

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0379
Valid 28/07/2021

44 ALSOP STREET
LEEK

REPLACEMENT OF FRONT
WINDOWS

(FULL - HOUSEHOLDER)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on neighbouring amenity and future occupiers.
- Impact on the designated heritage asset of Leek Conservation Area

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The building is an attractive, late 19th century property which retains its original painted timber sash windows and other historic detailing. It is a grander building on the end of a row of terraced properties and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. It also lies within the setting of Albion Mill, a Grade II Listed Building. Dwellings in Leek are protected by the Article 4 Direction to conserve historic detailing and prevent incremental changes which will cumulatively harm the wider area. There is no evidence that the joinery is rotten and beyond repair

PROPOSAL

Consent is sought to replace the existing windows with double glazed upvc windows to the front elevation of the property.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan

SS1 Development Principles
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 - 14
Section(s) 4, 5, 12, 15, 16

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 31.08.2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: N/A
Press Advert: 04.08.2021

Public Comments

None received within consultation period

Town / Parish Comments

None received within consultation period.

Conservation Officer

Recommends refusal

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The building is located within the Development Boundary of Leek; a 'town' and is considered to be a sustainable location by Local Plan policies SS2 and SS5. The principle of the development is therefore acceptable.

Impact on the Character of Leek Conservation Area

Policy DC1 refers to design and seeks to secure development of a high quality which is designed to add value to the area and to respect the site and its surroundings. New development should promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF (2021) requires the design of a development to add to the overall quality of an area, by being sympathetic to local character and by being visually attractive as a result of good architecture.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 places a duty on the local planning authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Paragraph 194 of the NPPF (2021) requires an applicant to submit a Heritage Statement 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.

As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary'.

Paragraph 203 of the NPPF (2021) states, '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'

Similarly, Policy DC2 states that the Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.

Policy DC2 also requires that all applications likely to affect heritage assets will require the submission of a heritage statement, including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate. A heritage statement has been submitted to support the application. The statement considers that the proposal preserves the existing character and appearance of the property.

Within the appraisal issues and opportunities within the Conservation Area are addressed. One issue is the erosion of historic details and that throughout the Conservation Area the unique qualities of its buildings are being eroded by the incremental removal of windows and doors of historic design with off-the-peg, modern substitutes driven by heavy marketing, pressure to individualize property and the drive for thermal efficiency.

Whilst some traditional window designs can accommodate the newer types of slim double glazing, problems arise with the installation of windows with heavy, chunky frames of standard double glazed units, failure to replicate the original design, introduction of top-opening lights, timber beading, applied leading and UPVC materials. Ill-considered replacement windows and doors can damage the local character of the area.

UPVC is only considered if the existing windows are not to a traditional design already and UPVC may be an acceptable compromise if the overall design can be improved. However, UPVC is not generally encouraged in historic buildings as it fails to accurately replicate traditional joinery and we would lose good historic detailing that contributes to the character of the area. This building retains its historic sash windows and therefore the change to UPVC cannot be supported as sections tend to be wider, giving a bulkier appearance, glazing bars are applied and the overall appearance and finish is not authentic. Given the age of the building I would expect traditional, high quality window materials of appropriately lightweight and elegant appearance. This position is in line with recent appeal decisions.

To protect the historic character of Leek from harmful alterations the council introduces article 4 directions which covers publicly visible elevations of dwellings meaning that planning permission is required to alter or replace windows and doors with a different design or material. This article 4 brings dwellings in line with the existing planning controls for flats and other commercial and non-residential buildings. Changes that harm the character or appearance of a building are likely to be refused.

The opportunities section of the appraisal also seeks the reinstatement of historic detailing such as windows and doors and period shopfronts. Leek has had a successful track record in operating grant scheme which have had a significant impact on the vibrancy of the town centre and its local distinctiveness. There is still much to be achieved. The replacement of the historic timber windows with modern plastic (pvc) doubled glazed windows would damage the local character of the area as the unique qualities of its building would be eroded.

The applicant has not provided any sufficient justification to confirm that the alterations are necessary to achieve a public benefit which would offset the harm caused which is contrary to National Planning Policy contained in the NPPF and Local Policy.

The replacement of the existing single pane timber windows with double glazed pvc windows in place of the historic details, especially in such a prominent location and in such an architecturally distinctive building is considered to have a significantly detrimental impact on the character of the conservation Area. As such the development is considered contrary to the overall aims of this appraisal, national and local policy which seek to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

Amenity

Due to the nature of the development it is considered that the development will have an acceptable impact on neighbour amenity.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The replacement of the exiting windows with doubled glazed PVC giving considerable importance and weight to the duties at section 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, in consideration to Policy DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan in giving 'great weight' to the conservation of the relevant sections of the NPPF. It is recommended that the application be refused.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Refuse

Case Officer: Rebecca Bowers

Recommendation Date: 01.12.2022

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

