

Dunholme Farm.  
September 2021.

**Site to West of Dunholme Farm House,  
Comb Hill, Haltwhistle.**

**Planning Statement**

September 2021.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose of this Statement**

This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr and Mrs Storey (the “applicant”). Its purpose is to assist Northumberland County Council (the “council”) in their consideration of the accompanying full planning application for the conversion of Agricultural Buildings into five properties at Dunholme Farm, Comb Hill, Haltwhistle, Northumberland.

### **1.2 Context**

1.2.1 The statement sets out the context for the development by providing the background to the proposals, including a description of the site and its surroundings and relevant up to date policy framework. Having regard to Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004, this statement then considers the applications conformity with the Development Plan, relevant National Planning Policy (July 2018) and other material considerations, and sets out the case in support of development. This statement should be read in conjunction with the other supporting information which accompanies the planning application, namely:

- Design and Access Statement.
- Location Plan and Indicative layout.
- Conversion Designs.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- Preliminary Risk.
- Access design and Layout.
- Planning Statement.
- Structural Report.

1.2.2 The results of these technical reports have informed the design process. To identify how the design process has been progressed through the findings of these technical reports, further detail is given in the accompanying Design and Access Statement, including plans and drawings.

1.2.3 The following section of this Planning Statement and supporting documentation submitted with the application demonstrate that the

development is sustainable and in accordance with the NPPF (July 2021). The emphasis for decision making is therefore for the Local Authority to approve the development proposals without delay in accordance with the NPPF.

## **2.0 THE PROPOSAL**

### **2.1 Proposed Development**

- 2.1.1 Planning permission is sought for full planning permission for five properties at a mix of 2 three bed properties, 4 four bed properties. The properties will be accessed via a new vehicular access point onto the Comb Hill Road. The proposed design is to be informed by an understanding of the positive characteristics of the locality.
- 2.1.2 The proposal will be constructed using high quality traditional materials and create a high quality developmnet for Haltwhistle. Haltwhistle has a mix of traditional stone and slate properties along with some average to poor quality housing. It is proposed that the developmenet will be use high quality materials including stone and slate constructed of a scale and design of a traditional property, along with timebre and metal reflective of the agriculturalcontext.



Figure 1. Proposed Site Layout.

## 2.2 Planning History

2.2.1 The site has no relevant planning history.

## 3.0 THE SITE

### 3.1 Site Location and Description

3.1.1 The proposed site is in agricultural use and covers an area approximately 0.45 ha in size and is located to the northern edge of Haltwhistle, immediately adjacent to existing development at and residential properties.

3.1.2 The site is located within open countryside on the northern side of Haltwhistle, immediately adjacent to the Comb Hill Road. To the north of the site are

residential properties, with Dunholme Farm House to the east. To the south are open fields in agricultural use. The land is in agricultural use and has no environmental designations. The site has a slight slope from north to south.



Figure 2. Site Location and Context.

### 3.2 Accessibility and Opportunities to Travel by Public Transport

3.2.1 The site lies to the north of Haltwhistle which has a good range of services, including a first school, shops, public houses and a hotel and it is served by a regular bus service to both Hexham and Carlisle, it also has a train station.

## 4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

### 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

#### Sustainable Development

4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and amended in 2021, it is a significant material consideration. The overriding

principle of the NPPF is to achieve sustainable development (Section 2, Paragraphs 7 to 10 ), which has three key dimensions: economic, social and environmental, as listed in Paragraph 8 which states that planning should “(support) strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations”. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. NPPF para 7 advises that the policies set out in paragraphs 7 to 10 of the document taken as a whole, constitute the Government’s view on what sustainable development in England mean in practice for the planning system.

4.1.2 Paragraph 8 provides the key starting point against which sustainability of a development proposals should be assessed. This identifies three dimension to sustainable development, an economic role, a social role and an environmental role. Paragraph 9 goes on to advise how the three roles of sustainable development are mutually dependent and should not be undertaken in isolation. It makes it clear that to achieve sustainable development economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

4.1.3 Paragraph 78 of the NPPF states that ‘to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning Polices should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby’.

## **4.2 Core Planning Principle**

4.2.1 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out 12 core planning principles, one of which is to “always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of and buildings.” Another core principle is to “proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth”.

## **4.3 Delivering Sustainable Development**

### Building a Strong Competitive Economy

- 4.3.1 The NPPF advises that the government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. Furthermore, it advises the government is committed to ensuring the planning system does everything it can to support economic growth. It clearly identifies that planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.
- 4.3.2 It is considered direct and indirect (suppliers) job opportunities will be created through the construction period.

### **4.4 Delivering a Wide Choice of Housing**

- 4.4.1 The NPPF clearly identifies that Local Authorities should seek to boost significantly the supply of housing with LPAs required to identify and update deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of housing.
- 4.4.2 "Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing.

### **4.5 Development in Rural Areas**

- 4.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework advises to promote sustainable development in rural areas housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. This includes in groups of smaller settlements where development in one village may support services in a village nearby. The National Planning Practice Guidance and Framework in general confirms that all settlements are capable of delivering housing in rural area, and that the delivery of such housing is important for supporting their broader sustainability, including their vitality and viability of services and community facilities.
- 4.5.2 Paragraph 78 of the NPPF states that *"to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the*



*vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby”.*

#### **4.6 Requiring Good Design**

4.6.1 The NPPF sets out the government approach to design which advises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to make places better for people.

4.6.2 The NPPF sets out principles for achieving well-designed places, with paragraph 127 stating that planning decisions should ensure 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 (such as increased densities);*

*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; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.*

4.6.3 Paragraph 127 expands upon this and advises that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes.

4.6.4 The submitted Design and Access Statement accompanying the development proposals clearly sets out how the development would meet and exceed these objectives and therefore represent high quality design. The design would be of high quality traditional materials, stone would also be used for boundary treatment at the entrance to the site and landscaping will be provided to screen the site from views from the north. The approach and appropriate of landscaping and the layout will not conflict with the key polices within the Core Strategy GD1, NE1, BE1 and H1 or Local Plan Polices GD2 or H32.

#### **4.7 Development Plan**

4.7.1 The NPPF states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is material consideration.

4.7.2 The Tynedale Core Strategy (2007) and Tynedale Local Plan (2000) remain a statutory component of the development plan and the starting point for determining applications as set out in para 12 of the NPPF. However the NPPF advises at para 2 that LPAs should give due weight to the relevant policies in existing local plans according to their weight according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

4.7.3 Paragraph 48 of the NPPF states that weight can be given to policies contained in emerging plans dependent upon the stage of preparation of the plan, level of unresolved objections to policies within the plan and its degree of consistency with the NPPF. The emerging Northumberland Local Plan is in the process of preparation with consultation having taken place during July/August 2018 and publication expected in January 2019, although limited weight can be given to this at this stage.

#### **4.8 Summary of Relevant Policies**

Tynedale LDF Core Strategy (2007)

Policy BE1 – Principles for the Built Environment

Policy GD1 – The General Location of Development

Policy GD4 – Principles for Transport and Accessibility

Policy GD6 – Planning Obligations

Policy H6 – Change of Use of Existing Buildings to Housing

Policy NE1 – Principles for the Natural Environment Tynedale District Local Plan (2000)

Policy CS23 – Development on Contaminated Land

Policy CS27 – Sewerage Policy GD2 – Design Criteria for Development

Policy GD4 – Range of Transport Provision for all Development

Policy GD6 – Car Parking Standards outside the built-up areas

Policy H32 – Residential Design Criteria

Policy NE27 – Protection of Protected Species

Policy NE37 – Landscaping in Developments National Planning

Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (2021, as amended)

## **5 PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

### **5.1.1 Overview**

5.1.2 The adopted Development Plan for the area within which the application site is located comprises the saved policies of the Tynedale Core Strategy and Tynedale District Local Plan

5.1.3 The site lies within open countryside close to the Town of Haltwhistle which has a good range of local services, including a First School, two shops, one public house, village hall and a hotel, and which is served by a regular bus service to Hexham and Carlisle.

5.1.4 Policy HOU 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan (Publication Draft Plan) relates to making the best use of existing buildings. Criterion (c) of Policy HOU 1 supports “the conversion and change of use to residential use of other suitable redundant premises”. Policy HOU 8 of the Northumberland Local Plan (Publication Draft Plan) relates to residential development in the open countryside. Policy HOU 8 supports the conversion and change of use of non-residential buildings and the re-use of redundant or disused buildings to residential use in the open countryside, subject to the proposed development meeting the criteria set out within this policy. One of the criteria set out within Policy HOU 8 is that the existing building or structure should be of permanent and substantial construction.

5.1.5 As a material consideration, the NPPF seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing. Paragraph 78 of the NPPF states that “to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities”. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more circumstances apply, one of which includes where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting. Paragraph 79, much like former Paragraph 55 of the 2012 document, does not impose a requirement to undertake marketing of buildings, and is accepting of the re-use of existing buildings in what may be regarded as unsustainable locations. In accordance with Paragraph 213 of the NPPF, due weight is thus afforded to Policy H6 of the Tynedale LDF Core Strategy.

## **5.2 Sustainability**

5.2.1 The NPPF and local planning policies support development in sustainable locations where prospective residents have easy access to a full range of services and public transport links.

5.2.2 The NPPF also stresses that, in the rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, in this case the proposal is for conversions which are supported in both the Local Plan and NPPF. 5.2.4 Having regard to the relevant policies in the Development Plan and in giving due weight to national policy, it is considered that this would be a sustainable location for development in principal in accordance with the NPPF.

## **5.3 Design, Layout and Impact on Residential Amenity**

5.3.1 Policy BE1 of the Tynedale LDF Core Strategy sets out the principles for the built environment and seeks to ensure that a development is of a high-quality design which maintains and enhances the distinctive local character of the former Tynedale District’s towns, villages and countryside. Policy GD2 of the Tynedale District Local Plan sets out the design criteria which must be met by all types of development. One of the criteria set out within Policy GD2 states the design of proposed development “should be appropriate to the character of the site and its surroundings, existing buildings and their setting, in terms of scale, proportions, massing, positioning and appearance of buildings, use of

materials, structures and landscaped and hard surfaced areas”. Policy H32 of the Tynedale District Local Plan also refers to design and sets out several criteria for all new residential development to satisfy

- 5.3.2 Policy QOP 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan (Publication Draft Plan) sets out design principles for all types of development to adhere to. One of the principles states proposals will be supported where design “makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and contributes to a positive relationship between built and natural features, including landform and topography”. Policy QOP 2 of the Northumberland Local Plan (Publication Draft Plan) relates to good design and amenity. This policy states “development will be required to provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users of the development itself and preserve the amenity of those living in, working in or visiting the local area”.
- 5.3.3 Policy NE1 of the Tynedale LDF Core Strategy sets out the principles for the natural environment. Policy NE1 seeks to protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape. Policy ENV 3 of the Northumberland Local Plan (Publication Draft Plan) relates to landscape. This policy seeks to ensure that proposals conserve and enhance the character of the landscape.



Figure 3. Indicative image of Conversion.

- 5.3.7 The proposed conversions have been designed with regard to the Structural Survey and constraints of the site. The proposed development is in accordance with the immediate existing domestic setting and includes stone and slate as the principle external material. It has been well designed, using similar traditional features and scale and materials to the traditional surrounding dwellings along with timber and steel to reflect the agricultural context. The curtilage of the dwellings would be proportionate and of an appropriate scale, but not dissimilar to other properties adjacent. The proposal would be of a good quality design in keeping with the surrounding area, in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy H15.
- 5.3.8 The impact of the development on the character of the rural area has been carefully assessed. Due to the fragmented built development of the northern edge of Haltwhistle it does not have a distinctive edge. Due to the distinctive layout of the site it would be in close proximity to existing development and would enhance the character of the area, appearing well related in scale and character to the existing town. The proposal would be visually seen as a rational and cohesive extension to the village and provide a landscaped area that will provide a clear edge to the village.
- 5.3.9 The site is not considered to benefit from any distinctive landscape or ecological quality, utility, access or have any heritage value as it has always been agricultural land. Further the site is in close proximity to other development. It is considered that the proposal would be seen as a relatively small housing scheme within the town, which would be a rational extension of the village extending the built pattern along Comb Hill Road.

## **5.4 Highways**

- 5.4.1 The NPPF states that transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development, whilst also contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. The NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.
- 5.4.2 Access is proposed off Comb Hill Road through the construction of a priority junction. It is important to note that the applicant has control over the visibility

splays to both the LEFT and RIGHT. In this respect, the application is acceptable in its impact upon the highway network in the area and in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF.



Figure 4. Extract of plan showing the extent of the visibility splay on Comb Hill Road.

5.4.4 It is demonstrated through the Transport Assessment that the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact on the local highway network and accords with the NPPF and policies GD4 and GD6 of the Local Plan and Policy GD4 of the Core Strategy.

## 5.5 Drainage

5.5.1 The NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

5.5.2 The application site is located within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest risk for flooding; as such a Flood Risk Assessment is not required for this application

5.5.3 On the basis of the consultation responses received, and subject to appropriate conditions, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in relation to drainage and flood risk, and would be in accordance with Policy GD5 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

## 5.6 Ecology

- 5.6.1 The Local Plan, Core Strategy and NPPF highlight the importance of considering potential effects upon the biodiversity and geodiversity of an area, as well as impacts upon trees and hedgerows. Policies NE27, NE33, NE34 and NE37 of the Local Plan and Policy NE1 of the Core Strategy are therefore relevant. The NPPF relates specifically to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including impacts on habitats and biodiversity. A phase 1 habitat survey has been completed which has been submitted with the application. The survey concluded that no further ecological surveys of the site were required subject to some mitigation measures.
- 5.6.2 This survey did not identify the presence of significant habitat types. The report also shows that the site does not support protected species including badgers, bats, birds and other protected species.
- 5.6.3 The ecology reports suggests the following ecological enhancements including habitat enhancement and mitigation during construction. Typically these would be expected to be secured by way of planning condition.
- 5.6.4 The findings of the report have been carefully considered and in light of this report and the recommended mitigation it is considered that the development wholly accords with the environmental policies of the NPPF. It is accepted that mitigation could be reasonably secured through condition in accordance with Policies NE27, NE33, NE34 and NE37 of the Local Plan and Policy NE1 of the Core Strategy together with the NPPF.

## 5.7 Ground Conditions

- 5.7.1 The PRA undertaken has identified a very low risk level with respect to ground contamination. A risk level of LOW is currently considered appropriate for the site with respect to potential risks to controlled waters (groundwater, surface water features) and adjacent sites, as potential sources have been identified on site as well as the potential for shallow groundwater.
- 5.7.2 A risk level of LOW is currently considered appropriate for the site with respect to potential harmful ground gas. The site is currently considered to pose a very



low risk to the proposed end users from ground contamination. The site is currently considered to pose a very low risk to the surrounding environment and controlled waters with respect to potential contamination. A very low risk is currently considered with respect to ground gas.

5.7.3 It is considered that the site is suitable for residential use and therefore would meet the requirements of policy CS23 and the NPPF.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Based on the above information and the technical reports that have been commissioned to support this planning application it is clear that the principle of development is in conformity with the NPPF and complies with the policies contained in the Tynedale Local Plan and Core Strategy.
- 6.2 This document has illustrated the design of the development and set out the proposal for the site. The proposed scheme looks to provide 5 family homes designed to reflect and enhance the character of its surroundings. Overall the scheme will utilise the existing buildings and landscape assets of the site and provide new high quality homes with good accessibility, set in a carefully designed site plan that responds to the context of the surrounding of the site.
- 6.3 A preliminary ecological appraisal has been carried out the findings of which have been integrated into the development, Council officers have previously approved the ecological survey. The mitigation would ensure that the development wholly accords with the environmental policies of the NPPF. Further to this the Tree Survey has also been approved previously by the Council.
- 6.5 The proposal is a sustainable form of development which is a suitable location that would deliver an appropriate development well related to existing development. The submitted Design and Access Statement has demonstrated that the proposed development will not result in any significant or unacceptable impacts upon the character and appearance of the site, immediate locality or the wider environment, or the amenity of adjoining residents and land uses. The proposal will lead to a high quality residential development.

- 6.6 The site lies adjacent to the Town of Haltwhistle, which has a good range of local services, the principle of the development and the proposed scale would be acceptable and the application site is considered to be a suitable location for new housing delivery. Having regard to the NPPF the proposal would satisfy the presumption in favour of sustainable development in relation to the three dimensions: social (supporting and sustaining the local community and provision of new housing, including the provision of contribution towards affordable housing); economic (delivery of new housing and increasing employment opportunities); and environmental (the proposal has demonstrated it would not have any significant or adverse effects upon the site and wider environment, subject to relevant conditions where appropriate).
- 6.7 The development would be sustainable in terms of its economic, social and environmental role. Having paid regard to the relevant section of the Development Plan and NPPF, the benefits of the proposal in terms of housing delivery including affordable housing would outweigh any harm caused by the proposals. In line with the aims of the NPPF, the scheme represents sustainable development. It is therefore considered that planning permission should be granted.