

2.3.7 Constraints

Key constraints arise from the site’s position within a wooded High Weald landscape where open pasture fields sit between areas of ancient woodland. Any development must respond carefully to the existing vegetation structure, the gently sloping landform and the rural character of the surrounding countryside.

Woodland edge
Ancient woodland and managed coppice lie immediately to the south and west of the site. These woodland edges are an important ecological and landscape feature and must be protected and respected. Development should maintain an appropriate buffer to the woodland edge and avoid disturbance to tree root zones, soils and habitats associated with the woodland margin.

Field character
The site forms part of a simple pastoral field that contributes to the wider pattern of agricultural land across the valley. The open character of the field and its relationship to surrounding woodland must be retained, avoiding excessive built form or urbanising landscape treatments.

Trees
A mature oak located within the north-eastern part of the site provides an important landscape feature and ecological habitat. This tree should be retained and incorporated sensitively within the design of the proposed dwelling and landscape.

Ecology
The field itself is dominated by modified grassland of relatively low ecological value, however the boundaries of the site connect to woodland habitats and contribute to ecological corridors across the wider landscape. Construction and future management must therefore protect these connections and avoid unnecessary disturbance to boundary vegetation.

Landscape character
The High Weald landscape is characterised by irregular fields enclosed by woodland and hedgerows. New development must respond to this established landscape grain and avoid visually prominent or intrusive forms within the countryside.



Photograph of woodland adjacent to site

2.3.8 Opportunities

The site presents significant opportunities to reinforce the wooded character of the High Weald landscape while accommodating a carefully integrated rural dwelling.

Landscape integration
The gently sloping topography and strong woodland edge allow the proposed house to be positioned so that it sits naturally within the landscape, framed by existing vegetation and partially screened by trees.

Woodland relationships
The proximity of woodland and coppice provides an opportunity to reinforce the transition between open pasture and woodland through additional native planting, strengthening ecological networks and enhancing habitat diversity.

Trees and orchards
New tree planting across the site can extend the wooded character of the landscape while retaining the open quality of the field. Orchard planting and scattered native trees provide a traditional rural response that reflects historic patterns of land management in the High Weald.

Ecology
The development provides opportunities to enhance biodiversity through habitat creation including native tree and shrub planting, species-rich grassland and wildlife features integrated into the landscape design.

Architecture
The project offers the opportunity to deliver a carefully considered contemporary house rooted in the traditions of rural High Weald settlements. By responding to landform, vegetation and views, the architecture can appear as a natural component of the landscape rather than an imposition upon it.



Site photograph looking south

2.3.9 The Applicant and the Site

Lucy grew up at Cockhaise Farm and lived there until leaving home following her marriage to Nick. The farm formed a significant part of family life and childhood, with daily involvement in agricultural work, livestock and the surrounding landscape.

Following their marriage and the birth of their children, Lucy and Nick remained closely connected to the farm and continued to spend substantial time there with family. Over time, this relationship developed into a longer-term ambition to return permanently to West Sussex and take an active role in the stewardship and future management of the land.

Nick uses a wheelchair following a rugby injury and the proposal has therefore been shaped fundamentally around long-term accessibility and adaptability. The house has been developed as a fully accessible family home capable of supporting changing physical needs over time whilst maintaining a close relationship with landscape and outdoor life.

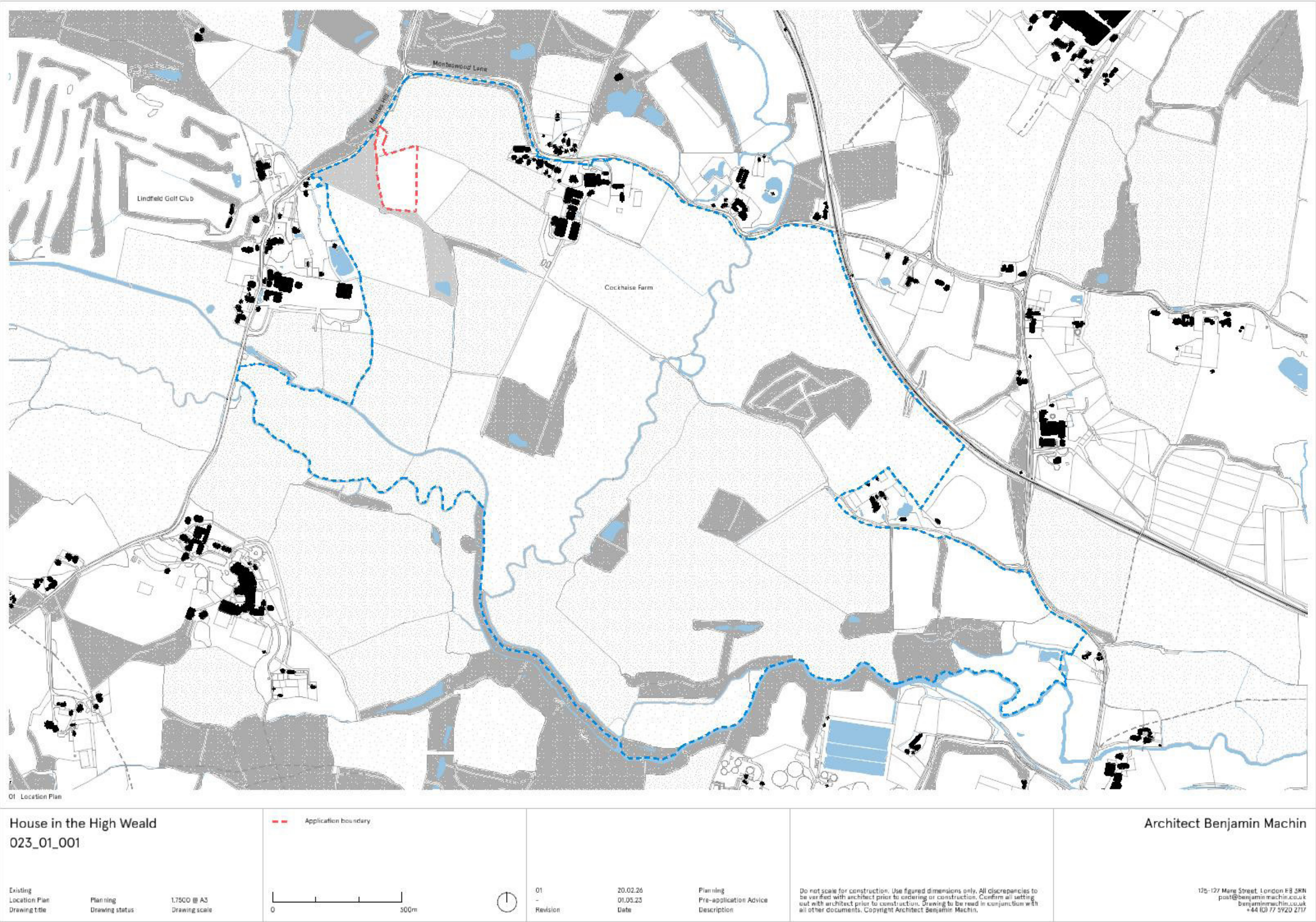
Alongside domestic occupation, Lucy and Nick intend to continue and expand ecological and agricultural stewardship across the site and surrounding land. This includes woodland management, orchard planting, habitat creation and long-term biodiversity enhancement associated with the wider landscape strategy.

The proposal therefore emerges not simply from a desire for an isolated rural dwelling, but from an established and enduring relationship with Cockhaise Farm and the surrounding landscape. The project seeks to support long-term stewardship, accessibility and family life rooted directly within the agricultural and ecological context of the site.

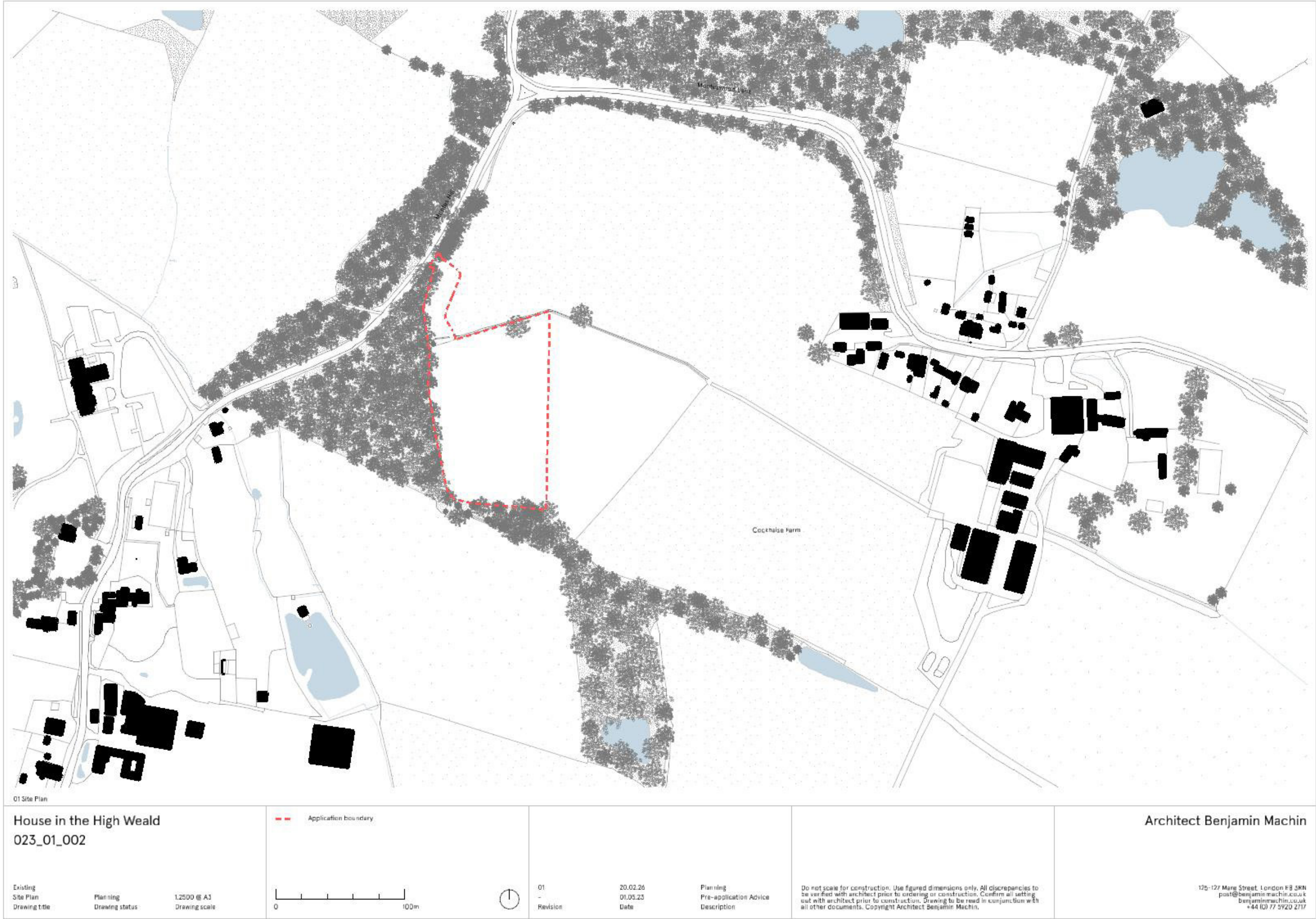


All photographs of clients taken on and around the site over their lives

3.0 Existing drawings



Existing location plan



Existing site plan



Existing site elevations

4.0 Planning Policy

4.1 Overview

A Planning Statement accompanies this application and should be read alongside this Design and Access Statement. Together, the documents establish the design, planning and environmental rationale for the proposed development.

The proposal has evolved through an iterative process of site analysis, design review, pre-application engagement and independent Design Review Panel feedback. This process has informed a scheme developed specifically in response to the characteristics of the site and surrounding landscape.

The submitted proposal is therefore not speculative or generic in approach. It is the outcome of sustained testing against landscape character, settlement pattern, ecological considerations and planning policy requirements.

The accompanying Planning Statement demonstrates in detail how the proposal accords with the relevant national and local planning policy framework.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The site lies within open countryside and is assessed against Paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework relating to isolated homes of exceptional quality.

The proposal has been developed from a close reading of the site, its landscape structure and the dispersed agricultural character of the surrounding High Weald landscape. The design responds directly to existing landform, woodland edges, field patterns and working rural typologies rather than imposing an unrelated architectural object within the countryside.

The scheme delivers a highly site-specific dwelling of exceptional quality through clarity of organisation, careful environmental response, long-term accessibility and a landscape-led approach to siting and form.

The proposal also secures substantial environmental enhancement through biodiversity gain, woodland and orchard planting, habitat creation and long-term ecological stewardship.

Taken together, the proposal satisfies the requirements of Paragraph 84(e) by delivering architecture of genuinely outstanding quality which is innovative, landscape-led and rooted directly in the particular conditions of the site.

4.3 Local Planning Policy

The proposal aligns with the objectives of the Mid Sussex District Plan and associated local planning policies relating to design quality, landscape character, biodiversity and sustainable rural development.

The scheme has been carefully developed to preserve and reinforce the existing landscape structure of the site and wider countryside setting. New planting, habitat creation and long-term landscape management are integrated within the proposals, resulting in measurable ecological enhancement and biodiversity net gain.

Access, layout and use have been resolved in a clear and robust manner through a new agricultural-style field entrance from Montes Hill, designed to reflect the established rural access character of the lane and a fully integrated accessibility strategy responding directly to the applicants’ long-term needs.

The proposal responds positively to the dispersed agricultural character of the surrounding area, drawing from local farmstead typologies and landscape patterns rather than suburban or standardised housing models.

Overall, the scheme represents a carefully considered and policy-compliant form of rural development which is specific to place, environmentally responsive and capable of enduring long-term occupation and stewardship.

5.0 Design Development

5.1 Design Philosophy

The proposed dwelling is the result of an extended process of site analysis, design development and consultation. From the outset, the project has been guided by two closely related ambitions: to create a fully accessible family home and to develop architecture that emerges directly from the landscape character of the High Weald.

Accessibility has informed the project from its earliest stages and is embedded within the organisation of the house, landscape and routes through the site. Rather than being treated as a technical requirement applied after the fact, accessibility has shaped the spatial structure of the proposal itself, allowing movement between buildings, gardens and landscape to occur naturally and without hierarchy.

The design is grounded in a close reading of the site and its wider setting. The surrounding landscape is characterised by irregular pasture fields, woodland edges, mature hedgerows and dispersed agricultural holdings shaped through long-term management and occupation. The proposal responds to these existing conditions rather than imposing a singular object within open countryside.

Architecturally, the dwelling draws from the fragmented arrangement of local farmsteads and agricultural yards common throughout the High Weald. The proposal is conceived as a loose grouping of forms arranged around a sheltered courtyard, creating a series of protected external spaces positioned within the wider landscape structure.

Landscape and architecture have been developed together as part of a single environmental strategy. Woodland margins are reinforced and extended, while meadow, orchard and productive garden planting introduce ecological diversity and strengthen the pastoral character of the site.

Materially, the proposal draws from regional agricultural buildings and traditions of rural construction whilst employing contemporary low-carbon building techniques and natural materials. The intention is to create architecture that is both environmentally responsible and rooted specifically in the character of this place.

The proposal therefore seeks to establish a long-term relationship between dwelling, landscape and stewardship — a house shaped by accessibility, ecology, agriculture and the particular conditions of the High Weald landscape.



Site model by Architect Benjamin Machin made from wood salvaged from site

5.2 Design Themes

At the outset of the project, five key design themes were identified by the client and design team that would guide the development of both the house and the surrounding landscape. These themes underpin the design approach and are reflected in the architectural and landscape decisions set out throughout this document.

- Embedding Mid Sussex into the design
- A contemporary farmstead
- Natural materials
- A landscape shaped for wheelchair access
- Ecological gains

The design process began with careful study of the landscape of Mid Sussex and the particular character of the High Weald. This was balanced with ongoing conversations with the clients to understand how they live on the land and their ambition to continue caring for it as long-term custodians.

Central to these discussions was the need to create an exceptional home that supports Nick’s use of a wheelchair while remaining deeply connected to the surrounding landscape. The project therefore seeks to integrate architecture, gardens and farmland into a seamless environment where movement through buildings and landscape occurs naturally.

Through this process the architecture emerged from a close reading of the place — its topography, woodland edges, pastoral fields and dispersed farmsteads. The intention has been to create a dwelling that feels embedded within its landscape and that strengthens the ecological and cultural character of this part of the High Weald while providing a much-loved family home.



Aerial photograph of the irregular field pattern in Mid Sussex



Aromas IV, Eduardo Chillida, 2000



Chanctonbury Ring, Sussex, Mk II by Frank Wootton

5.3 Accessibility and Landscape Integration

The proposed dwelling has been conceived from the outset as a fully accessible home and landscape. Nick’s use of a wheelchair has informed the organisation of the architecture, external spaces and routes through the site from the earliest stages of the project.

Whilst Building Regulations establish minimum technical requirements for accessible dwellings, the proposal adopts a broader understanding of accessibility centred on independence, ease of movement and long-term quality of life. Accessibility is therefore embedded as a spatial principle rather than treated as a retrospective technical exercise.

The house and gardens are organised around clear and legible circulation routes, allowing movement across the site to occur naturally and without hierarchy. Buildings are grouped around a sheltered courtyard to reduce travel distances between principal living spaces, while generous internal dimensions and turning radii support comfortable day-to-day use.

A continuous accessible route extends from the arrival space through the house and into the surrounding landscape. Thresholds between internal rooms, terraces and gardens are level, allowing exterior spaces to function as a direct extension of the dwelling. External gradients are carefully moderated to work with the existing topography whilst remaining fully navigable.



Site photograph of the clients, Lucy and Nick, looking south

The landscape itself is intended to be actively inhabited rather than simply viewed. Accessible routes connect productive gardens, orchard planting, meadow spaces and woodland edges, encouraging daily engagement with the wider landscape and supporting long-term independence within a rural setting.

The proposal therefore seeks to demonstrate an approach to accessibility in which architecture, landscape and everyday life are considered together — creating a home where accessibility contributes directly to spatial quality, environmental integration and long-term liveability.



Cottage garden in Kent denoting permeable resin-bound gravel pathways for accessibility and to resolve level changes for wheelchair users