

Treehouse Accommodation Northeast of Laverick Cottage,
Fourstones
Heritage Statement
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Prepared in relation to a proposed application for Treehouse Holiday Accommodation at Land Northeast of Laverick Cottage, Fourstones, NE47 5DX



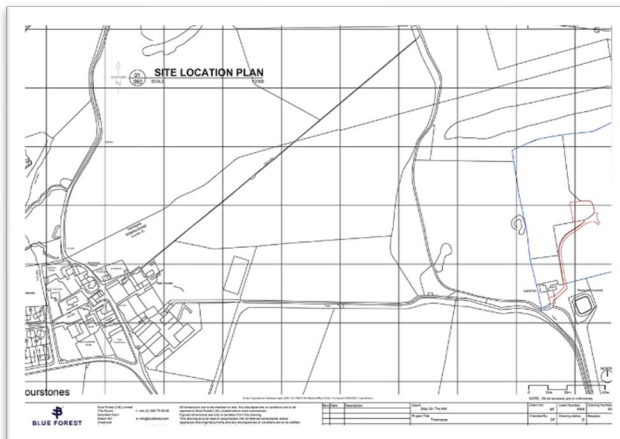
Land Northeast of Laverick Cottage, Fourstones, NE47 5DX – Treehouse Holiday Accommodation

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared in relation to a proposed ‘treehouse’ at land northeast of Laverick Cottage and The Bothy, Fourstones, NE47 5DX. The treehouse structure is proposed to serve as holiday accommodation and is located close to a number of public footpaths, bridleways, and the long distance Route72 Hadrian’s Wall Cycle route. The Hadrian’s Wall long distance footpath / National Trail runs some 2.5km or 1.5miles to the north of the site.

1.2 Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) states that *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”*

1.3 Neither Laverick Cottage nor the adjacent building 'The Bothy' are listed, or known to be considered undesignated heritage assets. They are however attractive stone-built buildings located in undulating countryside on land rising to the north of the South Tyne, and west of the North Tyne. The cottages are located some 1.2km from the centre of the village of Fourstones, which lies due west, and some 600m from the farmsteads which make up its eastern edge. The site is at similar distances, though 150m north of the cottages.



1.4 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.



Figure 1 and 2 Site Plan and Proposed Block Plan

1.5 400m southeast of the application site is Warden Hill, and the outer edge of its Iron Age hill fort, separated from the site by a dense band of woodland. The site is 1.5km south of the southern extent of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Hadrian's Wall) World Heritage Site.

2.0 Context

2.1 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 3 shows the view towards the site at a distance, from the B6319 public road at Whinnyhill Plantations. This shows an electrical substation and the private road accessing this and Laverick Cottage and the Bothy, and the application site. '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.

2.2 Figure 4 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.

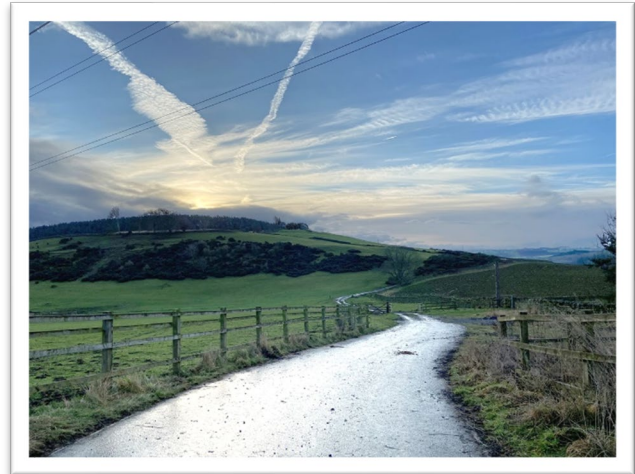


Figure 4 The view south from the access road towards Warden Hill

2.3 Figure 5 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 5 View looking east from the C road north of east Fourstones

2.4 Figure 6 shows Laverick Cottage and The Bothy – with the application site in the stand of trees to the right of the frame - viewed from the base of Warden Hill and its wooded fringe. The image looks north-westwards towards the cottages, with the village of Fourstones and a more distance 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 just south of Laverick Cottage.



Figure 6 View from the fringes of Warden Hill looking west towards Fourstones and a distant Newburgh.

2.5 Figure 7 shows Laverick Cottage and the Bothy – two existing holiday lets – viewed from the south. To the right of these is the Laverick Plantation which is accessed via either of the two field gates shown in Figure 8. Figure 8 shows the site on the far side of grazing, and accessed via an existing field gate. The site is newly supplemented with deciduous trees among surviving mature deciduous specimens, with commercial planting having been felled.



Figure 7 Laverick Cottage and the Bothy looking north

2.6 Figure 8 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 8 The eastern gable of 'the Bothy' with the stand of trees to the far right being the application site with the access gate visible to the right of the pair

3.0 Heritage Context & Significance

3.1 The site – like much of the area in the Tyne Valley and its South Tyne and North Tyne tributaries – sits in a wider landscape steeped in history. This is recognised by the Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Hadrian's Wall) World Heritage Site whose edge lies some 1.5km to the north, and a series of scheduled ancient monuments relating to the wall and its forts beyond that. There are no heritage designations either within, or in the immediate vicinity of the site, and neither Laverick Cottage nor The Bothy are of any historic note, although they do appear on the 1st Edition OS map of the area, and appear to be mid C19 in character – possible outfarms to the farmsteads at Fourstones or High Warden. While attractive, the buildings are considered to have only minor heritage value.



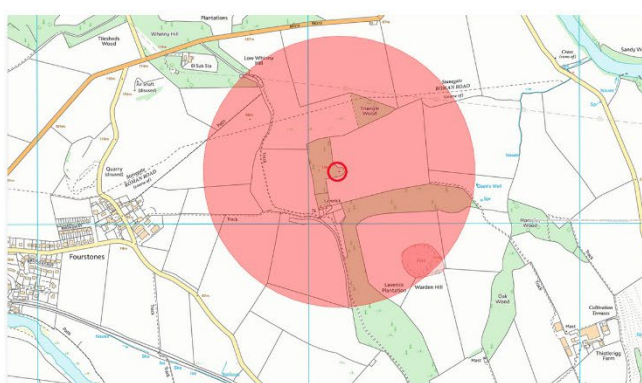
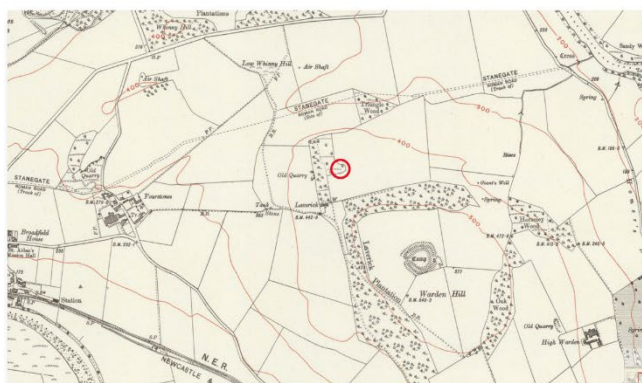
Figure 9 Warden Hill viewed from the site, looking south east

3.2 The site does however lie 150m south of the course of the Stanegate Roman Road, which then descends to Fourstones west of the site. The route of Stanegate is shown on the Historic England mapping extract at Figure 12, running through the tip of 'Triangle Wood'. The route is undesignated though of archaeological interest. The works are at some distance from this.

3.3 As the period mapping shows, the site at present remains largely unchanged since 1866. Laverick Cottage is remote from other residences, being equidistant between east Fourstones to the west, and High Warden, to the south east. Just north of High Warden lies the site of Homer's House – scene of the notorious 1826 murder of Joseph Hedley.



3.4 By far the most notable designated heritage asset in the vicinity and just at the edge of the 500m radius search shown at Figure 12, is the Scheduled Ancient Monument Warden Hill Fort. Designated 26th November 1932, the asset is scheduled as 'Hillfort on Warden Hill, 1km north-west of High Warden' and its entry notes that small multivallate hillfort are iron age features dating from sixth century BC to first century AD. The entry states *'The site has extensive views in all directions and is located near the junction of the rivers North and South Tyne. The enclosure is roughly circular in shape and measures 85m east to west by 63m north to south within three ramparts and a ditch. The ramparts have become spread and give the impression of being terraced into the hillside; the two outer ramparts, which are 0.4m and 1.5m high, are only 1.5m apart and were originally separated by a ditch which has become obscured by the spreading ramparts. The more substantial inner rampart measures 6m across and has a maximum height of 2m. Where the matrix of the rampart is clear of turf, it is composed of large facing stones infilled with smaller stones and earth. An original, slightly inturned, entrance can clearly be seen in the western side of the fort. There are no visible traces of circular houses within the hillfort but some*



Figures 10, 11 and 12 showing the 1866 1st Edition OS Map; third edition 1924 map, and current arrangement

will survive beneath ground level; others have been damaged and obscured by surface quarrying. Examination of aerial photographs has revealed the possible existence of a small Romano-British settlement overlying the north-western corner of the hillfort. This lies in an area of surface quarrying and its outline is difficult to determine with certainty. The stone field wall which crosses the southern edge of the protected area and the re-erected trig point which lies on the southern perimeter of the protected area are excluded from the scheduling but the ground beneath them is included.' The full entry can be read here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1011421?section=official-list-entry>



Figure 13 The view west by northwest from the summit of the hill fort

3.5 As figure 13 indicates, the intervisibility between the site and Warden Hill is low, with an extensive band of intervening woodland and the curvature of the hill shielding the site from view. Further designated sites – notably a series of listed farm buildings at east Fourstones, and the scheduled monuments at Chester’s Roman Fort are a substantial distance from the site, with no intervisibility.

3.6 The site is significant as part of a broad area featuring a range of historic elements – ranging from the iron age fort to the south east, to historic settlements at Warden, Fourstones and more distantly Newbrough. With the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site to the north, and the Stanegate also passing by, the site shares a significance enjoyed by a swathe of land across the route of Hadrian’s Wall. There is only one designated asset within 500m of the site – this being the Iron Age hill fort at Warden whose western edge is 380m distant from the site. The nearby Laverick Cottage and Bothy, while attractive parts of the rural landscape, and in the local vernacular, are not of notable significance. The actual site, being in former plantation woodland, and with a proposed access track cutting briefly across grazing land, is of low significance.

4.0 Proposal

4.1 The proposed works are the construction of a short linking track over the area of grazing land immediately to the east of The Bothy, accessed via the existing unmetalled track which leads to the site from public roads. This road will access the corner of the Laverick Plantation where a treehouse structure is proposed, raised on stilts and with minimal interference with the ground beneath. The proposed track will give access to a turning head and parking north of the existing drystone wall which bounds the woodland. Set within the area of retained deciduous trees and new planting is the site of the proposed treehouse with the small amount of new access infrastructure discretely located within this existing boundary.

4.2 The proposed treehouse would sit on an elevated deck with the highest point of the deck some 1.6m above the ground, and with 6.65 metres to the apex of the roof. The roof is indicated as being in cedar shingles with vertical cedar cladding to the main structure, and horizontal wave-edged cladding to the entrance porch. The structure is essentially an oval structure subdivided internally to provide x1 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. The treehouse sits beneath the canopy of several retained deciduous trees.

4.2 The proposals are similar in flavour, and with a similar accommodation offer, to recent approved schemes at the Grade II* Hesleyside Hall within the Northumberland National Park, reference: 19NP0057 Hesleyside Huts, Hesleyside Hall, Bellingham, Northumberland, NE48 2LA 'Construction of a timber tower (holiday accommodation) including installation of package treatment plant'; and 19NP0056 Hesleyside Hall, Bellingham, Hexham, Northumberland, NE48 2LA 'Construction of fairytale rustic tree house (holiday accommodation) and installation of package treatment plant'; and within Northumberland 18/00402/FUL 'Proposed tree house holiday unit', Beacon Hill Farm Longhorsley Morpeth Northumberland NE65 8QW.

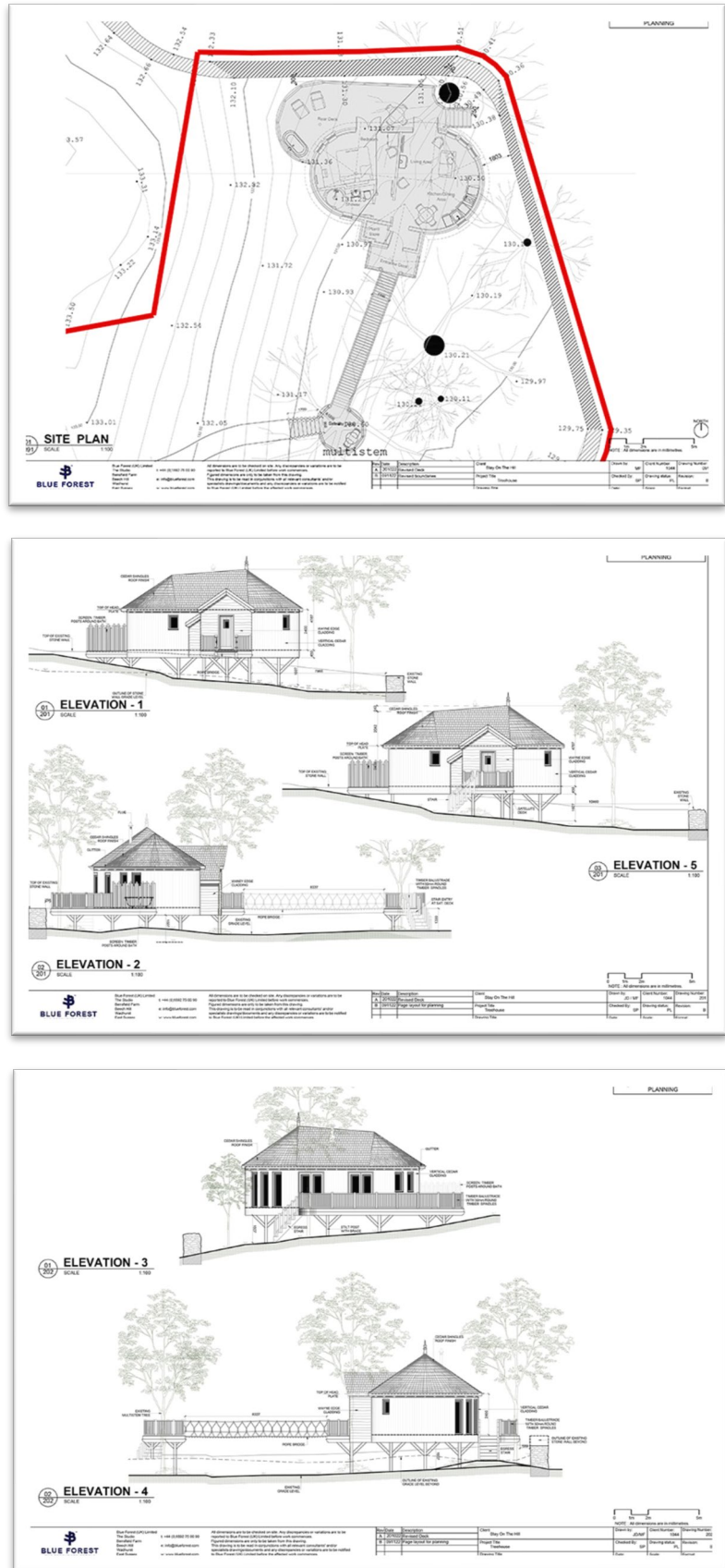


Figure 14 Proposed plans and elevations

5.0 Policy Context

5.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) states in Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) Paragraph 194, that “In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.”

5.1.2 Paragraph 197 advises that “in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.

5.1.3 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance”.

5.1.4 Paragraph 200 states that “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification”.

5.1.5 Paragraph 201 states that “Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss..[...]”.

5.1.6 Paragraph 202 states that “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use”.

5.2 The Town and Country Planning (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) Act 1990

5.2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings) Act 1990 sets out the wider legislative framework in which development which affects listed buildings and conservation areas must be considered. Section 66 of the 1990 Act requires that “In considering whether to grant planning permission [F1or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

5.3 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979

5.3.1 The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 or AMAAA was a law passed by the UK government, the latest in a series of Ancient Monument Acts legislating to protect the archaeological heritage of England & Wales and Scotland.

5.3.2 Section 61(12) defines sites that warrant protection due to their being of national importance as 'ancient monuments'. These can be either scheduled monuments or "any other monument which in the opinion of the Secretary of State is of public interest by reason of the historic, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest attaching to it". If an ancient monument is scheduled then it gains additional legal protection.

5.4 Local Policy Context

- 5.4.1 Northumberland Local Plan – 2016-2036 (March 2022)
Policy STP 3 Principles of sustainable development (strategic policy)
Policy ENV7 Historic environment and heritage assets
Policy ENV 8 Frontiers of the Roman Empire - Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site

5.5 Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance (English Heritage 2008)

5.5.1 Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance (English Heritage 2008) is intended as a guide to conservation thinking and practice. It defines conservation as the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage value and recognises that change in the historic environment is inevitable, whether this is caused by natural processes, wear and tear, or responses to technological, social or economic change.

5.5.2 The heritage values set out in the English Heritage document Conservation Principles: Policies and guidance are:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value: the ways people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

5.5.3 There are six commonly accepted levels of significance. These are:

Outstanding level of significance: Exceptional levels of architectural and decorative preservation – corresponding to the NPPF advice that harm would be 'wholly exceptional' e.g. according to the highest level of protection and special interest afforded to a grade I or grade II* listing.

High Level of significance: A nationally and regionally important asset e.g. Grade II building to which substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.

Medium level of significance: May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category to be retained where possible although there is usually scope for adaptation.

Low level of significance: Undesignated assets that may make a positive contribution at a local level. There is usually scope for adaptation.

No interest: Historically unimportant but a category above intrusive or negative impact. Adaptation or removal would usually be acceptable.

Intrusive: Historically unimportant and having a negative impact on the setting or significance of other assets. Could be removed with beneficial effect.

5.6 Historic England's 2019 Advice Note 12 '**Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets Historic England Advice Note 12**' provides information on the analysis and assessment of heritage significance in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It advises a staged approach to decision-making and the development of proposals for change to heritage assets. It states that "A staged approach would usually embrace the following stages, informed by the scope of the proposal:

1. Understand the form, materials and history of the affected heritage asset(s), and/or the nature and extent of archaeological deposits
2. Understand the significance of the asset(s)

These two stages fulfil the requirement in paragraph 189 of the NPPF and are undertaken by the applicant.

3. Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance

This stage fulfils the requirement in paragraph 190 of the NPPF and is undertaken by the LPA.

However, the applicant needs to be aware of impacts so that the analysis of significance submitted to the LPA, under paragraph 189, is sufficient in its level of detail.

4. Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF

5. Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance

These two stages are addressed by the assessment of impact by the LPA but may also be addressed by the applicant in reaching a decision on the scope and design of a proposal. Indeed, assessment of these three latter stages by the applicant prior to application may assist a positive assessment of impact by the LPA, thus leading to better outcomes for applicants, reducing both abortive work and delays."

6.0 Assessing the impact of the proposal

6.1 The application site lies within Laverick Plantation, a longstanding area of woodland which is undergoing active management and where a recent planting scheme of native species has occurred. The site lies 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 is proposed which will run through an existing field gate east of The Bothy and will serve 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.

6.2 The site lies 380m from the westernmost extent of the circular Iron Age hill fort at Warden Hill, which is located southwest of the site. It lies 1.5km south 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 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.

6.3 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.

6.4 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.

6.5 The setting of the scheduled monument Warden Hill Fort is unaffected by the development.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 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.

Sources

Department for Communities and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework (London, DCLG 2021)

Historic England Advice Note 12. (Swindon. Historic England, 2019)

English Heritage. Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (London: English Heritage, April 2008)

Northumberland County Council 'Heritage Statement Guidance' (Development Services, Northumberland County Council, April 2015)

Listed Building mapping information taken from <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search>

First Edition Ordnance Survey 1866;

Third Edition Ordnance Survey 1924;

Web Resources:

<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/herdetail.aspx?crit&ctid=91&id=4725>

<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results.aspx>