BLACKBROOK HOUSE
VISITORS CENTRE

BUGSWORTH BASIN
HIGH PEAK
SK23 7NF

PLANNING APPLICATION
DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT
OCTOBER 2009

British Waterways

11161

INTRODUCTION

SCHEME DETAILS

Site Location	Bugsworth Basin, Buxworth, High Peak, Derbyshire SK23 7NE
Development	Relocation of the existing visitors centre from shipping containers into a dedicated new build facility, to be called Blackbrook House Visitors Centre, which will house and provide an improved interpretive exhibition about Bugsworth Basins history and heritage.
Date. Prepared	October 2009
Applicant	British Waterways Waterside House, Waterside Drive, Wigan, WN3 5AZ
Agent	John McCall Architects, No1 Arts Village, Henry Street, Liverpool, L1 5BS Tel 0151 707 1818 Fax 0151 707 1819 admin@johnmccall.co.uk

The** DESIGN **Process

ASSESSMENT

Physical

Situated at the head of the Peak Forest Canal, Bugsworth Basin comprises the largest and most complete surviving example of an inland transhipment port ever created on the English narrow canal network, which once extended to over three thousand miles of canals. The basin incorporates the terminal interchange between the Peak Forest Canal and its associated tramway and was once a thriving industrial centre for the transhipment of over six hundred tonnes of limestone, gritstone and lime per day - aswell as comprising a localised centre for the production of burnt lime.

The Basin complex contains many structural and artifactual features that are almost, if not completely unique to the British Inland Waterways Network. The Peak Forest Tramway *(the connecting flow lines of which traverse the entire Basin complex),* opened in 1796, and was certainly one of the very early mineral railways to service a British Inland Waterways based transport system, and ranks amongst the earliest Derbyshire railways to have been fitted with iron rails.

The Basin incorporates the substantial remains of at least four lime kilns and associated structural features which bear witness to its former importance within the local lime trade and regional economic development, the Basin complex also demonstrates clear structural evidence of its morphological transition from canal-company to railway-company ownership through its substantial surviving industrial architecture.

With so much historical and archaeological importance associated with Bugsworth Basin, it was consequently designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument in December 1977. The surviving eight acres (3.24 hectares) covered by Bugsworth Basin contains a wide range of extant archaeological features, which include transhipment wharves, tramway flowlines, limekilns and the foundation remains of transhipment and warehouse buildings. The Basin complex also retains its original Wharfinger's House, office and stables, which are Grade II Listed Buildings, although these properties are now in private ownership.

Restoration and renovation of Bugsworth Basin began in 1968 by volunteers of the Inland Waterways Protection Society (IWPS) helped by the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) restored parts of this important site over three decades. Work included the sealing of the bottom of the basin to prevent leakage and extensive stonework repair. In 2003 Bugsworth Basin was re-opened to boat traffic and to full navigation and has become a focal point for pleasure boaters, who use this former inland transhipment port for short-term moorings.

Fig. 1 Aerial view of proposed site highlighted in yellow

Inland Waterways Protection Society Ltd has, since 1968, achieved:

- the restoration of the final 457 metres of the original Peak Forest Canal main line (Basin Approach Canal) to full navigation depth and condition,

- the restoration of the main channel through the Basin complex, and five of the six wharfage basins to full navigable depth and condition,

- the reconstruction of historically accurate replicas of the bridges on the Tramway Embankment, Lower Basin and Lower Basin Arm,

- the installation of a sanitation facility for the use of the boating community.

An integral part of these achievements has included strenuous, and successful, attempts to safeguard the historic and archaeological integrity of the site by:

- opposing the proposed construction of a commercial marina, thus preventing the destruction of the Central Peninsula,

and,

campaigning successfully to divert the course of the A6 By-Pass, thus preventing the destruction of the entire Basin complex, including the Basin Approach Canal, Canal Bank Cottages, the Wharfinger's House, Stables and a considerable length of the Peak Forest Tramway and Interchange.

Fig. 2 Photo of the wider Bugsworth Basin

Fig. 3 Photo of Bugsworth Basin post-restoration

The aspirations of British Waterways *(BW)* and The Inland Waterways Protection Society *(IWPS),* is to continue and build on this rejuvenation and continue to make further improvements which include an improved interpretive exhibition about Bugsworth's history and the reopening of part of the tramway in the hope that the basin will function increasingly as an important recreational amenity and educational resource for the benefit of visitors of all ages and abilities. In addition to this, the facility will also be used as a base for the IWPS to manage and maintain the Basin and also enable them to house and display archive material telling the story of the site.

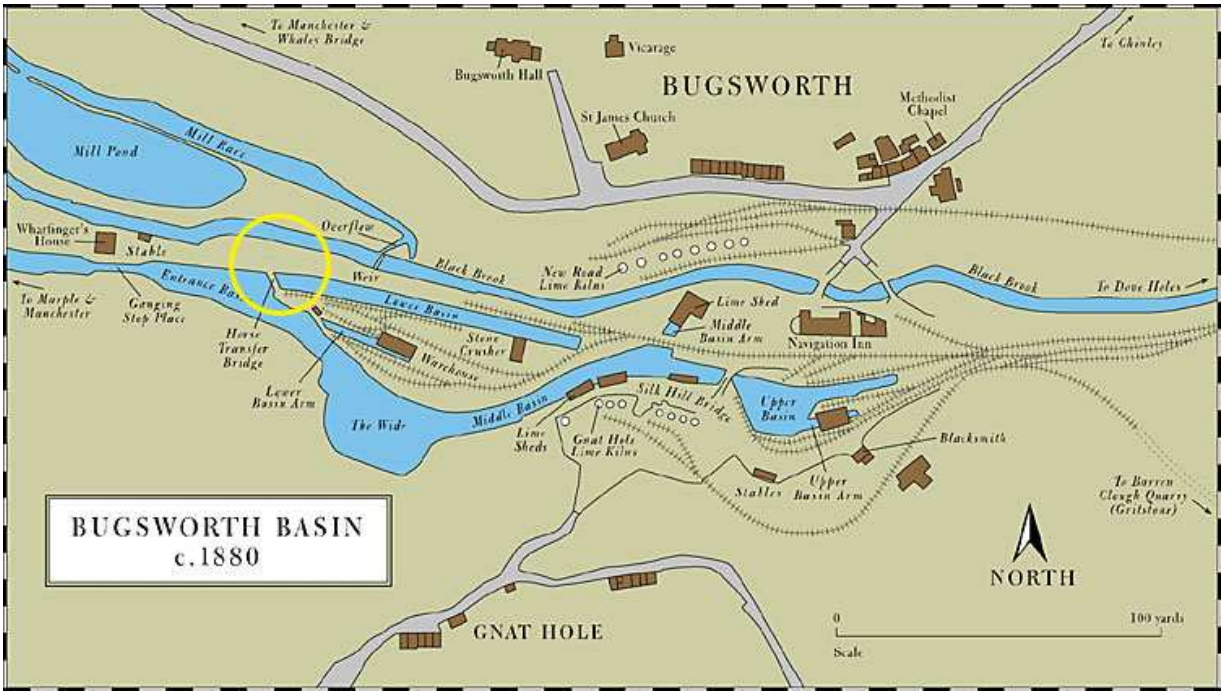

Fig. 4 Map of Bugsworth Basin from 1880

Social & Economic

The basin is situated on the fringe of the Peak District National Park and the purpose of the extensive restoration has been to develop this industrial heritage site as a tourist centre to highlight and increase visitor's awareness of the significance of Bugsworth Basin's industrial history and heritage, through its archaeological and restored remains within the basin.

The proposed visitors centre is intended to relocate the existing facilities *(Fig. 7)* from its existing metal storage containers to a dedicated facility that compliments and builds on the restoration and rejuvenation that has already taken place in the area. The new visitors centre will provide an enhanced and more apt environment for visitors that does justice, and compliments the renovation work that has been carried out at Bugsworth Basin.

Aswell as enhancing visitor's experience of Bugsworth Basin, Blackbrook House also aims to provide a facility that can be used by the wider community, particularly educational groups of all ages.

The wider educational aspects are of particular importance in terms of teaching industrial, archaeological and economic history to students of varied age groups. Bugsworth Basin has, over the years, been visited by numerous student groups from the UK, including Losehill Hall, Castleton, as well as by academic staff from overseas, notably the University of the Means of Communication (formerly the Institute of Railway Engineers) of St Petersburg, Russia and from the South Dakota State University, USA. More recently, visits have included schoolchildren, both local (Buxworth) and from Ecclesall (Sheffield) during the Summer of 1998, and Humanities undergraduates from the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) during the Autumn of 1997 and 1998. Additionally, IWPS Ltd has supplied the MMU with historical and archaeological literature for educational purposes, and is currently producing new publications to complement and enhance the existing series.

It is hoped that Blackbrook House will enhance recreation, tourism and employment along the canal corridor, particularly at Bugsworth Basin, with a strong economic and environmental case for developing Whaley Bridge, with its excellent transport links, as the main gateway to Busgworth Basin.
The towpath walk to the Basin itself can be promoted as an integral part of the waterway experience, with an interpretative trail starting from the centre of Whaley Bridge. By using Whaley Bridge as the starting point then this will enable the town and its businesses to capture a higher proportion of visitor spend, on goods, services and refreshments.

Fig. 5 Cast-iron name plate recovered during the excavation of the Middle Basin Arm in 1976

Fig. 6 New Road lime shed straddling the head of the Middle Basin, 1928

Planning Policy

The site for the proposed Visitors Centre lies south west of the village of Bugsworth on land that falls within the Bugsworth Conservation Area and is also a Scheduled Monument. In addition the site lies within an area of designated open countryside, which is also, adopted Green Belt.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 – Green Belts, advises that small essential buildings for recreational purposes are not inappropriate development provided that they are designed and sited to minimise their impact on the green belt and their use of materials and character do not cause harm to the visual amenities or character of the area. Policies OC1 and OC2 of the High Peak Saved Local Plan endorse this advice.

On a more detailed level, Policy LT11 of the Adopted High Peak Local Plan provides guidance for development in the vicinity of 'Canals and Canal Basins'. In the preamble to this Policy it specifically identifies the need for opportunities to enhance recreation, tourism and employment opportunities along the canal corridor, particularly at Bugsworth Basin. It also advises that there may be scope to interpret the industrial archaeological significance of the Canal.

Involvement

A public consultation event was carried out prior to the submission of the planning application that provided a mixed response to the proposed works. Pre-application advice has been sought from High Peak Borough Council's planning and conservation officers. Advice and dialogue has also been sought from English Heritage, which concluded that a contemporary approach to the design of the new visitors centre would be appropriate for the area.

Peter Whitehead—Society Historian
Elizabeth Pleasant—High Peak BC, Planner
Joanne Brooks—High Peak BC, Conservation Officer
John Humble—English Heritage

Fig. 7 Existing visitors centre and exhibition facilities

Evaluation

In total there were four proposed locations *(Fig. 8)* for the potential siting of Blackbrook House, as indicated by the aerial photo. All the sites had their various opportunities and constraints, and these were all evaluated and assessed.

Constraints; The site houses a group of shipping containers (see Fig. 7) which are used for storage by IWPS and currently serve as the visitors centre. The site is restricted in size; it is bound to the north by a retaining wall which creates a 5 metre drop down to the lower Blackbrook. To the south of the site is a track which is the main vehicular and pedestrian access to Buxworth Basin and serves a number of private dwellings which lie to the west of the site, including canal cottages and the Wharfingers house. To the immediate west of the site is an existing small facilities building which houses a slop room, toilet and an office / shop. The site ground conditions consists of fill down to river level and will require specialist foundation techniques.

Opportunities; The site occupies a key location on the on the main circulation spine of the basin and is at an intersection of routes, being immediately adjacent to the ramp access to the system of footbridges which carry pedestrians over the lower basin and warehouse arms. The visitor centre, shop and toilets are a well established use and the site is a natural point of attraction for pedestrian, cyclist and boater visitors. The site is generally level and free of vegetation.

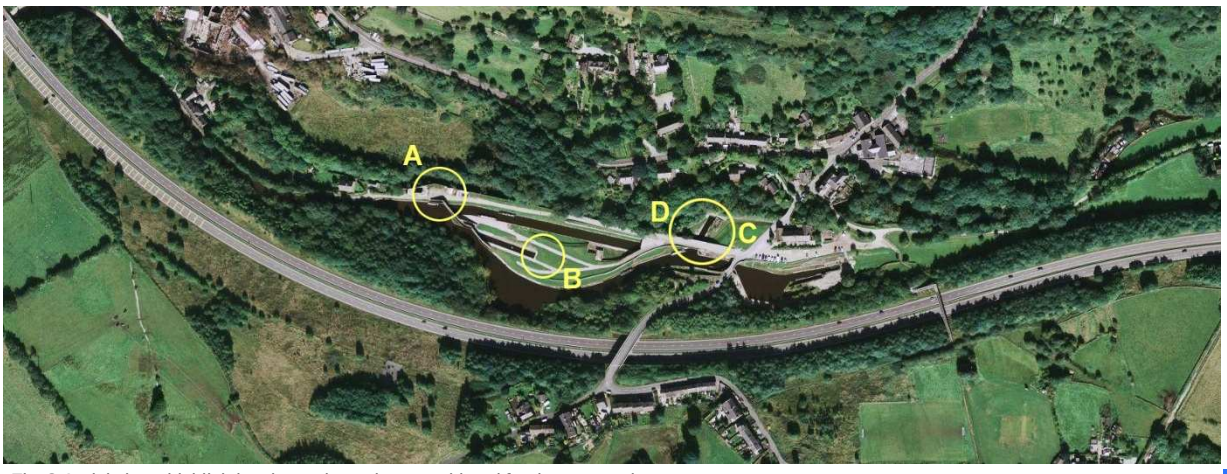

Fig. 8 Aerial photo highlighting the various sites considered for the proposal

DESIGN

The proposal is for a modest single storey building, consisting of a central section with a shallow mono-pitched roof which contains exhibition space, entrance hall and retail area. This central section is flanked by two lower flat roofed blocks, the smaller of which to the west houses 2No. wheelchair accessible public WC's and the larger block to the east contains a store/workshop and meeting room for the use of IWPS. The two flank blocks are clad in coursed natural gritstone and the central section has a glazed wall to the south, with plain rendered external walls to the north, west and east and also to the workshop 'block' to the east of the building.

USE

PPG2 and particularly LTH - Canals and Canal Basins (High Peak saved local plan policies) describe the appropriateness of new facilities that contribute to and enhance recreation, tourism and employment, particularly at Bugsworth Basin. Blackbrook House is intended to act as a facility that will display the interpretive exhibition of Bugsworth Basin's story, which will be relocated from the current metal storage containers. In turn this will dispose of these containers.

The facility will also be used as a base for the IWPS to manage and maintain the basin and also enable them to house and display archive material telling the story of the site. Opportunities for use by the wider community will also be encouraged.

LAYOUT

The aspiration for the internal planning is to organise the small number of spaces into a flexible arrangement, with the main visitor entrance as a multi use space which serves as a waiting , retail and circulation area. Off this entrance lobby is the main exhibition space, which is a simple well proportioned volume with three walls available for display and the fourth wall being floor to ceiling glazing. This creates a calm, robust space with good natural light on the exhibits and with views into the basin and of passing pedestrians and boats. Additionally accessed off the entrance lobby is a good sized meeting room/office for the use of IWPS and a wheelchair accessible WC and kitchenette for the use of staff/volunteers. All spaces are on one level and all doors will be level access, wheelchair accessible.

At the west end of the building and accessed directly from outside are two wheelchair standard WCs which will be accessible for public use. At the east end is a store/workshop for IWPS which is accessed from a hardstanding area. To the north of the building is a secure yard which will provide bin storage.

SCALE AND APPEARANCE

The main driver for the design of the proposal is to create a building with provides the necessary facilities for Bugsworth Basin without being overly intrusive. The fundamental criterion is to respect the fact that this is a scheduled ancient monument. In view of this the proposal is conceived as a simple, single storey building consisting of a series of low blocks in a linear composition.

The east and west flat roof blocks act as visual buttresses to the slightly higher central section, with its lightweight roof. All external walls are simple rectangular shapes constructed in either local gritstone or natural coloured render.

The glazed entrance and exhibition space wall provide a lightweight, modern counterpoint to thest earthbound materials. The scale of the building is carefully controlled to reflect its context, whilst great care has been taken to avoid a pastiche of 'traditional' forms.

LANDSCAPING

The site is in an exclusively hard landscaped area of the basin, visually softened by the views of trees across the canal and the river, and enlivened by the movement of water and the bright colours of the canal boats. The proposal is to create a paved yard to the rear (north) of the building for bin storage, a paved area to the west of the building providing level access to the existing and new toilets, a hard-standing to the east for maintenance, vehicular access and turning for bin wagons and for the existing trackway to form the hard area to the front (south) of the building. The proposal is to fit a sedum roof to the two flat roof sections of the building.

ACCESS AND TRANSPORT

Transport for Leisure Ltd. has produced an innovative report, titled—Bugsworth Basin / Whaley Bridge Traffic Management & Sustainable Transport Plan. This study forms part of the Mopark EU Interreg IIIB North Sea Region Canal Link Project into the Peak District National Park and conforms to British Waterways' own recently adopted strategy for sustainable transport outlined in the 2004 BW report.

Vision as outlined in the Bugsworth Basin/Whaley Bridge Traffic Managements and Sustainable Transport Plan –

Development and placement of Bugsworth Basin as a focal point of a green network of walking, cycling and symbiotic public transport routes (bus, train and boat), which will unhook the leisure experience at Bugsworth Basin from dependency on private car. The prime thrust of marketing and promotion should be Bugsworth Basin as a walking, boating and cycling destination linked to existing bus, train and boat networks. This is not to suggest, for one moment that cars should be 'banned' from Bugsworth Basin. Far from it. But this suggests that the prime thrust of interpretation, marketing and promotion should be to promote, in the most positive ways possible, Bugsworth Basin as a walking, boating and cycling destination, linked to the available, possibly enhanced, bus and train and even boat networks, which must also be promoted closely with more sustainable ways of accessing the Peak National Park.

This vision and the Sustainable Transport Plan accords very much with British Waterways' own national strategy for sustainable rural transport development as outlined in Water Ways: Inland Waterways and Sustainable Rural Transport. This strategy clearly defines the degree to which encouraging greater use of the UK inland waterway network for green travel will enable the Government's national transport objectives to be realised.
In developing the facilities on offer at the site there is a need to persuade people that they have a realistic and acceptable alternative method of transport and the 'green option' is the most meaningful way of accessing / discovering the site.

The site is ideally located close to an excellent network of local rail and bus services which gives a real opportunity to promote it as a strong 'green destination' in its own right as well as providing access to the Peak District National Park.

There is a strong economic and environmental case for developing Whaley Bridge, with its excellent transport links, as the main gateway to Busgworth Basin. The towpath walk to the Basin itself can be promoted as an integral part of the waterway experience, with an interpretative trail starting from the centre of Whaley Bridge. By using Whaley Bridge as the starting point then this will enable the town and its businesses to capture a higher proportion of visitor spend, on goods, services and refreshments.

There is the potential that the nearby Tesco Supermarket will have the capacity for parking provision. Tesco supermarket car park has 300 spaces and from past observation appears to have plenty of spare capacity even at times of high demand. Capacity is likely to be even greater at times of highest demand at Bugsworth Basin, especially on Sundays and Bank Holidays. There is access from the car park directly onto the towpath allowing access to both Whaley Bridge, Bugsworth and beyond. Whilst it depends on individual managers of stores, and we haven't yet approached Tesco about this proposal, there is precedent for this arrangement. The Industrial Discovery Centre at East Pool near Redruth is owned by the National Trust and there is an agreement in place with Morrisons for visitor parking using spare capacity at their car park. Again there could also be an advantage for the supermarket in that visitors who park there may also call in at the start or end of their visit to pick up some shopping. Further collaboration with local businesses include the nearby Navigation Inn. Currently there is an agreement that parking provision is shared between the visitors to the basin aswell as customers to the Navigation Inn, and it is envisaged that this provision will continue in the long term future.

Development of the Green Networks

Perhaps the most important measure of all, to develop Bugsworth Basin as a high profile green tourism destination which lies on important walking, cycling and public transport networks, a destination and an experience to be enjoyed as part of active travel. This will require development of the Peak Forest Canal Towpath from New Mills and Whaley Bridge into a multi-user leisure route, served by frequent train and bus services, available for cyclists, walkers, and those in wheelchairs. As mentioned above these enhancements are taking place this financial year. There are a number of connecting routes that converge at Bugsworth Basin and the proposed waterbus will provide a park and ride facility as well as being a major visitor attraction in its own right, animating the site.

Fig. 9 Visualisation

Fig. 10 Visualisation

SUSTAINABILITY

The proposal is for a compact building with a relatively efficient footprint and coastline. It is likely that the construction method will be a timber frame with level of insulation. All windows will be high specification double glazed. All spaces will be naturally ventilated, heating is to be electric under-floor and there will be good natural lighting. Artificial lighting will be by low energy fittings.

Because of the budgetary constraints it will not be possible to fit renewable energy devices initially, however, provision will be made to retrofit solar and photovoltaic panels as appropriate in the future.

CONCLUSION

The proposed building which is the subject of this planning application will provide much needed facilities for Bugsworth Basin, and will replace a group of unsightly shipping containers which have been in use on the site a temporary means of providing interpretive and storage accommodation for a considerable period of time.

The proposal is a careful balance between the conflicting criteria which are presented by the context, the functional brief, the geometry and structure of the site, its status of scheduled ancient monument, the circulation patterns and many more considerations.

We feel that the proposal represents a very valuable opportunity to create a building of high quality and of carefully considered design which will be a major contributor to the long term future of Bugsworth Basin and to the economic and cultural health of the High Peak region.

Fig. 11 Visualisation

Fig. 12 Visualisation