

**CUMBERLAND COUNCIL
CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

Proposal: Conversion and associated works into single luxury dwelling

Address: Former Methodist Church, Scotch Street, Whitehaven

Reference: 4/22/2399/OL1 & 4/22/2398/OF1

Date: 21/03/23

Description: Whitehaven's former Methodist Church is one of the more impressive landmarks within the conservation area. It is by TL Banks, who also designed the Market Hall and Bath House, as well as various other well-known buildings in the region. It is notable both for its scale and for its use of polygonal granite for the majority of the walls. This feature makes it unique among Whitehaven's buildings, although the red sandstone dressings, which have degraded, are a more familiar feature.

Its current condition is dilapidated. The building is at considerable risk and exerts a problematic influence on the conservation area in its current state. It had greatly suffered in the treatment of its interior character over a period of decades. Sensitive reuse has the potential to bring a major improvement to this prominent street corner. It is grade II listed, and has been vacant since 1996.

Conclusion: No objection (See below for suggestions of two conditions)

Assessment:

Since my previous consultation response, updated information has been received clarifying that secondary glazing will be provided to the internal windows, but details of this and restoration will be submitted in a separate listed building consent application.

- Where secondary glazing can be unobtrusively fitted without the need to, for example, damage shutters or other joinery, it is typically not necessary to secure listed building consent.

Internal lining will be done in non-hydraulic hemp lime plaster. This is good practice, although as before **I request the use of a condition to specify it in more detail prior to its installation.**

Some annotations have been added to the plans and sections, and a label corrected.

Please refer to my previous request for a condition requiring detail of the full height partition separating the nave from the foyer. A drawing would probably be the best way of providing this information.

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 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