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From: planningcomments@highpeak.gov.uk
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To: Planning Comments (HPBC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

[REDACTED]

Application Reference No. : HPK/2026/0228 Site Address: Spring Shopping Centre & Land South of Station Road
Buxton Derbyshire Comments by: Rachael QuinnCouncillor HPBC

From:
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Submission: Objection

Comments: Objections to the Springs development

I object to the development on several grounds; these are, overdevelopment, the impact on the town due to worsening of infrastructure and the lack of economic impact assessment, the dubious viability of the project and a lack of meaningful consultation and transparency surrounding the scheme.

Firstly overdevelopment, the original bid, and the requirement from government was 75 new residential units in the town centre. When Capital and Centric first spoke to councillors the number rose to 180, which we thought was ambitious, but possible. The figure quoted at consultations was 250, that was the figure publicly displayed in the Springs Centre until a couple of months ago. This planning application is for 327 flats plus a terrace of five town houses. The figure has continued to increase to fill the viability gap and is excessive.

The impact of the development could be disastrous, in the short and long term. There has been no assessment of the impact of road and parking changes on the wider town and, shockingly, no consideration of the impact on the shopping area. Within the Springs centre, key stores, such as Next, will be forced to relocate, this could lead them to go elsewhere, damaging the town centre offer. Waitrose, as a supermarket, will be most impacted by the reduction and relocation of parking. When asked questions about this council officers simply replied that retailers are concerned but have not provided details. If Waitrose relocates, or leaves the town altogether, that will have a negative impact on other businesses who benefitted from custom, as shoppers use their trips for a range of purposes. There are 60+ businesses in Spring Gardens, the huge reduction and relocation of parking will inevitably have an impact. For shoppers, the lack of parking may lead to them shopping out of town rather than at Waitrose. If Waitrose closes, we have the impact of staff losing their jobs and the loss of town centre supermarket for those who can't go elsewhere.

There are currently 431 spaces around the Springs centre (26 of which are for use by blue badge holders). The proposals reduce this to 266; that is a decrease of 165. The developers are setting aside 120 of these spaces for residents in the new development. Therefore, total onsite parking will be reduced to 146. The impact on disabled provision is, proportionately, even greater.

The council has attempted to deal with this by buying the D.B. Schenker land. However, this is problematic and does not have planning permission. In addition, it is at some distance from the shopping area and will require big changes

to the road network which is already under stress and often congested. The distance to the D. B. Schenker land will also disadvantage Waitrose as a business and their customers, particularly the elderly and disabled.

The proposed changes to the road lay out will also be detrimental to traffic flow, with an entry to the new rear Springs car park opposite the entry to McDonald's, leading to more congestion on a road that is already problematic. If further changes are made to the Palace Road junction to facilitate the proposed additional parking, this could have detrimental impacts for visitors and residents alike. The argument that people will come by train, by bus or by active travel to shop or to work is fallacious. People using supermarkets tend to use cars rather than carrying heavy shopping and our public transport is not good. The environmental impact of people cruising to find parking spots has also not been considered.

In terms of viability, I am concerned as to the nature of these expensive 'for Buxton' apartments. We are told that only 120 parking spaces will be needed for residents, yet they will need well paid jobs to afford the rent. In Buxton, most people travel to work by car. Going by train to Manchester is possible but expensive and subject to delays, cancellations and a long journey. It is hard to see where the residents of these apartments will come from.

My final concern, and the most serious, is the lack of proper consultation and transparency. The people of Buxton had no idea that what they were facing was a residential development. They were excited about leisure facilities, the application mentions, in its headline, a cinema. This is unlikely. People said that they were concerned about parking, the response was to take parking away. There was also no indication of the number of residential units, or their nature, (rental and aspirational). The signs displayed in the Springs centre, until recently, gave the figure of 250. This is misleading and wrong. The time for public comments on this application is very short. Many people are struggling to open the attachments, which impedes their ability to comment.

In addition, the whole process has lacked transparency. Most council updates have been confidential verbal updates, of which no record is kept. Meetings have been secret, and in those meetings, councillors who are on the development control committee have expressed support for the proposals. There have been meetings about the application which have only been for the Labour group. The council itself is deeply invested in the application, and I am hugely concerned as to the impartiality of the process.

It is hugely disappointing that such an opportunity may not be beneficial for the people of Buxton, yet the planning process is an opportunity for genuine engagement. The following actions may make the development less detrimental to the welfare of the town.

A guarantee to retailers within the Springs centre that they will not be disadvantaged, (including more careful consultation and consideration of retailers such as Next, to prevent the loss of businesses and jobs,) could help to mitigate the impact. Where can Next and other businesses be accommodated without loss of amenity?

Retain the eastern/Waitrose end car parking and safeguard the disabled parking

Phase the development to minimise disruption

Reduce the number of proposed dwellings to, at least, the figure of 250 that was mentioned in the consultation

Carry out a full impact assessment of the impacts of the development

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