# Statement of Material Weight

***604 Monkton Farmhouse***

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On behalf of: Scott High

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## 1. Introduction

Ethical Planning have been instructed to prepare a Statement of Material Weight to be submitted in support of a planning application (ST/0734/HFUL) and listed building consent application (ST/0735/LBC) for:

*2 no. openings in the southern boundary wall to incorporate pedestrian and vehicular access*

At Monkton Farmhouse, Monkton Lane, Monkton Village, Jarrow, Tyne and Wear, NE32 5NN.

Monkton Farmhouse is a Grade 2* Listed asset located within Monkton Conservation Area.

The statutory consultation response from the Conservation Officer states that '*The harm to the Grade II* Listed building and the conservation area can be quantified as less than substantial harm. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF requires such harm to be weighed against any public benefits of the proposal. These benefits are defined in the Planning Policy Guidance as 'anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the NPPF', and which are 'of a nature or scale to benefit the public at large and not just be a private benefit'.*

Therefore the purpose of this Statement is to set out the public benefits of the proposal in order to demonstrate that they outweigh the *'less than substantial harm'.*

This statement should be read against the accompanying documents and plans submitted in support of this application, including the Statement of Heritage Significance.

## 2. Public Benefits

The public benefits of the scheme are considered to be as follows:

- **Reducing the risk of traffic related accidents**. At present, the owners of Monkton Farmhouse do not have a private parking area and are required to park on the adjacent Monkton Lane. At a consequence, their car has been damaged multiple times from collisions. The parking of vehicles on Monkton Lane also reduces visibility for access and egress for both Barnes Close and the residential property Capella. The proposed development would remove an obstruction on the road, reducing the risk of accidents accordingly.

- **Improved access for emergency services vehicles.** The reduction in stationary vehicles along the road facilities quicker and easier access through the village, enabling emergency responders to reach incidents more efficiently. This is particularly pertinent since the new Hebburn Community Fire Station is located just 500 metres to the south west of the site, therefore Monkton Lane is now used more regularly for this purpose.
- **Improved pedestrian safety**. The removal of a vehicle through the provision of a dedicated off-road parking and turning space mitigates the risk that vehicles will block line of sight for pedestrians and ensure that pavements remain clear of obstructions.
- **Reduced burden on local public infrastructure**, by removing demand for on-street parking and lessening road-edge damage, thereby improving street safety and reducing long-term maintenance liability for the local highway authority
- **Potential to contribute to the UK's net zero target**. In accordance with the drive for net zero carbon, the applicant is proposing to install an EV charging point. It is not currently logistically possible to install a charging point due to the existing parking arrangements. A car parking bay in close proximity to the house will ensure that the relevant charging port can be installed and utilised.
- **Enhancing the visual setting of Grade II Listed Monkton War Memorial**. Currently on-street parking often obstructs views of a Grade II Listed war memorial, located on the southern flank of Monkton Lane, diminishing its presence and impact within the streetscape. By relocating vehicles off-road, the proposal would contribute to improving the appreciation of the designated heritage asset, which aligns with national policy objectives to preserve and enhance the setting of listed buildings.

## 3. 'Less than Substantial Harm'

Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that: '*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'.*

The public benefits must be real, deliverable and proportionate to the level of harm caused.

The Conservation officer has confirmed that they consider the proposed development would cause harm which is 'less than substantial'. 'Less than substantial' can encompass a broad range of harm, ranging from minimal to almost substantial, as indicated in the case of *R.(oao James Hall and Company Limited) v City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Co-Operative Group Limited [2019] EWHC 2899 (Admin).*

The submitted Statement of Heritage Significance provides clear uncontested evidence that the boundary walls fronting Monkton Lane have been rebuilt and altered in recent decades, diminishing their authenticity. Furthermore, these walls are not referenced in the official list entry for the farmhouse, suggesting they are not considered key components of the asset's significance.

In the wider context, immediately to the east of the site is a late 20th century residential estate where multiple breaches in the wall have been made to facilitate the development. This represents that the removal of more significant swathes of the wall has been considered justified in previous applications. Historically, this site was

agricultural land associated with Monkton Farmhouse. Therefore, it is considered that if the development of this site meets the tests set out in paragraph 215, it is reasonable to assume that the benefits of the creation of one pedestrian and one vehicular access point would be considered to create proportional public benefit to justify the 'less than substantial harm'.

In summary, while the presence of the boundary wall contributes to the setting in a broad sense, the walls are clearly of lower significance relative to the listed dwelling itself. The removal of the boundary wall to create pedestrian and vehicular access points has previously been considered acceptable in facilitating the development of High Back Close.

On this basis, the overall heritage value of the affected fabric is limited and the associated level of harm could reasonably be considered much less impactful than 'almost substantial'.

It is acknowledged that what amounts to a 'relevant public benefit' is a matter for the decision maker, as is the weight attributed to material considerations[1]. However, in this instance, whilst the proposed public benefits are modest, they are considered proportionate to the anticipated level of harm identified.

On this basis, we respectfully request that the planning balance acknowledges that modest public benefits may, in appropriate circumstances, justify a limited degree of harm.

## 4. Other Material Considerations

Notwithstanding that the implementation of the scheme is considered to have proportionate public benefits. These are considered to outweigh the 'less than substantial harm', it is considered that there are other material considerations which should carry weight in favour towards the determination of any application.

Notably, the proposals would result in an improvement for highways and pedestrian safety, for the reasons set out above. Safety is a relevant material consideration which should weigh in favour of the approval of this application.

Furthermore, the adopted parking standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for South Tyneside (2010) sets out that *'designers of residential developments need to carefully consider how to accommodate the number of cars that are likely to be owned by residents. A CABE housing audit concluded that new residential developments in the north of England generally have inadequate parking provision. Specifically, consideration should be given to the calculation of the number of cars that new residential properties would be likely to generate, with provision made on this basis*'.

Monkton Farmhouse is a 4-bedroom semi-detached property with no off-street parking provision. The configuration of the existing property therefore does not accord with the adopted car parking standards SPD.

[1] Bramshill v SSHCLG [2021] EWCA Civ 320

It is considered that providing the existing residents with the ability to ensure appropriate car parking provision is provided for a dwelling of its size is a relevant material consideration which should weigh in favour of the determination of this application.

## 5. Summary

The proposed openings in the boundary wall would result in a minor level of heritage harm, which falls clearly within the “less than substantial” category. However, the wall's limited historic significance, and previous alterations which have taken place, combined with the real, deliverable, and proportionate public benefits associated with improved highway safety and compliance with parking policy, provide a sound and reasonable planning justification. The additional of a car parking space will support the use of Monkton Farmhouse as a residential property for current and future uses.

In our discussions with the local planning authority and conservation officer, it has been indicated that a making of an opening in the wall for the purposes of a pedestrian access could be considered favourably. Therefore, there is an acknowledgement that there are public benefits that could override the less than substantial harm in this location. We respectfully request that the public benefits and material considerations set out in this statement are considered and assessed accordingly.

Furthermore, for the sections of the boundary wall to be removed, the applicant confirms that the materials could be carefully dismantled and retained for reuse in the repair and restoration of the remaining sections of the wall. This approach will help to maintain material continuity and longevity in preserving the character of the listed structure. The applicant would be willing to accept a suitably worded planning condition to secure this commitment. This measure would contribute to mitigating the impact of the proposal and reducing the permanence of any harm to the significance of the Grade II* listed asset.

In summary, in line with Paragraph 215 of the NPPF, it is concluded that the public benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the limited heritage harm, and that the development represents a balanced and justified intervention in the context of the listed building and conservation area and should be granted accordingly.