

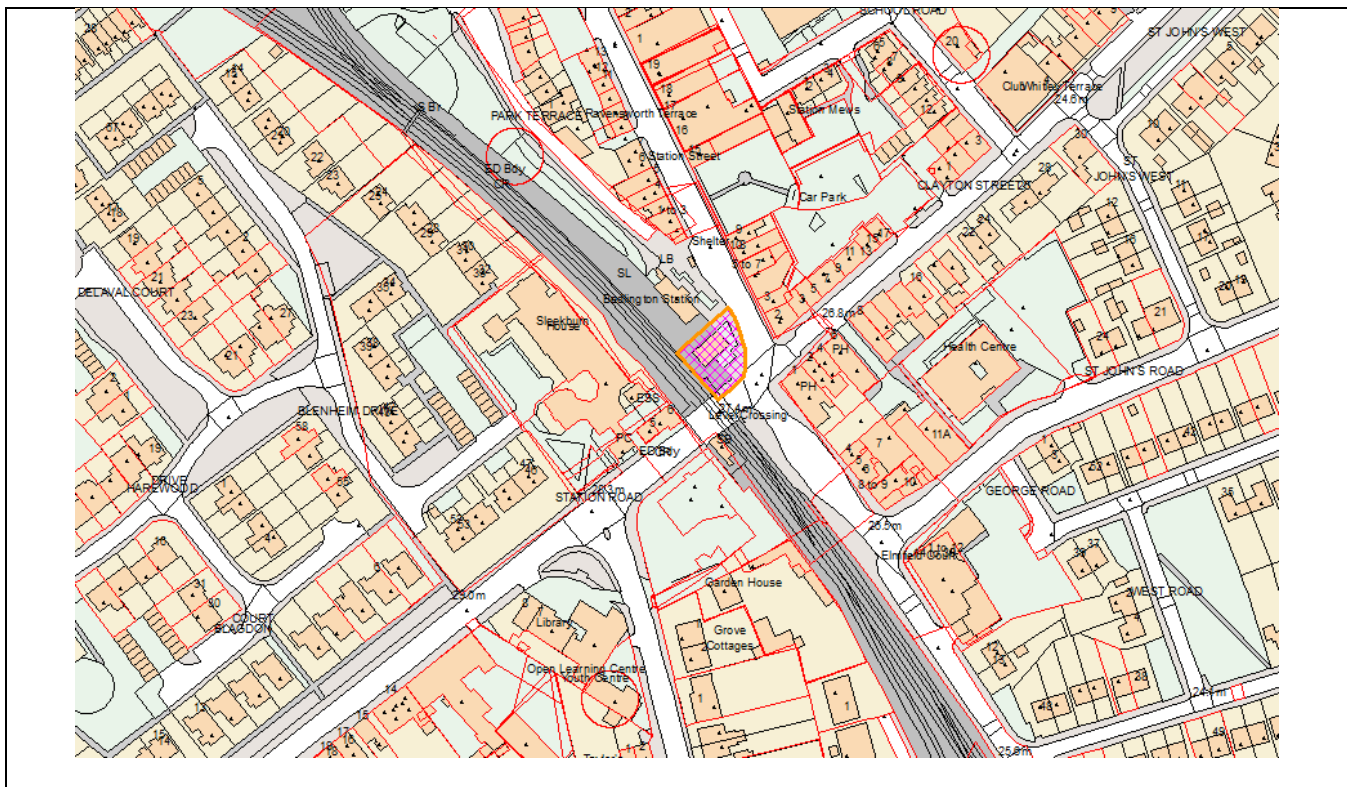


# Northumberland County Council

## Strategic Planning Committee – 1 August 2023

<b>Application No:</b>	23/01070/CCD		
<b>Proposal:</b>	Demolition of the former Bedlington Station Building (South) to accommodate works to construct the new railway station approved under 21/01106/CCD		
<b>Site Address</b>	Bedlington Railway Station, Station Street, Bedlington, Northumberland NE22 5UZ		
<b>Applicant:</b>	Northumberland County Council County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF,	<b>Agent:</b>	Alannah Healey SLC Property 72 B-Box Studios Stoddart Street Newcastle upon Tyne NE61 2EF
<b>Ward</b>	Sleekburn	<b>Parish</b>	East Bedlington
<b>Valid Date:</b>	14 April 2023	<b>Expiry Date:</b>	11 August 2023
<b>Case Officer Details:</b>	Name: Mr Gordon Halliday Job Title: Consultant Planner Tel No: 07785 727053 Email: gordon.halliday@northumberland.gov.uk		

**Recommendation:** That this application be GRANTED permission



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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Under the provisions of the Council's current Scheme of Delegation, in cases where the local authority is the applicant in respect of a planning application, it is required to be determined by the Planning Committee.

## **2. Description of the Proposals**

2.1 The Northumberland Line scheme seeks to re-introduce passenger services onto the existing freight line that runs between Newcastle Central Station and Ashington. The scheme includes the construction of six new railway stations and associated infrastructure. It is envisaged that there will be a half hourly service with an anticipated journey time between Newcastle and Ashington of 35 minutes.

2.2 The railway line was formerly known as the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line. Passenger services on the line ceased in 1964 since when freight trains have continued to operate.

2.3 This application seeks consent to demolish the former Bedlington Station building (south) to facilitate delivery of the new railway station that was granted planning permission in November 2021. Planning permission is required for the demolition because the building was included within the land for the station development. Otherwise the proposal would have constituted permitted development.

2.4 The former station buildings (north and south) are located on the existing redundant Newcastle bound platform. The consent for the new station identified that both buildings were to be retained. The northern station building was constructed in 1850 and closed in 1964 whilst the southern building probably dates from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A glazed canopy that is no longer present linked the two buildings. Network Rail used the two remaining buildings for office accommodation until about 15 years ago since which time they have remained mainly empty, although the southern building has been occasionally used to store spares for the adjacent Level Crossing.

2.5 The southern station building proposed for demolition is a tall single-storey structure constructed in red brick with a slate roof. It repeats some of the design features of the northern building including its brick construction, pitched slate roof, sandstone detailing and blind roundel windows, although overall its design is less detailed. The southern station building comprises three rooms internally that were probably used as a waiting room/booking hall, an office and WC. A detailed description of the building and its architectural features is provided at paragraphs 7.9 – 7.11 of this report.

2.6 Since the planning application for the new railway station was approved, further work has been undertaken on the constructability of the proposed scheme. This has included an Options Assessment of the various factors for and against the retention of the Bedlington South station building.

2.7 The Options Assessment report states that In addition to the station buildings, the former up platform remains mostly intact. However, the platform cannot be reused as part of the Northumberland Line because it does not comply with current railway design standards and the platform edge also needs to be moved slightly east to accommodate a revised track alignment through the station. The front wall and approximately 1½ - 2m of the existing platform will therefore need to be removed and replaced with a new structure. The existing platform is an integral part of the south station building's foundations and so, to prevent the gable end of the structure collapsing, expensive and complicated temporary structural underpinning would be required to 'shore-up' the structure whilst the front wall is being replaced. The estimated cost of this work is approximately £375k. The works may cause further structural damage to, or collapse of, the building and it is estimated that this could add a further £100- 200k to the costs depending on the amount of damage sustained.

2.8 A structural survey of the two station buildings identified that there are extensive defects within both structures, including evidence of structural movement within the walls of the buildings, cracking to walls, roof damage, life-expired gutters and downpipes, vegetation growth, unsafe / damaged floors etc. The estimated costs to bring the buildings back to usable standard are £450-500k for the northern building and £325-375k for the smaller southern building.

2.9 The Options Assessment recognises that the southern building has historic merit and refers to the Heritage Statement that was submitted with the original station application. Heritage issues are dealt with in detail in Section 7 below. Notwithstanding the historic merit, the applicant's submissions conclude that the building should be demolished for various reasons *'including the structural integrity of the existing building, the adverse programme and other implications for the delivery of the new railway station at Bedlington as a result of retaining the building; the risk that there is no guarantee that further damage would not be caused to, or collapse of, the building even with careful installation of the temporary works to facilitate the new railway station development; and the enhanced accessibility and public realm that will be enabled through demolition'*. It is also stated that demolition would represent a more prudent use of the funds available for investment at the station.

2.10 The submissions from the applicant include letters of support for demolition from Northern Trans Ltd. and Network Rail. Illustrative material on what the southern part of the station platform, the station entrance and the relationship with neighbouring streets could look like with and without the station south building has also been submitted.

### 3. Planning History

**Reference Number:** 21/1106/CCD

**Description:** Construction of a two-platform railway station including: ramped pedestrian access, new highway access; modifications to existing highways including pedestrian footways; provision of parking for cars, electric vehicles, motorcycles, cycles, and taxis and other associated works. Construction of facilities ancillary to the station including, lighting, soft and hard landscaping, surface and subsurface drainage, utilities and other services, boundary treatment and other associated works at Bedlington Railway Station, Station Street, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 5UZ.

#### 4. Consultee Responses

East Bedlington Parish Council	<p>Object in the strongest terms to this proposal.</p> <p>It is clear from the following extracts from the Bedlington Station Heritage Statement that demolition is NOT an option for this building: 5.12 "Of 19 former stations on the Blyth and Tyne only Bedlington, Hartley, Hepscott and Morpeth stations remain as standing buildings. These structures have group value with each other as well as other standing buildings along the line." "The Bedlington Station buildings are therefore unusual in that they are still owned by Network Rail and not converted to residential use or demolished. The buildings therefore have regional significance as a rare survival of station buildings on the Blyth and Tyne Railway, made rarer still at Bedlington by the survival of two buildings of different phases demonstrating the development of this station in the early-20th century". "it can be stated that in all likelihood Bedlington is one of the best-preserved examples of a station on the Blyth and Tyne Railway". "It is considered that should the buildings be assessed for local listing, they would be likely to meeting the criteria for inclusion on the local list due to their architectural and historic interest, regional rarity, group value with other railway structures and landmark value within this part of Bedlington".</p> <p>The Parish Council has, for many years, attempted to engage with Network Rail with a view to developing, with grant funding, these buildings as a Heritage and Innovation Centre to provide a community asset that celebrates the important railway heritage of our town. Network Rail has continually ignored attempts at dialogue. Meanwhile the buildings have continued to degenerate due to lack of maintenance. In 2020 the Parish Council was invited by the County Council to submit an expression of interest in these buildings. A detailed proposal was forwarded to the County Council. The vision was a development that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• forms the centre piece of our town redevelopment;</li><li>• provides first class facilities that might be expected in more high profile stations;</li><li>• creates a heritage and innovation centre recognising the achievements of our forebears and inspiring the next generation to engage in emerging green technologies;</li><li>• restores civic pride;</li><li>• creates jobs and business opportunities; and</li><li>• signifies the second coming of passenger rail.</li></ul> <p>The development would provide office space, exhibition space,</p>
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	<p>waiting room and toilet, café, with an atrium area connecting the two buildings that would allow for pop up local shops, tourist information and other local services. The Parish Council has earmarked £40,000 to meet its contribution to the scheme and is confident that grant funding will be available. After submission of this scheme we heard nothing. Furthermore, in March of this year, this proposal was accepted by the Bedlington Innovation Team (formerly the Bedlington Town Board) as one of the proposals to go forward for Borderlands Funding as part of the Bedlington Place Plan. This was as a result of almost 18 months of discussion with local councillors and officers from the NCC regeneration team.</p> <p>Should the demolition of the South Building be allowed, this proposal will, of course, be irrelevant. The original planning application for the station, reference 21/01106/CCD clearly shows both buildings as retained on the platform. We would like to understand what has changed since then. Material considerations outlined in this objection are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on character and appearance of the area.</li> <li>• Impact on the community and other services.</li> <li>• Economic impact and sustainability.</li> <li>• Proposals in the Parish Plan.</li> <li>• Previous planning decisions.</li> </ul>
County Ecologist	No objection subject to conditions
Public Protection	No objection
Climate Change Team	No response received
Built Heritage and Design Team	Objection – requiring a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the historic asset.

## 5. Public Responses

### 5.1 Neighbour Notification

Number of Neighbours Notified	94
Number of Objections	16
Number of Support	1
Number of General Comments	1

5.2 Petition – a petition organised by the Northumberland Line Community Heritage Group and containing 1038 signatures has been received objecting to the demolition of the building.

5.3 Notices - general site notices were posted on 21 April 2023 and a press notice was placed in the News Post Leader on 21 April 2023.

#### Summary of Responses:

5.4 The letters of objection received to the application include objections from West Bedlington Town Council and the Northumberland Line Community Heritage Group. 13 residents of Bedlington, Newbiggin-be-the Sea, Cambois, Blyth, Seaton

Sluice, Cresswell and Morpeth also submitted objections. The objections are made on the following grounds.

- The building plays a major part in the history of the Bedlington area as part of the only original stations buildings left on the line.
- The buildings are an important heritage asset and should be repaired for use by commuters and the local community providing employment opportunity and helping restore civic pride.
- The reduction in space available for community use resulting from the demolition of the south building will significantly impair the opportunity to run a mixed-use sustainable business.
- The establishment of a visitor centre / museum on Bedlington Station, including reference to Bedlington Iron Works as well as the history of the railway, could assist in the marketing of the Northumberland Line for tourism.
- The collective of station buildings and signal boxes at Bedlington Station have a group value of heritage benefit and would be likely to meet the criteria for inclusion on the local list due to their architectural and historic interest, as stated in the Heritage Statement submitted with the original planning application.
- Possible uses for the building include café, museum, meeting room, heritage centre, educational centre and pop-up market.
- The buildings should be renovated for community ownership and use.
- Whilst the building displays evidence of structural problems and lack of maintenance, these can be rectified.
- Local residents should be consulted and ways to save the building should be fully explored.

5.5 The Railway Heritage Trust has commented in support of the proposed demolition. The Trust supports in principle a project for the conversion of the northern station building into a community asset. It considers that the southern building lacks the architectural character of the northern building, retains minimal original features and will require investment of several hundred thousand pounds to make it structurally sound. It considers that the focus of restoration should concentrate on the northern building which it considers has the potential to shine as a restoration project.

5.6 The Northumberland and Newcastle Society has submitted comments acknowledging the conflicting challenges of the proposal. It considers that reinstating the Northumberland Line as soon as practicable is highly desirable, however, if the southern building is demolished, a building of quality and significance will be irreplaceable. The Society therefore considers that all reasonable opportunities should be explored before resorting to demolition.

5.7 The above is a summary of the comments. The full written text is available on the planning portal.

## **6. Planning Policy**

### Development Plan Policy

6.1 The Development Plan in respect of the application site comprises the adopted Northumberland Local Plan (NLP). The following policies in the NLP are relevant to the consideration of the application.

QOP1: Design Principles
QOP2: Good Design and Amenity
QOP6: Delivering Well-designed Places
TRA1: Promoting Sustainable Connections
TRA5: Rail Transport and Safeguarding Facilities
ENV1: Approaches to assessing the impact of development on the natural, historic and built environment
ENV7: Historic Environment and Heritage Assets

## National Planning Policy

6.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are material considerations in determining this application.

## 7. Appraisal

7.1 The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are:

- Principle of the development
- Impact on heritage assets
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area

### Principle of the Development

7.2 The principle of the Bedlington Station development was established by the permission granted to the original application in November 2021. In June 2022 the Secretary of State approved an application for the Northumberland Scheme under the Transport Works Order Act Order, further confirming the principle of the Bedlington Station development.

7.3 Whilst the principle of the development of the station has been established, the current proposal represents a change from the approved scheme and raises issues that need to be carefully assessed.

### Impact on heritage assets

#### *Local and National Planning Policy*

7.4 NLP Policy ENV 7 Part 6 states that *'Development proposals that affect the significance of non-designated heritage assets shall require a balanced judgement, taking into account the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset'*.

7.5 NLP Policy ENV 7 Part 7 continues: *'If following the above assessment, a decision is made that will result in the loss of all or any part of a heritage asset, or a reduction of its significance, developers will be required to record and advance understanding of the significance of the asset (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to its importance and the impact, through appropriate compensatory*

*measures. The results of such measures should be made publicly accessible through appropriate archiving and publication. The ability to create full records in this way should not, in itself, be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be supported’.*

7.6 The NPPF states that: *‘Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations’.* (paragraph 189). It continues: *‘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’.* (paragraph 197)

7.7 The NPPF also states: *‘In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.* (paragraph 203). It continues: *‘Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred’.* (paragraph 204) Paragraph 205 states: *‘Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible’.*<sup>69</sup> However, *the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted’.*

#### *Description of the Building*

7.8 A Heritage Assessment was submitted with the original planning application for the new railway station. This document stated that the grouping of railway buildings at Bedlington Station was considered likely to meet the threshold for local listing. The Heritage Assessment was resubmitted but was not updated for the current application. The applicant was asked to supply further information assessing the proposed demolition of the building and its impact on significance. A Heritage Assessment Addendum (HAA) was subsequently submitted.

7.9 The HAA states that the northern station building was constructed in 1850 and closed in 1964 whilst the southern building probably dates from the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A glazed canopy that is no longer present linked the two buildings. The southern station building that is proposed for demolition building is a tall single-storey structure constructed in red brick laid to English Garden Wall Bond, with a brick plinth to the base of the building with brick copings. It has a timber fascia under a slate roof with a single brick ridge stack. The south-east and north-east elevations each contain two rectangular windows with sandstone lintels and sills. The north-east elevation also contains a blind roundel window with brick surround in the gable. The north-west elevation is the main entrance to the building, formerly being accessed from under the glazed canopy. It contains a door at the western end of the



building and another door, now blocked in brick at the eastern end, both with sandstone lintels. There is a rectangular window at the eastern end and two smaller windows placed centrally to the building, now blocked with brick. A photograph from 1966 shows that immediately prior to closure these small openings were used for issuing tickets. The south-west elevation onto the platform contains a further doorway (double width) with a renewed brick arched head, an adjacent rectangular window with a sandstone lintel and sill, and a blind gable roundel window. A lantern for ventilation and glazing (now boarded up) is provided at roof level facing north-west.

7.10 The southern building repeats some of the design features of the northern building including its brick construction, pitched slate roof, sandstone detailing and blind roundel windows, although overall its design is less detailed.

7.11 The building comprises three rooms internally that were probably used as a waiting room/booking hall, an office and WC, although other possible uses have been stated. The waiting room/booking hall occupies the western two-thirds of the structure and is open to the roof with lantern glazing. The ceiling is boarded in timber. It contains a parquet floor, although in a poor state of repair, and blocked chimney breast in its east wall. The doorway in its south-west wall onto the platform has transom glazing. The office and WC are at the eastern end of the building, each accessed through separate doorways from the east end of the waiting room. The office also contains a blocked fireplace in its south-west corner.

### *Significance and Setting*

7.12 The Heritage Assessment Addendum (HAA) states that the significance of Bedlington Station lies in its architectural and historic interest as one of only 5 former stations on the former Blyth and Tyne line that has standing buildings. These structures have group value with each other as well as with other railway structures along the line. The Bedlington Station buildings are the only ones that are still owned by Network Rail and have not been converted to other uses resulting in greater conservation of the internal space which gives them regional significance. Their location is considered to give them landmark quality in this part of Bedlington and their architectural styling is also readily understandable as railway architecture providing the buildings with architectural and aesthetic value.

7.13 The HAA states that the north and south station buildings form a pair with each contributing positively to the setting and significance of the other. The setting of the station buildings is the railway and surrounding road network. At Bedlington the survival of several railway buildings, linked by former platforms and stone boundary walls, provides a visual and functional setting for the buildings as part of this asset grouping within the townscape. This includes the North and South signal boxes. On Ravensworth Street the station buildings are set back from the road at the junction between it and Station Road, at the level crossing. The buildings are also slightly elevated. This placement and elevation lends prominence to the buildings which are otherwise small scale structures; although the loss of the glazed canopy between the two buildings and the loss of the footbridge over the level crossing have eroded their setting. Surrounding the buildings on Ravensworth Street there is an expanse of block paving and modern brick wing walls and planters. Whilst there is a small number of trees, this hard landscaping does not complement the station buildings and is a detracting feature of their setting. Between the two ranges comprising the station, there is currently a metal palisade fence and gate, and likewise, to the north-

west of the station the low stone boundary wall to the platforms, that makes a positive contribution to the asset, is now also topped by the metal palisade fence. The fencing is unsympathetic to the aesthetic and historic value of the station and is a detracting feature of its setting. The station is located within the urban townscape of Bedlington which contains several non-designated historic buildings in its vicinity. These vary in quality, but ultimately make a positive contribution to understanding the historic significance of the railway as part of the town's development and the station's place within that.

### *Assessment of Impact*

7.14 The planning application is supported by an Options Assessment report that weighs up the factors that have been considered in retaining or demolishing the building and ultimately recommends the latter for various reasons, including:

- the structural integrity of the existing building;
- the adverse programme and other implications for delivery of the new railway station at Bedlington as a result of retaining the building;
- the risk that there is no guarantee that further damage would not be caused to, or collapse of, the building even with careful installation of the temporary works to facilitate the new railway station development; and
- the enhanced accessibility and public realm that will be enabled through demolition. Visualisations of the options for landscaping and improved accessibility have also been submitted.

7.15 The HAA states that the demolition of the southern station building will result in the total loss of its heritage significance as a non-designated heritage asset. The demolition of the south station building will also result in change to the setting and significance of the original station building to the north. This will remove evidence of the station's historical development and expansion in the early-20th century that forms a part of its historic interest. The intrinsic significance of the northern building as the original station building with historic and architectural interest, as part of the original 19th century railway development will not be affected.

7.16 The HAA points out that the applicant is in ongoing discussions with strategic partners to secure funding to bring the former northern station building back into use. The re-use of the northern building will considerably enhance the significance of the heritage asset, especially when experienced in the context of the adjacent operational railway system.

7.17 The Council's Architectural Heritage and Design Officer has reviewed the submissions, including the HAA which she considers accords with the requirements of the NPPF and the advice set out in Historic England's Guidance *'The Setting of Heritage Assets'* Paragraph 9 Cumulative Change and concurs with her assessment that the degree of harm caused by the proposed demolition is total loss of a non-designated heritage asset. The officer's detailed response raises an objection to demolition and refers to the national and local policy requirement that the decision maker must make a balanced judgement that takes the total loss and significance of the heritage asset into account.

7.18 The Parish Councils, Community Heritage Group and local residents have referred also to the potential for the building to be restored and made available for community use together with the main station building. A number of potential uses are referred to. Objectors to the proposed demolition acknowledge that the building

is in poor condition but consider that this has happened through neglect by its owners, Network Rail. The Council's Architectural Heritage and Design Officer notes that the building is windproof and watertight but has vegetative growth, slipped slates, cracked and broken glass to roof lights, isolated loss of brick detailing, open joints, delineation of the brick face, missing rainwater goods and bricks, water ingress, use of non-matching brick in consolidation, timber decay of the parquet flooring and areas of cracking in the brick. She considers that some of these defects illustrate that the building has not been appropriately maintained or repaired and that none of the defects prevent the building's repair and refurbishment in a manner consistent with its conservation.

7.19 It is understood that Network Rail were considering its demolition since before the Northumberland Line scheme became a reality. It is not subject to any specific designation so there has been no requirement for it to be maintained in good condition. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states: '*Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision*'. However, it is not considered that in this case Network Rail have deliberately neglected or damaged the building. Rather it has been the case that for many years the building has not fulfilled any beneficial purpose other than occasionally storing materials.

7.20 The Parish Council and other objectors consider that both the north and south station buildings should be renovated for community ownership and use. They identify various possible uses for the buildings including café, museum, meeting room, heritage centre, educational centre and pop-up market. Some discussions on possible uses for the station buildings have taken place since planning permission was granted for the new railway station. The submission of the current planning application has provided a new focus for these discussions. This has resulted in some progress being made in that Network Rail have recently agreed to grant the Parish Council a 99 lease for the northern building at a lease rent of £1 per annum if demanded. The Railway Heritage Trust has also agreed in principle to support a project to bring the former station back into use as a community asset and considers that in an environment where resources are limited the focus should be on the main north station building. It states: '*The risk is that if both buildings are retained, the southern building will suck resources into making that good and the northern building will suffer and turn out merely adequate*'.

7.21 National and local planning policy requires the decision maker to reach a balanced judgement on whether a non-designated heritage asset should be demolished. The heritage factors to be taken into account in making such a judgement have been assessed above. The overall assessment is dealt with in section 8 of this report below.

#### Impact on the character and appearance of the area

7.22 The Government has given centre stage in the recent revisions to the NPPF to raise the standards of design and quality of new development and this is reflected in local planning policy. Policy QOP 1 in the NLP sets out the design principles for new development and Policy QOP2 requires development to provide a high standard of amenity for users and not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of those living in the area. Development proposals should ensure that the physical presence and design of the development preserves the character of the area and does not have a visually intrusive or overbearing impact on neighbouring uses. Policy QOP6 in the

NLP includes as a criterion in delivering well-designed places: '*Proposals which would materially diminish the standard of design in an already approved scheme will not be supported*'.

7.23 The applicant has recently discussed the proposed demolition of the building with the Parish Council and the local heritage group with a focus on the implications for utilising the space that would be created by the demolition. This has led to the submission of illustrative material on what the southern part of the station platform, the station entrance and the relationship with neighbouring streets could look like with and without the station south building. Whilst these designs are in draft form and for illustrative purposes only it is considered that they demonstrate that a more attractive entrance to the new station could result from utilising the space freed up by the demolition of the building to improve access and platform features.

7.24 The condition of the two station buildings currently has an adverse impact on the attractiveness of the local environment. If the north station building is retained, given the submissions made by the applicant, it is not certain that sufficient funding will be available to repair both station buildings.

7.25 It is concluded that, notwithstanding the adverse impact on a heritage asset, the proposed development complies with NLP Policies QOP 1, QOP 2 and QOP6.

#### Other Matters

##### *Equality Duty*

7.26 The County Council has a duty to have regard to the impact of any proposal on those people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act. Officers have had due regard to Sec 149(1) (a) and (b) of the Equality Act 2010 and considered the information provided by the applicant, together with the responses from consultees and other parties, and determined that the proposal would have no material impact on individuals or identifiable groups with protected characteristics. Accordingly, no changes to the proposal were required to make it acceptable in this regard.

##### *Crime and Disorder Act Implications*

7.27 The proposal does not give rise to any implications for crime and disorder.

##### *Human Rights Act Implications*

7.28 The Human Rights Act requires the County Council to take into account the rights of the public under the European Convention on Human Rights and prevents the Council from acting in a manner which is incompatible with those rights. Article 8 of the Convention provides that there shall be respect for an individual's private life and home save for that interference which is in accordance with the law and necessary in a democratic society in the interests of (inter alia) public safety and the economic wellbeing of the country. Article 1 of protocol 1 provides that an individual's peaceful enjoyment of their property shall not be interfered with save as is necessary in the public interest.

7.29 For an interference with these rights to be justifiable the interference (and the means employed) needs to be proportionate to the aims sought to be realised. The main body of this report identifies the extent to which there is any identifiable interference with these rights. The Planning Considerations identified are also

relevant in deciding whether any interference is proportionate. Case law has been decided which indicates that certain development does interfere with an individual's rights under Human Rights legislation. This application has been considered in the light of statute and case law and the interference is not considered to be disproportionate.

7.30 Officers are also aware of Article 6, the focus of which (for the purpose of this decision) is the determination of an individual's civil rights and obligations. Article 6 provides that in the determination of these rights, an individual is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal. Article 6 has been subject to a great deal of case law. It has been decided that for planning matters the decision making process as a whole, which includes the right of review by the High Court, complied with Article 6.

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 The southern station building that is proposed for demolition is a non-designated heritage asset. National and local planning policy requires the decision maker to reach a balanced judgement on whether a non-designated heritage asset should be demolished.

8.2 The significance of the building is enhanced by being one of a grouping of buildings associated with the former Blyth and Tyne Railway and because few such relic buildings survive. However, it was a 20<sup>th</sup> century addition built some 70 years after the other buildings in the group.

8.3 If the building is to be retained it would need to be underpinned whilst the existing platform is demolished and the new platform installed. It is in generally poor condition, having been little used by its owner, Network Rail, since the station closed in the 1960s and the costs of underpinning and of repair and restoration to a beneficial use are significant.

8.4 The reintroduction of passenger rail services on the Northumberland Line will bring considerable benefits to communities in south-east Northumberland, including in the Bedlington area, but expenditure needs to be prioritised as there are funding challenges.

8.5 The northern station building has greater architectural and heritage merit, is larger, is generally in better condition and consequently has greater potential to be repaired and restored for beneficial community use. Network Rail has agreed to grant a lease of this building to the Parish Council for 99 years at a rent of £1 per annum if demanded. The concentration of funding on one building is more likely to achieve a positive outcome than spreading any funding between the two buildings.

8.6 The demolition of the southern building would allow a more attractive entrance to the station to be provided as illustrated by drawings recently submitted.

8.7 It is concluded that the proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and that, notwithstanding the loss of a non-designated heritage asset, the balanced judgement and overall planning balance weighs in favour of granting planning permission subject to appropriate planning conditions. The recommended planning conditions are strict in order to achieve the required policy outcomes but are considered to meet the tests for applying planning conditions.

## 9. Recommendation

That this application be GRANTED permission subject to the following conditions.

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the following plans and documents.

173726-LAC-SN05-ZZ-DRG-LEP-000003 Site Location Plan  
173726-PIO-SN05-ZZZ-REP-MPM-00001 Bedlington Station South Buildings  
Options Assessment  
173726-MSI-SN05-ZZ-REP-ESU-00002 BEJ Bedlington South Station Building  
Assessment Appendix A  
60601435-ACM-06-PL-DRG-ECV-000001 Existing General Arrangement  
60601435-ACM-06-ZZ-DRG-EHW-060001 (Rev P05) Proposed Highways General  
Arrangement  
173726-AEC-SN05-ZZ-DRG-ECV-000002- (Rev PO1.1) Proposed Platforms  
General arrangement  
60601435-ACM-06-PL-SKE-ESU-000003 (Rev PO1.1) Bedlington Station Building  
BLD2 Existing General Arrangement

Heritage Statement Addendum. Dr Gillian Scott for AECOM for Northumberland  
County Council. 11 July 2023

Reason: To ensure that the approved development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents.

3. A programme of building recording work is required in accordance with 'Level 3' of Historic England's 2016 guidance document 'Understanding historic Buildings – A guide to Good Recording Practice'. The building recording scheme shall include appropriately scaled and annotated drawings, photographs and a written account of:

a) the building hereby approved for demolition; and

b) its wider context to include the surviving station building (including the lean-to), platform and signal boxes.

The building recording scheme shall comprise three stages of work. Each stage shall be completed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before it can be discharged.

a. No development shall commence on site until a method statement based on Historic England's 2016 guidance document 'Understanding Historic Buildings – A Guide to Good Recording Practice' has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

b. The building recording scheme shall be completed in accordance with the approved method statement.

c. The programme of analysis, reporting, publication and archiving must be completed in accordance with the approved method statement and Historic England's 2016 guidance document 'Understanding Historic Buildings – A guide to Good Recording Practice'.

Reason: In order to provide a reasonable opportunity to record the significance of the heritage asset and to comply with Policy ENV 7 (Part 7) of the Northumberland Local Plan and Paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. The removal of materials to be recovered for re-use from the demolition of the building hereby approved shall be carried out where practicable by tools held in the hand. Where machinery is required for demolition measures shall be deployed to ensure that the materials to be salvaged are not damaged. Materials salvaged from the building's external fabric, including masonry (bricks, and stone detailing) and roof coverings shall be stored for re-use. Details in writing of the re-use shall be supplied to the Local Planning Authority before passenger rail services commence.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring that no damage is caused to the building materials and that the architectural fabric and features are appropriately salvaged for re-use in accordance with Policy ENV 7 (Part 9) of the Northumberland Local Plan.

5. Hard and soft landscaping, in and around the site, including (but not limited to);

- planting,
- boundary treatments and means of enclosure,
- access features,
- seating,
- interpretation / information boards, and
- public art installations

shall be implemented in accordance with the landscaping scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority under Condition 14 of decision 21/01106/CCD dated 10 November 2021.

Thereafter the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall be completed before the introduction of passenger rail services (or, in the case of planting, by the end of the first planting season following the approval of the details).

All approved hard and soft landscaping shall be maintained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To safeguard the visual amenities of the area in accordance with Policy QOP 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

**Informatives:**

1. Demolition shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Construction and Environment Management Plan approved under decision 22/01214/DISCON dated 25 May 2022.
2. Depending on the works proposed some of the details to be submitted in respect of condition no. 5 might require other approvals.

**Date of Report:** 17 July 2023

**Background Papers:** Planning application file(s) 23/01070/CCD (this application) and 21/01106/CCD (station application)