

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 24/08/2026

Application Ref: HPK/2026/0276 (FULL) AND HPK/2026/0277 (LBC)

Site Address: 1 The Square, Buxton

Proposal:

(FULL) Proposed bathroom alterations at first and second floor level and an air conditioning unit to the side elevation at 2nd floor level

AND

(LBC) Listed Building Consent - Proposed bathroom alterations at first and second floor level and an air conditioning unit to the side elevation at 2nd floor level

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	Grade II* - The Square (List Entry No. 1257843) Grade I – the Crescent (List entry No. 12578760) Grade II* - Old Hall Hotel (List Entry No. 1257847) Grade II – Natural Mineral Baths (List Entry No. 1257914) Grade II Park and Garden – The slopes (List Entry No. 1001456) Grade II* Park and Garden – Pavilion Gardens (List Entry No. 1000675) Buxton Central Conservation Area
Non-Designated Heritage Assets(s) (NDHAs):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The Buxton Central conservation area is characterised by its high proportion of Georgian

and Victorian buildings. The Buxton character area appraisal (pg 14) states: “From 1780 up to the early 1800s there was a significant amount of investment by the Devonshire Estate in the town and this phase represents the main period of Georgian development within Buxton. This included the construction of The Crescent between 1780 and 1789 and the Great Stables, two new bridges, St. Anne’s Well, The Square and the new church of St. John’s. The Duke also pumped money into the refurbishment of other inns and lodgings.”

The Square is a Grade II* Listed Building, thought to have been built by architect John White in 1803-05. John White was commissioned by the 5th Duke of Devonshire on several projects. The Square has a 3 storey facade of Ashlar gritstone, with slate hipped roof.

The Square is nestled within close proximity to a number of heritage assets, dating to the Towns development as a spa town. These include the Crescent (Grade I), Old Hall Hotel (Grade II*), Pavilion Gardens (Grade II* P&G), The Slopes (Grade II P&G), and Natural Mineral Baths (Grade II), among numerous others. Collectively these form a strong group value, contributing strongly to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Assessment and Impact

The applications seek consent for the installation of an air conditioning unit onto the southern elevation, and internal alterations. It is proposed to convert the existing first floor bathroom into an office and W/C, convert the existing second floor w/c into an ensuite, and install an ensuite into bedroom 2 (second floor).

Air Conditioning Unit

The proposed air conditioning unit would be located on the southern elevation wall, which overlooks the Crescent, Natural Baths and The Slopes. The air conditioning unit would be visible from pedestrian paths on the Slopes garden, which currently allows for views with the Natural Baths in the foreground with a stepped view to the rear showing the new build section of the Crescent, with the Square behind. This creates a well-considered, and designed view which contributes positively to the significance of The Slopes and character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposed installation of an Air Conditioning unit on this location will introduce a visually foreign object with a very utilitarian and engineered appearance in a historically sensitive location. Therefore, it will cause harm to the Square, the Slopes and the conservation area. As such it is recommended that the air conditioning unit be removed from the scheme.

Furthermore, no details have been provided as to the internal implications of installing an air conditioning unit. Air Con units typically require the installation of internal wiring/pipework with internal fan units being installed on either the internal wall or

ceiling of each room. Product details of the proposed air-conditioning unit has been provided which indicate the use of wall mounting air cooling units internally. The plans provided do not indicate where these will be located or any new wiring/piping routes for servicing these internal units. At present there is insufficient information provided to make an assessment of the impact the proposed installation will have upon the internal historic fabric of the Listed Building. Details of the outstanding elements outlined above would be required for consideration should an air conditioning unit be found acceptable.

First Floor W/C and Office

Plans show the existing first floor bathroom and store cupboard to be converted to an office with smaller W/C. the alterations will not require the alteration of any historic internal walls. Furthermore, the w/c is expected to produce less internal humidity than a bathroom, therefore the loss of natural ventilation (window) to the w/c is considered acceptable. As such there are no objections to the proposed alteration subject to a condition requiring details of all new plumbing and soil routes.

Second Floor Ensuite to Bedroom 1

Plans show the existing second floor W/C to be converted to a larger ensuite bathroom serving Bedroom 1. The existing W/C is not considered to be historic fabric, and only a small section of historic wall would be removed to form an internal doorway. This is considered acceptable subject to condition of the proposed door details. Bathrooms including baths or showers produce a high level of humidity. If not properly ventilated can result in damp and over a prolonged period would damage the historic fabric of the Listed Building. The existing W/C has an original sash window which provides natural ventilation. As such the conversion into an ensuite bathroom is considered acceptable, subject to provision of details of plumbing and soil routes via condition.

Second Floor Ensuite to Bedroom 2

An ensuite bathroom is also proposed for installation to serve bedroom 2. The proposed ensuite will include a shower and will not include any natural ventilation. As outlined above, bathrooms without ventilation cannot be supported within a Listed Building due to the impact of the resulting high humidity upon historic fabric. It is recommended that this ensuite be removed from the proposed scheme if ventilation cannot be sympathetically demonstrated. Alternatively, the proposed ensuite could be made smaller, and limited to a W/C.

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 (August 2026)

HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets

1. Development proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The relevant historic environment record should be referred to in making this assessment, and appropriate expertise employed where necessary.

2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets (including through effects on their setting) should identify whether proposals would be likely to:

- a. Have a positive effect, which is where the significance of a heritage asset would be enhanced, or better revealed; or
- b. Have no effect on the significance of a heritage asset; or
- c. Result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or
- d. Cause the total loss of the significance of a heritage asset.

HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets

1. When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial 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 effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.

3. Any harm to a designated heritage asset will be a matter of considerable importance and weight, which should be dealt with in accordance with paragraphs 4 to 6 of this policy.

4. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.

HE9: Conservation areas

1. Development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should:

- a. Retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible; and
- b. Consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.

2. Not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of a building or other element which contributes to the character or appearance of a conservation area that is desirable to conserve, the assessment of impact should take into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole, and the effects of this considered in accordance with policies HE5 and HE6.

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 Conservation Areas Character Appraisal (Adopted 2007)

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the applications seek to install an air conditioning unit and carry out internal alterations to form a proposed W/C and 2 ensuite bathrooms. There are no heritage objections to the formation of the ensuite to bedroom 1 on the second floor, first floor w/c and office as outlined above. However, there are concerns regarding the lack of ventilation available to the second proposed ensuite to serve bedroom 2 as outlined above. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding the proposed location of the

air conditioning unit and the lack of details regarding the internal installation of this unit as outlined above. In terms of planning policy these alterations result in harm to the Grade II* Listed, The Square and Buxton Central Conservation Area (NPPF Policy HE6 (3) and HE9 (1)) As such the following recommendations are made:

- Remove proposed air conditioning unit from scheme.
- Remove shower from Bedroom 2 ensuite. OR remove second ensuite from proposed scheme.

In the absence of these recommended amendments the application should be refused in order to protect the special architectural interest of the Grade II* Listed Building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

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