



**National
Trust**

18 December 2020

NYMNPA

18/12/2020

Ms H Webster
Planning officer
North York Moors National Park Authority
The Old Vicarage
Bondgate
Helmsley
Y062 5BP

Dear Ms Webster

Application for change of use of ground floor visitor centre (Use Class D1) to restaurant/cafe (Use Class A3) (no external alterations) at The Old Coastguard Station, New Road, Robin Hoods Bay Application ref no: NYM/2020/0896/CU

Thank you for your letter dated 4 December and the opportunity to clarify a number of matters that have been raised by our application.

Firstly, I would like to apologise if this application has caused any confusion in the submission and if it was lacking in detail; I hope I can provide some clarity around the National Trust's intentions with this submission.

Current operation and issues arising from Covid

We are seeking consent to reconfigure the existing visitor centre space at ground floor level within the Old Coastguard Station (OCS) and this involves a partial change of use at ground floor to accommodate a small café area. The loss of income to NT arising from the Covid pandemic has had serious financial impacts across the organisation and this led to reappraising properties across the Trust. Both OCS and Ravenscar had been identified as at risk of closure. This closure would have resulted in the loss of 5 local jobs as well as the closure of the two centres that provide the public focus of NT activities on the Yorkshire Coast. As a result, the property team has worked hard to find a solution that we consider will support the viability of the property in the long term, keep both properties open for public benefit and allow our important conservation work on this coastline, where we manage 12 miles of the coast to continue.

National Trust
North East Consultancy Hub
National Trust
Holy Jesus Hospital, City Road
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 2AS

Switchboard: 0191 255 8600
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

President: HRH The Prince of Wales
Regional Chairman: Olivia Grant
Regional Director: Janet Bibby

Registered office:
Heelis, Kemble Drive, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 2NA
Registered charity number 205846

It is important to highlight that any income raised from this proposal is wholly retained and invested within the NT Yorkshire Coast portfolio and does not revert to National Trust Head office as some commentators have suggested.

Further information on the proposal

By reconfiguring the property, we can retain the 5 staff and we will be able to create 2 more jobs which will support the opening of both the OCS and Ravenscar.

In recent years at the Old Coastguard Station, National Trust has charged a small entry fee to support the running of the visitor centre and this has been supported by the ground floor retail space selling NT gifts which has been ancillary to the operation of the visitor facility. However, financially this has not been sufficient to support the running of the centre, even in non-covid times, hence the risk of closure.

It is the retail gift sales component that would be removed from the property and replaced with the café counter/servery area (the area is approx. 11 sqm) that would also provide a facility for takeways. The current exhibition space would be replaced by a small seating area of up to 10 seats with interpretation retained and incorporated into the wall panels telling the story of the OCS. Once Covid restrictions are lifted the limited seating can be confined to a smaller area that will allow the opportunity for visitors circulate in order to read the panels, or to sit and have a drink whilst reading them. By moving in a different direction and gaining a different income stream our assessment is that we can keep the visitor centre open and at the same time remove the entry fee for the exhibition which will support the centre in returning to being a more accessible facility as was originally intended.

Having considered the viability of the centre, we took the opportunity to look at how the space within the property operates, particularly in light of Covid and social distancing rules and reconsider how the space within the property might be better used. By reconfiguring the ground floor space, we are able to remove the existing welcome desk and allow a one way route with separate entrance and exit around the property. We also propose to reopen an existing locked door and re-open a window currently covered, so that the space is more welcoming and provides a place to sit and overlook the coast and provides more natural light to enjoy this space.

The intention of the team is to create a more welcoming centre that can engage with our visitors in coastal conservation matters and I am sorry that the Design and Access Statement was not clear in this respect. There is the entrance/lobby area which will still contain visitor welcome information and information about events and whilst the display panels will be moved to first floor level to improve and reinvigorate the use of the area upstairs, we should have made it much clearer that at ground floor level visitor welcome and information material is retained. The reconfigured arrangement will provide space for visitors to be guided to the more detailed exhibition on coastal conservation at first floor level, should they wish to do so. The information space at first floor will be modernised and it will still provide the opportunity, as it does currently to let out to school groups for education events.

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The space at first floor level is smaller and it would not be able to accommodate the café and exhibition as some comments have suggested. It is important to emphasise that this submission ensures that the ground floor will continue to operate as it does currently by providing important information on safeguarding our oceans and coastal conservation matters as well as visitor information; the space will be in a different configuration and allow better interpretation material to be presented

I attach additional plans showing the existing and proposed configuration within the building which I hope explains these points and we consider this will be a financially viable solution for the future of this property. We entirely agree with comments about the important role that this centre plays in Robin Hood's Bay which is why the team has worked hard to find a sustainable solution.

Deliveries, opening hours and accessibility & waste management

National Trust currently has 2 deliveries a week to Ravenscar and our intention is that this can be co-ordinated with the provision of deliveries to the proposed café at OCS so that vehicle deliveries in this part of the coast are not duplicated. We can confirm that as suggested by NYCC highways this occurs before 10.30 am.

The proposed café would operate as a 'grab and go' offer selling hot and cold drinks and cakes, bakes and scones, confectionary and ice cream. Hence the takeaway facility but also providing some limited indoor seating. There is no change to the application in this respect.

We note comments about the proposed opening hours of the centre and the proposal is to open from March until the end of October each year, but we also anticipate being able to open some weekends in the winter such as Christmas and New Year period and also look at lengthening the opening to other weekends in the year where we can do so.

We can confirm the property has an accessible working lift for people to access the first floor of the property and there are toilet facilities at this level.

In respect of litter management the existing refuse storage area is located adjoining the property and there are litter bins nearby.

Compliance with National Park Policy

This proposal does not result in the loss of a community facility, which we understand is resisted by Strategic Policy L as our intention is to directly support the viability of the visitor centre.

The gift sales area of 11 sqm would be removed and replaced with the café servery area. The current exhibition area would become a combined seating and interpretation area. There would be some marginal loss in circulation space at ground floor level. This is offset by

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proposed improvements to the interpretation at first floor level and in the reconfigured lobby/entrance and welcome area.

We consider that the reconfiguration of the ground floor will result in an improved visitor welcome and engagement for the centre that is more inviting [reopening a covered window and door] and importantly it will secure a viable income stream for the property that maintains the public visitor centre facility that is then free to access. It retains and generates jobs and secures a future for the building that offsets the marginal loss in circulation space. We therefore consider it complies with national and local policy to support the visitor economy.

In respect of policy BL8 whilst we understand the thrust of the policy is to ensure the development of shops offices and food and drink services are appropriate to the community it serves and the Plan explains the impact of enterprises aimed specifically at the visitor market can be detrimental to the character of settlements and undermine their viability and vitality; this building is a visitor centre which has an existing legitimate role in the visitor economy and has been selling gifts for the visitor market. Changing to café use is no different in catering for this market and has no change nor impact therefore on retail activities in Robin Hood's Bay. We do not consider therefore there is any conflict arising with policy BL8.

The proposal is also small scale and we believe consistent with NPPF advice to safeguard against the loss of recreational and cultural facilities in a community. [paragraph 92]

I trust this provides helpful clarification on the reasons for this submission and provides the further information you were seeking.

Please let me know if you require anything further at this stage.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



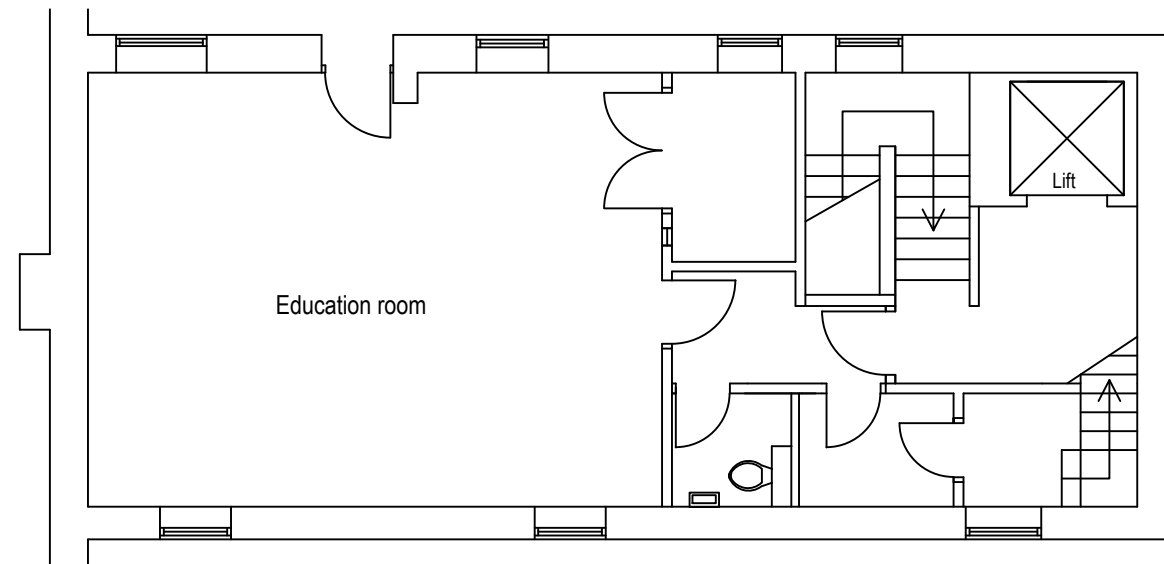
Natasha Rowland MRTPI
Planning Adviser, (North)

Encs

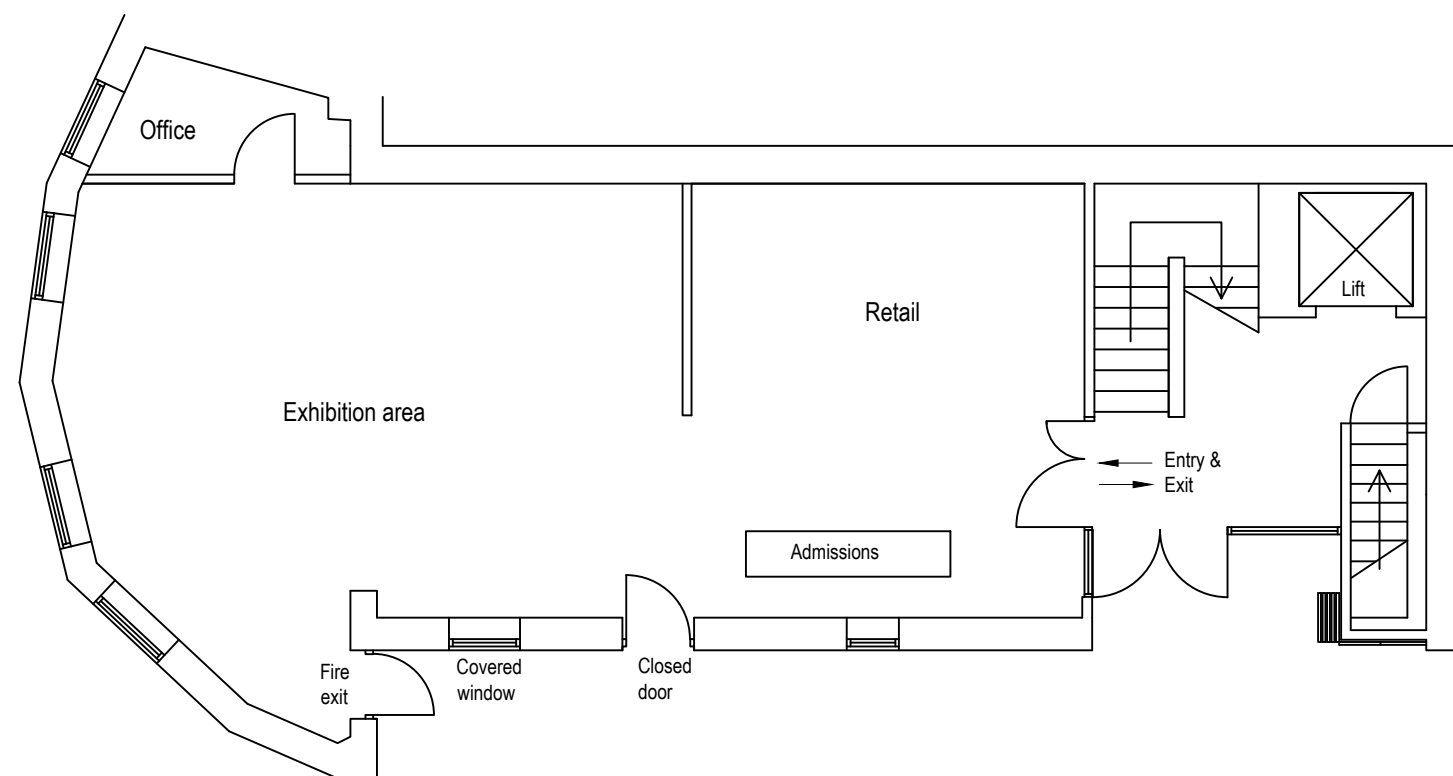
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First floor



Ground floor

REVISION	BY	DATE	DETAILS

NOTES

NYMNPA
 18/12/2020

AMENDED


NATIONAL TRUST
 NORTH REGION
 Goddards, 27 Tadcaster Road
 Dringhouses, York YO24 1GG
 Telephone (01904) 771970

ESTATE/PROPERTY

Old Coastguard Station
 Robin Hoods Bay

DRAWING TITLE

Existing plans

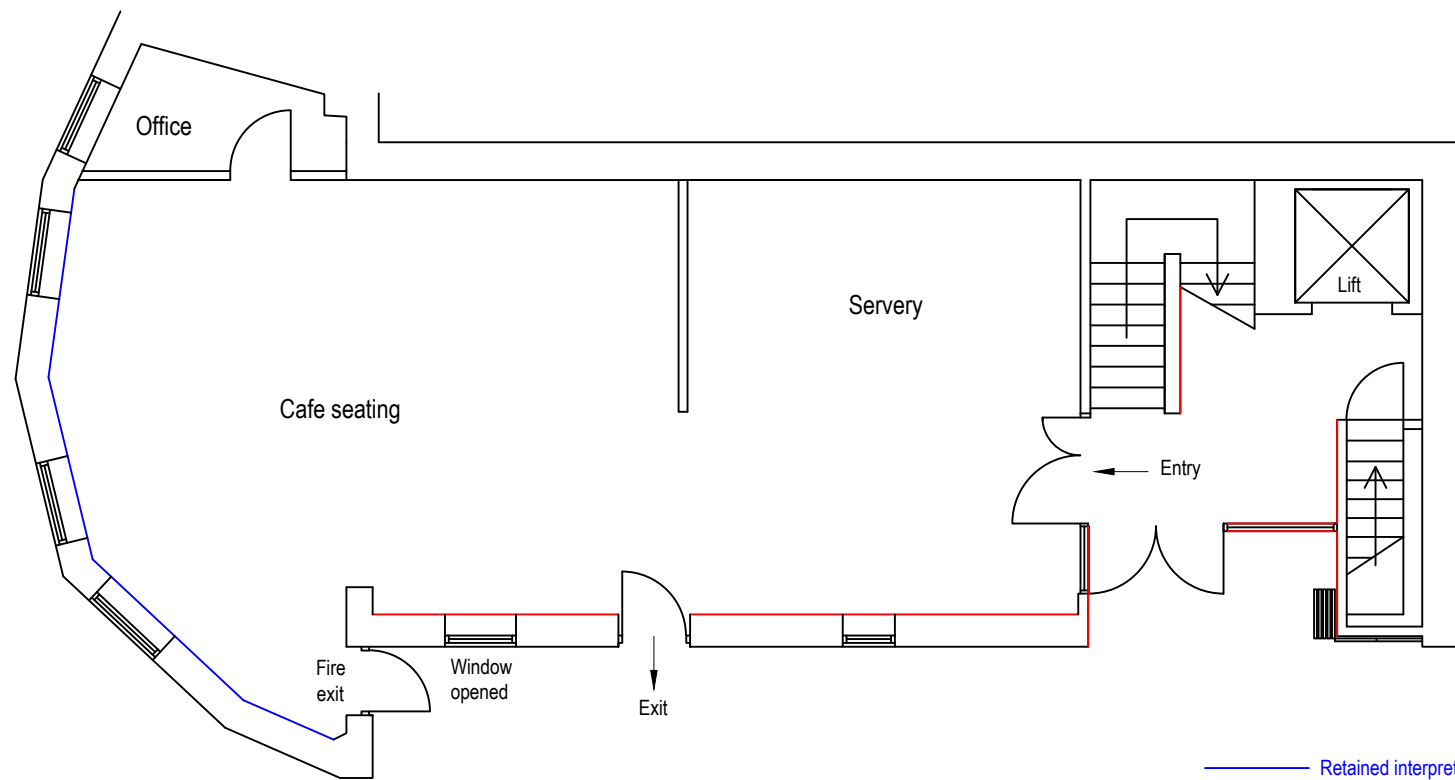
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SCALE	1:100	PROPERTY REFERENCE	
DRAWING No	OCS/1	REV	

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First floor



Ground floor

— Retained interpretation
 — New interpretation

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 Telephone (01904) 771970

ESTATE/PROPERTY
 Old Coastguard Station
 Robin Hoods Bay

DRAWING TITLE
 Proposed plans

DRAWN BY D Coope	DATE December 2020
SCALE A3 1:100	PROPERTY REFERENCE
DRAWING No OCS/2	REV