

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Signage

Address: Tesco, Lancashire Road, Millom

Reference: 4/25/2294/OA1

Date: 28/10/25

Description: A former red sandstone goods shed associated with the railway, now converted and extended into a branch of Tesco. It is surrounded by carparking adjacent to Lancashire Road and the bridge on St George's Road.

Conclusion: Suggest design revision

Background: In August 2024, an application was received for various advertisements including internally illuminated fascia signs and a gantry sign. At the time, I requested a reduction in the scope of the signage, which seems likely to introduce clutter without a clear need in all cases.

This application was withdrawn.

Assessment:

- To the SW elevation, it is proposed to replace the existing top-lit flat sign with a new internally illuminated TESCO sign consisting of individual letters and blips.
 - Our Conservation Area Design Guide advises against the use of internally illuminated signage. Discreet top lighting hidden under the eaves of the building would likely give a better appearance, more suited to the conservation area (although I do note that the existing downlighting is somewhat unattractive, and the outlook for the elevation is the car park).
 - I also note that the arched side door is shown as being in the wrong position on the Proposes Elevation. It is also missing on the Existing Elevation. I presume it is not proposed to move the doorway and that this is just a mistake in the drawings, but would be grateful for clarification.
- The SE elevation receives an updated TESCO sign over the door in similar fashion. See above.
- A dibond panel is applied to the wall beside the door, with opening hours etc printed on.
 - I have no objection to this addition.
- An ATM booth situated to the south of the building is proposed to be updated visually. Currently, this is clad in dark horizontal timber cladding. The revised scheme consist of blue and white signage. I do not object to this signage as it is smart and is in the context of an ATM booth.
- NE elevation – new internally illuminated TESCO sign replacing existing sign. See above comments.
- NW elevation – additional internally illuminated TESCO sign. See above comments.
- Site signage. It is proposed to add five new pole signs. These will add to the clutter of the site, but do carry some useful content.

- I would say Signs 11 and 12 seem the least obviously useful. Sign 11 shows the direction of parking and entrance, but all three options are in the same direction. Sign 12 simply reads TESCO, which should already be apparent.
- This type of sign can degrade within a few years, so I would suggest making use of powder coated aluminium or stainless steel for the poles, and stainless steel for the fixings, so they don't rust.

Summary:

- Consider whether the TESCO wall signs can be top lit by discreet fixtures under the building eaves, rather than internally illuminated, in order to better conform with the guidance of the Conservation Area Design Guide.
- If internally illuminating, consider whether control can be placed of the brightness and colour of the light. A lower, warmer light will probably look a lot more attractive than bright, cold light.
- Consider whether signs 11 and 12 are really necessary, or can be omitted from the scheme.

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).

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.

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.
 - 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.
 - BE5 refers to the design of shopfronts, urging that appropriate shopfronts, whether historic or recent, should be retained and restored as opportunity allows. Proposals relating to them should consider relevant guidance, including the Shopfront Design Guide supplementary planning document.
 - 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.
 - DS5 refers to the importance of achieving good standards of design in both hard and soft landscaping.

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.

The Shopfront Design Guide is a supplementary planning document adopted in 2021 that is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications affecting shopfronts within the legacy Copeland area.

Sammy Woodford

Conservation and Design Officer