



northcote



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Proposed new pavilion restaurant at

Northcote Hotel

Northcote, Langho
Blackburn BB6 8BE



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Proposed New Pavilion Restaurant Building, Northcote Hotel & Restaurant, Langho, Lancashire BB6 8BE

Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the erection of a new pavilion restaurant within the grounds of Northcote Hotel.

The proposal seeks to provide a purpose-built restaurant facility that will further strengthen Northcote's position as one of the United Kingdom's leading gastronomic destinations. The development will provide enhanced dining accommodation, improved customer experience and future-proof facilities capable of supporting the continued growth of the business whilst maintaining the exceptional standards for which Northcote is internationally recognised.

The proposed development has been carefully designed to respect the character of the existing estate, complement the surrounding landscape and reinforce the site's reputation as a destination for culinary excellence.

Vision Statement

"Create more than just a restaurant, create a curated experience where guests are immersed in architecture, landscape, food, wine and hospitality, elevating a meal into a journey."





The Site Context and Northcote Hotel & Restaurant

Northcote occupies a highly accessible yet distinctly rural location on the edge of Langho in the Ribble Valley, Lancashire. Set within attractive landscaped grounds with extensive countryside views, the estate combines the qualities of a luxury rural retreat with excellent connections to the national transport network. Located approximately 5 miles from Blackburn and close to Junction 31 of the M6 and Junction 6 of the M65, Northcote is within practical travelling distance of major population centres including Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham and Newcastle, along with national motorway networks, while Manchester Airport provides direct international connections supporting its growing overseas visitor base.

This strategic accessibility has enabled Northcote to establish itself as one of the United Kingdom's leading hospitality destinations. Originally built as a private manor house in 1880 and converted to a hotel in 1980, the property was acquired by John Wolstenholme in 1983 and has since evolved into an internationally recognised centre for luxury hospitality, fine dining and culinary excellence.

The images below shows the inspirational images provided by the applicant to shape the scheme:





Northcote is a leading hospitality destination offering luxury accommodation, Michelin-starred dining, private events, a cookery school and the internationally renowned Obsession food festival. Together, these activities attract visitors from the UK and overseas, supporting the Ribble Valley and wider Lancashire economy.

Central to its success is the restaurant, which has retained a Michelin Star since 1996. Led by Chef Patron-Director Lisa Goodwin-Allen, its food celebrates Lancashire's landscapes, producers and seasonal ingredients while achieving international recognition.

The proposed standalone restaurant represents the next stage in Northcote's development. It would not increase dining capacity but would enhance the guest experience through improved views, greater table spacing, increased comfort and a purpose-designed architectural setting.

Relocating the restaurant would also allow the existing hotel to provide a more flexible and informal food and beverage offer for residents, visitors and business guests. This long-term investment would safeguard Northcote's Michelin-starred heritage, strengthen the hotel's viability and support tourism, employment and Lancashire's reputation as a destination for food and hospitality.

Design

The fundamental design objective has been to create a building of exceptional architectural quality that reflects Northcote's reputation for excellence whilst remaining sensitive to its setting. The proposal seeks to deliver a hospitality building worthy of one of the UK's most respected culinary destinations through the use of high-quality natural materials, sustainable construction methods, carefully framed views and an enhanced guest experience.

From the outset, the design process was guided by a number of key principles: integration with the existing hotel and wider estate; respect for the surroundings, creation of a memorable visitor journey; maximisation of views across the countryside; delivery of a sustainable and energy-efficient building; and the provision of architecture that complements the Northcote estate.

The early designs explored a more conventional two-storey evolution of the previously approved rectilinear scheme, providing the additional floor area required to support the operational and experiential ambitions of the restaurant. As the design developed, the introduction of a glulam timber structure created opportunities for greater architectural expression, larger spans and increased transparency. The image below shows early visions for the site



The introduction of the Glulam framing allowed the building design to evolve from a simple linear form into the flowing, curved architecture now proposed as can be seen in the sketches below .



The resulting design responds more naturally to the site and landscape, creating a distinctive yet elegant building that reinforces the guest experience whilst providing an architectural response more befitting Northcote than the previous scheme. The sweeping curved form wraps around the site, the glulam frame emerging out of the ground and roof sweeping away from the hotel, guides visitors intrigue towards the

restaurant, creating a strong sense of arrival and a building that appears to emerge organically from the landscape rather than a rectilinear unit sat upon it.

A key component of the proposal is the creation of a carefully curated journey between the existing hotel and the new restaurant. Guests arriving from the hotel will pass through a series of landscaped pathways woven through herb and kitchen gardens containing culinary herbs, edible planting and seasonal produce. These gardens reflect Northcote's commitment to fresh ingredients, local provenance and seasonality, creating a direct connection between the landscape and the dining experience. The intention is for the journey itself to become part of the Northcote experience.

Architecturally, the building seeks to balance contemporary aesthetics with timeless natural materials and craftsmanship. Conceived as a destination in its own right, the architecture creates an experience that begins before guests are seated, whether arriving through the landscaped gardens or beneath the dramatic entrance canopy.

The organic form of the building responds to both the landscape and the operational requirements of the restaurant. Sweeping curved elevations create a sense of movement and elegance whilst softening the visual impact of the development. Extensive floor-to-ceiling glazing blurs the distinction between inside and outside, ensuring that the surrounding countryside becomes an integral part of the dining experience. Generous terraces and balconies further extend the restaurant into the landscape, allowing guests to engage directly with the setting whilst enjoying elevated views across the estate as can be seen in the image below :



The building's structural expression is founded upon an exposed glulam timber frame, natural materials and sustainable construction. The timber structure enables the elegant spans and curved forms that define the architecture while reducing embodied carbon when compared with more conventional construction methods. Externally, the building is clad in charred timber, creating a rich and refined appearance that allows it to sit comfortably within the landscape. The dark façade contrasts with the warmth of the exposed timber frame and the transparency of the glazed elevations, producing a composition that feels contemporary, timeless and rooted within its rural context.

A central principle of the design is that luxury is defined not by capacity, but by space, comfort and experience. The previously approved scheme accounted for 48 covers, this is reduced to 38 within this proposal, the increased floor area is not intended to accommodate additional covers, but to provide a more generous and refined environment through enhanced table spacing, improved circulation, greater privacy and uninterrupted views. Dramatic dining spaces, carefully framed vistas and extensive connections to the landscape create an immersive setting that celebrates both the architecture and the culinary experience.

The proposal therefore represents more than an expansion of Northcote's facilities. It is a long-term investment in the future of the estate, creating a destination restaurant that reflects the ambition, craft and enduring success of Northcote, ensuring it remains at the forefront of luxury dining for generations to come.

The Guest Journey - Architecture as Part of the Dining Experience

A fundamental principle of the proposed restaurant is that the building itself becomes an integral part of the Northcote experience. Rather than a destination where guests simply arrive, dine and depart, the architecture, landscape and interior spaces have been carefully choreographed to create a journey that unfolds throughout the gardens, building and dining spaces.

For many visitors, the experience begins within the landscaped herb and kitchen gardens that connect the existing hotel to the new restaurant. Guests are guided along pathways through herb planting and other 'home grown' ingredients, with a mix of aromas and flavours. Seating areas positioned throughout the gardens provide opportunities to pause, relax and engage with the landscape, creating anticipation before arrival.

Whilst many guests will arrive via the hotel, the restaurant also accommodates direct arrivals by car, as established under the previously approved scheme. A dedicated access drive leads to a feature turning circle and covered arrival canopy at the principal entrance. Formed from the same expressive glulam timber structure that defines the restaurant, the porte cochère extends naturally from the architecture, creating a distinctive arrival feature that provides both visual impact and year-round weather protection.

Guests enter through a feature entrance door into a dramatic arrival space centred around a sculptural staircase that forms the heart of the building. More than a means of circulation, the staircase has been designed as an experiential element that gradually reveals the restaurant, bar and other facilities. As visitors ascend, carefully framed views provide glimpses into the main dining room, private dining spaces, chefs' table and wine room, creating anticipation and allowing guests to experience the theatre of the restaurant.

The staircase culminates at first-floor level to the bar, wine tasting and lounge areas, positioned to take advantage of panoramic views across the gardens and surrounding Lancashire countryside. This space forms the opening chapter of the dining experience, where guests are welcomed by the Northcote team. Indicative sketches of the feature stair can be seen below :



The first-floor bar extends onto a generous external balcony overlooking the gardens and wider estate. This elevated terrace provides a place for guests to relax and enjoy the landscape before the dining experience continues within the restaurant below.

Guests then descend to the principal dining level, the lower floor has been designed to create a sense of privacy, exclusivity and connection to its setting. At the heart of the space is the open kitchen, which serves as a focal point for the restaurant and transforms food preparation into part of the guest experience. Diners are able to observe the skill, precision and teamwork of the chefs, introducing an element of theatre and allowing a direct connection with the people and processes behind the food.

Following their meal, guests are invited to return to the upper level where the experience can continue in a more relaxed setting. The bar, wine room and specialist spirit lounge provide opportunities for after-dinner drinks and conversation, while the balcony offers a final opportunity to enjoy views across the estate before returning to the hotel.

The overall design philosophy is centred on creating a complete hospitality journey, from the herb gardens and arrival sequence, through the tasting experiences, dining spaces and pre/post-dinner bar area, every element has been carefully considered to create anticipation, discovery and lasting memories. The result is not simply a restaurant, but a destination where the entire experience is an occasion.

Scale and Massing

Although the proposed building is larger in height than that approved under application 3/2023/0452 and incorporates increased internal volume, the revised design introduces a more sophisticated approach to the massing, offering more space per guest. The building adopts a sweeping curved form around the hotel, with glulam framing and roofs that flow away from the hotel, creating a softer visual appearance than a conventional rectilinear, flat roofed structure.

This approach provides several benefits:

- * Reduced perception of overall building mass
- * Improved integration with the landscape
- * Creation of a welcoming arrival sequence
- * Enhanced architectural elegance
- * A more organic relationship with the surrounding grounds

The building has been deliberately shaped to reduce its perceived scale when viewed from the existing hotel. The sweeping glulam structure rises and unfolds away from the hotel, allowing the architecture to sit comfortably within its setting whilst maintaining a respectful relationship with the established estate.

The proposed restaurant has been designed to remain subservient to the existing hotel, which continues to be read as the principal building within the estate. Although contemporary in form, the restaurant is lower in overall scale than the hotel and has been modelled to reduce its visual impact, ensuring that it sits comfortably within the landscape whilst maintaining a clear hierarchy between the existing buildings and the proposed development.

Appearance and Materials

A palette of high-quality natural materials is proposed throughout the development.

Materials may include:

- * Glulam timber framing
- * Timber cladding elements
- * Standing seam roof finishes
- * Clear full height glazing
- * High-quality hard and soft landscaping materials and design

The external walls will be finished in either natural or charred timber cladding dependant on its location, the charred timber drawing inspiration from the Japanese Shou Sugi Ban technique. This treatment provides:

- * Exceptional durability
- * Reduced maintenance requirements
- * A rich and distinctive appearance
- * Enhanced weather resistance
- * A contemporary interpretation of natural materials

The dark cladding contrasts with the warm natural timber structure, emphasising the building's sculptural form.

The material selection has also been built on the previously approved scheme, sustainability and visual quality, ensuring the building sits comfortably within its rural context whilst expressing a contemporary architectural language. Large areas of glazing are proposed to the far elevations, maximising natural daylight and establishing a strong visual connection between the restaurant and surrounding landscape. Balconies and external terraces are incorporated into the design, allowing guests to enjoy panoramic views across the Northcote grounds and its surroundings.

Indicative materials can be seen below :



Landscaping and Setting

Landscape design forms a fundamental component of the proposal.

The development seeks to enhance the existing grounds through:

- * Retention and enhancement of landscaping around the site
- * New native tree, hedges and planting
- * Creation of landscaped relaxation areas
- * Enhancement of biodiversity
- * Introduction of seasonal planting
- * Herb gardens to feed the restaurant which will change with the seasons

The landscaping strategy forms an integral component of the overall design concept, helping to integrate the building into its surroundings whilst creating an attractive and engaging setting throughout the year. The proposed gardens, herb planting, pathways, and external seating areas have been carefully designed not only to enhance the visual appearance of the development, but also to contribute directly to the guest experience.

As outlined within the Guest Journey section of this statement, the landscape has been conceived as an extension of the restaurant experience itself, allowing visitors to engage with the ingredients, aromas and seasonal character of the gardens before, during or after their meal. The landscaping therefore plays a fundamental role in creating a sense of arrival, anticipation and discovery, transforming a visit to the restaurant into a carefully curated journey rather than simply a dining destination.

The proposed landscape works will strengthen the relationship between the architecture and its setting, soften the appearance of the building within the wider estate and provide opportunities for relaxation, exploration and enjoyment throughout the seasons.

Please refer to the accompanying Landscape Masterplan submitted as part of this application for full details of the proposed landscaping works.

The images below show inspiration for the landscaping and the overall sketch plan :





Access, Movement & Highways

The proposed restaurant will be accessed through the existing Northcote estate infrastructure and the previously approved access from Northcote Road.

Visitors will benefit from established arrival arrangements, existing and proposed parking facilities and circulation routes already serving the hotel complex.

The proposal has been designed to ensure:

- * Safe pedestrian access
- * Convenient access from existing parking areas
- * Inclusive access for all users
- * Level or gently graded routes where practicable
- * Compliance with current accessibility standards
- * Appropriate servicing arrangements

The development will not fundamentally alter existing or previously approved traffic patterns and will utilise the established infrastructure associated with the hotel, together with the new access arrangements previously approved under the previous planning permission.

As the number of restaurant covers is not proposed to increase beyond that of the approved scheme, no additional vehicle movements are anticipated. Consequently, the proposal is not expected to result in any

greater impact on the local highway network than that already considered and accepted under the previous planning approval.

The proposal utilises the access strategy already approved under planning permission 3/2023/0452.

No alterations are proposed to:

- * Site access arrangements.
- * Internal vehicle circulation.
- * Parking provision.
- * Service arrangements.
- * Drop-off facilities.

The proposal therefore maintains the assumptions underpinning the previously approved highways assessment and is not anticipated to have any materially different impact upon the local highway network. The development should therefore be regarded as effectively neutral in highways terms when compared with the approved scheme.

Please also see planning statement enclosed within the application.

Inclusive Design

The restaurant has been designed in accordance with the principles of inclusive access.

The building will provide:

- * Step-free access
- * Accessible parking provision
- * Accessible WC facilities
- * Suitable internal circulation space
- * Appropriate door widths and thresholds
- * Inclusive dining arrangements

The aim is to ensure that all visitors can enjoy the facilities.

Sustainability

Sustainability has been a consideration throughout the design process, influencing both the architectural design and material selection.

Measures incorporated within the proposal include:

- * High-performance building fabric
- * Energy-efficient glazing
- * Air-source heating, solar arrays and renewable technologies where practicable
- * Low-energy lighting systems
- * Sustainable drainage where possible
- * Enhanced biodiversity through the landscape masterplan and BNG requirements

- * Maximisation of natural daylight whilst maintaining strong visual connections with the surrounding landscape
- * Durable, responsibly sourced and low-maintenance materials
- * A glulam timber structural frame, reducing embodied carbon when compared with more traditional steel or concrete construction methods
- * The use of sustainably sourced timber cladding, providing a renewable and long-lasting external finish

The proposed glulam structure forms a key element of the building's sustainability credentials. Timber is a naturally renewable material that stores carbon throughout its lifespan, whilst the off-site manufacture of structural elements helps reduce construction waste and improve build efficiency. The use of timber cladding further contributes to the longevity of the building envelope, providing a durable and low-maintenance finish.

Together, these measures seek to minimise environmental impact, reduce operational energy demand and create a sustainable, high-quality hospitality destination that reflects Northcote's long-term commitment to responsible stewardship of its estate.

Planning Benefits

The proposal will deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits, including:

- * Significant investment into an established local business
- * Safeguarding existing employment and creating new opportunities within the hospitality sector, whilst supporting the development of future culinary talent through partnerships with local colleges, apprenticeships, training programmes and work placement opportunities for aspiring chefs and hospitality professionals.
- * Enhancing tourism within the Ribble Valley
- * Reinforcement of the hotels international reputation
- * Increased visitor expenditure within the local economy
- * Enhanced hospitality facilities
- * Landscape and biodiversity improvements
- * Long-term sustainability of an important regional asset

Planning History and Development Evolution

This application builds upon the principles established through the previously approved planning permission 3/2023/0452, which granted consent for a new pavilion restaurant within the grounds of Northcote Hotel. For full planning history please see accompanying planning statement.

The previously approved scheme established the acceptability of a standalone pavilion restaurant in this location, together with the associated access arrangements, parking provision and operational relationship with the wider Northcote estate.

The current proposal retains the key principles of the approved development, including:

- * The same siting and location of the building
- * The established access arrangements
- * The approved vehicle circulation routes

- * Existing parking provision
- * The overall operational relationship with Northcote Hotel and the Restaurant

The application seeks to enhance the quality of the restaurant environment while maintaining the fundamental planning principles previously accepted by the local authority. As such, the proposal should be viewed as an evolution and refinement of an already approved development rather than the introduction of a new planning concept.

Whilst retaining the fundamental principles established under the previous consent, the revised scheme delivers an enhanced architectural response, creating a building that is more befitting of the ambitions of the applicants and more sensitive to its setting. Through its flowing form, high-quality natural materials and carefully considered relationship with the existing hotel and gardens, the proposal represents a design improvement that strengthens the character of the estate whilst providing a more distinctive and memorable destination experience.

Historical Mapping and Land Contamination

A review of historical Ordnance Survey mapping has been undertaken by Dsign House Architecture, examining mapping records from the early 1800s through to the present day in order to understand the historic development and land use of the application site.

The historical mapping demonstrates that the site has consistently remained in fields / agricultural use or formed part of the associated gardens and grounds of Northcote throughout the period reviewed. There is no evidence of the site having been occupied by industrial, commercial or other potentially contaminative land uses that would typically give rise to concerns regarding historic land contamination.

The evolution of the site reflects the gradual development of the Northcote estate, with the application site remaining closely associated with the existing hotel and its surrounding landscape. The proposed restaurant therefore represents the continued evolution of an established hospitality estate rather than the redevelopment of previously developed or industrial land.

The historical mapping review has not identified any obvious indicators of historic land uses that would suggest an elevated risk of land contamination. The site has remained predominantly fields, agricultural and gardens in character for over two centuries, supporting the conclusion that the land is suitable for the proposed development without the risk of contamination from historic industrial or commercial uses. This approach is consistent with the risk-based assessment of land contamination promoted through the planning system.

Conclusion

The proposed restaurant represents a carefully considered investment in the future of Northcote. The development will provide a world-class dining environment befitting one of the United Kingdom's most respected Michelin-starred destinations whilst respecting the site's landscape setting and established character.

The proposal builds upon Northcote's long-standing reputation for hospitality excellence and will help secure the future success of the business, supporting employment, tourism and economic growth within Langho, the Ribble Valley and Lancashire for many years to come.

This development is therefore considered to represent sustainable, high-quality and appropriate growth and is respectfully presented to you for approval.