

### 3.0 Planning Context

The site lies within the Hertsmere Borough Council boundary, and is located within the Letchmore Heath Conservation Area and ward of Aldenham West. The site is located within the Green Belt and the house is not listed.

The site boundary forms the edge of the Conservation Area on three sides. The school playing fields located to the south east of the site are designated as a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt.

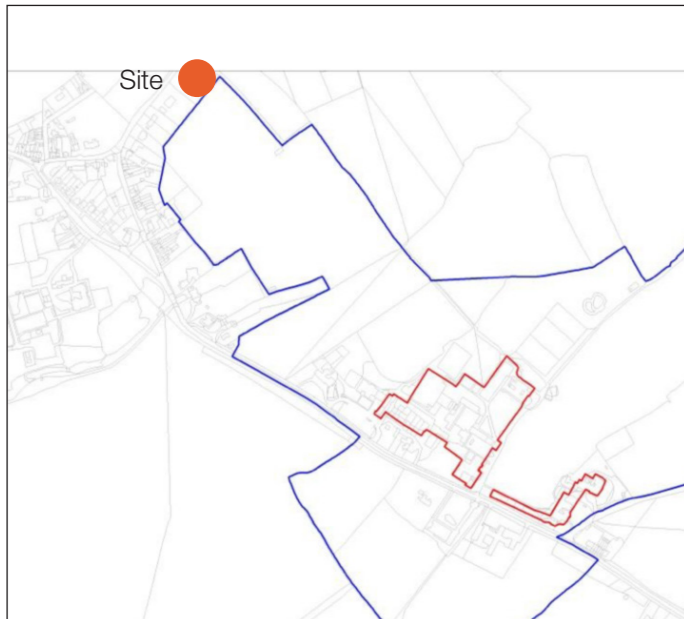
Letchmore Heath mostly comprises residential dwellings, and Jade House is a private detached three storey family house.

Jade House is one of several large detached private houses on Common Lane, of brick construction and tiled roof. The three storey house was constructed in the 1980's, along with the adjoining houses 'Cookmeade' and 'Edgefield'. These houses are of no historic value or interest, and are of no special architectural merit or quality.

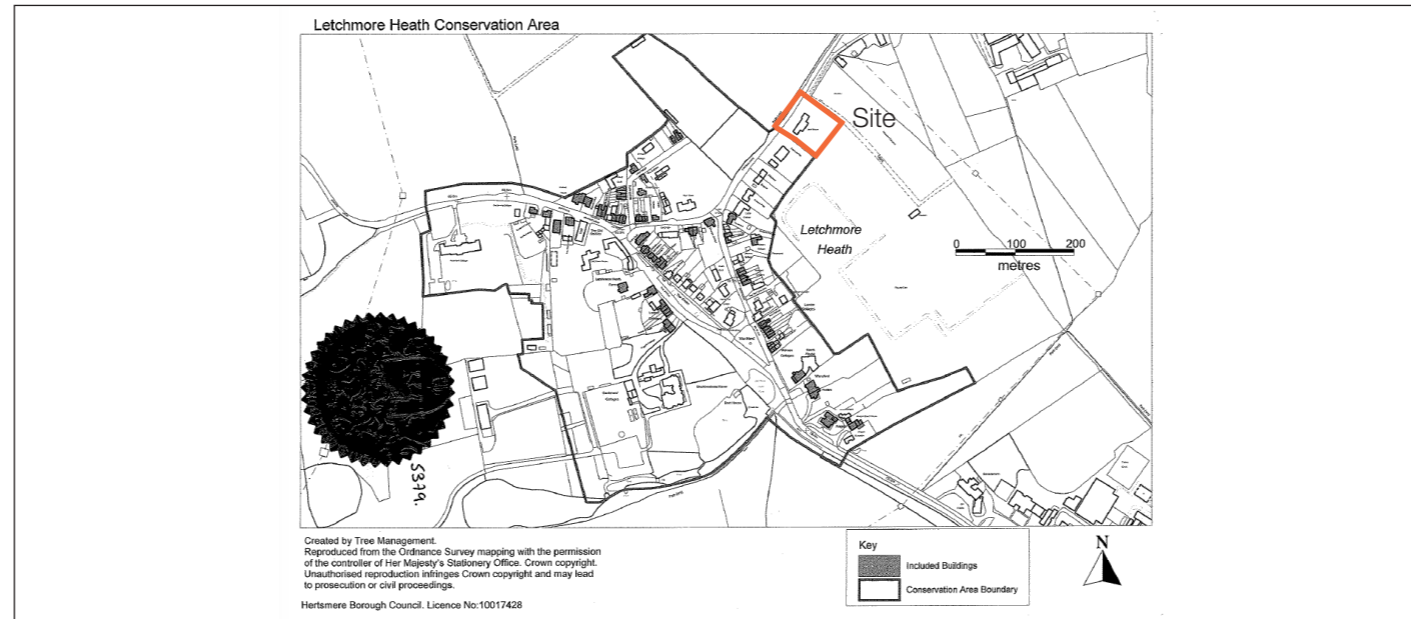
The relationship of the proposed new house to the existing context of the adjoining houses and Green Belt are issues that the proposal seeks to address. The views towards the site and Green Belt from Common Lane, and from the playing fields towards the site, have been addressed by the design, and are noted in this document.

The use of traditional materials, that acknowledge the variety of traditional vernacular materials used within the village, have been considered and incorporated within the design proposal.

The design seeks to use traditional materials, and traditional pitched roof forms, to create a new energy efficient family home that responds to, and respects, the particular site context and village location.



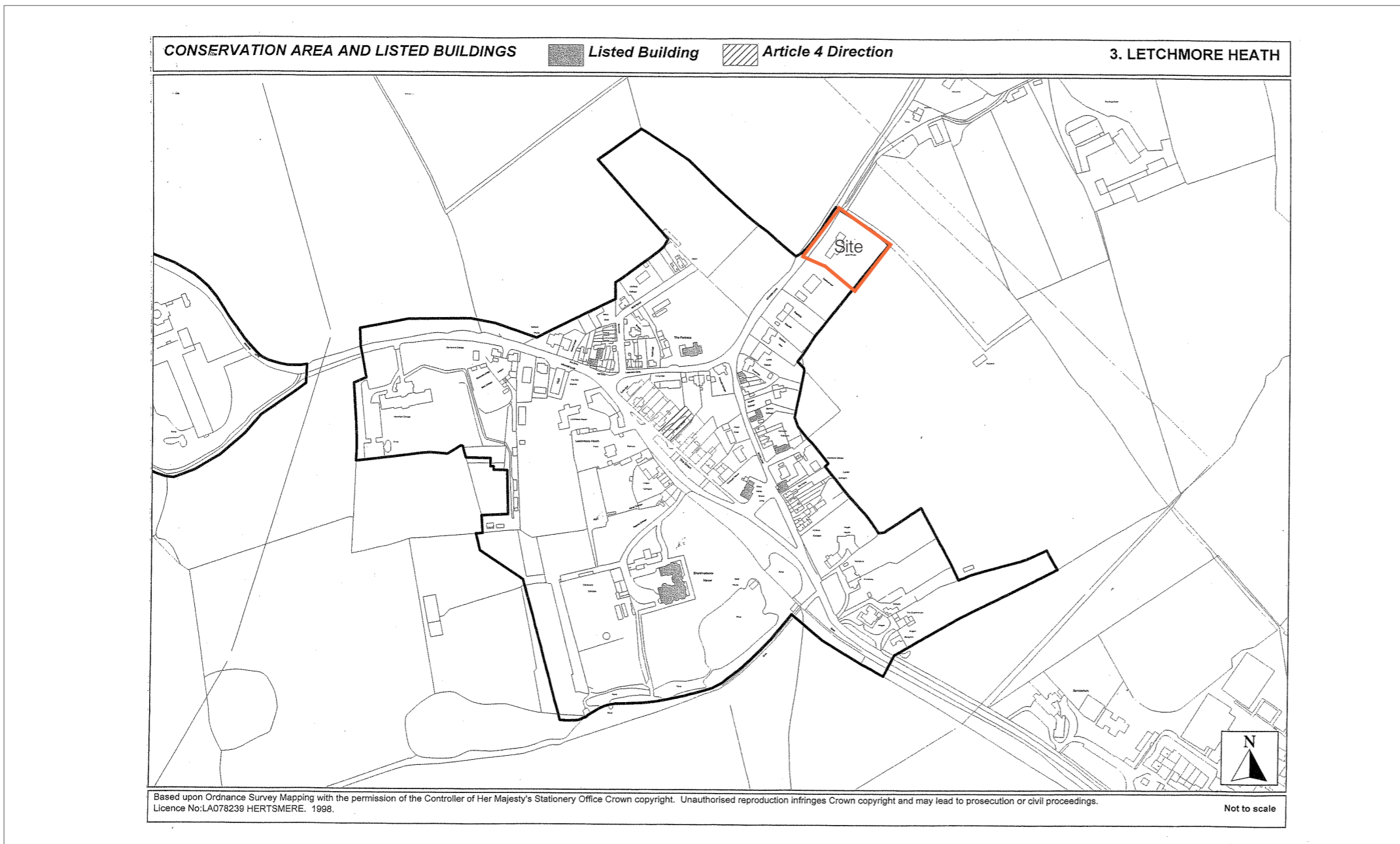
Major development site within the Green Belt, with site highlighted



Letchmore Heath Conservation Area, with site highlighted



Aerial view of site in context with village



Letchmore Heath Conservation Area boundary and listed buildings

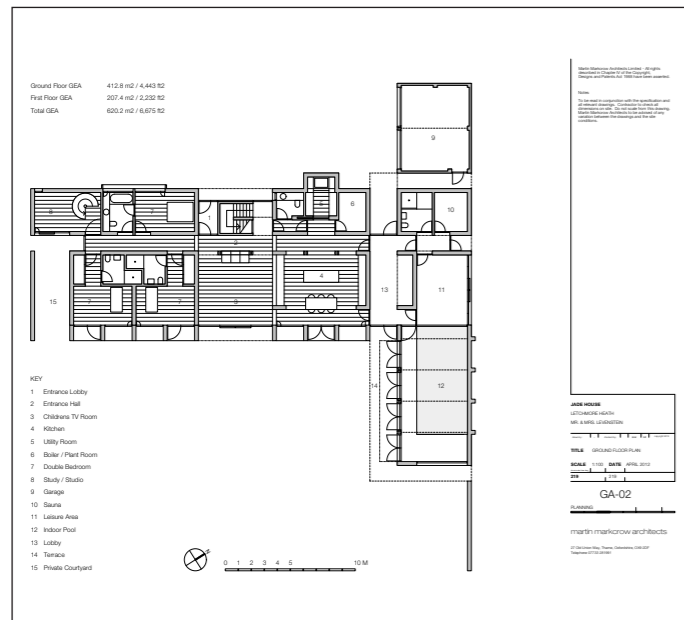
### 3.0 Planning Context

#### Top row

- Left Map showing major development site within the Green Belt
- Middle Map showing Letchmore Heath conservation area boundary
- Right Aerial photo with site edged red

#### Main Image

Map showing Letchmore Heath conservation area boundary and listed buildings



Ground floor plan

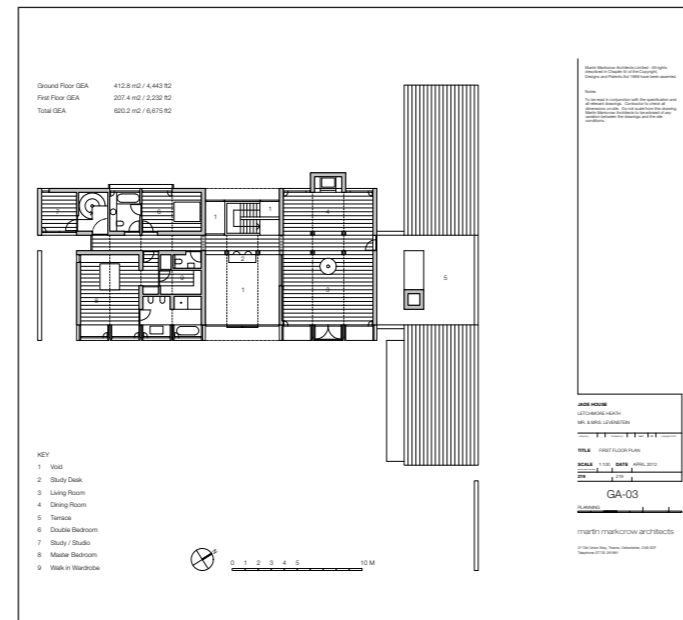
### 3.0 2012 Pre-Application PA/12/0940

A pre-application report was submitted to Hertsmere Borough Council in April 2012, enclosing proposed designs for a new house to replace the existing Jade House.

A pre-application submission was issued to Hertsmere Council in April 2012 (reference PA/12/0940) for a different house design which increased the ground floor footprint area in order to reduce the proposed height and massing. A pre-application advice report by Maria Demetri was issued, and is attached in the Appendix.

The proposed 33% increase in floor area was deemed acceptable, however the 80% increase in building footprint was deemed to constitute inappropriate development, and a recommendation to reduce the increase in building footprint to below 50% to be deemed as proportionate, or if not an option, "special circumstances would need to be presented to outweigh the harm to Green Belt". The overall increase in width of the house, and depth by virtue of the T-shaped plan were considered to not preserve the openness of the Green Belt. Evidence was felt to be needed to establish whether the design approach would preserve or enhance the Letchmore Heath Conservation Area, and that design cues of the surrounding area should be honestly and concisely incorporated. The proposed new design has reduced the building footprint significantly, though not quite to below the 50% figure suggested in this pre-application advice report. The total gross internal area (GIA) has increased by just over 38%, using GIA as a better comparison ratio, given wall thicknesses have more than doubled due to energy efficiency regulations.

Below are key extracts from the pre-application report Ref PA/12/0940 from Maria Demetri, Planning Officer, Hertsmere Borough Council. The response from the Conservation Officer is described on the following page.



First floor plan

### Planning History

The construction of Jade House in the 1990's as a single dwelling to replace two separate dwellings relates to a planning application TP/93/0393, and the single dwelling is now regarded as the 'original' building for purposes of planning policies.

#### Site Context

The site sits within the Letchmore Heath Conservation Area and the Green Belt.

The proposal included details of the new building area, footprint and width, compared to the existing house, which were tabulated in the Officer's report.

The report indicated that the increase in total built area of 33% could be deemed a proportionate increase, however the 80% increase in building footprint was deemed unacceptable. The report welcomed the reduction in building height, however this reduction was only made possible by the increase in the building footprint at ground level, and the plan footprint and height are inextricably linked.

The report indicated that an increase in footprint of below 50% could be deemed proportionate, unless special circumstances were presented 'to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt'.

The proposed increase in building width, and overall site depth arising from the 'T-shaped' plan, was considered to not 'preserve the openness of the Green Belt...'

The pre-application submission only defined the width of the main house, and excluded the single storey high brick garden walls flanking each side of the house, which effectively create a visual barrier to views to the Green Belt from Common Lane. These are now accounted for in the comparison, in order that realistic comparisons are made with the new proposal.



Site plan

### Conservation Area

It is noted that conservation area consent is required to be submitted to demolish the existing house, and only granted if a planning consent for redevelopment approved.

A fire had damaged part of the house a few months prior to the pre-application submission, however the house has since been repaired. The house condition and quality is described within this report. The Conservation Officer's report stated:

*"It is accepted that the existing (damaged) house is of no special merit and that it contributes little to the Conservation Area"*

*"A suitable replacement design would be acceptable"*

The proposed new design is submitted with the intention that it will enhance the quality of the Letchmore Heath Conservation Area. A section later in this report describes the architectural character, materiality, and design cues taken from the local area to inform the proposed design. The new proposal could be regarded as more conventional in its massing (a duo-pitch roof instead of the 'butterfly' roof proposed in 2012), and the elevations which are more traditional 'hole in wall' windows as opposed to the elevations of the 2012 scheme.

The 2012 scheme was considered by the Conservation Officer after the pre-application response was issued. Contrary to the expectation that it was "unlikely that the proposed scheme would enhance or preserve the Conservation Area" the report was positively supportive of the scheme except for the recommendation to slope the roof towards Common Lane. The report included the following summary:

*"Summary: the overall design of the scheme as submitted could be acceptable in order to fit well in the village Conservation Area and to achieve a positive recommendation. The main alteration suggested is the reversal of the slope of*



Model photograph

*the front roof. Details of finish and cladding materials can be agreed in due course and advice on these matters would be available from Conservation"*

The full details of the Conservation Officers' report should be on file, and the key extracts have been included in the following section covering the Conservation Officer Report 2012.

#### Highways

The 2012 pre-application retained the existing vehicle entrance and gate in its current location. The proposed scheme has relocated the vehicle entrance and added a pedestrian pass gate.

#### Car Parking

The 2012 pre-application scheme included a double garage as part of the single storey wing to the main house, which formed the 'T-shaped' plan. The internal dimensions of the double garage fell below the minimum target dimensions.

The proposed garage has been relocated, and accommodates one car and two motorcycles, and is described later in this report.

#### Trees and Landscape

A landscape scheme design is included as part of the application. The majority of the existing garden remains intact, with new landscape elements relating mainly to the relocation of the existing vehicle entrance, and the new hard and soft landscape in the immediate vicinity of the new house. An arboricultural report and impact assessment, and tree constraints and protection plan is included as part of the application.



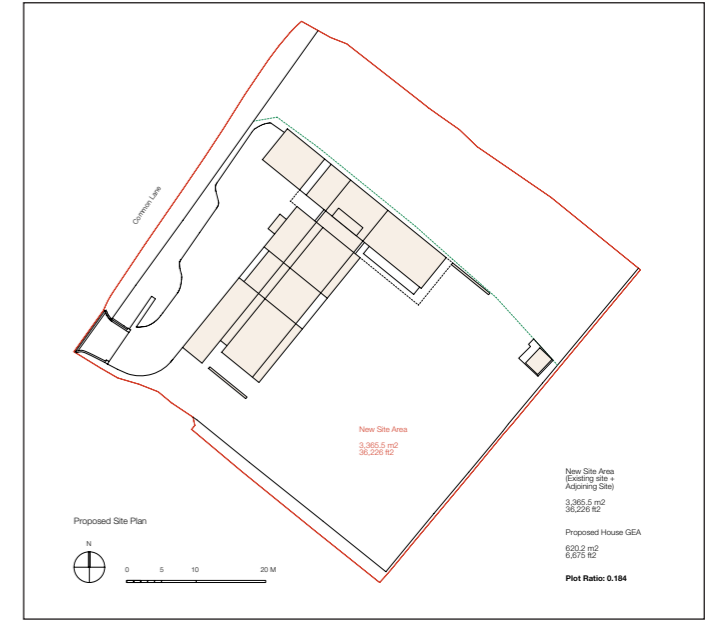
Model photograph



Model photograph



Model photograph



Site plan

### 3.0 Conservation Officer Report 2012

Graham Tite of Beams Ltd, issued an email as Conservation Officer, as set out below:

*"The policy background has been stated in the report by the planning officer and the present set of comments are additional to this information.*

*Regarding the demolition of the existing house and its replacement, policies E19 and E20 apply. It is accepted that the existing (damaged) house is of no special merit and that it contributes little to the Conservation Area.*

*A suitable replacement design would be acceptable. There is currently no Conservation Area Appraisal document for Letchmore Heath and therefore a precise definition of local character is difficult to make.*

*Nevertheless, it is clear that the site fits within the village fabric and that domestic buildings of modest scale and traditional size form the majority of the existing fabric of this area and determine its character.*

*It is accepted that the site in question sits in a part of Common Lane where buildings more typical of the 20thC provide a more modern visual context. It is felt that an overall village character should be maintained in future developments if replacement buildings are to harmonise with the wider setting. A suitable blend of the modernity as shown in the documents submitted (Received 30 April 2012) with a more traditional presentation towards the street could be acceptable.*

*There is no objection to the proposals in the aspect they present at the rear of the site (page 6.0/2) and they are acceptable. This side of the new house would overlook the private gardens and could be seen from the open spaces at the rear where no effect, positive or otherwise, could significantly affect the Conservation Area.*

*The views towards the street (page 6.0/1) would affect the Conservation Area. It is felt that this side of the proposed scheme would be acceptable in overall layout, mass and height. It is also felt that the architectural language requires some degree of adjustment in order to achieve a more comfortable acceptance visually.*

*This could be achieved by fairly simple means that do not alter the type of dwelling that the clients are seeking to achieve or the layout of the domestic quarters and garage.*

*It is recommended that the front roof slope should face downwards towards the front elevation on the main house (as already shown for the garage). This would produce a frontage with eaves at about the same height as the eaves of the bay that includes the entrance lobby area. The extra height for the bedroom windows would be achieved by a dormer-style arrangement or by a full height bay breaking through the eaves.*

*The breaking of the frontage into three separate elements is noted and this variation on the forward projection could even be given greater emphasis to the benefit of the overall effect.*

*Configurations of roof (as indicated above) can be found at the Locally Listed houses (c. 1925 in date) at Nos 55-65 Elstree Road, Bushey Heath (Local List numbers 276-281).*

*CFA Voysey was the "pioneer of modern design" who combined the clean lines of 20thC architecture with traditional sloping roof forms and other features of historic architecture with success. Attention is drawn to such buildings of Voysey as the house at Thorpe Mandeville, Northamptonshire (1898). Images of Voysey's work are widely available on the Internet.*

*Regarding the finish of the walls facing the street, this could be in a range of materials including brick or weatherboarding, neither of which is out-of-place in the language of modern architecture if given the correct detailing. This remark would also apply to the finish of the garage building which stands in a prominent position projecting forward.*

*SUMMARY: the overall design of the scheme as submitted could be acceptable in order to fit well in the village Conservation Area and to achieve a positive recommendation. The main alteration suggested is the reversal of the slope of the front roof. Details of finish and cladding materials can be agreed in due course and advice on these matters would be available from Conservation."*

### Design Response to Conservation Officer Report

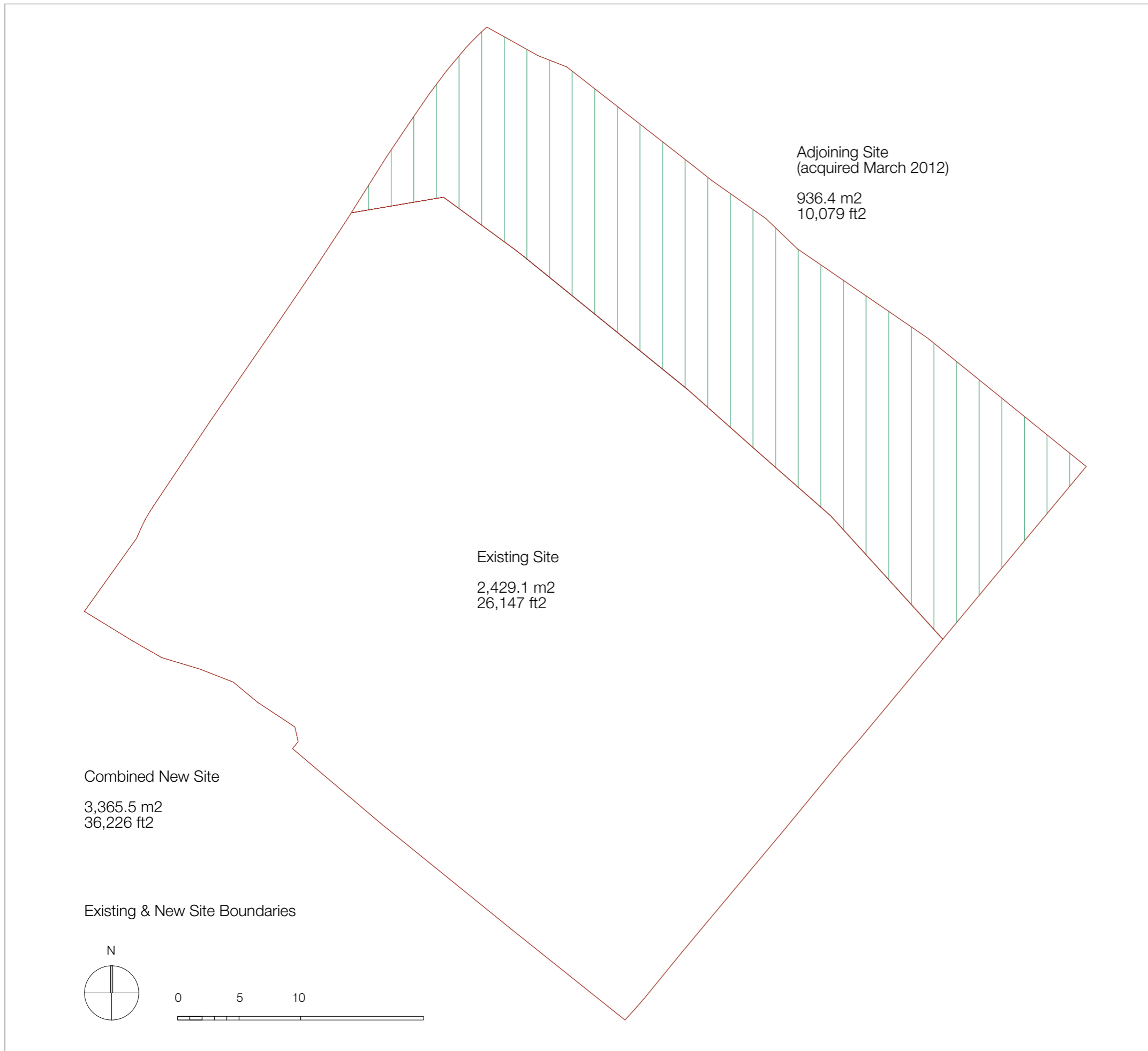
The Conservation Officers' report supported the principle of demolition and replacement of the house. At the time of the pre-application submission in 2012, the house had recently suffered fire damage at the east end of the house, and smoke damage extended further into the areas of the house unaffected directly by the fire. Hence the Officer referred to the house as 'damaged'. Repair work was undertaken after the fire, nevertheless the house is still of no special merit to justify its retention.

The Conservation Officer considered the design proposals acceptable, but felt that the roof should slope towards Common Lane as a "more traditional presentation towards the street". Given the proposal had a 'butterfly roof' design, with the roofs pitched to peak at the frontage to Common Lane, the roof form has now been revised to a conventional duo-pitched roof which slopes down towards Common Lane.

The change to a conventional duo-pitch roof, whilst retaining the 'breaking of the frontage into three separate elements' to retain the advantages of the more granular articulated massing, seeks to respond to the Officers' key design commentary.

The proposed use of brick and timber boarding, if correctly detailed, would seem to be acceptable subject to agreements on the finer detail or materials and detailing.

The proposed design seeks to use traditional materials and roof forms, but in a contemporary way, and a purposefully granular and more complex massing than a singular simple massing.



Site plan



#### 4.0 Site Boundary and Plot Area

The site boundary of Jade House was significantly expanded in 2012 to include an adjoining area of soft landscape and trees to the north east boundary. The purchase of the adjoining site was completed in March 2012, resulting in a 38.5% increase in land area occupied by Jade House.

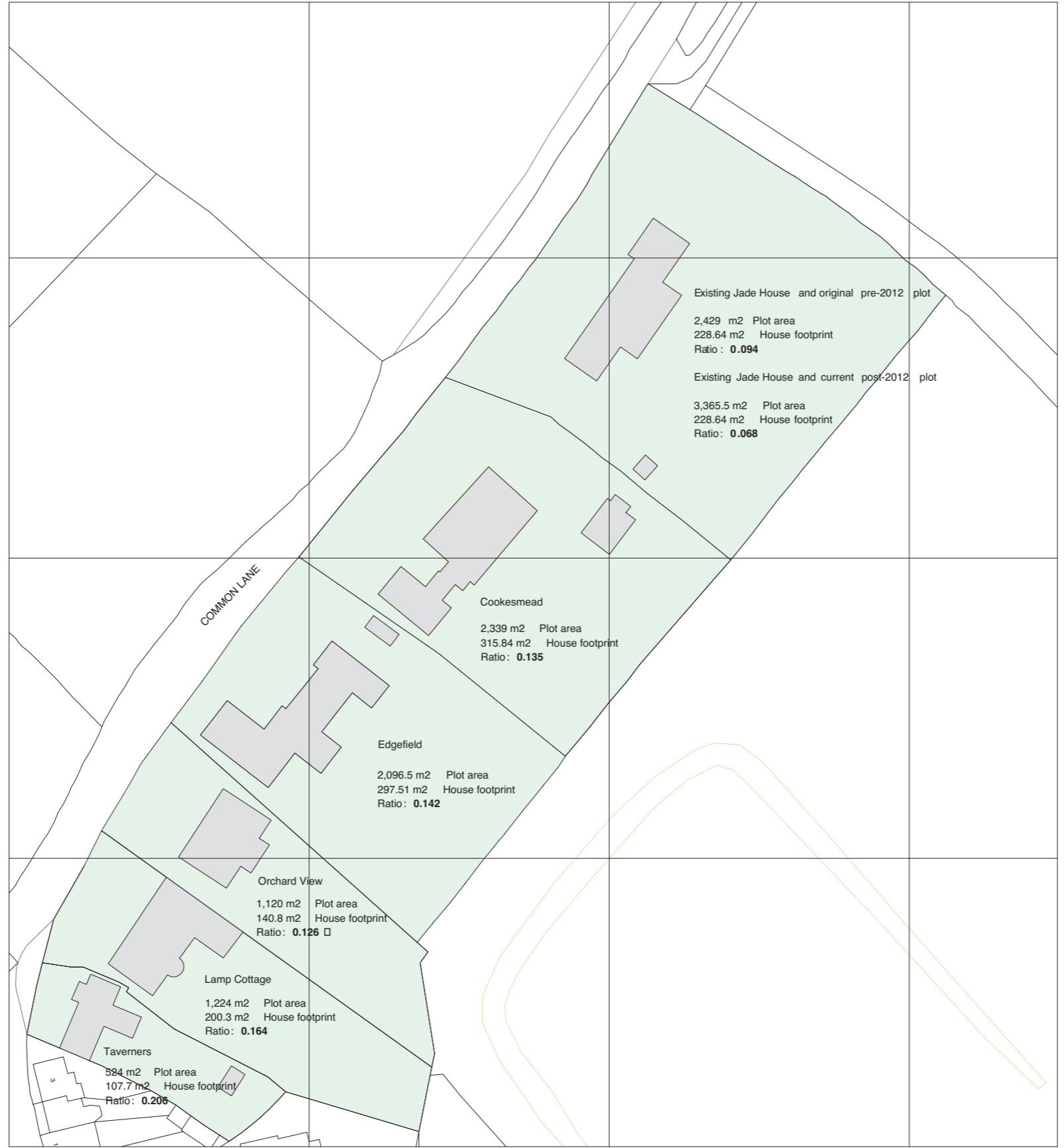
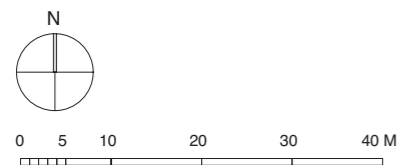
Pre-2012 site area	2,429.1 m <sup>2</sup>	26,147 ft <sup>2</sup>
Adjoining site area	936.4 m <sup>2</sup>	10,079 ft <sup>2</sup>
New combined site area post 2012	3,365.5 m <sup>2</sup>	36,226 ft <sup>2</sup>
Increase in site area	38.5%	

**Ratio of building footprint to site area  
Comparison of neighbouring properties**

Jade House (existing)	
On original pre-2012 plot	0.094
On current post-2012 plot	0.068
Cookesmead	0.135
Edgefield	0.142
Orchard View	0.126
Lamp Cottages	0.164
Taverners	0.206

**Jade House Site Area**

Original Site	2,429.1 m <sup>2</sup> 26,147 ft <sup>2</sup>
New Site (acquired March 2012)	936.4 m <sup>2</sup> 10,079 ft <sup>2</sup>
Combined Current Site	3,365.5 m <sup>2</sup> 36,226 ft <sup>2</sup>



**4.0 Jade House and Plot Ratio Comparison**

The current house sits within a large plot of land, which was substantially enlarged in 2012 with the acquisition of over 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of land to the east. The combined new site area of just over 36,000 ft<sup>2</sup> means that the ratio of the house footprint to the site area is significantly lower than those of all nearby properties on Common Lane.

Jade House's ratio of 0.068 is 50% or less than the ratios for the adjacent properties of Cookmeade, Edgefield, and Orchard View. It is therefore possible to say that the current Jade House has a disproportionately small ratio of building footprint to site area when compared to all other buildings on Common Lane, and most, if not all, properties in Letchmore Heath.

It is not possible to prepare comparisons for the plot ratios as there is no open source data for the total built areas of the adjacent properties, and therefore comparing building footprint as a proportion of the site area is the best comparison available.

Please note that the area data for Jade House is sourced from an accurate commissioned land and building survey. The data for the adjacent properties is sourced from a digital OS Map sourced in February 2023.

Site plan showing existing house and neighbouring properties comparative plot ratios



Existing site plan



#### 4.0 Jade House

Jade House is a large five bedroom house set within a 0.83 acre site located to the south of Common Lane, and is the last of a linear row of large detached family houses located to the north eastern edge of Letchmore Heath.

It is understood that Jade House was constructed in the 1980's by a builder/developer and provides nearly 5,000 ft2 of accommodation arranged over 3 floors.

A brick pool plant enclosure is located within the garden to service the outdoor swimming pool to the south of the site.

A small garden shed, summer house, and greenhouse are also located within the large rear garden.

Timber fence panels enclose the perimeter of the site, and access to the site from Common Lane is made via a sliding metal vehicle gate. The garden is set to lawn at the rear of the house, and is lushly planted with a variety of decorative shrubs and bushes, together with some mature trees. A large paved terrace extends around the house at the rear and incorporates steps to resolve the modest level changes across the site.

Existing Floor Areas	Gross Internal	Gross External
Ground Floor Area	203.08 m <sup>2</sup>	222.5 m <sup>2</sup>
First Floor Area	154.72 m <sup>2</sup>	173.3 m <sup>2</sup>
Second Floor Area	50.44 m <sup>2</sup>	55.97 m <sup>2</sup>
Total House Area	408.24 m <sup>2</sup>	451.77 m <sup>2</sup>
Pool Plant Enclosure	5.0 m <sup>2</sup>	6.14 m <sup>2</sup>
Total Development Area	413.24 m <sup>2</sup>	457.91 m <sup>2</sup>
Current Site Area		3,365.5 m <sup>2</sup>
Plot ratio		0.136



#### 4.0 Jade House

The property is an undistinguished building constructed of red brick walls, white UPVC windows, and a grey slate-effect tiled roof.

The elevation to Common Lane is rather overbearing, partly due to the long rather flat unarticulated plan form, and partly due to the unresolved irregular pattern of window and door apertures. The significant height of the house is particularly evident in the context of the lower adjoining houses, and the long flat tall frontage relates poorly to the street. Details where dormer windows break through the eaves line and incorporate different pitched tiled roofs, and the extended projecting eaves and roofs above the front door and garage doors, are rather unsightly features that disrupt an already irregular elevational composition.

The central main pitched roof section dominates the site despite the slightly lower pitched roofs at either end. The unarticulated linear form of the building creates a certain relentlessness to the overall appearance.

The end elevations are lower than the main central section, and the slight stepping in the plan, together with the numerous changes in roof pitch and irregular eaves lines creates a visually 'busy' and unresolved composition.

By contrast, the garden elevation is less unattractive, partly due to the more formal and less asymmetrical composition, with larger window and terrace door proportions, and a more articulated plan form created by the side wings being set back from the main central section.

Jade House is of no historic interest, and is of no architectural merit, and does not contribute to the quality and setting of the wider village context.





#### 4.0 Jade House Building Condition

Jade House was severely damaged during a fire in October 2011 (see photos above taken in 2011). The Fire Brigade managed to save the house from complete destruction, but an entire section of the house was damaged by fire, and extensive smoke and water damage was caused to large parts of the remaining house.

The north-eastern part of the house, comprising the double garage and utility room on the ground floor and master bedroom with an ensuite bathroom on the first floor, was severely damaged in the fire.

Smoke and water damage rendered the remaining areas of the house uninhabitable. Incoming services within the garage were damaged and were disconnected. Flooring within the house was taken up to access service runs and to remove timber flooring damaged by water. Paving to the front of the house was damaged by heavy Fire brigade tenders standing on the surface whilst fighting the fire.

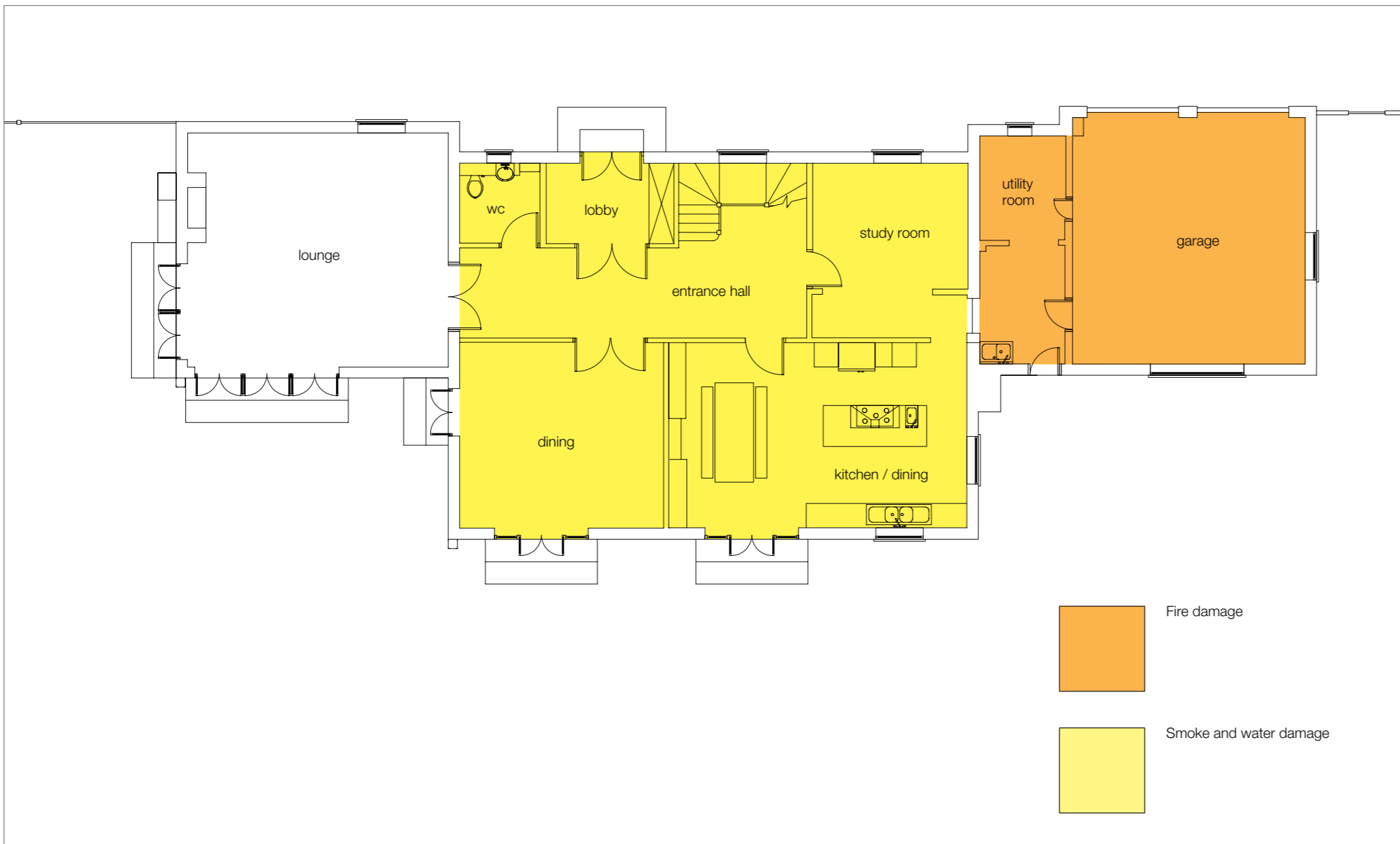
##### Post-fire condition

The house was unoccupied after October 2011, and with services damaged and disconnected, the very cold winter lead to some minor deterioration of the internal fabric of the building. In addition, the void below the suspended ground floor attracted rats, which were also located in voids in the upper floor and wall cavities.

The drying out of water used to fight the fire lead to timber flooring buckling throughout. Access to services has also required the lifting of most timber flooring.

Smoke damage affected the internal fittings and fixtures, most of which were removed.

Repairs were made to the house during 2012 and the house has been in use since.



#### **4.0 Jade House Building Condition**

Following the fire in 2011, the eastern end of the house was substantially rebuilt, and repairs made to the remaining areas of the house as necessary.

The existing house is of adequate condition for its age and construction quality, but it imposes significant maintenance and running costs due to the poor fabric.

The ground floor does not bear onto a continuous concrete slab but instead the ground floor is suspended above a void, which undermines the thermal performance of the house. In addition, the overall wall construction and insulation build up is only around 280 mm thick, which further contributes to the house being very poorly insulated with a poor thermal performance.

The voids below the ground floor have attracted vermin, who have periodically found their way into the upper floors of the house, necessitating vermin control measures.

The floor construction provides very little acoustic attenuation between floors, which has become problematic within a growing family environment.

The option to retrofit and modernise the house to achieve the quality of fabric, thermal efficiency, and achieve a property of architectural quality has been ruled out on grounds of cost and technical complexity.

The damage arising from the fire; very poor thermal performance; and acoustic issues have led to the decision to demolish the entire existing house and rebuild a new, energy efficient, sustainable house that will provide a suitable environment to raise their family and enjoy retirement in over the coming years.



Aerial photograph of existing house



#### 4.0 Site Appraisal Summary

This site analysis diagram describes a number of key site constraints and opportunities:

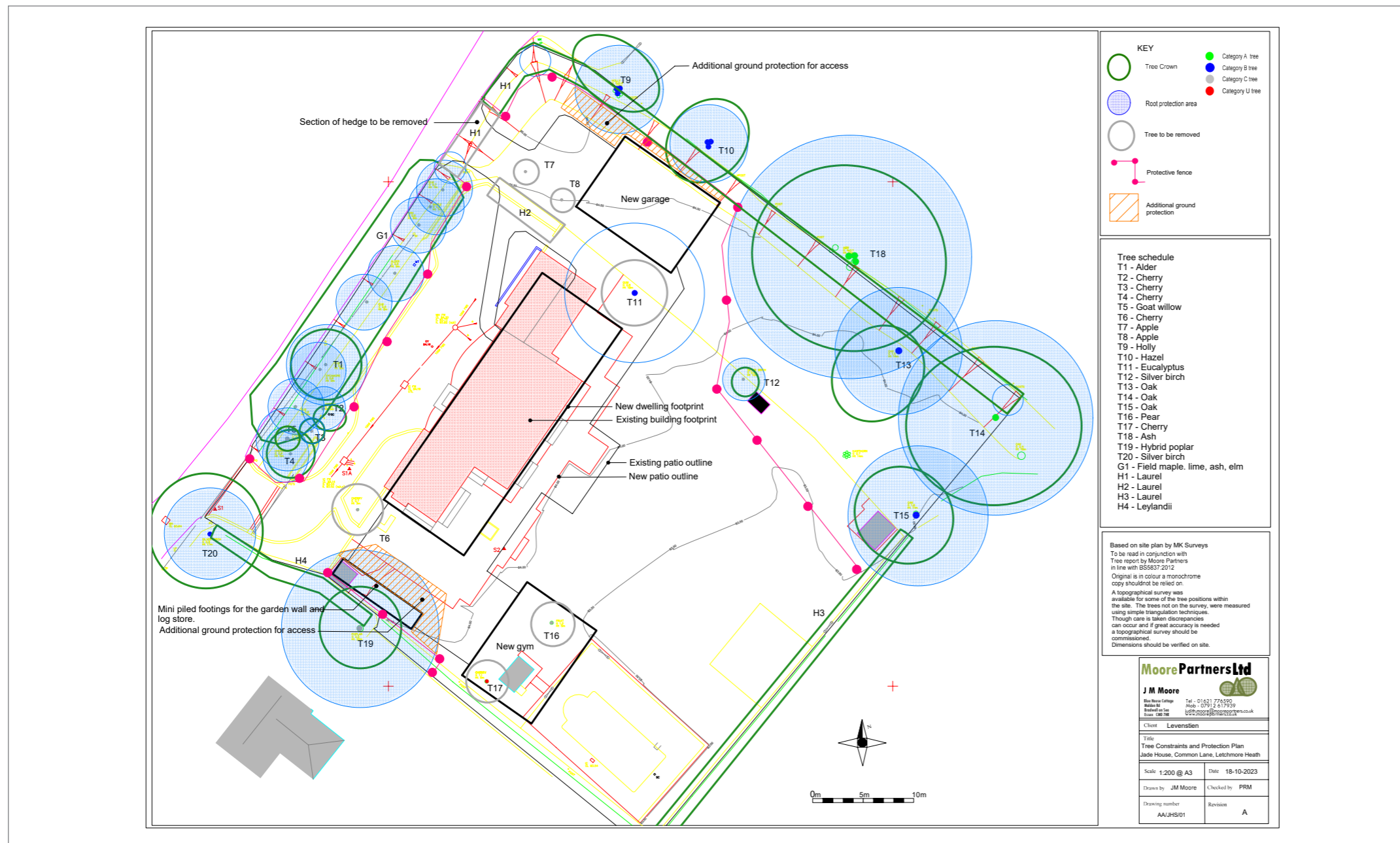
- Alignment of house with Cookmead and general alignment with other homes on Common Lane
- Set backs of houses to Common Lane vary in depth
- Site expanded in 2012 to incorporate a large area of land to the east of the original pre-2012 site boundary, resetting the context for a new house
- No openness from Common Lane into the site or across to the Green Belt and playing fields due to garden walls and hedges
- Location of Cookmead pool-house structure to boundary and position south of the property
- Large area of hard landscape to north side of house
- Site access is from the NW site boundary to Common Lane
- Length and massing of frontage to Common Lane and school playing fields
- Gap between Jade House and Cookmead boundary
- Aspect and views eastward towards the new plot added in 2012, and south across the lawn to the school playing fields
- Optimise benefits of rooms facing south-east through to the south-west for natural daylight and solar energy contribution to the sustainability strategy
- An arboricultural report and tree survey identifies existing tree positions and conditions



Aerial photograph of existing house

#### 4.0 BS5837 Arboricultural Report and Impact Assessment

Moore Partners Ltd. Arboricultural Consultants has produced an Arboricultural Report and Impact Assessment, and prepared a Tree Constraints and Protection Plan (left), compliant with the BS 5837 requirements, which are submitted as part of the planning application material.



Tree constraints and protection plan