Westmorland & Furness Council

westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Westmorland and Furness Design Code: Barn Conversions

Contents

Design Code for Barn Conversions

This section of the Design Code provides detailed code for barn conversion projects. It focuses on the conversion of barns or farm buildings to residential use or tourist accommodation, but also applies to conversions to commercial, non-farming uses such as shops, offices, other business uses, or local services.

The design code supports legacy local plan policies and national planning policy.

The design code supports the implementation of design policies in the three legacy Local Plans, in particular Barrow DS5, Eden DEV5 and South Lakeland CS1.1 & DM2. It also supports all other policies that relate to design in the legacy local plans, made neighbourhood plans (NP/NDP), and other development plan documents including:

- *Allithwaite and Cartmel NDP AC1
- *Grange-over-Sands NP10
- Haversham & Hincaster NP HH1
- **Lazonby NP D2 & D3
- Penrith NP 1
- Upper Eden NDP2 & 4
- Arnside & Silverdale National Landscape (AONB) DPD AS08

*Has a supporting Design Code or ** Design Guide.

Code is indicated by highlight boxes.

The text outside of the highlight boxes is supporting guidance.

After each code are the policy reference numbers of the relevant legacy local plan policies that the code supports. For policies in plain text, the code is a requirement.

For policies in *italics* the code is guidance.

This design code also supports the policies, guidance and codes of made Neighbourhood Plans. The policy links between the code and Neighbourhood Plans are set out in the supporting document ‘Neighbourhood Plan Policy Review’.

For other development types return to the home page.

1. Context

Introduction

1.1 The 'What makes Westmorland and Furness' section of this design code and the district's 'Key Aspects of Place' show how the district is a rich mosaic of different landscapes, localities, places, and settlements.

1.2 The design of barn conversions must respond positively to the character of the district and locality if it is to be valued now and in the future. The starting point with any proposal is to fully consider the three steps to understanding context: character areas, surroundings, the site itself, and the historic environment.

Surroundings

- This is the local area surrounding a site- comprising the spaces, buildings, landscape, townscape, views and features that are specific to the surroundings of the application site. The extent of the surroundings depends on how large the site is and where it sits in the landscape or townscape. This will vary on a case-by-case basis, depending on how far-reaching the potential interactions between the proposals and the nearby landscape may be. The design quality of the surroundings will vary. Where the surroundings or aspects of the surroundings exhibit poor design quality or lack local distinctiveness, these should not be replicated or incorporated into the design of barn conversions. The applicant must build up their own understanding of the surroundings with the help of this design code.

Site Analysis

- The character of the site itself also must be analysed. For example, the site analysis might identify steep slopes or limited access as constraints, whereas views out, mature specimen trees, or good existing boundary features can be identified as opportunities. The barn itself and any associated structures or buildings need particular consideration. The applicant must build up their own understanding of the site with the help of this design code.

Historic Assessment

- The historic environment encompasses everything from below ground remains, earthworks, field and settlement patterns, routes to buildings and structures. A heritage assessment considers all aspects of the historic environment whether they are designated or not.

1.3 Context is not a fixed distance from the site nor is context made up of an identical set of factors that apply everywhere. Topography and landform, water movement, views, sounds, activities, and communities are all important to context, but there may be other factors that are specific to the site and its surroundings. These factors can be both tangible and intangible, old or new, permanent or

temporary. The checklist with this design code captures the range of factors that make up the context of sites in the district.

The Three Steps to Context

Step 1: Surroundings

CODE BC 1.1 Surroundings: Barn conversions must respond to the character of the surrounding area and wider setting, to reflect local distinctiveness by complementing and enhancing the existing built and natural environment. This must be clearly demonstrated, showing an understanding of the existing landscape.

(Barrow: DS5, *DS6, GI1, N1*; Eden: DEV5, ENV2, ENV3, LS1, RUR3; South Lakeland: AS01, AS02, CS1.1, DM1, *AS08, CS8.10, DM2*)

1.4 To fully understand the surroundings of a proposal site, a context study should be conducted. Analysis should provide a comprehensive understanding of the townscape and wider landscape and should inform how the proposed development can integrate into its context (this is wider than a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment).

1.5 The level of detail of contextual analysis should correspond to the scale and impact of the proposed development. Applicants must include an appraisal of the local context, addressing landscape setting, local tranquillity, views, and vistas. This should guide the integration of the development with the landscape, focusing on careful siting, design, and impact mitigation. Pay particular attention to how the development will maintain or enhance its surroundings, ensuring a harmonious transition at the boundaries. This transition should reflect local character and materials, enhance the sense of place and respond positively to site opportunities. This appraisal should include identifying any sources or potential sources of noise or odour or activities that might impact local air quality. This can include but not be limited to adjacent or nearby working farm buildings and other forms of agri-business.

1.6 Including a contextual analysis and site study is recommended to demonstrate how proposals consider the broader landscape. Pay particular attention to how the development will maintain or enhance its surroundings, ensuring a harmonious transition at the boundaries. This transition should reflect local character and materials, enhance the sense of place and respond positively to site opportunities. Careful consideration must be given to the potential impact that proposals may have on existing amenity levels of surrounding uses, for example impact on residential privacy and security.

1.7 This design code includes a checklist to help you assess the site's surroundings. Further information is also available in the **Summary Character Appraisal** and **Baseline**.

The buildings along the village street at Newbiggin (Eden) look haphazard from this viewpoint, but there is consistency in the building heights, gabled forms, set back distance from the street and use of stone and drystone walls. The general format is farmhouses at the front, with barns and outbuildings to the rear.

Different building types with different heights and opening layout stand side by side in linear groups in Great Salkeld.

Barns are part of linear group and often face directly onto the village street in Motherby. The village street is well-lined by buildings, boundary walls and hedges.

Step 2: Site Analysis

CODE BC 1.2 Site Analysis: Barn conversion proposals must include a site analysis to evaluate the constraints and opportunities of the specific site. This assessment must consider how the site's characteristics influence the proposed development, ensuring sensitivity to local context.

(Barrow: DS5, H5, H7, N1, *GI1*; Eden: DEV5, ENV1, ENV2, ENV3, ENV10, RUR3; South Lakeland: AS02, CS1.1, DM1, DM3, *AS08, CS8.6, CS8.10, DM2, DM16*)

1.8 This study should analyse the site's aspect and microclimate to inform optimal orientation of living spaces, evaluate available access points, including rights of way, to enhance connectivity, and work with the site's topography and ground conditions for effective drainage and land use.

1.9 Safeguarding and enhancing ecological assets and habitats is vital to ensure biodiversity is integrated into the design. This includes retaining mature trees, hedges and waterways and features, with a focus on integrating them into the public realm.

1.10 This structured approach will facilitate a design that is not only visually appealing but also sustainable and contextually relevant.

1.11 This design code includes a checklist to help you assess the site. Further information is also available in the **Summary Character Appraisal** and **Baseline**.

This barn, on the left forms part of a close-knit group of buildings with a shared access. There are also features like the mature tree, high boundary wall, and a key view out to the surrounding countryside. Skelton.

This barn has few openings, but is the later breeze block lean to extension an opportunity to replace with a new extension that brings in light? Skelton

CODE BC 1.3 Setting: Applicants must identify whether their proposal falls within or affects the setting of any landscape, ecological, cultural, and historic sites or designations.

(Barrow: DS5, HE2, H5, N1, N3; Eden: ENV1, ENV3, ENV10, RUR3, *DEV5, ENV2*; South Lakeland: AS01, DM1, *CS8.6*)

1.12 Designations are specific areas recognised for their importance due to environmental, cultural, or historical significance. Statutory designations are legally recognised and protected by law, such as the Lake District World Heritage Site, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Non-statutory designations are also important for local planning, such locally listed buildings, or areas identified for their ecological value such as Local Nature Reserves.

1.13 For listed barns on farmsteads and country estates, applicants should check with the district's conservation officers which buildings are listed buildings, and whether any are curtilage listed buildings or are unlisted. This has important legal implications for changes to the barn.

1.14 Where development falls within, or within the setting of, a National Park (the Lake District or Yorkshire Dales), or National Landscape (Arnside & Silverdale, or the North Pennines), the relevant Management Plan gives a greater depth of information about the unique character of that area. This should be used to understand the Special Landscape Qualities that have led to the designation, and how these can be protected and retained.

1.15 Details of sites and designations can be seen on our website's interactive policies map. Applicants can also access interactive mapping through Defra's Magic website or the Planning.gov website.

1.16 Understanding the purpose of these designations is crucial for ensuring that proposed developments align with relevant national and local policies. This not only helps to protect the integrity of these sites but also supports sustainable development practices. Applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the implications of these designations, and to refer to the Nature Section of this Design Code for further guidance on compliance and best practices.

Step 3: Historic Assessment

CODE BC 1.4 Historic Assessment: Barn conversions must demonstrate how the proposal responds to the existing historic landscape and cultural context, incorporating a detailed assessment of the heritage and design elements.

The applicant must demonstrate how the proposal makes a positive response to the existing historic landscape and townscape context.

Barn conversion proposals must show consideration of the potential impacts on heritage assets (both designated and non-designated) and avoid harm to the significance of heritage assets.

(Barrow: DS5, HE2, HE3, HE4, H5, H7, N1, *DS2*; Eden: DEV5, ENV3, ENV10, *RUR3*; South Lakeland: AS08, CS1.1, DM1, DM3, *AS07, CS8.2, CS8.6, DM2*)

1.17 Farmsteads will have historically contained a range of building types and purposes that form a closely related group. Typical buildings on a farmstead might include: the farmhouse, one or more cottages, a barn, a byre, an implement store, a cart shed, livestock sheds, a stable, a dairy and milking parlour, loft-level storage, and related spaces such as yards and accessways. As part of the site and context appraisal it is vital to understand the original and later function of the building to be converted and how it related to the wider farmstead, farm holding and landscape. Historic Ordnance Survey maps can be useful in understanding how the farm and its context have changed over time.

1.18 In most barn conversions, the barn itself, the farmstead it forms part of, including outbuildings, surfaces and boundaries, may be of heritage value. A Heritage Statement must be produced where required to ensure comprehensive evaluation of the proposal's impact on heritage assets, especially where the proposal relates to listed buildings, and the surrounding historic and natural environment.

1.19 The degree of detail and complexity of the Heritage Statement will be proportionate to the nature of the development, the heritage asset(s) it affects and the nature of how it affects them. It will include not only consideration of visual impacts but also any effects of contextual relationships, such as between the barn and the farmhouse, other farm buildings or the agricultural landscape, and implications of choice of materials used in historic buildings.

1.20 Historic England has produced guidance on the approach to historic farmsteads and managing change. Since most barn conversions relate to historic buildings, which are designated or non-designated assets, the heritage assessment

should refer to their advice on the conversion of these buildings, the National Farmstead Character Areas and advice notes on the adaptive reuse of traditional farm buildings. The Heritage Statement must clearly demonstrate an understanding of the significance and setting of any heritage assets affected by the proposal. Potential impacts (both direct and indirect) on that significance must then be reviewed and levels of potential harm evaluated. Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets provides advice on understanding setting and its contribution to heritage significance. Historic England: Statements of Heritage Significance sets out what to include in a Heritage Statement.

1.21 The Heritage Statement should support the design approach used in the application, enable an informed planning decision to be made, and not be simply a list of sites and features.

1.22 The assessment must include:

- Designated heritage assets: Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, etc. (details can be found on the National Heritage List for England, and the Local Plan interactive map and the World Heritage Site website).
- Any relevant conservation area appraisals and management plans. Non-designated heritage assets – properties on the local list, archaeological sites, boundaries, historic street furniture, milestones, etc. (details can be found on the Historic Environment Record (HER)).
- The potential for any heritage assets not yet recorded, including below ground archaeology.
- Discussion on how the development will affect the setting of a heritage asset must be included. This goes beyond a consideration of purely visual impacts to look at how change effects the way an asset is understood and experienced e.g. the design of a farm conversion on the agricultural identity of a farmstead or hamlet.

1.23 The Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Database has identified 53 character areas and provides details of historical background, historic settlement type and vernacular buildings. Developments should respond to the details corresponding to the Historic Landscape Character Assessment for their location.

1.24 If the site is in an area covered by a Neighbourhood Plan or Conservation Area Management Plan, the proposed development should respond to any relevant design considerations provided in these documents. See Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments (2017) for further guidance.

1.25 This design code includes a checklist to help you prepare a heritage statement. Further information is also available in the **Summary Character Appraisal** and **Baseline**.

This set of farm buildings contains a variety of building types that all served a specific purpose and, in some cases, have been adapted and changed over time. Understanding the individual and collective significance of the farmstead will be crucial to informing any proposals for conversion. Newbiggin (Eden).

The barn on the far right in an isolated position outside of Motherby. As well as the interest of the barn itself, its relationship with the landscape, and perhaps the dry stone wall field system, will be part of its significance.

The assessment of significance might identify some buildings or aspects of the building where particular care is required in the design. It may also identify opportunities to enhance the barn or its surroundings, or buildings or aspects of the site that are less sensitive to change. Great Salkeld.

2. Climate

Using sustainable building materials

CODE BC 2.1 Sustainable Materials: Barn conversions must consider the use of sustainable construction materials and methods.

In order to minimise the embodied carbon profile of development proposals, applicants are to prioritise:

a) the repair, re-purpose and re-use of existing buildings, structures, boundary features and infrastructure (such as roadways, drainage, earthworks) to capture their embodied carbon;

b) the re-use of materials;

c) new materials being sustainable and locally-sourced; and

d) building structures which are adaptable and resilient to future climate changes.

e) the whole life costs of obtaining, maintaining, replacing and disposing of materials must be considered. Use locally sourced and non-toxic building materials that have low-embodied carbon and can be disassembled for re-use, or alternatively re-purposed or recycled.

f) anticipation of future adaptation, alteration or disassembly considering how current and future occupiers' needs may change, for example due to old age, disability or a growing family.

g) on-site renewable energy generation that can easily be altered or upgraded.

h) the need for external hard and soft landscaping, roofing, and rainwater goods to be resilient for more extreme weather events (rainfall, winds) and a warmer climate with more hot and dry spells.

(Barrow: C5, DS5, H5, H7, *HC1*; Eden: DEV5, RUR3, *ENV2*; South Lakeland: CS1.1, CS8.7, *CS8.6, DM16*)

2.1 The starting point with a barn conversion is the barn or farm building itself. To make best use of the embodied carbon, the barn's structure and materials must be re-used as far as possible to minimise the carbon footprint of the conversion. Traditional barns are almost always solid-walled masonry buildings, often with thick outer walls. These solid-wall barns therefore have higher embodied carbon and pay an important role in insulating the conversion from outdoor temperatures. To fulfil their role, these solid wall structures need to be able to 'breathe' (i.e. absorb and release water vapour in the air), which requires care in specifying new insulation, mortar for pointing, indoor plastering and outdoor finishes.

2.2 Therefore, to minimise carbon generated through construction and development, the conversion must:

- Re-use, adapt and upgrade existing buildings, structures and materials, especially materials that contribute to local distinctiveness such as locally quarried stone and slate where such sources are available.
- Use locally sourced and/or low carbon building materials:
    - Sustainably sourced timber
    - Locally quarried building stone and aggregate
    - Locally quarried slate
    - Natural lime for mortars, renders and limewashes
- Minimise the use of building materials that require large amounts of energy and resources to produce and/or cannot be readily recycled:
    - Concrete and cement, including in render and other finishes.
    - uPVC, aluminium and steel-framed glazing, windows and doors (aluminium is preferred to uPVC for its durability).
    - Avoid synthetic materials such as artificial / plastic roof tiles or cladding.
- Minimise the use of prefabricated building materials that can generally not be repaired and have a fixed lifespan, requiring more material to be brought in for replacement.
- Prioritise building methods and materials that can be disassembled and recycled. Building methods should also minimise land disruption and preserve the natural landscape.
- Design short-life systems and materials –for example mechanical and electrical installations – to be replaceable without requiring substantial alterations to long-life building elements, such as structure and external envelope.
- Consider the need for traditionally-built historic fabric to ‘breathe’. Modern insulation methods will generally be inappropriate, and approaches such as insulated lime plaster, diathonite etc. are preferred.

Although derelict, the walls of this barn at Stainton near Penrith are embodied carbon that may be capable of repair, and re-use.

Re-using the fabric and structure is the first step to achieving low carbon development and conserving the building. A well thought through approach to insulation, energy efficiency, daylighting and ventilation is required for any conversion proposal. Armathwaite.

Working With Water, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) & Flooding

CODE BC 2.2 Flood Risk: All development must contribute towards a reduction in flood risk and the potential impacts of flooding by:

a) avoiding built development and land raising in areas at risk of flooding from all sources;

b) addressing all flood risks, including but not limited to river (fluvial), coastal, surface water and groundwater flooding;

c) addressing the potential impacts of flooding and integrate SuDS, permeable surfaces, and other water management solutions to mitigate these risks; and

d) incorporating flood resilience measures.

(Barrow: C1, C3a, H7; Eden: DEV2; South Lakeland: CS1.1, CS8.8, DM1, DM6, *CS8.5*; National Standard for Sustainable Drainage Systems)

Surface Water Discharge Hierarchy

2.3 SuDS shall allow surface water to be discharged according to the following hierarchy. Proposals are to employ lower priorities only where the first and preceding priorities cannot be implemented. In each case, clear justification must be provided to explain why each non-implemented priority cannot be implemented.

- Priority 1: Collection for non-potable use.
- Priority 2: Infiltration of direct runoff into the ground where feasible.

- Priority 3: Discharge to an above ground surface water body (e.g., basin or watercourse).
- Priority 4: Discharge to a surface water sewer or another piped surface water drainage system.
- Priority 5: As a last resort, discharge to a public combined sewer.

2.4 Some areas may be at a higher risk of flooding than others, due to their geography, and this will also need to be factored into design proposals.

CODE BC 2.3 Sustainable Drainage: All development must integrate Sustainable Drainage Systems of an appropriate form and scale that:

a) manages runoff and actively contributes to local biodiversity. This includes the incorporation of complex, multi-tiered habitats such as wetland mosaics, bio-retention areas, and other natural features that provide habitat diversity and support ecological networks;

b) integrates with the context of the surrounding landscape and townscape; and

c) does not cause any adverse impacts on the quality of the receiving water body.

(Barrow: C1, C3a, DS5, DS6, H7, *DS2*; Eden: DEV2; South Lakeland: CS1.1, CS8.8, DM1, DM6, *AS12;* National Standard for Sustainable Drainage Systems)

2.5 The government's SuDS manual and the National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are key references for the specification of any SuDS system.

2.6 Development proposals must clearly outline how Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), and flood resilience measures are integrated. SuDS must be considered holistically and integrated with the provision and design of the development's green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain, as the three are frequently interlinked and therefore require an integrated approach. Detailed plans should show how these measures mitigate flooding risks, incorporating SuDS, permeable surfaces, and other water management solutions. Submissions must include schematics of water flow, stormwater management, and exceedance routes, and comply with local planning and environmental regulations. Additionally, effective maintenance and management strategies must be established.

2.7 Where possible, the opportunity should be taken to enhance watercourses, wetland features and SuDS components for both flood risk and nature. Examples of such enhancements include the de-culverting of watercourses and increasing the capacity of wetlands or SuDS components.

2.8 Consideration should be given to the climate change resilience of SuDS to ensure that the SuDS continues to effectively serve its purposes despite climate change impacts. Similarly, clear and enforceable maintenance and management arrangements should be put in place to ensure SuDS function as intended into the long-term.

Integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

2.9 SuDS are designed to manage surface water runoff as close as possible to where it falls, by using a combination of nature-based and engineered solutions. They should mimic natural drainage, providing benefits for water quantity, quality, amenity, and biodiversity. Multi-function SuDS that manage rainwater and runoff and provide amenity, ecological and microclimate benefits are to be prioritised over the traditional underground piping and storage of runoff and rainwater. This approach is required by the National Standard for SuDS. The Development Design Guide provides further guidance on the design, construction and maintenance requirements of SuDS.

2.10 SuDS are a system that is built up of smaller or larger components that are designed into development to contribute to the overall goal of managing runoff and reducing flood risk. There is therefore not a 'one size fits all' approach. Instead, there is a large range of options that can be used in different combinations depending on the development, the site and its context. Examples of SuDS components include:

- rainwater harvesting, including water butts;
- permeable surfaces to driveways, parking spaces and paths;
- natural soakaways for water to drain to; and
- hard and soft landscaping that intercepts or slows rainwater runoff.

2.11 The design of SuDS will vary according to site specific topography, ground conditions and development proposals. However, the following principles apply to all SuDS design. Three key principles of SuDS and flood prevention in all sites are:

- grading land leading to doorways so that stormwater and runoff flow away from the doorway.
- allowing safe overland routes for stormwater and runoff to flow, and
- ensuring new sewage and wastewater systems drain downward rather than upward to mains sewers to prevent potential sewer surcharge.

2.12 SuDS should manage overall water runoff speed and volume through the following:

- Prevention: reducing the amount of surface water runoff by minimising impermeable surfaces and increasing interception and infiltration
- Source Control: managing water as close as possible to where it falls, rather than diverting it
- Site Control: Managing water at a site or local level, such as through detention basins or swales & rain gardens
- Regional Control: Apply broader measures, such as wetlands, to manage runoff at a regional scale.

Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy Generation and Low Carbon Technologies

CODE BC 2.4 Energy Efficiency: Proposals must clearly show how the design of building(s) have maximised the efficient use of materials, their layout and orientation to be as energy efficient as possible.

The most appropriate renewable energy technology for the site and surrounding area must be used, having due regard to the physical nature of the development such as aspect, building height and visual amenity.

(Barrow: C5, DS5; Eden: DEV5; South Lakeland: CS1.1, CS8.7, *DM2*)

2.13 Where possible, all development must incorporate renewable energy measures that are sensitive to the local area and character. Renewable energy generation installed must be able to be altered or upgraded rather than simply replaced at the end of its lifespan. Renewable energy generation options include:

- Solar panels – for both electricity generation (photovoltaic or PV) and water heating (solar thermal)
- Air source heat pumps
- Ground source heat pumps
- Micro-hydro power (where possible)
- Biomass

Solar

- Solar photovoltaics (PV) produce electricity from the light of the sun. Solar PV should be used across Westmorland and Furness, but care must be taken to select solar PV with the least visual impact.
- Solar thermal panels collect heat from the sun to heat hot water. They work best alongside existing water heating systems which can help top up the heating system in winter months when solar energy is less abundant.
- To minimise the impact of a solar system on the character of settlements and buildings the factors below should be considered:
    - Location and Visibility – solar panels can affect the character and appearance of a barn conversion of farmstead. Less prominent roof slopes should be identified for solar panels, such as garden-facing roof slopes or secondary roofs and garage/outbuilding roofs. Freestanding arrays should be considered where there is space available and a sensitive roofscape.
    - Colour – matching or aligning the colour and finish of roof tiles and solar panels should be aimed for so that panels are blended with the roof they are mounted on and any surrounding buildings.
    - Framing – similarly, the design and colour of panel frames has an impact on their appearance. Where possible, panels without frames, black framed panels, or frames matching the colour of the panels or roof should be specified, to reduce the visual impact of the frames.

- Size – The more panels installed, the better the investment in solar installation is for residents. However, at least a strip of roof should be visible on all sides of the panel array. If the roof is not symmetrical, don't visually overload the roof – if you can't achieve a clean rectangle/square edge for the array, install fewer panels.
- In-roof or on roof – in order to conserve historic roof coverings and allow for reversible solar installations, on-roof panels should be used in barn conversions. Where on-roof panels are used, the distance between the panel mounting system and the roof should be minimised. Where solar thermal panels, which are thicker and harder to visually merge with the roof, are used, close-coupled systems must be avoided, particularly in sensitive areas.

Heat Pumps

2.14 Heat pumps are well suited achieving renewable energy generation in converted traditional buildings.

2.15 Ground source heat pumps use pipes that are buried underground to extract heat from the ground. Residential amenity should be carefully considered in determining siting of air and ground source heat pumps. Noise assessments may be required.

2.16 Air source heat pumps transfer heat from the outside into a building to provide electric heating to generate hot water and heating. An air source heat pump (ASHP) unit will need to be fitted to a wall or flat roof or placed on the ground, with plenty of airflow around it. ASHPs should be positioned to not be visible from the front of the building, and should otherwise avoid prominent positions, away from neighbouring properties.

2.17 Solar panels with storage batteries can power the ASHP instead of power from the National Grid. These two forms of renewable energy are often installed together, as the panels can power the home and heat pump.

Biomass

2.18 Biomass is mainly the use of logs, wood chips, wood waste or pellets to create electricity and heat. Biomass should be considered as a source of renewable energy generation when designing barn conversions. Small-scale domestic uses are likely to constitute permitted development, although permission may be required for larger schemes in community or commercial buildings.

2.19 Residential amenity should be carefully considered in determining siting of biomass boilers. Noise assessments may be required.

2.20 Biomass fuel must be obtained from a sustainable and, ideally, local source. Energy generation via biomass procured from an unsustainable source can have very high carbon emissions and must be avoided.

Adapting to climate change

- All development in Westmorland and Furness should be designed to adapt to the increasing effects of climate change – hotter summers, wetter winters and increased risks of surface water flooding.
- Climate adapted design must be achieved without resulting in increased emissions, for example from using air-conditioning to avoid overheating or unnecessary hard infrastructure for drainage.

Climate: what we don't want to see

- Barn conversions with a large carbon footprint due to the replacement rather than reuse of buildings, structures, materials and infrastructure.
- Proposals that add to the carbon footprint of development by extensively levelling out and regrading slopes.
- Building components such as windows, doors, soffits, renders and rainwater goods that have short lifespans and create a short cycle or renewal and replacement.
- Barn conversions that have a high carbon footprint to occupy due to a lack of built-in efficiencies such as passive solar gain and natural ventilation or require additional heating or cooling.
- Barn conversions that take no measures to manage runoff and reduce flood risk.
- Barn Conversions which fail to provide a holistic and adequately coordinated system for runoff management. For example, gullies and tank systems do not provide the multifunctional benefits of SuDS, such as enhancing habitats and biodiversity. In addition, below-ground systems will require consideration at the design stage of how they will be protected from construction impacts.
- A tokenistic approach to SuDS (e.g. a large pond) rather than development incorporating a range of SuDS measures as part of a holistic system
- SuDS measures that offer neither habitat value nor amenity value or perform poorly as either.
- Renewable energy generation serving energy inefficient buildings
- Renewable energy generation that is not responsive to the building or place and its character.

3. Nature

Biodiversity

Conservation and enhancement of priority habitats and species

CODE BC 3.1 Biodiversity Protection: All proposals must identify and consider priority habitats and species, designated sites, protected species and irreplaceable habitats within the site and its immediate surroundings. Where such habitats and species are identified:

a) the proposal must include measures to conserve these habitats and species, such as minimising habitat disruption, incorporating buffer zones, or preserving key ecological features; and

b) the proposal should aim to enhance these habitats, for example, by restoring degraded areas, expanding existing habitats, or creating new habitat features that contribute to the ecological network. Where measures to conserve and enhance cannot be achieved then mitigation and lastly compensation may be considered appropriate.

(Barrow: DS5, H5, N3, N4, *DS2;* Eden: DEV5, ENV1, RUR3; South Lakeland: AS04, CS1.1, DM1, *CS8.1, CS8.4, DM2, DM4*)

3.1 The Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will map out and list priority habitats and species that need protection and enhancement within the county. This includes habitats and species that are of national importance, as well as those that are locally significant. The Arnside & Silverdale National Landscape has a Nature Recovery Plan and the North Pennines National Landscape's Management Plan includes a section on nature recovery. These resources will be useful references for sites in or affecting the National Landscapes. In practice, virtually all traditional barns in the district used for agriculture already provide roosts or habitats for bats, a protected species. On this basis, the starting point of any barn conversion should be to assume that bats are present, and consideration needs to be given at the design stage as to how bat habitats will be protected and enhanced.

3.2 The Cumbria Local Habitat Map is a tool to identify and prioritise these habitats.

3.3 The Cumbria LNRS includes a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities that is supported by a Priorities and Measure Matrix. It also includes a Shortlist of the LNRS species that will be updated regularly. All three of these resources can be found on this page of the LNRS.

3.4 All barn conversions should align with the objectives outlined in the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This includes incorporating design elements that support the restoration, enhancement, and connectivity of habitats as identified in the LNRS.

3.5 Proposals should include features that contribute to the local ecological network as described in the LNRS. This may involve the creation or enhancement

of habitats, green corridors, bird boxes or other natural features that help achieve the goals of the LNRS.

3.6 Developers should use the Cumbria Statement of Biodiversity Priorities to access up-to-date information.

3.7 Opportunities should be taken to incorporate biodiversity into the fabric of existing buildings and structures where appropriate, for example through:

- Existing potential access points for roosting bats should be retained in the building where possible e.g. to rubble filled walls, wall tops, under roof and ridge tiles. If no such features can be retained one bat box, brick or bat tile should be installed in each developed building at a suitable location.
- One swift brick or universal nest brick should also be installed in each converted building. If this is not possible an external swift box should be installed.
- Swift bricks should be incorporated into the buildings' structure, in accordance with British Standard BS 42021:2022. In addition, one swallow cup should be installed per building being developed.
- All bird nesting features should be sited at an appropriate height for the target species and on a north or east aspect.
- Bat features should be sited on the south, south-east and south-west elevations but sheltered from strong winds at an elevation of at least 4m above the ground.
- All nesting/roosting features should be located away from artificial lighting and where possible siting above windows or doors avoided. They should also be placed where there is unimpeded access for the target species.
- All external boxes should be long-life boxes made from materials such as woodcrete.
- If works could impact priority habitat, potential bat roosting features or potential bird nesting features (e.g. creation of new gardens, roofing, replacement or windows or works to external walls), an ecological consultant should undertake a suitable ecological assessment to be submitted with the planning application. The aim should be to retain any priority habitat, potential bat roosting features or potential bird nesting features identified by the assessment.

3.8 These built-in measures will have longer useful lifespans than measures such as boxes fixed to walls or trees. Care should also be taken with the placement of biodiversity measures in terms of orientation, height from the ground and proximity to human activity.

Biodiversity Net Gain

CODE BC 3.2 Biodiversity Net Gain: All barn conversions must achieve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in line with current national policies and any local standards, unless exempt. This must be calculated using the statutory metric

and demonstrated through detailed ecological assessments submitted with the planning application, as per BNG regulations.

BNG must not only focus on the quantity of habitat created or enhanced but also on the quality and ecological value.

To achieve BNG, development must:

a) Include a range of habitats that are appropriate to the local context, ensuring that they reflect the natural character and biodiversity priorities of the area.

b) Design new or enhanced habitats to be part of a coherent ecological network. This involves connecting new habitats to existing green infrastructure, wildlife corridors, or natural habitats to ensure they contribute meaningfully to local biodiversity and resilience.

(Barrow: *DS2, N3;* Eden: DEV5, ENV1; South Lakeland: DM1, *DM4;* National Biodiversity Net Gain Policy 2023 onwards)

3.9 The government's national BNG requirements and guidance are in this online collection of documents.

3.10 Westmorland and Furness Council has also published this guidance for delivering the national BNG requirements. BNG proposals should maximise the potential of a site in terms of providing benefits to as wide a range of habitats and species as possible. Support will also be given to proposals that incorporate innovative habitat creation and enhancement schemes that prioritise locally distinctive habitats and are implemented using native species of local provenance. In considering BNG requirements, interventions should be ecologically coherent and appropriate within the location and context of the site.

3.11 Proposed habitat creation should be based on suitable conditions being present or that can be created, e.g. soil chemistry and drainage. Remediation works required prior to creation of target habitat must be considered where necessary in all proposals.

Swift or bird boxes are a simple way of creating space for nature in a constrained site such as a barn conversion. Skelton.

A close-up of the swift or bird boxes in the above photo. Skelton.

Biodiversity and BNG: what we don't want to see:

- Development that destroys, harms, undermines or places additional risks on priority habitats, priority species' features which help to support populations of priority species, or the local ecological network identified in the LNRS.
- Development that misses opportunities to extend or improve habitats or improve connectivity between habitats and support conservation intentions for priority species and habitats when considering BNG interventions and designing in nature.
- Development that does not achieve biodiversity net gain in line with national requirements and local policy.
- BNG having a narrow focus on the habitats and species that will benefit.
- Development within habitat buffer distances or otherwise being too close to sensitive sites, such as SSSIs, County Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves, and/or habitats and species.
- Habitat enhancement and/or creation that is inappropriate to the landscape, flora or soils of its proposed location or that will not achieve its target due to other limiting factors such as the size of the proposed habitat parcel.

Trees, Hedgerows and Planting

Existing Trees, Woodlands & Hedgerows

CODE BC 3.3 Existing Trees, Woodlands, and Hedgerows: Development proposals must:

a) retain and protect existing trees and hedgerows and, where removal is unavoidable, compensatory planting and replacement of trees must be provided at an appropriate ratio; and

b) include a variety of native tree and scrub species of UK provenance and grassland species of local provenance in new planting to enhance biodiversity and contribute to the overall green infrastructure network. In considering the location of buildings or planting of trees, full account should be taken of the recommendations in British Standard BS5837 or any subsequent updates to the standard.

(Barrow: DS5, N4, *DS6, GI6*; Eden: DEV5, ENV4, *ENV2*; South Lakeland: CS1.1, *AS04, AS08, CS8.1, CS8.4, DM2, DM4*)

3.12 Developers should integrate street trees and planting design to enhance urban environments and support ecological functions where appropriate:

- Prioritise the use of native species of UK provenance for street trees and plantings to benefit local ecosystems and ensure compatibility with local conditions.
- Consider a 'quality over quantity' approach: one mature tree or fewer trees with space to grow and mature will be of more ecological and townscape value than a dense cluster of saplings.

- Design tree pits to support healthy tree growth and prevent infrastructure conflicts.
- Incorporate pollinator-friendly plants and wildflower areas to boost biodiversity and create attractive green spaces.
- Ensure that all planting schemes are well-maintained and harmoniously integrated into the urban fabric.
- Retain and protect existing trees and hedgerows where possible and provide compensatory planting as needed.

3.13 Red squirrels are found in scattered locations across Westmorland and Furness. Outside of the National Parks they are found in areas including the countryside around Cartmel, Ulverston, Burneside, Burton-in-Kendal, Tebay, Shap Wells, Hardendale and Alston. The red squirrel stronghold areas in Westmorland and Furness, outside of the National Parks, are the Eden Valley and areas around Penrith, particularly to the north-east of Penrith around Greystoke. The ecological information supplied as part of the application documents should also be used to assess whether planting of tree species beneficial to red squirrel is appropriate. Tree species which are suitable for planting in areas which support red squirrel are blackthorn, hazel, bird cherry, crab apple, Scots pine, holly, wild cherry, yew, hawthorn, small-leaved lime and alder. Note that oak, beech, chestnut, sycamore and walnut should be avoided in red squirrel areas as these benefit grey squirrels. Whilst hazel will also benefit grey squirrels it is a very important food source for red squirrel and shouldn't be avoided. If you have red squirrels in your garden, you can find further information here on how to garden for red squirrels www.redsquirrels.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Red-Squirrels-In-My-Garden (note the document is being currently revised).

3.14 The Council is currently working on a Guidance Document for Native Planting. For further guidance on what preferred species to use please liaise with the Council's highways, waste and environment services. See also the Council's site for Climate change and natural environment.

Planting Design

3.15 When designing planting schemes, include pollinator-friendly species and wildflowers to enhance local biodiversity and create attractive, nature-rich spaces. Planting should consider climate change projections to ensure that schemes are resilient and deliver their intended benefits long-term.

- Pollinator-Friendly Species: Incorporate plants that support pollinators and provide diverse habitats. For example, single-flowered species are more accessible to pollinators than species with double flowers. A palette of plants which support wildlife is available for reference within the GB non-native species secretariat guide to Gardening without harmful invasive plants.
- Wildflower Areas: Designate areas for wildflowers to enhance local biodiversity and create attractive, nature-rich spaces.

- Consider the scope for planting on balconies, terraces and as green walls or other locations where flats are proposed.
- Consider space for composting or providing compost bins as a source of organic material for planted areas.

Trees, Hedgerows and Planting: what we don't want to see

- The loss of existing trees, hedgerows and planting that are important as habitats or as important landscape or townscape features.
- Design that destroys or degrades rather than maintains or enhances important trees, hedgerows or vegetation.
- A tokenistic approach to trees and hedgerows and planting (e.g. retaining one landmark tree or mature hedgerow) rather than making existing assets a holistic aspect of the site's design.
- Landscaping that has large expanses of hard landscaping, creating a harsher microclimate, and missing opportunities to integrate street trees and planting.
- New trees, hedgerows and planting that do not adequately compensate for existing trees, hedgerows and vegetation that will be lost due to development.
- The use of invasive non-native plant species as identified in government guidance on invasive non-native alien plant species or in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.
- The use of non-native plant species which might pose future ecological threat as identified in the GB non-native species secretariat report on Horizon scanning for invasive non-native plants.
- New planting that is of low or lesser habitat value.
- New planting that is not resilient to the current and anticipated impacts of climate change.
- New planting that is not an integral part of SuDS
- New planting where there is insufficient space for trees and hedges to grow to maturity.
- Quantity over quality: for example, fewer trees that are able to mature and offer meaningful habitats and townscape markers will be preferable to many trees of limited habitat or townscape value.
- Street trees planted where this would be out of step with the context.
- Expanses of lawn over landscaping and planting that can offer greater SuDS capacity, climate change resilience and habitats.
- Artificial grass, as this offers no ecological benefits and inhibits natural moisture movement.
- New planting that is impractical to maintain

4. Movement

Lighting & Safety

CODE BC 4.1 Light Pollution: External lighting at barn conversions must preserve dark skies and minimise or avoid light pollution.

(Barrow: C7, DS5, H7, *DS2, HC5*; Eden: DEV5, ENV3, ENV9; South Lakeland: AS01, AS02, DM7, *DM2; Good Lighting Technical Advice Note*)

4.1 According to the CPRE Night Blight 2026, Westmorland & Furness has very high coverage of the darkest skies in the UK. Lighting designs should respect Dark Sky guidelines to minimise light pollution. A range of lighting options, including ground-focused downlighting and dotted lighting along cycle paths, can improve safety and add visual appeal while being environmentally friendly by minimising light spill and reducing light pollution.

4.2 Compliance with both local and national regulations is essential, as is consideration of the Dark Skies initiative to reduce light pollution. Proposals should be informed by the useful best practice advice and detailed technical guidance within the Good Lighting Technical Advice Note: Designing Out Light Pollution in Cumbria, the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Arnside and Silverdale AONB.

4.3. The design of both internal and external lighting must have no or low impact on bats and nocturnal wildlife in accordance with the Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance GN08 Bats and Artificial Lighting.

Lighting: what we don't want to see

- Light pollution that is either a nuisance to others or undermines the district's dark skies.
- Light pollution that impacts protected species, especially where bat roosts are present on or in the vicinity of the site.
- Light which is directed upwards.
- Light trespass into neighbouring areas.
- Artificial lighting directed at waterbodies, hedgerows, woodland or lines of trees.

Car Parking

4.4 Most households who occupy new homes own at least one car and therefore thought must be given to how and where cars are parked. Consideration must also be given to the needs of people with disabilities, visitor parking, and Electric Vehicle (EV) charging.

4.5 Chapter J of the Development Design Guide is a key reference, as this sets out important **guidance and technical requirements** for the design of new car

parking in new residential developments. Appendix 1 of the same guide is also a key reference that sets out the **numbers** of parking spaces required for new homes and other building and land uses.

4.6 This section of the design code therefore concerns **how** car parking is to be designed into places and meets the needs of different people.

CODE BC 4.2 Car Parking: Car parking provision must align with the Development Design Guide and successfully integrate car parking provision into the design of attractive, distinctive and well-functioning places.

(Barrow: DS5, H7, I6, *HC4*; Eden: DEV5; South Lakeland: CS1.1, CS10.2, DM1, *CS8.10, DM9*)

4.7 Considerations during the design process for parking:

- Consider the minimum requirements established by Chapter J and Appendix 1 of the Development Design Guide for car parking in housing developments.
- Promote clear lines of vision from the front windows of the conversion by placing parking spaces to the side or rear of the conversion, and having meaningful gaps between areas of on-street parking or parking in front of buildings. Off-street parking spaces directly in front of windows and doors should be avoided.
- Consider the use of 'informal' spaces for parking cars rather than having formal driveways or marked out parking spaces. These work well in conversions because they look less like unoccupied parking spaces or driveways when empty.
- Consider the width of spaces: is there sufficient space for vehicle doors to fully open? Is there room for small children, the elderly or disabled to be assisted getting into and out of vehicles? Are meter boxes, downpipes or similar going to impinge this space?
- Avoid using standard garage or car port designs that would make the barn conversion look like a suburban home and consider alternative design solutions. In some cases cart sheds or outbuildings could be repurposed as garages, others could incorporate a new structure of a sympathetic design, whilst many conversions will not be able to accommodate a garage at all.

Although this building is a village hall rather than a barn, the approach to car parking would work equally well for a barn conversion. The simple change of materials to create an informal 'apron' of hardstanding for parking, sitting out, potted plants etc. The effect is less domestic in character than a driveway, is low-key in appearance, and allows maximum flexibility of the available space. Permeable surfaces should be used. Millhouse.

The layout of farm buildings around yards provides an ideal opportunity for both private garden space and parking that is screened by the buildings. Here, there appears to be scope for cars to park in parallel outside of the yard, where the fence is standing. Great Salkeld.

4.8 Electric vehicle charging points should be suitably designed into schemes.

4.9 The Council's Electric Vehicle Strategy sets out the strategy and practical steps for increasing the provision of EV charging in the district. EV charging provision should be:

- Convenient for the occupiers of dwellings to use and for servicing and replacement.
- Be discretely located rather than be an afterthought that clutters elevations, especially given they are a source of light pollution.
- Be provided for allocated spaces that are not in the curtilage of the home in a manner that does not clutter the street and avoids the running of cables over pavements and carriageways.

Car Parking: What we don’t want to see

- Views from principal rooms and homes that are dominated by parked cars
- Windows obscured by cars, vans or motorhomes parked within the curtilage. Pavement parking and antisocial parking
- Parking spaces that are too small to properly function by having insufficient space for car vehicle doors to be fully swung open, or for the very young, elderly or disabled to be helped into and out of vehicles.
- Garages that dominate the front elevations of homes
- Landscaping and trees that are relegated to the margins of parking spaces
- EV points that clutter building elevations
- EV charger cables that foul pavements or streets

5. Built Form

Building Types and Forms

CODE BC 5.1 Urban Grain: Applicants must identify the urban grain of the area surrounding their site as a key part in understanding the surrounding context and ensure the design of the barn conversion makes a positive response to 'knit into' the urban grain of the surroundings or settlement by respecting its character.

(Barrow: DS5, H7; Eden: DEV5, ENV3, RUR3, *ENV2*; South Lakeland: AS01, AS08, CS1.1, DM1, *DM2*)

5.1 For a barn or farm building conversion the built form and grain is usually defined by the collection of buildings and structures that make up the farmstead, and any agricultural sites or buildings in the surroundings. Farmsteads will have historically contained a range of building types and purposes that form a closely related group. Typical buildings on a farmstead might include: the farmhouse, one or more cottages, a barn, a byre, an implement store, a cart shed, livestock sheds, a stable, a dairy and milking parlour, loft-level storage, and related spaces such as yards and accessways. For any barn conversion as part of the site and context appraisal it is vital to understand the original and later function of the building to be converted and how it related to the wider farmstead, farm holding and landscape.

5.2 From this understanding it is important to understand the part historically played by the building in:

- The hierarchy of the buildings occupied by people, livestock and produce
- The economic value of the building relative to others on the farmstead – the more important buildings are usually the largest and best-built
- Its historic function either as a place of processing, shelter or storage (or a combination) and whether this changed or evolved over time
- How its materials and detailing reflect its age, function and overall importance to the farm.

5.3 These factors all govern the building's location, orientation, footprint, massing, height, layout of openings and materials and finishes. This in turn should be used to guide the design of any conversion.

5.4 The siting, form, scale and appearance of outbuildings can also have a noticeable impact on the character and appearance of farmsteads and rural areas. Outbuildings include bin stores, cycle stores, garages, car ports, garden sheds and other garden buildings. Thought should be given to the design and siting or these. For example, they could be part of the main structure of the barn or detached. They can look rural through the choice of materials and design. They can be prominent or discreet, grouped or dispersed or sited on or away from the edges of the plot or site. The latter is especially important to consider where the site adjoins the open countryside.

Here there is a grain stepping from left to right: the farmhouse, then below it a former stable or cottage, and below that the barn. The barn itself is in two parts: a cart shed part and a two-storeyed byre and loft. The grain of this farmstead is therefore four distinct parts under three separate roofs. The historic status of the buildings on the farmstead is shown by how high up the hill they are. On the opposite side of the road, a farmhouse with a cottage attached to it form another aspect of the grain. Motherby.

A similar hierarchy is seen here: the broad frontage of the farmhouse with a central doorway. Then to the right a narrower cottage, and then a broader farm building. The higher position of the farmhouse and cottage and the use of render show that they are historically of higher status than the barn. Motherby.

Height

CODE BC 5.2 Building Height: The height of barn conversions (for example raising eaves levels or adding an extension) must be informed by the context assessment and any historic environment assessment which will identify prevailing building height(s) and the variety of building heights in the site's context.

(Barrow: DS5, H7; Eden: DEV5, RUR3; South Lakeland: AS01, AS08, CS1.1, DM1, *DM2, DM3*)

5.5 Building heights must be informed by an assessment of the surrounding area, ensuring that barn conversions reflect the existing variety of heights to better integrate with their surroundings and contribute to the overall character and appeal of the area. A conversion should usually remain within the existing building and raising/lowering the height of a barn will typically have a negative impact on its character.

5.6 In a farmstead the heights of different buildings is an important detail because it is often the product of a building's age, original or historical function, and the hierarchy of buildings (usually the taller the building, the more important). Therefore, where there is a range of building heights in a historic farmstead, this should be respected by the design of a building conversion. Conversely where say, a farmhouse and combination barn stand under a continuous roof with the same eaves and ridge height, this characteristic should be retained by a conversion.

5.7 The site and context assessment is key to understanding whether differences in building height or consistency of building height are important to the character of the site.

The tiny step in the roof from farmhouse to barn was important when this farm was built as it helps to distinguish the farmhouse from the working buildings. Raising the eaves or roof of any part of the barn range would undermine this aspect of the farmstead's interest. Note the detached outbuilding on the right, which is lower than the barn range. Newbiggin (Eden).

Taller farmhouses and lower barns make these building type legible in the landscape, even at a distance. This is helped further by the locations of chimneys. As with the above example, raising the barn to match or be higher than the farmhouse would harm how the farmstead is perceived in the landscape. Newbiggin (Eden).

Built Form: what we don't want to see:

- Raising/lowering the height of a barn.
- Development that repeats or extends poor or inappropriate aspects of the existing context's component of built form.
- Built form that dilutes rather than reinforces the local character.

6. Identity

Building type, form and detailing

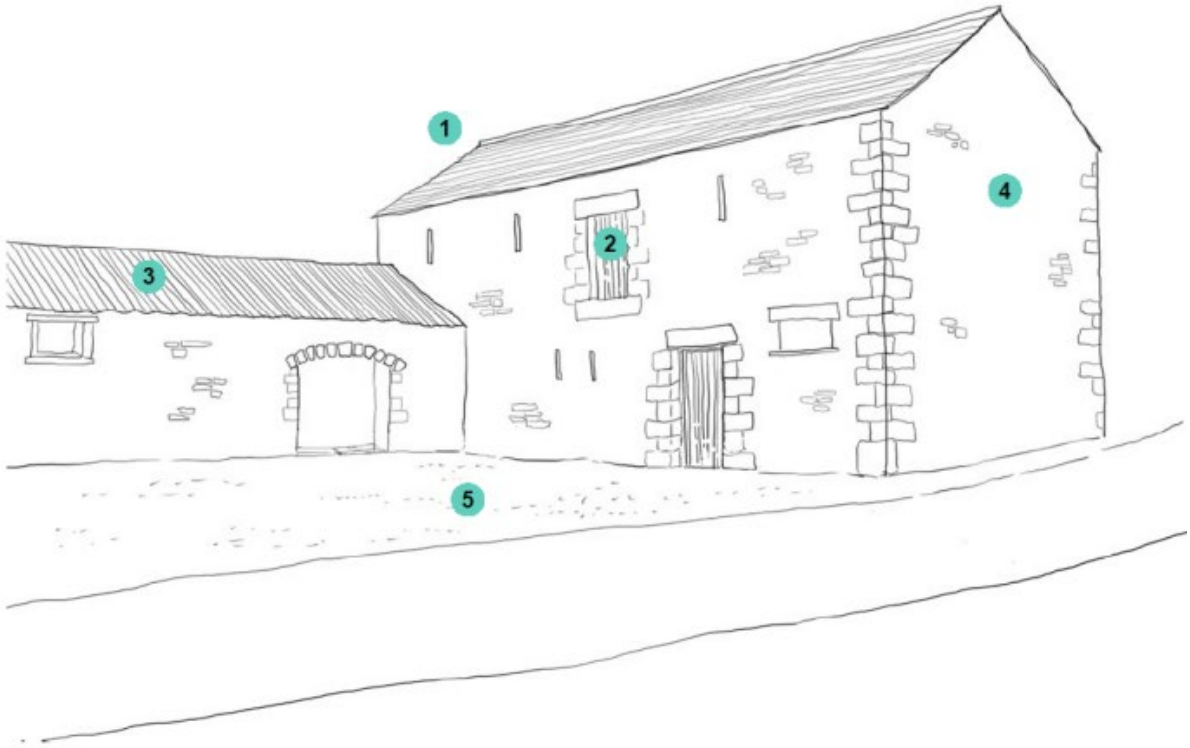
CODE BC 6.1 Contextual Design: Applicants must demonstrate how the analysis of the site and its context have informed the design of the proposal. Design must be locally distinctive and rooted in place.

'Design' here is all-encompassing and includes street and building layout, the hierarchy of spaces, streets and buildings, landscape and townscape response, building form, building design and materials.

(Barrow: DS5, H5, H7; Eden: DEV5, ENV2, ENV3, ENV10, *RUR3*; South Lakeland: AS01, AS02, AS08, CS1.1, DM1, *CS8.10, DM2, DM16*)

6.1 The analysis of the site and its context set out earlier in this code are especially important for a barn or farm building conversion. A balance must be struck between providing the accommodation required and maintaining the character and local distinctiveness of the building and site. Changes to openings, the roof or surroundings or additional extensions or external fixtures and fittings can all compromise what makes the farm buildings and farmsteads of Westmorland and Furness special and characterful, as well as the places or landscapes they form part of. As outlined in the context section, Historic England's guidance relating to farm buildings and historic Ordnance Survey maps are useful references in understanding the character and significance of a barn or farmstead.

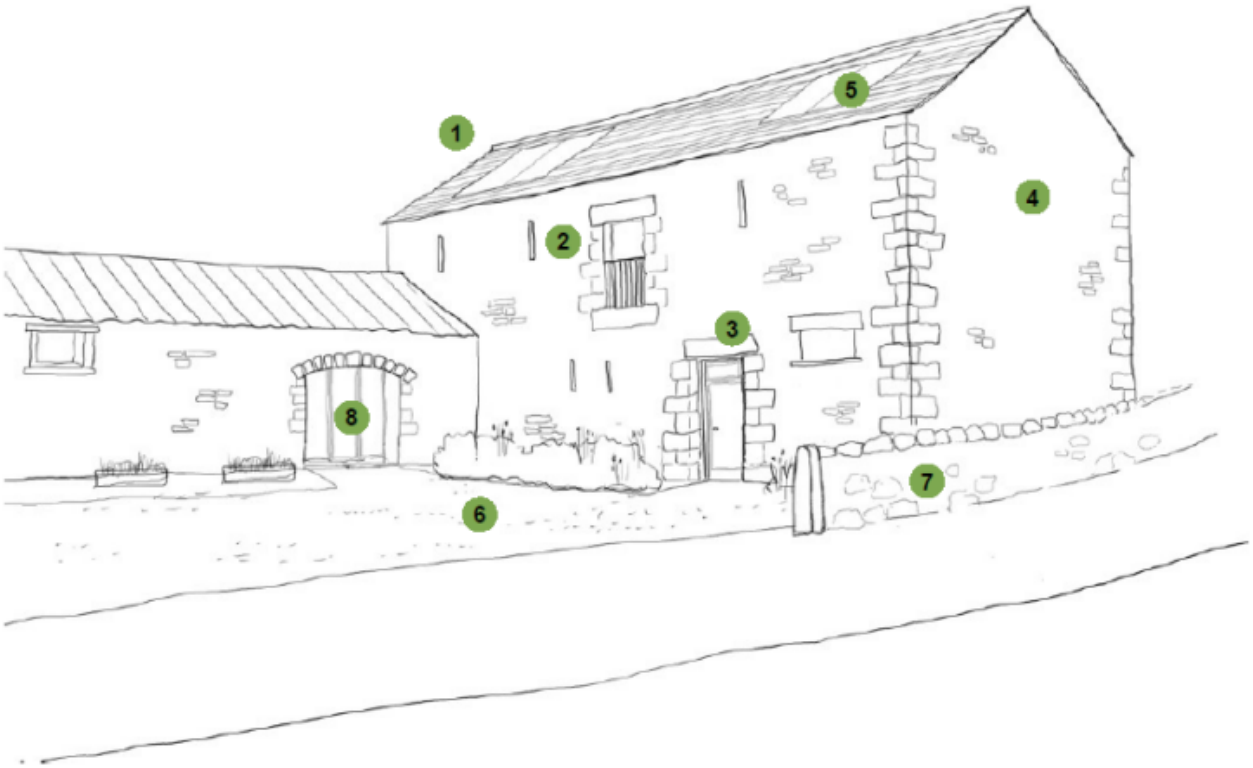
6.2 The application of the fundamental principles would mean a barn conversion would go from this:



An existing barn:

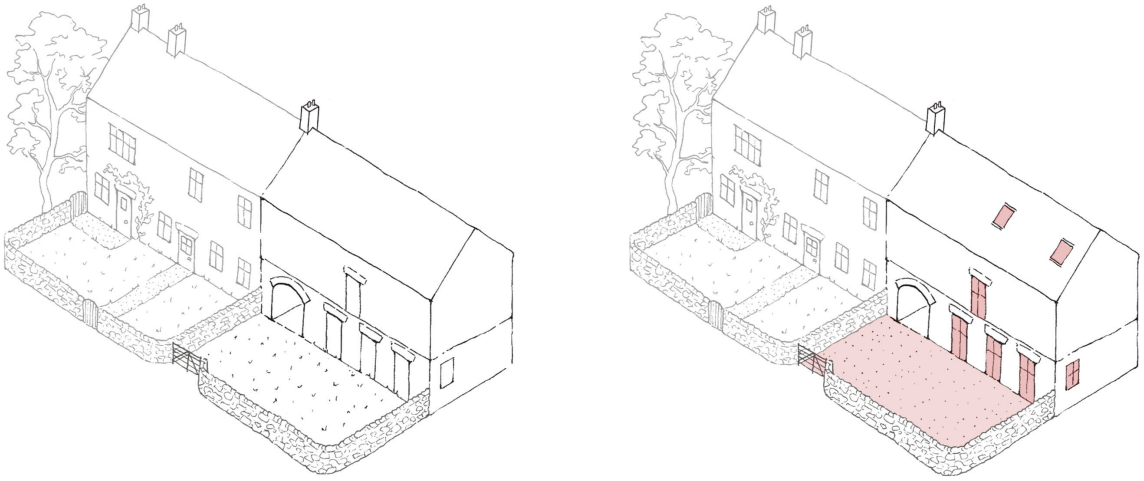
1. The existing hierarchy of buildings is evident from the difference in building height
2. A variety of historic functions is suggested, by the variation in the form of the windows, doors, openings and buildings themselves
3. Differences in materials indicate the hierarchy and value of the buildings
4. The footprint and orientation of the buildings is governed by the site
5. The external space is suitable for practical, functional uses

To this:



A well designed conversion:

1. Building height is reflective of the original barn, and of those in the surrounding area. The range of heights is retained
2. The original size and location of openings is respected, maintaining the original 'solid to void' ratio
3. Materials are reclaimed and reused wherever possible, e.g. stone lintels, or new materials are reflective of the original design and function.
4. The existing footprint of the buildings is retained, without substantial rebuilding. The built form reinforces the local character
5. Fewer, larger rooflights reduce visual clutter and give a less domestic appearance
6. The original functionality of the external space is respected, e.g cobbled yards retained
7. Boundary treatments harmonise with the character of the site. Traditional materials and techniques should be used
8. Existing openings can be re-purposed e.g. through glazing. The full height of the opening is retained, and the frame does not visually dominate



Longhouses and laithes are locally distinctive Cumbria farmstead layouts where farm buildings, the farm house, and sometimes cottages form, a long row. This successful conversion of the agricultural part of the longhouse re-uses existing openings while adding limited new ones. This maintains the character of the building. This is complemented by the retention of the boundary wall and a hard character to the space in front.

Longhouses and laithes are locally distinctive Cumbria farmstead layouts where farm buildings, the farm house, and sometimes cottages form, a long row. This unsuccessful conversion of the agricultural part of the longhouse includes an extension that disrupts the longhouse form and completely changes the layout and sizes of openings. The domestic treatment of the space in front further undermines the longhouse's character.

6.3 Each barn or farm building and its location are unique, therefore in order to satisfy the above code, this checklist should be considered as part of the design of the conversion:

a. Fundamental Principles

i. The barn structure must be capable or reuse and adaptation without substantial rebuilding, otherwise the scheme is for a new dwelling rather than a conversion. A conservation-accredited structural engineer is the best source of advice about whether footings, walls and roof structures and timbers are in sound condition or require strengthening, rebuilding or replacing.

ii. Understand the significance of the building and its context. This is key to understanding where changes can be harmful to the building's character or specialness if not carefully designed. It can also identify scope for change that would not be harmful. The context section of this code is a starting point, but a heritage consultant or conservation accredited architect will have the expertise for compiling a detailed understanding.

iii. Minimal external change. Retaining and re-using historic building materials, openings and building techniques, features and details are all fundamental to the building keeping its original / former character after the conversion.

iv. Work with the building. Design should be informed by the existing building's footprint, height, internal layout and orientation. Trying to put too many rooms or homes or too much floorspace into the building will affect its external character and appearance in a harmful way.

v. Expect compromise and adjustment. The character of a barn may mean that each room cannot be flooded with light, or the garage attached to the home, or a standard conservatory or sunroom added, or an exact layout or size of room being achievable. Rooms that 'borrow' light and unorthodox layouts are common responses to maintaining the character of a barn.

vi. Maintain the traditional and agricultural character of the barn. Flues, ducts, meter boxes, soil and vent pipes, EV charging points, aerials and satellite dishes, light fixtures, CCTV cameras, awnings, canopies, fascia boards and renewable energy generation can individually and collectively undermine the appearance of the traditionally uncluttered walls, eaves and roofs of barns. Care should be taken with regard to the location, size, design and colour and finish of external building services and external fixtures and fittings. The less visible these are, especially on the principal elevation and from the highway, the better in terms of maintaining the building's character. Creativity may be needed to perhaps site some of these features on outbuildings or extensions rather than on the roof and walls of the existing barn.

This threshing barn has just a large threshing door and a few ventilation slits on this elevation, which poses difficultly for lighting rooms in a conversion. The modern tile roof, however, could be replaced in a natural material and rooflights added? Could the threshing doorway be glazed and adjacent rooms 'borrow' light from it? Do other elevations offer more scope for change? Great Salkeld.

The stone barn has only three openings on the two elevations seen here. However, there is scope to replace the modern corrugated structure on the left with a sympathetically designed domestic addition. The rooms in the stone barn could perhaps be rooms that do not need much daylight or view out. There may even be scope to flood light in via rooflights in the valley formed by the two roofs. Ivegill.

This barn conversion achieves many of the fundamental principles of this code: external alterations have been minimised, and changes work with the character of the building and are low key. The barn is clearly now a house due to the large, glazed opening, but the former uses and functions of the barn are still legible, and it is still clearly a former barn. Newton Reigny.

b. Extensions and additions

i. Use existing additions or the known position of former additions or buildings on the site as options for re-use or reinstatement.

ii. The barn or farm building should not be dominated by new additions and extensions by virtue of their scale, height, massing or location.

iii. Upward extension to provide additional headroom in the upper floor should be avoided as this usually harms the character or appearance of the building.

iv. Overly domestic-style extensions such as conservatories, sunrooms and glazed porches harm the character of farm buildings, especially standard designs found on suburban houses.

v. Use the traditional barn or farmstead or others locally as a guide for how extensions should be sited and be designed in relation to the barn or farm building. For example, lean-tos and offshuts were often built onto larger buildings, and in some cases, additions form a linear range or laithe of structures.

This compactness of this barn could mean any change, however small, could have a disruptive impact on its character and appearance. If it were to be converted and additional floorspace needed, great care would need to be taken in terms of the siting, scale, height and massing of any addition. Newbiggin (Eden).

Where local stone is impossible or very difficult to obtain in the quantities required, other natural materials will work if the design of the additions otherwise maintains the character of being a barn. Greystoke.

c. Roof

i. The long, uninterrupted expanses of traditional roofing materials are key characteristics of farm buildings. Traditional expanses of roof in traditional materials laid in the traditional way (smaller slates at the top, larger at the bottom) should be retained in a conversion.

ii. Avoid cluttering or disrupting roof slopes with many rooflights, new gables, hipped roof joints etc. In some cases, fewer but larger roof lights can make the barn look less domestic than having several standard rooflights.

iii. Avoid adding domestic features such as chimneys, flues aerials and satellite dishes to roofs. Flues or chimney structures attached to the building can look less domestic, and technology can be sited away from the building or on outbuildings.

These two converted barns retain traditional uninterrupted roofs. The few rooflights and flues are the only indication from the street of the conversions. Greystoke.

This barn has many different openings on the elevation, but by contrast, the long roof is plain and uninterrupted. A conversion should maintain this aspect of the barn's character and appearance. Skelton.

d. Elevations and Openings

i. Re-use existing openings as far as possible, including re-opening blocked historic openings, and avoid introducing new openings to elevations.

ii. Work with the building. Areas of wall that are blank or largely blank should be left so as part of the conversion, the existing configuration of openings often reflects the historic or original use of the building and should be retained in a conversion. The ratio of solid-to-void on different elevations and parts of the building is often key to its character.

iii. Existing openings can be re-purposed. For example, a redundant doorway can be frameless glazed as a full-height, window or change to a glazed stable door for a smaller window. This is preferable to partially blocking up an opening.

iv. Avoid splitting large openings such as threshing doors or cart entrances by putting walls or floor and ceiling structures behind or against these large openings. This will always harm the buildings character. Instead, explore how these large openings can be used as full height spaces or as sources of borrowed light for adjacent rooms.

v. Where new openings are introduced, these should maintain the character of the building rather than being an obviously domestic-looking window due to its size and proportions.

vi. Follow the historic precedent and recess doors and windows far back into the masonry openings. Historically this was done to shelter joinery in the openings from the rain. It is an important characteristic of farm buildings that also highlights the thickness of the walls.

The former barn is at the right-hand end of this range. The large central opening has been fully glazed with no other openings or rooflights introduced to the frontage. The glazing on the front and gable has been set back into the thickness of the wall. The barn is still legible as a former barn and is still visually distinct from the attached cottage and house. Great Salkeld.

With such simplicity to openings, walling and eaves, it is easy for changes to barns to add clutter or complication. Changes to elevation and openings must uphold this simplicity. Ivegill.

This small building retains what appears to be a stable window to the right of the door, an opening adapted to a loft opening above, and a cart or implement store in the lean-to on the right. These indications of past uses and activities are key to this building's character and interest. Kirkoswald.

e. Materials

i. Existing traditional materials should be retained and reused as far as possible.

ii. As barns are almost always solid masonry buildings, materials should be breathable and permeable to ensure they are compatible with solid masonry and will not trap moisture leading to damp and decay. Therefore modern insulation techniques should be avoided in favour of traditional approaches such as lime plaster.

iii. Externally, poor repointing can have a significant adverse impact on the character of farm buildings and can ultimately be damaging to the fabric, including the use of inappropriate cement mortars or inappropriate styles of pointing. Generally it is always advisable to use lime-based mortar, researching evidence of the aggregate and sands used in the past, which may well have local significance and will enable a close visual match as well as allowing the building to function better.

iv. Modern materials can be a successful addition where they allow a distinction to be made between the old and new and avoid giving the barn an overly domestic appearance. For example, slim aluminium

frames to windows and doors can uphold the non-domestic character of the building, or timber cladding can distinguish the old from the new in a manner that harmonises through the use of natural materials.

v. For windows, white and bright colours for joinery are best avoided in preference to black, dark grey, pale green and grey greens. Windows should be set in a deep reveal and could also use tinted glass to give a strong shadow line.

vi. Materials or building components that are commonly found on houses, such as uPVC, cement render, or extruded aluminium gutters or artificial stone will detract from a building's character or appearance.

The roughness of the stonework and the projecting through stones give this barn a rugged and practical character. Introducing overtly modern materials like an artificial tile roof; uPVC windows, doors, fascias and rainwater goods; or cement render would be strongly harmful to its character and appearance. Motherby.

Here the stonework provides clues of the building's development: the differences in stone on the long elevation show the height of the barn was raised in the past, the pinker stone of the lean-to show this was a later addition, while there are signs of a filled in door and window on the long elevation. Skelton.

How stonework is pointed has a huge bearing on a barn's appearance and is an important aspect of how rubble walls were finished historically. On the left is a type of pointing around Kendal and the Lake District where the mortar is daubed over the stone to both fill the joints and provide a layer of protection over the stone. Top right is evidence of a nearly-lost limewash or whitewash finish that has been protected from weathering by the eaves. Bottom right is a version of rubble pointing around the Yorkshire Dales where pointing forms a protective semi-layer over the rubble.

Local sandstone, Cumbrian blue slate and stone slate courses just over the eaves. These three local materials give the barn a very local character. They should be retained and re-used. Armathwaite.

f. Spaces and structures around the barn

i. Reuse historic surfaces such as setts or cobbles and keep these in situ where possible. These stone surfaces often relate to the historic function of the barn or building and harmonise visually with the walls.

ii. Choose surfaces that respect the historic character of the barn and farmstead. Bitmac drives or brick paving or precast concrete flags and edging all bring a modern and overly domestic character to the site.

iii. Reuse existing stone boundary walls and hedges where possible. Avoid domestic looking walls, fences and boundary planting such as dense evergreen hedges.

iv. Re use existing outbuildings and structures. If new are required, these should uphold the agricultural character of the barn and the site. For example, typical garage and shed designs will look suburban.

v. Avoid introduction of domestic paraphernalia in the barn's curtilage such as sheds, outbuildings, storage etc.

vi. If a barn is being converted to a business or other non-residential use that requires parking for more than 2-3 cars, additional care is to be taken with the design and siting of hard and soft landscaping to ensure that parking areas do not dominate over overwhelm the barn or its site.

This barn has a monolithic appearance due to it simple mass and expanses of blank wall on this north-facing side. This elevation faces a small field. A conversion would need to preserve the open character of the space around the barn, the field boundaries and its monolithic character. Lamonby.

This barn conversion outside Penrith maintains a connection to the landscape through the open character of its curtilage, with a low boundary facing the countryside. The dry stone wall to the lane in the foreground maintains and reinforces the rural character. The barn has been sensitively repaired and converted, re-using historic openings. The open structure of the discreetly-designed balcony ensures the barn's simple form and the countryside beyond remain the focus in views.

Spatial Character in Historic Areas

CODE BC 6.2 Historic Spatial Character: Development proposals should respond to the historic spatial character of the site to achieve a layout that reflects the special character of the area. This should include considering the level of enclosure within the streetscape, the variety in size, massing and use in historic spaces and the treatment of pavements and landscaping. Whilst there is a need to meet modern transport and accommodation needs, developments should not significantly alter the historic spatial character of the place to meet these needs.

(Barrow: DS4, DS5, H7; Eden: DEV5, ENV3, ENV10, RUR3; South Lakeland: AS07, DM1, DM3, *AS08, CS8.6, CS8.10, DM16*)

6.4 Barns and farmsteads in particular have distinctive spaces such as formal or loosely enclosed yards or a strongly linear layout with pavement in front of the working buildings of the farm. In some cases, they open out onto fields and large spaces. The usual approach of having a front garden, driveway, garage and highly enclosed rear garden can be at odds with the traditional character and specialness of old farms and farm buildings. In some cases, gardens should be designed to maintain the visual link between the landscape and barn, or to have discrete, informal parking or a yard for parking rather than a standard driveway. Similarly, planting and the type and layout of hard spaces is important to overall character.

6.5 Boundaries should also be given close attention. High and low fences, bollards, formal gateways tall hedges and even domestic style boundary walls can detract from the farm character by breaking up important spaces and introducing strongly domestic and suburban features to the site.

Views into and out of development

CODE BC 6.3 Views: Development must incorporate, create or enhance important vistas or viewpoints and sightlines.

(Barrow: DS5, N1; Eden: DEV5, *ENV2*; South Lakeland: AS02, CS1.1, DM1, DM3, *CS8.2, CS8.10, DM2*)

6.6 Proposals should detail how existing and new shared viewpoints or vistas have been considered, particularly in relation to the landscape, coast, important historic features or where culturally important. The retention and enhancement of existing important viewpoints, vistas, and sightlines should be clearly demonstrated.

6.7 With barn and farm buildings there is often an important connection with the land and landscape. Where barns are on settlement edges or are in the countryside, the impulse to create a traditional fenced-in private garden should be avoided in favour of boundary features that maintain visibility between the barn and landscape. Simple post and wire fences can achieve this as can low hedges, low stone walls, or ditches.

This barn on the edge of a village has been converted to two dwellings. The conversion has maintained the vital link with the landscape around the village by having open edges to the curtilage of the barn. A high fence or fast grown hedge would divorce the barn from the landscape. Greystoke.

CODE BC 6.4 Historic Design: Where development impacts a conservation area or a traditional farmstead or settlement, design must reflect the local vernacular tradition (where buildings were designed to meet functional needs) or otherwise show a clear response to local context. There are many variations according to location and the applicant must demonstrate that their designs respond appropriately to the specific traditions of the area.

(Barrow: DS4, DS5, HE4*;* Eden: DEV5, ENV10, LS1, RUR3; South Lakeland: AS07, AS08, CS1.1, DM1, DM3, *AS02, CS8.6, CS8.10, DM2*)

6.8 Information on common vernacular forms, and their distribution across Westmorland and Furness, can be found in the Summary Character Appraisal and Baseline. Each settlement has a distinct architectural tradition, but there are common characteristics across the district. In areas where there is a wider variety of architectural styles, particularly those areas of 19th and early 20th century expansion around the edges of towns, design cues should still be taken from the prevailing architectural forms of the area.

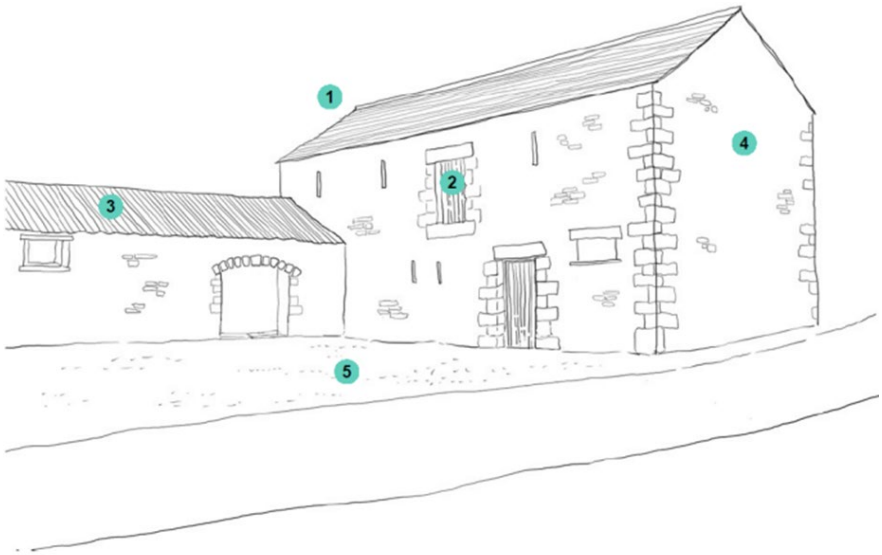
6.9 As a general rule of thumb, the more rural a site is, the greater the influence of vernacular architecture on the design of buildings should be. This is especially so in the height, form, massing and materials of buildings, which help to integrate rural buildings into the landscape.

6.10 In built up areas, vernacular buildings are often outnumbered by buildings whose design reflects national or international styles and trends and movements in design. In these cases, vernacular architecture and architecture of its time both have their place, but a reference to the locality in building design can maintain or strengthen an area's character, rather than dilute it.

Identity: what we don't want to see

- Barn conversions that ignore the findings of the site, context and heritage assessments.
- Conversion where the existing building is dominated by extensions or new openings or alterations to make it into a dwelling.
- Barn conversions where the building materials, forms, grouping, elevations, details and response to topography collectively to not feel rooted in the locality or respond to the building, farmstead and place.
- Artificial or short lifespan building materials and components.
- The tokenistic use of stone or slate, especially if it is reconstituted or not local in its origin.
- Proposals that attempt to give the conversion identity without also designing identity into the spaces, outbuildings, landscaping, boundary features and overall design of the development.
- Proposals that do not respond to the climate of Westmorland and Furness such as recessing windows and doors, roof overhangs or projecting eaves, having projecting copings, tabling or windowsills, or achieving a suitable ratio of solid-to-void in elevations.

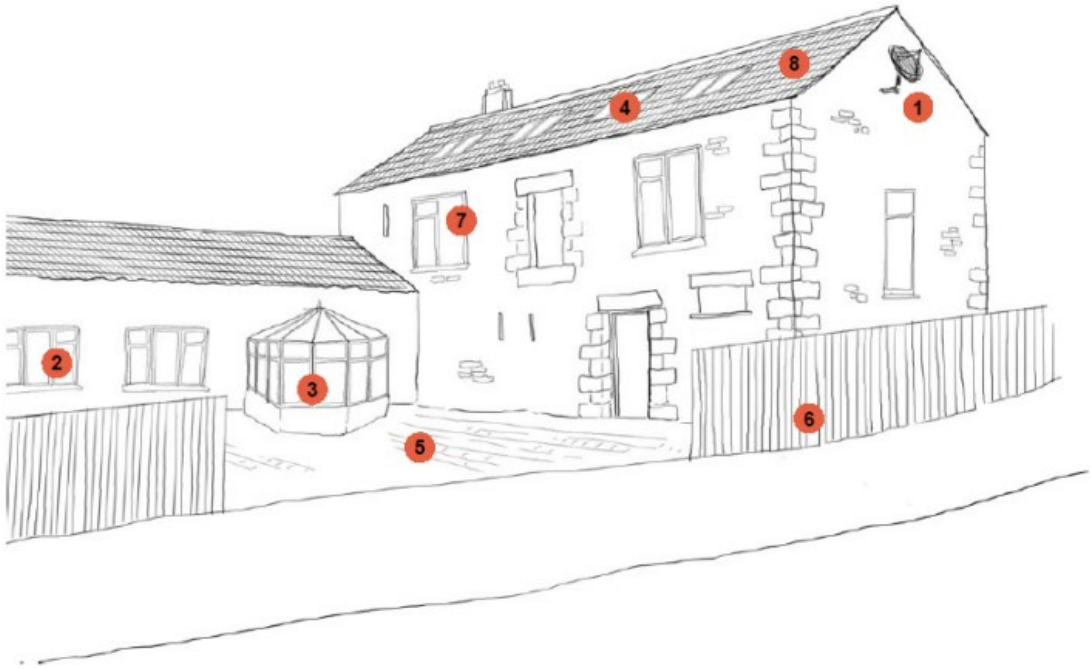
6.11 Ignoring this design code would mean a barn conversion would go from this:



An existing barn:

1. The existing hierarchy of buildings is evident from the difference in building height
2. A variety of historic functions is suggested, by the variation in the form of the windows, doors, openings and buildings themselves
3. Differences in materials indicate the hierarchy and value of the buildings
4. The footprint and orientation of the buildings is governed by the site
5. The external space is suitable for practical, functional uses

To this:



What we **don't** want to see:

1. Modern domestic features are very visible, detracting from the original character of the building
2. The original size and location of openings is lost, and does not reflect the original 'solid to void' ratio
3. Overly domestic or 'suburban' style extensions are not in-keeping with the surrounding character
4. Many, smaller rooflights add visual clutter and give a domestic appearance
5. Modern surfacing of external spaces e.g. monoblock, detracts from the original character of the site
6. Boundary treatments clash with the character of the space and utilise inappropriate materials
7. Modern detailing does not reflect the design and functionality of the original barn, e.g. non-recessed windows
8. The quality and style of materials dilutes the existing character