

Planning, Design and Access Statement for the Proposed Demolition of Existing House and Erection of a Replacement House together with a Domestic Outbuilding

**Site at Rathkeltair Lodge, Barton Hill,
Fornham St Martin**

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Rathkeltair Lodge, Barton Hill, Fornham St Martin

Client: Hall Contracts Limited

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Evolution Town Planning in support of the demolition of the existing property, Rathkeltair Lodge, and its replacement with a new high-quality property which is a bespoke design. The proposed house is visually attractive with a layout which respects and utilises the sites features and will enhance the site and its presence in the landscape. The proposals also include a detached garage to the west of the main house which will be used by the applicant to store their personal classic car collection.
- 1.2 Rathkeltair Lodge is a large two storey house located on the northern side of Barton Hill in Fornham St Martin, set at the bottom of the hill on the eastern side of the B1106. It is a significant plot of just under 2 acres with well-defined site boundaries comprising a mix of mature evergreen and native trees. These trees are an important public feature in the landscape, some of which are subject to Tree Preservation Orders particularly on the western and southern highway boundaries.
- 1.3 It is proposed that the existing property is demolished and replaced with a new, sustainable house which is in approximately the same position as the existing house. The new property will utilise vertical space by building a large basement floor and providing second storey rooms in the roof to provide additional floor space. The new house will be constructed to the highest standards, utilising high levels of insulation and environmentally friendly heating technology.
- 1.4 When originally granted consent, Rathkeltair Lodge was perceived as being in open countryside and, as a consequence, the permission was restricted by condition to its occupation in connection with the farming of the surrounding associated land. At this time the area would have been much more rural in its character. In the intervening 66 years, the areas to the immediate south and east have all been significantly developed with housing and the site is now perceived visually as being part of a more built-up suburban housing area. This change in the site context was recognised in the variation of the original permission by the removal of the restrictive occupancy condition in 2018 which required the occupation of the house in conjunction with cultivation of the surrounding land.
- 1.5 Barton Hill is acknowledged as a sustainable location for new housing by local planning policy as it has been given a settlement boundary. Whilst the application site falls just outside of the settlement boundary, in visual terms it relates strongly to the

neighbouring housing to the south and east. It is positioned within walking distance of the town of Bury St Edmunds which can provide the occupants with access to services without the need to rely wholly on private vehicles for transport.

1.6 Local planning policy permits the replacement of an existing house in the countryside where the proposed replacement house respects the scale and floor area of the existing house. Whilst the new property has a larger floor area than Rathkeltair Lodge, it is of a similar scale and form as the existing house. The new property utilises a single storey section to the rear of the house on the ground floor; rooms in the basement; and in the roof space to provide additional floor space without increasing the scale of the property. In any case, it would be possible to increase the floor space of the existing property significantly using Permitted Development Rights to create a substantial extension and second floor attic conversion, as a fall back alternative.

1.7 The creation of a large house such as this on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds will provide a property for high-income individuals which will benefit the local area economically. The construction of this property will have the equivalent economic impact as the construction of three smaller properties, and will likely be undertaken by a local building firm.

1.8 Overall, this application proposes the following;

1. Replacement of a poor-quality house with a high-quality property which is highly insulated and energy efficient;
2. Create a visually attractive, individually designed home which will have a positive impact on its immediate setting and the wider;
3. Create a new home which is proportionate to the plot and respects the existing landscape, by preserving the TPO trees on the site;
4. Implement mitigation and ecological enhancement measures to ensure that there is biodiversity gain across the site;
5. Create a new access which is compliant with the requirements of the county highways authority; and
6. Provide a bespoke high-end house for a local family which will benefit the local area economically. The construction of the new property will also have a local economic benefit.

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The plot of Rathkeltair Lodge is well defined in the landscape. The property was built in 1953 and was originally set within 4 acres of land. Much of this land has been sold and developed in the intervening years and the site now sits within just under 2 acres of garden land.
- 2.2 The existing property is two storeys and provides 4 bedrooms, a kitchen, dining room, lounge and store rooms. It provides approximately 166sqm of floor area. The property is in a poor condition and has been vandalised several times in recent years, with police being called on several occasions due to break in.
- 2.3 The house benefits from an existing access onto Barton Hill. This is shown in Figure 2.1 below.



Figure 2.1 - Existing Access

- 2.4 Large two storey detached houses run along the north western side of Barton Hill to the east of the application site. Rathkeltair Lodge is the final house in this row, closest to Bury St Edmunds.
- 2.5 On the opposite side of the highway is a large housing development of over 75 houses which front Barton Hill and lead off Russell Baron Road and various adjacent cul-de-sacs behind. This development can be seen on the aerial photograph shown in figure 2.2.
- 2.6 The properties on the south eastern side of Barton Hill are single storey bungalows. The houses off Russell Baron Road and its adjoining cul-de-sacs are a mixture of two storey semi-detached houses and single storey bungalows.

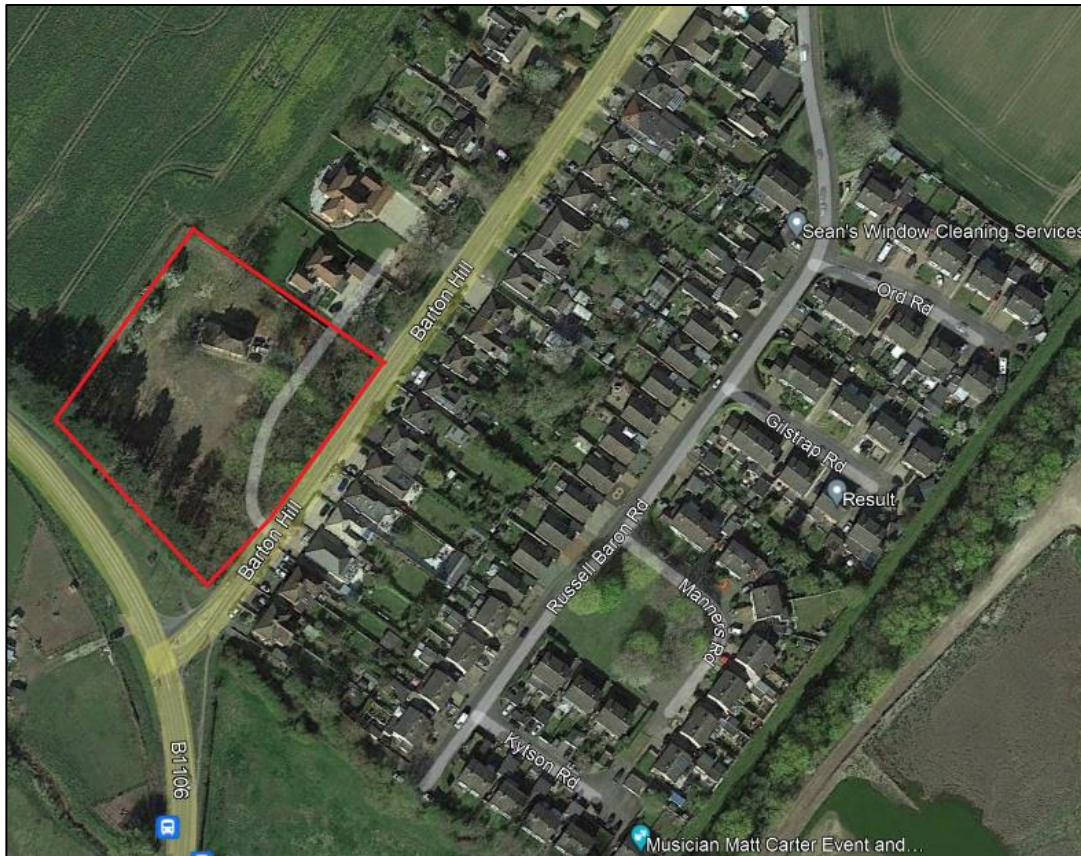


Figure 2.2 – Aerial image of Application Site

- 2.7 To the north of the application site, the property adjoins open countryside which is in agricultural use. There is a strong boundary of trees and hedgerows which enclose the site, limiting views into the site from the countryside.
- 2.8 To the west of the application site is the B1106 road, beyond which is land used as pony paddocks and grazing for a small number of livestock. Beyond this is the town of Bury St Edmunds approximately 250 metres from the application site. The western boundary of the property is enclosed by mature trees and hedgerows.
- 2.9 The site is just under 2 acres in size which forms a strong, well-defined unit with visually significant mature trees forming the boundaries which are a distinct and enhancing feature in the landscape. Several of the boundary trees are subject to Tree Protection Orders which can be seen in the planning constraints map in figure 2.3, shown by the green hatching with a white and green border. A tree survey and Arboricultural report is submitted with this application which provides a more detailed assessment of these trees.

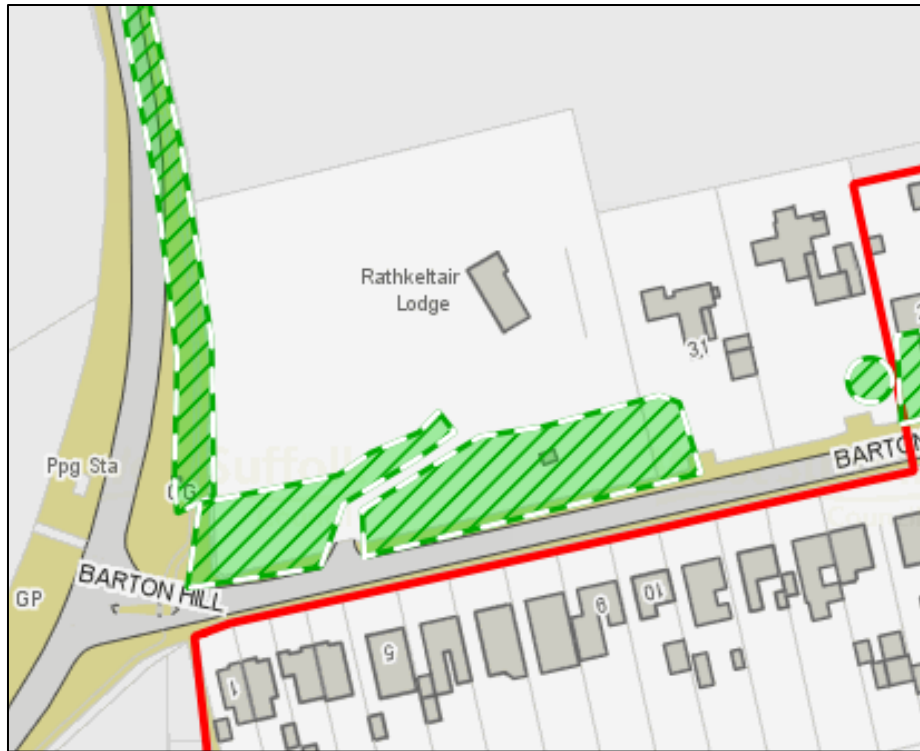


Figure 2.3 - Planning Constraints Map

- 2.10 This application is submitted with an ecology assessment of the site. This assessment has identified the presence of day roosting bats on the site as well as environment which will provide nesting; refuge; and foraging opportunities for a range of garden birds; common amphibians; and potentially common reptiles such as grass snake; bats; hedgehogs; brown hares; and potentially protect invertebrate species. The ecology report makes suggestions to mitigate the impact of development on the ecology which would result in a net gain on the site.
- 2.11 The application site is in Flood Zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding. It is not within a Conservation Area and there are no listed buildings within its immediate vicinity. It is not affected by any sites of Special Scientific Interest; Special Protection Areas; special landscape Areas; or subject to any Article 4 directions.

3.0 Proposals Development

3.1 This application proposes the demolition of the existing 2 storey, 4-bedroom house and its replacement with a 5-bedroom 2.5 storey house, with a large basement providing a swimming pool and gym. Immediately adjacent to the house is a 4-car garage / cart lodge for day-to-day use, with a study and playroom above. The applicant also has a number of classic cars as part of a private collection and so the proposals include specialised garaging for that car collection towards the centre of the site. Whilst the protected trees will be retained, the proposals also include the landscaping of the remainder of the garden area to provide improved residential amenity space.

Proposed Replacement of the Existing House

3.2 It is proposed to replace the existing house with a newbuild home. The existing 1950s house requires substantial modernisation; does not meet the needs of the owner; and is not energy efficient or particularly sustainable in its original construction. It has been vandalised at times and requires a disproportionate expenditure to bring it to modern standard.

3.3 Although no longer extant, and now incorporated into the NPPF, PPS4, expressly advocated the merits of reconstruction of the nation's building stock to provide for the levels of energy conservation that are needed to meet the challenges of climate change.

3.4 Accordingly, the proposal is to demolish and replace the house with a 'state of the art' new home to both a high standard of design and materials incorporating a raft of sustainable measures into the design. The proposed house will be of a scale which is reflective of the site and the strong defining boundaries. The proposed new house can be seen in figure 3.1 below.



Figure 3.1 – Digital Render of the Front Aspect of the New House

House Design

- 3.5 A single larger house is proposed which will meet the requirements of the applicant and reflect the scale and strong visual enclosure of the site. The proposed house will provide 5 bedrooms over 4 floors (including a basement level and roof space bedrooms), plus a study and playroom above the garage. At basement level the proposal includes a swimming pool and gym. A garage is proposed immediately adjacent to the house for the family’s day to day cars. The proposed building presents as a 2.5 storey house, with attic level accommodation, as could be achieved on the existing building within the remit of Permitted Development Rights.
- 3.6 The site lends itself to a more extensive development but the constraints of the TPO determine that it is environmentally better suited to this limited proposal which retains just one house.
- 3.7 The proposal is for a house which has a mix of two storey and single storey elements, forming a narrow spanned, steep pitched roof which retains a traditional form and appearance. This arrangement also has the considerable design advantage of delivering a larger amount of accommodation whilst avoiding any appearance of bulkiness.
- 3.8 Further interest is created by turning some of these elements at sharp angles to each other, which also breaks up the roof form, giving the appearance of several buildings rather than just one.

- 3.9 Short gables running off the main linear section also adds accommodation but retains the smaller scale appearance of the building from different viewpoints
- 3.10 Traditional dormers light a part of the main roof section and all windows are vertically aligned. There is a marked verticality in the appearance of the fenestration which reinforces its traditional character and appearance of a fine house in the Suffolk countryside.
- 3.11 It is proposed that the house is constructed from a traditional brick in a buff colour. The roof will be tiled in grey plain tiles and the windows and door will be created from wooden double glazing.

Garage Design

- 3.12 In addition to the garages proposed for day to day use by the family, the applicant also has a number of classic cars, and it is proposed to provide onsite specialised garaging for the owner's classic car collection, which is a major hobby of the applicant.
- 3.13 The single-story and part two story garage design reflects the narrow-spanned traditional form of the proposed house and runs in a linear form around part of the western and southern boundary and corner of the site on the edge of the tree line, whilst respecting the root protection areas of those trees and not posing a threat to them. The proposed garaging has a steep pitch roof emphasizing a traditional form.



Figure 3.2 Proposed Garaging

- 3.14 Proposed materials will complement the house. The roof will be clad in traditional plain

clay tiles and the wall plate, essentially in masonry of materials to be submitted to the LPA for approval.

Amount

- 3.15 The proposed development will deliver and retain one house on the site with attached domestic outbuildings and an 18-bay garage to store the applicant's classic car collection securely.
- 3.16 Whilst the proposals are a 1:1 replacement house, it is acknowledged that the amount of the overall development will be increased, albeit the proposal is for one house. A total internal floor space of 785 sqm is proposed which will provide 5 bedrooms across 4 floors. Whilst this is an increase in the overall size of the house on this site, with an area of just under 2 acres, the plot can accommodate a larger house such as this. The proposed design also utilises a basement floor which accounts for 265 sqm of floor space; rooms in the attic which create 84 sqm of floor space; and two rooms above the cart lodge which create 44 sqm of floor space. This represents a very efficient use of space, creating 4 times the floor space, whilst only using only 1.75 times the external floor area for the main house.
- 3.17 Using Permitted Development Rights, the existing property could be extended on the ground floor by 8 metres on the rear and side elevations, requiring only a prior notification application to be submitted the LPA. This would result in an additional floor area of 237 sqm to the property. The attic could also be converted into a living space using Permitted Development Rights, adding a further 35 sqm, giving a total floor area of 495.8sqm.
- 3.18 The basement floor of the proposed house is 265.68 sqm. This encompasses a swimming pool; gym; changing rooms; stores; and plan. An outbuilding could be constructed in the grounds of the existing house for these uses which are incidental to the enjoyment of the house.
- 3.19 Therefore, if the Permitted Development Rights for the existing house were implemented with prior approval, the existing property could be enlarged to be 495.8sqm. The new proposed house is 785sqm, but when the basement floor is removed this would equal 520sqm. This is a difference of only 23.5 sqm. Therefore, the proposed floor area of the proposed house floor area should be considered to be respected by the proposals.

Landscaping

- 3.20 A simple landscaping scheme is proposed by this application as shown in the site plan. This involves additional tree planting around the central and northern sections of the site, and hard landscaping to form a new access arrangement and a patio area. This remains modest in order to respect the existing landscape character encompassing the important trees around the site boundaries.
- 3.21 A full tree survey is also submitted given the importance of this site in the landscape. This survey evaluated the proposals put forward and concludes that, with mitigation and protection, the impact of the development on the site trees is acceptable.

Sustainability

- 3.22 The development will incorporate sustainability measures designed to deliver a high standard of sustainability. Sustainability measures proposed include:
- Air Source Heat Pump;
 - Rainwater recycling;
 - High value energy conservation materials being used in the floor, walls and roof;
 - Passive ventilation; and
 - Ecology enhancement measures and landscaping
- 3.23 This is a huge benefit of the proposed scheme. If the existing house were merely extended under Permitted Development Rights and renovated, there would be no way for the LPA to secure any of these wider benefits.

Drainage And Flood Risk

- 3.24 All surface water will be collected; stored; and then discharged to soakaways at a rate of no greater than 20 litre per second per hectare plus 30% allowance for climate change. Foul water will follow the existing outlet and include any brown water arising from recycling.
- 3.25 The site is in Zone 1 for Flood Risk and consequently an FRA is not required to support the proposal.

Access

- 3.26 The existing house is served by a highway access that is up to standard and which will

form part of the entrance to this development. It is proposed that a second access is created to the east of the site leading onto Barton Hill.



Figure 3.3 - Existing Access



Figure 3.4 - Location of Secondary Access

- 3.27 It is proposed that the existing access to the west is only used for entry onto the site, and the new access to the east is used for vehicles to exit the site and join the highway.
- 3.28 This change will have a beneficial impact on highway safety. At present, the existing residential access is under 40 metres from the junction between the B1106 and Barton Hill. The new access will be used for vehicles exiting the site and is over 90 metres from the junction with Barton Hill and the B1106, improving visibility significantly. Visibility

to the east is in excess of 150 metres.

Contamination

- 3.29 The site is already in established residential use and this is the starting point for the assessment of contamination considerations on this site. No intensification (in terms of additional residential units) is proposed, and therefore there is no overall change to risks posed by historic contamination issues.
- 3.30 As highlighted by the submitted Envirosearch Report, the site is approximately 216 metres from a Historical Landfill Site of Railway Cutting. The risk of ground gases to controlled waters was investigated by St Edmundsbury Borough Council in 2006 and concluded the risk is very low to adjacent residential properties.
- 3.31 To the east of the application site are two houses which have recently been constructed. These houses were granted planning consent in 2017 under reference DC/17/0085/FUL. When considering application DC/17/0085/FUL, it was requested that a contamination assessment of the site was required. This investigation concluded that the risks to human health were low. There was no remediation measured required as all testing showed that all determinants were below their respective assessment values.
- 3.32 Barton Hill is lined with residential properties. The application site currently has a house on it and this application proposes its replacement with a new house. This will not pose a threat to the health of future occupants. The source of contamination highlighted in the submitted Envirosearch Report is historic, last use dated 1957. The above highlighted investigations of this contamination have concluded that this poses no risk to the health of future occupants. To require a similar investigation would be out of proportion given the past work which has been undertaken.

4.0 Planning Policy

4.1 National planning policy is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) and Local Planning Policy in set out by the Joint Development Management Policies Document (JDMPD), the St Edmunds Core Strategy 2010 & Vision 2031 Documents, have been considered in putting this proposal forward. These policies and their aims remain in force following the formation of a single Authority in 2019.

The NPPF

4.2 This Important statement of Government Policy was revised in 2021. The policies set out in the JDMPD are judged to be in conformity with this updated Government guidance.

4.3 The 2021 NPPF puts a strong emphasis on making efficient use of land in Chapter 11. This planning application seeks to replace a poor-quality existing house, with a larger, higher quality property. Paragraph 120 in particular supports; *'the development of under-utilised and buildings... and available sites could be used more effectively'*.

4.4 Chapter 2 of the NPPF requires that the planning system achieves sustainable development by meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This application puts forward a property which will be highly energy efficient and sustainable.

4.5 The NPPF also gives weight to achieving well-designed places in Chapter 12. Paragraph 126 states that *'the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work'*. Paragraph 130 goes on to state that decisions should ensure that developments are, *'visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.'* The proposed scheme is an intricately designed house which will create a beautifully designed, sustainable property which is visually attractive and has been informed by the surrounding landscape.

Local Planning Policy

4.6 The objectives of the following policies are considered particularly relevant: -

- Vision policy RV1 - Presumption In favour of Sustainable Development;

- Policy - DM1- Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development;
- Policy - DM5 – Development in the Countryside; and
- Policy - DM2 - Creating Places - Development Principles and Local Distinctiveness

4.7 The proposal is for a larger replacement house that, whilst outside the settlement boundary, is immediately adjacent with it. Policy DM5 seeks to allow such replacement houses irrespective of location in the Countryside however includes some restrictive considerations so as to ensure that all development is sustainable, wherever it is located.

4.8 In locations that are more built up, such as in this case, it is considered that such restrictions are uncalled for and unnecessary since the proposal is sustainably located; it is a large site with well-defined boundaries; the introduction of a larger house is the only way economically, to permanently resist development which would seek a larger number of houses; thus, threatening the character and amenity of the locality. The proposed house is of a scale that protects and enhances the site and the context which it is viewed in.

4.9 Policy DM5 requires the replacement house respects the scale; floor area; and site boundaries. The proposal maintains the two-story height and scale for the new property, utilising rooms in the roof to achieve additional floor area and a basement without a significant increase to the footprint. As previously highlighted, the existing property could be extensively extended using Permitted Development Rights. This would result in a house which is of an equivalent scale to the proposed property, however it would not be as attractive or well designed.

4.10 The strong boundaries of the site distinguish it from the adjacent countryside visually. In design terms, the new house takes note of the extensive site area and curtilage which extends and enlarges the floor area of the new house which befits the overall site context and appearance in the street scene. To that extent, the proposal fully takes into account the aims of policy DM2. This seeks amongst other key aims to ensure that developments: -

- “Produce designs that respect the character, scale, density and massing of the locality; and
- “Recognise and address the key features, characteristics, landscape/townscape character, local distinctiveness and special qualities of the area”

- 4.11 The proposed house, which is exceptional in design terms, respects the development plan objectives to maintain local distinctiveness which carry weight in the consideration of the proposed development. The proposal does not harm the landscape in visual terms owing to the strong visual enclosure of the site which is protected by TPOs.
- 4.12 The demolition of a large house, which has a poor construction fabric with inefficient energy usage, and its replacement with the proposal which has a high standard of design as well as the highest standard of energy efficiency, is a highly sustainable exercise and carries the foremost weight in view of the balance of considerations of policy objectives relevant to this proposal; RV1 and DM1.
- 4.13 It is axiomatic in the consideration of applications for development, and the requirement of Section 38 of the Planning Acts, that such developments must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan “read as a whole”. The presumption in favour of sustainable development underpins this development proposal in terms of its location; design; site; and context the Development Plan policies set out in this statement and the Framework. Accordingly, it is submitted that the proposal merits the grant of a planning permission.

5.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 5.1 This planning application proposes the demolition of the property Rathkeltair Lodge, on Barton Hill near to Bury St Edmunds, and for its replacement with a carefully thought out; attractive house, which is a bespoke design to accommodate the site. This application also applies for an outbuilding for the applicant to store his classic car collection.
- 5.2 The proposed replacement house is an outstanding design which will have a beneficial visual impact on the site and the wider area. It has been arranged to utilize space in the basement and the roof to create a large living area for the occupants without increasing the footprint of the building significantly.
- 5.3 The existing property on the site is in poor condition, and is not energy efficient. The new house will be well insulated and built to the highest standards, utilizing environmentally friendly technology to heat the property such as air source heat pumps; rainwater recycling; will use high value energy conservation materials in the floors; walls; and roof, and will feature passive ventilation. These benefits are material considerations in favour of the scheme, which could not be secured without a planning consent on the site.
- 5.4 Since the site already includes one house, there is no change of use or intensification of the existing use. As such, in principle, the replacement of this house with a new house should be acceptable. The proposed garages are for the private collection of the applicant and is a use which is incidental to the enjoyment of the house.
- 5.5 The protected trees around the site have been taken into account during the design of the house to ensure there is a no negative minimal impact. Only a small number of less important trees require removal and these are not the protected trees. The scheme is supported by an accompanying arboricultural assessment, which has evaluated the potential impact and confirmed that the proposals can be delivered without harm to the protected trees or other trees which significantly contribute to the local area. The only trees proposed for removal are Class U and Class C trees (check report), and these will be replaced within the planting scheme. The arboricultural report includes measures for the protection of existing trees and these can be conditioned.
- 5.6 An ecology report has also been provided which has taken into account the works proposed by this application. The site does not have any existing ecological constraints.

The accompanying report has suggested protection measures and mitigation to ensure that harm is not caused to any wildlife around the site, and that a net gain can be achieved. Mitigation and enhancement measures include a selection of the following:

- Compensation for bat roost using either roost boxes or bat boxes;
- Hedgerow planting along the northern site boundary;
- Ornamental planting to utilize nectar rich plants for benefit of pollinators and associated predators;
- Bird boxes on suitable trees or the new garage;
- Two multi-chamber colony bird boxes; and
- A composting area to be created to provide refuge for invertebrates, amphibians and possibly reptiles.

5.7 These ecological benefits can be condition via the planning consent, and represent public benefits which could not be secured without approving this scheme. Were the site to be developed under Permitted Development Rights with the existing house being extended and renovated, these ecological benefits could not be secured. In the planning balance, this is a material consideration in favour of this scheme.

5.8 This application also suggests a new highway access onto Barton Hill. This is because it has been identified that the existing access does not conform to highway safety standards for vehicles leaving the site. The proposed access provides visibility splays in line with the county highways standards and should be considered to be a benefit of this application, which could not be secured without the approval of this scheme. This is a material consideration in favour of the scheme.

5.9 By creating a large; attractive; high quality; and well-equipped house such as this, high net worth individuals will be attracted to the region which will have a beneficial economic impact locally. The construction of this property is also the equivalent to three traditional houses, which will likely be undertaken by a local builder, which will have a further beneficial effect on the local economy.

5.10 Local planning policy supports replacement houses in the countryside where the sale and floor space of the existing house is respected. As has been shown in this application, the new property is of a similar scale to the existing house. It has a larger floorspace, but this only because a basement floor has been utilized and rooms have

been built into the roof space. Should the existing house be extended using Permitted Development Rights, this would result in a similar floor area as the proposed property.

5.11 The proposed house is in an extremely sustainable location, within easy walking distance to the town of Bury St Edmunds along footpaths.

5.12 Given the range of benefits put forward by this application, and its compliance with local and national planning policy, this application should be approved by the Local Planning Authority without delay.