

# **Proposed Cafe Extension, Preston Park Museum and Grounds**

## **Planning, Heritage and Archaeology Statement**

Stockton on Tees Borough Council

March 2024

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## 1.0 Introduction

### Scope of Report

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC). It has been prepared to accompany an application for planning permission in respect of the extension of the existing café at Preston Park Museum and Grounds, Yarm Road, Stockton-on-Tees. The description of development is as follows:

*“Extension to café, demolition of existing toilet block, creation of external seating area, new landscaping and other associated works”*

- 1.2 The application proposes a single storey extension to the south of the existing café and the demolition of the existing toilet block in order to incorporate both expanded indoor seating areas and improved toilet facilities within in a single building. The proposed development also includes internal refurbishment, an external seating area with canopy.

- 1.3 The purpose of this statement is to assess the application proposals against the adopted development plan, as well as other material considerations, including relevant national planning policy. This statement should be read in conjunction with other documents which accompany this application, including:

- the completed planning application forms and ownership certificates; and
- the application drawings, prepared by Ryder Architecture and BGP.

### Structure of Report

- 1.4 The remainder of the statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2.0 describes the application site, its surroundings and its planning history;
  - Section 3.0 sets out the relevant planning policy context, including the National Planning Policy Framework (‘NPPF’), development plan policies and other relevant guidance;
  - Section 4.0 assesses the proposed development against relevant planning policy, including the impact upon existing heritage assets and archaeology; and
  - Section 5.0 provides conclusions on all the above.

## 2.0 **Site Context**

### **Site and Surroundings**

- 2.1 Preston Park Museum and Grounds extends to approximately 40 hectares in total and lies to the east of the A135 Yarm Road and west of the River Tees, approximately 3.5 km to the south-west of Stockton-on-Tees Town Centre. The museum has been operating since 1953 and is owned by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
- 2.2 The Grade II listed Preston Hall itself is situated towards the eastern side of the wider site and is separated from the River Tees by a belt of mature woodland. To the west of the museum there is a large open green space which is surrounded by footpaths to the north and west, and by an access road that connects to the Hall from the south. Further to the west there is a belt of woodland that separates the site from Yarm Road, as well as a former lodge building, which is located at the main entrance to the site. The original 1825 Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) line once ran along the western edge of the wider museum grounds, although this stretch of the line was abandoned in 1853.
- 2.3 The existing café and toilet block which are subject to this planning application are located at the centre of the wider Preston Park Grounds, at the eastern end of the main car park, adjacent to the children's playground and skateboard park. The two structures are of single storey construction, with brick walls and slate roofs. The Butterfly World glasshouse is located further to the west, with a former aviary being to the east, along with a number of mature trees. Further to the south there are further areas of woodland and open space, as well as a second surface carpark.
- 2.4 The wider Preston Park Museum and Grounds site is bounded as follows:
- to the north by allotments gardens and residential development along Preston Lane with agricultural fields and Preston Farm Business Park beyond;
  - to the east by east by the River Tees, with a golf course and residential areas of Ingleby Barwick beyond;
  - to the south by residential development at the northern end of Eaglescliffe; and
  - to the west by Yarm Road, with residential development beyond.

### **Accessibility**

- 2.5 Given its location to the east of the A135 Yarm Road, which runs along the western boundary of the site, the wider Preston Park site is conveniently accessible by a choice of means of transport, including by bus, private car and on foot/by cycle. A network of pedestrian footpaths, including those along Yarm Road itself, help link the site to the surrounding residential areas to the south and west.
- 2.6 There are bus stops on either side of Yarm Road, within a short walk of the main entrance to the grounds (around 50m north-bound and 150m south-bound), as well as further to the north along this road. Buses using these stops help to connect the site to locations in the surrounding areas, such as Stockton, Yarm. The site is also located around 1 km walking distance from Eaglescliffe Railway Station.

- 2.7 The main vehicular access to the wider site is taken from Yarm Road. This connects the site with Eaglescliffe and Yarm to the south and Stockton to the north. As set out above, the main car park is currently provided adjacent to the café/toilets, skate park and butterfly world, with an overflow car park being provided to the south of these buildings.

## **Planning History**

- 2.8 Based on a search of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's public access website, there has been no previous planning application relating to the subject application site. However, there have been extensions approved to the adjacent existing play area and construction of a concrete skatepark, as well as extensions and refurbishment work carried out to the existing Preston Hall Museum.
- 2.9 Most recently, applications for full planning permission (ref. 23/1340/LA) and listed building consent (ref. 23/1341/LBC) in respect of an extension to the museum itself were approved on 8 November 2023. The former also included an extension to the overflow car park to the south.

## 3.0 **Planning Policy Context**

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was most recently updated in December 2023. The core principle of the NPPF is that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It also makes clear that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay (Paragraph 11).
- 3.2 The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Paragraph 135 seeks to ensure that all developments:
- a will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
  - b are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
  - c are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
  - d establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
  - e optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
  - f create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- 3.3 Chapter 16 of the NPPF sets out the policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Paragraph 203 states that, in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- a the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - b the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
  - c the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

### **The Development Plan**

- 3.4 The Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Local Plan was adopted by the Council on 30 January 2019. The plan sets out the planning policies which the Council will use to determine planning applications in Stockton-on-Tees and covers the period to 2032.

## Site Allocation

- 3.5 The Local Plan Policies Map allocates the wider Preston Park Museum and Grounds (including the application sites) under Policy ENV6 (Open Space). This policy states that green infrastructure should be integrated, where practicable, into new developments, including new hard and soft landscaping. Proposals should illustrate how the proposed development will be satisfactorily integrated into the surrounding area, in a manner appropriate to the surrounding townscape and landscape and enhance the wider green infrastructure network.
- 3.6 In addition, Policy ENV6 states that the Council will protect and enhance open space throughout the Borough to meet community needs and enable healthy lifestyles. Policy ENV6 includes a number of criteria that should be satisfied by development proposals which would result in the loss of open space or amenity space, and these relate to, amongst other things, whether the proposals are ancillary to the use of open space and the impact upon the character and appearance of the area or nature conservation interests.
- 3.7 The wider site is also located within a designated Green Wedge. Policy ENV6 states that development within Green Wedges will only be supported where:
- a it would not result in physical or visual coalescence of built-up areas;
  - b it would not adversely impact on local character or the separate identity of communities;
  - c it would not adversely impact on recreational opportunities; and
  - d it would not adversely impact on biodiversity.

## Design

- 3.8 Policy SD8 states that the Council will seek new development to be designed to the highest possible standard, taking into consideration the surrounding context and the need to respond positively to a number of sustainable design principles. These principles include:
- a quality, character and sensitivity of the surrounding public realm, heritage assets, and nearby buildings;
  - b landscape character of the area, including the contribution made by existing trees and landscaping;
  - c need to protect and enhance ecological and green infrastructure networks and assets;
  - d need to ensure that new development is appropriately laid out to ensure adequate separation between buildings and an attractive environment;
  - e privacy and amenity of all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
  - f existing transport network and the need to provide safe and satisfactory access and parking for all modes of transport;
  - g need to reinforce local distinctiveness and provide high quality and inclusive design solutions, and
  - h need for all development to be designed inclusively.



3.9 In addition, the policy requires that new development should, amongst other things, be designed with public safety and the desire to reduce crime in mind, and include provision of adequate waste recycling, storage and collection facilities.

3.10 Policy HE2 states that the Council will support proposals which positively respond to and enhance heritage assets, including their setting, in a manner appropriate to their significance.

### **Other Policies**

3.11 There are a number of policies which relate to the environment, biodiversity and flood risk. These include:

- Policy ENV1, which relates to energy efficiency, and states that the Council will encourage all development to minimise the effects of climate change; and
- Policy ENV4, which states that all new development will be directed towards areas of the lowest flood risk to minimise the risk of flooding from all sources and will mitigate any such risk through design and implementing sustainable drainage (SuDS) principles; and
- Policy ENV5, which states that the Council will protect and enhance the biodiversity and geological resources in the Borough through a series of methods.

3.12 In addition, Policy TI1 seeks to ensure that, where appropriate, new developments which generate significant movements are located where the need to travel can be minimised, giving priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, providing access to high quality public transport facilities. This will be achieved by seeking to ensure that suitable access is provided for all people (including those with disabilities), sufficient parking for vehicles and cycles is provided, and new development minimises conflict between traffic, cyclists or pedestrians.

3.13 Policy SD4 states that proposals for new town centre uses will be directed to suitable and available sites/premises in the centres within the hierarchy of centres. Should any proposals for main town centre uses in edge or out-of-centre locations emerge, they will be determined in accordance with the sequential and impact tests, having regard to the catchment area of the proposal.

3.14 Policy SD4 also states that support will be given to sustainable tourism proposals in the Borough's main town centres, tourist attractions, main parks and country parks, as well as enhancing the River Tees as a leisure, recreation and water sports destination. Out of centre proposals should be clearly related to activity in these areas and be of an appropriate scale.

3.15 Finally, Policy SD6 states that, where the requirement is justified and necessary, the Council will support planning applications which (amongst other things) provide opportunities to widen the Borough's cultural, sport, recreation and leisure offer.

## **Other Documents**

### **Supplementary Planning Document 1: Sustainable Design Guide**

- 3.16 The Sustainable Design Guide aims to provide additional guidance on policies within the LDF and those policies that have been saved from the Stockton on Tees Local Plan (1997). Although these policies have now been superseded by the adopted Local Plan, the design guide remains relevant, seeking to reduce the environmental impacts from commercial developments.

### **Local Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document**

- 3.17 The above Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in April 2023. The SPD aims to provide guidance on the interpretation and application of Local Plan policies relating to design for all new developments. It provides a toolkit to be used throughout the design and implementation process, covering areas such as context, green and blue infrastructure, movement, built form, placemaking, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan.

## **Summary**

- 3.18 National planning policy contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development and attaches great importance to design. It also confirms that local planning authorities should consider the positive contribution that the conservation of heritage assets make to sustainable communities, including economic vitality and local character.
- 3.19 The adopted development plan identifies the wider Preston Park Museum and Grounds as open space, falling within a green wedge. It also sets out a number of criteria against which proposals within such areas should be considered against. These include the requirement to demonstrate that there would be no significant harm to the character and appearance of the area or nature conservation interests.
- 3.20 The above policies, as well as the others relevant to the subject proposals which have been summarised in this section, including those relating to design and accessibility, are addressed in more detail in Section 4.0.

## 4.0 **Assessment of the Proposals**

4.1 This section of the statement assesses the proposed development against relevant planning policy, as contained within the adopted Local Plan and the NPPF, including the impact upon existing heritage assets and archaeology. It also summarises the benefits which would arise from the scheme,

### **Principle of Development**

4.2 As explained in Section 4.0, the adopted local plan designates the wider Preston Park Museum and Grounds (including the application site) as open space falling within a green wedge. Policy ENV6 states that the loss of such open space will not be supported unless one of four criteria, plus one further (mandatory) criterion, are satisfied. In this context, and in relation to the café extension, it is considered that:

- there would be a minimal loss of open space as a result of the proposed development, comprising a small area of grass to the rear/south-west of the existing café, with the external seating area being created on top of existing hard surfacing, with a small quantum of new planting being provided in place of the toilet block;
- this existing open space to be lost does not perform any significant function in sports and recreational terms, and indeed is not easily visible from the wider area. Conversely, there is a significant quantum of open space provided elsewhere within the wider site for such purposes, including to the front/west of the main museum building, which is only a short distance from the cafe;
- the new café extension would help improve the existing visitor offer at Preston Park Museum and Grounds, including for families, by providing an enlarged seating area and new toilet facilities, and supporting the wider use of the site for leisure and recreational purposes, outweighing this very small loss of open space; and
- taking into account the design and appearance of the café extension, which would not be easily visible from other parts of the park as a result of surrounding trees and the main bulk of the existing café, there would be no significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.

4.3 Given small scale of the café extension, particularly when considered in the context of the size of the wider site, and the role and function it would perform in serving visitors, it is considered that this would be ancillary to the use of the existing surrounding open space. Furthermore, the proposals would not result in any physical or visual coalescence of built-up areas, nor would it have any material impact upon recreational opportunities. On this basis, it is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with the relevant provision of Policy EN6.

### **Design and Appearance**

4.4 Policy SD8 requires that new development is designed to the highest possible standard and sets out various sustainable design principles which must be satisfied. It is considered that the proposed development meets the relevant criteria of this policy, on the basis that:

- the design of the café extension, its small scale, and the materials used take into account the character and sensitivity of the surrounding area;
- the appearance of the proposed café extension would complement the character of the existing building and wider setting, including the trees which surrounding the existing café and the parkland to the north;
- the café extension would not be easily visible from the wider park, as a result of both its location to the rear of the existing building and these surrounding trees and, as explained further below, would have a neutral effect on the setting of Preston Hall in heritage terms;
- as set out in Section 2.0, the site is conveniently accessible by a choice of means of transport, including non-car modes, given the bus stops on Yarm Road, and a network of pedestrian footways and pedestrian crossing on that road, which connects the park to the surrounding areas; and
- the expanded café would include provision for storage of refuse and recycling.

4.5 Taking into account all of the above, it is considered that the development would be in accordance with the provisions of Policy SD8. In addition, given the small scale of the development, and the significant distance from the nearest residential properties, it is not considered that the proposed development would have any unacceptable impacts on local living conditions, the character of the area, or the environment, as required by Policy ENV7.

## **Heritage Assessment**

### **Scope**

- 4.6 Preston Park was developed on farmland in the 1820s as a landscaped setting for Preston Hall (Grade II) (NHLE Ref. 1140000). The original Stockton and Darlington Railway ('S&DR') route ran along its western boundary and the earthwork remains on the edge of the park are now designated as a Scheduled Monument (NHLE Ref. 1484556). There is no potential for the proposed development to have any impact on the setting and significance of the S&DR earthworks due to the nature of the works and the extent of tree cover screening the site from view and it is not considered further. Preston Hall is the only heritage asset that has the potential to be affected by the proposed development.
- 4.7 This heritage statement has been prepared in the light of Historic England's guidance on Managing Significance in the Historic Environment (GPA2), the Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA3) while remaining proportionate in line with Para 200 of the NPPF.

### **Site History**

- 4.8 Preston Hall and its parkland were steadily enhanced and embellished under the ownership of the Fowler and Ropner families during the 19th century and the early-20th century. When Preston Hall was sold by the Ropner family in the late-1930s, the historic character and appearance of the parkland began to deteriorate. This process accelerated after Preston Hall was converted to a museum in 1953 and the grounds were repurposed as a public park. This redefined the character and appearance of the grounds and resulted in new attractions and facilities being introduced within the grounds, which coincided with the substantial reduction in tree cover, the loss of the original pleasure gardens and orchard, and the

abandonment of the kitchen garden, which fell into ruin. Numerous alterations to the Hall itself and the ancillary structures to the north of the Hall were converted and extended to serve the museum. This process of change and development has continued through to the present day, with planning permission (ref. 23/1340/LA) and listed building consent (ref. 23/1341/LBC) recently being granted for a further extension to the north of Preston Hall and an extension to the South Car Park.

## **Location**

- 4.9 The site of the proposed development is located approximately 150m to the south-west of Preston Hall. The proposed extension and other minor alterations to the existing café are intended to enhance the amenities within Preston Park, complementing the recently approved museum extension to the north. The extension will be constructed on the rear (south-west) elevation of the existing café, a location which is secluded and largely screened in views from Preston Hall and from the main drive due to intervening structures and tree cover. The area surrounding the café already contains various park amenities including public toilets, children's play areas, a skatepark, a large surface car park and the former aviary. With the exception of the former aviary, the visibility of these features in views across the park, and from Preston Hall, is limited given their height and extent of tree cover which helps to filter views towards these features.

## **Preston Hall: Summary of Significance**

- 4.10 Preston Hall's significance is defined by the early-19th century core of the building which is best appreciated when viewing the east and south elevations and the east service range. The original early 19th-century hall has a simple design, but the proportions of the building and the landscaped setting gave it a prominence and stature that remains evident. The original design intent behind the Georgian house is still reflected in the symmetry and balance of windows to walls, the shallow roof hips and the lack of ostentation in the surrounding landscape. The internal space has a similarly simple configuration with a few spacious, well-lit rooms arranged around the main stairs. The 1825 phase of development provides physical evidence of Georgian architectural design and the tastes and aspirations of the original owners. The late-19th-century additions to the house are also of architectural significance given their quality, scale and design.
- 4.11 The porch and glasshouse that sit prominent on the south-west corner of the building are defining features of the building and contribute positively to its overall character and appearance. The various extensions that were added to the building by the Ropner family reflect their vast wealth and their status within Stockton in the late-19th century and early-20th century. The historic significance of the building is linked to its age and its association with Robert Ropner who was a significant local businessman and major employer in Stockton in the 19th century. Preston Hall has been used as a public museum since 1953 with the grounds used as a public park. It has remained in this use for over 70 years, and this contributes to the historical significance of the building and reflects its evolution during the 20th century.
- 4.12 The former grounds of the Hall, now known as Preston Park, retains elements of the historic setting including the recently restored walled garden and orchard, and lodges. Despite these changes that the former grounds have experienced over time, the Hall retains

its prominence in views from the main entrance and approach road and it remains possible to appreciate how the Hall was once experienced when it lay at the centre of a grand estate within landscaped grounds, but extent of change and development that has taken place within the grounds reduces the Hall's sensitivity to further additions and alterations within its setting.

### **Heritage Impact**

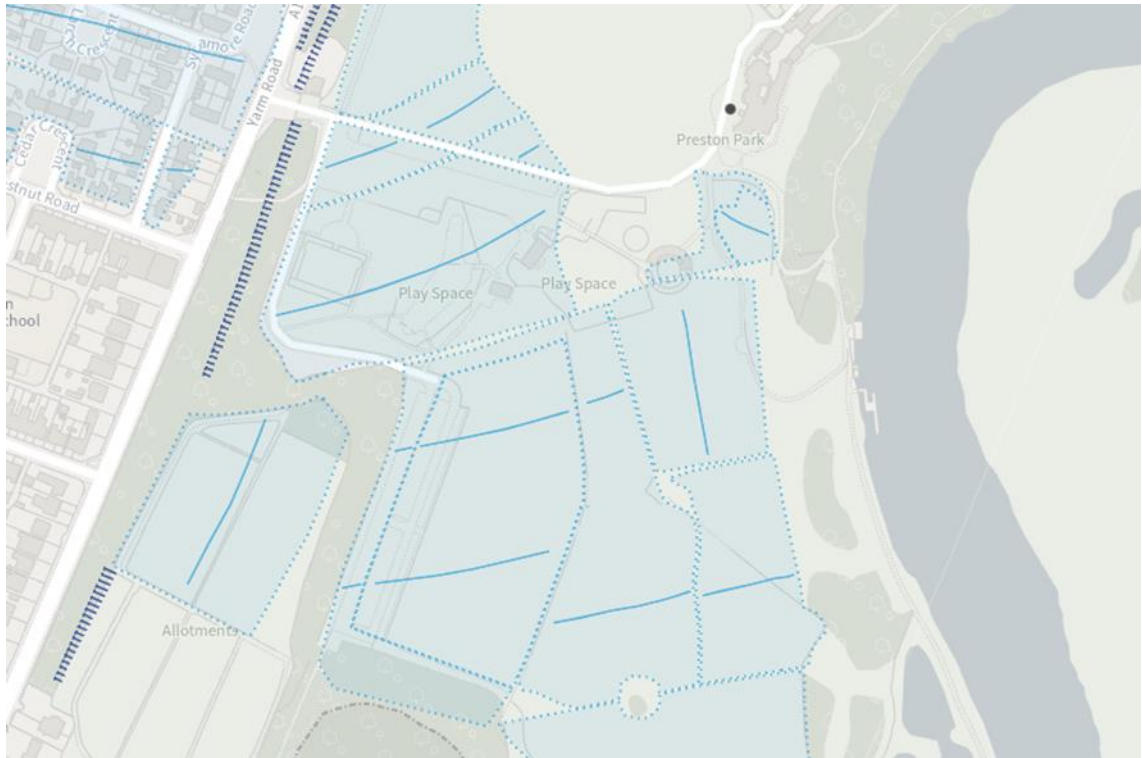
- 4.13 The design of the proposed extension and the alterations to the café building would not increase its height or prominence in views from Preston Hall or from the main drive. It would be substantially screened by the intervening trees and by the existing boundary wall and fence panels to the south-west of the existing cafe. The changes would be most apparent in close range views of the café, which is already experienced alongside other amenities and facilities within this part of Preston Park. This part of Preston Park is of limited sensitivity and can accommodate the proposed development without it having an impact upon the park's overall character and appearance or the setting and significance of Preston Hall.
- 4.14 As the changes would be largely imperceptible in views to and from the Hall and they would be consistent with the established character and appearance of the park, the proposed development would have a neutral effect on the setting of Preston Hall and no effect upon its historic and architectural significance.

## **Archaeology**

### **Site Evidence**

- 4.15 There are no recorded designated or non-designated archaeological assets within the site of the proposed café extension. Historic mapping shows the site as part of the 19th-century open parkland, that had previously been in agricultural use. Historic England's Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer (see Figure 1) identifies that the site and surrounding area previously contained medieval ridge and furrow (HE ref. 1624249) identified from cropmarks on 1947 aerial photography but no longer present, as indicated by the 2018 LiDAR imagery (See Figure 2). South-east of the site is the Former Hart Stackyard (HER 9508, HE ref. 1624251), an area of pre-19th century ridge and furrow that remains visible on the LiDAR imagery from 2018.

Figure 4.1 Map showing areas of existing and former medieval and postmedieval ridge and furrow as identified by Historic England from 1947 aerial photography and 2018 LiDAR imagery



Source: Extract from Historic England's Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer (accessed April 2023)

Figure 4.2 Figure 2 LiDAR imagery of the site



Source: Environment Agency Survey Open Data Index Catalogues

### **Archaeological Potential**

- 4.16 A full Archaeological Desk Based Assessment was prepared for Preston Park to inform the determination of planning application ref. 23/1340/LA. This concluded that the park retained high potential for medieval and post-medieval although the construction of the existing buildings and utilities would have resulted in localised impact on this.

### **Potential Effects**

- 4.17 The site encompasses the existing single-storey café, toilet block and an existing wall/fence structure linking the two. These structures are all modern and would have required intrusive works associated with building foundations and the installation of services connecting to the café kitchen and toilet block. The previous ground disturbance in this location is evident on LiDAR imagery. The site also includes hardstanding, a pedestrian path and access route linking to Yarm Road along Loverose Lane.



- 4.18 It is not anticipated that the proposed demolition of the existing toilet block would result in any harm to archaeological remains in this area due to the previous ground disturbance caused by the introduction of this structure and the associated utilities. The proposed single-storey extension of the existing café is within an area of light development and the associated foundations of the extension block are unlikely to extend below the depth of made-ground in this area, ensuring any archaeological remains present would be protected in the deeper stratigraphic layers. It is assumed that the new structure will connect to the existing utilities within the site resulting in minimal further intrusive works.

## **Conclusion**

- 4.19 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development complies with the criteria outlined in Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's local planning Policy HE2. If it is found that the proposed intrusive works would penetrate below the level of made ground, further archaeological mitigation may be required as part of the proposed development. In this instance an archaeological watching brief carried out during the construction works would be most appropriate to confirm the likely presence of any archaeological remains.

## **Transport**

- 4.20 Policy TI1 seeks to ensure that new developments which generate significant movement are located where the need to travel can be minimised, giving priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and providing access to high quality public transport facilities. In this context:
- the extended café would be conveniently accessible by non-car modes, given the location of the wider PPMG site immediately to the east of Yarm Road, where there are a number of bus stops, as well as the existence of Eaglescliffe railway station, which is around 1 km to the south;
  - the café is connected to the existing museum and wider grounds, as well as Yarm Road, by existing pedestrian routes, which, in turn, help to connect the park with existing residential areas via a network of footways and a pedestrian crossing on this road; and
  - the design of the café extension would facilitate suitable access for all people, including those with disabilities.
- 4.21 On the basis of the above, it is considered that the development would be in accordance with the provisions of Policy TI1.

## **Other Issues**

- 4.22 Policy ENV4 of the local plan seeks to direct development to the areas with the lowest flood risk and to mitigate any such risk through design and the implementing sustainable drainage principles. In this context, given that the application site falls entirely within a Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk of flooding) and proposes only a small quantum of additional floorspace, a flood risk assessment and sequential testing is not required for the scheme.
- 4.23 In addition, Policies SD4 and SD6 provide support for sustainable tourism proposals at the Borough's main attractions and schemes which would widen the existing cultural, recreation and leisure offer. In this context, the proposed café extension would complement wider developments at PPMG which seek to enhance the overall visitor experience, by

providing improved eating and drinking facilities and net toilet provision. This will, in turn, enhance the experience for families in particular, benefiting both local residents and visitors to the area. Given the scale of floorspace, and the nature of these proposals - as an extension to any existing café, which is specifically designed to improve facilities at the park - it would not be appropriate to seek to locate this development within Stockton Town Centre, or indeed any other defined centres.

## **Scheme Benefits**

4.24 In addition to the conformity with planning policy set out above, the proposed development would generate a number of important benefits, which should be taken into account in the determination of the subject planning application. These benefits include:

- improving the quality of eating and drinking opportunities at Preston Park, both inside and outdoors, as well as toilet facilities, making it more attractive to families in particular;
- supporting new employment opportunities, including the creation of construction jobs, which will also lead to spin-off spending in the local area;
- helping increase number of visitors, and thereby increasing tourist spending in the area – both at the park and museum itself, and through linked trips to other destinations in the Borough; and
- complementing the other developments recently approved at PPMG, including the museum and car park extensions, and enhancing the status of Preston Park as an attraction more generally.

## 5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC). It accompanies a full planning application for the extension of the existing café at Preston Park Museum and Grounds, along with demolition of the toilet block, the creation of an outdoor seating area, new landscaping and associated works. This statement addresses relevant national and local planning policy in respect of the proposed development.
- 5.2 The Local Plan designates the wider site as open space and forming part of a green wedge, setting out a number of criteria against which proposals in such areas should be considered. However, it has been demonstrated as part of the above statement that there would be no significant harm to the character and appearance of the area as a result of the very small loss of open space proposed, and indeed that the extended café would be ancillary to the main recreation and leisure use of the grounds.
- 5.3 As the proposals would be largely imperceptible in views to/from the hall and would be consistent with the established character and appearance of the park, the proposed development would have a neutral effect on the setting of Preston Hall - and no effect upon its historic and architectural significance. It has also been demonstrated that the proposals would comply with relevant policy in relation to archaeology, would be acceptable in terms of design and appearance, and would be accessible by a choice of means of transport.
- 5.4 The Local Plan provides support for sustainable tourism proposals at the Borough's main attractions and schemes which would widen the existing cultural, recreation and leisure offer. Having regard to the analysis of this, and other relevant policies, it is concluded that the proposals are in broad accordance with the development plan, when considered as a whole. It would also result in a number of benefits – including improving the quality of food and drink facilities at the park, new construction employment and enhancing Preston Park as a visitor destination more generally. On this basis, it is respectfully requested that the application be approved.



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