

PROPOSED CONVERSION OF EXISTING PREMISES & CONSTRUCTION OF 1No.
DETACHED DWELLING

At

THE PEARL
110 LOWER END
LEAFIELD
OX29 9QQ

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application to West Oxfordshire District Council for the conversion of the existing premises into 4no. dwellings for private rental and the construction of 1no. detached dwelling at The Pearl, 110 Lower End, Leaffield and should be read alongside the application drawings, Heritage Statement, and other associated application documents.
- 1.2 The current use comprises a Chinese take-away at ground floor with a 3-bed maisonette at 1st/2nd floor levels. The proposal seeks to provide an alternative business for the current proprietors as the current use is no longer viable. Greater detail is provided in the confidential Business statement submitted with this application.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION



Fig 1. View from Lower Road approaching from the East

- 2.1. 110 Lower End lies on the Eastern edge of Leaffield and within the Cotswolds AONB and the Leaffield Conservation Area. The premises are not Listed.

- 2.2. It lies in a prominent position facing East on the approach into the village. To the front of the building lies a triangular tarmac parking area enclosed by a low stone wall bordering the Highways either side, the application site amounting to approximately 0.1Ha in total.
- 2.3. The main building itself is a 2 ½ storey natural stone structure of historic vernacular with a steeply pitched stone slate roof with gables either end and 2 pitched dormers on the East-facing roof slope. There have been various single and 2 storey additions of unknown age to the rear and either side, creating a fairly random appearance.



Fig 2. Range of single and 2-storey additions on the North and West elevations

- 2.4. The hipped roof, 2-storey addition off the South gable may at some point have been a separate building, subsequently linked to the main building with what is currently the rear lobby adjacent to the W.C addition at ground floor and corridor to a bathroom at first floor (see fig 3 below).

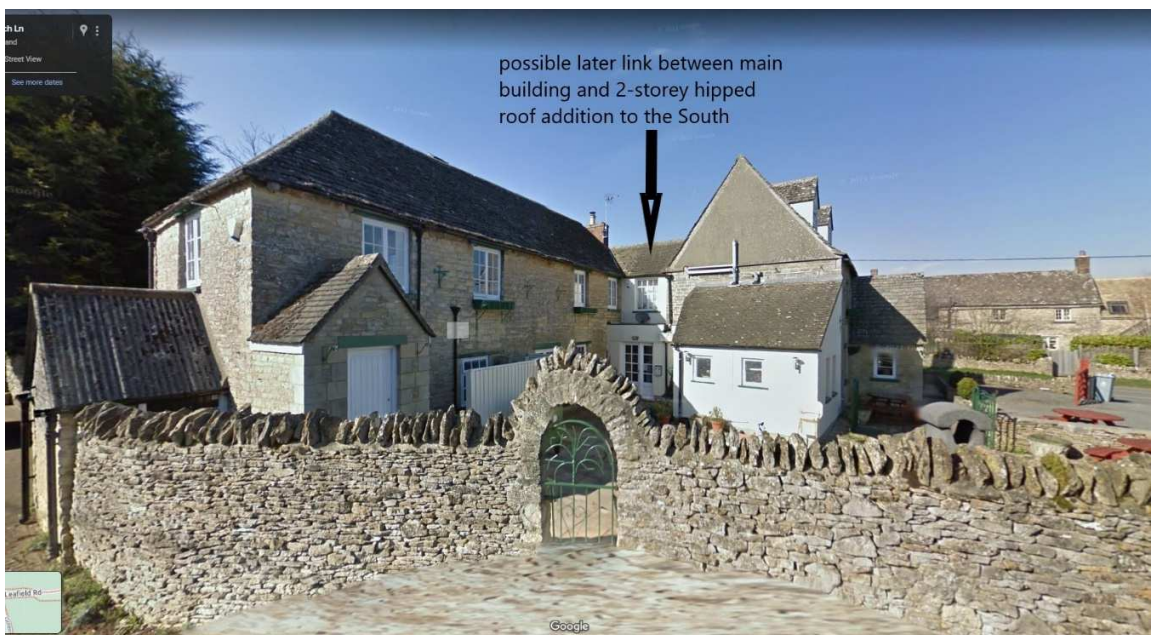


Fig 3. South elevation from Greenwich Lane

- 2.5. The ground floor accommodation comprises the former restaurant/bar areas, and commercial kitchen. The applicants' current living accommodation is located on the first and second floors.
- 2.6. It is emphasized that the premises has not only been their business since 2010 but also their home and the applicants wish that to continue.
- 2.7. Immediately to the West of no.110 lies no.108, a 1 ½ storey vernacular stone cottage fronting onto Lower End. The Eastern boundary of no.108 is shared for it's entire length with the application site.
- 2.8. There is a single first floor living room window in the rear (West) elevation of no.110 overlooking the rear garden of 108 and it is proposed that this is retained to provide natural light into the landing of Unit 3.
- 2.9. More detail regarding the setting is contained within the Heritage Statement.

3.0 RECENT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. 17/03934/FUL- Alterations and extension to create two holiday lets. Refused and appeal dismissed.

4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1. The Pearl (formerly The Potter's Arms, The Spindleberry and the Navy Oak) commenced trading in October 2010 as a Chinese restaurant, takeaway and bar and enjoyed a successful few years. However, for a number of reasons business has been declining and over recent times has become unviable (see separate confidential Business Statement).
- 4.2. The applicants (current proprietors and sole employees) wish to remain at no.110 and feel that a sustainable means of achieving that would be to create an alternative business that would support them and their family as well as being of benefit to the wider community.
- 4.3. The current premises lend themselves to sub-division into separate dwellings of varying sizes for private rental , with new accommodation for the applicants provided by a new-build detached dwelling.
- 4.4. The proposed accommodation would comprise:-

Unit 1 – 1-bed ground floor flat
Unit 2 – 3-bed, 3-storey house
Unit 3 – 1-bed, 2-storey cottage
Unit 4 – 1-bed, 2-storey cottage
New-build – 4-bed, 1 ½ storey house

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

5.1. The following local and national policies are considered most relevant to this proposal:-

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 Policies

OS1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
OS2 Locating development in the right places
OS3 Prudent use of natural resources
OS4 High quality design
H1 Amount and distribution of housing
H2 Delivery of new homes
H4 Type and mix of new homes
E5 Local Services and Community Facilities
T1 Sustainable transport
T3 Public transport, walking and cycling
T4 Parking provision
EH1 Cotswolds AONB
EH3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
EH7 Flood risk
EH9 Historic environment
EH10 Conservation Areas
BC1 Burford-Charlbury sub-area

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework 2021
West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

Pre-application consultations have taken place with WODC Planning officers. In March 2022 officers met on site to discuss initial options for 2no. semi-detached dwellings in the car park area (see Appendix 1 fig 1). This meeting was followed up with an e-mail response in April 2022:-

“We have reviewed the drawings and our view is that House Type 2, particularly due to its siting would be overly transformative to the existing open character of the site, which is prominent in the approach to the village.

Type 1 is more promising in our view but would need to be brought closer to the main building, perhaps joined to the existing wing or ideally incorporated with the it, so the first house would have an ‘L’ plan and a courtyard behind it.

Could this possibility be explored?”

- 6.1. A revised proposal was submitted for further comment in May/June 2022 (see Appendix 1 fig 2) and response ref 22/00591/PREAPP received on 17th June 2022

"..... I cannot help but think the site is just not deep enough to accommodate two dwellings, gardens and parking. My view is that conversion and possible extension of the southern wing is likely the best way to achieve some residential development on the site."

- 6.2. Another option was explored and submitted for comment in Oct 2022 based on the drawing in Appendix 1 fig 3. The following comments were received in response:-

"Firstly, on the additional built form proposed, I would suggest that extending the pub in this way would create an unacceptable impact on the existing wing, as it would block its light and outlook. Therefore, the best option in my view remains to develop the idea of a dwelling along the southern boundary.

In terms of the conversion, our policies contain a presumption against the loss of community facilities e.g. pubs. I appreciate that some bar space would remain however, there would undoubtedly be a significant loss of space available for customers, which may further reduce viability long term. The relevant policy is E5, which states:

Development proposals that would result in the loss of community facilities and services will only be supported where it can be clearly shown that:

- appropriate alternative provision of at least equivalent suitability and accessibility, particularly by foot, will remain, and;*
- in the case of pubs, shops and other commercially run services and facilities, the existing use is no longer viable and is incapable of being made viable or adapted to retain a viable service or facility including as a community run enterprise. A robust marketing exercise will be required to demonstrate that the use or premises is unviable*

Given Leafield is served also by The Fox, it is the second criteria which key to establishing the principle of development. A marketing exercise and full consideration of potential strategies to increase viability and demonstrate that the pub could not be adapted to another form of community facility would be required to allow residential conversion. This is why I raised the possibility of conversion to letting rooms as this could contribute to increased viability without the loss of a community facility.

This is not to say that the pub is not unviable, but unfortunately, the policy places the burden of proof on the applicant, and this would need to be discharged in a forthcoming application.

Of course, it is also possible to separate the two issues and apply for an additional dwelling in isolation to the use issue."

- 6.3. The final consultation in July 2023 was based on preliminary drawings for the proposal submitted with this application. The following comments were received in response:-

“On the design, this is certainly the best iteration yet in terms of siting, scale and form. The elevations however elevations do need work, particularly in the proportions and placing of the fenestration, and in obviation of the rooflights.

Previous comments still apply regarding the principle of conversion of the pub.”

The comments regarding the elevations related to the new-build dwelling which was very much a sketch idea that has now been developed more fully.

7.0 DESIGN

- 7.1. As can be seen from the pre-application consultations above, the design has evolved from initial ideas into a proposal that will provide an alternative business for the applicants so that they can remain living on the application site.
- 7.2. Consideration has been given to the relevant Planning policies listed above but in particular to:-
 - i) the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to whether it would conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Leaffield Conservation Area (LCA);
 - ii) Policy E5 - Local services and community facilities
- 7.3. With regards to 7.2(i) above this is addressed more fully in the accompanying Heritage Statement but to summarise, minimal external alterations are proposed with the conversion works and the new dwelling has been located and proportioned in order to minimize the impact on the Conservation Area (especially views when entering the village from the East along Lower End).
- 7.4. Although there are public footpaths in the area the application site is not visible from any such public vantage points away from the built-up area of the village. As such, it is seen within the landscape in the context of existing buildings in the village. The proposed development would not therefore fail to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
- 7.5. The impact on neighbouring properties (including within the application site) has also been considered, particularly overlooking.
- 7.6. The houses to the South off Greenwich Lane are set back from the road and would be approx. 20m from the front of the proposed new dwelling. This is regarded as reasonable in terms of overlooking in either direction.



Fig 4. Profile of proposed new dwelling superimposed onto existing view entering the village from the East

- 7.7. There are views from the first and second floors of Unit 2 into the rear of the new dwelling but due to the angles these are very limited (and the new dwelling's bathroom window will be obscure glazed). Consideration was given to relocating the new dwelling bed 2 window into the East-facing gable but it was felt that this would feel too exposed to Lower End and traffic entering the village from the East.
- 7.8. The design provides a mix of dwellings as listed in 4.4 above. As well as providing a new dwelling for the applicants these will also provide low cost housing opportunities for singles and couples in Units 1, 3, and 4, and a family in Unit 2.
- 7.9. The design of the new-build dwelling has evolved since initial consultations with WODC Planning officers and is covered in the heritage Statement.
- 7.10. Although the current 3-bed flat does not have any garden space garden areas have been provided for each unit in the conversion. This is limited in the case of Unit 2 but still provides reasonable private amenity space given that the existing flat has none.

8.0 ACCESS & PARKING

- 8.1. It is not proposed to alter the existing vehicular access to the car park other than to remove the modern timber field gates set back to the entrance, and the existing tarmac finish will be retained except where landscaped or garden.
- 8.2. In order to maintain current visibility from the car park exit the proposed 1.8m high wall enclosing the garden for Unit 2 is set at an angle (see fig 5 below).



Fig 5. Existing visibility to the West from car park entrance (gates to be removed)

- 8.3. Parking spaces have been calculated on a non-allocated basis in accordance with O.C.C Parking Standards.
- 8.4. Pedestrian access from the car park to Units 2, 3, & 4, and to the rear entrance of the new dwelling will be directly from the car park. Residents of Unit 1 will have to walk approximately 20m along Lower End to their garden entrance.
- 8.5. The Building Regulations, Part M (Access to and Use of Buildings) does not apply to the conversion works. The new dwelling will be provided with a minimum 900mm wide paved access from the rear garden gate to the rear French doors which will have a level threshold access for wheelchair users. It has also been provided with a W.C at ground floor as required under Part M.

9.0 FLOOD RISK

- 9.1. Current flood risk maps for rivers and surface water are included with the application and show the application site is not in a flood risk area.

10.0 SUMMARY

10.1. The applicants have lived at the premises since 2009 and very much wish to remain there.

10.2. A change in the type of business will allow them to remain at the premises and provide employment for them both.

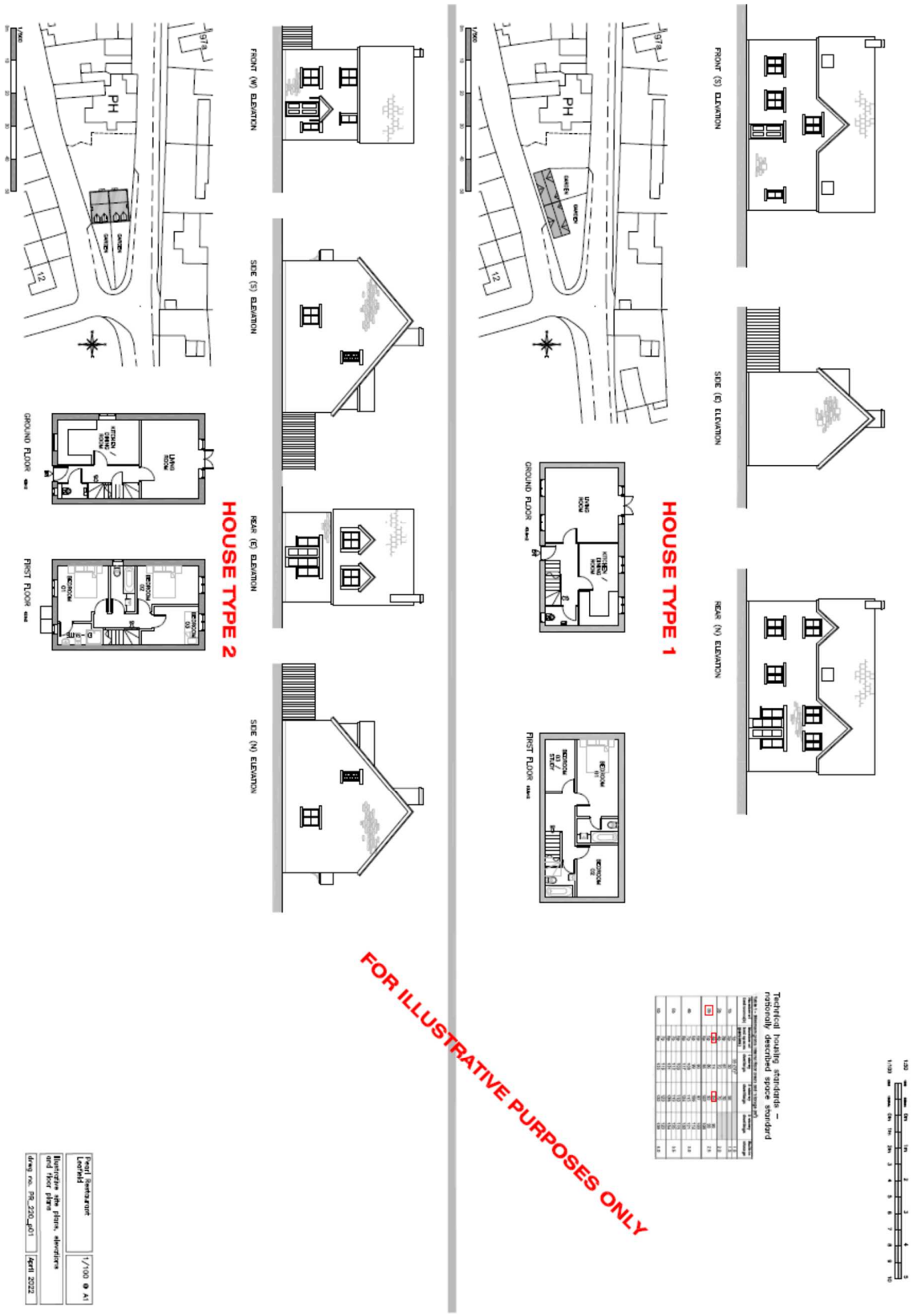
10.3. The Pearl is no longer an important facility to the local community.

10.4. The major factors that have affected the viability of the restaurant/take-away business are:-

- Significant difficulties in employing and retaining staff (particularly a specialist Cantonese chef);
- The development and popularity of The Fox as a traditional village pub offering food 5 days of the week;
- Increasing popularity of multi-outlet take-away delivery services;
- Increasing costs e.g energy and raw materials. This may or may not improve over time but it is certainly a factor.

10.5. Approval of the proposal will allow the applicants to remain at the premises and secure an income stream for themselves while providing low-cost housing for the community.

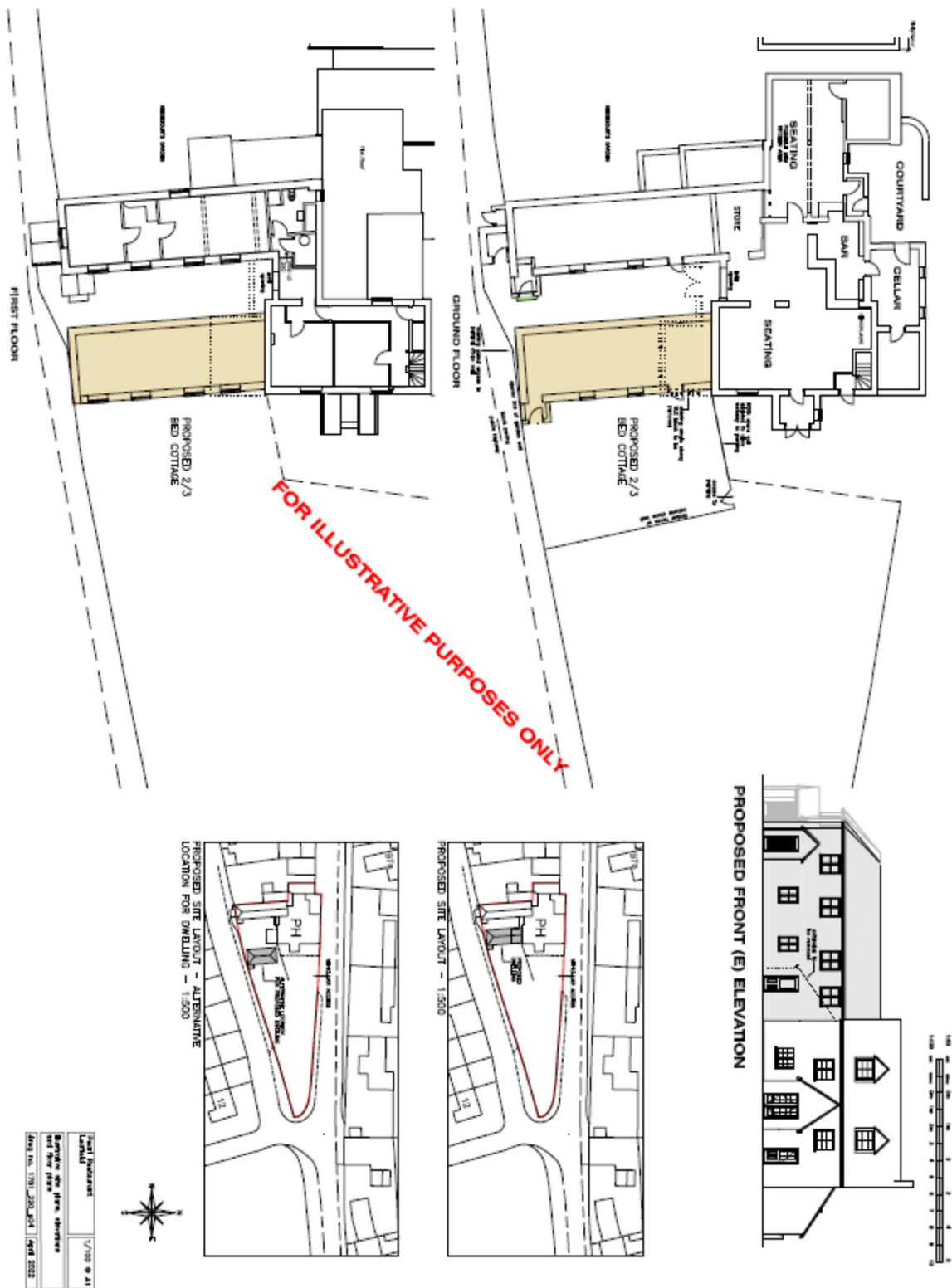
APPENDIX 1



Appendix fig 1 – Initial basis of pre-app consultation in March 2022



Appendix fig 2 – sketch proposal submitted for pre-app comment June 2022



Appendix fig 3 - sketch proposal submitted for pre-app comment June 2022