



Design + Access Statement

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BMJ International

Boverton House

This Design and Access Statement has been drafted in support of a full planning application for the conversion of Boverton House and redevelopment of the site to generate 15 apartments.

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1.0 | Summary of the Proposal

Introduction

Boverton House is a large detached property set within substantial grounds located in the South of Chepstow. Until May 2016, the house had been used as a day centre. Previously owned by Monmouthshire County Council, the site has now been acquired by BMJ International Ltd. for residential development.

This document has been prepared by Childs Sulzmann Architects in support of a planning application to Monmouthshire County Council to redevelop the site for residential purposes.

In summary, the scheme proposes to convert Boverton House and its modern annexes into 3 x 1B2P flats, 2 x 4P2B flats and 1 x 6P3B flat. The new villa will generate 3 x 1B2P flats and 6 x 2B3P flats. Totalling 15 units.

A pre-application DM/2021/01675 was submitted November 2021 and a meeting was held with Helen Hilton (former case officer), Andrew Nevill and Jonathan Morgan, with feedback received in January 2022.

The responses to our pre-application submission noted several aspects of the proposed design which could be improved. Most significantly: the relationship to Boverton House and the scale of the development, the contemporary design and its impact on the conservation area, and the preservation of existing historic and landscape assets.

Accordingly, the scheme has been revised to address the points raised in the pre-application feedback. Another meeting was held in March 2022 with new case officer Kate Bingham, Andrew Nevill and Jonathan Morgan. The revised scheme was received positively and generally it was accepted that the proposed scheme was agreeable in style, massing and density.

When drafting this Design and Access Statement, reference has been made to the Welsh Government's 'Technical Advice Note 12 – Guidance on Design and Access Statements March 2016' and to the 'Design and Access Statements in Wales Why, What and How' (June 2017) guidance and 'Site & Context Analysis Guide: Capturing the Value of a Site' (March 2016).



Recent photo of Boverton House and its grounds, from Bulwark Road

2.0 | The Brief and Vision

The Vision

The proposed development will offer a range of residential accommodation in a sustainable, central location in Chepstow. Our aim is to provide quality housing that is in-keeping with the surrounding conservation area context and creates a positive impact on the local community and character of the area.

Boverton House will be carefully renovated and the new build will be constructed from quality, robust materials which will withstand the test of time. The site will be enhanced with a landscape strategy which creates a biodiversity gain and has an integrated SUDs strategy to revive the derelict site and create an asset to the local area.

The Brief

Boverton House is set within large sloping grounds with a parking plateau adjacent to the house. The site has been derelict since 2016 and in early pre-application advice sought by the original owners, Monmouthshire County Council, it was agreed that residential development was agreeable in principle.

BMJ International Ltd. seek to develop the site to provide quality housing by converting the existing property and developing a second villa within the grounds on the flat parking area adjacent to the house.

Boverton House and its modern annexes has the potential to convert into 6 units, whilst making cosmetic improvements to the less sympathetic modern extensions.

The large grounds present the opportunity to create a second villa to sit alongside Boverton House. A property of similar scale could create an additional 9 units on the site.

The site has been neglected since 2016. The proposals seek to improve the character of the house and site generally with a considered landscape strategy, integrating a SUDs strategy and creating bio-diversity gain with additional planting and trees. The existing mature trees which line the boundary of the site will all be retained.

The site is currently at risk of vandalism and trespassing, the proposals will secure the property and site with a sustainable future and transform a derelict site into a community asset.



Views out towards the River Severn from site

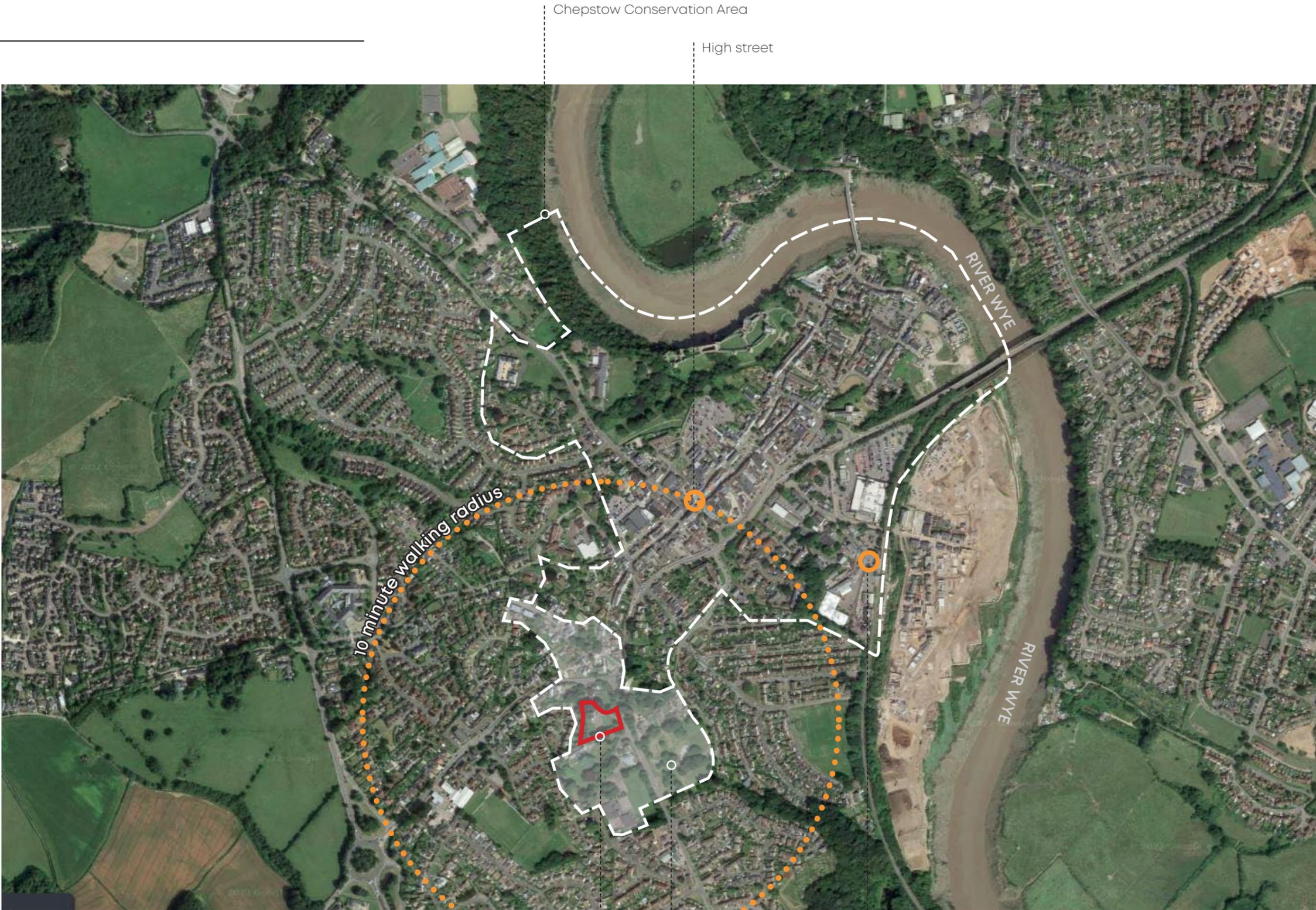
3.1 | Site and Context Analysis

Overview

The site is located in South Chepstow off Bulwark Road, South of the A48. The area of the site measures 3480m2 of which 280m2 is occupied by the existing property Boverton House and its later extensions.

The site is within the Chepstow Conservation Area and within this, the sub category of Character Area 9, Mount Pleasant and Hardwick Avenue - as described in the Chepstow Character Appraisal report 2016.

The site is conveniently located within a 10 minute walk to the high street and under a 15min walk to the train station.



Aerial image of Chepstow



3.2 | Site and Context Analysis

Conservation Area and Character Appraisal

Boverton House is located in Chepstow's Conservation Area in Character Area 9, Mount Pleasant and Hardwick Avenue. This character area comprises of a mixture of early and late 19th century terraced houses with semi-detached and detached villas which step down the hillside towards the river.

Further analysis of the character area from the Chepstow Character Appraisal report 2016 highlights the significance of the trees on the Boverton House site to the North and South boundaries, and the importance of the perimeter wall to Bulwark Road. In general within the area, there are views to the North-East across Chepstow towards the river due to the sloped topography.

Boverton House specifically is identified within a group of 19th and 20th century detached and semi-detached villas, all of which are set back from the roadside within larger plots of ground. Examples of these are illustrated overleaf: St Govans, Stratheden and The Gwentlands.

The grand scale of the buildings in this area reflects their former status as Georgian gentlemen's residences, positioned on the hill with desirable views over the town. Most are symmetrical three-bay houses but they vary in height.

Many of these properties are designated Grade II listed, as shown in the diagram overleaf. Boverton House and its close neighbour, St Govans, are non-designated.

Character area 9 has a wide range of materials. Painted render is used on Mount Pleasant terrace, elsewhere there is squared stone rubble, yellow ashlar, terracotta, engineering brick, red and yellow brick, roughcast and mock timber framing. Roofs are mostly natural slate with red brick or rendered chimney stacks.



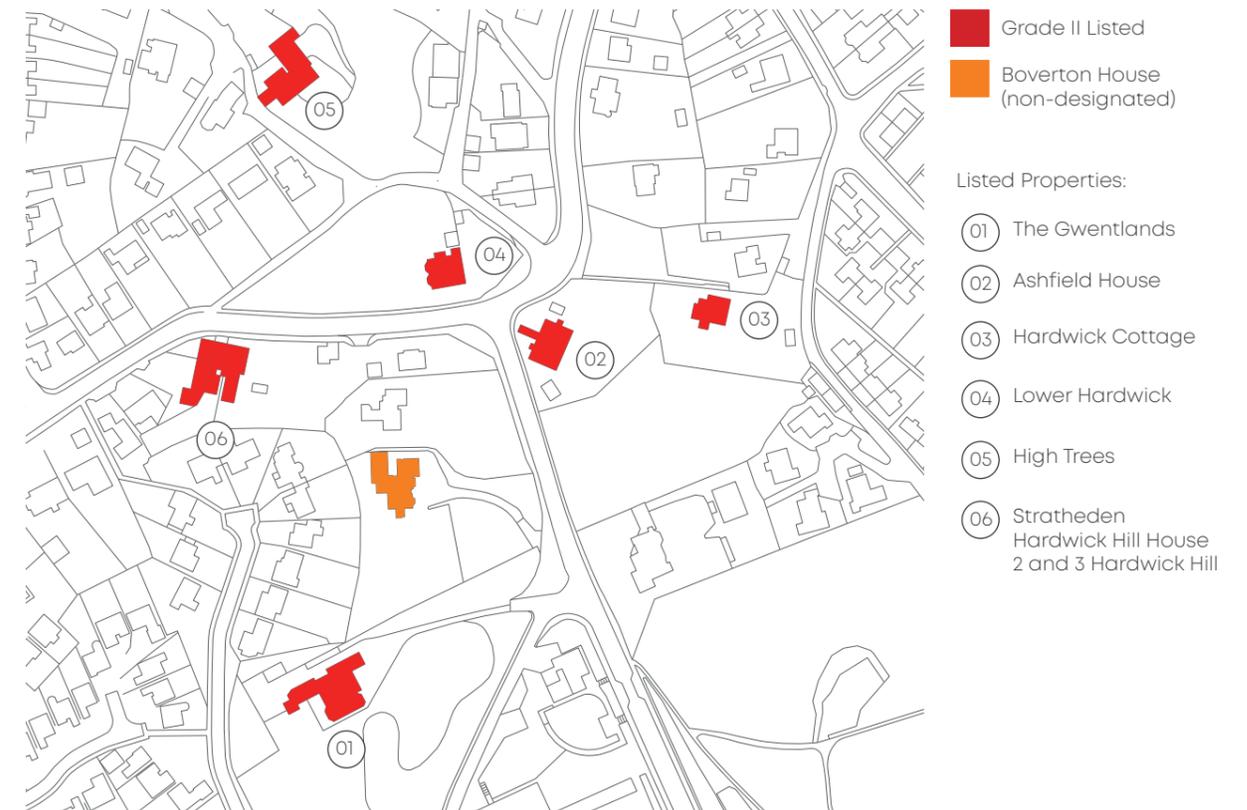
St Govans



Stratheden



The Gwentlands



Listed Buildings around the site

3.3 | Site and Context Analysis

Site Appraisal

The site has a significant sloped topography which creates a raised view of the property from Bulwark Road and is of significance as part of the character to the area.

The car park plateau at the top of the site is level and provides the opportunity for the location of a second villa in the grounds.

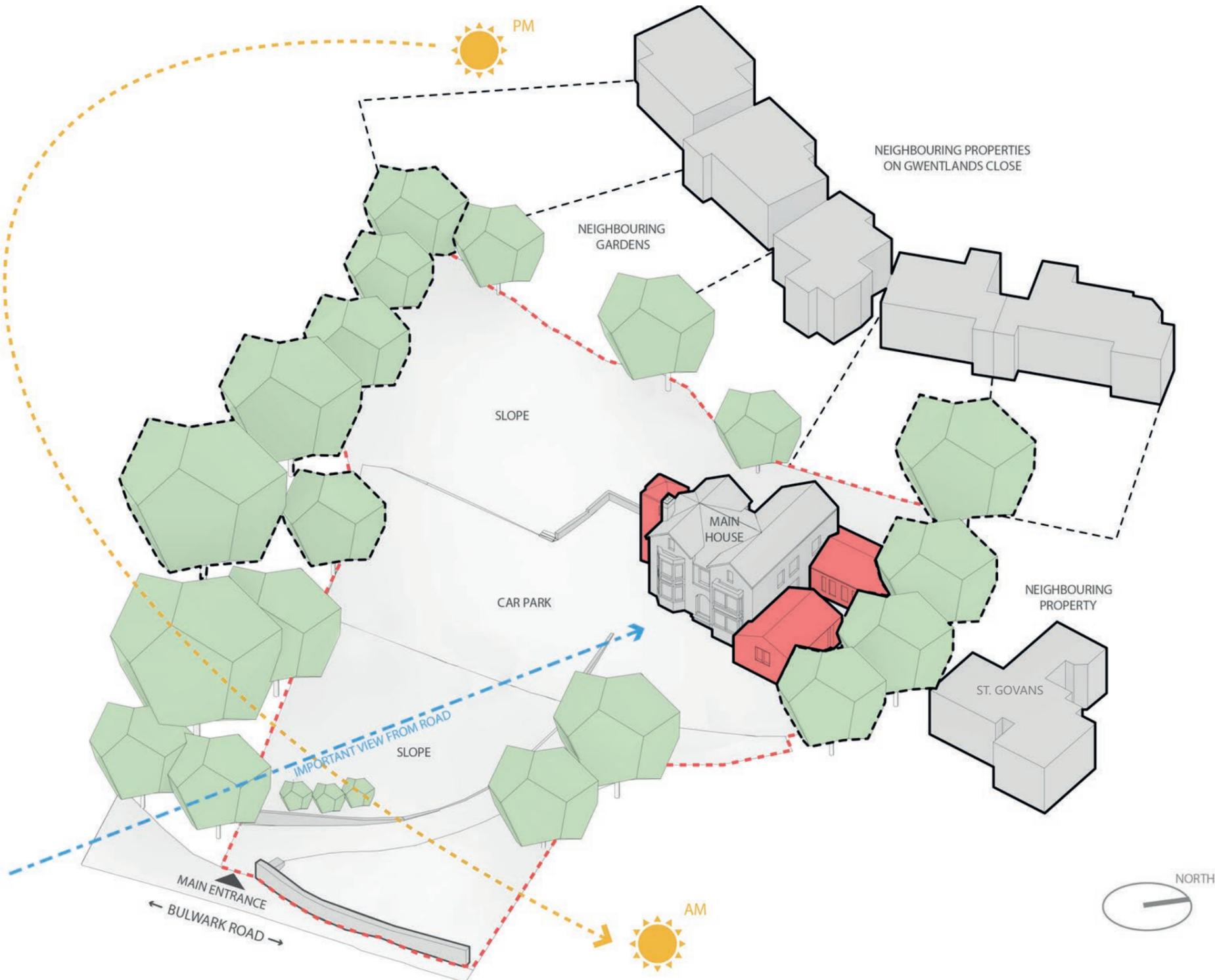
The perimeter is lined with significant trees to the North, South and West. These will all remain as part of the proposals and any building work will avoid disruption to root protection areas.

There is a row of smaller two storey dwellings to the West in Gwentlands Close, approximately another storey and a half above Boverton House, which overlook the site. Therefore a minimum distance of 25m will be maintained between these existing properties and the new development.

The neighbouring property to the North, St Govans, is approximately two storeys lower than Boverton House and is screened with existing trees.

Boverton House has three modern extensions, as highlighted on the diagram in red which have significantly increased the overall footprint of the building.

The access point to the site is off Bulwark road up the sloped driveway. The entrance is framed with stone perimeter walls which are characteristic to Bulwark road, as noted Chepstow Conservation Area Appraisal report 2016.



3D existing site diagram

- Key
- Modern extensions added to the main house
 - Mature trees
 - Planning application boundary
 - Sun path

3.4 | Site and Context Analysis

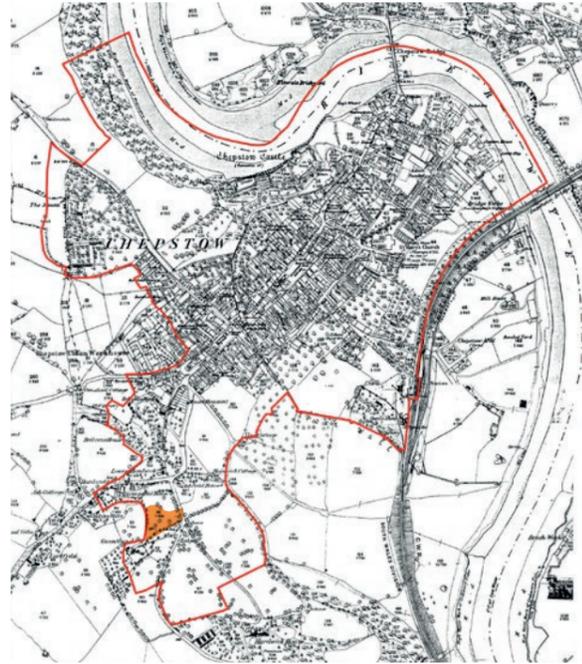
Existing Buildings and Fabric

Boverton House was built in the late 19th century. The port in Chepstow had begun to prosper into the 19th century and maritime and industrial activity grew. The construction of the railway in 1850 prompted the start of the expansion of Chepstow in the 20th century into the suburbs at Hardwick and Bulwark, where the site is located.

The detached large residence was built in a three-bay style and stands out from other properties in the area due to its grey rubble stone and yellow ashlar.

More recent additions to the house include: a single storey classroom extension which protrudes forward of the existing house, a cream render single storey ICT suite to the back of the house and a three storey cream rendered lift tower and external stair to the South of the property. All of the more recent additions facilitated the community and education activities that continued until the closure in 2016. The house has since remained unoccupied.

The cream rendered lift tower and ICT suite are not particularly sympathetic in style to Boverton House and could certainly be improved cosmetically to help appear more subservient.



Chepstow Ordnance survey 1881-2

- Conservation area boundary
- Boverton House site

Characteristic three-bay East elevation



Modern additions to the property:



Single storey classroom extension



Circulation tower



Single storey ICT suite

4.0 | Informing the Design

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities

The proposals consider the residential potential of Boverton House and its grounds whilst maintaining and improving the overall character of the conservation area.

After site appraisal, initial design studies and pre-application advice, it has been concluded that there is the opportunity for a new stand alone residential development of 9 units and the conversion of the existing property to provide 6 additional units.

The character of the existing property can be improved. The current rendered extensions to Boverton House are unsympathetic to the original building and could be painted to tie in better with the original palette of the building. The forecourt in front of Boverton House could be dressed and landscaped to provide a grander sense of arrival and reinstate the front door at the centre of the property.

Except for the mature trees around the perimeter of the site, all of which are to be retained, there is limited vegetation of any value on the site which can be improved with a well considered landscape scheme.

Constraints

A key constraint is the need to maintain the character of the site and the property. The Chepstow Character Appraisal 2016 outlines the character of the area as larger villas set back within landscaped grounds. As shown on the proposed figure ground image overleaf, the new villa should sit appropriately within the line of development set out from St Govans and maintain the feel of 'villas within the landscape'.

The sloped topography elevates the position of the proposed villa and therefore height, scale and massing are all important to consider from the prominent view from Bulwark Road. The proposed villa should not feel overbearing on Boverton House.

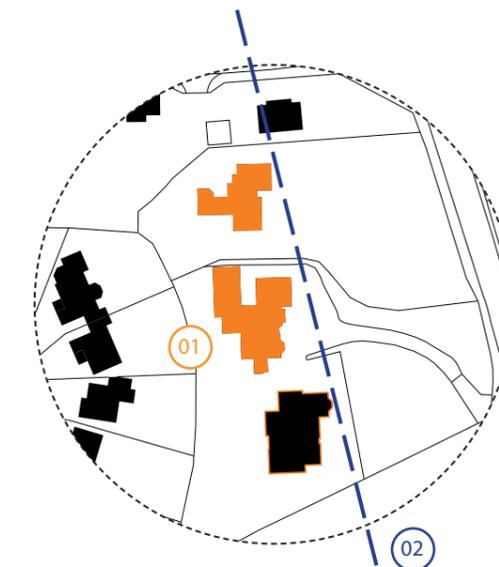
The mature trees, sloped driveway and boundary walls are all existing historic and landscape features which should be appropriately retained. Necessary highway works to the wall and driveway must be sensitively resolved.



Existing photo: line of existing buildings along Bulwark Road



Proposed figure ground diagram



Bulwark Road extract:

- 01 St Govans, Boverton House and the proposed development form a trio of 3 villas. Boverton House is the largest villa, framed by the St Govans and the proposed building.
- 02 The positioning of the proposed development follows the diagonal line set out by St Govans and Boverton House

5.0 | Design Development

Pre-Application Response and Comparison

Considering the pre-application feedback DM/2021/01675, the designs for both Boverton House and the proposed new villa have been amended to reduce the scale of development and minimise the impact on the conservation area.

The proposals now renovate Boverton House in its current layout, retaining the existing extensions.

The footprint of the proposed building has been reduced to the minimum required area to provide a majority of DQR compliant flats.

The positioning of the building is set as far backwards into the gardens as reasonable, working with the existing sloped topography and maintaining an appropriate distance to the line of existing dwellings on the Western edge. The protruding gable is now 5.5m back from the line of the previous design.

The height of the design has also been reduced, the proposed villa has been amended to two full storeys with a third in the roof space, referencing the design of Boverton House. The revised roofscape includes pitched mansards and gables which generally reduces the massing of the top floor.

The whole building has been set down 1.5m lower than the pre-application design. This helps to further reduce the visual impact from Bulwark Road.

Generally, the contemporary style of the design submitted at pre-application raised concern as being too prominent against Boverton House and inappropriate within the conservation area setting. In response to this feedback, the revised design references the language of Boverton House using pitched roofs, feature bay windows and gable ends.



Comparison of pre-application design, shown in red dotted line, against the current proposed design.



Current proposed view from Bulwark Road - outline of pre-application design in dotted red



Pre-application view from Bulwark Road

6.1 | The Proposal

Final layout

The proposed development consists of:

- Alterations and conversion of Boverton House to provide 6 flats
- The development of an independent block of 9 apartments.
- The reconfiguration of the site to retain the existing access and provide 22 parking spaces.
- Site relandscaped, retaining all perimeter trees, providing communal green spaces with an enhanced biodiversity and integrated SUDs management.



Communal bin store behind Boverton House

Existing lift tower repainted and planted to soften appearance

Proposed visual image looking West

Communal landscape to front and rear of new villa

Proposed entrance to new villa

New car park built within existing slope providing 13 spaces

Existing forecourt in front of boverton House repaved, providing 9 spaces

Front entrance to Boverton House

6.2 | The Proposal

Boverton House

The existing Boverton House property and its modern annexes will be converted into a total of 6 units.

- 3 x 1B2P
- 2 x 2B4P
- 1 x 3B6P

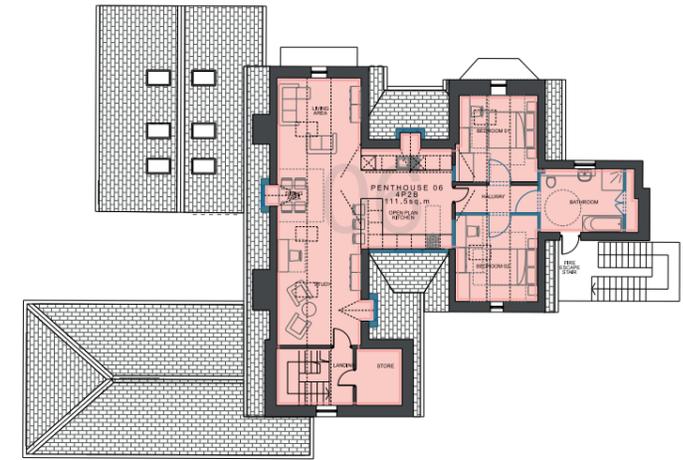
The main house divides centrally around the main staircase into apartments with a penthouse flat on the 2nd floor within the converted roof space.

The main entrance is reinstated through the central bay. All flats, except flat 03, are accessed off of the communal staircase. Ground floor flat 03 utilises the former ICT suite and has its own front access via a private courtyard.

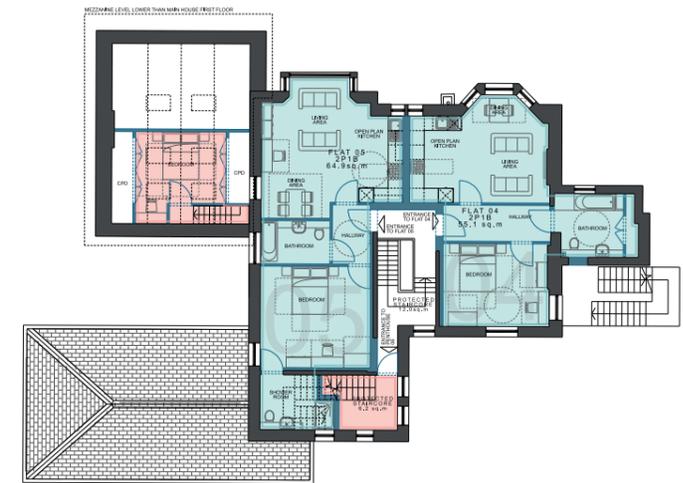
The penthouse flat on the 2nd floor creates 3 new pitched dormer windows and an infill flat roof dormer on the rear elevation in the proposed kitchen. These additions are appropriately sized and detailed in slate to remain in keeping with the existing roofscape of the house.

Significant surviving features including the stair, attractive fire places and period mouldings will be retained and refurbished.

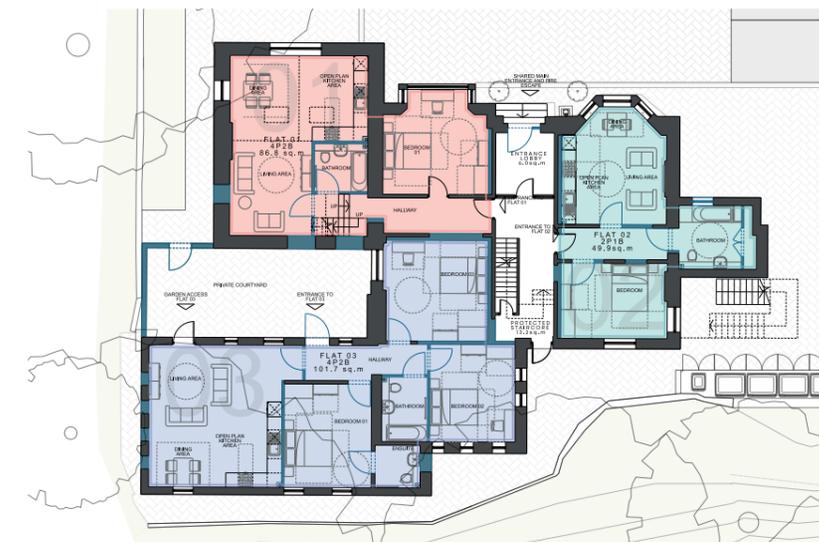
The main rooms will be returned to their original use taking full advantage of bay windows and views.



Boverton House - Proposed Second Floor



Boverton House - Proposed First Floor



Boverton House - Proposed Ground Floor



Existing bay windows



Existing fireplace

6.3 | The Proposal

New Villa

The new villa is designed to a similar scale as Boverton House. The new block is two and half stories, the second floor built into the pitched roof space, referencing the design of Boverton House.

Whilst the villa strongly references the vernacular of Boverton House with pitched roofs, gable ends and bay windows, the architectural intent is to reference rather than replicate. The materiality and detailing will be clean and minimal, creating a contemporary interpretation which is modest and subservient in style compared to Boverton House.

The aspiration is to create something similar to the image adjacent: South Garden by Maccreanor Lavington. Terraced housing with a ribbon of stone faced bays references the local vernacular bay window typology. Whilst traditional in form, the clean detailing of the window bays creates a minimal, contemporary look.

The palette of the proposed villa references the tones and materiality of Boverton House whilst being robust and contemporary: buff/grey brick to reference the tones of the rubble stone, reconstituted stone features and matte dark grey standing seam metal roof to match the tones and reflectivity of the slate roof on Boverton House.



South Garden, Maccreanor Lavington.



Proposed East elevation

6.3 | The Proposal

Character

Boverton House is identified within character area 9 of the Chepstow Conservation area, grouped with other properties characteristic of being large in scale and set within landscaped grounds.

The proposed residential development of the site is sensitive to preserve this context, in particular the public view of the site from Bulwark Road.

The visualisation here illustrates how the primary view of the East elevation of the house is preserved. The proposed new build apartment block sits separate from the house, forming another 'villa' on the site, sharing the grounds and the driveway.

The style of the new villa is complimentary to Boverton house and, consequently, preserves the character of the conservation area by creating a development which is sympathetic in style to the surrounding context.

The sloped topography provides levels of greenery and screening, framed by the existing mature trees around the perimeter of the site, preserving the character of villas set back within large gardens.



Proposed visualisation, view from Bulwark road

7.0 | Site Wide Considerations

Access, Movement + Community Safety

Access and Movement

The existing access point from Bulwark Road is maintained. Visibility and vehicle tracking requires the existing entrance driveway to be widened slightly to allow for two cars to be able to pass each other and for a fire rescue vehicle to enter the site.

The proposals seek to improve the overall appearance of the entrance driveway; resurfacing the existing tarmac with paving stones, refurbishing the existing gate and finishing the altered road with a low level swept stone wall.

As illustrated in the 'before and after' images, the required highway alterations are minor amendments. The curved profile of the wall can be retained and re-built in its new position, preserving the overall appearance of the existing boundary wall. The rest of the sloped driveway remains in its existing form and layout.

The scheme provides 22 parking spaces for 15 units with 25 bedrooms. Whilst this is marginally below the Monmouthshire parking standards, the sustainable location of the development must be considered.

Public transport links are good, with a bus stop located less than 50m from the main entrance, providing a variety of routes to Chepstow, Magor and Newport. The site is conveniently located within a 10 minute walk to the high street and less than a 15 minute walk to the station.

A communal bin and recycling store is located behind Boverton House and is therefore well screened whilst being centrally located. Waste collection will be managed on site by a private management company.

Provision has been allowed for a covered secure cycle store, which can be accessed by all residents on site. The store provides 16 spaces, equating to just over a space per flat.

Accessibility

There are 15 proposed units, over 10% of this total, (units 03, 07, 08 and 09) have allowed for disabled living by being located on the ground floor with level threshold. A disabled parking space (parking space 04) has been allocated on the upper plateau close to the new villa and Boverton House for ease of access. All stairways, doors and access are designed to be compliant with part M regulations.

Community Safety

The site is currently closed off and vacant and it is therefore at risk of vandalism and damage to the existing property. These proposals represent a sustainable long-term use of the site that will provide accommodation for the local community and help to improve community safety through occupation and natural surveillance. The landscaped forecourts will be well lit and provide clear access to the accommodation.



Diagram - Proposed Driveway



Diagram - Existing Driveway Condition

Boundary wall cut back,
curved profile retained

Lower swept wall finishes and
frames new driveway layout

Unightly gas cupboard to be
removed in new layout



8.0 | Ecology and Sustainability

Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (bats) was undertaken in September 2021 by Focus Environmental Consultants. The full reports have been submitted as part of this application.

Prior to these surveys, ecological and bat surveys were undertaken in 2014 and 2017.

All of these surveys have concluded that Boverton house is unlikely to support roosts of Lesser Horseshoe or Greater Horseshoe bats.

The recent Preliminary Roost Assessment concluded that a small number of Common Pipistrelle bats used Boverton House as a summer day roost but there was no evidence of a significant roost of bats or that the roof was used for winter hibernation. Therefore, the conservation significance was identified as low.

Updated from the pre-application design, Boverton House will now be renovated in its current form (no demolition of extensions). Therefore the roofs will remain relatively undisturbed except for the minor alterations to create new dormers and a section of flat roof on the original house. These will not alter the gable ends which are noted as the access points for the Common Pipistrelle bats.

All of the mature trees to the perimeter of the site, which provide the most significant opportunities for roosting, are being retained.

A sensitive night-lighting scheme will be implemented to avoid unnecessary illumination of wildlife habitats, as recommended in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

The proposed landscape scheme will provide the opportunity for more bird foraging/nesting habitats in the centre of the site, which is currently not very biodiverse.

Sustainability

The redevelopment of the site has minimised the impact on the site's topography and root protection areas by utilising the relatively flat land of the existing carpark. Therefore, there will be minimal impact on trees and will help to maintain the character of the existing landscaped area.

Our ambition for the site is to reference the masonry materials of the house, to create high-quality robust facades that will weather and age favourably, requiring little maintenance and upkeep.

It is recognised that sustainable development should consider mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The proposed villa presents the opportunity to incorporate renewable energy through integrated photovoltaic panels and utilising air source heat pumps for an electric heating strategy.



9.0 | Conclusion

In its current condition, Boverton House is derelict and the site does not provide any community benefit. The property, which has been identified as significant in adding to the character of the area, is at risk of being damaged and or falling into further dilapidation.

The proposal presents the opportunity to develop the site, helping to provide housing to the area whilst also renovating and preserving the existing property and its character.

The development to provide 15 units on the former day care site is considered appropriate, given it is located in a well-established residential area and, as outlined in this document, aims to have a positive impact on the local community and general character of the area.



Current condition of Boverton House



Proposed visual from Bulwark Road