



Historic England

Mr Stuart Talbot
High Peak Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Market Place
Glossop
SK13 8AF

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

11 November 2025

Dear Mr Stuart Talbot

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR CONSERVATION AND REPAIR WORKS TO
THE GRADE II LISTED DRINKING FOUNTAIN, MARKET PLACE, BUXTON, HIGH
PEAK, DERBYSHIRE**

Application no: HPK/2025/0367

Thank you for your consultation regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

**Historic England Advice
Summary**

Historic England supports the principle of conservation and repair works to the drinking fountain; however, we think the scheme would benefit from amendments. Specifically, we would like to see the retention of more original fabric and the omission of non-original materials in order to reduce harm to heritage significance, a requirement of paragraph 208 of the NPPF.

Significance



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The fountain (or well head) is located within the marketplace (listed as 'Drinking Fountain' HER no: 1258032). It is principally significant as a good piece of classically styled street furniture from the early nineteenth century which helps tell the story of Buxton as a spa town built to rival Bath. The thermal springs of Buxton were exploited for health and restorative tourism by the Duke of Devonshire from the eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century. The duke's patronage included a group of fountains and well heads for public use many of which are listed at Grade II. For this reason, the fountain has high associative historic value.

As a former working fountain, the structure has much communal value. By virtue of its function to provide mineral water to the public, it is an important monument to social history which was built at a time rife with waterborne disease and a major transition in attitudes towards public health. Locally, the fountain is significant for its role in well dressing ceremonies. These rituals date back to the Celtic times demonstrating the importance of water to Buxton's history.

Architecturally, the fountain is austere. The urn vase forms a striking silhouette in the marketplace which adds to its aesthetic value. Materially, the fountain is rooted in local vernacular: its stone slab construction has an attractive patina. However, its form also taps into wider fashions for neo-classicism. It has a positive influence on the character of the Buxton Central Character Area of the Buxton Conservation Area.

Impact

The proposal is to restore the fountain through reconstructing elements of the structure, reinstating the urn vase and re-landscaping the surrounds with cast iron railings.

It is proposed that over half (about 70%) of the existing sandstone would be replaced: this would harm the fountain's architectural value through the loss of the stone's patina and authenticity which indicates its age and long use in the marketplace.

Whilst we acknowledge the application's mention of ground subsidence, the proposal to set the stone fountain on a reinforced concrete slab would be harmful to its architectural significance. Concrete is a non-compatible material to sandstone because it can trap water and lead to stone erosion and cracking (particularly after frost) thus catalysing decay. The use of a concrete slab would also appear incongruous beneath the fountain instead of a traditional stone base. We are pleased to see that lime mortar is proposed elsewhere on the structure.

The rebuilding of the inner 'cistern' in a non-like for like manner would also harm an ability to understand the traditional construction of the fountain. Furthermore, we are concerned that blue engineering bricks might stress the existing stone of the cenotaph, but we would wish to see a structural assessment to confirm this.



The proposal to conserve and return the urn vase which includes repairing the crack, relining the feature with lead and the creating an urn lid is very positive and would reinstate the fountain's original appearance.

Reinstating the cast iron railings is similarly positive. The proposed design is carefully researched and offers an enhancement to both the listed structure and the wider marketplace, which sits within a conservation area.

Policy

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, sets out policies for decisions governing change in the historic environment.

Paragraph 207 of the framework sets out the expectation for supporting information, noting that "local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting."

Paragraph 208 states that local planning authorities "should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."

Paragraph 212 notes that "when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance."

Paragraph 215 requires that less than substantial harm to significance should be weighed against the public (including heritage) benefits of a proposal.

Position

Overall, Historic England welcomes the principle of conserving and restoring the Grade II listed fountain, however, we think the current proposals should be amended to achieve a 'lighter touch' approach to its conservation. We are not convinced that the current proposal for whole dismantling is necessary and the loss of around 70% of the original stone would be regrettable. We would also like to change to proposed materials.

Whilst we are sympathetic to the issues of long-term disuse and subsidence at this site, we think the application would benefit from a submission of the condition survey cited in documents, and furthermore, a structural assessment to allow for a more in-depth understanding of the fountain's fabric and issues for rectification. Ideally, we



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would like to see more of the original sandstone structure retained and repaired as this would conserve the historic patina and integrity of the fountain and therefore reduce harm in line with paragraph 208 of the NPPF.

We would extend our concerns to the proposed materials. The application intends to line the stone cenotaph with engineering brick. It is unclear from the application what impact this would have on the sandstone slabs. It would be helpful to see other options put forwards for securing the cenotaph. This could be achieved from a structural assessment.

Furthermore, we think the reinforced concrete base could harm the stone structure as a non-breathable material which is incompatible with sandstone. If a structural survey has been undertaken, it would be useful to see the justification for concrete as well as other options to secure the structure against subsidence. We would also encourage the design of the plinth to incorporate a gradient which would help direct water away from the fountain.

We are pleased to see that the proposed reinstatement of the urn vase and cast-iron railings are carefully considered through documentary research. We think both elements would enhance the architectural significance of the conduit and the character of the Buxton Central Character Area of the Buxton Conservation Area, aligning with paragraph 212 of the NPPF.

The local planning authority will also need to weigh the harm, which we assess to be less than substantial, against the public benefits of this proposal, as described in paragraph 208 of the NPPF. We cannot comment on public benefits but can comment on heritage benefits. We think this scheme offers heritage benefits in the form of reinstating the urn vase and the lost cast iron railings.

Recommendation

Historic England is broadly supportive of the principle to conserve and restore the fountain but has some concerns about the approach which would be harmful to elements of significance. We consider that the application does not currently meet the NPPF requirement to reduce harm through paragraph 208 and we recommend that further amendments aligned with our advice above are submitted for consideration.

In determining this application, you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account when making a decision on the application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us

Yours sincerely,



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Jessica Jenkinson

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire)



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