

Burnside Cottage
Wark
Cornhill on Tweed
Northumberland TD12 4RE

Via email and post

17 March 2019

Miss Stephanie Forster
Central Registry Team
Development Management
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland NE61 2EF

Dear Miss Forster,

Application no: 19/00081/FUL
Railway Bridge North East of East Learmouth Farm Cottages

Carham Parish Council considered the above application at its meeting on 12 March and is writing now to object.

1. These Victorian railway abutments are of historic interest, being part of the now defunct Alnwick and Cornhill railway which was built in the 1880s. The station buildings along the line and their associated structures were built to a high specification – the buildings, two of which are Grade II Listed, have been described as some of the finest country stations built anywhere in Britain – and the abutments at East Learmouth exemplify the quality of workmanship that was put into the line when it was built; not least because they are still standing and in reasonable condition, even after 130 years. Furthermore, they are a representative of our industrial heritage, and have a place in the landscape of the kind that Northumberland County Council's Local Plan recognises as attractive and seeks to preserve.
2. The value of the old Alnwick and Cornhill line as a heritage asset is evidenced by the railway enthusiasts who regularly follow the route of the line by car, taking photographs of the station buildings and the railway structures that remain. The abutments at East Learmouth are part of this route; one of a series of buildings and structures; a railway heritage trail, so to speak. They should be considered in this context as well as in their own right.
3. The abutments, today, appear to be in a reasonable state of repair. The stone-work that faces the road on both sides is intact, with no obvious sign of movement. There is vegetation growing on the embankments, close to the stone-work but not, apparently, in it. Because the condition of the abutments appears to be reasonable, and any vegetation would be easy enough to deal with, it is hard to see how their demolition can be justified.

4. These are now the only Alnwick and Cornhill railway abutments remaining in our parish. Highways England removed another pair, also in East Learmouth, in 2017.

Carham Parish Council realises that the remit of Highways England does not extend to the preservation of old infrastructure, so it is very unfortunate that these and other railway heritage assets are in its stewardship. Indeed, looking at recent planning applications for this corner of north Northumberland – including one to remove another abutment on the Alnwick and Cornhill line, in neighbouring Cornhill parish – it appears to be systematically dismantling our Victorian railway infrastructure.

Two years ago, when it removed the other abutments in East Learmouth, Highways England gave as its reason the cost of future maintenance. Carham Parish Council contends that this public purse argument does not take into account the inherent value of the abutments, in themselves and as part of a series, to local residents, historians and the tourist industry.

Northumberland County Council is in a position to reject this planning application for the reasons given above, and Carham Parish Council appeals to it to do so.

Yours sincerely,



PP Mrs Ann Lauder
Chair of Carham Parish Council

cc Angela Hallam-Baker, Cornhill Parish Council
Councillor Anthony Murray
Elizabeth Williams, Heritage and HER Officer, Northumberland County Council
Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP