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Planning and Heritage Statement incorporating Design and Access Matters

PROPOSED CONVERSION OF AND EXTENSIONS TO FORMER WAREHOUSE/SILK SHADE TO FORM TWO DWELLINGS AT SILK STREET, LEEK, ST13 6HX

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is a combined Planning and Listed Building Consent Application for the conversion and extension of a two-storey former warehouse and silk shade to form two dwellings- one a four bedroom, and one a three bedroom home. The application also proposes the erection of a detached domestic garage serving the larger home. The application building is a Grade II Listed Building and located in the Leek Conservation Area. It is a two-storey 19th Century former warehouse and constructed with a local red brick and has a plain tiled roof. The front of the building faces Silk Street (also known locally as Stafford Street) which is a short, narrow lane linking Silk Street to the south and Stockwell Street to the north. It is understood that the building is on the Council's Buildings at Risk Schedule.

1.2 The application building has, historically, been linked to 16-18 Stockwell Street.to which it is attached. Both the application building and 16-18, Stockwell Street have been the subject of a number of planning proposals, firstly in 1987 as part of proposals for a town centre redevelopment proposal, and more recently (2013), Planning and Listed Building Consents for the "Demolition of rear outrigger, renovation of existing building including re-roofing and re-pointing; two storey extensions to the rear, change of use to A1/A2 (business and retail) with new access from car park".

1.3 The buildings at 16 and 18 Stockwell Street are large, three storey buildings with commercial uses at ground floor. On the southern boundary of the application site is a single storey brick building used as public toilets, and beyond that, public car parking. There is more public car parking beyond the West boundary of the site, and to the East, beyond the lane that is Silk Street, two storey business premises that face Market Street.

1.4 The site is located on the edge of Leek town centre where there is a liberal mix of residential and commercial uses.

1.5 The application building is in a poor structural condition as set out in the Structural Engineer's Report that accompanies this application. The building has deteriorated over a long period of time. Whilst there have been a number of planning applications on the site, many have been withdrawn following unforeseen obstacles and the most recent permission has not been implemented. In the meantime, the building has got itself into a condition where it may eventually be irretrievable. This application will introduce an economic use to the building that, with appropriate extensions and renovations will save the building from ruin.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY

2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application.

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy advice with immediate effect. It is the Government's clear intention that the document should be considered to be a material consideration

and as such carries particular weight where development is not addressed by planning policies in the existing Development Plan.

2.3 Whilst the recently published NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making it does provide guidance to LPA's and is a material consideration in determining planning applications (para 2). The NPPF confirms that at the heart of the guidance is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 10) and that for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the Staffordshire Moorlands comprises of the adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014) saved policies of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998), saved policies of the Minerals Local Plan (1999) and the Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Joint Waste Core Strategy (March 2013).

2.4 The most relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy are considered to be SS1 (Development Principles); SS1a (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development); SS2 (Future provision of Development); SS3 (Distribution of Development); SS4 (Managing the Release of Housing Land); SS5a – Leek Area Strategy; SD1 (Sustainable Use of Resources); H1 (New Housing); DC1 (Design Considerations); C1 (Creating Sustainable Communities); NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources; T1 Development and Sustainable Transport and T2 (Other Sustainable Transport Measures). For the sake of brevity these policies are not quoted in full but they are referred to where appropriate in the following section.

2.5 Also of particular relevance to this application is the Staffordshire Moorlands Housing Land Supply Statement (March 2017) which sets out the Local Authority's performance in respect of housing land supply and housing delivery.

3.0 KEY PLANNING ISSUES

3.1 The key issues for consideration in the determination of this application are considered to be: -

- the principle of the development
- impact on the heritage asset of the building
- impact on the Conservation Area
- impact on the character and appearance of the area
- impact on neighbouring land uses
- impact on highway safety
- impact on biodiversity

3.2 The site is located within the town of Leek which is one of the three towns of the Staffordshire Moorlands, which the Local Plan Core Strategy sees as the receiver of the majority of new housing in the life of the local plan. The application site lies within the town development boundary where there is a general presumption in favour of development. The application site comprises a sustainable location for new housing that is within easy walking and cycling distance of the numerous local services, facilities and employment opportunities on offer within the town. The site also lies within a short walking distance of Leek Bus Station which offers regular links with the other two market towns of Biddulph and Cheadle and beyond that, to Stoke-on-Trent and other destinations. The application is submitted at a time when the Local Plan would support the development of this site for housing, and the proposal will assist in delivering the Council's commitment for additional housing in a period when the Council is failing to meet its housing delivery target. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle.

3.3 The development plan identifies a net housing requirement in the District of 6,000 additional dwellings during the period 2006 to 2026. Currently, there is a significant shortage of deliverable housing land in the District. The latest housing land supply figures for Staffordshire Moorlands, as set out in the Local Authority's Housing Land Supply Statement, demonstrates that the Local Planning Authority is only able to demonstrate 1.8 years of deliverable housing supply (with a 20% buffer). This falls significantly short of the 5-year supply required by paragraph 73 of the NPPF, and

represents a continued decline in the Council's housing supply position over the last few years. As a consequence, the provisions of paragraph 75 of the NPPF becomes relevant.

3.4 In order to significantly boost the supply of housing para 73 of the NPPF asks LPA's to have a 5-year continuous supply (including an additional 5% buffer) of deliverable land at all times. It also goes on to state that housing applications should be considered in the context of presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11).

3.5 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF confirms that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking.

3.6 In terms of compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 8 identifies three dimensions to sustainable development; social, economic and environmental which should be considered collectively. The proposal will derive a number of social benefits notably helping the Local Planning Authority to meet its housing delivery targets and assisting the aim to achieve a vital and vibrant character for the town of Leek. In terms of the economic dimension of sustainable development the proposed development will meet this aim by delivering a viable use to a failing building and generating additional household expenditure which will contribute to the local economy and help to support local services and facilities. Additional economic benefits will be achieved through the employment generated during the construction phase. With regards to the environmental dimension of sustainable development the site is considered to be well related to the surrounding residential development and its sustainable location will help generate sustainable travel patterns and reduce the need for reliance on the private car. The proposal will also deliver clear improvements to the local environment and secure an important Listed Building in a Conservation Area. Having regard to the above considerations it is concluded that the principle of development is wholly acceptable on this site and that the proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development.

3.7 The National Planning Policy Framework states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local Planning Authorities are therefore encouraged to take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The impacts that the proposal will have on the character and appearance of the area and the historic assets of the Listed Building and the Conservation Area are covered in the Heritage Assessment that forms part of this Statement (Section 4).

3.8 The proposed use is residential and will not therefore be generating nuisance by virtue of noise and disturbance, and neighbouring uses are themselves not noise generating. The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of this issue.

3.9 Paragraph 108 of the NPPF requires that decisions should take account of whether: the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe is reflected in CS Policy T1 Development and Sustainable Transport.

3.10 The application site has historically generated traffic. The wide entrance on the south side of the curtilage is capable of accommodating large vehicles which would fit in with its historic use as a warehouse. This access will be retained but will be used only for residential vehicles associated with one of the proposed dwellings, and its parking would be accommodated on the drive and the proposed domestic garage. No parking is proposed for the smaller proposed dwelling.

3.11 The proposed parking for the larger two dwellings is considered appropriate in terms of scale and highway safety. The sustainable location of the second dwelling is considered to adequately justify the lack of on-site car parking. The closeness of shopping, health care, social amenities,

employment and the Bus Station illustrate that this property could adequately operate without the use of a car. Should the future occupier require a car, Silk Street itself is not used as a through route and is used locally for car parking. In addition, there is ample public car parking nearby if needed. There would therefore be no significant conflict with CS Policy T1 or guidance contained in the NPPF.

3.12 In terms of biodiversity, the application is supported by a Bat and Bird Report. This concluded that there was no evidence of bat roosting, nor of foraging and commuting in and out of the building. Similarly, there was no evidence of bird nesting. It is recommending that a cautious approach is taken during renovation works.

4.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

4.1 The application property is a Grade II Listed Building in the Leek Conservation Area. It is a two-storey former warehouse (referred to in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a "Mill Building") dating from the middle of the C19th. It is within a group of buildings that include 16 and 18 Stockwell Street. The Appraisal makes no direct reference to the application site or the buildings close to it. It is thought that the Stockwell Street buildings were constructed first, with a Silk Shade and Warehouse, both facing the side street, built later as additions. The application buildings have been used for various industrial and storage uses, but is thought to have been vacant for at least 50 years. The condition of the building reflects this.

4.2 The application building is a two-storey brick building with a tiled roof. Its main elevation faces Silk Street. The floor plan is split unequally into two sections. The smaller northern part has evidence of a domestic use; the larger southern part is a single space at ground floor and split into five chambers at first floor. There is evidence of numerous changes to the structure of the building and this is evidenced by the variety of window and door openings in the roadside elevation. The upper windows are metal with a central opening segment, and the ground floor windows and doors are mainly timber. The application proposes to restore the metal windows and to insert secondary glazing to provide adequate heat insulation.

4.3 The upper storey has a concrete floor that is proposed to remain. The building has a trussed roof. The trusses and purlins are considered to be in good condition and are proposed to be retained.

4.4 The rear of the building has limited foundations. The proposed rear extensions will introduce some stability to the rear of the building. The rear elevation has seen substantial changes over the years and the proposal recognises this by concentrating changes principally to this part of the building and maintaining the historic character of the building where its character is at a higher level.

4.5 The detached building near the southern boundary of the site is a 20th Century addition to the site. Whilst the upper part of the building has now disappeared, it is proposed to rebuild this and use it as a domestic garage with storage at first floor.

5.0 COMMENTS ON THE HERITAGE ASSET

5.1 The application building has an industrial heritage. It has been vacant for over 50 years and has suffered consequent serious deterioration. Its condition is illustrated by it being on the Council's Schedule of Buildings at Risk. The Structural Survey indicates that the walls of the building can be restored without rebuilding and that the roof timbers are capable of being renovated.

5.2 The building is an example of the silk industry in Leek prior to its industrialisation. It is therefore an important relic of the town's early industrial heritage and worthy of retention. The building has been the subject of previous development proposals, none of which have come to anything. In the meantime, this heritage asset continues to deteriorate and is at risk of being lost from the town's history. It is therefore clearly important that a viable use is found for it, and this proposal does just that.

5.3 The application proposes a use that is commercially viable. Two dwellings can be accommodated within the existing structure in a way that respects its historic use. The walls, whilst vulnerable, can be retained and will benefit from the structural support given to it be the proposed rear extensions. The existing openings will be retained and the architectural detailing of the windows and doors will be respected.

5.4 The roof trusses will be fully exposed within the living quarters of the proposed dwellings in this "upside down" arrangement of bedrooms on the ground floor.

6.0 DESIGN AND ACCESS ISSUES

6.1 Use

The application proposes the conversion of the building to a residential use.

6.2 Amount

The application proposes the conversion of the building into two dwellings- one 4-bedroomed dwelling and one 3-bedroomed dwelling.

6.3 Layout

This is largely determined by the existing building that will be retained and converted to another use. The building fronts straight onto Silk Street. The rear is open and will be used as gardens for the proposed two dwellings.

6.4 Scale

The scale of the historic building will be retained. The proposed two storey extensions on the rear will be of the same height and proportion as the host building.

6.5 Landscaping

Other than the creation of domestic gardens there will be no formal landscaping proposed in this application.

6.6 Appearance

Clearly, the listed status of the application building leads the proposal towards one that seeks to retain the existing appearance of the building. The proposal does exactly this throughout. The front elevation will be renovated and existing features such as the early metal windows will be restored. At the rear, where there have been extensive alterations, it is proposed to erect extensions. The existing garage has partially collapsed and will be rebuilt.

6.7 Access

The site already has an established access onto Silk Street that will remain. Given that it is open, for security reasons a gate is proposed.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Government requires that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

7.2 The proposed development is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development as it complies with the three elements of sustainability (social, economic and environmental) as advocated by the NPPF. Furthermore, the proposal is in accordance with the provisions of the policies listed above in the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy.

7.3 The application is a Listed Building that is on the Council's Buildings at Risk Schedule. It is therefore important that the Council is open to a proposal that gives the building a new use whilst retaining its historic legacy. The proposal does this successfully.

7.4 The Local Planning Authority is requested to support this planning application and allow the conversion and extension of the building into two dwellings and grant planning permission accordingly.