

Planning Statement – Land to the north of Station Road, Drigg, Cumbria

Proposal: Outline Planning Application for residential development



Mr Graeme Morgan

Sunshine Properties West Coast Ltd

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SRE Associates - Planning and Development Consultancy



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for residential development on land to the north of Station Road, Drigg.
- 1.2 The application is submitted in outline, covering matters only relating to the principle of the development. The purpose of this statement is to set out the planning case in support of the development of the site, and it should be read in conjunction with the indicative plan and landscape information submitted.
- 1.3 Section 2 of this Statement will set out the site's context, Section 3 covers the proposed development, Section 4 relates to the planning history of the site and surroundings, Section 5 will set out the planning policy context against which the application must be considered and undertakes a planning assessment of the proposed development and section 6 will draw together the conclusions.

2.0 The Site

- 2.1 The application related to an area of agricultural land extending to 0.71 hectares opposite Station Road at Drigg. The development adjoins agricultural land to the north and west, an access lane to the east, and the B5244 to the south, which is the road through Drigg between Holmrook and Seascale.
- 2.2 The site is currently in use as agricultural land. The topography of the land is generally flat to nearer to the road frontage but raises slightly to the north. It is contained by hedgerows and post and wire fences to all sides.
- 2.3 It is within close distance of the main village centre of Drigg, which is proposed to be included in the tier of 'sustainable rural villages' in the Copeland Local Plan 2021 – 2038. Within Drigg village there is a Village Hall, Church, Pub, Train Station and Craft Shop.
- 2.4 It is located close to the Seascale settlement boundary (2.0 miles away) and is accessible from Drigg via train. It is therefore close to the local amenities of Seascale consisting of the Primary School, pubs, church and shops. Seascale is a Local Service Centre in the Borough as detailed in the Copeland Local Plan. Whitehaven, the Principal Town is accessible from Drigg via the train station.
- 2.5 The A595 which runs through Copeland can be joined 1.0 miles from the site and provides easy access to both Sellafield and Whitehaven and continues north towards Carlisle, and Egremont and Sellafield to the south. The A595 links to the A66, 16 miles north of the site which connects to Penrith and Junction 40 of the M6 to the east.
- 2.6 In summary therefore, the site is situated within a long-established residential area that is within reach of the best range of facilities that the Borough can offer via sustainable travel.
- 2.7 There is no Conservation Area within Drigg village, and there are no Tree Preservation Order's on or directly adjacent to the site. There is an area to the eastern edge of the village proposed to be allocated as protected open space, but this is not near to the site.
- 2.8 There are no Listed Building's on the site. The nearest Listed Building is 120m to the east of the site, which is Drigg Hall, a domestic property. This however is not impacted in any way

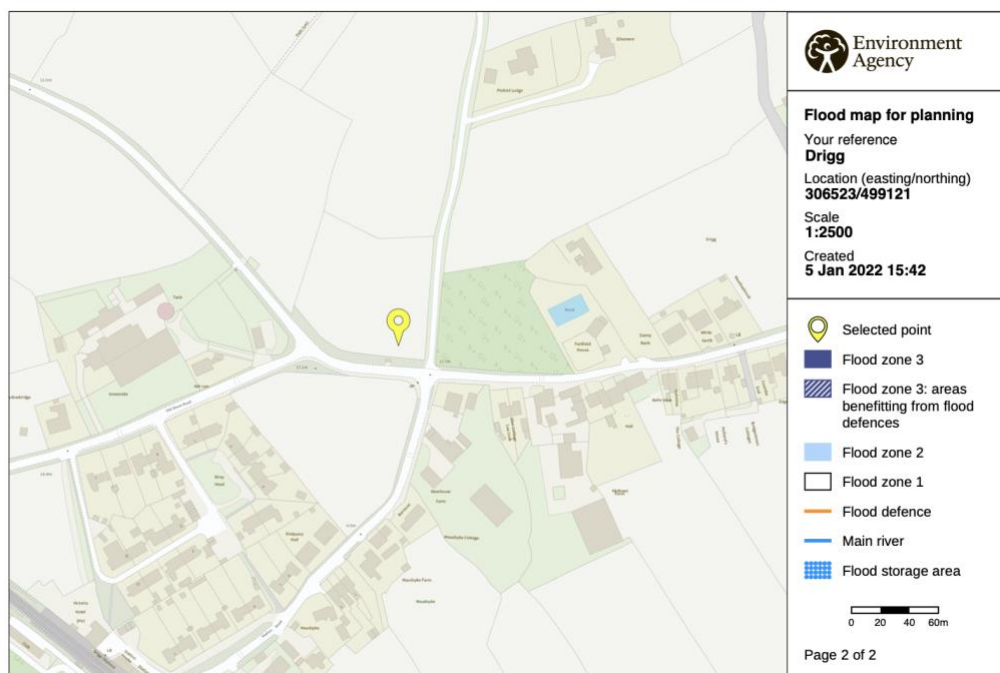
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by the site due to the distance between the two, as detailed on the Copeland GIS map below.



- 2.9 The site is located in an area that the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning has noted as Flood Zone 1, and as such have a low probability of flooding.



3.0 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The application is for outline planning permission, and therefore all details regarding scale, layout, access, landscaping and appearance of the residential development proposed on the site would be covered within a reserved matters application, if this is approved.

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- 3.2 The access is as mentioned not a matter forming part of the application at this stage, but the proposed development would utilise the frontage onto the B5244 as noted on the indicative layout. This also indicates that the necessary visibility from the site can be achieved.
- 3.3 While also not forming part of the application at this stage, the proposed scale of the development is in the form of 9 dwellings on the site as detailed in the indicative layout, which is what the site would be suitable for given the size and layout, and surrounding density of dwellings.
- 3.4 The indicative layout of the proposed development has a green space to the frontage of the site, with two properties facing onto this. Another 6 properties will be set against the east boundary to take advantage of the significant tree cover to the east of the adjacent lane. All the dwellings are detached and would have large gardens areas.
- 3.5 The property will have a minimum of two in curtilage parking spaces, although the plots could accommodate more parking for cars. The dwellings in the surrounding area are generally in the form of detached dwellings.
- 3.6 The site has been laid out on the indicative plan to take into account the existing established hedgerows containing the site, and to provide a green area of open space to the frontage to help integrate the site into the village and the rural nature of the setting.
- 3.7 The application site is considered well related to the existing residential developments to the south and east, the road network and it is considered that the development of the site in the proposed form is possible without having any adverse impact on residential amenity to the surrounding properties. The proposed developments visibility would be reduced as mentioned above by the existing natural vegetation around the site boundaries.

4.0 Planning history

- 4.1 There is no planning history for the application site.

5.0 Planning Policy and its application to the proposed development

- 5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Local Development Plan consists of policies within the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (December 2013). The policies in the following paragraphs are considered relevant to the proposed development.
- 5.3 The Local Plan sets out a long-term spatial vision and strategic objectives to support Copeland's vision which is "Working to improve lives, communities and the prosperity of Copeland". Although it was adopted before the updated NPPF (2019) it was adopted after the first NPPF that was published in March 2012 and therefore closely follows the principles of sustainable development, as defined by national policy and delivering sustainable housing in accordance with that policy.

- 5.4 Copeland Borough Council most recently released a 5-year land supply position statement which concludes that they currently have a 6.35 year housing land supply, following 3 years of sub-5 year supply. This updated position led to the removal of the Interim Housing Policy, which had been in place since 2017 as Copeland's primary decision-making document.
- 5.5 The settlement boundaries currently forming part of the Copeland Local Plan however have not been reviewed or updated in many years (referenced verbally in a Copeland Borough Council Planning Panel meeting as reviewed in 2004). This position is confirmed in the Housing Land Supply position document which states:

'As the Council is now able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, the Interim Housing Policy has been revoked. As the policy in the Core Strategy relating to development boundaries (Policy ST2 B and C) is still out of date, albeit for a different reason, applications for development outside the settlement boundaries in the Core Strategy will be determined in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, other policies relevant to the proposal and relevant material considerations.'

The explanation to the above is detailed as:

'These parts of the policy are considered to be out of date as the Preferred Options Draft of the Local Plan indicates that in order to meet housing needs identified in the SHMA over the period 2017-2035 (140 dwellings per year), development will be required outside the settlement boundaries in the Core strategy. Given this, the policy does not accord with the NPPF which requires local authorities to significantly boost housing delivery.'

Strategic Policies

- 5.6 **Policy ST1** of the core strategy sets out the fundamental principles that will achieve sustainable development. Amongst other things it seeks to ensure that development created a residential offer which meets the needs and aspirations of the Boroughs housing markets and is focussed on previously developed land away from greenfield sites.
- 5.7 **Policy ST2** sets a spatial development strategy whereby development should be guided to the Principal settlement and other centres and sustain rural services and facilities. As detailed above however, this policy that relates to the settlement boundaries is considered out of date until such time that the settlement boundaries are fully reviewed and adopted in a new Local Plan document.
- 5.8 The above are the strategic policies with particular relevance to residential housing sites. However, emerging Local Plan Policy DS2PO of the proposed Local Plan sets the proposed new settlement hierarchy for the Borough. In the emerging Policy, the settlement of Drigg is listed as a sustainable rural village, which are noted as having a supporting role to the Borough's larger settlements and it is acknowledged that they contain a smaller range of services, and sustainable access to the facilities in larger town. Drigg provides exactly this.
- 5.9 **Policy SS1** seeks to improve the housing offer of the borough by, amongst other things, by allocating housing sites to meet local needs in locations attractive to house builders and enhancing the general surrounding residential environment of the borough.

- 5.10 With regards to the above, it is noted that the site is within the vicinity of a number of residential properties. The proposed residential development can be built to a high standard, will have minimal impact on local amenity and improve the borough's housing stock in this desirable village location. It can also provide improvement to the village by aiding the creation of a village centre.

The Council abandoned progress on a previous housing allocations document with the lack of housing land supply being acknowledged, but this was intended to build on the Local Plan and Policy SS1 to identify sites that: -

- Met the needs of the Local Plan and the NPPF (2012);
- Provided sustainable development;
- Help to meet the needs of Copeland and provide a sound basis for economic growth.

It is considered that that site meets the above, given the location within a sustainable village, adjoining other dwellings and being a desirable location for new residential development of an appropriate scale.

- 5.11 **Policy SS3** requires housing development proposals to demonstrate how the proposal helps to deliver a range and choice of good quality and affordable homes for everyone. This is assessed by how well a proposal meets the identified needs and aspirations of the Borough's individual Housing Market Areas as set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The aim of the policy is therefore to: -

- Create a more balanced mix of housing types and tenure within that market area, in line with the evidence provided in the SHMA
- Include a proportion of affordable housing which makes the maximum contribution (consistent with maintaining the viability of the development) to meeting identified needs in that market area

- 5.12 This application site is in a settlement that has previously seen little growth over the recent years, therefore it is likely that there is demand for new residential development in Drigg, that will also help sustain the local facilities that there are.

- 5.13 **Policy ENV1** sets out an approach to ensure that new build development is not prejudiced by flood risk, by permitting new build on sites outside areas at risk of flooding, and ensuring that new development does not contribute to increased surface water run-off through measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems.

- 5.14 The proposed development is located within Flood Zone 1 which the Environment Agency (EA) define as an area having less than 0.1% annual risk of flooding and is therefore at the lowest risk of flooding.

- 5.15 **Policy ENV3** seek to ensure that new development will protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.

- 5.16 The proposed development is currently open grassed agricultural land. Therefore, the development proposed does not raise any obvious concerns on this subject. There are no designations or information available which suggests that the site is subject to any

biodiversity interest. The existing hedgerows around the site will be retained and enhanced, adding to the biodiversity.

- 5.17 **Policy ENV5** relates to the protection and enhancement of the Boroughs landscapes. It seeks to ensure that landscapes are protected from inappropriate change through unsympathetic development.
- 5.18 It is considered that the proposed development, being small scale, well contained within existing hedgerows and adjoining the centre of the village is not an inappropriate change to the landscape.
- 5.19 A landscape statement and landscaping plan has been included within the submission to ensure that the proposed development complies with policy ENV5.

Development Management Policies

Design

- 5.20 **Policy DM10** states the Council will expect high standard of design and the fostering of 'quality places' and development proposals will be required to: -
- Respond positively to the character of the site and the immediate and wider setting and enhance local distinctiveness through an appropriate size and arrangement of development plots, the appropriate scale and massing of houses;
 - Incorporate existing features of interest including local vernacular styles and building materials;
 - Address vulnerability to and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour by ensuring that the design, location and layout of all new development creates clear distinctions between public and private spaces, overlooked routes and spaces within and on the edges of development;
 - Create and maintain reasonable standards of general amenity.
- 5.21 It is considered that the above principles can be taken into account in any subsequent submission for reserved matters regarding scale, layout, landscaping and appearance. Again however, particular care has been taken in the proposed layout and landscaping to ensure that the development contributes to the sense of place and the issues raised in the Copeland Landscape Settlement Study, which forms part of the evidence base for the proposed Local Plan. The principles of the proposed layout can be followed through into the reserved matters application.

Residential Amenity

- 5.22 **Policy DM12** requires new build residential properties to have: -
- a separation distance of at least 21 metres between directly facing elevations of dwellings containing windows of habitable rooms
 - a separation of at least 12 metres between directly facing elevations of dwellings containing windows of habitable rooms and a gable or windowless elevation

- 5.23 While only submitted in outline, the indicative layout confirms that the proposed dwellings would as detailed meet all of the above separation distances within the site to the proposed properties, and to anything outside of the site.

Drainage and Flood Risk

- 5.24 **Policy DM24** states where a proposed development is likely to be at risk from flooding or increases risk of flooding elsewhere, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be required to be submitted as part of the planning application. Development will not be permitted where it is found that there is an unacceptable risk of flooding; or the development would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.
- 5.25 The development area is located within a Flood Zone 1 in which the NPPF recognises that all uses types are therefore appropriate. It is also under the site size threshold requirement for an FRA/Drainage Strategy.

Access and Transport

- 5.26 **Policy DM12** requires housing development to provide a car parking provision in accordance with adopted residential parking standards. Cumbria Highways have provided a Cumbria Development Design Guide but there are no adopted parking standards. The guidance provides a suggested level of parking for housing development.
- 5.27 The size of the proposed site could accommodate sufficient parking for the dwellings proposed on the indicative layout. It is therefore considered that any proposed layout can meet this criterion of Policy DM12.
- 5.28 **Policy DM22** requires development proposals to be accessible to all users by providing convenient access into and through the site for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, access for emergency and service vehicles, meeting adopted car parking standards which reflect the needs of the Borough in its rural context. Where necessary the potential transport implications of development will be required to be supported by a Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan to manage any significant transport implications.
- 5.29 The proposed development provides a safe, functional, permeable and inclusive access allowing good sustainability to the facilities in Drigg and allow sustainable transport links across the Borough. The proposed point of vehicle access has good visibility and would provide a suitable access for the proposed 9 dwellings. The proposal therefore meets the aims of local plan policies DM22.

Principle – National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (as revised July 2021)

- 5.30 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF states that sustainable development has three objectives social, economic and environmental.
- 5.31 The social and economic are as follows:

”a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right

time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being. "

It is noted in the above that a central aim of the NPPF is to ensure that the right type of land is available in the right areas, to ensure that the correct housing is available to meet the needs of present generations.

- 5.32 Paragraph 11 covers the issue of the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

*"For **decision-taking** this means:*

Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."

- 5.33 Paragraph 38 states "Local Planning Authorities should take a positive approach to decision making on proposed developments, and that they should approve applications for sustainable development wherever possible."
- 5.34 Paragraph 49 in the revised NPPF now states "in the context of the Framework – and in particular the presumption in favour of sustainable development – arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal of planning permission."
- 5.35 Paragraph 61 states that "*Within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes).*"
- 5.36 Paragraph 68 of the NPPF states that Strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of:
- a) specific, deliverable sites for years one to five of the plan period; and b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan.

- 5.37 Paragraph 74 of the NPPF covers maintaining supply and delivery of housing. This states Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old. The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:
- a) 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; or
 - b) 10% where the local planning authority wishes to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites through an annual position statement or recently adopted plan³⁸, to account for any fluctuations in the market during that year; or
 - c) 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the planned supply.
- 5.38 Paragraph 69 notes small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting an area's identified housing needs. The size of the site and types of development is considered to accord with this particular section.
- 5.39 Paragraph 79 seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas by ensuring housing is located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It also states that planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, particularly where this would support local services. Again, the proposed development is a site that would fit with the above, given the rural settlement nature of Drigg.
- 5.40 Paragraph 102 is regarding promoting sustainable transport, which is relevant to this proposal. *"Opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued."* This continues in paragraph 103 stating *"The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making."* As previously noted, this site is located within a sustainable village, with access to principal settlement in the Borough via the train station. The site then benefits from the Whitehaven services such as the West Cumberland Hospital, Westlakes Science Park, schools, churches, supermarkets & shops. The train station also links Drigg with Seascale, which is the nearest Local Service Centre.
- 5.41 Paragraph 110 states that, when assessing proposed developments, it should be ensured that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable travel can or have been taken up, given the type of development and its location; safe and suitable access for all users can be achieved; the design of streets and other transport elements reflect current national guidance; and any significant impacts of development on the transport network or on highways safety can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree. While Drigg is a rural village, the train station provides the opportunity to sustainably travel from the proposed development site.

- 5.42 Paragraph 126 states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 5.43 Paragraph 130 states that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area for the lifetime of the development; be visually attractive as a result of good design, layout and landscaping; be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; establish a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.
- 5.44 Paragraph 131 notes the important contribution trees can make to the character and quality of urban environments and that they help combat climate change. It encourages planting of these along roads in new developments. Again, the proposed development follows the above, given the importance of the proposed landscaping in the scheme.
- 5.45 Paragraph 159 seeks to direct development away from areas of high flood risk. As detailed above, the site is not in a high risk flood zone.
- 5.46 It is considered from the above that the proposed development site is appropriate in terms of a location when judged against the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework regarding location principle. As previously mentioned, this is the primary decision-making policy on this issue given the acknowledged time since a review of the settlement boundaries in Copeland.

Copeland Landscape Settlement Study

- 5.47 The Copeland Landscape Settlement Study, which should be used to determine how the landscape policy in the Local Plan is interpreted. Within this document is a detailed appraisal of Drigg. The text on Drigg in particular is noted below:

'Drigg

Key Characteristics and Qualities

Two individual linear settlements built around farmsteads with linear expansion of 19th and 20th century housing developments.

Holmrook is the northernmost, sitting on the boundary of the Lake District National Park. The village is characterised by its woodland setting and the riverside character of the central part of the village.

Drigg is a more dispersed settlement, with a string of well spaced modern individual houses connecting older farmsteads. The focus of the village is split between the chapel on the eastern edge and 19th/20th century housing at the railway station in the west. The settlement is constrained in the west by the railway and controlled land. Beyond the railway lies extensive areas of flat, open coastal pasture, from where there are long views to the Lakeland Fells and to the coast.

Sensitivity

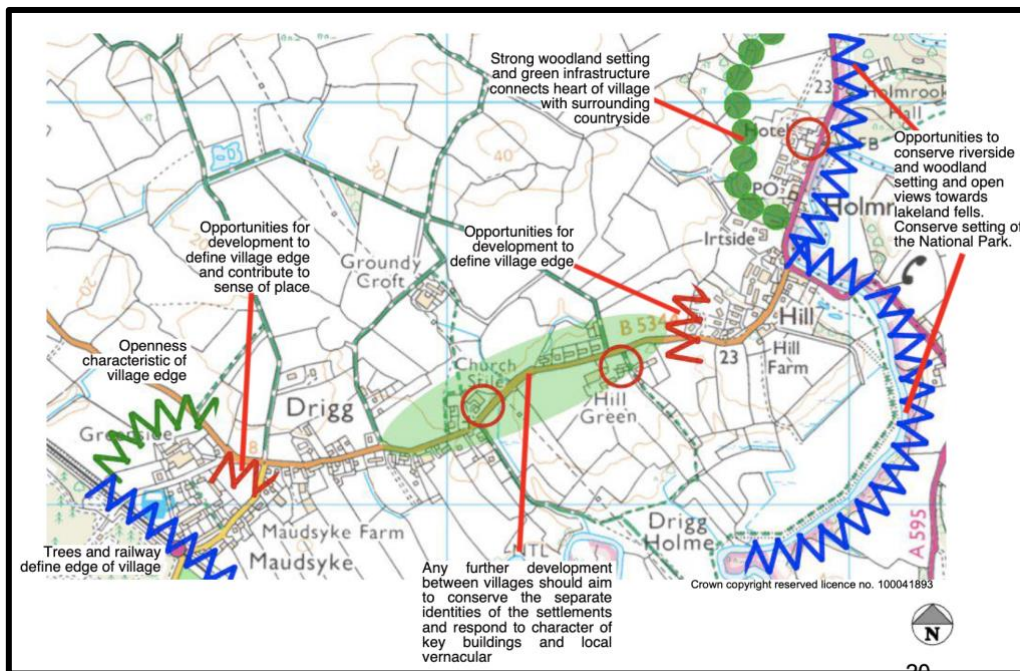
The separate identities of the two villages are sensitive to unplanned linear growth.

The intimate character of Holmrook and its woodland / riverine setting are sensitive to unsympathetic development.

The setting of the National Park is sensitive to unsympathetic or large scale development in Holmrook.

There is scope for development in Drigg to reinforce the sense of identity in the heart of the village and to help define village character.

5.48 The landscape map for Drigg is also copied below:



5.49 It is noted from the above text and map that the important landscapes within the village are the south west edge of Drigg and the edges of the Holmrook settlement. In addition, there is a defined edge to each distinct village so the space in between is to be protected. In terms of sensitivity, this site is in an area where there is an opportunity for development to define the village edge and contribute to a sense of place. In addition, the text states '*There is scope for development in Drigg to reinforce the sense of identity in the heart of the village and to help define village character.*' The development has been carefully designed with landscaping plans to ensure that this is taken into account.

It is therefore considered an appropriate location for new development in accordance with the Copeland Landscape Settlement document.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposed development provides the opportunity for additional dwellings on a site that is considered suitable for residential use.
- 6.2 The latest Copeland Land Supply Position Statement concludes that development outside of the existing settlement boundaries is required to meeting the identified housing need, and that the existing settlement boundaries are out of date.
- 6.3 Drigg is sustainable location for development, as detailed in the recent Copeland Local Plan draft documents, which places the settlement as a sustainable rural village.
- 6.4 It is contended therefore that the proposed development is acceptable and is in accordance with both national and local planning policy, and therefore should be approved.

Simon Blacker MRTPI