



Historic England

Ms Christie Burns
Cumberland Council
The Market Hall
Market Place
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7JG

Direct Dial: 0161 2421417

Our ref: P01588156

18 February 2025

Dear Ms Burns

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**LAND TO THE SOUTH OF HOLLY MEWS, ABBEY ROAD, ST BEES
Application No. 4/24/2094/0F1**

Thank you for your letter of 29 January 2025 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

Significance

Although not currently built on, the site formed part of the precinct of the medieval Benedictine Priory, and therefore has a high potential to retain archaeological deposits and the remains of structures and features associated with the monastic use of the site. Whilst the site is not scheduled as an ancient monument, there is no doubt that any surviving archaeological remains associated with the Priory would potentially be of at least local interest.

The site is also located within the St Bees Conservation Area, comprising of a long linear village with terraces of colourful rendered cottages ascending the sloping street, interspersed with some fine townhouses, with attractive architectural detailing, and a small number of village shops. The imposing red sandstone buildings of St. Bees School and St. Bees Priory lie within the conservation area to the north of the village, separated by flat open meadows and playing field

Impact

The application is for the construction of five houses on land to the west of St Mary and St Bega's Church. The proposed development would sit behind the previously approved 11 houses sited along Abbey Road. This scheme has only been part implemented with five houses having been constructed.



SUITES 3.3 AND 3.4 CANADA HOUSE 3 CHEPSTOW STREET MANCHESTER M1 5FW

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Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any Information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.



The applicant has submitted an Archaeological Evaluation and Heritage Statement. The Heritage statement has described the significance of the potentially affected assets and we do not disagree with this. It has concluded that the proposals will result in minor change to the conservation area, and wider setting of the Priory Church but that this change will not result in harm.

While we would agree with this conclusion in relation to the original part implemented development. We consider the nature of the current proposals, which create a back land, cul de sac style of development does not reflect the local distinctiveness of the area nor its linear character. Due to its form and positioning, the development will sit closer to Priory intensifying the impact of the partly implemented scheme. We therefore consider the proposals would result in some harm, the level of harm being less than substantial and towards the lower end. We also consider the proposed development does have some potential to impact upon archaeological remains.

Policy

National policy relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is articulated in section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024). These policies state that assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (NPPF, 202).

Local authorities should take the significance of an asset into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal (NPPF, 208).

When considering the impact of proposals on the significance of an asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be, irrespective of the level of potential harm (NPPF, 212). Any harm to, or loss of significance requires clear and convincing justification (NPPF, 213).

Where it is identified that harm will be caused, the decision maker should be satisfied that this is supported by a clear and convincing justification (NPPF, 213) and that the public benefits that it would bring about would outweigh the harm (NPPF, 215).

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably (NPPF, 219).



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Position

The proposed development does not reflect local distinctiveness and is out of character with the existing pattern of development and due to its location does have the potential to have some impact upon the setting of the priory.

Given the potential of the proposed development to impact archaeological deposits associated with the medieval Benedictine Priory, Historic England endorses the advice of the Council's Historic Environment Officer about the need to further archaeological recording, to be secured by condition, should the application be approved.

Recommendation

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 213, 215 and 219 of the NPPF.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

Ross Brazier

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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