

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 30th July 2025
Application Ref: SMD/2025/0257
Site Address: The Knot Inn, Station Lane, Rushton Spencer
Proposal: Erection of a marquee within the curtilage of a Listed building

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	- The Knot Inn – Grade II (listing ref: 1374775) - Rushton Spencer Station – Grade II (listing ref: 1191521)
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would be situated in the setting of The Knot Inn and the former Rushton Spencer Station building, both of which are Grade II listed.

The Knot Inn (Grade II) is a mid-19th century railway inn, constructed in red brick wall and blue tile patterned roof. The significance derives from its historic association and connection to the former railway which was in close proximity to the site, retention of historic fabric and plan form, illustrative use of traditional materials influenced by local availability and association with the growth of inns and public houses in the Victorian period. Its immediate setting is provided by the former station building and disused railway to the west, which provides a tangible connection to the building's historic interest. The wider setting is provided by the village and open agricultural fields, which enhance the rural character of the building.

Rushton Spencer Station (Grade II) is a c.1844 railway station building, which has since been converted to residential use. It is constructed in sandstone with a patterned tiled roof. The building is of high architectural interest with the use of Neo-Tudor and Gothick features. The significance derives from its association with the development of the north Staffordshire Railway and Churnet Valley line, its high architectural value and its landmark positioning as a bookend to this part of Station Lane.



Fig.1 c.1877-1887 OS map

Assessment and Impact

The proposal seeks permission for the erection of a permanent marquee within the grounds of the listed pub. As indicated on the proposed elevation, the marquee would be 6.5m in height and 10m in diameter, it would have a canvas exterior finished in a khaki/beige colouring. It was noted on site that the marquee appears to already be in situ.

The proposed marquee would be a bulky structure. Its tipi form would contrast with the shape and appearance of the more traditionally constructed buildings surrounding the site. In addition, the palette of materials would not be sympathetic to the overriding historic character of the immediate surroundings and the colour of the marquee would exacerbate the visual starkness of the conical shaped structure. The siting of the structure within the verdant part of the curtilage would also diminish some of the rural setting of the listed pub, which makes a positive contribution to its significance.

The site to the rear is quite visually open and there are views looking south from Station Lane towards the proposed development. As noted above, this would be a visually distracting feature, and it would be quite a prominent structure in a key vista of these two Listed Buildings from Station Lane. Due to the openness, it is unlikely that relocation elsewhere within the site would minimise or reduce this heritage harm.

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 Buildings (s.66).

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would result in a moderate degree of harm to the setting of the two Listed Buildings. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of s.66 of the Act. With reference to the 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). There does not appear to be clear and convincing justification for the level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) and there would be no heritage-related public benefits that would arise from the proposed development (par.215 of NPPF). Great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset’s significance (par.212 of NPPF). We object to the proposal from a conservation perspective and would recommend it is refused.

Conservation Officer: