

GRAEME IVES
HERITAGE PLANNING

Heritage Statement

Land off Abbey Road, St. Bees, Cumberland

On Behalf Of: High Grange Developments Limited

March 2024

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of High Grange Developments Limited (the ‘applicant’) in support of a full planning application for the construction of 5 dwellings, with associated access and landscaping (the ‘proposed development’) on land off Abbey Road, St. Bees, Cumberland (the ‘application site’).
- 1.2 From a heritage perspective the application site is within the setting of a cluster of listed buildings centred around the Church of St. Mary and St. Bega (Grade I Listed), formerly the Priory Church and now the Parish Church of St. Bees. The cluster of listed buildings includes St. Bees School and Abbey Farmhouse and is located within the St. Bees Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The historic environment will be an important material consideration for determining a future planning application. In determining the proposals Cumberland Council, as local planning authority (LPA), has ‘statutory duties’ under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings or their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest that they possess and also to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas.
- 1.4 National planning policy in respect to the conservation of the historic environment is set out in the National Planning Policy

Framework (revised December 2023) (NPPF) and places the following requirements on applicants:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understanding the potential impact of the proposals on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.” (NPPF Paragraph 200)

- 1.5 Therefore, given the above legislative and policy requirements Chapter 2 of this Heritage Statement identifies the relevant heritage assets that could be affected by the proposal. Chapter 3 reviews the historic development of the application site and adjoining area and Chapter 4 describes the significance of the heritage assets, proportionate to the potential impact of the proposed development. Chapter 5 provides an impact assessment with reference to relevant legislation and planning policies and Chapter 6 makes a series of conclusions in respect to the historic environment aspects of the proposed development.

2.0 The Relevant Heritage Assets

Introduction

2.1 The NPPF defines a heritage asset as follows:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).”

Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.2 The NPPF confirms that designated heritage assets comprise: World Heritage Sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, protected wreck sites, registered parks and gardens, registered battlefields and conservation areas.
- 2.3 The designated heritage assets that are relevant in considering the proposed development are identified below:

Listed Buildings:

2.4 Listed buildings are designated for their special architectural or historic interest in accordance with the DCMS Principles for Selection of Listed Buildings (2018). The listed buildings identified in Table 2.1 are relevant with respect to the proposed development:

Table 2.1: Listed buildings relevant to the proposed development:

Listed Building:	Grade:
Church of St. Mary and St. Bega	I
Wall, to west of Priory Church Nave, incorporating medieval cross and lintel	I
St. Bees Priory, former Chancel to Priory Church of St. Mary and St. Bega (Old Collage Hall)	I
New College Hall	II
Cross in Churchyard to north of Priory Church Nave	I
Sundial in Churchyard to north east of Priory Church Chancel	II
War Memorial in Parish Churchyard to north of Lych Gate	II
Lych Gate to north east of Priory Church Chancel	II
Railings and Gate closing west side of quadrangle at St. Bees School	II
St. Bees School Buildings around quadrangle to south west	II
Abbey Farmhouse	II
Barn Range adjoining south end of Abbey Farmhouse	II

2.5 A further cluster of listed buildings is located in the core of the village, centred around Main Street, however they are located well

to the east of the application site, are unlikely to be affected by the proposed development and have been omitted from this Heritage Statement.

Conservation Areas:

- 2.6 Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
- 2.7 The application site is located in the St. Bees Conservation Area.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 2.8 Historic England guidance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice Note 2 (2015) advises that non-designated heritage assets may be identified through the following mechanisms:

“Non-designated heritage assets include those that have been identified in a Historic Environment Record, in a local plan, through local listing or during the process of considering the application.”

- 2.9 The former Copeland Borough Council, now part of Cumberland Council, did not publish a ‘local list’ of heritage assets of local interest.
- 2.10 A HER Search was commissioned from Westmorland and Furness Council on 17th August 2023 (Reference: 1563/5786). The HER sites

located near to the application site are identified in Table 2.1, below. Most of the identified sites are archaeological in value and outside the scope of this Heritage Statement, however the extant, above ground, monuments have been described, proportionately, in Chapter 4.

Table 2.1: HER Assets located near to the Application Site

HER No.:	Site Name:
4308	Peckmill Leat / Beckmill
43792	Abbots Court
45856	St. Bees Priory Earthworks
41853	Low Abbey Farm
1193	St. Bees Priory/ Church of St. Mary and St. Bega
6849	St. Bees Man
11912	Row Bridge Coal Depot

3.0 The Historic Development of the Application Site

Introduction

- 3.1 St. Bees has a long history, dating from the pre-Conquest era and the foundation of the Benedictine Priory between 1120-1135. The Priory became dissolute in 1539, while St. Bees School was founded in 1583.
- 3.2 Historic maps indicate that the Priory and School were located in a relatively isolated position to the north of the main village, however the village expanded from the mid C19th to create the settlement pattern that is found today. The urban morphology of the western part of the village is summarised below to help gain an understanding of the setting of the heritage assets.
- 3.3 In this context, Historic England's guidance on The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) (2017) advises:

“Settings of heritage assets change over time. Understanding this history of change will help to determine how further development within the asset's setting is likely to affect the contribution made by setting to the significance of the heritage asset. Settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed or formed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to significance but settings which have changed may also themselves enhance significance, for instance where townscape

character has been shaped by cycles of change over the long term. Settings may also have suffered negative impacts from inappropriate past developments and may be enhanced by the removal of the inappropriate structures.”

Historic Map Regression

- 3.4 During the late C18th a Map of Cumberland, surveyed by Joseph Hodskinson and Thomas Donald in 1770-71, illustrated St. Bees as a linear settlement to the south-east side of Pow Beck. The main access into the village from the north (now the B5345) adopted a similar sinuous alignment as the current road. Two buildings, probably the Priory and School were identified on either side of the road, to the north of the beck.
- 3.5 Christopher Greenwood's survey of 1821-22 indicates that St. Bees had developed quite significantly by that time. The road from the north, alongside the Priory and School had become more enclosed, with an almost continuous ribbon of development. The route of Abbey Road and Beach Road had been constructed, including a junction that conforms to the pattern of the lane that now accesses the golf club. The core of the village had also extended to the east and south.

Figure 3.1: Hodskinson and Donald's Map of Cumberland (1770-71)



Figure 3.2: Greenwood's Map of Cumberland (1821-22)



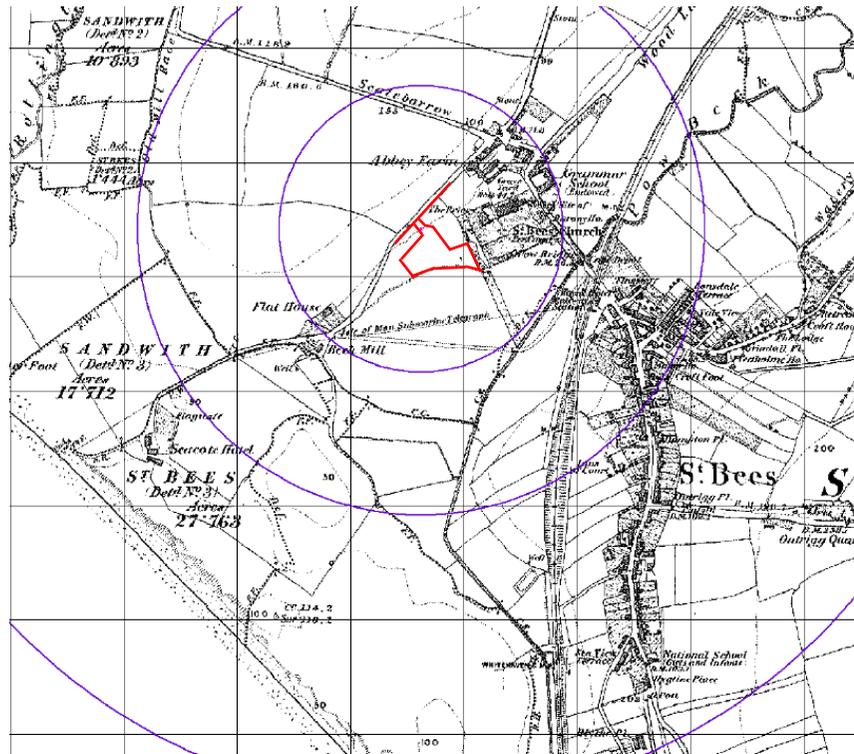
Figure 3.3: A painting by R. Shepherd (between c1845-53) illustrates the isolated, and slightly elevated, position of the Priory and School with the village core to the south-east (www.lookandlearn.com)



- 3.6 The Ordnance Survey map of 1867 confirms that the Whitehaven and Furness Junction Railway (opened for passengers in 1849) had been constructed between the main village core of St. Bees and the cluster of buildings located around the Priory and School. The 'L' shaped alignment of Station Road is also evident on the 1867 map.
- 3.7 A large, detached property (Flat House) had been constructed on the northern side of Abbey Road, close to the junction with Station Road, with Beck Mill to the south.
- 3.8 The 1867 Ordnance Survey map also illustrates the alignment of the 'Isle of Man Submarine Telegraph', which connected the island

with the mainland in 1859. The application site appears to have been outside the Priory grounds at that time and formed part of a larger, irregular field enclosure that extended southwards to Station Road.

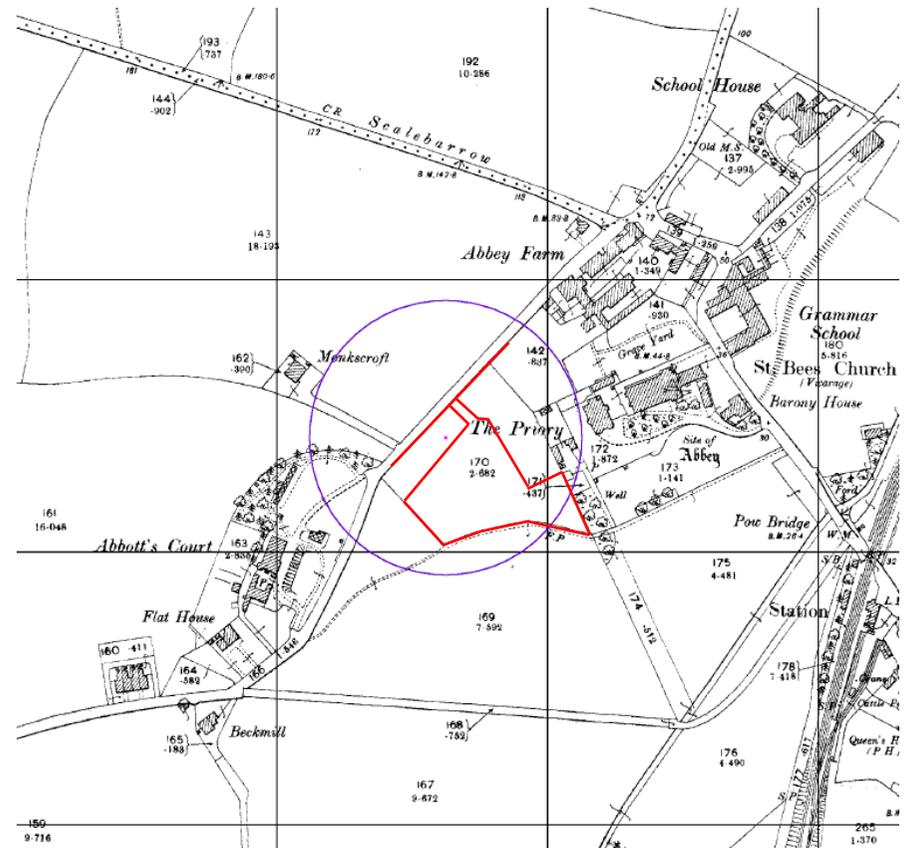
Figure 3.4: Ordnance Survey Map (published 1867) (1:10,560)



3.9 By 1899 St. Bees School had expanded to the north of the original school building and the large property of Abbot's Court had been constructed on the western side of Abbey Road, opposite the

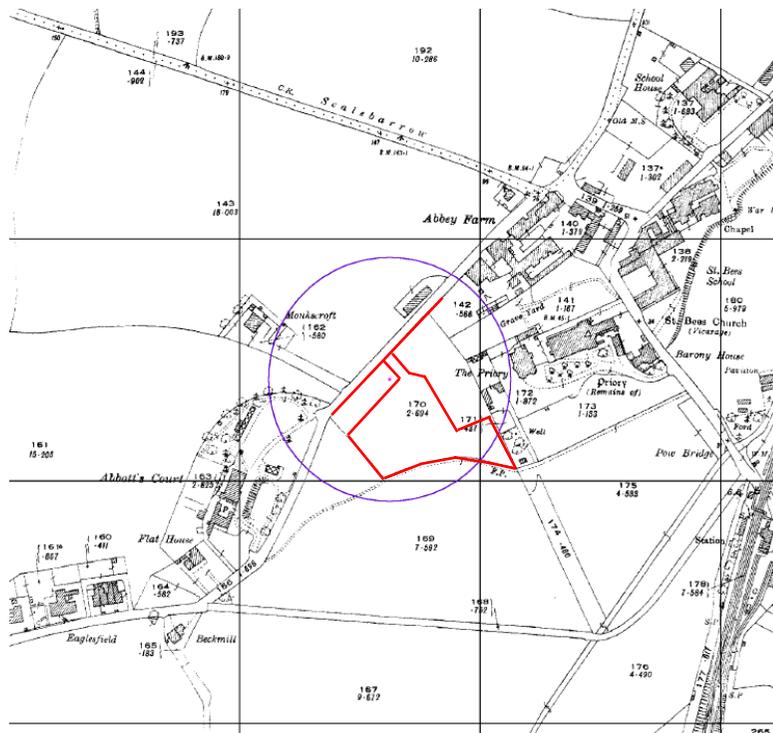
application site. A short terrace of four houses had been constructed to the west of Flat House and a further detached property (Monkscroft) was accessed along a driveway off the western side of Abbey Road. By that time the larger field had been subdivided, with an enclosure formed along the route of an adjoining track.

Figure 3.5: Ordnance Survey Map (1899) (1:2,500)



3.10 By 1924 a long, rectangular building had been constructed on the north-western side of Abbey Road, north of the application site, and the complex of buildings associated with Abbey Farm had been extended slightly further south-west along Abbey Road. The northern side of Beach Road had become more enclosed with several large residential properties.

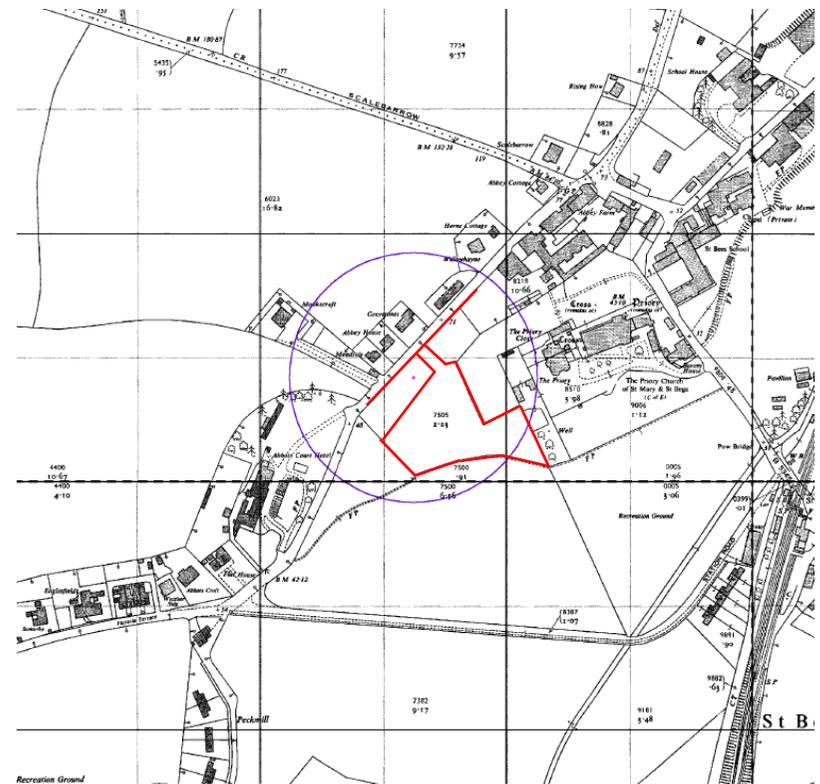
Figure 3.6: Ordnance Survey map (1924) (1:2,500)



3.11 The Ordnance Survey map of 1962-3 confirms that the north-western side of Abbey Road was mostly enclosed with residential

properties by that time, creating an almost continuous frontage along Abbey Road and Beach Road. The vicarage, to the west of the Priory, had been subdivided in two properties by that time. A row of semi-detached houses enclosed the western side of the lane to the golf course. The field pattern on the eastern side of the application site had also been adapted to accommodate a larger cemetery.

Figure 3.7: Ordnance Survey Map (1962-3) (1:2,500)



3.12 By 1977, the final gaps in the frontage along the north-western side of Abbey Road had been infilled with residential plots. The relatively large residential development of Abbey Vale had been constructed on the northern side of Scalebarrow, creating a greater sense of enclosure entering the village from the north.

Figure 3.8: Ordnance Survey Map (1977) (1:2,500)

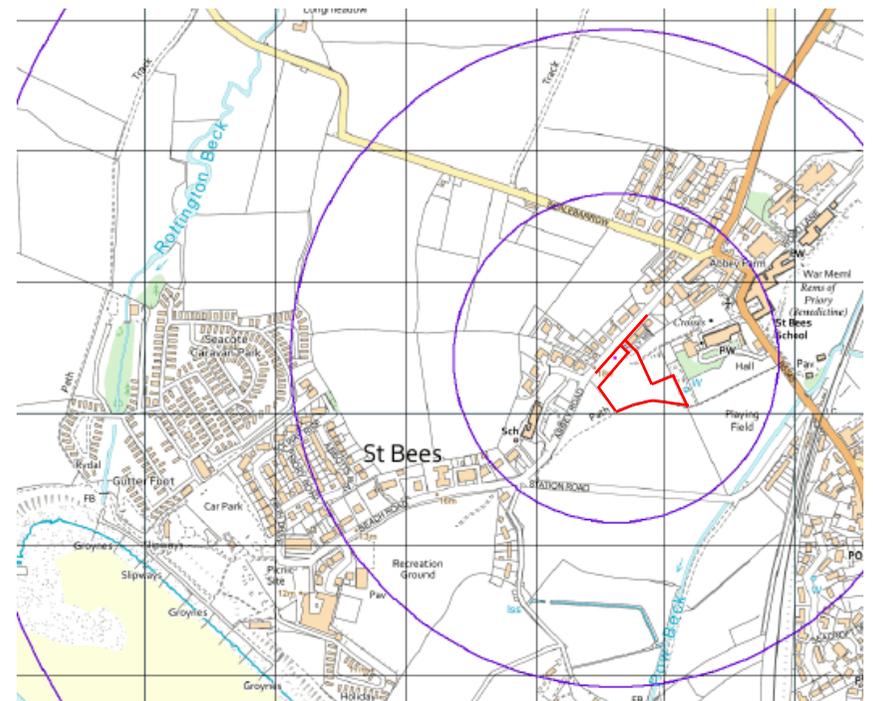


3.13 The townscape of the western part of St. Bees remained largely unchanged during the remainder of the late C20th. However, a cul-

de-sac of large, detached properties (Monks Hill) was constructed (1999-2003) between Abbey Court and Monkscroft, occupying an elevated position overlooking the application site.

3.14 By 2016 a short frontage of residential properties had been constructed on the south-eastern side of Abbey Road, with the development including an access and turning area into the current application site.

Figure 3.9: Ordnance Survey Map (2023) (1:10,000) illustrating the western part St. Bees including the Firth Drive residential area and holiday park overlooking the beach that developed from the 1960s



Recent Planning History

- 3.15 The current application site incorporates part of a wider site that gained planning approval for 11 dwellings on 22nd July 2010 (Application Reference: 4/09/2543/0). The layout of the approved scheme was intended to create a residential frontage to Abbey Road, with a central vehicular and pedestrian access. That scheme was part implemented, with the construction of 5 houses to the north-eastern side of the access from Abbey Road, approval for the remaining six dwellings remains extant.

Figure 3.10: Approved layout Application Reference 4/09/2543/0



Figure 3.11: The part implemented Abbey Road frontage developed under Planning Approval Reference 4/09/2543/0



- 3.16 In considering the approved scheme from a heritage perspective, the LPA Conservation Officer consultation (15th April 2010) concluded:

“It is concluded that the site makes a positive contribution to the conservation area’s character and appearance due to its paddock character, its position in the rural setting of the priory node of St. Bees, and its contribution to views of the Priory Church group from several angles. It is also part of the setting of the listed Priory Church collection being immediately adjacent to its south-west end.”

The Impact of the Proposals

The proposal would change this character by:

- *Altering the hierarchy of development at the priory's nodal focus,*
- *Building over open land,*
- *Intruding into views.*

These changes would, to varying degrees, change the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed building, but it is not clear that unacceptable harm would be caused, principally because of the impact of existing development along Abbey Road and up the side of the valley at Abbey Vale and Monks Hill."

- 3.17 Historic England was a statutory consultee in respect to the above application and advised (Reference: P00082901: 2nd February 2010) that:

"The application is for the construction of 11 houses on land to the west of St Mary and St Bega's Church The 11 houses will be sited along the Abbey Road frontage. The applicants contend that this layout will not have a significant impact upon the conservation area, or upon important views of the Priory Church. English Heritage would not necessarily disagree with this assessment. However, the main concerns regarding the proposed development relate to the potential impact upon archaeological remains. 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 national importance."

- 3.18 A Desk Based Assessment and Archaeological Evaluation Report (North Pennines Archaeology Ltd, 9th March 2010) concluded that:

"6.1.1 During the archaeological field evaluation at Abbey Road, St Bees, 5 trenches were excavated over three separate areas, covering 200m² of the proposed 3738m² development area. The purpose of the evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground archaeological remains within the vicinity, the evaluation trenches being located to provide a representative sample of the development area. All trenches were excavated to the top of the natural substrate.

6.1.5 The results obtained during the present evaluation, and from previous archaeological investigations suggest that the study area has been intensively in use as agricultural land and a more recent dump of excavated material. No evidence of any significant medieval activity was recorded on the site.

6.2.1 As the purpose of this archaeological field evaluation was to establish the nature and extent of below ground remains within the proposed development as specified by a brief produced by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, no further work is deemed necessary. However, given the significance of previous archaeological discoveries within the immediate vicinity of the study area, it is recommended that any future developments outside the evaluation area be subject to a similar programme of archaeological investigation."

4.0 The Significance of the Heritage Assets

Introduction

- 4.1 The NPPF defines significance (for heritage policy) as:

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.”

- 4.2 The setting of a heritage asset is defined by the NPPF as follows:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

- 4.3 The National Planning Practice Guide (NPPG) further advises, that:

“The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience

an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places.”

- 4.4 Historic England guidance on The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition, 2017) confirms that:

“Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance.”

- 4.5 The Historic England Good Practice Advice Note provides a non-exhaustive checklist of potential attributes of setting, concerning the ‘physical surroundings’ and ‘experience of the asset’, that may help to elucidate the contribution of setting to significance and have been used to help inform this Heritage Statement.
- 4.6 The description of the significance of the heritage assets, provided below, is proportionate to their importance and the likely impact of the proposed development on their significance, including their setting.

Listed Buildings

Introduction

- 4.7 Given the particular significance, contribution of 'group value' and distribution of listed buildings clustered to the east and north-east of the application site, they have been described as three groups, centred around the Prior Church, St. Bees School and Abbey Farm.

Church of St. Mary and St. Bega (Grade I Listed); Wall to west of Priory Church Nave (Grade I Listed); St. Bees Priory (Grade I Listed); New College Hall (Grade I Listed); Cross in Churchyard to north of Priory Church Nave (Grade I Listed); Sundial in Churchyard to north east of Priory Church Chancel (Grade II Listed); War Memorial in Parish Churchyard to north of Lych Gate (Grade II Listed); Lych Gate (Grade II Listed).

Special Architectural and Historic Interest

- 4.8 The list entry for the former Priory Church, describes the highly graded heritage asset as follows:

"Benedictine Priory, now parish Church. Present building dates from re-foundation c1120. Unroofed at Dissolution, re-roofed 1611 for use as Parish Church; further restoration 1622. Extensively remodelled and restored by Butterfield in C19: 1855, transepts re-roofed; 1858, tower repaired; 1881 aisles re-roofed.

Sandstone blocks on plinth (moulded in places); buttresses added at west end. North transept arm retains parts of original arched corbel table, and string below windows. Welsh slate roofs.

Nave with aisles, transept, crossing tower, and short chancel.

Original Romanesque west door of four semi-circular orders (under hoodmoulds) carried between ornamentally carved cushion capitals. Three outer orders carved with chevron interspersed with heads; only one of original jamb shafts survives; inner order plain, with compound respond. Late C20 fittings to doors. C19 lancet to end of each aisle and three above door. C19 two-and three-light aisle windows, restored two-and three-light C17 clerestory windows. Traceried C19 chancel windows.

Interior: six-bay nave arcade carried on alternating cylindrical / octagonal piers (except central north, clustered kneeled shafts); pointed, moulded arches with continuous hoodmould. Clerestory windows over spandrels. Pointed, moulded crossing arches carried on keeled responds. C19 walls, pierced with large cinquefoils, separate aisles from transept. Chancel extends into crossing. Polychromatic blond arcading to east wall. Minton floor tiles. Painted cast-iron alter rail; ornate 1886 painted cast/wrought iron chancel screen. Medieval bracket piscina in north transept arm. Numerous inscribed/carved medieval grave slabs in north transept arm and east end of south aisle. Stone set in south wall at west end of aisle inscribed and dated 1611, said to commemorate repairs carried out by churchwardens. Old and New Testament cycles in C19 stained-glass windows. Octagonal marble font in south aisle given by contractor in 1858. C19 octagonal wooden pulpit."

Figure 4.1: The west door with lancets above

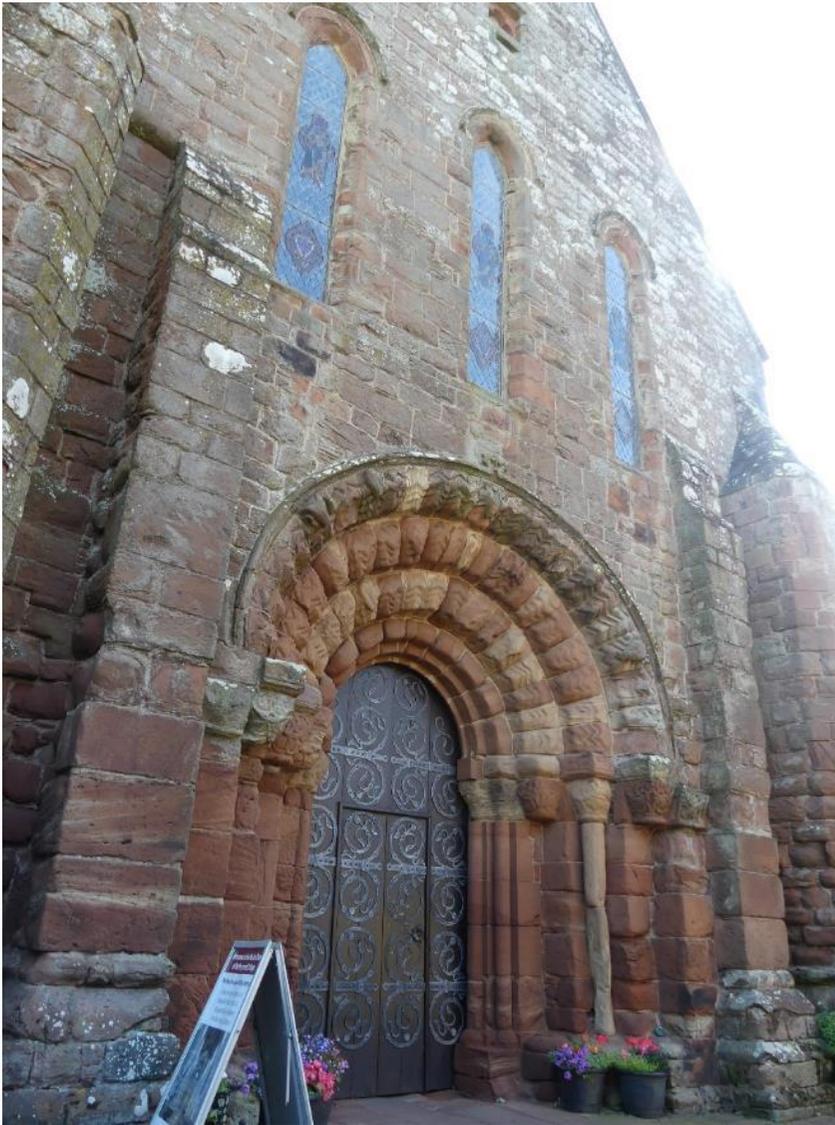


Figure 4.2: Detail of the capitals to the west door



Figure 4.3: The nave, crossing tower and north transept



Figure 4.4: The interior of the nave



- 4.9 Pevsner Buildings of England Cumbria (Hyde and Pevsner, 2010) summarises the history of the Priory as follows:

“A Benedictine nunnery established c.650 (a date disputed locally) was destroyed by the Danes. The monastery, also Benedictine and dedicated to the legendary Irish princess St Bega, was founded from St. Mary’s Abbey in York by William de Meschines c. 1120. The doorway was built not long after, and an E end of which we have fragmentary remains, the parish may have had to make-do with a pre-monastic building until the new nave could be built in the C13. The monastic parts have gone, but the Priory Church is gratifyingly

complete. After the Dissolution in 1539 the nave continued in parish use, with extensive repairs in 1611, according to a stone in the baptistery. In 1816 Bishop Law of Chester re-roofed the E end and established a theological college, the first outside Oxford and Cambridge. From 1855 into the 1880s William Butterfield restored and embellished the rest of the church, rebuilding the aisles and crossing tower and making a new chancel in the westernmost bay of the presbytery.”

- 4.10 The list entry for the Old College Hall (Grade I Listed) describes the building as follows:

“Former chancel to Priory Church (music room for St Bees School when surveyed). Rebuilt late C12; south aisle added late C13/early C14. Un-roofed at Dissolution; re-roofed and south arcade walled up when converted for use as lecture room in early C19. Wooden floor inserted. Sandstone blocks.

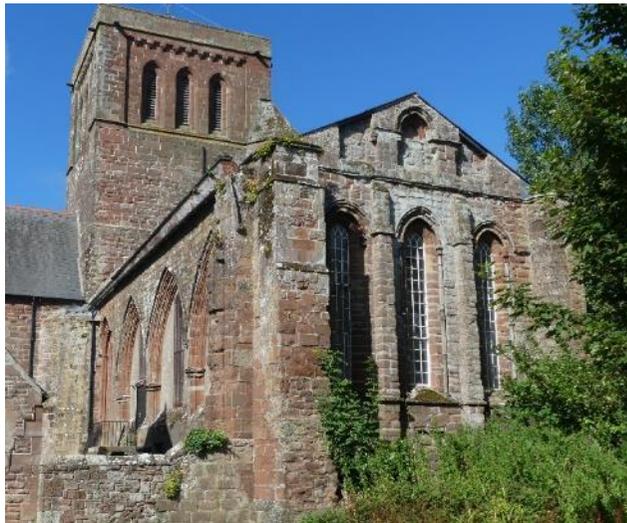
North side and east end have moulded plinth, string, decoratively carved cavetto eaves moulding, and pilaster buttresses between the windows. Five-bay north side has tall lancets with waterleaf capitals (to nook-shafts, now lost). East end has three lancets of equal height with waterleaf capitals; some en-delit nook-shafts survive. Remains of (stepped??) lancets in gable. Four-bay south arcade has windows inserted in blocking walls; steps up to door. Fragmentary remains of south and east walls to aisles.

Internally, removal of rubbish below wooden floor in 1981 uncovered medieval flagged floor with steps up to altar platform; (C14?) effigy or woman against north wall. In music room, east wall ornate two-tier late C12 blind arcading between the windows.”

Figure 4.5: The ‘walled-up’ south arcade of the original chancel (Old College Hall)



Figure 4.6: The three lancets to the east end of Old College Hall



4.11 The New College Hall (Grade II Listed) was constructed in 1863 of rough-faced red-brown sandstone with dressed stone detailing such as quoins and bands. The eastern elevation is punctuated with an external chimney breast with trefoil windows to either side. The west entrance is under a pointed head, with quatrefoil and trefoil windows to the western and southern elevation.

Figure 4.7: New College Hall



4.12 Pevsner The Buildings of England Cumbria comments that the building is:

“The personification of Butterfield: tough Gothic with no messing. Since the theological college closed in 1895 it has been used as a parish hall.”

4.13 Butterfield (1814-1900) was responsible for several campaigns of restoration at St. Bees and the association adds to the significance of the heritage assets. Butterfield was prolific during the mid-late C19th and became renowned for his ecclesiastical architecture. He established his own practice in 1840.

“In 1844 he was elected to the Cambridge Camden Society (from 1845 known as The Ecclesiological Society), a learned architectural society founded by undergraduate students at Cambridge University to promote ‘the study of Gothic Architecture’. This placed Butterworth at the heart of the Society, providing all of the designs for the first series of the Society’s Instrumenta Ecclesiastica (1844-7) and editing the second series (1850-52, 1856). His association with the Society influenced his architectural style and his choice of commissions. He subsequently worked almost exclusively on churches, designing approximately one hundred of them. His non-religious buildings included the Royal Hampshire Hospital and buildings at Keble College, Oxford and Rugby School.

A feature of Butterfield’s architectural style was his bold use of polychromatic brickwork and stone, and the extensive amount of marquetry work in the interior of his buildings. He was awarded the Royal Institute of British Architects Gold Medal in 1881.”

(Biographical Dictionary of British and Irish Architects 1800-1950, <https://architecture.arthistoryresearch.net/architects>)

4.14 The principal buildings are located within a cluster of ancillary structures, including a section of wall that incorporates medieval fragments (Grade I Listed) to the west of the church and a cross, thought to be C10th/ C11th (Grade I Listed) to the north of the church.

Figure 4.8: The C19th wall incorporating a Medieval cross and lintel to west of Parish Church



- 4.15 A Grade II listed sundial, dated 1649, with an octagonal stone shaft is raised on three stone steps to the north-eastern edge of the churchyard.

Figure 4.9: The sundial to the north of Old College Hall



- 4.16 The churchyard is accessed via a lych gate (Grade II Listed) to the east of the Old College Hall. The list entry describes the lych gate as follows:

“Lych gate, early C20 in Gothic style. Snecked rubble with quoins. Graduated slate roof with stone copings and kneelers; apex cross over east entrance. Single opening with continuous jamb moulding and 4-centred head to north, east, and west sides; double wooden gate in east entrance. Included for group value.”

- 4.17 A war memorial (Grade II Listed) in the form of a 10ft high Celtic stone cross is located just to the north of the lych gate.

Figure 4.10: The lych gate and Celtic cross of the war memorial



The Contribution of Setting and the Application Site to Significance

- 4.18 The cluster of ecclesiastical buildings gains significance from their group value, an important aspect of their setting, which allows an appreciation of the historic occupation of the former precinct, the impact of the Dissolution and subsequent renewal.

4.19 The broad pattern of the village, with a cluster of buildings associated with the Priory and St. Bees School isolated to the northwest of the main, linear, village core has remained largely unchanged over time. The valley floor of Pow Beck maintains the physical separation between the two parts of the village, providing a distinctive aspect of the setting of the heritage assets.

4.20 The north-western part of St. Bees has evolved over time, not least with the gradual expansion of the school, the construction of Abbey Road, during the late C18th / early C19th and the gradual development of residential properties along Abbey Road from the mid C19th. Ultimately, Abbey Road and Beach Road have led to the development of a significant 'seaside' settlement that provides access to the beach and St. Bees Head.

4.21 In views from north-eastern part of Station Road, a ribbon of development extends behind the church and along Abbey Road and Beach Road to the west of the heritage assets. However, the rolling landform of the northern side of the Pow Beck valley largely comprises agricultural fields and rises gently to the north, thus helping to maintain the landmark status of the crossing tower of the Church.

4.22 In views from the south-western part of Station Road, the ecclesiastical group is largely obscured by the dense tree and shrub cover within the grounds of the church, with the crossing tower rising above the canopy of trees and providing as focal point in the valley.

Figure 4.11: The view from the north-eastern end of Station Road, the crossing tower breaks the skyline, with the Abbey Vale residential area in the backdrop, and the ribbon development of Abbey Road to the left



Figure 4.12: A view from the bend to the centre of Abbey Road



Figure 4.13: The position of the Priory Church and School, isolated from the main village, can be appreciated from the elevated eastern part of High House Road



4.23 In contrast to the wider prospect across the valley, a more intimate sense of enclosure is experienced on the B5345, with the boundary wall of the churchyard, tall gables of the school quadrangle and tight bends of the road all adding to the sense of arrival in St. Bees.

4.24 From the B5345, the lych gate, war memorial, churchyard wall, New College Hall and remains of the Priory can all be experienced in close proximity, underlining their group value.

4.25 With the exception of the rough-cast rendered Barony House, to the south of the Lych Gate, the common use of local red/brown sandstone is a further positive aspect of setting that contributes to the group value of the assets.

Figure 4.14: The New College Hall, Old College Hall and crossing tower above



4.26 The rising topography of the eastern part of Abbey Road provides an elevated vantage point to appreciate the Parish Church within its immediate churchyard setting in a gap between residential properties.

Figure 4.15: The Parish Church from the elevated, eastern, part of Abbey Road



- 4.27 In this context, the application site is located to the west of the Church and occupies land that slopes southwards, downhill from the hedge line of Abbey Road. The first edition Ordnance Survey map indicates that the site was not enclosed with the Priory at that time.
- 4.28 The top of the crossing tower, including the three lancet windows, and part of the nave roof, can be appreciated rising above the vicarage and associated tree cover, which screen the elevations of the Church and details such as the west door. The landmark status of the tower, against the skyline, is apparent in views across the

site, while the immediate setting of the church including the group value of the associated assets is screened by the tree cover and intervening vicarage.

Figure 4.16: A view from the western end of Station Road, looking across the application site towards the Church tower



- 4.29 Given the special architectural and historic interest of the group of heritage assets associated with the Church of St. Mary and St. Bega, and the contribution of the immediate and wider setting, the application site is considered to make a limited contribution to the significance of the Parish Church by virtue of the views towards the landmark tower.

St. Bees School Buildings around Quadrangle to south west (Grade II Listed); Railings and Gate closing west side of Quadrangle at St. Bees School (Grade II Listed).

Special Architectural and Historic Interest

4.30 The list entry summarises the school as follows:

“Public school, founded 1587 by Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury. Buildings form 3 sides of quadrangle. North range C16 with additions of c1820; other ranges built 1842. North range probably 1st school building, built from material salvaged from the Abbot’s house. Sandstone blocks on chamfered plinth. Graduated slate roof with stone copings and kneelers; corniced stone octagonal end chimney. Originally 2 storeys; storey added when roof replaced c1820. 9 bays. Seven 3-light and (C20?) 2-light mullioned windows, with glazing bars in architraves, under continuous hoodmould to ground floor; 6th bay from left, now blank, original door? 4 similar windows to each floor above; hoodmoulds with labels to 1st floor. 1842 ranges ashlar on plinth. Graduated slate roofs with stone copings and blocking courses; corniced stone octagonal mid and end chimneys. Symmetrical, 5 bays. Central castellated 4-stage clock tower, over 4-centred entrance arch, has octagonal corner turrets. Two 2-storey bays to either side with ‘aisle’ to ground floor. 2-storey, 6-bay south range has window over ‘aisle’ to left of 4-centred door with octagonal turrets on either side; 3 bays to right. All windows paired sashes with glazing bars in architraves; all windows (except to aisles) have hoodmoulds with labels.”

Figure 4.17: The Quadrangle of St. Bees School, with the clock tower aligned with the octagonal gate piers and the north range, considered to be the earliest part of the school, to the left



4.31 The gates piers and railings were constructed in c.1842 and are aligned with the central clock tower and entrance of the school building. The railings are of three bays to either side of the gate piers and are raised on a low stone plinth with a moulded coping. The piers are octagonal on moulded bases, with large caps and quatrefoil panels. The wrought iron gates have scrollwork panels which match inset bays to the railings.

The Contribution of Setting and the Application Site to Significance

- 4.32 The school derives significance from its group value in association with the Priory. The formal quadrangle contrasts sharply with the organic alignment of the road that enters St. Bees from the north, creating an unexpected gateway into the village and emphasising the status of the school buildings.

Figure 4.18: The formal plan form of the quadrangle adjoining the sharp bend on the B5345



- 4.33 The stone boundary wall continues southwards and incorporates a further set of octagonal gate piers and a drinking fountain.
- 4.34 The application site is well screened to the south-west of the school complex by the intervening tree cover and topography of the churchyard, and the ecclesiastical buildings themselves and is considered to make a neutral contribution to the significance of the school.

Abbey Farmhouse (Grade II Listed); Barn Range adjoining south end of Abbey Farmhouse (Grade II Listed).

Special Architectural and Historic Interest

- 4.35 The list entry describes the farmhouse as follows:

“House. Dated 1679; later additions and alterations. Richard Caton of Lancaster was mason. Decorative, dated, door lintel on north return incorporates initial IL:B (John Lowther: Baronet – owner); RS (Richard Stainton- tenant) and TT (Thomas Tickell -estate steward). Main block, to right in farmyard elevation, incised stucco with rusticated quoins. Graduated slate roof with outshut to rear. Stone copings and kneelers; rendered mid and end chimneys. Symmetrical; 3 storeys, 3 bays, with sashes to each floor (2nd floor sashes smaller). Part-glazed door on north return has sash to left on ground and 2nd floors above on 1st floor. All sashes with glazing bars in stone surrounds. 2-storey, 2-bay block adjoining south return is pebble dashed rubble under graduated slate roof. Plank door, with paired sash in stone surround to each floor on right. (Information on initials provided by Blake Tyson).”

- 4.36 The status of the house is reflected in the symmetrical architecture of the principal, eastern elevation that faces across the Priory. The stucco cladding of the farmhouse helps to elevate its status over the rubble stone of the adjoining agricultural buildings.

Figure 4.19: The eastern gable and south front of Abbey Farmhouse



- 4.37 The barn was designated for its group value and adjoining the farmhouse helps explain the original function of the buildings at the north-eastern end of Abbey Road. The list entry describe it as follows:

“Barn range (noted residential in Aug. 2016), probably C18th with later additions and alterations. Snecked rubble with quoins.

Graduated slate roof with 2-storey outshots to rear, facing road. Wagon entrance to centre rear between outshots which have door and window openings to each floor. Farmyard elevation has doors and windows of various dates. Included for group value.”

Figure 4.20: The cart entrance to the northern elevation of the Barn to Abbey Road



The Contribution of Setting and the Application Site to Significance

- 4.38 The farmhouse effectively ‘turns its’ back’ on Abbey Road, from where the grander eastern façade cannot be appreciated. Instead, the rear elevation encloses the eastern side of Abbey Road with a

large blank cat-slide outrigger, and the gabled two-storey wing that incorporates the tall, narrow window to the stairs.

Figure 4.21: The application site is obscured by the landform and alignment of Abbey Road to the west of the Abbey Farm group



- 4.39 In this context, the farmhouse and barn are both obscured from the application site by the alignment and topography of Abbey Road, and the intervening buildings that extend westwards along Abbey Road from the listed buildings.

St. Bees Conservation Area

- 4.40 A Conservation Area Appraisal has not been published for the St. Bees Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Design Guide SPD, adopted December 2017, provides the following short summary, but does not describe the significance of the heritage asset:

“This long linear village is attractive in appearance, 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 fields.”

- 4.41 The Historic England guide Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management, Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition, February 2019) provides advice regarding the context for conservation area appraisals and has helped to inform the following, proportionate, summary of St. Bees.
- 4.42 The two historic cores of the conservation area are located on either side of the Pow Beck valley, close to the coast below St. Bees Head. This geographic context makes an important contribution to the pattern of the townscape and appreciation of the conservation area.
- 4.43 The historic development of the two principal cores of the conservation area makes an important contribution to its

significance, with the linear pattern of the Main Street area contrasting with the cluster of buildings that developed to the north-west around the Priory and School.

- 4.44 The conservation area boundary is drawn tightly around Main Street and the triangular pattern of Finkle Street and Cross Hill at the northern end of the Main Street, before extending eastwards to include the lower part of High House Road.
- 4.45 The boundary then extends north-westwards across the railway line to include a field on either side of the B5345 before incorporating the School and Priory buildings that are clustered around the tight 'S' bends that lead out of the village.

Main Street Village Core:

- 4.46 The Main Street character area rises from north to south and is characterised by a fine grain plan form of relatively narrow plots and a tight sense of enclosure. Most buildings have a back-of-pavement building line with few front courtyards. The southern part of Main Street, south of the junction with Outrigg has a more sinuous alignment, which adds to the sense of enclosure. Several former farms contribute to the enclosure of the southern part of the street.
- 4.47 The enclosing buildings to Main Street are almost entirely two storeys in height, although their relationship with the sloping ground and differences in floor heights create a variety at eaves level.

Figure 4.22: A view northwards along Main Street



Figure 4.23: A view southwards along the southern part of Main Street



4.48 Most of the buildings are in residential use, punctuated by several shops and pubs. The local red-brown sandstone is clearly evident, although the majority of buildings enclosing Main Street appear to have been rendered. The status of several domestic buildings is elevated by their symmetrical elevations and use of neo-classical motifs, including architraves to the windows and hood moulds over the doors.

Figure 4.24: The Manor House Hotel (Grade II Listed) Main Street



4.49 Most of the existing buildings that enclose Main Street date from the C18th and C19th, with Nursery Cottage (Grade II Listed) adjoining No. 125 Main Street dating from the C17th.

Figure 4.25: The C17th Cottage in the northern part of Main Street



4.50 The most significant views in the Main Street core of the conservation area are along Main Street itself, which allow the fine grain of the streetscape, architecture of the enclosing properties and uses of the enclosing buildings to be appreciated.

4.51 There are few views out from this part of the conservation area due to the sense of enclosure. The most memorable views are from the northern part of Main Street, northwards towards the slope of the Pow Beck valley as it climbs from St. Bees to Mirehouse. While glimpses of the sea are gained from the southern part of Main Street, for example along Sea Mill Lane.

Figure 4.27: A view of the agricultural landscape north of St. Bees from the Manor House pub



- 4.52 Finkle Street and High House Road are more varied in character, with buildings of up to three storeys in height and a varied building line. However, in places the sense of enclosure is quite intense as the north-eastern 'finger' of the conservation area climbs the valley side.
- 4.53 The north-western part of the conservation area, designated around the Priory Church and School, is different in character, with the focus being on the principal buildings of the School and Priory group. On leaving Main Street the tower of St. Mary and St. Bega

only becomes visible on the approach towards the level crossing over the railway, overlooked by Grindal House (Grade II Listed) and is seen against the backdrop of the Abbey Vale residential area. Otherwise, the buildings in the north-western part of the conservation area are obscured by tree cover from this location.

Figure 4.28: The view across the level crossing towards the north-western part of the conservation area



- 4.54 Moving northwest along the B5435, the sense of separation between the two principal areas of the conservation area becomes apparent and views open-up across the playing fields on the northern side of the road towards the school complex. The mature trees within the Priory Grounds continue to provide an important

contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area in the kinetic views heading north-west.

Figure 4.29: Looking across the Pow Beck bridge towards St. Bees School



4.55 The conservation area boundary is drawn down the centre of Abbey Road, incorporating the buildings that enclose the south side of the road, including Abbey Farmhouse and Barn, and the adjoining residential properties including the first phase of the proposed development (Application Reference: 4/09/2543/0). Most of those buildings are screened in views from the B5435 by the trees associated with the Priory, with the Monks Hill residential development and Abbot's Court visible in the backdrop to the west.

Figure 4.30: Looking west through the entrance to the public footpath that links the B5435 with the western end of Abbey Road



4.56 The conservation area boundary incorporates the playing field, south of the Priory and the eastern end of Station Road. It then follows the field boundaries to the west of the Priory to include the application site. Those field boundaries are relatively modern, dating from 1899-1962, and this part of the boundary seems quite arbitrary. For instance, it could have followed Station Road westwards to the junction with Abbey Road and incorporated the whole of the flat landscape between the railway line and Priory; or the boundary could have followed the western extent of the Priory precinct as illustrated on the 1867 Ordnance Survey map. The boundary to the site is formed by a stone wall and the site itself comprises rough grass. The Archaeological DBA and Evaluation

Report (2010) suggested that parts of the wider site, including that already developed along the side of Abbey Road, may have historically been used to dispose of building materials. Views are gained across the site to the landmark tower of the church, however in other respects the site is considered to make a neutral contribution to the significance of the conservation area.

- 4.57 Views across the site southwards towards Main Street allow the linear form of St. Bees to be appreciated, but the conservation area itself is not discernible within the wider roofscape.

Figure 4.31: A view southwards towards St. Bees from Abbey Road



Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Introduction

- 4.58 Most of the potential heritage assets identified by the HER search (Reference: 1563/5786) are archaeological in value or are no longer extant. The two buildings that remain to the west of the application site are summarised below.

Peckmill Leat / Beckmill (HER No. 4308)

Summary of Heritage Value

- 4.59 The HER entry provides the following description:

“The mill leat at St. Bees was considered for scheduling in 1979, but was not scheduled as was considered not of sufficient importance.

Charter No 423 in the Register of the Priory of St. Bees is a grant by Benedict of Rottington to the monks of St. Bees [SMR 1193] of liberty to take and lead water from his ‘water of Rottington’ to their mill, identified in the cartulary as Peckmill. According to CWAAS this charter puts the origin of the mill leat within fifteen years on either side of 1250, although the surviving watercourse has no doubt been cleaned and recut many times. Members of CWAAS surveyed the remaining sections of the leat in summer 1983.

May continue to the north as SMR11916 – Rottington Mill Race.

By 1500 the Priory had two mills: one a fulling mill, possibly Sea Mill [SMR 14570]; and the other a corn mill 'below the site of the cell', evidently Peckmill. After the Dissolution the lands were mostly granted to Thomas Leigh, then Sir Thomas Chaloner who let the mill to William Latus in 1561. The mill then passed to the Lowthers and is mentioned in the Lowther rentals until 1841. The mill is now a private house, with nothing in the thickness of the walls to suggest its age. A small window may have taken the shaft for the water wheel into the building, or a level controlling the flow of water to the wheel. The weir at the top of the leat has been destroyed. Traces of the leat survive as earthworks; the ditch is 3m deep behind the modern houses on Abbots Way, where a trench dug through it in 1978-9 found traces of wooden revetment on the steeper eastern side and a clean pebbly bottom over sand. A sandstone-lined culvert [SMR 43676] was also found in the garden of 14 Abbots Way in 1878 heading towards Seacote Farm [SMR 43675] which dates from 1474 (Todd, 1985).

The mill is named 'Beckmill' on the 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps.

A mill symbol is shown in the vicinity of Beck Mill on Hodskinson and Donald's 1774 map of Cumberland."

- 4.60 The building appears to have been dilapidated for some time and is now subject to a refurbishment which includes a large rear extension in place of the cat-slide outrigger, reroofing and uPVC window frames.

Figure 4.32: Beck Mill currently under refurbishment



The Contribution of Setting and the Application Site to Significance

- 4.61 Historically, the mill occupied an isolated position to west of the Priory to take advantage of the leat. However, it clearly has an important historic association with the Priory. During the mid to late C19th a small cluster of residential properties had become established on the opposite side of Abbey Road.
- 4.62 The application site is located well to the east of the former mill. Views are gained from the site looking west towards the non-designated heritage asset, although from Abbey Road itself the mill is obscured by the road alignment and enclosing hedges.

Abbots Court (HER No. 43793)

Summary of Heritage Value

4.63 The HER entry describes Abbots Court as follows:

“Abbots Court was built as a private residence in 1866 and maps show it to have originally comprised two separate blocks, each on either side of an off-centre courtyard. In 1930 it was auctioned following the death of its then occupant, Elizabeth Dick Hodgetts, and was advertised as comprising the residence with stables, coach house or garage, greenhouses, lawns and gardens together with two cottages nearby. In 1934 the building was converted into a hotel during which an extension, partly infilling the courtyard between the house and the two cottages, was built to house additional bedrooms while a single-storey billiard and dance room extension was added to the north end of the building. The house and two cottages thus became a single building. During World War II Abbots Court was used by staff of Mill Hill School, London, between 1939-1946. During the mid 1970s St Bees School acquired the building and it was converted into boarding accommodation for a maximum of 36 pupils and a housemaster, a role it provided until 2009 when accommodation was found elsewhere. The domestic south wing has been fully modernised in recent years and currently provides accommodation for the bursar. The greenhouses have been demolished and the stables and coach house are now semi-ruinous.

Assessed for listing but declined in 2012.”

Figure 4.33: The gateway and boundary wall to Abbots Court with the 1930s infill between the two gables



The Contribution of Setting and the Application Site to Significance

4.64 The setting of Abbots Court has changed over time, with the loss of several of the ancillary buildings that illustrated the status of the property and the construction of the Abbots Vale residential development to the east. However, it remains as a substantial residence, in large grounds with an entrance from Abbey Road that underlines the status of the property.

4.65 The house enjoys a relatively open aspects across the fields to the south, looking towards the main village, although an aerial photograph from 1946 indicates that the grounds were more heavily planted with large trees at that time, particularly to the east of the house (raf-1416-s197-po-005. www.historicengland.org.uk/images).

4.66 The application site is located to the east of the non-designated heritage asset and is considered to make a neutral contribution to its significance.

Figure 4.34: Abbots Court viewed from Station Road



5.0 Impact Assessment

Introduction

- 5.1 The proposed development has been assessed in accordance with the relevant legislation, national and local planning policies.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 5.2 The 1990 Act incorporates several 'statutory duties' for decision-makers, including the following:

"S. 66 (1): In considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."

"S. 72 (1) In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any powers under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

- 5.3 Case law has determined that 'preserve' means 'to do no harm'.

Copeland Local Plan (2013-2018)

- 5.4 The adopted Core Strategy and Development Management Policies contain the following policies in respect to the historic environment:

Policy ENV4 – Heritage Assets

The Council's policy is to maximise the value of the Borough's heritage assets by:

A. Protecting listed buildings, conservation areas and other townscape and rural features considered to be of historic, archaeological or cultural value.

B. Support proposals for heritage led regeneration, ensuring that any listed buildings or other heritage assets are put to an appropriate, viable and sustainable use.

C. Strengthening the distinctive character of the Borough's settlements, through the application of high quality urban design and architecture that respects this character and enhances the settings of listed buildings.

Policy DM27 supports this policy, setting out the Council's approach to development which affects built heritage and archaeology."

Policy DM27 – Built Heritage and Archaeology

A. Development proposals which protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character of the Borough's historic sites and their settings will be supported. This will be particularly relevant in the case of:

- i) Scheduled Ancient Monuments*
- ii) Conservation Areas*
- (iii) Listed Buildings and structures*
- (iv) Non-listed buildings and structures or landscape features of local heritage and archaeological value*
- (v) Surface and below ground archaeological deposits*

B. Development proposals which have a significant adverse effect on a Scheduled Ancient Monument or its wider site or setting will not be permitted.

C. Development within Conservation Area will only be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area and, where appropriate, views in and out of the area. The Council will pay particular attention to:

- i) How new development respects the character of existing architecture and any historical associations, landscape features, open spaces, trees, walls and quality of townscape*
- ii) The impact of any proposed works to trees with regard to Policy DM28*
- iii) The design of any proposals for new or altered shopfronts and / or signage, which should be an integral part of the design and avoid the use of internally illuminated signage*

D. Development which affects Listed Buildings or their settings will only be permitted where it:

- i) Respects the architectural and historic character of the building*
- ii) Avoids any substantial or total demolition, or any demolition that is not related to proposed development affecting the building*
- iii) Does not have a significant adverse effect on the setting or important views of the building*
- iv) Involves a change of use to all or part of the listed building which contributes to the conservation and overall economic viability of the building, and where the use can be implemented without any adverse alterations to the building.*

E. Any development proposal which is considered to affect an existing or potential site of archaeological importance will be required to be accompanied by an archaeological assessment. Where archaeological deposits are evident, below ground or on the surface, evidence should be recorded and where possible preserved in-situ. Proposals for development where archaeological interest has been established will not be approved until evidence has been provided that the risk of archaeological disturbance has been adequately investigated and has been minimised. Planning permission will not be granted if the impact on potential archaeology is unacceptable.”

- 5.5 The Local Plan was adopted in 2013, after the original version of the NPPF in 2012, however aspects of the local policies in respect to the historic environment are inconsistent with the approach of national policies.

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

- 5.6 Paragraph 201 requires LPAs to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset, taking account of available evidence and any necessary expertise. LPAs should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset.
- 5.7 In determining applications, Paragraph 203, requires LPAs to take account of:
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
 - b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
 - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*
- 5.8 When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. *"This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance."* (Paragraph 205)
- 5.9 Paragraph 206 states that any harm to, or loss of, significance to a designated heritage asset, should require clear and convincing

justification. Paragraph 208 requires that in circumstances that would lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

- 5.10 LPAs should look for opportunities for new development 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 should be treated favourably (Paragraph 212).

Proposed Development

- 5.11 The proposed development comprises the following:

The erection of 5 detached dwellings with associated access, landscaping and car parking.

- 5.12 The proposed dwellings would be accessed from the existing vehicular and pedestrian access from Abbey Road, constructed as part of the adjoining part-implemented scheme for eleven houses (Application Reference: 4/09/2543/0).
- 5.13 The current proposals for five houses, include three two-storey houses and two predominantly single storey houses which include an attic floor.
- 5.14 The houses would be clustered around a central joint access driveway and a sequence of communal landscaped areas would

extend down the length of the access drive within the centre of the scheme.

- 5.15 The houses would be principally constructed of red brick (to be agreed with the LPA), with a full-height panel of stonework, under a tile roof. The roofscape of the proposed houses would be animated by a combination of dormers, gables and chimney stacks.

Impact Assessment

Listed Buildings

- 5.16 The proposed development would not directly impact any of the listed buildings within the vicinity of the application site, and any impact on their significance would be indirect, resulting from change proposed within their settings.
- 5.17 Most of the listed buildings, described above, would be obscured from the proposed development by intervening trees or other buildings and the contribution that setting makes to their significance, and the ability to appreciate that significance, would not be affected by the proposed development. For example, St. Bees School (Grade II Listed) and the buildings associated with Abbey Farmhouse, would be physically separated and obscured from the proposed houses by the Priory and Vicarage and the dense tree cover of the churchyard. The topography on the southern side of Abbey Road also rises up gently to the east and influences views across the site.

- 5.18 Similarly, ancillary listed buildings and structures within the churchyard itself, such as the lychgate, war memorial, sundial and New Collage Hall would all be obscured in views across the site from the west. In views from the south, those heritage assets would also be mostly screened within the enclosing tree cover of the churchyard and would be distanced from the proposed development, which would be read just below the existing houses on the northern side of Abbey Road.

- 5.19 In light of the above, the contribution of 'group value' to the significance of the identified listed buildings would be preserved by the proposed development.
- 5.20 The proposed development would cause change within part of the wider setting of the Priory. The intimate enclosed immediate setting, within the spaces of the churchyard, and ability to appreciate key details such as the west door, from close proximity to the Priory would not be affected by the proposed development.
- 5.21 The proposed development would be visible in longer views, particularly from the south and west of the application site in which the tower of the Priory is an important landmark.
- 5.22 In views from the south, for example near the bend in Station Road just west of the houses, the site is well distanced to the left of the tower. The sense of separation is accentuated by the tree cover wrapped around the tower and the west of the churchyard. The most prominent feature in the middle-ground of the view, below the tower, is the brightly rendered detached building located within the grounds of Priory adjoining the car park, which is quite prominent to the right side of the view (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: The view towards the Priory tower and application site from the south



5.23 From this location the proposed houses, which would be clad in brick and stone and less prominent in the view than the rendered building to the right, would read as a continuation of the existing houses to the northern side of Abbey Road. The proposed development would be well below the skyline and would not compete with the landmark status of the tower.

5.24 In views from the west, for example close to the entrance to the public footpath from Station Road (Figure 5.2), the proposed development would appear in the middle ground of the view to the left of the Priory tower.

5.25 However, the five proposed houses would not be intrusive in the view towards the Grade I Listed building. The existing houses completed so far from Phase 1 of the scheme (Planning Approval Reference 4/09/2543/0) provide a sense of the scale of the

proposed two storey units and the proposed materials, which would sit quietly in the context of existing buildings and the tree cover that wraps around the Priory.

Figure 5.2: The views towards the Priory tower and application site from the west



5.26 The proposed houses would step down the slope of the site and be contained within the existing stone boundary wall, which would be retained. The houses would sit below the top of the tree canopy that wraps around the Priory Church and the houses would be experienced against the backdrop of that tree cover. The proposed development would be largely placed to the left of the tower, only part of Plot 14 would be seen directly in line with the tower and roof of the nave. However, the house on Plot 14 would not obscure

the view of the heritage asset. The scale of the proposed houses would appear quite diminutive relative to the scale of the Priory Church

Figure 5.3: The view from the west aligned, across the application site, towards the Tower (Aerial Photograph, 1999)



5.27 The Priory Church is clearly an important heritage asset, and the different aspects of setting, from the intimate appreciation of architectural details to the more distant views of an important landmark, make a positive contribution to the significance of the

asset. However, the change in setting proposed within the application site would not harm the significance of the heritage asset and the proposals are therefore in accordance with S.66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 5.28 The proposed development is also consistent with the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF. The proposals would conserve the significance of the heritage assets and Paragraphs 206-208, regarding harm to designated heritage assets, should not be applicable. Proposals that preserve those aspects of setting that do make a positive contribution to the significance of a heritage asset should be treated favourably (NPPF Paragraph 212).
- 5.29 With reference to the Local Plan, the proposed development would protect and conserve the 'built heritage' in respect to Policy DM27 (Clause A). It would not have a significant adverse impact on the setting or key views of the listed buildings, with reference to Policy DM27 (Clause D, iii).

St. Bees Conservation Area

- 5.30 The application site is located within the western edge of the conservation area, although in respect to the open space between the railway line and Abbey Road, the boundary seems quite arbitrary in relation to which land is designated within or left out of the conservation area boundary.
- 5.31 The boundary wall to the western and southern sides of the site may have been in situ by 1899 (Figure 3.5), although the boundaries between that wall and Abbey Road were adapted on several occasions during the C20th. Previous archaeological

investigations (required as part of Planning Approval Reference 4/092543/0) did not identify any evidence associated with previous uses of the land or associated with the Priory Precinct.

- 5.32 The site could be broadly characterised as scrubland that does not add to the visual quality of the conservation area. In this context, the proposed development would complete the development of the southern side of Abbey Road, behind the eleven houses already constructed or with extant approval. The proposed development would not impact on the core of the village or the distinctive urban pattern of St. Bees, with the Priory Church and School cluster located separately from the main village core. The proposed development would sit comfortably with the Abbey Road townscape.
- 5.33 Given the above, the proposed development would cause a minor change within the conservation area, however that change is not considered harmful, and the proposals would be in accordance with S. 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 5.34 The NPPF confirms that not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance (Paragraph 213). Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development in conservation areas (NPPF Paragraph 212) and proposals that preserve those elements that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably.
- 5.35 In respect to Local Plan Policy DM27 (Clause C) the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. With reference to Policy DM27 (Clause C, i) the

proposals would respect historic associations, including groups of heritage assets, within the townscape and the pattern of the wider townscape itself. The proposed development would not impact any important trees within the conservation area. It would develop an existing open area; however, the quality of that space is degraded, it is enclosed behind an existing boundary wall and the frontage to Abbey Road has extant permission for six homes. Therefore, given the character and appearance of the conservation area, the development of the site would not harm the significance of the heritage asset.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 5.36 The two closest non-designated heritage assets to the application site, Abbots Court and Beck Mill, would be separated from the proposed development by Abbey Road, Station Road and the open space to the west of the site. They are experienced in the context of modern houses that have extended along Abbey Road. Abbots Court benefits from views across the open spaces to the south, but the application site is located to the east of those views. The contribution of setting to their significance would not be harmed but the proposed development and NPPF Paragraph 209 need not be engaged in respect to the current application.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The application site is located within the settings of an important group of listed buildings, including the Church of St. Mary and St. Bega Priory Church, Old College Hall and St. Bees School. The listed buildings benefit from considerable group value, in association with a range of ancillary buildings and structures, and the Priory tower forms an important landmark in the village and wider landscape. The site is also in the St. Bees Conservation Area, although the boundary seems quite arbitrary relative to other, adjoining, open spaces, the enclosure of the site and internal boundaries are relatively modern, in the context of the adjoining Priory, and the visual qualities of the site make a poor contribution to the appearance of the conservation area. Previous archaeological investigations have not encountered evidence of significant previous development.
- 6.2 In this context, the proposed development would bring forward five detached houses. The proposal would preserve the setting and significance of the identified listed buildings, most of which would be obscured and distanced from the scheme. The proposals would not affect the intimate immediate setting of the Priory group and the ability to appreciate their special architectural and historic interest at close quarters.
- 6.3 The proposals would cause some change within the wider setting of the Priory. However, in views from the south, the proposed development would be distanced from the Priory tower, it would be seen against the backdrop of existing houses on the north side of Abbey Road, below the skyline, and would utilise a palette of materials that would sit discretely within the townscape of the northern part of the village.
- 6.4 The proposed houses would be seen in views towards the Priory tower from the west. The houses would be largely to the left of the tower, sitting below the associated tree line, and would not compete with the landmark qualities of the tower.
- 6.5 Considering the significance of the listed buildings, and the contribution of setting to that significance, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with S. 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the relevant policies of the Local Plan and the NPPF.
- 6.6 The proposed development would cause a minor magnitude of change within the conservation area. However, the scheme would sit comfortably within the northern edge of the conservation area, it would respect key historic associations and the pattern of townscape within the conservation area. Therefore, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with S.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy DM27 of the Local Plan and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.