Westmorland and Furness Design Code: Conversion of Larger Buildings to Homes

Contents

Design Code for the Conversion of Larger Buildings

This section of the Design Code provides detailed code for the conversion of larger buildings into multiple flats or apartments, including the conversion of buildings into homes of multiple occupancy (HMOs).

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 the conversion of larger buildings to homes 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 for the conversion of larger buildings to homes is to fully consider the three steps to understanding context: the 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 and townscape. This will vary on a case-by-case basis, depending on how far-reaching the potential interactions between the proposed development 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 new development. 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 points as constraints, whereas views out, existing buildings and materials to re-use, mature specimen trees, good existing boundary features and existing or potential pedestrian links may be identified as opportunities. 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 a range of factors that make up the context of sites in the district.

The Three Steps to Context

Step 1: Surroundings

CODE CLB 1.1 Surroundings: Conversion of larger buildings to homes 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, for example with a Design and Access Statement showing an understanding of the existing townscape and landscape.

(Barrow: DS5, *DS6, GI1, N1*; Eden: DEV5, ENV2, ENV3, LS1; 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. The level of detail of contextual analysis should correspond to the scale and impact of the proposed development. The study must include an appraisal of the local context, addressing landscape and / or townscape setting, local tranquillity, views, and vistas (this is wider than a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment). Nearby sources or potential sources of noise or air pollution should also be identified.

Analysis should provide a comprehensive understanding of the landscape or townscape and should inform how the proposed development can integrate into its context, paying 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.

1.5 The findings of the contextual analysis and site study must be included in the Design and Access Statement to demonstrate how proposals consider the broader townscape and landscape.

1.6 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 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, all of which can inform the design of proposed developments.

The context of this street space is straight and linear with regularly spaced street trees. The corner buildings are noticeably taller and larger in footprint than the buildings behind. Building either face directly onto the pavement or are set behind small walled front gardens. Barrow.

In a densely built-up town centre like Ulverston, the surroundings may be the rest of the building, plot, terrace and street. Here, homes in the upper floors are an excellent re-use of historic buildings in a highly accessible location.

Step 2: Site Analysis

CODE CLB 1.2 Site Analysis: Conversions of larger buildings to homes 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*)

1.7 This study should analyse the site's aspect and microclimate to inform optimal siting and orientation, evaluate available access points to enhance connectivity, and work with the site's topography, water movement, and ground conditions for effective drainage and land use.

1.8 The study should assess existing structures and services to promote cohesive integration, understand the impacts of air quality, lighting levels, odour, noise and the uses of adjoining land and sites, to mitigate disturbances for future occupants, and retain, protect and enhance key landscape and ecological features such as trees, woodlands, and boundary treatments. Site analysis should establish the ambient

noise environment, and this must be considered to determine the layout and design of development as well as measures that may be required to reduce impact of noise sources. National standards on noise and vibration must be adhered to and advice sought from relevant experts.

1.9 Land contamination and/or potential contaminative uses may also be a factor to consider. For further guidance on how to consider potential contamination visit the website.

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

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

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

CODE CLB 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, DM16, *CS8.6*)

1.13 Designations are specific areas recognised for their importance due to environmental, cultural, or historical significance. Statutory designations are 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 as a locally listed buildings or areas identified for their ecological value such as Local Nature Reserves.

1.14 Where development falls within or is adjacent to 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 CLB 1.4 Historic Assessment: Conversions of larger buildings to homes 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.

Conversions of larger buildings to homes must consider potential impacts on heritage assets (both designated and non-designated) and avoid harm to the significance of heritage assets.

(Barrow: DS5, 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 In some building conversions, the existing building itself, the site or street 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 and the surrounding historic and natural environment. The degree of detail and complexity of this will be proportionate to the nature of the development, the heritage asset(s) it affects and the nature of how it affects them.

1.18 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 Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance sets out what to include in a Heritage Statement.

1.19 The degree of detail and complexity of this assessment will depend on the size of the development and the nature of the heritage asset. Some heritage assets have an important relationship with their setting or other nearby assets or features of the townscape or landscape. For example, the Heritage Statement will include not only consideration of visual links or relationships, but also any effects on contextual relationships, such as the link between a village and its medieval field system or a landmark and views of it.

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

1.21 The assessment must include:

- Designated heritage assets: World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens. etc. (details can be found on the National Heritage List for England, 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.

This empty building would be given a new lease of life through conversion. It is in a conservation area, so consideration must be given to the impact of the conversion on the character and appearance of the building and conservation area, plus any neighbouring or nearby listed buildings or locally listed buildings. Barrow

This large house in Bolton (Eden) is a heritage asset that has been converted to several homes, retaining the original character and appearance of the building, and also its grounds, which have an open character. The conversion is not obvious, which ensures the character of the building as a historic single home is retained.

1.22 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.

1.23 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.

1.24 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**.

2. Climate

CODE CLB 2.1 Sustainable Materials: Conversions of larger buildings to homes must consider the use of sustainable construction materials and methods.

In order to minimise the embodied carbon profile of new development, 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;

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) 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; and

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, H7, *HC1*; Eden: DEV5, *RUR3*; South Lakeland: CS1.1, CS8.7, *CS8.6, DM16*)

2.1 The starting point with a conversion of larger building to homes is the original building itself. To make best use of the embodied carbon, its structure and materials should be re-used as far as possible to minimise the carbon footprint of the conversion.

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

- Re-use, adapt and upgrade existing buildings, structures and materials, especially materials that contribute to local distinctiveness such as locally quarried stone and slate.
- 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.
- 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.

Conversion and adaptation are the lowest carbon solutions. This former industrial building in Kendal is now homes. This makes use of the embodied carbon of the existing building and structure. It could be adapted and re-used in a different way in the future.

Although derelict, the walls of this barn at Stainton near Penrith are embodied carbon that may be capable of repair, and re-use or conversion, or as a last resort, a source of recycled materials.

Natural slate and timber have lower embodied energy and can be re-used or recycled. Greystoke.

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

CODE CLB 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 appropriate SuDS, permeable surfaces, and other water management solutions to mitigate these risks; and

d) incorporating flood resilience measures.

(Barrow: BP5, C1, C3a, H7; Eden: DEV2; South Lakeland: CS1.1, CS8.8, DM1, DM6, *CS8.5*)

Surface Water Discharge Hierarchy

2.3 Sustainable Drainage Systems (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 CLB 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 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

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:

- non-potable re-use;
- rainwater harvesting, including water butts;

- green roofs;
- permeable surfacing;
- infiltration;
- swales;
- channels and rills;
- filter drains;
- filter strips;
- bio retention areas;
- rain gardens;

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 for 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

Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy Generation and Low Carbon Technologies

CODE CLB 2.4 Energy Efficiency: Proposals must clearly show how the building design has 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, *BP2, BP5, H7*; 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. Solar thermal should be used across Westmorland and Furness, but care must be taken to select solar thermal with the least visual impact.
- 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 buildings undergoing conversion. 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. In conservation areas, panels should not be installed on the main elevation of a building. The main elevation is the face or faces of a building seen from the direction from which it is most commonly viewed. Where it is installed on the main elevation, layouts should consider their visual appearance.
    - 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 – 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 Ground or air source heat pumps are well suited to new build developments and can also be suitable in 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 house, 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 new developments. 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

- Development with a large carbon footprint due to the materials, components and building techniques it uses, and missed opportunities to reuse buildings, structures, infrastructure or materials where feasible.
- 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.
- Homes 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.
- New development that takes no measures to manage runoff and reduce flood risk.
- Development which fails 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 place or its character.

3. Nature

Biodiversity

Conservation and enhancement of priority habitats and species

CODE CLB 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, and preserving key ecological features; and

b) the proposal must 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, BP13, *BP4, DS2;* Eden: DEV5, ENV1, RUR3; South Lakeland: CS1.1, DM1, AS04, *CS8.1, CS8.4, DM2, DM4*)

3.1 Opportunities should be taken to incorporate biodiversity into the fabric of new buildings and structures for example through:

- Living roofs and/or walls. These promote biodiversity, minimise water run-off, improve building insulation, reduce cooling costs in summer and can improve the appearance of an area. Such schemes are unlikely to be appropriate for traditional or Listed Buildings.
- Swift or universal nest bricks, at least one brick per dwelling averaged across the development, to be integrated into all new developments that require planning permission.
- Bat access tiles for roofs, bat bricks and other bat roosting provisions. The total number of integrated bat roosting provisions installed/created in new developments should equate to 50% of the number of new dwellings.
- All habitat for bats and hole-nesting birds should be integrated into the buildings. The distribution and location of bricks must be determined by the target species. For example, swift bricks should be incorporated into the buildings' structure in accordance with British Standard BS 42021:2022. Such bricks are best clustered (as swifts like to nest colonially), at a height of at least 5m, and with at least 5m clearance in front and at least one metre between bricks. All bird bricks should be sited with the hole facing between north and east. Bat bricks 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 bat and bird bricks should be located away from artificial lighting and where possible siting above windows or doors avoided. All bat

and bird features should be placed where there is unimpeded access for the target species. Features should only be installed in suitable locations which may mean that some buildings have more than one feature whilst others have none.

- 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 Developers should use the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre for up-to-date information. The Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will map out and list priority habitats and species that need protection and enhancement; it also provides guidance on biodiversity net gain in specific areas. 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.

Biodiversity Net Gain

CODE CLB 3.2 Biodiversity Net Gain: All development 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)

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

3.5 Westmorland and Furness Council has also published this guidance for delivering the national BNG requirements.

3.6 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.

3.7 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 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 CLB 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: AS02, CS1.1, *AS04, AS08, CS8.1, CS8.2, DM2, DM4*)

Planting Design

3.8 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 space for composting or providing compost bins as a source of organic material for planted areas.

3.9 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.

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 the development.
- 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.
- 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 CLB 4.1 Light Pollution: Lighting in streets, the public realm and buildings must preserve dark skies and minimise or avoid light pollution.

(Barrow: C7, DS5, *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 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 which is directed upwards.
- Light pollution that is either a nuisance to others or undermines the district's dark skies.
- Light pollution that impact protected species, especially where bat roosts are present on or in the vicinity of the site.
- Artificial lighting directed at waterbodies, hedgerows, woodland or lines of trees.

Car Parking

4.4 Most households 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 CLB 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.
- In areas well-served by public transport, with strong walking and cycling links to local destinations, consider reducing car parking provision to enhance the overall design of the development by providing more space for other road users, buildings or spaces. Utilise Public Transport Accessibility Levels and/or isochrone analyses for walking and cycling to identify where reduced parking might be suitable.
- Promote clear lines of vision along streets and from the front windows of houses by placing parking spaces to the side or rear of houses and having meaningful gaps between areas of on-street parking or parking in front of buildings. In-curtilage parking spaces directly in front of windows and doors should be avoided. 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 most contexts because they look less like empty parking spaces when empty.
- Avoid the use of continuous front curtilage parking or parking that dominates views of the site or building from the street. Where front curtilage parking is necessary, include meaningful landscaping or front gardens to mitigate the visual impact of parked cars on the street scene.

4.8 Electric vehicle charging points should be suitably designed into schemes. 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.
- Discretely located rather than be an afterthought that clutters elevations, especially given they are a source of light pollution.
- 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

- Streets that are dominated by parked cars
- Views from principal rooms and homes that are dominated by parked cars
- Windows obscured by parked cars, vans or motorhomes parked within the curtilage.
- Conversions where the curtilage is entirely car parking or is visually dominated by car parking.
- 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 or are out of character with the original building.
- Landscaping and trees that are relegated to the margins of parking spaces
- EV points that clutter building elevations.
- EV charger cables that cross pavements or streets.

5. Built Form

Building Types and Forms

CODE CLB 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 converted building(s) makes a positive response to 'knit into' the urban grain of the surroundings or settlement by respecting its character.

(Barrow: DS5, DS7; Eden: DEV5, ENV3, LS1, *ENV2*; South Lakeland: CS1.1, DM1, AS01, AS08, *DM2*)

5.1 The **urban grain** is the pattern, arrangement and scale of buildings, streets and plots within a place or area. Understanding the urban grain is essential for ensuring that new development knits into the surrounding environment, respecting the established rhythm, scale, and density of the area. This assessment should inform the design approach, guiding decisions on building types and forms to create a cohesive and contextually appropriate development.

5.2 For a building to be converted to homes, the built form and grain is usually defined by the building itself plus the buildings and structures that make up the wider street or its surroundings. For any building 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 relates to the wider street and surroundings.

5.3 These factors all govern the building's 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 building conversions. Outbuildings include bin stores, cycle stores, garages, car ports, garden sheds and other garden buildings. Thought should be given to the design and siting of these. For example, they could be part of the main structure of the house or detached. 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.

5.5 Additional guidance on identifying building types and forms can be found in the National Design Guide. Homes England's Building for a Healthy Life provides guidance on how to apply best practice when designing various urban grains.

Height

CODE CLB 5.2 Building Height: The height proposed in the conversion of larger buildings to homes (for example raising eaves and/or ridge levels) must be informed by the context assessment and any historic environment assessment which will identify prevailing building height(s), the variety of building heights in the site's context, and whether the proposed changes will impact any heritage assets.

Barrow: DS5, H7; Eden: DEV5, LS1; South Lakeland: CS1.1, DM1, AS01, AS08, *DM2, DM3, DM16*)

5.6 Building heights must be informed by an assessment of the surrounding area, ensuring that development reflects the existing variety of heights to better integrate with their surroundings and contribute to the overall character and appeal of the area.

5.7 The building height should reflect site-specific conditions to encourage variety and maintain the character of the area.

- Building heights should respond to the hierarchy of streets and spaces in a proposal. For example, a main street or larger or wider space is generally the appropriate location for taller buildings to help enclose these larger spaces. Similarly changes in building heights may help the transition between the existing townscape and landscape context into the heart of the site.
- Variations in both eaves heights and overall building heights will help break up the uniformity of the streetscape, contributing to a richer urban fabric. Staggered rooflines can be introduced to create visual interest and diversity.
- Building heights should respond to the natural topography of the site. On sloped or uneven terrain, buildings should be designed with stepped or terraced forms that enhance overall visual appeal and better integrate with the landscape.

Uniform roof heights in Kendal but made livelier by the vertical accents of the chimneys and the slightly taller corner buildings containing shops. Views of the wooded backdrop and castle provide added interest.

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

- An approach to built form, grain building height, density, set back distances, building lines and the spacing of buildings that is not informed by the site and context assessments.
- 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

Accessibility

CODE CLB 5.3 Accessibility: Applicants must show how proposed new homes comply with the optional Building Regulation (BR) requirement M4(2) in the proportion required by the relevant legacy local plan.

South Lakeland: all new housing must comply with BR M4(2) and in some cases M4(3) (exemptions may be considered where evidence is robustly demonstrated in line with circumstances set out in policy) (Accessible and adaptable dwellings).

Eden: 20% of new housing on sites of 10 or more new homes must comply with BR M4(2).

Barrow: all new housing must achieve BR M4(1).

(Barrow: DS5, *BP2, HC4, H12;* Eden: DEV5, HS5; South Lakeland: DM11, *DM2)*

5.8 The conversion of larger buildings into homes should be designed to accommodate the needs of all residents and visitors, particularly the elderly and those with disabilities.

5.9 Homes should be adaptable for future change. Flexibility in design will allow for seamless transitions as residents' needs change, reducing the need for costly renovations or relocations and supporting independent living.

Light, Aspect, Privacy

5.10 The home environment plays a pivotal role in shaping the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. A well-designed home not only provides shelter but also supports the physical, mental and emotional health of its occupants. It also supports residents to live sustainably and avoid using unnecessary energy to provide heating and cooling.

5.11 Ensuring that homes are designed with health and wellbeing in mind is crucial for creating environments where residents can thrive. Building conversions can improve or hinder the character of surrounding spaces and their lighting and ambience. Building conversions must incorporate in to designs a consideration of others around it and ensure that excessive lighting of the surroundings is avoided. This approach is key to building resilient and vibrant communities where people can lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

5.12 Applicants should demonstrate what measures have been taken to enhance the health and wellbeing of residents in building conversions. For example:

- The design of building conversions should favour dual aspect layouts which allow for better light distribution and cross-ventilation. This approach enhances the living conditions and comfort within the home and avoids the need for artificial climate control systems. Single aspect, north facing dwellings should be avoided because of their poor natural lighting and limited sunlight exposure.
- The internal layout of homes should minimise noise transmission between rooms, with bedrooms and private living areas placed away from noise sources like roads or communal spaces.
- Thoughtful design strategies should be employed to mitigate adverse impacts on daylight, views and privacy to reduce overlooking of private amenity space and enhance the overall living environment. In building conversions, energy-efficient glazing should be used where appropriate to maximise light penetration while maintaining thermal efficiency and reducing the need for artificial lighting.

Security

CODE CLB 5.4 Security and Safety: Applicants must ensure that public and communal spaces, buildings, streets and paths are directly overlooked through natural surveillance and ensure there is clear and obvious demarcation between

public and private spaces utilising appropriate physical boundary treatments or landscaping elements. Buildings should directly address streets and routes by avoiding presentation of blank frontages or gables.

(Barrow: DS5, I4, *DS2, HC5*; Eden: DEV5; South Lakeland: CS10.2, DM1, DM5, *DM2*)

5.13 Design must ensure that people feel safe both inside their homes and in the surrounding areas. A careful design should consider how each home interacts with its neighbours through a strategic layout, effective boundary treatments, natural surveillance and well-planned parking to create a secure and welcoming environment. Developments should also be designed to promote social interaction among residents as this can lead to a stronger sense of community and foster wellbeing and security. More guidance can be found in the national 'Secured by Design' guides.

- The design of buildings should enable passive surveillance from the front of the plot and the street. This means windows and main entrances should face public areas to enable residents to overlook their surroundings.
- Trees, shrubs and other planting should be selected and maintained to ensure they do not obstruct sightlines.
- Main entrances should face the street to maximise visibility and discourage hidden areas. Focal lighting should emphasise these areas to make them clearly visible and welcoming.
- A clearly defined defensible space or a front garden should be introduced in order to separate public and private areas. This will not only enhance security but will also encourage community interaction by providing spaces where residents can engage with one another while maintaining a clear boundary between public and private space. Such spaces can be achieved through low boundary walls, landscape features or even a change in pavement types.
- Private gardens or other highly enclosed spaces should be located at the rear of properties. Fences can be used in order to maintain a sense of privacy, and they should be constructed using robust materials. These spaces should not be located adjacent to highways or public spaces to avoid undermining the principles of passive surveillance.
- Leftover or residual spaces that lack clear purpose or visibility should be avoided. Careful planning is essential to ensure all parts of the development are purposeful, visible and contribute to the safety and attractiveness of the community.
- Secure car and bike parking should be provided in locations that are visible from within the home.
- Developments should include appropriate and non-obstructive lighting to enhance security, while avoiding light pollution. Lighting should cover streets, pathways and key areas without creating shadows or glare, ensuring that residents feel safe moving around the development at all times.

Accessibility, Light, Aspect, Privacy and Security: what we don't want to see

- Development that does not feel safe or encourages the fear of crime.
- Public spaces, streets and routes that are poorly overlooked by buildings or other people
- Developments that do not consider the access needs of all of their users and potential users
- Private gardens that are overlooked by buildings or public spaces and gardens that border public spaces.
- 'Left over' or non-defensible spaces that can attract antisocial behaviour
- Buildings that turn their backs on streets, spaces and routes.
- Concealed entrances to buildings
- Homes that are not oriented and laid out to achieve the benefits of passive solar gain and natural ventilation.
- Homes that are not designed with adaptability or extension in mind.

6. Identity

Building type, form and detailing

CODE CLB 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, R17; Eden: DEV5, ENV2, ENV3, ENV10, HS2, *RUR3*; South Lakeland: CS1.1, DM1, AS01, AS02, AS08, *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 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 curtilage of surroundings or additional extensions or external fixtures and fittings can all compromise what makes the settlements of Westmorland and Furness special and characterful.

How a conversion can maintain the character of the building and its context, first by undertaking an analysis of the context and building:

1. A large dwelling that may have been two dwellings or a shop and dwelling when it was built. It has very little heritage value.

2. Adjacent buildings have a mix of uses, from residential to commercial, although are of a similar form and character.
3. The boundary treatment is typical of this built up area but has been opened up on the front.
4. Adjacent houses are set back from the road, and have long front gardens, defined by hedges and boundary walls.
5. There are active frontages to the street with a regular rhythm of openings, including front doors.
6. Buildings and openings are primarily simple shapes, without ornate architectural detailing.

How a conversion can respond positively to the site and its context:

1. The windows have been upgraded, but the size and style of the openings remains the same. The original solid-to-void ratio is maintained. If the building being converted is listed, in a conservation area or is a non-designated heritage asset, more consideration would need to be given to the detailing of windows and their subdivision into sashes and panes.
2. The original height, size and form of the building has been retained.
3. Boundary treatments are in-keeping with those of the surrounding houses.
4. A small number of well-spaced rooflights allow for additional rooms in the loft. Their positioning relates to the windows below.

5. Although provision has been made for car parking, it does not dominate the frontage.
6. Neat, discreet solutions have been provided for practical elements such as cycle and bin storage.
7. Soft landscaping, in-keeping with neighbouring front gardens, increases biodiversity and amenity value.
8. SUDS and surface water runoff reduction have been considered, through the use of permeable paving and planting.

6.2 Each 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 structure must be capable of reuse and adaptation without substantial rebuilding, otherwise the scheme is for a new building rather than a conversion. A structural engineer (and one who is conservation-accredited if the building is pre-1914) 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, and for historic buildings, 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. In some cases the character or appearance of historic buildings has been harmed or diluted by inappropriate past alterations. In these cases, the conversion is an opportunity to reinstate or reinterpret external features or details that have been lost or altered. Such features may be window patterns and details, materials and finishes, roof materials, or details such as bay windows, cornices or pitched roofs.

vi. It may be the case that the existing building is of no architectural or historic interest. In such cases, the opportunity should be taken to improve the building's character and appearance through the design of its new roof form, facades, materials and detailing that better reflect the character of the area and/or constitute high quality contemporary design.

vii. Expect compromise and adjustment. The character of the original building may mean that each room cannot be flooded with light, or a standard conservatory or sunroom added, or an exact layout or size of room achieved.

This sensitive conversion of a former school in Great Salkeld demonstrates the fundamental principles listed above. The conversion has responded to the different-sized rooms, ceiling heights, chimney stack locations, window sizes and locations, and the locations of the external doors. The former character and appearance of the building can be clearly understood and appreciated.

This former railway station in Barrow is a grade II listed building with many existing traditional features that a conversion would need to consider as part of its wider significance. These include the slate roof, the arched openings, the multi-colour brickwork and stonework, the large central porch, window and door design and other features and details.

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 original 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.

c. Roofing

   i. In conservation areas and historic places, roofing materials should follow the local identity, with an emphasis on using slate or stone typical of the area, installed using traditional methods, such as laying in diminishing courses, with larger slates at the eaves and smaller ones near the ridge.

   ii. Flat roofs can work well alongside pitched roofs in building conversions if paired with appropriate eaves or parapet details. However, large expanses of flat roof should be avoided, especially around coastal areas, as they are an ideal location for seagull colonies. Such colonies can be a source of nuisance, and can affect the condition and performance of the flat roof and its drainage.

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 be altered to form a smaller window. Existing openings can be re-purposed in a way that keeps the scale and proportion of the original masonry opening. For example, a redundant loading door on an upper storey can become a full-height, frameless window, or the space within the original masonry void reconfigured with a part-glazed mock-door as an alternative to fully glazing the opening.

iv. Avoid splitting tall or broad window openings by putting walls or floor and ceiling structures behind or against these large openings. This will always harm the building's 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 standard-looking modern 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 and to prevent the spread of fire across the elevation.

This mill conversion in Penrith has made minimal alterations to the external elevation, retaining the building's traditional character.

The historic masonry openings have been kept and re-purposed in different ways to suit the mill's new use.

This building near the centre of Appleby has a distinctive layout of newer and older openings that relate to its current and past uses. Any conversion should work with the existing layout of openings in a creative way that maintains local distinctiveness.

This historic building in Kendal was historically a shop with perhaps a home above it. It can be seen that there are walled up second storey windows that could perhaps be re-opened as part of a conversion. Maybe the passageway through the arched opening could be used to give access to individual apartments? There are also historic features and details to retain, with a question of whether to render, limewash or paint over the exposed rubble walling, which was probably historically covered over.

The window pattern of the upper floors looks ideal for habitable rooms in new flats. The boarded openings on the side suggest that access could be provided to the upper floors without much change to the layout of the shop unit at ground floor. There may, however, be compromises to make over the number and sizes of flats due to the building's layout and openings. Barrow.

e. Materials

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

   ii. Walling materials should reflect the local character which, depending on the area, is characterised by the use of stone or bricks

   iii. Modern cladding materials such as timber or composite panels can be used in contemporary buildings but must harmonise with the surrounding environment.

   iv. Modern materials can be a successful addition where they allow a distinction to be made between the old and new. For example, slim aluminium frames to windows and doors can uphold the non-domestic character of a building where applicable, or timber cladding can distinguish the old from the new in a manner that harmonises through the use of natural materials.

   v. 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.

   vi. The use of building materials such as interlocking concrete tiles, plastic, composite or artificial tiles, which are limited to a single size, should be minimised.

f. Spaces and structures around the building

i. Consideration should be given to; the curtilage/space around the building to avoid gardens becoming overwhelmed by parking and/or the removal of front boundaries; the balance of soft and hard landscaping.

ii. The creation of more dwellings in the building means each dwelling must have its own cycle storage and bin storage. These important storage features must be designed into the scheme in a discreet manner that does not harm the character of the site or that of the wider street.

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

iv. Choose surfaces that respect the historic character of the building. Bitmac drives or brick paving or precast concrete flags and edging all bring an overly modern character to the site.

v. Reuse existing stone boundary walls and hedges where possible. Re use existing outbuildings and structures where applicable. The height, materials and appearance of new boundary features should reflect the original/existing examples.

Three very different buildings achieve harmony through the use of similar local stone and a mix of local and Welsh slate. Langwathby.

Bare stone, natural colour render and painted render side by side, giving a variety of textures along with the variations in the designs of the houses and cottages. Langwathby.

Spatial Character in Historic Places

CODE CLB 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 a settlement to meet these needs.

(Barrow: DS4, DS5, HE4, *BP4*; Eden: DEV5, ENV10; South Lakeland: DM1, DM3, AS07, *CS8.6, CS8.10, DM1, 6AS08*)

6.3 Many of the district's characterful and historic places developed in the era before reliance on cars and motor vehicles. Therefore, the impact of the movement and parking of cars in new developments should be considered in relation to the historic context and setting. Successful new housing schemes are often not dominated by vehicles, and driveways and garages can be discrete to housing. The more that parking spaces are integrated as informal components of the design of streets, the more chance there is for design to have a similar spatial character and sense of enclosure and variety of spaces as historic places do. This may be supported by the move to electric powered vehicles, where cars can be parked and charged at discreet charging stations away from the front of houses. In addition, how hard and soft landscaping are handled - verges, hedges, paving, kerbs, pavements - can play a significant part in maintaining a local and/or rural identity in a new development.

Views into and out of development

CODE CLB 6.3 Views: Development retain important vistas or viewpoints and sightlines from the proposed development.

(Barrow: DS5, H7, N1; Eden: DEV5, ENV3, ENV10, *ENV2*; South Lakeland: CS1.1, DM1, DM3, AS02, *CS8.2, CS8.10, DM2*)

6.4 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.

6.5 The type, form and composition of the conversion of larger building conversions into homes must be rooted in local character. This varies across Westmorland and Furness in response to changes in the underlying geology and the historical development of settlements which in turn has influenced not only the choice of local building material but also built forms and methods of construction. Important features – such as historic buildings, ecological designations, trees, hedges and landforms – and the connections or views between them, contribute to character and should be protected and celebrated in new developments.

6.6 A detailed analysis of local characteristics and variations across Westmorland and Furness is available in the accompanying Summary Character Appraisal and Baseline documents. The Context section of the Design code provides further guidance on understanding the site and wider surroundings.

6.7 The applicant must demonstrate and clearly articulate how the proposed development respects or enhances local character and distinctiveness. This must be informed by an understanding of the site context, including any historic character assessment required to support the application.

Glimpsed views like this one matter: from the heart of Skelton, there are views across to the other side of the Eden valley. The district is blessed with an interesting and varied landscape.

CODE CLB 6.4 Historic Design: Where development impacts a conservation area or the historic core of a 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, *BP4;* Eden: ENV10, LS1; South Lakeland: CS1.1, DM1, DM3, AS08, AS07, *CS8.6, CS8.10, DM2, AS02,*)

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.

CODE CLB 6.5 Compatible Building Materials: The colour and textures of new development must harmonise with local character and landscape. Choices of building materials must reflect the quality and character of the built environment and landscape.

(Barrow: DS5, DS6; Eden: DEV5, ENV3, ENV10, *ENV2;* South Lakeland: CS1.1, DM1, DM16, AS01, AS07, AS08, *CS8.2, CS8.10, DM2, DM3*)

6.11 One of the most important ways of establishing a sense of place in the built environment is through the use of materials. Within Westmorland and Furness, the appearance of buildings is largely a direct product of the geology beneath them and locally prevalent building materials. However, in some areas building materials have been imported or manufactured, changing the appearance and character of buildings. Development should respond to and complement existing local character and the surrounding landscape. Where possible, original fabric should be retained or reused, and new materials and work should complement the historic fabric.

Historically it was common to use pigment or render to give buildings a ‘neat’ and ‘clean’ appearance like the building in the middle. As good stone became more common and affordable, local stone was left exposed like the red building on the right. We now commonly see buildings like the one on the left that were once rendered, being exposed. If local stone is less commonly available, texture and colour become increasingly important to new development. Kirkoswald.

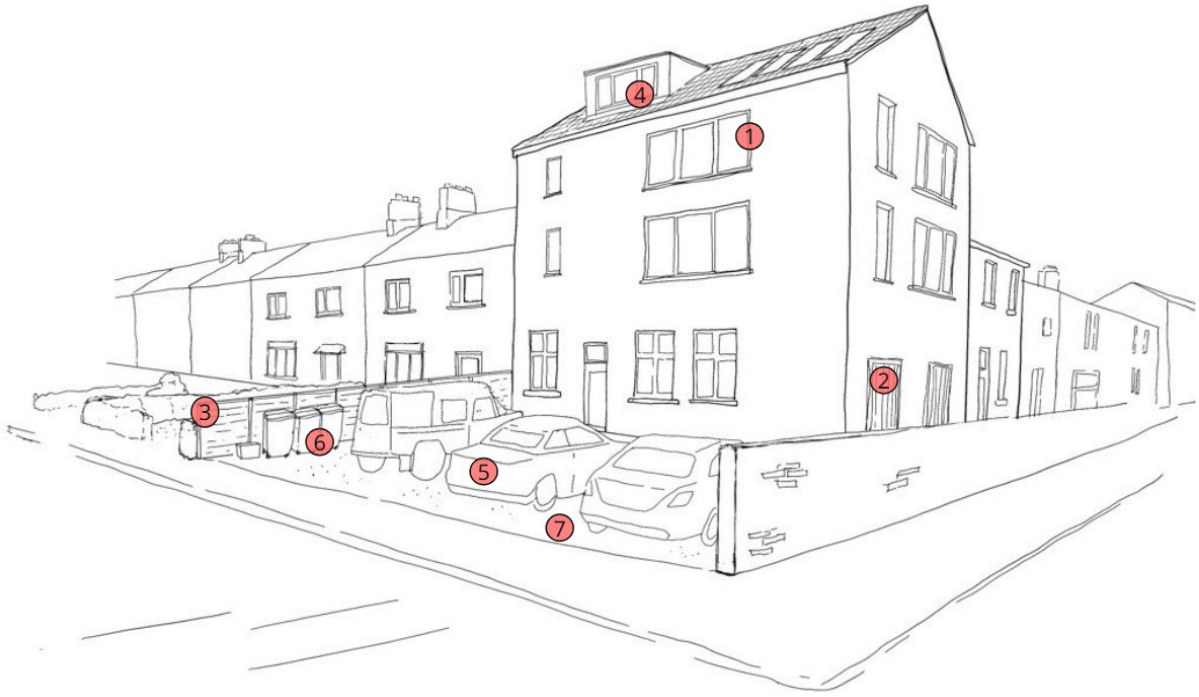
The contrasts in colour and texture can be a source of interest and delight. Kirkoswald.

Identity: what we don’t want to see

- A conversion that ignores the findings of the site, context and heritage assessments.

- Conversions where the building materials, forms, grouping, elevations, details and response to topography collectively do not feel rooted in the locality or respond to the place.
- Mock-historic buildings or mock-historic details rather than a modern interpretation of the 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 buildings identity without also designing identity into the streets, spaces 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.
- Curtilages that lack traditional or well-designed boundary features and hard and soft landscaping.

A poor conversion which ignores context, character and identity:



1. The window layout of the upper storeys has been significantly altered with new openings of different sizes and proportions. This changes the solid-to-void ratio and the character of the building.
2. One of the front doors has been moved from the front to the side, with an additional door added to the side elevation. This significantly changes the front elevation, which is the principal elevation. The new doors are not in keeping with the size or style of the originals.

3. Lower quality materials, not traditionally used in the area, such as close boarded timber fences or precast concrete post and panel fences, have been used for the side boundary.
4. The removal of the chimney, addition of a box dormer and numerous rooflights give a cluttered and disjointed roofscape.
5. Car parking dominates the frontage onto the street, detracting from the character of the street.
6. No or inadequate provision made for wheelie bin or cycle storage, so bins are left in the front curtilage creating a cluttered appearance.
7. The front garden is fully paved over, missing the opportunity for reduction of surface water runoff and biodiversity enhancement.