# Heritage Assessment: 45-49, Derby Street, Leek

## Introduction

This Heritage Statement is to support an advertisement application for the display of a non-illuminated hanging sign at an estate agent's office in Leek's Derby Street. The site is located in the Leek Conservation Area.

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 proposal.

This Statement demonstrates how design principles and concepts have been applied to the design of the proposed advertisement and how it has taken account of national and local historic environment planning policies, and in particular how its 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.

## 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 advertisement application comes within the Central Section. The "sub-section" of Derby Street and Russell Street identifies the layout at Derby Street 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 two storey mid-terraced building. Whilst the application property was likely to have been constructed in the mid to late 19th Century, it has been altered in the 20th Century. There is some evidence of a stone wall on the right-hand recess of the building, but the shop fronts are modern brick with painted render above. The left-hand of the three buildings has a traditional shopfront design in painted timber. The first floor has two attractive dormers with ornate timber detailing. Their roofs are of clay tiles.

The site 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).

This application proposes a white painted timber sign hung from a black painted metal bracket. The bracket is at first floor level in a central position of the three buildings (45, 47 and 49 Derby Street). The sign will display the name of the applicant's business painted blue and a red painted "&".

**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 TCR1 Development in the Town Centres section promotes design principles that will improve and enhance the distinctive heritage of the town centre.

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

The Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD contains a section on shop fronts. Para 6.3 states that "advertisements and signs should always be designed to complement the appearance of the shopfront, building and character of the area". It further states that "Hanging signs offer a more traditional approach and add interest and individuality to the street scene".

**Heritage Assessment**

The application building is attractive in parts and has some historic and architectural interest. The current proposal complements this with a traditional hanging sign. The use of traditional materials (painted timber) and the use of a painted metal bracket is in character with the

historic character of the Conservation Area. Its position on the building is traditional and inkeeping with the character of the Conservation Area.

It is considered that the nature of this well-designed sign complements 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 advertisement at 45-47, Derby Street, Leek will not harm the historic character of the Conservation Area and will comply with the Council's planning policies.