BUXTON CRESCENT HOTEL AND THERMAL SPA

THE PUMP ROOM

A DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

STRIDE TREGLOWN & EK ARCHITECTS
MANCHESTER
Special thanks to Ros Westwood, Derbyshire Museums Manager and her staff at Buxton Museum and Art Gallery, particularly Les Steeples, for their extensive research which has provided an invaluable insight into the past and to Derbyshire County Council: Buxton Museum and Art Gallery for permission to use the historic images in this presentation.
INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanies the Town Planning and Listed Building Consent Applications for the restoration and minor re-modelling of the Pump Room. This application forms part of a series of Town Planning and Listed Building Consent Applications that will see through the restoration, adaptation and conservation and the re-establishment of The Crescent, Natural Baths and Pump Room as a unique group of buildings returned to their original uses as an international focus for “taking the water” and bathing in Buxton’s natural mineral waters, as a critical aspect of the regeneration of Buxton Spa.

The overall aspirations of the project are:

- To create a unique 5 star spa hotel of world class standard within the listed fabric of The Crescent, Natural Baths and Pump Room
- To establish areas within the buildings that reflect and respect the buildings listed status and proposed use
- To enhance the setting of the buildings to reflect their status as the focus of the town and the public aspect of the taking of and bathing in the waters
- To promote public access throughout the buildings
- To incorporate a focus within the development whereby the history of Buxton Spa can be interpreted
- To integrate the development within the wider urban context, accepting the overall regeneration benefit of an holistic approach
- To promote the public use of the thermal waters

Architectural reports and Access Statements accompanying the existing approvals explain the historical background and design approach to the overall works, whilst this DAS focuses in more detail on the specifics of the Pump Room.
The Pump Room falls within Area 1: The Crescent, The Slop"es and Devonshire Royal Campus of the Buxton Conservation Area Appraisal. The area contains relatively few buildings, but some of the largest and highest within the town. These contrast with small ancillary buildings.

The topography creates a series of glimpsed views of the major landmarks with open expanses of park and lawn laid out and conceived in relation to the buildings. This is particularly evident in the view from The Slopes across to The Crescent and beyond. The Pump Room sits in the foreground as a stage, encompassed by the Crescent and with the Devonshire, Palace Hotel and parkland as backdrop.

Looking Down The Slopes

The Crescent embraces a large, central, public circulation space at the edge of which is the Pump Room, which became the focal point for the source of the thermal spring water in the early 20th century.
HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Built and ‘presented to the town’ in 1894 by the 8th Duke of Devonshire, the Pump Room was the civic focus for taking the waters, designed by Henry Currey over forty years after he had first undertaken works at the Natural Baths.

The plan of Currey’s pump room prior to 20th C alterations.

The popularity of spa treatments was to reach its zenith during the reign of Edward VII who took the waters in the pump room in January 1905.
Following investigations into springs and tanks at the Natural Baths, the Town Surveyor re-constructed the Pump Room in 1911-12. The original open colonnade was enclosed, the inner wall removed and two brick piers formed to support steel beams.

Two entrance vestibules, one at each end of the building frontage were formed under the domes or cupolas. The existing rear wall of the building was removed, piers and beams added (in a similar manner to the front) and a new curved rear wall added to encompass a sunken elliptical well chamber.
The mahogany interior doors and screens were finished with bevelled edged plate glass, vestibules had new mosaic floors with a light green 5ft high tiled dado and a Patteson’s Adamant Terrazzo floor in a broad panel treatment.

Marble formed the principle decoration. The base and moulded capital to the four massive piers and corresponding half piers and pilasters were lined with Vert Tinos marble, the shafts in Breche Pavonazzo, a richly Brecciated marble.

An ornate white marble balustrade ensures the public cannot go further. The floors of the well chamber, staff room and Chalybeate room are paved with alternate squares of Swedish green and white Carrara marble. The rear of the chamber is faced in fine statuary marble with delicate Swedish green marble banding.

Upper surfaces were decorated with fibrous plaster mouldings and relief ornament in Carton Pierre. The leaded lights to the windows include representations of the Buxton Seal, and the coat-of-arms of both Buxton and the Devonshire. The building was heated by gas fires and radiators with electrical light fittings. The colour scheme was green and white, with mahogany furniture upholstered in green.

Additional works over the years included the early addition of wrought iron balustrades to the steps down to the well chamber and timber duct boarding. Reports suggest the cupolas were removed in the 1950’s.

The Pump Room re-opened in 1984 as the Micrarium, closing in 1997. It continues as a centre for art exhibitions and sales. Though serviceable the building has suffered from a lack of maintenance, dampness penetrate, windows are shuttered and netting under draws the ceiling to prevent falling plaster.
USE

The proposal is to restore the Pump Room as the civic location for taking the water, whilst adapting the fabric for use as a restaurant or grande café. This will include essential repair and conservation work to the roof, stonework and windows.

The production of a restored shell as part of the initial enabling phase of the wider scheme will allow flexibility for a future restaurant / café (A3) use whilst providing a temporary home for the Tourist Information Centre (TIC.) The TIC vacates its current home in the Natural Baths during the main construction phase prior to taking up permanent residence in the Crescent.

The situation of the Pump Room with-in a long established retail, hotel and leisure neighbourhood means its use will knit well with the adjacent existing and proposed uses. Its location, along with the Crescent and Natural Baths are the focal point of the town linking the established pavilion and gardens to the west, with the main shopping street to the east through a natural convergence the foot of the Slopes.

Crowds at Opening

Early photographs illustrate the Pump Room’s use as civic performance space. The stone balustrade and cupolas were often festooned with bunting whilst literally hundreds of onlookers waved and cheered from the roof at civic ceremonies.
The roof was regularly used as a container garden taking advantage of its position relative to the slopes.

Refurbishment works to the roof allow the roof surface to be used as a stage for public performance to be viewed from the natural amphitheatre of the Slopes and the piazza in front of the Crescent. To ensure health and safety without detracting from the historical setting, temporary scaffold will be used for occasional performances. The missing cupolas will be reinstated as their original design to frame the stage.

In order to bring the Pump Room back to something like its original use and to conform to statutory regulations, public and staff washroom facilities need to be provided. Given that the Pump Room is essentially one space these are to be incorporated in the end pavilions. This will necessitate the alteration of the main façade. The main entrance doors, currently in the end bays, will be moved to the adjacent bays to accommodate the washrooms in the end pavilions.

The relocating of the entrance doors will allow the opportunity to provide fully inclusive access. Level access is already provided and the washrooms are detailed to provide excellent provision for the disabled.
AMOUNT

The existing gross external floor area of the Pump Room is 245 sqm. Though the fitting-out works will be subject to further application, it is anticipated that a servery will be created underneath the original arcade between the two new main entrance door positions. With public access restricted to the well chamber, staff room and Chalybeate room at the rear, the usable (net) floor space is anticipated to be a maximum of 90 sqm providing approximately 60 covers.

The future fitting out proposals whilst providing for use such as a restaurant or grand café will ensure that the pump room remains as the civic location for the taking the water.

LAYOUT

The existing layout of the building (as we currently find it) has obviously greatly influenced the proposed layout. The repositioning of the entrance doors as explained earlier allows for the creation of washrooms now essential, but missing from the original works.

To remain true to the vision of the 1912-14 remodelling works the two screens that separately define the Chalybeate and staff rooms are to be moved back to their 1912-14 positions to define the private spaces to the rear.

The existing marble balustrade further limits the public. Health and Safety considerations dictate that the apertures within the balustrade be filled as they present a danger to young children. The temporary wire mesh is to be removed and modern curved toughened glazing with minimal framing be installed to solve this issue whilst not detracting from the original feature. Subject to future use, further consideration may be given to a secondary balustrade should the relatively low height of the original balustrade be considered an operator concern.
As explained previously, the fitting-out works will be subject to further application, it is anticipated that a servery will be created underneath the original arcade between the two new main entrance door positions.

Conflict has arisen with regards to the level of toilet provision within the washrooms. The conservation desire is to leave the former entrance pavilions, with their mosaic floor, tiled dado walls and bevelled glazed mahogany double swing internal doors un-changed and undivided as far as possible, whilst providing public and private sanitary accommodation in sufficient numbers, that are accessible to both disabled staff and customers.

The conservation led solution is to leave the former entrance pavilions un-divided and provide a single disabled wc in each. One is primarily a unisex customer wc with freestanding child changing facility whilst the other will be a unisex staff wc with freestanding changing stool and lockers. At peak usage customers will use the staff wc. This solution will give flexibility with minimal interference.

During the TIC’s temporary residence, the open-plan arrangement will work well without lobbies to obscure observation of the public. Lobbies will be required to separate toilets from areas of food preparation and will be added as necessary during future fitting out works, subject to further application.

SCALE

The scale of the building would have been considered by Henry Currey to provide adequate accommodation without obscuring the views of the Crescent.

LANDSCAPE

The roof of the Pump Room is to be finished in paving stones to facilitate its occasional use as a performance space taking advantage of the natural amphitheatre of the Slopes.

The Pump Room, Crescent and Natural Baths represent an enormously rich heritage in respect of their quality and significance. They do not however stand-alone and have to be seen and appreciated as part of the wider context of their immediate environment and the town itself.

Since 1991 when the Crescent has been empty and in the 1970’s Baths were closed, the area between the Crescent and the Pump Room has reflected a lack of life and activity. As a car park they have served some pragmatic purpose but the piazza, in amongst one of the finest public spaces in the country will be considered, designed and regenerated as part of the wider works.
This will include proposals for:

- hard landscaping and traffic management
- repairs to external fittings
- sympathetic lighting scheme both in respect of public safety and display
- design of graphics and signage
- incorporation of public art celebrating the Town and the Water

The external treatment of the building and its surrounding includes the removal of modern street furniture such as the plastic sand hopper and the redressing of the black macadam to the rear with bonded gravel. This will blend with the existing paths to the Slopes. The design of the forecourt between the Crescent and the Pump Room is subject to further design work which is conditioned under the Town Planning Approval for the wider works to the Crescent.

APEPARANCE

The proposal will return the building to its 1912 remodelled appearance. The existing Derbyshire Grit stone will be geologically analysed to ensure an appropriate match is made to the original stone for repair work. According to records the stone for the original works was taken from the Nithen End Quarry. The lead cupolas are to be reinstated to closely follow the original. Windows will be repaired and black powder coated stainless steel window grilles fitted. Rainwater goods will be replaced to match the original.

Internally the marble will be repaired, together with the plaster cornice and ornate ceiling work. Paint analyse will ensure an informed decision on the proposed decorative finishes and their colour mateched.

ACCESS

Buro Happold Disability Design Consultancy has been appointed to provide access consultancy for the full redevelopment, including the Pump Room. A full access statement has been prepared to demonstrate the commitment of the Client to providing an environment that is accessible to all people.

The management will continue to review all policies, procedures and practices to ensure they do not create barriers. They will continue to regularly review all aspects of accessibility to the built environment to maintain the building’s usability.

As part of the development proposals the area between the Pump Room and the Crescent will benefit from improvements to the public realm. To ensure life and activity is breathed back into this piazza, car parking will be largely removed reinstating pedestrian priority. This will ensure safer freer pedestrian movement. Detailed arrangements will be recorded in a development travel plan.

The natural topography of the site location and the surrounding environment will impact on the approach and accessibility of the Pump Room. Accessibility where possible will be enhanced without impacting on the building fabric.

Existing flush access from highway to pavement and from pavement to building will be retained. Accessible parking will be provided within 100m of the building entrance. Vehicle drop-off arrangements closer to the Pump Room are to be further considered as part of the development traffic management proposals.

Existing benching does provide resting points on the pedestrian routes to the Pump Room. The area immediately to the rear of the Pump Room is only accessible by a series of three shallow steps. Alternative level access routes are available. This area serves only the purpose of allowing windows at the back and will not require “ACCESS”.

The Pump Room is currently provided with level access. This will be replicated with the relocated main entrance doors. The door and window openings contribute greatly to the character of the main
façade and their proportion can not be altered. Though the double entrance doors will be new and fitted into a 1500mm structural opening it is felt that an unequal door leaf would upset the balance of the opening and would not be appropriate. Subject to the width achieved by a single leaf in the final door design, to allow both leaves to be opened a help bell will be added.

Unisex accessible toilets are provided. BS8300:2001 has been referred to and its recommendations will be met subject to the modification of grab rail positions relative to historic fabric details and door operation which is subject to the retention of the existing historic double doors.