

# ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSION TO BANK COTTAGE, BRYHER, ISLES OF SCILLY

Planning Design Statement

September 2018





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# INTRODUCTION

## Bank Cottage, Bryher

Mary and Simon Lowth approached Dualchas Architects in Summer 2017 to make proposals for the alteration, renovation and extension of an existing set of buildings within a garden site, at Bank Cottage on the Isle of Bryher.

Our brief includes the refurbishment and extension of the main dwelling house and the adjacent garden cottage, in conjunction with the addition of a new-build workshop, on the site of an existing outbuilding.

In working in such a sensitive location as Bryher, our priority is firstly to understand the unique character of the place. Through our design proposals, we seek to maintain and where possible improve, our site's contribution to the unique character of Bryher.



- 1 The rear of Bank Cottage to the left, within the lanes setting of Bryher
- 2 Location of site within the Isles of Scilly archipelago



# CONTEXT

## Isle of Bryher

As the most northwesterly of the Isles of Scilly, Bryher is only 2 kilometres long and 1 kilometre wide and has a permanent population of around 80 people.

There are two small settlements: The Town, on the east coast, where the quay is located, facing across the Tresco Channel to Tresco Island; and at Great Par, on the west coast, where the Hell Bay Hotel is located, facing out to the Atlantic.

It is a low-lying island with gently rolling hills, some arable land, some typically hedged fields and a number of white sandy beaches.

Bryher is pedestrian in nature and access is by boat directly onto the beach or quay, depending on the tide. Use of cars on the island is restricted to residents only. Roads are narrow and form a casual path network, mapping out the movement and pace of daily life that is reflected in the soft edges and intimate, sheltered lanes.

The settlement at Great Par on the west coast of Bryher, where Bank Cottage is located, is the most westerly settlement in England.

Several traditional granite buildings with hedge-rowed gardens line a network of small lanes and face west out over Great Par to outlying rock formations and the Atlantic.

Bank Cottage sits amongst a cluster of modest stone buildings on the lane running through the settlement. Its garden is surrounded by a tall hedge and gently slopes down towards Great Par beach.

In keeping with the rest of the island's architecture, the surrounding buildings display tall, thin gables and parallel roof pitches with no dormers. Materiality is kept to a simple palette of stone, slate, render and timber outbuildings.



- 1 Location of the site adjacent to Great Par beach
- 2 Bank Cottage (left), within the settlement at Great Par
- 3 The beach at Great Par
- 4 Bryher lanes and hedges

## Existing Buildings

### The House:

The main dwelling house has recently been used as a guesthouse. At the core of the building is a simple, original, long granite building, of one and a half storeys. There have been numerous additions during the course of the twentieth century. These include a porch, a two-storey gabled extension, dormer windows and a flat roofed extension with roof terrace.

Evidence of the numerous alterations to the original stone building can be seen in the in-filled openings and in the rear elevation, facing the lane behind.

The additions to the front and side of the house have all been finished in a cream coloured render that also conceals the original stonework. From the entrance and garden side it is difficult to discern the original building, but the simple stone elevation facing the lane maintains some continuity with the adjacent buildings.

The existing fabric including the UPVC windows requires upgrading and there are numerous locations of water ingress.

Tresco Boat Services provide the only frequent boat transport onto the Isle of Bryher. Bank Cottage plays a humble role in this service, as the site of a wall-mounted public notice board, containing the regularly updated daily sail times.



- 1 Existing house gable, extensions and porch
- 2 Stone rear elevation / stone work retains evidence of previous openings / boat service timetable board displayed on stone wall at the end
- 3 Existing house form within the garden

**The Cottage:**

This is a small stone outbuilding that sits on the boundary wall, accessed only from within the garden. It was converted in the 1990s to form a separate, compact one-bedroom suite for the guesthouse. It currently contains a bedroom, living room and a small shower room.



**Workshop and Storage Shed:**

At the foot of the garden facing on the path that runs along the edge of the beach, the shed is a sturdy timber framed, timber clad structure. It was built originally to house a boat, for direct access to the beach, but there have been numerous ad-hoc additions including garden storage, and a lean-to greenhouse.

Recently it was used casually to sell fishing tackle to summer visitors, passing on the beach path.



**The Moorings:**

This is a granite cottage, independently accessed from the beach path. It sits at half-a-storey above the path level, with steps rising up to a south-west facing terrace.

No changes are proposed to this building and it is currently being run as a self-catered, one-bedroom holiday house.



- 1 Stone Cottage to the right of the house, viewed form the garden
- 2 Timber workshop at the foot of the garden
- 3 The Moorings, accessed form the beach path

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# PROPOSALS

## Approach

Our overall approach is two-fold:

- to reinforce the Urban Edge of the lanes by clarifying the original stone building at the heart of Bank Cottage;
- to work within the existing Garden enclosure to make an extension that relates to the natural materials and scale of the new landscaped garden.

This Urban/Garden strategy identifies the key characteristics of the site and seeks to reinforce these qualities through removal, adaptation of, and extension to the existing structures.

### Urban Edge:

The identity of the original stone building is currently diluted and almost lost by the numerous additions that have been added to Bank Cottage over the years.

The other adjacent buildings have clear gables facing on to the three-way junction of lanes at the entrance to the Bank Cottage.

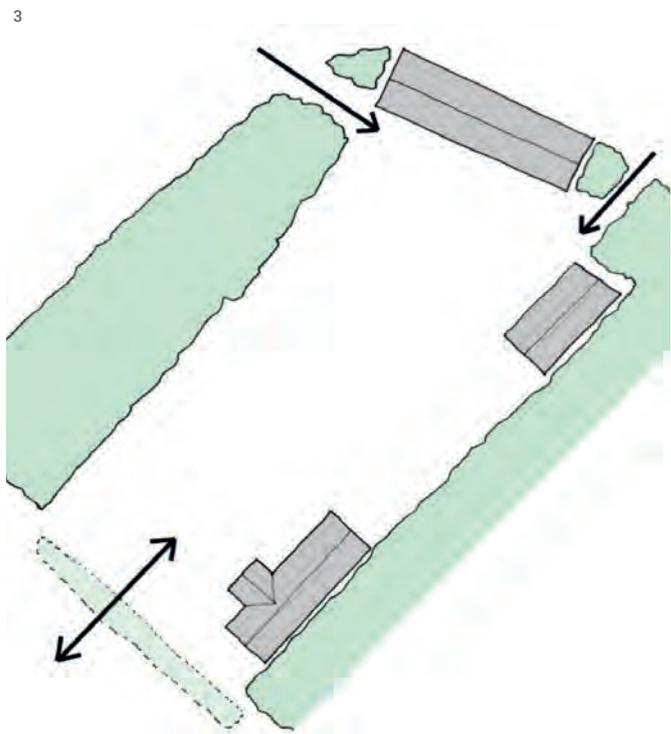
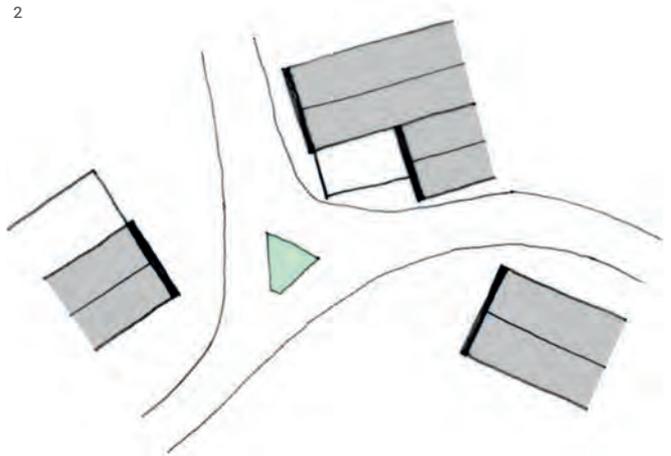
Clarifying a well-proportioned stone gable will help form the idea of a distinct place, formed between gables, within the network of lanes.

### Garden Enclosure:

One of the most distinct elements of the Scilly landscape is the high hedges that surround flower fields and private gardens. These allow each space to obtain shelter and privacy.

Reinforcing the planted edge of the site, to form a frame for the garden is the most important element of the landscape strategy for Bank Cottage.

Any new structures will therefore seek to relate to the garden in terms of materials and scale. They will seek to sit low and unobtrusively in the garden, at or below the height of the boundary.



- 1 View southwest from the garden, with the Moorings cottage to the left
- 2 Reinforcing the Urban Edge: Gables facing the junction of lanes
- 3 Reinforcing the Garden Enclosure: Buildings and hedges forming a frame for the site

## Phasing

There are four distinct parts to the project which are planned to be completed in phases, over a number of years:

### **Cottage:**

Renovate and extend the Cottage to improve ancillary accommodation to the house, by adding a small extension.

### **House:**

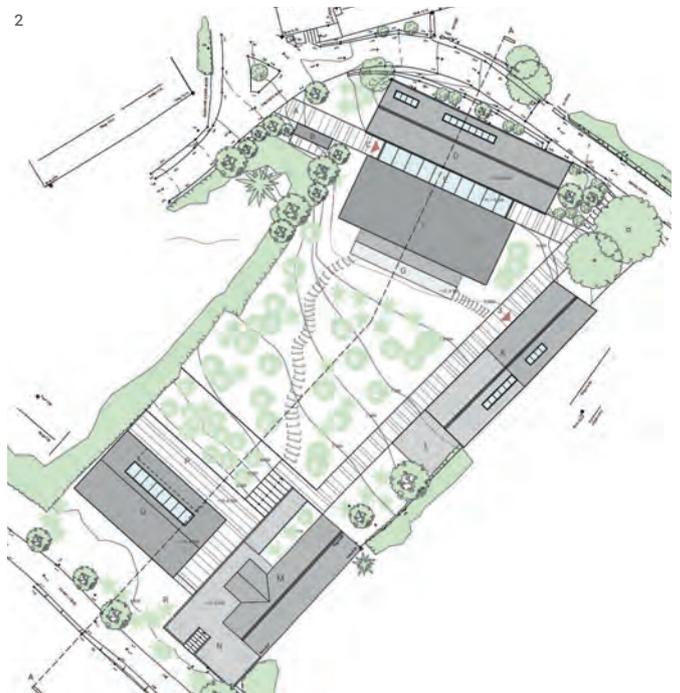
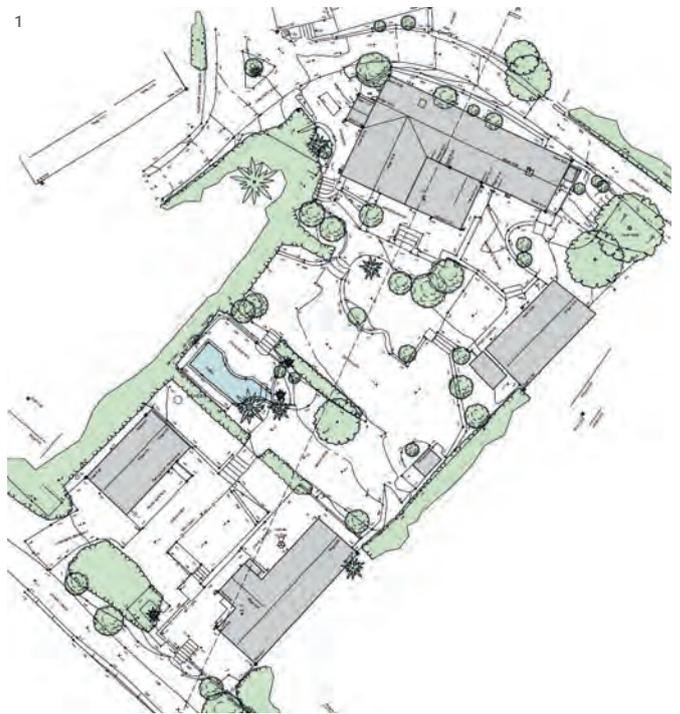
Alter and extend the main house to provide a two-bedroom house and to create a new kitchen/dining/living space that opens out to the views and garden.

### **Workshop:**

The creation of new workshop/studio to replace the shed at the bottom of the site.

### **Garden:**

A new, naturalistic landscaped garden using plant species found throughout the Scilly Isles. This will create both privacy and a way to circulate between the various structures.



- 1 Existing site plan
- 2 Proposed site plan

## Cottage

Tucked discreetly into the east perimeter of the site is the modestly sized existing garden cottage. The newly refurbished and extended Cottage will sit quietly alongside the main house and garden and improve ancillary accommodation for the main house. It's proximity to the main house means that it is considered integral to the design of the house.

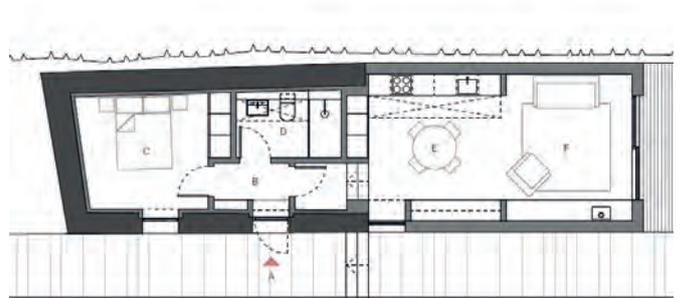
The intention is for this building to house the owner's sister who is currently living on Bryher and is an active member of the community. The cottage will house this family member whilst the house is being renovated as well as permanently afterwards.

It is intended that due to the accommodation need and it's proximity to the house, that the ownership of the cottage will remain with Bank Cottage in perpetuity.

The design proposal is to renovate the existing building and stonework to create a bedroom and bathroom, before adding a small timber extension, elongating the existing form. This addition will house a kitchen/dining/living space with views out to sea, absent from the existing cottage.

The Cottage is currently habitable, but lacks appropriate cooking facilities and living space.

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- 1 Plan of Cottage with extension
- 2 Elevation to garden: original granite building and simple timber extension

## House

The main house has been extended numerous times in previous years, resulting in an eclectic building that does not reflect the simple modest forms of the surrounding architecture.

Our approach prioritises the restoration of the existing building back to a form that is more respectful of its surroundings:

### 1. Remove

The extensions that detract from the original form are to be removed including the incongruous gabled garden extension and the dormer windows.

The render is to be removed from the original stonework and the building will be sensitively protected from water ingress.

### 2. Repair/Amend Stonework

The original stonework will be re-pointed and extended by a metre in height, so that its proportion matches those of other adjacent buildings. This will also remove the need to create dormer windows.

New gable openings will be carefully positioned and proportioned to reflect the local vernacular.

### 3. Insert New Interior

The building will be re-lined to provide the required accommodation, with a large opening on the first floor taking advantage of the elevated views. This opening will be colonnaded to provide the new intervention a rhythm and structure that respects the solidity of the granite walls and slate roof.

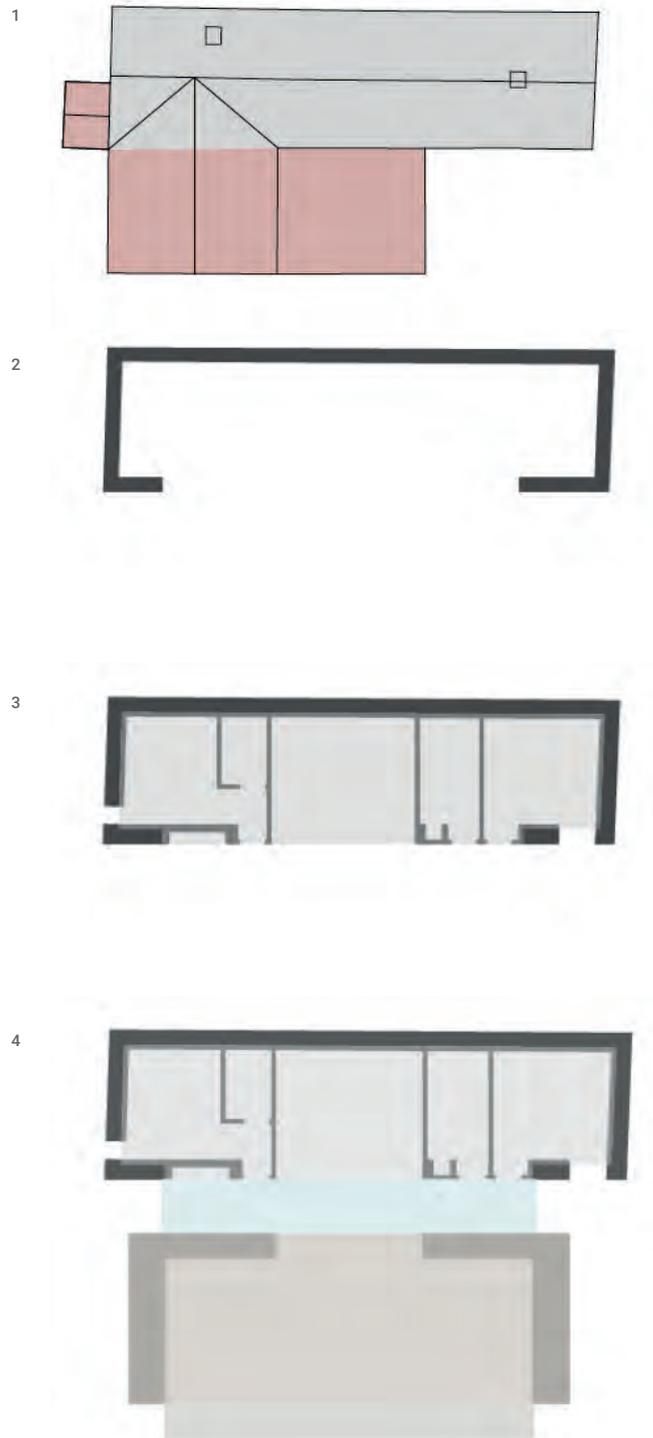
### 4. New Link and Extension

A glazed link will separate and define the existing from the new, creating a delicate balance of respect for and contrast to the original structure.

The addition of a modestly proportioned open-plan kitchen/dining/living space to the front of the existing building, will take the form of simple, timber-clad structure.

Anchored low into the sloping garden, the single-storey addition will sit within the frame of the boundary hedges. It's height and material will relate closely to the garden, respecting the character of the pattern of original houses and gardens.

A canopy will provide a feathered edge while naturally weathered cladding will also soften the rigidity of form. The planting of vines will be encouraged to gently envelop the sides, over time, rooting the new addition to its landscaped surroundings.



## Workshop

The bottom perimeter of the site runs parallel to the coastal path with a gap in the hedge providing direct access to the beach. The existing lightweight workshop structure is to be removed and replaced by a new workshop.

The replacement building, with integrated storage, takes the weathered timber exterior of the existing structure as inspiration. Facing the shoreline, the visible façade is comprised of timber panels that act as sliding screens.

The screens when closed, will give the impression of a timber fence forming the edge to the garden. When opened up, the glazed doors will provide direct access to the beach path and views out to sea.

Due to its proximity to the beach path, the original building had always been used for casual enterprise and it is intended that this will continue. It will be possible for the workshop to open up to visitors, allowing the building to work as a gallery-studio when required. This new, casual enterprise will be in the tradition of path-side stalls and shops, found throughout Bryher.

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- 1 New Workshop from the beach path, concealed by timber screens
- 2 Section through Workshop, sitting below the eaves height of the adjacent Moorings cottage

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# PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

## Consultation

During the design of this project we have made several consultations. These have helped refine the brief and design of the proposals to ensure they respect and enhance the character of the existing context.

### Planning:

A Pre-application enquiry was made to the Council of the Isles of Scilly Planning Department in Summer 2017.

Planning Officer Stephanie Wade engaged with the proposals and submitted a detailed response in September 2017. This highlighted guidance in relation to: the existing and proposed use classes of the buildings; the design of new additions and alterations requiring to be sympathetic to their setting; reference to be made to The Isles of Scilly Design Guide. The letter outlined that the proposals were generally acceptable, subject to further clarification of use and design.

### Isles of Scilly Design Guide:

This guide has been referenced throughout the design process to help define the response to the distinct local character of the buildings and both the man-made and natural landscape elements.

Critically the document highlights sustainability on Scilly as being the balance between the natural and the man-made:

*“Sustainability on Scilly is about living in balance - within a very defined and remarkable natural and man-made environment.*

*Scilly is a beautiful place and for the sake of its environmental, economic and social well-being, it is imperative that it remains so.”*

Isles of Scilly Design Guide, Council of the Isles of Scilly, 2006

### Duchy of Cornwall Architectural Advisor:

The Duchy is the major landowner of the Isles of Scilly. In late 2017 discussions were held with Dominic Roberts of Frances Roberts Architects, Architectural Advisors to the Duchy. This continued in early 2018 and the design has been modified to accommodate comments, advice and further appropriate design references.



- 1 The most westerly houses in England, at Great Par, Bryher
- 2 The Town in the lee of Watch Hill on the east side of Bryher
- 3 Path to the north side of Watch Hill, Bryher, looking west
- 4 Lane and hedges on Bryher

## Use

The most recent use of Bank Cottage, prior to the purchase by the current owners, was as a guest house in the summer months and as a private house in the winter months. In addition to this the Garden Cottage was used as additional owners' accommodation. The shed at the foot of the garden was used as a store/workshop and occasionally as an informal summer shop.

### Proposed Use:

Currently the house is being lived in by the sister of the owner. She lives there full-time is an active member of the community and has recently been working as a supply teacher in Tresco, whilst also running the Moorings self-catering cottage. Following the completion, she will continue to live at the property in the Cottage, with the owners living in the main house. It is not proposed that the cottage would ever become a separate dwelling and the ownership would be maintained with the house. Overall there will be a reduction in the number of bedrooms on the site.

### House:

It was noted in the pre-Application process that the main house was still recorded as a dwelling (class use C3) and not as a guest house (C1). The house has now returned to use as a dwelling and the proposals will maintain this and therefore there will be no class use change. It is intended that the owners will live in the house full-time after completion.

### The Cottage:

This is an ancillary building, supporting the use of the main house. It currently contains a small bedroom, shower room and living room. It is proposed that this is extended to create a bedroom, shower room and a compact kitchen/dining/living area.

As described above, the use of this building by the owner's sister is defined as being accommodation that is needed for a key-worker in the islands (supply-teacher) and on-site business need (self-catering management). Forming adequate accommodation in the Cottage reduces demand on other accommodation on Bryher. and helps reduce the spatial demand on the main house, requiring only a modest addition to that building.

### The Workshop:

The creation of a new artist's studio creates an ancillary building, supporting the use of the main house. This would be for the owner's sister, who is also an artist and writer. It would also contain storage for the garden in place of the current large shed.



- 1 Existing house and entrance porch on approach
- 2 Existing cottage in the foreground, within the mature garden
- 3 Existing shed in the foreground, at the foot of the garden, facing the beach lane.

## Design

The buildings of Scilly have a distinct and sensitive historic characteristic. This can be defined as modest, gabled stone buildings with timber extensions, infill structures and outbuildings. These are grouped along largely pedestrian lanes, enclosed by tall hedges, fields and gardens.

### Character:

The Design Guide highlights Historic characteristics to develop in new designs and alterations:

- Simplicity of form
- Robust, durable materials
- Well proportioned, well balanced facades
- Substance to what is built – a sense of weight and strength
- Absence of frills
- Buildings well anchored on their site and integrated in their landscape surroundings

The proposals respect each of these principals in working with the existing house and forming a new extension.

### Fenestration:

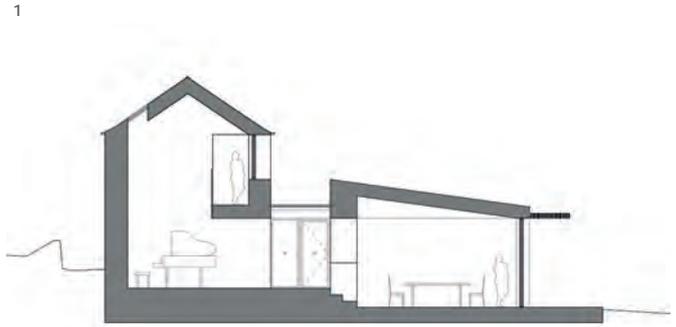
A key requirement of the brief for the proposals is to create glazing elements that take advantage of both the fantastic westerly views from the site and to give direct access to the garden from the living spaces.

Careful treatment of fenestration is required to allow the altered buildings to sit harmoniously within their context. Larger areas of glazing have been limited to the southwest elevation, facing the garden. These areas of glazing have been broken up into elements with vertical emphasis, avoiding large planar elements. There are many recent examples in Scilly of glazing of this arrangement working successfully.

### Extension Form:

It is the intention that the extension sits unobtrusively within the hedged garden boundary, alongside the existing taller stone building.

The roof of the extension is a low and mono-pitch roof form reflecting the pitched silhouette of the roofscape on the island. This reinforces the parallels with other house/outbuilding/shed relationships on the Isles of Scilly.



- 1 Section through House and proposed extension.
- 2 Southwest elevation showing new glazing screens with vertical elements
- 3 Pine Trees, Town Lane, Bryher, recent example of glazed screen with vertical elements

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# PALLETTE

## Materials

It is proposed to use a minimal palette of materials to limit the impact of the new additions. All material choices have been carefully considered to reflect the character of the existing landscape.

Restoring the existing granite stonework of the main building and adjacent cottage will help to preserve the character and sense of place that has been lost through the more recent modifications.

Careful use of glazing and structure will provide lightness and visual relief from the stone, helping to define the old from the new without detracting from the original building. A line of steel columns will provide an opening on the first floor, that respects the visual weight of stone and slate.

There are a number of small buildings both on and adjacent to the site that utilise weathered timber cladding.

For the extensions and the studio, the aspiration is to achieve simple detailing, avoiding unnecessary complexity. They are to be clad in delicately detailed horizontal timber. This will be untreated and allowed to weather naturally. There will be no overhangs and projections, allowing the timber to weather evenly.

Windows in the new extension will be consistent, floor to ceiling and timber framed with external aluminium facings for durability.



- 1 Slate roofing, timber cladding and mono-pitch outbuildings on adjacent site
- 2 Nearby restored granite building with tall gable, small windows and a timber outbuilding
- 3 Existing outbuilding with weathered timber
- 4 Granite wall, weathered timber gate and native planting, in the lanes of Bryher

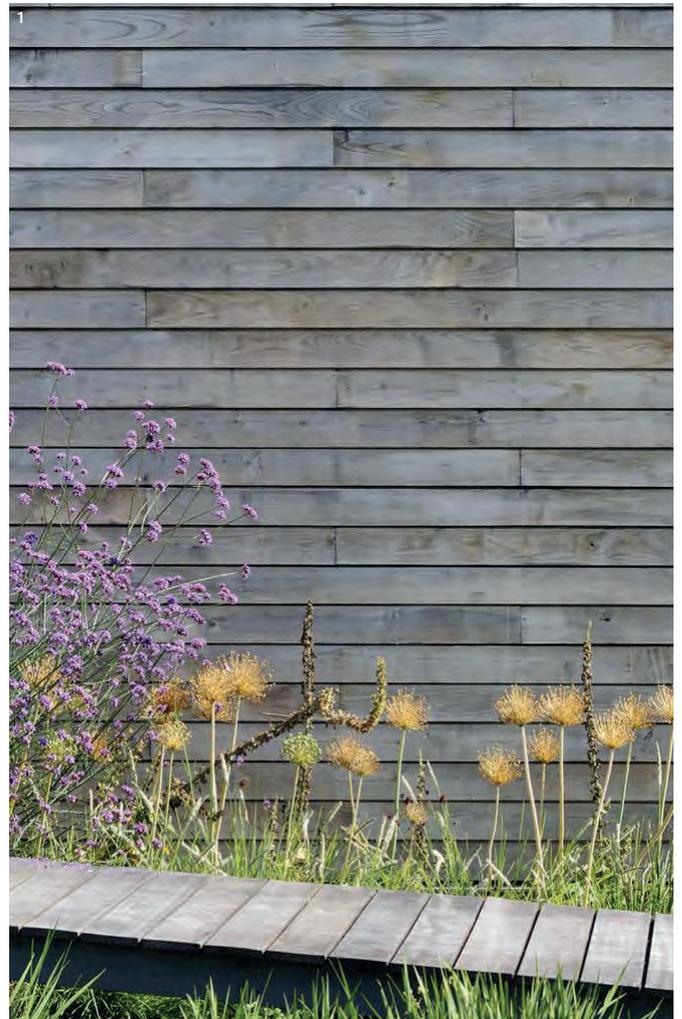
## Landscaping

It is intended that there will be a naturalistic approach to the landscaping of the garden.

The new and altered buildings are designed to sit within the garden and to form an intimate relationship with it.

The mild climate of the Scilly Isles encourages the growth of a wide variety of plants and trees not found on mainland England. New planting will seek to create beautiful, thought-provoking spaces that will elevate the senses and inspire a deeper connection to the natural world.

A planting scheme will be developed to reflect the rich variety of Scilly plants, whilst characteristics such as existing stone steps, embedded within the existing garden landscape, will be also be celebrated.



- 1 Naturalistic planting against the back-drop of simply detailed, untreated timber cladding
- 2 Existing stone steps embedded into the garden landscape

## Precedent

For over 20 years Dualchas Architects have been responsible for creating private houses, affordable housing, community buildings, small workshops and tourism developments throughout rural Scotland.

Our buildings seek to address the specifics of brief, location and budget to produce site-specific, sustainable, intelligent architecture.

The designs seek to create a modern interpretation of traditional and vernacular buildings of rural and island settings, with imaginative use of materials, technologies and glazing, within recognisable forms.

Material, form and layout are always site-specific and relate to the unique orientation and conditions of the location.

We have built many buildings on the varied British Isles, including a number in weathered timber and stone.

We also work to sensitively restore and adapt existing buildings that have been neglected, within the settlements of the Highlands and Islands. These buildings are often important to the fabric of a place and their re-use can be seen as an investment in the tradition, culture and future of that place.

Our work is equally applicable to the environmentally sensitive Isle of Bryher. Our established approach and principles can be applied to an understanding of the local building types and forms, to alter and extend the existing structures to create a sustainable new use for the site.



- 1 Stone restoration: Kirk House, Garve, Easter Ross, 2012, Dualchas
- 2 Glazed link and weathered cladding: Tigh Port na Long, Isle of Skye, 2013, Dualchas
- 3 Stone refurbishment: Rinour Steading, Moray, 2010, Dualchas



# SUMMARY

## Bank Cottage, Bryher

The proposed design seeks to address the unique character of Bryher, uncovering the original building at the core of the Bank Cottage and extending and adapting it for use as a modern family home.

By choosing forms and materials that are familiar in this context, and by providing a simple, neutral link between the two main building elements - one old, one new - the proposal addresses the distinctive urban and garden qualities of the site.

By sitting the new structures within the frame of the garden hedges, they will appear quiet and private.

By keeping the extension modest in scale and form, using materials that reflect the existing context and by considering a suitable minimal landscaping strategy, the extension and outbuildings will sit subtly in their setting, providing the owners with an intimate connection to the historic building fabric, surrounding garden and the wider landscape.

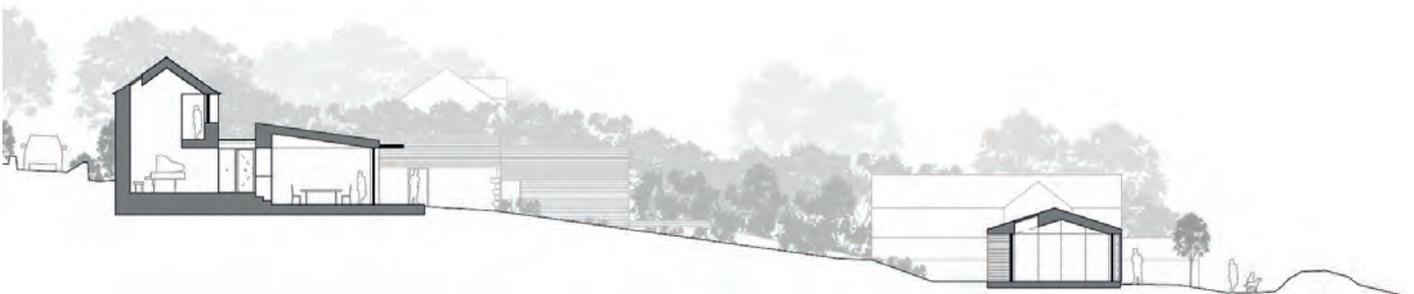
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- 1 Entrance elevation to lane: with altered stone gable, neutral link and garden extension
- 2 Existing house from the garden
- 3 New low-lying extension in front of restored and altered original stone house
- 4 Long section through the site, with new additions stepping down the hill, staying below eaves and hedge line

# CONTACT

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Project: 805\_Lowth\_Bryher  
Date: September 2018  
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