

# 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.

5.5 The Copeland Local Plan also identifies specific areas of Local Landscape Importance. These are the most significant areas of Local Landscape Importance within and on the fringe of built up areas. These areas are protected from non-essential and inappropriate development. Often these designations are combined with the need to protect the areas of recreational and amenity importance. The land immediately adjoining the site is allocated as an area of Local Landscape Importance. Significantly, the site has been specifically excluded.

#### 6.0 National Planning Policy

6.1 Regard should be had to the advice provided by PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment.

6.2 Paragraph 2.11 of PPG15 attaches particular importance to developers consulting with the Local Planning Authority on development proposals. In this case the developer began consultation with the Local Planning Authority in the first quarter of 2008. The developer received positive comments regarding the development of the site in principle. The developer has given due consideration to the need to assess the likely impact of their proposals on the conservation area and listed buildings.

6.3 Paragraph 2.16 relates to the requirements for development affecting the setting of listed buildings. The proposed development does not adversely affect the setting of any listed building.

6.4 Paragraph 4.14 relates to the special attention that shall be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.

6.5 Paragraph 14.17 advises, “Many conservation areas include gap sites, ..... That make no contribution to, or indeed detract from, the character or appearance of the area; their replacement would be stimulus to imaginative, high quality design, and seen as an opportunity to enhance the area”. The application site does not make a contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. This is primary due to its artificial topography and surrounding development. The high quality scheme will make a positive contribution to the area.

6.6 Paragraph 4.17 goes on to advise that it is important that new buildings should be designed with respect for their context, as part of a larger whole which is a well established character and appearance of its own. The proposed Scheme achieves these objectives.

## **7.0 Impact on the St Bees Conservation Area**

7.1 The St Bees Conservation Area is large and diverse. It is understood that the St Bees Conservation Area was designated in the mid – 1975. The area has not been reviewed. There is no character appraisal for the St Bees Conservation Area.

7.2 The Conservation Area extends south along St Bees Main Street and to the east along High House Road. The Conservation Area also includes the area around St Bees Priory and the buildings of St Bees School. These buildings form a focus around the B5345 leading to the Grade II \* Pow Beck Bridge. The chancel of the Priory is a significant and dominant feature in the landscape. It provides a strong focal point for views into the Conservation Area.

7.3 The site is screened from views from the east by a group of mature trees within the Priory grounds and the structure of the Priory itself. The site only becomes fully or partially visible from Station Road to the south and southeast. From Station Road the views to the north are dominated by the non-traditional

development at Monkscroft and to the north side of Abbey Road. Development on the site will not have any adverse effect on views of the St Bees Priory from Station Road.

7.4 Travelling north to south on Abbey Road views are restricted by existing development immediately abutting the highway. This feeling of enclosure will be continued by the proposed roadside development on the site. This will not impede important views of the Priory and will reflect the traditional form of development in the area.

7.5 Similarly, travelling south to north along Beach Road important views of the Priory will be retained as the principal view is west to east across the Pow Beck floodplain. Photomontages clearly show the proposed development in the context of the existing built and natural environment. Views of the Priory are preserved.

7.6 The important long distance views of the Priory from Station Road and beyond, the north, High House Road, the B5345 and Nethertown Road will remain unimpeded. There are no other significant viewpoints from inside or outside the St Bees Conservation Area that will be affected by the proposed development.

## **8.0 Listed Buildings**

8.1 The adjacent former Abbey Farmhouse and barn range adjacent to the application site are listed as Grade II (this excludes the converted byre building adjoining the site). The barn range at Abbey Farm has been successfully converted to residential use. The proposed development reflects the character of Abbey Farm in its scale, design, proportions and detailing.

8.2 The Church of St Mary and St Bega and the chancel to the Priory Church of St Mary and St Bega are listed Grade I. These are buildings of

significant local architectural and historic importance. The buildings are separated from the site by ancillary development at the Priory Close and the graveyard. Mature trees provide a significant element of screening to the listed buildings. The site does not immediately relate to or read as part of the setting of the listed buildings. The sensitive development of the site will not adversely affect the setting, character or appearance of the listed buildings.

8.3 The site is screened from the group of listed buildings that form St Bees School by the Priory, Abbey Farm and the natural topography of the area. Only oblique views of the site are visible from Pow Beck Bridge. Pow Beck Bridge remains the undiminished focal feature at the base of the Pow Beck floodplain.

8.4 The development of the site will not adversely affect appearance, character or setting of any listed buildings in the locality.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

9.1 The site is considered capable of accepting sensitive residential development that will in turn preserve and enhance the character of the St Bees Conservation Area. Historically and physically the site relates to Abbey Farm. The proposed development reflects the character of Abbey Farm incorporating local vernacular architecture and local materials.

9.2 The protection of St Bees Priory and associated buildings is paramount. However, due to the location, topography and development adjoining the site sensitive development will not affect the setting and important views of the listed buildings.

9.3 Due to its proximity to residential development at Abbey Farm and to development on the north side of Abbey Road the site forms part of the built up development of St Bees. Indeed, this is reflected by the fact that it is located inside the settlement boundary. The site is not afforded any special protection as an area of landscape, recreation or amenity importance. Indeed, it appears to have been specifically excluded. The proposed development of the site does not adversely affect any significant views of the St Bees Conservation Area.

## **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

### **1.0. Introduction**

1.1. This Design and Access Statement supports an application for the erection of eleven dwellings at Abbey Road, St Bees. This Statement is intended to meet the legislative requirements of Section 327A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

### **2.0. The Application Site**

2.1. The site is part of the former Abbey Farm and is located adjacent to Abbey Road, St Bees. The Abbey Farm development lies immediately to the north east and comprises of a range of converted former agricultural buildings. The grounds of St Bees Priory and open land lay immediately to the south. To the north there is non-traditional residential development along Abbey Road. This consists of detached houses and bungalows of various styles and designs and the modern cul-de-sac development of Monkscroft.

2.2. It is understood that the site was previously used for external agricultural storage. Since active agricultural use ceased in the mid 1980s the land has been vacant. During the construction of Monkscroft a substantial amount of spoil was deposited on the site. This has created an artificial topography which has become roughly vegetated.

2.3. The site has a road frontage of approximately 150 metres immediately adjoining Abbey Road.

### 3.0 **St. Bees Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.**

3.1 Issues relating to the St Bees Conservation Area and listed buildings are dealt with in the accompanying Listed Building and Conservation Area Impact Assessment.

### 4.0. **Design and Layout.**

4.1. The development should be sited to minimise the impact on the St Bees Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings. Development should relate well to existing development and landscape features. The road frontage of the site is considered particularly suitable for development. An area measuring approximately 25 metres from the carriageway edge into the site would readily accept appropriate development.

4.2. The area of the site beyond the frontage strip would require more careful consideration before it is confirmed as being suitable for development. Development in this area may have a greater affect on the Conservation Area and listed buildings. This area maybe suitable to provide appropriate landscaping scheme to assimilate any development into the existing built and natural environment.

4.3. In order to avoid the development being unduly elevated it will be necessary to excavate part of the filled area of site to reduce the overall height of the dwellings. The height of the dwellings should not have an adverse affect on the properties opposite or unduly dominate the landscape.

4.4. The design of the buildings should reflect the character of the existing

Abbey Farm development. Any development should have a traditional agricultural context. The design, scale, proportion and detailing should reflect the character of either a traditional Cumbrian farmhouse or a range of agricultural buildings.

4.5 Externally, the buildings should be finished with traditional materials and reflect the local vernacular. Slate roofs with St Bees sandstone and facing brick elevations are considered appropriate.

#### 5.0. Access.

5.1 The Applicant has obtained pre-application advice from the Highway Authority. A singular central vehicular access should be utilised to avoid individual private driveways accessing onto Abbey Road. Access should be gained to the rear of the dwellings with a shared access driveway and an appropriate turning area. Vehicular access to the site should be located centrally to allow maximum highway visibility. If possible a highway visibility splay of 70m x 2.4m x 70m should be achieved.

5.2 In order to improve the appearance of the development and to protect natural features the existing hedgerow should be replanted behind the visibility splay. Alternatively, if the hedgerow is not capable of being transplanted then the new hedgerow should be established together with traditional stone walling.

5.3 The development should incorporate adequate off street car parking to Cumbria Design Guide Standards.

6.0 **Summary**

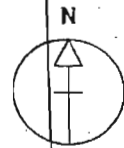
6.1 The site is suitable for small scale residential development in the form of infilling consistent with Policy HSG4 of the Copeland Local Plan 2001-2006.

6.2 The design of the proposed dwellings should reflect the local vernacular architecture and the character of the St Bees Conservation Area. In particular, traditional detailing, proportions and materials should be incorporated.

6.3 The site layout should seek to minimise the impact of the development on the St Bees Conservation Area and surrounding areas. Consideration should be given to providing a suitable landscaping scheme.

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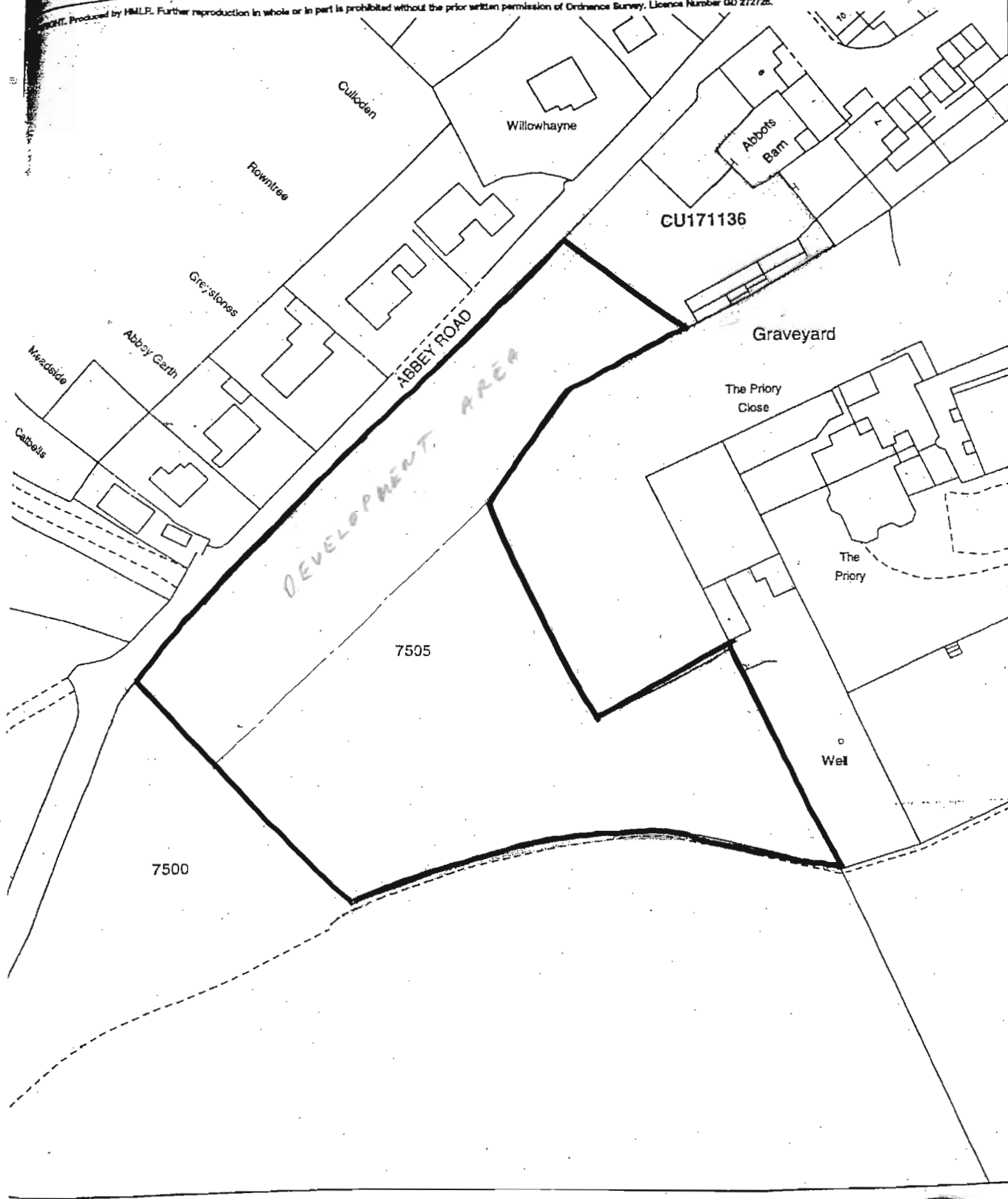
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