

[REDACTED]

From: T C Lowe <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 07 July 2026 16:17
To: Planning (HPBC)
Subject: HPK/2026/0228 - Objection

[REDACTED]

Dear Sirs

Application Reference No: HPK/2026/0228

Site Address: Spring Shopping Centre & Land South of Station Road, Buxton, Derbyshire

Comments by: Thomas C Lowe

Address: 24 Brown Edge Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 7AJ

Phone: Redacted

Email: Redacted

Submission: Objection

Comments: I submit this objection as a resident of Buxton and a local business owner. As a local accountant, I regularly advise businesses on financial sustainability, commercial viability, and long-term planning. This professional experience, combined with my knowledge of the local economy, has informed my assessment of the proposed development and its potential impact on Buxton's town centre, businesses, residents, and visitors. I also have a lower-limb injury, which gives me a personal understanding of the importance of accessible parking and inclusive town centre design. For these reasons, I respectfully object to this planning application.

As both an accountant and a local business owner, I fully support investments that strengthen Buxton's future. However, I have serious concerns that this application, in its current form, presents significant economic and commercial risks that could undermine the long-term viability of the town centre. One of the first questions is whether there is sufficient commercial demand. The town centre currently has a noticeable number of vacant units, which raises legitimate concerns about whether the market can support additional retail and hospitality space.

Without such evidence, the development risks creating an oversupply of retail and hospitality space, diluting customer spending across more businesses rather than increasing overall economic activity. This could place further financial pressure on existing independent retailers and reduce the long-term viability of the town centre.

The proposal has grown substantially from the original vision. Such a dramatic increase fundamentally changes the nature of the development and raises legitimate questions about whether Buxton's town centre has the infrastructure, transport links, parking capacity and commercial demand to support a development of this scale.

Every successful development depends on realistic assumptions. This proposal relies on several optimistic forecasts simultaneously:

- high residential occupancy,
- sustained retail demand, continued support from existing anchor tenants,
- the attraction of new commercial occupiers,
- Significant changes in travel behaviour.

Should any of these assumptions fail to materialise, the development's commercial viability could be compromised.

One of my greatest concerns is the impact on existing businesses during construction. Many independent retailers, cafés, restaurants and professional firms rely on consistent customer access. The proposed reduction in parking, combined with an estimated construction period of up to three years, is likely to significantly reduce footfall. For many small businesses already operating on tight margins, a sustained decline in customer numbers could threaten their survival.

The long-term parking strategy also raises concerns. While the development seeks to encourage more sustainable travel, Buxton does not currently benefit from the transport infrastructure found in larger cities. Public transport remains limited; many residents commute by car, and visitors continue to rely heavily on accessible parking. Reducing parking provision before suitable alternatives exist risks discouraging shoppers, visitors and tourists from coming into the town centre.

As an adviser to local businesses, I regularly see how closely cash flow and customer access are interlinked. Businesses cannot simply absorb several years of disruption while hoping future benefits will compensate for present losses. If established retailers and hospitality businesses close during construction, there is no guarantee that replacement occupiers will emerge afterwards. Empty commercial units reduce confidence, deter investment and ultimately weaken the town centre economy.

Existing vacancy levels should also be considered when assessing the scheme's commercial viability. If a significant number of retail and commercial premises are already vacant within Buxton town centre, this raises legitimate questions about the level of demand for additional commercial units. Regeneration should focus not only on creating new premises but also on ensuring that existing units remain occupied and that established businesses continue to thrive. Otherwise, there is a risk of redistributing demand rather than creating new economic activity, leaving both existing and newly created premises underoccupied.

I also question the assumptions surrounding residential demand. The proposed rental levels appear to exceed current market averages in Buxton, while many apartments will have limited or no parking provision. These factors may restrict demand and increase the risk of lower occupancy levels. An under-occupied residential development would generate less spending within the local economy than anticipated and reduce the wider economic benefits upon which the scheme relies.

From a financial risk management perspective, developments of this scale are normally strengthened through phased delivery. A phased approach would allow residential demand, commercial occupancy and transport arrangements to be assessed before committing to the full scale of the project. Such an approach would significantly reduce financial risk for all stakeholders while allowing adjustments if required.

My objection is not to regeneration itself. Buxton deserves continued investment, and thoughtful regeneration should be welcomed. However, regeneration must be commercially sustainable and should strengthen—not weaken—the existing businesses that already contribute to the town's economy. The current proposal relies heavily on overly optimistic assumptions while exposing local businesses to significant short-term disruption and long-term uncertainty.

I therefore urge the planning authority to reconsider the scale of the development, undertake a more robust assessment of its economic impact, particularly on existing businesses, and explore a phased approach that balances regeneration with the long-term prosperity of Buxton's town centre.

A further concern is the significant reduction in the provision of disabled parking. Accessible parking is not simply a convenience; for many people, it is essential for accessing the town centre safely and independently.

As someone living with a lower limb injury, I understand first-hand the challenges that even relatively short distances can present. Requiring disabled residents and visitors to walk approximately 330 feet from a parking space to shops and services may appear reasonable on paper, but in practice it can be a barrier in itself. During periods of poor weather, particularly throughout the winter months, uneven surfaces, ice, heavy rain and steep gradients make such journeys considerably more difficult and, in some cases, unsafe.

This issue extends far beyond my own circumstances. Many Blue Badge holders live with mobility impairments, chronic pain, neurological conditions or age-related disabilities that make walking longer distances extremely challenging. The proposed reduction in accessible parking risks discouraging disabled people from visiting the town centre altogether, undermining their independence and affecting local businesses that rely on customers of all abilities.

From both commercial and community perspectives, accessibility should be a fundamental part of any regeneration project. A thriving town centre must be inclusive and accessible to everyone. In my view, the substantial reduction in conveniently located disabled parking could disadvantage disabled people when compared with non-disabled users. Unless the planning authority can demonstrate that reasonable and equally accessible alternatives will be provided, the proposal could raise concerns under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), which requires public bodies to have due regard to the needs of disabled people when making decisions.

Regards

Thomas Lowe