



High Peak Borough Council

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Conservation Team Advice

Date: 27th August 2026
Application Ref: HPK/2026/0274
Site Address: Whaley Bridge Uniting Church, Buxton Road, Whaley Bridge
Proposal: Alteration and improvement of car park at the rear of the church to provide 13 car parking bays including one disabled bay with associated works.

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	• Methodist Church and Sunday School – Grade II (listing ref: 1054734) • Railway Bridge – Grade II (listing ref: 1119771) • 40 Old Road – Grade II (listing ref: 1088130) • 42 Old Road – Grade II (listing ref: 1054728) • 19-23 Old Road – Grade II (listing ref: 1334782) • Whaley Bridge Conservation Area
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would be situated within Whaley Bridge Conservation Area, the immediate setting of a Grade II listed church and wider setting of number of Grade II listed buildings and structures.

Whaley Bridge Conservation Area was designated for its industrial heritage and importance as a transport link to surrounding towns and settlements. The town is situated on the edge of the Peak District. The area had been a coal mining hub since the

late-16th century and its industrial importance for coal mining and textile mills grew from the late-18th century with the development of Peak Forest Canal and, later, the Cromford and High Peak Railway. The historic core of the settlement runs north to south following the Old Road and railway line. Predominantly, buildings are 2-storeys, constructed in gritstone and dating from the early- to mid-19th century, although some earlier buildings are interspersed through the settlement. The Uniting Church makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Whaley Bridge Uniting Church, formerly designated as Methodist Church, is Grade II listed. The building dates c.1821 and is constructed in stone with a slate roof. The building has round-headed arched windows and doors. The significance of the building relates to growth of Non-Conformist places of worship in the 19th century and modest architectural design which was synonymous with this type of building.

40 and 42 Old Road are both Grade II listed. They both date from the 18th century, the latter a former farmhouse. The buildings are illustrative of vernacular construction that pre-dated the industrial era and heritage of Whaley Bridge.

19-23 Old Road (Grade II) is a late-18th century former farmhouse and outbuildings, constructed in stone with a slate roof. The building is associated with the former agricultural origins of the settlement and illustrative of traditional and agrarian construction.

The Railway Bridge (grade II) dates c.1863 and was possibly designed by William Baker, the chief engineer of London and North Western railway. The structure is cast iron with stone abutments and is associated with the development of the Whaley Bridge to Buxton Line and illustrative of transportation heritage.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal seeks to resurface the car parking to the rear with asphalt, install concrete kerbs around the perimeter and create painted lines demarking parking bays.

The current parking area is gravel enclosed by a grass embankment to the east and south. The car park is positioned discreetly to the rear of the church and currently makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of the surrounding Listed Buildings. The proposed works would result in a minor visual change, but the visual impact on the character of the Conservation Area and setting of Listed Buildings would not be discernible. Overall, the proposed works would have no effect on the significance of the designated heritage assets (policy HE5 of the NPPF).

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the setting of the Listed Building (s.66) and preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (s.72).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2026

Chapter 20: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

HE4: Securing the conservation of heritage assets

1. Heritage assets, as an irreplaceable resource, should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. To achieve this, development proposals which would affect the significance of heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting should:
 - a. Maintain or secure a use consistent with their conservation, taking into account the importance of maintaining the assets, the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities including local economies, and the positive contribution they can make to local character and distinctiveness; and
 - b. Avoid (or if that is not possible, minimise) harm to the significance of heritage assets, and instead conserve this significance.



2. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (including from development within its setting) should have a clear and convincing justification in accordance with the policies in this chapter.
3. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the asset should not be taken into account in any decision relating to the asset.
4. Proposals for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with other policies in this Framework and/or those in the development plan, but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, should be considered on the basis of whether the conservation benefits outweigh the disbenefits of departing from the policies concerned.

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.

2. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on a designated heritage asset should be supported.
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.
5. Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or if all of the following apply: a. The nature of the heritage asset would otherwise prevent all reasonable uses of the site; b. No suitable use for the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; c. Conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is not possible; and d. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the asset back into use.
6. Within this context, development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, the significance of grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; while development which would cause substantial harm to, or the total loss of, assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

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.
3. Proposals which conserve those elements of a conservation area that make a positive contribution to the area (or which better reveal its significance) should be supported.

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
- Whaley Bridge Conservation Area Appraisal (2008)

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would not alter or effect the significance of the Conservation Area and setting of the Listed Buildings. This would satisfy the provisions of s.72 and 66 of the Act. In relation to planning policies, the works would comply with the conservation of the significance of the designated heritage assets (policy HE4, HE5, HE6 and HE9 of the NPPF and policy EQ7 of the local development framework). There are no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson