

Agenda Item	5.2
Report No	PLS/027/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee
Date: 24 April 2018
Report Title: 18/00164/LBC: Georope Ltd
Achara House, Duror, Appin, Lochaber PA38 4BW
Report By: Area Planning Manager – South/Major Developments

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Change of use from house to hotel, alterations and extension, and conversion of outbuildings to bedrooms
Ward: 21 – Fort William and Ardnamurchan
Development category: Local
Reason referred to Committee: Applicant is Local Member

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.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree the recommendation to **GRANT** listed building consent as set out in section 11 of the report.

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 It is proposed to change the use of Achara House to form a hotel, including a rear extension and changes to the internal layout to create four upper floor bedroom suites and ground floor guest facilities. External changes to Achara House include the change from a ground floor window to a door on the side elevation and a window to a door on the rear elevation to access the new extension. The extension is in a design and finish to match the main house, separated by a modern lead clad extension to signal the change from old to new. There are also changes to the levels in the car park to facilitate a ramped access into Achara House. The stone barn to the immediate rear of Achara House is to be converted to two guest bedroom suites. Alterations are also proposed to the Coach House to upgrade the existing house to create five bedroom suites and Watson's Cottage to create two guest bedroom suites.
- 1.2 This current application is for Listed Building Consent for the changes to Achara House and its curtilage buildings. A related application for planning permission for the development (18/00163/FUL) which includes the servicing arrangements is before Members for determination.
- 1.3 Pre Application Consultation: Informal discussion as part of previous proposals
- 1.4 Supporting Information: An outline business case has been submitted in support of the application which includes the wider aspirations for the property which would be subject of future applications. A design statement and background report have also been submitted, together with details of the alterations to the fabric of the listed building.
- 1.5 Variations: Retention of one of the proposed doors on the side elevation of Achara House as a window; confirmation of retention of window glazing as per previous permission; details of ramped access/car parking levels at Achara House entrance; retention of arched windows in Coach House; reduction in size of dormers on Coach House.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site comprises Achara House and its grounds and some curtilage buildings. Achara House is located on the southern side of the village of Duror and is a three storey building set within large garden/grounds, extending to approximately 120 acres. The house was B-listed on 28.08.1980. Circa 1900, incorporating 19th century baronial dwelling. Built for Charles Stewart of Achara on site of earlier house. Alterations of c.1900 said to have been designed by Sir Robert Lorimer. Various outbuildings converted to dwellings and garage in vicinity of house not included in listing 1930's photograph show more extensive service range, now demolished.
- 2.2 Permission has previously been granted for works to repair the roof, internal walls and dry rot treatment. This work has been undertaken with much of the interior stripped out (and features stored) and the building fabric largely repaired. Listed building consent has also been granted for the painting of the exterior of the

building in white. This work has not yet been done.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1	Decision pending	17/01975/FUL: Erection of extension and internal alterations (Planning Permission)	
3.2	Decision pending	Erection of extension and internal alterations (Listed Building Consent)	
3.3	18.10.2017	17/04386/PNO: Farm-related Building Works	Prior Approval not Required
3.4	20.12.2017	17/04702/LBC: Strip and repaint external walls with mineral-based paint, changing colour from light ochre to off-white	Granted

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

4.1 Advertised: Yes

Date Advertised: 26 January 2018

Representation deadline: 16 February 2018

Timeous representations: 0

Late representations: 0

4.2 Material considerations raised are summarised as follows:

a) None

4.3 All letters of representation are available for inspection via the Council's eplanning portal which can be accessed through the internet www.wam.highland.gov.uk/wam.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 **Historic Environment Team:** Generally supportive of the proposal following revisions made.

5.2 **Lochaber Disability Access Panel:** Made observations on the limitations on disabled access and has requested meeting with the application to discuss the issues. *(Comment: Many of the issues raised will be covered by Building Standards. The applicant's agent has provided further information in relation to the issues of disabled access and has indicated agreement to meet with the Panel).*

5.3 **Historic Environment Scotland:** No comments.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application

6.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012

28 - Sustainable Design
29 - Design Quality & Place-making
57 - Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage

6.2 West Highland and Islands Local Plan 2010 (as continued in force 2012)

No specific policies apply

7. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance

Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)

7.2 Scottish Government Planning Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (The Scottish Government, June 2014)

Scottish Environment Scotland Policy Statement

Historic Environment Circular 1

Historic Environment Scotland - Managing Change in the Historic Environment

8. PLANNING APPRAISAL

8.1 Section 14 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 states that, "In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, the planning authority.....shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".

Determining Issues

8.2 This means that the application requires to be assessed against all policies of the Development Plan relevant to the application, all national and local policy guidance and all other material considerations relevant to the application.

Planning Considerations

8.3 The key considerations in this case are:

- a) The impact upon the character and appearance of the listed building.
- b) any other material considerations.

Impact on the character and appearance of the Listed Building

8.4 Achara House is a Category B Listed Building and the immediate buildings around the House are listed by virtue of being curtilage buildings.

8.5 Policies 28 - Sustainable Design and 29 – Design Quality and Place-making require that proposals demonstrate sensitive siting and high quality design in-

keeping with local character and the historic environment.

- 8.6 There is a requirement to judge proposals in terms of their impact upon the natural, built and cultural heritage features identified by Policy 57 of the Highland wide Local Development Plan. As an application relating to a Category B listed building Policy 57.1 states that developments are suitable where they can be demonstrated not to have an unacceptable impact on the protected amenity and heritage resource.

Achara House

- 8.7 Externally the changes to the existing house are fairly minor, with one of the windows on the side elevation being changed to a door to facilitate fire escape. There are also changes to the levels at the entrance to the building to provide a ramp for disabled access. Repainting of the building has been approved under a separate listed building consent, as have the first phase repairs to the building. Existing windows are to be repaired as per the original permission. The main external change is the erection of an extension onto to the rear of the building to provide 'back of house' facilities, kitchen etc. The extension is discreetly located at the rear, next to the byre and is designed and finished to match the main house. It is linked by a small lead clad extension to minimise disturbance to the fabric of the main house and also to provide a visual separation between old and new elements of the building.
- 8.8 Internally the building has been stripped out, for which Listed Building Consent has been granted. The current application is for the alterations to the building as the interior is reinstated. A key change is the use of a metal studs with modern insulation and plasterboard rather than the more traditional lath and plaster. Although this will not be seen once the building has been reinstated, its use is not traditional to the building. This has been the subject of discussion with our Historic Environment Team. This solution is part of a designed scheme to address environmental issues with the building to allow air to flow between the internal finishes and the stone walls, and to provide a fire strategy for the building, by creating sealed compartments within the main structure of the building. Balancing the benefits of this modern approach against the loss of the more traditional interior finish (albeit largely unseen), is considered to be an acceptable intervention for this particular building.
- 8.9 Other alterations include repositioning of door openings and partition walls and remedial works to some advance lining works that were undertaken. A condition is proposed to ensure any new and replacement doors, facings, skirtings and corncing match the original detailing.

Byre

- 8.10 The existing stone byre lies to the immediate rear of Achara House and has been stripped out and the roof repairs undertaken. The exterior of the building will be largely unchanged, with existing openings being reused. Two gable windows are proposed to the rear and two new heritage rooflights included in the courtyard facing elevation. Internally the building is to be relined and reconfigured.

Coach House

- 8.11 The Coach House appears to have been subject to previous alterations and has a mix of features. During the application the applicant agreed to amend the scheme to reduce the size of the modern dormer windows and retain the three arched windows. Although the building will be a mix of old and new, it does retain those features that are likely to be more original, whilst allowing for a modern interpretation of later previous interventions. Internally the building is to be reconfigured.

Watson's Cottage

- 8.12 Limited alterations are proposed to this simple, single storey, hipped roof building. Externally there is the change from a window to a door, creation of a new door opening, alterations to two existing windows and installation of two heritage rooflights. Internally the building is to be stripped out, new partition walls built and the building relined.

Summary

- 8.13 It is considered that the proposals are largely sympathetic to the listed buildings and the overall proposal will provide a more certain future for these buildings.
- 8.14 Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies 28, 29 and 57 of the Highland wide Local Development Plan.

Other material considerations

- 8.15 None

Non-material considerations

- 8.16 None raised.

Matters to be secured by Section 75 Agreement

- 8.17 None

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 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 the proposal will not have a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the listed buildings.

10. IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Resource: Not applicable
- 10.2 Legal: Not applicable

10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable

10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: Not applicable

10.5 Risk: Not applicable

10.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

11. RECOMMENDATION

Action required before decision issued N

Subject to the above, it is recommended that listed building consent be **GRANTED**, subject to the following:

Conditions and Reasons

1. All existing fireplaces (incl. hearths, grates, surrounds and mantelpieces) shall be retained in situ.

Reason: In order to safeguard the character and qualities of the listed building.

2. All new plasterwork and internal timber detailing, including replacement/new doors, facings, skirtings and cornicing shall be finished to match the original detailing, unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to safeguard the character and qualities of the listed building.

REASON FOR DECISION

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 the proposal will not have a negative impact upon the character and appearance of the listed buildings.

TIME LIMIT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

In accordance with Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), the works to which this listed building consent relates must commence within THREE YEARS of the date of this decision notice. If work has not commenced within this period, then this listed building consent shall lapse.

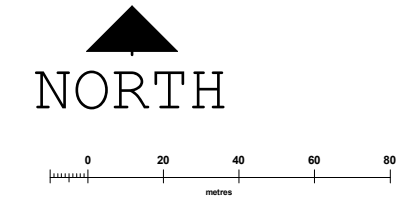
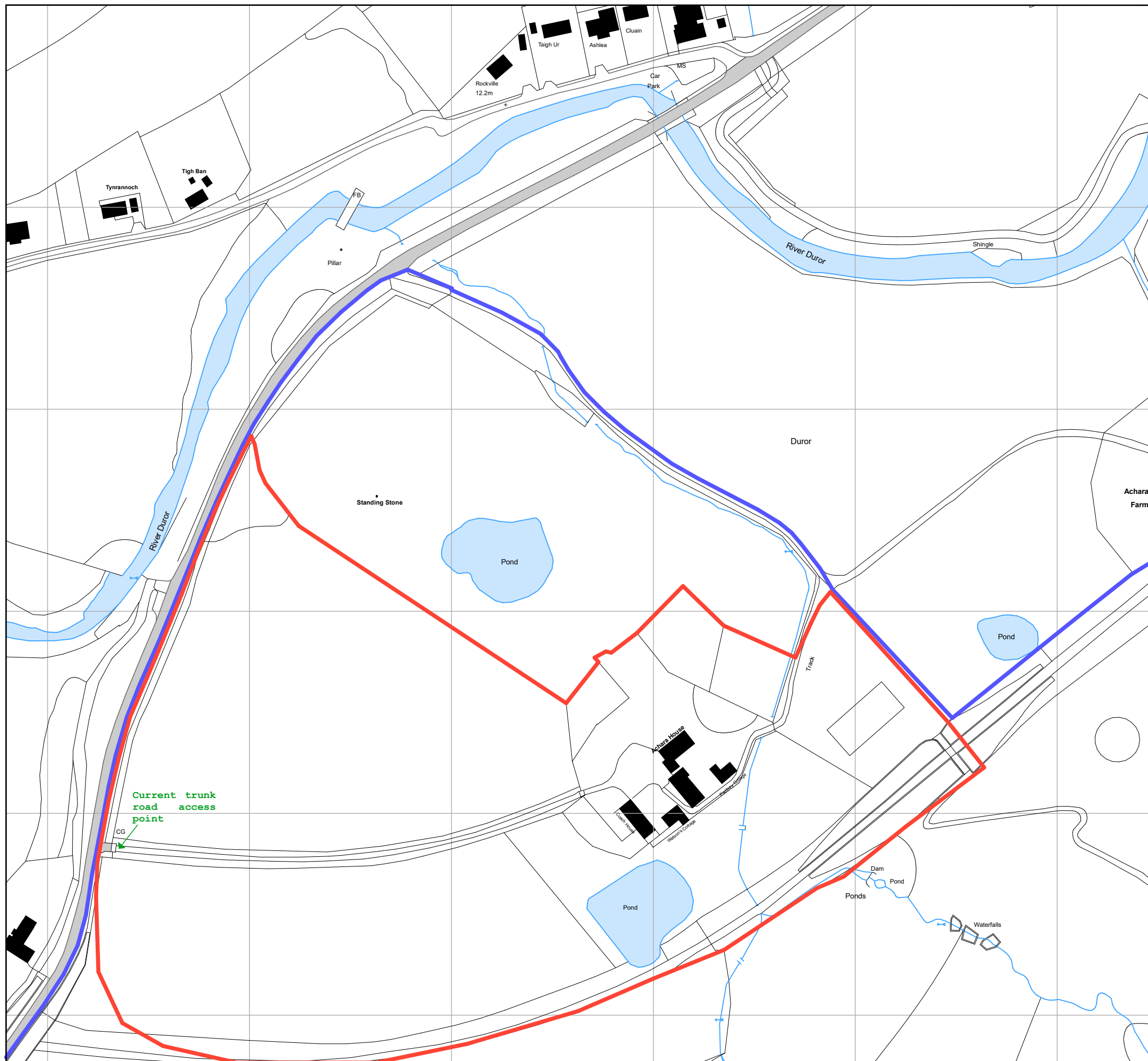
FOOTNOTE TO APPLICANT

Protected Species - Halting of Work

You are advised that work on site must stop immediately, and Scottish Natural Heritage must be contacted, if evidence of any protected species or nesting/breeding sites, not previously detected during the course of the application and provided for in

this permission, are found on site. For the avoidance of doubt, it is an offence to deliberately or recklessly kill, injure or disturb protected species or to damage or destroy the breeding site of a protected species. These sites are protected even if the animal is not there at the time of discovery. Further information regarding protected species and developer responsibilities is available from SNH: www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-species

Signature: Nicola Drummond
Designation: Area Planning Manager – South/Major Developments
Author: Susan Macmillan
Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.
Relevant Plans: Plans 1-13 - See 18/00163/FUL



Location Map 1:2000

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Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title: Location Map	
Stage: PLANNING/LBC	
Date: JAN2018	Scale: 1:2000
Drawing No: AHH/PL/001	
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A3

NORTH



NORTH

Existing Site Plan - 1:500

Proposed Site Plan - 1:500



REV A: SCALE BAR

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Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
Existing & Proposed site plans

Stage: **PLANNING/LBC**

Date: **JAN18** Scale: **1:500**

Drawing No: **AHH/PL/002 A**

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Existing Elevation A - 1:100



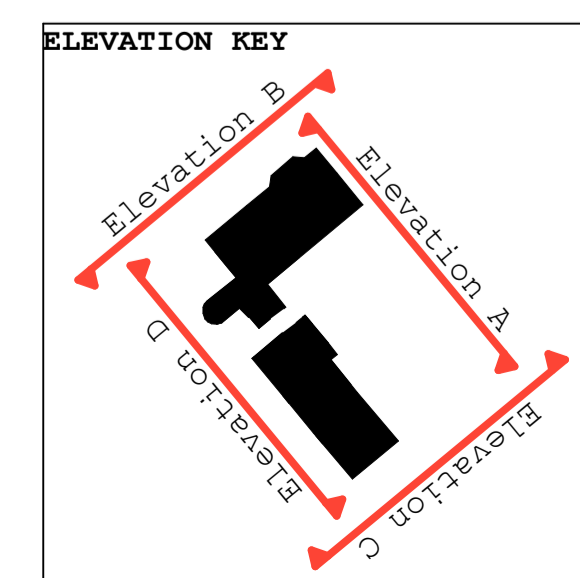
Existing Elevation B - 1:100



Existing Elevation C - 1:100



Existing Elevation D - 1:100



REV A: SCALE BAR

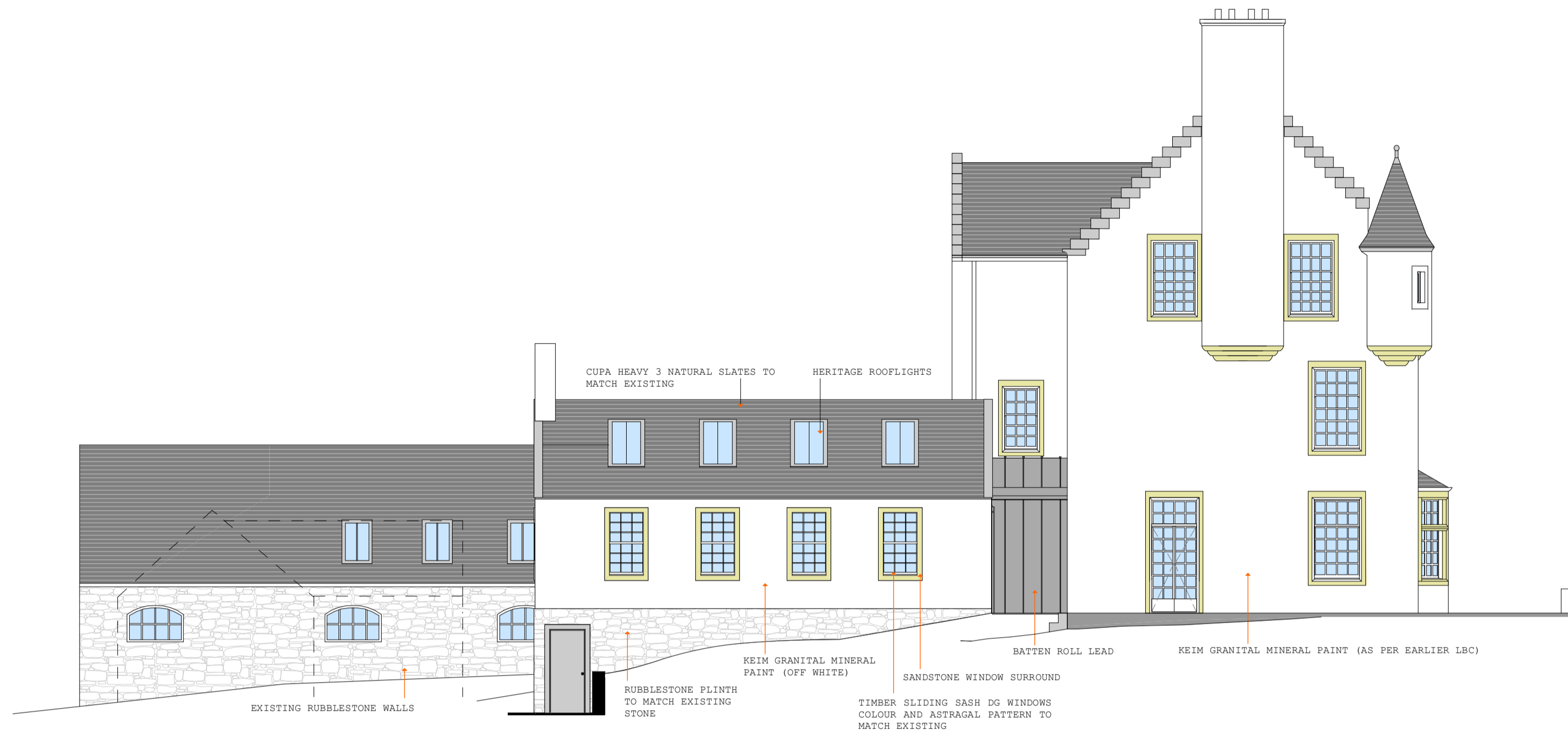
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Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
Existing elevations

Stage: PLANNING/LBC	Scale: 1:100	A1
Date: JAN18		
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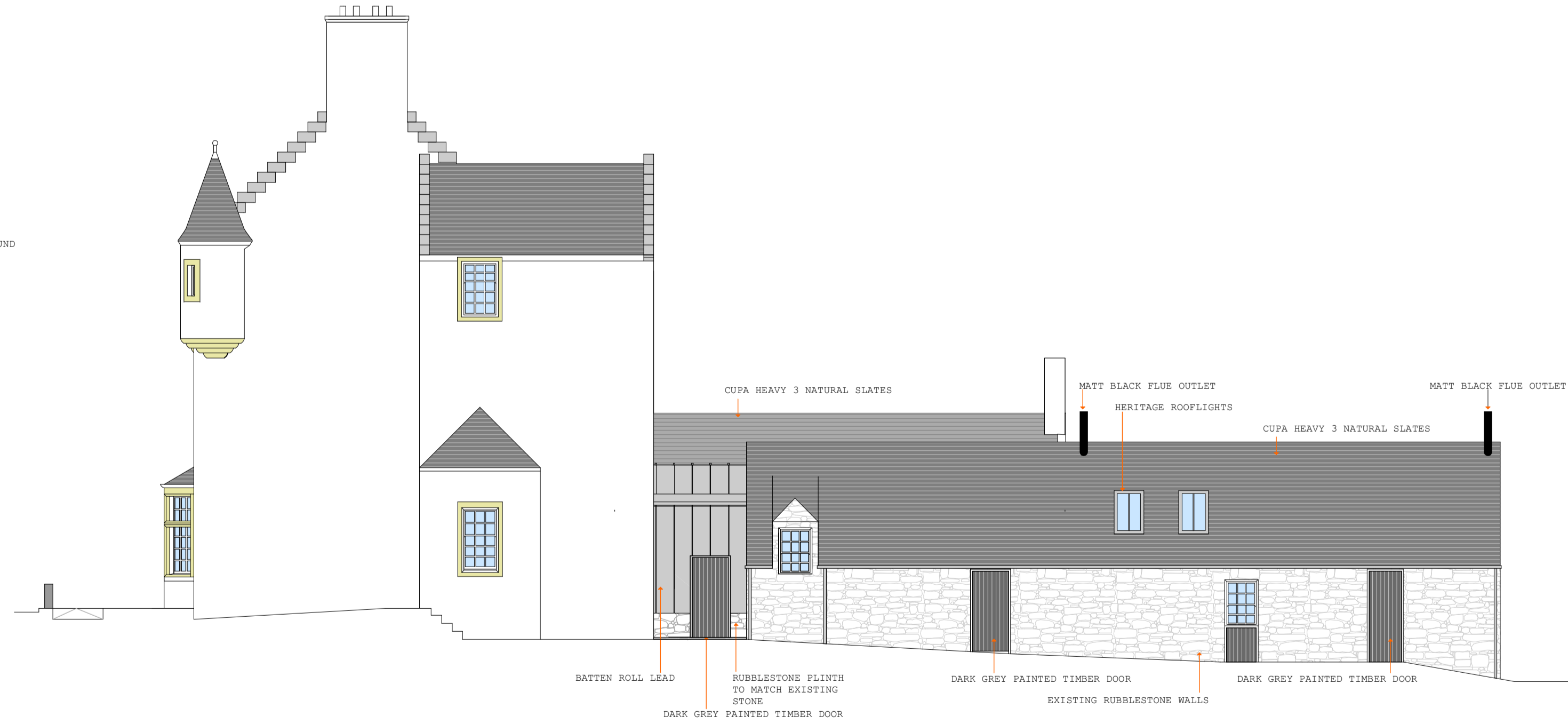
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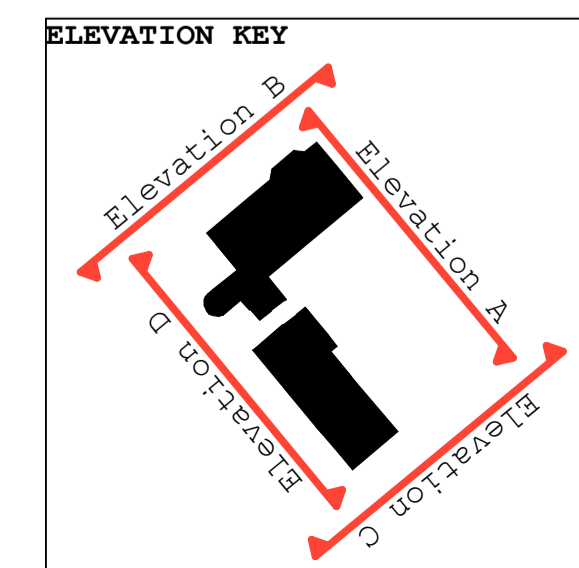
Proposed Elevation B - 1:100



Proposed Elevation C - 1:100



Proposed Elevation D - 1:100



REV B: GRD FLOOR WINDOWS/UPPER WINDOWS/RAMPS
REV A: SCALE BAR

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Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
Proposed elevations

Stage: **PLANNING/LBC**

Date: **APRIL18** Scale: **1:100**

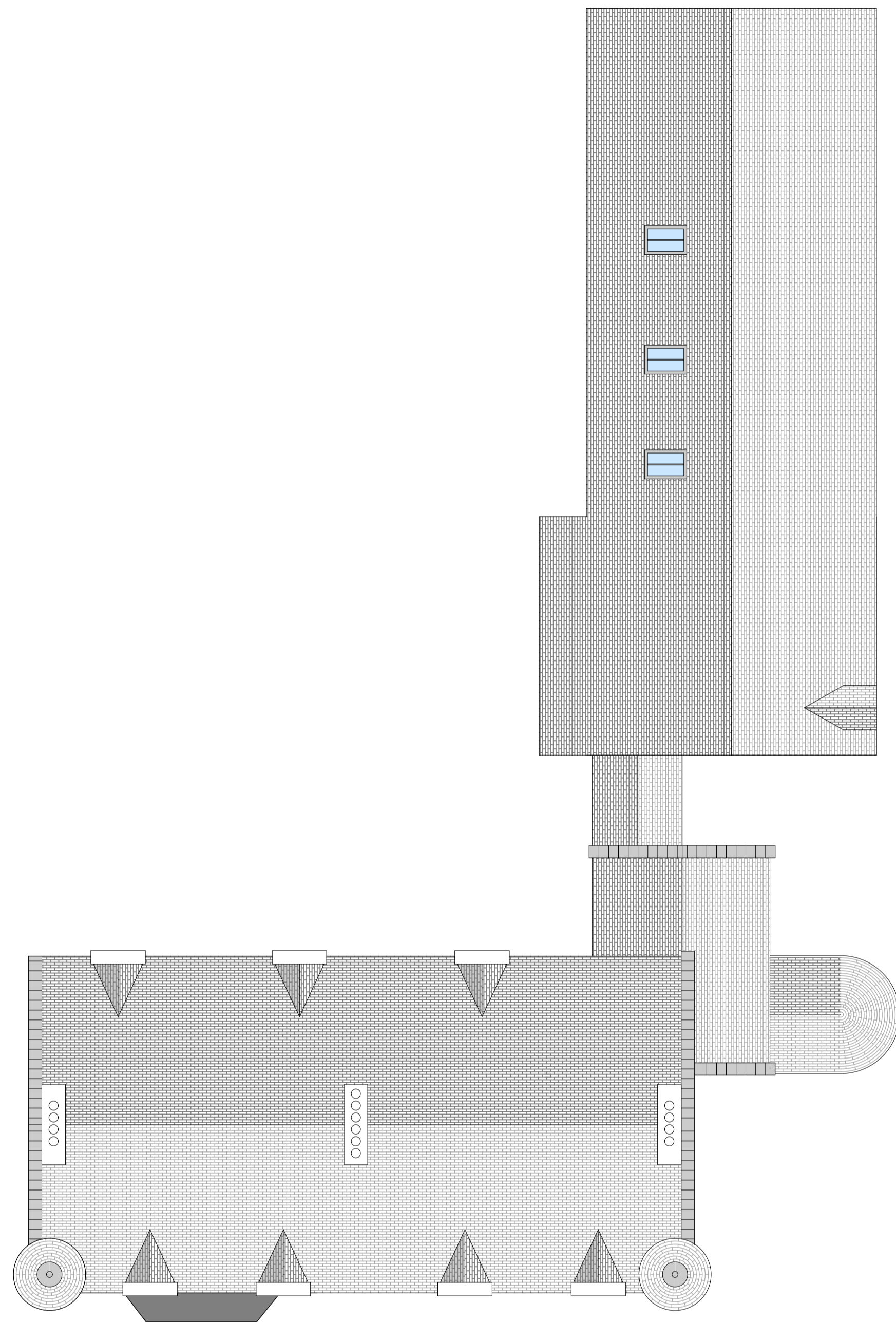
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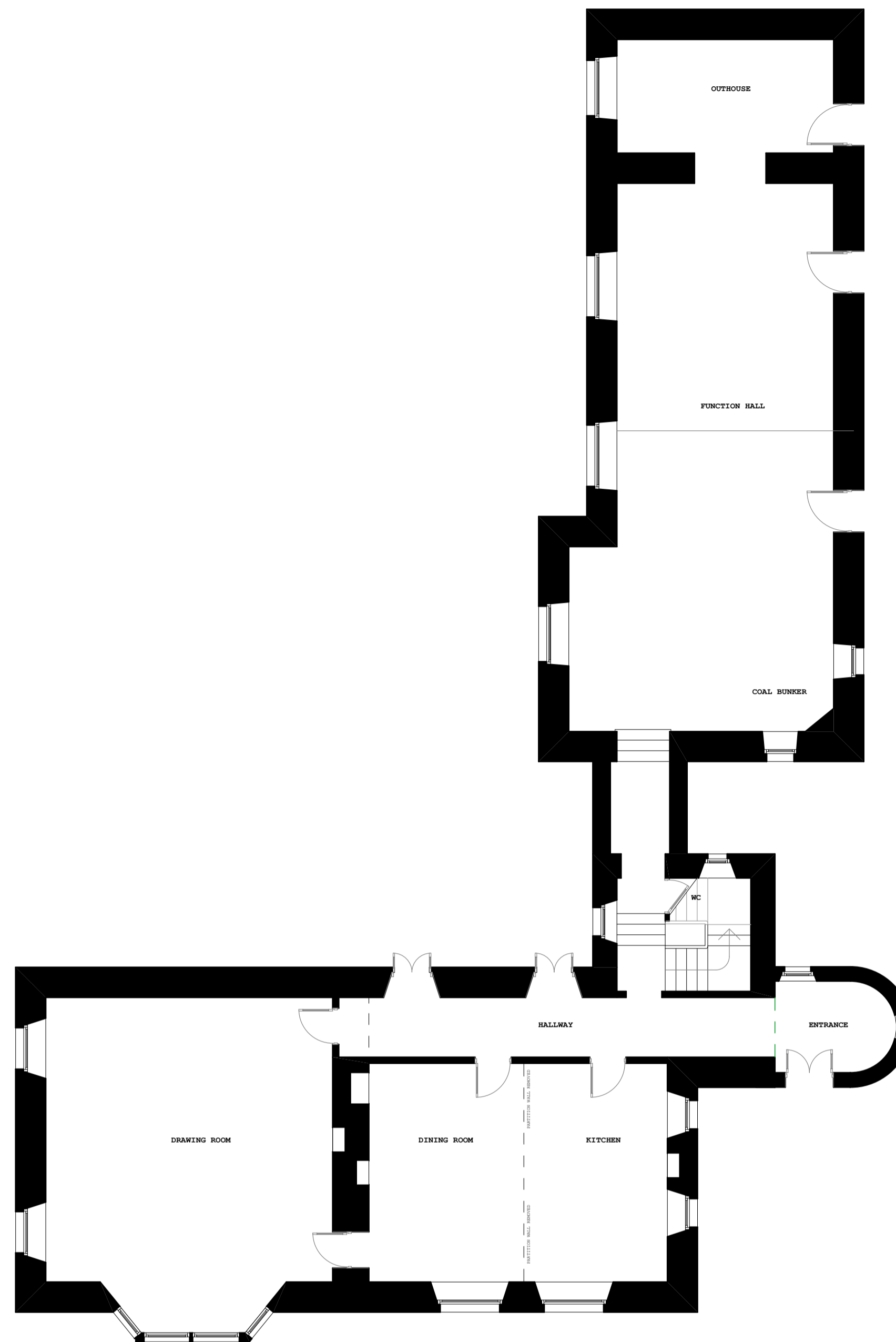
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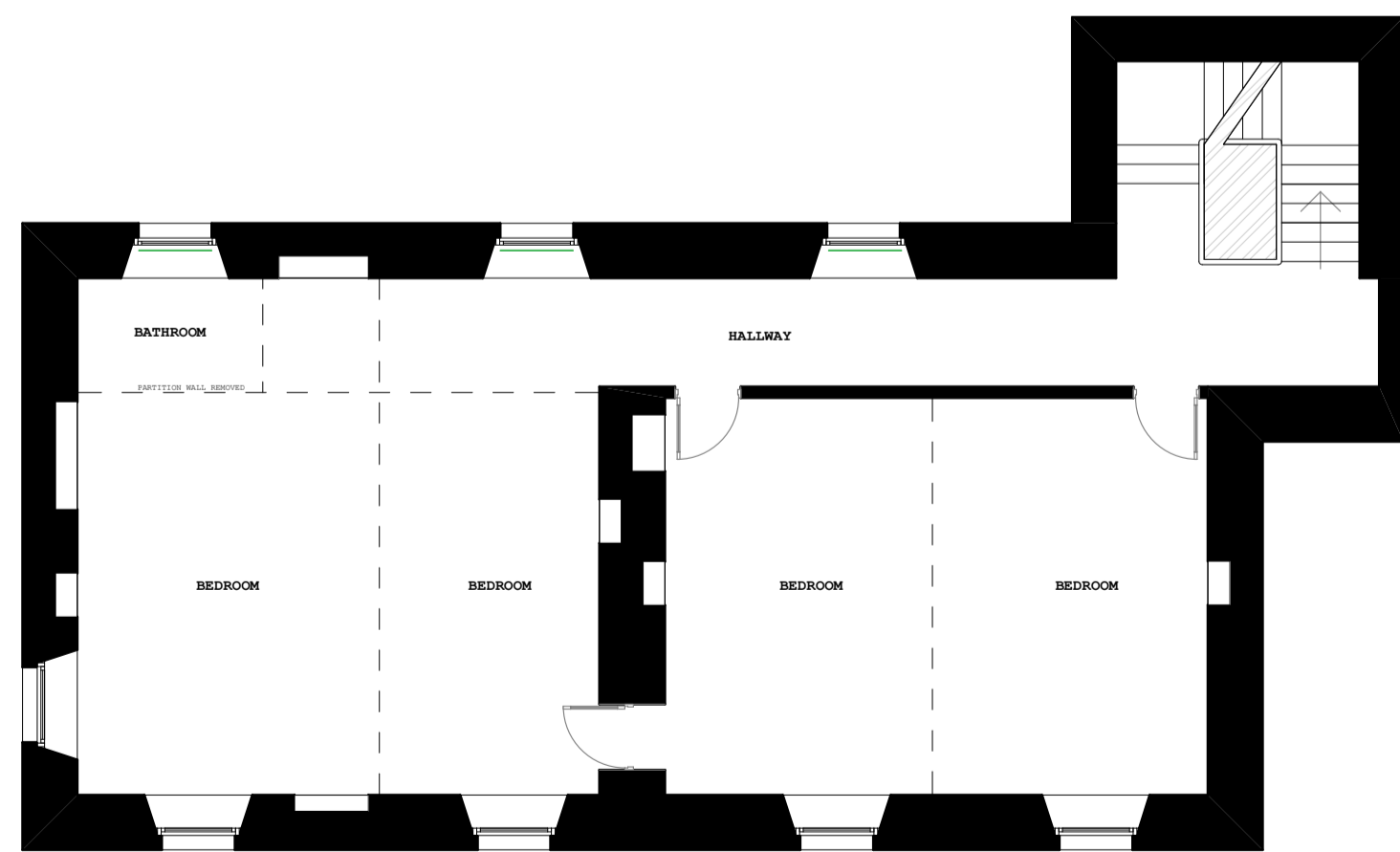
NORTH



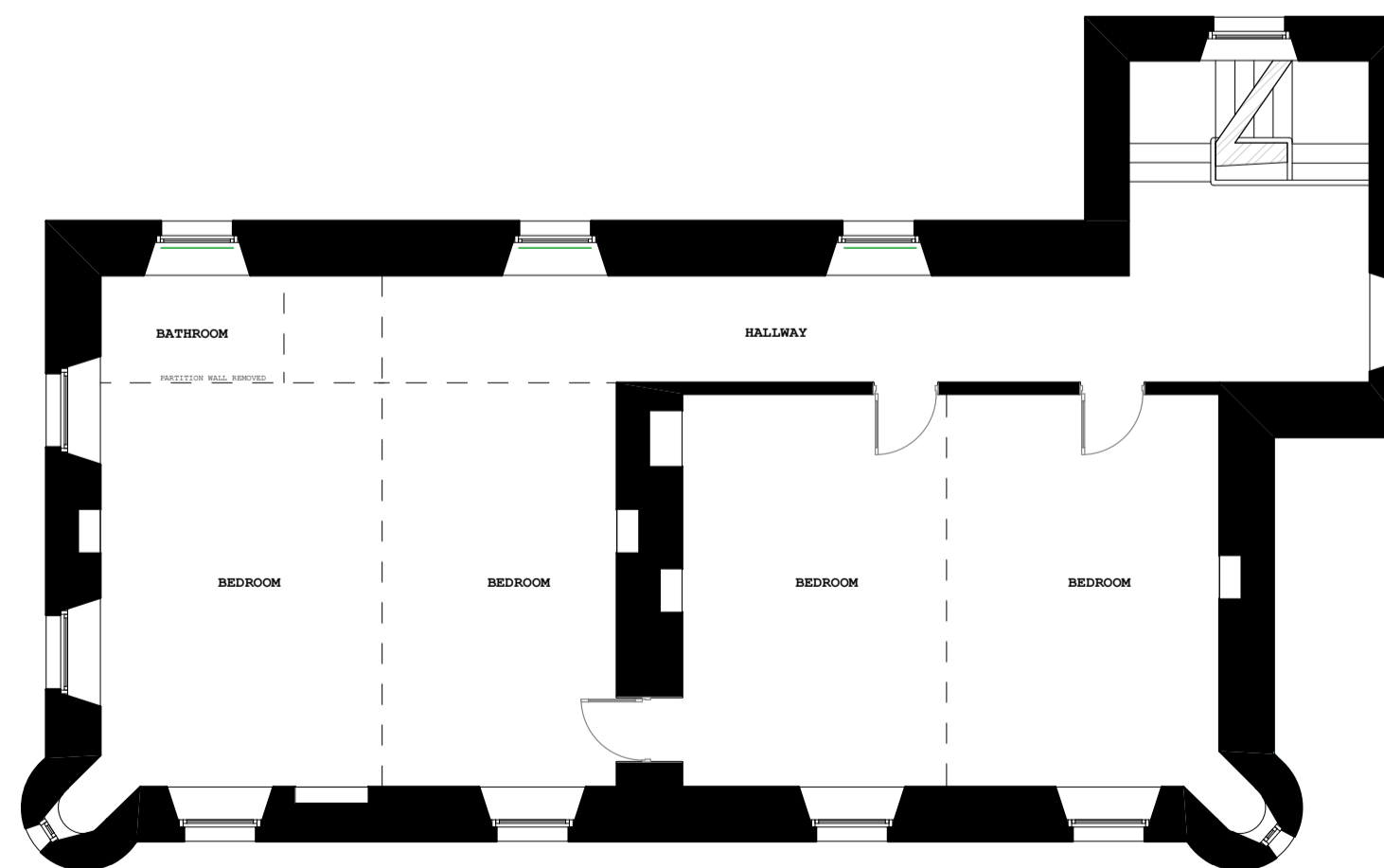
Existing Roofplan - 1:100



Existing Grd floor plan - 1:100



Existing 1st floor plan - 1:100



Existing 2nd floor plan - 1:100



REV A: SCALE BAR

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Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
Existing plans (Achara House)

Stage: **PLANNING/LBC**

Date: **JAN18** Scale: **1:100**

Drawing No: **AHH/PL/005 A**

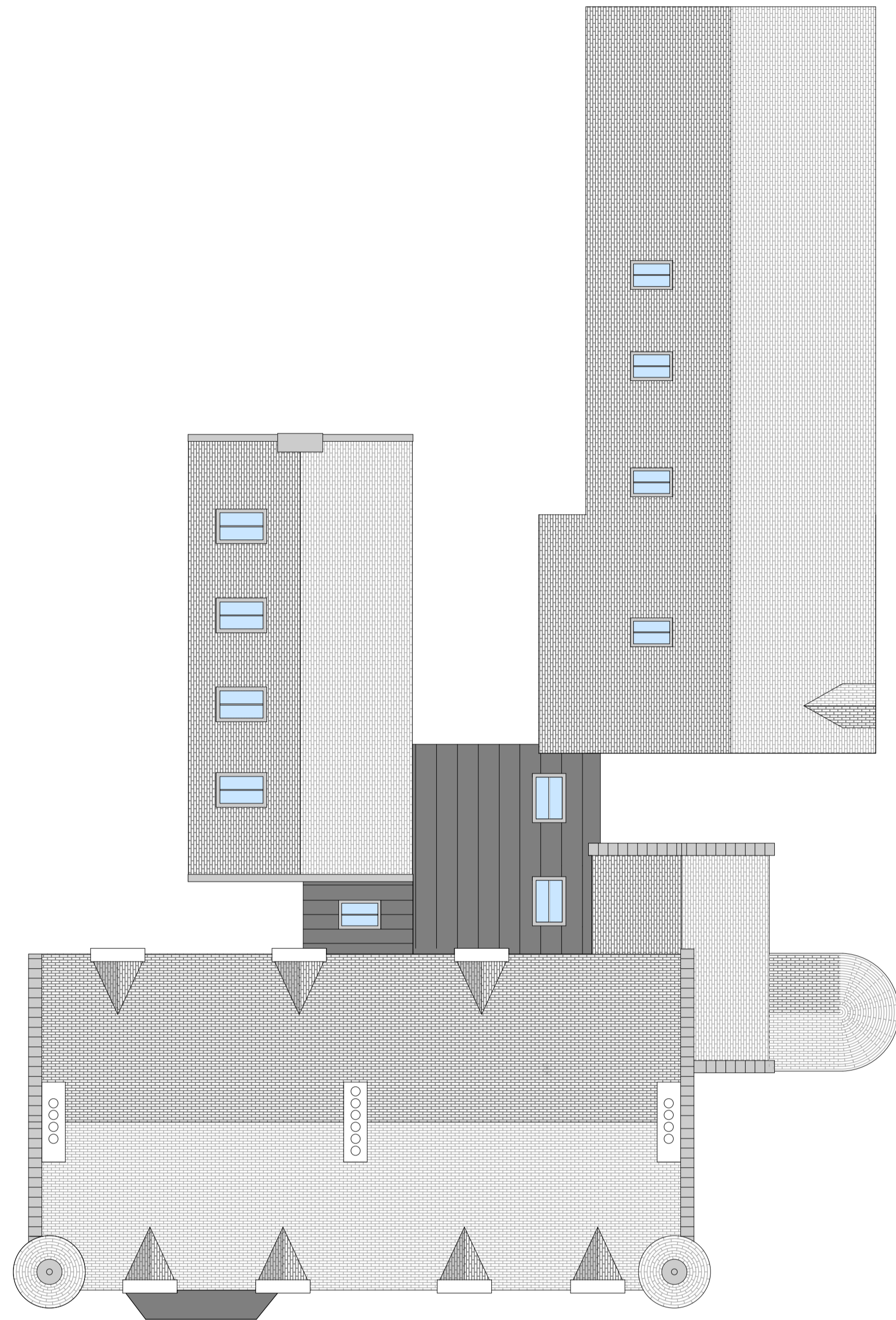
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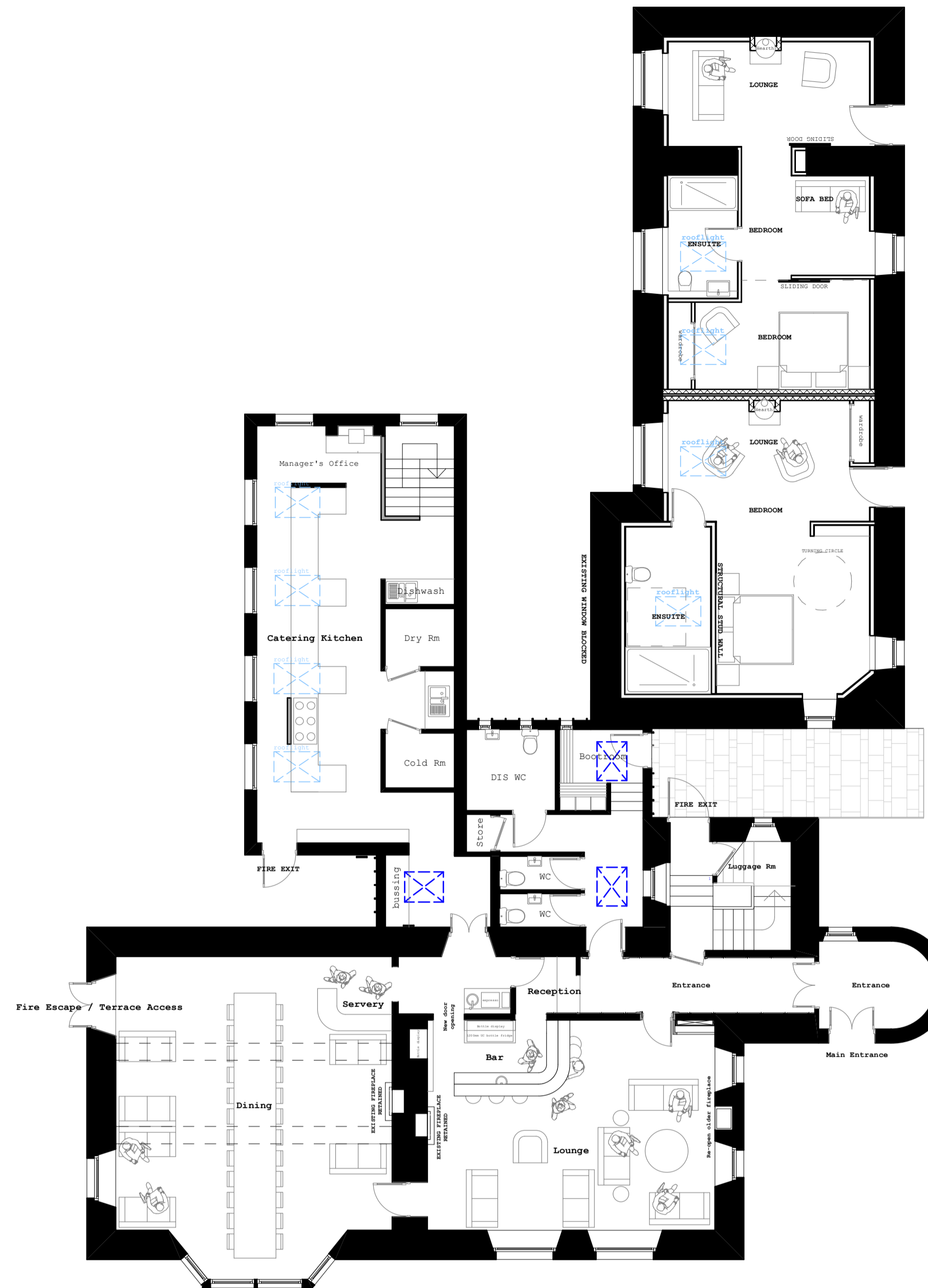
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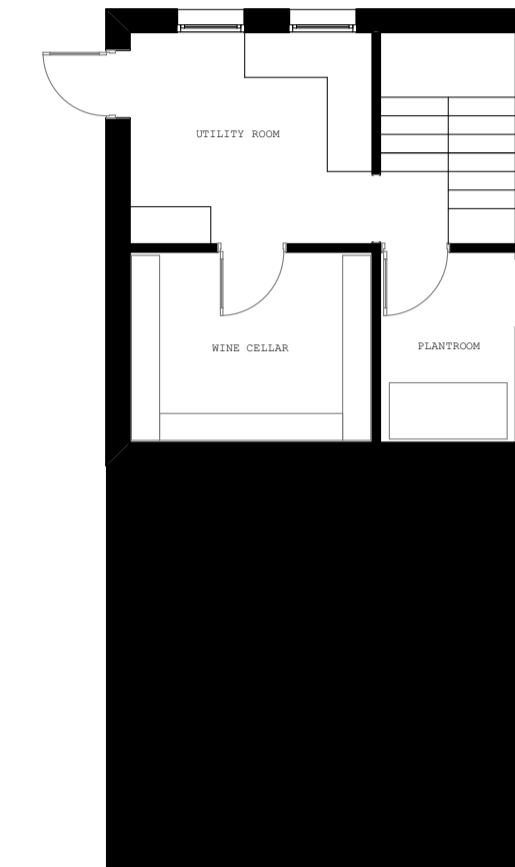
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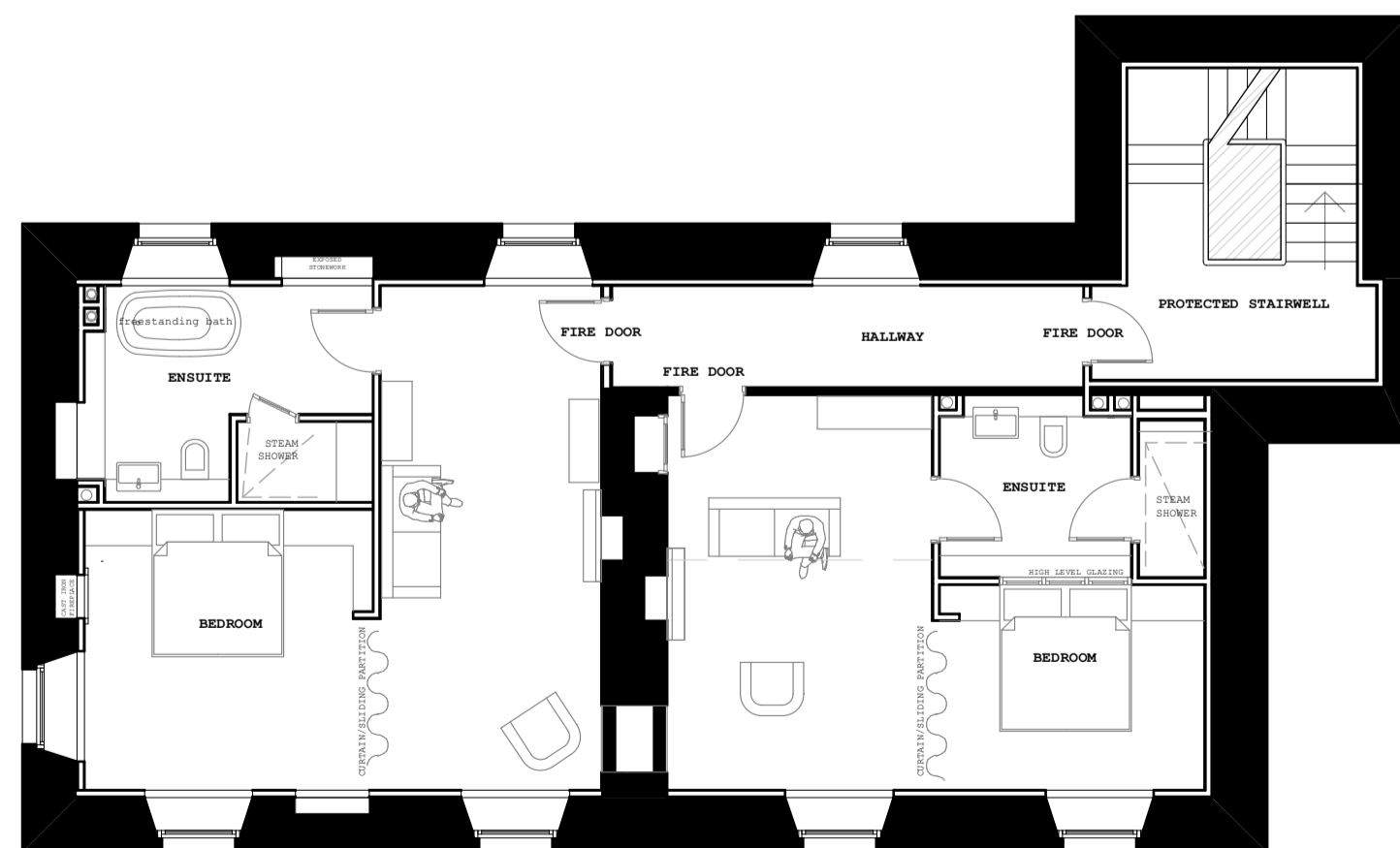
Proposed Roofplan - 1:100



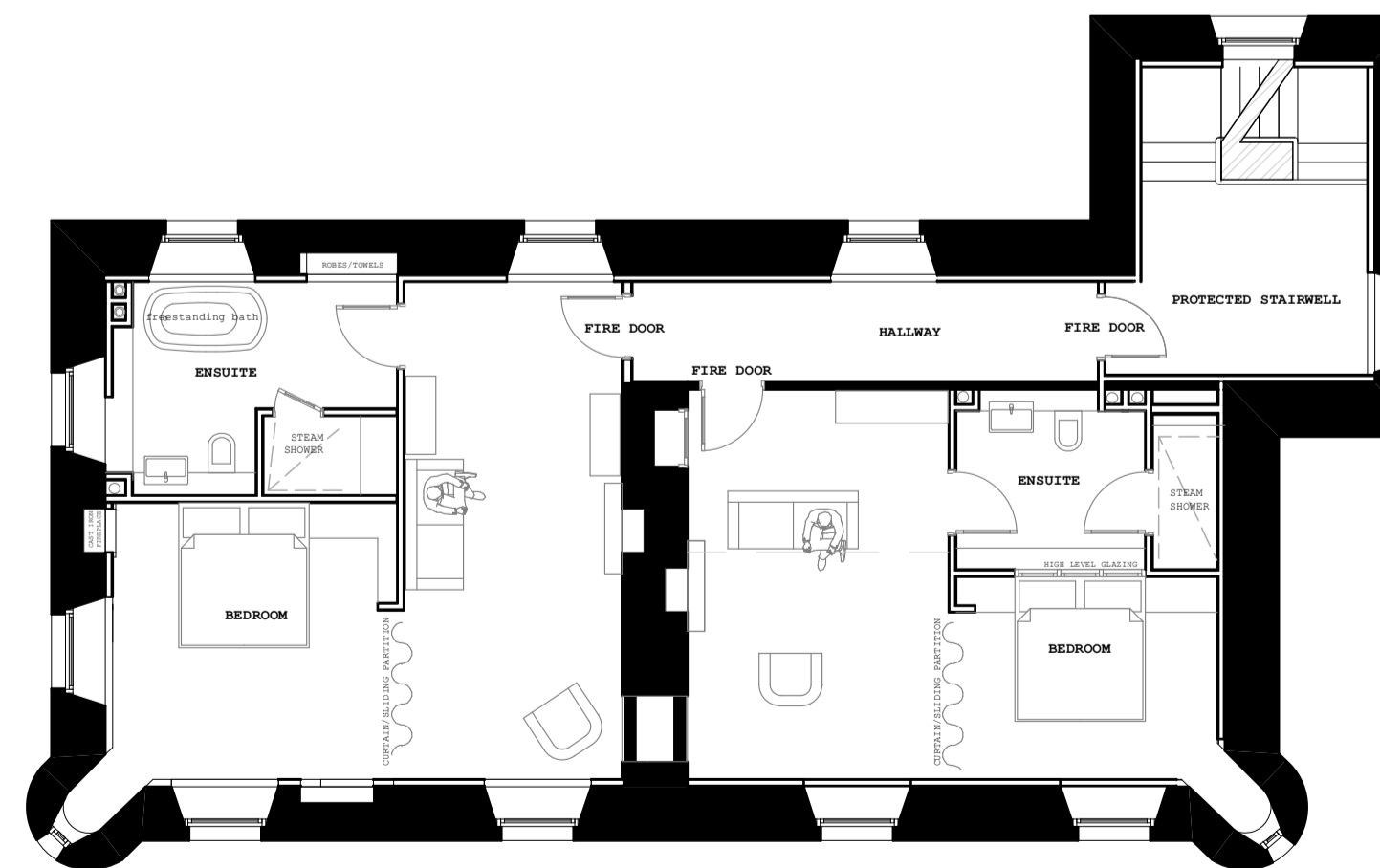
Proposed Grd floor plan - 1:100



Proposed basement plan - 1:100



Proposed 1st floor plan - 1:100



Proposed 2nd floor plan - 1:100

REV B: WINDOW AND DOOR ALTERATIONS
REV A: SCALE BAR

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Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
Proposed plans (Achara House)

Stage: **PLANNING/LBC**

Date: **APRIL18** Scale: **1:100**

Drawing No: **AHH/PL/006 B**

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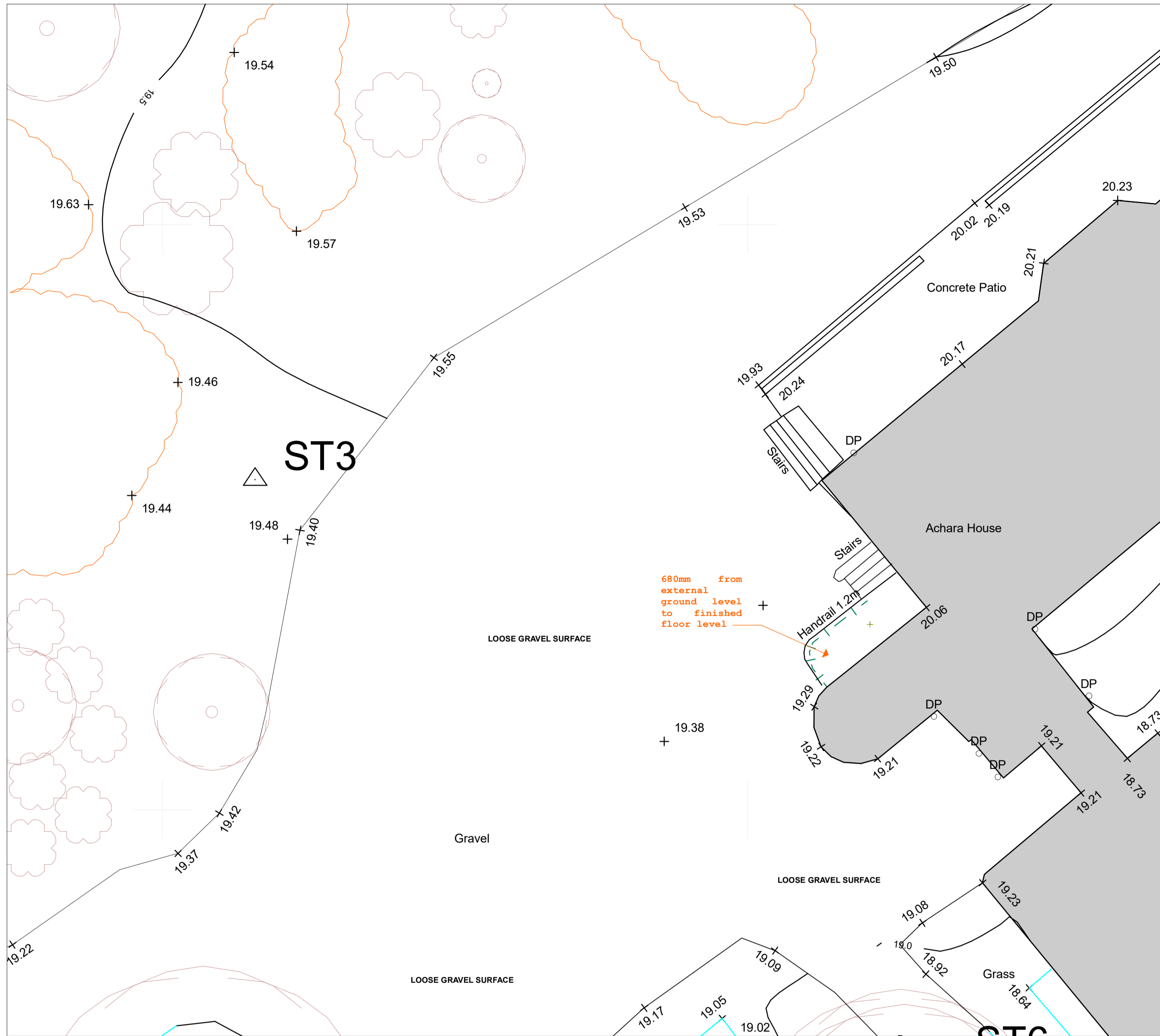
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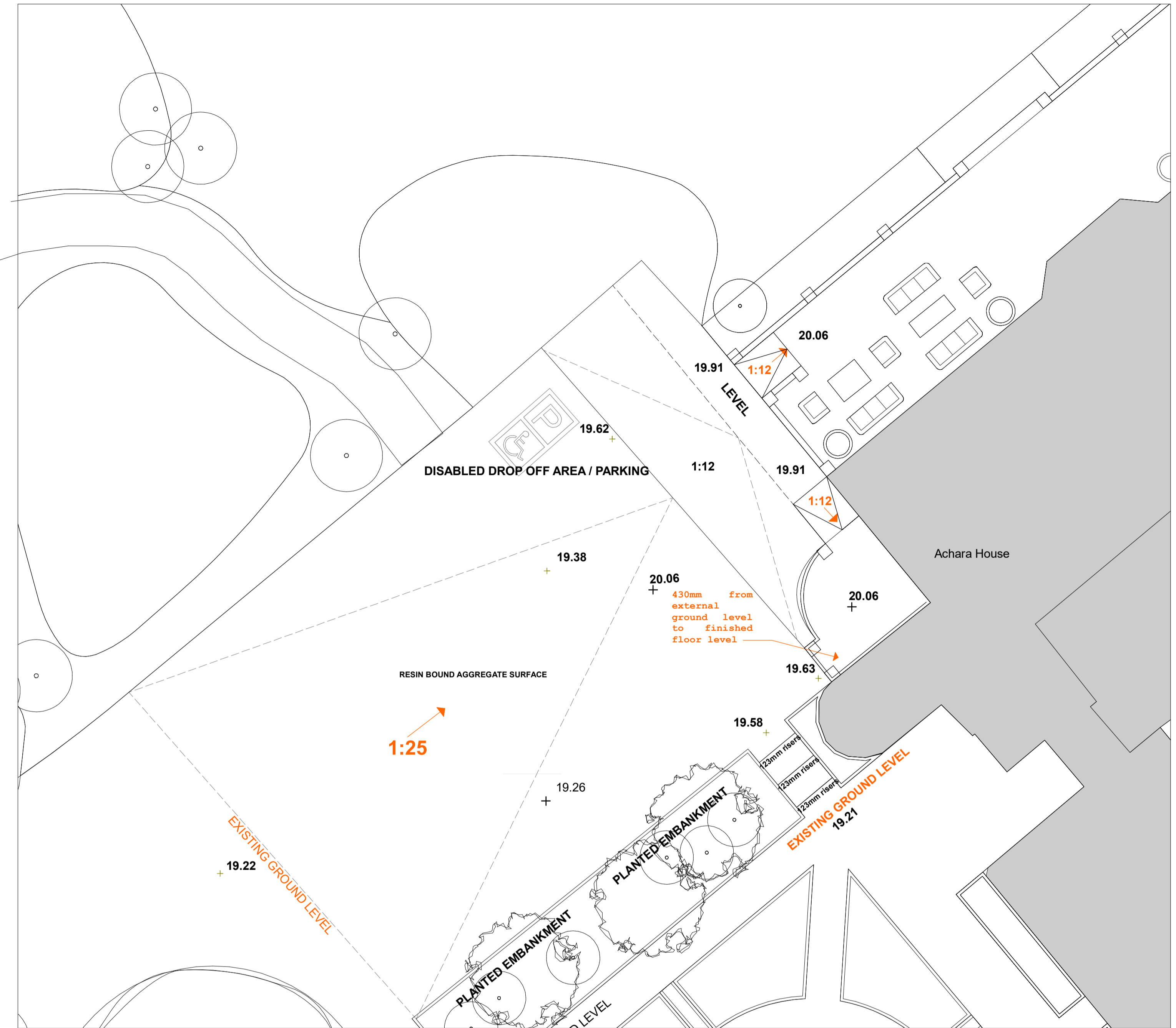
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EXISTING ACCESS - 1:100



PROPOSED ACCESS RAMPING - 1:100



EXISTING ACCESS - VIEW



PROPOSED ACCESS RAMPING - VIEW

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Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
Ramped Access (Achara House)

Stage: **PLANNING/LBC**

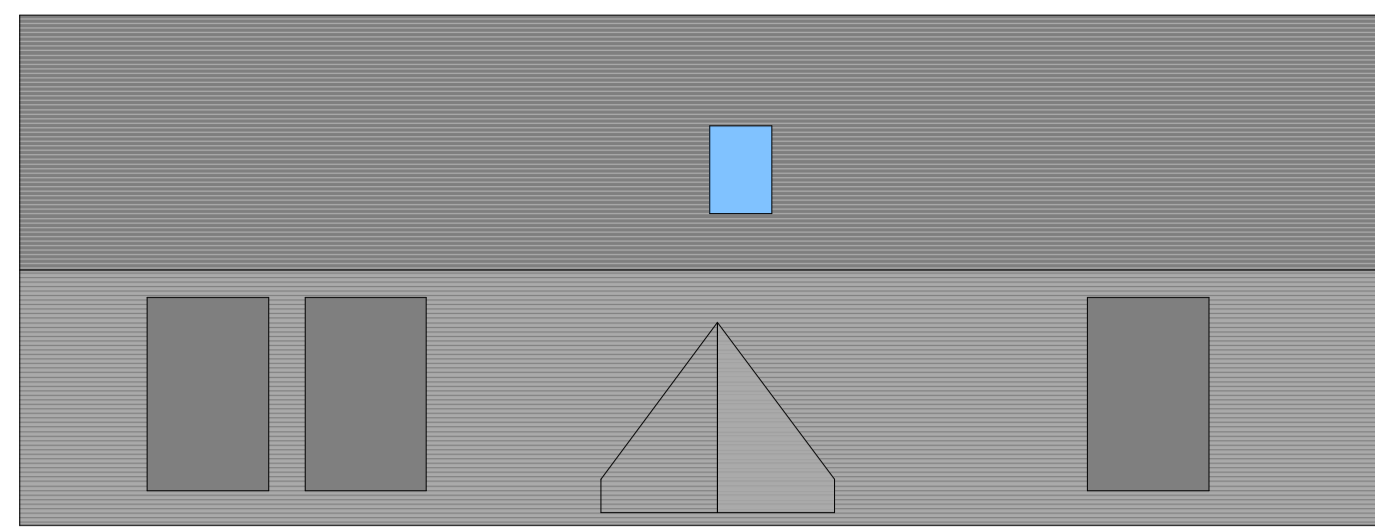
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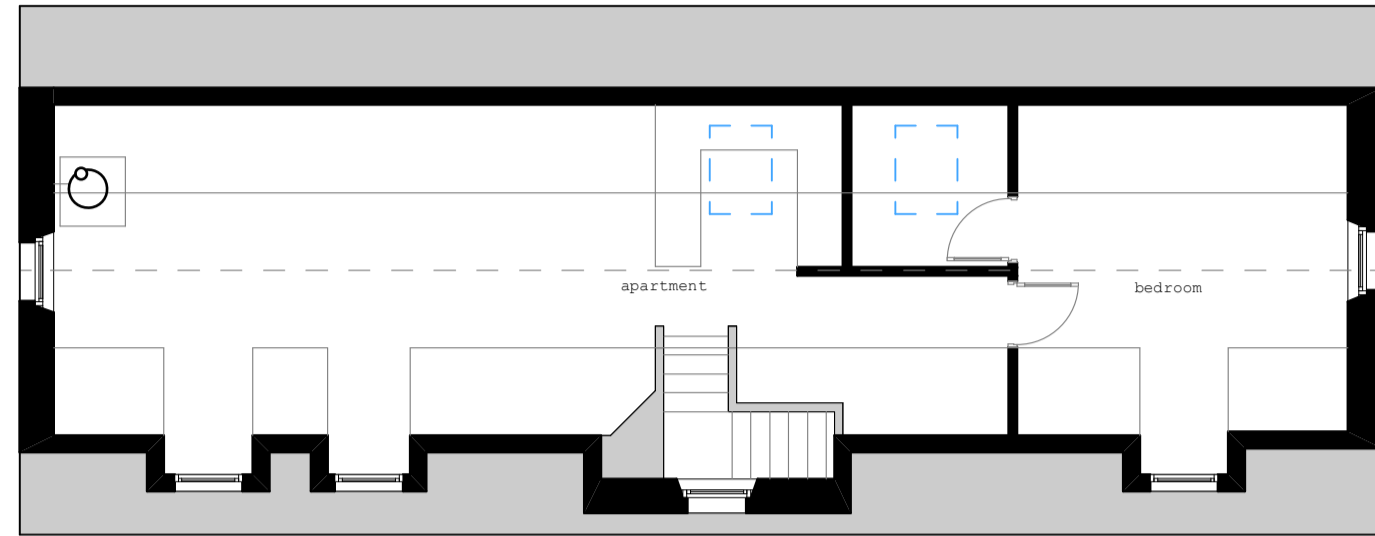
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Existing Roofplan - 1:100



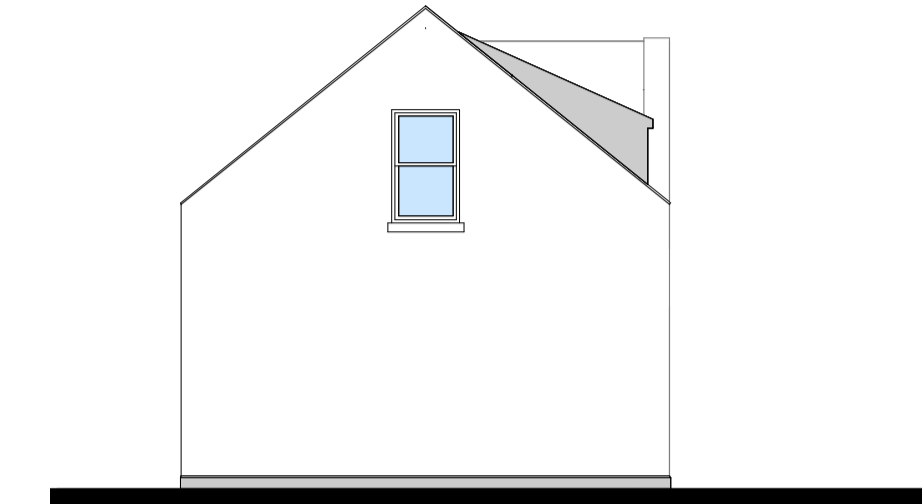
Existing First floor plan - 1:100



Existing Ground floor plan - 1:100



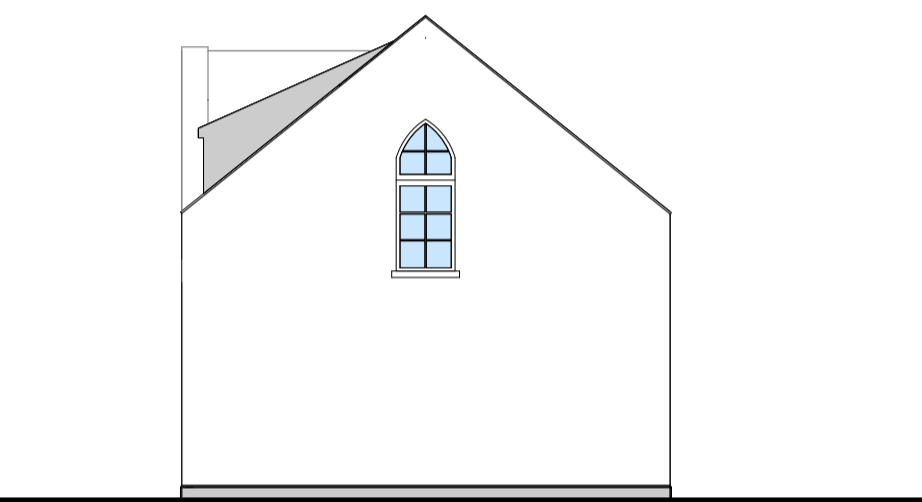
Existing NE Elevation - 1:100



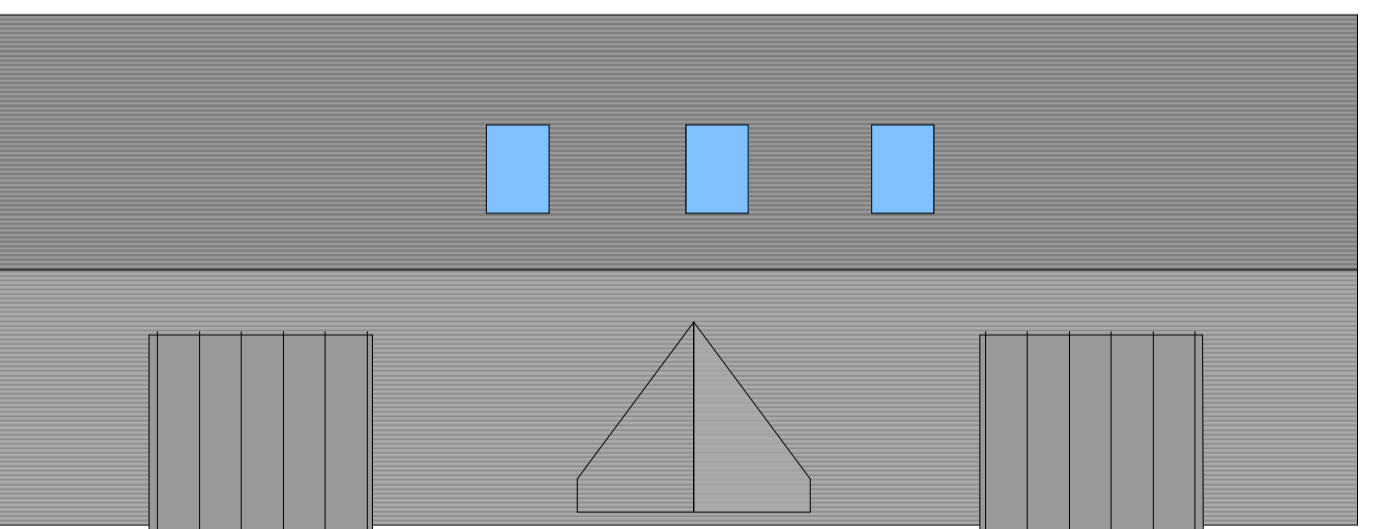
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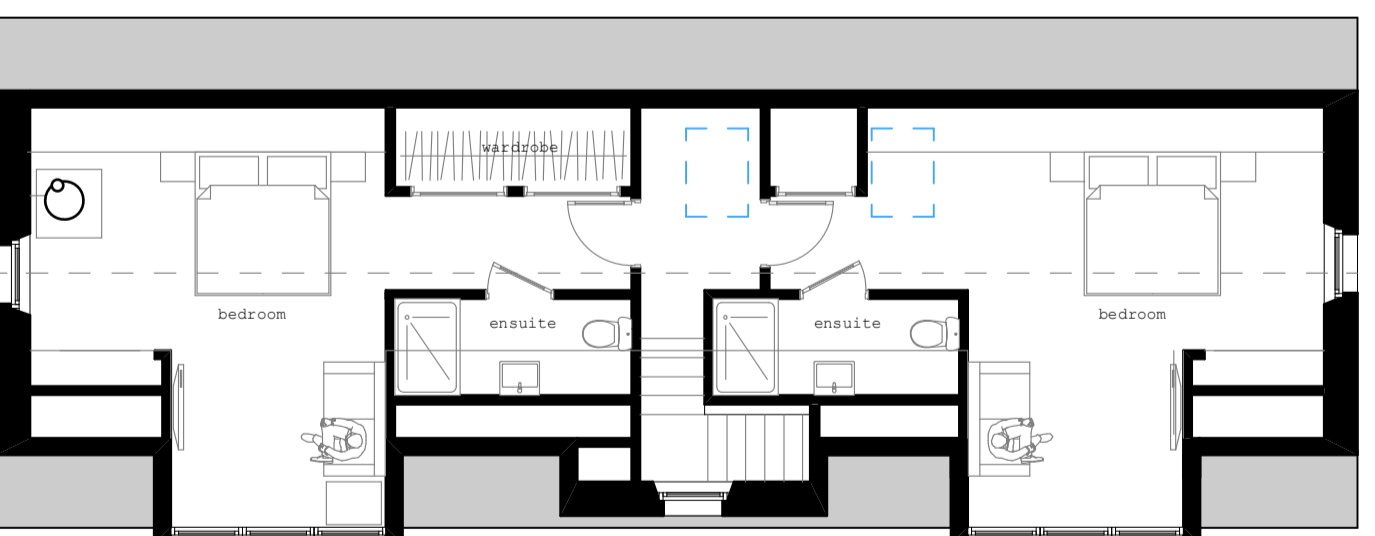
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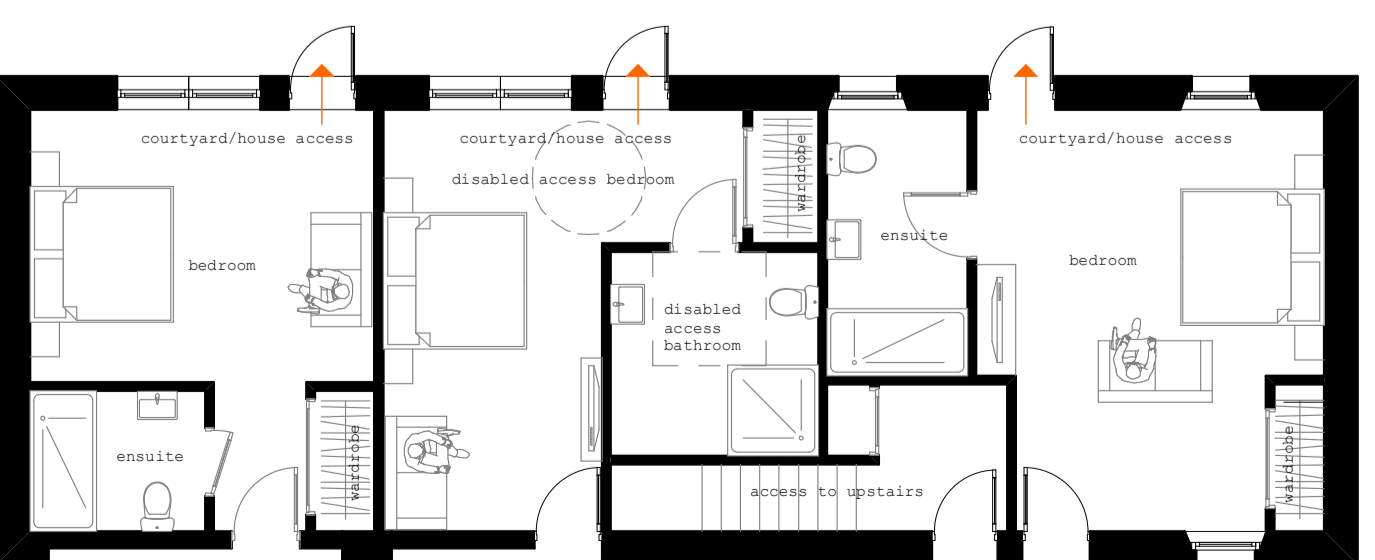
Existing Side Elevation - 1:100



Proposed Roofplan - 1:100



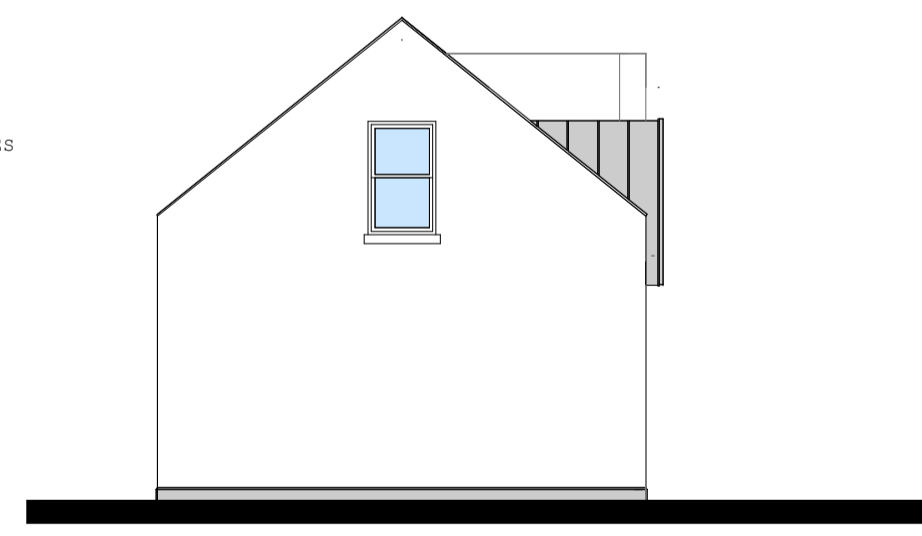
Proposed First floor plan - 1:100



Proposed Ground floor plan - 1:100



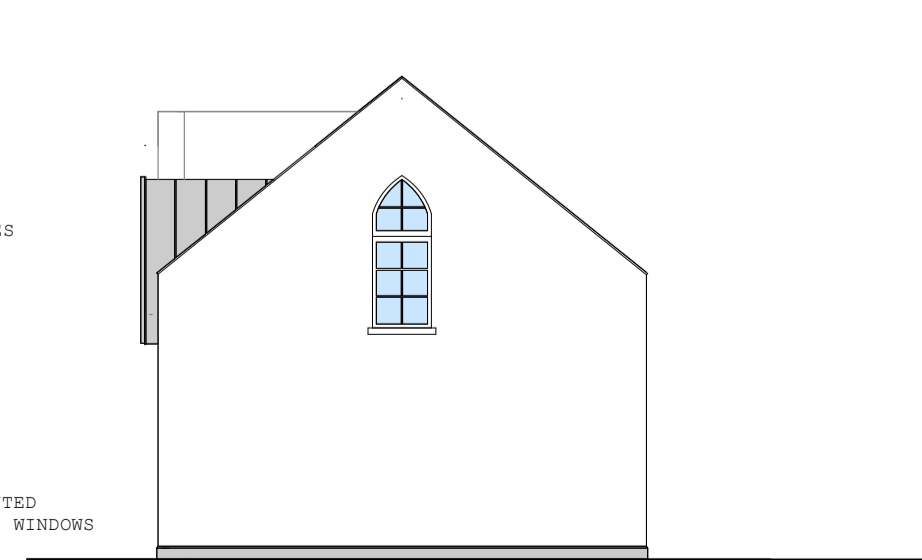
Proposed NE Elevation - 1:100



Proposed Side Elevation - 1:100



Proposed SW Elevation - 1:100



Proposed Side Elevation - 1:100

REV C: ARCHED WINDOW RETAINED
REV B: DORMERS REDUCED IN SCALE, ARCHED WINDOW RETAINED
REV A: SCALE BAR

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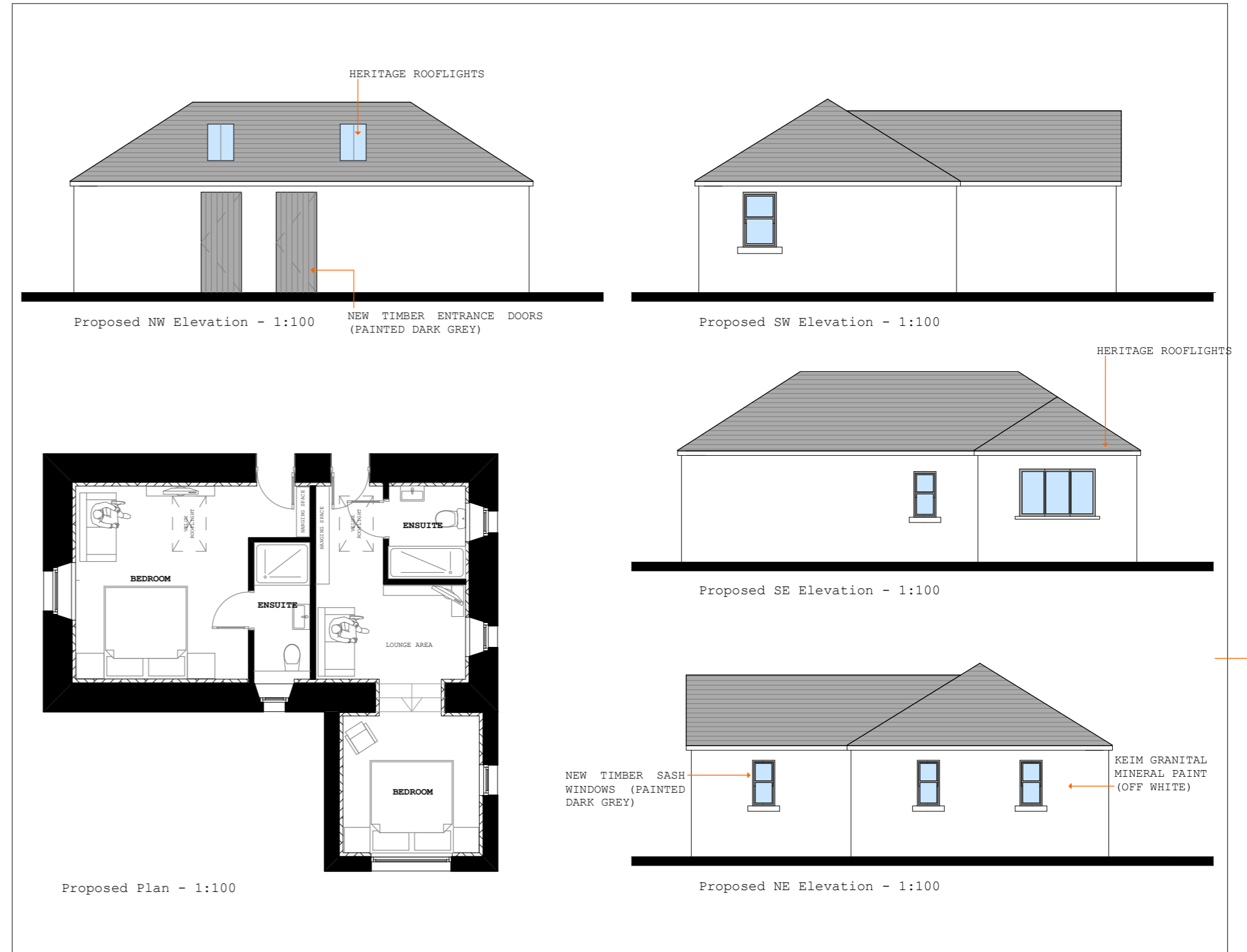
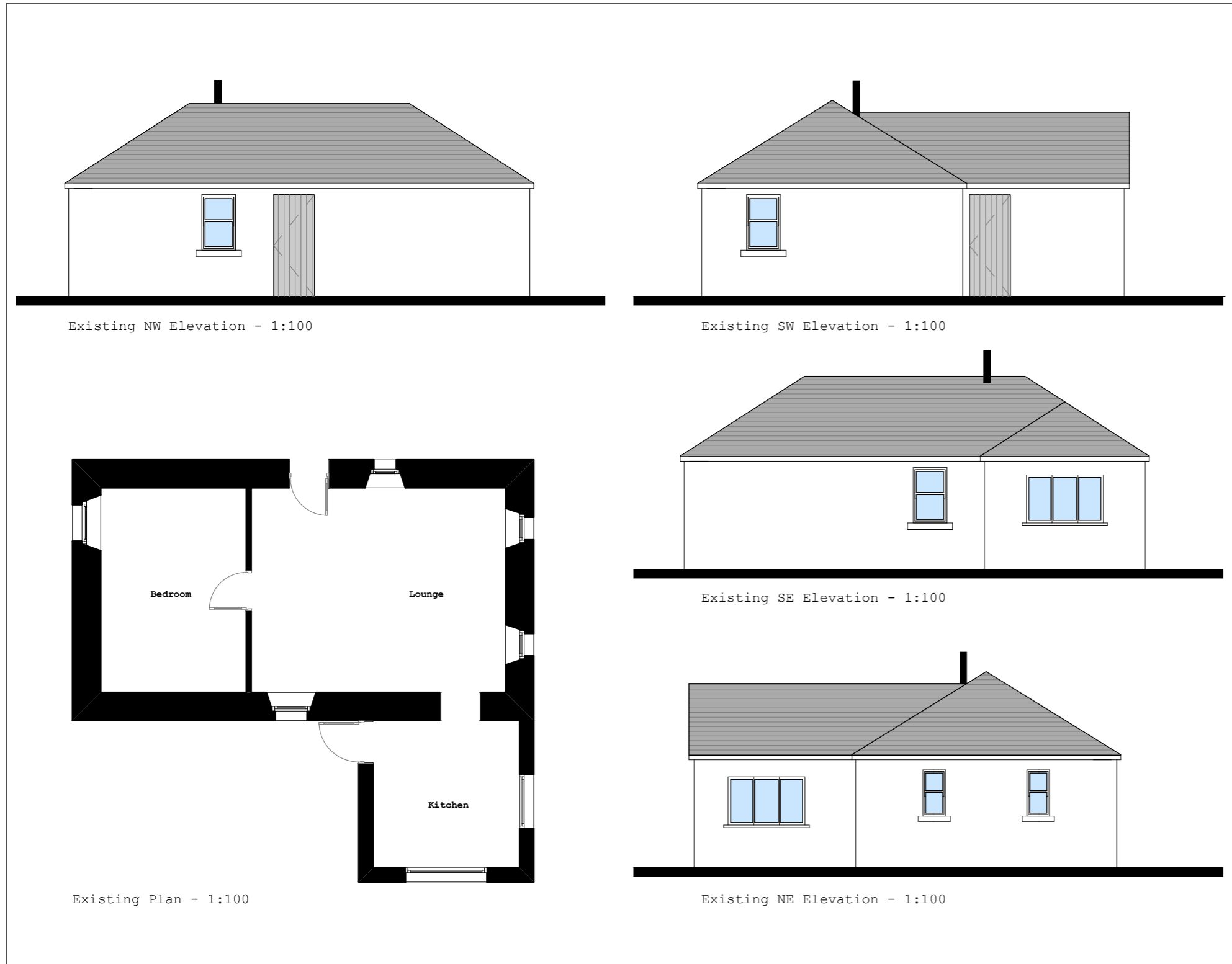
Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
Existing & Proposed Coach House

Stage: PLANNING/LBC	
Date: APR18	Scale: 1:100
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REV A: SCALE BAR

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Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
Existing & Proposed Watsons Cottage

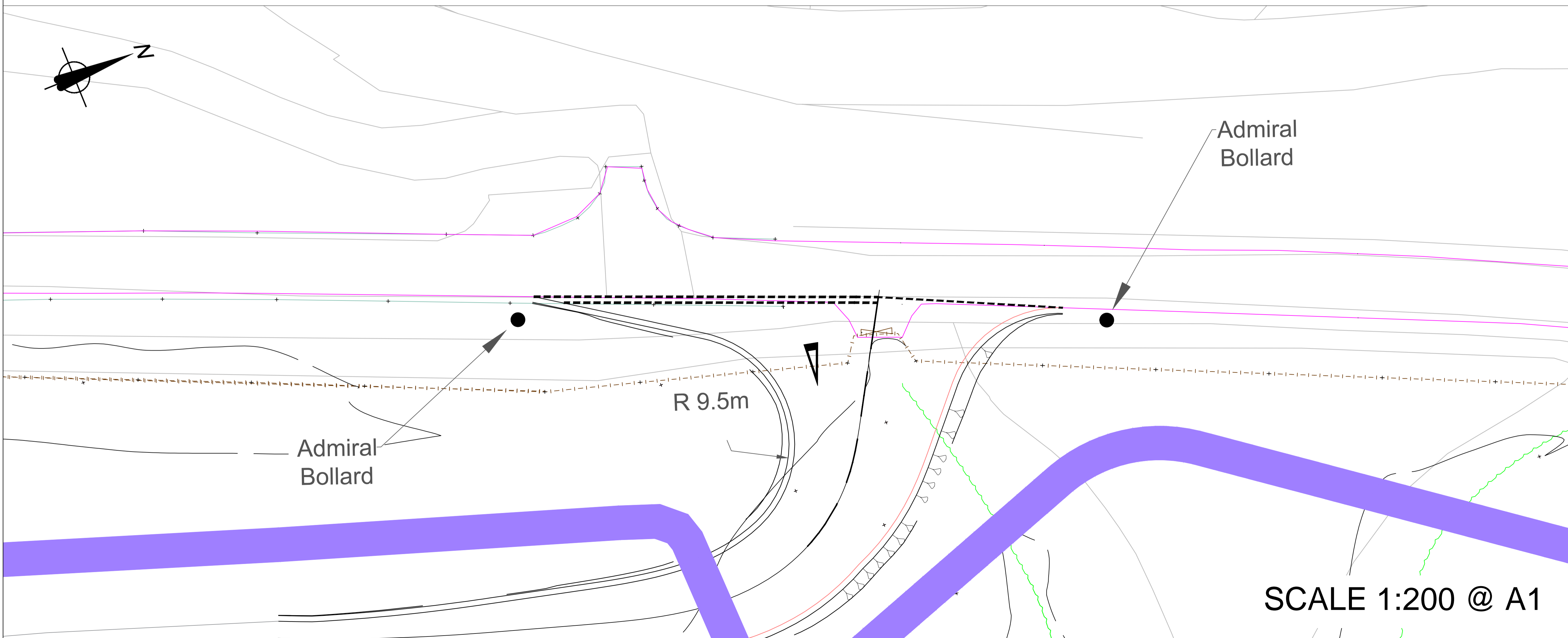
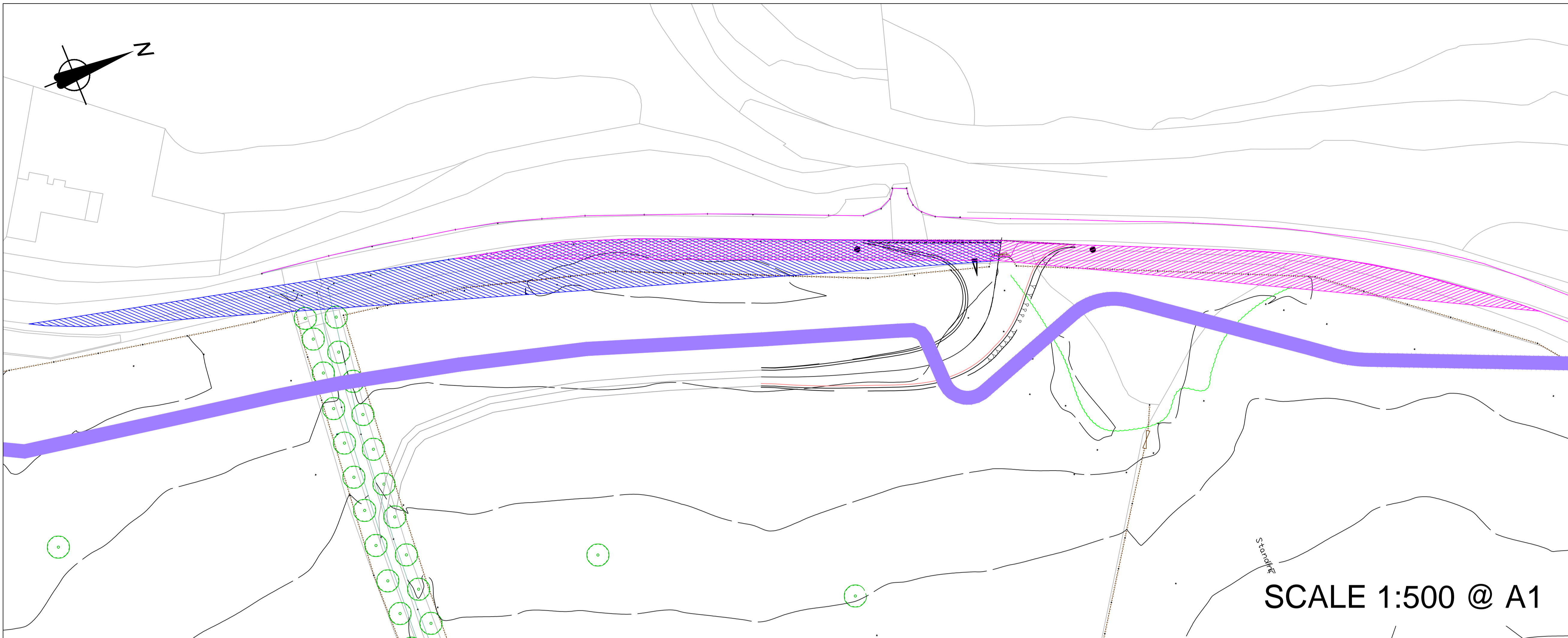
Stage: **PLANNING/LBC**

Date: **JAN18** Scale: **1:100**




Drawing No: **AHH/PL/008 A**

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A2



KEY

	Proposed Route (Sealed Path)
	Visibility Splays (120m)
	Visibility Splays (215m)

SCALE 1:500 @ A1

SCALE 1:200 @ A1

FOR ISSUE

Rev	By	Chkd	Apprv	Date	Description
2	EC	KV	AKY	15/02/18	ADDITIONAL 60MPH VISIBILITY SPLAYS FOR ACHARA HOUSE PLANNING APPLICATION 18/00183FUL
1	EC	KV	AKY	05/01/18	PRELIM DESIGN PROPOSED ROUTE NOW INCLUDED

Client
SUSTRANS Scotland
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Project
NCN78 Caledonia Way
Dalnatrat to Duror

Drawing
PROPOSED LAYOUT FOR ACHARA ACCESS PRELIMINARY DESIGN

Drawn by: EC Date: 05/01/2018
Checked by: KV Date: 05/01/2018
Approved by: AKY Date: 05/01/2018

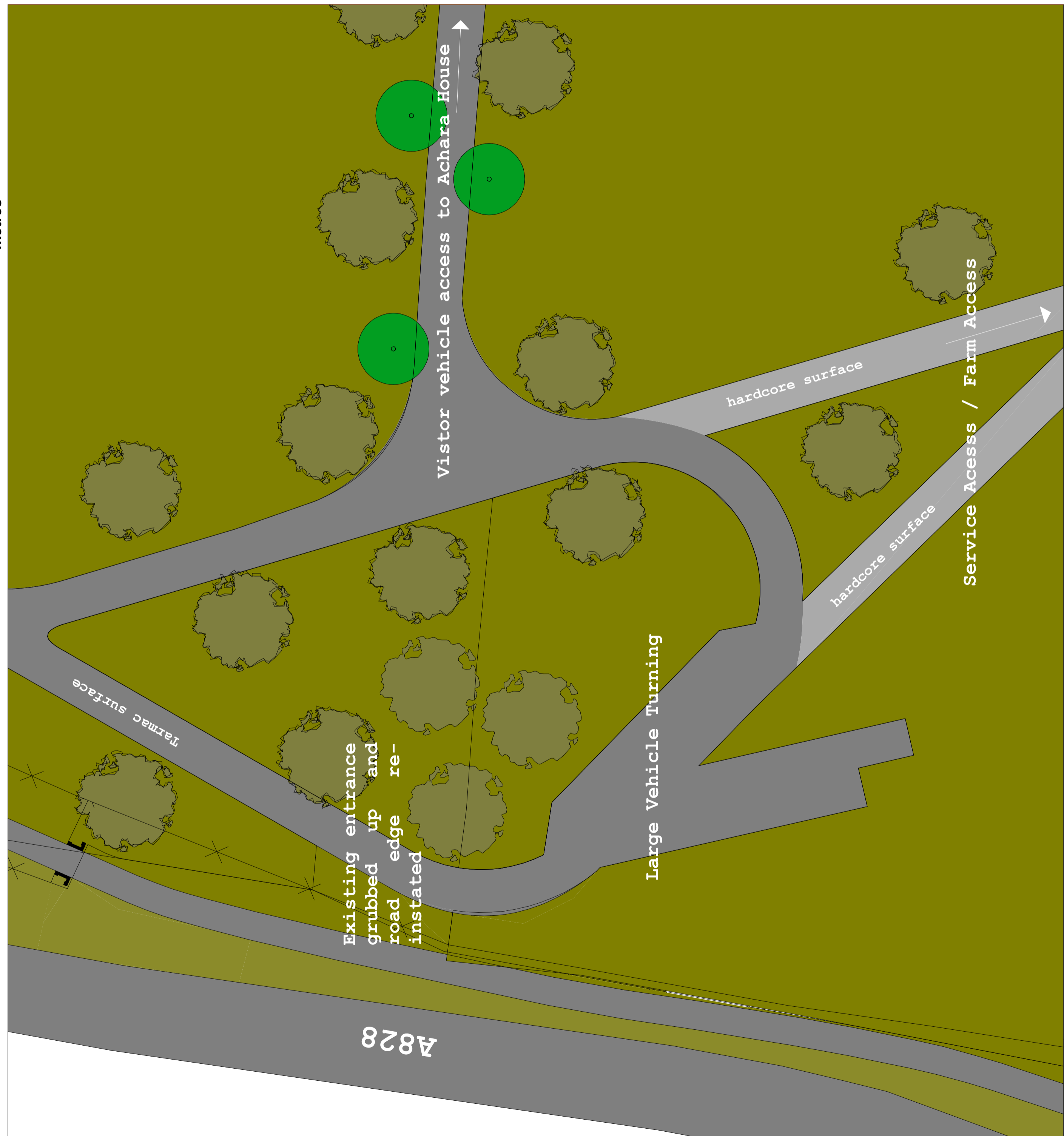
Drawing No.	Revision
694103.AA.02.DR.LD.0004	2

Drawing Scale: 1:500 / 1:200

DRAWING NUMBER: 694103.AA.02.DR.LD.0004; PROJECT NUMBER: NCN78; PROJECT NAME: ACHARA ACCESS; PROJECT LOCATION: DALNATRAT TO DUROR; PROJECT STATUS: PRELIMINARY DESIGN; PROJECT DATE: 05/01/2018; PROJECT SCALE: 1:500 / 1:200; PROJECT DRAWING TYPE: PRELIMINARY DESIGN; PROJECT DRAWING NO.: 694103.AA.02.DR.LD.0004



Proposed plan of new trunk road access - 1:200



Proposed plan of new access connecting to existing access - 1:200

REV B: VISIBILITY SPLAYS ALTERED
REV A: SCALE BAR

linearchitecture

Achara House Hotel

Drawing Title:
New Access Road Details

Stage: PLANNING/LBC

Date: JAN18 Scale: 1:200

Drawing No: AHH/PL/010 B

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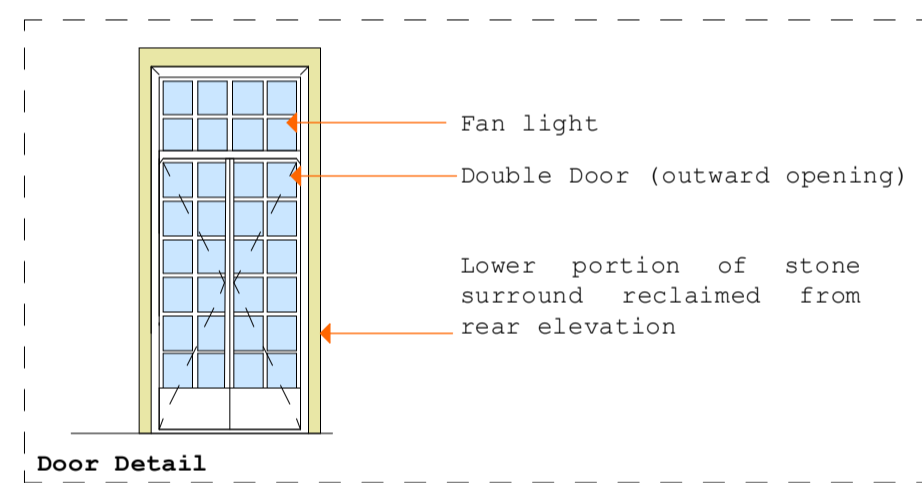
A1



Proposed view



Existing view



Door Detail



Proposed elevation



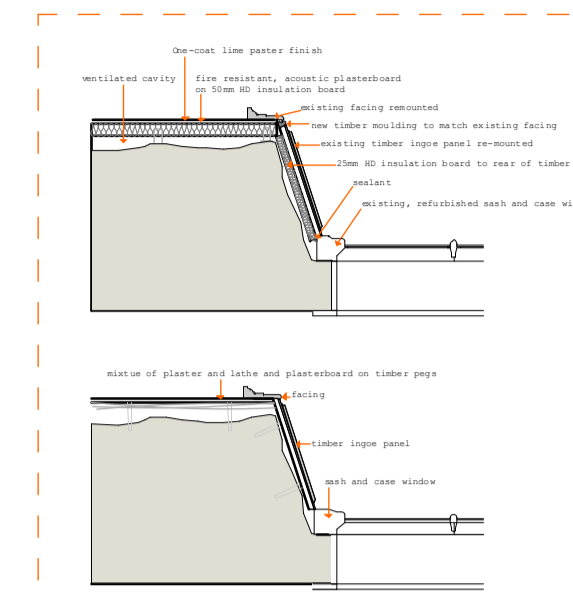
Existing elevation

Fire Exit and Terrace Access

The hospitality use of Achara house places extra pressures on its layout in terms of functionality and statutory requirements. In terms of modifications required to comply, Achara House is blessed with a layout that requires no large, difficult additions such as external/extra fire escapes etc. However, the ground floor does require an additional fire escape and the balance of benefit versus drawback indicates that a discrete and harmonious alteration to an existing side window would allow both the building to comply with statutory requirements due to fire escape as well as allow the proposed restaurant and bar areas to have direct access to the stunning gardens.

Shown above is a photomontage of how a dropping a window cill to form a door would affect the elevation. The impact is slight and due to the heavy astragals on the existing window, this would allow the creation of an exit door that would feature the same ratio and size of astragal pattern as the adjacent window. The stone window surrounds will be removed from one of the rear door surrounds that are being modified to accommodate the kitchen/utility extension and as the entire building is being repainted - any surface modifications will be indistinguishable.

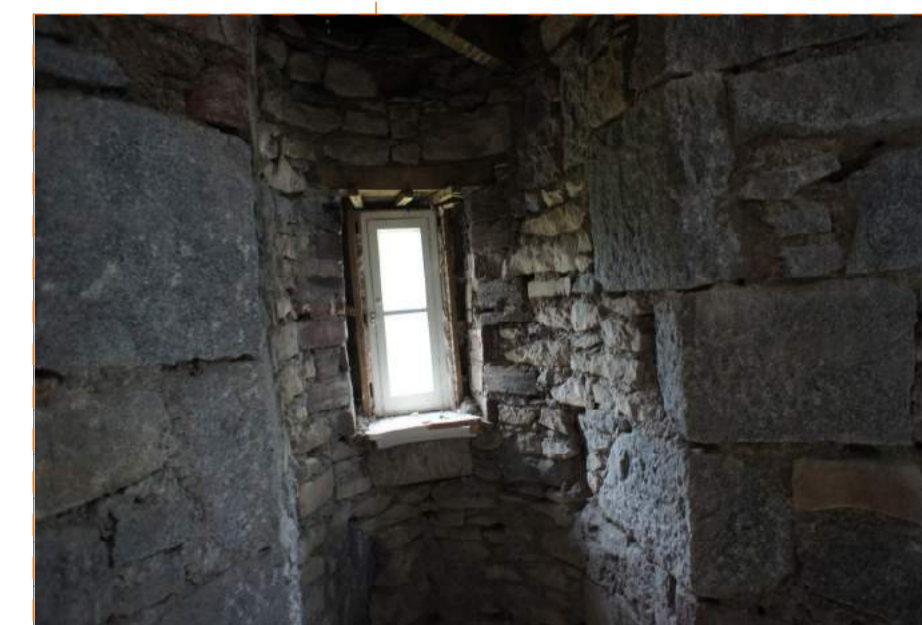
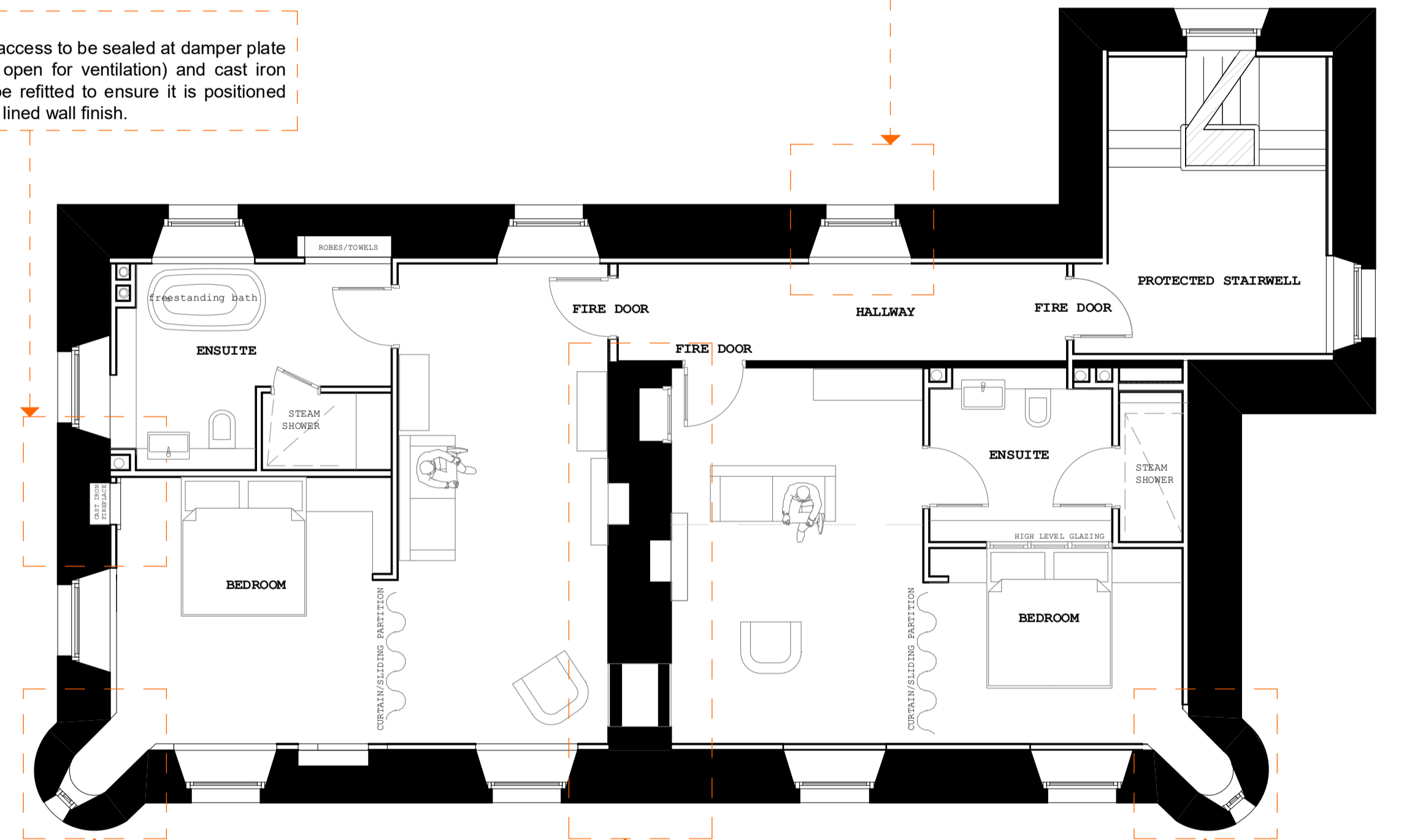
Principles shown here apply to 1st and 2nd floors (except Bartizans - top floor only)



Existing Timberwork - Typical Detail
This detail shows how the new linings and insulation will interface with the existing timberwork at windows and doors. The majority of the existing plaster and lathe have been removed for rot works relating to the current LBC. The external wall linings will be replaced with acoustic plasterboard and 50mm of high density insulation. The detail below describes how the thicker wall linings will be integrated with the existing timberwork finishes. The existing window/external door facings will be removed, repaired and treated to all sides as necessary and re-fixed to accommodate the new thicker wall linings. Any voids created by the thicker linings will be made up with timber mouldings to closely match the existing and painted to match. The timber ingoe panels will also be removed and insulation installed to their rear faces and sealed to edges. The timber ingoe panels will then be repaired and treated if necessary and then refitted

Fireplace

Existing flue access to be sealed at damper plate (but flue left open for ventilation) and cast iron fireplace to be refitted to ensure it is positioned proud of new lined wall finish.



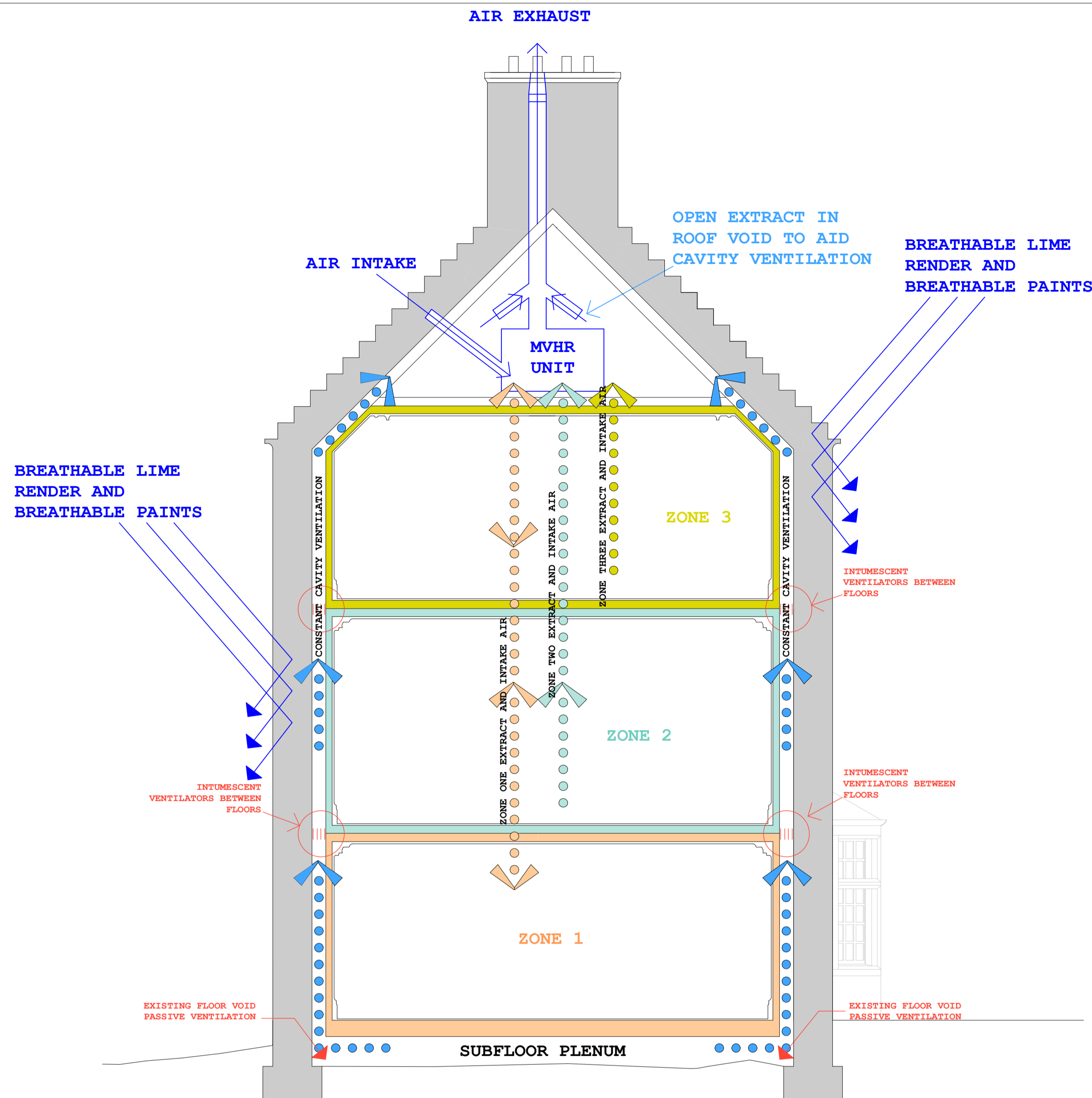
Bartizans

The two bartizans are currently bare stonework having been treated for rot. As these two areas are not adjoining any other rooms, separation is not required so the proposed wall finish is a light grade rigid woodfibre insulation board (Steico Therm), a glass fibre mesh and one-coat lime plaster (Lime Green Solo). The small ceiling areas of the Bartizan are flat with the pointed roof structure left open as per original. The ceiling is to be lined with Fermcell breathable particle board and given a matching coat of one-coat lime plaster (Lime Green Solo). Windows to be retained and refurbished.

Note - All walls in upper bedrooms to be finished with one-coat lime plaster - irrespective of substrate to ensure seamless finish with Bartizans

Brick Central Wall & Hearths
Existing brickwork central wall will have all current, recently applied finishes removed, all penetrations sealed to maintain fire separation and then the entire wall will be repair/finished in a 10mm one-coat lime plaster finish as original. All existing cast iron fireplaces to be retained





Environmental Principles

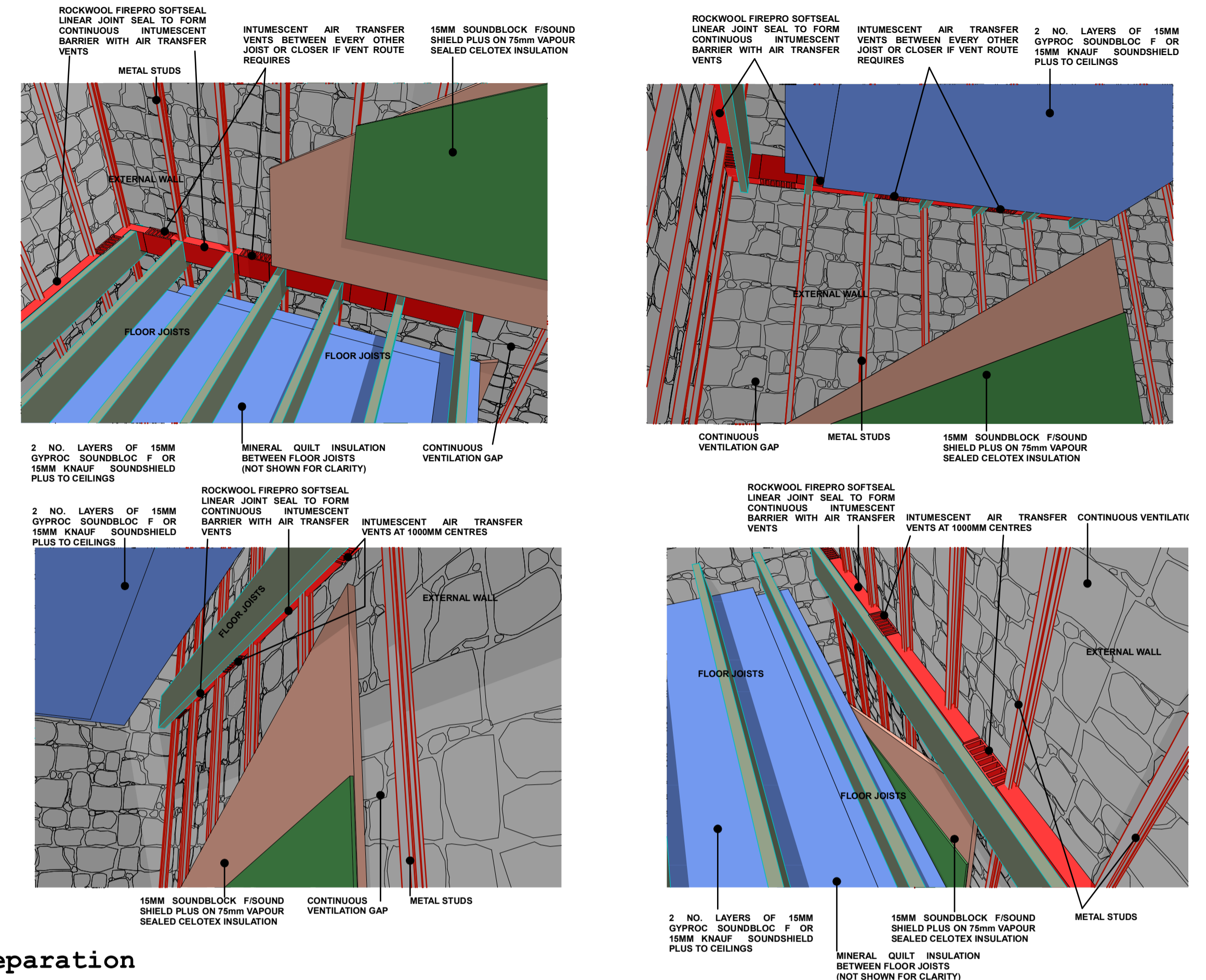
The main environmental principle behind the conversion of Achara into a hotel is to ensure that the building is efficient to heat, has managed active ventilation and controlled vapour transfer. This has been designed to work in conjunction with fire compartmentalisation to ensure that any possible fires do not spread either room to room or floor to floor. Acoustic separation between rooms is also critical for the proposed hotel use.

The linings of the existing building were removed during the recent LBC-approved renovation works as access was required to facilitate rot remediation works to all inner faces of all external walls to the building. Most floor joists were replaced due to rot as were rafter ends. This presented an opportunity to refit the building to an appropriate standard for hospitality use and to much more closely manage airflow and fire separation.

One of the main issues facing properties of this age in these locations is the ruinous costs of heating that lead to poor short term financial decisions being taken that jeopardise the longevity of the building. The huge heating costs also lead to owners making modifications that seriously restrict airflow throughout the structure and this is, in many cases, the primary cause of rot damage to these buildings. Another major factor in damage to older buildings is the huge increase in sanitary facilities such as multiple ensuite bathrooms that means that building occupants now generate a much higher amount of water vapour that older, passively ventilated buildings simply cannot manage. When these issues are applied to a hospitality use these problems are greatly magnified.

Solutions

The solutions outlined here deal with the ventilation, water vapour management, heat loss and heat recovery issues within one complete managed system. The core principle is managed ventilation and compartmentalisation. The main walls of the building are 700mm thick cut granite walls that are in remarkable condition internally considering how poor a state the adjoining timber work was in. However, the walls have suffered from dry rot infestation, poor rear face ventilation and the use of a non-breathable paint. The exterior walls will be re-finished in a new breathable paint to go over the existing lime render to restore vapour transfer through the walls. The renovated interior will feature a continuous, fully ventilated cavity to the rear face of all external walls, preventing any moisture build up. The air is admitted into the building at ground level through existing floor void passive vents - once inside the subfloor plenum the air is drawn up the wall cavities by active extraction in the roof void. This active extraction is part of a whole-house Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR) System that manages the airflow throughout the building. Key to this system is the fact that each room within the building is sealed and its airflow is independently managed by the MVHR system. This means that no moisture from occupants or their actions can escape into the building structure, the warm extracted air's heat is transferred to the incoming dry air thus greatly increasing thermal efficiency as well as vapour management. The MVHR system gets its intake air through a discrete vent tile to the roof at the rear of the building that is invisible from the ground and the extract stack is routed through one of the redundant chimney stacks to ensure there is no visual disruption to the building. Each room is insulated on all faces (walls, roof/ceiling and floor) to ensure the maximum reduction in heat loss. By retaining a ventilated cavity behind the insulation envelope allows us to then use highly efficient, non-breathable insulations that would not normally be compatible with traditional construction methods. This method also allows us to retain the original windows without suffering too much heat loss by being able to adequately compensate through fabric insulation to roof/walls/floors.



Fire Separation

One of the main dangers facing older buildings is the dangers of uncontrolled spread of fire throughout the structure. Great advances have been made over the years with national building regulations for new and converted buildings but existing old buildings such as Achara are very vulnerable to spread of fire. The main drawback of the ventilated cavity approach that we are proposing for air flow and vapour management is the possibility of the spread of fire through the cavity. Therefore the full height cavities require intumescent sealing that on one hand maintains airflow but on the other will passively seal the cavity if a fire gets into it.

The new linings to all areas of the building are proposed to be fire rated plasterboards which will massively reduce the chance of fire getting into the cavities. The use of galvanised support channels against the stonework greatly reduces the combustibility of materials within the cavity.

Heating

Since the 1960s Achara House has been heated by oil fired heating system - and since the 1990s the bills for this have been ruinous. This incentivised the previous owner to turn off the heating during long periods when the building was unoccupied and for longer periods during the winter. This had a highly detrimental effect on the internal humidity levels and ultimately led to a highly damaging flood that ruined the internal finishes over more than half of the building.

This is plainly not a viable heating system for a hotel and attempting to heat this building using a conventional combustion heating system would seriously impact the viability of the building as a hospitality business. Therefore, one of the main aims of this renovation and conversion is to create a building that is both economical to heat and responsive to the demands of a hospitality business. Additionally, a heating system that incentivises the owner/operator to keep it constantly warm and dry will ensure the building's longevity. To achieve this, we have proposed the compartmentalised and highly insulated public and private areas as shown opposite. We have also proposed a whole-house Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery system that will manage all ventilation and provide background (secondary) renewable heating to the building. The main heating of the building will be provided by a Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) that utilises buried coils in the extensive grounds that will provide renewable heat and hot water to all the buildings that form the hotel complex, all year round. The GSHP system attracts the highest available Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) of 19.86p/kWh. In financial terms this means that Achara House will earn circa £8000 pa in RHI payments and thus will go from extremely expensive to heat to being almost free in terms of heating costs. This, more than any factor will be decisive in ensuring the ongoing success of Achara House and protect its future for the next hundred years.

