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**F/YR22/0297/O**

**Applicant: Mr And Mrs Bridges      Agent: Ms Shanna Jackson  
Swann Edwards Architecture Ltd**

**Land East Of Maple Farm, Blue Lane, Wimblington, Cambridgeshire**

**Erection of a dwelling and garage/workshop (outline application with all matters reserved)**

**Officer recommendation: Refuse**

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

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## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of one dwelling and a garage/workshop on an area of undeveloped agricultural land on the south side of Blue Lane. The application is made with all matters reserved for later approval, and consequently the only issue for consideration at this time is whether or not the principle of development is acceptable in this location.
- 1.2. Policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 identifies Wimblington as a 'Growth Village' where development and new service provision within the existing urban area or as a small village extension may be supported. The site is situated outside of the existing built framework of Wimblington, hence the broad principle of developing the site with regard to the development proposals would be inconsistent with this policy.
- 1.3. Policy LP12 defines the developed footprint of a village as the continuous built form of the settlement and excludes undeveloped land on the edge of the settlement where the land relates more to the surrounding countryside than to the built-up area of the settlement. The site is currently undeveloped agricultural land and development of this parcel of land would encroach into the open countryside to the west of Wimblington to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area and would arguably create a precedent for further development along this part of Blue Lane. As such, the proposal would be contrary to the requirements of the Policies LP3, LP12, LP16(d) and DM3 (2014).
- 1.4. The application documents detail that the applicants currently reside in Doddington, with the public premises of their business, relating to the installation of fire alarms and security devices, based in Whittlesey. The statement suggests that the existing premises in Whittlesey is no longer able to accommodate the needs of the business and the applicants are having to utilise secure storage elsewhere in the district, requiring them to travel between sites and the new dwelling and garage/workshop is proposed to enable the applicants to work from home. It should be noted, however, that

the existing premises at Whittlesey are intended to remain operational and inter-site travel will therefore remain.

- 1.5. Policy LP3 requires development to be *essential* to the effective operation of rural enterprises. Policy LP12 Part D considers the availability of other suitable accommodation on site or in the area. Policy LP6 seeks to support the rural economy by allowing proposals that meet the criteria of as set out in Policy LP12. However, by virtue that the applicants operate a fire and security business (which is not considered a rural enterprise) and they currently reside at an existing dwelling within Doddington, and the business in Whittlesey has, and will, continue to function with this current arrangement, there is not a demonstrably essential or functional need for alternative accommodation to be provided at the site to continue effective operation of the business. Thus, the proposal is considered contrary to the aforementioned planning policies and cannot be supported.
- 1.6. Thus, given the following consideration of these planning policies, the proposal is considered unacceptable in principle and is recommended for refusal.

## **2 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1. The application site comprises part of a wider parcel of grade 3 agricultural land situated to the east of the dwelling at Maple Farm, Blue Lane, Wimblington.
- 2.2. Approximately 150m to the south of the site is the Knowles Transport Warehouse. There is a current application awaiting determination for the formation of an area of car parking to the north of this. The application site is located on the southern side of Blue Lane, approximately 70m east of the edge of the built framework of Wimblington denoted by the existing development along Blue Lane.
- 2.3. Blue Lane is a single track rural road, with limited passing places and obscured bends, which leads out of Wimblington to the north/northwest within agricultural land.

## **3 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1. The proposal is an outline planning application for the construction of a single dwelling and detached garage/workshop on the land, with all matters reserved for later approval. The proposed garage/workshop at the site alongside the residential dwelling is intended to enable the applicants to work from home where necessary.
- 3.2. The submitted illustrative drawing submitted shows a detached dwelling to the centre of the site with separate detached garage/workshop to the south-eastern corner accessed by a driveway leading from a bend in Blue Lane. From the proposed access and for approximately 50m to the west, it is proposed to widen Blue Lane to a width of 5.5m. The site is depicted to

retain existing trees and vegetation to the northern and western boundaries, with garden land depicted to the southwest of the site.

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

#### **4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1. No current planning history.

#### **5 CONSULTATIONS**

##### **5.1. Wimblington Parish Council**

*Further to last night's PC meeting, Councillors object to the application siting serious access issues. The plan shows access to the site on a dangerous bend where the lane significantly narrows and visibility becomes very difficult. Vehicles trying to pass is almost impossible on the lane and particularly at this bend.*

##### **5.2. Environment & Health Services (FDC)**

*The Environmental Health Team note and accept the submitted information and have 'No Objections' to the proposed scheme as it is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on local air quality and the noise climate or be affected by ground contamination.*

##### **5.3. Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Authority – Original Comments received 10.05.2022**

*Highways noted that Blue Lane is a fairly narrow road which struggles with passing vehicles, especially on the bend. The proposal to widen the road to 5.5m, is a good start, however it does not mitigate the issues on the bend. The bend is still very narrow, and visibility is not good.*

*There is a substantial number of bushes and trees in this location. Therefore, highways are requesting the addition of visibility splay to be added to the plans. This is to ensure the appropriate distance of visibility can be achieved. Please note that there is a chance that more investigation may be needed because it is highly likely that the visibility splay will show that the current arrangement is not suitable.*

*On the plan, it states the following, 'Install drainage channel at the edge of the highway boundary so surface water does not drain from the new driveway onto the highway'. This does not indicate the distance from the highway boundary. The access should be sealed and to be drained away from the highway in a bound material for a minimum of 5m back from the existing highway boundary.*

##### **5.4. Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Authority – Further Comments received 20.05.2022 on updated plans provided by the applicant**

*The updated plans have responded to some the issues raise in the previous comments. However, it is noted that the visibility splay westward up Blue*

*Lane crosses several trees and/or bushes. This would cause obstruction to the line of sight, should the bushes and/or trees not be treated appropriately.*

## 5.5. **Local Residents/Interested Parties**

### **Objection**

One letter of objection to the scheme has been received from a resident of Coney Walk, citing issues relating to access due to the width and visibility issues of Blue Lane in the vicinity of the site and that the land is currently undeveloped agricultural land that does not warrant the development proposed.

### **Support**

Six letters of support for the scheme from address points have been received (four from residents of Doddington and one each from Lily Avenue and Honeymead Road, Wimblington). Three of the letters received stated no specific reasons for support. The remaining three letters suggested that approval of the scheme would allow a local businessman to '*centralise his stores*' and '*expand his business*', will '*enhance the local area*' and '*maintain the growing business*'.

## **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 2 – Applications be determined in accordance with development plan;  
Para 11 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development;  
Para 80 – Development within the countryside;  
Para 110 – 112 – Promoting sustainable transport;  
Para 130 – Creation of high quality buildings;

### **7.2. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

### **7.3. National Design Guide**

Context  
Built Form

### **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  
LP6 – Employment, Tourism, Community Facilities and Retail  
LP12 – Rural area development policy  
LP14 – Responding to climate change and managing the risk of flooding  
LP15 – Facilitating the creation of a more sustainable transport network

## 8 KEY ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Design and impact on character
- Access
- Residential amenity
- Flood Risk

## 9 BACKGROUND

- 9.1. In November 2021, the LPA responded to a pre-application enquiry relating to a similar development as the proposed. The case officer's view at the time was that the proposals were unlikely to be considered favourably as development on this land would be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the rural area as it would directly contradict the current settlement pattern, contrary to the requirements of policy LP12 and Policy LP16 (d); and that the proposal to develop this site created conflict with regard to the principle of the development, rather than as a result of matters that could be addressed at the design stage.

## 10 ASSESSMENT

### Principle of Development

- 10.1. Policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 identifies Wimblington as a 'Growth Village' where development and new service provision within the existing urban area or as a small village extension may be supported. The site is situated within an area of undeveloped agricultural land approximately 70m west of the existing built framework of Wimblington. As such, it is not considered, when applying the Policy LP12 (A) of the Local Plan, to be located within the existing urban area of Wimblington and is instead considered an 'elsewhere' location.
- 10.2. Policy LP12 (D) states for proposals for new dwellings in areas away from market towns and villages (as set out in Policy LP3), will be supported where the application addresses the *functional need* for a dwelling in this location (noted as a) with supporting evidence and due regard to the necessary criteria of the Policy. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF seeks to avoid isolated dwellings in the open countryside unless there is similar justification. While the development would not be physically isolated given the proximity to Maple Farm, the conflict with the locational policies of the Local Plan indicates a conflict with the sustainability aims of the national and local policies.
- 10.3. The submitted Design and Access statement details that the applicants currently reside in Doddington, with the public premises of their business, relating to the installation of fire alarms and security devices, based in Whittlesey. The statement suggests that the existing premises in Whittlesey are no longer able to accommodate the needs of the business and the applicants are having to utilise secure storage elsewhere in the district, requiring them to travel between sites. The proposal seeks to create a garage/workshop at the site alongside a residential dwelling, to enable the

applicants to work from home where necessary. Although it should be noted that the applicant intends to retain the existing premises in Whittlesey and as such travel between sites will remain a circumstance of the existing operation, regardless of the proposed development.

- 10.4. Policy LP3 requires development to be *essential* to the effective operation of a rural business. By virtue that the applicants currently reside at an existing dwelling within Doddington and has maintained the operation of the premises in Whittlesey whilst doing so, there is not a demonstrable essential need for alternative accommodation to be provided at the site to continue effective operation of the business, nor is there demonstrable evidence to suggest a garage/workshop in this location is necessary for it to continue to operate successfully. Furthermore, the provision of fire and security alarm systems is not considered a rural business, that is, related to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, transport or utility services.
- 10.5. Thus, the principle of development of the site is not supported as an essential need has not been fully demonstrated, thus the requirements relating to Policy LP3 and of LP12 (D) (a) have not been met.

#### **Design and impact on character**

- 10.6. There are no indicative elevations provided with this outline application, with matters relating to the specific appearance, layout and scale to be committed at Reserved Matters stage.
- 10.7. Notwithstanding, the development proposed would see a detached dwelling positioned on undeveloped agricultural land that currently forms a distinct and natural demarcation between the developed built form of Wimblington and the countryside beyond, save for more isolated sporadic rural development similar to that of the adjacent Maple Farm. Development on this land would be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the rural area as it would directly contradict the current settlement pattern and would arguably create a precedent for further development along this part of Blue Lane that would erode the existing rural character as you travel west along Blue Lane out of Wimblington, contrary to the requirements of policy LP12 and Policy LP16 (d).

#### **Access**

- 10.8. Access to the site is proposed directly off Blue Lane. The indicative site plan suggests it will be positioned on the apex of a bend in the lane.
- 10.9. Consultations with the Highways Authority (HA) note that Blue Lane is fairly narrow with limited passing places, particularly on the bend in question. Proposals include the possibility of widening of the road, which may mitigate passing issues to a degree for vehicles travelling east along Blue Lane toward the site, however this widening does not offer any respite for vehicles approaching the site from the west at the bend. Furthermore, the visibility on the bend is likely to be unsatisfactory.
- 10.10. The applicant submitted a revised indicative site plan with visibility splays shown to address the initial comments from the HA. The HA's revised

comments note that the revised plans go some way to address issues of highway safety, but the proposed visibility splay to the west crosses through an area of vegetation that may impede appropriate visibility unless the vegetation is appropriately managed.

- 10.11. Notwithstanding, the LPA have received no objection to the principle of the proposed access arrangement in this location.

#### **Residential amenity**

- 10.14. There are no indicative floor plans or elevations offered with the application and as such the LPA are unable to establish definitively if issues such as overlooking will need to be reconciled. However, owing to the relative position of the proposed dwelling, shown indicatively, it would appear that there may be negligible issues relating to impacts on residential amenity to reconcile from the scheme.

- 10.15. The illustrative site plan also indicates that suitable amenity space may be provided within the site to meet the requirements of Policy LP16 (h) of the Local Plan.

#### **Flood Risk**

- 10.16. The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and issues of surface water disposal will be considered under Building Regulations; accordingly there are no issues to address with regard to Policy LP14.

### **11 CONCLUSIONS**

- 11.1. On the basis of the consideration of the issues of this application, conflict arises through the principle of the development of the site rather than as a result of matters that could be addressed at the design stage, and as such it is concluded that the application is contrary to the relevant planning policies of the development plan, LP3 and LP12.
- 11.2. Whilst any issues relating to visual or residential amenity could be reconciled at Reserved Matters stage, the outline proposals appear to be largely relating to convenience for the applicant as opposed to an essential *functional need* being demonstrated to enable the LPA to support the scheme.
- 11.3. It is apparent from public consultation that the applicant is a well-respected and well supported business owner who is valued within his local community. However, these factors do not outweigh the planning policy relating to the provision of residential accommodation within rural locations.
- 11.4. Such policy, both national and local, seek to ensure that only essential development is located within the open countryside and that should residential development be proposed to support such 'essential' development, there should be a clear functional need demonstrated for its provision.
- 11.5. The applicants have failed to justify a functional need for an alternative dwelling in this location to ensure the continued operation of the existing

business, by virtue that their existing property in Doddington offers sufficient residential accommodation for the proprietors of the fire and security business, which is not considered a rural enterprise that may be supported in such a location.

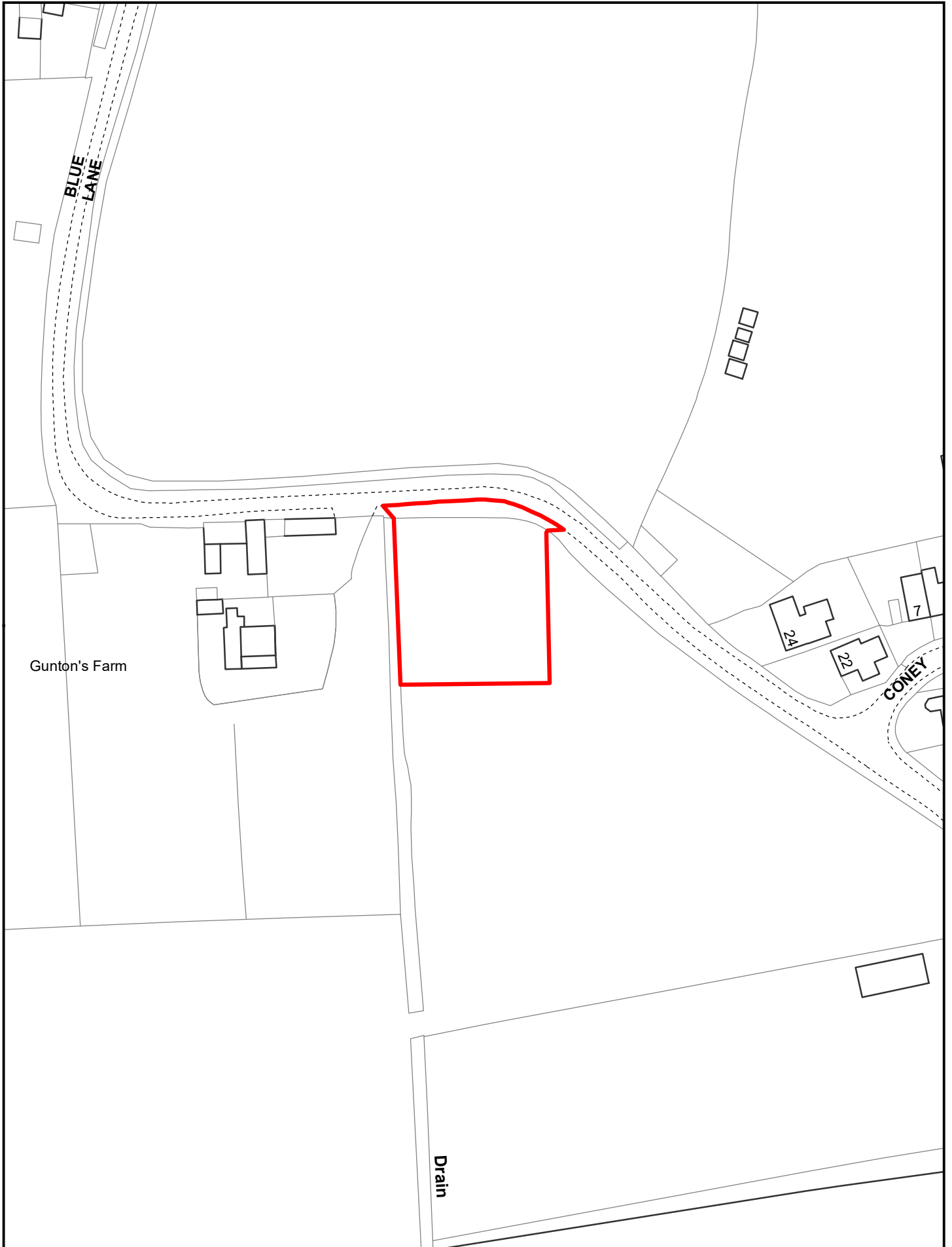
- 11.6. In addition, owing to its location, the scheme would encroach onto currently undeveloped agricultural land that forms a natural demarcation to the built framework of Wimblington and would result in a detrimental impact on the character of the area, contrary to Policy LP12 and LP16 (d).
- 11.7. Based on the above evaluation the only recommendation must be one of refusal as there are no material considerations identified that would outweigh planning policy relating to non-essential development within this rural location.

## 12 RECOMMENDATION

**Refuse**, for the following reasons;

1.	Policy LP3 requires development in areas away from market towns and villages to be <i>essential</i> to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, transport or utility services. Policy LP12 Part D states proposals for new dwellings in such locations will be supported where the application addresses the <i>functional need</i> for a dwelling in this location and that there is no availability of other suitable accommodation on site or in the area. Policy LP6 seeks to support the rural economy by allowing proposals that meet the criteria of as set out in Policy LP12. By virtue that the applicants operate a fire and security business (which is not considered a rural enterprise) and they currently reside at an existing dwelling within Doddington (with their business primarily located in Whittlesey) and the business has continued to function with this current arrangement, there is not a demonstrably essential or functional need for alternative accommodation to be provided at the site to continue effective operation of the business. Thus, the proposal is considered contrary to the above aforementioned local and national planning policies and cannot be supported.
2.	Policy LP12 seeks to support development that does not harm the character of the countryside. Policy LP16 (d) of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) and Policy DM3 of Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland Supplementary Planning Document (2014) requires development to deliver and protect high quality environments through, amongst other things, making a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the area. Development on this land would be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the rural area as it would directly contradict the current settlement pattern and would arguably create a precedent for further development along Blue Lane that would erode the existing rural character this side. As such, the proposal would be contrary to the requirements of the Policies LP12, LP16(d) and DM3 (2014).





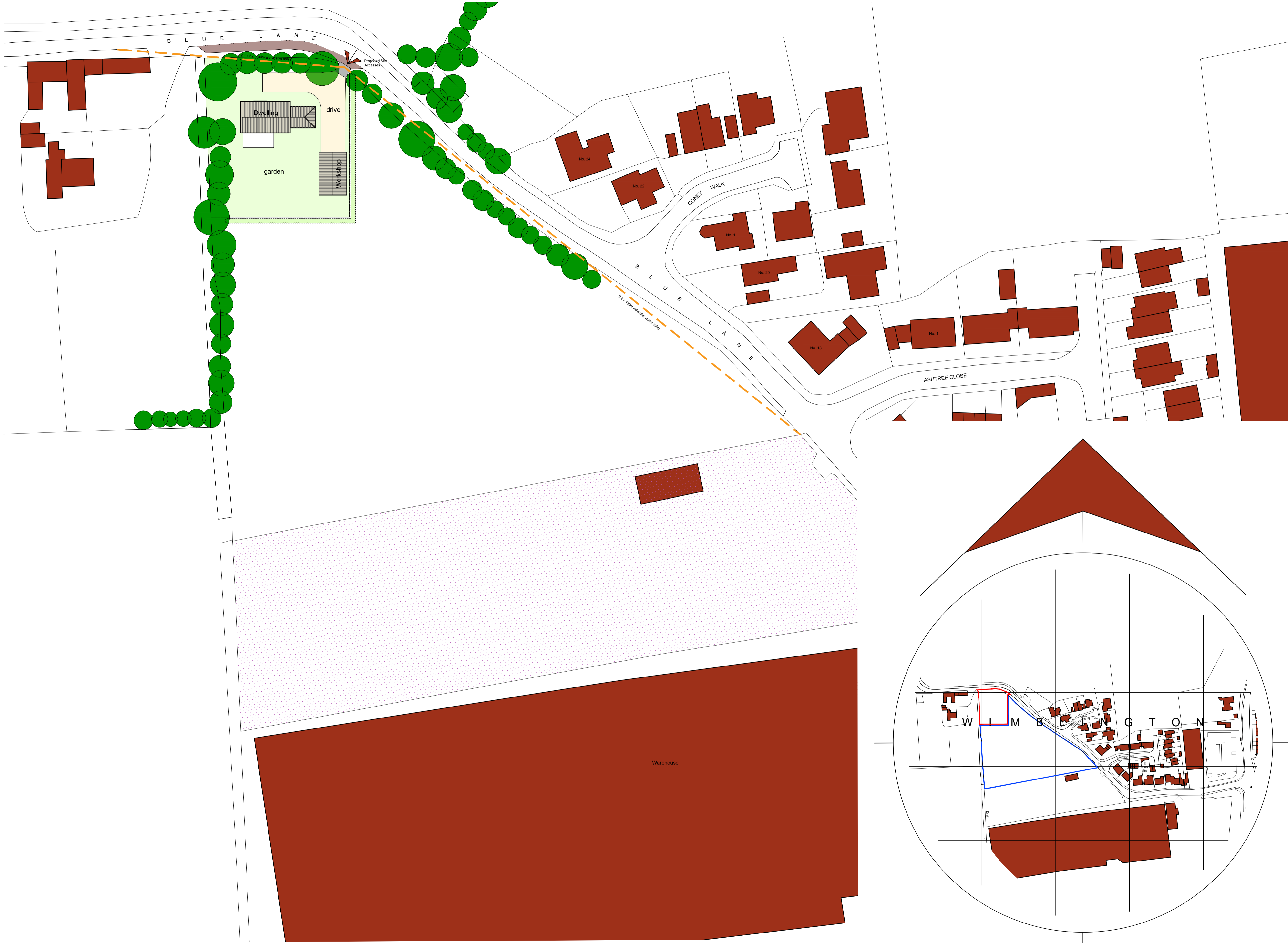
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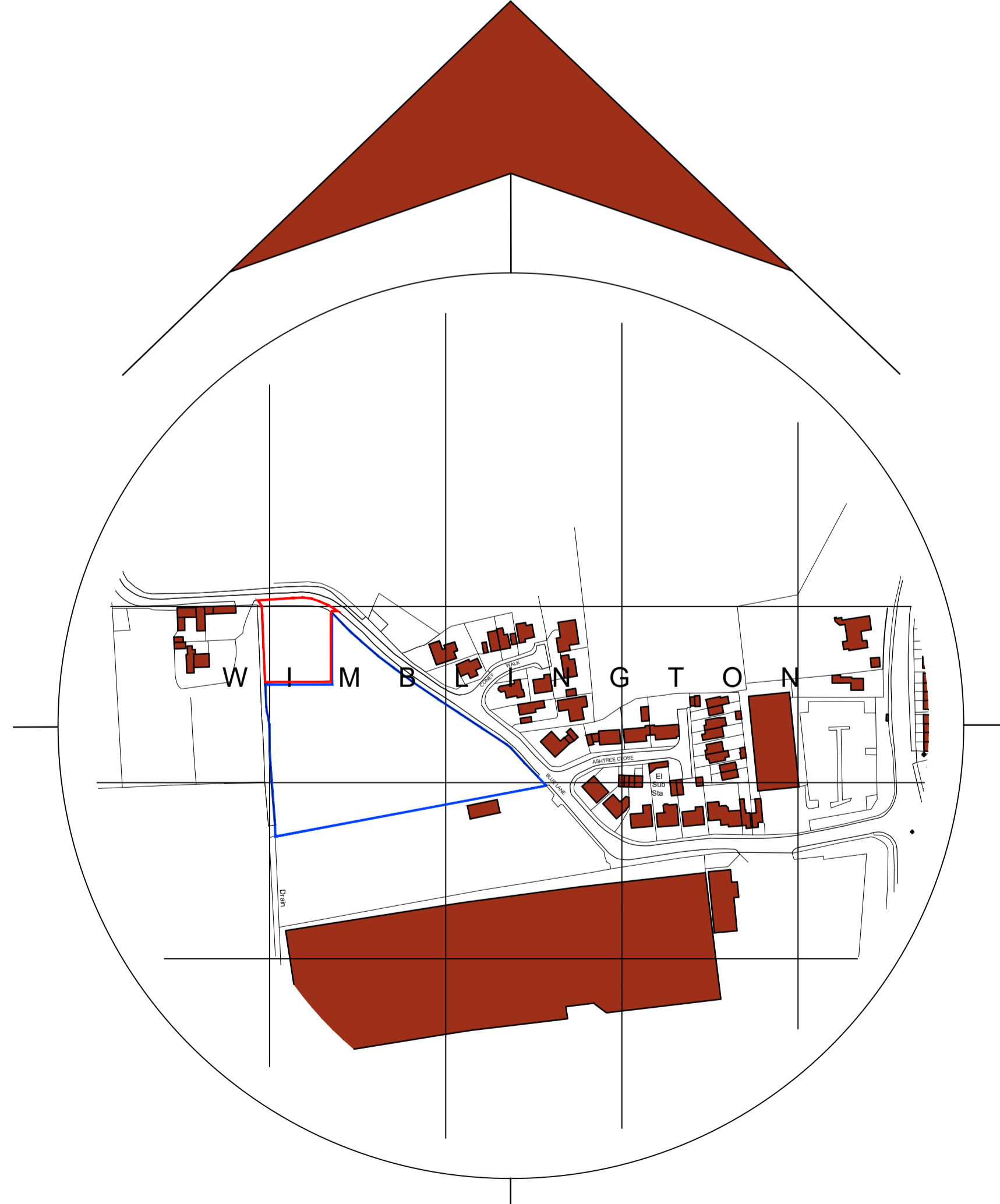
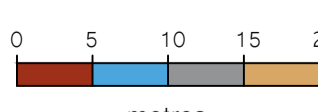
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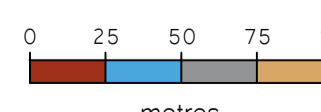




Indicative Site Plan  
Scale: 1:500



Location Plan  
Scale: 1:2500



- 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.

AREA SCHEDULE

APPLICATION SITE AREA = 2037m<sup>2</sup>

SITE PLAN KEY

- Indicates surrounding buildings - from OS Location Plan
- Indicates proposed indicative location of new dwelling (subject to reserved matters planning application)
- Indicates approximate location of existing trees and hedges
- Indicates proposed site entrance to be in accordance with the Cambs County Council Construction Specification. Access to be sealed and surface for a distance of 5.0m from the edge of the carriageway. Install drainage channel at the edge of the highway boundary so surface water does not drain from the new driveway onto the highway
- Indicates proposed garden areas
- Indicates proposed private parking and turning areas
- Indicates proposed indicative localised road widening to 5.5m wide
- Indicates current planning application ref: F/YR21/1421/F under consideration for the extension of car parking area associated with the warehouses to the South

Revisions

C	May 2022	Highways Comments
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FOR APPROVAL



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Job Title	Date	Scale
Proposed Self-Build Dwelling Blue Lane Wimblington for: Mr and Mrs Bridges	January 2022	As Shown Sheet Size A1
Drawing Title	Job No.	Drawn by
Outline Planning Drawing Indicative Site and Location Plans	SE-1698	RS
	Dwg No.	Revision
	PP1000	C