Heritage Assessment: 23, Wellington Street, Leek, ST13 5EH

Introduction

Town and Country Planning legislation requires the submission of a statement demonstrating how the special historic or architectural interest of a building or area has been considered within a planning application proposal.

This Statement demonstrates how design principles and concepts have been applied to the design of the proposal and how it has taken account of national and local historic environment planning policies, and in particular how the design preserves or enhances the historic and architectural importance of the application building; how the proposal has been designed to harmonise with the existing architectural style of the building and area; the application building's setting; and particular physical features of the building and area that contribute to its special interest or character.

The Statement also shows how the design approach to access balances the recommendations of the Equality Act 2010 with the historic asset.

Leek Conservation Area

The Leek Conservation Area was first designated in July 1970 and extended in 1989, 1994, 2004 and 2013. An Article 4 Direction has been confirmed by the Council in which the "permitted development" rights to extend and alter dwellings were removed from some properties, including the application property.

Planning permission is now required "to alter or replace windows and doors with a different design or material". Paragraph 9.1 of the CA Character Appraisal states that "Replacement windows, doors and other features will be allowed which replicate the existing details and materials without needing planning permission. Where changes preserve or enhance the historic character or appearance of a building, they will be granted planning permission. Significant changes which harm that character are likely to be refused."

Leek is located on the A523 former trunk road between Macclesfield (to the North) and Buxton (to the East). It is historically a hill settlement dating back to the 13th Century. The conservation area is focused on the historic medieval streets at the core of the town centre and expands outwards to include the large mills associated with the silk industry that operated in the town in the 19th Century, the streets of terraced workers' housing and attractive Victorian and Edwardian housing, much influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement. The application building lies in a pocket of small cottages to the west of the St Edward's Church sitting behind Clerk Bank House. These are thought to have been originally erected in the 19th Century as industrial buildings that have later been converted into dwellings. The application building is the most northern of these buildings on Naylors Yard and therefore some distance away from Clerk Bank House, and not within sight of it.

A Character Appraisal was published in 2017 for the Conservation Area. It concludes that the key positive characteristics of the Leek Conservation Area. These are separated into appraisals of the use of historic detailing and natural materials in the Conservation Area. Because of the range of periods during which the town has grown these vary depending on the age of the property.

The Historic Context of the Application Property

The application building is located in a terraced street between Britannia and Strangman Streets. Wellington Street, together with Chorley Street and Gladstone Street form a block of

former mill workers' homes between the former industrial mills, Wellington Mill (a Grade II Listed Building) and Brunswick Mill, both built in the mid-19th Century. The residential streets surrounding the mills were built before the turn of the century and were designed and built as a whole, and include shops, public houses, and a few larger houses occupying strategic positions. As a result the long red-brick terraces have a unity of design that is lacking elsewhere in the town where a more piecemeal level of development prevailed.

The application building is a two storey mid-terrace dwelling constructed in machine made bricks. Its roof is of clay tiles manufactured from one of the local potteries in Stoke on Trent.

Its windows and doors are not original and are a mixture of top-hung painted timber and uPVC windows with a plain painted timber front door and a uPVC back door. The window openings and the top of the door openings have painted stone lintels and cills.

Neighbouring properties have received a similar scale ant character of changes. A survey of the Street has shown that all of the houses have at least an element of uPVC doors and windows, with many have a complete set of uPVC installations.

The planning policy context

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and are defined as areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

The purpose of the Character Appraisal is to define and record the special architectural and historic interest of the Leek Conservation Area to guide decisions on planning proposals.

The development plan for the area is the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

Plan Policies

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan Submission Version February 2018 contains the planning and conservation policies that are relevant to this proposal.

Policy SS1 Development principles requires new development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the area and maintains is local distinctiveness.

Policy 1A encourages Sustainable Development in the area.

Policy SO8 in the Design and Conservation section promotes local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic assets.

Policy DC2 The Historic Environment requires heritage assets and their setting to be enhanced and gives protection to designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Heritage Assessment

The planning application proposes the replacement of timber windows and door that have reached the end of their lives with uPVC to match the remainder of the house. Given that the majority of the Street has done the same, the proposal would therefore fit in with the character of the Street. As a result it is considered that the nature of the well-designed do not detract from the character of the Leek Conservation Area. At most, they have a "neutral" impact, and in terms of Policy SO8, the proposal is felt to be in keeping with the character of the application building and the character, scale and design of buildings nearby. The proposal does not harm the historic character of the Leek Conservation Area.

The proposal also has the benefit of improving heat insulation at the application building. The proposal therefore has significant sustainable credentials and complies with the Government's and Council's sustainability policies.

Conclusion

This Assessment has, with the assistance of the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal, identified the elements of the character of the Leek Conservation Area and examined the value of the application building within this context. The proposal has been assessed against the Council's Local Plan policies. The conclusion of this study is that the proposed alterations to 23, Wellington Street, Leek will not harm the historic character of the Conservation Area and will comply with the Council's planning policies.