

I am Cllr Martin Colston and represent the Newbury Central ward in which this proposed development is situated.

When I stood for election to this council in 2023, I campaigned against an earlier iteration of the scheme under consideration in this inquiry on the grounds of overbearing scale and damage to the character of the town centre. During the campaign I heard from dozens of residents on the doorstep of their concern about the scale of the scheme. And we have already heard from Dr Peacock about further evidence of public opposition to this scheme.

When this application was brought to committee last year, officers concluded that the overall planning balance was in favour of approval, but it was clear that it was very finely balanced. A material change to any of the factors therefore could have tilted the balance in favour of rejection.

The vast majority of the town centre conservation area consists of buildings less than 4 storeys in height, while the proposed scheme has several blocks of 5 storeys and higher, including two at 7 and one at 8 storeys – double the height of most surrounding buildings.

The scheme does its best to hide the scale, but this has not been possible from all viewpoints. Nowhere is this more apparent than the view west along Bear Lane. Here the 7 and 8 storey blocks (A, B and S) tower over and totally dominate the 2 storey listed Catherine Wheel PH and its neighbouring 3 storey listed building.



When you see this view, how can you agree that this represents ‘**less than substantial to a low-moderate level**’ of harm? And how can you agree with the KC for the appellant in para 10 of his opening statement that the proposed development does “not cause harm to **any** heritage asset.”

I contend strongly that **this is brutal**, like a section of a 19th century industrial city has been unceremoniously dropped into the heart of our traditional market town, and totally dominate it. In addition, the elevations of these huge blocks are in no way sympathetic with the heritage elevations of the existing town centre.

This would **unarguably** and **dramatically** change the character of the town centre. In my view, and that of many of my residents, this would cause **substantial** harm to the town centre and therefore tilt the planning balance in favour of rejection.

As ward Councillor and on behalf of my residents I urge to Inspector to dismiss this appeal and thereby save the character of our market town.

Many thanks.

Cllr Martin Colston

Representing Newbury Central for West Berkshire Council

3rd June 2025