

10th August 2011

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT AND PLANNING APPLICATION FOR NEW ENTRANCE DOORS WITHIN THE LEFT HAND ARCHED RECESS OF THE CENTRE FIVE ARCHED RECESSES (INCLUDING CENTRAL ENTRANCE OPENING) TO THE NATURAL BATHS, THE CRESCENT, BUXTON SK17 6BQ

Applicant: Buxton Crescent Hotel and Thermal Spa Company Ltd

Agent: Stride Treglown, Architects

Conservation Architect: Nicholas Jacob Architects

Historic Significance

The town of Buxton is the site of a thermal spring around which the Romans built a spa complex. Following the dark ages, the medieval period saw this spring being a place of cure by receiving the waters of St. Ann's Well. This also saw the building of the Hall at Buxton and following a fire the new Hall. This is the place where Mary Queen of Scots was held under house arrest on the instructions of Queen Elizabeth of England. And it is here next to the Spa Bath as depicted by Speed on his map of Derbyshire that the Hall and subsequently the New Hall (now known as the Old Hall) is located. Following the destruction of the temple to the spring on the instructions of Oliver Cromwell, the spring fell into a period of little use. However, with the Georgian fashion of Spa visiting, Buxton had a new life, starting with John Barker's new baths adjoining the Hall at Buxton which were constructed in 1712. Through the 18th Century and early 19th Century, a number of alterations were made to the baths culminating in a major re-design by Henry Currey between 1851 and 1856. At the same time, Henry Currey designed the new Thermal Baths which are outside our site.

In 1937 the new baths were again re-constructed at a cost of £20,000 including a new Entrance Hall of red and white marble and a panelled oak rest room incorporated into the centre of the baths. The Natural Baths continued to be enjoyed until their eventual closure in 1972, when the new swimming bath behind the Opera House and Pavilion Gardens complex was opened by Princess Anne. Following the closure of the baths as public bathing in 1972 the only use that these buildings have had is as the Tourist Information Centre. Other parts of the Natural Baths have stood empty. The only use of the spa itself being the extraction of water for bottling, for the hospital site (in the original John Carr stables building) and to supply water to the modern swimming pool.

The Natural Baths in their current form are Listed Grade II and were last restored and rebuilt in 1937. This front façade with its parapet, solid over the central three arches and with turned ballusters above the outer arched recesses was substantially re-built in 1937. It maintains some of the appearance, although plainer, of the Henry Curry elevation of 1854.

Proposals

The proposal is to make a door opening in the left hand arched recess in place of the existing leaded light arched head window by the removal of stonework from the existing cill level down to floor level. Into this will be inserted a leaded light fanlight using the existing pattern of coloured glass and a solid oak door of six panels detailed similarly to the existing entrance double doors in the central arched recess.

Justification

This alteration is required so that the Buxton Water Bottling Plant may have access to the source of the water supply 24hrs a day and 365 days a year so as to maintain their supply.

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Mitigation

Following a study of all the options for supplying 24hr access to the source, it was agreed that this is the only route that would not mean asking permission to enter through the Natural Baths spa complex. It is an essential part of the agreement between High Peak Borough Council and the Buxton Water Bottling Plant that a 24hr supply is guaranteed. It is therefore essential both to the redevelopment of the spa and to High Peak Borough Council that a 24hr access without going through other ownerships is provided.

Access

The new entrance to the source of spring water will be directly off the footpath and will give level access to the room beyond. This room is the current means of access to the source and there is no change in the access from this point on. Therefore, there is no issue relating to access created by this proposal. Access to the Buxton Crescent and Spa Hotel within the site is the subject of a new Access Audit and Appraisal which will accompany this Listed Building Consent and Planning Application.