

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 24th June 2026
Application Ref: SMD/2026/0206
Site Address: 11 Russell Street, Leek
Proposal: Replacement windows to the front elevation

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	Leek Conservation Area
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal is situated in Leek Conservation Area which was designated for its medieval origins, overlaid with Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings. Leek originated as a medieval market town which later expanded as a result of industrial developments in textile and brewing industries. Typically, buildings are 2 and 3-storeys constructed in red brick walling, some rendered or timber framed, roofing with Staffordshire blue plain tiles. The building is evocative of late-19th and early-20th century detailing, with decorative timber front door, curved bay window to the ground floor, canted bay windows to the first floor and a Venetian window to the second floor under decorative vergeboard. Whilst there have been some alterations to the windows to the first floor and replacement of render, the building still makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal seeks permission to replace the windows at the front of the building. The façade of no.11 Russell Street is evocative of eclectic architectural features typical of the period of construction.

The Anglian drawn specifications provided indicate the windows would be replaced with upvc alternatives, which is not a traditional or sympathetic material to the architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area. The proposed detailing would result in a very poor imitation of the architectural detailing currently in situ and in the surrounding built heritage in the Conservation Area.

The proposal seeks to introduce a modern top-hung casement to the ground and first floor windows which is not a traditional design. It is presumed that the proposed design would also result in the loss of the curved feature of the ground floor bay window which

is a positive historic feature. The windows would be 24mm double glazed and have chamfered frames which would be stormproof. This would result in a bulky appearance to the frames, which would detract from the finesse and quality of craftsmanship seen in traditional timber window construction. In addition, the glazing bars would be sandwiched between the panes of glass which would result in a flat and blander appearance. The proposal mentions the windows would be woodgrain and projecting trickle vents could be removed from the proposal, but these are unlikely to overcome the overall negative impact of the window design and detailing. Overall, the proposed windows would diminish the architectural quality of the Conservation Area and harm its special interest and significance.

Conservation Areas are designated for their special architectural and historic interest which is 'desirable to preserve or enhance' (s.69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*). Whilst it is recognised there are some properties along Russell Street have replaced windows with upvc, this is not the overriding traditional material and character of the Conservation Area nor the street. In addition, it is not clear whether many of these other properties have had alterations prior to the designation of the Article 4 Direction in Leek which further restricts external alterations to properties.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of 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 have a minor-moderate harmful impact to the overall special interest of the Conservation Area. This would fail to satisfy the provisions of s.72 of the Act. With reference to the planning policies, this would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage asset (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework). There would be no heritage-related public benefits arising from the proposal to balance or outweigh this level of harm (par.215 of NPPF). There appears to be a lack of clear and convincing justification for the proposal (par.213 of NPPF) as thermal and sound performance improvements could still be achieved with a timber double glazed window with a more sympathetic design. Therefore, we object to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson