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Manor Barn - Great Trill Farm, Musbury, Axminster, Devon, EX13 8TU

Heritage, Design and Access Statement

mba

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**martin blake associates**

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## 1.0 Introduction

This Heritage, Design and Access Statement has been produced in order to explain the proposals for the part conversion of Manor Barn to a residential unit at the property known as Great Trill Farm, Axminster, Devon.

The proposals have been compiled based upon the extant planning and listed building consents references 89/0905 and 89/0906, dated 20-10-89. This included the conversion of Manor Barn into 2No. 4 bedroom dwellings.

As part of these proposals it is the intention to surrender the conversion of the western half of the barn into a dwelling and therefore retain the historically important manor barn in its current form. This will be in exchange for a relatively modest extension to the rear of the far less historically important farm house.

The eastern half of the manor barn to be converted to a dwelling is already divided into rooms at both ground and first floor levels. Leaving the western part of the manor barn undeveloped, will retain this wonderfully open, voluminous space, that would otherwise be lost under the extant planning approvals. Therefore, considering the proposals for the manor barn and farmhouse in an holistic manner, the benefits from an historical conservation perspective of keeping a significant part of the manor barn undeveloped, significantly outweighs the small rear addition to the farm house.



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## 2.0 Description of Property and Property History

### 2.1 Site Location

Great Trill Farm sits within its own land extending to around 270 acres. It is located near the village of Musbury and access via a single track road heading West of the A358.

When stood within the complex of buildings which make up Great Trill Farm, the topography of the land around is such that the farm sits within a bowl of land and almost completely concealed from the public domain.

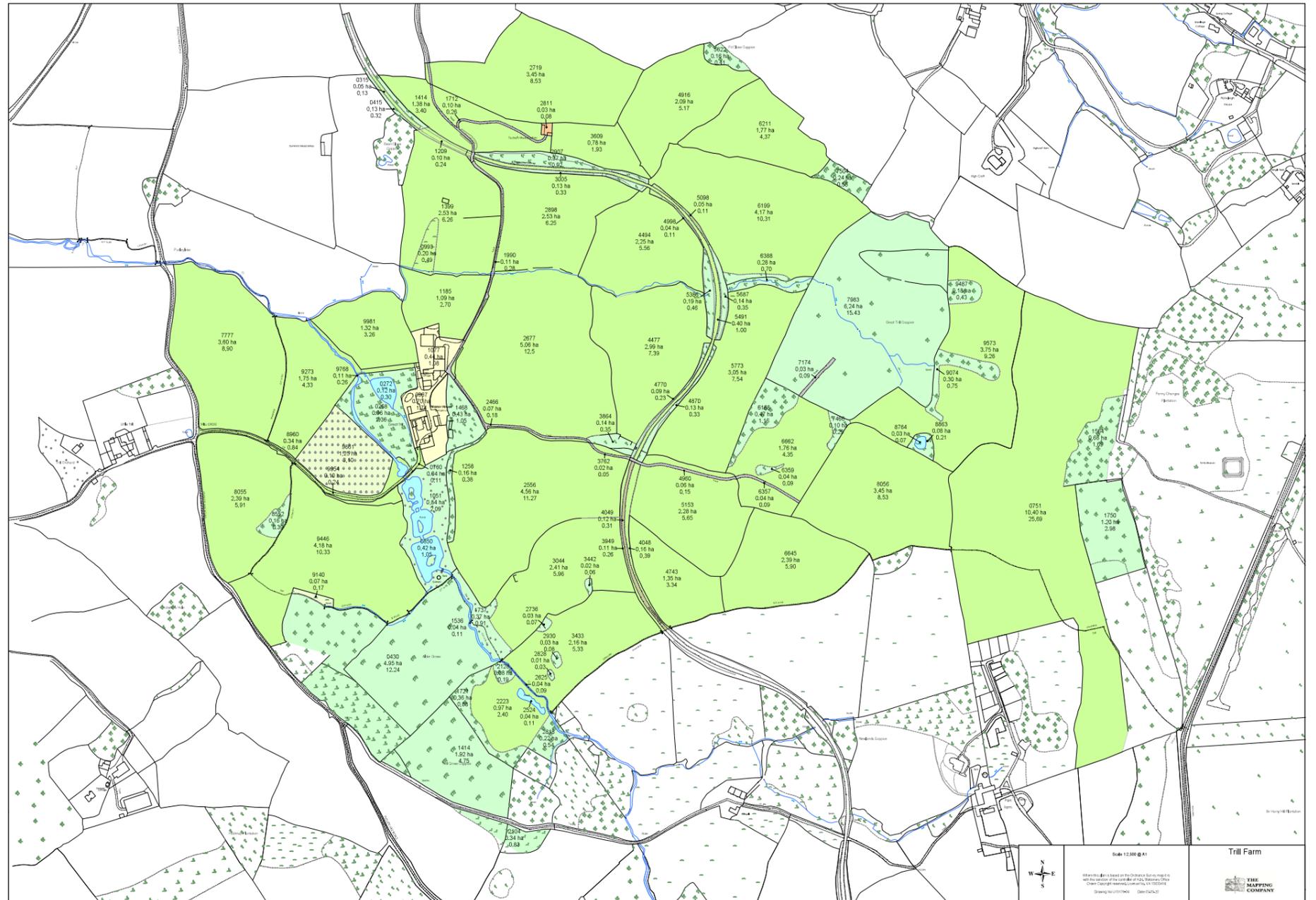
This can be seen on the adjacent land ownership plan.

### 2.2 Site Layout

The grouping of buildings which make up the core of Great Trill farm, are arranged about 2 courtyards, the first, the southern courtyard, between the north range of the farmhouse and the opposing south facade of Manor Barn, which are then flanked by what was the dairy barn on the east side and lean-to buildings to the west side, all of which have been re-purposed under previous planning approvals.

One could say that this area has a degree of loose formality about it, being close to the hierarchically important buildings of Manor Barn and Farmhouse.

The second, less formal courtyard, lies to the North of Manor Barn, with Manor Barn on the southern side and then flanked to the east and west by workshops and stores with the North side open to the land beyond.



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## 2.0 Description of Property and Property History

### 2.3 Site History

On examination of the local history archive, the following is mentioned of Great Trill:

'Great Trill, First mentioned in 1173, was one of the properties of the Drakes of Ashe, and at one time a small manor house. There are remains of Tudor buildings in the yard. The house itself has been modernised to some extent. It is practically certain that the great Duke of Marlborough was born in this house on 24th May 1650, and not at Ashe House in Musbury, as is so often asserted.'

To accompany a recent planning and listed building application connected to Great Trill Farm, messrs Keystone Historical Consultants undertook a study of the property and found the following:

Great Trill was connected to Ashe, in Musbury, which is said to have been acquired by marriage, by the Drake family, in 1415. Great Trill was certainly in the ownership and probably occupancy of Sir John Drake (1625-1669), JP, MP, Sheriff of Devon etc. in the 17th century. An 1896 privately published history of the Drake family states that the house at Trill 'which stills stands, is about the size of a modern English Farm-house, and it had a walled court, lodge and loop-holed towers.' (The Drake Family in England and America 1360-1895...by Louis Stoughton Drake (Boston, 1896). The Drake family were major figures locally as well as nationally. The south aisle in Axminster church is known as the Drake or Trill aisle and contains monuments of Drake family members, both of Ashe and Trill.

It is sometimes said that the first 1st Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722, son of Winston Churchill and Elizabeth Drake of Ashe) was born at Trill, but this appears to be contentious. A stone plaque with the Marlborough Crest, evidently re-sited, is built into the west gable of the farmhouse at Trill.



Fig 1. - 1840 Devon Tithe Map.

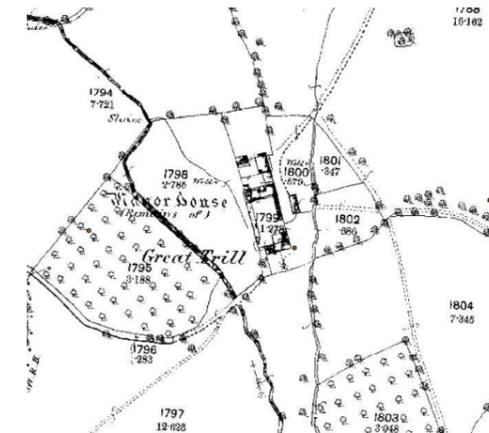


Fig 2. - 1880 OS first edition.



Fig 3. - 1904 OS map.



Fig 4. - 1946 aerial photograph.

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## 2.0 Description of Property and Property History

### 2.4 Property listing description

Grade 2 listed

Location

Statutory Address:

BARN NORTH NORTH WEST OF GREAT TRILL FARMHOUSE,  
PUDDLEYLAKE ROAD

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

Devon

District:

East Devon (District Authority)

Parish:

Axminster

National Grid Reference:

SY 29077 95682

Details

SY 29 NE 4/49

AXMINSTER PUDDLEYLAKE ROAD Barn north north west of  
Great Trill Farmhouse

GII C16 remains of manor house incorporated into circa C18 barn. Long stone rubble building with gable ended slate roof. Cart doors to left of centre. Of the C16 fabric there is a moulded string course which rises over a blocked window with moulded stone frame. At the centre a stone Tudor arched doorway, now blocked. In the east gable end a two-light oval doubled stone mullion window with drip mould. The Manor was one of the properties of the Drakes of Ashe. It is said that the Duke of Marlborough was born here in 1650

Shield reset in west gable of farmhouse is the arms of the Drakes of Ashe.



Fig 5. - Drakes of Ashe Coat of Arms set in west gable of farmhouse.

## 2.0 Description of Property and Property History

The listing description states that the barn is thought to be the remains of a 16th C. manor house which changed to a barn, circa 18th C.

The barn has a slated roof, below which are set random rubble stone walls.

Around the barn there are elements of stone dressings including window and door openings, a label drip mould and quoins at the building's corners.

Internally, to the east end of the building it is two storey, with the first floor element accessed by a dilapidated external timber stair of limited architectural quality.

At both ground and first floor levels, a longitudinal partition exists. At ground floor this comprises timber posts with the spaces between in filled with brickwork and render. At first floor level on broadly the same line the partition is timber and clad with timber boards.

The first floor structure is a combination of primary timber beams and secondary floor joists, housed into the primary beams. A number of areas of joists would appear to be 18th C. however there is evidence of a new section of floor over the area where the kitchen and internal staircase are proposed and these would seem 19th C. contemporary with the 19th C. roof structure. Floor boards are butt jointed softwood boards.

Throughout the barn, at ground floor level, the floor would appear to be an amalgam of packed earth, concrete and areas of flagstones.

The roof structure is relatively modern when considered in the context of the age of the earliest parts of the building and comprises a series of primary roof trusses and purlins, overlaid with timber rafters.

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It is interesting and relevant to note that a previous but recent assessment of the barn undertaken by Messrs Keystone Historical Consultants which found the following:

'...The building is the incomplete shell of a 16th C domestic building, massively altered in 19th century (between 1840-1890 on map evidence) when the west portion was widened to the rear and converted to a large threshing barn. At about the same date the building was re-roofed throughout with standard tie beam kingpost and strut roof trusses. The east portion retains an early floor and there is what appears to be the original first floor window evidence in both end walls.'

Keystone also discuss the significance of the building in their report, which states:

'The material significance of the barn as evidence and its aesthetic significance have, however, both been severely compromised by the loss of early fabric. After adaptation to agricultural use in the 19th century the building had lost its early roof; stacks and most of its north wall and much of its internal plan. Some of these may of course have been lost earlier...'

'The chief risk to the significance of the building is that it currently has no viable use. It is a large building, expensive to maintain and needs a viable and appropriate use to justify the costs of maintenance'

To follow, on the next pages are details of approved works to the barn, which were granted consent under application references 89/0905, dated 20-10-89.

These works are centred around the conversion of the barn to form 2No. residential dwellings.

### **Important Notes**

**1.** It is important to note that the approved works included the raising of the entire roof and external walls of the manor barn, by approximately 900mm, in order to facilitate sufficient head room at first floor level, below the collars of the roof trusses.

Subsequent to this, an application for discharge of planning/ listed building condition was submitted by Messrs Gollifer Langston Architects. This was in pursuance of the discharge of conditions 5 and 6 of the aforementioned approvals. These details were approved and the conditions discharged by East Devon District Council in a letter dated 16th January 2013.

The approved detail drawing by messrs Gollifer Langston Architects is Drawing No. 223-305 revision A - titled 'Wall Details'.

The approved details include the following:

The method by which the entire roof and external walls of the manor barn will be raised by approximately 900mm in order to facilitate sufficient head room at first floor level, below the collars of the roof trusses.

The relaying of the existing roof slates on new timber battens and new roofing membrane, including the introduction of eaves vents.

The lining of the external walls using insulation and dry lining.

**2.** It is also important to note that the extant consents included the incorporation of the small barn building behind the western section of the Manor Barn into what was called Unit 5 of the approvals. The proposals forming the subject of this application for planning and listed building consent do not propose to implement this.

### **3.0 Pre-application Planning Consultation**

A pre-application planning consultation was made to East Devon District Council under application reference 21/0040/preapp the outcome of which was received on 27/04/2021.

Unfortunately, due to social distancing restrictions, there was no opportunity for the planning case officer, nor conservation officer, to visit site in order to meet and discuss the sensitivities of the building, the proposals and what had been granted consent previously.

It was acknowledged by the local planning authority, that in order to form a considered opinion about the proposals a site meeting, at some point and when social distancing rules allowed, would be invaluable in this respect.

Since the pre-application feedback, social distancing rules have been relaxed and it is hoped that the applicant, their agents and members of the local authority's planning team can meet as part of the formal planning and listed building application process in order that the building can be assessed against the proposals, the extant consents and in the context of Great Trill Farm as a whole.

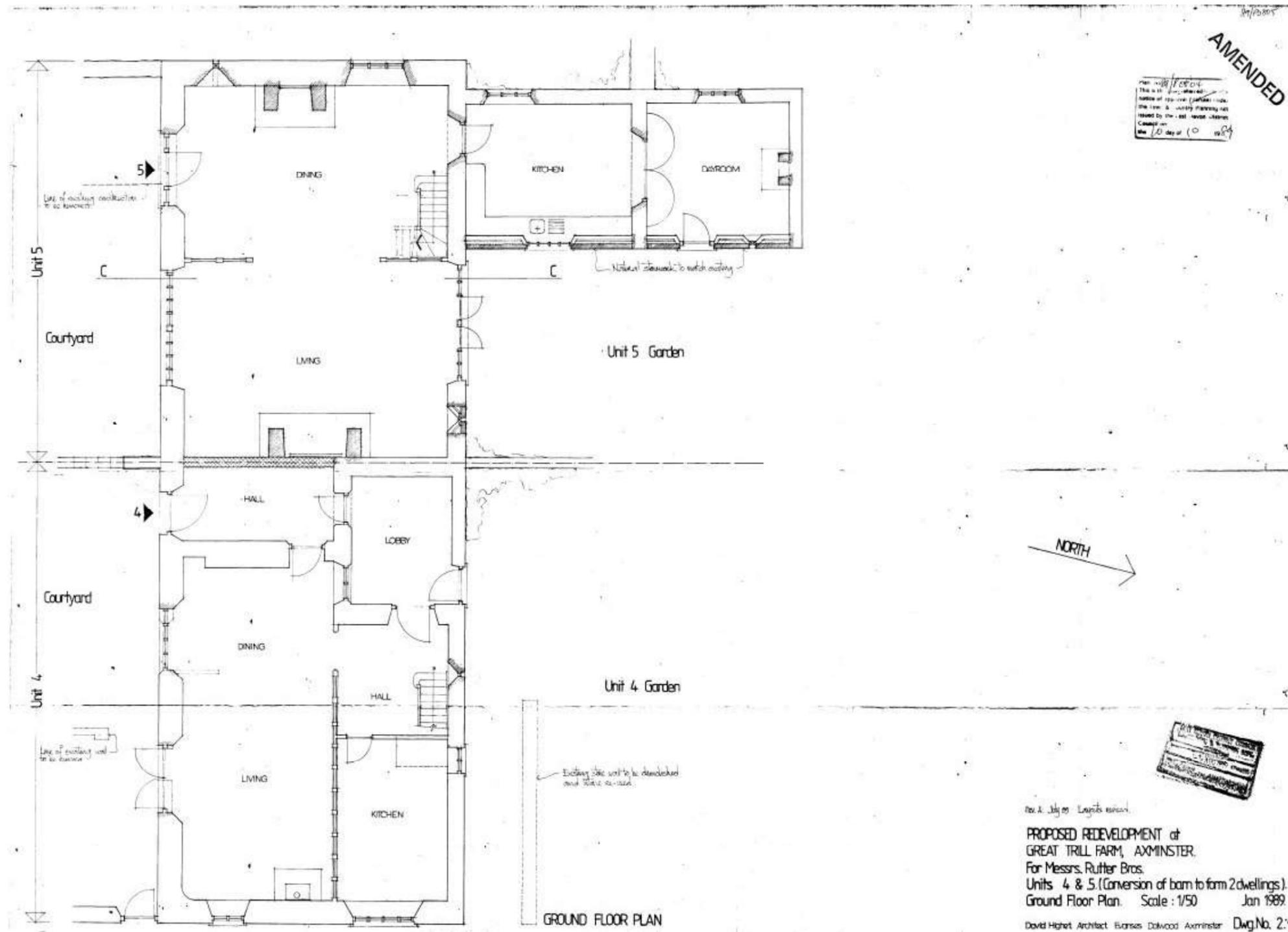


Fig 6. - Approved works to ground floor plan.

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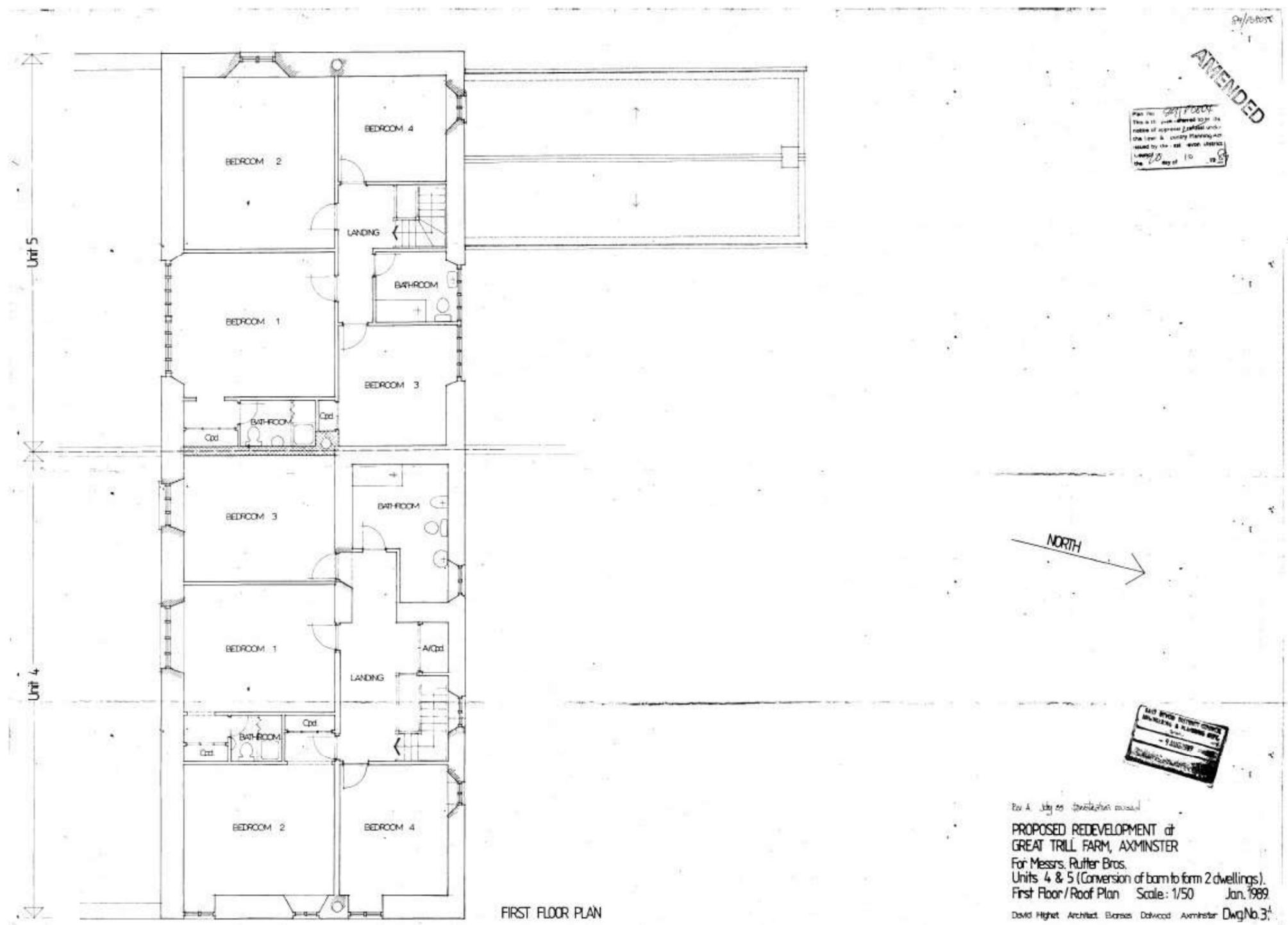


Fig 7. - Approved works to first floor plan.

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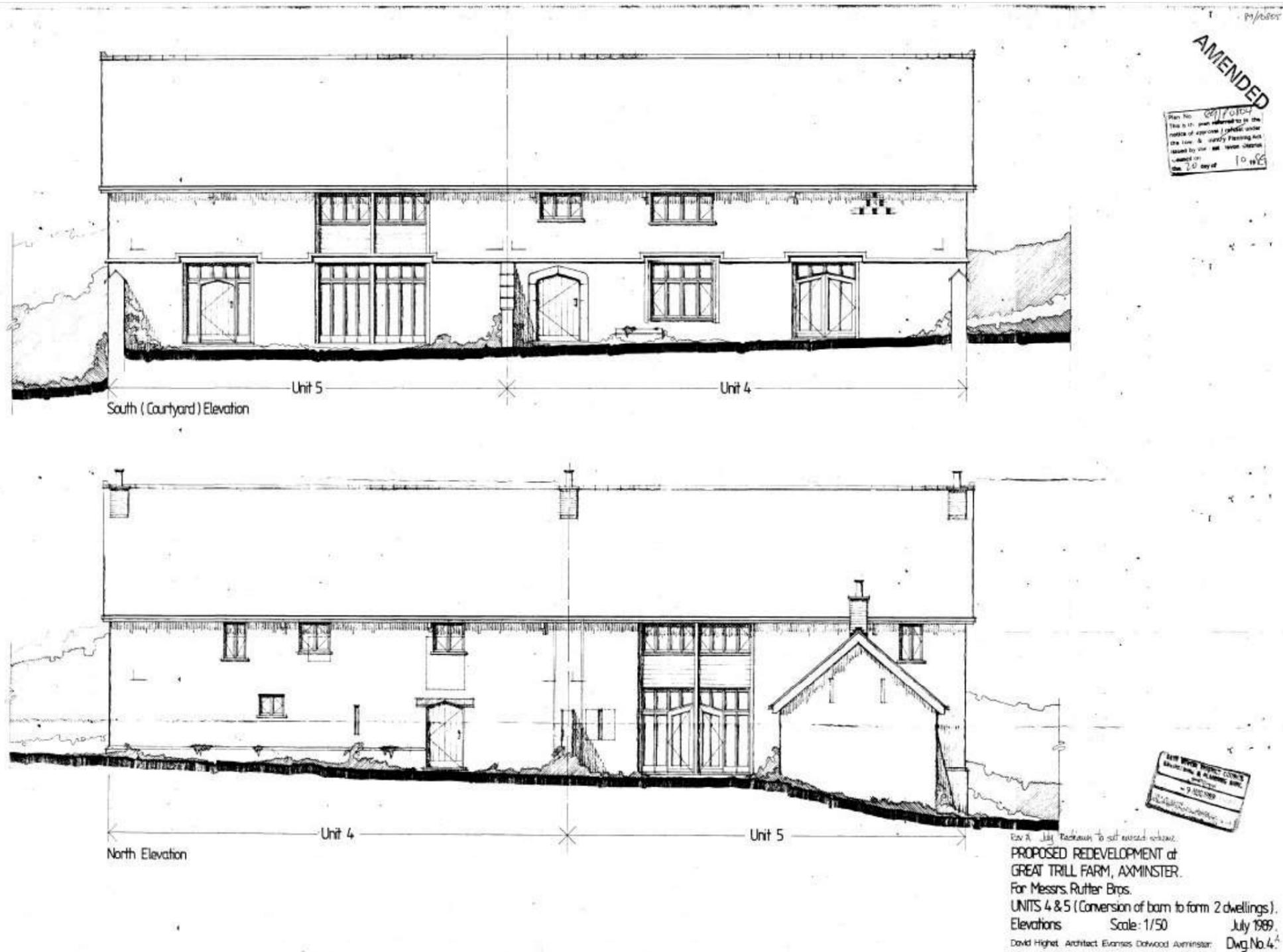


Fig 8. - Approved works to North and South Elevations.

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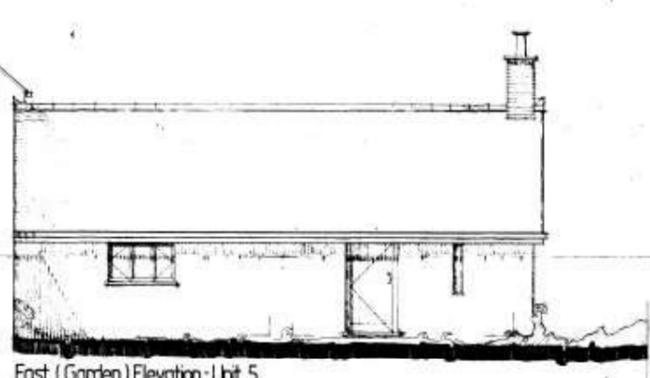
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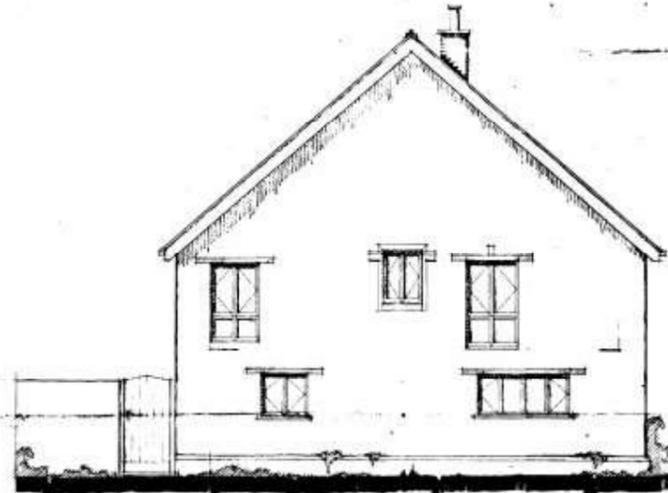


West Elevation (Unit 5)

AMENDED  
 10/10/89  
 10/10/89



East (Garden) Elevation - Unit 5



East Elevation (Unit 4)

10/10/89

Rev. A July 89. Revisions to self-revised scheme.  
 PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT of  
 GREAT TRILL FARM, AXMINSTER.  
 For Messrs. Rutter Bros.  
 UNITS 4 & 5 (Conversion of barn to form 2 dwellings).  
 Elevations Scale: 1/50 July 1989.  
 David Highet, Architect, Excesses Dalwood, Axminster. Dwg. No. 5.

Fig 9. - Approved works to East and West Elevations.

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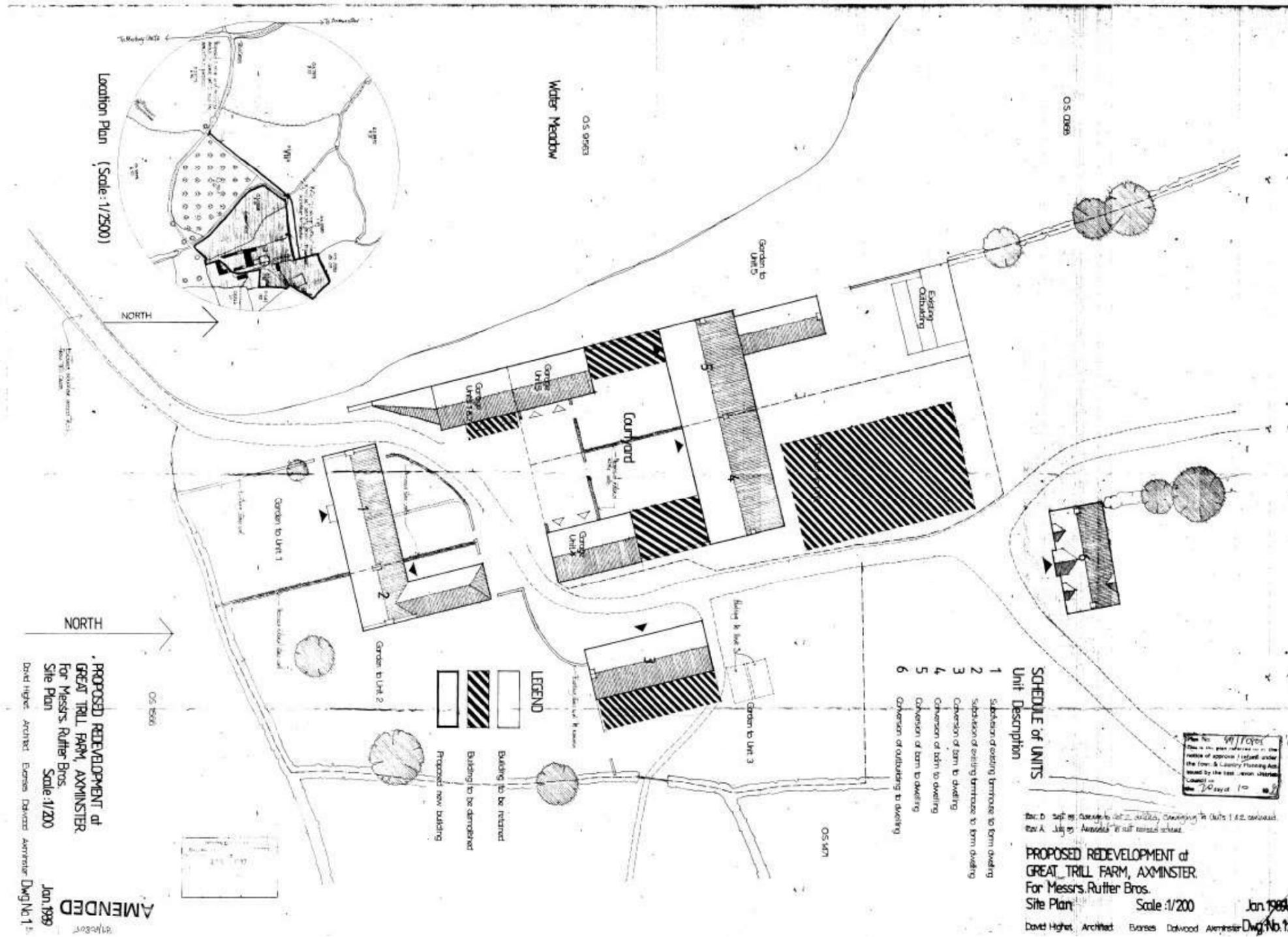


Fig 10. - Approved Site Plan.

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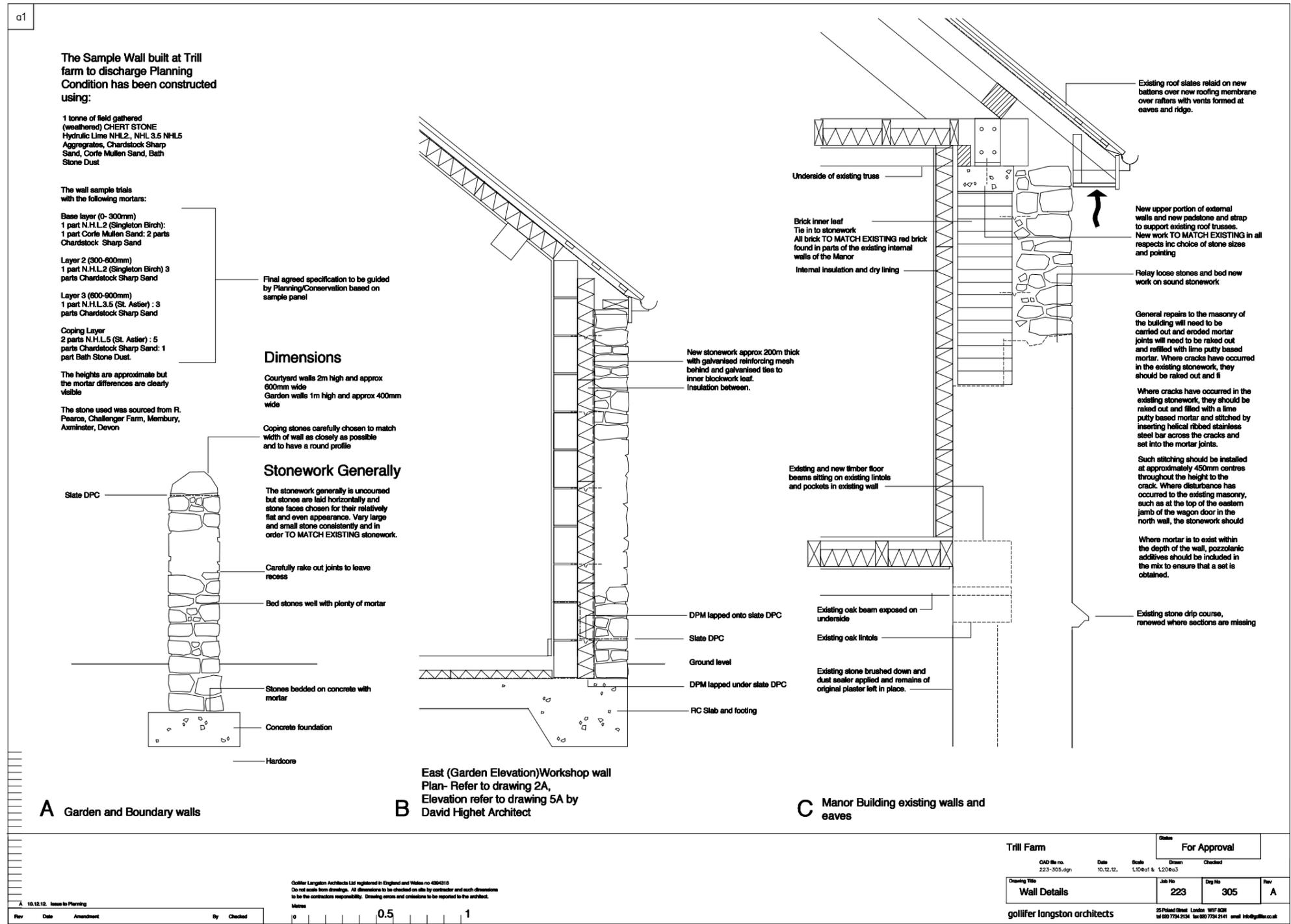


Fig 11. The approved detail drawing by messrs Gollifer Langston Architects is Drawing No. 223-305 revision A - titled 'Wall Details'

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Fig 12. The approved elevational comparison drawing by messrs Gollifer Langston Architects is Drawing No. 223-084 revision A - titled 'Existing Manor House Elevations'.

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## 4.0 The Proposals

The scheme contemplates the following:

- The general restoration and breathing of new life into the building, through giving the barn a purpose.
- Conversion of the eastern part of the barn to a 4 bedroom residence in accordance with the extant planning approvals.
- Re-covering of roof to introduce a roofing membrane across the top of the existing rafters.
- Reinstatement of a 'great hall' fireplace to the west end of the barn element of the building.
- Modification of existing roof trusses of the first floor to the eastern section of the barn, above the proposed bedrooms.
- Reinstatement of the roof between the dairy barn and manor barn.

### 4.1 - Conversion of eastern element of barn to form a 4 bedroom residential unit.

As previously mentioned in this document, there is an extant planning/ listed building approval for the conversion of the manor barn to form 2No. 4 bedroom residential units. The approved plans are also included within this document (fig. 6 to fig.12 inclusive). The intention is to implement the conversion of the eastern half of the barn in accordance with this approval but leave the western half of the barn and indeed the attached smaller barn to the north ostensibly as barns.

The unconverted barn will be used as a meeting place for those who live and work at Great Trill Farm and also as a shelter in inclement weather for those attending the farm on educational field trips.

### Important Departure From the Approved Plan

The approved and extant scheme for the barn includes the raising of the entire roof and external walls by approximately 900mm. This is to facilitate the first floor accommodation of both approved dwellings.

It is acknowledged that this is a major intervention and one which would have a detrimental effect on the significance, character and setting of this important listed building.

Instead therefore, the proposals will keep the roof and walls at their existing height and instead modify a small number of roof trusses above only one half of the barn to facilitate sufficient headroom over the first floor of the single proposed dwelling.

This modification will be carried out to relatively modern elements of roof structure and will allow the preservation of the overall character and setting of the listed building.

Advice has been taken from structural engineers, messrs John J Oates Ltd, Consulting Structural Engineers, and the sensitive modification of the roof trusses is detailed on their drawing No. 21/7553-01, which forms part of the application documents, together with their calculations which justify, structurally, this adjustment.

There will be other small adjustments to the proposals, namely a slight reconfiguration of the proposed stair and the introduction of a conservation rooflight over this stair.

It is proposed that the walls and ceilings will be lined and insulated using breathable construction methods appropriate to the conversion of such a building.

The insulating of the external walls and the application of a dry lining was approved in the detail submitted by messrs Gollifer Langston Architects in Drawing No. 223-305 revision A - titled 'Wall Details'.

A new ground floor construction to the residential unit is proposed and that this will be a breathable limecrete construction, again appropriate in converting a building of this nature.

The western half of the barn, save its general restoration, will remain as existing and it is envisaged that the space will be used to host periodic gatherings of the various workers and tenants at Great Trill Farm.

As part of this, a fireplace is proposed to the west end of this barn space and this will be in the same location as the fireplace approved under the extant consents.

### 4.2 - Re-covering of barn roof, to introduce a roofing membrane across the top of the existing rafters.

The introduction of a roof membrane was approved by East Devon District Council in a letter dated 16th January 2013.

The approved detail drawing by messrs Gollifer Langston Architects is Drawing No. 223-305 revision A - titled 'Wall Details', which shows a new roofing membrane being installed to the manor barn roof, with a ventilated air gap above the membrane.

The proposals therefore tie in with this approved detail.

The intention is to carefully remove the existing slates from the roof of the barn and set aside for reinstatement.

The opportunity will then be taken to carry out any necessary timber repairs to the roof timbers and this will be carried out on a like for like basis and kept to an absolute minimum.

Following this, a roofing membrane will be provided across the top of the existing rafters. This membrane will offer a vital second line of defence from the weather, which is particularly appropriate in this exposed location and will help prevent further ongoing defects and decay of the roof timbers resulting from wind driven rain.

The membrane will be such that this intervention could, if necessary, be removed in the future should this ever be desired, without detriment to the historic fabric of the building.

The membrane will be of a type which is ecologically sound and not harmful to bats.

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## 4.0 The Proposals

### 4.3 - Reinstatement of 'great hall' fireplace to the west end of the barn element of the building.

In this respect, a fireplace and chimney were approved as part of the extant consents relating to the conversion of the manor barn to 2No. dwellings. The proposals in this respect therefore, tie in with these approvals.

As mentioned previously, the works to the barn element of the building are minimal, other than the reinstatement of what looks to have been a great hall type fireplace at the west end of the barn. This would help in providing a sense of community and coming together for periodic celebration for the workers and tenants at Great Trill Farm.

The barn will also provide a place for shelter and having a snack and a hot drink in inclement weather, for those attending Great Trill Farm for educational field trips

The adjacent photographs show the location of the proposed fireplace and it is proposed that this rises up and terminates at roof level via a stone chimney centred on the ridge of the building.

It is interesting to note, that the remnants of the former external wall of the earlier barn can be seen to the right hand side of the former stack, as referred to in Keystone's historic report.



Fig 13. Existing barn looking west towards western gable and location of proposed reinstated fireplace.



Fig 14. Detail photograph of internal side of western gable of barn.



Fig 15. Detail photograph of internal side of western gable of barn.



Fig 16. Detail photograph of internal side of western gable of barn looking up to roof.

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## 4.0 The Proposals

### 4.4 - Reinstatement of the roof between the dairy barn and manor barn.

As part of the works to Manor Barn, it is proposed that the former roof connecting The Dairy Barn and Manor Barn, be reinstated. This will allow a main entrance to be created to the new dwelling unit in Manor Barn, away from the formal southern courtyard which exists between the north facade of the farm house and south facade of The Manor Barn. This southern courtyard is proposed for the use of the Farmhouse occupants and not those of the new dwelling in the Manor Barn.

The roof structure will be timber and will be tiled with clay tiles of a profile which matches those which exist on the dairy barn.

Evidence of the former roof connection can be seen in the adjacent historic maps and photographs.



Fig 17. Photo showing 'tide mark' of former roof of dairy barn connecting with the manor barn.



Fig 18. Photo showing 'tide mark' of former roof of dairy barn connecting with the manor barn as viewed from southern courtyard.



Fig 19. 1840 Devon tithe map.



Fig 20. 1880 OS first edition map.



Fig 21. 1904 OS map.

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## 5.0 Conclusion

The proposals are not intended, nor do they seek to, 'modernise' the manor barn. Instead, the proposals seek to provide a much needed use for the building. This is in direct response to the severe risk which currently exists for the barn, as identified by Keystone Consultants, that currently the barn currently has no viable use and is expensive to maintain.

The proposals pick up on and make use of the extant planning consents for the building, including the approval of details reserved by condition, and represent an opportunity to make careful and sensitive interventions into the building, which provide the building with its optimum viable use and ensuring its ongoing maintenance and care.

Reference has been made to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This 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. Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out similar aims. Whilst that document superseded Planning Policy Statement 5 "Planning for the Historic Environment", in March 2012, the accompanying 'Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide' is extant guidance and states the importance of plan form to the significance of the building and its understanding.

It is clear that in terms of the preservation of the listed building, the proposals will cause only limited harm and having regard to the matters outlined above, that harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial, a term found in paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework. That passage goes on to say that this harm should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

To summarise, the proposals are for the following:

- The general restoration and breathing of new life into the building, through giving the barn a purpose.
- Conversion of only half of the barn to form 1 dwelling, rather than the approved whole barn to 2No. dwellings.
- Re-covering of roof to introduce a membrane across the top of the existing rafters in accordance with the details approved as part of the discharge of condition 5 of the extant consents.
- Reinstatement of a 'great hall' fireplace to the west end of the barn element of the building. The approval of a fireplace in this location, and of a similar size was granted under the extant planning consents.
- Modification of existing roof trusses of the first floor to the eastern section of the barn, above the proposed bedrooms. This is in lieu of the approved scheme whereby consent was granted to raise the entire roof and external walls of the manor barn by approximately 900mm
- Reinstatement of the roof between the dairy barn and manor barn.

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