

Design and Access Statement

882_Old Beech Farm

August 2026

Revision: 3

The Applicant :
Chris Husband

Project Location:
Old Beech Farm
Cuckfield, Haywards Heath
West Sussex
RH17 5HY

Householder Application for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent

Proposed swimming pool and associated pool house in garden of farmhouse,
including removal of 1 no. cherry tree

This document must be read in conjunction with the full plans
associated to this application.

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Pre-Application Feedback

3.1 Pre-Application Feedback

In April 2026, Ecotecture submitted a pre-application enquiry relating to this swimming pool proposal at Old Beech Farm, Cuckfield (planning reference DM/26/0864), the result of which was received in June 2026. The feedback provided by MSDC is shown below.

Generally, the feedback received supported the idea of a proposed swimming pool and pool house on the suggested site, provided that appropriate consideration is given to minimising its impact on the adjacent listed Old Beech Farmhouse and its setting. Due to the existing unsympathetic nature of the proposed location of the swimming pool - contributed to by the existing hardstanding, outdoor kitchen and summer house - it was concluded that the proposed works are unlikely to negatively impact the character of the historic setting, with potential to improve it. The proposed materiality was noted as potentially having a significant impact on how appropriate the development is deemed to be, and so this has been carefully considered throughout the design to complement the existing Old Beech Farmhouse, aiding the proposal in blending into the existing site.

The proposed development site, Old Beech Farm, is a Grade II listed former farmhouse, part of a historic farmstead, located in a rural position outside Cuckfield. The farmstead also includes a Grade II listed barn as well as a number of other ancillary buildings. A Heritage Statement submitted with a previous application suggests that the farmstead originated as a dispersed drift way form and later evolved into dispersed multi yard arrangement, although the earlier form remains discernible. A farmstead with a surviving farmhouse and a barn both predating 1700 is very rare within the High Weald Character Area, and therefore an important survival.

The historic building assessment feeding into this heritage statement considered the development of the house. The principal phases of development can be briefly summarised as:

- Late 16th/early 17th century east range built originally as a wing to another structure which was situated to the western side, which has since been removed.
- The replacement of this structure to the west with a lower service range, at which point the former service wing became the 'house' proper. It is speculated that this may be the point at which the building took on its current lobby entry appearance to the principle (southeast) elevation.
- During the 18th century the east range of the building was largely underbuilt in brick.
- By 1843 an extension was added to the northeast of the building
- During the 20th century the 19th century addition was replaced and further extension added beyond it. Alterations were also made to the east range including further underbuilding and the introduction of a number of French windows. A boot room and porch were added, the latter in two phases.

Planning permission was recently granted for the demolition of the 20th century wing to the northern side of the house and construction of a replacement single storey extension, alongside other more minor alterations. This work has now been completed.

Based on the information within this HBA/Heritage Statement the former farmhouse would be considered to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, including its relatively complex history sequential rebuild and extension, historical illustrative value as a good example of a 16th century Sussex farmhouse, altered and extended in response to changing socio-economic circumstances and the needs and aspirations of successive owners, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials viewed within the landscape from which they were drawn.

The barn is described in the list description as dating from the 17th century. It is likely to possess architectural value based on its construction and craftsmanship, historical illustrative value as a good example of a timber framed Sussex barn of its type and period, and aesthetic value based in part on the use of vernacular materials.

The buildings also have group value with each other and with other surviving buildings within the historic farmstead, some of which may be regarded as curtilage listed or as non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs).

As such, the surviving rural/agricultural setting of the house and barn will be considered to make a strong positive contribution to their special interests and the manner in which these are appreciated, in particular those parts of those interests which are drawn from historical illustrative and aesthetic values. The buildings are currently set in extensive gardens with lawns and the original farmstead pond, with fields beyond.

The current pre-application enquiry relates to the part of the gardens to the immediate northeast of the house and is for the construction of a swimming pool and pool house. The area is currently largely occupied by a stone patio area, outdoor kitchen and summer house/pergola. Adjacent to this but unaffected by the proposed works is a hard surfaced tennis court.

In many circumstances, the introduction of domesticating features such as swimming pools within the immediate setting of a historic farmstead may be considered to detract from the surviving agricultural/rural character of that setting and the contribution which this makes to the special interest of the buildings within the farmstead.

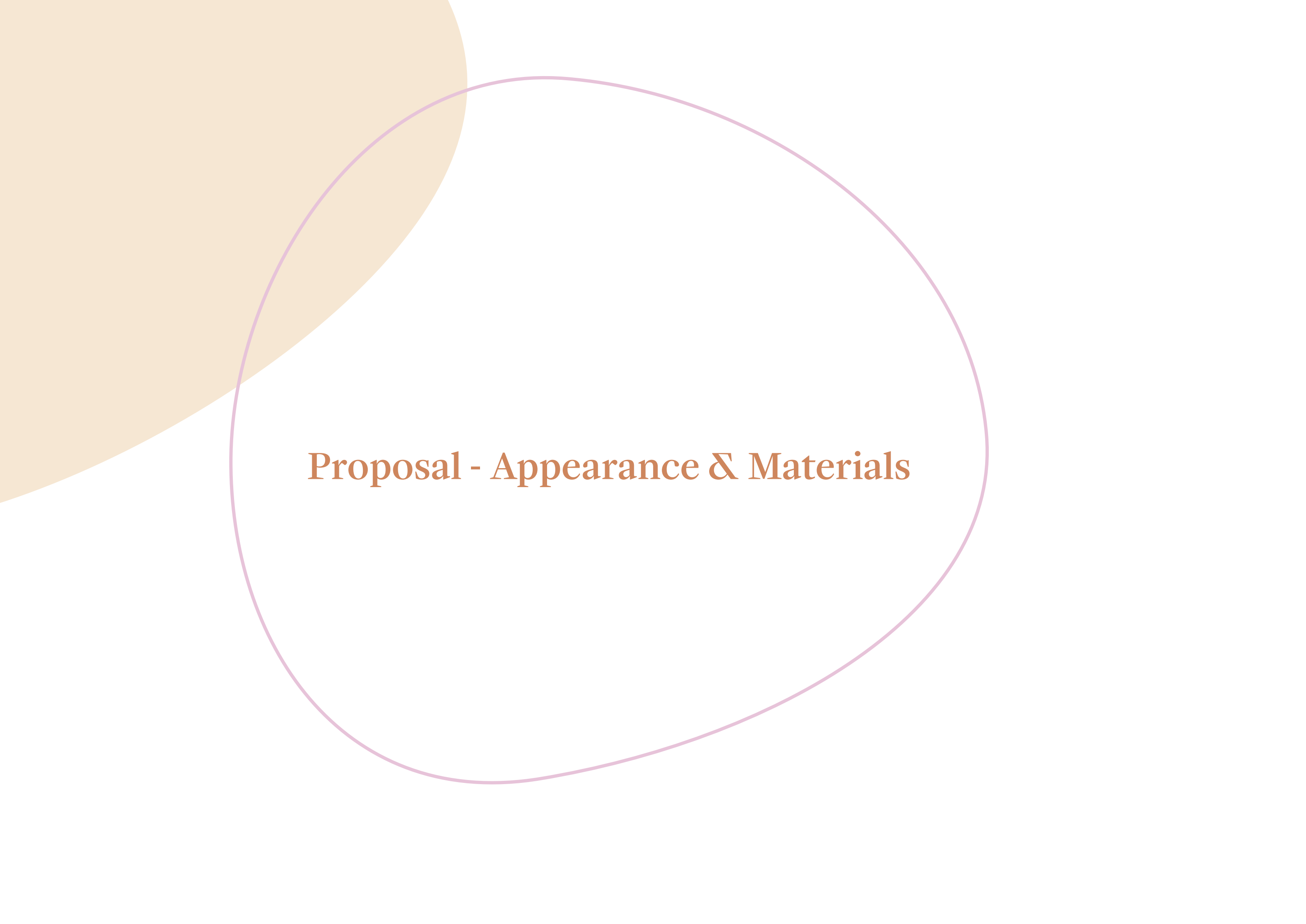
However, in this particular case the area in question is already largely occupied by hard surfacing and includes the built form of the outdoor kitchen and summer house. None of these features are particularly sympathetic to the wider rural context of the farmhouse and barn and would tend to detract from their settings. The character of the site is also influenced by the adjacent tennis court, which has a further domesticating impact. In this instance, the principle of the replacement of the patio, kitchen area and summer house with a pool, pool surround and pool house of more sympathetic design and materials may be considered acceptable – subject to detail, these works should not adversely affect the current character of the setting of the historic farmstead, and may have in fact the potential to enhance it.

With respect to the pool and pool surround, these largely occupy the area of the existing patio and outdoor kitchen. Subject to detail of design and materials, including the lining material to the pool, this work should not adversely affect the existing character of this part of the garden setting of the house, and will hopefully enhance it. I would recommend simple detailing and the use of materials drawn from the local vernacular, such as sandstone, as well as the avoidance of a brightly coloured (e.g. azure blue) pool liner.

It is noted that the proposed pool house would be a relatively modest building located to the northern end of the swimming pool. The building would be set into the existing bank in this location, which would further reduce its apparent bulk and visual prominence. The precedent images suggest a vernacular style building which would relate well to the agricultural context, and to the existing recent extension to the house. Subject to detail, this aspect of the proposal is not considered contentious.

I would recommend that any formal planning application includes a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme, including a scheme of planting around the pool area and pool house, to soften and screen the new built form and integrate it successfully into the existing farmhouse gardens and wider rural landscape. This landscaping scheme should if appropriate also include consideration of any new external lighting which would be required, which should be kept to a minimum.

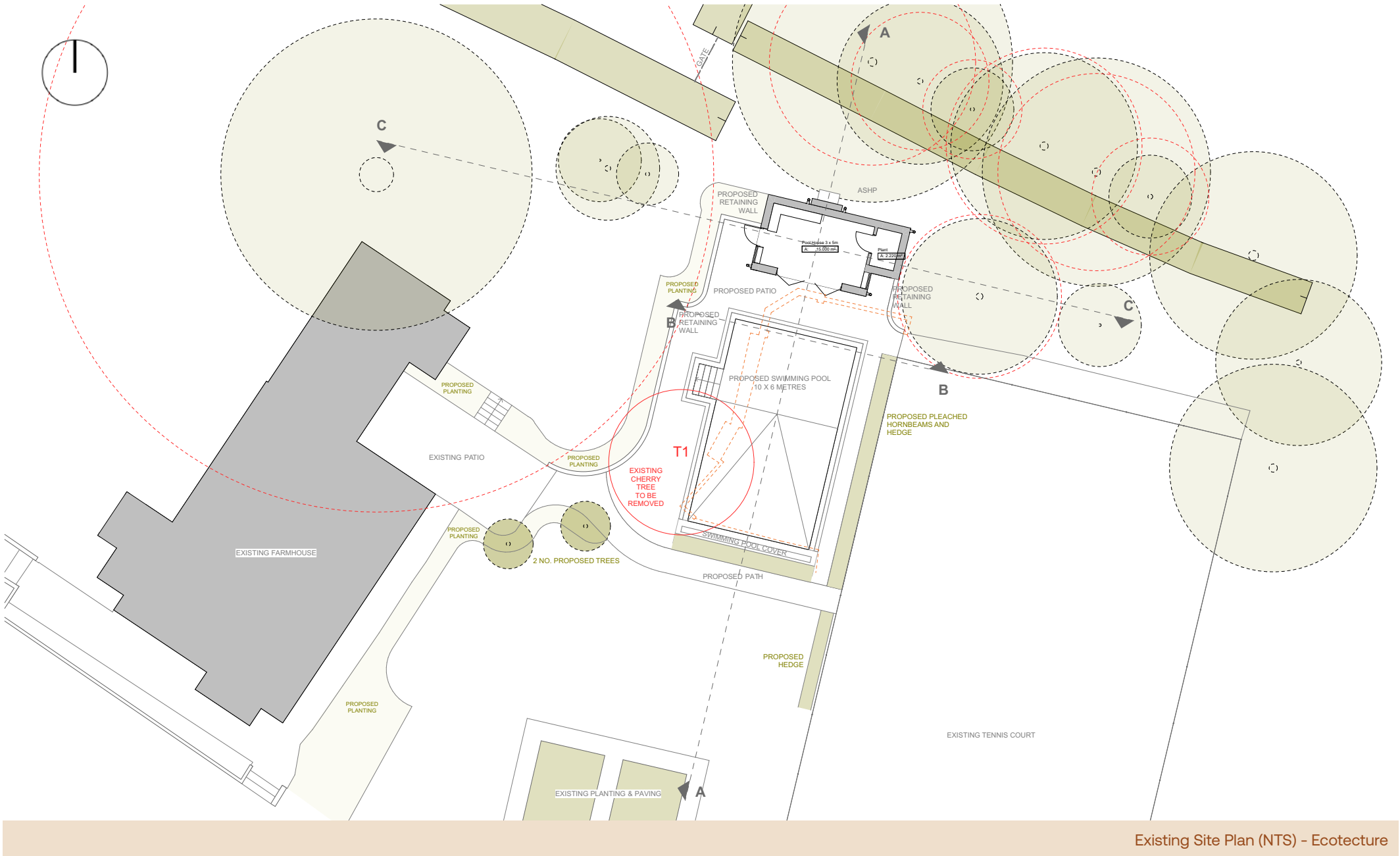
Any formal application would be assessed against the requirements of District Plan Policy DP34 as well as the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF. Such an application should be informed and accompanied by a Heritage Statement prepared according to the staged approach set out in the relevant Historic England guidance GPA Note 3 ***'The Setting of Heritage Assets'***.



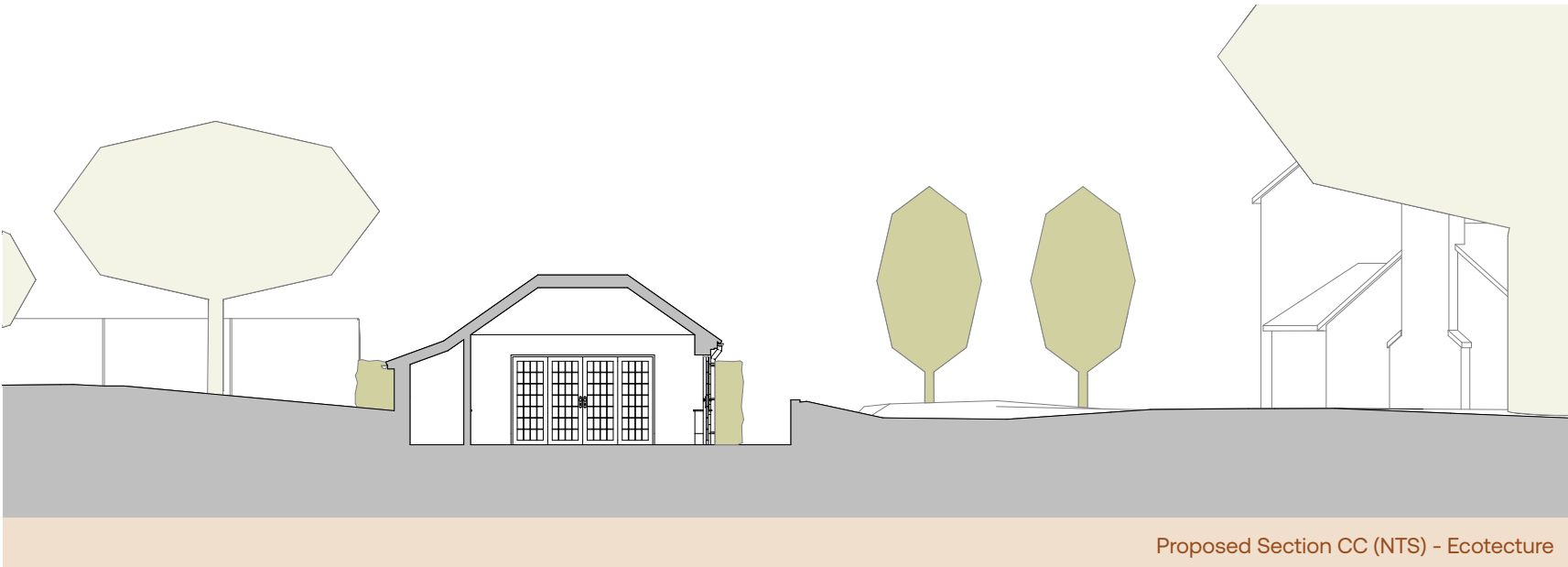
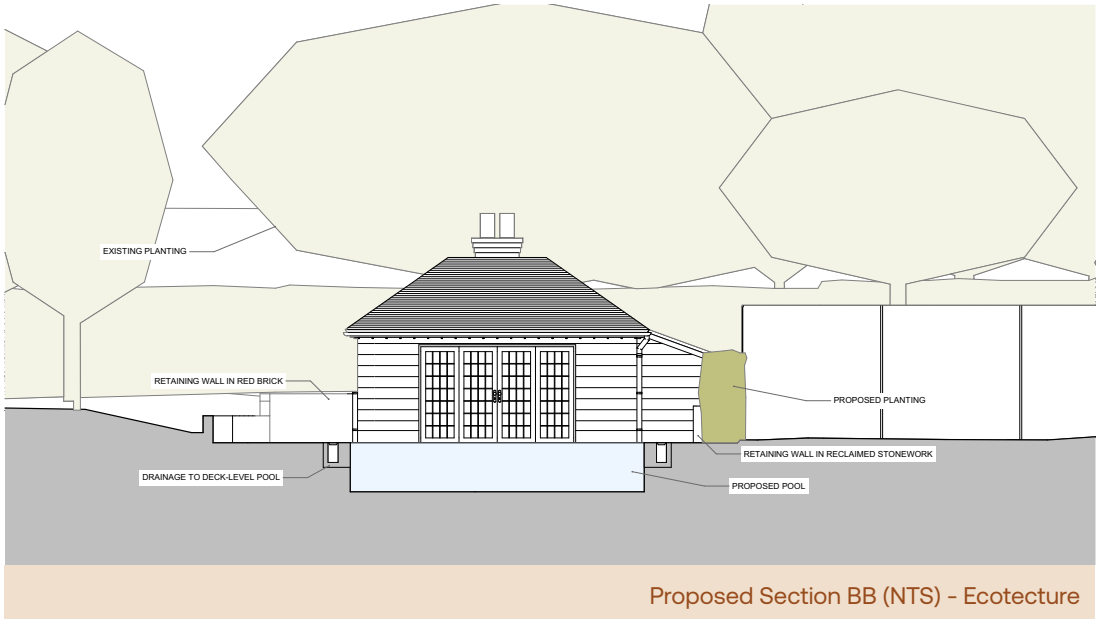
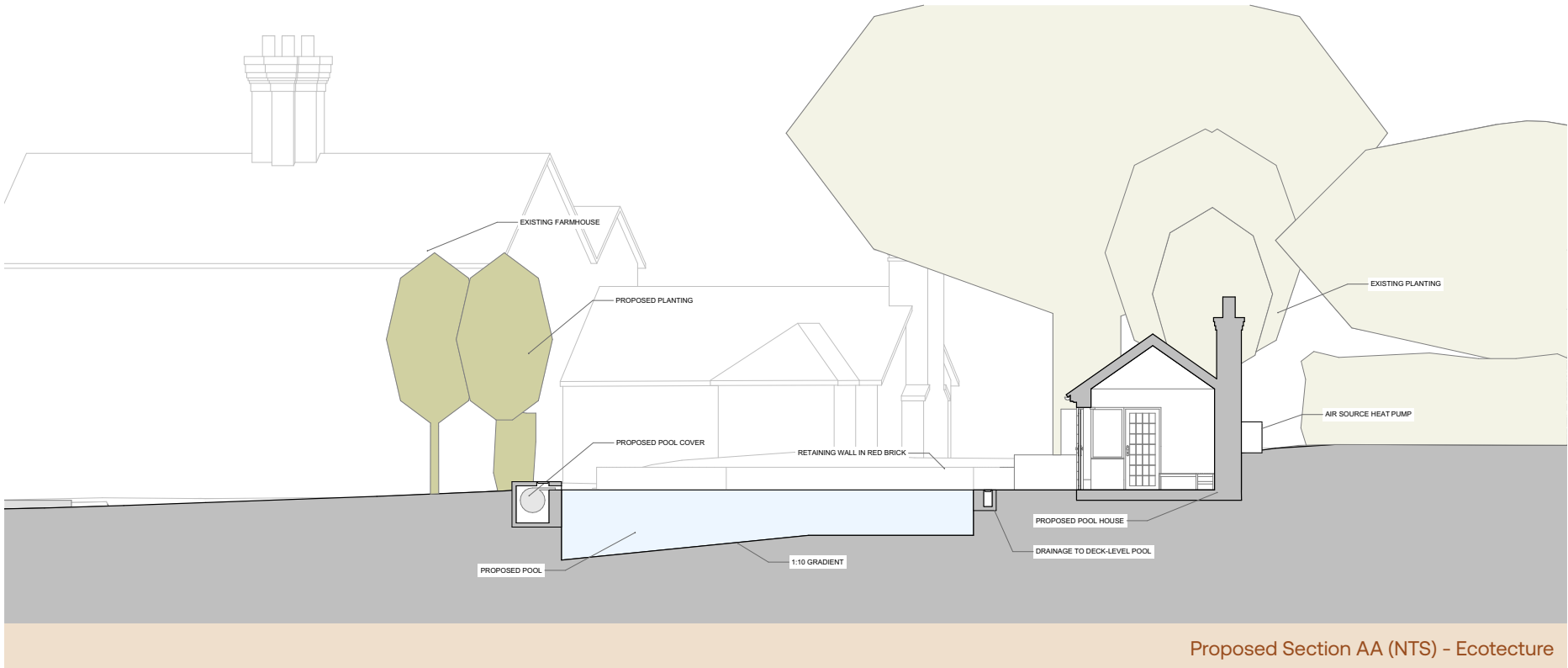
Proposal - Appearance & Materials

4.1 Proposed Drawings

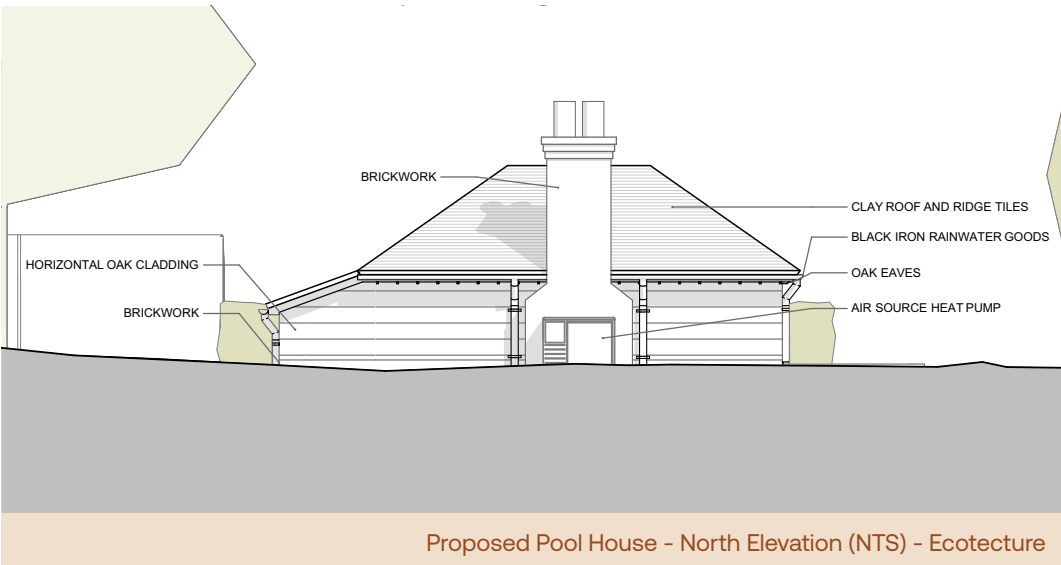
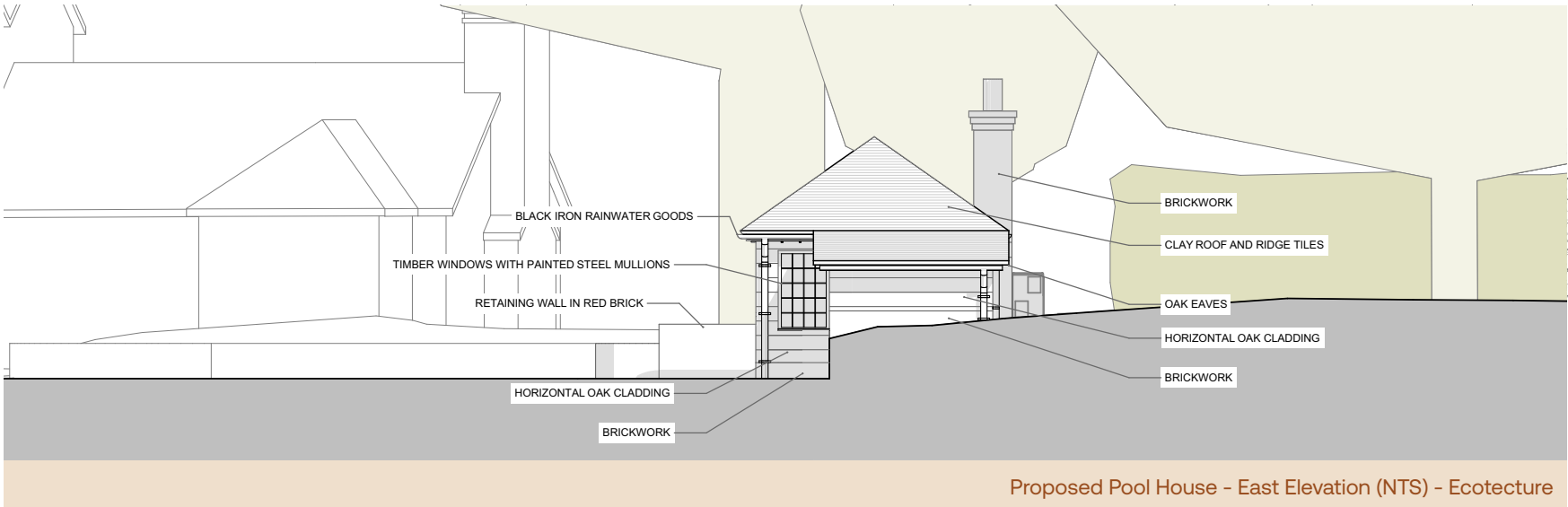
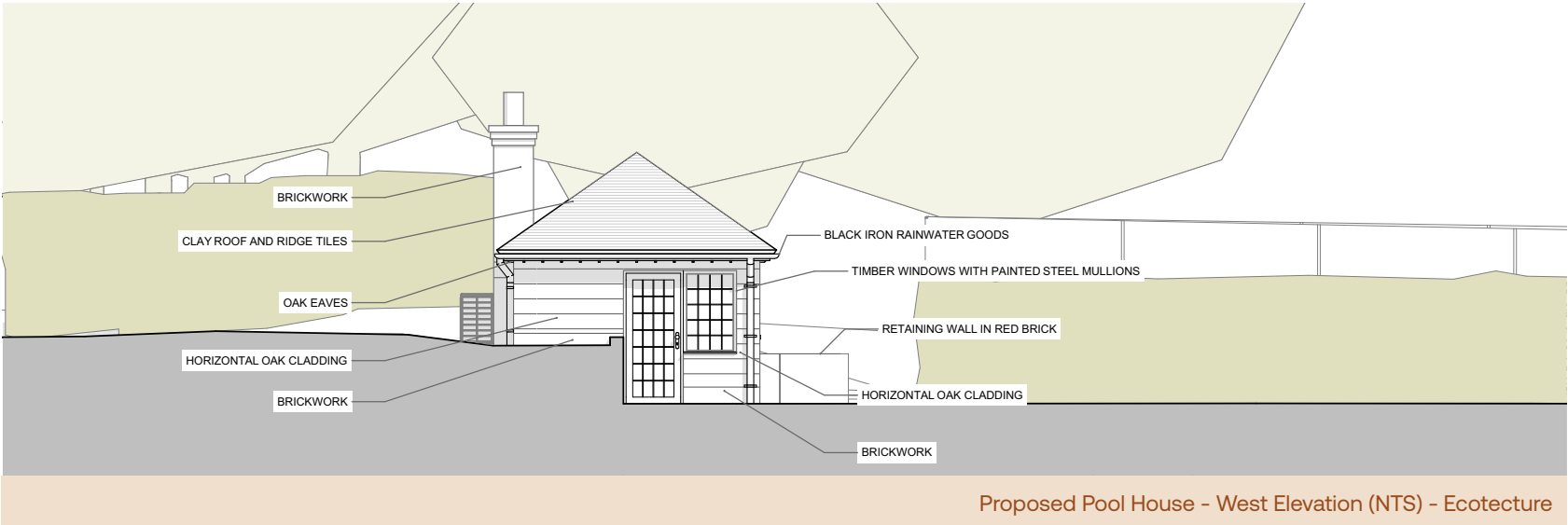
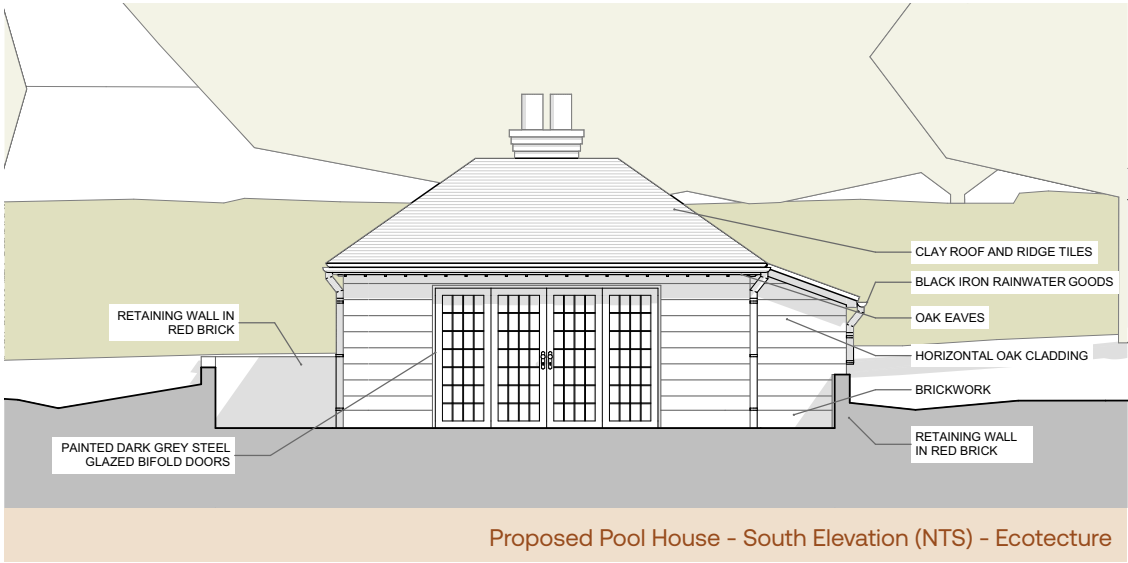
The proposal has been designed to minimise its impact on the surrounding historic buildings, such as Old Beech Farmhouse, and their setting, including the open nature of the site. By locating the proposed swimming pool in an area where existing hardstanding currently sits, the split of different areas of the site into domestic and agricultural use is not affected. Surrounding features such as the existing tennis court further cement this area of Old Beech Farm’s land as domestic in use. Further to this, grass banking surrounds the development site on two sides, providing a level of natural screening between the proposal and the adjacent farmhouse, which will be further aided by planting. This minimises any visual impact that the development may have on the area surrounding it, ensuring that the farmhouse remains the dominant structure. The pool house has been designed to a minimal scale, with features such as a hipped roof which help to reduce its bulk. Alongside this, the materiality of the swimming pool and pool house has been selected to complement, or where possible match, that of the existing farmhouse and its recent kitchen extension, which will further help the proposal to blend into its surroundings.



4.1 Proposed Drawings



4.1 Proposed Drawings



4.2 Materiality of Proposal



Brickwork plinth in Flemish bond pointed in lime mortar
To match farmhouse



Oak cladding with brickwork plinth below
Brickwork to match farmhouse



Timber windows with painted steel mullions. Painted steel doors.
To match farmhouse



Clay tile roof and ridge tiles
To match farmhouse extension



Clay chimney pots
To match farmhouse extension



Oak eaves
To match farmhouse extension



Cast iron rainwater goods
To match farmhouse

4.2 Materiality of Proposal



Brick paviours to surround pool
To match existing paving outside farmhouse



Zellige tiles to line pool
Colour 1090, size 10 x 10cm



Limestone drainage linear slot grille
To complement stone plinth of farmhouse



Red brickwork retaining walls in Flemish bond
To match existing farmhouse and pool house



Planting, including native tree species
To provide natural screening between pool and farmhouse

04 | Proposal - Appearance & Materials

4.2 Materiality of Proposal - Precedent Images



Precedent image - pool and pool house
Google



Precedent image - pool house
Google

4.2 Materiality of Proposal - Lighting

The lighting included in the proposal is intended to have minimal impact on both the setting of the adjacent listed Old Beech Farmhouse, and the wider countryside surrounding the site. In order to do this, warm-coloured, downward facing lighting is to be utilised, as demonstrated in the photos below. Lighting units of simple, rather than decorative, design will be used to further minimise impact.



Path lighting, Corston Cambridge Ground Spotlight or similar
Corston



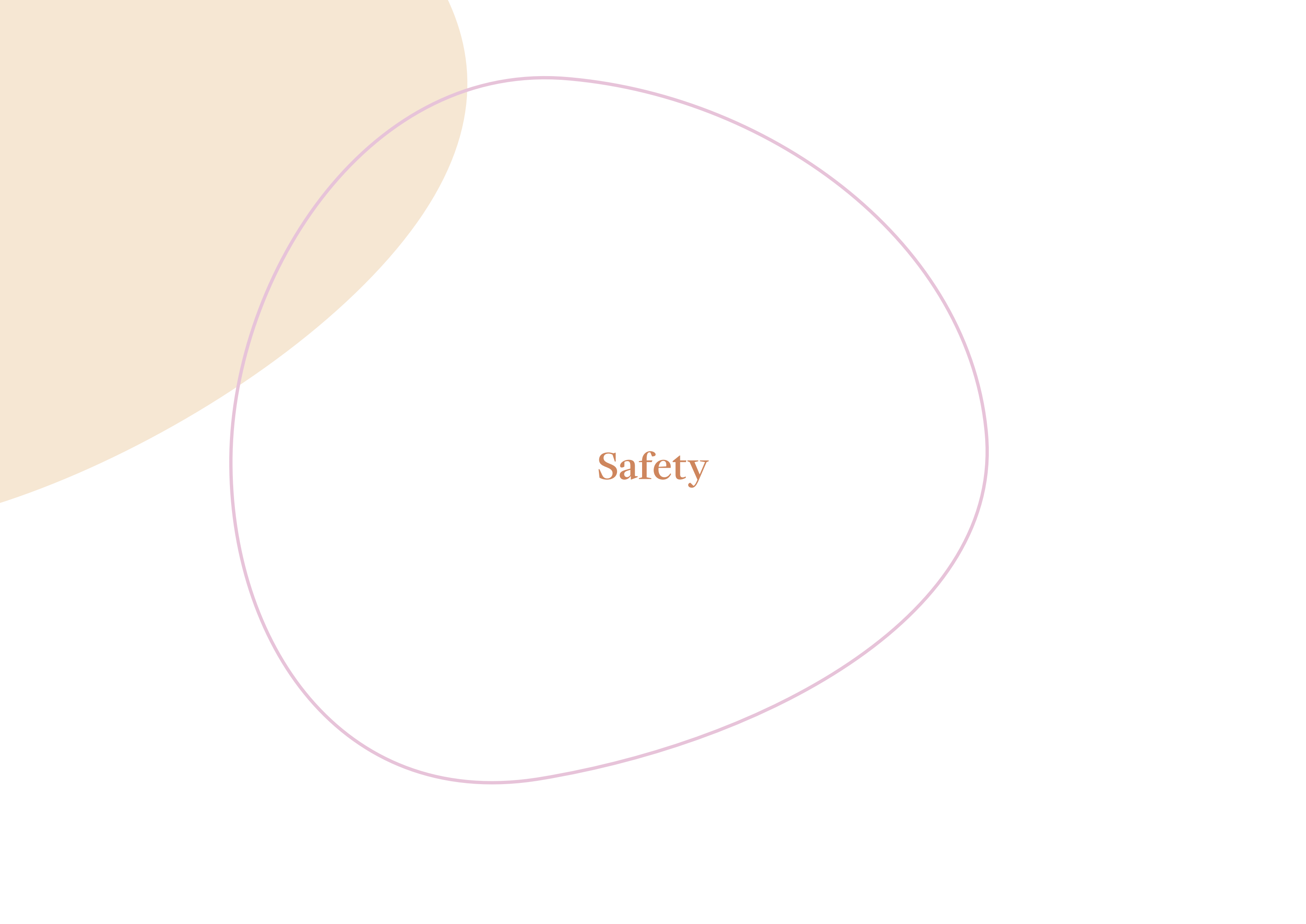
Path/wall lighting, Corston Southwark Mast Light or similar
Corston



Precedent image - pool lighting
Google



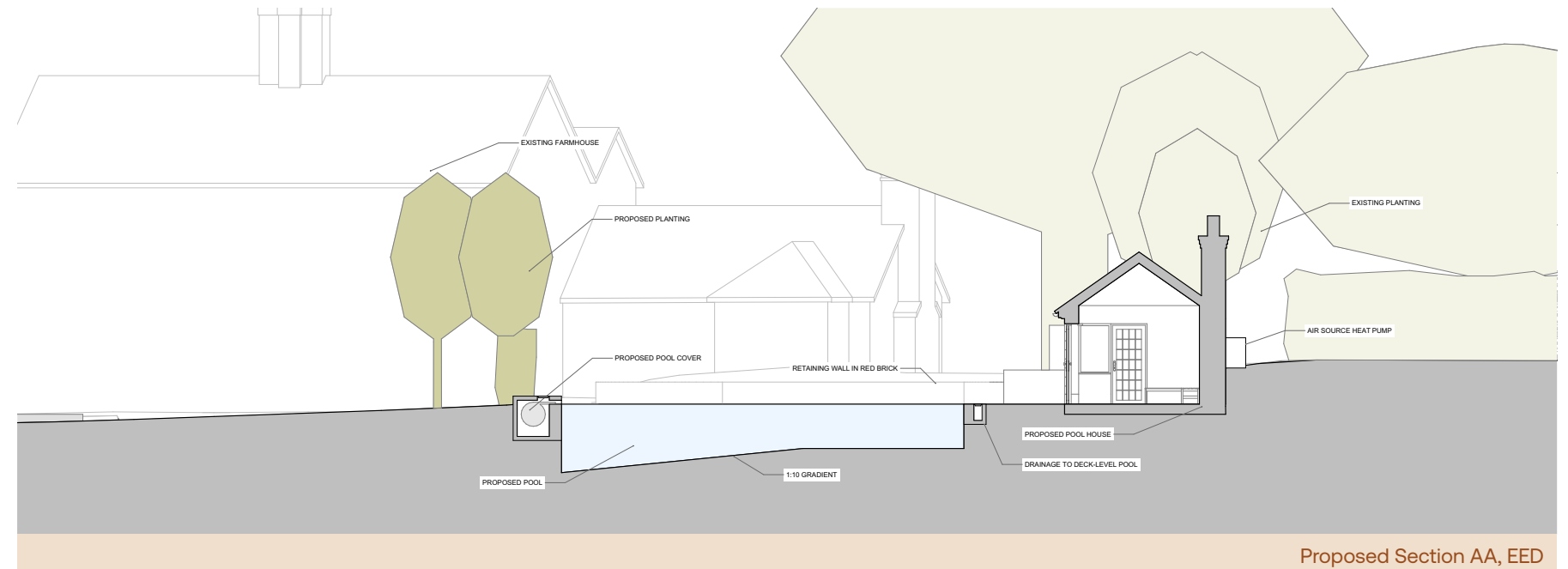
Precedent image - pool lighting
Google



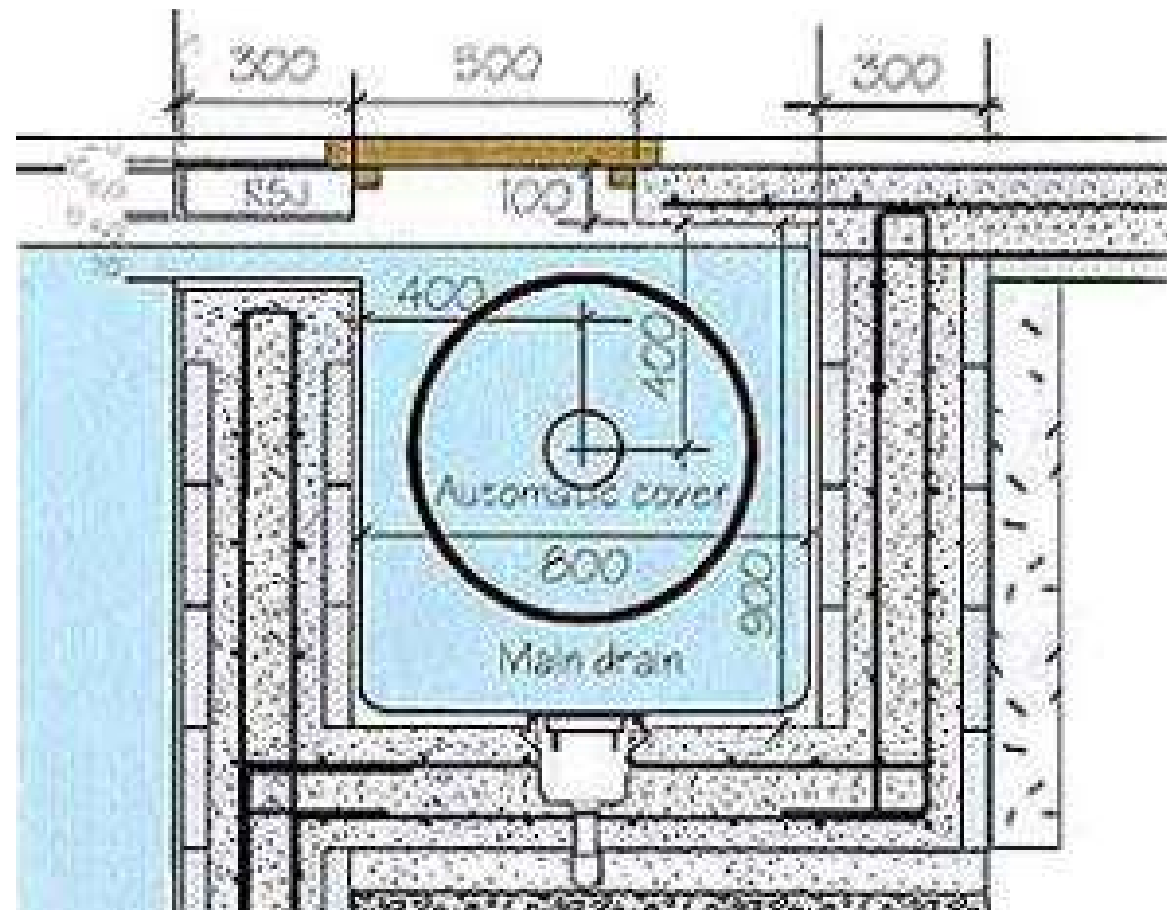
Safety

5.1 Safety Measures

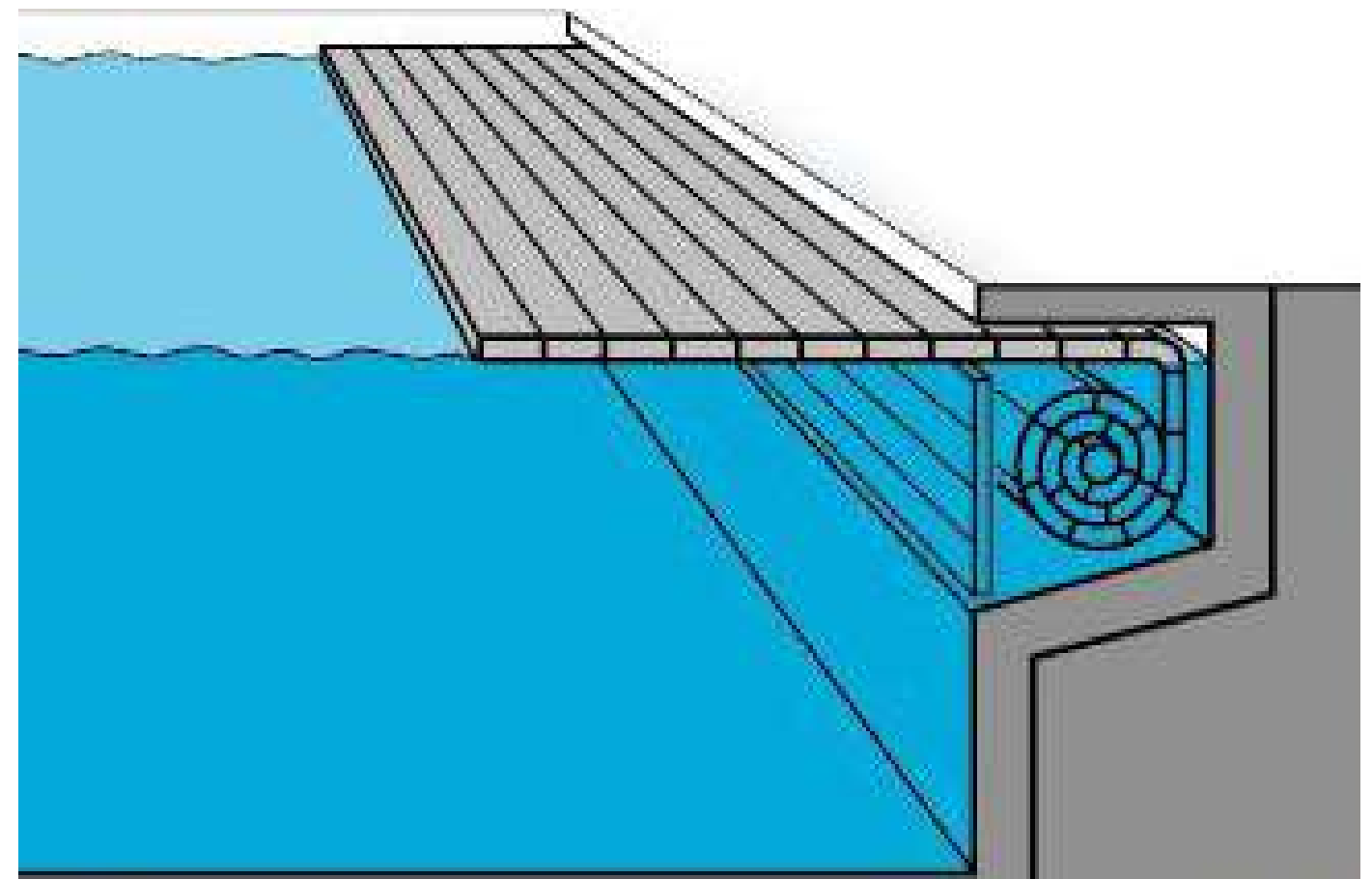
In order to maximise the safety of those using the swimming pool and adjacent buildings, a safety pool cover will be installed. When the pool is not in use, the cover provides a rigid surface above the water, to ensure that accidentally falling into the water is not possible. This cover will be installed to sit flush with the edges of the swimming pool, with a mechanism similar to the images shown. As the safety pool cover will ensure safety around the swimming pool, a fence or similar barrier surrounding the pool area will not be necessary. This is sometimes utilised as a strategy to keep vulnerable people and animals away from a pool when it is not in use, but in this instance, the safety pool cover will provide a rigid surface above the water to ensure that falling in is not possible. Additionally, the use and location of the swimming pool means that the pool is not publicly accessible, hence further reducing the risk. Avoiding the need for fencing or barriers also minimises the impact of the proposal on the adjacent historic assets and their setting. The gradient of the swimming pool from its shallow to deep end has also been designed to ensure safety. By limiting this to a 1:10 gradient, there is reduced risk of sudden changes in water depth and related difficulties in the water.



Proposed Section AA, EED



Flush pool cover detail example



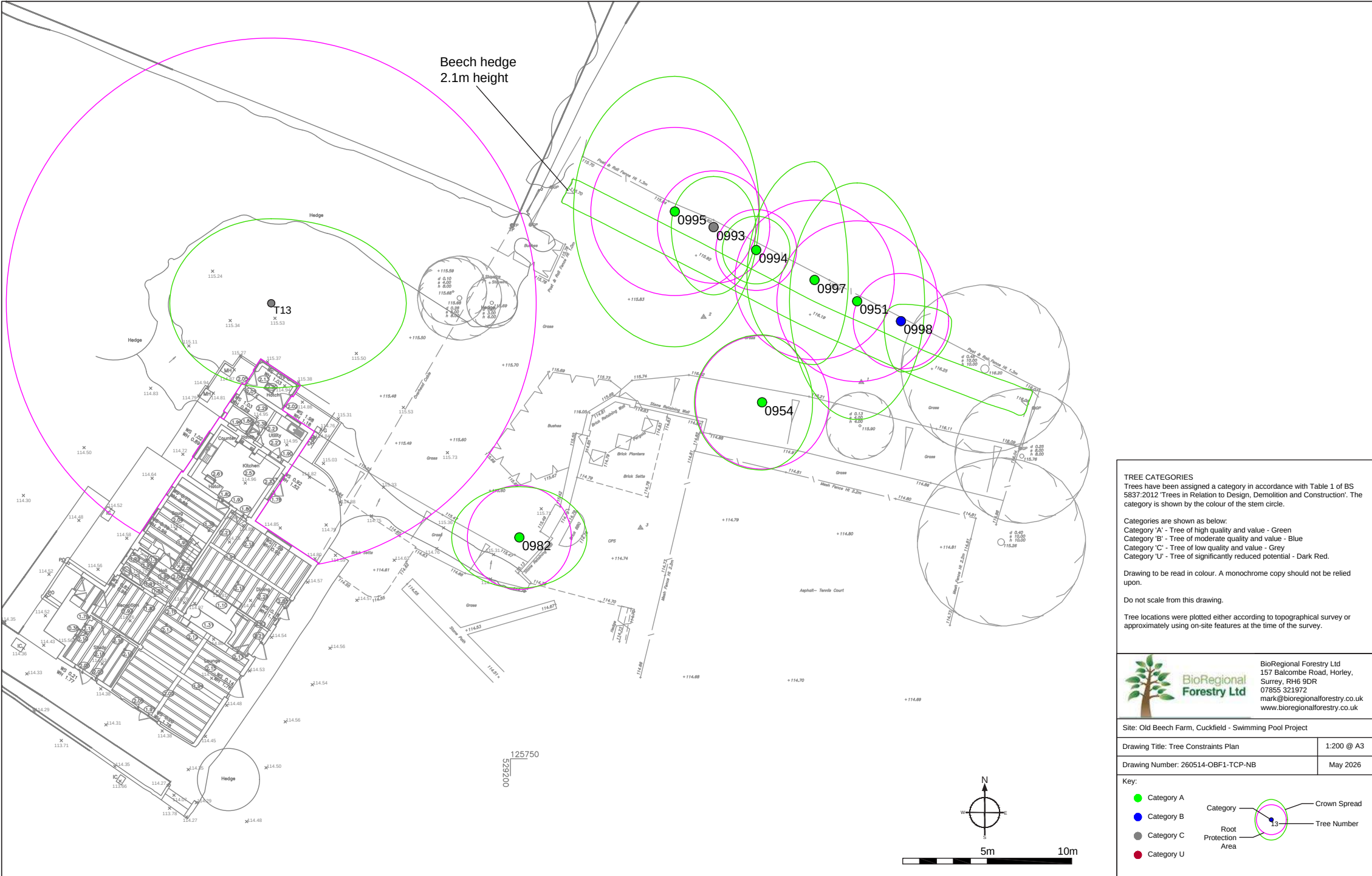
Flush pool cover detail example



Landscape & Ecology

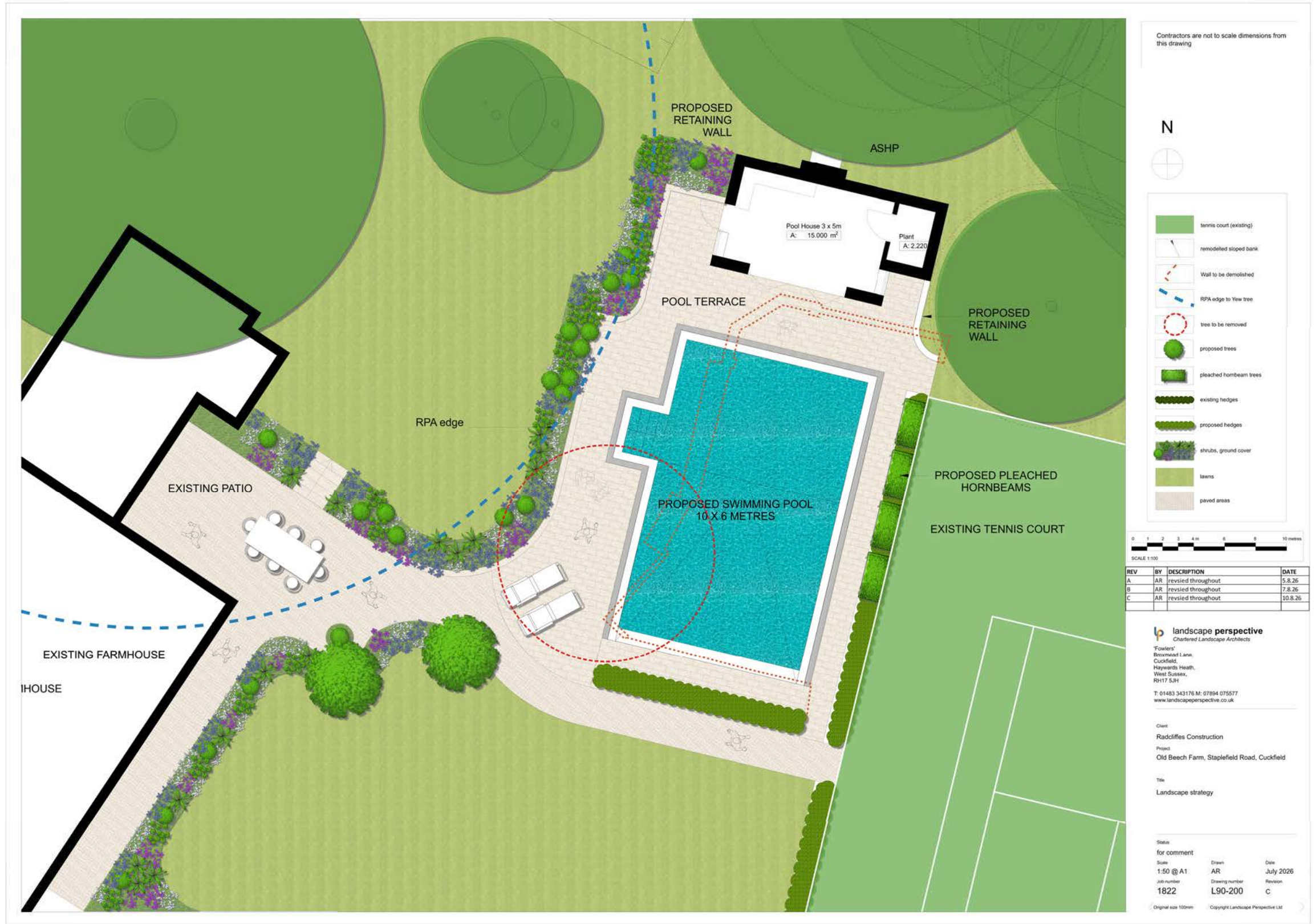
6.1 Trees

The proposal has utilised an area of existing hardstanding, hence reducing its impact on existing trees and planting on the site. However, one no. existing Cherry tree is to be removed as part of this application, as the proposed patio surrounding the pool would otherwise encroach too far into its RPA. Two no. trees are to be planted to replace the habitat and biodiversity lost, outlined in more detail in the proposed landscape plan.

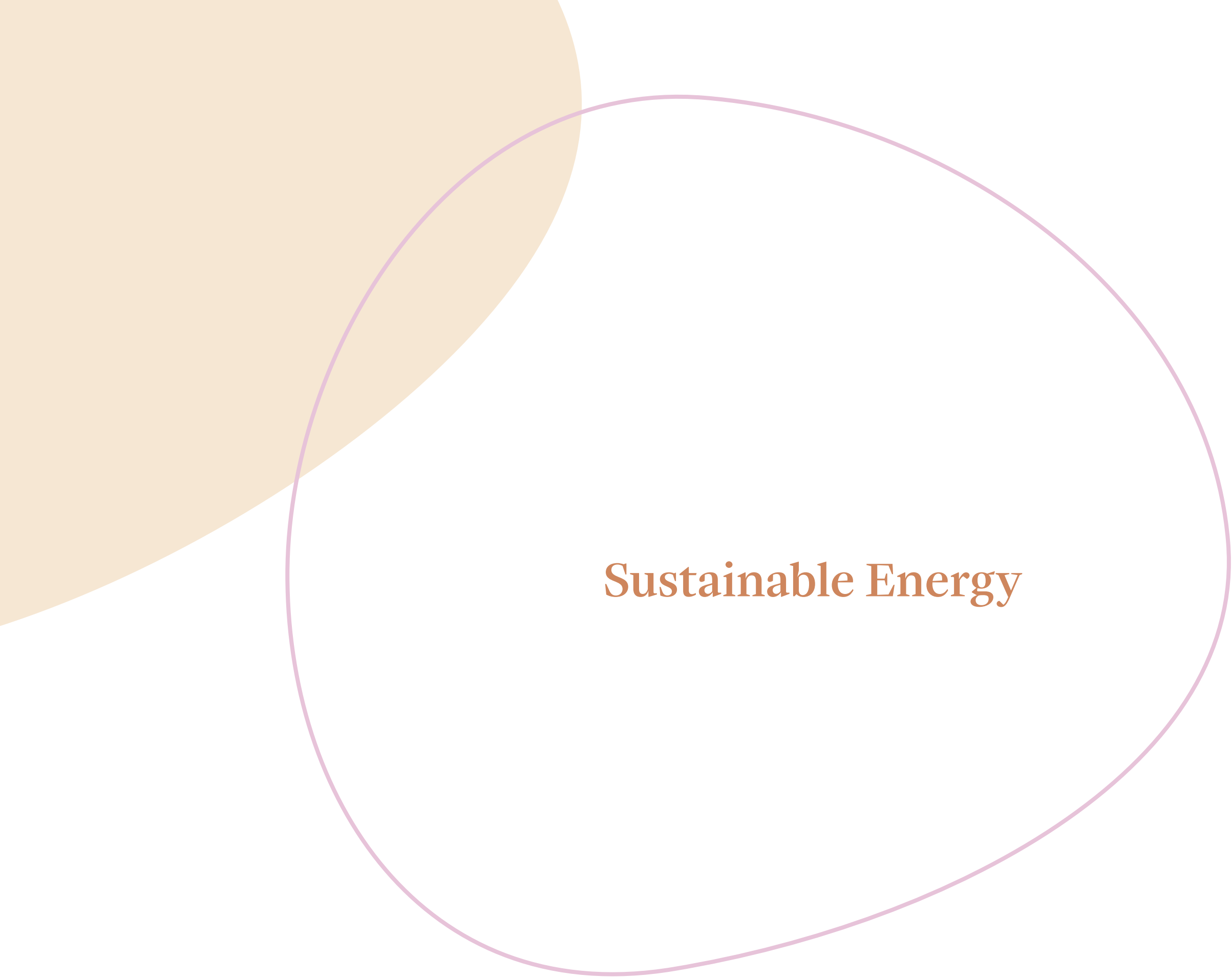


Tree Constraints Plan - BioRegional Forestry Ltd, May 2026 (NTS)

6.2 Landscape Plan



Proposed Landscape Plan - Landscape Perspective Ltd, August 2026 (NTS)



Sustainable Energy

7.1 Energy Efficient Design

The proposed pool house has been designed with a compact shape, large enough to accommodate its functional requirements, whilst minimising energy consumption for both heating and cooling. The building will also achieve a high level of airtightness, which alongside high-performance doors, will reduce thermal bridging and unwanted drafts. The use of only minimal glazing in the design will ensure adequate daylighting to internal areas whilst reducing the opportunity for heat to escape through unnecessary openings in the building fabric.

Lighting to serve both the pool and pool house will utilise energy-efficient LEDs, reducing the associated energy demand.

7.2 Renewable Energy & Sustainable Heat

Both the pool and adjacent pool house will be served by an air source heat pump located to the rear of the pool house, helping to efficiently maintain comfortable temperatures. This system will reduce reliance on external energy sources, providing an efficient alternative whilst also reducing operational carbon footprint.

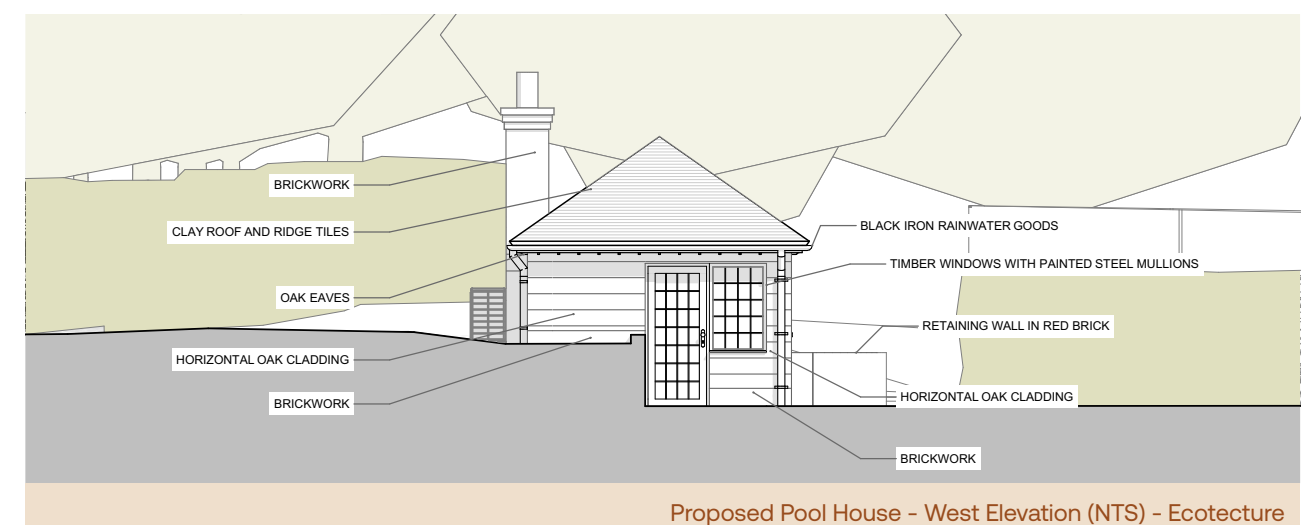
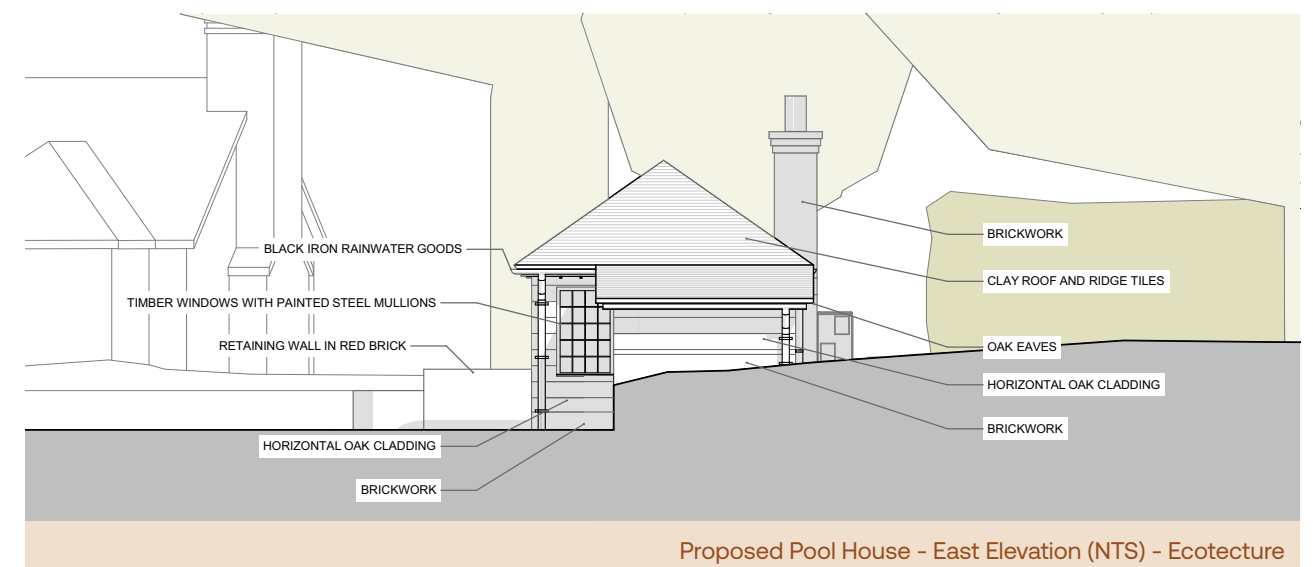
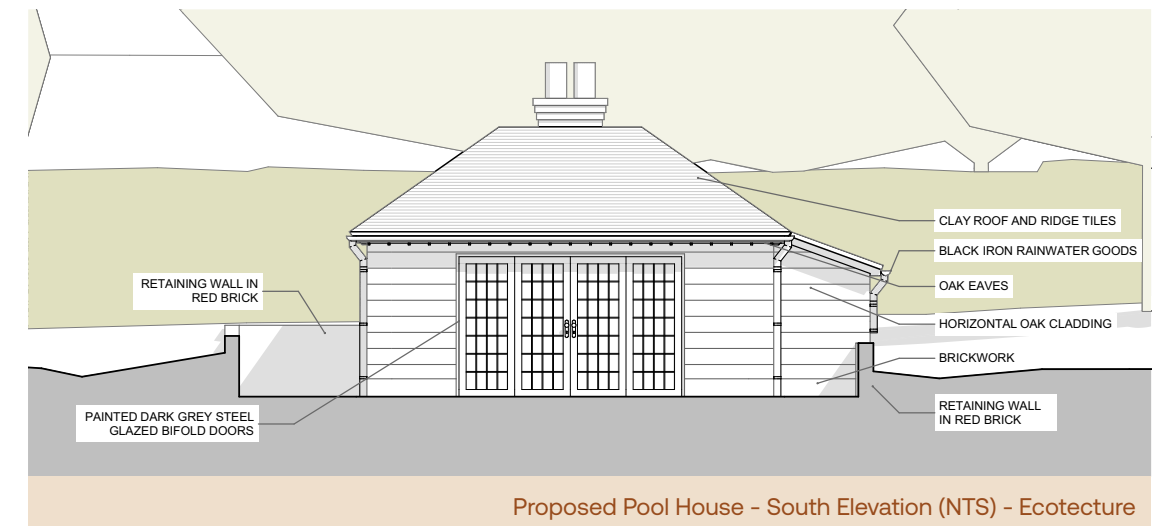
7.3 Natural Daylighting Strategy

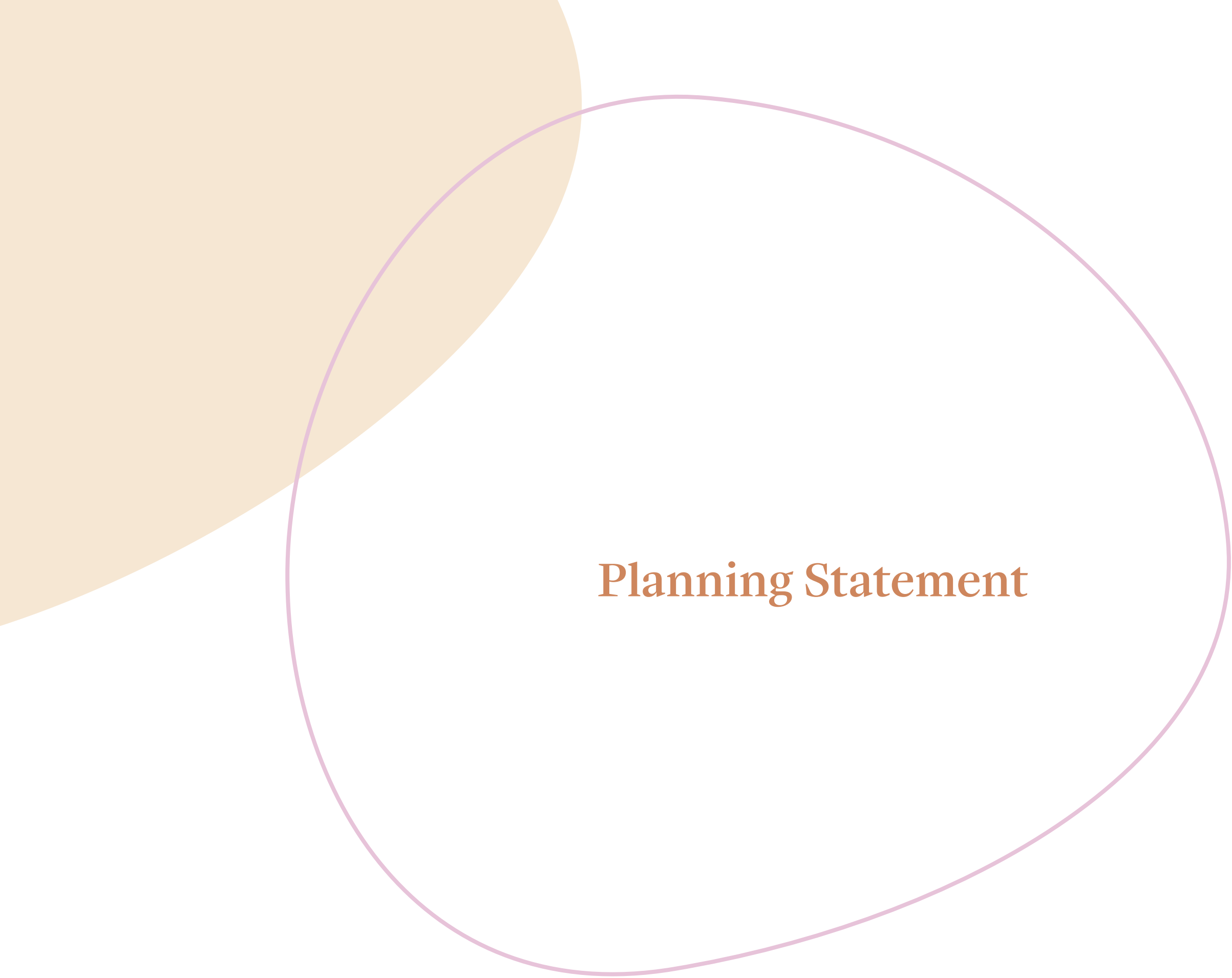
By the small-scaled nature of the design, natural daylighting will easily serve the primary space within the pool house through its glazed entry doors. This will reduce reliance on artificial lighting, and the associated energy consumption, however where additional lighting is required, LED appliances will be utilised in order to minimise energy demand. Whilst the proposed plant room is not served by natural daylighting, this space will be in use infrequently, only to access the equipment serving the pool and pool house, and so the lighting and associated energy demand of this room is likely to be minimal.

7.4 Sustainable and Locally Sourced Materials

By selecting materials that are indigenous to the area, the design harmonises with its context and the local architectural vernacular, creating a proposal that feels integrated with its surroundings. However, locally sourced materials also bring the benefit of reduced embodied carbon.

Where possible, the proposal seeks to utilise locally sourced, sustainably produced materials. This will ensure not only an aesthetically sympathetic design, but one which avoids unnecessary transportation emissions relating to its materiality.





Planning Statement

8.1 Introduction

This planning statement is submitted in support of a proposal for a swimming pool, pool house and associated landscaping works at Old Beech Farm, Cuckfield. This statement outlines how the design of the proposal complies with relevant policies and standards set out in the Mid Sussex District Plan.

8.2 Planning Applications History

Change of use from existing detached block of workshops and first floor office accommodation to residential accommodation ancillary to the main house.
CD/051/87
Status: Approved
Aug 1987

Demolition of existing single-storey pitched roof kitchen, utility and boot room. Erection of a single-storey extension to build a new entrance porch, kitchen and family living/dining room and a new bay window.
Ref. No: DM/22/2858 & DM/22/2841 (Householder Application & Listed Building Consent)
Status: Refused
Sep 2022

Proposed kitchen extension following demolition of single storey kitchen/utility wing, and minor alterations to existing facade. Amended elevations received on 10.08.2023 showing casement windows instead of sashes.
Ref. No: DM/23/1845 & DM/23/1846 (Householder Application & Listed Building Consent)
Status: Approved
Jul 2023

8.3 Planning Policy Context

Whilst the application site is situated near Cuckfield, it does not fall within the boundary covered by the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan, and hence relevant planning policies are set out only by the Mid Sussex District Plan and NPPF. The proposal is consistent with this ensuring that the development meets both local and national planning requirements. The situation of the site within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should also be given consideration, in particular the intention of the area to conserve and enhance its landscape. Key policies from the Mid Sussex District Plan and their relevance to the proposed development are outlined below:

DP6: Settlement Hierarchy

The open nature of the site is retained - by sinking the proposed pool house into the topography of the site, the character of Cuckfield and the open countryside surrounding it will be retained. There is no risk of over-development causing the coalescence of Cuckfield to other nearby settlements.

DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside

The visual, historical and biodiversity qualities of the site and the countryside around it are affected minimally, and possibly improved, by the proposed development. The proposed pool is to be situated largely in an area of existing hardstanding, which sits at the bottom of a grass bank, and the associated pool house will be sunk into the topography of the site to minimise its visual impact. Hence, the visual and historical qualities of the site will be maintained. The biodiversity of the site will be improved by the provision of two no. new trees to replace an existing cherry tree, along with further planting as part of the landscaping plan. These points are also relevant to the conservation of the High Weald AONB.

DP13: Preventing Coalescence

As the proposed development remains at a low height in relation to the surrounding topography of the site, there is no risk of this causing coalescence between the site and other adjacent areas of development. The characteristics of both Cuckfield and the countryside surrounding it are not affected.

DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The visual and historical qualities of the AONB are not affected by this proposal, as the development remains at a low level which does not impact the appearance of the site. Additionally, the proposed pool house is to be in a style to match the existing listed Farmhouse, hence retaining the character of the site. The biodiversity of the site will be improved by the provision of two no. new trees to replace an existing cherry tree.

DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities

The proposed development provides facilities to encourage a healthy lifestyle for the occupants of the site, through the provision of a swimming pool. The existing facilities provided by the site, including a tennis court, will not be impacted by the proposal.

DP26: Character and Design

The proposed development is to be in the same style as the existing listed farmhouse on site, hence not negatively impacting its current character. In particular, the proposed pool house will echo features such as vernacular materiality to ensure that it blends well with the existing buildings on the site. Appropriate landscaping, alongside the positioning of the proposal at the bottom of a grass bank, will be utilised to help the development blend into the surrounding site, whilst also enhancing its biodiversity. The defined domestic and agricultural areas of the site will not be impacted by the proposal.

DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution

Whilst there is potential for equipment related to the proposed pool to produce minimal levels of noise, as the site is not in close proximity to other properties, this does not present an issue. The nearest neighbouring properties are roughly 150 metres away from where the pool will be situated. The proposal will include minimal lighting, with warm LED lighting in the pool itself, and warm, downward facing lighting along the paving surrounding. This will ensure safety in and around the pool, whilst minimising impact on the landscape. Planting surrounds the site on all sides, which will further minimise the impact of any proposed lighting on the surrounding area.

8.3 Planning Policy Context

DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets

There are two listed buildings on the site, the most relevant being Old Beech Farmhouse, the history of which is set out in the heritage statement submitted alongside this application. Visual impact on these heritage assets and their situation in the wider site is minimised firstly by the use of an area of existing hardstanding, hence reducing the area of undeveloped land affected, and secondly by the grass banking surrounding the proposal, which provides screening around two sides of it. Further landscaping will enhance this screening effect. Additionally, the proposal makes use of vernacular materiality and forms in order to blend into the existing appearance of the site. Features which have the potential to negatively impact the heritage asset, for example the air source heat pump, are to be located discretely in order to prevent visual impact on the historic setting. The proposed site is already in a domestic setting, situated between the farmhouse and associated tennis court, hence the proposal will have no impact on the historic use of the site.

DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

Although one no. cherry tree is proposed to be removed as part of this application, no woodland or planting along the site's boundaries will be affected. Two no. new trees are proposed to be planted as part of the scheme, hence providing a net positive benefit to the biodiversity and habitats of the site. The proposal avoids encroaching on the root protection areas of all other existing trees.

DP38: Biodiversity

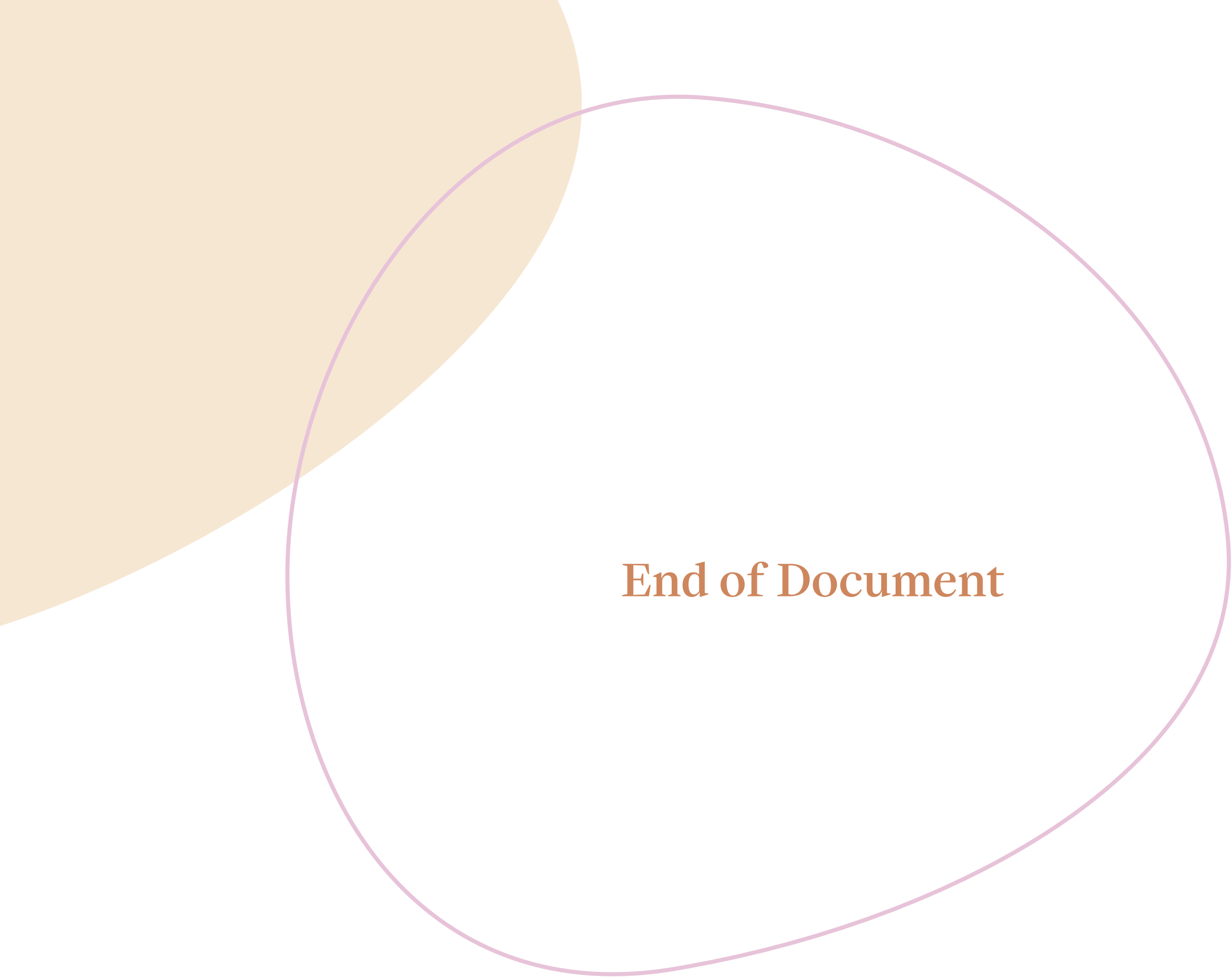
By retaining all but one existing tree, and proposing to plant two no. new trees, the proposal not only maintains, but improves the biodiversity of the site. Additionally, the use of an area which is already made up of hardstanding reduces impact on parts of the site which currently support biodiversity, the only impact being on a small area of grass lawn.

DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction

The relatively small nature of the proposed pool house means that it can easily maximise its use of natural daylighting, passive heating and ventilation through solar gains, all of which will help to reduce its overall energy consumption. Glazed windows and doors to the south elevation of the design ensure opportunity for both of these. Further to this, an air source heat pump will serve both the pool and pool house, providing a renewable source of energy. Efficient equipment, such as LED lighting in and around the pool, will further reduce energy demand.

8.4 Conclusion

The proposed development complies with all policies set out in the Mid Sussex District Plan, as well as ensuring that the character of the High Weald AONB remains unaffected. By utilising an area of the site that has undergone previous development, and is hence already considered to be of domestic use, the proposal avoids impacting the historic split of the site into domestic and agricultural uses. Additionally, by making use of existing topography, both the proposed pool and pool house remain visually subservient to their surroundings, including the listed Old Beech Farmhouse. Biodiversity on the site is to be improved, despite the removal of one no. cherry tree, through the planting of two no. new trees and additional landscaping.



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