

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Installation of eight rapid electric vehicle charging stations within the car park of the bridges retail park. Sixteen existing parking spaces will become EV charging bays, along with associated equipment

Address: Bridges Retail Park, Flatt Walks, Whitehaven

Reference: 4/23/2136/0F1

Date: 07/06/23

Description: This site is part of the car park of Bridges Retail Park. It is outside any conservation area although there are heritage assets nearby, including the boundary wall on the south side of the car park (un-listed), some of the buildings at Castle Forge, and the grade II listed wall on the west side of the retail units, which is one of the last surviving remnants of the gardens of Whitehaven Castle, which occupied what is now the site of the retail park.

Conclusion: No objection

Assessment: The proposal is quite self-contained and consists of a small level of harm to the setting of the non-designated heritage assets mentioned above. Due to the distance and lack of visibility with the listed wall, I would consider its impact to be neutral.

There would appear to be clear public benefit in providing additional chargers, and given the small level of harm and functionality of the car park, I would view this proposal as justified in conservation and design grounds.

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)].

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.
- 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".
- 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.

Sammy Woodford

Conservation and Design Officer