

ISSUES raised by J Williamson (per email 1.2.1017)

Point 1

REASONS FOR THE COMMERCIAL FAILURE OF THE CHILDREN'S NURSERY – with significant remaining Nursery capacity in the locality.

Having taken over the Nursery 15 years ago my wife and I invested heavily in the business – the result was that we increased income by over 250% to a peak of £400,000 in 2015. We were registered for 71 children and at our peak in 2015 had over 100 Nursery children and 40 After School children on our books.

Unfortunately, the following external factors combined to place the business in terminal decline.

New local Capacity

1. Whilst in 2016-17 one read in the Press about a significant increase in National birthrate – Buxton has experienced a decline. This had the effect of a decline in baby number intake taking effect in most Nurseries in the area.
2. As a good nursery with excellent facilities and reputation, we had children coming from all over the town. However, **we had important nearby feeder locations including Harpur Hill and Burbage.** Unfortunately the Education Department has a policy of encouraging both the development of in-school and localized Nursery provision – **without really looking at the effect on larger existing Nurseries further afield.** In effect you had a progressive and significant increase in capacity with the development of Burbage and Harpur Hill pre-schools and then, **what really hit us**, from Autumn 2015 the:
 - increase in capacity of Harpur Hill in-School nursery by 15 to include babies and toddlers,
 - support for the opening of Woodlings Nursery in Burbage with 45 new places
 - agreement to let Green Lane Nursery (300 meters round the corner) to increase its capacity from 35 to 55 children.**Thus from 2016 - 80 full time places were established locally in a market that was static at best – and where the other established non school based day Nurseries including the Serpentine (65 places) and Willows (50 places) operated at a peak of 85&70% capacity**
3. In addition, Playdays, a local Afterschool provider, had progressively set up after school provision in all local primary schools, leading to the collapse in our numbers **that forced us to close our Afterschool Club at the beginning of 2016.**

Financial Implications – Costs and Nursery Pricing Factors

1. As a really large Nursery we had very high overheads e.g. our rates bill of £11,000 was more than the rent, rates, heating and lighting, telephone and insurance costs of Woodlings in one large hall!!!
2. Because in addition to 'pre-schoolers' (3-5 yrs), our Nursery survived on having a large baby unit (staff cost ratio of 1 to 3) and toddler unit (ratio of 1 to 4) – with a full time manager, admin manager, cook and cleaner etc. – our wage costs represented 67% of income in 2015. Preschools (all 1 to 8) and smaller owner managed Nurseries can have wage costs that are less than 50%

of Income. With the introduction in 2016 of the £9 minimum wage target over five years (44% increase) it effectively meant **our costs from just wages were going up 30% in five years!**

In effect we needed to increase our fees by 5-6% annually which we know would not be affordable by many of our parents.

3. Introduction of the 30 hour free preschool provision (representing 45% of our income) was set at rates **that were substantially lower than our current (and future required) fee structure and were planned to fall slightly by 2020 when our costs largely through wages were set to increase by a further 19%!!!!**

The Financial Effects

- In 2016 with falling intake and child numbers our Income had significantly dropped to £320,000 with a £25,000 loss.
- In 2017 monthly losses were continuing AND by end of June we were faced with only having 45-50 children on our books from September 2017, **with monthly losses of £6-7,000!!!** And a projected totally inadequate annual fee income of £240,000
- There was no choice but to quickly announce the closure of the Nursery by 1st September 2017.

Positive Benefits to the Community

With the closure of our Nursery, Green Lane, Woodlings, Willows and Serpentine Nurseries have become busier and more viable as a result.

Points 2.3.4.5

PARKING, BIN LOCATION, FRONT LANDSCAPING

Site Levels

Fortunately the land is largely flat just gently rising by about 900mm from the front entrance drive to the boundary with NO 17 College Road. **(SEE PHOTO)**. So the Proposed parking areas and front planting areas will not require any material adjustment to site levels. Similarly the area at the back of the property, which is currently the flexi-tarmac playground, is totally flat so the drive/parking areas will merely require resurfacing.

Proposed Parking Areas - Revisions

Following our tel-con. , as promised, I did investigate the area of the tree canopy (and thus theoretically where roots could reach) where flat 1&2 parking spaces were originally proposed. I dug 4 test holes that did show evidence of a 1 meter section of a limestone outcrop 300mm below surface at one hole and incidence in all holes of gravel/stone possibly indicating that this may have been a parking area in the past. **SEE PHOTO** showing spades identifying outcrop and that historically in order to create children's flower beds in this area, we had to buy raised planters because of the very rocky ground conditions.

Whilst my personal preference would be to perhaps shift the spaces 1&2 towards the disabled place and leave any lesser infringement on the 'canopy area' to be dealt with by localized drainage measures, with careful design of the parking surface e.g. rather than tarmac each parking space - with the minimum of hardcore (on what is very firm ground anyway) we could cover each space with 75mm of Cotswold stone. This would allow free drainage to any possible roots.

This was a solution used to protect the roots of two oak trees on I project I did on the Four Oaks conservation area.

Never the less - I do include a totally REVISED PLAN 1702 1A that moves one parking place to the rear of the property and completely avoids infringing on the canopy. My reservation with this is that the additional parking zone negatively impacts on the landscaping at the back.

PLEASE ADVISE.

Bin Locations

In accordance with your comments I enclose the **REVISED PLAN 1702 1A that moves the bin storage area covering flat 3&5 from the rear parking zone to join the bin storage area on the front drive just up from the entrance.**

Front Landscaping

Having planted most of the current frontage, I can confirm that the soil is very heavy clay – infused with lime that with extremely high levels of rainfall results in many plant/shrubs/small tree types struggling to grow into healthy specimens.

Accordingly I proposed to build a small ‘matching’ stone block wall 400/500mm high along the frontage and remove all the soil up to a depth (inc. the wall) of 1000mm in a trench that is approximately 1500/2000mm wide. This will be replaced with a ‘well worked’ free draining high quality loam – conducive to healthy plant growth for the following planting scheme.

Thus to enhance the character of the Property from the street scene and screen the proposed parking places we enclose a proposed front planting scheme.

Please see attached Front Elevation Scheme 1 (and PLAN 1702 1A)

In choosing the species and varieties of shrubs/trees we are **not trying to create a ‘high wall’ of drab dark green.** Accordingly we have included a range of specimen trees:

- Suitable for the Buxton Environment - with low maintenance
- To provide a variety of shapes – that suitable for pruning and thus can be retained at modest height with an **attractive cloud like formation.**
- All the varieties chosen have an interesting variety of leaf shape and attractive colour variation from various greens through cream to gold to silver blue. They are **(See Scheme & PLAN)**
 - A. Green holly with Golden leaf edging – ILEX ‘Golden King’
 - B. Laurel with Cream leaf patterning – ACUBA ‘Japonica’
 - C. Yew tree with upright habit & gold leaves – TAXUS B – ‘Fastigata Aurea’
 - D. Dark green holly with tulip shaped flowers – ILEX ‘Aquifolium’
 - E. Green holly with Silver leaf edging – ILEX ‘Silver Queen’
 - F. Golden Clump forming Ewe tree – TAXUS B ‘Aurea.
 - G. A silver blue medium growing Scotts Pine that has an attractive slim pyramidal habit – PINUS SYVESTRIS ‘Fastigiata Blue Heaven’
 - H. A medium growing mountain ash – SORBUS ‘Joseph Rock’

In addition, we would interplant a range of attractive herbaceous perennial plants including Astilbes, Geraniums and Lilies, with mature specimens available from existing plantings.

Point 6

WINDOWS

Desirous to produce a sympathetic and durable replacement solution (given the extremely harsh and wet conditions in Buxton that often lead to the jamming up of cheap sash solutions) I had discovered that given the sheer quantity and number of windows the cost of replacing them all with fully functioning sash windows was going to be horrendous – effecting the viability of the conversion.

Thus whilst I had originally proposed installation of more cost effective UPVC windows, following your feedback I offer the following compromise which I hope will meet all parties essential criteria.

Therefore, I would now propose the following:

- **As a back ground** to consider;
 - a fair number of windows are ‘non sash’ fixed or top opening casement windows e.g. on the back hall and corridor.
 - There are a number of sash look top opening casement windows.
 - In rooms where there are plenty of windows for fresh air – a number of the side ones do not appear to have ever had the ability of being opened and/or had ceased to function (from evidence of the number of coats of old paint) since Edwardian times.
 - On the ground floor etc. at the sides and back there will be 3 bathrooms and a toilet served by six windows that are all at pedestrian height where top opening windows/with bottom translucent glazing would be a practical solution.
- I have discussed the project (supplied photos) with Batram’s of Burton, who specialize in high quality bespoke wooden joinery and have done hundreds of projects involving listed buildings. They have provided me with superb new and repair joinery on the original finely glazed sash windows of a 2* C18th Queen Anne House and heritage windows for a 2* Early Georgian coach house conversion.
- **According I would propose** retaining the rear hall and front hall gothic stained glass windows (subject to meeting building regulations). Batram’s would then be able to produce double glazed wooden windows that **replace all current sash windows with very realistic external detailed look a-likes**. However, taking into account ‘air cooling in rooms’ and yet save on costs and meet other requirements inc. bathroom privacy, we would wish to make some windows full sash and others have top opening sections or be fixed. As an example I attach a **Front Elevation Scheme 2** – indicating where we would propose to use each type.

Point 7.

SHY LIGHT

With regards to the front shy-light, giving amenity to the main flat bathroom, we will be completely re-slating the roof and installing a Velux conservation style shy-light that is recessed into the roof and is a black-dark grey in colour. This will blend in well with the roof-line.

Furthermore – given that this small fly-light is high up and surrounded by dominant roof features including a dormer window, large gable end projection to

the left and the attractive conical roof line to the right, I would argue that this feature will be almost lost to the street scene.

Point 8.

WINDOW AMENITY ISSUES

In practical terms there are three main issues to overcome:

1. With regards to no 13 College Road, there are in particular Kitchen windows on floors 2/3 that overlook our bedroom windows so we are proposing to use obscure/etched windows on the main lower window sections and/or opening restrictions. In addition there is a ground floor toilet that is directly overlooked and will benefit from etched glass. **Marked on PLAN 1720 5A**
2. With regards to no 17 College Road, there are a number of bathroom windows on floors 2/3 that overlook the first floor bay windows of a bedroom and we are proposing to use obscure/etched on the main lower sections and/or opening restrictions. This will also serve the function of restricting the view over Flat 3's private garden. In addition there is a large window for the ground floor en-suite shower room where it may be overlooked and etched glass may be the best solution **Marked on PLAN 1720 5A**
3. On the ground floor around the parking area and at eye level there are five windows relating to three shower/bathrooms. We would like the option to use our discretion (in terms of using obscure/etched glass and/or top opening only) depending on the final bathroom designs – in terms of occupier privacy e.g. some may work better with built in wooden slatted blinds.

Point 9.

NEIGHBOUR TREE ISSUE'S

With regards to the letter from Mrs Kate Tagg her concern is focused on the one sycamore tree which she wants to be removed, already an issue to her irrespective of the proposed development. She has no ownership of the affected area anyway.

In terms of the 'referred to' narrow strip of land/unstructured rockery dividing our Property and 13 College road, we own the section shown on the plans already submitted that in practical terms means that trunk of the sycamore tree is 2/3 on our land.

The abutting section of this strip, is owned by Richard Danks of Flat 2 -13 College Road. **Richard is fully supportive of the development. We have agreed with him** that as part of our development we will sympathetically re-landscape this strip to make a more attractive division between the properties. This will include the removal of the rather ugly exiting bin area (serving both properties – but splits following the boundary line) at the front of our drives. We will be building them a more discrete bin area at the back our bin zone proposed **per PLAN 1720 1A** And replace this exiting one with a raised bed and feature holly tree **per attached Front Elevation Scheme 1 and PLAN 1720 1**