

# **Chesterholm Museum, Bardon Mill**

## **Unlocking Vindolanda's Wooden Underworld.**

**Design & Access Statement** in support of application for museum extension to form new gallery and ancillary activity room.

**VINDOLANDA**  
**CHARITABLE TRUST**



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BRITISH MUSEUM  
Exploring the World's Past  
Creating the Future

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## **1.0) Introduction**

### **1.1 The application**

Roman Vindolanda is a major tourist attraction in Northumberland, attracting c.100,000 visitors each year, providing opportunities for up to 500 people to volunteer on the annual excavation programme and employing 33 local people. The economic impact of Vindolanda to the local area is significant.

The proposal is for an extension to the Vindolanda Chesterholm museum to provide a secure and appropriate exhibition space for the conserved large wooden objects from the Vindolanda excavations. In addition and ancillary to the exhibition space a multi-functional activity area is proposed which is directly linked to the exhibition area. The proposal is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund who have recognised the need to extend the museum to enable public display of the unique wooden collection of artefacts. The Vindolanda collection has recently been given the Designation accolade by the Arts Council England, recognising the unique collection which is of national importance.

### **1.2 Our Objectives**

The Vindolanda Trust is a registered charity founded in 1970, to research, preserve and promote and provide access to the widest possible audience to the archaeology of Roman Vindolanda. Our mission is to advance the knowledge and enhance the awareness of Vindolanda through meticulous investigation of the archaeological record and maintain access to Vindolanda's unique heritage resource and our contribution to the understanding of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site.

Due to space and environmental conditions the larger wooden objects that form such an important part of the wooden underworld heritage from Vindolanda have only been available to researchers and museum specialist. The proposed extension and associated activity space will enable the conserved wooden artefacts found at Vindolanda to be displayed for the first time for public enjoyment. These artefacts include water pipes, a rare wooden toilet seat and a wagon wheel.

Externally in providing additional gallery and activity space our overall goal is to;

- Improve the appearance of the building when looking into the site without compromising the character of the original building.
- Protect the setting of the scheduled ancient monument.
- Enhance habitat for ecology on the site.

## **2.0) The Site**

### **2.1 Site Location**

Chesterholm Museum is located in the open countryside approximately one mile north of the settlement of Bardon Mill and lies within the landscape setting of Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and Vindolanda Scheduled Ancient Monument. The museum and adjacent land where the extension is proposed is not scheduled land. There are no neighbouring properties that are not under the ownership of the Vindolanda Trust, adjacent to the development area.

### **2.2 Site Analysis**

The Chesterholm Museum lies in a secluded valley and has a long planning history. The original, and architecturally interesting house of Chesterholm has been significantly extended since being acquired by the Vindolanda Trust in 1974. The proposed location for the gallery extension and activity space is to the north elevation of the existing museum complex, an area which has previously been extended. This north elevation of the existing building is architecturally bland, dominated by a large mansard roof. Adjacent to the building are utilities including an oil tank and generator. Although access to the back of the building is restricted to staff only the building is clearly visible from the public driveway.

North (rear) elevation of museum as existing.



South (front) elevation of museum as existing



## 2.3 Special Character of the Area

### 2.3.1 Architecture

The original cottage 'Chesterholm' was built in 1830/31 by Rev Anthony Hedley and as it still is today was hidden from the surrounding area due to the topography. The first extension to the building took place in 1930 with a new wing to the east side. The dwellinghouse was acquired by the newly formed Vindolanda Trust in 1974 and turned into a small museum. Between 1975 and 1980 five major extensions have been granted allowing the conservation, research and public display of the Vindolanda collection to take place.

Although the original building is now less than ¼ of the development on the site the character of the original building is very much still evident on the southern elevation and has become the 'picture postcard' public face of the museum at Chesterholm.

### 2.3.2 Heritage and Landscape

Although not in a designated area of outstanding natural beauty and also out with the Northumberland National Park, the Chesterholm museum site lies within an area of countryside with many merits. The application site is secluded by its surrounding topography being significantly lower ground than the adjacent Hedley Building (converted and extended under application T/20061211) and almost

completely hidden in relation to the Vindolanda fort which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. In addition to the topography the museum is screened by woodland and more recent planting throughout the landscaped grounds.

### **2.3.3 Ecology**

The Chesterholm museum and the associated gardens with stream are a natural habitat for a variety of species, including European protected species such as bats. Bats in particular are prevalent in and around the Chesterholm museum.

### **3.0) Design Concepts**

#### **3.1 Massing, Design & Character**

The proposed gallery extension had been designed to enhance the existing architecture in this specific part of the museum, reflect the significance of the collection housed within it and also be sustainable. The design does not attempt to mimic the existing building, it is an addition of its time and as such will be clearly recognisable in the evolution of this site and the varying architectural styles. The hexagonal designs will create extensions of interest, softening the bulk of the existing mansard roof that lies behind.

#### **3.2 Materials**

The gallery extension would be finished with stone walls while the ancillary activity space would be timber. The two spaces are connected by a glazed link. The main gallery extension has no windows, a specific conservation requirement due to the sensitive nature of the collection to be housed inside. Glazing has however been incorporated into a feature lantern light within the roof. In contrast the activity space has significant glazing, making a light, airy environment with view out towards the adjacent grassland. The roof material proposed for the extension is Catnic SSR metal. This material has been chosen to not only provide a low maintenance solution but also to avoid a further mass of slate to what is already a complex roof system. Samples of the roof material and colour options are available. The height of the building does not break the ridgeline of the original pitched roofs of the museum (see plan DWG No CE4). The extension would not be visible from the south, therefore retaining the character of the original building.

Example of a Catnic clad roof.



### **3.3 Landscape & Ecology**

The existing trees to the east of the proposed activity space will be retained and are unaffected by the proposal. The development offers the Trust an opportunity to enhance this aspect of the building, bringing the land adjacent to the rear of museum up to the current standard of the other public areas of the site. This will provide a better setting for both the extension and the existing building. The extension would be visible from the north east part of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Vindolanda which lies on the escarpment above the Chesterholm site. Due to the topography the extension would not obscure the view of the East wall of the Roman fort and therefore has no impact on the setting of the monument in the landscape. It is recognised that there may be an impact on bats as a result of the proposal. The Vindolanda Trust is seeking advice from ecologists to identify the extent of the impact and suitable mitigation/habitat enhancement.

Application site in relation to Scheduled Ancient Monument of Vindolanda



### 3.4 Access & Utilities

Existing utilities would be relocated to the west of the extension, obscured from public view by the new development. A new access road to service the utilities is required. The road would be formed using 'grasscrete' or a similar method which creates a stable yet green surface with minimal visual impact on the setting of museum.

The overhead power line would require to be diverted to accommodate the works, enquiries are progressing with Northern Powergrid and would be the subject of separate consent.

The proposals include replacement of the existing toilets facilities within the Chesterholm Museum. This proposal includes replacing the existing treatment plan with a upgraded facility (WPL HiPAF) to cope with the effluent as there is no connection to mains drainage.



Public access would remain as existing. The existing provision of visitor parking, disabled parking and cycle racks are not altered by the proposals.

#### **4.0 Consultation**

##### **4.1 Pre-application consultations**

Although the land where the extension is proposed is not scheduled the site lies adjacent to the Vindolanda Scheduled Ancient Monument and therefore informal advice was sought from the Historic England Ancient Monument Inspector in respect of the development area. To ascertain whether the proposal would have an impact on archaeological deposits an archaeological investigation was carried out upon the request of Historic England. The investigation revealed no features, deposits or artefacts of archaeological significance. A full copy of the report is lodged with the planning application.

Due to the known presence of bats at the site a request was made by email to the Conservation team within Northumberland County Council on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2016, asking for advice. No reply has been received to date.

Total Ecology have been commissioned to undertake bat surveys and their first report is submitted with this planning application.

#### **5.0 Precedent & Policy**

##### **5.1 Precedent**

The Chesterholm Museum has a long planning history with previous consents reflecting the growing nature of the collection. The museum has been sensitively extended to facilitate what is now a world class museum, housing a collection of international significance.

##### **5.2 Planning Policy**

The site is located in open countryside and is a key tourist attraction within Tynedale and wider Northumberland. The Trust has taken into consideration Core Strategy Policies GD1, BE1 and ED1 in the development of these plans.

