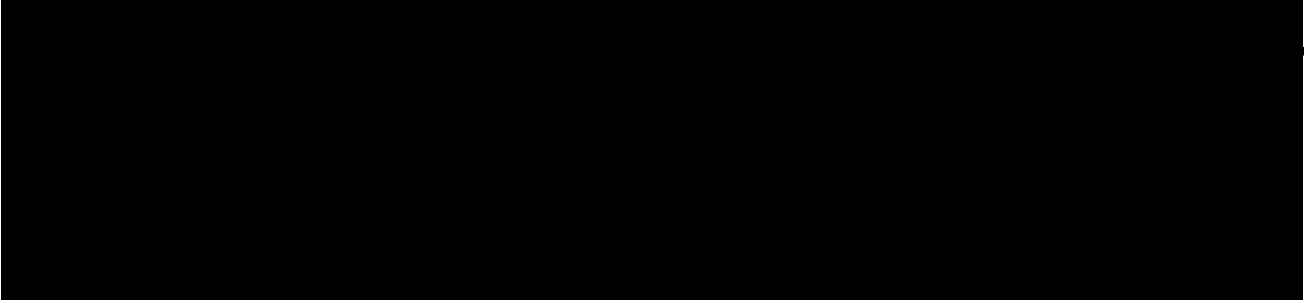
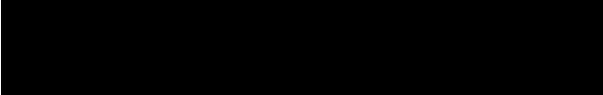




Application Reference No. : HPK/2026/0228 Site Address: Spring Shopping Centre & Land South of Station Road
Buxton Derbyshire Comments by: David Kerr
From:

Byron Street
Buxton
Buxton



Submission: Objection

Comments: I object to the development on several grounds. The current proposals are far beyond the scope and original intent; what we are seeing is a proposed overdevelopment supported by an absentee council executive with no grounding amongst the people of Buxton and wholly inadequate set of so-called Labour representatives who have failed to even consider the wishes of residents. This development will have a multi-generational impact, the negative impacts of which will be detrimental to even our grandchildren's children. The worsening of infrastructure, the lack of an economic impact assessment, the dubious viability of the project and a lack of meaningful consultation coupled with a total lack of transparency surrounding the scheme is beyond inept and bordering on the criminal.

The original bid with its requirement for 75 residential units from the then government was far more acceptable, with the emphasis of the plans being the expansion of retail and service provision. Capital and Centric then pushed the number to 180, which was chancing it, but it didn't take the focus away from the intended aim of a sympathetic redevelopment whose aims were still acceptable to the public. The figure quoted upon consultation of 250 (as was publicly displayed in the Springs until a couple of months ago) still pales in comparison to the 327 units cited on the application! A 336% increase on the initial requirement of 75. To then say that there is a viability gap should the development not proceed without this ridiculously enlarged allocation of housing must surely be justification for going back to the drawing board and consulting with local people as to what their requirements are.

The impact of this development will be nothing short of disastrous. There has been no assessment of the impact of road and parking changes on the wider town and, in a further act of insanity, no consideration for the impact the development will have on our primary shopping area and central business district. Keystone stores like Next, New Look and WH Smiths (as was) along with one of our few remaining banks will be forced to relocate with no guarantee that they will ever return. The far greater likelihood being a relocation to other areas of more likely still, a complete withdrawal. The retail offer the town provides could be irreparably damaged. Waitrose could be forced to close due to the impact of the imposed changes to parking provision and when questions were presented to council officers, the response was a tepid 'Waitrose are concerned but have not provided details'. It sounds to me like a deliberate obfuscation by council officers and elected officials with a vested interest in making this landmark project succeed before the Borough Council is dissolved. To proceed would not be in the public interest, it would simply be a salve to the already highly inflated egos of truly mediocre calibre elected officials.

The 60+ businesses in Spring Gardens that call the area home serve a population where 82% of them are car dependent. The enormous reduction and relocation of parking capacity will have an enormously detrimental impact. For shoppers, the lack of parking will encourage them to shop out of town, undermining the viability of Waitrose and bringing down the whole house of cards. Far from bolstering the economic prospects of the area, the development as it stands risks environmental degradation, job losses and the imposition of unaffordable housing.

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 (a decrease of 165) with 120 of them being reserved for residents of the new housing? 82% of residents are car dependent! We are a rural area, and employment prospects are disproportionately dependent upon a person's ability to drive. The urban population of 20,000 is heavily augmented by a great vastness of hinterland that adds another 10,000 people into Buxton's economic sphere. The total onsite parking will be reduced to a paltry 146. The impact on disabled provision will be even greater! What's more, locals will also lose the hard-fought parking concessions as the land will now effectively be privatised.

The council in its infinite failing has haphazardly attempted to mitigate this by wasting taxpayers' money on the purchase of the former D.B. Schenker land. A hugely problematic decision that will require the clear-cutting of adult trees at the foot of Palace Road, the construction of a new junction at an already dangerous spot and the complicated dismantling of the existing track and signalling system (as it's an old chain link system relatively unchanged since the 1860's) without disrupting trains going in and out of Buxton Station. It also lacks planning permission, and all for the paltry addition of maybe 50 spaces? The distance alone from Waitrose already makes it unfeasible. It would be far better to use the old rail shed land as apartments/bedsits and advertise them as a domicile for people intending on working in Manchester. The distance from the shopping area will require big changes to an already strained road network that already suffers from congestion to the point that buses are routinely delayed before they have even left the town centre. The distance to the D. B. Schenker land will greatly disadvantage Waitrose as a business and their customer base, particularly the more affluent elderly and the disabled.

The proposed changes to the road lay out will be detrimental to traffic flows and the new entry to the rear of the development opposite McDonalds where a whole raft of changes will be crammed into a tiny area already occupied by one of the few pedestrian crossings and the bus stop servicing the station will likely result in unnecessary dangers to drivers and pedestrians alike. The argument that people will come by train, bus or use sustainable methods like bikes to shop or to work is ridiculous. People using supermarkets tend to use cars rather than

carrying heavy shopping and our public transport is simply unreliable. The environmental impact of people cruising and subsequently failing to find parking spots has also not been considered - something that will not only exacerbate congestion but could put visitors off from visiting the area again.

I simply do not think these plans are viable. 337 homes needing only 120 spaces? If the existing trend that 82% of residents will be car dependent, then the new development will need 277 spaces, practically wiping out all available car parking. An annual rail pass costs upwards of £3800, and if average rents are expected to be around £1200 a month, I simply cannot see who will possibly be able to afford to live in this development. Certainly not locals at any rate as our purchasing power has fallen behind for quite some time. Residents will need well paid jobs to afford the rent, with salaries that simply aren't available to most in Buxton.

My final concern is the lack of proper consultation and utter lack of transparency. The people of Buxton have been treated with utter contempt by a council administration with no real grounding in the area and no real interest in the wishes of the people they are supposed to represent. The vast majority of local people have been sold a lie. They were expecting a project that would rejuvenate the town and propel us into the next decade, and instead they will be losing the free parking, will see a reduction in retail space and be foisted with a housing development that quite literally nobody asked for. Not even Homes England. The bare faced lies about new leisure facilities, the ongoing uncertainty over the relocation of the museum and gallery, the library, the complete withdrawal of the space allocated for council operations. A new college, new cinema, all these speculations have been withdrawn leaving a badly thought-out residential development and a lot of angry locals.

People said that they wanted more parking, the response was to take parking away. People wanted a better retail offer; the response was to reduce the amount of retail space. People wanted jobs, new facilities & the response is to leave us with even less than we have now. The entire endeavour has lacked transparency. Most council updates have been confidential verbal updates, of which no record has been kept. Meetings have been in secret, with major decisions being made by people with no skin in the game. Rumour has it that councillors who are on the development control committee have expressed support for the proposals, but the public is not entitled to know how they have voted? There have been meetings about the application which have only been for the Labour group who have then been forcibly kept quiet from discussing the proposals with their constituents! The council sure is deeply conflicted being both deeply invested in the application and being the party responsible for its approval? Shows a complete lack of impartiality.

It is hugely disappointing that such an opportunity to make the single biggest contribution to Buxton's public realm in a generation is being pissed away by a cadre of the most inept, self-centred charlatans ever to grace the Borough Council's chambers.

GO BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD.

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