

From: [James Stannard](#)
To: [Planning Comments \(HPBC\)](#)
Subject: HPK/2024/0122 - Conservation Officer comments
Date: 11 June 2024 06:20:30
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Please see below comments from Conservation Officer in connection with HPK/2024/011222

James Stannard Planning Officer
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Please note that my working days are Monday-Thursday

From: Emily Holland <>

Sent: Monday, June 10, 2024 1:42 PM
To: James Stannard <> **Subject:** HPK/2024/0122

Hi James,

Corbar Hill House, Corbar Road, Buxton, SK17 6RU.

Objection, recommended refusal.

1. Firstly, it should be noted for clarity this application is a resubmission of a previously refused scheme of the same, at this site. The schemes do not differ greatly nor do they offer an alternative to be proactive in alleviating substantial concerns.
2. Secondly and in addition, the nature of the proposed works and extensive project are not supported in principle.

For the purposes of this response Corbar House and its Coach House will from time to time be referred to as: CH&CH , for ease.

The scheme under 0122 shows an oversized blocky and very adventurous project within the setting and curtilage of Grade II listed CH&CH. There remains the inclusion of a cantilever balcony, extensive glazing, green flat roofing and unsightly weak materials of which the latter do not fall in line with the vernacular, the character of the listed building nor the High Peak Design Guide. I will echo my earlier comments from 19/10/2023:

The scheme presents itself as an extremely adventurous project, and something that attempts to become a regurgitation of a Frank Lloyd Wright piece. Using features that include but are not limited to; extensive glazing, cantilevered flooring and balcony, and burying the rear of the structure into the topography. These features are not seen to*

successfully alleviate the harm imposed on the asset, and the harm imposed on the Conservation Area. I do not see how it is a respectful or sensitive development within what is the curtilage, and immediate vicinity of a Listed Building and its survived Coach House.

Historic OS Maps dated 1882 show Corbar House, ponds to the frontage (still extant), large landscaped grounds (frontage still extant), Coach House (still extant) and a small ancillary garden building (now lost). Properties of this size, build date and extensive architectural design are by their nature set among grounds and landscaping. This contributes to their Setting and forms part of an asset's experiential value. The curtilage of a Listed Building is not marked by modern lines on a modern map and must not be confused with red boundary demarcations. Subsequently, I cannot see how the land here and therefore Setting can be physically dissected, and have modern connotations imposed upon them.

(Frank Lloyd Wright was an American modernist Architect, famous for his 'Prairie house' styled buildings).

In the proposed site sections under the now 0122, the scheme is seen to jar heavily against the character, form and decoration of the handsome Corbar House (&CH), harmfully splitting the curtilage and setting into functionally two pieces. The extensive landscaping and dissection of the site dilutes and physically imposes direct harm on the survived grounds and setting. The proposal overshadows and becomes an intimidating heavy block above and behind both CH&CH, emphasised and of which is helpfully demonstrated by the use of scaled figures, showing the obtrusive and uncomfortable mass at the top of the site. Due to the topography when viewed 'head on', the proposal oppresses the historic context and character of CH&CH, imposing direct harm upon the way in which the well survived grand Buxton house is appreciated, and experienced. There is nothing to allow for harmonisation, or to enhance or express traditional scale and form of the historic architecture.

Following on from this, in terms of design, scale, mass and materials the proposal does not seem to take into consideration any traditional architectural tooling, forms or ratios from that of CH&CH nor the Conservation Area, and appears to be a series of flat pack style rectangles, anonymous facades, flat roofing, obnoxious oversized fenestration and heavy dark materials. It is a substantial concern that due to the form and mass of the proposed and the heavy, dark discord of materials that the building looks to become a burden upon the site and I cannot see any way it will ever become subservient. For example, the contrast between dark large blocks of stone and thin dark clad timber is particularly jarring and I cannot see how this has been well informed nor is it sympathetic.

Heritage statement: (Part 1).

Local policy.

Policy EQ 6

Design and Place Making.

I have for the purpose of this response reiterated terms and sentences that this scheme does not fall in line with, I have then made my reply respectively.

All development should be well designed and of a high quality that responds positively to both its environment and the challenge of climate change, whilst also contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

This will be achieved by:

- *Requiring development to be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of High Peak's townscapes and landscapes*

Requiring that development on the edge of settlement is of high quality design that protects, enhances and/or restores landscape character, particularly in relation to the setting and character of the Peak District National Park

- *Requiring that development contributes positively to an area's character, history and identity in terms of scale, height, density, layout, appearance, materials, and the relationship to adjacent buildings and landscape features*
- *Requiring that development achieves a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development and does not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shadowing, overbearing effect, noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character and amenity*
- *Requiring that public and private spaces are well-designed, safe, attractive, complement the built form and provide for the retention of significant landscape features such as mature trees*

Policy EQ7.

Built and Historic Environment.

The Council will conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.

Particular protection will be given to designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings including:

- *Listed Buildings*
- *Conservation Areas*
- *Historic Parks and Gardens*
- *Scheduled Monuments*
- *Archaeological Sites or heritage features*
- *Heritage trees and woodlands*

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3.2 Site, boundaries and context. Page 11.

"the driveway has been extended beyond Corbar House to allow access to the proposal site". These new engineering works which include new infrastructure are unauthorised and are under the subject of an enforcement complaint. All images of tarmac and new 'retaining wall' and new steps are not historic or original.

Page 19.

"Corbar House was constructed in 1850 in the French chateau architectural style second empire", ".....it shares features seen in other Victorian buildings in the area". The significance of the architectural style is part of the Buxton vernacular, and is shared across core buildings such as but not limited to the Town Hall, The Palace Hotel, The Dome, The Pavilion Gardens and glass house, many residential dwellings and terraces in the core of the town and other public buildings. Many of these too within the collection of our Conservation Areas (many of which abut one another). The historic significance of the architectural style is high, and its ornate decoration an intrinsic part of the outward surviving character of the town. Second Empire architecture is in fact noted for its Renaissance foundations, (Napoleon III) tooling of the Baroque, and was ultimately exemplified by Christopher Wren and John Vanbrugh. For the nature of this area, climate, local crafts, materials and ancient methods of construction, thanks to the Duke and the status of the town; Buxton became and remains one of the first Peak towns to see what was at the time, innovative and rare high status, consciously designed pieces.

The coach house, whilst similar and in harmony is of a more honest design. It is not 'exactly the same' – by modern standards and would be unwise to contrive this, due to

the fact it was never domestic in infancy. Nonetheless it remains part of the relationship between the host due to the orientation, historic use, character, placement, mass and material palette. It appeared a short time later in late 1800s, a secondary feature if you will, demonstrating legible character and an expected pairing between that of a grand house, and its coach house. The stature of the two is well survived and it is appraised as being curtilage listed. Historic significance is therefore high in that regard. However, due to the lack of care and unauthorised works unfortunately received by the coach house over a period of time, its survival condition and deterioration of the fabric may reduce the significance to medium. Notwithstanding this, it remains appraised as being a key feature to the site and alongside its host, Corbar House.

Due to this appraisal, the significance and historic interest of the assets and landscape/setting is therefore medium overall, airing somewhat toward the upper of this scale and not the lower. It is the only listed building and legible grounds on this road appraised in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Heritage Statement. (Part 2).

Page 28.

Ancient woodland is identified as part of the site, hugging the furthest boundary and containing impressive ancient trees. The topography steps down toward the town, affording further ability to experience the placement and character of a grand house, and what survived gardens remain. The boundary of the Conservation Area (The Park), envelopes this site before extending west covering Corbar Woods. The setting is therefore under overlap, as the literal pen mark on a modern map dissects the site seen today, however this has little bearing on setting as again due to the overlap; the proposal is within the setting of the Conservation Area, its new engineering works *within* the Conservation Area, and all impose direct impact upon both setting of the Conservation Area, and that of the listed buildings.

The parklands, and urban town plan was in fact designed by Sir Joseph Paxton. Due to the extent of the town's historic progression, owing to the wealth and rarity of the Spa Town, the significance of these qualities are high, again also demonstrated by the quantity and vast swathes in which our Conservation Areas are designated. I am not sure why this point is doubted or noted as possibly.

Page 31.

Cartographic evidence demonstrates there is no precedent nor is it traditional to find what is seen to be infill or back land development consisting of a modern residence within the curtilage of a listed building. Irregardless of what former internal uses CHCH held in the short term past, the proximity in which the scheme consumes the site is not respectful or appropriate and seems to disregard heritage.

Section 5. Page 35.

"CHCH are of national significance, their significance derives from the historical interest illustrating the Victorian expansion of Buxton". This is a particularly weighted point, tying into my assessment above; the significance should in fact be on the upper end of medium overall.

"Corbar Hill House is set back from the road accessed through two stone gatepost a serpentine drive leading up to the building". The landscape, heritage assets and setting retain a historic sense of approach. This is strongly evident and what sets the area apart from other changes in the vicinity, strong legibility of its past and placement, and signs of age.

“Historically the proposal site was formed by various outbuildings and a tennis court”, something that is to be expected and natural in the grounds of a large house by its very nature. Subsequently what is not expected and what would therefore cause substantial disfiguring; is the inclusion of an large alien modern building. By this very point, there is nothing to suggest the project is an enhancement, looking to preserve, looking to contribute or looking to reinstate elements and features which historically form such grounds. Small tennis sheds and gardens rooms which form part of tennis courts are not a precedent.

The proposal is against the grain in terms of again design; earlier points are echoed, but in addition to this it is also now further emphasised that it is very much against the grain of the survived town plan and looks to wilfully create a discord among the vernacular and its merits.

It is not seen to be an enhancement or contribution to neither the setting of the Conservation Area or heritage assets. Terms reiterated from local policy are:

EQ6:

- *Requiring that development contributes positively to an area's character, history and identity in terms of scale, height, density, layout, appearance, materials, and the relationship to adjacent buildings and landscape features*

EQ7:

All development should be well designed and of a high quality that responds positively to both its environment and the challenge of climate change, whilst also contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

Leafy, wooded backdrops are noted later with the accompaniment of vernacular stone walls, simple humble features lining grounds and plots and quiet later ribbon development whilst modern, are in keeping and subservient with the scale, form and architecture of the Conservation Area. The wider vicinity and that of which is afforded by the somewhat rolling topography sees a modest cohesion allowing for historic and older dwellings to be experienced first, therefore retaining historic interest and legibility of the towns past and merits for designations.

Section 7. Page 44.

The dwelling is said to be unseen from the front of Corbar House, however it has also noted the extensive long ranging views from this high point in the town and Conservation Area, consequently this does not appear to be a confident point. The proposed sections clearly demonstrate the overbearing stance the proposal site has over the survived assets and curtilage, alongside the now sanitised and heavily altered grounds leading up to the site, unsympathetic hardscaping and exposed frontage. Other points here note the ‘projected soffits’, ‘reclaimed gritstone’ and larch boarding’. Again, as echoed above there are many issues with the material palette in itself, and it is further emphasised here that policy EQ6 is not in accordance with. Despite what appears to be a marginally detailed supporting document, there appears to be nothing that has actually informed the scheme in any regard nor what has informed the concept.

Page 50.

There is a substantial issue regarding access, new hardscaping and boundary treatment, and vulnerable randomly placed junction services box where works have already begun. Therefore I will not comment specifically on access at this time as it is too problematic and in any event should be informed and demonstrated within a comprehensive landscaping and layout plan.

8.2 Impact of.... Page 51.

“The proposal site is located outside the boundary of the Park Conservation Area and

north of the Corbar Hill House at a higher elevation due to the topography of the land. The Coach House which is within the curtilage of the Corbar Hill House is located between the proposal site and the listed building. The new dwelling will utilize the same access of the listed building. The proposal site once housed several outbuildings that have now been cleared”.

I disagree with this. The proposal is within the setting of the Park Conservation Area, and setting and curtilage of the CHCH. This is emphasised due to the topography, and the new dwelling has in fact received its own access of which was not there before. Again this consists of extensive steps, walling and other earthworks. The proposal site did not house several outbuildings that were domestic, nor were they of a substantial footprint or mass. This appears to attempt to allude the site has always been, and has been previously overdeveloped. This is not the case.

“The proposed new dwelling will not be prominent, dominant, or conspicuous in the setting of the listed building or Conservation Area. Additionally, the new dwelling would not compete with or distract from the significant elements of the listed building or Conservation Area”.

I completely and respectfully disagree with this bold claim, and do not see the justification as to how it is not prominent, dominant or conspicuous. It is very much those three terms.

Harm:

Heritage harm is imposed directly upon the assets CHCH, the special interest and significance is also in receipt of harm. The grounds, curtilage and therefore setting, are infilled with a building form that is massive, unsympathetic, and not at all respectful to any of the qualities and merits analysed. Substantial earthworks have irreversibly disfigured and depreciated the setting and ability in which the asset is experienced. Further sanitisation of setting and features include for example, the introduction of generic tarmac, rewriting the landscape and natural form, paired with a dramatically contrived building is at this time; unjustifiable. This is not an opportunity to invite further and considerable amounts of change, ultimately and sadly leading to further depreciation and therefore harm. In light of this, the scheme is subsequently not an enhancement, nor does it contribute to any of the surviving features and qualities affording historic legibility.

Heritage harm is imposed directly upon the setting and character of the Conservation Area. The scheme is not within the grain of the historic townscape, it is not traditional to find backland modern development shoe-horned behind a listed building and within its grounds, nor is there a precedent or justification for this. Whilst the wider Conservation Area may receive little harm, the setting of the Park here is in receipt of harm due to the accumulation of unnatural and alien work envisaged. The scheme appears to invite disregard for the history of the site, the assets, their character and their significance as part of the merits for the Park designation. The discord is quite sizeable in that the competition between the two forms is quite uncivil, and as such also has disregard for the town's historic development.

Final points:

“As the proposed development is assessed as having a neutral impact on the Conservation Area and a slight beneficial impact on the setting of the Conservation Area, there is no harm to the affected heritage asset. Therefore paras 206 to 208 of the NPPF, which discuss substantial harm or less than substantial harm, do not apply here”.

This claim in itself is convoluted, and I strongly disagree. It would be very confident to state that there is no harm at all. It should be noted both the Conservation Area and listed building are designated assets, and where is the *slight* benefit to setting? This is not a confident point and feels like an afterthought. It is conducive to note that there have been no identified public benefits in terms of heritage to be able to counteract this harm, and ‘slight’ of anything is weak in respect of the quantity of harm imposed. It is not realistic.

Harm is identified, and due to the clear accumulation of harm it would equate to the higher end of less than substantial. I do not see where at any point there is a ‘slight benefit’ to the Conservation Area, where here this appears to treat the primary listed building as perhaps secondary, or of no matter. The significance of the Conservation Area alone is for example not expressed by the use of high quality materials, architectural tooling or proportions. Sustainability nor long term durability are also not well informed, as for example a green flat roof will not bear the brunt of the climate in this area.

Despite some exploration in the supporting information, there is no clear and convincing justification for the scheme or the harm it directly imposes. The scheme is confident in wishing to be a ‘permanent addition’, but includes little to no enhancements or contributions to the Conservation Area or listed building. It is clear the scheme is not informed by either, and instead proactively disregards both in an attempt to overtake and create a statement piece. Unfortunately, the result of this is a scheme that it is very out of place and foreign to the area. It does not look to be in harmony with any of the features or elements that make Buxton a desirable and attractive sought after place to visit and reside. This in itself creates substantial discord long term.

The scheme does not have the special interest of the listed building nor its respective Coach House in mind, also the scheme does not look to combat previous concerns or be well informed by either the initial officer comments or the location in which it is proposed. The scheme does not fall in line with Local Policy EQ6 and EQ7.

The proposals would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building contrary to Section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The proposals would also fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area contrary to Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. With regard to the NPPF 2023, the harm would be less than substantial however it is appraised that due to the accumulation it would in fact be on the higher end. The scheme offers nothing by way of alleviating any harm, nor does it bring with it enhancements or expressions of which could be seen as contributions. Notwithstanding this example, the blunt infilling of the curtilage of a listed building is not supported in principle, there is no precedent and there is no action seen to be able to remediate this. I do not see clear and convincing justification for this scheme.

I cannot support this scheme and recommend refusal.

Thanks

In your communications with me please always quote the planning reference number if you have one.

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Due to work levels at this current time there will be a delay in responding to your query, however, I shall endeavour to do so as soon as I am able.

Emily Holland. Principal Conservation Officer.
Development Services.

High Peak Borough Council / Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

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