

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 2nd July 2026
Application Ref: SMD/2026/0242
Site Address: Nicholson Institute, Stockwell Street, Leek
Proposal: Listed Building Consent for internal and external signage

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)
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.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal would involve internal and external signage affixed to the Nicholson Institute.

External signage

The external information signs affixed to the building would be constructed in timber and fixed into mortar joints rather than 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 Building. The freestanding and A-board shown in the supporting documents would not require listed building consent, but are relevant for accompanying advertisement consent application (ref: SMD/2026/0241).

Internal signage

The internal signage would be a mixture of wall posters, painted stencilled lettering and information boards.

The painted lettering would use a water-based paint, which would be sympathetic to the building's historic construction and not restrict breathability of the fabric.

The proposed information boards are a mixture timber and transparent acrylic boards. Whilst they would have a contemporary style, they have been designed and sited sympathetically to the internal décor and detailing. The fixtures have been designed to minimise impact on historic fabric. The proposed internal signage would not detract from the building's internal architectural interest.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the special interest of the Listed Building (s.16).

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).

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would not harm the special interest of the Listed Building. This would satisfy the provisions of s.16 of the Act, Section 16 of the NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework. There are no objections to the proposed works from a conservation perspective.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson