

## Conservation Team Advice

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025  
**Application Ref:** SMD/2025/0039  
**Site Address:** Boots, 44 Derby Street, Leek  
**Proposal:** Advertisement consent for fascia replacement and projecting sign

| Heritage assets affected:                |                                     |                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Designated Heritage Asset(s):</b>     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leek Conservation Area</li> </ul> |
| <b>Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):</b> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                                                          |

## Conservation Advice

### Summary of Significance

The proposal would be situated in Leek Conservation Area, which was designated for its medieval market town origins which were overlaid with Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings. The town experience industrial growth in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with textile manufacture and brewing industries a key part of this growth. Typically buildings are constructed in red brick walling with Staffordshire blue and slate roofs. Derby Street forms the central commercial core of the town centre. No.44 is a modern 2-storey 20<sup>th</sup> century building of no heritage value. It makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

### Assessment and Impact

The proposal would involve the replacement of a fascia and a projecting sign to Boots Opticians. The existing include a modern aluminium fascia, with a trough light above the lettering, and a projecting aluminium sign.

The proposed size and style of fascia signage and projecting hanging sign would be similar to the existing and the principle of this would unlikely affect the area's character and appearance. Whilst aluminium fascias and hanging signs are usually discouraged in Conservation Areas as they are a modern material, it is acknowledged that the existing palette of materials consists of aluminium so the reuse of this material in this instance would not result in any greater impact than the existing signage. It would, however, be recommended that consideration is given to a matt or satin finish to the signage to minimise the visual contrast of this against the adjacent timber shopfronts.

Notwithstanding the above, the proposed internal illumination to the lettering would be an overtly contemporary feature which would create a bright and garish appearance to

the shopfront. Although this is a shopfront of low heritage value, it is still situated in the immediate context of historic buildings which make a positive contribution to the designated area's special interest. The internal illumination would distract from the overall character and appearance of the area and it is not overtly clear what the justification for this form of illumination is, particularly as the premises would appear to be a daytime operational use only.

Overall, the principle of the replacement fascia and projecting signage would likely have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, but the proposed alteration to install internally illuminated lettering would have a harmful impact on the area's significance.

### **Legislation and Policy**

#### *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*

The local planning authority should have a desirability of 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).

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within the setting), should require clear and convincing justification (par.213).

Where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (par.215).

#### *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**

In summary, the proposal would result in a minor degree of harm to the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This would be contrary to s.72 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 does not appear to be clear and convincing justification for this level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) and great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (par.212 of NPPF). We, therefore, object to the proposal from a conservation perspective and recommend the following:

- Removal of the internal illumination to the signage
- Clarification on the finish of the aluminium fascia – e.g. matt / satin finish

**Conservation Officer:**