

Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council

Minutes of the Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council Planning & Licensing Committee meeting held on 4th August 2020 at 7.00pm via Zoom

Present: Cllrs D. Smith, Chair (DS)
A. Humphryes (AH)
L. Date (LD)
D. Redfearn (DR)
R. Martin (RM)
Clerk
David Harvey, DHA Planning
16 residents

1. Apologies: Cllrs Whybrow, Jessel and Edmans
2. Notification of late items for the agenda : None
3. Declaration of Interests: None
4. Applications considered (plans were available at the meeting):

20/503147 River Farm, Chart Hill Road, Staplehurst
Full planning permission for the erection of extensions to the existing packhouse building, together with new internal access road, amendments to existing vehicular site access, hardstanding, acoustic fencing, landscaping and creation of an ecological enhancement area

20/503148 River Farm, Chart Hill Road, Staplehurst
Full planning permission for the erection of an atmosphere controlled storage building together with external hardstanding and new access road

20/503155 River Farm, Chart Hill Road, Staplehurst
Change of use of land for the siting of 20 worker caravans together with the erection of a laundry and games room and associated access and car parking area

Cllr Smith gave an overview of the previous planning applications relating to River Farm, including the Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) and went on to speak about the three new applications.

Planning agent, David Harvey (DH), from DHA was present at the meeting and responded to initial queries as follows :

- The atmosphere controlled store will be a separate building
- The packhouse will be extended to the front and rear
- The LDC states that a maximum of 31 HGV movements per day is permitted. The new applications will not increase this

Lengthy discussion followed on how the number of HGV movements would be managed and policed. DH stated that MBC could impose a condition on the new applications, limiting HGV movements to no more than 31 per day. He added that Bardsley monitor and record

these movements and MBC could request this information at any time. DS noted that a significant number of River Farm HGV's currently use Chart Hill Road and asked how Bardsley monitor this. DH advised that, as part of the proposal, the intention is to shut off the northern access, with all vehicles accessing the site from the A229, with signage erected to suit.

Cllr Smith summarised the 3 new applications and noted that the proposals will result in a considerable increase in hardstanding. He went on to ask what percentage of fruit arrives on site from overseas. DH advised that 20,000T / yr comes from Bardsley farms, 9,000T from other UK farms and 9,000T from abroad, giving a total of 38,000T / yr. A resident noted that the current LDC allows a maximum of 23,000T / yr in total so this is already being exceeded. DH advised that the current applications will seek to address this increase by providing an increase in the on-site HGV parking capacity. The resident expressed concern that Bardsley are not policing themselves on tonnage and could not be trusted to police themselves on HGV movements. DH stated that Bardsley were trying to make their vehicle movements more efficient in terms of full lorries entering and leaving site.

AH asked if the Parish Council could be given the last 6 months records of documented vehicle movements and tonnage. DH agreed to ask Bardsley for this information.

A resident expressed concern at HGV's parking on the road with their refrigeration units running. DH advised that the current application would address this issue.

A resident asked whether lorries would be travelling from site during the day and night. DH stated that there were currently no conditions limiting hours for lorry movements so yes they would.

DS stated that each of the applications should be considered separately as well as their effect as a whole. The discussions that followed are summarised below.

Packhouse extension

Concerns were expressed regarding :

- Additional hardstanding
- More parking required for workforce, not just those living on site in caravans
- More car movements to and from site
- Effect on historic bridge
- Flooding. It was noted that photographic evidence of recent flooding incidents had been provided by residents
- The effect of the expanded business on the rural location

RM stated that Bardsley should be managing their own business, not expecting MBC to police it. DH responded that Bardsley have been managing this, will have limits set and will comply. He added that responsibility for enforcement would remain with MBC.

DR asked whether HGV's are from a single company. DH stated that they were from a range of companies and Bardsley make every effort to ensure that lorries take the correct route to and from site. AH stated that there was no incentive for Bardsley to comply with restrictions on lorry numbers and felt that they should be punished for exceeding limits, eg if too many lorries came in one day less should be allowed the next.

Controlled atmosphere building

Concerns were expressed regarding increased hardstanding. DS asked what measures were in place to moderate flooding. DH stated that rainwater would be collected and diverted to the nearby reservoir via drains, collection points and hydro breaks then let out to the wider water system beyond. DS expressed concern that this had not worked to date. DH stated that Bardsley would have to attenuate to green field run off rates, if not better.

Members felt that the proposal represents overdevelopment, moving from a commercial farm to a distribution centre and queried the issue of the appropriate use class.

Worker caravans

DH stated that Bardsley currently accommodate staff in Sutton Valence in cottages and caravans. He added that the caravans were coming to the end of their useful life and it was felt that housing workers at River Farm would be the best option, reducing the number of car movements to and from site.

LD asked how many employees there would be on the site. DH stated that there would be no significant shift in the total number of employees as a result of the proposals.

DS noted that planning consent would not normally be given for 20 caravans in a flood plain and queried how Bardsley would deal with access and egress in the event of flooding. DH advised that a flood warning system and evacuation plan would be put in place.

DR queried how many workers would be housed in each caravan. DH responded that there should be no more than 1 or 2 occupants but agreed to query this with Bardsley. Cllr Smith noted that workers would need more amenities than a games room in this rural location which would mean people coming and going in cars to seek out local facilities.

AH queried whether the caravans would be connected to mains drainage. DH stated that this would probably be dealt with on site by septic tanks but agreed to check with Bardsley.

RM stated that 20 caravans would constitute a residential community, not just a workers site and felt that there should be a residential plan to address issues such as noise and car movements.

Members queried waste collection and disposal arrangements. DH stated that there would likely be a communal bin store, with waste possibly collected by private contractor. DS asked how waste from the site is currently dealt with. DH advised that it is all taken off site using empty lorries.

DS asked what measures there would be to protect local water courses. DH stated that petrol interceptors would be provided.

Packhouse and controlled storage applications (20/503147 and 20/503148)

It was agreed that the Parish Council wish to see the applications refused for the following reasons and reported to MBC planning committee for decision :

- The proposals represent overdevelopment of what was a rural farm site and is now moving to become a major distribution centre
- The likelihood of increased flooding as a result of the additional hardstanding. As well as affecting the site itself it would also cause flooding to roads, impacting the wider community
- Detrimental effect on highway safety, with HGV's using inappropriate rural lanes and reliant on others to enforce correct routes to and from site
- Increased car movements to and from site
- Concern regarding policing of vehicle movements
- Concern regarding effect on the historic bridge
- Concern regarding environmental issues such as run off and waste disposal
- Negative effect on visual amenity, damaging rural views
- Light pollution
- Noise pollution from cold storage back-up generators and refrigerant plant itself

It was agreed that, should the MBC planning committee be minded to approve the application then full consideration should be given to the following :

- Condition such that vehicle movements and tonnages are properly policed (using weight registering strips / CCTV) with penalties applied for flouting limits
- Condition limiting lorry movements to day time only

Worker caravan application (20/503155)

It was agreed that the Parish Council wish to see the application refused for the following reasons and reported to MBC planning committee for decision :

- Concern regarding 20 caravans being sited on a flood plain. It is noted that the applicant intends the caravans to be occupied throughout the year
- A lack of site based amenities means that occupants would be forced to travel, creating additional traffic on this rural road network
- Concern regarding drainage and waste disposal and collection arrangements
- Concern regarding potential pollution to water courses
- Noise pollution resulting from a year round, residential community. If each caravan was occupied by 4 people there could be 80 people permanently resident at the site

**20/503109 Land to the rear of 70 Church Street, Boughton Monchelsea
Erection of 24 no. new C2 extra care retirement homes, club house, bin
stores and landscape scheme**

The Parish Council wish to see the application refused for the following reasons and reported to MBC planning committee for decision :

- The proposal constitutes over-development of the site
- Parking provision on the site is inadequate with just one parking space per property. These homes are all 2 bedroom properties, many with two bathrooms. The number of visitor parking spaces is also inadequate and the information provided is contradictory. The hard landscaping plan shows (and states) that there are to be 24 on curtilage parking spaces and 10 visitor spaces, ie 34 overall however the transport statement advises that there will be 41, as detailed in the following extract :
*'3.3 Parking
3.3.1 In total, 24 parking spaces are proposed to serve the residential component of the site; four of which will be designated for disabled users. An additional nine visitor spaces will be provided and a further four disabled and four visitor spaces are proposed to serve the club house.'*
- Given that each property has its own private garden we feel that provision of such a large communal space is unnecessary. By reducing this, the constrained development area could be loosened up somewhat and a green buffer provided to the east of the site to mitigate the detrimental effect on existing Church Street properties. Note that the permitted scheme for 18 homes included a green buffer. It should be noted that the application documents include the following statements :
 - *'For clarification, the area of Cob nut platt proposed in the new scheme is greater than the area permitted in the previous scheme'*
 - *'It is not agreed that Extra Care is categorised by Inspectors by the need for communal facilities, rather is the provision of care that defines Extra Care developments. There is also no policy requirement, nor legislative requirement to define the amount of communal space required by Extra Care developments'*
- We are concerned at the inappropriate location of the club house which would have a detrimental effect on the private amenity of existing Church Street properties. The club house should be moved to the west side of the site where it would relate well to the adjacent communal space and allow new residents to make best use of it
- We are concerned at the highway impact of another 6 properties, with the resulting increase in traffic movements across the Church Street footpath
- We support C2 use of the site however increasing the number of properties from 18 to 24 is inappropriate in this location

**20/503054 55 Church Street, Boughton Monchelsea
Demolition of existing single storey side extension. Erection of two
storey side extension and first floor rear extension with pitched roof**

No objection however MBC should confirm that there is no detrimental effect on the private amenity of neighbouring properties

5. Any other Business:

It was noted that a TPO application had been received relating to land at Gandys Lane. This would be considered at the next planning meeting on 24th August however it was agreed that Cllr Smith be given delegated powers to speak to MBC's tree officer about the application in the meantime.

Cllr Redfearn queried planning consents relating to the Mulberry Tree site in Hermitage Lane. The clerk stated that she would check and report back to members. **CLERK**

Post meeting note :

The following planning application was agreed by MBC in 2019 :

19/504246 The Mulberry Tree Hermitage Lane Boughton Monchelsea
Conversion of existing restaurant building, flat and associated staff accommodation to form five residential dwellings with associated minor extensions and alterations to existing building, landscaping and formation of additional vehicular access point onto Hermitage Lane. (Revised scheme to 18/506158/FULL)

A further application for an additional home was refused by MBC in 2020 :

20/501296 The former Mulberry Tree, Hermitage Lane
Erection of a detached dwelling and associated parking, access and turning

6. Date of Next Meeting: To be determined according to need.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm