# **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

Case No: 25/01600/FUL

**Proposal:** Change of use from day school to residential dwelling.

Demolition of ancillary buildings to the rear and construction of new rear extensions with internal

alterations

**Location:** The Old Day School, High Street, Bluntisham

**Applicant:** Mr Simon Claridge

**Grid Ref**: 536769 274581

Date of Registration: 8th September 2025

Parish: Bluntisham

## **RECOMMENDATION - REFUSE**

This application is referred to the Development Management Committee (DMC) as the Officer's recommendation of refusal is contrary to that of the Parish Council.

### 1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 This application seeks planning approval for the change of use from a former day school to a residential dwelling, along with the demolition of some ancillary outbuildings to the rear, and the construction of new rear extensions. It should be noted that the submission details some works which do not require planning permission, but which are the subject of the accompanying application for listed building consent (reference 25/01601/LBC). This report seeks to separate the planning and listed building consent considerations, but they should be read and understood in conjunction with one another. It should also be realised that a high level of less than substantial harm has been identified during consultation with Conservation Officers and this applies to aspects of works both requiring planning permission and listed building consent.
- 1.2 The building is Grade II Listed and located within the Bluntisham Conservation Area. There are other Listed buildings of varying grades in the vicinity of the application site. Bluntisham is defined as a Small Settlement under Policy LP9 of the Local Plan to 2036.
- 1.3 This application has been accompanied by the following:

- Design, Access and Heritage Statement;
- Preliminary Roost Assessment;
- Required location and existing and proposed plans;
- Marketing Information\*

\*Please note, this was obtained from earlier (but recent) applications for a similar development on this site by the same applicant. The information is considered to remain relevant and Officers have received confirmation from the agent that the applicant accepts this information being transferred to this application for consideration.

1.4 Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

#### 2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives economic, social and environmental of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'
- 2.2 The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
  - delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
  - building a strong, competitive economy;
  - achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
  - conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment
- 2.3 Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website National Guidance

## 3. PLANNING POLICIES

- 3.1 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
  - LP1: Amount of Development
  - LP2: Strategy for Development
  - LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
  - LP5: Flood Risk
  - LP6: Waste Water Management

- LP8: Key Service Centres
- LP11: Design Context
- LP12: Design Implementation
- LP14: Amenity
- LP15: Surface Water
- LP16: Sustainable Travel
- LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
- LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
- LP25: Housing Mix
- LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
- LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings
- LP37: Ground Contamination and Groundwater Pollution

## 3.2 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

- Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
- Developer Contributions SPD 2011
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)
- Bluntisham Conservation Area Character Statement (1999)

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

## 3.3 The National Design Guide (2021):

- C1 Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
- C2 Value local history, heritage and culture
- I1 Respond to existing local character and identity
- I2 Well-designed, high quality and attractive
- B2 Appropriate building types and forms
- M3 Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
- N3 Support rich and varied biodiversity
- H1 Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
- H2 Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
- H3 Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities.

For full details visit the government website

#### 4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 24/01614/FUL Change of use from day school to residential, demolition of ancillary buildings to the rear and construction of new rear extensions (Withdrawn)
- 4.2 24/01615/LBC Proposed works to facilitate change of use from day school to residential including demolition of ancillary buildings to the rear and construction of new rear extensions. (Withdrawn)
- 4.3 25/01601/LBC Listed Building Consent for the change of use from day school to residential dwelling. Demolition of ancillary buildings to the rear and construction of new rear extensions with internal alterations Pending Consideration (associated with this application).

#### 5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 Bluntisham Parish Council recommends approval and supports bringing the building back into use whilst retaining the historic aspects.
- 5.2 HDC Conservation Team Objection High level of less than substantial harm to the building and less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area.
- 5.3 HDC Arboricultural Officer Objection insufficient detail to assess the impact of the development on trees in the neighbouring sites.
- 5.4 HDC Operations (Waste) Team No representations received at the time of determination.
- 5.5 HDC Ecology Team No representations received at the time of determination.
- 5.6 Historic England No comments to make we suggest you seek the advice of your Conservation and Archaeological specialists.
- 5.7 CCC Highways No objections LPA to consider if there will be any impacts in surrounding area due to not providing on site car parking provision.
- 5.8 CCC Historic Environment Team No representations received at the time of determination.

#### 6. REPRESENTATIONS

6.1 Three comments in support of the proposals have been received. These are available to view on HDC's Public Access Site but are broadly summarised below:

- Building has been used infrequently, has been subjected to vandalism and looks tired and run down.
- Building would make a great family home and the works would turn it into something wonderful.
- 100% supports renovation of the building.
- No highway safety concerns as a result of proposal.
- It will remain aesthetically in keeping with its surroundings and improvement to the streetscene.
- No other sustainable use other attempts to use have failed.
- Can see no reason why this would not be permitted.

#### 7. ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.
- 7.2 As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".
- 7.3 In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan (relevant to this application) consists of:
  - Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
  - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
- 7.4 The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.
- 7.5 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
  - The Principle of Development
  - Design and Visual Amenity

- Impact on Heritage Assets
- Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety and Parking Provision
- Flood Risk and Surface Water
- Biodiversity
- Impact on Trees
- Other Matters

# The Principle of Development

# Housing Land Supply

- 7.6 This report should be read with the knowledge that the NPPF paragraph 78 requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against our housing requirement. A substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements was introduced on 12th December 2024 in the revised NPPF and associated NPPG (the standard method).
- 7.7 As Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 is now over 5 years old it is necessary to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) based on the housing requirement set using the standard method. NPPF paragraph 78 also requires provision of a buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. As Huntingdonshire has successfully exceeded the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test a 5% buffer is required here. The 5-year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,907 homes. The current 5YHLS is 4,345 homes equivalent to 3.68 years' supply.
- As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.

### Principle of development

7.9 Policy LP2 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (the Local Plan) sets out the overarching development strategy for Huntingdonshire through the plan period. The main objectives are:

- Concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities;
- Direct substantial new development to two strategic expansion locations of sufficient scale to form successful, functioning new communities
- Provide opportunities for communities to achieve local development aspirations for housing, employment, commercial or community related schemes
- Support a thriving rural economy;
- Protect the character of existing settlements and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside;
- Conserve and enhance the historic environment; and
- Provide complementary green infrastructure enhancement and provision to balance recreational and biodiversity needs and to support climate change adaptation.
- 7.10 Policy LP2 directs approximately a quarter of the objectively assessed need for housing (together with a limited amount of employment growth) to sites dispersed across the Key Service Centres and Small Settlements in order to support the vitality of these communities and provide flexibility and diversity in the housing supply. In addition, rural exception, small and windfall sites will be permitted on sites which are in conformity with other policies of the plan, thereby providing further flexibility in the housing supply.
- 7.11 Policy LP2 is within the Development Strategy chapter of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and is therefore considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications for residential development. Notwithstanding this, weight should still be given to Policy LP2 given that it directs development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities which is consistent with the NPPF.
- 7.12 The site is located within the built-up area of Bluntisham which is a Small Settlement ass defined under Policy LP9 of the Local Plan to 2036. Therefore, the proposed new dwelling, located within the built-up area of Bluntisham is considered to be appropriately located in accordance with Policy LP9 of the Local Plan. LP9 supports development within the built-up area of a settlement where it is sustainable in relation to the:
  - level of service and infrastructure provision within the settlement;
  - opportunities for users of the proposed development to access everyday services and facilities by sustainable modes of travel including walking, cycling and public transport;

 effect on the character of the immediate locality and the settlement as a whole.

In this case, whilst Bluntisham does not offer the range or services and facilities available within some of the larger settlements, it is not devoid of services. There is a village hall, recreation ground, primary school, church, public house, shop, filling station and hot food takeaway. As such, it is not considered that the provision of one additional dwelling would place such a degree of strain on these facilities that it would render it unsustainable. In terms of access by sustainable travel modes, the site is conveniently located on the High Street with easy (and safe and convenient access) to many of the facilities detailed above. There is also a bus service to St Ives which provides connection with a wider range of services and connectivity to other settlements. Overall. the location is considered to be sustainable for the quantum of development under consideration. In terms of the impact on the character of the area, this is discussed in further detail in the proceeding sections of this report and there is considered to be some harm to the Conservation Area and therefore to the character of the area. The scheme is therefore not fully compliant with Policy LP9 of the Local Plan to 2036 (having regard to part c).

- 7.13 Further to the above, the overriding policy consideration relates to Policy LP22 of the Local Plan to 2036 (Local Services and Community Facilities) and assesses if the resultant loss of the facility by virtue of the conversion would result in harm to the settlement.
- 7.14 In this case, the applicant has submitted a statement of compliance with Policy LP22 as well as marketing details for the building. This details that following cessation of use as a school in the late 1960s it became used for various community uses which ceased around 2020/2021. The Statement details that the building was put forward as an asset of community value by the Parish Council in 2022 but this was never realised. It is unclear why the building was not registered as an asset by the Council, but Officers can confirm that it does not appear on the list available on the Huntingdonshire District Council website which is dated 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2025.
- 7.15 Marketing detail provided by Prestige Fine and Individual Homes sets out the approach to marketing the building (dates and advertising etc) as well as some of the challenges of the marketing process such as the property had no working heating system, was un-mortgageable, limitations on its use etc.
- 7.16 A summary of the level of marketing (before being sold to the current owner) detailed that the building had been marketed for 3 months and 19 days and had significantly reduced in price between the original asking and eventual sold price. Whilst paragraph 6.49 of LP22 refers to a general marketing period of 12

months at a value reflecting its permitted use, part e of the Policy (as set out below) details that either there is insufficient community support for the continuation of a facility <u>or</u> reasonable steps have been taken to effectively market the property for its current use without success. One or the other needs to apply, not both.

7.17 As set out in the Statement of Compliance submitted with the application only parts d & e are relevant to the consideration and the Policy requires one or the other (not both) to apply. This section of the Policy reads:

Where permitted development rights do not apply a proposal which involves the loss of a local service or community facility will only be supported where:

- d. an equivalent service or community facility will be provided in a location with an equal or better level of accessibility for the community it is intended to serve; or
- e. it demonstrates that there is no reasonable prospect of that service or facility being retained or restored because either:
- i. there is insufficient community support for its continuation; or
- ii. reasonable steps have been taken to effectively market the property for its current use without success.
- 7.18 The supporting paragraphs go on to read that the policy is intended to allow for the loss of an existing service or facility where this is to be provided in an alternative location giving equal or better accessibility to the community than the existing facility and that assessing the level of community support for a local service or facility is a matter of judgement which could be informed by information such as evidence of recent usage as well as the number and nature of comments made on an application by members of the local community. In this case, as detailed in the preceding sections of this report, the building has been a school, a nursery and pre-school and latterly owned by a charity and gifted to the community for various uses which ceased in 2020/21 due to the deterioration in condition of the building.
- 7.19 An important factor to note in the assessment of this application is the alternative provision which is present in the village. For example, on the opposite side of the road is the Baptist Church and associated hall. The village hall (a modern building available to book for community uses) is approx. 0.5km from the site with the St Helen's Primary School approx. 0.6km. Whilst the Statement of Compliance identities a local objection to the conversion, this document was submitted in support of the earlier (withdrawn) application. Crucially, at the time of preparing this report there are no objections to the scheme as presented and the Parish Council are also supportive of the change of use. It should

be noted that as set out in the proceeding sections of this report there are no fundamental objections to the proposed change of use, it is the associated works and the scale and design of the proposed extension which is considered to be unacceptably harmful.

7.20 Overall, Officers are satisfied that there is no significant public support for the retention of the building for community uses and that the marketing process was unsuccessful This, given the alternative provision now in the village is satisfactory and the scheme broadly accords with Policy LP22 part d and part e (i). Referring back to this compliance as well as the broad accordance with Policy LP9 means that the principle of a residential dwelling via the conversion of the building is considered to be acceptable, subject to compliance with all other materials planning considerations (including impact on heritage assets) and conditions.

## Impact on heritage assets

- 7.21 The Old Day School is a Grade II Listed and it is located within the Bluntisham Conservation Area. The building is referenced within the Bluntisham Conservation Area Character Statement (1999). Which states 'it is a well preserved and early example of a small rural school and presents as a simple, well-proportioned building in a pared down Tudor style constructed of local gault brick with stone detailing. Its earliest plan form remains legible and historic features, such as the clock, panelled doors, and the tablet displaying the coat of arms of the founder, enhance its architectural and historic authenticity'.
- 7.22 Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local 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.

Para. 212 of the NPPF sets out that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'.

Para. 213 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification'

Section 16(2) of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

- 7.23 The High Street comprises mainly residential properties, with dwellings of varying age, scale and designs along its length. The northern end of the High Street (to the east of the street) is more modern with historic development more prevalent to the west of the street and to the southern end. There are a number of Listed buildings (of varying grades) along the High Street (on both sides) at various points. The Old Day School was constructed in 1842 and the railings and walls to the front were listed along with the building in February 2024. The detached rear toilet block building and rear wall, were omitted from this listing. Previous submitted applications under reference numbers 24/01614FUL and 24/01615/LBC, sought planning permission for a similar proposal to the current applications however they were withdrawn following engagement with Officers due to heritage concerns. Whilst the current applications must be assessed upon their own merits, for the reasons set out below they have not overcome the heritage concerns of the previous applications and they are considered to be harmful to both the significance of the listed building and the Conservation Area. The Old Day School is a detached, predominantly brick and slate structure with a mixture of timber and ironwork windows and a number of pitched roof extensions/ancillary structures to the rear. The remaining site is predominantly hard surfacing with brick walls forming the rear and side boundaries. The front boundary is a low-level wall with iron railings above. There is a Grade II\* Listed building to the immediate north and south-east of the site, with additional Grade II Listed buildings to both the east, and south.
- 7.24 This application proposes the change of use of the building to a residential dwelling along with the demolition of some ancillary buildings to the rear and the construction of new rear extensions. Internal alterations do not require planning permission but do require listed building consent and so will be a subject of the separate 25/01601/LBC application. The application is accompanied by a Heritage, Planning, Design and Access Statement and HDC's Conservation Team and Historic England have been consulted.
- 7.25 Historic England did not wish to comment on the scheme but advised that this should not be read as 'no objection' and recommended that the views of specialist conservation advisers

(Conservation Team) be sought. Conservation Officers object to the scheme with overriding concerns summarised as:

- The 1931 cloakroom and later kitchen extension illustrate the changes in educational standard during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Thus, these form part of the significance of the building and their demolition can only be supported to provide an appropriate extension to the building which will secure its long-term future use. The extension (as set out below) is considered to be inappropriate.
- Removing the lean-to cloakroom (C.1896) the girls entrance and slate roof results in an unacceptable loss of early historic fabric and an erosion of the historic and social significance of the building.
- The proposed rear extension (proposed living area) is substantial and extends across the rear of the building, a glazed link passage connects this with the bedroom and bathroom wing. These are relatively large, modern, glazed, flat roof structures which appear overly dominant and which would swamp the original building. These do not integrate well with the character of the original building. Whilst the theory of the glazing is noted (in order to allow views through the building to reveal the original building) this, in practice is unlikely to be achieved due to internal furnishings, paraphernalia, window treatments etc which the LPA would have no control of.
- Further to the concerns with regard to the relationship, scale and massing of the extensions these works would also result in the requirement for existing windows to be internalised resulting in the loss of historic glazing as well as the loss of eaves detailing where the flat roof would need to cut into the slate roof.
- The Statement details that works to the boundary wall will be required but no specific details such as detailed drawings, engineer assessment or analysis of the railings or their proposed repair, storage and protection have been provided.
- 7.26 Overall, whilst Conservation Officers recognise that the long-term future of the building needs to be secured and would be supportive of bringing the building back into use, this can only be achieved in conjunction with an appropriate scheme being presented. In this case they consider that whilst a residential conversion may be a possibility for the building re-use, in this instance the scale, massing and modern design of the proposed extensions as well as the other proposed works, as set out above (as well as required internal works discussed within the separate listed building consent application) are inappropriate

and harmful to the heritage significance of the building. The proposed scheme would result in a significant increase in the footprint of the building and is incompatible with its character, proportions and history. Conservation Officers conclude that the impact on the listed building would result in a high level of less than substantial harm and that the impact on the Conservation area would be less than substantial harm.

- 7.27 The NPPF (2024) at Para. 215 details that "where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use." In this case, this would result in the provision of a single private dwelling. Therefore any public benefits would be limited (in comparison to restorative works to return the building to public use for example). As such, the level of harm in this instance is not considered to be outweighed, as there are no public benefits.
- 7.28 Based upon the extent of the proposals set out in the preceding sections of this report and the advice of specialists, Officers conclude that the works would be contrary to Policies LP2 and LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) and the provisions of the NPPF (2024).
- 7.29 It should be noted that Cambridgeshire County Council's Historic Environment Team were consulted and, whilst they made no comments it is prudent to mention that as a previously developed former school site, with the majority of the site laid to hard standing it is considered unlikely to contain important archaeological remains. However, should anything be uncovered during site works the developer has an obligation to stop and seek professional archaeological support, to ensure no intentional damage to any important remains.

### Design and visual amenity

7.30 Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

- 7.31 The character of the area and the application building as well as the arrangement and considered impact of the extensions are set out in the preceding sections of this report. The works to the front and side elevations are limited to mainly repairs/renovations and will have a limited impact on the appearance of the area. These works are given greater consideration in the listed building consent application. It is clear that the main alterations are to the rear due to the proposed addition of the large, glazed flat roof extensions. These are not considered to respond positively to context and in fact, disrespect the simple form and scale of the existing building. Whilst in some instances a contemporary addition to an historic building can be successfully achieved, in this case it appears dominant and irreversibly alters the way that the building is read in its historic setting. It fails to contribute to the character and identity of the area, does not successfully integrate with the building or landscape, and, whilst it cannot be considered a key view, does result in the introduction of incongruous development in a historic setting.
- 7.32 Overall, the development is considered to be contrary to Polices LP11 and LP12 (parts a, b and c) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, parts C1 I1 and I2 of the National Design Guide (2021) and Paragraph 135 (parts b and c) of the NPPF (2024).

# **Residential Amenity**

- 7.33 Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.
- 7.34 In terms of any overbearing, overshadowing or loss of light impacts, it is considered that by virtue of the limited height of the proposed additions in comparison with the existing relationship between the rear projections, ancillary buildings and the boundaries along with the retained separation that there will be no significant impact on adjacent neighbours residential amenity.
- 7.35 In terms of overlooking and loss of privacy there are no additional windows proposed in the main section of the building. The proposed glazing in the extensions is all at ground floor level and having regard to the boundary treatments in place would not result in an increased degree of overlooking. The proposed mezzanine level comprising of an office/seating area, within the existing building, could provide elevated views towards the side (south) elevation of No.18 High Street; there is a separation distance of approx. 1.2m to the boundary and 30m building to building. No.18 also benefits from a large curtilage and so the impact on any heavily used defensible space is minimal in practice. Furthermore, the sectional details show that the window will be in the lower part of the room (at floor level). Therefore, the impact in practice would be low. Whilst Policy LP14 requires consideration of the impact on

future users of a development, it should be noted that in this case the applicant is the owner of the adjacent site (denoted by the land within the blue line on the submitted location plan) and arguably, the most notable impact would be on them as opposed to any occupier of the development under consideration.

- 7.36 Officers note that there is something of an unusual relationship with No.16 High Street to the south in that some windows of this dwelling look directly onto the curtilage of site. Of the windows described below those to the rear (looking to the garden) are of most concern. The proposed site plan shows that these will face a grassed area. A site visit confirms that there are windows in the front (east) at first floor, side (north) elevation at ground and first floor, and two windows in the rear (west) elevation at ground floor and first floor. Given the age and design of the dwelling, the firstfloor windows are not set in an especially elevated position. It is unclear what rooms these windows serve. Whilst support for such a relationship would not generally be offered, what is important to note in this case is that this is an existing situation. These windows would have always looked out onto the curtilage of the property and its various uses. The section of land in question is also not directly to the rear of either building. As such, it would not have a significant impact on land which might be well used as immediate private/defensible space to the dwelling such as a patio or terrace for example. On balance, it is in this instance considered to be acceptable.
- 7.37 Having regard to other matters, the provisions on site are considered to provide a high level of residential amenity. There is an adequate degree of defensible space, thought has been given to bin and cycle storage and, given the sustainable location with options for recreation and leisure within walking distance a high level of amenity would be enjoyed. Internal layout ensures compliance with technical housing standards (in terms of space provided) and there are windows providing natural light to all habitable rooms. Given the previous uses of the site there are also no concerns regarding land contamination nor should the occupant experience unacceptable levels of noise or odour given the largely residential character of the surroundings.
- 7.38 Overall, taking the above assessment into consideration, the development proposed is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impacts and approach to residential amenity of the proposed and surrounding dwellings and therefore accords with Policies LP14 and LP37 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

## Highway Safety, access and Parking Provision

7.39 Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service

- vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.
- 7 40 The layout and heritage constraints of this site limit the ability to provide of off-street parking for motor vehicles and similar to the existing situation none is intended to be provided as part of this scheme. Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority have been consulted and raise no objection in terms of any proposed highway safety dangers. They do suggest that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should consider if there would be any negative residential amenity impacts arising from the lack of on site parking in the vicinity of the site and Officers have considered this carefully. The High Street appears to have no restrictions in place which limit on-street parking. Some of the surrounding dwellings benefit from off-street parking but, given the historic character this is not the case for every property. Whilst the provision of a single dwelling would likely result in the need for onstreet parking, it is not considered that the degree of intensification in this surrounding context would render the development unacceptable in this instance. Furthermore, it should be considered that the historic uses of the site would likely have generated the need for parking where visitor numbers would undoubtedly have been greater (users attending a class or function for example) than that proposed.
- 7.41 Further to the above, the sustainability of the location should once again be regarded. Cycle storage is shown on the site plan along with specification of the provision. Policy requirements dictate that one cycle space per bedroom should be provided with the Huntingdonshire Design Guide recommending secure covered storage and that proposed is considered sufficient. Should Members choose to grant planning permission it would be considered prudent to secure the provision cycle parking by way of a planning condition.
- 7.42 Overall, Officers are satisfied that the development would not create any unacceptable residential amenity issues (in terms of increased on street car parking), would not create any significant highway safety issues and would be acceptable with regard to its approach to sustainable travel in accordance with Policies LP14, LP16 and LP17 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

### Flood Risk and Surface Water

7.43 The site is at the lowest risk of flooding according to the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning (Flood Zone 1) and has no risk of flooding from other sources. Development of this nature is therefore acceptable in Flood Zone 1 and does not require the application of the Sequential or Exception Tests as per the NPPF (2024). Given the lack of surface water flood risk and the minor level of proposed built development (when compared

- with the existing situation) it is not considered that there would be significant surface water run off impacts.
- 7.44 Further to the above consideration, Officers are satisfied that full details of the proposed surface and foul water drainage could be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements in this instance.
- 7.45 As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on flood risk, surface water and wastewater management in accordance with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

## **Biodiversity**

- 7.46 Policy LP30 of the Local Plan requires a development to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and achieve a net gain where possible. As well as this (and separate from the requirements of LP30) qualifying new development is subject to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation pursuant to the Environment Act 2021. This means that a 10% statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is required, following the hierarchy of onsite provision; mixture of on-site and off-site provision; and the last resort of statutory biodiversity credits unless it can be demonstrated that the development would be exempt.
- 7.47 In considering the above it is noted that the application form details that the scheme would be exempt from BNG as it falls within the 'de-minimis' category, affecting less than 25m² of habitat. This is confirmed within the submitted Preliminary Roost Assessment detailed below. Having visited the site, Officers are satisfied with this suggestion. There is already built development to the rear of the site which would be removed to facilitate the proposed new extensions. The area surrounding the building is currently laid to hard surface and so its ecological value is neutral. As such, Officers are satisfied that the 10% BNG is not required in this case.
- 7.48 In considering other Ecological matters, as detailed above, the application is accompanied by a Preliminary Roost Assessment prepared by Sound Ecology, dated July 2025 and received on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2025. This concludes that no notable or protected species would be impacted by the development and that no further surveys are required. It goes on to make some recommendations for precautionary working methods and enhancements which could be secured by condition, should Members choose to grant planning permission.
- 7.49 Overall, having regard to the above, the development is considered to be acceptable with regard to its approach to

biodiversity and subject to a condition, would accord with Policy LP30 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

# **Impact on Trees**

- 7.50 As detailed in the preceding sections of this report, the site lies within the Bluntisham Conservation Area. There are no specific Tree Preservation Orders in force on this or adjacent sites, however any trees are afforded protection by virtue of their location within the Conservation Area.
- 7.51 Officers note that there are no trees within the site itself, and, as identified in the submitted Design, Access and Heritage Statement any trees are located outside the sites curtilage, separated by the existing boundary walls in adjacent gardens. Of most interest are the trees located to the north of the site, and whilst the Arboricultural Officer has highlighted those to the south, these are located a significant distance from the proposed built development. Aerial photography shows two trees located to the north, one of which is positioned central on the common boundary and the other one set further west.
- 7.52 HDC's Arboricultural Officer has been consulted and advises that at present there is insufficient information to allow for the impact on trees to be fully assessed. As a minimum, the application should be accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment as he observes that some of the extensions are to be located in close to the common boundary. If this means that the root protection areas (RPA's) fall within this then an Arboricultural Method Statement would be required to detail how surface removal and works would take place. If the proposed extensions were to fall entirely within the RPA (unclear at this stage) then it would render the extent of development unacceptable. As such, in this instance this matter cannot be considered and controlled by way of a planning condition and so is one of the recommended refusal reasons.
- 7.53 Overall, given the lack of detail provided with the application alongside the comments from specialists, Officers cannot be satisfied that the development can proceed with no impact on the trees within the Conservation Area. There is conflict with Policy LP31 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 in this respect.

# Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings

7.54 Policy LP25 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 states that proposal for new housing will be supported where they meet the optional Building regulation requirement M4(2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' unless it can be demonstrated that site specific factors make this impractical or unviable.

7.55 In this case, given the constraints presented in the conversion of an existing building (not least one of heritage value) it is considered that it would be challenging to achieve this compliance. (For example, the lack of parking and level access are factors). Therefore, Officers consider that should Members choose to grant planning permission that it would be unreasonable to impose this condition.

## Water Efficiency

7.56 Policy LP12 (j) of the Local Plan to 2036 states that new dwellings must comply with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency set out in Approved Document G of the Building Regulations. Should Members choose to grant planning permission a condition is recommended to be attached to ensure compliance with the above, in accordance with Policy LP12 (j) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

## **Development Obligations**

#### Bins

7.57 Part H of the Developer Contributions SPD (2011) requires a payment towards refuse bins for new residential development. A Unilateral Undertaking Form in respect of wheeled bins has been received by the Local Planning Authority. The proposal therefore accords with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

7.58 Community Infrastructure Levy Forms have been provided and will be dealt with by the Council's Implementation Team. The development would accord with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

### Conclusion

- 7.59 The presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.
- 7.60 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 7.61 A revised NPPF was published in December 2024, introducing a substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements. This has resulted in the Council being unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS). While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.
- 7.62 As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'.

## 7.63 NPPF para 11 states:

'Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
  - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance (7\*) provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
  - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
- 7\* Foot note 7 states: The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.'

- 7.64 As outlined in the report, there is a strong reason for refusal in relation to designated heritage assets. Therefore, there is a reason to not move forward to test d (ii) as per above and thus the 'titled balance' is disengaged.
- 7.65 Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 7.66 Given the proposal seeks to provide only one private residential dwelling, whilst there would be some public benefits of bringing the building back into use the Officers do not consider that this minor benefit would outweigh the identified harm in this instance.
- 8. RECOMMENDATION REFUSE for the following reasons
- 8.1 The proposed extensions by virtue of their siting, scale, mass, design and material finish would result in the addition of an incongruous form of development which would cause a high level of less than substantial harm to the Grade II Listed building and less than substantial harm to surrounding the Bluntisham Conservation Area. In addition, it would fail to respond positively to its surroundings, contribute to the character and identity of the area, or successfully integrate with the host building. It is contrary to Policies LP2, LP11, LP12 (parts a, b and c) and LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990, the NPPF (2024) and parts C1, C2, I1 and I2 of the National Design Guide (2021).
- 8.2 Insufficient detail has been provided to allow for an assessment of the impact on the trees to the northern boundary. In the absence of this information it cannot be confirmed that the proposed works could proceed without unacceptable harm to the adjacent protected trees, particularly as future works would likely occur within their root protection areas. The development therefore conflicts with Policy LP31 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388640 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

#### **CONTACT OFFICER:**

Enquires about this report to **Kevin Simpson – Senior Development Management Officer -**kevin.simpson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk



Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street Huntingdon, PE29 3TN Developmentcontrol@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

01480 388424 www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Head of Planning Services Pathfinder House

(Development Management)

St. Mary's Street Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE 29 3TN
Application Number: 25/01600/FUL Case Officer Kevin Simpson Proposal: Change of use from day school to residential dwelling. Demolition of ancillary buildings to the rear and construction of new rear extensions with internal alterations Location: The Old Day SchoolHigh StreetBluntisham Observations of Bluntisham Town/Parish Council.  Please √ box as appropriate
Recommend approval because (please give relevant planning reasons in space below)  The PC are in support of bringing this building back into use while retaining the historic aspects of the dwelling
Recommend refusal because(please give relevant planning reasons in space below)
No observations either in favour or against the proposal
Clerk to Bluntisham Town/Parish Council. (For GDPR purposes please do not sign)
Date: 6-10-25
Failure to return this form within the time indicated will be taken as an indication that the Town or Parish Council do not express any opinion either for or against the application.
Please send response to email address below:-
Development control@huntingdonshire gov uk

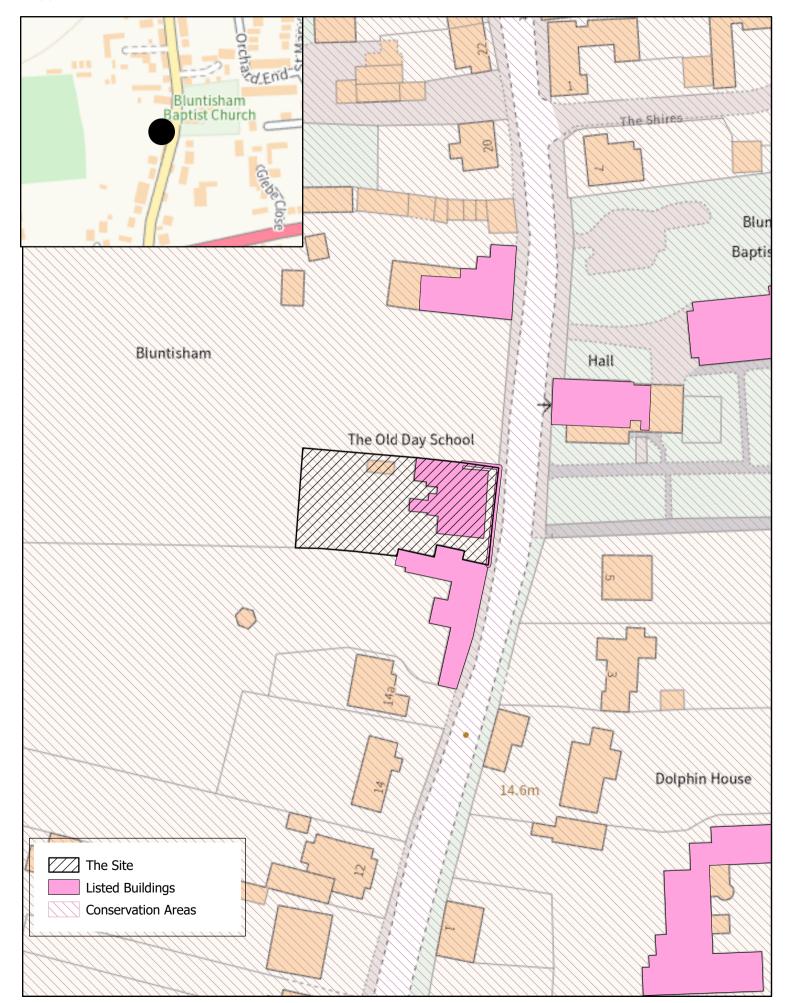
# **Development Management Committee Application Ref:** 25/01600/FUL

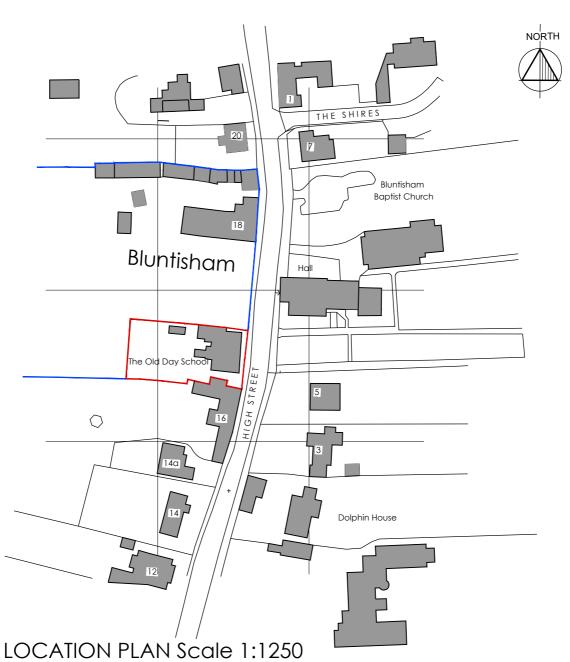
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Date Created: 04/12/2025



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Site Area = 0.073ha.

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0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

REV DATE BY REVISION NOTES
A 20/08/25 NFM Blue line added around client adjoining land.

Suite 2, Clare Hall,
St Ives Business Park,
Parsons Green,
St Ives,
Cambs, PE27 4WY

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Tel: 01480 494969

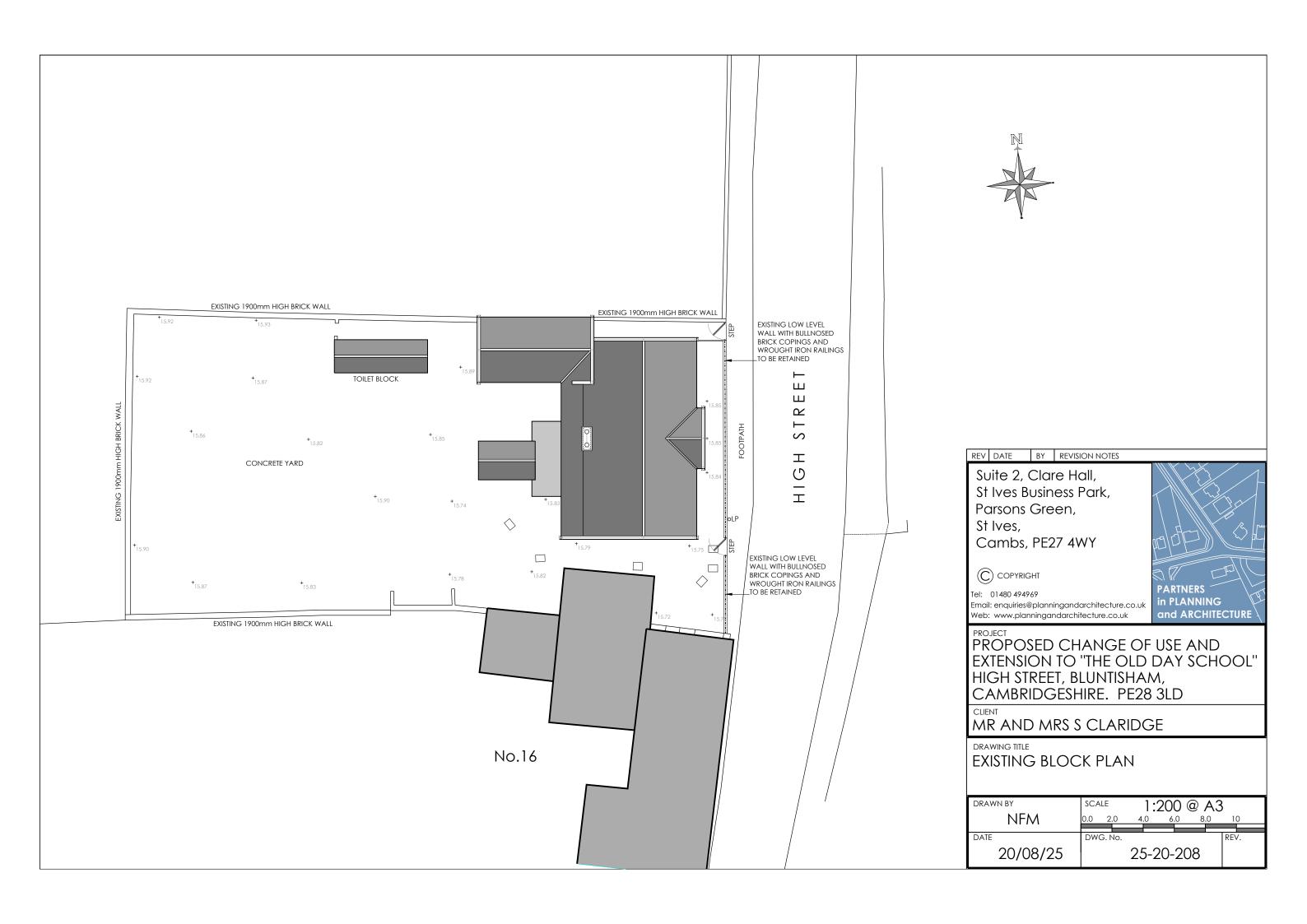
Email: enquiries@planningandarchitecture.co.uk
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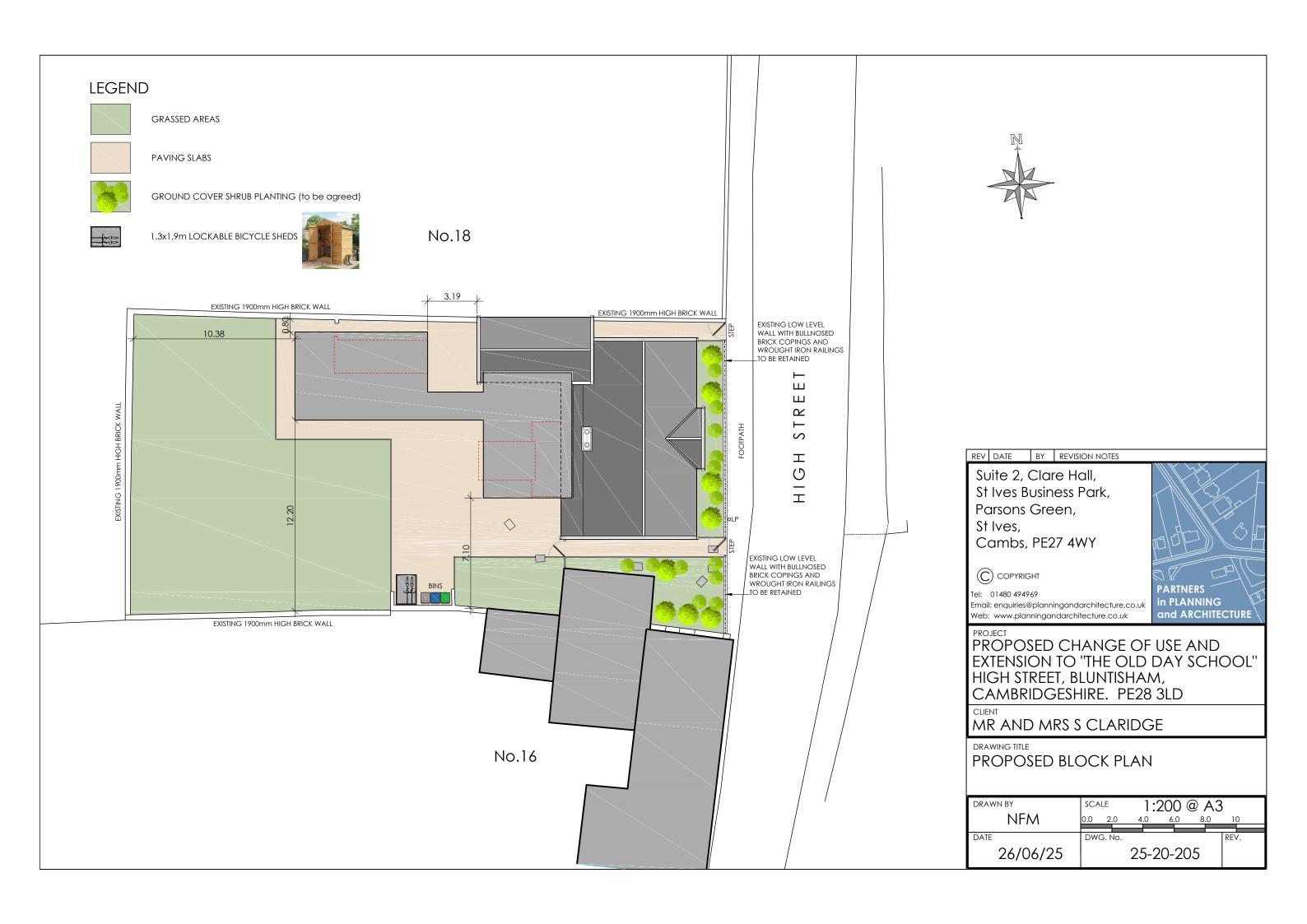
PROJECT
PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE AND
EXTENSION TO "THE OLD DAY SCHOOL"
HIGH STREET, BLUNTISHAM,
CAMBRIDGESHIRE. PW28 3LD

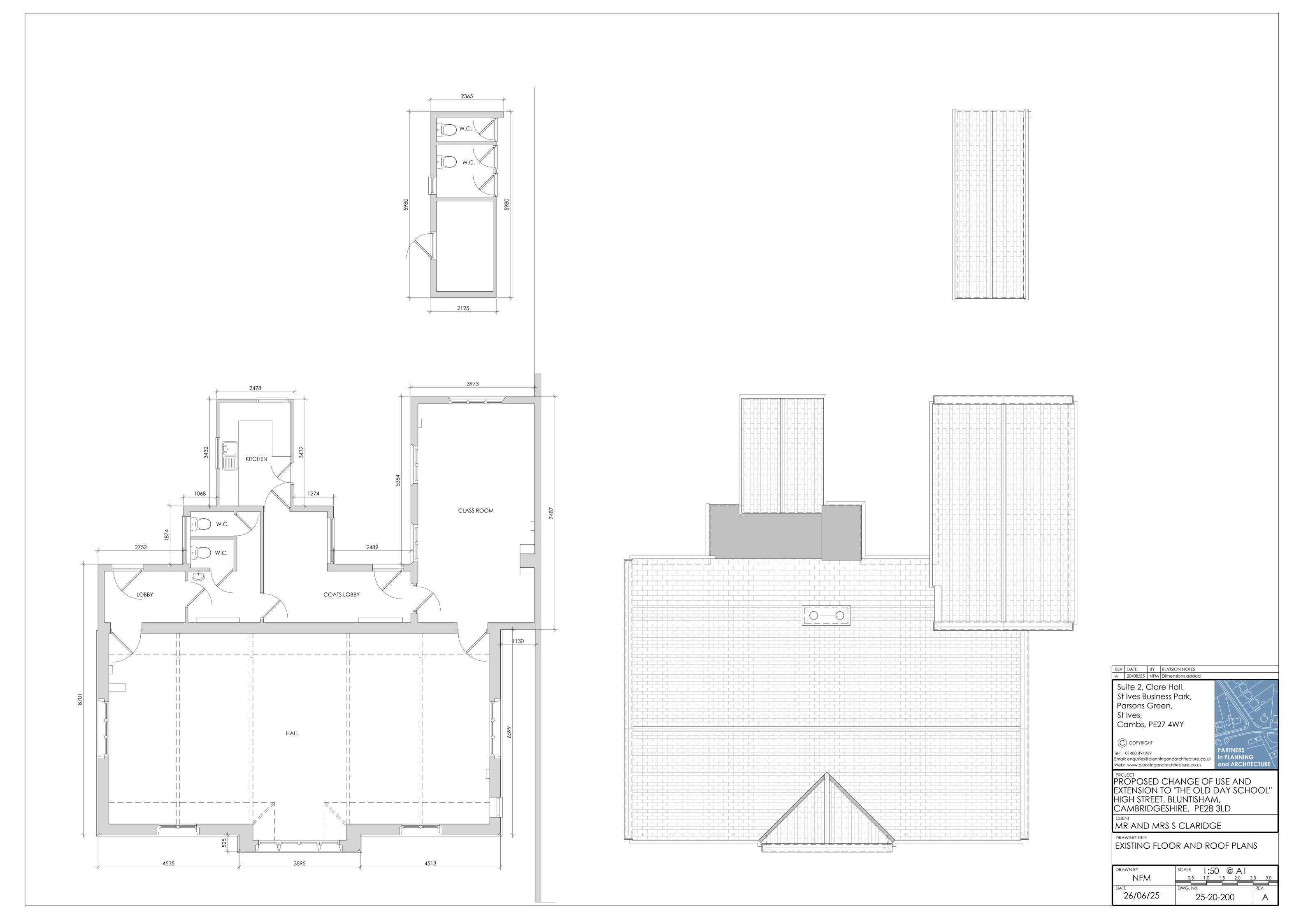
CLIENT MRS S CLARIDGE

PROPOSED LOCATION PLAN

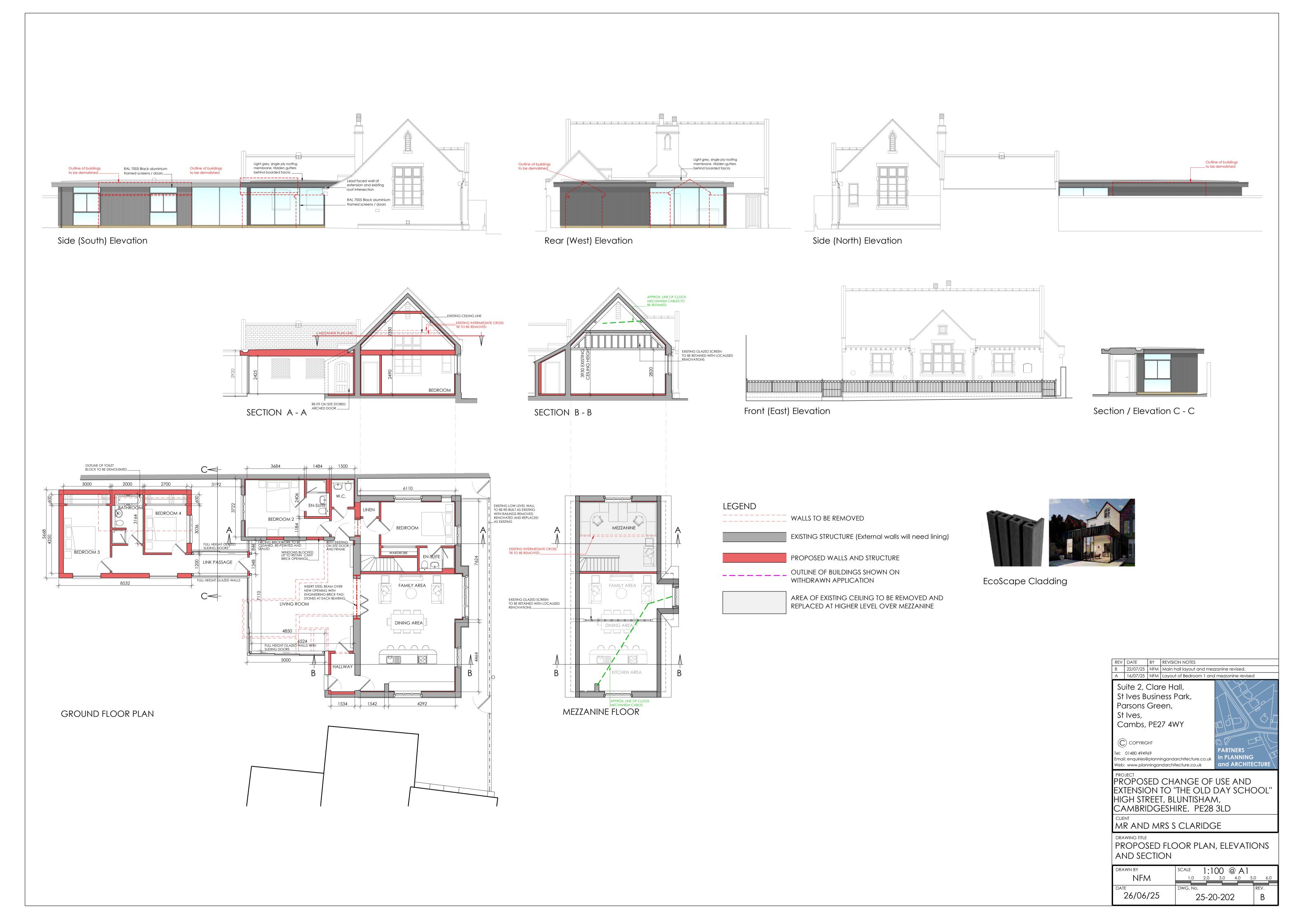
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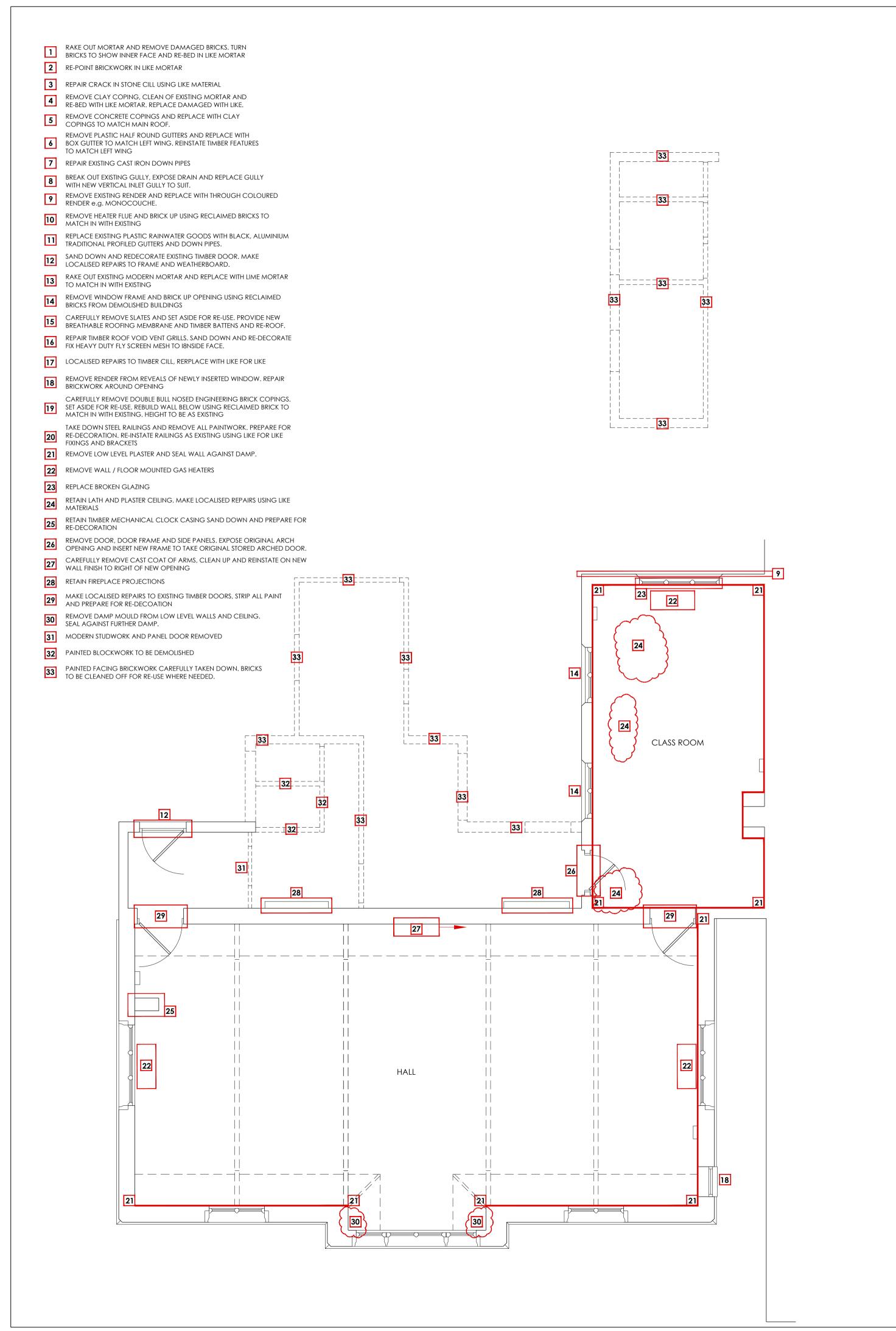


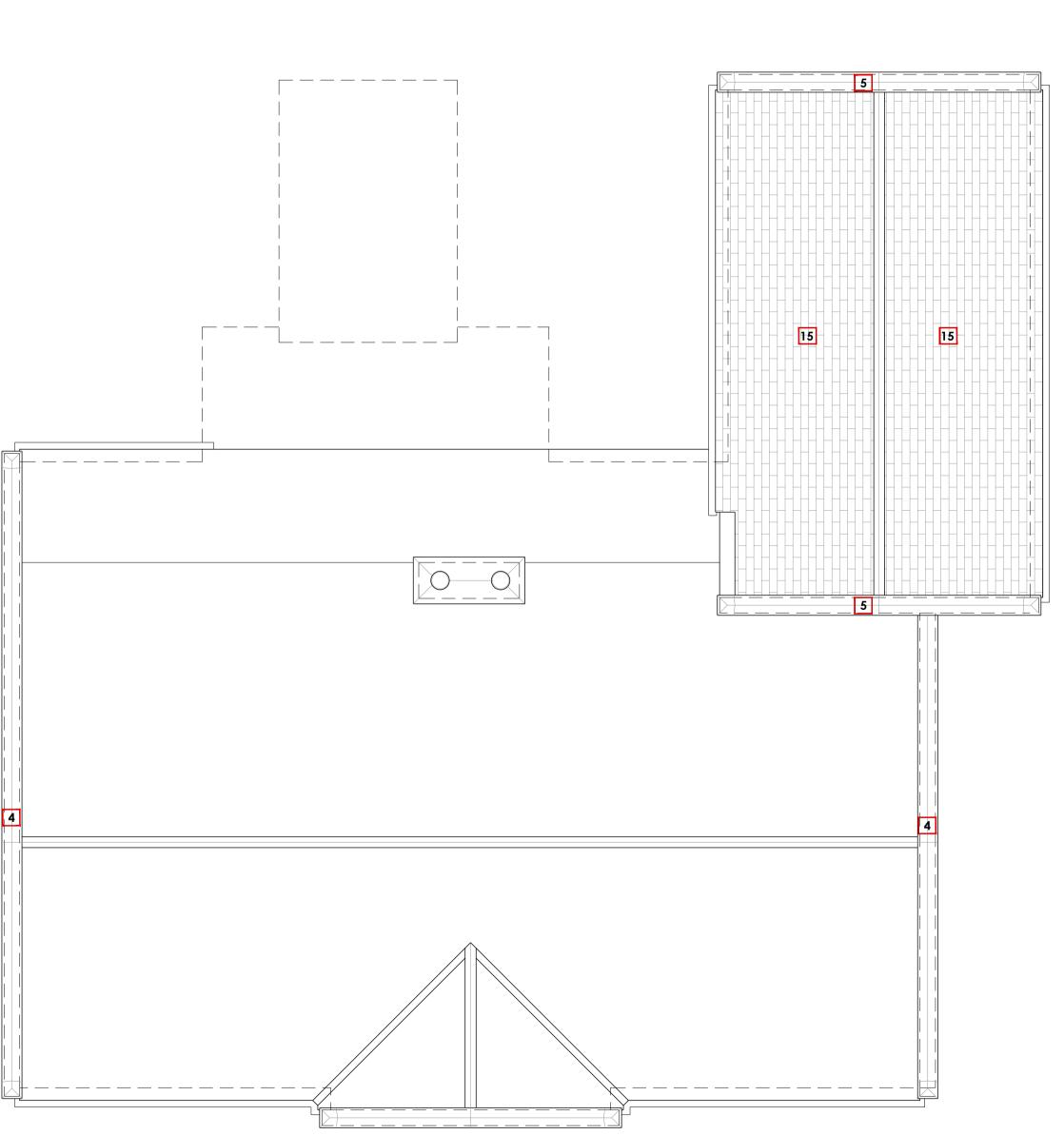


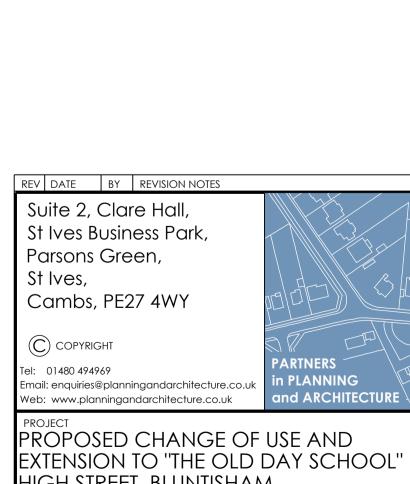












EXTENSION TO "THE OLD DAY SCHOOL" HIGH STREET, BLUNTISHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE. PE28 3LD

MR AND MRS S CLARIDGE

DRAWING TITLE RENOVATION DETAILS FLOOR AND ROOF PLAN

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