

**Northumberland County Council**

**Building Conservation Team**

**Memorandum**

To: Rebecca Adams, Planning Officer  
From: Sarah Dyer, Historic Building Advisor to NNPA  
Date: 15th September 2015  
Planning Reference: 15NP0064  
Site Name: Replacement Summer House at Snabdough

Thank you for consulting Building Conservation on this application. The application has been reviewed and the following comments are offered.

The submitted proposal is for a garden room in the garden of the Farmhouse at Snabdough. The application states that this proposal is a replacement for an existing garden room, however I understand that the existing garden room does not have planning permission, therefore it is not considered to have been assessed against local and national planning policy.

**SIGNIFICANCE:**

Snabdough is said to be the architectural surprise of the National Park. It is a Grade I listed. L-shaped stone farmhouse. Studies have concluded it is of three periods, the south part being probably 16th or 17th century, the southern half of the east wing, is of the 18th century, and the north half is about a 100 years old. The oldest part has walls 5 feet thick, offset at first floor level to about 4 foot 6 inches thickness. The structure is thought to have originally been a strong house rather than a Pele House as no Pele House of this size exists with 3 floors. Main block is oldest part of the house and the tunnel-vaulted attic makes it an extreme rarity. Overall dimensions and wall thicknesses comparable with many bastles. The attic vault unique amongst medieval domestic buildings in Northumberland (Ryder 1990).

Its wider setting is isolated and sheltered in the valley floor, close the North Tyne and away from other buildings or settlement. The building was fortified and its setting has historically played an important role in having clear views across the valley floor.

Snabdough is of high significance for its historical, architectural and communal value, being unique as a domestic building in England, isolated and fortified for protection. The area of highest significance and rarity is in the vaulted attic inside the building.

**IMPACT:**

The submitted proposal is for a garden house and decking in the garden of Snabdough. It will not be physically fixed to the listed building and therefore the consideration of its impact relates to setting only.

As set out above the significance of Snabdough lies in part in its historical significance as being part of a series of robust, fortified and isolated houses found across rural Northumberland that were constructed in protection from the Border Reivers. Part of the significance is the isolated position of such a building with clear views around and the introduction of the garden room structure introduces materials and design that is alien to this building and landscape would conflict with the significance. The treated timbers and proposed decking is perhaps more suited to more urban locations. Whilst it would be located behind existing vegetation adjacent to the road, seasonal and glimpse views of the structure are possible.

**POLICY:**

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 directs LPA's in considering applications to and within the setting of Listed buildings to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 12 of the NPPF directs LPA's in how to assess the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset and whether the proposal sustains and enhances or is harmful to the character and significance of that heritage asset. Section 7 sets out the requirements for good design in paragraphs 56- 68 noting that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning.

The NNPA LDF Policy 18 - Cultural Heritage states that the NNPA will support proposals which conserve, enhance and promote the quality and integrity of the cultural heritage of the National Park.

**POSITION:**

In assessing the submitted proposal against the legislation and policy as set out above it is considered that the submitted proposal would be harmful to the setting of the Grade I listed building by introducing a structure within its grounds that does not reflect local distinctiveness in its design or materials and is harmful to its setting because of this. It is considered that the level of this harm would be less than substantial. The NPPF advises in this regard, any harm requires clear and convincing justification and that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits that will be brought about by the proposal.

Sarah Dyer IHBC MRTPI  
NNPA Historic Buildings Advisor  
Northumberland National Park  
15th September 2015