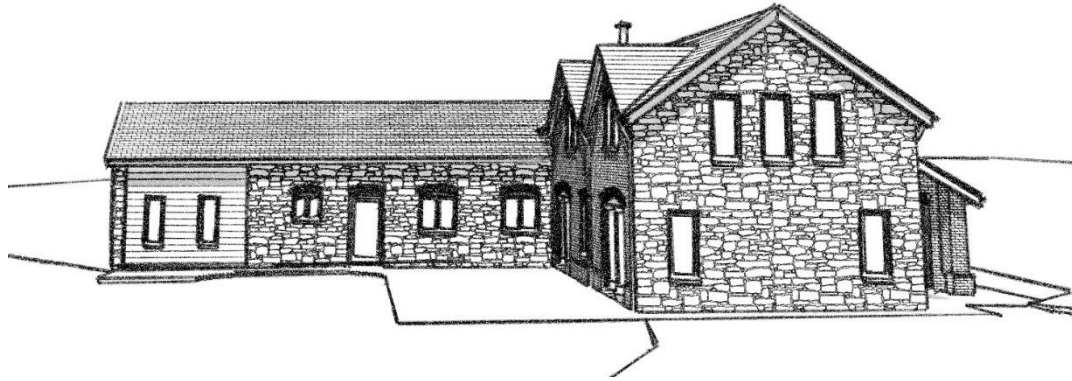


PLANNING STATEMENT

Hill Farm, All Stretton.

Replacement Dwelling & Barn Rebuild.



Proposal Description

This proposal is to reconstruct a ruined farmhouse and to rebuild and convert one of its associated barns. The existing structures are in various states of decrepitude and have been so for some years. Fire damage has left the original farmhouse no more than a shell, in parts without a roof. The two barns are in better condition but still need serious attention to make them viable buildings. The proposal is to rebuild the old, ruined farmhouse into a new dwelling and to integrate the attached barn into the plan which will form annex accommodation. The smaller of the two barns, which is not attached was a former stone barn. The replacement is a timber barn/stable which sits on the original base. This barn will not be rebuilt as part of this scheme.

Of the fire damaged house, there is nothing of value remaining, so the replacement building will be new. Drawing 577.03 shows how the plan of proposed cottage will follow the footprint of the ruined farmhouse and the old barn next to it.

The ground floor of this new dwelling will have an entrance hall, with downstairs cloaks, leading on one side into a lounge and on the other side into the kitchen / diner. A utility room with a door to the garden will lead from the kitchen. Opening directly from the kitchen / diner will be the attached barn. This will be rebuilt and integrated into the overall plan. Appropriately, the old barn will become an annexe, with bifold doors onto the garden from the Living space and a separate bedroom with en-suite at the far end. Deliberately following the layout of the existing barn, the door openings and windows will match as closely as possible what can be seen of the original, though some guesswork is needed as the structure is so badly damaged.

Upstairs the new home will have a master bedroom with en-suite and two further bedrooms served by a family bathroom.

It is proposed to make the new buildings integrate with the rural structures found around this part of the county and to make the barns look as attractive as they must have done when they were first built. The cottage and barn walls will be made of stone and brick whilst wooden cladding will reflect the use of this material in the old barns. Two small dormer bedroom windows will be tucked under the roofline and a long, sloping roof over part of the ground floor will add to the overall feel of a traditional country dwelling.

Site Location, Layout and Maps

The B5477, the old Shrewsbury Road, runs through All Stretton. Many narrow country lanes lead off this road, running up onto the Long Mynd, and along these lanes are scattered farmhouses. Some are still operating as agricultural premises but many are now private dwellings or small enterprises such as camp sites or equestrian businesses. Along the single track lane to Hill Farm you are unlikely to meet much traffic; perhaps a couple of horses and riders, the occasional dog walker or locals going about their daily lives.

It is a secluded, even remote area. Hill Farm lies halfway between Womerton Farm and Spring Cottage, with a good walk between them. It is a lovely, rustic setting. It is situated within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, indeed its location epitomises all that is most typical of the AONB. It is surrounded by pastoral scenes that seem unchanging; fields full of contented sheep, little brooks running down the escarpments, wooded glades of ancient trees and the undulating landscape of the Long Mynd and its famous Cardingmill Valley.

There is a public footpath just skirting the site, though it should be noted that the entire area is wide open to walkers, riders and cyclists and that few people find it necessary to stick to marked paths.

The replacement house and barns will respect these natural surroundings and will not be out of place with other houses and agricultural buildings in the vicinity, some of which are as old as the original farmstead and some of which are contemporary.

The site on which the ruined cottage stands is quite flat and modest in size. Access is directly off the single track lane, with plenty of space for vehicles turning in and coming out.

There is a large agricultural store to the south west of the site but this should not infringe on the rebuilding, nor be impacted by it.

Planning Policy Framework

Both national and local planning guidance caution against isolated development within the countryside, and particularly within an AONB. However, they do accept that residential properties, if they become uninhabitable, may be replaced *if they have established residential use rights*.

SAMDev section MD7a "Managing Housing in the Countryside" advises:

"replacement dwelling houses will only be permitted where the dwelling to be replaced is a permanent structure with an established continuing residential use. Replacement dwellings should not be materially larger and must occupy the same footprint unless it can be demonstrated why this should not be the case".

The house being replaced here was indeed a permanent structure. The new design follows a similar footprint and will be of similar height to the old farmhouse. Pre application advice was sought and expert opinion was that residential use of the building was continuous, even though the property had been uninhabitable for some years.

"I would be minded to accept that the property's residential use has not been intentionally abandoned, and hence that in principle an unfettered replacement dwelling could be supported".

Section MD7b of Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management Plan (SAMDev, 2015) advises:

“In order to promote a sustainable approach to development, proposals which minimise the impacts of new development, appropriately conserve the existing historic and landscape resource, and/or provide environmental amelioration are encouraged. This will include the appropriate re-use of existing suitable buildings and previously developed land”.

This project embodies the desire to fully utilise the existing buildings and to make them a valuable, positive asset to the area and to offer the owner a pleasant place to live after the heartbreak of fire damage. Renovation of the barns, of course, constitutes conservation of derelict rural buildings.

Shropshire Council published their report *Type and Affordability of Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)* in 2012, giving a considered overview of all aspects of building development in the county. Section 2.23 is particularly relevant to this proposal:

The visual impact of the replacement dwelling or existing dwelling plus extension on the surroundings and the need to respect the local character of the area, taking account of bulk, scale, height and external appearance of the resultant dwelling.

The aesthetics, scale and materials used in the proposed plans are intentionally designed to create a dwelling that melds seamlessly into its surroundings. The current ruined building will be removed, effective use will be made of whatever is still useable, and the character of the replacement cottage will be sympathetically rural and modest in scale.

Later in the same section designers are exhorted to consider:

A requirement to be sympathetic to the size, mass, character and appearance of the original building. A replacement dwelling should ordinarily be sited in the same position as the original dwelling.

These proposals are in accord with this advice. The new house design is located on the original footprint and will be comparable in scale and mass to the old cottage, insofar as this can be ascertained from what remains of the ruined structure.

The existing balance of housing types and tenures in the local area, and the need to maintain a supply of smaller and less expensive properties in the local area that are suitable for the needs of many newly-forming households.

This proposal is for a modestly-sized three bedroom home with the normal facilities you would expect to find in a modern dwelling.

Sustainability Considerations

The proposal is to replace a ruined building with a modern, insulated and energy efficient house. Where possible, materials will be reused and as much as possible of the barns will be retained.

Heritage Impact Assessment

Hill Farm was once a small estate consisting of farmland, farmhouse and two small barns. Misfortune in the shape of fire damage and subsequent neglect means that little is left of value from the original structures. However, the owner and agent are committed to preserving what is salvageable, echoing the original layout and creating an appropriate replacement for what once was there.

The barns would have been very attractive to modern eyes, encapsulating a vision of an ancient English agrarian landscape. Even in their derelict state, they evoke an enduring romantic quality, being of human scale, built using traditional, local materials and of a design that would have developed organically through centuries of human trial and error.

It is difficult to envision exactly how the cottage would have looked originally but its replacement will be of similar scale and mass, so that the rebuilt structures will retain their harmony and interconnectedness.

Reference was made to the heritage aspect further in the preapp advice:

Although generally presuming against isolated new homes, the Council's Core Strategy Policy CS5 and SAMDev Policy MD7a, alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), make an exception for open-market residential conversion of existing rural buildings which merit retention and reuse because they have intrinsic value as heritage assets. In this case the U-shaped range of barns behind the house undoubtedly qualifies as a non-designated heritage asset given the buildings' age, traditional construction and vernacular character. (ref. PRN 23461).

To summarise, although the old farmhouse and barns are not formally listed, they do constitute a non-designated heritage asset. The barns are old and in their original state, albeit in decrepitude. The cottage however, cannot really be viewed as a heritage asset as all that remains of it is tumbledown walls.

*Core Strategy Policy CS5 requires conversion schemes to contribute positively to the building's character, whilst SAMDev Policy MD7a and an Historic England document *Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings: Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse* recommend converting traditional rural buildings in their present form, with minimal alteration, to maintain their historic character.*

The barns are clearly fine examples of traditional farm buildings and the intention of the proposed design is to halt any further decline in their structure and to restore and rebuild them to their former glory.

There is one Grade II listed house and two listed milestones in the environs of Hill Farm but no listed monuments nearby. The nearest village, Leebotwood, has several listed houses and cottages, a barn or two, a public house and a church. None of these are near to the derelict premises.

The agent and owner intend to restore the historic barns to look as close as possible to their original state. Window and door openings will be retained in the same places, the roofs will be repaired and kept to the original design. The two storey dwelling will echo the shape and footprint of the ruined cottage, although, sadly, nothing material of it can be recovered.

Drainage

There is existing drainage on the site. The existing septic tank is in good working order so there is no need to install a replacement. The replacement dwelling and annex will be connected to this in the same way as the previous dwelling.

Storm water will be catered for by way of a soakaway in the courtyard.

Access

There is good access to the site from the lane, which is a very quiet byway. However, the farmyard will be resurfaced to bring it up to modern standards. The general view from the lane will not be greatly changed.

Conclusion

Hill Farm exists in a state of severe neglect. In this part of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty it constitutes an eye sore. This proposal will create a modern, habitable dwelling with an annexe and by so doing it will save an historic barn from what will otherwise certainly be further decline and, ultimately, complete obliteration.