

Comments, Observations and Objections to the Proposed Planning Application HPK/2016/0276

Over the last few years, Planning Inspectors have dismissed a number of appeals regarding the proposed development of No. 33 St. John’s Road, Buxton, (the third property along St. John’s Road from the Buckingham Hotel), the dismissals basically dealing with 3 main issues:

1. Whether the proposals would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of The Park Conservation Area;
2. The effect of the proposals on the setting of the Serpentine Walks and the pavilion gardens which are both listed as Grade II* on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens; and
3. The effect of the proposal on the living conditions of adjoining occupiers with reference to visual impact, potential overlooking and potential noise and disturbance.

Considering the application and plans for demolition and replacement of the Buckingham Hotel, we feel that many of the Planning Inspectors’ reasons and statements regarding the dismissal of the Appeals for No. 33 St. John’s Road are also extremely relevant in this case. Some of these can be summarised as follows:

- a. The building proposed would have a significantly larger footprint than the existing building, extending further back into the site, and a greater height, which would give the building a scale far greater than the more domestic scale of its neighbours. It has a relatively deep plan form that would penetrate much further into the site than the existing structure. It would appear alien in relation to the size and scale of neighbouring buildings and would disrupt the uniformity of the group it sits within. This incongruity would be significantly harmful and, as a consequence, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- b. It would be wrong to transpose a structure of the size and scale of the proposed structure into the group of which the existing building forms part.
- c. The comings and goings of vehicles serving the building would lead to a level of noise and disturbance that would have significant implications for the neighbouring occupiers.
- d. There is no suggestion in planning guidance that development should take place at the expense of conservation areas, the setting of Historic Parks and Gardens or the living conditions of nearby residents.

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Summary of Our Objections to the Planning Proposals

It is our opinion that the planning application HPK/2016/0276 should be refused for the following reasons:

Design and Siting:

- The proposed construction is out of proportion to its immediate surroundings and is inappropriate for its Conservation Area location.
- The concept of the exterior design and finishes of the proposed building are completely out of context with the location of the site in the Conservation Area. The Buckingham Hotel is placed in a commanding position at the apex of a triangle formed by St. John's Road, Burlington Road and Broad Walk. The proposed development in no way enhances the Pavilion Gardens, the Serpentine Walks or the existing Victorian buildings along these roads.
- Both the height and footprint of the proposed monolithic development are significantly out of scale with reference to adjacent buildings and the Serpentine Walks.
- All elevations of this proposed development would be to the detriment of all the adjacent environs, to the street scene along both St. John's Road and Burlington Road, and would also detract from the setting of the Pavilion Gardens and the Serpentine Walks, listed as Grade II* on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Parking Provision on the Proposed Development and Highway Safety:

- The area of St. John's Road/Burlington Road where the Buckingham Hotel is situated is constantly used for parking, due to its proximity to Buxton Opera House, the Pavilion Gardens and Swimming Pool, the Octagon and the Pavilion Arts Centre, which has dramatically increased the number of events taking place in the Pavilion Gardens. The heavy traffic currently using St. John's Road, which includes buses, coaches and lorries, allied to the nose-to-tail parking along the road throughout the year, especially at weekends, causes congestion and hold-ups. Cars currently entering and leaving the hotel exit directly onto the junction of St. John's Road and Burlington Road, causing traffic problems.
- The plans for the proposed new development show all the vehicles using the underground car park as entering and exiting onto St. John's Road, in close proximity to the Burlington Road junction, which will, in our opinion, significantly exacerbate the congestion problems. We feel this situation will be magnified and aggravated by the developers' proposal to bring the service vehicles in at the head of the ingress and egress route from the underground car park. It is our belief that the drivers of these service vehicles will not even attempt to get into the ridiculously small space, marked in blue on the drawing for deliveries (if, indeed, the turning circle of such vehicles would permit them to arrive in the position indicated on the plans). This will inevitably result in large delivery vehicles parking on St. John's Road between the proposed delivery entrance to the new construction and the junction with Burlington Road, resulting in dangerous blind spots for both the junction and the top of the ramp.

- We also feel that no account has been taken of the fact that one of the only emergency ambulance stations in the area is situated on Park Road, which feeds directly onto St. John's Road. As a result, ambulances frequently turn onto St. John's Road in a blue-light condition. The proposed increase in hotel traffic will impede the deployment of these vehicles.
- With a total of 96 parking places provided for the proposed development of 110 rooms, it is not unreasonable to assume that any additional guest vehicles would have to park on St. John's Road or adjacent roads. Although we acknowledge it is not required to do so, the developers' proposal also does not take into account the number of vehicles that will be needed to convey staff to and from this development. These staff vehicles, we assume, will have to park on St. John's Road or adjacent roads, yet again further increasing the congestion problems which will be caused by this enormous development.

Approved Local Plan Policy:

- This development is not within the Local Plan for Buxton.
- Whilst the proposed building does not completely fill the site, it is very little short of it. If the proposed development is allowed to take place, in our opinion this construction will negatively affect all aspects of St. John's Road, Burlington Road, and the Serpentine Walks, which are a part of Buxton's Victorian heritage, and will therefore detract from the current amenity afforded to users of the park and the inhabitants of Buxton.
- The Park Conservation Area was put in place to protect Buxton's Victorian heritage and its place as one of the UK's leading spa towns. The proposed development is totally out of keeping with the locality and the Victorian buildings in the surrounding area, and its size and nature detract from the vista afforded by the street scene along St. John's Road, that currently takes in St. John's Church, the Opera House and the Pavilion Gardens Octagon (an architectural landmark), together with that afforded by the street scene along Burlington Road and those from the Serpentine Walks and Pavilion Gardens.

Environmental Considerations

- In our opinion, the enormity of the proposed development will dominate all the Victorian buildings in the Conservation area and the landscape of the Serpentine Walks and Pavilion Gardens. The proposed plans also show greater building proximity to its boundaries, which will narrow the space between the hotel and adjacent properties, significantly detracting from their residential amenities.