

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Conversion to Three Bedroom Dwelling

Address: Former barn adj. Hensingham Hall, Hensingham Square, Hensingham

Reference: 4/23/2326/OF1

Date: 12/12/23

Description: This is a former barn, perpendicular to the road and adjoining Hensingham Hall

Conclusion: Request further information

Preamble:

- The barn is of indeterminate age. It is at least mid-19th century and quite possibly 18th century.
- The barn makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and should be considered a non-designated heritage asset on the basis that it has historic value by evidencing Hensingham's history and historic functioning and architecture. It additionally has some aesthetic value, being obviously of traditional construction, belonging to a time when agriculture existing alongside other uses in the middle of Hensingham, and being tucked away so as to introduce a sense of mystery.
- Its setting has been eroded by dilapidation and poor quality alteration and large areas of unattractive hard surfacing.
- I am supportive of the principle of converting this building to a three-bed house, and believe opportunity exists here to safeguard its future while enhancing and better revealing its significance and that of the conservation area.

Questions and suggestions:

- The heritage statement and design and access statement submitted with the application appear to be for other applications nearby, rather than this project. If the heritage statement could be made more specific and enhanced with a selection of photos of the building, that would be of great assistance in understanding the impact of the proposal and of creating a record of the building's current state.
- Is the wall masonry designed to be visible. It is shown as squared or possibly snecked rubble on the drawings, but if it is random rubble in particularly poor condition, a rendered finish may be preferable. I'd suggest, if the masonry is soft red sandstone and is left exposed, that a lime-based pointing mortar may help to slow the rate at which the masonry degrades.
- Is the roof to retain the existing slates with additional material to match, or have replacement in new slate?
- The Copeland area's Conservation Area Design Guide urges retention of timber as a material for windows and doors in residential buildings, so this should be taken as a baseline unless there is good reason for departing from this guidance. With barns, there is less clear precedent for timber windows as cast iron was sometimes used too, however it is unlikely

that a uPVC set of windows and doors would preserve the building's character and so conflict with policy DM13D of the Copeland area's existing Local Plan.

- It would be of assistance if a proposed site plan could be provided that shows the location of any walls and trees to be removed (tree removal in a conservation area may require prior notice via a Section 211 form to be served to the Council), and of changes to surfacing materials e.g. the parking.
- I'd request the use of flush-mounting roof lights, with a flashing that allows them to be mounted close to level with the roof surface.
- On the first floor north elevation there is a tall blocked opening. This is shown as having a raised sill as proposed. Has it been considered to set the base of the modified opening level with the first floor? This would provide an interesting effect internally to the lounge and would also retain most of the characteristic proportions of this opening, which is also on the building's more visible elevation.

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 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.

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 emphasises 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.
- 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.
- 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”.
- DM27C outlines the restriction in principle of development within conservation areas to that which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area.

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