

# **Planning Statement**

**Proposed conversion of stable building to 6 no.  
two bedroom holiday apartments**

**Link House Farm, Newton by the Sea, Alnwick,  
Northumberland, NE66 3ED**

**Prepared by  
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**On behalf of  
Mr V Thompson**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This statement is prepared and submitted as part of a planning application for the conversion of an existing agricultural building at Link House Farm to 6 no. two bedroomed self-contained holiday apartments. This statement is prepared in order to provide a full description of the development proposals and consideration of the acceptability of the scheme with reference to relevant planning policy and other material considerations. This statement is accompanied by a number of specialist consultant reports and this includes reports on ecology, flood risk and drainage. This statement will also provide a full description of the existing site and its planning history and the surrounding area, thereby allowing a full context for assessment of the development.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE, LOCATION AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

2.1 Link House Farm is a long established and developed agricultural steading located to the north of the village of Newton by the Sea and is located directly on the North Northumberland Coast. Link House Farm is situated approximately 500m north of Newton by the Sea and is approximately 3.2km north of the village of Embleton and 2.7km south of the village of Beadnell. Link House Farm sits at the end of a small unclassified road which leaves the north of Newton by the Sea and which terminates at a public car park adjacent to the coastal dunes. Link House Farm sits to the north of the public highway and within a substantial agricultural holding which extends north up to the Long Nanny Burn which flows into the North Sea. The steading in recent years has been developed based on a mix of uses including agricultural grazing on the land and equine development in the form of racehorse training. The main farm buildings within the steading have previously been converted to holiday accommodation and this has been supplemented by additional built development which has delivered a high quality and successful holiday accommodation development within the core of the original steading. More recently, 9 self-contained chalets have been developed immediately to the west of the original steading under planning permission 17/02302/FUL. Immediately to the west of these chalets and adjacent to one of the main access tracks through the farm are a substantial range of agricultural/equine buildings which have operated as the base for the ongoing agricultural and equine operations on the farm. These buildings are of substantial size and of more modern steel framed construction and consist of 5 linked barns and a lean to building, orientated as a group on an east west axis. The buildings have in part been used for the overwintering of cattle and also for the provision of racehorse stabling associated with the training of horses on land at the farm. The barn to be converted has been in use for race horse stabling. Each barn is a substantial size, being of two storey height with finished ridge heights of approximately 7.5m. The barns are of uniform length with consistent ridge lengths of approximately 27m, all orientated on a north south axis. The individual barns are of varying width and these present two storey gable elevations of between 13m and 19m in width. The largest barn is located at the west end of the building group. In addition to the five

barns, there is also present a mono pitch lean to, 10m in width which extends off the east elevation of the eastern most barn. The barns are finished in typical external materials and consist of profiled metal and fibre sheets to both the external walls and roof, all the building contain a large full height double sliding door on their southern gable elevations. The buildings are bounded to the south by a farm access road and storage and stack area. This track extends around the western and north western periphery of the buildings. Beyond this to the north are a small field paddock with a larger main grass field which extends north from the barns. The recently completed chalets are located 17m to the south east of the existing mono pitch lean to element. To the south beyond the access track and further to the west are further open agricultural fields. The entire area surrounding the farm steading is of relatively level topography to the south, west and north, while to the east the farm is bounded by the substantial dunes which sit at the rear of the beach within Beadnell Bay. Link House Farm is located at the southern end of Beadnell Bay and this stretches north in a wide expanse towards the village of Beadnell. Public rights of way are present within these dunes and an access extends from the public car park at Newton Steads immediately onto the beach to the east and north along Newton Links which sits at the back of the dunes and which extends along the eastern perimeter of Link House Farm and its land.

- 2.2 The conversion proposals within this application relate to the fifth barn within the building group described above. This is the eastern most of the five gabled barns. The proposals bring forward a scheme for the conversion of this barn which includes the demolition of the lean to building attached to its eastern edge and the fourth barn within the group which links it to the other barns within the group to the west. The conversion proposals therefore propose the demolition of two of the existing buildings within this group, in order that the barn becomes a free-standing element separated from the existing remaining three barns to the west. The conversion scheme proposes the development of 6 no. two bedroom holiday apartments within the barn, as per the submitted drawings. The accommodation is proposed to be developed through the conversion and reuse of the existing barn structure in order to deliver contemporary style accommodation consistent with both the character and appearance of the existing agricultural buildings and also a more recent style of contemporary barn conversion which has been

undertaken in the area. Such examples can be seen near Felton (18/01327/AGTRES) In this respect, the proposal is intended to be finished in wood cladding, with contemporary style window treatments set within the timber façade. Each accommodation unit would have its own small semi enclosed garden and amenity area developed on its east and west elevations. Parking for the development is proposed to be located in a single area located to the south on the existing access and storage area and vehicle access to the units would be via an existing highway access which serves the holiday development located to the south east of the farm steading. The application is accompanied by a full foul and surface water drainage scheme, it can be confirmed that the development will utilise the existing non-main drainage plant, which was relatively recently installed, and the building will utilise the recently approved surface water drainage strategy which was developed as part of the 9 chalets onsite. The accommodation proposed would be self-contained holiday accommodation of a similar style and character to the other holiday accommodation already available within the Link House Farm site.

### 3.0 ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS WITH REFERENCE TO RELEVANT POLICY AND OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 This section will provide an assessment of the proposal in relation to its acceptability with particular regard to relevant planning policy. This policy is derived at a national level from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and at a local level from the saved policies of the 1997 adopted Alnwick Districtwide Local Plan, the Alnwick Districtwide Core Strategy, and the emerging policies of the Northumberland Local Plan.

#### Principle of Development

3.2 At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework proactively promotes new economic development through the planning process. In relation to the rural economy, paragraph 83 gives explicit support for new tourism related development and states that planning decisions should enable *sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside*. Paragraph 84 goes on to state that planning policies and decisions also need to recognise that in rural areas sites for business and community related development may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In those circumstances the NPPF stresses the need for development to be sensitive to their surroundings and advocates the use of sites that are physically well related to existing settlements. In this respect, the NPPF is supportive of the principle of new sustainable holiday development of the type proposed in this application. At a local level the principle of new holiday development, of the type now proposed, is considered in saved policy T2 of the Alnwick District Local Plan. This policy states that applications for the creation of new permanent holiday accommodation will be determined against policies contained in the house section. In the context of housing policy, Policy H12 of the Local Plan is most applicable to the proposals in respect of it considering the conversion of non-residential buildings in the countryside to accommodation. This policy contains a number of criteria which includes the requirement that the buildings are structurally stable and capable of conversion, without substantial rebuilding, extension or alteration, that the site is not removed from basic

services and that it will not result in a building or access out of character with its surroundings or of a type which will create a demand for overhead services which would be visually harmful. The policy also requires appropriate access roads to the site and that any conversion is sufficient size to accommodate all the facilities that may be needed in terms of amenity. The number of dwellings in the context of policy H12 as a housing policy is also restricted to the number suited to the character of the location and setting, and also that the resulting development should not result in a conflict between residential and agricultural operations. It is considered that the policy approach of considering building conversion policy for holiday purposes in the same manner as permanent housing development is not entirely consistent with up-to-date national policy, given the clear difference that is identified within the national framework pursuant to the development of a strong rural economy. In this respect, consideration of housing and tourism development is entirely separate and the differences which exist are not reflected in the application of Policy H12. It is therefore considered that only limited weight can be afforded to Policy H12, on consideration of an application such as this. Having said this, it is considered that the proposal does fully comply with the criteria contained within Policy H12 as set out.

3.3 The Alnwick District Local Development Core Strategy includes policy on the location and scale of new development. Policy S1 states that the location and scale of new development should accord with a settlement hierarchy based on the majority of development being in the main rural service centres of Alnwick and Amble. In relation to a countryside location such as Link House Farm, this site would be defined as being within the countryside and, in this respect, Policy S1 states that development will generally be limited to the reuse of existing buildings. The proposal would therefore comply with this policy requirement.

3.4 The emerging planning policy within the Northumberland Local Plan reflects a more up to date position in line with the NPPF which further demonstrates that the Alnwick Core Strategy policies are no longer consistent with the National Framework. In relation to the overall development strategy, the spatial strategy policy STP1 makes provision for development in the open countryside, on the basis of a limited number of criteria. Three of these criteria are relevant in this case and this includes:

- i. Criteria 2 relating to support for the sustainable growth and expansion of and existing business.
- ii. Criteria 4 which supports additions to the range of sustainable visitor attractions and facilities appropriate to the character of the area and
- iii. Criteria 5 which supports the reuse of redundant of disused buildings which leads to an enhancement of the immediate setting.

On these 3 points, the development as proposed, clearly represents an expansion of the existing tourist accommodation business at Link House Farm, in relation to criteria 4, it adds to and widens the range of visitor accommodation that is available and in relation to criteria 5, it reuses a disused building which through its conversion and the demolition of adjoining buildings, leads to an enhancement of the immediate setting.

3.5 Policy ECN15 of the emerging local plan is also supportive of the principle of development. The policy has an overarching aim of promoting and developing Northumberland as a destination for tourists and visitors, while recognising the need to sustain and conserve the environment and local communities. Section 2 of the policy advises that these aims will be achieved through the development of new visitor accommodation and the expansion of existing tourism business by applying a number of principles. Section D of part 2 of the policy confirms that in open countryside, visitor accommodation should, wherever possible, be limited to the reuse of buildings that are structurally sound. This within the policy is described as preferential to the development of new permanent buildings for visitor accommodation. Section g of the policy also advises that tourism related development that enhances the environment will be strongly supported. The development proposal which relates to the reuse of an existing building is therefore consistent with the requirements of the policy and the principles that it puts in place and is also consistent with the aims of providing sustainable tourism accommodation which has the ability to enhance the environment of its location.

3.6 Overall, the proposal with reference to the general principles relating to tourism and development as expressed in the existing local plan and its emerging counterpart are fulfilled.



[Development within the North Northumberland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(AONB\)](#)

- 3.7 In addition to the general principles of development and the policy context described in the preceding section, it must also be noted that Link House Farm is located within the North Northumberland AONB. In this respect, reference is required to be made to section 15 of the NPPF and in particular paragraph 172. This states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, The Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest stated protection in relation to these issues. The paragraph goes on to state that the conservation enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas. The scale and extent of development within the designated areas is expected to be limited and the paragraph states that planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. The footnote to this paragraph states that, for the purposes of paragraph 172, whether a proposal is a major development is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it would have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined. In the context of this guidance and the content of paragraph 172, it is not considered that this proposal does represent major development which should be automatically refused other than in exceptional circumstances. As will be demonstrated, the nature, scale and setting of the development would not have a significant adverse impact on the purposes of the Northumberland AONB. In this respect, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable and consistent with the requirements of the NPPF.
- 3.8 The emerging Northumberland Local Plan also contains policy relating specifically to the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Policy ENV5 states that the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast AONB will be conserved and enhanced having regard to the current AONB Management Plan and locally specific design guidance. Development proposals within the AONB generate a number of specific and particular considerations and these are stated to include the sensitivity of the local landscape and their capacity to accommodate new development, including

temporary structures such as caravans and chalets, the intervisibility between the AONB, the seascape and the landscape beyond, interdependency between the special qualities of the landscape and the marine and coastal environment, including internationally and nationally important conservation sites, and the need to sustain and where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets, the sense of remoteness, wildness, open views and dark skies, and natural function of the coastline and the clear distinction between settlements and open countryside. It is again considered in the context of these requirements that the reuse of an existing building within the AONB is not contrary to either the purpose of the policy or any of the particular considerations present. This will be further demonstrated with reference to the consideration of particular specific areas of considerations such as ecology and a visual impact.

#### Landscape and Visual Impact

- 3.9 In the context of the site's location within the North Northumberland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it is clearly important for any development to ensure that it does not have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the area and, in particular, the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast AONB. As a conversion proposal, it is clearly the case that the building in question is already present within the landscape and as such any assessment of the application must be judged in this context. In this case, the barn in question represents one of a group of 5 similar buildings with an additional single storey lean to building located on its southern end. The starting point for the conversion is the demolition of the two adjoining structures on the east and west side of the barn and, in this respect, one of the existing barns and the single storey lean to will be removed. Whilst these buildings are long established in the landscape, it is nevertheless the case that they are not traditional buildings and as such represent a typical agricultural building consistent with their construction in the late 20th century. The removal of these structures will not therefore have any negative impact on the visual amenity of the area or the wider landscape and indeed it can be noted that their removal will in fact remove existing sizable built structures from the local environment and will allow new views to be created through the site where development previously existed. In this respect, it is considered that the

demolition proposals that are linked to this conversion scheme are of a net benefit to the landscape and visual amenity of the area.

- 3.10 In relation to the conversion of the building, it can be noted that this is proposed to be undertaken fully within the silhouette of the existing building. In this respect, the conversion will result in no material change to the overall mass and scale of the building and again, it can be noted therefore that this absence of change will result in a neutral impact on the prominence of the building within the landscape. In relation to the scheme of conversion, this has been designed in order to provide a simple overall conversion scheme, whereby the overall form of the building is maintained albeit that its external appearance is
- 3.11 improved through the use of new timber cladding. The window opening treatment within the main façades is also intended to be kept simple and minimalist, thereby negating any potential for the building to exhibit greater prominence within the wider landscape. Windows within the gable elevations are deliberately designed in order to create a framed vertical emphasis and this has the benefit of allowing occupiers to have open views of the surrounding landscape, particularly to the north in respect of the habitats that the land supports and the bird's species that will be able to be observed from the holiday accommodation. The scheme of conversion is considered to be sympathetic to the style of building and overall has no material impact on the appearance of the building and its position within the local visual environment.
- 3.12 Externally, works surrounding the building are also extremely limited. Small privacy screens are proposed to be erected adjacent to the ground floor openings within the south elevation, however, these are of limited height and will solely be seen in the context of the building itself and by enlarge with the building providing a much larger backdrop to these screens. Parking for the units is proposed to be located on the existing parking and stackyard area, immediately south of the building and, in this respect, the visitor's cars will be predominately screened from view by the converted building and the retained barns to the north. Screening on the southern edge of the parking area is already present, as is a low dry-stone wall, thereby affording further screening of any parked vehicles in this area. In the context of the site and the wider

development, it is not considered that the parking would give rise to any adverse visual impact on the local area or the character of the AONB.

3.13 In relation to local plan and emerging local plan policy, reference must be made to the Northumberland AONB Management Plan and the special qualities present within the AONB. The special qualities of the AONB are set out within the management plan and are summarised in 3 categories, these are under the headings of Landscape, Natural Environment and Cultural Heritage. In relation to landscape, key aspects of this special quality are derived from the coastline and its cliffs and beaches, the historic setting of many landmarks within this coastal visual environment, the ecclesiastical elements of the coast with particular reference to Lindisfarne, the Farne Islands, traditional coastal fishing villages clustered around small harbours, views inland to hills and in particular the Cheviot Hills, the wide-open low-lying coastal plane and the dark skies. In relation to the special qualities contributing to the natural environment, key aspects of this are identified as dune grassland, the rocky shores, the inlets and bays of the coast and the tidal mudflats which are present. The special qualities of the natural environment are also important in respect of the species which live and visit the area, and this includes migratory and wintering wildfowl and waders and breeding sea birds. Whin grasslands where whinstone occurs along the coast are also an important and rare habitat. Also, within the natural environment it is noted that small mixed farms are important as, through their management, they support a range of wildlife. In relation to the third special quality of cultural heritage, this is derived from the ecclesiastical history of the coast as evidenced by the many historic sites and the routes which exist between them. Fishing and farming are also a significant feature derived not just from current fishing and farming activities but also the historic evidence of this dating back to the iron age. Historic industry and transport are also noted to be a distinctive feature, and this includes historic lime production and quarrying associated with the historic estates within the area. Finally, it is noted that the military past and in particular the presence of castles and their associated defences are a key feature with many examples present including Warkworth, Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh as well as Lindisfarne.

3.14 It is in the context of these identified special qualities that the proposal must be assessed. It can be seen that with reference to the particular qualities

identified within the AONB Management Plan, that the majority are not required to be considered in the context of the reuse of an existing building situated within an existing developed site. In relation to the proposed impact on the natural environment, ecological matters will be considered in the next section. It can be however confirmed at this stage that the proposal would not adversely impact on any of the features of the natural environment within the AONB. The building does also not have any impact on the cultural heritage features identified. In landscape terms, for the reasons set out above, the conversion of the existing building and its improvement through conversion and the removal of adjacent buildings will in fact have a positive impact on the AONB, in this context the proposal will also have no material impact on the character and appearance of the site and the contribution it makes to the AONB coast. With reference to the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast AONB, it can therefore be concluded that the proposal is compliant with the requirements of Management Plan Policy and Policy ENV5 of the emerging local plan. Overall, the proposal is also compliant with paragraph 172 of the NPPF and the need to give great weight to the conservation enhancement of designated areas such as this.

### Ecological Impact

- 3.15 The impact of the proposed development must be assessed both with regard to any specific ecology considerations present within the building to be converted and the adjoining buildings to be demolished and also with wider reference to the Northumberland Coast and in particular, the habitats of the coast and the species which inhabit it. For this latter case, consideration must be given to this in relation to factors such as the increase in local population that would arise from provision of this additional holiday accommodation.
- 3.16 In relation to the first consideration on conversion of the building itself, the application is accompanied by a protected species survey undertaken by E3 Ecology Ltd. This report confirms that emergence surveys for bats were undertaken as part of the preparation of the application and it is identified from this survey work that the conversion will not give rise to any adverse impacts on bat roosts or other nesting sites present within the existing buildings. Appropriate mitigation measures are proposed as part of this

report and these mitigation measures would be expected to be conditioned as part of any permission for the scheme.

3.17 In relation to the wider local environment, the impact of the development upon this has also been previously assessed by E3 Ecology Ltd and the findings of this assessment are included within the accompanying report. This report has prepared prior to the formal adoption of AONB mitigation policy specifically considered the potential impact of the development upon the coast and its habitat and in particular with reference to protected nesting sites such as the little tern colony to the north of the Link House Farm. Previous holiday development at Link House Farm has fully considered the potential impacts upon this environment and it is within this context that a further assessment has been undertaken. It is concluded that the proposal, on the basis of its limited size and the limited addition to the population that would arise from it, would not give rise to any adverse impacts of a level which would dictate that the proposal was unacceptable. It is again identified that with appropriate mitigation in place and a suitable contribution to the local wardening scheme, that the development could take place without any adverse impact on the coastal ecology. The site itself has a long track record of successfully managing any impacts from visitors to the area and this has included a long standing no dogs policy for visitors which would be maintained as part of any current development. As part of previous developments, the site has also implemented an information scheme for visitors to inform them of the ecology of the area and the need for care when accessing the coast at certain times of the year. It is considered that the application of these steps within this new development would again appropriately mitigate any potential impact and on the basis of the conclusions within the report, it is considered that the proposals impact on the ecology of the local area would be acceptable and is capable of appropriate control through the measures outlined.

3.18 In this context the proposal is consistent with the requirements of paragraph 175 of the NPPF and the need to avoid any significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development.

#### [Highway Impact](#)

- 3.19 The development proposal introduces only limited additional traffic to the Link House farm site and this utilises existing and well-established highway access routes from Newton by the Sea to the south and the access from the public highway to the units would be via an existing track at the southern edge of the farm steading which already successfully and efficiently serves the tourist accommodation on site. This same access route will be utilised to serve the existing development and as part of the proposal a dedicated parking area will be provided to the south of the accommodation which fully complies with the Northumberland Highway County Standards. On the basis of the utilisation of existing and long-established access routes, it is considered that the proposal based on its limited scale is appropriate and acceptable and will not give rise to any issues of highway safety or local network capacity.

#### Flood Risk

- 3.20 On the basis of the site coastal location and due to part of the land which this is located being susceptible for flooding, a Flood Risk Assessment has therefore been undertaken. A copy of this assessment, undertaken by Northpoint Consulting, forms part of the application. The Flood Risk Assessment has identified that the site is potentially susceptible to coastal flooding from a 1 in 200-year flood event. The Flood Risk Assessment provides a full assessment of the potential flooding extent and the depth of flooding and accordingly the development has been designed in order to address the findings of this report. In this respect, the assessment has identified that whilst the buildings may be located within a potential area of flooding, any potential impacts arising as a result of the buildings already being existing, can be mitigated through the raising of floor levels internally within the building and through the localised raising of ground levels around the buildings to provide safe access to and from the site. Based on the analysis of the data and in consultation with the Environment Agency, it is identified that the application site is not at risk from flood, with occupiers of the application site and the new development not at risk of flooding with mitigations in place the accommodation can be safely occupied. Safe access and egress from the site can also be achieved and it can also be noted that the development will not give rise to flooding elsewhere. The application is therefore compliant with the requirements of the NPPF and in particular paragraphs 155 which stresses the need to avoid inappropriate development

in areas at risk of flooding. The proposal is therefore considered to be compliant with the requirements of relevant national and local policy and through appropriate mitigation measures secured through condition as an acceptable proposal.

### Surface Water Management

- 3.21 The planning application is submitted with a further separate report prepared by Northpoint Consulting which sets out the details of the foul and surface water management proposals for the site. Foul waste from the site is to be dealt with through the existing non-mains drainage system which is in place already on site and which serves the holiday development within the farm. The drainage strategy contains a completed non-mains drainage application form and confirms that the proposal will utilise an existing approved system, most recently considered by relevant Authority's as part of the development of 9 holiday chalets to the south east of the site. In respect of the surface water drainage strategy, this too utilises an existing scheme, recently approved as part of the 9-chalet development and, in this respect, utilises a surface water strategy based around an attenuation pond located immediately north of the buildings. This pond provides a hydro brake from the chalet and barns which limits surface water flow into the adjacent burn to not more than greenfield run off rates. This scheme has been recently approved by the LPA and as part of that scheme this incorporated the management of surface water from the 5 existing barns, one of which is now the subject of this application.



## 4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This statement has provided further information on the development of the 6 holiday units within the existing stable building at Link House Farm. The planning statement demonstrates that the building is capable of conversion in a manner which is appropriate in principle, with reference to national and local policy, and which can also be undertaken without any adverse impacts on the key considerations present in the area which include the location within the AONB and in respect of ecology and flood risk. In the context of the NPPF and its objectives for continued rural economic growth, the proposal can be seen to build on an existing and successful holiday accommodation site which has a track record of functioning without any adverse impact on the local environment or neighbouring land users. The reuse of an existing building is considered to represent a sustainable approach to the provision of new accommodation within this area and being located within an existing developed located further ensures the sustainability of the site. On the basis of the enclosed information and policy context, it is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development in line with the NPPF and the permission can accordingly be granted with relevant conditions and legal agreements attached.