
F/YR21/0597/F

**Applicant: Mr Chris Staley
Wisbech Grammar School**

**Agent: Mr Andrew Dighton
Wisbech Grammar School**

8 The Water Gardens, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 1LD

Erection of a part 2-storey, part single-storey rear extension; installation of air source heat pumps and PV panels to existing building and formation of a footpath access to school field involving piping of dyke

Officer recommendation: Grant

Reason for Committee: Number of representations received contrary to Officer recommendation.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission to erect a part 2-storey, part single-storey rear extension; installation of air source heat pumps and PV panels to the existing building and formation of a pedestrian access to the school field involving part piping of a dyke at an existing boarding house adjacent to the Wisbech Grammar School site at 8 Water Gardens, Wisbech.
- 1.2 The proposal is acceptable in design, amenity space, parking and flood risk terms, and whilst there are no issues of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing to reconcile, there are limited impacts to residential amenity with regard to possible noise implications.
- 1.3 Concerns from local residents were raised with regard to character, highway safety, drainage, and the future use of the development. These matters are addressed in more detail below, and it is suggested that necessary conditions are imposed to mitigate any impacts.
- 1.4 The below assessment deems the proposal to be compliant with the relevant policies within the Fenland Local Plan (subject to necessary conditions) and as such the recommendation is to grant the application.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site is situated within the settlement of Wisbech and lies to the north of Barton Road as part of the residential development in The Water Gardens. The dwelling is a two-storey, chalet-style dwelling constructed of buff brick with concrete interlocking tile roof and white uPVC fenestration. Immediately to the east of the site lies the school grounds and sports field of Wisbech Grammar School.

3 PROPOSAL

3.1 This application seeks planning permission to erect a part 2-storey, part single-storey rear extension; install air source heat pumps and PV panels to the existing building and form a footpath access to the neighbouring school field involving culverting of part of a dyke. The works are proposed as an enlargement to an existing boarding house at the site to add additional pupil and staff bedrooms along with associated common spaces and tutor rooms with pedestrian access to the school to the rear of the site.

3.2 Extension

The proposal encompasses a part 2-storey, part single storey rear extension that will project approximately 22m to the rear of the host dwelling by a width of approximately 13.7m. The single storey element will be positioned to the western side, and the 2-storey element to the eastern side. The single storey element will include a flat roof and will reach a maximum height of approximately 2.8m. The 2-storey element, of approximately 7.3m wide, will include a cross gable roof and will reach a maximum ridge height of approximately 6.6m and an eaves height of approximately 2.8m, both to match the existing dwelling.

3.3 The 2-storey element will include a flat roof dormer projection to the eastern and western roof slopes. The western facing dormer will project approximately 2.4m from the roof slope at a height of approximately 5.4m. The eastern dormer will be smaller, with a projection of 1.5m from the roof slope at a height of 5.4m.

3.4 The extension is proposed to be constructed of materials to match the existing dwelling.

3.5 Infrastructure

The proposal also seeks to include an air source heat pump system, topped up with power generated from PV panels positioned on the south facing roof of the existing house. There will be no power returned to the grid, but instead will provide battery storage for unused energy that will contribute to the overnight energy use.

3.6 Pedestrian Access

As the site is adjacent the school playing fields the proposals include the creation of a pedestrian access onto the school site via a gate from the back garden of the house. This will be achieved by culverting a 30m (approx.) section of the drainage ditch that runs to the east of the site, completed in accordance with the North Level Drainage Boards requirements. This will also see an enlargement of part of the rear garden of the dwelling.

3.7 Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/publicaccess/>

4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

F/YR20/1099/F	Change of use from 7-bed dwelling (C3) to 5-bed boarding house (C2) for Wisbech Grammar School including external alterations	Granted 11.01.2021
F/YR03/0886/F	Erection of a 2-storey side extension to existing dwelling	Granted 01.09.2003
F/YR03/0450/F	Erection of 2-storey rear extension to existing dwelling	Refused 23.05.2003

5 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Wisbech Town Council

That the application be supported.

5.2 PCC Wildlife Officer

Recommendation:

No objection subject to conditions.

Recommended condition(s):

Compliance conditions –

- *No removal of hedgerows, trees or shrubs shall take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation for active birds' nests immediately before the vegetation is cleared and provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. Any such written confirmation should be submitted to the local planning authority.*

Reason: Protected species are a material concern for Local Planning Authorities as per the National Planning Policy Framework and Peterborough City Local Policy. The disturbance of protected species may be an infraction as described within the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

- *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until at least 1 bird box and 1 bat box have been suitably designed into the scheme in accordance with best practice methodology as set out by the Royal Society for the Protection for Birds and Bat Conservation Trust, evidence of the inclusion of these boxes should be provided to the Local Planning Authority.*

Reason: to secure the long-term protection of the nesting bird potential.

Comment:

This proposal presents very little in the way of ecological damage with only the removal of a tree significantly reducing available habitat. With that in mind all the recommendations within the ecological report are appropriate and reasonable. They have been conditioned here.

5.3 North Level Internal Drainage Board

My Board has no objections in principle to the above application, however, I would make the following observations:-

1. *I note that the application refers to an intent to pipe the Boards Still Drain Extension to the east of the property to create a footpath link for direct access to the school. An application will be required to request consent from the Board to pipe this section of the drain.*

2. *Disposal of additional surface water is to the existing watercourse. The applicant will need to complete an application to discharge and a development levy in accordance with the enclosed will be payable to deal with the increase in run-off from the site.*

5.4 Environment Agency – original comments received 23.06.2021

*We have **no objection** to the proposed development provided that your Authority considers that the application meets the Wisbech Flood Toolkit guidance. We have reviewed the submitted FRA (Ellingham Consulting LTD. ECL0445/Shield Wilson dated March 2021) and list the key points below to help the LPA access whether the application is appropriate:*

The extension includes a ground floor bedroom for staff.

The hazard mapping shows where the extension is proposed there could be 1m depths for the 0.5% (1 in 200) and 0.1% (1 in 1000) with climate change scenarios. The submitted FRA states that the extension is proposed on land with typical level of 2.2mAOD.

To mitigate the residual hazard depth the finished floor level of the extension would ideally be set at 3.2m AOD.

However the FRA proposes a finished floor level is the same as the existing boarding house which is 2.75mAOD, approximately 0.55m above existing site levels in the area of the proposed extension 0.45m below the predicted flood depths.

The FRA recommends that there is "0.5m of flood resistant construction and 0.5m of flood resilient construction above finished floor level. The existing boarding house does not have flood resistant construction and therefore appropriate measures should be put in place to ensure that the development does not flood from the existing boarding house".

The Wisbech Level 2 SFRA Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment Toolkit (June 2012) section 1.3.11 states "Finished floor levels for all types of development (not just dwellings) must be set above maximum flood depth ...Where this is not possible (potentially in combination with some raising of finished floor levels) then a range of measures including safe refuge and a means of escape must be considered. This could be achieved by, but is not restricted to:

- Adding a first floor;*
- The addition of a mezzanine floor;*
- Altering a bungalow to become a chalet bungalow; or*

- *Providing room within an easily accessible loft space with velux windows added”.*

The existing ground floor of the boarding house has ground floor sleeping accommodation for students. The boarding house has floors that are above the flood depths.

5.5 **Environment Agency – additional comments received 06.09.2021**

Our previous response is still valid but the LPA should consider these additional points: The larger extension proposed has increased the number of bedrooms on the ground floor by 3 (1 staff and 2 pupils). The LPA needs to consider the impact on the emergency plan and whether the development will be safe and in accordance with the Wisbech Flood Toolkit guidance.

The extension may also now extended into an area at greater risk from a breach in the flood defences. The staff bedroom suite may now be risk of depths of 1m to 1.6m in the 0.1% (1 in 1000) hazard mapping. The FRA has not been updated so assume the previous flood risk mitigation is still proposed which could mean much greater depths in this part of the building.

5.6 **Local Residents/Interested Parties**

The LPA received 13 letters of objection from eight address points, seven from The Water Gardens and one from Pickards Way. The reasons for objection are noted as impacts to character, scale, and amenity, highways safety, flooding and drainage and concerns over precedent. In addition, queries were raised relating to the future use of the development should its proposed use as residential boarding house cease. The relevant material planning considerations as outlined within the comments received are assessed in more detail below.

There were further comments received within several objections relating to the existing covenant on the property and that the proposed development would be in breach of said covenant. This, however, is a civil matter that does not form part of the material planning considerations of the proposal.

6 STATUTORY DUTY

- 6.1 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).

7 POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 7.1 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021**
 Para 11 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
 Para 47 – Decisions should accord with the development plan
 Para 130 – Good design
- 7.2 **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**
- 7.3 **National Design Guide 2019**

7.4 **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
- LP14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding
- LP15 – Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network
- LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments

7.5 **Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance**

Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2016)

8 **KEY ISSUES**

- **Principle of Development**
- **Design and Character**
- **Residential Amenity**
- **Flooding and Drainage**
- **Parking**
- **Other Considerations**

9 **BACKGROUND**

9.1 This extension element of this application was originally proposed as a part single-storey part 3-storey rear extension. In considering the original proposals it was considered that the proposed extension was incongruous to the original style of the host dwelling with regard to scale, design and materials. In addition, the 3-storey proposal was considered to form an incongruous and dominant feature that jarred with the host dwelling and would appear out of character.

9.2 It was therefore recommended that the overall scale, layout, massing and design of the extension be reconsidered, and a revised design submitted for consideration. The current scheme has been amended to reflect this advice.

9.3 The site was granted change of use from a dwelling (C3) to a boarding house (C2) in January 2021 under F/YR20/1099/F. As such the proposal does not require a further change of use, and instead seeks to increase the level of accommodation at the site under C2 use.

10 **ASSESSMENT**

Principle of Development

10.1 Policy LP16 supports the principle of development subject to the significance of, and the likely impact on, the amenity of neighbouring properties and users in its design and appearance. Policy LP2 seeks to ensure that development does not result in harm to the amenity of the area or the environment in general. The principle of the development is therefore acceptable subject to the policy considerations set out below.

Design and Character

- 10.2 The proposed extension will be set entirely to the rear of the existing building and will match the height of this. Thus direct views of the extension within the streetscene on approach to the site from the south will be limited. Views of the proposal will be visible from the west along Water Gardens, where the overall expanse of the entire development may be apparent. However, given the proposed height of the development being no higher than the existing dwelling and with screening provided by mature vegetation to the west of the site the impact overall will be minimal. The proposal will not appear unduly dominant given its proposed height, single storey elements, and available vegetation screening.
- 10.3 Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed extension is substantial, the overall plot is ample to accommodate the development. As such, the proposal will not constitute overdevelopment of the site.
- 10.4 The proposed extension is intended to be constructed of materials to match the existing and as such will not appear incongruous.
- 10.5 Given the above, it is considered that the proposed scheme is considered compliant with Policy LP16 (d) with regard to design and character.

Residential Amenity

- 10.6 Information submitted with the application states that the proposal is purely for overnight accommodation for pupils, with staff supervision at all times. Pupils and staff will generally be off the site at school from 0800 to 1800 and will take all their main meals in the School refectory, pupils will not be allowed back into the house during the day, unless they are unwell.
- 10.7 Whilst it is noted that the proposal will see an increase in occupants within the boarding house, it is considered that the level of noise generated would not be so significant to cause continued noise nuisance. However, it is pertinent to note that if planning consent is granted, this would not indemnify the applicant against statutory nuisance action being taken in the event that noise complaints are received by adjacent neighbours under the relevant environmental health legislation. Further consideration to conditions limiting the use of the site are considered below.
- 10.8 The application site lies within a small estate consisting of a total of 8 dwellings (including the application property). The nearest dwellings to the proposed extension are No.7 to the southwest at a distance of approximately 14.7m, No.3 to the west at a distance of approximately 64m, and No.2 to the west at a distance of approximately 68m, from the nearest opposing point of each dwelling to the nearest point of the extension. Given these separation distances, it is considered there are no issues to reconcile with regard to overbearing, overshadowing or overlooking in relation to the proposed scheme.
- 10.9 As such, the proposed development is considered to comply with Policies LP2 and LP16 (e) of the Fenland Local Plan in this regard.

Flooding and Drainage

- 10.10 The site is located in Flood Zone 3. The proposals will not see a change to the flood risk vulnerability at the site.
- 10.11 Consultations with the Environment Agency returned no objection to the scheme, but offered recommendations regarding flood risk resilience measures and considerations for the emergency plan.
- 10.12 The application was supported by a flood risk assessment that included appropriate flood mitigation measures, including flood resilient construction methods and registration of the site on the Environment Agency's Flood warning service.
- 10.13 Whilst it is acknowledged that the site is at risk of flooding, given its location within Flood Zone 3, and the proposed extension not increasing flood risk vulnerability at the site, it is considered unreasonable to refuse the scheme on flood risk grounds.
- 10.14 However, should permission be granted, it will be necessary to include robust conditions to ensure that the occupants at the site are safe from flooding and that the proposal will not increase flooding elsewhere.
- 10.15 The proposal involves culverting part of the dyke along the eastern boundary to enable the creation of pedestrian access to the school site. Consultations with North Level Internal Drainage Board returned no objection to the scheme, providing the necessary applications to undertake works to the dyke under separate legislation are completed and approved by them.
- 10.16 Issues of surface water disposal will be considered under Building Regulations.
- 10.17 Therefore, given the above, it is considered that the proposed development complies with Policy LP14 of the FLP.

Parking

- 10.18 The Design and Access Statement states that the proposal will unlikely see an increased parking requirement at the site will have a parking space for the House Master and an additional space for staff. There may also be small minibus parked on the site for short periods of time. There may be an additional requirement for parking for cleaners at the site, although these will be required when rest of the staff are away from site which means they can use the existing parking spaces on site.
- 10.19 During inspection, the Case Officer observed ample parking at the site, with space for at least four vehicles on the driveway. Owing that the site will be primarily occupied by pupils with no vehicular requirements and only one additional staff member, the proposal does not appear to increase the need for parking over and above the existing situation. As such, the proposed development is considered to comply with Policy LP15 of the FLP.

Other Considerations

- 10.20 The proposal sees no change to the C2 Use Class (Residential Institution) at the site, which, owing to the changes of the Use Classes Order (1987) in September 2020, could see the building change into a hospital, nursing home, etc (within the C2 Use Class) without planning permission. However, given that the property is located within an existing residential development, further consideration would need to be given to the other types of developments that fall within the Use Class of C2 in regard to highway safety, access, parking and residential amenity. Therefore, in the event that permission is granted a condition should be imposed to limit the scope of the use to purely a boarding house associated with Wisbech Grammar School and limit future further, possibly inappropriate, development at the site.
- 10.21 The proposal also seeks to include an air source heat pump system, topped up with power generated from PV panels positioned on the south facing roof of the existing house. These elements were not clearly depicted on the provided plans. Whilst these proposals are unlikely to cause detrimental impacts with regard to residential amenity, flooding or parking as considered above, the lack of confirmation of their placement, scale, and design may impact on the character and appearance of the dwelling. Thus, it is considered that if permission is granted, these details should be submitted and approved by the LPA to ensure no detrimental impacts to character and appearance occur as a result, secured by condition.

11 CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The proposal is considered acceptable and accords with the necessary policies of the Fenland Local Plan. It represents minimal issues in terms of visual and residential amenity and is acceptable in design, amenity space, parking and flood risk terms. Accordingly, a favourable recommendation is forthcoming.

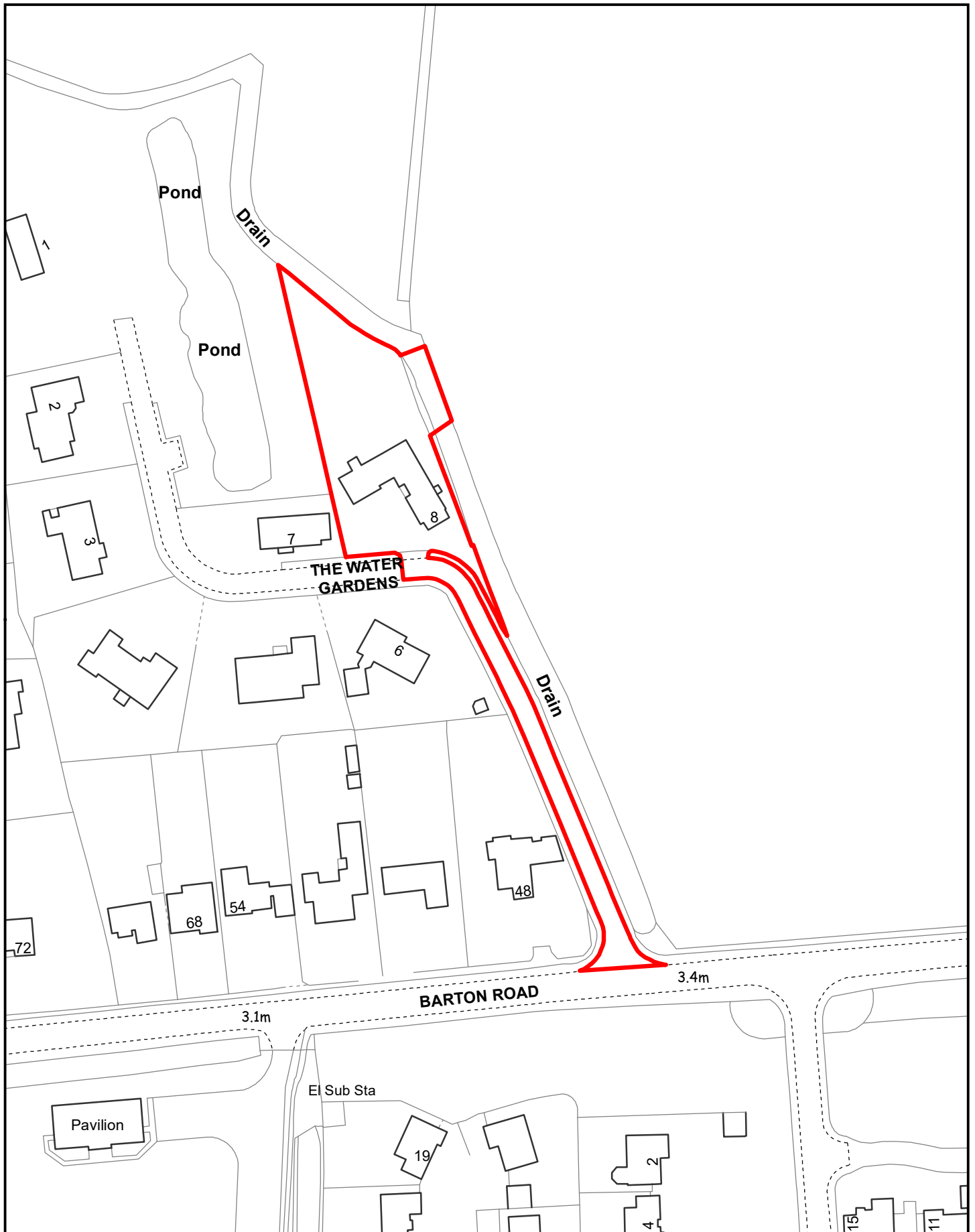
12 RECOMMENDATION Grant

The proposed conditions are as follows;

1	The development permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission. Reason: To ensure compliance with Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
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2	<p>No removal of hedgerows, trees or scrub shall be carried out between 1 March and 31 August inclusive in any year. If this is not possible, a nesting bird survey must be undertaken by an experienced ecologist 24-48 hours prior to clearance and the report submitted to the Local Planning Authority within 7 days.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure compliance with Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act with respect to nesting birds and to protect features of nature conservation importance in accordance with Policy LP19 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.</p>
3	<p>Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved, details of at least 1no. bat and 1no. bird boxes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details and retained in perpetuity. The details shall include design, location and number of bat & bird boxes to be installed.</p> <p>Reason - To secure the long-term protection of the birds and bats at the site in accordance with Policy LP19 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.</p>
4	<p>The premises shall be used for a boarding house in association with Wisbech Grammar School; and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in the Use Class C2 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order).</p> <p>Reason - In granting this permission the Council has had regard to the special circumstances of this case and considers that unrestricted use within Class C2; would be unacceptable in view of highway safety, access, parking and residential amenity.</p>
5	<p>No development other than groundworks and foundations shall take place until full details of the renewable energy infrastructure to be used in the development hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the development shall be executed in accordance with the approved details and retained in perpetuity thereafter.</p> <p>Reason - To demonstrate compliance with Policy LP14 (Part A) of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) and to safeguard the visual amenities of the area and ensure compliance with Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan, adopted May 2014.</p>
6	<p>The development hereby approved shall be finished externally in materials to match the existing building.</p> <p>Reason: To safeguard the visual amenities of the area and ensure compliance with Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan, adopted May 2014.</p>

7	<p>The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment (ECL0445/Shield Wilson March 2021) and in particular the following mitigation measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finished floor levels for the proposed dwelling shall be set no lower than the existing development; - Flood resilient construction measures be incorporated throughout the development to a height of at least 500mm above finished floor level; - Registration to the Environment Agency's Flood Warning System. <p>Reason: To reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants in line with Policy LP14.</p>
8	Approved Plans



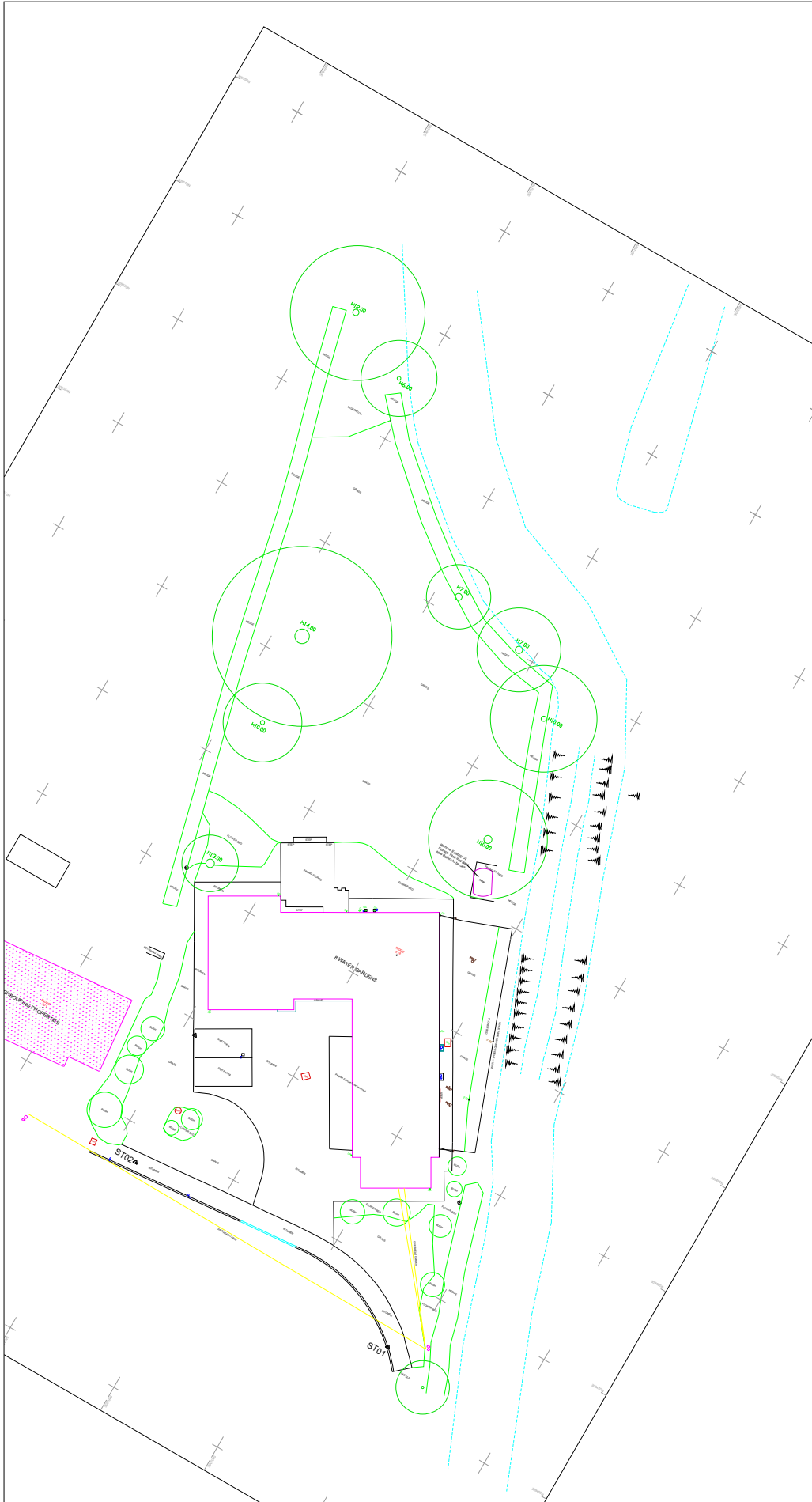
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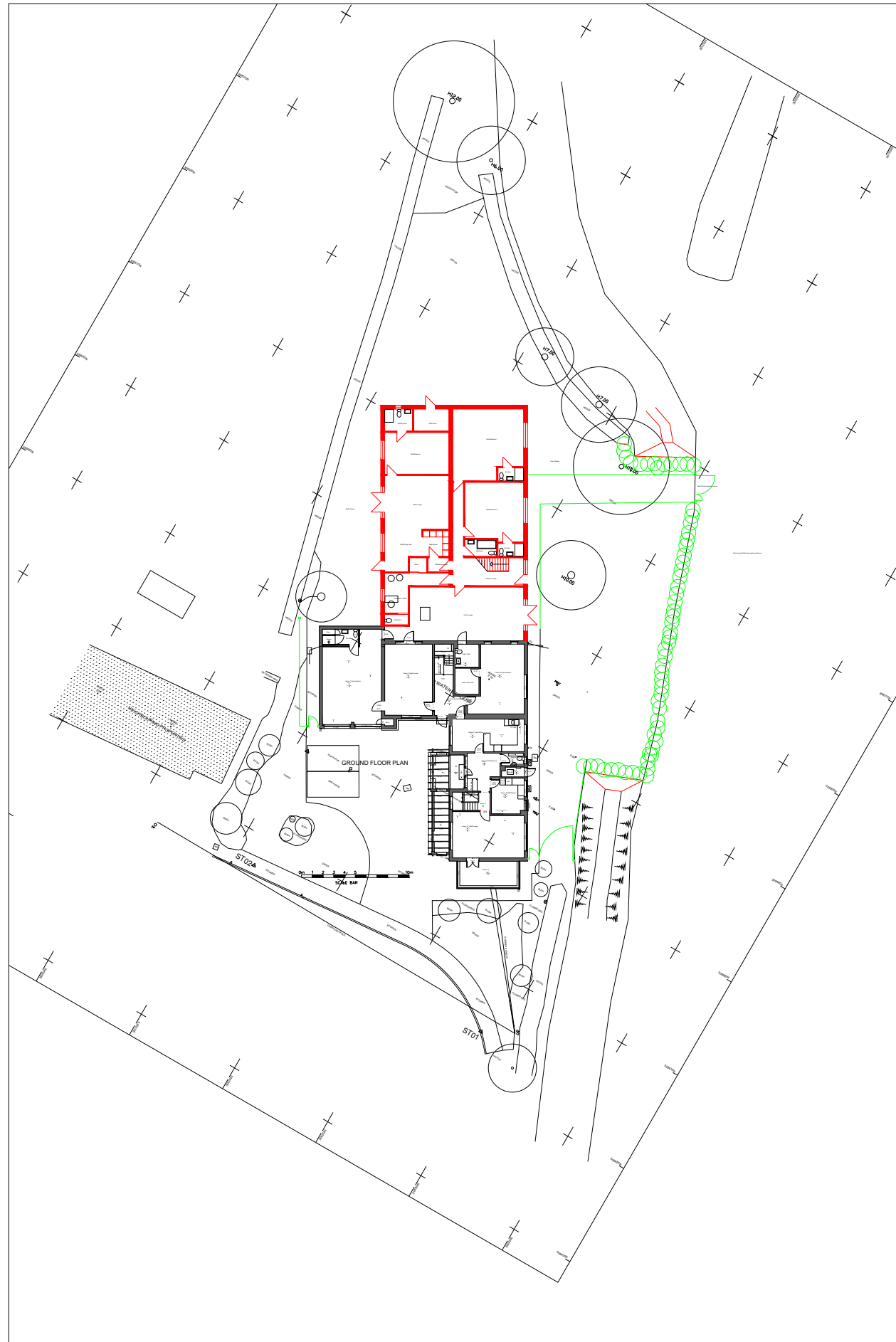
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Existing site Plan



Proposed Dyke filling with anticipated extension

Note:
 We have moved the entrance from the sports field further up the site towards the back of the warren house garden. This is because of the Rugby pitch position so that pupils can walk by the side of the rugby pitch to the boarding house, and not want to cut across the corner.
 There will be a pedestrian gate with a digi lock on it and a larger gate so we can get the mower through from the sports field.

By extending the length of the dyke filling we can create a better garden space, and also give better access for the contractors when they are building the extension.
 As part of the next Phase we will extend the footpaths to link up and put block paving to the field gate, but for September we just want a hard core surface with gravel topping so that it provides a safe surface.
 The school grounds department will plant the hedging when the next Phase is completed.
 For September we are also looking to have the front gates in place.

Wisbech Grammar School
 Facilities Department
 47 North Brink
 Wisbech
 PE13 1JX
 Tel: 01945-583631

Project:
 Warren House

Drawing Title:
 Proposed larger Dyke filling

Drawn by: ARD

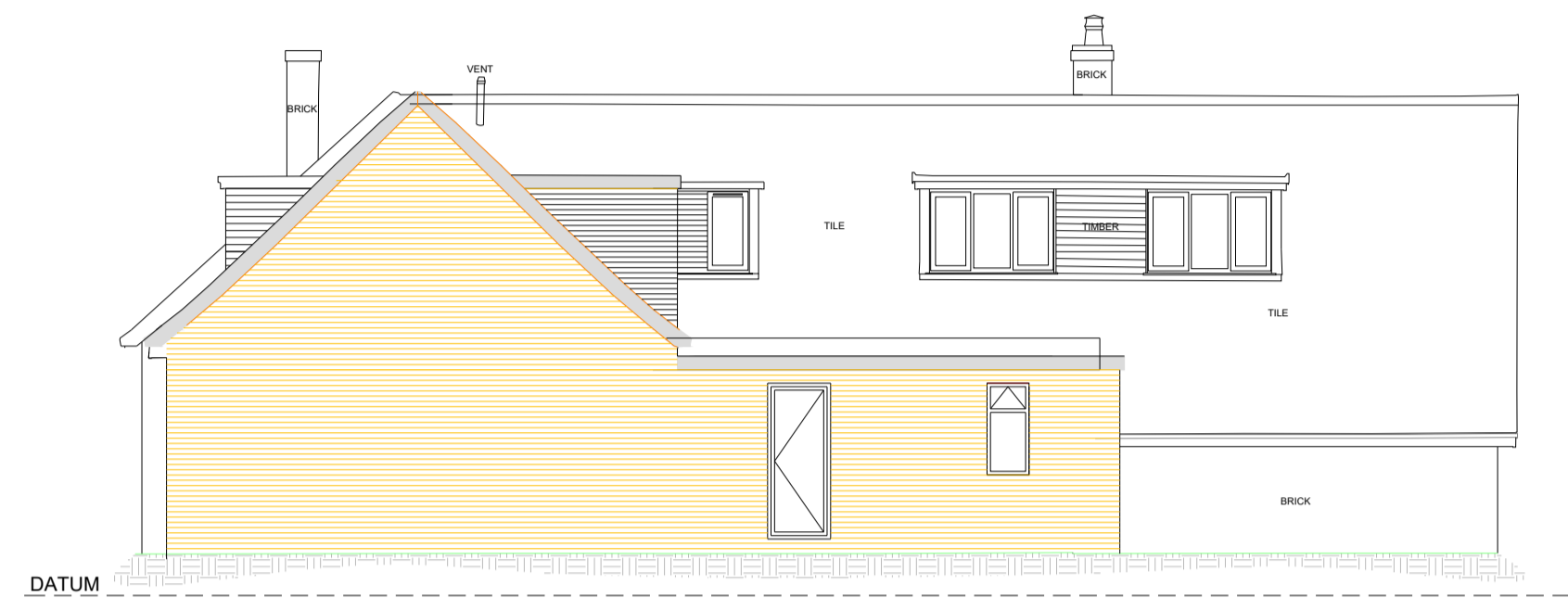
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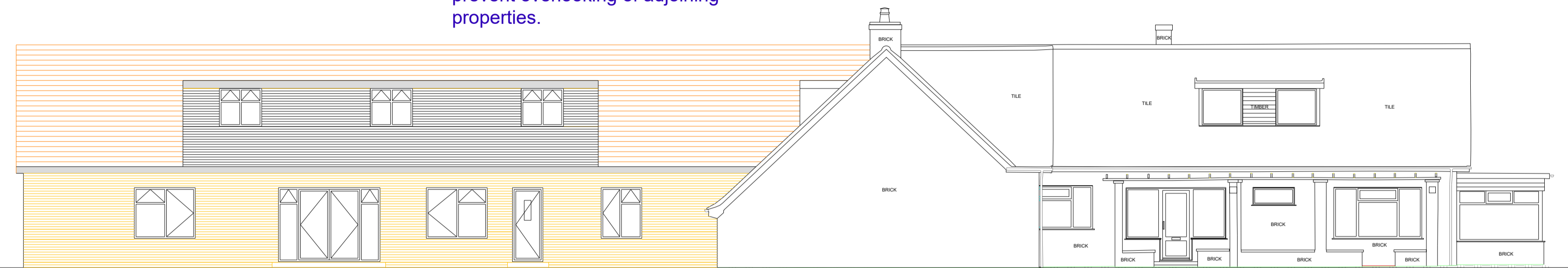
The North West Elevation will be in Brickwork to match the existing house
 The pitched roof will match the existing roof. The single storey flat roof extension will be in matching materials.



NORTH WEST ELEVATION



The dormer on this elevation will be in line with the Ground floor brickwork, to create enough headroom to walk from the stairwell to the bedrooms.
 The materials will be the same as all other dormers on the property.
 The windows in the dormers on this elevation will be in Frosted Glass to prevent overlooking of adjoining properties.



SOUTH WEST ELEVATION



Proposed North West Elevation

Proposed Elevations:

The extension is now proposed to be at the same height as the existing Building.

The NE elevation

This will follow the scale of the existing Building but step the extension back 350mm from the line of the existing building, to create a break in the elevation so that the new and old materials only meet at a junction with the existing building.

The roof materials will be the same as existing concrete tiles.

the Windows will be UPVC in white to match the existing house. The new dormer will be clad in a white shiplap boarding material in UPVC but of the same style as the existing.

The Brickwork at ground floor level will match the existing house.

Revisions:

A New Elevations produced

Wisbech Grammar School
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 47 North Brink
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 Tel: 01945-583631

Project:
 Proposed Extension to Boarding House
 8 The Water Gardens, Wisbech

Drawing Title:
 Proposed Elevations

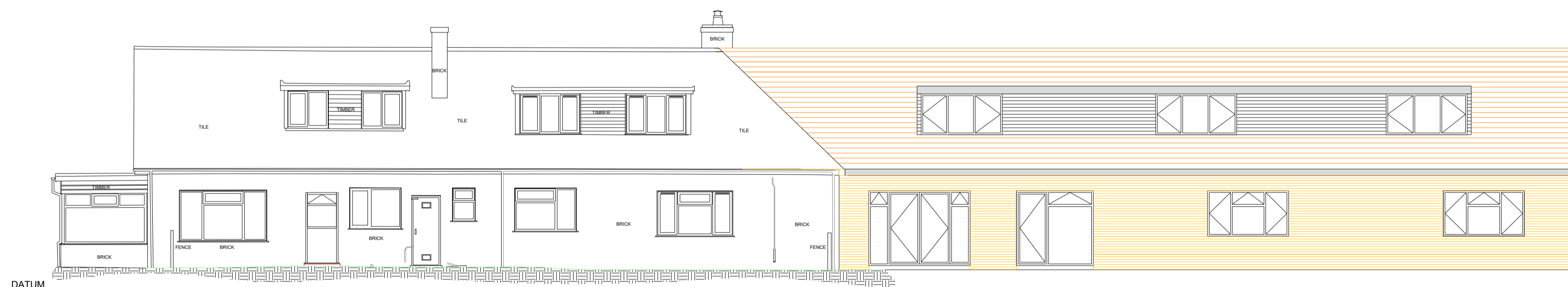
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Drg No: WH - 29

Rev : A



NORTH EAST ELEVATION

