

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Various alterations to refurbish a listed building and the demolition of an existing garage building within the curtilage

Address: 8 Scotch Street, Whitehaven

Reference: 4/25/2310/OL1

Date: 30/10/25

Description: 8 Scotch Street is a grade II listed mid-terrace three-storey townhouse dating from the 18th century.

Conclusion: Further information requested

Assessment:

- Remove panelling from under ground floor staircase.
 - Clarification has been provided that this refers to the area of infill placed above the earlier timber panelling, the element which sits behind the staircase balusters.
 - This is of no significance and **removing it can be expected to have a positive effect on the house overall.**
- Enlarge ground floor hall door to kitchen.
 - The design has been updated and this opening is proposed to be retained and the existing door replaced with a more attractive one.
 - **This will have a positive effect on the building's appearance.**
- Restore hallway panelling and re-reveal door into GF front room.
 - Clarification has been provided that the intention is presently to install panelling on both sides of the 1960s door opening, although I note from having visited recently that the rest of the small vestibule inside the front door is not panelled.
 - **A detail drawing will be provided.**
- Re-panel window reveals at all three floors and lime plaster with casein distemper at ground floor level due to concerns about damp.
 - More information has emerged regarding the panelling that was removed from the interior front elevation walls.
 - In the ground floor front room, highly significant mid-18th century wallpaper has been found behind some of the surviving panelling.
 - This panelling therefore postdates the paper, and is likely late 18th century or Regency (early 19th century) in date.
 - The 1960s application included replacement of the GF front room panelling with new panelling in plywood, however it is apparent that no plywood panelling has been removed within this phase of works.
 - The panelling that was removed differed in design from the surviving panelling, which dates from somewhere (or possibly multiple dates) in approximately the 1750-1840 range.

- The panelling removed in this phase of works was not covered up, whereas the rest of the panelling in the ground floor front room was covered.
- It is likely, therefore, that the removed panelling from the front elevations was more recent in date. Plausibly, the earlier panelling, contemporary with the other panelling in the house, had degraded to the point that it needed replacement by the 1960s, hence the proposal to replace with new plywood panelling, and the decision was made at that time to replace the front elevation panelling with new timber panelling, which was then removed in 2025, and cover up the rest in the GF front room.
- Or that the front elevation panelling dated from another time, with plausible dates probably ranging from the late-19th to the early-21st century.
- The panelling appeared to pre-date the radiators, however the radiators post-date the 1960s work as at the time night storage heaters appear to have been installed. This therefore doesn't provide any clear answer.
- In the absence of a better theory, I suggest that at the time of the 1960s conversion into a pharmacy, the front elevation panelling then in situ, which was likely contemporary with the panelling that still covers the wallpaper in the rest of the GF front room (early 19th century, say), had been degraded by water ingress associated with the parapet gutter (I suggest this is the same scenario that had damaged the front panelling by 2025), and this is why the plans from the 1960s propose replacing it with new (plywood) panelling. Clearly this did not happen as the panelling removed in 2025 was solid timber, requiring the assumption that decision was made to use solid timber instead.
- It is proposed to replace the panelling where it has been removed, with the addition of shutters to the front windows, which appear to have been lost in an early phase of modification.
- Detail drawings will be provided.
- **Working on the theory that the panelling removed from the front elevation walls was a 1960s recreation of relatively low quality, and in poor condition, the proposal would be a significant enhancement to the building.**
- **If one theorises that the removed panelling was contemporary with the other panelling in the GF front room, perhaps late-18th century or Regency, this would be a significant loss, however the evidence suggests this is not the case due to:**
 - It having a different design;
 - It being exposed when the other panelling was concealed, and;
 - New panelling having been proposed as part of the 1965 works.
- **Detail drawings of new panelling, shutters etc. will be provided.**
- Removal and replacement of plaster cornicing.
 - Evidence suggests that cornicing removed from the GF front room dated at least from the 1960s, and possibly later on the basis that it is fitted to the chimney breast, which was modified using stud work in the 1960s phase.
 - The cornicing does not therefore appear to be historically significant, although neither did it look out of place.
 - Any suitable replacement cornicing should therefore be fine. I would suggest a run-in design similar to what may have been used in the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries would match well with the rest of the house, rather than the dentilled style of cornicing more recently fitted in the GF rear main room, which is of a more typically late 19th century, and tends to go with more elaborate buildings.

- However, applied details such as reeded sections or paterae (small, round or square medal-like applied details) were often added to mouldings at that time, so there's flexibility.
 - **I would be grateful for confirmation of the design and locations of new cornicing.**
- Removal of skirting boards.
 - It appears that the majority of the skirting boards in the property have been replaced at some point.
 - **Where it is to be replaced, I would be grateful for a brief detail on where and to what design. I would suggest use of timber rather than MDF.**
- Remove floor boards from 2nd floor bathroom and use to repair other floors through the house.
 - Information has been provided about the proposed floorboard re-use.
 - This is primarily to be from the 2nd floor rear room (bathroom) to the 2nd floor front room.
 - There will be some harm from this, however there is also benefit in repairing areas of damage to other floors, and I would view this as providing justification. Harm is also mitigated on the basis that the boards will be deployed in a way that minimises cutting, where possible.
 - **This might therefore be taken as having a neutral impact on the significance of the building.**
- Demolish garage.
 - I note that there is no planning application for this, and it will be submitted in future.
 - I note that in the 1938 map, this building is shown connected to the back door, which was blocked up in the 1960s, by a link corridor. It potentially housed a wash copper and could have been used in the early 20th century, although there is no external chimney visible now.
 - It could additionally have served as a back kitchen at one point, as such features were at one time common to the rear of Whitehaven's houses.
 - **I would therefore be grateful if comment could be made, or one or two photos supplied, of the interior clarifying whether any historically notable features remain.**
 - **I question whether a planning application is additionally needed at this time as the garage is a building in a conservation area, and its demolition would therefore not be permitted development.**

Summary:

- I am supportive of the application on the basis that it will give this significant building an optimum viable use, and is motivated by conservation good practice despite it not being possible to inspect the elements that were lately removed. The research and documentation pertaining to the 1965 listed building consent application have been particularly helpful in clarifying this.
- Based on updated information and a fuller understanding of the phasing of the building and alterations that have taken place, I do not believe that the removal of the front elevation panelling constituted substantial harm. It appears likely that it dated from the 1960s and was somewhat hastily constructed, in which case its removal and replacement as proposed could be considered an enhancement.

- Details are awaited on the location and design of replacement panelling, cornices and skirtings.
- Due to the finding of significant 18th century wallpaper, there are likely to be implications for the design of replacement panelling that require further exploration and consultation with a joiner experienced in panelling history and design. Detail of this is awaited.
- I question whether a planning application is required before the garage could be demolished due it being a building within a conservation area. I would additionally be grateful for some brief information or a couple of photos clarifying whether this contains any evidence of earlier uses or historically interesting features.

Relevant Policies and Guidance:

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 establishes a need “in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works [for the Local Planning Authority to] have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest” [Section 16(2)]. This requirement also applies to the granting of planning permission affecting a listing building or its setting [Section 66(1)].

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 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) asserts that “Development that is not well designed should be refused”.

NPPF para. 210 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. 212 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. 215).

Where harm to a designated heritage asset is substantial, consent should be refused unless certain conditions can be demonstrated (para. 216).

Opportunities should be sought for new development within conservation areas and the settings of heritage assets that enhances or better reveals their significance. (para. 219)

Referring to assets in a conservation area, NPPF para. 220 states that loss of an element that makes a positive contribution to a conservation area should be treated as either substantial (under para. 213-14) or less-than-substantial harm (under paragraph 215).

The Copeland area’s Local Plan contains a number of relevant policies:

- BE1 provides for the preservation and enhancement of built heritage assets by:
 - Requiring a heritage impact assessment or heritage statement where the proposal would affect a heritage asset;
 - Giving great weight to the conservation of Copeland’s designated heritage assets when decision making;
 - Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to local character and history;

- Supporting proposals for the appropriate reuse of vacant historic buildings, recognising that putting buildings into viable uses consistent with their conservation can help sustain and enhance their significance;
- Supporting proposals that increase the enhancement, promotion and interpretation of Copeland's architectural and archaeological resources;
- Strengthening the distinctive character of Copeland's settlements, through the application of high-quality design and architecture that respects this character and enhances the setting of heritage assets.
- BE2 states that development should preserve or enhance designated heritage assets (or important archaeological sites) and their settings. The more important the asset, the greater weight that will be given to its conservation. Proposals that better reveal the significance of heritage assets will be supported in principle. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset will require clear and convincing justification.
- DS4 outlines the Council's expectation that all new development will meet high-quality design standards that contribute positively to the health and well-being of residents.
- DS5 refers to the importance of achieving good standards of design in both hard and soft landscaping.

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.

Sammy Woodford

Conservation and Design Officer