

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0062
Valid 03/02/2025

LEEK MOORLANDS
HOSPITAL
ASHBOURNE ROAD
LEEK

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT
FOR INTERNAL
ALTERATIONS TO
SOUTHEAST GROUND FLOOR
ROOMS OF ORIGINAL 3-
STOREY MAIN BLOCK FRONT
RANGE TO CREATE A
'TALKING THERAPY'
CONSULTANCY FACILITY

(LISTED BUILDING CONSENT -
ALTERATION)

MAIN ISSUES

- Heritage – internal work to Grade II Listed Building

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

An imposing and well known landmark building facing the Ashbourne Road in Leek. It was purpose built as a workhouse in 1838 and was an extensive development at its inception – see drawing AL103 in the submitted Heritage Statement (incorporated within the 'Conservation Design and Access Statement' (CDAS). The proposal relates to rooms within this original structure.

The building has remained institutional serving health needs throughout its history. It was listed in 1972. There is strong survival of its historic form but there has also been significant alteration and modern addition in parts.

Official List description

Workhouse, now hospital. 1838. By Bateman and Drury. Red brick with slate roof. EXTERIOR: main block facing street a 3-storeyed, 10- window range (2-1-3-1-2). Rear ranges arranged on panopticon principal, with 3-storeyed axial wing to rear of frontage linked to octagonal storeyed block from which 3 further cruciform wings formerly ran. Pediment over 3 central bays with date in apex. Central entrance in porch with coupled Doric columns. Windows (renewed in original openings to first floor) with flat-arched stone heads with moulded keystones. Moulded stone cornice and blocking course. Single storey 3-window pavilions with central pediment each side of main range. Central rear wing 3-storeyed, 6-window range (originally sash windows of 9 and 12 lights, some now renewed), linking to octagonal tower. One radial wing parallel to frontage block survives (the other demolished c1990): 2-storeyed, 8-window range, 12-pane sashes with stone cills and flat-arched brick heads. Lower rear wing beyond tower now (and perhaps originally) the kitchens. INTERIOR: layout still retains some

of the original plan, and the stone staircases with cast-iron rails survive in frontage block and rear wings.

PROPOSAL

The proposal amounts to relatively minor changes as described in the CDAS (p.20):

The proposed works involve the (reversible) infilling of two existing internal door openings D5 & D6, and two internal corridor window openings W2 & W3 (fig.15), the removal of an original internal masonry wall between one room and a store room to create a larger meeting room 2 (fig.7), the construction of a plaster boarded stud partition to create a new room 3 and an escape corridor, and the replacement or up-grading of the original internal 9-pane, part-glazed panel door D7 to 30 minute fire resistance (fig.6).

The stated purpose is set out as follows (CDAS p.24):

The four ground floor rooms in the southeast end of the original front range 'Main Block' building are used in part as hospital and medical supplies storage, but the former offices are largely vacant. The proposals seek permission to re-configure the rooms and fit them out to provide four new outpatient consultancy rooms to provide 'on-site' talking therapy services.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS5 Leek Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres; 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

As must be expected there is an extensive planning history to the premises. There is no obvious need or requirement to investigate this further in relation to this application.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 6th March 2025

Neighbour consultation period ends: 6th March 2025

Press Advert: 19th March 2025

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

Leek Town Council - none

National Amenity Societies and Historic England

None

SMDC Heritage Conservation Officer

This is a desk-based assessment based on the information provided. The proposal would involve internal alterations, including the infill of 2 internal doors and 2 windows (now internal to a corridor), opening up of an internal masonry wall to create a larger room, installation of a modern partition to subdivide an office and upgrades to an existing doorway to improve fire safety in the building. As set out in the Conservation Design & Access Statement, much of the interior is of lower significance as a result of modern interventions and finishes from the current use.

The proposed works would result in a degree of harm to the special interest of the listed building as they would involve the loss of a small portion of historic masonry, erosion of the historic plan form and proportions of the rooms. The proposed upgrades with intumescent paint to a door are clearly justified in terms of fire safety. In addition, the proposed technical details of the infill of D3 & D6 and W2 & W3 show that some of the heritage harm could be reversible.

In relation to the overall significance of the listed building, the level of harm would be very minor as the alterations would not completely diminish the understanding of the building as a former workhouse and the internal areas affected have already been considerably altered by modern 20th century interventions.

Notwithstanding this, it is noted that the proposed new partition for Room 3 would intersect a chimney breast detail – is this a feature which has already been blocked/covered up? Can further details of this be provided.

Further details were submitted by e-mail (dd. 20.03.2025) in response to which the Conservation Officer confirmed (by e-mail 22.03.2025) the overall recommendation remained un-changed:

In summary, the proposed works would result in a very minor degree of harm to the overall significance and special interest of the Listed Building. This would be contrary to the provisions of s.16 of the Act. With reference to the planning policies, this would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage asset (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework). There is clear and convincing justification provided for the works (par.213 of NPPF) as this [development] would enable the continued optimum viable use for the building to be realised and some of the works are also in the interest of fire safety for occupants. Notwithstanding the clarification on the proposed partition for Room 3 mentioned above, there are no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

There is a statutory duty placed on the LPA, under section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to consider the impact of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building affected, and its setting and "have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".

An LPA can only discharge its duty if it has carried out a proper assessment of the impact on the Listed Building, is conscious of the duty and has demonstrably applied it in assessing the proposal. This assessment extends to setting, the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced.

Historic Environment Policy DC2 of the Local Plan is to give protection to designated heritage assets and their settings and non-designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF.

NPPF paragraph 212 states that 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".

Paragraph 213 goes on to say that: "any harm or loss [to a heritage asset] should require clear and convincing justification."

NPPF paragraph 215 states that: "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 securing its optimum viable use."

In principle the development can be supported if the above stipulations are satisfied which in this case should be determined subject to the Council's Conservation Officer's assessment and advice.

Heritage

The Conservation Officer's assessment shows that it would be appropriate to recommend approval. Although some harm is identified this is described as "very minor" and without doubt 'less than substantial' in the meaning of the NPPF. There is a rationale to the proposal which can be reasonably accepted as presenting a clear and convincing justification for the work. There is a strong level of public benefit in that the work would both enable the development or expansion of public health provision as a result of the services that would be catered for at the hospital and the development would help sustain on-going beneficial use of the building by the National Health Service.

With the exception of the removal of an internal dividing wall between store 1 and office 3 the works would all appear likely to be reversible.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

Clear and obvious public benefit is associated with the proposal that off-sets the minor heritage harm identified. No requirement for conditions beyond plans and commencement is identified.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : **Listed Building Consent be granted**

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 31.03.2024

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council