Planning and Heritage Assessment: 57, Derby Street, Leek

Introduction

The planning application proposes the replacement of the timber and metal shopfront that served “Bargain Booze” with a painted timber shopfront and door incorporating a brick plinth under the windows.

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.

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 shops and offices to the east end of Derby Street. These are thought to have been originally erected in the 19th Century as dwellings that have later been converted into commercial uses.

A Character Appraisal was published in 2017 for the Conservation Area. It concludes with 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 analysis also breaks the Area into five Character Sections. The planning application comes within the Central Section. The “sub-section” of Derby Street and Russell Street identifies the Derby Street forms to be an integral part of the old town. It states that the earliest buildings cluster towards the western end, while the eastern buildings (where the application building is sited) belong mainly to the 19th century. The present building line is virtually continuous, broken only by the side roads. However, the line of the historic facades is not continuous with smaller buildings flanking the pavements, and larger houses set back to encompass front gardens, now lost by the building of mostly flat roofed front extensions to shops. Those buildings that retain original, unaltered facades, have acquired good quality 19th or early 20th century shop fronts, or have been sympathetically restored. Within the eastern end of the street, a scatter of small-scale buildings, some with tiny stone gables engulfed in

later brickwork, mark the extent of the old town, and are surrounded by an increasing number of larger brick buildings.

The Historic Context of the Application Property

The application building is a three storey mid-terraced building. Given that the application property was constructed in the mid to late 19th Century, machine made bricks have been used in its construction. However, the first floor of the frontage has clearly been rebuilt in the 20th Century with a modern red brick, and at the same time, modern windows have been inserted at first and second floors. Its roof is of clay tiles.

It is included in a "block" bound by Derby Street to the South, Bath Street to the East and Deansgate to the West. None of the buildings in the block are Listed (other than backland buildings at the far end of Getliffes Yard).

The existing shop front is proposed to be removed in its entirety, including the fascia trough light and security cameras. The proposal is to replace this with a traditional shopfront design in painted timber. The side pilasters will be slimmer and the fascia board replaced. There will be a central timber and glazed door i9n the middle of two timber windows above brick plinths.

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 building has minimal historic and architectural interest. The existing shopfront is modern and brash. The proposal delivers a traditional shopfront in design and materials that is in character with the historic character of the Conservation Area.

It is considered that the nature of the well-designed alterations do not detract from the character of the Leek Conservation Area. In terms of Policy SO8, the proposal is in keeping with the character of the application building and the character, scale and design of buildings nearby. The proposal preserves the historic character of the Leek Conservation Area.

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 at 57, Derby Street, Leek will not harm the historic character of the Conservation Area and will comply with the Council's planning policies.