

**CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

Proposal: Advertisement consent for the erection of 1 no. Free-standing internally illuminated sign and 1 no. Free-standing non-illuminated sign

Address: The Edge Coastal Activity Centre, West Strand, Whitehaven

Reference: 4/25/2357/OA1

Date: 20/11/25

Description: The Edge is a new build in a dramatic, sculptural style that resembles a washed-up sandstone pebble. West Strand is a formerly industrial area developed over the 19th century, but has been mostly cleared and is now part of the open leisure space of the harbourside.

Conclusion: No objection

Assessment:

- Although within the conservation area, this location is far from the gridiron streets of the town, and has a much looser and more informal post-industrial character.
- The Edge dominates this location, establishing a strongly architectural presence on the harbour side that serves as an anchor visually and functionally.
- The proposed signage is modern in appearance, but compliments the appearance of the Edge, which is itself largely responsible for establishing the architectural character of this location, which was to a great extent undefined and a kind of stylistic vacuum following the decline and clearance of industry here.
- I therefore view the proposed signage as appropriate to the building, which defines the architectural character of this area, and do not believe it will exert any appreciable influence beyond it to the broader harbour or town.
- I would view this as entailing neutral impact on the conservation area, justified by the benefit provided to the navigation and functionality of this key new piece of regeneration, which overall has had a strongly positive impact on the conservation area.

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 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).

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.
- BE6 controls advertisements, whereby applications for consent to display advertisements will be permitted where the proposal will not have an adverse effect on either amenity or public safety.
- 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.

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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