

CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Proposal: Consent to display advertisement signs

Address: 14-15 Market Place, Egremont

Reference: 4/25/2277/OA1

Date: 04/09/25

Description: These buildings are historic though of currently unknown provenance. They may be 19th century, although this part of town is the oldest and there are buildings opposite dated 1667, so further inspection of the structure would potentially reveal more information.

From a historic photo of c. 1950, 15 Market Place appears to have subsequently been remodelled through the raising a reprofiling of the roof and removal of chimney stacks. Additionally, a side door onto Bookwell has been removed (behind where there is now a lamp post), along with a wall and small gateway giving access to it behind a low wall with railings.

The buildings are considered heritage assets.

Conclusion: Request further information and design revision

Assessment:

- I have no objection to the general direction of design, which looks smart and professional, nor to the quantity of signage.
- I note that the visualisation of the façade signage appears different in the Proposed Elevation drawings compared with the Advertisement Details document – the version in the elevation drawings features a green tint to the stock photo panels, whereas the versions on the detail image have these in their original colours.
 - I would view the version on the proposed elevation drawings as better, as the green tint unifies the colour scheme into the overall house colours, whereas the version shown in the detail drawing is visually noisier and more discordant.
 - Use of a gradient map to apply the house colour scheme to the stock photos would provide a more coherent overall appearance.
- Additionally, the detail drawing version is wider. The side parts make a pair of inverted triangles, however, on the façade elevation version, the truncation of these triangles at their outer sides causes the negative space between them to read visually more like a range of mountains. I think this is quite a clever piece of design as the negative space and green colour scheme convey the appearance of mountains and forests from a distance, providing an obvious reference to West Cumbria, but are still clear and legible.
- Finally, there is also a difference in text colour. The proposed elevation drawing façade sign features lettering that might be painted on in a matching shade of green to the overall colour scheme, whereas the detail drawing shows black text that is peg-mounted and backlit.
 - The former looks more of-a-piece with the overall colour palette, and painted on lettering would provide a more appropriate appearance for the conservation area.

This is the preferred approach. Backlit peg-mounted lettering is also often not durable, and parts can detach within a few years.

- Lighting is kept to the minimum needed in conservation areas. Having the façade signs unilluminated would be preferable. During daylight, there is no need for illumination at all, and at times where it is both dark and the centre is open, e.g. late on winter afternoons, the shop window or fascia signage should be readily able to carry out this role.
- Because of these three differences, I would say the elevation drawing version façade sign is better visually and more suited to its location, more coherent, and also allows the text to be read more easily as the greater visual noise of the detail drawing versions otherwise competes with it for attention.



Figure 1 The two variants of the facade sign, for illustration

Summary:

- I view the overall design direction as positive.
- The drawings in the application should show consistent designs.
- I would view the façade sign version shown on the proposed elevation drawing as preferable in conservation and design terms, for the reasons outlined above.
- I would recommend avoiding peg-mounted backlit lettering and instead opting for painted on or otherwise directly applied lettering, with the shop window signage, potentially in combination with the fascia signage, providing the illuminated option.

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 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.

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.

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