

William & Catherine Blake at Felpham

a period of happy industry ...

Our aim is to welcome visitors to see and experience the Cottage that William and Catherine knew, to see how they lived and worked there.

The cottage stands apart from other literary houses because of the radical importance of Blake – he is an ongoing inspiration to so many people who pursue a dissenting imagination. As a poet, painter and artist-printmaker, his influence and inspiration extends even further.

William and Catherine moved from London to Felpham in September 1800 and stayed for three years, at what was a critical and spiritual turning point in their lives.

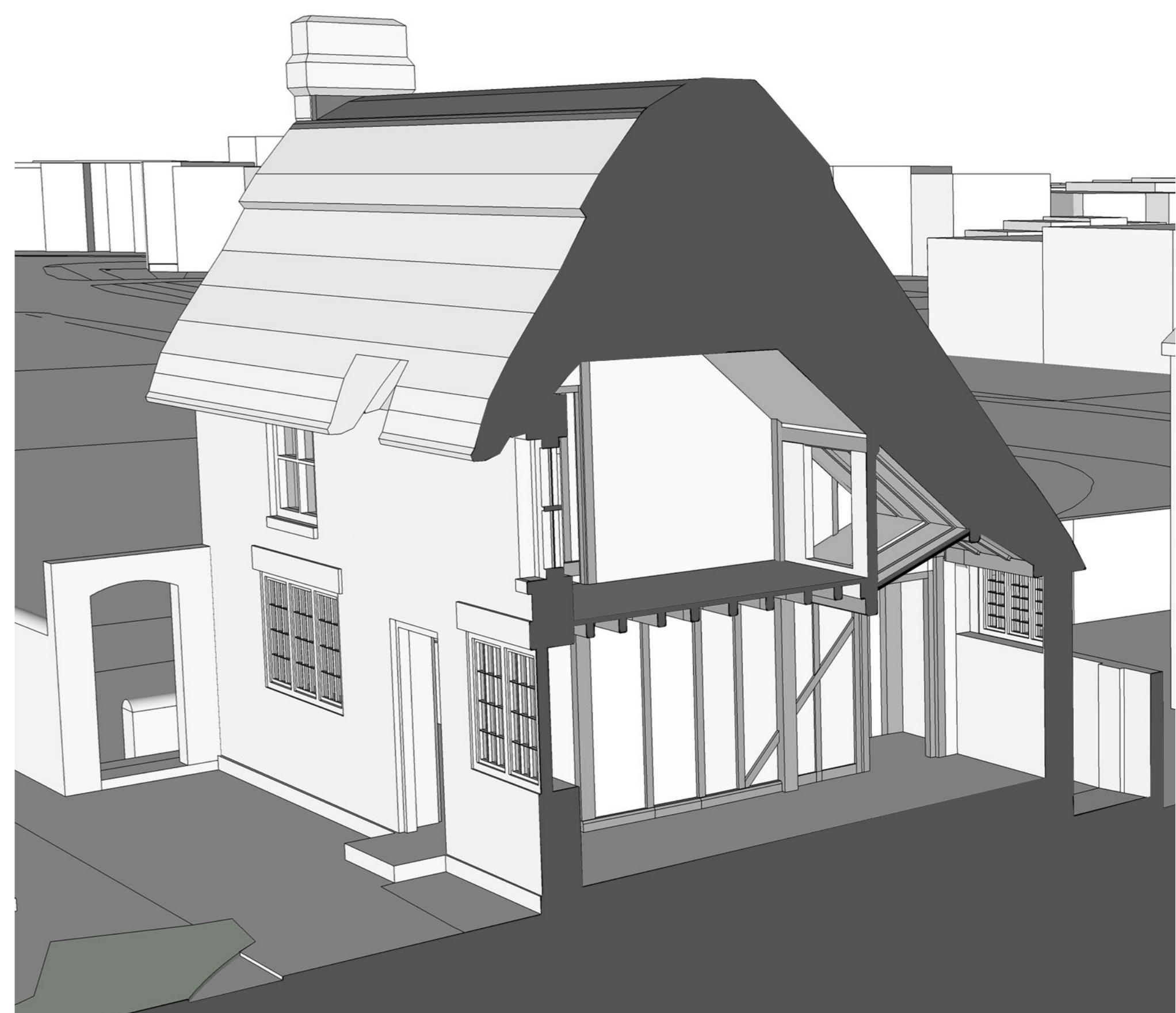
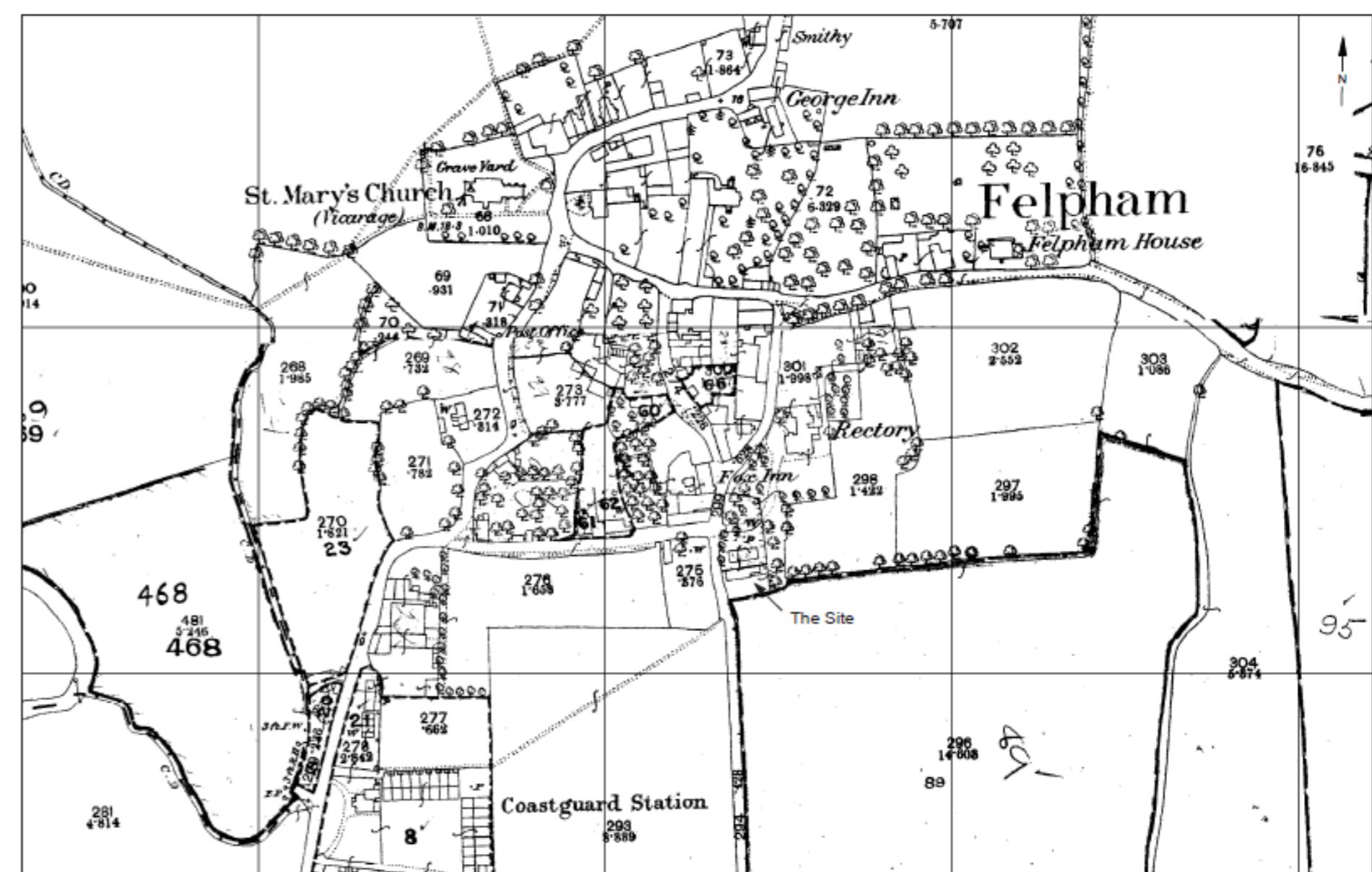
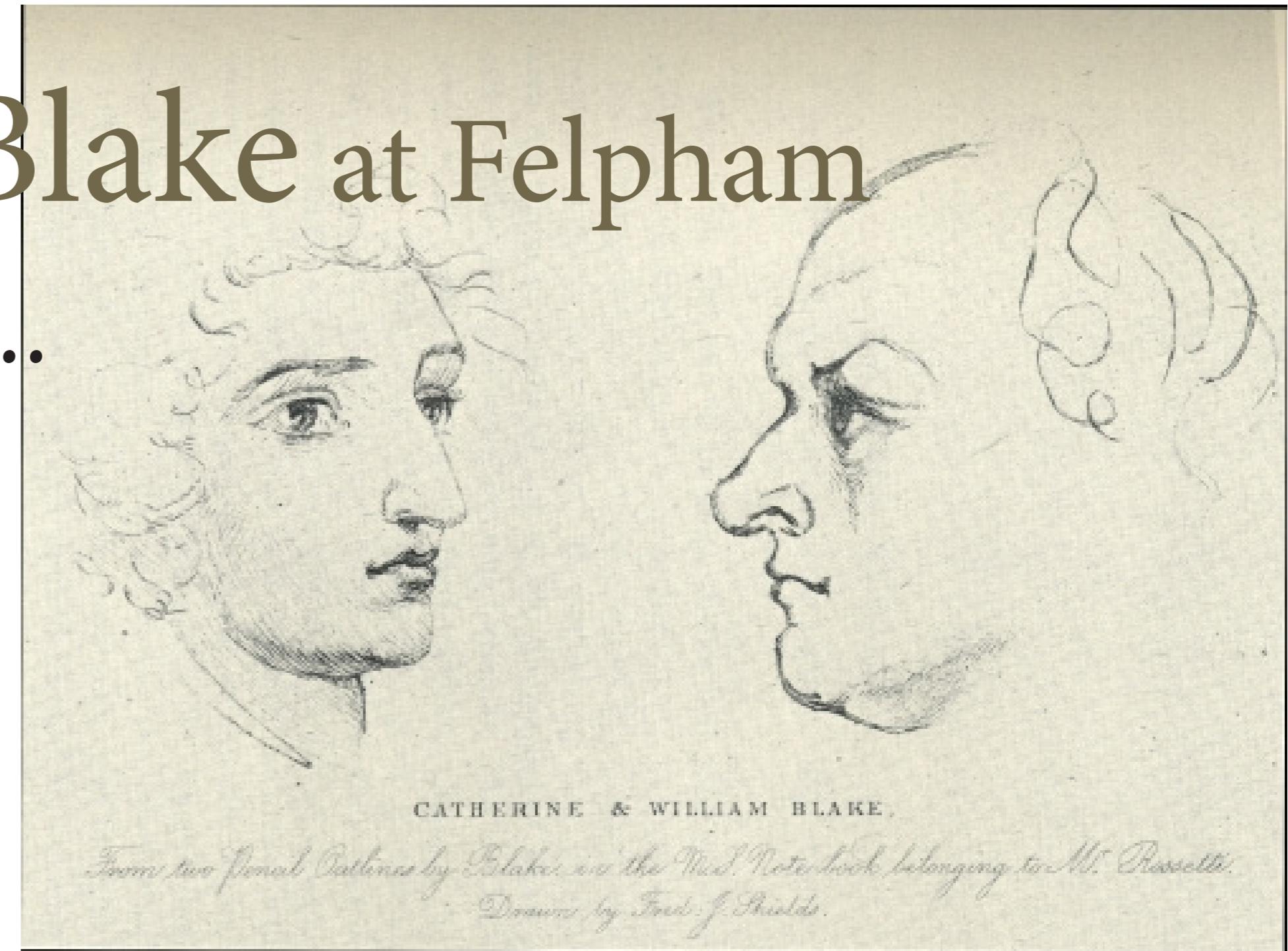
The Cottage as William and Catherine would have known it ...

The original seventeenth century thatched cottage that William and Catherine Blake knew, lived and worked in, was composed of two rooms on the ground floor divided by the entrance door opening onto the garden. A single large window lit the room on the left of the entrance and two smaller windows lit the room to the right. Two bedrooms occupied the floor above.

Of the two rooms on the ground floor, the room on the left immediately adjacent to the road, was large enough and the ceiling beams high enough to have been the location where Blake set up his printing studio, including his star wheeled rolling press, and beneath the window, for light, there would have been at least one workbench for etching and to ink and prepare the plates for printing. A second workbench is likely to have been present against another wall for dampening and blotting papers before printing, and, following printing, pressing and drying impressions. The rooms may well have had cupboards for storing paper, Blake's numerous copper plates, and other materials needed in the studio.

The second room on the ground floor would have been where Catherine prepared and served meals and where they sat together reading, writing, or passing the time in what would have been their kitchen-living room. Here would have been a large range or grate used for cooking, heating water, and warmth, above which, suspended by a chain, would have hung a large iron pot.

The garden would have been planted and kept by Catherine "for scent, food and to heal", and would have open and leading to the sea. They would have been dependent upon their garden, challenged by the natural elements that surrounded them and by a landscape, self evidently for Blake, redolent of vision.

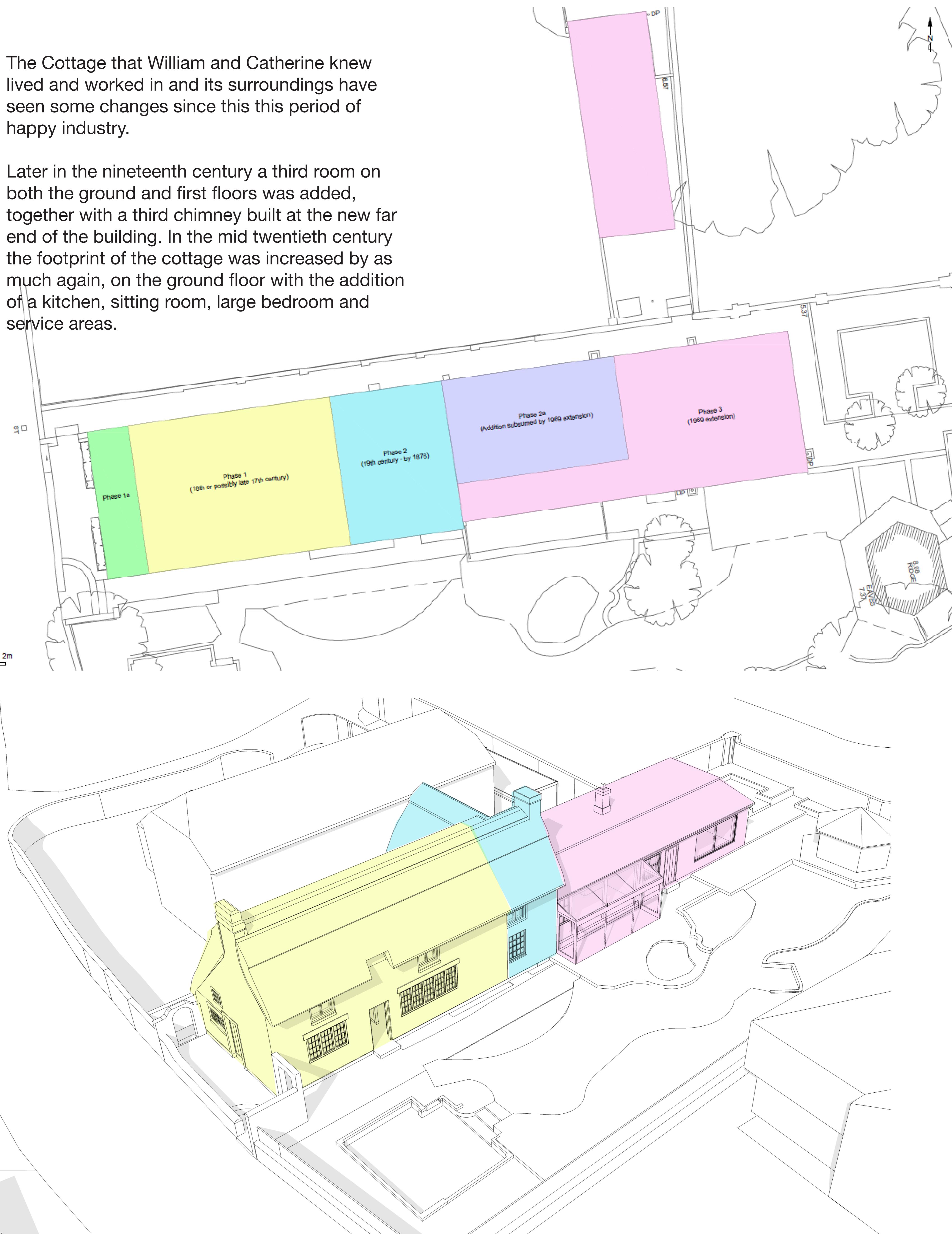


The Changes at the Cottage

up until today ...

The Cottage that William and Catherine knew lived and worked in and its surroundings have seen some changes since this this period of happy industry.

Later in the nineteenth century a third room on both the ground and first floors was added, together with a third chimney built at the new far end of the building. In the mid twentieth century the footprint of the cottage was increased by as much again, on the ground floor with the addition of a kitchen, sitting room, large bedroom and service areas.



What we feel the Cottage Needs

restoration & potential for further engagement ...

1 Repairing the Structure

Work will need to be carried out to repair and secure the structure of the building. New joists will need to be inserted. Heating and services can be concealed, and sensitive lighting installed to retain the correct feel. The flintwork is of exceptional quality and a wonderful attribute to the building.

2 Restoring the Thatch

The cottage is currently over thatched, restoring the correct thickness will relieve stress on the roof as well as provide a dramatic aesthetic improvement, giving the cottage back its elegant profile, dormer window sweeps, and proportion of the northern gable which is nearly obscured by the extra thatch.

3 Improving Access

Improving and rationalising access to the building and garden will be key, allowing for the enjoyment of all.

4 Return to Original Form

Through understanding the history and development of the cottage, it seems clear that by removing the 20th Century extension, this will restore the original structure and reclaim the distinct character of the cottage, including the early nineteenth-century addition.

5 Provide Ancillary & Support Space

Discrete spaces for an office and other services can sensitively be provided

6 Bring People to the Cottage & Provide Space for Reflection

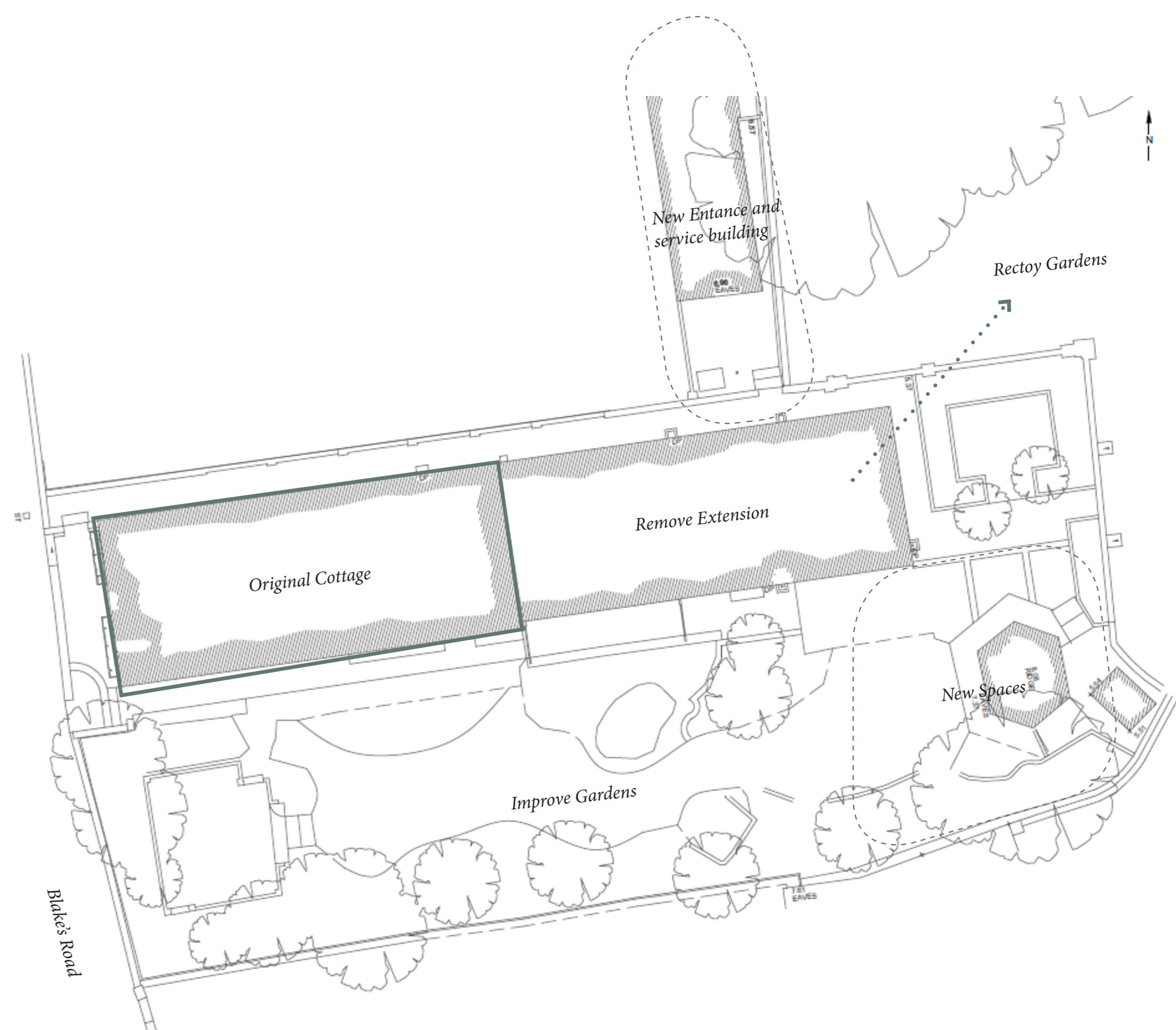
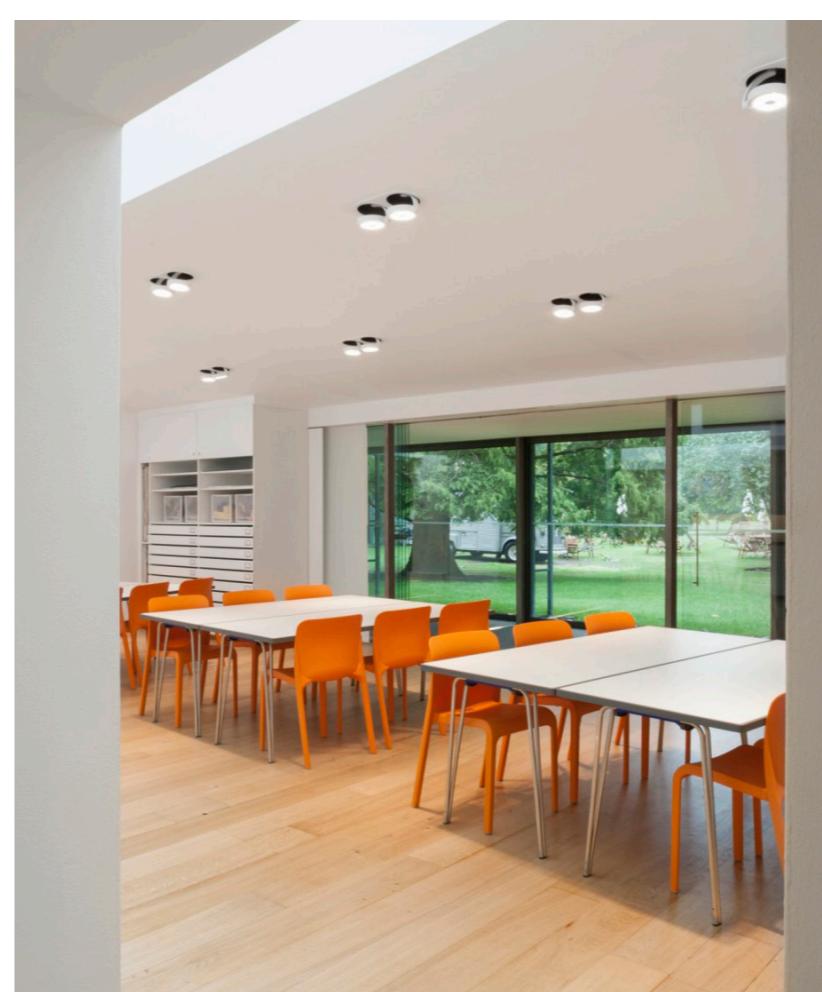
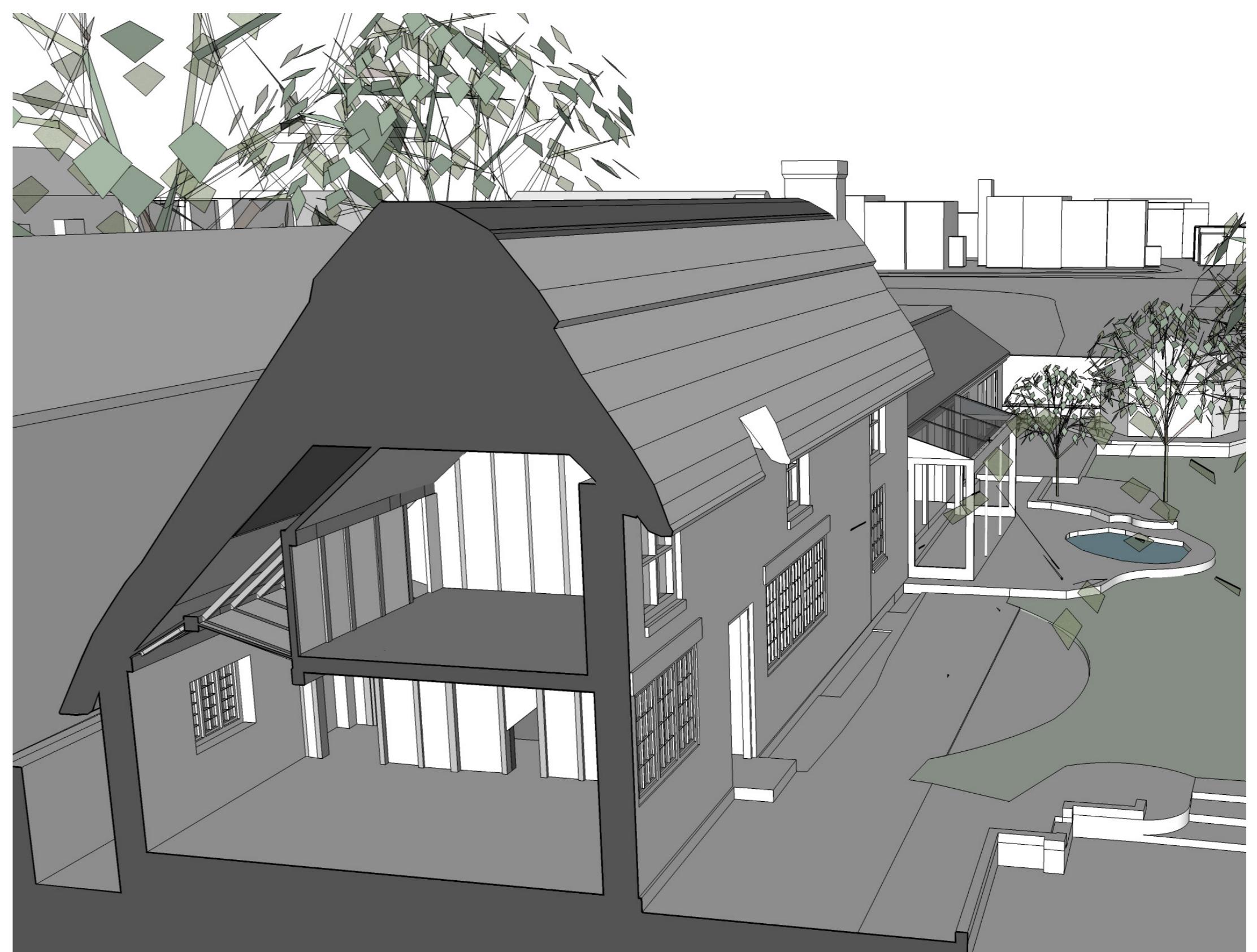
A new space could be a palace of the imagination – a place of pilgrimage. This could provide flexible spaces for exhibition, lectures and workshops.

7 Restore and Improve the Garden

The cottage garden should be special. The recreation of a cottage garden that was historically accurate for the period could be a significant attraction in its own right.

8 Provide attractive connections to the Village and Old Rectory Gardens

Opening up views from Blake's road and possible connections to the Rectory Gardens could improve the attractiveness of the village and create a celebrated environment for all.



Our Vision & What's Next

and how you can get involved ...

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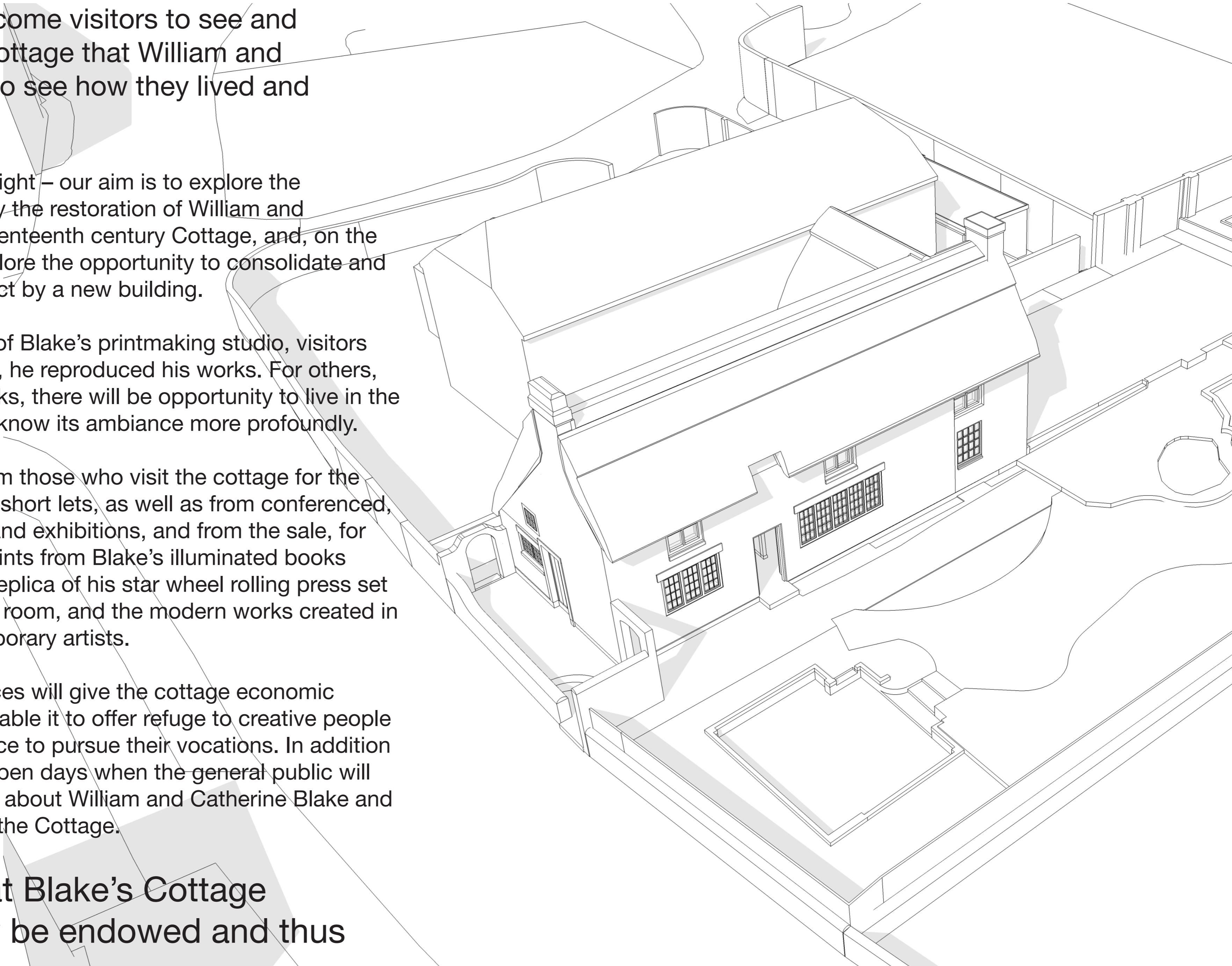
As these boards highlight – our aim is to explore the possibilities offered by the restoration of William and Catherine Blake's seventeenth century Cottage, and, on the same site, further explore the opportunity to consolidate and enhance such a project by a new building.

In the reconstruction of Blake's printmaking studio, visitors will see how, uniquely, he reproduced his works. For others, for a few days or weeks, there will be opportunity to live in the cottage and come to know its ambiance more profoundly.

Income will derive from those who visit the cottage for the day, those staying on short lets, as well as from conferenced, lecture programmes and exhibitions, and from the sale, for example, of replica prints from Blake's illuminated books printed on the exact replica of his star wheel rolling press set up in the ground floor room, and the modern works created in the atelier by contemporary artists.

Over time these sources will give the cottage economic independence and enable it to offer refuge to creative people seeking time and space to pursue their vocations. In addition there will be regular open days when the general public will be welcomed to learn about William and Catherine Blake and their time together at the Cottage.

It is hoped that Blake's Cottage could one day be endowed and thus safeguarded.



Finding the right Architects ...

Rick Mather Architects approach concerns the enhancement of the built environment through design. The integration of the new with the old, to the benefit of existing structures, informs an overall perspective which considers the physical fabric and the context of the site.

They have achieved a reputation for working with and making sense of existing historic structures and have considerable experience of gaining consents for unique projects within historic settings working with stakeholders, conservation and funding bodies.

