

Heritage Statement

The Knoll

Marlborough Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6RD

1 May 2025

Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been written to support a proposal for the renovation of the porch and installation of new French windows at The Knoll. It should be read in conjunction with the plans submitted under planning proposal HPK/2025/0133.

Methodology

This assessment is based on:

- National Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment) policies HE6 and HE7, superseded by Historic England's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice*.
- Historic England's principles of evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.
- Saved High Peak Local Plan Policy BC10 *Archaeological and other Heritage Features*.
- *High Peak Local Plan* Modification Version January 2016 Policy EQ6 *Built and Historic Environment*.

Historical development

Devonshire Park. The Knoll is an unlisted Victorian villa on Marlborough Road within the Devonshire Park element of The Park Conservation Area, an Article 4 area. Devonshire Park was laid out in 1868 by Robert Rippon Duke for the Duke of Devonshire and developed for fashionable housing between 1870 and 1878. Marlborough Road is part of the later development of Devonshire Park, characterised by houses set on high platforms. Devonshire Park differs from most of The Park with smaller houses set within smaller plots of land, but the boundaries are much harder, composed largely of coursed rock-faced gritstone at a uniform height of approximately 1 metre, and finished with a chamfered ashlar coping. Marlborough Road is lined by intermittently surviving lime and sycamore trees.¹

The Knoll. The Knoll was built in 1874. It was designed by R R Duke for £58 and built as the Duke of Devonshire's estate house for the Chief Clerk of the Buxton Estate.² It remained part of the Devonshire estate until death duties forced its sale (along with many of the Duke's Buxton assets) in 1956. Planning permission was granted for its demolition in 1968 and 1972, but fortunately in survived.³

Setting. The site is elevated above, and bounded by, the grounds behind the Palace Hotel to the south and east where it is screened from the hotel by tall hedges within the curtilage and mature trees within the hotel grounds. There is a public footpath outside this curtilage. Vehicular access is via a wide private driveway between 10 and 14 Marlborough Road with parking for several vehicles within the curtilage. The site is bounded to the north by the rear gardens of the houses on Lascelles Road (which lie outside the Conservation Area). The western boundary faces the back of the large Victorian villa, 14 Marlborough Road. All boundaries are marked by drystone walls between 1.5 and 2.5 metres high, several of them also with high hedges.

¹ *Buxton Conservation Areas: Character Appraisal* (Mel Morris: HPBC), April 2007, page 93, and Appendix 1 – Historical Development of Area, pages 20, 23.

² Langham, M, *Buxton: A People's History* (Carnegie Publishing: 2001).

³ BUX/1168/2 and BUX/172/1.

Description. The Knoll is constructed of coursed Millstone Grit (probably from a small quarry of Kinderscout Grit now lying below 7 Lascelles Road) and roofed in natural blue slate. In contrast to the other Victorian villas on Marlborough Road, the building is almost devoid of detailing; it is characterised by simple rectangular window sills, jambs and lintels, probably of the Corbar Grit variety of Millstone Grit group from the disused quarry at what is now the Punch Bowl caravan park off Manchester Road. The house's predominantly large sashed windows are all wooden framed. The original building has previously been extended along part of the northern side by a single-storey porch before 1897. Subsequently, this porch was extended along the whole northern side, probably in the 1970s. Both porch phases are constructed of similar materials to the original house. The 1890s porch has casement windows on its Northern aspect in a similar style to the original windows. However, the 1970s porch has out-of-character casement windows with concrete lintels which conflict with the house's predominantly Victorian styling.

Significance of The Knoll

As a relatively small, simple estate house for the Chief Clerk of the Buxton Estate, The Knoll is the most austere Victorian house within Devonshire Park, being devoid of external detailing and of limited architectural importance. This does not detract from the larger, more fashionable villas of Marlborough Road, as The Knoll is set behind 10 and 14 Marlborough Road, out of view from Marlborough Road, with access via a wide unadopted driveway. Nonetheless, it contributes to the collective Victorian theme of Devonshire Park, although it is hidden from all but those using the adjacent public footpath.

Impact of the proposals on The Knoll's significance

The 1970s porch was built over the original drains. These drains are currently collapsing and probably causing ground earth wash-out, causing a rotation. There is progressive cracking of the external coursework and internal walls. This requires urgent attention to strengthen the foundations and rebuild the affected 3 metres of porch; 'doing nothing' is not an option as it would lead to continued rotation and possible structural collapse. It is proposed to rebuild the affected western 3 metres of porch, re-routing the drains outside the walls of the house, and strengthening the foundations. The existing stone coursework and roofing slates will be used to restore the porch retaining its original style but rebuilt to current building standards. This will conserve the character of the house.

All replacement and new windows will be hardwood and manufactured using tooling specifically machined to precisely match the form of original Victorian windows' glazing bars. All glazing will use double-glazed units with thin heritage restoration hand-made crown glass to avoid the 'glinting' of modern float glass. This will ensure that the external appearance of the development is appropriate to its surroundings in accordance with High Peak Local Plan Policies EQ6 and EQ7, while reducing the property's carbon footprint.

It is proposed to replace the porch's 1970s casement windows with sash windows of an identical style to the original Victorian windows. The current concrete sills, lintels (and, on the western elevation, jambs), will be replaced with Stanton Moor Millstone Grit, from the same geological stratum as the original house's Corbar Grit. The rebuilding will bring the 1970s porch into thematic sympathy with the largely Victorian house while increasing the insulation levels.

It is also proposed to replace the northern-facing single-glazed windows casement windows of the 1890s porch with identically-styled hardwood double-glazed windows. This will conserve the heritage of the porch while reducing the house's energy requirement.

Additionally, it is proposed to install three recessed Velux windows into the sloping porch roof. These will match the current Velux currently installed elsewhere in the house, while bringing light into the currently dark interior of the northern-facing porch.

It is also proposed to instal French windows in the sitting room's eastern elevation. The Knoll originally had a small triangular garden, probably explaining the dearth of ground floor Victorian windows facing the garden. However, the garden had expanded by 1897 and now has mature trees and shrubs. The proposed hardwood double-glazed French Windows will be of identical character to the adjacent Victorian sash windows, again using Stanton Moor Millstone Grit jambs and lintels. The windows will increase the wellbeing of current and future occupants by providing views of the garden from the ground floor while being stylistically sympathetic with the original Victorian windows.

Avoiding, minimising and mitigating the impact on the heritage value

Porch. The proposed work on the porch will conserve the style of the rotating 1970s element by re-using the current coursework and roofing slates in exactly the same form as the existing porch. Replacing the 1970s windows with Victorian-styled sashes will improve The Knoll's aesthetic value. Double glazing the 1870s casement windows will decrease the house's carbon footprint while retaining the original Victorian styling. The proposed Velux are in sympathy with the current Velux installed elsewhere and, their impact will be minimised by being flush with the sloping roof.

French windows. The impact of the French windows will be mitigated by styling the windows identically to the adjacent Victorian windows including using matching Millstone Grit jambs and sills.

Trees. No trees will be affected by the proposed works.

Opportunities to better reveal or enhance heritage significance

If no action is taken, the porch may continue to rotate, leading to structural collapse. The proposals take the opportunity to maintain the significance of the property's heritage value by retaining existing Victorian styling where present, including aspects in need of urgent structural attention. The proposals enhance and respect the heritage significance by removing detrimental 1970s styling and reinstating sympathetic and distinctive Victorian character.

Justification of any harmful impacts

None of these proposals will be visible to the public or neighbours, all being on the garden aspects, shielded by the house or high hedges. Therefore, there will be no impact on neighbours or the public. Overall, there are no detrimental heritage aspects of the proposals, which will increase the wellbeing of current and future occupants by bringing light and views into the house while increasing the levels of insulation and energy efficiency.