

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT : EXTENSION AND ALTERATIONS TO SMERRILL FARM, KEMBLE, GL7 6BW

DATE 2.11.23

PROPOSAL:

Upgrade the existing cottage to create a separate self-contained annex to the Ground floor for elderly relative. Construct an Eco 2 bedroom detached annex for owners.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY AND ITS' SETTING:

Smerrill Farm is a small cottage (just over 900 sqft) set in a 1.5 acre plot consisting of two small paddocks, a wooded area, garden and outbuildings (see OS map). The site is accessed from the southern end via a long drive which is essentially flat, and the site widens at the Northern end, the Eastern side rises up considerably to a bank following the hill of the A429. The cottage itself is nestled deeply into the bank so that the road is virtually at the same height as the roof. Because of that and the dense trees following the line of the road and set just off the road, the cottage is barely visible from the highway. There is a concrete walkway to the sides and rear of the cottage retaining the bank and raised elements of the garden, so the only fully visible elevation of the cottage is the South West facing front elevation which overlooks its' own lower paddock. There is a lane leading West by the site entrance heading towards Coates, rising upwards to Smerrill Dairy Farm and from there you can see parts of the cottage, but otherwise it is obscured from view.



Adjacent to the site is Smerrill Barns. Smerrill Barns is a substantial grade 2 listed building (or series of buildings linked) Listing NGR: ST9975898968. Although we are not certain, it is possible that at the time of listing 1959 the barns were in ownership of the cottage (or vice versa) and so we are assuming the cottage is curtilage listed.

The area is designated an SLA but not AONB or conservation area.

The cottage itself is built in the Cotswold Vernacular with stone walls and split stone slate roof. Windows are upvc in the stormsure design with integral glazing bars.

HISTORY OF PROPERTY:

The cottage is believed to have been built close to 1890, possibly as a tenant farmer considering the barns. However, in more recent times the cottage has been under the ownership of the Clement family (over fifty years) consisting of the parents and two daughters. We believe the property was held as a small holding and the outbuildings were used as an agricultural museum between 1978 and 1986. We believe there has been no significant agricultural activity in a true business sense for many years and there is no agricultural tie with the property.

The daughters moved out many years ago, and the father died in 2014. The surviving widow sadly passed away in January 2023 so clearly had been on her own for the largest part of 9 years. The daughters are now selling the property, and we (the applicants) are, at the time of writing, in the process of purchasing, with a view to refurbishing the cottage and enlarging the habitable area with a detached annex. Although it is our intention to eventually link the buildings as one which will be explained later in this document.

CONDITION OF THE PROPERTY

The garden/wooded area is now a little overgrown. Many of the stone walls especially around the northern paddock are in states of disrepair. The stables which consist of mainly corrugated metal roof and walls are very tired. The stone outbuilding attached to the stables is generally in sound condition although there is a large settlement crack on the gable wall facing the driveway and internally where it retains garden to the north is a large bulge indicating subsidence as the wall does retain the bank.

The cottage stonework externally is in good condition except for the north gable wall leading up to the chimney which is in need of significant repair. The UPVC windows are relatively modern and in reasonable condition. Above most windows the stone head lintels have been replaced recently.

The stone tile roof is in good repair but the plastic roof to the rear and side over the walkway, although not dilapidated, does look unattractive and detrimental to the look of the cottage.

Internally the bathroom is in need of modernisation/refurbishment. The kitchen too is dated and tired. The staircase is fine but has inadequate handrail facility. Apart from a few squeaky floorboards the first floor seems in reasonable condition. There appear to be no areas of significant damp. The plumbing generally is old and in need of updating. The electrical wiring also is very old and so a complete rewire is required.

APPLICANTS' OBJECTIVES AND PROPOSAL

The applicants wish to refurbish and enlarge the habitable space whilst maintaining the charm of the original cottage for their own use as their principal home.

They also have an elderly relative moving in with them and propose to create a self-contained annex for him in the existing cottage. The elderly relative has a number of health issues, including COPD, hearing loss and deteriorating vision. As such, timing is of the essence as his ability to live on his own

in his current property is getting progressively more challenging so they are looking for him to join them in June 2024 at the latest.

The applicants also recognise that the property's grounds and outbuildings require refurbishment and ongoing maintenance which is essential to sustaining the site in line with the Local Plan Issues.

1. Construct a substantial detached eco annex in a contemporary design to Passive House standards to be used as their main residence.
2. Retain the existing cottage which is built in the Cotswold Vernacular but substantially refurbish and alter to give ground floor accommodation for the elderly relative and retain the first floor as bedrooms for visitors and a home office for the applicants.
3. Improve the internal insulation and heating system to the cottage so that it attains Passive House standards.
4. Carry out the project to minimise the carbon footprint both during the construction work and for the lifetime of the property.
5. Maintain and enhance biodiversity creating new habitats for both wildlife and plants.
6. Ensure the property is commensurate with the objectives of the Local Plan 5.0.1 a & b.

DECISIONS FORMULATING THE DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

The applicants are aware that the proposal for the new eco dwelling is on what is currently paddock land/countryside which is not normally allowable for planning purposes. They are also aware that the new building is significantly larger than the existing cottage which is not normally supported and contrary to D.19 and D.67 of the Design Code. However, the applicants feel there are several arguments why in this instance the proposal should be allowed.

1. The existing property is very small at 930 sq ft, but the land around it substantial at 1.5 acres. Being a mix of woodland, paddock, and garden, in order to attract a suitable owner living on the site, a much larger property is warranted. When placed on the market the agents had 38 viewings. Every viewing had the same feedback that the property was too small, and the amount of work required to bring it to modern living standards too much. Only by allowing more substantial habitable accommodation could the property attract an owner capable of maintaining the property commensurate with Objective 5.0.1 1 of the Natural and Historic Environment both now and into the future.
2. It may be considered preferable that the cottage is extended. However, to the rear is the raised bank towards both mature trees and the road. To the right again is a raised garden and mature trees. To the left is elevated open paddock land, and it is considered that the gable wall may be an important habitat for bats which, currently prevents any building work for several months. An extension to the front would contravene The Design Code D.67b, as well as cutting out any natural light to the original building. Therefore, there is no viable means of extending without major consequences, so it only leaves the option of constructing a detached annex.
3. The PEA indicates that further bat surveys are required which can only be carried out in May-September 2024. Therefore, the applicants will be unable to apply for permission for an extension under the validation criteria, let alone carry out any development until mid-2024 at the earliest. That does not work for the applicants' relative who would then be unable to join them until the end of 2024 once the construction is done. Issue 3.0.5 of the Local Plan

encourages planning decisions to support the care of the elderly and although this is just one person, still relevant.

4. The proposal is for a detached annex, not an Open Market dwelling. If approved the applicants would be happy for that to be a condition so that the detached unit could not be sold separately.
5. Complete demolition of the cottage would contravene Policy EN10. The cottage although requiring substantial work is still an 1890's-built cottage in the Cotswold Vernacular which should be retained. As in 2 above, a sensible extension would be very challenging.

SUPPORTING POLICY

The proposal is for an "eco" style semi contemporary design, built alongside the cottage which is of the Cotswold Vernacular but to be significantly refurbished. Because it is an Annex and not Open Market Housing, we believe it is a grey area as to which policies of the NPPF and Local Plan are applicable. However, we are assuming that policies relating to both detached dwellings and refurbishment/extensions apply.

1. [NPPF Paragraphs 55 and 80. Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:](#)

[\(c\) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting.](#)

The property is currently empty, run down and the grounds in disrepair. Allowing the proposal will enable the owners to reverse the decline.

[\(e\) the design is of exceptional quality](#)

The proposal is of a high standard architecturally retaining Cotswold design criteria in a contemporary way but blends with the cottage as per D.67(g) of the Design Code. The proposal will utilise the latest energy saving technology, have a low carbon footprint, enhance biodiversity, and ensure future sustainability of the built environment.

2. Local Plan (2011-2031) Chapter 3 Issues
 - a. 3.0.2: The Proposal will help protect the immediate property and ensure properly maintained within area of Special Landscape. Biodiversity provisions will ensure sustainable and improved habitats for wildlife.
 - b. 3.0.5: Proposal enables the family to care for an elderly relative, at the same time retaining a good degree of independence with the detached living accommodation.
 - c. 3.0.7: By allowing enlargement of the property creates a good size full time family home. The cottage simply refurbished and not enlarged would more likely be sought as a second home.
 - d. 3.0.14: Converting oil fired boiler to ASHP, Solar panels and High levels of insulation to both buildings. Rainwater harvesting all contribute to helping with this issue.
 - e. 3.0.15: Although Solar panels are proposed, these are not overly visible due to the site location or detrimental to the landscape but still give renewable clean energy.
3. Local Plan (2011-2031) Chapter 5 Objectives
 - a. 1. Natural and Historic Environment: The Proposal is in line with all paragraphs a-d.
4. Local Plan (2011-2031) Chapter 6 Local Plan Strategy
 - a. Policy DS3: Not applicable as we believe Smerrill Farm is outside a Non-Principal Settlement
 - b. Policy DS4: The proposal is not for Open Market Housing so does not apply. As aforementioned we are happy if this a condition of approval.

5. Local Plan (2011-2031) Chapter 10 Built, Natural and Historic Environment. EN1

a. ensuring the protection and enhancement of existing natural and historic environmental assets and their settings in proportion with the significance of the asset: The proposal makes the property attractive to future ownership and the refurbishment of the 1890s cottage will help ensure the longevity of the cottage and proper care of the land around it.

b. contributing to the provision and enhancement of multi-functional green infrastructure; The proposed pond, rainwater storage, although minor, will help with Green Infrastructure by helping to reduce flood risk.

c. addressing climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation through creating new habitats and the better management of existing habitats; The pond, Green Living roof, rain water storage, new bat boxes, sustained ownership to maintain the woodland will all contribute to the above in respect of habitat.

The proposal includes the following which will help address climate change:

- i. Solar Panels,
- ii. Replacement of fossil fuel heating to renewable,
- iii. Improved insulation of the existing cottage
- iv. Passive House Design to the new annex
- v. Mechanical Heat Recovery to both properties
- vi. Use of stone of site, re-siting spoil, cladding made from recycled material all reducing carbon footprint.

d. seeking to improve air, soil and water quality where feasible: The proposal includes replacing the old septic tank with a new small package treatment plant. Replacement of the oil-fired boiler with an ASHP both of which will assist with the clause.

e. ensuring design standards that complement the character of the area and the sustainable use of the development.

- The proposal uses locally sourced stoned and roofing materials.
- The cottage retains its Cotswold vernacular design.
- Although the annex is more contemporary design, the use of local material helps blend the properties visual aspect.
- The cladding makes the annex look more agricultural in line with buildings by an old farmhouse. The cladding specified is made from 95% recycled material using renewable energy at their factory.
- The green roof and cladding to the rear reduces the visual impact of the annex from the highway and as the property is set into the slope of the paddock further reducing its' visual impact.

6. Local Plan (2011-2031) Chapter 10 Built, Natural and Historic Environment. EN2

DESIGN OF THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Development will be permitted which accords with the Cotswold Design Code (Appendix D). Proposals should be of design quality that respects the character and distinctive appearance of the locality

The proposed annex is a contemporary design, but adjacent to the cottage which is built in the Cotswold vernacular. However, the use of recycled stone from the site, roof tiles which

are similar and by replacing the cottage windows with flush ones the same colour as the annex will harmonise the two.

The proposal completely complies with D59 to D62 of Sustainable design within the Design Code.

The adaptation for the elderly relative complies with D.63 and D.64 for Inclusive Design allowing the relative to live longer in his own home.

There are conflicts with the Design Code D19 and D.67 1. In respect of scale of the annex which is much larger than the existing, but as previously stated any extension of the cottage complying with D19 would be too insignificant to create a decent sized modern family home commensurate with the size of the plot. The proposed Annex creates an additional 1700 sq ft of habitable space, the cottage has 930 sq ft so in total 2,630 sq ft. Set in 1.5 acres this is certainly not overdeveloped, and essential for the family to look after their elderly relative.

Furthermore, both the cottage and annex are barely visible from the highway being set low to the main road. There are no public footpaths anywhere near the property which would overlook.

Therefore, we request that non-compliance in this respect be excepted.

7. Local Plan (2011-2031) Chapter 10.4 The Wider Natural and Historic Landscape (POLICY EN4) & Special Landscape Areas (POLICY EN6)

The site is an area designated SLA. The proposed Annex is set low to the surrounding land and barely visible from outside the property grounds. The West view is shielded by mature trees. The Green roof gives a degree of camouflage from the small section of highway where the property is visible. Therefore, there is no detrimental effect of the property to the Local landscape. In respect of tranquillity, it will not generate any substantial noise once completed.

The applicants would comment that the enormous Grain Stores currently under construction at Smerrill Dairy dominate the SLA and are likely to create substantial noise pollution which surely contravene the policy and create a potential precedent for this application.

8. Local Plan (2011-2031) Chapter 10 Trees Hedgerows and Woodland (POLICY EN7)

The proposal requires the removal of several small immature trees located to the front of the cottage on the paddock fence line. These include a Ginkgo Biloba, a Prunus, a Spindle. A Hazel and a Holly tree. Because the trees are quite small they can be dug out around the root boles and re-planted in the lower paddock. There are two trees along the boundary of the driveway and lower paddock. These will be trimmed back to allow better light to the annex. No other trees are affected by the proposal.

9. 10.8 Biodiversity and Geodiversity: Features Habitats and Species (POLICY EN8)

A PEA has been carried out by a firm of Ecologists (Simecology) and identified the following key points.

- a. There was no direct sign of bats in the loft or roof of the cottage, the fact it is an old stone cottage with stone slates, is an ideal roost, therefore, a need for further surveys in May-September before work can be carried out to the cottage roof. However, there were no potential bat roosts identified which would be close to or affected by the proposed works. The applicants originally wanted to link the cottage on two storeys with the annex. However, due to their timing constraints for the father-in-law cannot have that delay. Therefore, having consulted the Ecologist, they agreed that a detached construction from the main cottage is acceptable. They have conditioned that no external lighting around the building be permitted until the further surveys have been carried out at which point the applicants will explore further works linking the two buildings.
- b. There is a small animal shelter at the lower northwest corner of the paddock. The ecologists believe this is a possible bat roost and have advised that the building be fenced off during construction works. Again, the further surveys will dictate any future changes to the shelter.
- c. The grass to the paddocks is of generally poor quality, However the ecology report identified some wildflowers in the area where the annex is planned. Therefore, the turf in that section will be relocated to other parts of the paddocks under the auspices of the Ecologist.
- d. There are sections of drystone Cotswold walling to be removed. This stone will be re-used, and the demolition will be done by hand. If any bats or other habitats/roosts are found, then work will stop and the Ecologists consulted with appropriate action taken before work resumes.
- e. Additional bat boxes will be fitted to the annex.
- f. The annex green living roof will attract insects, birds, and other wildlife.
- g. The pond will encourage amphibians and other wildlife.
- h. The site has a number of mature Ash trees. The new owners will manage them and do their best to reduce the likelihood of Ash dieback by removing leaves and infected trees/branches.
- i. If the proposal is supported by the planning authority, then proper maintenance of the woodland will take place, removing ivy, dead branches, encouraging light and growth at low level as well as creating areas of old logs for other species. The wife of the applicant is also very keen to feed wild birds. As aforementioned if the proposal is not supported it is likely the property will remain empty and become more derelict. Some of the trees could become a hazard to road safety due to proximity to the highway, as well as the buildings on and around the property.

- j. The PEA indicated that the overall site in its current state offers little in the way of promoting protected species. The advice in respect of possible hedgehog habitat will be followed.
- k. Without doubt, approval of the proposal will benefit all aspects of biodiversity and habitat. At the time of the survey the Ecologist was unaware of the proposed Green roof or pond. For the record, following a recent visit, we have found that the current owners have removed the troughs at the front of the property.
- l. The garage development referred to in the PEA is not being applied for at this time.

10. Local Plan (2011-2031) Chapter 10.10 Historic Environment: Designated Heritage Assets (POLICY EN10) & Non-Designated Heritage Assets (POLICY EN12)

It is likely that the property is deemed curtilage listed. Although built around 1890, there are no significant heritage assets other than the stonework is quite nice and the cottage is built in the Cotswold vernacular. The stone lintels have been replaced in the last 20 years with a poor-quality fake. The windows are modern upvc with white Georgian bars integral to the double-glazing units. The proposal does allow for the windows to be changed to traditional flush design, albeit in upvc timber effect. The colour proposed is Agate grey which is a soft green/grey which blends nicely with the buff Cotswold stone.

The proposed annex will be built out of stone recovered from the boundary walls, The same Agate grey windows, doors and fascia's will be used to create a softer feel and blend with the cottage. The south facing roof will utilise a good quality fake stone tile (Marshfield Stone Tiles) which will blend with the cottage and be in keeping with the local buildings.

By positioning the annex in the paddock to the left of the cottage frontage, the cottage will be enhanced and fully retained. Once the bat surveys are carried out and any further action required taken, then the stonework repairs will be carried out.

This is all fully in line with the three paragraphs of EN10 & 12, preserving the asset, improving it from its' current state and ensuring its' future use as a cottage in a sustainable way.

11. Chapter 10.14 Managing Flood Risk (POLICY EN14)

The lower paddock is Flood risk level 3 draining into the Thames. The remainder of the site and where the new building is proposed, is Flood Risk level 1. 70% of the proposed annex roof is a green living roof which has less run off than a conventional tiled roof. Rainwater will drain to water butts for garden irrigation as well as the new proposed pond. Any new drive works will be permeable gravel. Therefore, we believe the proposal will reduce any flood risk as opposed to increase.

12. Chapter 10.15 Pollution and Contaminated Land (POLICY EN15)

The site is in Zone II Outer Protection Zone. There are no proposed activities which will risk pollution and there is no contaminated land on site. There will be no noise pollution. Due to the bat issues mentioned above, external lighting will be very limited and so no light pollution. The site is very remote with only one immediate neighbour whose boundary is 30 metres from the annex.

13. Chapter 11.10 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development (POLICY INF10)

The proposal is fully complicit with this Policy.

PHOTOS



Existing frontage with side walkway



Side gable and fallen walls



Missing stone walls around paddock



Plastic roof



Replaced stone lintels of poor quality



Stormsure window style , not flush design



located

Side Paddock current entrance where annex to be

Conclusion:

The proposal will ensure that Smerrill Farm is updated to modern standards providing a spacious and well appointed home well into the future. It will be in line with many of the Local Plan Policy objectives relating to maintaining historic assets, sympathetic to the Cotswold vernacular, improving the site in respect of climate change, carbon emissions and bio-diversity with minimal impact on the local landscape. Increasing the habitable amenity of the property will ensure it's desirability as a family home. As clearly evidenced by the selling agents experience, not enlarging the habitable area would make the property unsaleable leading to further decline.