

Westmorland and Furness Design Code Context Checklist

LUC

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Brownfield Business Context Checklists

These checklists support the Context section for brownfield business uses in the Westmorland and Furness Design Code.

The tables below include question prompts for helping you the context of your proposal site in four 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 topographical and geological character of the site and its surrounding area?	
What is the surrounding settlement pattern? For example, nucleated, linear (interrupted or continuous), dispersed or polyfocal.	
How tranquil or busy is the place? Is it a focus for activity or an area for relaxation?	
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 is the current network and hierarchy of streets surrounding the site and how do these influence the character of the site?	
What are the current public transport provisions within the surrounding area?	
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 range from trees and hedges on neighbouring properties to green spaces, lakes, woodlands and high fells 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 current provision of open space within the area? This includes amenity space (e.g. for dog-walking or informal play) green corridors and routes (such as river corridors or pathways) and natural green space (e.g. woodland or wetland).	
What are the current water features within the surrounding area, including coastline, lakes, rivers, streams, ponds and other water features?	
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	
Is the surrounding area heavily built up and urban? Or suburban? Or irregular or mixed? What building types are most common, for example commercial sheds, industrial buildings, terraced streets?	
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 streetscape?	

What are the current building lines of surrounding settlement? Are they uniform or staggered? Are they consistent or varied?	
What is the surrounding roofscape of surrounding settlement, including rooflines? For example gabled / hipped / long / stepped roofs?	
What are typical building heights (numbers of storeys) within the surrounding area? Is there a noticeable building height or range of storeys?	
Identity	
Are there any notable local buildings or landmarks within the surrounding area?	
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 current visual amenity of the surrounding area, i.e., the views and surroundings which create the backdrop to the area?	
What is the local building vernacular? What do the older buildings 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?	
Public Space	
What are the different streets and character types of streets within the surrounding area? For example, village lane, market town high street, alleyway, back street, cul-de-sac etc.	

What is the level of enclosure along surrounding streets? For example are street enclosed by buildings and boundary walls or open in character due to gardens or buildings being set back from the street?	
Are there opportunities for social interaction or meeting places nearby? For example, village greens or town squares.	
Is there greenspace or greenery within the public realm? Does it have any value in terms of pollinators, wildlife, amenity or absorbing water or sound?	
Are street trees a common occurrence within the surrounding area? If so, what form and species?	
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?	
What are the characteristics of the local community? What are the local amenities and facilities, for example shops and services?	

Step 2: Site

Access points – How do access points relate to surrounding movement patterns, including by foot, bike and vehicle? Are there any public rights of way or desire lines through the site?	
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?	
Topography – How does topography influence the layout of the site, drainage and both inward and outward views?	
Flood Risk Assessment: Is there a flood risk at the site? What measures will you implement to mitigate any flood risks associated with the site?	
Ground conditions – What is the geology of the site and is it permeable? What were previous land uses on the site? Is there the potential for contaminated land? Is the site likely to be of archaeological interest?	
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 – Are there any existing structures on the site and what is the historic value of these structures? 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 in site layout?	
Is the site in a groundwater source protection zone? (https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.html)	
Noise & air quality – Is there the potential for noise and air pollution to affect future occupiers of the site?	

Orientation – How does the path of the sun affect conditions on site and outward views? What is the existing microclimate on the site?	
Visual Impact: How does your development visually relate to the surrounding landscape and townscape, and what strategies will you use to preserve important views and sightlines?	
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?	
Community Infrastructure: How close is the site to local amenities and services, and how will you ensure convenient access for future residents?	
Environmental Constraints: Are there any legal constraints or protected areas affecting the site that could influence your development plans?	
Microclimate Conditions: How do localised weather patterns, such as wind exposure and sunlight availability, affect your site's design?	
Materials and Sustainability: What local materials will you use for construction, and how will you incorporate sustainable practices, such as renewable energy solutions?	
Community Feedback: How have you engaged with the local community to gather insights and preferences for the development?	
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).
- **Geology and Topography:** Consideration of how local geology and landforms influence landscape features and practices.
- **Settlement Pattern:** Assessment of the layout and density of existing settlements and how they integrate with the landscape.
- **Cultural and Historical Influences:** Exploration of historical land use and any significant cultural landscapes in the area.
- **Connectivity and Transport Routes:** Identification of roads, railways, and pathways that facilitate movement and access.
- **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?	
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 industry, buildings, infrastructure?	

Possible Topics to include in a Historic Assessment:

- A discussion of 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 areas 'sense of place' like a noisy marketplace or serene churchyard