

BOLTON BY BOWLAND, GISBURN FOREST & SAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Ms. Laura Eastwood
Principal Planning Officer
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
BB7 2AU
BY EMAIL

26 January 2021

Dear Ms. Eastwood

Planning Application 3/2020/1091

Coars Farm Garden Centre, Settle Road, Bolton By Bowland, BD23 4SN

Proposed redevelopment of site for 30 no. holiday chalets, conversion of existing holiday house and adjacent barn to a 20 person holiday let. Extension of existing cafe, construction of reception building with managers flat, alteration to existing garden centre to form a farm shop and plant display area. Creation of car parking, landscaping and associated works.

I am instructed by the Parish Council to write to you, following the recent email discussions and the concerns expressed by local residents and Parish Councillors. The application is significant and, whilst the Parish Council is mindful of the tourism attractions to the area, it also has considerable objections to the proposal and the negative effect such a development would impact on the local area & residents. May I take this opportunity to thank you for allowing for late submissions due to the Christmas & New Year period included in 21 day consultation window, as well as the ongoing issues caused by Covid situation.

Bolton by Bowland, Gisburn Forest & Sawley Parish Council wishes to object to this application on a number of grounds which will be detailed following the summary:

- The overall scale & size of the proposed development is contrary to the rural landscape of the area and the quiet enjoyment of the unspoilt landscape of the surroundings
- This will create a disturbance of the nearby SSSI and impact on the adjacent AONB
- A development of this size would generate excess nuisance to the local infrastructure
- It would give a negative economic & commercial impact on the local community which is already well served with visitor accommodation and garden centres
- Site access including the local roads is completely unsuitable for large construction plant & equipment, giving rise to longer term contamination of roads, water courses & drainage due to movements on & off site. LCC Highways Officer early response suggests improvement / further consultation is needed and that the suggested visibility splays given by the applicant are incorrect.

Clerk to BOLTON by BOWLAND, GISBURN FOREST & SAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL
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The list of Consultees does not include some neighbouring properties and, whilst the Parish is geographically diverse, this gives rise to local concern. It is now understood that the statutory 21 day Notice was posted late & this will allow for more consideration and possible comments by residents. The Parish Council is surprised that Environment Agency, Forest of Bowland AONB & Natural England are not on Consultee List on RVBC Planning Portal. It is accepted that these statutory bodies may have been consulted, however the Parish Council would appreciate knowledge of such consultation, particularly due to the proximity of the site to AONB Boundary & the White Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest and whilst noting that LCC Highways have given an early response, is it possible to arrange a site visit by LCC Highways Officers, who will in all probability have no direct knowledge of the area or site, other than digitally generated?

Size & Scale ; The green lungs of the Parish are appreciated by both residents and visitors as assets worthy of protection. It has been suggested that the application looks more like a small housing estate in Clitheroe than a small holiday destination in the more rural parts of the tranquil Ribble Valley. The scale of 30 holiday chalets (in stone, with significant outdoor area and parking for each) in addition to conversion of house & barn, with manager's flat would increase the transient population of the area out of all proportion to the existing residential one. The size & scale of each plot is therefore considered to be excessive and the more usual holiday accommodation in this rural area would be of simpler wooden construction with less individual outdoor spacing configured. The physical effect of the site would have a negative impact on the surrounding countryside and 121 car parking spaces is greater in number than Clitheroe Tesco, which appears to be far too many for the actual application, as evidenced by LCC Highways Report which describes the increase in number of parking spaces from 30 to 121 as "excessive".

Sustainability : The Parish Council has concerns about the sustainability of the site, both from a financial perspective, but also from the environmental standpoint. Whilst it is noted that part of Planning Law does not include the long term financial state of an applicant, nevertheless there has been no business case or plan put forward as part of the application itself & the applicant's own Planning Justification states at para 5: *"Whilst the site is currently not unviable, it does lack resources for reinvestment and development to enable the business to expand and grow to meet changing market demand. For example, plans for redevelopment of the café and garden centre approved in 2016 have not been implemented (application 3/2016/0088) refers."* This application is for premier stone built type of construction, which appears admirable, however much greater upfront costs are needed, but not evidenced as secured. This gives rise to questions about how the Applicant would be in a position to take forward such a wide scoping development. Whilst it is noted that Planning decisions may only be based on the actual application, local residents have concerns that, should this development be approved, what further expansion might be applied for in future? Contrary to this, there is evidence of another development project in the Parish falling into dilapidation due to insufficient capital investment where the Parish Council has supported local residents' requests for planning enforcement.

Environmental Concerns : Note is taken that the site is intended to become at least carbon neutral, however there is little consideration of the effect of light pollution from 30 holiday chalets in addition to ancillary facilities inc. holiday lodge for 20 persons on the local

environment, which is widely acknowledged as a Dark Skies area to be enjoyed for the lack of additional light. Latest technology is under consideration for PV panels to the roof, however what details are there for the number of Electronic Vehicle Charging Points to be installed & how will these be powered? A new septic tank mechanism is part of the application, but there is insufficient detail for waste collection, storage & removal in addition to a lack of policy on recycling. This is further demonstrated by the comments if LCC Highways response about discharge of foul water. Noise pollution is a further concern, whilst the neighbours are at some distance, many have enjoyed very peaceful surroundings for much, if not all of their lives & wish to continue to enjoy the peace & tranquillity to which they are entitled.

SSSI & AONB Concerns: Natural England gives the nearby 13.43 hectare White Moss the Designation of Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its being “the best surviving example in Lancashire of mire type” This type of peat bog is to be preserved and any potential run off from the site may cause irreparable damage. Paras 13a & 13b suggest that drainage operations would be likely to damage the special interest and therefore the mire type could be lost forever. In addition, the Management Plan for the adjacent Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty states in its aims “to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural beauty of the Forest of Bowland landscape” which does not suggest a significant holiday development.

Traffic & highways issues. Traffic counts have been submitted as part of the application, but have these counts been independently verified for audit purposes? It is noted that the Traffic Survey took place during Covid restrictions, which would surely not reflect the more usual road situation. Local knowledge emphasises that the stretch of Forest Becks Brow, particularly from High Grain Farm past the entrance to the site is very narrow, allowing insufficient room for two cars to safely pass in some places. This is in contrast with the traffic details supplied as part of the application and it is noted that some vehicles have been recorded at speeds exceeding 76mph. A local resident queried the traffic survey as “...*but the only deployment I know of was 20 metres before the junction that turns up to Tosside on Grunsagill Road. This would include lots of cars that do not pass the area in question and also reduce the average speed as cars slow down to turn up to Tosside. So not an accurate survey at all!*” Traffic management of a site such as this, with unlit roads where, to quote the applicant’s traffic report “...**visibility does not meet the standard for a derestricted carriageway..**” may be an accident waiting to happen when much increased usage by visitors who are unfamiliar with the roads in wet / icy conditions are driving in the area & meet oncoming traffic at excess speed. The applicant’s Transport statement says in its summary “...**promote sustainability by reducing the number of car trips to local facilities...**” Since there are no facilities on site e.g. shops / doctors / pharmacy / public transport / leisure facilities (other than bar & restaurant on site), it is therefore the case that a number of increased car trips would be the inevitable result of such a development. Parish Council submits that this does not equate with Tourism objectives in both Local and National Planning policies. The Trip Rate calculations submitted as supporting documents with the application seem irrelevant, as they detail Hampshire & Limerick, Cheshire & Greater Manchester in particular; Parish Council respectfully suggests that normal conditions in Tosside & Bolton by Bowland areas of Ribbles Valley are significantly different from any of the areas detailed, particularly regarding the prevalent weather conditions and the information should therefore be discounted.

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Sustainable Transport: National & Local Planning policies refer to sustainability of transport linkage. There is no public transport to the site and, as has been highlighted, the local roads are narrow, unpaved and unlit. The application suggests that it is acceptable to walk 4.2 miles to the nearest local shop in Bolton by Bowland which is in our opinion disingenuous for use of a holiday outlet. Similarly walking on the roads and the use of cycles by those unfamiliar could be extremely hazardous and would be most unlikely in dark, cold or wet conditions, even if access to the site was changed to link with PROW. The roads are completely unsuitable for those with disability or mobility issues and therefore the only reasonable means of access is by private vehicle, generating additional traffic, contrary to carbon neutral initiatives. The application will no doubt generate additional employment, however in this area of very low population this will probably not be local employment; again giving rise to additional vehicle usage by single users.

Construction; It is noted that the proposed lodges are large in scale, with ancillary outdoor seating areas and individual parking. Since these are potentially to be constructed of stone, whilst one building may fit into the surrounding landscape, Parish Council submits that 30 in number could be considered a new hamlet, which is opposed and not demonstrated as needed in the rural landscape. It is acknowledged that stone construction would allow for greater retention of value over more temporary caravan type construction; nevertheless there has been no evidence of affordability for the construction. The limits of access to the site have been noted, but any potential site construction of this scale would need detailed construction & traffic statements, as well as any working time with limits.

Site Management ; A Manager's flat is included as part of the application, but the Parish Council wonders if there is evidence of how the site (if approved and opened) would be managed ; opening hours / limits, curfew, no fireworks etc are mentioned in the Management Plan, however this would be unenforceable by a single manager with a number of more difficult guests. Since there are no local leisure facilities, it may be assumed that some visitors will wish to create noise & disturbance for their entertainment, to the annoyance of other visitors & locals. Sites such as this need management of visitors on a 24 hour, daily basis but details of such plans are sketchy.

Bolton by Bowland, Gisburn Forest & Sawley Parish Council therefore strongly objects to this application and requests refusal by Ribble Valley Borough Council.

Yours sincerely

TERESA TAYLOR

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