

**CUMBERLAND COUNCIL**  
**CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

---

**Proposal:** Reinstate dormer window; alterations to existing mansard slate roof to accommodate internal stair and lift; remedial works to timber floor structures and lintels to address wet rot deterioration; replacement of existing lift with new fully compliant lift to serve all levels; continuation of central stair up to third floor level to provide compliant access and means of escape - replacement of existing timber sash, casement and fixed light windows - internal insulated linings to external walls

**Address:** 6-8 Lowther Street, Whitehaven

**Reference:** 4/24/2247/OL1

**Date:** 14/08/24

---

**Description:** 6-8 Lowther Street, formerly known as Whittle's, and before that as Davis's Chusan Tea Warehouse, is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century building with somewhat Italianate styling elements. It is listed grade II and is within Whitehaven's conservation area.

**Conclusion:** No objection

**Assessment:**

- Reinstatement of dormer lost due to degraded purlin. I do not anticipate any harm from this. The building is in a poor condition and requires a new use, and this reinstatement of the dormer, matching its appearance, could be expected to have a neutral impact.
- Reprofiling of the roof to accommodate the top floor stair headroom. The section of the roof affected is hidden from the street and does not in itself architecturally contribute to the building, being instead a rather unattractive part of the building that has been largely ignored. I would expect the reprofiling to have a small positive impact on the building's significance by making this part of it more attractive.
- Timber floor and beam works. This seems reasonable, and will be particularly necessary given the insulation strategy. Use of sand/cement plaster is typically discouraged in solid walled buildings as it can contribute to raised moisture levels in the wall, where there is an imperfect barrier to water entry from outside or above. However, this needs considering in combination with the insulation strategy.
- Insulation strategy.
  - This would typically be considered poor practice, and a recommendation made that insulated lime plaster, possibly in combination with wood wool or sheep's wool, be employed to reduce the likelihood of the wall becoming damp and leading to damage and poor performance.
  - I am encouraged by the presence of calculations and evidence of considered discussions showing awareness of this problem. It appears to me that the heat loss calculations supplied in an appendix do not factor the possibility that as the masonry will be outside the internal insulation, its temperature will drop, and this will probably increase its moisture content, which will reduce its thermal performance. There is also a gamble being made here that the temperature of the inner face of

the masonry, behind the insulation will not drop to the point that condensation forms, which would result in an as-built performance considerably lower than the calculations and risk damaging materials set into the wall such as joists, lintels, windows etc.

- As this building is rendered, I think it likely that problems will not be encountered as a matter of default, and that where they are it will be in response to a specific water ingress problem either through the render or due to the parapet gutter. This therefore makes the issue more about specific hypothetical defects.
  - Nonetheless, it is possible for small defects to occur, potentially cumulatively, without incurring suspicion, particularly where the building is not or cannot be thoroughly and regularly inspected. I'd therefore suggest installing some of the internal boarded surfaces in such a way that they can be easily removed to allow a visual inspection of the insulation and inner face of the masonry as part of the building's regular condition inspections.
- Lift. The existing lift has some historic value, and some aesthetic value, though this is lesser. The fact an inspection and report on the lift have been produced is helpful. This clarifies that the lift consists of a mix of different works over different periods, some more valuable than others. It also does not appear viable to retain the existing lift and make good due to the proposed use and requirements of users. Given:
  - The high priority on getting the building back into use;
  - The importance of having a lift to the ongoing functioning of the building;
  - The mixed nature of the lift, which is not an excellent example of a particular type;
  - The attractive proposed design of the replacement lift,

I would consider the loss of historic heritage value and minor harm to the external aesthetic value of the building by virtue of the addition of an 850mm projection to the roof, to be compensated for by improvement in the building's usability and internal aesthetic value.

- Stairs. I do not view the closing off of the rear staircase as entailing harm to the heritage value of the building. I am also supportive of the proposal to insert a new staircase linking the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors as this appears well justified and an opportunity to link the floors better and provide an architectural feature. I understand the details of this, and the lift casing, will be agreed in a future application.
- Windows. Inspection suggests that the existing windows are free of historic glazing, with the exception of the stained glass, and are in extremely poor condition. The stained glass has been set aside following removal of the windows, and will be re-used. Replacement windows will match existing in details, with the exception of using 10mm slimline glazing units with solid glazing bars and putty beading. These details, combined with the irreparable state of the existing windows, provide justification for the change. I view this as being positive in heritage terms as it will improve the appearance of the building.

---

#### **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).

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.
- 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