

# **Poultry House / Kennels Harbottle Castle (New), Harbottle**

## **Proposed Conversion to Fishing Lodge**



## **Design and Access Statement**

August 2020

*Argyle Planning Consultancy LTD*

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

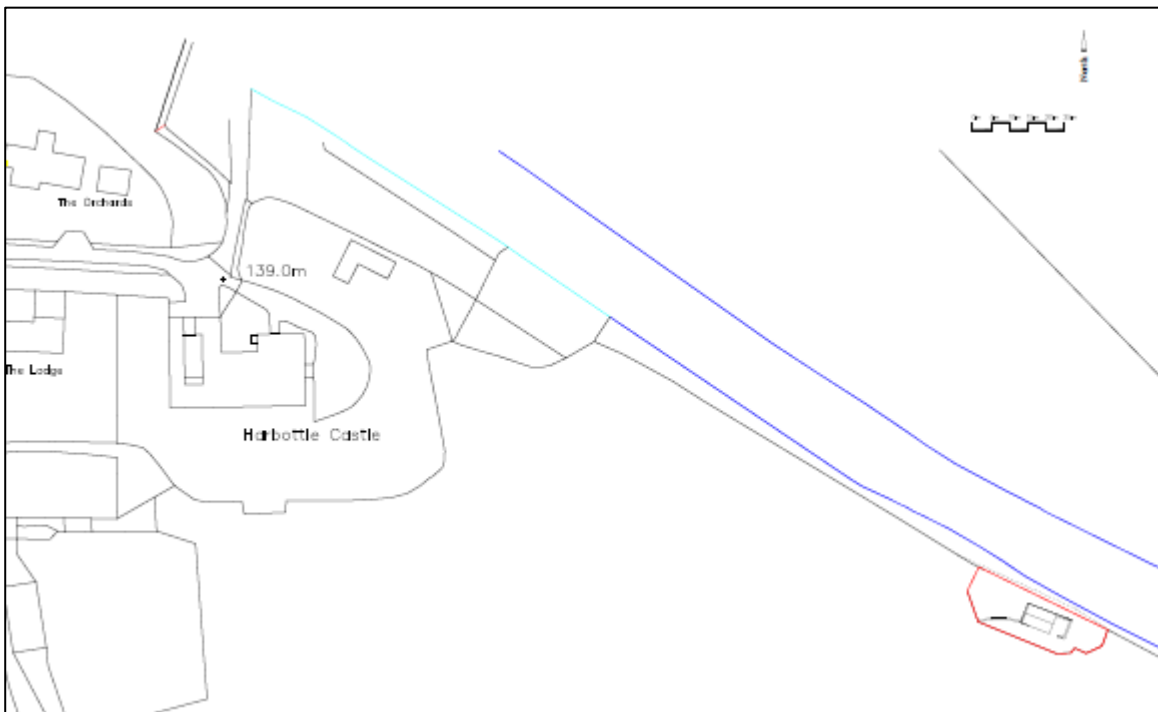
1.1 This Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been produced by Argyle Planning Consultancy Ltd in association with Clive Mattison Associates as agent on behalf of the applicants Mr and Mrs G O’Kane. Together with the Heritage Statement it supports a full planning application (already submitted) for the conversion and reuse of the Poultry House, Harbottle Castle into holiday accommodation particularly aimed at the fishing holiday market.

## 2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

### 2.1 Location

2.1.1 The former poultry house stands just south of the River Coquet on the northern edge of the Park to Harbottle Castle House. It stands approximately 200 metres east south east from Harbottle Castle House, about 270 metres from the access from the C172 to the west and about 400 metres from the centre of Harbottle.

Location Plan



### 2.2 Size and Shape

2.2.1 The site forms a roughly rectangular parcel of land on the south bank of the river and extends to 445 square metres. A curving stone boundary wall extends to the west of the Poultry House.

### 2.3 General Site History

2.3.1 The building is not shown on the 1860 Ordnance Survey First Edition even though it is



likely from its style, form and materials that the building was in existence by that date. It is clearly shown in the second County Series of 1895 (See Heritage Statement).

2.3.2 The building has been little altered from its original form and there is no record of relevant planning history.

## 2.4 Buildings and Structures

2.4.1 The building is built of sandstone and slate in the Northumbrian vernacular style in two sections. The main section has an open colonnaded front with the roof supported by two cast iron columns on dwarf walls. Full height railings from dwarf wall to eaves previously secured the frontage. The front stonework has an ashlar finish whilst that to the rear and sides is coursed rubble. The eastern offshoot to the main building originally had a slightly lower ridge height as a result of the eaves height to the rear being lower than the main building. The frontage to the offshoot originally had an entrance door and again evidence of a large aperture secured by railings mounted into a dwarf wall and running to eaves height.



Main section of building with open colonnaded front



Eastern offshoot



Rear and gable of main section of building



Gable of eastern offshoot

2.4.2 The western end of the building is structurally in reasonable repair. However, the rear gable corner to the eastern offshoot has collapsed taking out a section of roof and affecting the tie-in to the main building. To stabilise the offshoot from further collapse, the corner and part of the rear wall and gable has been rebuilt but work has not been completed pending the outcome of this planning application.

## Access

2.5.1 The vehicular access to the site finishes at a field entry and hardstanding just off the C172 to the west. Pedestrian or 4x4 access from there is available across the park to the poultry house. Vehicles can also access the parkland via a track to the west of The Lodge and Harbottle Castle House which leads to an agricultural building in the ownership of the applicants.

2.5.2 Public transport in the form of bus services to Rothbury are available from the First School in Harbottle. The 16A and 16B service is operated by Upper Coquetdale Community Transport and runs twice weekly in the morning and afternoon. From Rothbury more regular services operate to Alnwick, Morpeth, and Newcastle. Mainline rail can be accessed at Alnmouth, Berwick or Morpeth Stations.

## 2.6 Constraints

2.6.1 The principal constraint on development of the building is flood risk from the River Coquet. Environment Agency Flood Mapping for river flooding indicates that the building lies within flood zone 3 and a substantial part of the Park within Flood Zone 2. However, the river is substantially below the level of the Park and the Poultry House at this point by some 20 feet and the owner has confirmed the building has never flooded in living memory as the Park is on a slightly elevated plateau. A site-specific Level 1 Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out but concludes that subject to ensuring flood resilience measures are incorporated in the design and an evacuation plan in place the development and surroundings would not be at undue risk.



The Poultry House is shown in red and is mapped as being in Flood Zone 3

2.6.3 Evidence from the site shows there are pipistrelle bats present in the roof and crevices and accordingly E3 Ecology has carried out a bat survey which influences the design of the conversion as set out below.

2.6.4 The coal authority mapping of areas of mining risk and surface coal resources indicate that the site is not in a surface coal resource area or an area of development risk. Mining activity is not therefore a constraint.

2.6.5 The site sits adjacent to and set into a stand of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. A tree survey and arboricultural impact assessment has been carried out the findings of which are that most of the trees are in reasonable condition although one Ash near the buildings west end has Ash Dieback. The trees will require a modest amount of surgery to ensure low branches do not cause any building damage but as no excavation works are required under the canopy within the existing building the conversion is unlikely to affect the health and vitality of the trees.

2.6.6 The previous use of the site as a building which has housed livestock up until c 2012 means that a contamination assessment is required. A level 1 assessment has been carried out as advised on the NCC website and is submitted alongside this DAS. As the design will enclose the whole interior floor of the building with a reinforced concrete slab and the immediate surrounds to the building are to be hard landscaped and there is no proposal to cultivate the ground, there will be no risk of contamination to those occupying the holiday accommodation.

## **3.0 SURROUNDING AREA**

### **3.1 Land Use**

3.1.1 Land uses in the wider area around the site are exclusively agricultural - comprising mainly livestock grazing with shelterbelt woodland.

3.1.2 There are residential uses in Harbottle but the closest houses are around 200 metres away such that there would be no impact on the amenity of existing residents.

### **3.2 Existing Development Form and Style**

3.2.1 Development within the wider area surrounding the site is largely contained within Harbottle village. However, there are isolated houses and steadings dotted throughout the Upper Coquet Valley.

3.2.2 Buildings in the landscape, as with the application site, are principally built in Northumberland vernacular styles and are constructed in local stone with predominantly slate roofs.



### **3.3 Movement and Connections**

3.3.1 The principal movement corridor in the vicinity of the site is the C172 affording access up and down the Upper Coquet Valley. A network of unclassified roads intersects giving access to hamlets and steadings in the valley.

3.3.2 A long distance cycling route, namely the Sandstone Way Cycle Route, passes through Harbottle close to the site.

3.3.3 Public transport links are set out above.

## **4. DESIGN POLICY BACKGROUND**

4.1 Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 sets out how planning proposals should achieve a high quality of sustainable design.

4.2 The Northumberland National Park Local Plan 2009 at the time of writing is currently the adopted Development Plan for the area. However, its replacement is so close to adoption having completed examination and modification stages that its policies carry very significant weight and by the time that the application is determined it is likely to be adopted. The policies of relevance to the proposal are :

ST1 – Sustainable Development

ST2 – General Development Principles

ST4 – Spatial Strategy

DM6 – Conversion of Buildings

DM7 - Rural Economy and Diversification

DM10 – Habitats and Biodiversity

DM11 – Landscape Tranquility and Dark Skies

DM12 – Trees and Woodlands

DM14 – Historic Landscape Assets and Built Heritage

## **5.0 DESIGN SOLUTIONS**

### **5.1 Design Objectives**

5.1.1 The design objectives for the conversion are:

- To achieve a quality conversion of the Poultry House to a high internal and external design standard to provide accessible holiday accommodation.
- To achieve a design that works with the form and layout of the unlisted heritage asset and retains its character and distinctiveness.
- To achieve a design that has negligible impact on the natural environment and ecological assets and is safe from flood risk.

### **5.2 Design Concept**

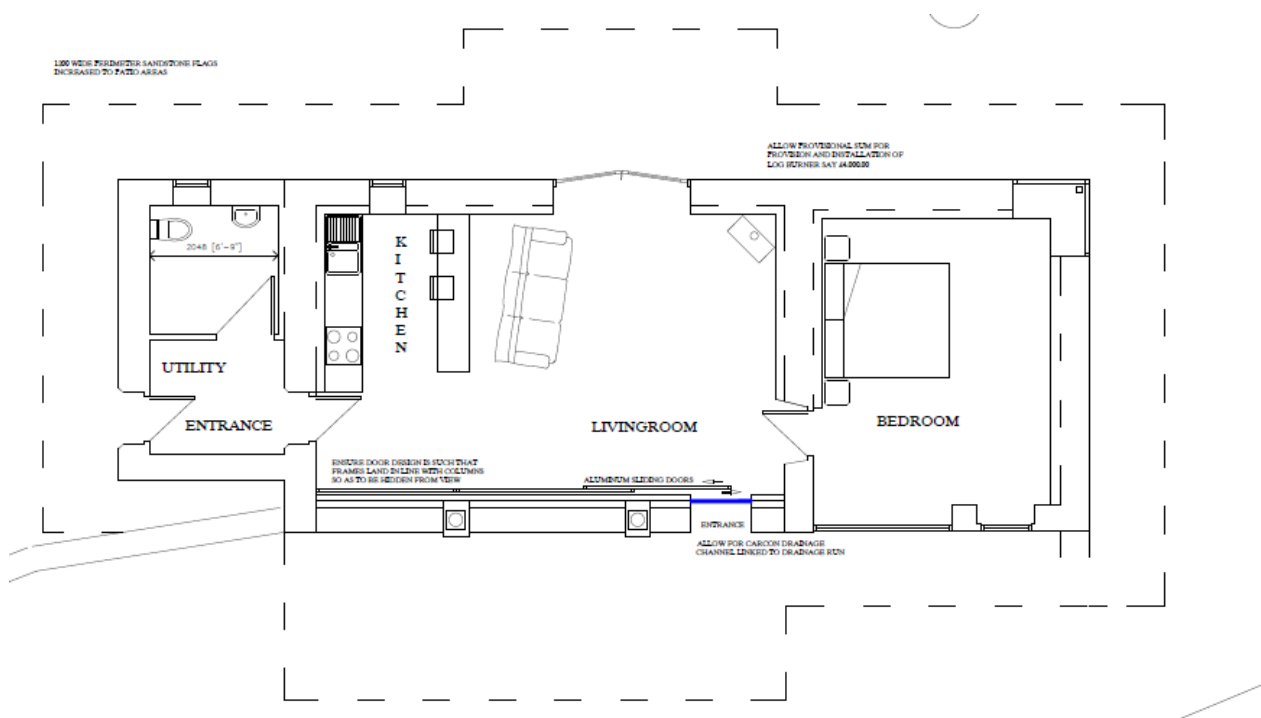
5.2.1 The design largely follows the footprint of what exists / previously existed with a small addition at the west end in keeping and subordinate to the original structure to provide a lobby / accessible WC and shower room and space for fishing equipment, boots and air source heat pump equipment, etc.

5.2.2 The design / scale / layout has been devised to be in-keeping with the existing building but to facilitate the client's requirements in a sympathetic manner.

5.2.3 In undertaking the conversion, the structure of the building will be safeguarded and the conversion will secure the future of this locally significant heritage asset.

### 5.3 Layout

5.3.1 The layout is determined by the existing form of the building and the flood constraint and is proposed to be as follows (See Plan below):



The main living space and kitchen utilizes the main building as it currently exists whilst the bedroom is accommodated in the eastern offshoot. In that way the principal walls of the building are not affected. The principal entrance will be via the sliding glazed paneling to the front with a side door at the west end in the new small offshoot accommodating the accessible WC and shower room and utility space.

### 5.4 Built Form and Design

5.4.1 Externally the building will appear little different in terms of scale and form to that which currently exists other than in two respects.

- The biggest change will be the need to construct the small extension at the east end to accommodate the WC and shower room and lobby area given the restricted size of the building to accommodate even 1 bed holiday accommodation. However, this extension to the building has been designed to be modest in scale, set back from the front



elevation and down from the ridge and is therefore entirely subordinate to the original building.

- The decision has been taken that as the roof and gable of the eastern offshoot had already collapsed in part due to structural problems with the design, the decision has been taken to extend the main roof over the eastern offshoot at the same level rather than following the original slightly lower ridge height.

5.4.2 As far as possible additional windows in the walls will be kept to a minimum although it is proposed to insert a glazed patio door, a bathroom window and a corner window in the rear elevation of the building.

5.4.3 To the front largescale glazing will be set behind the colonnade and dwarf wall to maintain an open front elevation as far as possible.

5.4.4 The intention, subject to any bat mitigation measures necessary, is to have an open rafted space in the main living area and bedroom to allow as much height as possible, particularly as the slab level is proposed to be lifted slightly to increase flood resilience.

5.4.5 To increase flood resilience also flood barriers will be installed at the door entrances to offer protection in the event of flooding.

5.4.6 The building will be served from the applicants own private spring which has sufficient capacity to serve the holiday accommodation and drainage will be to a package treatment plant.

## **5.5 Materials Palette**

5.5.1 The materials palette of the Poultry House is simple, consisting of only a few elements – sandstone, welsh slate, timber doors and (originally) wrought iron railings. These are traditional materials and have aesthetic value in defining the building's character and significance.

5.5.2 Material selection on the proposed conversion will adopt a similar approach. A larger palette selection would cause confusion and a cluttered appearance to the simple pleasing form of the building. A limited range of matching materials (reusing as much stone and slate as possible) is therefore proposed with the addition of aluminium framing to the larger window openings.

## **5.6 Landscaping**

5.6.1 The principle of landscaping for the conversion is mainly to utilise quality hard landscaping materials reflecting the prior form and use of the building and retaining the curving stone perimeter wall.

5.6.2 The area immediately around the building, extended to incorporate the proposed rear patio area, will be hard paved in stone flags to provide dry access around the building.

## **5.7 Access**

5.7.1 Given the size of the holiday accommodation, the traffic generated by the proposed development is anticipated to be only one vehicle at any one time.

5.7.2 The vehicular access to the building will be taken from the C172. Access is by a private access / field entry. The proposal is to provide a small parking area within the applicant's ownership where there is already hardstanding. Clients will then use a luggage drop off and pick up service provided by the applicant for transport across the Park to the Lodge or in the case of mobility impaired visitors they will be permitted to take their own cars across. To facilitate this a grid reinforced trackway allowing the grass to grow through will be set into the pasture although the park is set on gravel which gives a dry surface for most of the year. It should be noted that the application is for a fishing lodge and secluded holiday accommodation and therefore it is expected that all visitors will fully understand the logistics of the location and the limitations this brings. This is indeed part of the attraction and vehicular access direct to the door for most visitors to the unit is not considered essential.

5.7.3 For those guests requiring vehicle access to the Lodge direct via the reinforced trackway a small parking area will be provided, screened by the flank boundary wall at the west end of the building. See Block Plan. This will similarly be constructed with reinforced cellular block/mesh to allow grass to grow through and to avoid impact on the root plate of surrounding trees.

5.7.4 Pedestrian access, as well as via this route from the C172 will be possible from the north west along a track in the applicant's ownership.

5.7.5 Public Transport on a limited basis, as set out above, is available locally from outside Harbottle First School. National rail services are available from Alnmouth Station / Berwick Station.

5.7.6 A long distance cycleway runs close to the site and quiet roads allow cycling to be the more likely sustainable mode of transport for visitors to the lodge. As such secure cycle parking and storage will be provided behind the flank wall at the west end of the building.

5.7.7 Access is not simply about travel to or from the site. The applicant intends to design the layout of the lodge as far as possible to be step-free with accessible WC and shower so that it can offer accessible holiday accommodation for those who have impaired mobility. This comes at a slight 'cost' in terms of requiring the space in the western extension to be large enough to accommodate an accessible toilet and wet room and requiring onsite parking provision. However, visitors requiring this standard of accommodation are a priority target group when planning holiday accommodation in Northumberland and providing for them is a key benefit of the proposed scheme.

## **6 Impacts of the Design Concept**

6.1 In essence, by restricting the lodge in size to what can broadly be achieved within the existing footprint of the building, the impact of the design concept is generally positive. The

scheme will enable the development, principally through conversion of existing fabric, of a small holiday lodge and the character and appearance of the building and its setting would be protected and enhanced as a result of the development. The proposal meets the requirements of policy ST4 and development in the open countryside and policy DM7 in that it only involves the reuse of an existing building to provide holiday accommodation thus supporting the rural economy.

6.2 The design concept works with the natural environment and is intended to limit potential flood risk by ensuring living accommodation is flood resilient. The holiday accommodation will operate with a flood evacuation plan in place and the route to the south and the C172 is by and large outside flood zones 2 and 3 such that emergency access can be provided in the event of flooding.

6.3 The ecological impacts of the development mainly on bats using the building has been assessed by E3 Ecology and mitigation in the form of bat access points into the ridge line and bat crevices in the gables has been incorporated into the design. Other ecological mitigation will be achieved through use of bat and bird boxes in surrounding trees. Policy DM10 would therefore be met. The proposal in being of a very small scale and with the design proposed will not impact on landscape tranquility and external lighting will be designed in such a way to be the minimum level simply to allow safe movement around the building. It will not therefore impact on the ecology of the river bank or on dark skies and policy DM 11 will be met.

6.4 The conversion will be designed to comply with sustainable construction techniques, reusing reclaimed material wherever possible and will utilise appropriate renewable energy installations in the form of an air source heat pump and sustainable water and drainage systems. As such it has been possible to ensure that the converted building's carbon footprint will be as low as possible.

6.5 Foul drainage from the building will flow to a package treatment plant to be sited to the south west of the building along with sustainable drainage measures for the surface water drainage. There will therefore be no impact on the natural and particularly water environment surrounding the site.

6.6 The building involved is a local heritage asset and the impact of the proposal is assessed in the Heritage Statement but the conclusion is that there will be no harm to the heritage assets involved and indeed its future will be secured by the proposal. Thus policy DM14 will also be met.

6.7 NNPLP Policies ST1 and ST2 require development proposals to meet certain criteria. Some of the principles are not directly relevant to a rural conversion that is seeking to make effective use of existing buildings but it is helpful to review the scheme against these criteria against which it performs well as follows:

*Policy ST 1 Criteria*

a) makes the National Park a high-quality place to live and work – *The proposal supports the visitor economy of Harbottle providing in a small way direct and indirect economic benefits.*

c) contributes positively to the built environment by having regard to the site context - *The proposal utilises an attractive building in a sensitive way preserving the built environment.*

- d) protects or enhances the landscape character of the National Park through use of high quality design – *The proposal helps to preserve the Park at Harbottle which is a quintessential part of the landscape character of the village.*
- e) improves biodiversity by protecting existing priority habitats and species – *The proposal provides for the protected species and habitats in and around the building and utilises appropriate mitigation measures.*
- f) conserves the quality and quantity of natural resources - *The proposal will conserve the water quality of the Coquet by ensuring that appropriate provision is made for foul drainage.*
- g) makes efficient use of land and infrastructure, in particular by prioritising the use of previously developed land and buildings – *This is exactly what the proposal will achieve – taking a redundant building and giving it an economic future.*
- h) improves public access to, and enjoyment of, the National Park’s special qualities – *The proposal will improve public access to the landscape and the River Coquet - key qualities of the Park.*
- i) reduces waste and greenhouse gas emissions through improved energy efficiency and making full use of small-scale renewable energy – *The proposed conversion will be carried out in a way that significantly improves the energy efficiency of the building and the applicant is proposing the installation of air source heat pumps.*
- j) protects and enhances habitats that provide important carbon sinks, including peat habitats and woodlands – *The proposal will, by managing the trees immediately around the building, secure their futures as a carbon sink.*
- k) development avoids increasing flood risk, and allows for the natural drainage of surface water – *The proposal is to allow natural drainage of surface water and although notionally located in Flood Zone 2/3 the positioning of the building and its proposed conversion has been shown in the FRA not to create any increased flood risk.*
- l) conserves or enhances the historic environment and helps secure a sustainable future for heritage assets at risk – *The proposal preserves and enhances an important local heritage asset which is at risk of collapse and provides a use which is consistent with its conservation.*

#### Policy ST2 Criteria

- a) The special qualities of the National Park will be conserved or enhanced;
- and b) The proposal is of a high quality design that will make a positive contribution to the National Park’s special qualities and the local environment. – *The proposal works with an important local building incorporating high quality construction materials and design details and the conversion will complement the local vernacular.*
- c) The siting, orientation, layout, scale, height, massing and density of the proposal are compatible with existing buildings and the local built form. – *The proposal uses the built form of the building as the guide and starting point for designing the conversion.*
- d) The proposal is located in an area identified as being at the lowest risk of flooding. – *As a conversion of an existing building the location is fixed, however the FRA demonstrates there will be no impact on flood risk for occupants or elsewhere subject to flood resilience measures and a flood evacuation plan being in place.*
- e) The proposal will not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the amenities of adjoining occupiers. – *The proposal is c 200 metres from the nearest occupied building.*
- f) Sustainable design and construction techniques are incorporated in the proposal including design features to ensure that they provide resilience to climate change, measures to minimise waste and energy use and where appropriate use energy from



renewable sources – *The conversion will conform to Building Regulations in terms of energy efficiency and incorporate small scale renewables as above.*

g) Incorporate a good quality landscaping and planting scheme where appropriate, which reinforces local landscape character, increases habitat connectivity and makes use of appropriate native species – *The proposal will include tree management to safeguard the stand of trees and incorporate hard landscaping around the building but the intention is to reflect the simple landscape structure of the Park.*

h) Opportunities are taken to enhance local wildlife and biodiversity – *Protected species and habitat will be provided for and appropriate mitigation carried out as stipulated by the ecologist.*

j) The proposal ensures the proportionate creation of an accessible, safe and secure environment – *The proposal will provide a simple access and parking arrangement accessed off the C172 and cycle storage at the Lodge.*

k) The proposal ensures the provision of appropriate and proportionate services and infrastructure to meet the needs of the development – *The proposal can be provided with infrastructure and services (water, drainage, electric, broadband) without impacting on the character of the surrounding environment.*

l) The proposal will be served by appropriate and adequate storage, waste management and other infrastructure – *The proposal will provide discrete provision for recycling and refuse behind the flanking stone wall of the building.*

m) The proposal will not give rise to unacceptable risks from contaminated or unstable land. *The proposal is not located on or near to land known or suspected of being contaminated or unstable.*

The proposal therefore meets the criteria of policies ST1 and 2 and is therefore compliant.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

7.1 This document supports the planning application for the conversion of the Poultry House at Harbottle to use as holiday accommodation.

7.2 The proposed design of the development for the site provides a one bedroom lodge in a sustainable manner that utilises the scale and form of the redundant building without adversely affecting its fine character or the valuable setting of the Harbottle Castle Park.

7.3 Indeed the proposed design has been conceived to preserve and enhance the building and give it a new and sustainable future benefitting the character and appearance of the area for the future.

7.4 For a development that is in accordance with national and development plan policy and represents a sustainable form of development, the NPPF carries a presumption in favour and accordingly permission should be granted without delay.

**Argyle Planning Consultancy Ltd – August 2020**