
F/YR26/0090/O

**Applicant: Mr & Mrs Punter, Ms G Dunn
& J Bass**

**Agent : Mr Gareth Edwards
Swann Edwards Architecture Limited**

Land North Of Walthoria House, Gote Lane, Gorefield, Cambridgeshire

Erect up to 2 x self-build/custom build dwellings involving culverting the drain for access (outline application with matters committed in respect of access)

Officer recommendation: Refuse

Reason for Committee: Number of representations contrary to Officer recommendation

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The proposal seeks outline planning permission with all matters reserved except for access, for the erection of 2no. self-build dwellings.
- 1.2 The rural location of the site away from the built form of Gorefield is considered to render it an 'Elsewhere' location, where development is restricted to that which is essential to the effective operation of local, rural enterprise. No evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is the case, and the proposal is therefore considered contrary to the spatial strategy set out in the Local Plan, and accordingly unacceptable in principle.
- 1.3 Additionally, the development of the site for housing would, in principle, result in the loss of an open undeveloped piece of land which is considered to contribute to the general character of the area, the loss of which would be contrary to Policy LP16 (d) of the Local Plan along with the urbanising impact of the proposed development.
- 1.4 Furthermore, whilst the Self-Build Unilateral Undertaking has been completed and submitted, the appropriate checking and monitoring fee has not been paid. Therefore, the application fails to be supported by an enforceable means of securing the self-build nature of the scheme, as well as its exemption from mandatory BNG.
- 1.5 The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Policies LP3 and LP19 for the aforementioned reasons, and is accordingly recommended for refusal on these grounds.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The application site is located on Land North of Walthoria House, Gote Lane in Gorefield.
- 2.2. The site is currently an area of paddock land with a post and rail fence to its front boundary with a frontage spanning approximately 70m between residential development to the north and south of the site.

- 2.3. The surrounding area is largely rural in nature, with low levels of sporadic or loose knit residential development in the surrounding area. The northern extent of the main built form of Gorefield is located approximately 550m to the south of the site.
- 2.4. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is at very low risk of surface water flooding.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The proposal seeks outline planning permission, with matters committed in respect of access, for the erection of 2no. self-build dwellings involving the culverting of the drain to allow access.
- 3.2. The submitted site plan identifies a single access point serving both dwellings located centrally along the site frontage. The indicative layout shows a linear form of development with the dwellings set back within the site.
- 3.3. Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at:
<https://www.publicaccess.fenland.gov.uk/publicaccess/>

4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1. There is no site history relevant to the determination of the application.

5 CONSULTATIONS

5.1. Gorefield PC – 18.02.26

As this is a very historical site in the village if planning permission is granted an archaeological survey should be requested.

5.2. FDC Environmental Health – 08.02.26

No objection subject to condition restricting working hours

5.3. FDC Ecology – 12.02.26

No objection subject to biodiversity enhancements being provided at Reserved Matters stage.

5.4. Natural England – 12.02.26

No objection

5.5. North Level Drainage Board – 12.02.26

No objection

5.6. LLFA – 17.02.26

As a flood risk assessment/surface water strategy containing the above information has not been submitted there is insufficient information in order for us to determine the impacts of the proposal.

5.7. Local Residents/Interested Parties

A total of 13no. letters of support from residents of Gorefield. The following points

were raised:

Supporting Comments	Officer Response
New residents will sustain local services and facilities	See 'Principle of development' Section
Dwellings will be in keep with street scene	See 'Character and appearance' section
Site in Flood Zone 1	See 'Flood Risk and Drainage' Section
Site within walking distance of village	See 'Principle of development' section

6 STATUTORY DUTY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014) the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021).

7 POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development

Chapter 4 – Decision-making

Chapter 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Chapter 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities

Chapter 9 – Promoting sustainable transport

Chapter 11 – Making effective use of land

Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Chapter 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Chapter 17 – Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Determining a Planning Application

National Design Guide 2021

Context

Identity

Built Form

Movement

Nature

Uses

Homes and Buildings

Fenland Local Plan 2014

LP1 – A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

LP2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents

LP3 – Spatial Strategy, the Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside

LP4 – Housing

LP5 – Meeting Housing Need

LP12 – Rural Areas Development Policy

LP13 – Supporting and Managing the Impact of a Growing District

LP14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland

LP15 – Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland

LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District
LP19 – The Natural Environment

Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland SPD 2014
DM3 – Making a Positive Contribution to Local Distinctiveness and character of the Area

Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2016

8 KEY ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Character and appearance**
- **Amenity impact**
- **Flood Risk and Drainage**
- **Parking provision and highway safety**
- **Biodiversity Impact**
- **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**

9 ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

- 9.1. The location of the application site is considered to fall outside of the built form of Gorefield and is in a more rural nature of location, approximately 550m from the built form of Gorefield, with limited development present in the surrounding area. The site therefore has limited access to services and facilities and would rely entirely on the private motor vehicle.
- 9.2. On this basis, the site is considered to fall within an 'Elsewhere' location, where development is restricted to that which is essential to the effective operation of local, rural enterprise.
- 9.3. The proposal is for the erection of two self-build dwellings, with no evidence submitted to demonstrate that it is required for the effective operation of a rural enterprise. As such, the principle of the development conflict with Policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan, and is therefore considered to be unacceptable.
- 9.4. In addition, the application is submitted as being for Self and Custom build housing. Under section 1 of the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, local authorities are required to keep a register of those seeking to acquire serviced plots in the area for their own self-build and custom house building. They are also subject to duties under sections 2 and 2A of that Act to have regard to this and to give enough suitable development permissions to meet the identified demand.
- 9.5. As set out in the Regulations, Part 1 of a register comprises those people and organisations who meet all the eligibility criteria, including the local connection test. Part 2 comprises those people and organisations who meet most, but not necessarily all, the eligibility criteria. The Council has a duty to 'give suitable development permission in respect of enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the authority's area' (i.e. to meet the demand for the number of applicants on Part 1 of their register) within a 3 year period, post the end of the base period.
- 9.6. The permissions granted demonstrate that the demand for self-build and custom housing (as identified by the register) is comfortably being met in Fenland.

Therefore, no weight will be given to the delivery of self/ custom build housing at this time

Character and Appearance

- 9.7. Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan sets out several criteria proposals are required to meet, to ensure that high quality environments are provided and protected. Most relevant to the proposal are:

(d) makes a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the area, enhances its local setting, responds to and improves the character of the local built environment, provides resilience to climate change, reinforces local identity and does not adversely impact, either in design or scale terms, on the street scene, settlement pattern or the landscape character of the surrounding area.

- 9.8. Further guidance is provided within the Delivering and Protecting High Quality Developments SPD.
- 9.9. The site is presently an area of open paddock land, the open nature of which is considered to contribute to the generally rural character of the surrounding with dispersed and loose knit development. Thee introduction of built form within this 'gap' site would inherently result in an urbanisation of the area with a detrimental impact on its character and appearance contrary to Policy LP16 (d) as cited above and with no justification for this impact in principle terms.
- 9.10. While a scheme could be designed at reserved matters stage which may be acceptable in architectural and design terms this would not address the fundamental character harm arising from the principle of developing this site.

Impact on Amenities

- 9.11. Policy LP2 of the Fenland Local Plan seeks to promote high levels of residential amenity. Similarly, Policy LP16 seeks to ensure development proposals result in high quality environments.
- 9.12. It is considered that the site is of a sufficient size for a detailed design to be provided at Reserved Matters stage that provides adequate private amenity space provision for the proposed dwellings, as well as ensuring that amenities levels are retained through the sensitive siting and design of the dwellings.
- 9.13. Therefore, on the basis that an appropriate detailed scheme could likely be provided at Reserved Matters stage, it is considered that the proposal would accord with Policy LP2 and LP16 in principle, in respect of amenities impact.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 9.14. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is categorised as being at very low risk of surface water flooding, notwithstanding that at the time of the officer site visit there was evidence of standing water on the site. As such, it is considered that there are no issues to address in respect of flood risk, having regard to Policy LP14 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) and Chapter 14 of the NPPF (2024).

Parking Provision and Highway Safety

- 9.15. The Highway Authority have considered the proposals and have raised no objection to the scheme in terms of highway safety impact.

- 9.16. The indicative layout plan shows a centrally located access point to serve both properties, with separate parking and turning areas provided for each plot. The geometry of Gote Lane is such that appropriate visibility splays can be provided to ensure safe access and egress to and from the site.
- 9.17. Whilst the layout is only indicative at this stage, it is clear that there would be sufficient space on site to provide adequate levels of parking provision at Reserved Matters stage to accord with Appendix A of the Fenland Local Plan (2014).
- 9.18. It is therefore considered that the proposal accords with Policy LP15 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) in respect of parking provision and highway safety.

Biodiversity Impact

- 9.19. The proposals have been considered by both Natural England and the Council Ecologist, with no objections received from either body for the principle of development.
- 9.20. It has been suggested that the Reserved Matters submission include a scheme for biodiversity enhancements, which it is considered could be secured through the submission of a landscaping scheme.
- 9.21. It is not considered that the development of the site would result in any detrimental impacts on protected sites or species.
- 9.22. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policy LP19 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) in respect of its biodiversity impacts.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 9.23. The Environment Act 2021 requires development proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity following a mitigation hierarchy which is focused on avoiding ecological harm over minimising, rectifying, reducing and then off-setting. This approach accords with Local Plan policies LP16 and LP19 which outlines a primary objective for biodiversity to be conserved or enhanced and provides for the protection of Protected Species, Priority Species and Priority Habitat.
- 9.24. There are statutory exemptions, transitional arrangements and requirements relating to irreplaceable habitat which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. In this instance, one or more of the exemptions / transitional arrangements are considered to apply and a Biodiversity Gain Condition is not required to be approved before development is begun because the nature of the development being self / custom build is exempt from statutory net gain.
- 9.25. Notwithstanding this, whilst the Self-Build Unilateral Undertaking has been completed and submitted by the applicant, the appropriate checking and monitoring fee has not been paid. As the application is considered to be unacceptable in principle, this has not been sought from the applicant. As such, the absence of the correct fee means that the self-build, and subsequent exemption from BNG, has not been fully secured and this forms a reason for refusal on the application.

10 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 The proposal seeks outline planning permission with all matters reserved except for access, for the erection of 2no. self-build dwellings.

- 10.2 The rural location of the site away from the built form of Gorefield is considered to render it an 'Elsewhere' location, where development is restricted to that which is essential to the effective operation of local, rural enterprise. No evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is the case, and the proposal is therefore considered contrary to the spatial strategy set out in the Local Plan, and accordingly unacceptable in principle.
- 10.3 In addition, the development of the site for housing would, in principle, result in the loss of an open undeveloped piece of land which is considered to contribute to the general character of the area, the loss of which would be contrary to Policy LP16 (d) of the Local Plan.
- 10.4 Furthermore, whilst the Self-Build Unilateral Undertaking has been completed and submitted, the appropriate checking and monitoring fee has not been paid. Therefore, the application fails to be supported by an enforceable means of securing the self-build nature of the scheme, as well as its exemption from mandatory BNG.
- 10.5 It is recognised that there are no highway or flood risk issues to reconcile and that a detailed scheme could be produced which would provide for acceptable amenity impacts and an appropriate design. It is also recognised that the development of two dwellings would have some economic benefits, such as during the build process, and would also contribute two dwellings to the district's housing supply. These benefits are considered to be limited in nature, especially given that the Council can currently demonstrate in excess of the required five year housing land supply, and would not outweigh the harm identified above.
- 10.6 The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Policies LP3 and LP16 for the aforementioned reasons, and is accordingly recommended for refusal on these grounds.

11 RECOMMENDATION

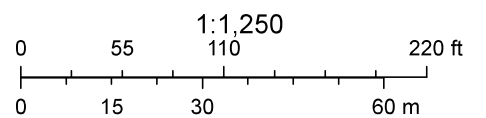
Refuse; for the following reasons:

1.	Policy LP3 of the adopted Fenland Local Plan 2014 sets out the settlement hierarchy within the district, setting out the scale of development considered appropriate to each level of the hierarchy. The application site is located outside any defined settlement and is therefore classed as being located in an 'Elsewhere' location as defined under Policies LP3 and LP12. In such rural locations development is to be limited to specific uses only within a countryside location. The proposal is for the construction of an unjustified new residential property, not associated with any of the specified criteria and the proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies LP3 and LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.
2.	Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 requires new development to deliver and protect high quality environments and make a positive contribution to the character of an area. The undeveloped nature of the application site contributes to the generally rural character of the area and the loss of this through the introduction of built form of two dwellings and their urbanising visual impact would, in principle, be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area. If permitted the development would therefore be contrary to the above policy of the Local Plan.
3.	In the absence of a legal agreement or other enforceable mechanism to

<p>secure the delivery and occupation of the proposed dwelling as a self-build unit, the development fails to meet the definition and requirements of self build housing as set out in the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended).</p>



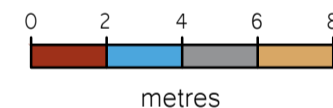
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- General Notes
1. All dimensions are shown in 'mm' unless otherwise stated.
 2. The contractor, sub-contractors and suppliers must verify all dimensions on site prior to the commencement of any work.
 3. This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all relevant engineers and specialist sub-contractors drawings and specifications.
 4. Any discrepancies are to be brought to the designers attention.

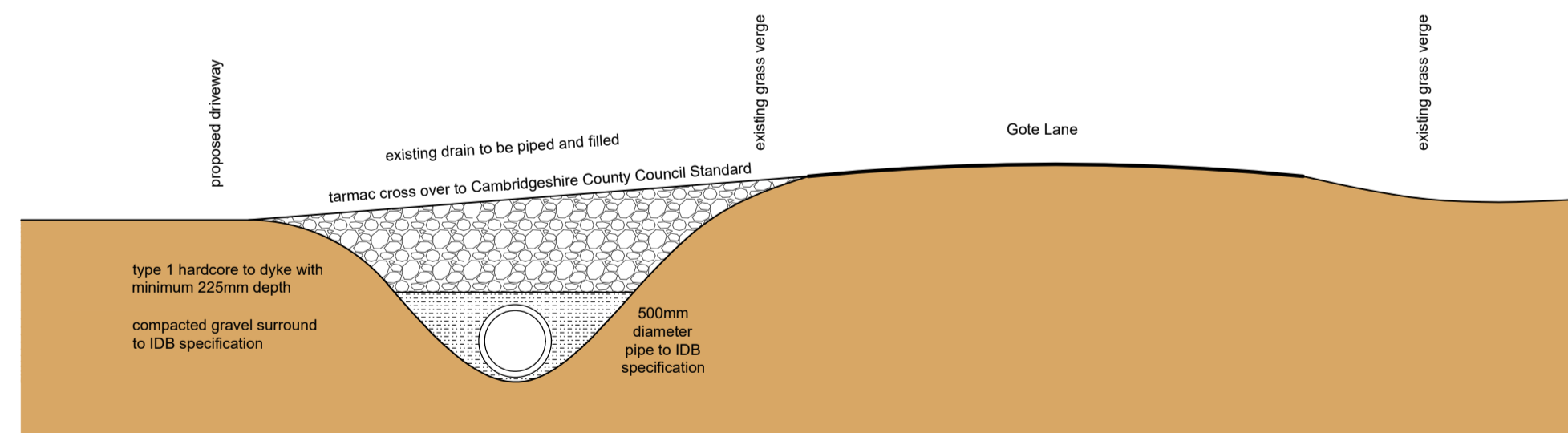


Proposed Site Plan With Indicitive Layout
Scale: 1:200

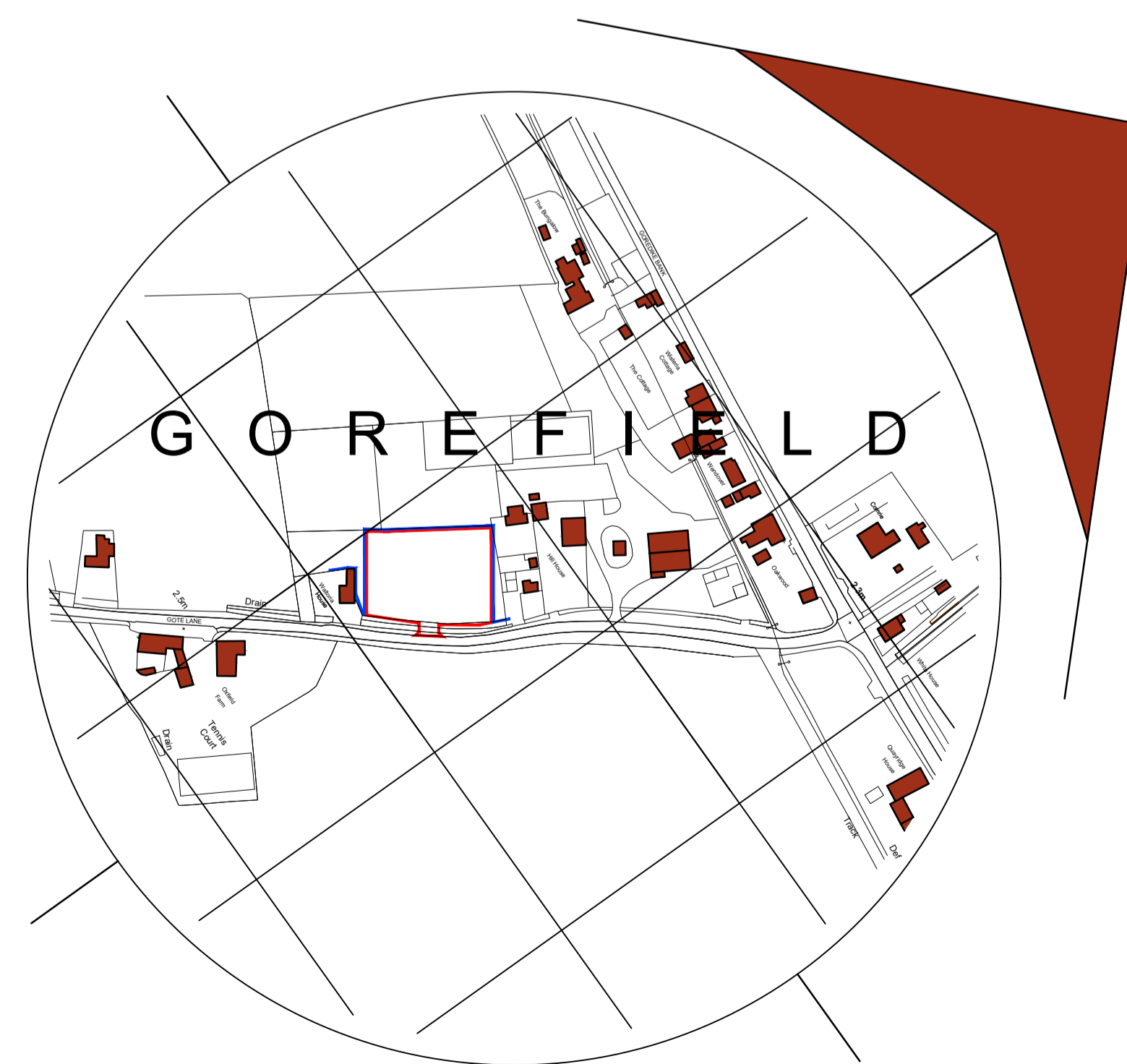
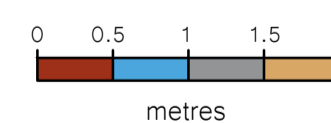


SITE PLAN KEY

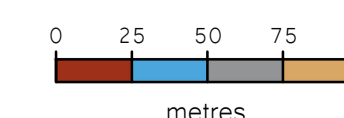
- Indicates buildings taken from OS plan
- Indicates unsurveyed buildings on site
- Indicates proposed self build dwellings
- Indicates proposed access to be sealed and drained to CC highways standards
- Indicates proposed garden space
- Indicates proposed patio space
- Indicates existing site levels set to temporary datum of 10.000
- Indicates unsurveyed trees and planting
- Indicates proposed hedgerow surrounding site
- Indicates proposed gravel drive
- Indicates existing & proposed site access
- Indicates approx. position of overhead electric cables
- Indicates proposed features to be demolished



Access Cross Section
Scale: 1:50

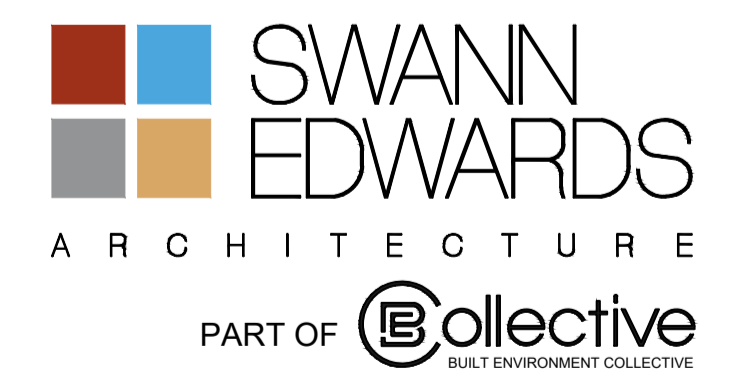


Location Plan
Scale: 1:2500



Revisions	
B	Jan 2026 Added plot numbers & Changes following planning comments

PLANNING



Swann Edwards Architecture Limited, Black Barn,
Fen Road, Guyhirn, Wisbech, Cambs. PE13 4AA
t 01945 450694 e info@swannedwards.co.uk w www.swannedwards.co.uk

Job Title 2No. Self Build Dwellings Land between Waltoria House & Hill House, Gote Lane Gorefield, PE13 4NU	Date December 2025	Drawn by CW
Drawing Title Planning Drawing Site & Location Plan	Job No. SE-2400	Checked by GE
For: Client of Swann Edwards	Dwg No. PP1000	Sheet Size A1
		Revision B