

F/YR12/0150/F  
22 February 2012

Applicant : Mr W Bishop

Agent : Mr C Walford  
Peter Humphrey Associates Ltd

The Ship Inn, Purls Bridge Drove, Manea, Cambridgeshire

Conversion of existing public house into 2 x 2-storey 3-bed dwellings

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This proposal is before the Planning Committee at the request of Cllr Archer to discuss the possible implications of the loss of a public amenity

This application is a minor application.

1. **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The site is located within the hamlet of Purls Bridge south of Manea village. The Ship Inn is an existing public house which overlooks the Old Bedford River and is located close to the RSPB Information Office and Visitor Centre at Welches Dam. The site is adjacent to the Ouse Washes Nature Reserve and lies within Flood Zone 3.

2. **HISTORY**

Of relevance to this proposal is:

F/YR11/0706/F - Conversion of existing public house into 2 No. 2-storey 3-bed dwellings – refused 26 October 2011.

3. **CONSULTATIONS**

***Parish/Town Council:***

Object to the application on the basis that the grant of planning permission would result in the loss of an important community facility/amenity which the Parish Council believes is capable of being operated on a financially viable basis.

***Evaluation and Estates Officer (FDC):***

The marketing of a public house is a specialist field and the services of an appropriate Licensed Premises Valuation expert is required, however, makes the following comments:

- no evidence of advertising and marketing submitted;
- listing not currently features on any website;
- when did marketing cease;
- asking price of £350,000 needs comparing to external evaluation;
- suggests asking price could not be justified as alleged decline in

- business would not make the property attractive;
- alternative use value as a completed residential conversion may struggle to make £250,000.

**Local Highway Authority (CCC):**

No objections in principle but requests amendments to address parking and turning within the site for Plot 1 and minimum parking space standards. Requests amended plans.

**Environment Agency:**

Considers that the proposal is only acceptable providing the finished floor levels shall be set no lower than 3.10 m above Ordnance Datum to reduce the impact of flooding on the proposed development and future occupants. Also requests condition relating to foul water disposal.

**Natural England:**

The proposal is located very close (15m) to the boundary of the Ouse Washes SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar site. However, it is noted that external construction activity will be minimal and foul drainage will be to a septic tank system consequently no objection to proposal.

**FDC Scientific Officer (Land Contamination):**

Requests unsuspected contamination condition be attached.

**Local residents/interested parties:**

None received

**4. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

FDWLP Policy

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| E8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proposals for new development should:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- allow for protection of site features;</li> <li>- be of a design compatible with their surroundings;</li> <li>- have regard to the amenities of adjoining properties;</li> <li>- provide adequate access.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| H3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To resist housing development outside DABs. To permit housing inside DABs provided it does not conflict with other policies of the Plan.</li> </ul>   |

Core Strategy Draft Consultation July 2011	CS10	- Rural Area Development Policy
NPPF	Para 2	- Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan.
	Para 7	- Achieving Sustainable Development
	Para 28	- Support a prosperous rural economy – to promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

## 5. ASSESSMENT

### ***Nature of Application***

This application is a resubmission of a previously refused application for the change of use of an existing public house to 2 x 3-bed dwellings. The current proposal has not offered any new information to that previously assessed.

The proposal seeks to convert the public house into 2 dwellings with each dwelling having 2 parking spaces and a small private amenity area.

The application is considered to raise the following key issues;

- Site history
- Principle and policy implications
- Justification for closure
- Issues associated with the application

### ***Site History***

The Ship Inn is a destination pub mentioned in the likes of the AA Walking Guide [www.theaa.com/walks/fenlands-big-skies-420143](http://www.theaa.com/walks/fenlands-big-skies-420143) unlike a local pub that relies mainly on the local community for support. In 2011 an application for the same proposal was refused on the grounds of lack of evidence that the public house is no longer viable. Also a comprehensive marketing exercise had not been undertaken

### ***Principle and Policy Implications***

In order to assess whether the change of use from a public house to residential is acceptable, it is necessary to assess whether the pub is still viable to ensure that the loss of such a facility is not undertaken lightly.

The NPPF seeks to support a prosperous rural economy (para 28) and to promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages such as local shops and public houses. In recognition of the

NPPF, the emerging Core Strategy, Policy CS10, considers that the re-use of rural buildings can be supported provided comprehensive evidence is provided to justify why the building can no longer be used for the purpose that it was originally built or last used and that there is no demand for employment purposes.

### ***Justification for Closure***

In order for the Local Planning Authority to determine if the conversion of the public house is acceptable it is necessary to ascertain whether the pub is viable or not which is generally an exercise undertaken by the applicant. Such an exercise would entail the commissioning of a specialist consultant to carry out a viability assessment on the pub prior to submitting the application. It is also considered that the applicant should have undertaken a comprehensive marketing exercise to show that there is no interest in the pub.

The applicant's have not carried out an independent viability assessment, therefore, the LPA is unable to determine if the pub is or could be viable.

The applicant's have carried out a very limited marketing exercise with UK Pub sales, although the information provided does not include the date that marketing commenced. Comments from UK Pub Sales indicate that "*despite numerous parties requesting details on the property from our marketing, only one has proceeded to a viewing. We feel the reason for this is that after reviewing the brochure they do not feel there are sufficient features to justify the asking price*". The LPA is unaware if the asking price has been reduced accordingly. There is no marketing of the pub currently being undertaken.

Accounts have been received from 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009, but no accounts have been received for 2010. The accounts that have been submitted appear to show a fluctuation in sales over the last 5 years and whilst some years have seen a decrease in sales other have shown an increase. Without sight of the 2010 accounts it is not possible to determine the level of current sales.

### ***Issues associated with the application***

The viability assessment carried out by the agent is generally the assessment that the LPA would carry out as directed by CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) and is not an independent viability assessment carried out by a specialist. This has been asked for but the applicant has declined to commission such an assessment.

It has not been demonstrated that a comprehensive marketing exercise has been carried out, for example, there is no copy of the signed and dated instruction to confirm placement on the market in October 2010. There is no evidence of marketing and advertising. The listing is not currently featured on the UK Pub Sales website or others listed, therefore, it is not possible to confirm if it is still actively being marketed.

### ***Conclusion***

The lack of information regarding the purposeful marketing of the pub together with the lack of accounts information and the fact that the application does not include an independent viability assessment results in the LPA being unable to make an informed decision on the viability of this pub.

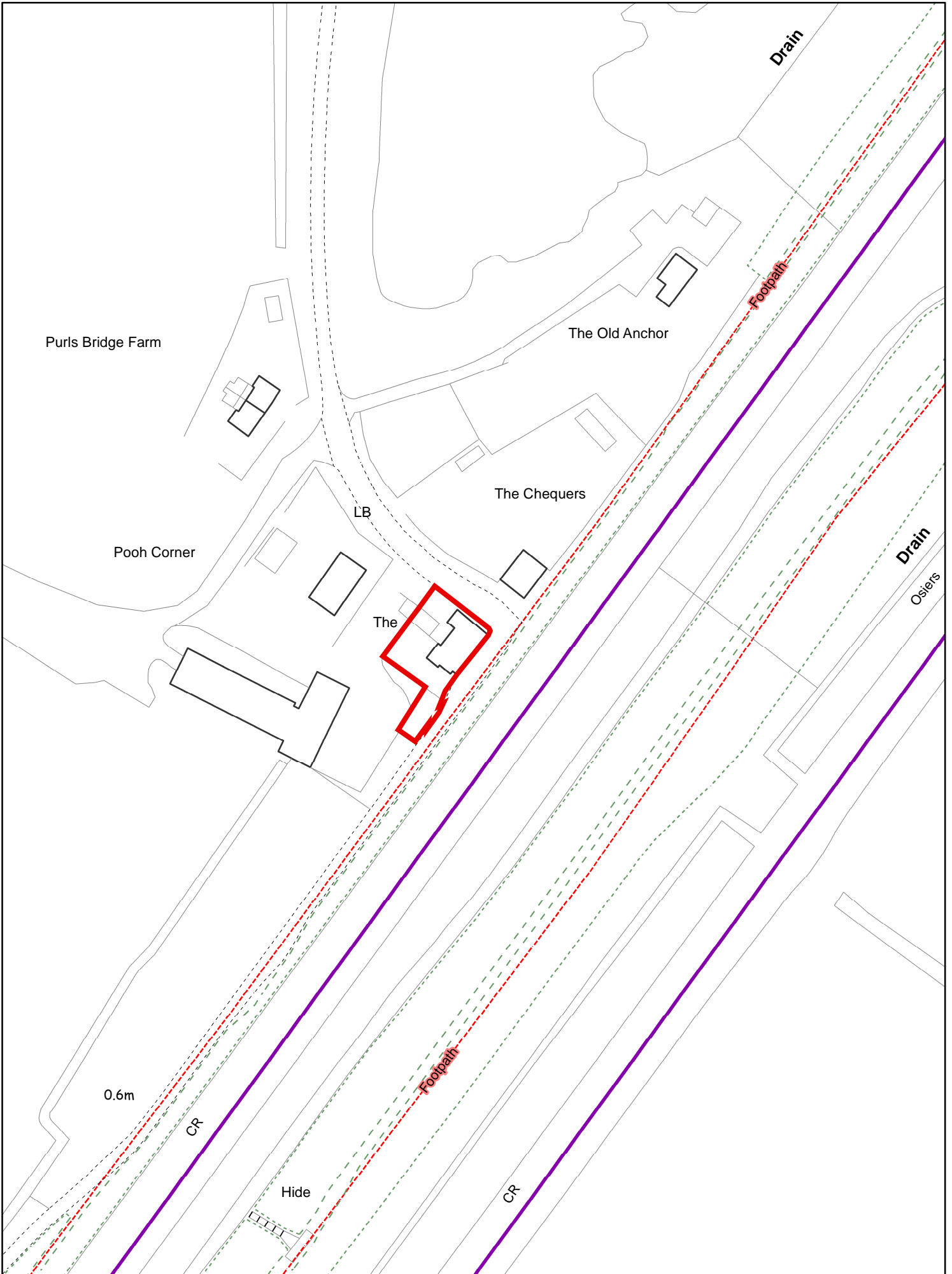
Therefore, the LPA considers the application should be refused on lack on information and evidence that the public house is no longer viable and is unable to be sold on the open market.

A recent appeal decision in May 2010 dismissed the closure of a Suffolk pub after the Inspector considered that it might become viable under new ownership. The Inspector recognized that the appellant had struggled to operate a viable business but found little indication of whether or not the pub use could be rendered financially viable under new ownership. Without the benefit of an independent viability assessment it is not possible for the LPA to determine if the public house is unviable.

## 6. **RECOMMENDATION**

### **REFUSE**

- 1. The proposal fails to demonstrate that a comprehensive marketing exercise has been undertaken; nor has the application demonstrated that the existing facility is not viable contrary to advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CS10 of the emerging Core Strategy (draft consultation July 2011).**

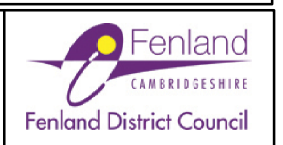


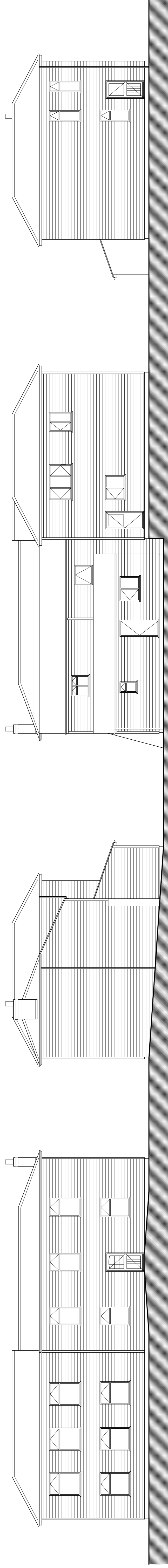
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Scale = 1:1,250



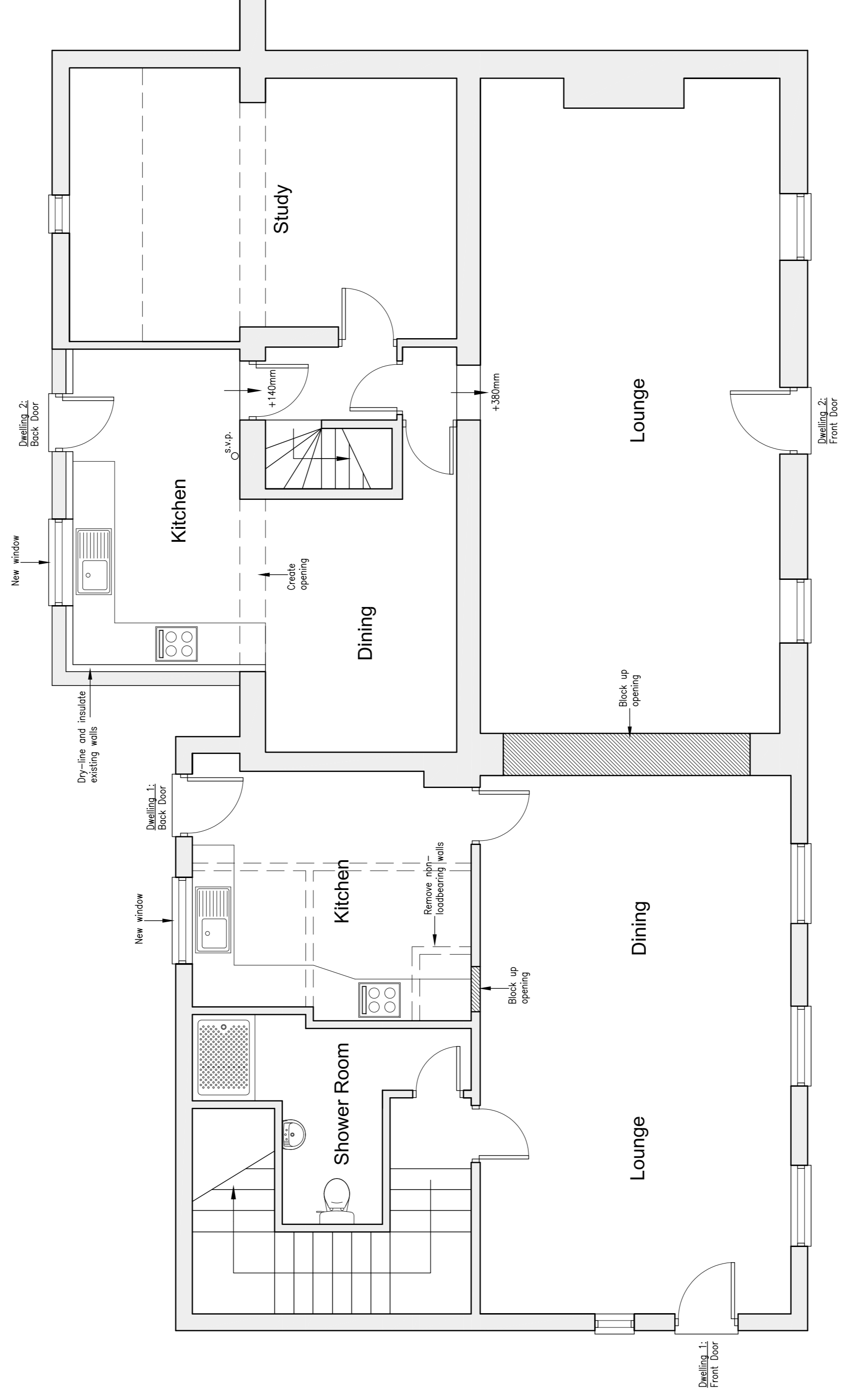


Proposed Front Elevation 1:100

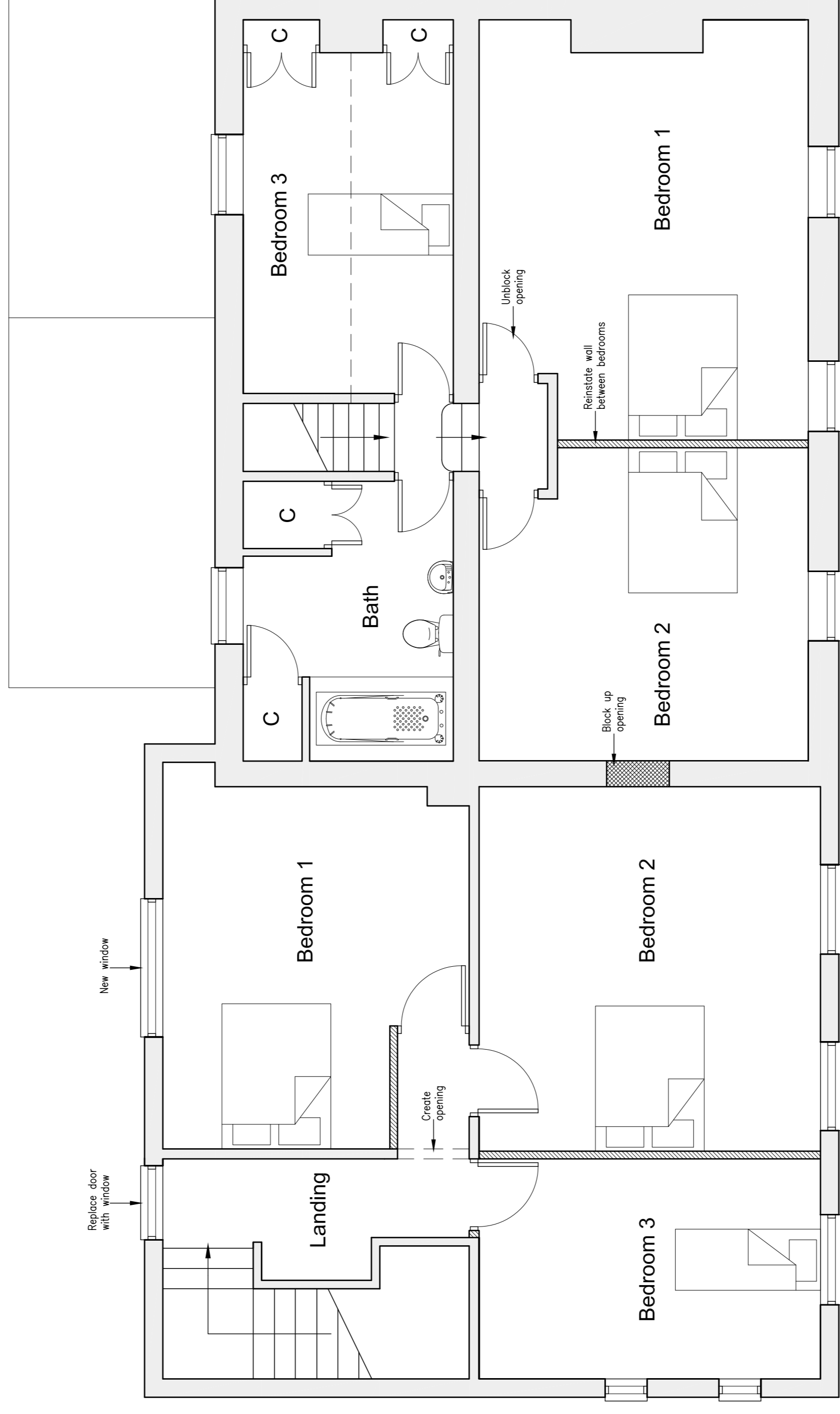
Proposed Side Elevation 1:100

Proposed Rear Elevation 1:100

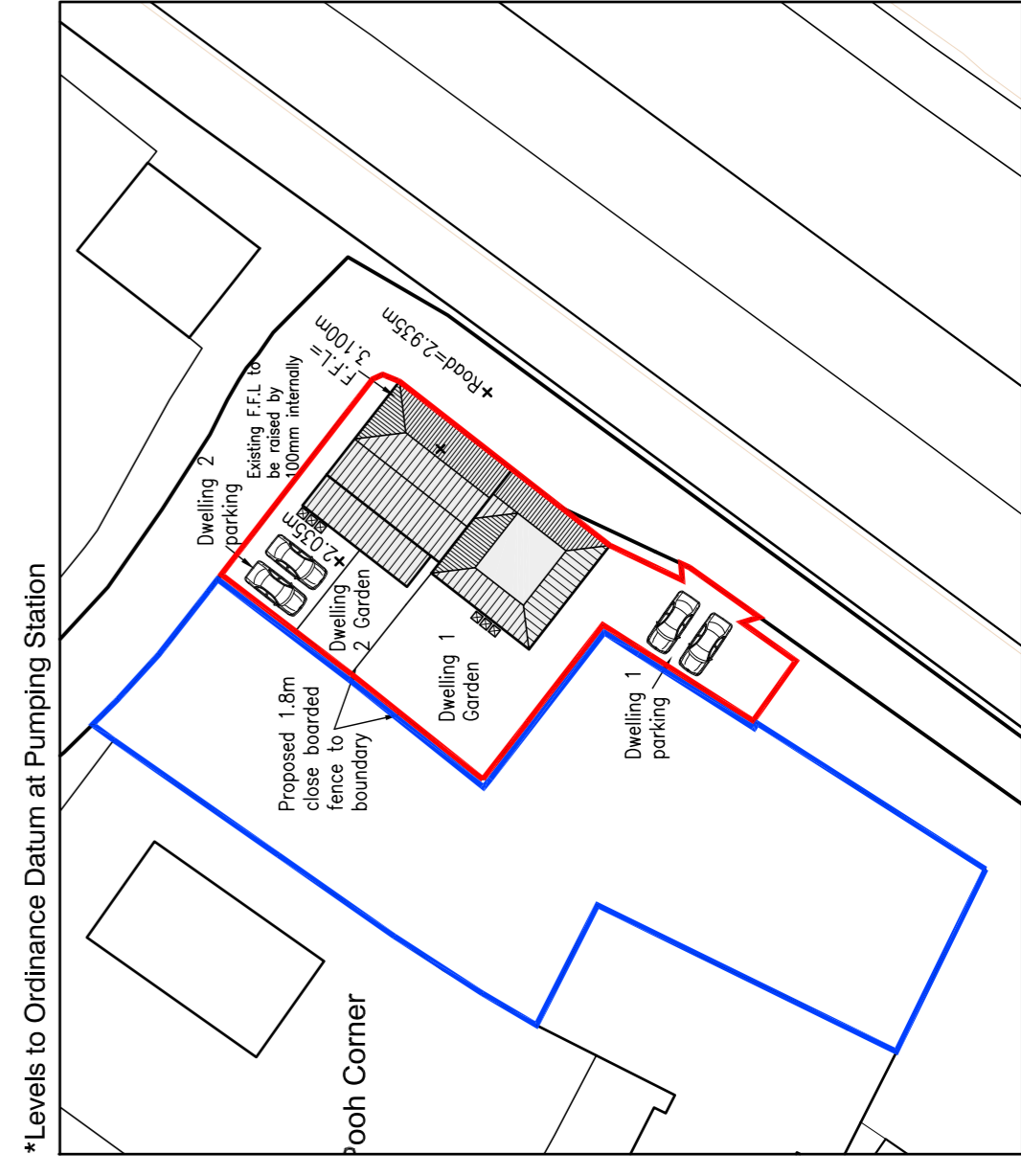
Proposed Side Elevation 1:100



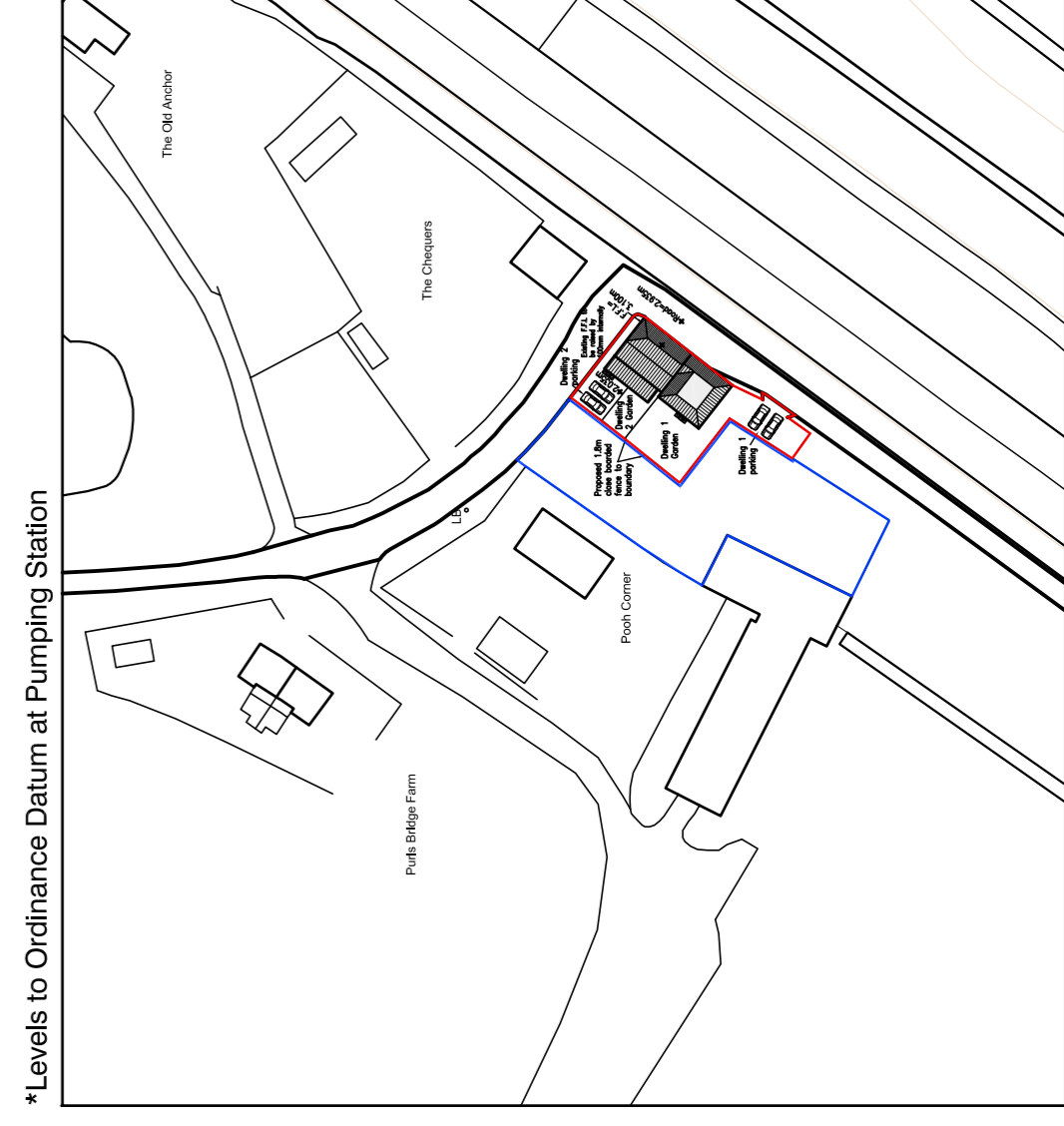
Proposed Ground Floor Plan 1:50



Proposed First Floor Plan 1:50



Proposed Site Plan 1:500



Location Plan 1:1250

\*Levels to Ordinance Datum at Pumping Station

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06/09/2011 - Amended for validation, REV/A.



PROJECT  
PROPOSED CONVERSION OF PUBLIC HOUSE  
TO 2NO. DWELLINGS

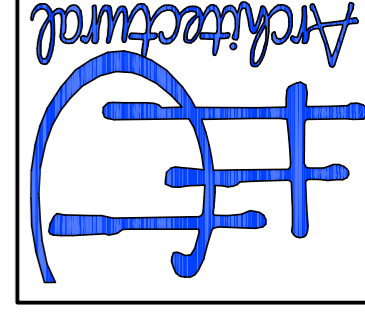
SITE  
THE SHIP INN  
PURLS BRIDGE  
MANEA  
MARCH  
CAMBS  
PE15 0ND

DRAWING  
PROPOSED

CLIENT  
Mr & Mrs Bishop

DATE July 2010 SCALE As Shown JOB No. 4602/02A

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Building  
Cameron Wrenne 08.08.10  
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