



DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

Application Reference Number	16NP0126
Description / Site Address	Siting of a Biomass Boiler incorporating 8m high flue and Drying Room. Creation of an associated area of hardstanding and new access at Land North of Grindon Farm, Haydon Bridge, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 6NQ
Expiry date of publicity / consultations	12 January 2017
Last date for decision	16 February 2017

Details of Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the proposed siting of a biomass boiler and drying room for the processing of logs and hay, in addition to the creation of an area of hardstanding and new access, on land north of Grindon Farm, Haydon Bridge.



Aerial map view outlining approximate area of application site

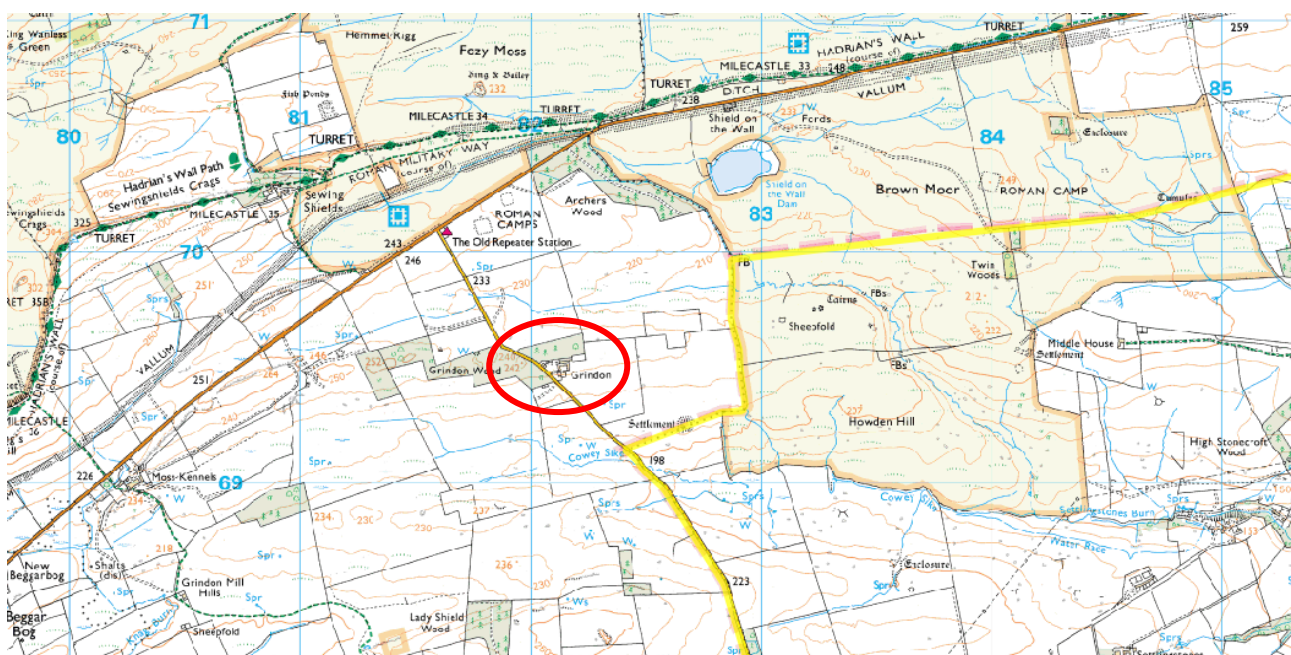
Grindon Farm is located within the open countryside approx. 5km north of Haydon Bridge, some 700m south east of the B6318 Military road, situated some 400m inside the National Park's southern boundary.

The farmstead comprises 4no. residential and holiday properties clustered together alongside various agricultural buildings and enclosures, which are bounded to the north and west by densely planted woodland. Vehicular access to the site is obtained from 3 different points interspersed along the C227 North Road, which runs along the south western border of the site.



The proposed development seeks the felling of trees within the approximate area of the red line outlined in the map extract on page 1, the area of which would then be laid to Whinstone hardstanding alongside the creation of a new vehicular access leading to this from the north-most existing access point onto the C227 North Road. The scheme then proposes the siting of a biomass boiler (3m x 5m footprint x 2.5m height) and log drying container (14.6m x 2.5m footprint x 2.9m height) on a concrete pad to the southern part of the hardstanding area, to which would be connected an 8m high chimney, proposed to be painted black.

The purpose of the proposed scheme is to facilitate farm diversification, providing a secondary income for the applicants alongside the farm business and holiday accommodation. Logs and hay would be processed on the site and the resultant products sold and/or used as fuel for the cottages and holiday accommodation.



Aerial map view identifying application site relative to surrounding area (Park boundary in yellow)

Planning Policy & Guidance

National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

National Planning Practice Guidance (2015)

Local Policies

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

Policy 1	<i>Delivering Sustainable Development</i>
Policy 2	<i>Climate Change</i>
Policy 3	<i>General Development Principles</i>
Policy 5	<i>General Location of New Development</i>



Policy 14	<i>A Sustainable Local Economy</i>
Policy 15	<i>Sustainable Tourism & Recreation Development</i>
Policy 17	<i>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</i>
Policy 18	<i>Cultural Heritage</i>
Policy 19	<i>Tranquillity</i>
Policy 20	<i>Landscape Quality and Character</i>
Policy 21	<i>Farming</i>
Policy 22	<i>Trees, Woodlands and Forests</i>
Policy 25	<i>Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency</i>

Supplementary Planning Guidance

NNPA Landscape Supplementary Planning Document (Landscape SPD)

Relevant Planning History

None relevant to this application

Consultation/Representations

Haydon Bridge Parish Council: No objections

Historic England: No objections

The proposal would not impact directly on any archaeological remains from the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. It is not considered that the proposed development would harm the ability to appreciate and understand Roman military planning and land use. It is therefore not considered that the proposal would harm the setting of the World Heritage Site. It is recommended that relevant specialist conservation staff are consulted, including the National Park Historic Environment Officer.

NCC Public Protection: No objections; Informative given

In principle, Public Protection is in agreement with this proposal. An Informative is recommended regarding the need for the applicant to obtain the approval of Public Protection for the proposed boiler and chimney under Section 14 of The Clean Air Act 1993.

NNPA Access and Recreation Officer: No objections

As there are no Public Rights of Way within the vicinity and the development is not likely to impact on existing public access within the area, no objections are raised.

NNPA Ecologist: No objections

The application site is located within an existing plantation and the area of trees to be removed is small and does not contain any trees of particular ecological importance.

NCC Highways: No observations

The proposed development confirms in highway terms within the NPPF and policy GD4 of the Local Plan. The proposed siting of the biomass boiler is within a private site with the provision of a new access and hardstanding coming off a private road. No highways objections are raised to the proposed development.



NNPA Landscape and Forestry Officer: No objections

From a landscape perspective, the proposed development is set within an existing Scots Pine copse at the periphery of the farmstead. When viewed from the north the development would largely be screened by these trees however it is noted that these trees will be felled at some point in the future.

The proposed 8 metre high flue is likely to be the most visually prominent feature of the development however irrespective of the future of the surrounding woodland, the flue would sit alongside existing electricity poles approximately 7 metres in height and therefore on balance the proposed development would not have a significant detrimental effect upon the landscape character or views of this part of the National Park.

It is reasonable to presume that the existing Scots Pine copse is likely to be felled during the lifetime of the proposed development and as such recommend that the boiler and drying room are painted an olive green or earthy brown colour rather than blue (as depicted within the brochure submitted) in order to minimise the visual effect of the development when viewed from the adjacent public road as and when the existing woodland is felled.

A condition is recommended regarding external lighting in order to ensure that any such lighting required in associated within the development is Dark Sky compliant.

Whilst an area of woodland is proposed to be felled, I do not regard the Scots Pine affected to be a significant or notable species. Good practice would suggest that an equivalent area of trees lost as a result of this application should be replanted elsewhere on the farm however it is understood that this cannot be stipulated under planning law.

NNPA Historic Environment Officer: No objections, subject to an appropriate condition in order to ensure that the structure does not intrude into the setting of the World Heritage Site should the adjacent woodland reach maturity and felling rotation. Whilst the structures are not in keeping with the farmstead, this does not preclude modern structures which enable the farm to operate efficiently and sustainably.

No representations received in response to a notice displayed at the site on 09.01.2017.

Assessment

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

- The Principle of the Development;
- Design and Visual Impacts;
- Impact upon Residential Amenity;
- Impact upon National Park special qualities (Ecology and Biodiversity; Cultural Heritage; Tranquillity; Landscape Character);
- Highways and Rights of Way; and
- Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy



The Principle of the Development

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of decision making.

The application site falls within the open countryside whereby Core Strategy policy 5 limits development to the reuse of existing buildings, with new buildings only ordinarily permitted where the development cannot take place within an identified local centre or through the reuse of an existing building. Development within the open countryside should also conserve or enhance the special qualities of the National Park and, where appropriate, provide opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy these special qualities.

The NPPF seeks to support a prosperous rural economy, stating that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. Core Strategy policy 14 provides support for the creation and retention of a sustainable local economy through proposals which enable the creation of new businesses and expansion of existing businesses and employment uses which do not negatively impact upon the special qualities of the National Park. Core Strategy policy 21 provides further support for proposals which enable the diversification of farming practices.

The proposed scheme constitutes new development within an open countryside location, however is considered to be acceptable in accordance with Core Strategy policy 5 due to the type of development proposed, which necessitates the addition of purpose-built structures, and its proposed physical and relational connection with the existing farm in terms of both operation and processing materials (timber and hay). The proposal would furthermore enable the diversification of an existing farm business in accordance with Core Strategy policies 14 and 21 and the NPPF. Whilst new buildings within the open countryside are generally resisted by Core Strategy policy 5, on balance the proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle in accordance with Core Strategy policies 1, 5, 14 and 21 and the NPPF subject to further considerations surrounding the impact of the development upon the National Park's special qualities which are discussed below.

Design and Visual impacts

NPPF Chapter 7 paragraph 56 states that "*good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning*", and that development should be responsive to local character and distinctiveness. Core Strategy policy 3 provides support for development proposals that conserve and enhance local character and the Park's special qualities, further supported by the Northumberland National Park Authority Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The proposed development would comprise the creation of an area of hardstanding (approx. 10m x 50m), and the siting of a biomass boiler (3m x 5m footprint x 2.5m height) and log drying container (14.6m x 2.5m footprint x 2.9m height), which would both be blue in colour. The proposed boiler would be served by an 8m high chimney, proposed to be painted black.



The works are proposed within an area currently planted with Scots Pine, which would be removed as part of this application, however would be bordered to the north by an existing area of woodland to which it is understood that no works are proposed at present.

The proposed structures, by their nature as purpose-built equipment, are acknowledged to constitute a contrast to more traditional agricultural buildings and structures typically found within farm steadings. It is however by this inherent nature that the proposed structures are considered to be acceptable in terms of their form and size; furthermore the proposed structures would be relatively small when viewed in context to the existing farmstead, which comprises a number of larger residential and agricultural buildings, and buildings immediately adjacent, which would aid in lessening their overall visual impact. The proposed hardstanding and track raise no concerns with regard to impact upon visual amenity.

As submitted it is proposed that the boiler and container would be painted blue. Whilst the existing Scots Pine plantation to the north and west of the site would aid in screening the development from the wider area at present, should these trees be felled the development may become more visually prominent within the area and in this context blue buildings would be undesirable. It is therefore recommended that a condition be attached to any planning approval requiring the buildings to be painted a dark colour (black, dark green or brown) in order to protect the visual amenity of the area. A condition would also be attached requiring the proposed chimney to be painted black in order to lessen its overall visual impact. Subject to the inclusion of the conditions recommended above the proposed development would accord with Core Strategy policy 3 and the NPPF.

Impact upon Residential Amenity

Grindon Farm occupies an isolated position within the open countryside, the closest neighbouring properties to which are The Old Repeater Station (holiday accommodation), some 750m to the north, and Grindon Hill, some 1.5km to the south. Due to the separation distances between the farm and these neighbouring properties, it is considered unlikely that the proposed development would have any significant impact upon the amenity of either of these properties. Consideration must additionally be given to both the existing residential and holiday properties at Grindon Farm however due to their direct relationship with the farm it is not considered that the proposed development would detrimentally impact upon their amenity. NCC Environmental Protection have additionally been consulted on this application and have raised no objections. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would be acceptable in terms of impact upon residential amenity, in accordance with Core Strategy policy 3 and the NPPF.

Impact upon National Park special qualities

Ecology and Biodiversity

The application site does not fall within or directly adjacent to any designated ecological sites of international, national or local importance. The NNPA Ecologist has raised no objections to the proposed development and has identified that the trees proposed to be removed are not of particular ecological importance. The proposed development would therefore accord with the NPPF and Core Strategy policies 17 and 22 in this regard. Whilst replacement tree planting would be desirable in order to compensate for the loss of an area of Scots Pine, as the tree removal would



not result in harm to the special qualities of the National Park (as discussed in full below) it is considered unreasonable to request replacement planting elsewhere.

Cultural Heritage

The application site falls within the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site however is some distance (approx. 600m south) from any designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments and does not include any Listed buildings.

Historic England have been consulted on the application however do not consider that the proposal would harm the setting of the World Heritage Site, recommending that NNPA consult with special conservation staff. The NNPA Historic Environment Officer has raised no objections to the application (noting that whilst modern, the structures would enable the farm to operate efficiently and sustainably), subject to the inclusion of a condition requiring the proposed structures to be painted a dark colour in order to ensure that these do not intrude into the setting of the World Heritage Site; this is considered to be reasonable and such a condition would therefore be attached to any planning approval. Subject to the inclusion of such a condition, the application would accord with Core Strategy policy 18 and the NPPF.

Tranquillity

The information submitted to support the application indicates that no external lighting is required to be installed in connection with the proposed development. It is nevertheless considered to be appropriate to attach a condition to any planning approval in order to restrict the installation of new external lighting in connection with the proposed development, should any be required in the future, due to the isolated location of the site and presence of the site within the Dark Sky Park. Subject to the inclusion of such a condition the proposed development would accord with the NPPF and Core Strategy policy 19.

Landscape Character

Core Strategy policy 20 seeks to protect the landscape quality and character of Northumberland National Park through the assessment of all proposals in terms of their impact upon landscape character and sensitivity and accordingly its support for appropriate development types.

The application site is located within the 'Upland Commons' Landscape Character Area, as defined within the NNPA Landscape Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Within this area, the Landscape SPD's guidelines for development state that:

- *Farm building conversions and diversification may offer opportunities to restore the vernacular built fabric of the area;*
- *New farm buildings should take care not to compromise the pattern and scale of farmsteads across this landscape;*
- *Particular care should be taken to avoid cumulative influences and the cluttering of the skyline, although carefully-sited domestic scale wind energy development may be accommodated where the landscape offers a degree of containment;*



- *Maintain the pattern of stone wall enclosures as part of the wider landscape character of this area.*



Views facing north (top) and south east (bottom) towards application site



The proposed development would form part of an existing farm steading and at present would be screened/bounded by an existing Scots Pine plantation to the north when viewed from the north/south respectively; it is however recognised that this plantation may be felled in future and in this regard a condition is similarly recommended requiring the boiler and drying room to be painted a dark colour in order to minimise their visual impact when viewed from the adjacent public road. Compensatory planting is not considered to be a requirement of the proposed scheme in the interests of landscape character. Whilst the 8 metre high chimney would be visually prominent to some degree, regardless of the presence of the existing Scots Pine plantation, the NNPA Landscape and Forestry Officer has identified that this would sit alongside existing 7 metre high electricity poles and therefore on balance considers that this would not have a significant



detrimental effect upon the landscape character or views of this part of the National Park. A condition is however recommended in order to require the chimney to be painted black in order to reduce its visual prominence. Subject to the conditions recommended above it is considered that the proposed development would accord with Core Strategy policy 20 and the NPPF.

Highways and Rights of Way

The proposed development would not impact upon existing public access within the area due to the absence of Public Rights of Way surrounding the site.

The proposed development would be sited within a private site with vehicular access to the proposed biomass boiler and drying room obtained from an existing private access track which adjoins the public highway, to which NCC Highways have raised no highways objections. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would accord with Core Strategy policy 3 and the NPPF in this regard.

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Due to the nature of the proposed development the requirements of Core Strategy policy 25 are not considered to be applicable.

Recommendation & Conditions

It is recommended that conditional permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To ensure that the development is commenced within a reasonable period of time from the date of this permission, as required by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
 - Application form, received 21st December 2016
 - Location plan, received 21st December 2016
 - Proposed site plan, received 21st December 2016
 - Glen Farrow Biomass Log Dyer (annotated specifications), received 21st December 2016
 - Proposed container details, received 21st December 2016
 - Planning Statement, received 21st December 2016

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt, to enable the Local Planning Authority to adequately manage the development and to ensure the proposal accords with policies 1, 2, 3, 5, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 28 of the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy & Development Policies Document (Core Strategy) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

3. Within 6 months of the installation of the boiler and drying room hereby permitted, the boiler and drying room shall be painted a dark brown, dark green or black colour and shall be retained as such in perpetuity.



Reason: In the interest of the satisfactory appearance of the development, the surrounding landscape character and surrounding cultural heritage, in accordance with Policies 1, 3, 18 and 20 of the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy & Development Policies Document (Core Strategy) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

4. Within 6 months of the installation of the chimney hereby permitted, the chimney shall be painted black and shall be retained as such in perpetuity.

Reason: In the interest of the satisfactory appearance of the development, the surrounding landscape character and surrounding cultural heritage, in accordance with Policies 1, 3, 18 and 20 of the Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy & Development Policies Document (Core Strategy) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

5. Prior to the fixing of any external lighting associated with the development, details of the external lighting shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details should include:

- The specific location of all external lighting units;
- Design of all lighting units;
- Details of beam orientation and lux levels; and
- Any proposed measures such as motion sensors and timers that will be used on lighting units.

The approved lighting scheme shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and shall be maintained as such during the operation of the development, unless removed.

Reason: In order to ensure that there is no harmful impact upon the tranquility and intrinsically dark character of Northumberland National Park and the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park through excessive light pollution, in accordance with Policies 1 and 19 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 125 of the NPPF.

Informative Notes

1. This planning permission is granted in strict accordance with the approved plans. It should be noted however that:
 - (a) Any variation from the approved plans following commencement of the development, irrespective of the degree of variation, may constitute unauthorised development and may be liable to enforcement action.
 - (b) You, your agent, or any other person responsible for implementing this permission should inform the Local Planning Authority immediately of any proposed variation from the approved plans and ask to be advised as to the best method to resolve the matter. Most proposals for variation to the approved plans will require the submission of a new application.
2. This consent is granted subject to conditions and it is the owner and the person responsible for the implementation of the development who will be fully responsible for their compliance throughout the development and beyond. Some conditions may require work to be carried out, or details to be approved prior to the commencement of the development.

Where pre-commencement conditions are not complied with, the whole of the development could be unauthorised, and you may be liable to enforcement action. In some



circumstances, the only way to rectify the situation may be through the submission of a new application. If any other type of condition is breached then you may be liable to a breach of condition notice.

3. Biomass Boilers – Notification, Grit & Dust Arrestment and Approval of Chimney Height

For solid fuel biomass appliances with a rated output of greater than 50kW, notification, approval of arrestment and chimney height approval is required under Section 14 of The Clean Air Act 1993 with the Public Protection service at Northumberland County Council. Operation of such an appliance, without agreement may be an offence under the Act. An information form is available to download, complete and return from:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Protection/Pollution/Pollution.aspx>.

Please note that this biomass boiler information and requirement does not form part of your application or the decision for your planning permission.

Background Papers

Application file 16NP0126

EIA Screening Opinion

	Signature	Date
Planning Officer		
Head of Development Management or Chief Executive		