

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL DELEGATED PLANNING DECISION

1.	Reference No:	4/26/2142/0F1
2.	Proposed Development:	CONVERSION OF FORMER REDUNDANT CHURCH TO A DWELLING (RESUBMISSION OF 4/26/2018/0F1)
3.	Location:	ST MARKS METHODIST CHURCH, MORESBY PARKS, WHITEHAVEN
4.	Parish:	Moresby
5.	Constraints:	ASC Adverts - ASC;Adverts, Safeguard Zone - Safeguard Zone, Coal - Standing Advice - Data Subject To Change, PROWs - Public Right of Way
6.	Publicity Representations &Policy	See Report
7.	Report: INTRODUCTION This application relates to the former Methodist church known as St Mark's, situated on Moresby Parks Road in Moresby Parks. The church ceased use in 2020 and has been vacant since. There is a driveway to the north east that provides parking for 3 cars and access is taken directly from Moresby Parks Road. PROPOSAL This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use and conversion of the building to residential use from a place of worship. The ground floor of the property will consist of a kitchen/dining room, bathroom, office, bedroom, pool room, snug, cloak room, boiler/plant room and two WCs.	

The first floor will include a living room and bedroom.

Externally additional windows will be added to all elevations with the removal of the cross from the east elevation. A timber fence is also to be installed along the southern boundary.

RELEVANT PLANNING APPLICATION HISTORY

Provision of ramp for disabled access, approved in April 2003 (application reference 4/03/0195/0 relates).

Conversion of former redundant church to a dwelling with the addition of a balcony at first floor level, withdrawn in May 2026 (application reference 4/26/2018/0F1relates).

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Moresby Parish Council

No response received.

Highways/Local Lead Flood Authority

No comments to make.

Footpaths Officer

No response received.

United Utilities

No response received.

Public Representation

The application has been advertised by way of a site notice and neighbour notification letters issued to 4 no. properties.

One letter of support has been received praising the ongoing use of the building.

One letter of comment has been received which raises issues regarding the loss of community use and the sales procedure undertaken which is meant to allow for community purchase of such buildings.

PLANNING POLICY

Planning law requires applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan

On 1st April 2023, Copeland Borough Council ceased to exist and was replaced by



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Cumberland Council as part of the Local Government Reorganisation of Cumbria.

Cumberland Council inherited the local development plan documents of each of the sovereign Councils including Copeland Borough Council, which combine to form a Consolidated Planning Policy Framework for Cumberland.

The inherited the local development plan documents continue to apply to the geographic area of their sovereign Councils only.

The Consolidated Planning Policy Framework for Cumberland comprises the Development Plan for Cumberland Council until replaced by a new Cumberland Local Plan.

Copeland Local Plan 2021-2039 (LP):

Cumberland Council continued the preparation of the LP as commenced by Copeland Borough Council.

The LP was adopted by Cumberland Council on the 5th of November 2024 replacing the Copeland Local Plan 2013-2028 and the saved policies of the Copeland Local Plan 2001-2016.

The policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Strategic Policy DS1 – Settlement Hierarchy
- Strategic Policy DS2 – Settlement Boundaries
- Policy DS4 - Design and Development Standards
- Strategic Policy H1 - Improving the Housing Offer
- Strategic Policy H2 - Housing Requirement
- Strategic Policy H3 - Housing delivery
- Strategic Policy H4 - Distribution of Housing
- Strategic Policy H5 - Housing Allocations
- Policy H6 - New Housing Development
- Policy H7 - Housing Density and Mix Strategic
- Policy H13: Conversion and sub-division of buildings to residential uses including large HMOs
- Policy N3 – Biodiversity Net Gain
- Policy SC5 – Community and Cultural Facilities
- Policy CO7 – Parking Standards

Other Material Planning Considerations

National Planning Policy (NPPF)

Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2021 (SHMA)

Copeland Borough Council - Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Objectively Assessed Housing Need (SHMA)

Cumbria Development Design Guide (CDDG)

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The existing building is located within the development boundary for Moresby Parks as defined in Policy DS2 of the Local Plan. The settlement is classed under Policy DS1 as a sustainable rural village where the conversion of existing buildings to residential use is acceptable within the confines of the settlement boundary.

The building is surrounded by other residential dwellings and within walking distance of services required for day to day living and therefore is considered, in principle, to be an appropriate use in this location.

Design and Impact on Residential Amenity

Policy DS4 of the LP promotes good design and the aspiration that new dwellings will respond positively to their surroundings.

Policy H13 of the LP sets the standards for acceptable residential dwellings.

The following criteria are required to be met for the development to be considered to be acceptable:

- a) The development does not result in unacceptable levels of harm to residential amenity (noise and disturbance) for occupiers of the converted property and/or those occupying neighbouring properties;
- b) Future residents have adequate levels of natural lighting and privacy;
- c) The development does not have an adverse impact upon the privacy of neighbouring residents through direct overlooking;
- d) Off street parking is provided or sufficient parking is available within close proximity of the site;
- e) Adequate external amenity space is provided, including for waste and recycling bin storage without harming the visual amenity of the area where possible;
- f) Cycle space is provided, where possible;
- g) Safe access is available from both the front and rear of the property, where possible; and
- h) The development does not result in an over-concentration of HMOs, taking into account the cumulative impacts of HMOs and subdivided properties within the vicinity of the site.

Consideration will also be given to the loss of the original property and whether this supports the Housing Strategy informed by the Council's SHMA and Housing Needs Study.

Externally, alterations are proposed involving the addition of window opening and the removal of the cross from the side of the church. Internally, the dwelling created will have sufficient



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facilities for everyday living with the addition of internal walls in accordance with the provisions of Policy H13. The proposal has been fully considered and it is considered that the residential property is of a suitable standard.

The impact of the proposal on the residential amenities of the occupiers of the adjoining properties has been considered. It is proposed to install a 2-metre-high fence along the southern boundary to provide an adequate screen. Three windows at ground floor level of the southern elevation will also be fitted with obscure glazing (grade 5) to mitigate the impact on the adjoining property. These mitigation measures can be secured by the imposition of planning conditions.

On this basis, the living standards are deemed to be acceptable and the minor external alterations are considered to be acceptable in compliance with Policies DS4 and H13 of the LP.

Loss of the Community Facility

Policy SC5 of the LP seeks to resist the change of use of a community facility where there is evidence that there is a demand for that facility that is unlikely to be met elsewhere.

One letter of objection has been lodged against the proposal which comments on the loss of a community use and also questions the sale of the building without considering whether it could be retained as a community use. The building has not been nominated by the community as an Asset of Community Use. Consequently, the owner of the building was not obliged to make provision in the sales process for a community purchase.

Policy SC5 of the LP is designed to provide some flexibility to allow changes of use in certain circumstances. The existing building has not been functioning as a place of worship since 2020. The building has remained vacant and was put up for sale with little interest. Any community interest in taking the building forward could have been put registered during the period that the building was vacant.

There is alternative provision for places of worship within the local area which provides sufficient provision for the community.

On this basis, the loss of the community facility is acceptable under the terms of Policy SC5 of the LP.

Parking and Highway Safety

The building currently utilises a driveway at the side of the property for parking. Furthermore, there is ample on street parking in front of the property – this is common practice along Moresby Parks Road. In relation to the previous use as a place of worship, the use as a residential dwelling is expected to reduce vehicle movements on and around the site, therefore creating a less intensive usage. Furthermore, the site is located on a regular bus route with cycling and walking opportunities widely available for nearby local services.

The Highways Authority has raised no comments to the application.

	Overall, it is considered that the proposal complies with Policy CO7 of the LP and will provide an accessible development. <u>Biodiversity Net Gain</u> Policy N3 requires that all development, with the exception of that listed in the Environment Act must provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain over and above existing site levels, following the application of the mitigation hierarchy set out in Policy N1. This is in addition to any compensatory habitat provided under Policy N1. It is stated net gain should be delivered on site where possible and where on-site provision is not appropriate, provision must be made elsewhere in accordance with a defined order of preference. Biodiversity Net Gain became mandatory for small sites in the UK on 01st April 2024. This application relates to the conversion of an existing building and does not involve the creation of any additional space. The land surrounding the building is all hard surfaced and has traditionally been used as a garden and parking space. The proposals will not impact more than 25m2 of on-site habitat, and therefore meets the De Minimis Exemption. <u>Planning Balance</u> The site falls within the settlement boundary of Moresby Parks and the principle of residential development is acceptable in this location. The proposed use will result in the retention and reuse of a vacant building to provide a dwelling which will result in an improvement in its appearance. It is considered to accord with the provisions of Policy H13 of the LP. The proposed external alterations necessary to allow the proposed conversion are minimal and involve the installation of additional window openings. The use of a timber fence along the southern boundary and also obscure glazing within the three ground floor windows window openings on the southern elevation will provide adequate mitigation and protect the residential amenity of the adjoining dwelling. The building ceased use as a place of worship in 2020 and has remained vacant since that time. The loss of the community facility is acceptable as there is alternative provision elsewhere within the vicinity. This meets the test set out in Policy SC5 of the LP. The site is located within a sustainable location, and adequate provision is made within the site for off road car parking. The existing access onto Moresby Parks Road will be retained to serve the parking area. On balance this is considered to be an acceptable form of development which will be consistent with the details set out in national and local policy.
8.	Recommendation: Approve (commence within 3 years)



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9.	1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. Reason To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. 2. Permission shall relate to the following plans and documents as received on the respective dates and development shall be carried out in accordance with them: - - Block Plan, scale 1:200, drawing number 659 01003 02, received 13th May 2026; - Proposed Ground Floor Plan, scale 1:50, drawing number 659 04001 05, received 13th May 2026; - Proposed First Floor Plan, scale 1:50, drawing number 659 04002 04, received 13th May 2026; - Proposed Elevations, scale 1:100, drawing number 659 05001 05, received 13th May 2026; - Proposed Section, scale 1:50, drawing number 659 06001 03, received 13th May 2026; - Design and Access Statement, received 13th May 2026. Reason To conform with the requirement of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. 3. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no external alterations, including replacement windows, doors or skylights and roof coverings, or painting or rendering shall be carried out to the converted building, nor must any building, enclosure, extension, porch, domestic fuel container, pool or hardstanding be constructed within the curtilage without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority. Reason To safeguard the appearance of the building and amenity for the neighbouring
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properties in the interests of visual amenity and in accordance with Policy DS4 of the Copeland Local Plan 2021-2039.

4. Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling hereby approved the three windows at ground floor level on the southern elevation shall be fitted with obscure glazing to a specification not less than grade 5. Once installed the obscure glazing shall be retained at all times thereafter.

Reason

To safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties in the in accordance with Policy DS4 of the Copeland Local Plan 2021-2039.

5. Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling hereby approved a solid timber fence shall be erected along the southern boundary of the site in accordance with a specification which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The timber fence shall be retained at all times in accordance with the approved details at all times thereafter.

Reason

To safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties in the in accordance with Policy DS4 of the Copeland Local Plan 2021-2039.

Informative Notes

Biodiversity Net Gain – Exemption Applies

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition “(the biodiversity gain condition)” that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the local planning authority, and
- (b) the local planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of the Biodiversity Gain Plan is Cumberland Council.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or



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more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements is/are considered to apply.

Applicable exemptions: De Minimis Development

Development Low Risk Area – Standing Advice – Mining Remediation Authority

The proposed development lies within a coal mining area which may contain unrecorded coal mining related hazards. If any coal mining feature is encountered during development, this should be reported immediately to the Mining Remediation Authority on 0345 762 6846 or if a hazard is encountered on site call the emergency line 0800 288 4242 Further information is also available on the Mining Remediation Authority website at: Mining Remediation Authority - GOV.UK

Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received, and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Case Officer: S. Papaleo

Date : 17/07/2026

Authorising Officer: N.J. Hayhurst

Date : 25/08/2026

Dedicated responses to:-