

3.0 Vision and Masterplan Principles

3.6 Avoidance of High-Risk Building Classification

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, national fire safety regulations were comprehensively revised. Under the current regime, residential buildings exceeding 18 metres in height above the lowest ground floor entrance are classified as Higher-Risk Buildings (HRBs). This designation introduces a series of enhanced fire safety requirements and a more rigorous, multi-stage process to achieve Building Regulation approval.

From the outset, the design brief for the Buxton Masterplan sought to remain below the HRB height threshold, ensuring compliance with current safety legislation while avoiding unnecessary regulatory complexity. This approach also offers a contextual benefit as it limits new building heights to levels consistent with much of Buxton’s established built form, thereby maintaining harmony with the town’s character and skyline.

During a meeting with BBCP Building Control and Derbyshire CC Fire & Rescue Service on 8 July 2025, the project’s fire engineer confirmed that all residential elements of the development fall below the 18-metre HRB limit. The design therefore avoids classification as a Higher-Risk Building, while still incorporating robust fire safety measures consistent with best practice and the latest Building Regulations.

The one exception within the masterplan is the observation tower, which reaches approximately 21 metres above ground level. However, this element is non-residential and does not feature a roof or provide a hermetically sealed façade, meaning it does not fall within the HRB definition. Its open structure and limited occupancy ensure that the tower remains compliant under the current regulatory framework.

3.7 Amendments to Existing Shopping Centre

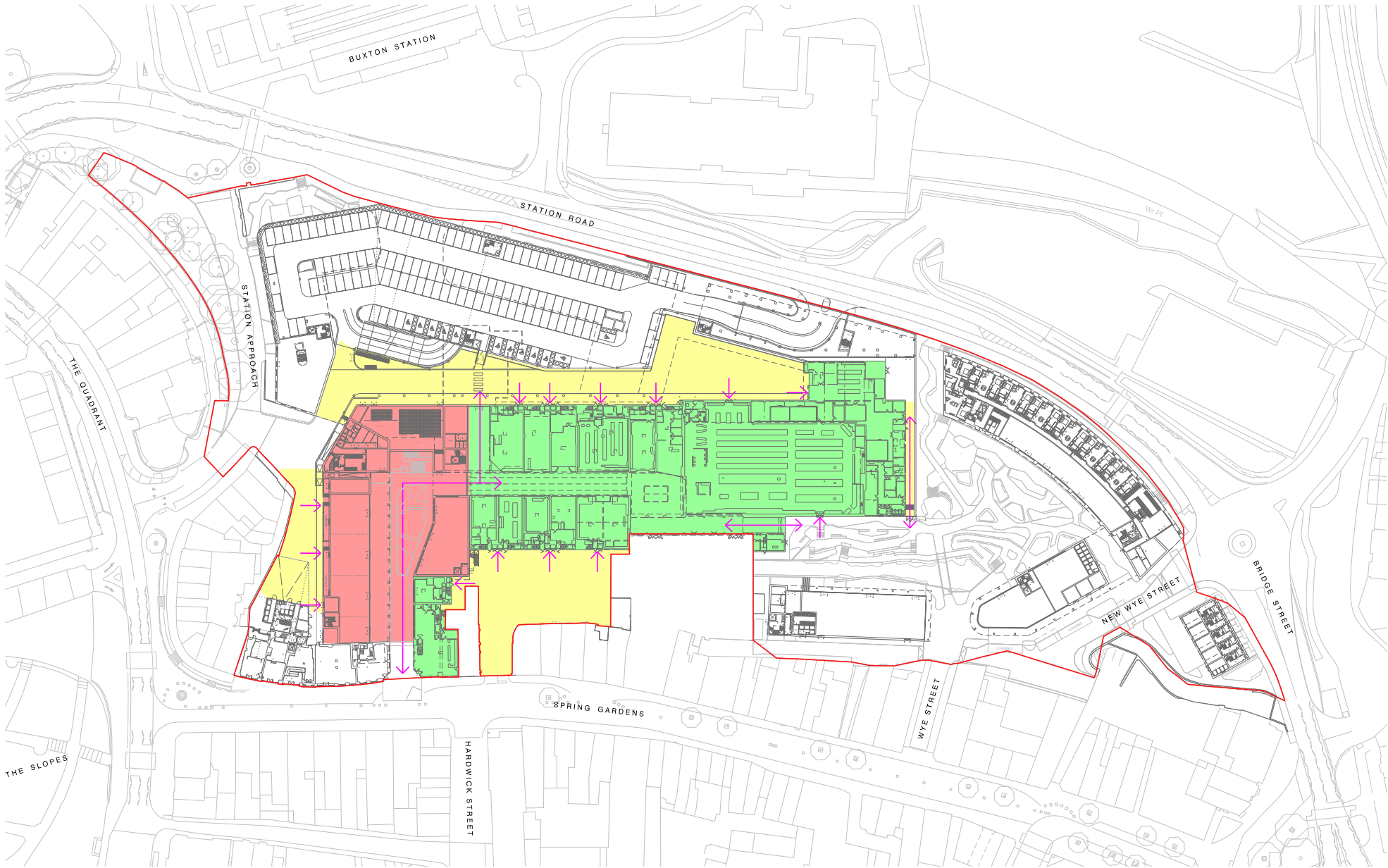
The drawing opposite the interface between the proposed masterplan and The Springs Shopping Centre.

During RIBA Stage 1, it was initially envisaged that the entirety of The Springs could be retained and extended upwards to form Blocks 9, 10, and 11. However, following detailed structural design and logistics analysis, it has been determined that the benefits of partially demolishing The Springs outweigh those of full retention. The accompanying plan identifies in red the portion of the building proposed for demolition, with the remainder of the centre being retained and integrated within the wider masterplan.

Discussions will be required with existing tenants to establish whether displaced occupiers wish to relocate temporarily within available vacant units or return to the redeveloped premises upon completion.

The areas shaded yellow on the plan denote the retained service yards, which will continue to operate during and after construction, ensuring uninterrupted delivery and servicing access. Purple arrows indicate the proposed points of entry and exit to The Springs, which are designed to improve movement efficiency and enhance connections to the surrounding development.

The new buildings are carefully arranged around the retained portion of The Springs, preserving retail continuity while visually containing and softening the impact of its 1980s architecture.



demolition works and existing access to the shopping centre

3.0 Vision and Masterplan Principles

3.8 Compliance with Planning Policies

This ambitious masterplan is underpinned by some of the current and emerging planning policies, which makes the proposal capable of gaining planning consent. Listed below are the key policies and the reasons why the scheme is compliant. Reference should also be made to the planning statement for a detailed planning assessment.

Station Road Buxton Design Framework SPD

- Vibrant and viable town centre with high-quality mixed-use development that supports the vision of lively and thriving spa town with a tradition of festivals
- Bold place-making interventions with a new boulevard and expansive public realm spaces
- Sustainable and diverse community created through a varied residential tenure aimed at reversing the projected decline in population
- Architecture that respects and reinforces existing building lines and urban grain while also making a dramatic contribution to the architectural heritage of Buxton without succumbing to pastiche
- Maximise street frontages by infilling gaps within the streetscape to Spring Gardens, Station Road, and Bridge Street
- Provide level access for all
- Improved pedestrian access through the site while navigating the challenging topography and strengthen pedestrian links with wider town centre
- Multi-levelled buildings lining the new boulevard connecting Buxton Station and Spring Gardens, which will give rise to an interesting streetscape and creates a new network of connected streets
- Carefully considered roofscapes that add to the existing richly articulated skyline
- Concealed parking allows for a pedestrian friendly townscape
- High quality streets and new public spaces
- New interventions that are sympathetic to the existing, density, height, massing, materials and roofscape, while creating an architectural language that is clearly of its time
- Provide a first-class gateway to Buxton by transforming the frontage when viewed from Station Road with new apartments and tree-lined public square
- Add to visitor orientation and navigation with a new viewing platform that offers stunning vista across the roofscape of Buxton
- Create key vistas, particularly from Buxton Station looking toward a new public square and boulevard connecting Spring Gardens, plus a visual connection along a newly exposed section of the River Wye towards a second public square
- Sustainable buildings

Water In Buxton SPD (adopted 2021)

- Protect mineral water through thoughtful choice of piled sub-structure
- Reduce phosphates reaching River Wye through compliant drainage system
- Increase efficiency of new residential buildings by reducing water usage to 110 litres per person per day by incorporating water efficient showers, reduced capacity baths, low flow taps and toilets, water efficient appliances, rainwater harvesting, and use of greywater
- Engagement with the Environment Agency throughout the design process, particularly as the site is within the ‘core protection area’
- Residential Design SPD (adopted 2005)
- Residential building that adopts the material palette of Buxton in a contemporary and inventive way

High Peak Design Guide SPD (adopted 2018)

- New architecture that avoids pastiches while being respectful and modern
- Integration of green roofs, new public squares with verdant planting to help blend architecture with landscape

High Peak Growth Plan 2017

- High quality and ambitious masterplan
- Enhanced visitor experience with large public spaces and orientation tower
- Reinforced local identity with new buildings that are sympathetic to the existing, density, height, massing, materials and roofscape, while creating an architectural language that is clearly of its time
- New and appropriate rental product to ensure Buxton can attract first time buyers before they put down roots elsewhere
- Biodiversity net gain within verdantly planted new public spaces
- Increase energy efficiency of new residential buildings by adopting the guidance of the Water In Buxton SPD
- Encourage start-ups with new workspaces facing the newly opened River Wye that was previously culverted

High Peak Adopted Local Plan (Adopted 2016)

- Section 6.141 of the report is particularly relevant to the application site, which echoes the points raised by the above reports
The High Peak Borough Plan 2023 – 2027 – this was agreed by full Council in December 2023.
- This report echoed the points raised by the above reports



4.0 Design Strategy for Buildings

4.1 Existing Architectural Language of Buxton

The architectural character of Buxton is a direct reflection of its rich history, natural setting, and emergence as one of England’s most celebrated spa towns during the 18th and 19th centuries. The town’s built environment displays a remarkable coherence despite its stylistic diversity, unified by the extensive use of local limestone and a distinctive response to Buxton’s dramatic topography and landscape context.

Georgian and Regency Influence

The Georgian and early Regency periods established Buxton’s architectural identity. The Crescent, designed by John Carr and completed in the late 18th century, remains the town’s most iconic building. Its sweeping classical façade and formal symmetry epitomise the refinement and grandeur of the spa era. The Pump Room, another key Georgian structure, reflects the social elegance of the time, with its balanced composition, tall sash windows, and decorative columns framing views across The Slopes.

Victorian Expansion

The Victorian period saw Buxton’s continued prosperity, marked by ambitious civic and leisure architecture. The Pavilion Gardens, with their cast-iron and glass pavilions, bandstands, and ornamental structures, embody Victorian optimism and the town’s growing status as a fashionable destination.

Buxton Railway Station, opened in 1863, brought visitors from across the country and introduced a bold stone façade and clock tower that celebrated the arrival of the railway age.

Gothic Revival Heritage

Buxton also embraced the Gothic Revival movement, most notably through St John’s Church by William Railton. Its slender spire, pointed arches, and intricate stone detailing contrast with the classical restraint of the Georgian core, enriching the town’s architectural variety.

Local Materials

A defining feature of Buxton’s architecture is its use of locally quarried limestone, which lends a cohesive tone and texture to buildings of all periods. The warm, natural stone unites Georgian crescents, Victorian terraces, and civic landmarks within the surrounding Peak District landscape, reinforcing the town’s harmonious character.

Modern Interventions

More recent additions, such as The Springs Shopping Centre (constructed in the late 1970s), reflect the evolving needs of the town but are generally regarded as less sympathetic to Buxton’s established architectural grain and material quality. Future development therefore offers an opportunity to repair and enhance the townscape by reintroducing human scale, and material integrity.

Summary

Buxton’s architectural language is a rich tapestry of Georgian classicism, Victorian grandeur, Gothic revivalism, and selective modernity. Together, these styles chart the town’s evolution while maintaining a unified identity through scale, proportion, and the pervasive use of local stone. This legacy provides both the inspiration and the benchmark for the architectural response within the proposed masterplan.



the crescent

4.0 Design Strategy for Buildings

4.2 Architectural Features of Buxton's Historic Buildings

Buxton is renowned for its stunning architecture, which reflects both the grandeur of the Georgian and Victorian eras and the town's rich history as a renowned spa destination. From the iconic colonnade to the intricate details of string courses, the town's historic buildings speak to a refined period of design, craftsmanship, and the social prominence of Buxton during the late 18th and 19th centuries. The key architectural elements of Buxton's historic buildings have made a significant contribution to the town's distinctive character. These features include:

Colonnade

One of the most striking architectural features of Buxton is its colonnade, particularly the Buxton Crescent, one of the most important and iconic examples of Georgian architecture in England. Designed by John Carr of York and completed in 1789, the Buxton Crescent is a masterpiece of classical design. The colonnade, with its elegant columns supporting a curved portico, creates a sense of grandeur and symmetry, offering visitors an introduction to the refined spa experience that Buxton became famous for.

The colonnade is more than just an aesthetic feature; it symbolizes Buxton's cultural heritage and its transformation into a fashionable spa town. The columns' clean lines and balanced proportions evoke a sense of harmony and order, setting the tone for the architectural style that characterizes much of the town's historic buildings. These columns are integral not only to the Crescent's design but also to the visual identity of Buxton, enhancing its reputation as a town steeped in tradition and refinement.



the crescent colonnade

Cornices and String Courses

Cornices are one of the most distinctive features of Buxton's historic architecture, particularly within its Georgian and Victorian buildings. Typically made from stone, they form a decorative projecting band at the top of walls, providing both visual emphasis and a practical transition to the roof. Once a mark of craftsmanship and civic pride, cornices in Buxton contribute to the town's sense of refinement and architectural order.

String courses, the horizontal bands that define many of Buxton's façades, are another hallmark of the town's built character. Usually formed in local limestone, they create a subtle contrast with surrounding materials while breaking up the vertical mass of buildings. Historically, they were used to separate storeys and reinforce classical proportions, lending rhythm and balance to otherwise simple elevations.

Together, cornices and string courses express Buxton's tradition of elegant restraint - a design approach that values proportion, craftsmanship, and detail over excessive ornamentation, giving the town its enduring architectural harmony.



string courses at first floor level

Roofscape

The roofscape of Buxton is dramatic. As a spa town, Buxton is filled with buildings that feature elegant, often complex rooflines. These roofs, which are a blend of functional necessity and aesthetic appeal, contribute to the visual identity of the town.

Many of the buildings in Buxton are crowned with hipped roofs, which slope down on all sides, often punctuated by dormer windows. These roofs are typically covered in slate, which adds to the rustic charm of the town and provides a uniform, cohesive appearance. However, in some of the more opulent buildings, such as the Buxton Pavilion, Devonshire Dome and the Palace Hotel, roofs are elaborately designed with decorative elements, such as balustrades and cupolas, enhancing the overall grandeur of the structure.

The roofscape of Buxton also features a notable amount of symmetry and balance, often dictated by the classical design principles that underpinned much of the town's development. The interplay between the horizontal lines of string courses and the sloping rooflines creates a visual rhythm that adds dynamism to the town's architectural landscape. These roofs are not just functional; they serve as the crowning touch that completes the architectural composition of the buildings, contributing to Buxton's overall architectural harmony.



roofscape

4.0 Design Strategy for Buildings

Dormer Roof

Dormer windows are another key feature of Buxton’s historic architecture, particularly in the town’s Victorian and Georgian buildings. Dormer windows project from the roof, often creating a charming and functional space within the upper levels of the building. These windows not only provide natural light and ventilation to attic rooms but also add visual interest to the roofline.

In Buxton, dormer windows are typically featured on buildings with steeply pitched roofs, enhancing the verticality of the structure. Many dormers are designed with elegant detailing, such as pediments, decorative stonework, or ornate timber framing, contributing to the overall aesthetic of the building. Dormer windows are often arranged symmetrically along the roof, further emphasizing the classical influences that dominate Buxton’s architectural style.

The use of dormer windows in Buxton reflects the town’s architectural heritage, where function and form are seamlessly integrated. These windows not only serve practical purposes but also contribute to the overall character and charm of the town, adding a distinctive feature to the roofscape and helping to define the historic fabric of Buxton.

Bay Windows

Bay windows are protruding windows that extend outward from the facade, creating a three-dimensional effect that adds depth and visual interest to the building’s exterior. Bay windows were particularly popular in the Victorian era, where they were used to increase natural light and improve the views from within the home.

In Buxton, bay windows are typically found in both domestic and commercial buildings, and they often feature decorative elements such as leaded glass, wooden or metal supports, and ornate sills. The use of bay windows was not only an aesthetic choice but also a practical one, as they allowed for improved ventilation and light within the often narrow and densely built streets of the town.

The bay windows of Buxton contribute to the town’s distinctive architectural identity, breaking up the monotony of flat facades and offering glimpses of the surrounding countryside. They also serve as a reminder of the town’s prosperous past, when it was home to an affluent population who sought to enjoy the best of both the natural and built environment.

Curved Facades

One of the defining characteristics of Buxton’s architecture is its use of curved façades. These gently sweeping forms, often found in Georgian and early Victorian buildings, bring a sense of grace and continuity to the town’s streetscapes. The Buxton Opera House exemplifies how curved corners can soften architectural edges, guiding views and enhancing the elegance of the overall composition.

In Buxton, the curved facades serve to break up the linearity of traditional rectilinear street layouts, creating more dynamic and visually pleasing compositions. This architectural feature enhances the sense of spaciousness in the town’s urban environment and reinforces its status as a fashionable spa resort.

Conclusion

The historic architecture of Buxton is a testament to the town’s rich cultural heritage and its status as a fashionable spa destination. Through architectural features such as the colonnade, canopy, cornice and string courses, roofscape, and dormer roofs, bay windows and curved facades, Buxton presents a visually cohesive and aesthetically pleasing environment that blends form with function. These elements, drawn from the Georgian and Victorian design traditions, contribute to the town’s unique character, offering a glimpse into the past while continuing to shape Buxton’s identity as a historical architectural gem in the heart of England.



dormer window / bay window



bay window



curved facade / dormer windows

4.0 Design Strategy for Buildings

4.3 Contemporary Architectural Response to Buxton’s Vernacular

The architectural proposals for the Buxton Masterplan have been guided by a deep respect for the town’s historic character, its distinct material palette, and the refinement of its Georgian and Victorian architecture. The design philosophy seeks to reinterpret these traditional features in a contemporary way, ensuring that the new development contributes positively to the evolving story of Buxton while avoiding pastiche.

Rather than replicating historical details, the design takes inspiration from the principles that underpin Buxton’s architecture - balance, proportion, rhythm, and craftsmanship. These timeless qualities have informed a modern architectural language that is sympathetic to its context, celebrating the heritage of Buxton while delivering a progressive and sustainable future.

Colonnades

The colonnade is one of the most iconic features of Buxton’s historic architecture, most notably seen at The Crescent. Within the masterplan, this concept has been reinterpreted through the use of arcades and colonnades that frame key public spaces. These elements provide sheltered pedestrian routes and create active frontages, much like their historic counterparts. However, rather than using traditional columns, the contemporary colonnades employ slender stone piers and modern detailing, allowing lightness and transparency while maintaining the rhythm and civic presence that characterise Buxton’s classical architecture.



colonnades

String Courses and Horizontal Emphasis

The use of horizontal string courses is a defining characteristic of Buxton’s Georgian and Victorian architecture, visually grounding the buildings and reinforcing their sense of proportion. In the masterplan, these traditional features are reimagined through subtle changes in material texture, tone, and shadow. Horizontal bands are expressed through coursed stone detailing, recessed joints, or contrasting metal elements, giving depth and visual hierarchy to façades without direct imitation. This approach maintains Buxton’s sense of rhythm and refinement while enabling a modern architectural expression.

Roofscape and Dormer Windows

Buxton’s historic skyline is defined by elegant roofscapes, articulated through hipped roofs, dormer windows, and chimneys. The masterplan continues this tradition by designing sculpted rooflines that respond to views, orientation, and the surrounding topography. The use of mansard and articulated roof forms ensures the massing is sympathetic to Buxton’s scale and maintains a rich, varied skyline.

Dormer windows have been interpreted as simplified, contemporary projections, expressed through clean lines and refined materials. These add character to the upper levels, echoing the rhythm and silhouette of traditional Buxton rooftops while introducing modern glazing and detailing. The approach provides a clear visual link to the heritage context without reverting to replication.



string courses, bay windows, roofscape and dormer windows

Bay Windows and Curved Facades

Buxton’s historic buildings frequently employ bay windows and curved façades to soften corners and provide panoramic views. Within the masterplan, these features have been integrated as sculptural forms that add visual interest and break down the mass of buildings.

On key corners, curved façades enhance legibility and create focal points that frame views and guide movement through the urban realm. These gestures echo the elegant curves of The Crescent, yet they are realised using modern construction techniques and materials to achieve a crisp, contemporary appearance.

Similarly, bay windows have been incorporated to provide depth and animation to façades. They project subtly from the building line, allowing light to penetrate deep into interior spaces while offering outward views across Buxton. The design treats the bay as an architectural rhythm - a repeating form that celebrates verticality and creates human-scale interest along the street.



bay windows and curved facades