

PLANNING STATEMENT – THE COTTAGE

A retrospective planning application seeking consent for a rear extension (including replacing of storage sheds), to include a reclaimed slate roof with 6 rooflights (located in the unseen inner valley) and the addition of exterior, vertical timber cladding to an existing cottage providing ancillary accommodation for Halton Grove wedding venue. Planning approval was sought and received for the wedding venue, farmhouse and cottage under application 20_03388_FUL. This also included the change of use to guest accommodation (C1).

INTRODUCTION

1. The cottage (now Bridesmaid's Cottage), formerly 'Shildon Cottage', is part of the wedding venue, Halton Grove and is located within the site curtilage, previously known as Shildon. The cottage serves solely as wedding guest accommodation, specifically for bridesmaids (as referred to and required by Condition 8 in the previous consent – 22/01073/VARYCO) at Halton Grove. Halton Grove is a wedding venue which has recently opened and is now booked for weddings and guest accommodation into 2026. The full site comprises a farmhouse, cottage, event space, courtyard and enclosed woodland and gardens.
2. The Applicant is aware that the site's rural setting is unique and therefore has endeavoured to enhance and extend what was once a dated, rendered cottage in need of improvements. The privacy at Halton Grove is one its many key features with the location of the cottage benefitting from such seclusion, screened behind a mix of established laurel hedge-lines, woodland trees and recently planted mature shrubs in all directions. The new external timber cladding has enabled the exterior of the cottage to blend in with the beauty of the land and surrounding woodland.
3. This Statement seeks to address and clarify matters related to the changes to the property size, the impact of external cladding, the general use of the property and previous applications made for this property.

PROPOSAL

4. Retrospective planning permission is sought for the extension of the existing cottage to the rear whilst affixing European larch cladding, vertically, to all elevations. The existing sheds to the west of the property have been removed and reinstated on a smaller scale. Parking provision is located to the rear of the cottage, as shown and agreed in the application 20_003388_FUL for those staying in the cottage. The submitted plans show both the previous and current/proposed layouts.

THE SITE

5. The site consists of event space, farmhouse and cottage (both C1 use) set in large grounds of approximately 6 acres. The properties and grounds are located in a rural setting north-east of Corbridge with woodland to the north, west and east and raised hills to the south. The nearest houses, not visible from Halton Grove, are Halton Shields to the north and

Shildon Grange and other domestic/agricultural dwellings to the south (all approximately half a mile from Halton Grove).

6. Beyond the woodland, the site is surrounded by open land largely used for agriculture. The adjacent large field to the south and west of the property (approximately 15 acres) is used by a local farmer as grazing land and came as part of the original purchase in November 2020.

PLANNING POLICIES

7. Section 38(6) of the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, states that planning applications should be assessed in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
8. The *Tynedale District Wide Local Plan (LP)* was adopted in 2000 and some of its policies have been 'saved'. The *Tynedale LDF Core Strategy (CS)* was adopted in 2007.
9. The New *Northumberland Local Plan (NLP)* adopted in March 2022. In accordance with Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, the policies contained within the document at this stage will carry some weight, with strategic policies carrying a greater weight. The background studies/ documents, which form the evidence base for the NLP, constitute a material consideration.
10. Other relevant documents include The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, 2012 (as amended in 2019).
11. The main factors in determining a planning application of this nature are considered to be the general principle of development, Green Belt, Heritage, ecology, lighting and access/parking.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

12. The existing dwelling could be extended under permitted development rights and received a certificate of lawfulness for an identical footprint in November 2014 (Ref No; 14/03856/CLPROP). The property is not listed and is not within a Conservation Area. A larger extension could also be supported under both current householder and Green Belt policy. The cottage works commenced prior to planning permission being granted, when the property would have been deemed a domestic dwelling.
13. Converting and extending an existing building is a highly sustainable form of development. The extension and shed has increased the original cottage footprint by 28%, which is considered proportionate and would not have any adverse effect upon the landscape setting of the site. The location of the extension is to the rear of the property, surrounded by extensive established tall shrub and tree cover therefore the extension cannot be seen from outside the site (Images 1.4 & 1.5 below).
 - a. The use of European larch, attached vertically to all elevations (including the storage shed), has enhanced the previous facade (see Images 1.2 & 1.3 below) – this will naturally silver with age.

- b. The use of reclaimed Welsh slate, which has been added to the existing and new pitched roof has improved the appearance of the property, and is deemed as in-keeping with buildings of this nature.
14. Paragraph 84 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites, to meet local business and community needs in rural areas, may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable. The proposal doesn't seek to increase parking provision as the original approved applications provides more than adequate parking for guests visiting and staying at the venue, neither will it increase the amount of trips made to Halton Grove – with more people staying, movement of traffic will be reduced.
15. Overall, it is considered that the principle of development can be supported as the proposal offers a range of planning benefits through the conversion and extension of an existing building and physical, in-keeping improvements – a highly sustainable form of development.

GREEN BELT

16. Paragraph 133 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the fundamental aim of which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The Green Belt serves five purposes:
 - a. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
 - e. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land
17. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. An exemption to this is:

‘the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.’
18. Paragraph 146 of the NPPF also states that certain other forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This includes:

‘the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
19. Paragraph 4.5 of the CS states that Tynedale has an extensive area of Green Belt which runs westwards from Tyneside along the Tyne Valley to surround Hexham. The purpose of the Green Belt in Tynedale is to prevent the spread of the Tyneside conurbation, to prevent the merger of settlements in the Tyne Valley, to protect the character and setting

of historic settlements such as Hexham and to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

20. The proposal is for a simple extension which would result in an increase of the building footprint (including previous concrete hardstanding) of 28%, therefore, based on feedback during the planning committee meeting where the initial application was debated and approved, the extension would not result in a 'disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building'.
21. It is considered that the proposal is fully supportable under current policy with the openness of the Green Belt completely untouched and preserved due to the private, natural screening of the cottage from all directions.

HERITAGE

22. The NPPF, at section 16, states that local planning authorities (LPAs) should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.
23. Those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets. The Government's overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.
24. The NPPF states that LPAs should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of details should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset.
25. Saved Policy BE26 of the LP states that there will be a presumption in favour of the physical preservation in situ of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, as defined on the Proposals Map. Development which would adversely affect the World Heritage Site will not be permitted. Proposals within its setting will be considered under Policy NE17.
26. It should be noted that there was a previously accepted *Heritage Assessment* (as part of the approved scheme 20_03388_FUL) that considers the heritage matters associated with the proposals. There is a Grade II listed sundial located circa 25 metres to the south west of the cottage. The site also lies within the *Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site Buffer Zone*. The image below shows the wooded setting of the site in relation to Hadrian's Wall, some distance to the north and hatched in red (see Image 1.1 – Supporting Images).
27. The proposal is for a rear extension to an existing cottage and timber cladding, previously approved as befitting for the main event space extension. The site is well contained with existing tree cover and newly planted, mature shrubs. The proposal will not have any impact upon designated heritage assets;
 - a. A separate Heritage Statement, presented by AB Heritage, supports this and should be considered in conjunction with the previous, extensive Heritage Statement,

ECOLOGY

28. The proposal will have zero or minimal impact on protected species;
 - a. A separate Ecology Appraisal/Bat Survey carried out by E3 Ecology supports this and should be considered in conjunction with the previous, extensive Ecology Statements (also by E3 Ecology) submitted as part of the wider approved scheme 20_03388_FUL;
 - b. The compensation strategy recommendation for the addition of further bird or bat boxes, as mentioned within the Ecology Appraisal, is something that was required by and addressed as part of the original application and would be adhered to as part of this application too;
29. All windows, including the 6 x rooflights have curtains or blinds that are shut/ pulled down at night. The rooflights have solar powered remote-controlled blinds. The rooflights are not visible from any elevation.

LIGHTING

30. External lighting has been added (locations and the type of up and down lights in the architect's drawings and datasheets – presented separately). All external lighting is on a day/night sensor to ensure the safety of guests moving around the site during darkness.
 - a. The ecology appraisal refers to any impact additional lighting may have and concludes that lighting is 'low lux' and 'intermittent and low intensity'.
31. As seen in Images 1.4 & 1.5 – there is no visibility of the cottage through screening provided by the woodland and thick shrubs.

ACCESS/PARKING

32. As the cottage is only ever used as accommodation for wedding guests, there would be no additional access or parking requirements beyond what was applied for and approved in Application 20_03388_FUL.

CONCLUSION

33. The proposal seeks retrospective permission for the extension, external improvements and recycling of an existing building and takes full account of the LP, CS and Central Government planning guidance and is no way in contravention of any restrictions imposed by Green Belt or other relevant policies.
 - a. The cottage, with the afore mentioned extension has been in place since weddings launched in May 2023 and, as such, this application does not to seek to alter the current operation, usage or layout of the site in any way.

- b. As previously referenced, it should be noted that the existing dwelling could have been extended under permitted development rights and received a certificate of lawfulness for a very similar application in November 2014. It should also be noted that the LPA approved and Tynedale Committee Members subsequently supported unanimously, a more complex and detailed scheme for change of use and larger scale works (20_03388_FUL) at Halton Grove. The LPA is therefore invited to support this proposal.

SUPPORTING IMAGES

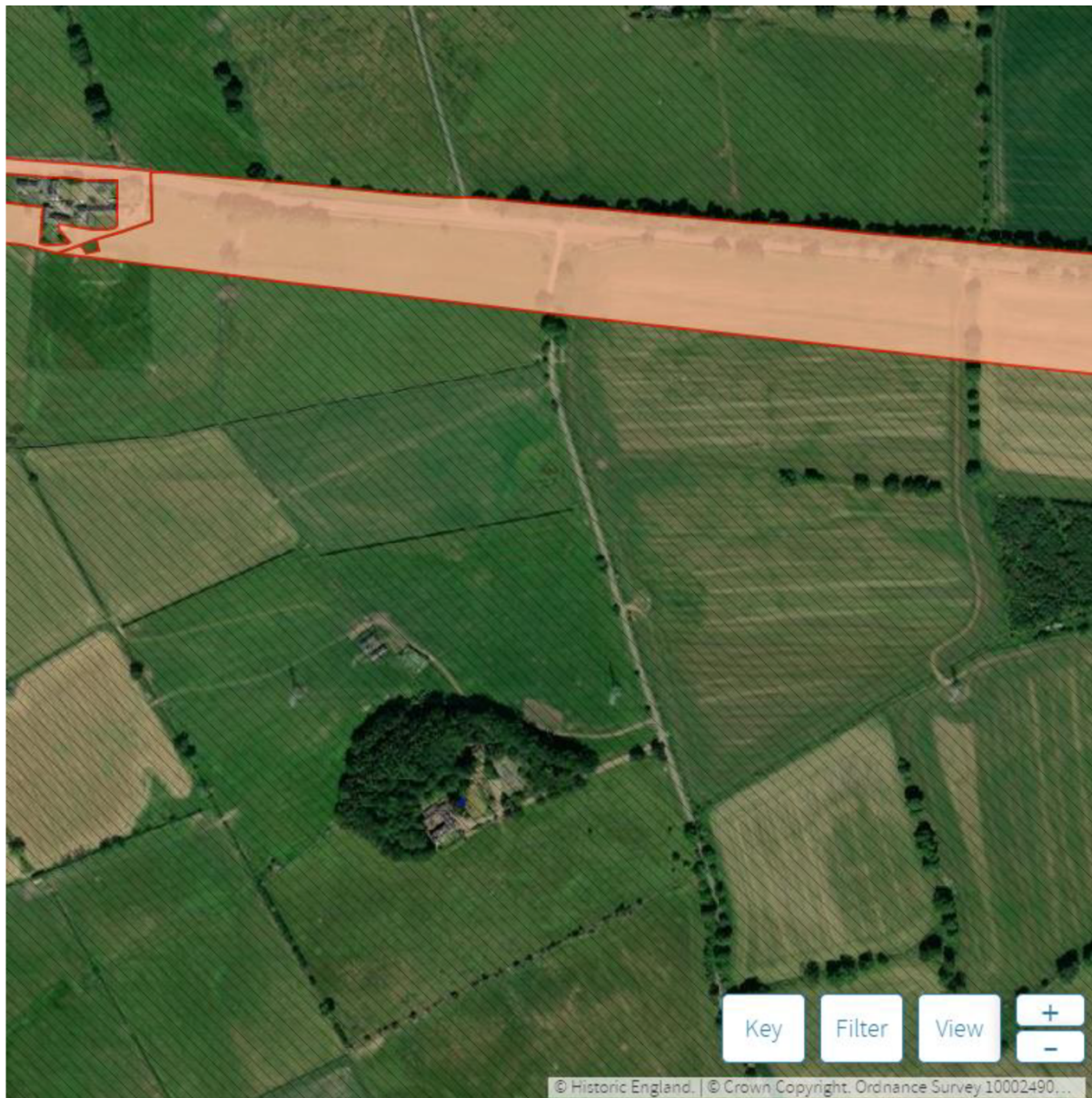


Image 1.1 – Hadrian’s Wall Buffer Zone in relation to the Site



Image 1.2 - North-east (rear) elevation of the cottage – May 2020



Image 1.3 – North-east (rear) elevation of the cottage – September 2022



Image 1.4 – Google Street View from C245 (road that serves Halton Grove) looking towards the cottage (location of cottage marked by the blue circle) – the photograph shows that trees are not in full leaf therefore screening would improve



Image 1.5 – Google Street View looking towards Halton Grove from B6318 (location of cottage marked by the blue circle)