

From: [Hugh Peacocke](#)
Sent: 07 November 2023 16:26
To: [Planapps](#)
Subject: <v9_SmartSaved/> Application ref. no 23/02094- Kennet Centre re-development (2)
Attachments: App 2 - Kennet Centre 23-02094 HWG 2023 Oct 25.docx; App 2.1 Long view N from Abbey Close Newbury - 2023 August.JPG

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Dear Sir/ Madam,





The above application was considered by our Planning and Highways Committee last night. The Committee considered the recommendations of the Council's Heritage Working group (attached) and resolved that this Council objects to this planning application on the following grounds:

1. It is out of scale with the character and scale of the Newbury Town Centre Conservation area.
2. It does not preserve or enhance the listed buildings in its vicinity
3. It fails to meet the criteria required regarding public benefits (see Historic England guidance)

Kind regards



HUGH PEACOCKE
(He/Him/His)
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Minutes of Heritage Working Group 2023 Oct 25

A meeting of the Newbury Town Council Heritage Working Group was held on Wednesday 25 October 2023, at the request of the Town Council's Planning & Highways Committee, to consider the planning application 23/02094 for the Kennet Centre. The following observations and recommendations lie within the terms of reference of the Heritage Working Group, which relate to the heritage assets and environment of Newbury, and the position of the Kennet Centre within the Town Centre Conservation Area. Aspects of the application which do not lie within those terms of reference were not considered.

1. Elevations:

A) Bartholomew Street

The Heritage Working Group welcomes the scale and appearance of the buildings to the north of The Newbury (pub). It finds the building immediately to the south of The Newbury (the northern part of Block E) acceptable in scale and design. It finds the design and height of the five-storey block to the north of the multi-storey car park (the southern part of Block E) to be unacceptable; the maximum height here should be four storeys, noticeably lower than the lift tower of the multi-storey; and the design of the frontage should be improved.

B) Cheap Street and Market Place

The proposed five-storey buildings between the former Save the Children and the cinema (Block C), which would be damaging to the street scene, should be reduced from five storeys to a maximum of four storeys. At no point should the Cheap Street elevations exceed the height of the Vue cinema.

The glazing presentation of the Eagle Court building facing the Market Place is unsatisfactory. More traditional glazing bars with windows in proportion to the surrounding buildings should be provided.

C) Market Street

Market Street is within the town centre conservation area and it is the view of the Heritage Working Group that street elevations in the conservation area should not exceed four storeys in height. In addition to the unacceptable height here, it considers that the design of the frontage of both blocks of flats is in need of improvement, particularly in setting the entrance to "New Street" (if this is to provide an attractive new approach to the town centre from the railway station) which lies between them.

2. Relation to Listed Buildings and other Heritage Assets

The Heritage Working Group considers that the current plans would be harmful to existing listed buildings and other heritage assets. In Bartholomew Street these include "The Newbury" (a listed pub), which is dominated and diminished by the proposed development, particularly behind and to the south. Among listed buildings affected opposite are nos. 16 and 17 and no. 28, and other heritage assets affected include no. 18-20.

In Cheap Street, the proposed development dominates the former “Save the Children” and the “Catherine Wheel”, both listed buildings, which are dominated by 6- and 8-storey buildings behind and 5-storey buildings on the street frontage to the south. Listed buildings affected opposite include the former Crown Post Office, and no. 41 Cheap Street. Other heritage assets affected include the three-storey no. 44, recommended for priority local listing and deserving national listing, which if this development is approved would face a 5-storey block.

Other listed buildings and heritage assets would be affected across a wider area.

3. Building heights and massing

The proposed development is over 100 feet high in the centre of the development, with three blocks (A, B and S) about the same height as the BT tower/ telephone exchange. The scale proposed is out of keeping with the overall height and scale of the town centre conservation area, and damaging to the setting of existing heritage assets.

4. Remoter Views

Remoter views of the town centre, and the town centre conservation area, will be obstructed by the proposed development. This is illustrated by the attached photograph taken from Abbey Close; the proposed development will be up to the same height as the BT telephone exchange on the right of the picture. It is evident that the 7- and 8-storey high buildings in the centre of the development will completely obscure views of the Town Hall clock and (for some) the Saint Nicolas Church tower.

5. Materials

The Heritage Working Group welcomes the materials used in the Robert Adam elevations on Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street. However, many of the buildings in this development still propose features and materials which are out of keeping with the existing heritage assets and listed buildings. Berkshire brick, or brick of similar colour and texture, and tile-hung walls, should be features integrated in this development.

6. Urban Grain

The Heritage Working Group refutes the developers’ contention that the proposed development represents a return to the pre-Kennet Centre urban grain. The proposed development cannot accurately claim to reflect the previous users, or the sizes of their premises in this area, and the historic reality does not support the scale of the present development. In particular, the proposed development does not reflect pre-existing plots along Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street, or the scale of development in the central area. Plenty’s Eagle Iron Works, which occupied part of this site, were no more than three storeys high.

7. Effect on Town Centre Conservation Area

In accordance with Historic England guidance, any proposed development should preserve and enhance the town centre conservation area. The Heritage Working Group contends that the proposed development fails to do this, with particular concerns about the heights and massing. The Heritage Working Group considers that development above six storeys would be damaging to the conservation area, and that development above four storeys would be damaging on the existing town centre street frontages. This applies to Market Street (which lies within the conservation area), as well as the streets with a medieval origin, Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street.

8. Archaeology

The whole site is of archaeological importance as part of the medieval town centre of Newbury, and should be subject to physical excavations and archaeological assessment before development starts. Particular attention should be paid to the areas of the plots close to the street frontages of Bartholomew Street and Cheap Street, but deep testing should also take place in the central area.

Anthony Pick
Chairman

29th October2023

