

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 21st May 2025
Application Ref: SMD/2025/0178
Site Address: Nicholson War Memorial Monument, Derby Street, Leek
Proposal: Advertisement consent for 6no Vinyl 2.6m x .6m banners to be fixed to 6no lamp posts to promote the centenary of the Nicholson War Memorial

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	- Nicholson War Memorial – Grade II (listing ref: 1268666) - Leek Conservation Area
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would be situated in Leek Conservation Area and the immediate setting of the Nicholson War Memorial, which is a Grade II Listed Building.

The war memorial (Grade II) is a c.1924-5 80ft clock tower, built as a war memorial and constructed in Portland stone with a brick interior. The monument was gifted for the town by local silk manufacturer Sir Arthur Nicholson in memory of soldiers killed in WWI. The significance of the monument derives from its commemorative importance, its grandeur and designed prominence in Leek.

Leek Conservation Area was designated for its origins as a medieval market town which was transformed by the growth of textile manufacturer and brewing industries from the 18th century. Typically buildings are constructed in red brick with Staffordshire blue tiles or slates. The war memorial makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as it is a landmark feature within the town centre and is a designed visual bookend when looking down Derby Street.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal seeks consent for banner signage to be attached to 6 lighting columns in the immediate foreground of the Nicholson War Memorial. The banners would be 2m (H) x 0.6m (W) and would be attached to the columns by metal mounting arms.

It is noted that the red edge of the location plan may be drawn inaccurately as it does not appear to incorporate LC1 column in the red edge.

The banners would be situated at a high level and would be quite visually prominent. From a conservation and design perspective, banner signage can often create quite a cluttered appearance to the streetscene, particularly when multiple banners are used as it can dilute the effectiveness of the advertisement messaging and be a distraction to the surrounding character. Additionally, in this instance, the proposed banners would be situated in very close proximity to the memorial and would likely interfere with and distract from the appreciation of the architectural interest and the memorial's designed prominence.

It is also not clear what colour the proposed mounting arms would be as the visuals in the Planning and Heritage Impact Statement show a white bar, which would contrast with the colour of the main columns.

Whilst it is recognised that the proposed banners are initially intended for the promotion of the centenary of memorial's construction, the proposal sets out that the banners would later will be used on an ad-hoc basis to promote local events. Therefore, the proposal would have a degree of permanence in terms of its visual impact.

It would be suggested that consideration is given to alternative lighting columns for the banners, in less sensitive locations. From a conservation perspective, it would be recommended that the banners are not included on LC2, LC4 and LC5 as these are in direct and important sightlines of the Listed Building and an important focal point in the Conservation Area.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the setting of the Listed Building (s.66) and preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (s.72).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

In determining applications, local authorities should take account 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, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) – DC2 The Historic Environment
- Leek Conservation Area Appraisal (2017)

Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposal would result in a minor-moderate degree of harm to the setting of the Listed Building and minor harm to the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This would be contrary to s.66 and 72 of the Act. With reference to planning policies, this would be ‘less than substantial harm’ to the designated heritage assets (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework). At this stage, we cannot support the proposal from a conservation perspective and recommend that the number of banners is reduced and/or the proposed banners immediately in front of the memorial are relocated to minimise the visual impact on the designated heritage assets. In addition, further information on the colour/finish of the mounting arms for the banners and an accurate site location plan would be required.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson