DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2019/0621 **Valid 07/10/2019**	**60 ST EDWARD STREET** **LEEK**	**LISTED BUILDING CONSCENT FOR FIXING HERITAGE STYLE COMMEMORATIVE 'BLUE PLAQUE' TO FRONT WALL.** **(LISTED BUILDING CONSENT - ALTERATION)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any feature of special architectural or historic interest which the Listed Building possesses, in line with Section 66(1) of the Town & Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is No.60 St Edwards Street, Leek; a Grade II Listed Building that sits within a row of impressive three storey buildings to the west of the public highway, many of which are also listed.

The building was first listed in 1972. The ground floor of the building is constructed from an Ashlar stone, with two shop fronts; one currently in use as a building and joinery contractors, the other as A1 retail; whilst the upper floors have previously been converted into flats. In between these two shop fronts is a wide arched central entrance, with the name ‘Les Hertes’ in moulded stonework above. The upper floors are characterised by timber framing which give a mock Tudor appearance.

PROPOSAL

The applicant – the proprietor of the building and joinery contractors – seeks Listed Building Consent for the fixing of a commemorative blue plaque on the front elevation of the premises, highlighting the buildings significance.

The plaque itself measures 400mm in diameter, is 12mm thick, and would be connected to the wall by 2 screw fixings placed within the bed joints between the stone work.

Following responses received from members of the public, the Conservation Officer, the Conservation Liaison Panel, and members of the Leek & District Civic Society, the location of the plaque and wording contained on it have been amended to be re-sited in a less sensitive location and re-worded to ensure that the description of the building is historically accurate.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

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.
Section 66(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The Local Development Plan for this site comprises the Saved Policies of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998); Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (adopted 26th March 2014) and any relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's).

The Staffordshire Moorlands Emerging Local Plan (Submission Version February 2018) has now been through an Examination by an Independent Planning Inspector and as such planning policies within it can be given appropriate weight, in line with paragraph 48 of the NPPF.

The Council agreed to publish the Local Plan Submission Version for representations in February 2018. At this point, the Council agreed that the Local Plan was "sound". Formal representations were then invited from residents, businesses and other stakeholders to provide them with the opportunity to support or challenge the soundness or legal compliance of the Local Plan. This stage in the process followed three previous public consultations since 2015 which had informed the preparation of the Local Plan alongside a comprehensive evidence base.

In June 2018, the Council subsequently agreed to submit the Local Plan Submission Version to the Secretary of State for examination. Hearing sessions were conducted in October 2018 and the Inspector issued his initial post-hearing advice in January 2019 which set out some actions for the Council and a range of modifications that would be necessary to make the plan sound. The full schedule of modifications is to be determined and will be subject to consultation in due course. The Inspector will then be in position to write his final report. Subject to the findings of the appointed Inspector, the Local Plan can then be adopted by the Council. This will be towards the end of 2019 at the earliest. At this point, Upon adoption, it the Local Plan will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and become part of the statutory development plan for the District.

In this context, the Council's position on the weight to be given to the policies contained in the Local Plan Submission Version in terms of the three criteria set out in Paragraph 48 of the NPPF is as follows:

- The stage of preparation – the Local Plan is now at an advanced stage of preparation as the Council has submitted it to the SoS for examination

- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies – this varies depending on the policy in question. The Officer Comments section of

this report identifies the level of outstanding objections to each policy and recommends the amount of weight to be given to them at this stage in the process

- The degree of consistency of policies with the NPPF – given that the Council has submitted a Local Plan that it considers to be sound, all policies are deemed to be consistent with the NPPF.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. As stated in paragraph 2 of the NPPF, the document is a material consideration which must be taken into account in planning decisions.

Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2014

SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS5 Towns
SS5a Leek Sub-area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 Historic Environment

Emerging Local Plan Submission Version 2018

SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS5 Towns
DC2 The Historic Environment

National Planning Policy Framework 2019

Achieving Sustainable Development	Chapter 2
Achieving Well Designed Places	Chapter 12
Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment	Chapter 16

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

SMD/1988/1005	Change of use to Estate Agents (Approved 22/02/88)
SMD/1989/0942	Change of use from Estate Agents to fabric and haberdashery shop (Permitted Development 18/05/89)

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 27th November 2019
Neighbour consultation period ends: 30th October 2019
Press Advert: 13th November 2019

Public Comments

One objection has been received in connection with the application. The grounds for objection are summarised below:

- The wording of the plaque is too long; speculative and subjective
- The building is not sufficiently historically significant
- Opens the way for further insufficiently researched applications which could lead to the diminution of the integrity of the Blue Plaque Scheme and the Leek & District Civic Society

Town / Parish Comments

Leek Town Council: No objections

SMDC Conservation Officer

There is no objection to the proposed siting of the plaque on the building but I am concerned that the plaque will be rather dominant on this highly ornamental façade which is totally original and carefully designed with great symmetry and precise jointing of the stone. There is only a limited area of ashlar stone on which to site the plaque and it will detract from this careful, well considered composition. Is it possible that the plaque could be sited within the shop window, on the side door or even within the fanlight directly below 'Les Hetres'?

SMDC Conservation Liaison Panel

No objection to the St Edward Street plaque (on the fanlight) but considers the text to be too long and inaccurate. Text should finish after '1883'.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Core Strategy (CS) Policy DC2 seeks to safeguard and where possible enhance the historic environment by resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District's towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance and promoting development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests of acknowledged importance.

Paragraphs 193-196 of the NPPF sets out how a local authority should assess the significance of the asset and the potential impact of a development proposal upon that asset – giving greater weight to the asset in line with its importance.

Where a proposal is found to lead to substantial harm or total loss of an asset, consent should be refused unless that are substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm. Where it is judged that there is less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The application as submitted showed the positioning of the plaque on an Elevation Plan contained at Appendix 4 of the Heritage Statement. This plan showed the plaque to be positioned on the Ashlar stone in between the northern shop frontage

and another arched doorway. The original proposed wording of the plaque read as follows:

"Les Hetres – built by Hugh Sleigh in 1883, was beautifully restored by the owners of Nixon and Reeves – recognised and celebrated by the Chimney Pot Preservation Society."

Concerns were raised with regards the location of this plaque and the accuracy of the wording on it. The Conservation Officer and Liaison Panel both commented on the fact that this plaque as originally proposed would sit rather dominant on the façade which has precise joining, and with only a limited amount of Ashlar wall, the plaque would have the potential to detract from it.

Members of the public were particularly concerned with the proposed accuracy of the wording and the length of it.

These concerns were relayed to the applicant's agent. This has subsequently led to a revised Elevation Plan being submitted which shows the plaque to be positioned on the fan light within the central doorway which is slightly recessed, which is considered to be a much less sensitive location, and has received no objection from the Conservation Officer.

The revised design of the plaque contains the words "Leek and District Civic Society' around the perimeter, with the main text reading as:

"Hugh Sleigh (1822-1901) Silk Manufacturer and Benefactor, built 'Les Hetres' in the Arts and Crafts style for his family in 1883. Renovated by the owners a century later, it has outstanding chimneys which are celebrated by The Chimney Pot Preservation Society."

This revision was put before the Conservation Liaison Panel, who raised no objection to the revised location of the plaque on the fan light but objected to the text, citing it to be too lengthy and inaccurate, suggesting the text should end after the 1833 date.

The Conservation Officer has confirmed in writing that having discussed the matter with a heritage colleague, the proposed text is accurate and has recommended approving the application.

In light of these comments, it is considered that in its revised location, the proposed plaque has addressed concerns made by members of the public and other consultees and would preserve the special architectural qualities and historic interest of the Listed Building and would preserve and to a certain extent help to enhance the historic significance of the building, thus demonstrating compliance with Section 66(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990, Policy DC2 of the Core Strategy and restrictive policies contained in Chapter 16 of the NPPF.

The application is therefore considered in its revised form to comprise a sustainable form of development and in line with Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy and

paragraph 11 of the NPPF, is recommended for approval subject to appropriate conditions.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions

Case Officer: James Stannard
Recommendation Date: 29th November 2019

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council