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HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

PROPOSAL : ALTERATIONS TO BOUNDARY TREATMENT INCLUDING DEMOLITION OF SMALL SECTION OF STONE WALL AND ITS REPLACEMENT WITH METAL RAILINGS AND RELOCATION OF PEDESTRIAN ACCESS GATE

ADDRESS : SUGDEN HOUSE, STOCKWELL STREET, LEEK, STAFFORDSHIRE, ST13 6DH

APPLICANT : SUGDEN HOUSE MANAGEMENTS

DATE : JANUARY 2022 JOB No. : 2019-2456

INTRODUCTION

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.

Sammons Architectural Ltd have been asked to prepare a Heritage Impact Assessment on behalf of Mr Sugden House Managements which relates to a full planning application and conservation area consent for the demolition of a section of stone boundary wall and its replacement with metal railings including the relocation of an existing pedestrian access gate. This statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings numbered 2019-2456-01A, 2019-2456-05A, 2019-2456-06A, 2019-2456-07A, and 2019-2456-08A.

ASSESSMENT

Leek Conservation Area

The Leek Conservation Area was first designated in July 1970 and extended in 1989, 1994, 2004 and 2013. An Article 4 Direction has been confirmed by the Council in which the “permitted development” rights for minor operations under Schedule 2 Part 2 Class A of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended, which would otherwise permit the erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, or wall have been removed. In addition as the application building is a non listed building located within the Leek Conservation Area the partial demolition of the wall will require conservation area consent as part of it is over 1m adjacent to a highway.

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 Leek Conservation Area originally encompassed the historic shopping centre but has since been extended 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 occupies a prominent position on the northern side of Stockwell Street at its crossroads with Ball Haye Road . It is situated on the fringes of the town centre shopping and business area and as such is surrounded by mixed development with residential units to the south and north and a medical centre to the east and industrial yard area associated with the former Blakemore & Chell site immediately to the west.

A Character Appraisal was published in 2017 for the Conservation Area. This separated the town into appraisals of the character of five distinct zones (the application building is in the eastern zone with Getliffe's Yard and London Mill) and 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 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.

Section 72 of the same Act is also relevant and states "in the exercise with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area. of any functions under or by virtue of any of the previous mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

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 Core Strategy (2014) and 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.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out clear guidance on the Historic Environment. Paragraph 194 of the Framework states that "in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's significance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. "

Paragraph 195 of the Framework states that “Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (Paragraph 197).

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance (paragraph 199)

202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. 203. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application.

In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (paragraph 203).

Heritage Assessment

Many of the buildings in the immediate area are from the Victorian period, although many appear to have much older origins. The fringe areas contain examples of attractively detailed modest housing, much of which is terraced and mills associated with the town's historic weaving industry. Within the residential areas are individual, often larger, buildings of exceptional value some of which are Listed, but many not considered to be of national value.

Sugden House, the application building, is considered to be one of these buildings. Originally built as a public building and opened as a Cottage Hospital in 1870. A further wing opened in 1909 resulting in a two phase gothic revival building. At its Stockwell Street elevation it is two storeys high red brick building with a multi-gabled frontage decorated with stone string courses. Windows are tall and have stone cills and headers and include areas of patterned tiling. The roof is plain tiled with decorated ridges and heavy chimneys. Land levels fall towards the eastern boundary of the site, and fall further to the north along Ball Haye Road. At this point the building takes on a third storey at basement level. To rear is a communal grassed area and a large car park that is served of a wide access off Ball Haye Road.

The application building positively contributes to this character and consequentially represents a building of local architectural interest and 'significance' and is therefore considered a valued 'heritage asset' in conservation terms. Significance is also derived from the fact that the application building was designed by Sugden. The largest architectural influence in the town comes from the family architectural practice of the Sugdens and the Conservation Area contains many other examples of the Sugden legacy including the Trinity Church, the NatWest Bank and the Leonard Street Police Station.

The application seeks planning and conservation area consent to alter the existing boundary treatment along part of Stockwell Street. The existing boundary, which is constructed from stone wall with coping detail, has been undermined by the root system of a large tree which is located in close proximity. The existing wall is now in a parlous condition and structurally unsound. The replacement of a small section (approximately 9.75m) of boundary wall with wrought iron railings and the relocation of the existing pedestrian gate would allow the tree, which is a visual important feature within the street scene, to be retained. It should be noted that the section of wall along this part of Stockwell Street is not original. The photographs below, which were taken prior to the residential conversion of Sugden House, show that there was a vehicular access to the left hand side of the tree and that a dropped kerb existed in this location.


For
¼ mile



The access was closed by railings at the time and formally closed with a wall when a new access off Ball Haye Street to serve the residential apartments was granted in 2005. The boundary walls to Sugden House have clearly been subject to a number of alterations. These are evidence both in earlier applications as well as in the fabric of the walls themselves. Indeed the stone and copings which are proposed for removal of part of this application are not identical to the more original part of the wall closer to Ball Haye Road.

The existing boundary wall is not therefore considered to be of any architectural or historic significance. The alterations proposed would provide enclosure to the curtilage of the building whilst ensuring that the large tree which provides public amenity to the area is maintained. The existing wrought iron pedestrian gate is existing and would merely be located and the design of the proposed wrought iron railings would be sensitive and in keeping with this. A mix of boundary treatments are evident along this part of Stockwell Street and it is considered that the use of wrought iron railings would be acceptable boundary treatment and in keeping. Having regard to the above it is not therefore considered that there would be any harm to the significance of the boundary wall, its setting or the wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area within which it is located.

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 alterations to the boundary treatment along Stockwell Street as proposed would not be harmful to the historic character of the Conservation Area and will comply with the Council's planning policies.