Land at Hounds' Cottage
Wall Hill Road
Ashurst Wood
RH19 3TQ

Planning Application for:

Demolition of existing storage building and erection of a detached two-storey, 3-bedroom house with single-storey detached garage and associated access and landscaping

Design and Access Statement

January 2026

North elevation of existing hedge from driveway

# Introduction

Hounds' Cottage, built in the 1950's, is a 5-bedroom family home set in about 4.5 acres (1.82 ha) of land, situated at the top of Wall Hill Road in Ashurst Wood. The applicant, who owns Hounds' Cottage, is seeking to subdivide their land and create a separate plot on which to construct a detached, 3-bedroom dwelling.
The proposed plot is 0.15 ha and lies between Hounds' Cottage itself and its neighbour to the west. Access to the plot would be from the existing driveway that serves Hounds' Cottage.

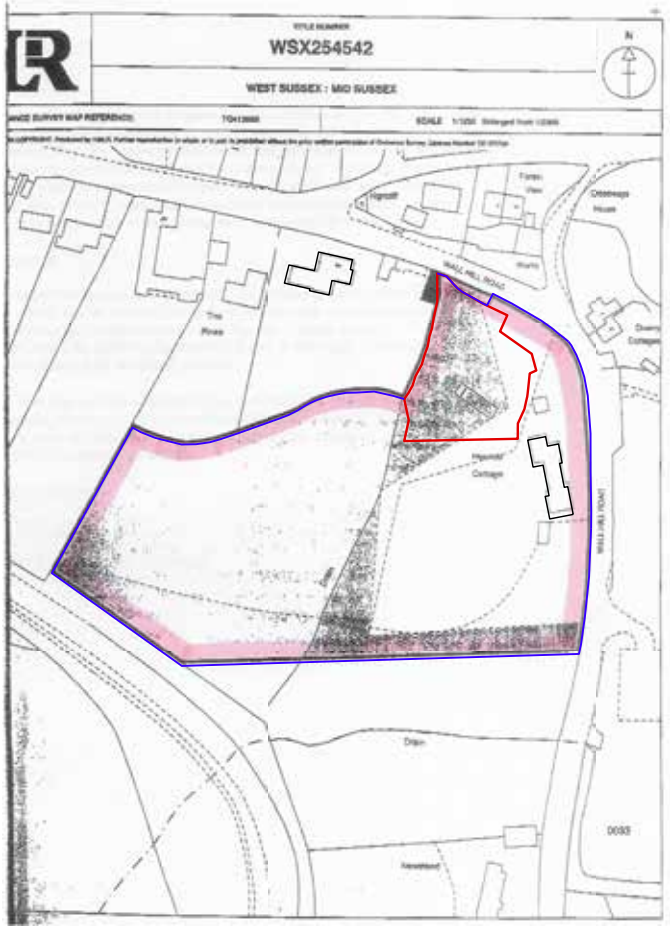
The predominantly wooded site slopes down from north to south and is overgrown with brambles and scrub. It was formerly a nursery garden in which a building remains in the lower part of the plot, currently used for storage.

A preliminary arboricultural assessment was commissioned before initial designs were made, to inform on the general health of the trees and overgrown shrubs on and adjacent to the plot. An initial planning policy appraisal was also commissioned which gave the applicant a background to the national and local planning constraints and opportunities. A design proposal emerged which formed the basis of a pre-app to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC), submitted in July 2025.

The comprehensive feedback from MSDC has been invaluable and this proposal is the result of constructive dialogue between the applicant, architect and planning officer.

This Design and Access Statement and drawings should be read in conjunction with an arboricultural report prepared by Broad Oak Tree Consultants, a Preliminary Ecological Assessment by CT Ecology (with an assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain), and a Planning statement by Asher Planning.

Entrance to whole site from Wall Hill Road



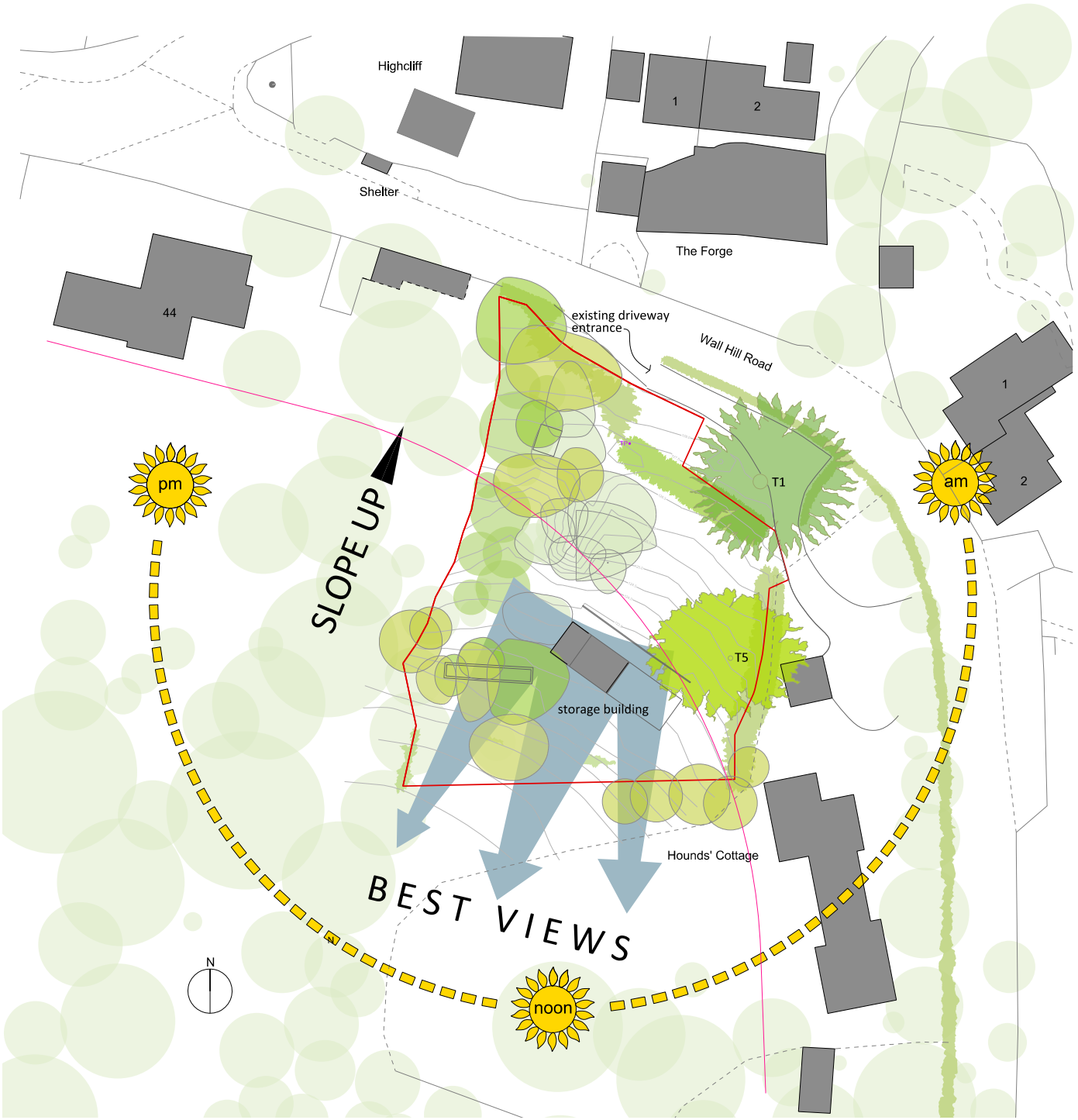

Land Registry map of whole site with proposed plot indicated in red

## Site analysis

The site for the proposed dwelling lies between two substantial houses – Hounds' Cottage to the south-east and Moor Hill to the west. The former is screened by the mixed hedge running down the eastern boundary. Moor Hill lies behind dense shrubs and trees on and inside the western boundary. Across Wall Hill Road to the north of the site is the former Forge workshop and behind this are houses on Hammerwood Road; their view of the site is effectively screened by a 4.5m high mature leylandii hedge forming the northern site boundary.

Existing trees are generally on the western side and are clustered with groups of native, non-native and invasive species of shrubs, mostly overgrown. The western boundary contains dense groups of overgrown planting; the eastern boundary is marked by a mixed hedge. Two trees are noteworthy: an imposing Monterey Cypress (T1) tree sits just outside the proposed site boundary in the north-eastern corner, and a maturing oak tree (T5) is situated near the eastern boundary.

The report on tree inspection considers all other trees to be category C or U. Some of these trees are dead or dying. Notwithstanding, the applicant's aim is to retain as many trees as possible to safeguard biodiversity.



The site has a marked slope from north to south, with a level difference of about 9.5 metres. The middle part of the site is largely open, allowing longer views towards the south and consequently good sunlight in the middle of the day.

An existing outbuilding, once part of a nursery garden, is partly derelict but still used for storage and is regularly accessed by vehicle on a lane running down the eastern boundary. Remnants of other buildings – likely former greenhouses - are present.


Existing site section

Looking north-west from middle of site

Existing storage building

Looking south-west across the site. T5 is on the left

## Pre-application

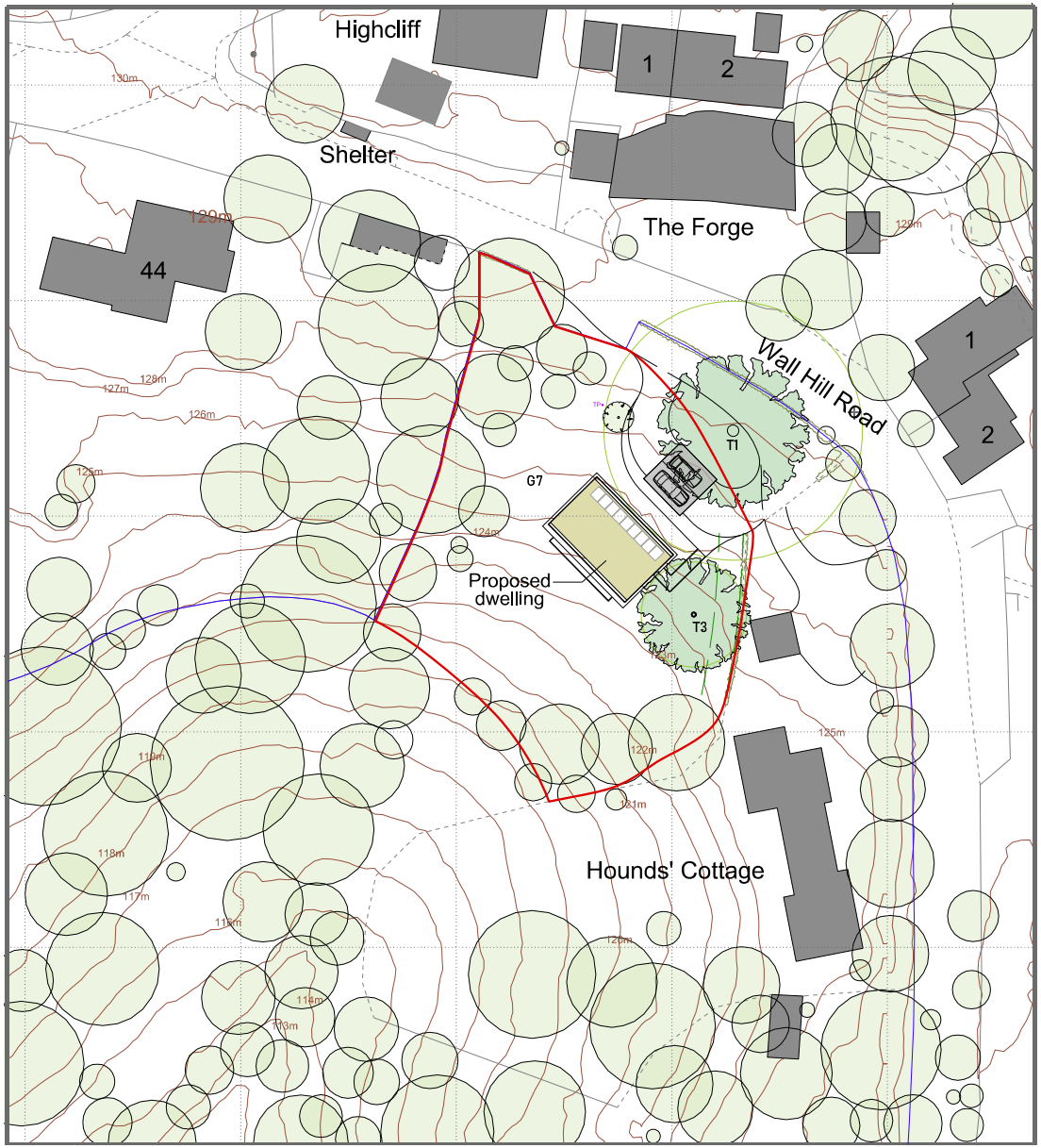
A pre-application was submitted in July 2025, alongside an initial tree report and a planning policy note. The pre-app proposed a 3-bedroom dwelling of approximately 172 sqm GIA, built over two levels.

The cross section indicated that the house was cut into the natural slope so that from the north (Wall Hill Road) it appeared as a single storey building. The entry level is the upper floor level, containing open-plan living spaces, a shower room and utility space. The lower level contains three bedrooms (one with ensuite shower room), a family bathroom and a study. Each bedroom has direct access to a south-facing terrace leading into the garden. The entrance was via a dog-leg ramped bridge, leading to the front door which was situated on the east elevation.

Vehicular access was provided by a looped driveway off the existing driveway, with parking for two cars in a double garage that allowed cars to drive through with no requirement to reverse into the road.

The house was positioned so that it avoided the Root Protection Area of both the oak tree (T5, formerly T3) and the Monterey Cypress (T1).

The house was conceived as a low-energy building, constructed from sustainable timber (either as prefabricated panels, CLT or timber frame) with timber cladding externally. The roof form was part flat, part monopitch, whose form would be manifested internally, increasing in height towards the southerly view. Shading to the open-plan upper floor would be provided by rolling timber screens. Photovoltaic panels on the flat roof would service an air-source heat pump to provide all hot water and heating.




Pre-app site plan

The double garage, also timber clad, was proposed with a steeper double-pitched roof that could accommodate storage within the roofspace.

Response from MSDC

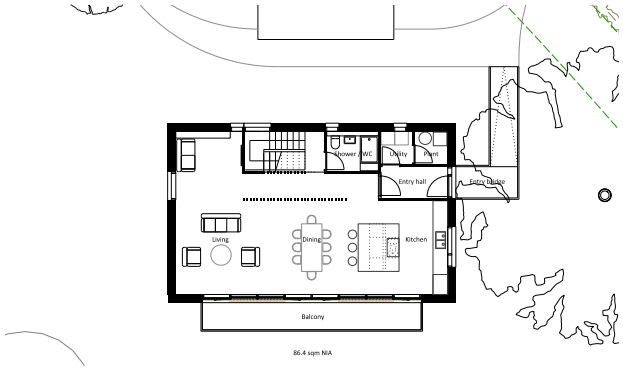
Mr Hamish Evans, the planning officer from MSDC, gave a comprehensive response and was generally supportive of the proposal in policy terms. Please refer to the Planning Statement for a more detailed breakdown of the national and local policies which apply to the project.

In design terms, Mr Evans felt the house should move further away from the oak tree (T5, formerly T3) to improve daylighting. He considered the double garage with its steep pitched roof would be out of scale compared to the house itself, with its windowless north façade obscuring much of the house which 'would not relate well with the public realm'.

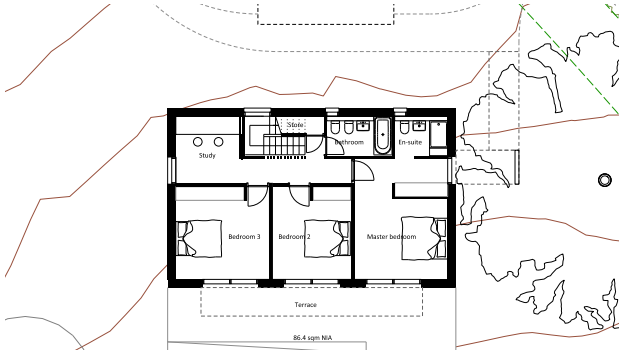
Otherwise he felt that the design, while contemporary, would 'blend well with the surrounding woodland and countryside'.

Further, he considered that 'the proposal would be a significant distance from any existing residential properties…[and] as such it is unlikely to cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants'.

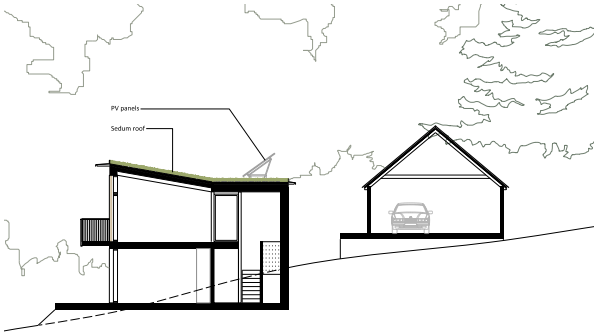
pre-app scheme: view from south-east



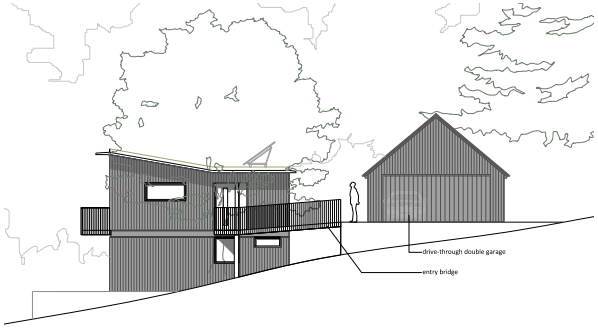

Pre-app scheme: upp floor plan with entrance from the east



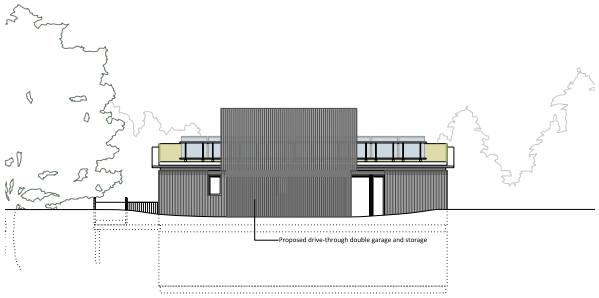

Pre-app scheme: lower floor plan with direct access to terrace from bedrooms




Section showing double garage on the right




East elevation: the entrance was via a dog-leg ramped bridge




Composite north elevation with garage in front of house

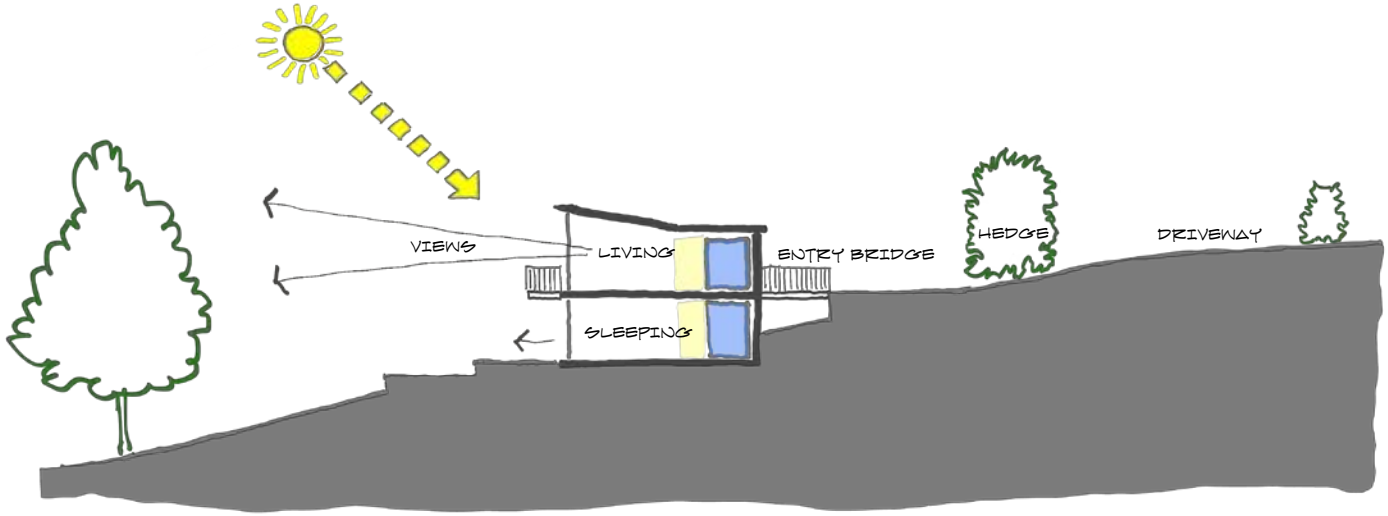
# The proposal

## Design Concept

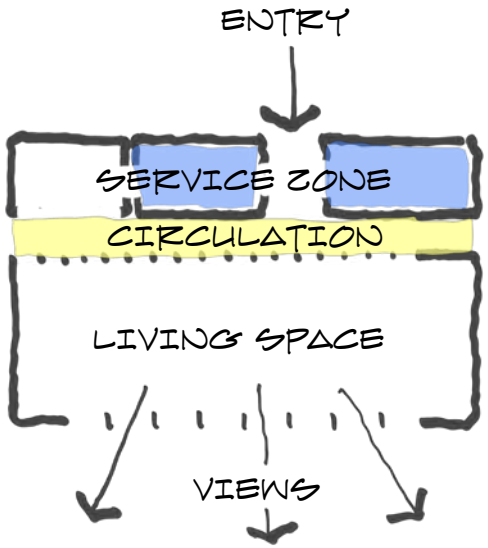
The concept behind the planning of the house was predicated on the topography, with the principal living spaces on the upper floor, level with the driveway outside the garage. This brings a number of benefits: the roof form is expressed within the open-plan living space, the slope of the ceiling admitting more daylight deeper into the plan, and the space opening up towards the view. The south-facing wall has full-height sliding glazed doors and a long balcony; in summer months the wall can be opened up, enhancing the connection to the landscape from inside.

By contrast the north wall has more limited glazing, reflecting the need to limit heat loss but also the programmatic arrangement of 'servant' spaces such as stairs, shower rooms, utility and plant room. But windows to the stair, entrance hall, shower room and snug ensure the house is not 'blind' to the street – providing passive surveillance and signalling occupation within.

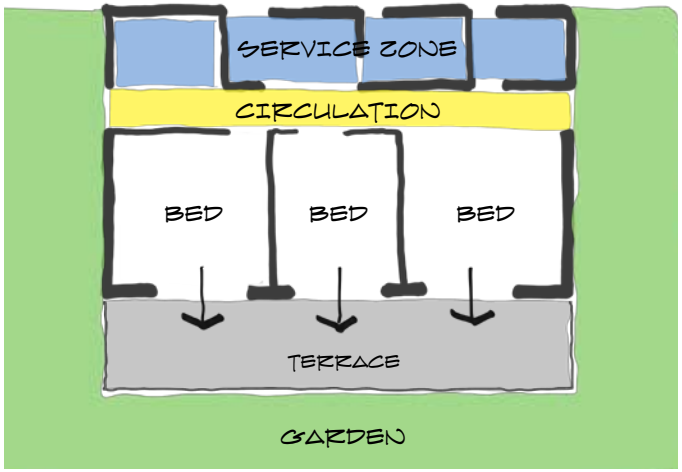
Three bedrooms, bathrooms and a study room occupy the lower floor. The clear programmatic diagram continues with service rooms along the north wall (partially within the sloping ground) contrasting with bedrooms on the south side, each of which opens up onto the terrace.




Diagrammatic section

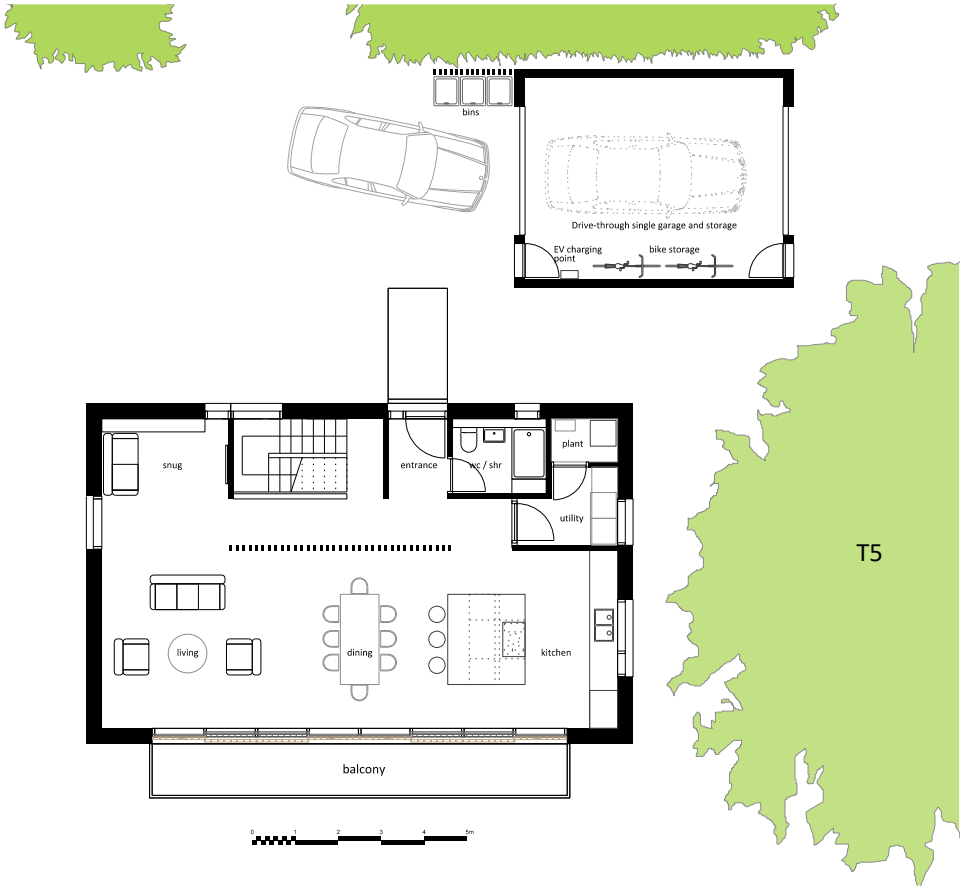



Plan diagram: upper floor (entrance level)




Plan diagram: lower floor (garden level)

The upper floor plan was therefore revised to bring the entrance onto the north elevation so that the front door was clearly visible from the approach. By lowering the driveway we now propose a simple, level entry bridge. The double garage was reduced to a single, and its roof form revised to a low monopitch, which related much more comfortably with the roof profile of the house.




Left: proposed entry level (upper) plan with single garage. The entrance bridge and front door are now clearly visible from the approach

Below:proposed lower level plan. Bedrooms have direct access to the terrace

The Planning Officer's suggestion to move the building further west from the oak tree (T5) to allow more daylight to the building has been implemented. In doing so, an additional benefit has been greater exposure of the north elevation to the pedestrian approach – a more active frontage than before.


Proposed composite north elevation: moving the garage further east reveals the entrance and more active frontage

Proposed east elevation showing single garage with a lower roof profile and level entry bridge

Illustrative view of proposed house from south-east

We looked more closely at the relationship between the proposed garage and house and the mature hedge that currently screens the site along its northern boundary. By rotating both buildings towards the south by 12 degrees we found that not only would the house be better orientated towards the south, but the garage could sit behind the hedge. The hedge therefore would largely remain in situ, penetrated only to accommodate the new driveway, and retain most of its biodiversity value.

These revisions were sent informally to Mr Evans and received his support.

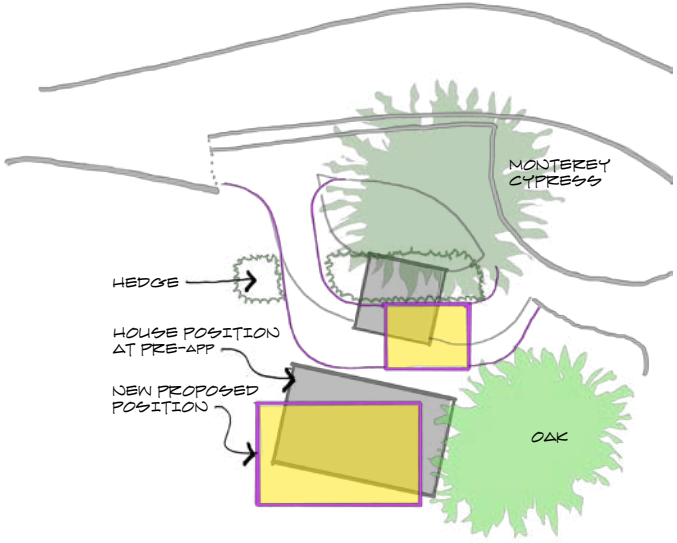
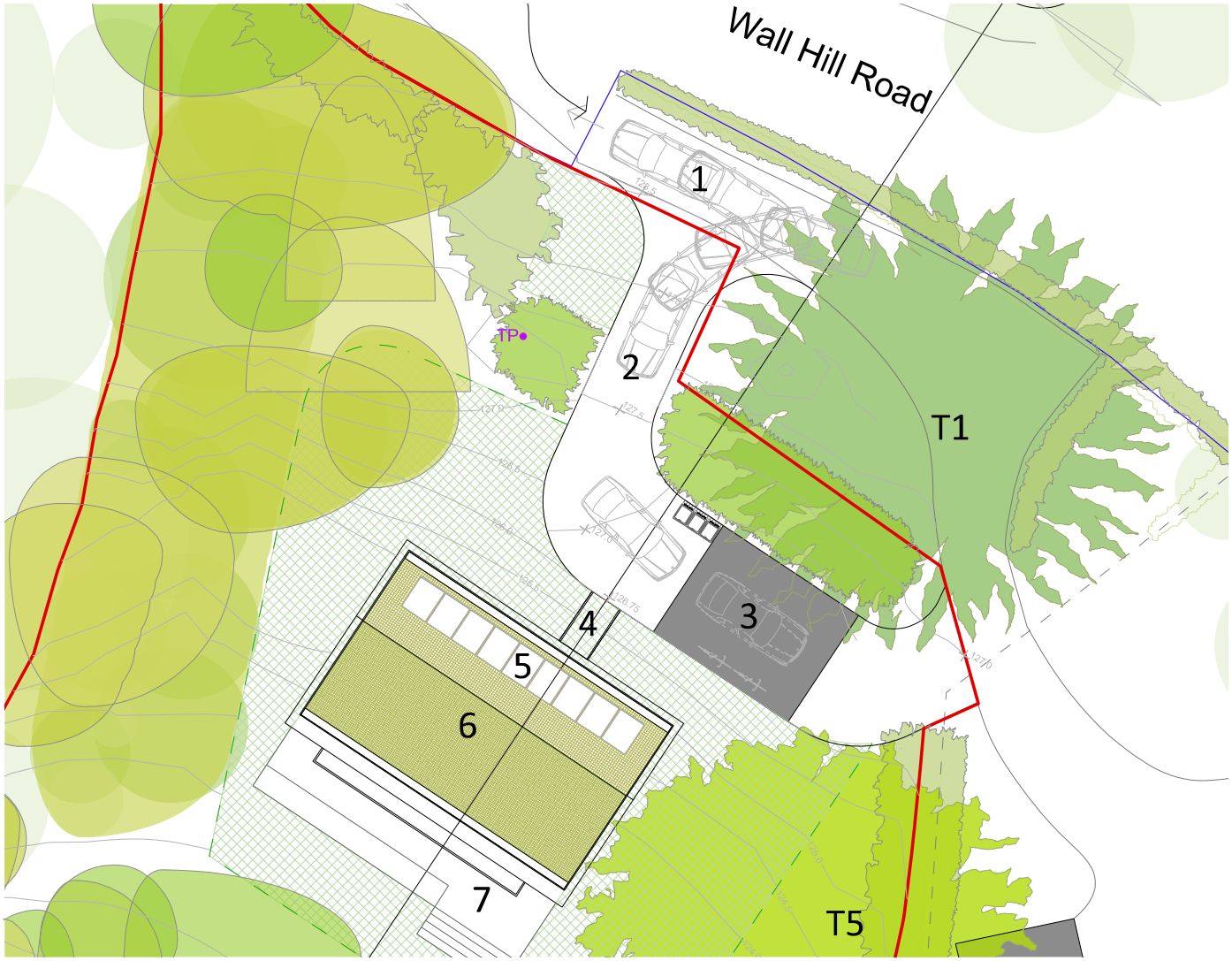



Diagram showing the repositioning and reorientation of the house and garage from pre-app




Proposed site plan showing the single drive-through garage located behind the existing hedge

## Areas and space standards

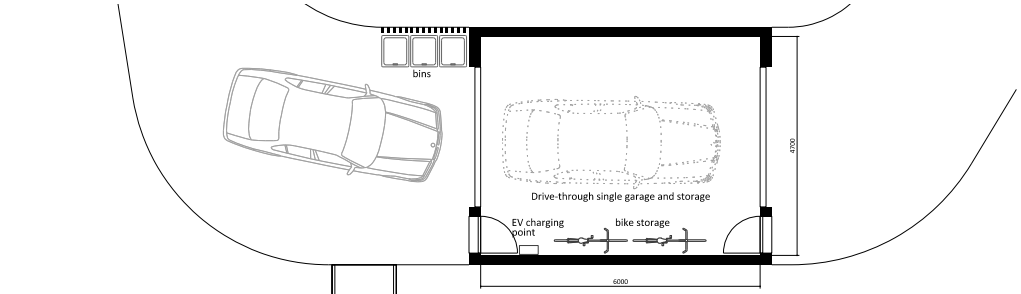
The total Gross Internal Area is 172.8 sqm, spread equally over the two levels.

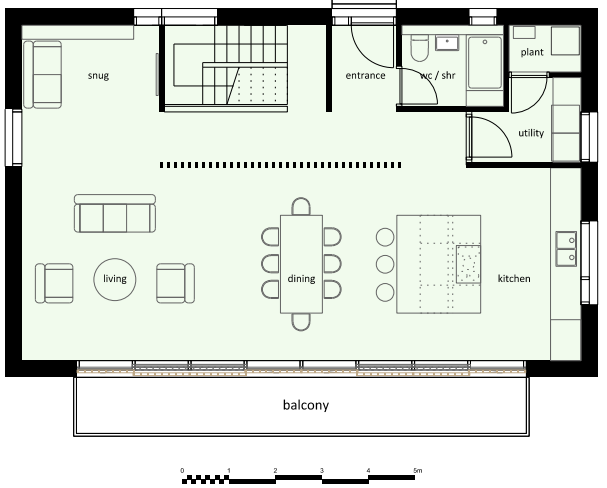
Master bedroom: 26.3 sqm, including 1.4 sqm built-in wardrobe.
Bedroom 2: 14 sqm, including 1 sqm built-in wardrobe
Bedroom 3: 16.8 sqm, including 1.8 sqm built-in wardrobe

As a 3b-6p dwelling, the total GIA exceeds the minimum requirement set out in the Nationally Described Space Standard.

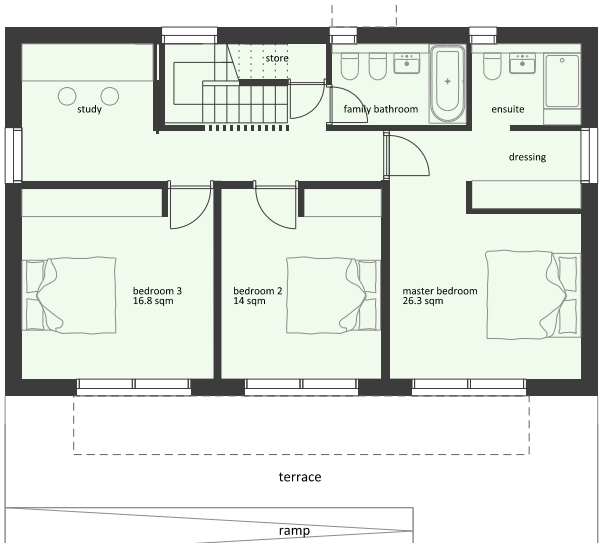
Built-in storage is calculated being 1 sqm for under stairs, 0.68 sqm for B1 (1.4 – 0.72), 0.28 sqm for B2 (1-0.72), and 1.08 sqm for B3 (1.8-0.72), totalling 3.04 sqm, which exceeds the minimum for this dwelling type (2.5 sqm) by 0.54 sqm.

Further storage will be available in the garage roofspace.




Upper level plan




Lower level plan

## Vehicular and pedestrian access and parking

Pre-application advice was sought from West Sussex CC Highways Authority, based on the current design. Their response on 18 November 2025 was broadly supportive:

- the additional single dwelling would not result in 'significant material intensification' and the LHA would 'not raise any concern to the use of the existing access point'
- WSCC HA calculated that parking for three cars should be provided, and were satisfied that with one vehicle in the garage there was sufficient space for two more in the proposed driveway.

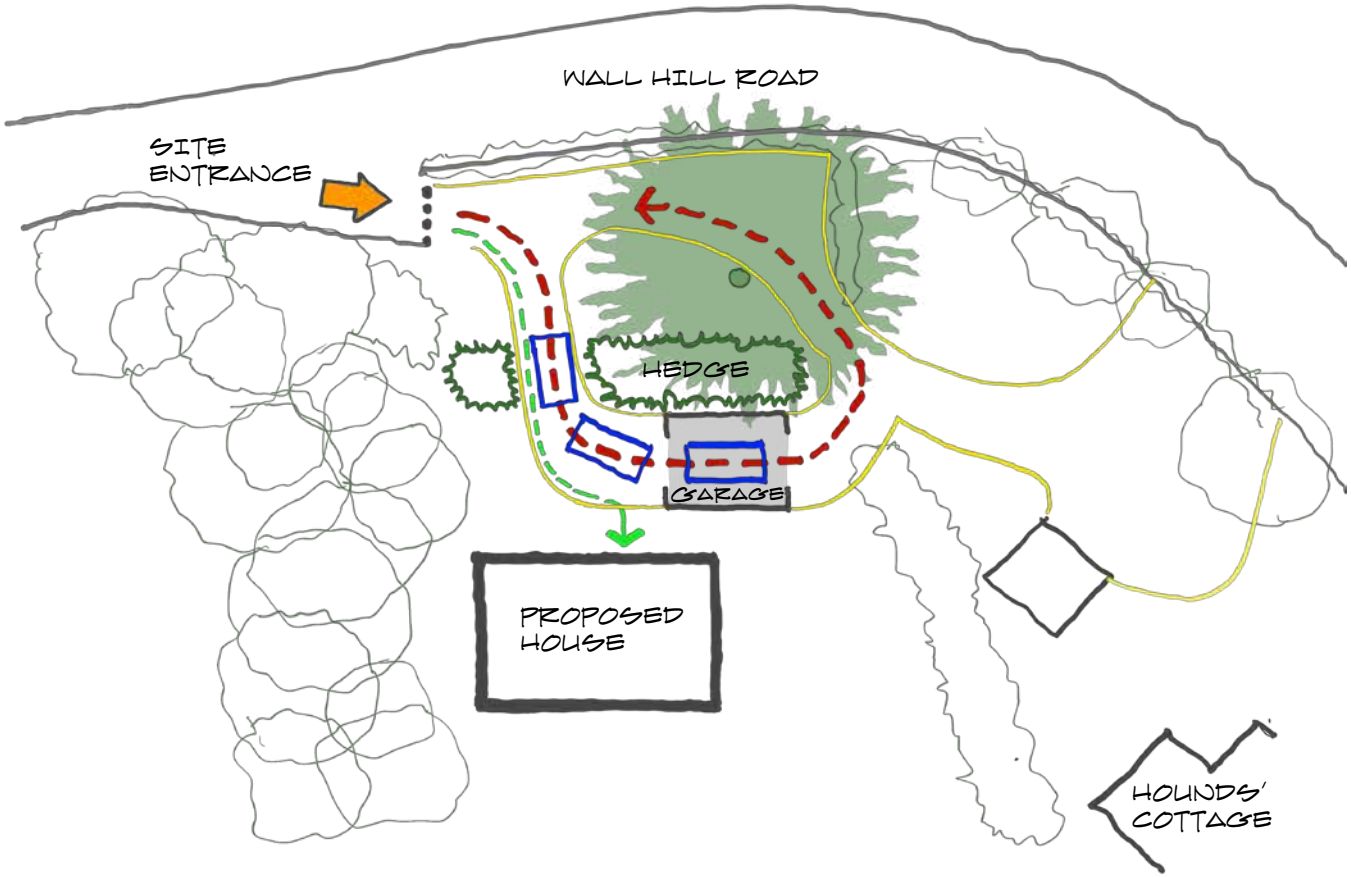
The proposal therefore did not need to change from that which was submitted for pre-app advice.

Vehicular and pedestrian access to the proposed dwelling will use the existing driveway to Hounds' Cottage but then turn into a private driveway that serves the garage and house. The garage is proposed to be 6m x 4.5m internally, and is therefore in accordance with Manual for Streets, providing secure parking for one car and at least two bicycles, as well as some storage. The driveway itself has space for two more vehicles.

The driveway and double-ended garage are designed on a loop so that a car may drive through the garage and exit onto the shared driveway beyond the Monterey Cypress. Alternatively, cars parked in front of the garage may exit by reversing onto the shared driveway and exiting the site in forward gear.

The garage has pass doors next to the garage doors so that entering or exiting the garage with a bicycle is easy, which in turn encourages its regular use. An EV charging point will be provided at the garage such that it can charge a vehicle either inside or outside the garage.

Pedestrian access is step free, The proposed driveway will have a short downward gradient of approximately 1:10 to the entrance level. Frome here a level bridge spans over a cutting to the front door.



## Foul sewage and surface water (drainage) assessment

The proposed dwelling will have its own package treatment plant for foul and waste drainage, situated within the new site boundary. The plant is more than 7m from the house and less than 30m from the shared driveway, enabling emptying by tanker.

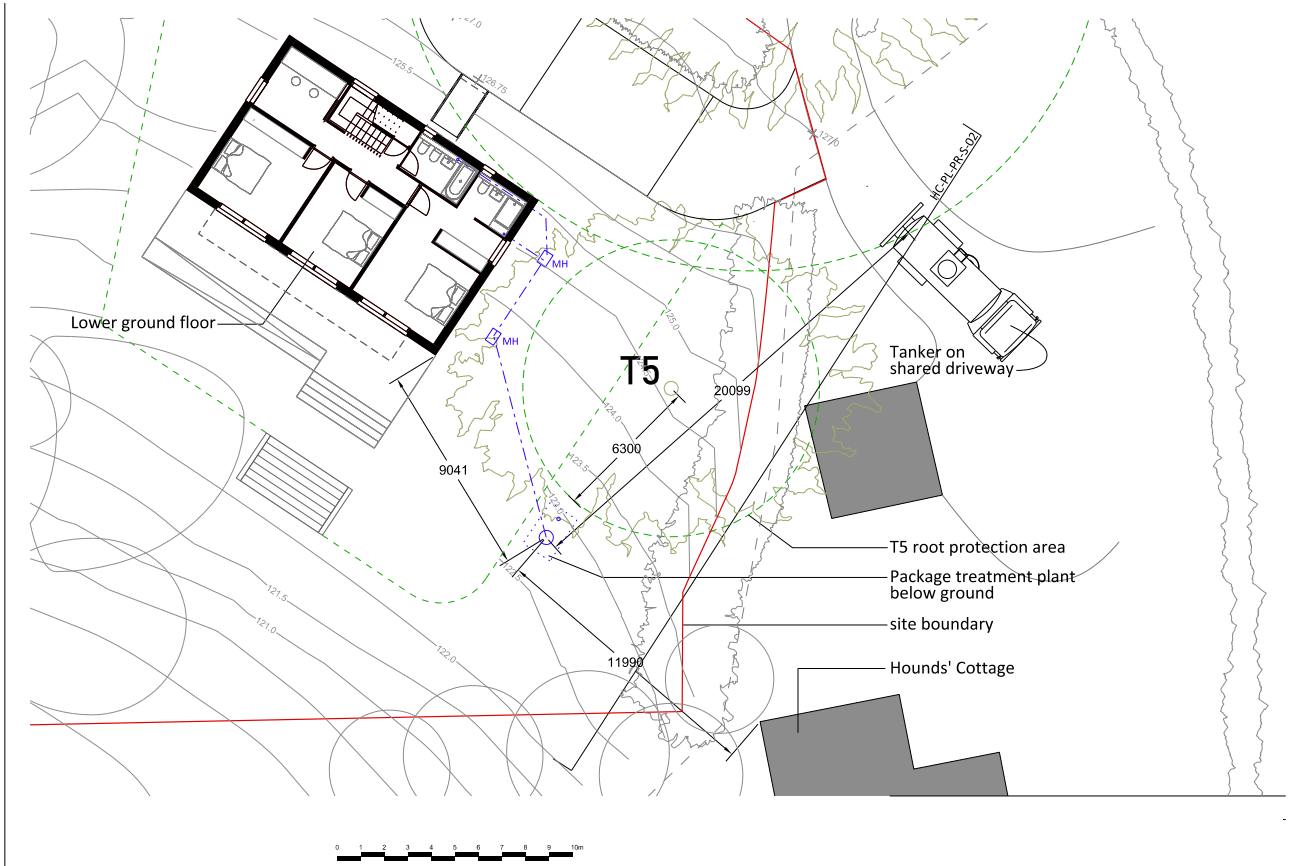
The site is in Flood Zone 1. The site area is approximately 0.15 ha. The site is characterised by a natural gradient from north to south with a height difference of some 9.5m over 48m in plan length. There is no history of flooding.

The long term flood risk for this site has been identified from the .gov website:

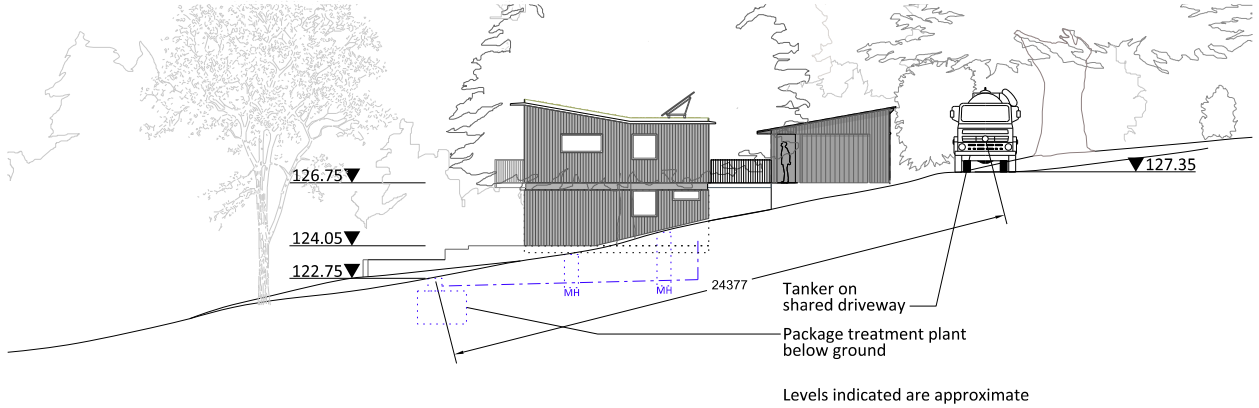
For surface water:
- yearly chance of floording: very low
- yearly chance of flooding between 2040 and 2060: very low

For rivers:
- yearly chance of flooding: very low
- yearly chance of flooding between 2036 and 2069: very low

The site lies outside of a groundwater flood alert area.




Plan of proposed foul drainage to package treatment plant




Section of proposed foul drainage to package treatment plant

**Landscaping, biodiversity and visual impact**

An imposing Monterey Cypress acts as a marker to the site as a whole, not actually within the proposed site boundary but standing sentinel by the shared driveway.

The existing site was once a nursery garden. One of the structures that served this enterprise is partially intact and is in use as a storage building. It appears from the topographic survey that the central area of land has notional terracing where previous greenhouses stood. The site has been maintained but inevitably the ground cover of brambles and scrub prevails. Trees and shrubs have been allowed to grow out and some species have suffered as a result. Some ash trees are subject to die-back and some are dead.

The sole tree on the eastern side of the site is an oak in good health which has the space to mature well, and the desire to retain it was an early design decision. The siting of the house is comfortably outside its RPA. A mixed hedgerow forms the eastern boundary, while the northern boundary is marked by a dense hedge of leylandii and cherry laurel.

The concept behind the landscaping is to keep as many trees as possible, recognising their biodiversity value (even if dead), and to create a vegetated garden to the south and sides of the new house, adopting the terracing idea to optimise its amenity value. Thick shrubbery to the west would be thinned to encourage better health of both shrubs and trees.

The proposed driveway is within the RPA of the Monterey Cypress and would be supported by a proprietary interlocking grid system that retains the

Monterey Cypress (T1)

Oak (T5)

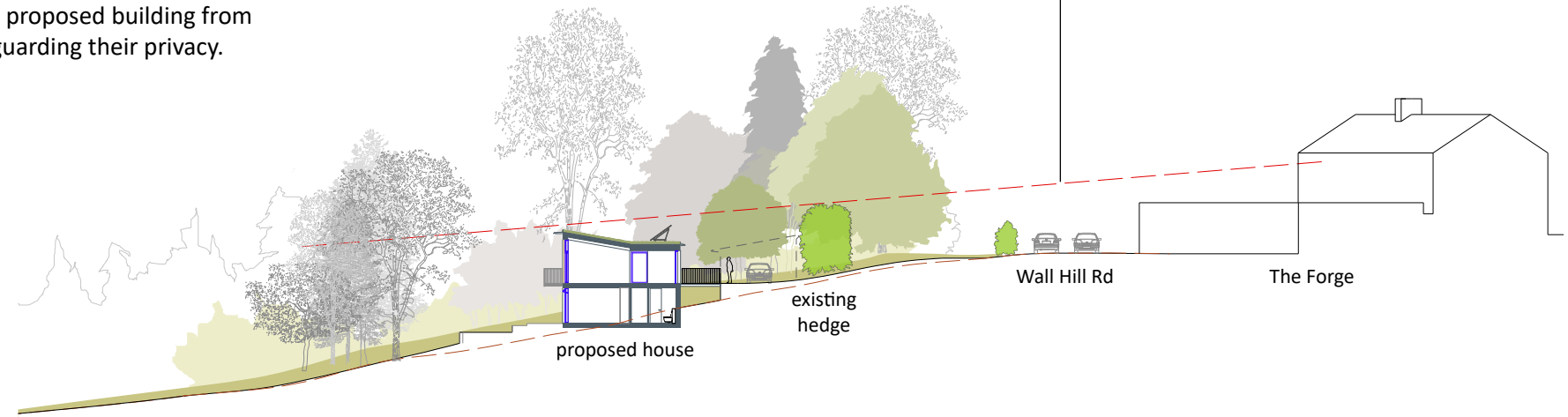
Hedge (leylandii and cherry laurel)

permeable gravel and provides attenuated drainage to the root system below. The garage itself would be either a reinforced concrete slab supported by screw piles which would be positioned to avoid root damage or a steel grid system such as the Green Grid Root Bridge which can support the garage slab.

Fortuitously, the main central portion of the site has few trees, and this relatively open area is the location of the proposed dwelling. Those trees that would need removal to enable the building are of low quality. Please refer to the Tree report, PEA and biodiversity metrics for more detail.

The site plan demonstrates that the proposed house also sits on an imagined arc of development in relation to Hounds' Cottage and Moor Hill, thereby retaining a similar relationship to the road as its neighbours.

In terms of visual impact, the retention of the mature hedge along the northern boundary will largely screen the building from view, not just from the road but from The Forge and the properties behind. The existing trees and hedges also screen the proposed building from neighbouring houses, safeguarding their privacy.

**Sustainability**

DP 39 of the MSDC District Plan seeks to improve the sustainability of development and incorporate measures appropriate to the type of development and its location. S14 of the NPPF requires plans to mitigate and adapt to climate change: reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat. Measures adopted in this proposal follow principle DG37 of the Mid-Sussex Design Guide SPD.

The building has been designed on a fabric first basis, using sustainable timber construction wherever possible both for structure and cladding, and levels of natural insulation that will target Passivhaus values. Sunlight through full-height south-facing glazing will ensure high levels of daylight deep into the living spaces; external screens will assist in limiting heat gains in summer.

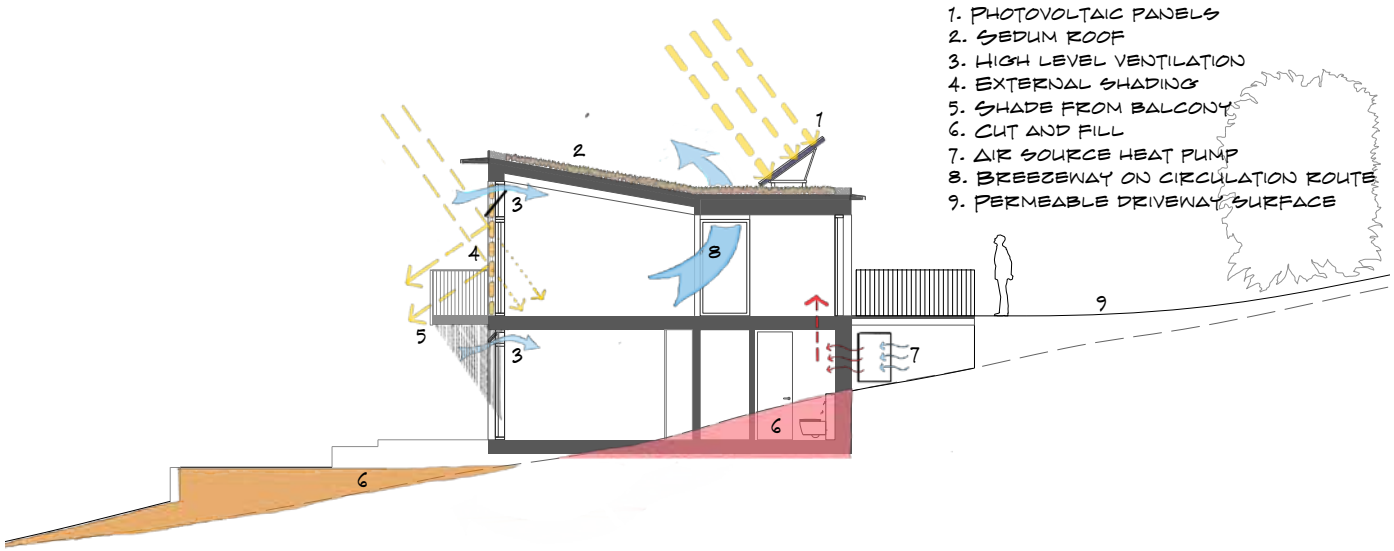
Construction materials will be selected for their low carbon properties and recyclability. Structural connections will be bolted where possible, allowing future disassembly.

The simple structural diagram will allow partitions to be added or removed which allows the building to respond to its occupants' needs in the future. For example, a bedroom could be created at the entrance level should this be required.

The roof is designed to support a sedum planted covering, which helps regulate storm water run-off, provides thermal mass to naturally temper heating and cooling cycles, and provides potential for biodiversity. An air source heat pump will provide all heating and hot water; an array of photovoltaic panels mounted on the flat section of roof will provide most of the power requirements for the heat pump and EV charging station, depending on season.

The proposed building will utilise the natural slope of the land. To do this effectively the rear (north) part of the lower floor is cut into the ground; the north wall thus becoming a retaining wall in its lower section. The excavated spoil from this will be redistributed on the site to form the garden terracing. Additional spoil from levelling out some of the existing embankments will also remain on site.

Arisings from the demolition of the existing storage building are envisaged to be used as hardcore below the ground slab, and if bricks can be recovered they can be used in the construction of the terrace.



North elevation of proposed house behind existing hedge