



PLANNING STATEMENT

incl. Heritage Impact Assessment

**WEDDING MARQUEE | WALCOT HALL | WALCOT**

## 1.0 Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared by **keystonearchitecture** on behalf of the Applicant to accompany a Removal of Condition (S73) Application relating to Conditions 1 and 2 of PA/2014/0963, for the Marquee at Walcot Hall, Walcot, North Lincolnshire, DN15 9JT.

The Local Planning Authority is North Lincolnshire Council.

The site is located within the Alkborough Conservation Area and is within the curtilage of the Grade II Listed Walcot Hall.

## 2.0 Physical Context

The proposed site was previously a grassed area adjacent to Walcot Hall, in the Hamlet of Walcot, just to the South of the village of Alkborough. The Marquee was erected in 2014 and has been in use as an outdoor wedding venue since this date.

The wider grassed land includes some established trees and bushes. The majority of the land is just grass, which is managed but relatively wild, rather than the manicured lawns in other parts of the grounds.

The site is owned by the Applicant and the proposal seeks to remove the restrictions of the previous Planning Approval, to allow year round weddings, which are becoming increasingly popular, offering wider support to the rural business, which also offers holiday accommodation for all year round use.

The site is located in the centre of Walcot, to the South of the house, well away from the highway and public domain.

The proposal seeks to remove Conditions 1 and 2, which restrict the siting and use of the Marquee to mid-April to mid-October every year. The removal of these restrictions will allow the rural business that operates at Walcot Hall, to offer year-round wedding services alongside its current year-round holiday accommodation.

The holiday accommodation provides additional support to the existing rural business, providing additional services throughout the year. Without expanding too much on the recent impacts of COVID, it is obvious that the existing rural business has not fared well, and other more secure sources of income and over a full 12 months, are required.

The wedding venue is currently restricted to operating between 1<sup>st</sup> May and 30<sup>th</sup> September, leaving the business and the Applicant, without their main income for 7 months of the year.

The site is bounded to all sides by mature grounds of Walcot Hall, and is not visible from any public realm.

### 3.0 Evaluation

The proposal seeks to remove Conditions 1 and 2 of Planning Approval PA/2014/0963, which currently restricts the siting and operation of the Marquee from mid-April to mid-October.

The wider site currently operates as a wedding venue with separate accommodation, often used by wedding guests, which is able to operate throughout the year, including the Hall itself, a luxury yurt and a Shepherds hut.

The existing site is an established wedding venue in the countryside, but is restricted by time constraints which require updating to take into account modern shifts in wedding practices.

Rural businesses should be encouraged to diversify and adapt to offer sustainable services in rural areas, to support other businesses and provide continued wider benefits to other local businesses through visitor spending.

The North Lincolnshire Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy Policy CS11: Provision and Distribution of Employment Land – Rural Economy states:

*“To deliver a thriving rural economy by supporting development or activities that assist in rural regeneration and that strengthen or diversify rural businesses.”*

A recent business review by North Lincolnshire Council recommended the business expand its season for business growth and to improve profitability.

Restricting the operations of a business to 5 months of the year, severely restricts its ability to provide consistent services, support to other businesses and secure employment.

Providing unrestricted use of the Marquee as a wedding venue shall provide additional support to an existing rural business, with no change or further impact on the countryside or neighbouring properties, particularly as the Marquee isn't visible, and its installation is considered acceptable through the previous Approval.

Weddings at Walcot Hall, one of North Lincolnshire's premier wedding venues, are becoming even more popular as a result of the 20 years of exceptional service. Weddings are now a 12-month business, rather than a traditional summer event. The most popular wedding date in 2024 (to date) was 23<sup>rd</sup> September, showing shifts from the traditional July and August dates.

Winter and Christmas weddings are becoming particularly popular. The increase in flower and decoration availability to suit autumnal and winter colours offer a standout contrast to traditional wedding colours of the summer, allowing people to have a more unique wedding experience.

Autumn weddings are ideal for those who appreciate the beauty of nature and desire a warm, rustic feel, while winter weddings offer a unique, cosy, and intimate atmosphere, particularly the idea of a festive celebration.

At present, Walcot Hall are unable to offer these weddings in their Marquee.

In addition, allowing the Marquee to remain in situ throughout the year allows the Hall to show potential customers around their potential wedding venue. People choosing to spend money on lavish wedding venues want to see what the venue before committing. The Marquee can also be utilised for open days and wedding fayres, to attract business and investment.

COVID affected rural businesses drastically, with the facility losing a significant amount of business over the years weddings and gatherings were prohibited or restricted.

Since then, the cost of living crisis has had an effect on peoples wedding budgets and directed people away from traditional expensive church and wedding receptions, to combined services in one location.

The cost of living crisis has also contributed to wedding dates outside of the original 'wedding season', where they are generally more expensive.

Allowing year round weddings in the Marquee at Walcot Hall provides improved wedding services to couples wanting more cost effective ceremonies outside of the traditional wedding season, as well as offering increasingly popular autumn and winter weddings to suit changing tastes.

The variation in the time of the operations of the Marquee does not impact on the provision of the Marquee or the ability of the Hall to provide these services, it just allows them to be continuous throughout the whole year.

The extended operating months allows the Hall to provide secure employment for the directly employed staff, as well as additional support to local caterers and others who supply services to the weddings.

Planning Policy CS1 of the Local Development Framework states “*spatial strategy shall focus on supporting thriving rural communities, creating opportunities for rural economic diversification*” continuing “*in the countryside, support will be given to development that promotes rural economic diversification and small-scale employment opportunities, particularly on previously used land or in existing rural buildings*”.

The previous Planning Approval suggests the provision of the Marquee offering wedding services at Walcot Hall is suitable. The restrictions placed may have been accepted at the time, but the aforementioned shifts in popularity of alternative wedding dates and themes requires the Hall to adapt its business offerings throughout the year.

The change to allow year-round wedding services in the Marquee at Walcot Hall is necessary to ensure the existing rural business offers what clients now demand, as well as continuing to support and invest in the rural economy.

The proposed changes to operating months helps provide a viable income opportunity throughout the year, where the current wedding marquee use is restricted to the Spring and Summer months only.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

The proposed variation is to remove the restrictions on the timing of operations of the Marquee of the previous Planning Approval.

The variation is required to support the changes to trends and the requirements of customers, and to protect and enhance the rural business.

Considering the development against the North Lincolnshire Local Development Framework, Policy CS11 – Provision and Distribution of Employment Land – Rural Economy, supports a thriving rural economy through development that assists in rural regeneration.

In this instance, the erection and use of the Marquee, and its impact on the Listed Walcot Hall, are not in question, as they were previously considered acceptable and Approved under PA/2014/0963. The variation is proposed to remove restrictions that constrain the business to operating for 5 months out of 12, allowing improved investment and support to other local rural business, and rural employment.

The impact of the changes to the previous Approval would not further impact on noise or traffic, as it is still only possible to hold one ceremony at a time, so it is concluded that there would be no increased impact or detriment on neighbouring residential amenity.

The proposed variation to the previous Approval does not alter the character of the site or wider area, as there shall be no physical changes.

With the competition that is now present with new wedding businesses opening regularly, Walcot Hall's future, and the jobs of their staff, are in serious jeopardy if they are only allowed to hold weddings for just 5 months a year.

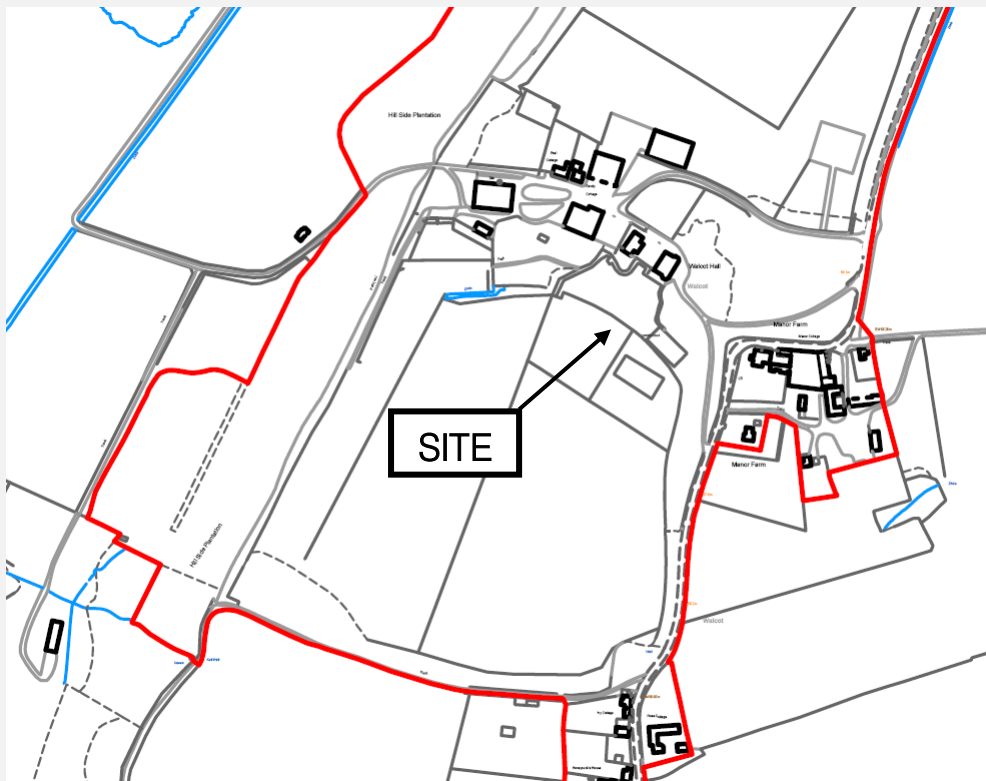
This is one of North Lincolnshire's premier wedding venues that needs to move with the times and weddings are now all year and cannot operate productively with the restrictions of the original Planning Approval.

The Marquee is necessary to stay up and be in use for the remaining 7 months of the year, to show potential customers around, for open days and for wedding fayres, to attract business and investment.

## Appendix A Heritage Impact Assessment

To assess the impact of the proposed change of operating months of the wedding Marquee on the character of the Conservation Area and the adjacent Grade II Listed property itself, an analysis of the character is identified below.

The site is within the grounds of Walcot Hall, Walcot Road, Walcot, which is a mid to late 18th Century Grade II Listed building. The site is located in the hamlet of Walcot, around 1-mile South of the village of Alkborough. The site is located within the extensive Alkborough Conservation Area.



The site is very remote, and is generally surrounded by expanses of gardens, woodland and fields, with the exception of the main house to the East, and farmyard to the North West.

Buildings locally comprise of 18th and 19th Century houses, both single and two storey, in local limestone or red face brickwork, with clay pantile or blue slate roofs.

The variation in styles is typical of rural developments such as Alkborough and Walcot. It is often the case that these villages grow sporadically over Centuries, and the properties vary vastly in appearance, scale and position. Alkborough and Walcot are a prime example of this.

Below is an extract from the Local Authority Conservation Area Appraisal, identifying the character of Walcot, Walcot Hall and the buildings adjacent:

### 5) Walcot.

To the south of Countess Close, the conservation area is characterised by mature trees and parkland associated with Walcot Hall, which is in a small hamlet about half a mile separate from Alkborough village. The house is set in a belt of trees between two areas of open farmland with trees along the scarp edge behind. It was built in the late 18th century for Thomas Goulton.

The west front, comprising the first limb of the original 'H' plan, was demolished in 1964. The surviving east front is of brown brick under a slate roof. It has two bays of large sash windows either side of an early 19th century Doric porch with a tripartite sash above. The ends have contemporary canted bays on the return elevations.

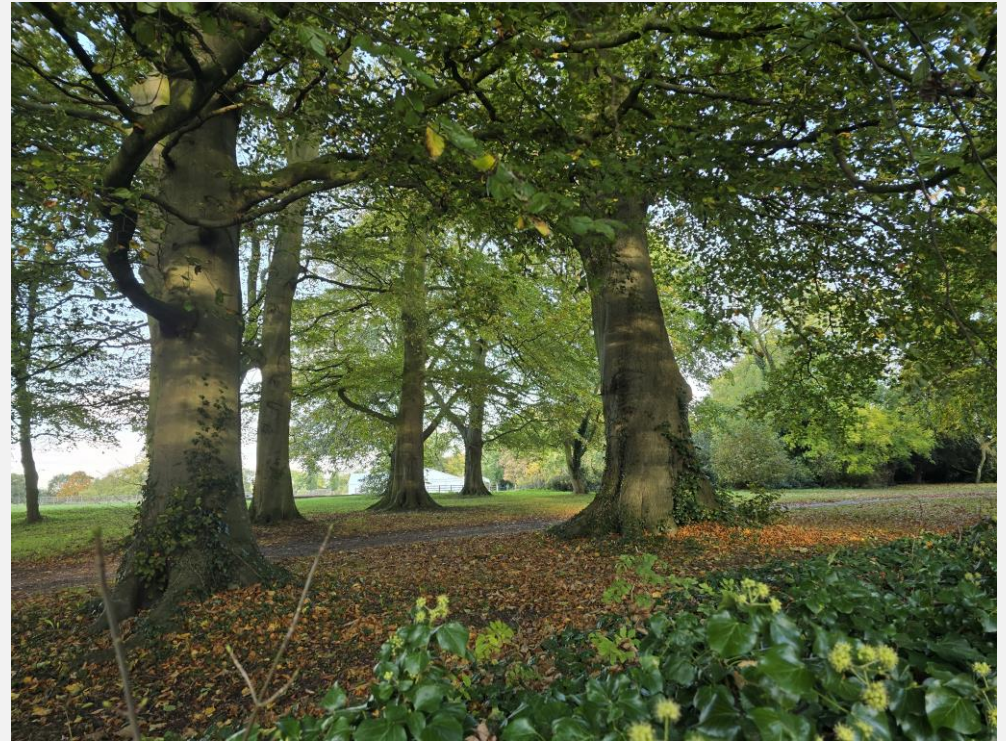
Behind Walcot Hall are pedimented stables and Peel Cottage, an early 19th century rubble stone estate cottage with sash windows and a hipped pantile roof.

Whilst the location and setting of the Marquee is as existing and previously approved, it is not visible from the public realm. It is however important to ensure the proposals do not detract from the Grade II Listed property “Walcot Hall” or the Conservation Area as a whole.



The Marquee is a temporary structure, located some 100 metres from the Hall, surrounded by open countryside and extensive mature trees and hedges. It is not considered to adversely affect the street scene as it is not visible from Walcot Road.

Where it is just visible over the boundary walls and through the trees, it cannot be seen in context with the Hall from any angle, as below:



View from Walcot Road to the East, looking over the high boundary wall, to the West.



View looking West from Walcot Road at road level.



View from Southern entrance to Walcot Hall, looking North.



View from Southern entrance to Walcot Hall, looking North, taken beyond the gates.

As previously mentioned, the Marquee has been up many years and has Planning Permission at present, to remain erected from mid-April to mid-October. This Approval suggests the Marquee does not have a negative impact on the Listed building.

The Marquee is viewed as temporary ancillary structure, rather than a permanent building.

It is considered that the proposal to increase the times of operations of the Marquee throughout the year, does not affect the existing property and wider Conservation Area, and does not have an adverse effect on the character or setting of the Heritage Asset. The Alkborough Conservation Area protects the area from adverse development which would impact on the Heritage Asset. The Asset is taken as the Conservation Area as a whole, and the Grade II Listed building known as Walcot Hall.

The appearance and siting of the Marquee is as existing and previously Approved. The change to the Conditions imposed around months of operation, does not impact on the Heritage Asset or the Conservation Area.

In the context of the significance of the proposals within the Conservation Area and adjacent to the Grade II Listed Walcot Hall, it is not considered to amount to substantial harm to, or loss of significance of the designated heritage asset.