

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 2nd July 2026
Application Ref: SMD/2026/0241
Site Address: Nicholson Institute, Stockwell Street, Leek
Proposal: Advertisement consent for 6 external signs at the Nicholson Institute Leek

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	- Nicholson Institute and Leek College of Further Education – Grade II* (listing ref: 1268544) - Gate piers, railings and gates of Nicholson Institute – Grade II (listing ref: 1268545) - Leek Conservation Area
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would involve alterations to the Nicholson Institute, which is a Grade II* Listed Building situated within Leek Conservation Area and in the setting of other Listed Buildings.

The Nicholson Institute (Grade II*) was constructed 1882-4 as a school of art, museum, art gallery and public library. The building was building was given to the town by Joshua Nicholson and designed by local architectural firm W.Sugden & Son. The building is constructed in red brick and designed in mid-17th century revival style. The significance derives from its historic association with the development of public buildings in the late-Victorian period, association with local notable architects, architectural grandeur, internal decor and distinctive domed tower which dominates the skyline of Leek. The piers and railings are also Grade II listed and are significant due to their association with the principal building.

Leek Conservation Area was designed for its medieval origins which have been laid over with Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings. Typically, buildings are constructed in red brick with Staffordshire blue tiles. The town expanded as a result of industrial growth in the late-18th and 19th century, specifically associated with textile manufacture and brewing industries. The Nicholson Institute, although set back from the main road,

is a landmark building with the town centre and makes a positive contribution to the area's character and appearance.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal seeks consent for non-illuminated external signage to the Nicholson Institute. This would include a freestanding sign to the entrance, A-board sign and four information boards attached to the building.

The proposed materials for the signage would be timber and any signs affixed to the Listed Building would be fixed into mortar joints rather than the masonry. The proposed materials, scale and design of the signs would be sympathetic to the principal building and not distract from the architectural interest and character of the Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area.

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).

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would not harm the special interest and setting of the Listed Building nor harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This would satisfy the provisions of s.16, 66 and 72 of the Act, Section 16 of the NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework. There would be no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson