PEAKS AND PLAINS HOUSING TRUST

IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING BUILDING CONTAINING FLATS and CONVERSION TO FORM 8nr NEW SELF CONTAINED FLATS

26 ST JOHNS ROAD, BUXTON, SK17 6XQ

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF PLANNING APPLICATION

22/07/13

The Context of the Project

The existing building is a residential property approximately 100+ years old, occupying a prominent position within a row of similar properties facing the swimming pool in the Pavilion Gardens.

It has 3 storeys plus a basement, and is stone built with a pitched slated roof. It has previously been converted to form 7nr flats, some of which appear to have shared bathroom and cooking facilities.

The site is within a Conservation Area, but the building is not Listed.

The overall condition of the exterior of the building is basically sound, but the condition of external timberwork is very poor, and there is very little thermal insulation. Internally the building is also in very poor condition.

In addition, the existing internal layout is not appropriate for current needs, and the internal construction does not meet current standards or good practice for this type of use.

We understand that the property has been vacant for some time, and that it has now been purchased by Peaks and Plains Housing Trust with the assistance of High Peak BC under the Empty Homes initiative, with a view to renovating it and returning it to use to provide affordable housing, which is much needed in this general area.

We believe this proposal is entirely consistent with the current policies relative to the re-use of vacant residential properties,

Design + Access

1. Use

As described above, the property was originally a large private residence, although it has clearly been converted and used as flats for some considerable time.

Most of the other similar properties within this area appear to have been converted either to a similar use, or for use as hotels.

This proposal to renovate the building as flats is entirely consistent with the general use of similar properties within this area.

2. Amount

The building was previously split in to 7nr flats, although the internal layout indicates that at least one of these had more than one bedroom.

This proposal involves converting the building in to 8nr self contained 1 Bedroom flats.

This will not only provide additional affordable housing in this very central location, but will also help to address the general shortage of 1 Bedroom accommodation, which is now in even greater demand due to the recent 'empty bedrooms' legislation.

3. Layout

The previous internal layout involved access to the ground floor via the original front entrance door, and access to the upper floors via a smaller entrance at the rear, leading to an internal staircase in that position. We intend to retain that overall arrangement, but we will improve and enhance the rear entrance with the erection of a new entrance lobby, as shown on the drawings.

Internally, we will alter the existing layouts to provide 8nr 1 Bedroom flats (2 flats per floor).

Basement access will be retained for maintenance purposes only.

We have designed the internal layouts so that a second means of escape will not be required, and we will remove the existing unsightly steel escape staircase at the rear.

Externally, although much of the site is fairly well overgrown at the moment, it is clear that a large part of the grounds were previously hard surfaced, and our proposed layouts are generally similar to that, with only a relatively small additional area of hard standing at the rear. This will enable us to provide 8nr standard sized parking spaces, with the good access and suitable loading / turning facilities.

We have also made provision for a refuse storage area, located adjacent to the front entrance gate for convenience of collections etc. This will include facilities for a range of recycling bins as well as for general refuse. Siting the facility in this location takes advantage of the existing ground levels as it can be cut in to the existing embankment at a lower level, so that it will be effectively concealed by the use of timber fencing and screen planting, without disturbing the aspect or the prospect on the frontage.

4. Scale

The existing building obviously sits well within the context of the properties on St John's Road.

The overall external massing of the property will be unaffected by these proposals, as the only change we are proposing to the size and shape of the building is to construct a small single storey lobby to the rear entrance.

The conversion to form 8nr flats will increase the number of flats by 1, but as described above, some of the previous flats appear to have been designed for multiple occupation, so there will be no overall increase in resident numbers as a result of this conversion.

5. Landscaping

Peaks and Plains Housing Trust have commissioned a full tree survey which has been carried out by Cheshire Woodlands.

Their report will be provided in support of this application as soon as it is available, but their preliminary assessment indicates that no significant difficulties are likely to be caused by the proposed external works arrangements.

As already noted above, although we are proposing to rationalise and improve the vehicular access and parking areas, the overall hard paved area is very similar to what already exists on site. The existing tarmac and compacted stone hard surfacing totals approximately 325m², and we are proposing to increase that to approximately 360m², including the new refuse and recycling storage area, which represents an increase of only about 11% overall.

The majority of the hardstanding area will be at the side and the rear of the property, which will enable us to maintain the soft landscape and planted front boundary on to St Johns Road, in order to blend well with the overall character of the area.

We intend to provide a full landscape planting scheme for your consideration in due course.

6. Appearance

We intend to make very few changes to the external appearance of the building.

We will retain and renovate the existing stone outer leaf, including repairs and renovation of the decorative stone cills, lintels, surrounds, string courses, etc, as far as possible.

We will also retain and repair the existing slate roof, and replace the existing fascias etc with new treated timber sections, similar to the existing.

The rainwater goods will be replaced with black powder coated aluminium sections, using ogee profiled gutters to echo the profile of the original items.

Soil and waste drainage will generally be run externally, in black pvc sections, as it is at present.

The proposal involves the construction of a small single storey lobby to the rear entrance, and the removal of the existing steel escape staircase.

(continued over)

As shown on the drawings there will be some minor alterations to some of the window and door openings on the rear elevation, and we will install a wider version of the existing dormer window on the rear roof pitch, to provide adequate headroom in the staircase area on the top floor, but we are not anticipating the need to make any significant changes to the external appearance of the building in any other areas.

The existing rendered finish to the rear outrigger is generally in poor condition, and most of the proposed alterations to windows and doors occur in that outrigger. We will repair or replace the rendered finish to the whole of the outrigger, so that the alterations to the structural openings will not be visible.

The existing timber windows are all in very poor condition. They are beyond economical repair, and do not meet current constructional standards in any way. If we were fully restoring this building to its original condition we would have to consider replacing the windows with new timber box sash frames to match the originals. However, in this case, although this is a Conservation Area the building is not Listed, so we propose to use windows that are affordable (within the context of a social housing scheme) and provide the performance levels required by current standards, whilst ensuring that their proportions and configuration are sympathetic to the overall appearance of the building.

We therefore intend to use pvc frames with sealed double glazed units, generally with top hung opening lights in the top half of the windows, and with the transom in the mid-height position, to reflect the overall proportions of the original windows.

We note that there are already a number of similar buildings along this row that have been fitted with windows of this type, including the house next door (number 24), and provided that the configuration and proportions of the windows are selected correctly we believe that their overall appearance remains perfectly acceptable.

We will also need to replace the existing front entrance doors with a new door and frame that will provide the security necessary for this type of accommodation, and we will select a style of door that is suitable for this situation.

7. Access

This is a long established site with long established traffic, transport, and access regimes, and these proposals will not affect those connections beyond the site area in any way.

This project is a refurbishment / upgrading of an existing residential property, and in view of the existing levels and the constraints imposed by the existing structural layouts it is not feasible to provide full wheelchair access.

We will plan the corridor and doorway widths to suit people with mobility problems wherever possible, and provide appropriate handrails on the stairs, etc, but we are limited by the dimensions of the existing construction, and especially by the use of the existing staircases.

The upper floor flats will only be accessible via the existing staircase at the rear of the building, and there are also short flights of stairs in the circulation areas within each flat due to the existing split floor levels, so the upper floor flats can not be made accessible to wheelchair users.

In addition, due to the restricted space available within the envelope of the existing building, the room sizes on the ground floor are also inadequate for residential use by wheelchair users.

Unfortunately, for these reasons, it is not feasible to provide wheelchair access to these flats.