

Heritage Impact Assessment

6 Duke Street Whitehaven

Surface mounted LEVELS signage

CA28 7ER | 28 September 2026

Draft for review

The two signs are confined to ground-floor locations and leave the principal upper-storey decoration visible. The trays nevertheless introduce local visual effects, including apparent interruption of a fascia moulding. The heritage conclusion remains provisional pending confirmation of fixings, affected fabric, illumination and approved details.

1 Purpose and scope

This assessment considers two sets of built-up LEVELS lettering mounted on backing trays at 6 Duke Street, Whitehaven. It is based on AST drawing 206634, Revision 4, dated 2 February 2026; four supplied photographs; Historic England listing information; and published council records and guidance. Sources are listed in section 9.

No site inspection, opening-up investigation or assessment of concealed fixings has been undertaken. The photographs show both signs fitted to the building. Whether these show completed installation or a temporary fitting remains to be confirmed. The depicted appearance is assessed without assuming that the installation matches an approved scheme.

2 Heritage significance

The premises form part of the former Whittles Furniture Store, a Grade II listed building, National Heritage List entry 1086773. The listing describes a three-storey stuccoed building dated 1889, with ground-floor shopfronts, tiered pilasters, ornamental window pediments and a decorative dormer. It identifies group value with neighbouring historic buildings. [1]

Its significance derives from its historic commercial function, elaborate architectural treatment and contribution to the surrounding streetscape. The upper-storey ornament, proportions and relationship between the shopfront and upper façade are particularly relevant to this proposal.

The property lies within Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area. The council character appraisal identifies 6–8 Duke Street as the listed building dated 1889. The historic townscape provides the setting in which its architectural and commercial character is experienced. [2]

The supplied photographs also show views towards the Grade II listed Waverley Hotel. The effect of the vertical sign within these shared views is therefore relevant. [3]

3 Description of the signage

The scheme comprises a horizontal sign above the principal shop entrance and a vertical sign beside a recessed entrance. Dimensions below are taken provisionally from the larger detail drawings in Revision 4.

Sign	Lettering width × height	Tray width × height
Horizontal	2,350 × 512 mm	2,390 × 552 mm
Vertical	403 × 1,850 mm	443 × 1,890 mm

Drawing discrepancies: page 1 gives the vertical tray width as 442 mm, while page 3 gives 443 mm. Page 2 gives the horizontal tray height as 55 mm, while page 4 gives 552 mm. AST should issue a coordinated correction before submission.

Revision 4 specifies trays with 50 mm returns. This does not establish the overall projection of tray and lettering combined; a section detail is needed. The lettering is predominantly teal, with white edging and an orange/yellow accent to the S. Photographs show a light horizontal tray against the light fascia and a blue vertical tray against the blue wall.

Tray and letter materials, coating references, fixing arrangements and illumination specifications are not established by the supplied proof sheet.

4 Planning and design context

Cumberland Council records approval of advertisement application 4/25/2422/0A1 on 20 February 2026 for two sets of illuminated built-up letters at this address. The decision notice and approved drawing schedule have not been verified for this assessment. The register entry cannot therefore confirm that the Revision 4 trays and installed details are authorised. [4]

Whitehaven's conservation-area development guide promotes signage that respects building proportions and architectural character, with careful consideration of lighting and avoidance of visually intrusive corporate treatments. [5]

National policy requires proportionate assessment of heritage significance and the effects of proposed works, with harm avoided or minimised. This draft follows that approach but does not establish full policy compliance while installation details remain outstanding. [6]

5 Assessment of effects

Horizontal sign

The horizontal sign sits above the principal entrance within the ground-floor fascia. Its limited extent relative to the overall frontage allows the upper-storey windows, pilasters and decorative features to remain visually prominent. Its position relates logically to the commercial use and entrance.

The backing tray nevertheless introduces an additional rectangular surface and visible depth. Photographs 3 and 4 show it apparently covering a short section of horizontal fascia moulding and interrupting its continuity. Matching the surrounding colour reduces contrast but does not remove this effect. The age and significance of the affected fascia material require confirmation: covering modern replacement fabric and cutting or drilling historic mouldings have different implications.

Vertical sign

The vertical sign occupies the narrow wall face beside the recessed entrance. Its blue backing reduces contrast with the painted surface. It does not appear to conceal the adjacent window opening or upper-storey decoration.

The sign occupies much of the available width and creates a conspicuous vertical element. The tray conceals part of the scored wall treatment, while raised lettering and the bright accent colour attract attention in close street views, including towards the Waverley Hotel. These effects are localised, but its relationship with the entrance pier warrants attention when confirming dimensions and projection.

Physical effects and reversibility

Surface mounting does not demonstrate an absence of harm. Drilling, anchors, cable penetrations and any cutting may affect listed fabric. A tray might allow lettering to be assembled with fewer wall attachments, but no fixing schedule demonstrates this. The signs may be removable; holes, damage or concealed alterations would still require repair. Full reversibility cannot presently be confirmed.

Illumination

The council application describes illuminated letters. The daytime photographs do not establish lighting type, brightness, operating hours or night-time appearance. Illumination may increase prominence and affect appreciation of the building and neighbouring heritage assets after dark. This effect remains unassessed.

6 Measures to minimise impact

- Confirm dimensions, materials, finishes and total projection in a coordinated drawing.
- Investigate whether the horizontal tray can avoid covering the fascia moulding.
- Record fixing locations, number, diameter, depth and receiving substrate; reuse suitable existing fixing positions where feasible and avoid decorative features.
- Conceal cabling along agreed routes that minimise intervention into historic fabric.
- Specify restrained, static illumination, with brightness and operating hours justified for this location.
- Record affected surfaces and provide compatible repair details for redundant holes or future removal.

For completed work, these details should describe the actual installation and any necessary remedial work.

7 Provisional conclusion

The signs provide identification for the building's current use and are confined to ground-floor locations. The principal upper-storey architectural features remain visible and legible.

The trays nevertheless create local visual effects, particularly the interruption of the horizontal fascia moulding and coverage of the narrow entrance pier. On the available visual evidence, there is potential for a low degree of less-than-substantial heritage harm. This is a provisional assessment, not a finding of no harm or an endorsement of the installation.

A final conclusion requires confirmation of the affected fabric, fixings, lighting and approved details. Any residual harm should be identified and justified; the benefits of the wider refurbishment should not automatically be attributed to this signage design.

8 Sources

Drawing: AST 206634 Revision 4, LEVELS Exterior Light Box Signage, 2 February 2026, four pages.

Photographs: image001.jpg to image004.jpg, supplied by the applicant; dates unconfirmed. Online sources checked 28 September 2026.

[1] Historic England — Whittles Furniture Store — 1086773

[2] Council — Whitehaven conservation areas character appraisal

[3] Historic England — Waverley Hotel — 1086716

[4] Cumberland Council — Application 4/25/2422/OA1

[5] Council — Conservation area development guide

[6] National Planning Policy Framework — August 2026 — HE4 and HE5

Appendix A Vertical sign photographs

Photographs supplied by the applicant. Installation status and dates remain to be confirmed.



Photograph 1 at left shows the tray and lettering in oblique view. Photograph 2 at right shows the sign face and its relationship to the entrance pier and the Waverley Hotel beyond.

The blue tray reduces contrast with the surrounding surface, but occupies much of the pier width. The photographs do not establish the concealed fixing arrangement or whether the visible cable represents the completed installation.

Appendix B Horizontal sign photographs



Photograph 3 Front view of the horizontal sign above the principal entrance.



Photograph 4 Oblique view showing tray depth and the apparent interruption of the fascia moulding.