



BLUE FOREST
THE TREEHOUSE PEOPLE



LAVERICK COTTAGE TREEHOUSE

Design & Access Statement

1044
MAY 2023

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1.1 Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The applicants at Warden Estates, a traditional agricultural estate surrounding the hamlet of High Warden and the village of Low Warden, are seeking to explore the possibility of expanding the facilities on the farm estate and wish to discuss the potential for a sustainable treehouse holiday unit within the area of woodland adjacent to Laverick Cottage; a recently refurbished three-bedroom holiday cottage owned and run by the applicant. The proposed treehouse would be used for guest accommodation/holiday purposes and would also be managed by the applicant.

The following document has been developed in conjunction with ecology, heritage and arboricultural consultant reports, and summarises the design approach. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, surveys and construction method statement detailing the proposed works and existing site.

BACKGROUND

The applicants recently moved back to Warden Estate with their young family as part of the succession plan for the estate. They love walking and cycling and are in the process of developing “Stay on The Hill”, offering unique, tranquil holiday accommodation for like-minded people who love active, nature based holidays.

The proposed treehouse meets this vision and would support the viability of the wider farming activities in order to broaden the income streams and at the same time promote the sustainable approach to the farming activities on the site. Like many land-based activities, there is considerable pressure and uncertainty within the industry and the opportunity to broaden its wider economic base will continue to support the principal farming element of the estate. Indeed, tourism is a use commonly found on estates and farms due to its low-key use and compatibility with farming activities. Warden Fishing is a successful business but additional accommodation is needed to support the fishing guests.

DESIGN APPROACH

As a small family run design and construction company, Blue Forest has established a reputation for creating inspiring designs for both our private and commercial clients. We specialise in working in sensitive environments particularly in & around trees, offering tailored solutions to all our clients.

The design approach has taken into account the existing site conditions, site context, scale, development appearance, construction methods and proposed methodical access arrangements. The chosen materials, size and scale are intended to suit the site and provide a wonderful feature for the property, whilst not causing a detrimental impact on any landscape or surrounding ecology.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

- Locally sourced sustainable timber (within 20km radius where possible). All other timber to be PEFC or FSC certified.
- Timber sourced from the estate itself will also be used. Trees that fell during the storms of 2021 and 2022.
- Fabric-first approach to the treehouse design (highly insulated building fabric and triple glazed windows).
- No dig foundation solution to limit damage to tree roots.
- Low energy lighting and appliances, with smart heating controls.
- Bicycle storage to encourage sustainable modes of transport.
- Electric charging points for cars.
- Wood burning stove - fuelled by wood from the estate.

A RICH VARIETY OF WILDLIFE AND HABITATS INCLUDING RARE AND INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT SPECIES

- Net biodiversity gain through habitat creation and tree planting.
- Dead wood management to maximise ecological enhancements.
- The treehouse will be raised off the ground to maintain wildlife corridors.

TRANQUIL AND UNSPOILT PLACES

- The location and layout of the treehouse (close to Laverick Cottage) has been chosen to protect the sense of tranquillity within the woodland and wider landscape.
- The treehouse will use natural materials and utilise existing accesses to minimise disturbance, amalgamate and integrate with the woodland character.
- The use of locally sourced materials, natural tones and textures respond to the character and local vernacular of the woodland.
- Dark Night Skies will be respected, with minimal and sensitive lighting provided.
- Maintain natural infiltration capacity of rainwater into soils by retaining and utilising the existing natural path surfaces and raising the treehouse off the ground.
- The naturally sloping land form will be left untouched to minimise the impact on sensitive ecology/ arboricultural receptors.
- Free to roam pathways will be created and maintained around the woodland plantation.

DISTINCTIVE TOWNS AND VILLAGES, AND COMMUNITIES WITH REAL PRIDE IN THEIR AREA

- Local employment opportunities associated with the day-to-day running of the tourism accommodation.
- Development of holiday accommodation that will improve mental health and well-being through being closer to nature.
- The business will contribute directly to the local economy with the creation of a part-time role to assist with the treehouse changeovers and by using local services and produce, wherever possible.
- Seasonal produce from Warden Estate and local farmers are promoted and available to purchase on site..
- A local guide will provide recommendations for local farm shops, pubs, and tourist attractions as well as walking and cycling routes.
- Additional revenue from tourists will help to support local pubs remain open which is so important to local residents.
- Secure and sustain income for future generations by improving conditions and sustainability of woodland.



1.2 Vision

Bespoke, award winning sustainable tourism accommodation for the enjoyment and exploration of the surrounding countryside.

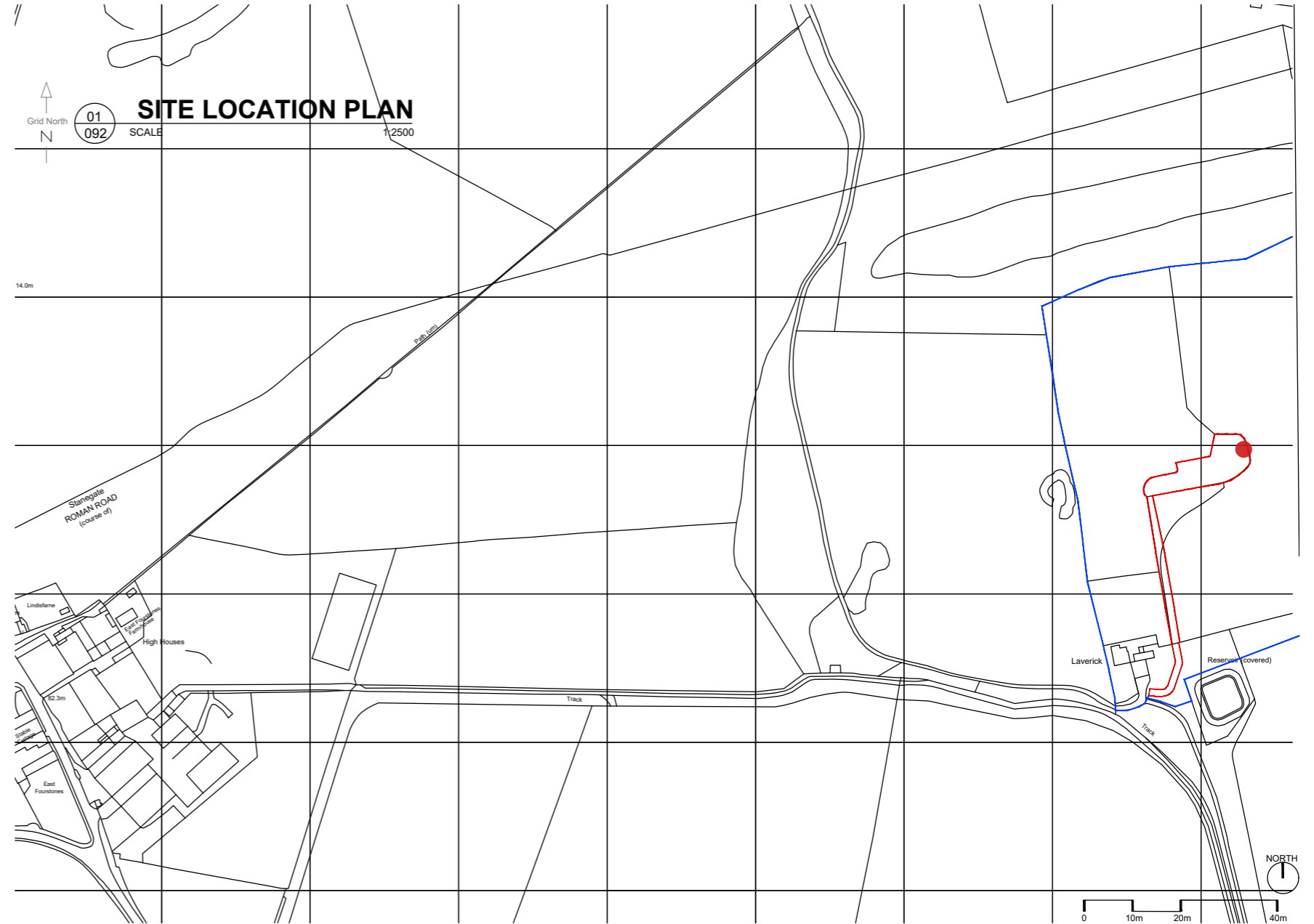
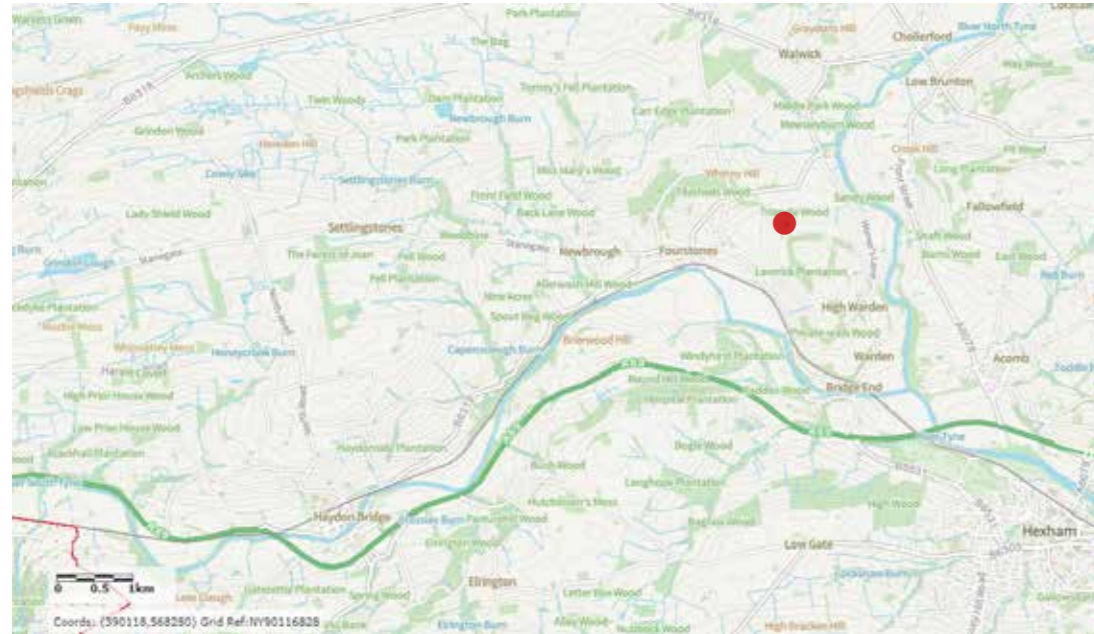
- Provision of unique, high quality and sustainable tourism accommodation, diversifying the county's tourist offering.
- The applicants have shown with their success of running Stay on the Hill that they understand market conditions, customer needs, running costs and responsibilities of running a short term holiday let business. They have the right skills and experience to make this luxury unique treehouse enterprise a success.
- Lighting will be strictly minimised to lessen light spill and enhance the dark skies experience, whilst mitigating impact on wildlife.
- Bird feeders will be placed around the proposed accommodation to attract wildlife for bird watchers and for those dark skies enthusiasts, an additional package for guests can include telescopes, high quality binoculars, information and instructions on night skies apps and a keep warm package.
- Engage guests in an outdoor experience through the promotion of outdoor activities, including walking trails and cycle routes, utilising public footpaths to draw users into the open landscape, to explore the natural beauty and wildlife.
- Encouraging a sense of wellbeing with yoga retreats, art holidays, and other experiences enjoyed through immersing in nature.
- Promote opportunities for guests to spend more time outdoors and to understand and enjoy the special qualities and unique heritage of the landscape. Educating and informing guests about farming, agriculture, nature and rural life.
- A truly innovative development that conserves and enhances the woodland landscape while providing an essential contribution to mental health and well-being, the appreciation of the cultural historic and landscape value of the site and surroundings through immersion in the natural environment. A survey commissioned by the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) and undertaken by YouGov showed that:
 - I. 89% of people felt that access to nature-rich green space helped improve health, well-being and happiness.
 - II. 86% supported the increase in the number of accessible nature-rich areas in the UK.
 - III. 75% felt that nature could positively support the economy through, inter alia, tourism.



View from Laverick Cottage



1.3 Location



OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

- Site lies within a Green Belt
- Site lies within SSSI Impact Risk Zones - to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites (England)
- Nearest SSSI Tyne Watersmeet
- Within 0.5km of a scheduled monument (Fort on Warden Hill)
- Woodland forms part of the national forest inventory (conifer)

Land adjacent to
Laverick Cottage
Fountains
Hexham
NE47 5DX

- NOTES:**
- Property Boundary
 - Site Boundary (1425m²)
 - Proposed Site Location



2.1 Site Ownership Boundary



2.2 Site Layout

LAYOUT

The site is located within the Laverick Plantation, an area of woodland lying at the centre of the Parish of Warden, which encompasses Fourstones to the west, and Warden to the southeast.

The application site lies between Low Whinny Hill to the north and Warden Hill to the southeast. The proposed treehouse site is positioned discretely, next to the boundary in the northeast corner of the woodland. The ground levels drop by about 3m from the entrance to the site to the proposed location for the treehouse. This change in ground levels means the visual impact of the proposed structure is significantly reduced, being hidden in a natural 'bowl' within the topography.

The location and layout of the treehouse and deck are predominantly determined by the location of the surrounding trees. The trees will screen the treehouse from views from the wider landscape. The treehouse will sit behind the stone wall boundary to the plot.

With regards to tree health and the proposed manner of support for the structures, to keep maintenance to a minimum and to ensure that the construction of the treehouse has little or no negative impact upon the surrounding trees we have chosen to support the treehouse structure on posts with no fixings to the trees themselves.

The treehouse has been located and designed to limit the visual impact the proposed structure will have within the landscape. Due to the topography, natural screening from vegetation, and the distance the treehouse is situated from neighbouring properties and public access routes the proposal will be almost entirely hidden from view.

ACCESS

The site is accessed via a private road running south off the B6319. The B6319 runs northwards out of Fourstones and connects with the B6318 – the 'Military Road' at Chesters. The private road measures some 980m in length from the B6319, with the proposed site using an existing short access track and existing field gates, taking the total distance from site to public highway to 1.2km.

Access will be strictly limited to guest and maintenance needs only. The proposed treehouse parking area doubles as a turning head for emergency vehicles if required.



① Treehouse Site

..... Access Track



2.3 Site Photos



3.1 Treehouse Design Proposal

DESIGN BRIEF

To design a single treehouse holiday accommodation unit to be erected within Laverick Plantation near Laverick Cottage and Bothy.

Key considerations and design parameters include:

1. To create a unique and tranquil treehouse holiday destination.
2. To create an unimposing structure that will be appropriate for the appearance and nature of the site & surrounding area.
3. To provide comfortable self-catered accommodation with one bedroom and en-suite facilities.
4. To utilise sustainable materials and construction methods to limit the environmental and ecological impact of the development.

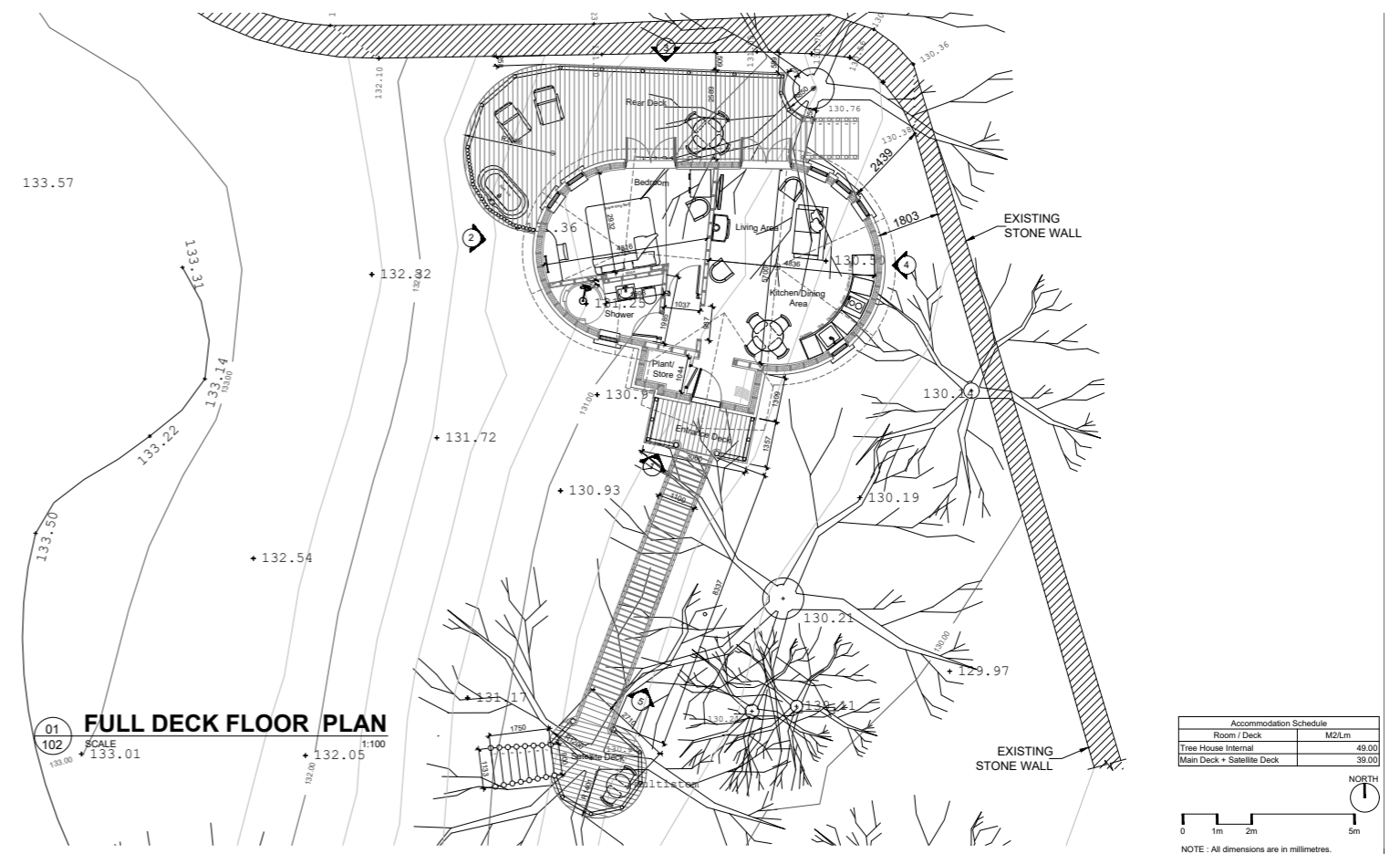
The treehouse is essentially an oval structure subdivided internally to provide 1 bedroom, and a combined living and kitchen area. To the north is an area of elevated decking. The structure is accessed via a short bridge from the south. Fire risks and exits have been well thought through with alternative emergency exits should the rope bridge not be accessible. EPC ratings will be carried out to achieve a C rating. The treehouse sits beneath the canopy of several retained deciduous trees. The structure will not be fixed to the surrounding trees in any way.

SCALE

The internal footprint of the treehouse is 49m², with an additional 39m² of deck (including the satellite deck and rope bridge). The treehouse is intentionally small in scale to ensure it can be positioned discretely within the landscape setting. The location and layout of the treehouse and deck are predominantly determined by the location of the surrounding trees, which screen the treehouse from views from the wider landscape. The treehouse has been orientated to maximise the views with the main deck overlooking the fields to the north.

The structure will be supported on solid timber posts, the deck and platform are accessed from ground level by wooden steps. The treehouse will be built at ground level when measured from the highest point of ground level immediately adjacent to the building. The eastern most elevation of the building will stand at a height of approximately 1.6m from ground level. The apex of the roof will reach a height of 4.8m from the highest point of the ground and circa 6.6m from the lowest point of ground.

With regards to tree health and the proposed manner of support for the structures, to keep maintenance to a minimum and to ensure that the construction of the treehouse has little or no negative impact upon the surrounding trees, we have chosen to support the main treehouse structure on posts using a no dig foundation solution. Please refer to the accompanying Construction Method Statement (CMS) for details of the construction sequencing and measures taken to ensure the well-being of the trees and habitat. All mitigation measures have been written in conjunction with the arboricultural impact assessment, ecology report and heritage report.



3.2 Materiality, Textures and Tones

LANDSCAPE LED DESIGN

The treehouse will be finished with materials that are appropriate to reflect the immediate landscape character. We have intentionally specified a combination of different tones and textures to help break up the mass of the structure. Over the course of their natural weathering, all the timber cladding on the treehouse will weather to a silvery grey colour, blending in naturally with the surrounding vegetation.

TEXTURE



STONE



MATERIAL OPTIONS



COMBINATION OF ENGLISH CEDAR AND LARCH
CLADDING



CEDAR ROOF SHINGLES



3.3 External Finishes



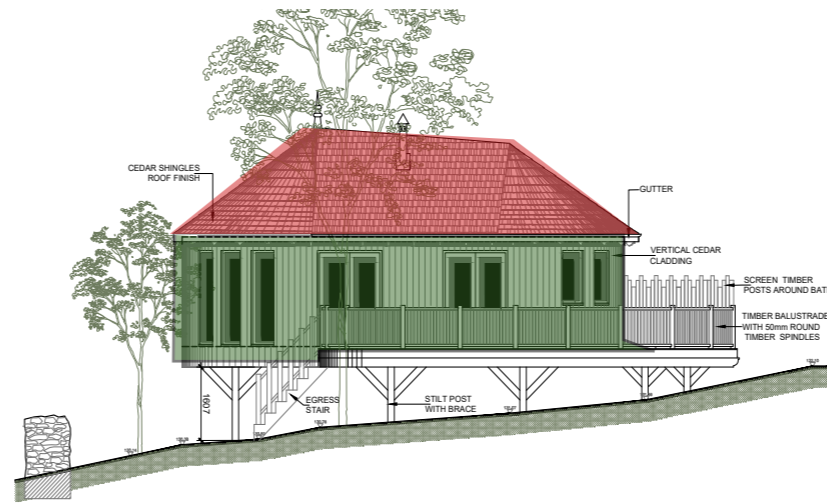
English Cedar vertical cladding
Profile: 19-25mm x 120-150mm boards



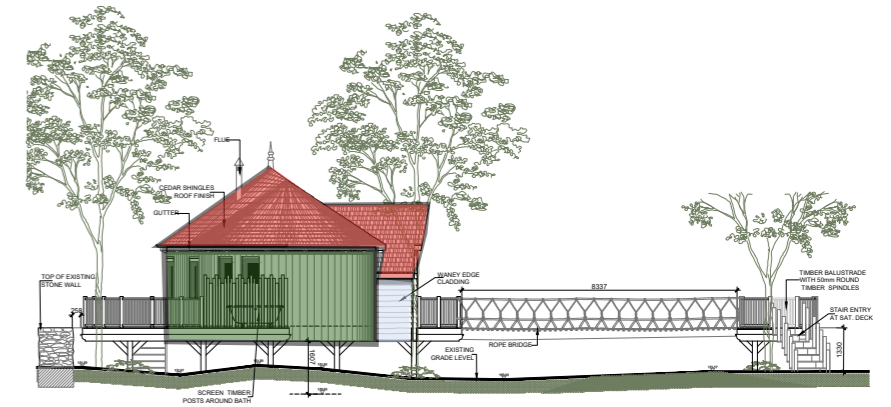
Larch waney edge cladding to be sourced from within 20km radius of site
Profile: 19-35mm x 250 - 400mm boards



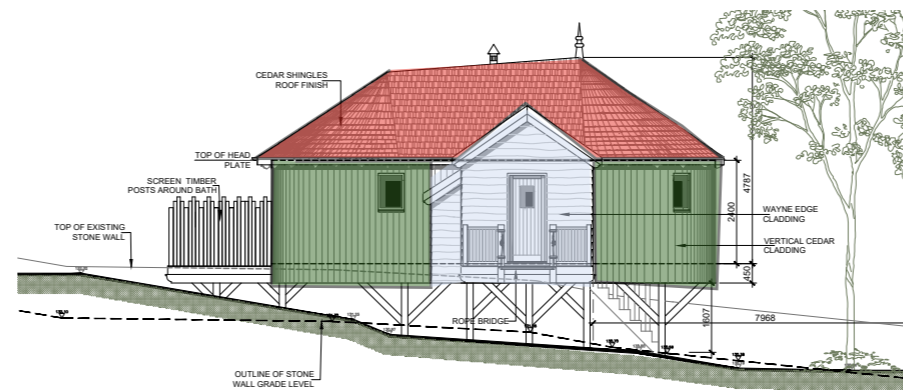
Cedar shingles



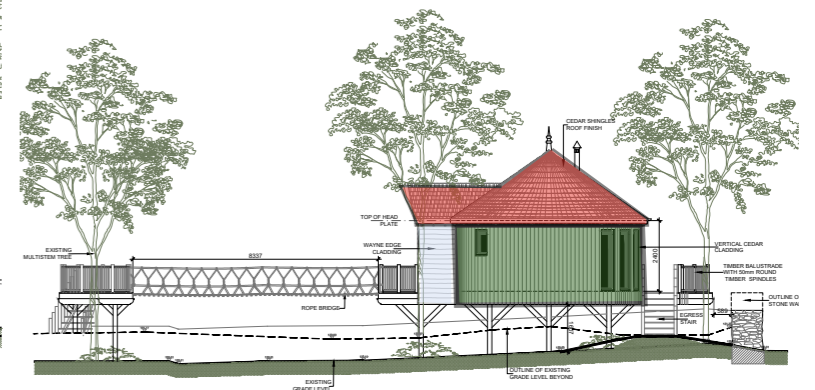
North Elevation



East Elevation



South Elevation



West Elevation



3.4 Construction and Specification

CONSTRUCTION

The principle throughout the treehouses' design is to reflect the natural and rural aspect of the landscape at Laverick Cottage with a predominantly timber aesthetic. Combined with Blue Forest's innovative craftsmanship, this will produce a high quality finish in keeping with the surrounding area.

A stained timber staircase with a rope detail balustrade will provide access to the treehouse leading to a timber deck. A safe & attractive balustrade, 1.1m high will be situated on the edge of the walkways & deck areas. The balustrade will be constructed using solid timber round posts, evenly spaced with round timber spindles.

APPEARANCE

The exterior of the treehouse will consist of a Cedar shingle roof finish, with a mixture of vertical English Cedar cladding and Larch waney edge cladding to external walls. Oak framed, double glazed windows and doors will be used throughout.

Over the course of their natural weathering, all the timber cladding on the treehouse will weather to a silvery grey colour, blending in naturally with the surrounding vegetation.

SUSTAINABILITY

Blue Forest will ensure that the timber in the proposed treehouse will be sustainably harvested and certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). All Larch waney edge cladding will be sourced from within 20km of the site.



1. Cedar shingle roof



2. English Cedar cladding / Larch waney edge



3. Oak double glazed windows & doors



4. Decking



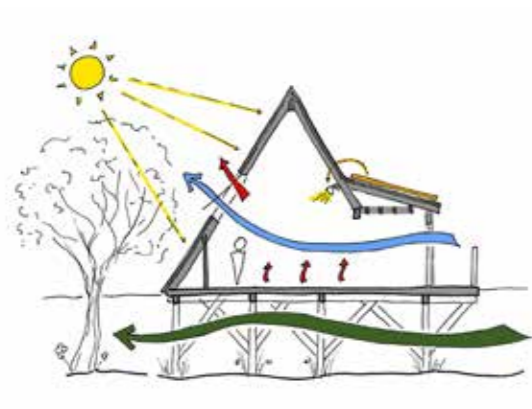
5. Timber balustrade



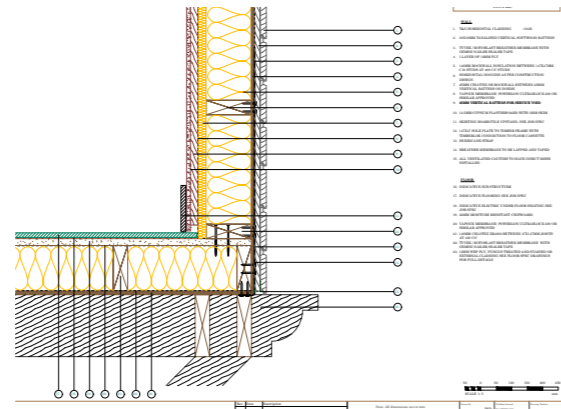
6. Timber staircase



3.5 Key Sustainability Considerations



Fabric-first approach to treehouse design



Highly insulated building fabric



Natural ventilation



Double glazed 'plastic free' timber windows



Use of prefabricated timber frame to minimise construction waste



Photovoltaic cells & battery storage



Ultra low energy lighting combined with large windows to maximise daylight



Ultra low energy appliances and smart heating controls



Wood burning stove fuelled by wood from the estate



We will aim to source 80% of the cladding materials for the treehouse within a 20km radius of the site.



Low flow toilets and appliances



Raised platform to facilitate ecological corridors



Minimal waste to landfill



Electric charging points



Site accessible by non-car modes of transport. Secure bike storage in car parks

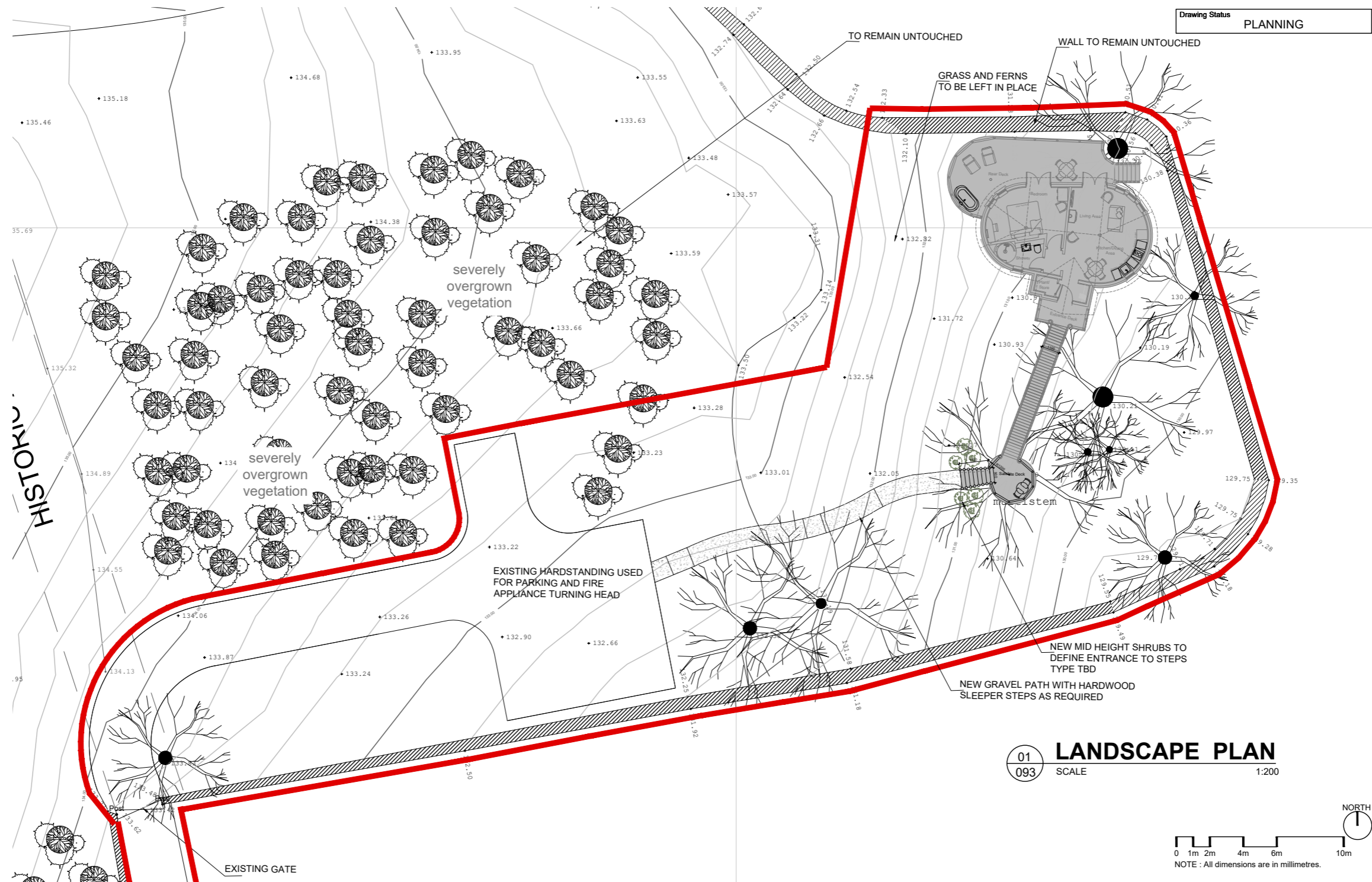


3.6 Visual

(Artistic visual for illustrative purposes only)



4.1 Site Access & Car Park



4.2 Services Strategy

SUMMARY

The proposed development comprises one treehouse accommodation unit, sleeping 2 people in a single bedroom with an en-suite shower room and self-catering facilities (hob, oven, sink and fridge). The plan (see right hand side of page) indicates locations of the main utility assets.

The treehouse is positioned close to existing farm access tracks and these can be followed to route-buried services without adversely affecting tree roots for the majority of the route to the site. Any digging within tree root protection areas will follow arboricultural advice.

ENERGY

An entirely 'off-grid' arrangement is not considered viable due to the nature of the site (over shading from trees) and the scale necessary to support the daily loads. Also, operating the site as a commercial venture will require resilience in electricity supply which cannot be guaranteed from an off-grid solution.

We propose to meet electrical energy demands via a single-phase electricity supply supporting an 'off-grid' inverter and battery storage arrangement, supplemented by solar photovoltaics.

DRAINAGE

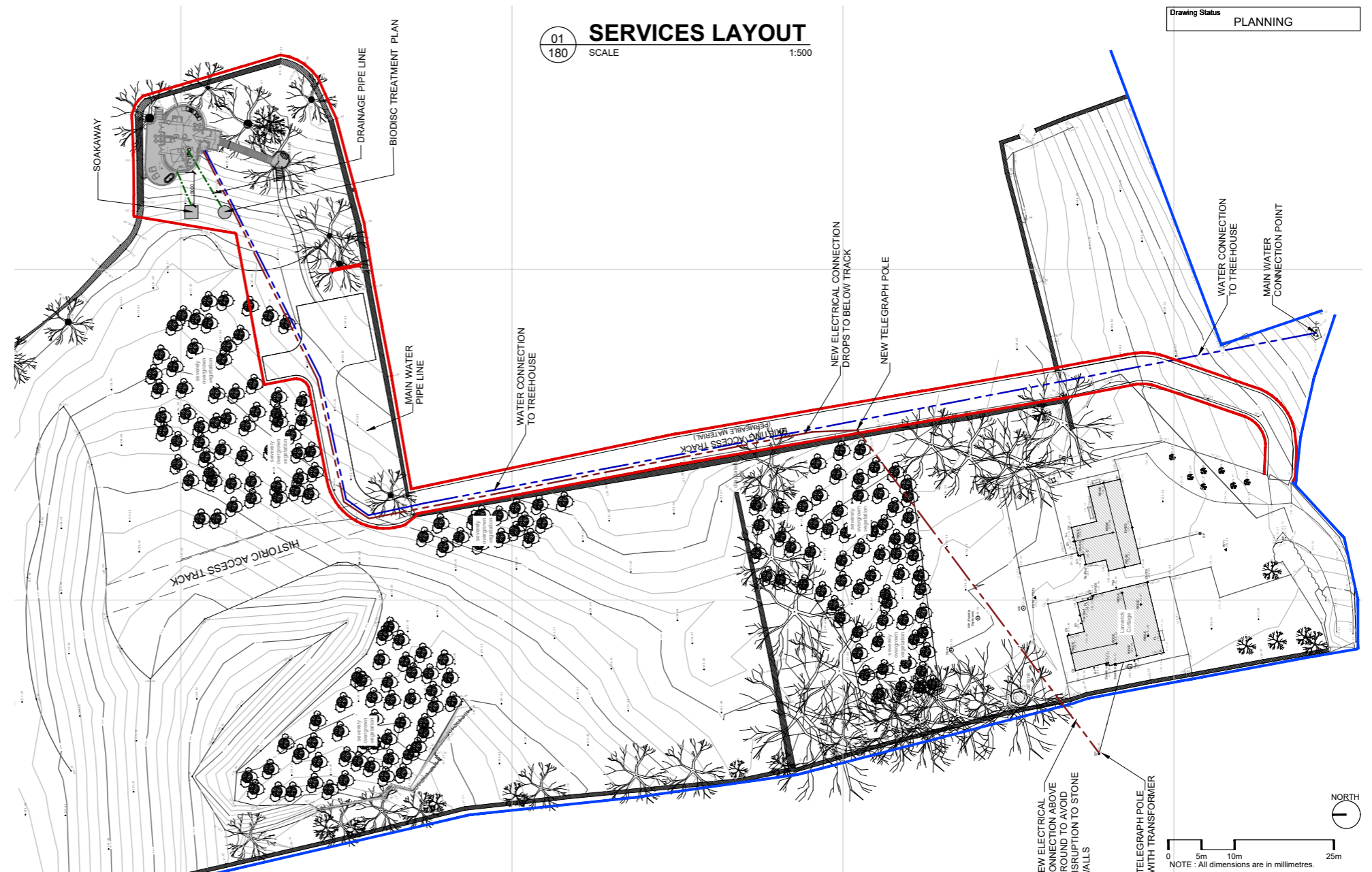
Foul drainage from the treehouse will require a bio-disc sewage treatment plant. A soakaway adjacent to the treehouse is proposed for storm water.

WATER

A mains water supply will be run from the nearest connection point.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ducts will be run to provide data services / broadband internet possible for 4G access for guests.



5.1 Planning Policy (Summary)

INTRODUCTION

1. This statement is prepared in support of a planning application for a treehouse which will be used for tourism and ancillary to the wider activities undertaken on the estate at land north of Laverick Cottage, Fourstones, NE47 5DX.
2. The treehouse will offer a unique form of tourism accommodation that distinguishes itself through its innovative design and integration with the surrounding environment. For example, the scheme will deliver a small unit of accommodation, whilst delivering on-site woodland management and biodiversity gains and improvements to local access. The development will also support local employment and skills advancement through the modest growth of the tourism side of the estate business. The project will also support the core functions of the estate including that of agriculture and land management. A supporting letter from the applicant is attached at Appendix 1.
3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports sustainable tourism development within the Countryside and recognises that such development often has to take place beyond settlements. It states development should be supported subject to impacts on the countryside character, local character, amenity and that of highways. Policy ECN15 also supports tourism at a local level and recognises that the hinterland in which the site is located has significant potential for generating benefits from tourism. The scheme would comply with this approach and would be a small unit which can be said to be a unique type of development that would widen the diversity of accommodation within the area. Secondly it would be located close to existing development, that of Laverick Cottage, and would utilise the same means of access and other infrastructure. Thus, the scheme can be said to accord with Policy ENV15 which supports tourism development within rural areas.
4. The development can also be said to meet Policy ENV16 which supports tourism development within the Green Belt and will reflect a small building which is linked to the wider open space activities on the estate, securing better access and employment skill development as per the policy requirements. The development will improve access to the wider footpath network and will be linked to the woodland management and environmental improvement of the estate and thus can be said to meet the terms of ENV16.
5. As well as being acceptable in principle, the application is supported by the relevant assessments in respect of arboricultural, ecology and heritage/landscape assessments and these confirm that the development will be acceptable in respect of these matters. The development is also well located for such development and will have good access to Fourstones, via the footpath network or cycle routes and further afield in respect of local attractions and amenities. Thus, the development can be considered to be acceptable in planning terms as set out within this statement.
6. The statement will assess the development against the development plan and any other material considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and which will ultimately justify the development in planning terms. In summary, the presumption in favour of sustainable development will apply in this instance having regard to the development plan and the wide range of economic, social and environment benefits that will accrue from the development.
7. The statement should be read alongside other reports including the arboricultural report prepared by Arbtech, a Heritage Report prepared by Roger Higgins and an ecological report by Arbtech. The architectural drawings are produced by Blue Forest, the designers of the treehouse development.

CONCLUSION

- The development will contribute to meeting the need for tourism accommodation in the area which will support the existing farm estate and represent a sustainable diversification scheme, improving access for visitors, and which will link to existing open space uses on the estate.
- The proposals will provide a new tourism unit which will contribute to the future of the farm estate whilst facilitating wider woodland management and biodiversity improvements and preserving landscape character.
- The treehouse unit is unique and bespoke and is located close to existing tourism uses and will reflect a type of development that can be supported by ECN15 and 16, with the latter supporting such development within the Green Belt. The unit will be linked to other open space uses whilst significantly improving access to the local countryside area and providing education and skills for young people within the rural economy.
- The development is supported by relevant assessments in respect of arboricultural, ecology and landscape/heritage assessments and can deliver a wide range of enhancements in this regard.
- Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development which means that where development accords with the development plan, development should be approved without delay. The application proposals would fulfil the role required by the planning system and would deliver benefits in respect of the three planning roles which are set out in the framework.
- The above clearly demonstrates that the proposals are sustainable and thus the presumption in favour of sustainable development lies in support of the scheme. In short, the scheme meets the terms of the development plan.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, REFER TO FULL PLANNING STATEMENT SUBMITTED WITH THIS PLANNING APPLICATION.



6.1 Guest Experience

TREEHOUSE GUEST EXPERIENCE

Before arrival, guests will be supplied with a welcome pack detailing information on their stay. This will include the following points:

- Share with the guests a summary of the site, and the story of how the treehouse came about.
- Provide details on all the Estate has to offer, including maps of all the walking trails with wildlife, biodiversity etc.
- Provide the guests with an explanation of what is available to see and do locally.
- Provide information on places to go for food and drink, supermarkets and other activities in the area.
- Information on where to purchase local produce on site or hire added extras such as electric bikes (with helmets) which will be available – allowing guests to explore the area easily, and without the need to use a car.
- Special request order form – for guests to order any specific items before they arrive to reduce need for travel and allow them to arrive, relax and switch off from the world. This can include:
 - Shopping delivery
 - Breakfast hampers
 - Cheese boards
 - Wines, chocolates
 - Check-in information
 - Information on what to see and do locally

On arrival guests will be directed to the treehouse car park, where they will be able to unload their luggage.

During their stay guests shall be left in peace to enjoy the surroundings. Should they require anything they are able to call the Stay on The Hill team. Wellington boots, umbrellas, etc will be available for hire should the guests wish to enhance their exploration.

At the end of the stay the guests will be able to leave their keys in the drop-off box located as they exit the site.

MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE

We expect guests to enjoy a 3 night / 4 night break. Cleaners will collect and deliver replacement bedding, cleaning materials, etc.



Guests will deposit rubbish into the external bins beside their treehouse. There will be a number of bins to allow for the waste to be sorted to maximise recycling. The waste shall then be collected from outside the treehouse every day and the waste taken back to the collection area to be deposited into larger bins where it shall then be collected by the refuse & recycling company.



6.2 Soft Landscaping Plan

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

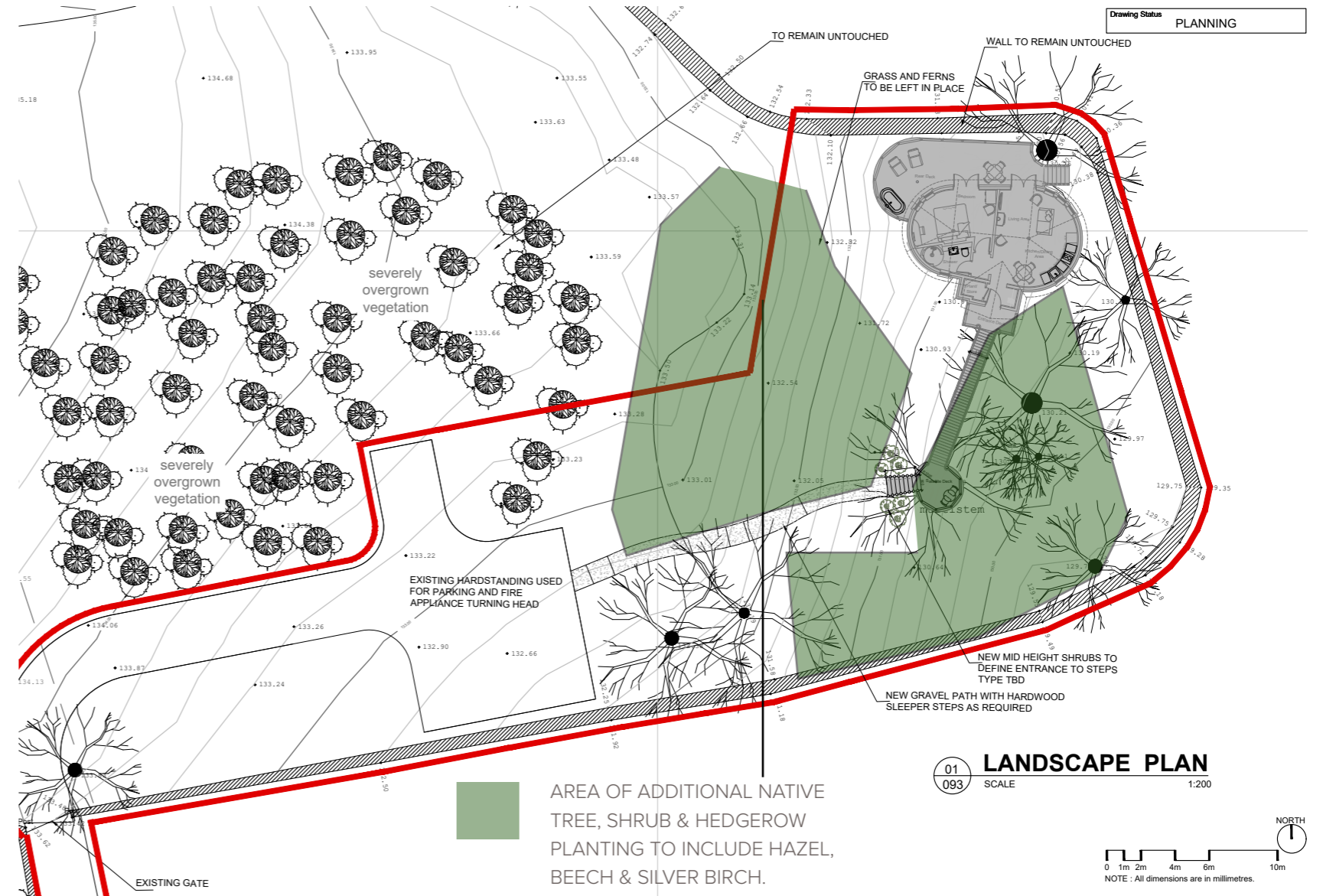
The site, known as Laverick Plantation is newly supplemented with native species planting among surviving mature deciduous specimens, with commercial planting having been felled.

LONG TERM VISION

To retain the site to a semi-natural woodland, improving the biodiversity and natural attraction of the area.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

1. To maintain and improve the landscape value and biodiversity of the woodland as a whole.
2. As far as possible to improve the quality of timber and encourage natural regeneration, while retaining as a priority the maintenance or enhancement of their biodiversity.
3. Where possible, semi-natural features within the area will be retained and enhanced.
4. Control invasive species.
5. Periodic thinning to promote tree growth and biodiversity.
6. Promote native plant species to support local wildlife.
7. Increase habitat diversity by selectively clearing some areas and encouraging undergrowth, hollow (shelter) trees, and deadwood.



7.1 Landscape Context

SUMMARY

The site is located within the Laverick Plantation, an area of woodland lying at the centre of the Parish of Warden, which encompasses Fourstones to the west, and Warden to the southeast. To the north the boundary is the B6318 Military Road. The application site lies within an area of plantation woodland between Low Whinny Hill to the north and Warden Hill to the southeast. Figure 1 shows the view towards the site at a distance, from the B6319 public road at Whinnyhill Plantations. 'As the crow flies' the site is 680m southeast of this junction. By the road – which then becomes an unmetalled track – the distance is 1.2km as it follows the more circuitous contours of the land, and approaches the site ultimately from the south. The B6319 is also the course of the Route72 Hadrian's Wall Cycle Path, which brings visitors through the area.

Figure 2 shows the application site, again at a distance, viewed from the north and looking towards Warden Hill which is ringed with woodland. The site is not visible from this vantage point, which shows Low Whinny Hill to the foreground, with its vegetated slope, and the application site in a depression between the two hills. The metalled road at this point soon gives way to a rougher track.

Figure 3 shows the view towards the site from the unnamed C road linking east Fourstones with the B6319. This shows the woodland-fringed Warden Hill with the buildings at Laverick Cottage just visible in the distance. The application site is not visible from the west, as the site sits on a slight plateau shielded from view by rising land.

Figure 4 conveys the relative flatness of the immediate site, which previous images have shown is shielded from prominent view by the undulating land around it.

Figure 5 shows Laverick Cottage and The Bothy – The image looks north-westwards towards the cottages, with the village of Fourstones and a more distant Newburgh to the west. The undulating character of the land is evident, and the surprising lack of visibility of the site, which might be imagined to be more prominent in the landscape. The image also looks towards the bridleway which skirts Warden Hill, and the confluence of footpaths located just south of Laverick Cottage.

The proposed works are relatively low in their impact on the landscape, sitting within a stand of long-established woodland, and designed to touch the site minimally. The construction proposed, and its material palate, are unobtrusive and contextual.

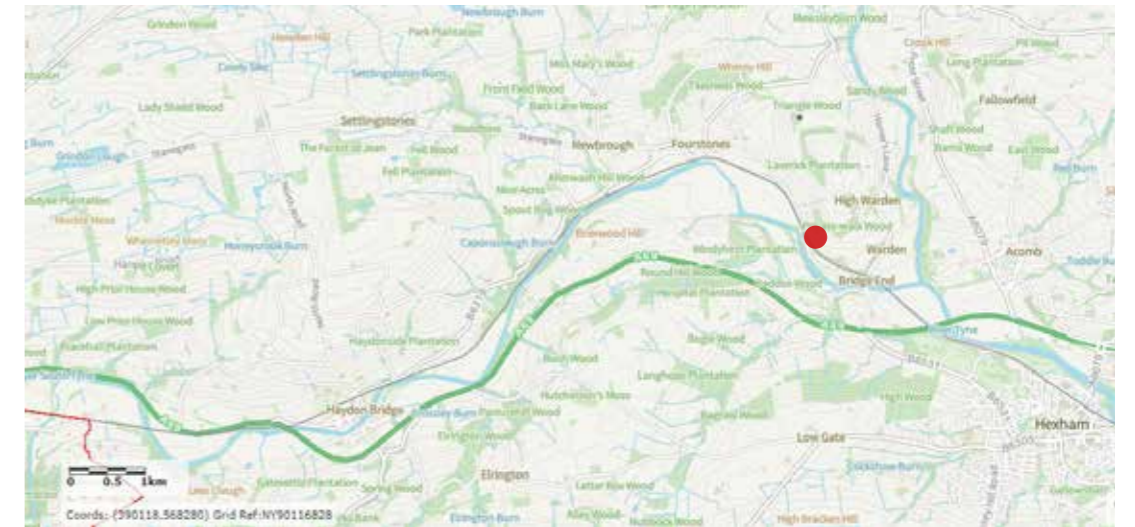


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



7.2 Heritage Context & Significance (Summary)

SUMMARY

The application site lies within Laverick Plantation, north of Laverick Cottage and The Bothy, properties which are holiday accommodation under the same ownership as the application site, and whose proposed access they share. Neither building is considered to be a heritage asset of note. An access track will run through an existing field gate east of The Bothy and will serve as a turning head and small area of parking to serve the one bedroom proposed accommodation. This is located so as to enable access by fire tender and is well concealed behind an existing drystone wall.

The site lies 380m from the westernmost extent of the circular Iron Age hill fort at Warden Hill (see Figure1) which is located southwest of the site. It lies 1.5km south of the southern edge of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Hadrian's Wall) World Heritage Site. Listed buildings at east Fourstones are in excess of 500m from the site and there is no intervisibility as the site lies within a slight depression with rising ground to the west and north. From vantage points to the north and east, the bluff of Triangle Wood shields the site.

The significance of the site lies in its broad historic setting which stretches many miles following the linear route of Hadrian's Wall and to a less extent, the Stanegate. The pre-Roman significance is focused on Warden Iron Age Hill Fort. C18 and C19 significance is present in vernacular farm buildings to the west of the site at east Fourstones, but these are remote and the site has no bearing on these assets.

The proposed works are relatively low in their impact on the landscape, sitting within a stand of long-established woodland, and designed to touch the site minimally. The construction proposed, and its material palette, are unobtrusive and contextual. The setting of the scheduled monument Warden Hill Fort is unaffected by the development.

CONCLUSION

It is respectfully asserted that the scheme is a contextual and well-considered proposal which will sit discretely within an established woodland setting. With a range of leisure routes in the immediate vicinity, including public footpaths, a bridleway, and notably the long-distance Hadrian's Wall Path, and the Route72 Hadrian's Wall Cycle Path, the site is well-placed to provide discrete accommodation to visitors. The proposal is not considered to cause material harm to known or unknown heritage assets, and the most notable feature in the area – Warden Hill Fort – is unaffected by the proposal. The location of the site – some distance north of the confluence of routes just south of Laverick Cottage - suggests that casual users of the route network will be unaware of its presence.

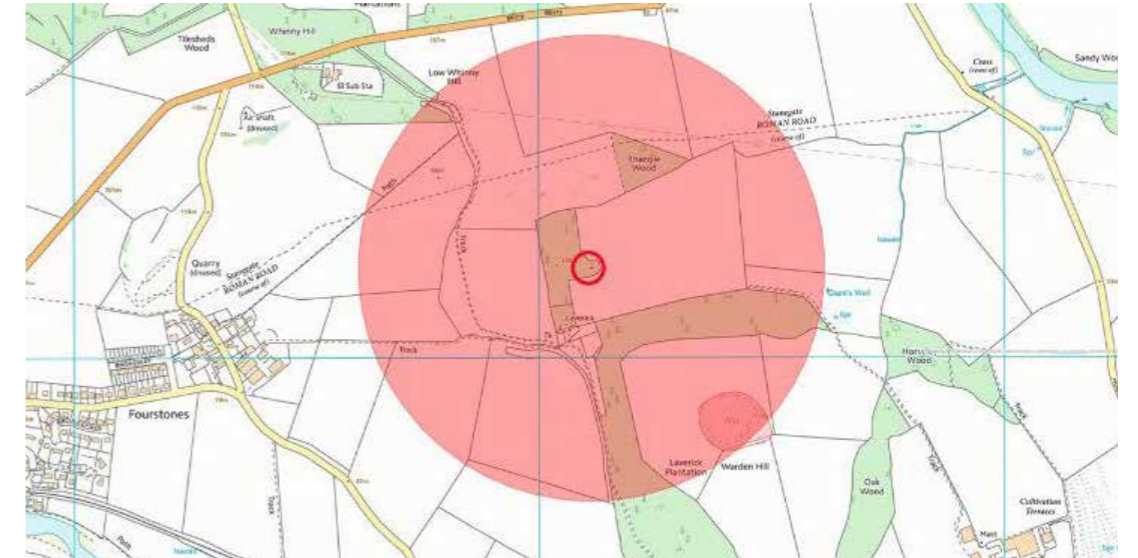


Figure 1 - 500m radius of site

FOR MORE INFORMATION, REFER TO FULL HERITAGE STATEMENT SUBMITTED WITH THIS PLANNING APPLICATION.



7.3 Ecology Survey (Summary)



SUMMARY

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) survey has been undertaken at Laverick Cottage to inform a planning application for the erection of a 'treehouse' (hereafter referred to as "the proposed development"). A plan showing the proposed development is shown on the right hand side of the page.

The site is located at National Grid Reference NY 90102 68190 and has an area of approximately 0.1ha comprising of areas of recently felled woodland and bramble scrub and a section of grazed sheep field (the current access track). It is surrounded by grazing fields with some conifer woodland to the southeast.

The following habitats are present within and adjacent to the site:

- Modified grassland, grazed – g4, 60
- Drystone wall – u1e,67
- Other woodland; mixed; mainly conifer recently felled with some young, planted trees – w1h6, 53, 56
- Bramble scrub with some tall herb and bracken – h3d, 12, 16
- Pontic rhododendron (a non-native invasive plant species Listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) was recorded close to the eastern boundary of the site.

Due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from sensitive sites, it is anticipated there will be:

- No impacts to designated sites
- No impacts on amphibians, including great crested newt
- No impacts on reptiles
- No impacts to any notable habitats
- No impacts on badgers
- No impacts on hazel dormice

As the trees are to be retained, the proposed development will not result in the removal of any habitats which could be used by foraging or commuting bats. The proposed development may include the use of lighting which could spill on to bat roosting, foraging or commuting habitat and deter bats from using these areas.

The proposed development will result in the loss of scrub and deadwood habitat. This is likely to have a minimal impact on biodiversity due to the fairly low ecological value and isolated nature of these habitats.

PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS

The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities will be incorporated into the proposed development:

- Native tree, hedgerow and shrub planting
- Creation of wild flower grassland
- Planting fruit bearing trees and species-rich grassland to increase foraging opportunities
- Creation of brush piles or installation of hedgehog houses in shady areas
- Installation of gaps under boundary fencing to enable hedgehogs to move freely through the site
- The installation of a minimum of two bat boxes on mature trees around the site boundaries will provide additional roosting habitat for bats
- The installation of a minimum of three bird boxes on retained mature trees or on the new building on site will provide additional nesting habitat for birds



SEE PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL, SUBMITTED WITH THIS PLANNING APPLICATION, FOR MORE INFORMATION.



7.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a strategy to develop land and contribute to the recovery of nature. It is a way of making sure the habitat for wildlife is in a better state than it was before development.

The NPPF recognises that moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains is central to sustainable development and that contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment is a core planning principle.

As a minor development a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) has been carried out and proportionate enhancements will be delivered for biodiversity including the provision of dedicated bird and bat boxes. In addition, a woodland management will lead to the enhancement of the site, including further tree planting and habitat creation, including brush piles, etc.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Maintain a variety of tree ages and species
2. Increase the number of trees through tree planting - The applicant is looking to plant a tree for every guest that books into the treehouse.
3. Habitat creation (log brush piles, bird and bat boxes, etc)
4. Increase habitat diversity and a greater variety of flora and fauna
5. Contribute to carbon sequestration, mitigating climate change effects on the woodland.
6. Minimise disruption to wildlife (sensitive construction methods, see CMS)
7. Monitor woodland / wildlife closely during and after construction.

Overall, by integrating these specific approaches in the development of the treehouse, we can achieve a net gain in biodiversity compared to managing the woodland without the treehouse development project.

Bat roosts



At least three bat boxes to be installed



Woodcrete bat box

Nesting Birds



At least three general purpose bird boxes to be installed



Woodstone Nest Box

Habitat Creation

(Reptiles, amphibians, hedgehogs, etc)



Log brush piles



New tree planting with native species (see landscaping plan and woodland management)



7.5 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Summary)



THE PROPOSAL

The proposed installation of a one bedroom accommodation treehouse and exterior deck within the confines of an existing stone wall. The treehouse has been designed to sit within the existing trees on site so as to blend with the landscape.

It is likely that arboricultural impacts can be addressed with arboricultural methodology or minor amendments to the proposal.

PROPOSED TREE WORKS

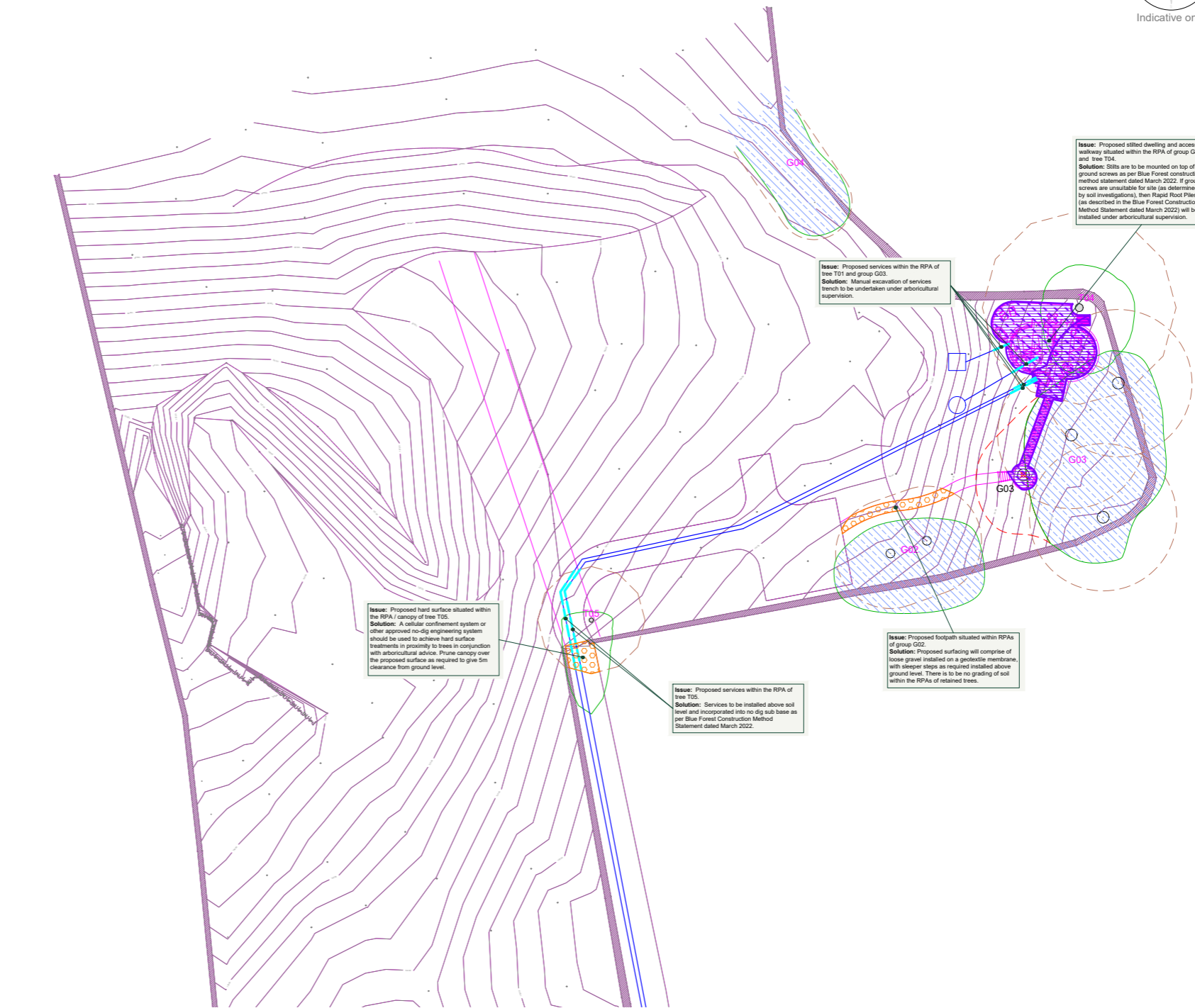
See construction method statement for further details regarding proposed tree protection methods, etc.

Table 8: Summary of Tree Works.

No.	Species	Works	Category
G01	Various	Prune - Raise crown as required to give a ground clearance of 5m, to facilitate vehicle access over proposed track	B2
G03	Various	Partial removal of group - Fell tree to ground level	B2
T02	Common Ash	Fell to ground level	U
T03	Sycamore	Fell to ground level	U
T04	Common Oak	Prune - Raise crown as required to give a ground clearance of 7m over the proposed structure location. Remove major (>25mm diameter and/ or longer than 2m) deadwood and hung up stem.	C1
T05	Common Oak	Prune - Raise crown as required to give a ground clearance of 5m, to facilitate vehicle access over proposed track	C1

CONCLUSION

It is the conclusion of this report that the overall quality and longevity of the amenity contribution provided for by the trees and groups of trees within and adjacent to the site will not be adversely affected as a result of the local planning authority consenting to the proposed development. It is considered that any issues raised in this report, or beyond the scope of it can be dealt with by planning conditions.



Indicative only

Impacts	Ref. #
Tree loss	1
Group / hedge to be removed (prior to start of work)	1
Trees to be removed (prior to start of work)	1
Group / hedge to be removed (prior to start of work)	1
Trees to be removed (prior to start of work)	1
Group / hedge to be removed (prior to start of work)	1
Trees to be removed (prior to start of work)	1
Group / hedge to be removed (prior to start of work)	1
Trees to be removed (prior to start of work)	1

No.	Species	RPA (m ²)	Incision (%)
G01	Various	1000	10
G02	Various	2000	20
G03	Various	3000	30
G04	Various	4000	40

No.	Species	Work	Date
G01	Various	Prune - Raise crown	15/03/2022
G03	Various	Partial removal of group	20/03/2022
T02	Common Ash	Fell to ground level	25/03/2022
T03	Sycamore	Fell to ground level	30/03/2022
T04	Common Oak	Prune - Raise crown	05/04/2022
T05	Common Oak	Prune - Raise crown	10/04/2022

Issue	Solution
Proposed stilted dwelling and access walkway situated within the RPA of group G03 and tree T04.	Stilts are to be mounted on top of ground screws as per Blue Forest Construction Method Statement dated March 2022. If ground screws are unsuitable for site (as determined by soil investigations), then Rapid Road Piles (as described in the Blue Forest Construction Method Statement dated March 2022) will be installed under arboricultural supervision.
Proposed services within the RPA of tree T01 and group G01.	Manual excavation of services trench to be undertaken under arboricultural supervision.
Proposed hand surface situated within the RPA of canopy of tree T05.	A cellular confinement system or other approved no-dig engineering system should be used to achieve hard surface treatments in proximity to trees in conjunction with arboricultural advice. Prune canopy over the proposed surface as required to give 5m clearance from ground level.
Proposed services within the RPA of tree T05.	Services to be installed above soil level and incorporated into no dig sub base as per Blue Forest Construction Method Statement dated March 2022.
Proposed footpath situated within RPAs of group G02.	Proposed surfacing will comprise of loose gravel installed on a geotextile membrane, with sleeper steps as required installed above ground level. There is to be no grading of soil within the RPAs of retained trees.

SEE ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT, SUBMITTED WITH THIS PLANNING APPLICATION, FOR MORE INFORMATION.



7.6 Economic Benefits

INTRODUCTION

The Government are encouraging farmers and land owners to develop new sources of income as the Basic Payment scheme is being Phased out. Tourist accommodation is the perfect balance working well alongside farming operations while producing an alternative income stream, reducing risk caused by fluctuations in the agricultural market.

Farm diversification into treehouse development presents a strong economic case, as it offers an additional revenue stream through agritourism and unique accommodation. This diversification helps reduce dependency on traditional agricultural income sources, mitigates financial risks associated with weather and market fluctuations, and contributes positively to sustainable land management practices.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

Established in 2019, Stay on the Hill was the applicants first diversification into the holiday accommodation sector. The applicant believed there was a need for high-quality, affordable accommodation options for tourists in the region. Accommodation that offers something extraordinary. They have witnessed a significant increase in visitor numbers year after year, consistently achieving an impressive 70-80% occupancy rate. This has proven that the concept is both viable and well-received; they have taken pride in the remarkably high review ratings on Google, surpassing all other accommodations within the area.

As with Stay on the Hill we have already proved we understand market conditions, customer needs, running costs and responsibilities of running a short term holiday let business. We have the right skills and are passionate about this Luxury unique tree house enterprise.

THE PROPOSAL

As avid travellers the applicant recognises that the shepherd's hut and glamping markets have become saturated in recent years, with their popularity beginning to wane. Today's discerning travellers seek a comfortable experience alongside exceptional access to nature – footpaths and panoramas – while still feeling at one with their surroundings.

The development of a treehouse will tap into the growing market for eco-tourism and unique accommodations, increasing revenue by attracting tourists seeking a distinctive experience. Additionally, the treehouse can promote environmental conservation through sustainable practices, creating a healthier ecosystem for agricultural activities. Overall, diversifying into treehouse development can improve financial stability and contribute positively to the local economy.

Unlike with people renting out their home when away or their second home when not in use, this is providing constant tourist accommodation throughout the year.

CONCLUSION

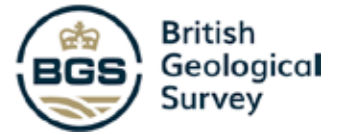
It is with these considerations in mind that we strongly believe there will be an immense demand for treehouse accommodations at this particular location. With your support, we can provide visitors with an unparalleled experience that combines comfort and closeness to nature, setting a new standard for the industry.



Image of the inside of a treehouse



7.7 Geology Map





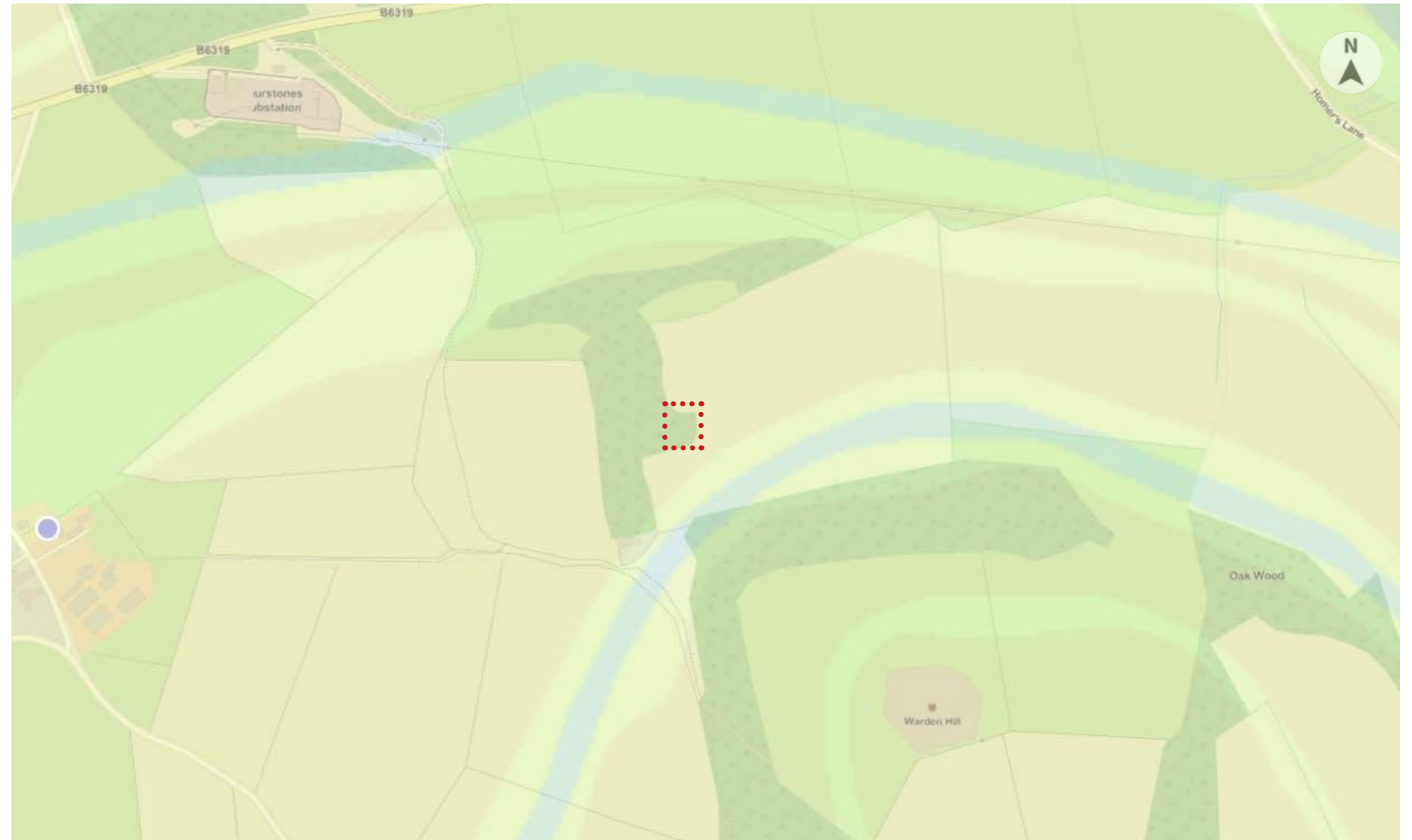
DESCRIPTION

Bedrock geology:

Stainmore Formation - Sandstone. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 329 and 319 million years ago during the Carboniferous period.

KEY:






-  Proposed Treehouse locations
-  Stainmore Formation - Sandstone



Environmental roam map: Not to scale



7.8 Flood Risk Map

-  Approximate Area of Development
-  Main River - River Tyne (North & South)
-  Flood Zone 1
-  Flood Zone 2
-  Flood Zone 3



8.1 About Blue Forest

Blue Forest is an award winning company. We have taken a pioneering approach in the design and construction of sustainable and environmentally friendly buildings and have developed a reputation as the world's leading luxury treehouse builder.

The Blue Forest team, which includes directors Andy Payne, Simon Payne and Ben Lutyens (shown below), are passionate about the well-being of the environment and are keen to promote sustainable principles and ethics throughout the design and construction process. The majority of the timber used in our buildings is FSC / PEFC certified or sourced from sustainably managed forests where there is an active strategy of replanting and habitat regeneration.

Blue Forest's passion for the environment has led to the design and implementation of many revolutionary green technology solutions for our clients.

Our uniquely tailored service provides a turnkey solution, where everything from design and planning to construction and commissioning comes in an easy, reliable and professional package.



ANDY



SIMON



BEN



Image: Precedent image - not proposed treehouse





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