

Members Update Sheet

Item 2 NYM/2020/0757/FL – A site visit was undertaken on 30 March 2021: Please see site visit notes:

North York Moors National Park Authority Planning Committee Site Visit

Public minutes of the site visit held at Toft House Farm, Aislaby at 10.30 on 30 March 2021.

Present: Mrs J Frank (Deputy Chair - Acting Chair), Mrs A Fisher, Mr J Bailey, Mr A Scott, Mr C Williamson

Apologies: Mr D Hugill (Chair), Mr C Pearson, Mr M Bowes

National Park Authority Officers: Chris France (Director of Planning)
Hilary Saunders (Planning Team Leader)

Others:

Applicants – Messrs Hall
Agent - Mrs Katie Atkinson

NYM/2020/0757/FL – Proposed construction of 2 no. self-build local occupancy dwellings with associated driveway, garage/parking, amenity spaces and landscaping works at land at Toft House Farm Caravan Site, Aislaby

The Members and Planning Officers met the applicant and agent in the caravan field to the rear of the application site. Everyone then walked to the edge of the application site where the Deputy Chair opened the meeting.

Chris France set out the details of the application, and reminded Members why it had been deferred for a site visit, including assessing how the site relates to the form and character of the village and whether, even though falling outside the main part of the village the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the character of the area.

The applicants had pegged out the position of the two proposed dwellings and Members walked onto this area. Hilary Saunders went through the plans which showed both the siting, curtilages and design of the proposed development and Chris France pointed out the route of the public right of way to the north east.

The Deputy Chair closed the visit once she was satisfied that there were no questions from Members and Members and Officers left the site.

Hilary Saunders
Planning Team Leader

Please see separate circulated information received from the Applicant in support of the application:

Figure 1 – location of site on edge of existing development and nature of existing ‘spread’ development in village

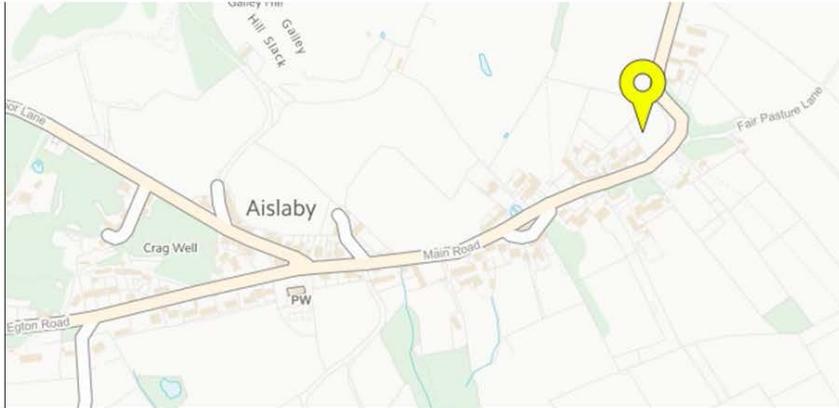


Figure 2 – approach to the site from Whitby, site screened by its position behind existing buildings and mature vegetation



Figure 3 – site in plan form, dwellings to be positioned in line with existing properties to the immediate west on southerly part of the site closest to the road (northern part to remain green)



In support of NYM/2020/0757/FL – construction of 2 no. self-build, local occupancy dwellings with associated driveway, garage/parking, amenity spaces and landscaping works at land at Toft House Caravan Site, Main Road, Aislaby

Item 3 NYM/2020/0896/CU

Parish - Object for the following reasons:

- Changes to the Old Coastguard Station were grant aided to provide an information and educational facility for all. Moving the facility upstairs will diminish it's impact.
- It goes against the principles of preservation and education, values that should be reflected, not profit.
- A café downstairs would impact on the educational aspects of what the Old Coastguard Station represents that should be enhanced not detracted from.
- The plan is still not clear on details i.e. where any extractor fan would be located and the impact of that.

Natural England - No objection

Fire Officer - No objection/No comment.

In response to the additional information submitted by the applicant, the following representations have been made:

Julie Brignall, Whitegates, Tommy Baxter Street, Robin Hoods Bay - The revised plans and additional information provides much more clarity. If fully implemented it will benefit the bay. On this basis I would like to withdraw my complaint.

Mr Alan A Staniforth, Darnall, Whitby Road, Robin Hoods Bay – Object. The proposal is “to help improve the visitor’s experience and education offer at OCS”
With many years’ experience in planning and designing visitor centres for the NYM National Park, including the original displays at OCS, I dispute this statement.

The design and positioning of display material and the movement of visitors are important factors in the effectiveness of the message to be conveyed. The wall displays and visitor movement will be restricted by café tables. Visitors are deterred by any obstructions with stairs and lifts discouraging them to proceed.

The opening of the window on the ground floor will have only minimal impact on the “Dark space” particularly as it is close to the existing windows. The entrance and lobby are small, restricted areas and are already used for information displays. There will be virtually no increase in wall space. What exactly is “enhanced visitor welcome material”?

Proposals to “Changes to the learning offer” can be carried out without affecting the current use of the space within the building. It would appear that the present retail area is to be abandoned with a concomitant loss in revenue.

The centres at Ravenscar and Robin Hood’s Bay are ideally situated to promote the work of the Trust and deliver a vital conservation message. The centre at Ravenscar has seen a reduction in its interpretation facility in favour of a catering provision. The Trust are now proposing similar action at OCS with the ‘threat’ that without these changes the centre may be closed. Whilst appreciating the need for generating revenue, I suggest that devaluing of the interpretative/informative at the expense of a limited additional income would be a retrograde step. To infer that closure of the whole facility would otherwise be a possibility is disingenuous.

Ms Joanna Pedley, Ocean View, Covet Hill, Robin Hood's Bay - The proposed creation of a café will negatively impact the scope and quality of the existing visitor information, education and community uses of the building. Whilst the National Trust claims that the Old Coastguard Station can only be financially viable if it includes a café, this case has not been transparently made. Other options to improve its financial viability, consistent with its current use, should be explored in consultation with the local community.

This comment is supported by the following observations from the additional information submitted by the National Trust.

- The proposed re-distribution of interpretive materials in different parts of the ground and first floor will reduce the ease of access, impact and overall coherence of the visitor information/education offer. The proposal to use the entrance lobby is concerning, since the space is very small and the area will be a busy thoroughfare into the ground floor area and for accessing the stairs and lift. It will not be conducive for people standing and absorbing information. It is not clear how the limited wall space on the ground floor can be used for local artists works (compared to full use of the first floor space on a commercial basis)
- The materiality of the proposed café income stream, compared to the proposed loss of other existing income streams (retail shop, entrance fees, renting out the first floor space, and reduced school/learning activity income) is unclear. Therefore the financial justification for the proposed change of use remains weak.

Marie Mack, The Coble, Covet Hill, Robin Hoods Bay - With reference to North York Moors Local Plan policies SPL (community facilities) and UE3 (loss of existing tourism and recreational facilities). I note that SPL states that:

“Development that would result in the loss of a community facility or would compromise its use, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer sustainable or viable in that location or is no longer needed.”

Policy UE3 states similar objectives re. tourism facilities.

It is clear from the most recent information from the applicant that:

- There would be a significant reduction information on the ground floor in order to accommodate refreshment facilities, thus compromising it's use as a visitors centre. Information would be restricted to walls and the entrance lobby. The most significant and popular interactive exhibit, the fish tank, is to be removed. Is this area now predominantly a cafe or a visitors centre?
- The proposed changes would result in the loss of a classroom facility. Instead, the National Trust's revised educational offer is for self-facilitated learning or guided tours, both occurring outside the building. There would no longer be a specialist educational facility within the building. I would draw your attention to the letter submitted by Mrs Claire Barber of Fylingdales School on the value of such an indoor facility - without it, there is no space for focused learning before exploring the beach without distractions, nor a space to learn in bad weather.

- The changes would also result in the loss of a community facility used by local artists for exhibitions which were popular with tourists. The proposal shows a much reduced offering in the cafe area.

The applicants claim that their current use of the Old Coastguard Station is no longer financially viable. Under Strategic Policy L this would need to be demonstrated.

This is complicated by the fact that income from commercial use including holiday accommodation, education fees and retail sales supports the visitors centre, but surely the guidelines in Appendix 2 in the NYM Local plan are of value here. It cannot be enough to simply suggest that because of the effects of Covid this is no longer a viable option in the future without any proof.

Moreover, there are material planning considerations here; most notably layout and design issues. I would encourage the committee to make a site visit to understand the restrictions presented in this building with this layout. The combination of a cafe and visitor information in the ground floor would result in people moving between exhibits crossing paths with people carrying hot drinks. Secondly, any information displayed near to tables where cafe customers are seated or queuing would most likely deter people from coming closer to read it for fear of being in another person's space. This is far from ideal in a visitors centre.

Finally, the National Trust has not made any attempt to consult with members of the local community on this matter or to consider anything other than a café.

Mr N Mack, The Coble, Covet Hill, Robin Hoods Bay - Policy UE3, Loss of Existing Tourism and Recreation Facilities states "Development that would lead to the loss of an existing tourism or recreation facility will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the business is no longer viable or that the new use would result in a significant improvement to the immediate environment..." The overwhelming number of reasoned objections to this planning proposal clearly raise material planning considerations and recognition that the existing visitor centre is a tourist attraction providing a "valuable educational resource highlighting the area's fascinating geology and marine life."

The proposal and plan submitted by the National Trust show that in reality the Old Coastguard Station (OCS) would cease to be a visitor centre of any real attraction, as it will primarily be a cafe.

The National Trust have failed to provide any financial evidence to show that the visitor centre is no longer viable. It is my view that the revised proposal will lead to a reduction in income. Good learning resources like this have been in decline in recent years through loss to inappropriate developments where there is no justified need. I do not believe that all opportunities have been explored for alternative ways to fund the continued success of the exhibition centre. To my knowledge, there has been no engagement with the local community to secure any form of continued viability through voluntary or community participation.

Health and safety concerns could also result in fewer school children visiting the OCS, given risks posed by hot drinks and the danger of them moving freely on the ground floor.

The revised plans do not mention or provide adequate clarification of the exit door on the first floor. The opening of this door, even for ventilation, would as adjoining neighbours adversely affect our quiet enjoyment of our home and we would therefore ask that the door should remain closed, other than in an emergency.

ITEM 4 NYM/2021/0043/FL

Please note an amendment to Condition 4 as follows:

4. The accommodation hereby approved shall not be occupied as a separate independent dwelling and shall remain ancillary to the use of the main dwelling known as High Farm and shall form and shall remain as part of the curtilage of this main dwelling as a single planning unit and shall be used only for: 1, members of the family of the occupier of the main dwelling as a residential annexe or 2, as holiday letting accommodation. For the purposes of this condition, the holiday unit(s) hereby permitted shall form and remain part of the curtilage of the existing dwelling known as High Farm and shall not be sold or leased off from the main dwelling or let off except as holiday accommodation in accordance with the terms of condition 5 below without a further grant of planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.

Additional Background Information:

The applicant has provided further information to confirm they no longer have any future need for replacement kennelling at the site.