

LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREA IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Appraisal accompanies a proposal to erect eleven dwellings on land at Abbey Road, St Bees. The site is within the St Bees Conservation Area.

2.0 The Site

2.1 The site is located at Abbey Road, St Bees and is shown for identification purposes edged red on the attached plan (Annex 1). The north side of Abbey Road has a built up frontage comprising of a variety of non-traditional detached dwellings leading to the modern cul-de-sac development of Monkscroft. The existing development on Abbey Road displays a variety of designs and external finishes. The former Abbey Farm is located to the north east of the site and has been successfully converted to residential use. The churchyard of St Bees Priory adjoins the site to the south and east.

2.2 The site is roughly vegetated on an artificial topography. It is understood that the current topography of the site was created following tipping of inert spoil on the site. The natural topography is considered likely to be a gentle slope from north to south.

2.3 The area surrounding the site has a wider context in the St Bees valley. A traditional group of buildings comprising of the St Bees Priory and St Bees School occupy the base of the valley. To the east some non-traditional development (including a disused filling station) is located on Station Road adjacent to the Carlisle to Barrow railway line. The northern slope of the St Bees valley is dominated by the non-traditional development at Abbey Vale.

3.0 Site History

3.1 The site was previously part of Abbey Farm. It is understood that the land was the farm stack yard until the early 1980's and used for general agricultural activities and storage. In the early 1980's Abbey Farm became redundant and was subsequently converted to residential use.

3.2 In 1991 Copeland Borough Council resolved to grant Planning Permission for the erection of twelve dwellings on the site. The grant of Planning Permission was subject to a Section 106 Agreement to secure minor highway improvements. Due to land ownership issues the Section 106 Agreement was never completed. An adjoining landowner has now undertaken the works required by the proposed Section 106 Agreement.

3.3 In the late 1990's Planning Permission was granted for the conversion of the former byre building adjoining the site. This Planning Permission has subsequently been implemented.

3.4 In recent years housing development has taken place on the adjoining Monkscroft site. It is understood that inert spoil from this development was deposited on the site. This is reflected in the topography of the site, which has a uniformed banked contour. Vegetation has now regenerated over the spoil.

4.0 Archaeology

4.1 A brief for a desk based archaeological assessment is attached as Annex 2. It is anticipated that any grant of Planning Permission will be subject to a condition requiring some element of project monitoring to record items of archaeological interest.

5.0 Development Plan Policy

5.1 Policy ENV26 of the Copeland Local Plan 2001-2016 relates to development in and affecting Conservation Areas. Policy ENV26 requires that development in Conservation Areas will only be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area and, if appropriate, views in and out of the area. The policy then provides criteria to ensure development reflects the character of the area.

5.2 The requirement to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area reflects the statutory duty imposed on Local Planning Authorities by Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Judicial authority has interpreted the meaning of “preserve or enhance” in a neutral sense. Whilst the character and appearance of Conservation Areas should always be given full weight in planning decisions, the objective of preservation can be achieved either by development which makes a positive contribution to an areas character or appearance, or by development which leaves the character and appearance unharmed. Therefore development that does not cause demonstrable harm is acceptable.

5.3 Policy ENV33 of the Copeland Local Plan provides that applications affecting the setting or important views of a listed building will only be approved when there is no significant adverse impact on the listed building.

5.4 The site is designated as a Landscape of County importance. Policy ENV6 requires that development in such areas should have special regard to design, scale, siting and choice of materials. The site has been designated as an area of County Landscape Importance as part of a much wider designation to protect St Bees Head and the surrounding area. The entire settlement of St Bees is included in this blanket designation.