

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: Daniel Babusca

From:

Woodlark Close
Harpur Hill
Buxton

Phone:

Email: [REDACTED]

Submission: Objection

Comments: Dear Sir or Madam,

Please record this representation as a formal objection to the above planning applications.

I support the regeneration of The Springs Shopping Centre, improvements to the connection between Buxton railway station and Spring Gardens, the reopening of the River Wye and the creation of attractive public spaces.

However, I object to the applications in their current form because the proposed development is excessively residential-led, provides an insufficiently balanced range of town-centre uses, raises serious unresolved parking and transport concerns, and does not respond adequately to Buxton's distinctive heritage and architectural character.

The proposal includes 332 build-to-rent homes alongside approximately 4,250 square metres of commercial space. Although it is presented as a mixed-use development, its scale and emphasis mean that it would function predominantly as a very large apartment complex rather than as a comprehensive regeneration of Buxton town centre.

1. Excessive number of residential units and overdevelopment

The proposed 332 residential units represent an excessive concentration of housing on this sensitive and strategically important town-centre site.

The principle of residential development in the town centre is not objectionable in itself. New residents could support existing businesses and increase activity outside normal shopping hours.

However, this does not justify maximising residential density at the expense of the character, economic purpose and long-term functionality of the town centre.

The amount of accommodation proposed appears to have driven the height, scale, massing and layout of the buildings. The resulting development would be apartment-dominated and would risk creating a dense residential estate in the centre of Buxton rather than a natural extension of its established streets and commercial areas.

The council should require a substantial reduction in the number of residential units, together with corresponding reductions in building height, bulk and massing.

The site should be designed around the wider needs of Buxton, rather than around the maximum number of apartments that can be accommodated.

2. Failure to provide a properly balanced mixed-use town centre

The original purpose of the town-centre regeneration was to renew and reshape this part of Buxton in a way that supports economic growth, improves the visitor experience and ensures the long-term sustainability of the town centre.

However, the balance appears to have shifted too far away from comprehensive town-centre regeneration and towards the creation of a residential-led neighbourhood.

I acknowledge that approximately 4,250 square metres of commercial space is proposed. However, this commercial element is subordinate to 332 apartments and does not, by itself, demonstrate that the scheme will provide the range, quality and long-term viability of commercial uses required by a major tourist town.

The application should provide a transparent comparison between:

- The existing commercial floorspace and premises that would be removed.
- The net amount of replacement retail, hospitality, leisure, office and cultural floorspace.

- The sizes and locations of the proposed commercial units.
- The amount of active commercial frontage at ground-floor level.
- How the units will be made affordable and suitable for independent businesses.
- How occupation of those premises will be secured and maintained.

Spring Gardens is one of Buxton's principal shopping and visitor areas. Its retail offer should be maintained and complemented by cafés, restaurants, leisure facilities, cultural attractions and other uses that encourage visitors to spend more time in the town.

The redevelopment should provide a much stronger and enforceable commercial, leisure, hospitality, cultural and visitor-focused offer.

This could include independent shops, restaurants, cafés, indoor visitor attractions, flexible market or event space, cultural facilities, visitor services and other premises that support Buxton's tourism economy.

Spring Gardens should not become predominantly an apartment complex with a limited number of ancillary commercial units.

It should remain a principal commercial and visitor destination, supported by an appropriate amount of residential accommodation.

3. Narrow housing and tenure mix

All 332 homes are proposed as rental accommodation, with no meaningful opportunity for residents to purchase a home within the development.

I do not object to rental housing in principle. However, a development of this size should contribute to a diverse, stable and balanced town-centre community.

A near-total build-to-rent model provides an extremely narrow housing offer and limits the ability of local people to purchase a property and build a permanent financial and community stake in the town centre.

The development should include a broader mix of tenures and housing types, including:

- Genuinely affordable and social rented housing.
- Homes suitable for local families.
- Accessible and adaptable homes.
- A range of dwelling sizes.
- Secure long-term rental options.
- An appropriate proportion of homes available for purchase.

Housing should form part of a balanced regeneration strategy, rather than becoming the overwhelmingly dominant use of the site.

4. Inadequate and uncertain parking arrangements

Parking is one of the most serious unresolved issues associated with the development.

The redevelopment would introduce approximately 880 additional residents while removing some of the existing parking at The Springs.

It would also generate demand from commercial occupiers, employees, deliveries, visitors, disabled users, taxis, servicing vehicles and people attending town-centre events.

Buxton is a tourist town in which parking demand varies significantly by season.

Assessments based mainly on average weekday conditions would not adequately represent demand during summer weekends, bank holidays, festivals, major events and other peak visitor periods.

A separate proposal has been announced for up to 200 new parking spaces on the former railway depot beside Buxton station.

However, this is a separate project on separate land and remains subject to its own planning approval, funding and delivery arrangements.

The main development should not be approved on the assumption that a separate car park will necessarily be permitted, funded, constructed and available when required.

Before permission is granted, the applicant should be required to demonstrate:

- The total number of existing public parking spaces that would be lost.
- The residential parking demand generated by 332 apartments.
- The likely displacement of residents' vehicles onto surrounding streets and public car parks.
- Peak-season visitor demand rather than merely annual averages.
- Provision for commercial employees and customers.
- Accessible and Blue Badge parking.
- Taxi, coach, loading and delivery arrangements.
- Electric vehicle charging provision.
- Construction-period parking and traffic management.
- The cumulative effect of the development and the separate railway-depot car park proposal.

Any permission should be subject to a legally enforceable phasing requirement preventing the removal of existing public parking or the occupation of the apartments until adequate replacement public parking is fully operational.

Without secure replacement parking, the development could displace vehicles into surrounding residential streets, make the town centre less accessible to visitors and adversely affect existing businesses that depend on tourist and customer traffic.

5. Inappropriate architecture, scale and relationship with Buxton's heritage

The proposed architecture does not respond adequately to Buxton's distinctive Georgian and Victorian heritage.

The concern is not simply that the buildings are contemporary. High-quality contemporary architecture can be appropriate in a historic town.

The problem is that the proposed scale, massing, repetitive elevations and apartment-block typology appear generic and institutional.

The scheme risks creating the impression of a large residential estate rather than a fine-grained extension of Buxton town centre.

New development in this location should respond appropriately to local scale, massing, proportions, materials, colours, roofscape and established building lines.

The use of stone-coloured materials or selected heritage details would not, by itself, overcome fundamentally excessive height, massing or repetitive building forms.

The overall composition, proportions and relationship between the new buildings and surrounding heritage assets are more important than superficial material treatments.

The proposal should be redesigned to include:

- Substantially reduced building heights and massing.
- Smaller and more varied building plots.
- A finer-grained street pattern.
- Greater variation in elevations and rooflines.
- Active commercial ground-floor frontages.
- Stronger visual relationships with existing streets.
- Locally appropriate and durable materials.
- Protection of important views towards established landmarks.
- More convincing transitions between the development and neighbouring heritage buildings.

Given the size and sensitivity of the development, the revised scheme should be examined through an independent design review process with meaningful input from conservation and heritage specialists.

6. Loss of Buxton's distinctive town-centre character

Buxton's appeal as a visitor destination depends heavily on its distinctive architecture, historic streets, independent businesses and traditional town-centre character.

A large apartment-led development with generic building forms could weaken the qualities that make Buxton attractive to tourists and residents.

The development should enhance Buxton's identity rather than introducing a design that could be placed in almost any town or city.

The redevelopment of such an important site should create a memorable and locally distinctive destination that complements the existing town rather than competing with it.

7. Insufficient support for tourism and the visitor economy

Buxton experiences significant seasonal visitor demand and depends heavily on tourism, hospitality, retail, cultural venues and events.

The current proposal does not appear to give sufficient priority to the needs of tourists or to the expansion of the visitor economy.

A genuine town-centre regeneration scheme should include a meaningful range of attractions and facilities that give people reasons to visit Buxton, remain in the town for longer and spend money with local businesses.

The development should include a stronger mixture of:

- Retail premises.
- Restaurants and cafés.
- Leisure and entertainment facilities.

- Cultural and community spaces.
- Visitor information and tourism services.
- Flexible event and market areas.
- Spaces suitable for independent local businesses.

Increasing the resident population may provide some support to existing businesses, but this is not a substitute for creating new commercial and visitor attractions.

8. Risk that residential development will be delivered before the public benefits

There is a risk that the residential parts of the project could be prioritised while the commercial premises, public realm, visitor facilities and replacement parking are delayed, reduced or altered.

Any permission should include robust planning conditions and legal obligations requiring the commercial premises, public spaces, station connection, River Wye improvements and replacement public parking to be delivered at defined stages before substantial occupation of the residential accommodation.

The commercial space should also be protected against later conversion to residential use without a full planning assessment.

The regeneration benefits relied upon to justify the scale of the application must be legally secured rather than left as aspirations.

9. Infrastructure and public-service pressures

The addition of approximately 880 residents would create further demand for local healthcare, public services, waste collection, utilities, transport infrastructure and community facilities.

The application should clearly demonstrate how these additional demands will be accommodated and funded.

The council should not approve such a substantial increase in the town-centre population without adequate evidence that existing infrastructure and services can cope.

Appropriate developer contributions should be secured to mitigate the effects of the development.

10. Need for a more balanced alternative

The redevelopment of The Springs is an important opportunity for Buxton, but regeneration should not be treated as a choice between retaining the existing shopping centre and accepting an apartment-dominated development of excessive scale.

A more appropriate alternative would provide a genuine mixture of commercial, tourism, leisure, cultural and residential uses.

The residential element should be reduced to allow more space for businesses, public amenities, visitor facilities, landscaping and parking.

This would provide new homes while also strengthening Buxton's economy, protecting its heritage and improving the town-centre experience for residents and visitors.

Conclusion

I support the principle of regenerating this underperforming site, but I object to the present applications because they do not provide an appropriate balance between housing, commerce, tourism, transport and heritage.

I respectfully request that the applications be refused in their current form, withdrawn or deferred to allow a fundamental redesign incorporating:

1. A substantial reduction in the number of apartments, building heights and overall density.
2. A stronger and legally secured mix of retail, hospitality, leisure, cultural, employment and visitor-focused premises.
3. A broader housing and tenure mix, including genuinely affordable housing, family accommodation and meaningful opportunities for local ownership.

4. A comprehensive parking and transport strategy based on cumulative and peak-season demand.
5. Binding delivery of adequate replacement public parking before existing spaces are removed or apartments are occupied.
6. A heritage-led redesign that respects the fine grain, scale, roofscape, materials and architectural identity of Buxton.
7. Independent design review and detailed assessment of the effects on nearby heritage assets, important views and the wider townscape.
8. Enforceable phasing arrangements ensuring that the promised commercial, public-realm and infrastructure benefits are delivered alongside, rather than after, the residential development.
9. A clear assessment of the effect of approximately 880 additional residents on local infrastructure, services and facilities.
10. A genuinely balanced town-centre scheme that supports tourism and independent businesses rather than creating a predominantly residential apartment estate.

Buxton requires ambitious regeneration, but the town should not have to choose between leaving The Springs unchanged and accepting an excessively dense, predominantly rental apartment development.

A more balanced scheme could provide new homes while also strengthening tourism, supporting local businesses, protecting Buxton's heritage and creating a successful town centre for residents and visitors.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Babusca

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