



Historic England

Mr Arne Swithenbank
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
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Leek
Staffordshire
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Direct Dial: 07770445866

Our refs: P01595900 &

13 August 2025

Dear Mr Swithenbank

**Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021
& T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**THE FOXLOWE, MARKET PLACE, LEEK, STAFFORDSHIRE
Application Nos SMD/2025/0313 & SMD/2025/0312**

Thank you for your letters of 25 July 2025 regarding the above applications for listed building consent and planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the applications.

Historic England Advice

The proposal affects Foxlowe, that is Grade II listed, where the building lies within the setting of the Parish Church of St Edward the Confessor that is listed II*, where it is designated on the basis of its 'more than special interest': PARISH CHURCH OF ST EDWARD THE CONFESSOR, Leek - 1268646 | Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1268646?section=official-list-entry>. The churchyard contains two Anglo-Scandinavian crosses that are designated as Scheduled Monuments. The listed building and its wider curtilage also lies within the Leek Conservation Area, where it is recorded as being 'vulnerable' on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register. Foxlowe is a fine formal Georgian brick building that makes a prominent and positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, where it was used as a Trade Union and Labour Club since the early twentieth century.

Historic England understands that this proposal is to provide for a new and larger flexible theatre/performance space, that would serve the town of Leek and its rural hinterland, where it is acknowledged that this would provide significant leisure provision. The



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proposal would result in a substantial new extension to the existing Grade II listed building at the rear, that would include part of an existing car park. There is no principle objection to having contrasting contemporary design, where it should read as a distinct separate structure. Care should be taken with the use of facing materials and finishes, where these should be of high quality. It is noted that the principal material shall be metal cladding along with brickwork. There is concern with the proposed quantum of materials, where this should be kept as minimal as possible in order to make the new elevations as unfussy as possible.

Having consulted the proposed plans and in particular the concept massing, there are concerns with the proposed scale and height of the proposed new extension, where it may not be visually subservient to the principal listed building, both in terms of proposed footprint and roof height. There is also potential harm to the setting of the Grade II* listed church, where there is considerable intervisibility between many different vantage points within the conservation area. There shall also be harm to existing fabric that lies to the latter extensions at the rear, where the proposal shall result in the demolition of late nineteenth century and twentieth century fabric. It is noted that this fabric is of a lesser significance, as stated in the submitted Design Access and HIA Statement, though there is some fine plasterwork contained within the Rainbow Room, that was constructed for the Union, where Historic England has concern with the loss of this fabric. Should approval be granted appropriate mitigation should be afforded, where fabric of significance should be recorded accordingly.

Recommendation

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, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Historic England has concerns, where it considers that the proposal would consist of 'less than substantial harm' (as designated under paragraph 215 of the NPPF), where such harm would need to be balanced with relevant public benefits. Given its proposed leisure use, Historic England acknowledges that there would be a degree of public benefit, though there are concerns with regards to proposed scale, massing and loss of existing fabric. It is noted that Staffordshire Moorlands District has policies contained in the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan 2014-31 for the protection of the historic environment, policies DC1 and DC2.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.



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Yours sincerely,

Benjamin Williscroft

Inspector of Historic Buildings & Areas

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cc: Megan Atkinson, Conservation Officer



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