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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF A REDUNDANT GROUND FLOOR SHOP/RETAIL PREMISES (AND BASEMENT) CURRENTLY CLASS A2, FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AT 1 CLERK BANK, LEEK ST13 5HE INTO A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING



August 2015



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Planning application for the conversion of a redundant ground floor shop/retail premises (and basement) currently class A2, financial and professional services at 1 Clerk Bank, Leek ST13 5HE into a residential dwelling

INTRODUCTION / CONTEXT

The Design and Access statement has been prepared to accompany the planning application the change of use of no1 Clerk bank, Leek into a dwelling.

The existing property is a three storey premises which occupies the corner of Clerk bank and Church Lane.

The property forms part of a cluster of adjoined buildings. To the left on Clerk Bank is a row of three cottages which are grouped together and are Grade 2 listed with English Heritage under reference no 1268613. Behind the property is a row of adjoined properties, nos 1 to 7 Church lane initially four stories in height, reducing to two storey as the lane rises towards what is known locally as the French Quarter.

The site is within the Leek Town Centre Conservation area, and the property is somewhat of a poor relation not enjoying a listed building status, whilst occupying the middle position of a row of ten listed buildings. Starting from the Maude Church Institute and the former Gramma school on Clerk Bank, also Clerk Bank House, and the row of cottages forming 2, 3 & 4 Clerk Bank on the left. All of which are Grade 2 listed. Whilst on the right hand side is St Edward Church which is Grade 2*, and also the Grade 2 listed Vicarage building, and the recently renovated shops forming no 2 to 4 Church Street. Even across the road, the row of four adjoined buildings starting with the Public House, now called the Green Dragon, to Overton Bank House are all Grade 2 listed buildings on the English Heritage register.

It is perhaps due to being within a cluster of notable and listed buildings that little of the history of this premises can be found. The adjoining premises forming 2 . 4 Clerk bank reputedly date back to the 16th Century having timber Cruck framed buildings behind the stone façade. Curiously the WC serving the ground floor of 1 Clerk Bank is also behind the stone façade of no 2 Clerk Bank and the frost window serving the WC looks out onto the timber panel door at the top of the steps leading to the entrance door of those cottages.

Each of these buildings forming this row were previously retail outlets, and they all seem to have been used as a hairdressing salon during their history.



Photograph by Arthur Goldstraw, Curtesy Lindsey Porter, LEEK 50 years ago: 1

The previous photograph taken sometime during 1950s by Arthur Goldstraw was included with a book written by Lindsey Porter in 2014, is probably the only close up historic photograph available of the premises, which appears be a tobacconist shop or maybe a general grocers judging by the signage for Park Drive and Senior Service.

The undated picture below from a collection of old postcards by Ray Poole, reports that the cottage behind the covered wagon (No3 Clerk Bank?) was the site of the first Co-operative society, established in Leek 1859. It doesn't explain why a ladder is propped to the open window of Clerk Bank House, but no1 Clerk Bank is pictured in the middle of the image with the shop awning.



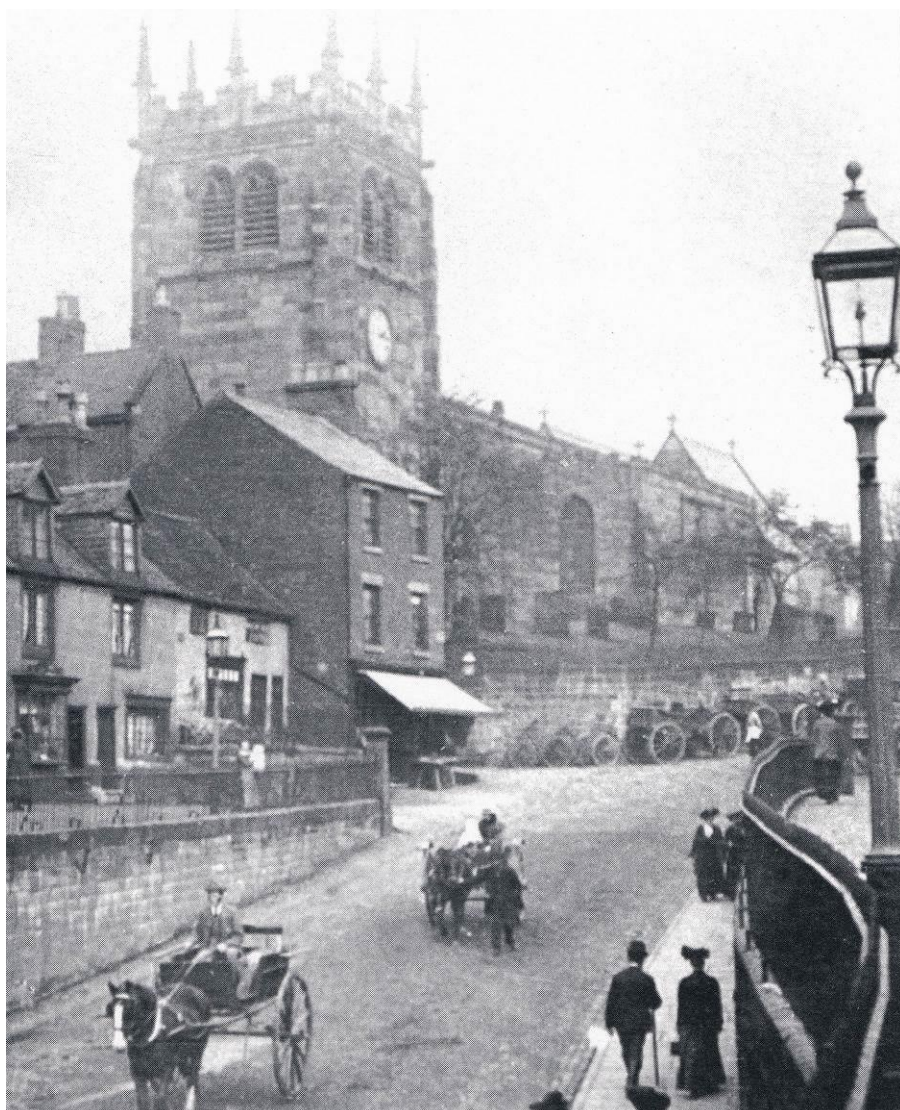
Image courtesy Ray Poole's Leek in Old Picture Postcards

Another historic photograph below from the Ray Poole Collection shown from the other side, possibly earlier than the previous image, shows the shop awning



Image courtesy Ray Poole's Around Leek in Old Photographs

The photograph below is taken from 'The Spirit of Leek:1, written by Cathryn Walton & Lindsey Porter. The book describes the shop as being a butchers shop run by Enoch Harrison in 1904. A trestle table is visible outside the shop presumably displaying wares, but it is unclear what type of shop it is from the pictures.



Photograph courtesy Lindsey Porter & Cathryn Walton, The Spirit of LEEK: 1

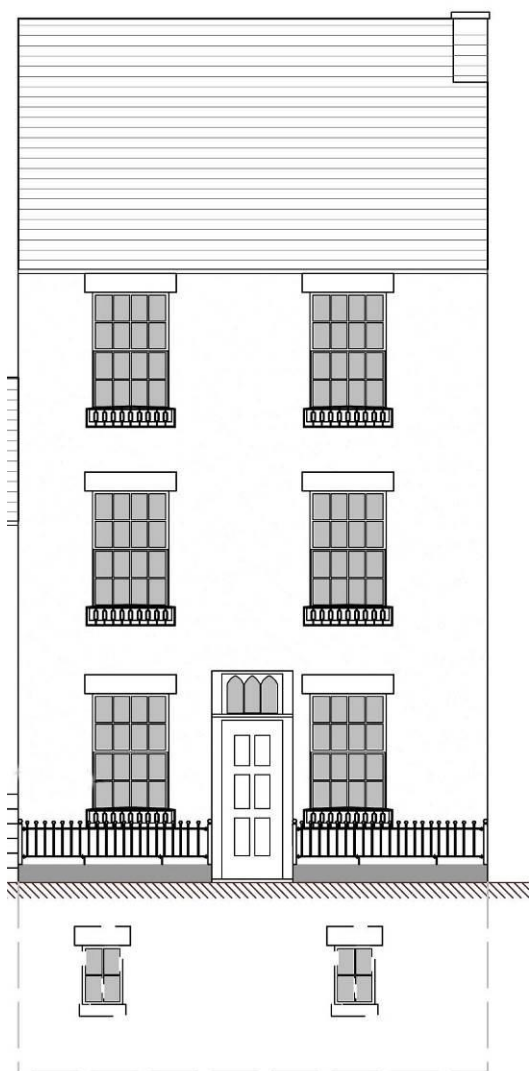
There is evidence of historic settlement within the building, uneven floors and displaced window heads and cills. Extensive structural work was carried out to the premises in February 2003 to stabilise the structure, having a pair of large steel beams installed in the ground floor construction to tie the base of the walls together, and a masonry column taken through the building from the basement to the underside of the second floor to give support to the upper floors. The timber lintel above the shop front was replaced with a steel beam and the shop window/frontage was replaced.

The property currently has a residential flat over the commercial space with the postal address 1a Clerk Bank, occupying both the first and second floor as a single dwelling.

A planning application was submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in 2010 (SMD/2010/0694) for a change of use to 1 Clerk Bank from its historic A1 use class (Shops, retail and hairdressing use) into its current use class A2, Financial and professional services. The permission was granted on 7th September 2010, for use as the Moorlands Tax Shop. The premises were in use until September 2009 when the Moorlands Tax shop ceased trading from there, due to the damp conditions in the property.

PROPOSAL

To change the use of the current planning use of the ground floor and basement premises from A2 Financial and professional services to residential use as a single dwelling.



The existing timber features, signage boards, shop front window would generally be carefully stripped out and the façade would be built up using matching masonry construction to incorporate a pair of timber framed vertical sliding sash windows, 8 over 8 glazed panels with stone head and cill details to match existing, also decorative window flower boxes, each side of a new front door.

Curiously none of the historic photographs demonstrate the use of the basement windows or pavement lights, however the original window and central door openings are still evident in the basement, and the void is still present beneath the concrete slabs outside the shop front.



The proposal is to utilise the basement area as living accommodation. The damp walls are to be tanked internally with a cement based waterproof screed and the timber floors treated against decay. The blocked up window openings shall be re-instated and fitted with a double glazed window unit to allow natural light into the basement rooms, and the external light well shall be re-instated and capped with an aluminium framed toughened glass panel to prevent debris collecting in the lightwell.

Ventilation will be provided to the basement using an Envirovent positive input ventilation system, ducting fresh air into the bedroom accommodation and extracting stale air from the bathroom, providing a healthy living environment with continuous fresh filtered air to prevent surface condensation and eliminate mould growth.

It is proposed to strip out the existing utility type metal frame internal staircase and replace it with a more domestic style timber staircase with moulded handrails leading to the basement area.

On ground floor an existing partition wall shall be removed to open up the rear of the room for use as a dining area, leaving the structural column in place to provide support to the upper floors. A new window is proposed to be formed in the side elevation, below the existing windows serving the upper floors, similar in style, timber frame vertical sliding sash this stone lintel and cill for natural light and ventilation purposes, similar proportions but slightly smaller in size than elsewhere on the building.

The existing shop/retail area would generally be kept as an open plan living space for lounge and dining area. An existing kitchen and WC would be retained and refurbished with new appliances, etc.

SITE APPRAISAL

The premises occupies the corner plot of Clerk Bank and Church Lane and is typical of local and national terrace properties having a corner shop, selling groceries and general household goods within a residential area.

The site was once surrounded by numerous textile mills within easy walking distance, and housing for the workers dwellings. The demise of the mills, together with advent of larger self-service supermarkets and easier access to cars means the workers have to travel further afield to work, with many travelling into Stoke, Macclesfield or Congleton and therefore the shopping pattern has changed with it.

The site occupies a curious position, neither described as town centre or slightly out of town. During the past 10 . 15 years the shop has exchanged hands several times, selling antiques, household nic-naks, interior design, and hairdressing and none of them lasting particularly long.

The location of the property for retail in the modern world is a definite handicap, it is neither in a town centre setting, located on a main road frontage but with difficult parking.

For the purposes of the Development Plan the site lies within the town's development boundary where there is a general presumption in favour of development.

USE / AMOUNT

The proposed scheme would essentially make use of the existing layout, albeit modernised, new heating, plumbing and re-wired comprising lounge, dining room and kitchen, the basement would be utilised for bedroom accommodation

On first and second floor, the existing dwelling would be retained and modernised as required with new kitchen and bathroom fittings.

The existing shared rear yard will provide an amenity area.

LAYOUT

There is no proposed extensions or alterations to the existing layout of the building

SCALE

The scale of the existing building shall not be altered as part of the proposal.

LANDSCAPING

The concrete flags at the front of the property would be taken up to exposed the lightwell void, which shall be covered with an aluminium framed toughened glazing panel to prevent debris collecting in the lightwell. The edge of the lightwell is proposed to be edged with a stone plinth, with metal railings to match the existing to define the entrance and prevent access to the lightwells.

APPEARANCE

The alterations to the proposed dwelling shall be constructed using traditional high quality materials to match the existing appearance.

ACCESS

The existing access to the property shall be retained which has a level threshold off Clerk Bank. The first floor flat is accessed via the shared yard off Naylor's Yard via existing metal steps

KEY PLANNING ISSUES

This is an application for the change of use of the existing ground floor and basement of the building from a retail premises (although current planning use is of which for the past 30 years has been ostensibly been used as a workshop to a single residential dwelling.

The key issues are considered to be the general principle of development, loss of a community facility, impact on residential amenity and highway safety.

Principle of development

The site lies within a predominately residential area and the use of the building as a single residential dwelling would be in keeping with the established character of the area. Accordingly the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with Saved Local Plan Policy H4 and therefore acceptable in principle.

The application site is located within the town development boundary and is generally in accordance with Saved Local Plan Policy H4. The site comprises a sustainable location and is within close walking distance to shops and other services.

The Core Strategy Revised Submission Version identifies a net housing requirement of 5,500 additional dwellings during the period 2006 to 2026.

Loss of community facility

The premises have struggled to provide a continuing benefit to the local community as a commercial concern

Policy C1 in particular seeks to protect existing community facilities and ensure that there will be adequate infrastructure in place to serve new development, supports the relocation of uses no longer compatible with their surroundings and requires high quality design and layouts in new developments.

It is difficult to predict with any degree of certainty that if the proposed change of use was not carried out, and the commercial premises retained for a viable business venture, just what type of facility is lacking in the local community that a business hidden in the back streets would fulfil.

Impact on residential amenity

It is not considered that the proposed change of use would be detrimental to any of the surrounding residential properties. The site is located within a predominately residential area and its conversion into a single residential dwelling would be in keeping with the local established characteristics of the area. The general appearance of the building is to remain as existing with exception of the changing the large shop windows with smaller sliding sash window to preserve the privacy of the occupants and will not result in any overlooking or loss of privacy to any neighbouring properties.

Highway safety

The proposed dwelling will not provide any off road parking and will rely on street parking. This situation is no different to any of the neighbouring properties. It has been noted that a number of convenience stores are located within 5 minutes walking distance from the property and the town centre is within easy walking distance of shops, services and other facilities.

There are a number of car parks within 2 . 3 minutes walk from the property.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and compliant with Staffordshire Moorlands Local Authorities Housing and Community policies. The proposed development will not result in the loss of a community facility because the premises necessarily provided a service to the community, and the proposed change of use is not prejudicial to the reasonable enjoyment of any of the neighbouring properties or detrimental to highway safety.

The alternative decision to retain the premises as a commercial retail outlet is more likely to have an adverse effect on the local community than the proposed change of use.