

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 28th July 2026
Application Ref: SMD/2026/0212
Site Address: London Mill, Ashbourne Road, Leek
Proposal: Variation of Conditions 2 & 7(g) in relation to SMD/2023/0192

Conservation Advice

Assessment and Impact

The proposal seeks to amend the previous approved plans for the conversion of London Mill to residential use (ref: SMD/2023/0191 & SMD/2023/0192). This application only relates to amending the listed building consent (SDM/2023/0192) and a separate non-material amendment (NMA/2026/0010) is considering the amendments to the planning permission.

The amendments include installation of an external smoke shaft, reconfiguration of interior to create protected fire escape routes and details of partial demolition and rebuilding of the damaged floors to the western end of the building.

Smoke shaft and layout alterations

The proposal seeks to make minor alterations to the internal layout of the approved conversion to create protected corridor routes and to alter the position of the internal smoke shaft. These alterations are very minor in scale and would not alter or increase the level of heritage harm arising from the previous approval.

Due to changes in fire regulations, the proposal also now seeks to install a projecting smoke vent shaft to the rear elevation. This would be flat roof and lead lined. The vent would project approx. 500mm above the ridgeline. This would be an alien feature which would cause some visual distraction to the appearance of the building. However, the vent would not project any higher than the modern lift shaft and would be positioned more discreetly to the rear so as to minimise the impact on the principal elevation. The vent would be lead lined to blend in with the roof tiles. Overall, this addition would cause some visual harm to the appearance of the building due to its prominence and its incongruous appearance.

Structural repairs to floors

The application has also included some further information on structural repairs to the floors on the western end of the building which would involve partial demolition internally and rebuilding. Whilst some of these works would result in loss of historic fabric, there is clear justification for this in terms of securing the structural integrity of the building.

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).

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would result in a minor degree of harm to the overall significance of the Listed Building. This would fail to satisfy the provisions of s.16 of the Act. 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 is, however, clear and convincing justification for the level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) as it would be in the interests of fire safety of occupants and structural stability of the building. In addition, the smoke shaft has been positioned and sited discreetly to minimise the visual impact on the appearance of the Listed Building and the proposed amendments would ensure that a new optimum viable use for the building can be secured (par.215 of NPPF). There are no objections to the proposed variations from a conservation perspective.

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