



DEMOLITION OF FORMER PUBLIC HOUSE AND ERECTION OF 60-BED HOTEL

Former Robin Hood Inn, 131 London Road, Buxton, SK19 9NW

Planning, Design and Access Statement

September 2014

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement (the 'Statement') has been prepared in support of a planning application submitted jointly by Premier Inn Hotels Ltd and Swanbank Property (Buxton) Ltd (jointly the 'Applicant') in respect of the former Robin Hood Inn, 131 London Road, Buxton (the 'Application Site').
- 1.2 The application is submitted in full and seeks planning permission to demolish the former Robin Hood Inn and erect a 60-bed hotel with associated landscaping, parking and servicing (the 'Application Scheme').
- 1.3 The application is submitted following long pre-application discussions with High Peak Borough Council and an extended public consultation exercise, which saw almost unanimous support for the Application Scheme. A separate Public Consultation Statement has been submitted in support of the application.
- 1.4 This Statement reviews relevant national guidance and adopted and emerging local planning policy and explains why it is considered that the Application Scheme is acceptable, taking account of all material planning considerations.

2.0 APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The Application Site is approximately 0.3ha in size and is located to the south of Buxton Town Centre. It is occupied by the former Robin Hood Inn, a former public house which ceased trading in early 2014 and is now vacant.
- 2.2 In addition to the vacant building the site comprises car parking, an existing access to London Road and several mature trees, three of which are protected by virtue of a Tree Preservation Order ('TPO').
- 2.3 Existing development within the immediate surrounding area is a mixture of residential and commercial.
- 2.4 To the north of the Application Site is an 'Esso' petrol filling station with associated 'Tesco Express' store; and to the east are the residential streets of Friar Grove and Sherwood Road. To the south is Marian Court, a sheltered housing apartment block for elderly people, and

residential dwellings on London Road. The eastern boundary of the Application Site is comprised of London Road (A515).

- 2.5 The A515 (London Road) is a primary road connecting Buxton with Ashbourne, a town on the southern border of the Peak District.
- 2.6 In planning policy terms the Application Site is shown as 'white land' on the adopted Local Plan proposals map and is approximately 440m from the defined Buxton Town Centre boundary.

3.0 APPLICATION SCHEME

- 3.1 The Application Scheme involves the demolition of the former public house, which has been vacant since early 2014 following the pub's closure due to viability reasons.
- 3.2 Following the demolition of the existing building, a new architecturally designed hotel will be erected incorporating 60 bedrooms, bar, restaurant and reception area as well as all back-of-house facilities including a kitchen, linen stores, storage areas, office and staff facilities.
- 3.3 The new building will be three storeys in height with a mansard roof design, similar in scale to other existing development in the immediate vicinity.
- 3.4 The building has been conservatively designed by the scheme's architect to complement the surrounding area whilst producing a unique and high quality development in its own right.
- 3.5 The building will have a residential character and will make use of a variety of materials found in the local vicinity such as natural stone, render, glass and slate.
- 3.6 The building has been positioned to the north west of the site as far as possible to maintain the separation that exists between neighbouring properties and the former public house.
- 3.7 The Application Scheme incorporates parking for 60 cars (including 4 disabled spaces), a servicing area to the front (west) of the hotel and the creation of a footpath link from the west through the Application Site to London Road.

- 3.8 One of the trees protected by virtue of a TPO requires removal to facilitate the construction of the Application Scheme, but this will be replaced with a semi-mature tree, the species to be agreed with the LPA.
- 3.9 The remaining two protected trees will be retained and protected as part of the development, and additional landscaping introduced around the Application Site.
- 3.10 Further details of the Application Scheme can be found on the submitted plans, elevations and other documents. The following information has been submitted in support of this planning application in addition to this Planning, Design and Access Statement:
- Site Location Plan;
 - Existing Topographical Survey;
 - Existing Floor Plans;
 - Existing Elevations;
 - Proposed Site Layout;
 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan;
 - Proposed First Floor Plan;
 - Proposed Second Floor Plan;
 - Proposed Context Elevations;
 - Proposed North and South Elevations;
 - Proposed East and West Elevations;
 - Proposed Roof Plan;
 - Proposed Tracking Plan for Service and Refuse Vehicle;
 - Sequential Assessment;
 - Heritage Statement;
 - Statement of Community Involvement;
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy;
 - Tree Survey and Report
 - Tree Consultant Letter;
 - Landscaping Scheme and Specification;
 - CDM Report; and
 - Protected Species Survey.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 One such material consideration in planning decisions is the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and the policies contained within it. The parts of the NPPF most relevant to this Appeal are summarised below.

NPPF

- 4.3 The golden thread running through the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.4 The NPPF explains that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.
- 4.5 **Economic** - The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time.
- 4.6 Premier Inn is always looking at locations where there is an identified need for budget hotel accommodation and as a result of market research has been looking for a suitable site within Buxton for around the last 10 years.
- 4.7 Several potential alternative development sites have been considered by Premier Inn but for various reasons none were genuinely suitable. Further details about alternative sites can be found in the Sequential Assessment which is also submitted in support of this application.
- 4.8 The adopted and emerging local plans for High Peak both recognise a need for additional hotel accommodation in Buxton, for which there is an identified need. The Application Scheme seeks to help address that need and as such accords with the economic dimension of sustainable development.
- 4.9 **Social** - The NPPF states that the planning system should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by creating a high quality built environment with accessible local

services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

- 4.10 As demonstrated in the Statement of Community Involvement also submitted in support of this application, there is almost unanimous support for the Application Scheme from local residents and businesses.
- 4.11 The Application Scheme will see the redevelopment of a vacant brownfield site to a use that would help address an identified need. The Application Scheme will employ between 30 and 50 people in a variety of roles and it is part of Premier Inn's strategy to fill as many positions as possible with employees who live locally.
- 4.12 Premier Inn also has a national target of 50% of all new job opportunities to be taken by those not in employment, education or training ('NEETs') and provide full training and career development opportunities to all team members.
- 4.13 Premier Inn pays above average salaries and will work closely with the local Job Centre to ensure that job opportunities are first marketed to local people. Contact has already been made with the manager of the Buxton Job Centre Plus, and this relationship will be developed as the process moves forward.
- 4.14 As such the Application Scheme will help support a strong community supporting its well-being. The Application Scheme therefore accords with the social dimension of sustainable development.
- 4.15 **Environmental** – The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment and as part of this helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and mitigate and adapt to climate change including to a low carbon economy.
- 4.16 The Application Site is not within a Conservation Area and the existing building is not statutorily or locally Listed. It is in a state of increasing disrepair and does not contribute positively to the local environment.
- 4.17 Conversely the Application Scheme has been architecturally designed to create a very high quality development that compliments its surroundings and enhances this part of Buxton.

Materials suggested for construction include locally sourced natural stone and slate, which constitutes prudent use of natural resources.

- 4.18 The Application Site is located in a physically sustainable location as it is within easy walking distance of Buxton Town Centre with its shops, restaurants and services and the proposed hotel will help to support those facilities.
- 4.19 Buxton Train Station is an approximate 15 minute walk and London Road is part of a main bus route.
- 4.20 Overall the Application Scheme accords with the environmental dimension of sustainable development.
- 4.21 The NPPF sets out core planning principles and places great importance on empowering local people and that they should be able to shape their surroundings. It also states that planning should encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed and actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling by focussing significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.
- 4.22 The Public Consultation Statement submitted in support of this application explains in detail how local people were consulted on the proposals for the Application Site and given the opportunity to comment on all aspects of the Application Scheme.
- 4.23 The response from local residents and businesses alike was almost entirely positive, with an overwhelming majority of support for both the principle of development and detailed design of the proposed hotel.
- 4.24 The Application Site is previously developed land and is situated in a sustainable location where people will be able to make use of public transport, walking and cycling. The proposal fully accords with the relevant core planning principles set out in the NPPF.
- 4.25 The NPPF defines hotel development as a 'main town centre use' and states at Paragraph 24 that local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan.

- 4.26 As the Application Site is not located within the defined Town Centre of Buxton as shown on the adopted High Peak Local Plan proposals map, there is a requirement to apply the sequential test.
- 4.27 A separate Sequential Assessment has been prepared and is submitted in support of this application. It concludes that there are no other sites that are genuinely available, suitable and viable, and therefore that the Application Site represents the sequentially most preferable site for the Application Scheme.

ADOPTED HIGH PEAK LOCAL PLAN

- 4.28 The development plan for High Peak is comprised of the High Peak Local Plan, which was adopted in March 2005 (the 'Local Plan').
- 4.29 Policy 4 of the Local Plan relates to amenity issues and states that planning permission will be granted for development provided that it will not create unacceptable loss of, nor suffer from unacceptable levels of, privacy or general amenity, particularly as a result of overlooking, loss of daylight and sunlight, overbearing effects of development, air, water, noise, light and other pollution, risk from hazardous substances and processes or traffic safety and generation.
- 4.30 The Application Scheme has been considerably designed with these factors in mind. The previous building line has been retained so as not to decrease the distance between the proposed hotel and existing residential development particularly to the south of the Application Site where the nearest residential dwelling at 131A London Road is located.
- 4.31 Privacy and general amenity to this property will be maintained as the hotel has been designed to ensure there are no hotel room windows facing towards this dwelling.
- 4.32 The scale of the proposed hotel is in keeping with the existing building to be demolished and other surrounding developments so there will be no loss of daylight or sunlight and no overbearing effects of development. Discussions with the Highway Authority at the pre-application stage have confirmed there will be no issues relating to traffic safety or generation resulting from the Application Scheme.
- 4.33 The Application Scheme involves the demolition of a former public house which is considered to be a community service.

- 4.34 As such Policy 32 of the Local Plan is relevant, and states that proposals for change of use or redevelopment of existing community services which serve the local community will be permitted provided that there are adequate alternative facilities elsewhere within the vicinity of the site; or it can be demonstrated that the facility no longer serves the needs of the community in which it is located.
- 4.35 There are a wide range of other public houses available within the locality of the Application Site. Within 500m of the Application Site are another four public houses (the 'Blazing Rag', the 'London Road', the 'Cheshire Cheese', the 'Swan') and Buxton Town Centre has an excellent pub offer and is within easy walking distance of the Application Site.
- 4.36 The Application Site therefore passes the first criterion of Policy 32 of the Local Plan as there are clearly adequate alternative facilities elsewhere within the vicinity of the site.
- 4.37 The former pub closed in May 2014 as it was no longer profitable, having seen a steady decline in customers for several years. The pub had been in the ownership of Marston's Pubs Ltd for many years forming part of their tenanted pub estate.
- 4.38 The volume of the pub's core draught beer and lager sales had declined year on year for the past decade or so and this was further exacerbated by the smoking ban in 2007 which significantly reduced trade overnight. This combined with rising costs for repairs, energy and other trade related costs such as Sky TV meant that the pub was losing money despite genuine efforts to try and support and reinvigorate the business.
- 4.39 In addition to pub's own problems, the town of Buxton has seen significant investment in the Town Centre and this had a large impact on outlying businesses such as the Robin Hood Inn. From discussions with local residents before the pub closed, it was clear that local residents preferred to visit broader-based family pubs or high street venues rather than outdated pubs such as the Robin Hood.
- 4.40 A decision was made therefore to close the pub as continuing to trade from this unviable and uneconomic unit would result in certain failure especially with the inability to secure a long term or sustainable lease or tenancy agreement.
- 4.41 Disposal decisions are always thoroughly considered and only taken as a last resort, but Marston's felt that in this case they had no other option as it was clear that the Robin Hood Inn was a pub with no long-term trading future.

- 4.42 This view is one shared by local residents, many of whom commented upon the steady decline of the public house throughout pre-application public consultation events. More details of these events are included within the Public Consultation Statement that has also been submitted in support of the application.
- 4.43 The Application Site therefore passes the second criterion of Policy 32 of the Local Plan in that it has been demonstrated that the facility no longer serves the needs of the community in which it is located.
- 4.44 Policy 68 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for tourist development which will reinforce or support Buxton's spa heritage and activities and/or reuse the town historic buildings in a manner sympathetic to their historic or architectural interest.
- 4.45 The Application Scheme is for a budget hotel which will assist in reinforcing and supporting Buxton by providing much needed quality but affordable hotel accommodation for visitors to Buxton.
- 4.46 Paragraph 5.133 of the Local Plan indicates that Buxton is the 'Heart of the Peak District' and the major tourist centre of the High Peak and the wider Peak District, with Paragraph 5.134 going on to state that the Council will continue to promote the development of tourist facilities and accommodation and to market Buxton on the basis of its central location in relation to the Peak District and other tourist destinations.
- 4.47 Paragraph 8.26 of the Local Plan confirms that Buxton is promoted as the "Heart of the Peak District", and is the major tourist accommodation resource for the Peak District. It goes on to say that developments will be welcomed which focus on the themes of Buxton's Spa heritage and architecture; its tourist and conference facilities, attractions and accommodation; facilities for families, its shopping and market; and the relationship of the town with the surrounding Peak District countryside and other visitor destinations, such as the Potteries, Alton Towers and Chester. It also indicates that the University of Derby development in the town centre provides the opportunity for an enhanced range of new facilities sustained by the academic population but also serving visitors.
- 4.48 Premier Inn's target market for this location is primarily leisure visitors particularly focussed on tourism. Other markets include short-term visitors of the University campus (for instance parents/friends of students or temporary students visiting the campus for summer-schools etc.), some business use and occasional visitors for events (such as Buxton Festival, Festival Fringe, Walking and Cycling Festival etc.).

- 4.49 The Application Scheme will help to meet the identified need for additional hotel accommodation within Buxton, and accords with adopted local policy.

EMERGING HIGH PEAK LOCAL PLAN

- 4.50 The High Peak Local Plan Submission Draft (the 'emerging Plan') was released for consultation in April 2014 and is due to be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in August 2014.
- 4.51 Weight can be given to the policies within the Emerging Plan according to their degree of consistency with guidance contained within the NPPF.
- 4.52 Policy E6 of the Emerging Plan - Promoting Peak District Tourism and Culture – states that the Borough Council will support the development of Peak District tourism and culture. It states that this will be achieved by, amongst other things:
- Strengthening the tourism role of the Plan Area by supporting and supplementing the tourism offer of the Peak District National Park
 - Supporting tourism and provision for visitors which is appropriate to the settlements and countryside and consistent with environmental objectives
 - Supporting the provision of new serviced accommodation in towns and villages in order to encourage overnight visitor stays
 - Encouraging the development of Buxton as England's Leading Spa town
 - Supporting new tourist provision and initiatives in towns and villages
- 4.53 The Application Scheme accords with these emerging policies, which can be given significant as they are aligned with guidance contained within the NPPF.

5.0 DESIGN

5.1 Use

- 5.1.1 The Sequential Assessment submitted in support of this Application confirms that the Application Site is the most sequentially preferable site for the proposed hotel.

- 5.1.2 As such the principle of the redevelopment of the site for hotel use is acceptable in terms of national planning guidance and local adopted and emerging local planning policy.
- 5.1.3 Specifically; at ground floor level the development will consist of hotel reception, 60 cover restaurant/restaurant, back of house facilities and six bedrooms, four of which will be suitable for disabled users. Externally there will be 60 parking spaces (4 marked for disabled users) some of which will be located underneath the first floor of the hotel.
- 5.1.4 A pedestrian footpath linking the dwellings to the east of the Application Site with London Road to the west is also incorporated.
- 5.1.5 First and second floors of the hotel will each comprise 27 bedrooms with associated store areas, lobby, hallways and lift/stairwells.

5.2 Layout

- 5.2.1 The layout of the Application Scheme is shown on the submitted Proposed Site Layout (ref: AA-473-101F), which shows the reception, bar and restaurant areas at the front (west) of the building at ground floor level with some bedrooms to the rear (east) and the majority of bedrooms comprising the first and second floors.
- 5.2.2 The west and south elevations of the proposed hotel follow approximately the same building line as the former public house so as to maintain the existing building lines.
- 5.2.3 The hotel's main entrance will be centrally located within the main west elevation to London Road, ensuring an active frontage as well as positive visual interest created by the entrance detailing.
- 5.2.4 Parking will be provided to the side (south) and rear (east) of the building and will not dominate the streetscene. Some parking is provided beneath the first floor bedrooms towards the rear (east) of the Application Site.

5.3 Scale

- 5.3.1 The proposed hotel is three storeys in height with a mansard roof and has been specifically designed so that the building is of a similar scale to existing properties in the vicinity; particularly 131a London Road and Marian Court to the immediate south.

5.3.2 The scale of the new Haddon Hall Care Home further to the south has also been considered as that development makes a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the area.

5.3.3 Breaks in the main body of the building and in the roof create an illusion of three separate blocks of accommodation, which ensures the hotel retains a residential appearance.

5.3.4 The scale has evolved following in-depth discussions with the Council's design team to ensure the hotel has a strong but respectful presence on this important gateway site, and this has been achieved.

5.4 Landscaping

5.4.1 A landscaping scheme is submitted in support of the application which shows a variety of additional planting to be introduced as part of the Application Scheme.

5.4.2 Boundary treatments vary and include the retention of existing fencing where this is of a good quality as well as the installation of new fencing to some boundaries.

5.4.3 One existing tree which is protected by virtue of a TPO will be removed to facilitate the development. Whilst unfortunate this is unavoidable as the works involved in the demolition of the existing building would likely have a severe negative impact on the health and stability of the tree.

5.4.4 The tree proposed for removal is referred to in the submitted Tree Report as T3, and has been classified as falling within category B2 within the report. This means that it is a tree of moderate quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 20 years, and that its value is mainly classed as 'landscape' i.e. as part of a group of trees that attracts a higher collective rating than they might as individuals.

5.4.5 A letter dated 27th August 2014 written by the Application Scheme's Tree Consultant confirms that the construction of the Application Scheme will lead to direct damage to the tree's roots which will lead to a high risk of failure. The letter has been submitted in support of the Application.

5.4.6 The letter goes on to state that severe damage to this tree is unavoidable and recommends that the tree be removed prior to the commencement of development and suitable

replacement with a semi-mature specimen in the same location following completion of development.

5.4.7 Therefore the Application Scheme includes the removal of the tree prior to commencement of development and following completion a semi-mature replacement tree will be planted in the same location as the removed tree of a species to be agreed with the Council.

5.4.8 It is considered that this is a reasonable approach and with the introduction of a replacement tree in the same location as well as several other new trees throughout the Application Site the loss of one B2 category tree is sufficiently mitigated.

5.5 Appearance

5.5.1 In-depth pre-application discussions relating specifically to the design and appearance of the Application Scheme have ensured that the proposed hotel will complement and enhance the street scene and wider surrounding area.

5.5.2 The palette of materials proposed included locally-sourced natural stone and slate, high-quality stone cladding and render.

5.5.3 The most visible elevations of the proposed building are the southern and western elevations. The architect has ensured these are strong elevations that make positive contributions to the street scene, and it is on these locations where some natural stone is proposed.

5.5.4 Inspiration for the appearance of the proposed scheme has been taken from the nearby Haddon Hall Care Home, which is understood to have been well received by local residents and the Council since its completion.

6.0 ACCESS

6.1 The Application Site is situated where it can make the most of available public transport links including the services provided by Buxton Train Station, which is approximately 15 minutes' walk to the north.

- 6.2 London Road (A515) is also part of a main bus route with the nearest bus stops serving both directions located approximately 75m to the north of the Application Site.
- 6.3 Premier Inn's desired parking ratio of one space per bedroom has been achieved and four of these spaces will be for disabled users. A secure and covered cycle rack will also be provided within the Application Site.
- 6.4 It is expected that many of the customers staying at the hotel will want to make use of Buxton's excellent eating and drinking establishments, all of which are accessible by walking from the Application Site.
- 6.5 The Application Site is well connected to the Town Centre by London Road, which has pavements on both sides and several safe pedestrian crossings.
- 6.6 In terms of inclusive access; the proposed building has level access to the entire ground floor, within which are four 'Universal Access' bedrooms designed specifically for disabled users. These rooms have been developed by Premier Inn and include disabled wet rooms and interconnecting rooms for use by carers where necessary. Lifts provide access to the accommodation on the upper levels.
- 6.7 The hotel shall comply with Part M ('Access for the Disabled') of the Building Regulations document and Premier Inn will also put into place any further measures to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 7.1 The hotel shall implement a control strategy designed to minimise energy consumption. A keycard system shall be considered for control of both the bedroom lighting and heating.
- 7.2 When the room is unoccupied, the lighting will be automatically switched off with the heating reverting to a pre-set temperature.
- 7.3 A control system will be implemented to allow customer control of the heating system but, for further energy saving, will automatically enter set-back mode during the night.

- 7.4 Lighting has a major and direct impact on carbon emissions. Electricity has considerably higher carbon intensity than other fuels, although there is little choice to its use for modern lighting. Therefore there is more incentive to examine lighting design and specifically with this building, emphasis shall be given to prevention of over-lighting; lighting efficiency; and control
- 7.5 There are well established design criteria for internal lighting. However these are often regarded as minimum lighting levels, which tend to result in areas being over-lit. During the design process each area shall be designed to achieve optimum lighting levels and care shall be taken to ensure over-lighting does not occur within lit zones. Increased internal gains from lighting will increase the likelihood of overheating in summer months and therefore to achieve the desired omission of comfort cooling it is essential that designed lighting levels are not exceeded.
- 7.6 The Building Regulations (Part LQA) detail stringent minimum efficacy levels to be achieved in all areas. To demonstrate compliance with these Regulations the building's lighting efficacy must be greater than 50 lm/W (lamp lumens per circuit watt) in general areas and 15 lm/W within the restaurant area. It is the desired intent to better the target lighting efficacy across all of the internal lighting installation.
- 7.7 There is a strong desire to eliminate unnecessary lighting of unoccupied areas, as this is believed to be an often overlooked discipline. Good robust technologies such as presence detection (PIR devices, detecting a person's presence within a room and switching lighting accordingly) shall be employed wherever possible.
- 7.8 All store rooms, offices and "back of house" areas shall employ occupancy detection to switch lighting. Consideration shall also be given to the installation of a "last man out" switch (one switch at the exit position that isolates all lighting circuits). This is intended to prevent lighting in unobserved areas being left on accidentally.
- 7.9 Lighting to bedroom corridors, escape and circulation stair shall be controlled by occupancy detection, with lighting levels being reduced by half when not occupied.