



**Mr I. Wrigley
Proposed Residential Development at The Knoll,
High House Road, St. Bees**

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**Architect's Statement in Response to Conservation Officer's
Comments**

Introduction:

This is a response to comments made by Copeland Borough Council's conservation officer, about the proposals submitted as part of planning application reference: 4/22/2407/0FI, for the construction of three detached dwellings and associated infrastructure at The Knoll, High House Road, St Bees. The paragraph headings refer to those in the conservation officer's consultation response document dated 23-02-23.

Context

We believe that the design is a well-considered response to the site conditions and wider context. The proposed house design and overall site layout have been planned to make as little impact on the existing situation as possible: one of the new dwellings sits in the same location as the house that was demolished as part of a previous approval, but is less prominent than its predecessor, and the two other houses have been located so that nearly all the existing tree cover and vegetation is retained. As a result, the development will be well-screened, almost invisible, from both High House Road, and across the valley from Whitehaven Road. There has also been a concerted effort to make the most of the site limitations: the ground slopes steeply, with a fall of nearly eight metres from top to bottom. This aspect, together with the extent of retained trees around the boundary, results in the lower part of the site feeling dark and oppressive most of the time. For this reason, it was decided not to pursue making the lower houses split-level, but rather to keep them at roughly the same level as the upper house, and introduce elevated terraces at the rear of the properties. The terraces will allow the residents to feel raised up above the trees, and able to enjoy the full benefits of the sunlight and views. There was a similar terrace on the house that was previously given planning approval on this site.



Dwelling that was demolished as part of previous planning approval.

Identity:

Considering what the development should look like, there is a plethora of building types and styles on High House Road - converted sandstone barns, garages, detached Victorian and Georgian houses, through to more modern houses and bungalows, These have all manner of different finishes, including red pantiles, brickwork, and variety of different renders.



Bungalow on High House Road.



Traditional slate, red sandstone and render.

Taking on board the Conservation Officer's comments, we have updated the elevational treatment of the houses, so that they reinforce the unique character of the village, reflecting the older more rustic-looking dwellings in terms of materials and features. The houses will have slate roofs with diminishing courses, sandstone and rendered walls, chimneys, traditional window arrangements with sandstone surrounds and quoins. The development will sit discreetly on the site and will enhance the distinctive traditional character of the village: creating a feeling of belonging - a development embedded in the local community.

Built Form:

The proposed development of 3 houses on a site that is 0.182 hectares equates to a density of 16 dwellings/hectare. This is well below the target density of 30, identified within the Copeland Local Plan, and is not inconsistent with the density of housing both on High House Road, and within the wider village context.

Each house has the same fundamental layout, which is simple and spacious. The scale and massing are sympathetic to the great majority of the houses in the village. Individual character is imbued through the variation of materials and features.

Movement:

The decision to refrain from designing split-level houses was taken partly to make the dwellings as inclusive as possible. Each property will have level access, and the number of steps/stairs within each house has been kept to a minimum. Outside, there are no steps in the public areas of the development. External stairs were necessary, to get from the top to the bottom of the site. These have been located within the private gardens and, as such, will generally only be used by residents, who will be familiar with them.

Nature:

Concerning the ratio of hard surfacing to garden areas, the paving around the houses is minimal, amounting to a path around each house, and a patio. As for the shared driveway, what will be provided is the minimum level of hardstanding required by Highways for such a development, to provide access, parking, and safe turning. The proposed houses have large gardens, and as stated previously, nearly all of the tree cover would be retained.



View of the site from Whitehaven Road.

Regarding solar access, the vehicular access from High House Road was fixed, and this, together with the desire to retain as many of the trees as possible, largely determined the site layout and design of the houses. The front of house No 1 faces south, and would therefore get plenty of sunshine during the day. The rear elevations of the two lower houses face west, so their elevated position will ensure plenty of afternoon light.

Safe, Inclusive Spaces:

The proposed gradient from High House Road to the new houses is one in ten, which is not excessively steep, given the existing site topography. Residents and visitors will be able to walk to and from each other's houses, and within them, without having to use steps.

Balance of Uses/Home and Building Function:

As noted by the conservation officer, the garages could be converted at a later date, to provide accessible and relatively independent home working areas.

Resource Efficiency:

The dwellings were designed with resource efficiency in mind. The front-to back depth of the houses was made relatively shallow, in order to maximise sunlight penetration. Lifting the two lower houses up on a plinth also helps in this regard.

Lifespan:

Maintaining the lifespan of the proposed houses, in terms of renewable energy, has been considered. Solar panels have been added and plenty of spaces have been provided around and between the houses, where heat pumps could be installed. These would support electric vehicle charging.

Summary:

In conclusion, this is a well-thought through design, which takes into account all the issues discussed above. The development would provide an attractive home for three new families, on a site that previously had planning approval for a single dwelling, and the existing environment has largely been retained. The new dwellings will adhere to the local vernacular and, sat back and below High House Road, will be relatively inconspicuous. The sense of place will be maintained, with continuity between old and new, which is the essence of conservation.