

Item 7b – 20/01631/FUL - Honey Street Mill, 2 A Honeystreet, Pewsey, Wiltshire, SN9 5PS

Statements of Objection

Alex Whittle – Objection – Received on 06/07 at 16:22

To the planning committee,

I am deeply concerned about this planning application (20/01631/FUL) and the impact that this will have on the hamlet in which I live. The small community on the North bank of the canal in Honeystreet is served by a single entrance from the main road, and this entrance is shared with the Honeystreet Cafe and India shop sites, and will additionally be impacted by the forthcoming housing development on the easternmost end of the site.

I have lived here for 20 years, and although the entrance to North Honeystreet is not ideal, it has presented no real issues until the recent development of the businesses at this commercial site. There have been several changes to the function on this site and each has seen piecemeal approval for applications to change the purposes of the buildings there without any sort of impact assessment on the traffic and parking requirements that all of these changes require. In fact, it seems that each of several businesses are claiming sole use of the limited existing parking facilities and the council assessment of the requirements and standing legislation appears grossly inadequate or even negligent. Since the site has been redeveloped, there have been many issues with inappropriate parking, either in the entrance, or on the main road outside which severely impact the ability to safely enter or exit the village. The applicant has made several efforts to minimise this on occasion, but I am extremely fearful of the long term impact of any changes to the permissible use on the site, both now and in the future when the plans for the buildings may change again to even more traffic intensive purposes.

If a single vehicle parks badly, the entirety of Honeystreet North is cut off from access to both residents and emergency vehicles. The traffic flows at the entrance are increasingly dense and the rate of near miss accidents are already alarmingly high. I really can not understand how approvals for the commercial development of this site has been allowed up to this point without a comprehensive review of the overall traffic and parking requirements, and ask that in the interest of health and safety as well as the wellbeing and peace of the residents that this is seriously addressed before any further approvals are granted.

Kind regards
Alex Whittle

Robert Carpenter Turner – Objection – Received on 06/07 at 16:34

I am Robert Carpenter Turner a resident of Honeystreet. I have to object strongly to the application for an Exhibition Hall right in the middle of Honeystreet, on a dangerous access road and having no additional parking facilities. The whole site is owned by the applicant and he must be aware that his cafe (which we all support) has far too few parking spaces at present, let alone on a busy bank holiday.

The Crop Circle Exhibition is good and well presented. It is also a suitable use for an old building, will give limited additional seasonal employment with (as the applicant states) 12.6 visitors a day. But it does not have any additional parking within the curtilage of the land owned by the applicant - all of which is needed by the applicants patrons to the cafe. Nor does it have any disabled access being up a rather dangerous stairs.

The road safety report under 'Access' states 'it is considered that traffic would not be moving at speed along its length and that the combination of parked vehicles, traffic accessing to the site and pedestrian users would lead vehicles to operate generally more carefully and slowly'. So it is considered acceptable to allow parked vehicles and pedestrians to form part of the traffic control? That is what I object to and fear in Honeystreet - parking outside the curtilage of the building on our lane and small roads.

The Highways officer has made several confusing reports and raises no objections to this proposal. Why then did the applicant apply for additional parking on an ANOB on land North of Honeystreet which was wisely refused by Wiltshire Council? The applicant must have known then that they needed additional parking. The cafe reopened on the 4th July this year, and there appeared many new signs on the approach lane saying "No Parking at any time". A clear indication that someone was expecting there may well be a parking problem. The Highways officer also states 'I do acknowledge that at times large parties may arrive by coach and that the site does not provide adequate space to accommodate parking, however, it is common practice for coaches to drop off and park elsewhere'. But where do coaches, mini buses park and where do they drop off and collect?

I have read the Michael Kitching's report (independent traffic consultant) and he has some big differences of opinion with the Wiltshire Highways officers report with regard parking at the premises. He states "to be compliant with the Council's adopted standards is 111 parking spaces" while the Highways officer in her report for this applications seems to say that 35 spaces are enough. She also says that 18 spaces are allotted to the cafe - far too few as we all know. Please do consider these two reports, they cannot both be right, and the Council should surely use its adopted standards fairly for every planning application.

The very top of Chimney lane (Clock House application) is subject for agreed planning development for 5 houses, making even more use of this difficult road access.

Sadly this Exhibition proposal is in the wrong place. The building would be most suitable for small artisan craft business.

I hope you refuse this application

Robert Carpenter Turner

Nicola Sidey – Objection – Received on 06/07 at 16:54

As a longstanding resident of Honeystreet, I have observed the terrible traffic and parking effects on the hamlet, that have happened as a result of the unauthorised use by the Crop Circle Centre and Exhibition, of space at Honeystreet Mill.

Busy days at the Crop Circle Centre and Exhibition see overspill parking dangerously swamping and blighting the local road network and entrance to our small hamlet. The Planning and Highways officer's reports reach the wrong conclusion for the following reasons:

1. Their parking calculation and assessment fails to take into account the 33 car parking spaces required to accommodate the external cafe terrace, despite the officer's written confirmation that the calculation should and would include this area.
2. In assessing the parking requirement for the D1 use, the officer has used one of the lowest possible parking tariffs of 1 space per 40sqm. as though the use was for a museum or art gallery. Whereas the more relevant and realistic parking tariff of 1 space per 5 sqm for a D1 use public hall, would give an eight- fold increase in parking requirement. It is important to note that there is no planning permission required to move between the various uses covered by the D1 classification. Therefore, as is best practice the assessment should have used the higher requirement not the lower one. If this had been done, the calculation would have shown a six- fold intensification of parking requirement relative to hypothetical B1 use .
3. The extremely low visitor numbers suggested by the applicant and accepted by the Planning and Highways officers, are not credible and bear no relation to the crop centre visitor numbers regularly observed by residents .The officers should have taken account of the fact that the 'consent' runs with the building and not the occupant, and the occupant could easily change. The unrealistically low visitor numbers accepted of 8 people per day in high season and 2 people per day in low season, will certainly be far higher in the future.
4. About one third of the parking spaces proposed in this application fail to meet the design requirements of Wiltshire Councils Parking Standards, because they are within operational areas and will require other cars to move before they can drive in or away. Others fail to meet the standards dimensional requirements. This means that these sub-standard parking spaces should be disqualified from the calculation, as in practice they will not provide the required parking.
5. The Highways Officer's failure to accurately assess the parking available and to include the relevant floor areas ,and the parking requirement tariffs in her calculation mean that the assessment, gives a wrong and false impression of the impact of the planning use changes in Honeystreet. An accurate assessment produced by highly regarded independent transport consultants shows that the impact on the local road network will be a severe, and therefore fails to meet the tests set down in the NPPF, and will result in Honeystreet suffering dangerous overspill parking potentially in perpetuity.

Thank you.

Statements of Support

Richard Cosker, RCC Town Planning Consultancy (Agent for Applicant) – Support – Received on 06/07 at 10:18

This statement is written by Richard Cosker of RCC Town Planning Consultancy on behalf of the applicant and in support of this application.

The first matter that I would like to bring into focus is the scale and nature of the use subject of this application which councillors should have in mind when considering this application. The application concerns the change of use a small part (just over 147m²) of an existing and long established commercial building to a modest and low key exhibition space dedicated to the crop circle phenomenon that takes place within the agricultural fields in this area. This is only 7.8% of the total floorspace of this commercial site.

The objections that have been raised by some persons have been completely disproportionate to the scale of the use and the reality of how it has operated since last summer. You will I am sure been sent photographs from objectors of parking in the area or the numbers of people attending the exhibition but these either don't relate to the exhibition use or relate to the opening/launch event and are not reflective of the typical situation. Others speaking in support of the application will refer to these issues in more detail.

In planning policy terms, the committee report confirms that the exhibition use is in clear compliance with Policy CP48 and CP39 of the Core Strategy and would have economic, tourism and heritage benefits. With regards to the National Planning Policy Framework this is clear that councils should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas through, for example, the conversion of existing buildings; sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places and cultural buildings.

We therefore agree with the officer's advice that there is no objection to the principle of the exhibition use.

With regards to further detailed planning considerations, it is clear that highway safety and parking are the other key issues.

The committee report is clear that the amount of parking provided on site is in compliance with the council's adopted parking standards, which for non-residential developments are maximum parking standards. As requested by the highway officer, the parking layout provided is based on an accurate measured survey undertaken by a surveyor, in contrast the persons objecting produced their own 'sketch' parking plan which was wholly inaccurate and raised unsubstantiated issues (as noted at 9.5 in the committee report).

In terms of vehicle movements and wider highway safety issues, the applicants have provided details of ticket sales over the last year (which are based on number tickets so this is accurate and substantiated evidence) which show very low tickets sales with an average of only 12.6 sales per day during high season. Not only are these low numbers spread over the 6 hour opening time but there is also the fact that many ticket buyers visit as a couple or buy a family ticket, thus the maximum number of vehicles that could be coming to the site is much lower (the sales show an average group of 2.3 people per 'group' thus there is an average of 6 groups/vehicles a day).

This level of visitors very much differs from the picture that has been painted by objectors but our details are based on accurate ticket sales records.

Finally of course, many visitors to the exhibition do so having already been visiting the café or the shop or are arriving at the site on foot, by bike and even by canal boat. So even with these small visitor numbers not all visitors will arrive by car.

It is having regard to the above that the highway officer has confirmed that there is no highway objection to this proposal.

In conclusion therefore, local and national planning policy wholeheartedly supports the exhibition use and councillors are urged to support the recommendation for approval.

John Wyles (Applicant) – Support – Received on 06/07 at 10:18

I would like to thank Members for considering our application. I am grateful for all the work done by your Planning and Highways Officers, in what have been especially difficult times. I was pleased to have been able to provide accurate visitor numbers to your Highways Officer to allay concerns about local traffic issues, as well as information about the parking provision on site.

I would like to clarify that the photographs submitted by the objector mainly showed parking that occurred in Chimney Lane as a result of private parties at houses in the Lane. That parking was nothing to do with the Crop Circle exhibition. It is fully accepted that at the opening weekend last year (when a launch event was held, with press in attendance and free food was provided) that there were a higher number of people on site. That was very much a one off.

During the period 14th July 2019 to 14 August 2019 only on four days were there visitor numbers above 20, with two of those days having pre-arranged coach visits. They were the only coach visits we had. They were scheduled on weekdays and a separate parking arrangement was made in a neighbour's field. Both coaches were for Crop Circle enthusiasts who had discovered the exhibition on the internet. They were not part of any scheduled tour. Both coaches stayed for approximately two hours. Going forward there are no plans to link with any tour operators.

Excluding the two pre-arranged tours, the average "high season" number of visitors was 12.6 over a day. Visitors arrive in a variety of ways, by public transport, car, cycle, boat and on foot. Many visitors link their trips to the shop and cafe also on site.

I wish to be able to house an internationally renowned Crop Circle archive, in the actual area that is world famous for this phenomenon. I believe the community will benefit from a tourist attraction, at no cost to local taxpayers or the Council. The crop circle exhibition is a not for profit and the work of many years' research by Monique, the curator. We are looking forward to collaborating with the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre to ensure the archive is managed according to best practice.

I am grateful to have the support of Pewsey Vale Tourism and Visit Wiltshire, who share our vision of a low impact, sympathetic and important visitor attraction, which we think can only enhance this beautiful area.

As the county and the country comes out of lockdown, we are hopeful that, even if only in a modest way, the exhibition will be able to boost local tourism and economic prosperity.

On that basis I would respectfully ask Members to consider granting our planning application.

John Wyles

Camilla and Piers Hampton (direct neighbours to the Honeystreet Mill Site) – Support – Received on 06/07 at 10:18

We absolutely support the application.

The national framework and local policy sets a backdrop in favour of enhancing the rural economy and in particular tourism. In determining planning it is important to carefully think about the very real and material effects of a negative decision. In this case we need to support two local enterprises who firstly actually employ young people and secondly occupy a huge site which obviously needs to be economically viable. Planning in Honeystreet seems to whip some of the local population into a default negative stance. The flip side of the same coin is that if as a village we continually push back too hard on planning we end up with sites like that opposite The Mill House which has been an appalling eye sore for way too long. To be clear therefore - isn't it better to utilise buildings that already exist to their maximum potential ensuring that they are maintained and kept and do not fall into dereliction.

Under application 08796/LBC the parish council unanimously approved the conversion of the upper floors of the pub to allow for self contained accommodation amongst other things. This seems to us to set a precedent for the conversion of premises to more modern or alternative uses in line with national policy and Wiltshire's policy in favour of tourism.

Mr Hampton is lucky enough to work from home three days a week and has never been inconvenienced by the India shop or any of the activities on the site. Mrs Hampton works from home 5 days a week and does two school runs twice a day and has also never been inconvenienced by cars parked or by people or deliveries to the site. The only cars we drive around are those tending to the Mill House on a regular basis which is of course no trouble at all.

There are photos in the SK Transport and planning report dated 19th November 2019 being used as evidence of serious looking parking issues caused by the use of the site.

We are happy to confirm that the photos were taken on Sunday 1st September and all the cars in the photos belong to our friends who were attending a joint birthday and christening celebration for our daughter - we had 40 people in attendance. Indeed that weekend was a perfect storm in as much The Mill House also had a large 18th birthday party on the Saturday night. Someone from the village took it upon themselves to move the fencing opposite The Mill House which forced more people to park on the road. None of this was caused by the Cafe, exhibition or shop on Mr Wyles' site.

There have been further photographs presented in evidence since then showing 'hoards' of people and cars. Again I am happy to be witness to say that these were taken on the night of the exhibition opening party - where the village turned out to support the exhibition. We were there and so recognise the people and the photographs. In our experience this was a one off afternoon and caused no one any inconvenience.

The Crop Circle exhibition is very unique. It is really a collection of a very dedicated ladies life work, collating (I believe uniquely) the only entire collection of crop circle images and research in the country. We feel honoured to have her here in the village and certainly our paying guests adore looking at the exhibition. Their cars are parked at our house however and so are never a nuisance. There is certainly a very positive symbiotic relationship between the cafe, the exhibition and local bed and breakfasts in the area. Though it is worth noting that none of our guests to date has stayed with us because of the exhibition proving it is not a 'mega destination' but we steer all our guests towards it and they are extremely interested in it and it is a highlight for their stay.

My husband or I tend to buy a coffee at least 4 times a week and I have never seen more than about 4 people in there when I have walked past.

If we can be of further assistance in determining this matter please feel free to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Piers & Camilla

Parish Council Statements

Alton Parish Council – Objection - Received on 06/07 at 15:56

Alton Parish Council voted unanimously to object to this application, amid serious concerns relating to parking, and heavy over-development of a sensitive area.

The application taken on its own clearly fails to meet the vehicle parking needs and safety requirements for potentially enormous numbers of seasonal visitors to the exhibition. But it is also essential that it is considered together with the simultaneous application 20/01633/FUL to expand the retail arm of the India Shop immediately next door, the Clock House application 19/09834/FUL to build six new dwellings immediately alongside that, as well as the fast-growing café on the same site.

The café is favoured by the Parish Council and residents. But whatever the merits of the individual projects might be they are, taken together, absolutely overwhelming and unacceptable for a small rural hamlet with no public facilities.