

**HPK/2016/0276
BUCKINGHAM HOTEL
BURLINGTON ROAD
BUXTON**

Demolition of Buckingham Hotel and erection of a new hotel and sub-ground parking.

PROPOSALS:

The application is for the demolition of the Buckingham Hotel and the erection of a new hotel accommodating 110 rooms, ancillary facilities, sub-ground parking and small vertical farm.

The replacement building is larger in area and height than the existing building and proposes 4 storeys of accommodation plus a further floor in the roof space. In addition a further 3 floors of car parking are provided, 1 at ground level and 2 of which are subterranean.

The proposed new building will be constructed in stone (part reclaimed from the previous building). The central roof area will be a flat living roof and surrounded on all sides by a narrow but steep mono roof pitch in slate.

All of the trees on the site will be removed and some replacement planting is proposed along St Johns Road.

No access alterations to the site are proposed.

DESCRIPTION:

The Buckingham Hotel is an impressive 3 storey stone building dated 1876. It was one of the first buildings to be developed along Burlington Road and provides an important focal point and pivotal building at the junction of Burlington Road and St Johns Road. The hotel originally consisted of two semi-detached properties that had gardens to the rear and sides and a shared crescent drive at the front. It is believed that these were purpose built as a pair of small hotels or lodging houses and combined in the early 20th century. In terms of its architectural style and construction materials, it is similar to many other Victorian buildings within Buxton, which has a large concentration of Victorian housing.

The application site lies within the Buxton Park Conservation area and adjacent to the boundary of the Pavilion Gardens (including Serpentine Walks) Registered Historic Park and Gardens (grade II*)

BACKGROUND:

Planning History:

A planning application to extend the Hotel at the rear was approved in 2002 and renewed in 2006.

Pre-app advice:

Pre-application advice has been given in 2015 and 2016, which in summary does not support the principle of demolition and redevelopment of the site on heritage grounds.

COMMENTS:

Whilst not a designated asset itself, the demolition of the hotel and redevelopment of the site has the potential to impact upon two designated heritage assets as follows:

1. The Buxton Central Conservation Area
2. The setting of the Pavilion Gardens and Serpentine Walks (Registered Grade II* Parks and Gardens)

In assessing, the impact and the harm caused to both heritage assets the ***Adopted Buxton Conservation Area Character Appraisal*** makes the following observations that are relevant to the determination of the application:

1. *As well as the main hotels, a large number of small hotels and lodging houses were built around the town, many of which are still in use for this purpose. The character of these small hotels and lodging houses relates closest to the 19th century villas.*
2. *There are several hundred villas in Buxton, most of which make a strong contribution to the character of the conservation areas. Almost every one of these houses or lodgings was built from high quality materials – gritstone with natural slate roofs and bespoke joinery. Most have additional details, in the form of stone carving or unusual joinery at the eaves or verge, that make them unique or unusual. With the amount of tree growth in the town, obscuring views and encasing private gardens, it is sometimes difficult to appreciate just the enormous quantity of villas within the conservation areas and the variety of detail. These take a large number of forms although the predominant model had a symmetrical front elevation, sometimes shared by a pair of semi-detached houses.*
3. *One of the most common devices found on both two and three-storey detached villas is the use of a symmetrical frontage with a central door and a segmental arched window or aedicule above, framed by a two-storey bay window on either side. This is commonly used along St. John's Street and Broad Walk. Elsewhere, the semi-detached houses either double up this model or adopt a Gothic character.*
4. *Part of the architectural quality of the town is the relationship between the buildings and their immediate garden and wider parkland setting. The main public parks lie within the bottom of the Wye valley, and*

thread together along the route of the River, but there are large areas of public walks within the woods created by the Dukes of Devonshire on the surrounding hillsides (e.g. Corbar & Grinlow) and these are an important part of the setting of the conservation areas.

The application site is located within sub- area 4 – Pavilion Gardens and Serpentine Walks. Whilst not individually identified, the character appraisal notes the strong relationship with which development along Burlington Road has with the public park and how development here contributes towards the setting of these and illustrates the close relationship and proximity of the gardens and 19th century townscape.

In summary, I would conclude that the building is identified as making a positive contribution to the significance of the Buxton Central Conservation Area. As such the principle of its demolition would be resisted for the reasons set out in the character appraisal above and summarised below;

- It remains a good example of a typical lodging house/small hotel that developed and expanded in Buxton to provide visitor accommodation at a particular time and as its destination as an inland holiday resort was established.
- It provides an important focal building at the Junction of Burlington Road and St Johns Road.
- It is a good example of typical Victorian architecture.
- It is constructed in a style and materials typical of many other buildings within Buxton.
- It forms part of and contributes towards the wider setting of the both Serpentine Walks and Pavilion Gardens (registered park and garden)

COMMENTS:

As summarised above initial pre-application advice has been given which in principle does not support the demolition of the building and the redevelopment of the site.

It is noted that the existing Buckingham Hotel is of a larger size than the adjacent development and this adds to its prominence within the street scene. However it relates well to development along Burlington Road by reflecting the same architectural style, mass, window proportions, roof pitch and detailing. The mass of the existing building is further reduced by the projecting two storey bays that help to break up the front and side elevations and introduce depth and interest to the building.

The Design of the replacement building is larger in plan form and height than the existing building. As a result, the scale and massing is greater and will have an overbearing presence within the street scene (this is illustrated on the proposed St Johns Road elevation, which shows the building's height compared with the adjacent private residential property). Given the proposed footprint and depth of the building, the roof scape will be particularly dominant

within the townscape and will not reflect the traditional pitch and profile of the majority of the historic buildings within Buxton.

The actual design approach to the appearance of the building is caught between trying to deliver a modern/contemporary version of the existing hotel whilst trying to reflect the Victorian architectural style of the area. This approach has not worked well and there is an assortment of window/doors style present. Both the scale and mass is in stark contrast with adjacent development and will produce a very dominant and ungainly building out of context within the street scene.

It is interesting to note that on page 6 of the MOLA letter dated 15th July 2016 reference is made to 'extensive dialogue about the design of the replacement building with officers at High Peak Borough Council' I feel slightly alarmed by this statement. As far as I can recall discussion revolved mainly around the principle of demolition of the existing building. Whilst comment may have been passed on the design approach these were made notwithstanding the strong objection to the principle of demolition.

The building is a non-designated heritage asset that falls within and makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Buxton Central Conservation Area and setting of a Registered Park and Garden. The reasons for arriving at this decision are identified in the section above and supported by the Buxton Conservation Area Character Appraisal. It is my view that the demolition of the building and redevelopment of the site in this manner would cause substantial harm to Buxton Central Conservation Area but less than substantial harm to the setting of the registered park.

In Applying the policies in the NPPF, paragraphs 132, 133 and 134 are relevant in the determination of the application. In particular, paragraph 133 states that

133. *Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*

- *the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- *no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- *conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- *the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

134. *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be*

weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

The applicant has submitted two conflicting Heritage Impact Assessments that come to differing conclusions on the level of harm caused to the heritage assets. AHP (Feb 2012) conclude that total demolition of the hotel would cause substantial harm to a heritage asset (the conservation area). Whilst MOLA (May 2016) in their addendum conclude that there will be less than substantial harm caused to the heritage assets through the development proposal.

Given the Council's own assessment of the impact of the development on the heritage assets, the Council would concur with the findings of the statement prepared by AHP. The applicant is therefore required to justify the harm to the heritage assets as outlined in paragraph 133 and 134 of the NPPF. It follows therefore that the applicant will need to demonstrate:

1. **Substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss** – The perceived benefits of the scheme are set out in the D and A statement prepared by MOLA and relate to economic, social/community and environmental. Whilst the list of benefits is extensive many of the benefits could be achieved with the retention and upgrading of the existing building.
2. **Nature of the asset prevents reasonable use** – The nature of the building would not preclude reasonable use i.e. it is not a structure that is not capable of reuse.
3. **No viable use medium term can be found** – The additional and supporting information identifies a number of alternative uses, including hotel all of which produces a conservation deficit. The conservation deficit is arrived at by the cost of the structural works against the open market valuation. The Council question the condition report and the costs associated with carrying out the necessary repairs.
4. **Grant Funding** – The building is in private ownership and access to grant funding or transfer to charitable organisation would be limited. However, there is no commentary on this in the application documents.
5. **The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use** – The harm caused to the heritage assets by the demolition of the existing building and redevelopment with a new hotel is outlined in the comments above and supported through the detailed character appraisal for the Buxton Conservation Area Character Appraisal and policy EQ7 of the High Peak Local Plan April 2016.

Although the Council has considered the condition of the building, cost of repairs and viable alternative uses it is important that a robust and independent assessment is carried out by the Council as follows:

1. Appoint a conservation accredited structural engineer to review and cost the necessary repairs to the existing building.

2. Dependent upon the outcome of 1. it may then be necessary to feed any revised costs into the viability assessment and to review the outcome of the viability of the existing building against alternative uses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The applicant is trying to demonstrate that it is not economically viable to retain the existing hotel and that other potential uses are even more unviable. The viability centres around the structural condition, repair costs and return of alternative uses. I would recommend that the Council secures its own commentary/report on the structure of the building, repair costs and assesses the viability of the proposed hotel or alternative uses. When this has been undertaken a more meaningful dialogue between the applicant can be engaged.

Joanne Brooks
Regeneration Officer
19th July 2016

Whilst not forming part of my consultation response the application pack contains a number of additional documents in support of the application and for information purposes only I have summarised these briefly as follows:

Structural Report – H & H Building Solutions Ltd March 2013

This concludes that the hotel is suffering from several serious structural defects and many more minor ones brought about by the type and method of construction as well as general deterioration and lack of maintenance. The cost of the repairs will be very large and do not allow for general improvements for guest comfort such as sound proofing, improved disabled facilities, new lift, heating and ventilation systems.

Costing of repair work – Level Projects May 2013

Total of essential repairs £959,475 (exc VAT)
Exclusions (heating systems, new lift and plant) £120,000 (exc VAT)
Loss of earnings whilst hotel closed 33 wks (not quantified)

Feasibility Report and marketing – Bruton Knowles March 2016

The hotel was placed on the open market on 11 Nov 2015 and is currently being advertised on rightmovecommercial.com on an open to offer basis. Any expressions of interest have fallen away due to cost of structural repairs.

- The hotel is not capable of economic repair as a hotel on the basis of the findings and costing outlined above.
- No potential alternative uses have been assessed as the owner wishes to continue the hotel business on this site.
- There is demand for continued hotel use albeit in a modern and enlarged structure.

- Best option is to remove the existing building and construct a new hotel.

Alternative Uses – Unknown author and not dated

3 alternative uses for the site have been explored, each requiring the necessary structural repairs along with various other alterations.

Summary of alternative uses: Conservation deficit

Flats	£1,174,725
Residential care home	£812,515
Offices	£717,403

The above uses have a higher conservation deficit than continued hotel use identified by Bruton Knowles which produces a conservation deficit of approx. £375,000.