

COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL  
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PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS INCLUDING FOOTPATH  
RESURFACING, NEW ACCESS RAMP, ALTERATIONS TO  
EXISTING RAMP TO CREATE NEW RAISED LAWN, NEW  
STREET FURNITURE, LIGHTING AND LANDSCAPING  
WHITEHAVEN CIVIC HALL, LOWTHER STREET,  
WHITEHAVEN, CUMBRIA.  
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Parish                    Whitehaven

This application relates to the area of public space which is located outside the Library and Civic Hall. It is proposed to refurbish this area to provide an improved public space in front of the civic buildings along both Scotch Street and Lowther Street. The project forms part of the Whitehaven Regeneration Programme.

The proposed refurbishment involves the resurfacing of the hard space with a limited palette of high quality grey paving, the introduction of new street furniture, enhanced planting and a new lighting scheme. The proposal has been designed to create four distinctive zones which are defined by a change in surface materials:-

Library Space - the existing large tree is to be retained and a small area of new seating is to be installed immediately in front of the library.

Lowther Street Plaza - a new square is to be created in front of the Civic Hall featuring new paving, benches, cycle stands and the introduction of replacement planting along the road frontage.

Civic Hall Entrance - the steps and ramp are to be refurbished to emphasise the entrance to the Civic Hall. New sign posting will create links to the town centre and harbour. The Civic crest is to be resited onto the side elevation of the Hall to make it more prominent.

Scotch Street Green space - a raised lawn containing new tree planting will provide a small outdoor amenity space. It is also proposed to attach pictures to the side of the Civic Hall facing onto Scotch Street to create a street gallery.

The existing street lighting is to be upgraded and extended to include wall mounted lights on the buildings and also up-lighters on the trees, benches and steps to create a distinctive evening environment.

An application for the removal of the five existing trees proposed in this application was approved in April. This permission was given on the basis that six semi-mature replacement trees were planted in this

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open space. It was also agreed that four additional trees would be planted at a local park within Whitehaven town centre. The submitted scheme is consistent with this consent.

In terms of consultations, both the Council's Access Officer and the Copeland Disability Forum welcome the proposals but have suggested some amendments to the scheme to improve inclusive access on this shared surface, especially for the blind, to meet DDA standards. These have been passed onto the applicant for consideration. The Crime Reduction Design Advisor at Cumbria Constabulary has suggested some minor changes to ensure that the space does not become a target for anti-social behaviour. These suggestions have also been passed on to the applicant. The Council's Landscape Officer has requested that method statements and a maintenance programme are requested for all the soft landscaping. The Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer welcomes the proposal which he considers will enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area at this point.

There are a number of relevant planning policies within the adopted Local Plan against which this application should be judged. Policy TCN 3 encourages development which improves the general environment within town centres. Policy TCN 9 sets out a strategy for Whitehaven town centre which encourages environmental improvements and the use of high quality materials. Policy ENV 26 requires all development to preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area, in particular improvements in the quality of townscape. Policy ENV 11 encourages the planting of new trees as a way of achieving a quality environment. Policy ENV 27 seeks to protect trees within the Conservation Area.

This is an important site within the Conservation Area which provides the main thoroughfare for people walking between the Civic Hall/Library and the town centre. The existing public space is tired and outdated. It is also cluttered which makes it difficult to navigate, particularly for the visually impaired, wheelchair users and the elderly. The proposed works will provide a much improved space that will be more pedestrian friendly and also more attractive in the street scene. The submitted proposals are of an appropriate design and will significantly improve the appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. It will also establish a scale and quality commensurate with the civic character and function of the area and should be supported.

Recommendation

That the application be referred to Full Council under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 and recommend approval subject to the following conditions:-

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2. No development shall commence until samples of all surfacing materials to be used in the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be constructed in accordance with the approved details.
3. No development shall commence on site until a scheme for the protection of the existing mature tree adjacent to the library which is to be retained as part of the proposal has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme of protection shall be implemented before any ground works commence on site and shall remain in place for the duration of the construction period.
4. No development shall commence until a Landscaping Management Plan indicating a method statement and a maintenance schedule for all the soft landscaping areas within the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Landscaping Management Plan shall be adhered to at all times thereafter.

The reasons for the above conditions are:-

In compliance with Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

To safeguard the character and appearance of the development in the interests of the visual amenity of the Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation Area

To ensure that the existing tree which is important to the amenity of the area is afforded adequate protection during construction works

To ensure that the approved landscaping scheme is implemented and maintained to an appropriate standard

Reason for decision:-

The submitted proposals are of an appropriate design and will significantly improve the appearance of this part of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policies TCN 3, TCN 9 and ENV 26 of the adopted Copeland Local Plan 2001-2016

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