

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Change of use of property from former commercial (bank) & residential use to proposed Millom arts & enterprise centre including demolition of existing outrigger extensions & bank vault, refurbishment & landscaping and proposed extension to accommodate a ground floor cafe

Address: 5 Market Square, Millom

Reference: 4/23/2246/0F1

Date: 19/10/23

Description: This is a late 19th century former bank, constructed as one of a group of different banks at around the same time during creation of the Market Square in Millom New Town.

Conclusion: No objection

Assessment:

- The existing building makes a positive impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- The open space to the north-west contributes both to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed church, by allowing the area within its curtilage to be better appreciated from the Square and St George's Road.
- The walls to the south-east adjacent to the alleyway also contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area and setting of the asset, although are less visible.
- Overall, the site contributes positively to the conservation area and the settings of the heritage assets with which it interacts.
- The north-east side extension, historically added to house a vault, makes a negative contribution to the appearance of the building. Although it makes a small contribution to the significance in the sense of being a complete part of a banking facility, I would view this as being secondary compared with the visual harm caused by the vault's external appearance. This also makes a negative contribution to the conservation area and the settings of nearby heritage assets, and poses a significant challenge in allowing the building to be successfully adapted.
- Fairly few features of interest are retained internally, however, where these are exposed, the heritage statement commits to retain them to enhance the character of the offering.
- I would consider the boundary wall of the church precinct to be part of the curtilage of a listed building. The proposed extension is not in contact with this wall, and therefore will not directly impact it.
- The views both from within the precinct and into it from the Square will be affected by the new extension. I would consider this to be a handsome, restrained and high quality intervention that interfaces satisfactorily with the existing building, is modest in height to preserve views of the trees from outside and the Market Square buildings from within the precinct, and which will make a considerable contribution both to the building and to the conservation area. The external space around the extension and former bank complements

them well and will introduce a softer transition between the extension and its surroundings on both sides.

- The retention of most of the boundary stonework on the south-east perimeter of the site minimises the harm here from loss of attractive historic fabric while allowing maximal reuse and adaptation within the footprint, as does retention of the roadside wall fronting the garden.
- It does not appear as though the PV installation will be visible from the public parts of the conservation area.

Summary:

- I'm supportive of the proposal in principle, and would view it as being a sensitive, well-designed scheme that enhances and better reveals the significance of the heritage assets affected.

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.
- 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.
- 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 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