

**CUMBERLAND COUNCIL**  
**CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

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**Proposal:** Extension and alteration to create a community hub

**Address:** Cleator Moor Library, Market Square, Cleator Moor

**Reference:** 4/23/2275/OF1 and 4/23/2253/OL1

**Date:** 12/10/23

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**Description:** Cleator Moor Library is a grade II listed single story structure dating from 1906. It is styled in the classical, stately fashion favoured for civic buildings up until about the Second World War. The building is a Carnegie library, funded by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. It and the Local Government Offices next door, which occupies the central position in the square, form a pair, and a little civic core for Cleator Moor along with the Memorial Fountain (also grade II listed) and the Market Place in front.

**Conclusion:** Request further information

**Assessment:**

- The intervention proposed is fairly major, consisting of a projecting rear extension that will link together the two listed buildings, making them useable as a single space and providing new amenities.
- I would anticipate harm in the following forms:
  - Material alterations to the Library in order to facilitate the extension;
  - Harm to the setting of the Library through the addition of the extension;
  - Material harm to the Local Government Offices to facilitate the extension;
  - Harm to the setting of the Local Government Offices to facilitate the extension;
  - Harm to the setting of the Memorial Fountain through addition of the extension;
  - Harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area through the addition of the extension;
  - Harm to the setting of 5-13 Jacktrees Road (grade II listed) through addition of the extension;
  - Harm to the setting of 13-20 High Street (grade II listed) through addition of the setting;
  - Harm to the settings of the remaining non-designated heritage assets positioned around the square.
- Taking those in order:
  - Material alterations to the Library
    - Removal of small rear extension to the Library to facilitate access. This is fairly low impact. The extension makes a neutral or possibly slightly negative impact on the appearance of the building.
    - The alterations to the foyer and entrance will improve the appearance of the building, which is currently rather enclosed upon entry. The building retains historic features, and this will enable them to be better appreciated.
  - Harm to setting of the Library

- Status as a prominent standalone building is eroded. This is fairly low impact as the prominence of the building from the front is maintained, and the additional elements are attractive and carry a considerable functionality increase that will be to the building's long term benefit.
- Material harm to Local Gov Offices
  - Removal of two windows; opening up of lower ground floor at rear. Loss of some historic fabric. The lower ground floor to the rear is less sensitive, but the loss of the windows on the gap between the buildings is more moderate. Given that this space will be internal, and there are clear functional benefits to allowing access to the upper floor, I would view the level of direct harm to the building to be justified.
- Harm to the setting of the Local Gov Offices
  - Erosion of status as standalone building. I would view this as low impact, as the building is already connected at the rear to a projecting wing, and the frontage of the building, where its character is communicated most strongly, will retain its prominence. The value addition of the extension justifies this low level of harm.
  - The building has experienced substantial refitting, stripping out and partitioning over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and these features harm the significance of the building. The alterations to the interior layout and circulation could be expected to have a positive effect.
- Harm to the setting of the Memorial Fountain.
  - The level of harm here is low and more than compensated for by the benefits. The public realm scheme can be expected to have a positive impact on the setting of the Fountain, and on the frontages of the two main buildings.
- Harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area
  - I would view this as minimal and more than compensated for by the benefits, which will be considerable. The removal of the clutter of the 1993 railings scheme from Market Place and replacement with more varied, thoughtful and high quality materials will improve its appearance and useability considerably. To the rear, what is currently an open space little used save for accessing the surrounding buildings will become much more animated and a place in and of itself. This too could be expected to bring considerable benefit.
- Harm to the setting of 5-13 Jacktrees Road
  - There will be very little impact to the setting of this building, save from the public realm works to the Market Place, which are an improvement. The roof of the 1996 entrance extension on that side will be reprofiled.
- Harm to the setting of 13-20 High Street
  - I would anticipate mainly enhancement by virtue of the public realm works. The frontage of the connecting volume between the two buildings will erode their prominence as standalone buildings from the same period, but only slightly due to its smallness and modesty of detailing.
- Harm to the settings of the remaining non-designated heritage assets
  - The Conrad Atkinson sculpture is proposed to be relocated. This will entail moving the three elements several metres from their current position and reorientating them through 90°.

- To my knowledge, the orientation and location of the sculpture is not a part of the artistic impact of the piece, and the new location close by will preserve its artistic value while allowing it to be appreciated by more people, as it is framed both within the composition of the redesigned square and in the view from the café windows.
- I anticipate benefit to the views from the windows of the buildings overlooking the square, and benefit to views from within and across the square in which those buildings appear.

**Questions arising:**

- The access ladder onto the upper extension roof is slightly questionable. I have seen these integrated in new development in a way that seems appropriate, however, are more discreet positions or types available here, as the ladder may clutter the linear rooflines of the new extension?
- Could the windows on the historic buildings be repainted in an alternative colour, e.g. a grey to complement the extension? Brilliant white looks anachronistic and modern, and grey may be both subtler and make a link with the new elements. Alternatively, a dark green for the windows and doors of the historic buildings could be bold and attractive in an Edwardian way and really give the historic buildings some freshness. The shade of the Local Government Office's front door would probably work well across all the historic windows and doors, but would need testing carefully.
- As the red sandstone is a strong colour, it would be good to have a better understanding of the larch colour. How is it expected to look when it first goes in, and is it expected to fade? If so, over what period? I've found an example called *House for a Chemist* by Brown and Brown Architects, and the combination of larch cladding with red sandstone looks great, which reassures me of this example, but it would be good to understand the specifics with samples or photos of where the product has been used elsewhere previously.
- I'm unclear about the purpose of the timber clad section to the left hand side of the rear upper floor of the Local Gov Offices. I note from photos that there is an unsightly pink diagonal section here where a part of building to the rear appears to have been historically demolished. Is the cladding to cover this?
- With the large expanse of glass on the south elevation of the café, is there a risk of overheating on hot days?
- There is little detail relating to the PV array installation. Are the panels to be installed flush with the roof surface, or on top of it? Will holes need to be made for new services, and where will the inverters, control units etc. be mounted within the building(s)?
- Is it proposed to clean the masonry as part of the work?

**Summary:**

The proposal appears to be well designed when considered against the National Design Guide, bringing benefits to the buildings in a wide range of aspects.

Though there are some harms proposed, mainly through loss of prominence of the two main buildings from some angles, and removal of some historic fabric, I would consider this to be acceptable and compensated for by the benefit, with judgement reserved on certain aspects, outlined above in Questions Arising.

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## 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 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 emphasizes 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.
- DM10 emphasises the need for high quality design and quality places. Part B requires design to respond to local character at multiple scales, paying attention to plot size and arrangement, massing and scale, interstitial spaces, and materials. Part C requires the incorporation of existing features such as landscape and vernacular style.

- 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.
- DM15A – Part D outlines the need, in converting a rural building to residential use, for the proposal to preserve the essential character of the building and its surroundings. In this regard, existing features of interest and external facing materials should be retained.
- 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”.
- DM27B: “Development proposals which have a significant adverse effect on a Scheduled Ancient Monument or its wider site or setting will not be permitted”.
- 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 Copeland area’s emerging Local Plan contains a number of relevant draft policies, to which limited weight can be given:

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