

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Change of use from ground floor retail and first floor residential (class e & c3) to form a short term let/ holiday cottage (class c3) and external alterations

Address: 70 Main Street, Egremont

Reference: 4/24/2202/0F1

Date: 26/06/24

Description: This building is a red sandstone mid terrace of two storeys. It appears to be roughly contemporary with the Market Hall and Town Hall (1880s)

Conclusion: Suggest design revision

Assessment:

I don't have any objection to the principle of this proposal, and am supportive of the aim to bring the building back into use. It entails a number of external elements:

- Removal of clutter from previous uses. This will have a positive impact on the building, the conservation area, and the settings of nearby heritage assets such as the grade II listed Town Hall.
- Replacement of existing poor quality uPVC windows to the front with higher quality uPVC replacements. Our Conservation Area Design Guide advises use of timber within conservation areas, so this should be the starting point.
- Removal of gloss black paint from frontage masonry. This will have a positive impact.
- Replacement of existing rainwater goods with new cast iron examples. This will have a positive impact.
- Replacement of the front door with a cottage style example in hardwood. To my eye, the style of the new door is slightly out of place. I would suggest a four panelled door, either solid or with the upper panels glazed. However, again I would view the improvement over the existing door as a strong mitigating factor, and there being no harm entailed in the change.
- Sealing the sandstone is not within the scope of planning control in this case, however I would urge caution as such processes are irreversible and can lead to more problems in the long run, such as the external appearance of the stone changing, or moisture becoming trapped behind it.
- New conservation rooflight fitted to rear roof pitch. I would view this as having a negligible level of harm on the building itself in terms of external appearance, but benefit in terms of internal environment. I'd view there as being no impact on the conservation area of settings of nearby assets.
- Removal of rear chimney. Loss of chimneys typically entails some harm to the character and appearance of a building, as they are characteristic of a certain past time that can no longer be replicated, and because they are part of historic heating systems. In this case, it may have served a wash copper, or perhaps a range, depending on the space use. Considering the

height of the chimney and the enclosed position, I would view the impact in this case as being of a fairly low level of harm on the building itself, though there are clearly benefits to the building's usability, and there being no impact on the conservation or the settings of nearby assets.

- Widening of existing door opening to allow French windows. I would view this as entailing a very minor level of harm to the building in terms of loss of historic opening pattern, although appreciate there is benefit to the internal environment and the access arrangements, making the building more useable. I anticipate no impact on the conservation area or nearby settings.
- Replacement of windows to rear. Rear windows are a mixture of uPVC and relatively recent timber sashes in poor condition. See comments relating to front.
- Blocking of rear doorway. Loss of a historic opening entails some minor loss of heritage value, however the proposal to infill the opening with blockwork and face in matching sandstone is good practice and will enable the opening to remain readable without sacrificing a good appearance.

Summary:

Overall, this proposal consists of clear benefit to the building, which will enhance its appearance and usability, bringing it back into use.

Regarding window replacements, Copeland area's Conservation Area Design Guide states that historic buildings of suitable style should be fenestrated with timber. This should therefore be the starting point unless good reason can be provided for using an alternative.

Relevant Policies and Guidance:

Section 72 of the 1990 Act states that "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of [a conservation] area."

Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) asserts that "Development that is not well designed should be refused".

NPPF para. 197 states that "In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation..."

NPPF para. 199 states, in the case of designated heritage assets, "great weight should be given to the asset's conservation", irrespective of whether potential harm is substantial, less-than-substantial, or total loss. Where harm to a designated heritage asset is less-than-substantial, it should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (para. 202).

Paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states the effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account when making decisions.

Opportunities should be sought for new development within conservation areas and the settings of heritage assets that enhances or better reveals their significance. (para. 206)

Referring to assets in a conservation area, NPPF para. 207 states that loss of an element that makes a positive contribution to a conservation area should be treated as either substantial (under para. 201) or less-than-substantial harm (under paragraph 202).

The former Copeland Borough Council's Local Plan contains a number of relevant policies:

- Local Plan Policy ST1C(ii) highlights the importance of protecting, enhancing and restoring the Borough's cultural and heritage features and their settings.
- ST1D emphasises the council's commitment to creating and retaining quality places.
- ENV4A stresses the importance of protecting listed buildings, conservation areas and other features considered to be of historic, archaeological or cultural value.
- ENV4B outlines support for heritage-led regeneration, ensuring assets are put to appropriate, viable and sustainable uses.
- ENV4C aims to strengthen the distinctive character of settlements through high quality urban design and architecture that respect character and setting.
- DM13D outlines the need, in converting non-residential buildings within settlement limits, or in subdividing large residential buildings within settlement limits, for conversion works to conserve the character of the building.
- DM27A outlines support in principle for developments that "protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic, cultural and architectural character of the borough's historic sites and their settings".
- DM27C outlines the restriction in principle of development within conservation areas to that which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area.
- DM27D highlights the necessity of avoiding disrespectful alterations, substantial demolition, adverse effects on setting or views, or changes of use that harm the conservation or economic viability of a listed building.

The Conservation Area Design Guide is a supplementary planning document adopted in 2017 that is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within conservation areas in the legacy Copeland area. It is therefore applicable to this application.

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Conservation and Design Officer