

Heritage Statement attached to Planning Application
Proposed 75 Bedroom Care Home, London Road Buxton

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27th June 2012

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1.0 Introduction

This document is attached to the planning application for a proposed 75 bedroom care home at London Road Buxton. The application site is not located in any of the Conservation Areas designated by the High Peak Council under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Whilst that is the case the application site is large and its location is significant. Some of the design considerations, in particular desires to preserve and possibly enhance the existing character of the area are therefore similar in context. This document seeks first to establish the essential character of Buxton and the heritage value of the site before examining the proposals against that background.

2.0 Essential Character of Buxton

Buxton is generally acknowledged as the highest town in England. For most of its history it was a small upland settlement near the River Wye, its growth into a town at this altitude (1000 feet), in this remote part of Derbyshire, is entirely due to the presence of thermal spring water which led to its prolific development in the late 18th century and the second half of the 19th century.

Some of the distinctive characteristics of Buxton are described in Part 1 of the document produced by the planning authority and titled 'Appraisal of the Buxton Conservation Areas' those characteristics are summarised below:

• dramatic and surprising architecture within a hilly landscape
• high quality landmarks making the most of the rolling topography
• The Crescent - one of the finest Georgian buildings in England
• use of Buxton mineral water for over 2000 years, providing immense historical continuity and a sense of antiquity
• a series of high quality public parks threading through the Wye valley, making full use of the presence of the river and adapting its course and flow to create lakes, ponds and waterfalls
• a dense concentration of mature trees forming a fringe to the bowl-shaped valley and a backdrop to the town. Mature deciduous trees forming avenues within the streets. An exotic mix of conifers and evergreen shrubs creating points of interest within the large residential gardens
• a high proportion of Georgian and Victorian buildings co-existing, with relatively little modern development
• many buildings designed with reference to Buxton's Roman Classical origins, incorporating arched windows, pilasters, columns, colonnades and arcades
• striking Victorian architecture, with a cohesive character, using gritstone as the main building material
• approaches into the town characterised by full-height two-storey bay windows
• building types dominated by villas, hotels and lodging houses
• strong presence of the railway network despite the loss of many of the station building.

3.0 Application Site

The site is located on London Road which was one of the historic approaches to the town (London Road is established along a route of a former Roman road) and therefore it still has an important contribution to make to the appearance and character of the town. This site was occupied by the Haddon House Hotel which had a significant presence on London Road. The building was demolished after a serious fire. The following paragraphs identify in more detail the architectural elements and landscape features which contribute to the essential character and appearance of Buxton.

4.0 Archaeological and other Heritage Features

Buxton has a wealth of heritage assets consisting of listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens and scheduled ancient monuments. These are all referred to as designated heritage assets and benefit from special consideration and statutory protection through the planning system and appropriate consideration when making planning decisions.

Whilst the Buxton area is rich in archaeological and other heritage features a desktop study of Appendix 7 of the Adopted Local Plan (2005) and further research via the Heritage Gateway did not reveal any record of the discovery of any archaeological remains or heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site. The former Haddon Hall hotel was assessed by English Heritage in April 2008, amongst the comments they made at that time were the following:

The building's architect has not been identified, and although competently designed and executed, it is of modest architectural quality and lacks significant or innovative decorative or constructional detail.
The former hotel has been significantly altered and extended, and its setting has been compromised by a development at the rear of the site.
The original floor plan and much of the building's interior detailing has been compromised by a series of change of use developments.

English Heritage concluded that the building was of insufficient architectural or historic interest to be a candidate for (spot) listing.

5.0 Identification Process

The planning authority has already identified many of the elements that contribute to the character of Buxton and they are contained in Part 3 of the document titled 'Appraisal of the Buxton Conservation Areas'. Those elements of significance to this site have been extracted from that document and are summarized *(in italics)* in the 'Architectural Elements' and 'Landscape Elements' paragraphs below:

6.0 Architectural Elements

In addition to the large number of Georgian and Victorian buildings a number of buildings in Buxton were built in a French Renaissance Revival style. It was mostly a roof architecture in which steep mansard roofs were used with ornate dormers, and truncated pyramidal roofs in the French 17th century manner. This was a popular style for hotels in particular (and was also referred to as 'resort' architecture', and can be found at the Town Hall (1889, designed by William Pollard of Manchester), the John Duncan School (Wye House) and the Palace Hotel. The former Haddon Hall hotel that existed on this site exhibited several of these features.

There is no intention to design a building which emulates any particular historic 'style'. The proposal is a modern building but its location and size warrant careful attention to design and scale. Particular attention has been paid to the London Road frontage. The design composition has two large elements with steeply pitched roofs with a fully glazed contemporary link.

6.1 Architectural Detail

Perhaps more than any other feature, the bay window seems to be synonymous with the character of Buxton. The bay window became increasingly popular in the Mid-Victorian period. The revival of interest in the bay was specifically linked to the fashion for a healthy home and access to fresh air. By the 1850s, this became commonplace in seaside resorts, such as Brighton and Hove, but Buxton's aspirations as a health-driven, inland resort meant that, from the 1860s, it became ubiquitous. It was also status driven and was regarded as an asset to any suburban house. Thus, many of the terraced houses that lined the main roads into the town were embellished with two storey timber bays in particular, West Road, Bath Road and Fairfield Road although properties on London Road are no exception

Several of the window elements of the proposed building facing London Road have been developed into 2 storey bays and a 3 storey feature bay has been developed which emulates an original feature of the Haddon Hall Hotel

6.2 Decorative metalwork

Surviving cast-iron arcades and decorative metalwork are amongst the distinctive features prevalent in buildings in Buxton. The Haddon Hall hotel on this site had multiple balconies with decorative metal railings prior to the fire and subsequent demolition

Decorative railings (in conjunction with a low wall) have been incorporated into the proposed boundary treatment on London Road

6.3 Chimneys

As many of the buildings emanate from a period when the combustion of solid and fossil fuels was the only form of heating multiple large chimney stacks topped with chimney pots are a feature of many buildings in Buxton.

The proposed design includes multiple chimney features. They are 'decorative' in function as they will not be used as a part of the heating installation for the building

6.4 Facing Materials (Gritstone and Render)

There is an abundance of local quarries around Buxton which were originally owned by the Devonshire Estate. This has meant that stone is the naturally dominant building material in Buxton in particular Millstone Grit (gritstone). This material was used throughout Buxton for masonry walls, architectural building features and boundary treatments.

After about 1910, roughcast render, became fashionable as a facing material throughout the country Buxton being no exception, and there are large areas of Buxton where render became the predominant building material. The 20th century buildings along Temple Road and a large proportion of the buildings on the south side of Green Lane (both within conservation areas) are examples.

In accordance with policy 4.2 of the 'Saved High Peak Local Plan' which encourages the use of traditional natural materials in all new developments in particular those that are prominent or conspicuous from public view points, natural 'gritstone' stone has been selected for the frontage elevations. Render in conjunction with 'reconstructed' stone details have been selected as the materials for the remaining external walls of the proposed building. Natural slates are proposed for the roofing materials.

7.0 Landscape Elements

Trees are significant elements that help to define the character of Buxton and its landscaped setting. They:

• define the horizon in many views looking out of the town to the hillsides beyond
• provide a lush foreground for the setting of large villas
• provide structure and balance where they line the streets,
• provide counterpoint to buildings and soften views when planted intermittently along the edge of the road
• fill open public spaces
• particular species selected for their foliage, bark or habit, provide visually stimulating focal points in gardens and public parks
• provide valuable wildlife corridors

7.1 Gardens

The trees and shrubs that fall within private domestic gardens are part of the whole landscape of Buxton, and it is often difficult to draw a distinction in the canopy between the public parks, avenues and trees in private gardens. Although many streets are lined with boundary walls, equally many are lined with privet and yew hedges, which make a significant contribution to the lush, green setting of the conservation areas.

A landscape design statement is included as a separate document attached to the application (prepared by Landspaces the designers). The landscape design objectives are and an overview of the landscape design is summarised here:

The main objectives are to create a pleasant environment for the residents, an attractive setting for the building in addition to visual interest and structure on the road frontage. This has been achieved by creating a large garden to the rear of the building and two further resident's gardens on the frontages.

Native trees have been included to soften the boundaries to supplement existing trees that have been retained. The trees in the gardens are complimented with shrubs of varying heights and forms to enhance visual interest. Shrubs which provide scent have been located adjacent to the footpaths and other shrubs have been selected to create wildlife habitat. The predominant shrubs are evergreen species which provided colour, shape scent and texture throughout the seasons. The shrub species have also been selected to ensure that once the landscape matures it will require minimal maintenance and management.

All of these features of the landscape design are complimentary to those which define the essential charachter of Buxton in particular the garden with trees and shrubs on the frontages.

8.0 Conclusion

In accordance with policy 4.2 of the 'Saved High Peak Local Plan' which seeks to ensure that the built environment of the area is preserved and enhanced by new development; the proposed building respects the existing architectural and visual qualities of the High Peak it will create a significant building on the London Road. The building is of an appropriate design and will on completion with its landscaped gardens to the frontage contribute to its setting.