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

Categories: [REDACTED]

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

From:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: Re: Planning Applications HPK/2026/0228 and HPK/2026/0229

Springs Shopping Centre Redevelopment, Buxton

Dear Sir or Madam,

I wish to register my strong objection to the above planning applications.

At the outset, I would like to make it absolutely clear that I support the principle of regenerating the Springs Shopping Centre site. Buxton deserves investment, thoughtful redevelopment and a vibrant town centre that will serve residents and visitors well into the future.

However, regeneration should never come at the expense of the very qualities that make Buxton one of Britain's finest and most distinctive historic spa towns. I do not believe that the current proposals achieve the exceptional standard that this nationally important location deserves.

My Interest

My comments are made from the perspective of someone who has invested significantly in Buxton's historic environment.

Over recent years I have personally restored two Grade II listed buildings in Buxton, carefully returning them to their historic appearance dating from 1852 and 1882. This has involved considerable financial investment, time and commitment, while working within the principles of historic conservation and respecting the architectural integrity of these important buildings.

That experience has given me a genuine appreciation of the responsibility we all share in protecting Buxton's unique built heritage. My objection is therefore not to regeneration itself, but to a scheme which I believe fails to complement and enhance the exceptional historic environment into which it is proposed.

Buxton Deserves Exceptional Design

Buxton is not simply another town centre awaiting redevelopment.

It is one of England's finest historic spa towns, renowned for its elegant Georgian and Victorian architecture, carefully planned streets, public spaces, parks and nationally important heritage assets.

Visitors come from across the United Kingdom and overseas because Buxton possesses a unique identity that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

A development of this scale, occupying such an important site in the heart of the town, should therefore aspire to the very highest architectural standards.

In my opinion, this proposal falls short of that aspiration.

Whilst contemporary architecture certainly has its place, it should complement and enrich its surroundings rather than dominate them.

The proposed buildings appear competent but ultimately generic in character and could be located in many modern town centres without reflecting the distinctive architectural language that has defined Buxton for generations.

This site deserves architecture that is unmistakably Buxton.

Heritage and the Conservation Area

The significance of Buxton lies not only in its individual listed buildings but also in the relationship between its buildings, streets, open spaces, mature trees, views and carefully composed townscape.

Having reviewed the visual material submitted with the application, I remain concerned that the cumulative impact of the proposed development would fundamentally alter that historic environment.

Although some buildings may be partially screened from certain viewpoints, the overall scale, density and massing introduce a more urban form of development than currently exists.

I am concerned that the proposals have not convincingly demonstrated that they would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Buxton

Conservation Area.

Scale and Density

This represents an intensive form of development for such a sensitive town centre location.

Whilst each individual building may appear acceptable in isolation, the combined effect creates an impression of overdevelopment.

I am concerned that maximising development potential has taken precedence over achieving a scale that responds sympathetically to Buxton's established architectural character.

Architecture

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

Developments of this importance should become future heritage assets in their own right.

Unfortunately, I do not believe these proposals possess the timeless architectural quality expected for such an important location.

Future generations should look back upon this redevelopment with pride, not simply accept it as adequate.

Public Views and Townscape

One of Buxton's greatest qualities is the experience of moving through the town, appreciating the changing relationship between its historic buildings, open spaces and surrounding landscape.

The submitted visualisations indicate that the new development would become visible from a number of important public viewpoints.

Whilst each individual impact may appear modest, the cumulative effect risks changing the experience of the historic town centre in a way that cannot easily be reversed.

Parking, Accessibility and Transport

Parking and accessibility remain significant concerns for residents, businesses and visitors.

I remain unconvinced that the proposals provide sufficient reassurance that additional residential development can be accommodated without placing further pressure upon existing town centre parking and surrounding residential streets.

These matters deserve careful consideration before any permission is granted.

Impact on the Local Economy

The vitality of Buxton depends upon a healthy mix of independent businesses, visitors and an attractive public realm.

A lengthy construction programme together with substantial changes to the town centre inevitably carries risks for existing businesses already operating under difficult trading conditions.

Regeneration should strengthen the town centre economy rather than inadvertently weaken it.

Tourism

Tourism is one of Buxton's greatest economic strengths.

People visit because of the town's remarkable architecture, heritage, landscape, parks and unique atmosphere.

Protecting these qualities is therefore not simply a conservation issue but an economic necessity.

The long-term prosperity of Buxton depends upon safeguarding the very qualities that distinguish it from other towns.

Consultation

I was disappointed that several important planning documents, including the Heritage Statements, were unavailable due to server errors through both the High Peak Borough Council Planning Portal and the Buxton Design website during the consultation period.

Residents should be able to examine all relevant supporting documents before being expected to comment on proposals of this significance. I hope the Council will take this into account when considering the weight to be given to public representations.

Conclusion

This redevelopment will shape Buxton for generations.

Once constructed, its impact upon the character of the town cannot easily be reversed.

For that reason, I believe the Council should expect nothing less than exceptional architecture that reflects Buxton's unique history, respects its internationally recognised heritage and enhances the character and appearance of its Conservation Area.

Whilst I support investment and regeneration, I do not believe these applications have demonstrated that they achieve those objectives.

Unless the Council is fully satisfied that the proposals preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Buxton's Conservation Area, protect its heritage significance, provide an appropriate scale of development and satisfactorily address concerns relating to parking, accessibility and town centre vitality, I respectfully request that planning permission be refused.

Buxton is a town of national importance whose architectural heritage has survived for generations. Decisions taken today will shape its character for decades to come. I respectfully ask the Council to ensure that any redevelopment of this important site is of truly exceptional quality and worthy of Buxton's unique status. In my view, the current proposals do not yet achieve that standard, and I therefore respectfully request that planning permission be refused unless the scheme is substantially improved.

Finally, I wish to emphasise that my objection should not be interpreted as opposition to progress or investment. On the contrary, I believe Buxton deserves regeneration of the very highest quality. This is a unique opportunity to create a development that respects the town's internationally recognised heritage while providing lasting economic, social and environmental benefits. I simply do not believe that the current proposals achieve that ambition.

Yours faithfully,

Howard Crowther

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