

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE –
11 November 2014**

Agenda Item	6.1
Report No	PLN/077/14

**14/02735/FUL : MeyGen Ltd
Ness Of Huna And Ness Of Quoys**

Supplementary Report No 1 Report by Area Planning Manager

SUMMARY

Description : Amended design and finish for 3 Power Conversion Unit Buildings (PCUBs) at the previously approved (ref 12/02874/FUL)

Recommendation - GRANT

Ward : 04 - Landward Caithness

Development category : Major Development

Pre-determination hearing : Not required

Reason referred to Committee : Deferred from September committee.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1** Members will recall that this proposal was considered at the meeting of the North Planning Applications Committee on 16 September 2014. The application was deferred to allow the applicant the opportunity to review the scheme and to consider a design similar to that previously approved whilst allowing for the change in scale of the proposal. This report should be read in conjunction with the parent report considered by Committee on 16 September which is appended.
- 1.2** In response to this, the applicant has amended the external appearance/finish of the buildings. External walls and roofs will be aluminium standing seam cladding, incorporating local masonry elements, and gables will be vertically timber lined over a black anodised carrier board. It is not proposed to change the design, dimensions, footprint or siting of the buildings from that presented to Committee in September.
- 1.3** The applicant has submitted amended details including revised photomontages, illustrations of the proposals, landscaping details, and a detailed design statement. The full design statement is available to view on the Council's eplanning system. Key points are summarised below.

1.4 Rationale for Buildings

- The proposed buildings are functional housings for power conversion equipment, switch gear and related elements of the technical process in converting power generated by offshore tidal turbines to electricity that may be fed into the grid connection. The buildings house high voltage equipment and will be unmanned. For safety and practical reasons, MeyGen does not want the site to become a focus of attention that would attract visitors to the site. Furthermore, the buildings, as the only visible part of the project, should seek not to be a focus point. The buildings should blend and adapt to the landscape and retain the low impact nature of the offshore project. MeyGen is in discussions with Natural Retreats at John o' Groats to provide a tourist facility for the project and also the greater marine energy potential of the Pentland Firth.
- Technical development of the project has resulted in a considerably reduced requirement for covered floor space, resulting in a significant reduction in overall footprints and heights. This required a re-assessment of the design approach.
- The footprint width of the buildings has been reduced substantially from that previously approved. The original, consented buildings were 45m (l) x 30m (w) x 12.2m (h). The buildings now proposed are (45m (l) x 18 (w) x 5.68m (h)).
- The buildings originally approved had curved roofs, this was to address the more significant visual impacts because of the size of the buildings and to relate their forms to elements of the wider landscape. The lower ridge height and smaller footprint mass of the current proposal reduces the direct visual impact and retaining the curved roofs on the scale of building now proposed would result in a forced and contrived visual appearance.
- The current low pitch portal structure has been considered in terms of materials, colour, finishes and quality of detailed and landscaping elements/landscape integration to maximise quality, appropriate contemporary architecture and positive contribution to the wider landscape.

Amended Design Proposal Details

- The concept is "extruded" building form using natural mill finish aluminium standing seam cladding to walls and roof with no guttering. The aluminium finish will dull to light grey over time and will reflect the skyscape.
- The gables emphasises the extruded concept; the sectional form projects 1000mm beyond the gable line and the returns soffits are timber lined. The gable is similarly vertically timber lined over a black anodised carrier board. The gable details will help break up the form of the building from views east and west (Canisbay Kirk) along the A836.
- The elevations are punctured by ventilation louvers, windows and plant access doors. Use of pressed metal, riveted facades common in industrial buildings of this type are avoided.
- In terms of landscaping, limited bunding to the south east, which will utilise some excavated material from the development, will partially conceal the buildings and the drainage channels will be formed in local masonry which will extend and form low walls separating the service/access areas of each building.

- The buildings at their closest point are roughly 250m from the A836 and more than 4m below the road.

2. PLANNING APPRAISAL

2.1 Material Considerations

2.2 Design and External Appearance

The report considered by Committee on 16 September noted that the design and external appearance of the buildings previously approved under planning permission 12/02874/FUL was subject to extension discussions with the Council and relevant consultation bodies. The report and discussions which took place at the meeting on 16 September expressed disappointment in the change of design and external appearance from that previously approved. However, the report acknowledged that on balance, the significant reductions in scale and massing of the building would lessen landscape and visual impacts to a degree which would allow the amended design to be accepted. The Committee agreed to defer determination of the application to afford the applicant an opportunity to reconsider the external appearance of the buildings.

- 2.3 The external appearance of the buildings has been amended. The amendments now proposed (as outlined in section 1 above) represent an improvement to the proposal. Although the design of the buildings remains unaltered in that they are rectangular buildings with dual pitched roofs, the aluminium and timber finishes and detailing proposed are high quality, more reflective of the function of the buildings and reducing the resemblance to standard large agricultural sheds. The enhanced detailing helps break up the mass of the building and helps lessen the appearance of its scale. This was a key concern raised in relation to the original proposal for amended design.
- 2.4 The potential for the overall design of the buildings to remain as previously approved under 12/02874/FUL but at a reduced scale was discussed with the applicant. The reasons provided, as summarised in section 1.4 above, are accepted in that the curved roofs would be out of proportion given the dimensions of the significantly reduced scale buildings now proposed. It is also recognised that the applicant does not wish the design buildings to attract visiting members of the public for health and safety reasons related to their function.
- 2.5 It is considered that the scale, massing and external appearance of the buildings can be absorbed into this landscape setting without significant landscape or visual impact, this is demonstrated in the photomontages that the applicant has submitted in support of the amended proposal. The amended external appearance gives the impression of a high quality development in the landscape.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Development Plan and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the application be granted subject to conditions, with the proposed amendments to the external appearance of the building. There are no changes to the conditions presented at the meeting of the committee on 16 September 2014.

4. RECOMMENDATION

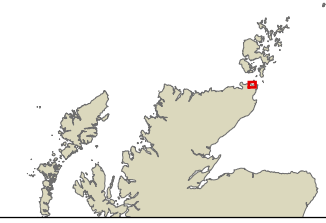
Action required before decision issued N

Subject to the above, it is recommended the original recommendation of **approval** subject to the conditions and reasons detailed remains unaltered.

Signature: Dafydd Jones
Designation: Area Planning Manager – North
Author: Emma Forbes
Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.
Relevant Plans: Plan 1 – Location Plan
Plan 2 – Overall Elevations
Plan 3 – Gable Perspective
Plan 4 – Side Elevations Perspective (1)
Plan 5 – Side Elevations Perspective (2)
Plan 6 – Gable Perspective (2)
Plan 7 – Landscaping



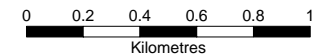
MeyGen Tidal Energy Project
Phase 1



Legend
 Planning Application redline boundary

Ness of Quoy

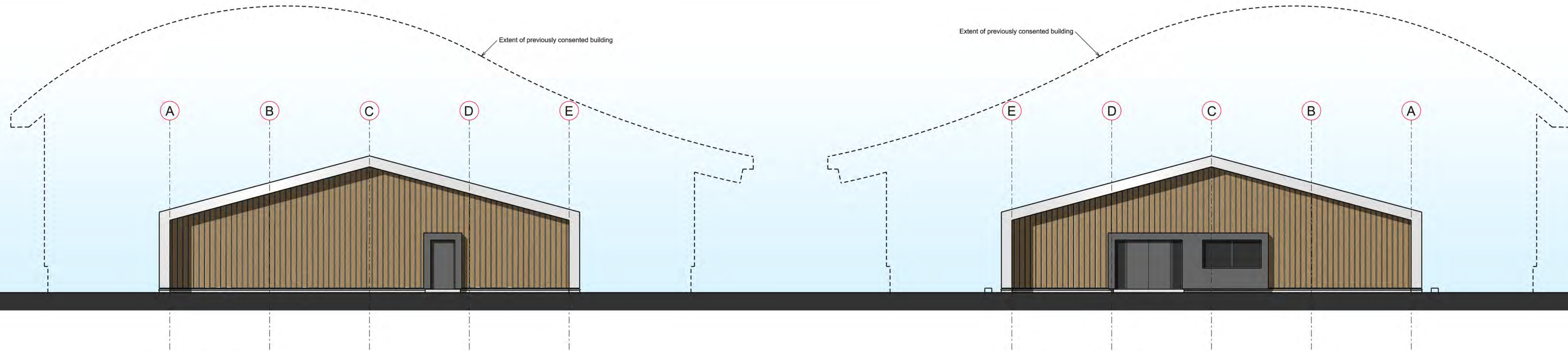
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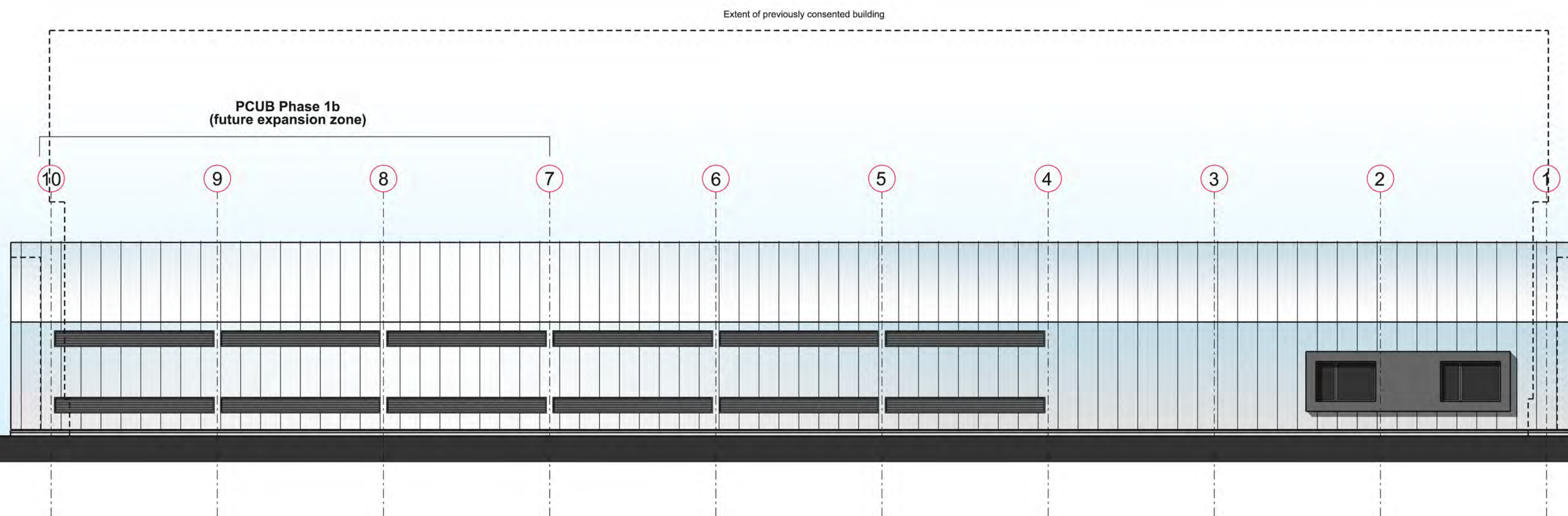


Date: 25/01/2013

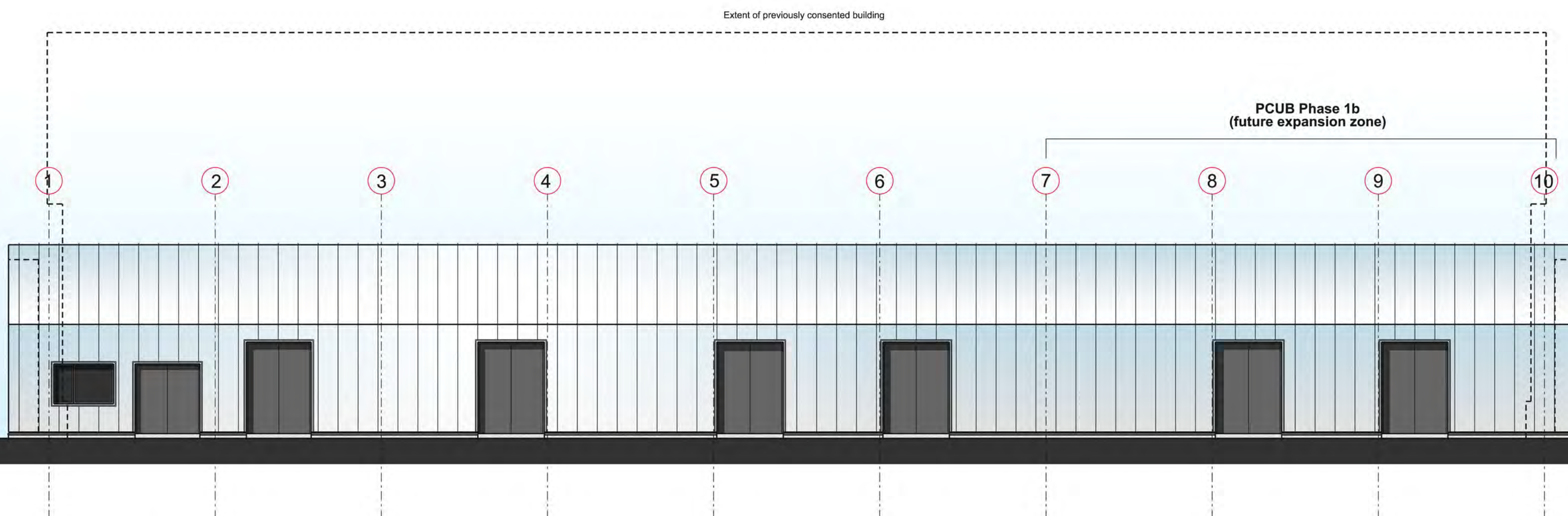


1 South-East Elevation
1:100

2 North-West Elevation
1:100



3 North-East Elevation
1:100



4 South-West Elevation
1:100

PLANNING

Revision	Description	Date
Rev. 8	Elevations revised.	23.10.14
Rev. 7	Building height altered.	10.07.14
Rev. 6	Building height altered.	08.07.14
Rev. 5	PCUB sections revised to reflect altered layout	26.06.14
Rev. 4	PCUB elevations revised to reflect altered wall construction	10.02.14
Rev. 3	Building altered.	16.05.13
Rev. 2	Building handed. Re-issued to client.	18.01.12
Rev. 1	Issued to client.	21.12.11

PENTLAND FIRTH INNER
SOUND TIDAL STREAM
NESS OF QUOYS

MEYGEN LIMITED

**PCUB Elevations
Phase 1a & 1b**

Option 4

Scale: 1:100@A1	Project Partner: AB	Drawn: MAW
Date: 12.12.11	Project Leader: AB	Checked:

Project Number: 1/6775	Drawing: 110	Revision: 8
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