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Design and access and heritage statement

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR REINSTATEMENT OF BLOCKED UP WINDOWS TO NEWSPAPER HOUSE FRONTAGE (BEDZ, BEDZZ & BEDROOMS) BROOK STREET, LEEK. ST13 5JE



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Planning application for reinstatement of blocked up windows to newspaper house frontage (bedz, bedzz & bedrooms)
Brook street, Leek. ST13 5JE

Introduction/Context

This design and access statement has been prepared to accompany the application to reinstate the road level windows serving the building known as Newspaper house, currently occupied by Bedz Bedzz and Bedrooms. The original window openings although infilled with brick can be clearly defined by the brick arch lintel still in existence and the straight jointed brickwork at the window jambs.

Proposal

The application is to open up the bricked up window opening to the original proportions and to be fitted with single glazed timber frame windows of a matching proportions to the existing windows above.

The occupiers of the premises operate a bedroom furniture store with a large showroom offering all makes and sizes of beds and bedroom furniture. The Brook street frontage of Newspaper house rises gradually a full storey height from one end to the other, this means the bedroom showroom is high above the road level. Bedz, Bedzz and bedrooms are a long established business serving the local community of Leek offering a competitive service in town. Despite being there for a number of years and town centre location they are still finding new customers have not been aware of their existence. The proprietors believe this is due to elevated position of their showroom above the roadside and the high level signage above vehicle users passing through the town. The proposal to form window displays from previously bricked up openings will increase their presence in the town.

Use/Amount

The basement windows are being opened up to allow the proprietors to have a shop front display. Each window shall reveal a bedroom display or feature which shall be enclosed with solid boarding or similar and decorated to prevent viewing into the warehouse area. The space behind the window for the display shall be approximately 2½ metres by 2½ meters to allow each window to have a different display.

Layout

Internally small mock bedrooms shall be formed using a timber stud frame to form small display areas.

Externally existing previously blocked windows shall be reinstated. There are no new openings to be made.

Scale

There are no proposals to alter the existing scale or massing of the building, the proposed works is confined to reinstatement of the windows previously bricked up and minor internal alterations.

Appearance

The proposed development shall not differ greatly from the existing building. There are currently 5 no existing window openings with brick arch lintels that have been previously bricked up. The proposal is to remove the brickwork to the windows to the openings at roadside level, and to supply and fit new timber frame windows fitted with single pane of toughened glass in frames matching existing proportions painted mid blue to match existing.

Landscaping

There are no proposals to alter the existing landscaping.

Access

There are no proposals to alter the existing access. The proposed window displays shall be located within the staff only access warehouse area.

Statement of significance and impact

In 1777 a parliamentary report recorded parish workhouses, Newspaper House was once used as a workhouse; it was a parish workhouse on Brook Street which was originally named Workhouse Street.

In 1934 what had then become the firm of Hill Brothers took over the Leek Times and moved into the former workhouse building in brook street in 1968.

In 2006 part of the building was used has a dance studio up until recently and was a popular venue used by the local community.

In 2007 Bedz, Bedzzand Bedrooms an application was made for change of use for the first floor and basement level which was given full approval.

Newspaper house occupies a prominent position within the commercial town centre of Leek. The building abuts the 5 storey gable of London Mill, at the Eastern end of the building. The gradient of Brook street results in the building being 3 storeys high at the London mill abut and 4 storeys high, before dropping down to the 2 storey offices occupied by NFU Mutual.

The building is quite simple in form, the windows serving the top 2 floor appear to be of a regular appearance having a brick arch soldier lintel over. The upper floor window are a timber frame inward opening hopper windows. The lower part of the building has been altered significantly, there are numerous patches of mis-matched bricks. Larger windows have possibly been widened from two smaller windows similar to the upper windows. The entrance to the bedroom showroom appears to be a previously larger opening infilled with bricks to leave a smaller door and window, with the straight line joints still in evidence.

The building is fairly insignificant in appearance, and whilst it forms part of the heritage and character of the town centre conservation area, it does not possess any of the distinct architectural features that other landmark buildings in the conservation area have. The building understood to be a former workhouse has the characteristic appearance of a utilitarian building and quite stark compared to the fine architecture of the mills around town.

The design for reinstating the windows is merely following the existing windows above, and would not significantly affect any of the original features of the building. The proposal is merely to open up previously bricked up openings.



