

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 26/05/2026

Application Ref: HPK/2026/0134

Site Address: The Natural Baths, The Crescent, Buxton

Proposal: Internal works to alter and extend the hygiene room system, removal of existing doors, removal of internal walls and below ground works to create 3 no. new drainage trenches.

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	Grade II – Natural Mineral Baths (List Entry No. 1257914) Buxton Central Conservation Area Setting of: Grade I – The Crescent, Buxton (List Entry No. 1257876) Grade II – The Pump Room (List Entry No. 1257920) Grade II – St Ann’s Well (List Entry No. 1257868) Grade II* – Old Hall Hotel (List Entry No. 1257847) Registered Park and Garden Grade II – The Slopes (List Entry No. 1001456)
Non-Designated Heritage Assets(s) (NDHAs):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The Natural Baths is a Grade II listed building, located below the Grade II* Old Hall Hotel, and next to the Grade I Crescent Hotel. The Natural Baths are a fine former bath house located on the site of the Buxton water source. As such the building is an important building in Buxton’s history as a spa town. The position of the Natural Baths next to the Crescent Hotel, Pump Room, St Annes Well and Registered Park and Gardens forms a strong group heritage value within the complex.

Internally the Natural Baths has a surviving 1920s interior dating to the buildings use as the gentleman's first-class bath. While some elements have been removed previously, the level of surviving historic fabric internally contributes to the buildings architectural and historic value.

Assessment and Impact

Since receipt of the initial consultation revised plans have been received. As such a list of the plans reviewed below are provided as follows for clarity:

Original submission:

D5660(3)-01-B - Existing Location Floor Plan

D5660(3)-20-A - Proposed Typical Details

D5660(3)-30 - Existing & Proposed Elevation

03.17.LH.D5660-3. Photographic Record

03.25.LH.D5660-3. Design Access Statement

03.26.LH.D5660-3. Heritage Statement

Received 20/05/26:

D5660(3)-10-C - Proposed Location & Floor Plan

The application seeks to alter and extend the hygiene room system located within the Natural Baths. The existing system was approved in 2018 (HPK/2018/0014), the current application seeks to replace and extend the existing hygiene system. The hygiene system includes, replacing the existing floor, replacing and extending the white walling, install three new drainage trenches, and remove the 2018 staircase.

The proposed hygiene room extension will enclose the majority of space left unaltered in the 2018 installation. Plans show the small switch room to remain unaltered, this area includes 1920s tiles and the only surviving section of 1920s terrazzo floor. The retention of this room as existing, is encouraged as it allows some visible/visual retention of the historic fabric.

The new hygiene white walling system will cover the remainder of the surviving tiled walls within the interior. The covering of the historic interior is harmful to the architectural and historic significance of the Listed Building as it masks the legibility of the interior. It is understood from my site meeting with the applicant that the extent of cleaning required within the space would cause damage to tiles over time if left uncovered. Therefore there may be heritage benefits to covering the tiles, however, the extent of this cleaning and its impact upon the tiles if left uncovered should be explained fully in the heritage statement. It is therefore suggested that an addendum to the submitted heritage statement is provided with the additional cleaning justification

for the proposed covering of the historic interior.

Additionally, small clear viewing panels are present in the existing white walling. This allows for some level of visibility of the historic interior hidden behind the white walling. As an increased amount of the historic interior is to be covered, the clear viewing panels should be extended to increase the amount of historic interior visible to allow improved legibility of the historic value of the interior.

It is also proposed to install three new drainage trenches. Historic photos demonstrate the pool was previously much larger. However, the level of 1970s intervention with the floor structure is not fully understood. It may be that the old pool was backfill but retained, or removed entirely. Therefore the level of harm caused by the proposed trenching can not be fully understood ahead of further investigation. The expertise of the Archaeology team at Derbyshire County Council should be consulted in regard to the impact of any excavation works required.

Legislation and Policy

Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 66(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that with respect to any buildings or land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area.

National Planning Policy Framework

In determining applications, local authorities should take account 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, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within the setting), should require clear and convincing justification (para 213).

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. (para 215)

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- High Peak Local Plan (Adopted 2016) – EQ7 Built and Historic Environment
- Buxton area character appraisal (adopted April 2007)

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposed alteration works will cause harm to the significance of the Listed Building in covering and obscuring the historic 1920s interior. In terms of planning policy (NPPF para 215) this is considered to be less than substantial harm. In order to address the heritage concerns outlined above, the following amendments should be made:

- Stronger statement of justification, ideally in the form of an addendum to the heritage statement.
- Increased quantity of clear viewing panels within the hygiene wall, ideally continuous at a level to match the details in the tilework and stained glass windows.

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