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

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

Lightwood Road
Buxton
Buxton

Phone:
Email: Submission: Objection
Comments: We strongly object to the planning application HPK/2026/0228 for Spring Garden redevelopment.

While we fully support the aims for the regeneration of Buxton town centre, we believe this application fails to adequately provide a solution that will support a sustainable future for the town which is contrary to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is a substantial residential development of 332 units that if fully occupied would result in an additional 880 occupants living in the town centre. This is not in keeping for this historic Spa town that relies heavily on its heritage to attract visitors for its economic viability.

In particular this planning application gives rise to significant concerns over the governance, the heritage of the town, parking and accessibility, the planning process and economic viability. These are addressed in more detail as follows

Governance

Conflict of interest Ć High Peak Borough Council (HPBC) is the land owner, in part petitioner, active partner in the development and overall approver of the application. This appears to be a serious conflict of interest and for the sake of transparency the decision to approve this application should be called into to the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

The reorganisation of Local government means HPBC will be deciding on a scheme they will not be responsible for managing. This is likely to constrain the successor authority in the future administration of Buxton's regeneration. This seems to be against the principles outlined in S24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 which recognises the importance of ensuring that decisions taken by predecessor authorities do not unnecessarily constrain the options available to successor bodies. On this basis the decision should be called in to MHCLG or deferred to the incoming authority.

Funding has been obtained from Future High Streets Fund. The aim of this fund is to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that drives growth, improves experience and ensures future economic sustainability which means that they are not fully reliant on retail. This application takes the alternative approach of being fully reliant on residential which will not achieve the required aims as it will threaten Buxton's economic sustainability. Only a mixed-use scheme across residential,

commercial and recreational areas will be able to achieve the stated aims the Future High Street Funds expects. In our opinion this scheme will not achieve the required objectives.

Heritage planning

Scale - This application is for a primarily residential development of 11 buildings of 332 rental units. This could result in an increase of 880 people who will need public services. This population density is more in keeping with metropolitan areas and it is questionable that the existing infrastructure can support the additional load on services that this proposal suggests will be covered. In addition, the mix of housing proposed does not address the key issue of providing affordable housing or support the HPLP policies CF1 or CF2 for the Commercial space. On this basis the application does not support what the wider Buxton community requires in a scheme to revitalise Buxton.

Proposed Buildings - The scale of the proposed blocks would dominate the skyline of the town centre and detract from the heritage buildings and are significantly out of scale by at least a floor of the existing town buildings. The unique look and feel of the town would be irrevocably lost in the new urban complexion. The design of many of the blocks rely on flat roofs resulting in the look of a high-rise concrete jungle, which does not reflect the architectural landscape of the town. The Station Road context elevation shows the structure will be over twice the height of the existing Waitrose building. In addition, the materials proposed are of lower quality than originally outlined in the Planning statement vision and are less reflective of the existing town structures. A revision of the architecture and materials proposed would be needed for the proposal to be acceptable.

We welcome the applications proposal to open access to the River Wye and provide additional green public spaces for new residents and the existing population however we fail to see if both of these communities can be satisfied with the proposed mix of Public versus Private space. There seems to be too little private green space to satisfy the possible 880 new residents while retaining the public access needed for the station approach and high street.

Parking & Accessibility

Accessibility - The applications proposal for access from the Station to the high street is flawed as it relies on steps and a single public lift to provide step free access. With the challenges of Buxton's topography and weather this reduces accessibility for the less able and aging population in conjunction with the decrease on central parking. This application must address this issue in order to increase capacity and reduce the dependency risk of a single point of failure in this current submission.

Car Parking - The reduction of parking spaces from 442 to 264 that have direct access to the town centre is both discriminatory and economically short sighted. The existing provision of parking is a key asset to the town as it provides step free access to the town centre for residents, shoppers and visitors. Reducing this provision is therefore likely to reduce the influx of people to the town centre which is against the core tenet of revitalising Buxton.

In addition, 332 new residential units are highly likely to demand parking spaces to ensure occupancy therefore further restricting public supply. The provision of adequate parking should be addressed in this application rather than a separate planning application which might not go ahead as the provision of accessibility, traffic flow and highway engineering are all linked with the viability of this scheme.

The council should also ensure significant provisions are made for parking during the build phase of this or subsequent schemes, when spaces will be further reduced, as there will be extra parking pressure on the surrounding roads that will affect residents and visitors of the town.

Planning process

There are a number of serious concerns regarding this application in respect of planning process and policies this application fails to meet.

The Planning statement refers to the vision statement which details higher quality materials (Copper sheeting, stone facings, etc.) and design features such as roof terraces, gardens and Mansard roofs. These features are absent in the detailed application as submitted. This is misleading and reference should be made to the change in a revised Planning statement

This consultation process is fundamental flawed as the scheme original outlined has significantly changed with the increase in residential units and no affordable housing provision in the actual submitted application. Therefore, the positive reception for the original revitalisation scheme has been lost and the consultation should be reperformed based on the actual proposed plans. We are sure that a number of the consultation comments from various bodies would be amended. The key specific consultation points from the wider community of better parking provision and affordable housing, referred to as not viable by the applicant, have not been addressed. We would request that the council does not approve the application until these outstanding areas are addressed.

The actual plans do not appear to meet High Peak Local Plan policies of CF1 or CF2 to maintain Buxton town centres commercial and retail viability.

This application refers to other planning applications that will support the overall scheme. These are 100 new affordable homes in Fairfield and up to 200 new car parking spaces near Buxton rail station. Due to the exceedingly high dependency that exists on these separate plans for the viability of the town this application should only logically proceed upon a) the completion of the addition parking and b) approved plans for the affordable housing scheme.

Economic viability

There is a lack of information included in the application on the viability of the overall scheme as no Viability assessment is provided. It is therefore extremely difficult to assess whether the overall plan will achieve the aims outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to facilitate economic growth and ensure sustainable development. Reviewing the application planning statement a number of the basis used have to be questioned.

- a) 10% uplift in visitor numbers with an expected £6.7m p.a. revenue uplift. This seems unlikely if the visitors have nowhere to park and are expected to arrive by train/public transport.
- b) 50% reduction in HPBC car parking will impact the council's budget. Will the developers contribute towards this or will the council introduce on street parking charges. The council should address this shortfall in deciding on this proposal
- c) Council is investing over £10m of public money in this scheme and no details have been provided to show the value gained from this investment.
- d) Impact on both commercial and visitor numbers during the build phase will be significant and hasn't been outlined. Will businesses or the council be seeking compensation from the developer.
- e) Has support been gained for the scheme from major players in the town (Buxton Opera House, Hotels, Waitrose, Next etc.). We need to ensure the long term retention of significant retailers for the on-going high street viability.

Without clarity on these issues, it is unlikely that a positive view can be formed on the sustained economic viability that this scheme will bring to Buxton and on that basis alone this application should not be approved.

Summary

In light of the concerns raised above we strongly object to this planning application and request that the council refuses this application until the issues are addressed through revision, clarity around economic viability and increased governance over the overall scheme. This will provide a better and sustainable solution to revitalise Buxton that is supported by its residents.

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