

IF_DO

2206 - Mill House

Design and Access Statement

July 2023

Credits

IF_DO has prepared this document for the client, with the collaborators as indicated below.

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I.0 Introduction

I.1 Purpose of this document

The document sets out proposals for a sustainable reconfiguration and self-build extension of the Mill House (existing dwelling) for our clients, David Nicholson and Ruth Hawkins.

This document is meant to read in conjunction with all supplementary information submitted by IF_DO on behalf of our clients, including;

- Architects drawings,
- Planning Statement by Phil Cobbold Planning Ltd,
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment by ROAVR Group,
- Heritage Statement by Historic Building Studio,
- and Geo-Environmental Desk Study (Land Contamination Report) by JPC Environmental Services.

This Design & Access Statement presents initial site analysis, layouts & massing for a sustainable reconfiguration and self-build extension of the Mill House at Goram's Mill Lane, Laxfield. The proposal aspires to sit sensitively within its rural context and to celebrate the site's unique history as a working mill.

Photo: Site photograph showing approach to the Mill House site

I.0 Introduction

I.2 The Site

The land under the client's ownership is divided up into a series of meadows and mini-settlement plots. The Mill House site is one of the larger plots, with the existing Mill House and remaining mill base at its centre. It is a historic mill site (see section 3).

Today, the site consists of the existing Mill House with 20th century wing extensions to either side, the base of the original wind mill, and two barns (one used as an artist studio / workshop and the other as a music room). The site also consists of multiple landscape features such as ponds, a grassy meadow, various plum trees, willow trees, and a large oak tree. The site slopes up to the north-east.

The Mill House site is on the periphery of Laxfield in Mid-Suffolk.

I.3 The Brief

The Mill House in its current condition is dominated by the two 20th century wing extensions to either side of the original cottage. The brief looks to remove the wing extensions to return the Mill House to its original form with reinstated hipped roof and chimneys. In its reduced size, the Mill House will serve as ancillary accommodation with an exemplar sustainable self-build extension to serve as the primary living accommodation. The new build extension aspires to sit sensitively on the site and take full advantage of its unique site and surrounding rural context.

The brief has been developed with the following requirements;

- A strong physical and visual connection to the landscape beyond;
- Local ecological impacts to be mitigated;
- Sense of enclosure / 'yard' created between the new build extension and existing structures;
- Existing topography to be retained (minimal excavation);
- New build elements are to be sensitive to the existing buildings on the site;
- All demolished materials to be recycled on site or made available for sale where possible;
- All material choices to be assessed against 'Whole Life Carbon' impacts;
- Allow for passive ventilation and summer cooling strategies;
- Energy efficiency measures to be considered using Passivhaus methodology;
- Provide comfortable and flexible accommodation for a modern day family home;
- The kitchen and living space as the heart of the family home.

Opposite: Photographs of Mill House, and surrounding barns and landscape in June 2023



I.0 Introduction

I.4 Natural Building Systems - 'Construction without destruction'

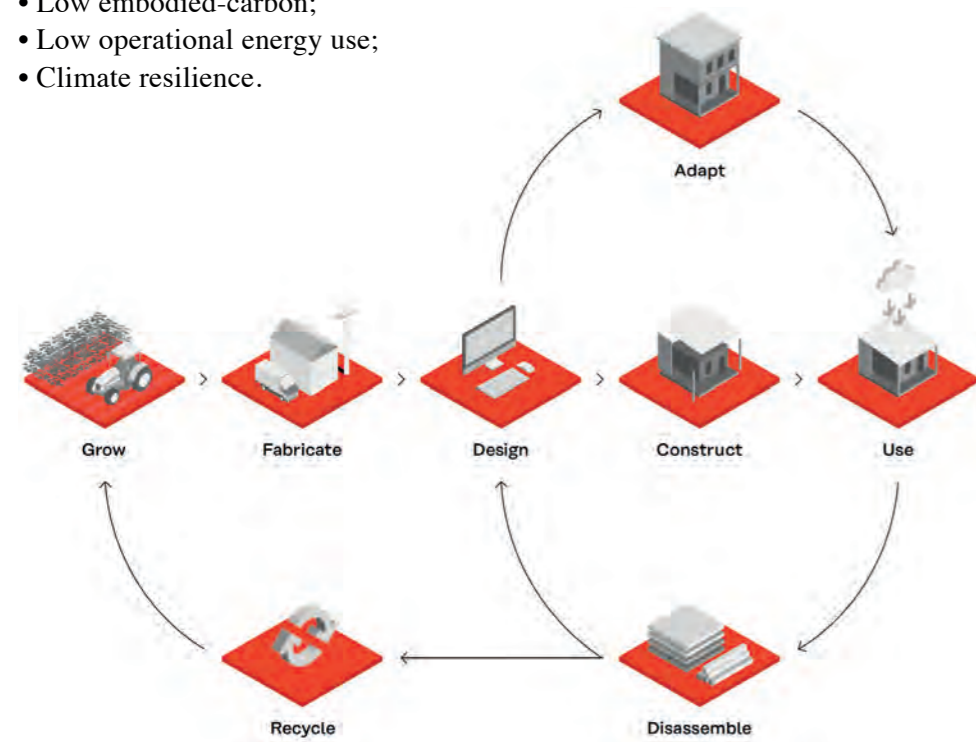
One of the core ambitions for this project is to create an inherently sustainable building by using sustainable and bio-based materials wherever possible. The client, David Nicholson, is the Director of Design at Suffolk based 'Natural Building Systems' (NBS). Their work in material technology, digital tools, and building physics aims to create buildings which are *'healthier for people, and kinder to the planet'*.

Of central importance to the project is the use of the Natural Buildings System's *ADEPT building system* to create a prototype for an affordable, sustainable, breathable, and demountable dwelling.

ADEPT is a low embodied-carbon, cassette system. The cassettes are packed with HempSil insulation, a unique material which optimises the natural characteristics of hemp shiv to regulate moisture in the air. It is a *'fully integrated prefabricated construction solution including breathable walls and roof, cladding, floors and internal walls.'*

The benefits of using such a system are;

- Construction efficiency (zero-waste);
- Circular economy;
- Low embodied-carbon;
- Low operational energy use;
- Climate resilience.



Above & opposite: Images courtesy of Natural Building Systems





Mill House Site

Laxfield

Photo: Satellite image of Laxfield and the Mill House site

2.0 Context

2.1 Location

Mill House, Laxfield is located within the county of Suffolk. The site is accessed off a single private track from Goram's Mill Lane. The Lane intersects Bickers Hill Road, which leads to Halesworth to the east, and High Street (B1117) and Stradbroke to the west.

The site is under 1km from Laxfield High Street and 14km from Halesworth town centre. It is 22km from Diss train station for National Rail services to London.

The land under the client's ownership is divided into two sites: Mill House and Mill Orchard. The Mill House site separated from Mill Orchard by the historic Mid-Suffolk Light Railway. Mill House enjoys impressive views in most directions over meadows, adjacent farmland, and to the Suffolk Downs.



Opposite: Satellite imagery of site

2.0 Context

2.2 Built context

Laxfield is an attractive village in Suffolk, established as a farming settlement in the 11th century, it has now grown to a population of 1,002 (Census 2021). The land Laxfield is situated on is relatively flat. The main street is wide and fronts the parish church of All Saints, the Royal Oak pub, the Old Guildhall (Laxfield Museum), and multiple private cottages.

The vernacular in Suffolk establishes strong precedent for plinths (/a strong base), recessed ground floors, and jettied first floors. Established in Laxfield is precedent for slightly jarring and sometimes literally overlapping built structures, a theme the Mill House client is fond of.

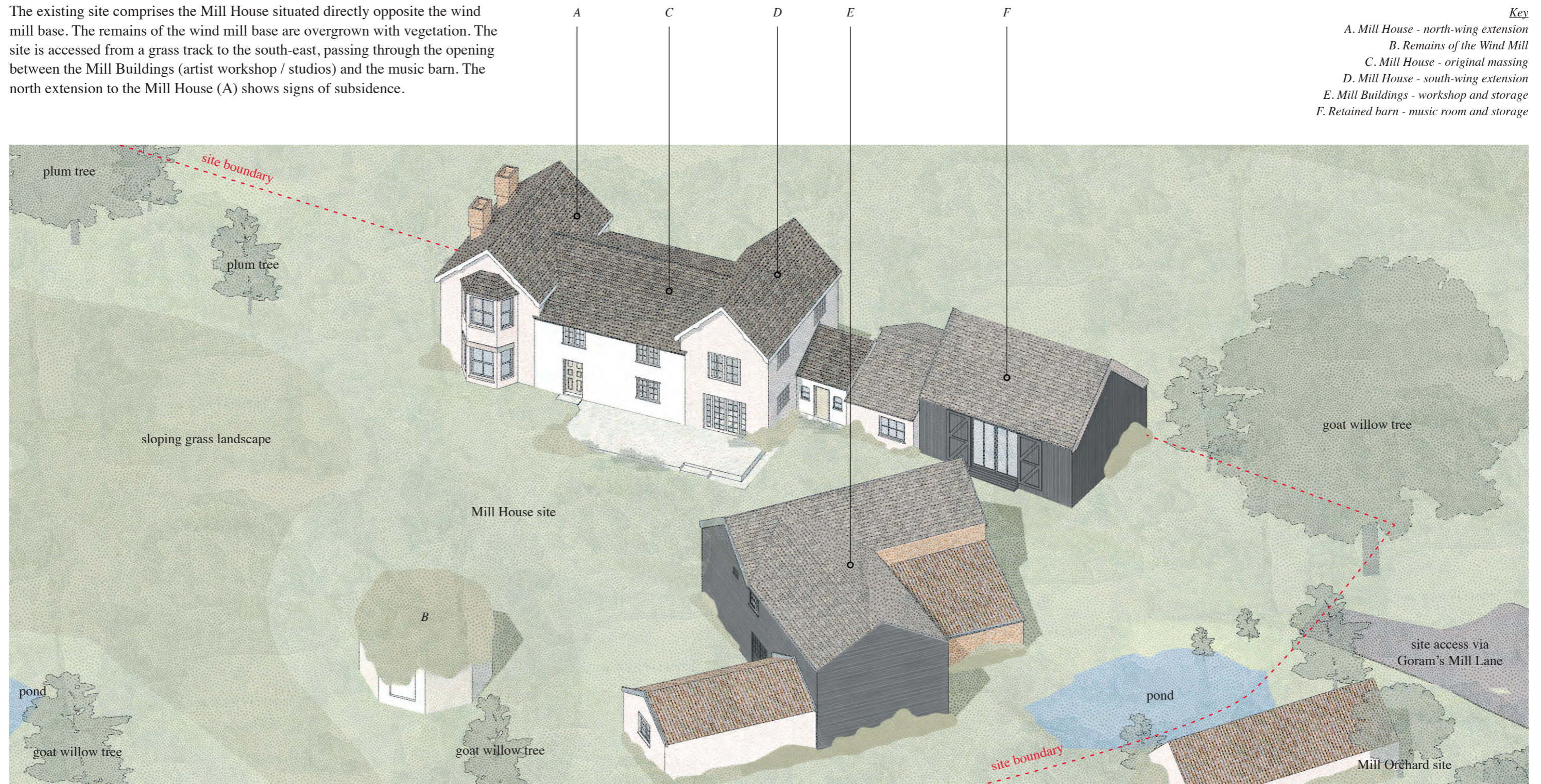


Opposite: Imagery of built context in Laxfield and Suffolk.

2.0 Context

2.3 Existing site

The existing site comprises the Mill House situated directly opposite the wind mill base. The remains of the wind mill base are overgrown with vegetation. The site is accessed from a grass track to the south-east, passing through the opening between the Mill Buildings (artist workshop / studios) and the music barn. The north extension to the Mill House (A) shows signs of subsidence.



Above: Axonometric drawing showing the site as existing.

2.0 Context

2.4 Existing buildings - Site Photographs



Above: Existing site aerial photograph
 Opposite: Existing site photos taken by
 IF_DO in 2023.

- Key*
- I. Mill base*
 - II. Artist studios barn*
 - III. Mill House*
 - IV. Music barn*



2.0 Context

2.5 Existing Site Photographs



Above: Site Photos (clockwise): the oak tree; site approach; dense vegetation growing over the windmill base; adjacent meadow; the site pond; the self-build proposal site.

2.0 Context

2.6 Ground Floor Plan - As Existing

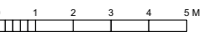
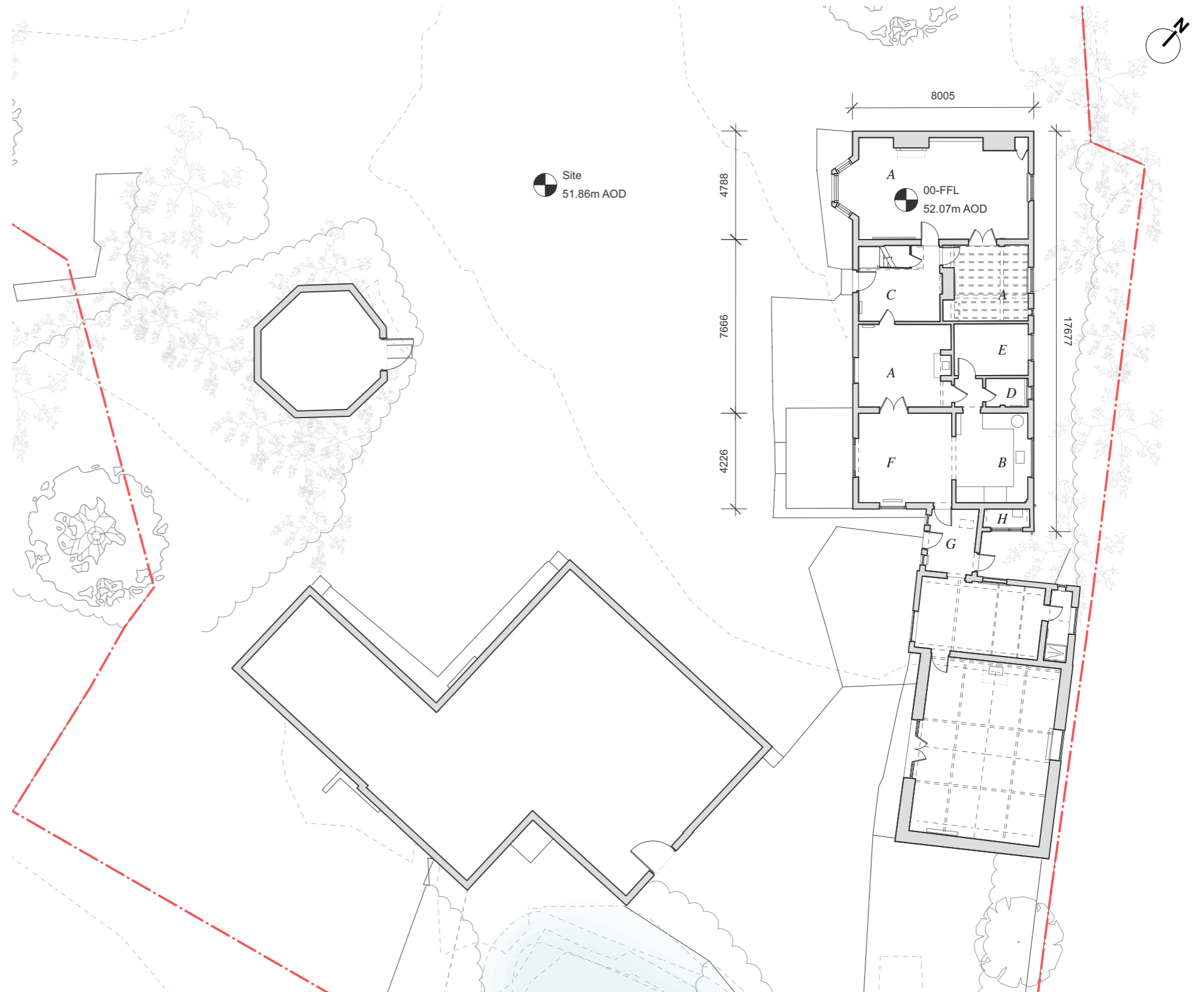
Mill House area (no outbuildings or barns included):

Ground Floor GIA: 130 sq.m
 Ground Floor GEA: 146 sq.m

Total Building GIA: 251 sq.m
 Total Building GEA: 281 sq.m

- Key
- A. Living room
 - B. Kitchen
 - C. Circulation
 - D. Bathroom
 - E. Utility
 - F. Dining room
 - G. Porch / Link building
 - H. Store

Opposite: Ground Floor Plan As Existing (Scale 1:200)



2.0 Context

2.7 First Floor Plan - As Existing

Mill House area (no outbuildings or barns included):

First Floor GIA: 121 sq.m
First Floor GEA: 135 sq.m

Total Building GIA: 251 sq.m
Total Building GEA: 281 sq.m

Key

- A. Bedroom
- B. Bathroom
- C. Circulation

Opposite: First Floor Plan As Existing (Scale 1:200)

