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Heritage Impact Assessment in Relation to the Proposed Replacement of Evenwood Cottage Cound Moor with a Bespoke New Dwelling

Historical Background

Whilst occupying a relatively large area, Cound Moor is made up of four much smaller communities. Coundarbour, a dispersed group of dwellings located just off the A458 road, Cound and Upper Cound all relatively closely together, but with Cound Moor set some 3 km further south. Cound is a very small collection of dwellings and farms. The northern half of Cound with the church and Cound Hall are within a designated *Area of Special Landscape Character* which recognises that this area of Shropshire and its immediate environs comprise an attractive rural landscape with a distinctive pattern of settlements and tracts of natural woodland set within open grazing areas. Cound Moor is a linear collection of dwellings and bungalows on the unclassified road to Harnage Grange and Acton Burnell. Whilst on the edge of the moor Evenwood Cottage lies within Acton Burnell Parish

The Cound landscape has been occupied since the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age with small artefacts discovered in considerable numbers across the parish. Early Iron Age bivallate hill forts survive nearby at Bayston Hill, Caer Caradoc in the Stretton Hills and on The Wrekin. The 1st century Roman legionary fortress at Uriconium, is only a mile and half distant. It was one of the largest towns in Roman Britain where they exploited silver-bearing lead ores and outcrop coal on the Shropshire plains.

During the warmer and milder weather of the Iron Age, the several meanders at Cound created ideal slow running and shallow fording points across the River

Severn which remained in use during the Roman period and into the early medieval period. With a productive hinterland and being a natural route centre Cound developed as a significant inland port with minerals and animal pelts from the Welsh Hills being exported and pottery, jewellery, ceramics and wine from the continent being imported. An important Roman road has been identified as passing through Cound on its way to Uriconium, following the alignment of the road between the A458 and Cound Stank. This may have provided a route for Roman soldiers travelling to or from the major fortified settlement at Isca Augusta (modern day Caerleon) or into the Welsh Marches .

Remains have been identified near to the modern Cound Hall of a Roman marching camp that may predate Uriconium.

After the Norman Conquest of 1066, most of southern Shropshire, including the manor of Cound, was set aside as a Royal forest and game hunting grounds under special jurisdiction of a Shire reeve, or Sheriff . Although game was hunted throughout the Shropshire *Long Forest*, as it was called, there is documentary evidence that Cound was a special hunting reserve for the Norman royalty. A T Gaydon BEd reported in *Victoria County History 8: Conover and Ford Hundreds (1968)* that:-

"Several historical records have identified a deer park of medieval dates in Cound, between 1066 and 1499, within the Royal Forest. It may have been formed soon after 1254 when a 'grant of free warren' was enacted and was still in operation in 1298. The medieval hunting park included stocks of free ranging deer together with wild boar and seems to have lain in the area of Longdale Coppice, north of the present day Cound Hall and the main road near the western banks of the River Severn."

In the 13th century the high quality of Shropshire wool brought prosperity to Ludlow, Shrewsbury, and Bridgnorth, as the main centres. Shrewsbury in particular became the principal market for an extensive area including much of North Wales and the Shropshire plains. The farm buildings of the present Cound Hall lie just to the south of the walled kitchen garden and are believed to be standing on the site of the first medieval manor house. The Victoria County History suggests relic bridge abutments were present on the Cound Brook slightly south of the modern A458 bridge over the brook but these are not visible today.

The dispersed settlement of Cound is split in two by the Coundmoor Brook and the earliest part of the village is considered to be where the church still stands. Coundarbour bridge was built over the Cound Brook immediately downstream of its confluence with the Coundmoor Brook by the renowned engineer Thomas Telford in 1797, and remains the oldest iron bridge still in vehicular use anywhere in the world. The confluence of the Severn and the Cound Brook is upstream of Ironbridge Gorge. The Cantlop bridge is a few miles away in Berrington parish, built in 1820 and no longer in use but maintained as a monument by English Heritage.

The surviving manor house of Cound Hall is a Grade I listed building and a large vernacular Baroque house, with a basement and two storeys of tall slender windows

topped by a half-storey, built of red brick with stone dressings. The house was built in 1703-04 for Edward Cressett by a John Prince.

The house is most notable for its large stop-fluted Corinthian pilasters with richly carved capitals, which have been described as "ambitious but inept" and suggestions are that the inspiration was the King William block at Greenwich Hospital that was designed by Christopher Wren.

One outstanding feature of the interior is the staircase, a significant alteration which has been dated to the late 18th century. The concept of the staircase was to gain more room where the original staircase had been, thus creating a feeling of greater space in the hallway. The staircase has a delicate metal handrail and runs through both storeys along three sides of an open well. The staircase rests on two very fine fluted columns. There is high quality Neo-Elizabethan plaster work on the underside of the staircase.

What is now the Riverside Inn, formerly the Cound Lodge Inn, on the A458 was built as a house in the early 18th century facing the River Severn and is listed Grade 2. It was an alehouse by 1745 serving turnpike traffic on the road which then ran between the inn and the river and would have also served boatmen on the river which at that time was a thriving waterway with a wharf at the location. The Shrewsbury-Much Wenlock road was diverted to its current alignment to the south of the building at some time before the construction of the Severn Valley Railway line (now disused) in 1862 and hence the former back of the house (south) has become the entrance front.

The building of the railway line and station commenced in 1858 and opened for trade in 1862 but never handled much in the way of passengers, mostly specialising in freight traffic. Mainly wool, agricultural produce and coal, from the collieries of Alveley and Highley, were the principal sources of revenue. The railway was closed in 1963.

Cound Moor has over time undergone drainage works to improve the grazing and support arable farming in particular wheat and barley. Scattered cottages and farmsteads give lie to a farming pattern of small holdings set within the larger estate of Acton Burnell Hall.

Evenwood Cottage



Evenwood Cottage is a much altered 19th century small holding with a small outbuilding range.





Extensions have been appended to the original building together with substantial rebuilding of poor-quality masonry at various stages during the late twentieth century creating an awkward plan form and building intersections. This leaves the structure vulnerable to water ingress and high maintenance. Windows and joinery have been replaced with inferior pastiche units creating an overall composition that lacks charm or architectural integrity.



In an attempt to introduce character, modern timbers have been applied or left exposed which then become a parody of its former self.









The property has reached a point where major repairs and intervention are required at a time when there is increasing emphasis on energy conservation and maintenance of a low carbon footprint in serving residential property. To repair the existing structure would address and reinforce its current defects for a given period. However, without the counterbalance of historic or architectural significance this does not merit such investment. The owners have thus decided to commission a bespoke new house which addresses the accumulated inefficiencies of the property as it now stands and build upon an established residential site.

Heritage Considerations

Whilst there are surviving elements of the original property in the core of Evenwood Cottage, such has been the alteration and destruction of architectural and historic integrity that it does not achieve the authenticity to defend retention. In the wider management of change in the Shropshire Countryside a well designed eco friendly and thermally efficient contemporary building represents a sequential progression which does not incur loss of a significant historic entity.

In order to validate the repair and retention of historically and architecturally important properties which contribute to the acknowledged character of the area, there has to be a selection process which allows for the replacement of insignificant or severely compromised units with contemporary developments of higher aesthetic and operational quality.

It is considered that this proposal constitutes such an instance.

Impact of the proposal on the setting of heritage assets close by

It is considered that the proposal will not have a direct physical or environmental impact upon heritage assets in the vicinity.

However in deference to its important landscape setting the design of the new dwelling will utilise in part salvaged materials from the extant property, so creating a vernacular character, modelled in a contemporary manner, with an imposing frontage gable which will enhance the site when viewed from near and far.



Reference of Proposal to National Legislation

In an attempt to coordinate the fragmented legislative control of planning applications the Government issued new guidance published in March 2012, updated February 2019— the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) —which replaced all other separate Planning Policy Guidelines and Planning Policy

Statements. The NPPF referred to 'heritage assets' as 'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.

In terms of how the legislation affects applicants proposing works to historic buildings and sites, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should require applicants: '...to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance' The NPPF dictates that approval for development proposals should normally be granted unless 'any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits'

The NPPF is in Shropshire cross referenced to the SHROPSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

The Strategy outlines the Spatial Vision of the Council towards development within the outstanding historic and natural landscape of the County. It describes the character, quality and diversity of Shropshire's natural and historic environment as the County's greatest asset which must be protected, restored and enhanced through the consideration of proposals for conservation and development which impacts on this environment.

In particular as Policy CS 17 outlines: the quality of the landscape, geodiversity and core areas of biodiversity such as the Shropshire Hills AONB, Meres and Mosses, and Severn Valley corridor must be maintained and managed in a proactive and sustainable manner.

Both designated and non-designated historic buildings, sites and landscapes are recognised for their importance to Shropshire's character, its communities, its economy, its culture and its sense of place.

Policy CS6: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Sets out how this may be achieved: -

To create sustainable places, development will be designed to a high quality using sustainable design principles, to achieve an inclusive and accessible environment which respects and enhances local distinctiveness, and which mitigates and adapts to climate change. This will be achieved by:

- Requiring all development proposals, including changes to existing buildings, to achieve criteria set out in the sustainability checklist. This will ensure that sustainable design and construction principles are incorporated within new development, and

that resource and energy efficiency and renewable energy generation are adequately addressed and improved where possible. The checklist will be developed as part of a Sustainable Design SPD;

- Requiring proposals likely to generate significant levels of traffic to be located in accessible locations where opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport can be maximised and the need for car-based travel to be reduced;

And ensuring that all development:

- Is designed to be adaptable, safe and accessible to all, to respond to the challenge of climate change and, in relation to housing, adapt to changing lifestyle needs over the lifetime of the development in

accordance with the objectives of Policy CS11

- Protects, restores, conserves and enhances the natural, built and historic environment and is appropriate in scale, density and design taking into account the local context and character, and those features which contribute to local character including scale, pattern and density, having regard to national and local design guidance, landscape character assessments and ecological strategies where appropriate;

- Contributes to the health and wellbeing of communities, including safeguarding residential and local amenity and the achievement of local standards for the provision and quality of open space, sport and recreational facilities.

- Is designed to a high quality, consistent with national good practice standards, including appropriate landscaping and car parking provision and taking account of site characteristics such as land stability and ground contamination.

- Makes the most effective use of land and safeguards natural resources including high quality agricultural land, geology, minerals, air, soil and water.

- Ensures that there is capacity and availability of infrastructure to serve any new development in accordance with the objectives of Policy CS8.

Proposals resulting in the loss of existing facilities, services or amenities will be resisted unless provision is made for equivalent or improved provision, or it can be clearly demonstrated that the existing facility, service or amenity is not viable over the long term.

The approach is reasoned in the EXPLANATION:-

Sustainable design reflects peoples changing needs over time and requires the consideration of different needs within the local community.

Development should take into account changing needs over the lifetime of the development, incorporating specific accessibility and design features, such as

Homes for Life and Lifetime Home Standards to ensure the needs of Shropshire's ageing and disabled population are addressed, as outlined in

Policy CS11.

The quality and local distinctiveness of Shropshire's townscapes and landscapes are important assets. They have a direct impact on quality of life and are an important influence on the local economy in terms of attracting investment and boosting Shropshire's image as a tourist destination.

The Council will ensure new development complements and relates to its surroundings, not only in terms of how it looks, but the way it functions, to maintain and enhance the quality of Shropshire's environment as an attractive, safe, accessible and sustainable place in which to live and work.

There are a substantial number of designated heritage assets in Shropshire. This reflects the special architectural and historical interest of the county and means that such assets require careful consideration and management where change is proposed.

Development should be sensitive to these valued features and make a positive contribution to the overall appearance and environmental quality of the area through the use of appropriate good quality locally sourced materials; the support and encouragement of traditional skills; the protection of heritage assets and the protection of important buildings, trees and environmental networks. Particular regard should be paid to Village and Town Design Statements and Conservation Area Appraisals.

High quality design will be expected in all new developments to ensure that the development is appropriate to its setting and surroundings and to ensure that local character is reflected. Appropriate landscaping and tree planting will form an integral part of any proposal to ensure that development is better assimilated into its surroundings. Developments should also include room for appropriate vehicular access (including for waste and emergency vehicles), suitable provision of car and cycle parking as well as footpaths and cyclepaths (where appropriate) and linked where possible, to the existing network.

These principles are further emphasised in the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan Adopted Plan 17th December 2015

In particular policy MD2

Sustainable Design Further to Policy CS6, for a development proposal to be considered acceptable it is required to:

1. Respond positively to local design aspirations, wherever possible, both in terms of visual appearance and how a place functions, as set out in Community Led Plans, Town or Village Design Statements, Neighbourhood Plans and Place Plans.
2. Contribute to and respect locally distinctive or valued character and existing amenity value by:
 - i. Responding appropriately to the form and layout of existing

development and the way it functions, including mixture of uses, streetscape, building heights and lines, scale, density, plot sizes and local patterns of movement; and ii. Reflecting locally characteristic architectural design and details, such as building materials, form, colour and texture of detailing, taking account of their scale and proportion; and iii. Protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic context and character of heritage assets, their significance and setting, in accordance with MD13; and iv. Enhancing, incorporating or recreating natural assets in accordance with MD12.

3. Embrace opportunities for contemporary design solutions, which take reference from and reinforce distinctive local characteristics to create a positive sense of place but avoid reproducing these characteristics in an incoherent and detrimental style.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed replacement of Evenwood House with a bespoke new dwelling is an inherently sustainable proposal. It retains and gives long term beneficial use to an established residential site in a manner which reduces energy consumption of the property holding and embraces a contemporary interpretation of vernacular style.

It is a proposal that can be implemented without detriment to neighbouring heritage assets or the wider landscape character and is thus a reasonable proposal which accords with the principles of local and national legislation outlined above relevant to the management of change in the historic environment.

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