

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0209
Valid 25/04/2025

2 WESTWOOD ROAD
LEEK

**PART CHANGE OF USE AT
GROUND FLOOR FROM A
SHOP TO A FLAT INCLUDING
ASSOCIATED ALTERATIONS.**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Loss of retail space
- Parking

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site consists of an end-of-terrace Victorian property with 20th century additions, currently in use as a retail unit on the ground floor with accommodation above, sited on the confluence of Westwood Road and Grove Street. Westwood Road has a mix of residential and commercial properties, while Grove Street is residential terraced housing with direct access onto Grove Street with no means of making provision for off-street parking. Historic imagery shows the property as a large Victorian dwelling with a triangular garden occupying the space there the flat roofed 20th c. addition and access ramp now sit, on the junction. There is no planning history to indicate when the ground floor property was converted into a retail unit, when the flats were created upstairs, nor when the extension was added, although a historic map suggests it may have been a post office as far back as 1945. The ramp was added in 2013 (SMD/2013/0190 (old ref. 13/00061/FUL)). The site is within the Leek Development Boundary, and outside of the Conservation Area.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks permission to change the use of part of the ground floor retail space into accommodation, with little minor exterior alteration except for the creation of steps down to the pavement from the raised platform next to the bay window on Westwood Road. The proposal will form two bedrooms downstairs. Upstairs accommodation will remain unchanged. The remainder of the ground floor will be retained in retail use

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
DC3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
E1 New Employment Development
H1 New Housing Development
NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 -14, 47, 109, 131, 135.

Section(s) 4 – Decision making, 9 – Promoting sustainable transport, 12 – Achieving well designed and beautiful places.

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

- Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands
- Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD
- Space About Dwellings SPD

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

- None relevant.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: Expired

Neighbour consultation period ends: Expired

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

One comment received in objection. The primary concern was parking availability.

Town / Parish Comments

No objection.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Acceptance.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

In accordance with Policies SS1 and SS2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan the Council expects all new development to make a positive contribution towards

the sustainability of communities and to protect and where possible enhance the environment. Policy SS5 – The Leek Area Strategy – aims to meet the housing and community needs of Leek and its rural hinterland by supporting the development of new housing on sustainable sites within the Development Boundary. However, it also aims to create employment growth and increase the diversity of employment opportunities to meet existing and future needs by supporting the retention and growth of existing businesses within the town. The site is outside of the defined Leek Town Centre, and on the fringe of the retail/residential divide along Westwood Road, and as such, it is considered that the reduction in size of one retail unit with the creation of a residential unit would not have a harmful effect on the town centre, and would positively contribute to the housing stock. The site is within the Leek Development Boundary, and outside of the Conservation Area, and therefore acceptable in principle.

Design

SMDC Policy DC1 requires development to be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; and be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, character and appearance.

Paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF outline what is expected of good design and required for the development of high quality, beautiful places, and provides for a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The proposal is mainly a change of use application with little exterior alteration, except for the new steps down to the pavement on Westwood Road. In design terms, these are not considered to be harmful to this street scene. Therefore the proposal is acceptable in terms of design.

Amenity

Paragraph 135 f) of the NPPF seeks to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants. Local Plan Policy DC1 requires development to achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development and to not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shadowing, overbearing effect, noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character and amenity. With little exterior changes, and no new windows, residential amenity in the area will largely remain unchanged. Therefore the application is considered acceptable in this regard.

Highway Safety

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and contribute to making high quality places. Policy T1 aims to promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. T1 aims to ensure that all new development is located

where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development. Appropriate parking provision is considered on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2. In this case, the current shop has no parking provision and there is not sufficient land to create off highway parking for the existing shop or proposed dwelling. However, the property is in a sustainable location within walking distance of Leek Town Centre where future residents can access public amenities, shops, cafes, restaurants and public transport. Residents may walk, cycle, or if parking is required there are local car parks. In this case, the proposed development is considered acceptable in regards to Policy T1 due to the reasons stated above. Notwithstanding the above reasons, SCC Highways have raised no objection, and therefore a refusal on parking or highway grounds is not considered to be sustainable.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

On balance, the loss of retail space is regrettable, however some of the retail space on the ground floor is retained, meaning the number of retail units in the town remains unchanged, while housing stock is increased. The site is on the fringe of where Leek becomes almost exclusively residential as opposed to retail, and so a smaller retail unit in this location would be acceptable. It is therefore considered that the reduction in the size of one retail unit for the creation of a residential unit would not have a harmful effect on the town centre, and would positively contribute to the housing stock, the latter having a demonstrable need.

The proposal, on balance, would be acceptable as the accrued benefits would outweigh the harm from additional on-street parking, as a residential unit is created. The application complies in all other areas of Local and National Policy. Therefore, the recommendation is to approve.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE, subject to conditions

Case Officer: Reuben Berriman

Recommendation Date: 23/06/2025

X 

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council