

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 2nd December 2025
Application Ref: SMD/2025/0443 & SMD/2025/0444
Site Address: 39 St Edwards Street, Leek
Proposal:

- Listed Building Consent for Change of use and internal works to building
- Change of use application with internal works to building

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	39 St Edward Street, Leek – Grade II (listing ref: 1268561) - Leek Conservation Area
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would involve alterations to no.39 St Edward Street which is a Grade II Listed Building situated in Leek Conservation Area.

39 St Edward Street (Grade II) is a c.1800 house with alterations late-19th century to insert a shopfront. The building is constructed in brick with a plain-tiled roof and projecting cornice. The building has a symmetrical façade, sash windows with voussoir heads and a central arched blocked up window. Internally, decorative finishes and fixtures still remain including a winder staircase, timber panelled doors, architraves, fireplaces and partially exposed Queen post trusses at the attic level. The significance of the building relates to its retention of historic fabric and plan form, association with the development of Georgian townhouse building and later commercial development of Leek town centre, illustrative Neo-Classical architectural influence and retention of decorative features internally.

Leek Conservation Area was designated for its medieval origins as a market town, which expanded rapidly from the 18th century with the growth of textile and brewing industries. In the centre of town, buildings are typically 2- and 3-storeys, constructed in brick walling with Staffordshire blue tiles. No.39 St Edward Street makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal involves internal and external works to facilitate the conversion of the upper floors to residential use. In principle, we are supportive of the reuse and conversion of the upper floors from a conservation perspective as, historically, this would have been residential and the proposed development seeks to find the optimal viable use for the building. However, as noted below there are some suggested alterations and some clarification on the proposed physical alterations.

External alterations

The external works consist of re-painting the shopfront, installing new signage, increasing the height of an existing flat roof extension, installation of a bi-fold door, window and rooflight to the rear outrigger.

The Design & Access Statement mentions that the shopfront would be re-painted and new signage would be installed, but no specific details have been provided. Further details on the colour and the signage to be installed would be required e.g. is it fascia lettering and/or hanging sign? In addition, would there be any illumination as this may also require advertisement consent.

To the rear of the building is a flat roof rendered extension with modern felt roof and plastic roof covering, neither of which make a positive contribution to the significance of the designated heritage assets. There is a stone boundary wall which forms the outer perimeter of the building. The proposal seeks to raise the height of the lean-to aspect of the extension. It is not overtly clear from the submission whether it is proposed to retain the stone boundary wall to the car park and just raise the height of the extension to project above this. The proposed works would also involve the installation of a bi-fold door and window to this car park elevation. Again, it is not clear if these would be installed through the stone masonry facing the rear car park.

Whilst it is recognised the existing extension is modern and of no heritage value, it is considered that the proposed external alterations to this could be reduced in scale to minimise the potential of increasing visual harm and distraction to the principal part of the Listed Building.

If it is proposed to raise the height of the extension above the copings of the stone wall, it would be recommended that the stone wall is increased in height as well. This would help reduce the visual appearance of the extension and, if detailed correctly, also hide the visual prominence of any rooflight. It would be recommended that a flat rooflight is used rather than a lantern style, again, to minimise visual prominence of a feature like this. From a conservation perspective, it would be recommended that the number of openings to the rear elevation are reduced. For example, just a simple patio door or small bi-fold door would suffice. There does not appear to be clear and convincing justification for an additional window (particularly as a rooflight is also proposed).

The application form mentions that the roof to the rear would use traditionally appropriate materials. However, it is unlikely this would be possible as a flat roof construction would require a modern material finish. Further specific details on the proposed materials would be required e.g. product specification.

Internal alterations

The internal works would involve the installation of partition(s) on the ground floor to separate the residential and commercial use and create an WC, installation of a partition on the first floor to create two bedrooms and widening of a masonry wall to the rear outrigger.

On the ground floor, there is minimal architectural detailing such as covings or cornicing. However, a staircase still remains in situ, and it is proposed to install a partition around this to separate the ground and upper floor uses. This would likely result in a degree of harm as it would reduce the historic proportions of the room and hide architectural detailing. It is not overly clear if any upgrades are required in terms of thermal/acoustic/fire attenuation e.g. would the ceilings of the ground floor have to be upgraded for Building Regulations purposes?

The proposed subdivision of the first-floor room would unlikely harm the significance of the building as there is limited architectural detailing which would be affected by this. The proposed alterations to the kitchen/dining room to remove the knibs of a remaining wall may negatively impact some of the significance of the building as this likely would result in the removal of historic masonry. It is noted that a door for the first-floor bathroom is not shown on the existing and proposed plans.

No alterations to the second-floor layout are proposed. However, the application form mentions '[w]herever possible, non-original / later insertions will be removed or replaced, restoring / revealing original fabric', but no specific details of this have been provided in the application which would be required to ensure that the level of impact on the historic interest of the building is fully considered in the determination of the application.

Other matters

The application form mentions that the utilities and heating would be upgraded to improve energy efficiency. Whilst mostly this would not require consent if, for example, just upgrading boilers and radiators. However, it is not clear if any micro-generation is proposed e.g. solar panels or air-source heat pumps and it might be useful to clarify as the level of detail provided is quite vague.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the setting and special interest of the Listed Building (s.16 and 66) and 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 likely result in a degree of harm to the special interest and significance of the Listed Building and possibly the Conservation Area. As mentioned above, some further clarification is required to fully assess the level of impact and some alterations to the design are recommended from a conservation perspective to minimise or reduce any heritage harm. We are supportive of the principle of seeking to find a new use for the building but, from a conservation perspective, we cannot support the application at this stage and would suggest the following:

- Clarification on the alterations to the shopfront and signage – what colours would this be painted and what works are entailed in regard to signage?
- Clarification on whether the stone boundary wall to the rear car park is to be retained
- Subject to the above, it would be suggested to increase the height of this stone boundary wall to hide the raised height of the flat roof extension and proposed rooflight
- It would be recommended that a flat rooflight is proposed rather than a lantern rooflight to minimise the visual appearance of this addition

- Remove the new window opening to the rear and just keep a bi-fold/patio door to the rear
- Further details on the material(s) for the flat roof extension
- Further details of any thermal/acoustic/fire attenuation upgrades between the walls and ceilings on the ground and first floor level
- Plans updated to show doorway to first floor bathroom
- Clarification if any works are required to internal walls/floors/ceilings throughout the building e.g. is insulation to be installed?
- Details of 'energy efficiency' improvements – is this just upgrading existing heating systems or does it involve any micro-generation?

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