

**BUCKINGHAM HOTEL**  
**BUXTON**  
**Heritage Significance**  
**Assessment**



**February 2013**

**The Buckingham Hotel, Burlington Road, Buxton, SK17 9AS**

**Heritage Significance Assessment**

**Prepared by**

**The Architectural History Practice Ltd**

**February 2013**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the Report**

The Buckingham Hotel Heritage Significance Assessment was prepared by Clare Hartwell BA MA and Marion Barter BA MA IHBC of the Architectural History Practice Ltd (AHP) in February 2013, for the owner Stoon Barah. The report is intended to inform discussions about the future of the building and should be read in conjunction with other specialist reports including the structural report for H & H Solutions by J.E.Haines, February 2013. Research was undertaken using cartographic, photographic and documentary records. The site was visited by Clare Hartwell and Marion Barter in February 2013.

### **1.2. Location**

Buckingham Hotel is situated on Burlington Road at the junction with St John's Road in Buxton. The postal address is 1-2 Burlington Road, Buxton, SK17 9AS and the National Grid reference is SK05322 73381. High Peak Borough Council is the local planning authority.

### **1.3. Copyright**

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### **1.4 Acknowledgements**

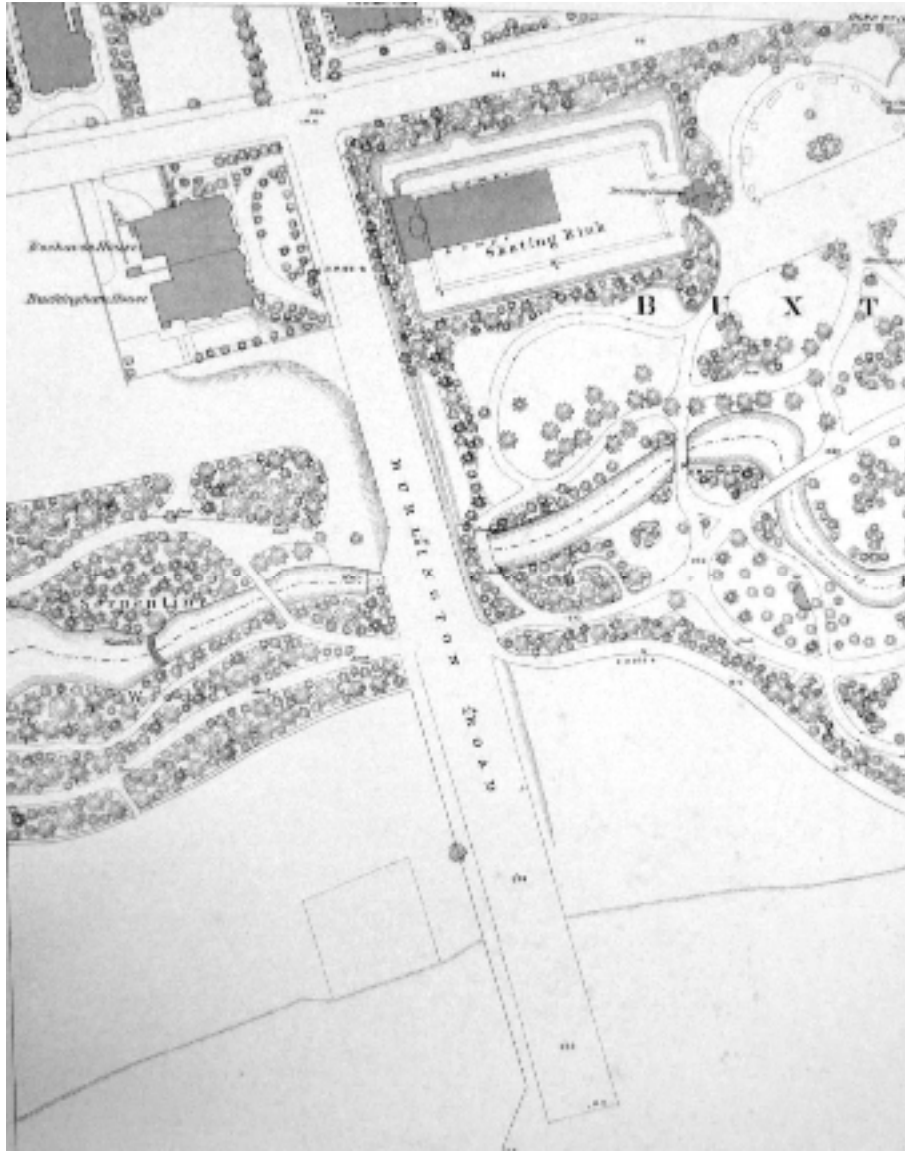
This report was written by Clare Hartwell, BA MA and Marion Barter BA MA IHBC, Directors of AHP. Photographs were taken by the authors unless otherwise stated.

## **2. HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Summary history of the buildings and site**

Buxton is the site of natural hot springs, exploited from the Roman period or before, which became a spa during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The fortunes of the town were intimately related to its status as a resort which was developed under successive Dukes of Devonshire, who owned much of the area. As spa attractions diversified to include leisure as well as medicinal activities the numbers of entertainment buildings increased and Buxton became increasingly dependent upon trade associated with visitors.

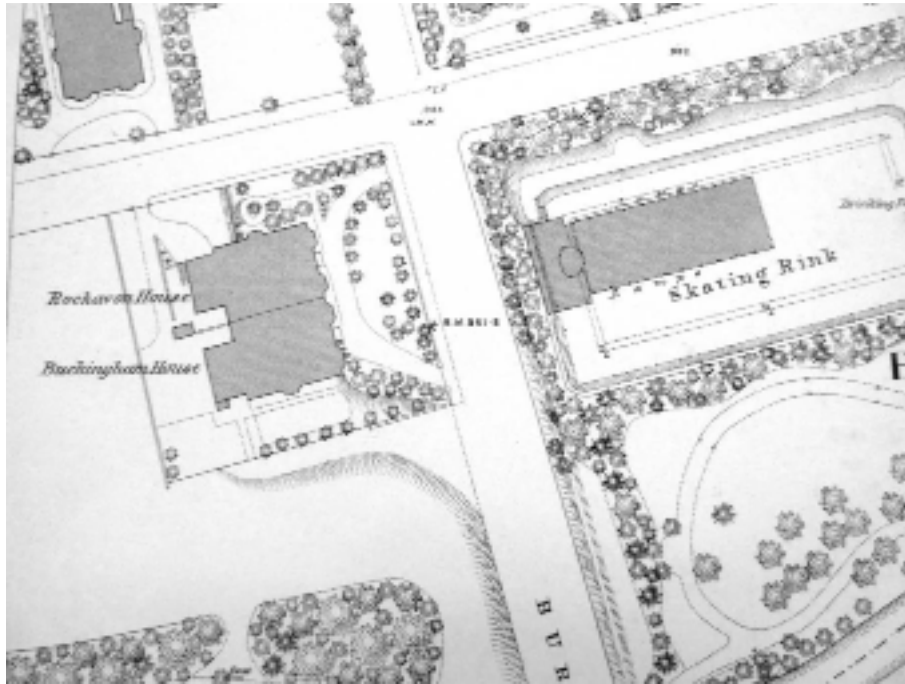
Lodgings and hotels were an essential facility and were built in increasing numbers from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after Buxton's railway station opened in 1863. Many of the smaller establishments built to cater for the visitor trade were used as family homes during off-season periods. Close proximity to the principal attractions and to the station was an advantage. The trade was highly seasonal in nature, and developments in the 1870s sought to extend the season by developing sheltered entertainment centres, including the Pavilion and Octagon buildings overlooking the Pavilion Gardens, which were enhanced and augmented at the same time. It was almost certainly this development which encouraged the establishment of additional lodgings in the immediate area to cater for the expected increase in trade.



*Burlington Road and part of the Pavilion Gardens, 1879 OS map, 1:500*

Burlington Road had been laid out by 1879, aligned roughly north-south across the valley, which was landscaped with gardens and woodland walks. The road did not initially extend further south than Lismore Road (not shown on the 1879 map), and was a cul de sac until later in the century. Most of the plots facing east into the gardens, south of the Buckingham Hotel were not built on until the 1890s, perhaps because asking prices for plots in this prime

location were high. The Buckingham Hotel site was the first to be developed, but did not form part of the immediate setting of the park and its buildings, as it overlooked the street corner and north-west corner of the park. A number of other, similar lodgings and small hotels sprang up along St John's Road, almost certainly in response to the location close to the gardens and Pavilion leisure facilities.



*Detail of the 1879 OS map 1:500*

## **2.2 Development of the Buckingham Hotel**

The Buckingham Hotel consists of two semi-detached properties dated 1876 (on inscribed datestones on the front elevation) and is first shown on the 1879 OS map. No. 1 to the north was called Rockavon House, No. 2 Buckingham House. The rear outriggers appear to be either part of the original design or added very shortly afterwards (they are marked on the 1879 OS map). To the front and sides were garden areas, with a shared crescent drive. To the rear

the 1879 OS map shows access from St John's Road, as today, leading to rear yards. The documentary evidence and architectural form and position of the building indicates it was purpose-built as a pair of small hotels or lodging houses. Trade directories show that both properties were in use as lodgings run by different proprietors. In the 1881 Kelly's Directory Rockavon House was described as a boarding house, while Buckingham House was furnished apartments. The properties continued to appear in trade directories in the same uses until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but neither is mentioned in the 1912 Directory.



*The Buckingham Hotel shown in a photograph of 1935 (North East Midlands Photographic Record, NEMPR)*

Buxton directories of 1921 list the two properties under a single entry as The Buckingham in the ownership of C.W. Marshall, indicating the properties



were combined sometime between 1912 and 1921. Archive photographs of 1935 show the building much as it appears today, as one hotel.

At some point after the properties became one hotel, various interior cross walls were modified or removed. The original party walls between the properties in the cellar and ground floor were largely removed, along with a cross wall between the north ground floor rooms, and this has affected the structural integrity of the building, which lacks good lateral restraint. There may have been inherent instability due to poor ground conditions, and a history of previous movement is indicated by the stone raking buttress at the back of the property (west elevation), cracks in lintels and movement in the front bays. The report by H & H Solutions dated February 2013 explains the structural issues in detail.



*Buttress at the rear of Rockavon*      *View through north ground floor rooms, showing arches and openings cut through internal cross walls*

The Hotel continued to trade as one establishment known as the Buckingham Hotel from the 1920s until the present day. There is evidence for external alterations undertaken at different times. Extensions to the south side shown

on the OS map of 1923 were removed at an unknown date, and there is the ghost of a porch on the rear wall of the south outrigger. The form of these extensions is not known. The use of random limestone for the basement storey to the rear and south elevation suggests that this area was not intended to be seen, or that levels may have been adjusted in this area. Unfortunately, no historic photographs of the rear have been found. The 2-storey infill block at the rear of the property is recent.



*Detail of the 1923 OS map showing the hotel with rear extension, lower left*



*Rear elevation with random limestone to basement level and scarring from a removed addition.*

### **2.3 Architectural style and materials**

Reliance on seasonal trade led to the development of a building type which was often used as a family home as well as offering lodgings. This Victorian building type is generally larger than a typical dwelling house and often furnished with generous bay windows to principal rooms. The Buckingham Hotel is typical in this respect and very similar in style to other buildings used

for the same purpose, for example establishments such as the Portland Hotel nearby on St John's Road. The basic formula was one which had been established in the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century, exhibited for example in lodging houses on Hall Bank, which also have generous bay windows, albeit somewhat later additions. It is an idiom widely used in resorts, especially seaside resorts, all over the country, designed to offer guests views and a feeling of spaciousness.



*Portland Hotel, Buxton*



*Typical small hotel architecture,  
Lytham, Lancashire*

The architectural style is relatively simple without much embellishment. The hipped roof, bracketed eaves and cambered window heads are Italianate in inspiration, a style which was widely adopted in the English architectural repertoire from the 1850s and 60s. The style was popular in Buxton and was one easily adapted to hotels and boarding houses. The building is constructed of local sandstone typical of most buildings of the date and type in Buxton, with a slate roof and dressed stone detailing. The two semi-detached buildings formed a matching pair, each with a stone plaque with the name and date of the respective houses. The rear wing of Rockavon House is one storey lower in

height than Buckingham House where the outrigger is five storeys including basement and attic. The main frontages extend through three storeys above generous basements with attics lit by gabled dormers.

## **2.4 The Setting and views**

Setting is defined as the surroundings within which a heritage asset is experienced (NPPF glossary). The hotel is positioned at the corner of St John's Road and Burlington Road. The former is a principal historic route which forms the main A53 road to Leek and leads past the railway station. The latter was laid out circa 1870, but most buildings along it date from the 1890s. Burlington Road faces east into the Pavilion Gardens, a grade II\* registered landscape, which originated as 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century pleasure grounds associated with Buxton Hall (now Old Hall Hotel), remodelled as the Serpentine Walks by Joseph Paxton in the 1830s and again by Edward Milner in the 1870s, with additional work by Adam Hogg, the Duke of Devonshire's gardener.



*Photograph c 1880-1900 taken from an upstairs window of the Buckingham Hotel. Portland Hotel opposite and part of Pavilion Gardens, with the low roof of the skating rink, lower right and the Octagon dome beyond (NEMPR)*

The northern-west end of the gardens immediately opposite the Buckingham Hotel was occupied by a skating rink from c.1870s, and is shown on maps of 1879 and 1923. The principal areas of the Pavilion Gardens as remodelled in the 1870s by Edward Milner are to the south of the terrace or promenade running along the front of the associated leisure buildings, the Pavilion and Octagon. The skating rink appears to have been a simple, functional single-storey building without architectural pretension, screened from the road by planted trees (seen in the historic image above).



*1923 OS map showing the Buckingham Hotel, top left, later houses along Burlington Road, and the skating rink opposite the hotel.*

The skating rink site is now occupied by a two-tier car park, screened from Burlington Road by evergreen trees, with a 1960s swimming pool between it and the Octagon. The section of St John's Road near the junction with Burlington Road is characterised by detached and semi-detached houses, mainly of later 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century date, including properties

historically used as private residences, hotels and lodging houses. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century properties have full height bay windows and other features similar to the Buckingham Hotel, but mostly on a smaller scale

The building is not identified in important views in the conservation area, although it is prominent in close views of the junction of the two roads. It is well-screened from Pavilion Gardens and can only be seen through the screen of mature trees from the deck of the car park. There are views of the building from the walk along the Wye west of Burlington Road, from the south. The views are screened and obscured by mature trees, even in winter conditions.



*View of the hotel from the car park, possible only in winter conditions*

The best views of the hotel are from the north, from St John's Road (Area 5 of the Conservation Area), where other Victorian buildings which originated as hotels or boarding houses stand opposite. Deciduous trees form part of the north boundary of the property. It is not known if these were planted or self-

seeded, however this part of the Conservation Area is characterised by plentiful tree cover with a green, leafy character. The 1879 OS map suggests that tree planting along property boundaries was intended to be even denser than it is today. Historic maps and photographs show a semi-circular lawned area in front of the hotel, now removed and used for parking.



*View from the gardens to the south, the adjacent property on Burlington Road is in the foreground with glimpses of the higher Buckingham Hotel beyond*

*The Hotel is hardly visible from the south west from Serpentine Gardens*

The hotel forms part of a group of buildings along Burlington Road, though owing to the tree cover and the fact that it is set back from the frontage, it is not prominent in long views along the road; oblique views are possible from close at hand. All the buildings on the west side of the road are built to the same front building line. Historically, aesthetically and functionally it has more in common with the other small hotels and houses on St John's Road, in Area 5 of the Conservation Area. St John's Road is the only place from which long views of the building can be obtained, however because the building is set back from the street frontage it is not clearly seen in long views from the east,

and evergreen planting around the car park obscures this street corner. Long views from the west are partly obscured by trees except in winter months.



*View looking east along St John's Road with the Buckingham Hotel, centre*



*Looking west along St John's Road*

## **2.5 Heritage Designations**

The Buckingham Hotel is an unlisted building situated in the Buxton Conservation Area Character Area 4: Pavilion Gardens and Serpentine Walks. It is not specifically mentioned in the adopted appraisal document, although later 19<sup>th</sup> century houses further south along Burlington Road are picked out for mention. The Pavilion Gardens and Serpentine Walks are listed grade II\* in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, and have high significance, nationally. The hotel is approximately 15 metres from the edge of the registered park but is visually separated from it by tree screening around the car park in the north-west corner of the registered area.

The hotel can be glimpsed in winter from the car park opposite (the latter is a negative visual element in the conservation area). It can also be glimpsed in long views from the Serpentine Walks to the south, although the view is heavily screened by mature trees. The Conservation Area map identifies The



Buckingham Hotel as an example of the many positive buildings in the town which makes a strong contribution to the character of the area; such buildings are considered to be heritage assets and covered by relevant NPPF policies. As well as the building itself, curtilage structures, in particular boundary walls, gate piers and ironwork overthrow contribute positively to the street scene and have historic character. The mature boundary trees have protection as they are in the conservation area.

### **3. HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Assessing significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets, and is embedded within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, March 2012). A key objective in the NPPF is to ‘conserve England’s heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance’. Significance can be measured in different levels:

- **Exceptional** – an asset important at national to international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II\* listed buildings and World Heritage Sites. The Buxton Crescent is within this level. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.
- **High** – a designated asset important at a regional level and also at a national level, including Grade II listed buildings and conservation areas. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.
- **Medium** – an undesignated asset important at a local to regional level, including local (non-statutory) listed buildings or those that make a positive contribution to the setting of a listed building or to a conservation area. May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.
- **Low** – structure or feature of very limited heritage value and not defined as a heritage asset. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings. The removal or adaptation of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.

- **Negative** – structure or feature that harms the value of a heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

### 3.2 Significance of the Buckingham Hotel

The hotel is considered to be of **medium significance** as a typical example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century Buxton hotel. It is an undesignated heritage asset, important at local level. It is not considered to have regional importance, and its significance relates to its status as a typical Buxton building type that contributes positively to the conservation area. The most significant view is at the corner of St John's Road, including the boundary walls, gate piers and ironwork overthrow. The hotel visually relates more strongly to the group of similar buildings along St John's Road than to later buildings on Burlington Road.



*View of the building with gate piers and overthrow, from the NE*

The deciduous trees along the north boundary contribute to the leafy character of the Conservation Area. The hotel is peripheral to views out of and across the Grade II registered gardens, and make a low contribution to the setting of the park as it is well-screened for most of the year by mature trees around the park perimeter.

The rear of the building has low significance and being at a lower level and to the rear, can only be seen close at hand. This area exhibits obvious signs of alteration, and is also used for service access. The tarmac rear yard areas are typical of service areas and have no significance. The modern infill block is of low significance.



*Service yard and rear of the building*

The interior of the hotel was briefly considered, although this aspect of the building is not a material consideration in conservation areas. The interior does not have special interest, and most areas are of low significance due to the level of alteration.

## **4.0 THE SCOPE FOR CHANGE**

### **4.1. Policy context**

The national legislative framework for development affecting conservation areas is provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; often referred to as the Listed Buildings Act. This states the duty on local authorities with regard to any buildings or other land within a conservation area, that *‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’* (section 72(1)). This does not mean that changes cannot be made; the current national policies on heritage are designed to manage change in a way that ensures that heritage assets are protected and their significance is balanced against the public benefits of new development.

Policies in the NPPF guide local authorities and applicants in determining applications that affect all heritage assets, including those in conservation areas. Non-designated assets in conservation areas that make a positive contribution to its character are regarded as heritage assets for the purposes of the NPPF. Where development causes harm to a heritage asset, it has to be justified; the greater the harm the more justification is needed. Paragraph 133 requires certain tests to be met where a proposal causes ‘substantial harm’, whereas if the harm is ‘less than substantial’ the LPA is required to balance the public benefits of development against the harm (paragraph 134).

Although the NPPF now provides the principal framework for planning decisions, High Peak Council policies are also relevant along with the relevant sections of the Conservation Area Appraisal for Buxton and the recent Buxton Design and Place-Making Strategy which emphasises quality in new development and is now supplementary planning guidance (SPD). The site is just outside the edge of the western boundary of the SPD core area.

## **4.2 Significance and scope for change**

The NPPF requires applicants to assess and describe the significance of heritage assets affected by development proposals (paragraph 128). The conclusions on the significance of the hotel are set out in section 3 above. The NPPF uses the principle of proportionality and advises that the more significant the heritage asset the greater the weight should be given to its conservation. This report sets out the significance of the Buckingham Hotel, its setting and different elements; this assessment will be used to inform the project development.

There is more scope to alter less significant heritage assets or parts of heritage assets, and where parts of a building or site do not contribute positively to a conservation area there may be scope for new development. This would apply to the rear (west) side of the hotel, where permission was granted for an extension in 2002, renewed in 2007, but now lapsed. Where a building, or part of a building or its setting makes a positive contribution to a conservation area, any loss of significance or harm has to be robustly justified, depending on the level of harm. This applies to the overall form and the principal elevations of the hotel, and to its setting of boundary walls and gateways. The impact on the setting of the registered Pavilion Gardens will also be a material consideration, although the site is currently partly screened by trees.

## **4.3 Scope for change at the Buckingham Hotel**

There is scope for substantial change to the interior of the building, for example by remodelling the internal layout and circulation. However the coherence of the fenestration, especially on the north and east sides, would need to be preserved to retain the appearance of the elevations. There is scope for alteration and extensions to the rear. AHP understands that permission

has previously been granted for rear additions, now lapsed. There is most scope for change where views of the site are most limited, for example to the south-west corner of the site.

More significant alterations such as raising the height of the whole building would need to be presented with clear information on the visual impact that this would have on the conservation area and potentially on views across the registered park. A case would need to be made for public benefits of the development, and the role that this could have in enhancement of the conservation area, to offset any harmful impacts. The potential for introducing new work of high architectural quality is an area which could be explored with the local authority.

#### **4.4. Scope for demolition**

Given that the north and east frontages of the hotel make a positive contribution to the conservation area, and that the hotel has some historic significance as a typical part of Buxton's Victorian development as a resort, AHP considers that total demolition would cause 'substantial harm' to a heritage asset (the conservation area). This would require a case to be made against the tests in paragraph 133 and may constrain the options, subject to the strength of the case that can be presented.

A key part of the case to address local and national planning policies will be issues of viability, relating to the costs of addressing structural defects and refurbishment in relation to the end value of the hotel. The LPA would need to be convinced that the existing building is not capable of viable repair, adaptation and extension. The quality of the replacement building and its contribution to Buxton conservation area and to the sustainability and distinctiveness of the town would be very important factors in making a case for a replacement building. A high quality of new design will be essential for a new build proposal, and a new build should be of a scale and mass that complements surrounding buildings and uses traditional materials such as

stone and slate, although there may be scope for using contemporary materials alongside stone and slate. Good quality contemporary design should be explored as a design option, although locally there may be a preference for a traditional design approach. Any new build should not be visually intrusive in the conservation area nor to the registered historic park.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

The Buckingham Hotel is a building of overall medium significance which makes a positive contribution to Buxton conservation area; it is within Area 4. It is close to, but not prominent in views from, a grade II\* registered landscape. It is not part of the setting of a listed building.

The most significant aspects of the hotel are the north and east elevations and its overall form. It has historic significance as part of the Victorian growth of Buxton as a resort. The altered interior of the hotel lacks special interest, and its features are not relevant to the conservation area. External areas to the rear and part of the south side are of low significance owing to alterations, as well as the fact that they do not feature in significant views within the conservation area.

It is considered that there is scope for change to the interior and for alteration or extension at the back of the building, with the potential of improving the appearance of the rear of the building. More radical change such as demolition would have to satisfy the stringent criteria in the NPPF and local policies, and a full case would be needed to form the basis of discussion with the local authority. High quality new design would be essential for the site, in relation to SPD in the *Buxton Design and Place Making Strategy*.



## 6.0 SOURCES

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OS map 1:528, 1879. Buxton Library

OS map 1:10560, 1923. Buxton Library

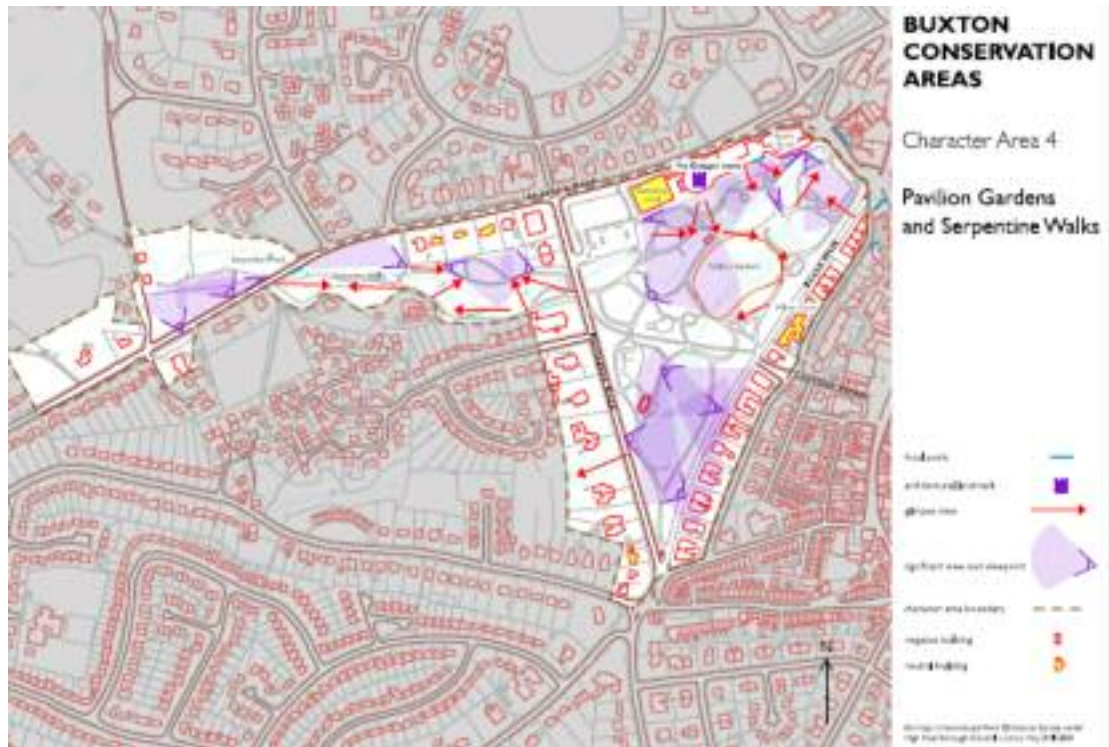
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## APPENDIX 1: Conservation Area Character Area 4



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