



DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

Application Reference Number	16NP0030
Description / Site Address	Forestry determination in respect of the Installation of a temporary bridge and track realignment at Fairhaugh Forest, Alwinton, Northumberland, NE65
Expiry date of publicity / consultations	4 April 2016
Last date for decision	14 April 2016

Details of Proposal

This application has been submitted in order to determine whether prior approval is required from the Local Planning Authority for the proposed construction of a temporary bridge over the Usway Burn and associated track realignment at Fairhaugh Forest, Alwinton. This request is made to the Local Planning Authority under Part 6 Class E 'Forestry Developments' of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO).

The proposed bridge would create a temporary vehicular crossing point over the Usway Burn in this location, providing vehicles with an alternative route to the existing ford crossing point during timber harvesting operations. The bridge would be constructed in accordance with the Method Statement and plans submitted, and would be removed once no longer required. The bridge abutments would then remain in place for any future use.

The proposed track realignment would facilitate the re-direction of timber extraction vehicles towards the temporary bridge, away from the adjacent property known as Fairhaugh House. The proposed track would measure approximately 70 in length and 4.2m in width, and would be constructed with locally quarried grey stone.

The application site is located wholly within Northumberland National Park, some 1.8km upstream of the River Coquet & Coquet Valley Woodlands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The site is also within close proximity of a number of public Bridleways.

Planning Policy & Guidance

National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

National Planning Practice Guidance (2015)

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

Local Policies

Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy and Development Policies Document (Core Strategy) (2009)

Policy 3 *General Development Principles*
Policy 17 *Biodiversity and Geodiversity*



Policy 19	<i>Tranquillity</i>
Policy 20	<i>Landscape Quality and Character</i>
Policy 22	<i>Trees, Woodlands and Forests</i>

Relevant Planning History

01NP0019 Change of use to holiday accommodation/estate management purposes and extensions and refurbishment. *Conditional planning permission granted 02.05.2001*

Consultation/Representations

NNPA Landscape and Forestry Officer: Comments made.

The proposed development would not have a substantial detrimental effect upon the landscape or views of this part of the National Park. Despite localised felling, the proposed road is unlikely to be visible from distant receptor sites due to the low position of the site within the wider landscape.

The proposed road would be located within close proximity to a number of Sycamore trees, which are considered to be notable features within the landscape and therefore care should be taken. Every effort should be taken to ensure that these specimens are not adversely affected, and it is therefore suggested that the alignment of the route should be reassessed.

Further information requested pertaining to the source and quantity of stone to be used. Care should be taken not to damage or affect the adjacent stone sheep steel. The development would not impact upon the Dark Sky Park status of the National Park.

NNPA Ecologist: No objections.

The watercourse is not a SSSI but does feed into the River Coquet SSSI downstream. The replacement of a ford with a bridge is therefore positive in terms of water quality as it is likely to reduce siltation on this stretch of the burn. No objections are raised to the methodology provided. The use of locally quarried stone raises no objections. Comments raised by the NNPA Landscape and Forestry Officer with regards to the retention of trees are reiterated.

NNPA Access and Recreation Officer: Comments made.

The application site is within the immediate vicinity of Alwinton Bridleways 14 and 19. Route 14 enters the site from the south, heading in a general north-easterly direction towards a footbridge crossing the Usway Burn; this bridge was washed away in the December floods and is due to be replaced. Further information is requested regarding the future use of the proposed bridge, as currently the existing ford allows access for horse riders and cyclists. No objection is raised on the condition that the Public Rights of Way are protected throughout. The works must not impact upon access to this route, disturb the path surface or prevent or refer public use of the path without necessary legal diversion or closure.



Assessment

The issues to be taken into consideration in the assessment of this application are:-

- The Principle of the Development; and
- The siting and means of construction of the private way

The Principle of the Development

The formation, alteration or maintenance of private ways for the purposes of forestry can be undertaken under permitted development rights set out within Part 6 of the 2015 GPDO, provided that the works are reasonably necessary for the purposes of forestry, and meet with further criteria set out within legislation. Where these criteria are met, the Local Planning Authority can only assess whether prior approval is required to assess the siting and means of construction of the private way.

The proposed bridge and realigned track would not fall within 25 metres of the metalled portion of a trunk road or classified road, and are considered to be reasonably necessary for the purposes of forestry. Based on the information made available to the Local Planning Authority it is therefore considered that the requirements set out within Part 6 of the 2015 GPDO have been met. The principle of the development is therefore deemed to be acceptable.

The siting and means of construction of the private way



View facing north east towards the application site with existing ford to right of photograph



It is not considered that the proposed temporary bridge or track realignment would have a substantial detrimental effect upon the landscape or views of this part of the National Park and are unlikely to be visible from distant receptor points due to the low position of the site within the wider landscape. Following the intended removal of the bridge, it is not considered that the remaining abutments or tracks would impact detrimentally upon the landscape character of the National Park.

The application is accompanied by a detailed Method Statement and plans setting out the proposed design and construction of the proposed bridge. The watercourse is not a SSSI but does feed into the River Coquet SSSI downstream. The NNPA Ecologist has reviewed the information submitted and considers that the proposed bridge would have a positive impact upon water quality in the area through a likely reduction in siltation. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact upon ecology within the area.

Comments received from the NNPA Access and Recreation Officer requested additional information regarding proposed access arrangements for the new bridge to current users of the existing ford. Confirmation has been received from the applicant that the bridge may be used by others users, however that the ford would remain accessible to existing users throughout. It is therefore not considered that the proposed development would conflict with existing access arrangements within the site.

Further comments have been raised regarding the source and quantity of stone to be used however this does not constitute a consideration in assessing the siting and means of construction of the proposed temporary bridge and track realignment. Comments have also been raised regarding the potential impact of the development upon Sycamore trees and a historic sheep steel close to the development site. As set out above, the proposal would be acceptable in terms of siting and means of construction in its current form, and therefore no further consideration is given to these points.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the assessment detailed above, it is considered that **prior approval is NOT required.**

	Signature	Date
Planning Officer		
Head of Development Management or Chief Executive		