

**Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N)
Planning and Development Team – September 2023**

Application Reference	Application Type	Location Details	Proposal
Northumberland County Council applications			
23/03284/FUL	Full Application	Land Surrounding Spital House Farm North Seaton Road Newbiggin-By-The-Sea	Erection of 101 no. 2, 3 and 4 bedroom two-storey dwellings, demolition of existing buildings and associated infrastructure.
Planning Officer	Ryan Soulsby		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) recommends grant of approval for this application is refused and the scheme is substantially revised according the comments below.</p> <p>The Society acknowledges that local authorities are required to allocate land for housing development within their local plans. We recognise the need for new sustainable housing development within Northumberland and we advocate for such development to be focussed on brownfield sites. Where development is sought for other sites we believe such schemes should require compelling evidence to justify them in principle and equally that they demonstrate strict compliance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirements.</p> <p>The Design and Access Statement (D&A) makes a number of claims that would not appear substantiated by the accompanying documentation. We believe this scheme lacks sufficient evidence in 4 specific areas of concern:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1. Local character and distinctiveness</p> <p>Whilst the D&A statement makes reference to the plans providing ‘a sense of place’, the reality suggests otherwise. We agree with the Built Heritage and Design (BHD) officer’s assessment that demolition of the farm buildings to the rear of the farmhouse will obliterate it’s setting, and that although in poor condition, those rear buildings can and should be restored to preserve their important place in the local vernacular distinctiveness. We believe this is particularly important for SE Northumberland, where loss of heritage and historic structures has been much higher traditionally than in rural areas of the county. The design of housing units within the scheme follows a generic pattern book design made up of 2-storey dwellings and therefore would not offset the loss of the farm buildings that would otherwise give the site a sense of place.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2. Community open space and wellbeing</p> <p>The Building for a Healthy Life (BfHL) toolkit appears not to have been utilised in the scheme’s evolution, as it might have constructively flagged some important opportunities. Furthermore, we note this proposal seems to provide for a minimum of green amenity space within a specific Sustainable Drainage System (SuDs) zone, this amenity space being located at a corner of the site with poor accessibility for most residents.</p> <p>We share the concerns of established nearby residents around loss of amenity and tranquility, not just during the construction phase, but equally once the development is established. It seems that little attention has been given to address the lack of alternative open space provision through mitigation measures and opportunities for community reassurance that emerged within engagement and consultation process.</p>		

N&N Planning & Development Team

	<p>There appears to be an absence of community spaces, play areas and other community connections that encourage health and wellbeing opportunities. The S106 agreement recommendations from the NHS will address only a small arc of the potential negative impacts on wellbeing to existing residents.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3. Climate change, ecology and flood risk</p> <p>We note the Lead Local Flood Authority's (LLFA) objection, and we believe if not addressed this objection would preclude the scheme being approved solely on these grounds.</p> <p>The Society would challenge the developer's claims of climate change impact neutrality as both unsubstantiated and unrealistic, with no apparent renewable energy provision, other than the EV charging points. We can see no construction features designed to reduce CO2 emissions, likewise a lack of ecological evidence, with surveys and mitigation plans not yet submitted. This absence of attention to such substantial elements of the scheme are a matter of profound concern to the Society, suggesting the developer considers them a low priority.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4. Travel and transport</p> <p>For such a substantial development, the Society would expect to see an explicit and well evidenced travel plan. The submitted travel plan is unclear how public transport links will be established and maintained. Connectivity from the site seems very limited with poor provision to encourage active transport modes thus incentivising residents to use private cars. This is particularly demonstrated in the design of a long cul-de-sac to the north of the site that we feel will actively discourage healthy travel.</p>		
23/03446/RENE	Renewable Energy Application	Solar Array Coastal Grains Ltd Belford Industrial Estate NE70 7DT	Proposed installation of ground mounted solar PV array
Planning Officer	David Love		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) recommends grant of approval for this application is deferred for amendment in respect of the comments below.</p> <p>The Society notes this scheme appears to infringe on a public footpath of significance that forms part of St Cuthbert's Way alongside an existing PV installation. We strongly believe this public footpath should be protected from this unnecessary intervention.</p> <p>It appears the applicant has not prioritised a rooftop solar PV installation which would be a more appropriate and less intrusive means of achieving the energy performance solution required by the scheme. As it stands the scheme does not respect a significant heritage asset (St Cuthbert's Way) and we believe it should be substantially amended accordingly.</p>		
23/03220/FUL	Full Application	Dairy Fields North End Farm Longframlington	Development of 6no. dwellings with associated access, parking and amenity space.
Planning Officer	David Love		

N&N Planning & Development Team

Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) objects to grant of approval for this planning application in its current form.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Society shares the concerns in other submissions to the effect that this application appears incomplete and needs further information in the following areas:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. This scheme seeks what appears to be a supplementary development of 6 dwellings that have a direct relationship with an existing approved application (16/00745/FUL) for 9 dwellings. If this is the case we believe this scheme and 16/00745/FUL should be treated as a single phased development. Since the combined applications would result in a continuous housing development of 16 properties we feel the application should be assessed against the environmental and social impacts of one site rather than as individual applications. We note that Longframlington has been subject of multiple new developments completed since the Neighbourhood Plan was published. Furthermore, it is evident the total number of these new dwellings substantial exceed the recommended levels for sustainability defined within the plan. The Society applies a social, environmental and economic sustainability test in its review of planning applications and as such we believe the impacts of this scheme should be considered in combination with other developments in Longframlington. We note the comments of others in relation to lighting impacts, traffic and a general degradation of the character of the village.b. We note and share observations expressed in other submissions in respect of potential drainage and sewerage negative impacts of the combined development. We feel these are legitimate concerns given the reduced drainage capacity of hardstanding as opposed to open land is likely to increase surface run-off and the application lacks sufficient detail how this will be addressed. Given the frequency of extraordinary climatic events we would expect appropriate analysis of the risk of overspill and thus potential to overwhelm local built and natural drainage capacity. Again, this is a sustainability issue as we have referred to above in respect of what appears to be over development in Longframlington.c. The application appears to make reference to net biodiversity compliance, however this is unclear in the site plan around planting. Equally, we would expect explicit detail on how net biodiversity gain is to be delivered and maintained throughout the scheme and specifically in respect of boundary treatments.2. The Society believes this scheme lacks sustainability and is not compliant with regional and local housing plans:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Given our concerns of this being potentially part of a phased development of 16 dwellings, it would appear the declaration made within the Planning Statement in respect of lack of
----------------	--

N&N Planning & Development Team

	<p>provision for affordable housing provision requires careful examination.</p> <p>b. As referred to above, the application includes a Planning Statement and this references the Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan (2026-2036). We understand the Neighbourhood Plan refers to 47 new properties as being appropriate for development, notwithstanding this allocation it seems that more than 150 dwellings have been permitted, thus further development is not justified within the defined settlement boundary.</p> <p>c. The Neighbourhood Plan makes provision for in-fill development, given the cumulative number of dwellings already permitted, this application is not justified on such grounds. Furthermore, the Society is opposed to loss of potentially productive agricultural land for housing development unless compelling evidence is presented to warrant change of use. In this case the application seeks an eastward extension of an existing development and thus should not be considered in-fill development.</p> <p>d. The Society endorses the need for compliance with recommendations and policies defined within neighbourhood plans. It is evident that Longframlington has been subject of housing development approval substantially in excess of that defined with the local plan. For the public to have confidence in planning decisions it is vital that any deviation from local plans should be accompanied by the most compelling justification and we feel this scheme lacks such justification.</p>		
23/03275/FUL	Full Application	Land To South East Of Fenham-Le-Moor	Development of six holiday chalets including access, parking, landscaping, and associated works.
Planning Officer	James Hudson		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) supports grant of approval for this planning application subject to the comments below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The layout and design of the chalets is to be commended as a sensitive proposal, which minimises the visual impact, in particular once the reinforced east boundary hedgerow is established. The Design and Access Statement is at pains to show that the proposals will not impact views from Holy Island. 2. The existing hedgerow is minimal, and its reinforcement will increase the availability of habitat, despite potential disturbance from the users of the chalets. There is no adverse comment regarding this in the Ecological Impact Statement. However, it appears that individual accesses are proposed to each chalet through this hedge and pedestrian access on the other side of the chalets might minimise disturbance. 3. The Ecological Impact Statement includes mitigation outside the red line boundary, including a hedge to the North and fencing and planting to the scrub along the Fenham Burn. This should be made a condition of any approval. 		

N&N Planning & Development Team

	<p>4. The surface and foul drainage proposals indicate that the soil conditions are not suitable for soak aways. It is likely that both the surface water and clean water from the sewage treatment plant may have to be taken to the Fenham Burn. There should be a condition requiring full details of these proposals, to be agreed before any development proceeds. Also, the upgrade track and carpark should be surfaced in permeable material.</p>		
23/02227/FUL	Full Application	Former Netherton Northside First School Netherton Village Netherton NE65 7HD	Change of use of former school building to two dwellings, including selected demolition and alterations.
Planning Officer	Michael Waddell		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) supports grant of approval for this planning application subject to the comments below.</p> <p>The Society as a matter of policy welcomes the repurposing of existing buildings whenever possible as it is often the most environmentally friendly option. Northside school closed in 2018 and has been vacant since this date and as time passes, there is a substantial risk of deterioration and could become a potential target for anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Although not listed, this Victorian school building is typical of many built in villages within the county. The proposals are surprisingly modest ensuring that only modern interventions are removed leaving the external appearance almost unaltered. The Society is delighted to see that it will remain recognisable as a former school which would have been an important part of village life. This sympathetic conversion will ensure that its place in the development of Netherton will be retained.</p> <p>We note from NCC documentation that there is a known flood risk for the site and that a comprehensive SUD's system has been suggested and that any areas for vehicles are constructed using permeable materials. We note that the tarmacked former school yard will be removed which will no doubt assist in providing adequate drainage.</p> <p>Reasonable sized gardens are provided for both dwellings along with offsite parking with the existing access retained. As this is on the periphery of Netherton, it is pleasing to see that the council have retained part of the site to provide a public play area for the benefit of the village community rather than allowing the whole site to be developed for housing.</p>		
23/03271/FUL	Full Application	Bendor Garage Wooler Northumberland	Change of use from agriculture to temporary overflow storage area and alteration of land levels.
23/03272/FUL	Full Application	As above	Change of use from empty field to open parcel of land for storing of trailers
Planning Officer	Stephanie Forster		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) objects to grant of approval for these planning applications.</p> <p>The Society understands the sites subject of these applications have been used for storage of industrial materials in connection with a business located nearby. These applications seek to obtain change of use approval from agricultural land to formalise and expand this storage as it appears the current use is contrary to the designation of the land.</p>		

N&N Planning & Development Team

	<p>The sites subject of these applications lie a few hundred metres north of the Cheviot Hills area of the Northumberland National Park and form part of an open rural landscape characterised by productive agricultural land. In addition to this intrinsic attractive rural landscape, the sites are also of historic significance that is recognised by detailed submissions from Historic England and the Battlefields Trust. We share these organisations' concerns on the harm this scheme will cause to important heritage assets.</p> <p>As a generic principle the Society is opposed to the loss of potentially productive agricultural land unless a compelling case is evidenced to justify such loss. In our view these applications are inadequate in both detail and justification for the proposed change of use. We are particularly disappointed with the lack of detail within the Design and Access statement (D&A) as it provides very limited information and seems based on a series of photographs that lack context or explanation. For such a substantially impactful scheme we would expect well-presented and explicitly evidenced applications that are absolutely clear on what is intended.</p> <p>Given the potential harm to heritage assets, impact on the landscape and loss of potentially valuable agricultural land we are opposed to grant of approval for this scheme.</p>		
23/03335/FUL	Full Application	Public Convenience High Street Newbiggin- By-The-Sea NE64 6DR	Two storey shipping container development to form a restaurant/cafe
Planning Officer	Ben Briggs		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) supports grant of approval for this planning application subject to the comments below.</p> <p>The Society notes the breadth of comment in respect of this application that relates to the site of a now demolished public convenience within the site of a car park. As a generic principle the N&N is supportive of sustainable reuse of existing cleared sites where a demonstrable public benefit can be derived.</p> <p>It is evident the applicant has undertaken detailed research as demonstrated through the comprehensive Design and Access statement (D&A) together with other supported documentation submitted. The Society has noted multiple schemes throughout the region that seek to use shipping containers repurposed as food and drink outlets. It would be fair to say there is significant variance in the quality of such applications and this proposal is better than most.</p> <p>We do recognise the concerns expressed in other submissions, however subject to appropriate conditions being applied to mitigate these concerns we believe on balance this a reasonable scheme and therefore we would support grant of approval.</p>		
23/03248/FUL	Full Application	Womens Institute Newton Point Newton- By-The-Sea Alnwick NE66 3EA	Demolition of existing building for erection of 2no. residential units.
Planning Officer	James Hudson		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) supports grant of approval for this planning application subject to the comments below.</p> <p>The demolition of the WI building and erection of 2 dwellings in its place appears to be a positive development for the village of Newton by the Sea.</p>		

N&N Planning & Development Team

	<p>The ecological benefits of native planting and proactive measures to enhance biodiversity such as creating hedgehog runs, reptile piles and building in nesting boxes is to be commended. However, the Society would welcome additional measures to make the dwellings more green energy efficient by the incorporation of initiatives such as roof-mounted solar panels.</p>		
23/03461/FUL	Full Application	Bleach Green Farmhouse West Road Ovingham NE42 6BL	Conversion of existing farm buildings into a single private dwelling house
Planning Officer	Stephanie Milne		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) supports grant of approval for this planning application subject to the comments below.</p> <p>Bleach Green farmhouse lies within the Ovingham Conservation Area (OCA) and any changes to the structure must respect this and aim to make a valuable contribution to its distinctive character. The Society notes that Northumberland County Council's Environmental and Design Team seek further information from the applicant regarding the importance of the farmhouse in context within the OCA. We would agree that this could have been more comprehensively researched and included in the Design Access and Heritage Statement.</p> <p>The retention and careful restoration of the striking chimney in the proposed design is to be applauded. It could be the last vestige of the bleach works which apparently stood on this site. It provides a tangible link to the building's historic past and confirms its importance within the conservation area and to the community of Ovingham.</p> <p>We share the council's concerns about the need to guarantee the existing public right of way through the site is either maintained or re-routed to the satisfaction of all parties to ensure no loss of access to the countryside. Notwithstanding this, the proposed restoration appears to be well conceived, restrained, and sympathetic to the 173-year-old building which has survived almost unaltered when so many other similar farm buildings in the county have been lost to rampant development.</p> <p>There are several proposals in the design proposal which we commend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of the roof of the main building with Welsh slate and use of clay pantiles to match what remains on the single storey building. • No inappropriate extensions to the building and minimal interventions to the historic fabric. • The use of traditional lime mortar to improve the building's appearance and long-term sustainability. • The provision of electric vehicle charging points on site. • The use of gravel for car parking areas rather than a non-permeable surface. 		
23/03286/FUL	Full Application	2 Courtyard Gardens Wark Cornhill-On-Tweed TD12 4FH	Erection of new dwelling.
Planning Officer	Jon Sharp		
Comment	<p>The Northumberland and Newcastle Society (N&N) objects to grant of approval for this planning application in its current form.</p>		

N&N Planning & Development Team

As a generic principle the Society recognises the potential value of some infill development in existing settlements where this is appropriate, sympathetic and endorsed within a carefully considered local plan.

It is evident that this scheme is not locally endorsed and likewise it has significant potential to adversely impact on the character of Wark. The Design and Access / Heritage statement (D&A) provided by the applicant is inadequate in detail and justification for this scheme. The legitimate concerns expressed in submissions of others are not addressed within the application and the lack of detail within the D&A suggests the applicant has not sought to achieve synergy with the character, environment or setting of the site. We believe the application should be refused accordingly.