

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Proposal: Proposed replacement detached dwelling

Location: **Quarry House, Castle View, Millom, Cumbria, LA18 5AQ**

Planning Reference: 4/26/2150/0F1

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Agent: MVC Design Ltd

1. Introduction & Updated Design Evolution

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared to support the full planning application for a replacement detached dwelling at Quarry House under application 4/26/2150/0F1. It directly responds to the formal consultation advice issued by Samuel Woodford, Cumberland Council's Conservation and Design Officer.

Following initial technical feedback, the layout and scaling has been radically modified from its initial submission. Rather than introducing an unrelated modern aesthetic, the replacement dwelling has been redesigned with a sympathetic style replacement of the original 1897 frontage, enhanced by a subordinate two-storey side extension. Structural failures and material degradation make a full rebuild necessary to bring the building above a reasonable structural condition and protect the applicants long-term investment in the site, but this updated design ensures the street-facing character and silhouette are preserved.

2. Statement of Significance

Quarry House is not listed and not sited in a conservation area, with its heritage value defined by three core categories:

- **Historical Link & Industrial Association:** Built c.1897 alongside King's Quarry, the property marks Millom's late 19th-century slate-producing town expansion. The site holds cultural value due to its relationship with the industrial landscapes celebrated by local poet Norman Nicholson, sharing an immediate spatial connection with the extraction site referenced in his poem "*Millom Old Quarry*". A carved slate datestone inscribed "**D. S. A. J 1897**" is retained on the façade.
- **Architectural Character (Exterior):** The principal elevation features a distinctive traditional slate-stone frontage. This material was likely sourced directly from the quarry workings located immediately behind the residential plot [source: 3]. The front curtilage is enclosed by a traditional historic slate wall that anchors the property into the Castle View street scene [source: 3].
- **Internal Joinery & Architectural Detailing:** While years of structural neglect have degraded the internal wall finishes, some of the core late-Victorian joinery remains intact, including elegant timber newel posts with a decorative ball cap, a solid profiled handrail and symmetrical timber baluster spindles, deeply-moulded architraves, a dado rail, period skirting boards, and a period-characteristic geometric floor tiling to the hall.

3. Structural Justification for Total Loss (Policy DS4 Compliance)

While Local Plan Policy DS4 and paragraph 202 of the NPPF state a preference for the retention and sympathetic repair of historic structures, a comprehensive structural inspection undertaken by Gadsden Consulting establishes that the building fabric is profoundly compromised:

- **Severe Lateral Movement (Category 4 Damage):** The internal stairwell and first-floor hall suffer from extensive vertical cracking measuring **up to 25mm in width** (classified as Category 4 Extensive Damage under BRE Digest 251). The kitchen features severe vertical plaster cracks measuring **7mm to 8mm wide**, indicating that there is currently very little tie remaining between the internal and external masonry walls.
- **Distortion of the Rear Elevation:** The rear elevation has suffered from structural failure to a far greater degree than the rest of the property, showing a severe internal split opening to **10mm** [source: 16]. The structural engineer concludes that a large section of the rear elevation must be completely demolished and rebuilt to ensure stability.
- **Internal Element Failure & Water Ingress:** The chimney breast is structurally compromised and **leaning inwards**, requiring it to be dismantled from the roof level up. Widespread roof slate loss has caused prolonged water ingress and rot within the structural roof timbers.

Rebuild vs. Invasive Repair Options

The structural engineer outlines a minimum repair baseline costing an estimated **£45,000** just to bring the shell up to a basic **"reasonable structural condition"**. This would require completely demolishing the rear wall, excavating all ground floors, and aggressively tying the stone leaves with visible modern helical bars, SockFix anchors, and CemTies.

To take down the rear wall the roof would have to come off, resulting in three structural unstable walls to be further reduced to ensure stability. Its also worth noting once the weight is taken off the walls then more structural movement would be inevitable.

Externally the invasive repair works suggested by the structural report would result in a lot of scars on the existing stonework, any repairs will inevitably leave mortar of a different tone to the existing, additional stonework will not match the existing until years of weathering have taken place and even then they wot be an exact match. Our opinion is that this work would be a **negative contribution to the heritage asset** compared to taking down and rebuilding the house sympathetically as applied for, it will after all only look new for a few years until the stonework has weathered.

There is no guarantee that the existing stonework is water shot, i.e. the external stonework may have to be **rendered over to ensure it is water proof** and does not allow water transfer the internal faces of the building, if we are forced to retain some of the three walls. From a heritage point of view stonework, even if it is newly constructed, would be less harmful than a rendered façade.

To achieve modern compliance with current Building Regulations for insulation and thermal efficiency, the building fabric would have to be entirely stripped back to bare stone, then building an internal insulated cavity wall. This aggressive process would permanently destroy the surviving internal fabric—such as the moulded plasterwork and doors, which the Conservation Officer highlighted as holding local importance. Therefore, a complete rebuild is the only practicable and safe method to secure the long-term residential future of the site.

4. Housing Supply Dynamics & Strategic Policy Alignment

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 203, the total loss of the non-designated structure is robustly balanced against the significant socio-economic benefits of the replacement dwelling, aligned with the *Copeland Site Allocations Plan*.

- **Addressing Strategic Shortages:** The Local Plan explicitly states that Millom suffers from a verified **"shortage of detached and semi-detached houses"**, with deficits focused on **"larger properties—that is, three bedroom or larger family houses"**. The proposed high-quality, 4-bedroom detached self-build dwelling directly resolves this identified borough deficit.
- **Support for Windfall Infill:** The strategy establishes that Millom's housing targets are expected to be met via allocated sites alongside **"any unexpected 'windfall' housing development that may come along on infill sites within the existing built-up area"**. Because Quarry House sits safely within the established built-up boundary, its high-quality replacement complies with this windfall delivery strategy.

5. Design Response & Heritage Mitigation Strategy

While the property holds local historical context, it carries **no statutory listing** and sits **outside of any designated Conservation Area**. To mitigate the loss of the structure, the scheme executes a highly sympathetic approach that pays direct homage to the original building through specific physical interventions:

- **Authentic Principal Frontage:** The principal front (east) elevation is designed to be faced entirely in natural reclaimed local stone. This meticulously replicates the vernacular masonry character of the original 1897 structure. In direct response to officer feedback, the ground floor canopy has also been reduced to maintain character of similar properties.
- **Subordinate Side Extension:** The proposed two-storey side extension is thoughtfully positioned over the southern garage flank. By incorporating a dropped roof ridgeline and setting this back from the main frontage, this section mimics an extension to the original and remains visually subordinate, ensuring the replicated 'main cottage' structure continues to serve as the primary architectural focal point within the street scene.
- **Roofscape Restoration:** The roof profile is specified to be finished completely in natural slate with dark ridge tiles, protecting the established texture and sky-line identity of Castle View. The silhouette is structurally balanced with a chimney stack located on the south gable.

Heritage Salvage and Interior Replication Protocol

1. **The 1897 Slate Datestone:** The original carved **"D. S. A. J 1897"** slate stone will be carefully extracted from the old masonry and integrated prominently into the new front elevation to preserve the visible history of the site.
2. **Faithful Staircase Replication:** Utilizing photographic evidence, a specialist joiner will turn matching **newel posts, profiled handrails, and baluster spindles** to custom-craft a direct visual continuation of the 1897 staircase. Modern timber architraves and skirting boards will be custom-milled to mirror the exact deep shadow lines of the original trim.
3. **Floor Tile Preservation:** Prior to demolition, a specialist contractor will execute a careful salvage protocol to manually lift and preserve the entrance hall's geometric tiles. These original tiles will be carefully re-laid as a feature floor within the **proposed ground floor cloakroom** where visiting guests can view and appreciate this tangible link to the property's industrial origin.

6. Conclusion

The amended design strikes a perfect balance under NPPF paragraph 203 and Copeland Local Plan Policies **BE1, BE4, and DS4**. It resolves the critical structural failings of the existing shell while fully celebrating the historic, material, and literary narrative of Quarry House. By mirroring the original façade, stepping back the side extension, and executing interior salvage, the proposal successfully preserves the character of Castle View resulting in minimal heritage impact.