

Planning, design and access statement

3 Catherine Street, Whitehaven



January 2020

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for internal and external changes to No. 3 Catherine Street, (Whitehaven) and its change of use to residential accommodation.
- 1.2 The proposed alterations to the building are intended to improve its appearance and facilitate a better standard of residential accommodation. The proposal would be of benefit to the character and appearance of the area.
- 1.3 The proposal will seek full planning consent for conversion to residential accommodation, under Class O of Schedule 2 (Part 3) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.
- 1.4 WE also note that the residential accommodation that would be created would help to meet the high level of need for housing in the area. The provision of new housing is a matter on which the Government places great importance.
- 1.5 We believe that the proposed development is entirely acceptable with regard to current policies and all relevant considerations, it should therefore be granted planning consent, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.0 Contextual Appraisal

Site Location

- 2.1 The application site is located within Whitehaven town Centre, situated just off the main (high street) Lowther Street, walking distance from the nearest bus stop and around 10 mins travel to Whitehaven railway station situated to the north of the site. The site is generally within walking distance of public transport and shopping opportunities and in one of the most sustainable locations of the district.



The application site's location in Whitehaven

The Surrounding Area

Whitehaven is a town and port on the coast of Cumbria, England. Historically a part of Cumberland, it lies equidistant between Cumbria's two largest settlements: Carlisle and Barrow -in-Furness. It is the administrative seat of Borough of Copeland District Council and has a town council for the parish of Whitehaven.

The site is also located within the town's Conservation Area, and adjacent to Lowther Street which contains a number of listed buildings including the Methodist Church, 59 Lowther Street (Savings Bank), 48 Lowther Street (Strand House) 81-83 Lowther Street, (just to mention a few), all grade II listed. Photographic examples of these buildings are shown overleaf



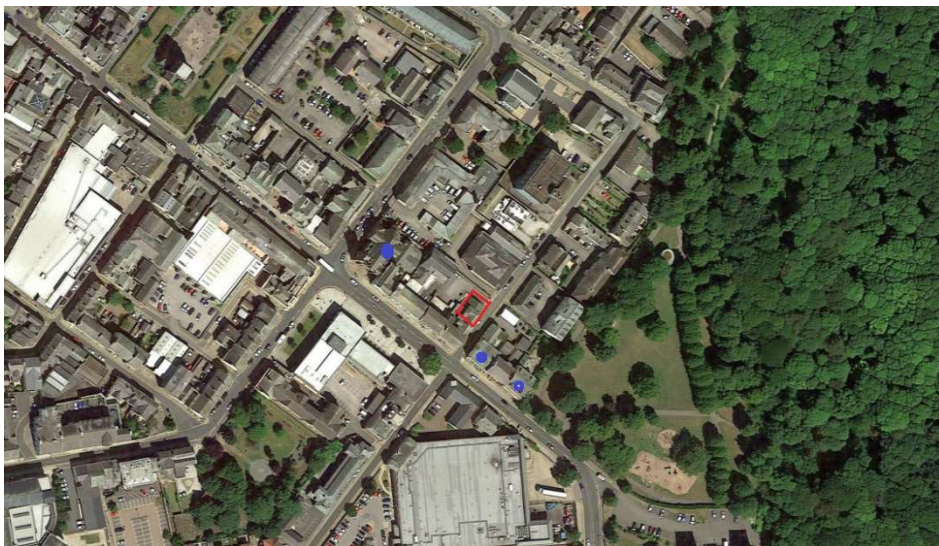
Methodist Church



81-83 Lowther Street



48 Lowther Street



The application site's (marked in red) location in Whitehaven, showing The Methodist Church and 81-83 Lowther Street (marked in blue)

2.3 Due to the historic nature of many of the buildings in the area, the part of the Conservation Area close to the application site retains much of its historic charm. Photographs of the application site and its surroundings follow.

2.4 Catherine Street dates back to about 1750 but it's uncertain who the eponymous Catherine was. Architecturally it begins in promising style with Somerset House at the end of Duke Street which looks down Catherine Street. This fine mansion was built in 1750 by Samuel Martin who made his fortune trading with America for tobacco.



Somerset House



Terraced Houses – Catherine Street



Adjacent to application, Lowther Street, Whitehaven



The application site 3 Catherine Street.

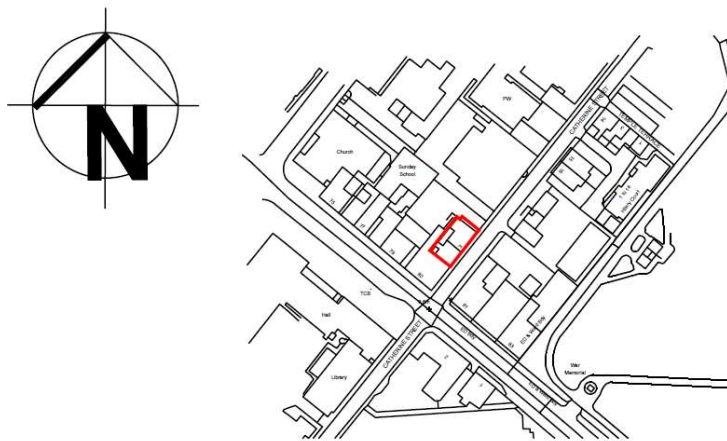


Rear of Catherine Street, Telephone exchange building

- 2.5 The area is otherwise characterised by a mixture of uses with residential, retail office and community uses all in close proximity. It is located close to, but outside of, the main shopping areas within the town centre,

The Application Site

- 2.6 The land under the Applicant's control is adjoined to No. 80 Lowther Street, consisting of the existing building and its parking area for approximately 8 spaces top the rear of the rear.
- 2.7 No. 3 Catherine Street is a vacant surgery building, and it fills the majority of the northern part of the application site. The proposal would seek to change the use class of the building from D1 (non-residential institutions) to C3 (Dwelling houses)



Location Plan

Scale 1:1250

Proposed Site Plan

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1 No. 3 Catherine Street is a two storey building, it has an established surgery use , this change of use is able to take place due to the provisions of lass O of Schedule 2 (Part 3) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (hereafter referred to as the GPDO).
- 3.2 This application proposes external alterations to the building, which would have the dual aim of improving its appearance and providing a more suitable standard of accommodation within the building. Details of the proposed alterations are set out below in Section 6 (Design) of this Statement.
- 3.3 The proposed conversion to residential accommodation would provide 6 apartments, with 5no. one-bedroom apartments and 1 no. two bedroom apartment. The internal configuration of the apartments would be designed to best utilise as much of the space of the existing building as possible.
- 3.4 No existing parking spaces will be provided within the site area, however as this development is in such a highly sustainable location, we do not believe parking should be a

constraint of the development. Directly outside No.3 Catherine Street there is provision for 3 cars in marked bays and a further provision for 7 cars in marked bays along the street.



View of Catherine Street, looking towards Lowther Street

4.0 Planning policy review

- 4.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for Copeland (2017-2035) comprises the saved policies in the Local Plan which states the housing target as follows: *“The current adopted Core Strategy contains a very ambitious target for housing growth, with a target of 230 homes per annum in the first five years which rises to 300 per annum for the remainder of the Plan”*. For 2016/2017 154 dwellings were built leaving a shortfall of 76 dwellings. In addition, the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) constitute important material considerations.
- 4.2 However, paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that where Local Plans are out of date, as the ‘due weight should be given to relevant policies. According to their degree of consistency with the more up to date policies of the NPPF. This effectively means that the material considerations formed by the NPPF can be of greater importance in decision-making and can be accorded more weight than the Local Plans policies where these are both out of date and inconsistent with the NPPF.
- 4.3 The fundamental precept of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 14 states that for decision -taking, this means:
- ‘approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
 - Where the development plan is absent, silent of relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless:
 - (a) Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstratable outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this framework taken as a whole; or
 - (b) Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted’
- 4.4 Footnote 9 then clarifies the policies in the NPPF which may indicate that developments should be restricted relate to a number of issues, such as the protection of designated wildlife sites, landscapes or Green Belt, none of which relate to this application. As discussed throughout this Statement, we do not believe that any of the policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted on the application site, and we do not believe that there would be any adverse impacts which would meet the high test of ‘significantly and demonstrably outweighing the benefits’ that the application would bring. As such, we believe that this application benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.5 Paragraph 49 notes that ‘housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.’ This paragraph also states that

‘Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.’

4.6 Paragraph 17 states that:

‘Every effort should be made to meet the housing and other development needs of an area and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability...’

4.7 Paragraph 19 states that planning ‘should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth’

4.8 Paragraph 47 requires local planning authorities to ‘boost significantly’ the supply of housing’. In this context, it requires local planning authorities to identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites to provide five years’ worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% or 20% where there have been a record of persistent under delivery of housing. This is considered further in Section 5 below.

4.9 With regard to employment land, paragraph 22 of the NPPF states: ‘Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose Land allocations should be reviewed regularly. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regards to Waller Planning.

4.10 With regards to empty housing and buildings, paragraph 51 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities: ‘should normally approve planning applications for change to residential use and any associated development from commercial buildings (currently in the B use classes) where there is an identified need for additional housing in that area, provided that there are not strong economic reasons why such development would be inappropriate.’

Copeland Local Plan 2017-2035 (housing)

The target of 230 per annum was a continuation of Copeland’s target within the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) which was ambitious and represented a significant uplift when compared to house building rates that the time. It should be noted that when the targets were first established in the RSS they were considered to be ‘ceilings’ (i.e. maximum figures), whereas now housing targets are something to be achieved and hopefully exceeded. The Council’s appetite for new housing has not diminished, but we hope now to be more robust and ensure our vision is met.

5 Planning Considerations

The need for housing

- 5.1 The Government places great importance on the need to provide sufficient housing to meet local needs, and this should be primarily be achieved through the Local Plan.
- 5.2 Where there is a shortfall in the supply of housing, national policy states that proposals for new housing should benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development (NPPF, Paragraph 49). This in turn states that permission should be granted unless 'any adverse impacts of doing so would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits' (NPPF Paragraph 14); it is clear from the analysis in this report that there would not be any adverse impacts which would outweigh the benefit of the provision of housing.
- 5.3 The Government's current procedure, which allows the conversion of office buildings to residential use, without regard to the local policy position, is a clear indication of the pressing need to provide housing. This procedure has already been used to demonstrate that the site's change of use to residential development is acceptable in principle, and that no other matters outweigh the importance of providing housing on the site.

Sustainable development

- 5.4 New housing in the town centre will help to enhance its vitality by providing trade for shops and pubs, throughout the week. The site's location within a couple of minutes' walk of much of the primary and secondary shopping frontages makes it ideally suited in this regard.
- 5.5 The site's sustainable location also makes it ideal to encourage non-car modes of travel, thus reducing carbon emissions generated through transport. This is further explained in Section 7 below.

6 Design

Amount

- 6.1 The proposed development is for 6 apartments; this would comprise 5 no. one bedroom apartments and 1 no. two bedroom apartments.

Layout

- 6.2 The layout of each of the floor has been designed to best utilise the existing building to provide 3 comfortable dwellings. The alterations have generally been proposed in order to provide enhanced living spaces. The alterations result in changes such as larger living rooms, where the space is needed most, and other alterations such as the previous first floor surgery into three apartments. In terms of the wider site and refuse collection and car parking arrangements would remain essentially unchanged.

Scale

- 6.3 The scale of the building would generally remain unchanged by the proposal, however the end of the building currently has a one storey element, this would be changed to a two storey element which will complete and balance the elevation of the building form.

Appearance

- 6.4 The building's appearance would be improved through a number of alterations, which would primarily relate to its windows and doors. The proposed alterations are detailed in the list below.
- 6.5 These alterations have been designed with the intention of improving the building's appearance. For instance, by replacing the large existing door with a smaller residential style door to the building frontage on the ground floor. These alterations would give the building a simpler and more unified appearance as a residential development and make it appear more aesthetically appealing.

Ground Floor

- 6.6 Timber glazed sash windows to the front and rear elevation to be replaced by fully glazed sets of new sash windows to match existing.
New glazed entrance doors to building frontage and side elevation.

First Floor

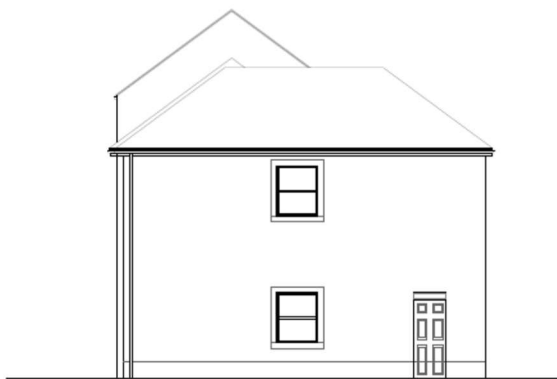
- 6.7 Timber glazed sash windows to be replaced on the front, rear and side elevations to be replaced by fully glazed sets of new sash windows to match existing.

Elevations

- 6.8 Insertion of small obscured glass windows to the basement in what is currently a plain brick façade. Changing the one storey gable end area to a two-storey element completing and balancing the building façade. It is also proposed to amend the main entrance door by moving it slightly to allow the formation of the apartments at ground floor but replicating the same style as the original



Proposed Front Elevation
Scale 1:100



Proposed Side Elevation
Scale 1:100

- 6.9 The proposed new windows in the rear elevations are required in order to provide natural light and ventilation to bathrooms and kitchens. However, these windows would also add visual interest to what is currently a relatively blank brick façade, using materials consistent with the rest of the building. We believe that

they would also help to improve the building's appearance. It is intended that these windows should be obscure glazed.

- 6.10 We believe the building's appearance is in keeping with the historic character of the Conservation Area and the various listed buildings which surround it. The proposed alterations have been designed with the intention that they will make the more successful at doing what it was originally intended to do, appearing as part of its Georgian context.

Landscaping

- 6.11 The site does not currently contain any areas of landscaping, as No. 3 Catherine Street fills the majority of the plot, and the remainder is used for storing cars and refuse bins. There is limited scope to introduce new landscape features due to the site's nature, and so the proposals are instead focussed on architectural changes, as noted above, with the aim of improving the site's character and appearance.

Use

- 6.12 We have explained above in Section 5 that this application proposes the buildings change of use from D1 non residential institutions to C3 residential dwellings.

Amenity

- 6.13 The proposed development would provide a good standard of amenity to the new residents within the proposed apartments which would provide a better standard of accommodation. The provision of new windows would also enhance residential amenity. Meanwhile, obscure-glazed windows on the rear elevation would prevent any potential for overlooking.

Waste

- 6.14 Communal refuse bins would be stored in the area currently used for this purpose in connection with the surgery, to the rear of the building/internal courtyard area.

7 Access

Highway Access

- 7.1 The application site already has a highway access, from Catherine Street, which serves the building to the west of the No. 3 Catherine Street. No alterations are proposed to the existing highway access point, and there would be no intensification of their use.

Public Transport Availability

- 7.2 The site is in a highly accessible location, close to bus stops, which are on the High Street (Lowther Street). From there, bus services connect the site with the rest of the town, as well as nearby villages such as Bransty and Harras Moor.

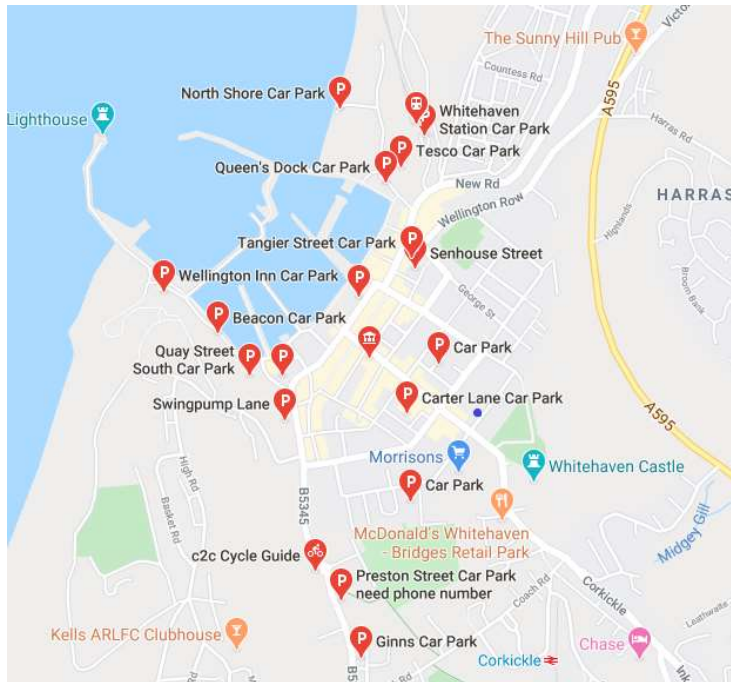
Whitehaven railway station is approximately 20 minutes' walk from site. It provides regular services to Carlisle and Leeds. To the South of the site (approximately 20 minutes' walk also) is Corkicke train station which provides services to Carlisle and Barrow-in-Furness.

Car and Cycle Parking

- 7.3 No.3 Catherine Street's location in the centre of the town and within easy reach of a wide range of services and transport facilities will also attract purchasers with reduced need for car transport and encourage travel by more sustainable means.

Inclusive Access

- 7.4 The 3 Ground floor apartments have been designed to enable easy disabled access.



Car parking zones in Whitehaven (site marked in purple)

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 This application proposed internal and external alterations to No. 3 Catherine Street, and its change of use from Surgery use D1 to residential use C3. These alterations are proposed both in order to improve the building's appearance and to create a higher standard of residential accommodation, internal and external alterations are proposed. These changes are essentially for the replacement of windows this new more appropriate to residential accommodation, the insertion of additional small windows to the rear of the building and the addition of the extension works to the gable end form one storey to two storeys.
- 8.2 The conversion of No. 3 Catherine Street will make a significant contribution to Whitehaven town centre by providing 6, much needed, new dwellings to meet an identified need for housing. New residents in the town will also help to support the facilities and services that exist or may be created. Those residents will be able to access those services and facilities on foot or by public transport, due to the site's sustainable location.
- 8.3 We therefore believe that the proposed development should be approved in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.