

Address: 39 St Edward Street, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13

Proposal: Change of use from retail (Class E) to mixed use — ground floor retail and upper floor residential dwelling, with internal alterations and associated works

Applicant: Rachael Poyntz-Roberts

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1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared in support of a **planning and listed building consent application** for **39 St Edward Street, Leek**. The proposal seeks to convert the property from a single-use retail premises to a **mixed-use building**, comprising:

- A **ground floor retail unit (Class E)**, and
- A **self-contained family dwelling (Class C3)** occupying the first and second floors.

The application is submitted in accordance with **Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**.

The property is a **Grade II Listed Building** located within the **Leek Conservation Area**, and the proposals have been designed to **preserve and enhance its historic character and architectural integrity** while securing its long-term, sustainable use.

2. Site and Surrounding Context

39 St Edward Street forms part of a traditional, historic terrace within Leek's principal commercial area. The building is of **three storeys**,

constructed in **brick and stone**, with a traditional shop front facing St Edward Street.

The street is characterised by a variety of **18th and 19th century listed buildings** of significant architectural merit, many of which have been converted to mixed commercial and residential uses. The property contributes positively to the townscape and forms part of the **Leek Conservation Area**, recognised for its intact historic form and strong commercial heritage.

Currently, the building is occupied as a **retail showroom** selling furniture, fabrics, and decorative paints ("Little Green Paint"). Currently, the front three rooms provide a display and sales areas, while the upper back rooms are used for **storage** and ancillary purposes.

The building has been **marketed for over 18 months** with minimal commercial interest, highlighting the challenge of maintaining full retail occupation in this part of the town centre.

3. Proposed Development

The proposal seeks to **introduce a mixed-use arrangement** to secure the ongoing viability and appropriate use of the building. The development will retain the ground floor as a retail unit while providing a **family dwelling on the first and second floors**, accessed from the existing rear entrance leading to the car park and the existing side entrance.

Summary of Key Works

• Ground Floor:

- Retention of existing retail use.
- Installation of a **non-permanent stud wall** around the base of the staircase to separate retail and residential areas.
- Addition of a **small staff toilet and sink** for shop use (reversible works).
- No structural alterations to the building.
- Installation of new electrical systems and heating throughout to meet current standards.

- Conversion to a **family residential dwelling**.
 - Refurbishment works include new heating, rewiring, and decoration throughout.
 - **First Floor – Front facing room:**
 - Introduction of **non-permanent partitioning wall** to create two bedrooms using existing doorways.
 - Each room to retain **one existing window each**, ensuring natural light and ventilation.
 - **Rear of the Building - current storerooms:**
 - Removal of a **non-original plastic roof** over the rear store area.
 - Creation of a **kitchen-dining space** with new **black metal French or bifold doors** and a window opening onto the existing car park area.
 - The rear yard/car park will be **landscaped** to form a small **garden and parking area for two vehicles**, incorporating **planting and biodiversity enhancements** (e.g., planters, small trees, and permeable surfacing).
 - **Second floor** – No building work to be carried out. Use as bedroom 1.
 - **External Appearance:**
 - The **existing shopfront** will be retained.
 - Installation of **new signage** in a traditional style, using materials and colours in keeping with the character of the street and Conservation Area.
 - No change to the building's façade, height, or roofline.
 - **Waste Management:**
 - Bins to be stored and collected from the **rear of the property**, ensuring they do not detract from the street scene.
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4. Design Rationale

Use

The proposal represents a sustainable and sympathetic change of use that retains the commercial function of the ground floor while bringing the underutilised upper floors into residential use. This approach aligns with **Local Plan Policy SS5 (Towns)** and national objectives in the **NPPF (2023)** to support mixed-use town centres and the reuse of vacant or underused floorspace.

Amount

The existing ground floor retail area will be maintained at approximately [37m²] with no reduction in active frontage. The upper floors will provide a **three-bedroom dwelling** of appropriate scale for the building and location.

Layout

The layout provides a logical separation of uses:

- Retail at ground level.
- Living, kitchen, bathroom, 2 x bedroom and dining spaces on the first floor (with garden access).
- Bedroom on the second floor.

This configuration allows for private, independent residential occupation while preserving commercial activity at street level.

Scale

No change to the building's external scale or massing is proposed. The works are entirely within the existing footprint and envelope of the building.

Appearance

All external elements will be retained or refurbished in traditional materials. The **shopfront, window proportions, and façade** will remain unaltered. The **rear elevation** improvements (door and window) will be sympathetic to the building's historic character. These changes will not be seen as they will be behind a gated, walled garden.

5. Heritage and Conservation Impact

The property's **Grade II listing** signifies its special architectural and historic interest as part of Leek's historic commercial core. The proposed works have been carefully designed to:

- **Preserve the historic fabric** and form of the building;
- **Reinstate and enhance** elements of the building currently affected by unsympathetic modern alterations (e.g., plastic roofing); and
- **Secure its long-term sustainable use** through sensitive adaptation.

No historic features will be removed or obscured, and all new works (such as stud walls and partitions) will be **non-invasive and fully reversible**.

The introduction of residential use above the shop mirrors historic patterns of occupation within Leek's town centre and ensures continued maintenance of the building fabric, consistent with the aims of **Paragraphs 202–208 of the NPPF** and **Policy DC2 (The Historic Environment)** of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

The new signage will be **traditionally designed** ensuring visual harmony within the **Leek Conservation Area**.

In summary, the proposal will result in **no harm** to the significance of the listed building or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Instead, it will **enhance its condition, vitality, and long-term preservation**.

6. Access and Inclusive Design

Pedestrian Access

The main retail access will remain via the existing shopfront on St Edward Street.

The residential accommodation will be accessed from the rear and the side of the building, ensuring separation of uses and privacy.

Vehicular Access and Parking

The existing **rear car park** will remain accessible, providing **two private parking spaces** for the residential use and sufficient space for deliveries and servicing of the retail unit.

Inclusive Access

While constrained by the historic form of the building, the proposals will ensure safe and convenient access for all users. Internal layouts will comply, as far as practicable, with **Building Regulations Part M (Access to and Use of Buildings)**.

7. Sustainability

The proposal represents an inherently **sustainable development**, reusing an existing historic building and minimising waste and embodied carbon.

The introduction of a garden area with planting will contribute to **urban greening and biodiversity** within the town centre.

Modern heating, insulation, and electrical systems will improve energy efficiency while maintaining the building's historic integrity.

8. Planning Policy Context

The proposed development accords with the following key planning policies:

- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)**
 - Section 7: Promoting sustainable and mixed-use development
 - Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
- **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020):**
 - **Policy SS5 (Towns):** Supports residential use of upper floors to enhance town centre vitality.
 - **Policy E1 (Town Centres):** Encourages mixed-use development that maintains active frontages.
 - **Policy DC1 (Design Considerations):** Requires high-quality, contextually appropriate design.

- **Policy DC2 (The Historic Environment):** Seeks to preserve and enhance listed buildings and conservation areas.

The proposed development is fully compliant with these policies.

9. Conclusion

The proposed **change of use at 39 St Edward Street, Leek** represents a **sensitive, policy-compliant, and sustainable adaptation** of a Grade II listed building.

The scheme will:

- Retain the active retail frontage and contribute to the vitality of the town centre;
- Bring vacant upper floors back into productive residential use;
- Preserve and enhance the building's historic and architectural significance;
- Improve sustainability, energy efficiency, and biodiversity;
- Maintain appropriate access and servicing arrangements; and
- Secure the long-term future of an important heritage asset.

Accordingly, the proposal should be viewed favourably by the Local Planning Authority as a **heritage-led regeneration project** consistent with both **local and national planning objectives**.