

Design, Access and Heritage Statement

Proposed Inset Balcony and Rooflights to Serve Upper Storey of Flat 2,
Mariners House, Marine Road, Alnmouth, NE66 2RP

11th August 2021

1.0 Location and Description

Mariners House is traditional building located within the Alnmouth Conservation Area on Marine Road, to the east edge of the village. Alnmouth lies within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Immediately to the north of the site are two large, purpose-built, four-storey brick, concrete and uPVC clad buildings. To the south are traditional two storey dwellings while to the west lies St John the Baptist Church and converted granaries.

In summary, the surrounding built environment of Marine Road comprises an eclectic mix of architectural styles and built forms that have evolved over centuries of development.

Mariners House was originally built as a two-storey dwelling (likely in the late Victorian era) but was subsequently extended by an additional full storey plus another storey of potential accommodation within the fully lined-out and floored roof space (likely in the post-war period).

This extension is evidenced by the thinner wall construction used for the third storey and above, and the steel truss construction system used for the roof structure.

It is likely that, at the time of the extension, the building was also subdivided into three flats which remains its current format.

The building has a natural slate roof, white painted render walls and uPVC door and windows.

The application site is Flat 2 which occupies the 3rd and 4th storeys.



Site Location Plan



Context Elevation as Proposed

2.0 Site Description

Flat 2 comprises a two-bedroom flat with an upper, 4th storey comprising a fully formed room with fully lined pitched ceilings and boarded floor. As such it was likely purpose-built for the purposes of providing additional living accommodation with scope for the later addition of a staircase and dormer windows.



East Elevation from across golf course



East Elevation



View from north-west



View from south-west

3.0 The Design Proposal

The dwelling currently has no outdoor amenity space within its ownership. Therefore, in addition to the proposed addition of five Velux rooflights, an inset balcony is proposed. This would provide full height bi-fold doors to admit natural light into the heart of the floor plan and access to an external terrace area. A glass balustrade would be set back from the face of the building. The simple, inset design (as opposed to projecting dormer windows), would preserve the traditional form of the building's roofscape.

The proposal is in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area as highlighted by the conservation area appraisal which states, “*Windows are generally larger...*” in this area of the town, due to a historic desire to maximise views towards the sea.

Furthermore, balconies, dormer windows and bay windows are key character elements of estuary and seaward-facing dwellings within the conservation area (Please refer to ‘Seaward Facing Properties in Alnmouth document’). As such, the addition of an inset balcony would be very much within the spirit of Alnmouth’s character.

This proposal to provide amenity space overlooking the sea is in the spirit of historic alterations made to buildings in Alnmouth over the past 200 years, which has resulted in the built environment we see today.

4.0 Access, Circulation and Use

Access into the flat, via a communal stair, would remain unaltered.

A proposed stair to link the second and third floors would be located in the hallway

The inset balcony with accompanying glazing would admit natural light into the heart of the floor plan and the roof terrace would provide the dwelling with much needed outdoor amenity space.

5.0 Heritage Statement

5.1 Heritage Assets

The only heritage asset in the immediate vicinity of Mariners House is Marine House Private Hotel, a Grade II listed building within the conservation area. This property is located 45 meters north of Mariners house. Two large four storey flat-roofed brick, concrete and uPVC plastic clad blocks of flats lie between Marine House Private Hotel and Mariners House. It is not considered that the alterations to Mariners House would have any adverse impact on Marine House Private Hotel.

5.2 Assessment of Significance

The application site is located within the Alnmouth Conservation Area and as such regard must be given to this designated heritage asset. The legislative framework has regard to Section 72(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (PLBCAA) which requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Policy S15 of the Alnwick LDF Core Strategy (ACS) states that all development involving built and historic assets or their settings will be required to preserve, and where appropriate, enhance the asset for the future.

The modest design of the inset balcony limits any wider impacts on the Conservation Area, therefore the impact on the Conservation Area is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with Policy S15 of the ACS, the NPPF and the PLBCAA.

Policy ENV9 of the emerging NLP seeks to ensure that development within Conservation Areas helps to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of that area and it is considered that the proposals are in general accordance with it.

Since there is no requirement for any groundworks, the proposed development will not adversely affect significant archaeological remains. It is therefore anticipated that no archaeological work will be required.

5.3 Alnmouth Conservation area

The Alnmouth Conservation Area was designated in 1972. The conservation area importance is emphasised by a significant number of listed buildings within its boundaries.

The application site lies specifically within Area 2 (Marine Road and Riverside Road), as defined by the Alnmouth Conservation Area Character Appraisal, covering the east, south and southwest areas of the settlement, and overlooking the golf course and estuary. These areas were mainly developed in the later 19th century.

This section includes much of the boundary of the conservation area. The roads are only built up on the town side, providing an important contrast with the open views to the golf course and riverbank and emphasising its recreational use.

The appraisal notes that the following are key character elements of Area 2 within the overall Conservation Area:

- Important open views of surrounding countryside, river and sea
- Informality of rough grass and verges
- Larger scale 2- 3½-storey buildings, detached, behind garden walls
- Walls coursed rubble ochre sandstone
- Roofs red clay tiles, bargeboards and open eaves, brick chimneys with clay pots
- Windows white-painted timber sashes
- Balconies, dormers, bays, oriels, decorative details

It goes on to say that “*Varied oriels, balconies and conservatories at various levels maximise sea views and emphasise the individuality of the buildings, as well as their [...] character*”. In Area 2, “*Windows are generally larger than in the core area*”.

This confirms that large expanses of glazing are in-keeping with the current character of the area and would therefore preserve the character of the Conservation Area.

As can be noted by considering drawing ‘MRH-PL-3002 - Context Elevation as Proposed and Existing’, dormers, bay windows and balconies are a recurring feature of the surrounding buildings. In addition, the ‘Seaward Facing Properties in Alnmouth’ document makes clear that throughout area 2 of the conservation area balconies, bay windows and dormers are commonplace.



Context Elevation as Proposed

The proposed large panes of glazing and inset balcony are therefore considered appropriate to the surrounding built environment and would preserve the character of the area.

6.0 Northumberland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Northumberland Coast was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1958, with the Northumberland AONB Partnership formed in 2003, and covers an area of 138km² along 64km of the coastline between Berwick-upon Tweed and the Coquet Estuary.

An AONB is exactly what it says it is, an outstanding landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so precious that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them.

AONB is a statutory designation established by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Together with National Parks, AONBs represent the nation's finest landscapes. The primary purpose of the AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

It is recognised that these proposals will be assessed against the relevant policies contained within the Northumberland Coast AONB Management Plan 2014-2019. Therefore, in designing this scheme, cognisance has been had to:

- The special landscape and seascape qualities of the AONB, their conservation and enhancement;
- The importance of the protection and conservation of heritage assets, including designated and non-designated archaeological sites, and the character and appearance of historic buildings, settlements and the built environment;
- The construction of housing for permanent occupation that will not impact upon the special qualities of the AONB, conforming with relevant policies within the emerging Northumberland Local Development Plan;
- The high quality of design and landscaping in the conversion, taking into account the AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment;
- The maintenance of the quality of the dark sky will be maintained and improved through advocacy and advice. The townscape of Alnmouth is recognised as part of the special landscape of the AONB.

The Northumberland Coast AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment describes a house which overlooks Marine Road, Alnmouth (see Appendix 8.1) as a successful example of design which fits the requirements of the AONB. *“The main purpose [...] seems to have been to secure more light into the house and better views out. [This] new*

building on the seaward side of the ridge up towards the Priory achieves this successfully with deeply recessed floor to ceiling windows and oversailing roof which fit the landscape well, helped by the scale of the mature sycamore close to it.”

Elements of the proposal are similar to this precedent in that the glazing will be recessed into the inset balcony, as opposed to being expressed as a traditional dormer which sits proud of the roof level.

The Northumberland Coast AONB Design Guide for the Built Environment also states: *“The old warehouses and granaries have been converted to other uses but it is from their commercial origins that we can recognise that the scale of Alnmouth’s development is larger, bulkier than most villages would show. Subsequent additions of large late nineteenth century villas with elaborate bargeboards, balconies, bay windows and oriel windows, projecting eaves and gables, which would look out of place in smaller villages, more nearly fit the scale of Alnmouth established by its commercial past.”*

This reiterates that Alnmouth is made up of larger and more varied buildings than a typical coastal village within the Northumberland AONB, with varied dormers, bay windows and balconies, and thus alterations to add balconies to existing buildings are more appropriate here than they might be in other villages or towns.



Context Elevation as Proposed

It is understood that the aim of the AONB partnership is to conserve and enhance the landscape of the Northumberland AONB, and to ensure the appearance of the historic settlement is protected and conserved. In submitting these proposals, we are firmly of the view that these aims have been met.

Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would not adversely impact upon the special qualities of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and as such would preserve the designated setting.

7.0 Conclusion

The context of the site has been taken into account throughout the design process, resulting in a modest, sympathetic design which minimises any impact upon neighbour amenity, the setting of the building or character of Alnmouth as a whole.

It is considered that this document and the proposals as drawn address any potential impacts upon the setting of the conservation area. By consulting the conservation area appraisal, we are confident that the proposals would preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

The proposal is of an appropriate scale and design. The form would not have any adverse impact on the street scene or the amenity of nearby residences. It is therefore considered that the proposal is in accordance with national and local planning policies.

8.0 Appendices

8.1 Extract from Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Design Guide:

Other developments include an interesting row of experimental concrete houses, Lovaine Terrace built in the 1860's, rendered and cheerfully painted with strong colours more expected in the Mediterranean than on our grey coast.



The main purpose of 20th century householders seems to have been to secure more light into the house and better views out. A new building on the seaward side of the ridge up towards the Priory achieves this successfully with deeply recessed floor to ceiling windows and oversailing roof which fit the landscape well, helped by the scale of the mature sycamore close to it.



Alterations and extensions are many and vary in success. One group of cottages along Northumberland Place illustrates the problem of individual decisions destroying the unity of the whole. Only one owner has retained the original shape of window opening, the others have widened theirs and introduced uPVC frames of different types which are too clumsy for the scale of building.

Even with the larger Victorian Villas some extensions seem overpowering, too large and prominent or with unsympathetic materials detracting from original character.