

Conservation Response.

Date: 08/06/2023.

File/Application ref: HPK/2023/0023.

Case Officer: James Stannard.

Proposal: Change of use and conversion of former Private Day Nursery to Apartments.

Address: 23 The Willows Day Nursery, Park Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6SG.

Dear James,

A number of points firstly before I provide a conclusion.

'Amount' on the Design and Access Statement claims there are only three sash windows on site, remainder being casement.

'Layout' on the D&A Statement describes four new sashes are proposed with the remainder being new casement or (flush sash). Firstly, sash and casement windows are two separate units. This term is often used to describe a modern plastic replica unit. Casement units are an earlier more primitive window model many found before the circa 17thC, typically seen in small cottages or the rural vernacular. Sash windows begin to appear in around 1700's (Georgian period) to the Victorian era on high status buildings able to take more glazing and larger reveals.

'Appearance' on page two of the D&A describes the windows to have a wood grain finish and in white. Later the Specification document describes the proposed windows to be plastic. I advise slimline windows are the proposed replacement with accurate sash mechanisms. Partial flip openers, or strange backward angular opening mechanisms do not accurately replicate a sash window.

Some windows are denoted W02, 03 in the descriptions and so on but there does not appear to be a window schedule included.

The existing status of the property shows traditional fenestration of a classic vernacular Villa. The principle or front elevation sees 9 total sashes. In the ground floor bay windows there are three each, the central being a four pane sash with respective outer units being two pane and are slimmer, consequently to accommodate the style of the bays. The upper floor sees three sashes, with the central unit above the doorway being more narrow to become parallel to the ground floor doorway. A simple design feature enabling a visual balance across the frontage. The roof dormer sees a fixed arch or semi-circle light above a casement, and drawings showing the existing appear to denote further sashes and one paired with an arched stone header.

Images shown on *Drwg No. Existing 06 Side elevations* as existing demonstrate additional sashes, a collection of four pane sashes and a central (later) sash to the side elevation roof dormer.



The building is not listed, though I have a number of concerns regarding the some of the proposed material interventions. Historic fabric, whether listed or not, will behave in the same way when forced to react and manage modern intervention not often compatible with porous 100+ year old fabric.

I therefore offer the following:

- The use of foil backed insulation is not advised and I do not support the use of Kingspan.
- Damp proof membranes and Damp proof courses are not advised.
- Proposed basement living space, I would advise to have more investigation. Basements by their nature are damp and not designed to be habitable. Typically they are straight to earth and their moisture levels subject to change in seasons and the like. I would not advise tanking and is something not supported by the SPAB or Historic England. New bathrooms and kitchens would require ample ventilation in these spaces.
- I would not advise the use of modern gypsum plasterboard and plaster against cold solid stone walling in any of the spaces.
- I advise replacement roof slates are to match existing.
- Not clear on whether repointing is required or what mix is proposed.
- Not clear on current status of the interior regarding general condition.

See drwg ref: *Drwg no. Elevations 01 Proposed front and rear elevations*. There are two additional rooflights or skylights proposed for either side of the roof dormer, paired with two basement level sash windows. I am not confident this now quite cluttered principle elevation is visually appealing. I advise the two new rooflights are removed. I am also not confident the new exposed basement level and new windows are appropriate for this type of architecture. Often these types of elevations are found in coastal Victorian designs such as in Brighton, where larger much grander elevations could afford to take the vertically extended frontages and symmetry. As above, these additions create quite a busy and cluttered principle elevation not best suited to this modest villa.

At the rear elevation two rooflights are proposed - due to them being rear facing there is no issue with these.

Similarly, see drwg ref: *Drwg no. Elevations 02 Proposed side elevation* and *Drwg no. 03 Proposed side elevation* there are a further eight skylights proposed. Two in the main building roof and two in the extension. Due to them not being at the principle elevation, there is no issue with these.

It appears a second floor as existing does not form part of the documents list, possible misprint? See below part of the docs list:

- *Dwg No. EXISTING 01 - Basement & Ground Floor As Existing.*
- *Dwg No. EXISTING 02 - First & Attic Floor As Existing.*
- *Dwg No. EXISTING 03 - Roof Plan & Section As Existing.*

First and attic seem to skip the second floor in between, additionally, *basement existing* on drwg no. 01 appear to show bay windows, (Photographs of existing show vents). The existing ground floor next to this is depicted accurately with the four bays (two at principle elevation) and respective entrance foyer. Clarity required.

The Specification document explains a complete eradication of all original features on the interior including what appears to be chimney breasts, flues and wythes, along with some staircases. '...the existing building is to be stripped back to base structure'. Contradicting a comment 'the internal form of the building large rooms with a full basement area window positioning and size and the original domestic purpose make the conversion into apartments a logical conversion without major alteration to the main body of the building...'. Yet what is proposed leaves essentially a shell of four walls and a roof, it simply looks to make a faux-historic building.

I make no dispute with mere cosmetics (wallpaper, carpet etc), though what forms the original floor plan of one of Buxton's original villas, retains legibility of the building and its desirability. I am not



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confident a complete sanitisation of the building's bones to be an honest approach. I believe there is opportunity to integrate these features into the apartments to protect the building's character as part of the Conservation Area. It is also unclear as to what other original features remain by way of coving, decorative plaster, clarity required. All items representative of build date and clear desirability to reside in these types of properties. The 'internal form' and 'main body' and 'original domestic purpose' are evidence of the traditional architectural scales, relationships between rooms and the like from build date.

Existing and proposed drawings inaccurately depict the chimney stacks. Pots and cowls are missing along with ridges. I advise pots and cowls are retained. They appear in good condition and are part of the local vernacular.

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To conclude; to make it clear I do not have any issue with a change of use and proposed new function for our historic buildings. However, as the application stands I object based on the number of concerns I have. I require more clarity on the items above. Additionally, it does not fill me with great confidence to see this property completely and irreversibly altered. I acknowledge it is not listed, though forming part of the original street scape (seen on Historic OS Maps dated 1889), this property contributes to the character and historic vernacular of Buxton and the Conservation Area. This is not solely based on the exterior alone. I don't believe what feels to be quite a dramatic overhaul of this historic building to be respectful or sustainable. The concept to provide longevity to our historic housing stock, especially within Conservation Areas is to approach them sensitively as they do retain meaning and identity. It is pertinent not to confuse a building's legible history, and I feel turning 23 Park Road into something it isn't – goes against many Conservation guidelines and ethics.

Regards,

Miss E Holland.
Conservation Officer.

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