

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Outline application (with all matters reserved) for five dwellings

Address: Beckermets Service Garage, Beckermets

Reference: 4/23/2034/001

Date: 15/08/23

Description: Site is a former car garage

Conclusion: No objection

Assessment: Since my last consultation response on this application, a design code has been submitted, providing detail on the proposed design direction for the site and its reasoning.

- This application reserves all matters, including design. This code is therefore intended to provide confidence about the submission of reserved matters.
- The design code is based both on Beckermets Conservation Area Appraisal and on relevant attributes of good design outlined in the National Design Guide including, which also serve as the basis for the National Model Design Code.
- This exercise identifies a number of important aspects to inform reserved matters, including being of two stories' height, fenestration that complements and aligns with Beckermets character, and using materials compliant with local character.
- Examples of materials could include sandstone and/or render wall facing, slate roofing and timber doors and windows.
- Properties will front onto the road, with gardens to the south-facing rear elevations.
- This provides helpful confidence in the general direction of the intended design work and shows awareness of local and national guidance, although it is light touch and a starting point.
- Design codes have the potential to be a useful tool, enabling the designer to gain value by making decisions using insights that are not immediately obvious – a parallel might be the investment strategy of a hedge fund manager seeking to find successful investments. In both cases, the utility of the tool is in the sophistication of the decisions it enables.
- A design code is a tool to increase long-term value creation by enabling higher quality decisions.

In my view, development of this site into five dwellings could be carried out sustainably, subject to well observed and innovative design. I look forward to discussing the emerging work as the opportunity arises.

Relevant Policies and Guidance:

Section 72 of the 1990 Act states that “special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of [a conservation] area.”

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

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

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

Paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states the effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account when making decisions.

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

Referring to assets in a conservation area, NPPF para. 207 states that loss of an element that makes a positive contribution to a conservation area should be treated as either substantial (under para. 201) or less-than-substantial harm (under paragraph 202).

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

- Local Plan Policy ST1C(ii) highlights the importance of protecting, enhancing and restoring the Borough’s cultural and heritage features and their settings.
- ST1D emphasises the council’s commitment to creating and retaining quality places.
- ENV4A stresses the importance of protecting listed buildings, conservation areas and other features considered to be of historic, archaeological or cultural value.
- ENV4B outlines support for heritage-led regeneration, ensuring assets are put to appropriate, viable and sustainable uses.
- ENV4C aims to strengthen the distinctive character of settlements through high quality urban design and architecture that respect character and setting.
- DM10 emphasises the need for high quality design and quality places. Part B requires design to respond to local character at multiple scales, paying attention to plot size and arrangement, massing and scale, interstitial spaces, and materials. Part C requires the incorporation of existing features such as landscape and vernacular style.
- DM27A outlines support in principle for developments that “protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character of the borough’s historic sites and their settings”.
- DM27C outlines the restriction in principle of development within conservation areas to that which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area.

The Conservation Area Design Guide is a supplementary planning document adopted in 2017 that is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within conservation areas in the legacy Copeland area. It is therefore applicable to this application.

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Conservation and Design Officer