

The Quiet Woman, Leek Heritage Impact Assessment



JW | Conservation

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**The Quiet Woman, Leek
Heritage Impact Assessment**

Prepared for HHL Property Limited

by

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Report

This report was commissioned from Jenny Wetton Conservation in 2026 by HHL Property Limited. Its purpose is to assess the impact of minor new proposals to convert the Grade II-listed building for holiday accommodation. The NPPF requires significance to be assessed when changes are proposed to heritage assets, and for the impact of proposals to be assessed in relation to significance. A full updated *Heritage Statement* was produced by the present author in June 2024. Listed Building Consent was granted for a Change of Use from Currently Vacant Public house to form 4 Holiday Lets in November 2024 and is still extant (ref. SMD/2024/0358).

1.2 Purpose of the Report

The report is designed to provide the author's professional opinion of an assessment of the impact of the proposals.

This report has been written by Jenny Wetton, BA MSc (Arch Cons) IHBC, Consultant, based on the existing updated *Heritage Statement* (dated June 2024), which should be read with this document.

1.3 Copyright

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2 HERITAGE PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (Dec. 2024)

The national legislative framework for development affecting listed buildings and conservation areas is provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; often referred to as the Listed Buildings Act. This sets out the duty on local planning authorities with regard to listed buildings and any buildings or land within a conservation area, when determining applications for planning permission. It is essential that these legal duties are considered, alongside the contents of the NPPF and other planning policies and guidance.

For listed buildings, the planning authority *'shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses'* (section 66).

Listed building consent is required for alterations which are likely to affect the character and special interest (significance) of the building. It is not required for like-for-like repairs, nor for alterations to modern fixtures and fittings which will not affect historic fabric, such as the removal of a modern partition.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024 replacing all former planning policy statements (previous editions NPPF etc). *The Planning Practice Guide: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* should be read in the light of the NPPF and does not comprise policy.

The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government has three interdependent objectives to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The latter objective includes contributing to 'protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.' So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**. Chapter 16 is related to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

The *Planning Practice Guide* states: 'In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time.'

Policy 206 states: 'Local planning authorities should make information about the historic environment, gathered as part of policy-making or development management, publicly accessible.'

Policies 207 and 208 of the NPPF require planning applicants and local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be appropriate to the assets' importance and no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of

the proposal on their significance. Local planning authorities should take this assessment into account when the potential impact of proposed development to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Policy 209 states: Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

The *Planning Practice Guide* gives further guidance:

'Disrepair and damage and their impact on viability can be a material consideration in deciding an application. However, where there is evidence of deliberate damage to or neglect of a heritage asset in the hope of making consent or permission easier to gain the local planning authority should disregard the deteriorated state of the asset (National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 202). Local planning authorities may need to consider exercising their repair and compulsory purchase powers to remedy deliberate neglect or damage¹.'

Policy 210 states: 'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'

Policy 212 states: 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'

Policy 213 states: 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Policy 214 states: 'Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities

¹ Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 18a-014-20190723

should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.'

The *Planning Practice Guide* gives guidance on how to assess if there is substantial harm:

'In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

While the impact of total destruction is obvious, partial destruction is likely to have a considerable impact but, depending on the circumstances, it may still be less than substantial harm or conceivably not harmful at all, for example, when removing later inappropriate additions to historic buildings which harm their significance. Similarly, works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all. However, even minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm².'

Policy 215 states; '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.'

Policy 216 states: 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'

The *Planning Practice Guide* defines a non-designated heritage asset:

'Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

² Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723

'A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets³.'

Policy 218 states: 'Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.'

Policy 219 states: 'Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.'

2.2 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020)

DC2 - The Historic Environment

1. The Council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.
2. Protection will be given to designated heritage assets and their settings and non-designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF.
3. All applications likely to affect heritage assets will require the submission of a heritage statement, including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate.
4. Where development is likely to affect archaeology, both designated and undesignated, the Council requires the submission of a desk based assessment, and where appropriate, field surveys and trench evaluation by a qualified professional.
5. Where the loss of significance is unavoidable, recording should take place and this should be added to the Historic Environment Record as a minimum, held by Staffordshire County Council.
6. The Council will continue its proactive approach to heritage assets at risk and welcomes development proposals which would result in the sympathetic reuse of these assets in line with NPPF policy.
7. The Council will promote development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests of acknowledged importance through the use of Conservation Area Appraisals, Design Guidance and Statements, Archaeological Assessments, Characterisation Studies and Masterplanning.

³ Paragraph: 039 Reference ID: 18a-039-20190723

3 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 The Proposals

Hewitt & Carr Architects have drawn up proposals for minor alterations to convert the building for use as holiday accommodation. This statement should be read in conjunction with the associated drawings.

Taking account of the Statement of Significance in the updated *Heritage Statement* of June 2024 and Policies 189 and 190 of the NPPF, the impact of the proposal on the aspects of significance and setting of the designated assets is considered below. The building is listed at Grade II and lies within the Leek Conservation Area and substantial harm should be exceptional. The NPPF advises that '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.'

3.2 Impact of Changes on the Significance of the Listed Building

3.2.1 Exterior

Existing Exterior

On the rear east elevation, the existing door at the left side will be replaced with a timber door in a timber frame with a glazed vision panel and with a timber side panel and the existing opening at the right side will be fitted with a similar door, both to provide access to units. A window will be inserted to the right side (W302) to provide light to the Unit 2 kitchen. Otherwise windows will be replaced on a like for like basis. Both door openings appear to have been inserted to the historic walls in the late 20th century, although the new window will result in the minor loss of historic brickwork. The proposals will improve the appearance of this elevation and are considered to be **neutral overall**.

Courtyard

An initial *Heritage Appraisal* of 2019 concluded of the courtyard that it is 'now hard to determine if any of the openings to the ground floor are historic.'

On the north side (Elevation 2), one of the existing fire doors will be replaced with an external timber door with a glazed vision panel, the other door will be replaced with a floor – ceiling double glazed, timber window in the existing opening. The existing windows will be replaced with timber-framed casements in an appropriate style. A 'conservation style' rooflight will be fitted; although this will result in the loss of some historic roofing slate, this is required to provide light to the unit beneath. The proposals are considered to be **beneficial overall**.

On the west wall (Elevation 3), two of the existing four doorway openings will be fitted with external timber doors with glazed vision panels. The two central openings will be converted to windows with timber-framed casements. The proposals are considered to be **beneficial**.

On the east side (Elevation 4), the existing right doorway opening on the ground floor will be fitted with timber door with a glazed vision panel. Two timber-framed casement windows will be fitted to existing openings on the ground floor while the first-floor windows will be replaced on a like for like basis.

The proposal is considered to be **beneficial**.

On the south side (Elevation 5), the existing wide opening will be partially infilled in brick to match the existing and fitted with a new timber door and a small timber-framed window. Otherwise, one window will be replaced on a like for like basis and the partially infilled window to the right will be reopened and fitted with a timber-framed casement window.

The proposals are considered to be **beneficial**.

3.2.2 Interior

There are a number of changes to the interior which are listed below:

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Significance of affected area</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
<u>Ground Floor:</u>			
North Building Unit 2: subdivide on west side to provide staircase and W. C.	Low	Neutral – area currently occupied by toilets with entirely modern fittings	N/A
South Building Unit 1: subdivide on west side to provide bedroom and W. C and redundant means of escape through The Unicorn boarded up	Neutral	Neutral – currently occupied by entirely modern kitchen	N/A
East Building Unit 3: subdivide at south end to provide W. C	High	Neutral – although would result in change to floor plan, the former stables would historically have been divided into stalls and have been largely subdivided along the historic beams.	Beams and posts to be kept open and brick floor retained, preferably open to view

<u>First Floor:</u>			
West Building Unit 1: subdivide at north end to provide two ensuites	Medium	Harmful – will subdivide space. LBC to subdivide for one ensuite already granted.	Retain historic fire surround
North Building Unit 2: subdivide on west side to provide staircase and two bedrooms	[not accessible and not surveyed]	Neutral – LBC for similar layout already granted.	N/A
East Building Unit 4: subdivide in centre to provide corridor to kitchen and enclose staircase	Neutral	Neutral – first floor here entirely modern	N/A

3.3 Overall Impact of Changes on Significance

Although many of the external proposals are considered to be beneficial, the internal alterations are considered to be largely neutral with one considered to be moderately harmful, being the change to the historic floor plan of the eastern room on the first floor of the west building. However, many of the changes have been concentrated in areas of lower significance, in keeping with best practice for historic buildings.

The building is now in a poor condition and repair and conservation work are needed as a matter of urgency to ensure the retention of the special character of the listed building. Little work has been carried out since the granting of Listed Building Consent in 2024.

Importantly, the proposals will provide a sustainable new use for the building, parts of which had been vacant for some years before the recent illegal use, during which much harm and damage have been caused, putting the significance of the building at risk.

4 CONCLUSION

The assessment of impact on the heritage asset of the proposed changes to the design is set out in Section 3 of the report. Although many of the external proposals are considered to be beneficial, the internal alterations are considered to be largely neutral with one considered to be moderately harmful, being the change to the historic floor plan of the eastern room on the first floor of the west building. However, many of the changes have been concentrated in areas of lower significance, in keeping with best practice for historic buildings.

The building is **now in a significantly worse condition** and repair and conservation work are needed as a matter of urgency to ensure the retention of the special character of the listed building and a new use found for the unoccupied parts of the building. Little work has been carried out since the granting of Listed Building Consent in 2024.

Importantly, the proposals will provide a sustainable new use for the building, parts of which had been vacant for some years before the recent illegal use during which much harm and damage have been caused, putting the significance of the building at risk. **The public benefits of the new use are considered to outweigh the limited harm caused by the proposals.**

With the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF, it is the author's professional opinion that **the application will conserve the listed building** and it is considered that the proposals are compliant with national and local planning policies.

5 APPENDIX – LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

SJ9856NW ST EDWARD STREET 611-1/4/122 (East side) 07/06/72 No.73 The Quiet Woman Public House (Formerly Listed as: ST EDWARD STREET (East side) No.73 Quiet Woman Inn)

GV II

Public house. Late C19 refronting of earlier building. Possibly timber-framed core, but refronted in brick with plain-tiled roof. Neo-Tudor style. EXTERIOR: 2 storeys, 3-window range. Central 4-centred arched door with drop-ended hoodmould with shield corbels; flanking canted bay windows, with round-arched lights to mullioned windows. Similar windows above, in painted stone surrounds. Dutch gables over each window, with diaper brickwork, heavy moulding and ball finials to copings. Left-hand gable stack. INTERIOR: not inspected.

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