is the existing outbuilding to the east of the site. This building is currently used as an art studio, and so the inclusion of this section of the building within the development will have a very limited impact. The new linkage section of the building is within the settlement boundary, as is the larger outbuilding on the western site.
- 1.8 The emerging joint Local Plan confirms that small infill developments within settlement boundaries such as this will be permitted. Somerton is categorised as a Hamlet in the settlement hierarchy which is expected to contribute towards new housing for the district. Infill developments of single houses such as this proposal are a sustainable way of meeting this quota. The reuse of existing buildings is an especially sustainable way of meeting these targets.

- 1.9 The emerging joint local plan also includes policies which support the division of existing residential plots and garden curtilages to create new houses within settlement boundaries.
- 1.10 The support for this development from the emerging local plan shows that the proposed development is in line with the existing and future planning policies and should be supported by the local planning authority.
- 1.11 This planning application is submitted with an ecology survey which confirms that the proposals will have a beneficial impact on biodiversity. The application is supported by a tree survey which recommends measures to ensure that the trees around the proposed development are not negatively impacted by the proposals. The recommendations proposed in these reports will be implemented should permission be granted when the development is commenced.
- 1.12 A structural note has been submitted with this application which confirms that the outbuildings are structurally sound and capable of conversion into a house and art studio.
- 1.13 The benefits proposed by this application include the following:
- 1.13.1 The addition of a house to the districts housing supply.
  - 1.13.2 The sustainable re-use of existing buildings.
  - 1.13.3 The development of a house which will support the needs of a local resident.
  - 1.13.4 Short term economic benefit from the construction and conversion of the existing building.
  - 1.13.5 Long term economic benefit from the additional residents supporting the local services and facilities.
  - 1.13.6 Social benefits to the local community from new residents.
  - 1.13.7 Biodiversity gains provided by on site mitigation.



## 2.0 Description of Site and Surrounding Area

2.1 The application site is situated in the extensive garden of The Old Rectory Somerton. The application site is positioned at the northern end of the gardens and benefits from an existing access onto Somerton Road. The site can be seen in figure 2.1 below.



**Figure 2.1 - Application Site**

2.2 The Old Rectory is a large property with extensive gardens to the north, east and south. The division of the site and outbuildings from this property will not have any adverse impact as the formal gardens and land directly to the north and east will be retained. This subdivision will leave the Old Rectory set in approximately 3.4 hectares of garden and park land.





**Figure 2.2 - Remaining Land and Gardens of the Old Rectory**

- 2.3 The site is within the village of Upper Somerton, defined as a Hamlet in the emerging Babergh Mid Suffolk Local Plan. Almost all of the application site is within the Somerton settlement boundary in the emerging local plan. Only a small section of the site to the east is outside of the settlement boundary which encompasses the eastern outbuilding.
- 2.4 As can be seen in figure 2.1 the site is well related to the existing houses which form the hamlet and run along Somerton Road.
- 2.5 The existing outbuildings on the site are used as art studios and for domestic storage. These buildings are in good condition and can be seen in figures 2.3 and 2.4 below. This has been confirmed in the submitted structural note provided by BHA Consulting. This note confirms that each of the buildings are; *“structurally strong enough to sustain the loadings from building operations reasonably necessary to facilitate conversion to residential use”*.



**Figure 2.3 - Eastern Outbuilding**



**Figure 2.4 - Western Outbuilding**

- 2.6 The application site is in Flood Zone 1, an area with a low risk of flooding which should not be considered an obstacle to planning.
- 2.7 The site has several trees to the north and south. A tree survey has been undertaken

which has informed the proposals in the application. The existing trees and hedges around the site will be protected and retained where possible.

- 2.8 There is a public footpath which runs along the northern section of the site. This can be seen in figure 2.5 below.

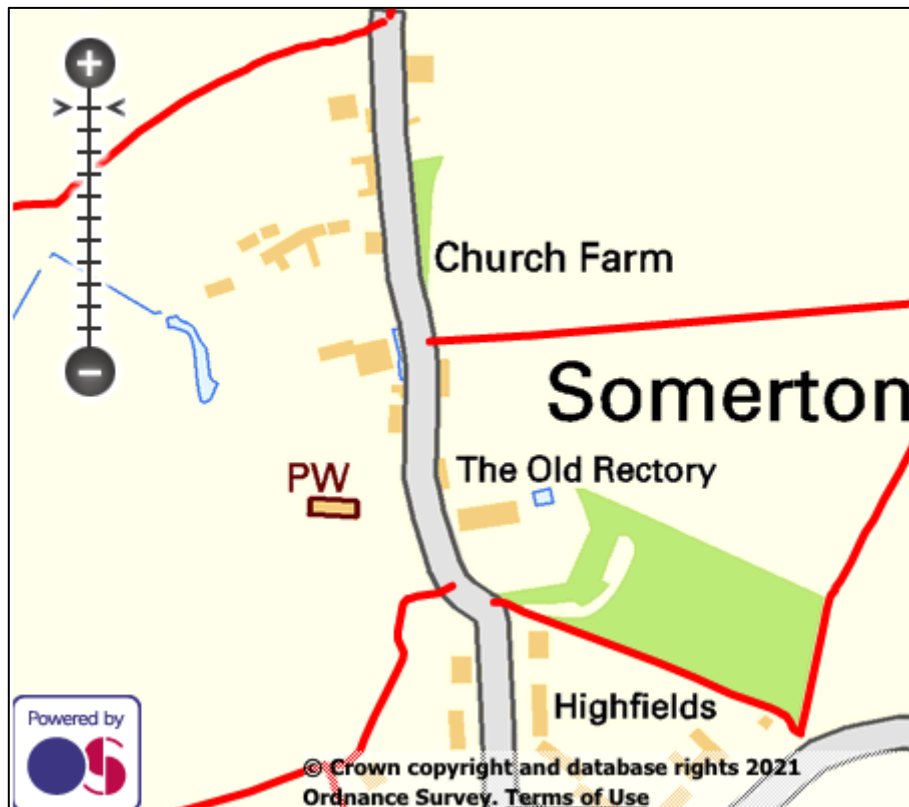
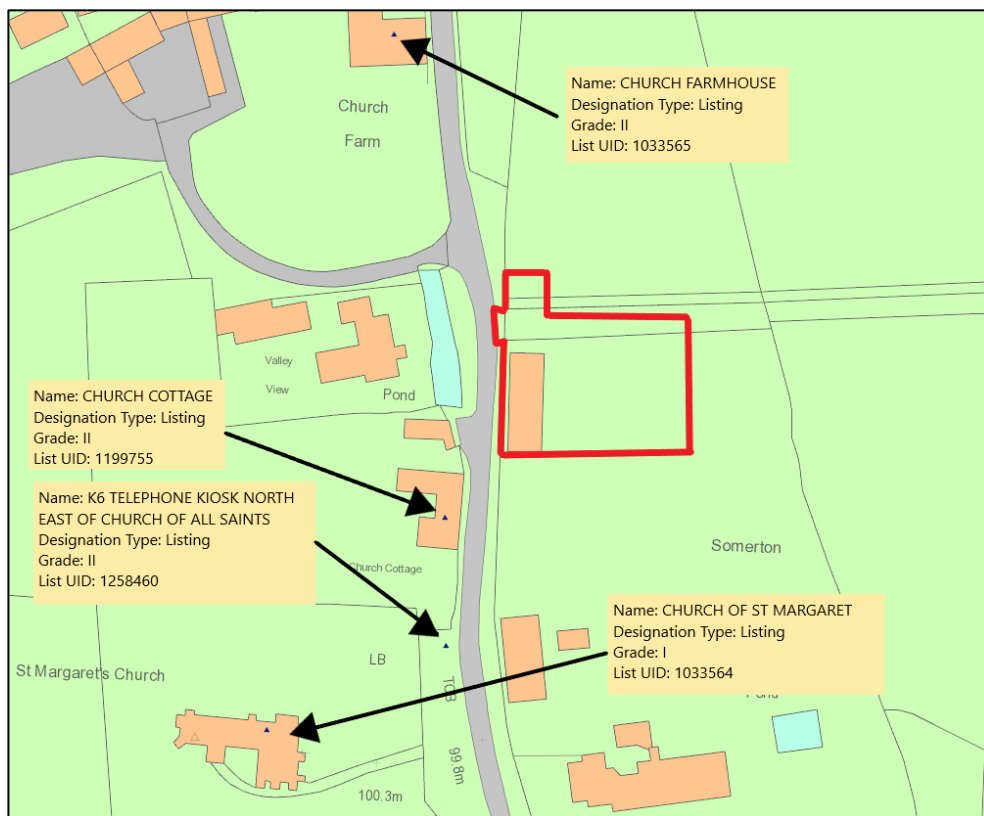


Figure 2.5 - Somerton Rights of Way

- 2.9 This footpath follows the existing vehicular entrance to the applicant's property and, should permission be granted, will be preserved and care will be taken during construction to ensure the footpath is not blocked or obstructed. The development will not affect the footpath as the access is already used for vehicles to access the paddocks to the north of the application site. The area outlined for parking is already surfaced and is used for parking and storage of vehicles and equipment.

## Nearby Heritage Assets

2.10 Figure 2.6 below shows the listed buildings nearby to the application site.



**Figure 2.6 - Listed Buildings Nearby**

2.11 As can be seen, the Grade II Church Cottage is 15 metres to the south west of the application site and the Grade II K6 Telephone Kiosk is a further 10 metres beyond this. The Grade II Church Farm is approximately 50 metres to the north of the application site and Grade I listed Church of St Margaret is approximately 65 metres to the south west.

2.12 All of these listed properties are on the opposite side of Somerton Road from the application site. As can be seen in figure 2.7 and 2.8 below the Somerton Road is lined by thick hedgerows and trees which means that views of the application site from the listed buildings are blocked.





**Figure 2.7 - View North up Somerton Road from the Telephone Kiosk**



**Figure 2.8 - View South down Somerton Road from Church Farmhouse**

### 3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1 It is proposed that the application site is subdivided from the land associated with the Old Rectory and a house and art studios are created from the existing outbuildings.
- 3.2 The house and art studios will be created by constructing a link between the existing buildings. This link has been designed by the applicant Graham Rust, an internationally renowned artist. The link has been designed to respect the character of the garden setting in which it is set, and will take the appearance of a single-story pavilion which will unify the studios on either side. This interesting, and original design will result in a unique building which is based on a simplified Regency model.
- 3.3 The house features full length windows facing south with fretted blind boxes and pale blue washed rendered walls. These walls will have stone ball finials. The zinc roof will support a central copper capped air vent which will result in a visually stunning building.
- 3.4 A hand drawn draft of the proposed elevations can be seen in illustrative drawings created by the applicant which support this application in the following images. (Final design submitted varies from this draft)

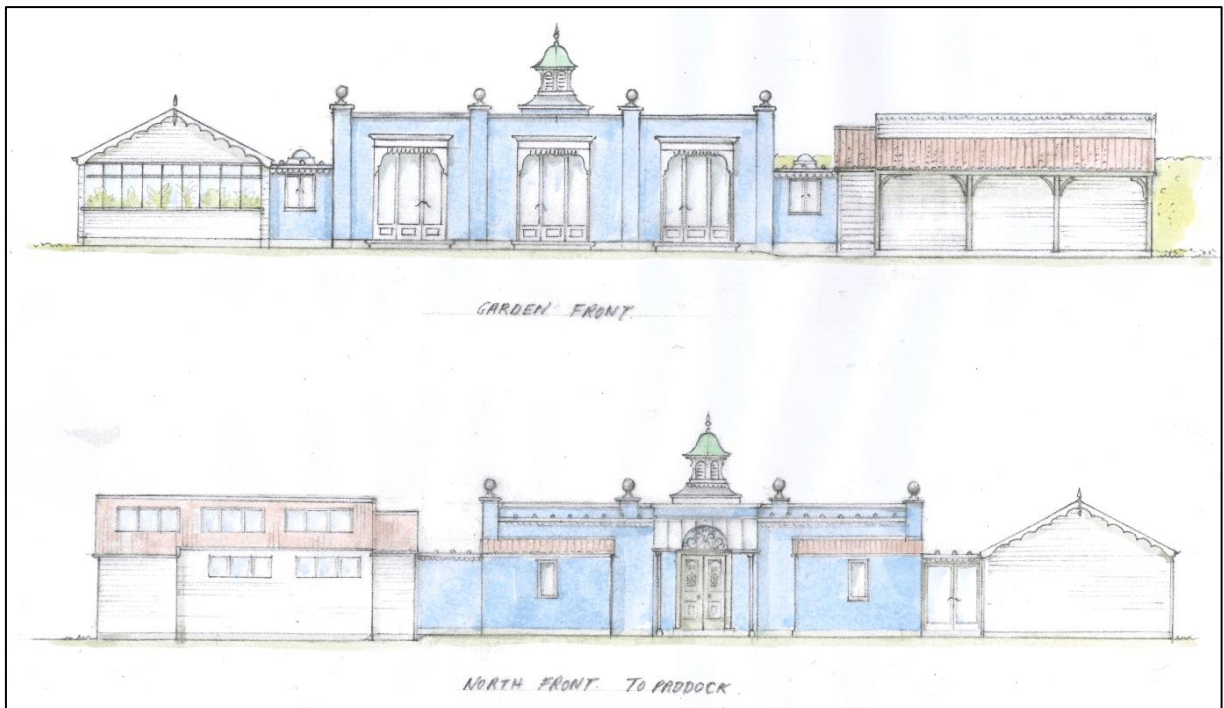
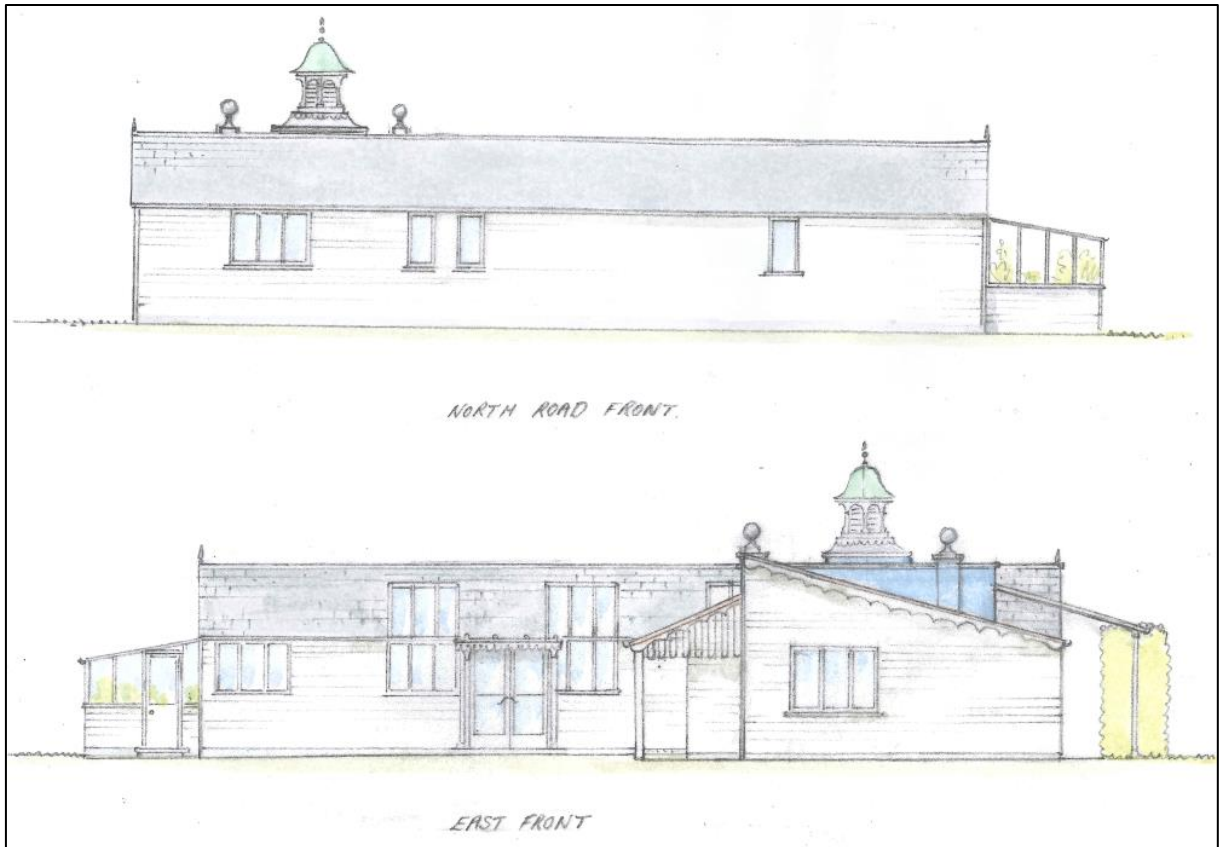


Figure 3.1 – Illustrative Draft Sketches North and South Elevations





**Figure 3.2 – Illustrative Draft Sketches East and West Elevations**

- 3.5 The property will function as both a home and also an art studio for the applicant. The proposed property includes 1 bedroom, 2 studios, a library and a kitchen. This will allow the applicant to live and work in a fluid space.
- 3.6 Externally, there is a courtyard garden to the south of the building which will be enclosed.
- 3.7 There is an existing access to the site from the Somerton Road which is used for vehicular access to the existing outbuildings and paddocks to the north of the application site. This access is of high quality and is safe and so will be utilised by the proposed development.
- 3.8 A surfaced parking area already exists to the northern side of the site near to the access. This area will be used for car parking and two parking spaces have been shown in the submitted landscaping plan with space for turning. The access and parking areas are already in place and therefore will not interfere with the public footpath which will be preserved throughout development and once it is completed.

## 4.0 Planning Policy

4.1 This section sets out the relevant national and local Planning Policies. National Planning Policy is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, July 2021 (NPPF). Local planning policies comprises the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No. 2 adopted on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2006 and the Babergh Core Strategy 2014. Babergh and Mid Suffolk are currently working on a Joint Local Plan which is currently undergoing Regulation 22 examination.

### Principle of Development

4.2 The NPPF contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which has an economic, social and environmental objective. The presumption in favour of sustainable development means *'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay'*.

4.3 Paragraph 38 requires Local Planning Authority's (LPAs) to adopt a *'positive and creative'* approach to decision making and to *'work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area'*. Paragraph 47 is a reminder that *'planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise'*.

4.4 In delivering a sufficient supply of homes, the NPPF paragraph 69 identifies that *'small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly.'*

4.5 Paragraphs 77 and 78 of the NPPF which supports sustainable rural housing and development which supports local need in rural areas. Whilst the 2006 Babergh Local Plan policy HS03 and the 2014 Core Strategy Policy CS2 categorise Somerton as countryside and go on to oppose housing in countryside locations, these planning policies restricting development in the countryside do not reflect the balanced approach towards sustainable development through the provision of rural housing as prescribed in the NPPF. These local Planning Policies conflict with Paragraphs 77 and 78 of the NPPF and so should not be given weight.

4.6 This is confirmed by the policies which are proposed in the emerging Joint Local Plan. This Joint Local Plan is currently undergoing the final states of examination.

4.7 In the emerging Babergh Mid Suffolk Local Plan, Somerton is defined as a Hamlet

Village in the Settlement Hierarchy Table 2, which has a settlement boundary.

4.8 Policy SP03 of the emerging Local Plan states that; “the principle of development is established within settlement boundaries, subject to the other policies in the Plan.” This policy goes on to state that development within settlement boundaries will be permitted where:

4.8.1 *“a) Design is sympathetic to its surrounding and demonstrates high-quality design by having regard to the relevant policies of the Plan;*

4.8.2 *b) A high standard of hard and soft landscaping, appropriate for the location is used;*

4.8.3 *c) Hedgerows and treelines which make an important contribution to the wider context and setting are protected, particularly in edge of settlement locations; and*

4.8.4 *d) The cumulative impact of proposals will be a material consideration.”*

4.9 This application confirms with all of these requirements, being of an exceptionally high-quality design which is sympathetic to its surroundings, incorporating a high-quality landscaping plan, it protects and preserves the surrounding trees and hedges and will have a minor cumulative impact on the surrounding properties.

4.10 This planning application falls within the Somerton settlement boundary. Only the existing western outbuilding falls outside of the proposed settlement boundary, however, given that the proposed use of this section of the building is to be a studio, there is little change to the existing use of the building. It is just being linked to the new section which falls within the new settlement boundary.

4.11 In the Policy Explanation of Local Housing Policy LP01, the emerging local plan confirms that; *“some small-scale development may be appropriate to meet the ambitions of the NPPF paragraph 78.”* And that; *“This will help meet the Councils’ objective to support strong and healthy communities”.*

4.12 Policy LP01 goes on to confirm that; *“Proposals for windfall development within dwelling clusters and/or a defined hamlet may be acceptable, subject to all the following criteria applied:*

4.12.1 *It would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the*

*settlement, landscape (including the AONB), residential amenity or any heritage, environmental or community assets.*

*4.12.2 It would not result in consolidating sporadic or ribbon development or result in loss of gaps between settlements resulting in coalescence.*

*The cumulative impact of the proposal on the location, context and infrastructure is considered acceptable.*

*4.12.3 The scale of development is infill only for a single dwelling and or pair of semidetached dwellings.*

*4.12.4 Special regard shall be given to development proposals preserving and enhancing the AONB and to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity affected by the proposal.*

*4.12.5 All new development will be expected to minimise dependence on fossil fuels and make the fullest contribution to the mitigation of climate change through implementation of sustainable construction practices and renewable energy technologies.*

4.13 The proposed development meets all of these policy requirements. The application site is well screened from the wider landscape and will not have adverse impact on the settlement. The proposals will improve two existing buildings and link them together to create one dwelling and studio. This site is within the existing built form of the village, with houses to the north, south and west, it will not result in ribbon development. The scale is for a single house. This planning application is supported by an ecology survey and tree survey which confirm that, with the impact of the development on biodiversity and geodiversity, will be positive. The proposal is for the re-use of two existing buildings which is an environmentally friendly use of existing materials. The house will be well insulated and will utilise rainwater harvesting. The property will be heated by air source heat pumps, which are the most environmentally friendly source of heating.

4.14 Emerging local plan policy LP03 further supports the proposed development scheme. This policy explanation confirms that, *“new residential development can be achieved through the... conversion of ancillary buildings within settlement boundaries.”* This policy confirms that within settlement boundaries that conversion within residential dwelling curtilage may be permitted.

- 4.15 The proposed development conforms with the stipulations of policy LP03 as it is in keeping with the size and scale of the existing dwelling. The Old Rectory is a very large property and the proposed development will create a small house which will not have a noticeable impact on this property. The design will complement the Old Rectory and its gardens as this will take the form of a classical pavilion or folly. The design of the property is completely unique and has been created by an internationally renowned artist, representing the highest standard of design. The property will have very little impact on the neighbouring properties as these are mostly screened from the application site by the trees to the west, and also as the development makes use of two existing outbuildings. The proposals use an existing safe vehicular access and has sufficient parking.
- 4.16 Emerging Policy LP05 is interlinked with policy LP03, as it deals with additional dwellings on sub-divided plots within settlement boundaries. The policy explanation confirms that; *“sub-division of existing residential plots within settlement boundaries does provide a regular source of housing supply in sustainable locations and contributes to the effective and efficient use of land.”*
- 4.17 LP05 confirms the LPA’s acceptance of the subdivision of existing residential plots and garden curtilages to create a new dwelling is acceptable. This proposal conforms with all of the requirements of this policy.
- 4.18 The significant support of the emerging local plan for this application shows that this development is considered to be sustainable development and is in keeping with up-to-date national planning policies and the future direction of planning policy within the district. The expiring 2006 Local Plan and 2014 Core Strategy are out of date and therefore should not be given weight when assessing this application.

### **Highways Safety**

- 4.19 2006 Local Plan Policy TP15 requires that proposals for new development provide parking in accordance with parking standards adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance. The NPPF also requires in paragraph 109 that development should be refused if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.
- 4.20 The proposed development benefits from access onto Somerton Road just to the north west of the site. This existing access provides a safe vehicular and pedestrian access onto the site from Somerton Road.

4.21 Visibility can be seen in both directions from the access for over 90 metres. As can be seen in the excerpt from Crashmap in Figure 4.1 below, there have been no incidents near the site in the past 22 years.

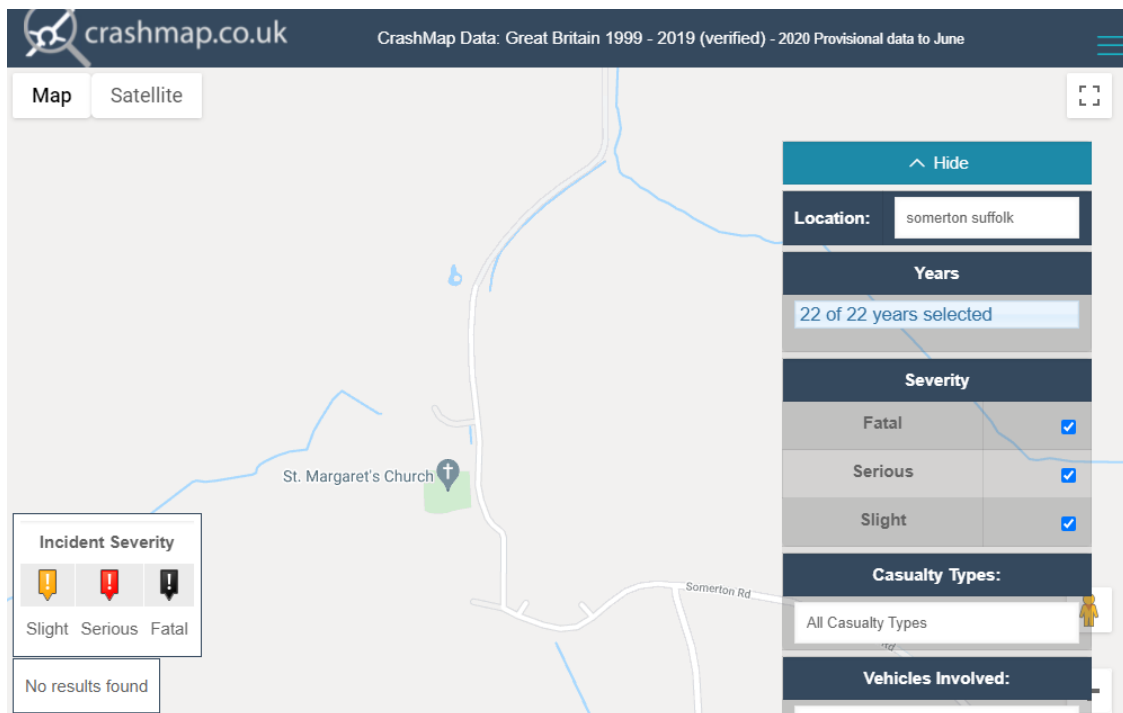


Figure 4.1 - Crashmap Record

4.22 Parking has been laid out towards the north of the site for two vehicles. This utilises an existing surfaced area which is in excess of the parking required in the 2019 Suffolk Guidance for Parking and has sufficient space for turning and manoeuvring of vehicles.

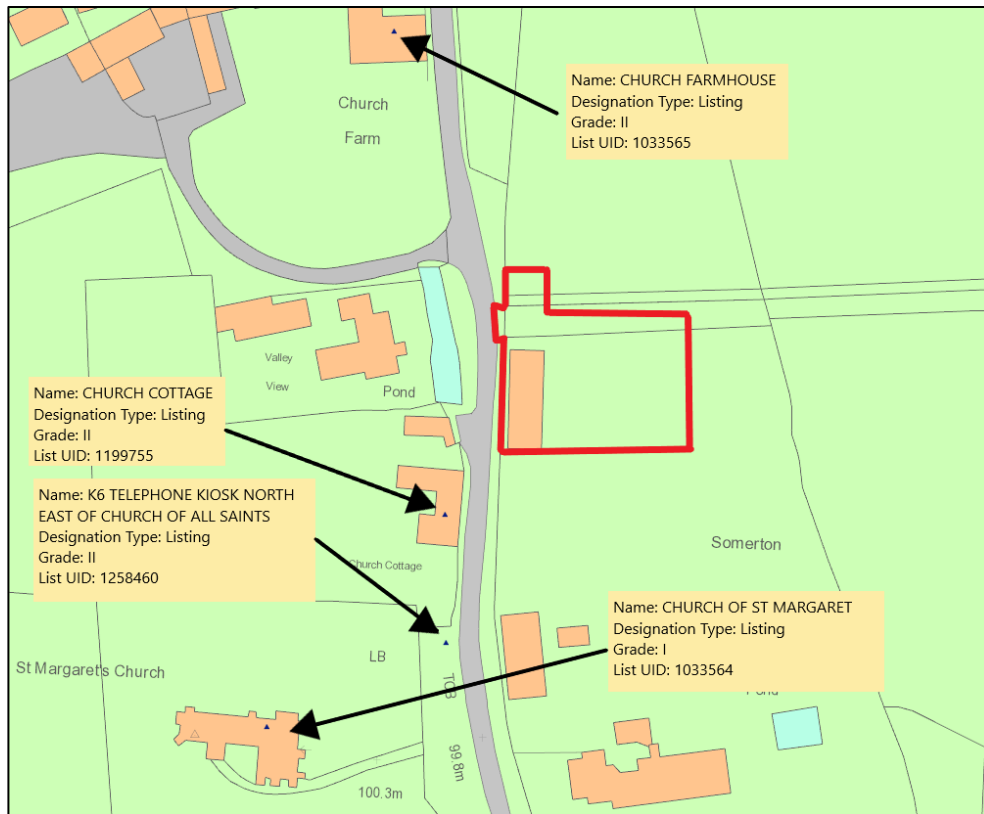
### Heritage Assessment

4.23 National planning policy requires in paragraph 194 requires that applications should; *“describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. 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.”*

4.24 The proposed development does not directly affect any listed buildings. The Old Rectory, in which this application is within the grounds, is not listed.

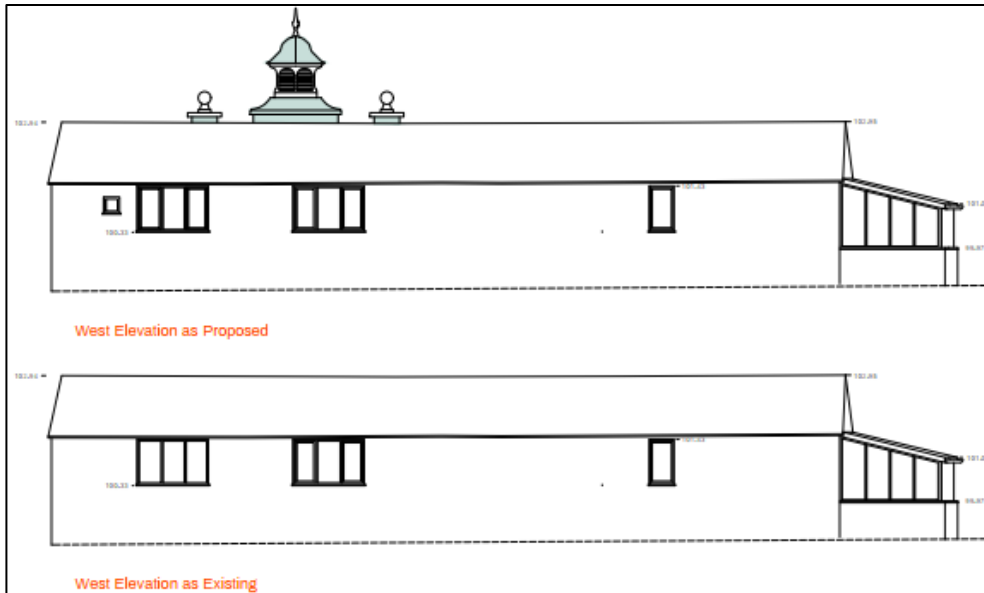
4.25 There are however listed buildings nearby to the site. These can also be seen in figure 4.2 below:





**Figure 4.2 - Map of Nearby Listed Buildings**

- 4.26 As can be seen in this map, Grade II listed Church Cottage is 15 metres from the application site. The listing for this building describes it as a; *“A C17 timber-framed and plastered house with a C18 or C19 brick base. 2 storeys. 4 window range, C20 casements with glazing bars. Roof slate (C19), with a central square shafted chimney stack. The interior has exposed timber-framing.”*
- 4.27 The setting of this listed building will not be impacted by this development. This is because there are two existing buildings on the site which form the majority of the new development, and because the application site is well screened from the listed building by the large hedgerow running along Somerton Road.
- 4.28 The western elevation of the proposed building can be seen in figure 4.3 below. As can be seen in this image, very little of the new section of the building is visible from Church Cottage to the west. Only the dovecote and the pier cap spheres are visible above the existing building.



**Figure 4.3 - Western Elevation: Proposed and Existing**

- 4.29 50 metres to the north of the site is Church Farmhouse. This is also a Grade II listed building described as; *“a C17 timber-framed and plastered house, built on an L shaped plan 1 storey and attics. Small casement windows (C20). C17 boarded doors. Roof tiled, with a central chimney stack with 4 grouped octagonal shafts (restored) on a square base. The gable at the east end projects on shaped brackets and has a moulded bressummer. The roof is hipped at the west end and has 2 gabled dormers. The interior has exposed timber-framing.”*
- 4.30 There will be no impact on this listed building by the proposed development. This is because there are hedges and trees which line the Somerton Road from the application site to the listed building. There is also a double row of high hedges which run along the north elevation of the application site. These hedges will be mostly retained, with a minor section of the southern hedge removed for pedestrian access to the front door of the new property. The double row of hedges to the north of the application site can be seen in figure 4.4 below.



**Figure 4.4 – Hedges to the North of the Application Site**

- 4.31 As there are already two buildings on the site, the addition of the linkage will not impact the setting of this listed building. Any views of the addition will be screened by the various hedgerows and trees.
- 4.32 65 metres to the south west of the application site are the Grade I Listed Church of St Margaret and the Grade II K6 Telephone Kiosk. Due to the screening provided by the intervening buildings, trees and hedges, and as a large part of the application is in for the conversion of existing buildings, there will not be an impact on these listed buildings as a result of the proposed development.

### **Ecology and Landscape**

- 4.33 Local Plan Policy EN04 requires that development must provide protection of semi-natural features on the site such as hedgerows, trees and features of geological interest. Policy EN05 goes on to state that development must include measures to mitigate the effect of the development on features of biodiversity interest.
- 4.34 This planning application is supported by a tree survey and landscape plan which assesses the impact of the proposed development on the semi-natural features around the site and also suggests protections for these. This survey identifies the quality of the nearby trees and makes suggestions on how the more valuable

specimens can be protected when development is commenced.

- 4.35 This planning application is also submitted with an ecology survey of the site. This assesses the existing buildings as habitats as well as the site area and surrounding land. The ecology report concludes that, with mitigation, a biodiversity gain can be achieved on the site which should be considered acceptable to the planning authority.

### **Public Rights of Way**

- 4.36 Local Plan policy TP02 requires that where a development affects a public right of way, it must be accommodated in the development in a way that will maintain its visual character and encourage and sustain its use.

- 4.37 DEFRA guidance entitled "*Rights of Way Circular*" (2009) states that, "*Proposals for the development of land affecting public rights of way give rise to two matters of particular concern:*

*4.37.1 the need for adequate consideration of the rights of way before the decision on the planning application is taken and the need, once planning permission has been granted, for the right of way to be kept open*

*4.37.2 and unobstructed until the statutory procedures authorising closure or diversion have been completed."*

- 4.38 A public right of way follows the existing access from Somerton Road to the east across the top of the site. This public footpath will be maintained and kept open during the development of the application site. It is proposed that the applicant will use the existing access and will not obstruct the public footpath, as this has a separate pedestrian gate access.

- 4.39 There is an existing surfaced area to the north of the public right of way which will be used for car parking as shown in the submitted landscaping plans. Therefore, there will be minimal works in the area of the public right of way.

- 4.40 Visually, the users of the right of way will be minimally affected by the proposed development. There will be a small section of the laurel hedge removed to create access to the front door of the property. Small glimpses from the footpath will be created by the development, but this will be a very minor impact and it will be visually engaging to walkers. The parking area to the north of the application site is

already surfaced and used for parking and storage, so this will also not have any adverse impact on users of the right of way.

## 5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 In conclusion, this application proposes the conversion, extension and connection of two existing outbuildings in the grounds of the Old Rectory in Somerton. This will create a house and studio for the applicant, through the utilisation of these existing building.
- 5.2 The design of the proposed house is unique and of the highest quality. This has been designed by the applicant who is an award winning, internationally renowned artist. This resultant property will enhance the character of the area and has been designed to complement the grounds of the Old Rectory in which the building currently sits.
- 5.3 A tree survey of the application site has been conducted and so has an ecology survey. These documents confirm that the proposals will have an acceptable impact on the landscape and biodiversity around the site. The ecology report concludes that with the proposed mitigation, the development will have a beneficial effect.
- 5.4 A structural inspection of the buildings has been undertaken which also confirms that the buildings are in good structural condition and are capable of conversion.
- 5.5 Planning policy is supportive of the proposed development. National planning policy is supportive of sustainable rural housing and development which supports local need in rural areas. This is also supported by the emerging local plan for Babergh Mid Suffolk which has given Somerton a settlement boundary, confirming the small-scale development and infill developments are acceptable within the settlement boundary. The emerging local plan also supports the sustainable reuse of existing buildings in the countryside, giving further policy support for this application.
- 5.6 This statement has not identified any negative impacts from the conversion and extension of these existing outbuildings. The site has an existing access onto the highway which will be improved to meet Suffolk Highways requirements, the nearby listed buildings will not be affected by the proposals and there will be ecology benefits created by the proposed mitigation suggested.
- 5.7 This proposal will result in a beautifully designed house and studio for an important local artist which will form part of his local legacy. This unique building will be an asset to the village and is should be supported by the Local Planning Authority.