

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Construction of a split level bungalow with associated infrastructure, parking, landscaping, and regarding of existing land levels

Address: Land adj. 13 Green Close, Seascale

Reference: 4/23/2148/OF1

Date: 09/08/23

Description: This plot is a sloping area of grass situated to the north of the grade II listed Church of St Cuthbert

Conclusion: Request design revision

Assessment:

- This proposal affects the setting of the grade II listed church.
- The contribution of the plot is currently small but positive.
- The broad setting of the church has become characterised over the course of the last few decades by a large quantity of brick and render bungalows and two-storey houses with pantile roofs. These are of no great architectural quality, and have had the effect of creating a strongly suburban character of driveways, access roads and front gardens that in some respects appears peculiarly American.
- I would expect the proposal to be in keeping with the broad character of Seascale and not to have an impact on the broad setting of the church.
- More locally, Green Close, which is flanked mainly by two-storey houses, terminates with a view in a south-westerly direction of the green slope of the site in question and the church itself, which can be appreciated in its prominent local position, reflecting its importance.
- The development of this site could be expected to largely remove this view, with most of the impression of the green slope being constituted by the domestic front curtilages familiar to either side of the road, and the church being visible behind the new building rather than as a focal point.
- I would consider the view of the church along Green Close – in which the greenery of the knoll on which the church sits still exists in this fragment – to enable the significance of the church to be appreciated.
- I would therefore consider its loss to constitute less-than-substantial harm to the setting of the listed church. The magnitude of this harm is low, but appreciable, and should still be given special attention in the planning decision.
- The design of the proposal appears unexceptional, although in keeping with its surroundings. Design tweaking of the existing scheme would appear unlikely to greatly affect the impact on the listed building as the impact is caused by the development of the site itself and insertion of a built mass where there presently isn't one.
- Preserving this setting should be given special regard, and the harm weighed against the public benefits.

Summary:

- The view along Green Close of the church in its prominent position contributes positively to its setting by allowing the significance of the church to be appreciated.
- The development will largely cause the loss of this view.
- This is therefore less-than-substantial harm to the significance of the asset's setting, which should be given special regard and weighed against the public benefits.
- A possible way of mitigating this harm while allowing the development to proceed may come in the form of shifting the building as close as possible to the eastern boundary of the site and leaving the remainder as garden.
- This would cause the building to be screened by Number 13 until all but the closest viewpoints, preserving the view along the close, across the green slope to the church.
- I would therefore suggest the applicant and agent conduct a heritage impact assessment for their project, given the need to preserve the setting of the church, and investigate design solutions that move the dwelling in such a way as to preserve the view.

Relevant Policies and Guidance:

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 establishes a need "in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works [for the Local Planning Authority to] have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest" [Section 16(2)]. This requirement also applies to the granting of planning permission affecting a listing building or its setting [Section 66(1)].

Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) asserts that "Development that is not well designed should be refused".

NPPF para. 197 states that "In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation..."

NPPF para. 199 states, in the case of designated heritage assets, "great weight should be given to the asset's conservation", irrespective of whether potential harm is substantial, less-than-substantial, or total loss. Where harm to a designated heritage asset is less-than-substantial, it should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (para. 202).

Opportunities should be sought for new development within conservation areas and the settings of heritage assets that enhances or better reveals their significance. (para. 206)

The former Copeland Borough Council's Local Plan contains a number of relevant policies:

- Local Plan Policy ST1C(ii) highlights the importance of protecting, enhancing and restoring the Borough's cultural and heritage features and their settings.
- ST1D emphasizes the council's commitment to creating and retaining quality places.
- ENV4A stresses the importance of protecting listed buildings, conservation areas and other features considered to be of historic, archaeological or cultural value.
- ENV4B outlines support for heritage-led regeneration, ensuring assets are put to appropriate, viable and sustainable uses.

- ENV4C aims to strengthen the distinctive character of settlements through high quality urban design and architecture that respect character and setting.
- DM10 emphasises the need for high quality design and quality places. Part B requires design to respond to local character at multiple scales, paying attention to plot size and arrangement, massing and scale, interstitial spaces, and materials. Part C requires the incorporation of existing features such as landscape and vernacular style.
- DM27A outlines support in principle for developments that “protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character of the borough’s historic sites and their settings”.
- DM27D highlights the necessity of avoiding disrespectful alterations, substantial demolition, adverse effects on setting or views, or changes of use that harm the conservation or economic viability of a listed building.

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