

Dear Ian

I am a Buxton constituent and member of a local group (currently 1000 members and growing) formed in opposition to the proposed large 'asylum dispersal centre' in central Buxton, which I believe is the product of months of collusion between the Labour-led council and Derby University, with large profits made by both organisations should the application be successful.

I understand that you are addressing the planning committee that will be meeting on 1st August and would like to make a **serious complaint** about both the way this planning application in respect of Buxton Halls has been handled and the content therein. Here are some of the material points:

We have evidence there has been detailed discussion between the university of Derby and the HPBC as far back as March 8, **yet the application was sneaked in 5 days after the local council elections**. You can readily understand that standing councillors would have liked to debate the matter. We believe this was done deliberately.

Evidence also suggests that planning officer James Stannard **validated the application contrary to planning statute and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**. We know this because the application is missing vital details which, under the Town and Country Planning Act, it should have contained, for example, **who actually owns the building (the university is only the lessee) and whether this third party has been notified of the application. The application also fails, startlingly, to mention asylum seekers/refugees.**

The only time the applicant made mention of this was in their press release of 31st May 2023 (22 days after submitting the planning application). Buxton Advertiser and Derbyshire Live. This reads:

A spokesperson for the University of Derby said: "The University is in the process of applying to the local authority for a certificate which would allow the space to be used by non-students, rather than stand empty. The University of Derby, like many in the local community, believes that we should support those in need whenever we can. We have decided to make this space available to provide short-term accommodation for vulnerable people coming to the UK as refugees. We are fortunate to be in a position where we can provide some limited help to individuals who have fled their country. We will work with the local community to ensure that they are fully informed and that they benefit from this important space being revived and put to positive use."

There are various other instances where the application fails to meet NPPG:

- An application must be accompanied by sufficient factual information/evidence for a local planning authority to decide the application;
- An application needs to describe precisely what is being applied for (not simply the use class) and the land to which the application relates;
- An applicant needs to describe the proposal with sufficient clarity and precision to enable a local planning authority to understand exactly what is involved.

In its current form, it fails on every count. The local planning authority needs to consider whether, on the facts of the case and relevant planning law, the specific matter is or would be lawful.

The timing of this planning application, the omissions and redactions within it and the evidence we have that show that council and university officials had discussed the proposal as far back as early March, indicate that it was made in bad faith, with an attempt at rubber-stamping it secretly, and that it fails to meet the requirements for what is a material change of use on several counts: **therefore, it should be RETURNED forthwith, for the university to proceed with the transparent public consultation that it should initially have entered into.**

If you value your personal respectability and your position as a local councillor then it behoves you to RETURN the application to the university, in order for them to undergo the process in the correct manner. This is what I am asking you to do as an elected representative of the public in Buxton, a large majority of whom are deeply unhappy about this proposal and the way it has been handled by you and your colleagues thus far.

I will also be copying this communication and sending further detail to local and national media, as I believe proceedings so far to be a serious failure of local government, and that it is in the public interest to shine a light on them.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Benton