

PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR CONVERSION AT THE VAULT

BUXTON, HIGH PEAK, DERBYSHIRE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

GARRY MILLER
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GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

Garry Miller is a heritage consultant, architectural historian and published author who has spent more than 40 years studying and working with buildings of town and countryside, in particular those of North West England. His career as a consultant began in the mid-1980s with the Preston-based Nigel Morgan Historic Building Consultancy, of which he became a partner in 1992 upon its rebranding as Datestone. In 1997 he was commissioned by the Heritage Trust for the North West, a buildings preservation trust based at Barrowford, Lancashire, to produce an in-depth regional study of vernacular houses in southwest Lancashire: the result, *Historic Houses in Lancashire: The Douglas Valley, 1300-1770* was published in 2002. The book was described as ‘scholarship as its best’ by *Country Life* (June 2003), and ‘well analysed and presented’ in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* (Vol 48, 2004); and was widely cited in the 2006 *Buildings of England* volume on Liverpool and Southwest Lancashire. Extensive research on the houses of Georgian and Regency Liverpool has also been undertaken, with a view to future publication. Following the success of his Douglas Valley book, Garry Miller established his own consultancy, producing analytical and interpretive reports on historic buildings, in particular the heritage assessments required to support planning applications affecting the historic environment. His area of operation encompasses the North West, Midlands, North Wales and parts of Cumbria and North and West Yorkshire. Several local authorities have cited his assessments as examples of best practice, and reports on more than 150 buildings or sites are produced annually.

THIS REPORT

Date of issue: February 2024

Purpose: for planning submission

Text: Garry Miller

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1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report supports proposed works at The Vault, High Street, Buxton, in the borough of High Peak, Derbyshire. The property is a 19th century commercial building that now functions as a public house. It is itself undesignated but stands within Buxton Central Conservation Area.

Proposals have been submitted to High Peak Borough Council for change of use of the first floor of the property to a boutique hotel. The heritage consideration arising – in respect of the external works only – is the proposal's impact upon the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the conservation area.. The scope and purpose of this report is to identify this significance and evaluate how it will be affected by the proposal.

The significance of the conservation area principally derives from its character and appearance as the historic centre of the spa and market town of Buxton. This significance is therefore embodied in its buildings and their relationship within the historic street pattern. The application property lies within area 2, which includes the old town, centred upon the medieval core of Buxton, along with later residential development of the 1860s. The vast majority of the buildings are undesignated but are important locally for their contribution either collectively or individually to the area's special character.

As one of these undesignated buildings, the significance of the application property is that of a 19th century commercial property in the old town which contributes positively on a collective basis to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This significance is embodied in its public elevations to High Street and Chapel Street, which illustrate its group role in the wider streetscene.

The internal works associated with the application have no bearing on the conservation area as they are unseen in the views which establish its character and appearance. Only the external works have relevance, and these are minor and affect the rear elevation only, involving changes to access and addition of ventilation grilles. These alterations will not be seen in the public views which illustrate the building's role in the conservation area. Owing to their nature and location their effect will be negligible and will thus sustain the positive contribution of the building to the character, appearance and significance of the conservation area.

The proposal thereby satisfies the requirements of both national planning guidance and the local development plan, and hence merits approval without delay.

2: THE SITE

The application property is located in the centre of the spa town of Buxton, in the borough of High Peak, Derbyshire. The Vault is located on the west side of High Street, spanning its junction with Chapel Street, and is a 19th century commercial building that now functions as a public house.



.Map 1.Location of the application property

3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

3.1 Designation

The application building is itself undesignated but stands within Buxton Central Conservation Area.

3.2 The application

Proposals have been submitted to High Peak Borough Council for change of use of the first floor of the property to a boutique hotel.

3.3 Heritage impact

The heritage consideration arising – in the respect of the external works only – is the impact upon the significance (i.e. heritage interest and value) of the conservation area.

3.4 Scope and purpose of this report

Paragraph 200 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) of the Revised National Planning Policy Framework (as revised, December 2023) states local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected, including the contribution made by their setting. The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the conservation area, along with the contribution made by the application building, and to assess the impact of the proposal upon it. In accordance with paragraph 200, it is considered the level of detail is proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset and no more than is necessary to understand the impact of the proposal. This report is to be read in conjunction with other documentation submitted in support of the proposal, and supercedes any previously-submitted heritage assessment.

3.5 Report structure

This is as follows:

1. A brief, proportionate description of the character of the conservation area (Section 4)
2. Analysis of the contribution made by the application building (Section 5)
3. A summary of the significance of the conservation area and application building (Section 6)
4. A summary of the national and local heritage policies against which the application will be assessed (Section 7)
5. Analysis within this policy context of the proposal's impact upon the conservation area (Section 8)

4: THE CONSERVATION AREA

A settlement of Roman origin and thereafter a market town in the medieval period, Buxton is renowned for its development as an elegant spa town, a process begun by landowners the Dukes of Devonshire in the 18th century and subsequently expanded during the Victorian period. The town is now covered by four separate conservation areas, with the application property standing within Buxton Central. A character appraisal of the conservation areas, adopted 2007, identifies nine different character zones all of which are very different. The application building falls into area 2 (Higher Buxton), which covers the 'old town' area, encompassing its Market Place, High Street and the old church of St Anne, along with residential development laid out by the Devonshire estate in the 1860s. It is described as an area of strong contrasts between the hard landscape of the old town and contrasting avenue and garden settings of the suburbs.



Map 2. Location of the application building within the conservation area

5: THE APPLICATION PROPERTY

The application building occupies a prominent corner location where High Street meets Chapel Street, and forms part of a row of commercial buildings which characterises the junction. The appearance of the building suggests it dates from the later 19th century, and the OS map of 1897 (below) implies it is an amalgamation of two formerly separate properties. Its appearance was intended to emphasise its position, with an entrance in its splayed corner along with first floor oriels, three to High Street and one to Chapel Street. The principal interest of the building therefore derives from these public elevations. In contrast, the rear is private, facing a small enclosed yard, and has a functional, altered appearance, with areas of render and modern steps up to an entrance.



Map 2. The 1897 25-inch OS map suggests the property is an amalgam of two originally separate premises



1. The interest of the building derives from its public elevations to High Street (left) and Chapel Street

2. The narrow rear elevation is altered and private

6: SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Rationale

Paragraph 201 of the National Planning Policy Framework states local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, and take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal in order to avoid or minimize conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Significance is defined in the NPPF Glossary as:

The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

6.2 The conservation area

The significance of the conservation area principally derives from its character and appearance as the historic town centre of Buxton. This significance is therefore embodied in its buildings and their relationship within the historic street pattern. The application property lies within character area 2, which includes the old town centred upon the medieval core of Buxton along with later residential development of the 1860s. The vast majority of its buildings are undesignated but are important locally for their contribution either collectively or individually to the area's special character.

6.3 The application building

As one of these undesignated buildings, the significance of the application property is that of a later 19th century commercial property in the old town which contributes positively on a collective basis to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This significance is embodied in its public elevations to High Street and Chapel Street, which illustrate its group role in the streetscene.

7: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

7.1 Statutory duty

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of a conservation area.

7.2 Relevant policies

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides the guidance as to how the statutory duty is to be put into practice. Paragraph 203 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

Regarding designated heritage assets, paragraph 205 states that ‘*great weight*’ should be given to their conservation and the more important the asset, the greater that weight should be; and that significance can be lost through development within its setting.

Locally, the key policy is EQ7 (*Built and Historic Environment*) of the High Peak Local Plan, adopted 2016. This states that heritage assets will be conserved in a manner according to their significance and that this will take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and ensuring that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.

8: IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL

8.1 Overview

The proposal is for conversion of the first floor to hotel rooms. The internal works associated with the conversion have no bearing on the conservation area as they are unseen in the views which establish its character and appearance. Only the external works have relevance. These are minor and affect the rear elevation only, involving changes to access and addition of ventilation grilles, as detailed upon the submitted drawings.



3. Existing (top) and proposed rear elevation, with minor changes shown

8.2 Its effect

The proposed external alterations will not be seen in the public views which illustrate the building's role in the conservation area. Owing to their nature and location their effect will be negligible and will thus sustain the positive contribution of the building to the character, appearance and significance of the conservation area. It thereby satisfies the requirements of both national planning guidance and the local development plan, and therefore merits approval without delay.