

Westmorland and Furness Design Code Context Checklist

LUC

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Conversion of Larger Buildings to Homes Context Checklists

These checklists support the Context section for the conversion of larger buildings to homes in the Westmorland and Furness Design Code.

The tables below include question prompts for helping you understand the context of your proposal site in three ways:

- Step 1: the Surroundings of the Site - the area around the site
- Step 2: the Site - the proposal site itself
- Step 3: Heritage Checklist – the historic character and whether there are any heritage assets or historic character to consider

Step 1: Surroundings

Landscape and Historical Context	
What is the settlement character of the surrounding area? For example, rural, hamlet or rural village, large village, market town.	
Are there any notable viewpoints and vistas towards, out of or across the site?	
How well-lit is the place? Does it have street lighting? What other forms of lighting are there? Is light pollution a problem?	
Movement	
What are the existing public rights of way (PROW) routes and other existing footpaths in and around the site?	
What are the current walking and cycling provisions within the surrounding area?	
Nature	
What are the current landscape and natural features within the surrounding area? This can include trees and hedges on neighbouring properties to green spaces, and woodlands within the surrounding area.	
Are there any priority habitats and species (national or local) or designated ecological sites within the surrounding area?	

What is the flood risk, including groundwater, fluvial, marine and surface water, of the surrounding area?	
Are there any mitigation measures being deployed to prevent and minimise the risk of flooding?	
Built Form	
How are boundaries treated within the surrounding area? For example, dry stone walls, hedges, fences etc. Are there any inappropriate boundary features that harm the character of the landscape or townscape?	
Identity	
Are there any notable views or vistas within the surrounding area? Are there any notable views into and out of the site?	
What is the local building vernacular? What do the older houses or farmsteads have in common in their design, size and materials?	
What building materials are common, both for walls and roofs, within the surrounding area? Are there any local variations in colours, textures, shapes and patterns?	
Use	
What is the current function of the site within the settlement or wider context? What are the current land uses both on and adjacent to the site?	

Step 2: Site

Existing building – is the existing building structurally sound and capable of re-use without rebuilding?	
Access points – How is the site accessed by vehicle and foot? Are there any improvements or adjustments needed to improve access?	
Landscape & ecology – Are there any existing natural features on site, for	

example trees, hedgerows, watercourses, ponds, other significant habitat? What is the boundary treatment of the site? How can these features be retained or enhanced? Are there any Tree Preservation Orders on site?	
Drainage – How well does the site drain and can this provide an opportunity for SuDS and wildlife? Does the site adjoin a watercourse? Is the site prone to flooding?	
Existing structures – what existing structures are there on the site? Are there opportunities to retain these structures or re-purpose materials?	
Existing utilities – Are there existing utilities on site that will need to be considered?	
Is the site in a groundwater source protection zone? (https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.html)	
Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitats: Have you identified any protected species or habitats on the site, and what mitigation strategies will you employ to minimise impact?	
Materials and Sustainability: What local materials will you use for construction, and how will you incorporate sustainable practices, such as renewable energy solutions?	
Accessibility Features: What features will you include to ensure the site is accessible to all users, including those with disabilities?	

Typical analysis of the surroundings could include:

- Location and Landscape Setting: Overview of the site's geographical context and its relation to surrounding landscapes.
- Current Land Use: Analysis of how the land is currently utilised (e.g., mixed, agricultural, residential, commercial).
- Architectural Styles: Review of the built environment, noting variations in architectural styles and materials over time.
- Key Views and Vistas: significant views into, out of, and within the site, highlighting any notable sightlines.

- Vegetation and Open Spaces: Assessment of existing green spaces, woodlands, and individual trees that contribute to the landscape character.
- Public Realm Elements: Consideration of street furniture, signage, lighting, and boundary treatments that enhance or detract from the character.
- Local Landmarks: Identification of prominent features or structures that contribute to the area's identity and sense of place.

Step 3: Heritage Checklist

Which character area in the Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Database is the site within? Will the development affect another character area? If so, which?	
What key points about the character area(s) are provided in Appendix 3 of the Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation Database ?	
Are there any listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens or world heritage sites within the site or its surroundings (see https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search)? If so, name them here.	
Is the site within a conservation area or its setting? If so, which area?	
If the site is within a conservation area or its setting, are there any relevant key points from the conservation area appraisal ?	
Is the site within a Parish or Town with a Neighbourhood Plan ? If so which?	
If there is a Neighbourhood Plan, does it have any key messages about local heritage and/or the site?	
Are there any locally listed buildings on or near the site?	
Based on the above answers, does the existing building or do any nearby buildings have any heritage designations? Is the existing building of historic interest in its own right or as part of the wider farmstead or settlement?	
Is there anything that currently detracts from the existing building's character such as its condition, later additions or alterations?	
Are there any clear things that can be done to enhance the historic	

environment such as replacing a modern roof on the existing building or repairing or restoring the existing building or removing harmful later additions?	
Walking over the site and its surroundings, are there any buildings, structures or features that might be of historic interest?	
Is any past activity on the site known? Such as past uses, conversions, occupiers?	

Possible Topics to include in a Historic Assessment:

- A discussion on location and landscape setting
- Historic layout and street pattern – how the area has changed over time based on historic map analysis
- Influence of local geology and topography e.g., agricultural practices, building materials, settlement location
- The potential for below-ground archaeology
- How the settlement relates to the surrounding countryside e.g., fields, back plots, access routes, views in and out
- Roads, railways and other communication routes
- Built form and the variety or consistency of architectural styles
- Existing and historic views and vistas, especially leading in or out of a settlement
- Building materials and detailing
- Open spaces, landscapes and trees
- Public realm areas – including street furniture, lighting, boundary walls
- Local landmarks
- Intangible elements which contribute to the area's 'sense of place' like a noisy marketplace or serene churchyard