



Christopher Harrison
Cumberland Council
The Market Hall

Whitehaven, Cumbria
CA28 7JG

02-07-2026

Dear Christopher

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021 & T&CP
(Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 & Planning (Listed
Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

MORESBY HALL, MORESBY, WHITEHAVEN, CA28 6PJ
Application No. 4/26/2187/OL1 & 4/26/2186/OF1

Thank you for your letters of 2026-06-12 regarding the above applications for listed building consent and planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice.

Summary

Moresby Hall is an exceptionally significant grade I listed manor house with medieval origins and historical associations with prominent local families. The setting of the hall contributes to its significance. In its immediate surroundings are historical outbuildings, some of which are listed at grade II, and attractive designed gardens. It sits in a wider landscape of archaeological and historic interest, with the remains of a medieval church and a Roman fort immediately opposite.

Proposals seek to convert a listed barn and adjoining cottage into holiday lets, undertake repairs to the hall, and to construct five new dwellings in the area to the north of the hall as a means of generating money to pay for repairs.

We do not have specific concerns over the proposals to convert the barn and cottage; however, the proposals to demolish an adjacent former workshop have not been adequately justified. We welcome the intention to invest in the restoration of the hall, but these elements of the proposals need more detail, including structural surveys and window surveys and detailed schedules of repairs.



We have concerns over the proposals to construct five dwellings to the north of the hall. The proposed scale, location and style of these houses would introduce a suburban residential form to an isolated rural site, and would result in a high level of harm to the significance of the grade I listed hall. The submitted information does not meet the requirements of Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note 4 or the NPPF in relation to enabling development. In particular, the application fails to demonstrate a robustly quantified and transparent conservation deficit, the absence of reasonable alternatives, or that the proposed development of five houses represents the minimum necessary to secure the future of the heritage asset.

Advice

Proposals

The hybrid planning application seeks to convert a barn and staff cottage to holiday lets, remove an unused former workshop building, make alterations to the top floor of the hall, install secondary glazing to the hall and undertake repairs to stone lintels and mullions, and construct five new dwellings to the north of the hall.

Significance

Moresby Hall and associated buildings comprise a remarkably well-preserved example of the long-term evolution of a high-status Cumbrian manorial site.

The main hall has exceptional architectural, archaeological and historic significance and good survival of medieval, Tudor and later fabric. The site has origins dating back to the 12th century as a fortified manor house and the home of the prominent Moresby family. In the 16th century the site was bought by the Fletcher family who developed the hall into fashionable post-medieval gentry residence, and whose influence extended across the surrounding area for centuries.

The Hall is surrounded by historic farm buildings and gardens, and the entire complex is set in a wider archaeological and historic landscape encompassing the early 19th century St Bridget's Church, the adjacent remains of a medieval church, and Parton Roman fort and associated civilian settlement.

The relationship between the Hall, its former estate lands, gardens and surrounding agricultural landscape strongly contributes to the understanding of its historic status and function. Particularly important is the immediate visual and historical relationship between Moresby Hall and St Bridget's Church. Together they form a highly significant



group illustrating the close association between the manor and parish church that characterised historic estate settlements. The prominent location on rising ground and the rural setting preserve the character of a manorial complex and contribute to the significance of the listed buildings.

Moresby Hall is grade I listed for its outstanding architectural and historic interest. In its immediate setting is a grade II listed 18th century bank barn (NB the listed building marker for this is incorrectly placed on the long, single storey former farm outbuilding to the north-east of the hall; a list amendment request has been made). Also listed at grade II are the 17th century gate piers to the hall, the early 19th century Church of St Bridget, a 13th century chancel arch surviving from the medieval church, and a 17th century table tomb to William and Thomas Brittons. Parton Roman fort and associated civilian settlement is located immediately west of Moresby Hall and is a scheduled monument. Several other historic farm buildings on the site are likely to be classed as curtilage listed structures.

Impacts

We welcome the intention to invest in securing a sustainable future for this incredibly important site, however we have some comments on some elements of the proposals:

Conversion of barn and cottage to holiday lets and removal of unused workshop

It's important to note that the barn here is actually the grade II listed building number 1255354 – 'Farm Outbuilding Immediately North of Moresby Hall'. The pin for this has been put in the wrong place on the NHLE map and a request has been made for this to be amended.

This building is a late 18th or early 19th century bank barn. It is a small, well-preserved example of a typical Cumbrian bank barn, with an earth ramp on the north side giving access to the upper floor. The ground floor is accessible from the courtyard on the south side. The barn is described as 'a good example of the uncomplicated vernacular building traditions of the area which makes an important contribution to the setting of the adjacent Moresby Hall'.

The proposed changes to this listed building involve the creation of a door through an internal wall at first floor level and the insertion of a staircase and mezzanine floor for a bedroom in the roof space. Roof lights will also be inserted into the roof. Very few changes are proposed to the adjoining cottage, which has already been converted to staff accommodation at ground floor level, and has had two roof dormers inserted.



These proposals will result in minimal harm to the significance of the listed bank barn and adjoining cottage and we are not concerned about these proposals. You may wish to request additional detail on specific conservation rooflights for the listed barn and stipulate that the earth bank and ramp on the north side of the barn are retained as these are part of its former function.

The roofless workshop building at the east end of the row is proposed for demolition. This building is contemporary with the bank barn and cottage, and would likely be classed as curtilage listed. The workshop building appears reasonably intact, aside from having no roof. There is no structural survey of this building to justify its demolition therefore we have concerns about its removal, and consideration should be given to its retention and conversion along with the other buildings, as was proposed in the 2018 application.

We do not have concerns over the removal of the remains of the collapsed 20th century Dutch barn.

Alterations to the hall

The application contains details of some minor changes to the planform at second floor level to incorporate a family suite. We do not have concerns over these changes as they will not result in harm to the significance of the listed building.

Details have also been submitted relating to repair and refurbishment works to windows at ground, first and second floor, and the installation of secondary glazing. We have concerns over repair works to this type of highly graded listed building being undertaken prior to a comprehensive window condition survey. After a window condition survey has been done, specific details of the repairs required including materials and suitably qualified and experienced conservation contractors should be submitted. There is currently insufficient evidence to be able to assess the potential impact of the works to the windows on the significance of the listed building. Secondary glazing should not be installed until all necessary window repairs have been completed.

Repair works to the roof, rainwater goods and pointing are also mentioned in various parts of the application, however there is no detail specifying where these are necessary. A structural survey by a CARE accredited engineer will be needed to specify this work.

Construction of five new dwellings to the north of the hall

We acknowledge that there was a previous consent for construction of new holiday lets on the site of the collapsed Dutch barn. Proposals for these buildings were modest in



scale and laid out in a way to reflect the courtyard character of the historic farm buildings. Their position set back from road and further down the slope meant they would have been less visible and prominent. Hard standing and carpark areas around the proposed new holiday lets would have been kept to a minimum with visitors making use of the main hotel carpark. These proposals also incorporated the repair and conversion of the roofless former workshop building.

While we do not object to the principle of some development in this area, the current proposals for five town houses would introduce a suburban house type that is entirely at odds with the setting of this historic site. The impact of their construction would result a high level of harm to the setting of the grade I listed hall and other associated designated heritage assets. As these would be private dwellings, a new access road, turning area and carparking is proposed, which would further compound the harm by eroding the rural character of the site. The dwellings would be highly visible from the road and detract from the prominence of Moresby Hall as the dominant building in the landscape along with the church.

Position

We recognise that significant investment is needed to maintain Moresby Hall and to secure its sustainable future. The proposals to convert the barn and cottage to holiday lets are generally sensitive to the historic buildings and will result in minimal harm to their significance; however, further justification is needed for the demolition of the former workshop building and consideration should be given to its retention and conversion.

The current proposals for an enabling development of five dwelling houses to the north of the hall would result in a high level of harm to the significance of the listed building by affecting its setting. The local authority should decide whether the proposed new dwellings constitute enabling development. Enabling development is development that would not normally be permitted, but is allowed because it secures the long-term conservation of a heritage asset.

The application does not provide a sufficiently robust or transparent justification for the proposed enabling development, or that five houses in the minimum necessary. Historic England guidance (GPA4) is explicit that enabling development is exceptional and must meet stringent evidential requirements. It must be shown to be the minimum amount of development required to address a clearly quantified conservation deficit. The application does not demonstrate this, and there is no structural survey of the hall or itemised and costed schedule of the repair and conservation works needed.



It is also necessary to demonstrate that a robust options appraisal has been undertaken to demonstrate why other, less harmful, solutions are not viable.

Recommendation

Historic England recommends that listed building consent and planning permission should be refused for these proposals in their present form, given the harm that they would cause to the significance of Moresby Hall. The following amendments would, however, limit this harm:

- Revisit the scale, design and location of the proposed new dwelling houses to the north of the hall to produce a more sensitive and in-keeping proposal.
- Undertake a structural survey and window survey of the main hall to create a detailed schedule of repair and restoration works needed.
- Prepare a robustly quantified and transparent conservation deficit and demonstrate that the quantum of development proposed is the minimum necessary to secure the repairs to the hall.
- Demonstrate that all alternative options have been discounted.
- Justification needed for the demolition of the former workshop building.

Should the proposals remain unchanged, our recommendation to refuse listed building consent and planning permission would stand: it will be for your Council to assess whether the harm to Moresby Hall's significance would be outweighed by public benefits secured by the development. In doing so, it should give great weight to the conservation of the designated heritage assets.

Should the proposals be amended as we have suggested we would no longer recommend refusal.

If there are any material changes to the proposals beyond those we have suggested, please contact us. If you propose to determine the applications in their current form, please inform us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity. Please also advise us of the decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

Louise Davies

E-mail: [REDACTED]

CC Roger Higgins [REDACTED]

Enclosure: Checklist for notification to the Planning Casework Unit



CHECKLIST OF INFORMATION FOR NOTIFICATION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE (PLANNING CASEWORK UNIT)

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021 & T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

If you are required to notify the Planning Casework Unit of this application, it will help to save time if you include the following documents:

- Copy of the application
- List of the drawing numbers
- Copy of the list description(s)
- Recent photographs if available
- Copy of the advertisement
- Copies of any representations received
- Statement explaining the extent to which the local authority has taken on board the advice and recommendations from Historic England and other consultees
- Confirmation of any amendments made to the application subsequent to initial notification to Historic England
- Explanation of why the local authority is disposed to grant consent, including copies of committee report(s) and minutes, where relevant
- List of proposed conditions