

CAU Report No: 2020R080

The Count House, Wheal Buller, Redruth
Heritage Impact Assessment
Cornwall Archaeological Unit





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1 Site location and project background

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been commissioned by Alan Ibbotson (Alan Ibbotson Consultancy (Cornwall) Ltd) on behalf of Tim Luscombe (the owner) to support a planning application at The Count House, Wheal Buller, near Redruth. The building is located approximately 0.6km to the south of Redruth and 0.8km to the west of Lanner at NGR SW 70485 40060 (Figs 1, 2 and 4).

The Count House, together with the adjoining property, Captain's House, to the east, were rebuilt in 2000-2002 as two new dwellings occupying the ruinous shell of an early 19th century Count House for Wheal Buller mine. Neither of the houses are designated as Listed Buildings and there are no other designations within the immediate area. However, because much of the stone-built structure of the original Count House survives and because of its 19th century mining connection, the building is viewed as a heritage asset. The proposals for works to The Count House include the construction of a new extension to replace an existing modern conservatory and for the replacement of the existing modern porch with new courtyard wall.

This document considers the heritage asset directly affected by the proposals and also examines the settings of relevant heritage assets within view of the site. The following sources were consulted: Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record (HER) (via Heritage Gateway); the National Heritage List for England; Cornwall Council's mapping service and GIS data accessible to CAU; early maps, records and published histories. The CAU project number is 147084.

2 Designations

The Count House is not a Listed Building and there are no designations in the immediate vicinity of the building. The building does not lie within the World Heritage Site for Cornish Mining. The main part of the Cambourne and Redruth Mining District of the World Heritage Site (WHS) lies approximately 0.6km to the west of the property, but a minerals tramway, which is also included within this WHS area runs east-west at a distance of approximately 200m north of the house.

The Conservation Areas for Redruth and Carn Brea both lie approximately 1.5km to the north and west respectively and they cannot be seen from the property. See Figure 2 for designation locations.

3 Historical background

The Count House is located on Buller Downs (formerly Trewirgie Downs in the manor of Trewirgie) in an area historically characterised by rough ground and mining activity. The name 'Buller' derives from the landowners, the Buller family of Shillingham and Morval in Cornwall who later moved their family seat to Downes near Crediton in Devon. The Buller family owned both the manor of Trewirgie and manor of Tolgus in the parish of Redruth as part of their estate from at least the 17th century through to the early 20th century and were clearly responsible for much of the mining activity in the area from an early date.

In the vicinity of The Count House a copper mine known as Trewirgie Downs Mine was opened during the 18th century and was later renamed and extended as Wheal Buller in 1819. Further to the east another 18th century mine, Wheal Beauchamp, also became part of Wheal Buller during the early 19th century, giving the sett a strike-wise extent of one mile, of some of the richest copper lodes in Cornwall (Morrison 1983, 335-6). Wheal Buller was the fourth most productive copper mine in Cornwall between 1819 and 1875, producing 141,707 tons of copper ore (Morrison 1983, 335).

The present Count House and Captain's House appear to have been constructed originally in the early 19th century most probably by James Buller of Downes House, Crediton as the Count House and Captain's House for Wheal Buller mine, although it is possible that the building was first built at a slightly earlier date in the 18th century as a Count House for Trewirgie Downs Mine. Wheal Buller was worked at this site from 1819 until its closure in 1847. The sale of the combined plant of 'Old Wheal Buller' and Wheal Beauchamp took

two years, between 1845 and 1847 (Morrison 1983, 338). In 1826-7 the Redruth and Chacewater Railway (for goods and minerals) was constructed to the north of the Count House, running from Wheal Buller to Devoran, with a branch to Redruth (Cornwall HER: MCO54528).

After the closure of the mine in the late 1840s Wheal Buller was reopened a year or two later at a new site located approximately 0.8km to the west of The Count House at what is now known as Wheal Buller Farm (NGR: SW 6980 3990). The new Wheal Buller site was included within a number of different mine setts up until 1875 when it closed.

The earliest map to depict Wheal Buller count house and adjoining captain's house is the Tithe Map for the parish of Redruth dated 1841 (Fig 4). This map depicts both The Count House and Captain's House as a single building and the accompanying Tithe Apportionment lists the plot as 'Wheal Buller' in Trewirgie, owned and occupied by James Wentworth Buller.

It seems likely that the building continued in use as the Count House for Wheal Buller up until the closure of the mine in 1875.

The next available map to illustrate the building is the First Edition OS map of c1880 (Fig 5). This map depicts both The Count House and Captain's House as a single property. The map also shows a shaft and engine house (no longer extant) located approximately 50m north-east of the building.

In 1888 an attempt was made to form a limited company to rework Wheal Buller, Copper Hill and East Wheal Basset as the Buller and Basset Tin and Copper Company Ltd. Apparently there were sixteen lodes within the proposed sett amalgamation (Collins 1912, 429). However, the company did not manage to raise enough capital and the plans were subsequently dropped.

For further information about the later development of Wheal Buller see Dines (1956, 358-61) and Morrison (1983, 335-353).

It seems that at some point after c1880 (Fig 5) but before c1907 when the Second Edition OS map was produced (Fig 6), the Wheal Buller count house and mine captain's house were converted for use as small tenanted dwellings. The c1907 OS map shows the building divided up into at least seven separate properties, with three separate properties shown within the area of the present Count House. The land around the building was also altered at this date (c1900) to provide separate garden plots and outbuildings for the tenants.

At some time after c1907, either in the early or mid 20th century, a stone-built outshut extension was added to the south end of The Count House.

The building continued in use as multiple tenanted dwellings until the 1960s when Camborne-Redruth Urban District Council served closing orders on each of the properties. From the 1960s onwards the building was left unoccupied, becoming more and more dilapidated until the roofs and internal floors collapsed along with sections of the interior and exterior stone walls (www.aditnow.co.uk/mines/Wheal-Buller-Copper-Mine/). By 1999 the property had become a ruinous shell and planning permission (W2/BR99/1521/28/BN) was gained for '*Renovation and rebuilding of former Count House and Mine Captains House, Channel View, Wheal Buller, Buller Downs, Lanner*'.

The rebuilding of The Count House and Captain's House was undertaken by the present owner of The Count House (Tim Luscombe) between 2000 and 2002. This involved the construction of new interiors, retaining the original layout where possible, new roofs and rebuilding of some of the external stone walls where necessary.

4 Property description

Together The Count House and Captain's House form a large two-storey, L-shaped building. It is set on a hillside in a landscape of fields and rough ground with no immediate neighbours (Figs 9-14). The Count House occupies the eastern half of the building and is a fairly narrow, single depth dwelling. The original external walls are constructed from granite and killas rubble with granite block quoins, jambs and lintels. At the southern end of The Count House there is a stone built early/mid 20th century outshut extension. During the rebuilding works in c2000 the whole of the south wall of the outshut extension had to

be rebuilt along with a large area of first floor walling at the north end of the front (east) elevation (see Figs 7 and 8 showing elevations of the Count House prior to rebuilding). The interior along with the roof and all the sash windows and doors are modern, constructed during the rebuilding works. The existing stone-built porch on the east front (Fig 13) is also a modern addition as is the glass and uPVC conservatory adjoining the south end of the building (Fig 12).

Within the curtilage of the building the former late 19th or early 20th century outbuilding to the north-east (Figs 16 and 17) was granted planning permission in 2016 for conversion into a residential dwelling (planning ref PA16/02643). Site levels rise to the south of the house where both the building and the conservatory have been cut into the hillslope behind.

5 Statement of significance

Although the Count House is not a Listed Building and was substantially rebuilt in c2000, it retains much of its original 18th or early 19th century external walls and internal plan form. Due to carefully considered rebuilding work in c2000 reusing the building stone from the collapsed walls on site, lime mortars and new timber sash windows, the building has retained its historic character. This building appears to be the only one still standing associated with Old Wheal Buller mine which was first established in 1819 by James Buller of Downes House, Crediton.

6 Proposals

The proposals are to replace the existing small, modern porch on the east elevation with a new single-storey porch and to replace the existing modern conservatory with a two-storey extension at the south end of the building to provide a lounge with sunroom. The existing rendered modern garden wall, which screens the property from the north will be extended to meet the new porch creating a courtyard, with a traditional slate coping added and secure solid door.

The justifications for the alterations are that the owner's growing family now need more space. The current layout has no separate lounge except for the kitchen-dining area and the main entrance is via a cramped porch which currently opens directly into the kitchen which offers no privacy, security or resistance to weather. The building commands superb views of the North Coast and the extension is designed to provide a lounge with sunroom on two levels to take account of this prospect. The extension is sited at the rear (South) of the building so as to preserve the front (North) elevation of the original Count House. However, this siting also enables sun and light to be brought into the new rooms and provides a roof for the solar/photo-voltaic panels to improve the energy efficiency and sustainability of the property. The design philosophy of the extension is to provide the requirements of a modern family with a contemporary design which harks back to the building's industrial past, incorporating high quality materials, again enabling the host dwelling to retain its original character. The room sizes relate to the Count House and the 2-storey plan enables both the views to the north coast and the benefit of sunny southern aspect (Design and Access Statement 2020).

Two different designs for the new porch and two-storey extension have been put forward. The initial design (**1**) is illustrated in Figures 19 and 20 and the alternative design (**2**) is illustrated in Figures 21 and 22.

Design 1:

New Entrance Porch

The external walls of the porch will be finished in vertical burnt larch cladding. The north wall will contain the entrance door set deep into a solid façade without windows, and the east wall overlooking the garden will have full height fixed glazing. The porch will also be lit by a roof lantern.

Extension at south end to provide Lounge and Sunroom

The external walls of the extension will be finished in vertical burnt larch cladding. The north and east wall will have full floor to ceiling glazing. At first floor level a glass balcony extends around the south and east elevations. The roof has a strong 40-degree pitch to match the existing outshut roof at the south end of the Count House, with a lowered roofline to the south to reduce overall height. The suggested roof covering is zinc with an array of solar panels.

Design 2:

New Entrance Porch

The external walls of the porch will be finished in vertical burnt larch cladding. The north wall will contain the entrance door set deep into a solid façade without windows, and the east wall overlooking the garden will have full height fixed glazing. The flat roof of the porch will ensure that the whole of the first floor window above will remain visible.

Extension at south end to provide Lounge and Sunroom

The external walls of the extension will be finished in vertical burnt larch cladding. The walls will have full floor to ceiling glazing in the east elevation and first floor of the north elevation whilst elsewhere vertical burnt larch cladding will be used as an external finish. At first floor level a glass balcony extends around the south and east elevations. Unlike design 1, the roof is much lower and flat with zinc covering and gutters hidden behind a low parapet wall.

7 Impacts of development proposals

In considering the impacts of the development on The Count House, a 'non-designated heritage asset', the following paragraphs of Chapter 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy 24 of the Cornwall Local Plan (2016) have been considered:

NPPF: 197. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Cornwall Local Plan: 2.189 Non designated heritage assets: Proposals affecting buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated heritage assets should ensure they are conserved having regard to their significance and the degree of any harm or loss of significance.

The proposals will not have any impacts on any designated or non-designated heritage assets other than The Count House itself, since the building is not visible from any other heritage asset. The Count House can possibly be very distantly seen from the World Heritage Site to the north and north-west, but not clearly enough to have any impact.

The proposals for a new porch, walled courtyard and new extension will have no impacts on the historic fabric of The Count House itself. Both the existing porch and conservatory are modern structures added in the 21st century so their removal will not cause any harm and the new structures will simply be added against the building with no need to alter any existing openings or insert any new openings.

The proposals are unlikely to have any impact on buried archaeology since the area of the proposed extension has already been disturbed by landscaping and terracing.

Adding new slate coping to the existing rendered modern garden wall which screens the property from the north will have a positive impact on the character of the north (original front) elevation of the building. The extension of this wall southwards to meet the new porch will have a minimal impact as long as the wall is not raised above the height of the present wall.

The designs for the proposed porch and extension seek to compliment the historic Count House by using burnt larch cladding on the exterior of both structures to contrast well with the warm yellow tones of the granite. This use of timber cladding draws on the design of historic timber-clad ancillary buildings frequently constructed at Cornish mine sites during

the 19th century. The use of timber cladding as opposed to granite rubble reinforces the idea that the structures are secondary and subservient to the existing building and also ties in well with the use of larch cladding on the existing historic outbuilding within the curtilage of the house (see Figs 16 and 17).

The use of tall, floor to ceiling glazing in some of the proposed elevations has been introduced to allow for well-lit interiors and views of the surrounding landscape with a nod to the design of 19th century workshop windows.

The two designs of the replacement porch (Figs 19-21) are the same except that the roofs are different. **Design 1** has a low-pitched lantern roof and **Design 2** has a flat roof with a low parapet wall concealing a roof light. Although a pitched roof design for the porch would be more in keeping with the historic building, this design was ruled out on the basis that a pitched roof would partially obscure the original window opening above. The floor to ceiling glazing covering the whole of the front (east) elevation of the porch has been designed to help visually reduce the mass of the structure in allowing a transparent view to the doorway and masonry of the historic elevation behind.

The proposed extension is sited at the south end of the building adjoining the early/mid 20th century outshut extension where it will be less visible in a sunken position terraced into the hillslope behind (see Fig 12). Positioning it here will also mean that the original northern frontage of the Count House is not directly impacted in any way. This location also enables sun and light to be brought into the new rooms. **Design 1** for the extension provides a south-facing 40° roof pitch for solar/photo-voltaic panels to improve the energy efficiency and sustainability of the property. The design was inspired by 19th century industrial north lights factory roofs such as that on the Bickford-Smith Fuseworks building in Tuckingmill. It is possible that the height of this proposed roof (which reaches the same height as the main Count House roof) will have a negative impact on the setting of The Count House in obscuring views of from the south and competing for dominance with the heritage asset. This structure would be particularly dominant viewed from the north or south. **Design 2** for the extension is positioned in the same location and occupies the same footprint as **Design 1** but is substantially reduced in height and mass with a proposed flat roof concealed behind a low parapet wall. This design will have a much reduced impact, being far more subservient to the historic building, and at the same time obscuring less of the outshut from the south.

8 Mitigation strategy

In order to minimise any adverse impacts on the character and setting of The Count House Design 2 for the extension would reduce the impact in terms of height and mass and would detract far less from the historic building. It is also suggested that the height of the new courtyard wall is kept to a minimum in order to reduce any impacts caused by obscuring part of the east elevation.

9 References

- Ordnance Survey, c1880. *25 Inch Map First Edition* (licensed digital copy at CAU)
- Ordnance Survey, c1907. *25 Inch Map Second Edition* (licensed digital copy at CAU)
- Ordnance Survey. *Mastermap Digital Mapping*
- Tithe Map and Apportionment, c1840. *Parish of Redruth* (licensed digital copy at CRO)
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- Dines, H.G. and Plemister, J., 1956, (reprinted Beer, K.E., 1988), *The Metalliferous Mining Region of South-West England*, HMSO.
- Morrison, T.A., 1983, *Cornwall's Central Mines - The Southern District 1810 – 1895*, Alison Hodge Penzance.
- <https://www.aditnow.co.uk/mines/Wheal-Buller-Copper-Mine/>

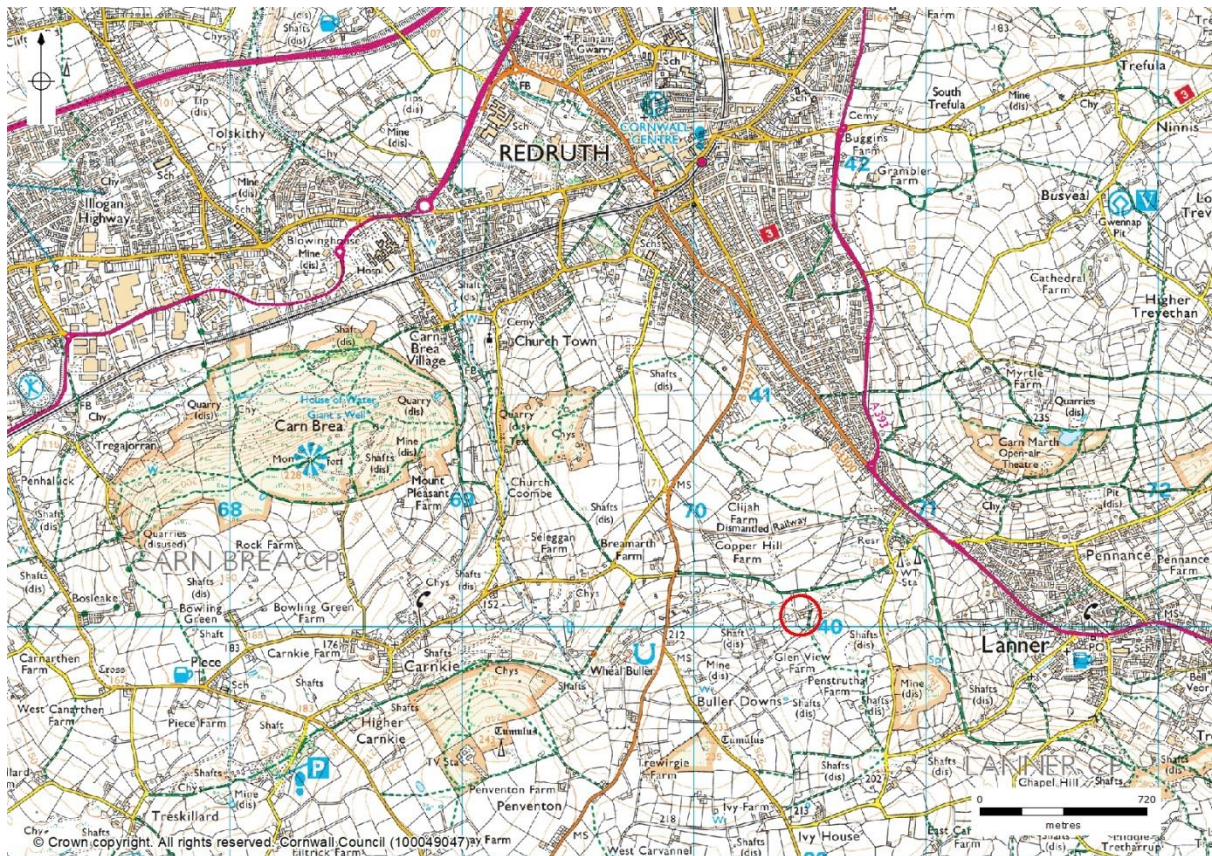


Fig 1 Site location circled in red.

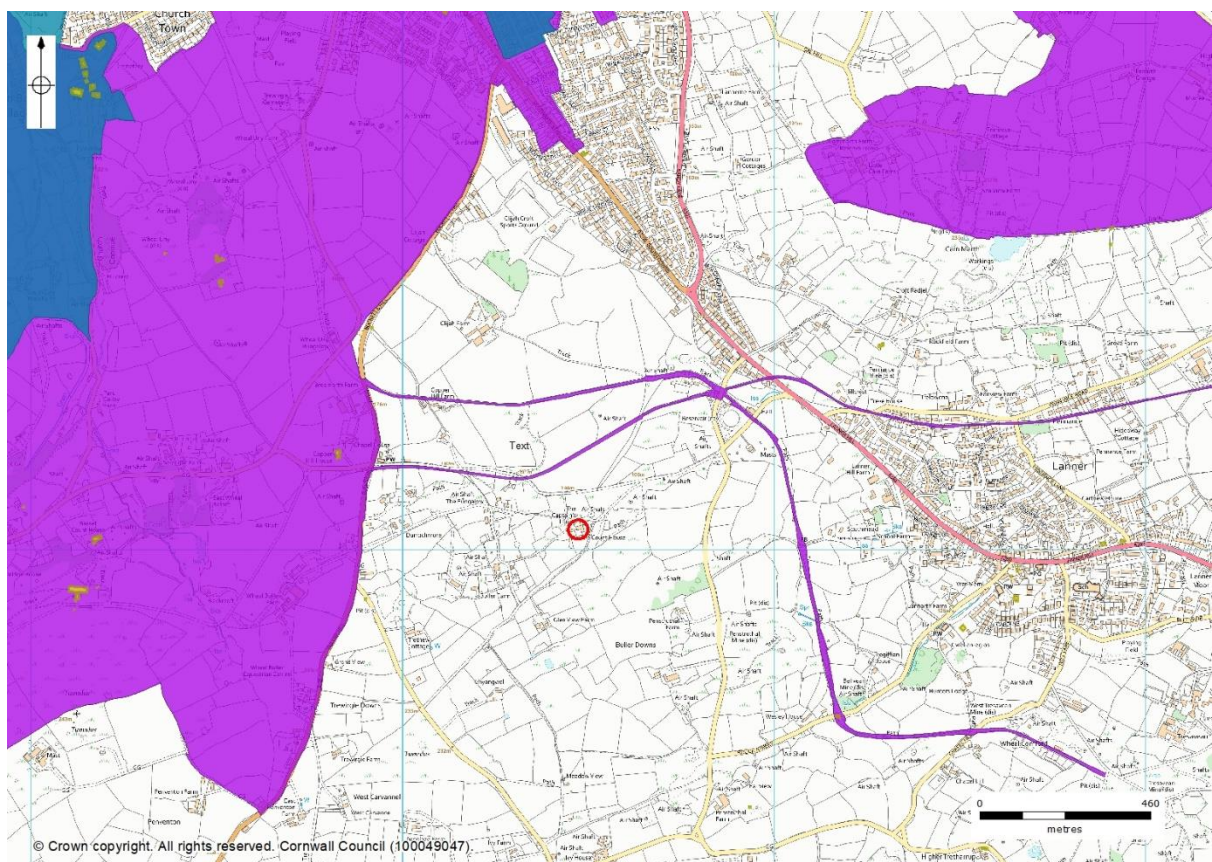


Fig 2 Location of The Count House (circled in red) with Conservation Areas shaded blue, World Heritage Site areas shaded purple and Listed Buildings shaded yellow.



Fig 3 Modern OS map showing The Count House outlined in red.



Fig 4 Extract from the Redruth parish Tithe Map c1840 showing The Count House outlined in red.

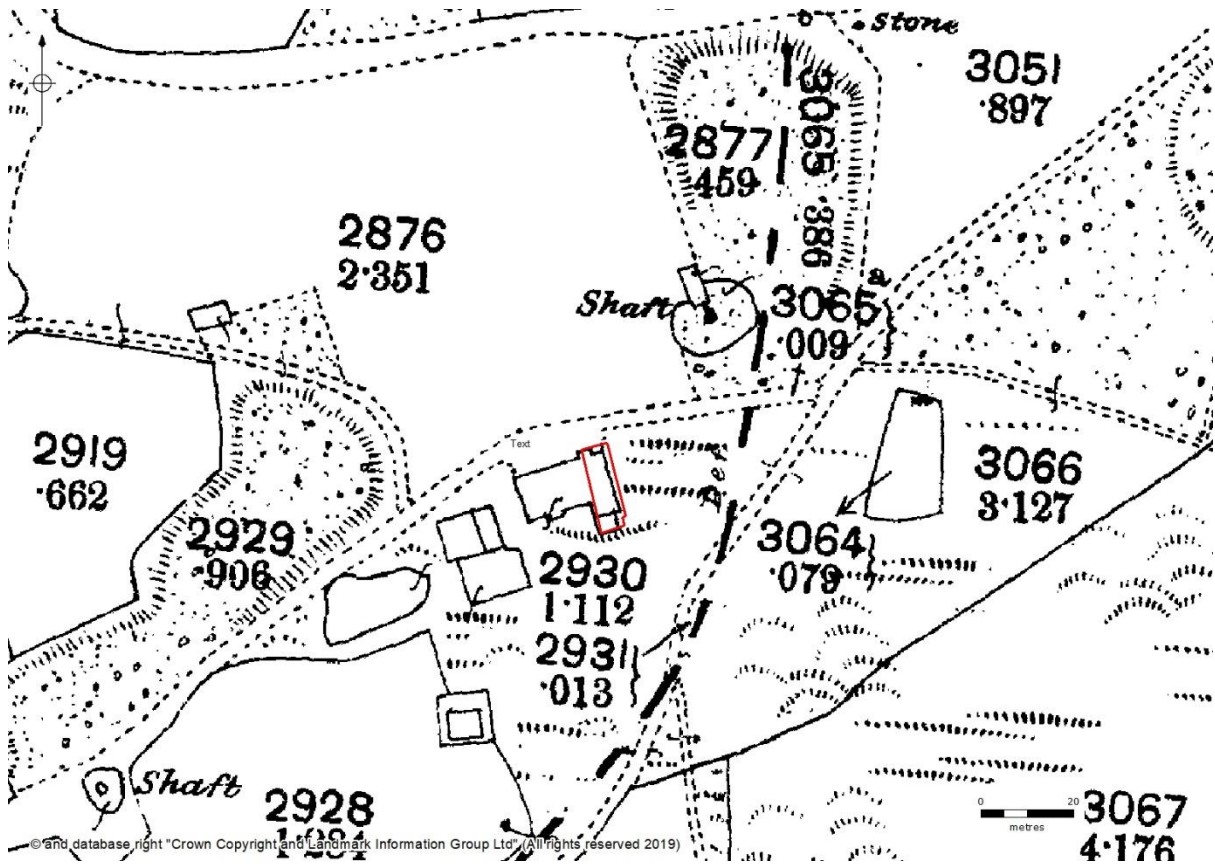


Fig 5 Extract from the OS First Edition 25 Inch Map c1880 showing The Count House outlined in red.

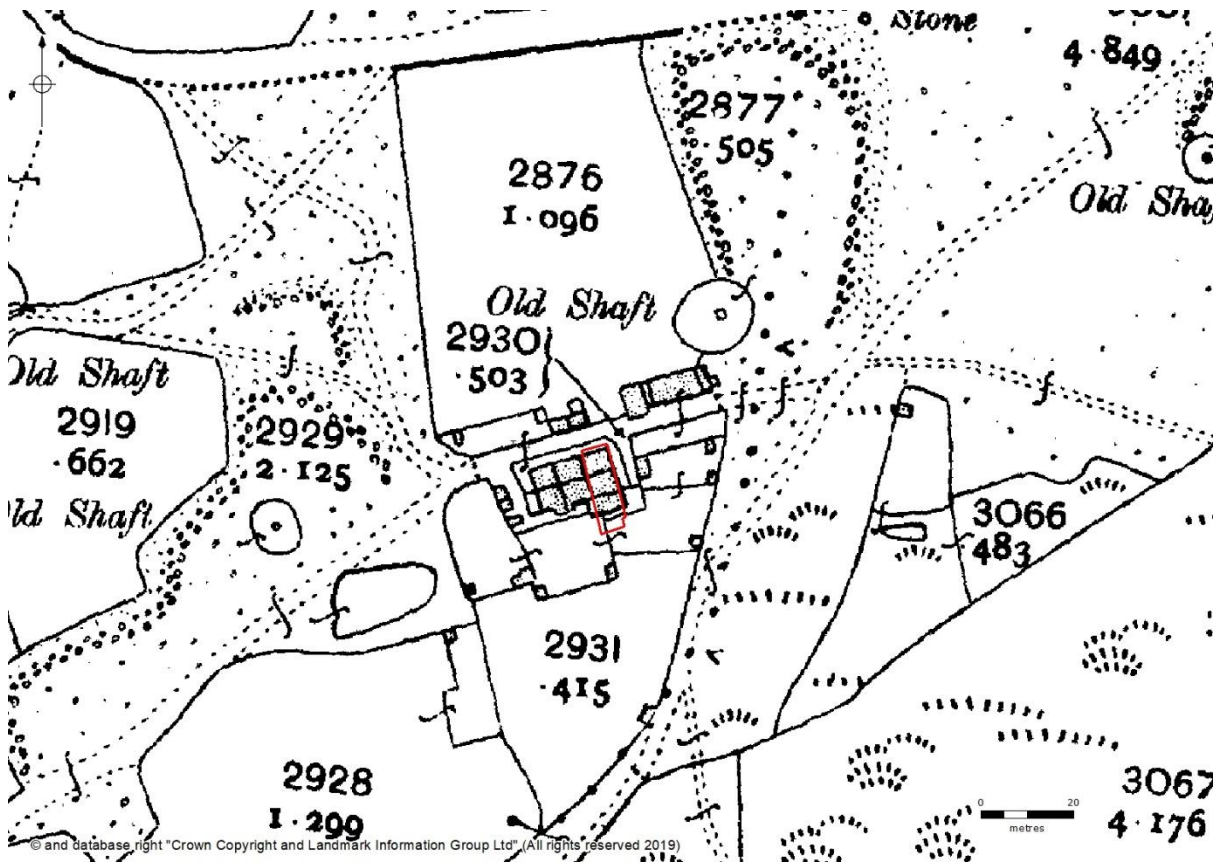


Fig 6 Extract from the OS Second Edition 25 Inch Map c1907 showing The Count House outlined in red.

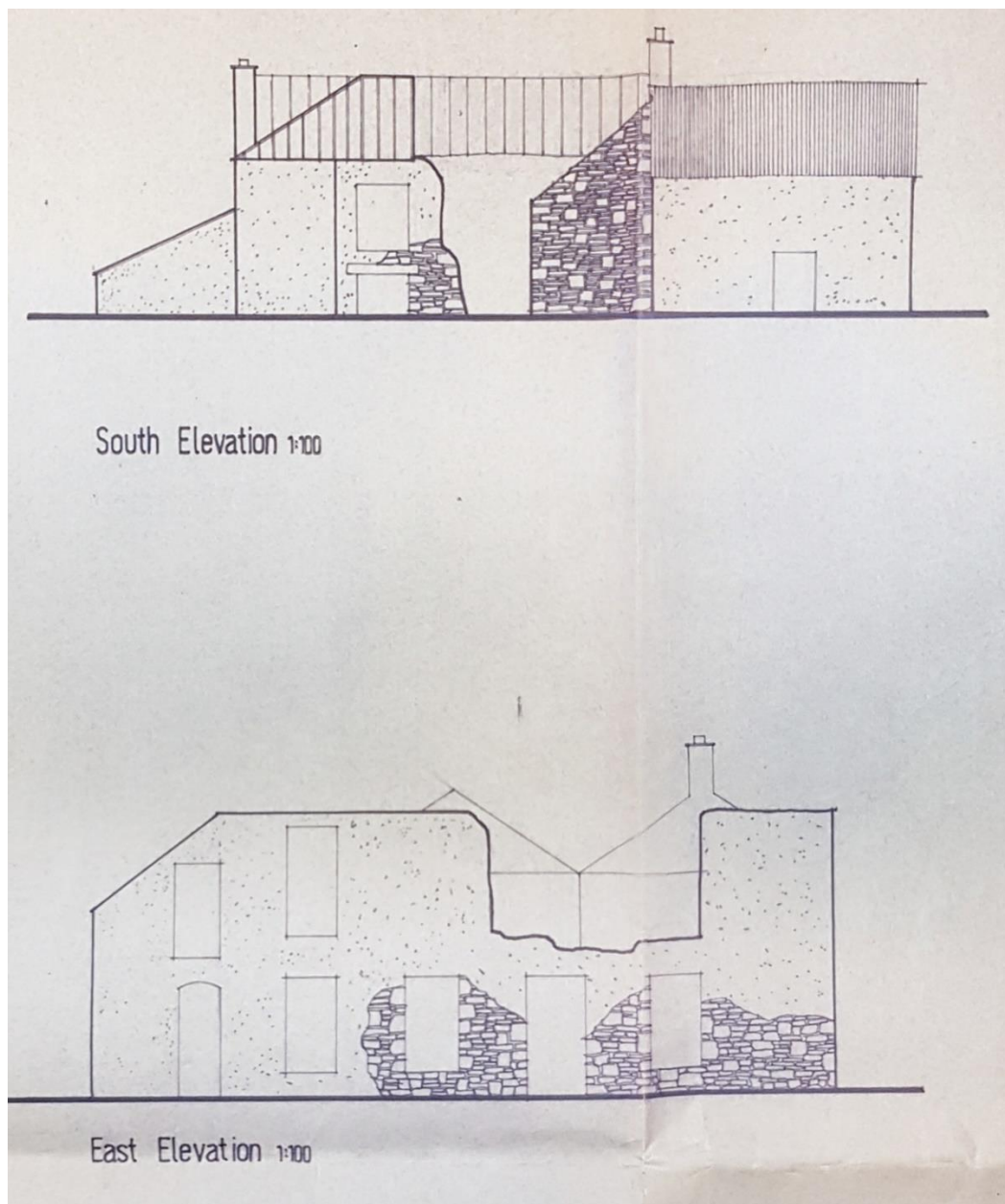


Fig 7 South elevation of The Count House and Captain's House and east (front) elevation of The Count House drawn in 2000 prior to rebuilding works. Drawings by Christopher J Pryor Architectural Services.



Fig 8 East elevation prior to rebuilding in 2000.



Fig 9 View of the east elevation of The Count House from the garden.



Fig 10 View through a field gate along the public footpath of the south elevation of the Count House and Captain's House.



Fig 11 View of the Count House looking north-west from the footpath.



Fig 12 View of existing conservatory in location of proposed new extension.



Fig 13 Existing modern stone-built porch.



Fig 14 Existing rendered garden wall adjoining the north elevation.



Fig 15 View from the garden in front of the east elevation looking north-east to Carn Marth in the distance.



Fig 16 View from the garden in front of the east elevation looking north to the converted late 19th or early 20th century outbuilding.



Fig 17 View from the north-eastern approach track looking towards the east elevation of The Count House and the converted late 19th or early 20th century outbuilding.

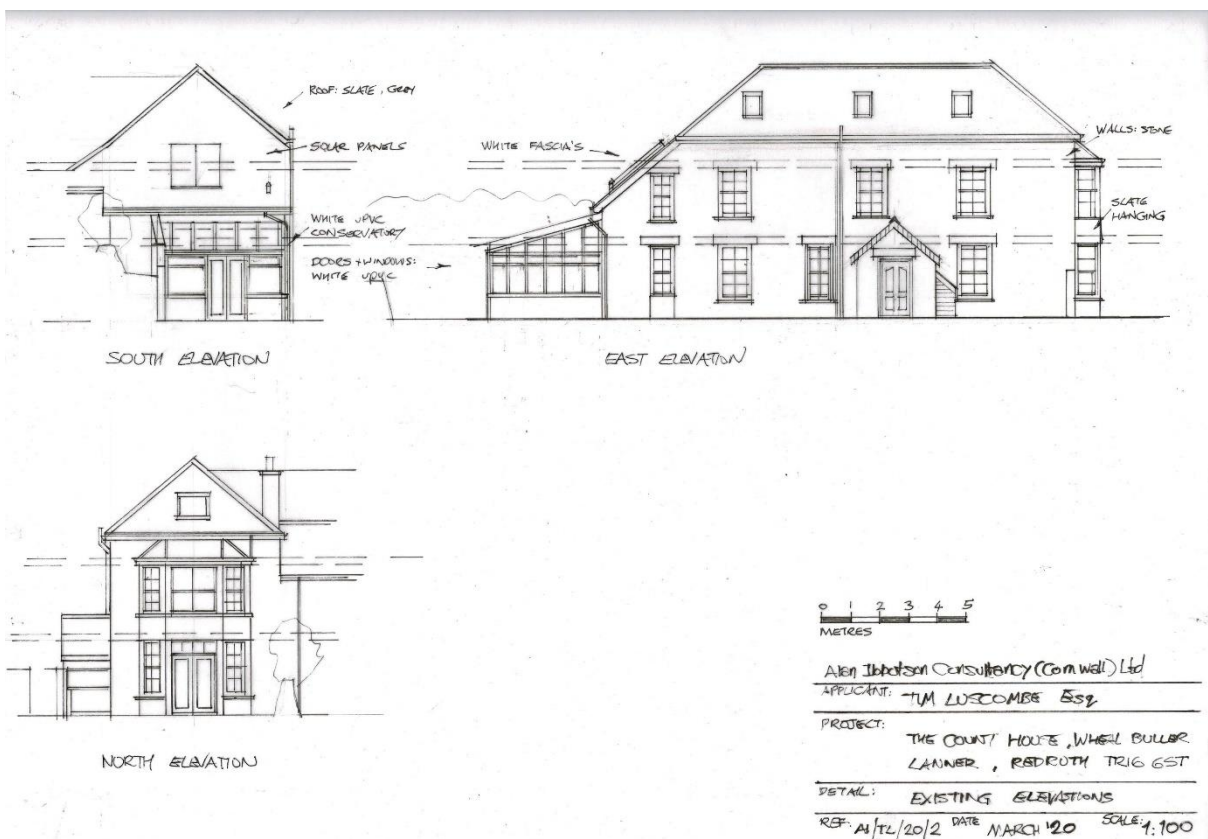


Fig 18 Existing elevation drawings.

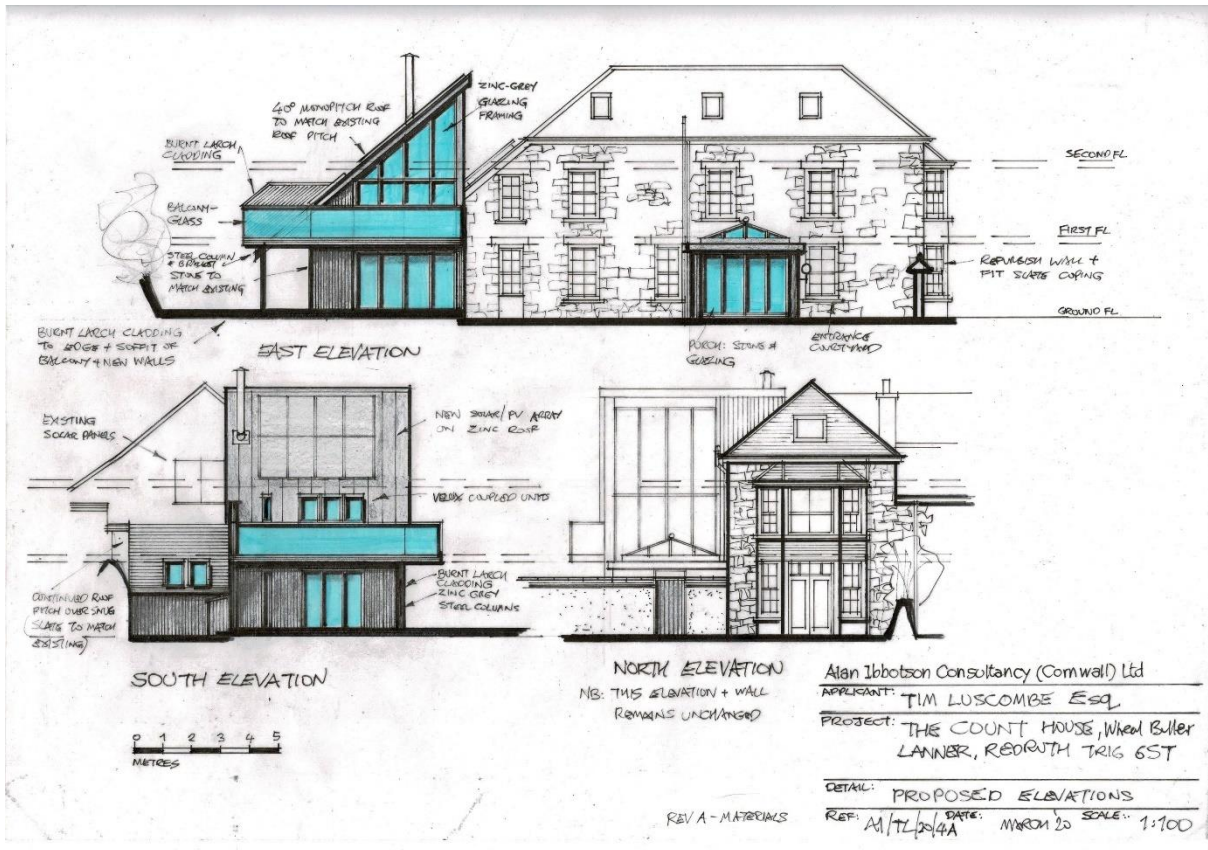


Fig 19 Elevation drawings showing initial proposals (design 1).

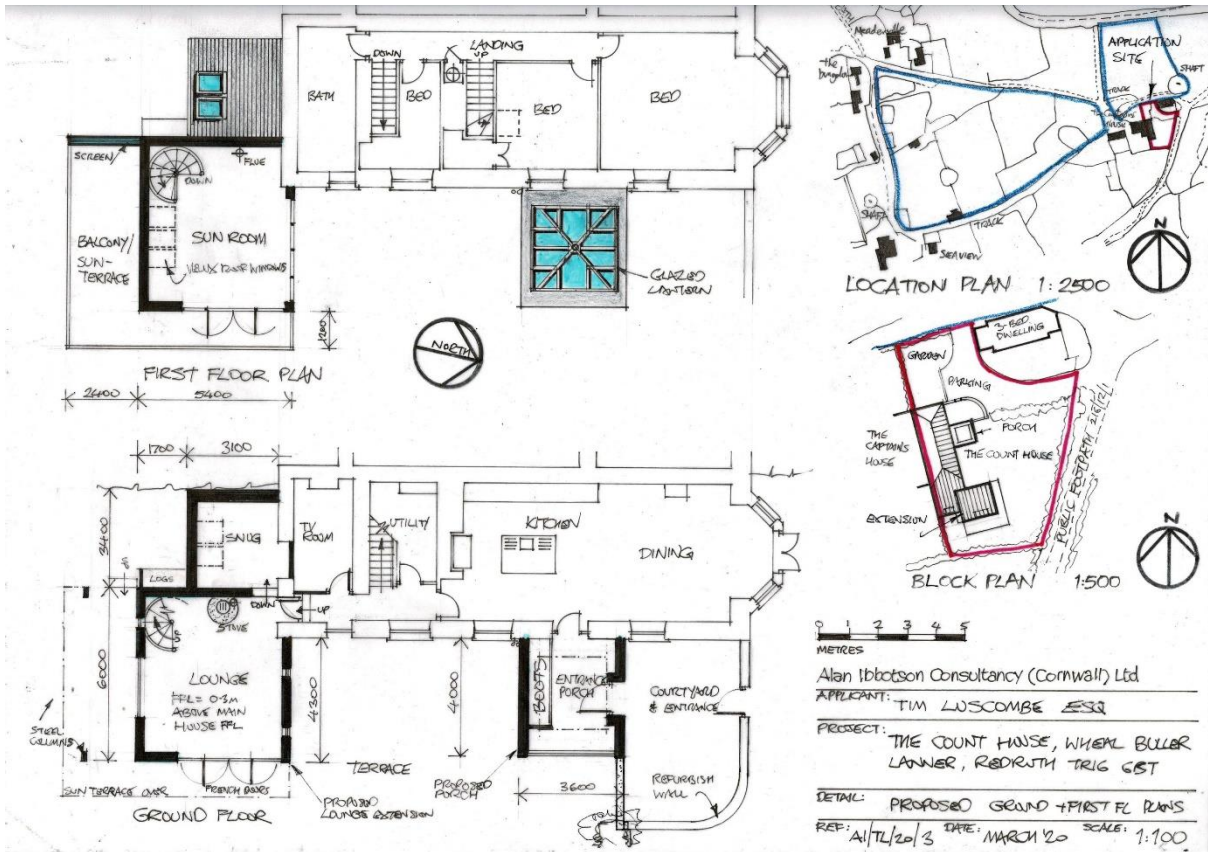


Fig 20 Plan showing initial proposals (design 1).

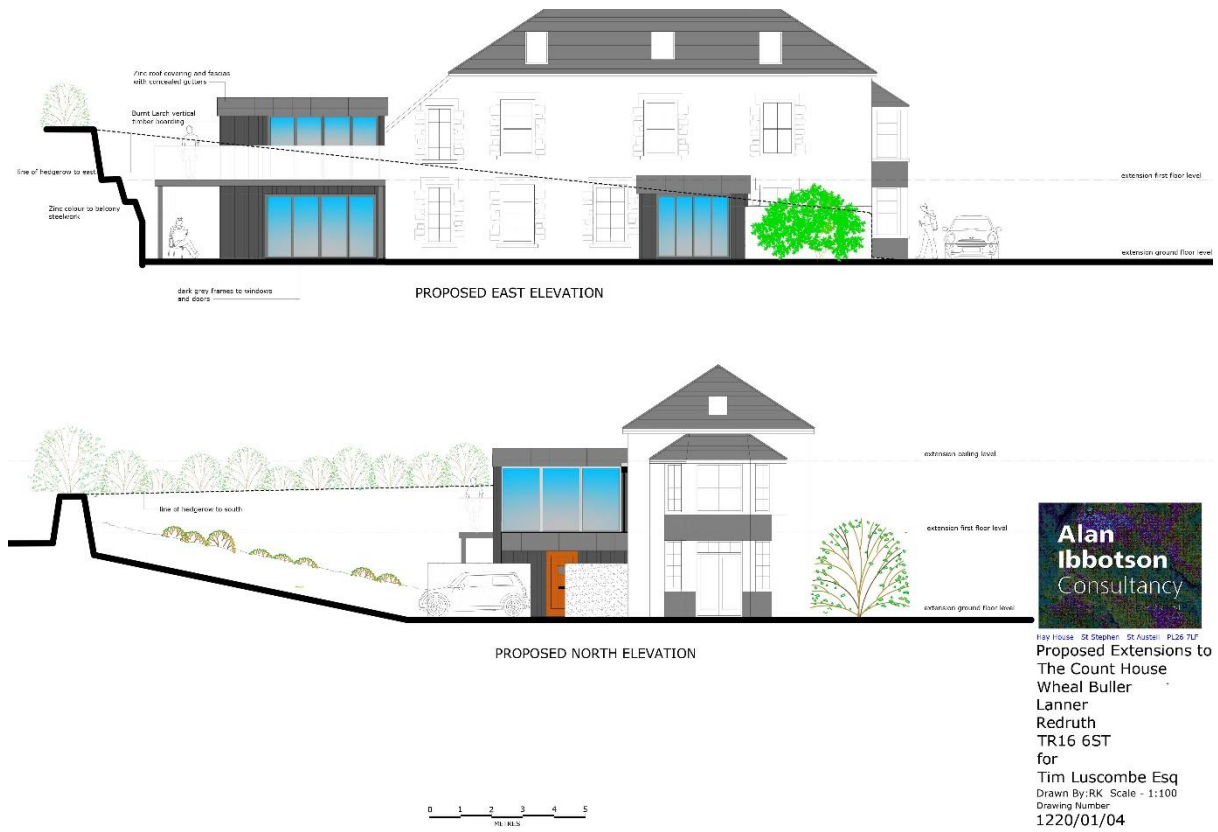


Fig 21 East and north elevation drawings showing alternative proposals (design 2).

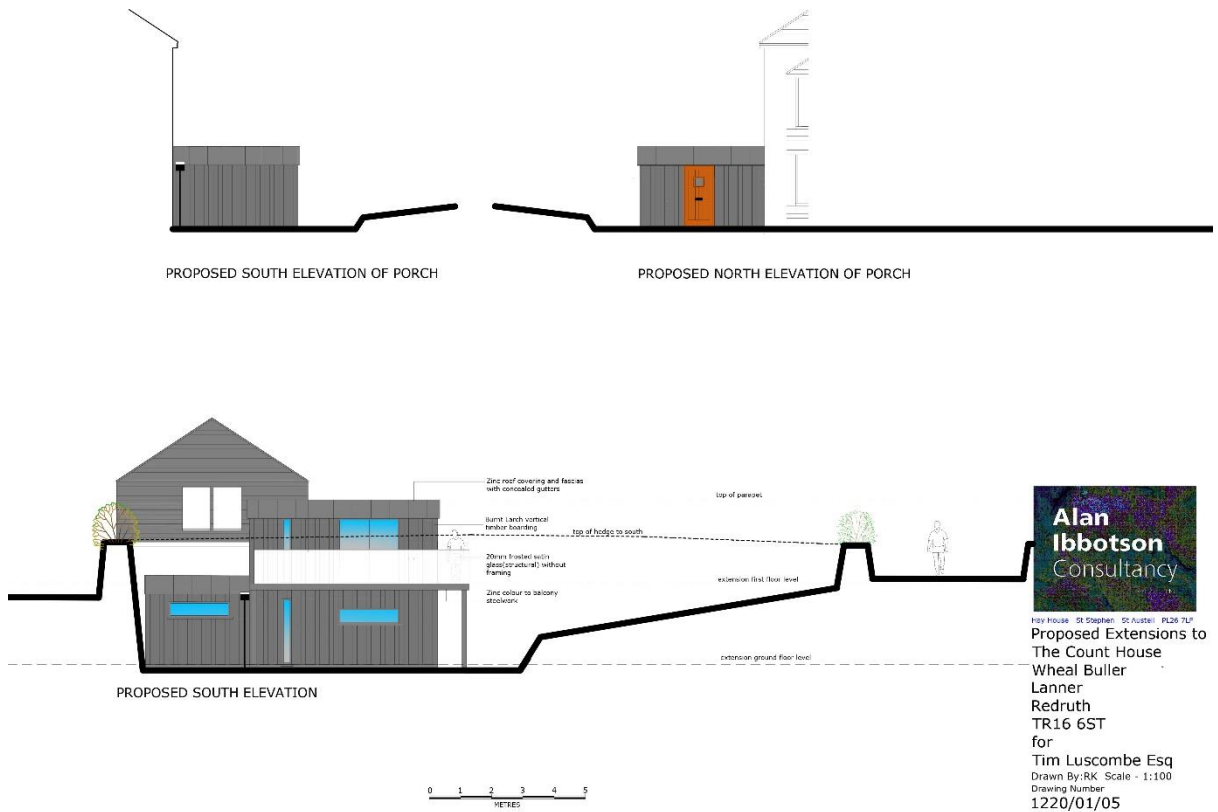


Fig 22 South and north elevations showing alternative proposals for porch and south elevation showing alternative proposals for new extension (design 2).

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