

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

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**Proposal:** Demolition of former public house and rebuilding of new office facility

**Address:** Park Head Inn, Egremont

**Reference:** 4/26/2092/OF1

**Date:** 21/04/26

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**Description:** The Park Head Inn is a former public housing, likely constructed as a row of cottages in the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and converted to an inn in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a long, low two-storey structure, with roughcast walls and slate roof.

**Conclusion: Recommend refusal**

**Preamble:**

- This application follows one from 2025 for the change of use of the former Park Head Inn into office space.
- The new application seeks total demolition and replacement with an office.
- An attached visual structural assessment from WDS identifies areas where movement has occurred, and other structural defects.
- I have not carried out an inspection myself, however, from the attached photos, the structural issues didn't appear terribly severe. The out of plumb frontage, at least from the photos, appears only slightly out of plumb, and the bulging rubble retaining wall to the rear, judging by its quite old-looking pointing all being intact, moved a long time ago and has not moved since. Rubble buildings do naturally tend to move a little, particularly where there have been major internal wall removals, so that is not entirely unexpected.
- However, I don't dispute the basic finding that the building needs quite a long list of repairs and that it would be more economically viable to demolish and replace it.

**Building significance:**

- As reported in my previous consultation response on 4/25/2245/OF1, the building appears originally to have been a row of miners' or workers' cottages.
- Although in a location plausible for a coaching inn, historic map data from 1898 shows it as "Parkhead Inn", but does not show yards or stables, suggesting it was not a coaching inn.
- "Park Head" existed as a named location by 1774.
- My hypothesis from this is that the building is a row of miners' or workers' cottages constructed before 1774 and converted into an inn between 1861 (when it is named "Parkshead") and 1898 (when it is named "Park Head Inn").
- There is an Ordnance Survey benchmark on the building frontage. This is a historic type of survey mark that allowed a levelling rod to be positioned accurately. According to the Bench Mark Database, this one dates from the First Primary Levelling of England and Wales on the Kirkby Kendal to Carlisle geodetic line, levelling between June 1843 and December 1844, in which it was described as "Bolt in North corner of H. Hartley's house, Park Head; 4.00 ft

above surface". This shows that the construction of the row took place prior to Dec 1844, and that its conversion to the Park Head Inn took place after then, correlating with the map evidence. It also shows that the northern house was owned by H. Hartley at that time. The height of the mark is given as 231.180 feet above Liverpool datum (which was the Ordnance Survey datum until 1921, at either St John's Church in central Liverpool (1840-1844) or mean sea level at Victoria Dock, Liverpool (1844-1921). Interestingly, it is shown as 230.4 feet above datum on the OS map of 1898.



- Additionally, the building was associated with a local Victoria Cross recipient, Harry Christian, who saved the lives of three men at the battle of Loos in 1915, and was landlord of the inn for some forty years (presumably from around 1920-1960). Reportedly, he kept his VC behind the bar, and is mentioned in a plaque on a wall at Low Mill on the other side of Thornhill. A memorial stone was laid for him in Ulverston, where he was born, in 2015. The episode for which Christian won the VC was adapted in graphic form in a May 1981 issue of Victor Comic.
- The building should be considered a non-designated heritage asset by virtue of its association with Harry Christian VC. It may also have some communal value in the local area due to its use as an inn for well over a century. Though heavily altered, it appears to have started out in life as an 18<sup>th</sup> century row of cottages, and retains historic fabric in terms of wall masonry and timbers. Additionally, OS benchmarks have some significance. Though over 500,000 of them were originally created, they are nonetheless an important part of the story of the whole country, and contain clues as to the past of places, as recounted above.

#### **Impact:**

- In contrast to the previous application, the demolition of the building would result in the total loss of all the forms of significance identified above.

#### **Summary:**

- The building is a non-designated heritage asset, therefore the application should be accompanied by a heritage statement according to policy BE1 of our Local Plan.
- In determining this application, impact on its significance should be taken into account when making the decision.
- Also, in accordance with BE1, the Council should support proposals for the appropriate reuse of vacant historic buildings, recognising that this can help sustain and enhance their significance.

- The Council should support proposals that increase the enhancement, promotion and interpretation of the former Copeland area’s architectural and archaeological resources.
- BE4 highlights that development should preserve or enhance such heritage assets. Proposals that better reveal the significance of heritage assets will be supported in principle. Proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets or their settings should demonstrate that consideration has been given to their significance.
- I don’t see evidence in the application that the building is unsavable, and given that it has some significance, and that demolition would completely remove this, it would be preferable to find a way to re-use it. The report from WDS states that it is unlikely the movement (to the front elevation) is still occurring. This is likely to have occurred shortly after the internal walls were removed.
- The WDS report highlights the substandard nature of the retaining walls to the rear of the property, and that these pose a risk to workers on site. I think these walls and the raised car park level ought to be distinguished from the inn itself – I have no objection to the car park retaining walls being dug out and rebuilt.
- I wonder whether a scheme of modernising the existing building, reconstructing the car park retaining walls, possibly in a slightly different position or with a different appearance, and extending the building as space demands, would result in a suitable building while retaining the forms of significance identified above.

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**Relevant Policies and Guidance:**

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...”

Paragraph 216 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.

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;
  - 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.
- BE4 refers to non-designated heritage assets, saying that development should preserve or enhance such heritage assets and their settings. Proposals that better reveal the significance

of heritage assets will be supported in principle. Proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets or their settings should demonstrate that consideration has been given to their significance.

- 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.

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