DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
(INCORPORATING HERITAGE STATEMENT)

for

13-15 PARK ROAD, BUXTON, DERBYSHIRE

To accompany an application for Planning Permission to extend, re-order and refurbish a Victorian house, previously extended and converted to 8 flats, to improve existing accommodation and create an additional 5 flats.

Submitted on behalf of Landau Properties

by

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1.0 PURPOSE OF STATEMENT

1.01 This statement has been prepared by Ashworth Jackson and Walker, Architects, on behalf of the applicants, Landau Properties, to accompany a new application for Planning Permission to extend, re-order and refurbish a Victorian house at 13-15 Park Road, Buxton that had previously been extended and converted to 8 flats, in order to create an additional 5 flats.

1.02 Previous proposals to extend, re-order and refurbish the property were submitted to High Peak Borough Council and were refused Planning Permission on 27 October 2005 (ref HPK/2005/0669). The application was reconsidered and dismissed at appeal on 10 August 2006 (ref APP/H1033/A/06/2013790).

1.03 The applicants accepted there were significant problems with the original designs and Ashworth Jackson and Walker were appointed to review the brief and the overall design approach.

1.04 It was clear that the scale, massing and detailing of the original proposals lacked sensitivity and were deemed inappropriate for a prominent site in the Park Conservation Area. The prominence of the proposed extension and the attendant loss of open amenity space to the south were also issues of great concern to the Planning Department and, ultimately, the Planning Inspector.

1.05 Through early discussions with Jane Colley, the Area Planning Officer, and Jo Brooks, the Council's Conservation Officer, new proposals were developed that sought to make the fullest possible use of the existing building and restrict any extensions to the rear of the property, replacing earlier, unsympathetic outbuildings and extensions.

1.06 Working closely with these officers Ashworth Jackson and Walker have refined these preliminary proposals to achieve a more sympathetic, balanced and harmonious relationship between the new and the old. The purpose of this statement is to explain and clarify the approach that has been taken and the thought processes behind these revised proposals.

2.0 THE SITE

2.01 The site lies to the north of Buxton Town centre on the south east margins of The Park Conservation Area adjacent to the boundary with the Buxton Central Conservation Area.

2.02 The site runs to approximately 0.275 hectares and is bounded by the rear gardens of nos 1-7 Park Road to the north; the drive, hard standing and garages to no 20 Park Road to the south; a lower level public footpath and the Church Yard of St John's Church to the east; and Park Road itself to the west.

2.03 The site is currently occupied by two buildings. No13-15 Park Road, a large, three storey Victorian villa with extensions and outbuildings to the rear occupies the central portion of the extensive site with No 11, a smaller detached house, located in the north east corner. The grounds comprise tarmac surfaces to the west, north and east with terraced lawns to the south

2.04 Vehicular access to the site is via a macadam "in-out" drive that leads directly from Park Road. The twin entrances face west and are marked by simple breaks in the vegetation (mature hedges and trees) that back the footpath to Park Road. The drive leads past the north elevation of the central building to a tarmac hard standing for parking and turning vehicles in front of No 11.

2.05 A pedestrian gate in the eastern boundary gives access to the public footpath and the Church Yard beyond.

2.06 Neither building is listed.

2.07 The site boundaries are screened by buildings, walls, fences and a mixture of densely planted shrubs and mature trees.

2.08 The Park Conservation Area is predominantly residential in character and the site is surrounded by residential property set in mature gardens on three sides and the Church Yard of St John's Church on the fourth. The nearest point of the nearest dwelling is approximately 18.5 metres to the north.

2.09 All other neighbouring buildings are a minimum of 28.5 metres away with views into and out from the site significantly restricted by buildings, natural topography and/or mature vegetation.

3.0 THE BUILDINGS

3.01 We understand both buildings on the site were constructed between 1879 and 1900. The main building (13-15 Park Road) is a grand, three-storey, stone built Victorian style villa with single and two storied extensions and outbuildings to the rear. The other (11 Park Road) is a much simpler, two storied structure.

3.02 No 11 appears to have been largely unchanged and has retained much of its original form and character but No 13-15 has previously been converted to 8 apartments.

3.03 A two storey stone, glass and timber storm porch marks the original entrance to the main house (No 13). The load bearing walls are finished with red orange facing brickwork within the basement level lightwells, a projecting tooled ashlar gritstone plinth with chamfered bed joints up to ground floor cill level and tooled ashlar facework with flush pointed joints above. Both plain and moulded dressed stone string courses, projecting window and door surrounds with hood moulds and other ornamentation exist to all elevations above. The bay windows at ground floor level have balustered parapets. A simply moulded frieze with projecting cornice exist above the first floor window head level. An oversized ashlar parapet has been introduced with moulded pedimented dormer windows to second floor level. The rear extension (15 Park Road) has tooled ashlar sandstone or gritstone with flush pointed joints to all elevations but no plinth, frieze, cornice or parapet detail. Window openings have flush lintels with projecting cills.

3.04 Windows are predominantly simply moulded single glazed vertical sliding sashes but some top hung imitation sashes and top or side hung casements exist particularly at second floor level. There is a fully glazed bay over the main entrance. All windows are constructed from timber with a white paint finish.

3.05 All doors are of framed and panelled timber construction with a paint finish and with glazed fanlights above. Panels below midrail level are generally solid with coloured, textured or clear glazing above. However, the French windows to the front elevation are fully glazed.

3.06 All roof slopes have been finished with blue black slate with matching ridge and hip tiles. The roof over the main house (No 13) is hidden behind the ashlar parapet. The roof over the rear extension (No 15) has projecting eaves with painted timber fascia and soffit boards and exposed ogee profiled gutters.

3.07 Lead flat roofs exist over all bay windows, including the fully glazed bay to the front elevation.

3.08 Forged iron railings have been installed to the perimeter of the front lightwell and alongside the stepped ramp to the side entrance. These have a black paint finish.

4.0 PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS AND CONSULTATIONS

4.01 Ashworth Jackson and Walker developed preliminary proposals for re-ordering the main building, bringing the basement level accommodation back into use and improving the layout and quality of the existing accommodation on the upper levels. The existing rear extension and outbuildings were to be carefully demolished and replaced with a new three storied extension that would increase the total number of flats in the building from 8 to 13.

4.02 On 3 August 2009 Ashworth, Jackson and Walker wrote to Ms Brooks, Conservation Officer at High Peak Borough Council enclosing site photographs and freehand sketch proposals for both a contemporary and a more traditionally designed extension, seeking further feedback and comment.

4.03 On 16 September 2009 Ms Colley, Senior Planning Officer, responded. She confirmed key aspects of local planning policy in general, the Park Conservation Area in particular and also in relation to residential amenity, car parking and highways, trees and landscape features. Ms Colley had no objections to the proposed works in principle but recommended that more detailed proposals should be developed for further comment, preferably showing a traditionally designed extension to the rear. Ms Colley also confirmed that any subsequent application should be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and an Arboricultural Report.

4.04 Ms Colley's comments were relayed back to the applicants and Ashworth Jackson and Walker were instructed to prepare more detailed proposals including a traditionally designed extension, as suggested.

4.05 On 23 February 2010 Ashworth, Jackson and Walker wrote to Ms Colley enclosing detailed site plans, floor plans and elevations for the amended scheme and requesting further feedback.

4.06 On 15 April 2010 Ms Colley responded by email enclosing a detailed written response from Ms Brooks:

- Recommending that parking provision on the site should be restricted to the minimum number of spaces required and these should be sensitively positioned.
- Querying the use and/or extent of render in lieu of stone on the proposed extension.
- Confirming that detailed drawings would be required for all windows and doors (both existing and proposed) to ensure that new features match the originals.
- Querying the detailing at certain window head positions and the resultant window proportions.

- Recommending that the Design and Access Statement might be framed in such a way as to take cognisance of the CABE/English heritage Building In Context Toolkit.
- Recommending the imposition of robust conditions to ensure the workmanship and materials would be of the highest possible quality should approval be granted.

4.07 On 4 May 2010 David Walker of Ashworth, Jackson and Walker met with Ms Brooks to review these comments in detail and to discuss the way forward. It was agreed that:

- 13 car parking spaces should be provided in total. 7 of these should be under the canopy of the trees at the front (west) of the site, providing this could be achieved using no-dig technology that would prevent damage to the trees which are integral to the streetscape and provide an important screen to the site. A further 4 spaces should be provided beneath the canopy of the trees to the north of the site, subject again to the same conditions. The final 2 spaces should be provided on a tarmac hard standing at the rear (east).
- On balance, a fine textured, through coloured, colour matched render used above a natural stone plinth might be a more appropriate treatment for the external walls of the new extension than all stone as this would help reduce the impact of the extension and make it clearly subordinate to the original building.
- Detailed drawings should be provided to confirm the appearance of the existing windows and doors and to show how the new windows and doors would be designed to match.
- The proportions of certain windows at first floor level of the new extension should be adjusted to make the windows appear longer and more rectangular. This was to be achieved by omitting the stone surround originally shown around each window opening and introducing projecting lintels and cills instead. The render would return into each window reveal.
- The Design and Access Statement should incorporate a Heritage Statement to address all of the principal conservation issues associated with major works in a Conservation Area.
- The application should be accompanied by 3D illustrations of the proposed scheme that would clearly demonstrate the scale, massing and overall modelling of the extension.
- Providing the documentation that was finally submitted for planning permission took account of these requirements Ms Brooks confirmed that she would support the application.

5.0 REVISED PROPOSALS

5.01 In the period since May 2010 Ashworth Jackson and Walker have been refining and developing the proposals to ensure that all of Ms Brooks' and Ms Colley's comments have been taken on board and all of their suggestions have been fully incorporated into the drawings and other documents that accompany this application.

5.02 In the final proposals:

- The existing in-out drive will be retained, as will the tarmac drive to the north of the main building and the tarmac hard standing to the east. However, new parking bays will be created beneath the canopies of the trees lining the north and west boundaries of the site using no-dig technology to avoid damaging roots or otherwise harming the trees.
- 7 car parking spaces will be created beneath the trees on the west boundary, 4 beneath the trees on the north and a further 2 off the hard standing at the east end of the site.
- Provision will be made for the secure storage of bicycles on the north boundary opposite the new main entrance to the building.
- The existing bin storage area immediately adjacent to the northernmost entrance from Park Road will be retained and refurbished
- The original main entrance to the building will be abandoned and access to the majority of the flats will be via a new fully accessible entrance located at basement level on the north side of the building, at the point where the new extension joins the existing building. The original entrance doors will be retained, refurbished and sealed shut.
- Large planting beds will be introduced along the front elevation to separate the building from the tarmac in-out drive, to improve privacy and security to the basement and ground level flats and to frame the front elevation.
- The glazed bay over this entrance will be carefully dismantled to continue the external wall behind. This wall will be faced with tooled ashlar gritstone and incorporate a new sliding sash window in stone surround, all to match the existing.
- A new lightwell will be created to the south of the semicircular bay at the front of the building to match the existing lightwell to the north. A new curved window will be introduced to the south side of the bay at basement level to match the existing to the north. The lightwell will be protected by painted iron railings to match the existing.
- The existing stepped ramp to the south will be retained and refurbished to maintain independent access to Flat 6. However, ground levels will be reduced around the base of the ramp to increase headroom for a new and enlarged entrance into Flat 2 beneath.
- The interior of the existing main building is to be re-ordered to make more sympathetic use of the original structure. The re-alignment of partitions allows each flat to be increased in size to provide open plan Kitchen/ Dining/ Living rooms and separate bedrooms. Three of the flats have one bedroom and the remaining five have two.

- The rear extension is three stories high, with two flats at basement level, two flats at ground floor level and a single flat at first floor level. Each flat has a single bedroom.
- The natural topography of the site is such that ground levels naturally fall away to the east and south, meaning that the new basement is largely above ground, which simplifies access and improves the potential for natural daylighting and ventilation.
- The main entrance is at this basement level and is accessed by stone steps and a ramp set within new planters.
- A level but shallow lightwell runs around the east and south sides of the extension. This will be banked to the south so as to eliminate the need for unnecessary railings. However, railings will be required to the east.
- The footprint of the extension is slightly larger than the combined footprint of the existing outbuildings but the extension has been positioned and modelled so as to minimise its overall impact on the original building, the adjoining plots and the Conservation Area as a whole.
- The first floor level accommodation is set within a new slate covered mansard roof, behind a rendered and stone capped parapet wall with hipped, lead cloaked dormer windows. The slate will be selected to match the existing main roof. The mansard breaks down the scale of the extension still further making it obviously subservient to the original building.
- Storey heights run through from one building to the other so that a single staircase provides access to all levels of both buildings, lobbied entrances providing the necessary fire protection and privacy for each flat.
- The external treatment of the extension takes visual cues form the main building but generally in a simplified form. The tooled ashlar plinth of the existing building continues around the full perimeter of the new extension. However, in place of the tooled ashlar stonework above, the new extension is to be finished with a fine textured through coloured (stone coloured) render with a simple projecting stone string course and parapet coping above.
- Full height windows at first floor level will have projecting smooth dressed, simply moulded stone surrounds to match the existing on the main building but smaller windows (serving bathrooms and kitchens) will have projecting stone lintels and cills and rendered reveals.
- All new windows will be timber vertical sliding sashes detailed and painted to match the existing.
- All external soil and vent pipes and rainwater pipes will be in cast aluminium with a black paint finish.

6.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

6.01 As previously stated the site lies within The Park Conservation Area; at its heart the raised and (relatively) level cricket pitch surrounded by the oval of Park Road with large houses and gardens on both sides.

6.02 It is an area characterised by large detached and semi detached villas, the majority built between 1848 and 1938, set within mature gardens with soft planted boundaries and level lawns surrounded by planted shrubberies. The garden aspect was usually reserved for the south, south east or south west facing elevations and houses are often set up on building platforms. Views into and out of each plot tend to be short and gradually unfolding.

6.03 The distinct oval layout of The Park is a strong characteristic with ever changing vistas that unfold and lead the eye round the next corner. The number of large trees set within mature gardens is the most striking characteristic of the area and these help frame and define routes through The Park and views out from it.

6.04 Most houses are set back behind the street frontage so the boundary treatments, varying from hedges to coursed gritstone walls, are the most significant part of the street scene. They also partially disguise the presence of the large houses beyond.

6.05 Built between 1879 and 1900, on a large plot to the south east of the oval, 13-15 Park Road closely conforms to many of these characteristics. Consequently it has been identified as making a positive contribution to the character of Buxton in the Buxton Conservation Areas Character Appraisal of April 2007.

6.06 Like many of the buildings deemed to make a strong contribution to the character of the area it is built from high quality materials (with gritstone walling, natural slate roofs and with bespoke railings and joinery).

6.07 There are no major landmarks within The Park Conservation Area though there are occasional focal points or views out, notably from the cricket pitch which has wide, panoramic views southwards to Higher Buxton and the hills beyond and also to Solomon's Temple.

6.08 From the cricket pitch the tree canopy in the southern part of the oval is sufficiently low that a wide panorama is still evident. 13-15 Park Road is not a recognised focal point in its own right. Although the house itself cannot be seen, the site is on the extreme eastern edge of these panoramic views from the cricket pitch looking out towards the Octagon Dome.

6.09 It is clear that the acid test of whether or not proposals to develop within The Park Conservation Area are acceptable is the degree to which those proposals improve and enhance the Conservation Area as a whole, rather than just the building or the site to which they belong. The applicants believe the current proposals to extend, re-order and refurbish 13-15 Park Road enhance the original building, the site and the Conservation as a whole.

6.10 The footprint of the existing extension and outbuildings at 13-15 Park Road is small when compared to the house itself. They are built at the rear, are of modest height, are clearly subsidiary to the main house and are virtually invisible from Park Road. They are also built from quality materials. In these respects the existing buildings are in keeping with the essential character of the area.

6.11 That said, the existing extension and outbuildings have little architectural or aesthetic merit. They take few, if any, cues from the main house so the proportions of these buildings, the ratio of solid to void, the positioning and treatment of windows and doors, the lack of horizontal emphasis brought about by the absence of a plinth, string courses or a parapet, and the fully hipped roof with overhanging eaves are all discordant features that undermine the integrity of the main house. Because this area of the site is clearly visible from adjoining plots, the public footpath to the south east, and St John's Church Yard beyond, the applicants believe the existing extension and outbuildings detract from the character of the original house, the site and the Conservation Area as a whole.

6.12 Although larger than the combined footprint of the existing extension and outbuildings the proposed extension would still have a smaller footprint than the original house and would still sit comfortably within the plot at the rear of the house. The proposed extension would be almost two full storeys lower than the house and virtually invisible from Park Road. Consequently it would not interfere with any of the panoramic views out from the cricket pitch or the oval of Park Road.

6.13 The proposed extension would be built from quality materials matching those on the main house. It would take architectural cues from the main house but the detailing would be simplified to emphasis the subsidiary nature of the building.

6.14 The projecting stone plinth, so characteristic of the area, would give a strong base to the building and heighten the sense of continuity with the main house. The rendered walls, projecting stone string course and parapet coping above would echo the strong horizontal features of the main house and help maintain the consistency of storey heights but in a simpler and plainer way.

6.15 The modelling and articulation of the elevations, with projecting bays and window surrounds and first floor level accommodation set within a slate mansard roof behind parapet walls, would all maintain that sense of continuity whilst reducing the overall mass of the building.

6.16 The applicants believe the proposed extension would improve the rear and side elevations of the house. In so doing it would improve and enhance the character of this part of the Conservation Area, particularly when viewed from surrounding plots, the public footpath and the Church Yard beyond.

6.17 The proposal to remove car parking from the forecourt immediately in front of the main house, to increase planting in this area and to relocate parking to discrete areas beneath mature trees screened from Park Road by boundary planting will all significantly improve the setting of the house.

6.18 The applicants hope and believe that they have demonstrated a willingness to consult and work with the officers of High Peak Borough Council Planning Department. They have taken on board the comments and recommendations that the officers have made and have developed proposals that respond positively to the key issues that have been raised. The applicants believe these proposals would improve the setting and appearance of the original house and, thereby, enhance the character of the Conservation Area as a whole. Consequently they trust the accompanying application for Planning Permission will receive approval.