

Design Statement

4.0 Design Development

From the outset our aim has been to achieve a high quality, sustainable, and distinctly local scheme that exceeds the standards of the often unimaginative, generic house builder approach, common on many rural sites.

Our vision is to provide homes of high quality architecture and construction, with generous layouts and amenity space that exceed minimum standards. We have planned flexible layouts to create live work opportunities on site to support sustainable rural business and economic development. The scheme is a modern interpretation of the local vernacular, which through careful design and detailing is lifted from the simple pastiche to give the project an identity of its own.

The generic 'UK' house builder approach to layouts and architectural detailing is now familiar across Herefordshire. This typology does not offer a responsive or sympathetic approach to development, and would be unsuitable for this site where great value has been placed on designing a scheme that sits comfortably in its context.

The proposed buildings, traditional orchard and landscape at Stone Farm draw on the sites history and characteristics of the local area to reuse the farmsteads redundant land in a way that will enhance the character of the village and engender a greater sense of place.

Together the team have collaborated to produce a project which we feel will be a real contribution to the area.

4.1 Early Thoughts – Landscape

The scheme has been informed by a landscape led approach to development.

The settlement pattern around Crozen, Ullingswick and Felton is typically dispersed with scattered villages, hamlets and farmsteads. It is a gently undulating landscape with wide valleys. Typically hedgerows are well managed with

sparse tree cover although, in the case of the immediate surrounds to the site, the vegetation to the north along the line of the Three Rivers Ride and small woodland areas around Crozen and Stone Farm give the local landscape a more vegetated feel.

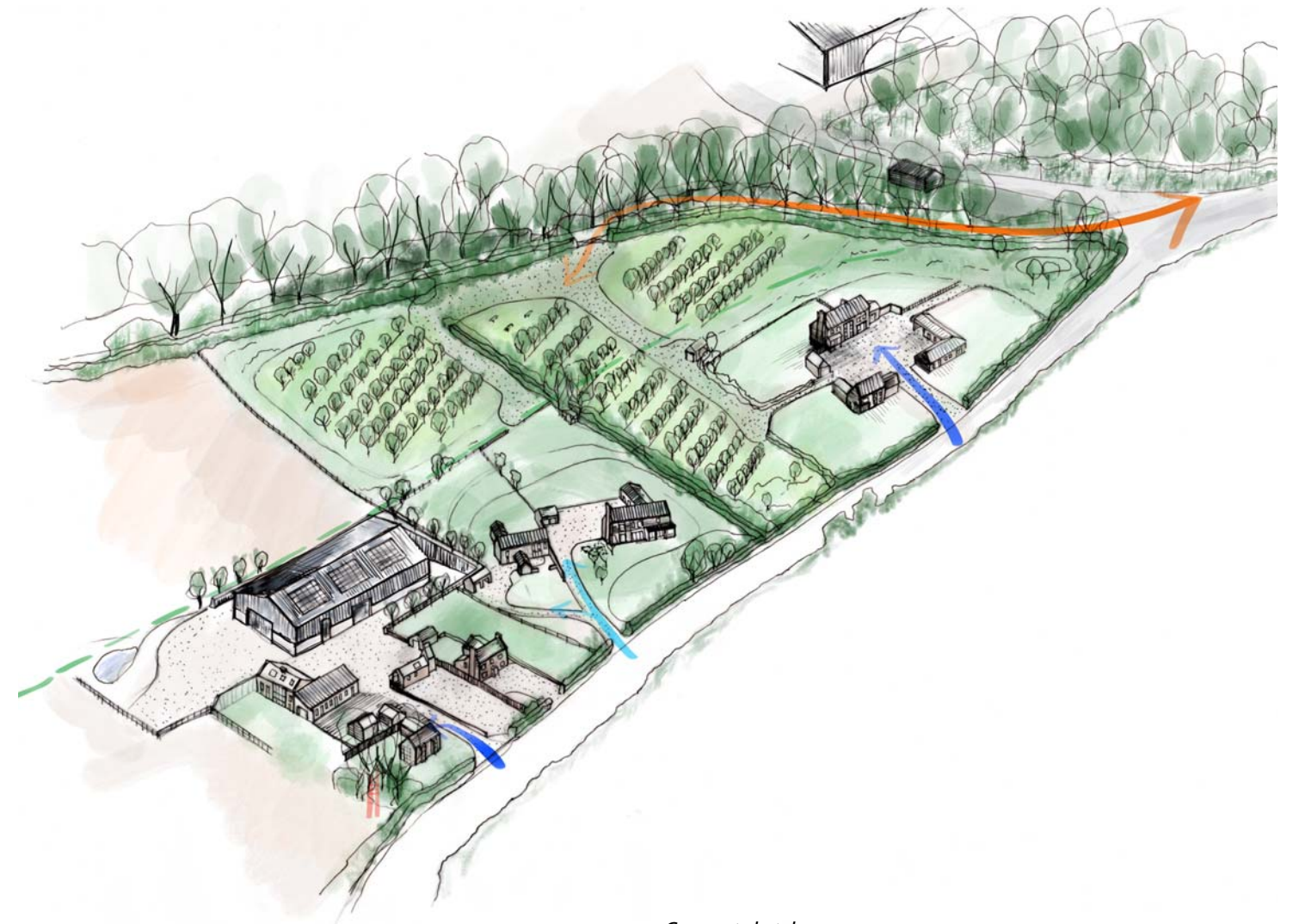
Herefordshire County Council published their Landscape Character Areas Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (updated 2009). This Guidance places the site within the category of Principal Settled Farmlands. The entry for the Principal Settled Farmlands category states that:

'This is a landscape with a notably domestic character, defined chiefly by the scale of its field pattern, the nature and density of its settlement and its traditional land uses. Hop fields, orchards, grazed pastures and arable fields, together make up the rich patchwork, which is typical of Principal Settled Farmlands.'

The visual effects of the scheme on its surroundings have been assessed in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, accompanying the application. In summary, the site is capable of accommodating new development. The area is relatively characteristic of the description of the Principal Settled Farmlands landscape type as a settled agricultural landscape of dispersed, scattered farms, relic common and small villages and hamlets. Not mentioned in the description, but now characteristic of the area, are the large agricultural barns that are a visible feature of the landscape.

Sections of the site are visible in some medium to long distance views, but its impact is limited by distance and the intervening landscape. At short distances the views are restricted to glimpses of the existing buildings on site enclosed by hedgerows and trees.

Feedback received at pre-app confirmed that the site was recorded as a Priority Habitat – Traditional Orchard (ref HERE1654), which has been lost. The opportunity exists to improve the appearance of the site and its current visual effects by planting and restoring this characteristic landscape feature.



Concept sketch

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4.2 Early Thoughts – Farmstead Built Character

The area is characterised by the medieval settlement patterns of farming communities. A scattered distribution of farmstead settlements and cottages with isolated churches defines the local character of the area.

The local settlement pattern supports low density dwellings adjacent to existing farmsteads, designed to relate well to the form and scale of existing buildings.

The following characteristics have been observed in local settlements and have informed the design proposal:

- Loose courtyards with outbuildings to two or three sides of the yard.
- Simple barn forms punctuate the skyline.
- A rich variety of building types often on the same farm in particular; hop kilns, cider houses, threshing barns and hay barns.
- Substantial barns often more than one to a farm and sometimes integrated into substantial combination ranges that were added to over time.
- High concentration of timber framed buildings, stone plinths and perimeter walls, red brick, metal sheet roof and wall cladding, and traditional slate roofs.

4.3 Early Thoughts – Initial Concept

Early engagement at pre-application and feedback from the council ecology officer have led to a landscape and heritage-led design approach for the scheme, which draws on the lost feature of the traditional orchard and historic arrangement of the farm yard.

The starting point for the site strategy was to distribute dwellings in localised clusters contained within swathes of enhanced landscape and a traditional orchard. The surrounding development pattern is relatively low-density, with predominantly detached dwellings set on medium - large plots. Historic mapping was analysed, and formed the basis for early concept sketches for the site. The prevalence

of loose courtyard arrangements, and dwellings fronting the lanes influenced the proposed layout, reinforcing the historic character of the site and its wider context.

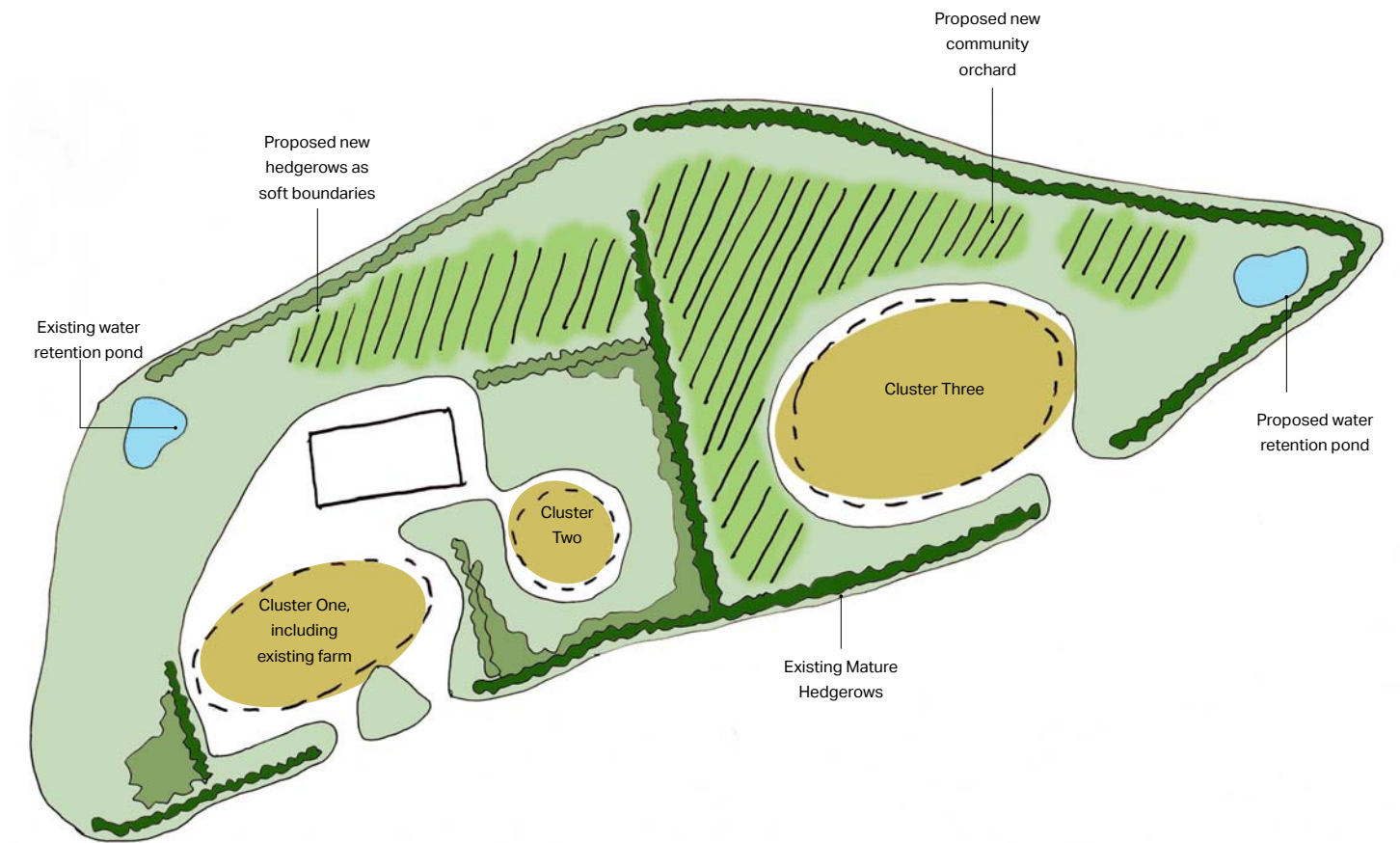
Key opportunities include:

- Retain and reinforce existing mature hedgerows by providing soft boundaries.
- Reinstate traditional orchard
- Provide generous gardens
- Provide permeability across the site, with community access to the orchard and bridle path

The site is relatively level with a slight fall from east to west and north to south, slopes are not overly pronounced and would not preclude sensitive development of the site, with only subtle earthworks required.

The site is located at the transition between the built extent of the village and Stone Farm, an ideally located pocket for a natural extension of Crozen. The development will include measures to 'soften' this division and provide better permeability between the two parts of the settlement.

The site itself is well enclosed by established vegetation with open countryside lying to the south and west. The design will need to sensitively respond to the adjacent built character and landscape perspectives.



Site Strategy diagram



Locally characteristic farm complex arrangements (Historic England Historic Farmsteads)

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4.4 Site Plan Development

The scheme has developed throughout a iterative design process. Early options 1 and 2, looked to cluster development more densely around the existing farmstead. This approach would have had an inappropriate impact on views to the site from the open countryside that lies out to the west and the bridle path adjacent to the northern boundary.

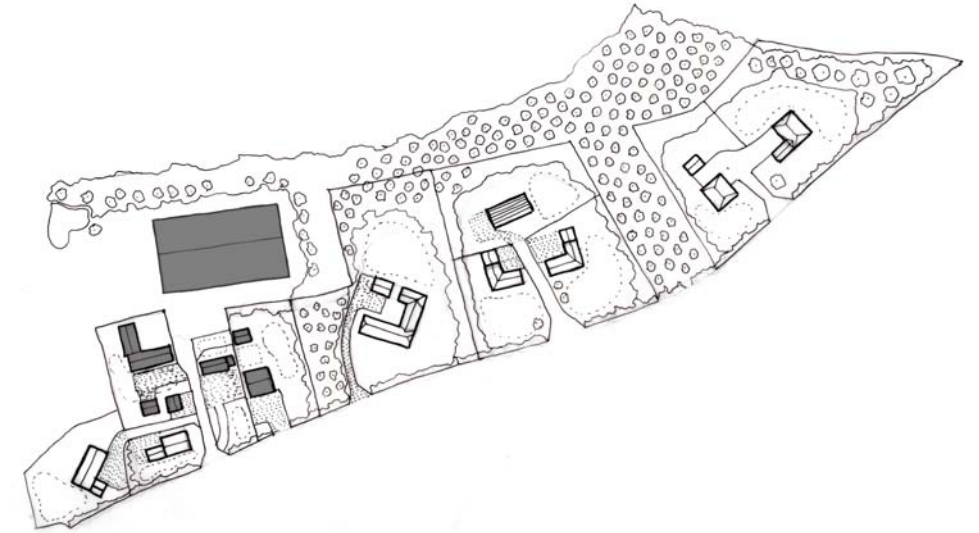
Option 3 illustrates how the site strategy developed to provide built clusters, enclosed and softened by natural swathes of enhanced landscape. The traditional orchard was extended to meet the road, providing a pleasing vista for those travelling along the C1118 and avoiding 'ribbon' development. In the final proposal, shown in section 5.0, the landscape was extended to include a further band of traditional orchard and woodland planting to the north, screening the existing agricultural barn from the bridal way.

Various arrangements and sitings of low density dwellings were explored. The layout of option 4 was amended to remove the proposed dwelling in land to the west of existing buildings, to preserve the existing edge condition of the farm complex when viewed from the open countryside to the west. A further benefit of this is that the setting of the proposed dwelling in the south west corner of the site is refined. The proposed one and a half storey cottage is positioned on an existing small plot within the curtilage of the farm, its position in the corner of the site offers an opportunity to improve and define the principle entrance to the farm complex, currently the back of garages and low quality conifers, this will provide an attractive vista to those approaching the settlement from the west.

Amendments to the layout of dwellings in the central cluster, in iterations 1–4, were informed by the desire to provide courtyards with separate home working office space to support the applicants NHS software solutions business, and provide options for sustainable rural working. The footprint of the dwellings reflects barn like structures, where the offices and garages form single storey additions, which give the impression of appropriately scaled outbuildings in keeping with farm complexes of this type. The 'L' shaped plans create private external space, located away from existing farmhouse garden.



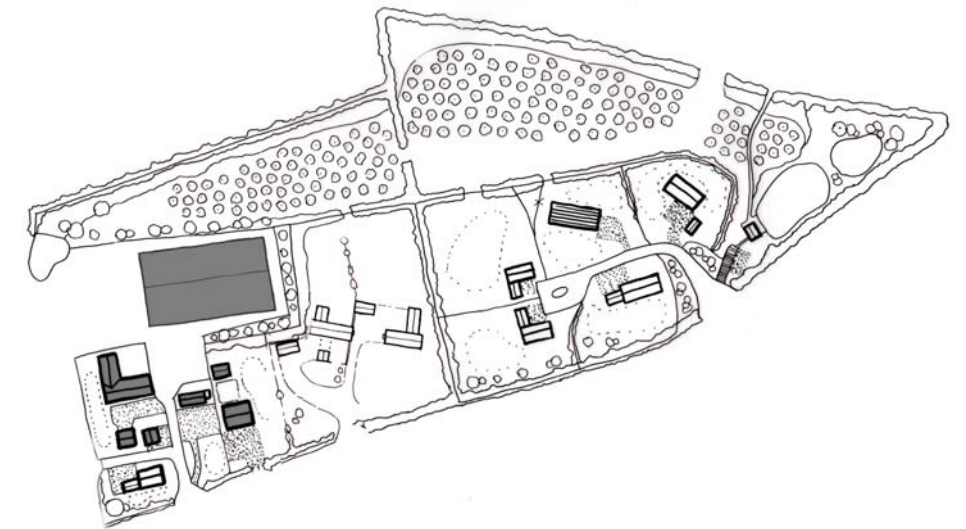
Concept site plan option 1



Concept site plan option 3



Concept site plan option 2



Concept site plan option 4

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The iterations show how the scheme developed to offer a more varied mix of house types, including terraced and single storey homes.

Option 5, shows the introduction of a revised layout for plots 4-8, where the dwellings are arranged efficiently around a shared courtyard where cars, bikes and pedestrians can move informally. The condensed arrangement makes better use of the site, allowing for a generous landscape including allotments, open green spaces, and a traditional orchard that give a community focus in addition to private gardens. This option has carefully considered single and two storey elements that relate well to each other and neighbouring properties. The footprint of the eastern most proposed dwelling was amended to accommodate a single storey detached property, its position closest to Crozen is of a neighbourly scale as only glimpses of its roof will be visible above the existing hedge, giving a more sensitive evolution to the village



Concept site plan option 5

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5.0 The Proposal

The proposed layout provides a range of house types including a terraced barn, single storey and larger detached properties, designed to generous space standards, that reflect housing within the vicinity of the site. The range of forms proposed draw inspiration from local character suitable for this ‘edge of settlement’ location. Plot sizes vary according to the size of the house and level of affordability, in addition a series of communal landscape character areas have been incorporated into the scheme that provide additional amenity space to all residents.

The development provides the opportunity to create a more varied mix of housing stock than currently exists in the area. The scheme caters for a wider cross section of society, and includes smaller units appropriate for first time buyers, a single storey dwelling that would suit occupants with restricted mobility and affordable units which are in short supply and provide the means for financially less able residents to stay and live in the area.

The predominant character of the local vernacular, like many dispersed Herefordshire villages, is a scale of domestic cottages, larger farmhouses and dominant agricultural barn complexes. The scale of the development in terms of building heights emulates that of the adjacent existing settlements and provides a complimentary density of development, particularly at the interface with Crozen.

The proposed dwellings are accessed via drives and pathways that meander from the C1118 to the courtyards, introducing characteristics of the winding lanes and farm tracks in the local area. One new access is proposed, and has been located to require the minimum amount of hedgerow removal and safe access onto the C1118 with the required visibility splays. An existing access serving the east of the site, is relocated to require a very minimal amount of hedgerow removal to achieve the required visibility splays, mitigated by the proposed hedgerow planting within the scheme.

Architectural influences and precedents



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5.0 The Proposal

Soft grass banks and new hedgerows flank the drives, creating a locally characteristic feature. Off street parking is planned for throughout the scheme, reducing the amount of 'seen' cars. All dwellings are provided with at least two parking spaces. Partially open timber framed garages and open communal carports reinforce the rural farm theme of the development. All dwellings have provision for bike, waste and general storage.

A new pedestrian route is created from the development to the Bridle path, improving connections through to the open countryside in the west and links to the existing settlement.

The space between houses here is generous and extensively landscaped to establish a harmony with the existing buildings at Crozen, and agricultural fields to the south. This proposed green corridor, creates an attractive vista that undulates between woodland, native meadow, native shrubbery gardens and traditional orchard planting.

Depending on the character area plot boundaries are defined by either low dry stonewalling, native boundary hedging, or characteristic timber post and rail fences.

The existing dense vegetation screen that surrounds the site to the north, and part of the east and west boundaries will be reinforced by areas of new native woodland planting. In combination with the considered scale and massing of the proposed buildings this will reduce any visual impact upon neighbours.



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5.0 The Proposal

5.1 Constraints on site arrangement

The northern section of the site occupies the highest ground within the site boundary, and will be visible from the public bridle path to the north and path in fields to the west. Therefore it is important that new buildings do not have any adverse impact upon these views. This can be achieved through careful siting and spacing of houses. The proposal does not breach the building line delineated by the existing large agricultural barn. Layouts in keeping with the historic organisation of local farmsteads and extensive planting will create pleasing vistas. The northern part of the site is the ideal location to replant the traditional orchard, as it will improve and dominate the view of those using the bridle and public paths. The adjacent image shows that from this viewpoint the woodland and orchard landscape features improve the setting, only the upper floors and roofs of dwellings 1 and 4 are visible.

5.2 Ecology and Biodiversity

An ecology impact assessment for the proposal has been undertaken by Swift Ecology and their report accompanies the planning application. The report finds that the proposed development is not considered likely to negatively impact on any protected species. The proposed development offers the opportunity to improve the future ecological value of the site, beyond its current situation.

Paragraph 117 of the NPPF states that “planning policies should...promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations...”. In line with the NPPF’s emphasis on biodiversity enhancement, the scheme includes the restoration of a lost priority habitat traditional orchard, and improved ecological networks through the creation of new hedgerows, woodland swathes and a pond. The ecologist’s report also makes a number of additional recommendations, which offer the potential for biodiversity improvement. See ecological impact assessment by Swift Ecology submitted in support of this application.



Artistic Impression: Proposed view from bridle path



Photograph: Current view from bridle path

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5.0 The Proposal

5.3 Appearance – Architectural Approach

As with the layout, the appearance of the proposals has developed through several iterations, in which the rich variety and familiarity of Herefordshire vernacular has found favour. Care has been taken to ensure these typologies are referenced in a way that detaches the scheme from the pastiche, and uses the elements in a manner appropriate for our time.

The design of the proposed built environment has therefore focused on a more traditional forms complimenting the excellent style of buildings within Crozen, Ullingswick and Felton, which have been studied in detail.

The material choices reinforce the direct relationship between the buildings and the land, materials are sourced locally where possible, providing a visual link with the historic buildings of the area. A complementary palette of grey locally sourced rubble stone, stone slates, red brick, timber boarding and earth toned zinc roofing, create a composition that is both of its time and completely at home within the historic landscape. The clustered composition of stepped roof pitches and traditional materials are the external manifestation of a plan that responds to the surrounding landscape, respects neighbour amenity and takes advantage of solar gain from the path of the sun.

The overall impact of the appearance is intended to be traditional materials employed with modern detailing to form a high quality and well designed set of buildings that we hope will be a part of the future heritage of Crozen and Felton.

5.4 Sustainable Principles

The requirements set out in the increasingly demanding building regulation approved documents ensure new housing stock can sustainably meet the needs of the future. The design has been developed to encompass a range of low environmental impact measures including:

- Passive solar design
- Maximised daylight
- Responsibly sourced materials. The local sourcing of stone, slates and timber where possible will root the building strongly on site as well as keeping construction transport to a minimum.
- Increased ecological value of the site
- Ground source heat pumps
- Bike Stores
- Home offices
- Photo-Voltaic panels integrated into the roof of the proposed car port
- Solar slates to the garages and outbuildings incorporate PV technology in an integrated way.
- The fabric of the building will combine modern energy efficient detailing with traditional materials. The external skin will be highly insulated and airtight with thermally efficient windows.



Site Wide Material Key

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Vertical Red Cedar Boarding | 6. Standing seam roof (VM Pigmento Red) |
| 2. Natural Limestone paving | 7. Vertical Cedar Cladding with preservative treatment |
| 3. Welsh Slate | 8. Red brick stone wall to match existing at Stone Farm |
| 4. Bonded Gravel to access drives | 9. Local tumbled Grey Sandstone walling |
| 5. Standing seam roof (VM Quartz Zinc) | 10. Natural Oak Windows and Doors. |

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6.0 The Cottage

6.1 Use

The Cottage, Plot 1 on the associated master plan, is a 1.5 storey 3 bed 5 person self build dwelling. Plot 1 encompasses a small parcel of land within the curtilage of the existing farm group. Its position in the south west corner of the site offers an opportunity to improve and define the principle entrance to the farm complex, currently the back of garages and low quality conifers, this will provide an attractive vista to those approaching the settlement from the west.

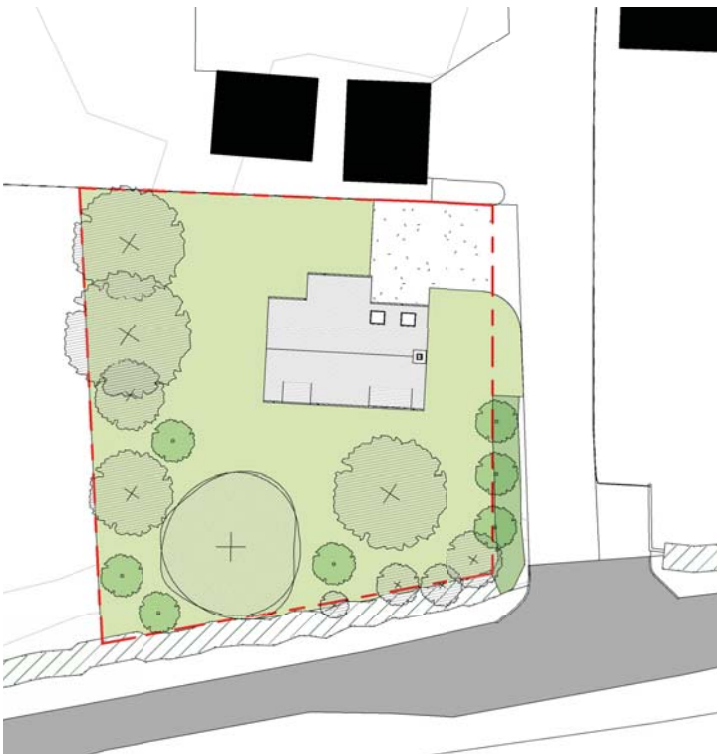
6.2 Layout

The proposed layout provides main living accommodation at ground floor and sleeping and bathroom accommodation at first floor, exceeding minimum space standards.

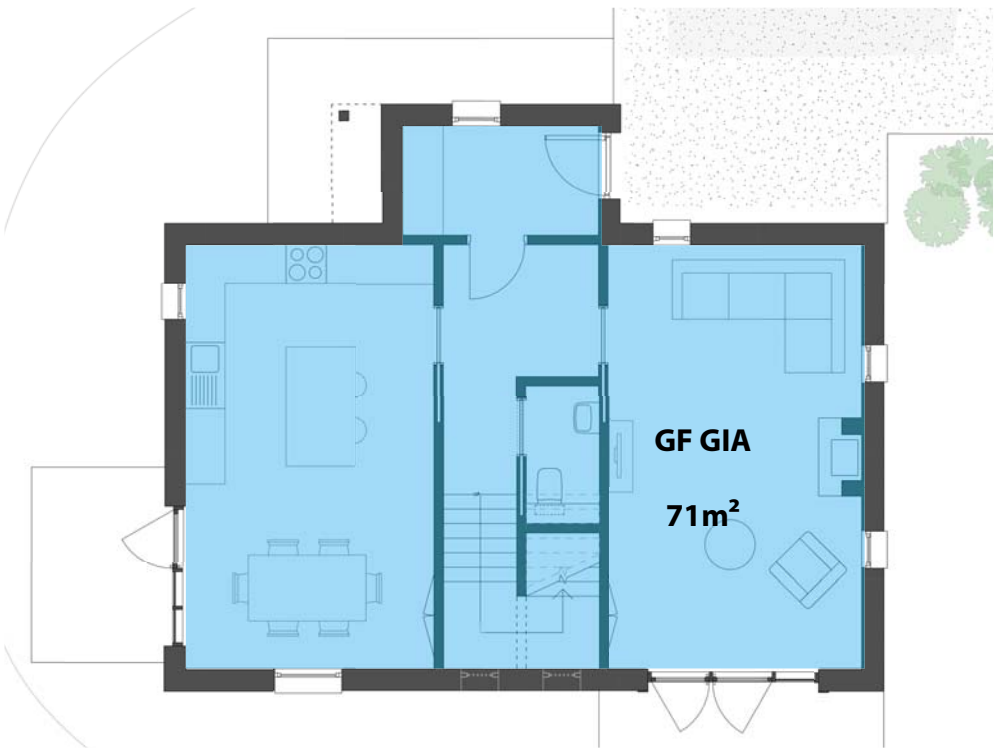
The layout has been designed to create light filled rooms that overlook the garden and countryside to the south and east with minimal windows at first floor facing north to respect the privacy of existing properties.

6.3 Amount

Plot 1 has overall site area of 800m². The Gross internal area (GIA) of the house at ground floor is 71m² making up 8 % of the overall plot area. GIA of the first floor is 66m².



Site Plan



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

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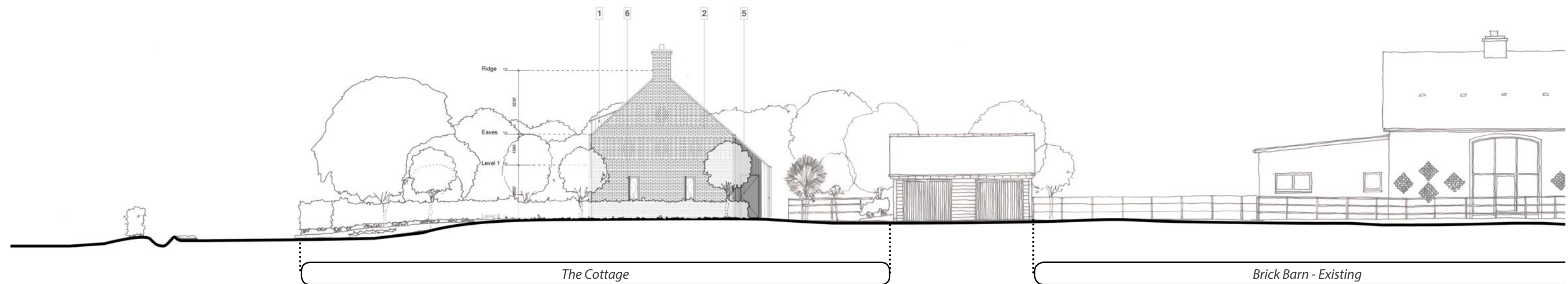
6.0 The Cottage

6.4 Scale and Massing

Given the plots location at the forefront of the site a dwelling of cottage scale and proportions is appropriate, and well related to the existing buildings on site. The massing is relatively low when compared to the existing oast house, farmhouse and barns, but will 'tidy' the existing arrangement by concealing the back of existing garages when viewed from the road, providing a focal point to the principle entrance.

The one and a half storeys height requires first floor accommodation to be partially housed within the roofspace, giving rise to roof dormers, which are flush with the front facades of the buildings and break the eaves lines on the front elevation.

Existing vegetation will mean this dwelling has limited visibility in medium – long distance views, however the simplicity of the massing ensures the dwelling sits in harmony with the existing farmyard group.



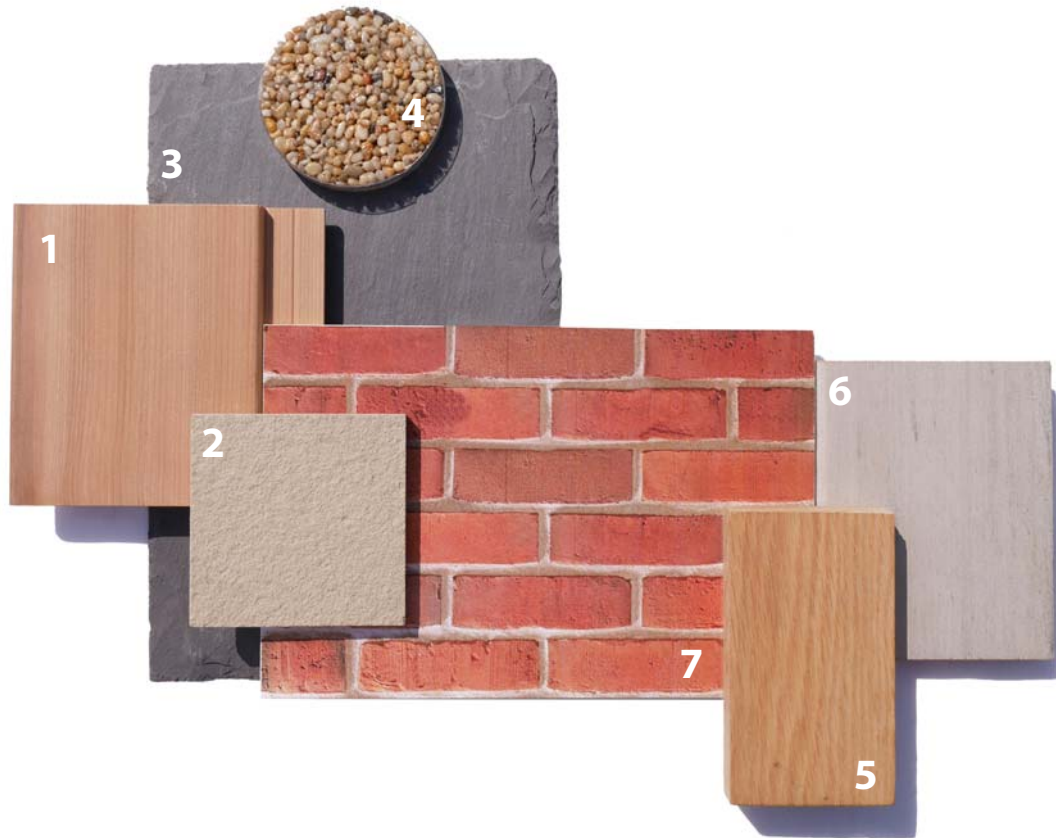
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6.0 The Cottage

6.5 Appearance

The proposal takes cues from the local vernacular and existing buildings at Stone Farm employing a traditional material palette with modern detailing. The principal gable facing the main access pays homage to the existing brick barn by referencing the diamond header brick pattern on the east facade. Timber flanked dormers are expressed on the front elevation in line with timber framing to the living room double door aperture creating a unified and simple aesthetic, in keeping with the uncluttered articulation of the existing buildings.

6.6 Access

Access to plot 1 is from the existing shared driveway that forms the principle entrance to the settlement.



Material Key

- 1. Vertical Cedar Boarding
- 2. Natural Limestone paving
- 3. Welsh Slate
- 4. Bonded Gravel
- 5. Natural Oak Windows and Doors.
- 6. Vertical Cedar Cladding with preservative treatment
- 7. Red brick stone wall to match existing at Stone Farm