



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

FOR

**PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF TENNIS COURT,
GREENHOUSE, SWIMMING POOL
AND ASSOCIATED GROUND WORKS
AT LOWER EASTCOMBE FARM
EASTCOMBE LANE
BATCOMBE
SOMERSET
BA4 6AL**

JUNE 2020 REF: F1442 / DA - Rev. D

BY

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PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF TENNIS COURT, GREENHOUSE, SWIMMING POOL AND ASSOCIATED GROUND WORKS, AT LOWER EASTCOMBE FARM, EASTCOMBE LANE, BATCOMBE, SOMERSET, BA4 6AL.

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Context Analysis / Planning Statement

This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for the proposed installation of a tennis court, greenhouse, swimming pool and associated ground works, made by Della Valle Architects Ltd on behalf of Mr B. Morris at Lower Eastcombe Farm, Batcombe, Shepton Mallet. It considers the proposal in the context of the site and having regard to all other material planning considerations.

The site is situated a short distance from the Eastern edge of the village, via a lane between Hincombe Hill and the A359. The site is set within a valley and comprises of several detached stone, timber, and steel-framed agricultural buildings clustered around a gravel track that forms the driveway to the main dwelling. The property is no longer used for agricultural purposes and is not listed, nor within a conservation area.

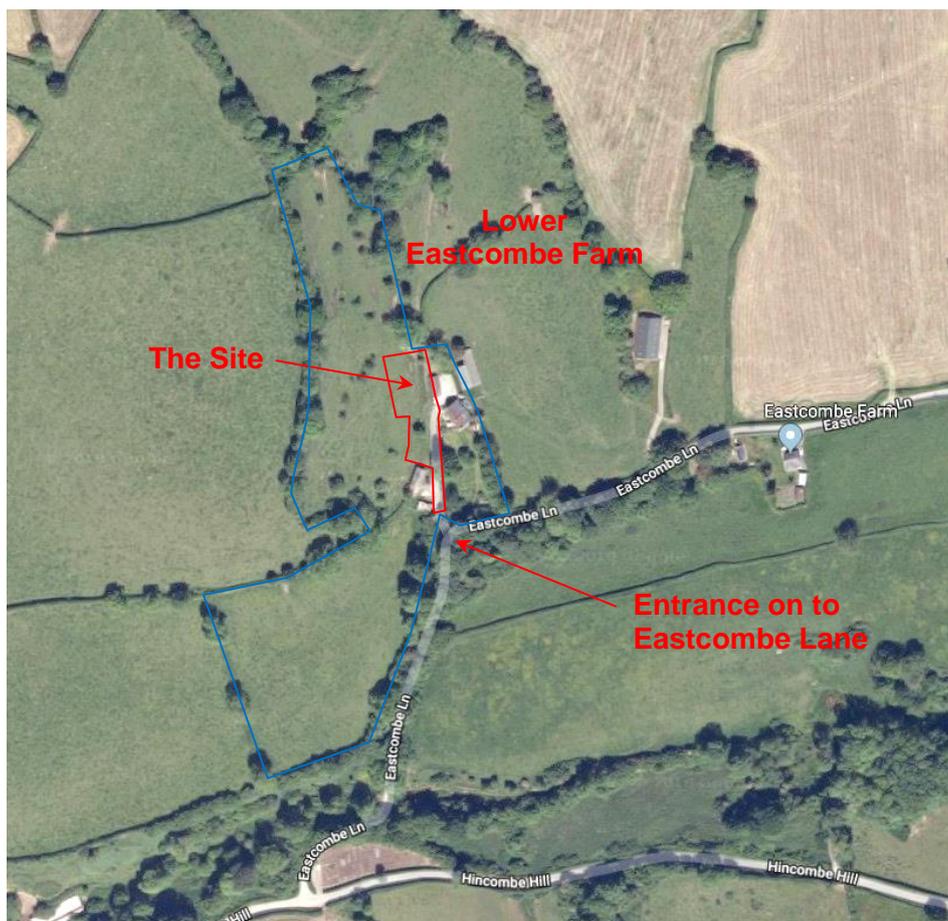


Image 1 - aerial view of site

A redundant stone barn and a timber stable are on the western side of the site directly adjacent to the entrance from Eastcombe Lane with an area of level hardstanding to the front, used for parking and turning, and steeply sloping fields to the rear. Following an earlier planning application (2018/0992/FUL) approved in May 2018, approval was granted for the change of use and conversion of the barn into a home office and gym, the stable to be replaced with a garage and a potting shed/greenhouse to be sited alongside another existing barn to the north.

During this earlier application, a tennis court was also proposed to the north-west of the site which, after discussions with the planning officer, was ultimately removed from the scheme.

In May 2019 an amended draft scheme was developed which repositioned the proposed tennis court closer to the main farmhouse in order to consolidate the extent of the site boundary. This was presented to the planning officer during a pre-app meeting and his feedback raised several points that would need to be satisfied.

As suggested during the meeting, NPA Landscape Architects were appointed to assess the site, carry out an ecological survey, and use the findings to help inform the development of a revised scheme. This now incorporates a tennis court in the position of the original approved greenhouse and potting shed, proposes a new greenhouse to help shield the tennis court from view from below the site, and details an appropriate planting and tree layout scheme suitable for the conditions on the site, as well as providing suitable ecological habitats for any expected wildlife. These are presented in the ecological appraisal, landscaping drawings and tree planting schedule submitted with this application.

The overall scheme has been designed to sit below the 52.5m contour that defines the Eastern side of the property. The levels ensure that across the scheme the net cut and fill is close to zero (1225m³ fill and 1152m³ cut so 70m³ net fill) to minimise the need to remove or add material.

A proposed hedge of mixed native species will obscure the proposed tennis court from the adjacent footpath, save for a semi-permanent retractable perimeter netting system (example images below.) (<https://www.networldsports.co.uk/tennis/tennis-ball-stop-netting/tennis-court-surround-net-post-tension-wire-system.html>).



Image 2&3 – examples of retractable netting proposed to tennis court.

The proposed tennis court surface is permeable to minimise runoff and painted in two tones of green so as not to contrast adversely with the landscape.

A stepped retaining wall has been included in the North West corner to reduce the need to modify the slope in the field above, where extensive tree planting is proposed. The retaining wall has been substantially reduced from that which had been envisaged at the pre-app meeting, which was a particular point of concern. No part of the wall exceeds 2.0m in height with 75% being between 0.5m and 1.5m high. The walls appearance is further softened with timber cladding proposed with climbing plants grown over which result in the wall being minimally visible from the adjacent public right of way running along the property driveway.

Below are photos of an existing block retaining wall on the neighbouring land at the boundary of the property to the North East, together with a timber sleeper wall in the garden of the main property with the latter being the style envisaged.



Image 4 – Concrete block retaining wall.



Image 5 – Timber retaining wall.

The repositioned greenhouse is similar in scale to that which was previously approved, but at a lower level so it will be less intrusive overall. The greenhouse masks the wall forming the southern end of the tennis court, which also forms the rear wall of the greenhouse. The greenhouse is proposed to be of a traditional style constructed with a timber frame and single glazing, with a low natural stone wall at the base to match the surrounding buildings, and is detailed on our accompanying drawing F1442/111.

The proposed swimming pool occupies the space between the lower barn and the repositioned greenhouse. A proposed hedge of mixed native species will screen it from the adjacent footpath running up the property driveway.

We have obtained advice from a pool specialist and confirm that there is no foul sewer available near the site, so pool water discharge must be handled on site.

The pool filtration system will include a 2m³ holding tank to allow any backwash water to stand while it dechlorinates to below 0.2 mg/l. Once levels have reduced it is pumped to the on-site 10m³ irrigation water storage tank where it will mix with harvested rainwater to further dilute it before being used for domestic irrigation. Volumes are approximately 1m³ every 10 to 14 days which is significantly below the environment agency de minimis limit of 5 m³ per day.

In normal use, the pool is never drained down. However, if this was ever required the pool water would be left to stand to dechlorinate before being tested and drained down via the storage tank and domestic irrigation system.

No discharge will be made to surface water, and the environment agency has confirmed a permit is not required in this scenario.

To minimise energy use, heating of the pool will be via a solar cover and an air source heat pump positioned adjacent to the greenhouse.

The planting scheme detailed in the accompanying tree planting schedule and plans consists of 3750m² of proposed native woodland to the north of the site, and an area of mixed fruit orchard to the west slope returning this area to its former use.

Amount

The approved scheme had an area of 1725m² within the red line. The proposed site area for this scheme is 1600m². Due to the reorganisation of the site the additional area required by the proposed tennis court and pool is approximately 700m² as shown on the Ordnance Survey extracts below.

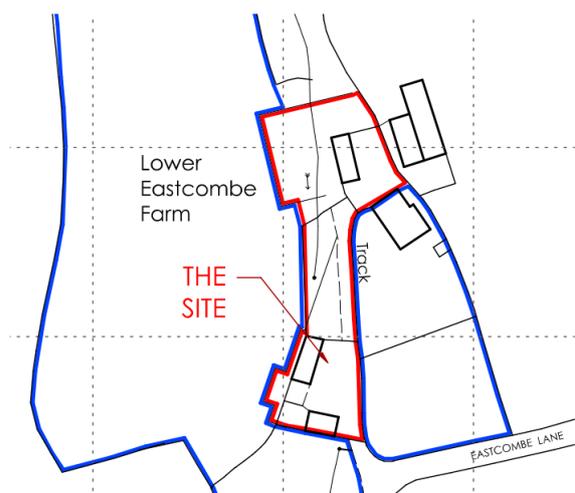


Image 6 – Approved site area outlined in red.

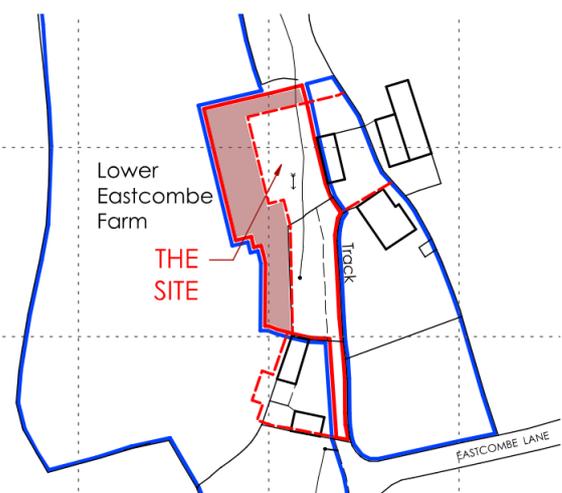


Image 7 – Proposed site area outlined in red, and additional area over approved scheme hatched in pink.

Layout

The proposed tennis court, greenhouse, and swimming pool have all been carefully positioned to minimise the visual impact when viewed from the entrance to the site from Eastcombe Lane, as well as along the public right of way that passes through the site. Being nestled in a valley setting the proposed development is not visible from the broader surrounding landscape.

Appearance and Scale

As described above, the proposed works will use natural materials that will enhance the visual character. The greenhouse will use a natural timber frame with a natural stone base to match the surrounding buildings and the retaining wall to the tennis court will be clad in timber and climbing plants grown over.

Landscaping

The proposed planting of wildflower grassland, orchard and nearly an acre of native woodland will follow the guidelines as set out in the ecological appraisal and tree planting plans/schedule in order to encourage a wide range of species of fauna.

Access

The main route through the site along the driveway will remain essentially unchanged, maintaining the route of the public right of way from Eastcombe Lane up to the fields at the north of the site.

The proposed landscaping works will also create a further private pathway from the patio at the rear of the lower barn to access the swimming pool and then leading up to the greenhouse and planting beds as shown on the proposed site drawings.

Conclusion

The proposal has been carefully designed and evolved following planning officer feedback from the pre-application meeting, to achieve a coherent and considered scheme that uses the landscape and topography to enhance the overall layout whilst incorporating the applicant's requirements.

This application maintains the residential curtilage of the host residence in a compact site below the existing upper contour which is appropriate to the valley setting. In addition, the reinstatement of the former use of the adjacent field as an orchard together with the creation of nearly an acre of new native woodland bring net ecological improvements. The result is a scheme that complements the overall setting.

Careful thought has been given to the design and layout of this planning submission. By adopting a collaborative design approach, the proposal represents a development which is in-keeping with the dwelling and existing outbuildings, and minimises its overall impact on the surrounding area. It would not adversely impact any adjoining properties or uses and would enhance the local area both visually and in ecological diversity.

The tennis court and greenhouse neatly steps into the land to soften the visual impact. The swimming pool connects the tennis court to the lower barn (benefitting from planning consent), with the landscape strategy gently wrapping around the whole scheme. All of these proposed additions neatly connect and surround the main residence to create a desirable family property. We therefore request that the above full planning application receives support from the Planning Department for a favourable decision.