

Derbyshire Landscape and Placemaking

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Appeal A, Enforcement Notice Appeal: APP/H1033/C/22/3297854 &

Appeal B, s78 Appeal relating to 184 Taxal Edge APP/H1033/W/21/3272745

Taxal Edge, 184 Macclesfield Road, Whaley Bridge, SK23 7DR

DRAFT URBAN DESIGN STATEMENT by Mary McGuire of Derbyshire Landscape and Placemaking, for High Peak Borough Council

Date: 21/10/2022. Our Ref: DL&P/UD/16.10-V1

Mary McGuire and Anton Cannell together offer a service to local government departments across Derbyshire and Staffordshire, offering independent specialist advice based over 25 years of experience within the fields of planning, landscape, and urban design. Mary McGuire qualified as a Town Planner and worked with Durham City Council, and the London Borough of Greenwich. She also holds a Masters Degree in Landscape Design, and a Masters of Architecture in Sustainable Urban Design with distinction, (including Breeam AG). She has experience in masterplanning, urban design and community consultation and has also worked for BDP, Latham Architects, and as a private consultant involved in corporate responsibility projects. Mary also worked for 2 years between 2018 and 2021 at Derbyshire County Council as a Development Control Urban Designer, funded by MHCLG (Design Quality Fund), specifically for the improvement of design of new housing developments and the impact on the landscape of Derbyshire. (RTPI Member:29778)

This statement relates to:

Appeal A - APP/H1033/C/22/3297854 – Concerns Physical Work to a single dwelling of an original classroom block, and;

Appeal B - s78 App APP/H1033/W/21/3272745 - Demolition of existing building known as Taxal Edge and the erection of 7no dwellings and garage / study blocks.

Reason for Refusal:

1. The scheme would not be well related to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses or be of an appropriate scale for this aspect of the Whaley Bridge settlement. In addition, the scheme would constitute poor design and fails to understand the site's defining characteristics. Furthermore, the scheme's design / layout would result in overbearing and shading impacts to an unacceptable level of amenity to be enjoyed by the future occupiers of Plots 1 and 2.

The development therefore fails to comply with Policies S1, S1a, S2, S6, H1, EQ2, EQ3 and EQ6 of the Adopted High Peak Local Plan, the Adopted High Peak Design Guide, the Adopted Residential Design Guide and Adopted Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Documents and the National Planning Policy Framework.

This statement assesses the built form and character of Appeal A, with a view to assessing its relationship to Appeal B, in its existing form and 'reverted scale and form' prior to development.

Scenario discussed include:

- a.) Appeal B scheme with the former classroom building in its built form today.

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- b.) Appeal B scheme with the classroom block to be converted as originally approved.
- c.) The 2009 consent for the approved main building, garage and classroom conversions.

Relevant Policies:

The NPPF; The National Design Guide; The High Peak Local Plan 2016; High Peak Design Guide 2018, and the High Peak Residential Design SPD2 2005. The relevant policies are expanded upon in the following sections.

1. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT:

1.1 Appeal A comprises a single dwelling of a former classroom block.

1.2 Appeal B comprises the demolition of the existing building known as “Taxal Edge” and the detached garage building, and the erection of 4 no. semi-detached and 3 no. detached dwellings. All of the dwellings are described by the appellant as 2.5 storeys in height each with an integral garage and all except one of the properties would have 4 bedrooms (the remaining dwelling having six bedrooms). Each house would be constructed of reclaimed natural gritstone facing, grey aluminium windows and a blue/grey natural slate roof.

1.3 The image (2a) below submitted as part of the application provides a perspective view of the proposed development in terms of building form and layout of access road, driveways, gardens and boundary treatments, within the boundary of the site itself.



2. SITE CONTEXT

2.1 Appeal sites A and B are situated next to one another in an elevated position to the west of Whaley Bridge on the slopes of a prominent wooded ridge known as Taxal Edge. They lie outside the built-up Area Boundary of Whaley Bridge, other than where the shared access track to the appeal sites and a few other properties joins with the Macclesfield Road, as defined on the Policies Map within the Adopted Local Plan. There is a distinct change between the built-up character of the

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settlement and the woodland landscape character of the sites. Appeal site B is approximately 350m from the Peak District National Park boundary.

3. LANDSCAPE SETTING.

3.1 The landscape statement by Anton Cannel explains the sensitivity of the site with reference to the AMES (Areas Multiple Environmental Sensitivity) and concludes that the Taxal Edge is a distinctive local natural feature in the landscape with public footpath links to residential areas. The woodland that is adjacent to the site on several sides consists of numerous mature trees of ecological and amenity value, it makes a positive contribution to the local and wider landscape and could be vulnerable to development.



3.2 Urban Design considerations are holistically linked with setting and context. As the site is located within a woodland setting and beyond the settlement boundary within open countryside, there will be a degree of overlap with the landscape statement.

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4. RELEVANT POLICIES & COMMENTARY

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2022

Part 12. Achieving well-designed places

4.1 Paragraph 130. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping*
- c) *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) *d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) *e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) *f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.*

4.2 The gap between the settlement edge and the development with its singular driveway in and out and high walled boundary, will result in a standalone development which will not integrate well into the existing settlement, appearing relatively separated within its woodland setting. This would not add to the overall quality of the built-up area whilst detracting from the wooded ridge and backdrop of the settlement.

4.4 The cumulative development of the former classroom building and the proposed new development of 7 houses would not result in a good architecture. The elevations have too many windows of different opening styles which appear unbalanced within the semi-detached typology due to the step-in levels. A reduction in window size especially in the upper floors and roof would relate to more traditional vernacular styles. The resultant proposed rooflines are dominated by large dormers and too greater step level changes that detracts from the opportunity to have a simple roofline that could read as a traditional housing ridgeline. The use of projecting box style windows, and bay windows with a longitudinal window opening at the third floor on houses 5 and 6 and 7 also creates an incongruous design that belies the possibility of using simple repetition to create a more harmonious contextual development. The use of glass balconies and integral garages are not sympathetic to local character. The underground garages with podium terraces and glass balustrades also result in a hard alien introduction within the natural landscape setting of the site.

4.5 The development of a hybrid version of 'grand villas' in a contemporary style in this elevated location would be out of character with the surrounding built development and landscape setting. The size and scale of the nearby housing developments appear more integrated and nestled within the valley. Whilst there is a strong linear development along Macclesfield Road with infill housing estates to the rear on either side, these estates maintain a domestic scale of predominantly 2 storeys and are not prominent in the landscape in that they relate to existing field patterns and

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geographical features. The proposed development whilst facing across the valley is set out in a tight group of large houses which gives the development an intensity which reads as over development within the woodland context.

4.6 The scheme creates a strong sense of enclosed development with strong facades and a layout dominated by hard surfaces and driveway; however, this distracts from the sense of place that is Whaley Bridge and its landscape setting. The character of Whaley Bridge is closely linked to its setting within the peak district landscape with Taxal Edge forming a distinct landscape ridge and identity to the settlement. The development will erode this strong landscape feature. The comments of the Highways officer establishes that the access road will be wider than on the approved plans resulting in a 5-5.5m wide carriageway, rather than 3.5m as shown. This will result in more hard surfacing and retaining with steeper gradients on the driveways leading to greater loss of character of the existing site.

4.7 The demolishing of the existing main building and the repetition of townhouse development represents a loss of potential of the site to create a better relationship of buildings that would provide a more characterful development relating to the historical development of the site. A mixture of apartments and more traditional house styles that would provide variety and relate better to the original setting within the woodland.

4.8 The development is stand alone and less likely to be integrated into the settlement framework and therefore less cohesive as a whole.

4.9 Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.

4.10 This will be covered in the following paragraphs where it will be demonstrated that the development does not reflect local design policies and guidance.

Part 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.11 Paragraph 174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

4.12 The development fails to recognise the intrinsic character of the countryside in this location, with increasing loss of existing trees and loss of green space. The layout results in suburban style gardens that will most likely develop into individual private gardens of different styles and character, resulting in the loss of the woodland landscape.

NATIONAL DESIGN GUIDE - 2021

4.13 The National Design Guide addresses the question of how we recognise well designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government's priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics that interact to create an overall character of place. Good design considers how a development proposal can make a contribution towards all of them.

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4.14 The Components of Good Design are:

Layout: Defines the structure or settlement pattern; the grain - the pattern of development blocks and plots; and the broad distribution of different uses, and their densities or building heights.

Form: Form is the three-dimensional shape and modelling of buildings and the spaces they define. Buildings and spaces can take many forms, depending upon their: size and shape in plan; height; bulk - their volume; massing - how bulk is shaped into a form; building lines - the alignment of building frontages along a street; and relationship to the plot boundary - and whether they share party walls or not. In the case of spaces, their form is influenced by the buildings around them.

Scale: Scale is the height, width and length of each building proposed within a development in relation to its surroundings. This relates both to the overall size and massing of individual buildings and spaces in relation to their surroundings, and to the scale of their parts.

Enclosure is the relationship between the height of the buildings across a space, and the dimension of the space itself. Different degrees of enclosure influence how people use different spaces, by creating differences in character that suit different activities.

Appearance : Appearance is the aspects of a building or space within the development which determine the visual impression the building or space makes, including the external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture. In the case of a space, its landscape also influences its appearance.

Landscape: is the treatment of land (other than buildings) for the purpose of enhancing or protecting the amenities of the site, the area in which it is situated and the natural environment. Landscape includes landform and drainage, hard landscape such as surfacing, boundary treatments, street furniture and play equipment. It also includes soft landscape – trees, shrubs and other planting.

Materials: The materials used for a building or landscape affect how well it functions and lasts over time. They also influence how it relates to what is around it and how it is experienced. The scale, form and appearance of a building influence what materials may be appropriate for its construction. Materials should be practical, durable, affordable and attractive. Choosing the right materials can greatly help new development to fit harmoniously with its surroundings.

Detailing : The details of a building are the individual components and how they are put together. Some are a deliberate part of the appearance of a building, including doors, windows and their surrounds, porches, decorative features and ironmongery. Others are functional, although they can also contribute to the appearance of a building. These include lighting, flues and ventilation, gutters, pipes and other rainwater details. Detailing affects the appearance of a building or space and how it is experienced. It also affects how well it weathers and lasts over time.

4.15 The developments within this part of Whaley Bridge are more rectilinear and smaller and more densely laid out, whereas the grain of this development is large and close with a bulkiness and fussiness that provides a different character.

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4.16 The buildings tend to increase in bulk and height towards the former classroom building. The building forms are dominant within a strong slightly curved building line. The line is formed to align with the contours and to make the most of elevated views from the site through the existing trees.

4.17 The relationship to the plot boundaries is poor to the rear where the proposed properties have small rear gardens overshadowed by woodland and proposed high stone walls. There will be a poor level of proportion of private outdoor space to size of dwellings. The resultant street frontage arrangement will be poor due to the number and length of driveways, limitations of shapes of the remaining garden spaces, and poor termination at the end of the driveways of the two large subterranean double garages, accompanied by split boundary retaining walls.

4.18 Due to the sloping nature of the site, the housing tends to have wider frontages than depth. The design response to this is to create more articulation and double frontages with a set back within the semi-detached properties and one of the detached houses. The appearance can be read as 14 elevations rather than 7 because of this strong articulation. The proposed large dormers on the front and the rear are bulky and read so in section, disrupting the roof profile of the houses. The housing Type C with 6 bedrooms clearly reads as a three-storey dwelling at the front with the twin gabled front elevation and repetition of vertical same size windows emphasising the height of the frontage. Refer to 3d image demonstrating the scale and massing of the houses with an appearance of being cumulatively 3 stories are highly likely to dominate the scale of space in front of them. This will be particularly evident when viewed over the wall into the site or when entering into the site due to elevated nature of the houses which will magnify their height, particularly with a sloping driveway up to the front elevation. This is certainly the effect created by the former classroom building when looking up towards it from below.

4.19 The cumulative development of the former classroom building and the proposed new development of 7 houses would not result in a good architecture. The elevations have too many windows of different openings styles which appear unbalanced within the semi-detached typology due to the step-in levels. A reduction in window sizes would relate to more traditional vernacular styles. The resultant rooflines are dominated by large dormers and too many level changes that detracts from the opportunity to have a simple roofline that could read as a traditional housing ridgeline. The use of projecting box style windows, and bay windows with a longitudinal window opening at the third floor on houses 5, 6 and 7 also creates an incongruous design that belies the possibility of using simple repetition to create a more harmonious contextual development. The use of glass balconies and integral garages are not sympathetic to local character. The underground garages with podium terraces and glass balustrades also result in a hard alien-built environment within the natural landscape setting of the site. Overall the architecture can be described as an attempt to be a modern townhouse / villa with an attempt to capitalise on views with large windows and balconies and a car dominated frontage.

4.20 Landscape impact will also be covered by the Council's Landscape Statement evidence.

4.21 The materials appear contemporary and modern with cut stone and slate roofs. The chimney stacks are welcome but appear incongruous in the absence of more simple elevations. The former classroom building (Appeal A) appears to be a smooth cut, pale stone clad finish, with dark grey fenestration. This looks new and contemporary contrasting with the woodland setting. On mass in a long terrace this impact will be more noticeable, whereas a reduced impact of these stone elevations would be achieved with a reduction in size of buildings. I am also concerned that the

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impact will be greater at night when the development is lit up (Appeals A & B), especially with the large windows. The lights will be visible through the trees and seen across the valley adding to the urbanising effect of the development.

4.22 The overhanging roof clashes with the chimney pots whereas the traditional detail corresponds with a coped verge. The stepped stringlines on the semi-detached do not unify architectural features. National Design Guide Part 2:

Context – enhances the surroundings.

Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context: Relate to the built form, topography and the surrounding context beyond site boundary. Existing build form including layout, form, scale, appearance, details and materials. Access and significant views affecting the relationship to the existing settlement, and the pattern of development.

4.23 Paragraph 43 states that well-designed new development is integrated into its wider surroundings. based on an understanding of the existing situation, including the landscape character and how places or developments sit within the landscape, to influence the siting of new development and how natural features are retained or incorporated into it; patterns of built form, including local precedents for routes and spaces and the built form around them, to inform the layout, grain, form and scale ; the architecture prevalent in the area, including the local vernacular and other precedents that contribute to local character, to inform the form, scale, appearance, details and materials of new development. It is carefully sited and designed. Sensitive re-use or adaptation adds to the richness and variety of a scheme and to its diversity of activities and users.

4.24 The site lies outside the settlement boundary on the western edge of Whaley Bridge. There is a distinct change between built up character and woodland character landscape. The site extends to a ridge above the B5470 and slopes towards the settlement boundary. The main building has an imposing presence, with the remaining buildings appearing scattered and disparate within the woodland context, especially against the dominant form of the former classroom building, subject to enforcement Appeal A.

Identity – attractive and distinctive.

Paragraph 51. *States that Well-designed places, buildings and spaces: have a positive and coherent identity that everyone can identify with; have a character that suits the context, its history, how we live today and how we are likely to live in the future; and are visually attractive. Local identity is made up of typical characteristics such as the pattern of housing, and special features that are distinct from their surroundings. This includes considering: the composition of street scenes, individual buildings and their elements; the height, scale, massing and relationships between buildings; views, vistas and landmarks. Legibility - how easy it is for people to find their way around; roofscapes; the scale and proportions of buildings; façade design, such as the degree of symmetry, variety, the pattern and proportions of windows and doors, and their details; the scale and proportions of streets and spaces; hard landscape and street furniture; soft landscape, landscape setting and backdrop; Nature and wildlife, including water; light, shade, sunshine and shadows; and colours, textures, shapes and patterns.*

4.25 The site has a distinct identity due to its large Edwardian house within a woodland setting. This main building is the dominant building surrounded by ancillary buildings, which would have included the original classroom building. Having been subject to change over the intermittent years the

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identity has been diluted. The arrangement would have been typical of a large Edwardian mansion on the outskirts of a settlement such as Whaley Bridge. The identity of the site will be completely changed by the proposed development with no attempt to recognise and protect any special features of the site such as the status of the original main building with a view to conversion, or the character of the informal rural landscape within the site. The existing hard surfaces to be replaced with more tarmac driveways is not considered an enhancement of the site's determining characteristics.

Built form – a coherent pattern of development.

Built form is the three-dimensional pattern or arrangement of development blocks, streets, buildings and open spaces. Well-designed places have: compact forms of development that are walkable, contributing positively to well-being and placemaking; accessible local public transport, services and facilities, to ensure sustainable development; recognisable streets and other spaces with their edges defined by buildings, making it easy for anyone to find their way around, and promoting safety and accessibility; and memorable features or groupings of buildings, spaces, uses or activities that create a sense of place, promoting inclusion and cohesion. The appropriate density will result from the context, accessibility, the proposed building types, form and character of the development.

4.26 *Appropriate building types and forms: their width, relating to their use; the height of buildings and the consistency of their building line in relation to the street itself, and the sense of enclosure that results; how built up they are along their length including whether or not buildings share party walls, and the structure of blocks and routes that this creates; the relationship between building fronts and backs, with successful streets characterised by buildings facing the street to provide interest, overlooking and active frontages at ground level.*

4.27 The development results in a more linear arrangement than the clustered arrangement of the current buildings. The elevations become a more visually prominent and presents a continuous frontage with a greater sense of identity looking across the landscape, whereas the previous arrangement is more inward looking and address the site itself, making more use of the scattered tree forms and creating internal views within these groups.

4.28 The appeal scheme is pushed back into the higher part of the site rather than at a lower level with driveways drawing carparking higher up the ridgeline, despite being at a lower level than the former classroom building. These driveways also draws the eye and magnifies the height of the individual houses. The experience of this proposed long driveway car parking in comparison with the a more nucleated car park around the existing main building of Taxal Edge 2009 is more cluttered and dominant than the carpark being briefly experienced around the main building. The landscape impact will be less disruptive to the visual continuity of the landscape which is also better for biodiversity.

Movement – accessible and easy to move around.

Patterns of movement for people are integral to well-designed places. They include walking and cycling, access to facilities, employment and servicing, parking and the convenience of public transport. Limits the impacts of car use by prioritising and encouraging walking, cycling and public transport, mitigating impacts and identifying opportunities to improve air quality. Incorporates green infrastructure, including street trees to soften the impact of car parking, help improve air quality and contribute to biodiversity

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4.29 The development is designed in such a way that the impact of car parking cannot be mitigated or integrated into the design with garages and forecourts highly visible with no opportunity to reduce the prominence of the parking areas. The integral garages also give a suburban character rather than a rural character. The result is out of character with traditional houses close by that relate to the rural setting. Whilst the location of more suburban estates are nearby, they are separated and less visually prominent within enclosed streets. These have a completely different setting and character, which does not justify the repeat of this typology within this wooded sloping site.

Nature – enhanced and optimised.

Well-designed places: integrate existing, and incorporate new natural features into a multifunctional network that supports quality of place.

4.30 There is little opportunity to introduce or enhance the natural setting of the site to support the quality of the place. The imposition of stepped driveways and retaining walls will impact on the natural setting. The site has suffered from tree loss and that there will be a need to ensure root protection zones of remaining ones are retained. The requirement for a widened access road and turning area around may have a significant impact on remaining trees. Level changes are also likely to impact on trees. The proposed planting scheme is indicated to replace native species however the layout of front gardens and potential for future residents to introduce ornamental gardens and varied treatments will result in a diminished natural setting.

4.31 The likelihood is that the long driveways will result in more cars being parked at the front of each dwelling and whilst this may allow for more intermittent planting, or which the appellant argues is more in keeping with the woodland setting, it is clear that the amount and intensity of the number of spaces will appear cluttered throughout the site, detracting from the frontages, with the side views of cars being repeated along the front gardens. It is likely that cars rather than garden space will become the predominant character.

Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive.

4.32 The impact on the Public Right of way as a perception of the local community. This is the gateway to the countryside for many residents of Whaley Bridge and historically access to the common / moorland along Taxal Edge. As a public route the experience of the character of this walk will be changed to a negative degree. This will result in glimpsed views of a more built-up form of development that will change the experience of the public access to and from Whaley Bridge. As a public accessible space will result in a loss of amenity value for the residents who use this route. The route will feel less public and more a part of housing developments on either side.

HIGH PEAK LOCAL PLAN 2016

4.33 Policy H 1 Location of Housing Development:

The Council will ensure provision is made for housing will give consideration to approving sustainable sites outside the defined built-up area boundaries, taking into account other policies in this Local Plan, provided that:

- *The development would adjoin the built-up area boundary and be well related with the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses and of an appropriate scale for the settlement;*
- *and the development would not lead to prominent intrusion into the countryside or have a significant adverse impact on the character of the countryside;*

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4.34 This is the key consideration in the assessment of the setting of both Appeal sites A and B. The Local Plan defined edge of settlement lies to the rear of the current built up area of Beech Rise. The area has a distinct geographical edge defined by rear walls and fences of the gardens on the residential estate side and high stone wall on the Taxal Edge side. The public footpath with widened verges (approx. 10m) and trees lining both sides provides a distinct geographical break between built and countryside character. The woodland nature of the appeal sites still predominates and links the appeal sites to the experience of the wider countryside extending out from Taxal Edge.

4.35 Appeal sites A and B if developed together would represent a dominant intrusion into this countryside setting. The former classroom building on its own, in my opinion, is experienced as a substantial large three storey house and due to the elevated position and large dormers provides a prominent and over dominant experience within the woodland setting. The house can be seen standing out above the built-up area of Whaley Bridge within the woodland area which acts as backdrop to the setting of Whaley Bridge. The original classroom building would have been more

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ground hugging and respecting of local vernacular. The current building has not respected the horizontal form of the original building rather it has been expanded, increased in height, and substantially changed character including the addition of oversized frontage dormers in a row.

4.36 Policy EQ 2 Landscape Character.

Seeks to protect, enhance and restore the landscape character of the Plan Area for its own intrinsic beauty. This will be achieved by:

- *Requiring that development has particular regard to maintaining the aesthetic and biodiversity qualities of natural and man-made features within the landscape, such as trees and woodlands, hedgerows, walls, streams, ponds, rivers, ecological networks or other topographical features;*
- *Requiring that development proposals are informed by, and are sympathetic to the distinctive landscape character areas as identified in the Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document and also take into account other evidence of historic landscape characterisation, landscape sensitivity, landscape impact and the setting of the Peak District National Park and where appropriate incorporate landscape mitigation measures.*
- *Requiring that development proposals protect and/or enhance the character, appearance and local distinctiveness of the landscape and landscape setting of the Peak District National Park*
- *Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement as identified in the Landscape Impact Assessment.*

4.37 The proposed development Appeal A and B together would not maintain the aesthetic qualities of the site, as the amount of development would be such as to change the balance of the site from its natural setting to a character of intensive built-up development. This balance within the confines of the site would be enough to change the intrinsic quality of the landscape. The walk through Taxal Beeches and along Taxal Edge has a sense of arrival and departure from the settlement into distinctive countryside typical of the this part of the Dark Peak. It is key to the setting of Whaley Bridge. The development will dilute this character and erode its essential beauty. It is acknowledged that a degree of change has already occurred with trees having already been removed and new building work having occurred, but the site is still capable of being enhanced and restored. In my opinion the development proposals are not informed by this distinctive landscape character as they provide a degree of formality and impose prominent structures and changes in landform, which would harm the character of the local and wider landscape.

Policy EQ 3 Rural Development Outside the settlement boundaries and sites allocated for development as defined on the Policies Map, including the Green Belt, the Council will seek to ensure that new development is strictly controlled in order to protect the landscape's intrinsic character and distinctiveness, including the character, appearance and integrity of the historic and cultural environment and the setting of the Peak District National Park whilst also facilitating sustainable rural community needs, tourism and economic development. This will be achieved by:

- *Ensuring that all development is of a high-quality design and protects or enhances landscape character and the setting of the Peak District National Park*

Allowing the following forms of new residential development:

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- *Re-use of redundant and disused buildings and/or the redevelopment of a previously developed site, where it does not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside. Where the existing building is in an isolated location the development should lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting.*
- *Limited infilling of a small gap capable of accommodating no more than 2 dwellings of a similar size and scale to the surrounding dwellings in an otherwise continuously built frontage*

4.38 The development fails to conform to either of the above policies for development outside settlement boundaries. The development fails to maintain a balance that protects the landscapes intrinsic qualities, nor does it ensure a high quality of design as it fails to address these intrinsic rural qualities but being both overbearing and adding in a degree of formality which has an urbanising effect. As a redevelopment of part of a previously developed site, it should not have such an adverse effect on the appearance and character of the countryside. By virtue of its elevated views, woodland character, and wider context of Taxal Edge as a distinctive landscape feature, the development would lead to an erosion in character that would lead to harm. The Council's Landscape Statement evidence expands upon this when explaining the multiple sensitivities of the site.

4.39 Policy EQ 6 Design and Place Making

All development should be well designed and of a high quality that responds positively to both its environment and the challenge of climate change, whilst also contributing to local distinctiveness and sense of place. This will be achieved by:

- *Requiring development to be well designed to respect the character, identity and context of High Peak's townscapes and landscapes*
- *Requiring that development on the edge of settlement is of high quality design that protects, enhances and / or restores landscape character, particularly in relation to the setting and character of the Peak District National Park*
- *Requiring that development contributes positively to an area's character, history and identity in terms of scale, height, density, layout, appearance, materials, and the relationship to adjacent buildings and landscape features*
- *Requiring that development achieves a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development and does not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shadowing, overbearing effect, noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character and amenity*
- *Requiring that public and private spaces are well-designed, safe, attractive, complement the built form and provide for the retention of significant landscape features such as mature trees*
- *Requiring that developments are easy to move through and around, incorporating well integrated car parking, pedestrian routes and, where appropriate, cycle routes and facilities*
- *Requiring that developments are designed to minimise opportunities for anti-social or criminal behaviour and promote safe living environments*
- *Requiring the inclusive design of development, including buildings and the surrounding spaces, to ensure development can be accessed and used by everyone, including disabled people.*

4.40 For reasons outline previously the development is considered to be outside the built-up area in a countryside setting that has intrinsic beauty. The character of the woodland footpath between the

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built-up area and this development is a landscape feature in its own right and creates a geographical marker to the edge of settlement with a distinct change to a countryside character beyond. The site is clearly part of and a continuation of Taxal Edge, due to its sloping landform. Policy EQ6 relates to design and placemaking. The development fails to meet the high quality and appropriateness of the design required. It is not well designed as it fails to respect the rural character of the setting. For Appeal A, a conversion of the original classroom / garage building and main building would have been significantly less obvious in character and sympathetic to the site's woodland setting in relation to consent HPK/2009/0689, whereas rebuilding of houses of a similar typology to the existing former classroom building simply leads to a magnification of this unsympathetic building form resulting in an unsympathetic development.

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL DESIGN GUIDE (SPD)2018

4.41 The High Peak Design Guide has been adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document and identifies the overarching principles in securing good design. Because of High Peak's high quality natural environment, historic towns and villages, there is an emphasis on respecting traditional built forms. This should not rule out high quality contemporary design and innovative solutions that respond to the context

The Challenge of Good Design

Para 1.4: High Peak is a special place of exceptional beauty. Buildings appear to grow naturally out of the landscape. We have the power to enhance or harm the special characteristics of the area.

Landscape and Settlements

Para 2.1 Towns and villages in the High Peak have a locally distinctive character which has been defined by their high-density form and their architectural and historic development, as well as by the use of natural and traditional materials such as stone and slate.

Para 2.2 It is important therefore that any new development is capable of achieving a high standard of design

Para 2.4 The High Peak landscapes provide some of the defining characteristics of the area and have been instrumental in shaping local settlement patterns.

The landscape character, development should assimilate itself into the landscape and avoid adverse impact on landscape quality

Building Style and Form

Para 2.7 High Peak towns and villages have evolved over many years. As a result, they produce a pleasing array of architectural styles. This creates visual interest to an area but maintains a strong coherent appearance through the use of local building materials. Traditional buildings within the High Peak area have their own distinct character and style which largely reflects the needs, resources and technology of the time in which they were built. In so far as residential buildings are concerned, the Council's Residential Design Guide SPD (adopted December 2005) sets out a detailed typology of the various house types found throughout High Peak

Style and the role of modern architecture

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Para 2.8 a bland version that devalues the original

Para 2.9 The new development was complementary, rather than identical to, surrounding buildings

Para 2.10 vernacular, and on national rather than regional styles. It is only by the use of local materials that links such buildings to the area.

Para 2.11 It may be preferable to find a design solution which responds to the traditional context. As well as requiring good design skills, it needs an in-depth knowledge of what defines the character of the development site.

4.42 The High Peak Design Guide explains that there is a distinctive local quality to the settlement in the area that is related to the landscape and the use of local materials of stone and slate which reinforce the local distinctiveness. It also explains that this strong coherent appearance and the design response depends on an in-depth knowledge of the site and traditional context. There is a role for modern architecture however, a bland or poor representation of the original would be poor design.

Setting:

Para 3.2 In the countryside or on the edge of settlements, buildings should sit comfortably in the landscape. This is best achieved by emulating the horizontal, ground-hugging form of traditional buildings with their strong eaves and ridge lines and simple, low silhouettes parallel with the contours.

4.43 It is contended that development works undertaken to the former classroom building (Appeal A) makes it prominent in the landscape and does not emulate the horizontal, ground hugging form of traditional buildings with strong eaves and ridgelines. The large dormers fail to give a sense of the low silhouettes parallel to the contours. The cumulative effects of Appeal A and B together, whilst facing across the valley and running with the contours are entirely set higher than the built development below and will therefore stand out more prominently above the existing settlement being visible in the winter through the trees. The ridge lines are complex and will not provide the simple traditional roof form that diminishes the scale and massing of the buildings.

Para 3.4 Settlements contain a variety of building forms ranging in scale from two to four storeys. The relationship of one to the other creates a sense of rhythm, balance and good neighbourliness that should be maintained. There is usually an intricate pattern of roofs at different heights but with a common roof pitch and similar length of ridge. The palette of roof materials is often limited. New roofs should normally fit in with the existing roofscape of an area by respecting these traditional characteristics. The rhythm established by chimneys and coped gables present a similar accommodation.

4.44 A variety of building scale has been used but this is not sufficient enough to reduce the overall perception of the development being predominantly three stores with a town house / villa style more suited to an urban area. The roofscape does not fit with the existing roofscape in the area as it stands out in open countryside. The chimneys seem at odds to the character with overhanging verge clashing with the traditional form.

New Development

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3.7 The architectural style of new development should be guided through an assessment and understanding of the character and context of the area. Sites may be capable of accommodating both contemporary and traditional forms

Scale 3.8 A new building should respect the scale of those surrounding it.

Materials

3.9 New buildings should use facing materials that either match or complement those of the surroundings. Under certain circumstances, new materials can sometimes be used as a foil to more traditional materials

4.45 The architectural style of the proposed development should be guided by an understanding of character and context. Again, there is a departure in the concept of this proposed development. Whilst the use of materials are consistent with the local area and local vernacular, the architectural style is inappropriate to the setting of the site.

Proportion

Para 3.10. Where possible new buildings should pick up on the proportions of neighbouring buildings in some way. This need not necessarily mean replicating the disposition of openings, but could be a more subtle interpretation

4.46 There is little opportunity taken to relate directly to the proportions or neighbouring buildings with the proposed architectural style developing its own interpretation and disposition of openings. In this respect referring back to the original character of the site and the main house can provide cues as to the style of new development. In this case, the architect has interpreted this as a villa style with a somewhat hybrid mix between 'grand villa' and 'small villa' as a typology set out in the Residential Design Guide. While the original building of the Edwardian era was typical of large houses located on the outskirts of settlements at the time, it was of a completely different form and setting at the time. The grand house form was singular and not a repetitive series which results in more intensity in the design. It is for this reason the choice of architectural style is inappropriate.

3.11 There are some basic principles that need to be respected if the new is to harmonise successfully with the old. These relate to the three main characteristics of traditional elevations: A balance of proportions between the overall shape of the walls and the openings they contain. A high solid to void ratio in which the wall dominates. A simple arrangement of openings, usually formal (often symmetrical) in the case of houses, and informal in the case of outbuildings.

4.47 The basic principles as laid out in paragraph 3.11 are lost in the front elevational treatment leading to a lack of harmony with older style vernacular in the area. The balance of the proportions of the overall walls and shape of the openings creates large window openings and a lower solid to void ratio than in traditional buildings. Whilst in more contemporary architecture this can be incorporated into the style of the building depending on the setting of the building.

Form

Para 3.14 The form of a new building can often be a specific response to the brief or the particular setting...the merits of a building's form would have to be judged on its individual qualities in terms of its suitability in the site's context.

4.48 As per the above comment the form is derived from the individual qualities of the site.

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Details

Para 3.15 Details are often the identifying factor for the age of the building and often result from a particular method of construction or skill. Depending on the sensitivity of the site

Para 3.16 Critical factors – treatment of elevations include the solid to void ratio, how blank or windowed a building looks, and the disposition of openings. Traditional construction techniques effectively limited the width of openings, making them vertical in proportion and relatively small. As a result, doors and windows were surrounded by large areas of masonry making the wall the dominant element. , traditional buildings tend to have a simple, restful appearance as a result of: z Using a similar size and proportion of opening throughout. Z Limiting the number of openings. Z Arranging the openings harmoniously, often in a formal, symmetrical manner. z Keeping them away from corners

HIGH PEAK RESIDENTIAL DESIGN SPD2 2005

1.1 High Peak Borough Council is committed to achieving a high standard of design in all new residential development. Creating a step change in the quality of new housing layout and design

- It promotes an approach to design grounded in an understanding of the qualities which contribute to local distinctiveness and sense of place in High peak.*
- It encourages an approach towards residential design, which is mindful of context but is also innovative.*
- It provides an effective and transparent mechanism for reviewing design quality as part of the planning process.*

CHAPTER 2 The Context for Design

The appearance of proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are material considerations in determining planning applications and appeals

Para 2.1 promotion of good housing design, including:

- Creating attractive places and spaces, which have their own distinctive identity but respect and enhance local character.*
- Focus on the quality of the places and living environments*

Para 2.4.2 The Council asserts its responsibility to ensure that new development has regard to the characteristics of setting through Local Plan Policy GD4 (Character, Form and Design) which establishes that a planning proposal will be permitted when: "Its scale, siting, layout, density, form, height, proportions, design, colour and materials of construction, elevations and fenestration and any associated engineering, landscaping or other works will be sympathetic to the character of the area, and there will not be undue detrimental effect on the visual qualities of the locality or the wider landscape." (Para 3.35)

CHAPTER 3 Understanding the Setting

Landform features establish the ground we build on. The dominant rock deposit of the Borough is the gritstone of the Dark Peak (lilac) to the northern part of the High Peak.

Para 3.7.1 Choice of walling materials (local plan extract):

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i. Natural stone of a colour and texture appropriate to the area will always be acceptable and encouraged, subject to local walling style, pointing, cut and laying.

ii. Natural slate of an appropriate colour and texture will usually be acceptable. Blue Slates from Wales. Texture is smooth. Used extensively in dark peak area.

Within the Buxton area many lime kilns continue to make lime putty and it is once again being used not only for restoration and conservation work but new build too

Colours to external decoration, rainwater goods, doors and windows their casing and frames play an important part in the character of High Peak's residential stock. The traditional detail is for timber used externally to be primed and painted; A consistent use of a single colour for all external decoration can help to unite these elements, avoid visual clutter and ensure these features are subservient to the aesthetic of the building. Contemporary use of colour, such as gunmetal grey in recent refurbishments in Glossop, help to demonstrate this effect

CHAPTER 4 Settlement Patterns

Para 4.0 Understanding Characteristic High Peak Housing Patterns.

The indigenous pattern of streets within settlements remains an important part of the Borough's character. This simple fact is consistently neglected in many contemporary developments, which fail to appreciate that character and local distinctiveness extend beyond the construction of individual properties to include the relationships between buildings and the spaces and townscape thereby created

Para 4.1 The three main street and settlement patterns identified as characteristic to High Peak include:

- *Irregular & Organic - Examples: Old Glossop, Charlesworth, Whaley Bridge*
- *Linear Grid - Examples: Howardtown (Glossop), Fairfield (Buxton)*
- *Axial & Picturesque. Example: Buxton*

New housing development, which does not adopt one of these settlement patterns, will be out of character with the High Peak.

4.49 The High Peak Residential Design guide puts strong emphasis on indigenous pattern of streets as determining factors in identifying the relationship between buildings and spaces. Out of the three main settlement patterns Whaley Bridge is Irregular and Inorganic, rather than Linear Grid (Howard Town in Glossop and Fairfield in Buxton and Axial Picturesque only found in Buxton). One of the key defining characteristics of the radial and organic pattern is a varied street width with an intimate scale with street alignments closely reflecting changes in topography. Whilst the layout has a slight curve to the access road, the style of architecture relates more to the picturesque than the irregular and organic settlement pattern.

4.11.1 The aim of this comparison is not to decry suburban forms of development, which do in many cases provide safe and pleasant places to live. The point is that more can be done to amplify what is special about High Peak through better layout and design.

4.11.2 Key messages for designing more locally relevant layouts:

- *Understand the setting – what are surrounding streets like?*
- *Adopt one of the themed layout approaches (or other) as relevant*

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- *Create townscape first, then fit in the streets*
- *Avoid disconnected estate layouts and promote ease of walking*
- *Think about creating natural extensions to indigenous town and village forms*
- *Be creative and avoid (over) standardization*

4.50 The adopted theme for the site appears to be based on the an axial and picturesque layout using a far more sophisticated urban aesthetic developed found in other parts of High Peak most noticeably in Buxton. Such as grand villas. Houses are grander, more formal and contrived in style. The picturesque refers to the 'buildings in landscape' style and the integration of fine open space with high quality dwellings

4.13.1 Designs should utilise existing features and address the site's wider context. Development in the countryside in particular should be appropriate to the character of the landscape as stated in Local Plan policy OC4 (Landscape Character and Design). The ambition should be to create a 'place' not just a collection of individual houses. Effective appraisal and informed response through the design process are integral to achieving this.

4.51 The ambition should be to form a place rather than just a collection of individual houses. Due to scale of the development, there has been little opportunity to develop a sense of place as the site falls exclusively behind the high wall and there is little connection with it. The loss of character of the countryside setting diminishes the sense of this being a natural space. It will lead to enhancement of the redundant building of the former school (184 Taxal Edge), however this in itself has potential for placemaking qualities, along with smaller ancillary terraced housing.

5. ANALYSIS OF REASONS FOR REFUSAL

The scheme would not be well related to the existing pattern of development

Original Comments:

5.1 The lane presently consists of a narrow lane / track. The creation of a hard surface driveway will significantly change the character and appearance of this soft edge to the current settlement boundary. Presently the wooded landscape is characteristic of the setting of the existing building, typical for a large-detached Edwardian Villa of this period. The change to a linear form of three storey dwellings is a change that diminishes the landscape setting significantly.

5.2 The setting is predominantly rural with a distinct change in character from the houses below the site that form part of the housing area along Beech Rise / Linglongs Avenue. The former classroom building and proposed new houses will be seen above the ridgelines of the houses below with a significant increase in elevation which would enhance their dominance.

5.3 This area of Whaley Bridge has a pattern of linear development along Macclesfield Road with a strong line of traditional ribbon development extending up the hillside towards Taxal Edge. This extends to the houses to the north of the appeal site (Brewood, Hilltop and Woodside) before abruptly cornering around the back of the ridge. Where the track leads off at the base of Taxal Edge, this represents a strong landscape feature which I believe is the perceived extent of settlement due to the abrupt change in landscape character. The presence of the three houses close to the junction with Macclesfield Road have a limited impression on the perceived character of this woodland edge. This is contrary to the appellants landscape statement that suggests the ridgeline is the perceived

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edge of settlement. This ridgeline forms a woodland backdrop to the settlement and blends with the wider natural landscape.



5.4 As stated in the Council's Landscape Statement, the mature woodland character of the ridge where the site lies is akin to many others within the wider nearby landscape and its character is more closely aligned with open countryside than the urban area of Whaley Bridge.

Settlement Boundary – perceived to be outside

5.5 The ridgeline above the site is a defining feature in the landscape quite separate to the urban area. The ridgeline itself flows and is repeated by ridgelines beyond in the surrounding landscape. The perceived edge and the extent of built development is below the ridgeline, and I would consider the base of the spur to be the perceived settlement edge based on the strong horizontal line of the wall at the base of the ridgeline and the track which is c.10.0m in width in places. The three houses at the junction are not solid enough as a group to represent the defining edge of the settlement at this point. The formal settlement edge of Whaley Bridge is described by the line between the Public Footpath (FP56) and the back of plots on Beech Rise, Linglongs Avenue and M3414-LS-21.07-V2 18 The Rise. This is the defined by the Local Plan as such and in my opinion due to its wooded rural nature. The group of outlying houses within the woodland have a different relationship to the settlement and are more related to the bend in the road and the extent of development along Macclesfield Road than the woodland edge.



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Landuse – residential but Typology different due to character of house and garden.

5.6 The proposed residential development is of a different typology and character than the houses and gardens that define the settlement edge. The rear gardens area of the houses on Beech Rise and Linglongs Road extends up to Public Footpath (Whaley Bridge FP56) and have a clear distinct boundary line. Public Footpath FP56 (a route known as Taxal Beeches) tracks in a north / south direction between the appeal site and the development to the east on Beech Rise, Linglongs Avenue and The Rise. To the south, it ceases to be contained by the higher appeal site to the west and the lower adjacent residential development to the east and tracks through a wooded area, which is located to the south of the appeal site, with lower pastoral fields to the east. Thereafter Public Footpath FP56 connects with Taxal Moor Road /Lanehead Road, circa 330m to the south of the appeal site.

5.7 This footpath which is approximately 10m wide, is considered to be a defining edge to the settlement with a distinct separation and change in character on either side of it, apart from the first part of the entry from Macclesfield Road where there is a joint usage. The appeal site is therefore set back from the rear of the houses at the end of the village within open countryside.

5.8 The former classroom building (Appeal A) is more visible at this time of year and there are gaps where there are clear views over the wall from the Footpath FP56. Views are more limited of the main house and visibility back towards the site is more partial. The site was originally more disconnected, but it was of a different form and typology to the incremental development below it. The closeness of the two types of development has not connected the settlement due to the character still being perceived as predominantly woodland character and the significant gap between the PROW and the site.

Historical development – from crossroads to outerlying houses do not justify further expansion.

5.9 On the proposals map, the site is located outside of the built-up boundary of Whaley Bridge. It is in the countryside. From an Urban Design perspective, the main consideration is whether the character relates well to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses and of an appropriate scale. The 1843 – 1893 Map shows Taxal Wood extending into Walker Brow. This natural woodland wedge with footpath HP23/56/1 defines the edge of settlement. The track leads to registered common land at Taxal Moor which suggests it may have been an established public route to and from the village.

5.10 The present main house forms a large, 3 storey building finished in natural stone with a slate tiled roof. The extensions to the original building form timber clad, flat roofed sections and other brick-built extensions. These unattractive and inconsistent modifications, which are somewhat incongruous are more obvious close up but from a distance they are not visible. Although this is the case, there have been previous applications to sympathetically restore the building into apartments

5.11 The incremental development of the town has filled in a dispersed linear settlement pattern from the historic core along main routes. There are distinct character areas due to changes in style and character of the periods of development. For example, a more characteristic area of individual villas within woodland settings is located to the north of Toddbrook Reservoir. Though the gradient of the slope up Macclesfield Road is such is that the stepping up covers a large part of the next house up the slope and so screened by the house in front of it. The issue of the appeal houses above on Taxal Edge is that their whole elevations will be visible from the bottom and across the valley.

5.12 The road network within the settlement area, comprising the A5004 Buxton Road, Old Road, Whaley Lane, Macclesfield Road and Chapel Road are lined with older, period built form, which with

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the general exception of the town centre, comprises residential development. There would have been outlying scattered farmsteads and occasional houses outside this historic road network as there would have been some dispersed settlement.

5.13 The proposed houses will appear dominant and do not relate well to Beech Rise and Linglongs Road. The existing large Edwardian house is a two-storey building with hipped slate roofs and projecting bay windows. Having had several unsympathetic alterations over the years, with felt roof dormer, half-timber additions, and external metal staircases, it appears in a rundown condition. However, the option of restoring the building is still a possibility and it may have value as a non-designated heritage asset. I would support this approach.

5.14 The later housing area backing onto the track gives a clear hard built-up edge. The large buildings within the woodland area to the west of the track are in their own parkland setting of a distinctively different character. To extend a denser pattern of development into this woodland area is not very well connected with the existing pattern of development, it is also destroying the woodland character of the site to an extent of impacting on the character of the countryside edge. The appellant may suggest that it is a logical extension of the built edge towards the Macclesfield Road, but I would dispute this as it is the landscape character that is the defining element).

5.15 The site off Linglongs Lane being developed by Barratts fills in lower fields in the landscape and has a much lesser impact on the perception of the settlement as it is surrounded by built development on three sides. The site is much lower within the valley and settled within the village. The Barratts development may have a perceived change on the settlement edge from the south, but it does not have a significant effect on setting of the settlement from the west. The Barratts site is located halfway along Macclesfield Road towards the core of the village and mirrors the extent of development on the north of Macclesfield Road. It is the significantly lower level of this site that makes it read within the existing settlement but it does not influence the perception of the settlement edge to the west.

5.16 Areas of backland residential development have occurred throughout the 20th Century and this development has given rise to various different types of architectural styles that form areas of residential development in a number of locations around Whaley Bridge. The estate next to the appeal site on Linglongs Avenue, Beech Rise and The Rise, housing off Reddish Avenue to the north side of Macclesfield Road and housing on Waterfoot Lane and Mereside Gardens also to the north side of Macclesfield give examples of brick-built houses with concrete tiled roofs. Whilst these houses diversify the settlement pattern, the overall prime impression is still of Whaley Bridge being of a traditional settlement character.

5.17 The residential developments below on Linglongs Avenue, The Rise and Beech Rise are all at a level below the woodland edge and therefore it is not seen as slightly below but more pronounced. The former classroom and new houses within the woodland appear elevated and dominant from views within these streets, particularly from the junction into Linglongs Avenue from Linglongs Road. The new development will be set back and more elevated. However, even with new planting there will be glimpses through to a much greater impression of elevated development. The height of the new buildings will leave a narrow band of trees behind to form a backdrop and new planting at the front may screen partially. When the landscape has matured and the development has weathered the change may not be so evident, however, I am of the opinion that in order to maintain views from the new development there will be clear gaps and residents will wish to enjoy the amenity of the front gardens which may lead to the weakening of the landscape structure and character.

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Be of an appropriate scale for this aspect of the Whaley Bridge settlement.

5.18 A new substantial detached 3 storeys dwelling with three large dormers and large windows built to a more contemporary style with reclaimed natural grit stone brick, grey aluminium windows and blue / grey natural slate roof has been established on site (Appeal A). This is set back quite separately and elevated to the main building. This building replaces the original classroom block and contrasts in style to the main building. The photograph above demonstrates the magnitude in scale and massing considering the former classroom building is well set back within the woodland area beyond the edge of settlement. This shows a poor relationship as the building shows how disproportionate the appeal properties would be to the existing pattern of development and the harm that would occur if Appeal B would be allowed to extend and magnify this scale of housing development.

The scheme would constitute poor design

5.19 Any increase in number of houses and vehicle activity on the access road close to Macclesfield Road needs to be considered. This may have implications on the design of the junction and subsequent loss of character of this edge of village. If it were the case that a more engineered highway solution would result, then I would consider this a significant loss of character.

5.20 I consider the long front driveways and gardens will emphasise the completely changed nature of the landscape setting and increase the amount of hard surface intrusion into this woodland area. Surfaces should be kept to a minimum. Despite showing trees retained next to Brewood to create a woodland gap, it has the effect of separating the group of houses within the site with no continuity.

5.21 The scale is substantial when considered on mass. The bulk of the dwellings appear three storeys due to the large wide dormer windows. I also find the integral garages not a very authentic response in this woodland location. Image No2 showing a high wall to rear boundary and stepped retaining walls to allow for subterranean garages exaggerate the height of the houses, particularly at plot 7 showing the existing house with the garages in front. The overall impression is more of a

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modern town house development. This is not the response I would expect at this woodland / rural edge which demands a more traditional vernacular. The development is not responsive to the actual site conditions and relies on significant remodelling. It is not contextual to the immediate site of the edge of settlement location. A more dispersed pattern and low-key development would be a better response.

5.22 The prime materials of the houses follow the recommendations of the design guide being stone and slate but the typology, repetition and form of the development does not. The scale and character is too contrasting with the nearby suburban developments. The elevated nature of the site and the repetition of the housing styles give an overall impression of a 'town house' development of a hybrid villa typology and does not reflect the rural character of the site.

The Entrance on Macclesfield Road

5.23 The Highways Authorities response considers that there should not be significant change to the junction on Macclesfield Road and this will be subject to detailed design. The Highways officer does say that in order to comply with current design guidance, the overall shared driveway corridor should be a minimum of 5.0-5.5m width which should be able to be accommodated on site. If this were to be 5.5m for the entire length of the frontage, then this would not be characteristic of most woodland access tracks and again be more urbanising in its appearance subject to detailing. The applicant has not yet demonstrated adequate turning on the site for a refuse vehicle which may result in a hammerhead arrangement being introduced.

5.24 The main area of the site from the south-west corner to the driveway entrance is 111m and the driveway equates to the remaining length of the site, approximately 122m. According to the existing site plan with topographical data, the main part of the site is 253 at the south-western corner and 235.15 at the driveway entrance over 111m. This is an 18m drop over 111m. The driveway itself falls from 235.15 to 218.5m at Macclesfield Road, over 122m. This is an additional 16.15m drop, equating to a 34.0m drop from the southwestern corner to the Macclesfield Road.

5.25 A tiered effect is traditional and characteristic in the area. Often this stepping is not disguised between properties, especially in terraces. The long front gardens and frontage garages mean that retaining walls will be more prominently seen from the frontage and in between the gaps in the buildings. Plots 1 to 3 have one-meter changes between finish floor levels and then Plots 4 to 7 general have 2m changes. This amount of remodelling will have an impact on the landscape character of the site, the long straight lines in the driveways lead me to understand that a significant amount of remodelling would occur and would not have the traditional tiered effect envisioned in the policy. The pushing back of the buildings further towards the ridge also has the effect of moving them further away from the settlement boundary.

5.26 Given the topography some remodelling of the site would be required for development and given the previous quarrying of the site the natural features have already been altered, and it is a matter of good design and layout as to the level of impact. With the cumulative effect of 7 new singular long driveways within a relatively small plot, I still consider this to have a negative impact on the landscape character. The older quarrying of the site has been less engineered along straight lines and has become part of the relic industrial landscape character that derived from its natural topography and geology. The imposition of driveways and retaining walls will impact on this setting.

5.27 With a considerable footprint and three floors with dormer style windows in the roof, the existing house on the site could be considered a grand villa given the criteria in the SPD. I consider the proposed further house designs to form a hybrid of a Small-Scale Villa and a Grand Villa. The proposed houses will be set in a sinuous / meandering line towards the higher, western edge of the appeal site and will tier down from left to right in the views of the site that are experienced from the east. The proposed houses will not therefore form a straight-line arrangement in plan or elevation.

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I consider this hybrid design to be too dominant and with more frontage elevations facing the valley, the impact will be greater than to have the single large Grand Villa typology.

5.28 The dormer windows in the semi-detached houses are substantial and give the houses the appearance of three storeys rather than 2.5 storeys. The detached houses with a third level window in the front facing gable will be clearly a three-story building in appearance. My main concern is that the gradation of elevations is still significantly built up and prominent within the site. They are modern houses but are not contextual in this location where lower 2 storey dwellings with a mixture of ridged and hipped roofs predominate.



Landscape Design

5.29 I consider that the new planting will not mitigate the dominant effect of the new houses and the character of the woodland will be changed. The nature of proposed planting may reinforce the woodland character but there will still be conflict with the residential gardens that will impose their own character within the site.

5.30 The Design and Access states that the additional tree planting within the site will in time, restore and enhance the wooded character of the site and as they become established, the trees will subtly interrupt the elevations of the buildings within the views from locations to the east, thus improving the assimilation of the development into this wooded, settlement edge. In addition, trees have been positioned in order to maintain framed views experienced by the future residents of the new houses. Whilst this is the intended benefit of the landscape scheme it is not enough to mitigate the effect of the scale and magnitude of the development. Depending on the landscape scheme to reduce the impact of the urbanisation when the design has been laid out to capitalise on views outwards will cause conflict between the residents using the site and the walkers of the footpath. There will be a conflict of interests between screening the houses from the public footpath, maintaining the woodland character of the site, ensuring amenity spaces have sunlight and views, and residents wishing to impose their own character on the landscape.

5.31 The development would be disconnected from the settlement and the woodland character would be lost if the development were to be allowed. The views at varying levels across to the site demonstrate there is a prominence in the location above the existing settlement. These views vary

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where the buildings are seen with a faint line of the ridgeline beyond, and some with a full backdrop of woodland. However, these views will change with buildings in between the trees. The more solid forms and outlines will be perceived from different angles, but the changes will present a perceived change in character from a distance. Even with an appropriate landscape scheme, the building mass, the layout of long driveways and amount of hard surface will create a more domesticated character to the houses. The front gardens are likely to be personalised to an extent that the woodland character is changes. This perceived change may create a connection with the existing built form below but the impact on the natural setting would be significant

Furthermore, the scheme's design / layout would result in overbearing and shading impacts to an unacceptable level of amenity to be enjoyed by the future occupiers of Plots 1 and 2

5.32 I believe (as a minimum) that the rear gardens of Plots 1 and 2 will have poor amenity due the overbearing presence of trees close to the houses at the rear, which will especially give a sense of enclosure in summer. This will reduce the use and residential enjoyment of the garden. The space is disproportionate to the dwelling in this countryside setting.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 From an Urban Design Perspective, the current site has a significantly different character to the nearby urban area. It has a distinctive character and placemaking qualities that have been eroded by the unsympathetic development of the former original classroom building (Appeal A), will be destroyed by the further proposed development (Appeal B), which is overly dominant within this woodland setting and does not relate well to the nearby settlement. A more low-key traditional development would be more in keeping with the few traditional houses remaining outside the settlement boundary. However, my preference would be for the retention and renovation / reuse of the main building than the proposed development of linear houses. The site requires more sympathetic treatment of external works to be contextual to the current setting.

6.2 For reasons previously stated I maintain that the proposed development does not relate well to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses. The scale is such to give a dominant affect in the surrounding landscape and has a distinctly different scale to the local residential development nearby. The HPBCs Residential Design Guide give examples of typologies that are acceptable in Whaley Bridge, and these typologies are to be used in relation to the contextual setting of individual sites. The placing of hybrid typologies on the larger villa scale in a row with high elevations facing across the landscape will have a dominant effect and impact on the character of the woodland setting. For these reasons I consider the scheme is not acceptable and does not meet the standards of design required.

6.3 A previous proposal for development on part of the site was made under application HPK/2009/0689. This proposal included the conversion of the existing property known as 'Taxal Edge' to apartments and the conversion of the former classroom and garage into dwellings. The existing woodland area to the southwest of the main building would not have been affected by these proposals and planning permission was approved. The proposals that are subject to this Appeal differ significantly from application HPK/2009/0689 in that development is proposed that extends from the existing dwelling (on the site of the original classroom) to the location of 'Taxal Edge' (which is proposed to be demolished). This would lead to the loss of the wooded gap that separates these two elements of existing development and an overall increase in the visual impacts of development along the wooded ridge the site occupies.

6.4 I therefore conclude that the scheme should be dismissed.