National Trust

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT AND HERITAGE STATEMENT (COMBINED)

To support a Planning Application to install a Visitor Information Shed with ramp for a temporary period of 5 years at Wentworth Castle Gardens

1. Introduction

This statement accompanies an application for the installation of a Visitor Information Shed with ramp at the National Trust property known as Wentworth Castle Gardens. The applicant is the National Trust, 27 Tadcaster Road, York, YO24 1GG. This application is accompanied by and should be read alongside the following documents:

- Location Plan
- Site Plan
- Floor plan and elevations
- Manufacturers specification

In accordance with national validation requirements, the purpose of this Design and Access Statement is to outline the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development.

1.1 Overview of the proposal

Wentworth Castle Gardens is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden (RPG), the only one of its kind in South Yorkshire. There are over 26 individually listed buildings and structures in the grounds and parkland. The site consists of over 60 acres of formal gardens and 500 acres of wider parkland which is open to the public. The main house and some of the surrounding buildings are owned by Northern College, which provides residential and community education for adults.

The site lies within the following designations identified in the Barnsley Local Plan (2019);

- Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Conservation Area
- Green Belt
- Grade I Registered Park and Garden

The Proposed Visitor Information Shed would be sited on an area which was used as an accessible parking bay by Wentworth Castle & Stainborough Park Trust, who ran the site between 2002 and 2017. It remains a tarmacked area, next to the main visitor route between Visitor Reception and the formal gardens. The shed will be installed adjacent to the visitor picnic area, which is a grassy area with planted trees. It will face a non-historic wooden fence, behind which the Play area is sited. The bio bubble is also sited to the side of the proposed location of the shed, shielded by a holly hedge facing the Parkland.

The choice to place the shed at the bottom of the sloped parking bay space means that, for visitors, their view of the Long Barn (a Grade II listed structure) when walking up from the Visitor Reception is not impeded.

This statement considers the impact of the visitor information shed on the significance of the heritage assets in this location and considers the requirement under the National Planning Policy Framework to provide an assessment of any harm arising as required by paragraphs 199 - 202 of the NPPF. The National Trust approach is informed at the outset by a set of conservation principles, with a focus on revealing and sharing the significance of the places we care for and ensuring that their special qualities are protected, enhanced and enjoyed and understood by present and future generations.

1.2 Installation of Visitor Information Shed

This application seeks Planning Permission for the installation of a Visitor Information Shed on a former accessible parking bay near the picnic area for a specific temporary period of 5 years. The shed will be used as a multi-purpose space to enrich the visitor experience, for example the facilitation of trails and tours; sharing site information; growing support and sharing of property-specific maps and guides. As visitor numbers grow and we programme more events, the shed will allow volunteers and staff to engage more fully with visitors in a way that the current Visitor Reception Building does not allow.

Informal pre-application advice was sought from the Design and Conservation team at Barnsley MBC. It was suggested that the proposal would likely be accepted for a limited period due to the justification and enhancement of the visitor experience and engagement. It was stated that careful assessment would be needed of the proposed location, which is provided within this document.

During 2023, we have commissioned a spatial plan on site, which will in turn inform future redevelopment of the walled garden. Within 5 years we would therefore expect to have a more permanent solution to the Visitor Information Shed.

2. Proposed Development

2.1 Historical background

Working in partnership with Barnsley Council and Northern College, this estate, rooted in rivalry, provides a space to bring people together. Royal diplomat Thomas Wentworth was outraged when a cousin inherited his family home, Wentworth Woodhouse, in 1695. Known for his ferocious ambition, Wentworth was determined to outdo his rival, creating this spectacular place once known as ‘the finest garden in England’.

Wentworth’s wealth was deeply entwined with empire and the slave trade. He was one of the principal negotiators of the Treaty of Utrecht, which secured Britain as supplier of enslaved Africans to Spanish colonies in the New World.

Despite its turbulent past, this breath-taking landscape now provides space for relaxation, reflection and opportunities for people to enjoy nature and beauty. Today it is South Yorkshire’s only Grade I registered landscape. There are surprises along every avenue, including a castle that is not what it seems. The main house is closed to visitors as it houses Northern College, which offers residential adult education courses.

Wentworth Castle Gardens was previously run by the Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Heritage Trust, this ceased to operate in 2017. In 2019, The National Trust (NT) entered into a 25-year lease

agreement with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to run the site in partnership with Barnsley MBC and Northern College.

2.2 Proposed location

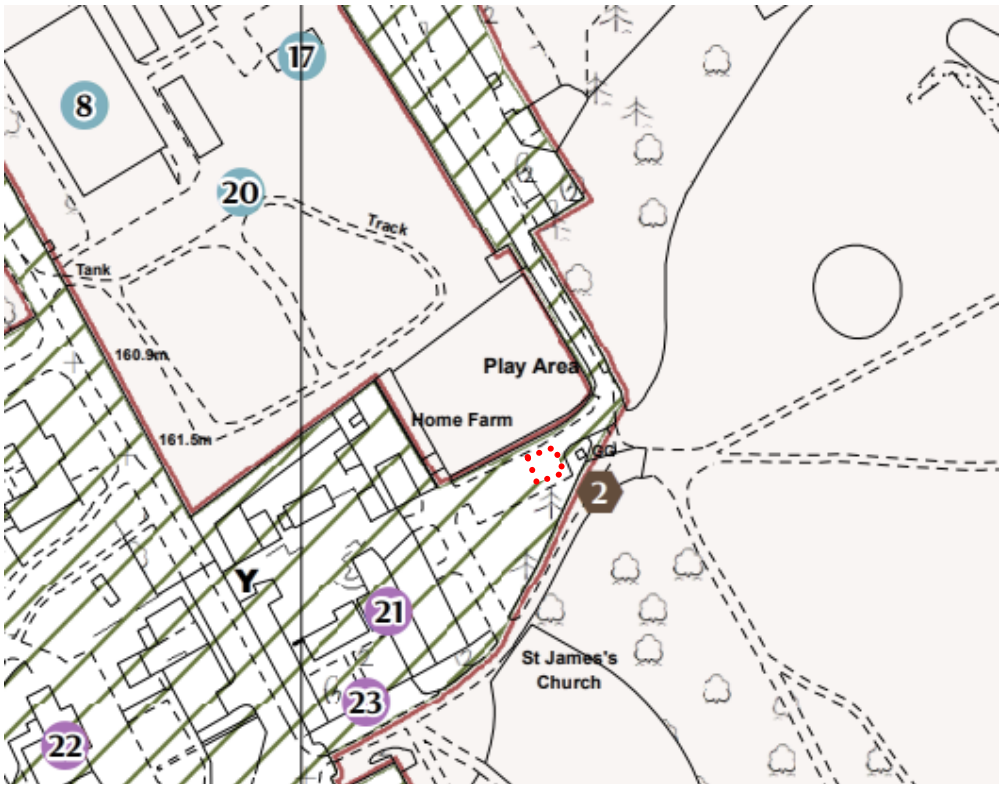
As mentioned above, the proposed Visitor Information Shed would be located on the site of a former accessible parking bay, which was used by the previous Trust when the visitor route was different. The site is on the visitor route, between Shed Lane and the Long Barn building.

No work will need to be done to prepare the site for the installation of the shed. MCD Sheds, who we will buy the shed from, will install the Shed onto a timber base directly onto the tarmac. A disabled access ramp will also be fitted post-installation to ensure the visitor information shed is fully accessible.

The shed will be finished with decking oil with the neutral finish chosen to complement other woodwork in the surrounding area. No electric cables will be laid for the building.

The location is indicated in the diagram and photos below.

Figure 1: Location of proposed visitor information shed at Wentworth Castle Gardens



Figures 2 & 3: Photos giving an approximate area of the floor plan of the proposed Visitor Information Shed – at the lower end of the tarmacked area, next to the fence and the grit bin.





2.3 The proposal

The Visitor Information Shed seeks to address several challenges, which have become apparent at Wentworth Castle Gardens.

Firstly, from the end of 2020 it became apparent that visitors were looking for more information as they arrived on site. They had questions about their visit; the history of the gardens, parkland & house; and our future plans. At this point, we were not handing out any printed material due to the Covid pandemic.

We therefore set up a 'Visitor Information Point' in the form of a gazebo. During the warmer months of 2021 and 2022, this was staffed by the Garden Guide volunteer team. They provided person-led interpretation for individuals and groups near the start of their visit to Wentworth Castle Gardens.

Volunteers answered questions about the orientation of the site, how to access the parkland, that day's events and how to find facilities. This has been a positive experience for visitors.

This need for more information can't always be met by the Visitor Welcome team, especially during busy periods when they are under pressure to process admissions. There is also little space in the Visitor Reception Building to host longer conversations. As visitor numbers grow, this need has only increased.

However, the temporary gazebo no longer provides a sustainable solution to sharing visitor information. By the end of the 2022 season, it was looking very shabby and in early 2023 it ripped in the wind. The installation of the Visitor Information Shed would provide a weather-resistant space which could be used all year round to share information with visitors.

The proposed Shed will improve presentation on the visitor journey, and also enable us to provide a space for temporary displays and for inviting visitor feedback.

Finally, it will improve volunteer welfare as the gazebo can be damp and the surface is uneven. The proposed shed will be a more inviting space for both volunteers and visitors.

In summary, the Visitor Information Shed will provide a more high-quality solution to the challenges we face on site – whilst remaining a temporary fixture.

3. Planning and Related Policy Framework

Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Statutory Development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).

In this case the Statutory Development Plan comprises:

- Barnsley Local Plan (Adopted January 2019)

Material considerations in this proposal comprise the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) together with any relevant Supplementary Planning Documents.

The key elements of national and local planning policy therefore relating to this proposal are set out below.

3.1 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF (July 2021) states that there are three overarching objectives for the planning system. These are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways; an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective. At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).

Section 13 of the NPPF relates to protecting Green Belt land.

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim being to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and recognising that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

The five purposes of Green Belt are set out at paragraph 138;

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF states that "a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt". However, there are stated exceptions to this and of those exceptions, point (b) provides for "the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it"

It is considered that the proposal provides appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation, which preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. As such, it does not constitute inappropriate development. The proposed visitor information shed will provide facilities to support the existing outdoor recreational function of the site. The site is located opposite the existing play area along the visitor route and within an existing area of hardstanding surrounded by trees and vegetation. The size of the shed has been kept to the minimum necessary for the required purpose and it utilises natural materials. It is therefore considered that the facility preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Section 15 of the NPPF relates to conserving and enhancing the natural environment where paragraph 180 requires local planning authorities to apply various principles when determining planning applications. Point a) of the paragraph states that "if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused."

Given the proposed shed is to be located on an area of existing hardstanding with no engineering operations, we consider that the proposal will result in no harm to biodiversity.

Section 16 of the NPPF relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment where paragraphs 199 – 208 of the NPPF relate to considering potential impacts of a proposed development on heritage assets. A Heritage Impact Assessment has been completed and is included below. The Heritage Assessment concludes that the proposed works will have an extremely limited visual effect on the site. It is therefore the view of the National Trust that the proposals are appropriate to this setting, proportionate and overall will have a neutral impact on the heritage values of the site for the period that they are in place. In addition, there will be a positive contribution to the quality of visitor experience at the site.

In determining applications, the NPPF (para 194) requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be *'proportionate'* to the assets' importance.

The impact of a proposed development on the significance of designated heritage assets is to be considered in line with the advice contained within paragraphs 199 - 202 of the NPPF. This reinforces that '*great weight'* should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset '*the greater the weight should be'*. Paragraph 200 also confirms that significance can be harmed or lost from development '*within its setting'.*

In order to examine the overall level of 'harm' in NPPF terms (i.e., whether it is to be considered either as 'substantial' or 'less than substantial') and given that great weight must be given to conservation afforded by the importance of the Grade I RPG and Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Conservation Area it is important to outline a summary of the overall impacts, which can be found in the Heritage Assessment. This concludes that it is the National Trust's assessment (in response to the test contained in NPPF paragraph 202) that no element of the proposed development constitutes Substantial harm (or for that matter more than slight, potential, harm) to a recognised heritage asset.

3.2 Local Policy

Barnsley Local Plan

Barnsley's Local Plan was adopted on 3 January 2019. Relevant policies are summarised below:

Policy SD1 Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development and to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Policy GD2 Temporary Building and Uses states that temporary buildings will normally be allowed where it can be demonstrated that a permanent building is not suitable. We do not consider that a permanent structure is suitable or necessary for the purposes of this project. The policy states that on sites visible from highways and public areas, temporary buildings will normally be given a temporary permission not exceeding 5 years. We consider that the lifespan of the structure is approximately 5 years and therefore we are seeking permission for 5 years.

Policy E5 Promoting Tourism and encouraging Cultural Provision states that tourism will be promoted and the growth and development of cultural provision will be encouraged. This includes, amongst others, encouraging the provision of a wide range of venues and opportunities for cultural activity, promoting the existing cultural provision and tourism offer and encouraging the growth of the tourism business sector. In addition, the policy states that "Tourist related development in rural areas will be protected and encouraged to support and diversify the local economy, subject to the requirements of Policy E6 Rural Economy."

Policy E6 Rural Economy states that a viable rural economy will be encouraged by allowing development in rural areas if it supports the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy, results in growth of existing businesses, is related to tourism and recreation or improves the range and quality of local services in existing settlements.

Policy D1 High Quality Design and Place Making expects development to be of high-quality design and expected to respect, take advantage of and reinforce the distinctive, local character and features of Barnsley.

Policy HE1 The Historic Environment positively encourages developments which will help in the management, conservation, understanding and enjoyment of Barnsley's historic environment, especially for those assets which are at risk. This will be achieved by;

a) supporting proposals which conserve and enhance the significance and setting of the borough's heritage assets specifically including Wentworth Castle parkland (the only grade I Registered Park and Garden in South Yorkshire) and Stainborough Park conservation area
b) ensuring that proposals affecting designated heritage assets conserve those elements which contribute to its significance

c) supporting proposals that would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area
d) ensuring that proposals affecting an archaeological site of less than national importance or sites with no statutory protection conserve those elements which contribute to its significance in line with the importance of the remains
e) supporting proposals which conserve Barnsley's non-designated heritage assets
f) supporting proposals which will help to secure a sustainable future for Barnsley's heritage assets, especially those identified as being at greatest risk of loss or decay

The below Heritage Assessment demonstrates how the proposal meets the requirements of this policy.

Policy HE 4 Developments affecting Historic Area or Landscapes expects proposals that are within a Registered Park and Garden to respect historic precedents of layout, density, scale, forms, massing, architectural detail and materials that contribute to the special interest of an area; respect important views either within the area or views that contribute to the setting of the area and take account of and respect important landscape elements including topographic features or trees that contribute to the significance of the area where harm might prejudice future restoration.

The visitor information shed is to be located within an existing area of hardstanding for a temporary period where the visual impact on the surrounding site has been kept to a minimum thus seeking to minimise the impact on the wider RPG. Further discussion of this is set out within the below Heritage Assessment.

Policy HE6 Archaeology states that applications for development on sites where archaeological remains may be present must be accompanied by an appropriate archaeological assessment. The proposal does not include any digging or foundation work that would penetrate this existing surface, meaning there is no potential for archaeological impact.

Policy BIO1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity expects development to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological features of the borough. The application site lies out with the designated Stainborough Park Local Wildlife Site. Given the proposed shed is to be located on an area of existing hardstanding with no engineering operations, we consider that the proposal will have no specific impacts on habitats and species on the site.

Policy GB1 Protection of Green Belt states that Green Belt will be protected from inappropriate development in accordance with national planning policy. The detailed boundaries are defined on the Policies Map which includes land at Wentworth Castle Gardens.

4 Assessment of the proposal

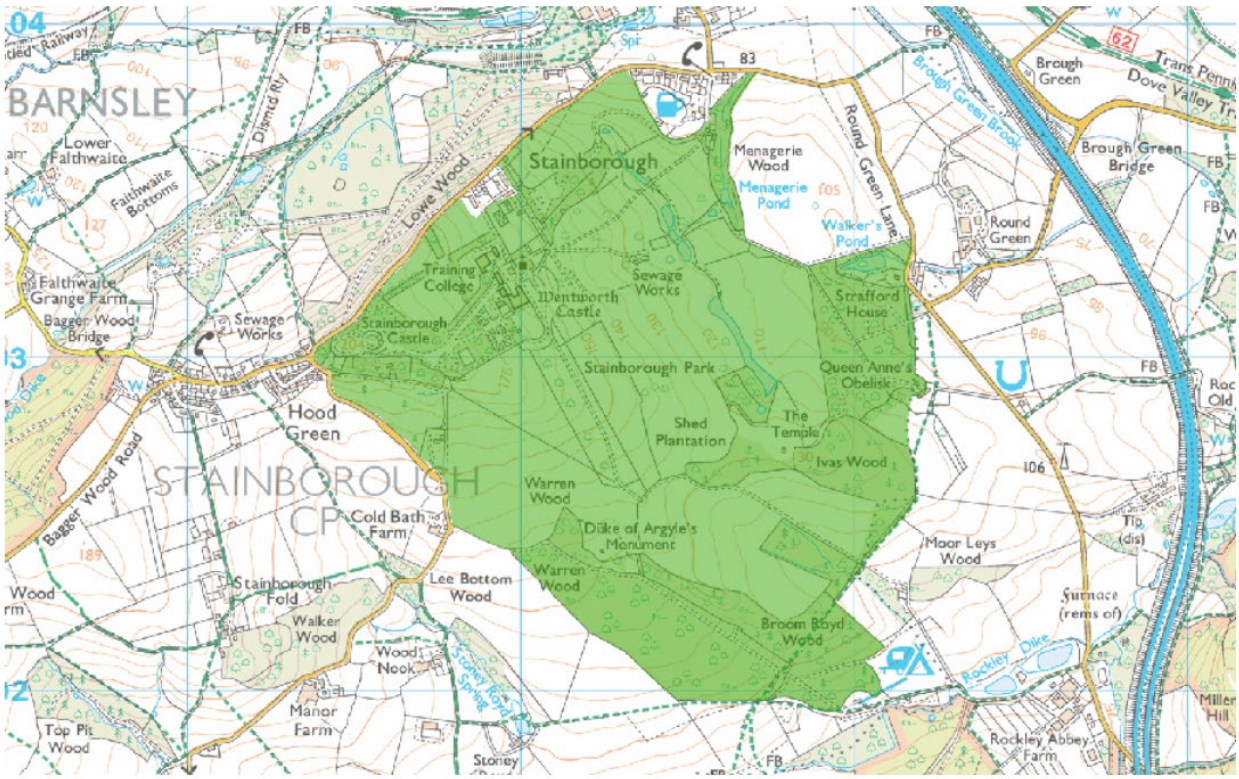
4.1 Planning Issues

In accordance with national and local planning policy, the main planning issues raised by the development are as follows:

- the impact upon the historic environment;
- the impact upon relevant ecological interests; and
- the impact upon the Green Belt

4.2 Historic Environment

Wentworth Castle is a Grade 1 Registered Park and Garden, and the extent is indicated on the following plan:



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Wentworth Castle Registered Park and Garden

The estate also contains several designated heritage assets which are identified in the following table.

Name	*Designation*	*National Heritage List number*
The Pillared Barn	Grade II* Listed	NHL 1315049
Steeple Lodge	Grade II Listed	NHL 1151059
The Orangery	Grade II Listed	NHL 1151072
Former calf houses, Home Farm	Grade II Listed	NHL 1315053
Dairy House Home Farm	Grade II Listed	NHL 1191812
Cart Shed, Home Farm	Grade II Listed	NHL 1191802

Cottage East of Cart Shed, Home Farm	Grade II Listed	NHL 1151071
Former stable block and attached arch	Grade II Listed	NHL 1191779
Church of St James	Grade II Listed	NHL 1286916
Barn and attached wall, Home Farm	Grade II Listed	NHL 1315052
Churchyard Gates and Gate piers	Grade II Listed	NHL 1151070
Statue of 1st Earl of Strafford	Grade II* Listed	NHL 1191709
Wentworth Castle	Grade I Listed	NHL 1151065

Heritage Assessment

The proposed work and potential impact have been assessed by the National Trust's Regional Cultural Heritage Curator, in consultation with colleagues and with reference to the historic material held within the site archive.

The proposed location is alongside what was a historic service route, leading towards the original home farm complex to the immediate north east of the main Wentworth Castle mansion. By the early 20th century, this route was lined with various structures related to the running of the house and estate, including electricity generation – hence the colloquial name of 'Shed Lane'. These structures have been removed in more recent years, although footings and low walls survive at many points.

As noted above, the location of this temporary structure has been chosen to make use of an existing area of hard standing located at the point where the lane turns up the hill towards the Long Barn. This was created by the previous trust that ran the site as an area for disabled parking. No digging or foundation work is required that would penetrate this existing surface, meaning there is no potential for archaeological impact.



In terms of visual intrusion, the shed will make use of significant existing planting that sits close to the location (marked in red above, 'x' indicates the proposed shed site). This is largely made up of evergreen bushes and was planted in this location by the previous trust to hide 'bio bubble' sewage treatment infrastructure installed when the Long Barn was converted into a catering outlet in the early 21st century. This will effectively hide the shed from the mansion and from the front of the Long Barn

The shed will also be low enough to not be a strong visual distraction when seen from the parkland to the east, being largely lost against the existing wall and fencing alongside the play area immediately across the lane.

In conclusion, the proposed works will have an extremely limited visual effect on the site. It is therefore the view of the National Trust that the proposals are appropriate to this setting, proportionate and overall will have a neutral impact on the heritage values of the site for the period that they are in place. In addition, there will be a positive contribution to the quality of visitor experience at the site.

The National Trust therefore feels confident that it is an appropriate proposal to make for the site.

4.3 Ecology

The wider Wentworth Castle Gardens site is recognised as a sensitive site in terms of protected species and the site 'Stainborough Park' is identified as a Local Wildlife Site for its biodiversity.

The siting of the Shed is outside of Stainborough Park LWS and is on a hard-standing surface, previously used for parking, consequently ecological impact is negligible.

4.4 Green Belt

As stated previously with regard to NPPF assessment, it is considered that the proposal falls within one of the exceptions allowed for appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation, which preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. As such, it does not constitute inappropriate development.

5. Conclusion

The planning application seeks consent for the installation of a Visitor Information Shed with ramp for a temporary period of 5 years at the National Trust property known as Wentworth Castle Gardens. It has been demonstrated that the development is consistent with national and local planning policy and will add to the quality of the visitor experience of Wentworth Castle Gardens.

The scale and extent of the development has been kept to a minimum, carefully balancing the needs of the proposal with the need to conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment. It is considered that there are significant public benefits of the development arising from the proposal.

Accordingly, it is requested that planning permission is granted.