

Final Appellant Comments regarding 6 Grosvenor Mansions, Broad Walk, Buxton, SK17 6JH
Planning Application HPK/2022/0399
Listed Building Application HPK/2022/0400

Thank you very much for the opportunity to make some final comments on the responses to your consultation on my planning appeal. I apologise if this is a little long and repetitive, but there is so much in the LPA Statement of Case which I believe is contentious at best and misleading at worst.

1. Responses in support of my appeal

As stated in my original appeal, it is supported by all 12 fellow flat owners and shareholders of Grosvenor Mansions Management Ltd. The fact that 8 of them have taken the trouble to send in a personal response is evidence of this and of the strength of feeling amongst us. It will be clear that we all share an understanding of the building's significance and a willingness to contribute to its upkeep in order to ensure a sustainable future for it. We unanimously reject the arguments of the Conservation Officer as unreasonable, unrealistic and out of touch. This is a view shared by every person in Buxton with whom I have discussed the issue!

It is significant that my local Ward Councillor, Jean Todd, a member of the local authority Development Control Committee, has also written in support of my appeal. She has previously suggested double glazing to a fellow resident who was complaining about the racket from one of the loud musical events that are periodically permitted by the Council in the Pavilion Gardens. Her intervention suggests that political thinking in the Authority may now be ahead of conservation thinking.

2. The response of the LPA

The LPA, relying heavily on the comments of the Conservation Officer (CO), is the sole objector to my appeal. I would contend that many of the CO's comments are contentious and unsupportable, as I will argue below. They appear to continue to rely heavily on heritage theory and documents rather than on any intimate knowledge of the building and the location, which, as far as I am aware, has never been visited. It is also frustrating that there is no acknowledgement of the considerable communication with the LPA that took place, at the end of which, for example, the CO accepted my proposed refurbishment schedule, other than the glazing element. My following comments are referenced to the LPA Statement.

1.3 *The proposed works would result in the loss of historic fabric and the proposed replacement windows are not of an appropriate design or detailing and would result in the installation of an incongruous form of development.*

The design and detailing of the windows will not be changed. The historic fabric, insofar as it still exists, relates to the glazing. The wooden sash frames will be retained.

As such, the proposal would be in direct conflict with Sections 66 and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The Act is now 34 years out of date and therefore cannot take account of modern technological developments in glazing or the huge current concerns over carbon emissions, energy conservation, the looming climate crisis, evolving standards for energy efficient buildings and rising fuel costs. These are political issues but in the power of the LA to rebalance, as is now happening in some parts of the country.

3.1 a public facing location, facing Pavilion Gardens

Sadly Grosvenor Mansions is now barely visible from the Pavilion Gardens as it is almost totally screened by tall evergreens which the Local Authority has allowed to grow way beyond the height which would have been the intention of the original Gardens ornamental design.

Old photographs show an attractive, now sadly lost, vista across to the Mansions.

3.3 The listing description refers four times to **plain** (not elaborated) sashes, as opposed to the detail elsewhere of the façade. In addition, there is no mention whatsoever of the actual glazing.

6.1 The repeated concern for **the loss of historic fabric** is somewhat bewildering. The windows have been here for 160 years and there is clear evidence of poor maintenance and repairs. As plain sashes, they can be refurbished and restored by a skilled craftsman. The only historic fabric, insofar as it exists in 30% of the panes, is older glass; how original I cannot say.

6.3 Again, an **Article 4 direction dating from 1966** will not have taken account of modern glazing techniques or of energy conservation concerns and methods.

Despite the Article 4 direction, at No 18 hardstanding replacing an original frontage now provides intrusive car parking immediately adjacent to Broad Walk - far more detrimental than my proposals.

6.4 Again, contrary to the original intention described in the CAA, the building now neither presents itself to the public park nor catches the eye of the visitor because of the screening from tall evergreen trees. It is acknowledged in para. 6.5. that **the main view is now oblique**.

6.10 The LPA claims that **my proposals will impact the entire appearance the entire building**.

The appearance of the building is already impacted by conspicuous secondary glazing in a neighbouring first floor flat and by signage and stencilled window information on the dental surgery below my flat. My proposals will be inconspicuous in comparison.

6.11 Nowhere in the historical listing, which focus on the design of the plain sashes, is there mention of the actual glazing.

6.12 Close scrutiny for tell-tale impurities, ripples and distortions by both me and a heritage architect suggest that only 30% of the glazing may be historic glass, as defined by the LPA. This is all in panes to the side and rear elevations.

WE FOUND NO HISTORIC GLASS IN THE MAIN WINDOWS OVERLOOKING BROAD WALK.

6.13 replacing 18th century glass in their respective frames with double glazing is not possible

Presumably this is an LPA typo for 19th Century – the building dates from the 1860s!

My craftsman joiner contests this and has produced diagrams (previously provided) to demonstrate how slimline double glazing will work. He perfectly double glazed windows in my previous 1900 (not GII) property. Also, of course, much of the current glazing is not 19th century.

6.14 the scheme does not provide a methodology

Yet on 31 July 2023 the CO stated: “the refurbishment schedule on page 2 of second response to myself is suitable”.

there is a lack of content in the heritage and design statement

Annoyingly, this harks back to my original application and does not acknowledge the elaborated statements that I submitted on 9 March 2023, once I realised precisely what was required.

I imagine that the Planning Inspector may be able to assess whether repair work can be undertaken to avoid harm, as the CO suggested.

6.16 *harm to a heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefit*

6.17 *it is clear that the proposal would result in private not public benefit*

This relegation of public benefit seriously downplays growing concerns about carbon footprint. A major plank of my proposal is to conserve energy and to reduce significantly CO2 emissions – surely one of the most pressing issues of public benefit in the 2020s! The LPA is choosing to place less than substantial harm to the asset above significant public benefit.

7.1 *the need to protect a heritage asset is considered greater than other competing considerations such as sustainability*

Whilst Grosvenor Mansions is a splendid 19th century building, it is primarily a home to ordinary people rather than a “heritage asset” in the sense that grander buildings may be.

To relegate the importance of sustainability in this way is alarming. Buxton enjoys more than its fair share of neglected old buildings. Yet, the residents of Grosvenor Mansions regularly spend their own money on maintaining the building and ensuring its sustainability. But, if we are not allowed to deal with cold and draughty windows, it will become unsaleable, unoccupied and neglected – with the sustainability of the whole building out of the window!

7.3 *The Appellant’s objection to secondary glazing seems to be motivated by aesthetics than its viability.*

A curious comment since exactly the same concern for aesthetics could surely be said about the CO’s insistence on historic glass. But I have also stressed the impracticality of trying regularly to operate secondary glazing, especially in rooms such as kitchens and bedrooms.

Conclusion

The LPA Statement of Case clearly boils down to an intractable desire to protect 30% or so of older glazing in the property, none of which is in the public facing windows on Broad Walk.

The LPA appears deaf to the genuine concerns and ambitions of the residents, and indeed the wider population of the town, which are clearly articulated in fellow Residents’ own responses.

I am offering to spend a significant amount of money to restore properly working sashes with all their health and environmental benefits; and I have advised that I would be happy to follow any requirement regarding the type of double glazing that would be acceptable.

I contend that my Appeal deserves a 21st Century response, which is balanced and realistic and which genuinely addresses the future needs of the building - and the planet.