

**Proposed new holiday accommodation on site adjacent to The White House,  
Harbottle  
for  
Mr and Mrs Andrew Davison**

**PLANNING, DESIGN AND HERITAGE STATEMENT**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is for a new holiday cottage situated on the site of an existing Summerhouse. This Summerhouse was constructed to support use of the site as garden space by our Client's grandparents in the absence of any associated with their own house in the village. Latterly, the house had to be sold but the site was retained, providing an ongoing connection for the family to the village.
- 1.2 Keeping the Summerhouse in a good state of repair has been proving increasingly difficult for our Clients and this has led them to consider what the long-term options might be for this site
- 1.3 Planning Approval was obtained for a new 4-bedroom house on this site in August 2006, and then subsequently renewed in 2009. This consent then lapsed with only the drainage connection to the mains sewer progressed.
- 1.4 Planning Policy has since changed with the introduction of '*Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework, Core Strategy & Development Policies*' in March 2009. Policy 10 stipulates that the occupancy of any new dwelling in the National Park must be restricted in perpetuity to people who have a defined local need, in accordance with the local need criteria stated therein. Our Clients are unable to meet these criteria and are therefore unable to proceed on the basis initially intended.
- 1.5 A Pre-Application enquiry in early 2019 (ref 19/0014), which predated our involvement as Agent, advised that holiday accommodation was more likely to meet the requirements of current Planning Policy. As such, we were approached by our Clients to see if we could provide them with a workable solution.

## **2. SITE OVERVIEW**

- 2.1 Harbottle village is relatively modest in scale, principally constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and laid out either side of a single main road running East-West, overlooked by the ruins of its Grade I Listed, and Scheduled, 12<sup>th</sup> Century castle to the North.
- 2.2 The site under consideration is located on the South side of the main road, immediately adjacent to The White House and to the East end of the village. There is currently no vehicular access to the site; access is provided by a pedestrian gate and steps at the North-West corner of the site off the footpath adjacent to the main road through the village. The garden area immediately adjacent to the road sits lower than the footpath and then steps down again against the summerhouse before continuing to fall away to the South.
- 2.3 The long vista afforded to the South from the proposed new building is bound by high hedges to the East and West. Beyond the Southern boundary of the neighbouring White House, the view from this linear plot opens up so that a wide panorama is afforded to those venturing to the Southern end of this site.

- 2.4 The site is currently much under-used, visited relatively infrequently by our Clients, primarily to use as a base for walking locally or to undertake maintenance. Though it has an electricity supply, it is without basic facilities such as heating and running water. This structure therefore offers little comfort for even the briefest of visits, given its dissociation from the facilities of the house it was originally intended to accompany.
- 2.5 The landscape around Harbottle is classified by Northumberland National Park Authority's Landscape Supplementary Planning Document as Sandstone Upland Valleys, of which the key characteristics are listed as follows:
- *'Sinuous shallow valleys and narrower, incised tributaries set within the sandstone uplands;*
  - *Valleys enclosed by distinctive, gently convex sandstone hills with acidic vegetation; Strong topographic, vegetation and land use patterns;*
  - *Meandering rivers that are hidden within the landscape, but lined with alders;*
  - *Steep bluffs clothed in pine and other conifers flanking the valley floor;*
  - *Shelterbelts and clumps of Scots pine and mixed woodland on lower slopes and valley floor;*
  - *Sandstone-built historic villages on lower slopes;*
  - *Rich archaeology including rig and furrow, motte and bailey and fortified bastle houses – the heart of reiving country;*
  - *High degree of tranquillity away from major roads and settlements.'*
- 2.6 The proposals for the new holiday accommodation have been developed in accordance with the guidance offered by the National Park through the Pre-Application process; application ref. 19/0074 and latterly 20/0002. These have explored initial ideas of a single holiday cottage and then subsequently an expanded brief to provide an additional, subsidiary, unit providing more basic accommodation aimed at cyclists. The guidance offered in response to these proposals has been very helpful in shaping the proposal submitted here for consideration. This is essentially a single building with built-in flexibility, allowing for subdivision to accommodate the needs of different user groups.

### 3. **RELEVANT PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND POLICY DOCUMENTS**

The following is a list of policies which we consider relevant to this submission for Planning Approval.

#### 3.1 **National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019**

##### 2. Achieving sustainable development

Paragraph 8 sets out three primary objectives for achieving sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

*'a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth,*

*innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

*b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*

*c) **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'*

This development does not have a direct economic dimension to it but strongly supports those social and environmental objectives.

#### *Economic*

The opportunities for Harbottle to provide its own self-supporting economy are largely restricted to tourism. The village does support a local pub and the inward investment proposed here would undoubtedly further that support. Indeed, our Clients have been in touch with the owners of the Star Inn to discuss how these businesses might support one another. There is an agreement in principle that the owners of the pub would act as a point of contact and key holders for the proposed holiday accommodation which we understand they view as complementary to their plans for the pub.

The *Historic Village Atlas 9: Harbottle*, prepared for Northumberland National Park in 2004 by The Archaeological Practice Ltd., identifies that '*hopes for the future tend to be centred on tourism or an influx of commuters to the villages whose incomes are derived from sources outside the valley, but whose spending may cause an upturn in the local economy.*' With limited opportunities to generate a self-supporting local economy amid a long-standing downward trend in population, this development would at least increase the opportunity for local spending.

#### *Environmental*

Development is often considered to be directly opposed to the objective of protecting the environment. While there may always be some degree of compromise, this development is specifically aimed at protecting the interests of the existing built environment by 'making effective use of land' within this immediate context. Located in the centre of the village, sandwiched between established building plots, the top of the site offers relatively little to the essential natural characteristics of the National Park; the sense of remoteness, big skies and connection to a relatively unchanged natural environment is not embodied here. Here the opportunity to support the National Park's economic objectives is surely more pertinent, provided the development does not detract from those environmental objectives. This being the case, the single storey proposal is intended to make a relatively modest impact on its setting; bedding the building down to allow for the management of its visual impact from the road and on its immediate

neighbour, but orientation, selection of renewable sources of heat and power, ensuring the building is well insulated, and making informed choices about materials will all mitigate against the potential any development has for negative environmental impact.

With regard to the built and historic environment of Harbottle, protection is offered through the careful management of scale and massing to respond to, but not replicate, the principle design features of the local vernacular. A dual pitched roof and punched openings with a vertical emphasis are reminiscent to those of the surrounding late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings. Intended to appear ancillary to the existing houses of Harbottle, the building sits relatively low on the site, with the annexe lower still to relate to existing garden levels to the North of the site and appear subservient to the main cottage. The whole therefore remains visually subservient to the neighbouring White House and the visual impact of the development from the road is minimised. Planting provides screening and softens the edges further to retain as much of the 'garden-like' feel of the existing plot as possible.

Significantly, the siting of a building here reinforces the historic plan form of the village. Though there doesn't appear to have been a building in this location for some considerable time, the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of Harbottle of 1865 shows an elongated building crossing the site. This appears as an extension to the White House which immediately neighbours this plot but certainly by the Second Edition Map of 1899 a shorter building, more akin to the scale of the building seen today, is shown and the plot becomes vacant.

It may be that the previous occupation of this site has disturbed any deposits but we are mindful of the historic and potential archaeological sensitivity of this site. According to *Historic Village Atlas 9: Harbottle*, this site falls within an area thought to have been subdivided originally as medieval burgage plots and later into wider field enclosures in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century:

*'the area of long tofts stretch down to Back Burn to the south and south east of the village also represents an important component of the borough, requiring the active engagement of the National Park Authority to ensure that, as far as practicable, significant alterations to any of the field boundaries are avoided.'*

There is no intention to alter or obscure any of the existing boundaries as part of this proposal and retaining the building more or less in line with the existing road-side format of the historic village serves to reinforce the local landscape character and support a sustainability agenda set out in this section of the NPPF.

## 6. Building a strong, competitive economy

Paragraph 80 states that:

*'Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which*

*businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.'*

As has already been mentioned, the opportunities for economic growth within a rural context such as Harbottle are relatively limited and as such, provision of holiday accommodation within a destination where visitors want to come, and which is afforded greater protection because of its unique qualities, aligns with the objectives outlined above.

This section goes on to state that planning policies should enable:

- 'a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings...*
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and*
- d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.'*

This development would clearly support all of the above. The proposed working arrangement with the Star Inn will support the objective of helping to retain and support existing local services; something which is fundamental in sustaining local rural communities, particularly those as isolated as some of the villages within the National Park.

## 12. Achieving well-designed places

The issue of what makes good design can be hard to define and is largely subjective, however it is recognised as having a vital role to play in the creation of successful environments. The National Planning Policy Framework does not define what makes 'good design' but advises on what needs to be considered in order to achieve it. Paragraph 124. states:

*'The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'*

This section goes on to state that developments:

- 'a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*

- c) *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change...*
- d) *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users...'*

The scheme submitted here has been guided entirely by its context. We are very aware of the sensitivity of this location within the National Park and within the long-established setting of the village. However, the village has had to adapt to changing uses and economic climate (the *Historic Village Atlas 9: Harbottle* states that Bulmer's Directory of 1887 describes Harbottle as having ten retail businesses and two inns; a significantly different environment to the one which exists now). It is important to respect the historic context but doing so does not require replication of it. This proposal is evidently modern but this only serves to provide clarity about the evolution of the village while being suitably reverential to it.

The desire by our Clients to provide a fully accessible Cottage also aligns with objective 'f)' in that it will offer an inclusive environment to access what might be perceived as rather 'inaccessible' countryside. Landscaping to the North will provide level access to the front of the building from the road. The Main Cottage has been designed to provide for independent use of the facilities by wheelchair users. Access onto the patio area to the South will be possible but unfortunately the steepness of the terrain to the South of this will restrict unassisted access.

## 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

We don't believe the site is protected by any specific ecological designations but it obviously falls within the National Park.

The site itself is principally laid to lawn with high hedging along the East and West boundaries; two large conifers sit between the existing summerhouse and the gable end of the White House. Beyond this there is little notable planting to encourage wildlife. The landscaping associated with this development will help improve the biodiversity of the site by utilising native planting as screening and softening, principally to the North side of the building. The South side will be retained largely as lawn given that the long-ranging view is the main focus of this development and maintenance is an important consideration.

## 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

This section requires that the context in which any development is proposed is assessed to ensure that whatever makes it significant is identified and therefore protected. Without understanding the essential qualities of what makes, in this case the village of Harbottle, significant, it is impossible to understand how any proposal will impact on it.

Policy 18 of the 'Northumberland National Park Authority Core Strategy & Development Policies: March 2009' (covered in more detail in the next section) deals with the issue of Cultural Heritage and recognises that this understanding is not static. However, the same document recognises Harbottle as one of eight 'Local Centres' where new development is to be focussed. This designation has been awarded on the basis of the knowledge presented by the 'Historic Villages Atlas 9 : Harbottle', and the Historic Environment Record and, as such, providing we are doing nothing to disturb the archaeology or detract from the cultural, natural or historic environment of the village, the proposed development cannot be considered to be impacting negatively on its significance. In fact, this document recognises that without development, the significance of some of these 'Local Centres' may actually be at risk through ever-changing economic, social and working patterns within this rural context.

NPPF Paragraph 185 states that:

*'Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:*

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.'*

Local Plans are formed on the basis of this National Guidance and as such, the proposals will be reviewed in more detail against the specifics of local policy in the following section.

However, in summary, this development is intended to contribute positively to the village of Harbottle by responding sensitively to the traditional plan form, scale and massing of the existing buildings and, while utilising traditional roof profiles and proportions, doing so in a way which sets it apart from the historic. It appears as an ancillary building, subservient to the larger scale buildings which neighbour it. It will also enhance the historic environment by providing an economic benefit to the village, encouraging local spending and investment in tourism which can only have a positive impact to the village and the wider National Park.



### 3.2 Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework, Core Strategy & Development Policies (March 2009)

This document provides an overarching spatial planning policy for the National Park to promote and protect the special qualities identified therein, whilst ensuring that it offers opportunities to sustain local communities and support the local economy.

In order to do this, this document sets out a series of Policies to support some key objectives.

Policy 1 is entitled Delivering Sustainable Development but the sustainability criteria more applicable to this project are outlined under Policy 3:

#### Policy 3 General Development Principles

This states that development will be permitted if it meets the three criteria detailed as follows:

- '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;*
  - residential extensions are subservient to the main building and do not substantially increase its size;*
  - 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.'*

The scheme proposed here meets all of the relevant criteria outlined above, most specifically those listed under b. which are concerned with building construction.

It is a matter of interpretation about what constitutes a 'sympathetic' response. We would suggest that it is more appropriate to make a positive design response which prioritises context and environmental criteria rather than attempting simply to replicate the materials and form of the existing built environment. This *'protects and enhances local character and*

*distinctiveness'* far more than imitation, which only ever serves to reduce clarity about the historical development of local towns and villages.

Section 4 of this document outlines the principles of the design approach adopted in this application.

#### Policy 5 General Location of New Development

Harbottle is recognised as a 'local centre' and as such it is considered suitable for 'new local needs development'. It is one of only eight such centres identified within the National Park.

This section of the document refers to national and regional planning policy objectives of seeking to locate new development within or close to established service centres so that they might support one another. Paragraph 6.17 of this document states:

*'The National Park Management Plan clearly establishes that the survival of viable communities is a vital component of the living landscape of the Park. If this is to be realised, some additional employment and housing development will be required within the Park to meet local needs. The policies within the Core Strategy also reflect and strengthen the important role of the gateway settlements in supporting the needs of the National Park communities.'*

This proposal will support the local community by helping to underpin a fragile rural economy, providing some limited local employment opportunities in the management and running of this accommodation.

#### Policy 6 The Sequential Approach

In order to identify suitable sites for development, they are prioritised under this Policy. This aims to ensure that those sites classified as most appropriate for development are considered first:

- 1. Previously developed land and buildings within the identified settlements;*
- 2. Other suitable sites within the identified settlements;*
- 3. Previously developed land and buildings adjacent to the built-up area of the identified settlements;*
- 4. Other suitable sites adjacent to the built-up area of the identified settlements.'*

As mentioned earlier, we believe this site could once have been occupied by a building on much the same footprint, however this is obviously some time ago. The Pre-Application response received 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019, ref. 19/0074, suggested the existing residential curtilage and landscaping would constitute enough evidence of previous development to consider this a category 1 site but even if this were not the case, it would certainly be considered a 'suitable site within the identified settlement' under category 2.

#### Policy 14 A sustainable Local Economy

As suggested by the title, this section of the document is concerned with the creation and maintenance of a sustainable local economy. Tourism is

recognised as forming an integral part of the National Park's economy, alongside farming and forestry.

Paragraph 8.5 states:

*'The National Park Authority has a duty to foster the economic and social well being of local communities, therefore it is essential that planning policies provide support for existing businesses and provide opportunities for new economic development, particularly where they relate to the special qualities of the National Park.'*

As has been set out already, the introduction of sensitively designed holiday accommodation has the potential to do much to support the local economy, particularly when specifically targeted to attract users known to be under-provided for locally; in this case wheelchair-users and cyclists. This is further supported by Policy 15:

#### Policy 15 Sustainable Tourism & Recreation Development

*'The National Park Authority will support proposals for sustainable tourism and recreation developments which:*

- a. Maximise opportunities for visitors to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park whilst not adversely impacting on them;*
- b. Integrate with existing visitor facilities, particularly where they can be accessed by public transport; or*
- c. Reuse buildings to provide: self catering and / or bunk house / camping barn accommodation.'*

This proposal will meet one of the National Park Authority's statutory purposes of promoting opportunities for improved understanding and enjoyment of the National Park. Providing access for a wide range of users, either independently in two units; one high quality and fully accessible, one more basic in provision for cyclists, but inter-linked for potential use by larger groups or families. The provision of a cycle store will hopefully encourage visitors who wish to explore the Park using more sustainable forms of transport.

#### Policy 17 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

As far as we are aware, this site is not protected by any specific ecological designations but, in accordance with this Policy, every effort will be made to ensure that any species and habitats which currently exist on this site are retained and, wherever possible, enhanced through the proposed landscaping. As stated previously, largely laid to lawn, the site is currently doing little to encourage biodiversity within the Park.

#### Policy 18 Cultural Heritage

This Policy supports the conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of the National Park. Though not in immediate proximity to the Grade I Listed Harbottle Castle, the village has a historic value in its own right. The proposals have therefore been carefully considered to ensure that they

do not detract from the integrity of the village and have been carefully sited to take account of the historic plan form of the village.

#### Policy 19 Tranquility

Paragraph 10.1 states that '*tranquillity, freedom from noise and visual disturbance, is a key component of experiencing the National Park*'. There is recognition that this is hard to define but the introduction of this modest development should have relatively little, or indeed no, discernible impact on the tranquillity of this setting.

The proposal will require demolition of a short section of wall and formation of a new vehicular access off the main road to provide 2no. in-curtilage parking spaces. However, once provided, there should be relatively little disturbance associated with a small scale development such as this.

Lighting is recognised as an issue as the site lies within the designated boundaries of the Northumberland Dark Sky Park and rooflights have been largely omitted. Two no. rooflights are included over the annexe to provide daylight without compromising privacy given the proximity of the road and adjoining cottage, however blinds would be installed to limit permeation of light at night. All other windows can be shrouded by curtains or blinds to limit light permeation into the wider environment. The Dark Sky status of the Park is something our Clients are keen to protect, and in fact wish to market the accommodation on the basis of the experience this offers.

There are no proposals to incorporate external lighting, other than a single external light at the main entrance to each unit which will operate on a sensor. This will only trigger on approach or departure from the building and a timer will ensure that the light is only operational when required. These lights would be fitted with cowls to restrict any uplighting.

#### Policy 20 Landscape Quality and Character

*'The natural beauty and heritage of the National Park will be conserved and enhanced whilst being responsive to landscape change. All proposals will be assessed in terms of their impact on landscape character and sensitivity as defined in the Landscape Supplementary Planning Document. Development which would adversely affect the quality and character of the landscape will not be permitted.'*

The existing landscaping on this site is rather 'urban' in style and, whilst functional, it does little to enhance the character of the National Park.

The careful choice of planting, limited in extent and palette to local species, will ensure that the quality and character of this landscape are improved.

#### Policy 25 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

The National Park recognises that large scale renewable energy development is not necessarily appropriate in a landscape afforded extra protection because of its unspoilt beauty. The integration of relatively low-key

technologies in a domestic context must therefore be welcomed. This scheme proposes the use of photovoltaic panels on the roof to generate power and air-source heat pump technology to provide heating. High levels of insulation are proposed and the building is orientated to take full advantage of not only the views but of solar gain; designed intentionally with large areas of glazing on the South side and smaller openings to the North.

The rural location of this development does not lend itself to the most efficient construction process but it is hoped that materials can be sourced relatively locally; selected for their environmental credentials as well as their sensitivity to context.

### **3.3 Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework, Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document** (September 2011)

This document is a Supplementary Planning Document associated with the Core Strategy outlined under Section 3.2 of this document. It is principally connected to Policies 1 and 3 of the Core Strategy; concerned with sustainability and general development principles.

Under paragraph 3.4, relating to Building Form and Hierarchy, it states the following:

*'Typically buildings in the National Park are from the 18th and 19th centuries and have an understated appearance with a simple linear form. The living areas will be the most dominant with smaller lean-to structures on the back or sides, which fulfil a functional purpose and are hence often smaller.'*

This is true of many of the buildings in Harbottle and this has informed the scale and massing of the building proposed here.

This approach is further reinforced in paragraph 4.2:

*'The National Park Authority supports contemporary design, however for this to be appropriate it should be locally distinctive with careful analysis of the established forms of building within the National Park.'*

Section 5 sets out the design considerations for sustainable design, each of which is expanded upon within the document but whose headings alone are listed here:

- 5.1 *Conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the National Park*
- 5.2 *Making efficient use of land, materials, and infrastructure*
- 5.3 *Providing opportunities for all to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park*
- 5.4 *Promoting the local community's economic and social well-being and their ability to access services*
- 5.5 *Reducing the causes and impacts of climate change, particularly by maximising renewable energy generation and energy efficiency in buildings*
- 5.6 *Demonstrating high quality design and sustainable construction*
- 5.7 *Promoting accessibility via public transport, cycling, or walking*

- 5.8 *Conserving scarce resources*
- 5.9 *Conserving water resources, air, and soils*
- 5.10 *Reducing the amount of waste produced and increasing the amount recycled*
- 5.11 *Preventing inappropriate development in areas which are at risk of flooding or which contribute to the risk of flooding'*

The proposals submitted here for consideration adhere to all of the relevant criteria, most of which have been addressed in earlier sections of this document.

Sub-section 6.1 of Section 6 is concerned with the design principles for new development. The design considerations are further subdivided into 'Open Countryside' and 'Within Settlements':

*'Design Considerations - Open Countryside*

- *Care should be taken to consider the wider views both into and out of the development site;*
- *Development should sit comfortably within the landscape and take care not to harm views through appropriately coloured materials, including changes in colour due to weathering;*
- *Reflect the form of the surrounding landscape and buildings i.e. creating a linear form with ridge lines following the horizontal aspect of the landscape in valleys;*
- *Skylines are particularly important to distant views : care should be taken not to break the skyline as this would result in a very dominant building;*
- *Boundary treatment and landscaping should avoid a suburbanising affects.*

*Design Considerations – Within Settlements*

- *Look at the rhythm and form of existing buildings and how your proposal will fit within this;*
- *Carefully consider the height, scale and massing in relation to surrounding buildings;*
- *Refer to any relevant village appraisals such as conservation area character appraisals or Historic Village Atlas documents to inform the approach;*
- *Appropriate boundary treatments and landscaping can often help to anchor the development into the wider setting as well as creating habitats/ managing an area for wildlife purposes;*
- *Consider opportunities for creating new habitats e.g. roosting or nesting spaces.'*

Arguably, criteria from both of these categories apply here, all of which are met by this proposal. Within its wider landscape context, it sits relatively low in to root itself firmly into the topography and avoid interruption of the skyline. Within the context of the settlement, the historic plan form of the village has informed the location for the building within the site and height, scale and massing have all been key considerations in the design.

Paragraph 6.4.3 describes the requirements for soft landscaping. It advocates the use of native species, planted with due consideration to their mature height and spread, and with consideration given to the wildlife this might support. All of this will inform the choices made for the landscaping scheme immediately in front of the building. It goes on to state that '*simple landscaping can help to avoid suburbanisation of the countryside*'; something which is both beneficial to the maintenance aspects of holiday accommodation, but also to the enhancement of the wider National Park.

In considering the landscaping impacts of this proposal, reference has also been made to *Northumberland National Park Authority Local Development Framework, Landscape Supplementary Planning Document, September 2011*.

#### **4. DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 Approaching the site along the main road from the East, the site sits low on the South side of the road, down from pavement level. The approach is dominated by the gable end of the White House which, as its name suggests, is painted and therefore notable amongst the principally natural stone elevations which surround it.
- 4.2 The proposed scheme was intended from the offset to be subservient to the White House. Principally single storey, the building is positioned to utilise the drainage connection already made into the mains sewer, be accessible from the main road for wheelchair users and relate to the garden area which falls away to the South. Inevitably, providing level access to the North side of the building conflicts with providing level access to the garden and, as such, a patio has been provided along the South elevation to give external access to the views and star gazing opportunities which this site offers.
- 4.3 In order to better anchor the proposal into the site, and give prominence to the main holiday cottage, the floor level of the adjoining annexe has been lowered. This breaks up the massing on the North elevation, and enhances the sense of separation when the units are being used independently.
- 4.4 This is further supported by the landscaping scheme; the annexe has a designated garden area immediately to the North, enclosed by a new dry stone wall linking the annexe to the existing boundary wall. Steps positioned against the gable end bridge the change in level between the annexe entrance and the driveway.
- 4.5 Gravel is used for the driveway, parking spaces and the lowered half of the courtyard immediately to the West of the annexe. This provides a permeable finish to deal with surface water but it is crossed by stone paths to provide an accessible surface for wheelchair users, bikes and wheeled suitcases.
- 4.6 Screening from the road and between the units is offered by native planting at the perimeter of the site and in the courtyard.
- 4.7 An outbuilding is located adjacent to the parking area for the storage of bikes, bins and maintenance equipment. The only enclosed part of this

building is for the secure storage of maintenance equipment, intended for use by the owners or their management team only. The oversailing roof will provide weather protection for the air source heat pump unit, bins and the 'Sheffield' racks providing secure storage space for bikes. This structure will be finished in the same materials proposed for the holiday accommodation and will help to break up the visual impact of the long elevation to the road, highlighted as a concern previously by the Planning Officer.

- 4.8 The main cottage is accessed at the West end of the North elevation into a lobby area with storage for coats and boots lit solely by the glazed entrance door. This gives access into a largely open-plan living, dining and kitchen area with large glazed openings on the South side to take full advantage of the far-reaching views down the garden. A bedroom at the West end and a bathroom at the East end of this space share the opportunity to take advantage of the view, as they too are afforded large glazed openings to the South. Level access is offered onto this patio from each.
- 4.9 Separated from the main cottage by a lockable door in the North elevation is the annexe. This more compact offer contains a small shower room, basic cooking facilities and a double/twin bed. This has the capacity to be used independently as a 'camping/bunk-barn' style offer, or as an additional (albeit 'inaccessible') extra room to the main cottage.
- 4.10 It is proposed to clad the external walls of the building with cedar or larch which will weather to grey. This requires relatively little maintenance and is obviously a natural product with relatively little processing involved in its production. The roofs will be fibre cement profiled sheeting in a dark grey or black, a material commonly used in the local agricultural context. The windows and doors will be powder coated aluminium to match the roof colour. The building needs to straddle level changes in the topography and, as such, it is proposed to construct the building on a concrete plinth, bush-hammered to expose the aggregate, provide texture and soften its appearance. This will be extended to form the patio area. A structural glass balustrade will provide protection from falling without compromising the views to the South.
- 4.11 As referred to earlier, it is proposed to heat these units with an air source heat pump, supported by PV panels on the South slope of the roof of the main cottage.
- 4.12 The intention is to direct foul drainage into the system installed previously for the house which obtained planning approval (now lapsed). We understand there is a connection into the main sewer beneath the road immediately to the North of the site.



## **5. ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 As has been stated previously, there is a notable change in level between the main road and the South end of this site. Given that our Clients wished to provide accessible accommodation, the main cottage has been sited to achieve level access from the road but inevitably this has led to some compromise in its relationship to the garden to the South. Given the topography an accessible patio has been provided but access to the main garden area will be limited for wheelchair users.
- 5.2 Providing level access from the road will require raising part of the existing garden area to provide the associated driveway and parking spaces. Setting the annexe at the slightly lower level, whilst not accessible, means the existing site levels can largely be retained here. The scale of the accommodation provided in the annexe does not facilitate wheelchair access.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Supporting Statement: Management of the Accommodation**

Given that our Clients do not live locally to the proposed site, they have confirmed that discussions are ongoing with the owners of the Star Inn, close by on the North side of the village.

At present, our Clients have an agreement in principle from the owners that they would be willing to assist in the management of the proposed accommodation. This could include helping with marketing through their website, managing bookings, acting as key-holder, meeting guests and showing them the building on arrival, arranging handovers, laundry, welcome packs and cleaning, being on call for any emergencies and monitoring for maintenance needs/arranging any required minor works. This is to be formalised in due course but needs to remain a flexible agreement as the current situation may obviously change.

As the pub also has a tourist information point, they would be able to provide suggestions for visitor activities.

There will undoubtedly be some advantage to the pub in providing hospitality to guests utilising this accommodation, as well as more general benefit from a strengthened local tourist economy.

## APPENDIX B

### Site Photographs



View of the site from the main road looking South. Existing summerhouse shown to the left of the photograph; the gable of the White House to the right



Existing summerhouse with lawn immediately to its North. The existing lawn is set down from road level. This is shown in the following picture.





Looking East across this lawn area between summerhouse and road. Note relative height of cars just visible through hedging along North boundary



View looking West towards the White House. Note existing pedestrian access into site and poor state of the boundary fence





As referred to above, the boundary fence and pedestrian access gate



View of the summerhouse and the White House from the South. We understand that the high hedge which separates these properties has been trimmed back since these photographs were taken



View looking South from the existing summerhouse, curtailed slightly by boundary hedging to both sides



The view opens up at the South end of the site which extends beyond the high hedging shared with the White House