

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2022/0035
Valid 24/01/2022

SUGDEN HOUSE
STOCKWELL STREET
LEEK

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

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact on the setting of the conservation area
- Retention of tree

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application relates to Sugden House in Leek. The application relates specifically to the stone boundary wall adjacent to Stockwell Street. Sugden House is a prominent building on the corner of Stockwell Street and Ball Haye Road.

The application site is located within Leek Conservation Area. The building is a former Cottage Hospital (now Sugden House), which opened in 1870. A further wing opened in 1909, resulting in a two phase gothic revival building in mellow brick with stone dressings.

PROPOSAL

Consent is sought to make alterations to the existing boundary treatment to Sugden House on the Stockwell Street elevation. The works are described as follows:

- Removal of existing gate and gate post and rebuild with coping stones.
- Removal of stone wall and insertion of metal ornamental fence in black.
- Removal of stone wall and insertion of stone gate posts with existing metal gate reused with renewed black paint.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan

SS1 Development Principles
DC1 Design Considerations
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport
DC 2 The Historic Environment
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows.

Leek Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 12,15 and 16

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None relevant

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 16.03.2022
Neighbour consultation period ends:16.02.2022
Press Advert: 02.03.2022

Public Comments

No representations received within consultation period.

Town / Parish Comments

Leek Town Council have no objection to the development.

Conservation Officer

Original comments

Objection due to impact on Sugden House and its context and therefore its setting.

Conservation Officer was involved in a meeting with the applicant's agent to agree an acceptable scheme. Formal plans were submitted 18.05.2023.

Arboricultural Officer

The Beech tree on the Stockwell Street frontage is protected as T1 under TPO No. SM.235. I have noted no condition-related defects or concerns about the tree itself (eg disease, decay, structural defects etc) which require attention nor which would suggest the future lifespan of the tree may be limited. Purely on this basis the tree

could have a useful life and on-going significant amenity contribution for another 40 – 50 years or more. But presently unforeseen natural circumstances could reduce that (eg disease, decay, major storm damage).

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The existing boundary wall is clearly showing signs of damage due to the roots of T1 under TPO No. SM.235. The Councils Arboricultural officer confirms that the tree is not showing signs of deterioration. The Tree has visual amenity and makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area in an area where green spaces are minimal. As such a compromise needs to be agreed which allows for the retention of the TPO tree and repairs to the boundary wall. As such the principle of the development is accepted subject to the development having an acceptable impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

Design and Heritage



Fig 3



Fig 4



Fig 5

Figure 3 is an early 20thC archive image held by Leek Library (accessed via Staffordshire Past-track) and shows how prominently the boundary wall has featured generally. The image does not however appear to extend far enough to show the section subject of the application. The agent's heritage statement comments that "the stone and copings which are proposed for removal as part of this application are not identical to the more original part of the wall closer to Ball Haye Road". Whilst this may be true, it is not clear to the LPA that the section of wall in the application has any lesser significance or is necessarily more recent though the agent says that to the west of the tree there was c.30 to 40 years ago an access off Stockwell Street. It seems to the LPA that this may have been west again also of the wall subject of the application. Fig. 4 is an older photo pre-dating the substantial eastern extension seen today and in Fig.3. This shows a very much more elaborate wall the detail of which is clearer still in Fig. 5.

Policy NE 2 states that the Council will protect existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, in particular, ancient woodland, veteran trees and ancient or species-rich hedgerows from loss or deterioration. This will be achieved by:

- Requiring that existing woodlands, healthy trees and hedgerows are retained and integrated within a proposed development unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh their loss;

Policy DC 2 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 194 of the NPPF 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 assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Within the Leek Conservation Area Character Appraisal the Issues and Opportunities section of the appraisal states that boundary walls, hedges and railings are a defining feature of the Conservation Area providing attractive, strong boundaries enclosing gardens. The need for off-street parking is threatening front gardens resulting in a loss of enclosure and bland hardstanding. Other boundaries are threatened by piecemeal removal, inappropriate alterations and replacement with modern block walling, modern metal railings and timber fencing.

Numerous discussions have taken place between stakeholders to agree on an acceptable scheme. Following a meeting the applicant's agent has submitted a revised proposal. The amended plans show a development which proposes to relocate the pedestrian gate due to unstable and potentially unsafe tarmac that has been raised by the tree roots and proposes an intentional section of railing in front of the TPO tree. Ornamental Railings are proposed and the existing gate is to be reused. This has been considered to be the most balanced proposal which takes into consideration the value

of the tree as well as the character of the Conservation Area. As such the proposed development is not considered to harm the significance of the Conservation Area and would continue to sustain it.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

It is for the above reasons and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised that I recommend accordingly.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION :

Case Officer: Rebecca Bowers

Recommendation Date: 19.05.2023

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Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council