Design, Access, and Heritage Statement

2 – 4 Derby Street, Leek



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Contents

1. Introduction

2. Site and Surroundings

3. Proposed Development

4. Design and Access Policy

5. Design Principles

6. Heritage

7. Conclusion

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared on behalf of our client, Coffee#1 Limited, and relates to proposed external alterations to the existing shopfront at 2 – 4 Derby Street, Leek.

1.2 This Statement aims to address the relevant design, access and heritage matters connected with the proposed development taking into consideration the application site's context and character.

1.3 In terms of its structure, the Statement describes the site and its surroundings (Section 2), followed by an explanation of the proposal in Section 3 and a review of design, access, and heritage orientated policy in Section 4. Section 5 considers the key design and access principles. The application site is in the Leek Town Centre Conservation Area and hence an assessment of heritage matters is set out in Section 6. Conclusions are provided in Section 7.

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2. Site and Surroundings

2.1. The property is a two storey, terraced unit, located in the centre of one of Leek's main shopping streets. It faces onto the pedestrianised Derby Street, and is immediately south of Market Place.

2.2. 2 – 4 Derby Street appears to have been built in the late 19th/early 20th century, however, the shopfront seems a relatively new addition, as it spans across the entire shopfront. The shopfront has a series of floor to ceiling windows while the entrance is centrally located. It is set back from the main frontage.

2.3. The shopfront is formed by a variety of different shaped windows that are timber framed. Two small pillars sit in front of the entrance. The fascia board is above the windows and is wide and deep. There is also a small projecting sign present.

2.4. At first floor level, the façade is red brick with three timber, white painted sash windows.

2.5. An alleyway is located to the side of the entrance, which leads to a small parking area to the rear and shops beyond.

2.6. The building is not listed but is in the Leek Conservation Area.

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3. Proposed Development

3.1. It is proposed to make alterations to the existing shopfront of 2 – 4 Derby Street to allow for the occupation of the unit by Coffee#1 Limited.

3.2. In terms of the shopfront alterations, it is proposed to replace the existing floor to ceiling glazed windows on the front elevation with new wooden bi-fold doors/windows either side of the entrance. These windows will open out onto the street and improve the activity and interaction between the street and the proposed coffee shop.

3.3. The entrance to the store is to remain centrally and continue to be set back from the shop windows either side. The existing structural steel columns in front of the entrance are to be retained. Above the proposed new bi-fold windows will be a series of single paned windows that will replicate the pattern of the windows below.

3.4. In addition, new stallrisers will be installed to increase the depth of this element of the shopfront. They will also be panelled. Whilst the entrance doors will be replaced with new wooden doors that will be fully glazed.

3.5. The shopfront (and windows) will be painted in a sympathetic, muted dark green colour and new ironmongery will be installed.

3.6. No other significant changes are proposed apart from new fascia and projecting signage, which will be introduced along the Derby Street elevation (and will be addressed by the accompanying advert application).

3.7. The proposed alterations are illustrated and annotated in detail on the Existing and Proposed Front Elevations:

- Proposed and Existing Elevations (Dwg. No: A-G/1395-21 P3).

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4. Design and Access Policy

4.1. This section assesses specific design and access policy set out in the Development Plan as well as in local supplementary planning guidance and at a national level.

4.2. The relevant Development Plan document for the proposed site is the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2014 – 2033 (Adopted September 2020).

4.3. There is also the Leek Neighbourhood Plan, but it is at an early stage of its production and has yet to be made. Supplementary planning guidance is in the form of the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide (February 2019) while there is also Leek Conservation Character Area Appraisal (September 2017).

4.4. Relevant adopted Local Plan policies include Policy SS5, which states that the Council will seek to consolidate the role of Leek as the principal service centre and market town while supporting its regeneration. This will be achieved through, amongst other things, consolidating the main retail core and the market area and protecting and enhancing the town's distinctiveness, vitality, and viability.

4.5. This is supported by adopted Local Plan Policy TCR1, which aims to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of Leek by promoting retailing as well as other key town centre uses, supporting positive measures and proposals which enhance and regenerate the shopping and town centre environment and ensuring new development is well related to pedestrian shopping routes.

4.6. In terms of design and access policies, Policy DC1 is pertinent. It states that all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the distinctive character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD.

4.7. For instance, development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the surrounding character; be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance; and create, where appropriate, attractive, active, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments.

4.8. There is also Policy DC2, which covers the historic environment. It states that the Council will promote 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 using Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guidance and Statements and Characterisation Studies.

4.9. Shopfront Design is addressed in the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Design Guide (February 2018). It states that new development in town centres should be guided by existing context, pattern, and grain of development. There is a need to respect surrounding scale and the proportions of neighbouring buildings.

4.10. New shopfronts should reflect the character and architectural style of the upper floors and the area, while maintaining the rhythm of the individual buildings in the street and building with appropriate materials and finishes.

4.11. In more detail, new proposals should adopt corporate signs and colour schemes to suit the local area, respect the host building, use traditional materials where appropriate whilst signage should complement the frontage and illumination should be discreet.

National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF)

4.12. An initiative-taking approach to delivering clever design is advocated within the NPPF which states that it is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning. It is recognised that design should contribute positively to creating better places in which to live and work and help make development acceptable to communities (Paragraph 126).

4.13. Paragraph 130 advises that developments should, *inter alia*, function well and add to the overall quality of the area over their lifetime, establish a keen sense of place, respond to local character and history while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

4.14. The NPPF also considers the impact of advertisements. It notes in Paragraph 137 that advertisements should be subject to control only in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking account of cumulative impacts.

Summary

4.15. It is considered that the proposed development will meet the high-quality design standards required by the Development Plan, supplementary design, and national planning policy.

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4.16. Policy DC1 states that all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness through incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the surrounding character whilst respecting the site and its surroundings. It should also be appropriate in terms of scale, appearance which creating an active frontage. It is considered that the proposals will meet these requirements. It will use the existing shopfront, create a new and attractive frontage whilst being sensitive to its surroundings in the use of sensitive colours and materials.

4.17. In this regard, the changes proposed mean that the proportion, scale, and character of the building will be retained and that there will be an appropriate interpretation of the building's design features in compliance with all relevant policies of the Development Plan, the supplementary guidance on design and the wider provisions of the NPPF.

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5. Design and Access Principles

5.1. The following examines the key design and access influences on the proposed development, namely its use, layout, amount (density, scale, and massing), appearance and access.

Use

5.2. The last use of the premises fell under Class E and the proposed change to a coffee shop is also within this use class categorisation.

5.3. The proposed use of the premises is therefore considered appropriate. It will complement the wider retail provision within this part of the city centre and will re-use a currently vacant unit. It is felt that the nature of the Coffee#1 operation will support the vitality and viability of the centre.

5.4. Indeed, evidence from existing Coffee #1 stores in similar locations would suggest that there is likely to be an increase in footfall and an extension in the length of stay in the centre by customers.

Layout

5.5. The proposed coffee shop will have a spacious internal layout with the internal and external seating areas creating an attractive, welcoming and inviting atmosphere for customers. The proposed changes in terms of internal layout relate to new shop fittings, which will include a store area, small office, toilets and a variety of tables and chairs. However, this will be undertaken with sensitivity and the approach would be to seek to optimise revealing original features of the building as part of the interior design.

5.6. The proposals also include an external seating area to the front of the property, which will be the subject of a separate pavement licence.

Amount (Density, Scale and Massing)

5.7. There will be no change to the amount of development in terms of density, scale, and massing.

5.8. The proposal will provide for 83 Nos. covers internally and 16 Nos. covers externally. The building will be adapted and fitted internally to provide high quality accommodation.

5.9. It is considered that the amount of development is appropriate given the nature of the proposal and the surrounding form of development in Derby Street.

Appearance

5.10. The appearance of the application site will alter but the changes are minimal and relate to changes to the configuration and style of windows, the introduction of a new shopfront colour and the replacement of existing elements such as the entrance door and stall risers. The design is considered to be reflective of the high quality, bespoke nature of Coffee#1's approach, which seeks to reflect each individual building in a sensitive and careful manner and aims to elevate its existing and original features.

5.11. The minor elevation alterations will represent an overall improvement to the appearance of the building when viewed from Derby Street.

5.12. In addition, the proposed signage will comprise new fascia and projecting signs that will use the existing advertisement features at above ground floor level. Both will involve the use of fret cut lettering that will be externally and internally lit.

5.13. The resulting ground floor frontage will thus offer a more inviting appearance than at present and complement the wider street scene. It is considered that the proposed changes will lead to an aesthetic improvement and will be sensitive and sympathetic to surrounding properties in terms of colour, style, and materials. As set out in Section 4, it is considered that the proposals comply with the Development Plan and supplementary planning guidance.

Access

5.14. Access to the building will not be altered with level access into the unit continuing to be provided. Access for all will be ensured within the internal layout of the coffee shop.

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Summary

5.15. It is considered that this section of the Statement conveys the relevant design and access related matters of the proposed development, and that the proposal will result in an improvement in terms of the property's aesthetic quality and visual appearance. Furthermore, it will improve the property's relationship with the surrounding street scene and will respect the distinctive character of the wider Conservation Area.

5.16. The design and access principles adopted by the proposed development are in accordance with the Development Plan, supplementary planning guidance and NPPF.

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6. Heritage Matters

6.1. 2 – 4 Derby Street, Leek is not a listed building but is within the Leek Conservation Area. It is noted that local records (Local Plan Proposals Maps) suggest that the building is listed. However, our research indicates that the building is not listed according to Historic England where there is no record of the listed building description. Moreover, the Conservation Area Appraisal does not identify the building as listed. As such and having taken soundings from our in-house Heritage team, the consideration has been made that the building is not listed. However, the Local Validation List requires that heritage matters be addressed for proposed development in Conservation Areas.

6.2. The key characteristics of the Leek Conservation Area, as identified by the Conservation Area Appraisal (September 2017), include that the town retains its medieval street pattern dating from the 16th century, which is based around the church in Market Place (to the north of the application site). This is the core of the Conservation Area, and is formed by Church Street, St. Edward's Street, Derby Street and Stockwell Street (Paragraph 4.2).

6.3. Paragraphs 4.17 and 4.18 note that Derby Street forms an integral part of the old town. It leaves the Market Place from its south-eastern corner as a broad, slightly winding street and, apart from the 19th century side roads present, the building line is virtually continuous, but the line of the historic facades is not. While smaller buildings flanked the pavements and larger houses retained front gardens, recent extensions have been sometimes of inferior quality. However, the Street benefits from retaining original, unaltered facades (or those have been sympathetically restored) from 19th or early 20th century.

6.4. The appraisal addresses shopfronts and their design in Paragraph 8.20. It states 20th century buildings are variable in quality and design. At their best they stand well with the town's historic buildings, at their worst they detract from their surroundings. Well-designed shop fronts can sometimes ameliorate the poor ones, but a successful blend of scale, materials and design should be the aim. Future additions should either be top quality contemporary work, or meld quietly into the background with traditional styles and materials.

6.5. At Paragraph 1.8, the appraisal notes that planning permission will only be granted for development that preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with the policies in the Local Plan

6.6. In regard to relevant policy, adopted Local Plan Policy DC2 covers the historic environment. It states that the Council will promote 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 using Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guidance and Statements and Characterisation Studies.

6.7. Shopfront Design is addressed in the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Design Guide (February 2018). It states that new development in town centres should be guided by existing context, pattern, and grain of development. There is a need to respect surrounding scale and the proportions of neighbouring buildings. New shopfronts should reflect the character and architectural style of the upper floors and the area, while maintaining the rhythm of the individual buildings in the street and building with appropriate materials and finishes. In more detail, new proposals should adopt corporate signs and colour schemes to suit the local area, respect the host building, use traditional materials where appropriate whilst signage should complement the frontage and illumination should be discreet.

6.8. Turning to national guidance, Paragraph 194 of the NPPF states, 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 assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (Paragraph 197).

6.9. There is also the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which is the primary legislation and foundation on which further policy, and guidance. relating to the conservation of the historic environment is built.

6.10. In these terms, it should be noted that the proposals for 2 – 4 Derby Street are relatively limited.

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6.11. It is accepted that the shopfront is to be replaced, however, the building is not listed whilst the proposed replacement shopfront would be considered to be in keeping with the wider Conservation Area. It will use conventional materials in the former of timber windows while introducing contemporary features that are designed in a traditional way. The timber bi-fold windows are the most notable feature, but they will create interest and interaction with the street scene that will help revitalise this vacant unit. In addition, stallrisers will be deepened and the front door will be replaced, however, the structural columns will stay in situ

6.12. The shopfront will also be repainted in a muted colour palette of dark green, the existing advertisement fascia boards will be re-used whilst internally the proposals will make minimal alterations to the ground floor which has already been fitted out for the previous occupier.

6.13. It is considered that the proposed changes to the building align with Development Plan policy and guidance contained in the SPD. For instance, the proposed development seeks to protect and conserve this building in a Conservation Area through its re-use and by making limited alterations to allow for its viable operation. The introduction of the bi-fold windows and the other minor changes accords with SPD guidance in that respects of the grain of development and uses appropriate materials and finishes.

6.14. While the proposals are introducing new corporate signs and colour schemes, it is considered that the muted colour palette and utilisation of existing signage locations respect the host building and that the introduction of the bi-fold windows will be a novel and welcome addition to this part of Derby Street. To this end, the proposed development will enable the re-use of this vacant building thereby improving the centre's economic viability and ensuring that the property makes a positive contribution to the wider Conservation Area.

6.15. Accordingly, the proposal are a successful blend of scale, materials and design which meld contemporary elements, traditional styles, and materials as advocated by the Conservation Area Appraisal.

6.16. As stated, the proposed alterations to the property are considered to be minimal, therefore, NPPF Paragraph 194 should be applied in that the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As such, it is considered that the evidence in this Design, Access and Heritage Statement is sufficient to consider the proposals.

6.17. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed development aligns with heritage policy as set out in the Development Plan, supplementary guidance and NPPF.

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7. Conclusion

7.1. It is considered that this Statement aptly conveys the design, access, and heritage principles – in terms of use, layout, amount, appearance, access and heritage impact– that have informed the proposal.

7.2. The proposed changes to the building will be minimal and limited to the shopfront. It is considered that this approach will be sympathetic and reflective of this building and its location. All features are to be retained with the only notable external changes relating to the introduction of new windows and a new colour palette around the window and door frames. New signage will use existing infrastructure.

7.3. Internally, the alterations will focus on the introduction of new interior design features such as a customer counter, shelving and fitted seating areas.

7.4. The overall design approach aims to reflect the surrounding context of the property whilst creating an attractive and inviting frontage to Derby Street thereby increasing the visibility of the unit and its interactivity with the street scene.

7.5. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the Development Plan, supplementary planning guidance and provisions set out in the NPPF.

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