

# **Pavilion Gardens Phase 1: Pavilion Arts Centre Paxton Suite Refurbishment**

## **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

### **Overview:**

Planning permission is sought for the refurbishment of the Paxton Suite, part of the Pavilion Gardens complex. The remodelled Pavilion Arts Centre would provide a multi-function space, with a wide range of facilities. The first configuration creates a 372 seat auditorium with stage, for use in theatre productions, lectures and conferences. With the bleacher seating retracted, and loose seats removed, the auditorium can be used as a flat floor hall, for exhibitions, auctions, fairs or meetings. A smaller 95 seat Studio Theatre is created on the stage for smaller, less formal productions or lectures. The facility will be used by the Pavilion Gardens Complex, the University of Derby and by Buxton Opera House, in addition to smaller user groups, which will provide a wide ranging programme of events.

### **The Physical & Social Context:**

"The Pavilion Gardens is located due west of The Crescent and Spa Complex in the centre of Buxton. The rear of the building faces north onto St John's Road. The main public access is from the south elevation with a number of entrances opening out onto the associated parkland.

The contribution of the Pavilion Gardens complex to the character of the townscape is substantial. Situated in the core of the historic centre of Buxton, the area around Water Street, the Square and the Crescent, the complex as a whole provides a critical focal point in terms of the townscape.

The buildings in their present configuration provide vital facilities for the local community in recreational and social terms as well as in the wider tourism context. The community value of the buildings in their current use is therefore high and the continual use and development of the recreational facilities is highly significant in cultural and heritage terms. " (*Pavilion Gardens Conservation Statement, Plann.it Ltd*)

### **Historical Context**

In November 1867 the 7th Duke of Devonshire proposed the building of a Winter Gardens; a large summerhouse for the recreation of visitors during cold or wet weather. These were constructed in 1871. The Octagon Concert Hall was added in 1875, followed in 1889 by the Paxton Suite, a theatre designed by WR Bryden. In 1903 the complex was significantly remodelled and the Opera House and conservatory added. The Opera House supplanted the role of the Paxton Suite, which as a result was converted to a cinema named The Hippodrome. This remained in use until 1932.

In 1935 the complex was again substantially re-designed. The Hippodrome reverted to use as a theatre and was renamed The Playhouse. The Foyer and stage were remodelled in an art deco style in keeping with the rest of the complex. New seating was installed with a single aisle down the centre

In 1982, the Central hall was gutted by fire. Following this, the complex and the Paxton Suite were further altered. The Paxton Suite was converted to a conference hall, the theatre seating was removed, and an incongruous suspended grid ceiling was installed. The latter concealed the

vaulted ceiling and the town coat of arms above the proscenium. The Paxton Suite is currently used to house fairs, auctions, meetings and conferences both singly, and as an ancillary space to the Octagon.

### **Vehicle access & pedestrian approach**

Vehicle access to the complex is via St. Johns Road, to a car park at the west end of the site. A small number of metered on-street parking spaces are available on St Johns Road and Water Street on the north of the building. A bus-stop is situated directly outside the main St. Johns Road entrance. There are no alterations to these arrangements as part of the scheme.

Due to the slope of the site, pedestrian entrance to the complex exists at both Garden level from the south side and off St Johns Street to the north. Circulation within the complex is via stairs in the main hall. Disabled access between Garden and Street levels is via a stair lift.

Existing pedestrian access to the building will be retained and the St Johns Road entrance will be enhanced with the addition of a new entrance canopy. A second entrance is proposed off St Johns Road to the new Studio Theatre, which will also have an entrance canopy, stairs and a new wheelchair ramp.

### **Statutory Consultation:**

The new extension has been the subject of pre-application discussions between Marsh:Grochowski Architects and the following parties. Their comments have been incorporated wherever possible.

- Richard Tuffrey, Conservation officer, High Peak Borough Council, and through him, English Heritage
- Peter Edwards, Highways Officer, Derbyshire District Council
- Chris Lines, Development Control, High Peak Borough Council
- Robert Bruce, Derbyshire Fire Service

### **Use:**

It is intended to create a multi-purpose, multi-function space which can be used for a wide variety of uses. These are as follows:

#### Main Theatre Configuration:

- 372 seat auditorium with raked seating on balcony, bleacher, and on raked rostra in stalls. Sliding folding partition in retracted position. Studio theatre bleacher in retracted position. Full stage in use. For use in theatre, lectures, conferences and music recitals.

#### Auditorium only

- 372 seat auditorium with raked seating on balcony, bleacher, and on raked (or flat) rostra in stalls. Sliding folding partition in open position to divide spaces. Reduced depth stage in use. For lectures, conferences or music recitals.
- Bleacher retracted. Flat floor hall for use in fairs, exhibitions, auctions, meetings and conferences.

#### Stage only

- Studio theatre: 95 raked seat bleacher extended. Sliding folding partition in open position to divide spaces. For smaller, less formal theatre productions or lectures.
- Bleacher retracted. Small flat floor hall for use in exhibitions and meetings.

#### **Area:**

The proposal is primarily for refurbishment of an existing building, with a very small new area of storage created at basement level. (26sq.m) This is reclaimed from below the new stage area, and so will have no effect on the external appearance of the building.

#### **Concept:**

The concept for the scheme is that the original features of the building should be uncovered and enhanced. This would remove incongruous additions such as the suspended ceiling in the main auditorium, and reinstate elements such as the rooflights, which have been slated over. New interventions will be minimal and reversible. Original features such as the ventilation grilles and cowls will be brought back into use. Elements such as the entrance canopies (which did exist over the St Johns Road entrance), which have been lost, will be reinstated.

#### **Scale:**

N/A - as existing

#### **Landscaping:**

N/A

#### **Materials and Construction:**

The existing building is constructed of traditional vernacular materials. Given the listed status of the building, any alterations externally will be carried out in materials to match existing. New materials internally are generally lightweight stud partitions. Where new loadbearing walls are required, it is proposed that these are constructed in blockwork and plastered.

#### **Sustainability:**

The existing building has little insulation and the windows and doors are in need of repair. The new scheme will upgrade the insulation in the roof, and will replace the windows and doors with new meeting current regulations. In this way, the heat losses through the building fabric and the energy consumption can be reduced. Elements such as the reinstated rooflights will reduce the some of the requirement for artificial lighting

**Access:**

The existing building is partially accessible, with level entry being available to both the garden and street levels. There is currently no wheelchair access to the upper floors, the stage end of the Paxton Suite auditorium, the stage itself or to the basement changing area. The scheme will provide the following:

- Wheelchair access to the whole of the flat floored Auditorium, and designated wheelchair seating positions
- Wheelchair access from the auditorium to the Stage / Studio Theatre
- Ambulant disabled access to the basement changing rooms
- Disabled toilet / actors changing in the Studio theatre
- Ambulant disabled access to and escape from the balcony
- Wheelchair access to the Studio Theatre from the street.
- Colour schemes will be designed for the visually impaired and an induction loop will be provided.

Access to the upper floors of the complex is outwith the remit of this project. Suggestions have been made for how this could be accommodated in the future, and this scheme does not prevent this.