

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**CAITHNESS, SUTHERLAND & EASTER ROSS PLANNING
APPLICATIONS AND REVIEW COMMITTEE – 21 April 2009**

Agenda Item	4.4
Report No	18/09

08/00432/FULSU Erection of house and garage, installation of new septic tank and soakaway system and formation of new access onto public road at land 250 metres north of Bighouse, Trantlemore, Forsinard.

Report by Area Planning and Building Standards Manager

SUMMARY

This application seeks detailed consent for the erection of a house and garage, installation of a new septic tank and soakaway system, and formation of a new access onto the public road on land 250 metres north of Bighouse, Trantlemore, Forsinard.

The application is reported to Committee because it is considered to be unacceptable on design grounds.

The Recommendation is to REFUSE planning permission.

Ward Number 1 – North West and Central Sutherland

Applicant – Mr Morrison

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 The application site lies on the eastern side of the public road from Trantlemore to Upper Bighouse, which runs parallel to the A897. The site is currently rough grazing with open views towards Halladale River. There is a former croft house on the site which is to be demolished. The site slopes down from the road and then levels off before a short and sharp drop in levels to the field below.
- 1.2 The application seeks detailed consent for the erection of a two storey house measuring 9.135 metres in length, 7.620 metres in depth at the north west gable and 9.020 metres in depth at the south east gable. There is a two storey pitched roof projection on the front elevation with a bay window protruding from this. The front elevation is orientated south west. The proposed access is taken from the public single track road to the west of the proposal and leads to a detached garage and parking area at the western side of the house. The septic tank and soakaway are located to the north of the house.

2. PLANNING HISTORY

2.1 **07/00008/OUTSU** – Erection of new house, formation of new access onto public road and installation of new septic tank and soakaway system on land 75metres south of Upper Bighouse, Halladale (granted outline planning permission on 30 March 2007).

2.2 The above application agreed the principle of developing a house on this site.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

3.1 No representations have been received in relation to this application.

4. VIEWS OF APPLICANT

4.1 The applicant has given the following justification for the development:

- In terms of scale, roof pitch, windows and use of materials, the design complies with the guidelines for housing in the countryside.
- Contrary to your guidelines, most houses in this area are not single storey. From the turn of the main road to the end of the road to Bighouse there are 15 houses of which nine are traditional 1¾ storey, four are two storey and only two are single storey. Furthermore, the houses on either side of the site are two storey.
- A two storey house is more appropriate to this site and for that reason I think permission should be granted.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Internal Consultees

Archaeology – The application will affect two buildings that are depicted on the 1st edition OS map c.1877 which formed part of the early to mid 18th century Bighouse Crofting Township. The buildings are of historic interest and they should not be demolished without a visual record first being made. Condition ARC 3 (photographic record) should be attached to any consent issued.

Roads – No objections.

5.2 External Consultees

Scottish Water – No objections.

6. POLICY

6.1 The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the proposal

Highland Structure Plan:

- G2 Design for Sustainability
- H3 Housing in the Countryside

Tongue and Farr Local Plan

- Policy 1.6 - Infill Housing

Deposit Draft Sutherland Local Plan

- Policy 3 – Wider Countryside
- Policy 18 – Design Quality and Place-Making

7. PLANNING APPRAISAL

- 7.1 **Determining issues** – Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2 The proposal requires to be assessed against the appropriate policies of the Development Plan, supplementary guidance and National Planning Policy and Guidelines as referred to in the Policy section. In particular, the proposal requires detailed assessment of the following fundamental issues:
- whether the principle of development is appropriate in terms of policy
 - whether the layout of development is appropriate
 - the impact on the amenity of the area and residents
- 7.3 The application proposes the erection of a two storey house, new access and drainage facility on the site of a former croft house. The site is currently very open with no existing trees or planting to provide screening. This site and the existing houses located adjacent to the road to Upper Bighouse can be viewed from the A897 to the east. The proposal is located at the top of a rise in the landscape which adds to the site's prominence when viewed from the A897.
- 7.4 The site was granted outline consent for a house in March 2007. Therefore, the principle of erecting a house on this site has already been agreed. A condition was attached to the outline permission for the site which stipulated that the house should be single or one and a half storeys only, and should reflect building styles traditional within the area. The current proposal is therefore not in accordance with the conditions of the outline consent.
- 7.5 The two storey suburban form of the house is considered unsympathetic to the rural character of the area and will dominate this open site. Vernacular rural architecture generally demonstrates basic functional form and includes design traits such as a single or one and a half storey rectangular form, strong roof pitch, vertical and symmetrical emphasis to openings and little decorative detailing. The design of the proposed house lacks signature characteristics of a rural building which would help integrate the house into the landscape. The two storey scale and square form of the proposal is considered to dominate this prominent site and is unsympathetic to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The majority of houses located along the road between Trantlemore and Bighouse are orientated with their front elevations facing directly east and rear elevations facing west. This proposal is orientated at an angle on the site with the front elevation facing south west.

The orientation of a house on this site should respect the existing settlement pattern. The windows are another aspect of the design which is considered unacceptable. Traditional rural homes maintain a balance of proportions between the walls and openings by demonstrating a vertical emphasis, simple, symmetrical arrangement of features and a greater wall surface area than windows and doors. This approach should be mastered in contemporary rural design. The proposal includes a very unsymmetrical arrangement of windows, particularly on the north east elevation which will be prominent from the A897. The windows add to the suburban appearance of the house and dominate the front and rear elevations. The bay window further reinforces the suburban design.

- 7.6 In response to the applicant's justification for the development, the two closest houses to the site are indeed two storey. However, these houses have a rectangular, traditional form with narrow gables and traditional features such as chimneys at each gable end. The two storey house to the north is tucked into the roadside, whilst the two storey house to the south is screened from the immediate area by mature planting. The existing two storey houses are not suburban in appearance and are sited less prominently than the current proposal under consideration. Similarly nearly all existing houses in the area have a very traditional appearance.
- 7.7 Highland Structure Plan Policy G2 (Design for Sustainability) requires development to demonstrate "sensitive siting and high quality design in keeping with local character". Highland Structure Plan Policy H3 (Housing in the Countryside) requires that housing be of an "appropriate location, scale, design".
- 7.8 Deposit Draft Sutherland Plan Policy 3 (Wider Countryside) requires that "suitably designed proposals are consistent with other policies in the Highland Structure Plan and this Local Plan, are in accordance with the existing settlement pattern and landscape character". Policy 18 (Design Quality and Place-Making) requires that "new development should be designed to make a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of the place in which it is located. Applicants should demonstrate sensitivity and respect towards local distinctiveness of architecture and design in their proposals".
- 7.9 The proposal is considered contrary to Structure Plan and Local Plan policy which requires new development to demonstrate good design in keeping with local character. The proposal may set an unacceptable precedent for similarly designed proposals, which would be detrimental to the existing character and appearance of the area.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Whilst the principle of a house on this site has already been established, the design of the proposal is considered unacceptable in terms of scale, form, and orientation. The two storey suburban form is not sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is not in accordance with the outline conditions which stipulated that the house should be single or one and a half storeys only, and should reflect building styles traditional within the area. The proposal is considered to be contrary to Structure Plan and Local Plan policy which requires development to demonstrate good design which is in keeping with local character.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

1. The proposal is contrary to Highland Structure Plan Policy G2 as it fails to demonstrate sensitive siting and high quality design in keeping with local character.
2. The proposal is contrary to the Deposit Draft Sutherland Local Plan Policies 3 and 18 as it does not demonstrate sensitivity and respect towards local distinctiveness of architecture and design.
3. The proposal if approved would set a dangerous and unwelcome precedent making it difficult to refuse applications of a similar nature in the future.

Signature: Allan J Todd

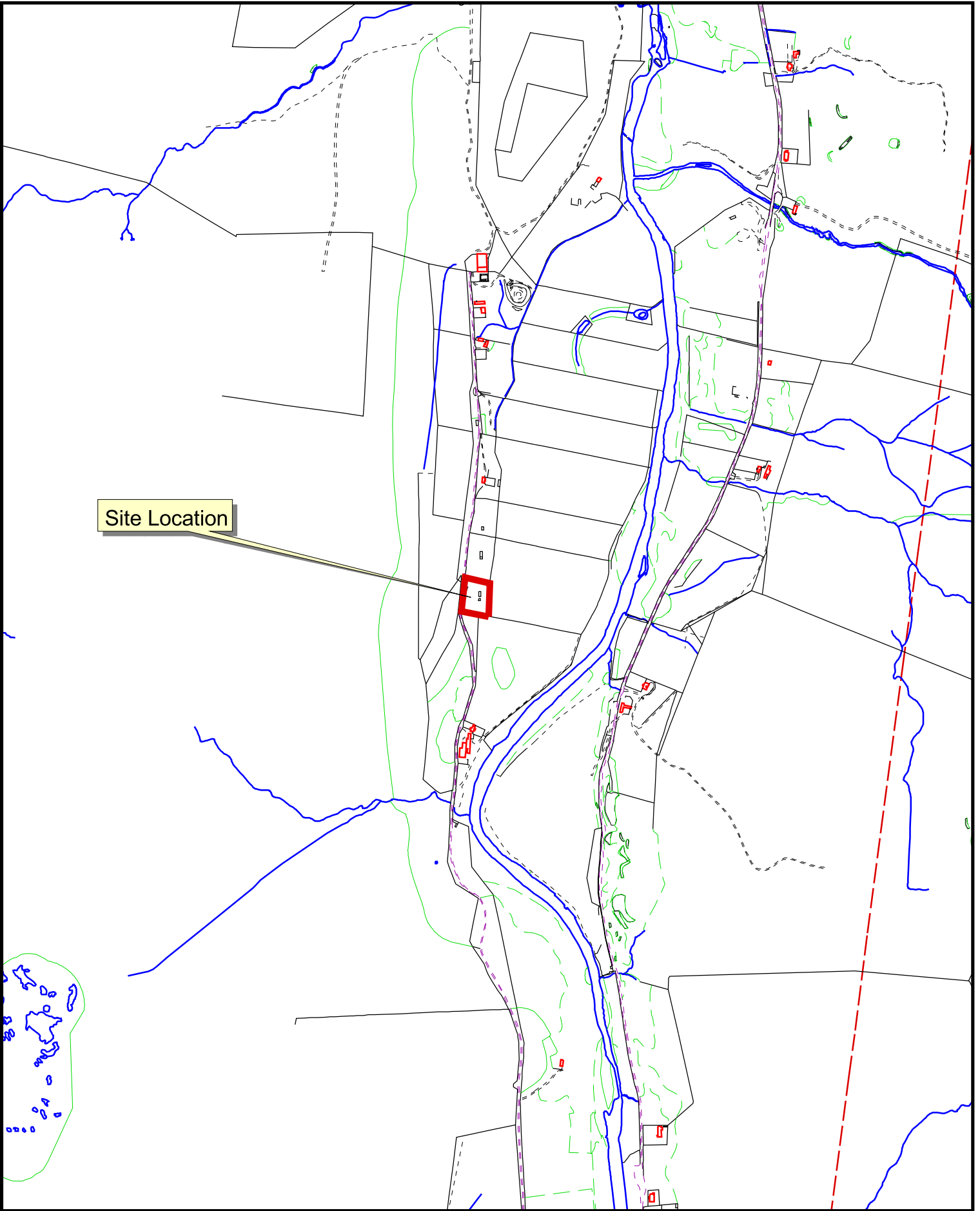
Designation: Area Planning & Building Standards Manager

Author: Rebecca Scott (01408 635372)

Background Papers: As referred to in the report above and case file reference number 08/00432/FULSU

Date: 7 April 2009

Site Location



08/00432/FULSU
Erection of house and garage. Installation of new septic tank and soakaway system. Formation of new access onto public road at Land 250m To North Of, Bighouse, Trantlemore, Forsinard.

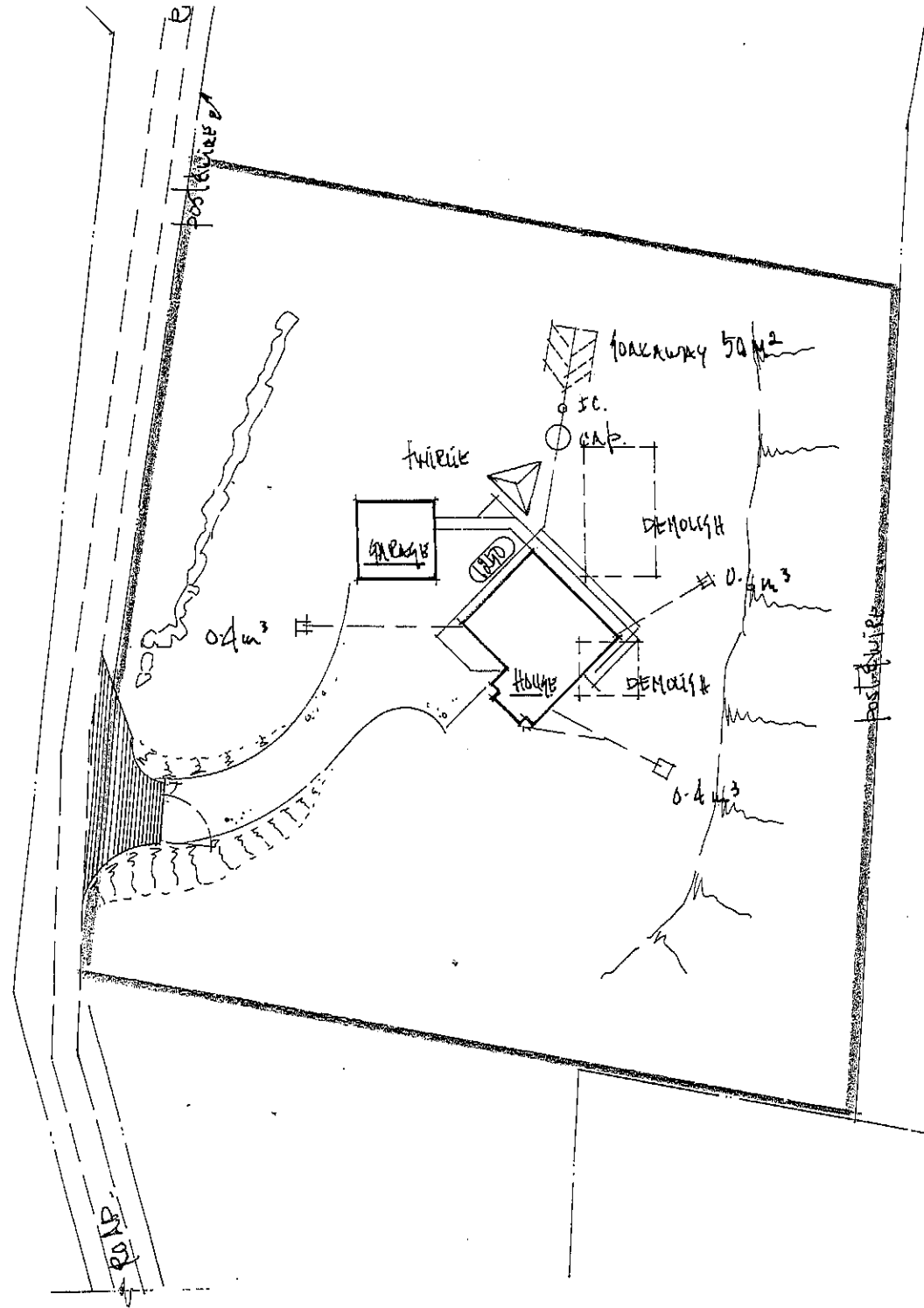
Mr Morrison
per Mr H Mackay
28 Grove Lane
Thurso
KW14 8AE

Date: 8 April 2009

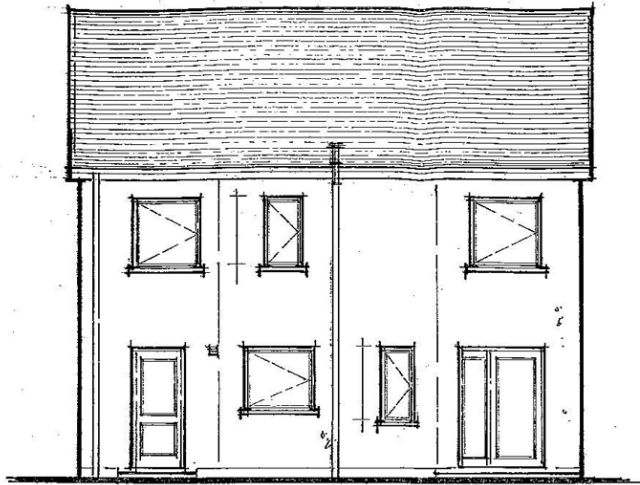
SUPPLIED BY THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

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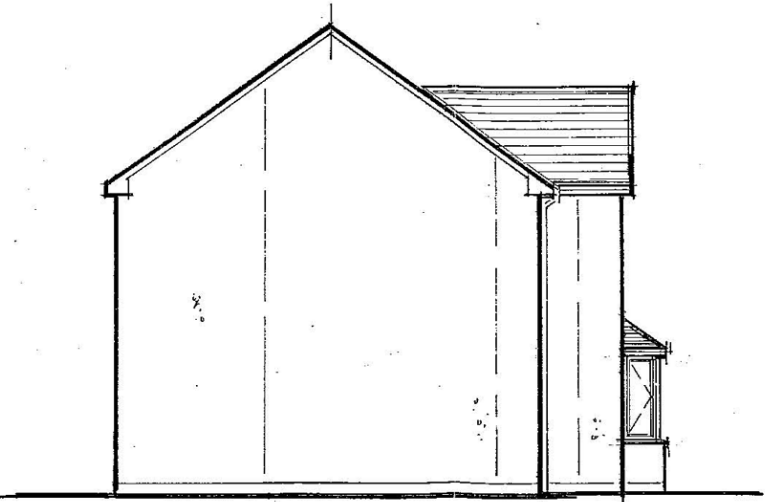
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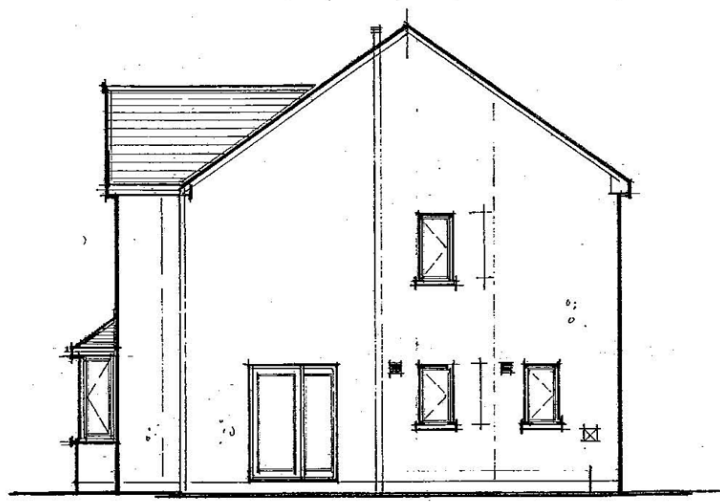
North West Elevation 1:100



South West Elevation 1:100



North West Elevation 1:100



South West Elevation 1:100