

From: planningcomments@highpeak.gov.uk
Sent: 23 July 2026 11:20
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: Anastasia Babusca
From:

Woodlark Close
Harpur Hill
Buxton

Phone:

Email: [REDACTED]

Submission: Objection

Comments: Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the above planning applications.

I recognise that The Springs requires investment and that the site offers an important opportunity to improve Buxton town centre. I also support proposals that would create better public spaces, improve links with the railway station, enhance the River Wye and replace the existing shopping centre with a more attractive and useful development.

However, the current scheme places too much emphasis on high-density residential accommodation and does not provide an appropriate balance between housing, commercial activity, tourism, parking and heritage.

The proposal for 332 build-to-rent apartments, together with approximately 4,250 square metres of commercial space, would transform this central site into a predominantly residential neighbourhood. In my view, this is not the balanced town-centre regeneration that Buxton needs.

1. Excessive residential density

The proposed number of apartments is too high for this prominent and sensitive town-centre location.

Residential development can play a positive role in regeneration by bringing more people into the town centre and supporting businesses throughout the day and evening. However, the residential element should complement the commercial and visitor functions of the town rather than dominate them.

In this case, the scale of the housing appears to determine the overall design of the development. The height, bulk, density and layout of the proposed buildings appear to have been shaped primarily around accommodating the maximum possible number of apartments.

This would create a development that resembles a large urban housing estate rather than an integrated extension of Buxton's existing town centre.

A significant reduction in the number of apartments is required. This would allow the buildings to be reduced in height and mass, provide more space for commercial premises and public amenities, and create a development that responds more appropriately to its surroundings.

2. An unbalanced approach to town-centre regeneration

The redevelopment was originally promoted as an opportunity to revitalise Buxton town centre, support tourism, improve the local economy and create a more attractive destination for residents and visitors.

The current proposal appears to have moved away from those objectives and become primarily a build-to-rent housing development with a secondary commercial element.

Although approximately 4,250 square metres of commercial space is included, this must be considered in the context of 332 apartments and an estimated 880 new residents.

The application does not appear to demonstrate convincingly that the proposed commercial provision will be sufficient to replace what is being lost, support independent businesses or create a stronger visitor destination.

The applicant should provide clear information showing:

- How much existing commercial floorspace will be demolished.
- How much new retail, hospitality, leisure, office and cultural space will be provided.

- Whether there will be a net increase or reduction in usable commercial premises.
- The proposed sizes and locations of individual commercial units.
- How much active commercial frontage will be created at street level.
- Whether the units will be affordable and suitable for small and independent businesses.
- How the commercial units will be protected from remaining vacant or being converted into residential use.

Spring Gardens is one of Buxton's most important shopping streets and forms a major part of the town's visitor economy.

It should remain a destination for shopping, dining, leisure, culture and tourism rather than becoming the frontage to a large apartment development.

A stronger commercial and visitor-focused offer should be included, with space for:

- Independent retailers.
- Restaurants, cafés and hospitality businesses.
- Indoor leisure and entertainment facilities.
- Cultural and community uses.
- Markets and temporary events.
- Visitor attractions and tourism services.
- Local and start-up businesses.

Residential accommodation may help existing businesses, but it cannot replace the need for new commercial premises and attractions that encourage people to visit Buxton.

3. Lack of housing choice and local ownership

The proposal is based entirely, or almost entirely, on apartments available to rent rather than purchase.

Rental accommodation has an important role in meeting housing needs, and I do not object to rented homes in principle. However, a development of this scale should provide a broader and more inclusive range of housing options.

A single-tenure build-to-rent model creates a narrow form of housing provision and gives local residents little opportunity to purchase a home within the development.

The scheme should include a more balanced mixture of:

- Homes available for purchase.
- Genuinely affordable rented housing.
- Social housing.
- Secure long-term rented homes.
- Family-sized accommodation.
- Accessible and adaptable homes.
- A range of apartment sizes suitable for different households.

Allowing local people to purchase homes would support longer-term community stability and enable residents to establish a permanent stake in the town centre.

The current tenure model should therefore be reconsidered as part of a wider reduction in residential density.

4. Parking pressures and loss of existing provision

The effect of the development on parking has not been adequately resolved.

The scheme would add approximately 880 residents to the town centre while removing part of the existing parking provision at The Springs.

Parking demand would not come only from residents. Additional spaces would also be required for:

- Commercial customers.
- Employees.
- Tourists.
- Disabled visitors.
- Deliveries and servicing.
- Taxis.
- Contractors.
- Event visitors.
- Friends and relatives visiting residents.

Buxton experiences much higher visitor numbers during summer, bank holidays, festivals, weekends and major events.

Any parking assessment must therefore examine the busiest periods of the year rather than relying mainly on typical weekday demand.

A separate proposal for up to 200 parking spaces near the railway station has been presented as part of the wider regeneration plans.

However, that car park is a separate development requiring its own planning approval, funding and construction programme.

The Springs development should not depend on an unapproved or undelivered car park to address its parking impact.

Before planning permission is granted, the applicant should provide clear evidence regarding:

- The number of existing public parking spaces that would be removed.
- The expected parking demand from 332 apartments.
- The number of residents likely to own vehicles.

- The impact on nearby streets and existing public car parks.
- Peak-season tourist parking demand.
- Parking required by commercial occupiers and their customers.
- Blue Badge and accessible parking provision.
- Loading, servicing, taxi and coach arrangements.
- Electric vehicle charging.
- Construction traffic and contractor parking.
- The combined impact of the main scheme and the proposed station car park.

Adequate replacement parking should be completed and available before existing spaces are removed or the apartments are occupied.

This requirement should be secured through enforceable planning conditions or a legal agreement.

Without sufficient parking, the development could increase congestion, displace vehicles into surrounding residential streets and discourage visitors from using the town centre.

This would have a negative effect on both residents and businesses.

5. Poor relationship with Buxton's architectural heritage

The proposed buildings do not appear to reflect the distinctive character of Buxton.

Buxton is known for its Georgian and Victorian architecture, historic streets, stone buildings, rooflines and important views.

The issue is not that contemporary buildings are automatically unsuitable. A well-designed modern development could work successfully in this location.

However, the current proposal appears too large, too repetitive and too generic for such a prominent town-centre site.

The scale and form of the apartment blocks risk creating an institutional or estate-like appearance that could be found in almost any town.

The development should respond more carefully to:

- Existing building heights.
- Traditional plot widths.
- Historic street patterns.
- Building lines.
- Roof shapes and roofscape.
- Local stone and other appropriate materials.
- The scale and proportions of nearby buildings.
- Views towards important landmarks.
- The setting of nearby heritage assets.

Using stone-coloured materials would not be enough to make an excessively large building appropriate.

The fundamental form, height, massing, proportions and layout must also respect the character of Buxton.

A revised design should include:

- Lower building heights.
- Reduced building mass.
- Smaller and more varied building blocks.
- Greater architectural variation.
- More traditional proportions.
- A finer-grained street layout.

- Active commercial frontages.
- Better transitions between new and historic buildings.
- High-quality local materials.
- Improved protection of important views.

The proposal should be independently reviewed by recognised urban design, architecture and heritage specialists before any approval is considered.

6. Damage to Buxton's identity as a visitor destination

Buxton's attractiveness to tourists depends heavily on its historic appearance, cultural venues, independent shops, cafés, restaurants and traditional town-centre environment.

A dense apartment-led development could weaken these qualities if it introduces an urban form that does not relate to the character of the town.

The redevelopment of The Springs should strengthen Buxton's identity and create a destination that visitors will actively want to explore.

It should not simply provide residential blocks with a limited amount of commercial space at ground level.

This site should become an attractive extension of the town centre, with distinctive architecture, public spaces, visitor facilities and active streets throughout the day.

The design should be unmistakably connected to Buxton rather than appearing as a standard development that could have been built anywhere.

7. Insufficient emphasis on tourism and commercial activity

Tourism is one of the most important parts of Buxton's economy.

The current proposal does not appear to provide enough new attractions, facilities or commercial opportunities for visitors.

A major town-centre redevelopment should increase the number of reasons for tourists to visit, stay longer and spend money locally.

The scheme should provide a clear and substantial tourism and commercial strategy, including provision for:

- Independent shops.
- Restaurants and cafés.
- Leisure uses.
- Cultural venues.
- Indoor attractions suitable for poor weather.
- Flexible event areas.
- Markets.
- Community spaces.
- Visitor information services.
- Businesses connected to tourism and hospitality.

The introduction of new residents may generate some local spending, but it is not a substitute for a strong commercial offer.

The centre of Buxton should remain focused on serving the town as a whole, including its residents, businesses and visitors.

8. Risk that the apartments will be prioritised over public benefits

There is a concern that the residential buildings could be constructed and occupied before the commercial premises, public spaces, parking and other promised benefits are delivered.

The residential element is likely to be the most financially valuable part of the project. Without strict controls, there is a risk that other elements could be delayed, reduced or changed later.

Planning permission should therefore include a detailed and enforceable phasing plan.

This should ensure that the following are completed at appropriate stages before substantial residential occupation:

- Replacement public parking.
- Commercial premises.
- Public spaces.
- Improvements to the station connection.
- River Wye works.
- Landscaping.
- Pedestrian routes.
- Visitor facilities.
- Necessary transport and infrastructure improvements.

The commercial areas should also be protected from future conversion into additional apartments without a full planning application.

The council should not rely on general promises or illustrative plans where the public benefits are being used to justify such a large residential development.

9. Pressure on local services and infrastructure

The introduction of approximately 880 residents would create additional pressure on local services and infrastructure.

This could include:

- GP and healthcare services.
- Public transport.
- Roads and junctions.
- Waste collection.
- Water and drainage systems.
- Emergency services.
- Community facilities.
- Schools and childcare.
- Public spaces and recreational facilities.

The applicant should provide clear evidence that these services can accommodate the additional population.

Where extra capacity or improvements are required, the developer should make appropriate financial contributions through planning obligations.

The development should not place additional costs and pressures on the existing community without adequate mitigation.

10. Need for a genuinely mixed alternative

The Springs site should be redeveloped, but the current proposal is not the only possible form of regeneration.

The choice should not be between retaining the existing shopping centre and constructing more than 300 rental apartments.

A better scheme would provide a balanced mixture of:

- Residential accommodation.
- Shops.
- Restaurants and cafés.

- Leisure and cultural facilities.
- Visitor attractions.
- Community uses.
- Public spaces.
- Landscaping.
- Adequate parking.
- Employment opportunities.

Reducing the number of apartments would allow more space for these uses and would make it possible to create a lower, less dense and more attractive development.

A properly balanced scheme could provide new homes while also supporting tourism, creating jobs, protecting heritage and improving the experience of Buxton town centre.

Conclusion

I support the regeneration of The Springs site, but I object to the current applications because the proposals are too heavily dominated by high-density rental housing.

The scheme does not provide an appropriate balance between residential development, commercial activity, tourism, parking, public infrastructure and the protection of Buxton's heritage.

I respectfully request that the applications be refused, withdrawn or substantially revised to include:

1. A significant reduction in the number of apartments.
2. Lower buildings with reduced height, scale and massing.
3. A stronger and legally protected range of retail, leisure, hospitality, cultural and visitor uses.

4. A broader housing mix, including homes available for purchase and genuinely affordable accommodation.
5. A comprehensive parking strategy based on peak tourist demand as well as residential demand.
6. Delivery of adequate replacement parking before existing spaces are removed or apartments are occupied.
7. A heritage-led redesign that reflects Buxton's architecture, scale, roofscape, materials and townscape.
8. Independent review by qualified design and heritage specialists.
9. Legally enforceable phasing to ensure that commercial premises, public spaces, parking and infrastructure are delivered alongside the apartments.
10. A clear assessment of the impact of approximately 880 additional residents on local services and infrastructure.
11. A more balanced redevelopment that strengthens Spring Gardens as a commercial, cultural and visitor destination.

Buxton needs thoughtful and ambitious regeneration, but this should not result in one of its most important town-centre sites becoming a predominantly private rental apartment complex.

The opportunity should be used to create a development that benefits residents, businesses and tourists while preserving the character and heritage that make Buxton distinctive.

Yours faithfully,

Anastasia Babusca

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