

**BH**

Planning & Design

# Planning Statement

**Stelling South Cottage, Stocksfield,  
Northumberland, NE43 7UU**

**March 2022**





**RTPI**

Chartered Town Planners

## Confirmation of Instruction

<b>Client</b>	Mr & Mrs Taylor
<b>Site</b>	Stelling South Cottage, Stocksfield, Northumberland, NE43 7UU
<b>Prepared By</b>	Joanne Wood BA(Hons) DipTP, Senior Planner
<b>Reviewed By</b>	Mark Ketley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI, Planning Director
<b>Our Ref</b>	BHPD00408
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## Report Signatories

<b>Prepared By:</b>	Joanne Wood BA(Hons) DipTP Senior Planner 
<b>Authorised By:</b>	Mark Ketley BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI Planning Director 

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application for full planning permission concerning the proposed change of use and conversion of an existing agricultural storage building to residential use at Stelling South Cottage in Northumberland.
- 1.2 The application also proposes a porch extension to the side of the building and the construction of a first floor mezzanine extension across part of the building as part of its conversion to residential use. The building would form ancillary accommodation for the main dwellinghouse which is constrained in terms of the living space available within it and in need of substantial upgrading internally.
- 1.3 The document explains the context of the development proposal whilst also presenting an overarching justification for the scheme in the context of all relevant national and local planning policy and guidance. It has been prepared on behalf of our clients, Mr & Mrs Taylor (“the Applicants”)
- 1.4 To assist the County Council in its consideration of the application this Planning Statement accompanies the submission of a full suite of existing and proposed plans comprising of the following:
  - Site Location Plan
  - Existing Site Plan
  - Existing Floor Plans and Elevations
  - Existing Roof Plan
  - Proposed Site Plan
  - Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations
  - Proposed Roof Plan
  - Proposed Sections
  - Proposed 3D Visual Illustrations

## 2. Site Description

- 2.1 The application relates to Stelling South Cottage which is an existing residential dwelling located approximately 2km to the east of Newton and 3.5km north of Stocksfield on the north side of the A69.
- 2.2 The property itself is a two storey detached stone-built dwelling featuring a number of decorative features including a slate roof and timber windows and doors. There are two stone-built outhouses located immediately to the north and south of the subject dwelling as well as an agricultural storage building which is also located to the southern side of the cottage. This application relates specifically to this agricultural storage building which is a rectangular shaped single-storey structure with a lean-to roof constructed using corrugated metal sheeting.
- 2.3 The site is located on the eastern side of the B6309 with the front elevation of Stelling South Cottage facing west directly onto the highway. The agricultural storage building to which the application relates is also situated close to the boundary of the site with the public highway but is largely screened from public view by mature shrub and hedgerow planting immediately in front of its west facing elevation. Otherwise the site is bounded to the north, east and south by open agricultural fields.
- 2.4 The site by definition is located in the open countryside and it also lies within designated Green Belt.

### 3. Planning History

- 3.1 The application site has a very limited planning history in recent times with the only application currently showing on the Council's Public Access concerning the construction of the agricultural storage building to which this latest application now relates:

**Reference Number:** T/20010550

**Description:** Construction of Agricultural Building

**Decision:** Approved

## 4. Description of the Proposals

- 4.1 Planning permission is being sought in this case for the change of use, conversion and extension of an existing agricultural storage building to provide ancillary accommodation for the main dwellinghouse which is constrained in terms of the living space available within it and in need of substantial upgrading.
- 4.2 The proposal would involve the change of use of the existing building which, as explained above, is a rectangular shaped single-storey structure with a lean-to roof constructed using corrugated metal sheeting that turns its back onto the B6309.
- 4.3 The proposed conversion works would involve the installation of three window openings and one door opening to the east elevation along with the construction of an open porch. One high level window is also proposed to be inserted in both of the south and west facing elevations whilst a rooflight is proposed to the roof of the existing building to provide light into the ground floor space.
- 4.4 A small flat roofed timber porch extension is proposed to the north facing side elevation whilst a first floor mezzanine extension is also proposed across part of the building at its southern end which would project from the roof of the existing building and would have a flat roof. The extension would be of contemporary design featuring an anthracite standing seam zinc cladding finish with windows facing out to the south and east. The approach to this aspect of the development would provide a modern and attractive contrast to the remainder of the building which would be clad using larch timber.

## 5. Legislative and Policy Context

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the “development plan” unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Such material considerations can include Government policy statements, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of which a revised version was published by the Government in July 2021.

### Local Planning Policy

- 5.2 The application site lies within the administrative boundary of Northumberland County Council whose development plan still comprises of the plans of the former District local authorities that made up Northumberland prior to Local Government Reform in 2009. This is owing to the lack of an adopted County-wide development plan since the reform measures took place. That said, the Council have recently undergone formal examination into an emerging new Northumberland Local Plan and formal adoption of this document, which will replace the development plans of the former District authorities, is expected by the end of March 2022. Consequently, the policies and provisions of the emerging Local Plan form a material consideration in the assessment of this planning application.
- 5.3 The application site is located in the area of the former Tynedale District Council whose adopted development plan consisted of the Tynedale LDF Core Strategy (adopted April 2007) and the Tynedale District Local Plan (adopted April 2000). By law, these documents remain the starting point for assessing new development proposals in this part of the County until such time that the new Local Plan is adopted with the Core Strategy setting out the overall spatial planning strategy for the former Tynedale District for the period up to and including 2021. Despite now being beyond its intended lifespan, it still provides the basic principles and policies to guide development and the future use of land whilst also establishing parameters for the general scale and location of new development.
- 5.4 In contrast, the Tynedale Local Plan is far more aged having been adopted in 2000. Saved policies of the Local Plan remain relevant to planning decision-making alongside the Core Strategy provided they align with the objectives of the latest version of the NPPF. However, they were adopted in April 2000 and were only ever intended to guide future development proposals up until 2006. As such, the policies and provisions within the Local Plan are no longer considered to properly reflect the current growth requirements of the former Tynedale District, especially when they are now some 15 years beyond their intended life span. In such circumstances the NPPF published in July 2021, which is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, advises that Local Planning Authorities are only to afford policies in existing Local Plans material weight insofar as they accord with the NPPF.
- 5.5 The Core Strategy continues to attract weight at the time of submitting the planning application with Policy GD1 setting out a hierarchy for the location and scale of new development. In open countryside locations this policy limits development to the re-use of existing buildings unless allowed for otherwise under alternative policies from the development plan. Development in the open countryside is permitted under Policy H20 of the Local Plan provided extensions are sympathetic to the character of the original building and would not substantially increase its size. Policy H6 of the Core Strategy is also relevant and states that the change of use of existing buildings to residential use in the open countryside will be permitted where the building is of permanent construction and has visual or historic merit which contributes to the distinctive character of the area and justifies its retention, and the change of use would not involve any extension, significant rebuilding or harm to its character.

- 5.6 As set out in Section 2 above, the application site in this case is also located in the Green Belt where there is a strong presumption against new build development. Policy NE7 of the Local Plan states that development involving the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt will not be permitted other than for the following purposes:
- a) agriculture and forestry; or
  - b) essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation; or
  - c) essential facilities for cemeteries; or
  - d) essential facilities for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it; or
  - e) limited infilling in, or redevelopment of those major existing developed sites identified on the Proposals Map, subject to Policy NE10 or NE11 or NE12 or NE13 being satisfied; or
  - f) limited infilling within the boundaries shown on the Proposals Map in existing villages listed in Policy NE5 and in accordance with Policy H10; or
  - g) limited affordable housing for local community needs within existing settlements subject to Policy H23 being satisfied; or
  - h) proposals for the limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings subject to policies in the Built Environment and Housing chapters being satisfied.
- 5.7 In terms of design, Policies GD2 and H32 of the Local Plan seek to ensure that development proposals are appropriate for their location in terms of layout, scale, design and impact on the amenity of existing residents. Core Strategy Policy BE1 also seeks to conserve and enhance the built environment of the former Tynedale District. These policies generally align with the objectives of the NPPF in terms of promoting good quality design outcomes from new development

### **National Planning Policy**

- 5.8 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development which, for decision-taking, means (unless material considerations indicate otherwise) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless (i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
- 5.9 Paragraph 7 of the Framework advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 5.10 Paragraph 8 goes on to provide the key starting point against which the sustainability of a proposal should be assessed and this identifies three dimensions to sustainable development - an economic element, a social element and an environmental element - which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. Whether the presumption in favour of sustainable development is successful in this case is therefore dependent on an assessment of whether the development proposal would be sustainable in terms of its economic, social and environmental roles.



- 5.11 In terms of Green Belt, paragraph 149 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt as being inappropriate development. However, it goes on to provide a number of exceptions to this where the construction of new development is held to be appropriate within these designated areas. One such exception includes the extension or alteration of an existing building provided that it would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
- 5.12 Paragraph 150 states that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that they would preserve its openness and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. A second closed list of exceptions to established Green Belt policy is provided which includes engineering operations, material changes in the use of land and the re-use of existing buildings provided that they are of permanent and substantial construction.

### **Emerging Planning Policy**

- 5.13 Draft Policy STP1 of the emerging Local Plan provides sets out the overarching and strategic distribution aims for new development and seeks to focus new developments within main towns, service centres and service villages across the County. The policy states that development in the open countryside will only be supported where it would re-use redundant or disused buildings and result in an enhancement to the immediate setting. Draft Policy HOU8 of the emerging Local Plan specifically deals with residential development in the open countryside and it states that the conversion and change of use of non-residential buildings; the re-use of redundant buildings or disused buildings to residential use; and the extension or adaptation of existing dwellings, will be supported where the existing building or structure is of permanent and substantial construction; is in keeping with and makes a positive contribution to the character and setting of the area; and is capable of conversion and appropriate enhancement without complete or substantial rebuilding, disproportionate extension or unsympathetic alterations.
- 5.14 Draft Policy QOP2 deals specifically with amenity and establishes a number of design related criteria against which new proposals will be assessed. Amongst these is a requirement to provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users by ensuring appropriate levels of privacy and outlook as well as the retention of trees and other soft landscaping. The policy also seeks to protect users and neighbouring uses from noise, odour, gases and other harmful effects.

## 6. Planning Assessment

- 6.1 The main issues in this case, relative to the acceptability of the proposed development in principle, include the extent to which it accords with the adopted development plan for the area and the extent to which it is consistent with the aims and objectives of national policy as set out in the NPPF.
- 6.2 As explained in the sections above, the application site is located in the open countryside by definition whereby Policy GD1 of the Tynedale Core Strategy limits development to the re-use of existing buildings unless allowed for otherwise under alternative policies in the development plan. Also of relevance is Policy H6 of the Core Strategy which allows for the change of use of existing buildings to residential use in the open countryside where the building is of permanent construction and the change of use would not involve any extension, significant rebuilding or harm to its character.
- 6.3 In this case the proposal would bring a redundant building which no longer has any use as an agricultural store back into use. The proposed cladding of the existing building with larch timber would result in an attractive building with a modern architectural style that would be sympathetic to the traditional stone built Stelling South Cottage and would serve only to improve and enhance the character and appearance of the site. The proposed conversion accords with the relevant criteria of Policy H6 of the Core Strategy as well as the NPPF in these respects which both support the re-use of redundant or disused buildings in the countryside where it would enhance the immediate setting of a site.
- 6.4 It is acknowledged that Policy H6 of the Core Strategy does not specifically allow for extensions to buildings that are to be converted for residential purposes. However, this policy is now of some age with the Core Strategy only ever being intended to guide development proposals and planning decision making up until 2021. In addition, the position of preventing extensions to existing buildings as part of a conversion process is not supported by the most recent version of the NPPF which is a far more up-to-date national policy document. The latest position established by national policy is reflected in Draft Policy HOU8 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan which, once adopted at the end of March 2022, will allow for proportionate extensions to existing buildings in cases where a change of use and conversion is being proposed. This clearly sets out the direction of travel in planning policy terms that the Council is taking in assessing the acceptability of proposals for the conversion of existing buildings in the countryside and, in this instance, the proposed extension would not result in a disproportionate addition due to its modest size, careful siting and innovative architectural approach. Full compliance with the requirements of the NPPF and the emerging Local Plan would therefore be achieved in this case and the proposed development is acceptable as a matter of principle.

### **Green Belt**

- 6.5 Notwithstanding the above conclusions on the acceptability of the proposed development in principle, it is important to recognise and address the fact that the application site also falls within designated Green Belt where there is a strong presumption against all but essential forms of new development. Indeed, the NPPF makes clear that Local Planning Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt as inappropriate development. However, it goes on to provide a number of exceptions to this where the construction of new development is held to be appropriate in the Green Belt. One such exception includes the extension or alteration of an existing building provided that it would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.
- 6.6 Paragraph 150 of the NPPF states that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided that they would preserve its openness and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. A second closed list of exceptions to established Green Belt policy is provided

which includes engineering operations, material changes in the use of land and the re-use of existing buildings provided that they are of permanent and substantial construction.

- 6.7 At the local level, Policy NE7 of the Tynedale Local Plan indicates that planning permission will only be granted for limited extensions to existing buildings in the Green Belt and subject to the satisfaction of other relevant development plan policies. Policy NE14 also states that proposals for the change of use, conversion and extension of existing buildings in the Green Belt will be permitted where the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and the proposed use, and any associated use of the land, would be in keeping with their surroundings and the proposed development would not have a materially greater impact than the existing on the openness of the Green Belt or on the purposes of including land within it. Policy NE14 is largely consistent with the NPPF in these respects.
- 6.8 In considering whether a development proposal is “limited” and “proportionate” for the purposes of applying relevant policy it is necessary to take into account not only the scale of the proposed development but also its design. The development proposal in this case would give rise to an increase in the volume of the original building of approximately 35%. The proposed extensions, including the porches, when based on their combined volumes would therefore clearly be limited and proportionate when considering the wording of the relevant policies from the NPPF and the development plan.
- 6.9 Volume increase is, however, just one aspect of assessing the materiality of any resultant size increase. Other factors such as location, siting, other physical dimensions and the relationship with other curtilage buildings must also be considered to determine whether a proposed extension to an existing building is considered to be limited and proportionate in scale. This also, in turn, informs an assessment of the potential resultant impact on the openness of the Green Belt arising from the development. Examples of case law would suggest that, on appeal, Planning Inspectors have considered proposals resulting in greater cumulative increases than would result in this instance would not be disproportionate.
- 6.10 The proposed extensions comprising of porches and the first floor mezzanine level over part of the building would appear subordinate to the original building. The scale of the proposed roof extension would not be disproportionate to the original building in terms of individual measurements (the span of the gable is similar although slightly less than the original building), and the length of the extension from north to south would be less than half of the length of the existing building. When the overall scale of the linear extension is assessed it would appear subservient to the scale of the original building and symbolic of the relationship with the main dwellinghouse by virtue of being lower and on falling ground. The simple form and fenestration would make it appear functionally subservient to the main dwelling at Stelling South Cottage and representative of its intended use as ancillary accommodation to the property. The building is also largely screened from public views by mature trees and hedging around the curtilage of the site to the east and by a large hedge along the boundary of the site with the B6309.
- 6.11 It is acknowledged that the proposed extensions would have some limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt in this location. However, the site is substantially developed by the original house, existing stone outbuildings and the agricultural storage building which is the subject of this application. Whether the proposed scheme would harm openness is a comparative exercise between the existing and the proposed. The existing site is not open and is covered by a wide range of buildings, some of them pre-dating the designation of the Green Belt. The proposed first floor extension would exceed the height of the existing building, however not significantly so or to the extent that it would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt in this location. The extension would not impact upon views through the site which would still be retained. Furthermore, from most view points the extension would be viewed either against the back drop of Stelling South Cottage which it would appear subservient to, or would be screened by the existing dwelling. It is therefore considered that any harm

to the Green Belt in terms of impacts on openness would not be substantial in this case nor would they be sufficient to warrant refusal of the application.

- 6.12 The Green Belt was designated in this area to protect the countryside from encroachment; prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; and to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. When considered in the context of these purposes of the Green Belt therefore, the proposed extensions would not result in encroachment into the Green Belt beyond the existing residential curtilage. The host property is also located in an isolated location approximately 2km to the east of Newton, which is the nearest settlement, and therefore there would be no opportunity for towns merging into one another as a result of the development nor would it result in urban sprawl. Due to the distance of the application site from any nearby settlements, the proposed development would not impact upon the setting or special character of a historic settlement and the proposed extension of this existing building would not therefore conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF.

### **Visual Impact**

- 6.13 The proposed conversion would involve cladding of the existing building in larch timber, the construction of small porch additions to the north and east elevations, construction of a first floor mezzanine extension and the creation of openings to the south, east and west elevations. The cladding of the building in larch timber would serve to improve and enhance the appearance of the building, and the application site as a whole, whilst being sympathetic to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling Stelling South Cottage which would remain as the traditional and dominant visual feature.
- 6.14 The proposed porch extensions would be modest in terms of height and footprint and would not be visually prominent either within the application site or in views from the surrounding area. The use of timber would also appear in keeping with the timber cladding proposed to the exterior of the building. The proposed first floor extension would be more prominent within the street scene and surrounding area, however it would still sit lower than the main dwellinghouse which, rightly, would remain as the dominant building and feature of the site. The converted building along with the proposed extensions would still be viewed in the context of the existing residential dwelling and, as such, would not appear overly dominant or obtrusive in views from the locality. Furthermore, the host building would be screened in public views from the north by Stelling South Cottage itself and from the east by mature trees therefore it would only be viewed within the immediate surroundings of the site from the south and west. Views of the building when travelling along the B6309 would only be fleeting however due to the natural screening along the boundary of the application site with the B6309.
- 6.15 The proposed extensions and alterations to the building overall are considered to be acceptable in terms of their design, scale and use of materials. The proposal would not adversely impact upon the character or appearance of the subject site or the surrounding area and would actually serve to enhance these visual interests. As such, the proposal accords with Policy GD2 of the Tynedale Local Plan, Policy BE1 of the Core Strategy, and Draft Policies HOU8 and QOP1, QOP2 and ENV1 of the emerging Local Plan.

### **Impact on Residential Amenity**

- 6.16 The subject building is located in close proximity to Stelling South Cottage, however there are no windows proposed to the north elevation of the building which would face towards the existing residential dwelling. Furthermore, the building to be converted would form ancillary accommodation for Stelling South Cottage and would therefore not be occupied as an independent residential unit. As such, the proposal would not raise any issues for the residential amenity currently enjoyed by the

occupiers of the existing dwelling on the site and the building is also sufficiently distanced from other residential properties in the vicinity to ensure no resultant adverse effects would arise. The proposal therefore accords entirely with Policy GD2 of the Tynedale Local Plan and Draft Policy HOU8 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan in these respects.

### **Highway Safety and Parking**

- 6.17 The building subject of this change of use application would be occupied as ancillary accommodation in association with the main dwellinghouse on the site. As such no additional car parking is required nor would the proposal generate any additional vehicular traffic to and from the site. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of parking provision and impact on highway movements in accordance with Policies GD4 and GD6 of the Local Plan and the provisions of the NPPF.

## 7. Conclusions & Summary

- 7.1 Planning permission is being sought in this case for the change of use, conversion and extension of an existing agricultural storage building to provide ancillary accommodation for the existing dwelling which is constrained in terms of the living space within it and in need of substantial refurbishment and upgrading. The proposal would not result in disproportionate additions to the existing outbuilding and, as such, the conversion of the building in this open countryside location is considered to be acceptable as a matter of principle in accordance with Policy H6 of the Tynedale Core Strategy, Draft Policies STP1 and HOU8 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan, and the provisions of the NPPF.
- 7.2 As the scheme would not result in disproportionate additions to the existing building to be converted, the scheme would fall within the exception in the third bullet point of paragraph 149 of the NPPF and would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Moreover, the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt as a result of the proposed development would be less than substantial due to its sensitive scale, siting and architectural approach. The proposal would therefore satisfy the requirements of the NPPF, Core Strategy Policy GD1, Local Plan Policies NE7 and NE14, and Draft Policies STP1 and HOU8 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.
- 7.3 The proposed extensions and external alterations to the agricultural storage building are considered to be appropriate in terms of siting, scale, design and materials and would not impact upon the visual amenity of the application site or the surrounding area. The proposal would also not impact upon the residential amenity currently enjoyed by the occupiers of any surrounding properties.
- 7.4 Overall the application presents a development proposal that is considered to be fully compliant with relevant policies contained within the development plan and the NPPF. The Local Planning Authority are therefore requested to support the application and approve the development without delay in line with the requirements of paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

# BH

Planning & Design

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1 Hood Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6JQ

T: 0191 232 8080

[www.bhplanninganddesign.co.uk](http://www.bhplanninganddesign.co.uk)



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Chartered Town Planners