

Proposals for the Future of Coulter Public Library

Coulter Public Library is a historic and much-loved village building, originally constructed as a lending library and reading room with an adjoining librarian's house. Over the years, the building has been modified and extended to form the caretaker's cottage, supporting its evolving role in village life. It is no longer in use: the library is closed to the public, and the caretaker's accommodation is currently unoccupied and requires significant renovation. Coulter Community Trust has developed a vision to bring the Library back into use as a vibrant community hub, ensuring it remains at the heart of village life for current and future generations. The aim is to adapt the building to meet local needs while preserving its unique character and heritage.

Our architects, **OCA Studio**, and community development consultants, **Community Enterprise**, have prepared early proposals and are keen to hear your thoughts. This consultation builds on last summer's community survey and is a key stage in the community-led design process.

Plans for the Library include:

- A revitalised library space for reading and learning, with links to local rural issues
- Flexible areas for meetings and small group activities with a modern kitchenette and accessible WC
- An enterprise hub and co-working space, providing training and opportunities and fostering connection
- An archive for local heritage information
- A retrofit exemplar, demonstrating best practice for sustainable upgrades to historic buildings and offering training and educational opportunities
- Additional affordable accommodation within the village
- Outdoor spaces for community growing and biodiversity

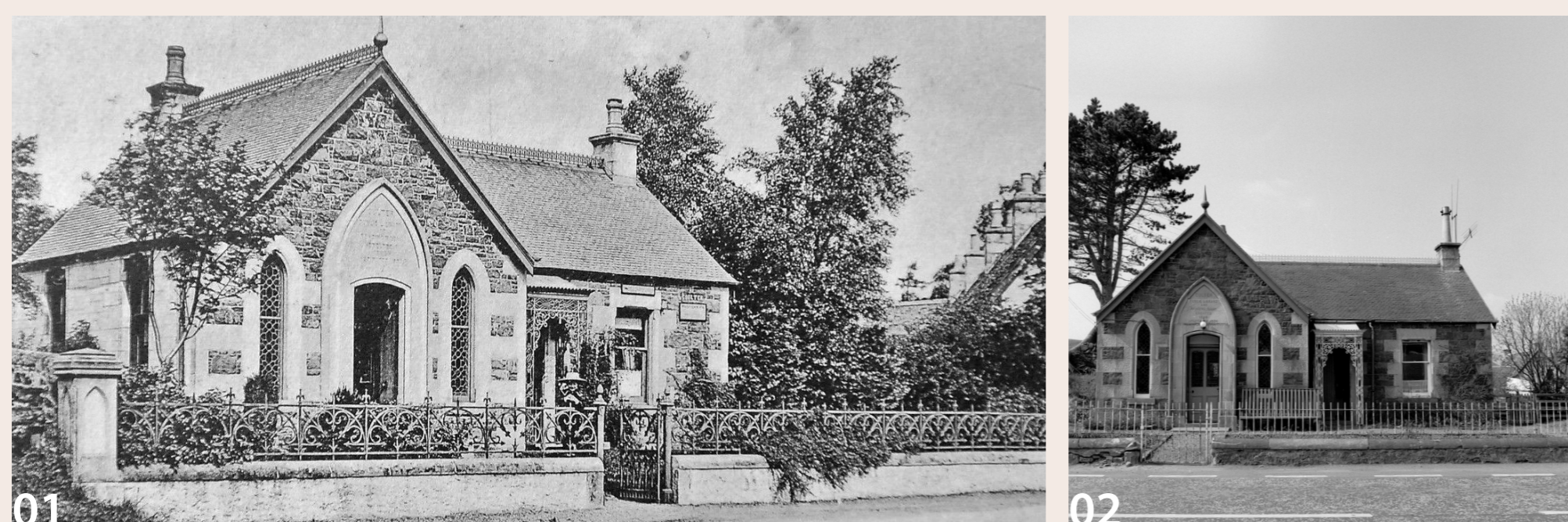
These proposals will continue to be shaped through this consultation process, ensuring the future of the Library reflects the aspirations of the local community. We look forward to hearing your ideas and feedback to help shape the future of this important village asset.



Above: Design Approach References

The Library Today

From the street, the Library still appears much as it would have shortly after its construction, with the exception of the small 1990s extension. Externally, the building requires maintenance and repair, including window replacement, renewal of rainwater goods, repair of renders and stonework, and restoration of decorative cast-iron features damaged in a recent storm. Internally, the reading room retains many original features, including decorative plasterwork, shelving and a fireplace, while later additions and the adjoining caretaker's house are tired and in poor condition, presenting an opportunity for repair, renewal and thermal improvement.

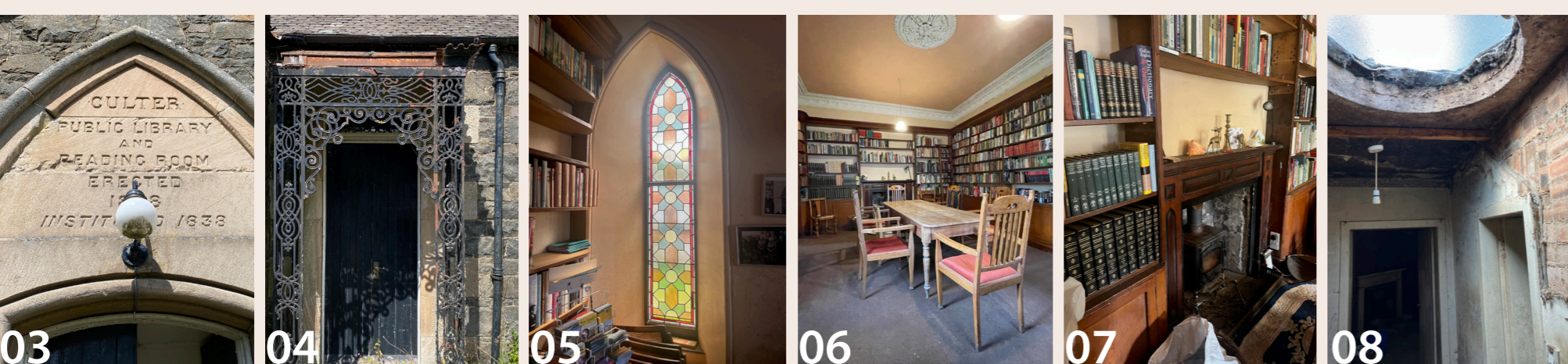


A rich history

Coulter Public Library was originally constructed in 1888 as a reading room and librarian's house and has been modified and extended over the years to support its changing role in village life. A rear extension was added in the late 19th or early 20th century, followed by a cottage extension in the 1950s and a small west-wing addition in the 1990s to accommodate kitchen and WC facilities. Despite these changes, the building's original form and character remain clearly legible.

Above: 01: Photograph showing library with original gate and railings to street, date unknown; **02:** Later photograph following replacement of railings ©HES Trove-

Below 03: Inscribed arched panel above library door; **04:** Decorative cast iron porch to cottage entrance; **05:** Arched stained glass windows to either side of library main door; **06:** Library interior, with door to adjoining cottage on right; **07:** Wood burner within library fireplace; **08:** Rooflight to cottage hallway within concrete roof slab



Above: Research & Precedent References **01-04:** Examples of libraries, where a small and cosy space is often part of the charm (Sir Walter Scott's library and study at Abbotsford; the historic Leighton Library in Dunblane; the library at Drum Castle) **05-06** A retrofit exemplar: how might the building construction and thermal upgrades be revealed (a 'truth window' in a straw bale house. a shuttered window revealing insulation behind)

Below: Envisaged section through the renovated Coulter Library and adjoining accommodation



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Proposals

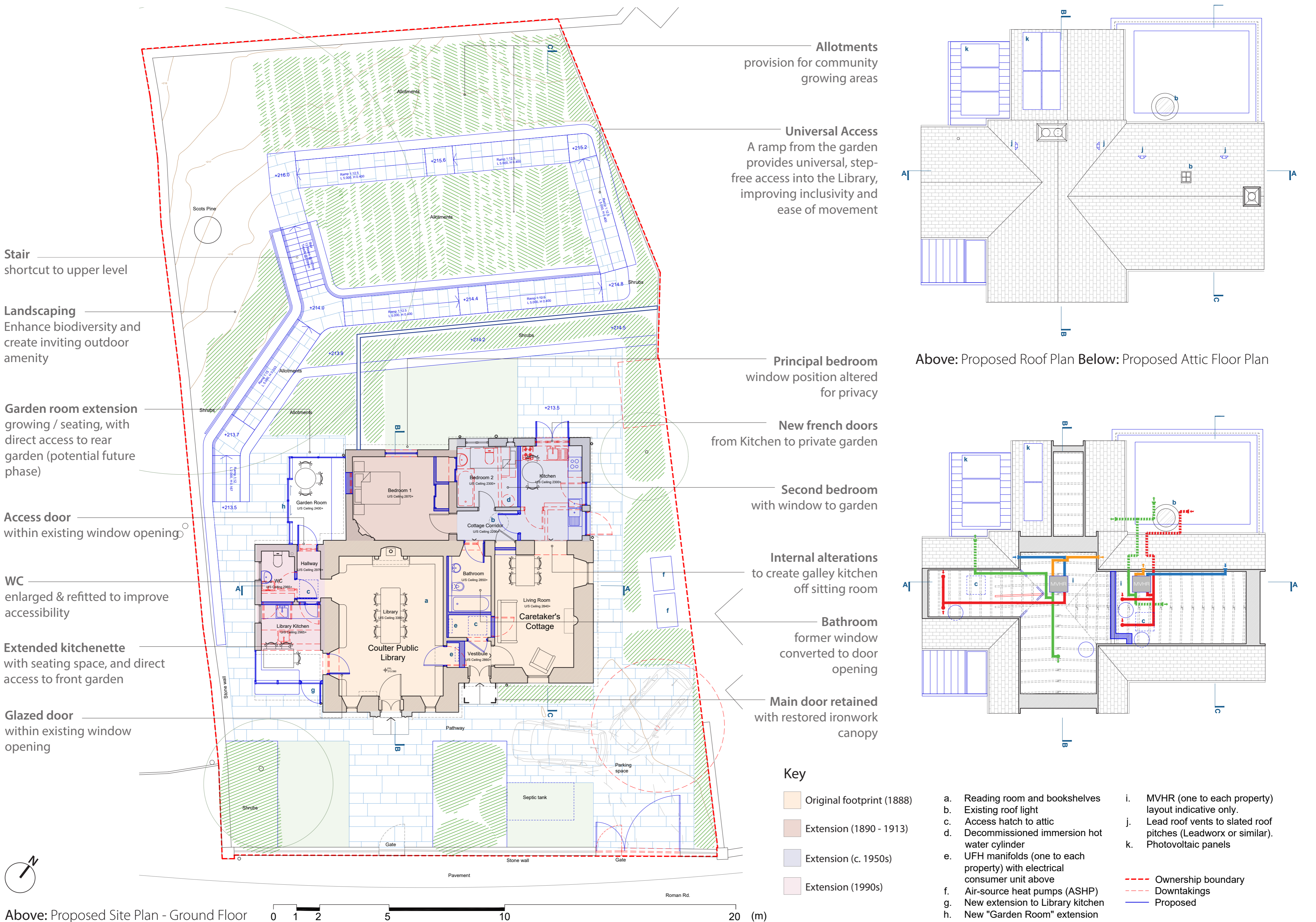
The proposals for Coulter Public Library aim to bring the building back into use as a vibrant and flexible community hub, while carefully retaining the character and heritage of the existing building. The developed proposal includes alterations to both the Library and the adjoining caretaker's cottage to bring them in line with modern requirements and support long-term, sustainable use.

The former reading room is proposed to be sensitively refurbished as a revitalised library and community space, supporting reading, local heritage, meetings and small group activities. The 1990s extension would be remodelled and extended to the front and rear, providing improved facilities and a series of smaller, flexible spaces that can be used independently or alongside the main library. An enlarged kitchenette would support food preparation, eating and social activity, with direct access to the front garden, while a predominantly glazed rear extension would provide a sheltered space connecting directly to the community garden.

The adjoining caretaker's cottage is proposed to be brought back into use as affordable accommodation, with internal alterations to provide improved living space and an additional bedroom. Across the site, the proposals include a full retrofit, featuring fabric repairs, solar panels, heat pumps, and heat recovery ventilation. These measures will enhance thermal performance while demonstrating best practice in the sustainable upgrade of historic buildings. Outdoor spaces would also be improved to increase accessibility and support community growing, wellbeing, and biodiversity.



Above: Envisaged front elevation, showing the refurbished library and caretaker's cottage. The design illustrates sensitive restoration of the historic building fabric, alongside enhancements to windows, entrances, and landscaping, conveying the building's renewed role as a welcoming and active community hub.



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Lead Architect: OCA Studio
 Conservation Architect: Munro Allison
 Business Planning: Community Enterprise