

Revised Heritage Statement to support S73 (Variation of Condition) Application

21 Russell Street, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 5JF

Previous Planning Approval Reference: SMD/2025/0347

Proposal Summary:

This S73 application seeks to vary Condition 2 of the Planning Permission SMD/2025/0347, to allow a slight variation of this permission, which aims to construct a single-storey orangery at the rear of the property and use as a dining room. The orangery will be designed in a Georgian style, using materials and proportions that complement the existing house and the conservation area's Georgian and Victorian character, to provide additional living space while preserving the area's heritage value. The proposal includes removing the back wall, which is the original wall of the current kitchen (with non-original door and window), to open the house onto the orangery, altering the rear elevation to first-floor level to integrate the orangery, and remove the existing windows, which were installed a few years ago as replacements for the original historic 8 over 8 Georgian windows, with new ones that better match the Georgian style. The rear area faces a non-conservation area, minimizing any impact on the conservation area's setting.

1. Explanation of the Significance of the Affected Heritage Asset

The property at 21 Russell Street is not a listed building but lies within the Leek Conservation Area, designated by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) for its special architectural and historic interest. Conservation areas are designated under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to preserve or enhance areas of special character or appearance.

Description of the Asset: The Leek Conservation Area encompasses a historic market town core with a rich blend of Georgian and Victorian buildings, characterized by red brick facades, slate roofs, and symmetrical designs reflecting the area's 18th- and 19th-century industrial heritage. Russell Street forms an integral part of the old town, contributing to the area's cohesive streetscape. The subject property is a Georgian-style terraced house with a symmetrical front elevation, sash windows (which were replaced a few years ago from the original historic 8 over 8 Georgian configuration), a cellar indicative of period construction for storage, and a rear garden that is currently used solely as a parking area and is overlooked by an Aldi supermarket and access road to the rear. The rear area faces a non-conservation area, reducing its visibility and influence on the overall heritage setting.

- Historical Context: The conservation area reflects the growth of the textile industry in the Staffordshire Moorlands during the Georgian and Victorian eras, with streets like Russell Street illustrating domestic architecture from both periods. The Georgian era (circa 1714–1830) brought symmetrical designs and sash windows, while the Victorian period (1837–1901) added decorative elements and industrial prosperity. The area's significance lies in its well-preserved townscape, materials (e.g., local brick and stone), and setting, which evoke Leek's economic and social history. The rear garden and kitchen area, however, have been adapted for modern use and lack historical features.

Significance Assessment:

Architectural significance: Medium to high, due to the area's consistent Georgian and Victorian styles, including proportions and detailing that the property contributes to. The original back wall adds to the structural authenticity, though the non-original door and window reduce its overall significance in that area. The original 8 over 8 windows and cellar highlight typical Georgian features.

Historic significance: Medium, as it forms part of the area's narrative of industrial development across both eras.

Setting significance: Medium, as the front elevation enhances the streetscape, but the rear area faces a non-conservation area and has low significance due to its use as parking and overlooking by modern elements like the supermarket and access road.

Sources:

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Leek Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2017).
Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER). Photographs attached as Appendix 1.

2. Explanation of the Impact of the Proposals on That Significance

The proposed single-storey orangery will be constructed at the rear of the property, permanently attached to the building, designed in a Georgian style to blend with the existing house and its Georgian and Victorian influences. The orangery will function as a dining room, enhancing the property's living space. The proposal includes removing the original back wall (current kitchen, with non-original door and window) to open the house onto the orangery, altering the rear elevation to first-floor level to integrate the orangery, and replacing the existing windows, which were installed a few years ago as replacements for the original historic 8 over 8 Georgian windows, with new ones that better match the Georgian and Victorian style.

Description of Impact: The orangery will extend into the rear garden, by 3 meters, with the original ground floor wall opened up (current kitchen) to create an open connection between the house and the new dining room, affecting the rear elevation but not the principal front facade or street view. The window replacement will affect the elevations but is intended to restore the original Georgian 8 over 8 configuration, enhancing authenticity. Both elements will be visible from adjacent properties and the overlooking Aldi supermarket and access road but not from public vantage points in the conservation area, as the rear area faces a non-conservation area.

Negative Impacts; Potential moderate visual and structural impact on the rear setting by reducing garden openness, removing the original ground floor back wall (current kitchen), and altering the rear elevation to first-floor level. However, this is less than substantial as the new structure and windows are sympathetic in design, and the back wall's significance is reduced by the non-original door and window, with the rear facing a non-conservation area.

Scale of Impact: The proposal complies with NPPF Paragraph 200, as harm is minimal and localized to the private rear area and modified features.

3. Avoid, Minimise, and Mitigate the Impact on the Heritage Asset

The design has still been carefully considered to reduce any potential harm to the conservation area's significance.

Avoidance: The orangery is located at the rear, which faces a non-conservation area, avoiding any alteration to the front elevation or public-facing elements of the conservation area. Window replacement is limited to improving rather than removing historic fabric, as the current windows are modern replacements. The Victorian context of adjacent properties remain unaffected.

Minimisation: Proportions are scaled to match Georgian aesthetics (e.g., symmetrical glazing, low eaves height), and materials are sourced to match existing. For the original back wall removal, the opening will be designed with structural support (e.g., lintels) that maintain the building's integrity and aesthetic

continuity with both Georgian and Victorian. The footprint is limited to minimize garden loss, and the dining room function will enhance the Georgian style with period-appropriate detailing.

4. Look for Opportunities to Better Reveal or Enhance Significance

The proposal includes several opportunities to positively contribute to the conservation area's heritage value.

Opportunities: The Georgian-style design of the orangery as a dining room will enhance the property's architectural coherence, better revealing the area's historic Georgian character through sympathetic detailing (e.g., period-appropriate windows). The window replacement will restore the original 8 over 8 configurations, reinforcing the Georgian influence.

-Enhancements: Removing the original back wall (current kitchen) and altering the rear elevation to first-floor level to open to the dining room will create a seamless flow, improve usability and allowing better appreciation of the Georgian proportions from within, while complementing the Victorian context of the broader area. Replacing the modern windows with more authentic Georgian-style ones will restore and enhance the property's facade, improving its contribution to the conservation area's townscape. Replacing the parking area with an orangery will improve the rear aesthetics, views of the Aldi supermarket and access road, thus enhancing the garden's contribution to the area's openness. The rear facing a non-conservation area ensures any changes have minimal impact on the heritage setting, focusing benefits within the conservation area. Improved insulation and glazing will promote sustainable use of the property, ensuring its long-term preservation.

5. Justify Any Harmful Impacts

Any minor harmful impacts are justified and outweighed by the proposal's benefits.

Justification: The slight alteration to the rear garden (currently a parking area overlooked by modern elements) and removal of the original back wall (current kitchen, with non-original door and window) are justified by the need to adapt the property for modern living, ensuring its ongoing viability and preventing deterioration, per NPPF Paragraph 202. Positive benefits include enhanced architectural harmony with Georgian and Victorian influences, improved internal flow with a new dining room, restoration of period details (e.g., 8 over 8 window style), and sustainability. The rear facing a non-conservation area further minimizes any negative impact on the heritage setting.

Alternatives Considered: No extension would limit usability; a smaller conservatory was dismissed as it wouldn't meet dining room needs; alternatives like a side extension were impractical due to site constraints and would impact the streetscape more. For the back wall, retaining it would prevent the open connection to the dining room, reducing the proposal's benefits; alternatives like a door-only link or partial removal were considered but would not achieve the desired integration.

Public Benefits: The proposal supports sustainable development by maintaining the property's use within the conservation area, aligning with SMDC Local Plan Policy DC2 (Heritage) and NPPF.

Conclusion

The amended – as built extension still respects the Leek Conservation Area's significance, with impacts minimized and justified by positive benefits, including improved window authenticity and enhanced usability with a new dining room within a Georgian and Victorian context. The rear facing a non-conservation area ensures changes have limited heritage impact. It complies with NPPF and SMDC policies.

References

- Historic England. (2015). Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment.
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. (2017). Leek Conservation Area Character Appraisal.
- National Planning Policy Framework (2023, with 2025 updates).