

Ms C Burns
Senior Planning Officer
Cumberland Council



The Clerk to St Bees Parish Council
East House
Coulderton
Egremont
Cumbria
CA22 2UR

23 April 2024

Dear Christie,

Ref 4/24/2094/0F1 Land to the south of Holly Mews, St Bees

Thank you for forwarding details of this new application and the additional information provided by the applicant. The Parish Council discussed this application at some length at its meeting last week and has some serious concerns about the proposed development.

The application is for five houses in addition to the eleven dwellings approved in July 2010. The dwellings approved in 2010 (only 5 of which have so far been built) are alongside Abbey Road whereas this new application would extend the development further into the valley bottom, impacting on the views of the Priory and the associated buildings. We do not accept the argument that existing poor post-war development on this side of the valley reduces the impact of current decisions. Any new development should follow modern planning principles. It should be noted that the existing buildings on the site are screened by the mature trees in the graveyard and are more sympathetic to the setting than the proposed layout and style of the new development. In any case the effect of the houses approved for this site, but not yet built, has still to be appreciated in practice.

The Priory is a Grade 1 Listed building and its unique status as one of the largest historic religious buildings in Cumberland draws many visitors, as shown by the recent "Light District" event in St Bees at the Priory, which attracted some 2000 people. In summary we are concerned that the layout, position and style of the new development would be detrimental to the historic ensemble of buildings at the Priory.

The area around the Priory is believed to have unexplored archaeological importance due to its proximity to the monastic precinct, and findings made during the two archaeological digs in 1979/1980 indicated this was an area of considerable historic activity. The ground features on the lower slope which were evident prior to the dumping of spoil from the first development, indicate that this could be an area of great archaeological interest. An aerial photograph from 1978 is attached. The application refers to the archaeological report prepared in 2009 but this did not cover the area which is proposed for the new development. The Parish Council would wish to see an archaeological investigation report for the new application area produced and evaluated before any approval is given for building on this site.

The Parish Council is very concerned about the issue of pedestrian safety on Abbey Road and this is a matter which has been discussed with Cumbria Highways over many years. Abbey Road has no footway along most of its length but carries a significant volume of traffic. Apart from traffic travelling to the Beach Estate, it is also the route to the beach and caravan park for

traffic coming from the north. Over the summer months the beach is very popular and the volume of traffic increases markedly. There is no safe route for pedestrians to walk to either the village and railway station from the abbey road area or to the beach. See drawing “Abbey Road – pedestrian safety” which shows the safety deficit. Abbey Road is too narrow to allow a pavement to be constructed and other options need to be considered.

At the time that the first application on this site was approved in 2010 we know that Highways did ask for a pedestrian link to be created across the site to join up with the public right of way (known locally as the Dandy Walk). This did seem to be included as a proposed condition in the report to the Planning Panel but we have been unable to find out why this was never carried through.

The proposed new development of five family-sized detached dwellings would increase pedestrian traffic further and create more vehicle movements. The Parish Council believes that such a pedestrian link, available for use by the public and properly surfaced to allow it to be used by pushchairs and wheelchairs, should be a prerequisite for any approval.

The other matter of concern to the Parish Council is flooding and drainage. The site is stated to be in Flood Zone 1 which is correct in terms of the risk of river flooding. However, there are several natural springs across the site which regularly cause flooding. Three of the proposed new properties appear to be on the line of these springs.

We trust that these comments will be taken into account when determining this application.

Yours sincerely

J Donaldson

Mrs Jane Donaldson
Clerk to St Bees Parish Council