ART GATEWAY AT STOCKWELL STREET, LEEK

PLANNING STATEMENT
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
HERITAGE STATEMENT

In 2013 planning permission was granted to the University of Derby for extensive works, including demolition and rebuilding to create a higher education campus within the site of the original Art College. (decision 17/10/2013 13/00709/FUL and SMD/2013/0613)

This project included the provision of a new pedestrian access into the site from Stockwell Street, and conditions 6 and 17 specifically referred to the requirement for a detailed scheme for the design of the new access and issues of highway safety. In the event, a modest treatment was carried out, including the retention of the original brick pillars and part of the boundary wall. Steel bollards were placed to limit vehicle access. Discussions continued at that time about an archway feature over the new entrance, but no detailed scheme was agreed.

The District Council now has access to funds and wishes to complete the original vision by the installation of an archway that will highlight the entrance and reflect the purposes of the University. The College of Art and Design is a fundamental element in the history of Leek and is intrinsically tied to its creativity and industrial heritage.

The project has been coordinated by Anne-Lise Fraser, head of Art and Design at Buxton and Leek College and Denis O'Connor, Director of Sculpture Works. He is a well-established sculptor and designer, based in Derbyshire but actively working on projects throughout the UK and Ireland. He has over 25 years experience in the development of immersive and inclusive projects involving local groups and communities that result in public art that can articulate and inspire. His commission was to work with the Director of the Art College, to involve all parties in this process, and to then build and install the selected design.

The project has initially involved 20 art and design students from the college who produced a series of visual ideas for the proposed Gateway Artwork. These ideas were presented to Joanne Brooks, Regeneration Officer, and Pranali Parikh, Head of Regeneration, and other staff in Planning and Conservation departments of High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

Four designs from the initial submissions were shortlisted and presented to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Sybil Ralphs MBE. One was selected and agreed to be the final design for the new gateway.

The proposed archway is fully illustrated in the submitted documents. It will be a prominent feature in the street scene, but allows the pillars on either side of the entrance to still define the opening. One of the documents explains the references which make up the final design for the gateway. The designs within the side panels of the arch pick up references to various elements, both cultural and historic, while the arch itself is a reflection of the local landscape. Anne-Lise Fraser and Denis O Connor have worked closely with Joanne Brooks in terms of developing this project and working on a design which will have long term cultural

significance for Leek. It will be a significant element of public art in the town and reflect the purposes and history of the College.

The archway will be fabricated from stainless steel plate and box sections. It will be mounted on concrete pads set behind the brick pillars, and further secured by bolts to the adjacent brick walls. There will be no disturbance to the Victorian brick pillars.

The maximum height of the gateway is 4.2m, the clear headroom below the arch is 2.9m, and the width between the side panels is 2.5m.

The 2013 works included two steel bollards at the entrance designed to prevent vehicle access. These will be compromised by the new archway, so the scheme allows for their removal and the replacement of a single bollard set further into the site. This will be equally effective at preventing vehicle access while allowing easy pedestrian movement.

It is also proposed to change the existing Notice Board, which is over-dominant in relation to the proposed archway, and out of scale with the boundary treatment and adjoining buildings. The proposal is for a 3-panel Notice Board fixed between the two right hand pillars and at a lower level. This proposal will be more in keeping with the proportions of the frontage and the plinth wall on which it will sit. The proposed Notice Board will contain similar lettering and information to that shown on the existing board.

The site is located in the Leek Conservation Area, and whilst not immediately adjacent to the Nicholson Institute, a grade II* Listed Building, a view of the side elevation is visible from Stockwell Street. The proposed treatment of the entrance, and the removal of the existing signage, will help to define the entrance and improve the setting of the listed building and thus enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

The Nicholson Institute was opened in 1884. It is a brick-built three storey building designed by the Leek firm of architects W. Sugden and Son. It has a tower, surmounted by a dome and lantern. The reliefs showing different trades and skills were by A. Broadbent. The institute provided a library, art gallery, museum and school of art. The library was supported by the town as the local authority but is now run by Staffordshire County Council. In 1900 the building was extended to create a school and silk school. It has ornamental modelling and lettering by A. Broadbent.

The Institute is set back from Stockwell Street, and partially obscured by the 17th century stone-built Greystones House. Among the features of interest on the exterior of the building are a set of fine tableaux over the windows depicting activities at the school. Among them are tableaux depicting Science, Physics and Chemistry, Music, Art, Literature, Cookery, Needlework, Dyeing, Manual Instruction, Weaving, Commerce and Agriculture. Inside there is a doorway with decoration reminding students that time is flying.

The 2013 planning permission allowed the removal of two curtilage buildings, leading to improvements in the setting of the Nicholson Institute. This was a decision heavily influenced by the benefits of opening up the surroundings to the Institute and the attached Art College building, including the new pedestrian entrance from Stockwell St and the landscaping proposed for the open area created in the centre of the new campus.

With the demolition of the Mill block and Carr Gym the site has a more open appearance from the South. The landscape improvements together with the opening up of a pedestrian

route directly from Stockwell Street has improved access to the new buildings and provided a view from the street through to the side elevation of the Institute. This visual relationship between the brick pillars and the Institute is seen from Stockwell Street but it is a contained view and does not detract from the Listed Building or in any way harm the setting of the historic building. The relationship between the side elevation of the institute and the site entrance pillars has no historic significance and the addition of the proposed art work will help to define the entrance, visually enhance the relationship and create a new dynamic visual experience within the conservation area.

It was always intended that this entrance should have a design and treatment that reflected the artistic and creative background to the College, and this current application takes the retained pillars and proposes a modern archway to define the entrance and to illuminate the purposes of the university campus.

The pillars are not significant structures in themselves, and one of the pillars was taken down and rebuilt as part of the previous works. However, they have some historic interest and are consistent with the buildings on either side, along the Stockwell Street frontage. They have interest and value, and add to the character of this part of the Conservation Area. The proposed arch will be positioned behind the pillars, and will not compromise their purpose in containing the new entrance.

The documents submitted with this application are listed below.
Location Plan 1.1250
Block Plan 1.500
Existing front elevation and site plan 1.100
Site layout plan 1.50
Front Elevation 1.50
Photo – existing sign
“Symbolism in the design” – statement on the archway design
Planning, design and access, and heritage statement

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