

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Application for consent to display various advertisements including internally illuminated fascia signs and an internally illuminated gantry sign

Address: Tesco, Lancashire Road, Millom

Reference: 4/24/2276/0A1

Date: 3/9/24

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: Request design revision

Assessment:

- This proposal appears to show an increase in the total amount of signage, featuring a number of new external signs including a substantial 4.3m high internally illuminated gantry sign.
- I question whether there is a need for this given that I assume the vast majority of people who use this shop are regular local shoppers who don't have any trouble locating it. Additionally, the hello/goodbye pole signs would seem to make the shop frontage less welcoming by adding clutter to it even as they ostensibly make it more welcoming.
- Our Conservation Area Design Guide contains guidance on signage design, and that internally illuminated box signs will not be permitted. Lighting should be discreet.
- There is also a large sign proposed for the east elevation featuring a printed image background. I question whether this enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area, or whether there is a sufficient practical purpose, such as highlighting the location of an entrance or communicating important information, to compensate.

Summary

- This scheme seems excessive and likely to introduce unjustified clutter.
- I question the inclusion of the hello/goodbye pole signs (9 & 12), the illuminated gantry sign (8), and the vinyl image sign on the east elevation (3). My view is the scheme would be better without these.
- The signs that replace the existing rather ugly rectangular Tesco signage on the building (1 & 2) appear similar but with the addition of internal lighting. These elevations are set back from the road further than sign 8, and are less visible to people than signs 9 and 12, and are also replacements of existing signage, and the internal lighting will replace bulky, unattractive projecting lights. This may therefore be acceptable.

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.”

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 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.
- 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