

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2026/0135
Valid 07/04/2026

THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK
65 DERBY STREET
LEEK

ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT
FOR 2NO IN TOTAL
ALUMINIUM POWDER-
COATED FASCIA SIGNS WITH
PUSH-THROUGH ACRYLIC
LED ILLUMINATED
LETTERING, 2NO. IN TOTAL
55"" SAMSUNG DIGITAL
DISPLAY
SCREENS AND 1NO.
EXTERNALLY APPLIED BLUE
VINYL GRAPHIC TO GLAZING
AROUND THE ATM

(ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT)

MAIN ISSUES

- Design
- Heritage
- Street Scene
- Amenity

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

A distinctive and prominent building in a brick brutalist revival style. The building overlooks a broad pedestrianised public space in Leek town centre at the northerly end of Derby Street, on the corner with Bath Street. It was purpose-built in 1980 as a new town centre branch office for the Britannia Building Society. It replaced a highly characterful, ornately fronted public baths of 19thC origin opened in 1854 (Victoria County History vol. VII 1996). The planning history shows permissions in 1978 and 1979 for conversion of the by-then former baths to building society use.

A new purpose-built national headquarters for Britannia Building Society had been opened in 1970 at Birchall on the outskirts of Leek designed by a Stoke-on-Trent architect, also to a 20thC brutalist style, but in concrete. The solid somewhat fortress-like form and design style of the Leek town centre branch was presumably chosen deliberately as evoking a sense of security and impregnability seen to be well suited to a bank's image. Despite a somewhat hulking form the building is in general proportion with its adjacent neighbours. The exclusive use of brick represents a relatively high standard of design and marks a step forward in contrast to some developments nearby in the town in the immediately preceding decade – though

outside of the Conservation Area. The Leek Conservation Area was designated in 1970. There is evident conscious design detailing in the outward appearance, notably for example in the variations in the roof profiles and in the chamfered brick edges to corners and around windows.



PROPOSAL

At the case officer's request revised plans have been submitted the purpose of which has been to ensure the exterior fascia signs are kept separate in each elevation. As first submitted a single wrap-around sign was proposed.

Other elements of the application involve the application of external vinyl sign work around the automatic till machine on Bath Street; introduction of etched frosting to glazing adjacent to the till machine; and the internal fitting of illuminated digital screens to the ground floor windows on Derby Street, along with further etched frosting to windows on that elevation.

For the main fascia signs the application form says:

Illuminance levels: 550 cd/m

Will the illumination be static or intermittent?: Intermittent [interpreted as meaning either off or on daily].

Applied vinyl around the ATM – all blue [interpreted as being free of any design pattern or lettering].

Separate short Planning Statement and Heritage Statement submitted.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

- SS1 Development Principles
- SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
- SS5 Leek Area Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- DC2 The Historic Environment
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres; 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities; 9 – Promoting sustainable transport; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

78/04900/OLDDC - Change of use of first floor to social club and to form new branch office – withdrawn

79/06936/OLDDC – Ground floor as building society branch office, first floor as lettable offices and accommodation – approved

90/00744/OLD – Minor internal and external alterations to suit revised branch layout – approved

07/00685/ADV – Fascia sign (1no.) with internal illumination to lettering and trough lighting to top edge, projecting sign (1no.) internally illuminated – approved

11/00595/ADV – Internally illuminated fascia sign (1no.) with external illumination by existing fixture and 1no. internally illuminated double sided fascia sign – approved

13/00949/ADV – 2 x Internally illuminated fascia signs and 1 x internally illuminated projecting sign

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: **12.06.2026**

Neighbour consultation period ends: **26.05.2026**

Press Advert: **03.06.2026**

Public Comments

None

Town / Parish Comments

None

SMDC Heritage Conservation

Leek Conservation Area was designated for its medieval origins as a market town which later expanded in the 18th and 19th centuries as a result of the growth in industries such as textile manufacture and brewing. Buildings are typically 2- and 3-storeys, constructed in red brick walling and plain tile or slate roofs. This part of the Conservation Area is the commercial core, with predominantly Georgian and Victorian buildings laid out in a tightly knit form along the street. The Co-Operative bank is a modern infill development. While the scale has mimicked no. 61 (Derby House) Derby Street, the fenestration design and solid to void ratio stand out within the streetscape as a late 20th C design.

The application seeks advertisement consent for 2no aluminium powder-coated fascia signs with push-through acrylic LED illuminated lettering, 2no 55" Samsung digital display screens and 1no. externally applied blue vinyl graphic to glazing around the ATM. Each element has been assessed below.

Blue Vinyl graphic

Blue Vinyl will be applied around the existing AMT machine. Plans show the vinyl to be a blue colour with no pattern or text. The vinyl will cover the glazing around the ATM on the Bath Street Elevation. This vinyl is not considered harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Aluminium powder-coated fascia signs with push-through acrylic LED illuminated Lettering x 2

The proposed blue fascia signs will have a 'wrap around' appearance, being visible from both Bath Street and Derby Street. The fascia signage will be internally illuminated. Internally illuminated signage is not typically accepted within the conservation area as it produces excess light pollution within the historic core. However, a review of the site's planning history demonstrates that internally illuminated fascia signage has been approved at this site previously (SMD/2013/0953) [since 2007 and in 2011 in fact – case officer] as such the proposed signage will have a neutral impact upon the conservation area.

2no. 55" Samsung digital display screens

Two digital screens are proposed to be installed internally and be visible through the window facing Derby Street. At present the window features various leaflets, and other informative paraphernalia. The digital screens will allow for similar information to be displayed. The screen will have an internally illuminated effect. As internal illumination has previously been found acceptable on this site there are no heritage objections to the digital screens. However, the screens should only be turned on during opening hours to avoid excessive light pollution in the conservation area outside of operational business hours.

Conservation Conclusion and Recommendation

In summary, the application site is a late 20th century building which appears out of character with the traditional shop frontages which line Derby Street. The proposed signage is considered to have a **neutral impact** upon the Conservation Area. On this basis there are no heritage objections to the proposal.

Recommended Condition: The 2 digital screens hereby approved shall be turned on during opening hours only. Reason: To maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policy DC2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

Recommend acceptance subject to condition

The building is located on Derby Street at its junction with Bath Street, within Leek Town Centre. Both roads are unclassified roads (D1287), have a speed limit of 30mph and benefit from streetlights and footways.

Description of Proposal: Advertisement Consent for

- 2no in total aluminium powder-coated fascia signs with push-through acrylic LED illuminated lettering,
- 2no. in total 55" Samsung digital display screens and 1
- no. externally applied blue vinyl graphic to glazing around the ATM.

Comment: The proposal for advertisement consent for 2 fascia signs with LED illuminated lettering, 2 digital display screens and glazing around the ATM.

Bath Street Elevation – sign and glazing around the ATM shown on submitted plan DRG NO 26-2794_01; 1 replacement fascia sign with LED illuminated lettering and glazing around the current ATM.

Derby Street Elevation – Derby Street sign and digital screens shown on submitted plan DRG NO 26-2794_2; 1 replacement fascia sign with LED illuminated lettering and 2 x 55-inch digital display screens. The digital screens will be located internally within the building but positioned to face outwards, making them visible to pedestrians and drivers.

It is noted within the application form the intended illuminance levels are 550 cd/m². This is in accordance with the appropriate illuminance limits for signs as stated in The Institution of Lighting Professionals, Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements 3rd Edition 2015.

Definition of a zone E3 - Medium district brightness areas (e.g. small town centres, urban locations). Appropriate levels for a Zone E3 are; up to 10.00 sq. metres 600 cd/m.

The application form states that the digital screens will display intermittent content. The Planning Statement further advises that the content may be static or incorporate slow transitions, and that the branch content team will be responsible for producing the displayed material, with flexibility to tailor content to meet any specific Council requirements.

The area fronting the building is set back from the carriageway by a wide section of pedestrian footway, which provides some separation between the advertisements and passing traffic on Derby Street where vehicle speeds are low. It is considered that the proposed development would not result in a significant detrimental impact on highway safety.

It is considered the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety. I therefore have no objection to the proposal (application number SMD/2026/0135) subject to the following conditions:

Signs will be mounted as specified location, height, sign size, type, and illuminance as stated within the application form and drawings DRG NO 26-2794_02 and DRG NO 26-2794_01.

The intensity of the illumination of the two digital display screens shall not exceed 600 candelas per square metre (cd/m²) in line with the maximum permitted recommended

luminance as set out by The Institute of Lighting Professionals Professional Lighting Guide 05: The Brightness of Illuminated Advertisements.

It is noted within the application form that intermittent illumination is stated to apply to all forms of advertisement type. However, based on the supporting information submitted, only the digital display screens would operate with intermittent illumination, while the fascia signs would be continuously illuminated.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The principle of the development has largely been confirmed by a series of previous consents over a number of years. The introduction of illuminated screens to face out from the ground floor windows has not however been considered previously. The introduction of etched frosting to certain of the ground floor street-facing windows is also new. Being within the Leek Town development boundary and situated on a stretch of 'primary shopping frontage' the proposals can all be considered appropriate in principle. The main issues to consider are matters of design; the implications for the character and appearance of the Leek Conservation Area; street scene character; implications for neighbouring occupiers including potential residential occupiers of any overlooking upper floors and highway safety.

Design

Discussion has taken place between the case officer and the agent for the application as a result of which an amended design arrangement has been secured. Images to show a wrap-around design as used by this agent and applicant in Hanley were provided but whilst those could perhaps be understood and considered suitable in that context (and indeed seem to improve significantly on what had been present previously on that building) the case officer has concluded that for this bespoke architecturally designed Leek building with evident specific detailing (as discussed above under the site description) the wrap-around sign would not be suitable. The submitted revision is manifestly superior in this context.

The applied vinyl to the glazing around the ATM is indicated to be in a single colour. At present the glazing to either side is semi obscure whilst the immediate surround of the cash machine is white. A submitted photo montage in drawing 26-2794-04 shows this in a single dark blue matching the dark blue of the fascia signs.

Where etched frosting is to be applied to existing glazing this will have the effect of creating a more 'closed' appearance. This could be considered to run against the normally more desired appearance of active frontage. It can be noted however that the law firm (Brooks and Co) occupying the opposite corner building makes extensive use of semi obscured glazing at ground floor on the street frontages. Not all the windows of the bank are proposed for this treatment and those that are appear to use drawn blinds and or free standing interior screens at those windows. With these various points in mind the etched frosting can be accepted.

The more significant impacts are likely from the proposed digital display screens. The main concern must be with regard to the potential intensity of the illumination which can be excessively bright even in daylight when automated settings can trigger undue brilliance. Further intrusion on the ambience of the street scene can occur as a result of the moving images especially if these are fast changing. The application indicates that this need not necessarily be the case and it would therefore be recommended that an appropriate condition be attached to regulate both this and the light brilliance.

Heritage

The Conservation Officer finds little heritage contribution in the current building. In the initial response the impacts of these proposals were suggested to be neutral. In a follow up exchange with the case officer the Conservation Officer has said that this neutral impact would be “better maintained” if the wrap-around arrangement were dropped in favour of two separate signs – as is now proposed in the applicant’s revisions.

The CO would have preferred not to have signs illuminated internally but, as has been concluded in a series of previous applications, given that in this building internal illumination has been accepted in successive applications previously, it would be difficult to resist now.

A condition is recommended that the digital screens be used during opening hours only. The accompanying planning statement makes no firm commitment on hours of use but says *“Currently, there are preliminary plans for the screens to operate between 8:00 am and 10:00 pm.”*

Amenity

Subject to controls by condition on the levels of illuminance or intensity of brightness and controls on timing of use the proposals would be consistent with the town centre primary shopping street location the impacts of the scheme should not be found unduly disruptive or disturbing to people enjoying the pedestrianised public space in this part of Derby Street or to any occupiers of neighbouring buildings.

Highway Safety

Given the HA consultation response, subject to control by condition as recommended, the scheme should not be problematic to highway users/highway safety

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The significance of this unusual building should not be overlooked or under estimated in the context of the town’s history. Banking and especially building societies have been a significant part of the town’s economy for at least a century and in the early

1990s the Britannia Building Society was the town's largest employer. With the amendments agreed by the applicant and subject to conditions this scheme can be recommended for approval as being acceptable in terms of public amenity and highway safety, the two matters for consideration in this application

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : **approve**

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 18.06.2026

X 

Signed by: Jane Curley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council