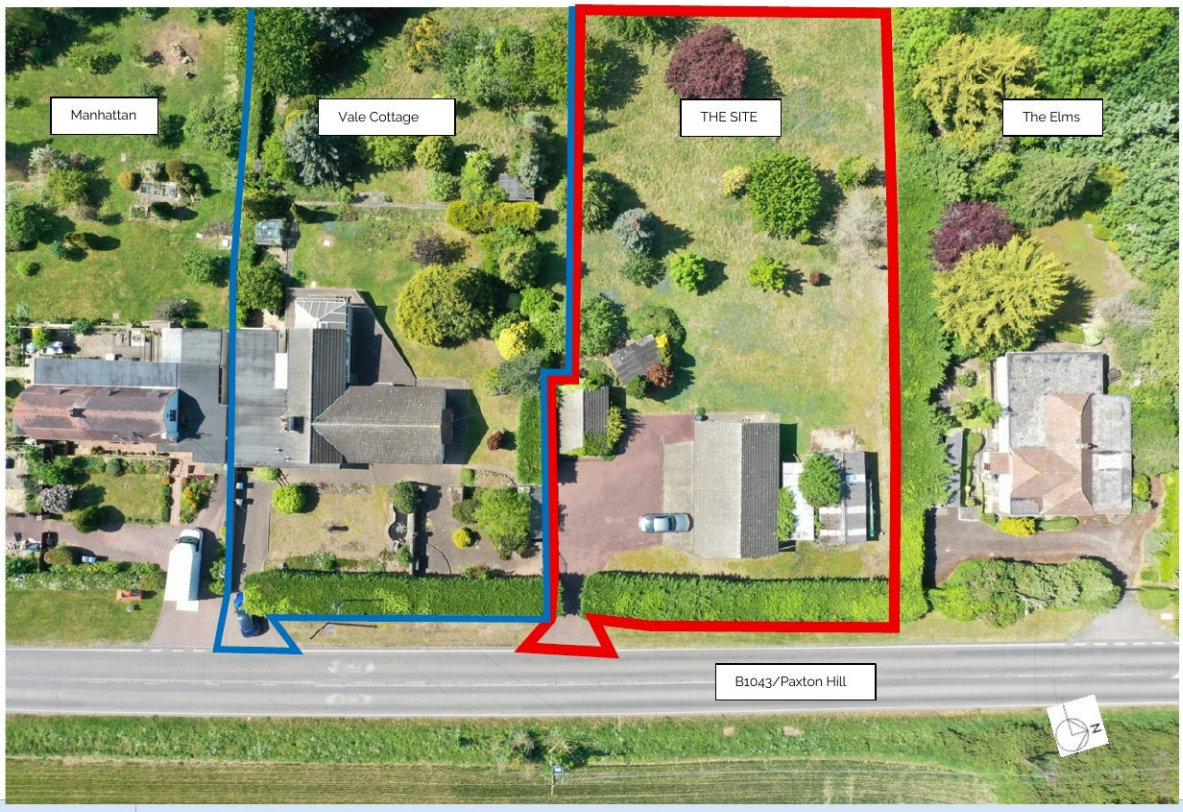
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DESIGN, ACCESS AND PLANNING STATEMENT

Site:	Vale Cottage, Paxton Hill, Great Paxton, St Neots, Cambridgeshire, PE19 6RB
Proposal:	Demolition of existing garaging and store buildings on the northern part of the site and erection of a detached two-storey HUF house on the resulting sub-plot (circa 0.18 ha).



Document	**This Design, Access and Planning Statement**
Companion Documents	Sustainability Statement (WvH Planning, October 2026) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (JW Biodiversity Management, ref RP-BM130626-01, July 2026) Arboricultural Planning Report incorporating Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree Protection Plan and Method Statement (AD Tree Consulting, ref 2026/026/APR Rev A, 18 October 2026)
Drawings	Peter Huf Architecture: b100a Proposed Floor Plans; b110a Proposed Elevations; b120a Proposed Site Plan; b121a Location Plan; b122a Block Plan; b130a Street Scene and Site Sections; b131 Site Section; b140a Existing Plans

1. Introduction

1.1 This statement is submitted by WvH Planning on behalf of Ms Ruta Balandyte-Smart in support of a full application to demolish the garaging and store buildings on the northern part of the Vale Cottage plot and to erect a detached two-storey HUF house on the resulting sub-plot of about 0.18 ha. The existing bungalow and the remainder of its garden are retained and are unaffected.

1.2 The statement combines the design and access statement with the planning case. It describes the site and the proposal, explains the design approach and the access arrangements, and shows that the proposal falls within the forms of development that the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) says should be approved outside settlements, in a district that cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land. A separate Sustainability Statement sets out the energy, carbon and biodiversity measures.

2. Site and Surroundings

2.1 Vale Cottage is a single-storey rendered bungalow standing in a generous plot on the west side of Paxton Hill (the B1043), some 500 m south of the built-up area of Great Paxton. The plot runs back from the road to the East Coast Main Line, and the land falls steadily westwards towards the railway and the Great Ouse valley beyond it. The bungalow stands on the southern side of the plot, below road level and screened from Paxton Hill by a tall conifer hedge.



2.2 The application site is the northern part of the plot nearest the road: a sub-plot of 1,805 m^2 (c. 0.18 ha) containing four outbuildings with a combined footprint of 165 m^2 (a brick garage with a tiled pitched roof, a corrugated-metal shed, a smaller brick store and a timber summerhouse), a dilapidated caravan and areas of hardstanding. It has its own vehicular access onto Paxton Hill, separate from the access serving the bungalow.

2.3 The sub-plot is enclosed on all sides: by The Elms, a bungalow, to the north; by the Vale Cottage bungalow to the south; and by the retained rear garden of Vale Cottage to the west,

with the railway beyond. A thick, healthy cypress hedge along the northern and eastern boundaries largely screens the site from the road. The trees of greatest value in the Vale Cottage garden stand on the slope to the rear, outside the application site.

2.4 Paxton Hill between Great Paxton and St Neots carries a loose ribbon of detached houses in generous plots on its western side: Manhattan, Vale Cottage, The Elms and Lingdale stand in a continuous group, with Trees beyond the open land north of Lingdale. All are single-storey and all sit behind hedges and tree belts. The national speed limit applies and there is no footway. Farmland lies to the east. The site is in Flood Zone 1; it is not in a conservation area or the Green Belt, contains no protected trees and is not near any listed building. Little Paxton Pits SSSI and Local Nature Reserve lie some 600 m to the west, beyond the railway and the river.

3. Planning History

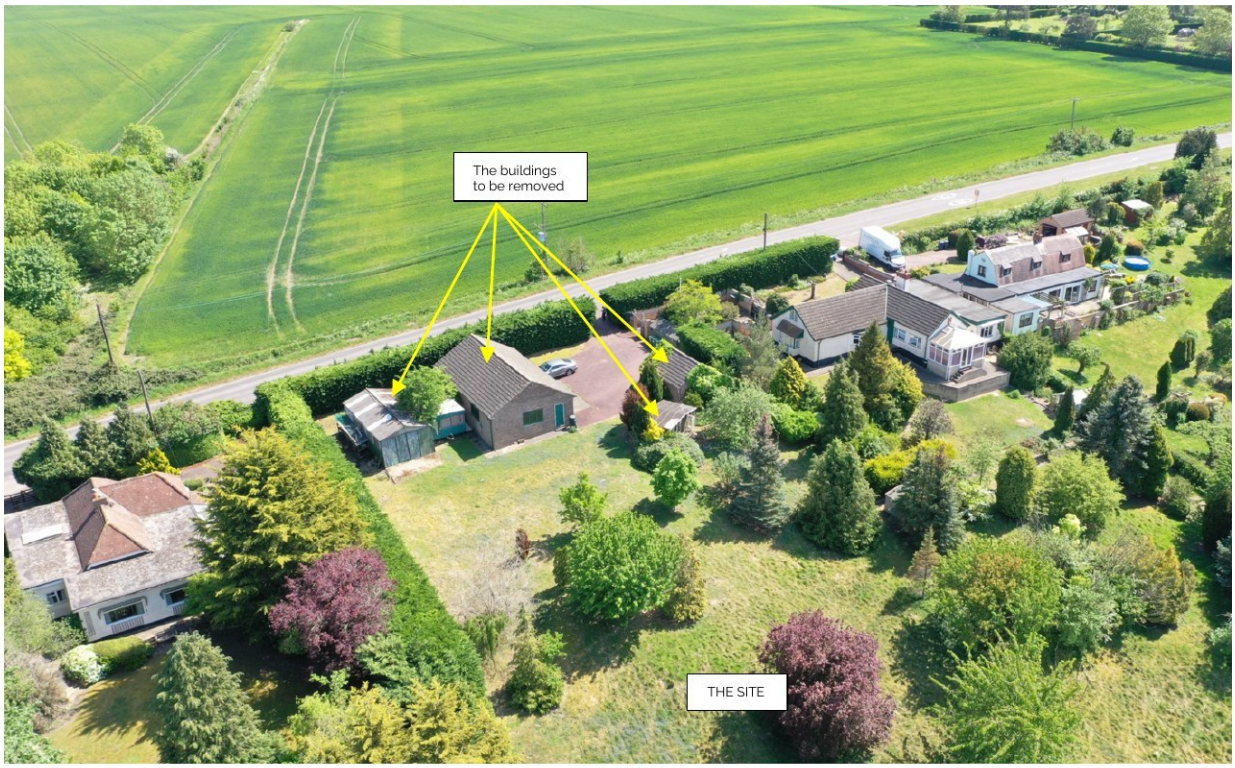
3.1 Vale Cottage itself has no planning history of relevance. The history of this stretch of Paxton Hill is dominated by the land north of Lingdale, two plots to the north, where new dwellings have repeatedly been refused:

Reference	Decision	Proposal and findings
0503573OUT	Refused 2006	Outline, three dwellings on land north of Lingdale.
0701275OUT	Refused 2007; appeal dismissed 2 June 2008 (APP/H0520/A/07/2056336)	Two or three dwellings and a footpath. The Inspector found the open orchard land to be in the countryside, amongst sporadic development along Paxton Hill; building on it would consolidate built development and be visually prominent.
18/70099/PENQ and 18/70196/PENQ	Pre-application advice 2018	Three bungalows not supported. Two bungalows could be visually acceptable while the tilted balance applied, before the Local Plan was adopted.
19/00759/OUT	Refused 22 November 2019	Two dwellings with garages and a new access on 0.7 ha. Single reason: significant encroachment of built development into the countryside, extending ribbon and fragmented development, contrary to LP 10(b). Environmental Health, Highways, the Tree Officer and the Wildlife Trust raised no objection. The Council then had a five-year housing land supply.
24/00654/HHFUL	Approved 2024	Single-storey side extension and roof replacement at Lingdale.

3.2 Those refusals concerned 0.7 ha of open garden and orchard land, two or three new houses and a new access, at a time when the Council could demonstrate a five-year supply and national policy gave no express support to infilling within groups of houses outside settlements. Each of those points has since changed, as Sections 7 and 8 explain.

4. The Proposal

4.1 The four outbuildings and the caravan will be removed and a detached four-bedroom house built on the sub-plot, with a detached garage and carport near the entrance. The existing access is retained and widened to 3.1 m.



4.2 The house is set into the slope. From Paxton Hill it reads as a single-storey, flat-roofed pavilion of 13.6 m by 10 m (121.6 m^2 gross external area). The lower floor (120.8 m^2) is cut into the falling ground: it is below ground on the road side, lit by two lightwells, and opens at garden level on the west where the land is a storey lower. The ground floor contains the entrance hall, kitchen, dining and living space opening onto a west-facing terrace, a guest bedroom with en-suite and a WC; the lower floor contains the principal bedroom suite, two further bedrooms, a bathroom and the plant and utility room. The gross internal area is 210.8 m^2.

4.3 The roof is a shallow 10° monopitch rising from the road side towards the garden, with clerestory glazing beneath the high eaves to the west. It is finished in natural pebbles and carries the photovoltaic array, laid flat so that it is not seen from the road. Measured from the lower floor at the rear the building is 7.8 m high; the street scene (drawing b130a) shows it standing behind the retained hedge at a similar height to the outbuildings it replaces and below the ridges of the neighbouring bungalows.

4.4 The house is a HUF Haus: a post-and-beam frame of laminated Scandinavian spruce stained dark grey, with white rendered wall panels and argon-filled triple glazing. The garage and carport (39.9 m^2, 3.2 m high) share the same frame and pebble flat roof.

4.5 An air source heat pump stands on a concrete base on the north side of the house. Foul drainage will be to a package treatment plant and surface water to soakaways, both to be designed by the drainage engineer following soil investigation. A 7 kW electric vehicle charging point, a bin store and a utilities cabinet are provided beside the drive near the entrance.

4.6 The boundary hedges are retained. A group of three Lawson cypress, a horse chestnut, an ornamental pear and a further Lawson cypress, all of low (category C) quality, and one moderate-quality (category B) wild cherry are removed to make room for the house, the basement excavation and the drive, together with a weeping willow in terminal decline (category U) and a short length of the frontage hedge at the access. None is visible from the road. The landscaping shown on the site plan is indicative; a detailed scheme of native planting, including new frontage trees whose landscape value will in time exceed that of the trees removed, can be agreed by condition.

5. Design

5.1 **Context.** The defining characteristics of this part of Paxton Hill are single-storey houses in large plots, set well back behind hedges and trees, on land that falls away from the road to the river valley. The design responds directly to each of them.

5.2 **Amount.** The above-ground footprint of the house and carport, about 162 m^2, is no greater than the 165 m^2 of outbuildings removed, and the caravan goes too. The built presence seen from the road is not increased; it is replaced by a single, well-ordered building.

5.3 **Layout.** The house is placed in the middle of the sub-plot, off both side boundaries and behind the frontage hedge, with the garden to the west. The garage and carport are kept close to the entrance so that vehicles and hardstanding stay near the road and the rest of the plot remains green. The existing access is reused, so no new break is made in the frontage hedge.

5.4 **Scale.** Half the accommodation is placed below road-side ground level by using the slope. The result is a building that presents a single storey to Paxton Hill, lower than the neighbouring bungalows, with its two-storey elevation facing west over the retained garden where it is screened by the plot's own trees and seen, if at all, against the backdrop of the existing houses and tree belt. The roof rises away from the road, so the tallest part of the building is the furthest from public view.

5.5 **Appearance.** The HUF house is an honest, lightweight timber structure with a simple palette of dark grey frame, white render and glass, under deep overhanging eaves. White render is the finish of Vale Cottage itself, and the dark frame and planted setting give the house a recessive character. It is a building of exceptional architectural and sustainability quality, designed and detailed by the manufacturer's own architects, and attracts substantial weight under Policy DP3(5) of the Framework.

5.6 **Landscaping.** The retained hedges and trees provide an established setting from day one. New native hedge and tree planting along the western and southern edges of the sub-plot, together with the compensatory planting recommended in the arboricultural report, will reinforce the enclosure of the site and benefit wildlife.

5.7 The proposal meets the design principles of Policies LP 11 and LP 12 and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD: it draws its siting, scale and materials from its context, makes efficient use of a constrained plot, provides parking, cycle and bin storage without letting them dominate, and achieves very high standards of energy and water efficiency (LP 12(j)).

6. Access

6.1 Vehicular access is from the existing, lawfully used entrance onto Paxton Hill, widened to 3.1 m. The drive is at least 3.7 m wide and will be built to carry a fire appliance (12.5 t to 17.5 t, to be confirmed with the Fire Service). Visibility splays can be provided along the frontage, within the highway verge and land in the applicant's control, to the standard the Highway Authority requires. In 2019 the Highway Authority raised no objection to a wholly new access

serving two dwellings a short distance to the north; a single dwelling using an existing access generates fewer movements than that scheme and no highway safety concern arises.

6.2 The garage, carport and drive provide at least three parking spaces, with a 7 kW charging point. Four secure, covered cycle spaces are provided in the garage, one per bedroom in accordance with Policy LP 17. Bins are stored beside the drive near the entrance for kerbside collection.

6.3 The approach from the drive to the front door is level, the entrance floor level (36.60) being only 0.23 m above the garage floor, and the HUF system readily achieves the accessible and adaptable standard (M4(2)). All the living accommodation, a bedroom and a WC are on the entrance level.

7. Planning Policy

7.1 **Development plan.** Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (adopted May 2019) lists Great Paxton as a Small Settlement (Policy LP 9), but the Council treats the Paxton Hill ribbon as outside the village's built-up area, so that Policy LP 10 (The Countryside) applies. LP 10 restricts development in the countryside to the specific opportunities provided for in other policies of the plan and requires all development to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and not to give rise to noise, obtrusive light or other impacts on its enjoyment by others. The design, amenity, drainage, travel, parking, biodiversity, trees, renewable energy and contamination policies (LP 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 30, 31, 35 and 37) are addressed in Section 8. The emerging Local Plan to 2046 is at Preferred Options stage and carries little weight.

7.2 **National policy.** The Framework was republished on 17 August 2026 as a set of lettered policies and is a material consideration to be read alongside the development plan. Policy S3 applies the presumption in favour of sustainable development through Policy S5 outside settlements. Policy S5(1) lists the forms of development that should be approved outside settlements unless the benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects; the list includes the redevelopment of previously developed land (d), limited infilling within groups of houses (e) and development addressing an evidenced unmet need, including housing where the authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites (j). Policy S5(3) defines isolated homes as those lying outside settlements *or groups of houses* and reserves Policy HO11 for them. Policy HO7 gives substantial weight to the benefits of providing homes that meet evidenced needs, and Policy DP3(5) gives substantial weight to outstanding or innovative designs that promote high levels of sustainability.

7.3 **Housing land supply.** The Council's current Housing Land Supply Statement and the 2024/25 Annual Monitoring Report record a supply of 3.68 years (4,345 homes against a five-year requirement of 5,907 including the 5% buffer). The Council accepts that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies to housing proposals in consequence. For this application the shortfall engages Policy S5(1)(j) directly and reduces the weight that can be given to LP 9 and LP 10 as reasons to withhold housing.

8. Planning Assessment

8.1 Principle of Development

8.1.1 The application site lies outside a settlement as the Framework defines one, which excludes scattered groups of houses outside built-up areas, and outside the built-up area of Great Paxton as the Local Plan defines it. Policy S5, not S4, therefore governs the principle.

8.1.2 The house is not, however, an isolated home. Policy S5(3) is explicit that isolated homes are those outside settlements *or groups of houses*. The sub-plot sits within a continuous group of houses on the west side of Paxton Hill, between The Elms and Vale Cottage. The tests in

Policy HO11, including the 'truly outstanding' design test in HO11(1)(e), are not the applicable tests; the question is whether the proposal falls within the list in Policy S5(1). It does so on three grounds.

8.1.3 **Limited infilling within a group of houses (S5(1)(e)).** One house is proposed in the gap between two existing houses within an established group. The gap is already occupied by buildings and a caravan, the frontage is continuous with its neighbours, and the ribbon is not extended northwards or southwards. The railway forms a hard western limit, so the development cannot lead to further sprawl. This is infilling in the ordinary sense of the word and it is limited in every sense: a single dwelling on 0.18 ha.

8.1.4 **Redevelopment of previously developed land (S5(1)(d)).** The sub-plot is occupied by four lawful, permanent buildings and their hardstanding. The Framework's definition of previously developed land excludes residential gardens only where they lie *in built-up areas*; the Court of Appeal confirmed in *Dartford BC v SSCLG* [2017] EWCA Civ 141 that gardens outside built-up areas are not excluded. The Council's own position that the site is outside the built-up area therefore brings the developed part of the sub-plot within the definition, and the proposal redevelops it with a building whose above-ground footprint is no larger than the buildings it replaces.

8.1.5 **Evidenced unmet need (S5(1)(j)).** With 3.68 years of supply, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply and an evidenced unmet need for housing exists. The proposal is of a scale that the existing infrastructure can plainly accommodate, and it is as well related to Great Paxton as any site on Paxton Hill can be: within the established group of houses on the village's main road, about 500 m from the built-up area. Policy HO7 gives substantial weight to the benefit of providing a home in these circumstances.

8.1.6 Because the proposal falls within Policy S5(1), the Framework says it should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by adverse effects assessed against the national decision-making policies. That is a markedly more favourable test than the one applied at Lingdale in 2019.

8.1.7 **The Local Plan.** LP 10 provides no specific opportunity for a dwelling of this kind, and the proposal is in tension with the restrictive purpose of LP 9 and LP 10 as they were written in 2019 against the 2019 Framework. Three considerations limit the weight that tension can carry. First, the August 2026 Framework now positively provides for infilling within groups of houses, redevelopment of previously developed land and housing to meet unmet need outside settlements; where a 2019 policy restricts what the current Framework supports, the Framework is a weighty material consideration. Second, the Council accepts that LP 9 and LP 10 cannot be given full weight while the five-year supply cannot be shown. Third, the substantive purposes of LP 10, criteria (a) to (c), are met: no agricultural land is lost, the character of the countryside is respected (Section 8.2) and the house creates no noise or light affecting the enjoyment of the countryside by others.

8.1.8 **The Lingdale decisions.** The 2008 and 2019 decisions turned on the openness of 0.7 ha of orchard and garden land, the scale of two or three new houses with a new access, and the consolidation of built form into open countryside. None of those features is present here: the land is already built on, a single house replaces existing buildings within an enclosed gap, the existing access is reused and nothing extends into open land. The policy context has also changed on both the points that decided the 2019 application: the five-year supply and the absence of national support for infilling outside settlements. The Lingdale decisions are therefore of limited assistance in determining this application.

8.2 Character and Appearance of the Countryside

8.2.1 The harm identified at Lingdale was the encroachment of new building onto open land, extending the ribbon. Here the sub-plot is not open land: it carries 165 m^2 of outbuildings, hardstanding and a caravan, glimpsed through the access. The above-ground footprint does

not increase. The house presents a single storey to the road, below the ridges of its neighbours, behind a retained hedge, with its roof rising away from the road and its solar panels laid flat. The valued trees and the slope to the river are untouched, and the view from the west is of a low building set against the existing houses and tree belt.

8.2.2 Replacing a tired collection of sheds and a caravan with a single building of real quality, within a strengthened framework of hedges and trees, enhances rather than harms this frontage. The proposal recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (LP 10(b), Framework Policy N2(1)(a)) and responds to its context as Policy DP3(1) requires.

8.3 Location and Sustainable Travel

8.3.1 It is accepted that the occupiers will rely on the car for most journeys, as do the occupiers of every house on Paxton Hill and most households in Great Paxton. Great Paxton's primary school, church, pub and community room are within a kilometre by road; St Neots, with its full range of services and its main line station, is about three miles to the south; and the village has a limited bus service (route 65 to St Neots and Buckden) supplemented by the Combined Authority's Tiger on Demand service. The house is designed for home working and provides cycle storage and electric vehicle charging, and its net-zero operational energy performance offsets a good part of the household's travel emissions.

8.3.2 The traffic from one dwelling is negligible. The officer's 2019 report accepted that housing in this location brings social and economic benefits; the limited weight attaching to the car dependence of a single household does not come close to substantially outweighing the benefits of the proposal (Policies TR3 and S5).

8.4 Residential Amenity

8.4.1 The Elms lies to the north-east, nearer the road, and the Vale Cottage bungalow more than 25 m to the south. Both are separated from the new house by the retained hedges and see only a single-storey building. The lower-floor bedrooms and the terrace face west over the retained garden of Vale Cottage. There is no overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing effect on any neighbour (Policy LP 14).

8.4.2 For future occupiers the only matter to address is the railway. The house stands on the road side of the plot, some 60 to 70 m from the nearest running line, with the retained garden and its trees between. The acoustic assessment submitted for the Lingdale site in 2019, where the dwellings would have stood at the railway boundary, found that satisfactory internal noise levels to BS 8233 could be achieved through the glazing specification and a ventilation strategy that did not rely on open windows. The HUF house exceeds that specification as standard: a factory-built envelope with airtightness comparable to Passivhaus, argon-filled triple glazing throughout and whole-house mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, so that windows need not be opened for ventilation. Set further from the line than the Lingdale plots and screened by the intervening garden, the house will provide healthy living conditions for its occupiers without further assessment or mitigation (Policy LP 14, Framework Policy P3).

8.4.3 The air source heat pump is a modern low-noise unit (sound pressure 34 dB(A) at 5 m) sited on the north side of the house well away from any neighbouring window.

8.5 Trees, Ecology and Biodiversity

8.5.1 The Arboricultural Planning Report (Rev A, October 2026) surveyed 17 trees and groups within the application site: one category A, six B, nine C and one U. One group and four individual trees are removed, all but one of them category C and none of high landscape value; the only category B tree lost is a wild cherry (T13) displaced by the basement excavation. None of the trees to be removed is visible from the road, so the report finds no significant visual impact on the landscape. No root protection area of any retained tree is encroached upon, and all retained trees, including the boundary hedges, will be protected

by fencing to BS 5837:2012 under the Method Statement. With compensatory and enhancement planting, particularly at the frontage, the report concludes that the arboricultural effect of the development will be positive (Policy LP 31).

8.5.2 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal found the buildings to have negligible bat roost potential and the trees low potential, with moderate potential for nesting birds and commuting bats and low potential for great crested newts, reptiles and badgers. Little Paxton Pits SSSI is separated from the site by the railway and woodland and will not be directly affected; standard pollution control during construction removes any indirect risk (Policy N6). The report's mitigation (clearance outside the bird nesting season or after a nest check, staged vegetation clearance, covered or ramped excavations) and its enhancements (bat and bird boxes, swift bricks as Policy N2(1)(f) expects, hedgehog gaps in fencing, native planting, log piles and low-spill lighting) will all be adopted.

8.5.3 The red-line site is 1,805 m^2, below the 0.2 ha threshold, and no priority habitat is affected, so the development is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain under the exemptions in force since 6 August 2026. The measures above nonetheless secure a net gain on the site (Policy LP 30).

8.6 Drainage, Flood Risk and Ground Conditions

8.6.1 The site is in Flood Zone 1 and below the thresholds for a flood risk assessment (Policy LP 5, Framework Policy F4). Surface water will be managed by sustainable drainage in accordance with LP 15 and F8: soakaways if infiltration testing of the clay soils permits, otherwise attenuation with a controlled discharge, together with permeable surfacing to the drive and rainwater harvesting for the garden. Foul drainage will be to a package treatment plant designed to the Environment Agency's general binding rules in the absence of a mains sewer. The former use of the sub-plot for domestic garaging gives rise to no more than a low contamination risk, which can be dealt with by a standard condition if the Council considers one necessary (LP 37, Policy P2).

8.7 Sustainability and Climate Change

8.7.1 The Sustainability Statement explains how the house is designed to achieve net-zero operational carbon: a factory-made HUF envelope with airtightness and U-values far beyond Part L, argon-filled triple glazing, an air source heat pump, a roof-mounted photovoltaic array sized to the dwelling's demand, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, water consumption limited to 110 litres per person per day, and offsite construction that cuts waste, vehicle movements and programme. These measures satisfy LP 12(j) and Policies CC2 and CC3 of the Framework and attract substantial weight under Policy DP3(5).

9. Planning Balance and Conclusion

9.1 The proposal is limited infilling within a group of houses, the redevelopment of previously developed land and the provision of a home towards an evidenced shortfall, each of which Policy S5(1) of the Framework says should be approved outside settlements unless the benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects. It is not an isolated home and the exceptional-design test of Policy HO11 does not apply, although the house would in any event satisfy it.

9.2 The benefits are substantial: a new home in a district with only 3.68 years of housing land (Policy HO7); a house of outstanding design and net-zero operational carbon (DP3(5), CC2); the removal of 165 m^2 of poor outbuildings and a caravan from this frontage; a net gain for biodiversity; and the economic benefit of construction and of a new household. Against them stand the residual tension with the restrictive aim of LP 10, to which reduced weight attaches, the car reliance of one household in a location where every household relies on the car, and the loss of a small number of mostly low-value trees that will be replaced.

9.3 The adverse effects do not substantially outweigh the benefits. The proposal accords with the development plan read as a whole in the light of the Council's housing land supply position and the August 2026 Framework, and planning permission should be granted.