



# **Northumberland National Park Authority**

**Walltown: Rangers Store and Borehole**

**Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement**

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## 1. Introduction

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The Northumberland National Park Authority are proposing to construct a new Rangers Store at Walltown Craggs Picnic site, Greenhead, Northumberland National Park. In addition to this a new borehole for extraction of water will also be sunk to the south of the existing visitor facilities to improve water quality, as the current borehole is located too close to the existing outfall from the water treatment plant.

This Planning Statement will seek to confirm the appropriateness of the proposals in the context of National and Local Planning Policy. It will also show the strategic fit of the proposals with the aims of the Northumberland National Park and show how, in the context of a number of factors associated with the site, that it is capable of accommodating the development successfully.

The Design and Access Statement in Section 5 will demonstrate how the key considerations of the site including, site layout, materials, landscape and views have been addressed and appropriately integrated within the proposals.

## 2. Site and Scheme Description

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The proposed development site is Located near Walltown Crags, within the Northumberland National Park. The site is located on a former Quarry and is currently used as a Picnic Site by visitors to the National Park.



There is an existing toilet block building on site, Externally there are picnic tables around the pond area and a large tarmac car park which accommodates around 70 cars. The general area around the site consists of exposed agricultural land with farm buildings to the south of the site. Hadrian's Wall, part of the Transnational Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site is located to the northeast of the site.

An application for improved visitor facilities at the site to provide for the visitors at Once Brewed has recently been approved by the Local Planning Authority, along with an application for temporary office accommodation. These developments are a key part of the wider 'Sill landscape Discovery Centre' development, as they will provide facilities for visitors and staff of the visitor centre during the construction of the new centre.

The proposed development is for a rangers store, which will be used to store timber, located in an area where timber is currently stored.

It is considered that the existing borehole on site has been sunk to a shallow depth, which is resulting in high levels of minerals in the water which is being extracted. In addition the existing borehole is also too close to the water treatment plant. Therefore a new borehole is proposed as part of this application to ensure that the facilities meet Environment Agency requirements, improve water quality and reduce maintenance costs.

## 3. Planning History

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The site is currently used as a Tourist facility with toilets, a small shop and a covered seating area. Before that use was granted the site was used as an active quarry. All planning applications made to the Northumberland National Park Authority for the Walltown Quarry site since it was proposed to provide for tourists are listed below:

- 14NP0089- Walltown Quarry; Application to provide temporary office accommodation to the south of existing visitor facilities in Walltown for a period of 2 years at Walltown Quarry Picnic site, Brampton, Greenhead, Northumberland CA8 7HZ. Approved in 2014.
- 14NP0080- Walltown Quarry; Application for the improvement of existing visitor facilities in Walltown to provide an improved visitor centre with a cafe area and outside seating, improved toilet facilities and a Tourist Information Centre. Approved in 2014.
- 04NP0020- Walltown Quarry; Change of use of general purpose visitors' amenity building to provide retail facility and refreshments. Granted conditionally in 2004.
- 03NP0011- Walltown Quarry; Installation of two cycle lockers in visitor car park. Granted conditionally in 2003.
- 91NP0063- Walltown Quarry; Construction of amenity building and car park provision with amended entrance. Granted conditionally in 1991.

These applications show that the site has had an active use for over 12 years and that gradual improvements have been made to the facilities provided. The current application continues to utilise the site and compliments its existing use.

## 4. Planning Policy

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### 4.1 Introduction

This section of the Planning Statement sets out the relevant planning policy context within which this planning application should be considered, based on the pre-application advice received from the Local Planning Authority. The Planning Policies are analysed at National and Local levels and for each of those, the policies considered to be the most relevant are discussed.

The following Local and National policy issues which relate to the proposed development site have been considered within this Planning Statement.

- Development within the National Park
- Landscape
- Sustainable Development

### 4.2 National Planning Policy Framework

On the 27th March 2012, the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework, a new document which sets out the Government's Planning Policies for England, and details how they should be applied.

The aim of the National Planning Policy Framework is to create a streamlined, clear and concise planning document that promotes sustainable development and provides a link to allow the community to have their say on development that takes place within their neighbourhood.

NPPF Paragraph 115 states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

Chapter 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It encourages Local Planning Authorities to avoid imposing architectural styles or particular tastes and not to stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It also advises the Local Planning Authority to address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

There is a clear emphasis on a presumption in favour of sustainable development within the National Planning Policy Framework, something which the Government see as at the heart of the planning system, with sustainable development itself being the golden thread which should run through the plan making and decision making process.

The National Planning Policy Framework identifies that there are three dimensions to securing sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), and promoting the use of previously developed land. The document identifies 12 core planning principles which should underpin the decision making process taken by the Local Authority. These principles include proactively driving and supporting economic development to help deliver homes, businesses, infrastructure and thriving local places. The core principles also state that planning should:

- Be used as a creative exercise to find ways to enhance and improve places
- Seek high quality design and amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- Understand the differing roles and characters that areas take, and promote the vitality of our main urban areas; and
- Promote mixed use developments and realise the potential of areas of open land that can perform multiple functions such as wildlife, flood risk management and recreation.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that the reduction of the impacts of climate change and the provision of renewable and low carbon energy should be one of the main focuses of the Local Planning Authority when considering new development. This includes encouraging new development in locations which reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Paragraph 98 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should approve planning applications if their impacts are, or can be made acceptable.

### **4.3 Northumberland National Park: Local Development Framework**

The Northumberland National Park Local Development Framework contains one Development Plan Document; the Core Strategy and Development Policies Document. The Core Strategy was adopted in March 2009 and aims to deliver the overarching strategy for the National Park and set out the overall planning strategy for the Northumberland National Park to 2024.

#### **4.3.1 Northumberland National Park Core Strategy**

##### **General Development Principles**

Policy 3 of the Core Strategy looks at General Development Principles and states that all new development, activities, and uses of land within Northumberland National Park must uphold and



promote the principles of sustainable development. It states that new development will be permitted when;

- a. The special qualities of the National Park will be conserved or enhanced;
- b. The proposal demonstrates high quality sustainable design and construction, which protects and enhances local character and distinctiveness through careful integration with the existing built form.

This includes but is not restricted to ensuring:

- materials are appropriate to the site and its setting;
  - development is sympathetic to existing buildings in terms of scale, height, massing, siting, form, materials and colour; and
  - the protection of open space which contributes to the amenity, character, and setting of a settlement;
- c. The proposal supports the wellbeing of local communities by ensuring:
    - amenity is not adversely affected in terms of visual impact, pollution, noise and waste;
    - the development will not have any detrimental effects on highway safety or the rights of way network;
    - the creation of a safe and secure environment;
    - the provision of appropriate community facilities to meet the needs of the development; and
    - that appropriate services and infrastructure are capable of being provided without compromising the quality of the landscape.

## **Sustainable Development and Climate Change**

Policy 3 states that all new development, activities, and uses of land within Northumberland National Park must uphold and promote the principles of sustainable development. The plan also advises that new development will be permitted when the proposals demonstrate high quality sustainable design and construction, which protects and enhances local character and distinctiveness through careful integration with the existing built form. Proposals must also support the wellbeing of local communities by ensuring amenity is not adversely affected in terms of visual impact, pollution, noise and waste.

As well as securing sustainable developments, the Northumberland National Park Authority are also dedicated to mitigating the effects of climate change.

Policy 2 of the Core Strategy states that in order to contribute to mitigating climate change and assisting adaptation to the impacts of climate change the National Park Authority will:

- Facilitate the achievement of regional targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting proposals which:
  - a. Focus development in the most sustainable locations within the National Park;

- b. Minimise the need to travel especially by private car;
- c. Include opportunities for home working;
- d. Promote walking, cycling, and the use of public transport.
- e. Increase small scale renewable energy generation;
- f. Minimise energy and water use and waste generation; and
- g. Attain the highest environmental standards.
- h. Promoting and enhancing the conservation of peat as a carbon store within the National Park.
  - Support proposals which allow for the successful adaptation to the impacts of climate change by: locating new development in areas at least risk from flooding and using sustainable drainage systems to control the effect of surface water run-off;
- i. Enabling wildlife and habitats to adapt to climate change; and
- j. Maximising positive opportunities resulting from climate change.

Policy 25 of the Core Strategy seeks for developments to minimise energy use and pollution in order to meet national targets set out in the Energy White Paper. The Core Strategy states that in order to achieve the national commitments to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, this will require an increase in the amount of energy generated from renewable sources.

### **Tranquillity and Landscape**

Policy 19 aims to conserve and enhance the tranquillity of the National Park by assessing development proposals for their impact on noise, traffic and light generated, the sense of openness and on the quiet enjoyment.

As the development site is within a Designated Landscape, Policy 20 of the Core Strategy directly relates to the site as it aims to conserve and enhance the natural beauty and heritage of the National Park whilst being responsive to landscape change. It states that all proposals will be assessed in terms of their impact on landscape character and sensitivity as defined in the Landscape Supplementary Planning Document. It advises that any development which would adversely affect the quality and character of the landscape will not be permitted.

### **Cultural Heritage**

Policy 18 of the Northumberland National Park Core Strategy states that the National Park Authority will support proposals which conserve, enhance, and promote the quality and integrity of the cultural heritage of the National Park, particularly those which among other things, recognise the

opportunities for education and tourism founded on cultural heritage and promote the role that cultural heritage has in helping to secure social and economic regeneration.

Policy 1 in the Core Strategy states that any development must be able to demonstrate that it will:

- Conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park;
- Make efficient use of land, materials and infrastructure;
- Provide opportunities for all to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park;
- Reduce the causes and impacts of climate change particularly by maximising renewable energy generation and energy efficiency in buildings;
- Demonstrate high quality design and sustainable construction.

## **4.4 Planning Policy Conclusion**

### **General Development Principles**

Taking this all into account, it is clear that the proposed development will not have a negative impact on the special qualities of the National Park and therefore accords with the General Development Principles set out in Policy 3.

### **Sustainable Development**

The proposed development is proposed on Brownfield land which is heavily promoted in the NPPF. In addition to this, sustainable materials are used, which include timber. By locating the store on a site which is already frequented by rangers, it is reducing unnecessary vehicle trips.

Therefore it is clear that the development is sustainable and meets the requirements set out in Chapter 7 of the NPPF and Policies 1, 2, 12 and 25 of the ore Strategy.

### **Tranquillity and Landscape**

The proposed development has been located in a position which reduces the visual impact on the landscape.

In addition to this the proposal will be located on a Brownfield site, which is heavily promoted in the NPPF.

Therefore the design is in accordance with the main principles set out in Chapter 7 and Paragraph 115 as the NPPF and the requirements of policies 19 and 20.

## 5. Design and Access Statement

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This Design and Access Statement is being submitted to meet the requirements of Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which substituted section 62 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and takes account of the advice set out in the DCLG Circular 01/2006, “guidance to changes to the development control system” and DCLG Guidance Document 03/2010 “Guidance on information requirements and validation”. It has also taken into account the CABE publication “Design & Access Statements – How to write, read and use them”.

Section 62 of the DCLG 01/2006 Circular states:

“The level of detail required in a Design & Access Statement will depend on the scale and complexity of the application and the length of statement will vary accordingly. Statements must be proportionate to the complexity of the application but need not be long”.

The issues that need to be assessed have been pointed out within this document and they are the use of development, the amount of development, the scale of development, the landscaping of the development and its appearance. Access to the site is also included.

### 5.1 Amount and use

The proposals are for a ranger’s store which will be used to contain equipment for the rangers working for Northumberland National Park. The store will be generally locked at all times and will be accessed only by the rangers and only during normal working hours.

### 5.2 Scale

The proposed new store will be single storey and consist of approximately 24m<sup>2</sup> Gross Internal Area.

The proposed borehole will be to a depth of 70 metres, this will be drilled at a maximum diameter of 150mm down to a depth of 10 metres and then 100mm to the remainder of its 70 metres depth. As a result, the footprint of the borehole will be less than 0.02m<sup>2</sup>

At the surface, there is a requirement for a manhole chamber and cover, approximately 900mm x 450mm, set within a 1.4m diameter concrete top, laid flush to the prevailing ground surface. This covers a chamber of approximately 1.0m depth, lined with concrete rings. This conceals the borehead hole and pump. The borehole is then connected back to the information centre by an insulated pipe buried at a depth of 900mm. It is therefore considered that the scale of the development, especially in terms of what is visible after completion is extremely limited.

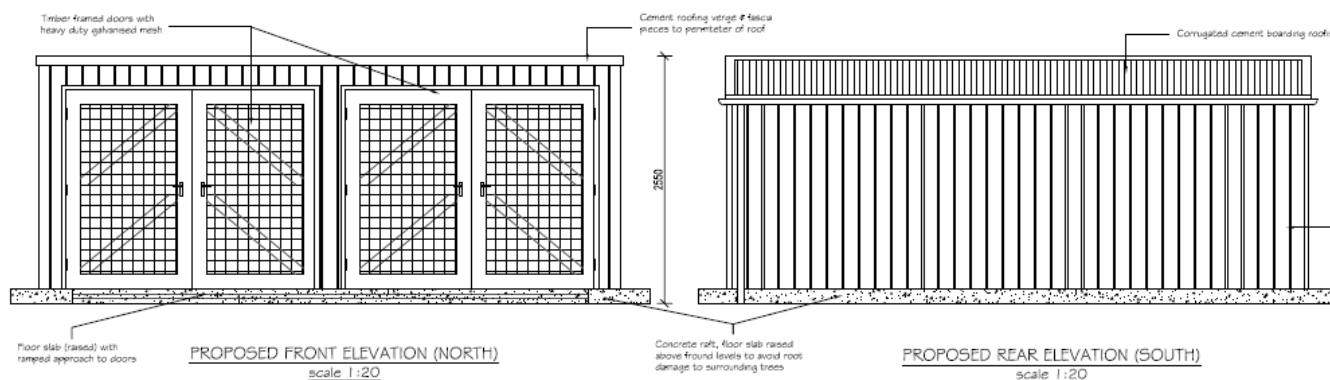
## 5.3 Site layout

The access for the site will remain unchanged and will be accessed off the Military Road B6318.

The Rangers store will be accessed off the existing private road.

The remaining internal site layout will remain largely unchanged.

**Figure 1: Proposed North Elevation**



## 5.4 Materials

The walls are proposed to be constructed of “hit and miss” vertical boarding.

Timber framed doors with a heavy duty galvanised mesh are also proposed. An access ramp is proposed on the approach to the doors.

The roof will consist of a corrugated cement boarding and a cement verge with fascia pieces added to the perimeter of the roof.

Flooring will be constructed with a concrete raft floor slab raised above ground levels to avoid tree root damage to the surrounding trees.

The manhole cover will be ductile iron, flush to the ground level, set within a concrete surround.

## 5.5 Landscape

The surrounding landscape includes the existing visitor centre building directly to the north with car parking further north leading to the quarry picnic area to the east of the building. The south of the site is an existing woodland with farm buildings located further south. The west of the site is predominately agricultural grazing land. There will be limited impact on the landscape as any areas of trenching will be restored to their existing surface level and either turfs replaced, re-seeded or tracks re-laid (as relevant) to match the existing.

## 5.6 Views

There is a band of tree planting which shields the site from the northern approach. The site is also not visible from the former quarry area due to the topography of the site.

The store building is shaded by the woodland to the south of the site and therefore it is not visible from the southern approach. The proposals will only be visible from the North and the East.

As there are no above ground structures associated with the borehole, there will be no visual impact of this part of the development after completion.

## 5.7 Ground Conditions

A key consideration of the borehole component of the development is that it is seeking replace an existing borehole that has been located on the site for a number of years. The original borehole was sunk prior to the requirement for an Environment Agency Permit. The reason why the new borehole is required is that the existing borehole is located too close to the water treatment plant outlet and cannot therefore comply with current Environment Agency Regulations.

The ground conditions have been assessed by the specialist borehole contractor that would be undertaking the installation works. The assessment of the site and conditions were based upon those for a borehole sunk at the B&B at the entrance to the Walltown Craggs site, namely Walltown Lodge B&B, postcode CA8 7JD.

The borehole drilling operation is carried out using a drilling rig that is lubricated using water. As a result, there will be no contamination of the ground water during installation.

Given the development will comply with Environment Agency requirements for distance from the existing septic tank, there is no prospect of the development leading to contamination of ground water in operation either.

## 5.8 Parking and Transportation

There are no proposed changes to the car parking on site as the existing car park can accommodate the Rangers. In addition, due to the limited scale of the development, it is anticipated that there will be minimal levels of construction traffic associated with the development.

## 6. Heritage

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As the proposed development falls within a World Heritage Site, it is important to consider the impact that the development could have on its surroundings.

This proposal is formed of two discrete components and in terms of the impact on the heritage of the development site.

Both components are located within the area of the former quarry which occupied the site for a significant part of the 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century and was the land use which was immediately prior to the current use of the site as a National Park Information Centre.

Whilst the site is located in an area which is rich in Roman history and other periods of activity, the fact that these uses were prior to the excavation of the application site and its surroundings as a quarry means that any trace of previous phases of activity would have been lost during the quarrying activity and no longer exist due to the reduction in site levels.

### **The Ranger's store**

In addition to the fact that the rangers store is located within the former quarry area, it is considered that the proposed construction methods would also minimise any potential impact upon the heritage value of the site. Indeed, the store is to be constructed by forming a concrete slab at ground level, with only minimal scraping of turf / topsoil to create a level area to form the concrete slab. The timber structure is then erected upon this. As a result, there will be minimal ground disturbance. The timber store itself will have a natural wood finish to the elevations, assisting in it assimilating itself with the surroundings.

Whilst this will be a modern addition to this site, it will be clear that this is a new addition to the location and it will therefore still be possible to understand the underlying history of the site, with the more natural environment with evidence of historical activity outside of the quarry, the former quarry that the development is located within and more modern facilities including the information centre building and this proposed timber store building.

In addition, in terms of the permanence of the development, whilst this anticipated to have a design life of at least 30 years, it will be relatively easy to remove the timber structure, break-up the concrete slab and re-seed the area of ground that the building would occupy.



## **The bore hole**

In a similar manner to the timber store, the bore hole is located within the area of the former quarry, below the level of any previous phases of human habitation and activity. Again this means that there is no potential for harm to below ground archaeology.

The borehole itself is drilled at a maximum diameter of 150mm down to a depth of 10 metres and then 100mm to the remainder of its 70 metres depth. This means that it has a very small overall footprint, further minimising the potential heritage impact.

At the surface, the only sign of the borehole will be a manhole cover, approximately 900mm x 450mm, set within a 1.4m diameter concrete top, laid flush to the prevailing ground surface. This covers a chamber of approximately 1.0m depth, lined with concrete rings. This conceals the borehole and pump.

As a result of this small footprint of the borehole and associated manhole, there will be little to indicate that the development is in situ, once complete. Whilst there is clearly a need to connect the borehole back to the information centre, with an insulated pipe within a 900mm deep trench, again, once the finished surface (grass and stone track) is restored, there will be only limited evidence of the presence of the works.

It is therefore considered that due to the absence of the potential for buried archaeology, there is very limited potential for harm to heritage assets and given the negligible amount of development that will be visible after completion, that again, there would be an imperceptible impact upon the heritage value of the immediate environs.

Due to the limited heritage impact of the proposals, it is considered that the proposed development accords with Policy 18 of the Core Strategy which relates to cultural heritage.

## 7. Conclusion

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This application is for a borehole and rangers store at Walltown Craggs, in the Northumberland National Park. The borehole is required to extract water and improve water quality as the existing borehole is located too close to the existing outfall of the water treatment plant. Potential impacts of the new borehole have been considered and it has been concluded that there is no risk of ground contamination. Indeed, given the increased separation from the water treatment plant outlet, there will be a reduced impact on groundwater conditions compared with the existing situation.

The proposed rangers store is located on land which is currently used as an open-air timber store. Its proposed location minimises the visual impact due to the sites topography and tree cover.

In overall terms, it is considered that the proposed development is fully in accordance with existing Local and National Policy and is appropriate for this sensitive site. As a result it is respectfully considered that permission should be granted for these proposals.